

WeCAN Gift to Give Utility Assistance

Written by Steve Frank
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Just in time for another blast of winter weather, the Watauga Crisis Assistance Network (WeCAN) received a \$5000 surprise gift from the High Country United Way. WeCAN will use the funds to help Watauga residents in need of utility assistance during the cold weeks that lie ahead. United Way Executive Director Linda Slade said, "Our board remains very committed to the immediate needs of our most vulnerable citizens," and she said, "The dangerous drop in temperature followed by record snowfall put many of our neighbors in crisis and the board stepped up to help alleviate some of that." The High Country United Way went into its reserve funds to make the surprise allocation to WeCAN and it couldn't have come at a more necessary time. United Way Board Member Johnny Carson adds, "I am proud of the decisions and quick action taken by High Country United Way. Words and slogans don't keep people's power and heat on. Action and money do."

WeCAN Coordinator Graham Doege said, "We are beyond thrilled to receive this generous gift from the United Way," and said, "The severe cold pushed not only those we serve into crisis mode, but the WeCAN program itself. There is no worse feeling than having to tell a family that there are no funds currently available to help keep them warm."

Since 2002, WeCAN has served as a clearing house of benevolence assistance and crisis services for Watauga County residents. It is a cash-in, cash-out program where 100% of donations go directly toward helping community members facing heating fuel shortages, utility cutoffs and eviction during the frigid winter seasons. Last year, WeCAN had to turn away 75 families in need of assistance.

With the third highest rate of poverty in North Carolina (29%,) Watauga County residents already face an uphill battle and this tough winter only compounded that, resulting in record demand for WeCAN. Even with the increased assistance from the United Way, WeCAN needs another \$30,000 in contributions to meet community needs through April.

If you would like to contribute to WeCAN please visit www.HospHouse.org or send a check to the Hospitality House made out to WeCAN at P.O. Box 309, Boone, NC 28607.

High Country United Way has been uniting people and resources to improve lives in the High Country since 1978 and has provided more than \$6 million dollars towards quality programs to help individuals and families in Watauga and Avery counties. To contribute to the success of the United Way please visit <http://www.highcountryunitedway.org/> or contact Linda Slade at (828) 265-2111 or linda@highcountryunitedway.org

For further information about WeCAN visit www.HospHouse.org or contact Graham Doege at 828.264.1237 ext. 110 or wecan@hosphouse.org