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## Energy efficiency groups discuss initiatives

January 25, 2013

By JACKIE STARK - Journal Staff Writer (jstark@miningjournal.net) , The Mining Journal

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MARQUETTE - Area residents had a chance to mix craft beer with learning about energy efficient homes Wednesday night as they took part in "Energy on Tap" inside the Ore Dock Brewing Co. Wednesday.

The event, sponsored by the Superior Watershed Partnership, brought several local energy experts to one place to answer questions from the public about ways to help improve their homes' energy efficiency.

Represented at the event were the Marquette BetterBuildings for Michigan program - which is administered by the SWP - Michigan Energy Options, Home Energy Solutions and Northern Energy Solutions.

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SWP Program Manager Natasha Koss said the group discussed simple ways to increase energy efficiency in the home, as well as common myths people often have on the subject, specifically on what changes or updates make the most financial sense for people on a budget.

"People think of home energy efficiency, they think of replacing their windows because that's where they feel the draft, but in reality, when you're thinking about return on investments, because windows are so expensive, the payback is so long," Koss said. "It's often not the best bang for your buck. The single best thing a person can do is insulate their basement foundation walls. That can be done relatively cheaply and the payback time is really quick. You're going to notice it really quick in your house."

With the recent cold snap sweeping across the area, Koss said many people had questions about home heating devices, and how to recognize places in the home that may be weakening the home's energy efficiency.

"This is more on people's minds right now," Koss said. "It was really timely (Wednesday) just because it's so cold. That seemed to be the topic of conversation."

Koss said the group also discussed some of the vocabulary of energy efficiency, vocabulary that can tend toward jargon used by people in the energy business - not the average citizen.

"There's a lot of acronyms and words thrown around in the media that have to do with energy efficiency and energy efficiency products in people's homes, and I think they can just be confusing to the average homeowner," Koss said. "This was a chance for us to really lay it all out. This is what it looks like for the start, when an assessor comes into your home, these are the products."

Koss said the SWP is considering making this event, or something similar to it, an annual undertaking.

Jackie Stark can be reached at 906-228-2500, ext. 242.

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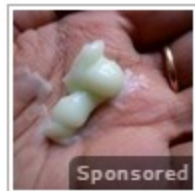
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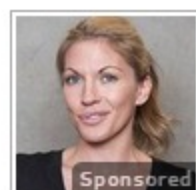
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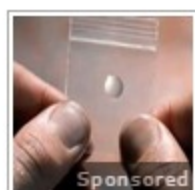
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