

## 35<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference in Review

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The Nebraska Rural Water Association's 35<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference was held March 18-20, 2013, at the Heartland Events Center in Grand Island, Nebraska. This was the second year for the conference to be held at the larger venue and once again attracted over 500 operators, exhibitors, presenters and guests combined. There were 14 hours for water recertification, 7 hours for backflow recertification and 11 hours for wastewater approved. On-site wastewater and well drillers CEU's were also obtainable at the conference. The conference started at 1 p.m. on Monday the 18<sup>th</sup> with a welcome from Nebraska Rural Water Association's Board President, Tom Goulette, and concluded on Wednesday the 20<sup>th</sup> at 2 p.m.

After a social hour and a meal the rural water association hosted "game night" Monday evening back at the Midtown Holiday Inn. The event was very well attended and included several different games to test one's skills. Some of the games included Wii bowling, putt-putt golf, basketball, bean bag golf, and darts. Two of the big winners on game night were Howard Last from Scotia and Bill Zoucha from Monroe.

After a full day of classes on Tuesday the 19<sup>th</sup> it was time for some food and entertainment. The NeRWA hosted a banquet, awards night and also provided entertainment in the main arena at the events center.

Every year at the annual conference the Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services presents the outstanding operator awards. This year's award winners were Terry Schroeder from the City of Tekamah, and Paul Benitz with East Richardson Rural Water District #2. Congratulations to both of these operators for their excellence in the drinking water field and best of luck to them as they continue their outstanding work as water operators.

The recipients for the 2013 NeRWA scholarships were also announced. They were Anna Grovijohn and Nathan Weatherby. Anna is the daughter of Tom Grovijohn, the Utilities Superintendent in Dodge, Nebraska. Nathan is the son of Troy Weatherby, the Managing Director of the Beaver Lake Association. Congratulations to these two outstanding students and their families.

This year the "Best Drinking Water" in Nebraska title goes to the City of Curtis. Curtis will now compete in the National Rural Water Association's Great American Water Taste Test in Washington, D.C. This is an annual event held at the Rural Water Rally. Congratulations and good luck to Grant Jorgensen and the City of Curtis at the national contest.

The Nebraska Rural Water Association would like to thank everyone who supported the NeRWA and attended the conference. A special thank you goes out to all of our Platinum, Gold, Silver, and Bronze exhibitors. The generosity of these sponsors helps so much in keeping the conference costs within reach. Thank you!

A big thank you goes out to the entire NeRWA board for all of their help and support. Each and every one of you contributed in your own way whether it was with game night, round tables or presentations. A special thank you to board member, Gene Schroeder, who helped fill a void left by a presenter that could not attend. Most of all Gene, thanks for telling “your story” about safety.

Finally, thank you to my co-workers for all the things they did to help with the conference. But I especially want to say: Mike Stanzel - thanks for hauling the “entire” conference in the St. Mark’s Lutheran Church trailer to Grand Island and back home again! Barney Whatley - thanks for setting up all of the computers, scanners, and whatever else I may be forgetting that made classroom activities and the conference go smoothly. Mike Lucas - thanks for making the “best tasting drinking water” competition go so well. Russ Topp and Randy Hellbusch - wow, you guys hauled a lot of boxes in and a lot of boxes out. Thanks a ton. Salli Kemerling and Carol Jasa - I will just call you two the “registration wizards.” With a team like this how could you not look forward to planning the 2014 annual conference?