



KRWA Staff Member Greg Metz explains some of the components in the Apprenticeship Training Trailer.

WATER AND WASTEWATER OPERATORS ARE ESSENTIAL TO EVERY COMMUNITY, CREATING A STABLE JOB OPPORTUNITY FOR LONG-TERM CAREERS.



Learn and Earn!
Kansas Rural Water Association
**APPRENTICESHIP
PROGRAM**

The KRWA Registered Apprenticeship Program is recognized by the Kansas Department of Labor and with other state associations through National Rural Water Association, under the U.S. Department of Labor. The Apprenticeship Program is designed to help train the next generation of skilled workers and provide standardized training across the nation in Drinking Water and Wastewater professionals' occupations. Apprentices will earn-while-they-learn in a structured two-year training program that combines on-the-job training with related technical instruction. Apprentices work with knowledgeable and passionate people who ensure that Americans can continue relying on safe drinking water and vital wastewater services that protect public health and the environment.

Water and wastewater workers provide an invaluable service – day in and day out. Their work is essential to protecting public health and the environment. See the next page for more information about the KRWA Apprenticeship Program. To apply, contact KRWA Apprenticeship Coordinator Monica Wurtz.

Program Overview

Over the next decade, the water sector is expected to lose between 30 and 50 percent of the workforce to retirement. To combat disproportionate retirement, KRWA has partnered with the National Rural Water Association to develop an Apprenticeship Program that will offer two new career paths – Water System Operation Specialist and Wastewater System Operation Specialist.

Minimum Requirements for Apprentices:

1. At least 18 years of age
2. High school diploma, GED or equivalent
3. Physically capable of performing essential functions
4. Take and pass drug screen
5. Pass a background check
6. Valid state issued driver's license



The mission of the Kansas Rural Water Association is:

Provide education and leadership necessary to enhance the effectiveness of Kansas' water and wastewater utilities.

Benefit for Apprentices

Water and Wastewater System Operators help provide safe drinking water to millions of Kansans and protect our natural waterways. Operators are a vital part of our communities. Without properly trained personnel in these roles communities can suffer. During their training, apprentices will work alongside professional operators, learn skills that can be taken anywhere, and earn a wage while they learn.

Participating Apprentices will be required to:

- Meet the Minimum Requirements for apprentices
- Register as an Apprentice with KRWA
- Be employed or be willing to become employed by a Participating Member System
- Complete the 2-year program:
 - 4,000 on-the-job training hours
 - 288 related instruction hours (classroom hours)

Benefit for Systems

Many Water and Wastewater Operators in Kansas have worked at the same utility for most of their career. With retirement, they will depart with decades of valuable institutional knowledge. These training programs will offer member systems a way to pass down and retain critical skills and knowledge of their water and wastewater systems to the next generation of industry workers.

Participating Systems will be expected to:

- Identify and support an experienced mentor to provide guidance and on-site training to apprentices
- Pay the apprentice's wages
- Take advantage of Program Coordinator to resolve concerns and ensure best outcome for apprentice
- Strongly consider retaining apprentices following program completion

If you are interested in registering as an Apprentice or becoming a Participating Member System contact KRWA Apprenticeship Program Coordinator:

Monica Wurtz, KRWA Technical Assistant
email: monica@krwa.net
cell: 785-262-7301

Spotlight on Apprenticeship

Name of Apprentice: Wynter Ziegler

System: City of Ottawa, Water Treatment Plant

Apprenticeship Track: Water Operations Specialist

Apprenticeship Start Date: February 24, 2022



Wynter Ziegler, City of Ottawa, titrates a sample for alkalinity.

KRWA: How long have you worked for the City of Ottawa? Any previous experience?

Ziegler: I have been working with the city of Ottawa for a little more than six months now. I had previously worked at a rural water district for a little over four years.

KRWA: What are your main responsibilities at the treatment plant?

Ziegler: My main responsibilities as an operator are to test the water to ensure we are producing the highest quality of water we

can to the community and to make chemical dosage changes to achieve that goal. I also assist with maintenance that needs to be done at the plant.

KRWA: What is your favorite part about being a water plant operator?

Ziegler: My favorite part of being an operator at the plant is probably troubleshooting and problem solving. If there is a problem in the process, I like to be able to figure out why it is happening and what is the best solution to solve the issue. I also like the community service aspect of being able to produce clean drinkable water to a community.

KRWA: What made you interested in KRWA's Apprenticeship Program?

Ziegler: I am always seeking opportunities to learn and grow as a water operator and when I came across this program I applied immediately. At that time, I was not employed by a water district or city but this program helped me get in touch with the right people so I could be.

KRWA: What do you hope to achieve or what have you achieved by participating in the program?

Ziegler: I hoped to gain more knowledge about water treatment and to become a better operator. You can always learn more about this industry! I also wanted to be able to pass my class two then my class four operator tests. This program definitely helped me pass my class two and I'm confident that it will help with passing my class four water operator test as well.

KRWA: Would you recommend the program to anyone that might be considering it (either already employed by a utility or not)? Why?

Ziegler: Absolutely! If you want to learn more about this industry and become a better operator, this program not only goes through the California state books but it also provides other materials like Suncoast Learning Courses which you go through at your own pace. I have found these courses very helpful in passing my class two water operator test. I would also recommend this program to anyone that is just starting out as well. I wish I went through a program like this when I first started in this industry.

KRWA Apprenticeship Visits JAG Students at Russell High School

On March 5, 2022, KRWA staff Monica Wurtz and Brian Bowles had the opportunity to visit Russell High School to speak with a group of students that participate in a program called JAG – Jobs for America's Graduates. JAG is a school-to-career program that has been implemented in over 1,000 schools across the United States and United Kingdom. JAG's mission is to keep young people in school through graduation and provide work-based learning experiences that will lead to career advancement opportunities or to enroll in a post-secondary institution that leads to a rewarding career.

On the day of their visit, Wurtz and Bowles started by asking the students if they knew where their drinking water comes from...and what happens to dirty water after it goes down the drain? Wurtz briefly explained how drinking water treatment and distribution works and Bowles covered the wastewater collection and treatment processes. After that, Wurtz talked to the students about careers in water and KRWA's Apprenticeship Program. Lastly, a few students had the opportunity to volunteer to help Bowles with running a chlorine residual test using a colorimeter. The students and their sponsor, Raina Tomlinson, were engaged, asked questions, and seemed to really enjoy the hands-on opportunity.

KRWA Apprenticeship will be reaching out to more JAG programs and schools across the state in the coming school year to hopefully participate in more visits like this.



Monica Wurtz began work with KRWA in October 2013. She previously worked at the Kansas Department of Health and Environment and also worked at US EPA Region 7 for four years. Monica is considered a national expert on various drinking water regulations.



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