In 1936, one of the worst heat waves in modern history swept through the United States. On August 14th that year, the temperature soared to 113 degrees in Kansas City. Home air-conditioners were not commonplace in the 1930s, so to escape the heat, people slept in parks and porches, they went to the movies because theatres were air-conditioned, and they bought ice from ice companies.

The poor couldn’t afford to go to the movies or buy ice, so the Salvation Army raised money so low-income people could buy ice for a penny a pound. The Program was known as “Penny Ice.” (This is from “Heat Wave,” an article by Dr. Jason Roe on the Kansas City Public Library’s website.)

Now, nearly 80 years later, most of us escape the summer’s heat with air-conditioning in our own homes. Some, though, don’t have home air-conditioning. For the past 15 years, Project ElderCool has provided a window air-conditioner for over 4,000 low-income elderly throughout the entire metro area. In a way, “Penny Ice” has become Project ElderCool. Instead of giving people a block of ice, we give them a small air-conditioner.

Project ElderCool relies on donations from caring people throughout our community. We’re also grateful to KCP&L, AB May and Goodcents Deli Fresh Subs for their support of Project ElderCool. KCP&L makes a contribution on top of your donation so that we can purchase larger AC units that are also more energy efficient. AB May in addition to a generous financial donation, willingly troubleshoots central air-units that no longer work in older homes of seniors. Goodcents makes a donation so that our program can also reach out to help low-income seniors in Topeka and Lawrence.

With so many people and these companies pulling together, Project ElderCool keeps bringing comfort and life-saving relief to many seniors.
TOP TEN LINES FROM LAST YEAR’S “THANK YOU” NOTES:

10. “Being a stage 3 cancer patient, going through treatments without your help would surely be the end for me.”
9. “I didn’t know how I was going to survive the summer but the “AC” has made all the difference in my life.”
8. “You stepped into my life and helped me at my most desperate time, when I was suffering so much.”
7. “You guys really saved my life.”
6. “It brought tears to my eyes to see guys coming to put the air conditioner in.”
5. “Sometimes when you think things can’t get any worse God steps in and sends people like you…”
4. “May God bless you for thinking and caring about us seniors.”
3. “Without people like you that care we all would be lost!!!”
2. “Thank you for the ray of hope you have injected into our lives.”
1. “It means a lot to have strangers care about you.”

ELDERLY (65 AND OLDER) HELPED IN 2014

Air conditioners purchased and installed ........................................... 217
Number of elderly you helped with their electric bill .......................... 314
Dollar amount given toward these electric bills ................................. $60,046
Number of elderly you helped with a gas bill .................................. 127
Dollar amount given toward these gas bills ..................................... $21,057
Number of yards mowed for free for elderly throughout the summer .. 55
Miscellaneous assistance to elderly (small home repairs, medicine and more)... 86
Dollar amount for miscellaneous assistance ................................. $29,495
Number of elderly we delivered food to each month ...................... 25
Number of elderly who came to our food pantries ......................... 338