I cannot believe it has been a year already—wow! The saying is true: time flies (but we didn’t have fun), even in one of the toughest years our industry has encountered.

In December when I was passed the gavel, I never imagined my year would be this tumultuous. Becoming chair of the section was something that I thought a lot about, even in my early days on the Manufacturers/Associates Council (MAC), and I could not believe it was my time.

**A Different Year**

I was looking forward to all the regional meetings, conferences, drinking water contests, and the many local and state government meetings; instead, FSAWWA was faced with lockdowns and cancellations like we had never seen before. This past year proved to me the dedication and excellent quality of the people who work in this industry. I know this is the career we all chose, but it’s very apparent how important it is to supply safe and reliable drinking water to our communities!

An excellent example of this dedication is our Water Utility Council (WUC). When COVID-19 hit, the members took it upon themselves to hold weekly pandemic virtual meetings, which are still ongoing. These virtual meetings are for all the utility members to discuss the impacts and challenges they are being faced with due to COVID-19. Topics have included staffing requirements, testing, and personal protective equipment.

As cancellations occurred, FSAWWA realized that we would have to conduct business differently, as we were no longer able to hold training and social events in person. The staff worked tirelessly (led by Peggy Guingona, our executive director) to find the right platforms to hold our events virtually so we could continue to deliver the same exceptional experience as our “live” events.

We moved the MAC New Technology Showcase to a virtual platform, opening it up to the entire state; we did this as well with our other training opportunities. So far, we’ve held 38 training events, which includes our virtual annual Fall Conference.

There is a lot of work that goes into making these events run smoothly—again, thanks to Peggy and her staff!

**Fundraising Successes**

Despite all of the hardships, there were also opportunities to raise money and influence lives. Water Equation (WE) held a national fundraising event involving all of the AWWA sections called WE Walk!, where people gathered virtually to fund scholarships, leadership programs, and safe water projects.

Participants were able to walk, run, or bike, logging their miles as they went. This was an eight-week program that raised a total of $26,405 for WE! The top spot for the most funds raised went to Florida with $6,093.02! There were different categories, and some are listed here. Mark Lehigh, our very own current section director and past FSAWWA chair, came in first place overall with the most mileage.

**Going the Extra Miles**

- 118 B4 5/25 (118-mile virtual walk around Lake Okeechobee): Mark Lehigh took the winning spot.

**TOP Walkers**

- Mark Lehigh: 566.6 miles (118 B4 5/25)
- Kyla Jacobsen: 542.10 miles (AWWA Sections and Friends)
- Colleen Heath: 460.5 miles (New England Young Professionals)

The section also gave money to Water For People and the Roy Likens Scholarship Fund. We were able to change the lives of 12 students with scholarships, with a total of $45,000 in scholarships awarded.

**My Thanks**

Thank you to all of our volunteers and members during this difficult year; your patience and dedication helped FSAWWA accomplish many things. I also want to thank the FSAWWA staff: Peggy, Donna, Casey, and Jenny! This year, more than ever, your tireless and excellent work kept us on track! Thank you, thank you!

I also cannot forget about the Executive Committee for its support and fellowship—you helped me to realize my dream!

This past year was hard for me—both professionally and personally—and it will never be forgotten. I want to thank my family (Scott and Regan) for all of their support; I could not have done it without you.

I am honored for the opportunity you have given me to be your section chair. Again, this has been my Conclusion of Vision in Delusion (COVID).

Although I will not be passing the gavel to Fred Bloetscher, the 2021 section chair, personally, I know that he will excel in this new role.

Here’s to 2021 being better than 2020!