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JP nonprofit among 7 area agencies to share in \$75K for heating aid

Posted by Matt Rocheleau January 23, 2012 09:10 AM

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(Howard Kang/ United Way of Massachusetts Bay & Merrimack Valley)

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By Matt Rocheleau, Town Correspondent

A Jamaica Plain nonprofit, along with six other local agencies, was chosen to share a \$75,000 donation made last week to help provide heating assistance to needy families.

The [Ecumenical Social Action Committee, Inc.](#), (ESAC) received \$12,500 from a total \$75,000 that the National Grid Foundation and the United Way of Massachusetts Bay & Merrimack Valley organizations said they distributed Thursday, in the middle of a winter in which [deep cuts in federal home heating assistance benefits](#) and [rising oil costs](#) have made staying warm a struggle for many low-income residents.

The utility company foundation's donation was made in "direct response" to the United Way's [\\$250,000 community challenge issued last month](#), United Way officials said. Due to the increasing need from residents, the National Grid foundation has upped its support of the funding the United Way distributes for basic needs services by 25 percent this year.

Following their contribution, the foundation has asked residents to do what they can to assist those struggling to provide basic needs for their families, according to United Way, which asks that matching donations be made at www.chooseyourimpact.org/FFSF.

"There exist basic needs that unite us all. Sadly, these fundamental requirements go unmet for too many residents of Massachusetts," National Grid Foundation board member Carmen Fields said in a statement. "We have answered United Way's community challenge and we urge the members of our community to join us. Together we can support our friends and neighbors in this shared time of crisis and ensure that no one feels cold this winter as they struggle to provide for their families basic needs."

Last winter, United Way of Massachusetts Bay and Merrimack Valley says it helped 604 households meet their emergency fuel needs.

"This season, with high unemployment, the elimination of a key rental assistance benefit and federal funding reductions, the projected need is greater than ever," the organization said. "Currently, nearly 100,000 Massachusetts

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man level," the organization said. "Currently nearly 100,000 Massachusetts children live in extreme poverty, 14 percent of Massachusetts children are at the poverty level and nearly 30 percent of Massachusetts children live in families on the brink of poverty."

According to [data released last month](#), the US Census Bureau considers 97.3 million, or one-third of Americans, to be low-income. Another 49.1 million US residents are classified as falling below the poverty line, meaning a record 1 in every two Americans - about half of the country's population - is considered either low-income or in poverty.

Five years ago, United Way's 2-1-1 service received 30,000 calls for assistance from residents seeking help with housing, utility payments, procuring food, becoming financially stable, veterans services, emergency relief and childcare help. Last year, the number of calls tripled to 90,000 and the organization projects it will receive nearly 100,000 calls by the end of this year.

"The immediacy with which the National Grid Foundation answered our community challenge exemplifies how United Way can directly turn a supporter's commitment into focused, positive action," United Way of Massachusetts Bay and Merrimack Valley president and CEO, Michael K. Durkin said in a statement. "Their steadfast support will help us begin to lift up the members of our community as one however our neighbors need collective action to keep their children warm this winter. I urge those who are capable of support this effort, to join the National Grid Foundation and help your fellow residents."

The \$75,000 from National Grid Foundation was distributed as follows:

- Ecumenical Social Action Committee, Inc., (ESAC) based in Jamaica Plain: \$12,500
- Asian Task Force Against Domestic Violence, based in Boston: \$12,500
- Cambridge Family & Children's Service: \$10,000
- Newton Community Service Center: \$10,000
- Community Teamwork, based in Lowell: \$10,000
- City Mission Society, based in downtown Boston: \$10,000
- Quincy Community Action Program, Inc. (QCAP): \$10,000

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