

Award Winners for 2006, *You are KRWA* – best by far

Little white lies not usually associated with awards ceremonies become an essential ingredient when “telling the truth” would spoil everyone’s treat of having a shocked and surprised winner at the awards banquet.

Year after year, the award winners at the KRWA annual conference describe a similar, prickly feeling as they listen to an honoree’s system or city accomplishments being described to the audience. The descriptions start sounding strangely familiar. As they glance at a spouse or coworkers to comment, “Hey, we’ve done that,” they see grins of co-conspirators barely able to contain themselves. A second before a name is heard, realization hits, “I’ve been had!”

This year’s award winners saw KRWA staff, spouses and coworkers exceptionally good at telling the believable fib to perpetuate the surprise, all while keeping a straight face.

Ruses that ensured surprises on awards night this year included: KRWA staffers dropping by to take photos for one reason or another, such as needing pictures to put on table centerpieces; co-workers secretly e-mailing copies of the winners’ bios; an unsuspecting winner was told he needed to attend the banquet because of recognition for their KAN STEP project; the zoning director down the hall just dropped by to try out a new digital camera; and one winner’s spouse even suggested his wife buy a new outfit for this year’s conference!

Under normal circumstances, selfless and dedicated awardees seldom recognize accomplishments



when recounted by others. That’s because they just see themselves working at the job they love. The following are the descriptions of KRWA award winners for 2006.

Friend of Rural Water

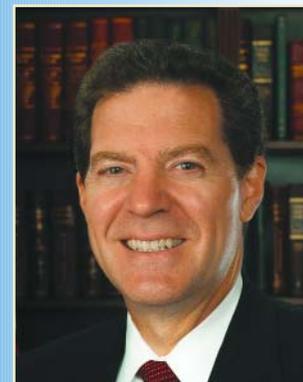
The KRWA 2006 Friend of Rural Water Award was awarded to U.S. Senator Sam Brownback of Washington, D.C.

The Award was announced on Wednesday, March 28, during the Association’s 40th Anniversary Conference and Exhibition, held at the Century II Convention Center in Wichita. The Award presentation was made in Washington D.C. during the National Rural Water Association’s Annual Water Rally, the last week of April, 2007.

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. It’s presented to people who have helped the water and wastewater

Friend of Rural Water



Sam Brownback
United States Senate

industries through professional support. Senator Brownback grew up on his family’s farm in east-

central Kansas near Parker. He graduated from High School, then from Kansas State University, received a law degree from University of Kansas in 1982. He has been an administrator, a broadcaster, a teacher, an attorney and author; a White House Fellow detailed to the Office of the U.S. Trade Representative, elected to the One Hundred Fourth Congress, and elected to the United States Senate. Senator Sam Brownback has supported funding for water and wastewater utilities and for the National Rural Water Association training and technical assistance programs that benefit Kansas systems. He understands water supply and the associated problems having served as Kansas Secretary of the Dept. of Agriculture dealing with water rights. Kansas public water systems thank him for his support and leadership.

City Clerk

The KRWA 2006 City Clerk of the Year Award was presented to Connie West of Deerfield.

City Clerk



Connie West
City of Deerfield

West began working for the city of Deerfield as city clerk in 1981. After a few years experience and training she was certified as a municipal clerk in 1987. She moved the 1981 vintage office that had only a telephone and typewriter into

the computer age that today utilizes automated records, billing, and a city Web site.

Professionalism and communication are strong points of West's city clerk office. She has kept her mayor and governing body informed about crucial matters of the city. Her work on the many city projects has included the Deerfield summer celebration, an annual event since 1987. Starting as a day event, it is now a weekend celebration with a scavenger hunt, several marathon races, a picnic in the park, and a community pot luck and dance. It culminates with one of the best fireworks shows in southwest Kansas.

In 1986 with only two paved streets, the city of Deerfield began planning for a major street project. West was responsible for arranging funding without putting the city in debt. The project's Phase I, curb and gutter, was completed in 1998. West was instrumental in applying for and obtaining a Community Development Block Grant for the financing of the project's Phase II, paving. The grant funded half of the project with the other half of necessary funding already in place due to West's diligent budgeting skills. The paving project was completed in 2000 with the city retaining only \$100,000 of debt from a \$1.5 million dollar project.

Connie West is a 25-year resident of Deerfield. She and her husband Wayne spend extra time visiting their children and grandchildren.

Rural Water Manager

The KRWA 2006 Rural Water Manager of the Year Award was presented to Steve Euler of Dwight.

Euler has been employed by Morris County RWD 1 for 14 years. He started with the RWD as a part-time project inspector and during ensuing years learned the business while working with the late Manager, Willis Hoch. Euler became Manager in 2004 and is a

Morris County Native, graduating from Council Grove High School and later from Kansas State University with a bachelor's degree in Agronomy.

Euler has been an advocate for the district's efforts to continue to accept new customers and to help find financing to install the extensions and improvements rather than asking each new applicant to pay for those costs which are often extremely high. The Morris County

Rural Water Manager



Steve Euler
Morris RWD 1

RWD 1 board and management have been willing to take on the time consuming and exacting task of applying for more government funding to expand the wide-open Kansas Flint Hills RWD. The district recently completed a project adding more than 80 new services and has another project in the works with 50 more services. These projects each involve subsequent USDA Rural Development loans and grants.

Steve Euler manages a system with 600 members and is a Class I certified operator and enjoys working with people. A growing rural water system makes many demands on a manager. Euler can be found helping obtain easements for the new projects, doing inspections of new construction, performing maintenance on water lines or visiting with members on-site when

they have any concern or a problem that can't be handled by phone.

Steve and his wife Diane live on a farm adjacent to where he grew up two miles south of Dwight. He continues farming with his father, raising cattle and hay. Steve and Diane enjoy spending time with her two children and grandchildren.

Rural Water Bookkeeper

The KRWA 2006 Rural Water Bookkeeper of the Year Award was presented to Donna Ferguson of Franklin County RWD 2.

RWD Bookkeeper



Donna Ferguson
Franklin RWD 2

Ferguson has worked as the Franklin RWD 2 bookkeeper for nearly 25 years. In a large, 242-member rural water district, she long ago made the jump from paper files to computer files. Ferguson also mails and e-mails materials for board meetings so board members have advance agendas and are better prepared for the meetings. Her filing system is a comprehensive system that enables her to locate any file by date or topic at quick notice—it is the envy of her peers.

She states her water system billing philosophy exactly by saying, "All meters need to be read after the 25th of the month and all billings have to be completed and mailed by the first of the next month. That's just the way it is, period." Ferguson read all meters

monthly before the district installed an automated radio-read meter reading system. She has climbed many fences and dipped out her share of meter pits. She still contends that, "The old way of reading meters, and having to climb fences was very good exercise."

Jim Ferguson, Donna's husband of 52 years, is water operator for the RWD. Nothing escapes this experienced and dedicated team's notice in the workings of the RWD. Donna and Jim Ferguson live southeast of Ottawa and enjoy spending time with their four children, 11 grandchildren and 11 great-grandchildren. When not spending time with family, Donna enjoys cooking, crafts and working in her flower and vegetable garden.

City Administrator

The KRWA 2006 City Administrator of the Year Award was presented to Tim Schook of Washington.

City Administrator



Tim Schook
City of Washington

Schook has been city administrator for the City of Washington since 1997. His service with the city draws heavily on his experience in construction management that has seen several new building and related projects in Washington. These projects include: a new Emergency Services KAN STEP building that houses both fire

and EMS services; a new pool house with handicapped accessible restrooms and showers; an expanded city campground with 40 electrical plug-ins and water hook-ups; the city's new Munchkinland Playground and Munchkinland Fitness Trail (A concrete lighted walking path with fitness stations); and a housing demolition program that provides for reduced landfill rates, city hired excavators and debris haulers. The last ongoing project has helped clean up the town, eliminating rundown, unsightly, unusable structures.

Tim Schook has a Kansas "Kan-Do" enthusiasm that lets him be equally comfortable in large business meetings or when operating a piece of city equipment. He has been a positive example and motivator for city team members who have helped accomplish the projects mentioned here. Since 1997, Schook has served on the board of directors for the Kansas Municipal Energy Agency (KMEA). During this time he has served KMEA in several other capacities as well, including: member of the Agency's executive committee since 2003; current board secretary/treasurer; current state and regional coordinator for the Agency's Mutual Aid Program for Municipal Electrical Systems; and recent appointee to the Strategic Planning and Building Committees. He is also a member of the Washington Rotary Club.

Tim Schook and his wife Pam live in Washington and together are raising a blended family of five, ages 16-28; most of them are grown with Tim's middle son deceased in 2004. Tim and Pam are also co-owners of Schooky's Deli in Washington. When not working for the city or busy with family outings, Tim enjoys spending time camping, hiking, walking four to five miles a day with his wife, visiting the kids, playing golf and bowling.

Water Treatment Plant Supervisor

The KRWA 2006 Water Treatment Plant Supervisor of the Year Award was presented to Morgan Marler of Hillsboro.

Water Plant Supervisor



Morgan Marler
City of Hillsboro

Marler has been employed by the Hillsboro Water Department for nine years. She is a lifetime native of the Peabody area, graduating from Peabody high school. She has a bachelor degree from Southwestern University and also holds a master's degree in environmental studies from Friends University in Wichita. Her present title is Water Treatment Plant Supervisor; she has a Class IV certification in both water and wastewater. Marler holds the distinction of being the first woman to achieve the state's highest classification for certification in both water and wastewater treatment.

Her achievements at Hillsboro include recently overseeing a \$3.5 million upgrade project at the city water plant. The project goal was to address stricter drinking water standards and to provide increased capacity. Marler worked in concert with the design engineer and contractor to assure all needs desired by the city council were met. The plant upgrades include the provision of a second clarifier, covers for both clarifiers, two new

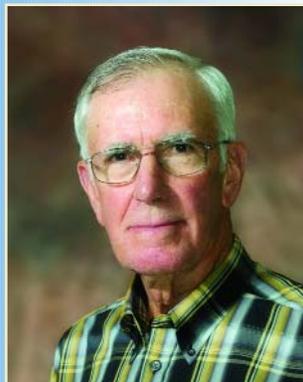
filters with granulated activated carbon layer making a total of five filters, and constructing a chlorine contact chamber.

When not working for the city of Hillsboro, Marler spends time helping her father in his auction business; she deals in vintage items of all types. She and her husband Shane are fans of folk and jazz music and enjoy attending folk festivals around the country.

Rural Water Operator

The KRWA 2006 Rural Water Operator of the Year Award was presented to John VanDyne of Independence.

Rural Water Operator



John VanDyne
Montgomery RWD 6

VanDyne, a lifelong Montgomery County resident, has been employed by Montgomery County RWD 6 for nearly 20 years on a part time basis since retiring from his dairy business. Even though just "part time," John VanDyne is on call 24-7, has a Class I certification and is mild-mannered but conscientious in tirelessly working to ensure that his 550 district members have quality water and continuous service. As a water system operator he maintains a very tight control on water loss and was involved in implementing a meter reading and billing system for the water district.

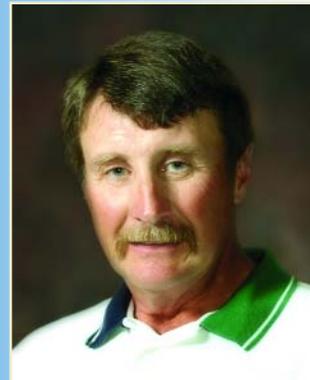
VanDyne is never far away from first hand information about Montgomery Co. RWD 6. His wife of 56 years, Betty, is bookkeeper for the large water system. As one of their board members noted, "John is too nice to fault, and he will do anything for anyone. Both he and his wife Betty are tremendous assets to this district."

John and Betty live east of Independence on the VanDyne family farm. They enjoy spending time with their seven children, 20 grandchildren and 15 great grandchildren. After family time, John enjoys woodworking, yard work and gardening. John is also a very active participant in his church, having been on the church board of directors for some 20 plus years.

Wastewater Operator

The KRWA 2006 Wastewater Operator of the Year Award was presented to Dennis Albrecht of Herington.

Wastewater Operator



Dennis Albrecht
City of Herington

Albrecht grew up on a farm outside Herington and has been a lifetime resident of the area. He started working at the Herington wastewater treatment plant nearly 17 years ago in 1990. When KDHE informed Herington that plant upgrades would be needed to

comply with ammonia and fecal coliform permit limits, the city was seriously considering the rather costly alternative of abandoning its existing activated sludge plant and replacing it with a lagoon system. Albrecht however, insisted that the existing plant was capable of compliance if certain actions were taken. If the city would deal with the storm water inflow problem and add disinfection, they could achieve compliance at a much lower cost to the city. Albrecht was convincing in this endeavor and as a result, the existing plant continues to operate in compliance with permit limits at a significant cost savings to the city.

In addition to being the wastewater plant operator for Herington, Dennis Albrecht has taken his turn as mayor of the city of Hope. While he is no longer mayor, having held the position gave him another perspective with regard to city management and allowed him to become familiar with operation and maintenance of lagoon systems. Albrecht also does wastewater contract work for the smaller communities of Wilsey, Lincolnville and Hope, as well as water distribution for Hope.

When not working at the plant Dennis spends time maintaining his rental properties and enjoys taking trips, as far away as Alaska, to hunt elk and moose.

Most Improved System

The KRWA 2006 Most Improved System of the Year Award was presented to Cliff Gibbs of Abilene.

Several years ago, the city of Abilene was experiencing source water quality problems. Water produced from city wells located in the Sand Springs area west of town had problems that included high nitrate content as well as high turbidity during rainy periods when the water level in the Smoky Hill River would rise. High nitrate water along with groundwater under the direct influence of surface water

caused city officials to make some hard choices between maintaining the original source of water and provide treatment, or to seek other water sources. Because the Sand Springs wells have a long history with the city and more importantly, they have senior water rights, the decision was made to construct a \$6.5 million filtration plant that included reverse osmosis to comply with the EPA Surface Water Treatment Rule and to remove the nitrate. Also, because of the loss of some wells within the city due to volatile organic chemical contamination, new wells were developed in the Smoky Hill Alluvium area south of town to replace the lost capacity and to add another source of water.

Most Improved System



**Cliff Gibbs,
City of Abilene**

Due to recent drought conditions, the city has implemented several programs to reduce water loss. "I am pleased with the decision to build the R.O. plant because I feel the city is now poised to deal with any new water standards that may be coming in the future," Cliff Gibbs explained. "Additionally, one main challenge is to reduce the amount of water that we run to waste and to further reduce the amount of system water loss. The city has responded positively by investing in new, more accurate data-logging, radio-read

water meters, allowing the imposition of increased water rates during the summer months, and approving a plan to use RO reject water to irrigate the city's parks. These proactive steps will go a long way to meet this challenge."

A new Abilene sewer plant project was started in 2003 when the city came under a state administrative order for failure to meet the discharge permit limits. This was primarily due to the substantial industrial and residential growth in Abilene and the immediate surrounding area. The city is currently in the construction phase of replacing the existing trickling filter plant with a \$9.3 million state-of-the-art sequencing batch reactor activated sludge plant to open in April, 2008.

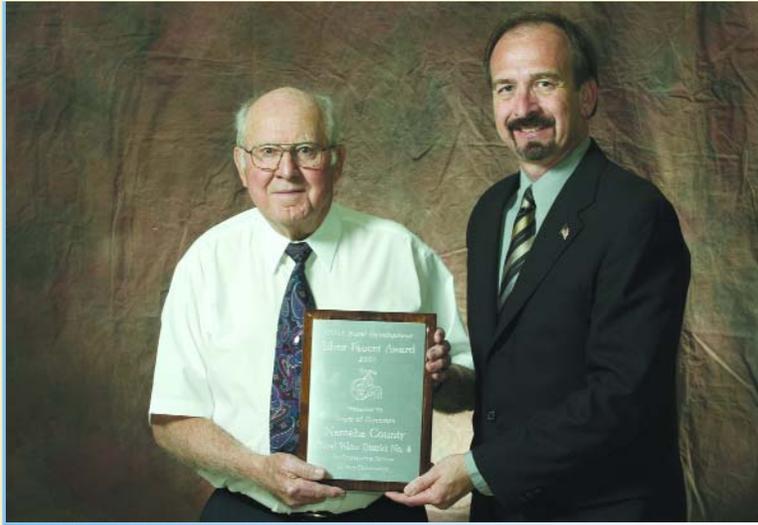
USDA Silver Faucet Award

The USDA 2006 Silver Faucet Award was awarded to Rural Water District No. 4, Nemaha County.

The dedication by local board members, staff and others to organize and develop Rural Water District No. 4, Nemaha County, was recognized as the USDA Rural Development presented its annual "Silver Faucet Award" to the District. District Manager Leonard Nissen accepted the award from Chuck Banks, State Director, USDA Rural Development.

In announcing the award, USDA Rural Development program chief Gary Smith stated: "Nemaha Rural Water District No. 4 knows the meaning of responsibility, dedication and customer service. They took responsibility for the decline in their area's drinking water and created a system that would serve and sustain their area. Their dedication to the community has been exhibited by maintaining reasonable user rates and sound operation of the system. Their customer service is evident by maintaining an average of less than 15 percent in annual water loss in the last four years."

Silver Faucet Award, by USDA Rural Development



Leonard Nissan, Manager, Nemaha RWD 4, with Chuck Banks, State Director, USDA Rural Development

Nemaha RWD 4 was incorporated in 1990. At the time, Nemaha County Extension and Kansas Rural Water Association supported the organization and planning for the project. Local leaders also worked closely with

USDA Rural Development in development of the project that received USDA loan and grant funding in 1994 in the amount of \$2.64 million. The project included the development of a new water system from wells to storage to

distribution. Construction was completed in 1995; the system began providing water service in early 1996.

The District serves 230 rural customers. This is 150% of the original projected number of users; the District now also sells water to the City of Goff.

Leonard Nissen, Manager of the District, accepted the award. Directors serving on the board include: Mark Winkler, Steve Hermes, Carl Reiff, David Wehner and Rick Heinen. Leo Wessel, Goff, assists with maintenance of the project.

They have what it takes

Kansas Rural Water Association recognizes that it requires people like these award winners, who are willing to work with people and provide the leadership needed to capitalize on opportunities for growth, that will sustain Kansas communities for years to come. Congratulations to them all.

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