

No Matter What, Groundwater is Still Important: A Fond Farewell

by Jennifer Wemhoff, Groundwater Foundation

The world has changed in countless, untold ways in the past few months. One thing that hasn't changed? Groundwater's importance. Groundwater is important to each of us right now. It will be important tomorrow and every day in the future.

The work of the Groundwater Foundation has been important for almost 35 years. In 1985 when the Foundation was born out of founder Susan Seacrest's passion and her kitchen table, the world was vastly different. No one believed youth environmental education was important. We didn't know as much about groundwater as we do now. Wellhead protection and source water protection weren't part of the vocabulary of groundwater managers. But things changed.

Over those 35 years, the value of youth education was illustrated in kids who attended the Nebraska Children's Groundwater Festival in the early 1990s who grew up to be groundwater stewards, managers, and educators. Our populace is more educated about groundwater resources and research continues to advance. We better understand the value of proactive protection strategies versus remediation efforts.

The Groundwater Foundation changed its strategies to adapt to a changing world, new approaches to groundwater education, and ways to engage communities in local groundwater stewardship. Mailed brochures and coloring books gave way to mobile apps and downloadable website materials. Social media changed the way we shared information and engaged constituents. Interested citizens turn to the internet to seek answers to local concerns and questions.

And things continue to change.

Personally, my life has changed in so many ways since I first set foot in the Groundwater Foundation offices in January of 2000. As a college junior, I was looking to learn from an internship (and to check off a requirement for graduation) but had no idea the profound changes the Foundation would bring about in my life.

I grew up as a professional at the Groundwater Foundation. I started full-

time in June 2001 as a fresh-faced, eager, perhaps a little naive college grad.

Now, over 20 years later in a colossal life change, I'm preparing to leave the Foundation. Now, I'm a married mother of two girls with a minivan and a mortgage.

Things certainly changed for me during my two decades at the Groundwater Foundation.

I grew deeply passionate about nonprofit work and the need to have an impact that's greater than myself. I've seen how people, businesses, and communities have come together to create a positive collective impact on groundwater resources.

My HEARTFELT THANKS

There's one more thing that hasn't changed: My deep appreciation for the people working diligently to protect groundwater, the water we drink and rely on every day to nourish our lives and communities.

Thank you, Groundwater Guardians. Your commitment to your communities and protecting groundwater is nothing short of amazing. I have been overwhelmed by your passion, creativity, and perseverance over the years. I consider so many of you my friends, and I will miss you all.

Thank you, Green Sites. You see implementing groundwater-friendly practices as part of your regular work as the right thing to do and are working hard to protect water resources, one site and one practice at a time.

Thank you, educators. You recognize the value of educated youth who grow into responsible groundwater managers and stewards in the future. Please keep up the amazing work!

Thank you, donors, constituents, readers, and social media followers. You made it possible for us to do our work. Your support, belief, and action have made the Groundwater Foundation a success for nearly 35 years.

Thank you, partners. I've been so blessed to work with incredible people over the years, all passionate and dedicated to making the world a better place in your own way.

Thank you, coworkers, past and present. You helped shape me into the person and professional I am today.



Thank you for the laughs, listening ears, critical eyes, advice, brainstorming, and fun for the last 20 years. My life would not have been the same without you in it, and I'm grateful to the Groundwater Foundation for allowing me to know you.

A CHALLENGE WITH THE CHANGE

And now, dear readers, I issue a challenge to you. One of our favorite sayings at the Groundwater Foundation has always been, "It is because of people that groundwater must be protected, but it is only through the efforts of people that it can be accomplished."

It is up to you to help the Groundwater Foundation carry on the mantle of groundwater education and protection, now and in the future. It is only through YOUR efforts that groundwater can be protected.

If the past few months have taught us anything, it's that we can't predict the future. We can only prepare for it. But one thing I know for sure is that groundwater is still important. It deserves our protection. Working with the Groundwater Foundation, and in partnership with the people and resources of the National Ground Water Association, it can and will be achieved. Please continue your support and commitment.

Thank you for your dedication, interest, friendship, partnership, and passion for groundwater. 💧

Read the entire *Aquifer*