

Balanced Electric moves to town

By Edie Moro for the Fern Ridge-Tribune News

Balanced Electric is a small women-owned company providing electrician services to the Tri-County area. The company was founded April 2, 2013, and had been operating out of one of the owner's homes, 10 miles west of Junction City. While it was convenient for owner Michelle Ericson, it was a long commute for the other staff members, some of whom live in Santa Clara.

Ericson had always wanted to move the business into Junction City so when she and co-owner Kim McBride saw the empty space at 260 W. 10th Avenue, they jumped at the opportunity. They began moving in over the Memorial Day week-end. They love their new location, which is a shorter drive for employees, provides easier access for deliveries, gives the company more visibility, allows them to be more community-involved, and will be more efficient once they finish getting organized.

Ericson and McBride each found their way into the male-dominated world of electricians by different routes. McBride grew up in the Portland area. She was intrigued by the program introducing non-traditional trades for women given at Portland Community College. She liked the electrical trade because it “gave me a chance to use my head as well as my hands and have a variety of experiences and working conditions,” she explained.

To become an electrician, a person first starts as a paid apprentice for another electrician. Once the apprentice has worked four years, totaling 8,000 hours, she may sit for the journeyman's exam. In 1994, McBride started her apprenticeship at Local 48, the union apprenticeship program in Portland. When she moved to Eugene in 2020, there was no union program so she did a variety of other things, finally getting back into the electrical trade.

Michelle Ericson was working at Lee Construction as a laborer when she spotted a man wearing a Builder's Electric jacket. She asked him how she could become an electrician – the job appealed to her because it looked easy and she knew she could do it. The man was the owner of Builder's Electric, and helped her enroll in the local apprenticeship program. She completed the program and passed her journeyman test in June, 1994. She kept working as an electrician after having her first son in 1995, but stopped to become a full-time mom after giving birth to her second son in 1998.

The two women had heard about each other for years, but had never met until December, 2008 when they both showed up at a RWDEs potluck (Rural Women of Diverse Endeavors). They hit it off immediately. At first, they helped each other on some personal jobs, then worked together for other bosses.

McBride received her electrical supervisor license in 2010, and the two women decided that they could do better running their own business instead of working for someone else. They chose the name “Balanced Electric” to indicate they wanted a balance between friends, family, work, fun,

and community. Their mission is to provide quality electrical work to their customers with honesty, respect, and craftsmanship while providing a safe and healthy work environment.

Their first electrical project as a new business was a large one – Pfeiffer Winery. Ericson explained that having such a big first job was a great benefit, as it allowed them to be able to purchase more equipment as the job progressed. Currently, Balanced Electric provides electrical services to several area wineries, including Pfeiffer Winery, High Pass Winery, and Brigadoon, as well as Long Tom Grange.

McBride is the main electrician, while Ericson handles bidding and scheduling jobs and other office work, as well as electrical work. Also, Ericson likes to teach home owners to fix small problems themselves, if it is a simple fix.

McBride and Ericson, along with journeymen electricians Monique Macias and Zac Oldham, work on large and small residential jobs, including new construction, residential remodeling, kitchens and bathrooms, panel upgrades, surge suppression, and some service work such as electrical wiring trouble-shooting. A new addition is putting in electric car chargers.

Balanced Electric is an authorized dealer for GENERAC generator sales, services, and parts. Both Oldham and McBride are certified to work on GENERAC generators up to 150 kW (150,000 watts), with Oldham servicing, prepping sites, and setting the generators.

Both business owners are involved in the local community. McBride is on the local Habitat for Humanity affiliate's board and is co-chair for the affiliate's "Women Build" along with Karen Jones, owner of Double Eagle Design and Construction. Ericson may be seen helping, or teaching women how to install a light switch.

The Balanced Electric office at 260 W. 10th Avenue, JC is open 8-5, Monday through Thursday. Contact them at 541-998-4610, or visit www.balancedelectric.com.

People interested in a local electrician's apprenticeship program offered by Mid-Oregon Independent Electrical Contractors may apply online. Applications and requirements are posted at www.midoregon.org. Applications will be accepted July 5-15, 2022.