



How Are We Doing?

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As this is my last presidential message, first and foremost I want to thank our members for the honor of allowing me to serve these past 12 months. Now before I sing “Happy Trails,” let me summarize how the Association is doing and how members are benefitting from our efforts.

IRWA is doing exceptionally well. We have not only weathered the roughest economic times, we have continued to advance our organization and our profession. In fact, IRWA and its members have become widely recognized as some of the most highly-trained and knowledgeable right of way experts in the world.

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Your leadership has been busy this year, and I would like to share some of the significant activities we have engaged in on behalf of our members and our organization.

Education and Professional Development: The demand for IRWA courses and certifications has been accelerating, and we have been actively revising course curriculum to bring the content up to a new industry standard. As a result of the career path opportunities, hundreds of members were inspired to get on the path toward their certification. To keep the momentum going at the chapter level, web conferences are held regularly with Region Vice-Chairs, Education Chairs and Professional Development Chairs.

Orders for the hardbound edition of the 2012 Principles of Right of Way textbook have already surpassed initial projections, and we continue to transition more courses online, making it more convenient to get (and stay) credentialed. Through IRWA’s Leadership Institute, a series of skill-building training videos are available to all members through YouTube, with new videos added regularly.

External Outreach: Promoting our certified and designated members to those who hire right of way professionals is a key objective. To expand our reach, we continue to run ads in engineering publications, and an innovative direct mail campaign has been targeting other external groups. We are aggressively marketing to organizations and companies who would benefit from an affiliation with IRWA, while reaching out to industry stakeholders. Today, all 50 State Department of Transportation directors receive Right of Way Magazine, along with quarterly updates on our various offerings. The enormous success of IRWA’s Project of the Year Competition has given IRWA a new voice in the media, and the expansive coverage has worked well to generate external awareness of who we are and what we do.

Membership and Chapter Support: To boost member retention, IRWA launched an incentive program where chapters with a 92% renewal rate receive a free conference registration. IRWA personally called every member who did not renew their membership, and the results have been dramatic. IRWA has also been conducting quarterly conference calls with Chapter Presidents, Membership Chairs, Region Vice-Chairs and Education Chairs to discuss best practices at the chapter level, along with effective membership efforts. These calls have been so successful that on average, 75% of our chapters are now participating. We are a chapter-centric association and pleased to see so many new ideas and programs resulting from these efforts.

Industry Affiliations and Alliances: In conjunction with our federal agency partners, IRWA recently hosted the annual Federal Agency Update in Washington, DC. In 2011, we partnered with the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission on IRWA’s Pipeline Safety training and have plans for other collaborative efforts with the Bureau of Land Management. IRWA is actively engaged with organizations that have a global reach, such as the Compulsory Purchase Association, the Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors and the International Real Estate Federation, FIABCI.

Through these affiliations, we gain access to their worldwide base of members, enabling us to promote IRWA education, credentialing and membership benefits to a wider audience. As a result of some aggressive business development efforts,



Clockwise from left, Randy meets with the Japanese Compensation Consultant Association at the 2011 Annual Conference, welcomes SARWA as IRWA's newest chapter in South Africa, signs a Memorandum of Understanding with the Compulsory Purchase Association, and meets with the Tennessee Department of Transportation on multi-site education delivery systems.



we have attracted more agency memberships. In 2009, IRWA had one agency membership with 58 members. Today, we have six agency memberships (with more pending) with more than 300 members. More and more agencies are recognizing the benefits of collaborating with IRWA. Recently, on a trip to Nashville, we held meetings with the Tennessee Department of Transportation, the Appraisal Coalition and other agencies to discuss their specific educational needs for online relocation assistance education programs and other partnering opportunities.

International Activities: I am often asked why expanding the Association internationally is relevant to our existing members. First, let me say that these new international members are all paying annual dues. Beyond the dues, we are seeing that, as they become IRWA members, they want to take our courses and become certified. All of this works to increase our bottom line and enables IRWA to take on new initiatives on behalf of all members. There are other considerations as well. We are all living in a global economy. We are seeing more and more infrastructure projects getting financed by various investors and international sources, and the potential opportunities for IRWA members are significant.

IRWA has also attracted a new international following of right of way professionals who are in dire need of formalized standards in ethics and negotiations and want to uphold these standards in their respective countries. In 2011, the South African

Right of Way Association (SARWA) became our first chapter outside of North America, along with more than 100 dues paying members. In 2012, I was invited to facilitate our ethics course in Johannesburg, where 68 attendees had registered. They recently announced plans to actively help other African countries, such as Uganda, to form IRWA chapters, as well. Last year, we also held courses in Beijing, China for over 25 students and attracted more than a dozen new members. IRWA has signed a three-year contract to provide more courses, and we predict up to 100 attendees at each class. Anxious to become certified, many of these students are ready to join IRWA and begin taking our courses. We could potentially recruit as many as 1,000 members in China by 2014, all of whom would be full dues-paying members.

As a vibrant profession, our collective body of knowledge and experience is attracting professionals from across the globe. We are leading by example and have earned a reputation as the world authority on eminent domain and infrastructure. By providing access to our courses and credentials, we are solidifying our position as the industry leader while further advancing the goals of the Association.

As expectations are raised, so is the standard we are measured against. While all is going well as a profession and an Association, we cannot and will not rest. We will continue to be challenged to move forward in an accelerated business world. Again, I thank you for the incredible honor of serving as IRWA President. Happy trails to you...until we meet again!