

# WHAT MAKES A CHAPTER STRONG?



From left, IRWA International President Faith Roland, SR/WA; Chapter President, Becky Iles, SR/WA; Vice President, Tim Sprout, SR/WA; Treasurer, Karen Tilton, SR/WA; and Secretary, Kristin Machacek, SR/WA.



Larry King, SR/WA, PLS, received the Chapter 71 Professional of the Year award from Faith Roland, SR/WA.



On behalf of Chapter 49, Mary Ellen Beardsley presented a \$4,500 check to Chapter 71 President Becky Iles, SR/WA.



Representing the Alaska Department of Transportation, Steve Titus and John Bennett, SR/WA, PLS, accepted Chapter 71's Employer of the Year Award.

## BY PAT THAYER, SR/WA AND SHARON MCLEOD-EVERETTE, SR/WA

Arctic Trails Chapter 71 held its 26<sup>th</sup> Annual Installation and Awards Ceremony last December. Participating in the festivities was our sister chapter, Alaska Sourdough Chapter 49 from Anchorage, who presented us with a \$4,500 check. Now, this was not the first time our sister chapter has given us such a generous gift. So what inspires a nearby chapter to make such a large donation – one that goes beyond the amount and includes their time, dedication and resources?

### **Banding Together**

In Alaska, our two chapters are separated by 360 miles. That equates to six or so hours of driving—if road conditions are good—or one hour by plane. In terms of size, Alaska could fit the state of Texas twice within our borders, so as you can imagine, we cover a lot of ground. Anchorage's population is around 360,000, while the

Fairbanks area population is roughly 90,000. And while the chapter sizes vary greatly (Chapter 49 has 122 members, Chapter 71 has 34 members), both have a strong education ethic and host monthly luncheons with educational speakers.

For regional and international IRWA events, Chapters 71 and 49 band together. For example, when Chapter 49 was bidding to host the 1997 International Seminar in Anchorage, not many of their members were able travel to the annual seminar to promote the idea. So Chapter 71 dove right in to help, selling raffle tickets, wearing Seymour the Moose costumes, making Polar Bears at receptions, and donating (and bidding on) raffle and auction items, literally selling even the shirts off our backs! After Chapter 49 won the bid, Chapter 71 worked with them to make sure the seminar came off without a hitch.

***“It doesn’t matter if your chapter is large or small or faces a population disparity. What matters is the ability to work together, share resources and support all our fellow members.”***



Attendees at the Arctic Trails Chapter 71 Awards Banquet, held at the Silver Gulch Brewery in Fairbanks, Alaska.

Both chapters strive to increase the number of members with their SR/WA designation. Currently, 52% of Chapter 71's members hold their SR/WA, and other members are currently working toward their designation. As both chapters are fairly far away from the rest of the United States, it can be difficult and expensive (not to mention the additional hurdle of getting time off work) to get to classes presented in the “Lower 48” states.

Chapter 71 cannot hold the same number of courses that our sister chapter can; we simply don't have the membership numbers to support the cost. Instead, we work together to coordinate classes and help each other out rather than compete against each other. Each year, our sister chapter tries to hold a seminar that is specific to Alaska right of way issues. Some years, Chapter 71 members are able to contribute as presenters at their seminars, and other years we cannot. That doesn't stop our sister chapter from reaching out and donating to our chapter account. This year, they went over and beyond our wildest expectations with their surprise \$4,500 gift to Chapter 71!

What does our chapter do with this wonderfully gifted money? We help our SR/WA candidates achieve their designation by assisting them financially to travel to classes held in Anchorage. We also help host SR/WA study sessions and we strive to ensure the classes we present are those most needed by members of both chapters. We also support our members who attend the fall forums, annual conferences and local seminars.

Why do they do this? Well, after all, they are our parent chapter! For several years before gaining its charter in 1976, Chapter 71 was an affiliate of Chapter 49. Some of our charter members have even moved to Anchorage and are now members of Chapter 49. We have fun together, and we get educated together.

So, what makes a great chapter? It all boils down to people and dedication - members who not only work in harmony, but are also comfortable challenging each other. Members who are open to new ideas and who enjoy working together as a team, whether within their own chapter, banding together with another chapter, or as part of their region. That's what enables us to feel like such an integral part of our International Association.