A Year to Remember

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Chair, FSAWWA

As chair of Florida Section AWWA for 2017, I have been very impressed with the talent, diligence, honesty, and diversity of our members and volunteers who worked together to make a better Florida and a better world through better water. This, my last Speaking Out column, provides some quick facts about what we did in 2017.

Events and Training

The FSAWWA’s 2,400 members can be proud of their accomplishments this year, with 137 event-days focused on training, outreach, legislation, fundraising, and/or networking. Overall, 2.6 event-days were held each week somewhere in Florida, and 60 percent of these were training events.

In January, we were the host section for the AWWA/WEF Utility Management Conference and Young Professionals Summit that attracted 1,073 participants and set the record for attendance at this event. In September, AWWA partnered with the Florida Section in the planning and delivery of the AWWA Customer Service Seminar and the AWWA Effective Utility Management Seminar in Orlando, which attracted 60 participants. By popular demand, we are partnering again with AWWA to bring the two seminars to Orlando in mid-December.

Our annual state conference, held in partnership with FWEA and FWPCOA, was very successful, with 350 exhibitors and over 3,300 participants. For the sixth year, FSAWWA was technical cosponsor of the 2017 ISA Water/Wastewater and Automatic Controls Symposium held in August. As I write this column, we are busy preparing for the FSAWWA Fall Conference, with 170 exhibitors and over 1,000 people registered as of November 1.

Legislative Issues and Utility Relations

We successfully communicated our legislative priorities to our Florida elected officials and members of the United States Senate and House of Representatives in January at our Tallahassee Fly-In and in March at the AWWA DC Water Matters!®-Fly In, respectively. We worked with state regulators on proposed water utility regulations. As I write this column, our Utility Council is getting ready for its Tallahassee Fly-In in November to focus our state senators and representatives on water utility issues for the 2018 legislative session.

To remind our local governments and utilities about the importance of AWWA to the provision of water services, our current and past section and region chairs and our chair-elect presented awards to the governing boards of nine Florida water utilities.

Strength of the Regions

Our 12 regions were active in hosting relevant and interesting training events and, as usual, provided creative ways to raise over $100,000 for the Roy Likins Scholarship Fund and Water For People. This year, all 12 of our regions participated and chose a regional winner for our Best Tasting Drinking Water Contest through activities ranging from dinner banquets to luncheon events. The City of North Miami was chosen as Florida champion during the statewide competition held at the Florida Water Resources Conference.

With the help of our regions, FSAWWA was very active in student outreach this year. Seven of our regions held Model Water Tower Competitions for middle school and high school students. Through the initiative of our regions, 26 Florida utilities participated in the FSAWWA Drop Savers poster contest, where over 100 posters created by students in grades 1 through 12 were submitted for the statewide competition.

Education, Conservation, and Committee Reorganization

None of this would be possible without our large membership, our hard-working volunteers, and our generous sponsors. Our section staff works diligently year-round to keep this volunteer organization working effectively—and legally. Without our dedicated staff members, Peggy Guingona, executive director; Casey Cumiskey, membership specialist; Donna Metherall, training coordinator; and Jenny Arguello, administrative assistant, we would not be the section that we are today.

I have been blessed to serve as chair of this great Florida Section and I will continue to serve the section in the years to come. On November 29, Bill Young, director of St. Johns County Utilities, will take my place as section chair during our Fall Conference annual business lunch and awards ceremony. I know he will be an excellent leader and I wish for him the fun, the pride, and the satisfaction that I have had this past year.