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From: Matulka, Mari <Mari_Matulka@mudnebr.com>

National Fuel Funds Network

1010 Vermont Ave., NW, #718
Washington, DC 20005
202 824-0638 (fax), 202 824-0660 (phone)
<mailto:info@nationalfuelfunds.org> <<http://www.nationalfuelfunds.org>>
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Energy Safety Net Bulletin #145

Demand for energy assistance continues to increase. News stories from across the country continue to report on long lines and large crowds applying for federal energy assistance, with many people seeking help for the first time.

In Illinois, 1,800 people waited in line for hours at the annual Energy Assistance Fair at Thornton Township Hall in South Holland. The turnout was more than five times larger than last year's attendance of about 350 people.

In Tuscaloosa, AL, hundreds of people gathered at the Community Services Programs office seeking aid. According to reports, people began lining up at 3 a.m. and police were called to help control the crowd at 9 a.m.

In Kansas City, MO, the line at the United Community Service Action Center one morning wound through the parking lot and half way down the street as hundreds of people wait to apply for assistance. Agency officials said they would see about 4,000 people a week.

The NFFN is interested in what is going on in your area. We are still seeking photos of long lines or crowded waiting rooms that we can use during our lobbying efforts on NFFN's LIHEAP Action Day. Please email your photos to <<http://www.info@nationalfuelfunds.org>> and/or send us a dispatch reporting on the situation in your area.

NFFN's LIHEAP Action Day, February 10, 2010

· Registration remains open and hotel rooms are still available for the NFFN's LIHEAP Action Day, February 10, 2010. LIHEAP Action Day is the major grassroots lobbying effort on behalf of the federal energy assistance program.

Last year almost 200 NFFN members and LIHEAP supporters visited Capitol Hill and met with Congressional delegations to express their support for the program. For more information or to register visit the NFFN website at <<http://www.nationalfuelfunds.org>>. And please register as soon as possible to assist the Network in planning for the event.

Congratulations

· To NFFN Board Chairperson Sue Montgomery Corey on her victory over the incumbent

in the Minerva, NY Supervisor election in November. Ms. Montgomery Corey, who is the Essex County Democratic Party Chair, is also president of the Community Power Network of New York State.

Fuel Fund Actions

- The Heat and Warmth Fund (THAW) raised roughly \$100,000 from its 9th annual “Night of the Warm Hearts” fund raiser at the MotorCity Casino Hotel. The event featured both live and silent auctions, entertainment and dinner.
- Delays in receiving \$4.75 million in state funds have resulted in Operation Fuel postponing the start of its emergency energy program until January. Pat Wrice, executive director of Operation Fuel, said the funds were approved by the state legislature earlier this year but the organization is awaiting approval from the Office of Policy Management.

Utility Actions

- E.ON U.S., the parent company of Louisville Gas and Electric Company and Kentucky Utilities Company, has increased its match for customer donations to the Community Winterhelp and WinterCare Energy Assistance programs from 25 cents to \$1. Community Winterhelp is affiliated with Louisville Gas and Electric and WinterCare is affiliated with Kentucky Utilities. Since 1983 the programs have raised more than \$6 million.
- Constellation Energy has contributed \$1 million to the Baltimore Community Fund to establish the Baltimore Gas and Electric Company Heating System Fund, which will provide energy efficient furnaces to qualifying limited-income customers in need of heating system replacement. The program was scheduled to begin November 1 and will be open to customers whose income level meets the qualifying level for the state’s weatherization program.
- Peoples Gas, ComEd, and CEDA are conducting a series of Energy Assistance Fairs in November and December to inform Chicago residents about available energy assistance programs. The events began on Nov. 7 and will end on Dec. 12. Peoples Gas also hosted its sixth annual Team H.E.A.T. (Home Energy Assistance Together) community service winterization project on Nov. 7. More than 75 Peoples Gas employees along with volunteers and public schools students weatherized homes in the Englewood community.
- Louisville Gas and Electric has opened an internet portal that enables organizations that provide energy assistance to look up a household’s utility bill and instantly credit funds to the overdue account. By using the new portal, organizations speed up the assistance process by eliminating what could be a lengthy telephone verification process. A utility spokesman said more than 20 Louisville area organizations and more than 250 in the Kentucky Utility Company’s service area are authorized to use the portal.
- Piedmont Natural Gas has donated an additional \$50,000 to its Share the Warmth

Round Up initiative, a program through which the utility's customers can round up their monthly utility bill to the nearest dollar with the additional money going to the energy assistance program. The North Carolina utility began the program in July with a \$100,000 donation. In recognition of the program, the Mayors of Greensboro, High Point and Winston-Salem designated October 28 as Piedmont Natural Gas "Share the Warmth Round Up Day."

- Dominion has made a second \$1 million contribution to its EnergyShare assistance program that provides crisis assistance to customers who have exhausted eligibility for other forms of aid. Dominion gave \$1 million to the program in October.

Congressional Actions

- The Continuing Resolution funding LIHEAP and many other government programs is scheduled to expire December 18. All indications are that the Congress will pass an additional Continuing Resolution to fund these program until next year when Congress will either pass the pending appropriations bills or will combine all of the funding legislation into a single omnibus spending bill. The resolution contains \$5.1 billion for LIHEAP, \$4.5 billion of which is base funding and \$593 million is emergency contingency funds.
- The Director of the White House Office of Energy and Climate Change Policy Carol Browner has said that climate change legislation won't be acted on by the Congress until after the New Year. Speaking at *The Carbon Economy*, an conference sponsored by the Economist on November 18, Ms. Browner said action on the bills would not be completed this year because of the amount of time that has been consumed by the debate over health care reform. Earlier this month, the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee approved a climate control bill sponsored by Committee Chair Senator Barbara Boxer and Senator John Kerry. The bill was passed despite a boycott by the committee's Republican members, who wanted to delay a vote until the bill was rated by the Environmental Protection Agency. The House passed climate control legislation earlier this year, and the House version would have to be combined with the Senate bill before any final action could be taken.

Reports and Studies

- Disconnections of low income customers in California have increase by 19 percent over last year, according to a report by the California Public Utilities Commission's Division of Ratepayer Advocates. The report found that while low income customers have traditionally suffered more disconnections than non low income customers the recent disparity is the worst in three years. The complete report can be viewed at <http://www.dra.ca.gov/NR/rdonlyres/2A0C5457-56FC-4821-8C4D-457F4CF204D1/0/20091119_DRADisconnectionstatusreport.pdf> .

Webinars and Forums

- The Coalition on Human Needs is conducting a webinar on hunger in America based on the results of a Department of Agriculture food security survey. According to the USDA, in 2008 the number of people in households that sometimes lacked the money for enough nutritious food rose from 36 million to 49 million - the highest number on record. Among them

were 17 million children - 4 million more in 2008 than in 2007.

Presenters include Dr. Deborah Frank, founder and principal investigator Children's HealthWatch, James D. Weill, president Food Research and Action Center, and Deborah Weinstein, executive director Coalition on Human Needs.

The webinar is scheduled for Tuesday, December 8 from 2 to 3 p.m. To register for the webinar visit <<http://www.bostonconferencing.com/chn/register>>.

George Coling, Executive Director
National Fuel Funds Network
1010 Vermont Ave., NW Suite 718
Washington, DC 20005
202-824-0660
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