

## Here Comes the Conference

By Pat Petersen, Training Specialist

With recertification in the rear view mirror of Nebraska Water Operators, it's time to start thinking CEU's for the 2016-2017 period. What better way to get started gathering your new hours than attending the Nebraska Rural Water Association's Annual Conference. Once again we will travel to Kearney and the beautiful Younes Conference Center for three days of learning, sharing our experiences with others and a lot of fun. This year the conference is set to get rolling on Monday, March 21 and conclude early in the afternoon on Wednesday, March 23.

The format for the conference this year will resemble that of last year's. Monday afternoon will begin with the annual Regulation Update by the Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services. Some of the topics they will discuss will be the Revised Total Coliform Rule and some of the personnel and position changes that have taken place in their department. Other speakers on the Monday program include Bill Podraza, Rich Koenig, and a representative from the USDA/RD. Once again, operators will have the opportunity to participate in a "fun night" Monday evening. JEO Consulting Group is doing the planning for this event and I'm sure it will be fun for all!

The learning will begin Tuesday morning at 9 AM. Operators will have their choice of four different sessions during each time period for which recertification hours have been applied for. Those attending will have an opportunity to gather 6 water hours, 6 wastewater hours, 5 backflow hours, and 6 well driller hours, pending state approval. Following the day full of classes, a social hour sponsored by HD Supply/Waterworks will give the operators a chance to enjoy a beverage before the evening meal and awards banquet. Following the banquet the NeRWA will provide entertainment and drinks for attendees. Final preparations are taking place for the entertainment and I feel those who attend will find Tuesday evening to be much more operator friendly than in the past. So, please come to the banquet and enjoy the evening.

Wednesday will begin with the operator breakfast and annual business meeting. Breakfast will be served at 7:30 AM and the business meeting will begin at 8 AM. Training sessions will begin at 8:30 AM and conclude at 2 PM Wednesday afternoon. The agenda for the conference is included in our magazine this quarter and I hope you see something new that you will want to attend. Some of the training sessions may look familiar but there are also some new sessions including a session about drones and their uses in the water and wastewater industry, climate change and operator succession.

The exhibit hall will be full again with vendors and their newest items to help make your jobs easier. Please support the vendors at each break and let them know how much you appreciate them and their products. The vendors are a major part of the Nebraska Rural Water Association's Annual Conference success.

For all of the operators who choose to attend this year's conference I hope it becomes an annual event for not only gathering CEU's, but to learn and mingle with other operators who may have some of the same issues as yourself. Each year I hear from many attendees that the interaction with other operators is invaluable to their success! So mark your calendars and come see what the Nebraska Rural Water Association's Annual Conference is all about.

Finally, this will be the first year in many that the Nebraska Rural Water Association will be without one of its own; Russ Topp. Russ touched a lot of people's lives not only from a work aspect but just by being a wonderful person. Hopefully operators can share some of their experiences they had with Russ at this year's conference. It will be those experiences that help us get past the sadness that we feel by losing him. Rest in Peace my friend....