If it ain’t broke, don’t fix it,” goes the old saying. Sean Olson, Salem Electric’s Purchasing & Warehouse Coordinator has another saying: “If we don’t use it, why hang onto it?”

Sean worked 20 years as an electrician before saying yes to a job change in mid-2014. It wasn’t because the work had grown stale. Nothing was particularly broken about his career, but Sean enjoys learning, analyzing and problem solving. After five years as an apprentice general journeyman for a construction company in Springfield and 10 years as an electrician for a paper mill in Halsey, Sean applied at Salem Electric.

Two co-workers encouraged Sean to apply for the job at Salem Electric and he’s very glad he did. “It’s a diverse job and I like that,” says Sean. As coordinator of the yard and warehouse he found things were in pretty good shape, but that doesn’t mean there wasn’t room for improvement. “We’ve upgraded the database so every part and piece of equipment has its own item number and we’ve done some reorganization of shelving in the warehouse and cleaned up the yard area,” he said. “I’ve really enjoyed working with the line crew on these projects and especially Rodney Sukau, our facilities maintenance coordinator. Some equipment had become obsolete, so now it’s gone which I think has made things a bit more efficient,” said Sean.

Sean’s father was an electrician and his mother a nurse. The oldest of four kids, Sean has siblings living throughout the Northwest. He and his wife Denise began dating at the end of their high school years. Together they have two children.

As a young person, Sean enjoyed basketball and tennis. Their son is now an avid baseball player and has most recently been playing shortstop or pitcher. According to Sean, their daughter is “a free spirit who likes to try a lot of new things and loves swimming and painting.”

Sean began hunting and fishing with his family when he was young and his family continues that tradition today. “We like to hunt deer and elk and more recently have added Chukar hunting – a type of game bird from the pheasant family,” says Sean. They prefer hunting in Eastern Oregon and also enjoy central Oregon lakes for camping and trout fishing.

“In our spare time we also train dogs and the kids really enjoy them. We currently own a German Shorthaired Pointer but we’ve also had Weimaraners and a Labrador Retriever.”

At Salem Electric Sean enjoys the teamwork and family-oriented atmosphere. “It’s a great job and a wonderful company.”
Salem Electric’s mission is to provide you with safe, reliable electric service day and night. Employees work constantly to maintain or replace worn equipment, trim and remove trees around the power lines and upgrade Salem Electric’s power system.

Even with a modern and well-maintained system, every electric utility experiences occasional service interruptions. Vehicle accidents, construction, animals, extreme weather and equipment failures can cause power outages. Despite our best efforts, severe and unusual natural events can cause outages that can last for hours or even days. When conditions are extreme, even with crews working around the clock, repairs are time-consuming, difficult and often dangerous.

We want to be sure our members are prepared in the event of a potentially long outage. Visit SalemElectric.com and select Quicklinks for information on outage preparedness.

Circuit 12 in West Salem serves the area around Capital Manor along the Edgewater District. Three separate outages occurred on Circuit 12 within a recent three-week period. This is a very uncommon occurrence for Salem Electric but analysis of the outages revealed that they were totally random.

The first occurred September 19 when a bouquet of errant Mylar balloons became entangled in the lines. When the metallic material came into contact with the overhead lines it created a short causing the outage.

On September 25 an aluminum wire tie holding the conductor to an insulator broke causing the line to fall onto a crossarm. This contact created a fault, tripping the breaker and causing the second outage on Circuit 12.

The last outage was October 5, as a result of a branch falling across a line in the Edgewater District. The branch shorted out two phases causing the outage.

Though very unfortunate, all three separate incidents coincidentally occurred on the same circuit, affecting the same members. Salem Electric works hard to maintain our facilities so they are as outage free as possible through regular and ongoing inspections and maintenance. Unfortunately no utility can guarantee a 100% power supply all the time, but when outages do occur we do our best to respond and restore power quickly. During outages remember to check our website at SalemElectric.com for information and updates.
Scholarships

Through the Office of Student Access and Completion (OSAC), Salem Electric is offering ten $1,000 college scholarships for the 2016–17 school year. Scholarships are available to applicants of all ages who meet eligibility requirements.

Scholarship Eligibility:

• Applicants’ primary residence is served by Salem Electric.
• Applicants may be high school graduates, home-school graduates, or GED recipients planning to enroll in a full-time undergraduate or graduate program.
• Salem Electric staff, board members, and their immediate family members are ineligible.

Application Information & Timeline:

• Visit SalemElectric.com and select Quicklinks for scholarship information.

February 15, 2016
Early bird application deadline.

March 1, 2016 – 5 p.m.
Final application deadline for all required materials.

• Applications can be printed and mailed with required attachments.
• Contact OSAC at cheryl.a.connolly@state.or.us or call OSAC at 1-800-452-8807 ex. 7387.

Scholarship recipients will be notified in April and invited to attend Salem Electric’s Annual Meeting on Tuesday, May 10 where they will receive their award certificate.
Capital Reserve REFUND

Capital credits reflect each member’s ownership in the cooperative. As a non-profit electric cooperative, Salem Electric does not earn profits as an investor-owned utility does, but when revenues exceed expenses the co-op earns margins. Each year those margins are allocated to members based on the amount of electricity an individual member purchased. Each May Salem Electric mails an allocation letter to members reflecting the credits earned from the previous year. At the discretion of the board, and based on the co-ops’ financial condition, capital credits are paid to members each fall. This year, Salem Electric’s board authorized payment of $1.9 million in capital credits earned in 2000.

Bylaw 4.4 NOMINATION AND ELECTION OF DIRECTORS.
(a) Nominations for Director positions shall be made by written petition not less than 30 nor more than 90 days prior to each annual meeting of the members of the Cooperative for those Director positions scheduled for election. Petitions shall be signed by not fewer than ¼ of one percent (0.25%) of the members of the Cooperative of record as at the preceding December 31 and delivered to the Secretary of the Cooperative and posted at the principal offices of the Cooperative at least 30 days prior to the meeting. No nominations may be made from the floor at the meeting. A notice identifying those Director positions scheduled for election shall be mailed to the membership at least 120 days prior to the annual meeting.

Petition packets and more information may be obtained by contacting Salem Electric at se@SalemElectric.com or 503 362-3601.

Notice of Director Elections

Salem Electric’s 2016 Annual Meeting will be held on Tuesday, May 10, 6 p.m. in the Founders Room at Roth’s Hospitality Center, 1130 Wallace Road NW.

Two positions will be up for election:
Position 3: currently held by Jerry Berger
Position 4: currently held by Paul Ennor

An individual can achieve nomination for a director position only by written petition as provided in Bylaw 4.4(a).
Board Meeting Summary

October 27, 2015

Presented by:

Jeff Anderson
Secretary/Treasurer

Alicia Bonesteele was reappointed to represent Salem Electric on the Oregon Rural Electric Cooperative Association’s board of directors. Joe Van Meter will continue as the board alternate, as well as the representative on the ACRE Political Action Committee and Government Affairs Committee.

Updated Ballot Procedures:
As a result of the Bylaw amendment approved by the membership in May 2015, counting the ballots will begin in the Salem Electric board room during office hours the day of the Annual Meeting. After the Annual Meeting commences, any additional ballots will be tallied and added to the count from earlier in the day with the results announced at the meeting.

Clean Hydro:
Clean Hydro has completed a successful three-year campaign to inform the public that hydro is a renewable resource. They are asking utilities to continue to support their cause through grassroots efforts, websites and printed materials.

Budget Presentation:
After a lengthy process to create the budget (which encourages employee involvement) it was presented to the board in October and will be voted on in November. Highlights from this year’s budget include: revolvement payouts consistent with 2015 amounts; three major capital projects including the replacement of the Musgrave Lane switch that feeds the downtown area; phase three of the Alumina substation getaways; the first phase of the Read substation replacement; and an offsite redundant data protection system to provide data back-up in the event of a disaster.

All board meetings are held at 7 PM at Salem Electric, 633 Seventh Street NW, Salem, Oregon

AMI Update

AMI Expanded Pilot
Project meters installed and functioning!
One morning in January 1987 I answered my door to find West Salem businessman Mark Gehlar waiting with a request that I run for election to the Salem Electric Board of Directors. I respected Mark, a former board member himself, knew of the excellent reputation of the utility and I had the time. I accepted the challenge and was subsequently elected.

At the board table sat six gentlemen, mostly business types, and me, a retired educator and homemaker. My educational journey into the electric co-op world would begin here. Though a member for many years, I quickly learned that the responsibilities of a director representing 18,000 members was more than just keeping the lights on. The decisions directors make in the board room must protect and improve on our members’ expectations. We study and review the issues before making decisions, listen to good advice and make use of staff recommendations.

The proposed budget is examined and a vote is taken. Board members take part in rate, bylaw and policy committees, vote to disperse capital credits to members, keep up on company safety programs, cybersecurity, capital improvements and most importantly, how we spend our members’ money.

Directors would be remiss if we were not consciously continuing our education on what is happening in the co-op world beyond our community. Our member associations, statewide and nationally, keep us informed of the fast-changing technologies bombarding us almost daily. Speakers at regional and national meetings are pros in our cooperative society affiliated with more than 930 utilities in 47 states. They are aware of our concerns, especially for the available supply of environmentally-friendly, cost-effective power. Be it coal, thermal, nuclear, wind, solar, natural gas or hydro, bills are showing up in D.C. on our legislators’ desks with mandates attached that could be detrimental and costly to our members.

It is up to us to educate these lawmakers of the cooperative mission and how we do business. Many have no co-ops in the districts they represent. Oregon’s metropolitan Portland area is a case in point.

I’ve attended classes and forums with directors from Maine to Kansas to American Samoa and in-between. I’ve listened to their stories, their successes and their struggles. I’ve shared some of mine. I’ve toured wind farms, solar facilities, substations, watched our crews raise power poles and trim trees away from power lines to prevent outages.

I’m grateful to have had the opportunity to serve the Salem Electric community alongside an exceptional management team, staff and fellow board members.