

For Immediate Release

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RACINE (April 2013) - Trumpeting winds and plummeting temperatures provided the backdrop for the devastating January 30th fire that destroyed 60% of the physical plant at Echo Lakes Foods in Burlington. Even greater devastation was experienced by more than 150 individuals who watched their jobs disappear along with the retreating fire and smoke. Echo Lakes has been able to bring some employees back to work in a very small section of the remaining factory, while others have been offered part-time jobs at nearby plants. However, fast forward to April 2013 to find 65 employees still without jobs and their families without the resources to pay for basic necessities such as rent, utilities, transportation and, yes, diapers.

While the Racine Community Foundation (RCF) normally works with all county non-profit agencies to address the on-going and long-term needs of the community, the Board of Directors voted to immediately respond to the Echo Lakes tragedy to address a specific cause: the well-being of Echo Lakes' displaced workers. With a donation of \$20,000, Mary Beth Mikrut, executive director of RCF said, "Our aim is to help sustain families who are without income. They are active in the community, their children attend school here, and through no fault of their own, they found themselves in a situation where they need help obtaining food and maintaining shelter while they wait for the plant to be rebuilt."

The Racine Community Foundation has partnered with Southern Lakes Area Love Inc. (Love, Inc.) to manage the distribution of the funds. Love, Inc., a Burlington-based, non-profit organization established in 1983, helps local families cope with economic and emotional hardships. Through Love, Inc., Echo Lakes families have been identified and are now able to take advantage of the food pantry at Love, Inc. on a weekly basis (versus the normal monthly access), and apply for rental subsidies during their time of unemployment. Racine Community Foundation's grant will match up to \$300 toward each families' monthly rent.

According to Bill Schoesling, executive director of Love Inc, “The vast majority of Echo Lakes employees are renters.” Subsidizing, rather than paying their rent, “helps them keep some skin in the game.” Love, Inc. predicts that food costs alone may reach a total of \$200,000-300,000 if this continues for one year. Schoesling reported that “families are extremely grateful for the support they receive. We find that they take just what they need and no more.”

For more information about the Racine Community Foundation, please call: 262-632-8474. Or visit the RCF website at www.racinecommunityfoundation.org. For the latest on events and activities, go to RCF’s Facebook page at: www.facebook.com/RacineCommunityFoundation.