

Whirlpool Corporation Appliance Donation Aids Southwest Michigan Community Action Agency in Their Mission To Support Those in Need

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"We received a call from Whirlpool Corporation wanting to know if we were interested in doing an appliance donation for some of our clients that are low-income," said Yvonne Vidt of the Southwest Michigan Community Action Agency (SMCAA). "And I said absolutely!"

SMCAA is dedicated to reducing poverty in Michigan and changing the lives of low-income Michiganders through a variety of programs, and is part of a national network of over 1,000 local organizations that help people move from poverty to economic stability and self-sufficiency.

"Due to the pandemic, a lot of our clients had kids that were home and even grandkids that were home, so there was a lot of extra use of their appliances and wear and tear on them," said Vidt.

Through SMCAA, 10 families in need in the community of Benton Harbor, Michigan were aided through the donation with up to two new appliances at each household.

“They were clients that applied for services through our agency,” said Kim Smith-Oldham, executive director of SMCAA. “They were low-income and met our eligibility criteria of living anywhere from 125 to 150 percent below the poverty level, so we’re talking probably under \$20,000 average income per household.”

The agency received funding from the state and federal government due to the Coronavirus pandemic for utility assistance, rental assistance, and other programs. Smith-Oldham said that this appliance donation fit well into these other programs to provide aid to those who needed it most during this difficult time.

“We are the Housing Assistance Resource Agency (HARA) in Van Buren County,” explained Smith-Oldham, “and we are currently working with the Berrien County HARA on the utility assistance portion of their COVID Emergency Rental Assistance (CERA) program as well as in Cass County.” The agency also hosts regular monthly and quarterly food distributions for its clients—one for seniors and the other for families.

“Last year, we served over 52,000 families in the tri-county area with food distributions,” she said. Whirlpool Corporation partners with the agency on their food program as well, with volunteers coming out every year to hand out Christmas turkeys and other food items for the holidays.

“These donations are very important,” said Smith-Oldham. “This is our job—community action— and this is what we do. It’s also important to the clients that we serve, so we appreciate all that Whirlpool has done for us.”

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