

The IBEW SPARQ

A quarterly newsletter highlighting IBEW values

Vol. 4 | Issue 2 | Spring 2020

We Are the Power Professionals

IBEW members do our best every day because we're professionals to the core, not because it leads to awards or accolades. But when we are recognized, it's worth celebrating. After all, it's an acknowledgment of our commitment to being the best in the business.

Every year, *Power Magazine* scours the globe to find the best, most efficient and most advanced gas power plants in the world for their annual awards issue. Last year, the editors honored the Wolverine Power Cooperative's 432-megawatt Alpine gas plant in Elmira, Mich., for a record-breaking reliability record.

The plant is not only one of the most reliable in the nation; Alpine's owners say it is the most efficient in their fleet. And IBEW members don't just run the plant—they built it. The \$166-million project began in 2015 and used only union trades. Signatory contractor Swan Electric hired members of Traverse City, Mich., Local 498 for all the substation, power line and construction work that brought the plant to life.

It nearly goes without saying that the project came in on time and on budget.

"I speak for all of us at Alpine when I say we are proud of the work we do to serve our members," said Grand Rapids, Mich., Local 876 member and Chief Plant Operator Dan Boulter. "When people come to our



plant, we take pride in our ownership of its performance and appearance. We take care of everything inside this gate, from cleaning the toilets to troubleshooting our emissions control system."

In recognition of that commitment to professionalism, Wolverine puts the names of the workers who run Alpine on a plaque out front.

Boulter said that while they do nearly all the work themselves—nearly 95 percent of the plant's work orders are for preventative/predictive maintenance—he may be proudest of what he hears from his peers in the industry, the traveling millwrights that work outages and do upgrades all

across the region and see into dozens of plants.

"We like when the millwrights come to the plant and say, 'We don't usually see a plant this clean.' Or, 'We are treated great around here,'" Boulter said. "It's good sign when they tell you, 'When you need help, we want to come back.'"

It's that kind of professionalism and pride from IBEW members—in all branches—that sets our members apart from the competition. With the Code of Excellence as our guide, it's the kind of performance that every day earns us the moniker "The Power Professionals."



What does SPARQ mean to you? Have an idea for the newsletter? Email theSPARQ@ibew.org



Professionalism in Training

The guiding principles behind the Code of Excellence are not very complex. Safety, professionalism, accountability, relationships and quality boil down to this: Take pride in your work and approach every day out to prove why IBEW members are the best in the business.

But things get complicated when translating those ideas to messy, crowded, high-pressure job sites. And that's where a professional approach to training can make a huge difference.

The Code of Excellence trainers at Denver Local 68 wanted to make the training more valuable for the last quarter of the membership that hadn't yet completed the COE course, so they set aside specific trainings only for the hands working together on the same job.

"There was a real sense of camaraderie and solidarity. They weren't rushing to get work done or trying to finish their lunch. They could speak their minds and, when they went back to work, they had a

real sense of connection," said trainer and business agent Jennie Gonzales.

Instead of working through generic scenarios, they could talk things through with the people they see every day.

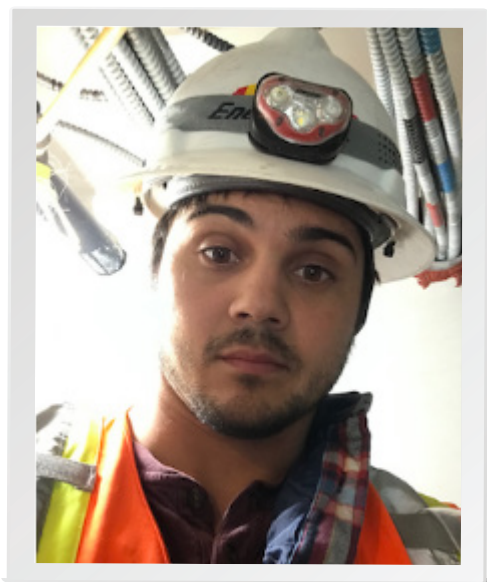
"These sessions put the Code into reality," Gonzales said. "A guy keeps showing up late. What do you do? The conversation was better, the questions were better, the engagement was better."

They also went over market share—what jobs the local was missing out on and why—and reviewed the laws and bills the local was fighting to protect or pass.

"Right now, a majority of our members coming in are younger and nonunion," Gonzales said. "We want them to understand that we fight for the best wages, benefits and working conditions, and so we expect the most professional electricians in the industry."



SPARQ GOES LOCAL



Justin Long, Apprentice Wireman
San Luis Obispo, Calif., Local 639

Professionalism From Day One

"I do not believe I could have learned the necessary skills for the electrical industry without the guidance of the IBEW apprenticeship program.

Without a professional apprenticeship, working in the electrical industry is extremely dangerous and I would not feel safe on the jobsite without the supervision of a journeyman and classroom instruction.

My apprenticeship is my ticket to the middle class."

Share your IBEW story for a chance to be included in an upcoming issue of *The Electrical Worker* (IBEW.org/MyIBEWStory).