

# VOLUNTARY INVESTMENT

My term as RWIEF Young Professional Trustee

BY BRETT FARNER, SR/WA



The act of volunteering is more than just a chance to serve; it is an opportunity to give back a portion of what we have received. By freely offering your time, you can make a valuable investment in the future. The Right of Way International Education Foundation (RWIEF) shares a similar mission of giving to invest in the future of right of way education initiatives. RWIEF is also contributing to this mission by providing unique volunteer opportunities on its Board of Trustees.

## First-Hand Experience

As a Young Professional (YP) Trustee, a new position created in 2015, I got a front row seat to see how the RWIEF works. Receiving charitable donations, generating financial contributions, funding course development, managing scholarship funds and exploring future investment opportunities are the primary responsibilities.

At first I considered it an education, but what surprised me was the freedom I was given to be involved immediately. Following another

influential YP in this role, I was encouraged to learn quickly, challenge conventional processes and suggest new ideas at my first meeting. The Board may have lamented at times giving me such a strong voice, but for a YP volunteer, the engagement was powerful.

The past three years, I endeavored to make a difference by experiencing and being involved in as many aspects of the Foundation as I could. I started with the media sub-committee, looking at the RWIEF website (RWIEF.org) and I helped at conference with the Foundation's exhibit hall booth. I later organized a volunteer group for a Monday Night Event and worked the Annual Golf Tournament. Over the last year, I focused on influencing how the Foundation manages certain assets in its balance sheet and participated in strategic discussions on the future of RWIEF activities. Because of this background, I was recently able to provide a comprehensive update to Region 3 at their Fall Forum on behalf of RWIEF.

## What I Learned

Ultimately, I realized there is an interesting aspect of volunteering and dynamic of giving back – you set out to give part of yourself to benefit others, but often times you end up getting more back in return. Any way you look at it, I would call that a good return on your investment.

As my term as a YP Trustee comes to a close, I would like to offer the following advice to my fellow young professionals: when it comes to volunteering, there is no such thing as being "volun-told." These are rare occasions where someone else sees your potential and gives you the platform to make an impact with your talents. Seize these moments when you can, be generous with your time and use volunteer positions as stepping-stones to build the future you want to see. To the RWIEF Board of Trustees, *thank you* for this incredible gift to serve alongside of you and for your investment in me. You are an unbelievable group of people, working endlessly to serve others. Each of you embody the true spirit of volunteering. Finally, I encourage everyone to continue to share your time, talents and blessings. 🌟



*Brett Farner is a Real Estate Supervisor at Ameren Services Company. He has been a member of IRWA's Chapter 37, Region 3 since 2008 and served as Chapter President in 2012-2013.*

