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Expanded in 2019: CS Week's Prestigious Expanding Excellence Awards

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Phoenix, AZ, Thursday, April 11, 2019 – One of the highlights punctuating every CS Week Conference is the presentation of its Expanding Excellence Awards (EEA), which salute utilities that have implemented major systems, aligned people with process and technology, and used home-grown or market solutions to enhance operations and improve customer experience. CS Week CEO Rod Litke announced the 2019 winners and finalists at Thursday's general session in Phoenix. New this year under the EEA umbrella are two Individual Achievement awards. Together, these prestigious Awards recognize corporate and individual excellence in customer service at large and small utilities.

Born from the desire to recognize individuals across the span of their utility careers, CS Week added the Distinguished Leader and Rising Star awards in 2019. Two recipients were honored with photos and brief sketches at Wednesday's and Friday's general sessions:

- **2019 Distinguished Leader: Darren McIlwraith**, *Director, Customer Care*, Enbridge Gas

This Individual Achievement Award recognizes individuals whose contributions to the understanding of and/or practice of effective leadership are singular, significant and have resulted in extraordinary impact in leading their teams.

- **2019 Rising Star: Laura Butler**, *Director, Digital Customer Experience*, Central Hudson Gas and Electric

This Individual Achievement Award recognizes an emerging leader in utility customer service and/or supporting information technology whose record reflects ongoing contributions to their company, exceptional and/or accelerated growth and increased levels of leadership and responsibility.

In the four corporate categories, CS Week recognizes two EEA class levels: Level I for utilities with \$500M and greater and Level II for utilities with less than \$500M in annual revenues. Twelve utilities were saluted at the awards ceremony for projects, programs and implementations completed during 2017 or 2018:

1. Best Customer Information System (CIS) Implementation. Major CIS implementation projects are evaluated on budget and schedule adherence, operational efficiency after go-live, innovation and improved service levels.

- **Level I Winner:** DC Water
- **Level I Finalists:** Kansas City Power and Light
Orlando Utilities Commission

2. Best Analytics Project. Pilot projects or large-scale implementations that optimize analytics from devices, data or other related technologies to address, remediate or enhance customer service qualify for this award category. These awards are evaluated based on complexity, innovation, improved service levels, improvements to customer service and cost/benefit.

- **Level I Winner:** Hydro Québec
- **Level I Finalist:** Arizona Public Service
- **Level II Winner:** Central EMC

3. Innovation in Digital Customer Engagement. High-tech, innovative or technologically complex, these projects improve customer service in the meter-to-cash customer experience lifecycle.

- **Level I Winner:** Con Ed
- **Level I Finalist:** Spire Energy
- **Level II Winner:** London Hydro

4. **Innovation in People & Process.** Innovative, low-tech or non-technological approaches to improving customer service in the meter-to-cash customer experience lifecycle which emphasize soft skills, general solutions and non-automated approaches to engage customers and/or improve the customer experience are the foundation for this award.

- **Level I Winner:** Austin Energy
- **Level I Finalist:** Com Ed
- **Level II Winner:** Hydro Ottawa

Short winners' videos showcasing their projects and initiatives were shown during Thursday's general session.

Afterwards, winners presented Conference Workshops about their projects and innovation specifics where attendees could ask questions to learn more.

Litke has been emceeing the EEA at CS Week Conference for many years. "I never grow tired of highlighting the innovative projects happening in utilities across the U.S. and North America. It's such an honor to congratulate the esprit de corps, the customer-focus, the dedication and the can-do attitudes of so many unsung stars -- those in operations and IT who know their business, understand their customers and synthesize competing requirements into industry-leading solutions that make them role models to others. I'm so pleased to congratulate our deserving 2019 winners and finalists. Winners videos are available online at www.csweek.org. I encourage utility leaders to watch them with their staff and executives back at their workplaces and perhaps ignite a similar project at their utilities."

For more information about the 2019 award winners and finalists or about the CS Week EEA in general, visit [EE AWARDS](#) or contact Shelley Carter, CS Week Expanding Excellence Awards Manager, at scarter@csweek.org

About CS Week

CS Week is the premier annual educational and customer service conference serving electric, gas and water/wastewater utility professionals across North America and around the world. CS Week provides learning and networking opportunities in support of the utility customer experience lifecycle: Analytics, Billing & Payments, Contact Center, Credit & Collections, Digital Customer Engagement, Field Services, and Strategies & Management.

Nine signature venues deliver on this mission during each CS Week and throughout the year:

1. **Executive Summit**
2. **Key Account Forum**
3. **College**
4. **Synergy Groups**
5. **ENGAGE311 with EXPO311**
6. **Conference**
7. **CS Week Research**
8. **Expanding Excellence Awards**
9. **LeadNext**

A 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization, CS Week attracts attendees from utilities of all sizes. Besides the robust education venues and diverse networking opportunities during its week-long conference, CS Week enjoys a supportive partnership with scores of industry partners, sponsors and conference exhibitors. CS Week offers year-round webinars and blogs to showcase utility success stories, update attendees on marketplace trends and keep utility professionals connected. For more information, visit www.csweek.org. Multiple advisory panels and steering committees shape and focus CS Week, ensuring content is aligned with mission. CS Week adapts to and reflects industry times while holding fast to its core foundation - providing utility professionals at every level valuable education and networking opportunities, with an emphasis on "expanding excellence in customer service."

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