



Scholars and Partners

BY ANGEL BANKS, SR/WA

An interview with Angela Deddish, SR/WA, and Madison Culp, RWP, recipients of RWIEF scholarships

The International Right of Way Association (IRWA) has long enjoyed stellar leadership and educational programming. Both have positioned the Association at the forefront of drawing professionals to the right of way industry and developing their skills. Add financial support to this mix, making professional development more accessible, and you have a winning combination to propel our industry's next generation up the ladder of career success. The Right of Way International Education Foundation (RWIEF) has funded many scholarship programs for IRWA courses. In this article, we are interviewing two scholarship recipients to hear their perspectives.

Angela Deddish, SR/WA, and her daughter Madison Culp, RWP, availed themselves of four RWIEF scholarship programs and each received IRWA Chapter 10's Ron and Cynde Barker Education Scholarship. They also share a close mother-daughter relationship. There is more industry history within this family as well. Angela's mother, Denise McHenry, started Indiana Acquisition, in 2000. This makes Angela a second-generation industry professional. Then Angela started her own company, Comprehensive Land Procurement LLC, in 2011. Madison came on board in September 2018, making Madison a third-generation industry professional. Cool stuff! Here are their insights.



What is it like to be a second- and third-generation right of way industry professional continuing the family business?

A: I felt fortunate to have had very personal training with established connections to the Indiana Department of Transportation, local agencies and utility companies. It can be difficult to familiarize yourself with policies and procedures for an industry discipline that does not typically offer formal training. Having someone to show you the ropes is vital. I have had the unique experience to be trained by and work with my mother, as well as train and work with my daughter, with almost a decade in between those experiences. Working with family comes with uncommon business and relationship challenges and benefits. All of us are independent and opinionated, but we are close and have great respect for each other.

M: I had big shoes to fill, and in the beginning, it was intimidating. But it came with the support of two strong-willed and intelligent professionals cheering me on. Now, with five years' experience under my belt, I could not imagine business any other way. Working alongside Angela, who holds the titles of Mother, Business Partner, Mentor, and Friend, has been challenging in the best ways possible. It has taught us how to use our familiarity with each other to our advantage and strengthened our personal relationship. The big question I ask myself now is, "Will I one day be working alongside one (or more) of my children?"

Tell us what RWIEF scholarships you received.

A: Forty for Forty Scholarship in 2018 and Leaders Light the Way Memorial Scholarship 1.0 in 2022.

M: 20/20 Vision Scholarship in 2020 and Leaders Light the Way Memorial Scholarship 2.0 in 2023.

What motivated you to apply?

A: The opportunity to take coursework and achieve certification with financial support. I admired the discipline and sense of accomplishment others in my Chapter spoke of when they shared their education journey.

M: The ability to invest in myself and obtain a certification without the financial burden. Seeing my mother awarded scholarships made it seem more reachable. Seeing the benefits they brought her solidified my desire to apply for a scholarship and achieve a certification.

Why was receiving a scholarship important to you?

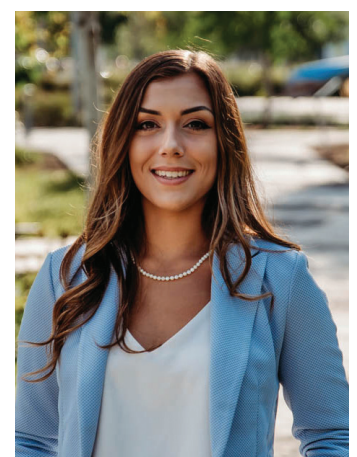
A: As a small two-person company, the cost of course registration and, in some cases, travel, along with time away from the office seemed overwhelming. Being funded for course registration gave me balance and motivation.

M: Being awarded a scholarship made me feel supported and valued. As a Young Professional, this was an invaluable feeling and played an instrumental role in me seeking an industry-specific formal education.

What certifications did you attain with the help of these funds?

A: RWA and RWP in 2019 and SR/WA Generalist in 2023.

M: RWA in 2021, RWP in 2022, and I am anticipating my SR/WA in the near future.





Do you feel scholarship funding is important to professional development? If so, why?

A: Absolutely! Most people I know did not seek secondary education to get into the right of way industry. They started elsewhere and found their way here. Having a formal education path in right of way speaks volumes in professional development. I find that people want to grow personally and professionally but many of those choices come down to time and money. If you can remove the financial aspect from that equation, taking courses seems more doable. We are also fortunate that Chapter 10 has its own scholarship program, which we have both benefited from. We were able to utilize that program between RWIEF scholarship opportunities.

M: I do! Acquiring knowledge through structured courses is crucial to professional development. Scholarship funding provides equal access to high-quality education, providing opportunities that might not have been feasible for all.

After this experience, what thoughts would you share with IRWA members considering application to a RWIEF scholarship program?

A: You are never too young or too old, too experienced, or inexperienced, to apply for a scholarship, take a course or achieve a certification. If you are fortunate enough to receive a RWIEF scholarship, be proud that others see something in you that makes you stand out and live up to that standard by taking advantage of the opportunity you've been given.

M: Utilize the scholarships, invest time in yourself and you will elevate your professional path. 🌟

How has this accomplishment impacted your career?

A: I have been an independent acquisition agent since 2001. It was very refreshing to showcase to clients and colleagues that even after two decades, I am still open to learning, growing and dedicated to the right of way industry.

M: As a Young Professional, having a designation speaks for my dedication to my career and industry.

Aside from the skillsets learned, what other benefits did you receive from attending scholarship-funded courses?

A: Networking with other right of way professionals and getting their feedback in relation to their specific discipline. Also, the sense of personal accomplishment was invaluable. I was also more confident in mentoring newer industry professionals and speaking publicly.

M: Personally, it provided a sense of community. It also equipped me with the tools to help lead Young Professionals and be an advocate for the industry.



Angel Banks is the right of way manager for the Metropolitan Sewerage District (MSD), a regional public sewer authority in Asheville, North Carolina. She created their right of way division in 1991, establishing policies/procedures for easements over 1,100 miles of sewer lines. Angel developed agreements with area municipalities allowing greenway uses over MSD's sewer easements. She joined IRWA in 1991 and served Carolina's Chapter 31, becoming Chapter president in 2004. From 2004, she served in Region 6's offices and was chair from 2007 to 2009. She worked with the IRWA Leadership Institute and was awarded the Region 6 Professional of the Year in 2013. Angel is now serving her fourth term as a trustee of the Right of Way International Education Foundation.