

Who moved my cheese?

In late July, I attended the National Rural Water Leadership Workshop in Reno, Nevada. This leadership forum explored lessons of leadership, management and growth within an organization. We shared open exchange of issues and communications as well as providing “how to” solutions. The stage for the forum was set with discussion of a book we had previously read, *Who Moved My Cheese?* by Spencer Johnson, MD. Many of you may have read this book. For those who have not read the book the story is about change that takes place in a “maze” where four amusing characters look for “cheese.” The “cheese” was represented by what you want in life – a good job, a good

relationship, a possession, good health. The “maze” is where you look for what you want – the organization you work for, the family you live with or the community you live in. The characters have to learn how to deal with unexpected change when they find their “cheese” that was always there for them to enjoy is suddenly gone only to find out it had just been “moved.”

On the return trip to Kansas I thought about the story of the characters and the cheese that was moved and how it related to my own job in our local water district, my position with the KRWA organization and my personal life.

How many times has my cheese been moved and how did I adjust to the change that the cheese had been moved?

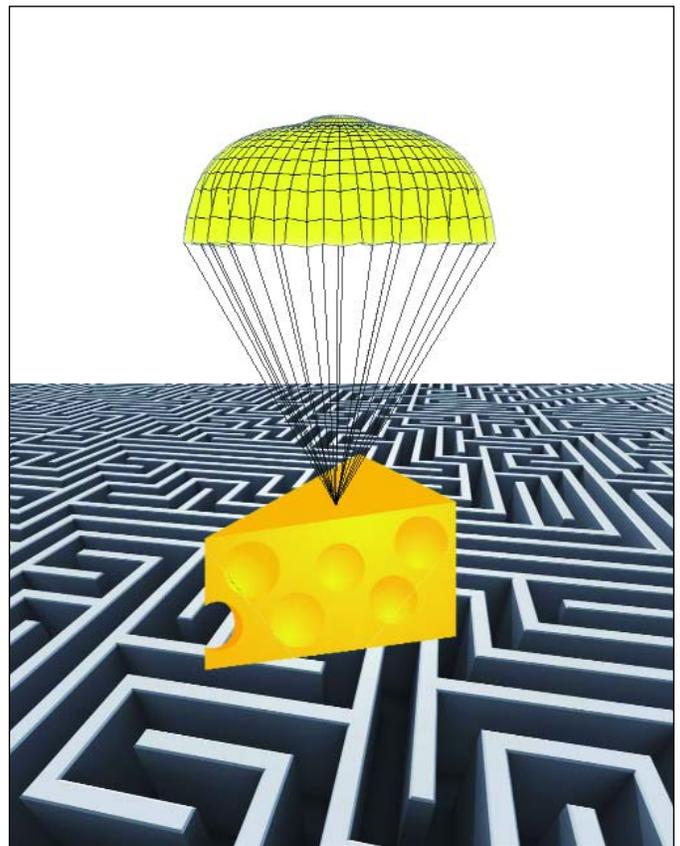
My farmer husband accompanied me on the trip. His job was to get me to the meeting and get me back home. His rewards would be to see some beautiful country and enjoy looking at all the farm

ground and see farmers working in the fields. I too shared the scenery with him, but I also found myself looking for windmills and water towers. I was interested in where people’s water was coming from, especially in Utah and Nevada when we drove for miles and miles and saw very few houses. I knew they had to have water from somewhere. I wondered how far water would have to be transported. What kind of obstacles or “maze” they may have gone through to obtain that water? When we got back to Kansas we got off the interstate and drove home on Highways 36 and 24 to see different country. I was excited when I recognized towns that are members of KRWA and wished I could have had more time to look around. When I noticed water towers of rural water districts I

wondered all kinds of things. Where are their offices? How many miles of pipeline? How many patrons served? How many pump stations? And how many, many times were the board of directors or city councils faced with their “cheese” being moved and how did they react to the situation?



Sharon Dwyer
KRWA President



In early November your KRWA Board of Directors and staff will conduct its annual strategic planning session. We will meet with an outside facilitator to assess KRWA’s mission, strategic objectives and goals for the next year and long-range. Some of the

same things that were discussed at the event I attended with National Rural Water will be discussed on the Kansas level- leadership, mainly direction and growth within the organization. Funding issues will be reviewed. KRWA's "cheese" was moved this past year with loss of funding from EPA for training and two technicians. Like the points in the book, KRWA was somewhat prepared for the change; we anticipated change, we monitored change, we adapted to change and KRWA was able to retain our staff because of years of planning should such a situation arise. KRWA's "cheese" was further moved by having an expanded program for on-site assistance funded through the Clean Drinking Water Fee and also, commensurate increased responsibilities to provide assistance to systems. KRWA takes those challenges very seriously.

Calling all board and council members!

Water is a business! Like any business, there are risks and options and all board/council members need to know the pros and cons concerning their technical, financial, and managerial decisions about water. That is why KanCap, a component of the Kansas Capacity Development Program was established by the State of Kansas. KanCap is an educational tool for Board/Council members and covers more than 200 topics that will assist councils and boards in becoming informed and knowledgeable decision makers for their rural water district boards or city councils. This training and all training materials are provided at no cost to board/council members. For more information on KanCap, or to schedule training for boards and councils please contact Kathy Tucker-Vogel, KDHE, 785.368.7130 or e-mail ctuckerv@kdhe.state.ks.us

The board of directors of KRWA and KRWA's staff are open to suggestions on how KRWA can be more effective in supporting you, the membership. We appreciate the opportunity to work in partnership with state and federal agencies: USDA Rural Development, the Kansas Department of Commerce; the Kansas Water Office and the Kansas Department of Health & Environment. I want to compliment KDHE and particularly Cathy Tucker-Vogel there for providing the leadership to help deliver KanCap training sessions. There are sessions being offered around the state for boards and councils. I urge all board and council members to attend. KanCap is a tremendous resource to help better manage a water utility. You need to see it to believe it, honest. You can gain knowledge about what to do if your "cheese" moves.

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