



MARIANNE MATHER / STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Lisa Jordan, education coordinator for the Illinois Water Works Association, scrutinizes a glass of water from one of the participating towns in Kane County. Jordan, along with two others, judged the annual Kane County water-tasting contest held Thursday at the Lincoln Inn in Batavia. The winning water was from Aurora.

TOPS AT THE TAP

Aurora again wins water competition

By Mike Danahey
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Proving it deserved the state championship it successfully defended last March in Springfield, the city of Aurora's tap water flowed home with "Best in Kane County" honors Thursday afternoon in a taste test competition at Batavia's Lincoln Inn.

With a sample drawn from the Phillips Park water tower, the water gushed over a field of 10 other samples at the Kane County Water Association's December meeting.

The key to Aurora's success? A little luck and that "we're a blend of well and surface water," said Bob Leible, Aurora's assistant superintendent of water production.

Surface water typically has

more particulates to be removed, while well water may be purer but often has a harsher taste, explained Dave Schumacher, manager of water systems engineering for Aurora.

Aurora's water is about 60 percent from the Fox River and 40 percent from underground. Elgin also taps into the Fox for its water — with its mix being 95 percent from the river and 5 percent underground, explained Mark Donnelly, vice president of the Kane County Water Association and Elgin's chief water chemist.

Aurora's water is softened, carbon-filtered and chlorinat-

ed with a hint of ammonia before it runs through the city's pipes and out hoses, faucets and shower heads.

Despite the hopes of one judge, there was no competition for which water would be best for your morning shower or the best to open the tastes in a fine scotch.

Instead, the water was rated for taste, odor and clarity by a panel that included this reporter, Illinois Water Works Association education coordinator Lisa Jordan and US 99.5 radio personality Ray Stevens.

"When I told them at work that I was judging a water contest, everybody thought I was" kidding, Stevens told his hosts.

Picking a winner was tougher than Jordan and Stevens thought it might be. All but one sample had what most people are looking for in tap water, which is to say no flavor or odor at all and close-to-crystal clarity.

Aurora has a bit of a water dynasty going for it. It won the Kane County competition in 2006 and a couple of times prior to that, Leible said. And Aurora water will be going for a three-peat as state champs down in Springfield in March.

"We're like the Lakers were, or the old Bulls," Leible said.

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