

Compiled by Kate Cline

Change for the Better

The industry is gearing up for the 2016 WQA Convention & Exposition, taking place March 14 to 17 in Nashville, Tenn. In advance of the show, WQP Managing Editor Kate Cline checked in with Water Quality Assn. President Bret Tangley to find out more about what to expect at this year's convention, as well as the association's goals and initiatives for 2016.

KATE CLINE: *What issues will WQA focus on in 2016?*

BRET TANGLEY: WQA will be focusing primarily on four core issues in 2016.

In the area of regulatory advocacy, we are taking a more proactive approach toward federal government relations by partnering with the Gephardt Group, led by former House Democratic Leader Dick Gephardt, to monitor and address the opportunities and threats to [point-of-use/point-of-entry] water treatment that may arise nationally on Capitol Hill.

We will be working on enhancing the infrastructure and expanding the business offerings of our product certification program.

On the professional certification and training side, we are making vital improvements [to] our Modular Education Program to make it easier for professionals to get certified.

In terms of consumer and industry relevance, we are strengthening our capability to more quickly, proactively and comprehensively react when water quality issues make national news.

CLINE: *Is WQA planning a trip to Washington, D.C., this year to meet with legislators? Why is it important for WQA staff and members to meet with their legislators?*

TANGLEY: Yes, we are. WQA will be coordinating legislative visits to select state houses and fly-in trips to Washington, D.C., in spring 2016. It is all part of an outreach effort to increase our industry's presence with government officials to promote the viability of our members [and] their services, products and science as real solutions to our nation's water problems.

It is absolutely critical for WQA staff, and even

more importantly, its members, to meet with national, state, regional, and local lawmakers and regulators. Water supply and water quality issues are under greater public scrutiny than ever before, especially with water scarcity issues in the West. In most states, the industry serves customers (constituents) in nearly every electoral district. Customers are voters; [WQA members] also pay taxes as a business and employ local residents, who also vote.

CLINE: *How do you believe restructuring the WQA volunteer committees will benefit the association and its members?*

TANGLEY: The changes will affect the association and its members tremendously, I feel, because the committee restructuring now matches the organizational structure, allowing for greater alignment and efficiency. The recent restructuring helped us re-implement some key volunteer management principles established in 2003, and will also provide a consistent process and clearer direction from board and staff to streamline the work of our volunteers.

We also wanted to provide our members with greater opportunities for engagement to get more folks involved with WQA. From a governance standpoint, a larger pool of volunteers also helps us build "farm teams" for future committee chairs and board members. To facilitate that opportunity, we issued an open call for volunteers for the first time in recent memory.

CLINE: *What features can attendees look forward to at the 2016 WQA Convention & Exposition?*

TANGLEY: We are very excited to announce that WQA is "going back to its roots" by reassuming exclusive control of our annual convention and exposition.

New classroom setups and technologies will create small group experiences and make it more conducive to asking questions and making interpersonal connections. Also, the trade show hours have been extended to allow more time for attendees and exhibitors to connect.

During the Opening General Session, keynote speaker Chester Elton will explain how managers at any level can build a productive work group culture [in which] employees commit to the culture and give that extra push of effort to drive real results.

We will have a facility tour for those interested in large-scale commercial water treatment. [Attendees] will have the opportunity to take a behind-the-scenes tour of Bridgestone Arena, home to the Nashville Predators of the National Hockey League. The arena's vice president of facility operations will explain the processes involved in making ice for the rink and show our group around the ice plant. **WQP**

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Bret Tangley