

# The Commonwealth Quarterly

News from around the circuit.

Spring 2012



**Commonwealth Electric Company**  
of the midwest

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## Happy Anniversary

David F. Firestone – President/COO

July 1, 2012 marks the 25th anniversary of Commonwealth Electric Company of the Midwest. To some, 25 years may seem like a long time; but to others, it may seem like yesterday.

There have been many changes that have occurred this past 25 years. Some good and some not so good but one thing that hasn't changed is the dedication and commitment of our employees. These dedicated employees, our loyal customers and all of our business partners have contributed to the success of our company. Our mission statement has remained simple "Customer Satisfaction". With our vision statement "Committed to Excellence", we will continue to grow and prosper. Thanks to all of those who are committed to making CECM the best.

On behalf of Pat, Glen and myself, thanks to all that have made our company successful these past 25 years, our employees, business partners and our loyal customers. We would also like to recognize those employees who started out with us on July 1, 1987 and are still with us today.

**Coleen Dieken  
Inez Elsasser  
Jay Hoobler  
Michael Duffy  
Richard Neal**

**Dave Oliver  
J. A. Amavisca  
Mike King  
Norman Stentz  
Sue Schlake**

This is pretty amazing when you think about it – 10 people are still with us today!

In closing, I want to stress the importance and the positive impact so many people have had in making our company so successful. We are a team! Everyone is important! We win as a team and lose as a team, that's what makes Commonwealth such a great place to work. We all know that even the best of teams have their ups and downs, but if we all continue to work together, no doubt in my mind, the next 25 years will also be as prosperous as our first 25.

I would like to leave you with an article that was printed in our July 1999 newsletter. The article was entitled "How successful Electrical Contractors Keep Making Money". After rereading the article, I thought to myself, we

have been practicing these principles but it would be a good thing to revisit these principles and apply them to our business strategy today. "How Successful Electrical Contractors Keep Making Money" – "Yes" generation. That means we need to be able to say "yes" we are able to do whatever we are asked to do. We as a company and a member of the electrical contracting industry cannot let old marketing rules stand in the way of our progress.

We need to be leaders, visionaries and motivators. Ambition, restlessness, passion, enthusiasm and intellectual curiosity are the hallmarks of these new leaders in the industry.

We need to communicate our passions and people will in turn willingly and enthusiastically accept the stress that comes with such change. We all know how stressful life can be when we are busy and we certainly are in a very stressful, but exciting time right now. Hopefully, all will perceive the benefits to be worthwhile with these burdens of being a busy electrical contractor.

We must never be complacent. We must never think that we've got it made. We have to avoid complacency because complacency makes us more vulnerable to our competitors who may be hungrier than we are. Just working harder and making existing processes more efficient will not bring about the dramatic change that will keep us successful. We can't wait for a crisis to motivate us. We have to consistently look for opportunities that bring about the innovations that this company has used so successfully to secure new work. We need to react creatively so that we can bring about our own changes and make our company even stronger and more profitable.

We must never take any of our customers for granted. We can be out-sold any day of the week by a competitor. We can only hope to keep customers by keeping them satisfied. Each customer is different and requiring unique services that change often. If we don't know what our customers think of our company, then ask them. Hopefully, they will give us an honest answer so we can continue to provide them with first-class service.

We must never think that we have all the customers that you need. Keep developing new prospects to replace those customers who will inevitably fall away or be lost to a competitor.

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## Didier's Grocery Expands with Design/Install of Commonwealth

**Ruth Chermok** - Business Development

Didier's Grocery is a locally owned, community grocery store. The Schuyler store was the second store owned by the Didier family and was purchased in 1978. The original store was located in Bellwood, NE.

The Didier's roots are deep in this community. When Jerome Didier passed away in 1981 at the young age of 49; his son moved back from Omaha to run the store. In 1988 they purchased another store in David City which is run by Tony Didier. The corporation today employs some 90 people, some of whom have been with the company for 20+ years.

The Schuyler store was built brand new in 1995 at the Intersection of Old Highway 30 and Highway 15, the recent 3,000 square foot addition, makes it a 21,000 square foot facility. Bierman Contracting of Columbus was selected to manage the addition under a design-build contract. Bierman has worked with our Columbus branch on a number of projects. They selected us to be their partner on this addition.

The project has been very successful, and with the design expertise of Engineer, Brian Orton, a very efficient and practical addition was laid out. The project has been managed, by John (JK) Kaup; and with his team he has installed all of the underground, service, lighting, and refrigeration/freezer equipment. Meeting a tight timeline, John (JK) has kept the crew on task, and the opening celebration went off without a hitch. We have received numerous compliments from the community and Didier's on the services of the Commonwealth Electric team!

Many of the aspects of the Didier family business are similar to the tenants of the Commonwealth Electric team. Taking care of the gamut of electrical installations within our communities, providing high quality "done right, the first time" services, maintaining a team of long term and dedicated employees; and earning a solid reputation within the communities that we perform work!



*Interior of Store Addition*



*John Kaup - Project Manager &  
Clint Didier - Store Manager*

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In our efforts to broaden our customer base, we must be careful, however, never to take on more jobs than we can profitably and comfortably manage. We can overcome lots of honest mistakes but we may never overcome a damaged reputation. Never stop selling our company. Take every opportunity to cultivate better communications and personal relationships with our customers. Make our customers think they are getting something extra from us.

We all must try intentionally to stretch our limits, but be careful. We don't want to overshoot the boundaries. Again, timing is important and we need to decide when the time is right to stretch those limits.

Finally, never stop wanting to learn. Leading contractors know that every employee hasn't come to the job with all

the information they will ever need. It is important for us all to work constantly on upgrading our own technical and management knowledge. We need to concentrate on learning how to solve problems rather than create them. We need to anticipate ways in which all the upcoming technology can be applied to our company. The competition is relentless and it saves the greatest reward for those that make the investment and take the risk.

What Will Rogers once said, "Even if you are on the right track, you will get run over if you just sit there." In order for us to surpass the competition, we must ensure that we apply all of the above. This, for certain, will make us a successful contractor for the next 25 years.

Happy Anniversary Commonwealth!

# Des Moines's New DART Transit Hub

**Matt Masters** - Project Manager

Commonwealth's Des Moines location was awarded the new Des Moines Area Regional Transit Authority (DART) "Transit Hub". The facility is designed to replace the Walnut Street Transit Mall. This new state of the art LEED facility includes a new 800 amp service, 350KW natural gas generator, extensive interior and exterior lighting packages, photovoltaic system, and many low voltage systems including fire alarm, paging, voice data, CATV, CCTV, and card access.



CECM is working with The Weitz Company, who is the General Contractor on the project and Substance Architecture. Commonwealth Electric's team consists of Nate Findlay, Project Foreman, along with Matt Masters, Project Manager, and Nick Page, Estimator. The Weitz Company has been great to work with on this project and we look forward to working with them on future endeavors.

# Simpson College builds a new Campus Center in Indianola, Iowa

**Mark Ramsey** - Project Manager

Commonwealth Electric Company of Des Moines recently began construction on the new Kent Campus Student Center at Simpson College in Indianola. The 55,000 square foot, two story building addition consists of student assembly spaces, general offices and meeting rooms, as well as a bookstore, theater and food court.

Commonwealth's scope of work includes a new 2000 amp service, site and walkway lighting, interior lighting and automated lighting controls, theatrical sound and lighting distribution, fire alarm and communications cabling.

Graham Construction is taking on the general contracting duties on this project, with KJWW as Engineering Consultants. The Commonwealth team includes Mark

Ramsey as Project Manager, Nick Page as Project Estimator and Tracy Simmons as the Project Foreman.

*"We are very excited to be working with Simpson College and Graham Construction on the new Kent Student Center. Mark, Tracy and our entire team are working hard to exceed expectations!"*

*- Michael Price, Vice President*

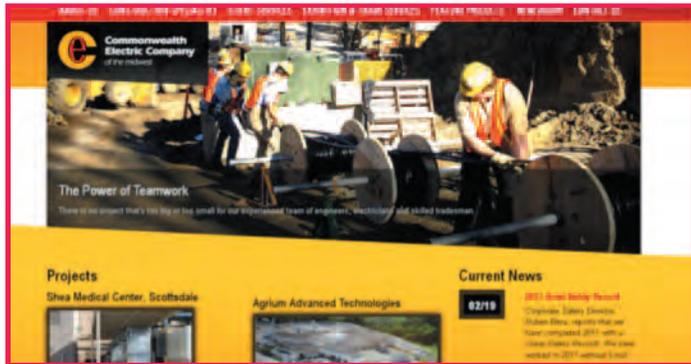
The student center is scheduled to be completed by October 1st of 2012 and will be a great addition to the Simpson College campus.



## Commonwealth Electric Unveils New Company Website

Ruth Chermok - Business Development

Just in time to celebrate our 25 years in business, Commonwealth Electric of the Midwest has rolled out a new company website.....[www.commonwealthelectric.com](http://www.commonwealthelectric.com). This site will serve us well going into our next 25 years, and includes special features on projects and demonstrates the comprehensive depth of our services. The site is very interactive, and is structured for better updates and news of our company.



The **HOME** Section features our company history, an interactive map of our locations, a map of our State Licenses, facts about our Safety Practices, Record, and Certifications, information about our Community Activities; and links to our various Partner pages.

The balance of the site provides detailed information as to our specific services, credentials, and featured projects. The diversity of our work is demonstrated under **CONSTRUCTION SPECIALTIES** with unique end extended services defined under **CLIENT SERVICES**.

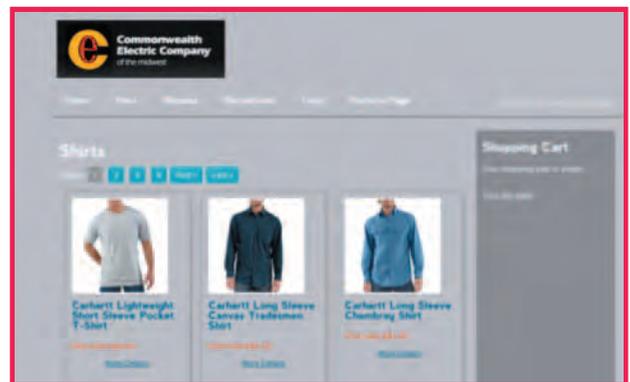
Our **EXHIBITION AND TRADE SERVICES** section sends customers to the website so they can order services for their booths for our Phoenix and Tucson Expo Division.

The **FEATURE PROJECTS** section will constantly be changing

and updated demonstrating the variety of projects, markets, and services that various Commonwealth Electric branches serve. Project Managers, Field Management, Customer Backgrounds, and Project Photos will be the highlights of this section.

Lastly, our Corporate Newsletter will be featured under **NEWSROOM** along with important updates about specific branch projects related to community service, employee service, or any other company news! We also make sure that customers have the specific information to contact each of our Branch Managers and offices.

We also have a new Company Store website, designed and coordinated by Matt Firestone with assistance from a number of people in our corporate office. This new and updated Company Store features easy access to all the CECM logo products available with current and updated photos of items. Check it out at [www.shop.commonwealthelectric.com](http://www.shop.commonwealthelectric.com)!



Thanks to all who have provided input, ideas and suggestions for these projects. Both sites have been structured to insure continual updates and improvements; and we welcome the suggestions, project information and updates from all CECM team members to continue to enhance “our story” and showcase “our work”.

## New Diction System for Fire Prevention Week

Allison Petersen - Service Coordinator

Just prior to Fire Prevention Week last fall, Commonwealth Electric’s Des Moines office teamed up with the Norwalk Fire Department to provide a new smoke detection system in a Norwalk apartment building. The new system included a strobe light to alert tenants who may be unable to hear the alarm on a standard smoke detector. The system was donated by United Services of Grimes and CECM donated the labor in an effort to increase fire safety for everyone, especially those with hearing issues. Mike Duffy, Special Project Manager, coordinated the project on Commonwealth’s end, with electrician John Schoolen doing the installation.



## Safety Record

**Ruben J. Bera** - Corporate Safety Director

We are well into 2012 and as we expected, our safety continues to improve. Our workers understand the importance of a safe work site. I bragged about our great year in 2011 and just to recap, I presented plaques to the following locations for their efforts:

**Tucson** – Achieving zero accidents. Every location has unique work conditions and Tucson has their share. Dusty environment and summer heat and we can't forget the dust storms or heavy rain downfalls. Considering these factors, achieving zero accidents is a great achievement. Tucson has shown a great commitment towards safety. During my safety audits, I have seen many improvements in work habits and equipment. Awareness is the key to their success.

**Phoenix** – Achieving zero accidents. Phoenix shares the same work environment as Tucson and this adds to the challenges they face daily. Phoenix has several key foremen that are committed to keeping their crews safe and informed. Their actions and leadership are the force behind a safe work site.

**Expo Division Phoenix/Tucson** – Zero accidents. Working

with the public has its challenges and demands. Our crews provide the customer with the power they request. Dragging SO cords great lengths opens the door for strains and sprains. Using good work practices has prevented employees from being injured.

**Des Moines** – Achieving zero accidents. Tucked away in the Midwest our Des Moines location continues to demonstrate safe work habits. During my safety audits I'm sometimes challenged by the foreman to find areas that need corrected. If I do, the problem is easily and immediately resolved.

Our other locations also helped achieve our lowest ever incident rate for 2011. All locations share the same hazards and exposures. It takes a lot to keep workers safe. Education and keeping the work force informed makes this happen.

As we dig into 2012 we look for another fantastic year. We will provide continued education and ideas to keep everyone safe. Workers are encouraged to submit ideas that can help prevent injuries and time away from work. We will continue to stay committed to excellence and committed to safety.

## Duncan Aviation – Paint Hangar

**Bob Philipps** - Manager-Design Build

Duncan Aviation, in Lincoln, Nebraska broke ground on a new 52,000 sq. ft. paint hangar at the Lincoln Municipal Airport. This new hangar was required due to the increased size of private sector planes that Duncan Aviation handles. The hangar is made up of three major areas, (1) 20,500 sq. ft. prep bay, (1) 19,200 sq. ft. downdraft paint bay and a 12,400 sq. ft. shop area that consists of storage, parts paint booth, wastewater treatment, tech services offices, break room, locker rooms and restrooms.

Commonwealth Electric entered into this project to provide the electrical installation along with phone/data with Tectonic Management Group located in Wheat Ridge, Colorado. We have worked several times with Tectonic in the past at Duncan's various locations. BCER out of Arvada, Colorado is providing the Mechanical/Electrical Engineering services.

Jason Rieckman is the Superintendent on the project and along with Kirk Coasert, Trent Strom, Sean Kotalik and Barry Erb is providing a first rate installation in the varied NEC classes and divisions that a paint hangar incorporates. Jerry VanAmerongen and his crew have installed the low voltage systems. We started on this project in May 2011 and will be completed in May of 2012.

In the near future, Duncan Aviation will begin construction of a new maintenance hangar by the end of 2012 and prior to that the removal and relocation of several T-Hangars which will be the responsibility of the Lincoln Airport Authority. Commonwealth Electric has been involved in both the design and planning for these two exciting projects.

On a side note, we have begun using the Fastenal Vending solutions on the job site for miscellaneous material and

expendables. With this system we have been able to track usage by each electrician and job along with maintaining proper stock levels. We have the capability to track it daily, monthly and even hourly and it comes with the software that allows a plethora of reports.



## Eastern Buffet Opens in West Des Moines

Allison Petersen - Service Coordinator

The City of West Des Moines has a new Chinese restaurant to tempt diners. Eastern Buffet is opening on Westown Parkway in the building formerly occupied by Joseph's Steakhouse. Commonwealth Electric provided electrical and communication work for the restaurant remodel based on the owner's direction. Project details included the installation of power for hot and cold buffet tables as well as a water feature, new light fixtures

throughout the building, and further work typical of this type of restaurant renovation. CECM Service Manager Jason Lane directed the work with Tom Washington serving as Project Foreman. This was Tom's second Chinese buffet restaurant in the past year, and Commonwealth Electric looks forward to completing similar projects in the future with this owner.



*Eastern Buffet - West Des Moines*