

Sustaining communities is KRWA's dedication

Annually, the board of directors of the Kansas Rural Water Association has combined a discussion of long range planning with a regular board meeting.

Since the first long range plan development at "The Barn" – a bed and breakfast near Valley Falls north of Lawrence — in 1992 to the 2004 meeting held November 6 at the Garden Hilton Inn in northeast Wichita, each successive discussion has helped provide direction for KRWA. The review gives the KRWA board of directors time to evaluate the Association's mission statement, the previous year's goals, objectives and accomplishments, in order to suggest any changes in direction.

It's a good exercise. The review fine tunes and sets out new objectives that KRWA can then strive to meet.

KRWA's purpose

Recently someone asked me what services KRWA provides. This person was

new to serving on a city council and not familiar with KRWA services. I explained they range from training and education to supporting legislation that helps water districts, cities and other local governments. Testing water meters and looking for leaks should always be assumed to be the likely task of a "water" organization. My friend was surprised to see a photograph of the water storage tank in Corning, Kan. and the article on the front page of the October 18 issue of *The Topeka Capital-*

Journal, reporting how local volunteers at Corning constructed an entirely new water system this summer. That article mentioned the help KRWA provided to the local people on that project. My friend was unaware of the KAN STEP

communities to gain economically as a result. On behalf of all Kansans, KRWA expresses appreciation for the strong support that the Kansas Congressional delegation has provided to ensure funding is available.

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program – much less the fact that KRWA provides support to the Department of Commerce for all KAN STEP projects. KAN STEP also constructs community buildings, fire stations and senior centers with the help of KRWA techs.

So what is KRWA all about? The long range planning session provided an answer that sums it all up very well. KRWA works to sustain communities. How does KRWA help do that? The short answer is that this is done with a diversity of far reaching services that go beyond the "water organization" issues discussed back in 1992 in Valley Falls at The Barn.

KRWA promotes the water and wastewater industry

Since the 1960's, KRWA has been a leading advocate for funding of water and wastewater systems through federal and state agencies. Why? Because KRWA was committed then as it is now to help Kansas citizens, particularly in rural areas and smaller towns, have access to quality and quantity water supplies, allowing these

Access to information

KRWA publications help provide guidance to many board or council members, operators and others through the seven publications in the *Water Board Bible* series, the KRWA magazine and newsletters – and award winning website, www.krwa.net. All provide options that have one purpose, to provide information that helps others. Can you name another website that shows a comparison of all funding options for water and wastewater utilities? It's on KRWA's website. No one sent it to us – we took the time to develop it; thanks to agencies that helped us get it right.

Since 1985, KRWA has regularly surveyed all rural water districts statewide to obtain information on operations and maintenance, rates, salaries and more. This information has been critical on several occasions to support various legislative initiatives. Being able to provide that information on the spur-of-the-moment to key legislators has saved communities and RWDs millions of dollars.

E. Ronnebaum
General Manager



The addition of Dan Knupp as Communications Director will help KRWA better provide information to systems. Dan's experience with print and electronic media will be an asset that will serve KRWA and its membership well.

Training and networking opportunities

Training provided by or sponsored by KRWA continues to attract full classrooms and field exercises. In addition to a variety of operation, maintenance and management training for water and wastewater utilities, KRWA provided six GIS/GPS seminars in 2004. An expanded mapping and technical support program is being announced in this issue. New staff members Steve Thompson, Director and Lowell Lamer, Coordinator of KRWA GIS/GPS Mapping Services will be working with GPS mapping tech Dan Byers to bring an entire range of GIS/GPS services and training to communities in Kansas. The new KRWA staff members are also providing technical support for AutoDesk software and ESRI products to counties and other local governments. KRWA's staff works in partnership with communities for local, long-term interest – not short-term financial gain for personal proprietary benefit.

The Annual KRWA Conference & Exhibition at Wichita continues to be one of the best in the U.S. State and federal agencies cooperate by providing speakers and just being there to meet the 2000 plus who attend. The training and the fellowship never run out at the conference – and neither does the coffee, cookies or any other hospitality. The KRWA board of directors recently indicated the intention for KRWA to continue to hold the annual conference in Wichita through 2010.

Being an advocate means taking stands

Cities and rural water districts need a strong voice on legislative matters. KRWA promotes a "pro-public water" agenda. Here are a few examples of how that's been delivered:

- Promoted and supported an alternative for funding of the State Water Plan in late '80s from having fee based on 3% of revenue to \$.03 per-thousand gallons sold
- Promoted and supported the right for local systems to purchase their own debt from then USDA's Farmers Home Administration, resulting in huge savings to systems
- Promoted and supported an option to the very difficult administration of sales tax on purchases by city water systems and rural water districts which is now state law
- Provided extra training sessions when new regulations were implemented or as appropriate to provide timely information to systems

Another article in this issue discusses KRWA sponsorship and participation in a recent water festival in Russell. This was a highly successful event for 26 classes from 15 schools. While KRWA does not intend to sponsor a water festival in every school district, KRWA is ready and willing to provide support for such events.

Referrals to resources

KRWA is made up of members. Through its Associate Membership Program, KRWA is a conduit through which members have access to vendors who provide products and services. Vendors and utilities benefit from this arrangement.

Beyond water, to sustain communities

Smaller communities in Kansas lack in numbers of people but they do not lack in need. In order to fulfill needs of residents, smaller community

governments can turn to KRWA for assistance in the many areas mentioned here. Water and wastewater are the corner stones of any community but new technologies, education and organizational skills are fast becoming the mortar that will hold them together – to sustain community integrity and livability.

From microbiology to rate reviews, from meter testing to finding that elusive water leak, from measuring sludge in the lagoon to explaining what improvements a system really needs to city councils or RWD boards, KRWA has the staff who cover the gamut of issues that local communities face.

Learn more about the sustaining services of your Association – KRWA – in *The Kansas Lifeline*, online at www.krwa.net, or please, just give us a call. We'd love to talk to you and come help.