

# From water to prison – and back in water

**I**would like to take this opportunity to introduce myself. My name is Jim Jackson, one the new faces at Kansas Rural Water. I live in Eudora with my wife Dawn and three children Tyler, Brendan, and Ashlyn. I was born in El Dorado and grew up just east in Rosalia. I graduated from Flinthills High School, and this is where I met my wife. Some of my hobbies include being a member of the Eudora 12th Man Club, coaching youth teams in Eudora, and working around the house and yard.

Jim Jackson  
Tech Assistant

## Water and prisons



After graduating I began my working career with the City of El Dorado water utility. My first year there I was on the distribution crew. The following year I became a water treatment plant

operator. By working and study, I attained the level of Class IV operator certification. The Director of Utilities at El Dorado taught me a lot about the importance of quality water, and being a quality person. I learned about the hard work and commitment that went into running a very good water system. I stayed in that position for six years and then felt I was ready for a change.

In December 1991, I began work at the new El Dorado Correctional Facility. I taught a

vo-tech class in building maintenance to inmates who were at maximum-security level. In July 1994, I transferred to the Lansing Correctional Facility. At Lansing, I also taught the same class in building maintenance, but this time, "behind the walls" as they say. This was also "maximum security." After a few more years of this "prison life", even I was ready for parole. There are some stories I could tell you about prison life but I don't believe this article and KRWA's Lifeline is where that needs to happen. The one thing that I learned from teaching in the corrections' system is the importance of communication with the people around you.

to have "Best Tasting Water in Kansas" the first year the competition was held at the KRWA annual conference. I was honored at the 2003 KRWA conference to be named Rural Water Operator of the Year. I really enjoyed my time at Jefferson RWD 13.

## Helping systems with regs

As a new employee of Kansas Rural Water, my main job will be to assist water systems with compliance issues, dealing with new and expanding regulations. New regulations present many challenges from learning about them to implementing changes in operations or adding

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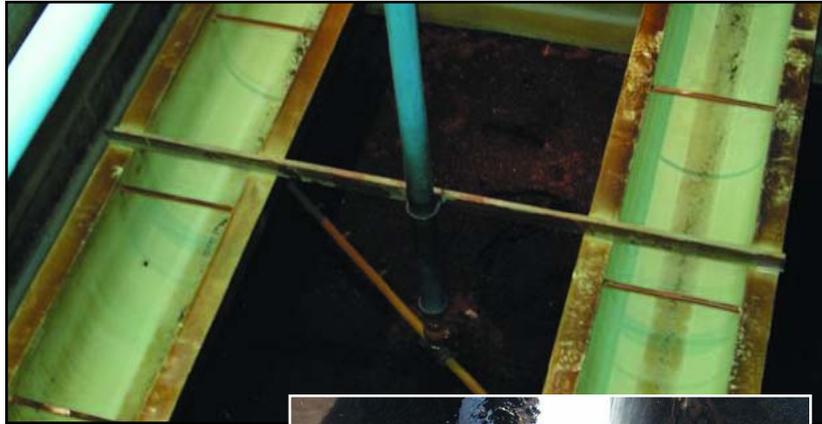
I returned to the water industry in January 1999. I applied for and was hired as District Manager and Operator for Jefferson County RWD 13. I am currently a Class II water operator having allowed that Class IV to lapse while teaching in prisons. I plan to also again attain the Class IV certification. In 1999, Jefferson RWD 13 was just completing upgrades to their treatment plant, and like many other districts, beginning to expand pretty dramatically. It was an honor to have been voted

improvements. At El Dorado, I know that the operators were somewhat insulated from the politics of dealing with the regs. In Jefferson RWD 13, compliance with regs was something that the board of directors was much closer to. That's just the way it is in smaller water utilities.

My goal in working at Kansas Rural Water will be to help operators and boards/councils to understand and appreciate the need and reasons for the regulations.

Then, how can we all not worry so much about "compliance" with the regs – but instead, focus on producing the best quality of water possible, working to make necessary improvements to help systems from those the size of El Dorado or the smallest towns and RWDs in Kansas provide the best service possible. That's a tall order. How to accomplish this? I'm reminded of the article in the November 2003 issue of *The Kansas Lifeline* by Shane Holthaus. It was entitled "Communication – the tool of choice." It was well stated. Communication is essential if you expect to make good decisions.

I look forward to the opportunity to assist cities and rural water districts in whatever way possible. KRWA has demonstrated its service and commitment to helping communities, large and small. I am proud to be on the KRWA team.



*My work at KRWA is not routine. In the photo above, I worked with Lonnie Boller as we conducted a "filter profile" for the City of Osage City's surface water plant. The photo at right shows the results of over-tightening a fast tap saddle. This 6-inch pipeline on a RWD near Lawrence carries 190 psi.*



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