



INTRODUCING OUR WATER & WASTEWATER APPRENTICESHIP PROGRAM

Jamie Herman | CEO

One of the most discussed items in our industry over the past decade has been succession planning – how to get new people in our industry and how to encourage public officials to hire “trainees” in a timely manner. We realize our Apprenticeship Program will not be the end all to this issue, but we certainly contend that it is a major step in the right direction.

As most of you are aware, the Association has been working with the New York State Department of Labor for the past 2+ years on the development of this program. Our sincere thanks to our NYSDOL Apprenticeship Training Representative, who we will call Michael, for all his time and effort assisting us through the process! In August we were notified that our program was approved on a “Probationary” status, allowing us to begin enrolling apprentices. As we progress, we learn. One big positive of a registered program is that our industry will now be a represented career path for high school and college level students. The water and wastewater profession is now on the radar.

NYRWA President, John O’Connell, recently addressed a group of industry representatives and stated, “the development and startup of these apprenticeship programs allows our industry to become a marketed career path for high school and college graduates, as well as military veterans transitioning back to civilian life. Apprenticeship will afford communities a path to fully train new Operation Specialists knowing they will be competent and up to the challenge when long term employees retire”.

The following will be a general description of our Apprenticeship Program. We registered with (2) titles: 1) Water Systems Operation Specialist; and 2) Wastewater Systems Operation Specialist. Our programs are required by New York State to be 2 year programs, although we are allowed to credit apprentices with up to 1 year of credit based on complimentary service. The Apprenticeship Program requires the apprentice to complete 2,000 hours of on the job training (OJT) per year, and 144 hours of related instruction per year. The NYRWA serves as the Program Sponsor, water and wastewater systems would agree to serve as Signatories. NYRWA staff will walk the system and the apprentice through the process, ensuring documentation is correct and the related instruction courses are satisfactorily completed in a timely manner. This is referred to as a “time-based” type of process, allowing each apprentice to learn through the related instruction and then practically apply what has been learned while working through the

on the job training with a seasoned employee. The ultimate goal is to achieve successful certification for the Apprentice, but also to ensure the completed Apprentice is a well-rounded, competent Operation Specialist. Last, we would note: the apprenticeship program does NOT replace operator certification, it is intended to compliment the operator certification process and provide exceptional industry professionals upon completion.

The NYRWA is actively pursuing grants to attempt to offset costs for the water and wastewater systems. At a minimum, we are hoping to receive enough funding to significantly reduce or eliminate any costs associated with the related instruction. Further, there is an outside chance that funds will be available to offset a portion of the labor expense. No guarantee, we are trying every avenue possible, and we will keep you posted.

If you are interested in the Apprenticeship Program and would like a more thorough explanation, please contact Kevin Maine at Maine@nyruralwater.org, Valerie Ogden at Ogden@nyruralwater.org or Jamie Herman at Herman@nyruralwater.org.

The Board and Staff of the NYRWA would like to extend our deepest condolences to our friend and long time member, David Sullivan, on the passing of his wife, Rhonda. Rhonda and David fought a courageous battle against cancer together, their love and strength were an example for us all. You’re family David, and we are here for you!

To all our amazing members, until next time, keep up the great work, serve your customers needs, and continue to provide...

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