

GREETINGS

By Adam German, Wastewater Tech

Greetings all, my name is Adam German and I am the new Wastewater Tech with the Nebraska Rural Water Association. For the past 8 years I have been the utilities superintendent for the village of Cortland. You may recognize me if you frequented the annual water conference in Kearney. I was able to raise the "Nebraska's Best Tasting" water trophy above my bald head on two separate occasions. If I remember correctly on back to back years. I haven't done any research but I'm pretty sure that's a record. I figured I would throw that comment into this article because it makes a few water operators cringe with jealousy.

Back in August of 2012 I applied to be the Cortland Utilities superintendent. When I got the job I was ecstatic. I would be close to home, have holidays and weekends off, paid vacation and a great insurance plan. I figured I would do a little mowing, a little snow-pushing, and do whatever I could to keep the town flowing. I had no idea what I was in for. In 2012 Cortland was in the process of building a new water main around town, a new well, and installing a brand new 250,000-gallon water tower. The old water tower would have to come down when the new one went into service. Cortland has two different lagoons, one on each side of the highway. I quickly learned that both lagoons were full and that the NDEQ really frowns when lagoons run over and discharge in an unorganized manner. You now know why I have no hair on my head. I was thrown into a pretty major storm. I found myself a little stressed and was questioning my career choice.

That's when I met Russ Topp and Mike Lucas and when I first learned about the NeRWA. Cortland was in a bit of a bind with the DHHS and because of coliform hits had to chlorinate the water, and take residual readings on a daily basis. Any time I had a question Russ would not only always pick up his phone to provide guidance but more often than not he would show up in town and happily answer my questions about Stenner pumps or do the math to make sure I was chlorinating properly.

Obviously the lagoons were going to be a major issue very soon and Mike Lucas, although residing clear out in Broken Bow, would answer all my calls and show up on-site to walk me through the discharging process, the influent sampling, and even gave me a heads up on what would and would not pass in the event of a surprise inspection from the NDEQ. I was floored. I was relieved. I remember thinking how grateful I was that they were around, I also remember thinking that it sure seemed like they both liked their jobs quite a bit.

As the years went by, I got to meet Pat Petersen, Barney Whatley, Mike Stanzel, and Randy Hellbusch, all of whom were always more than willing to share their expertise and happy to help life get a little easier in Cortland. Cortland has had new water maps made, water/sewer rates studied, valves GPS'd, and even sewer lines smoked - all thanks to the NeRWA and their fine staff. It wasn't too long ago that I said to myself... "self, you may want to try to join that team if you ever get the chance." The door opened and I applied. I am really looking forward to the road ahead. I have a lot to learn yet. I know that I have big shoes to fill. Mike Lucas really knew the ins and outs of the business and I want to thank him for all the help given to me throughout my career in Cortland.

I'll be hitting the road very soon; I am excited to meet all of the essential people working daily to keep our state's water safe. I'm just as excited to be working with the NeRWA. Stay safe out there.