

# Happy 50th Anniversary, KRWA

**T**his year, 2016, celebrates the 50th Anniversary of the Kansas Rural Water Association. In 1966, this fledgling organization had no office and no staff; it was a group of nine founders – dedicated rural water district supporters, who had a very big vision of the future that still serves as a blueprint for KRWA today. It is with a sense of profound pride and also great humility that I write this message in recognition of the Association’s Golden Anniversary.

The founders of the KRWA recognized that there was a need for an organization that could be of help as others pursued development of community water systems in Kansas. That simple concept of service to others has driven KRWA’s board members and subsequent staff members since 1966.

**Today’s KRWA board of directors and staff rededicate their efforts to all those who have given of their time and energy to provide water to their communities and rural areas.**



**This photo shows some of the Association board members and others at a meeting in 1968. In the foreground are: President Carl Conger, Iola; Beryl Ross, Ottawa; to the back left to right are Jackson George, State Director of the Farmers Home Administration; Dan Lickteig, Anderson RWD 3, Richmond; T. J. Dickerson, Bourbon RWD 2, Fort Scott; Owen O’Brien, Neosho RWD 8, St. Paul; and Robert Hill, Lafontaine.**

Today’s KRWA board of directors and staff rededicate their efforts to all those who have given of their time and energy to provide water to their communities and rural areas. And we pay tribute to the men and women who developed a strong and viable Association that remains committed to the improvement of water and wastewater systems in Kansas.

There have been many changes in the last 50 years. Many “rural water district” efforts originated in Kansas. As you read KRWA’s history, you will note that the first loan made to a rural water system with federal financing was in Kansas. That resulted because Mrs. Mary Mercer of Chicopee, Kansas wrote to President Harry Truman asking for help to develop a water system so she could sell Grade A milk from her herd of 27 cows. That same water system, Crawford Chicopee, was also the first borrower in the U. S. to repay its debt in full some 30 years later.

In 1976, the KRWA joined six other state rural water associations in chartering the National Rural Water Association (NRWA). Today the NRWA is the largest utility-member organization in the U.S. Helping form the NRWA is just one of many initiatives that KRWA has successfully supported. There is a myriad of legislation that has been passed that was originally requested and promoted by KRWA.

The business of providing public water has become much more complex since the passage of the Safe Drinking Water Act in 1974. While the implementation of the various rules and regulations can still be confounding, consider how impossible compliance would be were there not an experienced and effective organization to help local board and council members, operators, managers and administrators through the processes. KRWA’s training and technical assistance programs are

**KRWA staff are preparing a 50th Anniversary booklet that will be available at the conference. Don’t forget also to attend the “50th Anniversary Party”, Tuesday, March 29 at Century II Convention Center at the Annual Conference & Exhibition.**

**KRWA responds to thousands of calls annually. The rapport that KRWA has with people across the state and U.S. is beyond impressive.**

unique in Kansas – and they will remain so. Because of strong leadership and with good management, the KRWA will continue to be respected for being the organization that does what needs to be done, when it needs to be done – day or night – from solving emergency situations such as water leaks or other equipment failures to supporting funding requests so that communities can make improvements.

KRWA's ability to provide services has certainly been enhanced because of the long-term relationships that the Association has had with various state and federal agencies. Often with little recognition, KRWA's staff go wherever, whenever help is needed so that communities have the best water and wastewater service possible. KRWA lives its mission which is to provide education and leadership necessary to enhance the effectiveness

*of Kansas' water and wastewater utilities.*

The business of providing utility services is complex. The digital era has certainly helped KRWA and local systems to become more efficient. But technological advances are not what makes KRWA effective. Rather, it's people that make the difference. KRWA responds to thousands of calls annually. The rapport that KRWA has with people across the state and U.S. is beyond impressive.

The privilege of having a quality water system with dependable quantity year round rests on the persistent efforts of many dedicated people. Our history as individuals in our communities and with KRWA is only what we make it during the few short years that each of us can contribute to those efforts. Let us all continue to do what we can to help others.

Happy 50th Anniversary, KRWA!

*Sam Atherton 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 past-president of the National FFA Alumni. He retired in late 2011 as manager of Public Wholesale Water Supply District No. 4.*



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