COMING TO FRUITION: EXCITING PROJECTS TO COME

WHAT'S NEXT FOR THE COUNTY COURTHOUSE?

GET PREPARED FOR WINTER WEATHER
New year brings new projects, progress and opportunity

2016 is here already! We believe it will be an exceptional year for our Johnson County residents as we complete several wonderful initiatives to make our county an even better place to live, work and raise a family.

You may have already noticed some changes underway at 87th and Metcalf, the home of the former King Louie facility, now the new future home of the Johnson County Arts and Heritage Center. This facility will include the Johnson County Museum, a performance and rehearsal space for The Theatre in the Park and other groups, park, recreation and museum classes, an advance voting location and community space.

Many have been awaiting the opening of the Monticello Library branch in western Shawnee. The project is being planned and is expected to open in 2018. Other branch improvements are planned in Lenexa, Blue Valley in Overland Park and Corinth in Prairie Village.

Another area of progress is opening undeveloped park land that Johnson County has owned for several years. These efforts include Big Bull Creek Park in the southwestern part of the county, Rieke Lake near De Soto, and a joint city-county initiative to convert Meadowbrook Country Club and Golf Course into a long sought after park for the northeast part of the county.

Longer term projects include development of streamway trails and the development of the Cedar Niles property near Lake Olathe into a park.

Enhancements are also in the works for our transit services throughout the county. The JO is now a part of the region’s Kansas City Area Transportation Authority, and several expansions to the service will help link more riders to employers, education and retail centers. Also, para-transit improvements will help link more riders to employers, education and retail centers. Also, para-transit improvements will help get our seniors and riders with physical challenges where they need to go.

All of these projects are significant steps in the right direction for Johnson County. We’ve heard many times how our residents value these types of services and we know these initiatives will continue to position Johnson County as a great place to live. You’ll find more details about these efforts in this magazine, and we’ll soon be conducting a community survey to further engage our residents in discussions about how to continue improving our county. We look forward to working for you and with you in 2016.

Happy New Year!

Ed Eilert
Chairman
Board of County Commissioners

Hannes Zacharias
County Manager

On the cover: architectural renderings of the future Johnson County Arts and Heritage Center exterior at 8788 Metcalf in Overland Park, courtesy of SFS Architecture.
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Ways to Engage with JoCo

Online
Visit jocogov.org to:
• Find your County Commissioner
• Get answers to questions
• Learn about the more than 400 services Johnson County provides to residents.

Social Media
Twitter: @jocogov
Facebook: facebook.com/jocogov
Pinterest: pinterest.com/jocogov

By Phone
Call Center: 913-715-5000
TDD: 800-766-3777

In Person
Attend a weekly Board of County Commissioners meeting at 9:30 a.m.
on Thursdays on the third floor of the Administration Building, 111 S. Cherry St.,Olathe, Kansas 66061.

JoCo History: the South Park desegregation case
A 1948 ground-breaking desegregation case in Johnson County

Three Questions
Johnson County Government program volunteers discuss why they give back

Ten Things
Things to do with your Leap Day

Above: students learn hands-on about chemistry from Johnson County Wastewater staff at the CORE4 Youth Career Expo (see page 5 for more information).
In short

Apply for the Johnson County Citizens Academy
In early 2016, Johnson County will host a pilot Citizens Academy program. This program aims to better inform the public about Johnson County Government services, programs and responsibilities, build a sense of community and encourage interest in volunteer roles such as Meals on Wheels or board-appointed positions (e.g. zoning board). The program will take place once a week for two- to three-hour sessions starting in the spring, and running through early summer (eight sessions plus a graduation ceremony) and is free for all Johnson County residents, pending acceptance due to small class sizes. The sessions will vary each week and will feature separate departments and services across the county. Individuals interested in applying may visit jocogov.org/citizensacademy for more information and to fill out an application.

Another “Triple Triple-A” rating
Johnson County saved more than $6 million when we issued refunding bonds to pay off older debt obligations, thanks to receiving three Triple A ratings—the highest credit ratings possible—from Standard & Poor’s, Moody’s Investor Services and Fitch Ratings. Those ratings factored into Johnson County Government beating the market by issuing a series of General Obligation Refunding Bonds for an aggregate principal amount of $25,540,000 at a 2.16 percent interest rate, saving $2.6 million, and a series of Lease Purchase Revenue Refunding Bonds in the aggregate amount of $41,725,000 at a 2.38 percent interest rate, saving $3.5 million. In total, the county will save $6.1 million over 10 years.

Kudos!
Johnson County named Local Health Department of the Year
Johnson County Department of Health and Environment earned the prestigious title of “Local Health Department of the Year” from the Kansas Association of Local Health Departments. This award recognizes health departments that have made a significant contribution to the public health system at the local level. JCDHE received this designation due to its innovative efforts managing a tuberculosis event last spring.

Getting ready for Old Man Winter
Five cities and numerous Johnson County staff members met in September during National Preparedness Month for a full-scale exercise which dealt with an ice storm—a likely scenario in the coming months. The activity capitalized on what the various groups have learned throughout the year and provided the opportunity to practice real-time communication and collaboration skills in reaction to the events. This annual exercise ensures county and city government officials are familiar with each others’ plans and procedures and are ready to work together in a real emergency.

Governor Brownback tours Department of Corrections facility
This fall, Governor Sam Brownback toured the Adult Residential Center at New Century to learn more about how we provide Department of Correction clients with educational opportunities and training to help them find jobs. After the tour, Governor Brownback held a press conference during which he praised Johnson County Department of Corrections’ programs and highlighted the need for more such programs throughout the state to help offenders successfully reintegrate into the community after incarceration.

quotable
“Fast-growing Johnson County should have a more up-to-date courthouse that will better serve residents. If commission members can nail down a reasonable cost estimate for a new courthouse and provide compelling proof it’s better than any other renovation plan, they should push ahead to build it.”
— The Kansas City Star editorial board, Nov. 24, 2015
Expanding horizons: the CORE4 Youth Career Expo

By AMANDA KELLER

Choosing a career can be a daunting undertaking for young adults. It’s often difficult for middle- and high-school students to gain much exposure to career options beyond those of family members and characters in television shows or movies.

Exploring a wide variety of potential career paths early can be hugely beneficial for a student trying to determine what option is best for him or her after high school graduation. Public service careers are especially likely to be overlooked by young adults.

According to Mid-America Regional Council Senior Researcher Jeff Pinkerton, current long-term economic data shows that in the Kansas City metro well over 7,000 people will start jobs in the government sector between now and 2025; these are new jobs, beyond positions currently filled by government employees.

In an effort to introduce students to public sector career opportunities, the four largest government entities in our region—Johnson County and the Unified Government of Wyandotte County and Kansas City, Kansas, as well as Kansas City and Jackson County in Missouri—hosted a large youth career expo last fall.

These four governments, referred to collectively as the “CORE4,” have collaborated to increase communication and coordination on key regional issues that cross jurisdictional boundaries. MARC has also served a key role in convening the CORE4 partners and helping move projects forward.

The CORE4 Youth Career Expo took place Tuesday, Sept. 29 at Bartle Hall in Kansas City, Missouri. Approximately 2,400 middle- and high-school students and 169 counselors, teachers and chaperons from 45 schools around the metropolitan area attended the event.

Students explored 65 interactive booths representing a wide variety of government agencies and functions. At many of the booths, students could play a game or complete an activity related to the work of the represented booth’s career and learn specifics, such as salary range and educational requirements.

For example, communications professionals from both sides of the state line jointly manned an exhibit booth that provided students a glimpse of what public information officers do by allowing students to conduct mock media interviews on camera in front of a green screen.

“It was definitely an eye-opening experience for our students.”

“The expo did an excellent job of displaying the vast array of public service careers that are available for students to pursue,” said Clay Frigon, career and technical education coordinator at Spring Hill High School.

“The most beneficial part was the dialogue between our students and the representatives at the tables. It was definitely an eye-opening experience for our students.”

The CORE4 initiative grew out of a job shadowing activity that took place approximately five years ago between leaders from Johnson County and the city of Kansas City, Missouri, which served as a learning opportunity for both entities.

Not long after, the Unified Government of Wyandotte County and Kansas City, Kansas, as well as Jackson County, Missouri, joined the effort.

The CORE4 group anticipates hosting another youth career expo in the fall of 2017. To learn more, volunteer or register your school to participate, visit core4careerexpo.org.
Don’t let mild winter weather catch you unprepared

By LORI SAND

While the weather through December 2015 has been mild compared to some, it is still winter, which means drivers could face some challenges on the roads if they aren’t prepared.

Trent Pittman, assistant director for community preparedness with the Johnson County Emergency Management and Communications Department, says now is a good time to make preparations for the possibility of snow, ice and frigid conditions while traveling.

Prepare your vehicle
Perform routine vehicle maintenance before a winter road trip, including:

- Check tire tread and pressure often, as worn tread is the number one cause of skidding in winter driving conditions.
- Replace windshield wipers every six months or when you begin to notice decreased effectiveness. Heavy-duty winter blades should be used during the snowy season, but be sure to replace them when the thaw arrives to reduce wear on the wiper motor.
- Use windshield washer fluid that contains antifreeze with a rating minimum of -40 degrees and be sure to keep your reservoir full. It’s also a good idea to carry an extra jug of windshield washer fluid in the trunk.
- Have a mechanic check your vehicle’s heater, defroster, battery, brakes, lights, oil and exhaust system.

- Check the antifreeze level in the radiator. If it is low, use a half and half mixture of water and antifreeze.
- Keep the gas tank at least half full to prevent frozen gas lines.
- Does your vehicle have rear wheel drive? If so, consider weighing it down with sandbags. Center the weight over the rear axle to improve traction.

Build a vehicle prep kit
Pittman suggests starting with a basic kit, consisting of:

- Cell phone charger
- Blankets
- Flashlight and extra batteries
- Ice scraper

If there’s a possibility of icy or snowy roads ahead, add:

- Snow shovel
- Large bag of salt, sand or kitty litter for traction under tires if stuck

For those who are traveling long distances or to remote locations, Pittman also suggests packing:

- Energy bars
- Bottled water
- Flares
- Jumper cables
- First aid kit

The criteria for a watch can vary from place to place.

A winter storm warning is issued when a winter storm is producing or is forecast to produce heavy snow or significant ice accumulations. The criteria for a warning can also vary by location.

A blizzard warning is issued for winter storms with sustained or frequent winds of 35 mph or higher with considerable falling and/or blowing snow that frequently reduces visibility to a quarter mile or less. These conditions are expected to prevail for a minimum of three hours.

Reliable road condition information
Within the KC metro area:

- Web: kcscout.net
- Twitter: @kansascityscout
- Facebook: KansasCityScout

Anywhere in the state of Kansas:

- Web: kandrive.org
- Twitter: @KDOTHQ
- Facebook: KSDOTHQ

Always check the weather and road conditions along your route before starting a long drive during winter.

Visit JOCO72.org for other preparedness resources.
“I would not be where I am today without the help of Empowering Futures.”

- Increase levels of self-sufficiency and goal-setting relating to the teens’ future and that of their children.
- Delay subsequent childbearing until completion of goals related to basic education or training, or age 21.

Empowering Futures’ case managers work with clients to focus on getting regular prenatal care, setting and attaining education and life goals and learning parenting skills.

The program offers ongoing support as well as information and referrals for additional community resources. A support group meets monthly that features presenters offering useful information to the teens.

One woman’s journey

Orloff participated in the program for almost two years.

“Eileen was very focused in her participation with our program. She always had a list of new goals to initiate and was so conscientious in following up on any referrals I provided her,” said Blomquist.

During her involvement with Empowering Futures, she delivered a healthy baby girl, Vyla, and obtained her associate’s degree in liberal arts. Eileen will graduate from UMKC with a business degree in May 2016.

She and Vyla have their own apartment. Having consistently set and achieved her goals during her participation in Empowering Futures, Orloff is working in marketing while finishing school and caring for her daughter.

Having educated herself on nutrition and the importance of well-baby care during her involvement with Empowering Futures, Orloff strives to make the healthiest choices for Vyla.
Since creation of Johnson County in 1855, the county court system has occupied three different facilities. The current building at Santa Fe Street and Kansas Avenue has housed the Tenth District Court of Kansas for over half a century.

Johnson County Courthouse timeline
In the beginning, Johnson County used space on the second floor of the Harry Case Building, which was constructed in 1859, as the county courthouse (see image 1 to the right).

Construction of the first official county courthouse building, located north of the present one, was completed in 1892 (2). County voters approved a special tax to build the impressive three-story, red brick “temple of justice” at a cost of $36,414.

Described by The Olathe Mirror newspaper upon its completion as “a superb structure and stands as a monument to the genius, taste and skill of its accomplished architect, George P. Washburn.” It was the first of 13 county courthouses Washburn designed in Kansas.

Construction of the current Johnson County Courthouse was finished in 1952 and at the time housed most county government departments in addition to the courts system. With nine floors and almost 235,000 square feet of space, the facility was built in four phases, starting in 1951 when the court system had only three judges and the county population was approximately 63,000.

The county made an addition to the building in 1954, followed by a third wing in 1968 (3). By 1975, the courts had expanded to eight judges and the population had increased fourfold—to more than 237,000 residents. In need of more space, that year the county added an eight-story tower onto the east side of the building (4).

Over the years, the building has evolved to address the continual need for more space, including removing the jail from the fourth floor following construction of new separate adult and juvenile detention centers in Olathe and at the New Century AirCenter near Gardner.

An aging facility
For more than a decade, the existing courthouse has been an unsolved problem with overcrowding conditions, accessibility and security issues and demands for future space needs for more courtrooms as Johnson County continues to grow. The county population is currently estimated at 575,000.

“As the courthouse continues to age, we’re finding that repair and maintenance activities are becoming a lot more complex and a lot more costly to initiate,” said Brad Reinhardt, director of the Johnson County Facilities Department.

“For example, there are a lot of components of plumbing systems and electrical systems that are concealed behind walls. So it requires some level of demolition to access.”

In 2014, the district court system handled nearly 18,000 civil cases; more than 6,600 criminal cases, including 89 jury trials; and 13,132 traffic cases for the Johnson County Sheriff’s Office and the Kansas Highway Patrol.

The courthouse, which sees an estimated 400,000 visitors per year, now has 19 district courts, four magistrate courts and three hearing officers. It also houses the law library, Clerk of the District Court and District Attorney’s Office.
What studies have shown
Studies and master planning in 2005 and 2008 concluded the courthouse is “inadequate and fails to meet even the current space requirements of the Johnson County Courts.” The studies cited inefficiencies in:

- Security, including movement, transportation and separation of inmates between visitors and court officials.
- Costly mechanical systems.
- Failing to meet Americans with Disabilities Act requirements.
- Serving the general public.

Studies also concluded that the county’s growth will require more space for court hearings in the future.

“We want to have an appropriate, safe courthouse for everyone who comes to the courts—whether it’s jurors or the public or people coming to do their business,” District Court Judge Thomas Foster said.

District Attorney Steve Howe agrees.

“I’ve had a number of jurors (after trials) indicate that based on the current configuration of the courthouse, that they felt extremely uncomfortable having to have so much direct contact with dangerous individuals,” Howe said.

Support for a new courthouse, including a new location to the north of the existing building, was initially endorsed by the Board of County Commissioners a decade ago, following a 2005 study.

The project was not authorized. Since then, the Sheriff’s Office and Court Trustee’s Office relocated to 588 E. Santa Fe Street in Olathe, less than a mile east of the courthouse, in 2013.

What’s to come?
Heading into the new year, plans and discussions are underway regarding a proposal to construct a new 28-courtroom courthouse north of the existing building across Santa Fe. If the plan is approved, the existing courthouse would be razed, providing an expanded courtyard, open space between the street and the county’s administration building to the south and space for future growth.

The BOCC will review final detailed plan and funding options for the project in early 2016.

CONNECT WITH YOUR COUNTY COMMUNITY

Visit jocogov.org/JoCoMag to watch a video highlighting challenges with the current courthouse.
Deaf Cultural Center helps bridge the gap between deaf and hearing communities

By JODY HANSON

On a November morning, a man standing behind a kitchen counter held up a piece of plastic fruit and asked, “Remember the sign for it?” In unison, a group of kindergarteners from Brookridge Day School each peeled an imaginary banana. Down the hall, other children took turns pretending to sleep and wake up to an alarm clock that vibrated under their backs instead of making a sound.

Since 2001, the Deaf Cultural Center and William J. Marra Museum of Deaf History and Deaf Culture, located across the street from the Kansas School for the Deaf in Olathe, has been educating the hearing community on how to better integrate with the deaf and hard of hearing population. Sometimes, those lessons start with our community’s youngest learners.

An early introduction to the deaf and hard of hearing community

Each year, 35 to 40 schools, scouting groups and homeschool groups visit the DCC for a hands-on workshop, where children get a glimmer into what it’s like to be deaf. Activities include an American Sign Language story time, mini sign language class, art project, a video and a tour through the museum, and a model of an apartment with a telephone, alarm clock, doorbell and weather radio adapted for a deaf resident.

“I was impressed with how much thought and effort the center’s staff put into planning the field trip and workshop,” said Mary Beth Daly, activities director for Brookridge Day School. “It was a wonderful experience for the kindergarten children to be led by deaf adults in parts of the workshop, especially the storytelling section.”

Teaching businesses how to be deaf friendly

“There are an estimated 10,000 deaf individuals in the Kansas City metro,” said Sandra Kelly, DCC executive director. “They shop, eat out and hire service providers just as the hearing community does. Having the ability to communicate with cashiers, mechanics, customer service representatives and others in the business community is crucial for the deaf population.”

That’s why the DCC offers local businesses the opportunity to earn the designation of “Deaf Friendly Business.” Companies including Bank of Blue Valley, Audio/Vision Productions and Olathe Toyota have sent their employees to the DCC for a workshop put on by the Coalition for Independence and Hamilton Relay. Participants learn important tips for communicating with a deaf customer, how to work with an interpreter and how to answer a relay call from a deaf or hard of hearing person.

Mike Jensen attended a recent Deaf Friendly Business workshop for several reasons. His company, Challenger Teamwear, a distributor of soccer uniforms, plans to create a training program for Kansas School of the Deaf students who want to learn a trade. The company also receives the occasional relay call, and Jensen wanted to learn more about that communication tool so he can share that knowledge with his customer service staff.

“This program is a helpful resource,” explained Jensen. “I took the workshop mainly to learn about relay calls, but...
A look to the future
Kelly has lots of plans for the DCC. In addition to the workshops and the ASL classes, plus running the museum, Kelly wants to create a digital library of Kansas School for the Deaf newspapers, yearbooks and enrollment records dating back to the mid-1800s.

Another new focus is on the fine arts—featuring visual pieces from deaf artists and co-presenting performances with the Kansas School for the Deaf. The challenge—Kelly and one other employee share a full-time paid position. Everything else is done by volunteers.

“When I started in 2008, I realized we had to be more than a museum,” said Kelly. “Outreach and education are so important, and we couldn’t do all that we do without an amazing network of donors and volunteers.”

Learning a new language
Jensen hopes to learn American Sign Language, which is another training provided by the DCC. Individuals, groups or businesses can sign up to have an instructor teach ASL classes.

Evergreen Community, a long-term senior care community (located in the county-owned Health Services Building on Sunset Drive in Olathe) has about a dozen deaf residents. Evergreen has worked with DCC to offer on-site sign language classes to its employees for the past four years.

Nicki Christopher, a social worker at Evergreen, is currently taking a weekly ASL class with nine other co-workers. “Being able to communicate with our deaf residents is very important for their emotional and physical well-being,” said Christopher. “If they are sick, having pain, or just want to talk, they know they can come to us and we will understand them.”
Coming to fruition: county projects happening soon

By AMANDA KELLER

Our hometown Royals were crowned the 2015 World Series Champions, Johnson County celebrated its 160th anniversary and Oxford English Dictionaries selected an emoji as its 2015 word of the year. It was an exciting year.

Johnson County residents have many reasons to be enthusiastic about our community as we kick off the new year. Several county projects that have been in the works for many years are coming to fruition in the coming months.

Some elements of these projects were made possible through adoption of the fiscal year 2016 budget last August, which included a mill levy increase of 3.3 mills. A mill equates to one dollar of property taxes per $1,000 of taxable value.

The impact on the average Johnson County homeowner was approximately $8.26 a month for individuals with a $261,000 home, which is the average home value in the county.

This was the first mill levy increase for Johnson County residents in a decade. About half of the increase will be used to maintain current levels of county services, while the other half will fund parks, library and transit projects.

Let’s have a closer look!

The “new” King Louie: Johnson County Arts and Heritage Center

Over the last few years, many residents have wondered what the future holds for the iconic King Louie building at 8788 Metcalf in Overland Park.

The facility, owned and operated by a private company as a bowling alley and ice skating rink for many years, was vacated in 2009.

Johnson County Government purchased the building in 2011 as a future replacement home for the Johnson County Museum.

After extensive study, planning and public input, plans to refurbish the King Louie building into the new Johnson County Arts and Heritage Center are making major strides. Construction officially breaks ground on Jan. 14.

The building is expected to be substantially complete by the first quarter of 2017, with a JCAHC grand opening tentatively scheduled for April of the same year.

New home for Johnson County Museum

The museum’s holdings currently include more than one million photographs, 18,000 3-D artifacts and 300 cubic feet of archival material. Relocating the museum into the JCAHC facility will allow more space for an even greater number of exhibits and artifacts, to the benefit of museum patrons.

“At the Johnson County Museum, we’re most excited about the opportunity to be more visible to the community so we can better meet our mission of connecting people with the shared experiences and the heritage of our community. Our goal is to help visitors develop a deeper understanding and sense of place, especially for our young residents,” said Johnson County Museum Executive Director Mindi Love.

Many residents have fond memories of the King Louie ice rink, which will soon contain the 1950s All-Electric House, helping to preserve the relic and allowing patrons easier access during inclement weather.

The house is tentatively scheduled for relocation from its current home in Shawnee to the former King Louie building in February 2016.

“Our goal is to help visitors develop a deeper understanding and sense of place.”
Other arts and cultural uses
The new JCAHC facility will also include space for multiple Johnson County Park & Recreation District programs. The district will offer a variety of cultural enrichment opportunities, including arts, crafts, music and dance classes, in the new space.

Residents will delight in new offerings from The Theatre in the Park, which has historically only offered performances during the summer. The JCAHC will include a 350-seat “black box” theater for use year-round, supplementing The Theatre in the Park’s summer productions at Shawnee Mission Park.

A small portion of the building will be dedicated for use as a public space with a fine arts and cultural arts focus — an amenity that community members and leadership have long desired. Residents will also have an opportunity to rent this space for meetings, receptions and other special events. The county will host a permanent advance voting location within the JCAHC.

While the museum itself will continue operating at its current location in Shawnee for most of 2016, the 1950s All-Electric House will close in January to prepare for the 8.5-mile journey to its new home.

Park & Recreation District projects
Johnson County residents no doubt place a high value on the parks and trails system within their community. According to the 2015 Johnson County Community Survey, residents rank the county’s parks and recreation system tied with ambulance/emergency medical services (MED-ACT) as the most important service the county provides.

For more than 60 years, JCPRD has provided high-quality parks, park services and recreational programs to benefit residents.

Each year, JCPRD records more than 7 million visitors to its more than 4,800 acres of parkland and open green space, as well as nearly 1.5 million recreation participations in over 4,000 programs.

“Thanks to the three quarters of a mill additional funding the Board of County Commissioners approved this past year for the Johnson County Park & Recreation District, 2016 will be a busy year of capital improvements and expansion at JCPRD,” said Jill Geller, the district’s executive director.

“Thanks to the three quarters of a mill additional funding the Board of County Commissioners approved this past year for the Johnson County Park & Recreation District, 2016 will be a busy year of capital improvements and expansion at JCPRD,” said Jill Geller, the district’s executive director.

“The district, in cooperation with the city of Prairie Village, is currently developing a master plan to convert a portion of the former Meadowbrook Country Club and Golf Course, at 9101 Nall Avenue, to an approximately 80-acre park.

Residents have been highly engaged in both in-person and online opportunities to offer input on this interesting project. The final draft master plan was approved by the district’s board in December 2015.

**Big Bull Creek Park Master Plan**
JCPRD began purchasing the land for Big Bull Creek Park, located between Edgerton and Gardner in southeast Johnson County, after voters approved acquisition funding through a special referendum in November of 1998.

Upon completion, Big Bull Creek Park will be the district’s largest regional park. The 1,900-plus acre park’s master plan will be completed this spring, and phased development is tentatively scheduled to begin in 2017.

In 2016, additional Legacy Plan implementation projects include development of the Rieke Lake regional park site near De Soto and more than $1.3 million of trail design and development throughout the county.

Longer-term projects include development of 30 miles of new streamway trails and the Cedar Niles property.
Johnson County Library projects
According to the 2015 Johnson County Community Survey, nearly 70 percent of county residents report having visited a Johnson County Library branch within the last year.

The Johnson County Library is starting 2016 looking forward to many exciting projects—the most immediate of which is the much-anticipated re-opening of the renovated Central Resource Library on Jan. 22. Averaging more than 1,000 visitors per day, many patrons are anxious for the library to reopen after nine months of being closed for renovation.

This $3.6 million renovation project, launched in March of 2015, includes major facilities improvements to the 20-year-old building, such as new carpeting, improved restrooms, a new air conditioning unit, more electric outlets for patrons who bring their own devices, a 12-station training lab, more study rooms and larger conference rooms.

The library’s popular MakerSpace, which supports science, technology, engineering and math educational initiatives, is increasing to 1,700 square feet—six times its previous size—with generous support from the Kauffman Foundation and Black & Veatch.

In addition, a new Friends of the Library used bookstore will open at the Central Resource Library, generating funds to support early childhood literacy and special collection purchases.

Comprehensive Library Master Plan implementation
The library is actively beginning implementation of its ambitious 20-year comprehensive master plan, funded through a .75 mill levy increase approved as part of the fiscal year 2016 budget.

The plan’s first implementation phase will include planning and design of four priority capital projects.

• Monticello branch: Additional library services are much needed in the fast-growing area of Western Shawnee. “The Monticello Branch is the unanimous top priority of the Comprehensive Library Master Plan implementation,” explained County Librarian Sean Casserley. “The citizens of this part of Johnson County have long been guaranteed expanded Library services, and we’re positively thrilled to be planning immediately to make that happen.” The new branch is expected to open to the public in 2018.

• Lenexa branch: The library is coordinating with Lenexa city government about a site at the new Lenexa Civic Center project, at 87th Street Parkway and Renner Boulevard, as a potential new home for the branch currently located at 87th and Lackman. Anticipated opening for the relocated Lenexa branch is 2020.

• Blue Valley branch: The fast-growing population in southeastern Johnson County can expect planning to begin soon for expanded library services. Specifics will be determined in the coming months.

• Corinth branch: Planning will begin soon for expanded library services at the aging Corinth branch, possibly on the existing site. No timeline is in place yet, but more details will come soon.

Transit services expansion
Transit services are critical to many Johnson County residents, connecting people to jobs and educational institutions and providing critical transportation for disabled residents.

There have been significant changes to transit services in Johnson County over the last year. In an effort to improve services for bus riders within the Kansas City region, previously autonomous transit operators, such as The JO in Johnson County and IndeBus in Independence, Missouri, have joined forces with the Kansas City Area Transportation Authority to become one regional transit system.

Establishing one integrated regional system, branded as “RideKC,” has multiple benefits.
Residents benefit through more efficient use of tax dollars by consolidation of operations; Johnson County Government saved $455,000 through its agreement with KCATA.

Riders benefit from a simplified pass and fare system, and seamless connections when traveling from one part of the metro to another.

Future transit services in our community were given a major boost when the Johnson County Board of County Commissioners approved a .178 mill levy increase for transit improvements—which equates to nearly $1.5 million in new funding.

The funding covers expansion of transit options for disabled and elderly riders and strategic expansion of service in areas that will improve access to jobs for many residents.

Para-transit improvements
The county will better serve seniors and riders with disabilities through greater flexibility of Special Edition, a shared ride program providing affordable curb-to-curb transportation for eligible residents who are 65 or older, disabled or meet income requirements.

Starting in January 2016, Special Edition users are no longer limited to medical appointments if they wish to take the service to parts of Wyandotte or Jackson counties.

Special Edition users also have a new option to purchase affordable taxi vouchers good for trips up to 15 miles each way. These changes greatly increase the flexibility of the Special Edition program to the benefit of its participants, allowing them to schedule trips directly with taxi providers.

Better transportation to work, school and places of commerce
In an effort to create better regional connections between residents, employers, retail outlets and major educational institutions, several positive changes are happening to bus service in Johnson County this year, including:

- Improved service linking the Mission Transit Center and existing routes with the KU Medical Center area.
- Better east-west connections on 95th Street from the state line into Lenexa.
- Improved service in the 75th St./Metcalf Ave. corridors to connect Oak Park Mall, Shawnee Mission Medical Center, Johnson County Community College, KU-Edwards Campus and Prairiefire.

These transit route improvements will be implemented throughout 2016. ☛

WEB EXTRA Visit jocogov.org/JoCoMag for additional project details.
What’s your New Year’s resolution for JoCo in 2016?

“Will continue working to keep Johnson County a community of opportunity.”
Chairman Ed Eilert

“For our residents of all ages to take advantage of Johnson County’s many opportunities, services and programs to keep and stay healthy.”
First District Commissioner Ronald L. “Ron” Shaffer

“That Johnson County is able to continue to deliver a high level of service to our residents at the lowest possible cost.”
Second District Commissioner James P. Allen

“Working to get a 10+ year problem—the courthouse—replaced so we can stop pouring good money after bad trying to keep the current building from falling apart.”
Third District Commissioner Steven C. Klika

“That we take time to enjoy life and the time spent with people in our lives.”
Fourth District Commissioner Jason Osterhaus

“That our grandchildren enjoy the security and serenity of our community just as we have in JoCo, the heart of America.”
Fifth District Commissioner Michael Ashcraft

“To continue cutting fat out of the budget.”
Sixth District Commissioner John Toplikar

At work with the Board of County Commissioners
By LORI SAND

You might not know it, but in addition to living in a school district, or in a city or unincorporated area, your home also resides in a district located underground—a sewer district. Governing that district to ensure our sewers work properly is the responsibility of our Board of County Commissioners.

During regular Thursday business sessions, the BOCC seamlessly transitions into the Wastewater Board of Directors to vote on policies regarding the county’s sewer districts. This has been the case since 1992, when the voters of Johnson County approved a resolution to authorize the BOCC to oversee the creation, operation and financing of the Consolidated Main Sewer District and other sanitary sewer districts governed by the Board.

Making sure the sewer systems appropriately serve the customers requires a strong partnership between the BOCC and Johnson County Wastewater. While the BOCC approves budgets, contracts and user fees, JCW constructs, operates and administers county sanitary sewer districts. This partnership allows JCW to properly treat and handle county wastewater, eliminating disease and pollutants and protecting public health.
Do You Suffer From Back Pain?  
Non-Surgical, Drug-Free Pain Treatment

Having back pain, muscle spasms and shooting leg pain can bring life to a standstill.

At Renuva Back & Pain Centers, we’re passionate about keeping people moving. Don’t let pain keep you from enjoying time with grandchildren, participating in an active lifestyle or even climbing the stairs without pain.

Life is too short to let pain slow you down.

Pain is your body’s warning sign telling you something is wrong. Sure, you can numb the pain if you take enough Vicodin, Hydrocodone or some other pain pill. However, if you mask the pain, it can prevent your back from healing – maybe even damage it further.

Could this be the solution to your back pain?

My name is Dr. Michael Green, D.C., Clinic Director at Renuva Back & Pain Centers in Overland Park. Since our doors have been open, we’ve seen hundreds of people with back pain leave the office with less pain after our CoreCare treatments. I’ve seen it first hand and I strongly believe...

Back pain is NOT “just a part of life” and something you have to live with.

Renuva created CoreCare, a proprietary treatment protocol, which combines proven therapies such as Digital Decompression and Class IV Laser Therapy, commonly used by professional athletes and sports trainers.

Enjoy relief from back pain without drugs or surgery.

Call Today for an Evaluation: 913-815-8608

Before the FDA would clear Laser Therapy for human use, they wanted to see proof that it worked. This lead to two landmark studies.

The first study showed that patients who had Laser Therapy had 53% better improvement than those who had a placebo.

The second study showed patients who used the Laser Therapy had less pain and more range of motion days after treatment.

If Laser Therapy can help these patients, it could help you too.

However, Laser Therapy is just one part of the solution. When we combine Laser Therapy with other proven therapies, like Digital Decompression, the outcomes are even better.

Decompression Therapy has numerous studies that support its effectiveness.

For example, the Journal Of Neuroscience Research concluded, “Decompression Therapy should be considered first, before surgical procedures which permanently alters the anatomy and function of the affected lumbar spine segment.”

The Orthopedic Technology Review found that “86% of the 219 patients who completed Decompression Therapy reported immediate resolution of symptoms.”

This means in just a matter of weeks you could be back to doing things you enjoy most.

For a limited time, $39 will get you all of the services I normally charge new patients $257 for!

What does this include?

- An in-depth consultation about your pain where I will listen - really listen - to the details of your case.
- A complete neuromuscular examination.
- A full set of digital x-rays (if needed) to determine if a spinal problem is contributing to your pain.
- A thorough analysis of your exam findings so we can start mapping out your plan to being pain free. If you’re not a candidate for CoreCare, I will tell you.
- Plus two treatments so you can experience this amazing treatment and learn if this could be your pain solution like it has for so many others.

Call by December 31st and you can get everything I’ve listed here for only $39. The normal price for this type of evaluation, including digital x-rays is $257.

Don’t let your back pain get worse – call 913-815-8608 by December 31st.

Our address is:
10787 Nall Ave. Suite 110
Overland Park, KS 66211

We are located in the Corporate Medical Plaza, just across 107th from the new Top Golf facility.

I look forward to helping.

Sincerely,
Dr. Michael Green, D.C.
Johnston County’s older population is booming.

With the emergence of retiring baby boomers, the aging population will continue to increase by leaps and bounds.

The population growth in retirees is going to influence aging services in Johnson County for years to come. That impact will be significantly felt by the Johnson County Area Agency on Aging, operating as a public not-for-profit unit of Johnson County Human Services. Since 1979, the AAA has served as the foundation and safety net for community-based services, which are evolving to meet the needs of the county’s increasing older population.

The current AAA budget for providing aging services in Johnson County is approximately $4 million. Almost half of the revenue comes from federal funds. Another 27 percent involves funding from the State of Kansas, with county and local partnerships and program contributions providing about 22 percent.

“I would love to say that funding will grow as our aging population grows,” Dan Goodman, director of AAA, said. “But we can only hope that federal funding at least stays flat.”

The main challenge at all levels of government—local, state, and federal—will be ensuring adequate funding to meet increased demands for aging services now and into the future.

**Older adult population growth in Johnson County**

The growth trend of the 60-plus population in Johnson County and the metropolitan Kansas City region is expected to continue into the near and distant future.

At the start of this decade, the 2010 Census reported slightly more than 56,000 citizens in Johnson County, or almost 11 percent of the county’s total population, were 65 and older—an age threshold that signals eligibility for many of the human-service programs provided by local governments.

Four years later, the Census Bureau estimated the 65-plus population had risen to 72,900, representing roughly 13 percent of the county’s total population.

According to a report by the Mid-America Regional Council, the 55-plus population in Johnson County, which was 45,365 in 2000, is projected to reach 137,117 by 2030.

That’s an increase of 202 percent.

**Income needs of older adults**

For older adults, even some of the best planning and saving still may not be enough to maintain basic needs after retirement, research shows.

The Elder Economic Security Standard Index, developed by the nonprofit Wider Opportunities for Women and the Gerontology Institute at the University of Massachusetts Boston, measures the income that adults age 65 and older require to maintain their independence and meet their daily costs of living, including housing, transportation, health care and other needs. The index measures basic expenses for senior adults/couples living in the community, not in institutions.

On average, an elder couple in Johnson County requires a monthly income of $3,502 with a mortgage, or $2,622 without one, to meet their basic needs. A single senior adult would require $2,616 (with mortgage) or $1,726 (no mortgage).

The estimated average monthly Social Security benefit in 2016 will be $2,212 for a couple, both receiving benefits; $1,285 for an aged widow(er); and $1,341 for all retired workers. The estimates are unchanged from 2015 since monthly Social Security and Supplemental Security Income benefits were not increased in 2016.

Goodman cites two significant factors having an impact on senior households, one being that no COLA (Cost-of-Living Adjustment) in Social Security benefits was granted.

The other factor is the 2015 increase in the Kansas sales taxes from 6.15 percent to 6.55 percent, including a full tax on groceries and most other purchases. The higher tax rate will especially take a financial toll on fixed-income households.

“Seniors are spending a higher percentage of their income on sales taxes,” Goodman said.

In developing the elder standard index, researchers concluded that many older adults, who are not considered “poor” according to the poverty level, still do not have enough income to meet their basic needs and “may be forced to go without, or make difficult choices among basic needs such as nutritious foods, prescription medications, or adequate heating or cooling.”
The desire to age in place

The requests for services are expected to continue with the growing trend of seniors “aging in place.” The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention defines “aging in place” as “the ability to live in one’s own home and community safely, independently, and comfortably, regardless of age, income, or ability level.”

The concept of seniors, locally and nationally, remaining rooted isn’t new. For a variety of reasons, they prefer to remain in the home, and are often healthy enough to do so.

Goodman says both public and private entities in Johnson County are increasingly trying to offer more services, but demand can outstrip supply because the population is aging.

The challenges confronting the AAA in the face of an ever-increasing senior population and funding of essential public programs are difficult, but not insurmountable. It comes down to making budgetary sense for each cent spent on aging programs.

“We are going to have to make tougher decisions,” Goodman said. “As the need for services grows, so does our need for resources to provide those services.”

Johnson County Area Agency on Aging is here to help

Gordon Davis, information and assistance specialist with AAA, points out that Johnson County services help address the growing needs and to bridge gaps in the quality of life within senior households.

“We are a one-stop resource center for aging services and information,” Davis said.

The AAA assists older citizens and their families in a variety of different circumstances. It offers a wealth of information on topics of interest to seniors, health and wellness programs, home-delivered meals and other nutrition programs, transportation, educational opportunities and guidance about long-term care options. Services are provided for persons age 60 and older who reside in Johnson County.

Do you have Psoriasis?

We are currently enrolling qualified participants in a clinical research study with a new investigational drug. To qualify, you must be 18 years of age or older with plaque psoriasis; other restrictions may apply.

Health insurance is not needed to participate and you may receive compensation for time and travel. Eligibility is determined at the time of initial visit.

Compliant Clinical Research

Compliant Clinical Research Inc.
153 West 151 Street
Olathe, KS. USA 66061

To see if you or someone you know qualifies, please call (913) 481-6415 or log onto compliantclinicalresearch.com
Jack History Month is a time to acknowledge and celebrate the achievements of African Americans in society as well as in the Johnson County community.

A significant legal milestone in the history of the State of Kansas is the famous U.S. Supreme Court case of *Brown v. Topeka Board of Education* ruling in 1954 that eliminated segregation in the American school system.

A little known, but equally groundbreaking, case occurred five years earlier in Johnson County, when advocates for 39 African American students demanded and fought for educational rights.

First, a little background is needed as detailed in historic accounts, articles and newspaper stories about the court case and its participants.

**The South Park community**

South Park, an integrated community in Johnson County, was founded in 1887. Kansas had never been a Jim Crow state, but state statute in 1879 allowed first-class cities with populations of more than 15,000 to maintain segregated school systems. Smaller, second-class cities, like South Park, were required to operate a racially-unified school system.

The community was originally integrated for education. The original school, Walker School, housed both black and white children when it opened in 1888 until 1912 when a new school was constructed for only the white students.

Population growth in Johnson County after World War II prompted School District No. 90 to open a new South Park Elementary school near Merriam in 1947 for the white children to attend.

An educational disparity

The new building had indoor plumbing, an auditorium and a cafeteria. It also had one teacher and one classroom for each of its eight grades, plus a music teacher and a kindergarten.

Walker School, where the black children attended, had eight grades in two classrooms. The building was rundown, lacked indoor plumbing and a reliable heating system. Teachers utilized outdated textbooks and castoffs from other schools.

The school district had 222 white and 44 black students. The parents of all the children, both black and white, were taxed for construction of the new school, which cost $90,000.

When the black parents of Walker School students attempted to enroll their children at the new facility, the district trustees denied access, contending that enrollment was based on the attendance areas drawn up for each school.

Equality sought in South Park

Esther Swirk Brown, the daughter of Russian-Jewish immigrants who lived in Merriam, became aware of the situation from her African American maid. Brown urged black parents to sue because the action violated an 1896 court ruling that required “separate but equal” facilities. The lawsuit was filed in 1948.

Brown also made contact with leaders of the NAACP, a chapter of which was soon formed in Merriam, later explaining that she became involved because it was “simply the right thing to do.”

The civil rights group mobilized the parents and led them to court in the case.
known as *Webb v. School District No. 90*. The plaintiffs, all pupils at Walker School, included two Webbs—Harvey Lewis and Alfonso Eugene, Jr.

Parents of 39 students took their children out of Walker School and formed a boycott. They also hired the two teachers from Walker School, Hazel McCray-Weddington and Corinthian Nutter to continue their children's education. The teachers taught the children for more than a year in private homes and in the basement of a Baptist church, and were paid by fundraisers organized by Brown and the parents.

Nutter, who once said, “Schools shouldn’t be for a color. They should be for children,” was a key witness in the lawsuit, as the only certified teacher employed at Walker School. The Brown family’s attorney, Elijah Scott, took the lead in bringing about the case against School District No. 90.

**The Kansas Supreme Court’s ruling**

In June 1949, the Kansas Supreme Court ruled that equal facilities must be provided for all children with attendance based on geographic territory. In the interim, South Park School was ordered to admit black students in the fall since Kansas law did not permit segregation based on race in second-class cities.

The *Webb* decision upheld state laws against school segregation in second-class cities. The court also found that the South Park School Board had illegally established boundaries to separate students by race.

On the first day of class, Sept. 12, 1949, all children in the district, both black and white, attended South Park School without incident.

Five years later, the *Brown v. Topeka Board of Education* case ended school segregation because of race.

After the court ruling, Nutter accepted a position at Westview Elementary School in Olathe and eventually became the school’s principal before retiring in 1972.

Esther Brown died of cancer in 1976 at age 52. A plaque in a small park at 51st and England Street in Merriam honors the civil rights crusader.

In 2002, the Johnson County Museum, in partnership with South Park Elementary school, unveiled an exhibit recounting the struggle for equal education in South Park. Nutter died in 2004 at age 97 in her Shawnee home. The exhibit was dedicated to her memory and has in recent years moved to Merriam Park Elementary School. 🎨

(Mindi Love, director of Johnson County Museum, and museum staff contributed information and images for this article.)

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**NO KIDDING!**
Three Questions for Johnson County Government Program Volunteers

By LORI SAND

Elizabeth Easley, court services officer II, volunteers with Johnson County’s Meals on Wheels program.

Why do you volunteer?
Because it’s the right thing to do. It’s a different way that I can give back to the community outside of my career. I especially like what Meals on Wheels does. It’s fulfilling to know that these people will be fed because of the work that I do. For the most part, the clients I serve are older and they’re fun to talk to.

Do you volunteer elsewhere?
Yes, SAFEHOME is my other charity. I help with two events—the holiday store and the fundraising event, June Jubilee—in addition to making regular donations.

What would you tell someone who is considering volunteering?
You will receive more out of the experience than you give. A lot of people have the excuse that it takes too much time, but you can find the time. It doesn’t have to be grandiose; take baby steps.

Gabriela Moreno, full-time student at UMKC majoring in history and journalism, volunteers for the Johnson County Museum.

What do you do for the museum?
I’ve done a lot of different things since I started in October, including front desk receptionist, answering the phone and questions for visitors, doing some research for museum employees and conducting a couple of museum tours.

Why did you choose the museum as your volunteer activity?
My dad and I are huge history buffs. I’m from Iowa and my dad suggested that a history-based program would be a great fit for my volunteer interest. I knew nothing about Johnson County, but the museum came up on my Google search and after taking a tour I knew it was the place for me.

What would you tell someone who is considering volunteering?
At least give it a try. It’s not for everyone, but I love it, especially the interaction with our visitors. Many of them share their stories and memories associated with our exhibits. This is my first volunteer experience, but now it will be a part of my life.

Perry Cook, retired from Complete Home Concepts in 2008, now volunteers for the Catch-a-Ride program.

Why do you choose to volunteer for the Catch-a-Ride program?
When I was working, a friend of mine was doing it. So in 2008 I stopped telling people I was going to do it and did it. I give three rides a week. It’s really a worthwhile program because there is such a big need, especially in the smaller towns like Gardner, Spring Hill and De Soto where it’s difficult to find transportation. People are very appreciative.

What would you tell someone who is considering volunteering?
It will make them feel really good and you will meet a lot of really nice and interesting people.

Tell me about one of your interesting passengers.
I’ve given a ride a couple of times to a 98-year-old man who is really amazing. He’s very alert and he gets around with very little assistance. He’s told me stories about his work experiences and where he’s lived in different parts of the country.
2016 is a Leap Year, so why not let Johnson County Government help you fill your extra day on Monday, Feb. 29 with these 10 ideas.

1. Volunteer! Johnson County needs people to deliver Meals on Wheels, help out with our Department of Corrections clients, serve on a board or commission and so much more.

2. Bone up on your regional history at the Johnson County Museum or browse through thousands of historic photos at JoCoHistory.net.

3. Go to Johnson County’s Automated Information Mappings System online and look up aerial views of any Johnson County property dating back to 1941.

Make sure you are registered to vote with the Johnson County Election office. See what elections are happening in 2016 and even look up your polling place so you are ready.

4. Are you a stormwater steward? Get tips from Johnson County Stormwater Management to make sure you are doing your part in protecting our streams and waterways.

5. Even if you have to bundle up, get outside and enjoy one of our Johnson County Park & Recreation District’s parks or streamway trails.

6. Purchase a piece of artwork created by one of our Johnson County Developmental Supports Emerging Artists who have a developmental or intellectual disability.

Make an appointment to drop unwanted household chemicals or paint off at the Johnson County Department of Health and Environment’s Household Hazardous Waste facility.

7. Visit one of our 13 Johnson County Library branches, including our Central Resource branch that re-opens in January after nearly a year of renovation.

8. Learn about Mental Health First Aid and contact Johnson County Mental Health to sign up for an upcoming training.

WEB EXTRA For more information about each of these 10 things, go to jocogov.org/JoCoMag.