



## Evansville Wins Best Tasting Water in Minnesota

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If you didn't happen to be in attendance at the Minnesota Rural Water Technical Conference in early March, please allow me provide you with an update: The winner of this year's Best Tasting Water in Minnesota Award went to the City of Evansville! Evansville's winning entry edged out two other finalists in the competition for the honor: the City of Bloomington and the City of Battle Lake. In addition to these, there were 26 additional entries submitted by other hopeful public water supply representatives. This Best Tasting Water title was not easily come by for Evansville. While the city's Public Works Superintendent, Jerry Buse, has supplied water sample entries to the contest every year in the past, the Evansville sample never emerged as the winner. Perhaps the key to success was overcoming a number of obstacles presented by their local source water aquifer and water system that finally launched Evansville to the front of the pack.

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Like many small rural Minnesota cities, the city staff in charge of the water system serving its 612 residents is lean, but capable; Jerry works with City Clerk/Treasurer Diana Olson along with a part time maintenance assistant. While Diana holds down the billing end of the utility operations, Jerry is responsible for all other things related to public works—operation of the water/wastewater systems, maintenance of the storm water system, streets, parks, equipment, buildings, and mowing of city properties. At the present time, the maintenance position is unfilled; that makes Jerry an involuntary--though uncomplaining-- 'one man show' for the time being.

Jerry has been in the water/wastewater industry for a total of 27 years. He initially got his start by operating the City of Garfield's wastewater system. Jerry assumed responsibility for the water system when it was added soon after to replace the private wells in town. Today, he holds a B water license and a C wastewater license.

You may ask, "Has the city been 'chemically blessed' with drinking water ready for consumption with little required treatment?" Absolutely not! According to Jerry, the aquifer used by the city for their drinking water source is laden with high hardness levels, iron, manganese, naturally occurring arsenic, hydrogen sulfide and ammonia. That's quite a challenge to deal with by anyone's standards, especially while striving to maintain affordability of the utility services for their residents.

For the better part of the last two decades, the city has been engaged in a number of projects meant to upgrade the city's streets, water and wastewater utilities. The city has been fortunate to have leaders who have placed a high value on the care of the city's infrastructure.

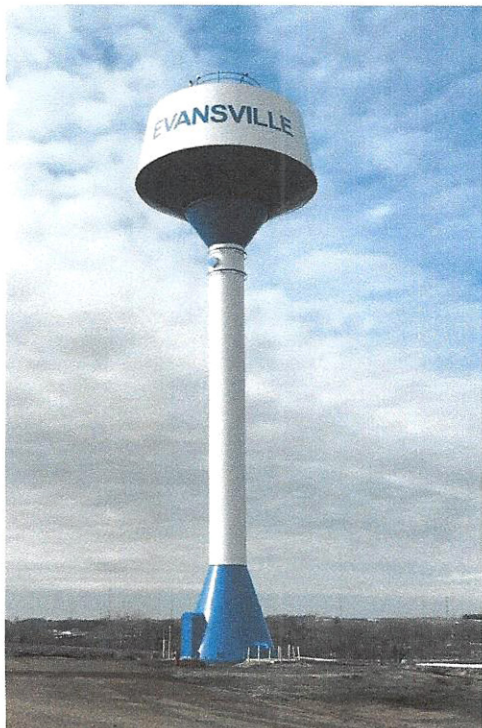
The most recent project to replace the city's water tower and upgrade the water treatment plant was completed in November of 2019. In total, the project cost was approximately 3.3 million dollars, and has resulted in more efficient and effective treatment of the city's challenging water chemistry. With guidance from their engineering firm, APEX, the city's upgraded water treatment system incorporated a better aeration system for removal of hydrogen sulfide in addition to a bio-filter for removal of the naturally occurring ammonia. Another additional benefit of the new system that Jerry has noticed is the reduction in the amount of chlorine required for treatment as the bio-filter becomes more active. The city continues, even today, to work with APEX to fine-tune the system to achieve its maximum efficiency.




Jerry remarked, "It is an honor for the City of Evansville to receive this recognition after planning and implementation of distribution system improvements, the addition of a second well connected to the water treatment plant, and the 2019 projects that replaced our water tower and made major upgrades to our water treatment plant. This was truly a community effort involving city councils, our city residents, and city staff over a number of years! Winning this award will provide confidence in the quality of the city's water supply, and help with attracting new families and businesses to the community."

Jerry isn't the only one in town that is excited about the Minnesota Taste Test Award news. Julie Aasness, a current Evansville city council member, commented, "With the city doing all the work on the treatment plant and water tower, the people in town will realize that it was all worth it!" Undoubtedly, credit should also go to Julie's late husband, Terry, who was always a strong advocate for continually maintaining and upgrading the city's utilities and infrastructure and making them what they are today. When asked what her husband would have thought about winning the right to claim having the best tasting water in Minnesota, Julie said, "Terry would be very proud—the city was everything to him! The infrastructure projects were always important to him to get done, and we were lucky enough to get funding for the projects."

What's in store for the future of Evansville's water system? Who knows! But, we do know that a sample from Evansville's water utility will be traveling to Washington D.C. in February 2021 to represent the State of Minnesota at the National Rural Water Association's annual National Water Taste Test that coincides with the association's federal legislative rally. The Minnesota Rural Water Association wishes the City of Evansville the best of luck, and congratulates the city on their accomplishments!



Through careful project exploration, innovative pollution-reduction strategies, and effective stakeholder partnerships, we can protect our environmental resources now and for years to come.

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