

More than 300,000 Michigan residents to receive additional Home Heating Credit

Approximately 309,000 Michigan taxpayers who received Home Heating Credits in 2016 will get an additional one-time credit of \$44 or \$22 this month to help keep their homes warm.

The payments are the result of a \$12 million supplemental to spend remaining 2017 federal Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program block grant dollars received by Michigan. The additional credit will be generated automatically. Eligible households do not need to do anything to receive the credit.

Households that had direct heating obligations – such as heating bills that they paid – will receive \$44. Households with indirect heating obligations – heat cost included in their rent or a heat bill in someone else's name – will receive \$22.



Recipients of the additional credit are households that filed a 2016 MI-1040CR-7 Home Heating Credit Claim and qualified for the credit.

Anyone whose original Home Heating Credit was paid directly to their heat provider will also have the supplemental payment sent to the heating provider and will receive written notification in a mailing the Michigan Department of Treasury is sending this month. Treasury will mail checks to all other households that are eligible for the supplemental Home Heating Credit. Recipients are encouraged to apply this payment to their heat bill even if there is no current balance owed.

The credit cannot be replaced or reissued. Anyone who receives a utility shutoff notice during the next six months cannot receive shutoff assistance from MDHHS if the credit is not applied to their heating bill.

Anyone with questions on their Home Heating Credit can contact Treasury at: Michigan Department of Treasury, Customer Contact Section, P.O. Box 30058, Lansing, MI 48909, or call 517-636-4486. For information regarding heat assistance, contact the MDHHS energy hotline at 855-275-6424, Monday through Friday, 8 a.m. to 4:45 p.m., or visit the energy website at www.michigan.gov/heatingassistance.



Award-winning Solutions for Energy Efficient Logistics (SEEL) LLC continues to soar

By Donald James
Special to the Chronicle

Since its Jan. 1, 2009 inception, Solutions for Energy Efficient Logistics LLC (SEEL), a minority-owned and operated energy services company based in Detroit, has risen to become a national leader in the energy efficiency and sustainability management movement.

The company's strong suit has been its ability to deliver and manage cost-effective energy-savings initiatives for its utility partners and program participants, all while leveraging industry data to identify areas for cost-saving measures for customers in diverse communities.

"We are the leaders in community outreach because we are not afraid to get our hands dirty," said SEEL's founder, president and CEO Louis E. James. "We are not afraid to knock on doors in neighborhoods that some might call questionable."

In addition to being headquartered in Detroit, SEEL has operations in Chicago, Atlanta and Louisville, Kentucky. For its high marks in energy efficiency and management, SEEL has received numerous honors and awards, the latest of which is 2017 Minority Supplier of the Year, presented by the 40-year-old Michigan Minority Supplier Development Council (MMSDC) at its ACE Awards ceremony held in December at the Detroit Marriot at the Renaissance Center.

"You truly represent the very best of Michigan, so it gives us great pleasure to



SEEL's founder, president and CEO Louis E. James

honor you," Michelle Sourie Robinson, MMSDC's president and CEO, said during her presentation to SEEL. "Our awards process has become quite competitive, so it's exciting to celebrate you as we close out our year. Thank you for all you do."

Accepting the award was Dr. E'Lois Thomas, SEEL's chief administrative officer (CAO).

"It's an honor for SEEL to receive this most coveted award," said Thomas. "However, winning it must be attributed to the entire SEEL team, led by the tenacity of our president and CEO, Mr. Louis E. James. Under his leadership, SEEL is a top energy leader, and a highly sought after problem-solver for energy efficient and energy program management."

Other awards and honors bestowed on SEEL over the years have included the Andromeda Star of Energy Award, presented by Alliance to Save Energy. The award is among the highest national

honors for the dynamic implementation and management of energy conservation initiatives. SEEL has also been the recipient of the prestigious Prime Supplier Leadership Award, presented by Washington, D.C.-based Edison Electric Institute (EEI), and in 2015, MMSDC presented its first ever Luminary Award to SEEL. The award was created to recognize companies that demonstrate a sustained and successful commitment to mentoring other minority business enterprises (MBEs) in MBE-to-MBE relationships.

While the success of any company is predicated on the caliber of its employees, staff and management teams, the prosperity of SEEL begins with the vision, leadership and integrity of Louis E. James. In less than 10 years, James, who has more than four decades of proven experience in manufacturing, service, sales, personnel and supply chain management, has transformed SEEL into a national model and powerhouse for energy efficiency and management.

With a heavy focus on empowering underserved communities, as well as supporting non-profit organizations thriving to help improve the quality of life for individuals, the James-led SEEL is fully committed to empowering those most in need.

"Our commitment to energy efficiency is matched only by our drive and commitment to making the states we work in better places to live and work," said James. "SEEL is honored to be a part

of that movement because it's not a matter of doing what we can, but doing what we must, to create and sustain positive change within our community."

One such commitment that is near and dear to James is providing training and employment opportunities to local displaced workers in all areas of operation. Thus, SEEL has developed and facilitated a training module that converts former blue collar workers into skilled green collar advocates and consultants, all equipped with a skill set that prepares them not only to work for SEEL, but many other environmental conscience companies. The training program to date has created more than 200 green jobs, of which 70% are occupied by minorities.

As the SEEL executive leadership team and other stakeholders said goodbye to a very successful 2017, all look forward to an even better 2018. According to Thomas, in 2018, SEEL will have experienced 300% growth since the company began nine years ago. For clients, employees, communities and companies that have trusting relationships with SEEL, the company's continued growth is great news.

"We at SMS Group of Companies are very proud to work with Mr. Louis James and SEEL," said SMS Vice President Kellie McGoldrick. "At every level of their operation, they not only support other MBEs but continuously work to help support the upcoming talent that will become the MBEs of tomorrow."

Top 4 business ideas for 2018

By Velma Trayham

People ask me all the time what are the best business ideas to invest in. If I had to choose it would be Real Estate Investing. More and more people are seeking sound ways to improve their finances and make double digit returns. I'll let you in on a little secret: while building my Marketing consulting firm, I also created Multiple Income Streams, one being investing in real estate, beautifying the communities. I started small, got myself a good team of contractors to take care of the property renovations and from there, I started buying up distressed homes. I built a business model helping others by building wealth, income and communities.

However, if you're not big on real estate, in 2018 there's a definite move away from businesses employing full-time in-house staff towards using Online Virtual Assistants instead. If you've got typing skills, a

broadband connection and are good with figures and have organizational skills you can build your own business by taking on a pool of other PAs as you take on more and more clients. Best part: you can do this from home with little capital required.

A similarly successful model is Kids' Enrichment Activities. As parents get busier and schools get more competitive, demand for teaching kids different skills is hot, whether that's tutoring academic subjects, music, swimming, gymnastics, yoga, coding. If you have a skill that can be easily taught to young students, you might already have a profitable business in the making! Again, you can build your own mini-empire taking on other tutors/instructors and accessing students through a website that you've built. No good at IT?

If you've got a sense of fun, I highly recommend getting involved in Supplying Drones. Around 600,000 drones are expected to be in the air by 2018

for a variety of needs and there's plenty of money to be made here if you're first in line. Drones are being used at weddings and celebrations to capture stunning and unique images. Drones are also being used to monitor crops and for security needs. You can also sell drones to millennials for the ultimate "selfie drone" shot without the need for a selfie-stick. Best bit: lots of potential growth in this area!

Mobile Businesses have hit the forefront of the most profitable industries in 2018. Why? Because it's all about SOLVING A PROBLEM for customers. Some good examples include mobile auto repairs – mechanics that come to your house and fix your car at home. Mobile veterinary services – with a massive increase in pet ownership mobile vets are always busy. You don't even need to be a vet to start this business, just invite vets to register with your website while you do the marketing and take a percentage. Some of the best mobile businesses also have an associated



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app that helps customers contact them instantly.

Not sure if you've got what it takes to start a new business? This year can be your best year yet with the right mindset. I believe that the only person that holds you back is you. Begin 2018 strong and accepting that whatever life gave out to you in the past bears no relation to what life can be like starting from tomorrow.

Listen to your still, small voice and reach out for those Go Moments, the moments that are telling you to move yourself forward and kill the static

in your life. Through one of my "go moments," God told me to write down a life guide which is now available on Amazon. "When God Says GO: Turn Your Storms Into An Unshakable Relationship With God, Leaving It All Behind."

Gift yourself some time over the next few days to absorb my life guide and I guarantee you'll feel inspired to commit to change whether that be in your personal life or starting a new business. God has firmly got your back.

That's a partnership made in Heaven, right?