

The Power of Partnerships

By joining forces with local and national groups, utilities can do much to fight poverty.

ENTERGY CORP. serves four of the five most impoverished states in the nation: Mississippi (first), Arkansas (second), Louisiana (fourth) and Texas (fifth). In fact, about a quarter of Entergy's 2.3 million residential customers live below the poverty line.



Fortunately, the region is blessed with social networks that thrive on innovation, resourcefulness, drive and compassion. Entergy and our fellow utilities benefit greatly from the coalitions in our area and the spirit of collaboration that exists among our partnering agencies. Great poverty breeds deeply committed poverty fighters.

Mission: Help Others

Ten years ago, Entergy Corp. Chairman and CEO J. Wayne Leonard made it his and Entergy's mission to help our low-income customers achieve self-sufficiency. As part of this commitment to our most vulnerable customers, Entergy took a new look at credit policies, weatherization courses, communications tools, grants and funding, research and lobbying efforts to assist in elevating the quality of life for citizens in great need of economic assistance. As Leonard explained, "We believe we have failed any time we have to disconnect a customer who is unable to pay the utility bill. And when we look at the costs of providing electric service, the numbers tell us that usually there are better business solutions than disconnecting and reconnecting the same customers over and over."

During this first decade, Entergy's Low-

Income Customer Assistance Initiative has become the accepted culture of the company and the basis for how it conducts business. As the only Fortune 500 firm headquartered in New Orleans, a city where some 40 percent of children grow up in poverty, Entergy believes we have a moral obligation and a business imperative to make fighting poverty a priority and to reinvest in the communities we serve to enhance the vitality and quality of life.

The foundation of our initiative's success is its coalition of partners. Building and sustaining these relationships is a big part of how Entergy works to maximize resources to help working poor families, low-income disabled individuals, single parents raising children and seniors doing their best to live within tight, fixed budgets. The company uses three approaches to building relationships: in-person summits and informational meetings, corporate grants and communications.

Meetings of the Minds

Through summits and informational meetings, Entergy works with nonprofit partners to help them reach low-income households. Entergy is able to help more families and individuals in need by educating allies about energy assistance programs and serving as a resource. Our state-based low-income customer assistance summits offer workshops and exhibits on weatherization and energy efficiency as well as information on new billing options and support tools. For example, a recent summit provided a poverty simulation workshop so advocates, presenters and other participants could "walk a mile" in the shoes of a struggling low-income, elderly or disabled person.

These meetings also are beneficial because they provide important face-to-face time with and between advocates and Entergy's executives to discuss current programs, identify



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A sampling of the written materials Entergy Corp. provides to customers and its partners in fighting poverty.

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opportunities and needs, and gather feedback. In 2008 more than 1,500 advocates and supporters participated in these meetings.

Giving Grants

Entergy provides more than \$10 million annually to nonprofit organizations that assist low-income customers. These grants come from three sources: the Entergy Charitable Foundation, corporate giving and local contributions.

The Entergy Charitable Foundation, founded in 2000, supports initiatives

to create and sustain thriving communities. It recently contributed \$75,000 to the Central Arkansas Development Council to provide weatherization assistance for energy-inefficient

houses of low-income homeowners. During the past two years, Entergy has helped to weatherize almost 6,000 homes for low-income and elderly customers, providing a welcome supplement to agencies when they were strapped for funds from the federal Weatherization Assistance Program.

One of those helped was 94-year-old Helen Motley, still independent but facing serious challenges on a fixed income. When contacted about the improvements made by Entergy, her daughter, Marilyn Sutton, said: "My parents gave and gave and gave to us, and to others. They never

Helping to Meet the Need

Due in large part to AGA's successful advocacy efforts on Capitol Hill, for the second straight year Congress is expected to appropriate the maximum \$5.1 billion in funding for the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP), as originally called for in the Energy Policy Act of 2005. These LIHEAP funds will assist income-eligible families in paying their energy bills, including natural gas bills. In fact, since 52 percent of LIHEAP recipients heat their homes with natural gas and AGA members account for 93 percent of nationwide natural gas deliveries, the value to AGA member companies is approximately \$2.5 billion.

Even so, LIHEAP funds currently meet the needs of just over 17 percent of America's LIHEAP-eligible families, and in light of the nation's current economic and job insecurity, the disparity between needy families and LIHEAP funds could grow significantly, which is why AGA will continue to advocate for increased funding.

In addition to congressional efforts, natural gas utilities play a major role in providing more than \$1.7 billion annually in program assistance to needy families. States also supplement LIHEAP with their own fuel assistance programs.

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LIHEAP Action Day 2010

is being held Feb. 10 in Washington, D.C. To participate, please contact George Coling at the National Fuel Funds Network, 202/824-0660 or coling@nationalfuelnetwork.org.



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Entergy Texas employees (on left) Henry Gernhauser and Brenda Broussard joined Karen Swenson, a social services administrator from East Texas, to discuss the great need for Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program funds in their state during a past LIHEAP Action Day in Washington, D.C.




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asked for anything in return, always doing for themselves. It's so nice to see someone help my mom now that she can't do as much for herself."

Entergy's corporate giving addresses a wide array of community needs, including arts and culture, community improvement and enrichment, education and literacy, the environment and healthy families.

"Without a grant from Entergy Louisiana, the city of Kenner's food bank would not be possible," said Beverly Nicolas, personnel department director for Kenner, La.

Entergy's Power to Care grant program is locally focused, and provides emergency bill payment assistance to seniors and disabled individuals in crisis through local nonprofit agencies. None of the donations is used for fundraising or administrative purposes so 100 percent of each contribution helps those in need. The Power to Care also doubles the impact of new pledges and one-time donations through shareholder-matched contributions—up to \$500,000 annually. In 2008 more than 17,000 customers were assisted. Entergy customers, employees and shareholders have together contributed more than \$15 million to the Power to Care fund since 1990.

Communicating the Message

Finally, Entergy also uses targeted communications to keep its partners informed and engaged. Our quarterly

newsletter, *Advocate Power*, reaches more than 9,000 low-income advocates and agencies, and provides up-to-date insights about all of our programs.

Southern churches in rural areas are another important source for partnership assistance, and Entergy interacts frequently with all faiths to ensure their leaders are aware of programs and services available to their congregations and others in need. Entergy maintains a fulfillment center to assist agencies, churches and others in securing materials in quantity for distribution to their members.

Entergy also partners with groups as diverse as the U.S. Internal Revenue Service (IRS) and others to get the word out about programs that are designed to apprise low-income families and individuals of the U.S. Earned Income Tax and Child Tax credits. Last year Entergy provided assistance and information by mailings and outbound telephone calls to more than 200,000 customers.

Our partnership with community action agencies supporting the National Fuel Funds Networks' LIHEAP Action Day has proved to be extremely valuable. This process has helped result in \$313 million in Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) funds for the states served by Entergy. Each year Entergy coordinates a team of low-income advocates and Entergy low-income team members to "storm the Hill" in support of LIHEAP funding. No one can convey the needs of customers more effectively than someone who lives or sees their struggles day in and day out. These advocates and LIHEAP recipients tell a powerful story to the senators and representatives.

Other partnerships include the support of Individual Development Accounts (IDAs) in 69 communities, which have benefited more than 19,000 individuals. Through the economic multiplier effect, the IDA program has pumped \$69 million into local economies. Entergy also has helped to pro-

duce reports describing the economic impact of early childhood education, resulting in significant funding increases, including an additional \$54 million in Arkansas. The reports' content also proved instrumental in helping to enact Louisiana's Pre-K for All program. In Mississippi, Entergy's Charitable Foundation committed \$300,000

to fund a Pre-K pilot program.

As Entergy's Low-Income Customer Assistance Initiative looks to its second decade, it will continue to build its programs and resources on the extraordinary relationships it has forged with low-income advocates, managers and customers. Together, we can make life better for many. ♪



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