In Illinois there are over 2,500 drinking water and wastewater utilities. The vast majority of the operators and managers at these facilities are male. Because of the small number of female employees and managers in this industry, opportunities to connect with female peers in the same way that their male counterparts do are few and far between.

Women in Water's mission is to empower women working in the water industry by inviting them into a safe and comfortable environment to mentor and be mentored, develop a woman-to-woman support network, and engage in woman-centered educational and leadership development opportunities. Simply stated: to connect with others in order to share ideas and obtain new knowledge that will improve your life and career.

Support
You gain an immediate personal and professional support system of others who share your interests and concerns. Being connected to a network of peers and participating in events reminds you that you are not alone, gives you a chance to let off steam with others who know your experiences and even laugh about your situation.

Mentoring
Find a mentor – Opportunities to grab the attention and pick the brain of someone at the top of your field are rare. However, through this committee’s mentoring program you can be paired with someone far more experienced than yourself; someone who has already experienced what you are experiencing now.

Be a mentor– Share your knowledge and shape the future of this industry! Giving back is the greatest reward and benefit.

Networking
Meeting, mingling with and getting to know other women in your field. These interactions create a sense of belonging. Networking with other women provides an opportunity to gain additional resources and knowledge that you might not otherwise have access to or would take years to build on your own.
Build confidence and camaraderie
Being part of the Women in Water committee will give you a leg-up in establishing professional relationships within a like-minded collaborative group. Here you can build a sense of security and trust. You can share "best practices", new ideas, and brainstorm with others who want to grow with you.

Deepen knowledge and expand expertise
Participating in group activities such as seminars, webinars, and lectures, as well as gaining insightful advice from other women, will build your skill set and help you find your niche or area of expertise. Group activities give you the opportunity to showcase your experience through peer-to-peer discussions, learn how to build a strong team, and learn how to lead. Public speaking will strengthen your communication skills, but no worries, if presenting isn’t for you, no problem! Maybe writing is your platform, for example writing book reviews or about your experiences as a developing leader in the industry.

Leadership development
Through mentoring and various other developmental programs that will be offered, you will have opportunities to build on the hard skills of a leader - communication, negotiation, people skills, etc.

Advice
Gaining the advice of experienced peers is an important benefit of networking. Women in Water members discuss a variety of topics including common challenges and opportunities; these discussions will open doors to valuable suggestions and guidance that only other women can provide. It is very likely someone in the group has experienced what you are. The advice and support can also apply to personal issues as well that can help lead to a good work-life balance. Offering genuine assistance to others also sets up a strong foundation for receiving support in return.

Friendship
Successful networking involves like-minded people, meeting regularly and helping each other to forge long-lasting friendships. This is the foundation on which naturally strong friendships tend to form.

As the saying goes, "No woman is an island". Regular interaction with like-minded and like-situational colleagues leads to learning, personal growth, and career progression. That is what belonging to Women in Water can do for you in a way that no other industry group can do.

Please visit www.isawwa.org/women to learn more about WIW and to join.