

Award winners 2006: *At your service – and then some!*

Surprise was on the menu for the many award winners during Wednesday evening's awards banquet.

These award winners were nominated and selected as the best in their professions or endeavors, or for exemplary service to the Association and its members during their professional careers.

The following bio-sketches and stories provide insight into a few of the many reasons why these individuals and groups were recognized.

The award presentations were made at the awards ceremony on Wednesday, March 28 during KRWA's 39th Annual Conference and Exhibition held at the Century II Conference Center in Wichita.

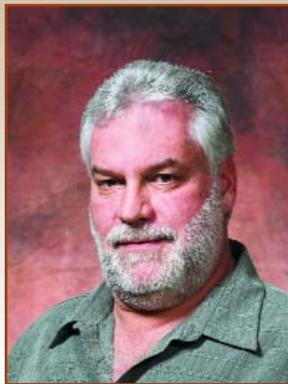


Retiring KRWA Board Member Carl Carroll winces with surprise and his wife, Lila, gives a laugh because the secret is finally out as Carl's name was announced as this year's Conger Award Winner. Carl said afterward, "I should have guessed, since I'd had my picture taken so many times this week!"

sustaining the community, Larry Wray has achieved this goal many times over. Involvement in the business of ensuring quality water being delivered to customers in a quickly growing RWD in an

Since taking the position, Wray has been instrumental in a variety of improvement projects including construction of two new elevated storage tanks; four above ground pumping stations, many

Rural Water Manager



Larry Wray, Douglas RWD 5

The Kansas Rural Water Association awarded its 2006 Rural Water Manager of the Year Award to Manager Larry Wray, Douglas Rural Water District (RWD) 5, Lawrence, Kan.

In keeping with the Association's award criteria of

"Our largest challenge is continuing to meet customer needs in a rapidly growing community adjacent to a major metropolitan area."

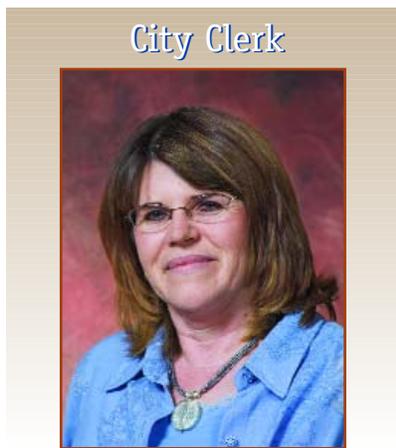
— **Larry Wray**

equally fast growing county has been intense. "Our largest challenge is continuing to meet customer needs in a rapidly growing community adjacent to a major metropolitan area," Wray said.

As a teenager, Wray helped his father install service lines and complete meter hookups for many of the original 325 customers. After the original operator retired, Wray was appointed manager in 1986. Today the district serves in excess of 1000 customers and continues to grow.

miles of new pipeline, construction of a new main office and maintenance shop and work at developing GIS mapping of the water system. Wray also works with hundreds of landowners to obtain easements that are becoming more of a challenge, requiring patience and understanding of landowner requests. Work is also currently underway with neighboring RWDs to form a Public Wholesale Water Supply District.

Larry Wray expects quality work to be done in both field and office. He places very high emphasis on maintaining a quality system that delivers quality water. With two water sources eventually mixing, maintaining chlorine levels becomes a challenge. A system benchmark that any certified operator would be proud of is the District's history of low water loss which was less than 5% in 2005. Derek Welsh, past RWD 5 board chairman said, "Larry is a hard working, dedicated individual that takes pride in everything he does. This award is well deserved."



Cheri Peine, City of Oswego

The Kansas Rural Water Association awarded its 2005 City Clerk of the Year Award to Oswego City Clerk Cheri Peine.

Cheri Peine's involvement in the day to day operations of a city of more than 2,000 people, currently without a city manager, is at a level that any city manager would aspire to.

Peine is the "go to" person in Oswego, attending all City Council, Planning Commission, Airport Board, Housing Committee, Public Building Commission, Economic Development Committee, Tourism Committee and Strategic Planning Committee meetings for the city. She has also been a driving force

on the Oswego Chamber of Commerce Board for many years. Peine has served on the League of Kansas Municipalities Governing Board and is currently serving on the Board of Directors for the Oswego Parks & Community Foundation, Midwest Assistance Program (MAP) and City Clerk and Municipal Finance Officer Association of Kansas, as treasurer. There is seldom a week that she doesn't have several evening or out of town meetings to attend.

Cheri Peine is a 31-year employee of the city with 22 years

outstanding staff and the city employees are great to work with. Our governing body is progressive and supportive of our efforts. It's exciting to see so many great things happening in our community, and the people in Oswego are some of the best you'll ever find. I feel very blessed," Peine said.

Peine supervises four employees in the city office. She said with the many projects going on, the fourth person hired this past February couldn't have happened at a better time. Cheri also attends regular training

"I love the diversity involved in my work, and I really enjoy going to work every day. I have an outstanding staff and the city employees are great to work with. Our governing body is progressive and supportive of our efforts. It's exciting to see so many great things happening in our community, and the people in Oswego are some of the best you'll ever find. I feel very blessed." — Cheri Peine

in the position of city clerk. She is a Certified Municipal Clerk and has just entered the second level of the Master Municipal Clerk Academy. Besides continually working to apply for grants and other funding for the city she is also working on a Comprehensive Community Development Block Grant involving pool improvement, condemnations, new ball fields, new underground electricity for the city park, a new community center as well as grants for a water plant and distribution project, airport master plan and housing.

"I love the diversity involved in my work, and I really enjoy going to work every day. I have an

through the City Clerk and Municipal Finance Officers Association, the League of Kansas Municipalities and the International Institute of Municipal Clerks.

Cheri and her husband Dean live in Oswego where they raised their children – her daughter and son, Misti and Marc Blair, his four sons, Heath, Brett, Matt and Jarred. They spent many years attending various sport events and being involved in numerous school activities. They are now enjoying their five grandchildren. With their oldest grandchild almost seven they are starting the sports circuit all over again.

Wastewater Operator



Kyle Headrick, City of Hesston

The Kansas Rural Water Association awarded its 2005 Municipal Wastewater Operator of the Year Award to Hesston Wastewater Operator Kyle Headrick, Hesston, Kan.

Involvement in the business of the collection of a city's wastewater and returning it to the environment ensuring the safety of the community is a critical endeavor for all communities. "Our largest

"Our largest challenge is continuing to meet the state and federal regulations that enable this to be done on a daily basis." — Kyle Headrick

challenge is continuing to meet the state and federal regulations that enable this to be done on a daily basis," Headrick explained.

Headrick has worked for the City of Hesston since 1990. In his 16 years with the city he has become very proficient at his job. He holds multiple certifications – a Class III wastewater operator and a Class II water supply system operator. Kyle is also certified as a master plumber, which comes in handy working where he does. He is considered by the Hesston City Administration as an invaluable asset to the city.

The administration and board of directors of the Kansas Rural Water Association recognize that it takes people like Kyle Headrick, who are willing to work with people and provide the leadership necessary to capitalize on opportunities for growth that will help sustain rural Kansas communities.

The Kansas Rural Water Association awarded its 2005 City Administrator of the Year Award to Lyons City Administrator John Sweet.

Involvement in the business of managing a city with more than the average number of needs has for Sweet been a labor of love and an endeavor of finesse. "The City of Lyons is a great place to live, work and raise a family and we are only getting better. Support from State agencies and KRWA has made a major difference in what we have accomplished to date and will be a major participant in what we accomplish in the future," Sweet explained.

"The City of Lyons is a great place to live, work and raise a family and we are only getting better. Support from State Agencies and the KRWA has made a major difference in what we have accomplished to date and will be a major participant in what we accomplish in the future." — John Sweet

City projects making advancements since Sweet's city administrator appointment in 2002 have been numerous. Chloride contamination caused by the mining of salt deposits a century ago prompted a community/

business/government partnership to protect the Lyons water supply. Phase-two of that multi-year salt-water remediation project kicked off last December. That same week the community also completed a Source Water Protection Plan providing the city with enhanced abilities to protect the quality of

City Administrator



John Sweet, City of Lyons

drinking water by identifying and managing potential sources of contamination and threatening activities occurring within the city source water area.

Lyons city projects also include a \$5 million airport project, a new 40 to 50 housing development and a \$1.5 million housing rehabilitation grant that will assist 70 Lyons homeowners in bringing

homes up to a more livable standard. The city is also embarking on \$3 million highway upgrade to include two major street resurfacing projects through the Department of Transportation and a \$3 million endeavor to replace the city's gas distribution pipeline system.

John Sweet hails from El Paso, Texas and served 27 years in the U.S. Marine Corps. He has a B.A. from the Univ. of North Carolina, a M.A. Degree in national security and strategy from the Naval War College in Newport, Rhode Island and a M.S. Degree in international affairs from Salve Regina Univ., Newport, Rhode Island.

Rural Water Operator



Jay Mars, Pottawatomie RWD 3

The Kansas Rural Water Association awarded its 2005 Rural Water Operator of the Year Award to Pottawatomie RWD 3 operator/manager Jay Mars.

Jay Mars' involvement in the business of managing a rural water district with over 300 miles of pipe, three storage tanks and a well field, while working on a part-time basis is nothing short of spectacular. "Unfortunately, water leaks don't always occur during business hours, so being on call 24/7 has meant missing holiday gatherings to fix water leaks, ensuring our customers have water," Mars explained.

Jay is the third member of his family to work for this water district. His father, Bob, has served on the board of directors since the district formed in 1977. Jay's mother, Ann Mars, has been bookkeeper for 17 years and together Jay and his mother take care of 569 customers as well as the city of Havensville.

Jay Mars has been a dedicated employee of Pottawatomie RWD 3 since 1997, achieving certification

"Unfortunately, water leaks don't always occur during normal business hours, so being on call 24/7 has meant missing holiday gatherings to fix water leaks, ensuring our customers have water." — Jay Mars

as operator in 1998. The RWD also operates efficiently with water loss maintained at less than 10%.

Jay and his wife, Tami, have three-year-old twins, Trent and Avery. In addition to working for the rural water district, Jay also farms with his dad and brother. Free time is spent hunting and camping.

Rural Water Bookkeeper



Janice Kern, Franklin RWD 6

The Kansas Rural Water Association awarded its 2005 Rural Water Bookkeeper of the Year Award to Janice Kern, bookkeeper for Franklin RWD 6 of Rantoul, Kan.

"I only volunteered to help straighten out the books for the district my father and other local farmers had started in 1969." She has since been a dedicated employee of the District for the last 19 years. Today the RWD, which operates its own water treatment facility, serves more than 900 users.

"Janice Kern is a very dedicated employee very deserving of this award," says RWD Board Secretary Robert W. Wilson, a retired welder and mechanic from Richmond, Kan. "When a customer has a problem she does everything she can do to help them. She will personally call all customers on the disconnect list to keep them from having to pay a disconnect fee! That's service," he added.

Kern progressed from keeping records manually in two different sets of books to using a computer billing system. Recently the District switched to the new technology of an automated meter reading system. Such changeovers always present additional challenges on the administrative

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Involvement in the business of helping operate and manage the RWD began something as an accident for Janice, she explained,

end, but Kern manages such change in her typical efficient style.

Janice's husband Lloyd "Bill" Kern, Jr. is manager of the district.

Water Plant Supt.



Ron Snethen, City of Ottawa

The Kansas Rural Water Association awarded its 2005 Municipal Water Plant Superintendent of the Year Award to Ron Snethen, Water Plant Superintendent, Ottawa, Kan.

Involvement in the business of managing a facility that delivers clean, safe drinking water to a community's residents and businesses has been a 35-year progression for Snethen. In 1971 he started a career with the city of Ottawa as a laborer that ascended

“Achievement for me or the water plant would not have happened without the great staff that has worked with me over the years. Also, those accomplishments were due in no small part to the Ottawa City Administration’s support that allowed me to rise through the ranks. This faith in city employees grows a quality workforce overall and I am very appreciative.” — Ron Snethen

through several positions to his appointment as water plant superintendent in 1992. He is making plans for retirement at the end of this year.

“Achievement for me or the plant would not have happened without the great staff that has worked with me over the years. Also, those accomplishments were due in no small part to the Ottawa City Administration’s support that allowed me to rise through the ranks. This faith in city employees grows a quality workforce overall and I am very appreciative,” Snethen said.

Ottawa Water Plant Supervisor Ron Snethen always says what needs to be said not just what wants

to be heard. He is always going to “agree to disagree,” noted his supervisor. Ron Snethen as a manager is keen to promote operator advancement and education for staff. He is always willing and ready to be a hands-on supervisor and will break a sweat with employees as needed.

Snethen is a dedicated, loyal employee who takes great pride not only in plant employees but in the treatment of the facility and has a passion for providing the best water possible to the community. He is extremely proud of the fact there has never been a violation of any KDHE or EPA regulation during his tenure as superintendent. Ron’s wife Carolyn is Ottawa City Clerk.

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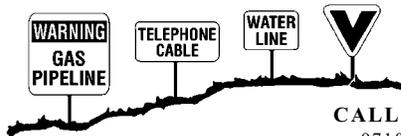
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Friend of Rural Water



Doug Mays, Kansas Legislature

The Kansas Rural Water Association (KRWA) has awarded its 2005 Friend of Rural Water Award to Doug Mays of Topeka.

The Friend of Rural Water Award is a special award – presented to people who many may not see as being directly involved in helping water systems.

“Friend of Rural Water” and Speaker of the Kansas House of Representatives, Doug Mays, has been a student of public water

supply systems, their challenges and concerns for yearly 30 years.

supply systems, their challenges and concerns for yearly 30 years.

As a member of the Kansas legislature he has had an open door to those interested in discussing the problems that confront water systems. He has helped craft innovative solutions to those problems and issues. Under his leadership, the Kansas Legislature has generally reacted in a favorable manner to resolve water supply and water system problems. He has been a force and voice for Kansas Rural Water Association before the legislature. More recently, as Speaker of the House, he has demonstrated time and again his commitment to the best interests of all public water systems in Kansas.

Mays is currently in his seventh term representing the 54th District that includes south-central Topeka and southwest Shawnee County. Before taking the post of Speaker in 2003, he served as Speaker Pro Tem from 1999 to 2000. Before serving in the Kansas Legislature, he served on the Topeka City Council and served as State of Kansas Securities Commissioner.

Speaker Mays earned a bachelor’s degree from Pittsburg State University. In addition to his efforts as a Representative and House Speakers, he is a securities regulatory arbitrator and consultant. He and his wife, Lena, have two grown children and three granddaughters.



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Conger Award



Carl Carroll, Montgomery RWD 2

The Kansas Rural Water Association awarded its 2005 Conger Award to Carl Carroll, KRWA board member from Independence, Kan.

Carroll retired from the KRWA board of directors at the conclusion of the conference, ending 18 years of board service, serving from 1988 to 2006.

“It has been a very rewarding experience to serve as a small part of such a giving organization with such great goals of helping people,” Carroll said. “KRWA’s efforts in

“It has been a very rewarding experience to serve as a small part of such a giving organization with such great goals of helping people. KRWA’s efforts in providing education and assistance for utilities to better serve customers as well as to serve as a resource for legislators, state and federal agencies is indeed a worthy cause.” — *Carl Carroll*

providing education and assistance for utilities to better serve customers as well as to serve as a resource for legislators, state and federal agencies is indeed a worthy cause.” Carl Carroll lives with his wife of 56 years, Lila, in Independence. They have a son, daughter and three grandchildren.

Carroll became a director of the Montgomery Rural Water District 2 board in 1974, later serving as board chair. In the early 80s he was appointed as RWD 2 representative to the planning committee formed to create Public Wholesale Water Supply District (PWWS) No. 4, the first of its kind in the state, which started production in 1985. Carroll

served as director on the PWWS board and later served as chairman, completing 22 years with that organization. Carl also served as manager/operator of Montgomery RWD 2 for 10 years. He retired in 1991 from his business, D & C Welding and Machine, of which he was a partner for 29 years.

The Kansas Rural Water Association was the first rural water organization formed in the United States in 1966. The new Association established a new tradition of recognizing long-term dedication to the organization’s goals with the Conger award. The award is named in honor of the first president of the board of directors of Kansas Rural Water, Mr. Carl Conger of Iola, Kan.



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Crawford County RWD 7 Board of Directors/Manager— L to R bottom: Cathy McDaniel, Veda Maxwell, Doris Morlock. Middle: Board Chair Craig Stokes, Ray Hamblin. Top: Jerry Wayman, Manager Henry Ashbacher and Jim Rhuems.

The Kansas Rural Water Association awarded its 2005 Most Improved Water System Award to Crawford RWD 7.

The devastating tornado that struck Franklin, Kan. at 5:11 p.m. on May 4, 2003 was a challenge that most water systems will never encounter. Providing clean safe water to the unincorporated community of Franklin founded in 1907 had been originally the job of two separate water companies. In 1997 work began to consolidate the two companies and in 1999 the Crawford County Rural Water District 7 incorporated.

The District recently replaced 26,400 feet of existing water main and overall maintains 53,000 feet of pipeline with a growth rate of

6% annually. In addition, the water district board is presently working on bringing sewer facilities to the community and a

“Only through perseverance, patience and persistence has the water district been able to achieve its goals.”

— Board Chair Craig Stokes

project to provide water service to three new residential developments.

Franklin residents were resolved to recover and pulled together to become stronger after the tornado. Improvements to the water system continued after tornado cleanup. Pipelines with

inadequate pressure that were a constant source of leaks were replaced by new and larger pipes. Valves were installed to allow for easier maintenance and operational quality improved overall. Board Chairman Craig Stokes summed it up when he said, “Only through perseverance, patience and persistence has the water district been able to achieve its goals.”

In addition to the water project the spirit of the community was actually rebuilt. A Franklin Community Center and Franklin City Park exist today where there were none before. A new sign proudly welcomes people to Franklin as they pull off of Highway 69. But one of the most prized accomplishments though, according to Veda Maxwell, bookkeeper for the RWD, is the recent addition of a new storm

siren. The remarkable recovery for Franklin, Kan. speaks volumes for the dedication of the volunteers who have worked to save the town and its heritage. Crawford Rural Water District No. 7 is just one part of that effort.

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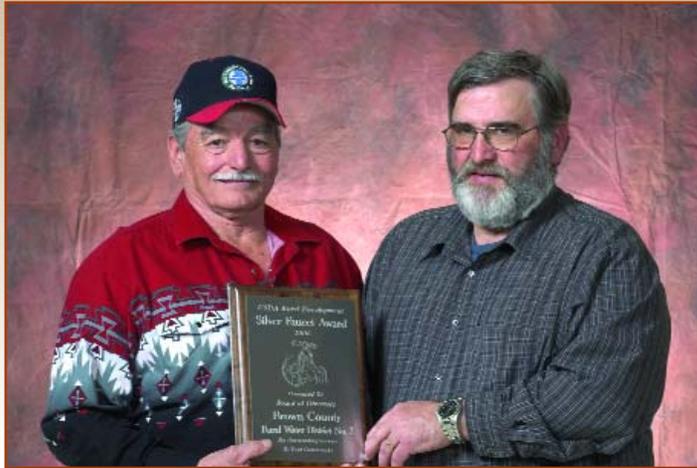
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Silver Faucet Award



Brown County RWD 2 representatives, Manager Harold Keller and Board Chair David Kerl.

For the 32nd consecutive year, the Kansas USDA Rural Development Office has awarded their annual Silver Faucet Award.

Brown County RWD 2 is the 2006 Award Winner with Manager/Operator Harold Keller and Board Chair David Kerl accepting the award at the KRWA Conference Awards Ceremony Wednesday evening.

USDA Rural Development presents the annual Silver Faucet Award to a water supply system in Kansas that exemplifies the qualities of cooperation, dedication and leadership in providing both high quality and quantity water service to rural water users.

During the 80s and early 90s, wells in Brown and parts of eastern Nemaha counties were going bad, either drying up or yielding poor quality water. Droughts during the time helped spur the formation of a steering committee and the incorporation of the rural water district. “RWD volunteers teamed up with their fellow citizens, and other community leaders to decide on a course of action that would allow for a progressive and orderly

.....

“Over the years they have worked diligently to ensure that the system is adequately maintained and have kept their annual loss of water to less than 10 percent. The District has been able to maintain the system, keep reasonable user rates, and keep an excellent operational and managerial staff.” — USDA State Director Chuck Banks

construction of that community’s dream to develop and grow their water system,” USDA Chief of Community and Business Programs Gary Smith explained.

Since 1991, two phases of RWD 2 construction have utilized USDA rural Development loan and grant funding of nearly \$4.3 million to construct what has now grown to 325 miles of pipeline, two booster pump stations, a 300,000 gallon storage tank, and a standpipe. The RWD has 421

meters and serves a population of roughly 4,500 people including the three small communities of Powhattan, Robinson and Leona. Phase one was completed in September of 1994 and phase two in February of 1995. Water is purchased from the city of Hiawatha.

“Over the years they have worked diligently to ensure that the system is adequately maintained and have kept their annual loss of water to less than 10 percent. The District has been able to maintain the system, keep reasonable user rates, and keep an excellent operational and managerial staff,” remarked USDA State Director Chuck Banks.



Director Chuck Banks presenting the Silver Faucet Award plaque to Keller and Kerl during the Awards Ceremony at the 2006 KRWA Conference.

USDA Special Recognition



USDA State Director Chuck Banks adds a few words to Gary Smith's presentation of the USDA Special Recognition Award before presenting the plaque to Elmer Ronnebaum. Gary Smith looks on at the right.

To add to the list of those surprised during the evening, USDA made a special presentation to KRWA General Manager Elmer Ronnebaum for work on behalf of rural water and smaller cities in Kansas. He was recognized for providing assistance with the development of rural water and public water systems in Kansas for more than 30 years.

"Elmer Ronnebaum has given generously of his time and talent to further the cause of rural water and public water systems in Kansas," stated Gary Smith, USDA Chief of Community and Business Programs, in presenting the award.

"Assuring a quality of life in our rural areas that is comparable to our urban counterparts is not necessarily high on the radar screen of the majority of our population," Smith added. "We recognize that no one does it alone. It takes a team of good players to make good things happen when you are working in areas off the beaten path. Occasionally it takes a catalyst to help keep the team focused and,

in some cases, in motion. Elmer Ronnebaum has been a catalyst for rural water for many years and the USDA Rural Development is pleased to recognize him for that outstanding effort," Smith concluded.

Elmer originally served on the original steering committee and

"Elmer Ronnebaum has been a catalyst for rural water for many years and the USDA Rural Development is pleased to recognize him for that outstanding effort."

— Gary Smith

board of directors of Nemaha County RWD 3 for 14 years. He worked for seven years as a director of Kansas Rural Water developing the KRWA magazine, *The Kansas Lifeline*, among other programs. In 1983, he was employed as Program Manager at KRWA. He has subsequently been recognized by the National Rural Water Association (NRWA) for outstanding work performance. In addition to supporting the Association's legislative activity

in Topeka, he has testified before the U.S. Senate and U.S. House of Representatives on behalf of the NRWA for funding support of state revolving loan programs. At KRWA today, he is General Manager, providing oversight and support to the present staff of 16 who work on technical, financial and managerial issues associated with public water and wastewater utilities. Other efforts which are unique were his promotion of and assistance in developing the "Water Board Bible" series which has sold more than 47,000 copies nationwide, and the more recent KanCap board/council training program funded through the Kansas Department of Health & Environment. He has assisted numerous rural water systems prior to and through development in Kansas. Ronnebaum is also Secretary of the Kansas Rural Water Finance Authority that has issued more than \$70 million in bonds for construction of water systems. The Authority also provides financial advisory

services to the Kansas Dept. of Health & Environment's Public Water Supply Loan Fund, a program that presently has more than \$300 million of loans with more than 70% of those loans being made to rural water systems and smaller cities.