

A CLOSER LOOK INTO THE NY RURAL WATER ASSOCIATION'S APPRENTICE PROGRAM

By Joe Redmond

In 2019, the New York Rural Water Association was awarded a grant through NRWA to start a Water/Wastewater Apprenticeship Training Program. Our staff worked diligently from 2016-2019 to get the program approved by the NYS Department of Labor and the NYS Department of Education. Topics include operation of water and wastewater treatment facilities, math, collection and distribution systems, safety, confined space, hazardous materials handling, hazard communication, aeration, chemistry, laboratory, emergency response plans and standard operating procedures, record keeping and rules and regulations and many other important subjects. Currently, we are working to become certified to teach CPR and First Aid.

The NYRWA had an excellent turnout for the first group of apprentices. Unfortunately, Covid greatly delayed the first year of classes for 2020. In 2021, we all worked tirelessly to make up for lost classroom time. Nothing compares to the person-to-person interactions or system tours during our training classes.

Apprentices get to see systems that may be very different from where they are currently working. They enjoy networking with other apprentices and learning from each other while on facility tours or during breaks in classroom training. Some of our wastewater apprentices have already been to Morrisville and have great ideas on how to prepare those who will be going soon.

The class structure is similar to the continuing education classes that they will need to renew their certifications, so they get a good idea of what will be required in the future. We, as instructors, apply each topic to real world scenarios with input from the apprentice and instructor. This is very beneficial and makes the learning process fun. By joining the apprentice program, you will be an overall better Operations Specialist by gaining knowledge about several types of treatment plants as well as seeing them in operation. We have a good time and the bonds we make can last long into the future. On occasion, apprentices will call and ask questions during their workday. We are always here to help. Class sizes are typically 1- 5 people, but we combine groups for a larger audience for classes such as the OSHA 10 Hour Course. Small class size seems to work best for covering material and engaging in real-world dialog as well as setting class dates that work for everyone.

The New York Rural Water Association will continue to offer the apprentice program for 2022 and hopefully beyond. If anyone is interested in more information about this great program, please contact Kevin Maine or myself at (518) 828-3155. We would be happy to meet with you and your elected officials to go over all the materials.

Congratulations to the apprentices who have completed or are about to finish this first round of apprentice training. You all have done an outstanding job and I have enjoyed meeting and working with all of you. 💧💧



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