

ALABAMA ONSITE WASTEWATER ASSOCIATION

AOWA news

Better Living Through Improved Sanitation

Vol. 28 No. 1 January, 2022

ROTO-ROOTER PLUMBING & WATER CLEANUP



www.aowainfo.org

INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

It Takes a Team - Roto-Rooter
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AOWA Launches New Website
and more.

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This News Magazine is a publication of the Alabama Onsite Wastewater Association (AOWA).

www.aowainfo.org

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President..... Alan Astin

Vice President.....Randy Anderson

Secretary
/Treasurer.....Roger Youngblood

The appearance of products in advertising or the editorial content of this newsletter does not imply endorsement by AOWA.

*On the cover: Randy Anderson, owner of Roto Rooter. This feature article about his company entitled **It Takes a Team**, begins on page 12.*

A Word From the AOWA President



Happy New Year!

I hope you all are doing well and seeing a great start to 2022.

I'd like to start this message by announcing that the AOWA News Magazine will be moving from four to two issues this year. You can expect to receive your copy of the magazine in January and again in August. This decision comes in an effort to provide a magazine with a great amount of industry-related content and announcements that you will find useful as an industry professional. If you have not been receiving the magazine and are a member of the AOWA and/or a licensee, please call us at the AOWA office at (334) 396-3434 to be placed on that distribution list. And of course, we would love to have you place your ad in one of our issues. What better way to promote your company and/or services than to advertise with us? Within this issue, you will find our 2022 Ad Media Kit, outlining pricing options for the year. This information can also be found on the AOWA website at www.aowainfo.org.

Oh, and speaking of the website, did you know we have a new one? Just before the end of the year, the AOWA website got a refresh. The URL is the same, www.aowainfo.org, but you will see a fresh layout and content on the new site. We hope you like it!

The 35th Annual AOWA Trade Show is just around the corner. This year's show will take place at the Orange Beach Event Center in Orange Beach, Alabama. Registration is OPEN and available on our website or by calling the office. And don't forget to book your hotel room at the SpringHill Suites under our group rate. This discounted rate will be available until February 15; just mention the AOWA when you call to book. We look forward to seeing you again for our annual show!

The 2022 Licensing class schedule can be found within this issue. The cost is \$700 for AOWA members and \$750 for non-members. All Licensing classes will take place at the Home Builders Association office in Montgomery, followed by your test at the AOWB that Friday. As a reminder - Basic Installer, Pumper, and Manufacturer must receive approval from the AOWB **BEFORE** you can take one of these classes. If you have questions about the process for getting into one of these classes, please contact Melissa Hines at the AOWB. All Advanced Installer, Level I & II classes do not require approval from the AOWB; however, there are a few prerequisites you must meet before you can take one of

these classes. You can find more information on the approval process and prerequisites on our website or by contacting the AOWB.

You will also find the 2022 Continuing Education schedule within this issue. We hope you can join us for one of these sessions.

As a reminder, online education will be offered in the fall if you decide you want to wait and get your hours that way.

The AOWA is pleased to offer a scholarship program for students interested in financial assistance to further their post-secondary education. Within this issue you will find more information on the scholarship criteria, along with an application. The deadline to submit your application is April 29. Don't miss out on this great opportunity!

We hope you enjoy this issue's feature article on AOWA board member, Randy Anderson. Within this article, you will hear more about Randy's company motto "It Takes a Team", highlighting some of his teams' accomplishments and successes at Roto Rooter.

Are you a current member of the AOWA? Has your membership lapsed? We hope you will consider joining or renewing your membership with us! Don't miss out on all the great member benefits. A membership form can be found on the website.

Are you receiving our e-news? This is a great way to stay up to date on important legislative announcements, advertising deadlines, and upcoming class schedules. If you aren't receiving our e-news, please call the AOWA office to be placed on the distribution list.

The AOWA is here for YOU! Our goal is to provide the best resources and utmost support to our members and other industry professionals.

As always, thank you for your efforts in keeping the AOWA a successful, supportive association for its members and others in the Onsite Wastewater Industry.

Take Care,

Alan



Alan Astin
AOWA President

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Scott Harris, M.D., M.P.H.
STATE HEALTH OFFICER

HAPPY NEW YEAR AOWA LICENCEES!

I hope everyone had a great Holiday Season and ready to enter 2022 with a fantastic start.

The Blackbelt Unincorporated Wastewater Program (BBUWP) continues to be a project that is supported by the Alabama Department of Public Health. So far, the BBUWP has installed several Onsite Sewage Systems for the residents of Lowndes County. The BBUWP has been featured nationally on CBS's 60 mins as well as locally through the Lowndes County Signal, Lowndes County's local newspaper. Keep your eyes open for a Docuseries to be released in January 2022 regarding the program on CBS. You can also follow the BBUWP on Facebook (www.facebook.com/bbuwp) and Instagram (@bbuwp). If you have anyone who would like to donate to the program, they may do so on our social media outlets as well as the new website, www.bbuwp.org.

In addition to the BBUWP work, the Bureau of Environmental Services continues to work on updating the Onsite Sewage regulations as well as Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) that will be sent to Public Health Environmentalists across the state; once the regulations have been approved by the State Committee of Public Health. We hope that the SOP's will continue to allow across the State procedures so that every Public Health District will work the same.

I hope you are all staying healthy in the next phase of Covid-19, Omicron. Please continue to wear a mask when you are in public places and if you haven't already, please consider getting vaccinated and boosted.

If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to contact me at (334)206-5375 or leigh.salter@adph.state.al.us (note new email address). I look forward to seeing you all in March at the AOWA Trade Show.

Sincerely,

Leigh Salter
Community Environmental Protection, Director
Bureau of Environmental Services

MAILING ADDRESS Post Office Box 303017 | Montgomery, AL 36130-3017
PHYSICAL ADDRESS The RSA Tower | 201 Monroe Street | Montgomery, AL 36104

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The Alabama Onsite Wastewater Association News Magazine is published twice a year. Issues are released in January and August.

Ask for the AOWA Media Kit today by emailing: rfreeman@asginfo.net



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No job is too big or too small, and all of our customers are important to us!
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More and more financial institutions are requiring septic inspections before financing a home. These inspections offer security to the buyer and increase the value of the home for the seller. Septic inspections can only be performed by a licensed installer. Call us today to schedule your septic inspection!

IN ADDITION TO OUR SERVICE AND INSTALLATION, WE OFFER SALES OF MANY ITEMS, BOTH FOR CONTRACTORS AND THE GENERAL PUBLIC!

- Offering a full line of PVC pipe, fittings, and accessories.
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- Liberty Pump Distributor including drip lines, grinder pumps, and side-discharge pumps
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- Jackson County's only source for Precast Tanks and accessories
 - 1,000 gallon and 1,500 gallon tank/pump combos

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- Sewer and Utilities - Pumping, Jetting, Inspection, Maintenance, Repair, Field Line Rejuvenation
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 - Jackson County's Only Source for Screened Top Soil

WE ARE A LICENSED GENERAL CONTRACTOR AVAILABLE FOR ALL COMMERCIAL AND RESIDENTIAL NEEDS FOR PLUMBING, SEPTIC, ON-SITE EXCAVATIONS AND MORE!

Living where you want is a major part of the American dream, but if the land you want to build on doesn't offer a "septic friendly" environment, we can help. We are the only Advanced Level 2 licensed contractor in Jackson County. We take great pride in installing a well-designed system for people who are making investments in their homes that should last for many years to come.



CHECK OUT ALL OUR SERVICES AT WWW.GULLEYSEPTICSERVICES.COM

AOWA Scholarship Program

Application Deadline – April 29, 2022 *(application on next page)*

AOWA is pleased to offer a scholarship program for students interested in financial assistance to further their post-secondary education.

If you, or someone you know, would be interested in applying for an AOWA scholarship, please read and share the information below. Applications are online, or request one from the AOWA Office (334-396-3434).

A scholarship recipient may attend the school of their choice, whether ACADEMIC, VOCATIONAL, or TECHNICAL, in or out of the state of Alabama. Scholarships are \$1000 per school year for the recipient.



Persons eligible to apply for the scholarships are AOWA members, spouses of members, children of members, grandchildren, stepchildren, and other immediate family members of a member having no

children or having underage children, employees and their children of AOWA member companies who have worked an average of 25 hours per week for at least 6 months for that member company, and member employee's children as well as AOWA employees. Documentation of such employment must be attached to the application. The Scholarship Committee makes the award selections from the application information submitted.

Scholarships are for the 2022 - 2023 academic year. Being approved for one scholarship does not disqualify an applicant from applying for another in a subsequent year. Past scholarship recipients must re-apply and complete the entire application if they wish to be considered for the current year. Failing, without good cause, to complete the courses for which the first scholarship was issued will result in disqualification for a second. The application must be fully complete. If the question does not apply to you please put N/A in the field. It is important this application be totally complete. In addition to the application, the applicant must submit a cover letter or summary of the

applicant's ambitions and goals, the reason they are pursuing their major or career choice and why they are applying for this scholarship. An official school transcript is also required.

The Scholarship Committee may cancel the scholarship at any time for due cause. Examples are: not attending classes, misusing tools, grades falling below a "C", conviction of a crime, fraudulent acts in school, not using the scholarship in the awarded year, discovery that false information was submitted on the application. At the end of the year a class transcript or class registration form must be submitted as final documentation. If the scholarship recipient stops attending school without good cause, or the scholarship is cancelled he/she shall reimburse AOWA for all monies received. Scholarships are non-transferrable.

Applications will be judged by the Scholarship Review committee. The criteria on which the applications are evaluated are:

- Academic Achievement – 35%
- Youth Leadership – 30%
- Commitment to Education and Career Goals as stated in the cover letter – 30%
- Financial Support – 5%



We look forward to receiving your application. Please call the AOWA Office at 334-396-3434 if you have any questions or concerns about the AOWA Scholarship Application.

- AOWA Scholarship Committee



Alabama Onsite Wastewater Association

2022 SCHOLARSHIP APPLICATION

Please return the application and corresponding material by April 29, 2022 to:

AOWA Scholarship Committee
P.O. Box 10
Lanett, AL 36863
(334) 396-3434



Date of Application _____

Sponsoring AOWA Member's Name: _____

Sponsoring AOWA Member's Phone Number: _____

Applicants Relationship to AOWA Member: _____

Applicant's Name: _____

Applicant's E-Mail Address: _____

Applicants Mailing Address: _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____ Phone No. (_____) _____

Applicant Residency Status: Resident of (City) _____ (State) _____

Sex: Male _____ Female _____ Date of Birth _____

Marital Status: Single _____ Married _____ (# of dependents _____) Separated _____ Divorced _____

IF APPLICABLE:

Parent/Guardian's Names: _____

Parent/Guardian's Address: _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____ Phone No. (_____) _____

EMPLOYMENT INFORMATION

Are you (applicant) employed? Yes _____ No _____ If yes, please provide the following:

Employer's Name: _____

Employer's Address: _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____ Phone No. (_____) _____

INSTITUTION INFORMATION

School (Institution, College, University) Name: _____

Student ID (if applicable): _____

School/University Address: _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____ Phone No. (_____) _____

School Point of Contact: _____ Phone No. (_____) _____

Major Area of Study: _____

Please include the financial aid office's Mailing address and Phone number:

Address: _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____ Phone No. (_____) _____

Attach the following on a separate piece of paper: 1. A written summary of your ambitions and goals, the reason you are pursuing this career and applying for this scholarship. 2. A transcript of your grades complete with your grade point average.

AOWA 2022 Class Schedule

Take advantage of these opportunities available from AOWA!

~IN-PERSON CLASSES~ *(All testing is done at the AOWB office in Montgomery)*

BASIC INSTALLER- Montgomery

April 11-14 Test Date - 4/15/22

July 25-28 Test Date - 7/29/22

September 12-15 Test Date - 9/16/22

PUMPER/PORTABLE RESTROOM - Montgomery

February 9-10 Test Date - 2/11/22

May 11-12 Test Date - 5/13/22

August 17-18 Test Date - 8/19/22

October 19-20 Test Date - 10/21/22

ADVANCED LEVEL 1 - Montgomery

March 21-24 Test Date - 3/25/22

August 8-11 Test Date - 8/19/22

ADVANCED LEVEL 2 - Montgomery

June 13 - 16 Test Date - 6/17/22



2022 Continuing Education Class Schedule:

September 15, 2022

Montgomery County Health Dept.
3060 Mobile Highway | Montgomery, AL 36108

October 6, 2022

The Event Center At Roto-Rooter
1435 Paramount Drive | Huntsville, AL 35806

November 16, 2022

Anniston City Meeting Center
1615 Noble St | Anniston, AL 36201

REMEMBER... All licenses will expire December 31, so get your CEU's before the end of the year!

Helping Hands Across Alabama



MISSION

The Mission of Helping Hands Across Alabama is to provide or make repairs to onsite sewage systems giving individuals a better quality of life. This program is intended for families, individuals, the disabled, wounded warriors, and others with a financial need or living below the poverty level.

All installations of systems and/or repairs of existing systems shall be approved by the Local Health Department and shall be completed per the ADPH Onsite sewage rules. System products used for the installations, as well as installation of systems, are provided courtesy of companies of the onsite sewage industry and licensed individuals trained and bonded through the Alabama Onsite Wastewater Board.

APPLYING

Individuals wishing to apply for assistance through AOWA Helping Hands Across Alabama program should submit an application by mail to:

AOWA
Helping Hands Across Alabama
P.O. Box 10
Lanett, AL 36863

PLEASE NOTE: Following your application submission, your application will be sent to the committee for review and evaluation of the assistance needed. Submission of an application does not ensure installation or repair of your system.

It Takes a Team

After 20 years as a Roto-Rooter franchise owner, Randy Anderson emphasizes education, service, and teamwork as the formula to running a successful business.

Despite entering the industry with no wastewater experience, Randy has been able to grow his business and expand his services thanks to the Alabama Onsite Wastewater Associate (AOWA). He initially became involved with the AOWA after purchasing his first Roto-Rooter. Randy ran into some trouble, and with no prior plumbing or septic experience, he found himself mystified by field lines. Instead of letting his lack of knowledge discourage him, Randy went looking for help. That's when he turned to the AOWA for industry education. Those initial classes from the AOWA have blossomed into a relationship spanning over 10 years. Randy is still very much involved with the AOWA and has been a member of the board of directors for eight years.

Randy values the education offered by the AOWA on industry best practices. "One thing I'll tell you about Roto-Rooter is we push hard on education," Randy explained. He acknowledges that plumbing as an industry does not put enough emphasis on education and training, so he is committed to keeping his staff informed and educated on the industry's best practices – even if it means taking on that role internally. Randy offers his

team training on all levels from entry-level employees to upper management. He wants to ensure his team can uphold and maintain the Roto-Rooter brand. "You have to adopt who we are if you want to be a part of Roto-Rooter," Randy said. His goal is to ensure all his Roto-Rooter franchises live up to what a service company should be and has no interest in hiring anyone who can't sustain those standards. "Either you come up and meet our requirements, or you move down to the next tier," Randy says. "But that's why I like Roto-Rooter; we want quality, we want honesty, and if you can't do those things, we're going to pass you down." Randy's standards are high, but as a small business owner, he works diligently to provide his team with great benefits and team-building activities.



Pictured above are a few Roto-Rooter employees, in front of a company truck.

continued...

After over 25 years as an entrepreneur, Randy Anderson does not hesitate to credit and acknowledge his team as key components to the success of his businesses. Randy is the owner of seven Roto-Rooter franchises in Alabama. He and his team operate out of the Albertville, Alabama office, which he purchased in 2002. Going on 20 years in the wastewater industry, it's hard to believe this was not Randy's initial career choice. "I was not a plumber or septic guy or anything like that before," Randy said. Originally from Oregon, Randy received his undergraduate degree in Mechanical Engineering from Oregon Institute of Technology, and a Master of Business Administration in International Business from Loyola Marymount University. He began his career in high-tech working for Fortune 500 companies. His career took him all over the world and, in entrepreneurial spirit, Randy eventually began to own and operate several small software companies. In 1985, while working in Huntsville, Alabama, he met his wife.

While living in Denver, Randy became a father and soon realized that his career was taking time away from his family. In 2002, Randy and his wife decided to move to Alabama to be closer to family. The move prompted him to make a major career change. Uncertain about his next career move, a friend suggested he



Randy Anderson, owner, Roto-Rooter

purchase a Roto-Rooter franchise, and with no background in the wastewater industry, Randy's initial response was, "you're nuts, you're crazy". Randy did not let his initial reaction deter him, however. Upon further research, he realized he loved the Roto-Rooter business model, and that this industry would allow him to do what he loved best — serving others.

Twenty years later, Randy still loves to serve others and has expanded his Roto-Rooter franchise ownership. When he purchased his first Roto-Rooter in Guntersville, there were only four employees working at that location. Fast forward to the present day, Randy has expanded the business from one Roto-Rooter to three offices in Alabama serving eleven counties. There are now offices in Albertville, Anniston, and Decatur. He now has over 30 employees throughout the locations. "Like with any business, we started small, which forces you to do everything," he

*"It takes a team,"
he explained.*

"I can't do it by myself."

continued...



Some of Randy's team members busy at work.

says. "I did the marketing function, accounts payable, payroll, and hired/fired people as well as installed field lines. It's kind of fun to watch as it evolves and grows into a bigger company, and we can have people come in and change what we do." In addition to expanding to various locations, Randy has also been able to expand the services he offers to his clientele. His goal is to cover all his clients' needs, he and his team are responsible for all

the water going into a client's building and all the water leaving a client's building. Currently, Randy and his team service approximately eleven counties in Alabama and offer services such as plumbing, drain cleaning – in addition to onsite septic, water restoration, and water filtration.

When Randy is not too busy running and growing his team at Roto-Rooter he finds joy in participating in team-oriented activities. On his days off, Randy enjoys getting out on the water and rowing. He even coaches a crew team! His team recently purchased some old boats from Georgia State University to fix up and use for practice or competition. Randy exemplifies excellent sportsmanship, demonstrating that to be a good leader you must first be a true team player! "It takes a team," he explains.



Randy out on the water, rowing

Check it out!

AOWA Launches New Website



The Alabama Onsite Wastewater Association is proud to formally announce the launch of our new website. Visit this wealth of information on-line at: <https://aowainfo.org>.

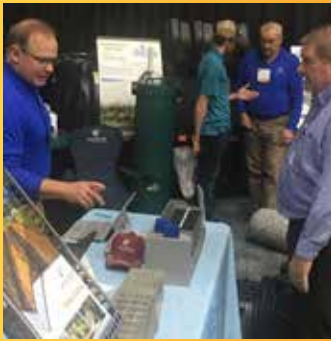
The image to the left is a small sample of what you will see when you access this site.

We hope you will take some time and explore the menus to see how we are "Promoting Professionalism in Our Industry."

Register for the 2022 AOWA Annual Trade Show!

March 17-18, 2022

Orange Beach Event Center, Orange Beach, AL



Join Us

The 35th Annual AOWA Trade Show will be held at the Orange Beach Event Center in Orange Beach, AL. If you are in any way connected to the onsite wastewater industry in Alabama, this conference is a must for you. There will be industry exhibits and seminars to keep you up to date with what is happening in YOUR industry, as well as networking opportunities with others in your field.

Join us for this "don't miss" event and get your CEUs for the year!

TRADE SHOW HOTEL

Take advantage of our discounted trade show rate at the Springhill Suites which is directly next door to the trade show location!

Rooms are available Tuesday, March 15, 2022 – Friday, March 18, 2022

SPECIAL RATE: \$129.00+tax (Reserve by February 15th, 2022 to get the special rate)

HOTEL ADDRESS:

Springhill Suites
4673 Wharf Pkwy W,
Orange Beach, AL 36561

HOTEL PHONE: (877) 590-8185

(Mention the Alabama Onsite Wastewater Association to receive the special rate)

We look forward to seeing you at the Orange Beach Event Center - Orange Beach, Alabama in March!

Forms for both Sponsorship Opportunities and Event Registration can be found on the following pages.

continued...



2022

AOWA TRADE SHOW

March 17-18, 2022 | Orange Beach Event Center, Orange Beach, AL

Sponsorship Levels & Benefits

DIAMOND SPONSOR **\$1,500**

- Two complimentary Trade Show registrations
- Logo recognition & hyperlink in promotional e-blasts and on website
- Logo recognition in conference program
- Logo recognition on signage onsite at Trade Show
- Logo recognition at all meals and breaks onsite at Trade Show
- Priority in selecting booth space if also exhibiting

PLATINUM SPONSOR **\$1,000**

- One complimentary Trade Show registration
- Logo recognition & hyperlink in promotional e-blasts and on website
- Logo recognition in conference program
- Logo recognition on signage onsite at Trade Show
- Priority in selecting booth space, following Diamond Sponsors, if also exhibiting

GOLD SPONSOR **\$750**

- Logo recognition in promotional e-blasts and on website
- Logo recognition in conference program
- Logo recognition on signage onsite at Trade Show

SILVER SPONSOR **\$500**

- Name recognition in promotional e-blasts and on website
- Name recognition in conference program
- Name recognition on signage onsite at Trade Show

BRONZE SPONSOR **\$300**

- Name recognition on website
- Name recognition in conference program



THE ALABAMA ONSITE WASTEWATER ASSOCIATION 2022 ANNUAL TRADESHOW

March 17 - 18 , 2022
Orange Beach Event Center, Orange Beach, AL

REGISTRATION FORM

NAME: _____ DATE _____

COMPANY NAME: _____

MAILING ADDRESS: _____

CITY: _____ STATE: _____ ZIP: _____

INDICATE WHICH REGISTRATION YOU WANT BY CHECKING THE BOX BELOW

Tradeshow Full Registration -

Includes both days of education, breakfast and lunch both days and tradeshow admission.

Tradeshow ONLY -

Only includes access to the trade show. DOES NOT INCLUDE EDUCATION.

Note: Only one licensee per member company is entitled to the \$50 discount. Other licensees at the member company must pay full price.

**Eight hours of Continuing Education will be offered on Thursday. Six hours will be offered on Friday.*

REGISTRATION FEES:

Registration includes training material and attendance certification.

**Mail Form and Registration Fee
(see chart to the right) to:**

**AOWA Training Program
P.O. Box 10**

Please Note: Payments made by credit card will be charged a 4% convenience fee. You may call our office to pay over the phone or register online.

Make check or money order payable to "AOWA"

There will be no refunds and no transfers.
There will be a \$30.00 fee for all returned checks. No exceptions!

ALL registration forms must be received by the AOWA Office by **Friday, March 11th, 2022**. There will be registration onsite if you are unable to meet this deadline.

Please note: You are not registered until we receive your registration form and payment.

PLEASE CIRCLE THE LEVEL OF REGISTRATION YOU WILL BE PAYING FOR	
BASIC INST./PUMPER/MAN (6 hrs) (AOWA Members)	\$280.00 \$230.00
ADVANCED INST. LEVEL 1 (8 hrs) (AOWA Members)	\$325.00 \$275.00
Advanced Inst. Level 2 (10 hrs) (AOWA Members)	\$380.00 \$330.00
Portable Restroom Only (4 hrs) (AOWA Members)	\$220.00 \$170.00
TRADESHOW ONLY - Thursday	\$40.00
TRADESHOW ONLY - Friday	\$40.00

News from the AOWB



HAPPY NEW YEAR LICENSEES!

Renewal season was busy here at the Alabama Onsite Wastewater Board (AOWB). We currently have 1,098 licensees and are still awaiting roughly 300 to renew for 2022. Several of these are due to expired bonds. The AOWB website is being updated weekly and the local health departments have been notified to check the roster and ensure each of you are licensed for 2022.

SURETY BOND RENEWAL/CONTINUATION

Please be aware that if your bond expires and we do not receive the renewal or continuation in our office, your license will be suspended, and you will not appear on the AOWB Roster. Feel free to verify your bond is up to date by calling our office at (334)353-9250.

CONTINUING EDUCATION FOR 2023!

It is never too early to start thinking about obtaining your continuing education credits for 2023.

REMINDER: You must obtain your education credits for the 2023 license renewal during this year – 2022! Please review the Approved Continuing Education Courses on our website for 2023. There are several locations throughout the State this year. There are also on-line continuing education courses available as well. **Remember the number of hours you need** and get registered today!!!

License type	Required C.E. credit hours
Basic, Pumper, Manufacturer, or any combination of these 3	6
Advanced Level I or a combo with Pumper and/or Manufacturer	8
Advanced Level II or a combo with Pumper and/or Manufacturer	10

Your service to the Septic Industry of Alabama is greatly appreciated. We thank you!



Kindest Regards,

Melissa Hines, Executive Director
Alabama Onsite Wastewater Board (334) 353-9250

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Business Plan Basics: Look Before You Leap!

A thorough road map for your business follows every step from procuring startup funds to charting an exit plan when it comes time to step away.

The circumstances are perfect — you're ready to make a major career move. You've decided to open your own pumping business. You have an idea of how to pull it off and the confidence to get started. Now you need a well-conceived business plan to set you on the right path.

Dave Kaster, principal at Fidelis, has written over a thousand business plans for clients at his advisory practice in Green Bay, Wisconsin. Kaster says clients need just two things before writing a business plan. "They need an idea to start with, and they need the time to explore the idea," he says.

You start with a concept of how to generate money for a particular service or product, and then you make sure that concept passes an evaluation on various levels. If you're ready to write a business plan, you already know what you want to do. Now you just need to flesh out your ideas by answering five questions: Who? What? When? Where? and How?

"Who does what? What are you trying to do? When do you do it? Where and how do you do it? But the biggest question is the 'why'?" Kaster says. "Once you decide to do a business plan, that's what I'd start with: Why are you doing it? Because that gives you the end result."

THE ENDGAME

Oftentimes, the most ignored piece in any business plan is the vision for the company.

"You absolutely have to start with the end in mind," Kaster says. The first step is understanding the end goal. Decide what you want out of the business, and work backward from there.

For example, maybe you want to build a wastewater business from the ground up and run it for 20 years. Kaster says you have to determine how you want to get out in the end. If you plan

to pass the business to your kids, it makes sense to invest in a permanent building, expensive equipment and a long-term marketing campaign.

It's a different mindset if you plan to be in business for 5-10 years, retire and let the company fade away.

"Define your exit strategy and what your ultimate goal is — to pass down to the kids, to sell, whatever — so any investors know exactly the end point or determination when and how to get out," Kaster says.

It's critical to conduct research to flesh out your business ideas. Talking to other pumpers is a good first step. Ask them how and why they got started and the difficulties they faced. Kaster suggests contacting a business consultant or marketing specialist to help put together your business plan.

It's critical to conduct research to flesh out your business ideas.

Talking to other pumpers is a good first step. Ask them how and why.

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"Picture a good time frame, 5-10 years down the road and determine what you want your business to look like," he says. "You need a target to start shooting arrows at."

One of the first things to decide is what type of work you want to specialize in. Will you limit your service to pumping septic tanks, or add septic system repairs, installing, portable sanitation or grease trap service, for example? From experience, you know what you're good at and what services the market demands and is willing to pay for; a business plan puts it all down on paper.

THE THREE ELEMENTS

One of the elements of a business plan is a marketing strategy. You'll need to define who your clients will be and how to reach them.

"Someone could say, I'll just advertise on social media," Kaster says. "Who's going to do that? I haven't seen a business owner yet who's done that regularly, consistently and correctly. So, you need someone from the outside to really dive in."

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A second element to strategize is operations. Determine how to manage your company in an effective way. "Working at a business is different than running a business," he says. "You have to think of things at a different level. You're not only affecting yourself, you're affecting the entire business. Clients. Suppliers. Every decision you make has ripple effects."

A third element to consider is financing. Decide how to finance your startup and how to use the money to grow your business.

"If you're going to family finance it, you owe it to your family to write a plan they can keep you accountable to," Kaster says. "You need to tell them, 'I'm going to keep you safe by following through with these plans.'"

If you seek outside funding, the business plan will have a different emphasis. Investors will require detailed market research, financial projections and operational methods to project the rate of return on investment. Bankers will need proof of cash flow to pay back a loan.

BLUEPRINT FOR SUCCESS

In general, business plans are written for a particular purpose and for a particular audience. The first audience is yourself.

"You have to go step by step and prove it out," Kaster says. "Make sure everything makes sense. It's always good to solve a problem before a problem comes up, so it's good to identify what the problems may be."

The second audience is those who will provide the capital. Solid business plans include carefully prepared financial projections, budgets and cost analyses. The average business plan is 40-50 typed pages, filled with charts, concepts and objectives.

"The best function of a business plan is to give you the end goal in mind and give you a starting point to get through your first 60 days or so," Kaster says. The plan serves as a blueprint to identify obstacles and opportunities before you fully commit to the career move that will change your life.



Alabama Legislature Convenes for 2022 Regular Session

As of this writing, the 2022 Regular Session of the Alabama Legislature has just begun. Major issues to be addressed include the budgets and the appropriation of the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) money from the federal government.

Revenue to the State's coffers have been at historic levels and have seen unprecedented growth over the last year. Those who deal with the budgets know these numbers are not sustainable and will likely take a downward trend once the federal stimulus money starts to dry up. In her State of the State address on January 11, Governor Ivey outlined a few of her budget priorities, including:

- **4% pay increase for teachers and state employees.**
- **Grants for failing elementary schools.**
- **\$12 million for two additional mental health centers and other health services.**
- **Paying down debt and shoring up rainy day accounts.**

In addition to passing the budgets, the Legislature must also appropriate the ARPA money, which can only be used for certain projects such as broadband, water and sewer infrastructure. There is \$580 million in ARPA funds and \$192 million in a capital projects fund that will be the focus of the first special session, likely to be held within the regular session in order to isolate the issue. Later this summer, the state will receive a little over \$1 billion in additional ARPA funds and a second Special

Session is expected to be called to appropriate those funds once they are received.

Look for weekly updates by email while the Alabama Legislature is in session, and we will keep you updated on the latest information. Members have until April 25 to finish the 2022 Regular Session. Although they can't go past that date, they can finish their work earlier. Since it is an election year, that is certainly a possibility.

Speaking of elections, primary elections in Alabama will be held May 24. Do you know who your Alabama State Senator and State Representative are? What about the people who represent you in the State House in Montgomery? Now is a great time to get involved in these local races and get to know your local legislators while they are on the campaign trail. All 105 Representatives and 35 Senators are up for election this year, along with the Governor and other statewide offices. Get involved, get to know your local elected officials and be ready to provide them with input when they consider issues that affect the onsite industry.





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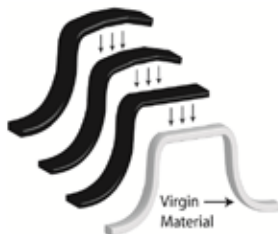
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Compiled by Betty Dageforde *Pumper Magazine*, October 2021

Tough Jobs, Rewarding Wastewater Work in Northeast Alabama

Chris Gulley grew up in the onsite industry and is now heavily involved in Alabama Onsite Wastewater Association training and charitable activities.

Name and title or job description:

Chris Gulley, president and chief executive officer

Business name and location:

Gulley Septic Services and Gulley Construction, Stevenson, Alabama

Services we offer: Septic pumping, installation and inspection; site prep, general excavation and hauling. I hold every license offered in Alabama and Tennessee. I'm also a distributor of Infiltrator, Liberty and Myers pumps products.

Age: 47

Years in the industry: I've owned and operated this business for 21 years, but I grew up in the industry. When my daddy retired as a bridge builder, he did excavation work and installed septic tanks, so I did that as a kid. Then I took a break, went into the military and then worked as director of safety for a trucking company. I came home two years after my father passed away in 1998 and had to start the business up from scratch.

Association involvement: I've been in the Alabama Onsite Wastewater Association for 15 years. I'm the District 2 representative and have been on the board of directors for three years. And I'm the founder and chairman of the association's Helping Hands Across Alabama program that puts in free septic systems for needy people. We generally do at least five per year. We give the participating contractors continuing education credits for the year. I'm also



Pictured above is Chris Gulley

the chairman of the Alabama Onsite Wastewater License Board.

Benefits of belonging to the association:

Networking and education are the two big ones. I'm one of the people doing some of the initial training and testing. I've hosted some portions of continuing education classes at my facility.

Biggest issue facing your association right now:

Legislation overreach is the biggest thing. They just passed legislation to take away anything over 15,000 gallons a day out of the Board's scope and give it to the general contractors.

Our crew includes: Jana Butler and Miranda Weaver work in the office. In the field are Brandon Hubbard, operator; Shambo Thompson, foreman, operator and installer; Melvin Smith, operator and truck driver; Josh Lusk, operator

and truck driver; Jerry Houser, operator and installer; Larry Humphrey, foreman, operator and installer; Rodney McCrary, operator; Drake Smith, laborer and assistant installer; Mike Bias, vacuum truck operator; Jamie Huckaby, laborer; and Josh Brooks, part-time truck driver. My 15-year-old son, C.J. Gulley, works with me when he is not in school.

Typical day on the job: I come into the office and get everything lined up and get the guys going for the day. I do estimates and diagnose problems. My forte is our line clearing and jetting, so I do a lot of that. I help the septic guys fill orders. I do the pump sizing for contractors. I mentor several new installers that went through training with me, and I spend a lot of time on the phone with them or go out to their jobs and help them problem-solve and teach them how to do new things. Some guys call me almost every day with questions. I try to do a lot in education and helping other contractors.

The job I'll never forget: We were doing a clearing job and septic install in Langston on the water. There was a little old lady in a trailer next door and she came out with a butcher knife and chased the bulldozer around, trying to cut the steel tracks because she said she couldn't stand the sound. The police came and took her away. She had some kind of mental illness. They brought her back that afternoon. The next day when we fired the dozer up, it went down. She had stuffed a plastic bag in the hydraulic tank and it ruined \$15,000 worth of hydraulic pumps on a brand new dozer.

My favorite piece of equipment: I have a John Deere 244J articulated wheel loader. We can put forks on it, a bucket, an auger, a Harley rake. I use it to feed dirt through my dirt screener. It's the most universal machine I have. We use it every day around the yard and we take it to jobs.

Most challenging site I've worked on: We did some work for a mountaintop development in Jasper, Tennessee. It was full of rock and steep terrain, and there were some very tight soils so we had to do some low-pressure pipe systems up there. It was such a steep grade the

excavator would slide down the hill. We took the John Deere skid-steer and chains and held the excavator in place while we dug across. And we couldn't use the skid-steer to put the gravel in the trenches so we had to dump the gravel and then take shovels and fill the trenches by hand.

Oops, I wish I could take this one back: A biodiesel plant closed with 20,000 gallons of grease to dispose of. They had me come in and build Arizona Department of Environmental Management-approved cells to a holding pond to put the grease in. We had it engineered, built the pond, put the grease in and hauled in wood chips to cover it. We had to keep it stirred and monitored for two years. It was supposed to turn into topsoil. Then the company went bankrupt and never paid us.

The craziest question I've been asked by a customer: We opened up a tank once and found a full-sized basketball in there. The customer wanted to know how it got in there. I have no idea. It had to go through a drain.

If I could change one industry regulation, it would be: In Alabama we have a state pumper license, but you also have to permit each vacuum truck in each county you pump in. I would change that to being statewide, like it is in Tennessee.

Best piece of small business advice I've heard: This came from my daddy — do something in life that nobody else wants to do and you'll always be successful.

If I wasn't working in the wastewater industry, I would: Be in education. I'd teach for the onsite wastewater industry. I just bought a building and I'm going to build an education center.

Crystal ball time – This is my outlook for the wastewater industry: I hope that we will be utilizing new technologies to do more innovative systems that are cleaner, for a greener environment. And we need to focus on advanced training for the onsite providers to professionalize the industry more.



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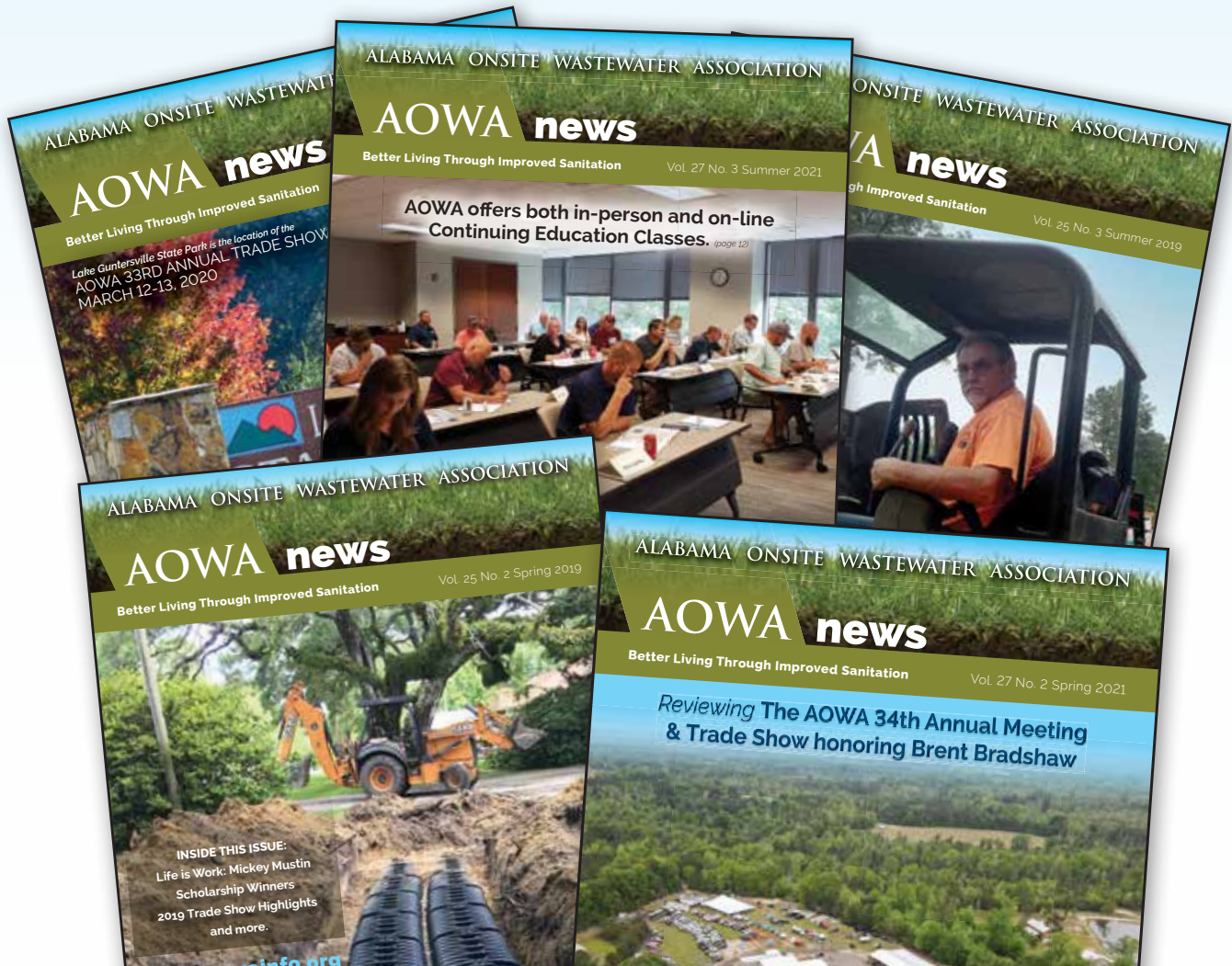
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