



2017 AWARD WINNERS



Abdu Durar, Ph.D.
City of Manhattan

ENVIRONMENTAL COMPLIANCE MANAGER

Abdu Durar, Environmental Compliance Manager for the Water and Wastewater Division of the City of Manhattan Public Works Department, was recognized for outstanding service to the water and wastewater utilities industries with a “Special Recognition Award” at the 2017 conference.

After receiving his Bachelor of Science Degree in Soil and Water Sciences from the University of Tripoli in Libya, Durar moved to the United States to pursue higher education. He first attended Portland State University

in Oregon, and then attained further education at Colorado State University where he received his Master of Science Degree in Agronomy. Leaving Fort Collins, Colorado for Kansas, he moved to Manhattan to attend Kansas State University where he received his Ph.D. in Agronomy. After spending four years as a Research Associate and Soil Scientist with the United States Department of Agriculture, his career moved into a different area in 1995 when he began working for the city of Manhattan as an Environmental Officer and Environmental Coordinator with the then Utilities Department.

From 2000 to 2003 Durar served as the Assistant Director of the Wastewater Division of the Utilities Department. From 2003 to 2008 he served as the Assistant Director of the Wastewater Section of the Utilities Division of the Public Works Department where he was responsible for planning, organization, and administration of the Wastewater Treatment Plant and Biosolids Farm. During these years he was charged with bringing the biosolids management practices back into compliance with state and federal regulations as the city had major issues in this area resulting in an Order of Compliance from the EPA. His success in resolving some serious issues was obvious and the Wastewater Treatment Plant received Plant of the Year awards in 2001 and 2002 from the Kansas Water Environment Association. The Biosolids Management Program won the beneficial use awards in 2001, 2011, and 2015. Since 2008, Durar has been serving as the Environmental Compliance Manager for the Water and Wastewater Division of the Public Works Department. He continues to work in the wastewater area as well as the collection system, water distribution system, storage, testing and reporting.

Greg Goetz, City of Grinnell

MUNICIPAL WATER OPERATOR

Greg Goetz, Grinnell, Kan. was named “Municipal Water Operator of the Year” during award ceremonies at the 2017 conference.

Goetz has spent his entire life in Grinnell. There, he not only serves as the water system operator but also looks after the sewer system and streets, and like so many other small city operators, is basically responsible for all things that make a small city function. He has been employed by the city since 2002, after attending local schools and working in several areas including construction.

Reducing unaccounted for water has always been among Goetz’s top goals. Even though water loss at that time was around nine percent, Greg felt the city should be able to do better and by adding meters to unmetered services and attending to leaks in a timely manner. As a result, water loss has been reduced to a very low four percent. Not satisfied with the city’s utility maps, he was responsible for taking advantage of the Kansas Water Office GPS Mapping Subsidy Program and obtained a very nice set of digital maps.



***KRWA appreciates
these winners for
their hard work
and dedication to
rural water!***

Additional efforts to help the city include his service as the “spark plug” in completing a KAN STEP project in 2005 to add an extension to the fire station. Not yet satisfied, he is currently spearheading an effort to rehabilitate Adams Street, which is the main street serving the city’s business district. The surface of Adams Street is asphalt and has deteriorated.

Citizens in Grinnell say that Greg has a great work ethic; he routinely goes beyond what is required.

In his spare time, Greg enjoys hunting and trapping but most of all, he enjoys spending time with his two grandchildren.



Sue Harsh, Rural Water District No. 6, Butler County

BOOKKEEPER OF THE YEAR

Sue Harsh, bookkeeper for Rural Water District No. 6, Butler County, was recognized as Rural Water Bookkeeper of the Year.

Harsh grew up in the Topeka area and is an Emporia State University graduate. After working for Butler County for a number of years, Harsh accepted the bookkeeper’s position with the water district in 2012. During her five years with the district, she has

seen a new elevated storage tank erected and a new pump station is scheduled to be installed. Also, the district is planning to replace nearly 1,000 meters with cellular based automatic read meters and she is currently working with the meter company to monitor the performance of ten auto-read meters on a trial basis. She says she enjoys crunching numbers and really likes working with the public, especially the district customers.

Sue is described by district directors as a person who is very thorough and is good at sorting out and establishing some sort of order to a hectic schedule.

Outside of work Sue enjoys watching Butler Community College volleyball where her daughter coaches. She also enjoys hunting, boating, singing, and baseball. Last year she and her family watched major league games in Milwaukee, Chicago, St. Louis and Kansas City. Sue and her husband Terrie live on the Harsh family farm homesteaded in 1871 near Cassoday.

James Boyer, City of Spring Hill
UTILITY SUPERINTENDENT

James Boyer, Utility Superintendent for the city of Spring Hill, was recognized for outstanding job performance and service to the water and wastewater utility industries with the award, “Utility Superintendent of the Year”.

Jim moved from Michigan to north-central Kansas in 1975 as a 17-year old. He began his working career as a trackman and track foreman for a railroad company in the northern part of Kansas. After twelve years though he decided to make a change and started his long career in municipal utilities. Since then, he has worked for several cities, ranging in population



from a low of 450 to a high of 15,000. These communities are Scandia, Humboldt, Eudora, Gardner with Spring Hill since 2011. In these communities, he has been responsible for a wide variety of duties to include operating and supervising both water and wastewater facilities consisting of water supply wells, water treatment plants, water distribution systems, wastewater treatment plants, wastewater collection systems, city parks and streets, natural gas distribution, electrical distribution and code enforcement. He was also a zoning manager and flood plain manager. Jim has also seen many improvements including new wells, water storage and distribution systems, new lift station and force mains and planning for a secondary water source to maintain water supply to customers.

Jim holds a Class IV operator certification in both water and wastewater from the Kansas Department of Health and Environment and a Class II wastewater collection system certification. Jim and his wife, Rita, have two children and several grandchildren and will be celebrating their 40th wedding anniversary this June. Jim enjoys fishing, water sports, gardening, and spending time with family.



Karen Kiser, City of Delphos
CITY CLERK

Karen Kiser, City Clerk at Delphos, was honored with the award “City Clerk of the Year” at the 2017 KRWA Conference.

Karen is a native Kansan. She held various jobs in Delphos before becoming the city clerk in 2001. In most small towns, the city clerk is the first person customers see when there is a problem. In the case of Karen Kiser, this is a person everyone likes.

Major water system improvements have been made by the city. Several years ago the city made the decision to replace the entire distribution system if funding could be secured. Karen worked with the city’s grant writing consultant and funding agencies and as a result of their work, loans and grants were secured to not only replace the distribution system but to also install electronic read customer meters. A city website is also being planned along with making use of social media. Karen agrees that the change to electronic media “may be getting me out of my comfort zone but I am looking forward to it”.

Barry Bechard, Clay RWD 1
RURAL WATER MANAGER

Barry Bechard, Clifton, Kan., manager/operator of Clay County RWD No. 1, was named “Rural Water Manager of the Year” at the 2017 KRWA Conference.

Bechard grew up in north-central Kansas on a farm. Farming has always been in his blood and continues to this day. However, in 1996 he began working for a small rural water district as operator/manager and after 21 years, he continues in that capacity. The rural water district is one of the oldest in the state, going into service in 1965 and operating on a very tight budget. One well provided water for the district for

water that customers are very happy with.

Bechard was involved in all of the meetings in getting the new source of water. Also, he has installed cell phone automatic read customer meters throughout the system to help provide better service to customers.

Bechard holds a Small System water operator certification through the Kansas Dept. of Health & Environment. With farming and working for the rural water district, Barry says that “there are lots of days I don’t know which way to turn. When asked what he does in his spare time, he said, “most people want to get out of town. When I’m done, I want to go to town.”



Stan VanMeter, Cloud RWD 1
RURAL WATER OPERATOR

Stan VanMeter of rural Concordia, received the award “Rural Water District Operator of the Year”.

VanMeter is a lifelong Kansan who grew up on the family farm. He spent the first 25 years of his working career farming with his family as well as running a dairy operation. When farming ended, he worked for a car dealership as a mechanic. In 2004, he moved to the rural area and became the operator for Rural Water District No. 1, Cloud County. He recalls that first summer where his family lived in a 16-foot travel trailer with no water or electricity. Water had to be hauled and a portable generator was used for power.

As operator for the district, he was told that the job would only require minimal time. That hasn’t been the case as it’s required much more. VanMeter has gained attention because of his persistence in finding and repairing many leaks in the district’s 35-year old distribution system. This effort has resulted in a reduction in

40 plus years but with water usage increasing and new water rights not likely available in the immediate area, the district began a program of test drilling in other areas. The test drilling process was not successful however, as water that could meet quality or quantity requirements could not be located. As a result, the district eventually partnered with the Clay Center Public Utilities Commission and is now purchasing treated well



water loss from a high of nearly 50 percent to now being less than 20 percent. Also, 275 new remote-read customer meters were installed which allows for meters to be read in only six hours. He has also installed eight regional meters to track water use.

Stan and his wife Maxine are both certified water operators, licensed through the Kansas Department of Health and Environment. They work together to keep water flowing to district customers. The district has approximately 205 miles of pipeline and serves an extensive area generally northwest and south of Concordia.

Stan is the type of person who always puts the customers of the district first, no matter what, and KRWA is pleased to honor him with the Rural Water Operator of the Year award.

City of Norton MOST IMPROVED WATER SYSTEM

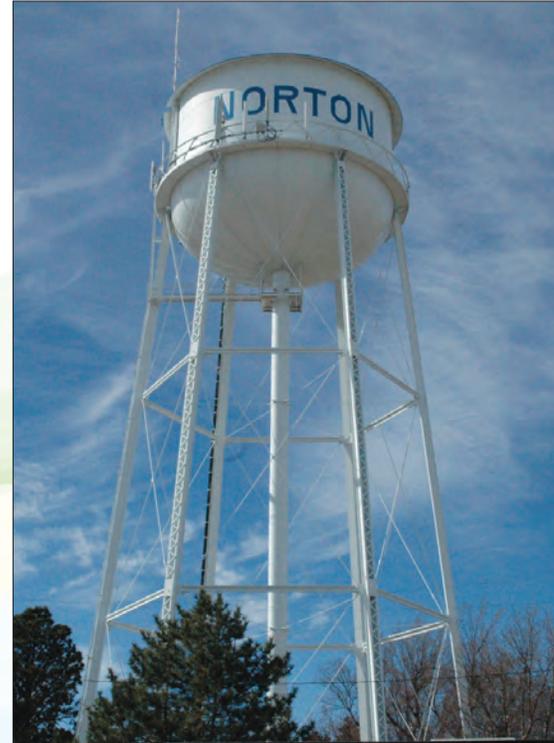
The city of Norton water system was named "Most Improved Water System" by KRWA at the 2107 conference.

Norton is proof that a community does not always need to embark on a multi-million dollar construction project. Norton also did not seek outside funding. Instead Norton made internal changes to improve a water quality that some said was distasteful.

Chemicals that were previously used were ferric chloride as the coagulant and sodium hydroxide to raise the pH. Treatment efficiency was rather poor and as a result the city reached out for assistance from Kansas Rural Water Association and Hawkins, Inc.

A change in chemicals was made to a more pH-friendly chemical, a proprietary coagulant for turbidity removal and sodium permanganate to oxidize manganese. As a result, the turbidity at the top of the filters went from a rather high 7.5 to a much more desirable .01 to .05. There was a change of operators in April and the new head operator increased monitoring considerably at the plant. The increased monitoring included across-the-board plant testing of turbidities from the raw water to below the filters, increased pH testing, conducting weekly jar testing to optimize chemical feed rates and sludge measurements in the clarifiers.

To further complicate operations, in May 2016, operators reporting for work discovered a massive chlorine



leak that filled the chlorine room with chlorine gas. A faulty heater had warmed the room to such a level to cause the fusible plug on one of the cylinders to melt. The immediate problem was solved by the local fire department but automatic operation of the plant was no longer possible because of the considerable damage to electrical components. Operators were then required to operate the entire plant manually for months.

Even though there is still some clean-up work that needs to be completed, the plant is producing a very good quality water and has been returned to automatic operation. Electrical boxes have been moved outside the building to minimize problems associated with chlorine exposure.

City Administrator Chad Buckley notes that the entire year has been a series of repair projects in the water plant. The public refused to drink the water one year ago. Today the positive comments from the public are nearly continuous.



Jamie Amlong, Water Plant Superintendent at Norton, accepted the award for Most Improved Water System.



**John Provorse, Butler RWD 4
SPECIAL RECOGNITION AWARD**

John Provorse, El Dorado, was recognized for outstanding service to the water utility industry. Provorse has been a director of Rural Water District No. 4, Butler County, for 42 years and President of the board of directors for 28 years. His long-time, dedicated service was honored by KRWA with a “Special Recognition Award”.

Provorse grew up in the Osage Hills of Oklahoma as an oilfield brat. As a high school senior decided to visit a local Vo-Tech for further education. Working summers in the oilfield at first

for contractors and later for a major oil company, he graduated from junior college and three years later received a bachelor degree In Mechanical Engineering from Oklahoma State. He then went on to Wichita State where he earned a Master Degree in Mechanical Engineering. He was very proud to accomplish that education with no debt — thanks to being an oil field brat.

Purchasing a farm in Butler County, he attended meetings of a newly forming rural water district. Provorse says, “As many rural water system directors are aware, curiosity can make you a director.”

Provorse has served as secretary, vice-president and president of the board. When the district had need for a new operator, Provorse worked and studied and passed the operator certification exam administered by the Kansas Department of Health & Environment. He was instrumental in obtaining and installing an automated meter reading system for the district. He is proud to have helped the water district negotiate a bank loan without government assistance or grants to install five miles of 8-inch pipeline to obtain a more reliable and less expensive water supply.

Among other things, during his career Provorse has established five companies.



**Wilson Ellis, Norton, Kansas
KRWA DENNIS SCHWARTZ
SCHOLARSHIP**

Wilson Ellis, Norton, Kan. was named the recipient of the \$1,000 Dennis Schwartz Scholarship at the 2017 conference. Wilson is the son of Scott and Darla Ellis.

Wilson has a 4.0 grade average at Norton High School and has taken demanding courses. His education goal is to study pre-engineering at Fort Hays State for three years and then transfer to Kansas State to complete a bachelor degree with a dual degree in Physics and Engineering. Wilson worked last summer through an intern position and that provided the opportunity to work with various city departments and to see first-hand how the city works for its citizens. Wilson comments that working with the city was instrumental in helping him to decide on pursuing an engineering degree.

The Association established the scholarship in the name of Dennis Schwartz who was a long-serving member of the board of directors and national leader in water utility organizations. Applications are limited to high school seniors who are dependents of employees of KRWA-member utilities. Wilson’s mother, Darla Ellis, is City Clerk at Norton.

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Ottawa Co. RWD No. 2
BEST TASTING WATER IN KANSAS

Rural Water District No. 2 in Ottawa County placed first in "Best Tasting Water in Kansas Contest".

Judges sipped, sniffed and swished water from glasses and voted Rural Water District No. 2, Ottawa County to statewide stardom. Rural Water District No. 2, Ottawa County, took top honors in the "Best Tasting Water in Kansas" competition. Other finalists were the city of El Dorado and city of Parsons.

Drinking water samples submitted by municipalities and water districts from utilities across the state were judged on their clarity, bouquet, and taste.

Ottawa RWD 2 produces water from nine groundwater wells. The system began providing water service in 1985; the district's service area is located

from southeast of Salina to northeast of Bennington. The district provides wholesale water to the city of Bennington, Camp Webster and a rest area on I-35 north of Salina. The district also just recently assumed the project that was previously known as Howison Heights. The district's distribution system includes 275 miles of pipeline. There are also five water storage tanks, three booster stations and two hydro-pneumatic pump stations. The district is governed by a nine-member board of directors. The system operations are maintained by Darrell and Norma Griffin and Joshua Werner, all of Salina.

A sample of water from Ottawa RWD 2 will be entered in the Great American Taste Test next February to be held in conjunction with the National Rural Water Association Rally in Washington, D.C.



Josh Werner, Operator at Ottawa RWD No. 2, accepted the "Best Tasting Water in Kansas" trophy.

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