

Mike Libich receives city employee of the year posthumously

Written by Elizabeth Barrett

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Co-workers share memories of him.

City of Gothenburg electrical foreman Mike Libich wasn't at the city banquet Friday night when he was announced as the 2013 employee of the year.

That morning, Libich's family, friends and co-workers attended the 58-year-old's funeral after a courageous battle with brain cancer ended on Jan. 14.

Libich's wife, Janice, accepted a shelf with a plaque which is given to honorees who are chosen by city employees.

City administrator Bruce Clymer described Libich as a quiet leader, noting that after nearly 22 years as foreman, the city's electrical system improved tremendously.

Accomplishments include adding a substation at the city shop, rebuilding the southside substation, changing several overhead lines to underground ones, installing automated meter reading and time-of-use metering for large industrial customers, working with the mayor and council to obtain new equipment and other improvements.

"Mike could not have done this alone but certainly was an integral part of the team between administration and employees that have improved our system," Clymer said.

The city administrator said he thinks Libich is deserving of the award because "he was always there when you needed him," a sentiment also expressed by the Rev. Don O'Brien at Libich's funeral.

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Libich's co-workers agreed.

Corey Cooper of the water, sewer and street department said Libich was always willing to help if needed.



“If you needed an extra hand or equipment, he'd send it,” Cooper said.

When Mike Peters moved to Gothenburg to operate the wastewater treatment plant, he said Mike sent his two sons—Travis and Marshall—to help him unload.

“And he never got into your business,” Peters said.

Peters added that Libich and acting electrical foreman Nate Baker saved the city a lot of money when they did electrical work at the treatment plant.

Baker said when he moved to town, the whole Libich family was there to help him move in.

“Mike was more a teacher than a boss,” Baker said. “I learned a lot more from him than I did in school.”

City services director Shane Gruber said Libich “always had something to talk about.”

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Gruber also recalled Libich's ability to negotiate for equipment with Clymer, the mayor and the council.

City clerk Connie Dalrymple said Libich wasn't bashful about asking for equipment that would simplify the job and increase efficiency and safety.

"And he wasn't upset when told 'no,' " she said. "But if told 'no,' be prepared, he would ask again."

Libich would also find the best product and price when working on a project, she said, and get it done quickly and efficiently.

Allen Weidman of the water, sewer and street department remembers him as being able to work with different temperaments.

"In the six years I've worked here, I'd never seen him mad at anyone," Weidman said. "He got along with most everyone and there are a lot of different personalities."

Next to work, Dalrymple said Libich's family meant everything and the best times were those shared with them.

"When I think of Mike, I remember that he loved to visit and had a cheerful, kind and helpful attitude," she said. "He was almost always happy and cheerful but when he did get really tickled about something and laughed out loud, it was infectious."

2013 CITY SAFETY AWARDS
City safety awards are given each year to those employees who are free from injury or accident.
One-year safety awards: Jill Bubenthaler, Joe Humphrey, Corey Cooper, Sandy Smith, Mike Luch, Gene Darling, Nate Baker, Ira Sahr, Tim Lauer, Jason Anderson, Nelson
Gibler, Bruce Clymer, Mary Dillon, Connie Dalrymple, Linda Swan, Ryan Rendeligh, Matt Langley, Kyle Shaley
Three- to five-year safety awards: Shane Gruber, Shawn Herli, Mike Peters, Jill McCandless, three years; Mary Koch, five years.

Libich's concern for his fellow co-workers was reciprocated when his sick leave was depleted during his illness.

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City workers shared their own so he never was without it.

Although Libich took medical leave last summer, they said their coworker and friend would show up in the office and work for awhile until the end of November.

“He will be missed,” several co-workers said.

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