

RELAY

FLORIDA'S ENERGY & ELECTRIC UTILITY MAGAZINE

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Feature

VETERANS CAN HELP UTILITIES STEER THROUGH TURBULENT TIMES

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There are a lot of ways to get to the corner office at Florida's public power utilities. Our conversations with four leaders showed some of those different paths but a shared passion about the importance of nurturing the next generation of leaders.

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Once again this year, the Florida Municipal Electric Association (FMEA) and Florida Municipal Power Agency (FMPA) joined together to recognize Florida Lineworker Appreciation Day throughout the month of August. Our goal this year was to not only show our appreciation for the work Florida public power lineworkers do to provide reliable power, but to also highlight how linework is a fulfilling career that offers many benefits.

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Veterans bring critical job skills to the workplace, but also personal values that align well with a Florida public power utility. The U.S. Department of Labor estimates that 200,000 men and women leave military service each year to return to the civilian sector. Hiring a veteran is a smart investment for your utility and its customer-owners.



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Where in the world is RELAY?

FMEA Executive Director Amy Zubaly remembered to pack a copy of RELAY magazine on a trip to Mt. Pilatus, Switzerland! Don't forget a copy on your next trip! Send pictures to relay@flpublicpower.com.

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FMEA

417 East College Avenue
Tallahassee, FL 32301
(850) 224-3314
relay@flpublicpower.com

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FMEA Executive Director

Amy Zubaly

Editor-in-Chief

Garnie Holmes
gholmes@flpublicpower.com

Managing Editor

Nicole Albers
nalbers@flpublicpower.com

Associate Editor

Elizabeth Bendele
ebendele@flpublicpower.com

Contributing Writers

Nicole Albers
John Egan
General Joe DiSalvo
Stephanie Madden
Amy Zubaly

Circulation

Beth Morris
bmorris@flpublicpower.com
(850) 224-3314, ext. 1003

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Careers in Florida Public Power

With more than 2,000 public power utilities across the country providing power to more than 49 million people, the industry is a powerhouse employer with a combined workforce of 96,000 people. In Florida alone, our 33 public power utilities employ about 5,700.

Our workforce is our greatest asset, but also one of our greatest challenges. Between changing workplace expectations of younger workers, lasting consequences from the pandemic, shifts in power generation and industry disruptions driven by new technology and changing customer expectations, hiring and retaining qualified and dependable employees is more difficult than ever — especially in a state like Florida with an unemployment rate as low as 2.5 percent.

I would venture to say that most people have no idea how much work it takes, nor the many different types of jobs involved, in delivering reliable and efficient electricity every day. The energy industry is home to more than 100 kinds of skilled, well-paying careers that provide reliable employment. From apprenticeships for high school graduates to highly trained technical jobs requiring advanced degrees; from those who prefer being outdoors to those who prefer an office setting; and from those who enjoy interacting with a multitude of people to those who enjoy working more independently with small teams — there is something for everyone in the electric industry.

But what makes public power stand out? What makes us shine brighter than other

electric industry sectors in attracting tomorrow's workforce? How do we promote the many rewarding opportunities public power has to offer and attract the brightest and best professionals of every field to the industry?

Public power utilities are community focused — we are owned by the communities we serve. We aren't just in the business of providing efficient, reliable electricity — we are powering our own homes, the homes of our families and friends, the schools where we send our kids, the hospitals that care for our loved ones and the local businesses that are the economic backbone of our community.

Employment in a public power utility offers a career in a community-oriented job that lets employees give back to the community they call home — just by coming to work every day. Whether working in finance or IT, customer service or communications, linework or engineering, employment in public power is an opportunity to get paid to help make their homes and communities a better place.

In addition to providing an opportunity to serve the local community, it's an exciting time to work for an electric

utility. The industry is in the midst of a number of technological advancements that offer many opportunities to learn about new technologies and innovations. From electric vehicle charging and energy storage, distributed energy resources and renewable energy projects, AMI and cloud technologies, new technologies abound and continue to advance in the utility sector.

We know firsthand that the benefits from a career in public power are endless. As utilities, we must determine which of these benefits best applies to our utility and our community and do our best to put that information out into the world. When you have new job openings, spread them across many avenues to make them more visible. Go to career days at local high schools to educate the next generation of workers on the many benefits of public power. Spread the word about how great it is to work at your utility at local job fairs and through the local Chambers of Commerce. Public power employment offers many exciting opportunities; it is up to us to ensure that tomorrow's workforce is aware of these opportunities and compelled to join the public power team. ■



Q&A with Brian Horton, *President and General Manager of Kissimmee Utility Authority*

First, describe your career path that led you to the role you are in now.

While working on my bachelor's degree in electrical engineering from Florida State University, I was fortunate to be given the opportunity to begin working as an engineering technician (and later as a relay technician) for the City of Tallahassee Electric Utility. At that time, I wasn't certain if I wanted to pursue a career in utilities; however, the industry was transitioning its system protection technology, and I enjoyed being a part of that and later leading those efforts for the city. Upon graduation, I was offered an engineering position within the same business unit and ultimately led that group for several years. It has always been important to me that my work benefits others and my community. During those years, I began to appreciate the positive impact of public power and decided to pursue a master's degree in public administration. I held several operational, engineering and regulatory senior management positions with the city prior to joining KUA in 2015, leading the energy delivery functions before moving into my current role as president and general manager in 2019.

What were some early lessons you've learned about managing people?

Everyone's needs, strengths and motivators are different. As a leader, I had to learn what those were for each individual and tailor my style to get the most out of each team member. I had to get comfortable with the concept that it was okay to have differing approaches for individual team members, provided we held each other accountable for the outcomes at the end of the day.

What are some leadership lessons you've learned?

I think any leader that comes up within the ranks of an organization typically struggles initially with letting go of how they ran a business unit compared to their successor. I think it's a natural tendency to want to see things done in the manner in which you did them. However, learning to let go and trust those you selected to do the job is equally critical to the success and development of you, them and the organization.

When you went to college, did you have an idea of what you wanted to do for a career?

I started college as a civil engineering major and took a couple of courses in that area before I realized that I did not want to build roads and bridges. So, I changed my major to electrical engineering, which intrigued me, and I initially thought I would end up doing something in the computer science arena.

How do you hire? What qualities do you look for?

Determining who to select and bring into an organization is one of our most important decisions. Bringing the wrong individual on board can adversely impact healthy teams and success, whereas the right individual can energize a team, increase creativity and move a business unit forward. I like to take my time during recruitment to get to know and understand the candidates and vice versa. I look for positive individuals with the aptitude and desire to learn and try new ideas and concepts. Being able to complement the existing team and provide different experiences and perspectives is also essential. KUA is extremely community-focused, so a potential candidate must embrace and respect those we serve. ■

Bill Updates from the Nation's Capital

Groups Urge DOE to Prioritize Funding Toward Production of Distribution Transformers

The American Public Power Association (APPA) and the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association (NRECA) recently sent a letter to Department of Energy (DOE) Secretary Jennifer Granholm urging the prioritization of funding from Defense Production Act (DPA) authorities go immediately toward the production of distribution transformers.

Department of Energy Seeks Input on Bolstering Cybersecurity for Public Power

DOE recently issued a request for information (RFI) seeking public input on a new \$250 million program to bolster the cybersecurity posture of rural, municipal and small investor-owned electric utilities. APPA plans to submit comments in response to the RFI and welcomes member feedback. Members can contact Bridgette Bourge, Senior Director for Cybersecurity at APPA, at bbourge@publicpower.org with thoughts on the RFI.

APPA Comments on DOE Implementation Strategy for Grid Resilience Program

APPA recently submitted comments in response to a DOE RFI on its implementation strategy for the Grid Resilience and Innovation Partnerships (GRIP) program. APPA supports DOE's initiative to stage the application process so that applicants can submit a white paper before being asked to complete a full application. APPA also addressed the timing

related to the first application cycle for the GRIP program, saying it is concerned with the relatively brief turnaround time.

APPA Responds to FERC's Generator Interconnection Reform Proposal

The Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) should consider a number of modifications and/or clarifications to a generator interconnection Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (NOPR) to help

ensure that any final rule improves interconnection queue processing while not inadvertently creating problems that could impose unnecessary costs and inefficiencies on transmission providers, interconnecting generators and existing transmission customers, APPA and the Large Public Power Council said. The Oct. 13 comments came in response to a NOPR issued by FERC in June 2022. ■





Odds and Ends *from Across the State*

FMEA Celebrates 80th Anniversary

Sunday, August 21, marked the 80th anniversary of the establishment of FMEA. As part of the association's yearlong celebration, FMEA has been highlighting its 80th anniversary by commemorating significant events and milestones through an interactive timeline on its website, posting photos from its archives on social media and through a special video on its YouTube channel, released during its annual conference in July.

"For eight decades, our commitment has remained the same — to steadfastly advocate for Florida's public power communities and to support our member utilities and their public servant employees," said Amy Zubaly, FMEA executive director. "From pooled fuel procurement programs in the early days, to advocacy in the halls of Congress and the state Capitol, and coordinating mutual aid assistance to expedite power restoration for our members when disaster strikes, our history shows FMEA's record of success in building a stronger network of public power communities. Our enduring mission will always be to protect and promote those communities and the electric utilities they own and operate."

FMEA was originally established as the Florida Municipal Utilities Association in 1942 in response to World War II fuel shortages. At the time, municipal utilities across the state realized they could band together to purchase fuel in bulk and achieve economies of scale. The association changed its name to the Florida Municipal Electric Association in 1988.

For more than a century, municipal electric utilities across the nation and in the state of Florida have provided affordable, reliable electric service. Locally owned and operated, these utilities focus on the unique needs and interests of their customers, are nimble in adjusting to the desires of the community and have quick response times, all while investing back into their communities. As forward-thinking entities, public power utilities focus on continuous improvement and innovation, make investments in the energy grid and electrical systems for improved reliability and are committed to environmental stewardship.

Florida Public Power Shows Strong Response to Hurricane Ian, Storm Hardening Working

Within six days of Hurricane Ian making landfall in the state, Florida's public power utilities restored power to 99.99 percent of all customers capable of accepting electric service. One of the most disastrous hurricanes in Florida's history, Hurricane Ian impacted two-thirds of Florida's 33 public power utilities with peak outages reaching 212,344 customers.

Through its nationwide network of support, FMEA was able to secure more than 750 line resources from 150 utilities in 22 states to provide mutual aid and assist with power restoration efforts in Florida following Hurricane Ian.

Mutual aid agreements enable electric utilities to call on each other for skilled emergency workers and supplies. Public power utilities across the country benefit from the strong network of mutual assistance partners through the American Public Power Association. These dependable connections have created a reliable system where member utilities both request and offer assistance when in need. FMEA is proud to serve as the mutual aid coordinator for Florida's 33 public power utilities.

KUA Bills Now Available in Spanish, Utility Launches Text Scam Alert Program

KUA customers can now elect to receive their energy bill in Spanish in the mail or via its customer portal, my.kua.com.

The addition of Spanish bills further expands the utility's robust Spanish-language support for all interactions with customers, including the customer service call center, lobby, cashiering, kua.com and live chat, social media, and all utility publications.





In addition, the utility recently announced that customers can opt-in to a new text-based scam alert system. The new feature sends users text message alerts about active utility scams targeting KUA customers in real time. When KUA receives information

about a local scam targeting customers, the utility will proactively send a text to those customers who have opted into the program. The text informs the customer that an active scam is occurring and directs them to visit www.kua.com/scamalert to learn more about the scam.

The www.kua.com/scamalert webpage then gives customers access to specific details about the current scam, such as the date it was reported, the scammer's claim, the scammer's instructions and any associated images or screenshots that may be related to that specific scam. Additionally, customers can also use www.kua.com/scamalert to report a scam and view past scams.

KUA continues to educate customers about scam awareness through in-person workshops and external communication via radio, newspaper and social media.

Cane Island Power Park Named Top Power Plant

Cane Island Power Park received a Top Plant Award from *POWER Magazine* for its continued success in providing affordable, reliable and clean power. The power generating facility is one of five natural gas-fired power plants in the world to be recognized and the only one located in Florida.

The award recognizes top performing power plants that have distinguished themselves as industry leaders through equipment enhancements, innovative design and successful operations.

The plant received the award for its excellent operating record in 2021, which plays an essential role in providing customers with affordable, reliable power. This was especially true when Hurricane Ian hit central Florida as a Category 4 storm on September 28. Cane Island operated throughout the storm and supplied electricity to customers who were able to take power.

Cane Island Power Park includes two baseload units, one intermediate load unit and a peaking unit. The two baseload units were available approximately 95 percent of the time in 2021 to provide electricity for 24 Florida cities served by the Florida Municipal Power Agency. The industry average for similar units is 85 percent.

In spring 2022, Cane Island Unit 3 completed a major maintenance and upgrade, its first performance upgrade since it came online in 2001. Maintenance work was conducted to replace and repair major components to ensure continued reliable service over the next decade. The upgrades also increased the unit's output by 12 megawatts, which will power an additional 8,400 homes and help reduce carbon emissions and operating costs.

Cane Island Power Park, located in Intercession City, Florida, is jointly owned by FMPA and the Kissimmee Utility Authority. Units 1, 2 and 3 are a 50/50 split between the two utilities, and Unit 4 is wholly owned by FMPA. KUA manages the day-to-day operations of the plant.

KUA Board Elects Officers

In October, the Kissimmee Utility Authority Board of Directors welcomed a returning Board member and held its annual election of officers.

Rae Hemphill, a retired information technologist, took the oath of office to begin a new five-year term on the Board which will expire September 30, 2027. Hemphill was appointed to the Board in 2017.

Manuel Ortega was elected Board chairman. Ortega is a former law enforcement officer for Broward County, Florida, and New Bedford, Massachusetts. A retired Navy captain, he holds criminal justice degrees from Western New England College in Massachusetts and Salvia Regina College in Rhode Island.

In addition, the Board elected: Rae Hemphill (vice chairman), Jeanne Van Meter (secretary), Ethel Urbina (assistant secretary) and Raymond Sanchez (director).

OUC Upcycles Concrete to Promote Ocean Conservation and Marine Life

Nearly 400 tons — about 800,000 pounds — of concrete will find a new purpose in helping revitalize marine ecosystems off the coast of eastern Florida. OUC®—The *Reliable One* donated the material in August to the Starship II artificial reef project in partnership with the Coastal Conservation Association (CCA) Florida, Building Conservation Trust (BCT), Shell Inc. and Volusia County.



OUC transported the concrete from its Indian River Plant in Brevard County to Volusia County via barge. It was deployed alongside 25 tons of granite donated by Shell at Volusia County's newly permitted reef site, located about 2.75 miles offshore of Lighthouse Point Park in Ponce Inlet. Together, the materials were sunk to create a new habitat and refuge for marine life.



Concrete for the reef came from the site of OUC's St. Cloud Operations & Maintenance Center, which is currently under construction.

This is the second reef created with concrete from the construction site. In 2019, 400,000 pounds of concrete were repurposed as ballast in the sinking of a cargo ship off the coast of Fort Pierce, OUC's first partnership in an artificial reef project. In March 2022, OUC donated 50,000 pounds of precast underground utility junction boxes to St. Cloud Fire Rescue to be used in confined-spaces training.

In just a few months, the reef will create a live-bottom habitat that will attract and sustain a wide variety of fish, shrimp and crab species for decades.

Beaches Energy Helps Raise Nearly \$10k to Save Sea Turtles

As a result of a committed partnership, the dedicated Jacksonville Beach community and a shared compassion for threatened sea turtles, Beaches



Energy Services, helped raise a record-breaking \$9,760 during this year's #CleanDarkFlat awareness campaign. The money was donated to the Beaches Sea Turtle Patrol. The #CleanDarkFlat campaign for sea turtle protection promotes keeping the beaches free of litter and personal items, keeping lights off on the beach at night for the safety of turtle hatchlings and filling in holes in the sand that could trap turtles.

The Florida public power utility shared its appreciation for everyone who promoted the safety messages, to those purchasing a #CleanDarkFlat 2022 mug and to its outstanding coffee shop partners: Bold Bean Coffee Roasters Jax Beach, Breezy Coffee Shop Wine Bar, Cup of Jöb, Jax Beach Brunch Haus and Round Bird Coffee Shop.

Lakeland Debuts Electric Fleet Trucks

The City of Lakeland has been gradually pursuing electrification of fleet vehicles, specifying hybrid or fully electrified vehicles where they fit the mission with a reasonable return on the investment. Over the years, the city has purchased fully electric administrative vehicles, industrial equipment and hybrid-electric police patrol vehicles. With the arrival of the first of the city's Ford F-150 Lightnings, the fully electrified work truck era begins.

City of Lakeland Fleet Management was given the opportunity to purchase Ford Lightnings in April 2022 and subsequently ordered six trucks to replace aging pickups assigned to Lakeland Electric's Field Services group. Two of the six lightnings have been delivered and are being prepared for service.

Field Services averages 100 miles per day on each vehicle while servicing neighborhoods; this type of usage results in a lot of petroleum consumption. With an effective range of 200 miles or more daily, the lightning is tailor-made for the field services. The vehicles use no petroleum fuel or engine oil, and greatly reduce maintenance overall. The potential cost avoidance per vehicle on fuel and maintenance



is \$4,100 annually with a life cost avoidance of \$28,700. The City of Lakeland will continue to electrify its fleet incrementally as more electric vehicles make their way into the market. In the meantime, keep an eye out for lightning in your neighborhoods!

OUC Is a 'Most Trusted Brand' in National Customer Survey

OUC — The *Reliable One* has been recognized as a “Most Trusted Brand” among U.S. energy providers, according to a national customer survey conducted by the human behavior and analytics firm Escalent. With a score of 749, OUC placed first in the nation among electric utilities included in the 2022 Cogent Syndicated Utility Trusted Brand & Customer Engagement™: Residential study.

The study tracked the performance of 140 gas, electric and combination utilities to identify brand and customer experience opportunities and trends in the industry. Utilities were scored on a 1,000-point scale, with only 39 meeting the benchmark to qualify as Most Trusted Brands. A total of 79,529 customers participated in the survey.

OUC debuted on the Most Trusted Brand index in 2018 and claimed the top score among U.S. electric utilities in the 2020 survey.

Earlier this year, OUC was named a 2022 Environmental Champion in another Escalent customer-focused study gauging utilities' environmental stewardship. OUC scored the most points for “environmental dedication” among electric peers included in the survey.

JEA, Other Florida Utilities Sign Agreements to Join the Southeast Energy Exchange Market

Florida public power utility JEA and three other Florida utilities have signed agreements to join as members of the Southeast Energy Exchange Market (SEEM), effective January 1, 2023.

Duke Energy Florida, JEA, Seminole Electric Cooperative and TECO Energy recently expressed their intent to join the expanded platform and expect active energy trading in mid-2023.

The new SEEM platform will facilitate sub-hourly, bilateral trading, allowing participants to buy and sell power close to the time the energy is consumed, utilizing available unreserved transmission. Participation in SEEM is open to other entities that meet the appropriate requirements.

Other founding members of SEEM include Associated Electric Cooperative, Dalton Utilities, Dominion Energy South Carolina, Duke Energy Carolinas, Duke Energy Progress, Georgia System Operations Corporation, Georgia Transmission Corporation, LG&E and KU Energy, MEAG, N.C. Municipal Power Agency No. 1, NCEMC, Oglethorpe Power Corp., PowerSouth, Santee Cooper, Southern Company and TVA.

With the addition of these Florida companies, the SEEM footprint would include 23 entities in parts of 12 states with more than 180,000 MW (summer capacity; winter capacity is nearly 200,000 MWs) across two time zones. ■

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Who's Who in the Florida Public Power Community

Beckham Announced as General Manager of Lakeland Electric



Lakeland City Manager Shawn Sherrouse announced Mike Beckham as general manager of Lakeland Electric, effective October 16, 2022. Beckham had

been serving as interim general manager since April 2022 when previous Lakeland Electric General Manager Joel Ivy accepted a position with Lubbock Power & Light.

Beckham was originally hired in June 2015 as assistant general manager. Beckham holds a bachelor's of science in electrical engineering from Georgia Institute of Technology and is a registered professional engineer.

Prior to working for Lakeland Electric, Beckham worked at First Energy in Ohio where he served as plant manager. He also held the position of director of consolidated coal plants for First Energy where he was responsible for the business aspects of more than 2,000 megawatts of generation. Beckham also held management positions in power production at Tennessee Valley Authority, Mirant and Southern Company.

JEA's Juli Crawford Profiled in The Power Source



Juli Crawford, director of financial planning and analysis for JEA in Jacksonville, was featured in the September 2022 issue of *The Power Source* by Florida's Women in Energy Leadership Forum. The *Power Source* talked to Juli about her various financial roles within municipal utilities, how she takes into account current national and economic situations when looking forward in financial planning and analysis, and how the industry is evolving across the nation and in her own utility.

Tallahassee's Barnes Named Customer Executive of the Year



James Barnes, chief customer operations officer for the city of Tallahassee, recently received recognition at the 2022 Digital + Cloud Summit as the customer executive

of the year, presented by Cloud for Utilities.

Cloud for Utilities' mission is to educate and empower utilities to innovate and improve outcomes and service for the business, our industry and utility customers. The Icon Awards recognize leaders moving the needle forward and give a well-deserved spotlight to innovation in the utilities industry. The Customer Executive of the Year Icon Award recognizes an executive who has done exemplary work on behalf of their customers. Whether it's implementing a new program, project, solution, technology or just doggedly acting in the customers' best interest, we want to honor those who are working to make things brighter for utility customers.

Florida Public Power Lobbyist Named to Florida Power 100



Dean Cannon, president & CEO of FMEA's lobbying firm, GrayRobinson, was named to the top tier of most influential political players in the Sunshine State

by City & State Florida. The inaugural Florida 100 list, which ranks high-profile politicians throughout Florida, gives Cannon the 19th top slot of 100 statewide political rankings, with Republican Gov. Ron DeSantis securing the No. 1 slot. Three years ago, Cannon was tapped to lead the law firm GrayRobinson, whose top-five lobbying shop by earnings is on track to move up the rankings this year. Cannon, who previously served as the firm's executive vice president and chair of its government affairs practice, also served as speaker of the Florida House from 2010 to 2012 before pivoting back to the private sector. His multifaceted law firm handles a wide array of legal matters apart from government affairs, including land use, bankruptcy and regulatory issues.

FMEA Welcomes New Communications Specialist to Team



FMEA welcomes a new team member to the Florida public power family.

Joanna White is FMEA's new communications specialist.

As communications specialist, Joanna will be handling FMEA's social media accounts, researching and compiling our weekly *Headline News*, working with the FMEA team and our members to produce a variety of communications tools and more. We are thrilled to have Joanna join us from Florida State University, most recently at the FSU Alumni Association and before that the Seminole Boosters.

Welcome, Joanna.

JEA Names Pedro Melendez Vice President, Planning, Engineering and Construction



JEA has appointed utility veteran Pedro Melendez to the newly created position of vice president of planning, engineering and construction. He will

report to chief operating officer Raynetta Curry Marshall.

In this role, Melendez will lead teams that manage the planning, engineering and construction of JEA's electric and water infrastructure. He also will develop long-range plans for northeast Florida's electric and water supply needs.

Prior to joining JEA, Melendez worked as the director of operations for transmissions and substations at NextEra Energy, where he led the strategic development and implementation of work practice and cost-effective execution programs for the company's transmission and substation assets in North America. Before his time at NextEra Energy, Melendez served as the director of asset protection and performance for ITC Holdings in Novi, Michigan.

Melendez assumed his new role on September 26. ■

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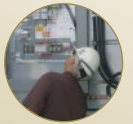
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THREE PATHS TO BECOMING THE EMPLOYER OF CHOICE

by John Egan

Unemployment is low. Competition for talent is fierce. Utility employees and potential employees have high expectations, including being part of an organization that is making an impact locally. Three FMEA member utilities discuss how they are making their workplaces a more attractive and meaningful place to work.

Green Cove Springs: Workplace Changes Flow from Bottom-Up Engagement with Employees

The 10 employees of the Green Cove Springs Electric Department, a small public power utility just outside of Jacksonville in northeast Florida, got a one-time, 6 percent lump-sum inflation increase in their paychecks in October. That's on top of a

15 percent annual salary increase, also effective in October 2022.

The increases were given the nod of approval by the Green Cove Springs City Council, but they were in response to the city's all-employee survey, director's discussions with employees and exit interviews conducted by the city.

Employees didn't want to leave the city, but other organizations were offering significantly better pay, so departing city employees swallowed hard and left, explained Dee Jones, human resources director for the utility.

"Employees want a sense of belonging, but they have to live in the real world too,"



she explained. “We had to find a way to stop the bleeding.”

Gas costs more than it did a year ago. Food costs have also risen. Rents continue to increase. Mortgage interest rates have doubled over the last 12 months. Employees are being squeezed financially on all fronts, making it harder to resist other companies’ job offers with higher salaries.

“Employee voices matter in shaping our policies,” said Jones, who joined Green Cove Springs Electric Department a year ago, after 21 years in human resources at other organizations. “Hearing their voices in a bottom-up format was really valuable to me and the utility’s leadership.”

While pay is one of several factors affecting employee commitment, Jones explained employees also had other things on their minds.

“Our electric department employees were looking for accessibility and improved communication methods so that they can receive up-to-date information in a more expedient fashion, so we are implementing a mass text messaging system to keep everyone — in the office and in the field — abreast of what is going on,” said Jones. “We’re also developing a city-wide

intranet where employees can access critical documents like their benefits, retirement accounts, health and wellness program information and much more.”

Going forward, other improvements stemming from employee feedback is that informational workshops with the city’s retirement plan administrators have begun and will continue to be scheduled annually or as needed. These workshops are held both in a group setting and through one-on-one conversations with the plan’s administrators. The city has also enhanced the retirement deferred compensation offerings by including a Roth option and stock investment access.

Employees across the city, including from the electric department, also expressed a desire for more and better quality employee wellness programs. The city is taking steps toward a comprehensive health and wellness program that will include whole-being and financial wellness.

“For lineworkers especially, family is first and foremost,” Jones said. “The pro-family improvements we are making to the wellness program so far have been well received and [have] encouraged me, as the HR director, to want to do more. We seek to take care of employees’ mind, body and spirit.”

Seven of the electric department’s 10 employees are lineworkers.

“Someday soon, I may see those lineworkers at the yoga classes I attend,” she added with a smile.

Jones added, “Happy employees are productive employees.”

When asked if the new policies have led to an improved workplace, she said the electric department is getting more applicants for a journeyman lineworker position than was once the case. Also, across the city, employee attrition is down.

“We aim to be the employer of choice locally,” the HR chief said.

Public power utility officials spend a lot of time and effort listening to the voice of the customer to improve service offerings. Employees are another critical stakeholder group whose views need to be sought out and acted on. Utilities can’t be an employer of choice unless they remain in continual contact with all stakeholders.

Electric Director Andy Yeager is doing his part to make Green Cove Springs Electric Department a local employer of choice by acting as chief safety officer and reviewing all field jobs before they start.

“By reviewing these projects, I want to send the signal that I care,” he said. “Everyone should go home at the end of the day in the same condition as they arrived for work.”

Yeager’s focus on employee safety stemmed from his years of experience managing lineworker crews. He aims to foster a team mentality in the electric department, where everyone watches out for each other’s safety and works together to plan each job. Yeager considers himself a team player in the department, rather than the coach.

“That means you are always looking out for [your] fellow lineworkers while they are

working. In other words, I will always watch your back and you will always watch mine to make sure we aren't doing anything unsafe that could get us hurt," said Yeager.

City of Tallahassee: Building Soft Skills Is Hard Work

Electricity is a technical business, but utilities need more than experts in electricity, engineering and finance to succeed. To perform optimally, utilities need to balance those quantitative, technical skills with "softer" qualitative skills like communications and leadership.

A dozen years ago, the City of Tallahassee Electric and Gas Department introduced a mandatory course for all new supervisors, called IGNITED. An acronym for Inspiring, Generous, Noble, Innovative, Trusted, Engaged and Dependable, the program has helped improve the consistency of supervisory decisions across the city's

electric and gas departments, said Tony Guillen, general manager for the city's electric and gas utilities.

"Prior to IGNITED, many of our newly promoted supervisors didn't have a lot of training in managing others," he explained of the mandatory program for those who supervise either craft employees or office workers. All new supervisors must complete the course within a year of getting promoted. The course consists of four full-day workshops spread across an eight-week period. Each class is limited to 12 new supervisors to ensure a high level of interactivity with the instructors and each other.

Guillen said one of the benefits of sending new supervisors through the course is that organizational silos are lowered. The utility has seven divisions with a total of 85 supervisors, and many would never get the chance to meet but for the program.

Absent the program, what's the chance that someone supervising lineworkers in the field would interact with a supervisor of finance, who works in headquarters?

What do the new supervisors learn? Soft skills like communications and leadership, mainly. "We want to give our new supervisors tools they can use in their work and also in their life outside work. Knowing how to relate to others and how to lead them are valuable and portable skills," Guillen said.

The program was developed in-house as a way for the utility to put its values into practice, he added. Each assistant general manager from the electric and gas departments teaches one module of the class, and as a capstone, students are responsible for delivering a team presentation about one of the program's modules.

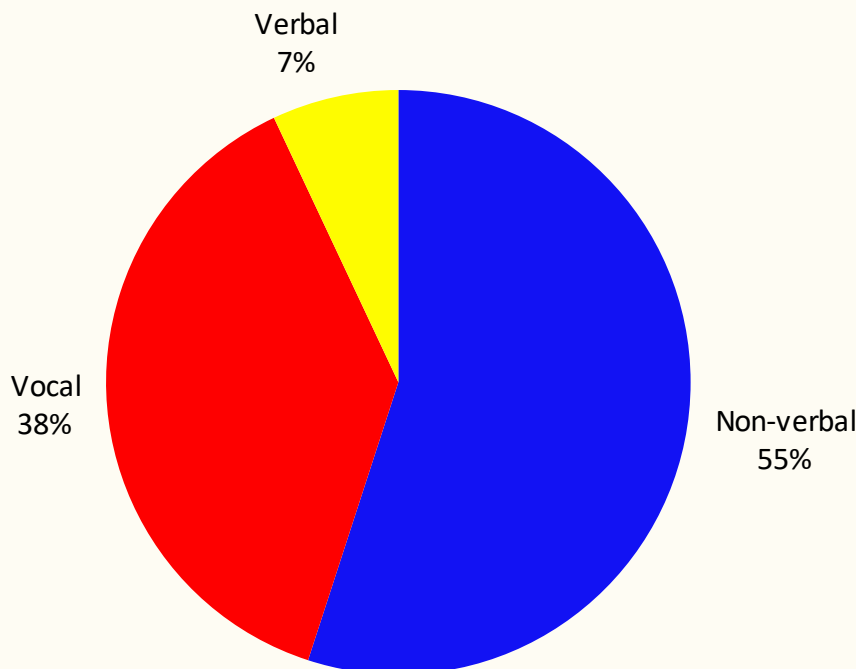
Having AGMs teach a module in the IGNITED program is a way for leadership to stay fresh and current with the concerns of new supervisors and those they supervise, Guillen commented. The face time with executives also helps new supervisors build relationships with the leadership team.

Communications means more than words in an email. In fact, psychologist Albert Mehrabian has shown that as much as 93 percent of meaning in a conversation is conveyed non-verbally, through eye contact, body posture, hand gestures and the volume and tone of voice.

In the dozen years since IGNITED has been held, leaders are getting fewer complaints from employees about their first-time supervisors, Guillen said.

The strong positive response to the new-supervisor workshops led the city's electric and gas departments to create another leadership-development program, ACHIEVES, an acronym for Accountability, Communication, Humble, Interpersonal, Engagement, Victory, Education and Self-Esteem.

HOW MEANING IS CONVEYED



Source: Albert Mehrabian, professor emeritus of Psychology, University of California, Los Angeles

Many utilities have selected their leaders from employees who have steadily moved up through the traditional path of supervising others: supervisor (or foreman), manager, AGM and GM. But sometimes the supervisory route doesn't play to the strengths of future leaders. They'd rather become subject-matter experts (SMEs) in their field rather than supervising others.

"We need a lot of leaders who have not been supervisors," he said.

The ACHIEVES program, currently being piloted, is not mandatory. It consists of five full-day workshops stretched across six or seven weeks. The first class had 10 employees, a mix of those with supervisory responsibilities as well as non-supervisors.

The city's electric and gas departments are trying a lot of new things and planning to keep what works. One way they are trying to build connections to the community, as well as to employees, is by using a series of videos — "The People Behind the Power" — to showcase people and jobs at both utilities.

"Everyone sees lineworkers climbing poles or in bucket trucks, particularly after a hurricane like Ian, but what about jobs in finance or as a meter technician or an energy

efficiency auditor? Those jobs are vital too. We can't roll without them."

In recruiting potential new employees, the city wants its job applicants to have a broader understanding of the types of utility jobs that could become available at the city. Featuring employees in the videos has also improved employee commitment, he said.

In addition, the videos are a chance to inform customers and community leaders about the diverse set of jobs performed by employees at the city's utilities.

"We do a really good job on the 'hard' skills, but we want to place as much emphasis on the 'soft' skills," Guillen said. "They have an [equal] importance. Balancing them benefits employees, the city and its customer-owners. Younger workers are especially looking for this balance."

Beaches Energy Services: Looking to Hire EPIC Job Candidates

Those who apply to work at Beaches Energy Services in Jacksonville Beach will find this statement on the job application: "This position requires working as a member of a team that values empowerment, pride, integrity, communication and teamwork. Are you willing to commit to these values?"

Those values spell out EPIC Team, a program developed internally a few years back to guide all aspects of work at the utility.

"We wanted to define our core values better, so we enlisted the help of all departments," said Dana Hyland, a human resources recruiter with the City of Jacksonville Beach. "This way we were assured that we would have everyone's input but also their buy-in to the program as well."

"This was key to the implementation and roll-out because all members of the team felt that their voices had been heard. It is now the core of how we do things here."

How does being a values-driven organization work? Hyland shares this story: "There was

a prospective job candidate who did not understand how to use email or computers. He really wanted to apply to an open position but because the process is mostly electronic, he was having a difficult time. He stopped by the city hall and I assisted him with the application process in my office."

"Integrity is an important core value, and well, I wanted to help the gentleman get a chance at the opportunity."

"EPIC Team is the reflection of our core values," he continued. "Here at the city of Jacksonville Beach and Beaches Energy Services, we use the program as a guide to our decision making on many levels. Our efforts and programs related to recruiting, professional development and career advancement are areas where we utilize the EPIC Team model."

"From small decisions to the really impactful ones, we always keep our core values in mind. Not only does this make a better workplace but it helps our customers, the citizens, know we have their best interest in mind."

Being a values-driven organization is helping the utility and the city become an employer of choice, said Hyland, who has worked as a recruiter for various organizations for more than 15 years. "This [is] one of the most difficult times I have ever been involved in recruiting. Candidates are looking for more than a steady paycheck and a good benefits plan. Unemployment is low and candidate expectations are high."

"Our core values help us to stay on track with the current expectations of a younger, ever-growing new class of talent," he continued. "Employees and potential employees want to feel empowered, appreciated and a part of something special."

"The EPIC Team program [helps] to put those values out there so the perspective candidate can feel better about choosing us as their employer." ■





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Veterans Can Help Utilities Steer Through Turbulent Times

by John Egan

With a state unemployment rate of under 3 percent, it's harder than ever to recruit new employees in Florida. Veterans bring critical job skills to the workplace but also personal values that align well with a Florida public power utility. The U.S. Department of Labor estimates that 200,000 men and women leave military service each year to return to the civilian sector. Hiring a veteran is a smart investment for your utility and its customer-owners.



RILEY KRUGGEL

Personal Values Make Veterans a Good Cultural Fit

Hiring managers don't just hire a set of skills — they hire a person. That person has specific values and personal characteristics in addition to a specific set of skills they bring to the table. Veterans have many values that make for a good cultural fit with Florida public power utilities.

"Veterans make great public power utility employees because the skills they learned while in the military are easily transferrable



WAYNE YOUNG

to the civilian workforce," said Julio Torrado, director of human resources and communications for Keys Energy Services (KEYS) in Key West. "Veterans are well-versed in the chain of command and teamwork. Both skill sets are highly valued in utilities."

Being Part of a Community

"I love being part of a brotherhood, a community," said Jamison Parker, a relay substation manager with Beaches Energy Services, serving Jacksonville Beach, Neptune Beach, Ponte Vedra and Palm Valley in northeast



JUAN LLERA

Florida. "It was a pleasant surprise to find that in a public power utility after I left the Navy. It's a gratifying feeling to know that what you do has a direct impact on the community."

Other veterans we interviewed also correlated their military service with being a part of a brotherhood or community. While their desire to serve is what brought them to the military, sharing that strong sense of service and community — found through their work in public power — is a way to continue living their military values as a civilian.

"As a first responder, working for a public power utility was a good fit," commented Juan LLera, a safety and risk management coordinator with KEYS. "After serving our great nation for over two decades, it was only appropriate to have the ability to continue to serve our local community while providing reliable service to our customers."

LLera spent 21 years in the Navy as a combat diver disposing of explosive underwater ordnances to support special forces teams from various branches of the military. He then worked in law enforcement for 13 years. Working in a utility was a nice opportunity to "take it down a notch in terms of stress," said LLera.

Being part of a community means you have each other's back, especially in dangerous situations, added Riley Kruggel, Apprentice Lineman II at Kissimmee Utility Authority (KUA). Kruggel, who is 24 years old, served six years in the Air Force National Guard right out of high school and was recalled to active duty while at KUA.

"Having each other's back is a core value you learn in the military. You need to be confident your partner fully supports you."

Wayne Young agreed. During his 27-year career in the Navy, he commanded two naval surface warships, including one that carried Tomahawk cruise missiles. These days, he's vice president of environmental services at JEA in Jacksonville. He sees his career as being "one of service, giving back and being engaged." JEA's high level of community engagement attracted Young when he was looking for a post-military career.

"We search high and low for veterans like Wayne," commented Charna Flennoy, a talent acquisition manager at JEA. Approximately 18 percent of JEA's workforce are veterans, she said, adding, "JEA partners with various military organizations that support veterans and their families. Our recruitments are advertised on various platforms to reach individuals seeking career opportunities within our organization. JEA remains compliant with all regulations addressing veteran's preference."

Added Cindy Herrera, vice president of human resources at KUA, "The veterans that we hire consistently bring value to KUA, not only because of their professional skill set, but their personal morals and values. We hire the most qualified candidates, and being a veteran is the cherry on top of the sundae."

Approximately 16 percent of KUA's 288 employees are veterans, she estimated. At the utility's Cane Island Power Park alone there are 18 veterans currently employed at the power plant. The majority of the plant's employees are Navy veterans who have worked in submarines or ships that have equipment and controls similar to the plant's turbines, which allows them to easily transfer their skills.

Service is important to LLera, who immigrated to the U.S. from Cuba as a child. "I wanted to give back to the country that gave me an opportunity to live here."

Humility and Teamwork

Serving in the military humbles people and teaches them that they are part of a team. A very large team, perhaps, but a team nonetheless. Success doesn't happen unless everyone does their job.

"I was fortunate to stand on the shoulders of giants, including my father, who served in the Navy," Young said. "My father told me that the people you will be in charge of will be your biggest accomplishment."

The first thing Young did after joining JEA was to knock on his colleagues' doors and ask questions about their work and the utility.

"Entering a new profession, I humbled myself, recognized others' expertise and referred to them when making decisions," he said. "That helped build trust. It's important to recognize the value of people who do the job day in and day out."

In other words, no one, not even a Navy's ship's commander, can launch cruise missiles by themselves. But working together, a team can execute a flawless launch.

When he was in the Navy, Beaches Energy's Parker was an interior communications electrician, a first-class petty officer (IC1) rank, and currently a lieutenant, engineering duty officer serving in the Navy Reserve.

"Power engineering is neither common nor sexy in the Navy," he said with a laugh. "Weapons are sexier. Admirals were sexier. Strategy was sexier. But I managed communications between sensors that were located in every compartment of the ship to make sure they all were communicating with each other."

Those sensors tracked temperature, air flow, weapons, flooding, telecommunications and the ship's navigation, among other things. Proper alignment allowed the ship and its crew to function optimally. He might not have been at the top of the totem pole, but everyone in that totem pole depended on him to do his job so they could do theirs.

In 2020, after only 18 months as a KUA employee, Kruggel was deployed to a combat zone, where he used the electrician skills acquired at the utility to help build an 864,000-square-foot military base, which included an underground electrical distribution system. In that six-month deployment, Kruggel performed a combat engineering role, which involved operating heavy construction equipment, laying pavement and terminating electrical cables at transformers.

"I did a lot of trenching, and my unit deployed 17 transformers," he said. "It's nice when your civilian skill set transfers back to the military."

Honor, Courage and Commitment

The four veterans we interviewed all expressed some version of "Honor, Courage, and Commitment" as principles that guided their military service.

"As military members, we live by a set of fundamental values each day: Honor, Courage and Commitment," explained LLera of KEYS:

"The honor to be your brother's keeper and work alongside hard-working professionals; the courage to get the job done regardless of

weather, obstacles or harsh conditions; and the commitment to our customers, fellow employees and our utility to do the right thing, always.”

“Integrity first, service before self and excellence in all we do are core values veterans bring to public power,” added KUA’s Kruggel. “It’s the same for working at a public power utility. We work for, and give back to, the community. Customers are owners. We would never do anything that disrespects them.”

Interviewed as Hurricane Ian was bearing down on Florida, he continued, “When a storm comes, or a car hits a pole and there are live wires on the ground, you must be resilient. You go to work, work safely and bring power back online.”

Safety Mindset

LLera learned first-hand the importance of working safely while clearing underwater mines and unexploded ordnances so special forces teams could do their jobs. One wrong move could be deadly.

Now the safety and risk management coordinator at KEYS, LLera has not forgotten his commitment to safety. Under his leadership, the utility had no lost-time accidents in 2021.

For the last three years, KEYS won state and national safety awards.

KEYS excellent safety record lowered its workplace insurance premiums by \$100,000 last year.

“Our employees oftentimes have to work in dangerous conditions, like restoring power,” LLera said. “Safety is everyone’s responsibility. Jobs have to be done right. That way, everyone goes home to their families and with all their fingers and toes intact.”

Essential Skills Transfer from the Military

As they seek to fill open positions, hiring managers want to see evidence that a candidate has demonstrated a particular skill in a prior position. If a candidate performed that skill in one job setting, there’s a high probability that he or she could do it in a utility setting. That’s true whether it comes to welding or leading organizations during periods of acute change.

Leadership, Management and the Chain of Command

“The military’s approach to recruitment has evolved over time,” LLera commented. “Instead of focusing recruitment on the traditional ‘grunts,’ the military is seeking people with

organizational skills. You’ve got to know the mission and be ready to execute it. You’ve got to follow the chain of command. If you don’t have those skills when you enlist, you will get them while you’re in the service!”

Chain of command is vital to the effective operation of any organization, whether you’re managing a dozen utility staffers or 1,000 soldiers or sailors operating in a war zone.

All the service branches emphasize a respect of the chain of command as well as leadership. Whether learned in a classroom or on the battlefield, leadership and chain of command are the heart and soul of the military.

Following the chain of command doesn’t mean reflexively consulting a rule book before undertaking an action — particularly if the setting is highly dynamic.

As the electricity industry continues to evolve, it’s important that employees at every level have the ability to critically assess whether changes need to be made. It may be necessary to revisit some policies and procedures that were enacted before electric vehicles and rooftop solar panels became common. Utilities must adapt to ever-changing customer expectations

Fast Facts About Veterans in the Energy Industry

Utilities are not the only sector of the energy industry that is actively recruiting military veterans. Oil and gas producers, oil refiners, pipelines and other segments in the energy ecosystem are recruiting veterans because of the values and skills they learned while serving.

Here are some fast facts about veterans in the energy industry, according to the Center for Energy Workforce Development (CEWD):

- Veterans represent almost 10 percent of the energy industry’s workforce.
- Employees with military training are in high demand, and most companies in the energy industry proudly sponsor veterans resource groups.
- The energy industry supports 7 million jobs and hundreds of apprenticeship programs, many offering “earn and learn” programs.
- Energy utilities expect to hire more than 115,000 people in the next three years.
- Average compensation for key energy industry jobs is \$75,000. Many pay much more.
- Today’s energy sector is highly reliant on technology proficiency.
- Many industry careers focus on environmental stewardship.

and communications avenues. But those changes can't be implemented unilaterally: they need to be run up the chain of command, lest chaos ensue.

"The military has a well-defined set of rules, regulations and procedures, and it is important that those are followed. But even the most detailed instruction manual doesn't cover all situations," JEA's Young explained. "That's when you need to exercise initiative, make changes and adapt. Leaders need to have the latitude to make changes to the tactical plan as they see fit. That's an essential part of leadership."

While Young currently manages an organization of about 80 employees in JEA's environmental services department, he managed more than 350 men and women as a Navy officer. He also studied leadership while attending the U.S. Naval Academy at Annapolis, Maryland.

Looking back at his leadership over the deployment of JEA's advanced metering initiative (AMI), Young said, "We may have broken some china along the way, but we were blazing a new path and recognized that we needed to make some changes to the plan as we moved ahead."

"Our nation's military does a great job of forging its members into independent thinkers that become assets while contributing to the overall team effort. They know the value of being motivated and taking the initiative to get the job done," added KEYS' LLera. "Service members are cross-trained in many areas, can adapt quickly and are encouraged to continue their education. Military members receive training with leadership and organizational skills, resulting in significant benefits to the utility."

Independent thinking. Ability to adapt. Following rules and regulations but recognizing when changes are needed. Using initiative to achieve goals. Capability to lead others. All of these are skills prized now as the utility industry is going through more change than ever before. In the military and in a utility, the ability to keep your eye on the mission, despite all of the noise and distractions, may

be the most valuable skill veterans can bring to Florida's public power utilities.

Improvising in Dynamic Conditions

JEA's Young recalls a comment from former U.S. Secretary of State Colin Powell, the Army officer who also served as a presidential national security adviser and Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. "You don't have to have 100 percent of the answers to move forward. If you wait until you have 100 percent of the answers, you'll never move forward."

"The Navy doesn't have a detailed list of instructions that covers all situations," Young said. "What you learn in the military is the ability to improvise when needed, to recognize changes and adapt."

"In the military, you get curveballs thrown at you every day," commented Parker of Beaches Energy. "If you excel in the military, it is partly because you rise to the challenge and figure out a way to hit those curveballs."

Parker recalled a ship commander's end-of-day comment to his sailors: "Semper Gumbi," which means "always flexible."

Words to live by, in the military and a utility.

Where to Recruit Veterans

KEYS is one Florida public power utility that has developed a specific plan to recruit more military veterans. It has nine veterans on its workforce, and most of them have been hired in the last five to eight years, according to Julio Torrado, the utility's director of human resources and communications. KEYS is looking to grow the number of veterans on its workforce.

The policy, approved in January 2022, says the utility is "committed to successfully recruiting talented and skilled military veterans into the workforce. KEYS recognized the extensive training, experience and transferrable skills gained through military service. This plan is intended to reward those who served their country and recognize the qualities and traits developed by military services."

Torrado said, "We have multiple military bases in our area. We recruit veterans via our

normal channels (website, Indeed, classified ads) given that they live in our readership area. But we also include a specific emphasis in places with significant military veteran readership, such as the www.veteransflorida.org website."

KUA's employment of veterans has been long-standing and consistent since the utility first came into existence in 1985. Over the years KUA has implemented several initiatives to recognize and retain its veteran workforce such as veteran's appreciation luncheons, walking in the Veteran's Day parade and other tokens of appreciation.

Several of those we interviewed said they joined their utilities after friends who were employed by a utility recommended they apply for a job there. This underscores the point that utilities should not overlook the power of word-of-mouth advertising. Since retired veterans often stay in contact with bases on which they served, utilities might want to proactively communicate with those employees who are veterans that the utility is actively recruiting veterans.

LLera of KEYS recommends utilities become active in local Military Affairs Committees (MACs). At monthly meetings, these members work to help soon-to-retire veterans find jobs as civilians.

"There's no better environment than the MACs for retired or soon-to-be-retired soldiers, sailors and airmen to find post-military employment," said LLera.

Another recruiting resource is Troops to Energy Jobs, a placement service for veterans operated by the Center for Energy Workplace Development.

In many ways, military veterans would make excellent hires at Florida's public power utilities. The personal values they bring — being part of a community, having a safety mindset, humility and teamwork, and honor, courage and commitment — are the values of public power. And the skills they learn in the military often can easily be redeployed at a utility once veterans end their active service. ■



CAREER LESSONS FROM PUBLIC POWER LEADERS

by John Egan

There are a lot of ways to get to the corner office at Florida's public power utilities. Our conversations with four leaders showed some of those different paths but a shared passion about the importance of nurturing the next generation of leaders. Hint: micro-managers need not apply.



Say "Yes" to New Opportunities

Lynne Tejada, Chief Executive Officer and General Manager, Keys Energy Services

Lynne Tejada was all set to become a newspaper reporter. A freshly minted graduate of the University of North Carolina's Hussman School of Journalism and Media who grew up in south Florida, she went looking for newspaper reporter jobs in Key West. But before she could land an interview with a newspaper, she learned of an open public information officer job at Keys Energy

Services (KEYS), then known as City Electric System. She applied, was interviewed and was hired in the same week. She has moved up steadily over the years since then.

In summarizing her 34-year career at KEYS, Tejada said, "Be ready for whatever. Embrace new opportunities. All of my jobs held huge surprises for me, and I embraced the new challenges. Saying 'yes' to new opportunities has worked for me."

As the electricity business becomes more dynamic, Tejada advised others to invest in their networks inside and outside the utility. A tip from a friend got her started on a career at KEYS: "Leverage the power of your network!"

In addition to her networking ability and can-do outlook, her writing skills were essential as she was promoted to communications director in 1996, associate general manager in 2003 and CEO/GM in 2005.

"As someone with a background in writing, I was asked to participate in a wide variety of activities, including strategic planning, writing a 50-year history of the utility and communicating with the KEYS Board on progress against goals," reflected Tejada.

Tejada said she doesn't feel her lack of an electrical engineering background has held her back.

"If you're bright and highly motivated, there's an abundance of opportunities out there," she continued. "Then, once you land a job, make yourself indispensable. Lots of changes in the industry means lots of opportunities."

In her communications — whether written or spoken — Tejada follows the "KISS" approach: Keep It Short and Simple. That can be particularly challenging in an industry as technical as utilities, but

she noted how critically important it is to translate technical jargon into words the public understands.

These days, Tejada is finding herself communicating more frequently with customers, especially business customers about their escalating bills due to rising natural gas costs. Her passion for breaking complex topics into simple terms has worked well for her.

When she tells business owners that the power KEYS purchases went from \$54.86 per megawatt-hour (MWh) at the start of fiscal year 2021 to a high of \$122.27 per MWh in fiscal year 2022, business owners focus on the numbers impacting their bottom line, not on the unit of measurement. Everyone understands a 123 percent increase in costs.

Tejada and other leaders share some common ideas about the workforces they manage (see sidebar on page 27). She noted a particularly talented supervisor with an accounting background is now doing great work managing KEYS's fleets and facilities department. And Julio Torrado, KEYS's longtime spokesperson, has assumed ever-greater responsibilities as director of human resources and communications.

"Find talented people, grow them, retain them and promote from within," she said of her mantra related to KEYS' workforce. "That's particularly true here in Key West, where it's hard to recruit new employees due to the high cost of living. So, we focus on finding talented people, training them and staying out of their way."



***In Public Power,
Anyone Can Go from
the Bottom to the Top***
**Corey Bush, Assistant
General Manager,
Customer Service,
Lakeland Electric**

Corey Bush has always had his eyes set on being a part of Lakeland Electric's leadership team,



Bush meeting with Senior Key Account Manager Jessica Stanphill

and he's not shy about saying that. Even the recently appointed current general manager has known for years of and welcomes Bush's ambition.

"I was born in Lakeland. It's a great place to work and grow and spread my wings. I am fortunate to be in my current position at Lakeland Electric, where I can channel my experience and leadership style to help us remain successful, not just now, but for the future. I welcome the opportunity to learn and grow, and if the opportunity comes in the future for the top spot, I'm all in," he said.

Since joining Lakeland Electric in 2003 as an apprentice lineworker, Bush has held a wide range of positions, many in the energy delivery group, where he has been a lineworker, electrician foreman, electric system operator, chief electric system operator and, most recently, manager of system operations. As he moved up the leadership ladder, he accepted a position in a completely different area: customer service.

"As a department, customer service is so much more than the contact center," he said. "I feel like I have been in customer service my entire career. In public power, we all work for the customers and we're all accountable to them. It's important we tell stories that point back to our value as community-owned."

Some of the most important lessons Bush learned throughout his 20-year career at Lakeland Electric was to pick his battles

and not take everything personally. "I like to win, but I have learned to take losses too."

Early on in his career, Bush asked his then-manager for an individual development plan, which he said gave great clarity to what he needed to accomplish to advance at the utility. "I said, 'Someday, I want to sit in your chair, and I need to know what I need to do for that to happen.'" His manager welcomed Bush's candor and ambition, and together they developed the plan.

Bush urged others to be as candid and proactive as possible with their managers in discussing career development. Communicating with your team in an open and honest way is essential for organizational clarity, he continued. "If there's something I can share, I will."

As AGM, Bush sits on the 9th floor of the Lakeland Electric headquarters. The nearly 100 people he manages, however, sit on the 1st, 2nd, 3rd and 8th floors, so he spends a fair amount of time managing by walking around and checking in with members of his department.

"When I became AGM in May of 2022, I thought of introducing myself at an all-hands meeting, but I decided to do it more informally, on a one-on-one basis," he said. His consistent message to those he manages: I have your back and I will stay out of your hair.

He said he relies on his employees' expertise to make sure Lakeland Electric takes good care of its customers. "The era of the command and control is over — no one wants to work for a micromanager. Empowering your employees is so important."

If you pay attention, you can find leaders at every level in your utility, he said, adding that there's no pre-determined path to the top. "Not everyone is comfortable on a college campus, and people who never set foot on a college campus are

incredibly valuable. It doesn't matter how many letters (e.g., J.D., MBA, P.E. or Ph.D.) you have after your name. Value is created in a lot of different places. I'm living proof of that. Ours is a business with technical and people components."

"In public power, anyone can go from the bottom to the top."

Bush finished his bachelor's degree in energy management and took an MBA while at Lakeland Electric. He said he particularly enjoyed the Six Sigma course in business school because it explained business processes as well as the importance of communications in project management.

"The Six Sigma course was one where I could apply my practical knowledge. It taught me the importance of business processes. Before you change a business process — and there's a lot of that going on today — you need to understand the reasons why that process was implemented in the first place."

Bush said utility leaders at all levels need to have good communications skills to be effective: "Things are changing so fast today, with advanced two-way meters, electric vehicles, rooftop solar and changing customer expectations, that leaders need to be a salesperson one minute, a business manager the next."



Don't Chase Money – Instead, Chase Your Passions
Kinn'zon Hutchinson,
Chief Customer Officer, Gainesville Regional Utilities

As a child growing up in Hawthorne, outside Gainesville, Kinn'zon Hutchinson recalled watching lineworkers climbing utility poles and working to restore power to his mother's home.

"Those lineworkers were superheroes in the community — they were working outdoors and they were helping members

of the community. Who wouldn't want to be a superhero?"

Then and there, Hutchinson at age 16 decided he knew what he wanted to do. "Ever since that day, I have wanted to work for a utility," he said.

Along the way, he broke barriers by becoming the first Black executive at Gainesville Regional Utilities (GRU). "I wanted to be the first, so I could inspire others to achieve."

Thirteen years ago, in late 2009, Hutchinson left a six-figure job with a big box retailer to become a temporary energy analyst at GRU. Starting pay was \$10.21 per hour.

That led to his top career recommendations and advice for others: "Don't chase dollars, instead chase your passions."

Also, "Do the best you can and see where it takes you."

Thirdly: "Do not be afraid of yourself. Your greatest competition is yourself."

Finally: "Never stop learning and never stop challenging yourself."

Now the chief customer officer at GRU, Hutchinson has instilled his passion for service to those he manages, helping GRU to win a national award at CS Week (an annual national utility customer service conference) a few years ago. It is not the only award in the GRU customer service department's trophy case.

Hutchinson recalled a year he spent in GRU's energy delivery department, which included meter reading. There, he got a more holistic view of the way GRU's decisions affected customers. "Rather than sitting behind a desk, I learned first-hand how GRU's decisions and policies affected customers." He also gained a better appreciation for the importance of accurate meter reads, as they started the revenue cycle for the utility.

Describing himself as "always running at 110 mph looking for the next challenge," he also recalled the guidance he received from a mentor: "You will rise in this organization, but take time to smell the roses. Don't miss too much on your way up."

Mentors like that one helped Hutchinson appreciate the importance of cultivating the next generation of leaders: "Don't forget what got you to where you are, and don't forget about the next generation."

Because "every day is an interview," Hutchinson emphasized the importance of first impressions. "You never know who you may be working for someday."

Hutchinson said he's not afraid of hiring someone with a different — or better — skill set than he has: "If they have a passion for serving customers, I want them on my team."

Interviewed shortly after Hurricane Ian ravaged Florida and the southeast, Hutchinson underscored the importance of employees attending conferences



and taking a proactive role in their professional development.

He noted that GRU changed its storm response process after people came back from conferences and shared what other utilities do. Specifically, other utilities were prepositioning food and water for customers in advance of a storm. Now, GRU does too.

“Go to conferences, learn success stories from others and come back and share those learnings. Each utility should not have to think it needs to reinvent the wheel, he added, giving kudos to FMEA and the American Public Power Association (APPA) for the workshops and skill-building events they hold.

Most importantly, he said, do what you love and the money will follow: “You’ll never ‘work’ a day in your life if you find your passion.”



**Professional Growth:
Getting Comfortable
Being Uncomfortable**
**Doug Peebles, Utility
Director, Ocala
Electric Utility**

Professional development can be

about getting out of your comfort zone, according to Ocala Electric Utility Director Doug Peebles: “Getting comfortable being uncomfortable is one way to grow.”

That describes Peebles 22-year career at Ocala from line crew groundman to utility director.

“Having worked for family and friends growing up, I didn’t know what I wanted to do for a career at age 18, but I knew some people who worked at Ocala Electric Utility and they said I should check it out. I’m glad that I did,” Peebles said.

In his early years with the utility, he said, “the old school mentality of believing that

all the learning you needed took place in the field was apparent.” Doug shared that he recognized there was more included in true professional development.

He longed for a broader, more holistic, understanding of the utility’s business. He also aspired to management. Doug found an opportunity for growth in the metering side of the utility business and was hired as a meter apprentice. “I wanted to understand what was going on in other organizations and how all of the pieces fit together.”

Succession planning has become an important construct in his time as a supervisor: “It’s become a big focus of mine. You need to support those around you who are seeking to grow professionally. I enjoy serving as a mentor to those that are finding their professional path.”

He’s been putting that commitment to employee development into practice for more than a decade, ever since he was a meter foreman. While Peebles said the utility has always supported his desire to grow professionally, there hasn’t been a formal professional development program historically.

Doug noted that he prefers to coach others in a small setting, or on a one-on-one basis. And whatever word you use to describe professional development, he recommended not using the word “training.” He shared that sending someone to training doesn’t necessarily mean they will learn something. Effective professional development takes a more personal and dedicated approach.

Peebles prefers a drip-drip-drip approach to continually grow. He’d rather seize on a learning moment than send someone to a classroom. When someone comes to him with questions, that’s a signal that the employee wants to grow.

As a coach, he said, “I say ‘we’ a lot more than I say ‘I’. All of us stand on the shoulders of those who came before us.” ■

Top 10 List: What They’ve Learned

Our interviews with leaders in Florida public power revealed a number of commonalities:

1. Leaders at all levels in an organization always need to be on the lookout for the next generation of leaders.
2. Tomorrow’s leaders can be found everywhere in an organization — if you are looking.
3. Today’s record low unemployment validates the wisdom of growing leaders internally: hire talented and motivated people, support them as they grow, provide them with new challenges, and let them figure out the best way to get the job done.
4. Leaders are coaches, not micromanagers.
5. There are several ways to accomplish work tasks. Yours may be different from others. Be mindful of safety, but allow for diverse paths to achieve a common goal.
6. Don’t be afraid to hire someone whose skill sets differ from yours.
7. Being a professional engineer is no longer a prerequisite to success in public power.
8. Find ways to connect what employees do to the mission of public power.
9. Clear, open and honest communication is required of leaders at all levels of an organization.
10. Being self-directed is a prerequisite for success, but organizational support is critical.

FLORIDA LINEWORKER APPRECIATION DAY



TENTH ANNIVERSARY

From FMEA and FMPA Staff Reports



Once again, the Florida Municipal Electric Association (FMEA) and Florida Municipal Power Agency (FMPA) joined together to recognize Florida Lineworker Appreciation Day throughout the month of August. Our goal in 2022 was to not only show our appreciation for the work Florida public power lineworkers do to provide reliable power, but to also highlight how linework is a fulfilling career that offers many benefits. A central part of this year's Florida Lineworker Appreciation campaign was a series of videos featuring Florida public power lineworkers. Some highlights are shared here, the full collection of videos can be viewed on our YouTube channel www.youtube.com/FloridaPublicPower.



“When you get into a restoration effort, it really means more than just coming to work. So that’s where it started to mean something, and I knew I was picking a career.”

– Michael Rainey, City of Tallahassee



“The satisfaction at the end of the day that you have accomplished something that helps the community, the town you work for. Through the years, you are able to succeed in life and be a hero for your kids.”

– Andres Hernandez, Town of Havana



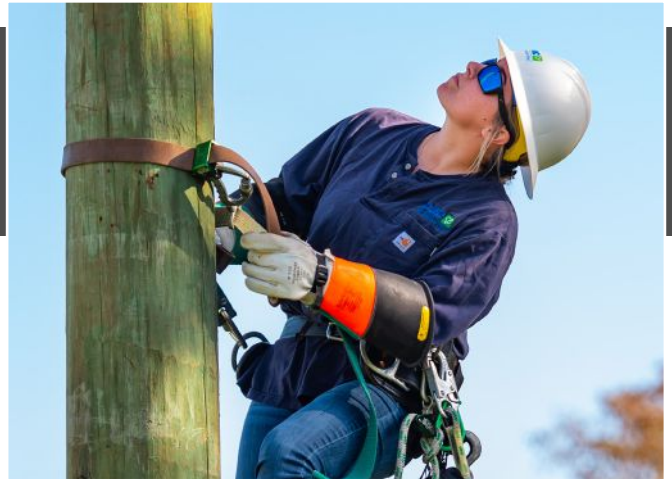
“I went into linework because I wanted something more than a regular job and I wanted to give back to my community.”

– Austin Carr, Lakeland Electric



“It’s satisfying to know I can help other people the way that my family was helped during hurricanes when it came to power outages. Just knowing that we get to help with that care is very satisfying and very rewarding.”

– **Jessica Giles**, *Orlando Utilities Commission*



“It was my dad; he is a lineman and growing up seeing him on the job made me want to do it. If one of my kids wants to do it, I think that would be pretty awesome.”

– **Kevon McKinsey**, *Kissimmee Utility Authority*



“The biggest impression that was made on me in my career was going to Puerto Rico for mutual aid and being able to help people out, the satisfaction I get being an emergency responder and helping people, and just bringing families back together.”

– **Kelvin Jasper**, *JEA*



“It’s a blessing to go help people and I see the happy faces on the people.”

– **Juan Colon**, *Winter Park Electric Utility*



Alabama

Electric Cities of Alabama
Andalusia Utilities Board
Cullman Power Board
Decatur Utilities
City of Dothan
City of Fairhope
Guntersville Electric Board
Huntsville Utilities
Opelika Power Services
Riviera Utilities
Sheffield Utilities
Troy Utilities
Utilities Board of Tuskegee

Arkansas

Conway Corporation

Connecticut

Wallingford Dept. of Public Utilities

Florida

Gainesville Regional Utilities
Ocala Electric Utility
City of Quincy
City of Tallahassee Electric
& Gas Utility

Georgia

Electric Cities of Georgia
Dalton Utilities

Illinois

Illinois Municipal Utilities Association
City of Highland Light & Power
Springfield City Water, Light
& Power

Indiana

Indiana Municipal
Electric Association
City of Lawrenceburg
City of Lebanon Utilities
Logansport Municipal Utilities
Mishawaka Utilities
City of Rensselaer
City of Scottsburg
Washington Electric Light & Power

Iowa

Iowa Association of
Municipal Utilities
Muscatine Power & Water
City of Eldridge
Sioux Center Municipal Utilities
Milford Municipal Utilities

Kansas

Kansas Municipal Utilities
City of Pratt
Baldwin City
Kansas City Board of Public Utilities

Kentucky

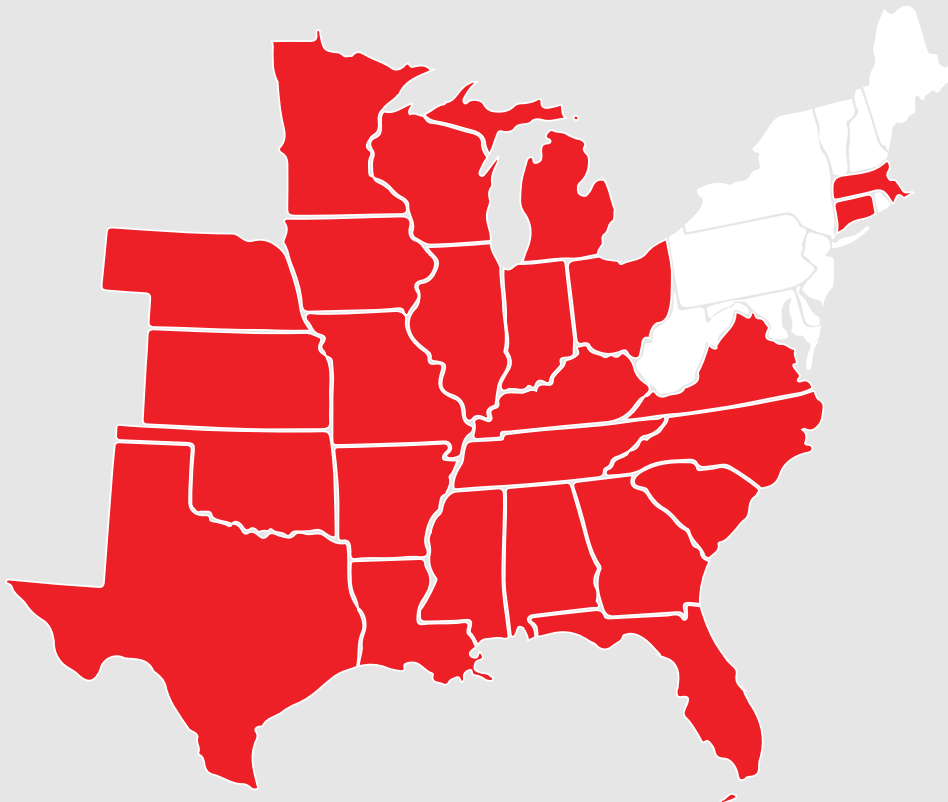
Frankfort Plant Board
Henderson City Utility Commission
Owensboro Municipal Utilities
Paducah Power Systems
Princeton Electric Plant Board

Louisiana

City of Winnfield
Lafayette Utilities System
Louisiana Energy & Power Authority

Massachusetts

Northeast Public Power Association
Belmont Municipal Light Dept.
Braintree Electric Light Dept.
Chicopee Electric Light
Town of Danvers
Groton Electric Light Dept.
Town of Groveland
Hingham Municipal Lighting Plant
Holden Municipal Light Dept.
Holyoke Gas & Electric
Littleton Electric Light & Water
Mansfield Municipal Electric Dept.
Marblehead Municipal Light Dept.
Merrimac Municipal Light Dept.
Town of Middleton
Norwood Light & Cable
Peabody Municipal Light Plant
Reading Municipal Light Dept.
Rowley Municipal Light Plant
Sterling Municipal Light Dept.
Taunton Municipal Lighting Plant
Wakefield Municipal Gas
& Light Dept.
Wellesley Municipal Light Plant
West Boylston Municipal Light
& Water Plant



Michigan

Michigan Municipal
Electric Association
Coldwater Board of Public Utilities
Grand Haven Board of Light
& Power
Holland Board of Public Works
City of Sturgis
Traverse City Light & Power
Wyandotte Municipal Services
Zeeland Board of Public Works

Minnesota

Minnesota Municipal
Utilities Association
ALP Utilities
City of Anoka
Austin Utilities
Brainerd Public Utilities
Buffalo Municipal Utility
Elk River Municipal Utilities
Marshall Municipal Utilities
Missouri River Energy Services
Moorehead Public Service
New Ulm Public Utilities
Owatonna Public Utilities
Rochester Public Utilities
Shakopee Public Utilities Commission
Willmar Municipal Utilities

Mississippi

Columbus Light & Water

Missouri

Missouri Public Utility Alliance
Carthage Water & Electric Plant
City of Chillicothe
City of Hannibal
City of Higginsville
Independence Power & Light
Macon Municipal Utilities
City of Nixa
City of Odessa
City of Palmyra Board of
Public Works
Poplar Bluff Municipal
Utilities & City Cable
City Utilities of Springfield

Nebraska

Lincoln Electric System
City of Grand Island Utilities
Omaha Public Power District

North Carolina

Electricities of North Carolina
Greenville Utilities Commission
City of High Point
Town of Tarboro
Town of Wake Forest
Wilson Energy

Ohio

AMP - American Municipal Power
City of Hamilton
City of Lebanon
Piqua Power System
Westerville Electric Division

Oklahoma

City of Edmond
Grand River Dam Authority
Town of Skiatook

Tennessee

Tennessee Valley Public
Power Association
Cleveland Utilities
City of Cookeville
Greenville Light & Power
Jackson Energy Authority
Memphis Light, Gas
& Water Division
Morristown Utility Systems
Tulahoma Utilities Authority

Texas

Austin Energy
CPS Energy
Lubbock Power & Light
Denton Municipal Electric
Kerrville Public Utility Board
City of San Marcos Utilities



Wisconsin

Municipal Electric Utilities
of Wisconsin
Arcadia Electric Utility
Cedarburg Light &
Water Commission
City of Elkhorn Electric Dept.
Fennimore Municipal Utilities
Hartford Electric
Kaukauna Utilities
Kiel Electric Utility
Manitowoc Public Utilities
Marshfield Utilities
Muscodia Utilities
New Lisbon Municipal
Light & Water Dept.
Oconomowoc Utilities
Ocotu Falls Municipal Utilities
Plymouth Utilities
Rice Lake Utilities
Shawano Municipal Utilities
Stoughton Utilities
Sun Prairie Utilities
Vanguard Electric
Waunakee Utilities
Wisconsin Rapids Water Works
& Lighting Commission

THANK YOU!

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As we look ahead to a cleaner, greener future, OUC is investing today for tomorrow – by demonstrating a clear, continuous commitment to solar energy, electrification, energy efficiency and affordability, and sustainability.

At the same time, we're leveraging new technologies and diversifying our portfolio with renewable energy to meet our goal of net-zero carbon emissions – positioning OUC for success as *the* partner of choice on the road to a better community and a better world.

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