

April 7, 2004

WHAT'S HAPPENING IN THE SCTC WETT PROGRAM

By: Keith Redmond

Greetings to all **MWOA members** across the **State of Minnesota**. I hope all of you are enjoying the beautiful weather we are having! The golf swing is back in action, it is not any better than last year, but it is fun to get out and abuse that tiny little ball again. With fishing season just around the corner I know many of you are getting the boats, motors, fishing gear, and accessories in order as well as preparing your facilities and projects for another summer. Good luck to all of you with your work and recreational activities in the upcoming months.

We have been very busy here at SCTC as well over the past year. We will be graduating out about 30 students at the end of June; they are ready and eager to go to work! Many of you know we had some issues with enrollment about 2 years ago. I am very pleased to inform you that we have turned that trend around and currently have a waiting list of students to get into our program at SCTC next fall! We still have some room for enrollment at our metro location, but are well ahead of where we were over the past two years. **Eden Prairie Water Treatment Plant and Blue Lake Wastewater Treatment Plant** continue to be our training grounds for the metro students. We are very thankful to have these locations for training our students; the locations provide for very effective learning of the content by our students, as a matter of fact, **Eden Prairie Water Facility** hired two of our graduates from our first graduating class from the metro section. We will continue to utilize the locations and run our program in the metro area to better serve our student population and industry alike. We look forward to a continued cooperative effort with our industry and SCTC for years to come.

At the SCTC campus, we recently received a grant for 1.7 million dollars from the **EPA** through the **MDH**. The purpose of the grant is to retrain water industry operators in small communities (under 3,300) population. We will be adding a gravity and pressure filter in our program area to assist us with that training. Our current lab will be enlarged by knocking down a few walls of adjoining classrooms to provide room for the filters. We will also update some equipment to accommodate the needs of instruction and enhance learning by the operators. The funding will allow us to train the operators at **NO COST** to the communities that meet the requirements, except for travel expenses; this includes fees, materials, meals and housing if needed. The courses under development will be for college credit (20 credits total) and offered over a 6 year period. The operators may take each course 1 time for free, if they want to retake any classes, they will have to then pay for retaking the course. Operators from communities over 3,300 population may also take the courses, however, based on the restrictions of the grant, they would have to pay for the classes themselves. We intend to start the training as early as this summer provided the contract is signed by then. Bill and I are busy working on the syllabus, outlines and course content as I am writing this letter. We should have at least 5 courses ready to go the first year which will likely be taught 2 – 3 times each or more if demand is high. We will be sending out notices/flyers in the mail to all communities that qualify and I will try to post the announcements on as many professional websites (water/wastewater) as I can. I hope to see many of you at these training sessions over the next 6 years. It is our intent to continue these training sessions beyond the 6 year agreement if possible and provide training to all operators as determined by interest of the communities throughout Minnesota.

Our student club, WAMM, has been active again as well. We have purchased a digital camera, microwave (mostly for student lunches), 2 lap top computers (last year), and other miscellaneous items

to assist with student education and learning as well as accommodate some basic daily needs. Our club also has been participating in several professional organization conferences, schools and seminars throughout the year as many of you have seen. We also sponsored the Stationary Bike Race at SCTC again this year, raising money for the **Gillette Children's Hospital, Children's Miracle Network**. We raised over \$6,000.00 this year, which is up from last year by about \$1000.00! Great job students!! The event took place on campus in the commons and each team was required to raise at least \$600. 8 club teams participated in the event and YES, the WAMM Club won the race with somewhere around 140 miles by 12 riders. Each rider was required to ride for 25 minutes. This was by far the best bike event we have been associated with and the students from all clubs had a great time, except for the unfortunate few who thought a night of partying before the race was a good idea. (I bet they don't do that again). Our students participate in club challenges throughout the school year sponsored by the student senate at SCTC. We-win some we lose-some? We will also be cleaning around a water retention pond later in April for Earth Day, an event we have taken part in over the past several years. This is one of those community service projects we do for the local area. Some of our students will partake in training on ground water in Sauk Centre as well. They will educate several groups of elementary students over a two or three day period on how water moves through the ground and the water cycle itself. This gives our students a chance to prepare an instructional piece and to speak publicly in front of a group of people. Our club does several small projects as well and I think the students are very active for only being with us for one year. If anyone has any ideas for a fundraiser or other event that we may want to do, please let me know so we can consider other options and activities for our group.

This fall, the WETT program was one of the featured programs at the MNSCU (Minnesota State Colleges and Universities) state fair booth. I know several of you saw the booth and stopped in to say hello. I would like to thank all of you who volunteered your time to work at the booth; we could never have staffed the booth without your help. The Metro section of the WETT program also took an entire day to staff the booth, handout information and answer questions. The event was very good exposure for our program and industry and to heighten awareness of water concerns throughout Minnesota. I would also like to give **St. Paul Water Utility** a big thanks for loaning us their water filter as a demonstrative prop for the booth. We received countless questions about what it was and what it did.

This year, SCTC will host the **Minnesota Science Museum** teacher training series. This will occur in late June. Bill and I will be assisting with that training over a 3 day period. This training has been going on for at least three years now and is geared towards high schools developing curriculum for their programs that relate to water treatment in some fashion. We are very excited about this opportunity to provide the education to area teachers, mostly in the science related areas.

We are just entering a new POSSIBLE venture with **St. Cloud State University**. We were contacted recently to sit down with **SCSU** and discuss the possibility of combining our program content and some of their course work to develop a new degree for students that may want a bachelor's degree related to training in water and wastewater treatment. We are very preliminary and have yet to formally meet on this subject. It is likely to take 2 years or more to get anything in place and offer a new degree, but we will be vigorously working towards another option for our graduating and graduated students. We have attempted this in the past (unsuccessfully), but with new management at both facilities we are going to give it another shot. Wish us luck!

I am in the process of working on reorganizing our advisory board for the WETT program. The initiative came from **MNSCU** and our **teachers union** to reactivate and invigorate our current boards

in the school systems. This will not change the fact that we meet with our board on a regular basis, but rather to include them more in our decision making processes relating to our program areas and make them more active members. I will be attending a training session myself in April to address this issue. It is my hope that the outcome of this effort will to better define the roles of our board and to empower that board in decisions made on the direction of our program at SCTC. Hopefully we will have guidelines in place that will assist and direct the board on its duties and responsibilities and make SCTC, Bill and myself more accountable for the students we produce from our program, which eventually become employees in the communities you work. Currently our board meets 2 times a year and at our last meeting at the **Eden Prairie Water Plant** this initiative was discussed.

About a year ago, I put a web site up on our program and did a very poor job of letting people know that it is available. I know it needs a lot of work, but it is my first attempt at doing a web page. It does provide information on our program and I hope you will direct people and prospective students to the web site for information on our program. The address looks a bit funny in that there is no WWW in the address so please type the address in as follows: <http://wett.sctc.edu> I am open to suggestions and assistance in making the web site look better and more attractive to users.

The last piece, in this lengthy letter, that I would like to discuss/announce is recruitment of students for our program. WE have spent countless hours over the past 3 years rebuilding our program and recruiting students. One very effective method used was running a very brief ad in the **Bloomington Water Plant CCR**. We have realized this to be an effective method of attracting students into our program by informing the general public of our existence. If any of you would be willing to run the ad in your CCR we will provide the ad for you and all you would need to do is attach it to your CCR. I have spoken with the Bloomington Water Operations and they have expressed it is at no additional cost to them since they have to issue the CCR's anyway. Please let me know if you want a copy of the ad and either Bill or I will forward it to you. Thanks to all who are able to assist with this.

Until next time, enjoy your summer!

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