

‘WHAT IN THE WORLD AM I GOING TO DO?’

“Just over the limit”—the financial limit—is what brought Debbie to Catholic Charities seeking help. “I could pay for oil,” she said. “I just didn’t have enough money to pay for a broken furnace.”

With a disabled husband in a nursing home, and medical issues preventing her from returning to work as a caregiver, Debbie became fraught with worry when the heat didn’t kick on one day.

“I just hated to ask anyone for help, but I thought, ‘what in the world am I going to do?’” The last couple of years have been rough, as ongoing extensive medical bills (a result of a six-month hospital stay) gobble up their Social Security and small pension.

“I am still able to get by, but there’s nothing for anything extra,”.

Debbie was encouraged to apply for heating help, but when she did, the agency told her that her income was just over the limit for assistance. However, they provided her with the names of five other agencies that could help.

“Catholic Charities was the last name on the list I called,” she said. “And the only one to help. They gave me \$359. I was able to add \$200 to it to get the furnace fixed.”

“I think it’s wonderful that the Church helps people in need,” she added. “I’m a Protestant, and I thought that would be a roadblock, but they weren’t judgmental, and everyone was so nice.”

Debbie said she now has two goals. “I want to go back to work, and as soon as I straighten up, I plan to give back to Catholic Charities. It’s God’s way of speaking, helping others—our neighbors—who need it, like me.”



Debbie, a recipient of Catholic Charities emergency funding, with Jean Johnstone, Catholic Charities executive director

Jean Johnstone, executive director of Catholic Charities, said Debbie’s story is a too-familiar one. Each year more people are seeking help, many of whom are middle class and falling through the cracks.

“They’ve worked their entire lives thinking Social Security and retirement would take care of them, and it doesn’t,” she said. “Any one of us could be a paycheck or two away from asking for help.”

Catholic Charities relies heavily on Catholic Ministries Drive dollars to help offset expenses for three offices that serve thousands annually throughout the Diocese.

“The Catholic Ministries Drive is essential to our existence. We have to keep the doors open to continue to help those in need.”