

Count on Us Kalamazoo! Energizing Equity Day

Host Partners: Black Enterprise, The Douglass Community Association



Count on us Kalamazoo!



Join us for a high-energy, family-friendly day of games, giveaways, and real tips to help you save money on your energy bill.

Come connect with your community, learn how to prepare your home for colder months, and discover resources that support energy equity and savings for all.



Free Entry
Community Giveaways
Energy-Saving Tips
Games & Food

Let's Energize
Kalamazoo—
Together

September 13, 2025
11am – 2pm
Douglass Community Association
1000 W. Paterson Street
Kalamazoo, MI 49007



Attendance: Approximately 50 customers

Survey Scores:

- 60% attendees completed a survey, rating the engagement 9.4 out of 10 (94%). Top reasons included access to information and positive environment. Special appreciation for hosting at The Douglass, desire to see more from us (smaller, more frequent).
- Top channels for driving event traffic were partner shared flyers (The Douglass) at 57%, Social Media at 20%
- Total of 40 breakout session participants provided raw feedback and frustrations surrounding affordability primarily. 67% unaware of resources and programs offered by Consumers Energy; 33% did not see Consumers Energy as an active presence in their community.

Count on Us Kalamazoo: Energizing Equity Day
Powered by Consumers Energy
September 13, 2025 | 11:00 a.m. – 2:00 p.m.
Douglas Community Association | Kalamazoo, MI

INTERNAL AGENDA

PROGRAM AGENDA IS TENTATIVE AND SUBJECT TO CHANGE

September, September 13, 2025

11:00 a.m. – 2:00 p.m.	Check-In
11:00 a.m. – 2:00 p.m.	Community Energy Festival & Open House
11:15 a.m. – 11:25 a.m.	Opening Remarks • <u>Derek Nofz, Community Affairs Area Manager, Consumers Energy</u> • <u>Alisa Gumbs, VP/Deputy Chief Content Officer, BLACK ENTERPRISE</u>
11:20 a.m. – 12:05 p.m.	Winter is Coming Prepare Your Home Now, and Your Bank Account Will Thank You Later <i>(30 min discussion, 15 min Q&A)</i> Want to save money on your utility bill? A few simple steps now can lead to lower hearing bills later. Discover easy ways to cut costs and keep more of your money where it belongs—in your pocket. Speakers: • Angela Thompkins, Consumers Energy Representative • Kaylen Humes, Community Homeworks • <u>Todd Holms, Kalamazoo Housing Neighborhood Services</u> Moderator: • <u>Alisa Gumbs, VP/Deputy Chief Content Officer, BLACK ENTERPRISE</u>
12:15 p.m. – 1:00 p.m.	Future of Energy Town Hall: Powering the Communities of Tomorrow <i>(45 min Q&A/ Audience Engagement with Industry Leaders)</i> Join this session to share your voice on future energy choices—and help shape an energy plan that keeps power reliable, costs manageable, and your community thriving. Speakers: • <u>Mary Balkema, Housing Director, Kalamazoo County Government</u> • <u>Justin Gish, Sustainability Planner, City of Kalamazoo</u> • <u>Stephanie Hoffman, Kalamazoo Climate Change Coalition</u> Facilitator: • <u>Jessica Woycehoski, Consumers Energy</u>
1:00 p.m. – 1:05 p.m.	Closing Remarks
1:00 p.m. – 2:00 p.m.	Lunch & Networking

Recap Video: <https://vimeo.com/1125652757/0c10e15251?fl=ls&fe=ec>

Breakout Videos:

1. Affordability (Panel 1) - <https://vimeo.com/1177302281/9c4640d712?share=copy&fl=sv&fe=ci>
2. Integrated Resource Plan (Panel 2) - <https://vimeo.com/1177305152/ff4cedae9b?fl=ip&fe=ec>

Event Promotion Plan		
Channel	Owner	Date
Local partner networks (Count on Us)	Consumers Energy, The Douglass Community Association, neighborhood associations, city officials, speakers	8/25 - 9/13
Consumers Energy website (IRP)	Consumers Energy	8/4
Facebook event	Black Enterprise, Douglass Community Association	9/9
MPSC outreach team email distribution	Consumers Energy	8/27
Brush the Block mural festival (CE partner) shared flyers	Consumers Energy	9/2 - 9/7
Facebook event created, paid event push (53 responded, yes) Nextdoor platform utilized	Consumers Energy	9/4
Local school districts shared flyer details with parents and students	Consumers Energy	9/8
2nd Mondays @11 - Tenants, Partners Shared flyers, verbally promoted	Douglass Community Association, CE joins 1st Monday in September	9/8
Email, 6 zip codes, 250% FPL *8.2k received, 30% opened	Consumers Energy	9/10
Diaper distributions (2 per week) - flyer shared	Douglass Community Association	9/9 and 9/11
Advanced targeted media story: Press Release summarizing Count on Us Kalamazoo progress YTD, highlight My Personalized Offerings, plug community event Energizing Equity Day (9/13) Local news stations (Matt J.) 1) Kalamazoo Times 2) Now Kalamazoo 3) La Voz Magazine 4) The TOUCH FM radio 5) Second Wave. Previously to WWMT-TV and WKZO radio	Consumers Energy	9/10

1. Key takeaways, overall, from this community engagement?

Deepening Community Connection and Presence

- The event was meaningful for both The Douglass staff and attendees, with many appreciating the opportunity to engage directly with Consumers Energy.
- Hands-on experiences like the VR booth and lineman demos helped educate and inspire younger attendees, introducing them to CE's role and career opportunities.
- Consumers Energy coworkers enjoyed the chance to "love on" the community—highlighting the warmth, curiosity, and energy of those they interacted with.
- Partnerships were strengthened, such as the potential collaboration with Goodwill's Workforce Development program.
- Community members were glad to see CE present and active in their neighborhoods, which helped humanize the company and build trust.
- Facility and partnership was great with The Douglass, Black Enterprise; facility was amazing, great match. CE partnership brought a lot of energy, and credibility to CE.

What Could Be Improved:

- Despite strong logistics and promotion, turnout was lower than expected. People knew about the event, but opportunity to better understand what prevented high turnout.
- The setup (e.g., booth-heavy layout and panel seating) may have hindered deeper two-way dialogue.
- Suggestions included more intimate formats like small group discussions or circular seating to foster equal and open conversations.
- One breakout or panel v. two, people lost interest
- Thinking more strategically about the date and timing to build from existing high turnout events

Listening to Concerns and Building Trust

- Affordability and rising energy bills were dominant concerns, even among those who had adopted efficiency programs.
- Customers expressed frustration with call center experiences—citing rude interactions and lack of helpful responses.
- There's a desire for more personalized support, especially among elderly customers and those facing complex issues like streetlight outages or furnace problems.

- Veterans voiced a need for targeted outreach and support, suggesting a gap that CE could address through dedicated programs or partnerships.

What Could Be Improved:

- Improve customer service responsiveness and tone, especially in the call center. Consider more inclusive and empathetic engagement strategies to rebuild trust and show genuine presence.
- Offer clearer pathways for issue resolution beyond the call center—such as direct contact with Community Affairs.
- Ensure follow-up on questions raised at the event (e.g., eligibility for Workforce Development programs).

What We Heard—and What to Work On

- **Affordability Concerns:** Many community members shared frustration about rising energy bills, even after participating in efficiency programs. Demonstrate that we understand this concern and are committed to clearer communication and continued support.
- **Customer Service Challenges:** Some attendees described negative experiences with our call center. We're taking this feedback seriously and exploring ways to improve responsiveness, empathy, and follow-through.
- **Desire for Direct Support:** Several people expressed a preference for working with local Community Affairs staff rather than calling in. We're looking at ways to make these connections easier and more accessible.
- **Veteran Outreach:** We heard from veterans who feel underserved. We're exploring opportunities to strengthen our outreach and align with veteran-focused programs and events.
- **Event Format Feedback:** While the booths and panel discussions were informative, some felt the setup didn't encourage deep dialogue. We're considering more interactive formats—like small group discussions or circular seating—to foster better conversations.

2. **How could we improve future engagements? Event logistics, communication, handling unexpected challenges, etc.**

Strengthen Trailer Logistics and On-Site Operations

Key Suggestions:

- **Energy Trailer Maintenance:** Include the trailer in regular fleet inspections to ensure safety and functionality (e.g., bolts, pins, hitches, awnings).

- **Cleanliness and Safety Supplies:** Equip the trailer with basic cleaning tools like a mop and broom to handle weather-related messes and avoid burdening hosts.
- **Simplify Setup:** Use visual aids like color-coded supports to streamline assembly and reduce confusion.

Expand and Refine Local Communication Strategies

- **Partner with Trusted Messengers:** Partner with respected community members, churches, and local organizations to boost turnout and build trust.
- **Tailored Messaging:** Provide handouts or talking points on high-interest topics like energy affordability, including examples of how CE is addressing cost concerns.
- **Smaller-Scale Consistency:** Host more frequent, localized events to maintain visibility and deepen relationships with the community.
- **Bring together community resources across multi-orgs;** integrate how the story is told locally. Next time, focus more on townhall style. Use social media as local feedback source, engagement via expanded feedback loop. Local media as a follow-up.
- **AT/Stacey relationship expansion and deepening relationships** as part of next phase

Enhance Engagement Format and Experience

- **Breakout Session Adjustments:** Consider reducing the number of sessions or combining with job fairs to attract broader interest and avoid attendee fatigue..
- **Feedback-Driven Design:** Use insights from this event (e.g., high satisfaction scores, low attendance) to balance quality with reach in future planning.
- **Douglass week in February (2/14)** an opportunity to engage together; lunch and learn on Wednesdays or youth and veteran engagements, Hussle night, etc.
- **Friday, 11/14,** event for Veterans; Veterans fair in Oct
- **Consumers Energy leadership presence** in the community meant a lot; keep building