

# WOMEN

*In Business*

PRESENTING SPONSOR:



*Kelsey Balensifer*

**NW Natural**



# HOW LONG HAVE YOU BEEN IN YOUR LINE OF WORK AND WHAT GOT *you* STARTED?

"I am new to the utility infrastructure world, but a portion of my job is community affairs and outreach. And I've been doing that piece since 2014 when I moved to the North Coast. I got started at **NW Natural** because I knew the person who was in this job prior to me. She was someone I knew in the community, someone I respected and really admired. She reached out to me when she was going to retire and said that she felt like my skill set and my background would be a good fit for this role. And I'm so thankful that she did. She really propelled me into a job that I didn't know I would love."

# WHAT IS A CHALLENGE *you* HAVE HAD TO OVERCOME?

“I never expected that I was going to be working for an energy company. It has been fantastic, but I didn't really come into this industry with any sort of training specific to natural gas infrastructure. It's been a lot of learning in the last year, a lot of technical terms, requirements, and regulations. I'm thankful to my colleagues who have brought me up to speed and helped me get training. The opportunities that I've had for advancement here so far have been wonderful. I'm thankful that **NW Natural** is willing to invest in me as an employee and wants to make sure I grow into this role and become comfortable in it.”

**AS WOMEN WE OFTEN DON'T BRAG ABOUT OURSELVES. TELL ME SOMETHING YOU'VE DONE THAT *you* ARE PROUD OF.**

“I knew this question was coming, and I’m so not prepared for it! I guess the moments in my life that I can point to where I’m proudest are the moments of personal connection between people, when it’s people helping people, coming alongside each other and really engaging with each other’s needs and desires. That’s part of what living on the North Coast is all about. In our small community, we have to watch out for each other. So, the moments that I’m proudest of are those moments where I’ve been able to help people along the way – and people have returned the favor for me, too, and I’m very thankful for that.”

# WHAT IS ONE THING YOU WISH YOU COULD TEACH ALL YOUNG *women*?

"I look at my nieces and the world that they're coming into, and the expectations that are out there for women - and I just want to tell them: choose your own path. Do whatever fits for you. Before coming to the North Coast, I was living in Washington, D.C. When I chose to move out to Oregon, I had a lot of people in D.C. who were very critical of that decision. They felt like I was throwing away my career, my life, to move to a town of roughly 5,000 people on the opposite coast. But I knew it was the right choice for me, and I was very confident in that. I've been happier here than I've ever been anywhere else in my life. The Pacific Northwest is definitely the place for me. I also made a career change a couple of years ago, during COVID, that most people didn't understand. It was a choice to move into a position that had a lesser title than what I had previously. There were a lot of people scratching their heads, but I knew it was the right choice for me at that moment. I can confidently say I wouldn't have gotten my job at NW Natural without that work experience. If I had listened to some of the naysayers in my life, I might not be where I am now, in a job and a place I absolutely love. Everybody's path looks different. You don't have to fit a specific mold or a specific scenario. You just have to find something that fits you."

# WHO INSPIRES YOU AND WHAT DRIVES *you?*

“There’s a lot of inspiring people around here! For me, the people that inspire me the most, the people I want to be like, are people who are community-minded, who are motivated by a love for others and a desire to be helpful. Whether it's volunteering at an event, helping coach little league or whatever it is, finding ways to give back, to show up and make a difference. From a career standpoint, and from a personal standpoint, I want to be somebody who's part of crafting the kind of community that I want to see. I want to be proactive in helping shape the North Coast in a way that is good and that we all benefit from. So that's kind of what I keep in the back of my head: A desire to be out there, being part of positive change.”

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*"Advice for women? Go for it. Do your thing. Don't hold back" - Lori Lum*

*"Be strong, yet willing to take chances" - Julie Lum*