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For Immediate Release
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Jamestown BPU Explains New Johnson/BPU Good Neighbor Fund Qualifications

The Jamestown Board of Public Utilities (BPU) explains changes for use of the John Alfred and Oscar Johnson Memorial Trust/BPU Good Neighbor Fund that is intended to assist working customers with BPU bills, should sudden troubles prevent them from paying utilities on time.

Customers who pay or attempt to pay BPU bills regularly, who receive no social services assistance for utility bills and who experience a sudden hardship may now be eligible for help through the fund. Customers that believe they qualify should contact the Salvation Army at 664-4108 to make an appointment. The Salvation Army will verify the hardship with the applicant, and then contact the BPU to validate the payment history. The process is quick and easy.

Previously, the Fund did not assist anyone on government help. Customers on Social Security, Food Stamps, or HEAP now may qualify if they have attempted to maintain a regular payment record at the BPU. Anyone with a good payment record may be eligible, regardless of income.

Help from the Fund is capped at \$250 a year per BPU account. Aid is on a first-come, first-serve basis. At any time, income from the Fund may be depleted and assistance may be unavailable.

Examples of financial hardship include, but are not limited to: an unknown leak in plumbing that may result in costly water and sewer bills quickly; an accident, a sudden illness or job loss that could prevent timely payments; or an immediate necessary house repair, leaving a customer with utility bills that cannot be paid on time.

John Alfred Johnson and his brother Oscar emigrated from Sweden to Jamestown. John worked for a local manufacturer in the day and for his brother in construction at night. John worked hard, saving and investing his money. An American citizen, John considered himself a "working man," and was proud of his Swedish heritage.

Upon his death, Johnson created the Johnson Foundation, to be administered by Jamestown Swedish Consul and Attorney John Sellstrom and his wife Carole. They endowed the John Alfred & Oscar Johnson Memorial Trust/BPU Good Neighbor Fund in December. The fund is held by the Chautauqua Region Community Foundation.

Customers with questions concerning the Johnson/BPU Good Neighbor Fund may be directed to BPU Communications Coordinator Becky Robbins at 661-1680. Appointments for applications must be made by calling the Salvation Army at 664-4108.