

Fall Conference Fun

By Pat Petersen, Training Specialist

As I sit down to write this article about the fall conference, the temperature outside is 41 degrees. September 11-13, 2018 were the dates for the NeRWA “fall” conference and the temps were 91, 93 and 96 degrees, perfect temperatures for a fun-filled week of activities and learning in Gering, Nebraska.

The pre-conference this year provided operators some very useful information about safety. Bob Hessler with Safetyline Consultants provided the instruction and once again received a very high rating according to our evaluations. His topics included: Traffic Control, Equipment Operation, Personal Protective Equipment and a special session titled, Who’s Fault is it? This was an in depth discussion on who is at fault or who may be to blame should an accident happen on the job. Thank you again, Bob.

Once again after the pre-conference, participants headed to the Riverview Golf Course where thirty-eight golfers took to the course. The golf tourney once again was a huge success. Most of this success relies on the exhibitors and vendors who choose to sponsor a hole or a pin prize for the golfers. Sponsors this year were Core and Main, Sargent Drilling, Municipal Supply, Johnson Service, M.C. Schaff, Baker and Associates, Advanced Consulting Engineers, Municipal Automation, Miller and Associates and Barco. A huge thank you to all!!

When Wednesday morning rolled around, operators could either participate in the trap shoot at the Mitchell Gun Club, ride in the Poker Run or sleep in. Eighteen chose to fire their guns at the range and seven went for a beautiful morning ride on their motorcycles. Municipal Automation was the sponsor of the trap shoot this year. Thanks, Bill! In years past, the poker run didn’t really have a sponsor to help fund the winners of the best poker hands besides the regular participation fees. This year was no different. That is, until Area 7 Field Rep, Tony Martinez, heard that there was no sponsor. Tony graciously donated \$50 to the Poker Run prize money. The winner of the poker run ended up being Area 8 Field Rep, Doug Woodbeck, who in return donated his winnings to the NeRWA equipment fund. Something he has done more than once by winning this event. It is things like this that make our profession (Drinking Water Professionals) so special and a great group of men and women to be a part of! Thanks guys, it really does mean a lot!

Andy Kahle then kicked off the conference with a session about regulatory changes and asset management programs. His session was followed by an update of water and wastewater certification procedures by Mike McBride with NDEQ and Mike Wentink with DHHS. Rich Koenig finished up Wednesday with an open forum for operators. This forum gave tips and pointers on how well do you “really” know your system and an opportunity to ask questions about anything you may be experiencing with your system as an operator.

A full breakfast awaited operators at 6:30 AM Thursday morning. The breakfast was well attended and helped prepare the operators for a big day of learning. Some of the presentations on Thursday included sewer rehabilitation, contamination issues, ice pigging, meter maintenance, flow controls and a round table. Thursday's classes were well attended and before we knew it our trek back east was about to begin.

Throughout the conference, operators are given the chance to win several door prizes. Just by being in attendance, they are given a chance to win one of many items. Municipal Supply (Hats), Barco (Garden Cart), Johnson Service (Fish and Game Table), Hawkins (Yeti Sidekick), Municipal Automation (Yeti Cups, Gloves), Elliott Sanitation (Golf Supplies) and Sargent Drilling (2 Pullovers) provided some of the prizes for the operators. Other door prizes included golf balls, fishing poles and many more things that I just do not have room to mention!

A big thank you to the Gering Civic Center and their staff for always having what we may have left 450 miles behind at the office and also providing excellent food for everyone. Rick and Judy, you have a great staff and you are all great to work with. Also, thank you to Mike Stanzel and Randy for running the golf tourney and trapshoot, Mike Lucas and Ken for being the photographers, Barney for all of the sign creations you come up with and finally the ladies back at the office for putting the "conference" in a box and pushing us out the door. Thanks, Salli, Amy and Carol!

So as we head towards 2019 I want to wish everyone the best of luck, good health and good fortune as we finish another amazing year! See you all in Kearney in March!!