



News Release

Lifeline, Inc.

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Home Energy Assistance Program Summer Crisis Program Serves Over 300 Lake County Households October 21, 2020

PAINESVILLE, Ohio— The HEAP Summer Crisis Program (SCP), which began on July 1st and concluded on September 30, assisted over 300 Lake County households in beating the heat.

Throughout the three months of the Summer Crisis Season, Lifeline's staff completed emergency assistance applications for 466 households from nearly every community in Lake County. Of those applications, 317 of them were either approved for assistance with their electric bill or received an air conditioner or fan. Nearly \$43,000 in federal dollars was expended over the course of the season, in addition to the window air conditioners and fans distributed.

"This year, we extended the length of the program and expanded eligibility requirements so we could help more Ohioans during this health crisis," Lydia Mihalik, director of the Ohio Development Services Agency said. "We're working with Lifeline every day to help Ohioans in need."

"This program really isn't just about providing comfort—it's about keeping our most vulnerable residents, senior citizens and those with health conditions, including COVID-19, safe and 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 Carrie Dotson, Executive Director at Lifeline.

"Due to COVID-19, our Summer Crisis Program felt a lot different than in past years," said Dotson. "Because of COVID-19, we didn't have a lobby full of walk-ins and we weren't able to do outreach and intake at the local senior centers as we usually do. But with so many of our residents struggling financially as a result of COVID-19 and layoffs, we were thankful to ODSA for allowing for over-the phone intake because we felt that really was the safest way to serve our local seniors and those with health conditions."

The Summer Crisis Program assists low-income households with an older household member (60 years or older), or households that can provide physician documentation that cooling assistance is needed for a household member's health. Conditions can include lung disease, Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease or asthma. This year, households that were diagnosed with COVID-19 in 2020, have a disconnect notice, have been shut off, or are trying to establish new service on their electric bill were also eligible for assistance. Applicants must have a household gross income at or below 175 percent of the federal poverty level.

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 One Victoria Place Suite 265A in Painesville.

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. Lifeline received interim designation as Geauga County's community action agency in 2020.

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, the Lake County Board of Developmental Disabilities, Lake Health and through private donors.