

Jewish Seniors Feeling Economy's Pinch **Community responds with *Lifeline Fund* ...and more.**

Mrs. R, in her early 70s, lives alone and has no family in St. Louis. She was working part-time to supplement her Social Security income and was accustomed to living on a tight budget. But the economy took a drastic turn. Her employer let her go. Soon she was forced to make desperate choices; between paying rent and utilities or buying food and medications. These are choices she cannot afford to make.

As the economy continues to falter, unemployment explodes and seniors like Mrs. R find themselves in serious trouble, Federation is providing emergency help – through **the *Lifeline Fund*. The *Lifeline Fund* offers additional financial assistance and loans to seniors, families and individuals in financial crisis.** *Lifeline* is administered by Jewish Family & Children's Service (JF&CS). And when Mrs. R had no one to turn to, she called JF&CS in desperation. She received immediate *Lifeline Fund* assistance to pay rent. At the same time other options are being explored to get her through this difficult time.

Federation agencies and programs report dramatic increases in need – often from people who never needed help before. And some report an increase in needs among our senior population. “Some 13.1 % of the Kornblum Jewish Food Pantry's new clients are aged 56 and above (from Nov. '08 to Jan. '09). And we are taking more calls for deliveries to homebound elderly in the last few months,” said Susan J. Rundblad. The Jewish community has rallied to keep the Food Pantry stocked and Federation's *Lifeline* Tributes are providing additional funding for Food Pantry supplies.

Other Federation-supported agencies and services include the Social Nutrition Program, which serves hot kosher meals to seniors (and has experienced a 20% increase in food costs); MERS-Goodwill job support; JF&CS Financial Assistance Program and the Jewish

Loan Association; counseling at Jewish Family & Children's Service; low-income housing at Covenant/CHAI and more.

“Seniors, as they age, rely more heavily on our community – especially in hard times -- to offer care where and when it's needed whether low-income housing, meal programs, transportation, long-term care and more. Thank goodness Federation agencies serve as a safety net in good...and bad times,” said Karen Berry Elbert, manager of the St. Louis Naturally Occurring Retirement Community (NORC) senior project.

“These needs are met through Federation's Annual Community Campaign. Each gift we receive helps support a vital system of programs and services that help people - one at a time,” said Barry Rosenberg, Jewish Federation executive vice president. “We've been uniting to take care of people in our community successfully for 107 years.”

Berry Elbert emailed residents of the NORC community to find out how they're faring in this volatile economy. “Some said they're cutting back more. One woman said she's worried about how she will make it: ‘I go to the grocery store less and I go to the stores where prices are lower on the things I need.’ The community is starting to see the impact,” said Berry Elbert. “And it's anyone's guess about how this will play out with our seniors who live on fixed incomes, the longer it lasts. So, we need to be ready.”

Editor's Note: The Lifeline Fund is available to any Jewish person/family who needs assistance. If you need help at this time—please take advantage of this wonderful service in our community.

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