

Connecting with Passionate Newcomers

The rewards of a college partnership

BY JENNA WOOD AND BRIAN TAYLOR, SR/WA



Olds College is one of the only schools with a dedicated Land Agent Diploma

It used to be that everyone you met had a different backstory as to where they came from and how they arrived at a career in surface land. Well, times are changing in the right of way industry in Canada, and Olds College in Central Alberta has played a large role in that change. For decades, the college has been offering a Land Agent Diploma.

As the industry grows and develops, we are seeing more young professionals get their start with the Olds College Land Agent Diploma, many of them directly out of high school. Yet, while these students graduate with knowledge and interest in our profession, they may not know exactly what part of 'land' they really want to work in. So each year, the land agent graduates host a networking event and invite a diverse group of industry professionals. Sponsors set up booths and the soon-to-be new graduates circulate the room, often with their resumes, introducing themselves to other professionals. It is an important night, as

this is when young prospective right of way agents meet mentors and learn about the various job opportunities available. Some are even lucky enough to secure future employment. And the employers benefit from linking with skilled and motivated graduates in a region where competition to attract recruits has been fierce.

A Long-Standing Partnership

For many years, IRWA Chapter 48, which covers Calgary and Southern Alberta, has had a strong program for young professionals. We have long recognized the value of partnering with Olds College

and other professional development programs around the province.

Each year, we conduct a presentation at Olds College to introduce new students to the Association and promote the benefits of IRWA membership. To encourage more folks to join, we offer sponsored memberships to get them started on the right track. We invite them to attend our Chapter luncheons, helping them understand the many opportunities that lie ahead. We also work with the College to help connect the future grads with industry companies looking to recruit.

One of our goals has been to show other Chapters in our region how they can make these same kinds of connections. At our Region 10 Spring Forum in April, Chapter 48 encouraged IRWA members to attend the Olds College networking event in order to further support the college's efforts while giving the students the opportunity to meet an even more diverse group of industry professionals. As a result, eight



Jenna is a Project Manager and ADR Specialist for Evolve Surface Strategies Inc. She is the Education Chair for IRWA Chapter 48.



Brian serves as the Head of Regional Property and Facility Management for Natural Resources Canada. He is a member of IRWA's International Governing Council and Chair of Region 10.

new members took us up on the offer of sponsored memberships by applying within the specified time following the event.

What it Takes

At the core of establishing a working relationship with a local school is organizing a few events and extending invitations. In exchange, we receive a yearly influx of enthusiastic Chapter volunteers who are keen to learn more and demonstrate their abilities. These passionate newcomers are happy to volunteer—and are driven to succeed—while mutually benefiting from their new relationships with already established industry professionals. Asking these new members to help organize a networking event is a good fit, as it's a familiar responsibility with

a defined timeline. Plus, they are the ideal group to promote Chapter membership to new audiences.

Our Chapter has put in a great deal of effort to attract new student members into the right of way profession, while benefiting from these highly engaged and motivated professionals. As we have watched our Chapter's success over the years, a big part of this can be attributed to our culture—to embrace, engage and recruit young professionals and provide opportunities for our new recruits. We are confident that young professionals in Southern Alberta will do some great things in the industry.

What have you done to engage students and new graduates in your chapter? ⚙️



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