

News Release

Lifeline for the Empowerment and Development of Consumers, Inc.

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HEAP Summer Crisis Program Assists High Number of Residents September 22, 2011

PAINESVILLE, Ohio—The Emergency HEAP Summer Crisis Program (SCP), which began on July 1, 2011 and concluded August 31, 2011, served a high number of low-income households with emergency utility assistance.

Throughout the two months of the Summer Crisis Season, Lifeline's staff completed applications for over 500 households from nearly every community in Lake County for emergency assistance. Of those 500 applications, over 480 of them were either approved for assistance with their electric bill or received an air conditioner. Over \$53,000 in federal dollars were expended over the course of the season.

"We could definitely tell that it was a busier season than usual and that a lot more of our Lake County residents needed a little extra help this summer," said Carrie Dotson, Executive Director at Lifeline. "This program really isn't just about providing comfort—it's about keeping people healthy. One of the requirements to qualify for the SCP is that you must either have a senior citizen in the home or have a physician documented health condition. These are people who clearly need their utilities on and to keep cool during the hottest months of the year."

Dotson said that the agency staff was somewhat surprised at the increased and steady demand for the emergency assistance, but glad to help their neighbors in need. They were also able to help so many residents who had never before sought the help of the program.

HEAP is a federally funded program designed to help eligible low-income Ohioans meet high utility costs. 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 other qualifying guidelines set by the federal government.

The HEAP Summer Crisis Program provided assistance to low-income Lake County households with an elderly member (60 years or older), or households that can provide physician documentation that cooling assistance is needed for a household member's health. These households were eligible for electric bill payment assistance up to \$175 *OR* an air conditioner if their utility bills are up to date.

For more information on the HEAP Programs, 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 and opens daily at 8:30 a.m.

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.