Standing on the front porch of her new house in Duluth’s Lincoln Park neighborhood, Salaam Witherspoon is beaming. Homeownership is a dream come true for the young working mom and her two children, ages six and eight. The family moved into the tidy, three-bedroom house in early August, grateful to Western Lake Superior Habitat for Humanity and its network of community partners for making it possible.

Witherspoon’s home is not just comfortable and attractive. It was designed and built to meet Minnesota Power’s rigorous Triple E New Construction standards for thermal integrity and energy performance. Triple E homes average a 25 percent reduction in space heating costs compared to conventional new homes.

“We want the homes we build to be affordable, not just the mortgage, insurance and taxes, but also the utility bills,” said Western Lake Superior Habitat for Humanity Executive Director David Clanaugh, explaining the organization’s interest in energy-efficient construction. “Our goal is to reduce those expenses substantially, so families can build assets.”

Minnesota Power’s conservation improvement program (CIP) team worked hand-in-hand with local Habitat for Humanity officials, builders and suppliers to ensure standards were met and the project qualified for maximum conservation rebates. The utility invited the organization’s construction manager, Chase Bement, to attend the 2019 Energy Design Conference & Expo in Duluth to learn about advances in energy-efficient design and construction. Habitat for Humanity volunteers staffed an informational booth at the event.

“It was a big learning process,” Clanaugh said. “Our goal is to build houses cost effectively, but in a high quality manner.”

The Lincoln Park project was the first Habitat for Humanity home built in Duluth in more than a decade, but the organization recently completed a home in Superior, Wis., another is under construction in West Duluth, and more homes are being planned. The Minnesota Power Foundation recently provided a $10,000 grant toward this surge in activity. Dozens of other community partners are supporting Habitat for Humanity’s work in the Twin Ports, as well. Partners in the Lincoln Park home included Lake Superior...
College, ISD 709, Wells Fargo, Essentia Health, three Rotary clubs, numerous faith-based congregations, union electricians and contractors, the City of Duluth and St. Louis County.

“There are layers and layers of interlocking partnerships; that is how Habitat for Humanity creates housing,” said Clanaugh, adding that families like Witherspoon’s are at the center of every project, contributing sweat equity, completing homeowner education and taking on the mortgage. “Our slogan is we build homes, community and hope.”

That hope is evident in the smile on Witherspoon’s face as she hugs her daughter.

“I have the most up-to-date, energy-efficient home; it’s awesome,” Witherspoon said, “But the most exciting part of being a homeowner is having a place that my kids can grow up in and call home. I’m so thankful!”

“Minnesota Power is grateful to partner with Western Lake Superior Habitat for Humanity,” said Chad Trebilcock, energy analyst with Minnesota Power and a key member of the CIP team. “Our goals are similar in many ways. We both like to promote healthy, energy-efficient homes in the communities we serve.”

“We are just honored to be partners with Minnesota Power,” Clanaugh added. “It is an incredibly good organization that brings a lot to the table, and we are stronger because of that partnership.”

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**ASHP Technology: A Hot Topic with Contractors**

Area heating, ventilation and air conditioning (HVAC) contractors got a jump on the winter heating season during a recent presentation on air source heat pump (ASHP) technology and incentives, held in Virginia, Minn. Sponsored by Minnesota Power, the event featured representatives from Mitsubishi Electric, who educated participants about this rapidly evolving technology. ASHPs deliver energy-efficient heating and cooling through a single unit. Specific cold climate models (ccASHP) provide effective heating with temperatures below 0° F. Minnesota Power offers rebates on ASHPs ranging from $50-$1,000 based on type and application. See “Featured Rebates” or visit [www.mnpower.com/rebates](http://www.mnpower.com/rebates) to learn more.

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