I would use the term “productively busy” to describe the Florida Section AWWA’s first half of 2017. I am happy and impressed with the diverse and effective ways that our volunteers made a positive difference in the lives of our members, our customers, and the residents of Florida. We have presented numerous awards to deserving water utilities, led effective public outreach, provided a variety of learning opportunities, and donated to communities that are in need of sustainable water and sanitation services.

This month I would like to recognize eight of these activities as examples of how we make a better Florida through better water.

**Outstanding Water Distribution System Award**

Each year, the Florida Section presents its distinguished Outstanding Water Distribution System Award to one deserving Florida utility in each of up to eight size classes. The 2016 award recipients are:

- **Division 1** – Seminole Tribe of Florida, Broward County, Region VI
- **Division 2** – City of Zephyrhills Utility Dept., Pasco County, Region IV
- **Division 3** – City of Coral Springs, Broward County, Region VI
- **Division 4** – Town of Jupiter, Palm Beach County, Region VI
- **Division 5** – City of Miramar, Broward County, Region VI
- **Division 6** – Broward County Water and Wastewater Services, Broward County, Region VI
- **Division 7** – Lee County Utilities Water Distribution, Lee County, Region V
- **Division 8** – Hillsborough County Public Utilities Dept., Hillsborough County, Region IV

This award recognizes the employees of these utilities as outstanding performers and leaders in the following areas:

- Maintaining high water quality and reliable operations
- Keeping excellent records
- Promoting professionalism, safety, and emergency preparedness
- Implementing a sound cross connection control program

This award was presented to the governing bodies of six of these utilities. We congratulate and thank each utility and its employees as they provide safe and reliable water supplies to their residents and visitors 24 hours a day, seven days a week—with no time off.

**Outstanding Water Treatment Plant and Operator Awards**

The 2016 FSAWWA Outstanding Water Treatment Plant and Operator awards were presented to deserving utilities and recipients at the Florida Water Resources Conference (FWRC) in April. The awards are based on exemplary performance in plant operations, maintenance, cost-efficiency, plant safety, training, and achieving consistently high drinking water quality. The water treatment plant awards are based on three size classes. We congratulate and thank Paul, Wally, and the award-winning utilities for their hard work in providing safe and reliable water to residents and visitors.

- **Marvin N. Kaden Outstanding Water Treatment Plant Operator** – Paul Haskins, Hillsborough County Water Resource Services
- **Meritorious Drinking Water Treatment Plant Operator** – Wallace “Wally” Reed, Hillsborough County Water Resource Services
- **Outstanding Water Treatment Plant Class A** – Peace River Manasota Regional Water
- **Outstanding Water Treatment Plant Class B** – City of Tarpon Springs Reverse Osmosis Facility
- **Outstanding Water Treatment Plant Class C** – Seminole Tribe of Florida, Hollywood Water Treatment Plant
- **Most Improved Water Treatment Plant Class A** – Coral Springs Improvement District
- **Most Improved Water Treatment Plant Class B** – Lithia Water Treatment Plant
- **Most Improved Water Treatment Plant Class C** – Lake Park Water Treatment Plant

FSAWWA is proud to be a technical cosponsor of the 2017 ISA Water/Wastewater and Automatic Controls Symposium to be held at the Wyndham Lake Buena Vista Resort August 8-10. Control systems are so critical to the operation of our nation’s utilities. As such, our FSAWWA members have much to gain from this gathering of automation professionals. Attendees earn FDEP-approved CEUs and PDHs while networking with their peers and hearing about the latest automatic control applications within the industry. For more information, go to http://isawwsymposium.com/. See you in Orlando!
**AWWA Landmarks Award**

The AWWA Landmarks Award “recognizes and preserves an American, Canadian, or Mexican water landmark at least 50 years old that has had a direct and significant relationship with water supply, treatment, distribution, or technological development.” This year two Florida water utilities received this award at FWRC.

**City of Dunedin - The City of Dunedin's Well No. 1** is over 100 years old. The first of Dunedin’s freshwater wells, it was dedicated in 1915 and is still in operation, providing fresh water to Dunedin residents.

**Destin Water Users - Destin Water Users Water Tower No. 1** is over 52 years old, having been dedicated on Oct, 23, 1964. The tower is still fully operational as it maintains local water pressure in Destin’s water distribution system and is monitored via the utility’s supervisory control and data acquisition (SCADA) system.

We congratulate the City of Dunedin and Destin Water Users for their sound maintenance of these water landmarks.

**Water Conservation Month**

April is Water Conservation Month in Florida, thanks to the efforts of the FSAWWA Water Use Efficiency Division (WUED), and its chair, Lisa Krentz, and vice chair, Dave Bracciano. The section, in collaboration with Florida’s water management districts, requests local governments, water utilities, and other organizations to adopt a resolution or proclamation declaring April as Water Conservation Month.

This year’s state proclamation was adopted on April 11 at the state’s Cabinet meeting. Representatives from the WUED were present to accept the proclamation and to present the list of local governments and organizations throughout Florida that proclaimed April as Water Conservation Month.

**FSAWWA Finance and Rates Committee Activities**

The most significant challenge facing utility systems across the county is the funding of needed infrastructure renewal, repair, and replacement. It’s important for local industry professionals to have access to and understand what other organizations are experiencing in terms of funding, financing, and developing rates and charges. Managers in the water and wastewater industry must address regulatory challenges, capital funding needs, succession planning, water supply shortages, elimination of effluent discharge options, and a declining industrial customer base. The FSAWWA Finance and Rates Committee is a resource for members to discuss these issues and understand how the water and wastewater industry is reacting and adapting.

The committee was formed in 2015 under the section’s Technical and Education Council. Led by Chair Tony Hairston of Raftelis Financial Consultants and Vice Chair Robert Ryall of Arcadis, this committee discusses, collaborates on, and shares information concerning best practices for financing water and wastewater utilities and establishing water and wastewater rates and charges. Other topics discussed include the impacts of state laws, regulations and regional and national issues on Florida rate setting, and the impact of management issues on the water and wastewater industry.

Two in-person meetings are held each year at the two FSAWWA conferences: the FWRC held in the spring and the FSAWWA Fall Conference. From 12 to 23 members have attended the five meetings held since 2015. As a participant in each of these meetings, I have enjoyed the free exchange of ideas and solutions on a variety of finance, rate, and management topics.

The committee has held three workshops:

- “Funding Infrastructure Improvements” was held at the FSAWWA Fall Conference in 2015. The five speakers focused on State Revolving Fund (SRF) and Water Infrastructure Finance and Innovation Act (WIFIA) developments, SRF drinking water new rule development, infrastructure and capital funding, municipal market update, and a legal update on tiered water rates. The speakers provided up-to-date and pertinent information to an audience of over 30 attendees.

- “Utility Financial Lessons Learned and Roundtable” was the second workshop held at the 2016 FSAWWA Fall Conference last November. This well-attended workshop included presentations and discussions on creative funding for utility infrastructure programs, customer service improvements in municipal utilities, assessment to accelerate...
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high-density redevelopment, and combining utility systems for financial strength.

“Utility Rates 101 Workshop” was held this year at FWRC. Four speakers shared their professional experiences with capital planning considerations, understanding customer billing data, and utility rate structure and design.

A fourth workshop is planned at the FSAWWA Fall Conference this November. The theme of this workshop is “The Value of Water” and its application to rates, impact fees, and customer service.

If you want to join this committee or learn more about its activities, please contact our chair, Tony Hairston, or vice chair, Robert Ryall, using the contact information provided at www.fsawwa.org under “Committees” or www.fsawwa.org/page/TECFRC.

Women of Water (WOW) Forum

The FWRC held in April hosted the Women of Water Forum featuring a facilitated panel of seven successful women in the water and waste-water industry. This distinguished group discussed relevant issues facing women in a male-dominated profession. The two-hour forum was very well-attended and the interaction among the panelists, facilitator, and audience produced a lively and informative discussion. Some of the discussion topics included:

- Did you choose the industry or did it choose you?
- What advantages have you seen as a result of being a woman in the engineering field?
- What small changes make the most impact?
- What has been your biggest career challenge?
- What tools would you recommend to help others maintain “balance” in their work/home life?
- What/who influenced you the most to enter the industry?
- What have been your challenges in balancing home and work life?
- What have been your tradeoffs between work and potential promotions versus family responsibilities?
- Are glass ceiling barriers a perception or reality?

The forum was organized and moderated by FSAWWA board member Marjorie Craig and provided a unique opportunity to learn from others who have “been there, done that.” The wealth of expertise and information that the panelists provided was enhanced by the style of the forum encouraging interaction between the facilitator/panelists and the audience, allowing the audience members to contribute their experiences, suggestions, observations, and questions.

The audience included those who are new to the industry, seasoned professionals, and somewhere in between. The takeaways gained are intended to help young and seasoned female (and male) professionals navigate through workplace challenges and politics.

One of the suggestions for next year’s forum is to add men to the panel! The attendees recognized that building understanding, trust, and solid working relationships among all genders are critical to an effective workplace and achieving career and industry success. There can be gender-specific timing, cues, and reactions that men and women should and can better understand so that we can better leverage our differences and use them as strengths. The FWRC planning committee is committed to presenting this forum at every conference.

Judges for the drinking water taste test included (left to right) Grace Johns, senior associate economist with Hazen and Sawyer; Barbara Powell, former water resources manager for Broward County and lead planner for South Florida Water Management District; and Harold Fravel, executive director of the American Membrane Technology Association (AMTA).

Panel members engaged the attendees in lively conversations. The panel is seated at the front table and includes, from left to right: Maria Loucraft, utility compliance and efficiency manager for City of Pompano Beach; Marjorie Craig (standing), director of Polk County Utilities; Eileen O’Neill, executive director of the Water Environment Federation; Jacqueline Torbert, manager of Orange County Utilities Water Division and a vice president on the AWWA board of directors and past FSAWWA chair; Lisa Prieto, owner of Prieto Environmental and P3 Electrical and FWEA president; Lisa Wilson-Davis, utility services operations and environmental compliance manager for City of Boca Raton; and Dr. Poonam Kalkat, director of Public Utilities for City of West Palm Beach.

Dozens of spectators observe the judging of Florida’s Best of the Best Tasting Drinking Water Contest at the Florida Water Resources Conference on April 25 in West Palm Beach.
Best of the Best Tasting Drinking Water Contest

The Best Tasting Drinking Water Contest is intended for fun and to recognize an industry often taken for granted. This year all 12 of our regions participated and chose a regional winner through activities ranging from dinner banquets to luncheon events. The 2017 winners are:

- Region I - City of Tallahassee
- Region II - City of St. Augustine
- Region III - City of Sanford
- Region IV - City of Wildwood
- Region V - Cape Coral Utilities
- Region VI - Seminole Tribe of Florida Hollywood Treatment Plant
- Region VII - City of North Miami
- Region VIII - Seminole Tribe of Florida Brighton Water Treatment Plant
- Region IX - People’s Water Service
- Region X - Charlotte County Utilities
- Region XI - City of Belleview
- Region XII - Bay County Utilities

Our Best of the Best Tasting Drinking Water Contest judged all 12 winners at FWRC and chose City of North Miami as the Florida champion that will participate in the national competition at the AWWA Annual Conference and Exhibition (ACE17) in Philadelphia in June.

Water For People Exhibitor Fundraiser

This year’s Water For People Exhibitor Fundraiser at FWRC raised a net $6,700 to support its mission: “Seeing communities break free from the cycle of poverty and spend time growing, learning, and thriving, instead of walking for water and fighting off illness. We’re working to reach Everyone Forever with safe water and sanitation.”

Many thanks to our participating exhibitors who donated to the cause and received from 60 to 120 raffle tickets to give out to their booth visitors for a chance to win gift cards worth $300, $200, and $100. All tickets were deposited at the Water For People booth and “Gold” participants were featured in poster displays that highlight a Water For People project. Additional raffle tickets were sold for five dollars each.

This fundraiser, which has been implemented by FSAWWA at its two conferences since 2007, provides Water For People learning and fundraising opportunities, while attracting visitors to the participating exhibitor booths.

Our Gold participants were:

- Custom Controls Technology Inc.
- Delta Products Corp.
- Environmental Operating Solutions Inc.
- Hazen and Sawyer
- Hydra Service Inc.
- Kimley-Horn
- Moss Kelley Inc.
- Reiss Engineering

Our Silver participants were:

- Classic Controls Inc.
- Primex Controls

Our Bronze participants were:

- CH2M
- Evoqua Water Technologies
- Jones Edmunds & Associates Inc.
- MTS Environmental

This fundraiser would not have been a success without the leadership of Juan Aceituno, FSAWWA Water For People chair, and volunteers Carla Erazo, Daisy Hernandez, Natalie McCudden, and Pamela London-Exner.

Dona Luisa (center) is president of El Negrito’s Water Board Association in Honduras. She is on a quest to make sure everyone across the municipality has access to safe water forever. (photo: Water For People)