

The past four months have been a difficult time for Barbara and Barrington Pearson...

Mr. Pearson was diagnosed with congestive heart failure, at one point going back and forth to the hospital about every two weeks, and in March he was hospitalized for almost a month. Prior to his illness, Mr. Pearson enjoyed working with his hands. He discovered his love for carpentry at 10 years old and made that his profession until the heart issues hindered his work.

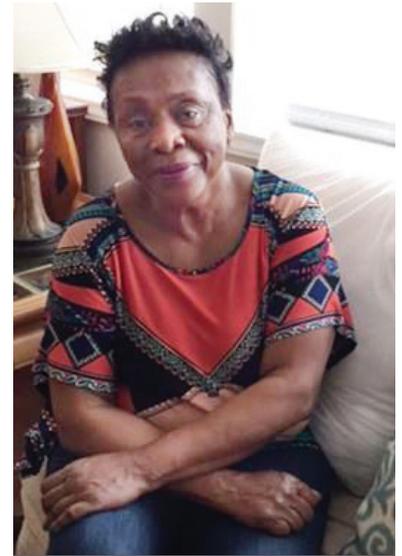
Now limited to mostly resting at home, Mrs. Pearson carefully monitors his sodium and water intake. Too much fluid can increase stress on his heart by trying to pump the excess fluid throughout his body. Thankfully, the hospital arranged in-home care to monitor Mr. Pearson's blood pressure and vital signs and to change his medication port each week. The couple's daughters and friends also help when they can, but Mrs. Pearson bears most of the responsibility of caring for her husband.

Like many couples in their seventies, the Pearsons' income is limited to their Social Security benefits, and a major medical problem was the last thing they needed. When it was time to pay their heating bill, a friend of Mrs. Pearson's let her know she could apply for HEAT funds at her community action agency.

While she was unsure of what to expect, she is grateful for the staff member who assisted her and who was so empathetic to their situation, especially since Mr. Pearson was in cardiac critical care at the time she applied.

Mr. Pearson's health is now improving and the couple is pleased with his progress. In the meantime, Mr. Pearson finds comfort through prayer, reading, watching documentaries and painting.

To the donors of HEAT, Mrs. Pearson says, "Thank you. I appreciate you helping to make the funds available. I'm quite sure there are many people like us who need this assistance." 🔥



Barbara Pearson

HEAT's executive director, Janet Joseph, presenting at workshop in Clayton County.



Photo by Bill Edge of the Georgia Public Service Commission.

Coming Together for the Community

The quality of life in our communities truly progresses when we go from identifying issues affecting our disadvantaged neighbors to sharing and implementing solutions. HEAT recently had the opportunity to participate in energy-assistance workshops focused on just that. Sponsored by Commissioner Tim Echols of the Georgia Public Service Commission, the two-hour workshops brought together energy companies and nonprofits to educate and answer questions from attendees on programs and incentives for low-income, elderly and disabled Georgians. Guests represented caseworkers, community outreach programs

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and other groups providing assistance to struggling Georgians.

HEAT presented at both events, which were held at Partnership for Community Action in DeKalb County and at the Clayton County Community Services Authority. HEAT's director shared information such as where eligible residents can apply for energy assistance, grant funds available to customers of qualified natural gas marketers and the number of families and individuals served by the organization through the years. Other participants shared information about programs and services to help reduce home heating costs and other assistance resources for households in need including:

- Gas SouthPay-As-You-Go
- Georgia Natural Gas Pre-Pay Plan
- Georgia Power PrePay Program
- SCANA Energy Regulated Division
- Atlanta Gas LightSenior Citizen Discount Program
- Salvation Army Project SHARE
- HopeWorkshome maintenance for senior homeowners

Thank you to Commissioner Echols for hosting the workshops and inviting HEAT to contribute. 🔥

Spirit of Giving: Sylvia

For more than five years, Sylvia has been one of HEAT's most consistent donors. Below she shares what inspires her to continue supporting the HEAT mission.

Q. How did you first learn about HEAT?

A. I believe it was through a bill insert.

Q. Why is HEAT a valuable cause for Georgia communities?

A. Well, we all like to stay warm. When I was younger and a newly divorced mother, I was what you may call "middle-class poor," even though I was still able to provide for the needs of my son and me. We lived up north and sometimes I would tack blankets to the windows to keep us warm. When I learned about who HEAT helps, I could relate to that experience. My son and I have turned out well, so I hope other people who need help will be okay, too.

Q. What does having a spirit of giving look like to you?

A. To me, it's helping people when you have even the tiniest sense of what they may be going through. When I give to a cause, I like to set up my donation to go out on a consistent basis, so it is not something I have to think about once I start.

Q. Is there someone in particular who inspired you to be a giving person?

A. Watching my kids inspires me. They are very generous and maybe because they understand things are not always guaranteed in life.

Q. Why do you feel it is important to have a spirit of giving to people in need?

A. We are all connected, so I cannot think of why someone would not give. I have seen enough of life to know things can change at any moment. 🔥

Thank You

With the help of our individual, corporate and grant contributors, HEAT provided more than \$741,000 in energy assistance last winter! Because of you, nearly 3,000 households were served and more than 6,000 individuals were assisted.



Donate to HEAT. Many less fortunate families need your help today.
Donate online at heatga.org or complete this form and mail it with your check to the address below.

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The Leader Behind the Scenes: HEAT Says Farewell to Its First Executive Director

For 16 years, the Heating Energy Assistance Team has been fortunate to thrive under the exemplary leadership of Janet Joseph. Janet has brought the organization a long way since it transitioned from being an outreach program to now standing on its own as a statewide fuel fund. She has given countless hours to build corporate partnerships and other community support to ensure HEAT faithfully provides energy assistance to low-income Georgians. After years of persistent work, Janet is preparing to settle into retirement this spring. But, we could not let her go without letting us feature a Q&A about her time with HEAT!



Janet H. Joseph

Q. How did you become involved with HEAT?

A. I started with HEAT when I was working at Atlanta Gas Light. HEAT was an outreach program the company established to assist families struggling with their energy bills. Working with an advisory committee to promote the program was one of several community outreach activities I was responsible for as a representative in the community affairs department. With the deregulation of the natural gas industry in Georgia, HEAT became a separate 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization in 2000 and I was hired as the organization's first executive director.

Q. When HEAT transitioned into a nonprofit organization, what was the early stage of operations like?

A. It was a time of rebuilding HEAT's donor stream, which was split among gas marketers due to natural gas deregulation. Atlanta Gas Light's approximately 1.2 million customers at the time were served by several marketers. HEAT had to reach out to each marketer to provide its customer base an opportunity to contribute, which was offered when they were customers of Atlanta Gas Light. This is still an ongoing process.

Q. What was the most challenging part of that early stage?

A. The biggest challenge was developing both the individual and corporate donor streams. Donations dropped significantly from more than \$700,000 annually to \$3,000. We had no direction to go but up!

Q. What were your most memorable accomplishments during that early stage?

A. When we received our first two corporate donations from SCANA Energy and Georgia Natural Gas. SCANA Energy also offered its customers an opportunity to make donations through their bills. Those were turning points that helped HEAT begin to build a solid foundation as a nonprofit.

Q. What was a significant moment when you felt HEAT came into its own as well-established nonprofit?

A. When the organization received its first \$1 million donation in 2004. Also, thanks to the support of the Municipal Gas Authority of Georgia and the Georgia Municipal Association, HEAT has established a network of municipalities that allow their customers to help their neighbors through HEAT as well.

Q. What has been the most challenging part of developing the organization in recent years?

A. In recent years, it's been working to expand and diversify our resources.

Q. What is your proudest memory as HEAT's director these past 16 years?

A. Restoring HEAT to the level it reached prior to becoming a nonprofit organization in spite of the many challenges faced along the way. I feel a solid foundation has been established for even greater growth moving forward.

Q. What are a few experiences you have had as director that have benefited you personally?

A. I have been blessed to work with a great board of directors that truly cares about those who are less fortunate. I have grown and been enriched by the sharing of their knowledge, time, expertise and, most importantly, their friendship over the years. Also, I have been strengthened by my association with our business and community partners who have stood with us throughout the years to help make a difference in the lives of others who otherwise would not have received help.

Q. What are your hopes for HEAT's future?

A. My hope is that HEAT will continue to grow and become one of the leading fuel fund organizations in the country. 🔥

Thank you, Janet, for all the time and effort you have given to the Heating Energy Assistance Team. Your leadership will be missed by our staff and board of directors. Enjoy your well-deserved retirement!



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*Helping low-income
Georgians meet their energy needs*

HEAT Partners with AARP to Help Local Seniors



Randy Lyons, AARP's most recent participant for HEAT.

Nonprofits often operate on a tight budget for administrative costs so that more funds can be used to support programs and services that help their target community. For many organizations, that means working twice as hard with a small, full-time staff. To fulfill their mission, nonprofits rely on outside assistance from volunteers, interns, freelancers and other groups. However, those

relationships aren't all about what an organization can gain.

For about eight years, HEAT has been a host agency for the AARP Foundation's Senior Community Service Employment Program (SCSEP). The program "matches eligible older job seekers with local nonprofits and public agencies so they can increase skills and build self-confidence, while earning a modest income." According to the foundation's website, SCSEP began more than 45 years ago and is managed by the U.S. Department of Labor in 21 states and Puerto Rico. (source: AARP Foundation SCSEP)

"Our goal with each person is to help them sharpen those professional skills that make them an asset while they search for the job that is right for them," said Tamika Condé, project director for AARP's SCSEP office in DeKalb County. "It is a great feeling when participants transition from the

program to a new position knowing they have something valuable to offer," she added.

The HEAT staff appreciates our partnership with SCSEP for that very reason. In exchange for the much-needed help with daily activities, we are able to provide additional assistance to older, low-income residents in our community.

"When we place participants with HEAT, we know they are in a safe and friendly work environment where they will be treated with respect," said Condé. "Those are important qualities our staff looks for in a host agency because we want a participant's placement to be an encouraging experience. We have enjoyed a beneficial partnership with HEAT over the years," she added. 🔥

The HEAT Factor is a newsletter published for friends and supporters of HEAT, Inc.

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Our mission is to provide energy assistance for Georgians in need.

HEAT, Inc. is a 501 (c) (3) statewide nonprofit organization that raises funds to help Georgians who need temporary financial assistance with energy bills. Thousands of households need help, but only limited funding is available.