Nonprofits happy to have stimulus money

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The agency hopes to weatherize up to 1400 homes in all three counties, with an average of $5,000 to $6,000 invested in each house, said Executive Director Marsha Kruecher. About 1000 applications have been approved so far.

The agency is also expecting the weatherization program to save people up to 30 percent on energy bills annually.

"To impact the economy of the community is great for us," Kruecher said. "We hope it makes a difference."

About $1.4 million will expand the agency's Early Head Start programs in Jackson and Hillsdale. About 60 children and about 10 staff members will be added to Early Head Start in January, said Mary Delacci, director of children's programs for Community Action Agency.

Though the infusion of cash is helpful, it's unlikely most of the area nonprofits will be able to maintain the programs once the funds are gone. Most organizations have to spend the money within two years of receiving it.

"Unless we get some money from heaven, we'll just be pared down," said Becky Filip, executive director of AWARE, Inc., in Jackson. AWARE, which provides services for victims of domestic violence, hopes to help at least 20 area families with its award of $50,000 for transitional housing, Filip said.

"We'll be able to provide homes for women who would not be able to afford it on their own," she said.

AWARE is also set to receive a $55,000 sub-grant to help 24 domestic violence survivors through the United Way of Jackson County.

The city of Jackson allocated $500,000 in stimulus funds to the Neighbors in Need campaign to provide services through the federal Homelessness Prevention and Rapid Re-housing Program, which assists people in paying their rent and utilities.

Earlier this year, United Way spearheaded Neighbors in Need, a communitywide collaborative of more than 30 local organizations. For the city to approach

Neighbors in Need to lead the effort was "creative and outside the box," said Ken Toll, executive director of United Way.

In turn, United Way plans to give sub-grants to AWARE and the following nonprofits: $52,576 to the Salvation Army to help the general population; $50,000 to Legal Services of Southern Michigan; and $40,000 to Central Michigan.

United Way will retain $4,288 to manage data collection and reporting through a Homeless Management Information Systems database. Clients are asked to contact 21 instead of going to the different agencies for help, said Scott Schmidt, Full Circle Development Coordinator for United Way.

"We want clients to be able to be served in a way that is not frustrating to them," Schmidt said.

Officials expect to go through the $500,000 quickly because of the increasing need in the area, said Michelle Pulst, the city's community development project coordinator.

Clients must either live in the city or be willing to relocate in order to receive help, Pulst said.

The United Way also was awarded $72,352 in stimulus funds. About $50,000 was distributed to local food pantries and the other portion went to shelter and administrative costs.

The Center for Family Health was awarded $10.5 million in stimulus money, which will be used to cover the administrative portion of its new community health center at 55 N. Jackson St. Construction for the 50,000-square-foot building is set to begin in April.

The new facility — scheduled to open in June 2011 — also will allow the center to create 75 full-time, competitive-wage positions and provide services to 13,000 more patients in the next five years, Executive Director Molly Kaiser has said.

The agency, which serves more than 24,000 Jackson County residents, was also awarded about $165,000 to increase staff and expand health-care services.