

The Commonwealth Quarterly

News from around the circuit.

Spring 2010



Commonwealth Electric Company
of the midwest

INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

What's The Difference?

Taking Care of the Customer

Commonwealth Communications - Lincoln Branch

Columbus Branch... Branching Out

The Wright Place

VFD Benefits, Incentives & Opportunities

Millard Public Schools

Commonwealth Electric & the City of Des Moines; a Valuable Partnership

Our Lady's Immaculate Heart Catholic Church

Don't Forget Customer Service

"What's The Difference?"

T. Michael Price - Vice President

Several years ago, I arranged to have coffee with a prospective customer in Des Moines. We greeted one another and after some small talk, I began telling him about Commonwealth Electric Company of the Midwest and our capabilities as a contractor. I went through our marketing materials, past projects and some of our existing customers. We had a good discussion and towards the end of our meeting, I asked him if he had any questions that I could answer. I expected him to ask about a past project, our service response time or perhaps what hourly labor rate we might charge. Instead, he simply asked me "Why Commonwealth, what makes you different from other electrical contractors?"

This is a question that I frequently ask myself. What is it that makes us different, and better, than other electrical contractors in our market place? Is the conduit we install better? No. Is our code compliant installation better than the next contractor's? Not really. Is our pricing for a specified scope of work significantly less expensive? Not always. So, if all these things do not necessarily set us apart, what does? Is it our vision of "Committed to Excellence"? Our dedication to customer service? Our high standard of ethics? Perhaps it's our conservative business practices? Maybe it is the awards we have won. Although all these things define us as a quality electrical contractor, I don't think they are the answer

to the question. They are, however, the product of the answer.

What makes us different? It is our employees, our people. Our people are our biggest asset and it is our people that set us apart from other contractors in our industry. Our personal ownership in projects, work ethic, sense of urgency, sense of ethics and fair play and our commitment to our owner's goals; all influence and dictate how we manage projects and conduct business. Our sound business practices help guide us in our day to day operations, but it is our people that make the difference.

After pausing for a second or two, I said "What makes us different? Well, it is our people. From our warehouse delivery men, to our project managers, estimators and administrative staff, to our electricians in the field; we have the best people in the industry working for us. That is what makes us different."



Michael Price - Vice President

Taking Care of the Customer

Ruben Bera - Corporate Safety Director

There are times when our work involves working in and around the general public. There are many steps we need to take to make sure someone doesn't accidentally walk into our work area and get injured. We hang signs warning people but these may not always work. We need to be on guard at all times.

At a recent job in Des Moines, IA, our crew, led by Robin Pearson, was doing remodeling work at a JC Penny store. They were making several electrical

changes and the store needed to be open. Robin and his project manager, Matt Masters decided much of the work could be done in the early hours when customers were not present. This was an excellent idea as we needed to use ladders and do overhead work. We didn't need the additional worry about something falling on a customer, or damaging store goods or injuring a store employee. We also had to install pipe in the floor and do core drilling. All this activity was done in the early hours and all areas were clearly marked and isolated.

Continued on page 2

Continued from page 1

The electrical rooms needed to stay open for the maintenance people and store workers needed to turn on and shut off power to cash registers. A lockout/tagout plan was used to ensure the safety of our workers and the store employees. There were no injuries on this project.

When customers were present, Robin instructed his crew to make sure when someone was on a ladder there was another worker below making sure someone didn't accidentally bump or run into the ladder. Another good practice was they never left a ladder standing with no one around. As Robin said, "We don't need a curious child climbing the ladder". Good thinking.

Working around the public is just part of our business. Knowing what we can do to eliminate injuries to our people and the public will always be our top priority. Just because we hang a sign doesn't mean we are home free. We must always be mindful of our work area and those around us.

Hats off to Robin and his crew for keeping everyone safe!



Commonwealth employees left to right;
Brad Ramsey, Aaron Haug, Barry Vandehaar, Robin Pearson,
Steve Rush, Bryan Greim & Jake Wheeler

Commonwealth Communications – Lincoln Branch

Jerry VanAmerongen – Telecommunications Manager

The last four months have been good for our operations here in Lincoln. The University of Nebraska – Lincoln has put out five new projects for bid and we were able to secure four of them. Over 900,000 feet of voice and data cable installed.

First, we bid and won the brand new Physical Sciences Building voice and data cabling project. This was a job that Commonwealth Electric was already doing. This project has plenty of new lab space along with offices, auditorium, and classrooms. The owner (UNL) supplied the winning contractor with 250,000' of BLACK data cable. We still had to purchase another 160,000' of voice and data cable to complete the project. We started this project in late October and it is scheduled to be completed by the end of March. We turn the project over to the owner in mid to late April. Todd Starkey was the technician overseeing this project.

Second, came the Multi Cultural Center and we were successful on this one also. Kidwell Electric was and still is doing the electrical portion of this building. This was a new building as well, but not as big. We supplied almost 60,000' of voice and data cabling. We were first on-site in late November and we were substantially complete in early January. We are still doing "extras" for this location with more on the way. Roland Lusins was our lead technician.

Third, we were able to land another project with the Whittier School remodel. Commonwealth Electric was doing the electrical on this one also! We started on this project in late December and are now at approximately ninety five percent complete. This one is also scheduled to turn over to the owner in April. We supplied right at 200,000' of voice and data cable and

are expecting to get plenty of "extras". Doug Ebert (JW) returned to our shop and is in charge of this project.

The fourth one is called Keim Hall and it is a remodel as well on the East Campus of the University. Middleton Electric is there doing the electrical. We first got there late February and are already sitting at about forty percent complete. We will have close to 300,000' of voice and data cabling installed here by the time this one is over. Todd Starkey is the lead on this one.

The only one that we missed out on was the new dorms going up on 17th and R Street. Kidwell is doing the electrical and another low voltage contractor (L.O.C.) was tremendously aggressive on this project. Even with their aggression showing, they only beat us by less than three percent overall.

We have also been informed that we will move ahead of Windstream as the number one contractor on the list of who UNL will contact for their smaller service types of projects. Windstream has held this ranking for the last seven plus years but they are slowly but surely getting rid of their installation crews. This has already generated numerous service tickets for our guys to do.

With all of this going on, we hired another technician, Roger Rezac, from Kure and Associates, to help out with the service side of things. Meanwhile Ron Dodd is staying overly busy with ALL of the other projects that we do besides UNL. Plus, Ron is our fiber termination guru, so he gets called on frequently.

So far, 2010 is looking pretty good! Keep up the GREAT WORK men!

Columbus Branch.....Branching Out!

Ruth Chermok – Business Development

Many good things are happening in Columbus and we are excited about the recent flurry of activity and exposure for our branch. The momentum started with an exciting BIM Seminar day! Eric Hoge presented to over 16 customers and prospective clients our efforts and advancements in Building Information Modeling. Throughout the course of the day four seminars were held at our office, and representatives from Behlen Mfg, Heartland Builders, NPPD, Cornhusker Public Power, Central Community College, City of Columbus, Chamber of Commerce, Katana Summit and others attended mini-seminars. Also, Eric has accompanied our team to demonstrate these services to Beckenhauer Construction, Norfolk, NE – B D Construction in Columbus, and Schemmer and Associates (currently working on projects for City of Columbus). All of these meetings went extremely well, and demonstrated our enhanced services.

In addition, recent client meetings have led to bid work and T & M proposals. We can report that we have been awarded the project at BD Medical and have already begun coordination with BD Construction. Both of these projects look very promising, and we have also had very productive meetings with Katana Summit and BD Pharmaceutical. We received the contract to commence work on the Leigh Dam Project, which includes electrical for camp and RV sites. Work continues on numerous other projects and ADM.

The Columbus market requires a broad perspective and

“The Wright Place”

Michael Duffy – Special Projects Manager

Kelly Cortum, Inc. and Commonwealth Electric in Des Moines have teamed once again. The completion of The Wright Place, a new special occasions and event center, was completed in the fall of 2009. Kelly Cortum’s inspiration and creative ideas along with his team Cindy, Janet and Rick developed this event venue. This 4000 square foot event center includes a complete catering kitchen, tables, linens, chairs, portable dance floor and audio visual equipment along with a well lit parking lot. There was a real need for a venue like this in Kelly’s home town of Norwalk so he took his idea and some undeveloped rental space and filled the need. With tables and chairs to seat 270 people comfortably and affordably, The Wright Place is sure to be a hit for not only residents of Norwalk but all of the Greater Des Moines area.

Commonwealth Electric provided design build services for this project. Chris Miller was Commonwealth’s electrical foreman and Mike Duffy was the project manager for this

work in many different markets. Steve Kaup, Sean Martys and I participated in the Columbus Homebuilders Show and found the event very productive! In addition to meeting and greeting hundreds of Columbus area residents, we developed over 17 direct leads for residential work and visited with lots of current and prospective clients. Several interactions created leads for possible commercial work. Our Service Team, led by John Kaup and Jared Kemper, are busy following up on leads, and bidding and installing residential work. It’s really exciting to see our vans out and about in a community the size of Columbus, it gets noticed! We look forward to, and are working hard to expand our client base and outreach in the community.



Steve, Sean and Ruth.....show Columbus – We’re here to stay, and Committed to Excellence and the Columbus Community!!!

project. Chris worked closely with Rick, Cindy and Janet to assure Kelly’s vision was complete. The Des Moines Commonwealth Group would like to thank Kelly Cortum and his team for the trust they showed in our ability to contribute to their projects.

Inquiries to The Wright Place can be made by phone at 515-333-6303 or by visiting their web site www.Wrightplace-Events.com. Give Kelly a call and tell him Michael Price told you to call.



VFD Benefits, Incentives and Opportunities

Brian Orton – Project Engineer

The projections of economic experts indicate that the new construction market is going to remain depressed for some time. Our success in this tight marketplace is going to be defined, in part, by the ways in which we bring new solutions to our existing customers, and use those same solutions to target receptive new customers. One of these solutions we can offer is the integration and installation of Variable Frequency Drives (VFDs) into our customer's processes and building controls.

The job of a VFD is to control the rotational speed of a motor. These devices are common in industrial and manufacturing settings when more precise motor control is required than can be provided by a starter. They are less common in applications involving building pumps and fans, but no less useful.

VFDs offer a number of benefits to customers that wouldn't normally consider them. Motor and equipment longevity is increased, system control is improved, and real time system monitoring and alarming become possible. And most of all, VFDs can save a lot of energy, which equals money!

Six months ago we installed a VFD to operate a 30 HP waste water pump at Oakland Foods that had previously been controlled by a combination starter. Like all pumps, this one was sized to handle the maximum flow that the plant required. Like most, this was rarely where the system actually operated. Because the pump was oversized for normal operation, it was repeatedly cycled on and off by the control system. This had led to premature failure in the motor and pump.

After the installation of the VFD and the setup of a simple PID loop, the pump runs almost continuously, eliminating the cycling that caused previous failures. The motor now averages 2700 RPM and is able to adapt its speed with demand, rather than the static 3600 RPM it ran at previously.

Millard Public Schools

Russ Williamson – Project Manager

Commonwealth Communications started off 2010 with the Millard Public Schools Interactive Whiteboard contract. This contract is the third phase of the whiteboard installations Millard has on their schedule. The project consisted of mounting interactive whiteboards and projectors throughout 180 rooms in 9 different schools. The project also required the electrical department to install electrical outlets for the boards and projectors in each room. Commonwealth began the project in January and had a completion deadline of March 5, 2010.

With the help of our foreman Tom Mangiamelli, this project was completed in a timely manner. The entire project was completed as second shift work so the main focus was making sure everything was back in place before classes started each morning. This project was

While it appears that the VFD has accomplished its initial purpose of extending the life of the pump, a pleasant side benefit is the energy savings that result.

Centrifugal pumps and fans are governed by Affinity Laws, which state in relation to energy:

$$\frac{Power_1}{Power_2} = \left(\frac{RPM_1}{RPM_2}\right)^3$$

Due to the exponential relationship of this equation, if you reduce speed by 25% you will see a power reduction of over 50%. In the case of Oakland, this meant the pump now used - on average - 9.4 kW per hour, rather than 22.4 kW. A general rule of thumb is that for each percent of speed reduced; twice that percentage of energy will be saved.

This is a fact that has not been lost on the Federal Government and local utilities. A number of grants, tax credits, and rebates are available to customers who make facility improvements and can demonstrate energy savings. In the case of OPPD, NPPD and its local utilities, there are very attractive rebates available.

NPPD is currently offering a \$30 per HP rebate for the installation of a VFD on an existing motor. There are also incentives and rebates if the motor is upgraded to a high efficiency type. Meeting the requirements for these incentives is often very easy and another way that we can be of service to our customers.

Despite these benefits and incentives, most aren't aware of them. As you continue to call on your customers and look for new, be sure to have a conversation about the benefits, savings, and incentives that Commonwealth can provide through the installation and integration of VFDs and other energy saving solutions.

different than previous jobs in that the school system provided the boards and projectors but Commonwealth was responsible for the storage and insurance for the material.

Staging of the materials and the owner providing equipment was necessary on a daily basis to insure no loss in production. The boards were kept in a climate controlled warehouse where our technicians would pick up what they needed each day. All necessary parts were staged in the warehouse and organized on a per school basis. The foreman would plan the installs and coordinate for material delivery or pick up just before each shift started. Once the installers arrived on location, they had all of their materials necessary for that location.

Due to the public opening of these bids, competition has become fierce. Other contractors have tried to get more aggressive in their pricing and we have had to exploit every opportunity for efficiencies and incorporate them into our bids in order to continue to be successful and the "low bidder."

Commonwealth Electric and the City of Des Moines; a Valuable Partnership



Commonwealth Electric has developed a number of valuable relationships in its many years in Des Moines. Recently, we have rekindled a long relationship with the City of Des Moines that has spanned several decades. Our service contract with the City has provided Commonwealth the opportunity to work on a wide variety of projects. Each of our service drivers has had a hand in a City job at one point or another, from short order service calls to long term ventures.

Currently, the City is undertaking the much needed widening of Merle Hay Road between Urbandale Avenue and Boston Avenue. CECM's involvement with the project includes moving the electrical for all of the retail signage along both sides of the street. Our service electrician, Chris Miller, is overseeing this work, coordinating with both the sign company and the City. In addition, Chris is also involved in a labor share with the City, assisting them with various electrical projects on an on-going, as-needed basis. Another valuable aspect of our association with the City is our work in the many Des Moines public library locations. This work ranges from lamp and ballast replacement to the relocation of the Franklin Avenue branch. Most recently we completed a lighting remodel at the South Side library. Tim Crowley, with occasional help from other service electricians, replaced several existing fixtures and installed

additional fixtures to enhance the experience of library patrons.

Tom Washington, service electrician, just finished work on a door access control project at the Des Moines International Airport in the Mid-America Jet Hangar. We have been extensively involved with the Parks and Recreation Department as well, on a wide range of jobs, including new lights in the parking lot of the former Science Center and restoring power and lights to an old building to make it ready for use as a maintenance facility. For the Des Moines Water Works, Commonwealth electricians pulled 5K cable between two buildings at the city's Fleur Drive water treatment facility.

In addition to these larger, long term projects, our electricians are often called out on smaller short term service jobs as well. These have included calls from the public libraries, Des Moines Fire Department, and Des Moines Municipal Housing to name a few.

Commonwealth Electric understands the value of our partnership with the City of Des Moines. Every project we undertake on their behalf is incredibly important to us, regardless of the size or scope of work. We have found it a pleasure to work with each of the City employees we have encountered and we look forward to our continued relationship and future endeavors.

Our Lady's Immaculate Heart Catholic Church

Mark Ramsey - Project Manager

Commonwealth Electric Company of the Midwest was recently awarded the contract for the Phase 1 and Phase 2 renovations of Our Lady's Immaculate Heart Catholic Church in Ankeny, Iowa. Phase 1 of the project consists of the installation of new light fixtures and a new lighting control system in the existing 12,000 square foot worship space. Phase 2 includes new light fixtures in the existing Gathering Space and Daily Chapel and the addition of a new, smaller Chapel. Along with the interior renovations, CECM will be installing exterior light fixtures and bollards in their new chapel courtyard. Dave Raver with RDG Planning and Design selected all of the light fixtures for this project.

Randall Milbrath, also with RDG, will be heading up the project, along with Story Construction, who is the General Contractor. The interior portion of the project is scheduled to be completed by May 20th, followed by the courtyard and chapel addition which is to be completed by June 22nd. Steve Hansen is Commonwealth's

Foreman on this job and he will be assisted by Project Manager Mark Ramsey.



Don't Forget Customer Service

Dan Shannon - Vice President

As we all continue to get through this difficult recession, it's very important that we all remember what it means to be part of the Commonwealth Family and how we will overcome and continue to be one of the best and most respected contractors in the country.

In my opinion, we cannot forget the single most important aspect of our business whether it be Construction, Service or the Expo Division.....delivering exceptional Customer Service every time. In the Expo Division, we come in contact with literally thousands of customers per year. These customers come from many different parts of the country and many times even many parts of the world. Not only are we their utility provider, to many of these folks we are the face of the Convention Center, the City, and believe it or not, the country. It is imperative that every customer that comes into contact with Commonwealth Electric be left with a feeling of satisfaction knowing that all of their needs were met with professional, caring service. We have adopted the same guest service promises that the Phoenix Convention Center lives by each and every day. These four promises are simple really but if not practiced regularly, can very easily be forgotten.

1. We are guest centered

- a. Providing service is the focus of our collective efforts and our main personal role
- b. We place the needs of our guests at the center of everything we do and we personalize our services to meet their unique requirements
- c. We strive to provide more than is expected thus creating memorable experiences
- d. We are proactive in our business practices and focus on anticipating our clients' needs
- e. A positive first impression builds trust. By following our standards for appearance and grooming, we demonstrate our professionalism

2. We are caring

- a. We deliver service with a pleasant, friendly and caring attitude. In our interactions, we show spirit, character and energy
- b. We provide clear and understandable direction
- c. We are all responsible with safety and security. Issues are immediately reported and corrected
- d. We consistently provide a clean, well maintained and pleasant environment for our guests

- e. End service in a pleasant way! Ensure guest satisfaction and extend a warm farewell and an invitation to return

3. We are prompt and responsive

- a. We are always available to our guests. We never say NO to an opportunity to serve them and to improve their satisfaction with our services
- b. We interact with our guests in an efficient and prompt manner. Completing our commitments on time shows dedication and professionalism
- c. We are sensitive to our guests unexpressed cues and we adjust our pace and service delivery accordingly
- d. We acknowledge and immediately address guest service problems. We correct them and promptly follow up to ensure satisfaction

4. We help each other to meet guest needs

- a. We always help each other by stepping out of our primary duties in order to assist our guests
- b. We are all responsible for the quality of our work environment. Be positive about Commonwealth Electric both inside and outside of our workplace
- c. We are free to share ideas, feedback and opinions in a professional manner, without fear of consequences
- d. We enjoy what we do. Maintaining perspective and having fun makes Commonwealth a great place to work.

These four simple promises have been the root of the Expo Divisions tremendous success. Our customer service is unparalleled by any other contractor at each of our exclusive facilities. I am very proud to say that we continually look for ways to improve our customer skills and have maintained a virtually spotless customer service record. One of the main reasons we have been the exclusive contractor at the Phoenix and Tucson Convention Centers since 1995 is our extraordinary level of success in customer service. It is imperative that as a Company we all keep customer service at the front of our minds and create memorable experiences for our customers to keep them coming back.