

Residential Electricity Savings Program Up and Running in Hampton

By Carla Simmons



The Energy Savers, Inc. management team

Air conditioners run throughout the summer, especially when temperatures reach 90 degrees and beyond. Furnaces kick on from October to April, working overtime when wind chills are below freezing. More electricity usage translates into higher electric bills. However, some communities are benefitting from industry competition.

Hampton Township, for example, has had success in taking advantage of today's competitive utilities market. "In response to Pennsylvania's electricity deregulation in the 1990s, we tried a pilot energy savings program for the township and its residents in 1999," explained Township Municipal Manager Chris Lochner.

Hampton had been looking at different electrical accounts for some time when Energy Savers, Inc. (ESI) helped the township put a deal together with Allegheny Energy. "We worked with Hampton's board and designed a program to include residents. It was popular—62 percent of residents signed up in a 10-day period," explained ESI President Jim Behr. Though the program

was successful, the provider had a weak financial position and the program ended after one year.

In the years since the pilot program, Hampton Township has been involved with cost savings programs for their bulk users. "We've used different suppliers, going with the best deal at the time," said Lochner.

In December 2010, ESI introduced a plan that would save the township \$79,000 on commercial use in the first year. "We wanted to put together a residential program and were pleasantly surprised when ESI was able to do this," said Lochner.

ESI chose TriEagle as the supplier and negotiated a rate of 7.17 cents per kilowatt hour. "This is the lowest price on the Duquesne system," said Behr. "This equates to a 23 percent savings for residents, which is very significant." A joint letter between ESI and Hampton went out to residents in January 2011 detailing the plan. Residents could register online or through a form included with the letter.

"We wanted residents to know that the plan was totally voluntary—we get nothing out of it," said Lochner. "And we've had a magnificent response."

According to Behr, as of August 3, there were over 3,000 households on the plan. The residential electricity savings program is available for Duquesne customers only. Residents can sign up for a 12-, 18- or 24-month period. "Generally, electricity prices adjust every three to four weeks due to market and weather conditions," said Behr. "Because of poor economic conditions, we've been able to maintain the 7.17 cent rate since January, while most other suppliers have increased rates." Customers' savings begin after enrollment and are normally seen after two billing cycles.

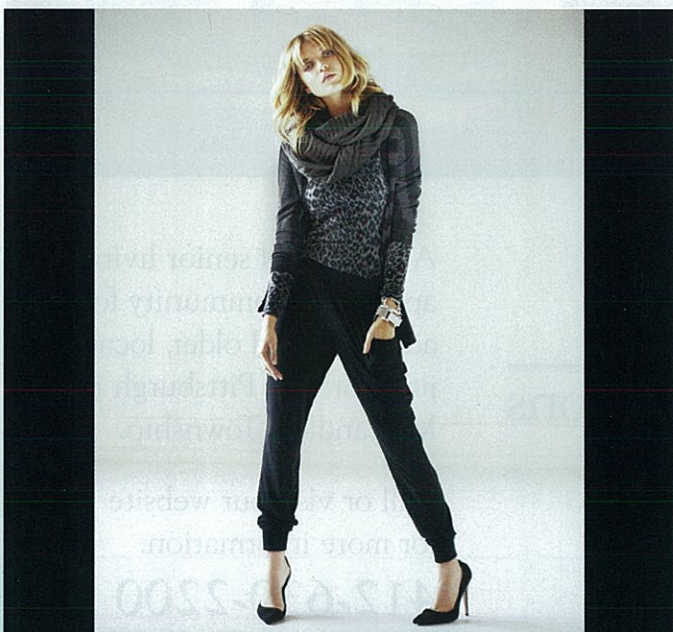
Hampton resident Geri Ittel joined the plan in March 2011, choosing the 24-month period. "I received a letter in the mail from the Hampton manager, saying the township had checked out different electricity companies and found this to be the best deal. I sent in the application and got a residential agreement from TriEagle," said Ittel. "I like that Hampton recommended this. They did the investigating—I couldn't have done this myself."

According to Lochner, the key to the program's success is in providing all of the information for the residents. "People thanked us for doing the legwork," he said.

Behr added, "Hampton asked us to eliminate the confusion. We made sure we got the best price from a reliable provider. Residents trust the township, and that makes the plan successful."

In two years, Hampton and Energy Savers, Inc. will revisit the program and the market. "We'll check with suppliers and continue with the best options," said Behr.

ESI has made the savings program available to Duquesne Light users in all local municipalities. Go to www.energysaversinc.com for information and enrollment. ■



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