

The Hartselle *March 2021*

Connection

Serving Hartselle's People, Building for Hartselle's Future

Helping Local Families Most Affected by COVID-19

The pandemic has affected families across the nation, and for the first time, many are struggling to pay their bills.

Fortunately, others have been able to step up to help.

Locally, local organizations and churches are working with people facing financial difficulties to help them find resources to pay their bills, including utilities. "Last year, local churches gave almost \$70,000 directly to Hartselle Utilities for utility bill assistance," says Hartselle Utilities General Manager Bob Sittason. "United Way has provided resources, as well."

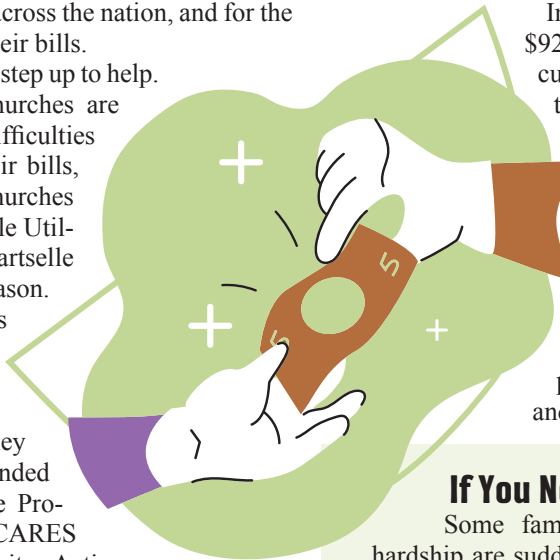
Community Action Partnership of North Alabama frequently helps local families in need find resources. They administer funds from the federally-funded Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP). Through LIHEAP's CARES Utility Assistance program, Community Action is offering a one-time \$1,000 grant to North Alabama residents who have not received assistance from Community Action before but are in need and have been directly impacted by COVID-19. The \$1,000 payments are made directly to utility providers to offset the cost of utility expenses. Applicants must qualify for assistance using established eligibility guidelines.

Community Action also administers funds donated locally through Operation Warm. Operation Warm is funded by local residents and businesses who donate \$1 or more above your utility bill, either monthly or as a one-time donation. All the money donated to Operation Warm stays in North Alabama to help people in need.

In 2020, Community Action provided over \$92,000 in assistance to 145 Hartselle Utilities customers. Of that, \$2,034 came through Operation Warm.

"If every Hartselle resident would just give \$1 a month extra on their utility bills," Sittason says, "that would raise the total to almost \$8,000 a month. That would have a tremendous impact on the number of people that Operation Warm could help."

To participate in Operation Warm, call Customer Service at (256) 773-3340, or complete the form on the back of this newsletter and return it with your utility bill.



If You Need Help

Some families who have never experienced financial hardship are suddenly facing difficulties because of COVID-19, whether it's from job loss, reduced hours, increased expenses, or expenses from actually having contracted the virus.

If you are unable to pay your bills, there are local resources available to help you:

- Community Action: capna.org / 256-355-7843
- United Way of Morgan County: uwmcal.org / 256-353-6643
- Local churches

If you have received a disconnection notice and are unable to pay your utility bill, call Customer Service at 256-773-3340. There may be other resources we can help you find.

Don't Rely on Luck to Keep Your Family Safe During Stormy Weather



Above: April 2011 tornado damage in Tuscaloosa. Don't wait for an emergency to create a plan: Knowing in advance what you'll do can keep your family alive. (Photo courtesy of the Alabama Emergency Management Agency)

Spring storms can produce high winds and flooding rain. Planning and preparing before an emergency can keep you and your family safe.

Create a written family plan, print it out and keep it in a safe place. Then prepare by gathering emergency supplies for your home and your vehicle. Discuss emergency notifications and expectations with your workplace and/or schools. Your family may not be together when a storm hits, so it is important to know how you will contact one another in an emergency.

If your power goes out, call Hartselle Utilities at 256-773-3340 (after hours: 256-773-2533). Don't assume that "someone else" has called, or that we already know. Phone calls help us pinpoint exact locations of outages, which helps to restore power as quickly as possible.

If you use a portable generator, never connect it to your home's electrical system unless your home has been wired for generator use. A generator connected to a home's wiring, or plugged into a regular household outlet can backflow into power lines and could electrocute anyone who comes in contact with them. You can be sure that if your power is out, Hartselle Utilities has crews working on your power lines. Please help to keep them safe!

Hartselle Utilities Welcomes Seven New Employees



Pictured left to right: Adam Brown, Forrest McCleskey, Chase Winkles, Mark Howard, William Cox, and Mark Villarino.
Not pictured - Zack Alred.

Mark Howard, Forrest McCleskey and Chase Winkles joined the Field Operations department in September 2020. They each bring unique experience to their roles as laborers, and you may spot them with their work crews maintaining HU's water, sewer and natural gas infrastructure. Zack Alred started with HU in October 2020 as an experienced equipment operator working with our sewer collection system crews.

Mark Villarino is HU's new Finance & Accounting Manager. Mark joined HU in November 2020 and brings a wealth of knowledge including a strong background in utility-based accounting.

William Cox is our newest wastewater treatment plant operator. He has many years of experience operating wastewater plants in North Alabama.

Adam Brown joined HU in December 2020 as utility locator. You will see Adam locating HU's water, sewer, natural gas, and electric lines around town anytime you call 811 prior to excavation projects.



Hartselle Utilities proudly welcomes these new employees!

Congratulations to these employees who were recently promoted! Pictured left to right: Blake McNutt, Safety Coordinator/Utility Inspector; Jeremy Dorrance, Customer Service Assistant Manager; Jonathan Kilpatrick, Field Operations Equipment Operator

A message from the Hartselle Fire Department



There is little time!

In less than 30 seconds a small flame can get completely out of control and turn into a major fire. It only takes minutes for thick black smoke to fill a home. In minutes, a home can be engulfed in flames. If you wake up to a fire, you won't have time to grab valuables because fire spreads too quickly and the smoke is too thick. There is only time to escape.

Three out of five home fire deaths result from fires in properties without working smoke alarms.



To contribute to Operation Warm, complete this form and return it to Hartselle Utilities

☐ Please add \$_____ to my monthly Hartselle Utilities (HU) bill. I understand that I have the right to stop this contribution at any time by giving HU written notice, and that the amount I have indicated will be added to my monthly bill until such notice is received.

☐ I'm already an Operation Warm partner. Please increase my monthly donation to \$_____.

☐ Please add a ONE-TIME donation of \$_____ to my bill. I understand that this amount will be added to ONE of my monthly bills.

Name _____ Account Number _____

Address _____ Phone Number _____

Customer Signature _____

Operation Warm is administered by Community Action Partnership of North Alabama, Inc.
All monies donated are used for local families in need.

COVID-19 Update

To continue to protect our customers and employees from COVID-19, HU's lobby remains closed, says Customer Service Manager Tim Mitchell. He provides these tips to make it easier to conduct business with Hartselle Utilities.

▪ BOTH LANES OF OUR DRIVE-THROUGH ARE OPEN

▪ You can make the following account changes via email to inquiries@hartselleutilities.org

- Account transfers
- Account connections
- Account disconnections
- New accounts (*you will still need to sign in person at the drive-through window, but you can complete paperwork in advance*)

▪ You can pay your bill online at hartselleutilities.org

Another option, says Mitchell, is to enroll in Automatic Bank Draft.

"Using Automatic Bank Draft helps you avoid lines and late fees," says Mitchell. When you sign up for Automatic Bank Draft, the amount of your bill is automatically deducted from your bank account on the day it is due each month.

To enroll, complete an enrollment form and bring or mail it to HU along with a voided check. It costs absolutely nothing, and you can cancel at any time with a phone call.

An enrollment form is available for download at hartselleutilities.org/customer-service/automatic-bank-draft/. For more information call HU at (256) 773-3340 or email Customer Service at inquiries@hartselleutilities.org.

Have you signed up
for E-Bill?

hartselleutilities.org/e-bill



Have a non-emergency question or a question about your bill? Email us at inquiries@hartselleutilities.org.

We try to respond to billing and general questions within 24 hours; service issues that need investigation may take up to 48 hours.

To report a gas leak, sewer backup or power outage, call our office. Our phones are answered 24 hours a day, seven days a week. During business hours (M-F, 7:30 am - 4:30 pm), call (256) 773-3340. After hours, call (256) 773-2533 or (256) 773-2588.



256-773-2533 or 911



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