



New York Water Environment Association, Inc.

The Water Quality Management Professionals

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New York Water Environment Association Leaders Meet with Town of Webster Officials, Recognize Dwayne Hilfiker with Outstanding Operator of the Year Award and Timothy Keegan with Lucy Grassano Scholarship

Syracuse, NY – New York Water Environment Association (NYWEA) staff visited the Town of Webster Water Pollution Control Facility and met with Webster Town Supervisor Tom Flaherty and Deputy Supervisor Patricia Cataldi, who serves as liaison to the facility, to thank these local leaders for their support of water infrastructure through upgrades to the facility. It was also an opportunity to present Outstanding Operator of the Year Dwayne Hilfiker and Lucy Grassano Scholarship Recipient Timothy Keegan with their recent awards.

The Town of Webster recently completed a \$12M asset renewal upgrade consisting of three new secondary clarifiers, new return sludge and activated sludge pumps, and a new standby generator. On the heels of that project, the Town is currently finishing up design on another upgrade. This upgrade will consist of asset renewal for much of the facility, but also transform it from a Water Pollution Control Facility to a Water Resource Recovery Facility. The upgrades will involve new diffusers and blowers for the aeration system, new solids handling equipment, and an outside waste receiving station. But the main focus is on a new solids dryer to turn their current landfilled biosolids into a Class A fertilizer for use by the local agricultural community.

Hilfiker received the Outstanding Operator of the Year Award which is given annually to a frontline individual in each of NYWEA's 7 regional chapters across the state. The award commemorates extraordinary dedication in the day to day operation of a water resource recovery utility, and/or successful solution to a problem, and/or contributions to the wastewater field. The award gives recognition to operations personnel who are essential in mitigating operational challenges beyond the staff's control.

Hilfiker is a New York State certified 4A water resource recovery operator with approximately 13 years of experience in the field. He built his reputation in the industry as a highly motivated, skilled, and versatile operator. Hilfiker has worked his way up from laborer to maintenance worker to certified operator and has done everything from sampling to maintenance to process control and troubleshooting. He put himself through precertification classes at SUNY Morrisville Environmental Training Center, and went on to pass both the 3A and 4A certification exams. His excellent mechanical skills and problem-solving ability have benefitted the Town financially. Hilfiker is also known as a team player, being the first to give praise or offer assistance. He is adept at taking constructive criticism and using it to improve and become a better operator.

Keegan was also recognized during the visit as a recent recipient of a Lucy Grassano Scholarship. This scholarship is named for Lucy Grassano, a Principal Administrative Assistant at the New York City Department of Environmental Protection. She was a mentor, friend, teacher, and mother-figure to many operations staff throughout the years. This scholarship is offered each year for up to one certified operator

from each of NYWEA's chapters to subsidize the cost of attending a NYWEA conference for the first time. Keegan was the Genesee Valley Chapter recipient – one of five awarded the scholarship this year to attend NYWEA's 95th Annual Meeting in New York City, along with Erik Hartmann of the Long Island Chapter, Joseph McDonald of the Western Chapter, Scott Owen of the Lower Hudson Chapter, and Nicholas Sullivan of the Metropolitan Chapter.

About NYWEA: Founded in 1929 by professionals in the field of water quality as a nonprofit educational organization, NYWEA has 2,500 members statewide and hosts several technical conferences each year for environmental engineers, scientists, water resource recovery operators, public officials and others who work in water and wastewater quality management. In addition, NYWEA sponsors a scholarship program, publishes *Clear Waters* – a quarterly educational magazine, administers wastewater operator training and certification, and supports humanitarian clean water projects. Headquartered in Syracuse, NYWEA has seven regional chapters, 15 college student chapters and is a Member Association of the international Water Environment Federation. For more information, please visit www.nywea.org.



(Pictured L-R: Town Supervisor Tom Flaherty, Dwayne Hilfiker, Deputy Supervisor Patti Cataldi, NYWEA Operator Certification Administrator Carolyn Steinhauer, Timothy Keegan, and NYWEA Executive Director Patricia Cerro-Reehil. (Not pictured: NYWEA Executive Director Designate Khristopher Dodson, Webster Town Engineer Mary Herington, who serves on the NYWEA Genesee Valley Chapter Board, Deputy Commissioner of Sewer Art Petrone, and Chief Operator Rick Kenealy also in attendance.)

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