

# PUBLIC WORKS & UTILITIES

PAVING THE WAY FOR A BRIGHTER FUTURE BY EDUCATING, ENGAGING AND EMPOWERING OUR EMPLOYEES.

<http://lincoln.ne.gov/city/pworks/docs/newsletter/>

2013 February / March  
In this issue:

- Director's Corner
- Strong Lincs
- Events
- Welcome Frank Uhlarik
- Biosolids

## CALL BEFORE YOU DIG

One Call Concepts, Inc. (OCC) recently won the contract to operate the Nebraska one call center – the Digger's Hotline of Nebraska. With the addition of Nebraska, OCC now serves 15 states as well as the District of Columbia.

As the 2013 construction season begins, we want to remind homeowners and contractors to call Digger's Hotline of Nebraska (811) at least 48 hours prior to excavation to have local utilities marked. Whether you are putting in a fence, installing sprinklers, burying a pet or removing and replacing a concrete sidewalk or driveway, Nebraska State Law requires you to call prior to any type of digging.

All member utility companies mark their individual utilities. The City of Lincoln is unique in that we maintain and notify the following utilities: water, wastewater, storm sewer, traffic (911 fiber and traffic signal wires), downtown utilities (electrical and irrigation lines) and Parks and Recreation.

Locating private utilities is the responsibility of the property owner. Examples of private utilities include water and sewer services, irrigation systems and gas lines to grills.

Local ordinances and permit requirements also must be followed.

For more information visit  
<http://www.ne1call.com>.

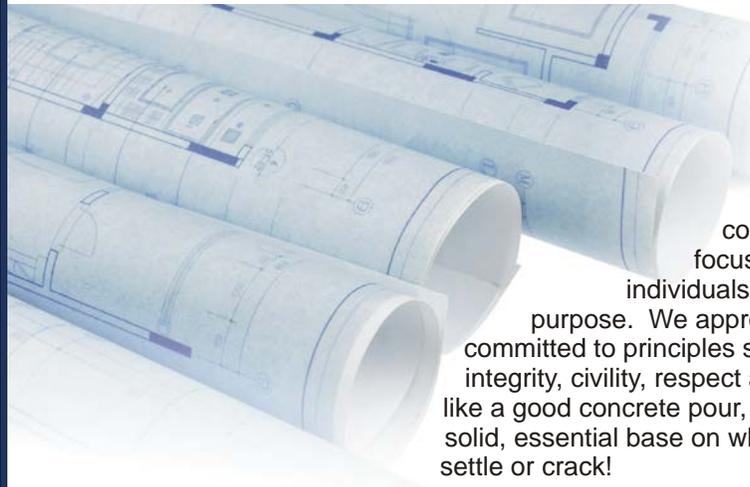
## Director's Corner

### *Laying the Groundwork*

**As I've shared with many of you before, my Dad was a concrete man – a salt-of-the-earth, blue collar guy and super hero of mine. He always expressed the critical importance of "laying the proper groundwork" for every decision we make and action we take. He believed that the most crucial component of any structure – or human being – was a strong, secure foundation.**



**Miki Esposito, Director of Public Works and Utilities**



In 2012, I asked that we focus not only on what we do, but who we are. Together, we successfully redefined PWU as a group of compassionate, customer-focused and solution-minded individuals dedicated to a common purpose. We approached our mission fully committed to principles such as professionalism, integrity, civility, respect and hard work. And just like a good concrete pour, we had to establish that solid, essential base on which to build so as not to settle or crack!

In 2013, we will build upon last year's success and work to create a written "blueprint" for how we manage all aspects, functions and operations of PWU. In accordance with nationally established best management practices, we have begun what's called a "self-assessment" process. The self-assessment provides an established framework for review, evaluation and improvement of our agency's policies, practices and procedures and will result in a publically accessible City of Lincoln Public Works and Utilities Management Practices Manual.

This process will enable us to think critically about current business practices; to carefully consider and document our work product and deliverables; to identify gaps where improvement is possible; and provide consistency and a legal basis for decision-making and actions. The greatest benefit to the self-assessment is in capturing the institutional knowledge of our most valuable and experienced employees nearing retirement. What an incredible resource they are to the next generation of agency employees!

I look forward to what I will learn from you during this process and deeply appreciate your continued dedication to our improvement.

# STRONG LINCS

**"THERE IS NO 'DIVISION' AMONG OUR DIVISIONS."**

Miki Esposito

**PWU Director Miki Esposito is pleased to announce the December/January Strong Linc Award recipients for the workplace principle of generosity. Please congratulate these Strong Lincs for their valued service:**

Duncan Ellis, Leroy Skaggs and Adam Fagnant (*Water*) – These individuals received thanks for efforts during a December 2 water main break in the 56th and Elkcrest area. Neighbors reported the workers as friendly, helpful and professional as they helped prevent as much landscape damage as possible. They expressed sincere appreciation for the workers returning with compost to refill the hole and replanting the salvaged plants in the homeowner's absence.

Tan Pham (*Watershed Management*) – Tan has been very busy with Accela automation, but always takes the time to patiently work with staff on computer issues and mapping needs.

Mike Wiese (*StarTran*) – Mike has served on the Amalgamated Transit Union (ATU) 1293 Executive Board as both Vice-President and President. Mike has demonstrated personal generosity by his donation of time and leadership to young men during 20 years of service with the Boy Scouts of America. He also participates in mission trips with his church.

John Bode (*StarTran*) – In January, John donated a kidney to his cousin. John doesn't feel his actions are particularly noteworthy, suggesting that he is "just doing the right thing."

Scott Opfer (*Engineering Services*) – Scott donates time and money to team-building exercises and organizes staff appreciation activities. Scott has a heart for helping others in community and contributes to the [Snow Angels](#) program, the Food Bank and his church.

Shawnadee Morris (*Solid Waste Management*) – Shawnadee convinced an individual (later determined to be a missing person from Vermillion, SD) to wait inside the gatehouse while police were summoned for assistance. She generously offered food and quiet conversation to ensure the person was not frightened by his situation.

Teri Hubka, Chris Williams and Marcia Rodaway (*Solid Waste Management*) – This trio annually collects monetary donations to help someone in need. Teri also was recognized by Wastewater for her office-wide fund-raising effort to purchase gift cards for the Big Brothers/Big Sisters program at Christmas time.

Joel Allison (*Solid Waste Management*) – Joel's generosity has helped many people, whether it's changing a flat tire, jump starting a vehicle, running an errand, buying lunch or providing a lift. He is always willing to help.

Lane Loschen (*Solid Waste Management*) – Lane generously offered assistance to remove a permanent litter fence prior to excavation of soil. He had the wire ties removed and the chain link fence laid on the ground before anyone knew what he was doing! The following day, he assisted in removing, knocking concrete off and storing the poles.

Mike Mandery (*Wastewater*) – Mike fostered a spirit of togetherness by buying and preparing prime rib for the Wastewater Collection holiday lunch.

Ron Swanson (*Wastewater*) – Prior to a coworker's passing, Ron assisted him during brain cancer treatment with supervision duties of the maintenance staff. Now working out-of-class, Ron is quickly earning the respect of staff with his cooperative common sense approach.

Taylor Buss (*Engineering Services*) – An additional award winner for the workplace principle of responsibility, Taylor was recognized for meticulously going through the Aurigo Construction Management software during upgrades, snapping screen shots and pulling old reports for comparison. He organized a team meeting with fellow inspectors, providing valuable insight for coworkers, as well as testing and feedback.

*The next workplace principle for February/March will focus on innovation. Nominations are due to Miki no later than March 15.*

## A Farewell Note...

Best wishes to our colleagues who recently retired from City employment. Their service to our community is appreciated. May they find success in all their future endeavors!

Jerry Poppe (*Water*) – 42 years

Larry Worth (*StarTran*) – 39 years

Leroy Uglow (*ES/Street and Traffic Operations*) – 38 years

Patti Kamerzell (*Business Office*) – 35 years

Randy Winch (*ES/Street and Traffic Operations*) – 35 years

Roger Tiedeman (*ES/Street and Traffic Operations*) – 30 years

---

*Condolences to  
Warren Wondercheck's  
friends and family.*

He passed away Saturday, February 9th from a heart attack. His care for others, pride in his work and project management skills will be dearly missed by the Engineering Services - Design/Construction Section and by many other friends and coworkers.

---

## 2013 Home & Garden Show

The 41st annual Nebraska Builders Home and Garden Show was held at the Lancaster Event Center February 7 through 10. Public Works and Utilities expanded its presence at this year's event and staffed educational booths that included Wastewater, StarTran, Engineering Services, Lincoln Water System, Solid Waste Operations and the Watershed Management Division.

With over 300 businesses represented and an estimated 15,000-plus attendees, PWU volunteers took the opportunity to speak with the public on topics such as household hazardous waste collections, recycling, land management and floodplain issues as well as transportation, water quality and drought concerns.



**Thursday, February 28**

**N.W. 48th Street Project Public Open House**  
4:30 to 7:30 p.m.  
Arnold Elementary School

**March 18 through April 19**

Rain Barrel Displays

**Saturday, April 20**

Rain Barrel Auction  
10 a.m. to noon  
SouthPointe Pavilions

Thursday, March 21  
Spring Contractor Meeting  
Firefighters Hall

Monday and Tuesday,  
March 25 and 26  
Earth Wellness Festival  
Southeast Community College

Tuesday through Thursday,  
**April 2, 3 and 4**  
Employee Training  
Auld Recreation Center

**Saturday and Sunday,  
April 13 and 14**  
StarTran "Stuff the Bus"  
Wal-Mart and Sam's Club locations

Wednesday and Thursday,  
**April 24 and 25**  
Spring Safety Meeting  
Firefighters Hall

**UPCOMING  
CONSTRUCTION  
PROJECTS**

**2013 Construction Season Projects**  
[lincoln.ne.gov](http://lincoln.ne.gov) (keyword: closures)

**WELCOME FRANK UHLARIK!**

Frank Uhlarik joins Public Works and Utilities as the Department Liaison and Environmental Compliance Administrator. With over 26 years of experience in environmental management, Frank was most recently with Alfred Benesch Company, where he was the project manager for environmental remediation efforts in the West Haymarket redevelopment area.



Frank will be charged with establishing and maintaining a comprehensive environmental management system for the department. He will continue to serve as the City's Environmental Remediation Manager for the West Haymarket project and work with other stakeholders in building upon sustainable development initiatives on behalf of the City. An Omaha native, Frank has become well acquainted with City of Lincoln personnel and programs through his past work on the Haymarket project and is looking forward to helping the department set and achieve its environmental goals.

Frank and his wife Paula live in Omaha and have three grown daughters and one granddaughter also residing in the Omaha area. Frank and Paula enjoy traveling, cooking, attending all kinds of sports events and exercising as much as they can tolerate. A former collegiate wrestler and Cornhusker State Games participant, Frank is now setting his sights on improving his "Crossfit" skills, an exercise regime he and Paula took up in 2011.

Welcome, Frank. We look forward to working with you.



StarTran, in cooperation with Wal-Mart, Sam's Club and Three Eagles Communications radio stations are sponsoring the 14th annual "Stuff the Bus" for Friendship Home from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. April 13 and 14. Raffle tickets for a chance to win great prizes can be purchased for \$1. Citizens are asked to donate new items needed by women and children at any Wal-Mart or Sam's location during the event. Friendship Home provides not only safe, confidential shelter and support, but also supplies women and children with the necessities needed to start a new lives free from violence.

**StarTran 31-Consecutive Day Bus Pass Has New Lower Price!**

StarTran's 31-Day regular pass is now only \$17. City/County employees are eligible to receive half-priced non-transferrable StarTran 31-Consecutive Day Passes for only \$8.50. Questions? Call StarTran Customer Service at 402-476-1234. The StarTran office, 710 "J" Street, is open from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. weekdays. Forms for City/County employees can be found on Intralinc's "Employee's Self Service" link and submitted to your payroll department.



# DOLLAR\$ & ÇENT\$

“Enterprise fund” is the term used for the Water, Wastewater, and Landfill Divisions, which means the financial support comes from utility revenues. In other communities around the country, the services provided by these divisions may be through private utility companies.

These divisions are generally not supported by tax dollars, but rather by the fees their customers pay for these services. These utilities have several cost centers. In addition to salaries and benefits, they include the cost of energy to pump and treat water, the cost to own and maintain a fleet of vehicles, the cost of maintaining hundreds of miles of pipelines and the debt service on funds borrowed for previous capital projects.

In Lincoln, the utilities make payments to the City’s general fund for services a general fund department provides to the utility division. This includes services from Law, Personnel, Purchasing and the Public Building Commission.

“These utility divisions are very capital intensive,” said Fran Mejer, PWU Business Manager. The cost of replacing the infrastructure at both Water and Wastewater would be in the range of \$1.5 billion each. As this infrastructure ages, the cost of replacing it needs to be programmed into the rates the customers pay.

Lincoln customers currently enjoy some of the lowest water and wastewater rates in the region, with average residential bills for each utility near \$20 per month.

## Lincoln’s Biosolids Land Application Program: 20 Years Old and Going Strong

Biosolids are nutrient-rich, organic materials separated from wastewater and biologically processed to make them safe to use as an organic fertilizer. The organic matter and other essential nutrients in biosolids cannot be duplicated by synthetic fertilizers.

In the last 20 years, more than 100 area farmers have applied 600,000 tons of biosolids to their crop land, improving their soil and increasing yields. Applications from the City’s biosolids program improve crop yields by an average of 5 percent compared with inorganic sources of nitrogen-fertilizer. Biosolids add organic matter to the soil that allows the soil to breathe and hold more water and nutrients. Organic nitrogen is released slowly, improving crop production. The result is better crops, less water runoff, less soil erosion and more water conservation.

A new farmer in the program reported the field he applied biosolids to have never yielded more than 85 bushels of corn per acre. After one application of biosolids, it yielded 145 bushels. The farmer said, “I didn’t add any other fertilizer, just like you said ... and I just harvested the best corn crop I ever got off that field.”

For additional information on biosolids, visit <http://lancaster.unl.edu/enviro/BiosolidsReprint.pdf>.



## PWU Recognized at NWEA Conference

The Nebraska Water Environment Association conference was held November 7 through 9 in Kearney. Employees from Wastewater were recognized for their great achievements:

**Scott Wilbur Awards** (presented for outstanding operation and maintenance of a wastewater treatment facility):

**Large Facility:**

City of Lincoln Theresa Street

**Medium Facility:**

City of Lincoln Northeast

**Safety Award Platinum:**

City of Lincoln  
Theresa Street

**2012 Top-Ops  
Competition**

First Place -  
Brad Barber



**Antelope Valley Project  
Crown Community Award 2012**  
[americancityandcounty.com](http://americancityandcounty.com)

## PUBLIC WORKS & UTILITIES

### MARKETING COMMITTEE MEMBERS

#### \*Newsletter Committee Member

**Ellen Wright**

[ewright@lincoln.ne.gov](mailto:ewright@lincoln.ne.gov)

**\*Amy Cornelius-Jones**

[acornelius@lincoln.ne.gov](mailto:acornelius@lincoln.ne.gov)

**Dave Beyersdorf**

[dbeyersdorf@lincoln.ne.gov](mailto:dbeyersdorf@lincoln.ne.gov)

**Gene Hanlon**

[ghanlon@lincoln.ne.gov](mailto:ghanlon@lincoln.ne.gov)

**Jeff Harrison**

[harrison1@neb.rr.com](mailto:harrison1@neb.rr.com)

**Joshua Meyer**

[jmeyer@lincoln.ne.gov](mailto:jmeyer@lincoln.ne.gov)

**Karen Sieckmeyer**

[sieckmeyer@lincoln.ne.gov](mailto:sieckmeyer@lincoln.ne.gov)

**Kitty Elliott**

[kelliott@lincoln.ne.gov](mailto:kelliott@lincoln.ne.gov)

**\*Meagan Pratt**

[mnpratt@lincoln.ne.gov](mailto:mnpratt@lincoln.ne.gov)

**Michelle Zuhlke**

[mzuhlke@lincoln.ne.gov](mailto:mzuhlke@lincoln.ne.gov)

**\*Nick McElvain**

[nmcelvain@lincoln.ne.gov](mailto:nmcelvain@lincoln.ne.gov)

**\*Pam Gadeken**

[pgadeken@lincoln.ne.gov](mailto:pgadeken@lincoln.ne.gov)

**Rock Krzycki**

[rkrzycki@lincoln.ne.gov](mailto:rkrzycki@lincoln.ne.gov)