

# URBAN WATER INSTITUTE NEWSLETTER



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## Year-End Message From Urban Water Institute

### A Season of Giving – A Season of Light

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Charles Dickens opened his book *A Tale of Two Cities*, in 1859, set in London and Paris, with the famous words: “It was the best of times, it was the worst of times, it was the age of wisdom, it was the age of foolishness, it was the epoch of belief, it was the epoch of incredulity, it was the season of Light, it was the season of Darkness, it was the spring of hope, it was the winter of despair...”

For months, those words rambled in our heads and the contrast of ‘best’ and ‘worst’ often peppered UWI conversations, during meetings and planning sessions. Nevertheless, in humble reflection we can report that collectively the UWI board always ended our meetings, activities and events focused on the season of Light, despite the seductiveness of the season of Darkness. We were guided by a strong resolve to continue to focus on our mission, support one another, and bring our water industry members together in a way that had not been experienced in the recent past. Despite the challenges over the past nine months we always held a belief that ‘We’ve got this!’.

December 2020: rounding the ninth month as we slide out of this year into 2021. While our businesses adapted to incorporate virtual communication techniques, we never lost sight of our primary goal of building relationships in the water industry. Not being able to see one another in person, experience the friendly handshake or gentle hug made it harder to maintain existing relationships and welcome new ones. Instead of convening our two annual in-person conferences, we developed poignant water industry conversations with industry leaders using zoom. When we close out December, we will have completed planning for our first all virtual conference spanning 2 days to be held during the time in February when we previously met in Palm Springs. Watch for announcements of this exciting, interactive event.

Adding monthly newsletters and expanding our virtual productions has been laborious – but honestly it has been a labor of love. We are growing as an organization, attracting new viewers, but staying true to our brand. We have not shied away from tackling the hard stuff or asking and answering the tough questions. We have designed interactions, even virtually, to raise up different views and welcome new voices into the complex, sometimes cantankerous water policy dialogue.

But it did not take too long to remember that we are not just workers in the water industry. We are members of families, communities, churches, wine clubs, golf groups, book clubs, feed the hungry programs, chambers of commerce and other civic organizations. The COVID pandemic required us to ‘shelter in place’ for months; and when we had to venture outside our homes, wear protective covering and practice social distancing. So now, for many of us, our work lives have visibly spilled into our personal lives, leaving little separation of these two demanding worlds. The kitchen table has become our workspace; it houses our computers, our notes, our water bottle, our half-eaten sandwich, our kid’s drawing of ... (see page two for more)



## Year-End Message From Urban Water Institute (continued)

(from page one) ... us working at the table, our to-do list. It has become the place we connect with the outside world, toss a tasty treat to our dog and share a meal with our family. UWI has intruded into this space and know first-hand how challenging and at times frustrating that has been, especially for our families.

# #InThisTogether

So much has been written about 2020 and the pandemic, but other than birth and death, we can't think of a singular human experience that has touched all of us this way. The personal pain, coupled with the professional work-arounds have bound us together in a moment of time and it has no regard for any of the real or perceived divisions that separate us on a daily basis. The universe, in one fell swoop, has made us equal in a way we never could.

"We give thanks." Is it odd to find thankfulness in the midst of death, illness, economic turmoil...fear? Actually, we think it is the most natural of reactions – for it speaks of resiliency and the deep inborn knowledge that we will not always be faced with this plague, but the memory of it can be a blessing. We saw the best and worst of our nature - but mainly the best - in a million small and large acts. And for this, we give thanks. This grit is embodied in our determination to serve the public – delivering safe, affordable water to all our customers, no matter what.

Our association has also been operating from kitchen tables over the past nine months. Our administrative staff, Stacy Davis and Ashley Blodgett, have worked unceasingly to assist us in reworking our conference business model – which is our main source of income. Our treasurer, John Thornton, has carefully shepherded our finances, navigating this time with care and prudence; our Board, led by former President Greg Quist and current President John Rossi have spent many hours discussing and analyzing what information our members need and how best to deliver it. UWI Secretary Andree Johnson prepared and administered multiple virtual webinars delivering it to you. Co-founder Kevin Hunt stepped in to remind us of our beginnings, and represent the voice of wisdom that has sustained us. Long time board member Mary Aileen Matheis did not miss a beat, taking on assignments, lining up presenters and sharing the work. Joyce Gwidt was a key negotiator with hotel vendors, helping to postpone our reservation for in-person events, without costly fees. Behind the scenes the past Presidents, and members of the Executive Committee have devoted their time and talent to keep our mission and vision in sight.

And you came. You came to the webinars in numbers that were almost the same as our conferences. You reached out to colleagues and suggested they attend also. You let us know that you value the information you and we provide – and that you understand that the Institute is a volunteer run non-profit that isn't beholden to any one view or organization.

The UWI leadership conducted a strategic planning workshop using zoom in October. In that workshop we reaffirmed our most basic goals and updated a couple to reflect current times. As we reach the nine-month mark at the end of 2020 – we recognize that signals a rebirth. These strategic goals will be our guideposts as we re-up our commitment to you to build a better water community together.

Peace and blessings for this holiday season.



### UWI Strategic Goals 2020

- Goal 1: To facilitate an exchange of ideas to inform Western water policy.
- Goal 2: Provide timely, thought-provoking programs featuring diverse views, perspectives, controversies, and outcomes.
- Goal 3: Foster enduring relationships to inspire an engaged water community.
- Goal 4: Create venues to exchange ideas with water policy makers.
- Goal 5: Welcome new voices, perspectives and ideas, to the water policy dialogue.
- Goal 6: Govern the Urban Water Institute with a board of directors that reflects the diversity of the water users throughout the state.

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