

# one

# community



November 2009

## SAVE & BENEFIT "ENDING HOMELESSNESS IN ST. LOUIS COUNTY"

Imagine living without a place to call home. A growing number of children and families in Northeast Minnesota face the harsh realities of homelessness every day, struggling to find safe, secure shelter and a warm place to sleep.

Recently, Minnesota Power partnered with Heading Home St. Louis County, area faith communities, the United Ways of Greater Duluth and Northeastern Minnesota, and local retailers to raise money for programs that fight homelessness in the Northland—by encouraging energy efficiency.

### Consumers Save Energy to Benefit Those in Need

The campaign, called **Save & Benefit "Ending Homelessness in St. Louis County,"** challenged congregations in Duluth and on the Iron Range to address the social concerns of homelessness, community costs of energy, and global issues of climate change by choosing to conserve energy in their own homes.

Minnesota Power provided rebates to customers who purchased ENERGY STAR®-rated light bulbs and appliances from participating retailers during May, June and July 2009. Customers who turned in old, inefficient refrigerators or freezers for recycling received incentives, as well. For each qualifying product sold or collected, contributions were made to United Way agencies in support of the Heading Home St. Louis County Ending Homelessness initiative.

The \$7,800 raised is being used by the United Way agencies to help homeless people apply for drivers' licenses and birth certificates and to connect them with transitional and permanent housing in their communities.

*"It allows us to look at the real barriers facing people who are homeless and provides funds to address some of those issues. It was a pretty creative way for Minnesota Power to support this effort."*

*Paula Reed, executive director, United Way of Greater Duluth*

### Congregations Spread the Word

Minnesota Power has led similar **Save & Benefit** community fundraising events for charities, but this was the first time it tapped the power of local congregations. About a dozen faith communities in select communities distributed coupons, passed out flyers and spread the word.

"Faith communities challenge themselves to make choices and take actions that fit their missions," said Al Lian, marketing analyst at Minnesota Power. He also serves on the implementation team for Heading Home St. Louis County, a 10-year plan to end homelessness. "Engaging them put a lot of feet on the street."

One of the first congregations to join was Eastridge Community Church in Duluth. Like other area churches and synagogues, members believe in good stewardship, striving to manage and use the resources they have been given wisely.



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Eastridge Community Church

"Connecting the county's effort to end homelessness with energy efficiency was a good fit for faith communities," said Rev. Fred Lund, pastor of Eastridge Community Church and member of the public relations and communications committee for Heading Home St. Louis County. He mobilized other area congregations to support the effort along with his own.

Shelley Valentini, executive director of United Way of Northeastern Minnesota, rallied participation among churches and businesses on the Iron Range.

*"This was a timely effort with high unemployment and a significantly depressed economy. There has been an increase in homelessness among families, and households all over our region are looking for ways to save energy and cut costs."*

*Steve O'Neil, commissioner, St. Louis County*

### Energy Choices Make a Difference

Based on the number of energy-efficient products sold and old refrigerators and freezers collected, the effort will save nearly 238,000 kWh annually. That is the equivalent of avoiding \$19,440 in energy costs per year (\$99,450 over five years). It is enough energy to power 20 homes for a year. In terms of reducing carbon, it is equal to taking 44 cars off the road for one year or approximately 513,304 miles driven.

"People often think they have to do big things in order to effect change, but the impact of collective actions is dramatic," Lian said. "This effort raised thousands of dollars toward a worthy cause in St. Louis County and is saving significant amounts of energy. Consumer day-to-day choices make a difference. That is the *Power of One* in your community."



(left to right) Al Lian, Minnesota Power; Steve O'Neil, St. Louis County; Rev. Fred Lund, Eastridge Community Church; Deborah McCauley, United Way of Greater Duluth; and Erin Shay of United Way of Northeastern Minnesota at a check presentation ceremony.



Every community has the power to save energy, lower costs and benefit the environment through conservation. Minnesota Power offers resources and programs that help schools, cities, neighborhoods and organizations work as communities to make a difference through energy efficiency.

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