



# Reaching Your Full Potential

BY ANGEL BANKS

## What do you want to be when you grow up?

A back-up singer? An archaeologist? I was one of those kids who never knew what I wanted to be. The thought of being on stage, backing up an international artist and seeing all the big cities seemed like the perfect career. I could see myself crooning into the microphone, of course in a glittering, color-coordinated gown. But the allure of those exotic “Natural Geographic” sites captured my imagination as well. The excitement of digging for treasures and the magic of building each found piece into a working whole sounded like such a rewarding profession. OK, so maybe I missed my mark.

Like many of you, I ended up in the right of way profession purely by chance. Lucky for me (make that very lucky for me), I met some incredible professionals who introduced me to IRWA. Becoming involved in chapter and region positions, it quickly became clear to me that volunteer leaders were a rare breed.

Volunteers have always been considered the grass roots of the Association. Yet, when it comes to leadership training and development, there seemed to be a void. How could that be? Given the educational focus of the Association, the time had come to make leadership training a priority. Now, thanks to the

forward thinking of the International Executive Committee and the U.S. and Canadian Education Foundations, the IRWA Leadership Institute is a reality!

Being a part of the Leadership Institute Team has been a once in a lifetime experience. Looking back on our first year of program development, I am truly inspired. I had no idea what to expect when I was first asked to become part of the team. Today, I can say that working with this collective brain trust of leaders motivates me to continue engaging and striving to be the best I can be.

Our second year of programing will include the Institute’s first online course, “How the IRWA Works,” designed to give all members an inside view of the Association. In June, the Institute is launching “Getting to Agreement,” a leadership skill that is sure to be useful in all aspects of IRWA volunteer work, as well as your business and personal life. The Fall Forum program will be “Holding Others Accountable and Modifying Performance,” another necessary skill for leading others toward a common goal.

At the end of the day, no matter our skill set, level of determination or our position in business or life, we are all just people – people who need positive ideas to retool and reenergize for that next IRWA volunteer opportunity or that next right of way project. IRWA Leadership Institute programs have

taken my skill set to the next level, helping me improve my techniques for more positive and productive personal interaction.

Leadership comes in all shapes, sizes and styles. After 21 years of service in my profession and IRWA, I consider myself to be a leader. Along the way, I’ve had the opportunity to support and back up the leaders under which I served. I’ve also been blessed with incredible “finds,” specifically those volunteers who have raised their hands when asked for help. Each contribution they brought to the table made for a much better whole. Funny how you come full circle. Turns out, I am a back-up singer *and* an archaeologist, after all. Who would have thought?



*Angel, who performed on stage at the Annual Conference in Atlanta, has 25 years of experience in the public utility and real estate fields. She serves as the Right of Way Manager for the Metropolitan Sewerage District, a regional authority in Asheville, NC.*