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Gassville couple wins cooperative's \$50,000 prize

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GASSVILLE — A Gassville couple are the winners of the of the Electric Cooperatives of Arkansas' Energy Efficiency Home Makeover.

The package valued at \$50,000 went to Bill and Mary Quilhot who live in a 70-year-old home on Buford Cutoff Road. The package includes new Weather-Barr windows and doors throughout the house, Retrofoam and cellulose insulation and geothermal heating and cooling systems.

Mary Quilhot said she believes a 60-year-old Toastmaster water heater helped to bring the home to the front of the homes of more than 2,000 applicants.

"It still works. I think it should go into the Guinness Book of World Records or something," she said.

Quilhot said she and her husband had long been concerned about the old water heater located upstairs and the damage it could cause if it started to leak. They were shopping and comparing prices and product information online when they settled on the high-efficiency Marathon brand even though it was a bit pricey, she said.

During their research, they found information about their co-op's Energy Home Makeover and decided to enter for a chance to win one of 17 Marathon water heaters to be given away in the competition. But they won the grand prize.

"I'm in a daze, Quilhot said. "I can't believe it."

Quilhot said her husband is an avid sweepstakes and contest player. He jested with the 40 or so presenters who delivered the prize news Friday that he entered "90,000 contests a year and never won one." His wife corrected him after the presentation.

"He won a Dickey's jacket," she said. "He's very proud of it."

"I've told him, 'Oh, honey. Why do you waste your time and our stamps on this stuff?' " she said

Doug White, vice president of the co-op, said the Quilhots' home is an excellent candidate to show what energy upgrades can do.

"The Quilhots' 70-year-old home, cooled with five window units, has major air infiltration," said White. "An energy audit revealed that the home has 1.42 air changes per hour. Which means that 142 percent of the air in the house changes with outside air every hour. Ideally, this figure should be 25 to 30 percent."

Quilhot said she's noticed what the makeover has done for the three previous grand prize winners.

"Last year's winners' September bill went from about \$200 to \$49," she said.

The Electric Cooperatives of Arkansas comprise 17 electric distribution cooperatives; Arkansas Electric Cooperatives Inc., a Little Rock-based cooperative that provides various services to the distribution cooperatives; and Arkansas Electric Cooperative Corp., a generation and transmission cooperative. The distribution cooperatives provide electricity to more than 500,000 members, or customers, in Arkansas and surrounding states.

The project's sponsors include: Harry G. Barr Company; Doug Rye; Marathon Water Heaters; Rood Heating and Air of Russellville; and Water Furnace.

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