



THE SPIGOT

from the NORTH DAKOTA RURAL WATER SYSTEMS ASSOCIATION

Rural Water Expo Celebrates 29 Years

By Lisa Schatz

Even after 29 years, the North Dakota Rural Water Systems Association (NDRWSA) annual Rural Water Expo still has the reputation of providing top-notch training for water systems striving to maintain quality water.

This year's Rural Water Expo, held in February, boasted a record number of exhibitors and attendees. Nearly 500 participants and 109 exhibitors from Georgia, Colorado, Illinois, and other areas of the country attended the event to showcase their products. Participants took advantage of valuable training sessions, roundtable discussions among their peers, and demonstrations of the new products available in today's ever-changing water industry.

Opening Ceremonies

NDRWSA President Jon Nelson kicked off the event and welcomed Gov. Jack Dalrymple, who discussed the changing times in North Dakota and the importance of adapting and providing for our robust economy. Sen. John Hoeven provided a video message relaying the importance of maintaining and building

infrastructure so trained water professionals can continue to provide potable water to all citizens of North Dakota. Bill Davis, acting state director of USDA Rural Development addressed the collaborative efforts being done for the development and sustainability of water and wastewater utilities

across North Dakota. Michele Schommer, NDRWSA's national representative, addressed the crowd with updates from the National Rural Water Association and discussed its continuing efforts.

Exhibit Hall

As the doors opened, attendees flooded the exhibit hall, curious to discover new and innovative equipment available in today's ever-changing water and wastewater industry. Exhibitors from across the nation showcased their equipment, products, and services. "Exhibitors are an integral part of the overall success of the 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 NDRWSA Executive Director Eric Volk. A special thank you goes to our 2015 Expo exhibitors. Watch for a special dedication to Expo exhibitors and sponsors in an upcoming "Spigot" article.

Something for Everyone

After a hearty breakfast Thursday morning, attendees settled in for more specific training opportunities while roundtable sessions were held for the boards of directors and rural water



Monty Miller and Nick Brehm with the city of Cando and Byron Kleven of the city of Stanley at the 2015 Rural Water Expo.



Jim Drong of Barnes Rural Water District and Mike Mortenson of Wells Concrete visit in the Expo's Exhibit Hall.





Nels Halgren of Greater Ramsey Water District, Larry Amundson of Dakota Rural Water District, Rod Beck of Rural Development, Connie Halldorson of Northeast Regional Water District, and Jack Hancock of Agassiz Water Users District won awards at this year's Rural Water Expo.



NDRWSA President Jon Nelson presents Mary Massad of Southwest Water Authority with the 2015 Best Tasting Water Award.

managers. Training demonstrations were held at exhibitors' booths to allow water and wastewater personnel to get an up-close-and-personal perspective of equipment and products. After two days of sessions and numerous other topics relating to water and wastewater systems, conference attendees returned home with beneficial and valuable information. Operators in attendance earned up to eight continuing educational units towards maintaining their certifications.

Meter Change-Out Competition

Operators displayed their skills by participating in the meter change-out competition. Nearly 20 participants put their expertise to work while being judged for speed and accuracy. Brent Harr from Stutsman Rural Water District was this year's winner and recipient of the \$100 cash prize donated by Ferguson Waterworks.

Honoring the Best in the Business

Many deserving people received awards during the Expo's Awards Banquet. Nels Halgren of the Greater Ramsey Water District was the recipient of the Outstanding Water Works Employee Award, which is given to a water operator or rural water system manager with outstanding leadership abilities and extraordinary accomplishments in water operations beyond the job's normal requirements. The award is given each year to an individual who has demonstrated superior performance, dedication, and leadership in his or her endeavors to provide quality water to North Dakotans.

Connie Halldorson of Northeast Regional Water District received the Outstanding Office Employee Award, which is given to an unsung hero working quietly in the background, such as an office manager, secretary, clerk, or city auditor. These individuals are the backbone of every organization. The award is given each year to individuals who have gone the extra mile in promoting water issues to their boards, councils, management, and communities.

Jack Hancock of Gilby was presented with the highly prized, Clark Cronquist Waterline Award, which is given to someone who, through his or her 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.

Larry Amundson of Dakota Rural Water District and Rod Beck of USDA Rural Development were presented with the prestigious Friend of Rural Water Award, which 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.

NDRWSA congratulates all of these deserving individuals for their accomplishments!

Live Auction for Scholarship Fund

Nearly 50 items were donated by rural water systems, exhibitors, and individuals for this year's annual Patrick Denne Memorial Scholarship live auction. Watch for more information in an upcoming "Spigot" article.

Equipment Raffle

Attendees had an opportunity to participate in a raffle to benefit NDRWSA's Equipment Fund, which allows the Association to purchase equipment to help benefit and provide service for water and wastewater utilities. Items purchased in the past include an all materials locator, sewer camera equipment, and smoke-testing equipment. In the near future, an acoustic leak detector will be added, which will provide leak location for extreme temperatures and depths up to 14 feet.

Water Taste Test

This year, 18 water samples were submitted from rural water systems and city systems across the state to participate in the Best Tasting Water Competition held during the Expo. The samples were rated on clarity, odor, color, and taste. After completing two rounds of taste testing, the ballots were counted and narrowed down to three finalists. The finalist panel, which consisted of three judges, crowned the Southwest Water Authority as this year's winner. In February, Southwest Water Authority 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 the city of Mayville and Northeast Regional Water District.