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Utility assistance fundraiser goes virtual for 2021, with greater need

January 18, 2021 - The COVID-19 pandemic has impacted people across our communities both physically and financially. Combined, Omaha Public Power District and Metropolitan Utilities District have seen a 38% increase in the number of customers requesting assistance with their bills.

The utilities are coming together, as they do every year, to raise money for energy assistance programs through the Heat the Streets Run & Walk for Warmth, which will take place March 6, 2021. This is the 14th year of the event. This year, it will be held virtually in order to help prevent the spread of COVID-19.

While utility assistance is a year-round need, this event is held during the cold winter months to bring attention to those who struggle to keep the lights on and heat their homes.

"Keeping homes warm and safe has taken on an even higher priority within the last year," said Tanya Cook, director, M.U.D. Board of Directors. "I'm proud to lend my support to this event."

Cook is co-chairing this year's event, alongside Janece Mollhoff, director, OPPD Board of Directors, and her husband, Wayne Mollhoff.

"We are seeing a record number of first-time applicants. These are customers who have never needed to reach out for help before," said Director Mollhoff. "It's clear the pandemic has taken its toll. We need to support our communities through the recovery."

OPPD and M.U.D. encourage participants to complete the 5K run or one-mile walk on March 6 on their own – in neighborhoods, local trails, or even on a treadmill. Custom neck gaiters will be mailed to all registrants.

Participants in the 5K may submit their results online. Awards will be mailed to the first-, second- and third-place male and female runners in each of the following age divisions: 12 and under, 13-19, 20-29, 30-39, 40-49, 50-59, and 60+. Register for the event or simply donate to the cause by visiting [HeatTheStreetsOmaha.com](https://www.heatthestreetsomaha.com).

Virtual 5K price:

- \$35 (Now through March 6)

Virtual one-mile walk price:

- \$25 (Now through March 6)

Children 12 and under receive free registration for the one-mile walk with a paid adult.

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Distribution of funding

Funds raised are administered by Dollar Energy Fund, Inc., a registered 501(c)3, and then split between M.U.D.'s Home Fund and OPPD's Energy Assistance Program to provide local assistance to those in need.

OPPD's Mission:

Provide affordable, reliable and environmentally sensitive energy services to our customers

M.U.D.'s Mission:

Provide safe, reliable and cost-effective natural gas and water services to our community