

Residential

Plumbers to People

Water Conservation Program



The Challenge

Many low-income, often elderly, customers get caught in a cycle of rising water bills they cannot afford to pay due to water leaks they cannot afford to repair. The cycle often results in the termination of water service for nonpayment by customers who are least able to help themselves.

This situation also wastes thousands of gallons of water as leaks remain unrepaired and often the quality of life for these customers is compromised.

The Solution

It is estimated that 25 percent of the population in San Antonio lives below the federal poverty line. Many of these residents may live in housing that is more than 50 years old.

Established in 1994, Plumbers to People was the very first formal SAWS conservation program. It remains unique nationwide.

The Conservation staff works in tandem with the City of San Antonio's Department of Human Services to qualify residents who want to participate in the Plumbers to People program.

The program is open to homeowners who are SAWS customers and whose income is less than 125 percent above the federal poverty line.

Once a customer has been qualified, SAWS is notified and arranges for a plumber to contact the customer directly for an appointment to make repairs.

Plumbers are under contract with SAWS and no costs for the repairs or the fixtures are passed on to the customer.

Plumbers to People Facts

Typical program repairs include, but are not limited to: bathtub/shower leaks, bathroom and kitchen sink leaks, toilet leaks, water heater leaks, water line leaks, hose bib leaks and slab leaks.

Since its inception, the Plumbers to People program has helped 8,383 customers make necessary repairs.

The average water savings for a repair under Plumbers to People is 59,000 gallons per year. To date, this program has resulted in water savings of more than 494 million gallons or 1,517 acre-feet per year.

On average, SAWS spends approximately \$225,000 per year for repairs made through the Plumbers to People program, making this one of our most cost-effective programs at an impressive \$80 per acre-foot for water saved. This program also effectively addresses affordability issues for our community.

Additional program benefits include a reduction in costs to SAWS associated with bill delinquency, disconnection and reconnection of water service.

Last but certainly not least, it helps increase the quality of life for many individuals in the community.