

Answering the call for 49 years

Mike Duensing finds his calling at Whirlpool's customer experience center

BENTON HARBOR — Mike Duensing has worked at Whirlpool Corp. for a long time.

Born in Benton Harbor, Duensing and his family moved to Stevensville, where he went to Lakeshore High School. The 68-year-old started working at the global maker of home appliances when he was 19 and looking for a part-time job while attending Lake Michigan College.

Fast forward to Sept. 7, 2015, and Duensing just celebrated his 49th year with the Benton Harbor company.

As a training analyst at Whirlpool's call center, the majority of people who have answered phone calls from curious customers were trained under Duensing.

Herald-Palladium Staff Writer Tony Wittkowski sat down with Duensing to talk about his job at Whirlpool and what he has seen there in his 49 years.

How does it feel to be with a company for nearly half a century now?

You make it sound so long. The great thing about the job I have now is I love

Q & A MIKE DUENSING

what I do and I enjoy training the new hires. For me it's very rewarding. I've had people come up to me who work on the floor and say, "Remember when you told us about this? Guess what, I just had that call."

As a training analyst, what would you say are your main responsibilities?

Our consultants that are on the phone ... I train them in how a product works. I try to do it in a non-technical way so they can explain it to the consumer. We can resolve the issue without getting service out to them. The consultants out there know their accessories and

how they work. I'm just trying to make them familiar with where the information is, because nobody comes in and knows everything after a 13-day training session.

My experiences with consumers don't change over time. They remain the same, so it makes it easier to give new consultants scenarios they'll come across.

How did you start at Whirlpool?

I was going to college and my dad told me I needed to get a job. I went to the employment agency and one fella said I have a spot open in Whirlpool working in the literature warehouse. It was sending out literature to dealers. They offered me another position and I just kind of moved from there.

When you first started, did you ever imagine yourself getting to this point?

No. I thought this would be a part-time job. I thought, I'll earn some money and go to college. It turned out that there was stuff I couldn't turn down.

Do you have any funny stories you can tell based on your years here?

We get a lot of strange re-



Don Campbell / HP staff

Mike Duensing, a training analyst for Whirlpool Corp., has worked for the company for 49 years. "The great thing about the job I have now is I love what I do and I enjoy training the new hires," Duensing says. "For me it's very rewarding."

quests over the phone. I can remember having consumers call about their dishwasher. They are asking me for the recipe to steam fish in a dishwasher. Somewhere they read they could do that.

I can also remember a call where the consumer filled her washing machine full of cucumbers to clean them because it was pickle season. It wasn't good. The pump had to be replaced. All the stuff that fell off the cucumbers clogged up the pump and wouldn't drain the washing machine. You think you hear all the stories, but there is always

another one.

What kind of reaction do you get when people hear you have worked at Whirlpool for so long?

You go to a meeting or a function where you go around the room and say where you work and how long you work there. It never fails that for some reason I'm the last one who is asked. I say 49 years and that brings a pretty big reaction.

I remember one meeting that I was in, there was a lady who went before me and said she was so-and-so and worked at Whirlpool for 35 years. There was this

big applause and she was happy and smiling. I got up and said I've been here for 45 years and it was like I just took the wind out of her sails. I almost felt bad. I get it now, how big of a deal it is.

If you could summarize your time here, what would you say?

I've learned a lot. When I got to the call center I knew this was my calling. It's been a real learning experience for me. I have a passion for what I do, and as long as I have the passion I'll continue doing what I do.

Contact: twittkowski@TheHP.com, 932-0358, Twitter: @TonyWittkowski