



## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### WEF Announces 2016 Ingenuity Contest Winners

ALEXANDRIA, Va. – The Water Environment Federation (WEF) proudly announces the winners of the fifth annual WEFTEC Ingenuity Contest. The competition recognizes innovative water professionals who used what they had on hand and a little bit of ingenuity to creatively solve persistent challenges.

The following winners were recognized during “A Celebration of Operator Innovation, Excellence, and Professionalism” ceremony, which was held last month as part of WEFTEC 2016—WEF’s 89<sup>th</sup> annual technical exhibition and conference—in New Orleans, La.

**James Spielvogel** from the Borough of Ellwood City, Pa., Wastewater Treatment Plant received the Ice Breaker Award. He invented a device to safely and easily lift the clarifier skimmer in the winter to prevent the skimmer from freezing to the grease box. Using this invention, one operator can stand on a clarifier bridge with a hooking pole and lift the skimmer onto an arched hook.

**Aaron Dressel, Chris Wize, Kelly Wolfe, and Dan Danhauer** from York, Neb., earned the Trough Toaster Award. Coincidentally, this team also found a fix to prevent freezing, but took a different approach. To prevent the scum trough on the thickener from freezing to the skimmer arm, the team installed a heat lamp about the trough. To protect the lamp from the elements, they designed and built a hood-type fixture and frame to hang the lamp above the trough. The result: not one frozen trough all of last winter.

**Cheryl Read** from the King County (Wash.) Wastewater Treatment Division earned the Danger Dodger Award for repositioning valve handles to avoid the need for confined space entry. Valve actuators in the secondary sediment tanks at King County’s South Plant required confined space entry to reach. Read realized that by rotating the valves 90 degrees, the handles could be reached from the outside. Industrial maintenance mechanics **Marvin Romack** and **Dalen McMichael** repositioned the valves to eliminate the need for a confined space entry and make working on the valves safer and easier.

**Brandon Pfleckl, Yeoanny Venetsanos, Annie Short, Ben Slater, Ani Guha, Maureen Knight, Irma Houck, Terry Dye Jr., Karen Hogan, Andrew Cockram, and Tracey Beaver** from the Prince William County (Va.) Service Authority drew the Digital Trailblazer Award for building their own map-based applications to display information for operators in the field. The team overlaid existing information into a geographic information system so that all asset and status information could be visualized and analyzed in a map-based context. The system collects maintenance, customer, financial, and design information into a single, mobile interface.

**Gregory Williams** from Good Harbour Laboratories (Mississauga, Ontario, Canada) received the Beaker Peeker Award for the vision to use the graduations on a simple glass beaker to measure scum depth from the top of an open tank. He simply dons gloves and lowers a large beaker — the 2-L size works well — down into the scum. The markings on the beaker can be recorded and the distance between them measured later to give a relatively accurate thickness.

**Walton J. Summers II** from the Jacksonville (Ark.) Wastewater Utility earned the Explainer in Chief Award for educating the public. This award recognizes both a Christmas parade float that shows the wastewater treatment process and a tabletop display that shows the consequences of misusing sewers as trashcans.

In addition to the above winners, the ceremony also featured a special recognition of **Jerome Marshall**, a quality assurance service inspector for the Sewerage and Water Board of New Orleans and [the first operator to receive the New Orleans Municipal Employee of the Year award](#). As a way to further promote innovation in water and support operations professionals worldwide, WEF presented Marshall with an Honorary Operator Ingenuity Award.

For more information about the WEFTEC Ingenuity Contest, please contact [innovation@wef.org](mailto:innovation@wef.org).

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### **About WEF**

The Water Environment Federation (WEF) is a not-for-profit technical and educational organization of 33,000 individual members and 75 affiliated Member Associations representing water quality professionals around the world. Since 1928, WEF and its members have protected public health and the environment. As a global water sector leader, our mission is to connect water professionals; enrich the expertise of water professionals; increase the awareness of the impact and value of water and provide a platform for water sector innovation. To learn more, visit [www.wef.org](http://www.wef.org).