



ACCENTUATE THE POSITIVE

Jamie Herman | CEO

As it was for many of you, 2020 was a very difficult year for my family and I, as well as our Rural Water family. We lost loved ones to both Covid-19 and non-Covid-19 issues, we struggled with working from home, separation from friends and family, learning the new “normal” and all the issues that brought. I could go on and on about the negatives. A good friend and mentor of mine passed recently. The family invited me to the “family only” funeral, which I was honored to attend. During the service it dawned on me, many things happened in 2020 to be grateful for, so I choose to accentuate the positive.

In 2020 we celebrated the election of NYRWA Board President, John O’Connell, as the National Rural Water Association (NRWA) Executive Vice President, unfortunately to little fanfare. John is now one (2) year term away from becoming Board President of the NRWA, a huge accomplishment! We congratulate John on his election and say thank you for your dedicated service to Rural Water! Our Board welcomed new member Bill Pickett from Brownville who has been a long-time mainstay at NYRWA events over the years. We look forward to having Bill provide direction in steering this association. Many difficult decisions needed to be made in 2020. Our experienced, dedicated Board lead the way with calm, collective decision making that allowed NYRWA to be successful in our mission under difficult circumstances.

We celebrated the retirement of two of our long serving staff members. Circuit Rider Doug Smorol, and Office Manager Valerie Ogden both retired in 2020. Doug and Valerie were so very important to this association, they provided leadership to many of our less experienced staff (including myself) and served the needs of our members with dedication and commitment for over 20 years. While their departure left a huge void, we congratulate them on their retirements and we look forward to celebrating the “next chapter” with them, and we sincerely thank Doug and Valerie for a job and career that each and every day provided our members with...Quality on Tap!

NYRWA welcomed new programs and new “family members” in 2020. We welcomed Administrative Assistant Kim Bennett, Apprenticeship Trainer Joe Redmond, Circuit Rider Steve Freeman, and State TA Provider Nate Wissenbach. Each of our new staff members have been an easy fit with our existing staff and have provided the same high level of service their predecessors established in years past. We look forward to many mutually beneficial years of service and thank each of them for their service

to our membership. Our Apprenticeship Manager, Kevin Maine, was promoted to Deputy Director. Kevin will continue with our Apprenticeship Program but will also assist with administrative activities for the association. Congratulations Kevin!

Now if you indulge me for a bit of a pride moment. My father used to say, “Jamie, there are two types of people in this world, people who make excuses and people who make things happen, always be the latter”. Well, let me tell you, our long-time staff members made it happen, and I couldn’t be any more proud of them. When faced with challenges, they never once said we can’t do this or that. Time after time they found solutions to assist our system members and to promote our associate members. Whether it was learning the web-based training world, canceling and rescheduling in person training, securing and delivering face masks and other PPE or working to provide the highest level of service possible to our system and associate members, these dedicated NYRWA staff members answered the bell every single time. Thank you one and all for a job very well done, it did not go unnoticed!

We also extend our gratitude to NYWARN and NYSAWWA who worked collaboratively with NYRWA and NYWEA, as well as our partners in the regulatory sector to secure face masks through FEMA. The efforts of all involved allowed water and wastewater operators in NYS to receive much needed PPE to provide a safe work environment for their employees. It seems like a lifetime ago, but at this point I recall it was nearly impossible to find face masks. This joint effort provided relief for ALL systems in our state. NYWARN took on this effort for all water and wastewater utilities, not just their members. If your system is not a NYWARN member I think you need to ask yourself why? For more information go to www.nywarn.org.

Most importantly, we are grateful to all the water and wastewater operators across this great state. You are to be commended! Finally, you were recognized as Essential Service Providers, and your communities benefited, as always, from your dedication to our industry. Many of you faced personal challenges and loss, yet you remained committed to the task at hand in protecting public health, and proved again and again that life as we know it would cease to exist without the work you do each and every day. The very definition of Quality on Tap! Sincerely, thank you for your service, especially during what was a very difficult year. From all of us here at NYRWA, a tip of the cap and >>>

our gratitude for a job very well done!

Last, but certainly not least, a heartfelt Thank You to our Associate Members for your continued support of this association and the needs of our system members. I can only assume that 2020 was a brutal year for at least some of our valued Associate Members. While we anticipated a reduction in support, we heard crickets, not one complaint, just unwavering support of this association and our members. They also answered the call to provide both web-based and in-person classroom training, without hesitation, without complaint. Sincerely, thank you one and all for your support and commitment! So I ask, when we

return to some sense of normal, PLEASE consider our Associate Members when you begin purchasing goods and services. Their contact information is available in our Annual Directory, which all system members receive. Here's wishing all of our Associate Members a beneficial and productive year ahead!

It is easy to get stuck in a rut and let all the negative things in our lives drag us down. Please take a moment now and again to look around, see the many blessings we all have right in front of us, and accentuate the positives in our personal and professional lives. Be kind to one another, you never know how your kindness might change a life of those we meet. 💧💧