A total of 315 people attended the joint Fall conference of the Nebraska Section AWWA, Nebraska Water Environment Association and Nebraska Chapter of the American Public Works Association, November 3-5, in Kearney.

There were 52 vendors. CAS Construction, Topeka, KS, received an award for the best exhibit. See list of vendors on pages 18-21.

The Water for People Raffle generated $1,340 for the non-profit group.

The 2005 AWWA Conference will be November 8-9 in Kearney.
Top Ops Winners

First Place Top Ops Team from M.U.D., from left, front: James Bartels, Kevin Tobin. Back: Chris Driscoll, Mike Koenig.

Since National AWWA rules prohibit engineers who are water operators from competing in the National Top Ops Competition, June 12-16, 2005 in San Francisco, CA, members of the second place team, who are not engineers, have been invited to represent the Section in the competition.

The Section pays $500 towards each participant’s registration. Leisen scholarship grants of $250 each also are available to help participants defray costs.
Second Place Top Ops Team with Chris Koenig, Top Ops coordinator, from left: Doug Pollack, David Lathrop, City of Seward; Ken Ekeler, City of York, Koenig. Eric Melcher, City of Aurora, was unavailable for the photo.

The Third Place Top Ops Team included: Larry Andreasen, City of Fremont; Steve Kelley, City of Beatrice; John Mirovsky, Lincoln Water System, and Chuck Thomerson, City of Columbus.
Scholarship Winners

The following students each received a $500 scholarship from the Nebraska Section.

**Chad Cecrle** is an undergraduate student at UNL working toward a degree in Civil Engineering. He plans to finish his undergrad work in the fall of 2005 and pursue a Masters.

Chad comments in his application: “During this past summer and this fall, I’ve been working with a graduate student on a project to utilize yard waste compost for erosion control on construction sites. Also this past summer, I went to China with an engineering student group. I witnessed the massive pollution affect on water quality caused by runoff. I would like to help develop solutions to this problem.”

**Patrick Denning** is an undergraduate student at UNL working toward a degree in Civil Engineering.

Patrick comments in his application: “My career objectives are very simple; I want to help people. I feel the environmental field and more specifically water treatment provides the opportunity to use my engineering skills to achieve that goal.”

**Brian Hindley** is an undergraduate student at UNO working toward a degree in Civil Engineering. He plans to finish his undergrad work this fall and attend grad school at the University of Nebraska.

Brian comments in his application: “As a casual observer, I often see water being taken for granted. I would like to help raise the public awareness of appropriate water use in an effort to help assure everyone has clean water for their use for years to come.”

**Curtis Jarecki** is an undergraduate student at UNL working toward a degree in Civil Engineering. After completing his undergrad work, Curtis plans to continue his education by attending grad school at UNL.

Curtis comments in his application: “As an undergrad, I’ve been involved in a project to sample water from storm drains in Lincoln to find sources of non-point source pollution. I also participated in a project to reduce the copper content of the drinking water in Waverly and Mahoney State Park. I assisted in a study examining the BOD concentration of runoff from the UNL Animal Sciences Livestock yard to determine if the site’s runoff was degrading the water quality in Dead Man’s Run. I would like to work with smaller communities to find ways of using newer technology for treatment and in ways to reduce water demand.”
Lifetime Members

National AWWA Director Curtiss L. Truss presented lifetime memberships to Lee Gustafson, EA Engineering Science and Technology, and Dennis Hirschbrunner, HDR Engineering Inc. From left: Gustafson, Hirschbrunner, Truss.
Safety Award

Rob Pierce, League of Nebraska Municipalities and chair of the Section Safety Committee, presents a safety award to the City of Hastings, represented by Ben Mattley.
David Jundt, Nebraska Health and Human Services and chair of the Small Systems Committee, presents Sandra Browitt, chair of the McCool Junction Village Board, an award for their water system’s contribution to the production of a water system management video. The project received recognition at the national conference in June 2004.

Members of the McCool Junction Village Board, from left: Vanee Holtmeier, clerk; Pamela Norquest, board member; Browitt; Ron Helmlinger and Jim Green, operators.
Outstanding Water Operator Awards

Bob Byrkit, Nebraska Health and Human Services, presents the water operator award to Ken Ekeler, City of Seward.

This gentleman was born and raised on a farm near Exeter, NE. After graduation from high school, he started his working career with a local lumber company doing all phases of building construction.

In 1973, he began employment with this water system as a maintenance worker. Over the years, he worked his way up to equipment operator, water system operator, and foreman for the water department.

He has been the water foreman and chief water system operator since August 1978. He is a Grade 1 Certified Water System Operator. He is very knowledgeable about the water system and a very valuable asset to the system for which he works.

He has two sons and two grandchildren. He is an avid hunter and more recently, has become an avid biker. If you see a bright yellow Honda Gold Wing streaking down the highways of Nebraska it just may be him.

It is with great pleasure that the Department presents this Outstanding Water Operator Award to Ken Ekeler from the City of York.

Roger Rhylander, Nebraska Health and Human Services, presents the water operator award to Jim Shields, M.U.D.

This gentleman was born in Omaha, NE and graduated from Westside High School. He earned a Bachelor of Science in Civil Engineering from the University of Nebraska at Lincoln and a Masters of Business Administration.


In 1997, he moved was promoted to his current position, director of Water Production. He oversees the operation and maintenance of the Florence Water Treatment Plant, a very unique and historic facility that treats up to 160 million gallons per day of Missouri River water. He also is responsible for the upkeep of five major reservoir sites and 13 pumping stations located throughout the distribution system.

He is a Grade 1 Certified Water System Operator and a Registered Professional Engineer in the State of Nebraska.

Jim, his wife, Jill, and three sons live in Fort Calhoun. He is very active in his community including serving on the city council, helping coach several sports, and traveling extensively with the marching band.

His fellow workers know him as a very knowledgeable, thorough leader who is supportive of all plant personnel.

At this time it is my esteemed pleasure to present this Outstanding Water Operator Award to Jim Shields of the Metropolitan Utilities District.
Water Industry Service Awards

Steve Kelley, City of Beatrice and chair of the Awards Committee, presents a WISA Award to Mike Wentink, Nebraska Health and Human Services.

Mike is a 1973 graduate of Lincoln East High School and a 1977 graduate of UNL.

He began his career in 1977 with the Nebraska Department of Health, and has held several positions during the past 27 years. He currently is operator certification-training officer.

Mike has been active in the Nebraska Section AWWA, serving as trustee and secretary. He also chairs the Education Committee.

Mike’s personal life is very full and centers on hunting, fishing and snow skiing. He and his wife, Cathie, have been married since 1977. They have two dogs. Bet they’re hunting dogs!

Steve Kelley, City of Beatrice and chair of the Awards Committee, presents a WISA Award to Rick Roberts, Lincoln Water System.

Rick began his career in the water industry in 1978 as a utility worker for the City of Lincoln. He has held several positions at the Ashland Water Treatment Plant and currently serves as assistant supervisor of Maintenance.

Rick has seen several upgrades to the plant during his years of service. He also was site coordinator for plant modifications and the vertical wells now in use.

Rick is a Grade 1 water operator, plus a licensed well and pump installer.

He has a son and enjoys sports, camping and fishing.
Steve Kelley, City of Beatrice and chair of the Awards Committee, presents a WISA Award to George Reed, Metropolitan Utilities District.

George joined M.U.D. in 1960 as a meter reader. He held several positions at the Platte South Water Treatment Plant, and was promoted to water system controller in 1995.

George has been a member of AWWA since 1973, and has attended numerous AWWA conferences at his own expense. He has helped numerous small water and wastewater systems. He is a Grade 1 water operator and holds a bachelors degree from Peru State College.

George’s supervisor says that he is a dedicated employee with a strong appetite for learning.

George spent 27 years in the Army Reserves and also coached girls’ softball. He and his wife, Nancy, have been married 41 years. They have three daughters.

In his spare time, George enjoys traveling and reading.

Steve Kelley, City of Beatrice and chair of the Awards Committee, presents a WISA Award to Mari Matulka, Metropolitan Utilities District.

Mari received her associates degree in English from Platte College in 1971, bachelor of science in Journalism from the University of Nebraska-Kearney in 1973, and masters in Journalism from UNL in 1986.

She began her career in the water industry with M.U.D. in 1984 as assistant director of Public Relations. She has been director of Corporate Communications for M.U.D. since 1995.

Mari has always been active in the Section’s activities. She has chaired the Publications Committee since 1989, chaired the Public Information Committee for 10 years, served as board trustee in 1993, and currently serves on the Education Committee.

Mari has received numerous awards throughout her career. She always makes sure deserving people are nominated for awards.

Mari has been married to John Sidzyik for 15 years. She has 11 stepchildren, 25 grandchildren and 1.5 great grandchildren.
George Warren Fuller Award Winner

From left: National AWWA Director Curtis Truss, Fuller Award Winner Chris Koenig, HGM Associates, and Section Director Joel Christensen, M.U.D.

Christopher J. Koenig was named the George Warren Fuller Award recipient at the 2004 Fall Conference for outstanding service to the water industry. This is the highest honor given by AWWA. The award will be presented to Chris at the National AWWA Conference in San Francisco, June 12-16, 2005.

A native of Nebraska, Chris received a bachelor of science degree from UNL. He is a registered professional engineer in the State of Nebraska.

He has a varied background having been employed by the State of Nebraska Department of Aeronautics where he “counted cracks.” He has worked as a consulting engineer for HWS Consulting Group Inc., and currently is Project Manager with HGM Associates Inc., Omaha.

Chris is a member of NSPE, Omaha Engineers Club, American Consulting Engineer’s Council, Water Environment Federation and AWWA.

He has held the following positions in the Nebraska Section AWWA: Board trustee, treasurer, vice-chair, chair-elect, chair and past-chair.

Chris was instrumental in hiring paid staff, and recently, in resolving paid staff issues. He continues to serve the Section by coordinating the Top Ops Competition, helping with the Water for People raffle and serves as “assistant treasurer.” He once made the claim as the “Best Looking” of the three Koenigs who belong to the Nebraska Section AWWA.

Chris has been married to his wife, Jerrene, for 22 years. They have two children, Angie and Ryan.
Chris realizes the speaker is talking about him before his name is announced.

Chris makes his acceptance speech.
Chris Koenig’s family, from left: Ryan, son; Angie, daughter; Jerrene, wife; Chris, Lucille, mother; Felix, father; Delores Langel, mother-in-law; Vern Langel, father-in-law.

Chris also received an award from the Section for his volunteer work as “assistant treasurer” since the Section no longer has paid staff. Kristine Ranslem, City of Albion, made the presentation.
Other photos of Chris used to roast him at the awards dinner.
Section Director Joel Christensen, M.U.D., presents National AWWA Director Curtis L. Truss and his wife, Wanda, of Springfield, OH, Nebraska home-grown products in appreciation for their participation at the annual conference.

A member of AWWA since 1983, Truss is the executive director of the Operator Training Committee of Ohio, the educational arm of the Ohio Section.

On the national AWWA level, Truss is a member of the Product and Market Advisory Committee and Opflow Editorial Advisory Board, and past chair of the Student Activities Committee. He received the George Warren Fuller Award in 1998 and the Tatlock Award in 1992.

He is a member of the National Rural Water Association, the Ohio Rural Water Association, the Water Environment Federation, the National Environmental Training Association, and the Association of Boards of Certification.
2005 Committee Chairs

The Board of Trustees strongly encourages members to get involved in the committees. Besides the benefits of networking and abreast of what’s happening in the state water supply system, it helps you do your job better and become a more valuable asset to your employer. Please contact one of the committee chairs to volunteer.

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