

# Greenleaf, Kansas Pitches in to Build New Water System

People who drive down some of the brick and asphalt streets in Greenleaf, Kansas might wonder why all the patches. Well, there's a water line below them. The city has made many, many repairs on its old steel pipelines. Town residents are eagerly looking forward to having a more reliable water system, thanks in great measure to community leaders and volunteers who are installing an entirely new distribution system through the self-help program called KAN STEP.

Greenleaf, located in Washington County in north-central Kansas, is a small community of only 400 residents; the town's water system consists of only 190 services. It's an agricultural-based community with some residents working in nearby towns. The town operates two wells as a source; the cost of production is relatively low. However, the cost of operating a leaking water system with constant repairs was not only extremely expensive, making the repairs also required the city's superintendent and co-worker to devote excessive time to keeping the utility in service.

## Volunteerism saves big \$

How to pay for an entire new public water system in Greenleaf was debated as various funding options were considered by the city. City Superintendent Jerry Baker vowed to avoid having the town go into debt to construct a new water system. Retail costs of replacing the entire system were estimated to be \$674,543 by project engineer Stuart Porter of the firm of Schwab-Eaton, PA, Manhattan, KS. The Kansas Public Water Supply Loan Fund (SRF) would have cost the town's residents nearly \$48,000 annually, or \$21 per month per customer for twenty years. A USDA Rural Development loan, with a forty-year amortization, would have been \$32,800 annually, or \$16.75 per user per month. Instead of pursuing a regular retail project, Baker won the support of the town's mayor and city council in making an application to the Kansas Department of Commerce for funding through the self-help program, KAN STEP.

When city officials met with representatives of the Kansas Department of Commerce, they took along a section of pipeline that had been removed due to leaks. That section was not untypical of many pipes in town containing multiple repair clamps. "Presenting that section of pipeline really opened some eyes," Baker says.



Installing new water lines requires taking up the brick streets, jackhammering through the concrete base, trenching and installing new PVC waterline, reconnecting services and putting the street back into condition.

Funding in the amount of \$300,000 was eventually awarded to the city of Greenleaf. The KAN STEP grant allowed the city to purchase all materials, rent necessary equipment, pay for the design consultant and grant writer to administer the project and also pay for inspection services and assistance that is provided by staff of the Kansas Rural Water Association.

Work began on the project in July 2009. The estimated completion date was October 1, 2010, however due to the long winter, the project still has some services to install. The project includes 21,000 feet of two- to six-inch pipeline, 190 new water service lines and meter settings, and new valves. Some existing fire hydrants are being reset to reduce costs. Superintendent Baker is the project's main sparkplug. His right-hand man is Cory Rosebaugh. Other volunteers, most of whom have day jobs, come home to supper and then provide help on the water system project. Volunteers also show up on weekends and even holidays to help with some aspect of the project to reach completion.

KAN STEP is an initiative patterned after a self-help program developed by the Rensselaerville Institute in New York, a non-profit education center that began encouraging communities to help themselves about forty years ago. Its community partnership program is available in a number of states.

The Kansas program, KAN STEP, is sponsored by the Kansas Department of Commerce. The program is designed to help communities with an acknowledged community improvement problem. The program benefits low- and moderate-income persons. A minimum of forty percent savings of typical "retail cost" must be shown through the self-help process. Types of facilities in Kansas that qualify include improvements to water or sewer systems and buildings.

Since 2000, and including Greenleaf's water system, the KAN STEP program has funded ten water system projects, twenty-two community centers, thirty-five fire stations, and four combination buildings (library-community centers). The total investment by the Kansas Department of Commerce is \$18,080,056. Volunteers donated \$14,332,514 in labor and services on those seventy-one projects.

Sweat equity projects may not be practical for many communities, but in rural Kansas where there is a need, there is also generally a high work ethic. The KAN STEP



**Project sparkplug and city superintendent Jerry Baker works to install another meter setting and service.**



**Corroded steel pipe in Greenleaf, KS has had many repair clamps applied. This section of deteriorated pipe is an example of one such section. Superintendent Jerry Baker says it was a good visual aid when the city made application to KAN STEP for funding a new water system.**



**Jake Heltgen, a member of the city council and also local farmer who has volunteered time on the Greenleaf water system project, works with Cody Rosebaugh to gather up brick for another trench down Main Street.**

program helps communities take a closer look at their challenges and helps them achieve their projects through a program that is an inspiring solution.

For more information and reports on individual KAN STEP projects, check the Kansas Rural Water Association Website at [www.krwa.net](http://www.krwa.net). For direct information about the KAN STEP program, contact the Kansas Department of Commerce through their Web site at [www.kansascommerce.com](http://www.kansascommerce.com).

*Elmer Ronnebaum is KRWA General Manager; he has been employed by KRWA since 1983. He served seven years on the KRWA board of directors prior to that. He also helped develop a large RWD and served for fourteen years on a water district board of directors.*

