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## News Release

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For Immediate Release

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### **KUB Customer Counselors Connect Community with Millions in Assistance** *Counselors Led Pandemic Response, Planning for Fiber Assistance Program*

**Knoxville, TN** – Five-utility provider Knoxville Utilities Board (KUB) not only continues to grow its operations, but continues to provide customers with individualized assistance through its Customer Counselors.

KUB's Customer Counselors group has been staffed with social workers since 1973. Since then, this group has established a network of more than 200 local agencies through which they provide customers with assistance. In the past five years, KUB customers have received more than \$14,000,000 in assistance from KUB and its partner agencies.

For Anna Freshour, a KUB Customer Counselor of seven years, the work is about more than financial assistance.

"We know that when a customer is stressed about their utility bill, they're likely stressed about other things as well," Freshour said. "So being able to lessen the stress related to utilities is so important. Whether we're extending their payment due date, placing them on a payment plan, or pairing them up with an agency who can provide additional assistance, we work with our customers to find a solution that's best for them."

Anna and the rest of the team make an average of 25,000 customer contacts each year. Through this work, KUB keeps its disconnection of service rate at less than 1% of its customers.

"Our Customer Counselors and our entire Customer Experience Department are critical to what we do," Gabriel J. Bolas II, KUB President & CEO, said. "That became even more apparent throughout the COVID-19 pandemic when assistance was needed like never before."

During the pandemic, KUB paused service disconnections for nonpayment for seven months, enrolled customers in payment plans, and used TVA's Pandemic Relief Credits and Pandemic Recovery Credits to establish the COVID Utility Relief Effort (CURE), which has provided nearly \$6.5 million in assistance to KUB customers.

As KUB's pandemic response exemplifies, customer needs are always evolving. Most recently, KUB began work to establish a program to provide Fiber services free for low-income households with students.

“To be part of the formation of this program is unique,” Freshour said. “Many times, we’re providing customers with assistance through existing programs, but this is ours. We’re making this program for these families. Parents need to know they’re able to get their children their education through internet.”

KUB’s Student Internet Access Program is expected to enter the pilot phase in 2023.

For more information about KUB customer assistance or to learn how customers can request assistance, visit [www.kub.org/assistance](http://www.kub.org/assistance).

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*KUB is a municipal utility serving Knox and parts of seven adjacent counties with safe and reliable electric, fiber, natural gas, water, and wastewater services to more than 473,000 customers.*