

News Release

Lifeline for the Empowerment and Development of Consumers, Inc.

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Home Energy Assistance Program Summer Crisis Program Concludes with High Number of Applicants September 19, 2014

PAINESVILLE, Ohio— The HEAP Summer Crisis Program (SCP), which began on July 1, 2014 and concluded on August 31, 2014, served a high number of low-income households with emergency utility assistance and cooling.

Throughout the two months of the Summer Crisis Season, Lifeline's staff completed applications for nearly 700 households from nearly every community in Lake County for emergency assistance. Of those 700 applications, over 600 of them were either approved for assistance with their electric bill or received an air conditioner—this is about 60 households more than in 2013. Over \$110,000 in federal dollars were expended over the course of the season, nearly \$40,000 more than in 2013.

"It was a very steady summer season, even though it wasn't that hot for most of it," said Carrie Dotson, Executive Director at Lifeline. "I think a lot of folks started the summer with high utility bills because it had been such a hard winter—they were starting out a little behind."

Through a partnership with the Lake County Council on Aging and many of Lake County Senior Citizens Centers, Lifeline was able to take applications on-site at many of the centers, which increased access for senior citizens across the county.

"This program really isn't just about providing comfort—it's about keeping people healthy. With the guidelines to qualify for the SCP requiring that applicants must either have a senior citizen in the home or have a physician documented health condition, we know we're helping folks who really need assistance. These are people who clearly need their utilities on and to keep cool during the hottest months of the year," said Dotson. "We're grateful to the Council on Aging and the local senior centers for helping us increase access for some of our county's more vulnerable populations."

The HEAP Summer Crisis Program provided assistance to low-income Lake County households with a senior citizen member (60 years or older) OR households that can provide physician documentation that cooling assistance is needed for a household member's health. City of Painesville Electric customers that have a disconnection notice are exempt from the requirement of having a senior citizen in the household or required physician documentation. These households are eligible for electric bill payment assistance up to \$350 *AND/OR* an air conditioner, for First Energy utility customers, or \$400 *AND/OR* an air conditioner for City of Painesville Electric customers. Applicants may not receive an air conditioner if they have received one in the last three years.

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 Development Services Agency, ODSA. 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.