

# Groundwater Foundation Launches “Water Well Wish”



Everyone in America should have a safe, reliable and affordable water supply whether it is supplied by a public water supply system or a domestic water well. Read this article and consider helping those who can't connect to a public water system gain a newly drilled water well.

Since the 1960's, there have been grassroot efforts to extend the benefits of being served by a public water supply system to all citizens of the United States, where no water supply exists. These efforts continue today, with great progress being made through the cooperation of the federal and state agencies and the National Rural Water Association and the state associations. However, there are people living in locations where the costs to provide public water system service still cannot be justified. To help address the need for clean drinking water for these people, the National Ground Water Association (NGWA) has created Water Well Wish.

Water Well Wish is being administered through the National Ground Water Association's Groundwater Foundation. The National Ground Water Association is headquartered in Ohio, and was founded in 1948 as the National Water Well Association. The organization changed its name in 1991, better reflecting their service to all the members in the groundwater industry. The NGWA's slogan is, "The industry leader for groundwater and its professionals." These professionals are primarily water well drilling contractors, engineers, geologists, hydrologists, equipment suppliers and regulators.

The Groundwater Foundation started in Nebraska in 1985. It was envisioned to be a foundation much like their fellow educational Arbor Day Foundation (also located in Nebraska), which has "a million members, donors and partners" today. While everyone has a reason or two for appreciating trees, which are important, groundwater is likely more important but gets far less love. You might have a favorite tree, like the Sugar Maple or the Bur Oak, but does anyone have a favorite

groundwater? I'd like to meet that person. The Groundwater Foundation focused most of its efforts on educating young people about the importance of groundwater, for drinking, for irrigation, for stream flow, etc. It developed tools for classroom use, trained teachers, offered camps for older students, and like the Arbor Day's Tree City USA designation, offered cities, counties, watersheds, etc., the opportunity to be declared a Groundwater Guardian. Most of those activities are still available. Membership in the Groundwater Foundation was likely low however, compared to the Arbor Day Foundation's numbers.

In 2018, the Groundwater Foundation merged with the National Ground Water Foundation, to enhance the effectiveness of both organizations. (Isn't it ironic that they acknowledge both spellings of groundwater?) The foundation gets administrative support from NGWA and greater exposure to a large, and related audience. The association gets another arm of outreach and education to a younger audience. And together, they are able to provide the just announced (August 2023) Water Well Wish.

Where groundwater is available and reliable, and most neighboring people are able to access that groundwater, extending a water line from a nearby water system is likely not economically feasible, just to add a single customer. So people living beyond the end of the line, where personal finances or other hardships do not allow self-funding of a safe and reliable water supply, Water Well Wish might be a possible solution.

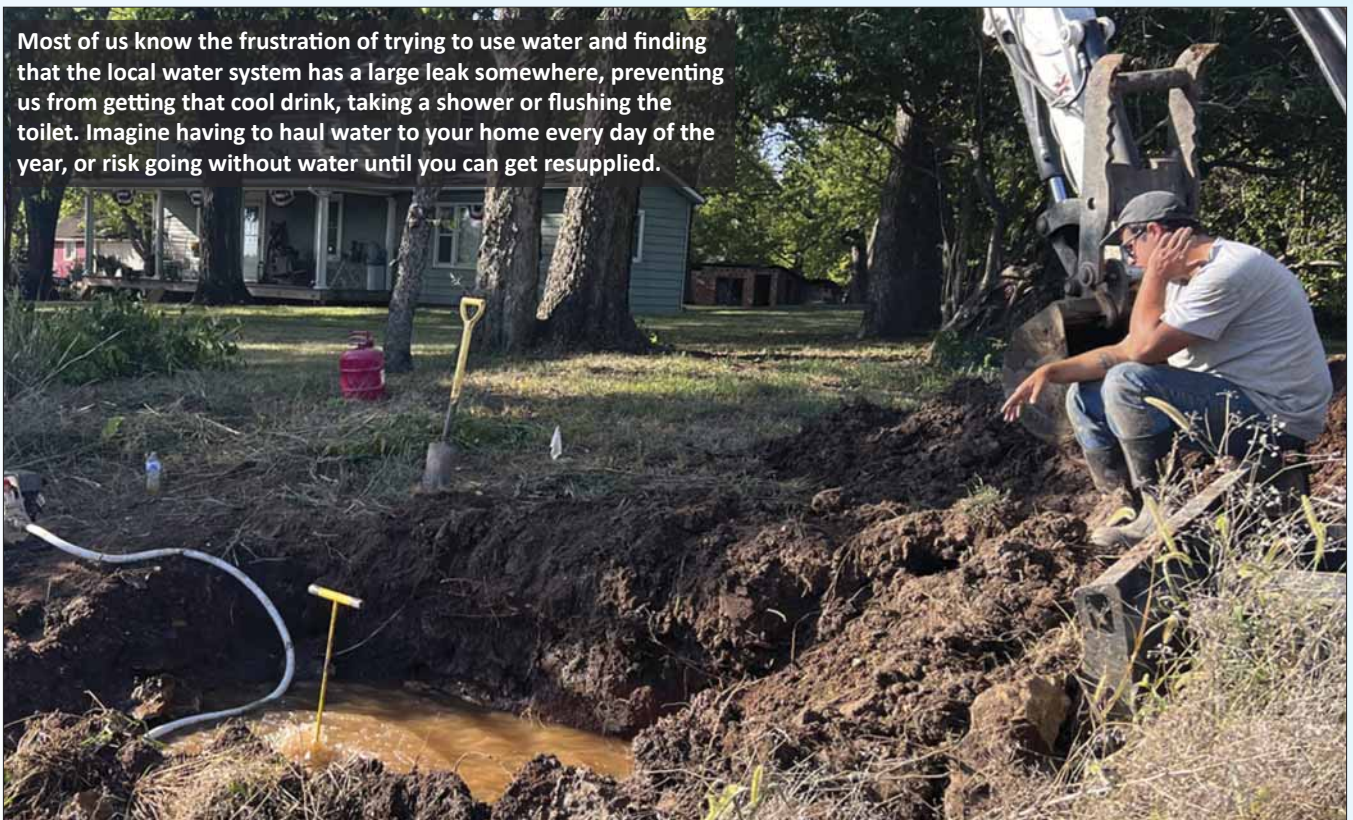
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For Kansas residents, the first step to participate in Water Well Wish is to apply for funding through the Kansas office of the USDA Rural Development Office for Single Family Housing Repair Loans and Grants, also known as the Section 504 Home Repair Program. If the applicant is denied participation in the federal program, the applicant can send a copy of the denial letter to the Water Well Wish program for consideration of funding. Details about the Section 504 Program can be accessed at:

<https://www.rd.usda.gov/programs-services/single-family-housing-programs/single-family-housing-repair-loans-grants/ks>

Families that are approved for Water Well Wish are at or below the federally-recognized poverty level for the state of residence of the family. Most have had a water supply in the past, but their well casing may have collapsed or is allowing

**Most of us know the frustration of trying to use water and finding that the local water system has a large leak somewhere, preventing us from getting that cool drink, taking a shower or flushing the toilet. Imagine having to haul water to your home every day of the year, or risk going without water until you can get resupplied.**



shallow groundwater to mix with, and contaminate the cleaner, deeper aquifer water, the groundwater level may have dropped and the well has gone dry. It could be that a family was still relying on a hand-dug well more than 100 years old that was subject to surface water runoff and is no longer safe to use. There are likely other situations that have made a domestic water supply become unusable that a new well could rectify.

Once a family is approved for funding, a well drilling contractor is found that will participate in the program. The driller will estimate the total cost of the project and submit that to Water Well Wish. With consideration of the urgency of the water supply need, the risk to the health of the family members and estimates of the amount of cash that will be donated to the program, Water Well Wish will approve the project for funding.

Under Water Well Wish and its predecessor, 110 new water wells have been drilled for families needing a new

water well. Currently there are 23 wells waiting for funding to be received at Water Well Wish. The costs for these 23 wells range from \$3,000 to \$21,250. The total cost for these 23 wells is just under \$265,000. There was a well drilled in Marshall County which was funded by Water Well Wish which had a cost of \$7,955.

If you are interested in helping people stay in their homes, giving them a safe, reliable water supply where one does not exist, you can join the individual and corporate sponsors of Water Well Wish with a financial contribution. You can write a check payable to "The Groundwater Foundation", and mail it to The Groundwater Foundation, 601 Dempsey Road, Westerville, OH 43081-8978. Be sure to add to the memo line of the check "Water Well Wish". Alternatively, you can pay by credit card at: <https://groundwater.org/water-well-wish/#donate>. All amounts contributed will help someone get a new well.

Through the years, Kansas Rural Water Association has been contacted by hundreds of people who have reported that their local water system has denied them from purchasing a benefit unit or establishing an account to be used at their home. While many of these connections were for new homes, many were also for existing homes whose owners were desperate to be able to turn on their tap and have a reliable source of clean water for their daily needs. How many of these folks didn't call KRWA? And for those people who were in their existing home, did any of us direct them to the 504 Program? I'm guessing that few of us have. As public water system professionals, we should support everyone having access to safe and affordable drinking water in America.

And as I think about it, I have a favorite groundwater, and it doesn't come in a green bottle from across the ocean. The ultra-soft Dakota Formation groundwater used by the City of Longford and Rural Water District No. 2, Clay County, is my favorite groundwater. I hope rural water districts and others can help direct those with unique circumstances towards this program.

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