



NECA/IBEW Local 48, A Long History of Diversity

Many may think that “diversity” is a more modern concept. Not so for NECA/IBEW Local 48. Even from their beginning years, NECA/IBEW Local 48 has been a diverse group.

In 1896, the National Brotherhood of Electrical Worker’s (the predecessor of IBEW) first woman organizer was Local 48’s Mary Honzik. The Brotherhood was also the first union to have a woman organizer on its staff.



Throughout the years, NECA/IBEW Local 48 has had many diversity firsts in the industry.

In 2001, Keith Edwards was elected the Business Manager of IBEW Local 48. An IBEW member since age 20, he was the first African-American to lead an IBEW inside union local in the nation.

In 2009 the Daily Journal of Commerce gave NECA contractor O’Neill Electric its first ever Minority Contractor Award. The newspaper also recognized O’Neill Electric for “Most Contracts Awards” in the \$500,000 - \$2 Million range, and its “People’s Choice” Award. Maurice Rahming, journeyman electrician and his wife Ali O’Neill, started O’Neill Electric in 1998.

Bridget Quinn, NECA/IBEW Training Center’s Workforce Development Coordinator, in 2013 won a Daily Journal of Commerce’s Women of Vision Award in its inaugural year.

The awards recognize women in Oregon and Southwest Washington who work in architecture, engineering, construction and other building industry fields.

Bridget is a graduate of the NECA/IBEW electrical apprentice program and currently, holds a General Journey Level Electrical license.



Diversity is as important to NECA/IBEW Local 48 now as it was when the partnership formed over 100 years ago. As NECA/IBEW Local 48 continues on, it looks forward to many more diversity firsts.

The Future of the Electrical Field

On June 6, 1914, thousands of electric bulbs lit up ten fashionable shopping blocks of downtown Portland’s 3rd street. NECA/IBEW Local 48 had constructed what became the “The Great Light Way.” The lighted arches would illuminate the 3rd street shops until the Great Depression in 1937.

Nearly a hundred years later, thanks to NECA-IBEW Local 48, “Troutdale, Gateway to the Gorge,” now lights up the night sky on the Troutdale Centennial Arch.



Arches aren’t the only area landmarks the partnership has worked on. From dozens of community park scoreboards to displaying Timber’s winning scores in Providence Park NECA/IBEW Local 48 has been responsible for illuminating many of the places that play a significant part in our community.

“From the beginning, NECA/IBEW Local 48 has invested in our communities,” says Tim Gauthier. “And it’s things like lighted arches or a community ballpark that make our neighborhoods unique and that make them our homes.”

“Along with our communities, we continue to play a role in the Portland/Vancouver area’s businesses,” says Gary Young. “We helped install some of the first electric lights; we’ve helped companies achieve LEED certification. Whatever new and different technology develops in the future, we’ll help our local businesses adopt that too.”