

# The IBEW SPARQ

A quarterly newsletter highlighting IBEW values

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## 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](mailto:theSPARQ@ibew.org)



## Professionalism More Vital than Ever in Volatile Industry

The telecommunications industry is in a constant state of change, and that can present challenges for our members working in the field. Over the past decade, technology has made many positions obsolete, with millions more jobs outsourced overseas. The stress can be overwhelming.

But Nick Kakles and his Verizon colleagues at Middleton, Mass., Local 2321 meet those challenges head-on by sticking to one of the core tenets of the Code of Excellence: professionalism.

Kakles has worked for Verizon for 22 years and served as a steward for the past 15. He understands other members look to him to set a professional standard. That means a neat appearance, a proper demeanor toward management as well as employees and staying calm on the phone, even with an angry customer.

“We are in an office environment,” said Kakles, who

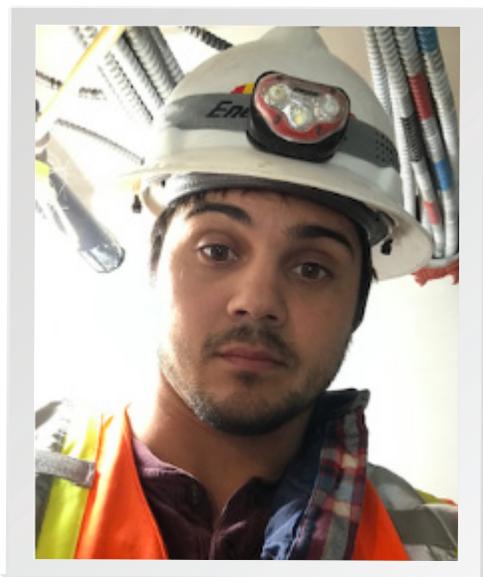


works with about 30 other service representatives at a Verizon call center in Lowell, Mass. “We have to stick together. You have to have good phone etiquette, no matter how hard that is to do.”

You don’t have to be a steward to be a leader in the workplace, he says. Without professionalism, it’s difficult to work together. Morale suffers. When management asks for even more from employees, Kakles encourages them to embrace it.

“Those are the little things that keep us in this seat and earning good wages from it,” he said. “You have to lead by example and do what is ethically correct. That’s what we do as IBEW members.”

Even in tough times, professionalism pays off. Kakles and his IBEW sisters and brothers use it every day as they work to forge a rewarding career in a challenging industry.



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).