DETROIT NATIVE SUN

DTE kicks off "Month of Warmth" events to help customers apply

PRNewswire/ -- As new state energy assistance funding becomes available Oct. 1, DTE Energy is launching Month of Warmth, a series of four customer resource fairs across southeast Michigan where customers can get help applying for bill assistance, exploring payment options and finding ways to lower energy use.

Oct. 1 marks the start of a new funding year for many state energy assistance programs, including the Michigan Energy Assistance Program and State Emergency Relief. That means income-eligible customers can begin applying for newly available help with their energy bills. The events come as cooler weather approaches and many households begin preparing for higher seasonal energy use.

"No one should have to choose between staying warm and paying for other basic needs," said Evette Hollins, vice president and chief customer officer, DTE Energy. "Month of Warmth is about bringing help directly into communities so customers can sit down with someone, ask questions and get connected to support before winter."

At the events, customers will be able to:

- Apply for energy assistance on site
- Learn whether they qualify for state and local support
- Get help with payment options and shutoff protection
- Find ways to reduce monthly energy use
- Connect with local agencies that provide food, housing and other support

Last year, DTE helped customers access nearly $125 million in energy assistance, underscoring both the need across southeast Michigan and the resources available for eligible households. Throughout October, DTE team members and community partners will be available at events across the region to help customers take the next step.

"As the new state funding window opens on Oct. 1, we look forward to working with DTE as they launch their Month of Warmth effort," says Dr. Darienne Hudson, President and CEO, United Way for Southeastern Michigan. "Connecting families to vital energy assistance puts them on a more solid footing as costs continue to rise, especially as we approach our typically harsh Michigan winters."

Month of Warmth events

- Washtenaw — Monday, Oct. 5, 3-6 p.m., Washtenaw Community College, Morris Lawrence Building, 4800 East Huron River Dr., Ann Arbor 48105
- Southfield — Saturday, Oct. 17, 11 a.m.- 2 p.m., Southfield Pavilion, 26000 Evergreen Rd., Southfield 48076
- Detroit — Thursday, Oct. 22, 10 a.m.-3 p.m., Fellowship Chapel, 7707 W. Outer Drive, Detroit 48235
- Inkster — Wednesday, Oct. 28, 10 a.m.-3 p.m., Operation Refuge, 27741 Carlysle St., Inkster 48141

The events are free and open to DTE customers seeking help with current or past-due energy bills, payment options or ways to lower future bills. DTE offers a range of support to fit different needs, from bill credits and State Emergency Relief to flexible payment plans, shutoff protection and free energy efficiency upgrades that help lower bills over time.

Customers who need help with their energy bills can get started anytime by visiting dteenergy.com/help or by calling 2-1-1 to be connected with a local energy assistance agency.

Detroit student helps design billboard

PRNewswire/ -- The Afterschool Alliance is joining Clear Channel Outdoor (NYSE: CCO) for a national visibility campaign that celebrates afterschool programs, featuring artwork created by a 15-year-old afterschool student from Usher's New Look. The student's "Powered by Afterschool" design will run across nearly 2,000 digital billboards in October as part of Lights On Afterschool, the 27th annual nationwide celebration of afterschool programs and the opportunities they provide young people to explore, connect with peers and mentors, and build new skills.

Evelyn Daniel, a 10th-grader at Cass Technical High School in Detroit, worked on the billboard as part of Usher's New Look programming at the Michigan Central Boys & Girls Club Spark Lab, which gives youth high-production, real-world work experience with industry experts. Communications and design professionals provided guidance and support to Evelyn throughout the project, and Clear Channel shared feedback and considerations for the billboard format. "My favorite thing about my afterschool program is being able to help people with a skill I acquired and learned to love from a young age," Evelyn said. "I'm an artist at heart, and in making the design for the billboard, I learned how to plan ahead and how to stick to a plan to make a project come together."

Some 8,000 Lights On Afterschool events will shine a spotlight on the many ways afterschool programs support students and their families, and to call attention to the need for more afterschool resources. The latest America After 3PM data show vast unmet need for afterschool programs. The parents of 29.6 million U.S. children want afterschool programs for their children—but just 7 million are enrolled. Afterschool programs help children and youth reach their potential by keeping them safe and engaged after the school day ends, providing hands-on learning in a place that builds a sense of confidence and belonging, and offering alternatives to screen time. A large and powerful body of evidence demonstrates that students who take part in afterschool do better in school, attain higher levels of education, and gain skills that last a lifetime, such as problem solving, teamwork, and communication.

Organized by the Afterschool Alliance, Lights On Afterschool includes events hosted by schools, Boys & Girls Clubs, YMCAs, 4-H clubs, cities, parks, museums, community centers, and many others. Longtime afterschool advocate USHER is Honorary Chair of Lights On Afterschool. Communities from coast to coast are holding special lightings of buildings, bridges, and parks, with mayors and governors declaring October 22 Lights On Afterschool Day.

Clear Channel Outdoor is supporting Lights On Afterschool by donating some of its most prominent spaces to display afterschool messages on digital billboards in 25 markets around the country throughout October. On October 22, Clear Channel will feature Evelyn's artwork on two jumbo billboards in New York City's Times Square and will illuminate Boston's South Station. The National League of Cities and the National Summer Learning Association will champion the campaign.

"We're thrilled to bring two incredible partners, Clear Channel Outdoor and Usher's New Look, together to showcase the power of afterschool programs for this year's Lights On Afterschool," said Afterschool Alliance Executive Director Jodi Grant. "Evelyn's work creating the 'Powered by Afterschool' billboards, with guidance from communications and design pros, demonstrates firsthand the kind of real-world learning, career exploration, mentorship, and growth that afterschool programs offer young people. At Usher's New Look, collaborations between industry leaders and youth are happening every day, giving youth practical experience while exploring possible pathways ahead. We are delighted that Clear Channel Outdoor is not only helping to elevate the need for afterschool programs but also investing in giving a young person such a tremendous opportunity."



