FSAWWA Scholarship Changes Lives, Strengthens the Water Industry

Rick Radcliffe
Chair, FSAWWA

Last month, at the Florida Water Resources Conference, your board of governors met to review section business for the first half of the year. One of the highlights of the meeting was a vote by the board to increase the dollar amount for the Roy W. Likins Scholarship. Awarded yearly to Florida students, either for undergraduate or graduate study, the scholarship’s namesake was a leader in the Florida water industry as a volunteer for many FSAWWA and FWPCOA committees and projects.

Starting in 2013, the board and the Scholarship Committee can award up to $25,000 in scholarship money each year. To date, the section has awarded 47 scholarships.

With the increased funding starting next year, I thought it would be a good time to reach out to some of our past scholarship winners and have them tell you, in their own words, what this scholarship has meant to them.

Bill Young
Director of Utilities
St. Johns County Utility Department
(1993 award)

I was St. Johns County’s water treatment supervisor when I decided to invest in my future by returning to graduate school for a master’s degree in public administration. I found information about the Likins Scholarship in the Florida Water Resources Journal, applied, and was very fortunate to be awarded the 1993 scholarship.

Bob Claudy drove to St. Augustine to present the award, meet with our county administrator, take photos for the local paper, and enjoy lunch. There is no doubt that the financial assistance was appreciated, but the public recognition was a tremendous boost to my career. I have now been the County’s director of utilities for 14 years, and to show my gratitude and loyalty to the Florida Section of AWWA, I chair the Likins Scholarship Committee and remain active in the section. Obviously, it is a cause that is very close to my heart, and a major contributor to my success. I know firsthand that every time we select a recipient, we are supporting a career and establishing a lifelong relationship with the Florida Section.

Marjorie Guillory Craig, P.E.
Associate Vice President
AECOM
(1994 award)

Life takes such interesting twists and turns, doesn’t it? Any given turn is affected by the free-will decisions and choices we make. Along with timing, opportunity, and, I believe, God’s will. As a petroleum engineering major at Texas A&M University, I would never have guessed that I would spend most of my life and career in utilities management, water resources, regulation, and civil engineering consulting in Florida.

But, timing being what it is, after graduating, the petroleum field fell off of a cliff, and I moved to Tampa to marry my college sweetheart. I washed boats for a living until I could convince someone to hire me. Dr. Bob Brown took a chance on me and I was hired as a civil project engineer with his small company.

Later, I was hired by Dave Tippin, longtime director of the Tampa Water Department and self-proclaimed “Water Troll,” and spent many years (and nights and weekends) working for him. While working there, and after passing the professional engineer exam, I became determined to pursue a master’s degree in civil engineering from the University of South Florida. A classic overachiever, I went to school while working full time, with two preschool children, an old Victorian “money pit” house—and only one car.

Money was tight, as it usually is when kids and an old house are involved. Dave told me about the FSAWWA Likins scholarship and about the remarkable man for whom the scholarship is named. I never had a chance to meet Mr. Likins, but through Dave, Bob Claudy, and Tim Brodeur, I learned about his contributions to our profession. The respect and love for Mr. Likins was evident to me in the reverential tones he was mentioned by my mentors.

I still feel honored that I was awarded the scholarship. It helped me financially, to be sure, but it also provided more sustained benefits and crystallized for me the significance of this organization. Although FSAWWA is overtly a group of professionals dedicated to providing clean water, it is also a tacit union of people devoted to public health and safety, community service, and to each other. By having a scholarship, FSAWWA shows commitment to higher education and promoting careers in the water industry. By naming it
after Mr. Likins, FSAWWA shows that it values its volunteers and their contributions.

It has always been important to me to give back to my community and profession (instilled in me by my mother's many volunteer achievements). The scholarship award, along with some not-so-subtle prodding by the Water Troll, sealed my loyalty as a volunteer for FSAWWA. I have continued volunteering for the section, while working for the City of West Palm Beach, the South Florida Water Management District, and now, again working in civil engineering consulting at AECOM.

And, speaking of timing, while at Texas A&M, I would never have guessed the Aggies would join the Southeast Conference and play the Gator Nation. By the way, I am outnumbered by Gators in my household, two to one. It’s going to be a long football season this year, but then again, I love football. Gig ‘em Aggies!

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Steve Soltau
Facility Manager
Pinellas County Department of Environment and Infrastructure
S.K. Keller Water Plant
(2002 award)

Early in my drinking water career, I realized if I ever wanted to get off of the weekend shift, and if I ever wanted to be sent to the AWWA annual conference, I needed more than just a Class A drinking water operator license; I needed a college degree. However, getting a college degree requires more than just the desire; it requires a lot of cash.

Just like every good American college student (albeit, about 40 years old) I applied for and received a hefty student loan. As the school kept dipping into my account to pay for the classes, the total-owed dollars grew larger every semester. Each month, the statement arrived via the U.S. mail, and each month, while I walked back from the mailbox, I decided it was better to not even open the envelope. I would just ignore it for now, and pay the bill after I graduated.

So, in 2002, after being active in FSAWWA for about three years, I filled out the application for the Likins Scholarship. Not long afterward, I received a call informing me I was selected as a recipient. In fact, the award paid for one semester of my MBA studies!

The section has been a part of my life for 15 years. I have been provided with professional guidance, met dozens of drinking water professionals, and made some close friends. I continue to look for opportunities to give back to the section and my region by helping with seminars, teaching, and volunteering for events in support of our members and the mission of the Florida Section.

David MacNevin
Ph.D. Student, Graduate Research Assistant
University of Central Florida
(2005 award)

I am very grateful for the Florida Section’s generous assistance in 2005 when I was named a recipient of the Roy W. Likins Scholarship. At the time, I was still a young graduate student at the University of Central Florida (UCF). I got my first taste of AWWA through the Water Bowl, the young professional summer seminars, and the UCF student chapter of AWWA. As a student, I learned from the experiences of countless water professionals, while attending the section’s conferences and touring multiple water treatment plants.

Soon after receiving the scholarship, I submitted my first abstracts for the AWWA state and national conferences, and have since had the privilege of presenting at several of them. In 2008, the section was very gracious to send me to ACE where I presented a paper in the “Fresh Ideas” poster session. After graduating, I served with Water For People as a World Water Corps volunteer in Nicaragua. On that trip, I gained a deep appreciation for the local governments and water professionals who fund, build, and maintain Florida’s supply of safe, affordable water.

Currently, I’m helping coordinate the FSAWWA young professionals summer seminar on membrane concentrate. Nationally, I’m learning about committee work by participating on the AWWA Distribution System Water Quality Committee.

Seven years after the Likins Scholarship, I’m excited to be a part of the drinking water community and look forward to what lies ahead.

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As you can see, the award has indeed changed lives, benefitted the water profession, and helped the programs and projects of the section.

Please join us in Dallas at the AWWA Annual Conference for our Florida Section luncheon hosted by the Manufacturers/Associates Council, in the Cactus Room at the Iron Cactus Mexican Grill & Margaritas, at noon on Monday June 11.

I hope to see you there!