

American Red Cross Provides Heat Relief through Westar Energy Fan Donation

Many people in the Topeka area will get a break from hot summer temperatures thanks to a gift by Westar Energy of 125 fans to the American Red Cross Operation Heat Relief. Westar Energy will be making the donation at 11:00 am, Wednesday, June 18 at the American Red Cross, 1221 SW 17th Street, Topeka.

"We want to help people who need assistance cooling their homes during the hot summer months," said Cynthia McCarvel, Manager of Community Affairs for Westar Energy. "The American Red Cross is in touch with people who need help and can get the fans to them as temperatures become unbearable."

Free fans from the Red Cross program help people who are elderly, disabled or have low incomes. The program was started in 1988 for people who are at risk of heat-related illnesses because of no means to keep cool during our hot Kansas summers. Since that time, the Red Cross has given away nearly 8,000 fans to needy families and individuals.

"The Red Cross helps people in times of disaster, and extreme heat can lead to emergency situations," said Jo Ann Long, Community Chapter Executive, American Red Cross, Kansas Capital Area Chapter. "Thanks to Westar, more people will have relief from potentially life-threatening temperatures."

To receive a fan, people must fill out a short form at the Red Cross, 1221 SW 17th Street, weekdays between 8 am and 4:30 pm. In addition, applicants will need a photo identification card or a utility bill to verify their address. Due to high demand and limited quantities, the Red Cross allows one fan per address.

The Red Cross would like to challenge the community to match Westar's donation of 125 fans. The Red Cross will accept donations of new fans from businesses and individuals wishing to assist those in need. New fans can be donated at the Red Cross office, 1221 SW 17th Street between 8 am and 4:30 pm.

In addition to Operation Heat Relief, the local Red Cross helps residents who have been affected by disasters such as fires, tornadoes, floods or a man-made disaster; with life-saving training in CPR, swimming lessons, first aid and babysitting; and provides emergency communications for military families. More than 20,000 people in Topeka and nearby counties are assisted each year by local Red Cross programs and services.

Westar Energy and the American Red Cross offer the following tips to stay cool and healthy during hot weather:

- Wear loose-fitting, lightweight, light-colored clothing and wear a hat or use an umbrella.
- Drink plenty of water, and drink water even if you do not feel thirsty. Avoid alcohol and caffeine.
- Eat small, frequent meals.
- Never leave children or pets alone in enclosed vehicles.
- Slow down, stay indoors and avoid strenuous exercise during the hottest part of the day.
- Use a buddy system when working in excessive heat, and check on family, friends, and neighbors who spend much of their time alone and more likely to be affected by the heat.
- If you have air conditioning, clean filters often, and let the air conditioner run if you are away. Turn it off, however, if you are gone for an extended time.
- Use major heat-producing appliances, such as washer and dryer, during the cooler hours of the day.
- Turn off lamps, televisions, and other appliances when not in use.

About the American Red Cross:

The American Red Cross shelters, feeds and provides emotional support to victims of disasters; supplies about 40 percent of the nation's blood; teaches skills that save lives; provides international humanitarian aid; and supports military members and their families. The Red Cross is a not-for-profit organization that depends on volunteers and the generosity of the American public to perform its mission. For more information, please visit redcross.org or visit us on Twitter at [@RedCross](https://twitter.com/RedCross).