

WDMWW GM Leads International Water Association

The leader of West Des Moines Water Works is now the leader of the industry's largest association.

Jerry Stevens, general manager of the Water Works, received the president's gavel at the **American Water Works Association (AWWA)** annual conference in Washington, D.C. this summer.

His election marks the first time in 57 years that an Iowan has led the national 130-year-old organization, considered to be the authoritative resource on safe water, with more than 60,000 members worldwide. The last Iowan to be president of AWWA was **Dale Maffitt**, after whom the Maffitt Reservoir is named.

"Water is necessary to sustain human life, and yet, those of us here in Iowa and throughout most of the United States, who have ample potable water, tend to take it for granted," stresses Stevens. "The water supply on Earth is the same now as it has always been. How we use it and take care of it is key to our lives and the future."

Tapping the Next Generation

Stevens sums up the mission of AWWA as working with local utilities and partners to "protect the public health." Topping his priority list for his tenure as president is recruiting the next generation of engineers, scientists, technologists and other pro-



Jerry Stevens receives AWWA presidential gavel from Joe Mantua, the 2010 president.

professionals to the water industry. He wants to stop the brain drain and tap the brain power of young people through mentoring, electronic communication and networking.

"One of the challenges for AWWA is to get new workers and professionals excited about joining the water industry," Stevens says. "AWWA needs to be

Stevens AWWA (continued on page 2)

Summer Water Main Replacements Improve Water Delivery

The West Des Moines Water Works has been steadily upgrading its water system in a number of ways to provide the best possible water to its customers. To ensure the aesthetic appeal of West Des Moines water, the board of trustees in 1995 committed to replacing the city's old unlined cast iron mains with new PVC plastic pipes. While the old mains, which date back 50 to 85 years, remain functional and perfectly safe for delivering water, they can on occasion cause water to look rusty.

"The discolored water is completely safe from a regulatory perspective, but not necessarily appetizing," says Jerry Stevens, general manager of the Water Works.

replacement (continued on page 2)



Kevin Trevislyan of the Water Works inspects the replacement progress on 13th Street between Ashworth Road and Pleasant Drive.

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West Des Moines water customers tallied their third-highest daily consumption ever on July 20, 2011, using a whopping 14.4 million gallons. It was the third straight day of 99-degree temps, and most of the water went right back into the ground for irrigation.

The highest daily usage recorded was 15.13 million gallons in June of 2006.

Source: West Des Moines Water Works

Focused on Attracting the Next Generation of Water Professionals

Stevens AWWA (continued from page 1)

relevant to young professionals and develop tools and strategies for communicating the importance and value of safe drinking water to the next generation.”

Building closer relationships with universities is one way to funnel new graduates and young professionals into the water industry as well as to involve professors and researchers. Stevens points out that he joined AWWA 36 years ago as a recent college grad at the urging of his mentor.

“My mentor provided a good example of what a general manager needs to be — involved in everything, aware of everything that goes on,” notes Stevens, a registered professional engineer. “Some of the most rewarding aspects of this job are working with the board of trustees to serve the needs of our customers, preparing for the future of a growing city and solving problems as they arise.”

Protecting the Public Health

Another priority for Stevens as president of AWWA is making sure that water utilities have access to low-cost financing in order to make improvements to their treatment plants and systems as they age or fall victim to natural disasters. He will continue promoting the Water Infrastructure Financing Innovations Authority, which would be analogous to a program in the transportation sector.

“Public health depends on water systems that can always deliver the highest quality water in the most adverse conditions, including blizzards, floods and tornadoes,” Stevens explains. “In West Des Moines, we have been fortunate in that we have the resources to make improvements, such as replacing old mains and adopting remote meter reading. Not all water works can afford to make necessary improvements to their infrastructure, especially those that have faced natural disasters.”

Stevens has been general manager of West Des Moines Water Works since 2004. A life-long Iowan, Stevens earned his bachelor’s degree in civil engineering from Iowa State University in 1974. He holds grade IV certifications for the operation of water treatment plants and distribution systems.

He received the **Fuller Award** in 2003, in commemoration of his engineering skill, diplomatic talent, constructive leadership and distinguished service to the water supply field.

At this year’s AWWA conference, **John Luther** (pictured right), former superintendent of the West Des Moines Water Treatment Plant, received the Fuller Award for his four decades of service.



2011 Marks 25 Mile Benchmark for Water Main Replacement

replacement (continued from page 1)

“Generally, we replace several blocks of old mains each year. In 2011, we reached the 25-mile benchmark in main replacement,” Stevens adds.

That amounts to more than 11 percent of the 220 miles of pipes operated by the Water Works. Priority is given to problem mains and those which are known to be causing discolored water.

Let Us Know

“We usually find out about problem mains when customers alert us to discoloration in their water,” Stevens says. “We ask that people please report any incident of rusty-colored water, so we

can determine if it is the result of rust from an older water main.”

This summer, upgrades were done in the following locations across the city:

- **13th St.** — Ashworth Rd. to Pleasant Dr.
- **Pleasant Dr.** — 13th St. to 16th St.
- **Center St. Pl.** — 17th St. to 19th St.

PVC pipes will eventually replace all of the unlined cast-iron water mains in the city.

Not all main replacements are a result of discolored water. The main on Pleasant Drive, for example, was replaced with a pipe twice the size of the former cast iron water main in order to increase water flow and improve fire-fighting capabilities.

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