

Utilities Section Newsletter

League of Nebraska Municipalities

March 2018

After 45 years - Howard Isaacs had a long run in public health

Reprinted with permission from The Water Spout – March 2018

by Michael Wentink, Field Services & Training, Nebraska Dept. of Health and Human Services

As many are aware, Howard Isaacs retired in early March of this year, after 45 years of working in public health, first with the Department of Health laboratory and then moving over to the Drinking Water Program.

There are many observations one can make about Howard, and having known Howard for the majority of that lengthy time, one trait that stands out with this author is Howard's sense of humor. Protecting public health is a serious business. Seeing some humor in certain situations and occurrences in this business does much to promote longevity in performance of that work. Howard was able to strike a fine balance between business and humor; very serious about public health issues but also able to see some humor at times to "lighten the load," so to speak. He'll be missed.

Howard did send a note to Drinking Water Program personnel announcing his retirement which, I would like to share. We all wish Howard the best during his retirement. Forty-five years is a long time.

November 21, 2017

Departments of Environmental Quality and Health and Human Services Administration,

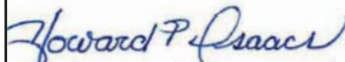
Nineteen Seventy Two was a pivotal year in my life. In May, I graduated from college, I became married to the lady of my life yet today, and on September 1, 1972, I began employment with the Nebraska Department of Public Health Laboratory as a Laboratory Technician. Thus began a journey with the prime responsibility of protecting the public health of our fellow Nebraskans.

In 1997, I moved from the laboratory setting to the Nebraska Public Health Drinking Water Program, where I am currently employed. If you stop to add up all of that time, well, let's just say it's been a long, long time. I am very proud that my entire career has been in the public health field.

Obviously hanging around that long means one thing....I was in it for the money. Actually, someone recently told me I must have a "Peace Corp" gene. The simple truth, I have thoroughly enjoyed the work I have been doing. Interactions and relationships with countless individuals realized during this time have also played a significant role for wanting to remain with this Program.

However, it is time for me to step aside, time to enjoy adventures with my wife, children, and grandkids. So today I announce that I will be retiring March 5, 2018.

Thank you,



Howard P. Isaacs, Administrator
Division of Drinking Water
Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services

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UTILITIES SECTION

Lash Chaffin
Utilities Section Director
Rob Pierce
Utilities Field Representative

SAFETY/HEALTH CORNER

Common Ground Nebraska held its 8th Annual Excavation Safety Summit

Common Ground Nebraska held its 8th Annual Excavation Safety Summit Feb. 21, 2018. The expo festivities included safety presentations, exhibit booths, demonstrations and a competitive excavator rodeo.

The keynote “motivational safety” speaker was Tony Crow of Texas. Tony was the victim of a hunting accident in 2003 that left him permanently blind for life.

He stated when he was working with his new seeing eye “leader” dog, that the dog stopped before a puddle of water. The dog trainer informed him that the dog stopped because he identified water in their path. He was informed that the dog noted the water as a pos-

sible hazard as the dog did not know if it was one inch deep or 100 feet deep.

Tony stated that a dog trained for one year could learn to stop and not to take chances. Tony said he worked for 26 years at a plant that heavily promoted safety. At the hospital, the doctor told him safety glasses could have saved his eyesight.

He said, it made me stop and think. We often talk safety, but do we practice safety? Are we just providing lip service and going through the motions of working or living safely?



Tony Crow, INJAM, keynote speaker.

Accidents can be caused by a number of reasons, but usually (about 80 percent) of the accidents are caused by an unsafe act, not an unsafe environment. A lasting quote from that day was that “leadership is best shown by example.” More information can be found on his foundation’s website at www.tonyINJAM.com.

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Municipal parks

The weather has been nice enough that the public is out enjoying the parks already. Hopefully, municipal employees have had time to get them ready for use. Many areas

need to be inspected, such as the restrooms, bandstands, drinking fountains, playgrounds and the shelters. It is good to have an inspection sheet for each area with a check off when

the inspection was completed or any repairs or maintenance was performed. One organization that can help out with training, inspection forms and CSPA inspection kits is the Nebraska

Recreation & Park Association (NeRPA) at www.nerpa.us.

Another useful site is the National Recreation and Parks Association at website www.nrpa.org.

A couple other organizations whose websites may be helpful when it comes to parks and recreation include: www.playgroundprofessionals.com and a group that that may be helpful with grants is www.the-granthelpers.com. Some of the materials these groups have available may require membership before having access or the discounted rates.

I hope everyone is gearing up for a summer of outdoor activities, as I know I am!

Nebraska Breaktime Trivia “Just For Fun”

Q-1. How many cities/villages names start with “Mc”?

Q-2. What two cities in Nebraska have a McKinney's Irish Pub?

Q-3. Can you name the top five Nebraska cities/

villages with the highest population percentage of Irish?

Q-4. What nine U.S. states have more Irish percentage by population?

Q-5. What village in Nebraska has a Dublin Cemetery?

Q-6. What city in Nebraska has this shamrock on its welcome sign?



Answers found on page 11.

Upcoming Safety Weeks

Did your community have anything planned for these safety weeks?

Work Zone Safety Week. The American Traffic Safety Services Association (ATSSA)

designated April 9-13, 2018 as “National Work Zone Safety Week.” To get more information on the National Workzone Safety Week can be found at <http://www.atssa.com/Events/NationalWorkZoneAwarenessWeek.aspx>.

Playground Safety Week. The designated week for “National Playground Safety” was scheduled from April 23-27, 2018. Information can be found at <http://www.playground-safety.org/>.

Construction Safety Week. The designated week for “National Construction Safety Week” is May 7-11, 2018. More information can be found at <http://www.construction-safetyweek.com/>.

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Classifieds

Lineman. The City of Mitchell is accepting applications for the position of Line Worker until the position is filled. This position is responsible for maintaining the cities electrical system. The successful applicant must establish residency within a 15-minute response time.

Applications and complete job descriptions, are available at the City Offices, 1280 Center Avenue, Mitchell, NE 69357, 308-623-1616, or cityadmin@mitchellcity.net. AAA/EEO.

Services Foreman and Heavy Equipment Operator. The City of Mitchell is accepting applications for the positions of Services Foreman and Heavy Equipment Operator until the positions are filled. The successful applicant must establish residency within a 15-minute response time of Mitchell and must possess or be able to obtain a mosquito spraying certification.

Applications and complete job descriptions, are available at the City Offices, 1280 Center Avenue, Mitchell, NE 69357, 308-623-1523, or cityclerk@mitchellcity.net.

The City of Mitchell is a veteran-friendly community and we would encourage those who have served in the armed services to apply. AAA/EEO.

Utility Worker I. The City of Aurora is accepting applications for the position of Utility Worker I. Applicant must be able to perform a variety of general maintenance work and operate a variety of equipment in the construction, operation, repair and maintenance of the City's water, sewer, wastewater, parks, cemetery, sanitation and street facilities. Must have a valid Nebraska Driver's License, and be able to obtain a CDL. Salary is DOQ, with an excellent benefit package. Applications can be obtained at the Aurora City Offices, 905 13th Street, Aurora, NE 68818 or by calling (402) 694-6992 or via email at utlysupt@cityofaurora.org. Position will remain open until filled. The City of Aurora is an EOE.

Utilities Assistant. The Village of Elwood is accepting applications for a full-time Utilities Assistant. Duties include assisting with maintenance of streets, operation of sewer and water systems, park

and swimming pool. Drug testing and a valid Nebraska driver's license are required. Salary is negotiable. A benefit package is offered with the position. Applications may be picked up at 304 Calvert Avenue, Elwood, NE 68937 or call 308-785-2480 for more information. E-mail requests for applications to villelwood@atcjet.net. Please include a resume with your application. Applications will be accepted until the position is filled. The Village of Elwood is an Equal Opportunity Employer.

Water Operator Class I. The City of Tekamah is accepting applications for Water Operator Class I. State certification Grade IV and Sewer Grade I must be obtained with six months of hire. Pay rate \$16-\$21/hour depending on experience and qualifications. Drug test required. Applicants must be at least 18 years old and hold a valid Nebraska driver's license. Application and job description may be requested at: City Office, 1315 K Street, Tekamah, NE 68061 or tekwater2@tekamah.net. Applications will be accepted until position is filled. Equal opportunity employer.



Hello Progress

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Nebraska utilities history

The Utilities Section Newsletter will continue to feature histories of both utilities and associate members. Any historical data and/or photos of your utilities, a specific facility, or articles already written are welcome, along with permission to print. If you have questions, contact Rob at 402-476-2829 or robp@lonm.org.

*By Rob Pierce, LNM Field Rep./
Training Coordinator*

Lewellen, located in Garden County, had explorers and trappers pass through the area in 1849 and the Ash Hollow Cemetery was established south of the Platte River. The first settler took up residence about 1884 and in 1885, an event called the Blue Water Battle occurred west of the future townsite. In 1886, a store and a post office, located about four miles from the present townsite, were established. On July 7, 1887, a post office was located in a general store and by December, a drug store was added. The residences and stores had individual wells and outhouses in 1890. In 1891, a wagon bridge was built over the North Platte River. On Dec. 4, 1891, a post office was moved from Keith County and in 1893, the Ramsey Post Office was moved to the present site of Lewellen. In 1899, a Methodist Church was constructed.

By 1900, telephone lines and a Lewellen Mercantile store were

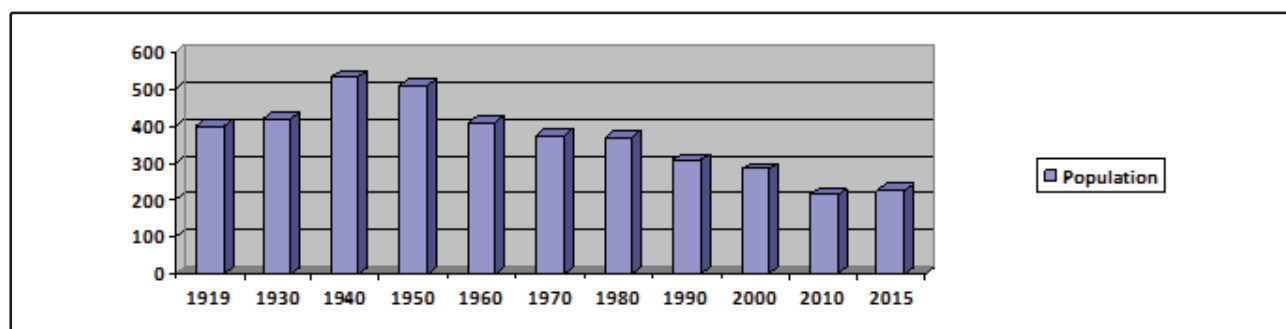
constructed. In 1903, the Wehn Telephone Company extended lines from Bridgeport to Oshkosh, then to Lewellen. In 1905, the Bank of Lewellen was organized. In July 1906, the townsite was laid out (platted) when the railroad extended to the area. The new community was named after the storekeeper, Frank Lewellen. A Lutheran Church also was built that year. In 1907, the McCoy hotel and a frame railroad depot was built. That year, the first Union Pacific Railroad train arrived. A drug store opened in a tent and soon built a frame building to house the store. In October 1907, the first addition was platted with two more additions for a total of 60 acres. The original townsite later became the southeast part of the town. School sessions were held in the Woodman Hall building because of a funding issue to build a new school. In 1910, a County



Lewellen Community Center. 2014 Photo.

Fair featured "Pacer" races held on Main Street. In 1911, a frame school building was erected and the *Lewellen Gazette* newspaper was established in 1911. The newspaper ceased publication in 1912, but started again in 1914. The Fairview Cemetery was established in 1913 and in 1915, the community had a dirt Main Street with sidewalks. In May 1916, the Grace Lutheran Church was built and a brick First National Bank of Lewellen was built in 1917. In 1917, the *Lewellen Gazette* newspaper ceased publication and

Continued on page 6



Nebraska utilities history

Continued from page 5
the *Lewellen Optimist* newspaper began publishing. In December 1917, an electric light plant was established. The Blue Creek Light and Power Company provided electric current. The population by 1919 was about 400 and on May 1, 1920, Lewellen was incorporated as a village. A two-and-a-half-story brick school building was erected and in 1921-22, the village voted to buy the Blue Creek Light and Power Company, but was unable to get a bond. The village had two large fires, one in 1921 that destroyed three stores and second fire in 1922. In 1925, a flagpole was installed on the intersection of Parker and Main Streets. That year, an electric transmission line was built from Scottsbluff to Ogallala, tying in the small towns along the way.

By 1930, the population was 419 and in 1931, the Western Public Service bought the Blue Creek Light and Power Company holdings and the electric rates were lowered. The natural gas service was provided by North Central Gas Company with an office in Scottsbluff. No water or waste-

water systems were in the village by 1932. In 1934, the Village of Lewellen became a member of the League of Nebraska Municipalities. In 1937 the *Lewellen Times* newspaper was being published.

By 1940, the population increased to 532 and WPA projects were underway with donations of \$8,761 for a swimming pool with a bathhouse and a park with playground equipment. A fire destroyed the Blue Creek Mercantile in 1940 and on Jan. 2, 1942, the Consumers Public Power District acquired all Nebraska properties of Western Public Service Company. The population decreased to 510 by 1950 and the library moved to the city hall building. In 1956, the fire department had 24 volunteer firefighters. The public sewer system and disposal plant was maintained by a one mil tax levy and a monthly rate of \$1.25 for residential and a commercial sewer charge of \$1.50-\$2.25 per month. The electric system was owned/operated by Consumers Public Power District. The cost of street lighting in 1956 was \$50 per month and the cost of pumping water was \$60 per

month. The village collected fees for garbage collection and paid a private collection company. Rates for residents were \$0.75 and for businesses were \$3 per month. The village maintained a (25ft x 75ft) swimming pool and installed new restrooms, fireplace and a tennis court at village park. In the summer of 1956, a street paving project was underway on Main Street. In 1957, work began on a new school building, which was completed in 1958. In 1958, the cost of street lighting was \$50 per month and the cost of pumping water was between \$50-\$60 per month. Park improvements were underway in 1958.

In 1960, the population was 411 and the electric system was owned/operated by Consumers Public Power District. The natural gas system was owned/operated by North Central Gas Company. Garbage collection service was provided by a private company with monthly rates for residents at \$0.75 and businesses at \$3. The cost of street lighting in 1962 was \$60 per month and the cost of pumping water was




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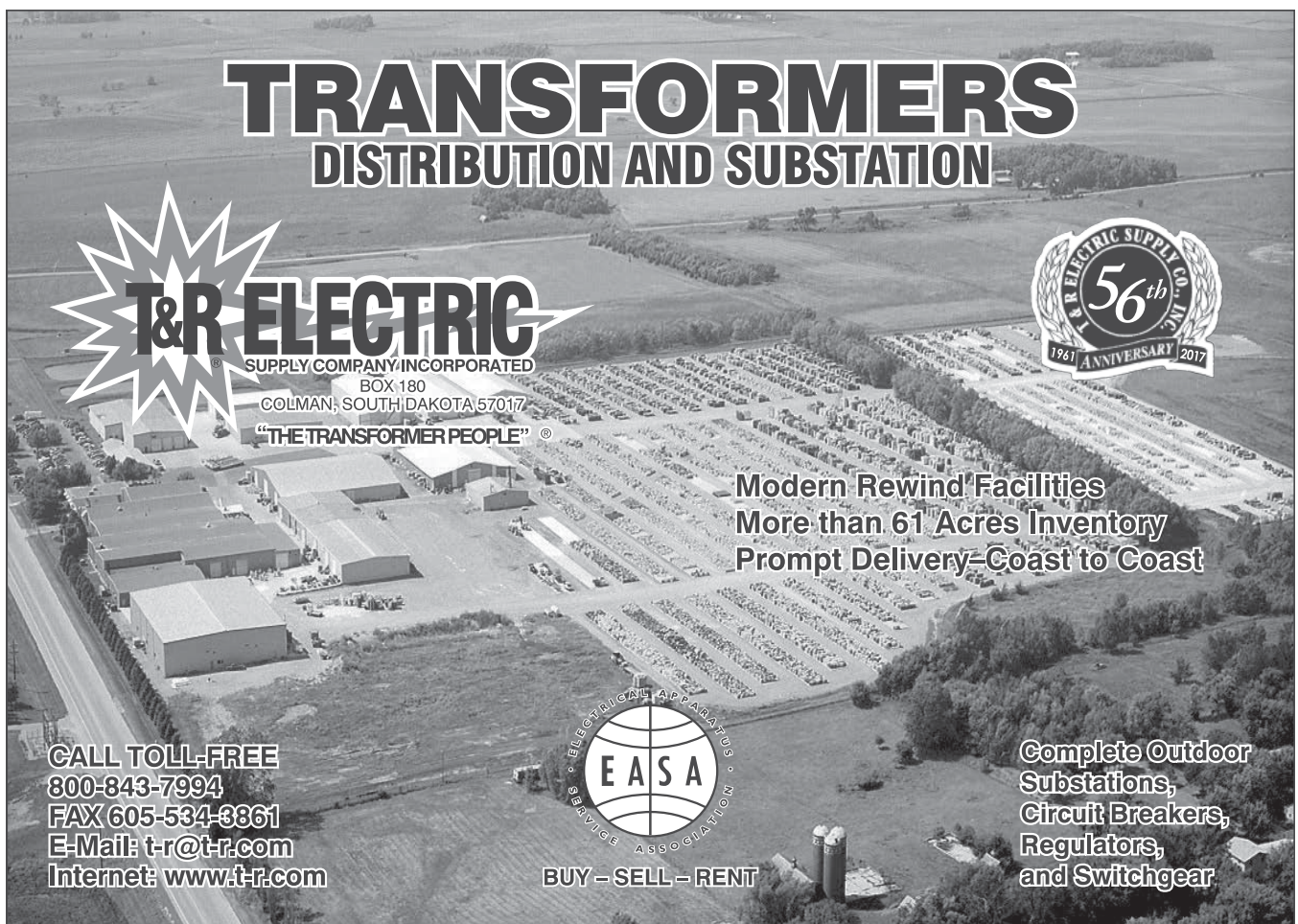
Nebraska utilities history

Continued from page 6
\$65 per month. The sewer system was maintained from a one mill levy and sewer charge of \$1.50 to \$2.25 per month. By 1970, the population decreased to 376 and the electric system was operated/supplied by Nebraska Public Power District. A metal Blue Creek Community Hall/Fire Hall was built in 1977. The population in 1980 was 368 and the gas system was owned/supplied by Kansas-Nebraska Natural Gas Company. In 1987, a new bridge was erected

across the North Platte River, just south of the village. A sewer collection system project in 1989 included replacement of the old piping with polyvinyl chloride (PVC) pipe. In 1999, the village maintained a non-discharge facultative retention lagoon system designed for 0.044 million gallons per day (mgd). The population in 1990 decreased from 307 to 282 in 2000. In 2002, a computer was installed in the library, which was housed in the south room of the village hall. In 2003, a 160-foot test well


was drilled by Sargent Irrigation Company and the fire department had 25 volunteer firefighters. By 2008, the natural gas system was operated by SourceGas with some individual propane tanks around town. A private company provided garbage collection service. The Garden County High School was located on the north edge of town and Lewellen was home of the Garden County Fairgrounds complex. In 2010, the population was 213 and in 2015, Black Hills

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Nebraska utilities history

Continued from page 7

Energy purchased the Nebraska properties of SourceGas.

Lewellen currently has a population of 224 and has been an incorporated village for 98 years. The village maintains a park, swimming pool, facultative lagoon wastewater treatment system and the streets (paved Main Street and gravel residential streets). The public library is housed in the village hall. The electrical system is operated/supplied by the Nebraska

Public Power District. The natural gas system is owned/operated by Black Hills Energy. Lewellan has been a Utilities Section member since 2005.

References: Nebraska Directory of Municipal Officials, 1956, 1958, 1960, 1962, 1964-75, 1977-87, 1990-2017; Water Resources of Nebraska, December 1936; Perkey's Nebraska Place Names, 1995; Nebraska Municipal Review, 2003 Nebraska Our Towns... The Panhandle, 1988; Maps Tell

A Story, 1991; NEDED Website, 2005; Lewellen Website, 2005, 2007; Garden County Website, 2009; History of Garden County, 1886-1986, 1986; Who's Who in Nebraska, 1940; History of Western Nebraska and It's People, 1921; NPPD Website, 2011, 2017; Nebraska Gazetteer & Business Directory, 1890-91; Broadwater News newspaper, 1920-21; Wikipedia, 2017-2018 and Nebraska Blue Book 1920, 1928, 1946, and 1978.

Looking Back!

On March 1, 1978, an "Open House" was held in the new League of Nebraska Municipalities building, which now has been occupied for 40 years. At one time, the Nebraska Municipal Power Pool occupied the 2nd floor and the Nebraska Hospital Association had office space in the basement. The 3rd floor consisted of efficiency and one-bedroom apartments. In the 1960s, the building was used as a mortuary.



The League of Nebraska Municipalities building; left photo from the 1960s and the right photo from 2014.

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Solid Waste Management Study Presentation

LB 1101, introduced in 2016 by former Sens. Heath Mello of Omaha, Ken Haar of Malcolm, Rick Kolowski of Omaha and Ken Schilz of Ogallala, called for a study to examine the status of solid waste management programs operated by the Nebraska Department of Environmental Quality (NDEQ). The study was to aid the agency in evaluating ways to modernize and potentially revise programs.

The study was to examine:

- 1) Whether existing state programs regarding litter and waste reduction and recycling should be amended or merged;
- 2) The needs of recycling and composting programs, including the need for infrastructure development, operating standards, market development, coordinated public education and incentives to increase recycling and composting;
- 3) Methods to partner with political subdivisions, and private and nonprofit organizations to most successfully address waste management issues;

- 4) Existing funding sources and possible new revenue sources at the state and local level to address existing and emerging solid waste management issues; and,
- 5) Revisions to existing grant programs to proactively address solid waste management issues.

LB 1101 also specified that NDEQ's Director would appoint an advisory committee and submit a report to the Legislature in December 2017.

The nine-member panel included: George Hoellen, President, T.O. Haas Tire, Lincoln; Jo Leyland, City Administrator/Clerk/Treasurer for the City of Imperial; Lash Chaffin of the League of Nebraska Municipalities; Ed Sadler, City Manager of the City of Sidney; Kelley Danielson, District Manager of the Butler County Landfill; Jim Weber, President of Sandhills Plastics, Kearney; Danielle Easdale, Waste Reduction and Recycling Incentive Grant Project Manager in Cass County; Rick Yoder, Chief Sustainability Officer at

the University of Nebraska-Omaha; and Fred Hlava, retired Gordon City Manager.

NDEQ finalized the Solid Waste Management Program Study report and on Dec. 15, 2017, submitted the report to the Executive Board of the Legislative Council and chairpersons of the Natural Resources Committee, the Urban Affairs Committee and the Appropriations Committee of the Legislature.

A presentation titled "2017 Solid Waste Management Study" was given at the 2018 Utilities Section Conference Jan. 18, 2018, at the Cornhusker Hotel. Speakers were Joe Francis, Associate Director of NDEQ, and David Haldeman, Land Management Division Director of NDEQ. They provided an overview of the study, highlighting areas of concern or areas that needed more study. The study results can be found on the NDEQ website at <http://deq.ne.gov/NDEQProg.nsf/OnWeb/SWMS>.



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Water Operator Training Workshops held

Since Jan. 1, six Water Operator Training Workshops were held in Blair, Beatrice, Chadron, Gering and North Platte.

Since 2010, 4,786 participants have attended the water and back-flow workshops sponsored by the Utilities Section and the Nebraska Section AWWA. The League and

AWWA have partnered on these water/backflow training workshops since the early 1970s. The Utilities Section has been offering water workshops for over 77 years (one water workshop was held April 17, 1941 in Alliance).

The remaining summer workshop is scheduled for July 12 in

Ogallala. Operators in attendance will receive five (grades 1-4) water and five wastewater toward renewing their license. Brochures can be found on the League website at www.lonm.org.

Need to get a wastewater operator certified?

Wastewater operator certification training for 2018 by the NWEA will be held July 19-20 in Kearney; Aug. 20-22 in Lincoln; and Oct. 15-17 in Norfolk.

Brochures and registration forms can be found at <http://nebwea.org/resources/certification-training/training-certification/certification-trainingapril2018> or contact Scott Bundy at scott.bundy@hdrinc.com (402-399-1357).

Certification exams are separate and applications need to be obtained from NDEQ. Registration forms for the exam can be found at www.ndeq.state.ne.us.

Information on the "Wastewater Licensing" schedule can be found at <http://deq.ne.gov/NDEQProg.nsf/OnWeb/Train05> and wastewater license applications at <http://deq.ne.gov/NDEQProg.nsf/OnWeb/WTFOCT>.

Cardboard banned from landfill

Starting April 1, 2018, the City of Lincoln will ban cardboard from its landfill. If you do NOT currently recycle corrugated cardboard, you need to work with your local hauler or make use of one of the city's recycling drop-off sites. The city is offering technical assistance and a cash rebate to companies to either start or expand recycling programs. (LMC 8.32.040, Sect. C/Recyclable cardboard)

Power & Equipment Show scheduled

The Power & Equipment Show is scheduled for July 25-26, 2018, at the Norfolk Community College Pohlman Ag Complex. To register, visit www.northeast.edu/2018/power-show. For more information, call 402-844-7216.

The Power & Equipment Show is presented by Northeast Community College in cooperation with Nebraska Rural Electric Association Suppliers Group, Nebraska Rural Electric Association and League of Nebraska Municipalities-Utilities Section.



Crow Line: A line of positive communication that all can share

Congratulations!

Outstanding Water Operator Award. The Department of Health & Human Services presented **Reece Jensen** of Sargent with an "Outstanding Water Operator Award." The award was presented at the 40th Annual Rural Water Association banquet held March 13, 2018.

Russell Topp Award. **Paul Benitz** of Rural Water District #2 was awarded the "Russell Topp" award by the Nebraska Rural Water Association. The Richardson Rural Water District #2 serves southeastern Nebraska, including the villages of Salem, Verdon and soon to be supplying the Village of Barada.

Best Tasting Water Competition. **Clay Center** was selected as the "best tasting water" in Nebraska at the Annual Nebraska Rural Water Conference. Utility Superintendent Kevin Thompson received the award on behalf of the city water system. A panel of judges chose Clay Center's water over the other 14 systems that provided water samples for the competition. The judges were Cope Clark, Rita Shea, Ken Deason and Anthony Fitzgerald. By winning this competition, Clay Center is qualified to enter the National Rural Water competition in Washington, D.C. Congratulations, Clay Center!

Poster Contest Winners. Check out the winning posters in the Children's Poster Contest held during the Joint AWWA/NWEA/APWA Fall Conference. There were 75 posters on display and 45 conference attendees submitted a voting ballot for their top three choices. More information

and pictures can be found at the AWWA website at <http://awwaneb.org/words/2017/02/postercontest/>. Congratulations to the winners!

Do you, your department or facility have something to crow about? Received an award, had an article written highlighting an event or person? Have a project worthy of acknowledgement in the *Utilities Section Newsletter*?

If so, please send your information to any of the League/Utilities staff so we can share your excitement or pride of an award,

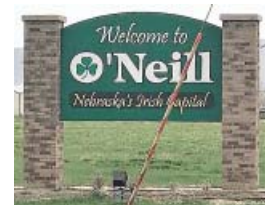


noted article or project with other members. Too often we read about negative news in our local newspaper, but the positive should be celebrated, embraced and shared. Optimism can be contagious and others may find positive ways to use your success to enhance a project or event in their municipality, department or facility.

"Just For Fun" Answers

- A-1.** Four (McCook, McCool Junction, McGrew and McLean). *Reference: 2017 Nebraska Directory of Municipal Officials*
- A-2.** Grand Island and Lincoln.
- A-3.** Greeley (33.84%), Halsey (30.71%), Barneston (29.83%), Primrose (28.19%) and Bingham (26.28%). Only Crookston, which came in 6th, had more than 25% of the population Irish. *Reference: www.zipaltas.com*
- A-4.** No, Nebraska is not one of them. Montana, Iowa, Pennsylvania, Vermont, New Hampshire, Maine, Massachusetts, Connecticut and Rhode Island are the most Irish states in the United States with over 17 percent Irish population. *Reference: https://www.irishcentral.com/news/nine-us-states-have-more-irish-percent-age-population-than-any-otherscan-you-name-them-224766292-237778741*

- A-5.** Primrose has had a Dublin Cemetery (north of town) since 1880 (138 years).
- A-6.** O'Neill. In 1969, it was proclaimed the Irish Capital of Nebraska by the Governor. O'Neill is the county seat of Holt County. The city was founded by General John O'Neill, a native of Ireland and a veteran of the American Civil War. *Reference: en.wikipedia.org*



Training calendar

Visit our website at www.lonm.org
for a complete list of workshops and conferences.

July

July 12..... Water Operator Training Workshop Fire Hall, Ogallala

August

Aug. 7..... Water Operator Training Workshop McCook

Aug. 8..... Water Operator Training Workshop Superior

Aug. 9..... Water Operator Training Workshop Crete

Aug. 22..... Backflow Workshop Fire Hall, Wayne

Aug. 23..... Backflow Workshop BPW Building, Beatrice

Aug. 29..... Backflow Workshop Grand Island

Aug. 30..... Backflow Workshop Fire Hall, Ogallala



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