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308 SAN MIGUEL COUNTY

KEEPING THE HOME FIRES BURNING

*An initiative to
heat homes offers up
cash for late bills*

By **MATTHEW BEAUDIN**
Editor

As the heaters kick on for the first time of the year tossing their rusted dust smells into rooms across town, some locals in need can catch a break on their bills.

Bright Futures for Early Childhood and Families, a local non-profit, has more than \$3,000 available to give to low-income San Miguel County residents who need help paying their heating bills.

The group snagged the money from Energy Outreach Colorado, a statewide non-profit organization that raises funds through donations from utilities, corporations, foundations and individuals.

It comes just in time, too: Temperatures fell off a table last week as the region waltzed into fall and looks toward winter.

"People are having to turn their heats on," said Jill Burchmore, who administers the funds and is a program manager for Bright Futures. "It's hugely important. People cannot live here without their heat on — if you have kids, they can get sick."

Any household that has an overdue energy bill and is interested in applying for energy assistance can go to Bright

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Futures at 135 S. Spruce Street (The Silver Bell Building). You'll need a driver's license, proof of income and past due utility bill.

"This isn't for people with children zero to five. This is for all people in San Miguel County who are struggling."

Burchmore can pay the past-due amount, also.

"I'll get them out of hot water," she said. "It's [for] anything that provides a source of heat. In other words, we don't

pay for your lights to be turned on." The utility bill must be at least one day late.

As the recession lingers like old smoke, people are having trouble making ends meet. "People are unemployed and having a tough time," Burchmore said.

If she gives people funding, Burchmore offers up tips on how to save energy, too. "I don't want to just give people money. I want to take the time to educate them. ... So their bills next time

are lower."

Energy Outreach Colorado is the only non-profit organization in the state that raises money for energy assistance. Its programs include energy bill payment assistance for income-limited households, energy efficiency upgrades for affordable housing and energy efficiency education.