



NLIEC NEWS, November 28, 2008

Within the Energy Assistance Community ...

Portland General Electric Pledges \$15,000 to Support NEUAC 2009

Portland General Electric has opened the sponsorship drive for the 2009 National Energy and Utility Conference with a \$15,000 gift to the National Low Income Energy Consortium and the National Fuel Funds Network. With the donation, the host-city utility becomes a Supporting Conference Sponsor for the event to be held June 15-17, 2009, at the DoubleTree Hotel Portland-Lloyd Center in Portland, OR.

In a special feature, conference attendees will have the opportunity to experience the problems and difficulties faced by many of the most vulnerable members of our society first-hand when they participate in a poverty simulation experience. Some conference goers will be asked to assume the roles of people in need while others will take on the roles of those providing assistance, in an exercise designed to increase participants' awareness.

"This simulation will give those taking part a real insight into the problems facing many people," said George Coling, NFFN's executive director. "It will help them understand the stresses of these difficult situations." More than 700 people attended the National Energy and Utility Affordability Conference last June in Denver. It marked the first time that NLIEC and NFFN combined their conferences, and attendees declared it a resounding success. For more information about NEUAC 2009, including sponsorship opportunities, visit the conference website: www.neuac.org.

Wish List — Laptops Needed

The National Low Income Energy Consortium and the National Fuel Funds Network, its partner in the National Energy and Utility Affordability Conference, are seeking the in-kind donation of eight laptop computers. The contribution would eliminate rental costs and administrative issues with loaned computers used for presentations at NEUAC. Donated computers need to have an operating system capable of running PowerPoint and at least one USB port for flash/thumb drives. The value of the laptops and the cost of shipping is tax-deductible, since both organizations are 501(c)(3) non-profits. NLIEC and NFFN welcomes

any number of computers to meet this need. For more information, contact NLIIEC Executive Director David Fox, 703.642.9070 (dfox@nliec.org) or NFFN Executive Director George Coling, 202.824.0660 (coling@nationalfuelfunds.org).

· **BGE Expo Helps Strapped Ratepayers Get Aid**

Nearly 100 residents from southern Anne Arundel County turned to Baltimore Gas and Electric Co. November 7, looking for help with their energy bills as the cold weather settled into the region. BGE conducted an energy-assistance expo to offer grants to limited-income customers as they struggle to cope with a tough economic landscape. And officials have an unprecedented amount of help to dole out through various state and federal programs. The expo was held at the Our Lady of Perpetual Help Church, Edgewater. Eligible attendees completed applications with the Office of Home Energy Programs, a year-round program through the Maryland Department of Human Resources that helps people pay utility bills, minimize heating crises and make energy more affordable. — *Annapolis (MD) Capital*, November 10, 2008

Read more at:

http://www.istockanalyst.com/article/viewiStockNews+articleid_2789714.html

· **Turning up the Oregon HEAT**

In Oregon HEAT's earliest days in 1989, Lake Oswego's Colleen Bennett was thrilled when the organization raised \$20,000. "I thought we did so well," said Bennett, one of HEAT's founders and member of its board of directors. These days, Oregon HEAT (Home Energy Assistance Team) is doing infinitely better when it comes to fundraising. Last year the organization raised \$1.4 million for people needing financial assistance with their home heating bills. While that is quite an impressive gain, it unfortunately does not come anywhere close to meeting the need for help in 2008, which has risen dramatically. — *LPortland (OR) Lake Oswego Review*, November 13, 2008

Read more at:

http://www.lakeoswegoreview.com/news/story.php?story_id=12265344116948100

In the States ...

· **New York Uses Lawsuit Funds for Energy-Efficiency Program**

New York unveiled a new energy-efficiency program for low-income families that will be bankrolled with funds the state collected as part of an air-pollution suit against one of the United States' largest utilities. The \$1.9-million pilot program, which was announced by New York Attorney General Andrew Cuomo, is designed to channel financial assistance to families who heat their homes with heating oil.

Specifically, the program will help families offset the costs of installing high-efficiency furnaces, steam boilers and weatherization features such as insulation and weatherstripping, Cuomo said. The \$1.9 million New York is committing to the program stems from a \$5-billion settlement that a host of states and the federal government reached earlier this year in a suit against American Electric Power. The US Environmental Protection Agency, the Department

of Justice and the states sued AEP for violating the federal New Source Review program, a provision of the Clean Air Act that requires utilities to install state-of-the-art pollution controls when undertaking certain modifications to their facilities. The settlement requires AEP to sharply reduce sulfur dioxide and nitrogen oxide emissions from 16 coal-fired power plants in five states.

It also requires the company to fund environmental projects in several states, including New York. AEP denies that it violated the NSR program, saying it only agreed to settle the lawsuit to avoid the financial risk of an adverse court verdict. — *Platts Commodity News*, November 10, 2008

· **50,000 Extra N.J. Households May Get Help to Heat Homes**

An extra 50,000 New Jersey households are expected to receive home heating aid this winter as the state makes more people eligible for help, officials said. As part of Gov. Jon Corzine's economic stimulus plans, the state is making available an additional \$87.8 million to residents who cannot afford to heat their homes. About \$77.8 million is extra federal funding for the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP), while another \$10 million is state funding for the NJ SHARES program. The state also is expanding eligibility for LIHEAP by raising the income limit to qualify from 175 percent to 225 percent of the Federal Poverty Level, which is \$47,700 for a family of four. That means about 245,000 families will be served this year, Community Affairs Commissioner Joseph Doria said. — *Newark (NJ) Star-Ledger*, November 12, 2008

Read more at:

http://www.nj.com/news/index.ssf/2008/11/50000_extra_nj_households_may.html

[http://www.philly.com/philly/wires/ap/news/state/new_jersey/](http://www.philly.com/philly/wires/ap/news/state/new_jersey/20081112_ap_njhomeheatingprogramgetsfundingboost.html)

[20081112_ap_njhomeheatingprogramgetsfundingboost.html](http://www.philly.com/philly/wires/ap/news/state/new_jersey/20081112_ap_njhomeheatingprogramgetsfundingboost.html)

<http://www.mycentraljersey.com/article/20081112/NEWS/811120352>

· **Former Utility Regulator Urges Nevada Commission Not to Cut Energy Assistance**

The state consumer advocate brought in a former Nevada utility regulator to persuade a state commission to retain \$1 million from a discontinued program, rather than cut the budget for energy assistance for low-income residents. Economist Carl Linvill, formerly a member of the Public Utilities Commission and energy adviser to Gov. Kenny Guinn, urged the commission to keep the money in the budget for improving energy efficiency of homes of low-income families.

“The most important reason to restore the full low-income budget is the impact of the recession and housing crisis on Southern Nevada,” Linvill said in written testimony. Consumer advocate Eric Witkoski wants the money used to help low-income residents weatherize their homes by sealing cracks that leak air, improving insulation and installing solar screens to reduce the sun's heat in the summer. — *Las Vegas (NV) Review-Journal*, November 25, 2008

Read more at:

http://www.lvrj.com/news/breaking_news/35098904.html

In the News ...

· **Hardship Turns Off Lights for Thousands of SMUD Customers**

Long job lines and slim bottom lines aren't the only signs of these dour financial times. Think power lines. As the currency goes, so go the currents that keep refrigerators humming, stoves cooking and rooms alight in households struggling to get by. The Sacramento Municipal Utility District flipped off the switch on 32,000 households and businesses who failed to pay their bills last year, and it's on track to pull the plug on as many customers this year. That's a 33 percent increase in disconnections compared with 2006 likely due to economic hardship rather than harsher weather or other factors that push consumers to use more electricity than they can afford. — *Sacramento (CA) Bee*, November 1, 2008

Read more at:

<http://www.sacbee.com/101/story/1361934.html>

· **More Utility Bills Go Unpaid**

Utilities are becoming more aggressive about collecting money from delinquent customers, leading to a surge in service shutdowns just as economic woes are pushing up the number of households falling behind on bills. The utilities say they are under pressure to clean out accounts that are weighing down their books at a time when their stocks are being hammered and earnings growth has slowed. Meanwhile, the increasing number of homes left without power -- which could rise as economic pain deepens -- is beginning to worry some consumer advocates and regulators. — *Wall Street Journal*, November 3, 2008

Read more at:

http://online.wsj.com/article/SB122567355463991711.html?mod=googlenews_wsj

· **Columbia Gas of Virginia Files to Reduce Natural Gas Costs Below Last Winter's Level**

Columbia Gas of Virginia (Columbia) has filed to reduce customer bills by 8.5% effective November 26. When approved, this filing means Columbia customers will enter this winter paying 2.5% less than they did last year and 25.1% less than in August. This filing reflects a continuing decline in natural gas prices. The decline means a typical residential customer will have their total monthly bill decrease from a current level of \$172.32 to \$157.66. This is based on a 100 Ccf monthly seasonal winter usage. — *Alleghany County (VA) Alleghany Journal*, November 3, 2008

Read more at:

http://www.rockbridgeweekly.com/rw_article.php?ndx=12396

· **Hundreds in Sullivan County, NY, Apply for Aid to Help Pay Heating Bills**

Lab assistant Susan Connors says she makes \$300 a week, but her last oil drop was \$900 and she's still paying off fuel bills from last year. So when she came to the Sullivan County social services office in Liberty at noon Monday to apply for heating assistance, she wasn't

surprised to find the line out the door.

“The more people I talk to, the more people say they are hurting,” said Connors, who lives in a mobile home in Monticello. “I am 49 years old and I have never seen it this bad.” Although county officials urged residents to wait to apply unless under an emergency, or do so later this month at town halls, they said Monday’s turnout proved to be the largest single day total for applications in recent memory. — *Middletown (NY) Times Herald-Record*, November 4, 2008

Read more at:

<http://www.recordonline.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20081104/NEWS/811040314>

· **Project Warmth Needs Grow With Economic Woes**

The bad economy is expected to make a cold winter more wretched this year as more people in the Kansas City area need help to heat their homes. Caring individuals can begin helping those in need on Saturday when the annual Project Warmth campaign begins with its areawide coat and blanket drive. Since Project Warmth started in 1992, more than 2,000 tons of food, clothing and blankets and more than \$7.8 million have been collected. The cash donations are managed by the Greater Kansas City Community Foundation and distributed by the Mid America Assistance Coalition and the Salvation Army to help with utility bills, rent and weatherization. The need is great this year. — *Kansas City (MO) Star*, November 6, 2008

Read more at:

<http://www.kansascity.com/news/local/story/879037.html>

· **Seniors Say They’re Cutting Back on Expenses, Worried About Heating**

Senior citizens say they’re concerned about the rising cost of energy and are cutting back on expenses. “I never have enough money one month to the next,” said Mattie Clay, 77. Clay, a retired teacher, said she’s worried about the cost of heating her house-trailer this winter. According to the Public Service Commission, the price of natural gas will increase about 17 percent for the heating season. “It was not too expensive last year but this year is going to be much colder,” Clay said. Gov. Steve Beshear has announced additional funding for the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program, which provides emergency funding and subsidies to qualified families. — *Frankfort (KY) State-Journal*, November 7, 2008

Read more at:

<http://www.state-journal.com/news/article/4462573>

· **Huge Need for Energy Aid Means Lines at County Offices**

Be patient. Be persistent. That’s the advice from Allegheny County to residents who want to apply for grants of up to \$800 under the Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program, called LIHEAP. “The response this year has been overwhelming,” said Sally Petrilli of the Pennsylvania county’s Department of Human Services. “There are people standing in line when our offices in Braddock, McKeesport and Natrona Heights open at 8:30 a.m. “We’ve been so busy we’ve had to ask some people who come to those offices to return the next day,” Mrs. Petrilli said. — *Pittsburgh (PA) Post-Gazette*, November 13, 2008

Read more at:

<http://www.post-gazette.com/pg/08318/927535-68.stm>

· **Residents Respond to Energy Aid Plea**

When Leominster, Massachusetts, Mayor Dean J. Mazzarella talks, people listen. In response to his plea to each city resident to contribute \$1 to an energy assistance fund, “someone came in here this morning after working the night shift to make a \$25 donation,” Mazzarella said while seated in his office at City Hall. Another man came in to the mayor’s office later yesterday morning with a \$100 donation. The plea — posted on the city’s website late last week — came after \$16,000 in funding for energy assistance, set aside by the city for this year’s heating season, had been expended. If each of the city’s 43,000 residents would donate \$1, it would mean a hefty boost to the fund. “Every little bit helps,” Mazzarella said. — *Worcester (MA) Telegram & Gazette*, November 13, 2008

Read more at:

<http://www.telegram.com/article/20081113/NEWS/811130682/1006/NEWS07>

· **PUC Weighs \$300,000 Settlement with PPL over Dauphin County Termination, Directs Money to Support Low-Income Program**

The Pennsylvania Public Utility Commission has issued a settlement with PPL Electric Corp. for comment that includes a \$300,000 contribution to a low-income program and ends an informal investigation into an electric termination that preceded a fatal fire in Steelton, Dauphin County. The Commission voted 5-0 to accept comments on the settlement agreement, which includes a \$300,000 contribution to PPL’s Operation Help, which provides emergency financial aid to pay heating bills for families with financial hardships. Under the proposed settlement, the company may not recover the contribution from ratepayers.

On November 7, 2007, the PUC’s independent Prosecutory Staff initiated an informal investigation into PPL’s termination of electric service to the Ryan Donachy family of Steelton. PPL terminated service to the residence on November 2, 2007. A fire at the home the following day was allegedly started by a lit candle that touched a wall. Two Donachy children died in the fire. — *Pennsylvania PUC news release*, November 13, 2008

Read more at:

http://www.puc.state.pa.us/General/press_releases/Press_Releases.aspx?ShowPR=2132

· **Bad Economy, Expanded Eligibility Swell LIHEAP Ranks**

Record numbers of Northeast Pennsylvanians are lining up to seek winter heating assistance. “It’s really kind of an onslaught of people,” said Gene Brady, executive director of the Luzerne County Commission on Economic Opportunity, which processes Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program grants for residents of Luzerne and Wyoming counties. “This will probably be our busiest year ever,” said Fred Lettieri, executive director of the Scranton-Lackawanna Human Development Agency. The upswing reflects liberalized eligibility for the program, rising unemployment and the economic crisis. — *Scranton (PA) Times Tribune*,

November 15, 2008

Read more at:

http://www.thetimes-tribune.com/articles/2008/11/15/news/sc_times_trib.20081115.a.pg1.tt15liheap_s1.2092120_top2.txt

· **More Turn to LEAP for Help**

The Boulder (Colorado) County Low-income Energy Assistance Program has seen 35 percent more applications for emergency assistance than at this time last year. Emergency requests are from those who need immediate assistance with their heating bill because of disconnect notices.

“Numbers are up, and they are staying up,” said Teresa Kullen, Boulder County LEAP representative. Requests for standard LEAP assistance also are up 20 percent in Boulder County, from 1,032 applications this time last year to 1,226 this year. — *Longmont (CO) Times Call*, November 22, 2008

Read more at:

http://www.timescall.com/news_story.asp?ID=12335

· **Cold Pushes Woman to Sell Off**

Facing a winter without a reliable source of heat was the last straw for Lisa Yeager. The disabled 53-year-old mother of two grown children went on the Internet last weekend and posted an ad. She would sell nearly everything in her Silver Spring Twp. mobile home -- her stove, kitchen table and even her picture frames and DVDs -- on Thanksgiving weekend so she could move into her van, the ad said. It was her best option, she figured. — *Harrisburg (PA) Patriot-News*, November 26, 2008

Read more at:

<http://www.pennlive.com/news/patriotnews/index.ssf?/base/news/1227669913123520.xml&coll=1>

Editorials ...

· **LIHEAP Leftovers: There Won't Be Any**

When Congress approved an “emergency” \$5.1 billion in home heating assistance (LIHEAP) in September, including \$34.1 million for New Hampshire, the average price of home heating oil was \$3.67 a gallon and expected to rise. This week, it is a dollar per gallon less than that. Home heating oil costs less this winter than last.

What is New Hampshire going to do with all that extra cash from Washington? Why, spend it, of course. Applications for home heating assistance are up 27 percent this year in New Hampshire, says Celeste Lovett, fuel assistance program manager at the state Office of Energy and Planning. According to the state, that means there is an increased need for home heating aid. It doesn't mean that at all. — *Manchester (NH) Union Leader*, November 26,

2008

Read more at:

<http://www.unionleader.com/article.aspx?headline=LIHEAP+leftovers%3A+There+won't+be+any&articleId=ce01af49-01a5-41d8-926b-51c490497afd>

Commentaries ...

· Warming Hearts and Homes

Dallas and Randi Gigrich are feeling the heat in the best way. In the two weeks since I wrote about their charity, which donates unused heating oil to needy families, they have been overwhelmed with calls from people wanting to help — and those needing it. On Wednesday, they delivered 1,200 gallons of donated oil to nine families. That same day, a man walked into Gigrich's Lake Forest Park office and asked for information about his charity, Home Energy Assistance Team, also known as H.E.A.T. The man said he was meeting with his family this holiday weekend, and wanted to suggest they make a donation. Bring it on, the Gigriches say. It's only going to get colder. — Nicole Brodeur in the *Seattle Times*, November 28, 2008

Read more at:

http://seattletimes.nwsourc.com/html/nicolebrodeur/2008444777_brodeur28m.html

NLIEC News ©2008. ***NLIEC News* is published monthly by the National Low Income Energy Consortium. It is provided free upon request to the Board of Directors and associate members of the NLIEC, its supporters, and individuals interested in low-income energy assistance issues. Some of the links to published news releases, news stories, editorials and opinion columns cited in the *NLIEC News* may not be active at the time the newsletter is distributed. Some of the linked publications may require free or paid subscriptions in order to view linked items. To subscribe to the *NLIEC News*, send an e-mail request to dfox@nliec.org <<mailto:dfox@nliec.org>> . If you do not wish to receive the publication in the future, send a message to the same address with the word "unsubscribe" in the subject line.**

**National Low Income Energy Consortium
6324 Beryl Road, Alexandria, VA 22312
Phone 703-642-9070 Fax 703-916-7850**

**Chair — Cindy Datig, Dollar Energy Fund
Vice Chair — Ken Thiry, Wisconsin Public Service Corp.
Secretary — Ron Grosse, Individual Member
Treasurer — Jim Jacob, New Jersey SHARES
Executive Director — David Fox**