

A NEW BEGINNING

Steve Smuda | Program Specialist

Before we get started, I would like to introduce myself. My name is Steve Smuda, and I am pleased to serve as the NYRWA's new Program Specialist. In this new role I will be providing training, on-site technical assistance, and assisting with our Energy Efficiency Program. I grew up in Gowanda, in rural western New York and graduated from Gowanda High School in 1991. In 1995, I met my wife Jackie, and after working a couple of jobs that didn't seem to fit, we decided to move to North Carolina. While in North Carolina, my wife and I purchased our first house. The term "fixer upper" was an understatement, and along with hidden termite damage and plethora of other maintenance nightmares came the realization that well water was not always unlimited. This thought would not seem to affect me as much as it did later in life. I didn't think I would ever say it, but after having our first child, my wife and I decided that there was no place like Western NY, and moved back and purchased my wife's childhood home to be closer to family. The difference was the house was located in the Village of South Dayton and had a municipal water supply. For the first time in my life I lived somewhere with a public water supply.

My life back in New York began in 2002, when I was approached by the mayor, who explained that the Village was looking for a new public works superintendent. After discussing this with Jackie, I applied and was hired for the job. This was the best decision of my life, and so began my new passion...not just a job! Over the next fourteen years I would be tested and challenged like I had never been before. One of the requirements was that I acquire my water certification, so I learned about the village water supply, a well system with an iron and manganese removal filtration plant. Then I focused my attention to learning about the distribution system through the repair of water main breaks, hydrant repairs, and frozen household pipes. Not long after, I developed a hydrant flushing plan and was able to obtain results and success when we were finally able to get clear water out of the hydrants. After a great deal of study and practical learning, I received my Grade IIB, C, and D water certifications, which are active today. South Dayton also has an RBC sewer plant, which after taking the sewer operators course at SUNY Morrisville, I received my Grade 1 sewer certification as well. Please don't ask which role I prefer as both

are highly rewarding!

The most valuable asset water and wastewater systems possess are the operations specialists and employees who run and maintain them. The small system faces an issue that should be dealt with years before it becomes a problem. That issue is the loss of critical personnel from either retirement or attrition. These important employees, some of which have worked for their water or wastewater facilities for decades, take with them knowledge of the infrastructure, distribution system, and process control. And in many cases, this information has never been documented. It is critical for the long-term sustainability of our water and wastewater systems that we plan for the day we will no longer be there. Whether it be documenting the precise location of valves, mains, and other underground infrastructure through GIS mapping, updating of SOP's and Monitoring Plans, or just keeping a journal in the well house to document changes in process, this documentation will allow the operations specialist of tomorrow to concentrate on producing safe drinking water or protecting the environment at a wastewater plant.

The Village of South Dayton has offered me a great many opportunities, and as I have worked here over the past fourteen years they have allowed me to gather many experiences and beneficial knowledge which I carry with me today. I gained a great respect for the many people who have shared their knowledge and experience with me. The trial and error of the past has lead to a better managed, operated, and maintained water and wastewater system today. It is with great pleasure that I look forward to meeting and working with many of you now that I have moved on to a new challenge. As we move forward in growing and maintaining our respective water and wastewater systems, I hope my knowledge and experience of the past can help those of you who need assistance in the future. 💧💧💧