

# Recapping the 2025 KRWA Conference & Exhibition

## Water Keep it Flowing

In spite of challenges due to limited meeting space, the 2025 KRWA Conference & Exhibition was another conference for the record books. A total of 2,263 people attended and in spite of several make-shift classrooms on the Exhibition Hall balcony, attendees were understanding and classes were well attended, if not over-flowing. KRWA will have access to the classrooms on the promenade level in 2026 and beyond.

The subsequent pages of this issue review the events from training sessions to the fun and games that make up the KRWA conference the “go-to” event. EXPO Hall was filled; exhibitors are a big part of the KRWA conference and their participation also helps keep the cost to attendees affordable.



With two and a half days of sessions, there's something for everyone, all the time. This conference is for members and non-members alike. One complaint typically is that “there are too many sessions that I wanted to attend.” This is one reason the KRWA conference continues to draw audiences and makes it one of the best water and wastewater conferences in the U.S. In 2025, attendees came from 318 cities and 206 rural water districts, public wholesale systems, or other systems. Registrants came from 31 states outside of Kansas and one registrant from Canada.

Due to spacing requirements, the operators' exam was moved to the Drury Hotel. It will be held there again in 2026. KRWA

appreciates the operator certification department at KDHE for making the exams available. A total of 187 water and wastewater exams were taken by operators for Small Systems through Class IV. The conference training sessions included exam refreshers.

### Who attended?

In 2025, registrants came from 318 cities and 206 rural water districts or other public water or wastewater systems.

The attendance breakdown is as follows:

- ❖ Operators: 1,102
- ❖ Administrative Staff: 104
- ❖ Board/Council Members: 105
- ❖ Industry: 917
- ❖ Regulatory: 35



The 2025 conference involved 209 different exhibitors, filling all 365 available booth spaces in EXPO Hall. It was unfortunate that USDA, EPA and DHS were not able to attend.

The 2026 conference, set for March 24 - 26, is already in the planning stages. Some changes will be made and one will be to allow more time for attendees to be in EXPO Hall. Both the Hyatt and Drury Hotel are already fully-booked. For other hotels where KRWA has rooms booked check the KRWA website at <https://krwa.net/conference> and then click on “Accommodations”.





# "What is going right?"

## *Lindsey Roy on the power of perspective after unthinkable loss*

**A**fter surviving a devastating boating accident and a rare lung disease that led to a double transplant, Lindsey Roy has learned that perspective won't stop life's setbacks — but it can shape how we bounce back and move forward.

Roy shared her message about perspective and resourcefulness with attendees of the Kansas Rural Water Association's 2025 annual conference during the meeting's opening session.

"I have a couple of stories about my life, but I know you all have stories too," she said. "That's what life is about. And with that, I try to humbly offer my story, not only to tell you the sensational story that I lived through, because I know many of you have lived those stories too, but to try to make something good come from it."

Roy, a native of Clyde, Kansas, was the youngest person to be named as a vice-president for Hallmark when she was in her early 30s. She shared the milestones she'd had planned for her life, such as becoming a wife and mother and achieving success in her career.

In 2013, Roy and her husband joined a group of friends from their time at Kansas State University for a lake vacation at Beaver Lake in Arkansas. As they wrapped up their time at the lake, she was unexpectedly caught by a propeller of a passing boat. The accident led to the amputation of her left leg and a lengthy recovery process.

In 2021, she was diagnosed with a rare disorder that affected the blood vessels in and near her lungs. After learning the untreatable disease did not respond to medication, she underwent a double lung transplant in 2022.

In both cases, she said, she had to change her perspective in order to move through the challenges.

"You don't expect those major breaks to happen, but they do, and they happen unexpectedly," she said. "And the whole secret is, how do you get to the other side?"

She has learned to reframe her struggles into positive outcomes: a hike on a cactus-filled trail didn't prickle or injure her prosthetic leg. She painted colorful toenails on a prosthetic foot for a swimming trip — easier to paint your toenails, she said, when you can take off your foot and hold it in your hands.

She offered three questions she described as a "perspective loop" that, by repeating each day, out loud, helped shift her perspective away from dwelling on her challenges:

- What is going right?
- What have I accomplished today?
- What are five ways it could be worse?

"These questions are simple, but they're powerful, and sometimes you don't know how powerful they are until you're desperate," she said. "Perspective is simply how you see things you have to control to change things."

She also suggested leaning into resourcefulness as a technique to move through a challenging time.



Lindsey Roy

During the recovery from her boating accident, she described her sadness at not being able to tuck in her young children at bedtime, because she couldn't climb the steps of their home. After being frustrated at the lack of expensive equipment like a chair lift, and after her arms had healed from the accident, she began crawling up the stairs — like a crab, she said — to allow her to participate in her family's bedtime routines.

"I guarantee you, if you have a struggle right now, there's probably a simpler solution than you know, but you're just not allowing yourself to, like, really play the movie out," she said.

Roy continues to work at Hallmark and as a keynote speaker. She wrote a memoir about her experiences, "The Gift of Perspective: The Wisdom I Gained From Losing a Leg and Two Lungs," which was published in 2023. She lives in Kansas City with her family.





# 2025 Opening Session – Butler Headliners Return . . .

It's become nearly a tradition! The Butler Headliners returned to the 2025 KRWA Conference for the 8:30 a.m. rousing opening session in Concert Hall on Wednesday, March 26.

The nationally-acclaimed Headliners show choir is directed by Valerie Mack. The mixed group is comprised of 36 singers, dancers and instrumentalists. They perform throughout the year at community functions, including local, state and national conventions. The Headliners also host the annual Show Choir Festival each November, which is a workshop for more than 400 high school students. The Headliners have established alumni in every performance field and are proud of these Butler alums.



Their 2025 KRWA production was entitled “Evolution of Emotion” It was a striking performance directed by Valerie Mack and assisted by Chad Ingram. The KRWA audience was treated to high energy singing and dancing, featuring pieces from Michael Jackson, Legally Blonde, Huey Lewis, and the Jersey Boys.

## Opening Session Prize Winners

Prize	Winner	System
\$250 Gift Card	Sara Howard	City of Buhler
\$250 Gift Card	Eric Kaldenbach	City of Wichita

## Hospitality Never Stops at KRWA

Thanks again to Cara Grier and Event Planning Services from Burrton, Kansas, for serving up the best ala carte' items that any conference can offer. It's absolutely the best – and thanks also to all the bakeries from Carousel Bakery in Stockton, Kansas. Just for trivia, here's the list of what was consumed:

- ❖ 96 doz (1,152) Glazed Donuts
- ❖ 53 doz (636) Cake Donuts
- ❖ 180 doz (2,160) Donut Holes
- ❖ 50 doz (600) Scones Blueberry & Chocolate Chip
- ❖ 37 doz (442) Cookies
- ❖ 116 doz (1400) Brownie/Bars
- ❖ 200 doz (2,400) Mini Muffins
- ❖ 29 doz (348) Bagels
- ❖ 42 doz (504) Mini Cinnamon Rolls
- ❖ 425 Yogurt Cups w/fruit
- ❖ 425 Vegetable cups w/ranch
- ❖ 8 gal of Sliced Peaches
- ❖ 8 gal of Pineapple Chunks
- ❖ 7 gal of Fruit Cocktail
- ❖ 45 lbs of Frozen Strawberries
- ❖ 82 lbs of Frozen Mixed Fruit
- ❖ 80 lbs of Bananas
- ❖ 90 Zero Sugar Yogurt Cups
- ❖ 40 lbs of Clementines
- ❖ 32 lbs of Oranges



- ❖ 38 lbs of Apples
- ❖ 50 gal of Orange Juice
- ❖ 20 gal of Cranberry Juice
- ❖ 237 gal of Coffee
- ❖ 36 Cannisters of soda mix
- ❖ 50 gal of Tea
- ❖ 26 kegs of Beer
- ❖ 32 Bottles of Tequila

Savor Catering, a division of ASM Global that manages the Century II Convention Center, provided the six meal functions.



# Expo Hall Vendors & Attendees – Something for Everyone!



**T**he KRWA annual conference brings together new faces and old each year at Century II in Wichita. There are common benefits consistently reported by those who attend the conference: timely programming, educational opportunities, and quality time to develop and grow relationships with vendors. Read on to hear more from attendees, in their own words:

The educational and social components of the annual conference are draws for the staff from Public Wholesale Water Supply District #4 in Cherryvale.

“You always learn something new,” said Manager Ken McNickle, attending for the 24th year, adding that the golf tournament was a can’t-miss offering for him each year.

The system’s assistant manager, Clayton Merrick, said he came to the conference each year with the goal of obtaining hours toward his certification.

“Lead and copper is the biggie right now,” he said.

They complimented the KRWA staff for their work organizing the event.

“It’s a good time,” McNickle said. “I think the guys all do a good job.”

Roger Koch, who serves as the utility superintendent in Axtell, said the 2025 conference was the 36th he had attended.

“It’s always good to visit with everyone,” he said. “You meet a lot of new people and see a lot of old faces.”

Koch attended the conference with the system’s operator, Kelton Kuckleman, who said the breadth of sessions offered helped him with his certification requirements.

“It’s good for training,” he said. “You get it all in one place”

Jason Allison came to the conference as he prepared to assume leadership of Cherokee RWD #3 in Columbus. A former Cherokee County Emergency

Management director, Allison sat for his Water I test at the conference this year.

In addition to the opportunity to take the certification test, Allison said the comprehensive offerings of both the conference and the trade show gave him a good foundation of knowledge as he moved into the district’s top management role.

“I think it’s amazing, because you get all these vendors in one spot,” he said. “It’s definitely an eye-opener for all the things that are available to our water district. It’s clear that the KRWA staff does a lot of prep work for this event, as the programming is very beneficial for the people taking classes.”

George Stringos, who works in the Sewer Maintenance department for the City of Hutchinson, said the programming offered at the conference helped him expand his knowledge.

“The classes help give you exposure to the information that’s asked on tests even if you don’t encounter it in your daily job,” he said. He attended the pre-conference Activated Sludge and Biological Nutrient Removal session for that reason. “We don’t usually have training like that where I’m from.”

Vendors, too, consistently report productive and profitable experiences at the annual exhibition in Century II’s EXPO Hall - especially the diversity in attendance.

Andrew Brunner, with EBH Engineering, said the trade show is an efficient way to meet with those who touch all aspects of their projects.

“We get to see all our clients and equipment suppliers here when we’re normally, like, a state away,” he said. “There aren’t a whole lot of opportunities like this to get everyone in one place.”

Mike Younger, also with EBH, agreed.

“You mostly get administrators and board members at other trade shows,” Younger said. “Here, you get the boots-on-the-ground guys. They’re the ones who have to make what we come up with work.”





One hallmark of the annual trade show is the quality of give-aways provided by vendors. Core and Main's bright yellow five-gallon buckets were among the prized promotional items in 2025.

Samantha Howard, outside sales representative for the company's Kansas City region, said she has been coming to the trade show for a total of 29 years - first with a business owned by her father, then with Core and Main for the last 16 years.

The size of the trade show is a particular draw for her, she said.

"It's big, it's successful, and there are so many vendors," Howard said. "The customers know we'll always be here when they walk in and need someone to talk to. We love to spoil our customers because they spoil us."



Matt Volz and Jason Fizell with the Kansas Infrastructure Hub staffed a table in the trade show area and presented a concurrent session during the 2025 conference. The Infrastructure HUB is a resource center that connects Kansas communities to state agencies working on infrastructure-related projects.



Tameka Kueser came back for her fourth KRWA trade show. As a regional sales manager for HK Solutions Group, which specializes in trenchless manhole rehabilitation systems and services, she is able to meet in person with her municipal and industrial customers during the trade show.

"It's my biggest show of the year," she said. "You get to know the other vendors over the years. It's always been a wonderful trade show, and I've never been disappointed."



Volz attributed the high volume of attendees to the quality of the programming.

"I'm impressed that people are going to sessions versus just spending their time in the hall," he said. "They're really getting something out of it, I think."

"I mean, it's huge, and it can be overwhelming, but if you just go and pick out a few select folks that you want to talk to, and then sit down have a meaningful conversation with them. That, to me, is the value in it."

Fizell noted that even though the conference attendance roster was large, there were multiple opportunities to make connections. He noticed a fellow attendee wearing a conference name tag as he

checked out of his hotel; by the time he got to the trade show, he ended up walking in with the person and chatting with them.

"It's a really good opportunity to connect with people you don't know - I was an exhibitor and he was attending the sessions, but we connected just by being here," he said. "It's great just having conversations with people who you wouldn't normally see."





# There's No Conference Opener Like It – KRWA's Meet & Greet Is One Big Party

The 2025 “Meet and Greet” brought some new games and events to this Opening Nite extravaganza. KRWA's opening nite “Meet & Greet” is unlike any other. It has great food, social, fellowship and fun. Yes, there was tea and coffee and the beer trailer was fully stocked as were four margarita machines.

Savor, which is the caterer for ASM Global that manages Century II, prepared a great meal featuring barbecued chicken and pork, potato salad, baked beans, coleslaw and desserts. People came to have fun and played the games until the tickets had to be turned in at 9:45 for the prize drawings. Thanks to numerous Associate Members who helped sponsor the games.



## The games included:

- ❖ Deluxe Casino
- ❖ Axe Throw
- ❖ O2 Bar
- ❖ Kentucky Derby
- ❖ One Ball
- ❖ Basketball Toss
- ❖ High Striker
- ❖ Bug Buster
- ❖ Cork Guns
- ❖ Mini-basketball
- ❖ Machine Guns
- ❖ Big Buck Hunter Arcade
- ❖ Silver Strike Bowling
- ❖ Fast and Furious Drifting Driver
- ❖ Cruis'n Exotica
- ❖ Electronic Bingo!
- ❖ \$10,00 Putting Challenge

The Corn Hole tournament had cash prizes for first, second and third place winners. And a photo shoot allowed several hundred people to have a photo to take home as a memento of the conference. The two caricaturists were busy until the last person left.

Kansas' oldest Rock n' Roll band, King Midas & The Mufflers, were on stage, strong as ever, playing the greatest old time rock n'roll tunes. All this combined to make one great evening of fun and fellowship.





## TUESDAY NIGHT MEET & GREET PRIZE WINNERS

Carnival Prize	Winner	Represents
KitchenAid® Artisan 5 Qt Mixer	Mallory Metz	Kansas Rural Water Association
Ninja Creami	Raeanna Pickering	City of Offerle
Ninja 12-Piece Cookware Set	Timothy Heinen	City of Seneca
Cuisinart Coffee Center	Mark Pingsterhaus	City of Cimarron
Cuisinart Ice Cream Maker	Clint Fraser	Cloud RWD 1
DeWalt Wet/Dry Vac	Zachary Smothers	City of Manhattan
DeWalt 2-Tool Combo Kit	Jeffery Zentner	City of Manhattan
Ninja Foodi Air Fryer	Heather Bussone	Elliott Group
Tool Chest	Karen Niehues	Nemaha RWD 4
Yeti Cooler	Timothy Heinen	City of Seneca
Ring Spotlight Cam Plus	Brianna Monson	City of Horton
Earthquake Tiller	Jake Walker	City of Parsons
Gorilla Dump Cart	William Peterson	City of Beverly
Stihl Weedeater- Battery	Andrew Hanna	City of Whitewater
Wine Basket	Eugene Sattelfield, Sr.	City of Haysville
Candle Basket	Anthony Camus	City of Parsons
Hose Reel Cart	Sam McCleary	City of Protection
Samsung 65" Television	Derek Horner	City of Lucas
Apple Airpods	Zane Kincaid	Leavenworth RWD 8
Shark Professional Upright Vacuum	Kyla Schlabach	Washington RWD 1
Char-Broil Tabletop Grill	Tammy Himelick	City of Milford
DeWalt Shop Stool	Jonathan Dean	City of Humboldt
DeWalt Cordless Pruner	Mallory Metz	Kansas Rural Water Association
Dewalt Pole Saw	Johnathan Simons	City of Haysville
Milwaukee 2 Tool Combo Kit	Casey Stout	City of Oakley
Rocking Chair Set	Darrell Warner	City of Liebenthal
Hisense Mini Fridge	Tommy John	City of Neodesha
KC Royals Gift Set	Amanda Kyser	Neosho-Allen RWD 2
Portable Heater	Mallory Metz	Kansas Rural Water Association
B-Air Blower	Karla Gerisch	Douglas RWD 4
Tulip Wheel	Clayton Follis	City of Beloit
Decor Wheel	Kyla Schlabach	Washington RWD 1
DeWalt Tool Set	Ryan Theel	City of Paxico





# 2025 Presenters



**The Kansas Rural Water Association appreciates the time and effort by all the presenters at the 2025 conference. Thank you for helping all those who attended understand we must - *Keep it Flowing*.**

Keegan Bailey	North Central Regional Planning
Javon Baker	Kansas Rural Water Association
Jordon Bang	Lancaster Rural Water 1
Arnab Bhowmick	Aktivov Asset Management
Carl Brown	GettingGreatRates.com
Chad Caldwell	KLM Engineering, Inc.
William Carr	Kansas Dept. Health & Environment
Monte Dakan	Johnson Service Company
Justin Dempsey	Nex-Tech
James DePriest	Hawkins Inc.
Matthew Derner	Hydraulic Institute
Holly Dickman	City of Hays
Rick Elliott	Elliott Group
Elizabeth Fitch	Kansas Department of Agriculture
Jason Fizell	Kansas Infrastructure HUB
Marsha Fleming	Kansas Dept. of Health & Environment
Ty Forrester	USG Water Solutions
Ryan Fugler	Hydra-Stop
Rob Gavin	Kansas Dept. Health & Environment
Katie Goff	Kansas Water Office
Gary Hanson	Stumbo-Hanson, LLP
Lloyd Harold	City of Olathe
Doug Helmke	Kansas Rural Water Association
Matt Hickman	HIC Agency, Inc.
Keely Hosmann	Kansas 811
Christianne Huard	Kansas Dept. Health & Environment
Josh Ingels	Rensenhoe Electric
Kevin Jones	Mid West Fire Training Associates
Megan Jones	Jones Advisory Group
Stewart Kasper	Kansas Rural Water Association
Erin Kinnaman	Kansas Dept. Health & Environment
Andy Kohler	Clow Valve Company
Drew LaMarca	Watts
Melinda Lambert	Mayer Specialty Services, LLC
Felan Link	Regal Systems, Inc. - Chlorinators
Kathleen Selzler Lippert	Office of Disciplinary Administrator
Alex Losen	Rensenhoe Electric
Dr. Leila Maurmann	Kansas Dept. Health & Environment
Brian McLeod	City of Wichita
Samuel McVay	Voice Grid Ai
Bret Melson	Johnson Service Company
Greg Metz	Kansas Rural Water Association
Adrienne Miller	Kansas Dept. Health & Environment
Chris Myers	Regal Systems, Inc. - Chlorinators

Connie Owen	Kansas Water Office
Paul Owings P.E.	Kansas Corporation Commission
Mike Peroo	Michael D. Peroo, CPA
Jessica Pierce	Kansas Infrastructure HUB
Vijay Ramasamy	Office of the Governor
Loyd Rawlings	USABlueBook
Emily Reichart	Kansas Dept. Health & Environment
JP Risenhoover	Elynx Water Solutions
Lindsey Roy	
Rich Sanders	Zenner USA, Inc.
Nick Schneider	Kansas Geological Survey
Charles Schwindamann	Kansas Rural Water Association
Jen Sharp	JenSharp.com
Brian Silcott	City of Ottawa
Jenny Smith	Kansas Dept. Health & Environment
Jason Solomon	Kansas Rural Water Association
Marvell Summerow	WaterWise Enterprises LLC
Jason Teal	Kansas Department of Commerce
Donald Teeters	Continental Technologies
Kirk Tjelmeland	Kansas Water Office
David Traster	Foulston Siefkin LLP
Cathy Tucker-Vogel	Kansas Dept. Health & Environment
Greg Vahrenberg	Raymond James & Associates
Dale Vanderhoof	City of Larned
Matt Volz	Kansas Infrastructure HUB
Sam Wade	Napoli Shkolnik, PLLC
Brownie Wilson	Kansas Geological Survey
Chad Yamashita	Kansas Dept. Health & Environment
Arch York	Kansas 811
Bert Zerr	Kansas Rural Water Association







# Wednesday Luncheon

## Q&A with Matt Holmes, National Rural Water Association

**M**att Holmes, Chief Executive Officer of the National Rural Water Association, attended the Kansas Rural Water Association's 2025 conference and exhibition and shared some news about current events at the federal level with attendees during the Wednesday, March 26 luncheon program. He participated in a question and answer session with *The Lifeline* after the program. Excerpts from that conversation:

**Lifeline:** You talked about the national association's presence in Washington, DC. Can you expound on how the association is working in the capitol, given the changes happening within the federal government?

**Holmes:** One of the primary roles of National Rural Water Association is to advocate for infrastructure funding for the systems, but also the technical assistance funding that we implement through our state affiliates like KRW. We've got a long-standing grassroots advocacy campaign in order to do that, which kicks off every year at the Rural Water Rally, which we had in February. Elmer (Ronnebaum) came with the delegation up there to meet with their representatives. We do that with all 50 states, and we've got a crew of folks up there in our DC office that coordinate this. They're up there meeting with legislators, and they're dealing with agency transitions right now, especially with agency personnel. They're working with the people that are in charge of the program implementation, but also educating



**Matt Holmes, Chief Executive Officer of the National Rural Water Association**

those key political appointees. We've been doing that for years, so we're trying to do that kind of long term approach to making sure our programs are sustainable, because it's all about relationships, right? You have to build and maintain those relationships, and to show that people get a good return on that taxpayer

dollar, so you're able to continue a lot of the same work that you've been doing.

**Lifeline:** Are you finding that you're needing to change some of your approaches in this new administration?

**Holmes:** Yes, it's a challenging time. As you know, the Trump administration is really trying to remake a lot of government, and, in the past, we have had a lot of bipartisan support for technical assistance. We still have a lot of bipartisan support for technical assistance. But there's a lot more direct involvement by agencies, and that actually didn't originate under the Trump administration – the Biden administration sort of started that as well. Unfortunately, the bipartisan infrastructure law putting \$50 billion into water made that a little bit more political and now technical assistance has become more of a political issue, and that's unfortunate, because it really is not. It's not a party line issue. It's about providing safe drinking water to real people in rural America. So to that end, we've had to be a lot more proactive to educate these new political appointees on why the program exists and what it should be doing. When you drift too far from the core mission, then people start to look at it like, "what are we really doing here? Is this worth it?" So there's been a lot of outreach and education to folks we normally don't have to do that with, such as the transition team. With DOGE (the Department of Government Efficiency) being a whole new agency, we've really tried to work to get information in there. Same with the staff at the





OMB (Office of Management and Budget.) We've had to be a little bit more proactive this year to make sure that happens. But it's the same story. The message is really not any different. These are solutions that rural America identified long ago. So we're just trying to educate people to not throw the baby out with the bathwater here.

**Lifeline:** Are there other things that you're doing this year that are different?

**Holmes:** We rely a lot on our state affiliates, and we're trying to educate our folks to have conversations out there in the states where they work. It's a good question, because we're not exactly sure yet what that message needs to be, because we're not sure what the President is going to do in his budget and what Congress is going to do in Fiscal Year 2026. Part of the work with the Rural Water Pledge is to sort of prime the pump and get people thinking about what is going to happen if some of these funds and funding sources go away.

**Lifeline:** Do you have anything else you would like to share for Kansans to think about?

**Holmes:** It's important to mention the Rural Water Strong Pledge, because I'd urge everyone to sign on. You can find it at [RuralWaterStrong.org](https://RuralWaterStrong.org). Congress has been issuing earmarks on the USDA Rural Development Water and Environmental Loan Program, the grant/loan program that everybody uses. Congress has the power of the purse, and

**We rely a lot on our state affiliates, and we're trying to educate our folks to have conversations out there in the states where they work.**

they can reduce the grant funding. With that program, you have to have the grants to pair with the loans to make projects affordable. We haven't told Congress that they're getting this wrong, because they are the appropriators and they can do it. So what we have said is, okay, you need to have a baseline amount of funding, which we've said is \$500 million, to keep that program viable. I've talked to people here about the State Revolving Loan Funds - it's the same story there, but there's so much more money in those because they were earmarked before. They've got all sorts of concerns there, which are all valid, but they've got more room to manage this web. But it's the same question - how viable are these programs going to be if it continues on this path? I know Congress has concerns about the efficiency and effectiveness of that agency, and those aren't completely unfounded. We want to work with the administration, whoever we need, to try to make the system more modern as we move into the future.

## Bingo Bash – and Let's Grow Keeps Spouses Busy

A total of 45 spouses had an enjoyable Tuesday afternoon doing the "Bingo Bash". The \$5 cash prize for winning a "game" went to 23 players. Complete with beverages and snacks, it was an analog of amusement with an enjoyable and friendly caller from Celebrations.

On Wednesday afternoon, 61 spouses had a fun afternoon where creating their own plant masterpieces. These were small terrariums where creativity blossomed, so to speak. Each attendee was provided a 6-inch terrarium to pot mini-plants. It was a take-home item.

Both of the programs provided an environment where new friendships were fostered. It was two great afternoons where people could connect, unwind and explore shared activities. The chocolate-covered strawberries, brownies, cookies and beverages also were appreciated.







# Wednesday Luncheon

## *‘Multigenerational’ planning approach proposed by State*

**T**o make the most practical and measurable progress toward water issues in Kansas, the state should approach water planning like it addresses transportation planning.

Vijay Ramasamy, a special advisor for water to Gov. Laura Kelly, shared findings from a series of statewide water meetings organized by the Kansas Water Office in 2024 to engage Kansans about their views of the future of water in the state during the Wednesday luncheon program of the Kansas Rural Water Association’s 2025 annual conference in Wichita.

Long-term, positive changes to how Kansas approaches water management are possible, he said - but policymakers, water users and water managers must act now.

“Every Kansan has a water issue, and these water issues are only going to continue to grow,” Ramasamy said, noting that water quality, water quantity, and aging infrastructure were among the top challenges that are statewide.

For instance, more than 150 public water supply systems in the state of Kansas are at or above the allowable level of nitrates, Ramasamy said; there are also more than 140 “orphan contamination sites” where industrial contaminants, often from old mining and oil operation sites, have affected the groundwater.

“Regardless of where you are in Kansas, whether you’re in eastern Kansas, western Kansas, you’re dealing with water quality issues,” he said.

Once considered an issue largely affecting the western side of the state, which relies heavily in the Ogallala region of the High Plains Aquifer for agricultural, municipal and industrial uses, water quantity is increasingly cited as a challenge for the eastern side of Kansas as well, Ramasamy said. Reservoirs providing municipal water supplies are filling with silt faster than expected, he said, reducing the availability of water to water users.

“Tuttle Creek, which 1.1 million Kansans rely on for their water supply, would be 90% full of sediment by 2070,” he said. “That can seem like a long way away, but again, that’s

our kids. That’s our grandkids. When we build a reservoir, we always know that it’s going to fill up with sediment, but the rate of development has shown that the rate of sedimentation is increasing, and if we don’t do something about it, we are going to be in a very difficult situation if we have a 1950s-style drought, or if we want to grow economically.”

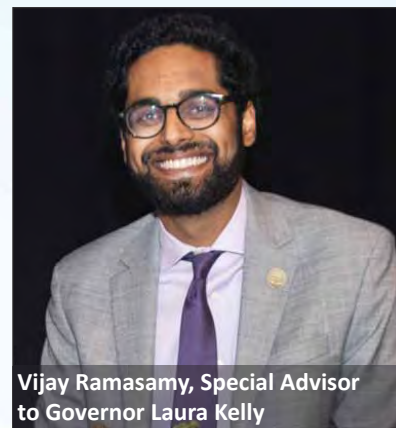
He referenced the belief in the 1950s that encouraged irrigators to tap into the “endless” supply of water of the Ogallala as an example of an understanding that has changed over time when it comes to viewing the resource.

“As we move forward, and thanks to the work of many people that are in this room, we’ve realized that hope of endless water was a fallacy; that as we move forward, it is only going to become more and more difficult, and we have to realize that we’re entering a new age, a new age of not abundance in water, but of management, that we have to manage this resource to ensure that our communities can survive, that our economies can survive, and that we can protect our way of life in Kansas, the rural way of life in Kansas,” he said.

### **Approaching water planning like transportation planning**

In 2024, the Kansas Water Office hosted a multi-part series of “local consultation” meetings that engaged more than 1,500 Kansans on their perspectives about water and its connection to their communities and regions. Those perspectives formed a strategic implementation plan with outcomes and recommendations to respond to the state’s water challenges. Ramasamy described some of the findings:

- More than 100 communities in the state are at risk of running out of usable water for their communities and their economies in the next 25 years, “an immediate threat” to water supplies and Kansas communities.
- Kansans want to attract new businesses and economic development in the state, but that’s only possible if there’s enough water to continue those objectives moving forward. “It doesn’t matter if we bring in a business if we can’t sustain the water for them for 10, 20, 30, 40, 50 years down the line,” he said.



**Vijay Ramasamy, Special Advisor to Governor Laura Kelly**

**Reservoirs providing municipal water supplies are filling with silt faster than expected, he said, reducing the availability of water to water users.**





- Communities across the state have critical infrastructure needs with aging water systems where state money and state investments could help support local investments.
- Kansans value transparency in the ways public funds are invested. “It doesn’t just mean that we’re going to say we’re going to spend \$60 million on water,” Ramasamy said. “People want to know, ‘what does that mean for water issues in my community, if I’m investing my taxpayer dollars in water?’”

There was also support for a “rolling approach” to water planning and management, Ramasamy said, mostly notably now done in Kansas through the state’s 10-year transportation planning process. In that process, lawmakers approve a dedicated revenue source for transportation projects 10 years at a time. The Kansas Department of Transportation manages projects within that source of funds on a rolling planning cycle, where the “pipeline” of projects is constantly refilled as other projects are completed. Public engagement is built in to the process, so priorities are constantly updated and evaluated in a more timely manner.

“Over the course of many years – we’ve had 40 years of transportation programs funded at about \$1 billion dollars per year – they’ve made really good progress on our transportation issues,” Ramasamy said. “We need to bring the same sort of thinking to water. Water is not the same as transportation, but legislators, the governor, everybody needs to see water at the same level in their minds and their priority as they do our roads and bridges.”

The approach would establish a “multigenerational promise” for addressing water challenges 50 years in the future, 10 years at a time – so in 2025, planners would consider 2075; in 2035, planners would consider 2085, he said.

“This dynamic process allows us to make changes in our investments based on changing needs, but also secures some sort of political and financial commitment to water, similar to what we have for transportation,” he said. “The only way that we are going to make large scale investments in our infrastructure, like our reservoirs, or actually invest the money that you all need to fix your systems is if we make this long term commitment.”

In the immediate future, additional state water plan funds – now about \$60 million a year – could address four of the 140 “orphan contamination sites” and 40 of the state’s 500 high-risk dams by 2027.

“As legislators or as the public, you can say, hey, I want to actually take care of this problem, invest more money and make sure that we’re actually addressing all 140 sites,” he said. “But unless we do this outcomes-based approach and show you what you can buy for different dollars. It’s really hard for you all to see where your money is going and how it’s impacting these issues.”

Dedicating a steady revenue source – Ramasamy used an example of \$140 million a year for 10 years – and breaking up the larger, tougher challenges into smaller timeframes also would help make more measurable progress more rapidly, he said, including:

- 50% to 75% of all irrigation systems would have irrigation system audits and technology upgrades to conserve 15% more water without affecting profitability;
- The state’s top six reservoirs would have more effective sediment management plans
- 99% of the state’s drinking water systems would meet federal standards

“When we take these big, complex problems and chunk them out into these attainable 10 year goals, then we can start to make progress on our problems, rather than feeling like these are too difficult to understand and too difficult to tackle.”

The report also addressed streamlining water program management – now divided across 14 state agencies – and building state staff capacity to work on, measure, and report about water issues. Ramasamy also highlighted the need for leadership and empathy as tools to use in addition to public funds.

“For today and tomorrow’s Kansans, water is going to require leadership, adaptation and empathy,” he said. “Money is not going to solve this problem related to water. These are very serious issues when we talk about water management, it’s going to require behavior change, changes in the way that we think about our future and our economy, but also real empathy for the struggles that happen today as we figure out issues for tomorrow.”

Ramasamy asked those in attendance to have one conversation with their state legislators over the summer, to ensure that lawmakers understand the current issues that are most important to each community. He also asked attendees to ask future legislative and gubernatorial candidates about their views on managing the resource over the long term.

“These issues, fundamentally, are about our communities,” he said. “They are about our kids and our grandkids. Moving forward, the investments that we make now will bear fruit for future generations. It will prevent emergencies, and we’ll make sure that we are more proactive, and will ensure that our kids and our grandkids can live in the same thriving state that we have gotten to enjoy.”



# Escape to Margaritaville



Wednesday evening's entertainment was a first for KRWA – a dinner-theater event. It was indeed an “Escape to Margaritaville” with two dozen Jimmy Buffet hits. This jukebox musical was about finding romance during a tropical bachelorette party. Combined with great food and social, it was a great time.

“Escape to Margaritaville” centered on a plot about the tunes of the Parrothead idol, with Caribbean bar singer Tully (played by Zach Garraway) falling for tourist Tammy (Nora Graham), while bartender Brick (Jackson Dorris) connected with Tammy's friend Rachel (Courtney Wages). “The show was about Rachel and Tammy, and they're going on Tammy's bachelorette party to Margaritaville. It was a fun show with great singing and choreography with numerous dance numbers.

*License To Chill, It's Five O'Clock Somewhere, We Are The People Our Parents Warned Us About, Son of A Son of a Sailor, Changes in Latitudes, Changes in Attitudes, Margaritaville, Volcano, Grapefruit, Juicy Fruit, and He Went to Paris* are just a few of the musical numbers performed by the Margaritaville cast.

KRWA thanks Kathy Hauptman and The Forum Theatre for another great production. It's quite a way to round out a day of conference-going. These and past musicals make the KRWA conference totally unique and provides an opportunity for many people to enjoy shows that they otherwise do not have access to.





# 170 Conference-goers Contribute \$7,004 to WaterPAC



**D**onations from 170 conference-goers at the 2025 KRWA conference gained \$7,004 for the Annual WaterPAC Raffle. The Kansas Rural Water

Association pays for the prizes for the Raffle.

All donations go to support the National Rural Water Association's WaterPAC. The PAC allows the NRWA to support various members of Congress with a focus on those who support the interests of water and wastewater systems. Whether it is requests that Congress maintain the various funding programs through USDA Rural Development or the state revolving loan programs, it's National Rural Water Association and its state affiliates such as KRWA that make continued efforts to ensure Members are aware of how funding is used both by the utilities and NRWA and its affiliates such as KRWA in providing training and assistance across the country.



WaterPAC was promoted numerous times throughout the conference. Matt Holmes, CEO at National Rural Water Association, reminded those attending the membership meeting of the role NRWA and KRWA continue to exercise for the interests of water and wastewater utilities.

## WaterPAC Raffle Winners

Prize	Winner	System
Quilt - Circle Illusion	Mark Axelson	Rooks RWD 3
Milwaukee Inflator	Kendall Eichman	Anderson RWD 4
KitchenAid® Artisan 5 Qt Mixer	Levi Brewer	City of Haysville
Porter-Cable Air Compressor	Albert Foreman	City of Coffeyville
Stihl Leaf Blower	David Herb	City of Wichita
DeWalt 12" Chain Saw	Bob Miller	Lyon RWD 3
Stihl WeedEater - Gas	Rich Hamit	Kansas Dept of Transportation
Stihl Tiller	Gene Langley	Lyon RWD 1, 3 & 5
Milwaukee Rolling Tool Box	Trevor Stevenson	City of Caldwell
Samsung 65" Television	John Hale	Century II
Pit Boss Smoker	Lori Muir	Riley County Public Works
\$500 Cash	Brian Rusche	City of Seneca
DeWalt 6-Tool Combo Kit	Trevor Stevenson	City of Caldwell
Smokeless Fire Pit	Bill Shroyer	City of Sabetha
Craftsman 230 Piece Socket Set	Bob Miller	Lyon RWD 3
Decorative Windmill	Ann Brown	Sedgwick RWD 4
2 GCI Chairs - Key Equipment	Calvin Jurgensen	City of Oswego

Members of KRWA's board helped staff the WaterPAC booth during the conference.

KRWA and NRWA appreciate the support for WaterPAC during the KRWA conference. KRWA is keeping track. Donations over the past 20 are 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; 2023 - \$6,098; 2024 - \$5,634; 2025 - \$7,004. Donations to WaterPAC at KRWA conferences since 2005 total \$117,697.



This photo shows some of the prizes in The WaterPAC Raffle, a fundraiser for the National Rural Water Association's WaterPAC. This was the 20th year that KRWA has sponsored the Raffle.

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





## Winners Take Home Four More Quilts

**A**nd so the legacy continues with KRWA presenting pieced quilts as grand door prizes. With the four given in 2025, the total is now 116 that have been given as prizes at KRWA conferences since 1984.

This year's patterns were *Circle Illusion*, *Chantilly Lace*, *Dandy Stars* and *Friendship Sashing*. The quilt, *Circle Illusion*, was a prize in the WaterPAC Raffle. The

others were drawn from the Thursday luncheon tickets.

These quilts were pieced by Connie Huerter of Seneca, Kan. The machine quilting was by Grace Bowser, Holton, Kan. The material continues to come from the stashes of totes of material gathered by Kathleen Ronnebaum who began this tradition. The quilts have always been a feature of the conference.



Tom Sloan, Douglas RWD 1 / KRWA and *Chantilly Lace*



Mark Axelson, Rook RWD 3 and *Circle Illusion*



Josh Werner, Ottawa RWD 2 and *Dandy Stars*



Garrett Sullivan, Leavenworth Cons. RWD 1 and *Friendship Sashing*