



THE SPIGOT

from the NORTH DAKOTA RURAL WATER SYSTEMS ASSOCIATION

NDRWSA Expo Celebrates 26 Years

By Lisa Schatz

As the well-known expression states “change is good,” and the North Dakota Rural Water Systems Association (NDRWSA) staff can certainly attest to that! This year’s 26th annual Water Systems Expo and Technical Conference was held in Fargo for the first time since 1990. In February, the Ramada Plaza and Suites opened its doors to 100 exhibitors and nearly 500 attendees for this event. Exhibitors as far north as Winnipeg, Manitoba and as far south as Las Vegas 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 followed by a warm welcome to Fargo from Cole Carley of the Fargo CVB. Special guest Tom Nelson, the state director of Rep. Rick Berg (R-N.D.) spoke during the opening session. Video addresses were given by Sen. John Hoeven (R-N.D.) and Berg. Steve Fletcher of Illinois, a board member for the National Rural Water Association gave the keynote address. Patty Corwin inspired the crowd with her motivational presentation, “How to Handle Change with Humor.”

We Appreciate our Exhibitors

From Manitoba to Las Vegas and from Washington to Pennsylvania; 100 associate member exhibitors 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 the Expo and we truly appreciate the time and effort they put forth to make it such a success,” says said Eric Volk, executive director of NDRWSA. “The valuable information provided by our exhibitors helps water and wastewater operators better perform their jobs.”

Something for Everyone

After a hearty breakfast, attendees settled in for more specific training opportunities and roundtable sessions were held the for board of directors, rural water managers, and office 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.

Pre-Conference Tour

New to Expo this year was the pre-conference tour. Bright and early the day before the Expo started, attendees visited the Fargo Effluent Reuse Facility and Tharaldson Ethanol Plant. The tour was guided by by the City of Fargo and Moore Engineering. While visiting the Tharaldson Ethanol Plant, Jerry Blomeke of Cass Rural Water Users District and Corey Aanenson of the Tharaldson Ethanol Plant addressed the crowd, providing details of the project and answering questions. A special thank you to AE2S for providing breakfast for our tour attendees!



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And the Winner Is...

This year, there were 16 water samples submitted from rural water and city systems that participated 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 six judges, crowned South Central Regional Water District (SCWD) as the winner. Next February, SCWD will represent North Dakota at Washington D.C. and have a chance to be named the "Best Tasting Drinking Water" in the nation! The runners up were North Prairie Rural Water District and the City of Oakes.

Honoring the Best in the Business

Steve Hansen, manager of Southeast Water Users District was the recipient of the "Outstanding Water Works Employee" award. This award is given to water operators or rural water system managers with outstanding leadership abilities and extraordinary accomplishments in water operations beyond the normal requirements of their job. Recipients of this award have demonstrated superior performance, dedication, and leadership in their endeavor to provide quality water to North Dakotans. Congratulations Steve!



Shari Hagen, office manager of Grand Forks-Traill Water District was awarded with the "Outstanding Office Employee" award. This award is given to the 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 the extra mile in promoting water issues to their boards, councils, management, and communities. Congratulations Shari!



Meter Assembly Competition

Operators displayed their skills by participating in a meter assembly competition. Nearly 25 participants put their expertise to work while being judged for speed and accuracy. Sam Shutt from the City of Minto was this year's winner and recipient of the \$100 cash prize donated by Ferguson Waterworks.

Live Radio

Radio talk-show host Joel Heitkamp broadcast his radio show live from the Expo, where he interviewed many attendees including Volk, Jaret Wirtz, manager of the Western Area Water Supply Authority, and Tony Belden of Engineering America. "I would like to thank Joel for giving our Expo this type of statewide exposure," says Nilson.

Live Auction Raises \$8,100 for Scholarship Fund

Nearly 65 items were donated by rural water systems and individuals for this year's annual Patrick Denne Memorial Scholarship live auction. Find out more about the auction in the June Spigot pages.