



It All Begins with You and Me

Are you ready to rise to the challenge?

BY JUDY JONES, SR/WA

Do you remember who inspired you to attend your first Chapter meeting? Do you recall the first time you went to an international education conference? Of course, you do! Someone believed in you and saw your potential to become involved with the Association as a member and leader. We all have, or had, those people in our lives who saw the potential in us that we never saw in ourselves. For me, that person was Larsen Edge. Although he passed away many years ago, Larsen is the reason I currently serve as the International President of this Association. He saw that potential in me, and I am forever grateful to him.

At last year's Board of Directors meeting, I challenged each and every one of us to bring in or sponsor a new member. I have, but have you? We are an exceptional organization, and between all of us, we hold a wealth of knowledge in all aspects of the right of way industry. How many times have you reached out to other members because you were stumped on an issue involving one of your projects and knew they could help you? One of IRWA's greatest benefits is its expansive network of seasoned professionals. Being able to pick up the phone and call a mentor or send them an email to get their professional advice on a challenge is priceless. Both having a mentor and becoming one are rewarding experiences, and I encourage you to establish these invaluable, enriching connections.

There was an issue that arose a few years ago about how our Association has not been diverse and inclusive enough — that should have challenged us. While attending IRWA meetings and events, we should have realized that if we wanted more diversity, it has to begin with ourselves, as it is each member's responsibility



to reach out, connect with other industry professionals and bring in the diversity we need. Can you remember the last time you invited someone to an IRWA event? Not as an employer bringing in a new employee but as you, an individual, who believes in our Association so much, you want to invite others to share the connections we have as members of IRWA. Through this action, you can become that person's mentor, and the cycle of giving back continues and grows.

The International Executive Committee has recently approved new initiatives to "spread the word" of who we are by placing 10 print and digital ads within six separate, like-minded organizations over the next six months. This ongoing marketing effort will focus on driving attendance to the 69th Annual International Education Conference and promoting IRWA education and training opportunities.

In closing, I ask you again, are you ready to rise to the challenge? It is never too late to bring in a new member, help expand our Association and build a better network for us and the future of IRWA. Imagine how much bigger our network would grow. It all begins with you and me. ✪