



Member Spotlight is a wonderful place to introduce yourself or to celebrate a fellow member's contributions to our purpose of improving the quality of life through infrastructure development. For more information or to submit a member for consideration, please contact Ethel Navales at navales@irwaonline.org.

This month, we spotlight Leslie Finnigan, SR/WA

My involvement in the IRWA began shortly after starting in the right of way business. I was hired by the Oregon Department of Transportation (ODOT) as a trainee in the Right of Way Department 33 years ago. The Department encouraged participation in the IRWA through courses and involvement in the local Chapter, so that made it easy to jump into volunteering.

For the next 12 years, I advanced from the trainee position at ODOT into a variety of roles, including right of way agent, senior agent and project manager. One of the positions I held at ODOT was a Condemnation Liaison, which was an exciting learning experience that allowed me to travel all over the state. I left ODOT after 10 years and went to work in the right of way department for a local public agency.

During those first 12 years at ODOT and Washington County, I really started getting active in the IRWA. Like many of you, I was asked to do one thing and that continued to evolve into various positions. Before you know it, you're serving as Chapter President. It was during this same time that I became active at

the Region level as well. I didn't want to end my involvement when I was no longer a Chapter officer, so I started volunteering for different roles within the Region.

The more I got involved, the more I wanted to be part of the Association. I had developed friends throughout our Region and had met many others at the conferences I was able to attend. The contacts I made were not only helping me in my job, but also in my career. Gary Farr—Vice President of Universal Field Service, Inc. in the Seattle area at the time and a member of Chapter 4—introduced me to Tom Benson, one of the owners of Universal. In 1998, Universal hired me as the Region Manager for Oregon and SW Washington. I asked Tom if Universal would support my involvement in the IRWA—I didn't know what a silly question that was! My position with Universal has continued to grow. I am currently the Vice President for the





Western Region. I love my job and my employer! Universal continues to support me in my career and in my professional development.

This development is primarily through the education and volunteer positions I have had with the IRWA. It started out small as a Committee Chair in a local Chapter, then continued with involvement at the Region level, then a professional designation, then a position on an International Committee. Four years ago, I became a trustee on the Right of Way International Education Foundation. I am so very fortunate to be involved with this group of dedicated professionals who work very hard to manage the resources so that new courses can be developed, old courses revamped/updated and training opportunities made available through scholarship programs. More recently, being involved in getting the 2019 Conference to Portland was exciting and a little scary. I was also thrilled for everyone to experience Portland and see this beautiful part of the country. All of this IRWA development has been cumulative. You don't stop and look back on your journey until someone asks you to write about it.



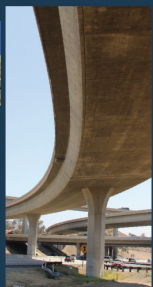
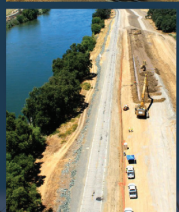
My life away from work and the IRWA is busy as well. My husband and I live in Salem and spend a lot of time with our kids and grandchildren. We have seven grandchildren now, ranging from six to 16 and they are involved in so many things.

They are all smart, beautiful and interesting individuals. I try hard to make as many games and events as possible and we like to take them to the beach and the mountains every summer. We also have two golden retrievers. I am a volunteer in the Golden Bond Rescue program in Oregon and do home inspections to make sure that these wonderful dogs go to good homes once they have been rescued and brought into Golden Bond.

The IRWA is a big part of my life—and not just professionally. What started out as training for me has developed into much more by becoming involved. I have life-long friends, contacts in the industry that I work in and a sense of accomplishment for the positions I've held. I hope that my experiences will encourage others to be involved as well and inspire them to take advantage of every opportunity the IRWA has to offer. ☆



Right of Way and Real Estate Services



www.OPCservices.com

Enhancing Lives through Infrastructure

Right of Way Program Management

Cost Estimating
R/W Schedule Preparation & Management
Risk Assessment & Management

Right of Way Acquisition

Land and R/W Negotiation
Relocation

Right of Way Support Services

R/W Engineering
Utility Coordination
Property Management



Locations:

Long Beach, CA
Irvine, CA
Bakersfield, CA
Riverside, CA
San Diego, CA
Fresno, CA
Oakland, CA
Sacramento, CA
Denver, CO **New!**
Las Vegas, NV
Dallas, TX
Phoenix, AZ **New!**