

## **MEDIA RELEASE**

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### **Source: Community Action Partnership**

Rachel McCoy, Director of Development and Communications

(816) 233-8281, ext. 143; (816) 244-2662 (cell)

[rmccoy@endpov.com](mailto:rmccoy@endpov.com)

[www.endpov.com](http://www.endpov.com)

### **Aquila boosts crisis energy fund to help families who could be in the cold (Nov. 26, 2007)**

(Nov. 26, 2007 – St. Joseph, Mo.) It's said that people "take care of their own" in Northwest Missouri, especially when the need is great.

Aquila, Inc., a Kansas City, Mo., based electric and natural gas distribution company, recently demonstrated the company's commitment toward supporting local families with a gift of \$3,000 to help boost the crisis energy funds Community Action Partnership offers to families in poverty during the winter months.

"It all comes down to the families who need assistance," says Sharon Bradford, Aquila operations manager based in St. Joseph. "With rising energy costs and cuts in federal aid, we want to help families who will find themselves this winter in the position of having to make very tough choices, such as paying for heat or groceries for their children. When it comes to keeping families warm and safe, we're all in this together."

Community Action Partnership distributes state-allotted crisis energy funds to a four-county Northwest Missouri region to families who meet federal income guidelines for poverty and have experienced a disconnection of services or who will see an immediate disconnection.

This year, the number of requests for heat and energy assistance – including several requests from families who have never applied before – is rising. Yet due to significant cuts in federal appropriations for health and human services, the funding normally utilized by Community Action Partnership has been reduced by more than 50 percent. By mid-December, the agency estimates its crisis energy funds will be completely depleted with 700 new requests still to come in. Many families may resort to unsafe heating methods as the winter turns colder, placing them in danger of fume inhalation and fires.

"This is a situation unlike any we've seen, in terms of funding reductions," says Dave Leyland, executive director, Community Action Partnership. "Community support, such as we have received from Aquila, is essential now if we are to keep moving families upward out of poverty."

In addition to crisis energy funds, the agency offers free weatherization courses to teach participants how to preserve heat and reduce their energy bills. Each participant receives a free weatherization kit, including plastic to cover windows and doors other heat-conserving materials.

"This gift will directly impact local families and senior citizens who come to us for help, and every request we can meet is one less person who will be in the cold," says Leyland. "We're very thankful for this gesture from Aquila that shows a genuine interest in the health and safety of the people we serve." **(more)**

## **Aquila boosts fund**

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Community Action Partnership of Greater St. Joseph is one of 19 Community Action Agencies in Missouri and one of the 1,000 Community Action Agencies in the U.S. working to fight poverty at the local level. Services offered by Community Action Partnership of Greater St. Joseph to low-income individuals in Buchanan, Clinton, Andrew and DeKalb counties include Head Start, offering comprehensive educational, nutritional and emotional support for children ages birth to five; housing development and rent assistance; energy crisis and utility assistance; leadership and life skills training; assistance with college entrance; and employment and workforce training programs through the Missouri Career Center.

The national network of Community Action Agencies, established in 1971 as Community Action Partnership, continues to be guided by its founding goals of “*Helping People-Changing Lives*” and ending poverty.

Aquila, a Kansas City, Mo., based electric and natural gas distribution company, serves approximately 900,000 customers in five Midwestern states (Colorado, Iowa, Kansas, Nebraska and Missouri). The company’s mission is to provide energy for better living. For more information, visit [www.aquila.org](http://www.aquila.org).

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### **Photo Caption (group photo):**

**Teamwork in action** ... Aquila, Inc. is a partner with Community Action Partnership of Greater St. Joseph in helping keep families with low-incomes warm and safe this winter. Sharon Bradford, operations manager for St. Joseph’s Aquila office helped coordinate a corporate gift of \$3,000 to Community Action Partnership’s crisis energy fund. The agency serves low-income families in a four-county Northwest Missouri region, receiving approximately 1,400 crisis energy assistance requests per winter. This year, the fund has been significantly reduced at the federal level – but community support is helping meet the needs of local families.

#### Group photo:

A gift for energy assistance is presented from Aquila to Community Action Partnership representatives: (from left) Doug Evenson, housing development director; Jerri Verneti, administrative assistant; Gretchen Herndon, Head Start director; Sharon Bradford, Aquila operations manager; Dave Leyland, executive director; Rachel McCoy, director of development; Jodi Bloemker, community development specialist; Dan Batliner, board vice-chairman; Heather Kettering, finance officer; and Shannon Dixon, program assistant.

#### Handshake photo:

Sharon Bradford, left, Aquila operations manager based in St. Joseph, presents a

corporate gift of \$3,000 for heat and energy assistance to Dave Leyland, executive director, Community Action Partnership of Greater St. Joseph.