Enterpris e KAN STEP project is a triple treat for city

It was in September 2003 after the final inspection of the KAN STEP water project in Enterprise that officials from the Kansas Department of Commerce, Kansas Rural Water Association, North Central Regional Planning Commission and the City of Enterprise were eating lunch in the local café. The topic of discussion was the successful completion of the water system project and the dedication of the volunteers that made the project possible.

“The idea for the second KAN STEP project popped up during the conversation,” remembered project spark plug and Enterprise City Superintendent Paul Froelich. “And would you believe that it made its way as a drawing onto a lunch counter napkin?”

Four years later that small drawing became a reality.

Identifying the need

While there have been many unique KAN STEP projects across the state, none have incorporated a fire station, a community meeting facility and a city library in the same project. The need for the new fire station was obvious. The present Enterprise fire station which housed two fire trucks was costing the city almost $1,500 a month to heat during winter months due to the age and type of construction. The firefighters did not have a meeting or training facility. The need for a new library was also at the top of the city’s needs list. There are not many towns the size of Enterprise with a library that has 18,000 titles or the number of patron visits that its library experiences.

Having successfully completed a KAN STEP water system improvement project, Enterprise officials and volunteers turned to a new KAN STEP application and began the process of filing the pre-application.

Work gets started

Once the project received preliminary approval the architectural firm of Rosemann and Associates, Kansas City, was assigned to the project and the process of demonstrating that the cost savings of at least 40% began. Final project approval and award of the grant was announced during the summer of 2005. Volunteers began work in September 2005 with the
disassembly and reassembly of a 40 by 85-foot steel building that was on the site of the new facility. After the relocation of the building, excavation work began only to be halted by the discovery of a very large mass of concrete that was the old base of a milling machine.

“The concrete we ran into was 5 feet thick, 8 feet wide and 25 feet long. From overhead it looked like a cross. We tried jack hammering it out with our air hammer – wouldn’t do it. We rented a hydraulic hammer – wouldn’t do it. The county brought in their excavator – wouldn’t do it. We finally asked folks at the Hamm Quarries office in Perry who operate quarries in Dickinson County. They brought in their Terminator rock crusher and had it broken out in twenty minutes,” Froelich said. “What a relief and what an obstacle to overcome!” Companies such as Hamm Quarries often prove to be a great asset to the very concept of the KAN STEP program by donating time and labor to volunteer projects.

There were many other obstacles and challenges that had to be overcome. These included obtaining enough forms to pour a nearly 10 foot tall basement wall. It required pouring a single-sided form wall against the existing city hall that had been built on unstable fill. That wall ended up being almost 5 feet thick.

“One of the things that bit us on the project budget was finding the
required ‘undisturbed soil.’ On the fire station side we ended up using quite a bit more concrete in the footings and stem walls that needed to be 4 feet tall instead of two because we had to find undisturbed soil to keep away from a settling problem,” Froelich lamented.

**Volunteers/staff anchor a project**

Through all the challenges and problems that the project presented, the local volunteers stuck with it and as of October 1, 2007 were able to see the rewards of their work. More than 50 volunteers of all ages have contributed in some way. In every community and every KAN STEP project there are those volunteers who stand out and the Enterprise project is no different. Besides the three full-time and two part-time public works staff there has been a core of four volunteers who have logged more than 4,800 hours on the project. The youngest of the four is 63 and the oldest just turned 84. It is the dedication of volunteers such as these that make the KAN STEP program work.

**A KRWA project view**

My overall experience with the Enterprise project is one of rewarding challenges. A total of 404 cubic yards of concrete were poured in the entire project. With the basement under the library, there were some extra challenges that do not occur on most KAN STEP projects. The winter of 2005-2006 was mild, allowing good progress to be made during those normally cold months. Without that progress, the project would not have been completed in the allotted time that the Department of Commerce allows, two years from the award date. The handicap ramp leading out of the basement was particularly challenging in that it has two switchback turns and a set of steps for regular traffic. Next to the ramp is a driveway approach for the fire station. Many feet of hand rails were welded together to provide a safe environment for all the height changes that exist. The fire bays
have individual trench drains. In the fire department area the fire chief has a separate office; there is a bathroom with a shower for firefighters to use after coming in from a run; and on the east end of the fire station there is room for expansion and storage. A fire wall was included that separates the fire station from the library and training/general purpose rooms in the basement. An access through the fire wall leads to a landing that allows access upstairs to the library or downstairs to the meeting room. The city added motion sensors for lighting through the entire area.

Enterprise Public Library has moved several times; having the collection in a fitting home is a dream realized for the library board, many of whom have been project volunteers.

“We are happy to see the old ‘Library’ signage on the front of the new building,” Sally Frank said. “Those letters were originally purchased with a memorial donation from local resident, Helen Dingler, in memory of her husband Herman.”

On the other side of the wall, just behind the signage is a unique, vaulted suspended ceiling. It is the handiwork of core volunteer Clell Reschke. After a little thought Clell altered the original plan to that of a stepped design that would accommodate the height of the door and window panels at the front of the library. These are a few extras in the facility that are rewarding to all who worked on it.

Rewards – more than a building

Because of the persistence, dedication and hard work by all the volunteers and city staff, the city of Enterprise now has an impressive fire station, library, community meeting room and training facility.

“A project like this brings the town together and gives paid and volunteer staff a focused goal. It is a way they can demonstrate community pride. There’s not one of the workers who have worked on the building that hasn’t brought folks by to show it off to others,” Froelich said. “The usable square footage of the facility is more than 14,000 square feet; it is energy efficient as well as handicap accessible; it will serve the community for decades to come.”

“We will have a late October or early November grand opening and at the same time we’ll have a thank you appreciation meal for all the volunteers and specially recognize that core group of Clell Reschke, Lee Barry, Duane Bing and Art Kidwell,” Froelich said. “The Day will also have a special ribbon cutting and dedication ceremony headed by Enterprise Mayor Mike Lynch.”

The city of Enterprise, located about five miles southeast of Abilene in Dickinson County, has used volunteer labor from the community valued at $168,972. KAN STEP funding of $253,500 from the Kansas Department of Commerce paid for the materials and special services for the project.