

Neighbors helping Neighbors

"Neighbor, you've worked hard to get where you are...Here's an opportunity to give a little back to a neighbor genuinely in need."

What is the Share Program?

Simply, it is Neighbors helping Neighbors right here in our community. The Share Program is a voluntary program, our customers are asked to participate in that has been put in place to help people having trouble paying their utility bills. The goal is to assist Elderly, Handicapped and families struggling to make ends meet due to escalating utility bills.

Why was the Share Program created?

The program was developed in response to the increasing high costs of energy. Benton Utilities has approximately 13,000 customers and approximately 300 of them are having trouble paying their utilities bills every year. This program will help the customers stressed financially when they qualify.

Will the Share Program only help with electricity bills?

Initially, it will only cover the electricity bills of deserving customers. But the Share Program may be expanded if the Citizens Committee determines there is enough money held in trust to justify participating in other endeavors that will benefit the community. The Program may eventually fund contributions to food banks or weatherproofing kits, for example. The Citizens Committee will determine both whether the Share Program should be expanded and what charitable works will be paid for by some of the money held in the trust.

How can I contribute to this program?

Your monthly utility bill will be rounded up to the nearest dollar. For example, a Benton Utilities customer's bill is \$59.50, it will be rounded up to \$60. The extra 50 cents will be put into a trust account to be administered consistent with the Share Program. The trust account will be used to cover utilities bills for people who meet guidelines developed by a citizen's committee and approved by the commission.

How much will contributing cost me annually?

According to research from the commission, the average Benton Utilities customer contributing to the program will pay about \$6 per year.

Do I have to contribute?

No, the program is completely voluntary and ratepayers not wanting to participate in the program can elect to not contribute by either calling the Benton Utilities office at 501-776-5923 or filling out an "opt out" card provided when you connect your services.

Who determines which customers will benefit from the program?

A seven-member citizen's committee will review applications and determine which customers are qualified to receive assistance from the Share Program. The current committee is comprised of: Sandra Herzfeld-Chairperson, Mary Large-Vice Chairperson, Greg Stewart-Treasurer, Kamma Medders-Secretary, Lisa Bridges, Keith Harris and Fairy McMahan.

How do I "Opt Out" of the Share Program?

If you do not want to participate in the program, you can elect to not contribute by either calling the Benton Utilities office at 501-776-5923 or out an "opt out" card provided when you connect your services.

When will the contribution start appearing on my bill?

Customers will have the opportunity to start contributing with their first billing.

How do I apply to be on the citizen's committee?

To apply to volunteer for the citizens committee, please fax a resume with a letter indicating why you are qualified to serve on the committee to (501)776-5954 or mail those items to Benton Utilities, 1827 Dale Street, Benton, AR 72015. These positions will be advertised as they become open in January of each year. Benton Utilities officials hope that plenty of community minded people will volunteer to serve on this citizens' committee to improve the quality of life in Benton.

How do I apply for assistance from the Share Program?

You must fill out the Share Application and return it to the Benton Utilities Customer Service office at 114 S. East Street (Municipal Complex – where you pay your bill) by the 15th of the month to be considered for assistance. The application can be picked up in the same office or you can print from this web-site.

How can I find out more about the program?

Check your utility bills. There are updates on the program frequently posted to the newsletter. Also, information about the program will be posted regularly on this website.

To download the Share Program information as a Microsoft Word document, click on the link below.