

**SUCCESSFUL FWQA SCHOLARSHIP & AWARDS LUNCHEON EVENT HELD AT THE ELEPHANT & CASTLE  
RESTAURANT IN WASHINGTON, DC**

**By K. Jack Kooyoomjian, Ph.D. and James Wheeler**

On Thursday, May 22, 2025, the Federal Water Quality Association (FWQA) held its' annual Scholarship and Awards luncheon at the Elephant & Castle Restaurant.

Dr. Christian Davies-Venn, FWQA's immediate Past President welcomed everyone & gave some brief introductory remarks about the FWQA, which was established in 1928. Our FWQA members are members of the Water Environment Federation (WEF), which is a world-wide not-for-profit technical & educational association of water & wastewater & environmental professionals to advance science & public policy for water quality & public health. The FWQA has been supporting & judging at Washington Metropolitan area regional science & engineering fairs & awarding college scholarships for over 3 decades. Christian introduced our keynote speaker, Mr. Adam Krantz, Executive Director of the National Association of Clean Water Agencies (NACWA), which represents the interests of publically-owned water and wastewater & storm water utilities of all sizes across the United States. Adam is also a Past President of FWQA. He chose to speak to the topic of ***"Keeping Everybody Healthy & Safe."***

Adam noted that we are at a crucial time. NACWA members provide safe, clean water and wastewater services to all. Their practice and business policy is to work with all parties to assure that science and technological innovations are used to benefit everyone with clean water and a clean environment. In the United States, NACWA members utilize technical innovation and sound practices to protect all communities, and monitor ecosystem health within a setting of viable engineering outcomes. There are huge challenges for the next generation to deal with such things as "forever chemicals" like PFOS & PFOA (Per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances). Smaller utilities and especially vulnerable communities need special assistance as well.

How do we get to know about everything in our environment and manage such challenges to promote public health and prosperity for all? For instance with PFAS, we are at the limits of measurement technology to measure as small as 4 parts per trillion. This is comparable to one drop of food coloring in 18 million gallons of water. A large swimming pool holds 1 million gallons of water, so essentially that is one drop in 18 swimming pools! Utilities are looking at the challenges of removing such small amounts from their treatment processes, but such efforts require exceptional technology & expertise & are very expensive to measure & to treat (literally hundreds of millions of dollars). We have to work with the science, engineering, economics and all the stakeholder groups to be effective & successful. We have to listen, listen, listen & learn & network with many to find solutions that make sense and can work for most circumstances. He thanked the regional science fair & scholarship winners and complimented them on their accomplishments. He encouraged them to use their talents & energy & solve the environmental challenges for the future to make our environment a better place for all, & he wished them good luck in their future endeavors in school & pursuits in college.

The Prince William County-Manassas City regional science & engineering fair awardees were recognized. The senior first place winners were Aysha Jafar & Adriana Ponciano from Osbourn Park High School. The Junior first place winner was Dean Lateef from Benton Middle School.

**McCallum Scholarship:** Jim Wheeler talked about Dr. Gordon McCallum's distinguished career in the Public Health Service and the US EPA, his involvement in the formation of the FWQA and the WEF and why we have this scholarship honoring Dr. Gordon McCallum. The Gordon McCallum Scholarship awardee is Amanda Wang, who was not present. Her accomplishments were highlighted by Mary Kline who touched on Amanda's background & accomplishments & noted that Amanda will be majoring in environmental studies at Vanderbilt University.

**Barber Scholarship:** Jim Wheeler spoke about our FWQA colleague Richard Barber for whom the Scholarship is named. Richard encouraged the FWQA Board to sponsor a scholarship program for seniors choosing environmental majors in college. Jim also shared personal insights into Richard Barber's career, including his joining the FWQA in 1980, being elected FWQA President in 1983, & his suggestion to start the scholarship & science fair awards in 1991 for young people, & why we have a scholarship honoring him. Ryan Shaw, our FWQA Vice President introduced the Barber Scholarship awardee Zehra Thakker, from Howard County, MD who will be studying environmental science at the University of Maryland.

**Olem Scholarship:** Sheila Olem, the wife of Harvey Olem gave some background on her husband, Harvey Olem. Sheila's husband, Harvey Olem, was a member of the FWQA & editor of the FWQA Newsletter. Harvey's dream was to have 100 peer-reviewed articles, & shortly after his untimely passing over the Andes Mountains in the jungles of Bolivia in 1994 on a mission for the World Bank with others who all perished, & their airplane was never located or recovered. On a somber note, his colleagues added his name as a collaborator at 42 years old to the 100<sup>th</sup> article. Sheila introduced Ms. Emma Hensch, who is the recipient of the Olem Scholarship. Emma's chemistry class sparked her curiosity to integrate microbiology and to monitor ecological health. She is interested in sustainable energy and water resource management and will be attending the University of Virginia.

**Ken Kirk Scholarship:** Jim Wheeler introduced the newest FWQA scholarship award named in honor of Ken Kirk, a past President of FWQA and Executive Director of NACWA. Ken was born in 1945 and passed away in March of 2024. Ken loved golf and was a real competitor in all activities. Ken was Adam Krantz's mentor at NACWA and was passionate about what became known as the National Capitol Area Scholarship Program. He was a driving force in the sponsorship of the golf tournaments & worked tirelessly to raise funds for all the scholarships. Adam Krantz introduced Mr. James Obasiolu who is the first recipient of the Ken Kirk Scholarship & is a high school senior in Columbia, MD who plays the cello. James is planning a career in environmental protection & is attending Harvard University in the fall.

**President's Scholarship:** The President's Scholarship was awarded to Astrid Tuuli Grace Determan, who is attending Duke University and plans to major in environmental science. She was introduced by Clarence Beverhoudt, WEF Delegate & immediate Past-President of the Chesapeake Water Environment Association. Astrid co-founded Arctic Angels to protect the Arctic Wildlife Refuge against well drillers. She is very articulate & has spoken before the UN during Climate Week as well as to Pope Francis regarding Environmental Justice issues.