



THE SPIGOT

from the NORTH DAKOTA RURAL WATER SYSTEMS ASSOCIATION

Annual Water Expo *Celebrates 27 Years*

By Lisa Schatz

With a record number of exhibitors and attendees for this year's North Dakota Rural Water Systems Association (NDRWSA) 27th annual Water Expo the "buzz" was to provide top-notch training for water systems to maintain quality water for all citizens throughout North Dakota. On Feb. 12-14, the Bismarck Best Western Ramkota opened its doors to 106 exhibitors and nearly 500 attendees for this event. Exhibitors as far north as Mississauga, Ontario, and as far south as Georgia arrived to showcase their products. Attendees took advantage of valuable training sessions, roundtable discussions among their peers, and the new exhibitor products available in today's ever-changing water industry.

NDRWSA President Keith Nilson kicked off the event and welcomed Gov. Jack Dalrymple, who discussed the importance of rural water and the funding dedicated to water systems this legislative session. Special guests, Jasper Schneider, state director of USDA Rural Development and Terry Harzinski of the Bismarck-Mandan Convention and Visitors Bureau gave a warm welcome to all attendees. Dot Frank inspired the crowd with her motivational presentation, "Fish!"

We Appreciate our Exhibitors

From Ontario to Georgia and from Washington to Ohio, 106 associate members arrived to showcase their products. Training demonstrations were held at exhibitors' booths to allow water and wastewater personnel to get an up-close and personal perspective of equipment and new and improved products.

"Exhibitors are an integral part of the overall success

of our Expo and we truly appreciate the time and effort they put forth to make it such a success. The valuable information provided by our exhibitors helps water and wastewater operators better perform their jobs," says Eric Volk, executive director of NDRWSA. A special thank you goes to the 2013 Expo sponsors. Watch for a special dedication to Expo sponsors in an upcoming Spigot edition.

Something for Everyone

After a hearty breakfast on Feb. 12, attendees settled in for more specific training opportunities while roundtable sessions were held for the board of directors and rural water managers. After two days of sessions and numerous other topics relating to water and wastewater systems, conference attendees felt confident returning home with beneficial and valuable information. Operators in attendance earned up to eight continuing education units towards maintaining their certification.

Meter Assembly Competition

Operators displayed their skills by participating in a meter assembly competition. Nearly 15 participants put their expertise to work while being judged for speed and accuracy. Perry Kuss from Stutsman Rural



Perry Kuss of Stutsman Rural Water District and Bob Shelstad of Ferguson Waterworks.

Water District was this year's winner and recipient of the \$100 cash prize donated by Ferguson Waterworks.

Pre-Conference Tour

Bright and early Tuesday morning, transportation was provided to the National Energy Center of Excellence (NECE) located on the Bismarck State College (BSC) campus. Joan Trygg, the Center's marketing and advising manager, welcomed guests and announced the increasing interest in the Water and Wastewater Technician Program that became available online last fall. Joan Mapel of BSC gave a tour of the facility as well as a virtual tour of the water plant program. Teresa Sundsbak, general manager of North Prairie Rural Water District (NPRWD) discussed the tuition reimbursement program available through NPRWD. A special thank you to AE2S for providing breakfast for our tour attendees!

Live Radio

Radio talk-show host Joel Heitkamp, broadcasted his show live from the Bismarck Best Western Ramkota Hotel on Feb. 14, where he interviewed many attendees including NDRWSA Executive Director Eric Volk, NDRWSA Vice President Michele Schommer, and Gordy Johnson, North Valley Water District manager. "I would like to thank Joel for giving our Expo this type of statewide exposure," says NDRWSA President Keith Nilson.

Honoring the Best in the Business

Gordon "Gordy" Johnson, manager of North Valley Water District, was the recipient of the "Outstanding Water Works Employee" award. This award is given to a water operator or rural water system manager with outstanding leadership abilities and extraordinary accomplishments in water operations beyond the normal requirements



Gordon Johnson of North Valley Water District and Michele Schommer, vice president of NDRWSA.

of their job. This individual has demonstrated superior performance, dedication, and leadership in his endeavor to provide quality water to North Dakotans. Congratulations, Gordy!



Keith Nilson, NDRWSA president, and Linda Aubol of Tri-County Water District.

Linda Aubol of Tri-County Water District was awarded with the "Outstanding Office Employee" award. This award is given to those unsung heroes working quietly in the background: office managers, secretaries, clerks, city auditors, whatever their titles may be – they are the backbone of every organization. These individuals have gone that extra mile

in promoting water issues to their boards, councils, management and communities. Congratulations Linda!

Bill Link of Grafton was presented with the highly prized,

"Clark Cronquist Waterline" award. This award is given to someone who, through distinctive leadership and perseverance, has gone above and beyond the call of duty in the promotion, development, and enhancement of rural water on a state or national level. Congratulations Bill!



NDRWSA President Keith Nilson and Bill Link of Grafton.

Jim Lennington of Bismarck was presented with the prestigious "Friend of Rural Water" award. This award is given each year to individuals who have demonstrated their commitment to providing quality water to North Dakotans through the promotion, development, or enhancement of the state association or a local, city, or rural water system. Lennington is a senior project manager for Bartlett & West Engineers, Inc. Congratulations Jim!



Jim Lennington of Bartlett & West Engineers, Inc.

Live Auction Raises \$8,000 for Scholarship Fund

Nearly 40 items were donated by rural water systems, exhibitors, and individuals for this year's annual Patrick Denne Memorial Scholarship live auction. Watch next month's Spigot pages for further information regarding the auction.

And the Winner is...

This year, 12 water samples were submitted from rural water systems and city systems to participate in the Best Tasting Water Competition held during the Expo. The water samples were rated on clarity, odor, color, and of course, taste. After completing two rounds of taste testing, the ballots were counted and narrowed down to three possibilities. The finalist panel, which consisted of four judges, crowned State Line Water Cooperative (SLWC) as the winner. In February, SLWC will represent North Dakota at the national contest in Washington, D.C., and have a chance to be named the "Best Tasting Drinking Water" in the nation! The runners up were South Central Regional Water District and Barnes Rural Water District.



Above, Mark Vander Vorst of State Line Water Cooperative and NDRWSA President Keith Nilson.

Left, Gordy Blixt, past president of NDRWSA and Les Sigette, wastewater technician of NDRWSA.

