



THE SPIGOT

from the NORTH DAKOTA RURAL WATER SYSTEMS ASSOCIATION

Honoring the Best in the Business

By Lisa Schatz

During the North Dakota Rural Water Systems Association (NDRWSA) 33rd Annual Water EXPO, an awards ceremony was held to recognize individuals that have dedicated years of service to the water industry.

And the 2019 award winners are...

Liz Suhr Receives Outstanding Office Employee Award

Liz Suhr, R&T Water District, was presented the Outstanding Office Employee award, which is given to office employees that have gone above and beyond the call of duty to promote water issues to their communities and provide support to management and other decisionmakers.

Liz has been involved in the water industry for 12 years and currently works as the business manager for R&T Water District. Liz serves on the City of Ray Planning and Zoning Board and is very involved with the community. Throughout the years, her role and responsibilities has grown immensely. When R&T expanded its service into rural distribution, she embraced the challenge of learning and understanding the relationship between R&T and its membership with the Western Area Water Supply Authority.

Liz lives in Ray with her husband and has two daughters. In her spare time, she enjoys going to UND hockey and Minnesota Twins games. Liz is an avid quilter and enjoys flowering and gardening.

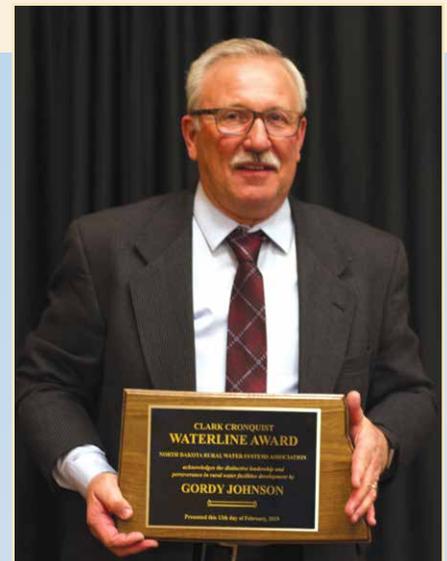


Gordy Johnson Receives Clark Cronquist Waterline Award

Gordy Johnson, Cavalier, was presented with the highly prized Clark Cronquist Waterline. This award 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.

Gordy started employment as the general manager with North Valley Water Association in 1975. In 2014, the system merged with Langdon Rural Water District to form the Northeast Regional Water District. Gordy has served on several boards throughout his career, including Akra Township board and school board, as well as various committees within his community. He has received several awards, including Outstanding Water Works Employee, Waterline Award and the Operator's Award. Gordy faced many challenges while building the water system, but he worked hard to come up with solutions to better the district. Gordy was successful in securing more than \$30 million of grant funding and often talks about the original system compared to what it has grown into today. He believes rural water has been a huge positive factor – not only in terms of retaining and encouraging rural residences, but also in improving quality of life.

Gordy has been married for 49 years and has 3 children and 11 grandchildren.



Kenny Rogers Awarded Friend of Rural Water

Kenny Rogers was presented with the prestigious Friend of Rural Water. This award is given each year to those 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.

Kenny has devoted 23 years of his life to the water industry. He is a Maxbass native and is presently serving on the All Seasons Water Users District Board. He has served or serves on numerous boards and committees, such as Garrison Diversion Conservancy Board, Northwest Area Water Supply Advisory Committee, Assinboine River Basin Initiative Board, and the Missouri River Advisory Council. He is a mentor for many and has traveled throughout the United States and Canada discussing many and all types of water issues. Kenny and his wife have two children. In his spare time, he likes to talk “water.”



Mike Thompson Honored as Outstanding Water Works Employee

Mike Thompson, East Central Regional Water District (ECRWD), received the Outstanding Water Works Employee. This award is given to a water operator or rural water system manager who has shown outstanding leadership abilities and has performed beyond the normal requirements of their job.

Mike has been employed at ECRWD for 29 years and holds a Class 4 Water Plant Operation License and a Class 3 Water Distribution License. The district had this to say, “Mike has worked in all areas of the water world and has been pivotal in the success of the reverse osmosis plant. He is not afraid to roll up his sleeves and work hard. Whether it be nights, weekends or even holidays, Mike is always willing to help. Mike is a dedicated employee and is always keeping up with modern technology to keep the water plant running efficiently and smoothly.”

Mike and his wife have three daughters. In his spare time, he enjoys spending time at their cabin on Cotton Lake. He is an avid hunter, trapper and fisherman.



City of Bismarck Wins Water Taste Contest

Attendees at NDRWSA’s annual conference have found the best tasting water in North Dakota. On Feb. 13, the winner of a statewide competition was announced in an effort to identify the tastiest water in the state and, participants hope, in the nation.

Nineteen large, small and rural water utilities from around the state submitted samples of their water straight from the tap. Conference attendees narrowed it down to four systems – North Prairie Rural Water District, East Central Regional Water District, R&T Water District, and the City of Bismarck. The winner of this year’s competition was the City of Bismarck, whose water was chosen by a panel of judges as the most appealing. The panel of judges consisted of Geoff Slick of AE2S, Kristi Brunner of Bartlett & West and Kent Watson, National Rural Water Association (NRWA) president. The City of Bismarck supplies water to the City of Lincoln and a portion of the South Central Regional Water District and is a NDRWSA member.

The competition is part of a “Quality on Tap!” campaign to emphasize the high quality, standards and consequently taste of rural water. Winners of state contests will compete in a national contest on Capitol Hill in Washington, D.C. This event is part of the NRWA Rural Water Rally, an annual legislative event for the 50 state affiliates of NRWA.



David Penny with the City of Bismarck.