

Rotary Clubs to Support Generator for Robbinsville

Four area Rotary Clubs have joined with Project Freedom Inc. (PFI), a non-profit that develops housing for people with disabilities, to raise funds to install a back-up generator system at PFI's Robbinsville residential complex.

Hurricanes Irene and Sandy caused widespread power outages, but for the tenants living in Project Freedom's Robbinsville complex these outages were especially restrictive. Robbinsville's two elevators will not operate without power confining second floor tenants in wheelchairs to that level and preventing first floor tenants using wheelchairs from going upstairs to be with friends who may be in need or under stress.

"People want to gather when they are frightened," said Norman Smith Project Freedom's co-founder who lives and works at the Robbinsville complex. "People learned from Hurricane Irene that leaving their apartments to be with a friend on another level may mean they are stuck there if the power goes out. If the power outage last for days, other issues start cropping up.

The 24-hour power outage from Hurricane Sandy pointed out the need for an integrated generator system to maintain the use of the two elevators and other vital equipment and to provide electricity to the community center. This gives PFI management the ability to encourage the Robbinsville tenants to shelter-in-place in their homes.

"I have inspected potential shelters for the state, said Smith, a well-known advocate on preparedness issues for people with disabilities. "You don't want to go to a shelter if you have the option to stay in your own safe and accessible environment. Having a generator means that Robbinsville's tenants can stay put in most cases. It means Project Freedom management has the flexibility bring in resources such as food to support the tenants in extended power outages."

The Rotary Clubs have pledged \$10,000 in seed money to spur giving by corporations, other businesses and individuals toward the estimated \$60,000 cost of the project.



Pictured planning the fund raising efforts for the project are, from left, Jim Haws, Rotary Club of Hamilton Township; Peter Rafle, Princeton Corridor Rotary Club; Tim Doherty, PFI's Executive Director; Susan Mullin, Rotary Club of Princeton; and Wally Sawka, Robbinsville-Hamilton Sunrise Rotary Club. For more information and to donate, visit projectfreedom.org.