

October 27th, 2016

Subject : 2016 APWA PWX Minneapolis/St. Paul Congress Experience

Dear Members of the Executive Committee,

Thank you very much for the opportunity to join the Wisconsin Emerging Leaders Academy. It was a pleasure to visit Minneapolis/St. Paul. This conference allowed me to meet some great people, and gain new insight in my field. Minneapolis/St. Paul is now a new favorite city for me. I enjoyed amazing food and I built stronger bonds with my immediate team members.

My APWA PWX experience started with the Opening General Session, where the value of community was instilled by every speaker on stage. Throughout the whole conference the sense of comradery was evident - even as a new member I felt very much part of this community. Brian Usher's passing of the torch to the 2016 President Elect Ronald Calkins was a great example of how strong the connection between members is – I am not sure there was a dry eye in the whole auditorium.

The Opening General Session's keynote speaker, Captain Scott Kelly, was very impressive. Since he was rocketed up to the space station over a year ago, I have been fascinated with the idea of spending so much time away from Earth. Hearing how he became an engineer, an astronaut, and a Navy Captain even though he struggled through school was empowering. Life in space, for that length of time, must be one of the hardest accomplishments of human existence to date. Captain Kelly stressed how important it is to push yourself, although the work may be difficult and often times frustrating, once the hardest task possible is completed – in his case, spending a year in space – looking back at everything up to that point is worth it and you will not be disappointed in what you have achieved.

After the Opening General Session, I spent time on the showroom floor. I was able to put faces to some people I have talked with over the phone and I was able to make specific connections with companies I deal with often. Our city has been working with GPS Tracking for several years, but within the last year we have implemented a new GPS tracking system that also gathers specific vehicle information. I have primarily spent my time getting the GIS information ready for the mapping system. While on the floor we met the team from Force America, our tracking supplier. They had a demo controller of what our operators use in the vehicles, it was fun using the new equipment, even if it was in a controlled environment.

While on the showroom floor, I met with an ESRI Product Manager, Derek Law. I was able to explain two problems I am facing at work and Derek spent an hour with me discussing solutions. At one point we were on the ESRI Solutions Blog, digging through archived records, hoping to find an answer to my question. Derek also showed me some great resources to scour the next time an issue comes up.

I sat through a few GIS/GPS specific sessions. The first session I went to was 'There's An App For That!: Take Action on GPS Fleet Tracking Data.' Although our city is already employing a tracking system, it was great to see how many people see a need for detailed metrics – it helps solidify all the time my team and I have spent working on implementation. The second session was 'There's An App For That!: Optimizing Field Operations with ArcGIS Apps.' It was a packed session, with people spilling out into the common area. The need for GIS technology is huge; the implementation of it is slow. Being someone who identifies issues and creates ArcGIS Apps, I gained some great ideas for helping our inspectors streamline their inspections. I am in the process of learning their Smartform setup and how I can integrate it into our field use.

Another great session I went to was put on by the National Weather Service. Shawn DeVinny, a meteorologist with the National Weather Service enthusiastically walked through ways of finding hourly-updated weather information for snow and ice control, as well as demonstrating how we can help surrounding communities by uploading current weather information.

In my off time, I walked around the city and went to some fantastic restaurants with co-workers who also attended APWA PWX. One of my co-workers went to college in St. Paul so she knew quite a few great places to try out. We had amazing burgers from the Blue Door, we had phenomenal pizza from Pizza Luce, and we took a walk along Minneapolis' revitalized riverfront on the way to get ice cream from Izzy's. Walking along the Mississippi River, in their Mill Ruins Park, was neat. I wish we could have gone to the Mill City Museum, a building built into an old factory, but we ran out of time – it's just another reason to go back!

Thank you again for the chance to join APWA Congress as a Wisconsin Emerging Leader. I had a great time in a wonderful city; I cannot wait to see what my part of the APWA community will be.

Sincerely,

Emma Reed, GISP
GIS Specialist
City of Kenosha
2626534054
ereed@kenosha.org