

A Learning Experience

By Adam German, Source Water Protection Specialist

As this article is being written another 5-day backflow class is wrapping up in the other room. The group is taking their final test in hopes of getting their grade VI water operator's license. For the past 5 days, 15 Nebraskans from across the state met up in Wahoo to learn all about the world of backflow. They spent the first two days in the classroom learning to identify different types of backflow methods, devices, and assemblies. On Wednesday the class headed to the back to start learning the testing procedures, with Thursday being the day they are tested on those procedures. This particular Backflow class was a bit different. The proctor for the testing procedures was a student at the last 5-day class held in October. That proctor was Adam German. Yep. Me. If you haven't heard yet, the NeRWA's "Backflow Barney" will be retiring soon. I have spent the last several month's following Barney to Backflow class after backflow class trying to learn all the ropes and skills it takes to teach these classes. I will be honest; I have learned a tremendous amount but still have a way to go before future classes go as smoothly and flawlessly as Barney's classes go. Barney is retiring in March; he will hopefully be around to help out for the 5-day class in April but after that I will be on my own. So, a little heads up...if you are planning on taking any backflow prevention classes in the future give the new instructor a break; he's going to be a little nervous.

Another one of my new duties is in the Source Water Protection area. We have been helping a few small Nebraska systems recognize potential hazards that could become a problem to their public drinking water in the future. NeRWA will help the system form a steering committee of land owners and residents that are interested in learning about keeping Nebraska's drinking water safe; specifically, in their immediate area. We will explain to the steering committee, town officials, and the public the benefits they can receive from not only the NeRWA, but also other agencies like the DHHS, NDEE, and NRD's that have the ability and willingness to help small systems find grants to help fund the goal of keeping water safe to drink. I do enjoy this part of the job, the Source Water Program is a great opportunity to get out and meet different people with the same goal...safe, clean drinking water.

Once again, I have found myself in a bit of a stressful situation. I have a lot to learn and a short amount of time to retain all of the stuff Barney is throwing at me. I'll get it figured out. I have already figured out that when it comes to having any questions or needing any help the staff at NeRWA is always there. Barney hasn't retired yet and I have lots of questions for him. I look forward to adding to his grey hair collection in the upcoming months. Stay safe out there.