



Making Waves

It takes courage

BY JAKE FARRELL, SR/WA



It is hard to believe that we are six months into this fiscal year. Focus on the 2022-2023 budget is underway, and IEC Treasurer Fred Easton and his Finance Committee members are working hard with our CFO to put together an aggressive budget in alignment with our push for growth in membership and education.

The U.S. Infrastructure Bill is an opportunity for IRWA to position our education and membership opportunities to the industry and our current members. Our members are critical to the accomplishment of the work. We must also look beyond our skill sets and bring together like-minded associations. IRWA will be exploring the possibility of creating a coalition of associations in the infrastructure industry to align and discuss pressing topics affecting the work we do. This type of activity will truly face our Association outwards and bring IRWA to the table of pressing topics impacting the infrastructure community.



It takes courage to be successful.

- T.D. Jakes

The IEC Leadership Videos continue to focus our message around our Strategic Objectives. November and December highlighted the topic of membership, and January will focus on the topic of education. Membership and education are the two main sources of income to IRWA, each making up almost half of total income for the Association.

Over the past several years, IRWA's leadership has examined and assessed the title of our senior staff leader. Two months ago, the IEC promoted Tim Drennan, CAE, to the role of executive director. In recent months, we have been working with Tim and other senior staff leaders at headquarters to align the goals of IRWA volunteer leaders with the implementation efforts of our staff. This structure works well for the Association. The International President serves as the chief elected officer of the Association and works alongside the executive director to operate the business of IRWA. We believe the title of chief executive officer is not the right fit for IRWA at this time, and the best course of action is to amend the Bylaws of the Association to remove the title of chief executive officer and replace it with executive director.

In parallel paths, it is imperative that the Association has a guiding document. The work our staff and leadership has accomplished over the past few months has shown us that we should revitalize and modernize our Corporate Operating Guide. This document is currently being updated and combined with my thoughts on Board-Staff Linkage and Governance Process as well as the IRWA Policies and Procedures. The new Corporate Operating Guide document will be ready for discussion in first quarter of this year.

In addition, I am very pleased to announce the efforts the Membership and Marketing Committee have been working on. We have set our objectives around three themes:

1. **Student Outreach.** We will focus our efforts towards speaking opportunities at high schools to bring awareness to a career. We will also market to colleges by direct marketing, alignments and agreements with real estate fraternities as well as job fairs.
2. **Digital Media.** We will continue to focus on modernizing the IRWA website for a better user experience. We will also build a stronger foundation with social media. We plan to engage ambassadors comprised of staff, leadership and members to push our messages beyond our current reach. This will serve in expanding the Association's influence and push IRWA's brand.
3. **Partnering.** Education partnering will broaden the scope of learning for our members. We will utilize the expertise of the Right of Way Consultant Council as well as the knowledge and experience they bring to IRWA. We plan to invigorate and recommence the Federal Agency Update, giving balance to the creators of the work and those who are hired to help execute the work. We will also be working to lay the foundation for a "infrastructure coalition" to bring together like-minded associations to discuss and share ideas on projects and how to better serve the communities we work in.

In June of last year, I challenged all of us to grow our membership. We have untapped areas of members just waiting for us to engage them. In October, IRWA realized our largest growth in membership in the previous 22 months. 84 new members joined in October 2021. We look forward to continuing that trend, and I am grateful for the work all of you have put into bringing new members to IRWA.

Every week, I try to give the leadership of the Association some advice and thought-provoking words for them to use however they wish. I challenge myself every day to question who I am and how I lead at home with my family, at the office with my employees and in this amazing role with IRWA. As I was drafting this column, I was overcome with a message I wanted to share from T.D. Jakes:

"If you don't want to make waves, be mediocre, be normal and fit in. Dress like them, walk like them, act like them, eat like them. Go where they go, think like they think and do what they do. Then once you've neutralized your uniqueness... you no longer need courage. It takes courage to be different. It takes courage to be successful. It takes courage to win. People don't talk about people [who] don't win. If you win... they are going to talk about you. Do you have the courage?"

Thank you again for your trust in me to lead this great Association. I will continue to improve IRWA and its brand. I am always available if you have any questions or thoughts. 🌟