

KRWA Is True to KRWA's Mission – Providing Education and Leadership



When I recently read the quote of Benjamin Franklin, “When the well is dry, we know the worth of water”, my thoughts went back to times in my life when I dealt with dry wells. As a young girl, I lived on a farm with a well which was used for the dairy barn and the house but when the well was low we would have to supplement the house by using the cistern. One farm job that I dreaded was the “hauling water” trips to the county well. To make the trips less boring, I always took a book along to read while waiting for the tank to fill. Then there was the annual task of cleaning out the cistern – scrubbing the walls down and cleaning the grit from the runoff of the roof and who knows what all else. It was a day to celebrate in late 1962 when rural water came to my childhood farm.

In 1967, I married and moved to my grandparents’ farm – and yes, only to be back on a well again. I thought cleaning a cistern was bad, but that was nothing compared to having to climb down in a 30-foot hand-dug well to work on the pipes and see a rat or a snake looking at you from the cool, laid-up rock walls. Of course, I didn’t do that. I just offered encouragement from above as my husband, who really hates snakes, climbed down in the well to make the necessary repairs. I was really good at pouring in the Clorox to disinfect the water. Sadly in 1975, we had to sell our big cattle herd of eight because the well could not produce enough for two adults, two dogs, a handful of cats and the cattle. In 1974, Douglas County Rural Water District No. 5 was formed and by 1976 we were able to hookup for a fee of \$325. That was absolutely the best money we ever spent in our lives! So I have lived the Benjamin Franklin quote and yes, I do know and appreciate the worth of water.

Respect for early volunteers

Not only do I appreciate the water, I appreciate all those men and women who ever had anything to do with bringing rural water to rural America – especially Douglas County, Kansas. From legislators, Farmers Home Administration at

the time, the Kansas Rural Water Association which became a charter member of the National Rural Water Association in 1976 – and certainly not least, the local people who willingly invested their time and effort to organize the water district, work to sign up applicants, contact landowners to obtain easements, and then work with engineers and contractors to get the project constructed. Many people today cannot fathom the amount of time that had to be donated to make that all happen.

In the early formation of our local water district, I volunteered to help out however I could. That sparked an interest that later led to a 32-year office manager career with Douglas RWD 5 and the chance to serve on the Kansas

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Rural Water Association board of directors. I am proud to serve on this board and especially proud of the accomplishments of the management and staff of the KRWA organization who on a daily basis carry out the KRWA mission. I follow Dennis Schwartz as KRWA board president; Dennis was a board member for 37 years. He decided to not seek re-election this year to the KRWA board but he continues to be the board member from Kansas on

the National Rural Water Association board.

As we all – that’s you and KRWA – “Set Sail for the Future”, we cannot help but think of what lies ahead with the drought situation and the decline in the lake levels and groundwater levels in Kansas.

This issue of *The Lifeline* features a review of the special presentations at the recent 2014 KRWA Annual Conference. I encourage you to read the presentation by Tracy Streeter, Director of the Kansas Water Office, as he explained the Governor’s challenge for Kansans to develop a 50-Year Vision on water. There still are opportunities for input into the plan and I encourage readers to also check out the information on the Kansas Water Office Web site at www.kwo.org.

Training and Tech Assistance Come First at KRWA

One of the aspects of the contract that KRWA operates and that is administered by the Kansas Water Office is to provide assistance to public water systems with developing or updating their water conservation plans. At the meeting of the KRWA board of directors in May, Elmer reported that 141 water systems have received assistance with their water conservation plans in 2013 and 2014. Presently, KRWA is working with 65 additional systems and their plans. That's important work and help. It's important to have a plan approved and have it implemented.

KRWA's training calendar is busy. KRWA responds to systems' interest in sessions, so again, I just want to say that if your system has an interest in a particular topic, please let the KRWA staff know. They'll do whatever they can to provide that training. KRWA staff are available to attend city council and RWD board meetings to discuss projects, compliance matters and funding options. If KRWA doesn't have the answer, staff will find someone who does.

The work by KRWA on water loss is notable. Unaccounted for water may or may not be significant, depending on the capacity of the water system. Certainly a 2 gpm leak is critical if the town has only two wells that pump 17 gallons per minute! And there are systems in Kansas with such limitations.

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KRWA's mission is to provide education and leadership necessary to enhance the effectiveness of Kansas' water and wastewater utilities. KRWA's board of directors and staff live that mission, every day. KRWA staff respond daily to many requests on all aspects of operation and maintenance issues, e.g., searching for leaks, answering questions about funding options, conducting

water and wastewater rate reviews (at no charge!) and doing everything possible to help public water and wastewater systems to provide the best possible service at the most reasonable cost possible. I am proud to be associated with KRWA. No one can make it rain – but I hope that if your community has any water supply issues that you do not hesitate to contact your Association – KRWA, and get help before the well or your supply runs dry.

Sharon Dwyer is the current President of the KRWA Board of Directors; she was first elected to the board in 1998. Sharon was office manager for Rural Water District No. 5, Douglas County from 1981 until 2013 when she retired from a full-time position. She is active in numerous community programs, especially church and 4-H activities.



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