LOOKING FOR A JOB?

Learn how Johnson county helps individuals overcome obstacles and get employed!

PLUS:
- Major projects updates
- Library OnDemand
+ More
Fall is a time of transition. Many families have transitioned from spending time on vacation, at the pool or enjoying our county’s parks and lakes to a more structured schedule as kids head back to school, sports and activities. Soon we will transition from the colors of our flower and vegetable gardens to the color of autumn leaves. It will not be long before the transition takes us to colder weather and end-of-the-year holidays.

Over the last few months, we have gone through transitions in the COVID-19 pandemic. During late spring and early summer, we experienced a period where vaccinations increased and cases, hospitalizations and deaths decreased. For several weeks, we had no COVID-19 outbreaks in our senior living facilities. Based on CDC guidance specific to vaccinated individuals, we returned to get-togethers with friends and loved ones. For some, life felt similar to a time before the pandemic. For others, mitigation efforts remained part of daily life.

The delta variant has transitioned us into a different phase. Unfortunately, vaccination rates are slowing down, and cases are increasing. In early August, cases started approaching levels we had not seen since our surge in late fall/early winter 2020. Our health care system reported strong concern in the level of patients being seen, both from COVID-19 and from a backlog of those who had delayed medical treatments. Senior living facilities once again reported outbreaks.

We have transitioned back into a phase where it is crucial to follow mitigation efforts recommended by our health experts. If you are eligible and have not yet done so, please get vaccinated. Please wear masks in indoor settings, even if you are vaccinated. We hope these efforts will help us move back to a time with low cases and better protection for our residents against this unpredictable virus.

Speaking of transitions, one of the Board of County Commissioners’ top priorities (you can read about all of our newly adopted priorities on page 15) is helping vulnerable populations transition into becoming more self-sufficient. In this issue, you will see how the county helps many of our county’s vulnerable populations find and keep jobs in the community.

Earning a paycheck is one of the optimum ways to be self-sufficient. This issue includes a look at other county programs and services that help people with their food, transportation, financial and health needs.

Also in this issue, you will meet some of our community members…a Shawnee couple who lost their son on Sept. 11, and a 9-year-old Overland Park girl honored as a hero for calling 911 when her neighbor was experiencing a medical emergency.

We wish you a safe and healthy transition into fall.

Ed Eilert
Chairman, Board of County Commissioners

Penny Postoak Ferguson
County Manager
Mobile services van debuts in Johnson County

The Department of Health and Environment debuted its new mobile services van in July at COVID-19 vaccination events around the county. The van allows health department staff to go out into the community and provide public health services, such as immunizations and education to the public about physical activity, healthy eating and how to prevent STD infections. The van is equipped with two medical refrigerators to store vaccines, an exam table, a restroom and space for staff to complete paperwork and provide education to residents.
Fun at the Johnson County Fair
The Johnson County Fair took place in Gardner from July 26 through Aug. 1, with the theme “Heroes Unite.” The week started with the K-State Research and Extension 4-H judging events such as photography, rockets, foods, livestock and more! The projects and animals were on display to view as people strolled through the buildings and barns. There were booths, stadium events and food trucks, coordinated by the Johnson County Fair Board Association. People were excited to watch the derby and ride the carnival rides after last year’s carnival was canceled. Johnson County Government’s booth provided education on county programs along with free vaccinations in the Commercial Building. What a wonderful week it was!

Kuhlman Cleanup
The Board of County Commissioners authorized up to $725,000 on June 17, to clean up the long-abandoned Kuhlman Diecasting property and to raze the vacant factory building.

Funds will be used for hazardous material abatement and razing the existing structure(s) on the site near 164th Street and Mission Road. The site is in an unincorporated area just outside Overland Park.

The county is not acquiring the property of approximately 35 acres with the funding.

The Kuhlman site, including a 74,000-square-foot warehouse, was last operated as a metal plating facility before closing in the 1990s and going into bankruptcy.

The awarding of a contract to complete the cleanup and demolition will require future approval by the BOCC. A contract is expected by the fall.

quoteable
Johnson County welcomes new Chief Counsel and Director of Legal Services
On May 17, Peggy Trent assumed the new role of county advisor. After obtaining her license to practice law in Kansas, she officially became Johnson County Government’s Chief Counsel and Legal Services Director. She has more than 30 years of experience as a government attorney. She most recently served in the state of Wyoming.

“I was attracted to Johnson County by its innovative approach to addressing everyday issues facing the community,” Trent said. “My experience and background have prepared me to provide the proactive legal advice necessary for the county commissioners and manager to achieve the county’s desired outcomes and strategic priorities. I am excited to begin work as part of the team and am looking forward to living and working in Johnson County.”

— Peggy Trent, Johnson County Government’s Chief Counsel and Legal Services Director
Johnson County Museum recognized for pandemic response

The Johnson County Museum was awarded the American Association of State and Local History’s 2021 Award of Excellence for its response to COVID-19, which included:

- A collecting initiative
- A temporary exhibition designed to inspire and embolden the community
- A partner-supported community art exhibition and public programming to help unpack the pandemic and address mental health needs and special educational programming to offer safe and nurturing spaces for childcare
- Summer camps and virtual learning hubs
- Curriculum guides to help older students better understand the historic context of the pandemic and social justice movements

The AASLH Award of Excellence is the second award the museum has earned for its pandemic response. The Kansas Museum Association presented the museum with its Award of Excellence as well.

KC Air Show wows during Independence Day weekend

Record crowds gathered for a once-in-a-lifetime air show at Johnson County’s New Century AirCenter July 3-4. The KC Air Show featured the U.S. Navy Blue Angels and the U.S. Air Force Thunderbirds. In 2021, the Blue Angels celebrate its 75th anniversary and brought new much larger, louder and more powerful F/A-18E/F Super Hornets to this year’s show to thrill the crowd with performances. The air show culminated on Independence Day with the debut of the Super Delta formation with the Blue Angels and Thunderbirds flying together as they departed Johnson County. This only the fourth time in history these two teams have preformed together.

Looking for monthly news?

Sign up for our monthly e-newsletter at jocogov.org/JoCoMonthly. Receive a recap of the top county government news stories each month, along with events, trivia, job openings and more!

NotifyJoCo

Be notified about emergencies in your area, including severe weather, water outages and more. Signing up is as easy as 1-2-3!

Sign up

Go to notifyjoco.org or text NOTIFYJOCO (all one word) to 888777 to sign up for Johnson County’s public notification system.

Choose alerts

Get the alerts that are relevant to you - weather, public safety warnings, community events and more. Customize your locations of interest for home, work and school.

Get notified

You’ll receive messages by phone, text and/or email (whichever you choose) any time there’s an emergency situation.

Tune in to our podcast!

Visit jocogov.org/podcasts and tune in to the latest episode of “JoCo on the Go,” a podcast featuring everything Johnson County!

Looking for monthly news?

Sign up for our monthly e-newsletter at jocogov.org/JoCoMonthly. Receive a recap of the top county government news stories each month, along with events, trivia, job openings and more!
Removing obstacles to employment in Johnson County

When it comes to employment, it can often feel like feast or famine. Either there are many job openings and not enough qualified candidates or there are few opportunities and unemployment is high. But for some people who experience different barriers to employment, they can feel left behind, even in times where finding a job is easier for most.

In honor of National Disability Employment Awareness Month (NDEAM) in October, we’re highlighting the services Johnson County provides to help individuals overcome obstacles to employment. The purpose of NDEAM is to highlight the important contributions people with disabilities make to our workforce. By helping break down the barriers to employment, we’re supporting our community and economy. People with criminal records, physical or mental disabilities or older adults might find it difficult to enter or re-enter the workforce. Johnson County staff saw this firsthand and came together to find a solution.

The Community Supported Employment Program (CSEP) is an initiative within Johnson County Government that helps residents who experience high barriers to employment find jobs that match their skills and interests. The program has been around for about 20 years, and it started as a collaboration between Johnson County Developmental Supports (JCDS), Johnson County Mental Health Center (JCMHC) and Johnson County’s Human Resources department to assist residents receiving services find employment opportunities within Johnson County Government. After a hiatus in the aftermath of the Great Recession, the CSEP committee reconvened and expanded to include Johnson County’s Departments of Corrections (COR) and Aging and Human Services (AHS). The focus was also expanded to include finding employment communitywide.

Prior to the onset of COVID-19, the committee held job fairs that connected dozens of local employers with applicants who have utilized services from the departments participating on the committee. They also hosted appreciation events for community employers and coordinated public speaking training with the County Manager’s Office for individuals receiving services. While the events had to pause due to the pandemic, CSEP is looking at options for having another job fair either virtually or once it is deemed safe to gather in person. But while the committee plans its next steps, each department represented continues to offer myriad employment services for people in Johnson County who may have a hard time finding employment due to age, disability or criminal record.

**Developmental Supports**

JCDS provides an array of employment service options to help adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD) find jobs in the Johnson County area. People with IDD often have the skills and work ethic desired by employers, but face barriers that make the traditional employment-seeking process challenging. For example, job seekers with IDD may need assistance to help develop a resume, navigate technology, grow skills and effectively handle employer relations. This is where JCDS comes in. Employment specialists provide assistance in the form of marketing, job placement and job coaching, with the end goal being the person working independently in a job they find fulfilling. Job coaching services entail an employment specialist learning alongside the person in the beginning of their employment, and providing extra help to the person and employer as needed. Job coaching services are short-term and intensive. Employment specialists act as a resource to employers, getting to know business needs and matching the skills of the job seeker to open positions.

“Having meaningful employment leads to improved outcomes for people with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities. We see an increase in independence, improved self-confidence, better

Carrie Hensley, Project SEARCH graduate, working as an office assistant for Terracon.
health outcomes, long-term improved cognitive outcomes, and just the satisfaction of having a paycheck. Work is a central part of who we are and how we relate to others, regardless of disability status,” said Angeline Anderson, Director of Day and Employment Services at JCDS.

JCDS has assisted in numerous successful job placements in all industries in Johnson County, in a variety of positions. JCDS currently supports more than 120 people in employment services and continues to grow at a rapid rate.

Johnathan Fry, an individual who utilizes JCDS’s employment services, said, “I enjoy working in the community because I like being around people, and when they smile, I know I am doing my job well.”

A specific program offered by JCDS to help adults with IDD grow work skills is Project SEARCH. Project SEARCH is an international employment skills training program that immerses adults with IDD into internship opportunities with local employers. JCDS’s Project SEARCH program is one of only two adult programs in the state.

The program is nine months long and is accredited through Johnson County Community College. Along with the internship experience, there is a component of classroom time, discussing professionalism and workplace expectations that set a foundation for employment success.

The diversity of people with IDD elevates the workforce and results in numerous contributions to businesses. Unemployment rates for people with IDD are extremely high compared to those without an IDD. Kansas is an Employment First state, meaning people with IDD should receive services that enable them to find jobs in the community compared to other service options. JCDS hopes to raise expectations for people with IDD to find jobs in Johnson County that positively impact the person, businesses/the economy and Johnson County as a whole.

JCDS also provides free inclusion training for Johnson County businesses and other public and private organizations and covers topics such as Americans with Disabilities Act accommodations, hiring and managing people with intellectual disabilities and the benefits of inclusive practices.

You can learn more about resources for people with IDD and inclusion training at jcds.org.

Mental Health
Johnson County Mental Health Center’s vocational services are available to any open client currently receiving case management, therapy or medication services. Part of the strengths-based model that JCMHC staff use in providing behavioral health services empowers clients to develop their own goals for treatment. Anyone who states that employment or employment-related education is a goal is referred to the Project SEARCH classes of 2020 & 2021

JCMHC vocational services team.
Everyone, regardless of their mental health diagnosis and symptoms, work history or legal background, can receive vocational services.

The JCMHC vocational team is comprised of six team members – five supported employment specialists and one team leader. The team uses the evidenced-based Supported Employment Model of Individual Placement & Support in providing services. This means that the methods that the team uses to support individuals have been proven to be effective through years of research and analysis.

JCMHC’s vocational team helps those they serve focus on competitive employment, finding jobs within the community that pay at least minimum wage. They work with each individual to identify their

“"This is the best therapy I've ever had. I now have a reason to get up in the morning."

-JCMHC Client

Sharon Morris and Russell Dickison, vocational team members. Dickison is representing the role of a client.
Corrections

COR offers many employment services to its clients. All clients are assigned to a specific resource developer who will handle their employment needs. The resource developer will look at the client’s skill set and then match that skill with an employer in the community. The resource developer reviews the employment history and then conducts an Employment Readiness Scale (ERS) assessment to evaluate their barriers and strengths to employment. The resource developer will review the outcome of the assessment with the client and they will work collaboratively on an action plan. Depending on the outcome of the ERS, the client can either be placed into employment, if they are job ready, or work on their individual barriers before attempting to seek employment.

If clients wish to improve or gain a new skill set, COR offers a 12-week skills certification program called College of Trade. College of Trade is a collaborative effort with Community Corrections, NCircle (a non-profit) and Johnson County Community College. This program is offered three times a year and can serve up to 20 clients each session. During this program, clients are taught essential skills for employment and can obtain certification in welding, forklift operation, culinary or construction. College of Trade also offers non-certification classes in photography, creative writing, digital literacy, public speaking, and financial literacy.

Employers wishing to be engaged in this service can call 913-826-4200 and ask for someone on the vocational team.

Aging & Human Services

AHS Outreach division assists low-income residents with services such as utility assistance, food pantry use and Kansas City Medicine Cabinet vouchers. Many residents need assistance due to insufficient household income as a result of low-paying jobs or unemployment. To assist households in finding employment, local job openings are routinely shared with clients. When meeting with residents, Outreach staff members share resources, including advancing education, Workforce Partnership classes and employment opportunities. In 2019, AHS hosted an Education & Job Fair onsite at the Olathe office, inviting both educational institutions as well as employers who were currently hiring and paying a livable wage. The fair was very successful for both the attendees (job seekers) and vendors (employers and educational institutions). After hosting the event, AHS learned about the CSEP group. Kay Lowe, Olathe Multi-Service Center manager, joined the team to represent the Outreach division.

To see resources available from Aging and Human Services, please visit them online at jocogov.org/dept/human-services/home.
Fall semester offers face-to-face classes and resources to help students succeed at each step of their educational journey.

**Campus is alive** with in-person classes, and our flexible online, hybrid and short-term options are still available.

Our **Campus Transformation** project continues with the renovation of science labs in the Classroom Laboratory Building, Science Building and Regnier Center, providing state-of-the-art facilities for enhanced learning.

We’re also awarding the new **Kansas Promise Scholarship** across 50+ eligible programs in:

- Arts & Design
- Computers
- Communications & Foreign Language
- Health
- Education
- Industrial Technology & Design

Learn more at [jcc.edu/KansasPromise](http://jcc.edu/KansasPromise)
Mark your calendar

Here are some of the Johnson County events you can enjoy this fall. You can find more at jocogov.org.

**Saturday, October 2**
Ceramics (Ages 8-13) - Learn how to score and slip, use various clay tools, and apply glaze to a finished design. Students will be introduced to the potter’s wheel as well. For more information or to register, contact the Arts & Heritage Center at 913-826-3070.

**Thursday, October 7**
History on Tap: Latinos on the Santa Fe Trail - Join Dr. Gene Chavez as he reveals the hidden history of Latinos on the Santa Fe Trail. Includes beverages and snacks. Ages 21 and up. To register, visit jcprd.com.

**Saturday and Sunday, October 9-10**
48 Hours of 4-H - Join the 48 Hours of 4-H Service Challenge! Invite your friends, clubs, adult volunteers and 4-H alumni! Contact Beth Hinshaw at bhinhaw@ksu.edu with questions.

**Wednesday, October 13**
3rd annual Hispanic Heritage Month Celebration
6-8 p.m. at the Johnson County Arts & Heritage Center. Learn more at jcprd.com/327/Arts-Heritage-Center.

**Friday, November 5**
Ceramics Date Night! (Ages 16+) - Enjoy an evening with your special someone at a one-time workshop exploring clay together. For more information or to register, contact the Arts & Heritage Center at 913-826-3070.

**Sunday, November 7**
Owl Prowl (Ages 5 & older, children under 16 must be accompanied by parent/guardian) - Informative talk featuring live owls and an evening hike through the park. Register at jcprd.com/1158/Owl-Prowl.

**Thursday, November 11**
Veterans Day - Please watch jocogov.org and @jocogov on Facebook and Twitter for details on our annual Veterans Day observation.

**Monday, November 22**
Kids’ Day Out - Discover history through hands-on activities and exploration of KidScape and museum exhibits, play games and enjoy down time. For program questions, call the museum 913-715-2570.

**Thursday and Friday, November 25-26**
County offices closed for observing Thanksgiving.
Thursday, December 2
History on Tap: Mid-Century Holiday Party Fashion
Join Johnson County Community College’s Fashion Merchandising and Design Program as they discuss the incredible examples of Mid-Century cocktail dresses and winter coats from their Historical Fashion Collection on display in the All-Electric House. Display ends Jan. 15.

Winter interest in the landscape: keeping your garden beautiful all year
Join Lynn Loughary, Wyandotte County Extension Horticulture Agent on Wednesday, Nov. 3 as she shares a few of the must-have plants that provide year-round interest in the landscape. Many gardens can become dreary, drab and colorless over the winter months, as they lose the warm weather of summer. Beat this winter boredom in your garden through the texture, color and movement of plants that will bring year-round beauty to your landscape.

Join K-State Research and Extension Horticulture agents from across the state as they discuss timely topics in horticulture. Free and open to all from noon to 1 p.m., on the first Wednesday of the month. Preregistration required to participate in the online sessions. Register at johnson.k-state.edu/lawn-garden/.

Build Your Resilience Circle with Elizabeth White
In this workshop from 9 to 10 a.m., Saturday, Oct. 2, Elizabeth White, author of 55, Underemployed, and Faking Normal, will lead participants through questions to help identify trustworthy community members with whom to form resilience circles. Participants will walk away with the tools to form their own resilience circle support groups, where members can support each other and discuss issues related to aging and living a good life on a limited income. Before attending the workshop, we recommend watching the video 55, Underemployed and Faking Normal with Elizabeth White in the Library OnDemand or reading the book.

This program will be hosted using the meeting software Zoom. A Johnson County Library staff member will contact registrants via the email you registered with the day of the program with instructions on how to access the Zoom meeting. You do not need to download any software or create an account. Register at jocolibrary.com.

Wednesday, December 8
Nature Time Yoga (Ages 2-6 with adult) - These parent and child experiences are designed to encourage creativity, coordination and enhance awareness of the natural world. All children must be accompanied by a participating adult. Program held indoors. Everyone attending must register and pay. Register at jcprd.com. Children under 1 must register, but will not be charged.

Saturday, December 11
Printmaking (Ages 8-12) - In this class you will explore color, line and shape while learning the basics of printmaking and creating unique artwork. For more information or to register, contact the Arts & Heritage Center at 913-826-3070.

Thursday, December 16
Behind the Scenes Tour - Interact with museum staff as you learn why we collect, how we collect and the importance to our local community. Our collection features over 19,300 3D objects and over one million images. To schedule a separate time for your group of six to 12 people, or a tour for youth or scout groups, please call (913) 715-2570.

Friday, December 24
County offices closed for observing Christmas.
This history of women’s suffrage and public service

BY GERALD HAY

1861
After becoming the 34th state in the Union in 1861, Kansas allowed women to vote in school elections.

1867
Kansas was the first state to hold a referendum on women’s suffrage. A referendum is when citizens directly vote on an issue. The referendum was defeated in 1867 by male voters. That changed 20 years later when Kansas recognized a woman’s right to vote in municipal elections and hold offices.

1887
The town of Argonia, Kansas (Sumner County) elected Susanna Salter as the first woman mayor in the United States. Also, that year, Syracuse, Kansas, became the first local government in the state to elect an all-female mayor and city council.

1890
Edgerton became the first community in Johnson County to have an entire ticket of women candidates to run for town office in 1890.

1894
Suffrage activists in Kansas launched a second attempt to win broader voting rights, but the state amendment was defeated at the polls.

1911
A third attempt to grant women the right to vote in Kansas was introduced. The Equal Suffrage Amendment was passed by the Kansas Legislature, signed by the governor and then submitted to the state’s male electorate for ratification.

1912
On Nov. 5, 1912, Kansas became the eighth state, and first in the Midwest, to approve women’s voting rights in all elections.

1920
The 19th Amendment was ratified on Aug. 8, 1920, granting women the right to vote in all elections. Kansas ratified the amendment on June 16, 1919 along with New York and Ohio.

1971
It would be 51 years after ratification of the amendment and 81 years after the Edgerton elections before another woman was elected mayor in a Johnson County city. That occurred in 1971 when Margaret W. Jordan was elected mayor of Leawood.

1981
It would be another 61 years after ratification before the first woman was elected as a Johnson County commissioner. The milestone occurred when Johanna Lingle, the first woman mayor in Lenexa, became a county commissioner in 1981.

2000
With the adoption of the county’s Home Rule Charter in 2000, Annabeth Surbaugh became the first public-elected, at-large chairman of the Board of County Commissioners (BOCC) after serving as a district commissioner. Prior to the charter change, the chairmanship was annually chosen by county commissioners.

2020
In celebration of the 100th anniversary in 2020 of the ratification of 19th Amendment, a PDF digital exhibit by Johnson County Museum is accessible at jcpd.com/womenandthevote and a JoCoHistory Blog post is at jocohistory.wordpress.com/2021/07/30/womens-firsts-in-johnson-county/.

Today
There have been 116 county commissioners elected in the 166-year history of Johnson County since it was created in 1855 as one of 33 counties in the territory of Kansas. During that time, only 13 women have been elected to the BOCC. They include the four women commissioners currently serving on the seven-member board (Becky Fast, 1st District; Charlotte O’Hara, 3rd District; Janeé Hanzlick, 4th District; and Shirley Allenbrand, 6th District).

It is the second time in BOCC history that the board has had women in a majority.

Jordan (above), Lingle (below). Photos courtesy of Johnson County Museum.
**How can I renew my registration without going into a Motor Vehicle office?**

To renew your vehicle registration, you are required to pay a state registration renewal fee and county personal property taxes annually. In return, you will receive a decal to be placed on your tag or plate. As a courtesy, Johnson County mails a vehicle registration renewal notice to you approximately 30 days prior to your vehicle’s registration expiration. This notice is also available at edp.mailserviceslc.com/consumer/jcomve/.

- **RENEW ONLINE** at ikan.ks.gov using a credit card or by eCheck. You will need your PIN number located on your renewal notice. After renewing online, please allow 5 to 7 business days to receive your registration receipt and decal by mail. There will be a convenience fee charged by the payment processor for this service. Some registrations may not qualify for electronic renewal.

- **RENEW BY MAIL** with a check, money order or cashier’s check with the remittance slip at the bottom of your registration renewal notice. Include valid proof of insurance. Please do not send cash in the mail. You may write one check if renewing multiple vehicles. Please allow 5 to 7 business days to receive your registration and decal by mail.

**Do I need to wait in line to get a handicap parking placard?**

You do not need to visit a Motor Vehicle office to apply for and receive a handicap parking placard. You can avoid the wait in line by visiting ksrevenue.org/pdf/tr159.pdf to print the application before filling it out with your physician and mailing it into Johnson County Motor Vehicle at 6000 Lamar Avenue in Mission, KS 66202. Your placards and/or plate will then be mailed back to you. You can also drop off the application to an ambassador in the lobby of either Motor Vehicle front office during business hours.

**Where do my motor vehicle fees go?**

*This example is for a regular passenger vehicle renewed by mail. Additional fees are added if renewing in person, online and/or paying with a credit card. Fees can vary based on your vehicle and transaction type.*

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Fall programs coming your way!
JCPPRD.com/Activities

What do you do for fun?
The legislative powers of Johnson County Government are vested in a seven-member Board of County Commissioners that exercises its authority to ensure the general health, safety and welfare of the public.

The board is composed of an at-large chairman and one representative from each of the six districts in the county.

Chairman Ed Eilert
913-715-0500

Becky Fast
1st District
913-715-0725

Janeé Hanzlick
Vice chair,
4th District
913-715-0434

Jeff Meyers
2nd District
913-715-0432

Michael Ashcraft
5th District
913-715-0435

Charlotte O’Hara
3rd District
913-715-0433

Shirley Allenbrand
6th District
913-715-0436

BOCC priority areas for 2021 – 2022

For the remainder of this year and next, the Board of County Commissioners will focus on four key areas, while continuing to provide the core functions and responsibilities that make Johnson County a great place to live, work and raise a family. The BOCC adopted these priorities on June 24.

1. Assess, advance and implement strategic capital planning and resulting major projects with efficiency and effectiveness.

Johnson County uses strategic planning and capital program management to plan, budget and fund major county projects (such as the new courthouse, parks and libraries, and wastewater or stormwater projects) that enhance the life of residents and the business community. As part of this priority, the board and county staff work together to ensure major projects demonstrate stewardship, are managed effectively, provide engagement opportunities to receive community feedback and report progress on a regular basis.

2. Develop a forward-thinking transit approach that connects the community and serves vulnerable populations.

Public transportation is a focus area because it improves access to jobs, health care and other important destinations. Over the next two years, the county will continue to explore and analyze the micro transit pilot as well as utilize feedback from 2021 visioning sessions to develop a five-year transit plan that re-thinks how the services are provided to target populations.

3. Strengthen and finance the appropriate level of service to meet the needs of the county’s vulnerable populations and create conditions that promote community health.

Through our own county departments and alongside community partners, Johnson County will provide programs and services that help vulnerable populations work towards self-sufficiency. These populations include those with intellectual or developmental disabilities, behavioral health needs, or those who are aging or have low-income households.

4. Provide an ongoing focus to develop innovative initiatives and policies across the organization and community that enhance operational effectiveness and efficiency, levels of customer service and stewardship.

This priority will focus on efforts for staff to leverage diversity, implement sustainable practices, encourage new ideas and continue the best practices and improvements created due to the pandemic...all in an effort to better serve the residents of our county. ☝

jocogov.org/bocc
Twenty years ago, Robert (Bob) and Shirley Hemenway of Shawnee lost their son in the terror attacks on Sept. 11.

Ronald John Hemenway, the couple’s third son, was a Navy electronics technician first class petty officer assigned to the Chief of Naval Operations at the Pentagon. He was at work when American Airlines Flight 77 slammed into the building, killing all 64 people on the plane and 125 people inside the Pentagon, including Ronald John Hemenway. He was 37 and the father of two young children.

“His remains were never recovered,” Bob Hemenway said. “Not even his dog tags.”

The couple’s son was one of 2,977 victims killed in terrorist attacks involving four hijacked airplanes. Two planes struck New York City’s twin towers of the World Trade Center. The third hijacked plane struck the Pentagon. The final plane was deliberately crashed into a Pennsylvania field near Shanksville.

The victims of the terrorist attacks ranged in age from 2 to 85.

“The night before he died, we spent an hour and a half on the phone talking about equipment and so forth and I said, ‘Ron you better go to bed, you’ll never get up in the morning,’” his father remembered. “Twenty years may seem like a long time, but it seems just like yesterday.”

Shirley Hemenway agreed.

“Not a day goes by that we don’t remember,” she added. “I thought I was going to die. We lost a piece of our heart that day.”

Following Sept. 11, Ronald Hemenway was classified as Missing in Action (MIA) since his body had not been located by search and recovery teams. On Nov. 11, 2001, the Pentagon announced five victims either could not be positively identified or no remains were found in the rubble. Ronald Hemenway was reclassified as Killed in Action (KIA).

He rests in a single casket placed in a five-sided “Rock of Ages” granite monument at Arlington National Cemetery along with the other four unidentified victims. They included three civilians, ranging in age from 44 to 60, at work at the Pentagon and a 3-year-old girl on Flight 77. Other families also chose to include the remains of 25 other victims from the Pentagon attack in the casket. The group gravesite was dedicated on Sept. 12, 2002.

The couple attended the dedication. It would be the second time they had buried a son. Their second child, Dale, died in infancy.

Their lives were forever changed two decades ago. Even with the passage of time, memories never die.

“9/11 was a sad tragedy for our family and our nation. So many loved ones were lost that day,” Bob Hemenway said.

“It never goes away,” Shirley Hemenway added. “I want people to always remember. I don’t want them to ever forget.”

Married for 61 years, the Hemenways have two sons and three daughters, all living in or near Johnson County, along with 19 grandchildren and 11 great-grandchildren. The couple has lived in Shawnee since 1987.

With the passing of 20 years, it’s easier for the couple to talk about that day and the beloved son they lost in the 9/11 attacks.

A Gold Star Banner hangs from a front window. It symbolizes that a family has had a loved one die or killed while serving in the armed forces. Shirley Hemenway joined the North East Chapter of Gold Star Mothers in Kansas, including serving as a past president.

“Before 9/11, I didn’t even know what a Gold Star Mother was,” she said. “It’s an honor no family wants.”

For other Johnson County memories of Sept. 11, visit jocogov.org/JohnsonCountyRemembers
Major projects updates
BY NICOLE BLACKWELL

The plan was recommended to the Board of County Commissioners (BOCC) by county staff and an 11-member steering committee with public input gathered from pop-up meetings, open houses, a focus group and two online surveys.

The project was authorized with funding approval by BOCC in its role as the Public Building Commission (PBC).

County Square will soon be open to visitors in downtown Olathe

Soon residents and visitors will enjoy a new green space in downtown Olathe – the new Johnson County Square.

After the county’s new courthouse was built at the corner of Kansas Avenue and Santa Fe Street, crews demolished the old courthouse to create space for the new square.

Next, crews will backfill the foundation, then the new square is expected to reach substantial completion in November.

The square will initially include a community green, a curved walkway and a tree grove at the corner of Santa Fe and Cherry streets.

The existing water feature is designed to remain in place. The community green is a space where groups can gather. The space can be programmed for outdoor venues small and large or activities like concerts, yoga and small performances or can remain open for kite flying, yard games or informal gathering and picnics.

A curved and widened sidewalk will link the county administration building and the courthouse and all of the park elements. The plan includes a tree grove on the northeast corner.

New lighting, turf already a hit at Mid-America Sports Complex; Phase 2 work to begin in September

Part of the first phase of improvements at Mid-America Sports Complex opened in late April. More amenities have opened since, and more improvements are on the way.

The current project, designated as Phase 1 and involving about $12 million in improvements, started construction in October 2020.

Remaining Phase 1 improvements include the complex’s main entry gate, and the new Fan Zone west of fields 1 and 8. The Fan Zone will include full concessions with seating, restrooms, an umpires’ room, manager’s office, an outside BBQ cooker, 10 hitting tunnels and a playground for children ages 5 to 12. Officials expect the entry area and Fan Zone to open in September, with the playground opening in late October or early November.

Also in September, officials tentatively expect to break ground for Phase 2 improvements. This $10.3 million in projects will mirror Phase 1 with artificial turf installation and replacement of existing restrooms and concession areas on the “Softball 2” quad, involving fields 5 through 8.

Other work will include construction of a new maintenance building, more improvements to utilities and paving, parking and lighting, and a turf warm-up and practice area.

“Softball 2” quad fields should be playable by mid-April 2022, with parking improvements complete by June 15, and the maintenance building finished by Sept. 15.

Phase 3 improvements will follow in late 2022 with another $9.12 million in projects. This phase will again mirror the earlier phases with improvements to fields 9 and 10 and the complex’s Royals and Fenway baseball fields. A new concession building at baseball, parking improvements, utilities and paving are also part of this phase.

About a year after Phase 3, three phases

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of improvements at Mid-America Sports Complex West will start in 2024 and proceed through 2026.

**Major renovation project, large-scale improvements in progress at county libraries**

In addition to the major renovation project at Johnson County Library’s Central Resource branch, many large-scale improvements have either been completed or are in progress at the Cedar Roe, Corinth and Oak Park locations as part of the Library’s Capital Improvement Program. Though most building upkeep can occur behind the scenes, some projects require temporary closures ranging from several hours to several weeks and are dependent on weather conditions and recent supply chain constraints. Visit [jocolibrary.org](http://jocolibrary.org) for construction updates.

- **Cedar Roe** received a major facelift this year with major HVAC upgrades and replacement of the sloped shingle roof, exterior soffits and fencing. New shelving units complement a reorganized layout, and a walk-up curbside holds pickup spot was created to serve pedestrians and bicyclists in the neighborhood.

- **Central Resource** renovations are well-underway, which include the addition of a drive-thru window, more meeting rooms, a larger kids’ area and reconfiguration of staff workspaces. While holds pickups, returns and limited public computers are still available at Central, the branch will fully reopen after construction completes and furnishings, equipment and staff are back in the building.

- **Corinth** received a new roof and upgrades to its HVAC system over the summer and will get upgrades to its electrical system this fall.

- **Oak Park** is undergoing safety improvements to its electrical system this fall. The library anticipates a larger project in 2022, which will include renovation of public restrooms and roof replacement.

**Water quality**

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Kansas State University Agricultural Experiment Station and Cooperative Extension Service K-State Research and Extension is an equal opportunity provider and employer.
Library OnDemand offers events on your schedule

BY COURTNEY SAMMIS

Johnson County Library has more than books—it also hosts hundreds of events each year. Featuring knowledgeable presenters on topics ranging from local art to career and financial advice, all events are open to the public at no cost. Plus, now you can view those events online on your own schedule!

Library OnDemand is a virtual meeting space where you can engage with Library programs in a way that’s easy to fit into your busy life. Browse and register for upcoming events, participate live, or view past events when it’s convenient for you. However you choose to experience a program, Library OnDemand helps make library events available to more people than ever.

“With more things reopening and kids going back to school, I think people’s free time is going to be a lot more limited,” said Information Specialist Dylan Reiter. “To be able to watch programs on demand will be really advantageous.”

Library OnDemand provides full access to content and interactive features even after the event has taken place, giving the platform significant benefits over a standard video recording.

“There’s also a resource list that’s provided by the presenter or speaker that viewers can access to explore the topics to a much greater extent than just simply watching a video.”

Many Library OnDemand events also offer closed captioning, making them accessible to a wider audience. This important addition is funded by a grant from the Kauffman Foundation. The feature has already generated a lot of positive feedback, according to Program and Event Coordinator Joseph Keehn.

Future Library OnDemand events may also include breakout rooms, a new feature that will add another layer of interactivity to this virtual meeting space.

“Think webinar meets Zoom,” said Keehn. “So for instance, if you had an author talk, you could have book discussions happening while the author talk is going on. It could almost act as a watch party.”

Library OnDemand content is always being updated, with new programs added regularly. With a wide variety of topics, there’s something for any interest.

Arts & Culture

Local artists talk about their work, creative process and what inspires them in the monthly program Artists in Sight. In The Past is Prologue, hear about pieces of history that are often left out, glossed over or misrepresented in history books. Or learn to create one of several Maker Projects guided by the team from the Library’s MakerSpace.

Career & Personal Finance

Explore the Money Mondays series of events, with topics ranging from budgeting and investing to credit scores and popular money management apps.

Writers

Participate in the local writing community with Writing Lectures & Conversations, featuring local and national writers and poets. And mark your calendars for the Nov. 4-7 2021 Writers Conference, an annual event hosted by the Library that helps writers find inspiration, work through roadblocks and connect with other members of the community.

Community Matters

Here you’ll find resources to support community problem-solving and politics. You can also discover tools from this spring’s Community Developmental Disabilities Organization resource fair.

To experience all that Library OnDemand has to offer, visit jocolibrary.org/ondemand.
Delta variant spreads in Johnson County

BY JENNIFER DUNLAY

The delta coronavirus variant is throwing a wrench in plans to ditch the masks and return to pre-pandemic life. Between July 1 and Aug. 20, positive cases of COVID-19 in Johnson County increased 920%, going from 16 cases/100,000 persons (July 1) to 163 cases/100,000 persons (Aug. 20) in Johnson County due to the spread of the delta variant. This jump in cases caused Johnson County health officials to strongly recommend masking in indoor public areas in early August. To keep schools open in a safe manner, a mask order was enacted by the Board of County Commissioners sitting as the Board of Public Health. Masks are now required in school buildings attended by students up to and including sixth grade. The mask order is in effect until May 31, 2022, unless amended or revoked. Although the threat exists for children to become very sick with COVID-19, adults who are unvaccinated or immunocompromised are at highest risk for a severe health outcome from this virus variant.

Even with these additional protection measures in place, Dr. Sanmi Areola, director of the Johnson County Department of Health and Environment (JCDHE), says the best way to protect yourself and those you care about from COVID-19 is to get vaccinated.

“We have three highly effective and safe COVID-19 vaccines that will prevent you from becoming seriously ill and ending up in the hospital or even dying. Everyone 12 and older should get vaccinated so we can protect those who cannot – children under age 12 and those who are unable to get vaccinated for medical or religious reasons.”

Although a small number of breakthrough cases have been reported to the health department, 0.58% of those vaccinated with the Johnson & Johnson vaccine, 0.17% vaccinated with the Moderna vaccine and 0.20% of those vaccinated with the Comirnaty (Pfizer) vaccine, nearly all of the recent infections, hospitalizations and deaths comes from those unvaccinated. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) a very small percentage of fully vaccinated people can become infected with COVID-19 and spread it to others, which is why health officials are now asking everyone to wear a mask in public indoor places whether they are vaccinated or not. Those who do experience a breakthrough case tend to have no symptoms or mild symptoms and rarely require hospitalization.

Areola says it’s especially important that transplant patients, those with chronic illnesses like heart disease or diabetes, or anyone undergoing treatment for cancer or taking immunosuppressants should continue to take the same pandemic precautions they did before they were vaccinated – wearing a mask, avoiding crowded indoor places, keeping distance from those you don’t live with and frequent handwashing. Areola advises that gathering outdoors is a safer alternative and encourages everyone to wear a mask if you can’t keep distance from people you don’t live with, whether you are vaccinated or not. When planning a visit to a long-term care facility, Areola says it’s a good idea to call ahead and ask about their visitation policy, as it may have changed recently.

On Aug. 16, the CDC recommended a third dose of the COVID-19 vaccine for moderately to severely immunocompromised people because they are more at risk of serious, prolonged illness. People with moderately to severely compromised immune systems may not build the same level of immunity to a two-dose vaccine series and may benefit from an additional dose.

Those who would like an additional dose will complete and sign a form indicating they have an eligible condition. The additional dose is administered 28 days or later after the second dose of the Pfizer or Moderna vaccine. This additional dose is free and widely available in Johnson County. On Aug. 18, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services authorized a plan to offer booster vaccines for all Americans after Sept. 20. Vaccines can be administered eight months (or later) after an individual’s second dose of the Pfizer or Moderna shot. Booster shots for those who received a Johnson & Johnson vaccine have not been recommended yet.

Visit jocogov.org/coronavirus or call 913-715-2819 for more information about how to get a COVID-19 vaccination in Johnson County. You can also text your zip code to 438829, visit vaccines.gov or call 1-800-232-0233 (TTY 888-720-7489) to find a vaccine provider anywhere in the United States.

As the COVID-19 pandemic unfolds, information and data is subject to change. Information in the article was accurate at the time this issue was printed. Visit jocogov.org/coronavirus for the latest info.
On the evening of May 2, 2021, 9-year-old Bekkah Suraud, Overland Park, realized that her neighbor’s dog was out of her yard. When Bekkah entered her neighbor’s home to return the dog, she found her neighbor was experiencing a medical emergency. Bekkah quickly grabbed the neighbor’s cell phone. Finding the phone locked, she knew to use the emergency button on the cell phone to call 911. She was able to clearly and calmly explain that her neighbor was incoherent. She provided complete and accurate location information to help neighbor.

On Monday, May 24, the Mid-America Regional Council’s Public Safety Communications Program and the Johnson County Emergency Communications Center honored Bekkah for demonstrating the proper use of 911 in an emergency. Gale Wash, quality assurance and quality improvement manager for Johnson County Emergency Management and Communications, presented the award to Bekkah at a special ceremony at the Johnson County MED-ACT building, in Olathe.

“If you think someone needs help, call 911, and be prepared to listen to the dispatcher,” said Wash. “Make sure you know where you are, and be ready to answer questions about what you are seeing. These are important steps to getting the right help to the right place at the right time.”

Johnson County dispatchers play an important role in assisting callers administer life-saving help and relaying important information to emergency medical responders arriving on the scene. Trey Glidewell was the Johnson County dispatcher who assisted Bekkah with her neighbor. He prompted the nomination of Bekkah for MARC’s Heroes program.

“Emergencies are often emotional and stressful events,” said Mike Daniels, operations manager for MARC’s Regional Public Safety Communications Program. “Even though her neighbor was ill, with no other adult to assist, Bekkah displayed a degree of calm and composure that is rarely witnessed in events such as these, especially in someone so young,” added Daniels.

MARC’s Regional 911 Hero Award program recognizes young people who demonstrate knowledge of the proper use of 911 by performing heroic action during an emergency. To receive the award, the child must have initiated the 911 call and performed a heroic act during the course of the emergency that resulted in saving a life, significantly reducing property loss or stopping a crime.

When asked about the lifesaving experience, Bekkah said, “If I could teach anyone about this, I’d say if you know what’s right, then do it.”
Sharon Morris  
Education/Vocational Counselor, Johnson County Mental Health Center

Can you tell us a short story about how this program has helped someone? I worked with a client who had dreams of working in a human resources position but didn’t have a full understanding of what it would mean day-to-day. I was able to connect my client to our CSEP human resources partner who participated in an informational interview, allowing my client to get all of her questions answered. This client then went into a human resources certificate program at a Kansas state school and achieved her goal to become qualified to work as a human resources partner.

How has this program played a role in your department in helping people find employment? The resources for job development we’ve gained by our relationship with the Johnson County Department of Corrections has assisted our clients with a mental illness, who may also have a criminal charge, the ability to identify established working relationships with employers who identify as “fair chance.” Fair chance refers to an employer who will look at a potential employee with a criminal charge in their background and still give them a chance at being successful in that job.

What type of barriers for employment have you seen that this program helps to overcome? Some of our clients face barriers to employment due to lack of a lengthy job history, having had a gap in employment, increased anxiety over the process of applying for and being hired for a job. The CSEP job fair has given clients the opportunity to engage in a very normal process, the job fair, with additional supports from all of the CSEP members.

Rodney L. Weber  
Deputy Director of Field Services, Johnson County Department of Corrections

How has CSEP helped your program? CSEP has brought community employers to the table that are willing to work with our population. This program has opened doors that have usually been shut, giving our clients a second chance.

How has this program played a role in your department in helping people find employment? Twice a year, CSEP puts on a job fair that our clients attend. The members of CSEP work hard on recruiting employers to these events that match the needs of our clients. These events have helped our population tremendously as it gets them face-to-face with hiring managers and allows them to showcase their skills.

What type of barriers for employment have you seen that this program helps to overcome? When you hear the word “corrections,” it tends to make employers feel uncomfortable. CSEP helps educate employers about how they can be a part of something very special by helping an individual be successful. Employment is a barrier that all felons face coming out of jail or prisons. We as a community can help break down this barrier by offering an opportunity to these individuals, so they can make a better life for themselves.

Susan Waelterman  
Community Employment Specialist, Johnson County Developmental Supports

Can you tell us a short story about how this program has helped someone? A story that sticks out in my mind is one of an individual who was a bit apprehensive and scared to enter the workplace. I met with the individual and his family to discover what the vocational goals, strengths and dreams for his future would look like. Upon further discussion, I recognized he was not aware of several community resources that would enrich his life. I was able to quickly identify his needs and connect him with the proper channels to obtain additional services outside of employment. With a careful match of his job skills and vocational goal, he was able to obtain competitive, integrated community employment. His employer has stated numerous times that his enthusiasm to work and dependability has lightened the workload for an otherwise overloaded department.

How has this program played a role in your department in helping people find employment? Community employment is one way an individual can move toward a more independent lifestyle, but it also goes deeper than this. In employment, we assist the individual in embracing a greater sense of purpose and a feeling of self-worth. As members of the employment team, we advocate for our individuals in the community, build partnerships with local businesses and educate the public on ways to incorporate inclusivity in the workplace.

What type of barriers for employment have you seen that this program helps to overcome? Our program sees many barriers presented, but we always encourage our individuals to advocate and to be a voice for change. Our team is very creative and talented in implementing these supports when addressing an individual’s barriers. For example, a person may come to employment who is a nonreader. We would work with the employer to implement visual supports such as picture or color-coded task lists to encourage comprehension and completion. Many employers are amazed at how some slight tweaks and a different way of thinking can be used in the workplace for success.
**1 Catch-a-Ride**
Catch-a-Ride is a social service program that provides volunteer transportation for older adults, people with disabilities and other adults who have no other means of transportation to essential medical and social service agency appointments.

**2 Developmental Supports**
Johnson County Developmental Supports facilitates career and personal development for Johnson County residents with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

**3 Food pantries**
Food pantries throughout the county offer groceries and certain household supplies to older adults and others in need of food. Food pantries are available through the Johnson County Aging and Human Services Department, local non-profits and many area churches.

**4 Home-Delivered Meals**
The Area Agency on Aging provides home-delivered meals to homebound older adults, age 60+ and their spouse. An evaluation of need must be completed by an Area Agency on Aging assessor to qualify for home-delivered meals. Staff and volunteers deliver meals between 10:45 a.m. and noon, Monday through Friday.

**5 HomeConnect**
HomeConnect is a service for residents of the Johnson County Library service area who are unable to come to the Library in person, including those who are permanently or temporarily homebound. All types of library materials can be mailed directly to individuals who qualify, and return postage is provided. Olathe residents should apply for Olathe Library to You Delivery.

**6 Immunizations**
The Johnson County Department of Health and Environment offers immunizations for children, teens and adults, including COVID-19 vaccinations, seasonal flu shots and travel immunizations.

**7 Mental Health Services**
Johnson County Mental Health Center is the gateway to mental health in Johnson County, providing a wide range of mental health and substance abuse services to county residents who meet our level of care. Level of care is determined during the initial walk-in visit when meeting with a staff member who will listen and assess individual needs. If we are unable to provide the necessary level of care, we refer residents to additional providers in the community.

**8 Outreach Nurse Home Visiting Program for Senior Adults and Postpartum Mothers**
Skilled registered nurses are available to visit with senior adults and new mothers/infants one-on-one in their home and provide physical and social assessments as well as education and counseling.

**9 Utility Assistance**
Financial assistance to promote safety and avoid utility disconnection is available to qualifying Johnson County households. Help may be provided with electric, water, propane, gas or wastewater bills. Services are available by appointment only. For help with utilities January-March of each year, individuals may also apply for the Low Income Energy Assistance Program (LIEAP).

**10 WIC (Women, Infants and Children) Program**
WIC is a supplemental food and nutrition education program that provides services to Kansas families who qualify. WIC’s goal is to help keep pregnant and breastfeeding women, new moms and kids under age 5 healthy.
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