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Notes from editor (not for publication):



HEADLINE ELEMENTS:

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1 Vermont Jazz Center hosts benefit concert for Windham

2 County Heat Fund

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4 TEXT BODY:

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5 The Vermont Jazz Center (VJC) is hosting a benefit
6 concert for the Windham County Heat Fund Saturday, March 21,
7 at 7:30 p.m. at the Jazz Center on Cotton Mill Hill.

8 The concert will celebrate the 80th birthday of bassist
9 Cameron Brown, who has been teaching at the VJC's Summer
10 Jazz Workshop since 2006. His contributions and "historic

11 legacy” will be honored as he and his New York–based band
12 perform, wrote organizers in a news release.

13 “The 21st year of the Windham County Heat Fund has
14 made it clear that we can no longer be satisfied with past levels
15 of funding. Federal fuel assistances programs are under assault by
16 the Trump administration,” said Heat Fund co-Chair Richard
17 Davis. “Low-income Americans are being assaulted on multiple
18 fronts by their own government. As the U.S. economy has
19 widened the gap between the haves and have nots, average
20 Americans struggle to pay their bills. Paying for fuel to heat their
21 homes often takes a back seat to paying the rent, buying food and
22 medicine and paying for other basic necessities.”

23 The fund’s goal has always been to raise \$50,000 a year,
24 and Davis wrote that “it looks like we will exceed that this year.
25 Over the past 20 years, we have raised over one million dollars
26 and provided help in about 2,000 cases, whether individuals or
27 families. But that goal may prove to be too low as the Low
28 Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) is in the
29 sights of the Trump administration for elimination.”

30 Davis fears that if LIHEAP is eliminated, “there will be no
31 federal fuel assistance. The state of Vermont receives \$21 million
32 each year. There are 14 counties in the state, and if distribution is
33 based on that number equally, our county would need \$1.5
34 million to make up the shortfall. The Heat Fund is exploring ways
35 to supplement its fundraising in preparation for a worst-case
36 scenario for next year’s heating season.”

37 The fund administrators ask people in need to fill out an
38 application. They will try to vet all applications as best they can,
39 collaborating with Southeastern Vermont Community Action
40 (SEVCA) and other human service organizations.

41 “We work closely with the frontline people in the offices
42 of local fuel dealers,” Davis wrote. “They are unofficial social
43 workers, and they know many of the trials and tribulations of
44 their customers.”

45 During the 2024–25 heating season, the heat fund
46 received \$53,836 from 113 donors, including 105 individuals,
47 seven corporations, one church, and three grantees. Fuel
48 assistance was given to 107 individuals or families, and it paid
49 \$49,624.09 for all kinds of fuel.

50 “We only give money to fuel dealers, not individuals,”
51 Davis wrote. “Most years, we have no overhead because we take
52 no salary and we pay for things such as stamps out of our own
53 pockets.”

54 Donations can be made through Venmo, by sending a
55 check to the Windham County Heat Fund, 63 Cedar St,
56 Brattleboro, VT 05301, or directly at Brattleboro Savings & Loan.

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