

September 30, 2017

Wisconsin Chapter
American Public Works Association
300 E. Main Street
Sun Prairie, WI 53590

Dear Members of the Wisconsin Chapter Executive Committee,

The Adventure of a Lifetime at APWA PWX 2017 in Orlando, FL

My name is Isaac Dolan and I want to sincerely thank you for the opportunity to be a part of the Wisconsin Chapter's Emerging Leaders Program and given the adventure of a lifetime when attending my first-ever APWA Public Works Expo. While at PWX, I attended all of the general sessions to listen to the special keynote speakers (all of which were great). I also attended as many technical sessions as possible, toured the immense exposition hall countless times to check out emerging technologies and attend some of the New Product Showcase presentations and went to each of the socials held each night of the conference. This tremendous conference was intimidating at first but the staff, volunteers and fellow attendees helped make it a comfortable and enjoyable experience and it was really easy to talk with people I have never met before. The first keynote speaker and host for PWX 2017, Thom Singer, had a great point on having "uncommon commonalities" with people or meeting someone you have never met before and realizing that you have something in common such as the same number of siblings or you had a friend that worked for the same company they did or some other connections like that to help establish a connection between one another. To me, that is what this conference and this adventure was all about.

Day 1 - Sunday, August 27, 2017

Of the many sessions and the immense exhibit floor found at PWX on opening day, I found myself beginning my day by attending the First-Timers Breakfast where we were provided a warm meal and introductions from the APWA President and other committee heads. We were provided with background on the organization and PWX as well as an ice breaker where we had to get up and introduce ourselves and hopefully get a few business cards in order to win a prize, that is, if people you introduced yourself to had remembered to bring their business cards, oh well. It was actually during this breakfast that Eric Dundee introduced himself and invited those in attendance to the Younger Members Steering Committee meeting that would follow the breakfast. Having no real plans on what session to attend first, I decided to take Eric up on his invite and chose to sit in to hear about the issues and discussions involved with developing a strong Young Professionals group. A number of chapters spoke up and shared some great ideas and this soon became one of my favorite sessions during the conference. Getting together

with peers to brainstorm ideas on developing and engaging college students and young professionals is something that truly interests me and I started to get excited with anticipation as to how I could help the Wisconsin Chapter increase its awareness among young professionals and within universities across the State of Wisconsin.

After the YP steering committee meeting, everyone made their way to the opening general session where we met the first keynote speaker and conference host, Thom Singer. From his speech I found a great interest in his perspective on the “Uncommon Commonality” and how these things help establish a bond or a relationship between two people that can last a lifetime. Thom was all about making memories and friendships at PWX and I thought this was a great presentation to kick off the conference and I took his advice seriously every day of the conference.

Following the general session I made my way through the exhibit hall and sat in on a few product showcase presentations before making my way to a technical session to hear about Public Works professionals and their respective leadership styles. This I found to be a really good session with a great Q/A component where it was nice to hear from others in the crowd as well. Following my technical session, the entire conference headed over to the Rosen Centre Hotel where the “Get Acquainted Party” was just getting ready to kick off. Turns out I came to the event by myself but ended up leaving with a group from the Wisconsin Chapter which a great way to end the day. It just so happens that while I was checking out the food, drinks and music, I noticed someone else was standing by themselves so thinking of the Thom’s words of wisdom from the day’s general session, I introduced myself and started to make small talk. I was instantly surprised to find out that I had just met the other Wisconsin Chapter Emerging Leader, Kamron Nielson. I seriously had no idea it was her since I hadn’t seen her photo before getting to the conference. It was a wonderful surprise and she was kind enough to introduce me to Paul Woodard who then introduced me to a number of Wisconsin Chapter members including Scott Solverson and Jim Hessling. I had a really good time and got to introduce myself to a bunch more people while at the party. It was at this party I then found out that many of the Wisconsin Chapter attendees were staying at the same hotel as me. Paul was kind enough to invite others and myself to breakfast every morning which I unfortunately missed except the last one after sleeping through my alarm almost every morning. Turns out I didn't feel as young as I was because the late nights and early mornings really got the best of me during this trip but I had a blast nonetheless!

Day 2 - Monday, August 28, 2017

On the second day, the general session included keynote speaker Lisa Monaco, former Director of the CIA. She provided a very real and serious perspective on everyone’s role within an organization, whether it is a municipality or a company, in protecting theirs and their fellow colleague’s personal information. One careless mistake could result in personal information getting stolen or the data on your computer being held ransom. Given these threats it is important to include cyber-attacks in your emergency management plan and to educate employees on safe practices while reading emails.

Following the general session's keynote speaker, I was able to attend four technical sessions where I gained insights on women's careers in public works, emerging technologies, impacts of complete streets and public outreach for a major roadway project. All of these sessions were interesting and I learned things that I can apply to my career in many ways. Between the sessions, I took some time to stop into the exhibit hall to donate blood and enjoy some more exhibits, snacks and new product showcases.

Following the technical sessions, the Young Professionals Reception took place at B.B. Kings just a short distance away from the Orange County Convention Center. This was a terrific event with great music and some delicious food. The venue made it difficult to talk with others due to the loud music but I still was able to meet a few individuals; one from Gainesville, FL, a couple from outside Boston, MA and another gentleman from a city outside Fort Worth, TX.

Day 3 - Tuesday, August 29, 2017

Beginning the morning with the art of storytelling, we started the day with our keynote speaker Bob Allen who worked for Disney for many years. His speech on "The Magic of Story" was enlightening and helped keep things in perspective. Without stories, we wouldn't have the knowledge we have today. Following the day's general session, I proceeded to the exhibit hall for one more new product showcase before sitting in a technical session on bicycle lane retrofits and then ending my day with a three hour session on Operations & Maintenance Training. This was something that wasn't really relevant to my current career but I wanted to see what went into training and education for maintenance & operations personnel to gain a good understanding of a system that works in keeping staff trained and paid appropriately so that everyone is happy. Following this session, I made my way back to my hotel before joining fellow Wisconsin Chapter members at Mango's for our Chapter Meeting and Social. It was great meeting others within our chapter and finally getting some time to sit down and get to know one another a little better. The food was phenomenal and the music and show was really entertaining as well. I'd definitely recommend this place to anyone who is Orlando, FL and is looking for a restaurant to remember. Following the meal and some additional conversation, I joined Steve Grenier, Karen Dettmer and Emma Browne as we all walked and had some good laughs on our way back to our respective hotels. I had a great time and really enjoyed everyone's company at the Chapter Dinner.

Day 4 - Wednesday, August 30, 2017

The last day was a relatively short day so that everyone could travel back to their homes. In the morning, I attended the Active Shooter Workshop to gain some insight to such a horrific situation. This is something that one never wishes to happen but should always be prepared for in the instance that it should occur. I found this workshop very informative and a lot of tools were shared to protect yourself and others if an active shooter were to enter your workplace.

To end the conference, the closing general session had our last keynote speaker, Derreck Kayongo, who shared his story and it was probably one of the most inspiring stories I have ever heard. He is a man of great energy, humor, "style", and inspiration. I really enjoyed his closing words and having the entire room sing his song Moyodi.

This conference is probably the best of any I have ever attended and the atmosphere was so enjoyable that I most definitely want to attend more PWX's in the future. Thank you for this opportunity and for providing me with the adventure of a lifetime that I will never forget. With what I learned from this PWX, I look forward to becoming a more involve professional in APWA's Wisconsin Chapter and to help grow and strengthen its Young Professionals group.

Kind regards,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Isaac Dolan". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Isaac" and last name "Dolan" clearly distinguishable.

Isaac Dolan, P.E.
Project Engineer
AECOM
T: 715-342-3024
M: 715-301-3249
E: isaac.dolan@aecom.com