

Industry's Finest

Jeff Rumer Is Named NUCA's 2013 Ditch Digger of the Year

By Pam Kleineke



Utility and excavation contractors don't do what they do for the accolades. And while their noteworthy work creates and maintains vital infrastructure, it unfortunately is often taken for granted by the public that relies on it.

However, NUCA recognizes these hard-working contractors through its awards program, with the Ditch Digger of the Year being one of the association's highest honors it awards every year. Presented annually at NUCA's Convention, the Ditch Digger of the Year is awarded to a contractor member who has made a significant contribution to the association and the underground utility construction and excavation industry. With that, NUCA recently presented this prestigious award to Jeff Rumer, Founder and President of Underground Infrastructure Technologies.

"We all have the opportunity to be acknowledged in some way for our accomplishments and successes throughout our careers," says Rumer. "For me, the highest measurement of those accomplishments is to be acknowledged by your own peers. For that reason, I hold this award among the most precious to me personally and am honored and humbled by the recognition. I was the last person I would have expected to be named. There are so many that do so much for our industry."

Crafting a Career Path

Rumer's career first started in the building trades, where he worked as a carpenter foreman in 1989. Thanks to his degree in applied engineering, he was able to quickly climb the company ladder and hold positions as a project superintendent and later as a project manager on large commercial building projects. And although he found success in his field, he was intrigued about another form of construction.

"I enjoyed being involved in the construction of large buildings," says Rumer. "However, I felt drawn to the complexities and challenges of working below ground, so I quickly formed an affinity for excavation and infrastructure work."

Throughout the years of building projects, Rumer had the opportunity to work with several excavation and utility subcontractors. There, he formed a friendship with Jim Parent, Owner of JBS Pipeline Contractors.

"Jim performed the utility infrastructure work on several of the projects I had managed," says Rumer. "After giving notice of my plan to leave the firm I was working with, he approached me and offered me a management position with JBS. It was Jim who taught me the finer points of utility construction and provided me the opportunity that ultimately led to a career in utility construction."

In 2003 Rumer left JBS to join Trainor Construction Co., a large utility contractor with multiple divisions covering traditional pipeline work as well as trenchless technologies and concrete structures, as its new General Manager. Trainor was then purchased by Brannan Companies in 2005, and the company's name was changed to Brannan Construction Co. Rumer remained as Brannan's Division Manager until February 2009 when he left to form his own company, Underground Infrastructure Technologies (UIT).

Today, the Denver-based company focuses primarily on trenchless technologies, specializing in horizontal auger boring, tunneling, pipe jacking, pipe ramming, pipe bursting and sliplining. UIT serves its primary geographical market including Colorado, Wyoming and New Mexico, as well as parts of Texas, Kansas and Nebraska.

When Rumer isn't busy on the jobsite, he can be found spending time with his family. He's been married to his wife Carey for 17 years and the couple have four children — Joe, Emily, Stephen and Anthony. In addition to his work with UIT, Rumer and his wife own and operate a music store and coffee house.

"I build, sell and repair stringed instruments in the music store and my wife runs the coffee house," says Rumer. "I'm also a musician and perform regularly with a band I have been playing with for the last 7 years. We live high in the mountains [at 9,000 ft], so every day is an adventure for our family. We hike, ski, whitewater raft and fish when the snow isn't 10 ft deep."

Becoming Involved

For the past 50 years, NUCA has been a driving force for improving conditions in the utility construction and excavation industry, for both open-cut and trenchless contractors.



Never one to sit on the sidelines, Rumer participates in NUCA's Mission Las Vegas event at the 2014 Convention.

The association is constantly working to improve the operational proficiency and financial performance of its member companies, as well as securing more funding for America's aging underground infrastructure. With a reputation and mission like that, Rumer saw the value of the association and became a member of NUCA in 2004 — a decision that opened doors for him to better his company and advance his career.

"NUCA is by far the strongest and most engaging voice we have in our industry today," says Rumer. "The ability to be personally involved in that process, both locally and nationally, allows me to have some influence and control over my future both as a business owner and a member of the utility construction community. The opportunities provided through NUCA to have my voice heard with agencies that have dramatic effects on how we operate our businesses every day is crucial to our continuing success. I have had the opportunity to speak directly to and have my opinions heard by representatives from our state and federal legislature, OSHA, EPA and many more, only as a result of the strength that NUCA represents to our national leaders."

Despite all the benefits NUCA had to offer, Rumer has never been content with just paying his membership dues and sitting on the sidelines. He has taken his involvement with the association and helped create opportunities to make a difference in the industry he values and has built his career on.

"I have learned that the value you receive from NUCA is directly correlated to the contribution you provide," says Rumer. "Some members are happy just joining, receiving information from publications, newsletters and e-mails. NUCA is so much more than that. The effort it takes to actually participate and the resulting change you can effect individually and collectively in our industry pays dividends far beyond the time and cost you may contribute."

With that in mind, Rumer has been a very active member and has held many positions on both local and national levels. He was even instrumental in establishing his state chapter, NUCA of Colorado in 2009.

“With the help of the National Chapter Development Program, we formed the Colorado chapter of NUCA and I was elected as the Founding Board President,” he says. “I served two years [2009 and 2010] as Chapter President and one year [2011] as Immediate Past President. I was elected this year to serve another term on the chapter’s Board of Directors.”

Aside from work with his local chapter, Rumer is heavily involved over on the national side as well. He was elected to the National Board of Directors in 2010 where he served two years in that position. In 2012, he served as the National Secretary of NUCA and as the National Treasurer the following year. He’s currently NUCA National’s Vice President.

But his NUCA involvement doesn’t end there. In 2013, Rumer served as the NUCA Convention Chair. He also became the Chair of the National Chapter Development Subcommittee in 2011. Throughout his time in this position, Rumer has had the honor of helping to form new chapters in Washington D.C., Texas and Hawaii. Recently, he also became the Acting Chair of NUCA’s new National Trenchless Technologies Committee.

Rumer’s involvement in the association and dedication to the industry is definitely impressive and noticed by his fellow peers.

James Stutler, Vice President of Layne Heavy Civil says: “I watched Jeff become involved with NUCA nationally like a lot of us did, quietly at first, then steadily growing his involvement, because I think he saw an organization he believed in. Jeff embodies the real spirit of NUCA contractor members — a person who works very hard and diligently for our cause, without much fanfare or recognition. I am extremely glad to see Jeff recognized as Ditch Digger of the Year. He is a tribute to our industry, and we are very proud of him as a fellow Colorado digger.”

Pam Kleineke is Associate Editor of *Utility Contractor*.



Jeff Rumer (right) receives the 2013 Ditch Digger of the Year award from the 2012 winner, Ryan Schmitt.

Joining the Ranks

A Look at Ditch Digger of the Year Recipients Over the Years

- 1971- Peter Ellis, Rockville, Md.
- 1972- Joe D’Annunzio, Scotch Plains, N.J.
- 1973- Sam Luciano, Hazlet, N.J.
- 1974- Fred Compagni, Cortland, N.Y.
- 1975- William Feather, Marlton, N.J.
- 1976- David Shevock, Dover, Del.
- 1977- Leonard Genghini, Elkins Park, Pa.
- 1978- John Felton, Missoula, Mont.
- 1979- Robert Griffith, Aldie, Va.
- 1980- Rick Egge, Woodinville, Wash.
- 1981- D.A. Foster, Merrifield, Va.
- 1982- Joe Corrado, New Castle, Del.
- 1983- Loretta Simmons, Rochester, N.Y.
- 1984- Vic DiGeronimo, Independence, Ohio
- 1985- Leon Asadoorian, Salem, N.H.
- 1986- Bill Burgett, Fredricktown, Ohio
- 1987- Ben Luster, Tucson, Ariz.
- 1988- Ed Cruz, Holmdel, N.J.
- 1989- Harold Ruf, Pleasant Grove, Utah
- 1990- Jay Matricciani, Baltimore
- 1991- Andy Mayts, Palm Harbor, Fla.
- 1992- Gerry Kenny, Wheeling, Ill.
- 1993- Harold Mueller, New Berlin, Wis.
- 1994- Delaine Nelson, New Berlin, Wis.
- 1995- Mark Harris, Lake Mary, Fla.
- 1996- Richard Foster, Newtown, Pa.
- 1997- Tom Henkels, New Berlin, Wis.
- 1998- Mark Accettuero, Fairburn, Ga.
- 1999- Jim Barron, Baltimore
- 2000- Jim Stutler, Denver
- 2001- Steve Theis, Rolling Meadows, Ill.
- 2002- James King, Jr., Conyers, Ga.
- 2003- Greg Strudwick, Copell, Texas
- 2004- Lyle Schellenberg, Salem, Ore.
- 2005- Terry Dillon, West Lafayette, Ind.
- 2006- Cheryl Yoder, Jacksonville, Fla.
- 2007- Larry Fortin, Las Vegas
- 2008- Jim Giannelli, Albuquerque, N.M.
- 2009- Glenn Ely, Newtown, Pa.
- 2010- Ryan Schmitt, Jacksonville, Fla.
- 2011- Dan East, Dallas
- 2012- Ryan Schmitt, Jacksonville, Fla.
- 2013- Jeff Rumer, Denver