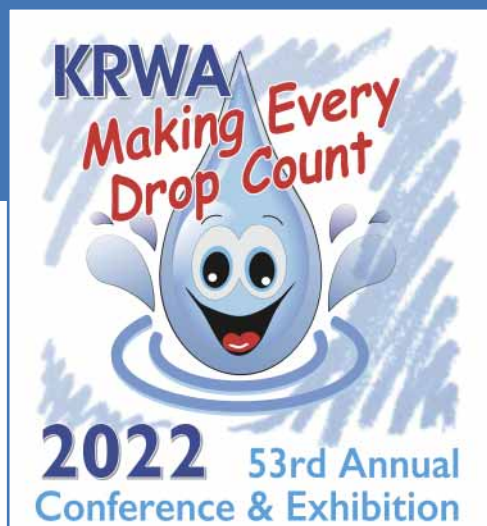


2022 KRWA Annual Conference Review

After a two-year hiatus because of the COVID pandemic, people appreciated the opportunity to get together again for KRWA's 2022 Annual Conference & Exhibition, March 29 – 31 at the Century II Convention Center Wichita. They came to learn and inquire about new products and services, rekindle fellowships with old friends, and make new acquaintances. The evaluation forms have been reviewed and the constructive comments for 2023 have been noted. KRWA welcomes suggestions from anyone for the 2023 conference and other regional training sessions as well. The Kansas Rural Water Association's Annual Conference and Exhibition is the Midwest's largest conference and is recognized as one of the best in the U.S. The total registration was 2,244. And the pecan and lemon bars and other bakeries were incomparable – hands down, no questions asked.

The KRWA conference provides something for everyone – and that something is non-stop. A complaint that ends up being a compliment is that “there are too many sessions that I wanted to attend.” That’s one of the main reasons why the KRWA conference is one of America's best water and wastewater conferences. In 2022, attendees came from 322 cities and 145 rural water districts, public wholesale systems, or other small systems. Registrants came from 35 additional states outside of Kansas and British Columbia.

The 2022 conference was the 53rd annual. The conference featured nine full-day pre-conference sessions for water and wastewater operators and managers, city clerks, board/council members, RWD bookkeepers and managers on Tuesday, March 29. The conference included 48 other concurrent training sessions that involved 67 presenters. The



Attorneys' Forum was the 20th event. The forum was again organized and facilitated by KRWA General Counsel Gary Hanson of Stumbo Hanson, LLP, Topeka.

Operator certification exams

An additional bonus for the conference is that it provides an opportunity for operators to complete the certification exams. KRWA appreciates the operator certification department at KDHE for making the exams available. More than 230 water and wastewater operators took the operator certification exam Thursday afternoon, March 31. Tuesday, March 29, provided a full day of training for water operators for Small System through Class IV. Exam refresher sessions were held on Thursday morning. KRWA appreciates the staff at KDHE for their extra efforts in helping provide unique training for wastewater operators on Thursday morning, March 31 as preparation courses to the exam.

Who attended?

In 2022, registrants came from 322 cities and 145 rural water districts or other public water or wastewater systems.

The attendance breakdown is as follows:

- Operators: 1,030
- Administrative Staff: 91
- Board/Council Members: 123
- Industry: 941
- Agency: 52

The 2022 conference involved 217 different exhibitors, filling all 365 available booth spaces in EXPO Hall. The 2023 conference, set for March 28 – 30, promises no less, with many of KRWA's Associate Members already wanting to reserve space. All rooms at the Hyatt were blocked out in 20 minutes through their online portal; the Drury Hotel is also fully booked. For accommodations for 2023, check the KRWA website at www.krwa.net/conference. Rooms have been blocked at many hotels.



Mark your calendars for the 2023 KRWA Conference at the Century II Convention Center in Wichita. The dates are March 28 – 30, 2023.

The 2022 "Almost 5K-KRWA Conference Run/Walk"

There was no shotgun start ... the six runners sprinted forward on command to start the 6th Annual "Almost 5K-KRWA Conference Run/Walk". It was a great morning for running or walking. An early morning run is invigorating. Should more KRWA conference-goers do it? "Of course, definitely yes," says KRWA's Mark Thomas who headed up this year's run.

Matt Kerr from Public Wholesale District No. 5 at Iola took home 1st place. His time was 20:30 on the 2.8-mile course. Bob Seleska from the city of Waterville earned second place with a time of 22:06. Third place finish was by Leigh Ann Schultejans from Nemaha County RWD 4 in Wetmore, Kan. with a time of 28:16.

Runners enjoyed hot chocolate with rolls and fresh fruit as they returned from Century II.



Shown left to right are Leigh Ann Schultejans, Nemaha RWD 4 (3rd place); Kirk Tjelmeland, Kansas Water Office, (4th place); Matt Kerr, Public Wholesale District No. 5 (1st place); Bob Seleska, city of Waterville (2nd Place); and, Mark Thomas, KRWA staff member.

Unequaled Hospitality – Food, Beverage and Social

KRWA takes this opportunity to thank Cara Geier and her "girls" (Event Planning Services) from Mount Hope, Kan. who were able to help out at the 2022 KRWA conference. They worked to keep the KRWA hospitality tables filled with the best bakeries imagined. If there was any complaint it was that there were "too many sweets and not enough selection for diabetics". And some people want coffee in the afternoons. That will be modified in 2023. The food products came from Paradise Donuts in Wichita and Carolyn's

Essenhaus in Arlington, Kan. Better food could not be had.

For trivia buffs, here's what was consumed at the KRWA hospitality tables:

- 88 dozen glazed donuts, still people's favorite!
- 29 dozen cake donuts
- 14 dozen strawberry strudel
- 145 dozen donut holes
- 21 dozen blueberry coffee sticks – a real hit
- 720 servings of coffee cake
- 540 pecan, lemon, brownie bars
- 170 dozen cookies
- 288 bagels
- 2,400 muffin sections – blueberry, banana nut, cinnamon and chocolate (yum!)
- 17 bags frozen mixed fruit
- 5 bags frozen strawberries
- 6 gallons sliced peaches
- 6 gallons pineapple chunks
- 6 gallons mixed fruit cocktail
- 10 bags apples



- 5 bags oranges
- 5 bags plums
- 7 bags clementines
- 4 cases of bananas
- 128 greek yogurt
- 240 flavored yogurts
- 12 zero sugar yogurt
- 6,350 bottles of water
- 31 canisters of pre-mix soda
- 237 gallons of coffee, tea and orange juice
- 27 kegs of beer



Act Now to Build the Workforce of Tomorrow . . .

Training a new workforce will require new attitudes, approaches

The water industry has made significant progress in lowering the average age of its workforce over the last ten years – but there’s still work to be done to ensure a smooth transition to the next generations of workers.

Don Van Veldhuizen, a Florida-based water industry trainer, offered challenging perspectives of generational stereotypes during a session at the 2022 Kansas Rural Water Association annual conference.

The average age of a water industry worker a decade ago was 57, VanVeldhuizen said. Today, it’s just over 45. However, the average age with more than five years of experience is almost 62.

“It’s a whole lot better than it was ten years ago,” Van Veldhuizen said. “But I’m also a little bit scared, because that means the experienced operators are three years away from retirement.”

If water systems haven’t started thinking about succession planning, Van Veldhuizen said, it’s time to start identifying the next generation of supervisors and leaders to take over. There are currently five generations represented in the water industry, he said.

He led a discussion about stereotypes related to Gen X, Millennials, and Gen Y workers – as well as the Baby Boomer generation currently in roles of authority and the remaining members of the “Greatest Generation” who are still serving on boards and even still working as operators.

One example: an older operator at a water system in Michigan would drive to each pump station, pick up a clipboard, record the numbers in a paper notebook, and continue on the circuit. A younger operator would use his cell phone to take a photo of each clipboard.

The older operator declared that he wouldn’t be changing his method, until he made an error by transposing the written values. It required the operator to drive back to the pump station to collect the accurate number. When the younger operator made an error, he had a visual record with his phone photos that he could produce immediately, saving the system time and money.

“That’s what the new generation can offer us,” he said..

It’s time to bury the stereotypes about age and generation, Van Veldhuizen argued. For instance, he said, a generation viewed as lazy may find new efficiencies in their work.



Don Van Veldhuizen offered challenging perspective of “generational stereotypes” during a pre-conference at the 2022 KRWA conference.

“The fact of the matter is, we develop these stereotypes for a selected few,” he said. “Maybe it’s an experience we’ve had with one person.”

Baby Boomers, because of the culture in which they were raised, can struggle with ceding control of responsibilities, Van Veldhuizen said.

Two quotes he offered for proof:

- ❖ “If I want something done right, I’ll do it myself.”
- ❖ “It’s my way, or the highway.”

There are sincere concerns that younger managers will make mistakes, or not do things the “right” way, Van Veldhuizen said.

But “everyone makes mistakes,” he said. Also, while some methods of management and operations are time-tested and effective, he challenged anyone who says “that’s the way we’ve always done it” to think about whether that statement is true.

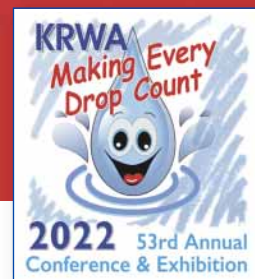
“We’ve only had the Surface Water Treatment Rule since 1989,” he said. “Have we really always done it that way?”

A succession plan is essential for retirement-age workers to make sure the system is handed off in good shape. If a

The average age of a water industry worker a decade ago was 57, Van Veldhuizen said. Today, it’s just over 45. However, the average age with more than five years of experience is almost 62.

“There’s a class tomorrow on the Kansas Open Meetings Act and some of the changes to that law. It’ll be a nice thing to be up to speed on that. I think it’s important to take the information back to the council.”

– Mike James, City of Phillipsburg



retirement-age person has not identified someone to take over, they need to begin the process as soon as possible.

“If they aren’t fully trained, are you fully retired?” Van Veldhuizen asked.

Training management-level workers is important, but Van Veldhuizen stressed that a system must be looking at its workforce at every level.

He offered these additional tips:

- ❖ Focus on retention instead of hiring. One estimate is that it costs \$20,000 plus a worker’s salary to train a water industry worker. “If you don’t have a revolving door, could you pay your employees more?” he asked.

- ❖ If a system can’t be competitive in salary, find other ways to show workers that they are valued. Appreciation is the top reason reported for a worker to stay in a job. One suggestion was to organize a mission trip to a developing country to help build water systems. “What we’re doing is amazing. Why don’t we share it? It will change you and make you passionate about industry,” he said.

- ❖ Broaden the way you talk about the industry. For high school and college students, one approach might be to talk about how water careers are environmental careers. Young people who are passionate about the environment are likely to resonate with that message.

Taking the time to work through transition and succession planning is essential to the future of the state, he said.

“The very lifeblood of our communities depends on water,” he said. “A community will die without you guys providing high quality water.”



KRWA Apprenticeship Program Builds Kansas Water Workforce

The Kansas Rural Water Association has developed an apprenticeship program for Kansas water and wastewater systems to build capacity in the state’s water/wastewater operator workforce.

“We’re going to see a major retirement boom in this industry during the next decade,” said Monica Wurtz, the coordinator of the KRWA Apprenticeship Program. “We need to be aware of that and start planning a way that we’re going to introduce some new blood into this workforce.”

The KRWA apprenticeship program has been developed in partnership with the National Rural Water Association. It resembles apprentice programs for plumbers, linemen, and electricians to ensure that young workers are building skills and experience needed to ensure that water and wastewater systems operate effectively.

Apprentices enrolled in the program receive credit for on-the-job training hours and additional classroom instruction. Participating water and wastewater systems provide mentors to apprentices; they are eligible for technical assistance from KRWA to work through concerns and challenges to make sure the apprentice has the best outcome from the program.

For more information about the program, contact Monica Wurtz at monica@krwa.net or 785-262-7301.



2022 Presenters

The Kansas Rural Water Association appreciates the time and effort by all the presenters at the 2022 conference. Thank you for helping all those who attended “Making Every Drop Count”.

Keegan Bailey	North Central KS Planning
Eric Barth	Hinkle Law Firm, LLC
Thomas Becker	Kansas State Data Center
Ethan Belshe	Kansas Office of Recovery
Arnie Bhowmick	Aktivov Asset Management
Kevin Bomhoff	Kansas Leadership Center
Carl Brown	GettingGreatRates.com
Rex Buchanan	Kansas Geological Survey
Dawn Buehler	Kansas Water Authority
Sabrina Cantrell	Kansas Dept. of Health & Environment
Randy Carlson	Kansas Dept. of Health & Environment
William Carr	Kansas Dept. of Health & Environment
Kent Culbertson	American AVK
Dustin Danker	Hawkins, Inc.
Julie Dawson	HF Scientific
Jim DeLozier	Brenntag Southwest, Inc.
Kristina Dietrick	HR Partners, LLC
Tanya Dorf Brunner	Oral Health Kansas
Austin Drake	Smith & Loveless, Inc.
Ginny Eardley	Kansas Dept of Commerce
Dan Fischer	USDA Rural Development
Elizabeth Fitch	Kansas Dept. of Agriculture - DWR
Jeff Flathman	Energy Solutions Professionals
Marsha Fleming	Kansas Dept. of Health & Environment
Dan Freese	Downey Drilling, Inc.
Ryan Fugler	Hydra-Stop
Rob Gavin	Kansas Dept. of Health & Environment
Toni Glymph-Martin	Wastewater Microbiology Solutions
Scott Good	Network Computer Solutions
Tony Grant	Maguire Iron, Inc.
Tim Halfhide	Kansas Dept. of Health & Environment
Gary Hanson	Stumbo Hanson LLP
Ted Harris	Kansas Biological Survey
Michael Harris	National Rural Water Association (Ret.)
Shane Harris	Network Computer Solutions
Steve Harsha	Kansas Division Emergency Management
Julia Hart	Kansas Disciplinary Administrator's Office
Justin Howard	American AVK
Linda Hunsicker	Kansas Dept of Commerce
Kevin Jones	Mid West Fire Training Associates
Muhammad Khan	USDA Rural Development
Tom Lasser	Hawkins, Inc.

D. Scott Loyd	Swindoll, Janzen, Hawk & Loyd
Todd Luckman	Stumbo Hanson LLP
Sara Maguire	Kansas Water Office
Ned Marks	Terrane Resources Co.
Mark McAnarney	City of Emporia
Brian McCrary	Aegion-Insituform Technologies USA
Courtney McMillian	eLynx Technologies
Samantha McPheter	eLynx Technologies
Jennifer McVey	Bartlett & West, Inc.
Deborah Mendenhall	Kansas Dept. of Health & Environment
Bob Myers	City of Newton
Jennifer Nekuda	Kohler Power Systems
Michael Nourse	Subsurface Solutions
Connie Owen	Kansas Water Office
Taylor Penick	Kientz & Penick, CPA's, LLC
Rick Penner	Viking Industrial Painting
Nick Polsinelli	Information Data Technologies
Ken Robinson	Avista Membrane Treatment Solutions
Kelly Rundell	Hite, Fanning & Honeyman L.L.P.
Clinton Schuckman	Kansas Dept. of Health & Environment
Chris Schuermann	HF Scientific
Jason Schultz	Kansas Dept. of Health & Environment
Jen Sharp	JenSharp.com
Darrell Shippy	Kansas Dept. of Health & Environment
Jenny Smith	Kansas Dept. of Health & Environment
Martha Tasker	City of Salina
Katie Tietz	Kansas Dept. of Agriculture - DWR
Don Van Veldhuizen	Don Van Veldhuizen Trainers
Clifford White	Geary RWD 4
Harry Wilk	AV Water Technologies LLC
Brownie Wilson	Kansas Geological Survey



Butler Headliners Perform

“Life is a Highway” at Opening Session

Thanks to the incomparable Butler Headliners, you will have to look hard to find another conference that gets a kick-start as the KRWA conference does. This troupe of 36 members and a combo and additional support staff started the KRWA conference opening session with songs about cars, planes and boats, and having “been everywhere” as they presented a Kansas-version of “I’ve been everywhere, man!” And those young folks enjoy performing for KRWA, even though it does mean getting up, traveling from El Dorado and being at Century II by 7 a.m. to run through quick sound checks and short rehearsal. This year’s show was entitled “Life is a Highway”.

The Butler Headliners have national acclaim as a show choir. Their performance at the 2022 conference was described on evaluation forms as “tremendous”, “love them!”, “what a bunch of enthusiastic young people!”. Audience appreciation came with rousing applause from the estimated 1,500 who attended the opening session. The Headliners sang and danced to nearly a full house on the lower level of Concert Hall. Valerie Lippoldt Mack directs the show choir. Other students serve as stage managers and sound managers. To be a participating member of the Headliners requires that the students maintain a minimum grade point average. After they graduate from Butler Community College, the group's members go on to become performers for the Walt Disney theme parks, Worlds of Fun, and other venues – and to own their own dance studios and direct church and community choirs. They become doctors, lawyers and teachers.



KRWA conference-goers can’t help but feel good about young people and the aspiring futures they should have. As an appreciation, KRWA again provided a \$3,000 stipend to the Butler Headliners. Valerie and the group always bring a complete new show. These young people sing and dance their hearts out.



Opening Session Prize Winners

Prize	Winner	System
\$250 VISA Gift Card	Dennis White	City of Udall
\$250 VISA Gift Card	Eric Harrod	City of Winfield

2022 Opening Session – KRWA Conference

KRWA Director Paul Froelich Gives Welcome

I was pleased to provide the Opening Welcome to the KRWA Conference on Wednesday, March 30. I delivered on behalf of Bill Shroyer, President of the Board of Directors for the Kansas Rural Water Association who was attending a National Rural Water Association event in Washington and who would arrive later on March 30.

Good morning – Kansas Rural Water Association! It is my pleasure to welcome all of you to the 53rd Annual Kansas Rural Water Conference and Exhibition, – Ah – FINALLY! We have tried to hold this “53rd Annual Conference now for three years, and it’s finally happening!

If this is your first Annual Conference, allow me to explain what KRWA represents. KRWA’s mission is to provide support to water and wastewater utilities. Utilities are made up of many different and necessary parts, and KRWA is here to support each part. Way back in mid-2019 (how long ago does that feel like?) KRWA staff chose “Making Every Drop Count” to be the 53rd Annual KRWA Conference theme. That conference was supposed to be held from March 24 – 26, 2020. We all know what happened next due to the Covid pandemic. And then, with so much sickness in 2021, there was no opportunity to hold a meeting with 2,000 plus people.

While we are here as managers, operators, city council members, administrators, clerks, RWD staff, I want to expound on a concern that most of us have. And I was hoping you could think about this as this conference continues.

First and foremost – Kansas Rural Water Association is here to support operators!

Educating operators is vital to the longevity of our utilities. We all know there is a crisis brewing. The wave of retirements is coming. It is estimated that more than 50% of the industry’s employees will retire within the next decade. Many small systems are operated by someone who would retire tomorrow if only there were someone who could replace them. In 2021, KRWA hosted 131 days of training, in-person classes, and webinars attended by 4,330 people. We



Paul Froelich, President, KRWA

developed the KRWA Apprenticeship Program to recruit, train and educate new water and wastewater operators to fill those roles. Tomorrow evening at the Awards Banquet, KRWA will recognize the first graduate of the Apprenticeship Program.

Educating operators doesn’t end when the training session ends. A large percentage of the more than 13,000 hours spent by KRWA staff onsite with water and wastewater system operators in 2021 was spent educating operators, administrators, and board members.

KRWA techs spent the remainder of that 13,000-plus hours assisting water operators and administrators with the sometimes very complicated tasks of keeping the water flowing. The staff conducted 164 water loss surveys and identified leaks that totaled more than 500 gpm. KRWA staff have located hundreds of leaks and help turn thousands of valves. Speaking of Every Drop Counts, those fixed water leaks will save the utilities almost \$1 Million in wasted water in 2021 alone!

The KRWA Wastewater Techs assisted 254 individual systems last year alone! Some of those systems were visited multiple times. In cases, KRWA helped them avoid costly upgrades. Again, we’re talking about millions of dollars of cost reductions because of KRWA’s support.

Without this support, many of these utilities could not function. Without water and wastewater utilities, not one of our communities could exist. The main thing

that separates America from many Third-World countries is safe, adequate drinking water and well-functioning sewer systems to treat our waste. Without all of you out there, citizens would not have these amenities. Recall some of the old-time photos in that opening video? And we all share the heartbreak of watching the news and seeing the human suffering and death, destruction of entire towns and infrastructure in villages and cities in Ukraine – and also elsewhere in the world. People in America often complain about the smallest of things. Dear Friends, we are all God’s children, and we are really lucky to be living in America with the benefit of modern water and wastewater services.

Kansas Rural Water Association also supports water and wastewater systems through our state and federal legislative networks. KRWA is a respected voice. I have been in Congressional offices and have heard the Members state that when they call KRWA, they know they are going to get straight information – and help. *The Kansas Lifeline*, KRWA’s magazine, is published three times a year and sent to nearly 6,000 readers. Recent articles in the magazine have mentioned concern over the proposed KDHE operator certification regulations, diminishing groundwater levels, attractive pay for operators – and many other topics of interest for anyone involved in the local utility. The KRWA Website is loaded with information – and it is unique with posting for public view thousands of follow-up letters to systems.

I also want to thank the 75 people making presentations at this conference. Some have traveled long distances to be here. EXPO Hall is filled with products and services. Exhibitors are a vital part of this conference; I encourage you to visit them and learn how they can help your utilities.

KRWA has something for everyone because, without all of you, the water wouldn’t flow. Thank you for all that you do – and also for your involvement with the Association. We are all in this together – and together, we will continue to work to make things as good as possible.

The Kansas Code

‘Festus’ entertained, encouraged Kansans during KRWA opening session



Kansans should be proud of their common-sense, helpful attitude toward others – and can be a model for all Americans to emulate.

Texas-based celebrity impersonator Mark Staggs delivered this message during the opening session of the Kansas Rural Water Association 2022 convention. Staggs performed more than a half-hour of standup comedy in the style of Festus Haggen, based on Ken Curtis’ rambling, kind-hearted character in the television series “Gunsmoke”.

He emphasized Kansans’ good qualities to the group.

“People in Kansas are good, hardworking people,” he said. “The Kansas work ethic is known worldwide.”

Much of his presentation included one-liners and zingers about Gunsmoke-era Dodge City, family life, and aging.

“When you’re young and you drop something on the ground, you reach right down and pick it up,” Festus told the crowd. “Nowadays, when I drop something, I look at it and think, ‘can I live without it?’”

Staggs broke out of the Festus character just long enough to exhibit his wide acting range, impersonating Liam Neeson, Jack Nicholson and John Wayne.

His persona as John Wayne prepared the crowd for what he described as the “code of the west” and the Kansas work ethic.

The code Staggs described is rooted in an attitude of respect, one that lends itself to cooperation. Pioneers had to



cooperate with each other just to survive, he said; that spirit of cooperation is still important today.

Staggs used the following examples to illustrate the Kansas worth ethic:

When you make a promise, keep it. “Honesty is absolute – your word is your bond,” he said. “A cowboy is loyal to his brand, his friends, and those he rides with. In your career, you need to do for others more than what they ask.”

Be hospitable to strangers. Allow them to take comfort, food, and coffee at your campfire.

Real cowboys are modest; braggarts are not tolerated. Staggs used the example of neighbors helping harvest thousands of acres of crops when a fellow farmer was injured in a car accident. “Nobody complained, and nobody bragged,” he said.

Complaining is what quitters do – and cowboys hate quitters.

Always drink whiskey with your gun hand to show friendly intentions. “That way everybody knows your intentions are good,” he said.

No matter how tired you are, always tend to your horse’s needs first before your own. And for managers, he said, that means taking care of your employees.

Always remove your guns before sitting at the dinner table. “It’s just good etiquette,” he said.

Never shoot a woman.

Staggs said after the morning session that Kansas had the elements needed to restore civility in America. His wife, he said, is from Manhattan, and he had traveled through the state over the years to spend time with her family.

Coming to Kansas is coming to the heart of America,” he said “The people here are kind of like the core of what America should be. They’re good. They’re honest, hard-working folks.”

The nation has “gotten off-kilter” he said, with groups more focused on success than on kindness. Kansans, by tradition, are more apt to abide by the personal code he described in his presentation.

“People out here in the center of America care about people’s welfare and have respect for people,” he said. “I think that’s something we’ll hopefully get back to as a country.”



The Annual KRWA Conference & Exhibition – Something for Everyone!

The opportunities for education, certification, training and more make the KRWA annual conference and exhibition a true investment for participants who serve their communities in many ways.

Attendees report every year that they appreciate the opportunity to learn about current trends, network with others in their fields, discuss equipment and services with vendors in the exhibition hall, and earn their certifications. They also report that they have fun with the family-friendly event. Here are some of their stories from the 2022 conference.

A contingent from Phillipsburg attended the conference, including Mike James, a city council member who said he appreciates the sessions targeted to those in local government.

“I come for the management training classes,” James said. “There’s a class tomorrow on the Kansas Open Meetings Act and some of the changes to that law. It’ll be a nice thing to be up to speed on that. I think it’s important to take the information back to the council.”

“It’s a good chance to be face-to-face with vendors,” said Kent Footh, assistant public works director for the City of Phillipsburg. “We know we can call them, but it’s better to come talk to them in person.”

Matthew Romero, chairman of the board of Miami RWD 3, said that the atmosphere of the KRWA convention kept him coming back for 12 years.

“There’s so much collaboration here,” he said. “It’s always good to meet new folks and have collaboration on the same subject.”



A highlight for attendees each year is the Tuesday evening social at Century II, complete with a carnival, casino, live music and a barbecue dinner.

It impressed Matt Carlson, a maintenance worker from Oxford, who was attending his first KRWA convention.

“I’m having a hoot,” he said. “King Midas and the Mufflers is one of my favorite bands, and I’m hoping to learn something and not fail my certification exam this week!”

The focal point of the Tuesday night social in 2022 was the multi-story zip line attraction, drawing city and water district staff and their families – and a number of spectators.

Calder Ashby, 11, grinned from ear to ear as he described his second trip down the zip line.

“When you go up, it’s really cool; then when you go down, it’s like ‘wooooo!’ It’s so fun!” he said, as he ran back to get in line for a third ride.

Calder’s mother, Stephanie Ashby, city clerk for the City of Walton, agreed with her son.

“This is my seventh year here and I always go on whatever ride they have,” she said. “It’s just awesome.”



"It's a good chance to be face-to-face with vendors. We know we can call them, but it's better to come talk to them in person."

– Kent Footh, City of Phillipsburg



Opening Nite Meet & Greet Is One-of-a-Kind!

The KWA annual conference opener is one big shindig! How else do you describe

two large halls at Century II filled with the following:

- Seating for 1,200 to enjoy a great barbecue meal and dessert bar
- Kansas' oldest Rock 'n Roll band on stage – King Midas and The Mufflers
- A Zip Line
- An area filled with casino games
- Mini Golf
- Three caricaturists
- The Oxygen Bar
- Archery Sharpshooter
- Escape Room
- Speed Pitch
- Bull Ride
- Instant photo shoot
- Foosball Table
- Air Hockey Table
- Pop-A-Shots
- Mega - Midway Games
- Beverage trailer and beverage stations
- Numerous table top games
- And, more than \$10,000 in door prizes!



KRWA's opening nite "Meet & Greet" is unique – a lot of fun and fellowship, good food and time to lay back. The zip line was constantly busy. There was something for everyone, all night long. And at 9:45, it was time to turn in the tickets that were won at the various games for the prizes that filled the side stage.

Festus and Doc and Miss Kitty greeted attendees. It was like an old west party – and a good time was had by all.



"I'm having a hoot," he said. "King Midas and the Mufflers is one of my favorite bands, and I'm hoping to learn something and not fail my certification exam this week!"

– Matt Carlson, City of Oxford



TUESDAY NIGHT MEET & GREET PRIZE WINNERS

Prize	Winner	Represents
Blackstone Griddle	Jonathon Lavielle	City of Elkhart
KitchenAid 5 Quart Mixer	Russell Jones	City of Lyndon
40" Samsung TV	Jason Biggs	City of Clearwater
Anvil Lopper-Shears	Paul Strathman	Nemaha RWD 3
Ring Video Doorbell Pro	Mindy Thorson	Dickinson RWD 2
Amazing Grace	SignAllen Markley	Douglas RWD 2
Dyson V7 Cord Free Vacuum	Todd Bond	City of Fort Scott
Fold Down Steel Cart	Sam McCleary	City of Protection
Ninja Prof. Kitchen System	Julie Winter	Riley County Public Works
Capresso Iced Tea Maker	Joshua Johnson	City of Elk City
Cuisinart Food Dehydrator	Maria Dressman	Elliott Group
Cuisinart Hurricane Hand Blender Set	John Simons	City of Haysville
Ridgid 16 Gallon Wet/Dry Vacuum	Roy Rickel	City of Harveyville
Cuisinart Ice Cream Maker	Ellis Edmonds	Leavenworth RWD 8
GoPro Hero8	Levi Reichard	City of Fort Scott
Cuisinart Griddler	Christine Tenbrink	City of Harveyville
GCI Freestyle Rocker Mesh Chair	Matthew Stock	City of Lebanon
Margaritaville Frozen Concoction Maker	Lisa Elmore	City of Gardner
Triple Slow Cooker	Cheryl Flory	Douglas RWD 2
Porter Cable 20V Impact	Keith Leddy	Sumner RWD 5
Air Compressor - 2 Gallon	Michelle Leddy	Sumner RWD 5
Dewalt 168 Piece Tool Kit	Sarah Hines	USDA Rural Development
4-Wheel Hose Cart	Pat Orazem	Riley RWD 1
Scotts Broadcast Spreader	Tony Lewis	KDHE
LED Tripod Work Light	Charlie Vieselmeyer	Republic RWD 2
\$500 Visa Gift Card	Kevin King	City of Park City
\$250 Visa Gift Card	Jim Zadina	City of Mankato
\$250 Visa Gift Card	Melissa Saaranen	City of Stockton
\$250 Visa Gift Card	Loren Eissler	Osage RWD 6
\$250 Visa Gift Card	Bob Seleska	City of Waterville
\$250 Visa Gift Card	Sam Atherton	Labette RWD 3
\$250 Visa Gift Card	Larry Toney	Public Wholesale 5
\$250 Visa Gift Card	Tonia Evans	Nemaha RWD 4
\$250 Visa Gift Card	Rich Krause	City of Russell



Wednesday Luncheon



Dawn Buehler, Kansas Water Authority

It's possible to make progress on tough water challenges in Kansas, said Kansas Riverkeeper Dawn Buehler, but it will take working together as partners to make it happen.

Buehler is the executive director of the Friends of the Kaw and the current chair of the Kansas Water Authority, in addition to her role as the non-governmental public advocate for the Kansas River. She delivered the Wednesday luncheon address during the KRWA 2022 annual convention.

Her focus on conservation efforts and public accountability for the river is important "not for conservation's sake" but because of the outsize impact the river has on those who live and work in the northern half of Kansas. About 800,000 Kansans get their drinking water from the river, she said.

"The Kansas River is a working river," Buehler said. "We use it for electricity, we use it for agriculture, for irrigation, for drinking water, for lots of businesses up and down the river. It's a very central part of our whole entire economy."

Buehler, who grew up on a farm along the Kansas River near DeSoto, described the Friends of the Kaw's opportunities for educating school

Partnerships are Key to Solving Tough Water Challenges

children – through lessons for students in grades six – twelve that teach about watersheds, natural resource management, and hands-on water testing and analysis – and for engaging community groups through programs such as Adopt-A-Boat-Ramp, where local groups assume responsibility for a public-use boat ramp along the Kansas River.

Education and advocacy opportunities are paired with volunteer activities to clean up the river. Buehler said that old tires were commonly used along the river to stabilize the streambanks – "they've been there all my life," she said. The practice was neither effective nor healthy for the river; over time, the tires have become dislodged from the streambanks and stuck in sandbars in the middle of the river.

The tires must be removed, one at a time, by popping them out of the streambed and removing them by boat. It's a time-consuming process, but, by working together with others, Buehler said they are now able to remove as many as 400 tires in a single day.

"It takes a lot of people and a lot of partners, but, with all of our partners, we've been able to get it done," she

said. "I'm telling you, the first year that I did this work, I thought, wow, that's impossible."

Buehler encouraged the audience, especially rural water districts and cities, to think broadly about partnerships that could make a difference in addressing significant challenges such as improving water quality.

"It's going to take every single one of us working together to prepare for the future and to solve all of our water problems across the state," she said.

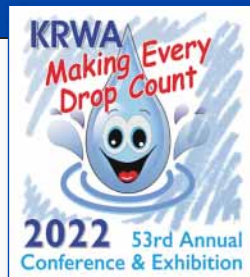
Non-profit organizations, such as Friends of the Kaw, and private-sector companies can provide programming and resources; educational opportunities help young people understand that they can make a difference in the environment through their own actions or through their careers; and helping landowners and land users find ways to prevent water quality issues before they begin.

"We can do more when we do it together," she said. "And it's going to take partnerships, lots and lots of partnerships, for us to get our work done."

"Small progress is still progress. At least you're moving the needle."

Buehler encouraged the audience, especially rural water districts and cities, to think broadly about partnerships that could make a difference in addressing significant challenges such as improving water quality.

Meter Assembly Contest Draws Many Participants and Onlookers

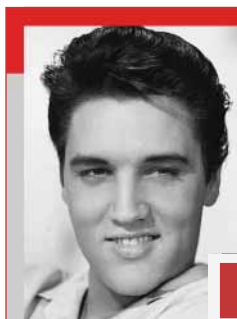


The Zenner USA hosted a meter challenge at the 2022 conference that challenged operators on their skills on disassembly and reassembly of a water meter. Contestants were given a meter and some time to study how it is properly assembled and also to practice the reassembly.

The contestants were then timed on their speed assembling the meter. The top 16 from the time trials held Tuesday afternoon and throughout the day on Wednesday were selected to go head-to-head in a single elimination competition. The winner received a \$500 gift card and will be entered into the finals at the National Rural Water Association's conference in September in National Harbor, MD. The second place winner received a \$300 gift card and third place received a \$100 gift card.

This photo shows top placements at the Zenner USA Meter Assembly Contest. Winners were: 1st Place Roger Rodriguez, City of Fort Scott; 2nd Place: Scott Flater, City of Fort Scott; 3rd Place - Mike Mabrey, City of Edgerton; 4th Place - Kimberly Hord, City of Fredonia. Miguel Hernandez with Zenner USA, managed the contest.

KRWA expresses appreciation to Zenner USA for offering the contest at the 2022 conference.



GIRLS SING ELVIS

Elvis Presley has the most No. 1 singles of any musician, with more than 30, but their delivery was done in a masculine tone.

Kathy Page Hauptman, artistic director of the Forum Theatre, flipped the gender script with the presentation of "Girls Sing Elvis" at the 2022 KRWA conference. It was an all-Elvis musical that brought the KRWA audience to their feet.

Introducing the show, Hauptman explained that Elvis was not a singer-songwriter. "He interpreted other writers' songs in a distinctive style that became the Elvis brand. But the long-term success of his career depended upon great songs," she said. "This show explores the early rhythm and blues performers that inspired Elvis plus



celebrates some of the best songs and songwriters in the business including the incomparable Lieber and Stoller." And there was lots of dance too.

The show included 23 musical numbers including "All Shook Up", "Hound Dog", "You Were Always On My Mind", "Jailhouse Rock", "Don't Be Cruel", "Burning Love", and more.

Chelsey Moore Ehresman's rendition of "How Great Thou Art" received a standing ovation.

Cast members were Jen Bechtner, Adrienne Degraftenreed, Kate Delaney, and Chelsey Moore Ehresman. The show included a five-member band and complete set moved to the Little Theatre at Century II for the KRWA audience.



Challenges and Hope Face Kansas Water Suppliers . . .

The future will rely on making plans today, says head of Kansas Water Office

Kansas water suppliers face significant and persistent challenges to ensuring that there will be enough water to provide users across the state.

It's up to the suppliers to take advantage of programs, planning efforts and new technology, said Connie Owen, director of the Kansas Water Office – but they must first recognize the reality the challenges represent.

“Adaptability and resiliency – they're a part of our lives, whether we like it or not,” Owen said. “We can choose to adapt and be resilient and be more successful. Or we can struggle even more than we currently do on certain issues.”



Connie Owen, Director,
Kansas Water Office

Owen used maps and graphics to illustrate the greatest areas of water concerns across Kansas during a session of the 2022 Kansas Rural Water Association annual conference. She addressed the Attorneys' Forum and presented one of the conference breakout sessions.

With each challenge, she offered a potential avenue to provide hope.

Two-thirds of Kansans rely on surface water for their water supply, Owen said, stored along rivers in reservoirs. The reservoirs are quickly filling with sediment, reducing the available storage capacity.

“It's not a mistake, not an accident – it's by design,” she said, “but we need to address it.”

When water storage levels decreased in John Redmond Reservoir in Coffey County, the state used conventional dredging technology to remove sediment. The reservoir is of particular importance as it is a backup water source for the Wolf Creek nuclear power plant in eastern Kansas.

The \$20 million dredging project that began in 2016 was both expensive and temporary, Owen said.

Tuttle Creek Reservoir in Riley and Pottawatomie counties is the site of a proposed pilot project to use water injection dredging to help improve storage capacity. Where conventional dredging requires significant investment in land resources to deposit the sediment outside of the reservoir, water injection dredging uses high

pressure to stir up sediment from the reservoir and send it downstream.

The practice has had great success in harbors and other waterways, Owen said; Tuttle Creek would be the first time it would be attempted in a reservoir. In late spring, legislators approved \$975,000 for fiscal year 2022 and \$1.025 million for fiscal year 2023 for the Tuttle Creek pilot project. The Water Office will work with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers on the project.

Legislators also approved funds for the early payoff of the John Redmond dredging bond and to reduce water supply storage debt for Big Hill, Clinton and Hillsdale reservoirs in eastern Kansas.

Extending groundwater supplies

Kansans who live in the western half of the state are more likely to rely on groundwater. The Ogallala portion of the High Plains Aquifer in the far southwest corner of the state has essentially been “mined” of water, Owen said.

Between state policies that allowed “too many straws in the drink” and the natural features that prevent rainwater from recharging the aquifer, some areas of the Ogallala are now considered to be depleted, she said. Other areas are estimated to have two decades or less of available water.

“What we hope to do is to extend the life of this aquifer as much as we can,” she said. “The western Kansas economy depends on it. Whether you're talking about the irrigators themselves or you're talking about people with domestic wells for their own homes, or communities, churches, hospitals, everybody, this is the water everybody out there depends on. And so we need to be thinking about doing things differently.”

In late spring, legislators approved \$975,000 for fiscal year 2022 and \$1.025 million for fiscal year 2023 for the Tuttle Creek pilot project. The Water Office will work with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers on the project.

"We can choose to adapt and be resilient and be more successful. Or we can struggle even more than we currently do on certain issues."

– Connie Owen



A potential solution for extending the life of the aquifer could be found in expanding the use of Local Enhanced Management Areas, or LEMAs, that allow local water users to set their own targets for reducing the amount of groundwater that they use. Their participation is voluntary though their plans must be approved by the Chief Engineer of the Kansas Division of Water Resources.

The practice is hopeful, Owen said, because agriculture producers in the state's first LEMA in Sheridan County are reporting using less water than they planned, while their profits have increased. One reason, she said, is that the producers' inputs such as fuel costs to operate their irrigation pumps have gone down when they pump less water.

"They love it. They think it's great," she said. "And so the hope is that this kind of behavior, these kinds of choices are going to happen all over the Ogallala Aquifer. That's what needs to happen."

Preventing water quality issues saves money

In terms of water quality, Owen said that threats such as harmful algal blooms and nitrate pollution are challenges that continue to plague public water systems. She referenced a recent Kansas News Service article that described the costs to water customers for treating the water, a situation that is particularly challenging for small cities and

systems to shoulder, with price tags often exceeding millions of dollars.

"These are untenable situations," she said. "We have to address the causes of these problems. We can't afford to just treat our way out of them."

Hotter, drier weather ahead

Extreme weather events pose an additional challenge for water system operators, Owen said. The Kansas Water Office is the lead agency for the Governor's Drought Response Team and closely monitors drought conditions across the state.

Kansas has experienced weather that is consistently hotter and drier over the years since 1901, she said.

"If you have lived here, you know what I'm talking about. And you don't need a graph to see it," she said.

"Looking forward, we have to be able to say our particular situation is changing; it has changed; and what are we going to do about it? For those who are involved with providing water for the public, you need to have plans. What will you do when a severe drought occurs? We've had some of those in recent memory. We're going to get them again. And they could be worse."

Owen encouraged public water providers to reach out to organizations such as the Kansas Rural Water Association and the Kansas Water Office for assistance with planning for extreme weather.

No traction for water overhaul bill

Finally, she said, the Kansas Water Office is tracking federal infrastructure funding opportunities likely to be available this year. Agency staff also closely followed legislation introduced by the Kansas House committee that studies water issues in the state that would have changed the funding structure for water projects, modified the organization of groundwater management districts, and substantially changed the ways in which state agencies address water issues, including the establishment of a cabinet-level agency focused entirely on water.

The House water committee studied the legislation in 2022, though committee members did not advance the bill to the floor of the House for consideration.

The challenges – in weather, in funding, in attitudes towards managing natural resources – are great, Owen said. But, she finds hope in the success stories about people who are making changes that are difficult in the short term but meaningful in the long term.

"My point in talking to you today is not simply to say everything's going to hell in a handbasket," she said. "It is, unless you do what needs to be done to make things better. It's possible. You just have to decide to do it. It's not comfortable. But it's possible."

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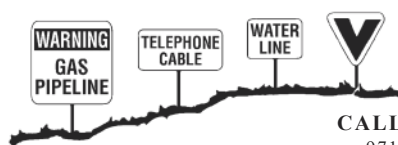
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Thursday Luncheon

Bending the Arc . . .

Water policy changes will take engagement, cooperation to set Kansas on the right path



Water industry professionals can change the future of water policy in Kansas by being engaged with their elected officials.

Rex Buchanan, director emeritus of the Kansas Geological Survey, encouraged attendees of the 2022 Kansas Rural Water Association annual conference to raise the profile of water issues to build support for modern laws that regulate water in the state.

Buchanan explained a concept he created with former Kansas Water Office

director Joe Harkins about the “arc” of water issues in the state and how approaches from legislators, governors and users has changed over time.

Kansas has been a challenging state for water policy because of its geography and its geology, Buchanan said. The eastern United States relies largely on surface water and uses riparian water law; in the west, most water is groundwater, which is typically allocated based on the water’s earliest users, often referred to as “first in time, first in right.”

Because of the groundwater supplies in the west and surface water supplies in the east, Kansas is a “transitional” state between the two approaches, Buchanan said.

“Kansas is, I think, really two states instead of one when it comes to water,” Buchanan said.

The differences from east to west – in precipitation and how the water is available, either on the surface or below – has created challenges for lawmakers to craft state-level policies. Additionally, Buchanan said, the governmental responsibilities of regulation, enforcement and planning are spread out over “somewhere in the neighborhood of 20 agencies” – making it difficult for Kansans and their elected officials to create systemic solutions to water problems.

The Ogallala formation of the High Plains Aquifer was once thought to be an infinite supply of water underneath

southwest Kansas, Buchanan said.

Agriculture producers installed large pumps to pull the water out of the ground at high rates to flood their fields from one end to the other.

It’s now understood that flood irrigation is not efficient and the Ogallala is not infinite, Buchanan said. Adding to the complexity of how to properly manage the resource, he said, is the understanding that the Ogallala is not a uniform source of water, with some parts of the aquifer holding much more water than other locations.

“It’s highly variable from place to place,” Buchanan said. “Don’t think of the Ogallala as this big underground bathtub. That’s not what it is.”

Center pivot irrigation technology gave farmers new ways to access their land, freeing them from the limits of flood irrigation, which required relatively flat land to be successful, Buchanan said. More corn could be grown in places where it was previously not possible, fueling the agriculture economy, particularly the ability to add feedlots and meatpacking plants in the southwest quadrant of the state.

It also meant that more water could be drawn from the aquifer, quickening its decline in some of the areas with the least amount of available water.

Water policy efforts picked up in the 1970s as policymakers created Groundwater Management Districts to provide more local management of



Rex Buchanan, director emeritus of the Kansas Geological Society, addressed the Thursday noon luncheon.

The differences from east to west – in precipitation and how the water is available, either on the surface or below – has created challenges for lawmakers to craft state-level policies.

“It’s really critical that we start back up in that arc, and you all are affected by where we are in that arc. And you all can affect this process to determine whether that arc starts back up or not.”

– Rex Buchanan



groundwater resources. Buchanan described this as a point when the arc of water policy efforts began to pick up.

The arc peaked in 1989 with the creation of the State Water Plan, the policy approved by the legislature that put in place a process for funding water-related activities.

Hayden, Harkins’ Comments . . .

Rex Buchanan played videos through his talk recorded as part of the Kansas Oral History Project, available at www.ksoralhistory.org, to provide additional insight into the state’s water policy history. The videos included former Gov. Mike Hayden discussing the importance of water to the state and Joe Harkins describing the close and dramatic vote in the state Senate that approved the State Water Plan.

Harkins said he was in the Senate the night the Kansas Highway Patrol was sent to retrieve Sen. Gus Bogina of Kansas City, who was at home

recovering from heart surgery. Bogina cast the deciding vote in favor of creating the plan.

Since then, there have been other efforts to affect Kansas water policy. Gov. Sam Brownback’s administration led a statewide “water vision” process in the 2010s; in 2022, the Kansas House committee charged with water issues debated at length – but did not approve – a bill that would have, among other things, changed the funding structure for water projects, modified the organization of groundwater management districts, and substantially changed the ways in which state agencies address water issues, including the establishment of a cabinet-level agency focused entirely on water.

But, Buchanan said, it’s time to again make substantial progress to address water concerns.

Harkins, in a video clip, described the conditions that made policies such as the State Water Plan possible.

“I’m gonna give you my opinion on what we did in the ‘70s and ‘80s,” he said. “That could not be replicated today. The circumstances do not exist that made it possible. Period. End of story. The type of bipartisanship and selfless leadership and commitment to public good is just not visible in the process today, like it was in those days. We need to get that back.”

Buchanan called on the water industry professionals in the audience to build support for water issues, particularly in the Kansas Statehouse.

“I think we’re at something of an inflection point,” he said. “It’s really critical that we start back up in that arc, and you all are affected by where we are in that arc. And you all can affect this process to determine whether that arc starts back up or not.”

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207 Conference-goers Contribute \$\$6,298 to WaterPAC

Donations from 207 conference-goers at the 2022 KRWA conference yielded \$6,298 for the Annual WaterPAC raffle. WaterPAC is sponsored by the Kansas Rural Water Association to support National Rural Water Association PAC. It allows the NRWA to support those members of Congress who support legislation that is in the interests of water and wastewater systems.

The WaterPAC was touted numerous times throughout the conference. Paul Froelich, President of the KRWA's board of directors, stressed the importance that the support by Kansas Rural Water Association has been to WaterPAC. Various legislative proposals including funding requests for training and technical assistance programs, USDA Rural Development loans and grants for water and wastewater, the state revolving loan programs are all among the National Rural Water Association priorities in Washington.

During the conference, KRWA directors took turns meeting conference-goers at the Rally booth.

Prizes for the Raffle are paid for by KRWA; 100 percent of the donations go to WaterPAC. KRWA and NRWA appreciate the support for WaterPAC during the KRWA conference. Donations in prior years have been as follows: 2005 - \$3,001; 2006 - \$3,000; 2007 - \$4,324; 2008 - \$4,692; 2009 - \$6,110; 2010 - \$5,073; 2011 - \$5,065; 2012 - \$7,193; 2013 - \$7,350; 2014 - \$7,650; 2015 - \$6,500; 2016 - \$7,969; 2017 - \$8,795; 2018 - \$7,616; 2019 - \$8,320; 2022 - \$6,298. Donations to WaterPAC at KRWA conference since 2005 total \$98,961.



The WaterPAC Raffle display in EXPO Hall during the KRWA Conference displayed items from an applied quilt to chain saw and KRWA Cornhole boards.

WaterPAC Raffle Winners

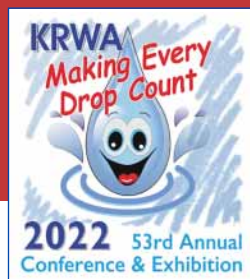
Prize	Winner	System
Quilt - Flower Basket	Chris Rohr	Haven USD 312
Ninja Food Pressure Cooker & Fryer	Stewart Kasper	Kansas Rural Water Association
KitchenAid 5 Quart Mixer - Dust	Bob Miller	Lyon RWD 3
Porter Cable - 4-Tool Combo Kit	Sandy Mulligan	City of Atwood
Apple Ipad 7th Generation	Brian Rusche	City of Seneca
iRobot Roomba Vacuum	Sam Atherton	Labette RWD 3
Keurig K-Duo Plus Coffee Maker	Pati Mishler	City of St. John
Green Mountain Grill with Pellets	JoAnna Sherwood	Douglas RWD 3
How Great Thou Art Sign	Greg Duryea	Kansas Rural Water Association
Stihl FS 91 Weedeater	Allen Markley	Douglas RWD 2
Stihl MS 171 Chain Saw	Bob Miller	Lyon RWD 3
Metabo 12" Compound Miter Saw	Ellen LeWallen	City of Winona
KRWA CornHole Boards	Laurie Strathman	Kansas Rural Water Association
Samsung 55" Curved Ultra HD TV	Carl Chalfant	City of Washington

**Prizes for the Raffle are paid for by KRWA;
100 percent of the donations go to WaterPAC.**



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We always can count on unpredictable weather in Kansas, no worries. KRWA would never let a light snow Thursday morning stop all the fun and networking.



Grand Prize Winners Take Home Four More Quilts

Four more quilts – now totaling 104 grand prize drawings since 1984 including 2022, went home to lucky conference-goers.

This year's patterns, "Paisley Delight", "Samplings From The Sea", and "Faceted Jewels" were designed and started in 2017 by Kathleen Ronnebaum. The final assembly was completed by Connie Huerter of Seneca, Kan. Quilting was completed by Joann Lutcavish of Steinaur, Neb. The applied quilt, "Flower Basket" was made by Huerter with the quilting by her cousin, Grace Bowser, who incidentally is city clerk at Mayetta, Kan. That quilt was among the prizes in the 2022 WaterPAC Raffle.



"Faceted Jewels" was the quilt selected by Rex Hess from the city of Mound City, at the Wednesday evening Awards Banquet. Rex had a double victory of sorts, having received the Wastewater Operator of the Year Award.



Laurie Seel, Office Manager at Nemaha County RWD 3, was the lucky winner of "Paisley Delight". Her winning ticket was drawn at the Thursday noon luncheon.



Erin Lingenfelter from the city of Emporia, selected "Samplings From The Sea" as her name was drawn for one of the two quilts given at the Thursday noon luncheon.



Chris Rohr, Director of Maintenance at USD 312 at Haven, Kan. was the lucky winner of "The Flower Basket" applied quilt. This quilt was the standout prize in the WaterPAC Raffle.

2022 Award Winners



RURAL WATER MANAGER

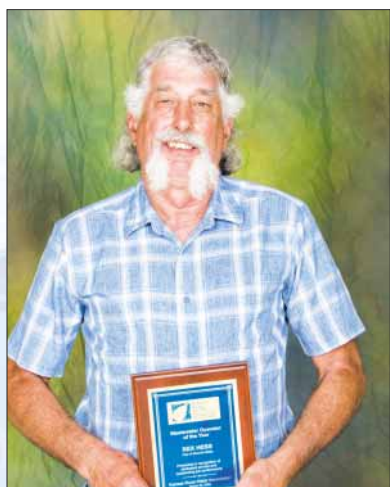
Brenda Adkins
Jackson RWD 3

Brenda Adkins began as Manager of Rural Water District No. 3 in 2005. At that time the office was located in the office of local attorney Ed Dunn. The office moved to its present location on the west side of the city square in Holton in 2007. In 2011 the district was able to purchase land and build its own maintenance shop. In 2019, Adkins was responsible for guiding the development of additional water sources for the district resulting in two new wells.

Adkins earned an MBA in Accounting and Business/Management from Washburn Univ., a Bachelor of Science in Business Administration from Peru State College and an Associate Degree from Highland Community College.

Adkins supervises four water operators and a bookkeeper. She is an avid advocate for the district and its employees. The district provides water services to nearly 2,000 rural customers including users on the Potawatomi Reservation and the cities of Circleville, Soldier, Denison, Mayetta, Netawaka, and Whiting. The water source for the district is from wells and also purchase from Public Wholesale District No. 18 – Banner Creek.

Adkins is very involved in Trinity Lutheran Church, where she currently serves as treasurer and she was treasurer of the Main Street Program when it was in operation in Holton.



WASTEWATER OPERATOR

Rex Hess
City of Mound Valley

Rex Hess has been employed by Mound Valley since 2017. In addition to operating the wastewater utility, his duties not only include maintaining the water and wastewater systems but also include other city functions such as mowing, snow removal, and even serving as a dog catcher.

Upon employment, Hess soon realized though, that the wastewater treatment system, consisting of a lagoon, was going to need some special attention. Effluent monitoring results were not in compliance with permit requirements, and the KDHE had placed the city on a watch list by the Kansas Dept. of Health and Environment.

After bringing this to the city council's attention, he began a search for a possible cause. With the help of the Kansas Rural Water Association staff, an issue with the effluent box design was identified. To replace or modify the effluent structure would be a budget crusher for the city. Hess took it upon himself to design and develop a cost-effective and straightforward fix for the effluent structure. After putting on a pair of waders, Hess installed a sub-surface effluent intake pipe, eliminating the surface water residue interference in the compliance samples. With installing the new intake pipe and working tirelessly to eliminate inflow and infiltration, the system is no longer exceeding permit effluent requirements. He is also in the process of upgrading the lift station with new pumps and a control panel.

Rex and his wife Sherry have four children and 11 grandchildren, all of whom enjoy riding mini bikes and camping together throughout the U.S.



SPECIAL RECOGNITION

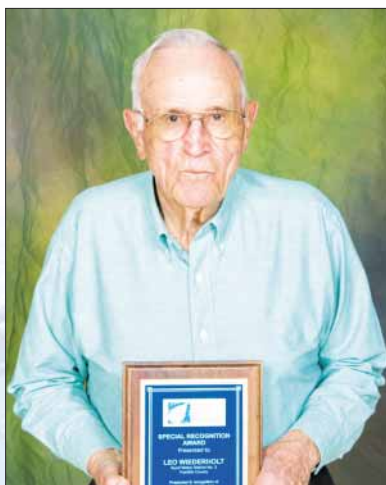
Alfred and Beverly Otter
Norton RWD 1

Alfred and Beverly Otter have been involved with Rural Water District No. 1, Norton County since it went into construction in 1969.

The district is located in New Almelo which is located in the southwest corner of Norton County. The district obtained a \$40,000 loan from the Farmers Home Administration and began service in 1970. The district's water supply well is located east of town south of Highway 9 in the drainage basin of the North Fork of the Solomon River. A seventy-foot standpipe is located a mile north of New Almelo; it has a capacity of 14,000 gallons. The district serves customers in New Almelo and extend two miles north.

Alfred, who is 89, still works as the backup, certified operator. Beverly was on the district's original planning committee. She was elected secretary-treasurer in 1970. "Bookkeeper" is also included in that office – a task that she continues with today. Together Alfred and Beverly read the meters, collect bacteriological tests, and other water quality testing. Anyone who works with a water system knows what has to go into it.

The Otters raised eight children; they have 16 grandchildren and nine great-grandchildren. They owned and operated New Almelo Oil for 20 years; it closed in 1989. Beverly was a Para-professional with Lenora Schools for 29 years. They celebrated 60 years of marriage in June.



SPECIAL RECOGNITION

Leo Wiederholt
Franklin RWD 3

Leo Wiederholt, who at the age of 89, continues to serve as the certified operator for Franklin County Rural Water District No. 3. Franklin RWD No. 3 began operations in 1965.

After graduating from high school, Wiederholt attended college for two years; then served two years in military service; then returned to finish his college education. Throughout the years he has been involved in farming, either full or part-time while also working as a substitute mail carrier and, for 25 years, working for the United States Department of Agriculture.

His time as a rural water district board member is interesting as he first became a board member when he and his wife moved to a place a short distance from the home place where his parents lived. His property was served by the rural water district. He and his parents switched places and since the home place was not served by the district, he was not eligible to serve on the board of directors. A short time later he had rural water installed on the home place and once again, was eligible to be a board member. That was in 1990 and as the youngest guy on the board, he was stuck with the paperwork (not his favorite task).

Today, Wiederholt continues to serve as the district's certified operator having obtained operator certification in 2000. He collects the regulatory samples and helps with the annual meter reading. Otherwise, meter reading is the responsibility of the customers. Leo says the district operates on a shoestring budget. He receives no salary for his operator duties but is reimbursed for expenses. He said that in the early years of rural water district construction, water lines were often run directly to the customer, not necessarily following roadways. Some of these areas have become overgrown with trees. He recently took on the task, at his own expense, of having trees removed from these areas.

Weiderholt continues to be active on the farm, tending to his cow herd. Leo comments that he really enjoys operating his new tractor which has heating and air conditioning.

2022 Award Winners



RURAL WATER OPERATIONS MANAGER

Frank Parker
Sedgwick RWD 3

Frank Parker who is operations manager for Sedgwick RWD No. 3, was recently named "Rural Water Operations Manager of the Year" by the Kansas Rural Water Association. The award was presented on Wednesday, March 30 during the Association's conference at the Century II Convention Center in Wichita.

Frank Parker was hired as a maintenance assistant at Rural Water District No. 3, Sedgwick County in the mid-1990s. Since then, the rural water district has grown to nearly 1,000 customers. The district serves the area east of Derby and extends into Butler and Sumner counties.

Parker has overseen the installation of radio-read meters throughout the water district. That provides for more precise water loss measurements and the ability to download water usage history. He used to have a pager to keep up with customers, but now the district has a website and social media to communicate, and he uses the cloud to coordinate work orders and to-do lists with other employees. During the award presentation, Frank was cited for his excellence in guaranteeing good customer service, being willing to go above and beyond to make sure that customers are not just served but helping keep them enthusiastic about being a member of the district.

He has helped the district through a change in the water supply and the construction of a new pump station and many miles of pipe. He has pushed for the district to have more of its own equipment and have enough staff to do its work so that a high standard of quality can be assured.

Frank is involved in his community, serving as an election precinct committeeman, and oversees a small group for Life Church East Wichita. Frank has been married to his wife Melanie for 25 years; they have five children.



SPECIAL RECOGNITION

Tom Lasser
Hawkins, Inc.

KRWA was pleased to recognize **Tom Lasser**, Technical Applications Specialist with Hawkins, Inc., with the "Friend of Rural Water" award. Lasser has worked with many water systems, especially surface water systems, optimizing their treatment processes to provide quality drinking water to customers at the most reasonable cost possible.

Lasser introduced Hawkins Water Treatment Group to Kansas in January 2008 when he opened the facility at Garnett as Branch Manager. He is recognized by his peers and his customers for being dedicated to understanding their treatment systems and how to meet their treatment goals. In announcing the award, KRWA comments that Lasser has always been available when called upon to help troubleshoot and improve system operations, and he goes above and beyond what's required whether it's financially rewarding or not.

Lasser has also made numerous presentations at training sessions on water quality and treatment. Lasser says that he enjoyed stepping from Branch Manager to Technical Applications Specialist, which has allowed him to have greater flexibility to work with customers' chemical treatment and equipment applications.



WATER/WASTEWATER DIRECTOR

Rod Huffman
City of Oakley

KRWA was pleased to honor **Rod Huffman** as the Water/Wastewater Director of the Year.

After serving four years in the Navy immediately after high school graduation, Rod returned to Oakley. He worked in the family restaurant business before accepting a position with the city in 1984. He soon was moved to the Water and Light Crew and then to the Water Crew when the city sold the electrical transmission system in 2000.

Soon after that, Huffman was also tasked with the operation of the wastewater system as the water and wastewater system operations were combined. In December 2000, the city's Water/Wastewater Director retired, and Huffman assumed the role of Director. The job is multi-faceted. For example, he is presently overseeing the construction of a 12-inch water main and a sewer main with lift stations to provide service to a major truck stop, motels, and other businesses east of town. He was involved in the conversion from a mechanical wastewater treatment plant to a discharging lagoon system and is converting to a non-discharging lagoon with the construction of a new lagoon cell this year.

Rod and his wife Tina have four children, and they have also fostered several children. They are very involved in the community. Rod has been a basketball referee for more than 20 years and has been part of the "chain gang" for football games for more than ten years. His fellow staff members appreciate his knowledge and willingness to share it; they say, "He's just flat fun to work with."



MUNICIPAL WATER OPERATOR

Jeremy Baker
City of Greenleaf

Jeremy (Jerry) Baker, Water Operator at the city of Greenleaf, has worked for the city of Greenleaf for nearly 20 years. He is certified in both water and wastewater operations by the Kansas Dept. of Health and Environment.

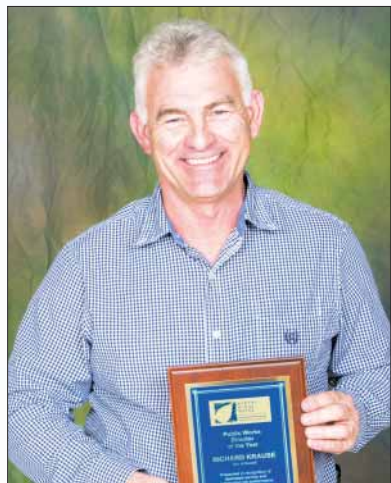
In addition to his duties with the water and wastewater systems, Baker seals the streets every year, usually with the help of one local person. He also manages and maintains pool operations. Some of the improvements he has also helped make in recent times include adding a sand volleyball court and a basketball court and upgrades to other city facilities. Baker was cited for his efforts to reduce costs for the city, for example, demolishing buildings and removing trees rather than having the city hire contractors.

Baker was also the lead person in obtaining a Kan-Step grant to replace the city's entire water distribution system in 2009. He and others did the installation, including taking up and replacing several blocks of brick streets. Thanks to KAN STEP and the volunteer work, the city avoided the need for a loan, which eliminated the city customers from having to pay off debt on the new system.

Recently, he also saved the small city about \$40,000 by doing all the work required to connect to Washington County RWD No. 1 to allow the city to blend water with the city's wells to comply with nitrate limits.

Baker also finds time to help in the family farming operation with his dad and uncle and makes time to coach track at Washington County School USD 108.

2022 Award Winners



PUBLIC WORKS DIRECTOR

Rich Krause
City of Russell

Rich Krause, Public Works Director at the city of Russell, was recognized as “Public Works Director of the Year” at the 2022 KRWA conference.

Krause has been employed by the city since 1980, holding various leader positions in the parks and water departments. When the city needed to fill the Public Works Director position, an extensive search was conducted to find the right person. As a result of the search, it became apparent that the best person for the job was already on board with the city. Today, Krause has a lot on his plate as he currently oversees the water production, water distribution, and wastewater departments.

Krause has broad municipal experience. He has received certification in municipal utility management from the Salina Area Vocational-Technical School.

He also holds the designation of Certified Public Manager through the University of Kansas Public Management Program.

Rich and his wife Tammy are life-long Russell residents, where they raised their two sons, Nathan and Ryan.



RURAL WATER OFFICE MANAGER

April Walker
Cowley RWD 3

April Walker began working for Cowley RWD 3 sixteen years ago after working at the Kansas Veterans Home in Winfield.

Walker has seen many challenges and helped make many improvements at the district in the years since. She has been recognized for serving the RWD well while answering questions about a water tower replacement, chlorine building improvements and a complete meter change out program.

Walker was instrumental in modernizing the district with billing software updates and maintaining the district’s digital presence on social media. According to Chairman Richard Graves, “April works 110 percent all the time to run this office. She is willing to work crazy hours and she’s not afraid to put on her boots and get them muddy. I don’t know how many office managers out there will go out to investigate complaints and leaks! And she’ll help check the wells on the weekends,” he says.

In her spare time, Walker says she enjoys spending time with her husband Clint of 20 years and her two sons, aged 22 and 16. Clint and April love to fish, visit Branson and watch the kids’ sports.

54th Annual Conference & Exhibition
Century II Convention Center
March 28 – 30, 2023



SPECIAL RECOGNITION

Jerry Robinson
City of Buffalo

Jerry Robinson, Mayor of the city of Buffalo, Kansas, was presented a Special Recognition Award at the 2022 KRWA Conference.

Robinson is a lifelong resident of Buffalo. He attended the local Altoona Midway High School. After high school, Robinson went to work for Advanced Systems Homes in Chanute, Kan. where he worked for 35 years.

He has continued to be involved in the Buffalo city politics since he first sat on the city council in 1993. Jerry became the mayor of Buffalo in 2000. He has been involved in many water and wastewater projects from start to finish for the city. As one KRWA staff member stated, “Jerry knows more about his city’s water and wastewater systems than any engineer or operator who has worked for the city.”

Robinson works daily for the city and since the mayor cannot be their own boss or pay themselves, Robinson works for the mayor’s pay of \$5 per meeting. The city has one meeting per month. Jerry volunteers the rest of the time to helping anyone in the community that could use a hand.

Jerry has been married for 40 years and loves to surround himself with his family and their children. In his spare time Jerry likes to garden.



MOST IMPROVED WASTEWATER SYSTEM

City of Moundridge
Mike Strausz
Wastewater Utility
Superintendent

Kansas Rural Water Association recognized the **city of Moundridge** as the Most Improved Wastewater System. Mike Strausz, Wastewater Utility Superintendent, accepted the award on behalf of the city.

Moundridge was having trouble meeting limits because of industry in town. The Department of Health and Environment required the city to make upgrades and the upgrades had to address nutrient removal. The city eventually had to add aeration at the head of the lagoon system.

A special issue on the Moundridge project is that rather than add more lagoon capacity, which is usually what happens, Moundridge decided to add aeration. The lagoon system is somewhat different than most because they have four cells, the last two are large deep cells that serve as holding cells. The plan was to hold the water until the city could get good samples, and then release it. The city has also worked with area farmers because the drainage splits property and farmers want to cross the drainage when they are working the ground.

Also in this issue, read about the Award to Pretty Prairie as the Most Improved Water System in Kansas. See pages 102 - 105.

2022 Award Winners



APPRENTICESHIP ACHIEVEMENT

Clint Bivens
City of Sabetha

Kansas Rural Water Association recognized **Clint Bivens**, wastewater operator at the city of Sabetha, as the first apprentice in Kansas to complete the program.

The Kansas Rural Water Association received approval as a Registered Apprenticeship program from the State of Kansas, Department of Commerce, on September 15, 2020. The goal of the program is to recruit, train, and educate new water and wastewater operators as our industry expects to lose up to 50 percent of its employees to retirement over the next decade. Apprentices can apply to the program whether they are employed by a water or wastewater utility or not. The program is roughly a two-year commitment, during which the apprentice must complete 4,000 hours of on-the-job training and 288 hours of course work. The course work is offered through a combination of online and in-person, hands-on delivery by KRWA staff.

Biven has worked for the city of Sabetha in their activated sludge treatment facility for about three years and spent four years prior working in the city's street department. Clint's mentors throughout the program were Rob Oom, who retired from the city of Sabetha in December 2021, and Dennis Enneking. A special "thank you" goes out to those mentors.

There are many benefits to the program – not just for the apprentice, but for the employer/utility as well. Apprentices are able to work alongside professional operators and learn valuable skills, while earning a wage and the employer is able to take advantage of a structured training program while passing down critical skills and knowledge of their systems to the next generation of industry workers.

KRWA recognized the first apprentice in Kansas to successfully complete the program as a wastewater operator. A Certificate of Completion was presented to Bivens from the State of Kansas, signed by Kansas Governor, Laura Kelly. KRWA congratulates Clint on being the first KRWA Apprenticeship graduate!



SCHOLARSHIP WINNER

Erin Johnson
Circle High School

The Kansas Rural Water Association announced the winner of its 2022-2023 scholarship to **Erin Johnson** of Towanda, Kan. The scholarship, named after long-time Association Director Dennis Schwartz, is in the amount of \$1,000.

Erin is the daughter of William and Estelle Johnson, Towanda.

Erin has maintained a 4.0 GPA throughout her high school years at Circle High School. She is ranked first of 130 students and received membership to the National Honors Society. She has participated in 4-H for twelve years and has been the Butler County 4-H youth Ambassador, President of the local 4-H Youth Rabbit Club, American Rabbit Breeders Association Youth Representation and a member of the Butler County Spring Livestock Show Committee. She has received high honors at the Kansas State Fair with the 2021 Champion Crossbred Lamb and Reserve Division Goat. In 2020, Erin was State Fair Division Champion and Junior Livestock Show Reserve Champion.

Erin's anticipated course of study is Environmental Engineering starting at Butler Community College, followed by a four-year college.

City of Arkansas City Wins First in “Best Tasting Water in Kansas” Contest



The best-tasting water in Kansas is produced by the City of Arkansas City, so says the team of professionals who judged water samples from across the state as the “Best Tasting Water in Kansas” during the 53rd Annual Conference and Exhibition for Water and Wastewater Utilities.

The water samples were judged with a blind taste test, according to KRWA Consultant Jason Soloman who attended a city commission meeting in early April to present the city with its award plaque.

The city of Arkansas City completed the construction of its new water treatment facility in late 2017 and the new facility entered service in March 2018. The reverse-osmosis plant was constructed by Walters-Morgan Construction, Inc., of Manhattan. The cost of the plant was \$16.874 million for construction and equipment, including \$58,380 for sodium fluoridation equipment. According to the city’s website, the city decided to construct a GreensandPlus filtration plant. This technology was chosen by the project team due to its ability to remove iron and manganese from water.”

A sample of water from Ark City will be submitted in February 2023 in the Great American Water Taste Test, which is held in conjunction with the National Rural Water Association’s annual rally in Washington, D.C.

KRWA is an affiliate of the national association, which is a leading advocate for funding for water and wastewater

system improvements through USDA Rural Development and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. The new Water Treatment Facility was funded through the Kansas Public Water Supply Loan Fund, which is capitalized with funding that originates from the EPA.



“The ‘Best Tasting Water in Kansas’ contest is open to all public water systems in the state, regardless of their membership in the Kansas Rural Water Association. The judging involved nearly two dozen samples; it was conducted anonymously by a team of water industry experts. The team included Gary Smith, former Director of Community Facilities Programs for USDA Rural Development in Kansas and now with the engineering firm of Schwab Eaton, P.A., Brad Vincent, P.G. Ground Water Associates, Wichita, Kan. and Rick Penner, Sales Representative from Viking Industrial Painting, McPherson, Kan.

Second place in the contest was won by WaterOne of Johnson County; the city of Chanute placed third.



Judges Rick Penner, Brad Vincent and Gary Smith.