

Small town life fits working at KRWA

Growing up in Meade, Kansas, it was unknown to me that this “small-town” life was a good fit for me and would be what I eventually wanted for my own family. As a graduate of Meade High School in 1998, that year couldn’t pass by fast enough so that I could leave Meade and attend Kansas State University to study Milling Science. When that fall semester began, it was quite apparent to me that milling science didn’t interest me one bit. The only reason I chose that major was because a KSU rep who told me it was the highest paying field for graduates right out of college. Geography was my backup major and the reason I didn’t pursue geography was because I had no idea what I could do with it. After



Mark Thomas, GPS/GIS mapping technician

discussions with folks in the geography department, I learned about GIS software and possible career opportunities and changed my major.

My wife, Michelle, also attended Kansas State, and graduated a year ahead of me with a degree in

Business Administration. She then took a job in Kansas City as an advertising sales associate. I still had one year left in school, and our wedding was scheduled the week following my graduation. This was a very busy time, carrying a full load at school, holding a part-time job, helping plan a wedding, and commuting back and forth from Kansas City on the weekends.

Following graduation and a wedding I moved to Kansas City and looked for work. We were living in a one-bedroom apartment with rent costing as much as most peoples’ mortgage payments. Buying a house was just not possible without me having a job. After being turned down for two GIS positions due to lack of experience, I became very open in my career search and took a job with PepsiAmericas as a route merchandiser.

A house and a dog

Michelle and I then became a typical suburban couple with a house and dog. I guess we were following the trend of most college graduates in becoming suburbanites, proving the “urban-sprawl” theory to be correct.

We were happy there but both of us realized that when we were to have children we wanted to raise them in a small town as we were. Two years passed and we were expecting our first child and began seriously thinking about moving to a smaller community. Michelle began looking around for jobs in her hometown of Seneca and found one with the Retirement Services Department of Community National Bank. On the other hand I had no idea of what I could do in Seneca. A possibility was there for working

with another beverage distributor in town, but I really wanted to work with GIS or something related. I didn’t think this possible for the location. Soon after I learned of KRWA and the GIS Mapping Department and met with Pete Koenig and Elmer Ronnebaum.

KRWA offered me a mapping position. Michelle, I and our new son, Trent, have made the move to Seneca. I am enjoying the opportunity to further my knowledge of new GIS software working at KRWA.

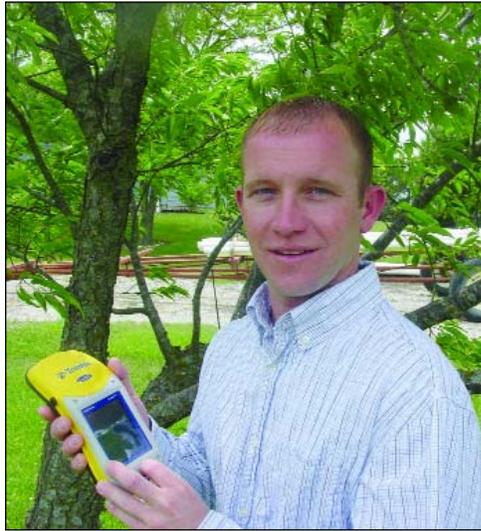
In the few short months of working here, I’ve had the pleasure of meeting many new people. I know that KRWA is committed to helping cities and rural water districts improve utility mapping products.

I’ve watched a recent poll that KRWA is conducting on its Web site. Of 52 entries, nearly half of those commenting state that their water or wastewater utility maps have not been updated since original construction. I believe that! Already I’ve worked on projects where the maps are literally coming apart. I know that systems want and need better map products and there’s an urgent need to move to the digital era. KRWA is here today and will be here tomorrow to provide that service, to work in partnership with its members and non-members alike so that utilities have necessary information.

I encourage anyone who’s interested in GPS mapping to give KRWA a call. Meanwhile, thanks for the opportunity to introduce myself to you. I look forward to meeting utility managers and operators as we improve mapping technology here in the state.

Seneca native joins KRWA as GIS mapping tech

The Kansas Rural Water Association is pleased to announce the addition of Jesse Knight as GPS/GIS mapping technician in the Association's mapping and GIS/GPS tech support service. He



Jesse Knight, GPS/GIS mapping technician

is a lifelong resident of Seneca, Kan. and is a graduate of Nemaha Valley High School. In his Mapping and Geographic Information Systems (GIS) and Global Positioning System (GPS) technician position he will be responsible for data collection and assisting in database development used in the process of producing system maps.

Knight completed courses and graduated from Kaw Area Technical School, Topeka, in 1995, attaining certification in Computer Aided Drafting.

Before coming to KRWA, Knight's prior work experience included five years at MAC Equipment, Sabetha, Kan., where he worked with mechanical engineers conducting research and

development of pneumatic conveying and filtration systems. He spent two years with the Kansas Department of Transportation as an engineering technician responsible for assisting in the production of highway project layouts using computers and GPS survey equipment.

During the years with KDOT, Knight worked in the computer survey arena, setting contractor waypoints and collecting elevations at worksites around the state. This experience coupled with his knowledge of computer aided drafting, compliment skill sets essential to undertake the data processing associated with the production of GIS/GPS digital maps. In the months he has spent with KRWA

Jesse Knight is enthusiastic in reporting, "To date it's been quite an experience, learning and doing quite a number of different things. Attention to detail and desire to get a job done are personal goals for me at KRWA."

The Association's mapping service goal is to help local water; wastewater and gas utilities improve mapping technology and products. Knight's abilities will be a welcome addition to the fulfillment of this goal.

In the mapping process following data collection, KRWA technicians bring field data back to the office where it is imported into corresponding shape delineated data files to produce new system maps in both hard copy and digital formats. This system of producing maps and digital files with GPS data is quickly becoming the

standard for engineers and agencies when comparing and compiling system information.

Jesse Knight is single and owns a home in Seneca close to his parents, a sister at home and a sister and her family in Centralia. He also finds time to baby-sit for a two-year-old niece. Knight also enjoys boating and spending time at the lake in Centralia. He is an avid hunter and takes advantage of the abundant deer and upland game hunting in the area.

Don't miss the GIS/GPS pre-conference session at the Annual Conference in March!

There will be a pre-conference session dedicated to GIS/GPS at the KRWA Annual Conference in March. Several key presenters will speak and answer questions pertaining to:

- How to get started with GIS/GPS.
- How much would it cost?
- What does it take to develop a department?
- What data is available and where could it be used?
- What can advanced GIS software do?

This pre-conference session will answer these questions and more. Information presented here will be valuable to any system that is interested in developing a fully functional GIS system acquiring GPS data for use in upcoming projects or simply updating system maps.

It's the
40th
annual!