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**Berkshire Gas Makes \$30,000 Award to
Food Bank of Western Massachusetts**

Funds to be Used for Food Distribution

Hatfield, MA – Berkshire Gas through a grant from the Energy East Foundation, the philanthropic arm of its parent company, awarded a \$30,000 grant at the end of December in support of the work of the Food Bank of Western Massachusetts. The Berkshire Gas contribution will be used to offset the costs of distributing food to more than 400 local meal sites, food pantries, shelters and other social service agencies and programs in western Massachusetts served by the Hatfield based Food Bank.

“As an energy provider and public utility, we know well the difficult choices that people have to make at this time of year, especially those in financial need. While mild weather has given many a temporary break on their winter heating bills, the problem of hunger is not seasonal and demands both our attention and our resources,” said Berkshire Gas President Karen Zink. “We are proud to partner with the Food Bank of Western Massachusetts to help them serve our most vulnerable citizens in meeting the most basic of human needs,” she said.

In commenting on the award, Energy East Foundation President Angela Sparks-Beddoe explained, “We are pleased to support important services in the communities that Berkshire Gas serves.”

“Berkshire Gas and the Energy East Foundation have demonstrated their commitment to the people in their service area,” said Andrew Morehouse, Executive Director of the Food Bank of Western Massachusetts. “We are successful in our mission only through the generosity of others. We are excited to welcome Berkshire Gas and Energy East to our family of caring and concerned individuals, businesses, foundations, civic groups and benefactors and we sincerely appreciate this generous gift,” Morehouse continued. He concluded, “Each dollar contributed allows us to distribute more than \$9 worth of food.”

The Food Bank functions as a central clearinghouse in the emergency food system, accepting and warehousing donations from the food industry and distributing that food to a network of more than 400 non-profit agencies: front-line food providers such as food pantries, soup kitchens, meal sites, shelters, and other social service agencies that serve low-income individuals, such as elder and child care facilities.

About the Food Bank of Western Massachusetts: The Food Bank was founded in 1982 as a non-profit organization serving Berkshire, Franklin, Hampden, and Hampshire Counties. The Food Bank is an affiliate of America's Second Harvest: The Nation's Food Bank Network. We are the leading provider of emergency food that reaches low-income individuals and families in western Massachusetts.

The Food Bank rescues food from the food industry that would otherwise go to waste and solicits food donations from a variety of other sources. In 2005, we distributed 5.7 million pounds of food to our non-profit member agencies. We are also the regional distributor of USDA commodities and the Massachusetts Emergency Food Assistance Program (MEFAP). In addition to distributing food, we are working with the community to develop strategies that will reduce the number of people in our area who must rely on emergency food.

About Berkshire Gas: Berkshire Gas is a natural gas utility that has been meeting the energy needs of customers in western Massachusetts for more than 150 years. Berkshire Gas serves. The Company, which is a subsidiary of Energy East, currently serves 36,000 natural gas customers in western Massachusetts