

News Release

Lifeline for the Empowerment and Development of Consumers, Inc.

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HEAP Winter Crisis Program Serves Hundreds of Lake County Households in First Two Weeks November 22, 2011

PAINESVILLE, Ohio— As temperatures tumble this fall and Lake County residents brace for winter, many Ohioans will take for granted the fact that they can turn on their furnaces and heat their homes whenever they wish. Many more, however, will need help purchasing that heat.

The HEAP Winter Crisis Program (WCP) began on November 1st and application numbers have been very high, according to agency officials.

“Our staff has completed applications for 400 households in just the first three weeks of November,” said Carrie Dotson, Executive Director of Lifeline, Inc. “This is up significantly from the 343 applications taken in the same three weeks in 2010. The need for financial assistance with heating bills is so great right now. We anticipate more people than ever before needing help with their heat costs due to the economy, so I expect those numbers to stay high through December and January.”

HEAP is a federally funded program designed to help eligible low-income Ohioans meet the high costs of home heating. This program can only be accessed one time per season and the amount of the benefit depends on the size of the household, household income and what type of fuel is used.

The WCP program can provide a one-time payment per heating season (Nov. 1 through March 31) for gas or electric utilities, or toward the delivery of wood, propane, fuel oil or kerosene to households when: a customer’s gas or electric service has been disconnected; a customer has received a final disconnect notice; or the customer has less than a 10 day supply of bulk fuel.

The Emergency HEAP Winter Crisis Program (WCP) began on November 1st and will run through March 31, 2012. Lifeline, Inc., Lake County’s Community Action Agency, will again administer the HEAP WCP for the 2011-2012 Season.

The Lifeline Energy Assistance Office will offer both scheduled appointments and walk-in hours each week. Appointments can be scheduled by calling our automated appointment line at 1-866-223-1471. This line will also give participants a list of the required documents needed to complete an application.

All walk-in sessions, held Monday, Wednesday and Friday mornings, are on a first come, first served basis beginning at 7:30 a.m. through December 31 and beginning at 8:30 a.m. on January 4. Only customers who meet the eligibility requirements and have all required documentation will

be able to complete their application process that day. All others will be asked to return on another day or encouraged to schedule an appointment.

For more information on the HEAP Winter Crisis Program, please contact Lifeline, Inc.'s Energy Assistance Office at (440) 350-9160. Lifeline's Energy Assistance Office is located at 54 S. State Street, Suite 303 in Painesville.

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. In 2008, Lifeline was designated as a mental health agency by the Ohio Department of Mental Health.

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 City of Mentor, the Western Reserve Junior Service League, the CVS Foundation, Bikers Aiding Local Diabetics and through private donors.