Hello Everyone!

I would like to introduce myself, Bruce Walker, as the new president of the Wisconsin Geothermal Association.

To tell you a little bit about myself, I started Wisconsin Well & Water Systems in 1994 after working for my father’s company for five years. In August of 2000, I expanded into drilling PVC wells. It was a natural progression to further expand into geothermal drilling from there as many of the procedures have so many similarities. In February, 2006, I travelled to Stillwater, OK to attend IGSHPA training at Oklahoma State University. Last year saw geothermal as approximately 80% of the footage that we drilled. I partner with other WGA members to complete the installations and find that this approach works well. I believe strongly in cooperation!

I have been a member of the WGA board for several years and at the board reorganizational meeting was elected president. Brian Urlaub, past-president has done a fantastic job and I wish to thank him for his efforts. Brian is still a member of the board and will remain very active in the organization.

It has certainly been an exciting time to be involved in the geothermal industry in Wisconsin - a lot has been happening!

The first major item is that we have hired an executive director. Her name is Cindy Denman of Brunner & Associates. I have come to know Cindy while on the board of the Wisconsin Water Well Association (WWWA). She has been the executive director of WWWA for some ten years and has been a dynamic influence in the growth that we have enjoyed there. I would like to thank Scott Hackel at the Energy Center of Wisconsin for all of the services that they have provided to us over the past couple of years. Welcome Cindy, we are glad to have you!

The next big change is that we are looking for another venue to host our conference in 2012. It will be held on March 7-8, so mark your calendar now. While the Mead Hotel in Wisconsin Rapids was a gracious host, it was apparent that we had outgrown their facility. To that end, we have entered into negotiations with a few different venues. Whichever direction we end up going, I expect to announce a decision soon.

Next, I established two committees, Bylaws and Convention. While the Convention Committee may be self-explanatory, why a Bylaws Committee? Well, there are several things in our bylaws that need to be updated. For instance, the notification for the Annual Meeting (or any special meeting) is set forth to be accomplished only by either face to face or by mail. These days, many people would prefer such notices to be sent by email, but our bylaws do not provide for that. The only way to change a bylaw is to do so at an annual or special meeting of the membership. Having a committee to review...
Knowledge and Networking Were Focus of Annual Conference

On March 9th and 10th, over 130 people from differing trades and backgrounds participated in the Wisconsin Geothermal Association’s annual conference at the Hotel Mead in Wisconsin Rapids. Eighteen speakers delivered cutting edge educational content to help attendees keep up with the latest industry developments. More than 20 exhibitors displayed examples of geothermal technology.

Annual Meeting

During the Annual Meeting portion of the conference, President Brian Urlaub gave a report on what the board had accomplished during the past year.

A great deal of effort was put toward increasing membership and as a result, the WGA gained 30 members since 2008. Brian stated he wants to see the WGA get to the next level. Items the board is currently working on include: website, membership discussion, having an executive director, committees and accreditation, training and testing. WGA could gain strength in several ways: end-users as members, partnering with more associations that are related in some way to geo, more involvement from the membership through specific committees.

During the past year, Leo Udee became an honorary lifetime member, the board created a new mission statement and changes were made to the website. The board also provided outreach through more training sessions and having booths at the Midwest Renewable Energy Fair, Better Buildings: Better Business Conference and the Wisconsin Ground Water Conference. Of course you can’t forget the networking that happens during the annual Geo ride.

There have been additions to the website to benefit contractors such as technical bulletins, an events page listing training and industry events, project spotlights, an “about us” tab and the IGHSPA logo has been added to the membership listing for qualified members.

Following the President’s report there was an election held for three seats on the WGA board in which current board terms were expiring. There was also a fourth seat open for a one-year term to fill a vacancy due to Mike Stevens resigning from the board. Mike took a job out-of-state and would not be able to complete his term. Seven people were on the ballot to fill the four open seats. The three highest vote getters were incumbents Leo Udee, Brian Urlaub and Jan Stranz. Filling the fourth one-year term was new-comer to the board, Jerry Brown. Jerry is the owner of Brown Heating & Air Conditioning in Deerfield, WI.

It was great to see so much interest in the board and hopefully the candidates who were not elected will be willing to lead in other ways.

New Officers

During breakfast on Wednesday, March 10, the WGA board met for a reorganizational meeting. The new officers are: President—Bruce Walker, Vice-President—Mark Flock, Secretary—Leo Udee and Treasurer—Dave Mitchell.
The 22nd Annual Midwest Renewable Energy Fair is taking place June 17, 18 & 19, 2011 about 10 miles east of Stevens Point in Custer, WI. Here is the perfect opportunity for you, as a WGA member, to help yourself and the organization. Each year WGA has a booth at the fair and members work shifts during the event. Please consider working a shift.

Over 20,000 people attend the MREA fair. There are booths, demonstrations, workshops, good food and great beer. Here is the best part – you will be able to do some free marketing of your own business while helping the association. You will meet people from all over Wisconsin, many from your area of business so bring your business cards.

There are two shifts each day. Friday and Saturday shifts are 10:00 AM to 2:30 PM and 2:30 PM to 7:00 PM. On Sunday the shifts are from 10:00 AM to 1:00 PM and then 1:00 PM to 5:00 PM. Ideally there would be 3 or 4 people per shift and some help with setting up on Friday and tearing down on Sunday.

This is a great opportunity – don’t miss it. WGA board member, Leo Udee, is coordinating the volunteers. You can contact Leo at 920-266-6470 or email leou@mepassociates.com.

The 6th Annual GEO Ride is just around the corner and you don’t want to miss it. Any open air vehicle is welcome (that includes a car or truck with at least one window rolled down).

The ride will be on Friday, June 3rd. The north and west riders will meet at 7:30 AM at Water Source Heating & Cooling on Hwy 93 in Eau Claire and then will ride to Muth Harley Davidson in Black River Falls to meet the rest of the group. The main ride will leave from Muth’s at 9 AM. If you want to join the ride mid-trip, you can meet the group for lunch at Hanson’s Holdup, about 5 miles west of Arcadia, WI on Hwy 95 at the top of Montana Ridge.

The ride will take us thru some of the most beautiful hill country this side of the Rockies, ending up at the traditional ice cream stop at Nelson, WI on Hwy 35 on the Mississippi River. We are planning on 72 degrees and sunny but we do recommend rain gear (especially for Brian Urlaub & Jim Cusack) for the annual 4 PM Twin Cities rain shower.
the entire set of bylaws will enable us to refine any other issues and present them to you in one organized fashion. In the meantime, I enacted a continuing resolution at the last meeting that allows for electronic notification until the Annual Meeting.

As a board member of the Wisconsin Water Well Association, I had the opportunity to travel to Washington DC in March and talk to several legislators about the benefits of geothermal. I was able to meet personally with Senators Ron Johnson and Herb Kohl and with Congressmen Tom Petri, Ron Kind and an aide to Representative Sean Duffy. Ron Kind was especially knowledgeable about geothermal to the point that he knew what a desuperheater was! He mentioned that he had spent time with some of our members and was impressed with the work they were doing.

Also in the past several weeks I met with Cathy Stepp, Wisconsin DNR Secretary and Nate Yahn, Policy Assistant in the Office of Governor Scott Walker. At each of these meetings geothermal was either a part of the dialogue or was the focal point. I want to make sure that as the political landscape changes, our industry is allowed to stand on its own. When an issue comes up that affects us, we want to be notified so that an accurate representation of geothermal is reflected. Also, when geothermal systems are designed and installed properly, people are happy, they save money and more people want it done, creating jobs.

I am also continuing to work for a closer association among organizations that have overlapping interests. Working closely with Wisconsin Well Water Association and Plumbing Heating Cooling Contractors Association is an example. I believe that you can accomplish much more in a cooperative environment.

Finally, take a look at the Mission Statement and Code of Ethics on our website. They really define us as an organization. If we take those words to heart, we cannot help but to grow. If you know of a company that is installing geothermal but is not a member, ask them to join WGA. The best thing for our industry is that everyone who is involved is knowledgeable and produces the very best product for the customer!

Regards,

Scott Niesen
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