

When Patricia Faced an Overwhelming Bill, HEAT Was There to Help

Moving toward the end of winter often comes with good feelings of a fresh start for the warm season ahead. For Patricia S., the last thing she expected was to end up without heat for weeks while managing the burden of health issues. She has been diagnosed with fibromyalgia, diabetes and high blood pressure. Since her husband's passing just short of his 90th birthday in 2020, having enough money to make ends meet has been a struggle.

Even though she has a sharp mind, sometimes it can be challenging for Patricia to keep track of all her living expenses and other responsibilities on her own. This past winter she thought there was an issue with her furnace when she could not get her home warm. She was surprised to find the issue was actually because her heating service was disconnected. Patricia did not have enough money to cover her past-due and current bill with her income being limited to Social Security.

Prior to the service being disconnected, her home also had

signs of a gas leak. By the time she had a plumber come out to help, she found herself in a Catch-22. The plumber said he could not check out the issue with her gas turned off. And the gas company said they could not turn on her service until her bill was paid and the leak was fixed.

Patricia never needed utility assistance before and did not know who to reach out to for help paying her bill. When she told a friend about her dilemma, he gave her a list of suggestions and HEAT's energy assistance funds stood out as her best option. A weight was lifted after she contacted her local community action agency where the team wasted no time in helping her apply.

Patricia is very pleased with the timeliness and kindness she experienced, especially not knowing how her situation would have been resolved without HEAT funds. "I think a lot of people don't know that there's help or where to start," she says. "I'm extremely grateful to HEAT's donors." 🔥



Message From the Director

When I reflect on this year, I think about the importance of community. Without the help of concerned citizens, organizations and businesses, it would be difficult to overcome unexpected challenges in our lives. HEAT is blessed to have a network of amazing donors and partners who have stepped up their contributions so we can better meet the needs of struggling families and individuals.

Despite heavy losses across the state, Georgia has been able to make it through the pandemic up to a certain point. However, the resurgence of COVID-19 is causing an uptick in people seeking help for several areas of basic needs, including energy assistance. HEAT has seen requests from many households with past-due bills in the thousands. Our staff continues to work diligently in our fundraising efforts even in the face of delays with processing applications because of necessary safety protocols that were

implemented due to the pandemic.

Not surprisingly, the Georgia Division for Family and Children Services estimates the need for assistance with heating bills may rise this winter. While the likelihood of this news is saddening, we know we can make a significant impact when we come together in great numbers. Our team asks that you remember your neighbors who will face hardships this winter and consider donating to HEAT.

As always, HEAT is deeply thankful to everyone who supports us in giving people in need the comfort and safety of a warm home when they need it the most. 🔥



Jeffrey Joseph,
Executive Director

The Gas Authority Goes the Extra Mile to Give Back



The Municipal Gas Authority of Georgia (the Gas Authority) truly has a heart for helping people that starts from the top down. The organization's culture of service is exemplified by the actions it takes to

help HEAT raise energy assistance funds for our neighbors in need.

One unique way the Gas Authority supports our mission is by presenting HEAT Awards at its annual membership meeting. This year, we congratulate the member cities that were awarded for raising the most dollars per utility customer by encouraging donations through bill inserts.

- Less than 1,000 customers – **Claxton**
- 1,000 - 5,000 customers – **Madison**
- More than 5,000 customers – **Covington**

The Gas Authority was created in 1987 by an act of the Georgia General Assembly that was signed into law by Governor Joe Harris. Its mission is "to provide municipalities a reliable, economical supply of natural gas, and to assist them in developing and growing their gas systems to optimize the benefits of public ownership." The organization is the largest nonprofit natural gas joint-action agency in the United States with 81 member systems across five states (mainly Georgia) that serve 253,000 customers.

According to Chris Strippelhoff, chief membership officer, the Gas Authority's core values are summed up by the

acronym S.P.I.R.I.T., which stands for service, professionalism, integrity, respect, innovation and teamwork. When the organization was introduced to HEAT in 2005 by the Georgia Municipal Association (a mutual partner), Strippelhoff said the importance of HEAT's work was clear and a partnership made perfect sense. At that time, customers of its Georgia member systems were already receiving energy assistance.

"Our member systems are there for the benefit of their local community. And the communities [served by member systems] are all over the spectrum in terms of socio-economic status, so we serve everyone," said Strippelhoff. "We believe it's our social responsibility and privilege to help HEAT provide emergency assistance to people in need."

In addition to giving HEAT Awards to encourage support from its members and maintaining active board membership with HEAT, the Gas Authority also began an employee giving program to raise more funds. Since the organization cannot donate directly as a nonprofit, the program allows employees to donate individually through payroll deduction, raising more than \$116,000 since it began.

"It's all voluntary," said Strippelhoff. "We have good people on our staff who see the great work HEAT does and want to support."

HEAT cannot express how grateful we are for all that the Gas Authority does for us and their fellow Georgians. We look forward to many more years of successful partnership with this phenomenal organization and its fantastic member systems! 🔥

HEAT Welcomes New Team Member

Behind every well-run nonprofit is the right mix of individuals who make a hardworking team. And HEAT is no exception. We are glad to welcome **Allison Kennington** as our new administrative specialist.

Allison was born and raised in the metro Atlanta area and attended The Westminster Schools. She learned the importance of giving back to her community from her mother, who was heavily involved in charity work through

Trinity Presbyterian Church in addition to working fulltime as a psychologist. Growing up, Allison regularly volunteered at local nonprofits such as the Agape Center and the Atlanta Community Food Bank.

After graduating from the College of



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Donate to HEAT. Many individuals affected by COVID-19 need your help today.

Donate online at heatga.org or complete this form and mail it with your check to the address below.

A donation of \$350 helps one deserving family pay their utility bill. However, donations of any amount are needed and appreciated.

Name _____

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City, State, Zip _____

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Home Heating Energy Provider _____

HEAT, Inc.

P.O. Box 849

Smyrna, GA 30081



How Often Should I Change My Home Air Filter

The small things become easy to brush off when life gets busy. But the filters in your home's HVAC system are one of those seemingly small tasks that should not be ignored. The filters help you and your loved ones stay healthier by keeping contaminants out of the air and prolong the life of your system by preventing it from overworking, saving you money. When it comes to changing your filters, there is no one-size-fits-all answer because there are multiple variables at play.

Types of Air Filters

There are three main filters for residential use:

- **Fiberglass:** Cheapest option and should be replaced once a month. Easy to change, but filtering abilities are limited compared to other types.
- **Pleated:** Typically costs more than fiberglass but lasts longer (30 to 90 days). Made from polyester or cotton paper and designed to filter out finer dirt and dust particles. Easy to replace and most are recyclable.
- **Washable:** Most expensive option (\$50+) but also one of the most efficient. Never needs to be replaced but needs to be washed once a month. In some models, air coursing through them creates an electrostatic charge that helps collect more particles from the air.

Other Variables to Consider

- **Material Thickness:** General rule of thumb in average home with no pets using 1-to-3-inch thick pleated filters is to replace them every three months. Having filters that are thicker than 3 inches means you do not need to change them as often.
- **Cats or Dogs:** Change filters at least every two months if using a standard pleated style.
- **Allergies, Asthma, or Respiratory Issues:** Consider changing filters every 20 to 45 days.
- **Small Children:** Change filters about every two months

to keep indoor air quality high.

- **Home Size:** HVAC system is likely bigger and processes more air in bigger-than-average homes. In most cases, that means filters should be changed more frequently.
- **Air Quality:** Smog and dust in cities with higher air pollution make your system work harder, which requires more filter changes. Also, change filters more often if doing renovations that create dust.
- **Vacation Home:** In homes where people do not stay for a long time, filters can last from six to 12 months.

MERV Rating

MERV (Minimum Efficiency Reporting Value) is a standard rating for a filter's overall effectiveness. The higher the number, from 1 to 16, the better it is at removing smaller particles of dirt and dust. Getting the right MERV rating filter for your system's build is important because a higher rating can cause problems with letting enough air through, which overworks your system. If you get a filter with a higher rating that works for your system, consider changing it more frequently since it will collect more contaminants in a shorter period.

This is a blog post share from Gas South.

Source: "How Often Should I Change Home Air Filters?" Gas South, 2020, <https://www.gassouth.com/blog/how-often-should-i-change-home-air-filters>. Accessed 16 Sept. 2021

HEAT Donor Shares Poem to Remind Us Why Giving Matters

You never know how sharing your story can touch another person. Recently, a HEAT donor shared a poem with our staff that was inspired by a recipient's story of getting energy assistance. We greatly appreciate whenever donors send in thoughtful words that motivate us in our mission and encourage others to get involved. Thank you to C. L. Burch for sharing this creative piece with us and our readers.

Isn't it sweet to have some heat
To keep us safe from the cold?
But there are those who are nearly froze
And their stories should be told.

A lost job, an illness,
A run of bad luck, it's true.
Put yourself in their shoes,
Help them pay their dues.
Who knows? It could happen to you!

One dollar a month or maybe two
May not sound like much to you.
But if we all gave,
It's our neighbors we save.
Isn't it the least we can do?

Will you miss that dollar every month?
Will it change the way you live?
It does more good than you'll ever know
Because you were willing to give.



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***Helping low-income
Georgians meet their energy needs***



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William and Mary, she moved to Aomori, Japan for three years to teach English. When she returned to the United States, Allison worked in politics doing field organizing, digital organizing and administrative work. However, she felt a pull to change course after the 2020 election and transitioned into the nonprofit sector with hopes of using the skills she gained in politics to do good in the Atlanta community.

Allison decided to join HEAT because during her time in Aomori, a metro area that receives major snowfall in the winter, she learned how important it is for people to be able to heat their homes. She appreciates HEAT's transparency as an organization and is excited by the opportunity to be a part of our team's growth. She looks forward to building a career at HEAT by helping to fulfill its mission of keeping Georgia families warm.

In her free time, Allison enjoys video games, cooking and studying Japanese. She loves swimming and plans to try aerial yoga. 🔥

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

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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.

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



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