

Medical insurance or the lack thereof, is becoming a bigger issue with every passing day. A recent article in the Seattle Times reported that about 25 million, or one in every five, Americans under the age of 65 did not have sufficient medical coverage last year to shield them from financial hardship if they ended up in the emergency room or were seriously ill. Friends of Friends Medical Support Fund has dealt with this issue for over ten years.

We are a community-supported, non-profit fund offering financial help to people on South Whidbey with medically related bills they cannot afford to pay. Every week our Service Coordinator talks with people who need help paying for prescriptions or doctor visits or gasoline and ferry fares so they can drive themselves to treatment on the mainland. Most of these people have jobs, but they find themselves in the difficult position of choosing between paying needed medical bills and buying food, heating their home or buying other necessities.

From January 1, 2008 to June 11, 2008 Friends of Friends has assisted 144 South Whidbey residents with a total of \$32,038 in medical and dental bills. Last year at this time we'd spent \$24,141. The need for our non-profit organization is obviously not going away anytime soon.

We're pleased that we receive grants from the community. Most recently the Whidbey Island Hospital Foundation gave us \$5000. Area churches and service organizations also support us. Individuals respond generously to our annual fund raising letter. Our volunteer board members organize an annual plant sale in May and once again this fall we'll host our Mr. South Whidbey Pageant at Freeland Hall. We're grateful that our community fully supports these endeavors.

In the past we've received donations from people who have asked their friends to donate to us in lieu of birthday or anniversary gifts. Others have been creative and organized small fundraising events or parties on our behalf. We're asking readers to think about what they can do to help us raise funds to help our neighbors.

At our board retreat each year, we discuss our hope that we won't be needed in the coming year. At the same time, we recognize that most of us are only a paycheck or two away from being in the same boat as those we serve. It is my utmost hope that a change in the political administration of this country will result in improved health care for everyone. Until that time, it's up to all of us to step up to the plate and do whatever we can to help our neighbors.

To reach Friends of Friends call 221-4535 or write to us at P.O. Box 812, Langley 98260. You can also visit our web site at: <http://www.fofmedicalsupportfund.org/>. We truly appreciate your involvement.

Claudia Fuller, President  
Friends of Friends Medical Support Fund