

The **Commonwealth** **Quarterly**

News from around the circuit | Summer 2022



**Commonwealth
Electric Company**
of the Midwest

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Commonwealth Electric is one of Lincoln's Best Places to Work!

Gus Fulton - Marketing Coordinator

This summer, Commonwealth Electric Company of the Midwest was officially recognized as one of Lincoln's Best Places to Work! On June 16th, our Lincoln, Nebraska, employees attended a celebration at Haymarket Park, where the 10th annual awards ceremony was held. After this year's winners were announced, our employees also enjoyed a picnic and Saltdogs baseball game.



Winners were determined based on the results of the Best Places to Work in Lincoln survey, which was sent to all our Lincoln employees earlier this year. The survey measured factors such as employee satisfaction and engagement in the workplace.

Commonwealth Electric received 3rd place in the Extra Large Company category.

A huge congratulations to our employees; you are what makes our company one of the best! Congratulations, too, to all the other companies recognized!

For the full list of winners, please visit <https://www.woodsaitken.com/congratulations-2022-best-places-work-lincoln>.



Photo courtesy of Woods Aitken LLP

Meetings and More!

Cathy Maddox - HR Coordinator

For a number of years, Commonwealth Electric has held an annual meeting which has come to be known as our Progress Meeting, and the contents of this meeting are pretty close to what the title suggests—progress! Each year, we ask several questions: What progress have the individual branches made? What's the most current progress of certain job sites? What progress is our company making in hiring? This year, our branch and division managers, along with a number of office staff, gathered in Omaha, Nebraska, on Friday, June 10th, to hear about the progress within our company at every location.



The meeting began with a message from our President/CEO, T Michael Price, who thanked everyone for all their efforts in continuing to make our company successful. CFO/Secretary-Treasurer Billy Friesen followed with a brief financial review of 2021, showing how the company has done overall and at an individual branch level. Attendees were shown where our profits and losses were, comparative to the budget and the previous year.

This meeting has spanned two days in the past, but this year it was condensed into half a day since most attendees were also present for an in-person Reveal of our 2021 stock price. This year set a new precedent for having an in-person meeting every five years, with every in-between meeting being held virtually. Our employees enjoyed seeing each other face-to-face, rather than by the usual phone call or Microsoft Teams meeting! Along with spouses and significant others, who were also invited this year to attend the Reveal, everyone met on Saturday morning to hear a more in-depth report on our company's finances.

It's always exciting to hear how our company is doing overall, as much of the time, we all naturally concentrate on our own location and its successes and challenges. To be in a room with all our coworkers and see the bigger picture gives us even more encouragement to work more efficiently, do better, and make our company even more successful. We realize that what we do—or don't do—affects not only ourselves and our own departments but also the person sitting across the table from us.

At this particular Reveal/Progress Meeting, we also celebrated Commonwealth Electric Company of the Midwest's 35th anniversary! Our company has come a long way since July 1st, 1987. Our growth has been strategic and well-thought-out, and we look forward to even more growth in the near future!



Greater NE Team Completes Data Center Construction

Jacob Svoboda - Senior Project Manager, Greater Nebraska



Our Greater Nebraska crew has completed construction on the final phase of the Compute North NE05 data center in Kearney, Nebraska. Compute North is the North American leader in TIER 0™ computing, with operations in numerous states. Commonwealth Electric worked with Compute North as a design-build contractor for the entirety of the project, which began with phase one in August of 2019. Throughout the project, we have coordinated with Nebraska Public Power District, the utility provider, as well as all of Compute North's suppliers.

Our team completed the installation of 54 modular containers and a fiber hut, which are currently being used to mine cryptocurrency but can be switched to AI or other blockchain technologies at any time. With construction complete, the site has an electrical load of 100 megawatts, which is nearly what the entire city of Kearney draws. We also completed the design-build electrical on a brand-new office space and warehouse for Compute North.

We continue to provide daily and technical services to Compute North at this Kearney site and another site in Sioux City, South Dakota. Zack Tupper, from our Central Engineering department in Omaha, Nebraska, has been our point of contact for all on-site engineering. In addition, Landon Braithwait on the technical service side, Dan Greene and Mike Coleman on the daily service side, and Anthony Brown, our site foreman, have each done a great job and continue to build a great relationship with the Compute North Team.

Omaha Line Crew Assists at Project Morgan

PJ Carey - Project Engineer, Des Moines

After a long-awaited development, we have finally broken ground on Project Morgan. Commonwealth Electric was one of the first companies to view the plans for Project Morgan when it was re-introduced to Des Moines back in August of 2021. It's crazy to see where just one year has taken us!

With the start of phase one upon us, we would like to give praise to our Line Crew from Omaha, Nebraska. The crew has been assisting the Project Morgan team with the first of many project milestones: the installation of Medium Voltage Overhead Temporary Lines.

With their help, our team was able to win in a competitive bid market for said project. Their expertise has been put on display in front of both the general contractor and customer, and we have heard many compliments from our colleagues out on site.

Job well done, Omaha Line Crew!



We're Back—Mean, Lean, and Green!

Dan Shannon -Vice President, Arizona Expo Division

To say that the last two years at the Expo Division have been rough is about as much of an understatement as I can think of. The pandemic halted the entire event industry for almost 18 months, leaving us concerned if the industry would ever return.

We were lucky enough to work for such an amazing company that we could relocate most of our staff to other divisions while we worked through this extremely difficult challenge. The support we received from our leadership team, as well as every other division in our company, was nothing short of remarkable. When we were at our lowest, the entire company held us up and kept reassuring us that things would turn around. Well, all I can say is that you were all right! I am happy to report that while we are still a bit shy of “regular business” from previous years’ histories, everything is pointed in a very positive direction, and our future is looking bright. To date, in 2022, we have seen three out of eight record months and are looking forward to an extremely busy Fall. We have picked up several other facility and show contracts, making us a leading provider of temporary electrical services in Arizona.

Our newest facility partner, State Farm Stadium, home of the Arizona Cardinals, has been a great client and has given us the opportunity to produce significant events such as concerts, sporting events, and NFL games, which have been not only fun to work on but also successful and profitable. Rumor has it that a big game is coming next February at the stadium. Something to do with the NFL Championship...called Super Bowl LVII or something like that? How cool is that?! The company we are all proud owners of will be integral to one of the world’s most renowned sporting events! Not only are we providing services to the game itself at State Farm Stadium, but we will also handle all the electrical needs for the Media Center, which will host thousands of TV, podcast, radio, and written media outlets from around the world live from the Phoenix Convention Center the week leading up to the big game. Additionally, we will provide services to the NFL Experience at the Phoenix Convention Center. This week-long event gives fans a chance to play interactive games, get autographs, and possibly meet their favorite past and present NFL players.

While I am thrilled that business has returned to the Expo Division, I am equally excited about the many changes we have made in our division to make us more efficient and cost-effective. In our downtime during COVID, our number one goal was to be fully prepared to come back stronger and better than we were prior. To do so, we had to do things differently and think outside the box. We looked at literally every process we have, both in the office and at show site, and searched for ways to improve them all. While our team has historically worked individually on assigned events, we have developed a new approach that allows our entire team to pitch in, no matter to whom the event is assigned. These changes have made us a stronger, more cohesive unit that strives to achieve our most important goals: to deliver the best product available and to provide exceptional service to all our customers.

Jennifer Sutherland, our most tenured employee of 25 years, took a new role as Office/Account Manager for both our Phoenix and Tucson offices. This transition has shown to be a great decision, as Jennifer has taken the lead in thoroughly researching many cost-saving initiatives for both locations. Once ready to present these ideas, she met with our Account Management team—LeAnn Whitehead and Cathee Cooper—to ask for their input. Their many years of experience proved invaluable in improving our operation. This entire team are true experts in our system and customer service. Together they chose the best path to take and have been extremely successful at implementing change. Our most successful and cost-saving changes have included:

- **Daily and post-show reporting for every event**

Each Account Manager and Foreman completes daily and post-show event reports—created in Microsoft 365—that recap all the event details. These include the number of services ordered, labor, equipment usage, man-hours, and a general recap of any challenges or successes we had for that particular event. *Continued on following page.*

As many of the events in this industry are recurring, this information is necessary to continuously improve our equipment, service, and customer satisfaction.

- **All offices fully utilizing Teams phone system**

The Expo Division was the company's "guinea pig" to implement the Microsoft Teams phone system and work out any kinks or challenges it might have. This phone system is now fully in place and has shown significant cost savings as we no longer have to use an outside telecom provider for our phone system.

- **Fully paperless operation**

The Expo Division produces approximately 300 events annually. With at least 15,000 customers using our services, one can only imagine the amount of paper used to produce these events. While it took a very long time to accomplish, I'm proud to say that our entire operation is now paperless. Each piece of information needed to produce an event is now stored in a cloud-based digital folder, which makes it easy for everyone involved in an event to access these files. In addition, we now receive digital faxes from our customers, and paper job folders have been replaced with iPads. This labor savings and installation accuracy have proven to be significant.

I can't say enough how proud I am of the Expo staff. The entire team held each other up through the worst of times and stayed positive, knowing that we would return better than ever. While it would have been easy to give up, we didn't sit and wait for things to get better; we made them better, and we should all be proud of the results.

We're not done yet! Many exciting changes, continual growth, and very cool events are in our near future.

Ethan Lavelle Receives Bronze at National SkillsUSA Championships

Kristin Callan - Senior Marketing Coordinator



Ethan Lavelle, an individual working in our Lincoln, Nebraska field, placed third in the nation in the Industrial Motor Control competition at the SkillsUSA National Leadership and Skills Conference in Atlanta, Georgia this past June. This is a major accomplishment that requires a lot of electrical industry expertise and skill; we are all so proud of Ethan for this achievement!

The SkillsUSA Championships are career competition events showcasing the best career and technical education students in the nation. The philosophy of the Championships is to reward students for excellence, to involve industry in directly evaluating student performance and to keep training relevant to employers' needs.

In the Industrial Motor Control competition, students demonstrate their knowledge of electrical principles, equipment and industry codes, and standards as it relates to the design and installation of motor control systems. They must demonstrate their skills and abilities by properly installing motor control equipment and associated enclosures, raceways, pilot devices and circuitry in accordance with accepted industry practice and National Electric Code requirements.



Ethan is currently working for us while he takes classes in Norfolk, Nebraska, at Northeast Community College. Commonwealth Electric Company of the Midwest sends a huge congratulations to Ethan; we are so excited to watch you excel in your career!

Commonwealth Lights up the Sky in Columbus

Jeremy Braun - Project Manager, Greater Nebraska

Commonwealth Electric caught Columbus, Nebraska motorists' attention this summer as workers hung off the 33rd Avenue viaduct to upgrade its lighting. The addition included multi-colored, high-grade LED lights installed under each of the three arches. Along with the lights, installation included a new service, mosaic controller, and internet connection for remote control of scenes and programmed shows.

Coordinating with the Union Pacific Railroad and working in a high-traffic area made this seemingly simple project more complex. However, it was well worth it when the city shined red, white, and blue lights on the viaduct for the Fourth of July.



Outage Work at Phoenix Data Center

Dave White - Service Manager, Phoenix

Every year, the Commonwealth Electric Phoenix branch manages an average of about four electrical outages. The latest series of work included the CECM Engineering Department preparing drawings and calculations related to the Arc Flash sensing circuits that were installed. Zach Taylor and Josh Muench have been the key contributors to our engineering needs, which have been timely and successful.

Most of our outages are one-day events that can take anywhere from 12 to 16 hours. Our dedicated electricians perform all the “fluff and buff” activities and the pipework for the power and fibre optic cabling. The crew in this photo below managed to successfully and safely complete the required maintenance and installs on the 5 SES sections on the property .



There is one outage left on the schedule for the year, however outage work can also transform into other emergency maintenance repairs. For example, the recent Emergency Outage. An IR scan done by another company identified a hot piece of bus work in one of the cabinets. A quick response by Commonwealth had the SES isolated and the cabinet opened to reveal a heater element that was operating and creating what looked to be a piece of hot bus! We have also had emergency breaker change-outs and other service opportunities because of our work on these outages.

A big round of applause for all the folks who volunteer when these outages come along and give the extra effort to complete these outages with a commitment to excellence.

Commonwealth Electric Uses Prefab to Enhance Efficiency at Merck Animal Health

Jon Folkers, Business Development Manager, and John Randall, Project Manager – Omaha, NE



Commonwealth Electric was selected as the electrical contractor for the Merck Freedom V project for Merck Animal Health in the Fall of 2019. Due to COVID restrictions, construction could not start until the Fall of 2020. The projected finish date is Quarter One – 2023. We are working directly with the CRB Group and AdvanceTEC, Inc. on this project.

The three-story, approx.175,000 square-foot facility is located at 21401 West Center Road in Omaha, Nebraska. Merck Animal Health has been doing business in Omaha since the 1950s and is highly regarded in the animal health industry. Merck produces a broad range of veterinary vaccines for small animals at its Omaha location. With the addition of this clean room facility, Merck will increase its production output and expand its footprint at its West Center location in Omaha.



Cleanrooms play a vital role for pharmaceutical companies to help ensure products are safe to bring to market. Merck vaccines will be produced, handled, and packaged in a space where cross-contamination will not be an issue. This facility is heavy with mechanical processes with substantial amounts of piping and filtration needed. Due to the need for a controlled environment where pollutants like dust and aerosol particles are filtered out to ensure the cleanest area possible, these controlled environments have completely separate systems for heating, ventilation, air conditioning (HVAC), lighting, flooring, and walls.

Our prefabricated efforts were elevated to meet the demands of this project. We knew early on that we would have a great opportunity to impact our schedule, improve efficiency, and drive down our construction costs with effective prefabrication planning and project delivery. Our team knew with the shortage of labor in the Omaha market, they would have to step up their planning efforts to make a positive impact on this project. John Randall, the Project Manager for this project, said, “We were able to successfully use prefabrication in 90-95% of the overhead branch conduit racks and hangars on this project. The coordination and collaboration between our engineering department, prefab shop, and field teams have helped make this job a success for everyone involved.”

Prefab Manager Troy Savich shared that his team met the daily challenge of bending, kitting, marking, and shipping all prefab assemblies in sections. Once the shipments were received on site, the kitted assemblies were then split out and installed in sections. Troy stated that every day his team was pumping out prefab to go to the job site. “The drawings provided by the CECM engineering department were barely dry as we started to put our prefab kits together,” he said. “We ran anywhere from one to three trucks a day to the job site.”

Performing a job of this size could not have been done without strong leadership, collaboration, and communication within our CECM team. Understanding Merck’s expectations, while keeping effective lines of communication open with the general contractors of CRB, AdvaneTec, and all other trade partners has moved this project forward and was key to our success. Our engineering, prefab, low voltage, and field teams worked together to make this project a success. This is one of the largest prefabrication jobs that Commonwealth Electric has done to date. Our focus was always on our customers and our push to stay ahead of the project schedule took a concerted team effort – one that we all can all be proud of.

Advocacy Day in D.C.

Cathy Maddox - HR Coordinator

For the past few years, the goal of the ESOP Association's National Conference has been to organize and bolster efforts on Capital Hill. With that in mind, members, owners, and citizens of the ESOP community kicked off the recent conference with the second annual Advocacy Academy and ESOP Advocacy Day.

Brian Lund, Service Manager at our Omaha Branch, and Cathy Maddox, HR Coordinator at the Corporate Office, recently attended the conference in Washington, D.C. as co-chairs of the Commonwealth Electric Employee Ownership Committee.

Our requests, or "asks" in the parlance of Capital Hill, were threefold. First, we asked senators and members of congress to contact the U.S. Department of Labor to request that it finally – after 48 years – issue formal regulations and guidance on the issue of adequate consideration. This regulatory vacuum on stock valuation has led to countless audits and investigations of ESOP transactions initiated by the Department's enforcement arm, the Employee Benefits Security Administration (EBSA). Formal guidance would provide both employee-owned companies and those considering employee ownership some desperately needed regulatory certainty.

Second, we requested legislators' support for bipartisan language to be included in any retirement security legislation moving in the House or Senate that would promote our Employee Ownership Initiative at the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL). This plan, which has support in both houses and among both parties, would institute a grant program at the DOL to support state centers for employee ownership and provide education and technical assistance to businesses looking to transition to employee ownership. We are excited to share that this has recently passed legislation!

Third, the ESOP Association and employee ownership community have long supported making the key tax deferral provisions found in section 1042 of the tax code available to S corporations, not just C corporations, as in current law. While fully expanding this tax treatment has a substantial "cost" in the way legislation is considered or "scored" by lawmakers, a recent bill passed by the House and set for consideration by the Senate has opened the door in this regard.

Brian and Cathy were able to have an outstanding and extended visit with Senator Deb Fischer, and although Senator Ben Sasse had been tied up while testifying, he was able to meet with them for several minutes before returning to the Senate floor. In Washington, D.C., it's often said that "if you're not at the table, you're on the menu." The ESOP Association is dedicated to advocating for all ESOPs and is working hard not just to ensure we're not "on the menu" but to secure a seat at the table.

Brian and Cathy also attended the 2022 TEA National Conference and heard from numerous keynote speakers, most notably Bob Woodward, Pulitzer-prize-winning author, reporter, and Associate Editor of the Washington Post.



Brian and Cathy with Nebraska Senator Deb Fischer.



Brian and Cathy with Nebraska Senator Ben Sasse.

Columbus Community Hospital Fieldhouse

Trey Burdick - Project Manager, Greater Nebraska



Our branch in Greater Nebraska was recently awarded the contract for the Columbus Community Hospital Fieldhouse in Columbus, Nebraska. Commonwealth Electric will be performing both the electrical and low voltage systems, with Tyler Hellbusch serving as the on-site foreman and Trey Burdick as the Project Manager.

The project consists of a 250,000 square-foot, pre-engineered metal building, renovations, and two smaller additions being added to the existing Columbus Family YMCA. Among the additions are a soccer field, basketball courts, tennis courts, golf simulators, and a courtyard.

We look forward to working with JE Dunn Construction on this project.

Tabitha Prairie Commons Senior Living

James Haake - Project Manager, Greater Nebraska

Tabitha Senior living, located in Grand Island, Nebraska, has four stories of Independent living. This includes a parking garage, assisted living, memory care, skilled nursing, long term care, and short-stay rehabilitation services. Commonwealth partnered with Chief Construction on the 200,000 square-foot project. Construction began in May of 2021 and is scheduled to be completed in November 2022.

Riley Fischer and Jeff Trotta lead a crew of 10-15 people on the electrical side, while Kip Kudron leads a crew on the Low Voltage side. We also utilized our prefabrication shop to prewire all of the load centers, which saved an enormous amount of time in the field. Working underground was a huge part of this project. It was vital we installed all of our underground feeders accurately as the job site was spread out. We used a Topcon to layout the electric rooms, generator, data closets, and transformer locations. One of the biggest challenges was the procurement of various electrical components. However, weekly coordination meetings ensured deadlines were being met, the installation was being done accurately, and we were staying on schedule.



Riley Fischer (left) reviewing plans with an inspector.

Greater Nebraska brings on Assistant Service Managers

Andy Sueper - Service Manager, Greater Nebraska

With a rapidly expanding industry, the Commonwealth Greater Nebraska leadership team felt it was time to take the necessary steps to meet the growing demand of the customers served throughout Columbus, Grand Island, Kearney, and surrounding areas. One step was to hire an assistant service manager in each of the Columbus and Kearney locations; their duties included assisting the service manager in producing a quicker response time to customers' needs, whether that be a customer proposal, walking down work, or reviewing jobs with field staff. Since joining the team, these individuals have also worked on new procedures to improve the service department. The hiring took place in April, and the Greater Nebraska area is excited to announce the additions of Andy Kallhoff and Dustin Allen.



Dustin Allen — pictured above — started with Commonwealth in November 2021 and came on with an advanced set of electrical skills. In April, Dustin accepted the Kearney Assistant Service Manager position and has been an excellent addition to the team. He has 16 years of electrical experience, starting when he was just 19 years old! Since joining the office, Dustin has been building relationships with new customers in the Tri-Cities and growing our location. Outside of work, Dustin enjoys spending time with his daughters. He recently moved to Kearney and enjoys kayaking, playing pool, and doing electrical work in his free time. His daughters are 10 and 14.



Andy Kallhoff — pictured on the bottom right — is the Assistant Service Manager for Columbus; he has been in the electrical field for 14 years. He has been improving communication with our technicians to keep our department running smoothly as it grows. Andy was born and raised in Columbus, Nebraska, and graduated from Columbus High School in 2002. Andy married his wife, Amber, in 2015, and they have four amazing children: Gage, 18, Tay, 16, Marcella, 6, and Vivianne, 3. Andy enjoys hunting, golfing, and any adventures he and his family can find in his free time.

New Project Manager Joins Des Moines Team

PJ Carey - Project Engineer, Des Moines



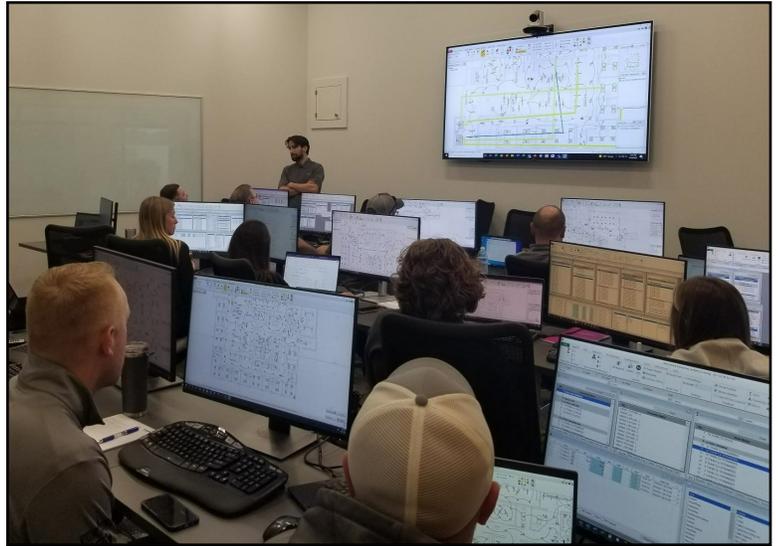
As Project Morgan moves full speed ahead, our Des Moines, Iowa, team recently gained a Project Manager with the addition of Jamie Nikkel. Jamie comes to us with a vast wealth of knowledge, having experience on both the management side and within the field. Fun fact about Jamie: he stayed in 296 hotels last year!

Jamie completed his apprenticeship in 2001, after which he transitioned into technical services. He then transitioned into management before arriving at Commonwealth. He will be assisting with QA/QC, safety, VDC, TopCon applications, and interfacing with the GC's production team. Please stop by and introduce yourself to him if you get the chance! Welcome to the Commonwealth team, Jamie!

Des Moines Hosts McCormick Estimating Training

Kate Kriegel - Project Engineer, Des Moines

In May, the Des Moines office proudly hosted a three-day McCormick estimating training for several of their employees, as well as employees from other Commonwealth locations. The goal of the training was to gain a better overall understanding of the McCormick software system. Special attention was given to Design Estimating Pro, an on-screen takeoff feature within McCormick. By utilizing on-screen takeoff, employees can reduce estimating errors, eliminate printing the drawings, and, most importantly, save time completing the estimate. A great effort was made to ensure all employees learned several processes, such as automatic counting of like symbols and the ability to overlay drawings to easily distinguish differences, which will optimize their time.



This training provided a hands-on experience that proved to be beneficial for both new and well-established estimators. Once again, Commonwealth demonstrates its commitment to employees' core values and mastery.

