

VareseNews

Difficulty to pay the bills. “Energia dei Legami” provides support

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Help is being provided for people who have to pay their house bills, in exchange for services that are useful to the community. In short, the project is “**Energia dei legami**” (Energy of ties), and is co-funded by the Cariplo Foundation and by the non-profit Energy Bank, which is an A2A foundation.

The support will be given to **families in economic difficulty that are unable to pay their bills.** The relations will be managed by the **cooperative Lotta contro l'emarginazione**, along with its partners Cooperative Studiouno, Nonsolopane-food counter, the Cooperative Naturart, and the association, Albero.

It is the **town council of Varese**, and in particular the social services, coordinated by Councillor **Roberto Molinari**, that has promoted and encouraged this project, which is the result of **a call for bids, made by A2A**, which, in the last few years, has seen several users **suddenly stop paying their bills.**

The interventions planned for “**ENERGIA DEI LEGAMI**”, will be carried out **in town and will focus**

particularly on three council districts: San Fermo, Biumo Inferiore and Belforte.

The project seeks to intervene in **two areas of vulnerability**: families that, because of the **economic crisis, have lost their earning power** and are in danger of falling into poverty, with, for example, problems of rent arrears and a danger of foreclosure on a house for which they are unable to pay the mortgage. The second area concerns **structurally fragile families** that have insufficient earning power to face unexpected expenses and particularly critical moments. These are people that, even if they applied to council social services, would not receive support, because they are above the aid threshold.

“There are no longer just the traditional forms of support of the social services; there is also support that promotes the voluntary sector, which, in this case, took part in an important bid for support for families temporarily in difficulty. The council is also involved in this project and will contribute. This initiative is important, because it intervenes in those areas of Varese that are particularly sensitive, and acts in that grey zone that might escape the attention of the social services, because it contains people who often don’t ask us for help; but thanks to this project we can extend our support to them, as well,” **Councillor Roberto Molinari** said.

The project seeks to support **40 families**, by realising a personalised project, which will provide the following:

- . **An economic subsidy for the payment of bills**, partial coverage of condominium fees, repairs of essential electrical appliances (e.g. fridges, washing machines), to provide temporary relief for critical situations

- . Individual or groups **financial education** courses, for people to learn how to manage their resources in the best way

- . **Support between equals, self-mutual help**, to re-establish bonds, relationships and reciprocal support for families

- . **Career advice courses**, to regain earning power

- . **Support for primary needs, food**, as a temporary measure to face a critic period

- . Courses to **educate people on the efficient management of energy resources**

. Procedures for **repaying the economic support received**. The recipients provide time and skills to repay the help they have received, to the community.

The project will involve the local communities in the districts concerned to support fragile families by way of **joint welfare, that is generative and related to fundraising initiatives**. The aim is to make the town of Varese and its three districts more capable and involved in resolving the social-economic problems of the families that live there.

The intention is to involve restaurants in town in support initiatives, such as “**il piatto sospeso**” (meal outstanding): this entails fundraising among customers in order to “pay” for a complete meal for a family in need, or to donate hot meals and/or essential items to a family.

di Translated by Alessia Cantarini (Reviewed by Prof. Rolf Cook)