

| Winter 2019 |

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All-Woman Committee is a Unique Mix

BY VALERIE EDGREN

multimedia coordinator for parkhill, smith & cooper, inc.

Because water is a precious resource, especially in the Southwest, more and more professionals are becoming dedicated to bettering their community through the industry.

The Desert Mountain Chapter of Texas AWWA represents a great cross-section of engineering fields. The committee, which happens to be all female, has two engineering minds in water resources, a chemist, and a woman who oversees educational outreaches in the field.

For example, Kimberly LaBree, Chapter President, has seen the need for people to have access to clean water.

"Knowing that I can help people with that need, a need that is a basic necessity to people, is what keeps my passion going," she said.

She wanted to be a structural engineer but fell in love with the water field. She has worked on and managed projects as small as designing water and wastewater systems for Canutillo, Texas, to as large as the award-winning T-Bar Ranch project in Midland, Texas. LaBree is a professional engineer and Project Manager with Parkhill, Smith & Cooper Inc. in the El Paso office. She has a passion for getting clean water

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to people in need. She specializes in finding the most cost-effective ways of obtaining financing from various funding agencies. LaBree has planned, modeled and designed about 77 miles of pipeline. She earned a bachelor's degree in civil engineering from UTEP in 2012.

"I do love engineering," she said. "I do love that we help people. It's rewarding, giving people water for the first time."

Protecting that water is what motivates Teresa T. Alcala, Chapter Vice President. A quality control chemist at the International Water Quality Laboratory, she is celebrating her 29th work anniversary with El Paso Water. She was born in El Paso and raised in Juarez, Mexico. Her love of natural sciences, biology and chemistry led her to pursue a degree from UTEP in microbiology with a minor in chemistry. El Paso Water readily hired her. She has risen from laboratory technician to chemist, then senior chemist, and now she is Assistant to the Laboratory Manager.

"It has been my passion to serve the people of El Paso by doing my job with the principle in mind, that all that I do

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The Desert Mountain Chapter leadership (clockwise from top left): Anai J. Padilla, Evelyn Rios, Kimberly LaBree and Teresa T. Alcala.



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contributes to protecting their health, with the understanding that water is a natural and vital resource that can eventually become scarce if we do not take care of it," she said.

Alcala said she focused on microbiology testing at one of El Paso's water plants.

"I obtained the certification for our water bacteriological testing when the laboratory that I put together was stationed in one of the water plants."

She proved she could master heavy metal analysis and instrumentation, developing methods for a new inductively coupled plasma optical emission spectrophotometer.

"Loving what I do, perseverance, research, dedication and self-motivation is what has helped me out throughout my career," she said.

Evelyn Rios, Chapter Treasurer, is Assistant Engineer at Hazen and Sawyer, a 1,000-member nationwide firm. In El Paso, she has overseen designing a biofilter odor control system, helped with the design of

a chemical scrubber system, and helped retrofit an existing chemical scrubber system to meet clients' needs. Rios is trained in BioWin and Transient modeling, which allows her to gather historical data and compile all the data to analyze it in models.

"I got into the industry because it fascinates me a lot. I think it is the most beautiful thing in the world that we are able to treat wastewater into drinking water. It is the true definition of recycling. Also, because water is life. Without water, we would not survive.

"I stay in the business because I enjoy designing and coming up with different ideas as to how to approach a problem. The water/wastewater industry is always different, although there might be the same problem. There is the flexibility to approach and solve the problem differently because you not only focus on one process, but you have to take into consideration the whole plant since it is a cause and effect situation."

Anai J. Padilla, Chapter Secretary, has been the Manager of the Carlos M. Ramirez Tech2O Water

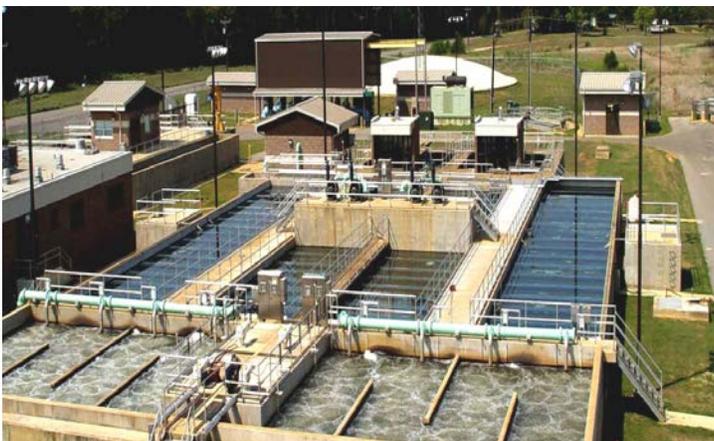
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Resources Learning Center at El Paso Water since 1994. She was drawn to the field to provide customers the tools and knowledge to promote the efficient use of water in urban landscapes. In her 25 years with El Paso Water, she has administered various residential and commercial conservation programs, leading to a 30 percent reduction of water use per person. She also created a landscape CD-ROM guide of more than 400 plants, trees, flowers and vines suitable for the Chihuahuan desert region landscapes. It began with a grant from the Bureau of Reclamation and now is available as a webpage at www.elpasodesertblooms.org.

Padilla is on the Texas AWWA Education Committee strategic planning for the next year, promoting the education section of the AWWA.

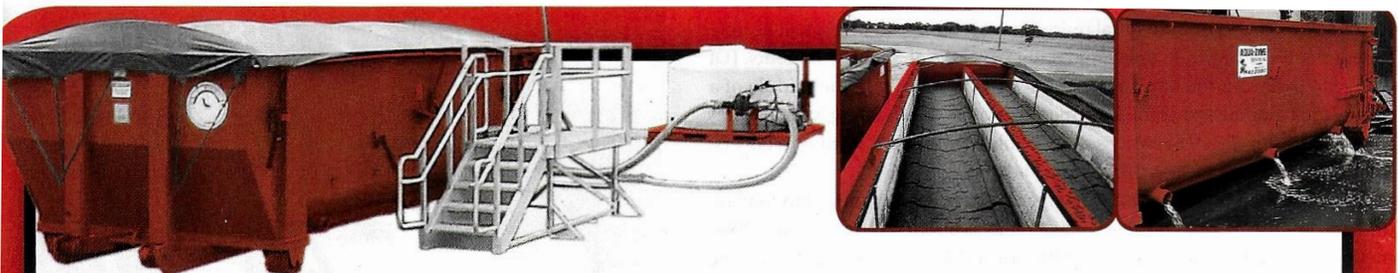
She handles a wide range of workshops and public events to highlight and educate about regional water issues. She plans public events such as the Water Festival, which interlaces the sciences with arts and

culture to celebrate the importance of water in our daily lives.

"I like to share my experiences as a Horticulturist so people can learn that conservation and having a beautiful landscape is achievable. I try to surround myself with very talented individuals because I also love to learn from others," Padilla said. "I love being a member of this group, where we all work toward a common goal."

The Desert Mountain Chapter serves three states — Texas, New Mexico, and Mexico. It also stands out because of the diversity of the committee, which in past years has been made up of engineers. The talents of the members seem to be pointing toward educational outreach.

For example, the group is making plans for educational tours of local water facilities such as water plants and planning to encourage girls to get involved in Meter Madness, an AWWA contest measuring an individual's skill at assembling a water meter quickly and accurately. 📍



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