2012: Where Did The Year Go?

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As I write my 12th and final “Speaking Out” column my first thought is, “Where did the year go?” It seems like it was only yesterday when my first column was due.

Looking back at 2012, I am happy to report that the Florida Section AWWA continues to have financial strength and strong leadership from the board of governors. I’m honored to have had the opportunity to lead the section this year. The professionalism and spirit of cooperation that exists within the board and among the volunteers and staff were evidenced to me time and again. Everyone involved believes in making the section a success and in our mission to serve the water industry day in and day out.

The following recaps some of the programs and events this past year.

2011 Fall Conference Highlights

We had 190 exhibits at last year’s show, which 1,250 people attended. There were more than 60 technical presentations and a poster session covering a wide variety of water-related topics. Contests at the event included Top Ops, Backhoe Rodeo, Young Professionals Water Bowl, and Meter Madness. More than $8,000 was raised at the Roy Likins Golf Tournament.

Thanks to all who were involved in last year’s conference.

Business Practices Workshop

The fourth annual workshop was held in St. Cloud early in February. The event included a “State of The Section” report, an overview of our bylaws and standard practices manual, and a presentation of each council’s 2012 programs. In the afternoon, Tommie Brown, the workshop moderator, continued to work with us to redefine our goals for the section.

AWWA/WEF Joint Washington Fly-In

The 11th annual Fly-In was held March 7-8 in Washington, D.C. The purpose of this annual program is to advance AWWA and WEF legislative issues on Capitol Hill.

The first morning meeting started with briefings and discussions of proposed new legislation for Water Infrastructure Finance and Innovation Authority (WIFIA) funding. The AWWA members spent the afternoon and the next morning visiting their members of Congress. In all, our FSAWWA delegates visited 18 congressional representatives, including both senators. I would like to thank Paula Dye, Suzanne Goss, and Edgar Fernandez for setting up the appointments.

Water Distribution Award

Each year, one winner from eight utility categories is selected according to the service connections in their distribution water systems. For this honor, we recognize outstanding performance in water quality, operational maintenance procedures, professionalism in public relations and customer service, safety programs, emergency preparedness, and cross control procedures. Jason Parrillo and I had the privilege of presenting an award to each winner at their respective board meeting. Please congratulate the 2012 winners:

- Bay County
- City of Leesburg
- Bonita Springs Utilities
- City of Ft. Lauderdale
- City of St. Petersburg
- Palm Beach County

Best Tasting Drinking Water State Champion

Collier County won the statewide Best Tasting Drinking Water Contest on May 1 at the Florida Water Resources Conference. Judges chose Collier County from 10 regional winners to earn the title as Florida’s best.

In June, Paul Mattausch, director of Collier County, represented Florida at the contest held at the AWWA Annual Conference and Exposition (ACE) in Dallas to determine the best tasting water in the United States. In the competition, Collier County was in the top five. Congratulations to Paul and his department, and to Collier County, for a job well done.

Public Affairs Council Award

Earlier this year, the Southwest Florida Water Management District awarded the Public Affairs Council of FSAWWA a $5,000 grant for its participation in outreach concerning watershed education in the greater Tampa Bay area. I would like to congratulate the council and Amanda Rice for their leadership in helping to achieve this grant for the section.

Florida Top Ops

The Top Ops award for 2012 belongs to City of Deltona All Stars. The team took home the first-place award from the “College Bowl” type event that tested each group of water treatment and distribution operators on its knowledge of system operations.

The FSAWWA sponsored the City of Deltona team trip to the International Top Ops competition at ACE in Dallas. The City of Deltona was eliminated during the earlier rounds, while Palm Coast Water Buoys from Palm Coast Florida came in second. Congratulations to all those who participated.

Model Water Tower Competition

The Florida Section is celebrating the 10th anniversary of the Water Tower Competition by taking it to middle schools. This year we had seven regions participating in the event, with over 900 students building model water towers.

I would to thank all of the volunteers for putting on this fine event. It teaches young students all about water and how precious it is to us everyday.

Fresh Ideas Poster Session

This year’s Fresh Ideas Poster winner was Stephanie Ishi, for her poster, “Fluorescence Quenching: A Method for Monitoring Water Quality and Enhancing Drinking Water Treatment in Organic-Rich Surface Water.” By winning the contest, Stephanie was given an all-expenses-paid trip to ACE in Dallas to present her poster there. Congratulations, Stephanie!

Water Forum

Once again the Florida Section co-hosted the third annual Water Forum with the Associated Industries of Florida (AIF), which was held in Orlando on September 6. This year, six speakers discussed the latest water issues that
we are facing in the state. The presenters and their topics were:

- Rep. Steve Perman: Agriculture Lands for Water Storage
- Rep. Steve Crisafulli: Water Issues for the 2013 Legislative Sessions
- Herschel Vinyard, secretary of FDEP: Budget and the New Look of Water Management Districts
- Drew Bartlet, director of FDEP: Update on the Numeric Criteria
- David Childs: Legal Update

**Roy Likins Scholarship Fund**

Your executive board this past year approved to provide up to $24,000 a year in scholarships. We are very excited to offer this opportunity to students who want to be involved in the water industry.

It took many years to get to this level. I would like to thank those individuals who started this fund and for those who have contributed over the years.

**Water For People**

Under the leadership of Christine Ellenberger, the Water For People program continues to grow in the state. Through fundraising and other efforts, the donations throughout the regions this year for this worthwhile organization will exceed $45,000.

**Fuller Award Winner**

Matthew Alvarez, P.E., received the Fuller award at ACE in June. Matt has a long history of dedicated service to the Florida Section and has served as the state’s Young Professionals Committee chair, Region III chair, section secretary, chair-elect, chair, and past chair. He currently serves as general policy director. We all appreciate Matt’s hard work.

**Past Chairs Summit**

The fifth annual Past Chairs Summit was held in Orlando last August. During the meeting the executive board gave a “State of the Union” address. The past chairs listened and gave us their feedback. The big topic was membership and how important it is to the section and how we have to better engage our members. Your executive committee is committed to expanding and increasing section membership.

During the meeting with the past chairs, we added up how many total years of service there were with those in attendance, including the executive board, and the total was 516 years! Needless to say, there was a great deal of knowledge, history, and service to our industry in the room that day. I would like to thank the past chairs for their guidance and service to our industry.

It has been an honor to be the chair of the section. I would like to thank all of the members for their hard work and many volunteer hours this past year. The dedicated members in our regions, councils, committees and all of our other groups is what makes this section so productive—for the section itself and the entire water industry. I also would like to thank Peggy Guingona and her staff for making the Florida Section run so efficiently every day.

Thanks for the chance to serve you and the section. Merry Christmas and Happy Holidays to all!