

# A Tale of Growth, Community Dedication, and Honoring a Local Hero at Rural Water District No. 2, Linn County

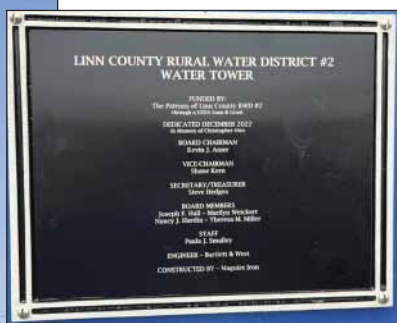
A small rural water district in east-central Kansas has embarked on a journey that blends growth, innovation, and heartfelt remembrance to a community member. Linn County Rural Water District No. 2 recently unveiled a towering testament (no pun intended) to progress. It is a new 75,000-gallon water storage tower, replacing an aging standpipe.

The location of the new elevated storage tank is KS Hwy 52 & 600 Rd., Mound City, Kan. The decision to replace the aging standpipe was prompted by practicality. The cost of upkeep had grown burdensome, and the standpipe was no longer adequate to meet the needs of the growing customer base within the district. The new water storage tank, standing tall at 102 feet, dwarfs its predecessor by 22 feet and provides "10-fold" more water storage capacity, supplying approximately 10 pounds more pressure to customers.

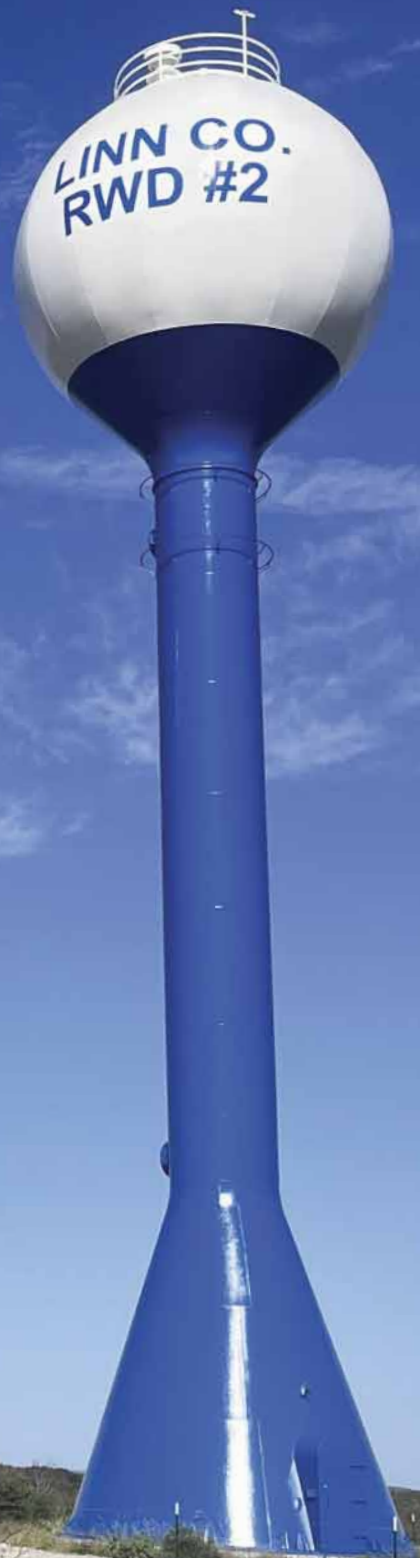
Linn County Rural Water District No. 2 dates back to 1968, when a handful of dedicated landowners initiated efforts to develop a new rural water system. By 1979, the district was officially formed. Over the years, it has grown from approximately 75 patrons to approximately 960 services today, with more than 800 miles of waterlines to provide service to the patron. The original water supply for the district was to purchase water from the city of LaCygne. With the development of Public Wholesale District No. 13, the district joined in that project as a purchaser of water. The district sells approximately 3.26 million gallons of water per month.

The total expenditure for the storage tank and a concurrent project to add new mains within the local Sugar Valley Lakes community was approximately \$2.365 million, with the water

storage tank accounting for \$621,000 of that expenditure. These projects were sent out for bids, and despite the challenges posed by COVID-19, contractors were selected. The funding mix for these initiatives included upfront contributions from early signers, a 40-year loan from USDA Rural Development at a remarkable 1.125% interest rate, and \$360,000 in grant funding through USDA Rural Development to offset COVID-related cost increases.



This plaque hangs on the door to the new water storage tank at Rural Water District No. 2, Linn County.





Ribbon cutting at a dedication on August 23, 2023 was done by London and Addison Otto, daughters of Chris and Melody Otto. Shown in this photos at the event are Joe Hall, Director; Shane Kern, Co-chairman; Addison and London Otto; Steve Hedges, Secretary/Treasurer; Paula Smalley, Office Manager; and Kevin Amer, Director.



Paula Smalley, Office Manager at Rural Water District No. 2, Linn County, is shown after uncovering the Christopher Otto dedication plaque to be placed at the gate of a new security fence once installed. The photo will hang at the district's office in Mound City.



Bartlett & West, Inc., Topeka, was the design consultant for both the water tower and the mains expansion project. The storage tank was constructed by Maguire Iron.

Linn County Rural Water District No. 2 operates from its Main Street office in Mound City. The district has one full-time employee serving as the Office Manager, overseeing all fieldwork in coordination with the district's contractor, PAGE Enterprises. The district is governed by a seven-member board of directors. This board has diversity with three women and four men.

The ribbon-cutting ceremony on August 4, 2023, was a momentous occasion dedicated to the memory of Christopher Otto (1980-2019), a beloved member of the community. Christopher was fatally injured on July 11, 2019 near Rawlins, Wyoming as the result of an auto accident. Survivors are his wife Melody and two sons and two daughters. The new tower stands on land owned by the Otto family. Christopher's dedication to the area was recognized during the ceremony. The two-tone royal blue and white pedestal of the tower, a subject of a comical board discussion, was chosen in honor of Chris.



London and Addison Otto, daughters of Chris and Melody Otto, cut a symbolic ribbon on the day of the dedication of the new water storage tank. District Board Secretary/Treasurer Steve Hedges is to the right.

Approximately 75 people attended the ribbon-cutting, including board members, district staff, contractors, and engineers. The honor of cutting the ribbon was given to Christopher Otto's daughters, Addison and London, making the event a touching family affair. A luncheon hosted by the Otto family followed the dedication. It was fried chicken and all the fixin's.

Linn County Rural Water District No. 2's journey from an aging standpipe to a "towering" water storage tower is a testament to the power of community,

innovation, and remembrance. It serves as a symbol of progress, dedication, and the unwavering spirit of rural America. This story encapsulates the essence of what can be achieved when a community comes together to meet the challenges of the present and to prepare for a vibrant future.

*Stewart Kasper joined KRWA staff in August 2020 as Technical Assistant/ Trainer. He holds a Class IV operator certification for water and Class IV operator certification for wastewater in Kansas. Prior to joining KRWA, he was water plant operator at Rural Water District No. 2, Miami County.*

