

MEDIA RELEASE

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Source: Community Action Partnership of Greater St. Joseph

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Community Action Partnership receives, then runs out, of \$44,000 in help for summer utilities in less than 2 days

Record level of requests for help reflect deep level of community need

(Aug. 5, 2009 – St. Joseph, Mo.) This morning, there was help for low-income families with paying their utility bill, and keeping the lights and electricity on. By late afternoon, that help was mostly gone.

“We’ve never seen the requests come in so fast,” says Delphia Shanks, director of community development. “This is a clear sign of the level of economic need in our community. Last year, we had funds available for utilities for much longer. This year, August has just begun, and we’re out.”

On Monday, Community Action Partnership of Greater St. Joseph received an additional \$44,000 from the Low-Income Heat and Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP), administered through the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families. The mission LIHEAP is to assist low income households — particularly those with the lowest incomes that pay a high proportion of their household income for home energy — in meeting their immediate home energy needs.

By the time the paperwork for the funding was officially signed today, 95% the funds had already been allocated to families. Many lined the CAP building this morning, holding onto proof of a disconnection to their electricity.

“Staying cool in the summer time is key to maintaining good health,” says Shanks. “If you’re overheated and your house is too warm, then it’s unhealthy and can aggravate existing health problems. What this means is that our city’s most vulnerable populations may not be able to stay cool in their homes during the hottest times of the summer.”

In July of 2009, CAP St. Joe ran out of funds for energy assistance, after assisting nearly 650 families with electric bills and giving out more than 100 window-unit air conditioners. The recent \$44,000 in funding was predicted to assist families through the hottest part of the summer, and to be a boost to families who are within federal poverty guidelines and are typically paying a large portion of their income toward utilities. The maximum LIHEAP credit is \$300 toward the household’s energy bill.

However, those funds will be completely depleted by the end of tomorrow. To qualify for help with an energy bill, an individual must have a disconnect notice on the electricity and qualify for federal poverty guidelines (such as, earn income of less than \$1,980 for a household of 3.)

Community Action Partnership has provided programs to move low-income families out of poverty since 1965, serving nearly 16,000 people in poverty in Northwest Missouri. Head Start is one of the core programs managed by the agency. Additional services provided by Community Action Partnership to low-income families include utilities assistance, affordable housing, financial literacy and home ownership classes, life skills and workforce training. For more information, visit www.endpov.com.