

Can You Imagine?

Outline of Need: Can you imagine being afraid to sleep while your furnace was running for fear that it could burn your house down? Can you imagine having to choose between warmth and peace of mind? Can you imagine living on a small social security income when major costly repairs emerge, no savings available and very little room to stretch that monthly check any further? Sarah Hodge from Lebanon Junction did not have to imagine, when in fact each day she found herself looking for ways to stretch the dollar. Finding a reliable heat source was top on her list for the wintry cold days were upon her.

Sarah Hodge's furnace was very old and functioning very poorly. A furnace repairman informed her that her furnace was a fire hazard. She was cautioned strongly not to use it; the thought of temperatures dipping downward worried Ms. Hodge. During the day she would turn the furnace on periodically while keeping a fine tuned ear to any



unfamiliar noise that might warn her of fire. She claimed, "If it blew up or something during the day, I would have a better chance to get out." At night portrayed a different story. She said, "I turned my furnace off at night." She used a small kerosene heater, layers of clothing and an electric blanket to keep warm.



How Rural Development Helped: Ms. Hodge contacted the USDA Rural Development for help. The USDA Rural Development funded the installation of a new furnace with a federal grant offered only to senior citizens 62 years of age or older and in a very low income category.

The USDA Rural Development can also offer a 1% locked interest rate loan for families 18 years of age or older and in a very low income category to make repairs to their homes, subject to Governmental regulations and budget constraints.

The Results: Ms. Hodge's new furnace was installed on January 21, 2008, and she contently expresses, "I am staying warm and I love it." She also proclaimed "USDA Rural Development did a great job and I just loved the way it was handled." Can you imagine the relief one might experience of funding those needed repairs with no monthly payment or a very affordable one? Ms. Hodge certainly can, and with faith filled words claims, "I want to thank God for this program." Perhaps USDA Rural Development can help other families as well.

