

News Release

Lifeline for the Empowerment and Development of Consumers, Inc.

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Lifeline, Inc. Honors Lake County Residents, Organizations at 2014 Awards Dinner May 28, 2014

PAINESVILLE, Ohio— Lifeline, Inc., Lake County's Community Action Agency, is pleased to announce its 2014 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 May 12 at the Matchworks Tavern in Mentor.

"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, and our community, as well as the participants who excel in those programs."

The 10th Annual Mildred P. Wilson Award was presented to Jeremy and Vanessa Iosue, who have 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, Mark Alderman, Gwen Corban and Cate Hearn.

Jeremy, an attorney with Harvey, Abens & Iosue, was appointed to the Lifeline Board in November 2007 by the Lake County Bar Association and quickly became very active within the organization. Jeremy served two terms as Board President and one as Vice President, as well as previously chairing both the HR and Fundraising Committees. Jeremy and his wife, Vanessa, have been very active in Lifeline's fundraising activities, helping to establish and grow the March Mania event and bringing multiple tables of guests each year. Jeremy has also participated as a celebrity in the 2010 Dancing Under the Stars event where he won the Judge's Choice Award and raised well over \$1,000 for Lifeline. Jeremy will again be showing off his dancing skills as an All-Star celebrity for the 2014 Dancing Under the Stars. Jeremy and Vanessa have also been active every year with Lifeline's Giving Tree Project, adopting Lifeline families for the holidays for the past several years. Jeremy has also been very active in helping Lifeline to develop and maintain appropriate policies and procedures for staff and was particularly instrumental in the transition planning for both the HEAP staff in 2009 and the 2-1-1 staff in 2012.

"Jeremy and Vanessa are lifelong residents of the Painesville area that believe in giving back to their community," said Lifeline Board Member and former Painesville City Manager Rita McMahon. "They have each established themselves in careers which would allow them to live anywhere and they have chosen to commit their talents and themselves to promoting Lake County and the Painesville Area. Jeremy and Vanessa are true home town leaders that exemplify the best in our community."

The Outstanding Community Spirit Award was given to the City of Painesville's Utilities Office for their commitment to Lifeline, Inc.'s mission and the clients that we serve, as well as their support of the 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.

The City of Painesville is unique in being able to offer a full complement of utilities (water, electric and sewer) to all of its residents. The Painesville City Utilities Office has been providing electric for customers in Painesville City, some parts of the Township, Perry, a few customers in Madison and a few in Grand River for 126 years now. They service approximately 17,000 customers monthly.

The City's Utility Office provides utility reading and billing, credit and collection, and customer service in support of the City's water, sewer and electric utilities. The office has three full time and two part time meter readers who physically read each of the meters on the assigned routes. They have formed a relationship with many of their customers and go as far as to bring treats for the dogs on the routes. The Utility office staff consists of three front counter clerks, three billing office clerks, one collections analyst and one office manager.

The City Utility staff works very hard to avoid termination of services through many different options. Along with the wonderful staff at the HEAP office, they utilize the local Catholic Churches, St. Mary's and St. Gabriel's and have a wonderful working relationship with them, as well. They also work with the Lake County Community Network to seek assistance with hardship cases. The Utility office at the City of Painesville will set payment plans for customers facing extenuating circumstances to help get the account up to date in a timely manner. The Utility staff has received several cards and "thank you" notes over the years from customers who have faced difficult situations and have been able to bring their accounts current through the combined efforts of payment plans, co-pays, and agency assistance.

The City of Painesville's Utilities Office has a wonderful staff who go out of their way to work with Lifeline's staff to make our HEAP months run as smoothly as possible in an effort to better serve our clients. While they are unregulated and do not participate in the PIPP program, they have extended disconnections when they are aware that a client is working with HEAP so as to best assist the client.

"The Lifeline HEAP office deals with City of Painesville Utilities Office on a daily basis eight months out of the year," said Marina Rivera, Lifeline's Energy Assistance Coordinator. "We have a wonderful relationship with all the employees and especially with Beth Hughes. We truly appreciate the help we get to assist our mutual clients who are eligible for our program. This is an amazing group of employees that work effortlessly to meet our clients' needs."

Steve Posen, Melissa Bucher, Lesley Cruz and Denise Pizzi were honored for their Outstanding Achievement as a program participant. The Outstanding Achievement Award recognizes customers of Lifeline who have made significant progress in achieving family self-sufficiency.

Steve Posen applied for our Employment & Training program in April 2013 after being referred from another community agency. After being determined eligible, he started with the career assessment which helped him identify his strength & weaknesses and pointed him in the direction of careers that would be a good fit for him. Steve was unable to get employers to look past his old felony record, and with no marketable skills, he was struggling to secure gainful employment.

In July 2013, with the help of his Lifeline Consumer Education Coordinator, Steve registered for CDL classes at a truck driving school, booked the hotel required for the out of town school and arranged the usage of a rental truck for his test. In September 2013 Steve completed his schooling, and by October 2013 he secured employment in his chosen field. He is earning an income he is proud of and is thriving.

Melissa Bucher applied for our Employment & Training program in September 2013. Melissa is a single mom with five children and was employed part-time at a fast food restaurant earning minimum wage. She registered for STNA classes, completed them in December 2013, and passed her state test with a final grade of 96%. Lifeline not only paid for her career assessment, training and test costs, but also assisted Melissa with a uniform voucher and provided financial assistance for the TB test, FBI criminal background check and physical exam needed to obtain employment. Melissa obtained full-time employment in her chosen field in February 2014. Melissa has future goals of returning to school to become a LPN.

Lesley Cruz also applied for our Employment & Training program in September 2013. She had recently separated from her husband and moved in with her sister, along with her three children. Lesley was unable to

support herself and her children at her part-time minimum wage job as a stock person at a local discount store. Living with her sister and a combined eight children was very tense and difficult. Lesley found herself depressed. Through Lifeline's program, Lesley completed the STNA training in November 2013 and sat for her state test in December 2013. Lesley happily reported to Lifeline that she accepted a job as a STNA in February 2014 and is working full-time and was able to move out into a home of her own. Lesley shared that she now feels like she has a purpose and is making a difference.

"I come home each night knowing I did something worthwhile." Lesley was glowing with pride when she stopped into the Lifeline office to share her happy update.

Denise Pizzi is enrolled in our Supportive Housing Program. While she still has barriers to self-sufficiency and financial struggles, she has been persistent and tenacious in meeting her goals. Denise is fighting a chronic debilitating illness. She really works so that this illness does not define her and she pushes herself hard. Her case manager, Lauri Jackson, is most impressed with Denise's spirit and inner strength.

"Denise is a single mom of two girls who is actively involved in her community and is always lending a helping hand when she can. She is often selflessly volunteering, donating her time & energy and involved in one thing or another. Denise inspires people just by the way she lives her life. No matter what seems to come her way, Denise faces her barriers with grace and humility that inspires everyone who knows her," said Jackson.

The Outstanding Community Partnership Award was presented to two collaborations this year. The awards were given to the 2-1-1 Marketing Team and Leadership Lake County and to the Lake County Emergency Management Agency, Tri County CARE and the Lake County Citizens Corps for their collaboration following the July 2013 Lake County floods. The Outstanding Community Partnership Award recognizes a program or collaboration that shows both innovation and results in helping low-income families achieve self-sufficiency.

The 2-1-1 Marketing Team and members of the Leadership Lake County Class of 2013 were presented the Outstanding Community Partnership Award for their collaborative efforts to help spread the word about 2-1-1 Lake County.

In the fall of 2012, Leadership Lake County participants chose to do a service project for Lifeline's 2-1-1 Lake County program. Their task was to develop and begin implementation of a marketing plan for 2-1-1 Lake County. The group worked for many hours and developed a solid plan to help spread the word about 2-1-1's services. Following a presentation by Leadership Lake County Executive Director Dr. Jessie Baginski and class members, the marketing plan was adopted by the Lifeline Board of Trustees in January 2013.

The 2-1-1 Marketing Team was formed in the spring of 2013 and consisted of nine local community members who believed in the purpose of 2-1-1 Lake County and were interested in helping Lifeline spread the word about the service. Several of the Team members were Leadership Lake County alumni who had worked to develop the plan, while others simply had an interest in promoting 2-1-1. Team members included Doris Behnke, Robyn Fry, Paula Gordos, Cristen Kane, Rick Penny, Tom Ruffner, Julie Schick, Melissa Winfield and Eileen Yates.

Using the marketing plan developed by Leadership Lake County, the team first began to work on developing print material designs, which resulted in an informational post card with a magnet, t-shirts and posters. The committee members participated in several parades during the summer of 2013 to distribute the post cards throughout the community. They were also distributed to agencies, churches and several local businesses. Several members of the team also worked on securing funding and in-kind discounts to help pay for the marketing efforts.

All together, the 2-1-1 Marketing Team donated over 240 hours of volunteer time to Lifeline in 2013 and have made a tremendous impact on helping to inform Lake County residents of the valuable service that 2-1-1 Lake County provides.

The Lake County Emergency Management Agency, Tri County CARE and the Lake County Citizen Corps were also honored with the Outstanding Community Partnership Award for their collaboration in assisting Lake County residents who were affected by the July 2013 floods.

In July 2013, much of Lake County experienced very serious flooding as a result of a storm that overwhelmed the capacity of the storm sewers in many areas. Before the storm was over, the Red Cross began its work responding to the needs of affected families. For a great many people, the water filling basements was destroying property and threatening the structural integrity of their homes. The Lake County Emergency Management Agency quickly began to organize the response process, gathering all the agencies and government officials involved for a conference call daily and spoke individually with most of us several times a day. This proved to be an incredibly important component of a well-organized, effective emergency response. Cristen Kane and the Citizen Corps also stepped in from the first day, communicating with 2-1-1 many times a day and supporting us through our first emergency response situation. Cristen and her team of volunteers worked tirelessly to contact residents who reported damage or who were not physically able to clean and disinfect flooded areas. They also made many return calls for 2-1-1 to follow up with people in need, taking a burden from 2-1-1 operators who were working 12 hour days throughout the crisis.

Once the water began to recede and the immediate crisis was behind us, the job of cleanup began. To respond to the large number of families who required assistance, either cleanup help or financial help, the Tri-County CARE group was re-established. This group included most of the organizations involved in the flood response or represented agencies that were able to assist residents. This group hired a case manager and met weekly for the next several months to ensure that our residents got the assistance they needed to recover their homes to a safe and sanitary state. The work of the Citizen Corps, Tri-County CARE and the Emergency Management Agency enabled our community to return to normal quickly. Lifeline and its staff are grateful for the cooperation and effort put forth.

This year Lifeline's Annual Dinner and Awards Presentation were held in conjunction with National Community Action Awareness Month and featured remarks by David Bradley, Executive Director of the National Community Action Foundation and a keynote address by U.S. Congressman David Joyce, of Ohio's 14th District.

As Executive Director of the National Community Action Foundation, David Bradley gives a voice to the voiceless. For nearly three decades, Bradley has been the pre-eminent advocate in Washington, D.C. working closely with the Congressional leadership and with numerous administrations, to ensure federal policies related to major social service programs make a difference in the lives of low-income Americans. Bradley is the principle author of the Community Services Block Grant, which provides the core funding to the nation's CAA network. Bradley has been widely praised by leaders of both political parties.

Sargent Shriver, the first leader in the War on Poverty said it best, "No one has done more to keep the War on Poverty alive and fresh in the minds of individuals."

Bradley has both Bachelors and Masters degrees from George Washington University. In 1987, he was a Senior Executive Fellow at the Harvard University John F. Kennedy School of Government. He served in President Carter's Administration as Congressional Liaison at the Small Business Administration.

A lifelong Ohioan, Dave Joyce has dedicated his life to family and community. Born in Cleveland, Ohio in 1957, Joyce's father, a WWII veteran, was a salesman and his mother a proud housewife. Joyce graduated from West Geauga High School and went on to receive his BA in Accounting and Juris Doctorate from The University of Dayton. Upon graduation, he moved back to Geauga County and worked as a public defender.

While running for County Prosecutor in 1988, Joyce met a fellow West Geauga High School grad, Kelly whom he married in 1990. Throughout his service as the Geauga County Prosecuting Attorney, Joyce built a reputation as being a protector of both Geauga County families and Geauga County taxpayers. Joyce made it a priority to provide the highest quality legal work in the most cost-efficient manner possible. The evening Joyce was appointed in 1988 he told the crowd he would fight crime and work to develop the county in the way the people saw fit, not the developers or the courts. In 2005, the Ohio State Women's Bar Association presented Joyce with the Family Friendly Workplace Award for providing his employees a family-oriented office environment. In 2008, Forbes magazine named Geauga County the 4th best county in the nation to raise a family, citing the low crime rate and solid housing stock. Throughout his career, Joyce has assisted in numerous counties throughout Ohio as a special prosecutor and some of his case and trial work has been featured on national shows such as CBS

48 Hours.

In November 2012, Joyce was elected to the 113th Congress to represent the 14th District of Ohio. Joyce serves on the influential House Committee on Appropriations where he makes it a priority to reduce the scope and size of government and protect American tax dollars

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 7,000 households from nearly every community in Lake County with our community services programs and answered over 40,000 calls for information and referrals through 2-1-1,” 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. In 2008, Lifeline was designated as a mental health agency by the Ohio Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services.

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 ‘helping people, changing lives.’ Lifeline is currently funded by the UWLC and by grants through the ODSA, 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, Bikers Aiding Local Diabetics and through private donors.