

THE PURPOSE OF THE
 YOUNG LEADERSHIP COUNCIL
 IS TO FOSTER NEW IDEAS AND
 TO ENCOURAGE IMPLEMENTATION
 OF SPECIFIC STEPS AND
 MEASURES TO ENSURE CONTINUED
 GROWTH, RECOGNITION AND
 RESPECT FOR THE INTERNATIONAL
 RIGHT OF WAY ASSOCIATION.

YOUNG LEADERSHIP COUNCIL

EAGER TO WORK FOR CHANGE



Change can be good. Change is inevitable. People resist change.

These three truisms were on the minds of each of the participants who gathered at the first annual International Right of Way Association's Young Leadership Council Conference in Reno, Nevada, October 16-18, 1998. The Young Leadership Council (YLC) was formed out of a commitment to develop new IRWA leaders, with two purposes in mind. The first is to foster creative thought for younger, talented individuals involved in the right of way profession. The second is to serve as a source of leadership for local chapters, regions and international committees.

By MICHAEL W. WELCH, YLC CHAIR

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Approximately 33 of IRWA's 75 local chapters were represented at this inaugural meeting. On Friday night, attendees were treated to a welcome reception sponsored by Allen, Williford and Seale, Inc. and Contract Land Staff, Inc. During this informal gathering, a feeling of guarded optimism was prevalent. Conversations centered on the numerous positive attributes of IRWA and the ways in which the YLC could contribute ideas that would preserve and advance the Association. Young Leadership Council members represent some of the brightest, most articulate and most opinionated members from their respective regions. In that sense, Friday night's reception resembled the calm before the storm, as each attendee was well aware that the real work would start on Saturday morning.

The format for Saturday's Young Leadership Council meeting was simple. After a brief welcome and introductions,

the council divided into five discussion groups, each charged with the task of identifying the current state of IRWA, primary deficiencies in the association, and a plan of attack for implementing change. After selecting a discussion leader and a secretary, each of the groups engaged in round table discussions to identify problem areas. The advantage of the Young Leadership Council discussion group format is that it provided five independent views of current IRWA issues. Each group had representatives from different geographic regions as well as from the various disciplines included within IRWA. This diversity ensured that each problem, and consequently each potential solution, considered all aspects of our membership. When the morning sessions had ended, the discussion groups had identified the following areas of concern:

- Membership in the International

Right of Way Association is dwindling. According to statistics provided to the Young Leadership Council, membership within IRWA has decreased over the past 10-year period. Ironically, information was available that indicated that new membership was strong in some areas but that a lack of member retention resulted in the overall deficit.

- There is a perceived lack of recognition of IRWA as a professional association. The discussion groups generally agreed that we, as an association, have failed to educate allied and related professions, as well as the general public, as to what IRWA is, what we do and what services we provide.

- There is a perceived lack of recognition and respect of the SR/WA as a professional designation. The SR/WA designation is intended to recognize individuals who "have achieved professional status through experience, educa-

