Throughout 2016, Salem Electric’s 75th anniversary, the Info Bulletin featured photos and stories about 12 of our 25+ year employees who, when the series began, were current employees. During the year, two of those featured retired, and the stories didn’t include the additional 26 retirees throughout our history who each had over 25 years of service prior to their retirements.

Our first story used the following quote: “Long term or life-time employment as we know it today is completely, utterly, and unequivocally 120% dead and it ain’t coming back...ever,” Forbes.

That might be true for many organizations, but for Salem Electric the common thread seems to be: When you like the work you do, when you’re valued as an employee, and when you like the people you work with, you tend to stick around.

Thomas Edison said, “Most people miss opportunity because it is dressed in overalls and looks like work.” For these four 25+ year employees, opportunity knocked and they answered.

“I didn’t even know Salem Electric existed when my high school business teacher suggested I apply for the receptionist position the week before graduation,” says Cindy Lenker, executive assistant. “I grew up in northeast Salem, West Salem was across the bridge, somewhere I never went.”

During her interview, Lenker was told they were looking for someone with more experience. Somewhat naïve, she quipped, “How can I get experience if no one will hire me?” She was offered a part-time file clerk position. “Thankful for the opportunity, I worked at Salem Electric from 8:00 to noon then went to my waitressing job from 1:00 – 9:00 p.m. Two weeks later they hired me full-time as the receptionist.”
For Jon Charnetzki, line foreman, it was all about persistence. “I spent five years working on a dairy after graduating from Chemeketa with a degree in drafting. A friend suggested I try Salem Electric so I would stop by the office about once-a-month and talk to the then engineering and operations manager, Bob James. He was kind enough to speak to me whenever he was available. I think he got tired of me bugging him so eventually he offered me the utility man position.”

When Charnetzki moved on to the line crew, Willie Ball, energy specialist, was hired after having been a professional baker for several years. “I was initially hired as a utility man, but also did locating part-time. When an opening in the Member Services Department came up I applied and I’m thankful I took the opportunity. Over the years I have loved helping our members save energy and money. I have also enjoyed teaching kids about electrical safety through our Safety Town presentation.”

“In the early 1980s (dang, that’s a while ago) utilities were ramping up their energy conservation programs. I worked for a contract company who did energy audits for Salem Electric. When there was an opening… after signing a form saying the position may not be around longer than one year…I was hired,” says general manager Terry Kelly. “It was clear almost immediately this was a special place that valued its employees, the community, and its members. My kinda place! Some of the things I’ve valued over the years are the opportunities to expand my knowledge through training and conferences, the chance to be involved in the community, and Salem Electric’s ‘member first’ philosophy.”

What has changed over the 25+ years you’ve been at Salem Electric and why have you stayed?

Jon Charnetzki (31 years): “The people. There are only a handful of people here who were here when I was hired. I miss the former employees who I trained under and worked with. Thankfully Salem Electric has done a great job replacing them. I have been very fortunate to have had so many opportunities at Salem Electric.”

Terry Kelly (33 years): “Change happens. It’s how you handle the change that matters. The thing I value the most are the people. We have so much fun at what we’re doing and everyone does an amazing job. When the day comes for me to move on what I will miss most are the people.”

Cindy Lenker (35 years): “Change? Where to begin? I hate to admit it, but I remember setting type on a magnetic card reader. Boy, have we come a long way! One day my supervisor asked me to make a box around a group of numbers and I freaked out saying, ‘I can’t make a box! I don’t know how to do that!’ We laugh about that to this day (yes, he’s still here too). I grew up at Salem Electric. I am very thankful for the opportunities I’ve had, the people I work with, and the work I get to do. At every new employee orientation I tell new hires the same thing — ‘I thought I was just applying for a job to pay the bills, what I got was a rewarding career.’”

Willie Ball (29 years): “Technology has changed a lot of what we do and programs we offer our members — that’s the work. The other part, the better part, is that the years add up quickly when you’re working with people who are more like family than co-workers. Over the years we’ve made some great memories playing softball, participating in numerous parades (rain or shine), and being involved in lots of community events. I could never have imagined it was going to be this good.”
Tree Maintenance

Tree trimming is a critical part of Salem Electric being able to deliver safe and reliable electric service. We appreciate the beauty and environmental impact trees provide, however, it is vital that we protect the electrical system from hazards that threaten electrical reliability, equipment, our employees, and public safety.

Salem Electric has an effective tree maintenance program to meet city, state, and federal regulations for minimum clearances between trees and power lines. The Oregon Public Utility Commission (PUC) regulations require us to do pruning work to help prevent outages and downed lines, and to maintain a high level of safety and reliability. The tree maintenance performed by our well-trained line crews and contracted trimming professionals adheres to the standards and practices outlined by the National Electric Safety Code and the Oregon PUC, the same standards followed by all electric utilities in Oregon.

Which trees does Salem Electric prune?

As we rotate through our service territory, our crews examine trees for potential trouble spots. We look for branches that are too close to power lines, as well as branches that could fall during a storm and come in contact with a power line. We also search for diseased or dying trees. Our crews will prune any trees determined to be a possible threat. Typically these are trees that were planted below the lines that have grown too tall. Occasionally we prune the branches from trees located in other areas if they are too close to the power line. The general rule is a minimum of 8 to 10 feet of clearance for primary high voltage lines.

How do we prune?

Salem Electric’s top priorities are to ensure safe, reliable power while also guarding the health of the tree. A tree planted directly below our lines may have to be topped to keep the main trunk from making contact with the power line or, when tree branches completely surround the power line, we will prune a section in the middle of the tree to provide adequate line clearance. This is much healthier for the tree and keeps us from having to completely remove the tree.

Visit the Engineering tab on SalemElectric.com for information on the best trees to plant near or around power lines.
Salem Electric is offering ten $1,000 college scholarships for 2017–18. Applicants of all ages who meet eligibility requirements can apply through the Office of Student Access and Completion (OSAC).

**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:**

- Visit SalemElectric.com or OregonStudentAid.gov
- Contact OSAC at awardinfo@osac.state.or.us or by calling 1-800-452-8807

**Timeline:**

Applications available online at app.OregonStudentAid.gov. Start early and save your application until you’re ready to submit.

- **February 15, 2017**
  Early bird application deadline.

- **March 1, 2017 – 5 p.m.**
  Final application deadline for all required materials.

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

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**Pole Inspections Coming Soon**

One of Salem Electric’s goals is to provide the most reliable service possible. Inspections and preventative maintenance, such as our pole inspection program, are part of the process. In the coming months National Wood Treating Company will be inspecting poles in Northeast Salem and Keizer. We want members to be aware that unfamiliar workers or vehicles may be in your neighborhood while they conduct the inspections. If you have any questions, please call Salem Electric at 503 362-3601.
Board Meeting Summary

October 25, 2016

Presented by:
Alicia Bonesteele
Secretary/Treasurer

Board Action: Each year the Board Policy Committee reviews 20% of the board policies. The board approved the committee’s recommendation to not change four policies, rescind two policies, and make updates to five policies. To ensure information provided by candidates running for the board is accurate, the board approved authorizing Salem Electric to verify educational claims and check criminal history.

Manager’s Report: Each month measurable strategic objectives are updated for the board. Topics include: AMI Deployment, Basic Charge & Rates, Member Relations, Legislative Networking, and Cybersecurity.

Budget Presentation: The budget process encourages involvement from all departments before presenting the proposed budget to the board. Directors will review the budget throughout October, ask questions, and take action on the budget at the November meeting. The 2017 proposed budget highlights include: Read Substation Rebuild (Phase II), AMI Deployment (Phase I), Microsoft Office 2016 upgrade for all computers, and additional cybersecurity software.

Notice of Director Elections

Salem Electric’s 2017 Annual Meeting will be held on Wednesday, May 10, 6 PM in the Oregon Room at Roth’s Hospitality Center, 1130 Wallace Road NW.

Three positions will be up for election:
Position 5: currently held by Carl Beach
Position 6: currently held by Dave Bauer
Position 7: currently held by Alicia Bonesteele

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

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 will be available on January 3, 2017. More information may be obtained by contacting Salem Electric at se@SalemElectric.com or 503 362-3601.
From the start of my career at West Salem High School I have pushed myself to seize every opportunity that came my way. I studied hard for all of my classes my sophomore year and took every business class I could. Part way through the school year the application for Leadership Youth came out. I had no idea what this program entailed, but I knew that I wanted to apply and take advantage of this opportunity. During the summer before my junior year I was notified that I was one of 40 applicants from the pool of 140 to be accepted into the program.

Leadership Youth is a two-year program lead by the Salem Chamber of Commerce. Year one of the program takes high school students from the Salem-Keizer School District and displays all of the different parts of Salem to them. This is an opportunity that not a lot of high-schoolers have. We toured Don Pancho representing big business in Salem, Mission Mill to show the history of Salem, juvenile court to show the legal system in Salem, and a retirement home around Christmas to show us more about community service. These experiences, along with role playing different scenarios that leaders in the community deal with, really helped us appreciate and care more about our community.

Leadership Youth has helped me step out and meet new people that I would have never met without this experience. We were all pushed to do public speaking, go out of our comfort zones, and do things we may not have done without Leadership Youth.

Year two consists of being assigned to a business board and attending board meetings. I was really excited when we were given the opportunity to select three businesses that we were interested in from a list of possible business boards. I saw Salem Electric on the list and immediately put it as my number one choice (I had heard great things about this board from prior Leadership Youth representatives).

In mid-August I was notified that I was accepted to the Salem Electric board. I was so excited to meet with Michele and Alicia to discuss what the coming year would encompass for me. Everyone at Salem Electric has been so nice and helpful. Although I don’t fully understand all of the terms about electricity discussed at the board meetings, I am doing my research to catch up; some of this does include reading the 20 pages of board policies, but I realize this will help my comprehension.

When I joined the board, I didn’t realize Salem Electric is a cooperative member-owned organization. The customers, you and I, are the cooperative members. It isn’t just a big corporation somewhere else that doesn’t care about Salem. They are here in the local community, making long-term investments for our benefit.

Thank you Salem Electric for believing young people are part of the future. I can’t wait to find out what part I can play in helping support Salem’s future.