



Report to the We Care General Meeting, May 19, 2022  
 Emergency Financial Assistance Provided: January – April 2022  
 Submitted by: Rex Cole, We Care Intake Coordinator

*I want you to know that you guys are amazing and God bless for all that you do to help people and my family.*

S.E., We Care assistance recipient, April 2022

### **Population Served.**

For the period of January through April, We Care received the highest number of inquiries (301) and applications for assistance (233) of the past 5 years (Table 1). As a consequence, the We Care board reviewed 195 applications, and approved (160) or denied (17), with some withdrawn or placed on hold (18). These are record numbers for this 4-month period.

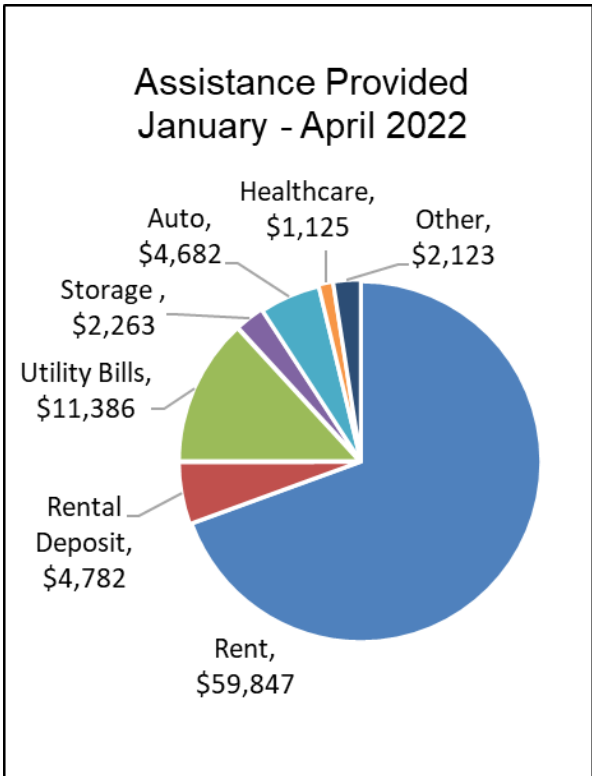
<b>Table 1. Households Served - January Through April</b>					
	2018	2019	2020	2021	<b>2022</b>
Assistance inquiries received		167	181	142	<b>301</b>
Assistance applications received	102	117	145	109	<b>233</b>
Applications reviewed by board	77	95	125	93	<b>195</b>
Total households assisted	74	88	103	89	<b>160</b>
Households denied assistance	3	6	12	2	<b>17</b>
Applications withdrawn, or on hold April 30th	0	3	10	2	<b>11, 7</b>
Households with disability assisted	16	20	26	24	<b>29</b>
Households with children assisted	43	33	50	48	<b>66</b>
Number of children assisted	64	74	105	93	<b>135</b>
Number of adults assisted	85	110	134	116	<b>210</b>

The households assisted were in Corvallis (138), Philomath (16), and Monroe (3), Alsea (1), Blodgett (1), and North Albany (1). Sixty-six of the approved requests were for families with children, and a total of 135 children were in the assisted families. Twenty-nine of the households assisted included a member with a disability. The financial difficulties of 36 of the assisted households were directly related to COVID-19.

In Forty-three of the households, We Care assistance facilitated the household to make a major transition: out of substance abuse (18 households), homelessness (15), domestic violence (8), the criminal justice system (1), or aided a refugee family (1).

### **Assistance Provided**

Housing (Rental assistance and assistance with rental deposits) continues to be most common type of assistance given, accounting for 75 percent of the total assistance given (Table 2). The second most common type of assistance provided was help with utility bills, accounting for 13 percent of the total assistance granted. Coincident with the larger number of households assisted during the January – April period, there was a dramatic increase in the dollar amount of assistance provided during this period in 2022. The total amount provided was over \$86,000. This is a 38 percent increase over last year’s Jan - April total of \$53,320 for this 4-month period.

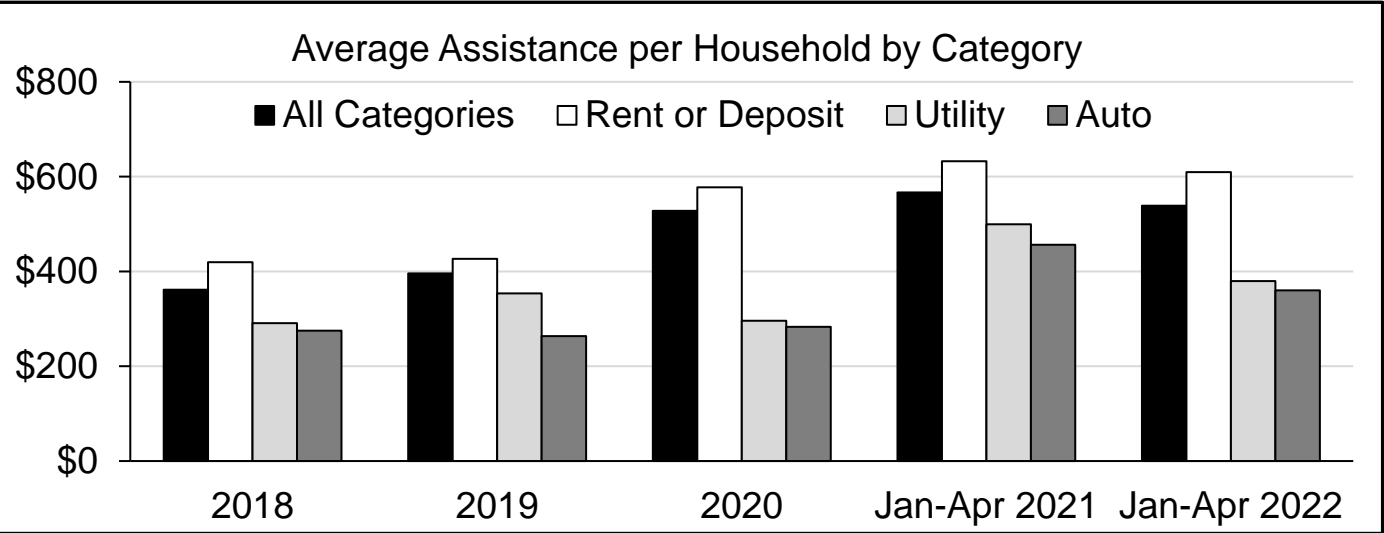


**Table 2. Types and Amounts of Assistance Provided (Jan. – Apr.)**

	2019	2020	2021	2022
	\$	\$	\$	\$
Housing	22,069	39,794	39,327	<b>64,629</b>
Rent	20,451	36,432	36,952	<b>59,847</b>
Rental Deposit	1,618	3,362	2,375	<b>4,782</b>
Utilities & Bills	11,180	3,186	7,993	<b>11,386</b>
Electricity	9,737	1,815	6,031	<b>8,543</b>
Natural Gas	518	-	-	<b>239</b>
Heating Oil	-	282	235	-
Water	924	627	1,728	<b>1,278</b>
Phone	-	462	-	<b>1,325</b>
Storage Space	722	1,599	140	<b>2,263</b>
Auto	2,302	2,013	5,515	<b>4,682</b>
Healthcare	335	1,714	87	<b>1,125</b>
Other	342	625	257	<b>2,123</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>36,948</b>	<b>48,931</b>	<b>53,320</b>	<b>86,209</b>

**Trends**

The impact of COVID on those living in poverty during the first years (2020-2021) of the pandemic was witnessed as an increase in both the number of those needing assistance, and the amount of assistance needed per household. Has this trend continued into 2022? In the first four months of the year the average amount of assistance (for all categories) provided per household has gone down slightly in 2022, compared to 2021. The average amount of assistance provided for each of the categories of housing, utilities, and auto expenses, has also gone down in 2022 compared to 2021. The average assistance provided remains above pre-pandemic levels. However, the increase in assistance provided in 2022 compared to 2021 is not due to an increase in the amount given per household. The increase can be attributed to the increase in the number of households needing help.



## **Discussion**

In 2022 COVID's grip on our lives and livelihoods seems to be lessening. **Why is We Care seeing an increase in the demand for assistance?** Several factors seem likely to be contributing:

- In mid-2020 and most of 2021, our state and federal governments provided a significant amount of rental assistance, and instituted eviction moratoriums. Those struggling financially needed less assistance from agencies like We Care. Indeed, we actually saw a slight decrease in the housing assistance provided in the beginning of 2021, compared to 2020. Now those government COVID-related programs (for example, the Oregon Emergency Rental Assistance Program) have ended, and those in need look to agencies like We Care for help.
- Another factor, is the significant increase in monthly rent that has occurred in recent years. This rent increase has generally not been compensated by an equivalent increase in the incomes earned by the working poor We Care serves. Now many have to ask for rental assistance to avoid homelessness for their families.
- A third factor is the end of an upsurge in resources available to the poor through other non-profit agencies. The pandemic encouraged the generosity of donors to a whole range of social service agencies, including We Care. The increase in donations meant that more agencies and more resources were available for referral of our clients for specific needs. There is now less urgent concern about COVID, the stock market is down, and private donations into the non-profit social safety net are returning to pre-COVID levels. There are now more holes in the safety net that bring people to We Care.
- Additionally, reduced employment income during the pandemic has depleted the financial reserves of many households. Now, those households are less resilient, less able to handle a financial emergency (e.g. unexpected medical bill, car repair, etc.) when it arises. To maintain housing, to keep the electricity on, to prevent their water from being shut off, they now seek help from We Care to help pay their bills.

## **Challenges Facing We Care in the Remainder of 2022**

- We Care's donors have been extremely generous during the COVID pandemic, increasing their contributions to help their less fortunate neighbors weather some serious financial difficulties. Nevertheless, the upsurge in demand for assistance We Care has experienced in the beginning of 2022 has exceeded We Care's income. For the remainder of 2022 We Care will face some difficult decisions and may have to turn down many Benton County residents who need one-time emergency financial assistance to avoid serious and sometimes devastating consequences.
- The dramatic increase in the number of those seeking assistance has placed an increased workload on We Care's four intake volunteers, creating an unsustainable situation for the organization. We Care continues to need more volunteers willing to undergo the necessary training and willing to make the commitment to work three hours per week performing tasks that can be frustrating, challenging, but also tremendously rewarding.