

# LEARN TO TEACH, TEACH TO LEARN

By Tim Tice, Projects Manager

Last week, we completed a conference in Florence that was attended by a good number of good people. Hearing from many attendees, the resounding compliment was “how friendly everyone is.” Now, I am certainly not taking away from our other conferences or short schools, yet this is what we at Oregon Association of Water Utilities, fortunately, get to deal with regularly.

It is the many times that we get out among the public workers and mix it up with conversation and field assistance learning from those who we stand in front of during classroom training. How we approach the classroom is an ever evolving process.

Just 15 years ago the format for the classroom was the overhead, which created more opportunities for the instructor to make side notes, something we call bunny trails, fill-ins or war stories. Following the overhead, a boatload of VHS tapes were developed for all of us to sit and watch a television screen. Then the use of PowerPoint was developed, using collages in a magical appearance of blending pictures, sounds and text to relay a message. Even this format included a method to take notes by those attendees, some of you writing every pronounced word as others doodle and still others nod off into dreamland.

Instructional classes have come a long way since the inception of the blackboard, chalk and eraser. The various approaches given in the class are designed to raise the retention rate on the subject being taught. One fine point that many are not aware of is how much we as instructors learn from those attendees. There is always good information to share.

Many times instructors are thought of as the go to person for information simply because of their experience, but that is not to say that someone in the audience hasn't the same, if not more experience than the instructor. Sharing of information has a little hurdle to get over; a stump that everyone should plow around, that being nervousness. We cannot sell ourselves short by not raising a hand and making a comment. To us, our conferences, short

schools and classes have always been an opportunity to network.

The topics are endless and some will agree that more is learned out in the halls during the break, but those discussions are the creation for the format for a new class. It is not known the potential that all of us can contribute to a class.

By attending an OAWU class, as an instructional building block for your continuing educational units, how much emphasis do you place on taking ownership of your education? As a manager, how much do you contribute to encouraging your personnel to stay up on the information to do the job correctly? A majority of students do not feel they play a key role in their own education.

The general attitude of the attendees is a direct reflection of the instructor, but that is not the only factor which determines the atmosphere of the class. An article “Influences of students”, state that four factors explained 77 percent of the various attitudes towards a class are instructor, course title, course implementation and the physical environment. However education is viewed, one thing is certain, “when we stop learning, we know a spade will be placed on our forehead”. With the vast amounts of information out there ready to be grasped, which direction do we go?

Networking has become an integral part of how we survive not only in the water and wastewater industry, but in every facet of our lives. Each of us plays a role in assisting those with whom we mingle in our daily lives. We need to make life easier for our industry brethren and holding back information is a contrarian deed.

We at Oregon Association of Water Utilities hope you choose a class that we offer, and continue to choose us as the road to your success. The success of the association goes hand in hand with the success of those in our industry. Working together for the betterment of the water and wastewater industry; through a higher level of understanding in technical, managerial or legislative arenas, is and should remain to be a primary objective. We learn a lot from those we teach and it is this networking that allows us to do what we do.

Thank you to all who assisted in making Florence a success this year. The events center staff, the catering crew, instructors and last but not least, the attendees. The best that life has to offer!