

ENERGY SPOTLIGHT®

February 2010

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♥♥♥ **PLEASE GIVE TO SHARING**

As we celebrate the Valentine's Day tradition by bringing love, good cheer and small gifts to family and friends, we hope you will help consider giving a critical gift to those in need – the gift of home heat – through a donation to our **Sharing Program**.

Show you have heart through a donation to Sharing



February is the final month of our Sharing Program "5\$ for 5" Campaign, in which we have been asking our customers to commit to helping those in need by donating \$5 per month for 5 months. We are extremely grateful to those who have participated and we hope you can find it in your heart to continue giving to Sharing whenever you can by simply circling a Sharing donation box on your monthly bill stub and adding the amount to what you owe.

Administered by The Salvation Army, the Sharing Program provides one-time annual grants of up to \$450 to qualified residential customers, which is used to assist them with paying their natural gas bill. In addition to donations received, Nicor Gas contributes \$175,000 to the program.

Thank you for your generosity!

The U.S. Census is coming!



The U.S. Census counts every resident in the United States and is required by the Constitution to take place every 10 years.

You will receive your census form in the mail in March. When you receive it, just answer the 10 short questions and then mail the form back in the postage-paid envelope provided by April 1. If you don't mail the form back, you may receive a visit from a census taker, who will ask you the questions in person.

The 2010 Census will help communities receive more than \$400 billion in federal funds each year for things like hospitals, job training centers, schools, senior centers, public works projects and emergency services. The data collected by the census also helps determine the number of seats your state has in the U.S. House of Representatives. For more information, visit www.2010census.gov.

Seniors Beware: Don't be the victim of telemarketing or home repair fraud

The Illinois Department on Aging reminds seniors that they are the most likely targets of fraudulent businesses looking to con people out of their savings. Telemarketing offers and home repair services are two prominent methods used to scam seniors.

TELEMARKETING FRAUD

Telemarketing fraud costs Americans about \$40 billion a year and nearly 80% of crooked

companies target senior citizens. Common scams include prize offers, travel packages, investment opportunities, vitamins (and other health products), charity appeals and recovery offers (companies claiming to be able to get your money back after you have been scammed).

HOME REPAIR FRAUD

Seniors, especially those who live alone, are prime targets for home repair rip-offs. Some

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so-called repair contractors, particularly those who operate door-to-door, may charge prices that are unfair and unreasonable. Some con artists propose offers that sound too good to be true, but they use inferior materials or they don't do the job at all.

In some cases, con artists pose as inspectors, city officials or police and use scare tactics to force you to have unnecessary repairs made on your furnace, chimney, water heater or the electrical wiring in your home. Fraudulent operators may even purposely damage your home and then try to sell you repairs. Some phony repairmen might also pretend they are inspecting an area inside of your home, when they are actually busy robbing you of cash or other valuables.

HOW TO AVOID BEING SCAMMED

Here are some general tips that will help you avoid becoming the victim of a con artist:

- ▶ Never send money or give out your credit card (or bank account) information over the phone unless you made the call and you are sure the business is legitimate
- ▶ Never be afraid to ask a door-to-door sales or repair person (or anyone who comes to your door) for proper identification



- ▶ Get estimates before doing renovations and *never* pay for work in advance
- ▶ Check references and have a friend, relative or attorney look over any contract before signing
- ▶ Don't pay for any prize offers or send money to improve your chances of winning. It's illegal for someone to ask you to pay to enter a contest

Remember, if an offer seems too good to be true, it probably is! If you or someone you know has been the victim of a scam, call the Illinois Department on Aging at 1 866 800-1409 (1 888 206-1327 TTY) to speak confidentially with a counselor who will help you resolve the issue.

2009 Shop & Share donations will help many stay warm

During nine days in November of last year, our customers and employees raised \$7,508 for the Sharing Program. On designated Shop & Share days, Jewel-Osco stores generously gave back five percent of the participants' grocery bill to Sharing – a program that helps customers not qualifying for government assistance pay their gas bills. Since 2005, Shop & Share days have helped raise over \$36,000 for Sharing.

Thanks to Jewel-Osco for once again participating and Clear Channel Radio for their media support, as well the many shoppers who have made it possible for families to stay warm this winter!

Jewel-Osco



February Natural Gas Cost



Every month, Nicor Gas files a gas supply charge with the Illinois Commerce Commission (ICC). It is the price customers pay for gas purchased from Nicor Gas during that month. As a regulated utility, Nicor Gas does not profit from the sale of natural gas. The price we pay for gas is passed on to our customers without markup. Visit nicorgas.com/gascost for energy efficiency tips, historical natural gas price information and home energy audit tools that will help you manage your natural gas usage and keep your costs down.

*At press time, this was the price Nicor Gas filed with the ICC. Under ICC rules, the price may be changed up until the first of the month in which it is effective.



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