



Meet Your Cooperative's Board Of Directors

Jim Stebbins

By Charly Markwart

*"I am
one of you."*

In early 2017, Jim Stebbins was looking for something meaningful to fill his newfound free time. Having just retired from a career that included 20 years as a dairy farmer, among other jobs, the Clarksville resident took interest when he received a letter from HomeWorks Tri-County Electric informing him and his District 2 neighbors of an opening on the Cooperative's Board of Directors.

"I looked into it and thought, 'This is something I want to do,'" he says. "The committee selected me, and when it came time, I ran for election, got out in the countryside, visited a lot of people, and was humbled that they elected me. I wanted something to do, and I got at least that much. It's been great."

Always up for a new challenge, Stebbins says his favorite aspect of his first year-and-a-half on the Board has been the continual learning process.

"Learning about what Tri-County is all about and the way co-ops are set up, and then researching the fiber project and learning all about that, I think every Board meeting I come out with something new," he says. "As a Board member here, I don't think you're ever done learning. It's a challenging learning experience, and I'm enjoying it."

One thing he picked up on right off the bat, he recalls, is the culture of collaboration and continuity that is ever present throughout the co-op.

"From the time I went on my first walk-through at the office and was introduced to the employees, I could just feel that this is a place where people are happy to come to work," he says. "When you've got motivation like that from the person who just started all the way up to the person about ready to retire, you can't put a dollar figure on that. It's the

reason for our success. People want to do their part for the cooperative, and that just comes through."

As for the part he serves as the co-op's District 2 director, the genial and down-to-earth Stebbins says he hopes HomeWorks members see him for what he is: one of them.

"I get my power from Tri-County, too," he says. "When my lights go out, I want them back on, just like all members do. My vote is equal to theirs. It's the great thing about a cooperative; all members have a say. They elect us, and we try to represent them the best we can. That's what I'm working to do."

Outside of his work with the cooperative, Stebbins is a family man, enjoying any opportunity he can to spend time with his two sons, three daughters, and five grandsons. He also enjoys working with the Woodland Fraternal Order of Eagles, studying genealogy, taking in a good biography or history book, playing cards with friends and "just kicking back." When it comes time to get down to work at the cooperative, though, Stebbins is all in.

"It's a humbling experience, being on the Board of Directors," he says. "Several of us on the Board are relatively new, and this is something that's been passed on to us. This great organization has been built up to where it is today, and we have to do our small part to keep it going that way."

Jim represents District 2, which is Barry and Ionia counties. He was elected to the Board in 2017. For more on Jim, including a video of our interview with him, go to: <http://bit.ly/HWDirectors>.