



NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

July 13, 2009

(Aurora, Illinois)

Mutual Ground's Domestic Violence Shelter Reopens Its Doors
United Way's Dunham Emergency Assistance Fund Provides the Key

Mutual Ground announced the immediate reopening of its domestic violence shelter after a nearly two week closure. The shelter was closed due to a significant decrease in funding from the State of Illinois precipitated by the current economic downturn. The reopening was made possible by a contribution from the Dunham Emergency Assistance Fund started by the Dunham Fund, an Aurora area private foundation, and administered by the Fox Valley United Way.

"We have reopened our shelter doors and the Dunham Emergency Assistance Fund has provided the key" said Linda Healy, Mutual Ground's Executive Director. "Since the shelter closed on July 1st, the agency has turned away 24 women and 32 children in dire need of emergency shelter from life-threatening emotional and physical abuse." Mutual Ground has provided over 102,000 nights of shelter since 1997. It is the only domestic violence shelter serving southern Kane and Kendall Counties and the Aurora portion of DuPage County. The closest shelters are in Elgin, DeKalb, Glen Ellyn and Joliet and are not easily reached by public transportation and many domestic violence victims do not have access to an automobile. Hessed House, an area homeless shelter, has accepted emergency referrals from Mutual Ground for the past two weeks, but cannot sufficiently provide the kind of specialized security necessary for domestic violence victims.

In March 2009, the Dunham Fund established the Dunham Emergency Assistance Fund at Fox Valley United Way to help address the unprecedented increase in demand for emergency food and shelter services during the recent economic challenges facing the Aurora, Illinois community. "It is very appropriate that Mutual Ground receive the first funding from the Dunham Emergency Assistance Fund," said Ryan Maley, chairman of the Dunham Fund. "The Aurora Police Department alone had over 5,000 domestic violence calls last year. Since July 1st, when the shelter closed, area police departments and hospitals had no way to assist victims who needed emergency residential services. Mutual Ground has a vital role in our community."

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To seed the emergency fund, the Dunham Fund provided an initial \$50,000 outright gift and challenged United Way to raise additional emergency funding to be matched by the Dunham Fund up to \$100,000. By early July, United Way had met the challenge and the Dunham Fund, recognizing the need was even greater than originally anticipated, provided an additional \$100,000 for the fund. In all, \$350,000 became available to distribute to area nonprofits providing direct services to those in need of food and shelter.

To maximize the effectiveness of the emergency assistance program, the Dunham Fund further collaborated with Fox Valley United Way to efficiently administer the emergency grants and to utilize United Way's expertise in identifying and selecting grant recipient organizations that were providing food and shelter services to those individuals most affected by the challenges of the current economic climate. The grants were to be made proactively and no request for proposals from area agencies was issued by United Way.

"The grant to Mutual Ground is the first of ten Dunham Emergency Assistance Fund grants that will be distributed within the next several weeks to area agencies that provide direct services to those in immediate need of food and shelter," said United Way's CEO, Michael Meyer "Additionally, all of the grant recipients were chosen for their long-term and sustainable commitments to the communities they serve, their strong and proven administrative leadership, their openness to finding new ways to address persistent community problems, and their willingness to collaborate with other agencies to solve those problems."

Donors may continue to make contributions to the Dunham Emergency Assistance Fund online at www.uwfoxvalley.org or may send a check to Fox Valley United Way at 40 West Downer Place, Aurora, Illinois 60506.

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