

Focusing On Helping Customers in Need

Atlantic City Electric's Customer Advocate team works every day to build and strengthen relationships with customers as well as local stakeholders that deal with difficult issues facing South Jersey communities.

The team spends much of its time out in the community meeting face-to-face with customers, participating in community events, attending conferences, and making local site visits to build awareness for, and helping customers apply for available state and federal payment assistance programs.

Outreach Efforts Expand in 2016

In 2016, Atlantic City Electric ramped up outreach efforts to educate customers about a number of ways they have to receive assistance with energy bills, as well as methods to reach the company when they have questions or concerns. The goal of the outreach is to increase the amount of application submissions received, which ultimately results in more customers and families being helped.

According to Alita Corbett, senior community relations specialist, the outreach efforts are working and the company has recently seen a spike of applications. "As of the beginning of September, the team made over 100 visits in 2016 to local community and senior centers, grocery stores, hospitals, libraries, schools and community events to answer questions and hand out or drop off information," Corbett said. "We also just added two new team members to help support the outreach and to better serve our Spanish-speaking customers. The more we are out in the community, the more awareness we can bring, the more we see increases in the number of customers signing up."

Multiple Forms of Assistance Available to New Jersey Customers

New Jersey has hundreds of millions of dollars available to eligible applicants for assistance with utility bills. Each program must be applied for separately and each has income requirements and other guidelines put in place by the NJBPU and the federal government. Additionally, there are other plans that the company itself runs, such as budget billing and extended payment arrangements that can provide additional assistance with bill payment.

"The most challenging part about my job is to get people to understand that the services are there for them, that the programs aren't a scam, and they can come to us for help," said Corbett. "We encourage customers to call us and let us know that they are having trouble making ends meet. We can help, that's what the Customer Advocate team is here for."

Energy Assistance Summit

In August, Atlantic City Electric hosted its annual Energy Assistance Summit at its Mays Landing headquarters. Over 100 representatives from local nonprofits, government and utility companies gathered for an all day information and workshop session. Topics included company policies and procedures, introductions to new Exelon teams, new program information regarding available assistance programs, as well as a chance for participants to offer about how to reach customers better. Speakers included representatives from NJ Shares, the NJBPU, OCEAN, Inc., Affordable Housing Alliance, Anti-Poverty Network, and APPRISE.

"In our first year, about thirty people attended the summit," said Corbett. "This year, over one hundred people took a whole day out of their week to come and hear and talk about programs to help those in need. We expect next year to have even more attendees, and we are happy to see interest and participation growing every year."

The summit, now in its seventh year, is designed to not only share information and educate stakeholders, but to help to build and strengthen relationships between Atlantic City Electric and its energy assistance partners.

For more information, or to speak to someone about outreach opportunities, please contact us at customeradvocate@atlanticcityelectric.com.

PULL QUOTES

“While many other areas of the state and the country have improved their unemployment rates, the counties we serve, many of which are rural or hit hard by casino closures, have not recovered as quickly. Every bit of assistance can go a long way.”

“The more help customers can get for their utility bills, the more they will be able to pay their rent or mortgage, buy groceries and pay for healthcare. It’s good for customers, and in turn, good for the community.”

“In New Jersey, we have more programs available than most states. We are appreciative of the legislators for their support because the programs offered are very valuable and really do help residents in South Jersey.”

CALLOUT BOX

About the Office of the Customer Advocate

The Office of the Customer Advocate was created in the fall of 2011 upon recommendations from customers. The team:

- Works directly with customers and governmental and regulatory officials to create better understanding of company policies and procedures
- Educates and provides information on a wide range of energy issues in South Jersey communities
- Assists customers with payment assistance applications
- Provides a direct resource to help customers get answers to questions and concerns
- Meets regularly with organizations that customers interact with such as credit counselors, banks, and local unions

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