

Sandi Bloom Retires After 43 Years of Service

At 19 years old, Sandi Bloom didn't give it much thought when a friend told her about a job opportunity at Oakdale Electric Cooperative. She was currently working part-time for a local elementary school, but was in need of full-time employment, and the opportunity sounded promising. Sandi submitted an application and eventually accepted an entry-level office position in 1971. During her 43-year tenure, Sandi worked her way up through the Billing Department to her most current position as the consumer data coordinator. This role entailed wearing many different hats, but mainly included managing members' accounts and coordinating all stages of the billing process, from the meters being read to bills mailed out to members. As one can imagine, this position held a lot of responsibility and stress, but Sandi always handled it with a glass-half-full attitude. Each night on her drive home,

she would reflect back on the day and ask herself if she treated all members with kindness, compassion, and respect.

After 43 years, Sandi Bloom retired from Oakdale Electric Cooperative on January 2, 2015. She will long be remembered for her positive attitude; quick wit, especially about her short stature; and compassion for others.

"God only lets things grow until they are perfect. Some things don't take as long as others."

Prior to her retirement, Sandi sat down with Deana Protz, communications and PR specialist, and this time around gave some thought to her past, present, and what the future holds.

Deana: Can you tell me how the billing process has evolved over the course of your career?

Sandi: When I started at Oakdale Electric Cooperative, members were responsible for reading their own meter and calculating their kilowatt usage. They would submit their monthly bill to the billing clerk at the co-op, who would verify the figures. At that time we had approximately 6,500 members, so this was quite a grueling task each month.

The hiring of meter readers and computerized billing were the next two major milestones in the advancement of the billing procedure. Dairyland Power, our wholesale energy provider, took over the processing and mailing of bills. However, they needed to input member information into their computer program, so my job was to make a photocopy of each and every member form. I remember standing in front of the copy machine for hours on end, until the project was completed.

The installation of computers was monumental. We went from pencil and eraser, to typewriter and white out, to computer and the delete button. Computers made the billing process faster, more efficient, cost effective, and accurate. However, initially there was only one computer for 15 office employees to share.



Deana: What other technological advances made a big impact on you?

Sandi: The installation of electronic metering in 2005. This program enabled us to obtain meter readings, check daily usage, and field billing questions without having to travel to the location of the meter.

Deana: What is something many people may not know about Oakdale Electric Cooperative?

Sandi: Our office employees used to answer fire calls and dispatch the volunteer fire department. At the time, the majority of our linemen were also firefighters, so it worked. We used a tuning fork to send specific signals out over the radio, and the men differentiated the different sounds. What a relief it was when we no longer oversaw the fire dispatch program.

Deana: Forty-three years is a great accomplishment! Why did you stay with Oakdale Electric Cooperative for all these years?

Sandi: It's very simple. I have always enjoyed my job and felt that I was making a positive difference in the lives of our members. The cooperative environment is special and unique because we are member focused. I took my responsibility to help our members very seriously, and I am proud of the work I have done. Our events, such as the annual meeting and open house, allowed me to put a face with a name, and get to know our members on a more personal note, which I always appreciated.

Additionally, the people I worked with over the years have become a second family to me. Oakdale Electric has been a great place to work.

Deana: Will you share your favorite memory at Oakdale Electric Cooperative?

Sandi: Hands down it would have to be the relationships with my co-workers and members. No matter how stressful or demanding a day might be, there was always laughter to balance it out. I had a smile magnet on my desk as a reminder to be positive and not take life too seriously.

Deana: Are you going to miss us?

Sandi: Of course! I am going to miss the relationship with co-workers and contact with our members. I may not have met all of the members I deal with in person, but I have built many great relationships



over the years. However, what I will not miss is the winter driving, or getting up early in the morning. I am so looking forward to being able to sleep in.

Deana: What are your plans for the future?

Sandi: To spend quality time with family and friends. I anticipate that I will volunteer with multiple organizations such as the library, food pantry, community table, and others. Needlework and crocheting have been a hobby and passion of mine for over 30 years, and I am looking forward to putting a dent into the yarn pile that I have accumulated over the years. Additionally, I am eager to hone my cooking skills and try out some new recipes.

Deana: What do you want to be remembered for?

Sandi: My positive attitude and sense of humor. And yes, even the time I wore two different shoes to work on the same day!

Sandi, we thank you for the 43 wonderful years you spent at Oakdale Electric Cooperative. Enjoy retirement! ■





2015 Member Photo Contest

“Life in Rural Wisconsin”

Oakdale Electric Cooperative is holding our annual photo contest for members’ photos to be featured in our 2016 calendar. Winning photos may be used in future newsletters or cooperative publications.

Photo Contest Criteria:

- Photos must be taken within the Oakdale Electric Cooperative service area.
- Photos should capture life in rural Wisconsin (seasons, wildlife, landscape, people, etc.).
- Photos must have a horizontal (landscape) orientation.
- Photos can be in color or black and white.
- Photos must be high resolution – at least 300 dpi and 8"x10".

Photo Contest Rules and Details:

- Contest will run from February 1, 2015, until August 21, 2015; however, submitted photos can be taken outside of this date range.
- Three (3) photos per member will be accepted.
- All Oakdale Electric Cooperative members 18 years old and over are eligible to submit photos.
- An Oakdale Electric Cooperative member under the age of 18 years old is eligible to participate, but must submit a parent/guardian form with entry.
- A completed entry form must accompany each photo.
- Member must own rights to photo.
- OEC employees will determine the winning photos.

Photo Contest Entry Options:

- **Email:** Deana Protz – dprotz@oakdalerec.com.
- **Mail:** P.O. Box 128, Oakdale, WI, 54649.
- **Drop Off:** Oakdale Electric Cooperative Office – 489 N. Oakwood St, Oakdale.

Entry forms and photo release forms can be downloaded from our website at www.oakdalerec.com, picked up at our office, or we will email you a copy.

Oakdale Electric Cooperative's 2015 ANNUAL MEETING



Watch for your annual report booklet in March



**Saturday, March 28
Tomah High School**

**Registration: 9 a.m.
Business Meeting: 10 a.m.**

- Director elections
- Annual reports
- Chance to win prizes
- Door prizes
- Lunch to follow
business meeting

Our Sympathy

Oakdale Electric Cooperative extends sympathy to the family of Larry Powell, Tomah, following his death on December 30, 2014, at the age of 78.

Larry served as a member of the Oakdale Electric Cooperative board of directors from 2000–2009. ■



Oakdale Electric Cooperative

Your Touchstone Energy® Partner



Bruce Ardelt, General Manager
Deana Protz, Editor

P.O. Box 128, Oakdale WI 54649
(608) 372-4131 • (800) 241-2468
info@oakdalerec.com

Office Hours: Mon.–Fri. 7:30 a.m.–4:00 p.m.

24-Hour Emergency Power Restoration: (800) 927-6151

Toll-free online bill payment: 866-392-4307

FAX Number: (608) 372-5173

Diggers Hotline: For underground cable locates and power line clearance information, call (800) 242-8511.