



## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### **Common Fund of the Heartland Announces Service Area Expansion** *Nonprofit Will Work with Additional Partners to Provide Assistance to OPPD and MUD customers outside the city of Omaha*

OMAHA, NE (July 10, 2019) Common Fund of the Heartland is excited to announce that it has expanded its energy assistance program by adding two new partner agencies: Christian Outreach Program Elkhorn (COPE) and Eastern Nebraska Community Action Partnership (ENCAP). These agencies provide services to previously underserved areas including Elkhorn and Western Douglas County.

With the expansion, Omaha Public Power District (OPPD) and Metropolitan Utilities District (M.U.D.) customers living in the following counties will have access to the assistance program; Burt, Cass, Colfax, Dodge, Johnson, Otoe, Pawnee, Pottawattamie, Richardson, Sarpy, Saunders and Washington. With the increased promotion of phone applications through United Way 211, a Common Fund partner, this program needed to be able to deliver assistance to a larger geographic area.

"Community Action Agencies across the country have been working to eliminate the causes and conditions of poverty since 1965. We look forward to working closely with Common Fund and our Community Action peers in Eastern Nebraska—Community Action Partnership of Lancaster and Saunders Counties, Northeast Nebraska Community Action Partnership, and Southeast Nebraska Community Action Partnership—to address the emergency utility needs of families in our communities," said Aaron Bowen, ENCAP executive director. "Reducing the power of poverty is no small task, and we are grateful to OPPD and Common Fund of The Heartland for strengthening our capacity to help families move beyond crisis and work toward greater financial stability."

Common Fund of the Heartland was formed in 2015 to raise funds for utility assistance and to identify gaps in the service provided. In 2018 alone, more than \$470,000 in utility and related assistance was distributed to Omaha families in crisis. Ninety-five percent of their clients have an annual household income of less than \$25,000 and thirty-nine percent were at risk of

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homelessness at the time of their assistance. Ninety percent of the total Common Fund budget directly supports programming.

COPE Executive Director Jim Tomanek said, “COPE provides essential services for families needing support in western Douglas County. COPE is the only agency in the western portion of Douglas County that provides food, clothing, household items, furniture plus rent and utility assistance. Nearly 400 families rely on help from COPE to remain in their homes and keep their utilities on. The partnership with the Common Fund is critical to continuing support for the families COPE serves in our communities.”

Visit [www.commonfundoftheheartland.org](http://www.commonfundoftheheartland.org) for more information.

### **About the Common Fund of the Heartland**

The Common Fund of the Heartland, a 501(c)3 tax-deductible organization, works closely with our partners; Family Housing Advisory Services, Heartland Family Service, The Salvation Army, Together Inc., and United Way throughout Omaha and the surrounding region to efficiently provide financial assistance for utilities and other related expenses to low-income families in crisis. Through our work, we seek to prevent homelessness and increase housing stability for our region’s most vulnerable residents.

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