

# Celebrate National Customer Service Week

In 1992, Congress proclaimed the first full week of October as National Customer Service Week. What started as a national event has become one of the most observed business occasions around the globe. Klickitat PUD employees in all departments aim to provide excellent customer service, but we want to take this opportunity to call out and recognize our customer service team specifically.

Within a small utility like Klickitat PUD, the customer service department is not just customer service. The team balances the 3 C's: customer service, credit and collections. In larger utilities, the roles could be separately staffed. Regardless of which job is being carried out, every interaction with our customers should leave a positive impression.

The first point of contact varies by office. Katie Kloster is the White Salmon customer service representative who receives some part-time help from Wanita Gordon. This allows Katie time to continue to broaden her knowledge of the utility and improve interdepartmental support for the office.

In the Goldendale office, Holly Thiele is often the first point of contact. However, when the phones ring, it is a team effort to respond to customer requests during the first contact promptly. Holly is also the team technology and training expert. She and Katie take care of mobile dispatching and service order rollout, along

with a number of standard roles. The customer service team—which includes meter readers—is moving to mobile service tools, which enable more efficient and ideally quicker resolution of customer requests.

The department veteran is Lori Fakesch, with 26 years of utility experience. Lori's primary role is to ensure timely accurate customer bills. She coordinates with service personnel and customers to address issues before sending out monthly bills for the seven billing cycles. Among a list of roles, Lori works closely with external agencies to coordinate customer assistance.

What advice can Lori provide to improve longevity within customer service? Focus on the positive aspects of the day. Lori still appreciates when she exceeds at least one customer's expectations per day.

Anita Clever coordinates customer generation. As the utility's energy service specialist, she guides customers through the net generation application process and reviews accounts annually. Anita also administers the BPA energy-efficiency program on behalf of KPUD, qualifying customers for rebates. Since energy services joined customer service, Anita has been a tremendous resource in troubleshooting customers' high energy use inquiries and proactively reviewing high energy loads. As legislation continues to evolve, Anita ensures KPUD is prepared to respond.



When asked what she would like to add about the customer service team, Brandy Myers said she's very proud they are a cohesive team taking pride in solving problems and satisfying customer requests. She says each team member brings different skill sets and is dedicated to excellent customer service. Brandy, the customer and accounting service manager, is excited to expand customer-focused tools such as SmartHub to improve data and messaging options available for users. The best interest of our customers is at the heart of all our decisions. The lobbies are open at both offices, and our team is grateful for the communities and customers we serve. ■



Holly Thiele



Katie Kloster



Lori Fakesch



Brandy Myers



Anita Clever