

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION**

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## **NIPSCO Pledges \$200,000 to Support Matching Energy Assistance Fund**

**MERRILLVILLE, Ind.** – NIPSCO has committed \$200,000 this winter heating season to the Gift of Warmth Program, an assistance fund created by NIPSCO to help individuals and families across northern Indiana who are experiencing financial challenges with their energy bills.

Local benefactors such as churches, individuals and other human service-focused organizations contribute to Gift of Warmth, and their donations are matched dollar-for-dollar by NIPSCO. The funds are administered by participating community action agencies, with offices across NIPSCO's entire service area.

Since 2002, NIPSCO matched an approximate \$2.1 million in Gift of Warmth funds raised, with assistance reaching 12,293 northern Indiana households.

Vicki Burge, social services director for The Salvation Army of Porter County, has served as Gift of Warmth Agency administrator for the past seven years. Burge comments, "Through Gift of Warmth, we are able to stretch these donations to reach those who may not qualify for aid from other energy assistance programs but are still struggling to make ends meet." She continues, "We are glad to work with NIPSCO to help neighbors in need improve their situation."

Individuals or groups interested in donating to the program or applying for assistance should contact their local community action agency. A listing of participating agencies by county can be found at [www.NIPSCO.com/billingpayment/payment-assistance/gift-of-warmth.aspx](http://www.NIPSCO.com/billingpayment/payment-assistance/gift-of-warmth.aspx).

In addition to the Gift of Warmth Program, there are several options available to offer much needed winter utility bill assistance for qualified households that are experiencing financial challenges, including:

### **Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) Program**

LIHEAP support is available to households falling within 150 percent of federal poverty guidelines, and is fully funded by a federal block grant offered through the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS).

### **NIPSCO Customer Assistance for Residential Energy (CARE) Discount Program**

In addition to the assistance available through LIHEAP, the NIPSCO CARE Discount Program is designed to provide further bill reductions to LIHEAP-eligible customers. Once enrolled in LIHEAP,

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customers are automatically enrolled in the program, and reductions range from 11 to 26 percent, depending on the same criteria used by the state in determining the level of assistance.

#### **NIPSCO Hardship Program**

For customers just outside the federal poverty guidelines for LIHEAP, the NIPSCO Hardship Program offers up to \$200 in gas bill assistance to households between 151-200 percent of the federal poverty level. Hardship funds are available through many of the same local Community Action Agencies where LIHEAP funds are distributed.

#### **Township Trustees**

A limited amount of energy assistance funds are available through local Township Trustee offices. Last year, approximately \$1.2 million was distributed to help nearly 7,000 customers. NIPSCO customers are encouraged to contact their local Township Trustee to see what help is available.

For more information on billing options and payment assistance, visit [NIPSCO.com/BillingPayment](http://NIPSCO.com/BillingPayment). For more information on available energy-saving programs and other ways to save, visit [NIPSCO.com/SaveEnergy](http://NIPSCO.com/SaveEnergy).

*NIPSCO, with headquarters in Merrillville, Ind., is one of the seven energy distribution companies of NiSource Inc. (NYSE: NI). With more than 786,000 natural gas customers and 457,000 electric customers across the northern third of Indiana, NIPSCO is the largest natural gas distribution company, and the second largest electric distribution company, in the state. NiSource distribution companies serve 3.8 million natural gas and electric customers primarily in seven states. More information about NIPSCO is available at [www.nipsco.com](http://www.nipsco.com).*

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