

## NEAN Energy Assistance Committee Meeting July 7, 2009

In attendance: Judi Martin, Mike Kelly, Ronda Jaeschke, Cory Fuehrer, Ardi Hoins, Laura Demann, DeVonne Ksiazkiewicz, Jeremy Coffey and Jan Davis (joined in at end).

### Discussion:

Need for NEAN's Energy Assistance Committee to become active in fulfilling NEAN's mission. Where do we begin and who will help lead these efforts. First step, we asked for input from each attendee to identify, from the questions/ answers submitted by participants at the NEAN Symposium, what they feel are priorities. Note, each conference call attendee listed their priorities but many were repeated and may not have been recorded. This report will be discussed at next NEAN meeting to gain member input and identify next steps.

A chair of this committee needs to be selected. Anyone interested should contact Judi or Mike.

### ***1. How can our company/organization help our customers/clients better manage their energy costs?***

- Shared vision with an understanding of different goals – Mike Kelly, DeVonne Ksiazkiewicz
- Educating our customers on what energy conservation can really do for our customers, starting with the ones that are struggling/ help them to reduce consumption – Mike Kelly, Cory Fuehrer, DeVonne Ksiazkiewicz
- Educating our customers on helpful payment plans available from customers utility companies – Mike Kelly, Jeremy Coffey, Ronda Jaeschke, DeVonne Ksiazkiewicz
- Work with housing authorities on low-income weatherization – Judi Martin
- Educate customers to apply for assistance earlier before it's too late, how to avoid service disconnection – Jeremy Coffey, Ronda Jaeschke, Laura Demman
- Educating customers about use of level payment plan – Jeremy Coffey, Ronda Jaeschke, Ardi Hoins, Cory Fuehrer
- LIHEAP – Mike Kelly, DeVonne Ksiazkiewicz
- Educate to get individual to report problems sooner rather than later in the process to avoid immediate crisis – Jeremy Coffey, Laura Demman, Cory Fuehrer
- Incentive programs through utility providers- identify each programs we each have – Ronda Jaeschke
- Offer financial plan/ financial stability programs to low-income clientele, middle class – Mike Kelly, Jeremy Coffey, DeVonne Ksiazkiewicz, Judi Martin
- Assistance agencies and utilities need to coordinate – Judi Martin

### ***2. What are the next steps for our communities?***

- Join NEAN – Judi Martin, Ardi Hoins, Ronda Jaeschke
- Challenges in funding for organizations like NEAN; burden now falling to a few partners, find more funding sources such as grants – Judi Martin
- Education / budgeting / partnering with other agencies – Jeremy Coffey
- More case management – proactive – Judi Martin, Laura Demman, Ronda Jaeschke
- Tap into media in promoting programs / services – Mike Kelly, DeVonne Ksiazkiewicz, Judi Martin
- Research other programs and use what is being done – Mike Kelly, DeVonne Ksiazkiewicz
- Coordination of efforts – Mike Kelly, DeVonne Ksiazkiewicz
- Increase community awareness – Mike Kelly, DeVonne Ksiazkiewicz
- Work with churches, community centers, schools – Jeremy Coffey
- Agency coordination – Jeremy Coffey
- How can we get our clients to the resources they need? – Laura Demman
- Case management approach – develop a comprehensive plan – Jeremy Coffey, Ardi Hoins
- Service learning projects to bring in capital – Judi Martin, Ardi Hoins
- Community awareness campaign to draw attention to all other areas affected besides just the energy education, hunger and health, for example – Mike Kelly, Judi Martin, Ardi Hoins, Ronda Jaeschke
- Promotion/education of conservation kits – Ronda Jaeschke
- Help people understand the carbon legislature – Cory Fuehrer

### ***3. How can we all work together? ( some of these had multiple sub-categories)***

- Communication tree – Mike Kelly, Judi Martin, Jeremy Coffey
  - Knowing what agencies are out there and funding sources
- Local coalitions, continuums, etc. – Jeremy Coffey
  - Use as a way for service providers to share information
  - Invite businesses, schools, community centers etc to table
  - Don't duplicate – partner with other service providers

- How can we help better manage energy cost? – **Mike Kelly**
  - Education – Do customers know how much energy they are using?
  - Start young, educate children in schools, possible opportunities with Neb. Energy Office – **Judi Martin**
  - Collaborate with agencies handling WAP- help promote program. **Ardi**
- Manage Energy Costs
  - Energy Education – It is needed, but where do you get the resources? – **Ronda Jaeschke, Jeremy Coffey**
  - Budget Management – good examples of how to teach people to better manage all bills. Idea of using incentives to keep people engaged – **Ronda Jaeschke, Jeremy Coffey**
- How can we all work together? – **Mike Kelly**
- 2-1-1 emergency United Way number, how to get statewide coverage, little use outstate. Laura to follow-up.
- Use of newspapers, community public service announcements, media. – **Laura Demman, Jeremy Coffey, Judi**
- Case management – building local coalitions – **Judi Martin, Ardi Hoins**

#### Summary-Common Threads

1. Need for community awareness.
2. Education – budgeting, energy use, resources, prevention of disconnection/use of level pay, avoid pay day lenders etc.
3. Coordination of efforts between agencies including partnering with those providing case management. Use of communication tools.

## 2009 National Energy and Utility Affordability Conference - Portland Oregon

The impact of the nation's developing and proposed energy policies on low-income households was the major theme of the conference this year. Numerous workshops and presentations brought together experts representing all points of view from various industries and organizations. Lively discussions between advocates took place leaving many with more questions than answers. Discussions of reducing conflict between social issues and impact on the poor as they pertain to climate change, environmental and energy issues are sure to continue.

Low-income weatherization/energy-efficiency workshops focused on: Best practices, impact of stimulus funding, community/volunteer weatherization projects, and efforts to engage low-income and large public housing tenants in energy saving initiatives. Additional workshops on environment and sustainability were held along with ones focused on energy assistance programs, energy education, outreach and advocacy and fundraising for energy assistance.

To my surprise and delight, the National Energy Assistance Report, Second Quarter was placed in the conference bags of the more than 700 participants. The report contained full-page coverage of the NEAN Energy Symposium.

I was the only attendee from Nebraska. Looks like we still have work to do in getting more exposure for Nebraska. I was pleased to have had the opportunity to serve on the conference planning team. I helped develop workshops, participated in the hot topics series where I presented on NEAN efforts in Nebraska, facilitated a strategic planning session to develop a national charitable energy assistance plan (this was the next step to the first ever fundraising conference I attended in Baltimore last fall), and moderated a workshop on innovative fundraising ideas.

In addition to workshops and speakers, there were social activities, a tour of the Bonneville Dam and a silent auction to provide funding to conference attendees.

Submitted by: Judi Martin

## 2008 Conference Recap

By Ivan Brandon, National Fuel Funds Network

The impacts of global climate change and U.S. energy policy on low income households were the featured issues during the first National Energy Affordability and Utility Conference, held in Denver on June 16-18, 2008.

The more than 700 NEUAC attendees heard presentations that explained the various aspects of global warming legislation and how these proposed laws would affect low income families. Conferees were also urged to monitor the situation closely so as to protect the interests of the poor and the elderly in the global warming debate.

The event, which combined the annual conferences of the National Fuel Funds Network and the National Low Income Energy Consortium, was the largest gathering of individuals and organizations dealing with the problem of providing affordable energy to low income households.

Denver Mayor John Hickenlooper opened the conference with a plea for increased cooperation between government and non-profit organizations. The mayor pointed out that much more can be achieved through positive relations between these two sectors.

Xcel Energy Chief Administrative Officer Ray Gogel also addressed the opening session and said the conference would "drive an open and innovative dialog" on energy affordability. Gogel said, "energy affordability is everyone's problem."

The conference keynote luncheon speaker, former United States Senator Gary Hart, was critical of current U.S. energy policy. "We will continue to import up to 70 percent of the oil we consume from abroad, including from the most dangerous region of the world, the Persian Gulf, to fuel energy-inefficient and wasteful vehicles," Hart said. "We will sacrifice the lives of our sons and daughters to get the oil. That is America's energy policy."

Hart, who is currently Scholar in Residence at the University of Colorado, said the country can change that policy by boosting conservation programs and renewable-energy sources such as wind and solar power.

In the conference's first plenary session, a discussion of energy policy and its impact on consumer prices, Jane Briesemeister of AARP warned of the consequences of climate change legislation on the poor. She said that any legislation designed to mitigate global warming must take into consideration the impacts on the poor.

Ms. Briesemeister made note of how previous legislative initiatives that were thought to benefit the poor had not had the expected result. She pointed out how utility deregulation had failed to produce lower home energy costs and added that some initiatives currently being discussed could have unintended consequences for the poor.

A second plenary session featured a discussion of climate change legislation and its impact on low income families. In that session, Rafe Pomerance, president of Clean Air – Cool Planet, provided graphic evidence of the warming of the planet before leading a discussion of the "cap and trade" concept included in most global climate change legislation.

Robert Greenstein, executive director of the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, said climate control legislation currently being considered in Congress would have a significant impact on the poor. He said a carbon cap would result in a 45 percent increase in home energy costs, but that allocating 14 percent of the allowances from greenhouse gas trading would hold low-income consumers harmless for the increased costs of the economic transition.

Greenstein said the Electronic Benefit Transfer system (used for food stamps), Earned Income Tax Credit and LIHEAP should be used to distribute the allocation to people with low-income.

The National Consumer Law Center's Charlie Harak spoke about the need for advocates for the poor to make their voices heard so that energy will not become "less affordable" for low income households. Harak said he expected climate change legislation to be passed within the next four years.

Reducing gasoline consumption was the topic of luncheon speaker Kateri Callahan, president of the Alliance to Save Energy, who unveiled a new program designed to help drivers lessen the pain at the pump. Both the National Fuel Funds Network and the National Low Income Energy Consortium are partners in this new campaign.

The Alliance's Drive Smart Challenge provides drivers with tips and coupons that can help cut gasoline consumption. The Challenge website ([www.drivesmarterchallenge.org](http://www.drivesmarterchallenge.org)) shows drivers how much money they can save by following a few helpful hints.

The plenary sessions and featured speakers were only a small portion of the activities during the conference. Attendees had more than 60 workshops from which to choose. The workshops covered eight general areas of interest: Energy Availability and Sustainability; Weatherization/Conservation; Focus on Energy Assistance; Outreach and Advocacy; Vulnerable Populations; Energy Programs in Indian Country; Evolution of Energy Programs; and Consumer Education and Services.

In addition to the workshops, there were also two Hot Topic sessions where conferees had a chance to participate in fast-paced 20-minute presentations on a variety of subjects. There were also tours of the National Renewable Energy Laboratory in Golden, CO.

Both the NFFN and the NLIEC took time during the conference to honor some of their members and others who have championed the cause of providing energy assistance to those most in need.

The NLIEC Achievement Award was presented to Mitch Miller, director of the Pennsylvania Public Utility Commission's Bureau of Consumer Services, for his tireless efforts to balance the needs of residential utility customers and utility service providers for more than 25 years. Miller has represented the National Association of Regulatory Utility Commissioners on the NLIEC Board of Directors for more than a decade.

The NFFN presented its highest honor, the Sister Pat Kelley Achievement Award, to Carol Clements, a former NFFN Board Chair and a long time member of the energy assistance community. Ms. Clements served as NFFN Board Chairperson from 2002 to 2006 and played a vital role in increasing the organization's membership and national profile. She was instrumental in the development and growth of the NFFN's Washington Action Day for LIHEAP, which has become the premier grassroots lobbying effort on behalf of the federal energy assistance program.

The NFFN's Victorine Q Adams Award, which recognizes institutional innovation and achievement, was presented to Oregon HEAT for its creative collaboration with an oil recycler in designed a program to help lessen the energy burden of low-income Oregon residents and reduce the level of petroleum waste products in the state.

PECO – an Exelon Company received the NFFN's Corporate Excellence Award. PECO was honored for its commitment to providing services and assistance to low income customers in the Philadelphia area. The gas and electric utility was recognized for its role as an advocate for low income rate payers on the local, state, and national level as well as for its use of innovative programs and aggressive outreach to address energy/poverty issues within its service area.

North Carolina Senator Elizabeth Dole was announced as the winner of the NFFN's Extra Mile Award for 2008. The award recognizes legislative achievement on behalf of the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program. Sen. Dole, was honored for co-sponsoring an amendment offered by Sen. Bernard Sanders (I-VT) to include \$800 million for the program in appropriations legislation last December and for leading an effort to insure that such an amendment would be allocated equally between formula grants and emergency contingency funds to insure a national deployment of the aid.