

HOOSIER PIPELINE

WINTER/SPRING 2022



The official publication of the Alliance of Indiana Rural Water



INSIDE: SPRING CONFERENCE | MENTORS MATTER | CONFERENCE RECAPS

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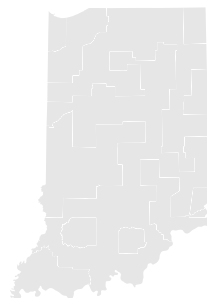
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Managing Editor
Design/layout
Marketing Manager
Advertising Co-ordinator

Christine Hanlon
Kiersten Drysdale
Dave Gill
Stefanie Hagdiakow

46

Indiana Pumpworks

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Far FWD



Tom Speer
Alliance Board President

In Full Swing

Greetings once again Alliance Members. It's hard to believe that by the time you read this article, 2021 will be over and 2022 will be in full swing. It seems like the older I get the faster time flies by.

2021 was a great year. We finally were able to do some in person conferences and meetings. And I have to say it was good to be able to see all of you again. I want to take this time to extend a heartfelt thank you to our entire staff for doing such a great job this year. The board of directors truly appreciates each of you.

In the fall we had our annual golf outing to raise funds for our scholarships that are awarded at the spring conference. We are excited to once again be awarding four \$2,000 scholarships to some college-bound kids in 2022. The application form for next year's scholarships is on pages 9 and 10 of this issue.

We also had the NRWA WaterPro conference in Milwaukee, WI. This was a great event and Indiana was well represented there. I had the pleasure of presenting the NRWA Awards of Excellence to six very deserving states. And I was fortunate enough to present one of those awards to our own Alliance of Indiana Rural Water! We were the recipient of the Outstanding Achievement in Communications, Publications and Public Relations Award. This was our first ever NRWA award. It was an exciting time for all of us and it was a well-deserved award. Congratulations to the staff for that big win!

"I want to take this time to extend a heartfelt thank you to our entire staff for doing such a great job this year."

Next was our fall conference in Fort Wayne. We had good attendance there and a great time was had by all. There were so many learning opportunities it was hard to choose which class to attend. We want to thank everyone for being there with us. And, of course congrats to all of our raffle prize winners. Also, during this conference you all elected a new board member. We are pleased to welcome Patty Campbell from Ramsey Water.

Mark your calendars now for the Spring Conference in French Lick. We are moving

back to our regularly scheduled dates of March 16 and 17, 2022.

In closing, we want you all to know how important you are to us; and, we do consider each and every one of you a part of our water and wastewater family. We can't begin to say how much you are truly cared about. We hope you had a wonderful holiday season and we wish you a very happy and healthy 2022. We can't wait to see you at one of our upcoming events.

Stay safe and stay healthy. ★

6
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Peerless Midwest
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Scholarship Application

(Please Print or Type)

A. Personal Information

Name: (Last) _____ (First) _____ (MI) _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Phone: _____ Email: _____

B. Member Information

(Applicant must be a dependent child of a system employee of a water or wastewater voting utility)

Utility Name: _____

Employee Name: _____

Applicant's relationship to employee: _____

C. High School Information *(Transcript must be submitted with application)*

School Name: _____ Graduation Date: _____

Address: _____ City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

GPA: _____ SAT Score (total): _____ Class Rank: _____ out of: _____

Attach a typed list of school and community activities, awards and honors, and other special recognition you have received during the last four (4) years

D. Work Experience – *(Describe any work experience during the last four (4) years)*

E. College / University Information *(Applicant must be enrolling as a first-year college student)*

School Name: _____

Address: _____ City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Please indicate: _____ 4 Year College/University
_____ Vocational/Technical School
_____ 2-Year Community/Junior College
_____ Other, Specify: _____

Major Course of study: _____
(Priority will be given but is not limited to water/wastewater related studies)

F. Financial Information

Please indicate which of the following income ranges matches your gross family income:

_____ Under \$30,000 _____ \$30,000 - \$50,000 _____ \$50,000 - \$70,000 _____ Over \$70,000

If you are receiving other known financial aid/scholarships, please itemize by name and amount.

Name: _____ Amount: _____

Name: _____ Amount: _____

Name: _____ Amount: _____

If there are any family circumstances that influence your need for financial assistance, please describe:

G. Essay

On a separate page in 250 words or less. **(Please type)**

Write a brief essay on your goals as they relate to your education, career, and future plans.

H. Certification

In submitting this application, I certify that the information provided is complete and accurate to the best of my knowledge. False information will result in revocation of any scholarship granted.

Applicant's Signature: _____ Date: _____

Parent's/Guardian's Signature: _____ Date: _____

OFFICIAL RULES

This scholarship will be made to defray the cost of educational expenses at an accredited institution of higher learning approved by the Alliance of Indiana Rural Water. Disbursement of the money will be made upon presentation of proof of enrollment (transcript or invoice.) Scholarship money will be paid directly to the scholarship winner. Applicants must be a first-year college student enrollee and cannot have received a prior scholarship from the Alliance of Indiana Rural Water. Applicant must also be a citizen or legal resident of the United States, a resident of the state of Indiana and a **dependent child of a SYSTEM EMPLOYEE of a water or wastewater voting utility.** (*Utility Board members' dependents are not eligible*). In order to be eligible, applicant must complete the application form in its entirety and return it to the Alliance by the entry **postmark deadline, January 31, 2022.** Scholarship recipients will be selected based on the number, length of commitment and quality of leadership in school and community activities, awards, honors, academic records, career goals, work experience and financial need. **Application must be signed by both applicant and parent/guardian before submission.** Applicants will be evaluated on a comparative basis at the sole discretion of the committee. All decisions are final. Application materials and decisions of the committee shall be confidential. Acceptance of scholarship constitutes permission to use recipient's name and/or likeness for purpose of promotion. No transfer of scholarship is permitted. Applicant must plan to attend an accredited school in the fall of 2022. Recipients will be notified by mail. Family members of employees of the Alliance of Indiana Rural Water and/or members of the Board of Directors are not eligible.

Mail application, transcript(s), & essay to:

(must be postmarked by January 31, 2022)

OR Email application, transcript(s), & essay to:

(must be received by January 31, 2022)

Alliance of Indiana Rural Water

P.O. Box 789

Franklin, IN 46131

alliance@inh2o.org

CHECKLIST

- ☐ Completed application
- ☐ Essay
- ☐ Academic transcript
- ☐ School & community activities
- ☐ Awards & honors
- ☐ Certification signatures

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Core and Main
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VEGA Americas
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Connie Stevens
Executive Director

Giving You Our Best

Welcome to year 2022. I can't believe how fast time goes and our lives change without us really noticing it. Just look at the changes the Alliance of Indiana Rural Water has gone through in the last 10 years. We have a new website, new faces on staff and new board members, as well as new partnerships and programs, and we are still growing.

As you meet our new team members, I know that you will give them the chance to prove themselves as knowledgeable and trusted advocates for you. Like you, they are passionate about the water and wastewater industry. They are happy to bring back your ideas or concerns you may have on changes in rules, regulations or legislation. We will share those ideas or concerns with the appropriate agencies and we are happy to set up a group meeting with them.

Our long-time dedicated staff has teamed well with these new faces and it shows in our accomplishments. As President Tom Speer mentioned, the Alliance of Indiana Rural Water stood out at the NRWA WaterPro Conference in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. We received the Outstanding Achievement in Communications, Publications, and Public Relations award. This was on a national level and a pretty big deal to us. One paragraph written in our nomination was:

Our public relation campaigns always include sending press releases for award winners to local newspapers, television stations, and radio stations. We also post all these on our website and social media platforms – tagging as many people as possible to increase visibility. We also provide every attendee at our events a press



"We received the Outstanding Achievement in Communications, Publications, and Public Relations award."

*release to take back to their town, so their communities can see water and wastewater at work and understand how **important these folks truly are!** They deserve to be celebrated and are too often out of sight – out of mind.*

While we have been a leader in the Water/Wastewater Apprenticeship Program, we continue to grow and lead in other categories within the industry. This is thanks to you, our/your membership. You give us challenges to learn from.

The one thing that will never change is our mission and desire to assist you and your utility to be the best that you can be. Not just to help you survive, but to thrive as well.

The reputation of this organization to provide good and pertinent training, experienced assistance and fun and challenging events throughout the year is a priority to us. This is your association, and we promise to always give you our best even in the most trying of times. ★

12
Lakeside
FP



Kelly Gardner
Assistant Executive Director

Apprenticeship Program Update

It was nice to see so many faces at the Alliance of Indiana Rural Water's fall conference in Fort Wayne. A special thanks to Fort Wayne City Utilities for offering tours for our attendees during the conference. It gave operators and apprentices the opportunity to see how the Three Rivers Water Filtration Plant and the Water Pollution Control Plant operate. Attendees learned how both plants operate to provide customers with clean, safe, great-tasting drinking water and how they clean and treat sewage before the treated water is released back into the Maumee River.

The Alliance has four more graduates in the Apprenticeship Program and all of them have worked very hard the past two years.

Chase Perry, City of Montpelier

The Montpelier Board of Public Works and Safety met to acknowledge Chase Perry for completing the apprenticeship program and receiving his water operator license. Montpelier was one of the first cities to qualify for the Indiana Finance Authority Apprenticeship Program Reimbursement Grant. This grant was developed to assist with funding for wages, training and a laptop for eligible utilities.

Patrick Biddle, Steuben Lakes Regional Sewer District

Patrick completed the apprenticeship program and received his Class I Wastewater License. Patrick was one of the first wastewater apprentices in the state. The Alliance commends



Patrick for his hard work and he continues to be a great asset working for Steuben Lakes.

Jacob Pool with Mentor Lorean Johnston, both former employees with the Town of Otterbein

Jacob graduated the apprenticeship program and passed the state exam to receive his Wastewater Class II License. The Town of Otterbein was also under the Indiana Finance Authority Apprenticeship Program Reimbursement Grant. The partnership with the Town, Alliance of Indiana Rural Water and the Indiana Finance Authority has been successful in getting more licensed operators for the state of Indiana.



Chase Perry.



Patrick Biddle.



(L-R) Lorean Johnston and Jacob Pool.



John Wendelburg.

John Wendelburg, Newton County Regional Sewer & Water

Newton County hired John Wendelburg right out of high school. With the support of the Newton County board and his mentor Randy Decker, John completed the Apprenticeship Program with his Class I Wastewater License. John then continued his studies and went on to receive his Class II Wastewater License within a short time. John is off to a great start at a very rewarding and life-long career in the industry.



Sarah Hudson, with the Indiana Finance Authority, was able to meet with some of the apprentices who are in the apprenticeship program reimbursement grant that were in attendance at the Fort Wayne Fall Conference.

If you know any of our recent graduates of the Apprenticeship Program, please congratulate them for their hard work and dedication. We wish them all success in their careers.

The Alliance of Indiana Apprenticeship Program continues to enroll apprentices in the program each year in January and July. If you are interested in the Apprenticeship Program, please contact Kelly Gardner at kgardner@inh2o.org for more information.★

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2021 Fall Conference Recap

Thanks to you, we were back to “normal” with over 430 people in attendance! Thank you to everyone who participated in the conference at the Grand Wayne Convention Center. On Tuesday evening, we welcomed everyone with dinner and drinks; it was a great time to mingle, get the “lay of the land” and ready for the conference!

Attendees arrived Wednesday morning to coffee, donuts and a welcome ceremony before going off to their preferred track of classes – administrative, water or wastewater. Wednesday’s luncheon featured the Best Tasting Water in Indiana contest. Auburn Water Department was crowned the tastiest in the state and will move on to compete in the Great American Water Taste Test in Washington, DC next year at the National Rural Water Association’s Rural Water Rally. After classroom sessions concluded for the day, the exhibitor reception kicked off with food, drinks, and the musical stylings of our own Wastewater Circuit Rider, Lorean Johnston! Then, as if that wasn’t enough, we ended the evening with a hospitality event in the hotel lobby! It was a great time to wind down from a full day of classes while mingling with peers and friends.

Thursday, everyone woke up to a delicious hot breakfast buffet before starting in on another day of classes. But first,



our Annual Membership Meeting included the election of three board members. Brad Colter – At-Large, Tim Doersam – District 3, and Pattie Campbell – District 4, were all elected for three-year terms beginning in 2022.

The Sportsman’s Raffle was a hit once again, and this year’s Grand Prize Winner was Angela Wirth from Ben Davis Conservancy District, who walked away with \$1,500 cash! Brandy Lampkins from Fort Wayne claimed the shotgun for her own!

Thank you to all our attendees, speakers, vendors, and sponsors for helping make this another fantastic event! ★







Fall Conference Sponsors

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41
Hawkins
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First half

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First half

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Suez
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National Water Services
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2021 Leadership Summit



This year's Leadership Summit was on July 29 and 30, 2021 in beautiful Bloomington, Indiana. Utility decision makers – board and council members, managers, and the like – were in attendance for this fantastic event. Being back in person and networking was the name of the game as attendees learned about being outstanding community leaders; discussed subjects such as HR, cybersecurity, and engaging legislators; participated in round-table discussions; and much more! Attendees raved about the event afterward, saying, "The speakers that were at the summit were outstanding. They all kept my attention because they were speaking on subject matter that is crucial to running a successful company. I will be back next year!"

A special thank you to all our speakers, attendees, and vendors for making the event such a success! ★



2021 Scholarship Clay Shoot/Golf Outing

The 2021 Scholarship Golf Outing & Clay Shoot was a fun filled success! We had an exciting clay shoot and played a full day of golf with a sell-out event! Aaron Evans of Sexson Mechanical Corporation won first prize for the Clay Shoot, and the JCM Industries, Inc. Team won the golf tournament. Our famous longest drive contest was conducted while sitting on a toilet once again. Teams donated \$20 to the scholarship fund for a chance to hit the longest drive... the only catch was you had to sit on a toilet while hitting the ball! The prize for the longest drive was a new golf bag; but the biggest reason to participate was that,

on their next shot, participants got to drop their ball 165 yards from the hole on a par 5 – not to mention all the fun we had and great pictures it created. Derrick Soares was the lucky long drive winner! Also, Justin Hawley with Ziptility won the closest to the pin contest. The 50/50 drawing this year was for \$520, and the winner was Bob Jordan from Covalen – who graciously donated all of it back to the scholarship fund!

Thank you to all our sponsors and everyone who attended for helping to make the clay shoot & golf outing a success!



Clay Shoot Sponsors

Henry P. Thompson Company, HydroCorp Meter Sales, National Water Services, NineStar Connect, Peter King Law, and Sexson Mechanical Corporation

Golf Tournament Sponsor

Covalen

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Hole Sponsors

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United Systems
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Water Solutions
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OF INDIANA
RURAL WATER

'22 **Spring Conference**
March 16 & 17
French Lick, IN

@ THE FRENCH LICK RESORT & CASINO

Earn up to 10 water AND wastewater credit hours!

Plans are in full swing! Check our website for updates, details,
and class schedules as they become available!

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36
S&K Equipment
FP
Center Spread with 27

51
George E Booth
1/2 H

28
Preload
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2022 AWARD NOMINATION FORM



Do you know someone who is doing a great job?
Goes above and beyond the call of duty?
OF COURSE YOU DO!!!
Indiana has the best and most dedicated
professionals in the industry!

Recognizing the outstanding contributions of rural water & wastewater professionals is one of the highlights of the Alliance's Annual Spring Conference. Each year the Alliance of Indiana Rural Water presents awards in recognition of outstanding performance.

Award winners in each category will be honored on Wednesday, March 16th during the Awards Luncheon. Please take advantage of this chance to recognize someone for a job well done! To assist the Alliance Awards Committee in selecting deserving individuals, please fill out the form below; attach additional pages if necessary.

Nominations must be received by February 11, 2022.

Please select ONLY ONE:

☐ Water System Operations
Specialist of the Year

☐ Wastewater System Operations
Specialist of the Year

☐ Manager of the Year

☐ Administrative Professional of the Year

Nominee's Name: _____

Job Title: _____ Shirt Size (Circle One): S M L XL 2XL 3XL

System Name: _____

Nominator: _____

Email & Phone Number of Nominator: _____

1. How long has nominee been employed with system?
2. What are the responsibilities of the nominee in his / her current position?
3. What is / are your primary reason(s) for nominating him / her for this award?
4. Please indicate what type of training the nominee has received:
5. Please list awards or certificates the nominee has received:
6. What contributions has the nominee made to the improvement of his / her system?
8. Will the nominee be attending the conference? ☐ Yes ☐ No
One award in each category will be presented. You may nominate one person per form.
(Please copy this form and submit one for each person you wish to nominate.)

Send to: alliance@inh2o.org OR Fax: 317-736-6676 OR P.O. Box 789, Franklin, IN 46131

Nominations MUST be received by February 11, 2022 to be considered.

*The Alliance reserves the right to publish names and photos of all awards winners in future publications.

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ME Simpson
1/4 V

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Wessler Engineering
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19
Beam Longest and Neff
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Ortman Drilling
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OPERATOR EXPOS

Annual Equipment Demo & Hog Roast Events

Southern Operator Expo
May 19th, 2022
Huntingburg, Indiana

Northern Operator Expo
May 26th, 2022
Akron, Indiana

More information, including how to sign up to demo or attend,
available at www.inh2o.org

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Metron Famier
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Metron Famier
DPS



The Value of Association



BY KELLY STRAIN
MEMBER SERVICES AND
TRAINING COORDINATOR

Maybe you've been a member of the Alliance of Indiana Rural Water since our beginning in the early 1980s or maybe you've just recently joined, but do you really know the value of your membership? Most people join a trade association like ours with one specific benefit or goal in mind only to later find that there are many more opportunities than originally imagined. It is important to get the most out of your membership and unlock all of the benefits we have to offer so I wanted to take a minute to remind you of what some of these benefits are.

1. NETWORKING

In every industry, who you know matters, and through your affiliation with the Alliance of Indiana Rural Water you may be introduced to potential contacts, clients and partners who can help you or your business move to the next level and become more prominent in our industry. Our events provide a forum for like-minded individuals to come together to share ideas, strengthen ties, find new jobs and make connections that would not be possible without the association.

2. TRAINING AND EDUCATION

Continued education and development are crucial in getting to the top of any industry. This is especially true in an industry like ours where new technology is being introduced and rules and regulations are regularly updated and changing. The Alliance of Indiana Rural Water holds five conferences and expos each year and numerous webinars and classes that help our members to learn and grow in their profession. Even outside of these official events, members have constant opportunities for peer-to-peer learning



and mentorship that allow members to share experience and knowledge.

3. CERTIFICATION

In addition to the usual training and education we provide, the Alliance of Indiana Rural Water is well known for our support and training programs designed to encourage state certifications of water and wastewater operators. We are the go-to association for certification exam prep courses (we offer multiple opportunities each year). In 2018 we introduced Indiana's only federally approved apprenticeship program for the water and wastewater industry. To date, we have graduated 10 apprentices and currently have 51 active apprentices in our program. Graduates of our apprenticeship program will go on to be the leaders of Indiana's water/wastewater utilities in the future. We also have plans to introduce our own Board certification and training program in 2022. The programs and certifications available through the Alliance of Indiana Rural Water provide a level of prestige and reliability in the minds of your customers that is invaluable.

4. INFLUENCE

One of the key benefits of joining the Alliance of Indiana Rural Water is the ability to support the mission of the organization and possibly influence legislation that affects the industry. The combined resources of the members of our association and our affiliation on the national level with the National Rural Water Association can be used to lobby lawmakers and sway public opinion more positively towards the goals of the association. With the increased level of government regulation in our industry, this is an absolute necessity for the survival of all of our members. Connie Stevens, our Executive Director, spends countless hours at the state house testifying and participating in various task force groups to make sure that the needs of our membership are represented.

5. INFORMATION

Membership in the Alliance of Indiana Rural Water means immediate access to any news or developments that affect your business and the industry. Outside



of the usual communication of members to each other, we provide newsletters, email updates, our magazine, the *Hoosier Pipeline*, and informative resources that help our members stay on top of recent developments in the field.

6. TECHNICAL SUPPORT

Through grants provided by the USDA and EPA, the Alliance of Indiana Rural Water is able to employ seven full-time staff members who are available to provide on-site training and technical support to Indiana's rural water and wastewater utilities. They provide regular hands-on assistance with things like leak detection, pipe and valve location, as well as operational matters related to treatment, water audit preparation and validation, assistance with wellhead phase II, testing, and emergency management. We also can provide energy efficiency studies and help our members locate sources of funding and recommend cost saving improvements.

The fast pace of technology and regulatory changes means that best practices are constantly updating and changing. Our field staff is well versed in the best practices that are vital to efficient, quality work. Especially for anyone new to the industry, membership in our association is key to tapping in to the knowledge of more experienced operators, learning these best practices, and performing the best work possible.

7. AFFINITY PARTNERS

There is power in association and through our affiliation with the National Rural Water Association we are able to provide our members with access to a portfolio of unique Products and Services which have been vetted for their quality and level of service. Choose from website design and customer communications, to several insurance packages including health plans, line and leak coverage, and background screening as well as our Rural Water

Loan Fund, all designed to meet the needs of utilities.

8. PERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS

Probably the most significant of all of the benefits of your Alliance membership is the opportunity for members to build friendships and personal relationships that can last a lifetime. At the Alliance of Indiana Rural Water, we are partners in your personal success and that of member communities and utilities. We are here for you and count you among our personal friends.

.....

To find out how you can become more involved with the Alliance of Indiana Rural Water, through committee participation or serving on the board of directors, or to find out more about any of the membership benefits I've highlighted here, please contact us at (888) 936-4992 or by email at alliance@inh2o.org. We love to hear from you! ★

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McMahon
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2
EJ Prescott
1/3 SQ



Thinking Outside the Box



BY DONALD PAPAI
APPRENTICE TRAINING DIRECTOR

Once again, I'm putting pen to paper to create a masterpiece for your enjoyment. Before we can proceed forward, we must journey back. While I was a junior in high school, I joined the United States Army delayed entry program and shortly after graduating my senior year I was sporting my battle dress uniform (BDUs). I received my basic training at Fort Leonard Wood (Fort Lost in the Wood), Missouri. After basic I traveled to Fort Lee, Virginia to receive my advanced individual training (AIT) where I trained under the Quartermaster and learned the trades of a water treatment specialist (MOS 51N/77W) Military Occupational Specialty.

Now, move ahead 36 years and here I am the Apprentice Trainer, responsible for training the new faces of our industry. Wow, if you only knew how much I really didn't like school! Perhaps that's why I'm pretty good at what I do, because I knew what really didn't work. For the apprentices entering the program and those who are just considering if this industry and program is right for them, let me just say this: "there is never a dull moment." I put more hours than one can count into building the training presentations. Yep! That's right they are more presentations than a typical class. I like to think of them as works of art, an expression of my creativity. Why do I go to such extremes? Because here is what I am up against folks: this is the day and age of Snap Chat, Facebook and TikTok to name a few. If you don't like it, just swipe it away. While you are in class you can't really just swipe me away, but you can tune me out. So, for that not to happen, I encompass the newest technologies such as GIFs, animation and embedding



videos to keep the attention of the student. I try to create quirky mind connections to help students remember important concepts. For example, *The Clean Water Act* was passed in 1972. For those of you on the clean water side, this act deals with wastewater and as a kid most of us were taught that when you had to go to the bathroom it was either number 1 or number "2," there you have it 197"2". The *Safe Drinking Water Act* passed in 1974. Water "4" the People. Even if you try to use soap it's not going to come out. *You're welcome!* I had one of my students the other day explain to me how he remembers the function of a foot valve (a one-way valve at the inlet of a pipe or the base of a suction pump). He said you use your foot to push on the gas of your automobile to go and when you take your foot off you eventually stop. See what I mean? Brilliant!

Education can be more than just memorizing, it can be "FUN" – yes, I said fun and I try to make every presentation fun. If you are thinking about becoming an apprentice or thinking about enrolling someone in the program, it's well worth it and I'm not just saying that. I wish a program like this existed when I entered the field. It truly is a great jumpstart to a wonderful career. At this time, I would like to thank each and every one of you for choosing the career that you chose. Now fold that up and stick it in your pocket, because one of these days when a customer is hollering at the top of their lungs because they couldn't possibly have used that much water you can unfold it and use that "Thank you!"

For more information about the apprenticeship program call 317-789-4200 or visit our website at www.inh2o.org. ★



BY DAVE ADKINS
WATER CIRCUIT RIDER

Mentors Matter

In June of this year, the National Rural Water Association (NRWA) held its annual conference in Orlando, Florida. The Florida location meant that we would need to fly to the event. It probably doesn't seem like a big deal to many, but for me it was an entirely new experience. I have never flown anywhere, never booked a flight, checked in, obtained a boarding pass, nothing. To say I was a bit nervous would be an understatement. Thankfully, we had staff members who volunteered to fly with me and help me through the entire process. With the help of my travel partner, we made it to Orlando without an issue. On our return flight, all of that changed. As we were leaving to fly back home, we received an email telling us that our flight had been delayed. It soon became apparent that we would need to fly on a different airline in order to get back to Indiana. Once again, had it not been for traveling with staff who knew how to navigate the situation, I might still be in Orlando or who knows where. I would like to say "Thank You" to those who took the time to help throughout the whole process.

You might be wondering why I'm sharing this story about my airplane ride. I'm sharing it because if I hadn't had someone who was willing to mentor me, in a sense, the trip to Orlando and back to Indiana would have been much more difficult. In our apprentice program, we try to pair the apprentice with an experienced operator to help explain the how and why of things we do. Hopefully, you do the same thing with any new hire you bring on board. It's easy to forget that all of us were, at one time, the new person – the one with all of

"It's easy to forget that all of us were, at one time, the **new person** – the one with **all of the questions** but **none of the answers**."

the questions but none of the answers. I have been there as well. I have been with the new person and have had to answer the same question numerous times or had to show them how to do a task more than once. Frustrating, yes, but when I stop and remember back to when I was just starting in the business,

I see myself, and it makes me grateful for the people who took the time to show me the ropes. Be patient, answer the questions, share your knowledge – because you really do have an opportunity to make a difference for someone. Stay safe and thank you for all you do. ★

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Force Flow
1/3 SQ



Why Mentoring?



BY REX BLANTON
WASTEWATER TRAINING DIRECTOR

What is mentoring? So, after looking it up in my Funk and Wagnalls (a little Laugh In humor) it's the process of a learning relationship, generally focused on long-term career development. A mentor should be an experienced, successful professional in the water or wastewater field who is willing to build that learning relationship with a newcomer to the profession. So, why is that important in the Water and Wastewater Profession? We need long term careers to be developed by our current professionals, serving as mentors for the next generation of certified operators.

The Alliance of Indiana Rural Water offers many types of training, including our Nationally Recognized Apprenticeship Program. Certification Exam review sessions are also offered to assist new hires in their pursuit of becoming Certified Water and Wastewater Operators. But sadly, what the Alliance offers is not enough. We can't be there day in and day out to assist with the "On the Job Training" (OJT), which is needed to train your newly-acquired employees of the daily grind, so to speak. Current experienced employees are much more qualified to operate and train the specific processes and procedures of a given individual plant, so using them as mentors to complete the process of becoming the next certified group is essential.

With all the technology in today's water and wastewater treatment facilities and more stringent regulations, the days of training employees by the "That's the way we've always done it" theory, are long gone. New, and even older employees, need to know the why of what they are doing and not



just the how. The employees who learn the why of a process are more apt to perform the how with a better overall understanding and make more ethical environmental decisions, not only for the process but for the truthful reporting of results from testing of the process.

As mentioned above, the Apprenticeship Program is well known and becoming very successful in bringing more certified operators into the state. A key component to the program is that of mentors at the facility to assist the apprentices with those OJT

daily duties and responsibilities. These mentors play a huge role in the success of our program and more will be needed, as we continue into the future with more communities and apprentices. Now, you might ask yourself, "If we are not in the Program, do we still need mentors for our new hires?" That answer is a resounding yes. And truth be known, you probably need a more qualified mentor if you are not in the Program because the mentor would now not only be responsible for the training of the daily routine items, but also for awareness of

regulations, the certification process, and much more.

When choosing a mentor for your organization, you can use the following five guidelines to make your choice a great one. 1) Pick someone who shares your core values and definitions of success. 2) Find someone who has attained, at least some of the specific goals you are aiming for. 3) It must be someone who, is able and willing to build that working relationship with a new employee. 4) Choose someone who will challenge the mentee to reach higher goals. 5) Lastly, introduce them to each other and allow them to discuss what the goals are, to be sure they are compatible and willing to work towards those goals before pairing them. This process may seem a little overboard for some folks, but using these guidelines, even watered-down versions, will lead your mentor and mentee in the right direction.

I'm sure that some of you may be thinking about how much time mentoring will take away from the needed daily actions of each of the employees. After a brief indoctrination under the mentor, the mentee should be able to perform some duties alone with little supervision. This initial training can free up the mentor for some of the more specific or complicated duties they normally perform. However, bringing the mentee into these duties slowly will eventually help all of you to reach your goals. During these trainings on additional duties, as well as the possibly more routine ones, the mentee should be encouraged to ask lots of questions, especially the why questions. The mentor will need to practice patience and good listening skills, due to the "four-year-old" why question barrage. Being able to answer these questions or ensuring the mentee that, as a mentor, you will find the answer to the question, can be the start of a solid learning relationship.

One other important piece should be used during the mentoring period. Both the mentor and mentee should be

attending training sessions together from others, either in the organization or from outside providers. If these other sessions can provide Continuing Education Credits for the experienced mentor, it can show them you are aware of their needs as well as of the mentee's. This commitment by the system, can help build the mentor's energy and morale needed for the long haul of the mentorship. It will also provide the mentee with more subjects to discuss with the mentor, which continues to build the learning relationship.

Another negative I've heard about training, in general, is the thought that if employees are trained well enough to gain certifications and we cannot pay them as well as other communities might, they may leave for greener pastures. This line of thinking is very counter-productive, due to the fact that the lack of training for development opportunities may kill any motivation they have. Remember that your certified water and wastewater operators attain as much or more training and are under as much or more scrutiny in their positions as any of your other community's workforce. Police officers, firefighters and teachers are routinely praised for their value to a community, but the experienced certified operators go unnoticed. They are responsible for providing safe drinking water on-tap 24 hours each day, responsible for meeting IDEM and EPA discharge limits that protect our source waters, and are the unsung front line heroes for protecting public health. ★

"There is only one thing worse than training employees and losing them, and that's not training them and keeping them."

– Zig Zigler

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Are You Listening?



BY SHERRI WINTERS
WATER PROGRAMS DIRECTOR

Communication. It's not all about talking. The most effective communication skill is learning how to listen! When you receive a complaint, who do you send to rectify the situation? Has that staff member been trained to actively listen to the complaint? Is there something you must do to rectify a situation or does the customer just want to be heard? Discerning what is really required of your utility, if anything, can sometimes be the solution. Taking a small issue and turning it into a bigger issue can be avoided if staff are properly trained on customer relations.

I will never tout myself as the best communicator, that's for sure. It can depend on my day-to-day mood and it takes effort. This 'skill' has developed over decades and from my past careers. Working with administrators, supervisors, residents from all walks of life, court systems, rules, regulations and your personal lives can sometimes be challenging when conflict issues arise.

One of the first things to do when communicating is to approach with an open mind. Try to avoid thinking you know the solution before hearing the

"Try to avoid thinking you know the solution before hearing the complaint/conflict. Hear the person(s) out before offering solutions. What is it they really want?"

complaint/conflict. Hear the person(s) out before offering solutions. What is it they really want?

There are thousands of resources available on effective communication. After reviewing many of these and reflecting on my experiences, I found that the following tips are routinely mentioned:

1. As mentioned above, approach with an open mind no matter your personal feelings.
2. Face the person directly and make eye contact, not in a confrontational way but show them you're 'present.'
3. Give them your undivided attention. (Don't keep looking at your phone, for instance; try blocking out all other background sounds and activities.)
4. Listen and try to picture what they are really saying; don't rehearse your response while they are talking. (This is what I'm bad about doing.)

5. Try not to interrupt with your solutions. (Again, one of my bad habits; I feel like I need to say it before I forget it. Just ask my co-workers!)
6. Wait for a pause to ask clarifying questions. (Oops, me again!) Occasionally paraphrase what you think you heard.
7. Try to feel what they're feeling.
8. Give regular positive feedback. ('I understand why you feel this way' instead of 'But you don't understand.')
9. Pay attention to nonverbal clues like body posture and the look in their eyes. (If it seems aggressive, don't respond with aggression. Try a relaxing more reassuring posture.)

Let's face it, when you're from a small community, you have likely known the person(s) for a long time. Try not to allow personal feelings to get in the way. Don't take things personally. That means don't respond negatively in a judgmental way as well as over-positively because they're a friend; no favoritism, be fair. The hardest part of communication can be not reacting impulsively and it takes work. It has to be a conscious effort. Remember, you're representing the utility, not yourself. Remaining professional is the key. Just relax, take a deep breath and go. And most of all, don't let it ruin your day! ★

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Midwestern Engineers
1/6 H

Make It a Dialogue with Your Customers



BY TOBY DAYS
SOURCE WATER SPECIALIST

Essential. Reliable. Invaluable.

Water – it's the thread that weaves together our daily lives. It keeps our communities healthy, our cities running, and our economies growing. Water is a cup of coffee, the produce aisle, better production, increased exports, and greater American strength. While essential, water infrastructure is largely invisible. Few people realize what it takes to treat and deliver drinking water every day or how wastewater is cleaned so that it can be safely reused or returned to the environment. The high quality of life we enjoy in America would not be possible without water and the infrastructure that fuels it.

Historically, water and wastewater utilities were happy to be out of sight and out of mind. The incredible systems, which bring water to homes and businesses and then take it away and treat it, were built generations ago. They have served their communities well – and in most parts of the country, customers are intrinsically used to clean, safe, reliable water service. As a result, most Americans take our most precious resource for granted. And utilities were largely content with that arrangement. They could quietly go about their business, proud to do the work that keeps communities going. Now, with aging infrastructure and depleted source waters failing to safely meet the growing demands of communities throughout the US, many Americans are beginning to lose trust in their local water utility and question rate increases needed for infrastructure improvement projects. Miscommunication – or lack of communication altogether – is usually at the heart of such misunderstandings.

“Nothing beats the connections made through interacting with others **in person**. The key is to tailor how you **connect with your customers**, understanding what kind of **information** they want from you and the context in which they want it.”

Developing and maintaining good relationships with customers involves more than simply informing them about the utility's needs (e.g., rate increase/bill) or meeting minimal regulatory requirements (e.g., Consumer Confidence Reports). It's an ongoing process involving education about the value of public water and transparency about the needs and challenges of the water system. Voluntary communication practices can help foster a community-wide water ethic, garner public support for infrastructure improvements and rate changes, as well as provide an overall better understanding and value of your water department. Proactive and routine communication with your customers will keep the importance of water in the forefront of their mind, changing the idiom of “out of sight, out of mind.”

Giving Customers What They Want, When They Want It

As customers are increasingly turning to online platforms and social media as primary channels for knowledge and communication, water providers need to diversify the way they inform and communicate as well. This may mean:

- Increasing and maintaining consistent, responsive, and robust social media presence

- Developing and maintaining informative websites, providing areas where customers can answer their own questions or seek answers from others
- Developing text and email notification alerts
- Smart metering with real-time use data that can be accessed online
- Branding your utility

The goal of your utility, in terms of its customer interactions, is to generate loyalty. There's no better way to do that than to offer quality products and services and to be responsive to your customers. New technologies have increased the number of options through which a utility can interact with their customers; however, people do business with people, not businesses. So no matter how often you communicate with technology, nothing beats the connections made through interacting with others in person. The key is to tailor how you connect with your customers, understanding what kind of information they want from you and the context in which they want it.

It may be tempting to revert to “out of sight, out of mind,” but it is better to be loud and proud about your utility and the services you provide. ★



DRAINAGE



BY KEVIN WENZEL
FORMER WASTEWATER
CIRCUIT RIDER

With melting snow and spring rains coming before we know it, now might be a good time to inform your town/city population about their responsibility concerning drainage. Here's some verbiage you can use!

Nothing is more frustrating than dealing with a wet basement. It can damage walls, flooring, and ruin personal property. Most often, backups occur because of improper surface drainage around a building, inconsistent maintenance on the sewer lateral and/or using the sewer as a trash can.

Downspouts that drain into the city's sanitary sewer can cause water to flow backwards into their home. (In most towns it is illegal to have downspouts hooked into the sewer.) Disconnecting downspouts from the sewer and making sure that gutters are properly draining away from homes and businesses can solve many problems.

Do your community members know that the maintenance of the sewer lateral is considered the property owners' responsibility all the way to the main? If they are experiencing back-ups during dry weather, there is a very good

possibility that tree roots or debris are blocking the sewer laterals. Almost all homes that are 30 years old or more have clay laterals that are often filled with tree roots.

Also, inform and remind your community what they can put down the drain. Grease should never be poured down the drain, and garbage disposals should be used sparingly. Never flush feminine hygiene products, wet wipes, or anything else that didn't come out of your body or off a roll! Remember to inform your community that their toilet is a toilet, not a trashcan! ★

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Advanced Rehab
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Do You Know About **Energy Efficiency Rebates and Incentives** from Your Electric Utility Provider?



BY DEE DEIG
ENERGY EFFICIENCY
CIRCUIT RIDER

Have you ever wondered where these rebates come from, or why they're available to you in the first place? Read on to learn more about how energy efficiency programs work, and how to reap the rewards!

What are energy efficiency programs?

Most utilities offer incentive programs to help consumers purchase more energy-efficient products at lower costs. In most cases, utilities are mandated by the state to spend a small percentage (often 1 to 3%) of operating income on energy efficiency programs. Some smaller municipal and cooperative utilities that are not regulated by the state choose to offer these programs to customers/members as a customer service element.

The type of program you should look for from your utility would be directed to industrial or commercial clients.

The following products are most often incentivized:

- LED bulbs and fixtures
- Energy Efficient motors, pumps, generators, aerators, compressors and any other equipment that uses energy
- Variable Frequency Drives (VFDs)
- Controls
- Smart and programmable thermostats

How do these programs work?

There are normally two different types of program structures that help consumers purchase energy-efficient products:

- Prescriptive – prescriptive programs work by giving the consumer a list of products and a dollar amount of rebate or incentive if an item from this list is purchased.



- Custom – custom programs work by the consumer working with the utility's account representative to determine what amount of energy the new project will save and what amount of rebate or incentive will be paid for the new project.

Participating is easy!

Benefitting from your state or utility's retail energy efficiency program is simple, when you keep the following in mind:

- Look for rebates and incentives by your zip code on the website Dsire.org
- Read instructions carefully when you fill out your application. You may need prior approval to installation or your receipt to claim your rebate later.
- Speak to your utility account representative if you have any questions while deciding the scope of your capital project.
- Visit your utility's or state's energy efficiency program website to learn which products qualify for rebates and how to claim them.

Below is a press release from Adam Sams, General Manager at LaGrange County and the rebate they received:

Congratulations to LaGrange County Regional Utility District who recently received a check in the amount of \$37,800 for new VFD installs and retrofitting many of their existing motors with VFDs. This move to upgrade their equipment is only the first step. More VFD upgrades are planned for the 2022 year. In the photo, featured from left to right, are Adam Sams – General Manager, Gerry Turner – Board President, Jake Taylor – Energy advisor at LaGrange County REMC, and Brittany Sams – Marketing and Member Services Manager at LaGrange County REMC.

If you are interested in a No-Cost, No-Obligation Energy Assessment, or help finding rebates and incentives for your utility, contact me at:

Dee Deig
Alliance of Indiana Rural Water
Energy Efficiency Circuit Rider
317-508-1505 • ddeig@inh2o.org ★



BY CHAD REYNOLDS
WATER CIRCUIT RIDER



WASTING WATER

Get the most bang for your buck! Are you wasting water unknowingly at your home or business? Do you know where to look to determine if you are? There are many ways water can be costing you money not only through the utility bill, but also through the damages it is causing. Let's go over some ways this can be happening and learn a few helpful tips to educate those who may not know.



Do you know where your shut off valve or valves are? Knowing this can save valuable time if and when a leak occurs. Does your shut off valves work? Many prefer a ball valve and some like a gate style valve. I believe in today's era most are going to a ball style valve for a couple reasons: ease of turning – and, by that, I mean only a partial turn and it's off; and, secondly the comfort of knowing that if the handle is in line with the pipe the valve is then in the open position. The big downfall on a gate valve is they don't get exercised. Therefore, when they are needed to function, it's likely they won't and, if they do, there's a great chance they'll leak afterwards.



LET'S FACE IT, NONE OF US LIKE A HIGH GAS, ELECTRIC, OR WATER BILL. WASTED WATER CAN DO JUST THAT AND IT WILL MAKE YOUR BILL HIGHER FOR SOMETHING YOU NEVER USED.

Here are a few ways one may be wasting water. Leaking pipes, dripping faucets or shower heads, running toilets or leaking fittings, and water heaters. For leaking pipes, one may be alerted by a hissing sound through the floor or possibly the splattering of water off the wall. This could be coming from a coupler, a split in the pipe, or at a tee. Neither of these is the end of the world, nor something you want to experience. In either case if you're a do-it-yourselfer it's a cheaper fix. If not, then a plumber will need to be called.

Boy what a mess it can create! Hopefully the leak is found soon after it starts. If you know you have a leaking faucet or shower head, this problem is much less of a strain. If it is a leaking shower head it may be a worn out gasket or the tape or plumbers dope may need replaced. As we all know nothing lasts forever – as much as we'd like it to. If it's a dripping faucet more than likely a seal is bad and, in this case, a repair kit will fix the issue.

Probably the most common and hardest to detect is the running toilet. Running toilets can waste a lot of water in an hour and many don't realize this. As much as 20-40 gallons an hour is common. If the water is just trickling through it may or may not happen when one checks. A stuck flapper on the other hand will have a steady flow of water passing through and will be much easier to detect. An easy way to check if water is passing through is to add food coloring to the tank of the toilet and if the color appears in the bowl, bingo – and not a winning bingo. If the color appears in the

bowl, then one should start by checking the seal against which the flapper is resting. In many cases the hardness of the water builds up and a simple cleaning will fix it.

Lastly is the water heater. This can be a tough one to detect as it is usually tucked away in its own room. These are notorious for leaking out the bottom or around the fittings near the top. Typically, if not found right away, the leak may result in a new floor being part of the repairs needed. The electrode that runs down the center is another problematic issue. Once these go bad, they create a stink in the water. I'm sure if you've been an operator very long you've come across this issue more than once.

In any of the cases listed, one will start with shutting off the supply valve.

Hopefully a valve is at each faucet or toilet so the main valve isn't needed. As many operators have experience with these situations, many homeowners will call on you to shut the water off at the meter. If this happens, politely ask the homeowner to add a new main shut off somewhere as it will benefit them greatly to have one.

Let's face it, none of us like a high gas, electric, or water bill. Wasted water can do just that and it will make your bill higher for something you never used. Hopefully when you arrive home or when you get a minute you'll take time to see if you're conserving or wasting water.

If you'd like a copy of this article to share with your customers, contact us! ★

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Are You **BULLETPROOF?**



BY GORDY MEYER
WATER CIRCUIT RIDER

Over the many years that I have traveled about the state visiting utilities and meeting with system personnel. I have seen quite a few familiar faces that look like mine, a few wrinkles in the face, gray hair or, in my case patches of gray hair on a bald head, and then I look at all the new young faces that have fire in their eyes, full of energy, ready to tackle what comes their way.

I think back to the days when I first started. I was full of that same energy, and nothing could stop me from getting the job done. I'm bulletproof;

nothing's going to happen to me. Then I think again, man, I did some stupid things in the past – usually getting into dangerous situations without thinking about it. I would jump down into the hole, get that clamp on the leak, tighten it down, get it done and then look up at the crew standing about six feet above me on the side of the trench as the last nut is tightened.

Did you catch that? What is not right about this situation? First thing, I probably didn't have a hard hat on, entered a confined space without a ladder for egress, had no trench box,

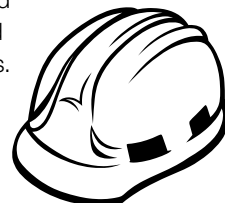
and was probably surrounded by loose sandy fill – and people were standing next to the trench above me. It could have been a bad day for me and for my family. Anything could have happened. I definitely wasn't bulletproof. Was I lucky or did I have someone looking over me? I believe in the latter.

Every day, we hear more and more stories of utility personnel being hurt or killed on the job. On most occasions accidents can be prevented by following safety procedures and using Personal Protective Equipment (PPE). You should be provided with the equipment needed to safely do your job and your supervisor should make sure that you are working in a safe environment. But ultimately, your safety is your own responsibility.

Wear and use the proper gear that is needed for the job. Look at the task that is needed in order to complete the job safely and efficiently. Take your time to do the job and don't rush through it. The beverage that you are wanting will still be cold later in the day and will taste just as good. Most of all, realize that you are not bulletproof. From the first day you start your career, go home to your loved ones each day and relax and enjoy them, knowing that you did a job well done.

If I can be of any assistance, please email me at gmeyer@inh2o.org or call me 317-408-4286.

Until next time stay safe and enjoy your kids and when they grow up and make you grandparents. Love them to pieces, spoil them, fill them with candy and send them home. ★



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Infrastructure Systems
1/3 SQ

What the **PFAS** is Going On?



BY LOREAN JOHNSTON
WASTEWATER CIRCUIT RIDER

PFAS. By now you have probably at least heard of it, but what is the hype? Why is PFAS considered an emerging contaminant? Are regulators going to expect us to remove it and how?

First, what even is PFAS? It seems sometimes in all the hype we miss out on crucial information on understanding new contaminants and how to handle them and where they come from, not only in our processes but also in our communities. In this day in age, it is easy to be unsettled by the unknown, especially when it comes to something as important as water.

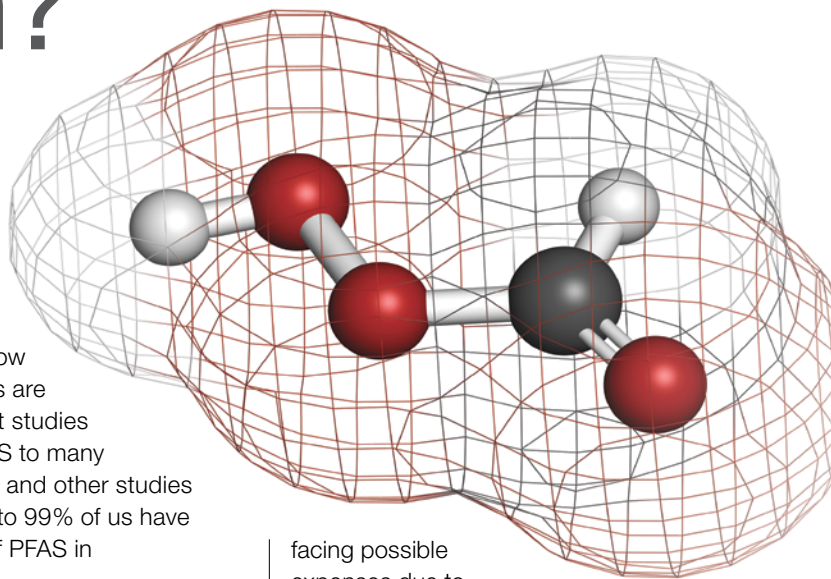
Even if PFAS, or polyfluoroalkyl substances, are something with which you may not feel familiar, they are all around us every day. I bet there are more than a few items you couldn't live without or that wouldn't exist or function as efficiently without PFAS. Most commonly PFAS can be found in stain-guards and non-stick cooking pans, wrappers from greasy foods and other waxes, polishes and cleaners. You can thank PFAS for that time the spill came out of the couch or brand-new carpet in the living room. Firefighters use AFFF (Aqueous film forming foam) for fire control and training purposes. This man-made, non-degradable chemical is found nearly everywhere, even in our waters.

So why are we concerned about PFAS? As I mentioned, PFAS is a man-made, non-degradable chemical. This makes spills, contaminations and pollution of this chemical into the environment hard to treat and control. As we continue to use products containing PFAS, we are seeing PFAS pollute our waters. Regulatory agencies

are working with facilities to test waters nationwide to get an idea of how badly our waters are affected. Recent studies have linked PFAS to many health concerns and other studies have shown up to 99% of us have some amount of PFAS in our blood.

As we have grown partial to the products that exist due to the use of these substances, I think we can all agree to some degree that we can't just eliminate PFAS. Consequently, the job of understanding how PFAS is affecting our communities and waters is left to our regulatory agencies and treatment plant operators. As operators, we must do our part in understanding PFAS and how it affects the waters we work with and communities we work for. We must do our part in providing data around this emerging contaminant to help understand and further reduce possible health threats. As new information arises on this topic, it will be our job to interpret this information and provide education for our communities. As always, we must do our part to ensure clean and safe waters for our communities and for those who come after us.

The NRWA has taken a legal step in prosecuting large manufacturers of this chemical. Working alongside attorneys of Napoli Shkolnik, the NRWA has filed a class-action lawsuit against these manufacturers to prove liability of expenses of testing or removal caused by these contaminants. Communities



facing possible expenses due to these contaminants should register to join the PFAS lawsuit. <https://www.napolilaw.com/nrwa-pfas>. ★

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Waller's Meter
1/6 V

RATEPAYER SUPPORT FOR INFRASTRUCTURE

BY SAM WADE

While aging infrastructure is a well-known and mounting problem for the water industry, underinvestment can have devastating long-term consequences for the US economy and the American public. While there are various governmental funding programs at the state and national levels that will assist in closing the gap, customer fees will continue to be the primary source of infrastructure funding, and rate increases will be needed to finalize projects and maintain that infrastructure over its lifespan.

The 2021 Infrastructure Report Card, released in March, revealed an \$81 billion water infrastructure investment gap for 2019 alone. Should this underinvestment continue, the annual funding gap is expected to grow to \$136 billion by 2039. American Society of Civil Engineers (ASCE) has modeled two investment scenarios over the next 20 years to illustrate dramatically different potential outcomes. “Failure to Act” would result in widespread water service disruptions, making industries less efficient and profitable, and leading to a \$2.9 trillion decline in the gross domestic product and over 630,000 fewer jobs by 2039. Costs to US households would increase by seven times and communities would suffer more frequent service interruptions, street flooding and other negative effects. Conversely, in the same timeframe, “Closing the Gap”

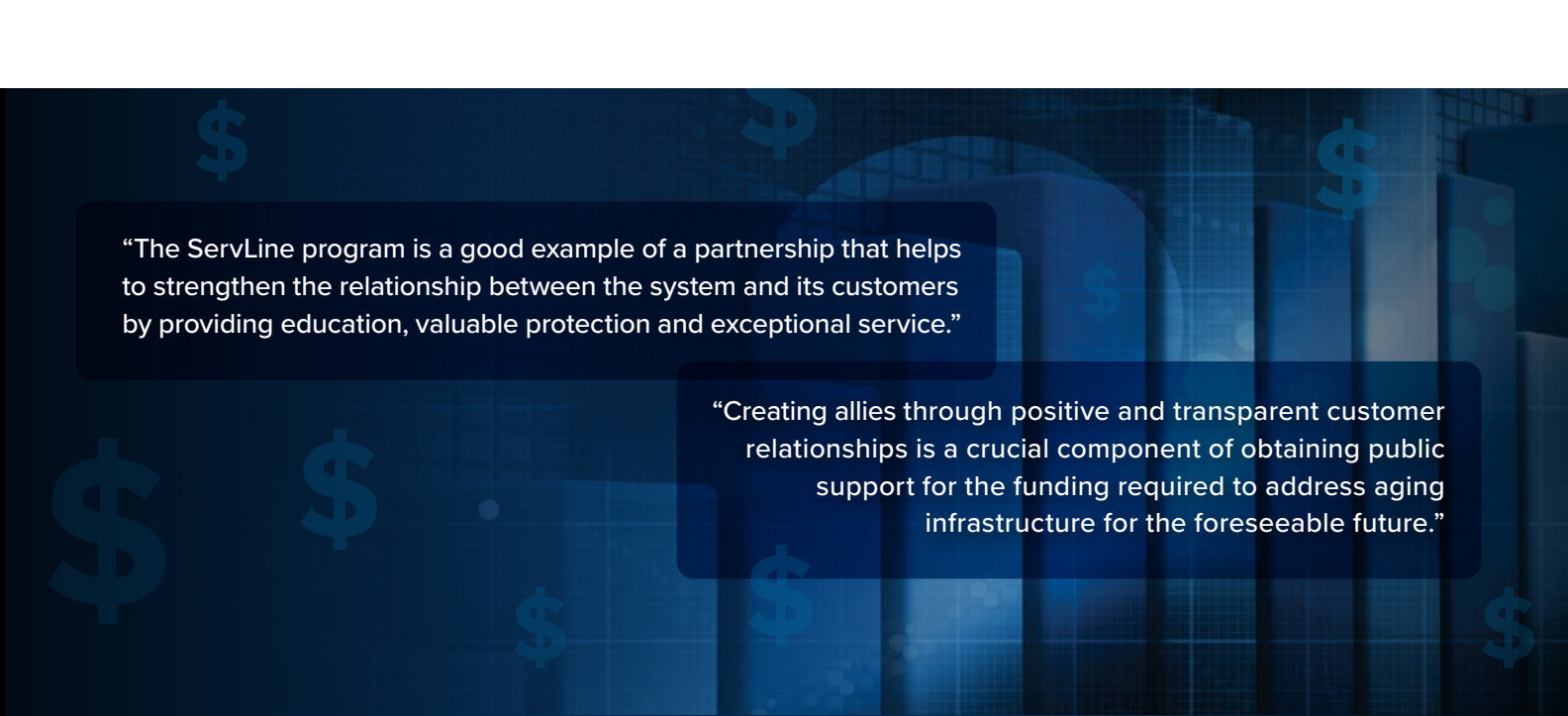
would benefit the US economy and its citizens with the creation of 800,000 new jobs, increased disposable income of \$2,000 per household and a \$4.5 trillion increase in gross domestic product.

Smaller water utilities face greater financial challenges than their large counterparts, having less access to capital and limited reserves, even prior to the Covid-19 pandemic, which has resulted in unprecedented economic hardship for the rural water sector. A 2020 sustainability assessment by the National Rural Water Association concluded that small systems, which comprise 91% of the community water supply inventory, have revenues to cover their operations and debt ratio, but that revenue is not sufficient to fund major infrastructure projects due to lower economies of scale and the inability of the ratepayer to afford increased cost for service.

In general, the public often takes their utility service for granted, which hinders the process for rate increases needed to implement infrastructure improvements and maintain a financially sustainable utility service. However, many systems are looking at public-private partnerships to offer better service and protection, thereby reinforcing positive customer relationships and experience that can result in a greater appreciation for the utility and its vital role in the community.

For example, customers are experiencing increasing numbers of service line breaks and leaks, and the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) estimates household leaks can waste more than 1 trillion gallons annually nationwide. That’s equal to the annual household water use of more than 11 million homes. One of the most negative customer relationship events for a water utility occurs when a customer receives an extraordinarily high water bill, usually caused by a service line leak or plumbing problem. The customer immediately expects the utility to absorb the increased bill, as 70% of Americans are not aware of their responsibility for the private-side service line. When explained, the customer may accept that responsibility, but the conversation is typically confrontational in nature and the customer is generally dissatisfied. Plus, the utility might have to absorb a bad-debt expense in the event the customer simply cannot afford to pay.

But what if, in that conversation, the utility could say, “No problem, it’s covered?” The customer would be happy, appreciative and supportive of the system because their needs and expectations were met. Additionally, the interaction between the ratepayer and the staff would be positive, and the system would be paid for the water lost from the leak. The result is a happy customer, which equals a supportive ratepayer.



“The ServLine program is a good example of a partnership that helps to strengthen the relationship between the system and its customers by providing education, valuable protection and exceptional service.”

“Creating allies through positive and transparent customer relationships is a crucial component of obtaining public support for the funding required to address aging infrastructure for the foreseeable future.”

The ServLine Leak Protection Program offered by HomeServe and provided through the utility delivers this experience to utilities and their customers. Data from 150 systems across the nation who have implemented this program demonstrates that, when this program is offered, the individual ratepayers' participation rate is 96%. For those customers who have had claims, satisfaction with the utility is increased by 70%, on average.

In addition to covering the water bill overage for the customer, the ServLine program eliminates the financial loss for the forgiven portion of the water bill for systems that include overage subsidies as part of their leak adjustment programs. For systems that operate as lending institutions, requiring full payment but carrying the debt, ServLine eliminates this process and the utility resources required for administration, while providing the most positive customer outcome. According to Kenny Baird, General Manager of LaFollette Utilities, “Working with ServLine has been a win-win for our customers and the utility. It has saved both the utility and customers thousands of dollars, and the process has been easy and efficient, with claims being handled promptly.”

The ServLine program is a good example of a partnership that helps to strengthen the relationship between the system and its customers by providing education, valuable protection and exceptional service. Creating allies

through positive and transparent customer relationships is a crucial component of obtaining public support for the funding required to address

aging infrastructure for the foreseeable future. Water companies interested in offering protection to customers can visit www.servline.com.

Sam Wade began his career in rural water in 1972 as a water and wastewater systems operator and city manager in Minnesota before becoming the manager of the Minnesota Rural Water Association in 1982.

In 1985 Mr. Wade joined the National Rural Water Association (NRWA) as the Training Director and became the Deputy CEO and Chief Operating Officer two years later. For more than 30 years Mr. Wade helped provide the leadership needed for the NRWA to train, support, and promote water and wastewater professionals that serve rural America. Wade retired from the NRWA in 2019 and now works as an industry consultant. ★

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February 9, 2021

Good Afternoon. Just wanted to say "Thank you" to you and the other members of the Alliance training teams. The combination of attending webinars, and the virtual conference along with your prior in person instruction made it possible for me to pass the IDEM Municipal Wastewater Operator Class IV exam. For now, I'm an apprentice, but with the help of John and Tony and putting in my time, before long I'll be a Class IV Operator.

Thanks again for all your help!

Vanessa Fisher
Wastewater Operations
Lebanon Utilities



Correction: In the Summer/Fall 2021 issue of *Hoosier Pipeline*, the article "Gas Chlorine or Liquid Chlorine – Which Do You Prefer?" incorrectly stated that gas chlorine is lighter than air. In fact, chlorine gas is 2.5 times **heavier** than air and, when released, settles in low-lying areas.

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