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## **Paducah DOE workers reach out to help family of former colleague**

**Paducah, Ky:** The positive impacts from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) of 2009 reached a new level at the U. S. Department of Energy's (DOE) Paducah Site, when a project crew, predominantly working through the ARRA program, raised nearly \$9,000 for the family of a fallen co-worker.

Joe Heath, 55, of Symsonia, KY, became ill this summer and died on September 21, 2010. Before his illness, Heath worked on one of three accelerated demolition projects at the Paducah Gaseous Diffusion Plant Site funded through the Recovery Act.

Joe's former colleagues initially collected almost \$4,000 to help the Heath family pay for ongoing medical expenses; the day after his death, they raised another \$4,800 with a childog lunch.

A group of United Steelworkers members spearheaded the fund-raising effort, two of them short-term ARRA hires and two who had known Heath for years.

"There were only six or seven people on the team who had been here any amount of time," said Andy Heider, a six-year Site worker who was one of the organizers. "The rest of the [30+] people on the crew were stimulus, but everyone felt that we needed to do something. Joe was well liked by everyone."

More than 200 people attended the fund-raising luncheon. Volunteers ran out of chili and came close to running out of hot dogs, but not out of people willing to help.

"Many people who didn't eat still sent money," said Butch Freels, one of Heath's closest friends and co-workers. "People were stopping me in the cafeteria the next day and giving me money. Some people handed me \$100."

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Brian Cope, an electrician hired with ARRA funds in October 2009, helped organize the fundraiser because he had been in a similar position. When his youngest son was born, the boy had to be hospitalized out-of-town for two weeks. Cope's International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers brothers collected money to help pay his family's expenses.

"Once you've been through something like that, it sticks with you," he said. "When I got this job here, it was a blessing The Lord blesses us with things, and we need to return the favor when we can."

Heath was hospitalized for seven weeks before his death. Coworkers began raising money as a way to reach out to Joe, his wife, Jayne Anne, their three grown children and one grandchild.

"We felt something had to be done; it was the right thing to do," Heider said. "What was impressive was the response we receive, not only from crew, but from employees of all the site companies."

Reinhard Knerr, DOE Site Lead in Paducah, said "This speaks to the quality of individuals employed by the ARRA work. I've seen the pride they take in their work, it doesn't surprise that it extends beyond their jobs."

Dane Wyatt, a mechanic working on the East End Smelter project, worked with Heath 15 years ago at another employer. They reconnected when they began working on the East End Smelter ARRA Project.

"The whole smelter crew made this happen," Wyatt said. "Joe worked closely with us throughout the project and everyone loved him.

"We wanted to be here to help."

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