Serving Lake County residents since 1973, Lifeline’s mission is to fight poverty and help low-income residents to become more self-sufficient. Each year Lifeline serves over 2,500 households, including nearly 6,000 individuals with health, housing, energy, and consumer education programs.

In 2018, our HEAP programs reached over 1,000 households between summer and winter crisis; our Volunteer Income Tax Assistance [VITA] prepared tax filings for over 220 residents with tax returns generating $341,624 back to our community; our Rental Assistance helped 250 households secure a safe and affordable housing; our healthcare services provided 55 families access to healthcare—providing prescriptions and diabetic supplies; and 2-1-1 Lake County answered over 36,000 incoming calls for information and referral services—its highest number in years.

In late 2018, Lifeline launched its new Volunteer Guardian Program in partnership with the Lake County Probate Court and Judge Mark Bartolotta. The funding for the program provided by the Lake County Senior Levy, the Lake County ADAMHS Board, the Lake County Board of DD and Lake Health, helps to protect the health and well-being of our senior citizens and other vulnerable populations.

Thanks to the generosity of our community, Lifeline, Inc. has continued to strengthen our endowment, the Lifeline Endowment Against Poverty. In an effort to plan for the future, our endowment has grown reaching over $200,000 in our four short years.

Our 2019 Dancing Under the Stars event, in partnership with the Family Planning Association of NEO, a Division of Signature Health, shattered fundraising records, raising over $100,000 for the very first time.

The immediate future of Lifeline, Inc. has new partnerships and programming ahead. In 2020, we will relocate our offices to a state of the art facility under renovation in historic downtown Painesville; launch a new program, Kinship Navigator, in partnership with RSVP, Lake County Department of Job and Family Services and the Lake County ADAMHS Board. The program will assist grandparents and other kin who are facing the challenge of raising family members children due to unfortunate circumstances; and finally, Lifeline, Inc. will be pursuing the designation as the Community Action Agency in neighboring Geauga County.

My tenure as President of Lifeline, Inc. has been an exciting time of change and challenge. Thanks to my fellow Board members, staff, and our Executive Director, Carrie Dotson, we continue to serve our community in the fight against poverty.

~ John Shepard, Lifeline Board President

What’s Inside

p. 2 Lifeline launches new Kinship Navigator Program
p. 4 Dancing Under the Stars 2019 recap
p. 6 Lifeline presents awards at 2019 Annual Dinner
P. 12 Lifeline graduates first Buy Car Program participant
p. 14 Lifeline prepares for HEAP Winter Crisis Program
Lifeline Launches New Kinship Navigator Program

by: Heather Riser
Program Coordinator

Lifeline is proud to announce our new Kinship Navigator Program. The focus of the program is to help grandparents and other kin who are raising children not their own. It will focus on breaking the cycle of poverty by offering educational, social and emotional support by working in conjunction with our community partners.

The Kinship Navigator Program will provide caregivers with information and referrals to county-wide programs to address their current and future needs through one on one sessions with our Kinship Navigators.

Additional educational events will be provided at no cost to caregivers. They will include topics such as: Basic needs-how do provide for them when I am on a fix income, where to turn?-Legal issues; how to obtain guardianship, temporary custody, what court do I go to and what do I really need?-Trauma and “triggers” where do I go for services, what services might be right?; Navigating school- from enrolling in a new school district to graduation; and Technology-“what is this app? & keeping children safe online.

The need for a Kinship Program was first suggested by Cristen Kane, Executive Director of RSVP, the Retired & Senior Volunteer Program of Lake County.

“Several RSVP volunteers shared that they were raising their grandchildren full-time due to their own children being affected by the opioid epidemic,” said Kane.

“They were stressed with the energy level they needed to have the grandkids full-time, with the amount of money they were taking from their retirement funds and the most stress was caused by the emotional roller-coaster they were experiencing.”

After quickly realizing that issue may be even bigger in Lake County as a whole, Kane contacted the Director of Lake County Department of Job and Family Services, Matthew Battato.

After several meetings together and with other county stakeholders, Lake County RSVP and the Lake County Department of Job & Family Services offered several free informational events for Grandparents raising Grandchildren throughout 2018 and early 2019.

“As more grandparents and relatives find themselves in the...
position of raising grandchildren, nieces, nephews and cousins due to the opiate epidemic and other factors, we think it is important to provide information and services to help them,” said Battiato.

“Oftentimes it is overwhelming to take on this responsibility and we want to support them and assist them with accessing resources to lessen their stress.”

“The biggest need we found was that grandparents truly needed someone to sit down with them one-on-one and listen to their story and direct them to the resources in Lake County that already exist to help them,” said Kane.

“They want to hear that they are not the only ones going through this. The seminars provided opportunities for the grandparents to help each other and console each other. It was very helpful and reassuring to learn that they were not the only people going through this type of crisis.”

To address this need, another component of the program will be providing peer lead support groups for both the caregivers and the children.

“The need to break the feeling of isolation as families are going through this process is overwhelming to many and it doesn’t need to be. Every one of these participants has their own story but the underlying thread is there,” said Lifeline Kinship Navigator Program Coordinator Heather Riser.

The Kinship Navigator Program will also offer an individualized component working one on one with the program coordinator. Participants in the program will be able to personalize which services they use depending on their own needs and wants.

The Kinship Navigator Program was made possible with the support of the Lake County ADAMHS Board and Lake County Commissioners Community Development Block Grant.

To get more information on this program please call 2-1-1 and asked to be connected to The Kinship Navigator Program.
11th Annual Dancing Under the Stars
a Record-Breaking Success!

Dancing Under the Stars, adapted from the popular television show, returned on Friday, Aug. 2 at LaMalfa Party Center to an audience of over 500! This year featured 12 area community and corporate leaders paired with local dance instructors to entertain attendees and, for the first time ever, raised over $100,000 for Lifeline, Inc. and the Family Planning Association of Northeast Ohio/A Division of Signature Health.

2018 Peoples’ Choice winners Miguel and Tanisha Solivan served as honorary chairs for the evening, kicking off the evening with inspiring remarks. Remarks were also made by Morris Beverage III, who along with his wife Kerri, were the event’s Presenting Sponsors. Both Morris and Kerri are former celebrities with Morris winning the Peoples’ Choice Award in 2013 and Kerri the Judges’ Choice Award in 2016.

Then the competition began. Those competing for the Judges’ Choice, Peoples’ Choice and Star of the Night awards included:

- Sir Sanden Brunner
- Ethan Konig, Shari Smith and Shannon Taylor of the Fred Astaire Studio in Chagrin Falls; Aleksei Minaev, Elena Minaev, Frank Anthony, Andrew Ta and Erica Kravchenko from the Fred Astaire Studio in Willoughby; Hannah Elizabeth Green of Rabbit Run Community Arts; and private dance instructors Maggie Runyon, John Thompson and Bobby Ford.
- Maurice Coffee, a 2017 celebrity, assistant pastor at Union Community Church and a Subrogation Specialist at Progressive Insurance, served as our master of ceremonies, while Lake County Probate Judge Mark Bartolotta, pro dancer Heather Felden and previous celebrities Anthony DiBacco and Ryan Callender served as judges. DiBacco was the co-Judges’ Choice Award winner at our 2018 event and Felden is a four-time Judges’ Choice winner as the professional.

The dancers competed to win a Peoples’ Choice award by garnering “votes” in the form of contributions from supporters. These “votes” were given directly to dancers prior to the event, submitted through the web, and placed in voting boxes the night of the event. The Peoples’ Choice Award was presented to Ryan Gilkerson for shattering the all-time fundraising record and raising

sisters Shawn Barbo and Carla Longano, of Brunner Sanden Deitrick Funeral Home & Cremation Center; Zak Benmerzouga, Global Project Manager at The Lubrizol Corporation; Ryan Gilkerson, On-Air Talent with WOVU 95.9 FM; Dr. Deborah Hardy, Associate Provost, Teaching & Learning, Dean of Faculty and Dean of Health Technologies at Lakeland Community College; Michele Tyler Johnson, Financial Adviser at Lighthouse Advisers; Jay McDonald,

Program Manager at Leadership Lake County; Sanjay Parker, Founder and CEO of Knowtion; Roger Principe, Community Volunteer; Vanessa Purdef, Owner Vanessa Purdef Photography; Dr. Jennifer Ross, Chiropractor at Aligned Chiropractic and Physical Rehabilitation; Kristen Sironen, Receptionist at Jennifer & Co.; and our Boy Band, including Ric Selby, a Partner at Dworken & Bernstein Co, LPA; Jeff Tomaszewski of MaxStrength Fitness; Jim Fox, Vice President of Direct Investments at Parkwood LLC; and Rob Gardner, a Special Projects Editor at WKYC Studios.

Helping to prepare the celebrity dancers were professional dancers:
We’re fortunate to have such committed pro dancers involved with our event each year. Pro Maggie Runyon has danced each year since 2012.

“I love dancing and sharing my talents with anyone and this event gets people out of their comfort zones and challenges them to create something all while giving back to the community,” said Runyon. “The process is different with each partner. You have to find their strengths and weaknesses and play on their strengths. You have to create a connection and partnership and learn to work as a team. Not only do you have to teach a dance but you have to keep in mind what the audience will enjoy and play to the judges!”

“I believe the key to the success is the foundation that has been built by past successful events and all of the great people who are involved, the pros, the celebrities, and the countless volunteers that assist with each fundraiser leading up to the main event. I believe that it has built and continues to grow its reputation as a signature event in Lake and Geauga counties.”

“I have to say that the community members of Lake County always amaze me! The cast members were so outside the box with their fundraising efforts and the people of Lake County soaked it up! I am so thankful I live in a community where people will support these agencies and their neighbors. Also a trophy and bragging rights are nice!”

We hope everyone will join us next year for the 12th Annual Dancing Under the Stars, to be held Friday, August 14, 2020.
Lifeline Honors Individuals and Local Organizations with Awards at 2019 Annual Dinner

Lifeline, Inc. was pleased to present its 2019 award winners and to recognize agency volunteers and community partners for their commitment to Lake County’s low-income citizens at our Annual Dinner held on May 30 at the Mooreland Mansion on the Lakeland Community College campus.

“We gave out five different awards to numerous recipients this year,” said Carrie Dotson, Executive Director of Lifeline. “We are so excited to be able to recognize those who partner with and support Lifeline and its programs. We were also thrilled that Congressman David Joyce was able to join us and offer our keynote address.”

The 15th Annual Mildred P. Wilson Award was presented to Jeffrey Diver. Named for the late Mildred Wilson, a dedicated Lifeline employee for many years, 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 residents we serve.

Jeffrey is the Executive Director of Supports to Encourage Low-Income Families (SELF), the Community Action Agency in Butler County, Ohio, and was its first employee in 1996. Throughout his career, Jeffrey has actively served on numerous committees and boards, especially those helping to meet human needs. Jeffrey is a member of the Ohio Association of Community Action Agencies Board of Directors and a lifetime certified “Bridges out of Poverty” trainer. He conducts trainings and strategic planning for other Community Action Agencies across Ohio as a part of the associations Internal Consultant Program.

In his role as an Internal Consultant, Jeffrey has collaborated with Lifeline on staff and board training, as well as writing our last three strategic plans.

“As a trainer, Jeffrey brings his experience as an Executive Director of a Community Action Agency, but also as a compassionate person. Because he has worked with Lifeline for so many years, when he comes to the agency to conduct training, there is a great sense of familiarity and trust, allowing for great communication among participants,” said Lifeline staff member Michelle Mezaris. “Jeffrey engages participants with discussions and examples that are relevant to Lifeline’s work and are easily adaptable to the Community Action movement in Lake County.”

The Outstanding Community Spirit Award was given to Dynamic Rental Strategies, Fox Run and Parkway Apartments in Willoughby for their commitment to Lifeline’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.

Lifeline has worked with Dynamic Strategies Fox Run and Parkway Apartment complexes for many years through a variety of our housing programs. They maintain clean and functioning units, communicate openly with their tenants and always go above and beyond when working with those who might be struggling financially. They have even contacted Lifeline on behalf of current tenants to inquire about eligibility requirements for programs offered at Lifeline. The staff has demonstrated a desire for families to live in stable and secure housing and treats them with compassion.

“The Community Spirit Award focuses on exceptional dedication and service by improving the quality of life for Lake County’s low-income families. That is exactly what Harry Friedman, his family, and staff has been able to accomplish for over a decade,” said Lifeline Program Coordinator Maribel Young. “Many of the people we serve are facing homelessness. By providing safe and affordable housing and supporting many of Lifeline’s fundraising events throughout the years, they are giving families a chance for a new beginning.”

The Outstanding Community Partnership Award was presented to three different recipients for three very important partnerships, including Lakeland Community Colleges Non-Profit and Public Service Center, the Adult Parole Authority, and the Perry Senior Center.

Established in 2005 with start-up funding from the Lake-Geauga Fund of The Cleveland Foundation, the Nonprofit and Public Service Center at Lakeland Community College seeks to enhance the capacity of nonprofit and public service organizations in Northeast Ohio. Building upon Lakeland’s historic relationships with nonprofits, public agencies and local governments, the center offers professional and organizational development opportunities by drawing upon expertise within the college and by partnering with other service providers.

One of the unique programs that the Non-Profit Center provides is the Community Action Poverty Simulation, which Non-Profit Center Director Dione DeMitro facilitates throughout the year. Developed by the Missouri Community Action Association, the simulation exists to promote poverty awareness, increase understanding of the causes and stresses associated with living in poverty and inspiring local change to decrease or eliminate poverty within your own community.

“Each time, Dione bravely shares her own personal experiences with poverty as she facilitates the simulation and
debrieff discussion,” said Dotson. “I’ve seen the poverty simulation presented hundreds of times by so many different facilitators and I’ve just never seen it done better than Dione does it because she really understands what living in poverty means and how hard it is to overcome.”

“The poverty simulations have become an important tool for really helping the broader community develop an understanding and sensitivity to what those living in poverty experience—we’ve seen teachers develop new ways to work with low-income students and parents, librarians look for ways to better serve low-income families and community members seek meaningful volunteer opportunities as a result of the simulations in Lake County. These all lead to better opportunities for those living in poverty,” said Dotson. “It’s also given Lifeline an additional platform to advocate for the clients we serve and share our mission with more people.”

The Adult Parole Authority (APA) for Lake County has been a partner with Lifeline since 2009 when the development of the Lake County Citizen Circle was established. The Lake County Citizen Circle supports those previously incarcerated with information and referrals to improve successful reentry into the community. As a founding member of Citizen Circle, the APA has brought a unique perspective to the community group. Although their relationship with the Citizen Circle participants is different, it is also vital to the work Lifeline has done over the last decade with ex-offenders.

As parole officers, lowering recidivism is part of APA’s agency goals and without their input Lake County would not have one of the most successful Citizen Circle and Reentry Coalitions in the State of Ohio. The APA has worked together with the Lifeline Reentry Office and Coalition to develop the reentry strategic plan, which has opened up doors to new funding opportunities.

“I have worked closely with the APA for 10 years. The trends to link inmates to community resources upon release are showing to help those who struggle with barriers such as employment,” said Mezaris. “As the Reentry Office for Lake County, a partnership between our entities can continue to have an impact on the rate of recidivism, improve self-sufficiency and increase public safety.”

“I feel that Lake County has benefited from the partnership with the APA, which unfortunately is not the case in other areas of Ohio. I am confident that we can help those returning to our communities and help them achieve their goals,” said Moon, Reentry Coordinator at Lifeline.

In 2017, Christine Znidarsic, Director of the Perry Senior Center, reached out to Lifeline with the request to bring the VITA/TCE program to their location for the 2017 tax season. In the past, AARP had offered this program at the Perry Senior Center, but they had left the location about five years previously and the center was looking to fill the void for their community members.

“Christine initially asked if we would be willing to meet their clients at their Perry location so that they would not have to drive into Painesville for the service,” said Lifeline Program Coordinator Heather DeMetro. “After meeting with Christine and touring their facility, I realized that this site could serve three eastern Lake County communities for our program, if they agreed to allow us to use the location for Painesville Township and Madison as well. They were open to the idea and offered to provide just about anything if we would utilize their site for VITA/TCE. We scheduled a few test dates for later in the 2017 tax season and they marketed the opportunity in their newsletter. The initial list of interested clients contained nearly 40 names and people were still signing up.”

In previous years, Lifeline did not serve many Perry residents in the VITA Program. However, now due to this partnership Lifeline staff saw the potential to provide an important service to low-to-moderate income residents who were in need of filing their taxes throughout the eastern part of Lake County.

For the 2018 tax season, we expanded the VITA/TCE program to the Perry Senior Center as a second site. On Wednesdays,

Continued on Page 8
Continued from Page 7

during tax season we complete returns
at the Perry Senior Center location
and are seeing a consistent increase in
interest at that site.

“It has become a beneficial partnership
for both parties. Lifeline provides the
knowledge, volunteers, oversight, and
laptop computers and Perry Senior
Center provides local marketing,
sign-ups, printer, paper, and ink,”
said DeMetro. “Together there is
great potential for growth and more
convenient access to the eastern part
of the county. We were thrilled to be
back in Perry for 2019.”

The Outstanding Achievement Award
was given to two Lifeline program
participants, Franchesca Grant and
Sophia Cicconetti, to recognize their
significant progress in achieving self-
sufficiency.

As a mother of two young children,
Franchesca understood the need of
balance with work, school and family.
She chose personal goals that reflected
her desire to be a role model for her
children, including healthier eating,
spirituality and creating moments of
quality time with her children.

Franchesca demonstrated her character
and strength as she continued to
excel in school and focusing on the
rewarding feeling to help someone in
need. She successfully graduated with
her LPN license in January of 2019
and subsequently graduated from the
Supportive Housing Program.

“I was very impressed with Franchesca’s
dedication and motivation,” said
Angela Wrana, Franchesca’s Lifeline
case manager. “She was always able
to successfully balance
raising her family
and working while
maintaining As and Bs in
her accelerated nursing
program.”

“Without Lifeline’s
help, I would not have
been able to go back
to school or provide
for my family,” said
Franchesca.

During her enrollment in
the Supportive Housing
Program, Franchesca discussed her long
term goal of becoming a registered nurse
and eventually a nurse practitioner, and
obtaining a Bachelors Degree. Angela
presented her with an opportunity to
pursue this goal sooner than she had
planned through enrollment in Lifeline’s
IDA Asset Building Program. After
learning about the Lifeline IDA Program,
Franchesca decided that now was the
perfect time to take the next step and
was accepted into the IDA Program to
save for her educational goals.

“Franchesca is currently participating
in the IDA program to move forward in
her education journey. As a participant,
she is required to save funds that will
be matched by Lifeline at an 8:1 dollar
match. Along with the savings plan, the
program also requires her to attend our
financial empowerment program and
specific asset education,” said Lifeline
Program Coordinator Tiffany Menosky.

“Franchesca is determined and focused
on achieving her goals to become
completely self-sufficient for her and
her family. She has been a strong
participant in the IDA program and I
expect her to complete this program by fall. She
has been pleasant to work with and is a very
astute learner. I believe that she will continue
to be successful in her endeavors.”

In the summer of 2017,
Sophia Cicconetti was
21 years old and a single
mother to her two week
old daughter. She was
employed at Dunkin Donuts
while also enrolled full-time at Lakeland
Community College and was struggling
to get back on her feet and be able
to provide for her daughter. She had
learned about Lifeline’s Supportive
Housing Program at Lifeline from a
friend who was also a single mother and
working hard to make ends meet.

“My friend told me how helpful the
program had been to her and she knew
that I truly wanted to be successful for
my newborn daughter and myself,” said
Sophia. “Prior to the program, I felt
totally lost and so behind that I wasn’t
sure how I was ever going to get ahead.
I always had a vision of myself being an
amazing mother to my daughter and
creating a good successful life for us. I
was so motivated but I did not know how
that was going to unfold since I could
barely pay my bills.”

With the financial assistance and case
management support of the program,
Sophia was able to rent a two bedroom
apartment and provide a safe home
for her and her baby. She was able to
focus on school and began to establish
a career for herself.

Sophia worked closely with her Lifeline
case manager, Angela Wrana, to set goal
plans and problem solve.

“Having the regular meetings with
Angela are very important to me
because we go over my goals and come
up with solutions to any problems that I
may be facing. We also complete budget
worksheets for each month so that I can
visually see my income and expenses so
that I am aware of my spending habits,”
said Sophia.
In the past year, Sophia has made great strides both academically and professionally. Sophia has decided to change her major from Radiology to Business and HR Management. She is also employed full time and is being trained for a management position with American Family Insurance. Her daughter is also thriving and has just learned how to walk!

“I am truly impressed with all of the progress that Sophia has made in this program,” said Wrana. “She has achieved not only the educational goals that she had set for herself, but also her personal goals. She should be proud of her amazing accomplishments.”

Sophia graduated from the Supportive Housing Program in December. She plans to continue to excel at her current place of employment and utilize the financial and educational skills that she has learned from Lifeline.

“Since participating in the program, I feel that I am a lot more organized as an individual in both my work and personal life, more responsible with my spending and saving, and have more confidence in myself to provide a successful life for my daughter and I,” said Sophia. “The employees at Lifeline have been so caring, understanding and helpful to me.”

The final award of the evening was the Staff of the Year Award. Voted on by the entire Lifeline staff, this award is given to one Lifeline staff member each year who goes above and beyond the call of duty, both in serving the customers of the agency and in being a team player—a staff member who really lives Lifeline’s mission. This year’s recipient was HEAP Program Manager Marina Rivera.

Marina has worked in Lifeline’s HEAP Department since 2009. Our HEAP Coordinator for many years, Marina was promoted to a new position of HEAP Program Manager earlier this year. In her roles as HEAP Coordinator and HEAP Program Manager, Marina is responsible for all aspects of the HEAP programs, including supervising HEAP staff, auditing client files for accuracy and adherence to program guidelines, and fiscal batching and reporting. We are regularly told by the Ohio Development Services Agency that we run one of the best HEAP programs in the state—much of this can be attributed to Marina’s efforts.

“Marina has been part of our Lifeline family for over a decade and during that time I have seen her grow and become one of the greatest assets to this organization,” said Young. “Even in the most difficult of situations she goes above and beyond for our clients and handles herself with grace. She is one of the strongest and most caring people I know and I am very fortunate to not only be her co-worker but also her friend. Her dedication to her work and our agency is truly inspirational.”

One of the most important qualities of a great leader is one that listens. Marina’s leadership is the driving force of Lifeline’s HEAP program as she listens, takes everyone’s thoughts and ideas into consideration, delegates and follow through to ensure that we address and meet the needs of our clients,” said Lifeline HEAP Coordinator Erika Taylor. “Many years of HEAP success can be attributed to Marina’s strong leadership.”

**Laketrans**

Laketrans seeking 10-year 1% of 1% sales tax with Issue 2

- Laketrans is asking voters, in the November 5 general election, to approve a 1% sales tax for 10 years.
- If passed, starting in 2020 the transit agency would receive 25 cents per every $100 in taxable goods purchased in Lake County.
- Today, Lake County residents rely on Laketrans over 2,500 times a day meaning 750,000 times a year and over 60 percent of Laketrans trips get residents to work or school including seniors and people with disabilities.
- Meanwhile, Laketrans is operating on its original tax levy from 1988 and has not returned to the voters for new money in over 30 years.
- Dial-a-Ride, the agency’s door-to-door, assisted transportation shared-ride service, ridership has grown 18% since 2015. Over the past five years, trips to medical appointments for seniors has increased 53%, and work trips, often for people with disabilities, have gone up by 21%. Trips to local senior centers have increased by 27% this year alone.
- The current demand for service exceeds Laketrans’s capacity by over 50,000 trips annually.
- Laketrans officials have said the issue would allow Laketrans to meet the growing demand for accessible transportation for Lake County seniors, people with disabilities and veterans. Over 75 percent of the funds from the tax would be used to sustain Dial-a-Ride service and meet the growing demand, while remaining funds will expand routes to improve job access.
- Officials also stated that as ridership increases, funding continues to decline, including a loss of $800,000 from the state alone in 2019.
- Laketrans is expecting the demand for Dial-a-Ride to grow for a few decades. Today nearly 25% of the county’s population is 60 years and older and by 2030, 34% of Lake County will be 60 years and older. This sales tax levy guarantees there will continue to be transportation options for Lake County’s seniors.
- Without the passage of Issue 2, Laketrans will have to cut 30% of its services.
Helping People, Changing Lives through HCRP Assistance

by: Angela Wrana
Program Coordinator

In June 2019, Bridget enrolled in the HCRP Program at Lifeline. The HCRP, or Homeless Crisis Response Program provides emergency rental assistance to the homeless population in Lake County. The assistance can include security deposit, an average of three months of rent, and utility deposits/arrears.

After living in Missouri for 15 years, Bridget and her two children, ages 13 and 14, had recently moved back to Ohio due to financial struggles and to be closer to her father who was ill. Sadly, her father passed away and Bridget found herself without any family support and struggling to provide for her children.

After being evicted from her home, Bridget spiraled into a deep state of depression that she describes as “very cold and dark.” Bridget moved in to a motel room with her children and struggled daily to provide for them with her waitressing job where she made just $4.25/hour, plus tips. “It was so stressful and emotional,” said Bridget.

But Bridget did not give up hope - she continued to fight and prayed every day for an answer.

Thankfully Bridget and her children became linked with Extended Housing’s Homeless Outreach Program where she began to receive financial assistance with her motel stay and was referred for mental health services. She was also referred to Lifeline for emergency rental assistance through HCRP.

Bridget came to Lifeline to meet with Program Coordinator Angela Wrana and quickly began her search for housing.

“It was difficult finding a home/apartment because of certain landlords rules,” said Bridget. “I was feeling overwhelmed but Angela stayed by my side & kept me encouraged.”

Soon after, Bridget was able to secure a safe and clean three bedroom apartment for herself and her children. Angela conducted a safety inspection of the unit prior to her move-in and assisted Bridget with her outstanding electric balance so that she would be able to get the utilities turned on in her name.

“Receiving not only rental assistance, but utility assistance as well, allows our participants the opportunity to better save their money so that they can be self-sufficient once their program ends,” said Wrana. “Bridget has fought so long and so hard to provide for her family, it is amazing to see her get back on her feet.”

Looking for a Volunteer Opportunity to help Lake County’s most vulnerable populations?

We’re looking for volunteers to be trained and matched as Guardians. Guardians assist with ensuring the health and safety of individuals deemed incompetent by the Lake County Probate Court. They work with the Court and local service providers to make decisions, including healthcare and housing, on behalf of those individuals.

If you’re interested in truly making a difference in peoples’ lives, contact us at 440-350-2233 or guardian@lclifeline.org
Thank you, Lifeline Annual Campaign Donors!
The Lifeline Board and staff extend their deepest thanks to those who made our 2018-19 annual campaign a success!

Donors $250 and up
Pamela Gouldsberry
Brian & Catherine Humphrey
The Lubrizol Foundation
James & Theresa Maher
Rita C. McMahon
Robert & Mary Moore
Pam Morse
Oak Hill Village Apartments
Dan Smith, Consolidated Investment Corporation
Joyce Taylor
Tropical Village Apartments
Ken & Paula Tully
Edward & Krista Zivkovich

Dorothy & Jim Quandt
John Shepard & David Polakowski
Robert & Doris Smith *
Kate Stein *
Father R. Stephen Vallenga
Drs. Kenneth & Liese Vito
Mark Wainwright & Drez Jennings
Mayor Robert Weger
Robert & Karen Zaluski
Tony & Marlene Zampedro *
Charles Zibbel

Donors $5-$99
Ali Adinaro *
Rick Amos, Amos Insurance & Financial Services
Alex & Alyea Barajas
Dr. Stephen & Robin Baum
Seth & Abby Begeman
Tim & Diane Begeman *
Michael Bertone, Bertones Gas & Service Center
Aaron Burko
Beryl N. Burko
Mary Frances Burns
Phil Cole, OACAA
David & Arlene Curry *
Mario & Tara Cututic
John & Jean Denison
Alfred & Peggy Dotson
The Eastlake Womens Club
Derek Elshaw
Fairport Harbor Tourism Council
Don & Joanne Filipski
Robert & Linn Gahr
Lynn & Jacqueline Gerould *
Janet Gockel
Nancy Guthrie
Paul Hach
Joe & Mary Hada
David & Anita Heider
Carley Hosler *
Constance P. Irvin
Judy Klotzbach
Steven & Laura Knots
Carrie Knox
Shannon Kriegmont
Bob & Heidi Landgraf *

Jeff & Laurie Laturell
Don & Ann Lieske *
Duane & Jeanne Lipps
Oscar & Jeannette Manns
Tim Manross
Aurora Martinez
Theo & Brenda Mezaris
Dave Mitskavich
Carrie Morgan *
Douglas Morgan, JF Morgan & Sons, Inc.
Catherine Nasca
Jay & Denise Neidermeyer *
Julia Parker
Jenni Lynn Patterson *
Scott & Erin Pawlak *
Marie Pollard *
Dianne Rafferty
Ralph Carter Management Company
Illene Rosewater
Bob Rosplock *
Christine Shoop
Marvin Silver
Dr. Lynn & Sheila Smith
John & Debby Speck
Carol Thobaben
Denise Timms *
Becky Tuma
Amanda Wayner
David & Sue Whittaker
John & Judy Woods

* Indicates First-time Annual Campaign Donor

Western Reserve Junior Service League

THANK YOU, WRJSL!

Last spring, WRJSL provided funding for our Bike Safety Program through their Community Grants Program.

Over 30 participants benefitted from their generosity!
Lifeline Graduates First Buy Car Program Participant

by: Tiffany Menosky
Program Coordinator

In May of 2019, Janelle was accepted into Lifeline’s brand new Buy Car Program. Janelle was in need of a reliable vehicle for her and her young son so that she could get to appointments, but, more importantly, so that she had better opportunities for employment. Utilizing ride share and public transportation can be extremely limiting to employment.

Janelle had encountered some difficulties on her journey and had recently returned to Lake County from Texas. She was set on improving her situation and was working with another Lake County agency on finding better employment and some basic life skills. A staff member of this agency directed her to Lifeline for the Buy Car Program.

To meet the requirements of the program, Janelle saved one-third the cost of the vehicle while participating in our Financial Empowerment Program. Lifeline matched her savings with the other two-thirds up to the $5000 total cap for the program.

“She was willing and determined to put in the time and follow the plan to get her the next level of self-sufficiency.”

Janelle purchased her vehicle in August 2019 and left the program more independent and with a stronger skill set in financial responsibility.

“Thanks to the Buy Car Program not only do I have a newer, reliable car, but also am fully educated in credit, budgeting and prioritizing correctly for setting and reaching goals,” said Janelle of her experience in the program.

“I truly believe that everyone needs to learn these skills and use these tools to be self-sufficient. For the first time in my life I bought a car from a dealership and it opened up so many opportunities. I couldnt be more thankful!”

Lifeline, Inc. is now on Facebook & Twitter!

‘LIKE’ us today to stay updated on Lifeline programs, upcoming events and news!
Lifeline, Inc. concluded its 2019 tax season with great results, according to the agency’s administration.

Final statistics for the VITA Program for the 2019 tax season show that 221 residents had their taxes prepared at a Lifeline VITA tax clinic and that 79 of them received the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC). A total of $341,624 in tax returns were filed and brought back into the Lake County community through Lifeline’s VITA Clinics.

The EITC is a federal income tax credit for low to moderate income working families and individuals. Congress originally approved it in 1975. Eligibility factors include how much you earned in the prior year and how many children you have. Even single adults and couples without children can qualify for the credit, although families with children receive larger credits.

“We’re really excited about the number of people that we served with free tax preparation services this season—while we fell a dozen or so short of last year, we had many more of our participants qualify for the EITC and the amount of tax returns was actually much higher. We’re really pleased to bring that kind of revenue back into the Lake County community,” Lifeline Executive Director Carrie Dotson said.

“We have to thank our partners at the United Way of Lake County. They provide funding for our VITA Program so that we can really take it to the next level and assist additional residents at multiple sites.”

Lifeline, Inc. uses volunteers trained and certified by the IRS through its Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) program. VITA volunteers provide free income tax assistance to low-income, elderly and disabled people. Throughout the 2019 tax season, volunteers donated 589 hours to Lifeline’s VITA Program—the most ever accumulated in a single season.

Lifeline Program Coordinator, Heather DeMetro agreed that the program was a huge success this year.

“This year’s tax season was a huge success! We had 13 volunteers this year, which was a major contributor to our success. They devote their spare time to help Lake County residents and truly enjoy being a part of this program. I’m so grateful,” said DeMetro.

Volunteers for the 2019 tax season included John Decker, Matt Fekete, Sabra Rodriguez, Sue Kunsman, Cher Kelley, Patricia Kelley, Rita McMahon, Brent Hanf, Dennis Jondle, Sara Aparicio, Linda Brentar and Harilur DSilva.

Lifeline was really pleased to be able to expand the VITA clinics this year to new locations, offering clinics at both Lakeland Community College in Kirtland and Willoughby Public Library, in addition to clinics at the Perry Senior Center and at Lifeline’s Painesville office.

Dotson says that its also the partnerships and collaborative efforts amongst providers in Lake County that have really boosted the results of the program.

“This year we were able to expand on our partnership with the Perry Senior Center to more easily serve those in eastern Lake County, and launched new partnerships with Lakeland Community College and with the Willoughby Public Library in downtown Willoughby to be more accessible to those in western Lake County, both of which were very helpful,” said Dotson.

“We also have a long-standing collaboration with Lake Erie College’s accounting professor, Julie Ziemak, who provides valuable guidance and training to our volunteers—we couldn’t do this without her contribution.”

Over the course of the last 10 tax seasons, the VITA Program has really made a difference for Lake County residents. Since 2010, our volunteers have prepared tax filings for 1,414 Lake County residents and generated $1,809,051 in returns for them. They have kept every penny and paid no fees. Volunteers have donated 3,500 hours to train and prepare tax filings for our clients.

“This year was also significant for our VITA Program because it was the first year we surpassed 500 volunteer hours served and we’re closing in on $2 million in returns generated,” said Dotson. “For a program that is completely volunteer-driven, that is an amazing amount of money brought back into our community.”

Lifeline, Inc. will again host VITA tax clinics beginning in January 2020. While specific clinic details will not be available until December 2019, Lifeline is already recruiting volunteers to become trained to assist low to moderate income households with tax preparation next winter and spring. In partnership with the IRS office in Cleveland, Lifeline staff and its volunteers will undergo varying levels of training, provided free of charge by the IRS.

You can make a real difference in the lives of working families by helping them claim every tax benefit to which they are entitled. Tax payers who take advantage of this free tax assistance can save on tax preparation fees and receive fast refunds.

Anyone can volunteer. No tax accounting experience is necessary, only a desire to help others in need. Volunteers participate in a several training levels. Once certified, volunteers will be scheduled to assist with tax preparation January through April.

Anyone interested in volunteering can contact Lifeline Program Coordinator Tiffany Menosky at (440) 354-2148 or tiffanym@lclifeline.org
Lifeline Finishes Busy Summer Crisis Season, While Preparing for the 2019-20 Winter Crisis Season

Lifeline’s Home Energy Assistance Program staff has been very busy throughout the 2018-19 program year. The staff saw high numbers of applicants for both the 2018-2019 Winter Crisis Program and the 2019 Summer Crisis Program.

“It’s amazing to me just how many households in Lake County use the HEAP programs to maintain their utility service, and ultimately their self-sufficiency,” said Carrie Dotson, Executive Director at Lifeline, Inc.

“Utility costs are high and rates increase sometimes unexpected, so we have a lot of our local residents who are relying on both the emergency assistance and payment plans to help them maintain service.”

During Lifeline’s 2018-2019 Winter Crisis Program, November 1, 2018 to March 31, 2019, the agency completed 781 applications for emergency assistance. Of those 781 applications, 743 were approved. The program allocated over $194,000 during the winter season for emergency assistance.

“We saw so many new people during the 2018-2019 HEAP Winter Crisis Program who had not heard about our program until they read about it in the newspaper or saw the inserts with their utility bills,” said Marina Rivera, HEAP Program Manager at Lifeline.

Lifeline’s 2019 Summer Crisis Program also saw high numbers. During the brief, two month season, 313 applications were accepted and 298 were approved for either emergency assistance or financial assistance in paying for an air conditioner or fan.

Those served during the 2019 Summer Crisis Program included households that either had a senior citizen or someone with a documented health condition in the household. In the months of July and August 2019, over $43,000 was allocated in emergency assistance, in addition to 50 window air conditioners and 10 fans distributed.

“We were thrilled to be able to partner so well with the Lake County Council on Aging and Lake County Senior Centers to help a lot of our senior citizens stay cool during the summer,” said Dotson.

“The 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 applicants 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.”

The HEAP Staff at Lifeline are gearing up for the 2019-20 Emergency HEAP WCP. It will begin on November 1st and applications will be processed by the Lifeline Energy Assistance office.

“The staff and I are looking forward to the HEAP Winter Crisis Program. We know we’ll be busy and help a lot of residents who need it,” said Rivera.

The WCP program can provide a one-time payment per heating season (November 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.

In order to help those who already have a critical energy situation, Lifeline’s HEAP program will be offering special walk-in days at the start of the program.

On Friday, November 1 a walk-in session will be held beginning at 7:30 a.m. A special walk in day will be held on Saturday, November 2 beginning at 8:30 a.m. Lifeline’s Energy Assistance Office is located at 54 S. State St., Suite 303 in Painesville.
The office will be closed on Monday, Nov. 11 in observance of Veterans Day.

All walk-in sessions are on a first come, first served basis. 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. Beginning Monday, November 4, the 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 or visiting https://capappointments.com to schedule online. This line will also provide a list of the documents required to complete an application.

For any questions regarding eligibility, please contact the Lifeline, Inc. Energy Assistance office at (440) 350-9160.

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.

---

**HEAP Winter Crisis Program 2019-20**

**Important Information**

**WCP begins November 1, 2019 and ends March 31, 2020**

To qualify for assistance, applicants must have a disconnection notice on their main heating source. For assistance with fuel oil, they must have less than 10 days supply in their fuel tank. Assistance with electric is only provided if electricity is needed to heat their home. Applicants must also meet federal income guidelines to qualify for assistance.

November 1 will be for walk-ins only--no appointments will be scheduled. We will offer both appointments and walk-ins on Saturday, November 2 beginning at 8:30 a.m.

The office will be closed on Monday, November 11 for Veteran’s Day, as well as on November 28 & 29 for Thanksgiving.

Throughout the remainder of the season, walk-in hours will begin Monday, Wednesday & Friday mornings at 7:30 a.m. on a first-come/first-served basis.

Appointments can be scheduled for Tuesdays and Thursdays by calling our toll-free, automated appointment hotline at 1-866-223-1471 or visiting https://capappointments.com.

Applicants should bring the following information at the time of their appointment: photo ID or Birth certificates, Social Security cards for everyone in the household, all income verification for the last 30 days (including child support and utility reimbursements), gas and electric bills and if renting, landlord name/address/phone number.

If self-employed or seasonal employee, we require proof of 12 months income. Applicants can use their 2018 tax forms if they’ve been employed over two years. If tax forms are self-prepared, they must show that tax forms were submitted to the IRS.

If assistance is received with rent, applicants must provide verification from LMHA.

Please contact the HEAP Office with any questions.

We can be reached at 440-350-9160
This year, Lifeline’s 2-1-1 received the distinguished honor of becoming accredited by the national Alliance of Information and Referral Systems (AIRS). This designation demonstrates the highest quality of service provided to our community in providing information and referrals through the 2-1-1 hotline.

“We are so pleased to achieve national AIRS accreditation and be recognized as one of the best of the best in the nation in terms of information and referral services,” said Lifeline Executive Director Carrie Dotson. “Our staff worked so hard to get our program ready to apply for accreditation and did remarkably well through the application process, site visit and test calls. Both our Board and I are very proud of the work they’ve done.”

The AIRS strict quality indicators require guidance related to customer services, staff engagement, program outreach and database management. Lifeline’s 2-1-1 staff worked for several years to improve program operations and processes to ensure that our community is able to receive vital information regarding basic needs such as housing, food, utilities and transportation. Lifeline’s 2-1-1 maintains a database of 494 resources at 994 different providers, including non-profit organizations, government entities, faith based programs and more.

Lifeline’s 2-1-1 calls are taken by trained staff and volunteers, many who are AIRS certified navigators. They understand the specific needs of our local community and how to best support our callers by providing personalized information and referrals to successfully resolve issues important to each caller.

Lifeline’s 2-1-1 impact continues to grow. In 2018, 2-1-1 responded to 36,317 incoming inquiries for assistance through the hotline and the online database searches, the highest number in years.

Please contact 2-1-1 if you or someone you know is in need of assistance.

2-1-1 is available 24/7/365 by dialing 2-1-1 or by searching our online database at www.lclifeline.org