



IT MAY BE TIME FOR GEOTHERMAL

Congratulations once again to Larry and Nancy Ferrell who were the winners of the 2011 Energy Efficiency Makeover Contest sponsored by the Electric Cooperatives of Arkansas.

What a great program to help a family and to teach others the practical ways to improve the energy efficiency of their homes. The Ferrells' house is a perfect example of what I wrote about in the September issue about the thermostat. When we first met the family, the thermostat was set at over 80 degrees to save money on their electricity bill. The house was hot and humid. When it was just too hot, the family would turn the thermostat down and let the air conditioner cool for a while and then turn it back up.

The house is now super efficient with the installation of a geothermal heating and cooling system, and the family has agreed to leave the thermostat setting at 75 degrees. An installed meter tells us that it is costing about \$1 per day to cool the house, and it should be about the same for heating. Larry and Nancy are excited about the geothermal system. The house will be comfortable; the utility bills will be affordable throughout the year, and

Larry will not have to split any more firewood.

I am regularly amazed by the number of folks that read this magazine and my column. My wife and I visited an arts and crafts festival on Labor Day. While my wife was looking at some dresses, I asked the lady attendant about the show's attendance and if she was enjoying the nice cool morning. I also asked if she was from another state and she replied that she lived near Huntsville. I asked her if she was an electric cooperative member and she said she was. I asked her if she ever read the *Arkansas Living* magazine and she quickly answered, "Yes, every month." Then she said, "I knew that you looked familiar. Mr. Rye, it is a pleasure to meet you. We have implemented several of the energy tips that you have suggested. And I think that the makeover program is amazing." Wow, we love to hear comments like these.

My wife and I then proceeded down the path, past numerous tents, until we found something that we wanted to buy for one of our granddaughters. As we were paying for the items, the lady asked if I was the Doug Rye that wrote the energy articles for the *Oklahoma Living* magazine. I told her that I was and that the Arkansas electric cooperatives were kind enough to share the articles with other states. She called her husband over and they proceeded to tell us that they had moved from a large city to a place on

a river near Smithville, Okla., for a simpler life. They wanted to make their new house as affordable as possible and were in the process of implementing many of our energy tips. They were really interested in the feasibility of geothermal heating and cooling.

Well, there are many folks interested in geothermal. In fact, questions about geothermal are among the most common inquiries the local cooperative's member services representatives and I receive. Why, you may ask? Because geothermal can provide comfortable heating and cooling at an operating cost far less than any other central system. It all has to do with the efficiency of the equipment. For example, a geothermal unit is four times as efficient as a gas furnace in providing heating for a house. That's because the Earth donates most of the heat. On the cooling side, geothermal is about two times as efficient as a regular air conditioning unit because it operates from the temperature of Mother Earth rather than the temperature of the hot outside air. It really is simple, and with the possible 30 percent federal tax credit, it is more feasible than ever. I suggest that you go to www.SmartEnergy-Tips.org and watch the workers drill the loops and install the geothermal unit at the Ferrells' house. It really may be the time for you to install geothermal. And as always, feel free to call me at 501-653-7931 if you have other questions. •

Doug Rye, a licensed architect living in Saline County and the popular host of the "Home Remedies" radio show, works as a consultant for the Electric Cooperatives of Arkansas to promote energy efficiency to cooperative members statewide. To order Doug's video or ask energy efficiency-related questions, call Doug at 1-501-653-7931. More energy-efficiency tips, as well as Doug's columns, can also be found at www.smartenergytips.org.