

# The Commonwealth Quarterly

News from around the circuit.

Spring 2020



**Commonwealth  
Electric Company**  
of the midwest

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## A Rising Star!

T. Michael Price – President

In late February, I attended the Iowa Nebraska ESOP Association Winter Meeting in Cedar Rapids with a few of our employee owners. We were able to attend several ESOP focused seminars and network with a great group of employee owners from several other ESOP companies across Iowa and Nebraska.

During the lunch session, attended by almost 180 people, the ESOP association presented some awards. In addition to “ESOP Employee of the Year” and “ESOP Company of the Year”, they also presented a new award called “The Rising Star Award”. This award is for a new ESOP company that is especially engaged, motivated and committed to promoting their ESOP and ownership culture.

The presenter started with explaining the criteria for the award and then began to describe the winning company, all the while being guarded and doing a good job in developing a bit of excitement and anticipation of who the winner might be.

As I listened to the presenter describe the company, its employees, its operations ... I knew. I knew she was about to announce that Commonwealth Electric Company of the Midwest had won the award! I put my hand on Cathy Maddox's shoulder and said, Congratulations. Moments later, Cathy Maddox and Brian Lund graciously accepted the award on behalf of all the employees of Commonwealth Electric Company of the Midwest. Upon hearing the news, one of the original company founders had the following to say.

*“This is fantastic news. This certainly isn't something we anticipated would occur so quickly, but it makes us all proud that the new leadership & their team of employee owners have embraced this culture. Way to go as you continue to “pick it up, step it up, & keep it up, ... as David Firestone says.”*

*-Glen Moss, Secretary.*

Special thanks to Cathy, Brian and our entire Employee Ownership Committee. Job well done everyone!



Brian Lund and Cathy Maddox  
Receiving Award



Michael Price, Brian Lund, Cathy Maddox and Billy Friesen

## New Corporate Office – 3910 South Street, Lincoln NE 68506

**Steve Hernandez** – Director of Information Technology

One year ago, March 2019, the Corporate Office was given a great opportunity. We did not realize it was an opportunity at that time: we thought our whole world was just turned upside down, since we were asked to look for a new facility to call home. Yes, we were being asked to leave a building that had been part of our Company even before the current iteration, what people call “The Old Company”. To say there were some mixed feelings about this would be an understatement. From that moment on we started an 8-month journey (that sounds more pleasant than scramble) to find, purchase, renovate and relocate to a new facility. This not only impacted the Corporate Office but the Lincoln Branch Warehouse, which also needed to find a new home.

Due to the leadership of our newly appointed executive committee we got off to a fast start. Within about a month we had located a new building at 3910 South Street, which was the old Nebraska Title Building, that was now abandoned. Unfortunately, due to the building getting a frozen pipe and water damage during the winter, the only option was to gut the entire space and start from scratch. We immediately started to put together plans for design, furniture, electrical, plumbing, HVAC and IT infrastructure, while crews were sent in to start cleaning out the damage.

Near and dear to my heart was the ability for IT to partner with Jerry Van Amerongen’s Low Voltage team to redesign the Corporate IT server room, and it is the cleanest installation I have seen in my 30 years. Commonwealth Electric does good work!

To everyone’s delight, by January of 2020, we were moving into our new location. This journey also gave us an opportunity to do some other things for our company and to give back to the community. We were able to free up the Corporate Office Avaya PBX phone system and relocate it to support our Phoenix and Tucson Branches, much to their appreciation. We were also able to donate some of the older IT infrastructure through a partnership with Southeast Community College and Lincoln Public Schools to be used by students interested in learning about information technology.

Finally, we were blessed to have the wife of Thomas M Price donate a sculpture from Serving Hands, a public art project celebrating the 50th anniversary of Campus Life in Lincoln, to the office in the name of Tom Price. We thank the Price Family for this wonderful addition, as we are displaying it proudly in our new location.

And remember, our teams at Corporate are here to serve all our employees and customers, so if you get a chance stop by and say hi.



New Corporate Office



New Corporate IT Server Room



Po Chen & SCC-LPS Representatives

# Security Systems Solution

**Clinton Stoffer** – Security Specialist

Commonwealth Communications Omaha office has been continuing to grow in both size and innovation. We are pleased to share that we recently completed our largest campus wide security installation and integration of a sizeable multi campus higher education organization in western Iowa. Our security team spent a substantial amount of time up front assisting with the design and budgeting to help the customer attain the funding needed to be able to implement an overall security upgrade for all their facilities. Utilizing products and engineering support from our best of breed manufacturers, we were able to design state of the art video and access control systems, which fully integrate to their existing campus wide notification systems.

Once this 18-month project was completed, it not only provided a robust security systems solution, but also the ability to have automated functionality to notify all staff and students (both on and off campus) of any eminent threats in real time. Utilizing preprogrammed threat levels, the campus now can lockdown and notify every one of several different types of



Panels



CECM Truck

danger, from both console and remote applications. These threat levels not only apply to possible security threats, they also encompass several other potentially life-threatening scenarios such as fire, inclement weather and gas or chemical exposure. As a first line of defense, the main campus has also incorporated License Plate Recognition, which is able to tie to multi-jurisdictional databases, to help identify potential threats as they enter the campus. The project attracted national attention as it was published in the March 2020 issue of Security Sales and Integration.

<http://digitaledition.securitysales.com/publication/?m=59710&i=652489&p=88>

# Des Moines Branch Employee Appreciation Dinner

**Danielle Thompson** – Service Coordinator

Every year Des Moines celebrates all employees by holding an annual Employee Appreciation dinner. Invitations to this event are extended to all the office, field employees and their spouses to attend. It is a nice time to slow down for one evening and come together as a family to catch up and celebrate our successes as a Commonwealth family. This year's Appreciation dinner did not disappoint! There was great food and a lot of laughter.

One of the many highlights of the evening is always the Big Daddy Award. This award is given to an employee that has done something very memorable during the year. This year's winner was Tom Washington, feel free to contact Tom and inquire what it was that earned him this award! As usual, it was a great night and we always look forward to next year's Appreciation dinner.



Tom and Karrie Washington



Alec and Brooke Perkins

## Community Involvement

**Scott Ragland** – Automation Manager

Barry Erb, The Big Bear as the boys call him, is a General Foreman for Commonwealth Electric-Lincoln. Barry has been with Commonwealth Electric for 8 years. Currently Barry is leading a crew at a pharmaceutical facility.

He has been in the National Guard for 20 years and has been deployed to Afghanistan, Kuwait, Bosnia and trained in Korea. Barry has a wife, Cami, and a son, Ryker, age five.

In 2011, before being deployed to Afghanistan, Barry and his wife purchased a house in a small community near Lincoln. After returning from Afghanistan, Barry was approached by the head coach for the wrestling team in Milford.

Barry was approached while he was going through the IBEW electrical apprenticeship in Lincoln. While working a full-time job and going to classes at night, he would help with the Milford wrestling team in his spare time.

In the early years it was very rare for Milford to win a dual. When Barry started coaching, they only had three wrestlers. Now Milford fields a team of sixteen wrestlers. Currently in the 2019-2020 season Milford has only lost two duals.

While watching Barry move amongst the players and parents, Barry has the same smile on his face that we are accustomed to seeing when we work with him. Barry relates well to these boys and many of the wrestlers on the opposing teams.

One point that is impressed upon the boys is that when the regular season is over, it is a new day. When they get to districts anyone can be upset, and someone having an average year could be going to state if they make the right move at the right time. It is all about hard work and perseverance. Barry says it is gratifying to see the boys mature and turn the corner. When you look at the multitude of hours Barry puts in with the team, it is surely not about money ---it is all about the boys.

Barry says he gives up a lot of time from work and he is appreciative that Commonwealth has worked with him to allow him to pursue his passion.

This year it is likely Milford will have six to seven boys going to State. Great job Barry! We thank you for your service, leadership, and dedication. Commonwealth is proud to have Barry on our team.



Barry Erb

## Welcome to the CECM Family, Mark Duffy

**Ashley Huinker** – Project Coordinator



Mark Duffy, Project Manager

The Des Moines location is excited to announce the addition of a new face in the Des Moines office. Mark Duffy has joined our team as Project Manager. Mark has worked in the electrical construction industry for over 30 years. Mark came to Commonwealth from the Des Moines International Airport where he oversaw the electrical department. His experience and knowledge of the industry will be a great addition to our team in Des Moines.

Mark resides in Norwalk, IA, just south of the Des Moines metro with his wife Shannon and their three children. Mark is also a younger brother to Michael Duffy, Des Moines Branch Manager. In his free time, Mark enjoys golfing, hunting, fishing and enjoying the outdoors.

Welcome, Mark!

# It Wasn't Iwo Jima.....But The Marines Raised The Flag In Phoenix

**Dave White** – Service Manager

Iwo Jima was certainly bloodier and more famous but on January 6, 2020 Marines peacefully raised the American flag at the Phoenix Branch of Commonwealth Electric.

As Marines ranging in age from 27 to 102 years looked on reverently, local Staff Sergeant Hiram Castanon assisted by Marine Veteran and Purple Heart recipient Marv Wilson, marched the flag to its new home and raised it, confirming our allegiance and respect for the Flag and the United States of America.

Branch Manager and Marine Veteran Bob Philipps spawned the idea earlier this year and a local company was commissioned to fabricate and install the pole and provide us with “OLD GLORY”. Marine Veterans William (Bill) Caiden (celebrated his 102nd birthday in November), Marv Wilson (72), Bob Philipps (58), Jerry Wright (58) and Nick Brown (27) (another Commonwealth Electric employee) were on hand with the local office staff to witness and participate in the inaugural raising of the symbol of our great country.

Our new flag is certainly the most obvious of the current wave of improvements as the Phoenix branch readies itself for a promising future here in the valley. **Watch the video here: <https://youtu.be/Tq3QoqTMFnM>**



## Iowa Methodist Medical Center Renovates Rehabilitation Unit

**Ashley Huinker** – Project Coordinator

The Des Moines office is proud to announce the completion of another project at Iowa Methodist Medical Center. The Younker wing of IMMC houses the rehabilitation unit for the entire campus. This remodeled unit houses new treatment rooms, a large multi-functional rehab gym, along with other patient care areas including UV treatment, speech therapy and hydro therapy. Additional office space as well as a new conference room, referral office, and physical therapy staff workspace was also included in this project.

This project included approximately 14,000 square feet of renovated space. Construction began in August of 2019 and completed in February of 2020. The scope of work for this project consisted of additional electrical distribution, new LED lighting and lighting controls throughout, a voice/data system, nurse call, access control, new cameras and a complete fire alarm system.

The CECM management team consisted of Travis Powell as Project Manager, Clint Bailey as Low Voltage Project Manager, and Ashley Huinker as Project Coordinator/Estimator. Ryan Shipman was the foreman for the project. Ryan has worked on numerous hospital projects for UnityPoint Health over the years. There is no doubt that his high-level experience and the work ethic of him and his crew was instrumental in the success of this project. The Des Moines team is thrilled to have completed another great project for UnityPoint Health.



IMMC Younker Rehab Gym

## Welcome Jennifer Lynch

**Bill Schaff** – Project Manager



Jennifer Lynch, Project Coordinator

There are many new faces here in the Des Moines office and once again we are excited to add another member to our team. Jennifer Lynch has recently joined the Des Moines branch as a project coordinator and brings with her many years of experience.

Jennifer was not only quick to hit the ground running but has brought a fresh perspective to our team from her various roles throughout her years in the construction industry. Jennifer is highly motivated and extremely organized. With the many contributions she will bring to the team, we are excited to welcome her to Commonwealth.