

Leading the way in **PUBLIC POWER**

The AMP Seven Hats Award was established in 1984 to recognize utility managers who serve smaller communities of less than 2,500 meters, and whose management duties extend well beyond the scope of a manager in a larger system.

Recipients of the award are recognized at the annual AMP/OMEA Conference for their demonstration of skill in seven areas: planning and design, administration, public relations, field supervision, accounting, personnel or employee direction, and community leadership.



Johnnie Burns, electric and water superintendent for the Village of Yellow Springs and the 2016 recipient of the AMP Seven Hats Award.

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 **AMPLifier**



Originally founded in 1850 and located in Yellow Springs, Antioch College has produced Nobel Laureates, Fulbright and Rhodes scholars, and notables in the arts, government, business and education.

Johnnie Burns might be new to public service, but utility work has been his lifelong passion. Burns is the electric and water superintendent for the scenic Village of Yellow Springs, Ohio, and the recipient of the 2016 Seven Hats Award.

"I was very much surprised," said Burns about being called to the stage at the 2016 AMP/OMEA Conference Awards Banquet to accept the prestigious award. "I got emotional. It shows all the hard work I do doesn't go unnoticed."

Though an employee at the utility for only three years, Burns has become an integral part of the village's team. He oversees the village's 2,200 utility accounts, personally responding to citizen concerns and providing positive leadership to his staff, while also performing field duties and managing the village budget.

Yellow Springs Village Manager Patti Bates nominated Burns for the award and describes him as "the very definition of a working superintendent."

"Johnnie is an incredibly valuable member of our team," said Bates. "He does everything from A to Z in the electric and water distribution departments and does an incredible job."

Burns began his 29-year utility career as a residential electrician. He later moved into the private sector, where he spent 15 years overseeing construction and utility crews.

In 2010, Yellow Springs hired Burns' company to replace the village's streetlights. Kelley Fox, the previous village superintendent, saw the way Burns interacted with his crews while immersing himself in field



Yellow Springs is an historically artistic community. The village is home to musicians, writers, painters and sculptors, the works of whom can often be seen woven throughout the village's downtown.

work. The two kept in touch from that point on, and in 2014, Burns took over Fox's position as electric and water superintendent.

Today, Burns oversees a small crew that manages the electric and water distribution for the village's 3,600 residents.

"Our team handles everything from electric to water distribution," explained Burns. "That's 36 miles of overhead line and 32 miles of water line that we're in charge of. On top of that, it's our responsibility to read all the village meters."

Burns' crew consists of three lineworkers, one full-time and one part-time meter reader, and himself. Though small, the team has a wide range of responsibilities in the village.

The team oversees and maintains the village's 1,200 streetlights, tornado sirens, traffic lights and electric vehicle (EV) charging stations. They also play a role in keeping up appearances throughout the year, hanging banners around the village and decorating the streetlights during the holidays.

"We have good days and bad days, but one thing is for sure - we really care about this village," said Burns.

Though the characteristics of the village have remained largely intact, Yellow Springs has seen many changes over the years, including the expansion of renewables in the village's energy portfolio and new business development.

Antioch College, the local liberal arts college that boasts notable alumni including Coretta Scott King and Virginia Hamilton, was closed in 2008 after separating from Antioch University. The college was independently reopened in 2011 after Antioch alumni banded together to reinvest in their alma mater. In June 2015, Antioch College celebrated its first graduating class since 2008.

"People are really starting to reinvest in the village," said Burns. "We've had a brewery open up in town and one resident even built a beautiful hotel. It's been great."

According to Burns, economic development is the ultimate goal of the village, but not big box development. Yellow Springs has few chain stores or restaurants within the city boundaries. They're all local businesses with local owners, adding to the small town charm that distinguishes the village from neighboring communities.

"We want people to come and shop, hike, eat and sleep," said Burns, who personally wraps up the EV charging station cords each night to ensure they don't get damaged and the village maintains its tidy appearance.

With an energy portfolio consisting of 93 percent renewables, Burns sees making renewable energy sources readily available as one of the key drivers of both tourism and business growth. The village is currently planning a 1 megawatt (MW) solar field to help offset peak load, which will also help keep electric costs down and serve as an incentive for businesses to call Yellow Springs home. As a member of AMP, the village also receives power from the Blue Creek Wind Farm, landfill gas energy, Meldahl/Greenup, New York Power Authority, OMEGA JV2 and Phase 1 Hydro.

Since Burns has assumed his current position, the village has replaced its streetlights with new, more efficient LEDs, broken ground on a new \$7.3 million water plant and completed the installation of 2.5



Burns celebrates with his family and friends at the 2016 AMP/OMEA Conference.


miles of new water line. Burns had a hand in all of it, from planning to execution.

"We have a lot to get done," explained Burns. "It's an ongoing process. We have to pick and choose what we get started on because we have so much to do and so little time. Day to day can be very challenging."

But according to Burns, that challenge is what drives him.

"The best part of my job is the challenge," said Burns. "And if I didn't have the team in the office and the team in the field, I wouldn't be able to overcome half of the challenges I face."

When not at work, Burns often spends his free time riding his motorcycle with his wife, or in the company of his two children and four grandchildren. Though he loves the time spent away from the office with his family, he is self-admittedly "crazy about work."

"It's a great feeling when you love going to work," said Burns. "And I do. I absolutely love what I do." 



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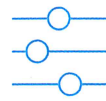
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