



## IANY Holds 2010 Winter Education Series in March

by Bobby Winter



In the past, IANY has hosted education courses in conjunction with the February supplier trade shows. At your recommendation, we have separated these courses, and are offering classes closer to the start of the season. Classes have been moved to the week of March 8 in the hope more contractors and their employees will be able to attend. We have a variety of courses available to help you become a more efficient and profitable irrigator. A complete schedule of courses – to be held at the Sheraton Long Island in Hauppauge – and registration form are on pages 8 and 9 of this newsletter.

As full-time irrigators who rely mostly on irrigation to support our families, we are faced with more competition than ever before. By becoming licensed and certified, you will have a greater edge over those who are full-time responsible contractors with no qualifications.

Our current competition also includes the guy we ourselves laid off, the landscaper who added sprinklers to his list of services and the guy who did sprinklers 20 years ago and recently lost his high-paying job. In order to stay ahead of them, we need to push the need for licensed, certified professionals and educate our customers as to why they should choose us over the company offering a cheap deal.

The local municipalities also will be looking for unlicensed contractors. Now, more than ever, they want to raise revenue, and will fine unlicensed contractors and force them to become licensed before continuing to work. In an effort to help, we are offering a special class focusing on Licensing. We have been working with municipalities and have been gathering all the information you will need in order to become properly licensed by localities. This will be an inside look at what you need to know before you apply.

Another class offered is on Electrical Troubleshooting. We are fortunate to have Tom Novick, one of the area's top electric and pump experts who will come in and teach the subject. This class demonstrates how to properly use an electrical multimeter, and will explain the technical terms needed to troubleshoot controllers, field wiring and solenoids. Tom also will go over how to properly wire a pump. This troubleshooting class will also be a great help for those looking to take the required Suffolk County restricted electrical irrigation exams. It is designed for the service tech who is great with the pipes and fittings part of the job, but lacks expertise in electrical troubleshooting.

A Beyond Basic Design School will be presented by Tom Armbruster, who knows our local market better than most. He is well-respected in our industry. This class will touch on precipitation rates, formulas, flow rates, hydraulics, scheduling and more. If you know how to install sprinklers but don't know much about the technical aspect of irrigation, this class will be an eye opener. If you are planning to obtain a license or go for a certification, this class will be great prerequisite.

We will be hosting a national Certified Landscape Irrigation Auditor (CLIA) exam on Thursday, March 13. The test includes 80 multiple choice questions to be completed in three hours. You must sign up at least 30 days before with the national IA. Go to [www.irrigation.org](http://www.irrigation.org) for more details.

Even if you have been in the irrigation industry for 20 years or more, your chances of passing this exam without taking the full-blown certified landscape auditor class would be 5 percent at best, so we are bringing in Art Elmers to teach this highly math-related class. This class is being offered to you for less than half of what it would cost to take elsewhere. It would be a shame to pass up this opportunity. Those who pass the exam are able to become an EPA Water Sense Partner, which can open up even more money-making opportunities.

With all the rain we had last year, we have asked NDS to come in and give the class, Drainage, an Alternative Income. Drainage should be an easy sell to those customers who had drainage issues last year, as many learned just how important good drainage is. A proper drainage system is just as important as a efficient irrigation system. Our customers all want good healthy lawns, and proper watering is the key. Too much water is just as bad as not enough water. So let's stop complaining about last year's rain, and look at it as this year's money maker.

The cost of this year's classes will be much less than those offered elsewhere. With the support of our great group of suppliers and manufacturers, we are hopeful more of you will be able to attend. Give your supplier a call and ask them if they may be willing to let you charge the classes to your supply account. It's a great time of year to get the guys in and start preparing for the new season. Save a few bucks per person by signing up two or more.

## General Meeting Notice

**Date:** Wednesday, March 10, 2010

**Time:** 6:00 p.m.

**Place:** The Woodlands

Town of Oyster Bay Golf Course

1 Southwoods Road, Woodbury, New York

**Agenda:** Andy Smith, National IA

Election of Trustees

**Cost:** \$50

NO DISTRIBUTION OF PROMOTIONAL MATERIALS



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## **Presidential Musings**

by Dennis Realmuto, CID, CLIA, CID

Welcome to 2010. With the rebound of the stock market, consumer confidence will be stronger and projects "on hold" for 2009, should make 2010 a better season. The caveat is: Homeland Security must keep the America haters from succeeding anywhere in the United States or consumer confidence will fall below 2009 levels. Mother Nature could help too, by sending some of the Northeast's rain south and west.

Last Dec. 1-4, I went to the national Irrigation Show in San Antonio, Texas. The purpose of my adventure was to re-establish my credentials – Certified Landscape Irrigation Auditor (CLIA) and Certified Irrigation Contractor (CIC) – and to obtain the Certified Irrigation Designer certification.

To my surprise, last January 2009, I called IA headquarters in Church Falls, Va., to establish myself as a "Water Sense Partner." As per the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), an irrigation contractor must be a Water Sense Partner in order to obtain LEED points for the builder/owner. To be a Water Sense Partner, you must have only one of the six certifications awarded by the IA board following passing of a test. No problem, I took the CLIA course and test in September 1996 and the CIC test in March 2002.

Much to my dismay, I was informed I was no longer a certified anything as far as the IA was concerned. I had not turned in my "CEUs." What on earth are CEUs? Continuing Education Units. A CEU qualification chart is on page 7.

After barking at the IA receptionist for a minute, I was informed I would need to retake the exams to obtain my certifications, then apply to be listed as a Water Sense Partner.

Dec. 1 and 2, I sat through the auditors class and took the CLIA exam Wednesday afternoon. On Dec. 3, I took the CIC exam, and on Dec., 4 I took the CID exam.

After completing the CID exam at noon, I took a stroll to the exhibit floor. To my surprise, 50 feet into the show and after just 15 minutes, the lights were dimmed and the announcement thanking all for attending was made. The show was over.

I did make it to the Contractors Common Interest Group meeting Wednesday at 4:00 p.m. led by IA External Affairs Director Andy Smith. We discussed several topics.

A. EPA and LEED points for commercial and residential construction. This entire program is evolving. The terms, the definitions and the points allocated to each category are under review continuously. The IA is in the midst of educating the EPA Water Sense people of the ability to conserve vs. termination of watering. Its studies showing the advantages of a lush green environment, benefits in air quality, human stress reduction, noise filtration and microbe balance of soil quality are just a few examples of IA's promotion of proper watering.

- B. The issue I brought up was of my personal matter – loss of my certifications. Not known to me, this was the hottest topic at the pre-show IA board meetings. The IA, without notification, dropped nearly 500 contractors from their certification list for not filing CEUs and paying the annual fee of \$25 per certification. To add insult to misery, on display in the exhibition hall lobby, was the Wall of Certified Contractors. Needless to say, my name was not on the wall. The IA board is reviewing the concept of notifying all contractors 90 days prior to losing their certifications. Several board members believe it is a privilege to be certified and the minimal cost and effort to obtain CEUs is the same as any license a contractor holds. It requires renewal and proof of proficiency.
- C. The IA board has created a new task force to evaluate the communication among volunteer groups, the board of directors, subcommittees, common interest groups, ambassadors and staff. How can the national IA serve the contractor better? All of the members want to hear from contractors. The chairman of this task force is Tim Malooly of Irrigation by Design, in Plymouth, Minn., with Bob Dobson, Mark Huntley, Chris Keating, Ed Klaas, Todd Magatagan and Dave Magner as ambassadors.
- D. The national IA now is offering its classes online – “Learning on Demand” – enabling contractors to take classes in their offices. E-Times is IA’s online newsletter, available at [www.irrigation.org](http://www.irrigation.org).

To my fellow contractors, I wish you all success. May the 2010 season be prosperous, healthy and dry. Take the time to relax in the off-season, and enjoy the important people in your lives. Plan and strategize now, for spring is around the corner.

I hope to see everyone at the general meeting on March 10. This year, your association is dedicated to education and benefits to the industry. Be part of it.

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## Call for Nominations



To maintain the proper balance of experience and new faces on the IANY board of trustees, the association’s bylaws require rotating membership. This necessitates elections each spring. At the March general meeting, elections will be held to fill the positions of Dennis Realmuto, Mike Pallotta, Rich Silverman and Bobby Winters, whose terms of office expire.

IANY is soliciting nominations to fill the positions to be vacated. If you would like to serve on the board or to nominate someone to run for a position on the board, please inform Cathi Matuza, the association’s administrator, by fax at 631-424-0170 or by e-mail at [info@iany.org](mailto:info@iany.org). As soon as possible after the elections, the board will convene to elect officers for the year ahead.

The general meeting will be held Wednesday evening, March 10, 6:00 p.m. at The Woodlands, on the grounds of the Town of Oyster Bay Golf Course, 1 Southwoods Road in Woodbury.



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## IANY Establishes Scholarship Fund

by R.B. Boyle

Following months of study by a special committee, IANY has established a scholarship fund for students of IANY members to receive financial aid for college.

In announcing the fund at the December general meeting, R.B. Boyle, who heads the committee, says the fund will help ease the burden of high college costs for students who qualify. “With college costs continuing to increase faster than family incomes, the demand for scholarships has never been higher. Millions of students seek scholarships every year, but only a few hundred thousand win awards,” Boyle adds.

This IANY program provides another opportunity for the students of IANY members to obtain valuable scholarship funding. It is not necessary to be enrolled in irrigation courses to be eligible.

If you have or will soon have a student entering college or a trade school, come to the March 10 IANY general meeting to learn about the scholarship fund and how it can help your family and your employees’ families. Application forms and full information on selection criteria and the distribution process will be available.

If you have any questions or would like to help with the scholarship fund please contact R.B. Boyle of RB Irrigation at 516-987-6637.

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## IANY 2010 Golf Outing: Save the Date



The Hamlet at Willow Creek

Mount Sinai

Wednesday, Sept. 29

Lunch – 11:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.

Driving Range – 10:00 a.m. to 12:45 p.m.

Shotgun Start – 1:00 p.m.

Social Hour – 5:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m.

Dinner and Awards – 6:00 p.m.

\$195 per person – golf, cart, lunch, on-course drinks,  
social hour & dinner

\$90 per person – dinner only



# **THROUGH THE LENS: IANY December 2009 General Meeting**



**An Attentive bunch**



**Guest speaker Art Desin**



**First-timer George; Multi-timer Joe**



**Dennis wearing a tie???**



**Thanks AGC**



**A view from the bar**





## Notes from the Publisher

by Rich Silverman CID, CIC, CLIA

Welcome 2010 and good-bye and good riddance to 2009!

This past year was a wakeup call and also very educational. Time to move forward and not look back. The experts tell us that the economy is improving slowly.

We may be the only industry, other than the HVAC trade, that would welcome a little global warming. The days of waiting for the phone to ring from our clients and from future business clients are over, as they now have too many choices and too many resources to do their shopping, i.e., Google. If you are waiting for them to call you, then, well, you will be waiting a long time.

If you are looking to do well in 2010, you must become more aggressive in your sales and marketing efforts and start calling them and asking what their needs are – not yours! You will have to a better job of marketing yourself and your company. You will have to operate lean-and-mean.

That employee who does a good job but shows up late all the time, looks like he was out all night and does not work well consistently .... Well, it's time to clean house and get rid of him. It will be a wakeup call to the rest of your team.

You will have to diversify by offering other products and services than irrigation only. Flexibility and attention to detail are the keys. History has proven that when times are tough, other opportunities appear. Look for them!

The universe provides us with plenty of opportunity and resources, such as "The Green Movement." One example is LEED which is Leadership in Efficiency Energy and Design ([www.usgbc-li.org](http://www.usgbc-li.org)). It has been demonstrated that commercial and residential clients are interested in saving our natural resources and are willing to spend extra dollars to do so. LEED is gaining momentum and is in the consciousness of the consumer. Have you heard about

- rainwater harvesting?
- soil-moisture sensors?
- weather sensors?
- drip irrigation?

How can we incorporate these and LEED movement into our businesses? Are you aware of SWAT ([www.irrigation.org](http://www.irrigation.org)) and Smart Irrigation Month ([www.smartirrigationmonth.org](http://www.smartirrigationmonth.org))?

Now is the time to prepare for the spring and create a plan that will carry you through both good and bad times. As I write this, it is 60 days 'til the first day of spring; the football playoffs are underway; and just like a head football coach, I am preparing my team for the next big game. Just like football, the team that is best prepared usually comes out ahead. If you wish to prosper in 2010, you cannot wait until the season comes to you; you will have to go out and make it happen.

Barnes & Noble has several basic books on business planning on its shelves. Pick up a copy of "Business Planning for Dummies" to get some ideas. Take this time to visit trade shows, take some landscape and irrigation classes, call and talk to your vendors, suppliers, your bank and your best clients. Learn how to use your computer and use the Internet as a resource. Build a website for your company, and use social media such as Facebook and Twitter.

Read a few business books on sales and marketing. Jim Huston has written several great books on estimating and pricing. Jeff Carowitz ([www.strategicforcemarketing.com](http://www.strategicforcemarketing.com)) is a marketing guru who helped many of us with his seminar last year. Jeff writes a column for this newsletter and for Irrigation & Green Industry magazine. Take this time to network with the people you do business with and those you wish to work with in the future.

Laying the groundwork **now** for a prosperous spring and summer is essential. I wish you all success in 2010.

P.S. As publisher of this newsletter, I am always looking for articles relevant to our industry. Articles can be of any size and topic as it relates to our industry. Send to [rsilverman@rainrich.com](mailto:rsilverman@rainrich.com).

### Advertise in this Newsletter!

For Information,  
Call 631-424-0170

**This newsletter and past issues  
are archived at [www.IANY.org](http://www.IANY.org).**



## Get Ahead in 2010

by Jeff Carowitz

So we've put the wraps on an incredibly difficult year for our industry, and now we must start thinking about how we can dig out of this economic morass and get back on the growth path.

In the last year, I've watched companies lose their marketing nerve, implement "death by a thousand cuts" to their budgets and demoralize their sales organizations with a lack of focus and direction. I've also seen companies cut prices, or go after business that was a poor fit, simply because any business was better than no business. Some of this has yielded results, much of it has not. And it has made a lot of people mighty grumpy in the process.

The most important thing to do in 2010 is to stop worrying about the economy and to start focusing on what you want to do to move forward. Take a proactive stance to drive your planning for the next season. Get ahead of your competition by doing something (anything!) while they are asleep.

**Focus, Focus, Focus.** Decide what segments of customers really drive your business and laser-target your focus there. Instead of trying to be everything to everybody, invest in the customers that are the best fit and the most profitable.

Conduct a customer and product-line profitability analysis to identify your all-stars. Be sure to base your conclusions on net-profit numbers, because many high gross-margin products and accounts often generate a high amount of overhead expense. Analyze your results to identify accounts and lines that are consuming the bottom line rather than adding to it.

**Reorient and Reinvigorate Salespeople.** A couple of years ago, reps would drive aimlessly around new subdivisions prospecting for business (or killing time?). This year, give them a list of who they need to be seeing. Point your salespeople to pay attention to the profitable accounts and the prospects that can become new profitable accounts. Make sure that every day is a productive day for your talented team.

**Diversify, with Care.** Be cautious with new products or customer segments that take you too far a field from your expertise. Go too far from your base of knowledge and capabilities, and the promised profits turn into a mirage. But do the research and take the training seminars to see what options are right for you and your customers.

**Stay Consistent.** Don't give your customers any chance to doubt your continued ability to deliver outstanding service. In this market, clients are far less tolerant of phone calls that aren't returned quickly and service techs who don't show up when promised. Some are even complaining when they get anything less than a bubbly person on the phone. Never give anyone an excuse to go elsewhere, unless they're one of your unprofitable accounts as noted above. Put in place a process that monitors revenues account-by-account, and red-flags those with sudden declines in revenue.

**Listen.** Conduct customer and market surveys to take the temperature of your market. Find out what "game-changing" enhancements will make you stand out from the rest of the pack. Use customer comment cards to capture continuous feedback on every transaction and to inquire about new items customers might need.

**The Bottom Line.** You've got downtime, make the most of it.

*Based in Houston, Jeff Carowitz is a leading consultant to the green industry. He can be reached at [Jeff@StrategicForceMarketing.com](mailto:Jeff@StrategicForceMarketing.com) or 760-532-7034.*



## Albany Outlook: 2010

by Tom Shanahan

For those who think the major event in an election cycle is the presidency, this year might seem an "off-year" election. But to those who follow politics in Albany, it's nothing of the kind.

This year, every statewide office is up for election – governor, lieutenant governor, attorney general, comptroller and both U.S. Senate seats. Plus, for good measure, every seat in both houses of the state Legislature is also up.

To compound the normal election year complications, it comes at a time of great financial distress for the state, plus the demands of controversial social issues, like gay marriage. Because this election falls in a census year, control of the all-important redistricting process is also at stake. Right now Democrats control everything. But if the Republicans take back the Senate, or even manage a tie, they will have a strong hand in the process of how districts are redrawn. This will play a major factor in every political calculation that is made.

Another consideration, at least for the state Senate, is that the chamber is only narrowly controlled by the party in power – the Democrats. It takes 32 votes to pass anything in the 62-seat Senate, and that's exactly how many votes the Democrats have.

This precarious margin of control is what led to the coup that brought the Senate to a halt, with three weeks left in the session last June. Even one defection on a controversial issue means the Democrats can't pass their bills, and many of the suburban and upstate members are concerned about facing re-election after voting for such city-oriented legislation as the MTA payroll tax.

Not only that, one of the Senate Democrats, Senator Monseratte, was convicted of misdemeanor assault last year and is facing the possibility of jail time, as well as the possibility of an expulsion resolution from some of his colleagues.

What does this mean for politics in the State Capitol? Quite possibly more cooperation than normally occurs in an election year, at least on basic issues such as the budget. If anything is to get done, cooperation is essential. But more controversial programs or changes in social policy are likely to be put off until after November.

*Tom Shanahan, is president of The Shanahan Group, IANY's Albany lobbying firm.*

## What Counts for Continuing Education?

To maintain your certification, simply pay the annual renewal fee and submit at least ten (10) Continuing Education Units (CEUs) yearly. There are many ways to earn CEUs. Following are a variety of activities, as well as the amount of credit each activity is worth. **A minimum of five (5) CEUs per year must be irrigation related. A maximum of five (5) CEUs per year can be green industry or business related.**

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### ► Attending an Irrigation Educational Short Course, Seminar or Technical Conference

These courses can be sponsored by the IA, state or regional irrigation or green industry associations or societies, federal or state agencies, manufacturers, distributors or professional associations and businesses. One CEU equals one hour per training. Refreshments and meal breaks are not considered training time. This category includes web-based training. Individuals can only submit CEU's for the same class once every three years.

### ► Attaining Additional IA Certifications

10 CEUs can be earned for each additional IA certification an individual successfully completes. 20 CEUs will be earned for an initial CID specialty designation. 10 CEUs will also be given to individuals who earn an additional specialty within the CID designation.

### ► Attending Irrigation and Green Industry Trade Shows and Field Days

These can be conducted by the IA, state or regional irrigation associations or societies, universities, colleges or technical institutes, federal or state agencies, and green industry organizations. One quarter CEU will be granted per hour of attendance. A maximum of 4 CEUs per year will be granted in this category.

### ► Judging an Irrigation Competition

These competitions can be conducted by the IA, Professional Landcare Network (PLANET), state or regional irrigation associations or societies, universities, colleges or technical institutes, federal or state agencies, green industry organizations or other professional associations or societies. One half CEU will be granted per hour of judging.

### ► Teaching an Irrigation Short Course or Seminar

These courses can be conducted by the IA, state or regional irrigation associations or societies, universities, colleges or technical institutes, federal or state agencies, green industry organizations or other professional associations or societies. One CEU will be granted per hour of teaching. Maximum of 10 CEUs per year will be granted in this category.

### ► Presenting an Irrigation Paper at a Seminar or Technical Conference

Papers can be presented for the IA, state or regional irrigation associations or societies, universities, colleges or technical institutes, federal or state agencies, green industry organizations or other professional associations or societies. A presenter can earn up to a maximum of five CEUs for any presentation over 15 minutes in length.

### ► Teaching an In-house Irrigation Training Course or Green Industry Training Course

These courses will be normally conducted by irrigation or green industry manufacturers, distributors and dealers. One half CEU will be granted per hour of teaching. Maximum of 10 CEUs per year will be granted in this category.

### ► Attending an In-house Irrigation Training Course or Green Industry Training Course

These courses are normally conducted by irrigation manufacturers, distributors and dealers. One half CEU will be granted per hour of attendance.

### ► Conducting Irrigation Audits

This category applies only to individuals that have earned the CLIA or CGIA designation. Two CEUs will be granted for each audit that follows the IA audit guidelines. A maximum of four CEUs can be earned in this category.

### ► Attending Business Courses or Seminars

A maximum of four CEUs will be granted for attending a business course or seminar that is directly related to the performance of your job responsibilities. One quarter CEU will be granted per hour of attendance.

### ► Attending Green Industry Courses or Seminars

A maximum of five CEUs will be granted for attending green industry courses or seminars that are not irrigation courses or seminars. One quarter CEU will be granted per each hour of attendance.

### ► Items Determined by the Certification Board

These include writing irrigation books or sections of irrigation books, writing irrigation articles for professional journals or magazines in the irrigation or green industry, serving as CB members, writing material for reference manuals, or writing questions for certification examinations. A maximum of five CEUs can be earned in this category. Hours earned in this category must be pre-approved.

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### Three ways to submit your CEUs ... (please send by only one method!)

1. Submit **FREE** online (or review your individual report or pay your renewal fee) at [www.irrigation.org/certification](http://www.irrigation.org/certification) (go to CEUs)
2. Fax for a **\$25 fee** the CEU Submission Form to 703.536.7019 OR
3. Mail for a **\$25 fee** the CEU Submission Form to Certification, IA, 6540 Arlington Blvd., Falls Church, VA 22042-6638



## IRRIGATION ASSOCIATION OF NEW YORK

### 2010 WINTER EDUCATION SERIES

Long Island Sheraton Hotel

110 Motor Parkway, Hauppauge, N.Y. 11788

CLASS OFFERINGS		
DAY AND TIME	COURSE NUMBER & NAME	COST
<b>MONDAY, MARCH 8</b> 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.	<b>1. Beyond Basic Design School</b> From layout to precipitation rates, formulas, flow rates and more. Even the veteran irrigation contractor will walk away with some new knowledge. Instructor: Tom Armbruster, CLIA	\$95 pp, member \$105 pp, non-member Sign up two or more from same company & <b>save \$20</b> per-person
<b>TUESDAY, MARCH 9</b> 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.	<b>2. Drainage: Alternative Income</b> After last year's rain, this is a must-know for all irrigation contractors. Learn how to install proper drainage. You might sell more drainage jobs than irrigation this year. Instructor: Jeff Dominick	
<b>WEDNESDAY, MARCH 10</b> 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.  <b>Thursday, March 11</b> 8:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m.	<b>3. Certified Landscape Irrigation Auditor (CLIA)</b> Prep class for national exam. For the advanced contractor looking to prove he/she's got what it takes. After taking this class, you will find out just how much you really don't know about irrigation. Instructor: Art Elmers, CID,CIC,CLIA,	\$185 pp, member \$225 pp, non-member Sign up two or more from same company & <b>save \$20</b> per-person
<b>THURSDAY, MARCH 11</b> 12:30 p.m. to 3:30 p.m.	<b>CLIA Exam</b> You must sign up with the national Irrigation Association at least <b>30 days prior</b> .	Visit <a href="http://www.irrigation.org">www.irrigation.org</a> for pricing.
<b>FRIDAY, MARCH 12</b> 8:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m.	<b>4. Licensing</b> This class is designed to help the contractor with all the information needed to obtain irrigation licenses in Nassau and Suffolk counties. Instructor: Bobby Winter	\$45 pp, member \$55pp, non-member Sign up two or more from same company & <b>save \$10</b> per-person
<b>FRIDAY, MARCH 12</b> 1:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m.	<b>5. Electrical Trouble Shooting</b> Basic electrical trouble shooting locating the source, timers, field wiring and solenoids; understanding of multimeters, amps and ohms; wiring of pumps. Instructors: Bobby Winter & Tom Novack	

Class subject to cancellation: minimum class size 12. Maximum class size 20. Sign up early!





**IRRIGATION ASSOCIATION OF NEW YORK**

**2010 WINTER EDUCATION SERIES**

March 8-12, 2010

Long Island Sheraton Hotel  
110 Motor Parkway, Hauppauge, N.Y. 11788

**Registration Form**

Contact \_\_\_\_\_

Company \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_ Fax \_\_\_\_\_ E-mail \_\_\_\_\_

**Names**

**Course Numbers**

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

**Registration forms and payments must be received by March 1.**

Class subject to cancellation; minimum class size 12. Maximum class size 20. So sign up early!

Visa/Master/American Express \_\_\_\_\_ Exp. \_\_\_\_\_ Code \_\_\_\_\_

Name as it appears on card \_\_\_\_\_

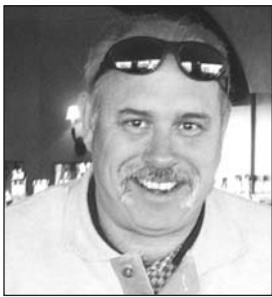
Billing address \_\_\_\_\_

Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Amount enclosed or authorized \_\_\_\_\_

Make checks payable to **Irrigation Association of New York.**

**Mail to:** Irrigation Association of New York  
Post Office Box 237  
Greenlawn, N.Y. 11740



## **It's About Reality, not Optimism**

by Tom Armbruster, CLIA

**D**ealing with the situation we are all facing as an industry is definitely the toughest task I have ever faced in this crazy irrigation business. Contractors' phones are dead. Jobs are being sold at prices so low that even if you have no fixed overhead, you are barely keeping men on board and gas in the trucks.

We've faced wet years, and we've faced economic slowdowns, but as a 33-year veteran of just about every phase of this business, this one seems different to me. Outside of the ball fields, the municipal jobs, the very few "estates" and the rare real-estate transaction, the bloodline of our industry, the hard working, "Pride-in-Their-Homes" upper middle class of this region, has stopped spending money on nonessential things such as lawn sprinklers for their properties.

We think – or hope in some cases – that this disaster is because we had a wet year. I've heard contractors express to me that "if I can just hold on until the spring, I'll be fine ...." Even if we debate the impact of the economic down-turn, and the fear that our 401(k)s, money markets and general financial health are still very much in question, there are way more issues at stake here. I'd like to discuss a few.

The momentum and movement toward being "green" are gathering steam far outside the California/Arizona markets. I understand that many of the people who are reading this are saying they don't see that as an issue. Believe me, it is an issue, and the grass-roots designers, legislators and Internet surfers are flocking there like moths to a flame.

Drought-tolerant grasses, meadow-grass, moisture maintaining soil amendments, organic fertilizers are terms that limit irrigation. "Xeriscaping" is a bad word for us, and is gaining serious momentum. Patches of artificial turf for dog runs, athletic fields, playgrounds, poolsapes and just plain the pesky area of "messy grass" to the left of the patio, outdoor kitchen and fire-pit are popping up and limiting irrigation.

How about the famous LEED program, and their crazy restrictions and guidelines for watering. I'm not saying that the door is shutting, just that it is moving very heavily to a situation where the cost of compliance is, in many cases, prohibitive to our industry and livelihood.

*Continues on page 11*

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I have, with regret, become an expert in rain-water recovery, due to heavy customer inquiries on Hunter's website. In most cases, you cannot store enough water to irrigate anything other than a few planting beds. Forget any expanse of lawn! At 27,000 gallons an acre-inch, who could buy, bury and maintain the vessels and pumping system? Planners want to be "green," they want to not use resources, and they definitely do not want to buy water.

Contractors who have been doing landscape lighting and holiday lighting and have raved to me about the potential over the past few years, all are saying their lighting businesses are down as much as irrigation. Is that caused by a wet spring? Will that business bounce back if we get dry weather next spring?

The theme is universal. Lawnscapers claim their fall clean-ups are way off. They are not mulching as in the past. They are not doing pavers, bed edging, seeding or fertilizer services (unless they are "organic" fertilizers) in any kind of numbers as in the past. Homeowners are shaving dollars for all nonessential services.

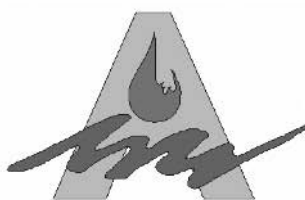
I believe "keeping-up-with-the-Joneses" is a phrase that will become far less prevalent in the future than it was for the past 25 years, as suburbia sprawled. Success was visually measured by the size, appearance and accessories of your home. The pools and over-the-top landscaping/irrigation projects that adorned almost every new home are getting slashed out of builders' offerings. When people buy homes, the immediate pool and landscape renovation upgrades are not happening as frequently either.

People are afraid for their jobs, their 401(k)s, their retirement, their house appraisals, sending their kids to college and having room and money when the kids have to move back because they can't get jobs!

I'm starting to hear stories from contractors, of homeowners getting together and buying a small compressor to blow out everyone in the group. I'm hearing contracts for service packages are falling off, with customers saying "just blow me out for now; we don't know if we'll even use it next year."

In this seriously bad environment, there will be opportunities: upgrades, water-saving timers, backflow testing, efficiency audits and low-volume alternatives to areas of waste and runoff. All these areas and other conserving, dollar-saving ideas will move into our offerings. Why? Because it is a win/win, and that's what has to happen. Homeowners need to "get something back" for any large investment. Spend to save, not to be affluent.

But make no mistake about my message: the bread-and-butter, irrigation-only contractor will be a dying breed as a sole business entity. If I hear one more story of how pricing is "lower than ever before" or "I can't sell a job for enough to stay in business," I'm going to scream. That's what happens when times get tough, for whatever reason. *Continues on page 12*



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We all rode the wave, and the industry grew to support X-number of contractors doing Y-dollars of volume. Whether or not you want to believe it, we're doing 40 percent less Y with the same amount of contractors! You do not need a master's degree in economics to know what happens when your "supply" is there, but the demand is off 40 percent. Guys are starving for work, and aggressively bidding low to get anything. Who among you can honestly look at Spring 2010 and not be scared to death that this trend will continue, or even get worse?

So get smart. Market win/win ideas and services to your homeowners who know you and have confidence in you. Offer services that save them money. Offer them something free for a new client, an efficiency audit or a smarter rain sensor. Offer to do other services with your men and trucks and machines: light drainage, lights, hidden dog fence, yard and garage clean-ups, upgraded water-saving devices, drought tolerant over-seeding programs or organic non-toxic fertilizer applications.

Maybe think about minimal investments in other related businesses. The only direction that I believe will keep you whole, without significant downsizing, is expanded services to your customer base. The pool of new residential systems is shrinking. Believe it that landscapers are looking to get into your business, and you'll see them offering irrigation from dripping only the plants they install, or watering only the work they do, to full irrigation systems.

More dollars for open advertising is not the answer; smarter, focused efforts towards the customers and neighborhoods where you are very visible is the answer. Start today formulating how you will approach 2010.

The ideas I've heard from all of you are varied and creative. Everything from a D-I-Y service to assist local homeowners in installing their own systems to garage floor refinishing. Ideas from pool service to total home services, where you will post a "services list" next to the controller or in the garage of every project the homeowner might do, but chooses to contract you instead. If you post 15 services, and only two customers per thousand even inquire, and only one job-per-service develops, that's 15 new jobs (per 1,000 customers) that month, to bring in income and open more doors for leads and networking. I'm available to discuss and share ideas. Let's all get ready for a challenging 2010.

*Tom Armbruster is Hunter Industries' New York-New Jersey sales manager. He can be reached at [Thomas.Armbruster@hunterindustries.com](mailto:Thomas.Armbruster@hunterindustries.com); 973-224-2276.*

## **2009 Irrigation Show Attracts Key Decision-Makers**

The 2009 Irrigation Show, held Dec. 2-4 in San Antonio, fared well given current economic conditions. There were approximately 4,500 attendees, which included over 2,000 qualified buyers who influence major purchase decisions. There were more than 280 companies that covered over 150,000 square feet of exhibit space.

The ratio of attendees to exhibitors is higher than in previous years and initial feedback has been very positive. "We look forward to getting additional feedback from the show surveys, and will continue to make enhancements to increase the value of the show for both exhibitors and attendees," said show officials.

The show included a three-day expo, over 25 education offerings, and 65 technical session presentations. More than 350 students attended Irrigation Association education classes and approximately 115 certification candidates sat for IA exams.

Keynote speaker Sandra Postel, of the Global Water Policy Project, highlighted the need for coordinated, concerted efforts to manage the growing competition for scarce resources and double water productivity for agricultural, industrial and urban use.

Postel is "realistically optimistic" about our global water future and believes that irrigation can, and will, contribute to the forthcoming water revolution.

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency highlighted the benefits of becoming an EPA WaterSense® Partner and held a public meeting on the WaterSense Draft Specification for Weather- or Sensor-Based Irrigation Controller Technology.

IA held an inaugural IrrigationPAC reception during the show. The IrrigationPAC reception brought together elite representatives from the irrigation industry to show their support for the association's public policy agenda and promote the mission of efficient irrigation through grassroots support.

**The 2010 Irrigation Show will be held Dec. 5-7 in Phoenix.**



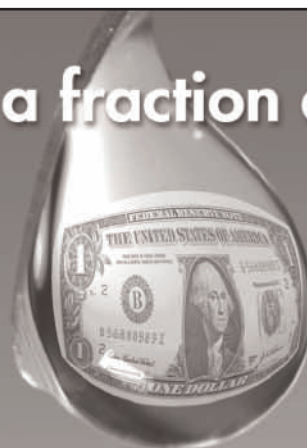
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