



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.**



*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](mailto:monica@krwa.net)  
cell: 785-262-7301

# Spotlight on Apprenticeship

**Name of Apprentice:** Garrett Sullivan  
**System:** Leavenworth Consolidated RWD #1  
**Apprenticeship Track:** Water Systems Operation Specialist  
**Apprenticeship Start Date:** February 23, 2022



**KRWA:** How long have you worked for Leavenworth Cons. RWD #1? Any previous experience?

**Sullivan:** I have been with Leavenworth Consolidated Rural Water District #1 for almost a full year now. I had absolutely no experience at all before I started working here.

**KRWA:** What are your main responsibilities at the RWD?

**Sullivan:** My main responsibilities here are daily maintenance and any repairs that are needed. I also help with the installs of new water mains whenever help is needed.

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

**Sullivan:** My favorite part of being a water system operator is being out in the field and being hands on most every day.

**KRWA:** What is the most challenging part about being a water system operator?

**Sullivan:** For me, the most challenging part about being a water system operator is working with customers to help them as best as I can to figure out leaks. Another part that has been challenging for me is the math but the apprenticeship program has helped a lot with getting that figured out.

## National Apprenticeship Week

On October 28, 2022, Governor Laura Kelly signed a proclamation spotlighting the continued growth of the Kansas Registered Apprenticeship Program and declared the week of November 13-19, 2022 as Apprenticeship Week throughout the state. The statewide proclamation coincided with the 8th Annual National Apprenticeship Week (NAW). In recognition of NAW, the Kansas Office of Apprenticeship hosted the 1st Annual Apprenticeship Summit on November 17, 2022 in Topeka. This event featured panel discussions, an awards presentation, a keynote speaker, and multiple networking opportunities. KRWA Apprenticeship Coordinator, Monica Wurtz, was invited to participate in a panel discussion regarding apprenticeship in rural communities. Monica also invited Dan Riney, Assistant Utilities Director at the city of Ottawa, to speak on his experience as an apprentice employer.



KRWA Apprenticeship Coordinator, Monica Wurtz and Dan Riney, City of Ottawa, participated in a panel discussion regarding apprenticeship in rural communities at the 1st Annual Apprenticeship Summit in Topeka.

## Howard Receives Completion of Apprenticeship Certificate

On October 11, 2022, KRWA Apprenticeship Coordinator, Monica Wurtz, attended the Garnett City Commissioners meeting to present James Howard with a Completion of Apprenticeship certificate from the State of Kansas for successfully completing the KRWA Apprenticeship Program as a water operator. James is the first apprentice in Kansas to complete the water track. He has also taken and passed the Class IV water operator certification exam. Congratulations, James!



Monica Wurtz presents James Howard, City of Garnett, with a Completion of Apprenticeship certificate. Back: Mayor/Commissioner, Greg Gwin, City Manager, Travis Wilson, Commissioner, Jason Sheahan, and Commissioner, Jody Cole.

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

**Sullivan:** What made me interested in the apprenticeship program was that it is a good opportunity for me to learn more things about water system operations since I have never had any experience in this kind of work.

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

**Sullivan:** What I hope to achieve from the program is to learn more about this industry and all the work involved. The program has helped me understand a lot of the math that is needed.

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

**Sullivan:** I would recommend the apprenticeship program to anyone that is considering it. I have learned a lot from the first year of the program and still have quite a bit to do.

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.



Don't miss the KRWA Apprenticeship on display at the KRWA 54th Annual Conference and Exhibition, Century II, Wichita, KS – March 28, 29 & 30, 2023



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