



Maine
Philanthropy
Center

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New MPC Report Highlights Philanthropic Response to Emergency Needs Last Winter - \$3.2 Million Given to Energy Assistance and Food Security

Portland, ME - June 4, 2009. With the mercury climbing higher every day, it becomes a little easier to forget the worry that many Mainers shared last fall when fuel prices were at record levels. Though fuel costs did drop before the real cold weather arrived, the worsening economic situation made it even tougher for many residents to meet their basic human needs last winter. In the face of this crisis, the philanthropic community stepped up to help households around the state.

A new report, *Philanthropic Investments in Energy and Food Security*, compiled by the Maine Philanthropy Center (MPC) tracks the charitable gifts made primarily by foundations during the fall and winter months last year. Altogether some \$3.2 million dollars were given to initiatives around the state to help with fuel assistance, home weatherization, and food security.

This report is the culmination of an initiative begun last fall by MPC that sought to provide grantmakers with a clearer picture of Maine's changing energy needs and an overview of programs aimed at increased fuel assistance, weatherization, and other conservation opportunities. Local initiatives from around the state where philanthropy participates as a partner in addressing energy issues were highlighted, and investment opportunities for funders to consider in order to fulfill their mission and have a greater impact – whether individually or collectively, locally or statewide, short- or longer-term – were identified.

Foundation grants have long been part of the funding that supplements federal and state allocations for emergency needs, but there had never been an assessment of its scope or impact. The high cost of heating fuel last fall was the perfect catalyst for this evaluation. This is the first time that the philanthropic response to such an issue has been measured and it creates a baseline for future reference. The process brought together numerous stakeholders involved in energy-related issues and the knowledge shared will hopefully lead to better coordination of information, leadership and resources, as well as improved public private partnerships and more effective strategies for addressing Maine's long term energy needs.

Some highlights of the report:

- ***Of the \$3.2 million in funds raised and grants awarded, \$2,487,380 went to energy-related programs while \$713,535 went to food security.*** The three largest recipients of the \$1.9 million in emergency fuel assistance funding were Keep ME Warm with \$329,085, Project Heat with \$165,135, and Share the Warmth with \$100,840. The remaining \$1.3 million for energy supported a wide range of other regional and community funds.
- ***Keep ME Warm Fuel and Food Campaign*** Although additional federal dollars were received last winter to expand LIHEAP (Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program) to help more low-income families, philanthropic contributions were critical in meeting the emergency needs of vulnerable families who failed to meet federal income guidelines.
- ***Feed ME Campaign*** funds were distributed through the United Ways to mostly small, rural, volunteer-driven food pantries with limited capacity for fundraising and grant writing, providing more than one million pounds of food for at-risk individuals and families.
- ***Energy Conservation Education Program*** Funded by MaineHousing, the University of Maine's Cooperative Extension program coordinated the distribution of 2,000 weatherization kits in October 2008. Demand well exceeded the supply and at least 1,000 more kits could have been used.
- ***Maine HEARTH – Home Energy Aid & Response Team Help*** With help from the State Planning Office, the Maine Commission for Community Service secured a \$92,500 grant from Hands On Network to support community-based efforts in each of Maine's sixteen counties through 2011.
- ***Ocean Energy Cluster Development in Maine*** The Maine Technology Institute made a \$50,000 award in support of the global Ocean Energy Conference to be held in Rockport in June 2009 (www.energyocean.com/2009/).
- ***Will Work for Heat Opportunity Maine*** received philanthropic support to produce a benchmark report entitled *Green Jobs, Green Savings: Developing Maine's Economy by Securing Our Energy Future*. Copies of the report are available through the organization's website, www.opportunitymaine.org.

MPC's report was supported by the Sam L. Cohen Foundation and the JTG Foundation, and the complete report can be downloaded from www.mainephilanthropy.org.

About the Maine Philanthropy Center -- Founded in 1995, the Maine Philanthropy Center is a statewide association of grantmakers – small and large private foundations, community foundations, public foundations, corporate giving programs, family foundations and philanthropic individuals – working together to promote philanthropy and to increase its impact in Maine.