



## INTRODUCTION

Jonathon Barnes | Wastewater Trainer/Technician

Hello everyone, my name is Jonathon Barnes and I am the newest member of the New York Rural Water Association staff, and will be serving as our Wastewater Trainer/Technician.

I was born in Louisiana and moved up to NYS when I was just a boy. I was fortunate to be adopted by a wonderful family of 2 brothers and 4 sisters when I was 8 years old. Not only were my two sisters and I adopted, but there were other adopted children, 9 of us in the house total as permanent. Big I know! Along with other adopted children and biological children, we had many others come through our home as fostered children, over 100 in all. However, being from such a large family, I learned a lot about life and others lives along the way. We learned mostly through the "Hard Knocks Academy" but were guided by our parents very well to understand each other and the life that everyone comes from is different. We were taught not to judge a book by its cover but rather the content of a person's character. I have held this enormously close throughout my life and it has proven tried and true. It was a wonderful part of my life, one that I believe made me who I am today and guided me as a young man.

Working from an age of 14, because we all want money and things cost money, I started out stacking wood. I realized money was hard to come by and even harder to earn. I spent my years attending school, playing sports, hunting, fishing, thoroughly enjoying the outdoors with my family and working my tail off. My jobs consisted of waiting and bussing tables, cooking, running maple lines, and into construction once I was 16. Our family attended Bolivar Richburg School, where I played several sports, graduated with a regents diploma and also attended BOCES Vo-Tech. I attended SUNY Alfred State College for drafting/cad, walked onto the football team and was asked to join the swimming and diving team. I attended Alfred for 3.5 semesters to find out that maybe I wasn't ready for college yet, so, back to work I went trying to find my niche. From restaurants, to retail, to internet assistance, to bartending, to management and ultimately back to construction, I worked sometimes three jobs at a time. Very consuming, but also very necessary at times in life.

When my son was born in 2006, I began working one more than fulltime job doing industrial/residential concrete work including; foundations, floors, mezzanines, bridges, sidewalks, patios, stamped, stained, broom and polished finishes. Over the next 9 years, we all worked very hard and took great pride in our

work that took us all over NY, PA, and VT. Our crew became one of the best around. Sometimes working in hard and extreme weather conditions, a well-oiled machine. Throughout these years, I ultimately got my first taste of infrastructure by working within the village, town, and cities. I realized what really held these communities together and what kept everyone safe and... mostly happy (every community has a few of them). These men and women I met throughout were known as "operators". Not knowing what "operator" really meant at the time, I just enjoyed what they were providing and doing for their communities. When I decided to leave the concrete industry, I knew I wanted to be closer to home with my son, who ultimately needed me more than I "needed" any particular job. That's when I found not only a job, but a career path and a life long passion.

My home town community was in need of some help, so I applied at the Village of Bolivar where I was hired as a skilled laborer. Knowing the opportunities that were available with getting certified in the water and wastewater systems, I knew this was a chance to be with my boy and still really go beyond just helping people by actually protecting them, along with the environment. It was a win-win. Not initially knowing what was involved with getting certified, when I heard school, I was a little hesitant to go where I hadn't been in 10+ years. It was a decision that ultimately set my path forward and I became a Certified Code Official. I know! (everybody's favorite inspector). With everything involved with applying code enforcement, it prepared me for my next journey in becoming a certified water and wastewater operator. Realizing the opportunities that were available by attaining these certifications, I soon became the Deputy Superintendent of D.P.W. Working hard and earning my D, IIA-SW/GUI Filtration Plant and IIB-GW or SW with Filtration Avoidance Plant Water Certification and then earning my 2A Wastewater Certification. Working under the Superintendent, in a small municipality with little budget room and only 3 full-time employees, we undertook many improvements to the wastewater collection system which accommodates 400+ ourselves, including: rebuilding brick laid manholes, locating and uncovering manholes that haven't seen daylight since the 70's, locating and replacing broken/collapsed clay tile lines, jetting, video crawler inspections, smoke testing, and several policies for grease traps, illegal connections, proper connections and public education. At the WWTF we also updated and/or >>>

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repaired our pumps, aerobic digester blowers/lines, oxidation ditch triton props, clarifiers, and drying beds.

We also had NYRWA technicians helping us almost every step of the way and man did they make a difference in assistance. That assistance! That professional assistance that gives us the help and guidance we need as Operation Specialists when we've met a wall, have run out of ideas or just need a different professional eye/ear to look or listen. When the opportunity of the NYRWA Wastewater Trainer/Technician came about, I jumped on it. What better way to really drive my ability to reach out and really help others and protect them than to help the professionals that are engaged head on with the responsibility of the safety, efficiency and protection of people and the environment. The professionals who don't really do it for the riches, but for the satisfaction of providing their own communities with the very thing that I believe most take for granted. Those professionals that are conscientious. Those professionals that are out on Christmas day because there's a leak that has to be handled, when everyone else is home with their families enjoying the water that is just always there. Those professionals that are double checking their plants every day because they know something is not right and it needs that attention in order to continue efficiently and without catastrophe. Those professionals that aren't afraid to ask for

help. THOSE are my kind of people! I look forward to learning from all of you. We never stop learning, and I know each of you have valuable lessons to share. I have found many professionals here at NYRWA in my travels so far and I believe in my immediate and long-term future I will be able to provide such assistance and professionalism for all of you here in NYS! 💧💧

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