

AND THE WINNER IS...

Recognizing IRWA's Young Professionals

BY MATTHEW ECKMANN, SR/WA



The Golden Globes, The Grammy's, The Academy Awards, The Screen Actors Guild Awards, The Emmy's, The CMA's, the VMA's and the Tony's. In this season of Awards shows, the list goes on and on. All these shows are great, but the one awards ceremony I look forward to most every year is the Annual SR/WA Recognition and Awards Luncheon, which is held at the Annual International Education Conference. This year, the conference will be hosted by the Beaver State Chapter 3 in Portland, Oregon.

Year after year, it amazes me to hear the stories of the nominees and the winners, and the passion they have for this great organization. From the wonderful people who run their Chapter's website and newsletter, the dedicated instructors focused on developing professionals in the right of way field, to the employers who support their employee's participation at the local, regional and international levels—there is an award recognizing all of their great work and commitment to this organization. For obvious reasons, however, my favorite award by far is the Young Professional of the Year Award. Starting in 2012, the International Nominations and Elections Committee decided that they would begin including an award acknowledging the contributions that the Young Professionals within the organization are making. This was a great accomplishment for the Young Professionals Committee to have their members recognized alongside some of the most impactful individuals, employers and Chapters in the organization. And now, every year a Young Professional gets to stand up on that stage in front of the entire organization and be recognized for the contributions he or she has made to the right of way profession.

When conceiving the idea for this article, the Young Professionals Committee decided that we would like to honor all the Young Professionals across the organization at the Chapter and Region levels who have been awarded Young Professional of the Year or who have been recognized by their Chapter/Region Leadership for their contributions. We asked Chapter Presidents and Region Chairs to acknowledge their most recent awardees or acknowledge a Young Professional who has stood out and made an impact within the organization. I am excited to present all the responses we received here in this article. If you happen to know one of the Young Professionals

mentioned in this article or if you meet them at the upcoming conference, be sure to take a moment and thank them for all that they do for their Chapters, Regions and the IRWA.

Region 1, Chapter 27
Sarah Williams, RWA

Paragon Partners
Sarah was awarded the Region 1 Young Professional of the Year at the Region 1 Spring Forum on March 16, 2019. Sarah currently serves as the Chapter 27 Secretary, heads the Newsletter Committee, and manages the Chapter Website and Social Media accounts. Sarah was recently awarded the Chapter 27 Member of the Year.
- Submitted by Yoli Matranga, SR/WA

Region 2, Chapter 33
Patricia "Nikki" Patterson, RWA
Acquisition Agent, Universal Field Services

Nikki was named Young Professional of the Year for Chapter 33 and Young Professional of the Year for Region 2. Nikki currently serves as the Young Professional Committee Chair for Chapter 33 and has assisted with the Region 2 YP Event at the Region 2 Fall Forum.
- Submitted by Teri Morgan, SR/WA, Region 2 Chair

Chapter 4 – Puget Sound
Jesse Ray, SR/WA
Project Manager, Contract Land Staff

Our Chapter provides an annual award for Chapter Professional of the Year, which recognizes individuals for their influential contributions, whether young or seasoned. Jesse has been nominated and won this award twice—last year and previously in 2015. Jesse is the only Chapter member to routinely volunteer in multiple positions at both the Chapter and Region level. He has been the Chapter 4 YP Committee Chair since 2014, while also serving as the Chapter 4 Social Committee Chair from 2014-2016, followed by serving on the Executive Board as Secretary in 2016 and Treasurer

in 2017. Currently, he serves as Vice-President and is an incoming candidate for President-Elect and International Director. In addition to his commitments at the Chapter level, Jesse also serves as a representative for IRWA Region 7 Young Professionals.
- Submitted by Dawn Fletcher, Chapter President

Chapter 6 – Denver, CO
Tom Clark
Real Property Specialist, City of Aurora

Tom is a go-getter and a crucial asset to the success of Denver's IRWA Chapter. Not only has he stepped up as a Young Professional, but he is also the secretary for our board. He will go above and beyond to help and is a true future leader in the IRWA.
- Submitted by Noelle Hoelsken, RWP, Chapter Treasurer and International Young Professionals Committee Secretary

Chapter 8 – Houston, TX
Callie Howard
Senior Appraiser, CBRE
Callie has helped plan and has attended every event while making huge accomplishments in her professional career. Callie currently serves as one of the Region 2 Representatives on the International Young Professionals Committee.
- Submitted by Rebecca Eguia, Chapter President

Chapter 10 – Indiana
Michelle Sechman, RWA
Real Estate Representative, Duke Energy
Michelle is a Real Estate Representative with Duke Energy. Michelle also currently serves as our Assistant Treasurer along with being on a couple Chapter Committees. Michelle brings a certain energy and attitude that I am not sure anyone else on the board possesses. It is an energy that inspires you to explore different ideas and ways of thinking. She is truly an asset to our Chapter.
- Submitted by Patrick A. McCallister, RWA, Chapter President

Chapter 17 - Wisconsin
Michelle Somers
ROW Agent, Terra Venture Advisors
Michelle Somers is Badger Chapter 17's Professional of the Year (2017-2018). Michelle is also our Chapter's Newsletter Editor and co-chair for our Education Committee. Most recently, Michelle was nominated to be our incoming Treasurer on her path to succession on our Executive Board. Michelle is always eager to volunteer to assist the Badger Chapter in any way, shape or form.
- Submitted by Jeff Olson, Past Chapter President

Chapter 17 – Wisconsin
Kyle Driscoll
Managing Director – Real Estate Advisory Group, Duff & Phelps, LLC
Kyle Driscoll was a finalist for the 2017-2018 International Young Professional of the Year, which was awarded in Edmonton. Kyle is currently our Chapter Treasurer and for many years, served our Chapter by heading the Valuation Committee. Kyle is responsible for management, client liaison and business development, as well as leading the Right of Way Appraisal practice for Duff & Phelps. He has more than 10 years of national appraisal, review and management experience.
- Submitted by Jeff Olson, Past Chapter President

Chapter 20 – Minnesota
Mindy Leadholm, SR/WA
Property Acquisition Manager, Washington County
Mindy is the current Chapter 20 President and is active with both Chapter 20 and Region 3 events. She is excited to be a part of the planning committee for the 2020 Education Conference in Minneapolis!
- Submitted by Mindy Leadholm, SR/WA, Chapter President



Chapter 31 – The Carolinas**Benita Harrington****Land Representative, Duke Energy**

Benita has done a superb job and put forth tremendous effort as the editor of the Chapter Newsletter. She has stepped up as Course Coordinator for many classes, been an active member of the Sponsorship Committee, handled email communications keeping the Chapter up to date and taken on the role of YP Committee Chair to continue to get the YP's more focused and involved in the Chapter. Benita has been a real, tangible asset to the Chapter membership and the executive team.

– Submitted by Anthony Alderman, Jr., MRICS, Chapter President

Chapter 32 – Nashville, TN**Jon Kriner****Acquisition and Project Manager, Croft and Associates, LLC**

Jon has been involved in both our Chapter and the Region, and he is the type of person to succeed in whatever role he is asked to handle. He is enthusiastic about the mission of the Young Professionals and we are honored to have him representing us!

– Submitted by Melissa Hudson Wells, SR/WA, Chapter President

Chapter 36 – North Texas**John Bennett, SR/WA****ROW Agent, Teague Nall & Perkins, Inc.**

John is very visible in our Chapter as a leader and volunteer. He has formerly been a Programs Co-Chair and is currently serving on the Education Committee, in addition to coordinating classes and facilitating IRWA CoP meetings in our area. John is dedicated to the ongoing success of Chapter 36 and is always willing to accommodate any need of the Chapter.

– Submitted by Kristen Bennett, SR/WA, R/W-RAC – Chapter President

Chapter 37 – Missouri**Brendan Weiler****ROW Agent, Volkert, Inc.**

Brendan Weiler has created our Chapter 37 website and is in charge of the daily updates. In addition to the website, he has also stepped up to assist on the newsletter. He is willing to help a hand anywhere there is need! Chapter 37 can't thank Brendan enough for taking charge and getting things accomplished!

– Submitted by Teresa McClure, Chapter President

Chapter 41 – Iowa**Amanda Vande Voorde, RWA****ROW Agent II, City of Cedar Rapids**

In Region 3, Iowa Chapter 41, we do not have an annual award for YP of the year, but we do have a YP that I feel is deserving of the type of recognition you are describing. Her name is Amanda Vande Voorde and she works for the City of Cedar Rapids. Last year, she was the recipient of one of IRWA's YP scholarships at the International Education Conference in Edmonton. She is a very articulate and professional member of Chapter 41 and currently serves as our Treasurer. She is engaged in matters dealing with the success of our Chapter and is always ready, willing and able to volunteer her skills to help us achieve our goals.

– Submitted by Jay Walton, Chapter President

Chapter 45 – Montana**Michelle Householder****Owner/Manager, MDLH Management, LLC**

Chapter 45 is very proud of Michelle and what she has brought to this rural Montana Chapter. This bright, young woman—who owns and operates her consulting firm—brings a calm demeanor which is the preface to a thoughtful, organized and committed professional who seeks truth and has exhibited

unbounded tenacity while carrying out her duties as Chapter 45 President. Her strength and resilience are beyond measure, and we are very excited to watch this 40 for 40 Scholarship Winner continue to grow as a dedicated professional and leader.

– Submitted by Dee Oakland, SR/WA, Region 7 Chair

Chapter 49 – Anchorage, Alaska**Kathryn Schreckenghost, SR/WA Agent, EPS, Inc**

Kathryn has certainly demonstrated her leadership skills by stepping up in her home Chapter 49 not only as an officer (she is currently their Vice President), but she also served as Co-Chair of the 2017 Annual Education Conference in Anchorage, Alaska. In observing Kathryn, one finds her to be dedicated, thoughtful, inquisitive and willing to reach out to mentors and others to better understand her profession and this Association. We are so encouraged to have a woman of her character in our midst who seeks knowledge and truth, and we know her growth will be exponential both professionally and in service to this Association.

– Submitted by Dee Oakland, SR/WA, Region 7 Chair



Matthew Eckmann, SR/WA, is the Facilities and Real Estate Manager for the City of New Braunfels, Texas. He has been an IRWA member since 2008 and is currently serving as Vice Chair of the Young Professionals Committee, as well as Treasurer for Chapter 39 in San Antonio, Texas.

