



THE LEGACY THAT IS IRWA

Cheers to a bright future

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Many members have found a place within the International Right of Way Association because it offers us the opportunity to grow our knowledge of the right of way industry and expand our circle of connections. Within this community, we learn to build our skills as infrastructure real estate professionals and become part of something bigger than ourselves and the singular roles of our jobs. Many IRWA members have been part of this community for years and for some, decades. Wonderful relationships and comradery are built over time spent together in the classroom, or at a conference or seminar where the leaders of our industry gather to share their time and experiences. Each IRWA member is part of our history, our reputation, and the legacy of education excellence and professionalism we pass on to future members and leaders.

As the legacy of the Association continues to grow with each passing year, investments are made by our members and our volunteers; they are what keep our Association thriving. The investments include funds raised through membership and course income, donations made to the education foundations and time spent managing the administrative duties of our Chapters and Regions. There are also the less tangible but equally important investments of the dedication our staff have to serving our members, the passion our members have for all things related to right of way, the desire senior members have to mentor and support new professionals and the generosity of our many volunteers to give so much of their precious time to the cause of making things better for those who come after — with no expectation of recognition or reward. These are the



investments made by many of our volunteer leaders that have kept us going through tough challenges and fuel our desire for continuous improvement. I've been thinking a lot about this legacy over the past few months as I conclude my time as a member of the International Executive Committee.

During the course of my time serving on the IEC, I have tried to find ways of ensuring that individual members and Chapter leaders can continue to influence the direction and vision of the Association. It has not always been an easy task — we have many Chapters, and I can say, in all seriousness, that no two are alike! Our field staff and Region leaders have done a tremendous job and worked very hard, especially this past year when public health restrictions made all our gatherings virtual, to ensure Chapter connections were maintained, and new lines of communication were opened to keep us all informed and engaged.

It's amazing to think about how such a wide variety of people in different right of way specialties have managed to build and grow a professional organization that has survived and thrived since 1934. Every decade of our history has brought change and progress. We have become an international organization with members around the world, and women have served in all leadership roles in the organization for many years. As this decade begins and social change raises our awareness about unconscious bias, I am confident we will continue to see positive change as we consciously examine ways to ensure our membership roster grows in diversity, and our education offerings provide opportunities for all to learn and engage in our profession.

During my time on the International Executive Committee, I have been reminded regularly of how important diversity is to our legacy. While tradition can provide perspective and guidance when making decisions, new ideas, fresh perspectives and innovative thinking will continue to energize our Association; being open to change and willing to listen has helped us to manage some difficult challenges. It has been equally important to remember that when it comes to education, "one size" does not fit all, and we have worked hard to offer multiple options of access for teaching, learning and sharing our knowledge with our members. We are all better when we share our skills and ideas, when we teach and learn from one another and when we are mindful of the impact our work has close to home and abroad.

I could not conclude this message about how important legacy is to the IRWA without mentioning the recent losses of Dan Beardsley and Carol Brooks. Both were very special IRWA members who left us far too soon. They were, each in

their own way, inspirational leaders who left a lasting impact on our Association. They each demonstrated unwavering support for our education programs, and they championed our mission to be the best at what we do. Dan and Carol were visionary leaders whose personal charisma and humility made them approachable and true ambassadors for our Association. Those of us who were lucky enough to meet and engage with them recognized how special they were and how lucky we were to be their students as they taught us how to lead with true purpose, shared their love of learning and brought out the best in all who encountered them. That is their legacy and one that we should all strive for. Thank you, Dan and Carol, for showing us the way and helping us get there.

As we move on and new volunteer leaders join our ranks to maintain and grow the work of ensuring that IRWA continues to thrive, I am confident that the future is bright and our Association will remain an industry leader for years to come. As we pass our leadership roles on to future members and leaders, let us set them up for success by giving them our support and encouragement. I look forward to seeing what they will accomplish and where we go from here.

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to lend a hand, I hope I have served you well. Raise a glass to those who have gone before us and those who will follow. Cheers and merci. ★