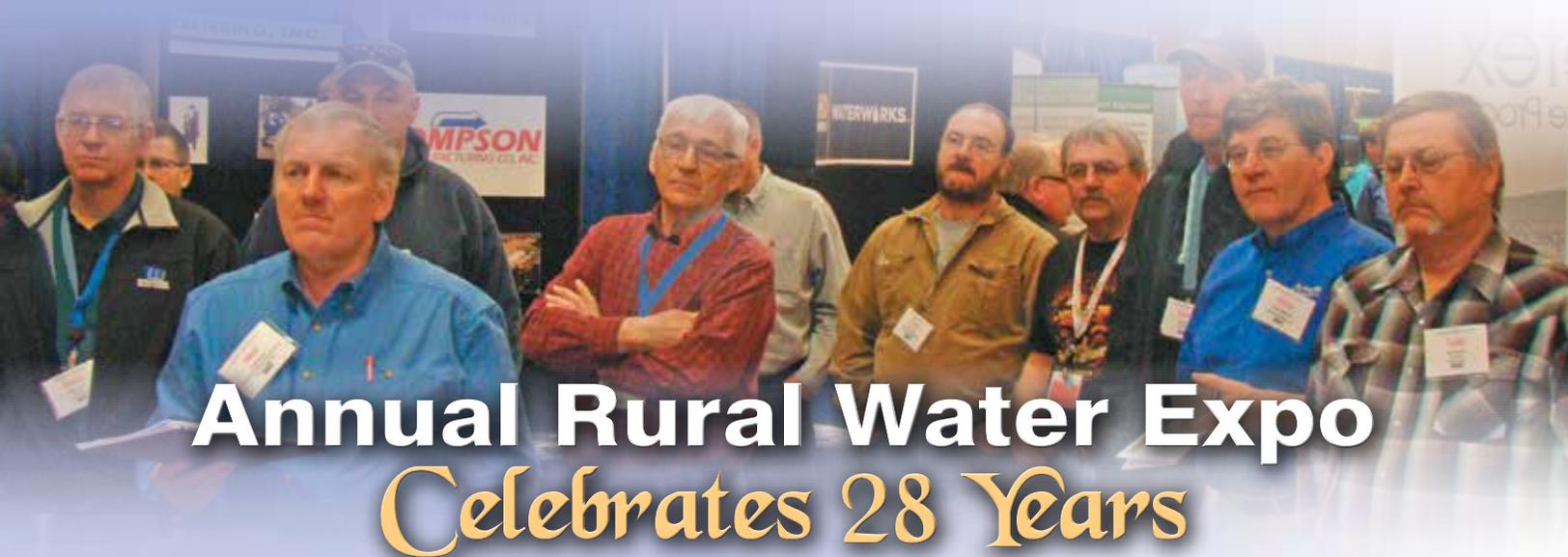




THE SPIGOT

from the NORTH DAKOTA RURAL WATER SYSTEMS ASSOCIATION



Annual Rural Water Expo Celebrates 28 Years

By Lisa Schatz

North Dakota Rural Water Systems Association (NDRWSA) hosted the 28th annual Rural Water Expo in February in Fargo. NDRWSA strives to provide top-notch training and essential information for water systems to provide reliable and safe drinking water to its members. Exhibitors, rural water managers, board members, water and wastewater operators, and city officials had an opportunity to partake in sessions provided by professionals well versed in the water industry. In addition to the training sessions, special guests Sen. John Hoeven and Rep. Kevin Cramer addressed the attendees concerning the changing times in North Dakota and their efforts in keeping rural North Dakota robust.

Opening Ceremonies

NDRWSA President Michele Schommer kicked off the event and welcomed Hoeven, who discussed the importance of rural areas, expanding cities, and the efforts in providing healthy, sustainable water to all citizens across North Dakota. Charley Johnson of the Fargo-Moorhead Convention and Visitors Bureau gave a warm welcome to all attendees. John Bearman, NDRWSA's national representative, addressed the crowd with updates from the National Rural Water Association and its continuing efforts. State Rep. Jon Nelson, NDRWSA's vice president, led a legislative forum answering questions and concerns of attendees. And last, but not least, motivational speaker, Cole Carley inspired the crowd with his presentation, "Change, Challenge, and Charles Darwin."

We Appreciate our Exhibitors

As the doors opened, attendees flooded the exhibit hall area, curious to discover new and innovative equipment available in today's ever-changing water and wastewater

industry. Exhibitors from across the country showcased their equipment, products, and services. "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 job," says Eric Volk, executive director of NDRWSA. A special thank you goes to our 2014 Expo exhibitors. Watch for a special dedication to these exhibitors and sponsors in the "Spigot" pages of an upcoming edition of the *North Dakota Water* magazine.



Leo Ackerman of Traill Rural Water District and Geoff Slick of AE2S.

Something for Everyone

After a hearty breakfast, attendees settled in for more specific training opportunities, while roundtable sessions were held for the board of directors and rural water 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 felt confident returning home with beneficial and valuable information. Operators in attendance earned up to eight continuing education units toward maintaining their certifications.

Meter Change-Out Competition

Operators displayed their skills by participating in this year's meter change-out competition. Nearly 20 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.



Bob Shelstad of Ferguson Waterworks presents Sam Shutt of the city of Minto with the prize for winning the Expo's meter competition.

Pre-Conference Tour

Bright and early the morning of the first day, transportation was provided to GPK Products, Inc., and Northern Pipe Products of Fargo. GPK Products, Inc., is a leader in the manufacturing of pipe drainage fittings. Attendees had the opportunity to witness the fabrication, injection molding, and oven cure process used during manufacturing. Following the GPK Products tour, Northern Pipe Products (NPP) allowed attendees to tour its state-of-the-art manufacturing facility. NPP supplies water and sewer PVC pipe throughout the Midwest. This tour provided participants with a better understanding of PVC pipe by exploring the material handling, blending, extrusion, testing, and packaging processes. A special thank you to AE2S for providing breakfast for our tour attendees!

Live Radio

Radio talk show host Joel Heitkamp broadcast his radio show live from the Rural Water Expo, where he interviewed many attendees including Volk, Jaret Wirtz of Western Area Water Supply, Larry Schultz of Southeast Water Users District, and Gordy Johnson of Northeast Regional Water District. "I would like to thank Joel for giving our Expo this type of statewide exposure," says Schommer.

Honoring the Best in the Business

Randy Thompson of Grand Forks-Traill and Guy Mischel of Southwest Water Authority were the recipients 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 of their job. These individuals have demonstrated superior performance, dedication, and leadership in their endeavors to provide quality water to North Dakotans. Congratulations Randy and Guy!



Randy and Carol Thompson of Grand Forks-Traill Rural Water District.

Brad Hejtmanek of Southeast Water Users District was posthumously awarded with the Outstanding Office Employee Award. This award is given to those unsung heroes who work quietly in the background: office managers, secretaries, clerks, city auditors, whatever their title 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. Accepting Hejtmanek's award was his wife, Karen, and sons, Doug and Jason.

Joe LaFave of Bismarck 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 Joe!

Jerry Blomeke of Fargo was presented with the prestigious Friend of Rural Water Award. This award is given each year to an individual who has demonstrated his or her 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. Blomeke is the manager of Cass Rural Water Users District. Congratulations Jerry!



NDRWSA Vice President Jon Nelson presents Jerry Blomeke of Cass Rural Water with the Friend of Rural Water Award.

Live Auction Raises \$7,000 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. More details on this auction will be available in a future "Spigot" article.

And the Winner is...

This year, 19 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 finalists. The finalist panel, which consisted of three judges, crowned the city of Wahpeton as the winner. The City of Wahpeton will represent North Dakota at the national taste contest in Washington, D.C., and have a chance to be named the "Best Tasting Drinking Water" in the nation! The contest's runners up were Grand Forks-Traill Water District and Southeast Water Users District.



Above, NDRWSA President Michele Schommer presents Allan Weiland of the city of Wahpeton with the travelling trophy for best tasting water in North Dakota. Left, Expo attendees sample water and cast their votes for the best tasting water in North Dakota.

