

Westco Emergency Fund
C/O Community Action Organization
1001 SW Baseline – Hillsboro, OR 97123
Phone: (503) 648-6646

December 11, 2002

Dear Friend,

When I came to work yesterday morning, there was a penetrating chill in the air that only Oregonians can describe. Even if the temperature gauge reads 40 degrees, it feels much colder. When I parked my car I noticed how full the lot was, even though it was only 8 a.m. Then I saw the line at the door. Forty or fifty people, waiting for our opening at 8:30. Then I remembered: Rent day.

According to Oregon law, after the rent is 5 days past due a landlord can present you with a 72-hour notice to vacate. That means if your rent is due on the 1st, on the 8th you must pay or you can be evicted. Everyone lined up at the door was in this situation. They needed help with the rent or they could be forced to leave their homes.

We opened the doors early and the lobby was instantly full. I walked through to survey the scene and see if staff members felt ready to deal with so many people. I tried to make eye contact with everyone and offer them a smile. Some people immediately looked down, and some tried to smile back. But I could see that it was not a smile, but a question: Can you help?

There was someone in a wheelchair, someone on crutches, someone who looked like they had slept in their car. People with kids, people in clothes inadequate for the cold. After awhile I didn't feel like smiling because I knew the sad reality that many of them would not receive help from us that day. I knew that in a few hours our funds would be gone and we would have to face telling people that not only are we not able to help, but we don't know anyone else who can. The resources just aren't there.

A reporter from The Oregonian showed up that day and his article is enclosed. We know that this is only "the tip of the iceberg." With the economic downturn and so many people out of work, it can only get worse before it gets better. Are you able to help?

We count on people like you to keep our fund going. It's so hard to turn away so many people whose needs are increasing at this time. If you can add to our fund, please, send us what you can. It's fully tax deductible and it goes directly to those in need.

And I invite you to call me, or stop by at any time, to find out more about our work. We depend on you and hope that you feel you can depend on us to help your neighbors in need.

With Best Wishes for a Warm and Safe Holiday Season,

Judy Schilling
Emergency Services Coordinator