



# THE SPIGOT

from the NORTH DAKOTA RURAL WATER SYSTEMS ASSOCIATION

## 25th Annual Water Expo: Celebrating 25 years

By Lisa Schatz

### North Dakota Rural Water Systems Association

Twenty-five years may seem like a long time for many, and for the North Dakota Rural Water Systems Association (NDRWSA) 25 years has brought lots of changes. But one thing that has not changed in 25 years is one of NDRWSA's goals – to provide top-notch training and education. That is exactly what happened at the 25th Annual Water Expo and Conference, Feb. 1-3 at the Bismarck Ramkota Hotel. Nearly 500 people attended this year's event to take advantage of numerous training sessions, roundtable discussions among their peers, view new exhibitor products, and the banquet. This year's theme was "Celebrating 25 Years."

NDRWSA President Gordy Blixt kicked off the event followed by Sheri Grossman and Kelvin Hullet of the Bismarck-Mandan Chamber of Commerce, who welcomed everyone to Bismarck. Special guest Jasper Schneider, the state director of USDA Rural Development, spoke during the opening session. LoAnn Wegh, president of LoAnn's Marketing in Dickinson, inspired the audience with her motivational presentation.

Several attendees participated in the Expo's operation and maintenance tracks.

### NDRWSA Appreciates its Exhibitors

Nearly 80 associate member exhibitors from Montana to Illinois and in between were available to provide information about their services as well as demonstrate products at their booths during the exhibition. "The valuable information provided by our exhibitors helps the water and wastewater operators who attend, better perform their duties. 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 strength of our association starts with the strong support we receive from our associate members," says Eric Volk, executive director of NDRWSA. NDRWSA sends a special thank you to the numerous exhibitors who helped sponsor the socials and meals – in particular – the 25th anniversary sponsor, AE2S and the diamond sponsors, Bartlett & West Engineers, Dakota Pump and Control, Moore Engineering, and TEAM Laboratory Chemical Corporation.



The Expo's 25th anniversary sponsor was AE2S. Pictured from left to right: Geoffrey Slick, Charlie Vein (president), Cal Thelen (rural water group manager), Dustin Shultz, and Jack Long.

## Something for Everyone

The Expo offered many different educational opportunities on a wide variety of topics, providing something for everyone associated with the water industry. Operators in attendance earned up to eight continuing educational units towards maintaining their certification.

## Water Day at the Legislature

Feb. 1, was Water Day at the North Dakota Legislature and North Dakota legislators were invited to attend a social hour in the exhibit area. Members of the North Dakota Water Coalition joined in sponsoring this event.

## Meter Assembly Competition

New to the Expo this year was the meter assembly competition. Nearly 20 participants put their expertise to work while being judged for speed and accuracy. Ray Rakoczy from Grand Forks-Traill Water District was this year's winner and recipient of the \$100 cash prize.



**Ray Rakoczy (left) of Grand Forks-Traill Water District and Ed Rekkedal of Arvilla, participated in the meter assembly competition.**

## Live Radio

Radio talk show host Joel Heitkamp broadcast his radio show live from the Ramkota one morning, where he interviewed Volk, Southwest Water Authority Manager/CEO Mary Massad, Jeff Breker of Southeast Water Users District, and several other attendees.

"I would like to thank Joel for giving the Expo this type of statewide exposure," Blixt says.

## Honoring the Best in the Business

Massad was the recipient of the "Outstanding Water Works Employee" award, which is given each year to individuals who have demonstrated superior performance, dedication, and leadership in their endeavor to provide quality water to North Dakotans.

Bob Keller, the location division manager of field services for Bartlett & West Engineers, Inc., 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.

Sandy Nelson, the office manager of Barnes Rural Water District, was awarded with the "Outstanding Office Employee" award. This award is given to the unsung heroes working quietly in the background who have gone that extra mile in promoting water issues and provide support to management and other decision makers.

Jack Long, a professional engineer with AE<sub>2</sub>S was this year's recipient of NDRWSA's most prestigious award – The Waterline Award, which is given to someone who, through their distinctive leadership and perseverance, has gone above and beyond the call of duty in the promotion, development, or enhancement of rural water on a state or national level.

## Live Auction Raises \$6,000 for Scholarship Fund

Nearly 40 items were donated by rural water systems and individuals for this year's annual Patrick Denne Memorial Scholarship live auction. Check out the May edition of *North Dakota Water* for further information regarding the auction.

## Who has the Best Tasting Water in North Dakota?

Water systems from throughout the state submitted samples of their water 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. The winner of this year's event was the City of Garrison, which will represent North Dakota at the national taste contest on Capitol Hill in Washington, D.C. Runners-up were the City of Mayville and Southeast Water Users District.



**Judges Angelo Polsinelli of Dakota Pump & Control, Cal Thelen of AE<sub>2</sub>S, Bob Keller of Bartlett & West, and Mike Foerstch of Moore Engineering make the final decision on the 2011 Best Tasting Water competition.**