

Rising Prices, Insufficient Income Boost Need for Energy Assistance

Community Action is bracing for an unprecedented number of requests for energy and rent assistance this winter, due to anticipated price increases for natural gas, electricity, and fuel oil, along with wages that have not kept pace with inflation.

Community Action assisted 25,327 individuals and 8,308 households with energy assistance from June 2007 to June 2008. The Community Action Partnership of Oregon estimates there are 429,000 households in the state that qualify for energy assistance, but

that funding is sufficient to help just one-in-four applicants. Assistance for low-income families has not increased along with energy prices, resulting in fewer resources available to a growing number of individuals and families.

Each year, energy assistance programs throughout Oregon struggle to satisfy requests for assistance with available funds. "More people are coming to us with higher current and past-due bills," said Judy Schilling, Manager of Community Action's Emergency Assistance

programs. "Many have been shut-off and need much more money to restore service," she said.

Schilling explains that people who heat with fuel oil, often seniors on fixed-income, face 100 gallon minimums to fill their oil tanks at a cost of \$5 per gallon.

As federal funds for low-income energy assistance remain flat or decrease, Community Action staff expect to see more families falling behind in their struggle to shield their children from the effects of inadequate heat.

Consequences of Unaffordable Heating

- Hunger and malnutrition increase when people are forced to choose between heating and eating.
- Personal health suffers as people are not able to fill prescriptions, must skip or reduce medications, or go without needed medical or dental care.
- The elderly, people with disabilities or medical conditions, and small children face increased risk of hypothermia.
- Use of alternative heat sources such as kerosene heaters and charcoal increases risk of fire and carbon monoxide poisoning.
- Evictions increase, causing more people to become homeless. Many families struggle to regain stable housing, children often leave school.
- Loss of utility service contributes to children going into foster care because lack of heat or electricity can be considered neglect.
- People in subsidized housing risk losing their housing if their power is shut-off.
- Added stress can increase the risk of depression, domestic violence, or crime.



Community Action anticipates requests from more than 8,500 households this year.

There Are People You Should Know!

Join Community Action for its annual *People You Should Know* breakfast on November 19 at the Kingstad Center in Beaverton. This free event includes a program focused on sharing Community Action's mission, successes, and the compelling stories of those served by the agency. A complimentary breakfast is provided by event sponsor, Kaiser Permanente.

The *People You Should Know* breakfast draws around 200 guests interested in learning more about Community Action and the impacts of poverty in our community.

Donations received at the event support Community Action's mission to assist low-income people to achieve self-determination. To learn more or to receive an invitation, contact Lisa Brown at: lbrown@caowash.org.

Dear Friends,

The change of seasons is always a busy time at Community Action. As we transition from summer to fall, the beginning of a new Head Start school year always brings a flurry of activity. This year, 805 Washington County pre-school children will benefit from Head Start's comprehensive approach to early childhood education. The school year is already off to a great start and we are so appreciative of the strong partnerships with the Beaverton, Hillsboro, and Tigard-Tualatin School Districts that make it possible for us to serve these children and their families.



Jerralynn Ness
Executive Director



Kevin Aguirre
Board Chair

With the coming of fall in Oregon, we also know that cold and rainy weather is not far away. For many months, our staff has been preparing for a significant increase in requests for energy assistance. The rising cost of fuel, as well as higher price tags on food and other essentials, has placed many families at greater risk for economic insecurity. In fact, we are hearing from more and more families who, a year or two ago, would never have expected to need assistance. They have long surpassed belt-tightening and are now faced with choosing whether to pay rent or keep the heat and lights on. For many, the help they receive from Community Action will make all the difference in bridging the gap.

In this edition of *Community Connections* we are focusing on the impacts of rising heating costs. Inadequate heat has serious consequences, especially for children and the elderly. At Community Action we know that there are ways to increase home energy efficiency and reduce costs. Our Weatherization Program works with families throughout the year to assess home energy use and recommend and implement cost saving measures. This proactive approach reduces heating bills and ensures that many more families will remain in homes that are safe and warm. (If you would like to learn more about how you can make your home more energy efficient, we encourage you to attend our Energy Fair on October 11th.)

Ending poverty is a national concern that is gaining renewed public interest. We have an opportunity with the upcoming elections to weigh in on this and many other crucial issues facing 21st century families. Regardless of your affiliation, we urge you to make your voice heard at the polls on November 4th. There is much work to be done to secure a strong economic future for all Americans, and we each have a role to play.

To those of you who have joined with Community Action to address the causes and conditions of poverty at the local level, we say thank you. With your help, we are making a difference. (Watch for our annual Impact Report in the next edition of *Community Connections*.) We hope you'll tell your friends, neighbors and colleagues about the work of Community Action and encourage them to learn more by attending our "People You Should Know" breakfast on November 19th. And of course, we look forward to seeing you there!

Sincerely, Jerralynn & Kevin



- ❖ **Thanks to Ivan Camacho, Doug Nichols, and Anastasia Mata Hernandez for their recently completed service as members of the Community Action Board of Directors.**
- ❖ **Welcome to Lynn Baker, Christy Barker, Monique Beikman, and Scott Gardner, new community leaders who recently joined the Community Action Board.**
- ❖ **Congratulations to Renee Bruce, Director of Family & Community Resources, on her appointment to the Northwest Regional Education Service District Board in the Social Services position. Renee's term on the board will run until June 30, 2012.**
- ❖ **Welcome Nicole Cossette, Community Action's new Director of Human Resources!**

Energy Fair Focuses on Efficiency and Sustainability

Learn how to reduce your carbon footprint and increase the energy efficiency of your home, at Community Action's 6th annual Energy Fair, Saturday, October 11, 9:30 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. at Aloha High School, 18550 SW Kinnaman Rd., Beaverton. The event is free and open to the public.

Community Action's 2008 Energy Fair will focus on sustainability, with more than 30 partners and vendors providing information on ways to lower energy bills and make homes safer, more comfortable and more efficient.

Workshop topics will include Lead Safety, Reducing Your Carbon Footprint, Home Weatherization, Furnace Basics, Care & Maintenance of Your Water Heat-



PGE volunteers weatherize a window for a Community Action client.

er, Plumbing Basics, and Solar Energy.

Metro will present its "Healthy Homes, Healthy Family" display, which encourages reduced use of toxic chemicals and suggests safer alternatives. Information about Metro's recycled paint program will also be available.

PGE will promote energy-saving practices such as use of compact fluorescent lights. Burgerville, a first-time Energy Fair

participant, will show how the company is reducing its carbon footprint through use of alternative energy and recycling. The Oregon Electric Vehicle Association will display several electric vehicles.

Alliance for Community Traffic Safety (ACTS) will hold a car seat clinic from 10:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. Correct installation, size and age appropriateness of child car seats will be checked.

Special Thanks To

Additional Energy Fair Partners

Costco, Energy Trust of Oregon, Green Mountain Energy, Home Depot, Joint Water Commission, Master Gardeners, Master Recyclers, NW Natural, Oregon Dept. of Human Services, Oregon Environmental Council, Oregon Food Bank, Oregon State Fire Marshal, Rebuilding Together, Sol-Food, Tualatin Valley Gleaners, Unlimited Choices, Washington County Bicycle Transportation Alliance, and Washington County Permits.

Helpful Energy Tips

September

Replace dirty furnace filters monthly, starting at the beginning of the heating season. Clean filters mean cleaner air, and help your furnace work more efficiently.

October

As daylight diminishes in winter months, we use indoor lights more often. Look for sales on compact fluorescent light bulbs, now available in many sizes, styles and colors.

November

Make sure your water heater is not making water too hot. Test the water by letting it run hot and using a meat thermometer to check the temperature. Lowering the temperature to 120-degrees or less saves energy.

December

Think before you buy. If it uses electricity, it will raise your electric bill. Turn off electronic devices when they are not in use. Use multi-plug strips for the convenience of turning off devices that consume electricity (such as TVs or computers) when they're not "on."

Generosity Abounds During The Holiday Season

Though the need exists year-round at Community Action, there are many special ways to support our work during the holidays. Civic and business groups are encouraged to "adopt" a Head Start class by providing gifts for each child in dozens of classrooms located throughout Washington County. Community Action's Hillsboro Family Shelter is always in need of canned and other shelf-stable food donations, as well as personal hygiene items. To participate in Adopt-A-Class, or to donate goods to the Shelter, contact Scott Schlegel at 503-693-3254 or sschlegel@caowash.org. According to Director of Development and Community Relations, Lisa Brown, contributions from the community are vital to meeting the needs of local low-income families. "We always appreciate donations of items from our wish list because they greatly enhance our ability to assist families. Of course

cash donations are incredibly important, as they provide us with the flexibility to help wherever help is needed most."



Kids in Head Start glow with excitement after receiving Adopt-A-Class gifts.

Need help finding help? Dial 211, or 503-222-5555, for information about social services in your community, provided by trained information & referral specialists in 150 languages.



1001 SW Baseline St. • Hillsboro, OR 97123

Conserve Resources!

If you are receiving this newsletter by postal mail, we would be happy to send it to you by e-mail.

Please e-mail your request to:
contact@caowash.org

Please be assured, our list is confidential.

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Community Action is a private, non-profit corporation. In partnership with the community, Community Action assists low-income people to achieve self-determination.

For further information, contact Resource Development 503.693.3255, or visit our website:
www.communityaction4u.org

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Jerralynn Ness

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Save the Date!

"People You Should Know" Breakfast

Wednesday, November 19, 2008
Kingstad Center, Beaverton
7:30 - 8:30 am

Sponsored by



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For information or to RSVP,
please contact Leanna Woodall,
503-693-3252 or lwoodall@caowash.org