



Pittsburgh's crisis relief fund

A partnership of The Pittsburgh Foundation and United Way of Allegheny County

GIVE



What is Neighbor-Aid?

Neighbor-Aid is a **community-wide fundraising campaign to strengthen our region's safety net for families and individuals experiencing hardship** during these very challenging economic times.

As unemployment and underemployment rates continue to rise, thousands of members of our community have been forced to seek help in meeting their most basic needs – food on the table, shelter, utilities, and warm winter coats for their children. Many of these are people who have never had to ask for help before - folks who traditionally have donated to funds for those with greater needs, never imagining that they might one day be recipients of that help.

Neighbor-Aid will raise funds from donors and be distributed through community agencies, providing tangible assistance to people in need of shelter, utilities, food, emergency purchases, and transportation.

We are planning this effort in close partnership with The Pittsburgh Foundation, The Forbes Funds, leading community agencies, Allegheny County Department of Human Services, and civic leader Elsie Hillman.

Evidence that needs are growing

From meetings with our partner agencies, community agencies that focus on basic needs and the review of United Way HelpLine data, we can see that there are increase requests for assistance. These basic needs include shelter for families, help with utility costs, one-time emergency expenses, and transportation to employment and medical appointments. This is on top of the definition of need in our community needs assessment (2007) that indicated that United Way should emphasize help to Financially Struggling Adults and Families. As the recession continues and possibly worsens, we can anticipate a greater call for help as the economy contracts and more people lose jobs or hours of employment.

United Way's 24-hour HelpLine provides information and referrals to individuals seeking help every day of the year. Recent months have seen stark increases in requests for help:

- Requests for family seeking shelters are up 141%
- Requests for help with food are up 114%
- Requests for help with utilities are up 28.4%
- More than 1,850 requests were made for help with rent and to avoid eviction in 2008

Your dollars go further

Your generous contribution will be matched dollar for dollar. And 100% of all contributions go to help feed, house and warm those who need us.

To donate

You can make a donation via credit card through United Way online at www.unitedwaypittsburgh.org or by check payable to **United Way – Neighbor-Aid** at Box 640716, Pittsburgh, PA 15264-0716. Thank You.

These represent some of the desperate calls for assistance to United Way's HelpLine:

- A woman called seeking shelter for herself and her four children. Her landlord was recently foreclosed upon, leaving her and her family homeless.
- A woman called asking for help with fixing her car. She needs the car to get to work and to get her children to school.
- A woman called who was recently laid-off after 25 years of employment. She asked for help finding agencies that could help her with her mounting utility bills.
- A man called who lost his job a month ago, but will not be able to receive unemployment compensation for another eight weeks. He just received an eviction notice and was seeking financial assistance with his rent. He also asked for referrals to food pantries in his neighborhood and assistance with his mounting utility bills.

SUMMARY OF GRANTS AWARDED BY NEIGHBOR-AID: FEBRUARY 2009

Over \$600,000 directed from emergency fund to families and individuals in need

The **Brashear Association** received \$15,000 to provide direct aid to families and individuals seeking help with housing, utilities and transportation services at its Family Assistance Program. The Association, which provides human and community services to low-income families and individuals who reside in South Pittsburgh neighborhoods, reported consistently increasing demand for assistance.

The **Dollar Energy Fund** received \$100,000 to provide utility assistance grants to low-income families in Southwestern Pennsylvania. The grant will be used to leverage available 1:1 matching grants from utility suppliers. The Dollar Energy Fund has grown to become the largest hardship fund in Pennsylvania, and the fourth largest in the United States.

Focus on Renewal received \$10,000 to help meet its "desperate need" for additional funding to serve increasing numbers of people seeking assistance from its Community Center and Emergency Food Pantry, where demand has spiked from 209 individuals in 2008 to 533 individuals in November, of whom 207 were children.

The Greater Pittsburgh Community Food Bank received \$200,000 to sustain its inventory of food, providing an essential resource for its network of 380 charitable member agencies to which it distributes an average of 1.8 million pounds of food monthly. Overall demand has increased 300 percent between 2006 and 2008.

North Hills Community Outreach (NHCO) received \$40,000 to provide food, utility assistance and emergency financial aid for other essential needs including housing and transportation. NHCO addresses the basic needs of individuals and families in crisis, hardship and poverty, serving 50 of the 130 municipalities in Allegheny County, and in the past five months saw 2,393 clients of whom 586 sought charitable help for the first time.

Community Auto received \$22,000 to provide assistance for low-income individuals to purchase vehicles and to establish an emergency repair fund for buyers. Community Auto accepts donated vehicles, provides repair and inspection services and offers them to low-income buyers at below market value. Access to reliable and affordable transportation is critical for individuals in obtaining and retaining employment.

East End Cooperative Ministry received \$69,000 to help meet rising costs resulting from increased demand from those seeking assistance from its Food Pantry and Men's Emergency Shelter. In the wake of the economic crisis, the Ministry's shelter is operating at over 133 percent of capacity with increased 'first time users.' Its Food Pantry has experienced an overall 20 percent increase in demand with a 300 percent spike in the number of clients from other neighborhoods who are not traditional pantry clients.

Catholic Charities of the Diocese of Pittsburgh received \$80,000 to provide direct assistance to families and individuals in need. The organization, which is experiencing an unprecedented volume of calls, provides basic needs programs for utility bills, emergency food, clothing, medication, furniture needs, disaster relief services for seniors and transportation assistance.

University of Pittsburgh Office of Child Development received \$50,000 to provide emergency assistance to help keep family members in employment through its GAPS2 program, predominantly serving transportation, utility and housing needs. In its request for support, the organization stated: "The working poor, often described as one paycheck away from homelessness, have been forgotten by many safety net programs."

Society of St. Vincent de Paul received \$15,000 to purchase mattresses and bed frames for increasing numbers of first-time clients. The organization serves mostly low-income and at-risk families, and has experienced a 30 percent rise in demand since October 2008, with more people having immediate and extended family members move in with them.