



January 2007 NEWS



Linking people in need to community resources.

PUBLICATIONS

Order forms available online or by calling 376-0011

Calendar of Events

- January 27th: Empty Bowls: Soup & Soul Review
- Feb 5th: Free Tax Assistance begins through VITA
- February 11th: [National 2-1-1 Day](#)
- February 20th: [United Way of Barth Co.](#) Annual Meeting
- February 15th: [FCFH](#) Advisory Board

National Homeless Count

January 25th marks the Annual National Homeless Count Survey and First Call for Help is participating by tracking the number of homeless individuals that contacts our office on that day. This survey is designed to take a "snapshot" of the homeless populations across the country and assess the needs that are not currently being met. If you are interested in participating in this project, call First Call for Help for more information and to receive the necessary survey forms.

Tax Assistance and the Earned Income Tax Credit

It's tax time and many people need assistance to file their tax return. Tax preparation assistance is available FREE to those who qualify through local Volunteer Income Tax Assistance Programs (VITA). Please share that this assistance is available. Many low-income households lose valuable tax return dollars by paying expensive fees. Please also share that household with children can receive the Earned Income Tax Credit. First Call for Help 211 can provide contact information about tax programs in your area. For a list of locations, look [here](#).

2-1-1 Service to 5 Counties

For almost two years, First Call for Help has served as the region's 2-1-1 call center for Bartholomew, Brown, Decatur, Jackson and Scott Counties. Statistics are provided each month on the number of calls that are received from each county. Statistically, the number of calls increased compared to the same month of the previous year. As the number of calls is expected to increase over the next year, our resource database needs to be as up to date as possible. This is a large task and **WE NEED YOUR HELP!** If you know of an agency or program that should be in our database, but is not, please send the information to data@fcfh211.org. Also, we are looking for help keeping track of seasonal programs in every county. Short term programs such as Christmas Assistance and Tax Assistance are important to communicate to the callers and sometimes that information is not known to the call center staff. If you know of a program that would be helpful to callers, please email us or call our office. For a complete listing of resources that are in the database, visit our website at www.firstcallforhelp211.org.

Special One Time Telephone Tax Credit

"The telephone tax refund is a one-time payment available on your 2006 federal income tax return, designed to refund previously collected federal excise taxes on long-distance or bundled services. It is available to anyone who paid such taxes on landline, wireless, or Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP) service . . . The IRS is making it easier for individual taxpayers by offering a standard refund amount between \$30 and \$60, so that these taxpayers don't need to gather old phone bills. Taxpayers who choose the standard amount will only need to fill out one line on their tax returns. The standard amount is based on actual telephone usage data and the amount applicable to a family or other household reflects the taxes paid on long-distance or bundled phone service by similarly sized families or households. Using this amount may be the easiest way for taxpayers to get their refunds and avoid gathering 41 months of old phone records." For more information, visit the [IRS website](#).

New Personnel at First Call for Help

First Call for Help welcomes Jessica Coomes as the new Call Center Support Assistant! Jessica will be taking the lead role in providing direct information and referral assistance to telephone inquiries and supporting the call center.

How You Can Contribute to First Call for Help

- Monetary Contributions can be sent to the address below.
- All contributions are tax deductible!
- Volunteers are also needed to answer calls during normal business hours.

Helpline Statistics for December 2006

There were 1244 callers to First Call for Help 211 Helpline in December. This is higher than December of 2005 when there were 1021 callers and about the same as November 2006 when there were 1263 callers. There were 1494 needs expressed by callers in December. The top needs were related to holiday assistance: checking on registration status (334), needing holiday food (183), and needing holiday gifts (124). There were 1567 referrals made in December. The top referrals were Bartholomew County Christmas Clearinghouse (209), Christmas Cheer Fund (166), Love Chapel- Holiday Food "Visit" (154), and Sans Souci Voucher Assistance Program (82).

County call breakdown is as follows:

Bartholomew	1078
Brown	12
Decatur	17
Jackson	32
Jennings	11
Scott	13
Other	23
Unknown	58

2006 Year End Helpline Statistics: A First Look

First Call for Help has begun compiling the year end Helpline Statistics. More information about the top needs and referrals will appear in the next newsletter, but here are some of the statistics already available.

Total call volume for 2006 exceeded the 2005 levels. First Call for Help telephone specialists responded to 9,687 calls from people in need in 2006 versus 8,588 calls in 2005, representing a 13% increase.

Comparative call volume by county:

	2006	2005	2006 % of All Calls	% Increase in Call Volume
Bartholomew	7986	7110	82%	12%
Brown	162	142	2%	14%
Decatur	176	99	2%	78%
Jackson	445	211	5%	111%
Scott	181	96	2%	89%
Other Areas	315	395	3%	-(20%)
Unknown	422	528	4%	-(20%)
Total	9690	8588	100%	13%

Bartholomew County Christmas Statistics

With the busy holiday season of 2006 behind us, First Call for Help 211 can report on how many people were served through the Christmas Clearinghouse and through the waiting list.

The Christmas Clearinghouse is a Christmas assistance registration system created as collaboration between multiple social service agencies and Christmas assistance programs in Bartholomew County. First Call for Help helps to manage the system. When the Christmas assistance programs and social service providers use the system, families in need still have many options for ways to receive Christmas assistance, but at the same time, duplication is avoided between the programs so that more total families can be served with the limited available community resources. Registration for Christmas assistance can begin as early as October for some of the participating programs and each program has different deadlines.

The statistics from the Christmas Clearinghouse Internet database indicate the following:

	Year 2006	Year 2005
Total Households Registered	1461	1179
Total Children Registered	2327	2223
Children Served Detail:		
Firemen's Cheer Fund	1458	1462
Lincoln Central Neighborhood Center	324	302
St. Bartholomew Catholic Church	125	93
Salvation Army	266	204
Shop with a Cop	112	103
All Others	42	59
Food Baskets Detail:		
Firemen's Cheer Fund	533	412
Love Chapel (Registered, actual served may be significantly lower if households did not pick-up)	775	655
Salvation Army	138	112

After the December 1 deadline, there were an additional 98 households who were identified with a need for gifts for children who had missed the registration deadline. First Call for Help maintained a waiting list, and nearly all of the 220 children in the households on the waiting list were matched with some form of assistance thanks to the further generosity of organizations and individual sponsors coordinated in partnership with the Volunteer Action Center.