



Cindy Gresham

Compiled by Rebecca Wilhelm

Regional Rewards

With WQA Aquatech USA recently wrapping up in Las Vegas, Rebecca Wilhelm, assistant editor of Water Quality Products, spoke with Florida Water Quality Association (FWQA) President Cindy Gresham about the FWQA Annual Convention and the unique opportunities provided by regional water quality associations and tradeshows.

Rebecca Wilhelm: How does a regional association benefit its members in ways that larger groups cannot?

Cindy Gresham: I think with the fewer number of people we have compared with the national [show], our members are more inclined to talk and to ask questions. They tend to know people that are there so they interface much easier. In the large, national group they are kind of lost in the crowd. That is definitely a benefit: the ease of communicating, not only with board members but with guest speakers that we bring in—it makes it very comfortable for people to talk and ask questions.

Wilhelm: What unique opportunities for industry involvement and networking do regional associations provide?

Gresham: Unique opportunities would really be for dealers to talk to manufacturers' reps that normally they would never get to talk to, and also the education. A lot of these folks are not able to go to the national [show] because of location. If they are small dealerships, they can't afford a trip like that. So we kind of bring the big show and knock it down a few steps so that they can be a part of it.

We always have a great golf tournament, which is a tremendous opportunity for people get to know some other OEMs and dealers in a nonthreatening format and enjoy a great afternoon with people who are in the same business. Every once in awhile a business topic comes up, and you can glean information just by listening to a conversation with other professionals talking about what is going on in their companies.

Wilhelm: What kind of relevant information do you provide to your members?

Gresham: The information that we are giving is to have real people who that can give them the information. We set up a venue where they can come and find out answers to questions they might have—through vendors at the tradeshow and our educational seminars. We have one during our annual show and we also have a small education session. Previously, we have always had those educational sessions in one day.

This coming fall, we are going to have two days: one on the east coast of Florida and one on the west coast. They will be a day apart for the vendors that come to travel to the second location. We are hoping to attract some people, especially from the east side of the state who can't always get to the west side of the state.

Wilhelm: What will be the focus of this year's FWQA convention?

Gresham: This year, we are really trying a couple different things. At the beginning of the year we endorsed a collection agency, TechCollect. They offered [members] a discount to use their services for collections. We have been trying to set up some partnerships with companies like that.

We have a representative coming from the insurance industry who will give a seminar. We are specifically targeting our members who do not have healthcare coverage. We are just endorsing this particular company, and they have said that a FWQA member will not be refused insurance. With the dealers in our area, many of them are very

small dealerships, and they can't just call anybody to get healthcare coverage. We are working with our members diligently this year in that arena.

We are also taping members' commercials. FWQA is going to pay for the taping and production of a commercial, and we will have the DVD available for our members to rent. They can take it to their local cable company and they will have a commercial that they only have to pay to run—they don't have to pay to create the commercial.

Those are the three major things we are trying to do this year to help our members. We are using this to draw in more members, but also have something that makes their membership mean something other than just paying us for something they can't see.

Wilhelm: What challenges or struggles are FWQA members currently facing?

Gresham: The biggest struggle that they are having right now is the slowdown of the economy. The building industry has come to a screeching halt in Florida, and the biggest growth a lot of these dealers had was from the new construction. I think last year was one of the first years that Florida actually had more people moving out than moving in. *wqp*

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CALENDAR

May

21-23 Aquatech China
Shanghai Exhibition Centre
Shanghai, China
tel: +86 21 62 70 5336/4474
www.aquatechtrade.com

June

5-7 Florida WQA Convention
Caribe Royale Resort
Orlando, FL
tel: 863.644.6622
www.fwqa.com

8-12 AWWA Annual Conference & Exposition
Georgia World Congress Center
Atlanta, GA
tel: 303.794.7711
www.awwa.org

19-20 Indiana WQA Convention
Holiday Inn at the Pyramids
Indianapolis, IN
tel: 574.522.4159
www.iwqa.org

July

9-12 Texas WQA Annual Convention
San Antonio's Menger Hotel
San Antonio, TX
tel: 361.573.6707
www.twqa.org

14-17 AMTA/SEDA Joint Conference & Exposition
Naples Grande Resort & Club
Naples, FL
tel: 772.463.0820
www.membranes-amta.org

26-28 53rd South Atlantic Well Drillers Jubilee
Myrtle Beach Convention Center
Myrtle Beach, SC
tel: 540.740.3329
www.well-drillers.com

For a complete list of industry events, go to www.wqpmag.com.

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