



People Are the Key to Delivering on KRWA's Mission

It is with a sense of pride and a great personal passion for the Kansas Rural Water Association that I assumed the role of President of the Association's board of directors upon election at the board's reorganizational meeting held on April 1, 2010.

I want to begin this article by recognizing the great work of the other board members and the Association staff. KRWA board members have provided effective leadership as KRWA strives to help cities and water districts across the state. KRWA staff works in partnerships with local water districts, cities, public wholesale districts, privately owned systems, state agencies, consultants and other professionals on numerous projects every day. Their commitment and dedication make KRWA one of the most dynamic organizations in Kansas today. KRWA is a respected voice, and the Association is a critical provider of training and assistance for communities and water districts. These partnerships are only possible because of the confidence that agencies have placed in the Association. Membership support is also outstanding.

Helping you, helping me

KRWA has a lot to offer. I became manager of Public Wholesale District (PWWSD) No. 4 at Cherryvale in 2002. I was one of two inspectors who inspected the water line installation in 1984 and was assistant manager before becoming manager in 2002. I hold a Class IV certification in water. I am also serving as a member of the Kansas Water Office Public Water Supply Committee. I was honored as the KRWA Rural Water Manager of the year in 2003. Also, I am very proud that PWWSD 4 placed first in the Kansas contest and then went on to win first place in the Great American Taste Test sponsored by the National Rural Water Association. PWWSD 4 also was recognized with the Capacity Development Achievement Award from the Kansas Department of Health and Environment in 2007. PWWSD 4 uses the onsite services that KRWA provides including an annual testing of all the master meters to the 14 systems the district serves. That service has been critical in ensuring metering accuracy and in fairness of billing to the

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member systems. I also know first hand how hard KRWA works in looking for water leaks for our entities. If you have problems please call KRWA for help. KRWA's staff members are very knowledgeable in all areas of water and wastewater utility operation, maintenance and management. You will receive prompt service.

There is no question as to the benefits of the services that KRWA provides. The services are unique and invaluable to water and wastewater systems. KRWA provides many people with opportunities for training, leadership experience and networking. Not only does the Association provide assistance with daily and ongoing issues, as somewhat of an unexpected bonus to people, KRWA is also a source of many close friends and colleagues. That was so obvious at the recent annual conference, which was attended by nearly 2,100 people. The conference is a landmark effort that exemplifies the dedication and spirit of the Association and its work in so many ways. We need the ability to connect with each other within our profession. If we do not interact with others, it's likely we will miss opportunities because we just can't see them. Many people have told me that they learn something every time they attend a training session.

People make the difference

Another aspect I am also passionate about is the concern that local water systems – cities, rural water and public wholesale districts – work to encourage, enlist and support young people to take an interest in their utilities. There has been a heavy investment of time and resources by those who worked tirelessly to establish their rural water or public wholesale districts, the additions and improvements to municipal systems, etc. It is not uncommon to hear local board/council members comment that there is a lack of interest by those who have never served on the board or council. That may be true but present board and council members need to also encourage others to take an interest in their community. If a community is going to remain viable and grow, then it is essential to maintain, expand and improve the water and wastewater services. Doing so requires good governance. In some cases, present governing body members may need to enlist and coach new leaders. While utility workers are charged with keeping the utilities in service, it is incumbent on governing body members to also be informed, aware of the issues, and involved to the extent that is appropriate.

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To that extent, I would like to encourage local board and council members to participate in future KanCap training sessions that KRWA will be conducting. KanCap was developed by KRWA with input from focus groups from municipalities and rural water districts. So, the materials contained in KanCap were developed around the issues that your peers saw as important. The result is a one of a kind

training program to help boards/councils and staff improve management of their utilities. The Capacity Development Program administered by the Kansas Department of Health and Environment is providing funding support for expanded training. I encourage local systems to demonstrate leadership in co-sponsoring this training in their communities. I think it will be one of the best investments that can be made.

As KRWA board president, I also encourage people to submit any suggestions to the KRWA staff or to board members. KRWA is dedicated to helping people help other people, in whatever way possible.

Sam Atherton is manager of Public Wholesale Water Supply District No. 4 located at Big Hill Reservoir near Cherryvale, KS. Sam has been a member of the board of directors of the Kansas Rural Water Association since March 2006. He received a bachelor's degree from Fort Hays State University; he is also the President-elect of the National FFA Alumni.



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