

West Des Moines Water Wins “Best” in Iowa Competition

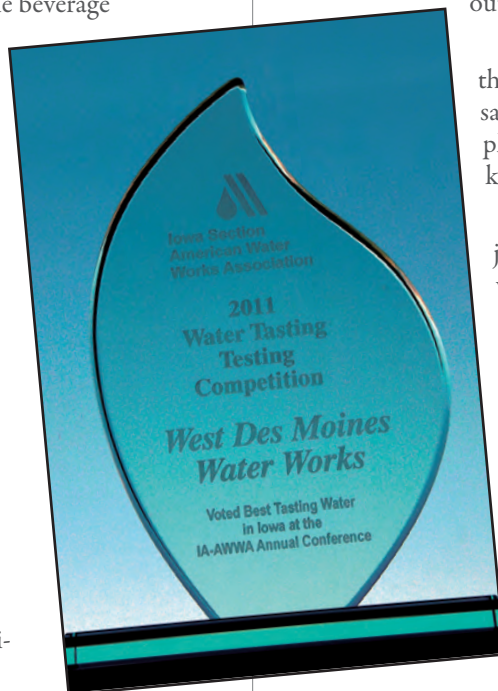
When Sonya Heitshusen, a reporter for WHO-TV, was asked at the last minute to fill in as a judge at a taste test contest, she said she was led to believe the beverage was something a little higher octane than tap water.

“I joked [with the other judges] that Dan Winters told me it was a wine judging contest—that’s how he convinced me to go in his place,” Heitshusen mused.

That bit of banter was the only interaction she had with the other judges in the annual best-tasting water contest sponsored by the Iowa section of the American Water Works Association. Ten Iowa cities entered the contest in October and West Des Moines won. The city will now participate in the national drinking water competition in July 2012 in Dallas.

“This is a very serious competition,” noted Mitch Pinkerton, water production manager. “You submit your entry in a glass gallon jar at the beginning of the day and you don’t know anything else until they announce the results that night.”

In this case, the contest sprang a bit of a leak when Heitshusen announced that West Des Moines won during her station’s 5 p.m. newscast. The story went out on the wire after that.



“People did seem to be surprised that West Des Moines won,” she said. “I told them that it was a completely blind test. We didn’t even know [which cities] were entered.”

Heitshusen added that the four judges were not allowed to confer with each other about which water they liked best. In fact, they were segregated from each other as they independently tasted and rated each room-temperature water sample on a scale of 1-10 in four categories—appearance, odor, aftertaste, and the feel of the water in the mouth.

“Once you finished a sample, it was taken away and they brought you the next,” she explained. “You could tell a definite difference between them. Some tasted minerally and a couple had a lot of chlorine.”

Best Tasting Water (continued on page 2)

Board of Trustees Announce Water Rate Adjustment for 2012

The Water Works Board of Trustees has approved a new water rate that will take effect January 1, 2012. Water rates have been adjusted from \$4.30 per 1,000 gallons of water consumed to \$4.45 per 1,000 gallons. The basic service charge for a residential water meter will increase by 30 cents to \$3.30 per month.

The adjustment is necessary to meet the projected 3½ percent increase in overall expenses to cover the costs of water treatment and distribution, purchased water, power, and system maintenance.

“We will never compromise when it comes to protecting the public health and providing our customers with clean water at the lowest possible cost,” said Jerry Stevens, general manager of West Des Moines Water Works. “Rates are adjusted only when absolutely necessary to keep our commitment

to the public. We are continually looking for ways to cut costs, without cutting corners, to maintain a quality, reliable water supply.”

For a typical West Des Moines family using 6,000 gallons of water, this rate adjustment means that the Municipal Services Bill will increase by \$1.20 per month.

Water rates are set by the Board of Trustees, who are appointed by the mayor and approved by the city council, to cover the full cost of water service. No revenue is received from taxes.

For additional information, please call our Customer Service Department at 515-222-3460, during regular business hours, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m., Monday through Friday. Please visit our website, www.wdmww.com, for complete rate information.

DID YOU KNOW



Every winter, the Water Works gets several calls about frozen pipes. If you leave for an extended period, we recommend setting your thermostat at no lower than 55 degrees to prevent pipes from bursting.

More people in the world have access to a cell phone than to a sanitary toilet.

The numbers shake out this way:

6.8 billion people,
4.6 billion wireless phones and
4.2 billion toilets.

Source: West Des Moines Water Works, World Watch Magazine

West Des Moines Wins “Best Water” Competition with First Entry

Best Tasting Water (continued from page 1)

Heitshusen admitted that she awarded no 10s, but she did give out some 9s. The scores provided by Heitshusen and the other judges were tabulated by AWWA officials and ranked to determine the winner.

“This contest has been going on for years, but West Des Moines had never entered. I thought it was time that we at least tried,” said Jerry Stevens, general manager of the Water Works.

West Des Moines taps water from several wells, some are deep and a few are shallow. The Water Works also buys water from Des Moines Water Works, which uses river water primarily. The water submitted for the contest was pure West Des Moines well water.

“At every level of our operation, quality water is our No. 1 objective. We meet or exceed all regulations for EPA and water quality standards, and now an independent taste test ranks it the best,” Stevens said, adding that the Water Works will have bragging rights for a year.

Taste is in the Mouth (and Nose) of the Drinker

A number of things impact how water tastes including the vessel from which you drink. Water tastes different in a Styrofoam cup than it does in a crystal water glass.

Water tastes different at room temperature than it does ice-cold because your taste buds are numbed at cold temperatures.

If you live in an old house with rusty pipes, they may impact the odor, color and taste of the water. On the other hand, if you live in a new house with new PEX pipes throughout, those too may impact the taste of your water. Once the pipes have a slight build-up of calcium carbonate, that taste often dissipates.

Finally, if you take certain kinds of medicines they can affect your taste buds and how you perceive the smell and taste of something as bland as water.

It's Been a Long Dry Summer and Fall; Your Trees May Be Thirsty

The dry weather that has plagued Iowa since July continued throughout most of the state this fall, leaving outdoor plantings dependent upon the hose, instead of the heavens, for life-sustaining moisture.

The weather pattern that dominated most of Iowa since July intensified throughout the fall, according to State Climatologist Harry Hillaker. The statewide average precipitation for the period July 1 through December 1, 2011, is the lowest since 1976 and ranks 15th lowest among the 139 years of available records.

By November, most people retire their garden tools, but in a dry year like 2011 it's been a good idea to keep the garden hose handy as long as possible. While shoot growth on trees and shrubs stops in late fall, roots continue to grow until the ground freezes, according to Richard Jauron, Iowa State University horticulturist. Most well-established trees and shrubs do not need to be watered late in the season, but one- to three-year-old plants are still establishing their root systems and need watering in dry conditions. Young evergreens are especially susceptible.

Of course in Iowa, the question of when the ground freezes varies widely from year to year. This year, while the uppermost inch of soil was frozen the first days of December, the layers below were not, said Hillaker.

Taking all this into consideration, it may not be too late to give those young trees a healthy drink of water.

Another plant that needs your help this time of year is your **Christmas tree**. Once you've brought home your healthy tree, just follow a few simple steps to keep it looking beautiful for up to four weeks: 1) **Remove an inch or more from the bottom** of the trunk; a fresh cut facilitates water uptake. 2) Place the tree away from heat. 3) Check the tree stand or



reservoir at least once a day and keep it full at all times. If you let it run dry, a seal of dried sap will form and the trunk will no longer be able to absorb water.

Adding molasses, sugar, soft drinks, aspirin or commercial products to the water is not necessary. All the tree truly needs is water, and plenty of it.

WEST DES MOINES WATER WORKS 4200 Mills Civic Parkway 515-222-3460 fax 515-222-3378 www.wdmww.com
WATER TREATMENT AND DISTRIBUTION 1505 Railroad Avenue 515-222-3465 fax 515-222-3469 TDD 515-222-3334

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