



The solar array on the roof of Chuck Steininger's laundry facility in Selinsgrove, Pennsylvania, is expected to pay for itself in only two years. His investment came down to only \$17,000 after federal and state grants helped finance the installation.

Partnerships and Innovation Fuel Steininger's Cleaners

By Harry A. Kimmel III, Director of Communications

ATOP THE ROOF OF HIS DRYCLEANING PLANT IN HUMMELS WHARF, PENNSYLVANIA, CHARLES "CHUCK" STEININGER III KEEPS A SMALL FORTUNE. A solar powered water heating system is saving him about 20% on his water heating bills. "I was looking at it and thinking about it for a number of years," Steininger said. "Then one of my customers who happens to be in the solar power business gave me some more information on it. I did some more research and found that they have state and federal grants that would help pay for the system. That's when I realized I was going to go for it."

The cost of the system was about \$43,000. After the grants the cost was reduced to \$17,000. "I was told the investment I made would be paid off within two-and-a-half to three years," Steininger said. "It all depends on the weather."

Solar Energy is a Fair Weather Friend

Inside the plant there are two tanks of water, the main tank and a reserve tank. The water is heated to 130 degrees for Steininger's laundry service. If the water does not reach 130 degrees from the solar powered system alone, it calls upon the

gas-powered hot water heater to bring it up to temperature.

That's just one way Selinsgrove, Pennsylvania's, Steininger's Cleaners is cleaning up with diverse thinking.

Powerful Partner and Master Networker

Steininger's father, Charles Steininger Jr., founded Steininger's Laundry & Shirt Service in 1955. By 1962 he had expanded into coin-operated laundry and coin-operated drycleaning. Wasting no time he opened Steininger's Cleaners in 1965.

The company has about 30 employees at three locations, but Steininger's Cleaners' presence pervades a 45-50 mile rural radius around the company's headquarters. "We have several 'convenience locations'," Steininger said. Convenience locations can be any storefront that could benefit from serving as a pickup and dropoff point for clothing. A good example is a grocery store. "It works out well. It's a win-win. They get a percentage and we get the extra cleaning. It really works out well in rural areas."

Routes working with convenience locations add up to a high-