

Not Your Average Joe.

The drought is over! On Saturday, April 25, 2015, in Fort Worth, Texas, in front of ASHRAE members who traveled in from Texas, Oklahoma, Arkansas, Louisiana, and even Mexico, Mr. Joe Sanders, President of the Central Oklahoma Chapter, was presented with the prestigious Golden Gavel; an annual award given to the best overall Chapter in the Region based on an exhaustive set of criteria including membership, donations, programs, activities, communications, and more. An award that has eluded the Central Oklahoma Chapter for the last 22 years, going back to B.H.Prasad in 1993 *(prior to 1993, the Central Oklahoma Chapter won this award, on average, every 2 years with the longest stretch without winning of only 6 years)*.



Figure 1 - Joe Sanders (right) Receiving Golden Gavel Award

The Golden Gavel judging committee is taught not only to look at categorical performance taking into account Chapter size, but to look for improvement over previous years. The award committee in Fort Worth must have certainly recognized that the Central Oklahoma Chapter experienced a tremendous year from every perspective. There were statistical year-over-year improvements in meeting attendance, research donations, regular membership, and student membership.

The Chapter was treated to an excellent lineup of programs, which was evidenced by a 96/100 average member feedback score.

A number of things that used to be regular occurrences were brought back. Spouse's Night returned and drew a huge crowd with over 80 in attendance. The Chapter Roster was distributed in hard copy once again and brought with it \$3,800 in advertising revenue. Early planning allowed "Save the date" cards to be mailed out at the start of the year so members could get the meeting dates on their calendars. New members were inducted into the Chapter Hall of Fame; a practice that had gone dormant for 15 years.

There were also a number of "firsts" for the Chapter. A Sustainability Committee and a Social Media Committee were both established and became active right away. The first "Day on the Hill" was organized giving members an opportunity to lobby Representatives at the State Capital on a wide range of issues relating to HVAC&R. A cloud-based document storage location was setup as a permanent Chapter digital archive. Chapter PE Study Sessions were organized which contributed to a 100% pass rate for those who attended.

With this award being so elusive for such a long time, I asked Joe if I could sit down with him and ask some questions to document how he pulled it off. After all, 22 years is a long time. In 1993, I was attending ASHRAE as a Student Member, and Joe, well, he was still in pubertal stages of development.

Q: *For the members who don't know your background, where are you from and how did you get where you are today?*

Joe: I grew up in Tulsa and went to Broken Arrow High School. I originally started college at Lindenwood University in St. Louis but transferred to OSU my sophomore year and graduated in the spring of 2002. I chose engineering because my father was an engineer. I was very interested in his job, but also in just learning how things worked and went together. I was hired by Trane directly out of college and went through their Graduate Training Program. The market for engineers wasn't great at the time following 9/11, but the position at Trane really intrigued me. I enjoyed my time at Trane, but in 2005 I was presented an opportunity at R.B. Akins that I couldn't turn down, and it has worked out extremely well. I have been there for 10 years now and do not anticipate leaving any time soon. I got started in ASHRAE my first day in the office at Trane. Basically, Bryan Garcia told me I was now the newsletter editor for Tim Jones' year. Since then I have been on numerous committees and a member of the Board of Governors several times.

Q: *When you were working your way through the chairs, did you start to see certain areas that you wanted to focus on once you became Chapter President?*

Joe: I knew I wanted to start early and get all my committees set. That began around January the year before (*the ASHRAE year runs July to June*). My focus was on the big committees: CTTC, RP, and Membership. Not only getting the chair positions in place, but also recruiting committee members. I knew that committee chairs couldn't do it all on their own and they needed support. I also wanted to be sure that all committee members were given the PAOE criteria right from the start. I remember my first year on CTTC; it was about half-way through the year before someone gave me the PAOE requirements. I thought: Why in the world didn't I get this earlier? So, as President, I wanted to make sure everyone was aware of the criteria and could stay on top of it.

Q: *So, your past experience on committees was invaluable to your success as Chapter President. What all committees have you served on?*

Joe: I've chaired Newsletter, CTTC, Refrigeration, and Special Events; and I've served on Board of Governors many times. I've served as committee member on others. Thirteen years total.

Q: *With all that experience, did you start out the year with the goal of winning the Golden Gavel? Most Chapter Presidents are just aiming for PAR and making sure we don't lose the Premier Award.*

Joe: My personality is that if there is something to win, I want to win it! But really, my goal was that if I couldn't win the Golden Gavel, I wanted to work as hard as I could to put the Chapter in a position where we could really compete for it during John's (*Semtner*) year. However, John was actually working as hard as he could to so that we could win during my year. That was one of the more significant things; normally a person going through the chairs tends to sit back and just observe during their year as President-Elect. John didn't do that. I probably had the most helpful President-Elect in history.

Q: *Did everything go as planned or where there changes or course corrections needed along the way?*

Joe: I tried to get it setup so that all I had to do was provide oversight to committee chairs and allow them to do their work; and for 99% of the time, that's exactly how it went. We did, however, have one committee that started getting behind, but we rallied the troops and others stepped in. Members who weren't even really involved came in to help. If anything surprised me, it was the level of buy-in I got. Jeff Forman and Chris Dolan were two that really stepped in. I don't want to start naming people

because I'm sure I'll forget someone. There were many who came in to help when needed. That committee ended up exceeding their goal.

Q: *Where there any other key factors you can recall that made your year a success?*

Joe: I can think of a number of things. I met with John Harrod and Tino Mendez several times throughout the year. They have a lot of ASHRAE experience at the Regional level. Their advice and confirmation that we were on the right track was very valuable. I had stressed to my committee chairs to stay in constant contact with their RVC, and they did a real good job of doing that. I got started on the CRC report early in the year. Tino told me that the Chapters that impress the judging committee are the ones that do things no other chapters are doing. I tried to highlight those kinds of things in the report, and I had several people review the report before it was final. I can't remember who's idea it was to have a Spouses Night at District 21 and double that as a Refrigeration tour, but that hit a homerun. Overall, it wasn't really me, it was everyone involved, especially my committee chairs, that allowed us to win this award. It was a team effort.

Q: *Do you have any specific future plans for serving in ASHRAE, such as at the Regional or Society levels?*

Joe: I've already been elected to be the Regional Vice-Chair of CTTC. That's a three year commitment. With John Harrod rolling off of Director and Regional Chair, and very few Central Oklahoma people moving in to the regional level, we weren't going to be represented very well. Our Chapter is too strong and too big to not always have someone in Regional leadership.

Q: *Would you consider being our Chapter President again?*

Joe: I really enjoyed my time as Chapter President. I liked working with everyone in our industry and really benefited from the character building and leadership skills. It was a rewarding experience. If we were faced with another situation where someone needed to step in and fill the position at the last minute, like Harry Rountree (2006) and David Royal (2013) did, then I would be glad to do it. However, I really want to see our YEA and committee members go through the chairs. It will be an experience that will definitely help them throughout their career.

For more information on the 2014-2015 year, download Joe's CRC Summary Report under the History tab at ashraecok.org



Figure 2 - Central Oklahoma Chapter CRC Attendees

Interview conducted on August 24, 2015 by:

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ASHRAE Central Oklahoma Chapter Historian