

Turning Up the Heat on Maine's Energy Crisis:

Philanthropy's Role in Creating Local Solutions

September 29, 2008

Snapshots of Local Initiatives

- ◆ **York County** – Martha Muldoon, *Senior VP*, Kennebunk Savings Bank, 104 Main Street, Kennebunk, ME 04043 (207) 985-4903 x2323 Martha.Muldoon@kennebunksavings.com

United Way of York County (UWYC), Kennebunk Savings Bank and the Kennebunk Savings Bank Foundation have been in discussion for over a year on ways we can establish a network of organizations -- large and small, well organized and more informal, government funded and non-governmental groups -- doing good work to 'Keep York County Warm'. We believe that for York County, United Way is a well positioned overarching organization that is able to function not only as a clearinghouse of information, but as a facilitator and agent for change. UWYC has been very involved with other United Ways across the state, as well as with State government, in addressing the anticipated needs. This month UWYC convened a meeting of various provider organizations to exchange information about available resources, identify potential gaps in service and explore ways of working together for maximum effectiveness.

In October, we are planning a meeting with business leaders and other funders to share information about what we are calling the "Keeping York County Warm Network." This meeting will be designed as an information resource for funders who want to help but don't necessarily know how best to deploy their limited funds. As envisioned, the United Way either will serve as an information source to point to possible organizations to be considered for support or act as a conduit for funds (i.e. United Way would administer a donation based upon a given funder's desires). We see this as a creative way for business leaders and other funders to exchange ideas and employ best practices in meeting the needs of vulnerable populations.

- ◆ **Southern Mid Coast Region** – Bill Brilliant, *Customer Service Manager*, Downeast Energy, 18 Spring Street Brunswick, ME 04011 (207) 729-9921 bbrilliant@downeastenergy.com

In addition to making very significant charitable contributions to fuel funds throughout Maine, Downeast Energy is playing a leadership role in the Mid Coast Maine Preparing for Winter Action Program. Convened by United Way of Mid Coast Maine to build upon good work being done by many local groups, this initiative consists of four action teams: Making Homes More Energy Efficient; Ensuring the Safety of Vulnerable Neighbors; Responding to Emergencies; and, Gathering and Disseminating Information. Downeast's Bill Brilliant, a United Way volunteer, serves on the leadership council for the overall effort and is chairing the action team working to recruit and train volunteers to make homes more energy efficient.

- ◆ **Lincoln County** – Mary Kate Reny, *Operations Manager*, Renys Department Stores / Renys Charitable Foundation, 731 Route 1, Newcastle, ME 04553 (207) 563-3177 mkreny@renys.com

The Lincoln County Energy Task Force is a small group of individuals in the Damariscotta area who represent the local fuel assistance program, area clergy, businesses, the Community Housing Improvement Project (CHIP) and energy efficiency experts. The Task Force's purpose is to make sure that people in Lincoln County are kept warm this winter. Our intent is to maximize the effect and efficiency of our individual efforts by communicating with each other and networking our programs and funds. We continue to address the parallel tracks of best winterization practices, communication outreach to all community members, and emergency response.

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- ◆ **Western Maine** – Rev. Susan Crane, *Coordinator*, Franklin County Ecumenical Heating Fund, P.O. Box 147, Farmington, ME 04938 (207) 778-2163 hmbcmail@verizon.net

The Franklin County Ecumenical Heating Fund is now in its fifth season of helping keep our neighbors warm. Begun as a way for churches to pool resources and streamline the process of seeking fuel assistance, ECU HEAT now includes individuals, businesses, service organizations and philanthropies among its contributors. There are no income requirements, so the fund helps many who are just-over-income for LIHEAP. ECU HEAT is administered by Western Maine Community Action (WMCA), whose entitlement specialists may authorize fuel deliveries of 50-100 gallons for any Franklin County resident in need once they have utilized any federal or state funds for which that household may be eligible. Donations are received and acknowledged under the auspices of FAEM (Farmington Area Ecumenical Ministry), a not-for-profit corporation under the State of Maine. FAEM also operates a Food Closet and a Security Deposit Loan Fund, and is currently applying to the I.R.S. for 501(c) 3 status. ECU HEAT also has partnered with WMCA on a pilot project to conduct energy audits and to offer both grants and low-interest loans to help several households become more energy efficient.

- ◆ **Kennebec Valley** – Gradette Hatala, *Grants Administrator*, William and Joan Alford Foundation, Dexter Enterprises, Inc., Two Monument Square, Portland, ME 04101 (207) 828-7999 ghatala@dexterenterprisesinc.com

The William and Joan Alford Foundation recently made a \$100,000 grant to the Kennebec Valley Community Action Program for weatherization and emergency fuel assistance in the greater Waterville area. From KVCAP, we learned about the critical shortage of funds for weatherization. Yet, for every dollar spent on weatherizing a home, the average energy savings is \$7.80. Under the grant, 15 LIHEAP-eligible homeowners will receive comprehensive weatherization services, up to a value of \$5,000 each, for a long-term reduction in their heating expenses. Two of the recipients, large families with older furnaces and high energy consumption, will receive wood pellet stoves. The grant will also provide emergency heating assistance for approximately 35 families.

- ◆ **Eastern Maine** – Kathy Crossman, *VP – Community Impact*, United Way of Eastern Maine, 24 Springer Drive, Suite 201, Bangor, ME 04401 (207) 941-2800 x203 kathyc@unitedwayem.org

The Eastern Maine Funders, a group comprised of representatives of private, family, corporate foundations, along with the Maine Community Foundation and United Way, launched its *Energy Initiative* in November 2005. The group raised \$550,000, providing emergency fuel assistance to over 900 low-income families and seniors in the five-county region and weatherizing 90 homes through our region's three Community Action Agencies. In addition, 60 homes received heating system cleanings and tune-ups through a donation from Webber Energy, with the resulting system repairs funded by the *Energy Initiative*.

Eastern Maine Funders repeated its effort during the winter of 2007-08, raising more than \$500,000 from 16 different funding sources. Approximately 70% of the donations were targeted for home weatherization, with the balance going to emergency fuel assistance and heating system repairs. In-kind donations of furnace tune-ups were received from Webber Energy, R.H. Foster Energy and Dead River Company. As a result of additional funds becoming available this fall, the *Energy Initiative* has incorporated a "Neighbors Helping Neighbors" small grant fund to engage and mobilize community-based teams in efforts to assist neighbors who are most at risk from the challenges caused by high fuel prices this coming winter.

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- ◆ **Aroostook County** – Claudia Stevens, *Executive Director*, United Way of Aroostook, 480 Main Street, 3rd Floor, Presque Isle, ME 04769 (207) 764-5197 acunited@mfj.net

The United Way of Aroostook, working in collaboration with Aroostook County Action Program (ACAP) and other providers, has sponsored a series of meetings in three different parts of the County to exchange information about anticipated needs in the coming winter, as well as available State, municipal and nonprofit resources. Together with ACAP, Fisher Charitable Foundation and Presque Isle Rotary Club, the United Way is looking to establish a pellet stove initiative to provide energy efficient heating systems for ten low-income families at a cost of approximately \$4,750 per system (includes stove, hearth pad, vacuum and 5 tons of pellets).