



April Utility Shut-Offs

I hope this season of Lent is finding each of you in good spirits! At Catholic Charities, April is a very troubling time of year for many of the people that seek our services. To most citizens, April 15 is synonymous with Tax Day, but for many people in Wisconsin it's the first day of the year when they could be without electricity. Beginning April 15 of each year, families that were unable to pay for their electric and gas bills throughout the long and bitterly cold winter will face a utility shut-off.

Can you imagine what it would mean for you and your family if you were unable to turn on a light at night or heat a can of soup with your electric stove? What about families that have a well which provides water to their house? Without electricity, they won't even be able to bathe their children.

Catholic Charities provides help and creates hope for many families in this type of situation. Each year we solicit funds through our Annual Utility Appeal to help those families facing a utility shut-off. I realize for many people it is easy to say things like, "Well, that's not my problem. They should have paid their bill and then they wouldn't be in this situation". Yes, that would be very true! Many people that need help have made efforts in paying their bill, but because of the severity of the winter weren't able to keep up with the expense each month. **No family** should have to choose between paying their electric bill and providing food and/or diapers for their children. **No elderly person** should have to choose between heating their home or paying for medication.

At Catholic Charities we try to assist families before a disconnect happens. After a disconnect happens, families have to pay \$100-200 in reconnect fees and many times the utility company will require the past due balance to be paid in full as well. Each client we serve is educated about budgeting and how to prepare for the next winter. Additionally, our Financial Wellness Advocates work with utility companies to arrange re-payment plans, help qualified individuals apply for Energy Assistance and educate families for future financial stability.

Without the help of our donors, we cannot provide this much needed assistance to these families! If you are interested in donating to the Annual Utility Appeal, please visit our website at www.cclse.org.