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## Patriotic wood-burning stove serves two purposes

By Jessica Miller

PLAINFIELD, Iowa — The meaning behind the red, white and blue on what resembles a small storage shed in Brad Cole's yard is twofold.

First, the patriotic colors represent support for his son in Baghdad. The design also represents in a way what the small outdoor wood-burning furnace has given Cole's family - independence from high heating costs.

Cole installed the Central Boiler wood stove in November. He shut of the valve to his liquid propane tank and uses the heated water system with his water heater.

The farmer also sells the units produced in Northern Minnesota. He and his wife, Deb, began looking into alternative heating methods four years ago when natural gas prices crept up to staggering rates.

"Energy companies have way to much control," Cole said.

The outdoor wood burner was a way to lessen that hold, and he hopes to help other people free

themselves from high bills in the same fashion.

The stove works my heating water surrounding the fire box, which is contained in a water jacket. The hot water is then pumped into the home through small hoses. In Cole's case the hoses run through his furnace with an exchanger heating the area above the fan. When it drops below his thermostat setting the fans kick on blowing warm air throughout his home. The same method is used to heat his domestic water. The water that comes out of his faucets and the water from the wood furnace never mix.

The water is then pumped back to the furnace, where it is continually heated.

"The most efficient way to heat is with hot water we have known that for years," Cole said.

At the minimum people using the stoves could expect to save \$100 a month. Cole saves more by using dead wood found in fence rows, in timbers and ditches.

Cole is the first to say that

outdoor wood furnaces may not be for everyone. One must have access to wood and the ability to load the stove at least once a day in winter months.

Tom Lowe of Dysart has operated a similar stove for nine years. He bought his Heatmor stove because enjoyed chopping wood and wanted to find an alternative energy source. He liked the idea of the outdoor furnace because it eliminated burning inside and having to drag wood indoors.

Lowe also sells furnaces and said urban and rural residents have used them without problems. As long as people burn the proper firewood, he said the smoke burns fairly clean.

When Cole's stove heats the water to the proper temperature the (damper) on the fire door closes so that smoke coming from the stack is barely visible.

Both furnaces can be fitted to any type of heating system.

The smallest central boiler unit starts at \$4,700 and it heats up to 2,500 square

feet in 24 hours of burn time. The average cost for accessories is \$1,500.

Lowe said his units cost between \$4,500 and \$7,000, depending on the size.

With high heating fuel prices the units pay for themselves in as little as two years.

Central Boiler sold 5,800 units in 2003 an all-time high, according to Brian Brouillet a sales and technical assistant for Central Boiler.

"People are tired of high fuel prices," Brouillet said.