



News Release

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Lifeline, Inc. Honors Lake County Residents, Organizations at 2018 Annual Awards Dinner May 17, 2018

PAINESVILLE, Ohio— Lifeline, Inc., Lake County's Community Action Agency, is pleased to announce its 2018 award winners and to recognize agency volunteers and community partners for their commitment to Lake County's low-income citizens. The awards were presented at Lifeline's Annual Dinner held on May 16 at the Mooreland Mansion on the Lakeland Community College campus.

"We gave out four 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, and our community."

The 14th Annual Mildred P. Wilson Award was presented to Lifeline Board Member Ed Zivkovich, who has 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 William Margalis, past Lifeline Board member; Barb Crabtree, fiscal consultant; Janet Gockel, Lifeline volunteer; Rita C. McMahon, Lifeline Board member; Donna Zabarsky, past Lifeline Board member and community partner; Bob Zaluski, past Lifeline Board member; Mark Alderman, Ohio Development Services Agency Field Representative; Gwen Corban, former Lifeline Executive Director; Cate Hearn, former Lifeline staff member; Jeremy & Vanessa Iosue, past Lifeline Board member and volunteers; Elaine Waytes, Lifeline volunteer; Joe Hughes & Ali Ali Adinaro, Lifeline volunteers/celebrity dancers; and Frank Vaccariello, Lifeline volunteer.

Ed joined the Lifeline Board of Directors in May 2012, appointed by St. Mary's Church in Painesville where he served as president of the St. Vincent DePaul Society. Ed has been an extraordinarily active Board member, quietly assisting in whatever projects needed. Ed has long provided leadership on the Board Programs & Planning Committee and served as the Board Treasurer and Chair of the Finance Committee for two terms, in 2016 and 2017.

Ed has also been instrumental in his support of Lifeline's missions and in moving our agency forward. In 2015, Ed travelled to Columbus for the two-day training on the national Pathways to Excellence quality assurance program and assisted Lifeline staff in beginning the process. As a part of the self-review process, Ed met monthly with Lifeline staff to evaluate the current strengths and weaknesses of the agency operations. Ed was also instrumental last summer in helping to educate our community on 2-1-1 and its importance in the community and in helping Lifeline build relationships with the new Commissioners.

"In addition to the projects and leadership Ed has provided our Board over the years, Ed also steps up to help with the day to day activities of the Board," said Dotson. "Every year during the HEAP Customer Appreciation Week, Ed volunteers to be here bright and early on multiple days to help with pre-screening the clients—this is a huge help to our staff, as well as a service to our clients. On the fundraising end, Ed consistently has the highest percentage of contacts giving because he works at it."

“Both his volunteerism and his actions make Ed an incredibly valuable Board member, and one we will be sad to see go when his term expires in December,” said Dotson.

The Outstanding Community Spirit Award was given to Larry & Lori Weisman of Sheraton Furniture in downtown Willoughby for their commitment to Lifeline, Inc.’s mission and the clients that we serve, as well as their support of the community. The award 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.

When Lori and Larry Weisman of Sheraton Furniture in Willoughby heard about individuals in their community struggling in their return to Lake County and successfully achieve their goals, they wanted to make a positive impact. Bri Moon, Lifeline’s Reentry Coordinator, explained Lake County’s Reentry Program and the movement to assist those formally incarcerated with employment, housing, behavioral health/addiction services and other barriers to successful reentry.

“When I shared with the Weismans the need for basic furniture for those who had established housing, the collaboration was formed,” says Moon.

In 2017, nine individuals were assisted with beds and/or couches for their homes. Prior to receiving these items, individuals were sleeping on blankets in their empty apartment and sitting on the floor. With the generosity of Sheraton Furniture, clients were able to have warm beds to sleep in and a couch in their living space. The company even offered free delivery for the clients. Obtaining an apartment is a significant achievement for the clients and have the opportunity to make it a “home” adds to the community desire for them to become successful Lake County residents; the opportunity to put down roots.

“Sheraton Furniture is a wonderful presence in our community and has gone above and beyond when it comes to helping their fellow neighbors. They made the individuals feel like a priority by assisting them with affordable, fine quality furniture,” Moon shares. “This new partnership with Sheraton Furniture creates a new opportunity to develop collaborations that benefit the community and clients.”

The Outstanding Community Partnership Award was presented jointly to Father Chris Zerucha of St. Mary’s Church in Painesville, Bob Cahen of the Lakeland Foundation and Professor Alice Walker and her Lakeland students for their collaboration on raising local matching funds for Lifeline’s new IDA Program. The Outstanding Community Partnership Award recognizes a program or collaboration that shows both innovation and results in helping low-income families achieve self-sufficiency.

When Lifeline decided to move forward in development of an IDA Program at Lifeline, the staff knew that the first big hurdle would be raising our local match. We knew it was going to be more of a grassroots fundraising effort for the pilot project. We had no idea that we would get such amazing support from our local friends and partners.

Father Chris Zerucha was the first to jump on board and get behind the project and last spring began ‘selling’ the program and its benefits to potential donors. Over the course of the summer, Father Chris brought six individual donations in, as well as convincing two local businesses to support the program through fundraising events, totaling nearly \$6,000. Rarely have we found a community member as passionate about a program and its potential impact and actively supporting it, as Father Chris has been about the IDA Program.

In August, Lifeline was approached by Lakeland professor Alice Walker and Executive Director of the Lakeland Foundation, Bob Cahen, about working with a social work class who was learning about motivational interviewing and fundraising as a collegiate chapter of the AFP. They needed a project to focus on for the semester and, after reviewing several of Lifeline’s programs, chose the IDA Program. Under Bob and Alice’s guidance, the class researched IDA Programs—the impacts, the challenges and the logistics, and put together sales pitches. In December, the class made their sales pitches for the IDA Program to actual Lakeland Foundation donors, several in turn that made contributions to the IDA Program.

In total, including a matching contribution from the Lifeline Board, nearly \$15,000 was raised in 2017 as our local

match to the Ohio CDC funding. Because of the tenacity and support of these partners, our IDA Program is launched and we're ready to help our customers make lasting financial impact on their lives.

The Outstanding Achievement Award was given to two Lifeline program participants, Sabrina Falls and Kelly Broadwater, to recognize their significant progress in achieving self-sufficiency.

Sabrina Falls began her journey to self-sufficiency by enrolling in the Comprehensive Case Management and Employment Program (CCMEP) in December of 2016. Battling temptations from her previous drug addiction and finding a balance between her goals and being a single mother of two was difficult for Sabrina, but she knew that she wanted to make a change. Her goals included obtaining her GED, finding housing that was a safe environment for her and her two children, and concentrating on staying sober.

Through dedication and perseverance, Sabrina found housing at Neveah Ridge, working with case managers and completing outpatient services at Lake Geauga Recovery Center. Throughout her stay she attended high school equivalency courses and completed her GED in June of 2017. Before Sabrina finished her time at Neveah Ridge, she diligently searched for safe and affordable housing that would benefit her and her children after her time at Neveah Ridge was over. In August of 2017, the participant achieved her goal of finding housing. She signed her first lease agreement, as an adult, with New Directions for Living. She went on to successfully complete her Aftercare Group at Lake Geauga Recovery Centers in December of 2017 and enrolled at Lakeland Community College the following month.

Today, Sabrina is learning to sustain her success and continue her growth to achieving self-sufficiency. She is comfortably living at New Directions with her two children and working closely with the case manager on site, as well as through CCMEP. She currently attends Lakeland Community College part-time to explore career opportunities and complete brush up courses in English and Algebra. In her spare time, Sabrina attends substance abuse and support groups alongside individuals who have shared the struggles that she had endured.

"Sabrina's success can be attributed to her commitment to the CCMEP Program. She attended all of her appointments with the paperwork she needed. I could see she was committed to creating a better life for herself and her children. I have no doubts she will do that," said Breanna Horton, Lifeline CCMEP Coordinator.

Kelly Broadwater was referred to Lifeline for The Homeless Crisis Response Program (HCRP) by a local domestic violence shelter. The HCRP Program provides emergency housing assistance to homeless individuals and families in Lake County. HCRP provides rental assistance as well as assistance with security deposit, first/last month's rent, utility deposit and/or arrears. To be eligible for the program, customers must have a referral from Project Hope, Forbes House, or be working with an agency who works with those living on the streets or in hotels.

When Kelly first came to Lifeline for HCRP assistance, she was a single mom with three children and a baby on the way. She had escaped an unhealthy living situation and was trying to finish school while raising her children. Kelly desperately wanted to establish safe housing for herself and her children, but was in need of the financial resources to do so.

Once her referral had been received, Kelly met with Lifeline Program Coordinator, Angela Wrana to complete the intake process for HCRP. Kelly was immediately enrolled in the program and found her new home quickly afterwards. Kelly and her family had previously experienced a house fire, so they found it particularly reassuring that a requirement of The HCRP Program is that Lifeline staff must conduct a safety inspection of the unit prior to signing the lease. This allowed her piece of mind when transitioning into her new home.

The HCRP Program provided Kelly with five months of rental assistance as well as assistance with her security deposit and utilities. With this assistance, she was able to save her money to obtain beds for her children, a kitchen table and other needed household items to furnish their home.

"This program helped me get on my feet. It literally changed our lives," says Kelly. Kelly states that her children are thriving in their new environment. "My son, Cameron is autistic. It is very important that he is in a safe and

stable environment. This has helped him cope.”

The HCRP Program not only assisted her financially, but she also received case management support as well. Kelly communicated with Angela frequently to discuss budgeting and any issues or concerns that she was experiencing.

“Kelly was very motivated and determined. She never gave up and was always on top of fulfilling her responsibilities to maintain the resources needed for her family,” said Wrana.

Since completing The HCRP Program, Kelly has finished school and will be attending her graduation ceremony in May. She is presently saving for a vehicle and keeping her children engaged in activities.

This year Lifeline’s Annual Dinner and Awards Presentation were held in conjunction with National Community Action Awareness Month and featured remarks by both Lifeline Board President, Anne Curwen and by Dotson. The event also marked Lifeline’s 45th Anniversary of serving Lake County’s most vulnerable residents.

Dotson says that because Lifeline, Inc. is such a locally-focused organization, they work to recognize those who have made an impact locally with these awards.

“As a Community Action Agency, we are obviously a very community-based organization. Last year we served over 2,500 households from nearly every community in Lake County with our community services programs and answered over 35,000 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 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 and through private donors.