

Springtime Fun

By Pat Petersen, Training Specialist

For those of you who have had the opportunity to meet me as the Nebraska Rural Water Association's Training Specialist, you have seen how I have become more relaxed when it comes to conference time. This year was no different. The doors to the Younes Center were opened on Monday, March 13th for our annual conference and the fun did not stop until we had the trailer loaded and headed east on Interstate 80 on Wednesday, March 15th.

This year's conference was once again a complete success. This success rides on the shoulders of the operators, vendors and the professional presenters that take the time out of their busy schedules to have a little "fun" for a couple of days. I say "fun" because, it really has become a fun time for me. I think I speak for all of us at the Nebraska Rural Water Association when I use the word "fun".

Monday began with a warm welcome from Board President Tom Goulette followed by the annual regulation update. This year we welcomed some new faces to the conference, Mr. Don VanVelhuizen from the USA Blue Book was one of them. He gave an entertaining presentation about "When Robert's Rules of Order Become Disorderly." NDHHS Area Field Representative Rich Koenig closed out Wednesday by being the mediator of an "Operator Forum" for all operators, board members and anyone in attendance to voice concerns or ask questions about what may be troubling their systems. This was a fantastic Monday! Although I say it was fantastic, it was far from over.

Monday evening "fun night" was held again at the Big Apple Bowling Center. JEO spearheaded the event with the help of HOA, Sargent Drilling, Miller and Associates and NeRWA. Everyone who attended this event was treated to free pool, bowling, mini golf and a drink of their choice. Since JEO Consulting Engineers has taken the reins of this event, it seems that attendance has increased and the fun meter is moving up.

Training sessions began at 9 AM Tuesday morning and concluded at 5:45 PM that evening. Wow, that is a long day of learning! So what goes good with a long day of learning - how about some delicious banquet food, award presentations, a complimentary drink and some live music.

Following the banquet meal the NDHHS gave out two operator of the year awards. They were given to Lonnie Petrzilka from Denton and Jeff Sweetser from Fairbury. Both are very deserving of this award and congratulations to you both. The Chad Lee Band then took the stage and entertained everyone until after ten. Once again the music was great and the evening was a very enjoyable time.

Wednesday morning started with the traditional business meeting and operator breakfast. The delicious breakfast was well attended and the meeting carried on as usual. One big decision

that was made was the installation of a new board member. Jordan Bang with the Lancaster County Rural Water District #1 was chosen as our newest board member. Welcome aboard Jordan and we look forward to working with you.

Following the morning festivities, training sessions began at 8:30 AM and concluded at 2:00 PM. The final day of training can be a challenge to keep operators around but this final day was a little different....it was full! Maybe it was all of the fantastic raffle prizes that were to be won, but I really think it is just the amazing support these men and women show the Nebraska Rural Water Association. Speaking of raffle prizes, here is a rundown of some of the winners. Jeff Gress with the Village of Clarks was a two time winner. He won a 255 piece tool set and a very large LED TV. Some of the other major raffle winners included: Lyle Haneline, Dan Tanksley III, Tim Cleays, Mike Stieren, Brent Rahe, Wade Turner, Terry Thompson, and Tony Corbin. Another big winner was Dwight "Butch" Nickel. Butch works for the Village of Western. Butch had pestered his water tower contractor, Richard "Dick" Frankforter, for several years about a MaGuire Iron Jacket. Well, the jacket arrived, covered with 25 years of water tower paint. It's the fun shenanigans like this that can put the frosting on another fantastic conference.

With that being said, operators, vendors, entertainers and Younes Center staff, you've shown us your support again by making this conference great for all! Nebraska Rural Water Association board members, President Tom Goulette, Larry Wennkamp, Dennis Hoback, George Wagner, Tom Grovijohn and Greg Bouc, thank you for always asking where you can help and offering your moral support as our leaders. Finally, I am the lucky one that gets to write the articles about the conferences but the work that Salli, Carol and Amy do at the office is amazing. My team of workhorses, Randy Hellbusch, Mike Lucas, Mike Stanzel, Barney Whatley, and Ken Halvorsen, is a team that I will never trade for anyone!

I have had several requests to wear a pedometer while supervising the conference....next year I will do it and see just how many steps it really does take to run a three day conference. Maybe we'll see who guesses the closest amount of steps it takes and the winner gets lunch. I don't know, just a thought. See you next year!