

Success Stories

A trio of past scholarship winners are now serving the community in their own way

By Craig Reed

Every little bit helps.

That was the message sisters Ashley Stauffer and Stacey Heikes expressed about the Lane Electric Cooperative scholarships they earned in years past after their homeschool educations had been completed.

Ashley, Stacey and their brother, Ryan Heikes, each were awarded \$1,500 scholarships by the electric co-op in 2007, 2008 and 2012, respectively, for use while attending Lane Community College.

Today, Ashley, 31, and Stacey, 29, are registered nurses. Ryan, 27, is a Lane County Sheriff's Office deputy and a member of the Oregon Air National Guard.

"Anything was a blessing," Stacey says. "Everything adds up."

Ashley says her scholarship bought her nursing textbooks for one year.

She encourages students to fill out the scholarship application, which asks about personal goals, how education will help toward those goals and answering the question, "What is an electric co-op?"

Finalists are interviewed by a scholarship committee.

"It's a good experience

for kids to respond to the questions, to deal with the interview, to work on their interpersonal communication skills and to show their passions," Stacey says. "You have to work for the assistance. It's not a handout. And if you're a recipient, you want to succeed, you don't want to let down the people who have helped you."

Ashley admits she was "a little nervous" about the scholarship application process, but went ahead with it, knowing she needed the practice for when it was time to fill out job applications and do job interviews.

Heidi Heikes, the mother of the three scholarship recipients, says she is grateful Lane Electric offers the scholarships to students in rural areas. Heidi and her husband, Robin, raised their kids in the Lorane area.

"Those scholarships certainly helped us out," Heidi says. "Life is about all the puzzle pieces and fitting them together. The scholarships were a puzzle piece. The scholarships are a case of people investing money into you and then it's 'what can you give back?'"

Ashley and Stacey were certified nurse assistants while doing their nursing

studies. After fulfilling their prerequisites at Lane Community College, Ashley entered that school's nursing program. Stacey went through the nursing program at Umpqua Community College near Roseburg.

Both began working at PeaceHealth Sacred Heart Medical Center at River Bend in Springfield in 2012. At the same time, they took online classes at Oregon Health & Science University.

The sisters earned bachelor's degrees in nursing in 2014 and started working in the Springfield hospital's cardiac surgery unit as recovery nurses later that year. In 2017, Stacey transferred to the intensive care unit.

The sisters eventually took on leadership roles as charge nurses in their respective units.

"As a charge nurse, you can mentor the other nurses, you can counsel them," Stacey says. "You set the tone for your unit, how to be a positive impact on your patients and the staff."

In recent years, Ashley and Stacey say they were grateful and honored for the opportunity to care for Dave D'Avanzo, a retired Lane Electric employee who had been on the interview panel when the girls had applied for the co-op



Ashly Stauffer

scholarships. They also spent time with Dave when he gave them a tour of the co-op facility and had visited with him at annual meetings.

“We cared for Dave multiple times,” Stacey says. “What a small world. He helped us out and then we were able to help him, to ease his mind, to comfort him, to give him the best possible care. It was a blessing to be there for him during those times.”

While the sisters went into nursing, Ryan entered law enforcement. After he attended Lane Community College, he transferred to Southern Oregon State College in Ashland and earned a degree in criminal justice. He is on a year’s deployment to Kuwait with the Air National Guard.

A fourth Heikes child, Lyndsey, did not apply for a Lane Electric scholarship because she opted to attend Northwest Christian College



Ryan Heikes

(now Bushnell College) in Eugene for four years. She is a second-grade teacher.

At the time, the scholarship was only to Lane Community College. Lane Electric now offers scholarships to two- or four-year accredited colleges of a student’s choice.

While Stacey continues to be a nurse in Springfield, Ashley married Michael Stauffer in December and the couple moved to Akron, Ohio. Ashley plans to continue her nursing career.

“We were willing to work hard to get where we are,” Ashley says of her and her sister’s nursing careers. “You need to think about what you really want to do, figure out the cost and ways to help with that, and then go for it and do it.”

She says they appreciate Lane Electric’s help—“not only for the actual scholarship, but for being a support system for us.” ■



Stacey Heikes

Application Window Still Open

It is not too late to apply for a 2021 Lane Electric Cooperative scholarship.

The application deadline is Thursday, April 8, at 1 p.m. Applicants must be a Lane Electric member or a dependent of a qualifying member.

Five scholarships are offered:

- ▶ \$4,500 to a 2021 high school graduate to attend Lane Community College.
- ▶ \$4,500 Dave D’Avanzo Memorial Community Scholarship to attend Lane Community College.
- ▶ \$5,500 to attend VOLTA—a trade school for those interested in line construction and the electric utility industry.
- ▶ Two \$3,000 scholarships to a two- or four-year accredited college of the student’s choice.

Applications and more information about the scholarships can be found at www.laneelectric.com/scholarships or by contacting the Lane Electric office at 541-484-1151. High school counselors in the co-op service area also have the scholarship information.

