



NEWS RELEASE
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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AUSTIN UTILITIES DONATES TO HEATSHARE

AUSTIN, Minn.— Austin Utilities recently presented the Salvation Army with a check for \$3,378.50. The check represents donations Austin Utilities has received from their customers over the last year for the local HeatShare program. HeatShare is a Salvation Army program that provides emergency utility assistance for people with no place left to turn. The program is funded by Salvation Army donors and customers of local utility companies. Funds are typically used to pay for natural gas, oil, propane and electricity.

Much of the funding was provided through utility customers who set up monthly donations or make one-time donations when making their utility payment. “We are happy to provide an avenue for customers who choose to participate in the HeatShare program,” said Melissa Swenson, Customer Service Supervisor at Austin Utilities. “We are in a position that allows us to see the need for this program first hand.”

This year’s donation was a little larger thanks in part to some additional fund-raising. In October 2017, Austin Utilities hosted their first Share the Heat 5K and 1-Mile Walk | Run which raised over \$500 for the HeatShare fund. Created by our own wellness committee, the event included over 30 participants and is planned to be held annually in October each year. Our customer, the SPAM Museum, also donated the proceeds of an event they hosted in November 2017 adding an additional \$610.

“This program is very important to us” said Lori Espe, Salvation Army case worker, “because it gives us a chance to help families in real emergency situations that may not qualify for other programs.” HeatShare is only available to households who are facing utility disconnection and have had a recent emergency that has caused their bill to get behind. They must be able to verify the emergency. “This program is only available for people who have applied for energy assistance and emergency assistance from the county and have been denied,” said Espe.

Customers interested in setting up or making donations via their utility bill can contact Austin Utilities at 433.8886. Donations that are received in Mower County stay in the county to assist those in need. All donations are greatly appreciated.

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Austin Utilities is a municipal utility serving approximately 12,300 electric customers, 10,300 natural gas customers, and 9000 water customers. Their mission is to offer utility products and services in a safe, reliable and responsible manner in order to enhance the quality of life in our community. Austin Utilities' Board of Commissioners are elected by the consumer-owners of Austin to represent their best interest. For more information on Austin Utilities visit their website at www.austinutilities.com.