Membership: It Has Privileges!

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It is hard to believe that 2013 is upon us and that another year is in the history books. Time really does speed up as you get older—or is it maybe just the perception that time has changed? In a similar way, an analogy can be made that perception of membership and the value received, not just with the Florida Section AWWA but any organization, changes over time.

This is my first column for the magazine as your chair and the title harks back to an old American Express commercial which used to close with, “Membership has its privileges.” Well, I have news for you: FSAWWA has privileges too! Let’s take a closer look at what being a member of FSAWWA offers you in return for your investment. More specifically, let’s look through the utility lens for this exercise.

Monetary Benefits

The easiest target for privilege of membership is the direct savings you receive with discounts on publications, periodicals, books, and training. Membership gives you subscriptions to the premier publications of the American Water Works Association and FSAWWA:

- Journal AWWA
- Opflow
- Florida Water Resources Journal

These all include in-depth articles on real-world problems, new emerging technologies, and regulatory drivers, and provide timely information on upcoming training and events, such as:
- Local training provided by your region.
- On-demand training provided by FSAWWA at your utility.
- Web-based training on your computer provided by FSAWWA.
- Workshops and technical sessions provided at the FSAWWA Fall Conference.

Do you need CEUs or PDHs? The FSAWWA has them. Do you need distribution operator training certification? The FSAWWA has that. Wait—do you want an operator scholarship for your next level of licensure? Well, guess what? That’s available, too. And the list goes on.

Networking and Recognition

You also receive the privilege of becoming part of a larger family of more than 50,000 water professionals such as yourself. You can tap that resource at the AWWA Annual Conference & Exposition (ACE) that’s held every June. This event provides a unique opportunity to discuss important issues with your peers and colleagues. The conference also provides an opportunity to be an active member on any number of committees, divisions, or councils that pertain to your specific area of interest.

Membership also gives utilities the privilege of being recognized for the outstanding contributions that are achieved day in and day out by their operations and maintenance staff. This in turn allows the local community to be recognized as well. The FSAWWA gives out six awards at our conference, and members of our leadership also present them at a commission meeting or event of the utility awardee’s choice. The awards are:
- Outstanding Water Treatment Facility
- Outstanding Water Treatment Plant Operator
- Most Improved Water Treatment Plant
- AWWA Operator’s Meritorious Service
- FSAWWA Distribution System
- Landmarks

Make a Difference

Membership also gives you the privilege of participating in legislative activities that can directly impact project funding and influence water policy. There are two such events each year:
- Water Matters Fly-In, held in Washington, D.C., sponsored by AWWA.
- Legislative Day in Tallahassee, sponsored by the Florida Section’s Water Utility Council.

The FSAWWA also participates in two other events each year that promote a “think tank” atmosphere for solving water supply issues:
- Joint Associated Industries of Florida (AIF) Water Forum
- FL2030 Water Summit

How about help with communicating a water conservation message to your ratepayers? A thirty-second commercial has been developed by FSAWWA, in partnership with a local television station, with the message already crafted, and it’s available to all utility members for their use.

Connection and Camaraderie

As you can see, membership indeed has privileges and provides an excellent return on your investment, but we have only scratched the surface. Perhaps the most important values of membership are the relationships you build within FSAWWA. Some of them will be lifelong friendships, others might be acquaintances that provide contacts you would not have otherwise made in your day-to-day work environment: contact with a professor at a local university perhaps, or a manufacturer’s representative, or maybe even a contractor. What you will find with membership in FSAWWA is that it’s more than an organization—it’s a family.

Arguably, the most valuable privilege you receive from FSAWWA is its ability to bring all water stakeholders together in one room. To indicate their importance, our logo touts “Florida’s Water Professionals,” indicating that we have a body of talent that is unsurpassed. We have utilities, engineers, manufacturers, regulators, contractors, and academicians—the very core of our organization and our industry.

As a member, you have the breadth and depth of knowledge found nowhere else. You have a value in membership found nowhere else. You can meet or bring stakeholders together at our conference and engage them in meaningful discussions about issues that directly impact your utility or organization, and come up with creative ways to solve the challenges at hand. There, instead of the barriers of office walls, you’ll find an open environment in which to collaborate, communicate, and create solutions.

Becoming a member of FSAWWA gives you more than tangible benefits as a return on your investment. Find out more by visiting our website at www.fswawa.org; navigate to the “About FSAWWA” tab on the left-hand side of the webpage and learn what is available today. You will like the investment you make—I guarantee it!