1983. It was a tough year for Pittsburgh.

The closing of steel mills resulted in record unemployment and families needed help with utility bills like never before. Unfortunately, for many families, the bills were still coming in while the pay checks were not.
While volunteering for a Pittsburgh television station’s community outreach efforts in 1983, Betty Ann Simon found herself inundated with calls from low-income individuals seeking help with their mounting utility bills. This led local community leaders to recognize that far too many of their less fortunate neighbors were unable to afford the cost of heat, electricity and water. In response to the growing crisis, a coalition of community leaders formed Dollar Energy Fund and the Hardship Program was born.

Dollar Energy Fund is still going strong. The organization has grown to become the largest hardship fund in Pennsylvania and one of the largest in the nation. Expansions into multiple states allow us to provide assistance to even more families in need. While the organization continues to grow, our mission remains the same –

“To improve the quality of life for households experiencing hardships by providing utility assistance and other services that lead to self-sufficiency.”
The Need

Our clients are your neighbors. In many cases, these are families that are in need of help due to a recent job loss, medical emergency or other issues beyond their control. Dollar Energy Fund provides our clients with a hand up, not a hand out, to help them through a temporary utility payment crisis. A Dollar Energy Fund grant will help a family maintain or restore safe gas, electric and/or water service.

This temporary assistance is a lifeline for many during very difficult times. Letters and comments from clients illustrate the importance of the work Dollar Energy Fund does on a daily basis.
Customer Contact Center – Social Entrepreneurs

The need for utility assistance far outweighs the help that is available. Dollar Energy Fund is constantly looking for opportunities to raise funds to provide additional assistance. In 1992, the organization created a call center as part of a Social Enterprise project.

**What is Social Enterprise?** The goal of a social enterprise is to further goals for a good cause. Social entrepreneurs measure success by the impact on society, in addition to profit and return.

The project started with a six-seat call center, and in 2002, expanded to 35 seats. The Customer Contact Center continues to expand and now operates out of a 70 seat state-of-the-art call center. Dollar Energy Fund Customer Contact Representatives touch more than 100,000 clients each year to provide information and utility assistance.

Dollar Energy Fund’s Customer Contact Center provides many benefits to the community. First, it allows Dollar Energy Fund to administer programs that provide assistance to the clients we serve. Second, it creates jobs. And, finally, positive variance from Dollar Energy Fund’s social enterprise activities provides additional funding to our programs.
Case Study | iPartner©

By 2002, Dollar Energy Fund’s Hardship Program was receiving more than 12,000 applications each year. It partnered with over 15 utilities and 160 community based organizations throughout Pennsylvania. The application process was entirely paper based and program administration was a daunting task. Application review took six to eight weeks and included many levels of manual activities that were prone to errors.

After an extensive evaluation, Dollar Energy Fund decided that a custom web-based grant management system was essential to the Hardship Program. iPartner was born.

Since the implementation of iPartner, program application processing has been reduced from six to eight weeks to 24 to 48 hours. This is a significant decrease under any circumstances, but it becomes even more significant when you imagine a family without safe gas, electric or water service waiting anxiously for a decision on their program application.

Key Performance Indicators:

- Improved communications with agencies, utilities and clients.
- Increased accuracy of data entry.
- Ensured compliance with program guidelines.
- Shortened turn-around time necessary to process applications.
- Provided real-time statistics and reporting.
- Reduced overall program costs.
iPartner has also successfully improved communications among all stakeholders, increased data accuracy, ensured program guideline adherence and provided significant cost savings. In addition, up to the second reporting capabilities allow Dollar Energy Fund to proactively address programmatic issues based on real-time statistics.

Today, iPartner is more critical than ever. It manages program applications and communications for more than 1,000 users and 40,000 applicants each year. It reaches seamlessly across multiple states and has the capacity to expand and adapt as the Dollar Energy Fund organization grows.

“The technical changes we put in place have enabled us to measure the results of our work. Quantitative information highlights the benefits we provide to the community and strengthens our relationship with partnering utilities. What’s more, iPartner has opened a new line of business opportunities for the Dollar Energy Fund.”

– Cindy Datig, Dollar Energy Fund CEO
Case Study | West Virginia Utility Assistance Program

West Virginia has the third lowest per capita income level and is ranked last in the nation in median household income. Many families were struggling to afford safe utility service. With the support of West Virginia Governor Joe Manchin and a strong partnership with local Community Based Organizations, Dollar Energy Fund launched the statewide West Virginia Utility Assistance Program.

The West Virginia Utility Assistance Program replicates Dollar Energy Fund’s Hardship Program model. It incorporates state-of-the-art technology, a local agency network and fundraising initiatives to serve utility consumers throughout West Virginia. In October 2008, the program began providing utility assistance grants to low-income households and has been growing ever since.

The West Virginia Utility Assistance Program’s utility partners combine to serve about 95% of the state’s utility consumers. These partners match donations to the program and take an active role on the program’s Advisory Council. Representatives from local non-profit, government, corporate and giving communities also take part in the Advisory Council to direct the organization.

Donations can be made to:

West Virginia Utility Assistance Program
P.O. Box 3979
Charleston, WV 25339

or online at www.dollarenergyfund.org

“I am grateful for all that the Dollar Energy Fund is doing to help the citizens of the Mountain State through the West Virginia Utility Assistance Program.”

– Joe Manchin, Governor
**Case Study | Warmathon**

Winter is a difficult season for many families. Cold weather means higher utility bills. Dollar Energy Fund partnered with Pittsburgh radio station NewsRadio 1020 KDKA to address this need.

In February 2009, the first ever NewsRadio 1020 KDKA Warmathon to benefit Dollar Energy Fund took place. The two day radiothon consisted of 30 hours of broadcasting to educate listeners about who Dollar Energy Fund is and what we do. The radiothon also served as a call to action for listeners to pledge by phone or go on-line to make a donation to help their neighbors stay warm during the winter season. The first event raised more than $250,000!

**What is a radiothon?** Similar to a telethon, a radiothon is an on-air fundraising event designed to raise money from listeners who phone and pledge specific donations. At times during the radiothon, these pledges are made in exchange for gifts or premiums.

The Warmathon has now become an annual event and provides awareness and visibility to the Dollar Energy Fund organization in addition to raising funds!

**Donations can be made to:**

- Dollar Energy Fund
- P.O. Box WARM
- Pittsburgh, PA 15230
- or online at www.dollarenergyfund.org
Looking Forward

Through the generosity of our donors, partners and friends, Dollar Energy Fund has provided assistance to families and individuals in need for more than 25 years.

As we navigate through the next 25 years, we will continue to provide innovative solutions, driven by technology and social enterprise opportunities, to help our less fortunate neighbors through temporary utility crises.

*We cannot do it alone.* We hope you will support Dollar Energy Fund and the families we serve.

Support Dollar Energy Fund!

Dollar Energy Fund relies on the generosity of neighbors helping neighbors. Our unique partnership with utility companies allows us to match every dollar donated to Dollar Energy Fund’s Hardship Programs dollar for dollar. And, 100% of all donations and the matching funds will help a low-income family maintain or restore safe utility service through a direct assistance grant.

Because every dollar is matched by our partnering utility companies, your donation will go twice as far. Donations, large and small, are greatly appreciated and truly make a difference to the families we help.