I f you’ve even been to an FSAWWA networking event (which I highly recommend!), there was probably a philanthropic component to it. Whether it’s Water For People, the Roy Likins Scholarship, or some other charity, FSAWWA members are extremely generous with their donations and support.

In much the same way that AWWA recognized the need to help people around the world have access to safe water and adequate sanitation and founded Water For People, AWWA has more recently created a program called the Water Equation to help with water-related needs more domestically.

Many of you may have heard about the Water Equation, but might not be clear on the details, so I thought I would dedicate this month’s article to providing some clarity. To that end, I enlisted the assistance of Michelle Hektor, AWWA’s senior manager of development and donor relations for the Water Equation, and she offers the following discussion.

Water Equation

It’s been nearly five years since AWWA’s Water Equation took its first individual pledges from AWWA section directors to begin funding workforce advancement, young professionals programming, and the Community Engineering Corps. An aging workforce, lack of trained water operators, the need for an energized next generation to propel water industry innovations, and the desire to solve water infrastructure issues in the United States were all reasons for this new initiative.

Scholarships Fund Water Workforce

The One AWWA Operator Scholarship is a partnership between the Water Equation and AWWA sections to provide educational funding and opportunities to water and wastewater operators across the U.S. Since its inception, 105 scholarships have been awarded, for a total of $112,456 to fund courses, books, training, and continuing education units. These water professionals tell us that they wouldn’t be able to pursue their dreams of certification or of becoming a manager if not for the financial assistance from this program.

A $200,000 portfolio of academic scholarships is being managed through AWWA’s philanthropy, with corporate partners providing 25 undergraduate and graduate scholarships of $5,000 to $10,000 each. Scholarship applications open every year in mid-August and will close in mid-December this year for awards in March 2020. Presentation of the awards is an annual celebration at the Annual Conference and Exhibition (ACE) Water Industry Luncheon, which all scholarship recipients attend to learn more about AWWA’s resources and membership.

Leadership Day

The AWWA Young Professionals (YP) Committee has designed a Leadership Day that takes place each year before the YP Summit at the Utility Management Conference. The Water Equation funds the preconference community service, the AWWA YP Leadership Day of pro-
programming from AWWA's leadership, and an evening networking social so that the 125 young professionals can attend the event free of charge. The Florida Keys Aquaduct Authority sent three YPs to the event this year!

The Water Equation will continue to look for ways to support leadership programming for young professionals, while broadening its scope to include funding of youth programming as well.

**Community Engineering Corps**

Founded in 2014 by AWWA’s Engineers Without Borders and the American Society of Civil Engineers, the Community Engineering Corps has opportunities for volunteers to assist in safe water projects in the U.S. Water Equation funds this program to assist volunteers in their tasks of community outreach and includes federal and state funding to support the projects. Successful projects in Ohio, Washington, Tennessee, Montana, and Texas in the last year are a testament to AWWA’s volunteer spirit. Please visit www.awwa.org to learn more.

Celebrating five years in January 2020, this AWWA philanthropy is achieving the membership’s vision of providing workforce advancement through scholarships and leadership programming. Community Engineering Corps is focusing on access to safe water and adequate sanitation in our own neighborhoods.

The AWWA Florida Section has been supporting the Water Equation through golf tournaments, Texas Hold’em events, and the Wine for Water event that was held at the Orlando Science Center in July.

I really appreciate Michelle’s help with this month’s column. So, the next time you’re at an FSAWWA event or conference and you see a Water Equation raffle, please consider the good work that it supports and buy a ticket or two!

The AWWA Water Equation couldn’t have the positive impact it has without your support!