

# ***News Release***

**Lifeline for the Empowerment and Development of Consumers, Inc.**

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**Lifeline, Inc. Honors Lake County Residents, Organizations with 2011 Awards  
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**PAINESVILLE, Ohio**—Lifeline, Inc., Lake County's Community Action Agency, is pleased to announce its 2011 award winners and to recognize agency volunteers and community partners for their commitment to Lake County's low-income citizens. Lifeline also proudly acknowledged outstanding program participants for their successes in achieving self-sufficiency. The awards were presented at Lifeline's Annual Dinner held on June 15 at Rider's Inn in Painesville.

"We gave out four different awards this year," said Carrie Dotson, Executive Director of Lifeline. "We are so excited to be able to recognize those who support Lifeline and its programs, as well as the participants who excel in those programs."

The 8<sup>th</sup> Annual Mildred P. Wilson Award was presented to Gwen Corban, who has demonstrated outstanding service and dedication to Lifeline. The Mildred P. Wilson Award is named for the late Mildred Wilson, a dedicated Lifeline employee for many years. Mildred's commitment and service to both Lifeline and Lake County's low-income community were remarkable. This award was established in 2004 to honor an individual who goes above and beyond the call of duty in working to benefit Lifeline and the consumers we serve. Previous recipients have included Bill Margalis, Barb Crabtree, Janet Gockel, Rita C. McMahon, Donna Zabarsky, Bob Zaluski and Mark Alderman.

Gwen has served the community in a variety of social service roles throughout her career. A licensed social worker by education, Gwen recently retired from her role as a job developer and employment specialist at Neighboring. Prior to that position, Gwen was the Executive Director at Lifeline. She's also held positions as a guardian ad litem for custody cases through the Domestic Relations Court and as Executive Director for the Mental Health Association of Lake County.

Gwen is also a panel member of the Lake County United Way Emergency Services Panel. Gwen served for several years as a member of the Mentor Exempted School Board. She's also a 1997 graduate of Leadership Lake County. Gwen has been married to her husband Ron for 36 years and has two grown children, Sarah and Michael.

Over the span of her career, and in her personal activities, Gwen has shown a true commitment to helping Lake County's most vulnerable populations thrive. She has also remained supportive of Lifeline and its mission, even after moving on from the agency. Gwen was often seen at the Lifeline office bringing her Neighboring consumers for appointments. She's also remained supportive of Lifeline's fundraising efforts as both an annual campaign donor and a frequent attendee at Lifeline's events.

This commitment to our clients and to Lifeline, Inc. made Gwen a perfect choice for the 2011 Mildred P. Wilson Award, according to Lifeline Board Secretary Erin Johnson.

“Gwen’s contributions have gone above and beyond throughout her tenure working within the communities of Lake County,” said Johnson. “Gwen has always portrayed a spirit of acceptance and compassion. Gwen’s past and present hard work, efforts and determination have created a strong foundation to allow for ongoing future success within Lifeline Inc. and other area organizations.”

The Outstanding Community Spirit Award was given to Western Reserve Fuel Oil Company for their commitment to Lifeline, Inc.’s mission and the clients that we serve, as well as their support of the Lake County non-profit community. The Community Spirit Award is bestowed upon a local business or organization who displays outstanding dedication and service to improving the quality of life for Lake County’s low-income families.

Western Reserve Fuel Oil Company, located in Willoughby, has been in business for over 50 years. It is a small family business started by the Yentch family and currently owned by family members Sean and Kim Crawford. WRFOC has a long history of supplying fuel oils to residential and commercial customers in Lake, Geauga and Cuyahoga counties. A large part of their business is delivering heating oil to both homes and mobile homes, many of which are located in rural areas. There are several mobile home parks located in Lake County whose residents use heating oil and kerosene as their main heating source—they constitute a large part of WRFOC’s customer base.

WRFOC says that prompt, friendly service is a main goal for them. The recent years have been difficult for many of their customers because of the high price of oil and the economy. They feel it is important to offer assistance with a variety of payment and delivery options and especially appreciate the opportunity to help their customers who are elderly or low-income through the energy assistance programs at Lifeline.

“We are able to see first-hand the difference that Lifeline makes in the quality of life for many of Lake County’s citizens,” said a representative of WRFOC.

As our largest fuel oil vendor for HEAP, our staff has felt that WRFOC go out of the way to help the customer.

“WRFOC has let customers in need have less than their minimum requirement and have delivered small amounts if a customer is out of oil until they can deliver the full amount that was ordered,” said Marina Rivera, Lifeline HEAP Coordinator. “They really try to help anyone in need and often refer new customers to the HEAP Programs if they think they can help them. Our HEAP staff is also amazed that the drivers usually know the address by the customers’ names if we place an order. These are all reasons that our staff felt Western Reserve Fuel Oil Company was representative of the community spirit Lifeline represents.”

Lifeline Board President Jeremy Iosue agreed that the service WRFOC provides is beneficial to our consumers.

“Whether the economy is flourishing or floundering, Western Reserve Fuel Oil Company finds a way to provide their customers (and our residents) with everything they need,” said Iosue, “even if that means sacrificing or deferring their own profits.”

Ashley McClain was honored for her Outstanding Achievement as a program participant. The Outstanding Achievement Award recognizes a customer of Lifeline who has made significant progress in achieving family self-sufficiency.

Ashley enrolled in the Family Development Program in January 2010 just weeks before starting Auburn Career Center's intensive Licensed Practical Nursing Program (LPN). She was looking forward to the new opportunities a nursing career could offer and was seeking additional support from a Family Advocate to help her be successful. As a single parent of two toddler boys, Ashley faced the task of managing part time work as a State Tested Nursing Assistant and full time school coursework.

As Ashley progressed through the program it became clear that her real dream was to complete her LPN training and start college in the fall to pursue her Bachelor's Degree in Nursing. Ashley completed the Family Development Program in February 2011 after graduating from Auburn Career Center this winter. She has been spending her time studying for her LPN Licensure exam and working while she awaits notification of her acceptance into an RN Program.

"Ashley wanted to use her time in the Family Development Program to enhance her budgeting skills and to brainstorm solutions when she was facing challenges managing her busy life," said Michelle Mezaris, her Family Advocate. "Ashley worked hard and was determined to be successful. She should be proud of her accomplishments and will use her new confidence to drive her toward a fulfilling and rewarding life."

The Outstanding Community Partnership Award was presented to two organizations jointly this year. The awards were given to the Family Eyecare Clinic and Prevent Blindness Ohio. The Outstanding Community Partnership Award recognizes a program or collaboration that shows both innovation and results in helping low-income families achieve self-sufficiency.

Family Eyecare Clinic is an Optometry medical practice in Northeast Ohio dedicated to protecting your family's eyes from infancy to old age through preventive and corrective eye care. With 25 years of serving the families of Lake County, OH, they have been a part of your health and life for two generations. They provide every patient with complete information on caring for your and your children's eyes; the very best medical care for preventing, diagnosing, and treating your eye problems; and state-of-the-art vision correction diagnoses and solutions in the form of proper-fitting contacts, corrective lenses, and high-quality frames.

Prevent Blindness Ohio is the statewide consumer advocate for sight conservation. They promote eye health and safety while working to find the cure for blinding eye diseases. Their mission, to prevent blindness and preserve sight, is carried out through public information, research and early detection. The vision of Prevent Blindness Ohio is helping Ohioans enjoy good sight for life.

When Lifeline developed the Eyecare Assistance Program in 2009, we did so in partnership with Family Eyecare Clinic and Prevent Blindness Ohio. The eye care assistance program seeks to help low-income residents of Lake County with vision screenings and in purchasing eye glasses, if needed. With their help and dedication to assisting those in need, we have served over 250 people since the program began. More than 40 of them have gotten care for serious conditions that were not previously diagnosed, some of which can lead to blindness.

"Our partnership with Family Eyecare Clinic and Prevent Blindness Ohio enables Lifeline to further our mission to increase self-sufficiency," said Joyce Taylor, Lifeline Board Vice President. "Community access to care for preventing, diagnosing and treating eye conditions is critical in assuring that our community has appropriate resources to meet their needs."

Dotson says that because Lifeline, Inc. is such a locally-based organization, they work to recognize those who have made an impact locally with these awards.

“As a Community Action Agency, we are obviously a community-based organization. Last year we served over 3,000 households from nearly every community in Lake County,” said Dotson. “We’ve strived to continue that effort by recognizing local individuals, organizations and program participants who have been successful in the past year.”

Lifeline for the Empowerment and Development of Consumers was founded in 1973 with the mission of helping Lake County residents by providing them assistance and life skills programming that is designed to increase self-sufficiency. In 1980 Lifeline became a participating agency of the United Way of Lake County, UWLC, and in 1987 was designated a Community Action Agency by the Ohio Department of Development, ODOD.

Today Lifeline continues with the same mission of helping Lake County’s low-income residents break the cycle of poverty and make the transition from agency-dependency to self-sufficiency. Lifeline’s current programming includes services in the healthcare, housing & energy assistance, information & referral services and consumer education & job training areas. Our motto is ‘first to help, then to teach.’ Lifeline is currently funded by the UWLC and by grants through the ODOD, the Lake County Board of Commissioners, the Lake County ADAMHS Board, Lake County Department of Job & Family Services, the Western Reserve Junior Service League, the CVS Foundation, Bikers Aiding Local Diabetics and through private donors.