

News

## ARRA funding fuels Berlin-based business

Wednesday, April 7, 2010 10:16 PM EDT

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BERLIN — Kevin Ovitt says he's glad to be working again. The 56-year-old home remodeling expert had owned a successful home remodeling business in Shelton for several years. When the recession hit many of his projects dried up and he was left pondering his next career move.

Then a few weeks ago Ovitt heard about job bills being discussed in Congress as well various state agencies involved in Jobs for America Act and American Recovery and Reinvestment Act-funded programs, weatherization in particular.

After taking a course at the Building Performance Institute in Cromwell, Ovitt was qualified to run energy audits in homes. These audits can lead to hefty rebates for homeowners as well as jobs for home remodelers like Ovitt.

"We were really impressed with Kevin," said Steve Pelton about Ovitt's recent job interview. "He has experience in bathroom remodeling and is the kind of guy who will represent our firm very well."

With the home remodeling business in low gear Ovitt realized a job with Pelton could be the opportunity he was looking for. Though Steve Pelton declined to reveal Ovitt's starting salary he said weatherization jobs like Ovitt's pay from \$18 to \$25 an hour and come with a solid health insurance program.

Berlin-based R. Pelton Builders with 19 employees is a small business taking advantage of President Obama's ARRA-funded programs.

"We're doing our small part adding jobs and building our business — something that gives us optimism and hope for the years ahead," says Managing Director Michael Pelton.

With his brother Steve they run a residential weatherization/energy audit business that services home-owners throughout the state with a variety of options designed to save money and improve energy savings and efficiency.

The Peltons work closely with various state agencies that implement the federal Weatherization program passed last year (CRT in Hartford, ACCESS in Willimantic, New Opportunities Waterbury, and ABCD in Bridgeport).

It was the experience the company had with CRT that the Peltons felt was important for U.S. Rep. John Larson, D-1st Congressional District, to know about. Larson, a champion of the program, said he's beginning to see signs of economic recovery in the state.

"In January, we added 2,300 new jobs, the largest increase since the start of the economic downturn," he says. "The Recovery Act played an important role in saving and creating 7,000 jobs in Connecticut."

Larson says the act is on track to save or create 3.5 million jobs around the country.

“Look at small businesses like Pelton,” he says. “They’re getting the resources they need to create good paying jobs in our community.”

“My brother and I have been involved in residential home improvements for over 20 years,” said Michael Pelton. “Last year, we began focusing our business on doing program energy audits with the power companies like CL&P and United Illuminating as well as weatherization services through the ARRA weatherization program. We successfully bid in each of the regions in Connecticut and began expanding our business accordingly.”

Michael Pelton says the most positive experience to date has been with the Community Renewal Team of Hartford. “We have been working very closely with the hard-working CRT weatherization team since last year,” he said. “It has directly resulted in our business adding five new full-time positions.”

Nancy Pappas, CRT’s director of external affairs, says the federal money that comes through her agency enables companies like Pelton to survive the ebb and flow of the home-remodeling business.

“Working with us the Peltons have done 42 homes in the past 60 days,” she said. “This represents 104 work orders for weather stripping, blown installation and so on. It also increases their number of work crews. We’ve been able to help Pelton ramp up so they can grow their business.”

Helping fill those positions is another agency vital to Pelton’s growth and expansion — the Jobs Funnel Program in Hartford. He credits the combined efforts of various agencies for the smooth implementation of weatherization, about creating jobs while performing good work.

“You might even say this is one of those rare moments when a well-intentioned government program actually delivers on its promise,” says Michael Pelton.

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