

SMOC Receives \$10,000 Fuel Assistance Grant from Bank of America

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By Framingham Source Editor
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The Bank of America Charitable Foundation recently presented a check to the South Middlesex Opportunity Council's fuel assistance program. Participating in the check presentation were: (l-r) Nelson Santos, BofA Regional Manager, Solange Rosado, BofA Regional Manager, Rosalind Baker, SMOC Fuel Assistance Program Director, James Cuddy, SMOC Executive Director, Maria Santos, BofA Financial Center Operations Manager, and Shawn McLean, BofA Financial Center Operations Manager.

the cost of heat in the winter months and to remain healthy and safe," according to James T. Cuddy, SMOC's Executive Director. "As the cold weather settles into our area, thousands of families will request our assistance. It's a challenge every year to meet the demand for our help, so this generous grant from the Bank of America will go a long way in allowing us to serve more families in need."

"We know that many individuals and families struggle during this time of year, sometimes forced to make difficult decisions between buying groceries or paying the heating bill, and these basic needs must be met in order to achieve stability and improve their financial lives. We hope that this grant to SMOC's fuel assistance program will help many more families stay

FRAMINGHAM – The Bank of America Foundation recently awarded a \$10,000 grant to South Middlesex Opportunity Council (SMOC) for its Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP), which assists in paying winter heating bills for low-income eligible households.

"Since 1976, our fuel assistance program has been helping the most vulnerable people in our communities afford

safe and comfortable in their homes throughout the winter,” said Miceal Chamberlain, Bank of America’s Massachusetts President.

Every year, SMOC receives a limited amount of state funding to help qualified applicants pay for heating their homes.

In 2015, SMOC received 26,000 calls requesting general information or to inquire about prequalification for fuel assistance.

From the 6,460 applications received, 5,560 households received financial assistance from the program, including low-income, single households, one or two parent families with children, teens and young adults, and elderly and disabled households.

SMOC’s fuel assistance program makes payments directly to the primary heat source vendor, with special provisions made for those households whose heat is included in their rent and for those living in subsidized housing. Households with incomes up to 60 percent of estimated State Median Income are eligible for the program.

The fuel assistance program staff consists of seven full-time employees; however, the volume of calls and the application process requires a capacity of staff time that exceeds the program’s operations budget.

According to Harrison, the Bank of America Foundation grant will be used to hire additional staff to pre-qualify applicants during the busy fall and winter months.

For more information about SMOC’s fuel assistance program, call 508-620-1230 or 1-800-286-6776.