Telethon Raises Much Needed Funds for Heating Assistance

The second annual Heating Homes with Helping Hands Telethon on November 15 raised an impressive $57,320. United Way of Aroostook, Aroostook County Action Program, and WAGMTV partnered once again to raise funds which assist Aroostook County citizens experiencing emergency heating hardships this winter.

“We are very grateful to the hundreds of donors who helped us raise these funds which are so needed. With winter coming a bit early this year, we know some people will need some assistance keeping their homes warm,” said Sherry Locke, Executive Director of United Way of Aroostook.

The daylong telethon utilized over 30 volunteers from various organizations and businesses to take calls at both the WAGM TV donation call center and the ACAP HEAP (Home Energy Assistance Program) call center. Either viewers could call to donate to help raise funds or to inquire about eligibility requirements for the HEAP program and to see if they prequalify to receive funds and set an appointment to formally apply.

Donations go directly to help keep our neighbors in the community warm and safe when no other resources are available at the time of an emergency during a brutal time of year in Aroostook County. Over the coming winter, households receiving emergency assistance receive follow-up from ACAP’s coaching staff, which opens up the door to those individuals and families to get help with financial literacy, budgeting, weatherization, energy conservation education, and even energy-related financial incentives through various programs ACAP administers.

“We do everything in our power to keep those experiencing a fuel emergency from ever having to go through that again,” said ACAP Executive Director/CEO Jason Parent.

Early cold and snow this season underscored the extreme need for emergency fuel assistance in the region. The morning after the Telethon ended, ACAP received more than 500 calls in the first hour of the day from people needing assistance. While the pledges received from the
Telethon will come in over the next several weeks, call volume for Fuel Assistance remains extremely high due to the colder than normal temperatures and numerous other factors. ACAP regularly processes more than 5,000 applications each season, and since late August, has already taken more than 2,700 applications. Staff are processing as many requests as possible each day.

“We ask that community members please keep in mind that there is a process for determining eligibility as it relates to the Home Energy Assistance Program, and the related emergency fuel assistance program, that all need to be vetted through to determine eligibility. Appointments and key documents are required to apply for HEAP and emergency assistance,” said ACAP Executive Director and CEO Jason Parent.

Telethon funds are intended to be used for households determined not eligible for HEAP funds, and with a demonstrated need. Parent reminds the community that it is also important to remember that although over $57,000 was raised, those funds were pledged and not all of the money is currently in-hand. These emergency dollars are intended to run through this winter season and until this time next year. Anyone who is seeking assistance should call the ACAP offices at 768-3053 to make an appointment and have the following documentation ready, as well as the name of their fuel vendor and account number, to help ensure the most efficient and smooth process possible: valid/current government issued identification; social security cards for all persons residing in the household; current electric bill; current lease; and proof of all eligible income.

About United Way of Aroostook
United Way of Aroostook is a 510 (3) (c) organization established in the county in 1957. United Way works in every Aroostook County community to offer solutions to today’s problems. We actively seek donations to be distributed to health and human service agencies and their programs so that they may provide the services needed in our community.

About Aroostook County Action Program
ACAP provides the people of Aroostook County with services and resources that help individuals and families achieve greater economic independence. As a leader, or in partnership with others, ACAP provides guidance to the community in responding to emerging human needs in the areas of community health, early care and education, energy and housing, and workforce development services. For more information on ACAP, or to make a tax-deductible contribution, please contact the agency at 771 Main Street, on the web at www.acap-me.org, or by calling 764-3721.
PHOTO:

Volunteers from Nor State Federal Credit Union take calls at WAGM TV during the second annual Heating Homes with Helping Hands Telethon.