

Award Winners

Eager audience of 800+ folks waits impatiently

- Spotlights frame the podium
- One by one, each winner's photo, name and organization are six-feet high on Little Theatre's screen
- It's "The best of the best" in the Kansas water and wastewater industry

Once again, KRWA Vice President David Mueller emceed the awards ceremony, assisted by KRWA Board President Pat Shaffer. "Our water and wastewater utilities provide great service to millions of people," he stated. "It's a commitment that requires more than an 8 to 5 job. It requires a commitment by quality people. It requires a commitment to achieve and maintain 'Quality That Kansans Count On'."

Consumer Confidence Reports

Consumer Confidence Report (CCRs), due out by July 1 for the preceding year, are a great communication tool. Why? They let your customers know about the source, quality and healthfulness of their drinking water. But some systems get extra mileage, using CCRs to discuss other accomplishments as well as upcoming improvements.

For the fifth year, KRWA held its CCR contest. As in earlier years, entries were judged on accuracy, meeting federally-required language, readability, appearance and public relations.

2004 winners. Winners for RWDs and privately owned systems were:

- 3rd place – Barber County RWD 3

- 2nd place – Shawnee County RWD 8
- 1st place – Cowley County RWD 1 (these Cowley County folks are big on CCRs! In 2003, Cowley RWD 4 took first place)

For municipalities under 3,000 population:

- 3rd place – City of Bentley
- 2nd place – City of Nortonville (last year's second place winner)

• 1st place – City of Oxford
For municipalities 3,000 – 25,000 population:

- 3rd place – City of Fort Scott
- 2nd place – City of Holton
- 1st place winner -- City of Winfield (also in first place in 2003)

For municipalities serving more than 25,000 population:

- 3rd place – City of Garden City (2003's third place winner)
- 2nd place – City of Manhattan (also the 2003 second place population)
- 1st place – City of El Dorado

All winners received certificates from KRWA. First place winners received \$100, second place received \$75, and the final winners received \$50. Note that the repeat winners haven't rested on their laurels but instead kept up to a high standard.

Hats off to these systems for getting extra mileage out of their required Consumer Confidence Report!

Groundwater star systems

This new category recognized groundwater systems that did an outstanding job in

2003 in two areas. First, they evaluated the area contributing recharge to their source of supply. Second, they developed a wellhead protection plan to protect unwanted contaminants from impacting water quality.

✓ Rural Water District No. 3, Barber County developed a wellhead protection plan in response to exploratory oil wells being drilled near their two-well wellfield. No regulations currently exist in Kansas to restrict the distance of oil wells from public water supply wells.

✓ The City of Arlington developed a wellhead protection plan due to increases of nitrate in the groundwater that is diverted by their wells. The source or sources of the nitrate have not been determined yet. The city is also concerned about oilfield activities.

✓ The City of Stockton and the City of Plainville are threatened by a small feedlot up the valley from their wellfield. Cattle are confined in an area formerly used as a sand pit. The owner of this feedlot has requested that another feedlot, large enough to be regulated by KDHE, be permitted near the small one. They will aggressively oppose permitting of the proposed feedlot in public hearings. Mutually, they are investigating other options available to protect their water supplies from contamination, including the possible installation of groundwater monitoring wells. They intend to invite other water systems in the area to participate in their activities.

✓ The City of Phillipsburg has wellfields in an area closed to new appropriations and wants to maintain the high quality of its groundwater supplies.

Agriculture and oilfield activities are the most significant threats to its water quality. Educational activities will be used to remind those responsible for good stewardship to continue protecting the groundwater.

✓ The City of Jennings has three wells, one of which has high nitrates and another that was not usable for a few years due to oil field brine pollution. Protection of the well unaffected by contaminants and the temporarily impaired well is very important.

✓ Ottawa County Rural Water District No. 2 is threatened by a real estate development proposing to use septic systems. The district was successful in reducing the concentration of proposed home sites and has required their septic systems to be located more than 1/4 mile away from its four wells, partly because of the adoption of its plan.

Many congratulations to these systems and their staff for helping ensure that there will be quality water for the future.

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Great American Water Taste Test

Kansas is like the New York Yankees when it comes to good-tasting water: Everybody thinks it will come out on top. Why? Track record.

• In 2002, the City of Emporia was in the top five nationally



Great American Water Test

• In 2003, the national champion was Public Wholesale Water Supply District 4 at Big Hill Reservoir near Cherryvale

Understandably, the stakes were high for the 2004 state contest. The hard-working judges were KDHE's Darrel Plummer, Robert Vincent of Ground Water Associates, Lane LeTourneau of the Division of Water Resources, Marilyn Graham, Kansas Dept. of Commerce and Bill Driscoll, Leavenworth Water Department.

Note that it took five judges this year, whereas last year there were four. When the pressure mounts, just add another decision-maker. The judges tasted 13 samples from cities and RWDs.

The three finalists were:

- Dickinson RWD 1
- City of Emporia
- Public Wholesale District No. 4 (last year's national champion)

The winner was Emporia. It represented Kansas in the finals, held April 18 in Washington, DC. At the national level, it wasn't our turn. While Kansas did not make the final 5, KRWA salutes the City of Emporia for having the best tasting water in Kansas in 2004.

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Rural Water Manager

Keeping growing kids in clothes isn't easy. The same goes for fast water utility growth. Roy (Rocky) Fund, Jackson RWD 1, knows this first-hand. Until a little over a year ago, this system made the news a lot. Adding 30 to 40 new customers (about five percent growth) per year had stretched its capacity to the limit.

Any small problem put the system over the edge. Correcting



Roy (Rocky) Fund

the situation would take money. Fund took the lead in promoting, developing and implementing a major \$4,000,000 improvement project. Perhaps it was his years of teaching school that enabled him to convince folks to provide easements on the miles and miles of new pipeline. Fund's vision, communication and management skills have helped Jackson RWD 1 turn the corner, providing the kind of quality its customers count on.

Fund's advice to newcomers. Take as many classes as you can, work hard and ask for help from experts at KDHE, KRWA and other agencies. Your hard work will be repaid ten-fold in the years to come.

Many congratulations to the 2004 KRWA Rural Water Manager of the year of Jackson RWD 1.

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Municipal Utility Director

There isn't much that Ronald Rhodes doesn't know about the City of Emporia. In this era of five to seven careers in a lifetime, he's worked an amazing 32 years in one career and for the same municipality. He holds a Class IV water operator's certification. A strong supporter of industry organizations, such as American Water Works Association, Kansas Section, and KRWA, he has served on training committees for the Kansas Section.

Conference Roundup

Award Winners



Ron Rhodes

Rhodes is involved in a Kansas first: Emporia's ozone plant. He directs the operations of this sophisticated and state of art water treatment plant. He is known for going the extra mile in ensuring that everything is in top shape – from water production to maintaining good public relations.

Rhodes' advice to newcomers. Go to college and join organizations such as Kansas Section AWWA and KRWA. Keeping up on treatment techniques is a must, ranging from ozone and membrane technology to reverse osmosis. "Become computer literate if you aren't," he urged. "And network with other systems around you; they are an excellent source of information and help."

KRWA honors Ron Rhodes, a veteran water professional, as the 2004 Municipal Utility Director of the year.

Municipal Business Manager

Carolyn Koehn, City of Burns, is like the energizer bunny: Always on the go! She constantly multi-tasks, for example being a first responder with the county EMS. A certified grants administrator, she has been active in the Kansas Pride program. She

was instrumental in getting Burns' new community center through the KAN STEP program.

As city clerk, she actively promotes her town to gain attention of area TV and radio newscasters. She developed a disaster response plan that is second to none. Her weekly schedule makes most people gasp. From church to community centers, Koehn has made a big difference in her town.

But that's not all. In her spare time, she builds hammer dulcimers that she and her husband sell.

Koehn's advice to newcomers. Get as much training as possible including on the software your utility uses. Do go to conferences. Attitudes towards customers is very important. "Smile when you answer the phone," she stated. "Smiling gives a nice tone to your voice." One top priority: Remembering that this is a service industry, not just a provider of a service. "I am here to serve my customers," she noted. "You have to keep that servant attitude at all times."

Hats off to Carolyn Koehn, City of Burns, for going much farther than the proverbial extra mile.



Carolyn Koehn



Louis Scott Townsend

Wastewater Utility Supervisor

The City of Manhattan is fortunate to have an experienced, honored supervisor for its wastewater treatment plant. Louis Scott Townsend knows what it takes to run a complex operation smoothly. He has acquired that knowledge through nearly 25 years of work and study, including a Class IV certification.

Townsend and his staff have been honored for their exemplary work. For example, the Kansas Water Environment Federation has repeatedly recognized him and the performance of the plant.

He and his team were also recognized during a statewide review of operating projects, technological development, research and public acceptance activities that promote the use of municipal biosolids. Manhattan's well-run Biosolids Management Program reflects Townsend's vision and know-how.

Townsend's advice to newcomers. Attend schools. Have good working relationships with KDHE, EPA and KRWA; contact them if you run into problems and they will help. Customers are especially important. "Educate the public

about what wastewater is. Get them behind you since they are the ones who pay." Manhattan gives a lot of tours. "People are always amazed at what it takes," he noted. "Realize that what we do is unseen but important."

KRWA congratulates the City of Manhattan's Louis Scott Townsend as 2004 Wastewater Utility Supervisor of the year.

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Rural Water Operator

Theresa McGuire-Davis of Geary County Public Works is a turnaround artist. Compliance was an ongoing concern when she inherited this very small system in the late 1980s.

McGuire-Davis is responsible for both water and wastewater systems, holding Class II certification in both. Working and learning, she has continued to make improvements in both utilities. She is rightfully very proud of her utility systems and their record of compliance. And that's just half-time! The other half of her county employment is devoted to maintaining road signs



Theresa McGuire-Davis

In her spare moments, she is a member of a competitive barbecue team.

McGuire-Davis' advice to newcomers. Get all the information and classes you can possibly get, everything from KRWA and Salina VoTech to Ft. Scott. "Take that 18-month course in water management. It will provide a firm foundation when you take that job." Once you're on the job, look for any kind of notes or policies left behind by the prior operator. "Get as much information as you can about the system where you'll be working," she advised.

Heartfelt congratulations go to KRWA's 2003 Rural Water Operator of the year, Theresa McGuire-Davis of Geary County Public Works.

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Rural Water Office Manager

Keeping up with regular work is tough enough. Bookkeeping, preparing easements, negotiating with landowners, signing up new applicants and recording deposits would keep most folks busy.

But for Marion RWD 4's Kerry Shewey, there's much more to the story. She has been with the district for nine years. During this time the district has dramatically expanded capacity and has added about 150 new customers.

Shewey's efficiency and keeping up with new techniques in the office hasn't gone unnoticed by the board of directors. They also see her commitment to customer service and satisfaction. She is extremely dedicated to the



Kerry Shewey

district and always keeps the board informed of operations.

Shewey's advice to newcomers. "I did a lot of training and workshops in the beginning," she recalled. That included KRWA and also local training sponsored by the chamber of commerce on office management and customer relations. "Be flexible when working with customers," she advised. "We aren't totally hard-nosed." Strive to work well with your board so that it is supportive, as is hers. Learning about easements and legal descriptions helps. Upon taking the job, she got help from her operator concerning mysteries such as meters. "Always ask questions of people who have the knowledge and experience," she suggested.

KRWA is pleased to honor Kerry Shewey, Marion RWD 4, as the 2004 Rural Water Bookkeeper of the year.

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Silver Faucet Award

This award is made annually by USDA Rural Development to a utility in recognition of outstanding performance in providing water to rural Kansas.

Conference Roundup

Award Winners

In 2004, Gary Smith, Chief of Community and Business Programs, presented it to Atchison County Rural Water District No. 5.

Excerpts from Smith's comments included:

"Our winner in 2004 exemplifies the attributes that we feel are representative of this award, including:

- This RWD commenced serving rural families in the late 1970s.
- Adjacent to its service was a large group of rural users in need of water service. Problems centered around the limited supply of water from domestic wells. Many families were faced with hauling water. This issue surfaced in the mid 1990s.
- In early 1998, a major project expansion was completed to bring water service to the additional 200 users and a neighboring RWD.
- The total project cost was approximately \$3.3 million, which included improvement for



Atchison RWD 5

existing users, expansion into the new area and a connection for the neighboring RWD.

- This project has benefited over 1,200 rural families with a reliable quantity of water.

"Atchison RWD 5 has exhibited the attitude of spirit we think is reflective of the Silver Faucet Award by being a good neighbor, keeping focused on its purpose as a RWD, continuing to solve pending water needs by being helpful and involved, and continuing to serve additional users in the area."

Many congratulations to Atchison RWD 5 for providing the water that its users count on.

Most improved system

Many cities seek national attention. Others wish they didn't get so much, such as the City of Colby. Designated as an EPA SuperFund site, it had a huge compliance problem.

The issue? A contaminant 100 times above the permissible level. Decades' old contamination of groundwater due to a metal plating factory and waste disposal method had allowed excessive amounts of chromium to leach into the Ogallala Aquifer. Chromium, which has a maximum contaminant level of .05 mg/l or 5 parts per million, was at 100 times that level. In fact it was so high that water pumped from one of the city's wells was green in appearance.

EPA and the city cooperated on the construction of a new treatment plant. The project began in late 2002.



City of Colby

Improvements were made in many areas, such as:

- In August, 2003 the new treatment plant went online.
 - 15 recovery wells were installed.
 - Another new well was completed in the summer, 2004.
 - Soft starts were installed on all wells.
 - All meters are now less than 10 years old with 60 percent of them being radio read and 40 percent being touch read.
- The new plant adds 800 gallons per minute of treated water, with 0 – yes, zero -- parts chromium to the city's water supply. That water is important for more than quality reasons due to declining water tables and going on a 4th year of drought.
- Can Colby folks sit back? No. Recently some VOCs have been discovered in the groundwater; additional treatment will be needed for removal. However, the City of Colby has proved that it can overcome obstacles. It has spared no effort in creating an all around, well-run system that serves its customers 365 days a year.

Congratulations to the City of Colby for being KRWA's 2004 Most Improved Water System.