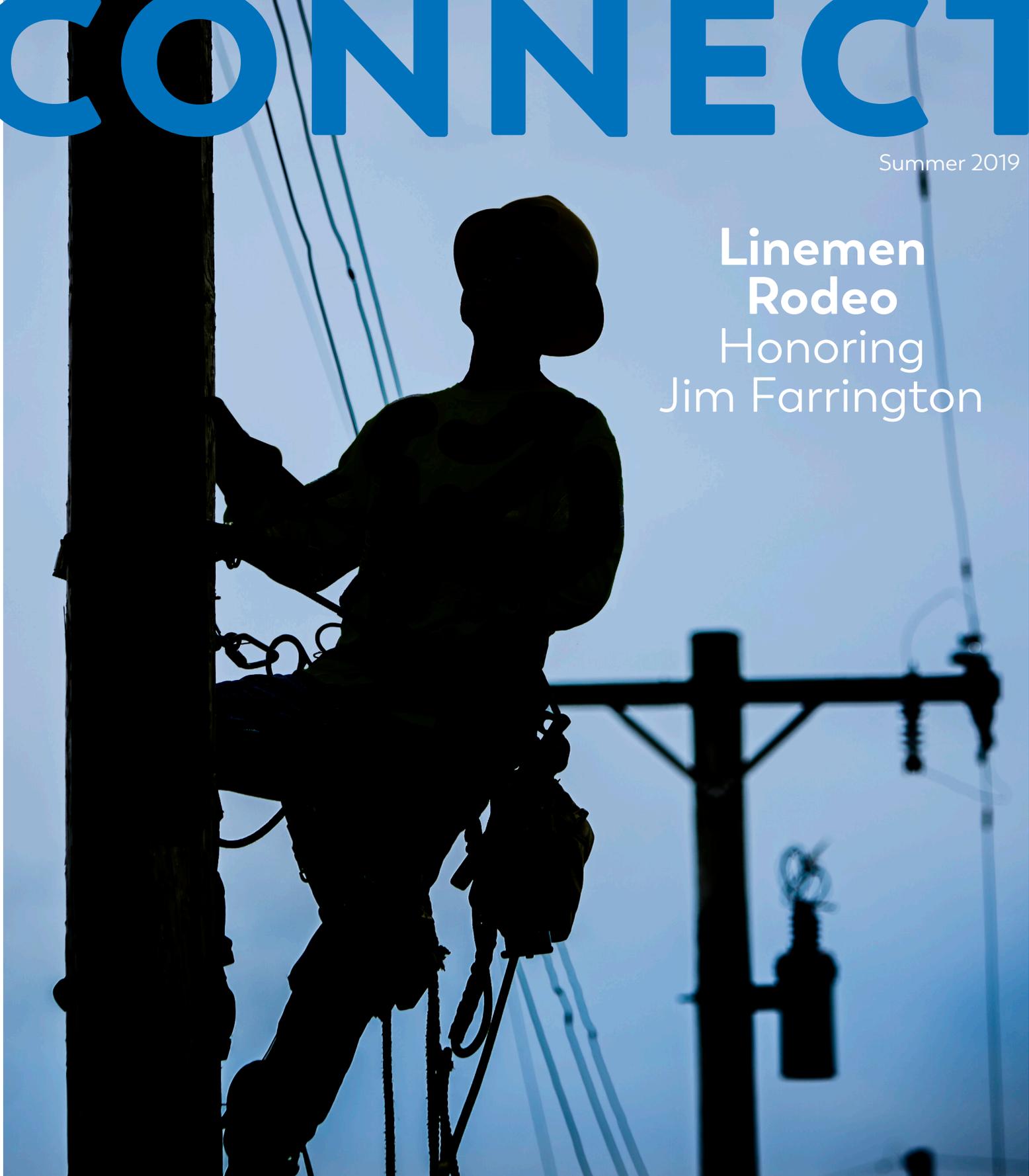


CONNECT

Summer 2019

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Pic of the Month

We supply the theme, you submit the photo.

Summer Theme Vacation Memories

[View all submissions here](#)



*John Kenny
My 4 1/2 year old, Johnny, being a good big brother and giving a ride to my 2 1/2 year old, Spencer.

1. Britta Andreson
Visiting my great-great grandparents', Anders Peter and Stina Kajsa, grave up the road from the family farm in Bredsättra.

2. Craig Hakala
Sunset in St. Martin.

3. Lin Loomis
The Blarney Castle in Ireland.

5. Wendy Wise
I Crossed that off my Bucket List!
Parasailing with my daughter at Madeira Beach in Florida.

Championing Education in Michigan

Libby Buckland

Building a strong talent pipeline filled with future co-workers has been a priority for decades. The education outreach taking place around the company impacts hundreds of children and teens every year. From MI Career Quest to work-based learning programs, employees are investing in the future workforce and engaging students early and often.

With a wide variety of opportunities for co-workers to educate and engage students of all ages, Education Champions brings alignment to all the education initiatives around the company – providing a centralized program for consistent messaging, comprehensive resources, training, and a talent bank of willing participants ready to lend a helping hand.

Work-based learning is one of the on-going partnerships we have with local school districts, allowing students the opportunity to pair with employees to apply their classroom skills in the real world.

“Work-based learning is truly a win-win program,” said Ryan Fogarty, Education Champion and Sr. Lab Technician at Trail St. Lab. “It presents a safe, supportive

venue for young adults to apply classroom learning and develop their ‘soft skills’ in a challenging new environment while showcasing all of the great and diverse career opportunities Consumers Energy has to offer.”

Winslow Willis, Gas Distribution Field Leader, also participated in the work-based learning program and said, “As an education champion, I had an absolute blast introducing students from Holt High School to some very lucrative career options within Consumers Energy for individuals who may not be interested in earning four-year degrees.”

If you are interested in getting involved with Education Champions, contact PO BOX: EduChamps for more information.

“I’m particularly proud of our willingness to partner with local educational institutions and invest in our young men and women as they’re deciding how they want to leave their mark on the world,” said Fogarty.

If you know of any k-12 events in your area that Consumers Energy can get involved with, email PO Box: EduChamps!



Winslow Willis, Isaiah Jackson (Senior at Holt High School) Dustyn Hartenburg and Max Miller – Gas Lines Workers.

Project SEARCH Graduation Day

Skills Learned, Friendships Formed, Memories Made

| Jodie Solari

Project SEARCH: Seven Project SEARCH students graduated in a ceremony attended by family members, friends, Jackson County Intermediate School District employees and co-workers on May 31.

It was the first of its kind at Consumers Energy and a spectacular celebration.

Angela Thompkins, Director of Talent Acquisition, Diversity and Inclusion, addressed the crowd with heartfelt words, "At Consumers Energy, creating an inclusive environment where everyone can bring their true, authentic and best self is what we strive for." She went on to thank the employees who supported the program and recognize the graduates, "I am truly grateful for the commitment, dedication and support of our co-workers who gave these students valuable skills they will have for the rest of their lives. And to all the graduates, congratulations."

David McKnight, one of the instructors, also addressed the graduates.

"Each and every one of you is a champion. You demonstrated this by showing us hard work, being dependable, being honest and respectful and being dedicated. You've all earned the right to be proud of your achievements."

He went on to recognize the staff, families and friends who supported the students and closed by challenging the students to do more.

"Your new challenge is to continue to stretch and extend your abilities, because champions accept nothing but the best for themselves."

The skills trainers also addressed the students before they were presented with their diplomas.

Michael Castle, who worked in the mailroom, said he was very happy because he accomplished his goals this year. He said he hopes to do more work for Consumers Energy in the future. His favorite part of the job was putting the checks in the envelopes.

The best part of the event was observing the interactions between the students and their Consumers Energy co-workers. It was clear in nine short months

skills had been learned, friendships had been formed and memories had been made.

I know the intent of Project SEARCH is for the students to learn new skills to prepare them for a job after graduation, but it was clear our employees had learned just as much, if not more, from the students.

Merv Webb, capABLE Chair, was instrumental in getting Project SEARCH started at Consumers Energy. He is proud of the program's success and looks forward to expanding it



in the future, "It shows people of all abilities can exceed at our company and I look forward to the program growing for years to come," he said. We have 12 interns planned for next year.

Read about how Project SEARCH got started at Consumers Energy [here](#). If you are interested in hosting an intern in your department, contact Amie Ostrander at amie.ostrander@cmsenergy.com or 517-257-0764.

See additional coverage of the graduation here: [MLive](#), [Fox47](#), [JTV](#).

Good Catch, Tom Wichman!

| Sarah Paterson

Tom Wichman, Gas Field Leader, was about to pull away from the curb, but something made him pause.

"I remembered seeing some kids in the front yard playing near where I was working. I had done a 360, but something told me to check again."

Wichman had completed the standard process of walking around his parked vehicle to check for hazards or obstacles, but had stopped to check an email after getting into his truck. Though it had only been a few minutes, his gut told him to check again before heading out.

As Wichman approached the back of his vehicle, he saw a young child coloring on the bumper of his truck. A potential tragedy was averted by his decision to take the extra time that would ensure conditions were safe.

He stressed the importance of not only doing a 360 every time you get in your vehicle, but also if your plans change.

"After you do a 360, you need to leave immediately. If you sit there, even for a couple minutes, you need to do an additional 360 before you pull away."



Co-Worker Corner: Peggy Schlicht

| Tom Lambert

From purchasing paper towels to operating and later buying bull dozers – Peggy Schlicht has done it all during her 23-year career at the Genesee Power Station. In June Schlicht said goodbye to her co-workers and hello to retirement with her family.

"It's been a very rewarding job," said Schlicht, who currently works as senior material management technician and is in charge of purchasing equipment and basic needs of the plant.

Schlicht, who started out with temporary work as a cleaner at the plant, said the relationships she forged with her co-workers mean the world to her.

"Overcoming challenges during unplanned outages and everybody jumping to come together to get the plant back online is a memory that I will take with me," she said.

Schlicht became a full time employee operating bulldozers at the plant. She used the dozer to push wood chips, delivered by truck, into the plant to fuel the boiler.

"I've had a lot of opportunities here," she said. "And I am grateful for that. It's important to mix it up once in a while. Plus, you get to meet new people along the way."

But now she looks forward to spending time with her husband, children and grandchildren.

"It's time to enjoy the good life," Schlicht said. "It's been a good run."



Lineman Rodeo Honoring Jim Farrington

Brian Zionskowski

Four of our Journey Lineworkers – Brian Zionskowski, Josh McTaggart, Kyle Rector and Chad Allen – traveled to Pennsylvania to honor their friend and mentor, Jim Farrington, on June 21. Brian shared the impact of his experience at the annual Lineman Rodeo:

On Oct. 5, 2018 my world was altered forever when my mentor Jim Farrington was killed on the line. To say Jim was larger-than-life is an immense understatement. He taught me everything I know about line work and what it takes to be a lineman – a true professional in our craft.

I was his apprentice, then journeyman and eventually his lineman rodeo partner for many years. We worked together for 10 years at Traverse City Light & Power and this last September I followed him to Consumers Energy at the Traverse City headquarters. Jim and I spent a great deal of time together in and out of work, and he taught me an incredible amount about so many aspects of life.

The opportunity to honor my friend came on June 21. A contingent of 17 family and friends, including Jim's wife, Mary, made our way to Clearfield, Pennsylvania to participate in the annual Climbing for Lost Linemen event organized by the National Sisterhood for Journeymen Linemen. It is a ceremony honoring all linemen who have lost their lives on the line from June the previous year to the event date.

This year there were 21 honorees...21 too many. Each fallen lineman's name is etched on a lantern, and a fellow line brother or team climbs a pole to hang their lit lantern. The lanterns are strung together with the other fallen names on a line between two poles during a ceremony at dusk.

Five of us made the climb for Jim – Kyle and me from Traverse City, Josh and Chad from Cadillac, with Bill Cornell, who was the foreman for Jim, Kyle and me at Traverse City Power & Light, running the lantern up on the hand line for us.

The climb was intense...daunting...yet cathartic. We are brothers of the trade, in our hooks, honoring our own. Struggling to see through the tears as the glow of the lit lanterns strung together illuminating the night was harder than I anticipated. After we honored Jim, we

climbed again to help hang lanterns for individuals whose brothers could not make the event.

I believe this event was what our line family needed. We spent time together laughing, crying, having a beer telling stories about Jim just like he would want us to do. It is in these moments, along with keeping the lights on safely every day, that I continue to remember and honor Jim Farrington. I miss you my brother. Keep climbing on!



The climb team hanging the remembrance lantern for Jim.



The climb team and their families with Mary Farrington.



Josh McTaggart, Chad Allen, Mary Farrington, Bill Cornell, Kyle Rector, Brian Zionskowski.



Jim Farrington, Brian Zionskowski and Bill Cornell at a past rodeo



Breaking Down Our Goals

Customer On-Time Delivery



| Jodie Solari

When you order a pizza and they say it will be there in 30 minutes, you expect it at your door in 30 minutes (or less).

In fact, when you place any order you expect it to be ready/delivered at the time you requested. So why would you expect anything less from your energy company? You wouldn't, and our customers certainly don't. So, we made a commitment to deliver hometown service by designing, scheduling and installing requested services within a three-day window of the customer requested date – this is called Customer On-Time Delivery (COTD).

What is COTD?

COTD tracks the number of requested customer orders completed within the target three-day completion window.

Why it matters

The COTD effort is improving the service delivery experience for our customers – making sure they have an excellent experience at every interaction and know what to expect along the way.

“Our customers have a project and a date when they need it completed – sometimes it is a home they are building or a business they are trying to open. We want to do everything we can to deliver on-time for our customers and ensure they have a positive customer experience along the way,” said Alycia Tolman, COTD Rally Room

owner. “Tracking this metric is building sustainable and repeatable processes that ensure the work is done in a predictable way when the customer wants it.”

Where we stand

Year to date, the goal is green at almost 76 percent against a Year-End target of 70 percent. Currently, the rally room team is focused on capacity planning for the end of the year.

“Historically, we know our opportunities spike in Q4,” said Tolman, “and we want to ensure we have the capacity to complete all of our customer-requested work on time.”

When the effort first began in 2016, the baseline for delivering on COTD was 9 percent and the goal was 50 percent; definitely breakthrough at the time. Thanks to incredible improvements made by thousands of co-workers, the goal was reclassified from a breakthrough to a continuous improvement goal in 2018.

How to learn more

Employees are welcomed to visit the COTD Rally Room at the Jackson Service Room (JSC) Room 200. If you would like to attend a Weekly Operating Review (WOR), contact Alycia Tolman.



Lending A Helping Hand to Jackson School Districts

| Tom Lambert

For the past decade, Jackson-area school districts have struggled to get the funds to meet the increasing technology demands that come with rising headcounts.

Now, thanks to some innovative thinking by our Investment Recovery team – led by Robert Redmond – students are benefitting from computers that are no longer needed by our employees.

“We have challenged ourselves to think differently in how we can put our used computers to good use, and we landed on helping students,” said Redmond. “The win for my team is we used the CE Way and empowered them to think differently to implement this program. This better aligns with our corporate strategy and Triple Bottom Line: People, Planet and Prosperity.”

As of June 1, the Investment Recovery team in conjunction with our Corporate Giving team has donated about 1,700 pieces of technology to schools and nonprofits. That's about \$600,000 worth of computers and other equipment. High school robotics teams also are benefitting.

The Investment Recovery Center is based in Jackson and located just a few miles from One Energy Plaza. Previously, the team sold hundreds of computers and other items no longer needed by the company through public auction.

The multiple auctions helped raise revenue but did not

complement our new corporate strategy.

Geoff Bontrager, superintendent of Northwest School District, said they are thankful to reap the benefits provided by the Investment Recovery team.

“This is huge for us,” he said. “We can't express how helpful this is to our students and teachers.”

John Denney, superintendent of Hanover-Horton schools agreed.

“I want to thank all of you for this gift to our district,” Denney said. “It would normally take two to three years to scrape together enough money to purchase that many computers. As limited as our budget has been for years, this is a phenomenal gift.”

Martin Darnell, Investment Recovery Tech Specialist, said they are looking to expand outside Jackson in the near future.

“We are serious about the impact that we have in our communities and what this does for our company,” Darnell said. “If it means delivering the tools they need like computers, then that's what we have to do. This has exceeded all of our expectations, and I look forward to how big it will become.”

Off The Clock: Chris Spedoske

Employees for Better Government Volunteer

| Hillary Kipp



Lean Office Manager Chris Spedoske understands a united group is stronger than any individual.

To help make sure our company has a strong voice in Washington D.C. and Lansing, Spedoske volunteers as Chairwoman of CMS Energy Employees for Better Government (EBG).

Decades ago, Spedoske joined EBG due to an interest in politics and the political process. Little did she know, she would one day lead the volunteer organization of eligible employees and shareholders.

One of Spedoske's responsibilities as Chair is to recruit and educate potential new members. "I'm committed to teaching my colleagues about the importance of this work," said Spedoske. "Given that the utility industry is highly regulated, it is so important that we have a strong, united voice in this landscape."

A goal for EBG is to maintain over 800 PAC members, and Spedoske is leading that charge.

"Strength in numbers is what makes PACs so important," said Spedoske. "Many longtime employees who are EBG members have retired or are nearing retirement, so it's crucial to educate new eligible employees about the existence of the PAC and how it operates."

"Volunteering time and being involved politically is just so important," said Spedoske, who has worked for CMS Energy for more than 28 years. "I'm proud to work for this company, and proud to Chair the EBG Steering Committee."

EBG is a political action committee (PAC). Corporate PACs are state and federally regulated organizations that support and educate candidates and legislators in a transparent, nonpartisan and democratic way. EBG is unique from other corporate PACs because it is employee run. The steering committee representatives, who vote on contributions and endorsements, come from all areas of the company, and are elected for four-year terms by all of the members in their respective districts.

Fix It Now, Change it for the Future

| Libby Buckland

Have you ever experienced human struggle during your daily tasks? Been left waiting for approval that restricted you from moving the process forward? Had to take five steps, but could have done it in one?

Have you ever wanted to feel empowered to change a broken process you use every day?

The Fix it Now (FIN) teams are doing just that – flipping the triangle and empowering frontline employees to make changes that will enhance their areas of work and improve processes. Supported by the Field Operations Support (FOS) team and built on the foundation of the CE Way, FIN teams in all 11 headquarters have been trained and on-going efforts to train remaining service centers are underway.

"Ultimately, we want to settle these issues at a local level and provide the FIN teams the support they need, while also celebrating their successes," said Bill Krieger, FOS Co-Chair. "When a local team has a breakthrough that will benefit other areas of the company, we will share the standards and findings to allow for consistent implementation that also provides enough flexibility to work for each location."

Since the launch in spring of 2017, FIN teams have gone to work problem solving and tackling root causes – shifting their mindset and focus from result metrics, to process metrics. Asking questions like, "What hoops did you have to jump through? Where did you experience human struggle today? What was broken?"

This type of problem solving and feedback gives the people closest to the work the ability to drive the change –

lessening, and eventually eliminating the human struggle they face every day.

FIN in Action

"Right now the teams are just getting their feet wet," said Ben Hatler, Union Support and Journeyman Lineworker. "We are pretty good at fixing the problem for today, but the FIN teams are now working to standardize processes and procedures to prevent new or recurring problems from arising in the future."

The FOS and FIN teams are paving the way for changing the culture of problem solving in Field Operations. Since its inception, some notable changes include:

- [The Flint fueling pilot](#) rolled out to 11 service centers
- Installation of suggestion boxes where co-workers can submit problems
- Tool room restructuring

Throughout the next year, the FOS team is focused on increasing Field Operations lean capabilities statewide and supporting CE Way training for frontline co-workers.

The expansion to localized teams is part of the plan to ensure those closest to the work are solving problems and recognizes that not all headquarters experience the same problems in the same way.



Recent Retirees
Congratulations to all the [Summer 2019 retirees](#).
Check out Connect each month for a link to a list of retirees.

