



BY MINDY LEADHOLM, SR/WA



# Region 3 Gives Back

On April 16 to 18, 2023, Region 3 held their Spring Forum in St. Paul, Minnesota. It was well attended, with approximately 75 people coming from all our Chapters. As host, Chapter 20 organized a great forum with multiple education sessions, fun networking events, some St. Paul trivia, live music and local brews.

In addition, Chapter 20 facilitated a 50/50 raffle, with half of the money going toward the cost of hygiene kit supplies for distribution at homeless shelters within St. Paul and Minneapolis. Contents of the hygiene kits included simple items such as a comb, toothbrush, toothpaste, soap, lip balm and deodorant — all items that are taken completely for granted by most of us reading this article.

The 50/50 raffle raised almost enough money to pay for 200 hygiene kits (Chapter 20 donated the difference). These kits were then put together by attendees throughout the forum. On the final day of the forum, the kits were delivered to the distribution center — within two hours, the following email was received:

*“I got the hygiene kits. Thank you so much to your group for pulling so many kits together for those in need!! They will be going out to our shelters today!”*

Many professionals within our industry come across people experiencing homelessness firsthand, as unauthorized encampments on public right of way become more and more common. The difficulties and dangers of moving an unauthorized encampment are far too many to list — for all parties involved. The packaging and gifting of the hygiene kits was a small, but meaningful, contribution we could give to those in need.

As participants, we felt that this level of giving back to others fell in line with IRWA’s purpose of “...improving people’s quality of life through infrastructure development” through a little bit of kindness, empathy and human compassion. Within Region 3, there have already been talks about other ways we can give back to our communities in the future, and we challenge other Regions and Chapters to do the same. ✪



*Mindy Leadholm, SR/WA, along with the rest of the Region 3 Spring Forum Planning Committee, organized and planned this event for all forum attendees. Planning committee members included Brian Mielke, SR/WA, R/W-NAC, Michael Stupka, Sean Lawler, SR/WA, Faye Gillespie, Shawn Zepper and Kelsey McGregor.*