



On Sunday, June 25, 2023, right of way professionals gathered in the Mile High City to attend IRWA's 69th Annual International Education Conference. The iconic snowcapped mountains framing the city skyline made Denver the idyllic setting for a promising conference. The prime location and highly anticipated return of the Federal Agency Update were big draws for registrants, and as a result, the 2023 conference achieved a record high for a post-pandemic conference, with over 1,200 in attendance.

### An Uplifting Welcome

The Opening Ceremony kicked off with Jon Vaughan, SR/WA, conference co-chair, stepping on stage to welcome everyone to conference. Moments later, his co-chair, Richard Pittenridge, SR/WA, joined him with a grin, proudly lugging an enormous hiking backpack over his shoulders as a clever salute to the endless hiking trails that Denver is famous for. The co-chairs then invited Past International President Lee Hamre, SR/WA, Kristen Bennett, SR/WA, and friends to join the stage and give a stunning rendition of the national anthem during the presentation of the flags.

Richard and Jon then ran through the list of festivities, highlighting the education sessions, networking events and more before welcoming International President Judy Jones, SR/WA, to the stage to call the Annual Meeting of the Members to order. Judy acknowledged the 2022-2023 International Executive Committee, Advisory Council and International Governing Council. "Thank you for your efforts in developing the solid foundation on which we continue to build this Association," she remarked.

# IRWA's 69th ANNUAL INTERNATIONAL EDUCATION CONFERENCE



RISE ABOVE





### Going Above and Beyond

Judy then invited President-Elect Fred Easton, Jr., PLS, SR/WA, to the stage to present the Lifetime Achievement Award to Ernest (Ernie) Franzoy. Kevin Winner, SR/WA, accompanied him on stage to share a story of Ernie's dedication to the Association. Clutching the award, Ernie smiled out from under the brim of his iconic cowboy hat and addressed the crowd, "I just do what I thought should be done to make this Association one of the greatest things in my life. You only get out of something what you put into it. So, anybody can win this, all you gotta do is strive to be the best you can be."

### On the Horizon

Next, Executive Director Tim Drennan, CAE, gave the State of the Association Address. Tim shared how staff at Headquarters have been working closely with leadership to meet marketing and education goals. He stated that the Association has experienced a growth in membership since October, resulting in a membership income of \$1.5 million. "As a result of the collaboration efforts between Chapters and staff, I am proud to say the Association has exceeded our course scheduling goal for the second year in a row. And for the upcoming year, we've already scheduled more than 350 courses," Tim remarked. He also announced that IRWA currently has 3,083 certified and designated members, which calculates to 42% of the membership holding at least one IRWA credential. He concluded by emphasizing the unlimited opportunities that lay ahead for the Association and

that anything was possible with members and staff continuing to work together to achieve goals.

Judy returned to the stage to give the State of the Profession. "In my 25+ years in this industry, I have never witnessed the demand for our services that is present today," Judy remarked. She spoke on how the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act funding has provided a catalyst for projects across many areas of the industry, including the rise of the green and renewable energy and the modernization of municipal and community-owned natural gas distribution pipes. Finally, she shared how IRWA is focused being a valued partner in providing educational offerings to mentor new talent to the industry and stressed the importance of training the future group of right of way professionals. "IRWA, like never before, is a member-led and member-focused organization, dedicated to meeting the needs of our members."

Judy then invited Lerato Mokgwathleng and Lourens Nel from Chapter 83 to join her on stage for the signing of a renewed agreement with South African Right of Way Association (SARPA) in recognition of SARPA's many contributions made to the right of way profession and IRWA.

The ceremony concluded with John Register, a two-time Paralympian, Persian Gulf War veteran and TEDx Motivational Speaker. John's inspiring speech set the tone for the rest of the week, leaving attendees motivated and ready for the events to come.





# AWARDS CEREMONY

This year, there were a total of 93 individuals between May 1, 2022, and April 30, 2023, who received their prestigious SR/WA designation. All smiles, the recipients took the stage one by one to shake hands with International Professional Education Committee (IPEC) Credentialing Vice Chair Elizabeth Smith, SR/WA, be congratulated by IPEC Chair Janet Walker, SR/WA, and take a picture with International President Judy Jones, SR/WA.

Next, the Right of Way International Education Foundation (RWIEF) President Leslie Finnigan, SR/WA, proudly announced a new scholarship named in memory of Past RWIEF President Carol Croft, SR/WA, and explained how the funds would be dedicated to those close to achieving their SR/WA (for more information on this scholarship, please see the July/August 2023 issue of Right of Way Magazine). "I know Carol is dancing a jig up in heaven about this," Leslie said, throat tight with emotion. The crowd erupted in applause as Judy and Leslie signed the MOU agreement and shared a warm embrace in memory of their dear friend Carol.

Next, the emcee for the event this year was comedian Brad Montgomery, who charmed the crowd with his quick-witted commentary and clever magic tricks before inviting International Nominations & Elections Chair Kris Koehler, RWP, to the stage. "The Awards presented today symbolize the best of the IRWA and the professionals in this industry. Every recipient and finalist should be proud of their accomplishments," Kris remarked.

The excitement and energy in the room was infectious as each winner was announced. The anticipation climbed as the ceremony concluded with the final awards for the afternoon. Janet Walker, SR/WA, accepted the Ronald Jourdan SR/WA Advancement Award. "I'm very honored to receive this on behalf of everyone I've worked with over the decades," Janet said as she smiled out to the crowd.

Past International President Jim Struble, SR/WA, presented the Dan Beardsley Memorial IRWA Builder Award to James H. Finnegan, SR/WA, this year after sharing some of James's finest accomplishments. As James took the stage, he quipped, "Well, Jim said an awful lot, and my answer to what he said is 'Yes that was me, but it took a long time.'" He took the time to honor the late Past International President Dan Beardsley, SR/WA, and concluded by thanking the committee for the award.

This year, the highest honor, the Frank C. Balfour Professional of the Year Award was presented to Cyndi Whelpley, SR/WA. "I couldn't do this without the professionals [who] surround me all the time," Cyndi said before thanking several people in her life including her family, mentors and lifelong friends who helped guide and support her to this very moment.



The winner of the Ronald Jourdan, SR/WA Advancement Award was Janet Walker, SR/WA.



Fred Walsavage was presented with the W. Howard Armstrong Instructor of the Year award.



The Frank C. Balfour Professional of the Year Award was presented to Cyndi Whelpley, SR/WA.



James H. Finnegan, SR/WA, received the Dan Beardsley Memorial IRWA Builder Award.



The recipient of the SARPA Scholarship this year was Kasy Baldauf, SR/WA.





Employer of the Year with 20 employees or more was presented to HDR.



Employer of the Year with Less than 20 Employees was presented to WSB.



The Chapter of the Year Winner was Beaver State, Chapter 3, Region 7.



Northern Colorado Water Conservancy District was named Employer of the Year, Government Employer.



Newsletter of the Year was awarded to "Bundle of Writes," Chapter 67, Region 1.



South Africa, Chapter 83, accepted the Gene L. Land Award for the Highest Percentage Gain.



Carolinas, Chapter 31, Region 6 accepted the Gene L. Land Award for the Highest Numerical Gain.



Jesse Ray, SR/WA, received the Young Professional of the Year award.



The recipient of the CRWEF Scholarship this year was Irham Khimji.



The winner of the Alan D. Wurtz. SR/WA Scholarship Fund was Haylie L. Patterson.



The recipient of the Website of Year award went to California Inland Empire, Chapter 57, Region 1.





The highly anticipated Monday Night Event was held at Sculpture Park this year. Over the venue, the 60-foot “Dancers” sculpture, consisting of two figures frozen in mid-frolic, stood impressively over the merry scene as attendees wandered across the sprawling green field to partake in the delicious array of food. As the summer heat dissipated with the setting sun, attendees gathered in front of the stage to enjoy the live music provided by That Eighties Band.

Meanwhile, on the opposite side of the field, others were enjoying the Dunk Tank festivities, sponsored by Farnsworth. By donating to right of way education, participants could purchase balls to throw at the target in a playful attempt to soak their chosen victim. Prior to the event, attendees and members voted on which IRWA leaders they most wanted to see dunked. One by one, each cheerful victim clambered onto the platform and swung their legs back in forth while goading attendees to dunk them. Peals of laughter and ecstatic high fives echoed throughout the captive audience as each leader fell to their watery fate in the honorable name of right of way education.

Later that night, the live auction was held, and the tradition of the iconic International President puppet auction continued this year with Judy Jones, SR/WA. By the end of the night, with a total of over 800 attendees at the Monday Night Event, the Right of Way International Education Foundation raised a net proceeds of over \$30,000 for right of way education.

The Foundation wishes to thank Croft and Associates, LLC; CBRE; IRWA Chapters 3, 4, 8, 10, 31, 32, 33, 36, 39, 74; CLS Family of Companies; Diversified Property; Epic Land Solutions; ERM; Farnsworth Group; HDR; Negotiations, Inc.; O'Brien Right of Way Valuation; IRWA Regions 2 and 8; and Universal Field Services.

# MONDAY NIGHT EVENT







# BOD

## BOARD OF DIRECTORS

International President Judy Jones, SR/WA, called the annual Board of Directors meeting to order on Wednesday, June 28, 2023. After the minutes of the previous annual meeting in Cleveland were approved, International Treasurer Koby Godwin, SR/WA, presented the proposed 2023-2024 budget. The motion to accept the 2023-2024 budget, which had been circulated to all 10 Region forums, was approved.

### Education Foundations

Judy recessed the meeting and invited Right of Way International Education Foundation (RWIEF) President Leslie Finnigan, SR/WA, to the stage to discuss Foundation updates. Leslie thanked the members, leadership and industries for their support of RWIEF and continued by sharing more about her journey with the Foundation. She touched on the huge impact Past RWIEF President Carol Croft and how she's still missed, but the Foundation is focused on carrying on her vision and mission.

"This has been a busy year. Our purpose to use money to further education initiatives and scholarships has been the focus," Leslie stated, also adding that the Foundation has committed to almost a half a million dollars toward right of way education this year. She continued, noting that the funds went toward multiple scholarships, including the Leaders Light the Way 2.0 scholarship and the new Carol A. Croft Finish Line Scholarship. She also shared that the Monday Night Event was a success and thanked all who helped plan the event. Leslie then invited those who requested an opportunity to donate to the Foundation to step forward and do so. Many donated generously to right of way education. "We can't thank you enough — your support means everything," Leslie concluded.





Next, Canadian Right of Way Education Foundation (CRWEF) President Nancy Sinclair took the stage to give their Foundation update. Nancy thanked everyone who came out to support the Canadian Hospitality Suite, which had taken place the night before. After introducing CRWEF's Board of Directors, she went on to speak on the donations to the Foundation. "Every donation that is made here today, that is made online when you renew your membership — that money goes directly into the delivery of the programs we all enjoy. So, thank you very much, we appreciate your continued support." Nancy continued by announcing that CRWEF had agreed to a commitment of \$3,000 every year for three years to each of the Canadian Chapters to award a member-based scholarship. She also spoke of the Foundation's commitments to education by sponsoring seminars, webinars, courses and more. Members in attendance then stepped to the microphone to donate to CRWEF in support of right of way education.



### Business and Nominations

General Counsel Dave Arnold, Esq., SR/WA, was then invited to present the resolutions. Two were offered this year: Bylaws Resolution 2023-01, which was passed, and Bylaws Resolution 2023-02, which was rejected (more information on these resolutions can be found on [irwaonline.org](http://irwaonline.org) on the Board of Directors 2023 page).

Judy then returned to the stage to present a check to the conference co-chairs Richard Pittenridge, SR/WA, and Jon Vaughan, SR/WA, and Chapter 6 president, Lisa Stringer, SR/WA, for hosting the conference in Denver this year. The three accepted the check and thanked key people who were a part of the planning process. Next, the co-chairs for the 2026 annual conference, Jake Farrell, SR/WA, and Mindy Leadholm, SR/WA, gave a brief preview of what to expect in Omaha. "We know 2026 is still a few years away, but we are really excited to start planning a really exciting conference."

Kris Koehler, SR/WA, International Nominations and Elections Committee chair, then presented the nominations for the International Executive Committee. Denise Skinner, SR/WA, Koby Godwin, SR/WA, and Dan Bucan, SR/WA, were up for reelection and were confirmed. Cyndi Whepley, SR/WA, joined the IEC as International Secretary. It was announced that Dave would continue as General Counsel for 2023-2024.

International Secretary Dan Bucan, SR/WA, presented the International Region Officers, while President-Elect Fred Easton, Jr., PLS, SR/WA, announced the 2023-2024 leadership appointments and the International Service and Industry Committee chairs and vice chairs as approved by the IEC. The entire slate then came forward to be sworn in by Past International President Lee Hamre, SR/WA.

### Working Toward a Future Together

As IRWA's next International President, Fred addressed the members and shared his insights and plans for the next year. He started by thanking the Board for their volunteer leadership and for dedicating their time and experience. "Your impact ethically sustains and grows this Association. Being catalysts for positive change, driving progress, innovating our industry and leading our profession will stretch so much further than you can ever know or see directly."

Fred went on to emphasize the importance of growing the Association and expanding the membership base. He also noted how marketing and outreach are essential factors in achieving that growth — increasing social media presence, holding more webinars and partnering with other professional organizations are ways to help promote IRWA. He closed by stating that the spirit of mentorship was at the center of the Association and the key to nurturing future leaders.

"My friends, I urge each and every one of you to seize the opportunity before us and commit ourselves to the effort to grow and sustain the International Right of Way Association," Fred remarked. "Together, we can embrace this challenge and create a legacy that will be remembered for generations to come."





# EXHIBIT HALL

1. American Association of Professional Landmen
2. Allied Powers LLC
3. Appalachian Field Service, LLC
4. Appraisal Institute
5. Atwell, LLC
6. Aurigo Software Technologies
7. BEM Systems
8. Canadian Right of Way Education Foundation (CRWEF)
9. CLS Family of Companies
10. Coates Field Service
11. Doyle Land Services, Inc.
12. Emerald Energy & Exploration Land Company
13. Farnsworth Group, Inc.
14. Federal Agencies Pt. 1
15. Federal Agencies Pt. 2
16. Flairdocs
17. geoAMPS
18. Halo Land Management
19. HDR
20. Integra Realty Resources
21. JLL
22. LandSolutions
23. LIA Administrators & Insurance Service
24. Merrick and Company
25. Nossaman



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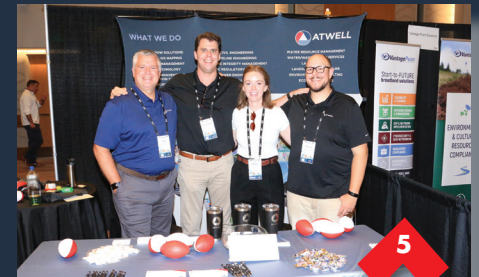
With hundreds of attendees, the Exhibit Hall served as an ideal venue for exhibitors to showcase their products and services to the dedicated right of way professionals in attendance. This was an excellent networking opportunity for many, and participants were excited to see familiar faces once again as they wandered through the rows of innovative and colorful booths.



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# EXHIBIT HALL

26. O.R. Colan Associates
27. O'Brien Right of Way Valuation
28. Overland, Pacific, & Cutler, LLC
29. Pandell Technology
30. RailPros, Inc.
31. Right of Way International Education Foundation (RWIEF)
32. ROWE PSC
33. Synergy Land and Environmental Services
34. THC, Inc.
35. TRC
36. U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
37. Ulteig
38. Universal Field Services, Inc.
39. Valbridge Property Advisors
40. Valcre
41. Vantage Point Solutions
42. Verdanterra
43. Western Land Services
44. Whitestar
45. WSB
46. WSP
47. International Young Professionals Committee
48. 2024 Conference Host — Long Beach, CA
49. 2026 Conference Bidder — Omaha, NE



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# COMMITTEES, COUNCILS AND REGIONS

IRWA's strength is derived from the dedicated right of way professionals who serve on International Committees. The Association credits their participation, leadership and collaboration in advancing important industry initiatives.

The Annual Conference provides a unique opportunity for members to discuss topics, relevant industry changes, trends and upcoming educational initiatives. The International Committees focused on issues impacting the core segments associated with the right of way profession, while the service committees discussed key initiatives that would help move the Association forward.

IRWA is also guided and supported by the leadership of its various councils. The International Governing Council (IGC) represents each of the 10 Regions working in conjunction with the International Executive Committee and Headquarters staff. The Advisory Council is comprised of past International Presidents. Also pictured is the Right of Way International Education Foundation, which supports the Association's educational initiatives.





# YOUNG PROFESSIONALS

## SATURDAY NIGHT EVENT



Greetings, IRWA Family,

Having time to unbury ourselves from emails that awaited our return, I'm excited to reflect on the Saturday Night Young Professionals (YP) Game Night.

Were you among the 285+ IRWA members and their families to attend the Luxury Center of the Denver Athletic Club? From pictures at the photo booth to casino games, the bowling alley, and billiards; everyone had a great time! We also celebrated four birthdays: Past International President Judy Jones, SR/WA, IRWA CFO Rakshan Mazarei, Association First Lady Heather Easton and mine!

I would like to express the Committee's sincere gratitude to attendees who made our event memorable; we hope to see you again in Long Beach, CA!

This annual event is done entirely through sponsorship support, and our sponsors showed up in a BIG way. We raised over \$17,700 in sponsorships! A special shoutout to HDR, Inc., our top sponsor, who sponsored to honor the legacy of Glen Bridger. Thank you for your support, and we send well wishes to those impacted by Mr. Bridger's loss.

We hope you stay connected with us @ IRWA Young Professionals on LinkedIn! See you soon!

Tiara McCray, International YP Committee Chair



# It's official!

IRWA's first Chapter is excited to welcome you to **Long Beach, CA**, for the **2024 Annual International Education Conference** to celebrate IRWA's 90th Anniversary.

June 23, 2024 – June 26, 2024



**IRWA**  
BUILDING A BETTER WORLD  
TOGETHER®



# FEDERAL AGENCY UPDATE



This year saw the return of the Federal Agency Update (FAU). Our agency partners in attendance included the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Federal Aviation Administration, Federal Highway Administration, General Services Administration, U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, U.S. Department of Interior, Federal Transit Administration and Veteran Affairs. The nine FAU sessions, which covered a variety of infrastructure topics, were well attended, with attendees taking advantage of the opportunity to participate in important conversations with agency representatives.





# GOLF TOURNAMENT

In conjunction with the 69th Annual International Education Conference in Denver, The Right of Way International Education Foundation (RWIEF) hosted the 27th Annual Golf Tournament. The Rocky Mountain Classic was held on June 27, 2023, at Green

Valley Ranch Golf Club, giving conference attendees and golf enthusiasts a day outdoors for networking and raising education funds. Despite the morning scourge of hungry mosquitos, the field of 144 golfers endured and won the day with brilliant sunshine, cooling winds and lots of fun. New this year was a long drive exhibition by Troy Teal, a golf fitness/power instructor and five-time World Long Drive Championship Competitor. This successful event raised \$24,000 for right of way education!

RWIEF would like to thank the participants, as well as the generous sponsors. Special thanks to **Platinum Sponsors:** Croft & Associates LLC, IRWA International Oil & Gas Pipeline Committee, IRWA Regions 3 and 5, IRWA Chapter 8, Allen, Williford & Seale, Tallgrass; **Diamond Sponsor:** Coates Field Services, Inc.; **Gold Sponsors:** RWIEF Trustees, Liberty Core Consultants; **Silver Sponsors:** Pattison & Associates, Inc., Percheron, Halo Land Management, Tablerock; **Bronze Sponsor:** IRWA Region 7; **Hole Sponsors:** IRWA Chapters 10, 52, 22, 14 and 16, IRWA Regions 4 and 9, David Sinclair, O'Brien Right of Way Valuation.

## RIDE FOR THE FOUNDATION FUNDRAISER

What's black and chrome, crisscrosses all over the United States and Canada and raises money for right of way education? Steve Grandon's awesome Harley, of course!

Ten years ago, the intrepid Steve Grandon began thinking of ways to combine two things he really enjoys, the IRWA and motorcycles. By riding from our current conference site to next year's conference site, he created a contest to guess his total trip mileage. Voila! The Ride for the Foundation FUNdraiser was born.

For a \$5 donation, anyone (IRWA member or not) can enter mileage guesses for the ride. To say Steve puts a lot of energy into this contest is an understatement. His shortest ride was from Minneapolis to San Antonio in 2020 at a distance of 1,478.5 miles, and his longest ride was from Nashville to Anchorage in 2016 at a distance of 4,378.7 miles! That is dedication (and saddle sores) for sure! Steve's employer, Liberty Core Consultants, sponsors this event and provides a \$1,000 cash prize to the winner!

In years past, Steve began his ride immediately after conference. This year, Steve completed his ride from Denver to Long Beach (2024 site) prior to the Denver conference. Mileage guesses were made during conference and the winner was announced at the Monday Night Event. Steve raised \$500 this year for ROW education. This year's contest winner was Gina Anthony with Diversified Property Services, Inc. And in another first for the contest, Gina guessed the mileage EXACTLY at 1,769 miles!





# THE CANADIAN HOSPITALITY SUITE

It was another great turnout on Tuesday night at the Canadian Hospitality Suite, hosted at Dierks Bentley's Whiskey Row, which put on a tasty buffet and ensured that glasses were never empty. The evening of networking was a huge success with over 420 attendees who had the opportunity to connect with some familiar faces and make some new friends! With a live performance from The Ten Cent Prophets, the energy was kept high throughout the night with an amazing series of sets that

kept conversations flowing and the dance floor full.

Thanks to the generosity of those who came out to support the event, over \$3,900 was able to be raised and donated to the Canadian Right of Way Education Foundation.

Of course, the Canadian Hospitality Suite would not be possible without the ongoing support of the companies who sponsor the event each year: Canada West

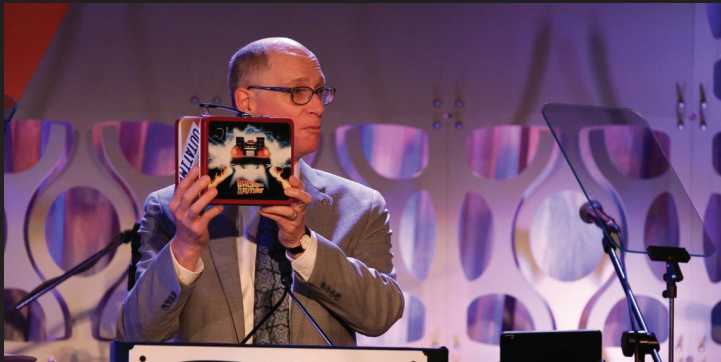
Land Services; Canadian Resource Valuation Group; Challenger Geomatics; D.A Grigg; DEMA Land Services; Evolve Surface Strategies; Integrity Land; Land Solutions; Midwest Surveys; Plains Midstream; Progress Land; Scott Land & Lease, Synergy Land & Environmental; Table Rock Land Services; Veracity Real Estate Solutions; and Vertex Resource Group. In addition, Canadian IRWA Chapters and Regions alike were keen to contribute to the success of the event, which included both Regions 8 & 10; Chapters 29, 48, 54, 62 and 63.

Planning is already underway for Long Beach, and we look forward to seeing everyone there in 2024!





# CLOSING GALA



The 69th Annual International Education Conference in Denver drew to a close with the traditional Closing Gala. Judy Jones, SR/WA, was welcomed back on stage to deliver her final speech. Overcome with the enormity of the moment, Judy took a moment to steady herself and take a deep breath. “Tonight is a time of reflection, and I’ve asked myself... was it worth it?” She continued by sharing her thoughts on her leadership journey, talking about the importance of accountability and thanking her IRWA family for their support.

“With each and everything in life, we should strive to leave a good impression. My hope is that I left a good one,” she said sincerely. As her speech drew to a close, she glanced up from her notes with a smile. “So, was it worth it? Yeah... it was.”

Judy then invited Fred Easton, Jr., PLS, SR/WA, and his wife Heather to the stage for the pinning ceremony. Judy was then given her President’s plaque, and Past International President Faith Roland, SR/WA, presented her with her Past International President’s pin. The two shared a tight embrace before exiting the stage.

Addressing the audience as International President, Fred emphasized the importance of mentorship within his life and the Association. “I think you’ll understand why I’ve spent many years volunteering for the Association and why it is so important to me. Hopefully, this will ignite a flame within each one of you to be an inspiration and mentor to others,” he remarked.

He explained how certain people at different points in his life impacted him, each imparting lessons about how to navigate life’s challenges or giving him the support he needed to move forward. He also thanked Heather, his guiding star and the most influential person in his life.

“Please, take a moment to reflect who have been your influences and mentors, and ask yourself, are you paying it forward to honor them?” Fred concluded. “I hope I spend this year doing some honor to all the mentors and influences who have brought me here.”

Following Fred’s speech, Ray Mehler, Region 1 chair, welcomed everyone to Long Beach, California, for the 2024 conference. Brandishing a lunchbox that featured their conference theme — the hit ’80s movie “Back to the Future,” — he encouraged everyone to come out to West Coast next year for another exciting conference. Conference Co-Chairs Richard Pittenridge, SR/WA, and Jon Vaughan, SR/WA, closed off the night by thanking everyone and inviting the live band, Deja Blue Variety Dance Band, to the stage. As the music filled the ballroom, the energy was infectious, and attendees rushed to the floor to dance the evening away.









# CONFERENCE SPONSORS

## In Appreciation

IRWA is pleased to give special recognition to our sponsors for their generosity in making this year's conference a success.



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