Like many other industries in the United States, succession planning in the water industry can be crucial. There is a whole lot of institutional knowledge that has left our workforce, and experts say this will continue for the next several years. Filling those gaps with educated, trained, and experienced personnel may be a significant challenge.

Your FSAWWA has recognized this issue and developed several programs and incentives to help fill some of those gaps. For young people entering, or just starting to consider, careers in our industry, the section offers several resources, including:

- Roy W. Likins scholarship program for college students
- High Schools Academy started in 2011 to help students learn the science of water treatment plant operation and prepare for the state exam
- Young Professionals Committee

The section just recently was able to help another high school with its own water plant operators training course, and I’m very proud to tell you about it here!

Region IV of FSAWWA started working with Hillsborough County schools two years ago to develop a water treatment plant operations course at one of their high schools. This was a group effort spearheaded by Pam London-Exner, Technical and Education Council chair, using her contacts within the school system and patterned after the section’s High Schools Academy program that blossomed under the leadership of Steve Soltau, chair of the section’s High School Initiative Committee.

With the help of Mark Lehigh, general policy director; Emilie Moore, section treasurer; Steve Soltau; Dan Glaser, Region IV chair; and Katherine Williams, Hillsborough County started the program this year at A.P. Leto High School.

As a fledgling program, however, there wasn’t much funding for it, and those involved needed help obtaining text books for the students. In accordance with our mission to promote and support our industry, as appropriate, the section’s Executive Committee agreed to purchase thirty water treatment plant operations manuals from California State University at Sacramento and loan them to these students, and hopefully, to future ones. The students were very grateful, along with their teacher, Sean Murray, and Brent League, science department director.

Hopefully, this is the start of the story for this kind of program and, with the continued help of our awesome FSAWWA volunteers and staff, we can help keep this going and expand it to more high schools in the future.

Get Ready for the FSAWWA Fall Conference!

Have you registered yet for the Fall Conference? I sure hope so, because this year’s event at the Omni Orlando Resort at ChampionsGate, December 8-12, is filling up fast and looks to be outstanding!

The technical programs are set, with a slate of excellent speakers sharing their experience and knowledge on a wide range of current and relevant topics. Similarly, the exhibition hall will have 165 booths and 17 tabletop exhibits filled with the newest products and services that you definitely don’t want to miss.

And who’s up for a little friendly competition with the following contests:

- Backhoe Rodeo
- Ductile Iron Tap
- Fun Tap
- Top Ops Brainstorming
- Meter Madness
- Hydrant Hysteria (women’s team competing this year!)
- Thursday Golf Tournament

Last but not least is the BBQ Challenge and Incoming Chair’s Reception, which is the perfect opportunity to welcome Kim Kowalski as the section’s incoming chair and enjoy some tasty BBQ!

The opening general session will be held Monday at the conference at 2:30 p.m., and this year’s keynote speaker is sure to be interesting and enlightening.

So come on out and take advantage of everything the Fall Conference has to offer—I’ll see you there!