

## A Positive Force

**An Interview with Helen Burt,  
Senior Vice President of Corporate Affairs, Pacific Gas and Electric Company**

**EDITORS' NOTE** *Helen Burt was named one of the 100 Most Influential Women in the Bay Area by the San Francisco Business Times for five consecutive years. Prior to joining Corporate Affairs, Burt served as Senior Vice President and Chief Customer Officer for PG&E. Earlier, she served as Vice President, Customer Billing and Operations at TXU Energy. She began her career at TXU as a customer service representative and concluded it as a Vice President. Burt holds a bachelor's degree in biology and chemistry from Midwestern State University.*



Helen Burt

**COMPANY BRIEF** *PG&E Corporation (pge.com) is a Fortune 200 energy-based holding company, headquartered in San Francisco. It is the parent company of Pacific Gas and Electric Company, California's largest investor-owned utility. PG&E serves nearly 16 million Californians across a 70,000-square-mile service area in Northern and Central California.*

**PG&E is recognized on a variety of levels as a leader in the utilities industry. What is the secret to your company's success?**

We've set a goal to be the leading utility in America, so virtually all of our initiatives are designed to move us in that direction. The real measure of our success is how much customers trust, like, and want to do business with PG&E. This starts with making sure that the energy we provide is safe, reliable, affordable, and clean. With that in mind, we've been relentless when it comes to driving operational excellence and our customers are seeing the difference. For instance, 2014 was our sixth consecutive best year ever for electric reliability.

One of the biggest keys to accomplishing these results has been our local focus. We put an emphasis on making sure we show up as a company that understands the community and the needs of our local customers. This drives the way we operate locally, and it drives the way we invest in supporting our communities.

Ultimately, our commitment to be a local company hinges on our local people. The secret to our success is the 23,000 men and women who are the face of the company. We're fortunate to have employees who are truly committed to their communities. There's a spirit of service that's

unique at PG&E. The more we can tap into that and support it, the more successful we are.

**PG&E has a long history of corporate responsibility and community engagement. How important are these efforts?**

Customers expect companies like PG&E to be contributing to the community in ways that go beyond the core service we provide. They expect us to be a positive force when it comes to improving the overall quality of life in the places we serve, whether through charitable

investments, helping to grow the economy, enhancing the environment, or any number of other ways we contribute.

Last year, we contributed more than \$23 million to charitable organizations. It's important to note that the company's community investment program is funded entirely by our shareholders and has no impact on customers' utility rates.

In addition, we actively encourage and support our employees' volunteer efforts in the community. Our employees contributed more than 75,000 volunteer hours at company-sponsored events in 2014, which was a new record for us. They also pledged \$7.3 million through our annual Campaign for the Community in 2014. That money is now being distributed to more than 5,000 schools and nonprofits.

**Would you tell us about some PG&E policies and programs that are making a difference in communities and with the environment?**

Over the past 10 years, PG&E has provided nearly \$70 million in funding for students in the communities we serve. For example, we created the PG&E Bright Minds™ Scholarships program, which helps students based on a combined demonstration of community leadership, personal triumph, financial need, and academic achievement.

We also created a high-school program called New Energy Academy to prepare the next generation of Californians for successful careers in energy. It's a three-year, in-school training program focused on science, technology, engineering, and math.

Another example is our PowerPathway program, a collaborative effort between PG&E, local community colleges, the public workforce development system, and labor unions. The goal is to go into our communities and create a pool of qualified candidates for entry-level skilled jobs in our industry. We've also been very successful in creating special PowerPathway programs focused on veterans.

This effort has proven so effective that it's been cited by the White House as a model for public-private partnerships aimed at closing the skills gap.

Along those same lines, every year we also give 10 nonprofit organizations \$20,000 Economic Vitality Grants to help with job creation, business development, and other economic opportunities. It's a great way for PG&E to help our communities thrive.

**How does PG&E's local focus fit in with its sustainability efforts?**

The two go hand-in-hand. Our view of sustainability goes well beyond the environment. It encompasses all the ways we're working in our communities to be a force for progress, economic development and growth, and community vitality. We have to have healthy, vibrant communities in order to continue thriving as a company.

At the same time, protecting the environment is one of the values that is especially important to many of our communities and to PG&E. Helping local customers and communities achieve their environmental goals is a big part of what we're doing. We already provide energy that is among the cleanest in the country, and we're working to do more. We're taking steps to help provide communities with new options for solar energy, which we're avid supporters of. We're also introducing more electric vehicles into our local fleets, and we're proposing to build out electric vehicle charging infrastructure for customers.

**With such a diverse customer base, how important is it for your workforce to mirror that diversity?**

One of the keys to our success is showing up as a local company. We can't do that if we aren't building a workforce that's reflective of the diversity in our communities.

We see diversity and inclusion as a driver for innovation. With all of the game-changing technology that's affecting the utility business today, our ability to innovate is absolutely essential to our future. Having a more diverse and inclusive workforce is one of the best ways to ensure we're infusing new ideas and new thinking into our work.

It's similar with our focus on supplier diversity. In 2014, PG&E spent more than \$2 billion with diverse suppliers – companies that are owned by women, minorities, LGBT individuals, and disabled veterans. This drives investments in local businesses and helps our communities thrive. It also helps us find better supply chain solutions, and ultimately improves the quality and affordability of the service we provide. ●