

# Meet Your Columbia REA Board of Directors



**Katie Wooldridge**  
Teacher, Coach  
Small Business Owner  
Volunteer Firefighter  
Starbuck, WA

“I remember talking to my dad. He is from Starbuck and he remembers the day when Columbia REA hooked up the power. I like to think of the changes some of our older members have seen.”

– Katie Wooldridge

For some of Columbia REA's Board Directors, it seems like a natural progression that they ended up on the Board. For Katie Wooldridge, it didn't feel that way at first.

“I never thought about getting on the Board. One day some people came and talked to me and said, ‘Hey, would you consider running?’” Remembers Katie. “I gave it some thought, and I felt like...yeah, I want to give back to the community.”

“I am a lifelong resident of Columbia County. I grew up on the farm...I was a farm girl. Drove a tractor, moved irrigation pipe and all that when I was in high school and college. I hadn't really worked in anything electricity related. This was something certainly new for me. It was about getting involved. This is one way I could do that.”

While the electricity business might have been new, giving back to her community was not something new for Katie. Whether through her years as a volunteer firefighter, or working with 4-H, or her many different turns as a

coach of various sports at the high school and Junior High level, or her real job as a teacher at Starbuck Public Schools, Katie Wooldridge has spent a lifetime giving much of her time and energy back to the community where she grew up, particularly in the area of youth sports.

“Athletics was such a big part of my life when I was a kid and in college. I think its important to support the kids when they're out there playing. It's a great thing for parents to do, whether they coach or just cheer from the sidelines. Just getting those kids involved is important. A lot of kids are choosing not to participate. I just wish more would.”



**Katie Wooldridge, and her sister, Dana, tearing up the bike trails in Sun Valley, ID.**

Katie's own accomplishments in the competitive sports arena are impressive, highlighted by two bronze medals in discus and shotput at the Junior Olympics as a 10-year old, and a stellar career at Whitman College, where she majored in Politics, minored in Education, and excelled on the basketball court. Look up “Career scoring leader – Whitman women's

basketball” and you’ll see Katie’s name at the top of the list. And oh by the way, she is also the career leader in steals, and second in career rebounds.

“Basketball was my favorite sport, but I haven’t done as much basketball coaching. I was the head track coach at Dayton. I was never a super track star, but they needed somebody,” Katie recalls with a smile. “And I coached Junior High and High School volleyball at Dayton also.”

“I like to be active. I really enjoy mountain biking. My husband Tony and I do a little bit of rock climbing. We have a boat...we like to go out on the river. I’m not really into extreme sports...like my son. He skydives...he made over 120 jumps last summer and he wants to get me up there. I’m not going to do that.”

While she may draw the line at jumping out of a plane, Katie is not against learning new things. “I’m not quite as ‘on the fly’ as my sister. She likes to drag me out to try new stuff. I’m glad she does, but I tend to do a little research first.”

Research is the name of the game for another adventure that Katie and her husband embarked on a few years ago, and that is flipping houses. “We’re real estate investors,” says Katie. “We buy homes and renovate them. We’re trying to build our rental portfolio...we did a flip in Walla Walla. It’s quite an experience.”

As a small business owner and a teacher with a naturally curious spirit, Katie, who has also completed her Credentialed Cooperative Director certification, finds that the continued learning aspect of being on the Board suits her.

“I’ve really enjoyed it...being on the board. As an educator, I feel like we’re always lifetime learners. This just continues on that path.”

“I was 36 when I came onto the Board. That doesn’t sound young, but that is sort of young in terms of board

membership,” continues Katie. “And being the only female on the Board...I don’t know that my perspective is a whole lot different. We all have different backgrounds. And now there are only two board members who were on the Board before I was elected 11 years ago.”

One “learning opportunity” that requires continuous re-examination and education, is rates. Katie doesn’t see that changing anytime soon.

“People want low prices more than anything else, which is understandable,” notes Katie. “At the same time, I think there are a lot of environmental issues coming down the road. They’re already here, really. But these renewable energy sources are expensive right now. So power supply will be a big issue.”

“It’s also critical to educate the public that hydroelectric power is so important not just for electricity, but for so many things in our lives. Bonneville Power has done a good job keeping their prices competitive, but we do have to go out on the open

**Katie and her husband, Tony, rock climbing at Wallula Junction**



market sometimes. I do foresee the price for some of those alternative energy sources will come down over time. It already has in some areas.”

“With so many things going on in the government, both locally and nationally, there is just always something at our doorstep.”