

Special Heat & Eat Information Supplement

A Message from Elder Services

The high costs of food, home heating fuel, utilities, and gasoline are stretching people's budgets to the breaking point. This is especially true for those with limited incomes, and for those who are on fixed budgets. No one should have to choose between either heating their home or having enough to eat. As we prepare ourselves for the "heat and eat" challenge that lies ahead, we thought it might be helpful to publish information we have gathered regarding local fuel and food assistance programs and services. This special supplement to Berkshire Senior contains information about a variety of fuel and food assistance resources that are available here in Berkshire County.

In regards to fuel assistance, this supplement offers information

about programs that help cover a fixed amount of heating costs, provide discounts, reduced rates, and/or weatherization and energy savings assistance. In regards to food assistance, there is information about programs that help cover a fixed amount of grocery costs, offer discounts, provide groceries at no charge through food pantries, or provide hot meals - including our own Meals on Wheels and Senior Lunch Program.

We hope that you find this supplement helpful. If you have any questions, or would like additional information regarding fuel and food assistance, please give us a call. We're here to help.

Robert P. Dean, Executive Director
Elder Services of Berkshire County, Inc.

Senior Power: Stretch your dollar

By Simone Gaunt & Laura Feakes

Don't miss these important money saving tips to help you manage your budget this coming winter season.

Berkshire Community Action Council (BCAC): A wide range of programs including fuel assistance, transportation, emergency shelter and much more. For more information, see page 2.

Citizens Energy Oil Program (Joe 4Oil): People who need help heating their homes can purchase a one time delivery of up to 200 gallons of home heating home oil for half the retail price per gallon. This program covers oil purchases only and does not apply to burner primes or services. This program is available December through mid March. For income guidelines call: toll free 1-877-JOE-4-Oil /1-877-563-4645, or call BCAC.

The Center for Ecological Technology (CET): Help with winterizing homes. Heating Oil Co-Op that contracts with full service dealers to sell oil at a reduced rate to co-op members. Consumers who heat their homes, apartments or small businesses with oil can save a significant amount of money each heating season. The consumer must join the co-op at a cost of \$15 per household, \$25 per business and \$7 for students, low income individuals and seniors. Call CET to apply: 445-4556.

MassSave: An energy savings program for Massachusetts homeowners and renters. It offers energy tips and information about free home energy assessments, energy-saving products, and loans, rebates, and other incentives for energy-saving home improvements. To see which rebates, loans, home energy assessments, or other energy programs are available use their website MassSave.com or call 1-866-527-7283.

The Salvation Army (Pittsfield and North Adams): Offers help with winter fuel expenses through their Good Neighbor Energy Fund, which helps people in need pay for their winter heating fuel and other energy bills. The fund is for families or individuals who are facing a short-term financial crisis and do not qualify for other fuel assistance programs. It is a joint effort between the gas and electric utility companies and the Salvation Army. Money for the fund comes from the utility companies, donations from utility customers and businesses and other charitable donors. It is available from December 1 until funds run out. For income guidelines and to apply, call the Salvation Army in Pittsfield: 442-0624 or in North Adams: 663-7987.

Berkshire Gas Company: Offers reduced rates to low-income customers who receive public assistance benefits and meet income limits. Eligible customers get a 20% to 40% discount on their gas rates. Utility companies

enroll eligible customers automatically, or customers can apply directly. Call Berkshire Gas Co. for details:1-800-292-5012.

Western Mass Electric Company: Provides a 35% discount to consumers who are also eligible for AFDC, EAEDC, Food Stamps, SSI, Medicaid, Fuel Assistance and/or some VA benefit programs. Call WMECO to request an application: 499-0260 or 1-800-286-2000.

Massachusetts Food Assistance Program: Assistance to help low-income families and individuals in Massachusetts buy food. New rules make it easier for many applicants to be eligible for food stamps by no longer considering assets in many cases. This will be particularly helpful for those seniors with monthly incomes between \$700 and \$1,734, but who have never received food stamps or SSI because they have liquid assets over \$3,000. For more information, see page 4.

Supplemental Security Income (SSI): Cash assistance for people 65 or older and those of any age who are disabled or blind, and with few assets and a small income. SSI provides monthly cash payments that vary in amount depending on the personal situation. The maximum monthly benefit for a single person age 65 or older, paying full living costs is about \$765.82. The more income you have, the lower your SSI payment will be. For information call Social Security: 1-800-772-1213 or call or go to your local Social Security office - Pittsfield: 78 Center St., Suite 101, 499-2432; North County: 37 Main St., North Adams, 664-7951.

Veterans' Services (VS): Provides cash and medical assistance to low-income Massachusetts wartime veterans and their families in need of immediate help. To determine eligibility, call the Veterans Services Officer: North County: 662-3040, South County: 528-1580, and Pittsfield: 499-9433.

Just a reminder...

Massachusetts laws prevent utility companies from shutting off service to people in special situations. Senior households, low-income families with infants, people with serious illnesses who cannot afford to pay their utility bills, tenants whose landlords are responsible for utility bills and low-income people who would be without heat during the winter are eligible for shutoff protection.

This article and the tips are excerpted from the website Massresources.org. Simone Gaunt and Laura Feakes are Elder Services Information & Referral/Intake Specialists. For more information about fuel and food assistance, call Elder Services at 499-0524 or 1-800-544-5242.



Berkshire Senior Heat & Eat Supplement

Berkshire Community Action Council

Central County - 1531 East Street 445-5671

North County - 663-3014

South County - 528-1947



For over 40 years, Berkshire Community Action Council (BCAC) has assisted Berkshire County low-income seniors and working-poor people to achieve self-sufficiency through uniting the private and public sectors. BCAC offers the following services for fuel and food assistance:

Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (2008-09) -

provides a fixed amount of heating cost assistance to homeowners and renters (including those whose heat is included in the rent). Eligibility is based on household size and the gross annual income of every household member, age 18 or older. Household income cannot exceed 200% of the federal poverty guidelines (for a single person \$20,808, for a couple, \$28,008.). If eligible, discounts are automatically given on telephone bills.

How to Apply - First-time applicants must apply in person at Berkshire Community Action Council. Past and new applicants must apply annually from November 1 to April 30.

Weatherization - a federally-funded program, seeking to save heating dollars by increasing the energy efficiency of homes through insulating attics, walls, floors, heating pipes/ducts, and/or weather-stripping, minor repairs, and heating system modification. The program is available to anyone eligible for the Federal Fuel Assistance program unless the home has been previously weatherized. Priority is given to homes with seniors, handicapped individuals or children age 6 or under.

Heatwrap - maintenance program for heating systems including preventative maintenance and emergency "no heat" services. This program evaluates heating system efficiency and cleans, tunes and repairs oil or gas heating systems. If needed, entire heating system replacement is available. When the work is completed, families are trained to become more energy efficient. Applicants must live in Berkshire County and qualify under the federal Fuel Assistance Program eligibility guidelines.

Holiday Warm Clothing Program - provides low-income children with warm clothing.

Food Distribution and Nutrition Assistance – provides working poor, seniors and low-income families food from the agency's food pantry sites, which distribute nearly 100 tons of food annually. (*See food pantries beginning on page 3.*)

Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) - provides one-time emergency assistance such as payment of past due rents for those facing eviction, utility assistance for those in imminent danger of shut-off, or food assistance for those with no other resources. Funds are limited and not always available. Applicants must prove that their situation is an emergency.

Emergency Shelter Housing - Our Friends' House, a family shelter, provides emergency services for up to 10 Berkshire County families. Services include GED preparation, i.e.: work readiness, college preparatory training, and adult literacy, parenting skills, housekeeping, budgeting and nutrition education services and referrals for additional support services.

Bartons Crossing, an individual shelter, provides emergency shelter services for up to 35 individuals. The individual shelter provides similar services plus substance abuse counseling.

Homeless Prevention and Transitional Housing Assistance - a collaborative effort with the Berkshire County Regional Housing Authority providing space and support for housing specialists to assist families and individuals find safe, affordable housing.

Councils on Aging

All 32 of Berkshire County's cities and towns have Councils on Aging (COA's) – municipal departments dedicated to the needs of the senior population. There are 19 senior centers in the Berkshires. Since 1956, the mission of COA's has been to link senior needs and resources by developing and coordinating services, community education and advocacy.

While each COA is unique to its community, services commonly offered include information and referral, transportation, outreach, food distribution programs, health education, social and recreational opportunities, and many other important activities. They are an important part of a county-wide aging network that makes it possible for seniors to remain independent and in their own communities. Please refer to the list of COA's below for additional information

Berkshire County Councils on Aging

COA	Contact Person	Telephone
Adams	Barbara St. Pierre	743-8333
Alford	Barbara Whelan	528-9238
Becket	Joan Moylan	623-8934 x27
Cheshire	Anna Farnams	743-1172/9719
Clarksburg	Lily Kuzia	663-8253
Dalton	Susan Jacobs	684-2000
Egremont	Rachel Shaw	528-3488
Florida	Donna Hartlage	662-2811
Gt Barrington	Grace Zbell	528-1881
Hancock	Joan Burdick	738-5225
Hinsdale	Jean Andrews	655-2310
Lanesborough	Debra Decelles	448-2682
Lee	Norma Maroney	243-5545
Lenox	Kim Graham	637-5535
Monterey	Cynthia Weber	528-2839
Mt. Washington	Leslie Ann Fitch	528-2839
New Ashford	Select Board	458-5461
New Marlboro	Margaret Smith	229-8278
North Adams	Sandra Lamb	662-3125
Otis	Pat Ryan	269-0100
Peru	Dawn Warner	655-8280
Pittsfield	Jean M. Beauchemin	499-9346
Richmond	Joanne Lahey	698-3319
Sandisfield	Mary Slater	258-4711
Savoy	Ronna Brandt	743-4290
Sheffield	John-Arthur Miller	229-7022
Stockbridge	Beth McCormack	298-3118
Tyringham	Barbara Adams	243-3297
Washington	Lorraine A. Deane	655-0232
West Stockbridge	Joan Rehm	232-4317
Williamstown	Brian O'Grady	458-8250
Windsor	Paul Hoag	684-3771

Berkshire Senior Heat & Eat Supplement

Meals on Wheels & Senior Lunch Program

Elder Services offers nutritious, hot noon-time meals each Monday through Friday to home-bound Berkshire seniors through our Meals on Wheels program. Elder Services also offers hot noon-time meals at the Senior Lunch Program locations listed below. Although there is no charge, for Meals on Wheels, a \$2.00 per meal donation is suggested to help cover the cost of food preparation and delivery.

Meals on Wheels: Home delivered meals are available to anyone 60 or over who has difficulty preparing their own meals due to illness, disability or frailty. To be eligible, seniors must have at least one of the following: a physical or mental impairment, such as lack of mobility; a recent hospital discharge; or inadequate kitchen facilities. There is no income limit. However, to qualify, a senior must be unable to attend a Senior Lunch location and have no one to help with noon meal preparation.

Elder Services Senior Lunch Program Information

Elder Services offers noon-time meals for those 60 and over at the following locations throughout the county.

City/Town Phone	Address	Days Meals Served	Meal Time
Adams 743-8333	Community Center 18 East St.	M-T-W-TH-F	11:30 a.m.
Becket 623-8934	Town Hall Route 8 P.O. Box 60	T & TH	11:30 a.m.
Cheshire 743-9719	Senior Center 119 School St.	WED.	Noon
Dalton 684-2000 684-0016	Grace Episcopal Church 791 Main Street	M & TH	Noon
Gt. Barrington 528-4118	Senior Center 909 South Main St.	M-T-W-TH-F	11:30 a.m.
Hinsdale 655-2310	Town Hall 39 South St.	W & F	11:30 a.m.
Lanesboro 442-4761	Town Hall 83 North Main St.	T & TH	11:30 a.m.
Lee 243-5545	Senior Center 21 Crossway Village	M-T-W-TH-F	11:45 a.m.
Lenox 637-5535	Community Center 85 Walker St.	M & F	Noon
North Adams 662-3125	Spitzer Center 116 Ashland St.	M-T-W-TH-F	11:45 a.m.
Pittsfield 499-9346	Senior Center 330 North St.	M-T-W-TH-F	11:30 a.m.
Pittsfield 442-2200 Kosher	Jewish Federation Colt Rd.	M-T-TH	Noon
Pittsfield 443-1841 Providence Court	Providence Court 379 East Street	M-T-W-TH-F	11:30 a.m.
Stockbridge 298-3222	Heaton Court 5 Pine St.	T-TH	11:30 a.m.
Williamstown 458-8350	Harper Center 118 Church St.	M-W-TH-F SUN	11:30 a.m.

Reservations should be made 24 hours in advance.

Community Meals

Meals at the following sites are offered at no charge.

Central County

Breakfast

- Salvation Army, 300 West St., Pittsfield, 442-0624, Monday - Friday, 9 -10 a.m.

Lunch

- Christian Center, 193 Robbins Ave., Pittsfield, 443-2828, Monday – Friday, noon
- First Congregational Church, 514 Main St., Dalton, 684-1715, Sunday, 1 p.m.

Dinner

- First Baptist Church, 88 South St., Pittsfield, 445-4539, Monday 5:30 p.m.
- First United Methodist Church, 55 Fenn St., Pittsfield, 499-0866, Tuesday 5 p.m.
- South Congregational Church, 110 South St., Pittsfield, 442-7357, Wednesday 5 p.m.
- St. Stephen's Episcopal Church, 67 East St. Pittsfield, 448-8276, Thursday/Friday 5:15 p.m.
- Salvation Army, 300 West St., Pittsfield, 442-0624, Sunday 4:30 p.m.

North County

Lunch

- Berkshire Food -First Congregational Church, Main St., North Adams, 664-7378 (enter on Summer Street). Monday, Thursday, Friday, noon
- Harper Center, 118 Church St., Williamstown, 458-8250, Sunday 11:30 a.m. (Call ahead to make reservation)
- Spitzer Center, 116 Ashland St., North Adams, call ahead: 662-3125, Sunday 11:30 a.m.

Evening

- Salvation Army, 393 River St., North Adams, 663-7987, Sunday 4 p.m.

South County

Lunch

- The Guthrie Center, 4 Van Deusenville Rd., Great Barrington, 528-1955, Wednesday, noon

Dinner

- Breaking Bread Kitchen, American Legion Post 340, Rte 7, Great Barrington, 528-4201, Thursday 5:15 p.m.

Homebound Seniors Weekend Meal Program

- Take and Eat, contact: Kathleen Ryan 664-1041 (Pittsfield/North Adams/Williamstown/Adams/Cheshire)

Food Pantries



Offer a variety of food to anyone in need. Some pantries have application procedures requiring proof of income, some are simply first come, first served. Most pantries limit distribution to residents of the town where they are located.

Central County

- Salvation Army - 300 West St., Pittsfield, 442-0624, Monday - Friday 1.-3 p.m.
- St. Joseph's Church, 414 North St., Pittsfield, 445-5789, Monday 7:30-8:30 a.m.
- St. Mark's Church, 27 Onota St., Pittsfield, 447-7510, Friday 10 a.m.-noon
- Lenox Methodist Church, 6 Holmes Rd., Lenox, 445-5918. Call by Thursday, for Saturday pick-up
- Congregational Church, Maple St., Hinsdale, 655-2670, Thursday 10 -11a.m.
- BCAC, 1531 East St., Pittsfield, 445-4503, Monday – Friday, 10 a.m.-1 p.m. (Baked Goods daily, 10 a.m.)

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Food pantries continued from previous page

- St. Agnes Church, 489 Main St., Dalton, 684-0125, Thursday, 6:30 p.m.
- Christian Center, 193 Robbins Ave., Pittsfield, 443-2828, Monday - Friday 9 a.m. - 4 p.m.
- Goodwill Industries, 158 Tyler St, Pittsfield 442-0061, call or ask at neighborhood store.

South County

- St. George's Church, 20 Franklin St., Lee, 243-0272, Saturday 10 a.m.- noon
- BCAC, 8 Castle St., Gt Barrington, 528-1947, Monday – Friday 9 a.m.- 5 p.m.
- People's Pantry, Bryant Elementary School Annex, basement classroom, Great Barrington, Thursday mornings

North County

- BCAC, 85 Main St., North Adams 663-3014, Monday to Friday; Baked goods – Daily 10 a.m.
- Salvation Army, 393 River St., North Adams, 663-7987, Monday - Friday 9 a.m. - 2:30 p.m., Baked goods Tuesday/Friday 9:30 a.m. – 2 p.m.
- St. Patrick's Church, 54 Southworth St., Williamstown, 458-5443, as needed - please call.
- Veterans' Outreach Center, American Legion/VFW Old State Rd, Lanesboro; For veterans and their families, bring copy of DD 214, Friday 10 a.m. – 1 p.m.
- Vietnam Vets of America, 30 River St., North Adams, 663-9994, Sunday 1:30-3 p.m./Monday 7-9 p.m.
- Goodwill Industries, 160 Howland Ave, Adams, 743-8092, call or ask at store.

Serve New England Program

(www.servenewengland.org)

Food co-op offering up to 50% discounts on quality grocery, meat, and vegetables to volunteers (all age and incomes) who donate 2 hours month to a worthy cause. Participant register at a local Serve Chapter; Serve purchases the food and coordinates the distribution of food to the Chapters. Different food packages available: Family Meal (about \$25); Vegetarian; Meat only (about \$16); Holiday - (turkey dinner at Thanksgiving & Christmas for about \$20).

To join Serve New England contact:

- First Congregational Church, 514 Main St, Dalton, Sue Jacobs Dalton COA, 684-2000

Or

- St John's Episcopal Church, 59 Summer St, North Adams, Share Office 664-7400

Brown Bag Programs

Supplemental monthly food program offering 10 - 15 lbs of nutritious food to eligibles, 55 years or older (Free or a small donation of about \$3). Sponsored by food banks, local agencies such as Councils on Aging, and the Executive Office of Elder Affairs. Eligibility: 1 person household - \$1,516/month, 2 person household - \$2,041/month and live in the service area of a program. You must register with your local Brown Bag program before you can collect your food. Home-bound individuals may join, but must make their own arrangements for pick-up.

Central County

- Pittsfield Council on Aging, Froio Senior Center, 330 North St., Pittsfield, 499-9346
- Becket Town Hall, 557 Main St., Becket, 623-8934
- Lenox COA Community Center, 65 Walker St., Lenox, 637-5535

North County

- Adams Council on Aging, Community Center, 20 East St., Adams, 743-8333
- North Adams Council on Aging, Spitzer Center, 116 Ashland St., North Adams, 662-3125
- Williamstown Harper Center 118 Church St., Williamstown, 458-8250

South County

- COA Claire Teague Senior Center, 909 Main St, Gt Barrington, 528-1881
- COA Heaton Court, 5 Pine St., Stockbridge, 298-3118

Massachusetts Food Assistance Program

The Food Stamp Program is administered by the Mass. Department of Transitional Assistance (DTA). To get a food stamp application:

Visit DTA: Pittsfield 75 South Church St., 236-2000, North Adams, 7 Main St., 663-1100 and toll free 1- 800-645-8333, or call the Food Stamp Hotline at 1-866-950-FOOD. Be sure to tell the representative that you would like the two page application for seniors. For more information about food stamp benefits, contact the Food Stamp Hotline at 1-866-950-FOOD. You may also visit the following websites: www.mass.gov/dta, or **Project Bread** (www.gettingfoodstamps.org).

Can I appoint someone to help me apply for food stamp benefits?

You can ask someone you trust to apply for you or go food shopping for you. That person is called your Authorized Representative.

What kind of property can I own?

You can own your own home, personal belongings, car and have money in the bank. Low-income seniors will not be asked for proofs of money in the bank or retirement accounts. If you live alone and your gross monthly income is \$1,734 or less, you will not be required to provide asset information and proofs. If you live with your spouse and your gross monthly income is \$2,534 or less, you will not be required to provide asset information and proofs.

If your gross income is higher than the amounts listed above, you will be subject to a \$3,000 asset limit. This means you will be asked to provide asset information and proofs.

What proofs will I need?

Identification showing your name and address: If you have no address, you must tell us where you are staying.

- **Proof of income** - An award letter or direct deposit statement of unearned income amounts and frequency of payments. If you are working, submit your last four pay stubs, direct deposit statements or copies of checks.
- **Social Security numbers for all members applying**
- **Proof of your expenses** - receipts for housing costs: rent or mortgage, heating and utilities.
- **Medical bills** - if you are age 60 or older, or if you are disabled
- **Non-citizens** - If you are not a citizen, bring proof of legal noncitizen status.

If you have trouble gathering needed documents, call your Food Stamp case manager and ask for help.

Ensuring your privacy

Food stamp benefits are issued electronically through the Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT) system. You will receive your own EBT card and Personal Identification Number (PIN) to shop for food in supermarkets, convenience stores and pharmacies. Your EBT card works just like a debit card. This ensures your privacy when food shopping.

This information was provided by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

For additional information, contact:

Elder Services of Berkshire County, Inc.

66 Wendell Avenue, Pittsfield, MA 01201

Phone: (413) 499-0524

or

1-(800) 544-5242

TTY: (413) 499-9764 Fax: 442-6443

Website: www.esbci.org

Email: esbc@esbci.org