REACHING A NEW MILESTONE

Big things ahead for IRWA's YPG

BY NIKKIY BESTGEN

Contributions by Noelle Hoelsken and Matthew Eckmann

The hardest part of writing an article is the start. Funny that seems to be the hardest part of *anything*. Where to begin? What's next? I know where I want to go, but how do I get involved? These are some of the most common questions I receive regarding the Young Professionals Group (YPG). Similarly, I have been writing this article in my head for weeks, fine-tuning every sentence and replaying it over and over. But even now as I sit with pen to paper, it still feels overwhelming.

A New Horizon

We are fast approaching the 2019 International Education Conference and a new milestone for the YPG. In Portland, we are pushing forward with our desire to become an official Service Committee of the IRWA as we have taken several measures to evolve from the "Group" classification. Following initial discussion regarding this evolution with numerous IRWA members and leaders, we have been met with approval and support. With a leap of faith and a giant step forward, our hope is that YPG will have a solidified place in the IRWA organization.

However, with every great progression comes the necessity of reflection. It is not only important that the YPG reminds our members of how far we have come, but also of our roots and how we came to be.

A Look Back

The origin of the current group has many stories, much like urban legends that you tell around a fire. It was a group in the 90's that saw the need for a youthful voice. Although the group was formed, momentum eventually fizzled out. Some say it was due to a lack of support for the movement. Another version of this story comes from our YP folks in Texas. It is said they adopted the models and methods that they used at the International Conference to create and implement a symposium. That symposium then grew into an organized group for all the Regions before morphing into the international group we have today. Yet another version of the story has humble beginnings in Region 3, where YP's from that Region combined forces with Regions 2, 7 and 8 to cultivate members throughout the Association. They brought the Saturday symposium into the National Forum, established a Saturday night event and created speaking opportunities in designated YP sessions. Since there are some of us from Region 3 and others from Texas, we will let you guess which legend we like to believe.

Whatever our beginning, one thing is for certain: we have learned from our historical challenges and have overcome our faults. The YPG continues to strive for improvement each year by adding more YP benefits, pushing the growth of the group and engaging more YPs in Region leadership and committees. We have enormous support from Chapter and Region leaders, IEC, IGC and vast support from employers throughout all the Regions. It truly is our time to give back, step up to the table, provide ideas, communicate opportunities and contribute to the future of the IRWA.

Opportunities to Support

We have created several amazing opportunities for our group. Last year we established a purposeful sponsor opportunity and CBRE answered the calling. They stepped up and did an astounding job with their sponsorship. They have set the bar high. They were an integral part of our process in the planning and execution of the Saturday night event. They also provided materials for our YPG booth in the Exhibit Hall. They were a trail blazer and we are forever grateful for their support. We have luckily secured our Purposeful Sponsor for the 2019 Conference, Contract Land Staff (CLS). We cannot wait to see what they have in store! Please plan to join in the fun and attend our Saturday night event, which is always open to all conference attendees. Details on time and location to follow soon.

The Saturday event is open for additional sponsorships and we have attached the sponsorship form for your review. Please submit it by April 30th so we can capture your logo(s) early. Your support makes this event possible and we appreciate all our supporters from previous years. We hope to add many more to for 2019!

At the 2018 International Education Conference, we had a drawing at the YPG Exhibit Hall Booth for a full 2019 Conference registration and credit towards an education course. We were so happy with the level of support and excitement for the YPG, as well as all the individuals that stopped by the booth to say hi. We recently announced the winners and we would like to congratulate them again. The 2019 Conference registration was awarded to Derek Lilleberg, a Land Agent with Phillips 66, while the education credit was awarded to David Hall Clark, a Right of Way Agent with Clark Land Resources. We hope to do this again in Portland so please stop by the booth, drop off a business card, get some ribbon swag and start a conversation about YPG.

The Start of Something Great

We believe that this is the year to start YPG involvement at every Chapter level. It is Vice Chair Matthew Eckmann's goal to bring the voice of YPG to every Chapter by then end of his term as Chair in 2020. Specifically, his goal is to have at least one person in every Chapter (yes, I said *every* Chapter) identify as YP and be the voice of their Chapter. Secretary Noelle Hoelsken has taken on the college challenge that targets college students with amazing incentives and discounts for membership. We believe that educating young professionals about the IRWA at an early stage will not only benefit the YPG, but the Association as a whole. Matt and Noelle have taken on some substantial goals, which will not only bring additional voices to the table, but create a starting point for the future YPs by showcasing our industry at the college level. We can become a first-choice career and not a second thought for this next generation of working professionals.

2019 is an exciting time for us. We look forward to the opportunities and are ready for the challenges. We are exploring different uses of technology and different ways to reach more members with our message and purpose. We are becoming more involved in leadership roles on every level of IRWA. We appreciate all who have helped guide our path, all who have mentored and supported us, and all who have truly helped to shape the group we are today. Thank you to our supporters, our believers, our advocates and of course, our Purposeful Sponsors. ✪

Nikkiy represents CLS in the role of Sales Manager for the Mid-West Region based in St. Louis, MO. Nikkiy plays an active role in the IRWA at the local, regional and national level through her continued role in YPG International Committee, Region 3 and Chapter 37 representation.