

By Elisabeth Lisican



# What's on Tap for the Future?

**A**nother ACE is in the books. Having just returned from the conference, I'm still reeling from the plethora of information and innovations I've just absorbed. This feeling is nothing new; however, I did note something different in the air at this trade show that perhaps was not as apparent at ACEs past: the tingling sense of urgency.

While many in our sphere often look years and even decades ahead when tackling and analyzing our water infrastructure problems, the water crisis in Flint underlined and added several exclamation points to call out the word, "now."

More than 12,000 water professionals gathered at Chicago's McCormick Place West Convention Center for the American Water Works Assn.'s (AWWA) Annual Conference and Exposition (ACE16). Lead was very top of mind.

During the Opening General Session, AWWA CEO David LaFrance drew from Chicago's history to demonstrate how water professionals have overcome seemingly insurmountable hurdles. He pointed out that the city reversed the flow of the Chicago River in just seven years.

"We've all been hearing about lead in water," LaFrance said in his talk. "How can we protect families today while we work for a lead-free future? It is certainly complicated, but definitely possible. The bottom line is water professionals always find a way to take what is complicated and make it possible."

Jim Cantore, meteorologist for The Weather Channel and ACE16 Opening General Session keynote speaker, said apparent changes to the water cycle—whether they're from climate change or other factors—are worthy of attention from water professionals as they manage their resources.

In his keynote address, AWWA President Gene Koontz stressed that today's water professionals must improve as communicators to ensure consumers will have confidence in tap water.

Whether that trust returns or not, one thing is certain: The industry continues to forge ahead. The staff of W&WD spent a great deal of time perusing the aisles of the trade show floor in search of compelling or unusual displays. A few of our favorites included a huge HDPE pipe, a Lego display of a city facing main breaks and infrastructure trouble, and an underwater drone and battery-operated pipe crawler.

Visit [wwdmag.com](http://wwdmag.com) for our special video reports from the ACE16 show floor.

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