

# CAP suffers food losses from malfunction, forges ahead

By Barbara LaBoe/ The Daily News | Posted: Wednesday, December 29, 2010

A Christmas Eve electrical malfunction was stressful but not particularly costly to the Lower Columbia Community Action Program.

The malfunction within PeaceHealth's Broadway Campus building shot down CAP's walk-in-cooler Christmas Eve, ruining all the food stored inside. Particularly hard hit were the 75 special holiday meals staff had made up for Christmas day deliveries. Some other regular Meals on Wheels items also had to be discarded.

Because it was a long holiday weekend, staff hadn't placed as many regular meal items in the walk in, said CAP Executive Director Ilona Kerby. That kept the loss to a minimum and totaled about \$350, she said.

The program's chef came in on Christmas to assess the damage and made a shopping list for essentials. He shopped on his way into work Monday and that, along with perishable food delivery, allowed for enough food for the Monday Meals on Wheels.

"We have very competent and organized staff," Kerby said. "So we were able to be up and running as usual on Monday."

It also helped that some food is stored in the main CAP building, because workers on Saturday were able to retrieve those meals and use them for the holiday deliveries. (CAP leases the kitchen space in the PeaceHealth Broadway building).

Meals on Wheels delivers about 250 meals a day on weekdays, but on Christmas it distributed only 75 meals to clients and others who didn't have family or were unable to go to another holiday meal.

Kerby said an alarm for the walk-in already has been requested from PeaceHealth. The alarm would alert workers in the event of power loss and allow them to move the food before it spoils.

Eventually, CAP hopes to move its Meals on Wheels program to Kelso, where it already owns a building at the corner of Ash and South Pacific streets. The Grounds for Opportunity shop/kitchen will serve as the Meals on Wheels kitchen. In phase two it also will have a cafe that will allow for job training classes and also raise money for Meals on Wheels.

The group is still fundraising for the \$944,000 project and also is submitting a Community Development Block Grant through Cowlitz County early next year, Kerby said.