

# From a Farm Kid to Director of Utilities

**H**ello – my name is Kris Kline. I have been given the opportunity to become part of the team at KRWA as a Technical Assistant. I am excited and look forward to the challenges ahead.

I grew up on a farm near the small town of Burlingame, where I learned the value of hard work, make do with what you have, and always try to improve yourself. I attended Kaw Area Technical School where I completed the two-year Computer Technology and Basic Electronics course. I later finished with an Associate Degree of Applied Science from Allen Community College in Burlingame. I have been a lifelong resident of Burlingame, where I married my wife Tricia and raised two children – Kristen and Kade. I have always tried to serve my community. I was elected to serve on the Burlingame board of education for several terms and was part of the PTO. I also was a hunter education instructor for four years.

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## From Computer Tech to RWD Operator

I was first a computer repair technician at a small company in Topeka for twelve years. One day I went into the local rural water office to pay my water bill and the clerk told me they were looking for a water operator. I applied for the job and that is where my next career began. When I started with Osage County RWD No. 8 in 2007, I had no knowledge of how to operate a water district. I was like most water customers. As long as water came out of the tap life was good. Little did I know how much work and knowledge it takes to ensure that water actually makes it to the customer's tap safely. Thanks to the guidance of KRWA staff at the time, I began my journey as an operator in training. I took as many classes as time would allow to gain knowledge of the different facets of operating a water district. The more I learned at classes and networked with the other system operators, the more I was able to take that knowledge and improve operations at the rural water district. After 12 years at RWD No. 8, I had many successes improving all aspects of district.

My first month as an operator was definitely challenging, with one of the district's largest leaks that drained most of the system. KRWA staff came to assist the district's contractor and me to isolate and find the leak that was next to a creek in the back of a corn field. Thanks to everyone's help, the entire system was soon back in service.

One of the major issues when I first started Osage RWD No. 8 was high unaccounted for water. Some of the major causes of the water loss were the pump stations were over pressurizing the system, the metering system, and more than 300 miles of pipeline with many small and hard to find leaks. After completing many improvements over several years, such as replacing a majority of the water meters and getting away from the customer read system, the district started to see financial benefits once

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the water loss was under control. While I was at the district, I attained a KDHE small operator certificate and later passed the Class II exam.

In 2019, I left the RWD to become a water and wastewater operator at the City of Osage City. Later I was promoted to Director of Utilities. I have learned to operate the surface water treatment plant and wastewater system and manage all the utility departments. The city water distribution system is way different than the rural system that I was accustomed to and it came with its own set of challenges. I obtained my Class IV Water and Class I Wastewater certificate. I have enjoyed working in the water industry over the last 14 years and I hope to stay in this field for the rest of my career.

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their technical needs, such as water loss, metering, and to assist them and their utilities to find ways to become more efficient.

Technology has improved tremendously with pump controls, SCADA, pressure monitoring, and meter reading systems over the years. I have always tried find ways to make technology work to help improve operations in the systems I worked in. One of my favorite mottoes is "Work smarter not harder!"

Technology allows us to do that. I have a lot of knowledge to pass along to the next operator in training and to help any operator be successful given the opportunity. I have a

passion for working hard and solving problems that has produced a positive outcome and to help the communities I have served. I look forward to helping operators and serving other communities. I know there is still a lot to learn not only from other operators in Kansas, but also from the other staff at KRWA. After all, when safe water comes out of the tap life is good for everyone, even though it takes a long journey to get there.

*Kris Kline began work with Kansas Rural Water on September 30, 2021. He previously was Director of Utilities at Osage City, Kan. and also had 12 years of experience as Operation's Manager at Osage RWD 8.*



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