



Bornhoft set to retire after more than 40 years

If you ask Kevin Bornhoft to find a location in Corn Belt Power Cooperative's service territory, you won't have to wait long. He knows the cooperative system inside and out. Bornhoft has spent the last 42 years serving member-cooperatives in Corn Belt Power's engineering and system operations department. He is set to retire as vice president, engineering and system operations in late March.

When Bornhoft started at Corn Belt Power on June 1, 1981 as a draftsman, he was just 20 years old, fresh out of college with an associate's degree in mechanical engineering. He wasn't married, didn't have any kids, but was ready to go to work.

"I remember I had never signed my name so many times," Bornhoft says of his first day of work. "I had never bought anything other than a car, never been through a loan process. My first job was to redo the system map. It was place and press lettering."

Right away at Corn Belt Power, Bornhoft became involved with system planning.

"We would go to Iowa State University and complete our power flow studies," he said. "They found out I could type. They would write-up the punch cards and I would go to a little closet with a machine that looked like a typewriter and make these cards."

Creating punch cards on a typewriter may seem like a mundane task, but Bornhoft used it to soak up information, which he credits to helping his career.

"In the meantime, after I got the cards running, the others would sit and talk about what they were planning and what issues they were trying to solve," he said. "That's how I got involved in system planning



Deserving retirement

Above | Kevin Bornhoft, vice president, engineering and system operations, will retire at the end of March after 42 years of service to Corn Belt Power Cooperative and our member-cooperatives. Bornhoft began as a draftsman on June 1, 1981.

right in the beginning. My title was always draftsman, but I got to do a lot of different things. It was always one challenge after another."

Nothing has changed more than technology and equipment in Bornhoft's career.

After he was promoted to engineering assistant in 1988, the cooperative purchased its first AutoCAD design system. The system allowed Corn Belt Power to plan for system improvements and expansions more efficiently.

"It was still, at that point, a manual system," he said. "It saved us a lot of time. We continued to get devices and programs that made processes more efficient. We used to have a five-person survey crew. Now we can do some of those jobs with just one person. So many jobs were done manually

back then. At the time, we could maybe survey a mile a day. Now, we use GPS data and all these programs that allow us to save a lot of time."

After almost 20 years in the engineering assistant position, Bornhoft was promoted to vice president, engineering and system operations, in Feb. 2007. Always one to find a new challenge, it didn't take Bornhoft long to come across one. On Feb. 24, 2007, Corn Belt Power experienced an ice storm which led to some of the most devastating damage in its history.

"It was an ice storm that went from the southwest corner of the service territory to the northeast corner," he recalls. "We lost close to 400 poles. As we were getting things organized and put back together, we had a blizzard come through **Continued on page 2...**

Bornhoft retirement

Continued from page 1... on March 1 and 2. That just buried a lot of the equipment we had in the field, conductor that was on the ground still froze there. It was every bit of four weeks of construction.”

While storms and crisis situations are top of mind for Bornhoft, he also led the department through several major changes. Under his leadership, Corn Belt Power joined the Southwest Power Pool (SPP) in 2015.



Presents to the Board

Above | Kevin Bornhoft, vice president, engineering and system operations, presents a department update to the Corn Belt Power Board of Directors Dec. 29, 2010.

“Operationally, that was a huge change for us,” he said. “It changed how we scheduled outages, built line, just about everything. Once we joined SPP and we put a lot of our line under their functional control, we were able to better manage and protect our system. We also began to receive a return on investment on our construction, which allowed us to be more aggressive in rebuilding our system. This is something I’m most proud of, the rebuilds and constructions we have been able to do.”

It’s exceedingly rare to see someone spend their entire career at one organization. For Bornhoft, it was easy.

“I just love the people and have always had challenges here,” he said. “I’ve been treated so well. I really enjoy working with our employees, board and managers group.”

Bornhoft has spent nearly all his career working alongside Ken Kuyper, executive vice president and general manager, Corn Belt Power. Kuyper knows what’s made

Bornhoft’s career so successful.

“Kevin has had a distinguished career at Corn Belt Power,” Kuyper said. “He has led the engineering department through a very ambitious program to rebuild an aging system while still meeting the new challenges brought on by industry growth and change. He is smart, thoughtful, creative, maybe most importantly a good listener. His determined and steady manner has made him a valuable asset to Corn Belt Power Cooperative.”

Karen Berte, senior vice president, finance and administration, Corn Belt Power, has spent nearly all of her career working with Bornhoft.

“I started at Corn Belt Power a couple of years after Kevin,” she said. “We were the youngest employees at the time. Kevin was always very soft spoken, but he was my go-to guy if I had a question about the operations part of the business. He was always very approachable and either knew the answer or found the answer for me. Over the years we have had many good times together both at Corn Belt Power events and outside of the cooperative. We would go to Corn Belt Power events and the Bornhofts and the Bertes were always one of the last ones to leave. He’s not only a dedicated coworker but also a friend. I wish him the best in his retirement and hope he enjoys the



Bornhoft family

Above | Kevin Bornhoft, vice president, engineering and system operations, left, middle row, and his family.

traveling Sherri has planned for them.”

Josie Ubben, engineering and operations assistant, has worked with Kevin for 20 years.

“Kevin’s hard work, dedication, and achievement he has made through his career may never be matched,” Ubben said. “He is humble, has integrity and is someone I can trust to go to for anything professionally and personally. I am grateful for all the support, encouragement, guidance and mentoring he has given me the last 20 years.”

As for Bornhoft, he has a busy schedule ahead. He and his wife Sherri have two adult children, three grandchildren and one on the way, but he will still miss coming to work.

“I haven’t thought about it,” Bornhoft said when asked the first thing he would think about on his first day of retirement. “We have a lot of things going on and we’ve been pretty busy. I don’t know when it will hit me that I’m not going back to the office.” ■



Finnegan promoted

Mike Finnegan, electrical system superintendent, has been promoted to manager, engineering and system operations. Finnegan will work alongside Kevin Bornhoft, vice president, engineering and system operations, prior to Kevin's retirement, April 1, 2024.

Mike began with Corn Belt Power Cooperative at Wisdom Station in 1992 where he was a general plant worker and control operator. In 1994, Finnegan transferred to the Hampton electrical maintenance crew where he was an apprentice and journeyman electrician. In 2018, he became system electrical superintendent.

The New Hampton native is a Navy veteran and a graduate of the Navy Nuclear Power School. ■



Jacob Olberding

Corn Belt Power announces Olberding to succeed current general manager

The Corn Belt Power Cooperative Board of Directors is pleased to announce the selection of Jacob Olberding, vice president, power supply, as the individual that will succeed Kenneth H. Kuyper, executive vice president and general manager, following Kuyper's anticipated retirement at the end of April.

Olberding has been employed at Corn Belt Power Cooperative since 2009, initially as a project engineer and then as an assistant plant manager before being promoted to vice president, power supply in 2018. The Cooperative is pleased to have the opportunity to select an individual for this position that is familiar with Corn Belt Power, its employees and its member systems.

Olberding is also familiar with the issues surrounding Corn Belt Power Cooperative's power supply, its agreements with strategic business partners and the operations of the Southwest Power Pool. Olberding is a graduate of Iowa State University with an engineering degree and has completed NRECA's Robert I Kabat Management Internship Program (MIP).

Jacob and his wife, Ashley, reside in Humboldt, Iowa and they have three children. He is active in his church and spends much of his spare time attending his children's extracurricular activities. ■

Thatcher returns to cooperative

On January 22, Corn Belt Power Cooperative welcomed back former employee Mike Thatcher. Thatcher will take the role of vice president, power supply. He was employed by Corn Belt Power from 1998-2018. In 2018, he took a job with the U.S. Department of Defense, before returning to Iowa to work at MidAmerican Energy. Welcome back, Mike! ■



Vlasman wins Touchstone Energy Volunteer Challenge

Congratulations to Doug Vlasman, energy advisor, Iowa Lakes Electric Cooperative, for winning the 2023 Touchstone Energy Challenge Grand Prize. As the Grand Prize winner, Vlasman chose to donate \$500 to the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation in Emmetsburg.

Vlasman volunteered more than 150 hours at the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation in 2023. He has taken part in the Touchstone Energy Volunteer Challenge for many years. Congratulations, Doug, on a well earned achievement. ■





January Touchstone Energy Volunteer Challenge winner | Brady Codner, member service advisor, Grundy County Rural Electric Cooperative, donated his \$100 prize to Iowa Waste Exchange.

Corn Belt Power hosts new system employees and directors for Orientation Days

Corn Belt Power Cooperative welcomed more than 30 new system directors and employees to its Orientation Days event on Jan. 18 and 24. The goal of Orientation Days is to provide new cooperative employees and directors basic information on the G&T and how our systems integrate across departments.

Those present learned about Corn Belt Power’s relationship with Basin Electric Power Cooperative, power supply, engineering and system operations, corporate relations, finance and administration, business development and information technology. Attendees also received a tour of the cooperative’s server room and control center.



Server room tour

Above | Jon Myer, IT director, explains the IT system to Orientation Day attendees Jan. 18.

“By hosting the event, we’re able to meet and interact with our new employees and directors from across the system,” said Ken Kuyper, executive vice president and general manager, Corn Belt Power. “We’re able to share a little bit about Corn Belt Power’s overall operations. Those who attend also learn about our long, impressive history and what it means to rural Iowans in our service territories.” ■

Corn Belt Power Cooperative **Watts Watt**

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- Ryan Cornelius, Editor; Vice President, Corporate Relations; CCC
- Marena V. Fritzier, Marketing Director; CCC

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