



Meet the 2020 Winners of TRWA's Awards of Excellence

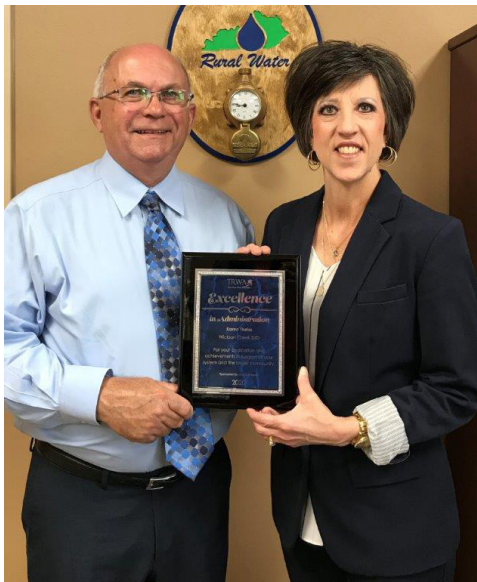
Compiled by Kelsey Copeland, Communications Specialist, Texas Rural Water Association

The TRWA Awards of Excellence program is designed to honor excellence within our membership of rural utilities across Texas. These awards are meant to recognize our member utilities and the shining stars who serve the Texas Water community. Though we typically honor our award winners during RuralWaterCon in March, the Texas Rural Water Association Board of Directors canceled our Annual Convention to protect the health and safety of attendees in response to the global Coronavirus pandemic. Although we were unable to recognize these deserving recipients during the event, we are proud to now be able to share their stories with you!

Excellence in Administration

Karen Theiss, Office Manager, Wickson Creek Special Utility District

Nominated by Kent Watson, General Manager, Wickson Creek Special Utility District



For 22 years Karen Theiss has had a desire to be the best of the best. She was hired in 1998 as an office employee at Wickson Creek Special Utility District and 10 years later was promoted to the office

manager position. She is an excellent office manager, a qualified public funds Investment officer, manages an office staff of 4, oversees the bookkeeping, accounts payable and receivable, payroll, and helps prepare an annual 5 million dollar budget.

Karen is always looking to expand her knowledge and improve the SUD. She regularly attends TRWA

conferences and graduated from the first TRWA Emerging Leaders Program. Karen has helped with numerous TRWA District meetings and provides insight to office managers that are just getting started in the industry. She makes sure that her employees and board members are treated well, and that the customers receive excellent customer service. She takes the time to get to know each of her employees and continually goes above and beyond to help others succeed. Congratulations to Karen on her well-deserved achievement! We also extend a special thank you to Live Oak Bank for sponsoring this award!

Excellence in Operations

Ronnie J Hoelscher, Manager/Operator, Violet Water Supply Corporation

Nominated by Linda Visor, Office Manager, Violet Water Supply Corporation

Ronnie J Hoelscher began working for Violet Water Supply Corporation in February 1968. His father, Jerome Hoelscher, was the first manager/operator of the system which was dedicated on April 18, 1968 and serviced approximately 100 families in the rural Violet, TX area. During Ronnie's tenure as manager/operator of the small water corporation, he accomplished an expansion of the system which now includes over 850 customers.



During his 52 years of service, Ronnie has made many changes and has facilitated expansions to meet the water needs of the rural communities. "At

the end of the day, it is important for our customers to trust that we are providing safe drinking water for families, the best service we can and are in compliance with all state regulations,” says Hoelscher. Ronnie is highly deserving of TRWA's attention and this significant award and recognition, congratulations!

Excellence in System Management

Daniel Heideman, General Manager, County Line Special Utility District

Nominated by Susan Browning, Office Manager, County Line Special Utility District



Daniel Heideman has been the manager of County Line SUD since 1981. In the 39 years since being hired, Daniel has operated the system with the utmost level of integrity and ethics. When Daniel was hired, the system had approximately 400 connections. Due to various reasons, neither the system's infrastructure nor the bookkeeping were being adequately cared for. There were no maps of the system and the list of customers was incomplete. Daniel took a notepad and pencil, then walked the entire system. He created the first map and created an accurate list of customers and addresses with their corresponding meter serial numbers and readings.

For 17 years, Daniel was the sole employee of County Line WSC. During that time, Daniel spearheaded several initiatives to expand and replace infrastructure in preparation for growth. In 1998, Daniel hired his first employee. County Line SUD now has eight employees with 3800 connections plus 1200 reserved accounts. When met with opposition to obtaining new water sources, Daniel has repeatedly stated “this is our duty as a water company. We have to make sure people have water in the future.” Daniel is very active within his community and has consistently gone above and

beyond his job duties with a kind heart, a good attitude and patience that few people possess. Special thank you to AIA Insurance Agency for sponsoring this award.

Small System Excellence

South Cleveland Water Supply Corporation



South Cleveland Water Supply Corporation, a system with 950 water connections, is committed to providing safe, high quality water services to their community, while maintaining a standard of excellence in customer service, regulatory compliance and environmental conservation. South Cleveland WSC's goals this past year were to improve the organization in all areas of performance, including the following noteworthy accomplishments:

- The system optimized services to their customers by improving communications and outreach along with updating their payment system. This has allowed customers to easily see account status, make payments and have access when they need it, resulting in fewer late payments and happier customers.
- With the help of an outside engineering firm, South Cleveland WSC put the finishing touches on a complete mapping and flow analysis of the water system. All lines, valves and hydrants are now mapped and will be continually updated. This will allow them to maintain all lines and valves more efficiently and project when and where to build their next well. They also updated all maintenance checklists for the system and equipment.
- They improved the offices and shop by cleaning, remodeling and organizing. These improvements included adding a shower, lockers and full kitchen for the staff. These changes have boosted employee morale and

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attendance. They also implemented an IRA for employees along with renewed health insurance.

- They provide lunch and have employee meetings to discuss issues such as safety, projects, rules, regulations or parts of the Tariff for better understanding. Sometimes talks are based on an item found on the “Ask Larry” section of the TRWA website. This has created a better understanding by all about the system’s needs, tasks, goals and objectives.
- Their Board of Directors meet monthly to provide oversight and direction to the organization. They have been supportive of the cost outlay and changes required to get the system to where it is today. Their success would not be possible without their Board members.

The impact has been felt at every level by the customers, the employees and the Board members. Congratulations to South Cleveland WSC for taking a proactive stance in meeting their future needs. We would like to thank CoBank for sponsoring this award!

Large System Excellence

Dripping Springs Water Supply Corporation



Dripping Springs Water Supply Corporation’s beginnings were humble, serving a few hundred water connections annually. Due to tremendous population and commercial growth in the last decade and a half, it now serves water to nearly 2,000 water connections every day. Faced with a roaring demand for water in western Hays County, Dripping Springs WSC took hold of the wheel, expanded their services and developed infrastructure to meet the thirsty needs of their existing and new members.

After decades of recording water meter data by hand and on foot, toting a clipboard house-to-house came to an abrupt halt with the investment and installation of an Automated Meter Reading (AMR) system. This technological advancement allowed staff to focus their time on further improving our system infrastructure including replacing waterlines, installing more efficient pumps, lowering water loss and making system software updates. Additionally, management committed funds to upgrade its system software to generate real-time daily water trends to management allowing operators to react and troubleshoot any water distribution matter; thereby further minimizing system downtime and water loss.

Dripping Springs WSC members can now sign up online and instantly connect to their water consumption used at their home or at their business. The investment in and combination of AMI and Customer Portals allows both members and staff for the first time to have an instant water conservation strategy to further minimize the loss of water and equally as importantly, bolster the availability of water.

Dripping Springs WSC continues to look to the future with additional system improvements including researching the benefits and feasibility of an Aquifer Storage and Recovery (ASR) well. These forward-thinking investments have proven Dripping Springs WSC is in the industry forefront of water conservation placing members ahead of profits. Congratulations to Dripping Springs WSC for their Large System Excellence award! Special thank you to MasterMeter for sponsoring this award.

Congratulations to the 2020 Awards of Excellence recipients, and a big thank you to everyone who helped spread the word about this program. Without you, these programs would not be possible. Stay tuned — the nomination period for the 2021 awards will open in August!



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