

2026 KRWA Conference & Exhibition

Winter, Spring Summer or Fall



KRWA's Annual Conference Is the "Go-To" For Municipal and Rural Water and Wastewater Utilities

It's the largest water and wastewater conference in Mid-America, and the 2026 conference lived up to that title in many ways. When everyone was counted from cities, rural water and public wholesale systems, exhibitors, agencies, and others, the total was a record 2,339 people attending. And that total doesn't include all the support staff who helped ensure that another KRWA conference met expectations.

The subsequent pages of this issue review the events from training sessions to the fun and games that make up the KRWA Conference & Exhibition the "go-to" event for water and wastewater systems, operators, managers, administrators, clerks, city council and rural water district board members. EXPO Hall was filled; exhibitors are a big part of the KRWA conference, and their participation also helps keep costs for attendees affordable.

There is something for everyone, all the time at the two and a half days of the conference. KRWA's conference is for Association members and non-members alike. One of the reasons for the large attendance is the many sessions, plus EXPO offers a wide array of products and services for the water and wastewater industries, as well as consulting, agencies, and management issues. From software to hardware, this conference has something for everyone. 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 2026, attendees came from 312 cities and 150 rural water districts, public wholesale systems, or other systems. Registrants came from 36 states outside of Kansas and Washington, D.C., and one from Ontario, Canada.

Due to spacing requirements, the operators' exam was again held across the street at the Drury Hotel. The exam will be held there again in 2027. KRWA appreciates the KDHE Operator Certification Department for making the exams available. A total of 302 exams for water and wastewater operators were taken for Small Systems through Class IV. The conference training sessions included exam refreshers.

Who attended?

In 2026, registrants came from 305 cities and 201 rural water districts or other public water or wastewater systems.

The attendance breakdown is as follows:

- Operators: 1,144
- Administrative Staff: 115
- Board/Council Members: 97
- Industry: 946
- Agency: 35

The 2026 conference involved 211 different exhibitors, filling all 376 available booth spaces in EXPO Hall.



The 2027 conference, set for March 23 - 25, is already in the planning stages. The hotel room block for the Hyatt will open on Wednesday, July 1 at 8 a.m. The Drury Hotel and several others are already fully booked. For the listing of hotels where KRWA has rooms booked, check the KRWA website at <https://krwa.net/conference> and then click on "Accommodations".

2026 Opening Session – Charles Marshall Highlights



Power of Heroism

Anyone can act heroically – even without a splashy, stretchy uniform.

Author and professional speaker Charles Marshall delivered this message during the opening session of the 2026 Kansas Rural Water Association's Annual Conference.

"Heroes aren't the Avengers, they aren't the Justice League, but neither are what we normally celebrate in our world," Marshall said. "They're not celebrities. They're not rock stars, sports stars, or music stars, necessarily, because those people can be heroes, but generally, when you look back at your life, the people who have impacted your life and who are heroes in your life are the people who contributed on a local level to your well-being, making sure that you have what you need to succeed. And I think that the people in this group qualify for that description."

Marshall, based in Springfield, Mo., shared humorous personal stories and anecdotes to demonstrate three characteristics of everyday heroes.

First, heroes own their own choices.

He shared a story about the vulnerabilities of a hospital stay after a serious car accident to illustrate that choosing between equally undesirable choices is rarely preferred, but often necessary, in life.

"The trick heroes employ is they choose the path that's going to get them to the better result, to get them where they want to go," he said. "So when bad things happen, heroes don't let other people's negativity affect how they respond. Heroes hold on to who they are. They hold on to their dignity. They hold on to their self-control, especially when they're in some sort of conflict with a client or customer."

"The important thing for you to remember is to respond with who you are, keeping your dignity, keeping your self-respect, and respond like that as heroes."

Second, heroes keep their minds open to learning and new ideas. Choosing to attend the KRWA conference was one example of how attendees were being heroes, Marshall said.

"You have opportunities to learn, to build yourself, to add to

your knowledge and your wisdom," he said.

Heroes also must be open to being wrong, Marshall said.

"I learned how to be wrong when I first got married," he said, recalling a long disagreement with his wife over the authenticity of a descriptive term commonly used in his family while he was growing up, an argument he eventually conceded.

"Are you open to correction? Can you hear what other people are trying to tell you?" Marshall asked.

Heroes also stay open to positive messages. Marshall, the author of a book titled "The Seven Powers of Success," suggested consuming positive media, such as books and podcasts, as a source of encouragement.

Finally, heroes leap into action. Marshall described a family meal at a fast-food restaurant known for their chicken sandwiches and customer service, where everything that could have gone wrong, did – including a series of spilled chocolate milkshakes.

The restaurant's employees leapt into action at every turn, cleaning up messes and replacing a child's treat. They were ready to respond, Marshall said – a lesson that anyone can replicate.

"The reason that you are in his room is because you have proven that you are a person of action," he said. "You have proven that you are a person who steps up. Because if you're not that person, you will be found out. People will not address you directly, necessarily, but they will talk about you and tell other people whether or not you can be counted on."

"Once you establish yourself as a person that can be counted on, people will buy your brand. They will believe in you. I think one of the best ways you can step up is in service to other people."

Marshall called on those attending the opening session to continue to find opportunities to implement the heroic actions in their work and their lives.

"We need heroes these days more than ever before," he said. "We need heroes, because bad times always are around the corner."



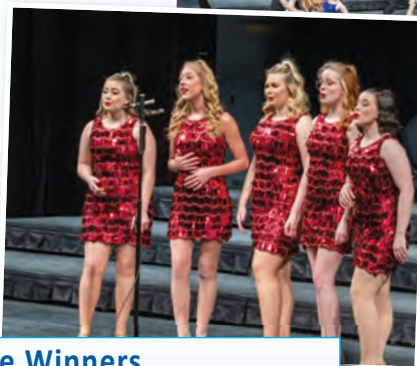
Tom Sloan, KRWA President introduces Charles Marshall, keynote speaker at the 2026 Opening Session.

2026 Headliners Show Second to None . . .

Have you ever attended any other conference where the opening session involves a show choir? Probably not, and that's one more reason the KRWA conference is special. The Butler Headliners returned to the 2026 KRWA Conference for the 8:30 a.m. opening in Concert Hall on Wednesday, March 25.

The Headliners are nationally acclaimed. The 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 alums in every performance field.

The Headliners bring a new show every year. Their 2026 production for KRWA was entitled "Building for Today". It was another great performance, directed by Valerie Mack and assisted by Chad Ingram. The Headliners always bring high-energy singing and dancing to the Opening Session.



Opening Session Prize Winners

Prize	Winner	System
\$250 Gift Card	Ryan Davison	City of Derby
\$250 Gift Card	Vickie Riniker	Riley RWD 1

Blessed be the Donuts – and Other "Second-to-None" Hospitality Food

Have you ever attended any other conference where the donuts, bagels, brownies, lemon bars, yogurt parfait, cinnamon rolls, cookies, and more never, ever run out? Probably not. The coffee and beverage break might be scheduled for 10:15. It's guaranteed that hospitality food will be available from the time the doors open until they close on Thursday noon.

So what is required to put on an event like the KRWA conference? For those keeping track of trivial matters, here's that info:

Donuts - 149 dozen; - 1788
Donut Holes - 240 dozen; - 2880
Cinnamon Rolls - 60 dozen; - 720
Bear Claws - cut 1/3 28 dozen; - 1008
Total Pieces - 6,396

Pastries
Mini-Muffins - 180 dozen - 2160
Scones - 50 dozen - 600
Bagels - 24 dozen - 288
Total Pieces - 3,048

Cookies and Bars . . .
Cookies - 87 dozen - 1,044
Lemon Bars; Brownies - 117 dozen; 1404
Total Pieces - 2,448

Beverages
Regular Coffee - 250 gallons,
about 4,000 8 oz. cups
Decaf Coffee - 67 gallons,
about 1,080 8 oz. cups
French Vanilla Creamer - 9 gallons
Half & Half - 5 gallons
Orange Juice - 49 gallons

Cranberry Juice - 23 gallons
Tea - 48 gallons
Total Gallons - 451
Bottled Water - 7,300

Yogurt and more ...
Yogurt Cups - with Fruit and Granola; - 264 lbs
55 lbs of fruit; 528 Yogurt cups
Sugar Free Yogurt Cups - 90 Cups
Vegetable Cups - 75 lbs. and 88 oz. of Ranch
Dressing - 400 cups
Fruit Salad - 246 lbs. of Mixed Fruit - 450 cups
Fresh Fruit (Apples, Clementines,
Oranges and Plums) - 375 lbs.
Mixed Nut Packages - 144

Social
22 Kegs of Beer
Margarita and Lemon Drop Drinks - 1800



Expo Hall Vendors & Attendees – Always Something New



Each year during the Kansas Rural Water Association's Annual Conference and Exposition, *The Lifeline* interviews attendees about their experiences. Read on for in-person accounts from 2026.

Tim Himelick from the City of Milford attends the annual KRWA Conference and Exhibition every few years to keep up his certification.

As the City Superintendent – and the Fire Chief, City Clerk, and Code Enforcement Officer – he's always looking for ways to "work smarter, not harder," he said. The trade show helps him connect with the latest equipment that benefits his city.

"There's always something new coming out," he said. "I put in auto-read meters a few years back, and I got all that information here."

"We don't need some of the big stuff here, like street sweepers, but there's a lot of the smaller stuff that really helps out."

Tanner Tuttle, an operator for the City of Gove, has been attending the KRWA conference since 2007. He has gotten to know operators from other cities in Kansas through conversations and encounters during training and educational classes each year.

"This is the only time I get to see some of these guys, because we don't live near them," he said. "You can learn quite a bit from the other operators, and the schooling, too."

Camron Spresser, an operator for Wheatland High School near Grainfield, attended his third KRWA conference in 2026. He agreed that the opportunities for continuing education and the opportunity to participate in testing for certification were strong pulls – among other aspects.

"They put on a great show and the food is always good," he said.

Both Tuttle and Spresser said that they appreciated the friendliness of the other attendees.

"Everyone here is like that," Tuttle said. "If you have a good attitude about it, you're friends with everyone."

KRWA Board of Directors member Brandon Smith spent some time as the conference wrapped up at the WaterPAC booth in Expo Hall.

Smith works for Public Wholesale Water Supply District No. 12 at Melvern. His experience in city government and for the wholesale water district gave him an appreciation for the association's service and interactions with their constituents, he said – and now, entering his second year on KRWA's board, he's gaining an appreciation for the work that takes place behind the scenes.

"I get to see why we write all these reports, why we interact with state policy makers, and why it's all important," he said. "It's really easy to say, hey, I like going out and helping a guy fix a leak. That interaction is great, but the work is on the backside, like the paperwork to facilitate the funding, and making sure that the people in charge of policymaking know why we do what we do."

"There's a huge disconnect, specifically between Topeka and rural Kansas."

Smith's role on the KRWA board, along with his service as an Osage County Commissioner and a member of the Marais des Cygnes Regional Advisory Committee for the Kansas Water Office and Kansas Water Authority, has given him opportunities to engage with policymakers and provide additional education and support.

The annual conference provides further opportunities for connection, he said.

"If you come for nothing else, come to meet some other people, because we're all in the same boat," he said. "We're all dealing with the same policies, and we're all dealing with the same trouble, and it's helpful just to know you're not alone."





A small wheeled cart on the show floor during the conference's Exhibition attracted significant attention.

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's Region 7 staff brought the mobile drinking water treatment unit to the conference to raise awareness about the equipment, said David Rinaldi, a physical scientist in the Water Division of the Agency's Groundwater and Drinking Water Branch, in the Public Water Supply Section.

The unit can be used on-site during a natural disaster or other water crisis to treat up to 10,000 gallons of water per day, Rinaldi said.

"If there's a time when a state or tribal area needs alternative water, and they can't meet that need, then they can request us to come help with that," he said.

When not in use, the unit is stationed at a secure facility in the underground caves near Kansas City, Missouri, allowing it to quickly be deployed across the agency's Region 7 states of Kansas, Missouri, Iowa and Nebraska, Rinaldi said.

Many emergency plans rely on quickly acquiring bottled water to serve a water system's customers, he said. That might not be feasible in a natural disaster, when every community is attempting to access the same supply of bottled water; it might come with a high price tag or rely on a business to donate water for a relief effort after a tornado or flood.

The onsite mobile unit can be a backup to those plans – as long as the broader water community is aware that it's an option, he said.

"Without knowing about it, without pre-planning, when a system goes down, you're not going to be looking for something you've never heard of," Rinaldi said.

The annual exhibition draws vendors from around the nation to connect with their current and potential clients and customers.

Kyle Long, a coatings consultant for TNEMEC who is based in North Kansas City, Missouri, said his company has been attending the show for at least 20 years.

"We're a coating manufacturer, so we're pretty involved in the water and wastewater market, and we deal with a lot of municipalities that, of course, attend the show," Long said. "We work closely with a lot of the other exhibitors and engineers and suppliers and things. So it's just a great place for us to connect with our peers."

Long said he was able to interact with multiple rural water departments that were in the design, planning or construction phases of new water tower projects in which they were involved.

"It's good to be able to connect with people," he said. "Even though we already might have a relationship with someone, it's good to be able to meet face-to-face. And because you get people from all over Kansas, maybe it isn't as feasible to have that connection outside of a show like this."



Yet other vendors use the exhibition opportunity to assess market feasibility or expand their business.

Josh Burnett represented Canada Company, a growing family business in Tulsa, Oklahoma. ("We're not from Canada, though everyone asks us," he said, noting that it was the last name of the family who purchased the company in the 1970s.)

The company traditionally served the oil and gas industry, Burnett said, though now about half of its business supports water, wastewater and other environmental water projects and needs.

The KRWA conference gives them an opportunity to intersect with different departments of municipalities and water districts. Because they sell equipment that monitors and addresses environmental issues like blue green algae in recreational lakes, they're able to meet with city staff and representatives of parks and recreational departments; because they sell gas monitoring equipment, they meet with clients from water districts that use chlorine gas.

"A lot of this is about safety," he said.

Burnett complimented the quality of the trade show and the enthusiasm of the attendees, which he said has been consistent each year over the four years he has been an exhibitor.

"Tuesday night is always the best because everyone is so gung-ho," he said. "We've been busy. It has been a good show."



This Party Is A Number 1...

KRWA's Meet & Greet Tops Off Day 1!

“It's like something you might expect at a conference in Orlando,” said one of the first-time exhibitors at the KRWA Conference. The 2026 “Meet and Greet” had more games and more sponsors than ever. KRWA's opening nite “Meet & Greet” is one great party. What a way to make new friends and renew acquaintances. There's always plenty of great food, social and fun. The beer trailer was complemented by margaritas and lemon drop cocktails.

Savor, the caterer for ASM Global that manages Century II, again prepared a great meal featuring barbecued chicken and pork, potato salad, baked beans, coleslaw, and desserts. People had fun. KRWA printed 40,000 game tickets for this event for the prize drawings at 9:45. Thanks to the numerous Associate Members who helped sponsor the games.



The games included:

- | | |
|-------------------|------------------------------------|
| ■ Deluxe Casino | ■ Machine Guns |
| ■ Axe Throw | ■ Big Buck Hunter Arcade |
| ■ O2 Bar | ■ Silver Strike Bowling |
| ■ Kentucky Derby | ■ Fast and Furious Drifting Driver |
| ■ One Ball | ■ Cruis'n Exotica |
| ■ Basketball Toss | ■ Electronic Bingo! |
| ■ High Striker | ■ \$10,000 Putting Challenge |
| ■ Bug Buster | ■ The Sizzler Amusement Ride |
| ■ Cork Guns | |
| ■ Mini-basketball | |

The Corn Hole tournament had cash prizes for first and second 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 entire building was cleared at about 11 p.m.

And Kansas' oldest Rock n' Roll band, King Midas & The Muflers, was again on stage, strumming out 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
Ninja Creami	Ron Bias	City of Parsons
Ninja Toaster Oven & Air Fryer	Shahla Holcomb	Bartlett & West
Jump Starter Pack - 1500 Amp	Carolyn Jones	City of Corning
Cuisinart Coffee Center	Melanie Lindberg	Republic RWD 1
Yeti Soft Cooler	Peggi Axelson	Rooks RWD 3
Milwaukee Wet/Dry Vac / Battery	LeAnn Collins	Jefferson RWD 12
DeWalt Cordless Drill	Phill Jeanneret	Lyon RWD 3
DeWalt Storage Step Stool	Roger Koch	City of Axtell
Stihl Cordless Vacuum	Doyle Bohl	Phillips RWD 1
DeWalt Spotlight	Lance Post	City of Morland
Bissell Little Green Carpet Cleaner	Peggi Axelson	Rooks RWD 3
DeWalt 142 Piece Tool Set	Jaden Brickell	City of Burlington
Rocking Chair Set	Erik LeQue	City of Independence
Apple AirPods	Kenny Chastain	Leavenworth Waterworks
Air Compressor	Adam Marcotte	City of Leoti
Igloo Gift Bag	Shahla Holcomb	Bartlett & West
Candle Basket	Skip Miller	City of Udall
Hose Reel Cart	Mary Garzillo	Douglas RWD 4
Anvil Loper	Gail Sloan	Douglas RWD 1 / KRWA
DeWalt 122 Piece Tool Set	Jared Carrel	Linn RWD 1
Shark Rocket Vacuum	Lisa Grissom	City of Haysville
Benchtop Fan	Sandy Benoit	Rooks RWD 3
DeWalt Shop Stool	Lisa Grissom	City of Haysville
Patriotic Double Chair	Kathy Edmonds	Leavenworth RWD 8
\$100 Cash	Colton Garzillo	Douglas RWD 4
\$100 Cash	Jaden Brickell	City of Burlington
\$100 Cash	Kenny Chastain	Leavenworth Waterworks
\$100 Cash	Dustin Myers	City of Horace
Smokeless Fire Pit	Chance Heinz	City of Edgerton
Table Top Grill	Roger Brandt	Leavenworth Cons. RWD 1
Barbecue Tool Set	Mark Axelson	Rooks RWD 3
Milwaukee Tool Box	Xavier Collins	Leavenworth Waterworks
Milwaukee Packout Tool Box	Mikala Goodall	Miami RWD 4
Dewalt Cordless Grinder	Phill Jeanneret	Lyon RWD 3
\$250 Cash	Aiyana Gendoes	City of Hill City
\$250 Cash	Robert Slocum	Jackson RWD 3



2026 Presenters



The Kansas Rural Water Association appreciates the time and effort by all the presenters at the 2026 conference. Thank you for helping attendees learn ways they can improve and explore the resources available to them.

Jon Adams	Insite Instrumentation Group	Lorraine Lowrey	Kansas Rural Water Association
Mark Axelson	Rooks RWD 3	Todd Luckman	Stumbo Hanson, LLP
Javon Baker	Kansas Rural Water Association	Charles Marshall	M Power Resources
Sheldon Bina	Professional Engineering Consultants	Mark Martina	ABB Drives Products Division
Kyle Blubaugh	City of Arkansas City	Jack Mason	City of Emporia
Angie Brownrabbit	Kansas Water Office	Pat McCool	Kansas Rural Water Association
Jerry Casey II	O.J. DuPree Company	Carolyn McGinn	Office of Governor Laura Kelly
Ben Coltrane	Midwest Engineering Group	Courtney McMillian	Elynx Water Solutions
Isaac Dailey	Kansas Dept. of Administration	Frank Moreno	City of Wellington
Monte Dakan	Johnson Service Company	David Mosier	Core & Main
Mick David	City of Arkansas City	Deb Ohlde	North Central Regional Planning
Joel DeHaven	Midwest Engineering Group	Mandy Patek	Kansas Dept. of Administration
James DePriest	Hawkins, Inc.	Mike Quaka	Halogen Systems
Brenda Dietzman	Wayfinder Consulting	Loyd Rawlings	USABlueBook
Seth Draper	US EPA Region 7	Chip Redmond	Kansas State University Agronomy
Karen Edwards-Lindsey	US EPA Region 7 & Hdq.	Nicholas Schneider	Kansas Geological Survey
Dan Fischer	USDA Rural Development	Charlie Schwindamann	Kansas Rural Water Association
Elizabeth Fitch	Kansas Division of Water Resources	Doug Silvius	Martin Pringle Attorneys at Law
Marsha Fleming	Kansas Dept. Health & Environment	Jenny Smith	Kansas Dept. Health & Environment
Rob Gavin	Kansas Dept. Health & Environment	Jason Solomon	Kansas Rural Water Association
Tony Grant	Maguire	Marvell Summerow	WaterWise Enterprises
Gary Hanson	Stumbo Hanson, LLP	Martha Tasker	City of Salina
Cara Hendricks	Kansas Dept. Health & Environment	Jason Teal	Kansas Department of Commerce
Matthew Hickman	HIC Agency, Inc.	Kirk Tjelmeland	Kansas Water Office
Christianne Huard	Kansas Dept. Health & Environment	Jeff Trowbridge	Subsurface Solutions
Brian Huston, JD	OutrightHR	Percy Turner	Wichita State University
Megan Jones	Jones Advisory Group, LLC	Matt Unruh	Kansas Water Office
Stewart Kasper	Kansas Rural Water Association	Greg Vahrenberg	Raymond James & Associates
Amelia Lane	Kansas Water Office	Michael Vavruska	Midwest Infrastructure Coatings
Jose Leon	Johnson County Wastewater	Allen Vinyard	Kansas Dept. of Labor
Chris Lilly	Keller Pressure Inc.	Elisabeth Wilder	Martin Pringle Attorneys at Law
		Nicholas Willis	WSU Environmental Finance Center
		Merle Windler	Thoroughbred Systems
		Chad Yamashita	Kansas Dept. Health & Environment
		Arch York	Kansas 811
		Kristen Zimmerman	Professional Engineering Cons.





Wednesday Luncheon

State Pushes Coordinated Approach for Kansas' Water Future

More than 100 years ago, there was a sandbar island in the middle of the Arkansas River, just to the west of the Century II Convention Hall in Wichita.

The 56-acre Ackerman Island was home to an amusement park with a roller coaster, carousel, a bowling alley and several theaters. It served as one of Wichita's first tourism attractions until the 1920s, when the park was demolished and the island used to sculpt the west bank of the river.

It's a lesson in history that helps illustrate the ways in which water can influence and support a community's progress, said Carolyn McGinn, the Special Advisor for Water to Gov. Laura Kelly.

"Even though the water itself stays the same, how we use water and how we get involved in different economic development things changes how the water runs and flows through our communities," she said.

McGinn delivered an update on the state's water planning efforts at the Wednesday luncheon during the 2026 Kansas Rural Water Association's annual conference.

The efforts continue to build a more stable, certain environment for funding water projects across Kansas, McGinn said, a goal that will become more critical as more communities begin to have tough conversations about their futures.

"I think the statistic is that 93% of Kansas communities have a population of 3,000 or less, and those numbers are even more interesting if you dive down to 500 or fewer," she said. "As we look toward



Carolyn McGinn, the Special Advisor for Water to Gov. Laura Kelly.

trying to manage our water systems and our water supply, we have to think, what does a community want to do?

"Some communities may just want to maintain and manage what they have – they've got the Co-Op, the post office, the pool hall, and maybe a Dollar General. They might want that. But other communities may want to explore their potential for growth and development. Not every community has the same vision as far as growth, but they do have the same vision for sustaining what they have."

Recent legislation like HB 2302, which was approved in 2023, has started making a difference in addressing community-level technical assistance and water project needs, McGinn said. The Kansas Water Office has been able to make \$63 million in grants to communities as a result of the legislation, though they've had \$885 million in requests, she said.

"Ten years ago, \$63 million for water sounded like a lot of money," said McGinn, a former state senator who served as the chair of the chamber's budget committee.

The grant program is also an example of the ways in which multiple levels of government – state, federal, and local – are communicating and working together, she said, an expectation that will become more critical as demand for funds outpaces their availability.

"We need bottom-up development from the communities, but top-down guidance and strategy from the state. And that's what we're working towards," she said. "We want input from the communities of what their needs are, but then we need to have the overall development and implementation at the state level."

Water projects can be expensive and expansive, requiring years of planning and design, which is difficult when funding sources are uneven. One way to both encourage more coordination between levels of government and provide more stability and certainty for funding would be to treat the state's water funds like the state's transportation funds, McGinn said.

In that process, ten years of funding are approved up front by the Legislature. Then, projects are selected for



Regional planning efforts will become increasingly important for economic development conversations, including the recent surge in conversations about planned data centers in Kansas, McGinn said.

development and construction “pipelines” two years at a time to meet current and upcoming community and regional needs. The needs are identified in part through local consultation sessions every two years.

State water planners will host similar “Local Consult” sessions in each of the state’s 14 regional planning areas beginning in July, McGinn said.

“We will be coming to a water basin in your area,” she said. “No longer are we going to be talking about going to your counties. Your counties are within the watershed, and so we want everybody from that watershed who’s interested to be involved in that process. We’ll be bringing agencies out explaining to you what is going on across your district, your watershed, and then also be listening to you so that we can better strategize and put together a plan.”

The most successful projects for consideration will be in water districts and communities that “have their house in order,” McGinn said.

“That means, do you know what your pipes look like, and where are they?” she said. “What kind of shape are they in? How old are they?”

Regional planning efforts will become increasingly important for economic development conversations, including the recent surge in conversations about planned data centers in Kansas, McGinn said.

Water district and city staff should continue to have conversations with their state legislators, thanking them for their investment in projects that have been awarded and asking for continued support in areas where projects have been requested but not approved, McGinn said.

“They’re in their third year of a five-year plan, and they’re asking lots of questions about what you are doing with the money,” she said. “I’m trying to explain to them that it takes time to get those programs going, but now they are going, so don’t start bailing out in year four of five. They’re going to start seeing great results of what the funding has done and all it has brought to their community.”

Spouses Welcomed and Entertained!

Spouses have long been welcomed during the annual conference, with programming designed for those who may be in Wichita for a few days with a city or water district employee or board member attending classes and training sessions.

A total of 60 spouses had an enjoyable Tuesday afternoon doing the “Bingo Bash”. The \$5 cash prize for winning a “game” went to 44 players. Complete with beverages and snacks, it was an analog of amusement with an enjoyable and friendly caller from Celebrations.

The Wednesday afternoon spouse program, presented by GROW, a Wichita-based plant “plant bar,” invited participants to create their own unique terrariums by layering soil, sand, rocks and decorative plants.

Kate Washmon of Sterling took part in the activity. The 2026 conference was her first time tagging along with her husband Jeff, who is employed by the city’s public works department.

Though she described herself as “not a plant person,” Washmon said the educational program helped explain different types of plants, giving participants multiple options from which to choose, and how to care for them.

“It was so informative and the lady leading it did a great job,” she said. “This has been a great experience.”





Thursday Luncheon

Arch York Encourages Resilience Through Adversity

Everyone struggles from time to time, from monotonous daily tasks to larger challenges. Arch E. York's recommendation? Embrace it.

York wears many hats, including work as Damage Prevention Manager for Kansas 811, a veteran of the U.S. Marine Corps and a professional motorcycle racer. His military and professional career along with his personal interests have shaped a set of insights he shared during the Thursday luncheon program during the 2026 Kansas Rural Water Association Annual Conference in Wichita during a short talk titled "The Art of Struggling."

As a young, aspiring motorcycle racer, he said his dad created a challenging situation to improve his skills on his dirt bike.

"In order to be a good dirt biker, you have to know how to operate that clutch," York said. "It has to be second nature. It has to be an extension of your own body. So he sat me out on a hill and said, You're going to sit on that hill, on that incline, and you're going to feather that clutch, and you're going to kill it, you're going to drop it, you're going to kill and you're going to drop and you're just going to keep feathering that clutch until you're really good at it.

"That set me up for great success."

York's self-described comfortable upbringing in suburban Kansas City gave him the urge to "roughen up" – by joining the Marine Corps. He learned almost immediately to treat boot camp like a game instead of fearing the difficulty of the experience.

"The more you can embrace it, you can see who really is going to succeed, and who really held up a whole bunch of resistance and did not succeed," he said. "You have to fully embrace that struggle."

Knowing how to struggle can provide safety, growth, and perspective, York said.

"A lot of people don't have that perspective because they are not rough enough around the edges," he said. "They don't have any resilience, because as soon as they're faced with any adversity, they collapse."

York encouraged the audience to take pride in their struggles. He had noticed that many of the water and wastewater operators wore their work boots to take classes and tests during the KRWA conference.

"You have pride and struggle," he said. "I know you do, because you wear your dirty boots everywhere, and I know exactly what that means. It's your way of showing everybody

else, hey, I work. I did my work, and these are my good boots. I invested in good boots, and I want people to know that I struggled to get here, but I'm here."

York recommended a 2017 book by the retired U.S. Navy officer and SEAL Team member Jocko Willink called "Discipline Equals Freedom" that he said helped give him a set of guidelines to live by.

Taking steps to put in hard work pays dividends later, he said. For water systems and others, that might mean creating and practicing response plans to even unlikely scenarios.

"I really encourage everybody to create layers and layers and layers of struggles in the beginning to prevent the giant struggle later on," York said. "And if that giant struggle happens, you know how to respond to it, and it will create an ease in the workplace."

Struggling also creates a contrast that can help enhance the joy of good times. In other words, it's not all bad, York said.

"The only reason we're able to enjoy the warm weather outside right now is because we know what the cold weather feels like," he said.



Arch E. York, Damage Prevention Manager for Kansas 811



"Million Dollar Quartet" Brought The House



The entertainment following the 2026 Awards was another superb production by The Forum Theatre. Kathy Hauptman, Director of The Forum Theatre, brought "Million Dollar Quartet" to life with an amazing cast and combo for the entertainment at the 2026 KRWA conference. It was a phenomenal production with amazing musical and vocal talent for KRWA conference-goers. Kathy's artistic team included Craig Benton, Director, and Anjelica McRae Breathett, Resident Music Director.

"Million Dollar Quartet" refers to an iconic jam session that took place on December 4, 1956, featuring Elvis Presley, Johnny Cash, Jerry Lee Lewis, and Carl Perkins at Sun Record Studios in Memphis, Tennessee. The session is celebrated as a pivotal moment in rock and roll history.

This jam session had cast members Jonathan Acorn (Jerry Lee Lewis); Tyler Michael Breeding (Johnny Cash); Carter Crosby (Carl Perkins); Sam Griffitte (Fluke); Chelsey Moore Eheresman (Dyanne); Nathan Roberts (Elvis Presley); Andrew Walker (Sam Phillips) and Joey Nuhfer (Brother Jay).



That true story brought to life the magic of that fateful evening, filled with broken promises, secrets, betrayal, and unforgettable celebrations – an exhilarating celebration of the music that shaped a generation and the infamous night when four legends made history. The session continues to influence musicians and is celebrated in various forms, including a Tony Award-winning musical that dramatizes the event.

Songs included "Blue Suede Shoes", "Real Wild Child", "Folsom Prison Blues", "Fever", "That's All Right", "Brown Eyed Handsome Man", "Sixteen Tons", "I Walk The Line", "I Hear You Knockin'", "Great Balls Of Fire", "Hound Dog", "Riders In The Sky" and "See You Later, Alligator", among others.

"Million Dollar Quartet" was an unforgettable performance. KRWA appreciates the incredible work of The Forum Theatre, the cast, and the artistic team for a truly pleasurable production.



191 Conference-goers Contribute \$7,021 to WaterPAC

Donations from 191 conference-goers at the 2026 KRWA conference gained \$7,021 for the Annual WaterPAC Raffle. All donations go to support the National Rural Water Association's WaterPAC. The PAC allows the NRWA to support various members of Congress, particularly 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 continue to be the leaders in meeting with Members so they 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. Members from Kansas have been supportive of the training and technical assistance programs.

WaterPAC was promoted numerous times throughout the conference. KRWA Board President Thomas Sloan reminded those attending the membership meeting of the roles NRWA and KRWA continue to play in advocating for the interests of water and wastewater utilities.

Members of KRWA's board staffed 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; 2026 \$7,021. Donations to WaterPAC at KRWA conferences since 2005 total \$124,718.



This photo shows the display of prizes for the WaterPAC Raffle, a fund-raiser for the National Rural Water Association's WaterPAC. The 2026 Conference was the 21st year that KRWA has sponsored the Raffle. KRWA's internal fund provides for the purchase of the Raffle items.

WaterPAC Raffle Winners

Prize	Winner	System
Quilt - Tonga Rhapsody	Paul Strathman	
Husqvarna Pressure Washer	Angie Smith	Public Wholesale 12
Milwaukee Inflator / Batteries	Bradley Sharp	City of Mound Valley
Ninja 50 Quart Cooler	Lonnie Rignell	City of Riley
Milwaukee Blower / Batteries	Bruce Swindle	City of Hiawatha
Dewalt Pole Saw	Levi Brewer	City of Haysville
Milwaukee String Trimmer	Bob Miller	Lyon RWD 3
DeWalt 2-Tool Combo Kit	Bob Miller	Lyon RWD 3
Milwaukee Rolling Tool Box	Kendall Eichman	Anderson RWD 4
KitchenAid® Artisan 5 Qt Mixer	Doyle Bohl	Phillips RWD 1
Stihl Battery Chain Saw	Robert Miller	Montgomery RWD 2
Welder	Lindsey Stansbury	DLS Underground
Pit Boss Flat Iron Griddle	Lonnie Rignell	City of Riley
\$500 Cash	Deana Parson	City of Enterprise
Stihl Tiller	Lonnie Rignell	City of Riley

Four More Quilts Now Total 120 In Prizes

And so the legacy continues with KRWA presenting pieced quilts as grand door prizes. With the four given in 2026, the total is now 120 that have been given as prizes at KRWA conferences since 1984.

This year's patterns were *Bow Tie*, *Triangles at Sea*, *Kate's Scrappy Stars*, and *Tonga Rhapsody*. The quilt, *Tonga Rhapsody*, was a prize in the WaterPAC Raffle. The others were drawn from the Wednesday evening

dinner and Thursday luncheon tickets at the 2026 Conference.

Quilts require a lot of time. These quilts were pieced by Connie Huerter of Seneca, Kan. The machine quilting was by Grace Bowser, Holton, Kan. (Grace is the former city clerk at Mayetta.) The material continues to come from the stashes gathered by Kathleen Ronnebaum who began the tradition of making quilts for the KRWA conference.



Jeff Cart, Ellsworth RWD No. 1: *Bow Tie*



JW Blair, City of Wichita: *Kate's Scrappy Stars*



Angie Smith, Public Wholesale District No. 12: *Triangles at Sea*



Paul Strathman, Nemaha RWD 3 (ret.): *Tonga Rhapsody*



Meet the 2026 Award Winners



MIKE TYLER, CITY OF CHETOPA

“MUNICIPAL WATER OPERATIONS SPECIALIST OF THE YEAR”

Mike Tyler with the city of Chetopa was recognized as the 2026 Municipal Water Operations Specialist of the Year.

Mike is a United States Air Force veteran who began working at the local water treatment plant in 2016. He had no prior experience doing such work. But with a strong work ethic and leadership skills, he gained the title of Water Plant Supervisor and earned a Class IV water operator certification. In his ten years with the city, he has overseen the installation of three new standby diesel generators and the replacement of high-service and backwash pumps. Mike is a strong leader and handles the day-to-day pressures of running a surface water plant that draws water from the Neosho River. Some notable efforts include coordinating the replacement of a ruptured 6-inch pipe buried 20 feet deep at the River's intake. He also supervised the change-out of the 10-inch riser on the elevated water storage tank in Chetopa. Mike and his crew operated the system continuously for several weeks to avoid pressure loss and service interruptions. Mike takes his work personally and is always available when problems arise, even when off-duty. Mike is retiring in June, and Chetopa will have a challenge replacing him.



DIRK LARSEN, ELLSWORTH COUNTY

(POST ROCK) RURAL WATER DISTRICT NO. 1

“RURAL WATER TREATMENT PLANT OPERATOR OF THE YEAR”

Dirk Larsen with Ellsworth County (Post Rock) Rural Water District No. 1 was the recipient of the Award, Rural Water Treatment Plant Operator of the Year.

Dirk recently retired from the industry after 20 years of service with Ellsworth RWD 1, or Post Rock Rural Water. Dirk identifies himself as a “gearhead,” which probably explains why he is very good at maintaining equipment. When asked about hobbies, Dirk says he grew up with people from the 1930s. He learned that if you are working, then you’re not spending money – so keep working! For fun, he loves the outdoors and enjoys dirt biking, snow and water skiing, and cutting firewood. And he says, staying active keeps the weight off.

Ellsworth RWD 1 has a traditional surface water treatment plant at Kanopolis Reservoir. The District provides water to 1,690 customers, including 6 cities, a housing development at Wilson Reservoir, and rest areas on Interstate 70. Nearly all the water is pumped uphill to the west of the plant through about 1,700 miles of pipeline. Over the years, Dirk has seen many improvements, including major upgrades in the SCADA control system, installation of VFDs for pump controls, and the addition of a third filter.

2026 Award Winners



KATHY HOCH, BUTLER RURAL WATER DISTRICT NO. 7 “RURAL WATER DISTRICT OFFICE MANAGER OF THE YEAR”

Kathy Hoch with Butler Rural Water District No. 7 received the award “Rural Water District Office Manager of the Year”.

Kathy has been the full-time bookkeeper and office manager for Butler RWD No. 7 since April 2001, when the office was set up in Whitewater, KS. She was supportive of the project to build a new pumphouse and purchase water directly from the city of El Dorado. She is very appreciative of the board members, the district’s operator, and the team attitude by everyone associated with Butler RWD 7. Kathy says her job is easy, thanks to working with an engaged board of directors. She is truly an advocate for the RWD. Originally, the district sent annual card booklets to the 328 customers so they could read their own meters. Now they are read electronically monthly, and customers are billed. She also helped support a credit card payment system and an ACH payment program for the district’s 408 members. Winter, spring, summer, or fall — when someone calls, Kathy always answers — kind and compassionate, especially when working with customers who are going through hard times or have big leaks.

Kathy and her husband Mark enjoy traveling. If she is not in the RWD office, she can likely be found at an event cheering on her 6 grandkids in their sports and music programs.



KEVIN CLARK, CITY OF ABILENE “WASTEWATER OPERATIONS SPECIALIST OF THE YEAR”

Kevin Clark with the City of Abilene was presented the award, “Wastewater Operations Specialist of the Year”.

Kevin began working at Abilene in 2008 as an operator, just after the city replaced an aging trickling-filter wastewater treatment plant with a new sequencing batch reactor (SBR) plant. After 14 years of operating the plant, he was promoted to superintendent and has served in that capacity for the past three years. During his tenure, the plant performed very well and consistently complied with regulatory requirements. Kevin holds a Class III operator certification. He enjoys his work with the SBR treatment process. He gives credit to his two operators, who help with the plant's overall operation and maintenance.

Kevin is a lifelong resident of Abilene. He has been married for 24 years and has two children. He attended Kansas State University, where he studied science and history. He enjoys baseball and hunting and has coached youth sports for Abilene Sports and Recreation. He has also played in various bands as a drummer, but his current passion is cooking, grilling, and smoking food.



TIM HIMELICK, CITY OF MILFORD “CITY CLERK/SUPERINTENDENT OF THE YEAR”

Tim Himelick with the City of Milford received recognition as the 2026 City Clerk/Superintendent of the Year”.

Tim grew up as an army brat and holds dual citizenship in the United States and France. He was born in France while his father was serving in the U.S. Army. During his teenage years, when his father was relocated to the United States, the family moved to the Fort Riley area. After graduating from high school, he joined the military, serving 11 years, spending time in Washington state, Panama, and finally back at Fort Riley. After honorable discharge from Army, he worked as a contract diesel mechanic at Fort Riley before eventually taking the position of City Clerk/Superintendent at the city of Milford.

During his 13 years in this position, Tim has overseen various improvements in the water system. One major change was switching the water supply source from surface water to groundwater purchased from a nearby rural water district. Another change was to replace all customer meters with auto-read. Current improvements on his list include adding another filter at the rural water district water plant, replacing one wastewater lift station, and installing standby generators at the city’s lift stations.

In his spare time, Tim enjoys making toys for his grandchildren with his 3-D printer. Along with his wife Tammy, Tim enjoys traveling, especially to Colorado, where they visit family.



TESSA SCHECK, City of Hays SPECIAL RECOGNITION AWARD

Tessa Scheck of the city of Hays received a Special Recognition Award for her service to the city of Hays.

Tessa is the Administrative Assistant for the Hays Department of Water Resources. Tessa helps the Divisions of Water, Water Reclamation, Maintenance, and Conservation, and the R9 project for Hays, which will bring water from Edwards County, more than 70 miles south of the city. Tessa is vital to each program, ensuring that all the smaller details are covered and completed to keep the major projects moving.

Tessa’s supervisor, Jeff Crispin, says, “She is the glue that holds us together, the grease needed to make things happen; she is a counselor, a friend to many, an awesome assistant, and a darn good person all the way around.” Tessa supports the operations of five municipal divisions and their 30 employees and she has provided this support system for more than 26 years! When people talk about institutional knowledge, this Tessa embodies what that means. Not much happens on the municipal side in this rapidly growing city without her involvement.

**Plan now to attend the
2027 KRWA Conference & Exhibition,
March 23 - 25, Century II Convention Center,
Wichita, Kansas.**



2026 Award Winners



MIAMI RURAL WATER DISTRICT No. 2 "MOST IMPROVED WATER SYSTEM"



Miami County Rural Water District No. 2 was recognized by KRWA as the 2026 Most Improved Water System.

Miami RWD 2 was incorporated in 1965 and began serving 987 customers. The rural water district's original treatment plant was constructed at Hillsdale Reservoir in 1985. Since that time, the district has expanded dramatically, now serving more than 4,700 customer meters and providing wholesale water to six other public water suppliers. When the original plant reached its maximum capacity, this Rural Water District began a 3-Phase, \$30-million project to expand treatment capacity. Miami County RWD 2 has

completed one of the largest water-treatment investments by a rural water district in Kansas. The district established three phases of the project. Phase 1 included a new pre-sedimentation basin to help pretreat water before it enters the district's existing super pulsators. Phase 2 was a new clearwell complex. Phase 3 is presently under evaluation. Improvements included a new pre-sedimentation basin and increased process wastewater treatment capacity. Miami RWD 2 constructed a new 3-million-gallon underground storage tank and installed a new high-service pump station. The project also built a new laboratory for process control testing. The district financed the project in part with a loan from the Kansas Public Water Supply Revolving Fund.

CITY OF FREDONIA

"MOST IMPROVED WASTEWATER SYSTEM"



The city of Fredonia was named "Most Improved Wastewater System in Kansas" at the 2026 Annual Conference.

The Fredonia wastewater facility is a mechanical treatment facility. Located in Wilson County in southeast Kansas, the system serves a population of 2,151 people. The facility is designed to treat approximately 500,000 gallons of wastewater per day and uses an oxidation ditch for the aerobic portion of treatment. Prior to the current operator assuming the superintendent's position, the city had 27 monitoring and effluent exceedance violations in one year, plus a Consent Order from the Kansas Department of Health and Environment. Simply put, the plant was in bad shape. The clarifier motor went down, and the former staff used an auto-drive push mower to move the sweeper arm, which was not very effective, and the clarifier filled with sludge. On the sludge pump, an end-wrench was used to hold the switch in "Hand" mode to operate the pump. The effluent pumps malfunctioned during high-water events, and the UV room flooded. What else could possibly go wrong?

But the system has made a turnaround. Through significant effort and many challenges, city superintendent Justin Dodd and his two-person staff, Mathew Comacho and Brett Droegemier, have optimized the heavily used wastewater treatment facility. These operators took the initiative; they called in other experts for assistance; they cleaned the facility and caught up on years of deferred maintenance. Over the past 16 months, the city has recorded zero monitoring violations or NPDES permit effluent exceedances. The consent order has been resolved, and the facility was found to be "In Compliance" during the most recent KDHE inspection. This project was aided by a loan from USDA Rural Development and a grant from Commerce. Guidance and assistance was provided by Kansas Rural Water Association through a referral contract with KDHE.

2026 Scholarship Award Winner



DYLAN BRUCE, McPHERSON HIGH SCHOOL DENNIS SCHWARTZ SCHOLARSHIP AWARD

Dylan Bruce, a senior at McPherson High School, was the winner of the Dennis Schwartz Scholarship Award. Dylan is the son of Andrew and Katherine Bruce. Andrew is the City Superintendent in Galva. The award was announced during the Kansas Rural Water Association's 57th Annual Conference & Exhibition, held March 24 – 26 at Century II Convention Center in downtown Wichita, attended by more than 2,400 from across the State.

Dylan is an outstanding student and participant in extracurricular activities. Achievements include being a state finalist in Prose at the 4A State Forensics Competition in 2024; Runner-up in POI at the 4A State Competition, and State Champion in Prose in 2025. Dylan placed with superior performances in the state solo and jazz ensemble in 2024. Dylan not only possesses qualities as an excellent student, but he is also an involved community member and a loyal teammate. He plans to attend Kansas State University to study Civil Engineering, Natural Resources, and Environmental Sciences.

The Dennis Schwartz Scholarship is a \$1,000 award in honor of Dennis who served on the Association's Board of Directors from 1977 to 2014 and a host of state and national committees, including the National Rural Water Association, the National Drinking Water Advisory Committee, and the Kansas Water Authority. The application is limited to the dependent of an employee of a member system or the dependent of a KRWA staff member. The committee reviewed applications using a grading system based on GPA rank, academic achievements, major course of study, other achievements, and an essay.

We'll Drink To That! Six Guys Judge Best Tasting Water

A fair and unbiased judging! All samples marked with only a number – there are no names. Any entry must have a chlorine residual.

And so began the 2026 Annual "Best Tasting Water In Kansas" contest on Tuesday afternoon, March 24 at the 2026 KRWA Conference.

Water samples from twenty-two cities and water districts competed in the contest. Each participating system submitted a water sample in a one-gallon container. The test is a "blind taste" test, with all samples numbered in unmarked containers so that the judges are not aware of which city or rural or public wholesale district submitted each sample.



All samples were judged on three criteria, including clarity, bouquet, and taste.

Clarity was based on whether the water sample was free of particles, debris, and discoloration.

"Bouquet" judging determined whether the water sample was odor-free and without smell. Taste was based on whether the sample had a "satisfying and



Best Tasting Judges: from left Rod Boerger, City of Inman; Gary Smith, Schwab-Eaton; KRWA Board Member Mike Schultz, retired City of Brewster; Wes Adams, City of Haviland; Tyler Epp, City of Hutchinson; and Eric Purk, City of Maize.

City of Emporia Wins Best Tasting Water in Kansas Contest



A familiar name was called during the 2026 edition of the Best Tasting Water in Kansas. The City of Emporia took the award for the ninth time since the contest began in 2001.

The city's water treatment system draws water from the Neosho River to serve more than 30,000 people in Emporia and, through wholesale contracts, to supply water to other communities. The city's current water treatment plant was originally constructed in 1916 with many improvements through the years. The most recent major renovation was completed in 2000. The city disinfects with ozone, lime softens and uses chloramines to maintain residual throughout the city and wholesale customers' distribution systems. The Emporia Water Treatment Plant staff is managed by Jack Mason, who presented on chlorine residual maintenance during the Conference. Next February, a water sample from Emporia will be entered in the Great American Water Taste Test in Washington, D.C. Emporia will represent Kansas in that contest sponsored by the National Rural Water Association.



The 2026 Best Tasting Water In Kansas Award was presented to the City of Emporia during the April 15 City Commission meeting as the city could not be in attendance at the evening Awards presentation during the conference. Receiving the award for the City of Emporia was Assistant Public Works Director Jeff Meek. Pictured: Front Row (left to right): Daryn Martin, Kansas Rural Water Association; Jeff Meek, City of Emporia. Back Row (left to right): City Commissioner Kurt Steinkuhler, City Commissioner Monica Duncan, Mayor Becky Smith, Commissioner Erren Harter and Vice-Mayor Tammi Ogle.

Past Winners of "Best Tasting Water In Kansas"



- 2001 - Jefferson RWD 13
- 2002 - City of Emporia
- 2003 - Public Wholesale Water Supply District 4
(First Place, Great American Taste Test)
- 2004, 05, 06 - City of Emporia
- 2007 - City of Gardner
- 2008 - City of Parsons
- 2009 - City of Augusta
- 2010 - City of Olathe
- 2011 - City of Emporia
- 2012 - City of Emporia
(Second Place, Great American Taste Test)
- 2013 - City of Augusta
- 2014 - Public Wholesale Water Supply District 4
- 2015 - City of Emporia
(Third Place, Great American Taste Test)
- 2016 - City of Emporia
- 2017 - Ottawa RWD 2
- 2018 - WaterOne
- 2019 - City of Arkansas City
- 2022 - City of Arkansas City
- 2023 - WaterOne (First Place, Great American Taste Test)
- 2024 - City of Chanute
- 2025 - City of El Dorado
- 2026 - City of Emporia

Annual Membership Meeting



Annual Membership Meeting Elects Mike Schultz, Bill Shroyer and Diana VanBruggen the Three-Year Terms on KRWA Board

The 57th Annual Meeting of Membership of the Kansas Rural Water Association was called to order by President Tom Sloan at 8:00 am, Thursday, March 26, 2026 in Meeting Room 201 at the Century II Convention Center in Wichita, Kansas. President Sloan thanked the delegates and all those who were in attendance. President Sloan asked members to share suggestions for improving the Conference and the Association with KRWA Board Members or staff. President Sloan then commended General Manager Elmer Ronnebaum and the KRWA staff for facilitating the Annual Conference.

President Sloan asked Secretary Bill Shroyer to read the minutes of the 56th Annual Meeting. Secretary Shroyer read the minutes. President Sloan asked for a motion to approve the Minutes. Treasurer Carl Chalfant made a motion to approve the minutes. The motion was seconded by Eric Ferguson with Public Wholesale Water Supply District 12. The motion passed.

President Sloan asked Treasurer Carl Chalfant to present the Treasurer's Report. Copies of the 2025 Annual Audit report were distributed to all in attendance. Treasurer Chalfant presented the Treasurer's Report. Taylor & Penick, CPAs, Manhattan, Kansas, conducted the Association's audit of financial records. The audit report was unmodified. There were no questions or comments from the membership. Director Julia Langley moved to approve the Treasurer's Report. The motion was seconded by Derek Kling with Butler Rural Water District 7. The motion passed.

President Sloan announced that Treasurer Carl Chalfant was not seeking re-election to another term on the Board of Directors. President Sloan commended Carl on his years of service to the KRWA Board and presented him

with a plaque of recognition. Carl thanked the membership for their support during his tenure and expressed appreciation for the Association's ongoing work.

President Sloan asked KRWA General Manager Elmer Ronnebaum to present the General Manager's Report. Ronnebaum reviewed the Association's operations over the past. Current membership includes 472 Municipalities, 266 Rural Water and Public Wholesale Water Supply Districts and 257 Associate (Industry) Members. His report explained that the dues collected by the Association pay only 10 percent of the total operations of the Association and that it is only through the benefit of contracts with the National Rural Water Association, the Kansas Water Office, and the Kansas Department of Health and Environment that the Association can provide the level of service that it does. KRWA staff assisted 629 individual water and wastewater systems in 2025, including conducting 152 water-loss surveys. Programs discussed included KRWA's efforts in water and wastewater training, energy assessments, GPS mapping, and other areas. Ronnebaum thanked the members for their support and complimented the work of all other KRWA staff. President Sloan thanked Elmer Ronnebaum for his report.

President Sloan asked KRWA Counsel Gary Hanson to summarize legislative changes affecting the membership. Gary addressed the delegation. He summarized a 1995 case in which KRWA filed as a friend of the court while Trego County RWD 2 was in

development and was opposed by some landowners who wanted to limit the transfer of water from Ness County. A similar, ongoing R9 Ranch transfer project involving Edwards County and the cities of Hays and Russell culminated in HB 2433, which defined the state's authority over water transfer projects. Gary explained how local restrictions on the R9 water transfer could impact a water system's ability to serve customers in neighboring counties. KRWA, and others, supported HB 2433 in both the House and Senate and which was passed.

President Sloan asked Director Justin Kramer, Chair of the Nominating Committee, to announce nominees for three positions open for election. Director Kramer asked the members for. None were offered. Director Kramer announced four nominees for the positions. Nominated were: Tim Peoples with Great Plains Development Authority; Mike Schultz (retired) with the City of Brewster; Bill Shroyer with the City of Sabetha; and Diana VanBruggen with the City of Russell. There were no additional nominations. Director Kramer asked each candidate to address the delegation and introduce themselves. Director Kramer asked KRWA employees Daryn Martin and Doug Helmke to distribute, collect and to count the ballots. KRWA Attorney Gary Hanson supervised the ballot count.

President Sloan announced the results of the election. Mike Schultz, Bill Shroyer and Diana VanBruggen were elected to three-year terms on the KRWA Board of Directors.

There being no further business, President Sloan adjourned the meeting at 9:00 am.

During the board reorganizational meeting, the officers elected for 2026 are Tom Sloan, President; Mike Schultz, Vice President; Bill Shroyer, Secretary; and Justin Kramer, Treasurer.



“Thank You” to these Associate Members for their additional support of the 57th Annual Conference & Exhibition.

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Vega Americas, Inc.
Wilson & Company, Inc.

Other Amounts - \$100 - \$500

ASC Pumping Equipment
ESI
Mayer Specialty Services
Rensenhoe Electric
TankSpekCorp
Tomcat Consultants, LLC dba TAP Co.



Thank You!



KRWA Training Sessions Continue to Fill . . .

Training sessions sponsored by the Kansas Rural Water Association continue to be at or near capacity attendance. These photos show examples of training events to show the variety of topics provided for water and wastewater operators and others.



Logan Williams, with the City of Emporia, explains the city's treatment process and answers questions as part of a Surface Water Treatment Overview training session. The city's Water Treatment Plant has an onsite classroom that was used for the classroom portion of the session on 6/6/24.



Cherly Treptow, Mid West Fire Training Associates, explains the use of the tripod during a confined space entry during a training session in Newton on 5/21/26. The confined space training is one of a two-day specialized Competent Person and Confined Space session that are key for new operators to learn necessary safety tips that could save a life. Look for these training sessions across the state this summer.



Andy Kohler, Territory Sales Manager for Clow Valve Company, explains the process of breaking down and repairing a fire hydrant. The session, also featuring Olathe WinWater, was held at Bonner Springs on 5/28/25 in their newly constructed Water Treatment Plant.



KRWA Wastewater Tech Charlie Schwindamann discusses a point with Mike Boston of the City of Augusta during the wastewater exam prep session in Hays on 5/20/26. KRWA hosts exam training the day prior to KDHE operator exam for both drinking water and wastewater exam-takers.

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