

# Staying the Course

MARK RIECK, IRWA EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT

## In January, you shared some strategic targets for the Association. What were they again?

For 2009, we focused on three strategic targets. They were to increase IRWA's external visibility, foster collaboration with our chapters and regions and strengthen the Association's accessibility for our members.



## Was the Association successful in hitting these targets?

I believe so. Let's review each one and members can judge for themselves!



At the Region 6 Fall Forum, Mark recognizes Florida's Suncoast Parkway, which ranked in the Top 10 Infrastructure Projects of the past 75 years. Pictured with Mark are Steve Benson, SR/WA of Universal Field Services, and Nicola Liquori, CPA, from Florida's Turnpike Enterprise.

## External Visibility

To intensify our external focus in 2009, we launched the Top 10 Infrastructure Project campaign, which generated 130 nominations from our members. The association-wide voting process yielded a top 10 that represented a wide range of projects – from bridges and roadways to pipelines and dams.

In February, we shared our “Top 10 Projects of the Past 75 Years” campaign with the media. Within two days of launching the news release, IRWA received more than 58 million media impressions through online sites, such as Yahoo News, Forbes, Reuter's, Market Watch and the majority of Metro Business Journals.

In October, we celebrated International Right of Way Month with a host of initiatives in honor of our 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary. Thanks to David Maturen, SR/WA, who collaborated with Michigan Senator Fred Upton, an IRWA proclamation was read into the 111th Congressional record in September. The October news release that followed worked wonders in bringing light to the vital role that right of way professionals have played in building quality of life for all citizens in the U.S. and Canada. In fact, that news release successfully produced 62 million impressions for the Association – even more than the first release!

To find the material mentioned in this article visit: [www.irwaonline.org](http://www.irwaonline.org)

We had hoped to visit the White House and watch President Obama officially declare October as International Right of Way Month, however given all that has happened in the world this year, we were grateful for the recognition in Congress. That said, we are already working on next year!

## Collaboration

I am proud of the efforts made by Chapter Presidents, Region leaders and the International Executive Committee. Their ability to communicate and work together has made major inroads in moving our Association forward. With the passing of a resolution at the Annual Board of Directors Meeting, a Governing Council emerged and will officially take effect next July. Comprised of IEC members and region chairs, everyone is already hard at work on governance issues, updating IRWA policies and procedures, and finding new ways to better support our chapters.

With the changing economy, we need to think and do business differently, and creative best practices are being developed and shared across the organization for membership, education and credentialing. The new publicity kits provided to chapters are being used to enhance their current newsletters, and we are pleased to see that IRWA ads are getting published in other chapter communications, helping us gain further traction and increase our reach.



In September, the International Executive Committee and Region Chairs met in Ottawa to review governance issues.

In response to recommendations from the International Communication and Marketing Committee, we hired a new business development officer and partnered with IRWA leadership to conduct a brand survey and launch a new brand platform. In a very short period of time, IRWA has developed a collective marketing effort, generating a very favorable response from membership, as well as providing new tools like our chapter trade show booth and IRWA brochure series, as well a new look for Right of Way Magazine, the voice of the right of way profession.

## Internal Accessibility

Since our members are the core of our organization, we have focused heavily on providing essential tools to help advance their careers as right of way professionals. Accessibility is critical in this economy, as many members find it increasingly difficult to travel or take time away from work to pursue their educational goals.

Our development of new online courses has been very aggressive. We have launched more than six IRWA online courses, and through our partnership with the Business Training Library, now offer more than 500 skill-building seminars, most of which can be used for recertification credit. Thanks to a shared commitment between the IRWA and our two education foundations, we will have 20 core courses available online for membership by summer 2010.

We continue to build the value of our SR/WA Designation by enhancing our course curriculum, making it even more rigorous. And soon you will see our "Hire an IRWA Professional" ads appearing in top engineering magazines and other publications read by infrastructure hiring managers. Our new Uniform Act Certification will also differentiate IRWA members from the competition and position members for success for years to come.

We continue to enhance the IRWA website, making it easier to navigate and updating the content more frequently. Recently, we launched a new look for our homepage that is already generating a 10% increase in new visitors each month.

All in all, 2009 proved to be a great year, in spite of the economy. And while we continue pushing through these difficult times, we intend to stay the course as we reinforce our reputation as the central authority for right of way professionals.