

THE WARMTH CONNECTION

Season's greetings! Every season, The Heat and Warmth Fund team dedicates ourselves to our mission of stabilizing and empowering Michigan families, keeping them healthy, safe, and warm. We do this with the hope that you will help us fulfil our mission. The colder months are detrimental to Michiganders without utilities. As we look to the past, take stock of today, and dream of the future, we see one constant who consistently uplifts our work: you. In this newsletter, you will find articles about THAW's beginnings, the people who work tirelessly to serve Michigan's vulnerable populations, and information about where THAW's ship is heading. Enjoy!

THAW PARTNERS WITH STATE TO LOWER HIGHLAND PARK WATER BILLS

Collaboration Provides Millions for Highland Park Infrastructure



In a historical deal brokered between the State of Michigan, the City of Highland Park, and the Great Lakes Water Authority (GLWA) in late November, Governor Gretchen Whitmer announced a partnership with The Heat and Warmth Fund to provide water bill assistance to Highland Park residents. The deal ends a decade-long disagreement over unpaid water bills in the city and will include millions of dollars in infrastructure repairs, including meter installment and water main and service line replacements.

"THAW is proud to partner with the

State of Michigan, the Great Lakes Water Authority, and the City of Highland Park to ensure residents have access to the affordable utilities they need to not only survive, but thrive," THAW CEO Saunteel Jenkins affirmed. "This innovative collaboration will not only improve Highland Park's infrastructure, but also improve the quality of life for its residents."

"To help ensure Highland Park residents can access safe, affordable drinking water, I am proud to announce a partnership with THAW to help lower bills on our path to implementing the historic settlement agreement we brokered last month," Governor Whitmer announced in a press release. "I'm thankful to THAW for raising its hand to help and to GLWA and Highland Park for working together in good faith on a deal that will ensure residents can access water, as the state helps the city with long overdue infrastructure upgrades.

Since I took office, we've made record investments in water infrastructure and affordability. I'll continue to work with anyone to keep rates affordable, and most importantly, keep safe water flowing to every home."

According to the U.S. Census Bureau, the median household income for Highland Park residents from 2018-2022 was \$30,341 with 37.6% of residents living in poverty. With these daunting statistics, all parties have stepped up to the plate to ensure access to affordable utilities for all.

"I am grateful to THAW, Governor Whitmer, and the State of Michigan for coming together to ensure every resident of Highland Park can access clean, affordable drinking water," Highland Park Mayor Glenda McDonald confirmed in a CBS News article. "Our community is strong, and we will work with state and local partners to fix up our infrastructure and get the job done so people can live with peace of mind in Highland Park."

THAW Announces New "Dr. Rowland Fund for Families"

Since our dear friend and former Director of Quality and Compliance Dr.Carolynn Ann Rowland's passing this year, our THAW staff has been working to honor her memory in ways that preserve her passion for helping our customers.

Dr. Rowland was a champion for "the least of these," and a strong advocate of our mission to stabilize and empower Michigan families, keeping them healthy, safe, and warm. As such, we have created a new fund, the Dr. Rowland Fund for Families, to aid Michigan's vulnerable populations.

We often speak with Michiganders



who are in crisis but may not be eligible for current programs. We do our best to direct them to services and funding for their specific need but now, with the Dr. Rowland Fund for Families, we will be able to fill the funding gap and directly address our customers' needs at their most difficult times.

At our recent Night of Warm Hearts Gala, we raised over \$50,000 during the Mission Moment of our Live Auction to go toward the Dr. Rowland Fund for Families. Dr. Rowland dedicated her life to helping others. We are grateful that this fund will continue her legacy of service.



CEO LETTER

Dear friends,

As the sun sets earlier and we enter Michigan's frigid winter, keeping the lights and heat on, the water running and the pipes from freezing is vital for our vulnerable communities. No one should have to decide between utilities and other essentials like food or medication. That's why our dedicated team at THAW works to stabilize and empower Michigan families, keeping them healthy, safe, and warm.

During our 14th annual Week of Warmth, we hosted two Customer Assistance Days (CADs) to provide on-the-spot assistance. One CAD was online, providing virtual appointments for families across the State. The other was in-person at the Considine Recreation Center in Detroit. The goal of both was to provide more support and prepare struggling Michigan families for the cold winter months. To conclude our Week of Warmth festivities, our Night of Warm Hearts Gala raised over \$550,000 to help Michigan families stay warm this winter. We also had the opportunity to honor our dear friend Dr. Carolynn Ann Rowland, who passed this year but will remain in our hearts, by retitling our Warm Heart Award the Dr. Carolynn Rowland Warm Heart Award.

The Week of Warmth is also a good time to reflect. I have been reflecting on THAW's 38 years of service in Michigan and the journey from 1985 to 2023 for our organization. This newsletter highlights our beginnings through a letter from one of THAW's founding board members, Dr. Geneva Williams. It then branches into our recent history with an Employee Spotlight on THAW Program Manager Evangelina Sherrill. Finally, it looks to the future with our new Dr. Rowland Fund

for Families and Highland Park Water Program.

As Dr. Williams says in her letter, THAW's illustrious journey has exceeded all expectations. Since our inception, THAW has distributed over \$230 million in utility assistance statewide to 320,000 households. There is no reality in which THAW can allocate this much direct aid without your support. While Michigan winter is cold, Michigan hearts are warm and caring. During this season of giving, please open your heart to help families stay healthy, safe and warm. Donate to THAW today. You can do so at thawfund.org/donate or by calling (313) 963-2656.

If you need utility bill assistance, THAW team members are here to help. Please call or text 1-800-866-THAW (8429), Monday through Friday, 8 am – 5 pm to reach our Utility Assistance Center specialists who can walk you through the application process. You can also visit our website at thawfund.org to learn more about our programs.

You can stay up to date with THAW's programming, including our Radiothon with WWJ on February 1st, 2024, by following our social media channels. Big things are on the horizon, and we wouldn't want you to miss a moment.

Warm regards,



Saunteel Jenkins
Chief Executive Officer
The Heat and Warmth Fund

Employee Spotlight: Evangelina Sherrill



Around the THAW office, Evangelina Sherrill's name speaks volumes. Her colleagues will never stop uplifting her passion and dedication to THAW's mission of keeping Michigan families healthy, safe, and warm. Evangelina has been with THAW for the past 18 years, starting as a volunteer and then being hired as a Program Manager.

Evangelina said she has grown professionally and personally during her tenure at THAW. When reflecting on her work here, she greatly admires THAW's "ability to change to fit the needs of the families we serve with programs that

provide a road to self-sufficiency." In lieu of putting "a Band-Aid on the needs of our families," Evangelina said she has seen the organization grow in unprecedented yet profoundly impactful ways to include energy education, weatherization services, and much more.

You can tell how much Evangelina Sherrill cares from the way her voice lifts when discussing our customers. During this interview, she echoed one of THAW's values, "we serve with empathy, dignity, compassion, and respect," through a story where she was completing a weatherization intake with a family whose house had broken windows.

"[The windows] were covered up with pegboard so naturally the family was still exposed to the elements but there wasn't a single time that anyone on our team made her feel as if what she did wasn't enough. We left that day being able to provide her with utility assistance, we were able to enroll her in an affordable

payment plan, and she had new windows installed the next day," Sherrill said.

Evangelina knows how impactful customer stories like these can be because she believes THAW has had an impact on her life as well. When her father passed away in Mexico, she had no way to leave the country. Thanks to her coworkers at THAW, "Within 24 hours, I had an appointment at the passport agency in Chicago, the money to pay for next-day passport services, and a flight booked to meet my mother and brother. It's when my coworkers became my THAW family."

Ultimately, Evangelina believes in the motto "kindness is contagious." Her day-to-day work results in a measurable positive impact on Michigan families and THAW thanks her for her years of dedication to our mission. Evangelina implores THAW's supporters to know that "any contribution, no matter how small someone may think it is, truly isn't. They all add up."

THAW Founder Reflects on Legacy, Future of Organization

One of the founders of THAW, Dr. Geneva Williams is a pioneering figure in the non-profit world. In her letter, Dr. Williams shares her reflections on THAW's early days and how it has adapted to assist Michigan families since its inception.

Based on the founders' initial conversations about community resiliency, we had absolutely no idea how large of an impact THAW would have on the State of Michigan. What we knew was there were people in need and we wanted to help.

When I was serving as the Vice President of Planning at United Community Services, now United Way for Southeastern Michigan, the process that we used was one of community planning and problem solving. As such, we engaged with all stakeholders to make sure any issues being addressed had a stable core of invested parties at the helm. At United Community Services, we discussed utility assistance and how to make sure Michiganders had life's necessities. To answer the call, the Energy Coalition formed.

The Energy Coalition consisted of social service agencies, United Way agencies, community members, and utility companies. Our method of planning was if you wanted to better your community, we wanted you at the table. The Coalition studied methods of community resiliency and how to ensure Michigan families could thrive in their warm homes. They ultimately decided that a new organization should be founded: The Heat and Warmth Fund.

Looking back, no one expected THAW's service to be statewide so quickly and efficiently, that the utility company partnerships would be so strong, or that THAW's scope would branch out into water bill assistance as well. I think these changes speak to THAW's responsive model and its ability to adapt. Now this all wouldn't be possible without THAW's grounding in authentic research, clear understanding of community need, and the coalition of folks who came together to address the issue.

I want to emphasize both the volunteer and staff leadership at THAW. To do



something that lasts this long, there's a level of dedication, passion, and interest that is part of THAW's DNA.

I knew founding THAW was the right thing to do and it worked in the beginning because we brought together the right people for the right cause. To see that continue over many years is a testament to how we, each and every one of us, can solve problems.

EVENT RECAPS

THAW's Week of Warmth and Night of Warm Hearts

To say this year's Week of Warmth was a success would be an understatement. In fact, it exceeded our expectations in every way! To start, our THAW team hosted two Community Assistance Days where we helped customers sign up for our programs and receive utility assistance. This direct community outreach speaks volumes for what Week of Warmth is all about: ensuring Michigan families have access to functioning utilities.

At our yearly Night of Warm Hearts Gala, hosted by WDIV Local 4's Rhonda Walker, guests entered DTE Headquarters and were immediately in the company of kind hearts. Through our auctions and generous donations, we raised \$550,000 for Michiganders in need!

Be sure you save the week of October 28th – November 1st, 2024 in your calendars! You won't want to miss everything next year's Week of Warmth will have to offer!



THAW's Gift of Warmth Telethon with WDIV

At this year's THAW Gift of Warmth Telethon, our friends at WDIV Local 4 decided to come to the THAW Offices and help us raise over \$150,000 to support our programming! Thank you to everyone who tuned in, picked up the phone, and spoke with our Call Center volunteers as we recorded donations and discussed everything THAW has been up to this year. Your generosity knows no bounds!



Ways to Support



Visit <https://thawfund.org/donate/donate-online/> to donate online.



Call **(313) 963-2681** to donate by phone.



Mail your gift to:
The Heat and Warmth Fund
Department Number 77650
P.O. Box 77000
Detroit, MI 48277-9901



If you have included THAW in your will or estate plan, we would like to recognize your intentions. Please let us know at giving@thawfund.org.



Scan this QR Code and select "THAW Newsletter" from the dropdown menu.

Follow us online:



Find our social media links at thawfund.org

THAW Leadership

BOARD OF DIRECTORS EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

President
Tanya R. Hill
Eclarim LLC, dba ForeverFresh

Vice President
Tony Saunders
Volte Investments

Secretary
Doug E. Detterman
Consumers Energy

Treasurer
Waymond Harris
Blue Cross Blue Shield

MEMBER-AT-LARGE

David Rouls
Slalom Consulting

BOARD MEMBERS

Patricia Alexander
Comerica Bank

Charles Bullock
Stevenson & Bullock, PLC

Romano Curti
Barton Marlow

James L. Doak
Miller Buckfire & Company, LLC

Cedric Flowers
DTE Gas

Katey Forth
Cinnaire

Rory Gamble
United Auto Workers

Lawrence C. Glass Jr.
El Bethel Baptist Church

Debbie Kenyon
Entercom

Kathy Makino-Leipsitz
Shelborne Development

Christopher Moyer
Visit Detroit

Robert Porcher
PM Logistic Services, LLC

Mark Winter
Identity PR