



Bath arts center buttons up with grant

By [Alex Lear](#) on January 27, 2016 [@learics](#)

BATH — Weatherization of the [Chocolate Church Arts Center](#) Annex is underway, thanks to a nearly \$10,000 grant.

The \$9,950 financial boost, matched by funding and in-kind contributions from the center at 804 Washington St., came from [Grants to Green](#). The program is a partnership between Efficiency Maine, the Maine Community Foundation, and the Maine Development Foundation.

The work, done by several local contractors, began last month and could wrap up in April, Jennfer DeChant, the center's executive director, said in a Jan. 21 interview.

"We're doing very well, and it's moving much quicker than we thought," DeChant said. "We ... are able to already see some of the benefits of the insulation and changes that we're making in the facility."

The Annex of the 168-year-old former church includes the center's administrative offices, art gallery and green rooms, and the Curtis Room.

The work follows another recent energy efficiency improvement. A \$15,000 grant from the Quimby Family Foundation in 2014 helped replace the furnace that heats the center's main stage.

While it remains a drafty building, the center is able to better ensure audience comfort, DeChant said, noting 5,000 people were entertained between September 2014 and June 2015.

Fuel cost about \$4,000 during DeChant's first Christmas season with the arts center three years ago.

"It was ridiculous," she recalled. "So immediately it became ... "I don't know what we're going to do, but we can't do this anymore."

But energy improvements, through the new furnace and use of natural gas, whittled that expense down to about \$700, she said – “amazingly impactful.”

Although the center first looked to weatherize the main building, it was decided to handle that work through a capital campaign, and shore up the Annex in the meantime, DeChant said. The grant proposal outlined a list of improved efficiencies, as created by an ad hoc Building Action Committee.

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Joseph Arsenault, in the background, and Gordon McKenney prepare insulation at the Chocolate Church Arts Center in Bath. Arsenault is a volunteer contractor, and McKenney is a member of the board of directors.