

# Shared Operators

By Mike Lucas, Wastewater Technician

Across the state it's becoming more and more difficult for small systems to hire and retain certified operators. A solution that I frequently see is shared operators between systems. These agreements range from those between the certified operator and each individual system to formal agreements between systems whereby one larger system may contract to share manpower and resources with a neighboring system or systems. I know of cases where one operator individually has agreements with two systems and others where the operator serves from 4 to 5 systems. There are larger systems that have successfully provided skilled personnel and resources to 3 or 4 neighboring communities. These arrangements may cover the full range of utility services or be specific to limited areas. Generally it can be a winning arrangement for everyone. If this seems like something that may be of benefit to you or your system contact me at 402-443-6157 or [lucas@nerwa.org](mailto:lucas@nerwa.org) and I'll provide you with some contacts.

One never knows where your life's path will lead you. One of the benefits to this job with NeRWA is the opportunity to meet many operators as I travel across the state providing assistance in whatever way that I can. I am forever impressed with the dedication, commitment and skills that I witness in operators who truly care about their communities. I've seen operators who have spent endless hours keeping their systems operating after storms and system failures. I witnessed an operator take time to help a lost 2 or 3 year old boy in a

diaper and t-shirt clutching his ziplock bag of animal crackers to find his way home in the rain.

Recently I had the opportunity to spend some time with Jack Stevens who is a shared operator between the Villages of Venango and Elsie. Jack cares deeply about the communities that he serves. He is a certified welder and somehow finds time to create magnificent metal artwork. He has metal sculptures in several states. Photos are attached. Soon to come is a sculpture of his grandfather on an antique tractor and an absolutely awesome ghost buffalo.

Once again a tip of the NeRWA cap to all of you operators out there.