

SILVER THREADS

Walk for Warmth helps local residents with utility bills

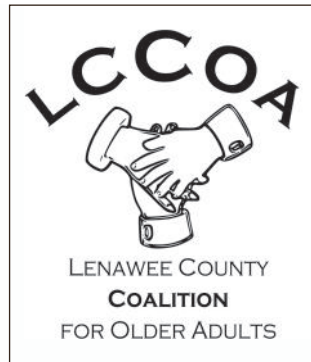
By Barbara Mitzel

During the cold winter months keeping warm in your home is among the most basic of needs. Yet one in five people in Michigan, many of them seniors, needs help paying their energy bill to keep the heat on.

In Lenawee County, utility bill assistance is the top essential need.

On Saturday, Feb. 20, by simply moving your feet you can help ensure that no one in the community ever goes without heat or electricity. The fourth annual Walk for Warmth event will begin at 10 a.m. (9:15 registration and refreshments) at the First Presbyterian Church, 156 E. Maumee St., in downtown Adrian.

Participants can choose to walk a half-mile or



1.5 miles through town. All funds raised will be used to support energy bill assistance and home weatherization programs for those in need in Lenawee County.

We know the need for utility assistance is real and exists in our community. Anyone can be affected at any time, whether it is a senior citizen in the grocery line, a veteran on a fixed income, to the working

family at a local school, even friends and family can be affected.

The Walk for Warmth is one way we can give back to our community by making a direct impact and helping make sure no one goes without natural gas or electricity.

Last year's Walk for Warmth raised \$48,000 of unrestricted funds that were used by the Community Action Agency to provide heating assistance to 135 Lenawee County families. This year, we are encouraging even more community participation, to come out and join the walk, either as individuals or part of a team.

For those who may experience or are currently having difficulties with energy bills or may need help

with other needs such as medical expenses, groceries or transportation, help is available by calling 211, which puts people in contact with a variety of community-based organizations that can assist.

Customers who think they may have a problem paying their energy bills are asked to contact their utility company as soon as possible. Don't wait, contact us right away for help. A variety of payment and assistance plans are available depending on your need.

Barbara Mitzel is the director of public affairs for Consumers Energy. The Silver Threads column is a project of the Lenawee County Coalition for Older Adults.