

The Dialogue



Dane County Department of Human Services
Division of Economic Assistance and Work Services

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The Empty Stocking Club

The Empty Stocking Club serves children year-round through the Wisconsin State Journal's Youth Services, Inc. In 2006, Youth Services distributed more than \$50,000 to area organizations concerned with the welfare of children.

But the Empty Stocking Club's best-known project is the purchase and distribution



Volunteers help sort some of the toys which were distributed to area kids last year.

of Christmas toys. The Empty Stocking Club has been giving away new toys to needy families for the holidays for 88 years. And for 89 years, the Wisconsin State Journal has been there to help.

Funds for the program are collected from readers of the

Wisconsin State Journal and used to benefit the children of families in need. Last year, more than 10,000 children received gifts from the Empty Stocking Club.

Each year, the Empty Stocking Club receives applications from as many as 4500 families in need. If you need assistance in providing gifts for your children on Christmas morning, complete the application included with this newsletter and mail it to Empty

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How To Contact Your Economic Assistance Worker

By **Liz Green**, Economic Assistance and Work Services Manager

As we get busier, I'm sure that it can seem an enormous challenge for you, our customers, to reach us when you need help or have information to provide. Help us manage our time to best serve you by following these tips:

1) We process paperwork and changes within 10 days of receipt. You will receive written notice from our automated computer system of any changes in

your benefits. **We act on applications** within 30 days. You will receive written notice from our automated computer system of your benefit awards and amounts.

2) Use the ACCESS website <https://access.wisconsin.gov/access/>

a. Find out if your case is open and the amount of benefits.

b. Report changes in employment.

c. Determine if you might be eligible for another program or apply for a new program.

d. We hope to provide terminals

in our waiting rooms in the future to make ACCESS available to you, or try it from your home computer or a public library.

3) Call the Change Reporting Center – 242-7500 – Our Change Reporting Center can take information from you on most changes in your case. If you are calling to report a change in your situation, call the Change Reporting Center, not your worker.

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Contacts

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4) Call the Review Scheduler – 242-7530. Our review scheduler can schedule a time for you to complete any required eligibility review with your assigned worker except for W-2 cases. If you reach voice mail, please leave a message and we will return your call.

5) Call Connections – 242-7441. Our Connections phone line is generally answered from 7:45-4:30 Monday through Friday and can answer basic eligibility questions or arrange for intake appointments. If you reach voice mail, please leave a message and we will return your call.

6) Send a note or letter to your worker– Please be sure to include:

- a. Your name.
- b. Your case number or SSN.
- c. Name of your worker.
- d. Your complete message.
- e. Including a phone number will allow follow-up questions.
- f. You can send this via US mail or use drop boxes and envelopes available in our

Department offices to save postage. You can also fax it to us at:

- Job Center – (608) 242-7410
Stoughton – (608) 873-9752
Sun Prairie – (608) 837-4399

7) Call your worker on the phone

a. Leave only one complete message. Leaving multiple messages can delay our response time and overload our phone system.

b. If you are calling to report a change, do not call your worker, call the Change Reporting Center at 242-7500

c. You will not always receive a return call. If we can complete your case action with the information provided, we will not return your call. We will only call if we have questions, need more information, or need to tell you something. You will get a written notice if your call results in a change to your case.

d. Please do not call to confirm receipt of your message/fax/paperwork.

8) E-mail us – Your worker's e-mail address can be obtained at <http://www.countyofdane.com/search/>

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Dialogue is published by the Dane County Department of Human Services (DCDHS).

Its purpose is to help foster economic self-sufficiency and family and community strength by informing families who use the services of the Economic Assistance and Work Services Division, community-based agencies, schools, and others interested in economic assistance and work services of changes in services, new programs, client successes and available resources.

For information on copy deadlines or circulation, contact:

David Carlson, Editor, 242-6424

For information on mailing list and circulation contact:

Irma Smith, Circulation Coordinator, 242-6401

Dane County Department of Human Services is a publicly-funded agency that provides economic assistance and work services, services to older individuals and individuals with disabilities, child protective services, services to juveniles, and public health services.

The department is committed to promoting individual, family and community strength and provides equal access to services without regard to race, gender, age or handicapped condition.

If you would like a copy of this publication in large type or an alternate format, please contact Irma Smith, 242-6401.

You can apply online for Wisconsin food and health care benefits!

Our website is easy to use, confidential, and free.

www.wisconsin.gov



Wisconsin Department of Health and Family Services

More information on the Dane County Job Center is available on the web at:

www.danejobs.com

Home Energy Plus: Help for Home Heating Costs

Energy assistance for 2007-08

Households having difficulty paying heat and electricity costs this season may qualify for Home Energy Plus. This assistance combines the Wisconsin Home Energy Assistance Program (WHEAP) and the state's Weatherization Program. The benefits of Home Energy Plus include the following services:

•Heating assistance.

This one-time benefit payment for each heating season helps pay a portion of each qualifying household's heating costs.

Empty Stocking

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Stocking Club, PO Box 8058, Madison, WI 53708, **NO**

LATER THAN Friday, NOVEMBER 9, 2007.

Applications will be verified for eligibility by the Dane County Department of Human Services. If you apply, make sure you complete the entire form and send it to the correct address, which is listed at the top of the application.

Eligible parents will have a toy voucher mailed on or before December 3, 2007. The voucher will specify the date to pick up one toy for each child 14 years of age and under. The Toy Depot will be held at the Alliant Energy Center on December 11 & 12, 2007.

For those of you wishing to contribute to the Empty Stocking Club, checks can be sent to the following address: Empty Stocking Club, PO Box 8058, Madison, WI 53708 or donations are accepted online at www.emptystockingclub.com

•**Nonheating electric-service assistance.** You may be eligible for assistance to help pay your nonheating electricity costs.

•**Weatherization services.** Reduce energy consumption through weatherization improvements. When you apply for WHEAP, you will automatically be considered for weatherization services.

• **Crisis assistance.**

You may be eligible if you have no heat or are out of fuel and cannot pay for more.

WHEAP Eligibility Limits

You may be eligible if your gross income for the last three months is less than the amount specified for your family size.

Funds are limited, so be sure to apply early. For details about eligibility call 1-866-HEAT WIS (432-8947). To schedule an appointment in Dane County, call Energy Services at 267-8601

Help for your home energy budget

Madison Gas and Electric has several plans and energy assistance options available to help with the cost of meeting your home energy needs, including:

• **Budget Payment Plan.** To help you budget for your home's energy costs, MG&E offers a budget payment plan. This plan spreads your energy costs more evenly over a 12 - month period to manage your monthly bills.

• **Deferred Payment Agreement.**

Lets you pay any past-due energy

bills in separate installments in addition to your monthly bill. Once you've entered into a Deferred Payment Agreement, you are also eligible for the Budget Payment Plan.

For more information, call MG&E at (608) 252-7222 or 800-245-1125. Information is also available online at www.mge.com.

Save Money this Winter with Tips from MG&E

- Lower the thermostat at night and when you're away (55°F lowest setting).
- Let the sun in during the day to reduce heating costs.
- Close drapes and shades at night to save money and improve comfort.
- Replace the five most-used lights in your home with ENERGY STAR qualified compact fluorescent bulbs to save more than \$60. (*See below.)
- Dry clothes on a clothesline instead of in a dryer.
- Wash clothes in cold water. Save 10 to 20 cents per load.
- Turn off lights and TVs when not in use.
- Set water heater at 120°F to 125°F. Save money and prevent scalding.
- When replacing an appliance, look for the ENERGY STAR label to save money.

For more energy-saving tips, call the Home Energy Line at 252-7117.

Free Thanksgiving Meal Offered

First Congregational United Church of Christ, 1609 University Avenue in Madison is offering a FREE traditional Thanksgiving meal from 12:00 noon until 3:00 p.m. on Thursday, November 22, 2007. Everyone in the community is invited to attend the meal. For those lacking transportation, home delivery is available by calling 233-9751 by Monday,



November 19 (end of day).

First Congregational United Church of Christ has offered the traditional meal of turkey, potatoes and gravy, stuffing, rolls and pie, for more than twelve years. Last year nearly 300 meals-were served at the church and through home delivery. No advance reservations are needed for attending the meal.

For more information, or to volunteer please contact

First Congregational United Church of Christ at 608-233-9751.



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