IRWA'S 65TH ANNUAL INTERNATIONAL EDUCATION CONFERENCE

BY ETHEL NAVALES

In June of 2019, Portland, Oregon opened its doors to over 1,200 right of way professionals for IRWA's 65th Annual Education Conference. IRWA International President Jeff Jones, SR/WA, began the Opening Ceremony by discussing the events that transpired on May 31st, which changed the IRWA family forever.

"As we begin this Conference, we are thinking of our colleagues that are not here with us due to the senseless tragedy in Virginia Beach," Jeff noted. "As I mentioned before, whether we personally knew each one of them or not, we do know them by the passion they had for the people they served, their love of their profession, and the dedication and commitment they had for the IRWA."

A moment of silence was offered for LaQuita C. Brown, Mary Louise Gayle, SR/WA, and Alexander Mikhail Gusev, SR/WA. Everyone was encouraged to visit the table set up in their honor.

A Warm Welcome

On behalf of Chapter 3 and Region 7, Conference Co-Chairs Leslie Finnegan, SR/WA, and Jim Lingeman, SR/WA, took the stage and welcomed everyone in attendance. They invited participants to all the exciting events that Conference had to offer, including the incredible educational sessions, the jam-packed exhibit hall, the Monday Night Event, the Golf Tournament and the Finnigan Fun Run. Leslie and Jim went on to thank Troop 530 for the presentation of the flags before thanking all the dedicated individuals and volunteers who helped to make this event happen.

Jeff returned to the stage to call the Annual Meeting of the Members to order and to acknowledge the 2018-2019 International Executive Committee (IEC) Members, the International Advisory Council and the International Governing Council (IGC).

Jeff then congratulated this year's finalists for our Association's most prestigious award, the Frank C. Balfour Professional of the Year. The finalists—Fredrick Easton, Jr., SR/WA, Leslie Finnigan, SR/WA, and Cyndi Whelpley, SR/WA—each went on stage to share their feelings on receiving such a high recognition.

Moving Forward

Jeff welcomed Interim Chief Executive Officer Daniel Stekol to the stage for a few brief comments. On behalf of himself, CFO Rakhshan Mazarei and all of Headquarters, Daniel thanked the IEC and the IGC for their confidence in staff during this transition period.

"We can do better. We will do better. All of you at this Conference and the thousands of members who could not attend deserve better," Daniel remarked. "And together, we will make this happen."

"We need to keep our people in mind," Jeff noted as he returned to the stage. "Whether it is the public, the users of our services or our members, our purpose is what we do for our profession. We improve people's quality of life through infrastructure development."

Celebrating Our Successes

Jeff acknowledged that our members have had a big part in the development of transportation systems, clean water systems and the ability to bring electric, natural gas and oil products to homes and businesses. Additionally, our members continue to be part of the maintenance and rebuilding of roads, rail projects, electric, water service, pipeline systems and more.

He went on to discuss the value we bring through our education and credentialing programs, such as the World CLIMB, which was presented by the Partnership for Infrastructure Professional Education (PIPE) Committee. In the past five years, PIPE has been integral in obtaining 41,064 course participations and in the production of seven new courses.

IRWA credentialing remains strong as well. In 2016, Past President Mary Anne Marr, SR/WA, and Right of Way International Education Foundation (RWIEF) President Carol Croft, SR/WA, collaborated to create the 40 for 40 program. Under this program, the RWIEF provided scholarships totaling $185,000 for 40 IRWA members to obtain their RWA or RWP designations.

In September 2018, the IGC agreed to pause the Association's Governance Project and created a Governance Task Force to review the process. This task force is on track to complete their work for presentation at the IGC meeting in September.

Finally, Jeff congratulated IRWA's Young Professionals for officially becoming IRWA's newest committee. On that high note, Jeff thanked everyone for their attendance and invited them to have some fun.

Special Guest

To conclude the event, the Opening Ceremony speaker was none other than Captain Larry Brudnicki, who commanded the Coast Guard ship that performed two dramatic rescues during the worst weather in over 100 years. His tale inspired a New York Times Best Seller and the blockbuster movie, "The Perfect Storm," starring George Clooney.

AWARDS CEREMONY

International Nominations and Elections Committee (INEC) Chair Randall Kopfer, SR/WA, recognized all of this year's award nominees and winners, commenting, "The awards presented today symbolize the best of the IRWA and the professionals in this industry. Every recipient and finalist should be proud of their accomplishments." He kicked off the ceremony by recognizing the 17th Annual International Surveying and Engineering CoP Right of Way Mapping Winners. Randall then invited INEC Vice Chair Jenni Kriner, SR/WA, to the stage to announce the Student Scholarship Awardee, Maxwell Bauer.

The Annual Awards Ceremony continues to be one of the most anticipated events of the International Education Conference. We congratulate everyone who was recognized for their exemplary work on behalf of the Association.

Winner of the Employer of the Year Award with less than 20 employees was Miller Nash Graham & Dunn LLP.

The recipient of this year's Alan D. Wurtz, SR/WA Young Professional Scholarship Award was Shannon Wilkins.

For the Employer of the Year with more than 20 employees, the award went to O.R. Colan Associates, LLC.

Donnie J. Sherwood, SR/WA, was named the W. Howard Armstrong Instructor of the Year.

The Young Professional of the Year Award was presented to Kasy Baldauf, SR/WA.

The Frank C. Balfour Professional of the Year Award stands as the most esteemed honor of the IRWA. Named after the Association's founder, this award honors professionals who have demonstrated exemplary support to the Association and have shown outstanding contributions made through leadership positions in the Chapter, Regional and International level. This year, the award was presented to Leslie Finnigan, SR/WA.

"I have so much tremendous gratitude for everybody here. The recognition is very sweet," Leslie said. "I remember the first conference that I went to in 1987. I found a real path within right of way and I wanted to see what I could do and how far I could go."

Chapter 83, South Africa received the Gene L. Land Award for highest numerical gain.

Chapter 84, Nigeria received the Gene L. Land Award for highest percentage gain.

Chapter 10, Region 5, Indiana Crossroads was presented with the Newsletter of the Year Award.

Chapter 38, Region 9, Salt Lake City was awarded Website of the Year.

The Chapter of the Year Award was presented to Chapter 4, Region 7, Puget Sound.

The State of Utah Department of Transportation was awarded the Government Employer of the Year.

SR/WA RECOGNITION

Over the past 12 months, 80 dedicated members have worked hard to achieve IRWA's highest professional designation, the SR/WA. Those who achieve this designation have proven their professional status though a combination of experience, education and examination.

During the SR/WA Recognition Ceremony, conference attendees gathered to acknowledge this commitment to professional development. Recipients were announced by our special guest emcee, Drew Carney. Drew joined Portland's KGW-TV as an anchor in September of 2006. He has also spent the past 12 years producing entertaining and community-minded reports for the Sunrise show. Drew's TV career began 20 years ago and in 2000, he moved to Portland and made the switch from sports anchor to feature segment reporter.

The SR/WA honorees were all invited to accept a certificate and have their photo taken with International President Jeff Jones, SR/WA, Chair of the Partnership for Infrastructure Professional Education Tami Benson, SR/WA, and Chair of the Credentialing Committee Trevor Martins, SR/WA.

INTERNATIONAL LUNCHEON

Our Association's global development remains an integral part of our mission to improve people's quality of life through infrastructure development. With members in 17 countries, the IRWA's influence continues to shape regulations, policy and laws regarding access for infrastructure projects worldwide.

To begin the event, Chair of the Council on International Relations Mary Anne Marr, SR/WA, went on stage to introduce the incoming (and previous) Chair, Randy Williams, SR/WA. Together, they welcomed those in attendance and spoke on the unique opportunity we have as an Association to share and embrace our international growth.

International Chapters were invited to speak on a topic of their choosing, providing a wonderful chance to see the IRWA at work across the globe. Brodie Allen represented Canada, Cesar Cantu spoke on behalf of Mexico, Gershom Henshaw represented Nigeria, Abdullah Ibrahim Aljalal represented Saudi Arabia and Jacques du Plessis spoke on behalf of South Africa.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Every year, a large portion of the business of the Association is conducted at the Annual Board of Directors Meeting. This year, that meeting took place on Wednesday, June 12th. International President Jeff Jones, SR/WA, welcomed the members in attendance and called the meeting to order. The first agenda item was the approval of the minutes from the previous meeting held in Edmonton, Alberta. These minutes, as well as the financial statements, were distributed electronically in advance. The motion passed to approve the minutes as distributed.

Jeff invited International Treasurer Jake Farrell, SR/WA, to the stage to present the proposed 2020 budget. Jake made note that the Finance Committee met four times during the year—including one meeting at Headquarters—to review the Association's historical financial records and create a budget based on trends and data. Jake remarked, "I am pleased to bring you a budget proposal that aligns with our strategies to increase the visibility of the IRWA and its certified and designated members, provide for the development of new education programming and review current programming." The 2019-2020 budget was approved as presented.

Jeff acknowledged one board resolution offered for consideration, which discussed the details of an IRWA corporate membership option. After some discussion, the proposed resolution of an update to the International Bylaws was approved.

Nominations

Next on the agenda was the nomination of the International Executive Committee (IEC) Officers. Chair of the International Nominations and Elections Committee Randall Kopfer, SR/WA, took the stage to present the INEC nominations. Aimie Mims, SR/WA was confirmed as IRWA's incoming International President. Sharon Slauenwhite, SR/WA, Jake Farrell, SR/WA, and James A. Olschewski, SR/WA, were up for reelection and confirmed. Judy Jones, SR/WA, joined the IEC as IRWA's incoming International Treasurer. Jeff announced that Brad Kuhn, Esq. will continue to serve as International General Counsel for 2019-2020.

International Secretary James A. Olschewski presented the International Region Officers, while President-Elect Aimie Mims announced the appointments of the 2019-2020 International Service and Industry Committee Chairs, Vice Chairs and Community of Practice Leaders.

Jeff invited the entire slate of 2019-2020 elected officers to come forward to the front of the stage to be sworn in by Past International President, Gordon MacNair, SR/WA.

Emerging Stronger

As is IRWA tradition, Jeff invited Aimie to take the podium and give some insight into her plans as the 2019-2020 International President. Aimie began discussing the common ground that unites the members of the IRWA. "We can often closely relate to each other on what our daily work life entails," Aimie pointed out. "More so than many of the people closest to us."

Aimie made note that the International Governing Council (IGC), which is comprised of IRWA's Region Chairs and IEC members, plans to refocus its efforts around the fundamentals of the Association, including education, instructor development, curriculum development and governance. "The IGC and IEC have worked tirelessly to regain firm footing on solid ground to best position our Association to move forward to the next chapter," Aimie remarked. "And I want to sincerely thank and recognize each of our leaders for their efforts."

Aimie went on to describe plans for Committees and CoPs, including the establishment of a communication and accountability framework. She also acknowledged all the new and creative programming initiatives led by various Chapters. Most importantly, Aimie emphasized that we are well-positioned to address additional challenges and we are aligned on how to best support the work that our members do as right of way professionals.

"We will emerge on the other side a stronger, more aligned community of professionals who have a clearer, unified vision of our future," she concluded.

Education Foundations

Carol Croft, SR/WA, President of the Right of Way International Education Foundation, took the stage and thanked everyone in attendance for their commitment to the right of way profession.

"As I've stated many times before, I have the privilege of sitting around the table with a group of men and women who are passionate about their profession and their position as a trustee," Carol said. "Their passion is evident in their volunteer work to grow the Foundation and to further our profession by funding good education initiatives."

Carol went on provide an overview of the Foundation's efforts, including an update on the Foundation's assets, as well as the introduction of the Twenty-Twenty Vision Scholarship. She also thanked the many individuals who helped in creating a successful Monday Night Event and Golf Tournament. Finally, Carol showed her appreciation for the generous donations pledged to the Foundation.

Bill Giese, SR/WA, President of the Canadian Right of Way Education Foundation, stepped on to the stage to provide updates on the CRWEF. He began by introducing the incoming board of trustees. He gave a financial update, gave details on the CRWEF student scholarship and acknowledged of the success of the Canadian Hospitality Suite.

"Our Foundation's mission is centered around educational growth," Bill said. "The cornerstones are our volunteers, our hard work and most importantly, our donors."

COMMITTEES, COMMUNITIES, COUNCILS AND REGIONS

Encompassing All Aspects of the Profession

IRWA's strength is derived from the dedicated right of way professionals who serve on International Committees, Councils and Communities of Practice. The Association credits their participation, leadership and collaboration in advancing important industry initiatives.

The Annual Conference provides a unique opportunity for members to discuss topics, relevant industry changes, trends and upcoming educational initiatives. The Industry Committees focus on issues impacting the core segments associated with the right of way profession. They include Electric & Utilities, Public Agencies, Oil & Gas Pipelines and Transportation. IRWA's Communities of Practice (CoPs) focus on issues related to our major industry disciplines, including Asset Management, Environment, Relocation Assistance, Surveying & Engineering and Valuation. IRWA's Service Committees focus on maintaining and improving quality member value throughout the Association. They include Ethics, Credentialing and the Partnership for Infrastructure Professional Education.

IRWA is also guided and supported by the leadership of its various councils. The International Governing Council represents each of the 10 Regions working in conjunction with the International Executive Committee and Headquarters staff. The Advisory Council is comprised of Past International Presidents, and the International Relations Group focuses on building our international presence. The Right of Way Consultants Council represents the industry's service companies who work to develop standardized practices. And supporting the Association's educational initiatives are the Right of Way International Education Foundation and the Canadian Right of Way Education Foundation.

GOLF TOURNAMENT

In conjunction with the 65th Annual Education Conference, the RWIEF and CRWEF hosted their 23rd annual golf tournament, The Rose City Classic, on June 11th. The tournament was held on The Reserve Vineyards and Golf Club, a semi-private facility about 30 minutes outside of Portland. The Reserve boasts two 18-hole courses with enough juice in the layouts to challenge the game's greatest players. The course has hosted the PGA Champions Tour and seen play by the likes of Jack Nicklaus, Arnold Palmer, Tom Watson, Fred Couples, Phil Mickelson and Sergio Garcia, just to name a few. Under a brilliant blue sky (we were under the wrong impression that it rained in Portland), an adventurous field of 108 golfers enjoyed their round on the pristine South Course, a par 72 track measuring from 5,189 to 7,172 yards. Everyone enjoyed contests for chipping, closest-to-the pin on the par 3 holes, men and women's long drives, as well as the top three tournament finishes and a closing raffle. While being challenged by the course and having loads of fun, the Foundations raised net proceeds of $20,000 for right of way education.

The Foundations wish to thank their participants, as well as their generous sponsors. Special thanks to **Platinum Sponors**: Allen, Williford & Seale, Inc., IRWA International Pipeline Committee, Croft & Associates, Region 5 and Region 3; **Diamond Sponsors**: Paragon Partners, Ltd. and Coates Field Service, Inc.; **Gold Sponsor**: RWIEF Trustees; **Silver Sponsors**: Percheron and Pattison Associates, Inc.; **Bronze Sponsor**: IRWA Beaver State Chapter 3; and **Hole Sponsors**: Singlepoint Acquisitions, Carolinas Chapter 31, Indiana Chapter 10, Old Dominion Chapter 52, David Sinclair, Region 7, Region 9, Wood, Universal Field Services, Inc., O'Brien Realty Advisors, New England Chapter 16 and Region 4.

YOUNG PROFESSIONALS

The IRWA Conference in Portland was monumental for the Young Professionals, with over 120 Young Professionals in attendance. Additionally, the Saturday Night Event was at capacity with an astounding 250 attendees. We would not have been able to have such a successful event this year if it weren't for the hard work and dedication of the Region Representatives in securing our amazing sponsors. We would like to give special thanks to our Purposeful Sponsor, Contract Land Staff, as well as our other sponsors: Croft and Associates, Universal Field Service, IRWA Chapter 8, IRWA Chapter 39, CBRE, HDR, IRWA Chapter 37, IRWA Chapter 16, OPC, Colliers International and IRWA Chapter 20.

The Young Professionals hosted two informative sessions during the conference. Our first session was on the topic of Generational Management, which was presented by a dynamic panel which consisted of a Millennial, a Gen X'er and a Baby Boomer. Our next session was an open discussion on getting a Young Professionals Committee started at the Chapter level. Participants left with some great tools to start attracting and retaining Young Professionals.

The most monumental part of this year's Conference was the announcement that the Young Professionals Group is now officially the Young Professionals Committee. This is a great step forward for the Young Professionals, as well as the organization as a whole. It is definitely an honor for me to serve as Chair during this time, along with YP Vice Chair Noelle Hoelsken, YP Secretary Jon Kriner and all of the Region Representatives. We will continue advocate for the Young Professionals within this organization and work to recruit even more through purposeful actions. Here is to a great year full of growth and amazing opportunities.

-Matthew Eckmann, SR/WA, Young Professionals Committee Chair

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The IRWA Young Professionals Group would like to extend a special thank you to our sponsors below.

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CLOSING GALA

IRWA's 65th Annual International Education Conference came to a close on Wednesday, June 12th with the Closing Gala. In his farewell remarks, Jeff Jones, SR/WA, thanked the many people who supported him on his journey to becoming IRWA's International President, including Michigan Chapter 7, various Past Presidents, Region 5, the Advisory Council, the IGC, Committee and CoP members, Headquarters staff and the 2018-2019 IEC members. Finally, saving best for last, Jeff thanked his wife for her unyielding support.

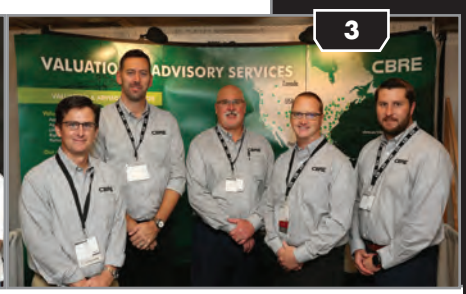
Addressing the entire audience, Jeff ended his speech saying, "I thank you all for your trust, support and above all, your friendship—not just this past Presidential year, but over my IRWA career."

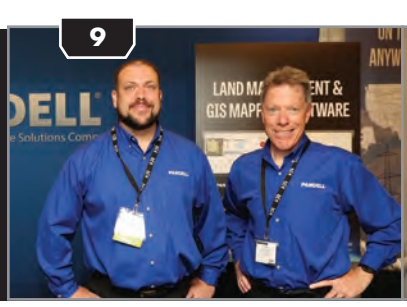
In honor of stepping into the Association's highest elected position, Aimie Mims, SR/WA, was called up to the stage for the presentation of the President's pin.

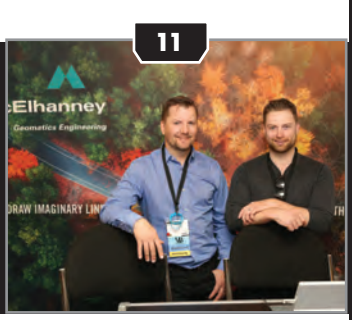
"I feel a great sense of responsibility in being your President," Aimie said. "My commitment to you is to give you the absolute best of my abilities. I will listen and seek to understand. I will consider other perspectives. I will remain honest and committed to working diligently in the best interest of our Association as a whole. You have my word and I expect you to hold me accountable. Together we will partner in trust to do our best—to do the right thing."

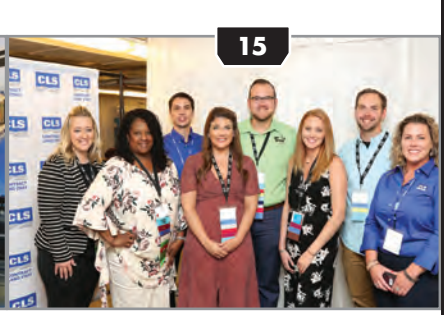
EXHIBIT HALL

With hundreds of conference attendees, the Exhibit Hall served as an ideal venue for exhibitors to showcase their products and services to the dedicated right of way professionals in attendance. For a chance to win an iPad, each conference attendee received an Exhibit Hall Passport, which encourages participants to visit each booth to obtain a signature. This created a highly interactive environment among the participants and was a great success in generating traffic.









1. Valbridge Property Advisors 2. IRWA International Transportation Committee 3. CBRE, Inc. 4. Contract Land Staff 5. IRWA International Electric & Utilities Committee and IRWA International Surveying & Engineering CoP 6. Appraisal Institute 7. ROWE Professional Services Company 8. Allen, Williford & Seale, Inc. 9. Pandell 10. Farnsworth Group, Inc. 11. McElhanney Ltd. 12. DataTree by First American 13. Altus Group Ltd. 14. Paragon Partners Ltd. 15. IRWA Young Professionals

EXHIBIT HALL

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MONDAY NIGHT EVENT

Everyone had a blast at Pioneer Square, downtown Portland's outdoor historical venue, where the Education Foundations hosted their annual fundraiser. Over 700 attendees were greeted by Brian Kidd (AKA The Unipiper), an amazing local entertainer dressed as Darth Vader who rode a unicycle while playing bagpipes that threw flames (you can't make this stuff up).

New this year was a silent auction, which utilized a real-time electronic app by Handbid. Guests could follow auction items on mobile devices and see who was outbidding who. Delicious food and strawberry shortcake were enjoyed, followed by a live auction featuring a puppet of our outgoing IRWA International President, Jeff Jones, SR/WA. Guests danced the night away with fantastic music by Five Guys Named Moe, who performed everything from Motown to rock 'n roll classics. Bringing the evening to a close, Chapter 4's Tanya Johnson, SR/WA, serenaded guests with her sultry rendition of Patsy Cline's big hit, "Crazy." Approximate net proceeds of $30,000 were raised for right of way education.

The Foundations wish to thank their generous sponsors: Appraisal Institute, OR Colan Associates, Lingeman Valuation & Consulting LLC, Miller Nash Graham & Dunn LLP, RP Herman & Associates LLC, Croft & Associates LLC, Saalfeld Griggs PC, Tierra Right of Way Services, Universal Field Services, Inc., AKS Engineering & Forestry, IRWA Region 6, IRWA Chapter 10, Cable Huston LLP and Epic Land Solutions, Inc.

In Appreciation

IRWA is pleased to give special recognition to our sponsors for their generosity in making this year's conference a success.

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