

Will Power

A MONTHLY NEWSLETTER FROM THE PIONEERS ASSISTANCE FUND

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SAVING ON UTILITIES

Q: It seems that utility rates keep rising. Do utility companies offer senior discounts?

A: With record heat in the West and stormy winters in the East, it's not surprising that many seniors who live on a fixed income have expressed concern about utility rates rising. Electricity, heating oil, propane, even telephone, and, especially in California, water rates creep up or sometimes jump up and users feel powerless, no pun intended.

There are things you can do. The first step is you: CONSERVE.

Basic energy conservation includes lowering the heat and raising the temperature when using air conditioners, running appliances at off-peak hours, and only with full loads, fixing leaks and leaky windows, and unplugging electricity "vampires" that suck wattage just by being plugged in, but are seldom used. Switch to low-flow shower heads, which are often provided free of charge from your water company, put a brick in the toilet tank to displace extra water, the list goes on and on. Get creative and see what you can accomplish.

Next, contact your utility companies. Most have programs to lower bills based on limited income or disability, but you have to call and ask them. Program names range from "Bill Assistance" to "Senior Discount" to "Disability Rate Reduction," so inquire about all programs and how you might qualify. Some utility companies have experimented with

offering rate-payers a flat monthly rate based on annual use, divided by 12. This may not represent a discount, but can help predict and control costs.

Ever heard of LIHEAP? It's the Low Income Household Energy Assistance Program, a federal program administered at the state level (Find your local state lineup coordinator at the link below). It is part of the Community Services division of the U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, designed to lower utility rates for users who meet certain criteria. No criteria specifically says "seniors," but if a household is already receiving help from a federal program, like food stamps, that means the household is eligible for other federal assistance, such as LIHEAP. There may be income eligibility as well.

Finally, if you are struggling to pay your utility bills or need resources for your parent, please contact one of our social workers to locate programs in your area.

Sources:

Office of Community Services, a division of the U.S. Department of Health & Human Services.

<http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/ocs/programs/liheap>

Find local state lineup coordinator

<http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/ocs/liheap-state-and-territory-contact-listing>

<http://energy.gov/energysaver/downloads/energy-saver-guide>

JOKE OF THE MONTH

"Why did the chicken cross the road? That's easy! She was egged on."

WILL CALL

Do you or someone you know need our assistance? Call toll-free (888) 994-3863 or wrpioneers.org





QUALITY OF LIFE OUTDOORS

Between the end summer and the start of autumn, there are a few precious weeks of transition. Kids are going back to school, stores are stocking for holidays, the weather cools somewhat and the days grow shorter. And there are still plenty of opportunities to get outside, and here are five reasons why you should:

1. Sunlight is good for your mood and overall health. “Humans make 90 percent of our vitamin D naturally from sunlight exposure to our skin – specifically, from ultraviolet B exposure to the skin, which naturally initiates the conversion of cholesterol in the skin to vitamin D3.” (The Vitamin D Society) Vitamin D is essential to protect against diseases ranging from cancer to heart disease. Sunlight wards off depression, literally by hitting your retina and figuratively by being the antidote to isolation.
2. Daylight helps your sleep cycle, setting your body clock to daytime as waking hours and, hence, nighttime as sleeping hours.
3. Fresh air is good for your lungs. The air inside our homes and businesses may be recycled through an air conditioner or contain unseen contaminants.
4. Your community is outside. This is where you can greet the letter carrier, see neighbors walking their dogs, and hear children at play. Maybe an ice cream truck rolls by as you collect your afternoon mail and newspaper. It’s good to connect with your community, even if stepping outside your front or back door is as far as you get.
5. Convening with gardens and greenery is relaxing. Our connection to nature is well documented for the peaceful silence, textures,

colors, fragrances and the persistence of greenery to grow without human intervention (even weeds!). Gardening or sitting in a garden add quality to your life. Annie Kirk, Owner of Red Bird Restorative Gardens in Portland Oregon says, “Having a go-to, do-not-disturb-I’m-healing-my-brain-soul-body-heart garden space is a tonic.”

What if you live in a cinderblock basement or city apartment? Open a window, grow a kitchen shelf herb garden, go outside and let your senses be your nature guide. Where ever you live look around for opportunities to get outside. Want some ideas in your area? Call one of our social workers today!

Sources:

Benefits of Sunlight: A Bright Spot for Human Health by M. Nathaniel Mead at
<http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2290997/>

“Sun exposure to the skin is the human race’s natural, intended, most effective and most neglected source of vitamin D” at
www.sunshinevitmain.org.

<http://redbirdrestorativegardens.com/blog/>

“ QUOTE OF THE MONTH

Great artists say that the most beautiful thing in the world is a baby. Well, the next is an old lady, for every wrinkle is a picture.

