Features

Johnson County Co-Responders

County approves FY2018 budget
Johnson County keeps sharp focus on emergency planning as disasters take center stage across U.S.

Every fall, Johnson County Emergency Management brings over a hundred county staff together for a large-scale disaster exercise to ensure the county is ready to respond to an emergency. The effort also involves coordination with cities, universities and colleges, and non-profit partners such as the American Red Cross and Salvation Army.

Recent events across the U.S. from active shooters and hurricanes to local events such as massive summer floods and heavy storm damage all point to the importance and urgency of preparing for the worst.

As more challenging crises face our nation, both natural and manmade, it is critical for local communities to ensure a plan is not only in place, but that it has been tested and tried. This year’s disaster exercise simulated the touch down of three tornadoes across Johnson County resulting in emergency responders needing to respond to loss of life, injuries, major power disruptions, highway damage, chemical spills and a significant impact on local government operations.

Local responders are the first to the scene of any disaster regardless of the size and scope, followed by county, state and federal support depending on the needs the emergency presents. Johnson County’s Emergency Operations Center in downtown Olathe is the central coordination point for countywide response efforts. Here partners from all aspects of local government fill the response center to coordinate the help needed throughout the county and test the county’s plan which details who is responsible for various aspects of a disaster response: jocogov.org/emergency-plans.

Law enforcement, fire and emergency medical services have procedures, protocols and guidelines in place which they continually test in their daily responses. As an emergency situation gets too large for local responders, they call on mutual aid from nearby communities. If the disaster is larger than what local responders can manage alone, they coordinate with the county emergency manager to request additional resources from the state of Kansas which can range from personnel and equipment to financial support to recover from a disaster.

This happened recently in Johnson County after significant flooding and severe weather impacted homes and businesses and left more than six million dollars in damages to city and county infrastructure including buildings, roads and bridges.

In 2016, Johnson County enhanced its emergency exercise program to include not only an annual full scale exercise, but also quarterly exercises to ensure capabilities are continually developed and evaluated. These exercises are held in conjunction with 15 workshops held throughout the year, each addressing a separate county-wide emergency function, a program Johnson County Emergency Management has had in place for the past six years.

Since 9/11 and Hurricane Katrina numerous changes and improvements have been made to disaster response efforts at all levels of government, and public awareness of individual preparedness has increased with ongoing reminders for residents to have home emergency kits and plans for the family including pets. More details are available at ready.gov and joco72.org.

As we move into fall and winter in Kansas, we encourage residents to take the necessary steps to keep their family safe including signing up for emergency alerts from the county at www.NotifyJoCo.org.

Ed Eilert
Chairman, Board of County Commissioners

Hannes Zacharias
County Manager

On the cover: Co-responder mental health professionals support seven cities and 10 police departments across Johnson County. Partner law enforcement joined the co-responders for pictures in September. Read more about the co-responder program on pages 12 and 13.
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Ways to engage with JoCo

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

Social media
Twitter: @jocogov
Facebook: facebook.com/jocogov
Instagram: instagram.com/jocogov

By phone
Call Center: 913-715-5000
Kansas Relay Operator: 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, KS 66061.

Johnson County Elected Officials
Ed Eierl, Chairman
Ronald L. “Ron” Shaffer, District 1
James “Jim” P. Allen, District 2
Steven “Steve” C. Klika, District 3
Jason Osterhaus, District 4
Michael Ashcraft, District 5
Michael “Mike” Brown, District 6
Stephen M. Howe, District Attorney
Calvin H. Hayden, Sheriff

Image above: More than 650 elementary to high school students packed the halls of the Johnson County Courthouse on Sept. 15 to celebrate Constitution Day — a now-annual event held by the District Court to recognize the formation and signing of the United States and Kansas constitutions. District Court plans to host its next Constitution Day in 2018.
In short
A glimpse into what’s going on at Johnson County Government

Johnson County Park & Recreation District wins prestigious National Gold Medal Award
On Sept. 26, Johnson County Park & Recreation District was selected for the National Gold Medal Awards for Excellence in Park and Recreation Management for agencies serving a population over 400,000. JCPRD was previously a finalist in 1991, 1993, 1994 and 2016. The agency previously won the Gold Medal Award in 1995. The honor was announced during the National Park and Recreation Association’s Annual Conference in New Orleans.

“This award is not about a single park or a single program. It’s about teamwork, collaboration and an outstanding commitment to public service,” said JCPRD Executive Director Jill Geller.

Johnson County Wastewater earns national recognition for environmental compliance
Johnson County Wastewater (JCW) received national recognition for its compliance with National Pollutant Discharge Elimination (NPDES) permit limits. The National Association of Clean Water Agencies (NACWA) recognized the county agency in July with platinum and gold Peak Performance Awards for the 2016 calendar year. Each year, NACWA recognizes public wastewater facilities for outstanding environmental compliance. Two JCW treatment facilities, the Myron K. Nelson Plant and the Douglas L. Smith Middle Basin Plant, received the Gold Peak Performance Award, honoring treatment plants that achieved 100 percent compliance with the NPDES permit in 2016. This year, JCW received four Platinum Peak Performance Awards, honoring treatment works that have at least five years of complete, consistent NPDES permit compliance.

This is the highest number of platinum awards the department has ever earned, recognizing New Century AirCenter and Tomahawk Creek plants for five years of compliance; Mill Creek Regional Plant for 10 years of compliance; and Blue River Main Plant for 11 years of compliance.

Local elected officials named to Johnson County Education Research Triangle (JCERT) Authority
This spring, Overland Park Mayor Carl Gerlach was appointed chairman of JCERT. Four elected officials were named to four-year terms on the JCERT authority board — Kansas state senators Melissa Rooker and Julia Lynn, Leawood Mayor Peggy Dunn and Olathe Mayor Michael Copeland. These new authority members join Gerlach, Johnson County Commissioner Jason Osterhaus and Johnson County Community College Trustee David Lindstrom in serving a second four-year term.

JCERT was created in late 2008, when county voters approved a 1/8-cent sales tax to advance academic, research and business efforts of three partner organizations: the KU Edwards Campus in Overland Park, K-State Olathe and the University of Kansas Clinical Research Center in Fairway. The JCERT tax generates more than $15 million annually and is divided equally among the three academic partner organizations. JCERT is on track to achieve its originally projected economic impact of more than $1.4 billion in its first two decades.

“Quotable”
“The Johnson County Museum connects the residents of our community with our history, giving us a sense of place and time, and it strengthens our understanding of this community.”

— Johnson County Commission Chair Ed Eilert
at Johnson County Museum’s 50th Anniversary event, Oct. 5
Three actions to fight flu this flu season

by JENNIFER DUNLAY

Flu is a serious contagious disease that can lead to hospitalization and even death. You have the power to protect yourself and your family this season in three action steps.

1. **Get a flu vaccine.**
   Everyone six months of age and older (including pregnant women) should get a flu vaccine by the end of October, if possible. A yearly flu vaccine is the first and most important step in protecting against the flu. The nasal spray vaccine is not available. About two weeks after vaccination, antibodies that protect against influenza virus infection develop in the body, so get your flu vaccine sooner rather than later. Johnson County Department of Health and Environment offers flu shots on a walk-in basis at its Olathe (11875 S. Sunset Dr.) and Mission (6000 Lamar Ave.) health clinics. Seasonal flu shots are $30 and high-dose flu shots for those age 65 and older are $50. Save time by checking in with the QLess mobile app or online at jocogov.org/jcdhe before you arrive.

2. **Take action to stop the spread of germs.**
   Avoid close contact with sick people and if you become sick, limit your contact with others. When possible, stay home for at least 24 hours after your fever is gone. Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when you cough or sneeze, and wash your hands often with soap and water. If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer gel.

3. **Take flu antiviral drugs if your doctor prescribes them.**
   If you get the flu, prescription medicine called antiviral drugs can be used to treat flu illness. Antiviral drugs can make illness milder, shorten the time which you are sick and may also prevent serious flu complications.

If you have questions about the flu vaccine, call your doctor or JCDHE’s immunization line at 913-826-1261.

Audit Services helps to improve government operations

by CHRIS DEPUSOIR

Johnson County Government’s Audit Services is an independent appraisal activity that examines and evaluates county government programs. The office provides an independent, objective assessment of county operations, services and programs, and provides recommendations for operational improvements that emphasize transparency and accountability.

Audit Services has seven auditors with varying expertise, advanced degrees and certifications, including Certified Public Accountant, Certified Internal Auditor and Certified Fraud Examiner.

“Our office’s mission is to assist the county in operating as efficiently and effectively as possible,” said County Auditor Ken Kleffner. “This office encourages continuous improvement and strives to be regarded as a trusted audit and consulting partner.”

The office conducts Performance Audits, following Generally Accepted Government Auditing Standards prescribed by the U.S. Government Accountability Office, when performing audits. The office also undergoes an independent peer review every three years to ensure its auditing processes and performance meets professional standards. Johnson County’s Audit Services passed its peer review accreditation in November 2016 conducted by the Association of Local Government Auditors.

Audit topics and activities are selected based on assessment of risk to the county, management requests or as directed by the county commission. Audit findings, results and recommendations are reported to the commission and are accessible by the public. State laws, federal regulations, industry standards, performance metrics and “best practices” are just some criteria Audit Services uses when evaluating county programs. Evaluations lead to recommendations designed to improve program performance and assist departments to achieve objectives.

One audit that was identified as having significant impact was a 2015 audit: AT&T Telephone and Communications Payments and Services. The audit objective was to determine if the county was being assessed unauthorized or cramming charges — questionable or unwanted charges added to one’s telephone bill. The scope of the audit assessed the internal reconciliation process for invoices.

It identified some practices that allowed exposure to unauthorized expenses. The office recommended developing countywide guidelines for review and payment of AT&T telephone and communication services. As a result of its recommendations, the county’s Department of Technology and Innovation implemented changes resulting in an estimated cost savings of $160,000. These savings were realized through the elimination of unnecessary phone lines and renegotiated agreements with AT&T.

Recently, the audit team presented the results of its transition audit of the Johnson County Sheriff’s Office to the county commission; it is now online at audit.jocogov.org.
Johnson County adopts 2018 budget
Mill levy reduction included
by AUSTIN FALLEY

In August, the Johnson County Board of County Commissioners adopted its fiscal year 2018 budget that included a reduction in the county’s general fund mill levy. The 2018 budget totals $1.06 billion, including $819.6 million in expenditures and $242.1 million in reserves.

“This budget meets the county’s needs and allows us to reduce the county general fund mill levy,” said Ed Eilert, chairman of the Board of County Commissioners. “The adopted budget includes a quarter-mill reduction, and increases the county’s reserves so it can better accommodate wastewater system improvements, weather a potential economic downturn and maintain our excellent credit ratings.”

Crunching the numbers
Of the $242.1 million in reserves, $106 million is allocated for Johnson County Wastewater (JCW), a fee-funded utility, which does not receive property tax support and does not receive revenue from residents who are not served by JCW. The reserve will help fund the construction of a new treatment plant and additional costs associated with sending wastewater to Kansas City, Missouri, for treatment until the new facility is built.

The remainder of the reserves are $81.1 million for general fund; $12.1 million for county operations; and $16.7 million for fee-funded services including stormwater operations, airport and 9-1-1 services and $25.3 million for parks and libraries.

“The adopted budget increases resources to public safety and elections and allows the county to meet the ever-growing demand for services,” said County Manager Hannes Zacharias. “This budget adheres to the commission’s direction to maintain a constant mill levy or reduction, if prudent.”

The total estimated county mill levy is 26.276 mills — a reduced mill levy when compared to 2017. This includes an estimated mill levy of 19.259 for the county taxing district, 3.915 mills for libraries and 3.102 mills for park and recreation.

Major capital projects
A Capital Improvement Program is part of the FY 2018 budget and totals more than $159.6 million. CIP projects include:

- $77.4 million for wastewater capital projects
- $15 million for the Stormwater Management Program
- $14.9 million for the County Assistance Road System (CARS) program

The Board of County Commissioners adopted the FY 2018 budget on Aug. 10. Under state regulation, the new budget must be approved and certified by the county clerk each year by Aug. 25.

- $14.8 million for park and recreation capital projects
- $13.1 million for election office voting machine upgrades

The total estimated revenue from ad valorem taxes is $247.6 million — $186.5 million for the county taxing district, $31.1 million for libraries, and $30 million for park and recreation.

The adopted budget funds a maximum of 3,949.72 full-time-equivalent employees, an increase of 62.73 FTEs over 2017, and include the following:

- Johnson County Library’s requested 38 new positions for the Monticello branch in Shawnee set to open in 2018.
- The Park and Recreation District has budget approval for 10 FTEs, including regional park managers, regional assistant park managers, park workers and more.
- MED-ACT will add 12 FTEs, all paramedics, seven will support two Overland Park MED-ACT ambulances which the county assumes operations in 2018. Five positions will enhance current operations to meet call volumes.
- The District Attorney’s Office will hire two assistant district attorneys and an investigator.
- Emergency Management and Communications will fill two emergency communications specialist positions.

The county’s budget includes a 13.3 percent increase in the county general services expenditure budget — 6.8 percent of the increase comes from the voter-approved public safety sales tax to fund a new courthouse and medical examiner facility.

On average, residential property owners will pay $885 in county property taxes for 2018 — about $74 per month, based on average home value in the county of approximately $293,000.

The new budget must be approved and certified by the county clerk each year by Aug. 25. The county’s Records and Tax Administration (RTA), as its county clerk, must calculate mill levies and taxes for certification to the county treasurer for collection on or before Nov. 1. The final setting of the 2018 mill levy is established by the county clerk with new property valuations by RTA.

The county’s fiscal year begins Jan. 1. FY 2018 budget documents are available online at jocogov.org.
After nearly a year of construction, a ribbon cutting which opened the Johnson County Park & Recreation District’s newest streamway park took place in mid-October.

This special event for the Coffee Creek Streamway Park Trail’s initial phase of 3.4 miles took place on Oct. 14 near Shelters 9 and 10 in Heritage Park, which is the primary access point and western terminus for the new trail. The ribbon cutting ceremony included light refreshments, giveaways, and comments by Johnson County Board of Park and Recreation Commission Chair Paul Snider and other officials.

“We’re pleased to open this new streamway trail, which will help serve the greenspace needs of southeast Johnson County,” said JCPRD Project Manager Bill Leek. “This trail crosses open fields, most of it leftover pasture lands, with some woodlands along the stream, consisting mostly of oak, hickory, hackberry, sycamore and cottonwood trees.”

The new trail stretches east to Switzer Road. At this time, the shelter near Heritage Park Shelters 9 and 10 has the only restrooms and other amenities. The trail connects to surrounding residential neighborhoods but no parking for trail access is provided at those points. The paved trail is for pedestrians and bikes only.

This phase of trail development ends to the east at 169th Street near Switzer Road and the Coffee Creek Crossing Development.

A future access point with amenities is planned about halfway through the phase I trail, but must wait until 2018 for anticipated extensions east and west of 167th Street and north and south of Flint Street by the city of Overland Park to provide access to what is referred to as the Verhaeghe property.

Funding nor timeframe have been set for the trail’s next phase, expected to take the trail roughly two miles southeast to where Coffee Creek converges with the Blue River, just west of 69 Highway and northeast of the Overland Park Arboretum. Other entities including Overland Park are planning trails along the Blue River. For more information about the Coffee Creek Streamway Park, visit jcprd.com/parks_facilities/coffee_creek strmwy.cfm.
Do You Suffer from Neuropathy?

If you suffer from any of these tortuous symptoms – numbness, tingling, or sharp nerve pain – then the facts below may be the most important you have ever read.

Neuropathy affects every part of your life - walking, sitting, and even sleeping.

Maybe you’ve had multiple tests, only to find out no one has any idea what you have. Maybe you’ve been put on a drug with heavy side effects.

Hi, I am Dr. Michael Riley, D.C., Founder and Clinic Director at Renuva Back & Pain Center in Overland Park. I’ve been helping people with neuropathy and nerve problems for several years now.

More than 20 million Americans suffer from peripheral neuropathy, a problem caused by damage to the nerves that supply your arms and legs.

This painful condition interferes with your body’s ability to transmit messages to your muscles, skin, joints, or internal organs. If ignored or mistreated, neuropathy can lead to irreversible health conditions.

Often neuropathy is caused by a degenerating spine pressing on the nerve roots. This can happen in any of the vertebral joints from the neck all the way down to the tail bone.

What is the Single Most Important Solution to Your Neuropathy?

By using gentle techniques in our unique CoreCare™ treatment program, we’re able to release the pressure on the nerve. This allows the nerve to heal and the symptoms to go away. Numerous studies have shown the therapies we use can be effective in helping nerve conditions.

Our unique CoreCare treatments, which include Class IV Deep Tissue Laser Therapy, work to restore the body’s natural ability without painful shots, drugs or surgery.

Before the FDA would approve Class IV Lasers for Photobiomodulation (PBM) therapy they required evidence that it was safe for use on humans. This lead to studies on safety but also numerous studies of which are included in Renuva’s 5-phase CoreCare treatment protocol.

Another study from Lasers in Surgery and Medicine found that 70% of patients who received PBM therapy maintained pain relief at their one month follow-up vs. only 28% of patients who received a Lidocaine injection.

Will This Treatment Work For You?

The best way to find out if you’re a candidate for CoreCare is to come see and experience it firsthand. That’s why, for a few weeks I’m including 2 treatments with your initial visit for only $39 (normally $257).

Here is what one of our patients had to say:

“I’ve fought neuropathy for 10-12 years and it’s physically painful. After two weeks of CoreCare treatments I felt a subtle improvement and now most of the pain, if not all, has gone away. Renuva has been a wonderful experience. The staff are great and I’m always well-tended to – it’s really an amazing program.”

- Bob W., Overland Park, KS

* Plus, two treatments so you can experience this amazing treatment and learn if this could be your pain solution like it has been for so many other patients.

Call by October 31st and you can get everything I’ve listed here for only $39. The normal price for this type of evaluation, including x-rays, is $257, so you’re saving near $220.

Don’t let your neuropathy get worse. Call by October 31st.

913.815.8608

We are located on the northeast corner of I-435 and Nall in the Corporate Medical Plaza. Right across 107th from the new Top Golf facility.

Our address is:

10787 Nall Ave, Suite 110
Overland Park, KS 66211

I look forward to helping.

Sincerely,

Dr. Michael Riley, D.C.

What does this offer include?

* An in-depth consultation about your neuropathy and health where I will listen - really listen - to the details of your case.

* Plus, two treatments so you can experience this amazing treatment and learn if this could be your pain solution like it has been for so many other patients.

* Plus, two treatments so you can experience this amazing treatment and learn if this could be your pain solution like it has been for so many other patients.

* A complete neuromuscular examination.

2 Treatments Included with Exam

$39

Call by October 31st

(913) 815-8608

(normal $257) Exam Includes: Consultation, Digital X-rays (if needed) & 2 Treatments
Election Day: Tuesday, Nov. 7
Johnson County Election Office administers first local elections under new law

by NATHAN CARTER

The Kansas Legislature passed a bill in 2015 which moved local elections from the spring to the fall in odd-numbered years.

The move means that everyone, from jurisdictions to candidates to voters, must adjust to new schedules and deadlines. The change has been a challenge but the Johnson County Election Office sees it as an opportunity.

Election Commissioner Ronnie Metsker said, “Last year, we offered six advance voting locations to Johnson County’s voters. We’re using the same six locations this year and beyond. That, coupled with the change to annual August and November elections, helps support our goal of providing a consistent voting experience to our voters.”

In August, the Election Office administered the county’s first election under the new law.

More than half of the county’s registered voters had local primary election contests on their August ballots. To administer an election of that size, the Election Office sent more than 800 election workers, 850 voting machines and 300 poll pads to six advance voting locations and 147 polling locations throughout the county.

Like November 2016, turnout for advance voting was record-setting. Nearly 8,500 voters cast votes before Election Day in August, surpassing the previous record of 6,830 for a local primary election in March 2007.

Election Day voters pushed the final turnout total to double the typical turnout for a local primary election.

“We were pleased to see so many voters participate in the August election,” said Metsker.

“It’s too early to tell if that engagement is attributable to the date change or the significant interest in some of the contests. One thing is for sure — more people voted in this local primary election than in any other in recent history.”

The county’s next election is Nov. 7. There are 185 candidates for city, school district, community college, water district and drainage district offices, and one city sales tax question in the 98 contests in the county. It’s a countywide election, which means every registered voter will have at least one contest on the ballot.

The deadline to request a ballot by mail is Tuesday, Oct. 31, at 5 p.m. In the past, those ballots had to be returned to the Election Office by 7 p.m. on Election Day, however, a new law allows voters to return their voted ballots to any of the county’s six advance voting locations or 199 polling locations (on Election Day) during voting hours. Ballots returned by mail must be postmarked by 7 p.m. on Nov. 7.

Each of these six locations will be open for one week — Monday, Oct. 30 through Saturday, Nov. 4 — with additional hours provided at the Election Office (only) on Monday, Nov. 6.

Election Day is Tuesday, Nov. 7, and the county’s 199 polling locations will be open from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m.

“Our primary goal is to provide the public with as many opportunities as possible to engage in the election process. We intend to make voting fast and flexible for our county’s voters,” Metsker said.

For more information on the November election, voters are encouraged to visit jocoelection.org or contact the Johnson County Election Office at 913-715-6800.
Museum exhibit celebrates golden anniversary

by GERALD HAY

The county museum is celebrating its golden anniversary with the opening of a special “Let’s celebrate: The Johnson County Museum is 50!” exhibit. The new, temporary exhibit gallery is part of the main museum space at the Johnson County Arts & Heritage Center at 8788 Metcalf Ave., Overland Park.

The special exhibit, which runs through April 2018, showcases objects collected over the past 50 years, many of which have never been displayed. The exhibit also features a timeline of the museum’s history as well as facts about its growth over five decades.

In 1961, the Kansas Legislature approved an annual tax levy of up to one-tenth of a mill for county museums. Three years later, the Johnson County Board of County Commissioners authorized the dedicated one-tenth mill levy for creation of a Johnson County museum and appointed a 17-member Board of Trustees to act as its directors.

Greenwood School purchased in 1965

Johnson County Museum purchased its first home in 1965 when the former Greenwood School was acquired for $14,200 in Shawnee. The old school building, built in 1927, served as a schoolhouse until the 1960s. The building was renovated into a county museum between 1965 and 1967.

In 1966, the county acquired the former Lanesfield School for one dollar from the Edgerton Dizzy Doers Extension Group which had developed a plan to open the schoolhouse as a museum. The one-room school, dating back to 1869, closed in 1963.

The Johnson County Museum celebrated its grand opening on Oct. 29, 1967, at its Shawnee location at 6305 Lackman Road. By the end of the year, the museum had 889 objects and 70 photographs in its collection. The Lanesfield School Museum, located at 18745 Dillie Road, Edgerton, also opened in 1967.

In 1986, the county commission created the Johnson County Museum System to supervise both museum sites with oversight by the Museum Advisory Council. A strategic plan for both museums was launched the following year and resulted in restoration of the Lanesfield School from 1988-1989.

The 1950s All-Electric House was donated and moved from Prairie Village to the museum complex in Shawnee in 1994. Renovating the house, remodeling the museum and opening of its signature exhibit, “Seeking the Good Life,” occurred in 1998. A decade later in 2008, the museum’s new temporary exhibit “KidScape” opened and later became a permanent installation because of its popularity.

King Louie West building acquired in 2011

Plans to find a new home for the Johnson County Museum began in 2009. Two years later, the county commission purchased the former King Louie West building in Overland Park to house various county agencies, including the museum. The commission approved the creation of the Arts & Heritage Center at the former King Louie site in 2015.

In 2016, the Johnson County Museum department became a part of the Johnson County Park & Recreation District. In April of the same year, the All-Electric House was transported from Shawnee to become the first item of the museum’s collection to be moved to its new location in Overland Park in the midst of construction of the Johnson County Arts & Heritage Center. The new county facility, operated by JCPRD, was completed earlier this year and opened on June 10, 2017.

The Johnson County Museum now has 19,430 objects and 36,882 photographs in its collection. The museum offers an expanded KidScape program; school, youth and scout programming; family and adult activities; and film and lecture series as well as tours of its temporary and permanent exhibitions, including its exhibit “Becoming Johnson County.”

Throughout the years, the community has spearheaded efforts to collect and preserve the history. The Friends of Johnson County Museums, renamed the Johnson County Museum Foundation in 2011, has served that role since 1987. They have raised more than $2.5 million to support museum exhibitions, programming and special events.

Over the years, the museum has been recognized more than 20 times for excellence in exhibitions, programming and publication by national, regional and state organizations.

Admission to the museum is $4 for senior adults (60-plus years of age); $5 for adults; and $3 for children ages 1-17. The museum is open from 9 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., Monday through Saturday. Individual, couple or family memberships are also available; call 913-715-2550.
Johnson County Library education help
by ANGEL TUCKER

Education is a family affair and Johnson County Library has the tools to succeed.

In-person resources are a classic library service. The very popular Homework Help program provides one-on-one help for students at no charge. Coaches provide help for your student in finding resources to complete assignments such as book reports and science projects. They tackle vocabulary, spelling, reading and writing skills, as well as math and social studies. The program is offered at the Central Resource Library, Mondays through Thursdays from 4-7 p.m. during the school year. Visit jocolibrary.org/homeworkhelp/online for more information.

Homeschoolers have a valuable partner at the library. Activities are organized around themes and ideas important to the homeschool community. Each county library location also provides a Family Activity Guide (each semester) detailing learning opportunities at that specific branch.

Many online resources exist to help students of all ages and for a range of educational pursuits. The library has created an eLearning page at jocolibrary.org/elibrary/elearning, where resources are available with your Johnson County Library card. Residents can access these resources on their smart phone or tablet at the library (free WiFi), on their computer or with the library’s public computers.

Some eLearning opportunities include:

Universal Class offers more than 500 online classes including accounting, bookkeeping, yoga and babysitting. This service is offered through the State Library of Kansas.

Khan Academy connects residents with online experts for topics including math, economics and finance, computer programming and more.

Mango Languages and Rosetta Stone Library Solution allow residents resources to listen, read, write and speak a new language.

These online language-learning systems teach actual conversation skills for many different languages ranging from Arabic to Yiddish.

Tutor.com offers several ways to get help with homework including live online one-to-one help every day from 4–11 p.m., essay drop off to receive detailed feedback on written reports within 24 hours, and 24/7 SkillsCenter™ for study resources and test prep. You can also get resume feedback, GED prep, citizenship guidance, financial literacy and tips on helping children with homework.

Make sure you also check out the library’s online resources for kids at jocolibrary.org/research/elementary-school or for preschoolers at jocolibrary.org/birth-to-six.
Johnson County’s Co-Responder program
New solutions for law enforcement’s interactions with mental health
by CHRISS DEPUSOIR

The Johnson County Co-Responder program deploys a mental health professional who is embedded with police personnel and responds on-site with law enforcement when mental illness is identified as a factor in a call. Individuals who suffer from a mental illness are disproportionately represented in the criminal justice system. This innovative program effectively provides follow up and engagement with people to get them into local services and prevent them from being incarcerated, ending up in emergency rooms or potentially involved in continued police interactions.

In 2010, when Johnson County received a grant from the Bureau of Justice Assistance, an agency of the U.S. Department of Justice, the county’s co-responder program was born. The first local government to participate and implement a co-responder was the city of Olathe, the second largest city in the county, keeping the program going even after exhausting grant funds.

“Continued funding by the city of Olathe once the grant ended was an indication of the great value they saw and received in the co-responder program,” said Assistant County Manager Maury Thompson.

What is a co-responder
A co-responder is a Johnson County Mental Health Center (JCMHC) employee, who is embedded in one or more county law enforcement agencies. The goal is to address and de-escalate situations in the field alongside law enforcement officers. These masters-level mental health clinicians meet the Kansas statute requirements of Qualified Mental Health Professionals, although their individual degrees, backgrounds and specialties may vary. They are trained to make quick assessments and provide crisis intervention at the scene of an emergency. While co-responders are employees of JCMHC, cities or jurisdictions fund the position, paying for the technology and clinical skill these professionals bring.

The mental health co-responder has an office within a law enforcement department, although they aren’t sworn officers and do not dress in police uniforms. By having offices with a partnering law enforcement agency, the mental health staff is able to build trust and communication with police colleagues. They also provide training for officers and offer techniques on the best ways to respond to persons who may have a mental illness. The co-responder receives additional training to acclimate to this unique position including non-emergency driving training, radio usage, ride-a-longs and use of police department computer systems.

The co-responder has access to electronic medical record information which can provide pertinent information in response to a call. The clinician always works in the field alongside law enforcement, never alone, and only once a scene is deemed safe. These professionals have a range of key skills including comfort in managing high-risk situations, excellent diagnostic skills for adults and minors, understanding of and working within HIPAA, expert knowledge of community resources and more.

Goals and community impact
The goal of the co-responder program is to identify and address the needs of mentally ill individuals in their interactions with law enforcement. As a result, communities hope to reduce unnecessary arrests or trips to emergency rooms as default solutions for dealing with mentally ill residents. This also decreases the likelihood of a situation escalating since law enforcement is not having to take the person into custody.

The program helps people access services more quickly in an attempt to reduce future contact with law enforcement.

“Not only does the co-responder program save local officers time that they can dedicate to law enforcement activity, but the person with a mental illness receives the assessment and treatment they need.”
— Assistant County Manager Maury Thompson
said Thompson, “but the person with a mental illness receives the assessment and treatment they need.”

After incidents, the co-responder can help to coordinate care for people. They can utilize the JCMHC Mobile Crisis Response Team (MCRT) to engage persons to consider or enter services. Community partners such as hospitals, EMS and others meet with clients and treatment providers to introduce the co-responder and crisis intervention team to open discussions and participate in crisis planning.

Co-responders can reach out to suicide survivors (family and friends) a few weeks after a completed suicide to check in with survivors and see if they need any resources. In addition, to help reduce the effects of trauma, co-responders are also starting follow up after significant events. With the Overland Park fire this spring, a co-responder was at the scene and three co-responders participated in a community support group the following weekend.

**Moving forward**

The program started at the county level from discussions with the criminal justice coordinator and the city of Olathe and has expanded over the past seven years. The Overland Park Police Department joined the program three years later. In 2016, the cities of Lenexa and Shawnee added a co-responder, sharing one mental health professional. Earlier this year, the program expanded to 14 cities as another shared co-responder was added for northeast Johnson County cities: Fairway, Leawood, Merriam, Mission, Mission Hills, Mission Woods, Prairie Village, Roeland Park, Westwood and Westwood Hills.

This summer, the city of Olathe added a part-time co-responder, funded through the Olathe Health System. In January 2018, Lenexa and Shawnee will each have a full-time professional and Overland Park will have a second full-time co-responder, providing them with 16 hours of co-responder coverage.

In addition, Johnson County Mental Health has partnered with the Johnson County EMS System Medical Director Program, which provides medical oversight to all Fire and EMS agencies in the county, providing the EMS System a co-responder that works specifically with Fire and EMS agencies to address frequent utilizers of 911 and those Fire/EMS patients who have mental illness and substance abuse issues.

“Allowing our pre-hospital providers to have access to a qualified mental health professional for patients with complex social needs is a true asset,” said Ryan Jacobsen, MD, medical director, Johnson County EMS System. “Many of our patient’s needs are not met by a simple ride in the ambulance to the hospital. The program creates another option for patients to get the help they need.”

Over time, local resources such as hospital beds for inpatient mental health facilities and the ability to hold people for involuntary detoxification have decreased. According to Johnson County Mental Health, as the demand for mental health services has increased, funding has decreased, leading to cuts in services, including emergency mental health services.

Information is collected and used to maintain and expand the local co-responder programs because of its successful outcomes. The data that current co-responders enter in the JCMHC electronic medical record software is essential to maintaining clinical history and treatment coordination after mental health interactions, including contact, if an arrest or emergency room was avoided, if substance abuse is indicated, or suicide threats or attempts were made.

According to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, approximately one in five American adults will have a mental health problem in any given year. Knowing that, the local community’s need to respond to mental health emergencies in a compassionate, appropriate manner is key. Johnson County continues to meet the community challenges and needs through the co-responder program.

If you or someone you know is having a mental health emergency, please call 913-268-0156.

For inquiries into the co-responder program, contact Jessica Murphy at 913-826-4200.

WEB EXTRA Check out a video about the co-responder program online at jocogov.org/jocomag.
Titanium is the New Black

It's an exciting time in the realm of hearing aids. Not only are electronic components getting smaller and hearing performance increasing, but the use of new innovative materials are being utilized, introducing new possibilities. While traditional hearing aids are made of acrylic and other composites, advancements in technology have allowed for a new material to hit the market... enter titanium.

Terrific Titanium
Renowned for being extremely durable and light-weight, titanium is used for various premium products such as high performance vehicles, watches and aircrafts and even in the medical industry for surgical implants – so why not use this resourceful material to build a hearing aid?

Well, thanks to its properties, titanium makes for an optimal material for in-the-ear hearing aids – which sit inside the ear canal. Why? Being 15x stronger than acrylic shells, titanium allows for a hearing aid shell to be built as thin as a piece of paper, reducing its size significantly.

The Art of Discretion
Because most hearing aid wearers are concerned about their hearing aids being visible, in-the-ear hearing aids are created to remain out of sight. Swiss hearing aid manufacturer Phonak has a new addition to its extensive portfolio that offers a super discreet fit along with excellent hearing performance. Custom-made to perfectly fit individual ears and personal hearing needs, the new Phonak Virto™ B-Titanium hearing aid is created from medical grade titanium using a sophisticated 3D printing technology – making it the smallest hearing aid Phonak has ever produced!

So, if you're looking for a hearing aid that is super discreet and built to withstand the hard knocks that life can bring, then a Phonak Virto B-Titanium certainly is the new black!
Johnson County Extension celebrates 100 years of helping the community
by ADELE WILCOXEN

Nov. 8, 1917 — the U.S. entered World War I in April. Eggs cost 48 cents a dozen, milk 45 cents per gallon and four-pounds of sugar was 37 cents. A four-room cottage in Johnson County could be rented for $7 per month.

Rural homes lacked running water and sanitation. Canned goods didn’t exist, most clothing was hand-made and Kansas farmers relied on kerosene lamps for light. It was then that Harry S. Wilson came to Johnson County as its first county extension agent.

In 1914, President Woodrow Wilson signed the Smith-Lever Act, establishing a national system of cooperative extension services connected to the nation’s land-grant universities (created under President Abraham Lincoln by the signing of 1862’s Morrill Land-Grant Act.)

The Smith-Lever Act relocated university faculty (agents) to communities to educate people about current developments in agriculture, home economics and related subjects.

“Extension was an attempt to put someone with a college education out where the people were,” said current horticulture agent Dennis Patton.

Wilson came to Johnson County to “co-operate” with the state’s land-grant university, Kansas State Agricultural College, and the Johnson County Farm Bureau, working with farmers to increase food production and food conservation.

By 1921, Wilson’s work included home economic programs. Women demanded access to information regarding pressure-cooking, canning, sewing, modern heating, lighting, water and sewage systems. Wilson also began 4-H youth programming with the organization of two pig clubs.

By 1925, Wilson and the farm bureau clamored for education of women in “dressmaking, home nursing and baby clinics, and kitchen improvement.” County women’s leader Mrs. Paul Brown signed up members for a women’s organization, submitting a request to the county commissioners to fund the hiring of a home demonstration agent. Charlotte Biester was hired on Feb. 1, 1926, the first Johnson County home agent, supervising 12 homemaker units and forming nine 4-H project groups for girls.

The cooperative extension service reflects the demands of modern life. Kansas’ land-grant university is known as Kansas State University. Its cooperative extension service is known as K-State Research and Extension. The Johnson County Extension Office has six agents and 10 support staff serving 580,159 citizens. Agents are university faculty who live in the community.

Last year, agents made 50,000+ contacts, assisting with radon testing, relief from miserable oak leaf itch mites and more.

Forty-five percent of the county’s land use is still based in agriculture — contributing about $4.9 billion to the economy in 2016. Today’s producers embrace the latest technology including innovations in using GPS and drones to monitor crops. Home Economics, now called Family and Consumer Sciences, includes health, nutrition, food safety, aging education, financial management and indoor air quality.

Internet. Cell phones. Drones. GPS. Satellite imagery. Harry S. Wilson would be flabbergasted at the technological tools and international network of scientific resources now available to extension agents. But 100 years later, the staff of Johnson County Extension still passionately embrace the original mission to serve and aid county residents in building better lives.

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Self Help Center is a valuable resource for residents

by LORI SAND

Imagine waking up in a foreign country without a map, a guide, and no knowledge of the laws or the language. That’s comparable to the experience many find themselves involved with a family law or eviction dispute and for one reason or another they do not have or cannot afford an attorney or legal assistance.

County residents are fortunate that they don’t have to negotiate the legal system in Johnson County District Court on their own. Free assistance is available through the Johnson County Self Help Center, which opened in May 2014, with that particular client in mind, assisting people with forms for family law cases such as divorce, paternity, child support, motions to change parenting plans, child support worksheets, medical expense reimbursements and name changes.

“While not intended to replace effective legal representation, the Help Center assists unrepresented people obtain basic and necessary information about the laws, rules and procedures used in the court system in general and in Johnson County District Court that affect their cases,” said Keven O’Grady, Johnson County District Court Judge.

Since opening, the Help Center assists with many common problems that unrepresented clients face. The majority of problems fall in the category of family law and include debt, landlord-tenant disputes, guardianship and conservatorship reports.

“The center is an important part of the court system and we feel that we’re contributing and helping the citizens of Johnson County,” said Help Center supervisor Teresa Young. “We’ve only scratched the surface of the number of people who are aware of our service. Our ongoing challenge is getting the word out.”

While the Help Center staff cannot provide legal advice or recommend a specific course of action, Kansas Legal Services attorneys are available by appointment on Thursdays to provide limited legal assistance to qualifying individuals.

During the remainder of the week, volunteer attorneys are on site to answer questions and provide limited help with preparing forms and navigating the sometimes technical court procedures. Volunteer attorneys can also help those without a lawyer analyze options and understand what is needed to present their case to the judge.

Clients can access an extensive library of free legal forms, case details, information about laws and court rules, filing assistance, document review, general court information, court date scheduling and referrals to low-cost or free legal assistance and social service agencies. Clients may also complete and file the necessary papers and forms in one location.

Staff is dedicated to providing information and the necessary forms, as well as helping clients better understand court procedures. The Help Center recently celebrated the milestone of serving more than 15,000 clients, an average of 470 visits and 360 phone calls each month. Typically, the center assists more than 20 people each day.

During the center’s milestone celebration, Judge O’Grady said, “We have a need for citizens in this county to have access to food and shelter, but access to legal help is also another big need,” also noting that those involved have made a huge difference in the lives of many people.

One in 15 Johnson County residents lives below the federal poverty line.

“The Help Center has become a remarkable diamond in the rough in the court system,” O’Grady said. He thinks it is a great model for other court systems in the state.

Not only do staff relieve frustration and confusion for clients, but the service is also valuable because family law cases require significant court time and resources. This service assures that court documents are filed correctly.

The Help Center is a collaborative effort by county judges, the Johnson County Clerk of the Court and court staff who visited a similar and successful program used by New York courts. Kansas Legal Services and the Johnson County Bar Foundation were instrumental in establishing the on-site attorney assistance program. The Johnson County Bar Association is involved to recruit volunteer attorneys.

Located on the first floor of the county courthouse, the center is open 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Friday during regular courthouse hours.
My grades are failing. My family is falling apart.
Nobody cares about me.
I lost my job.
My loved one is gone.
I'm struggling with a mental illness.

There are numerous stressors in everyday life. People are hurting all around us — some that we know about and some we don’t. Even if we know someone is hurting, it’s hard to start a conversation about suicide.

How am I going to help someone who is suicidal?
I'm not an expert.

Maybe we are afraid of the answer and the weight of the responsibility it bears. We think we must have an answer for everything. When, in fact, sometimes all we need to do is talk less and listen more. Simply being in the moment with someone and listening with compassion and empathy, allowing them to voice their struggles and concerns may be exactly what they need.

In September, people worldwide recognized Suicide Prevention Month, under the theme and goal of “Take a minute, save a life.”

In Johnson County, approximately six individuals die by suicide every month. Every statistic represents an actual human life lost, and every person is connected to a network of people who mourn and are forever changed by their loss. Raising awareness about suicide and providing prevention education is not limited to one month and we all have a responsibility now, more than ever, to increase dialogue and action to save lives in our community.

This is real, scary and so important.

Sometimes all it takes is compassion, empathy and caring about our fellow human beings to make a profound difference.

In 2000, Kevin Hines, author of “Cracked, Not Broken: Surviving and Thriving After a Suicide Attempt,” decided that he was going to take his life by jumping from the Golden Gate Bridge. He jumped from the bridge that day and lived to tell his story. He later said that if one person, any stranger, would have asked, “Are you okay?” that person’s reaching out would have changed his mind and kept him from taking the leap. That day, no one asked Kevin that question. No one acknowledged him and he did jump. Kevin is one of the few Golden Gate Bridge survivors alive today and he has made it his mission to share his story to help others.

Suicide prevention shouldn’t just be left to the professionals and experts. It is everyone’s responsibility to make a suicide safer community and save lives.

Get involved:
The Johnson County Suicide Prevention Coalition saves and supports life, with our community partners, through awareness, education and outreach. To join the efforts or learn more go to jocogov.org/spc or call 913-715-7880.

Warning signs of suicide:
- Increased substance usage
- No reason for living or sense of purpose
- Anxiety, agitation, unable to sleep or sleeping all the time
- Withdrawal from friends and family
- Acting reckless or engaging in risky activities

How to start a conversation about suicide:
- I have been concerned about you lately.
- I wanted to check in because you haven’t seemed like yourself lately.
- Are you thinking about hurting or killing yourself?
- Do you have thoughts of suicide?

How am I going to help someone who is having thoughts of suicide? I am not an expert.
- How can I help support you right now?
- You are not alone. I’m here for you.
- I may not be able to understand exactly how you feel, but I care about you and want to listen and help you.

Suicide is preventable, help is available
In an emergency, call 9-1-1.

Johnson County Mental Health Center
- 24/7 Emergency Service: 913-268-0156
- To access services: 913-826-4200

National suicide prevention hotline:
1-800-273-TALK or text 741741

Online resources
- afsp.org
- jocogov.org/suicide prevention

Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training (ASIST) is a two-day interactive workshop in suicide first aid. ASIST teaches participants to recognize when someone may have thoughts of suicide and works with people to create a plan that will support their immediate safety. The workshop is designed for anyone who wants to feel more comfortable, confident and competent in helping prevent an immediate risk of suicide.

To learn more or sign up for a training, visit jocogov.org/asist or call 913-715-7880.
Appraiser’s office sheds a light on property valuation

by AUSTIN FALLEY

If you’re looking for a home in Johnson County, officials say there’s about a two- or two-and-a-half-month supply of residential properties.

“The market is in a high demand with a little supply,” county appraiser Paul Welcome said. “There’s a real demand in this county for homes $350,000 and below,” adding that spring home sales were particularly strong.

With ever-growing demand, residential property values continue to rise. In 2017, 95 percent of residential real estate values increased; 31 percent of residential properties saw an increase of 5 percent or less.

A year-round process

Each year, the Johnson County Appraiser’s Office completes a four-step process to set the value of residential property — discover, list, value and defend.

The discovery step is year-round and done mostly through building permits, when a contractor or an individual will file a permit of construction or a home addition that will add significant value to the home.

The county appraiser’s office receives electronic and paper permits from 20 local jurisdictions. From there, Welcome and his team will gather information necessary to develop its fair market value. At this step in the process, the appraiser’s office verifies the characteristics of the property — style, square footage, number of bathrooms and bedrooms, among other key features.

Appealing a decision

By March 1, county residents are given notice about the current value of their property. If a homeowner disagrees with their valuation, they have 30 days to file an appeal with the county. Next, the appraiser’s office establishes an appeals process with each individual property owner.

Welcome said his office aims to accommodate each appeal by scheduling hearings during regular business hours and evenings if requested.

Homeowners who wish to appeal the valuation first attend an informal, typically over-the-phone, appeals interview. County officials report 55 to 60 percent of appeals are done via telephone.

“Telephone hearings are a great tool — both for the public, because of the convenience, and for the county,” Welcome said. The county appraiser’s staff aims to make every step of their process open and transparent. Welcome notes that all the data used to determine home values is available to the public on the appraiser’s website.

“The informal hearing is meant to be an exchange of information between the homeowner and the county,” Welcome said. “It allows the taxpayer to give a clearer picture to accurately value the home.”

Every property owner in the county has access to the sales data used to set their home’s value. That data goes back five years and only includes valid sales in that resident’s subdivision and neighborhood.

After the appeals hearing, the appraiser’s office will submit a recommendation of value back to the homeowner. That recommendation includes the next steps to appeal if the resident does not agree with the findings.

The next steps in an appeal are managed by the State Board of Tax Appeals, with hearings led by state staff or contracted hearing officers to mediate a final decision.

Questions from the public

The appraiser’s office hears many frequently asked questions during the valuation process.

“Primarily we get questions about quality issues or construction deficiencies,” said residential valuation manager Jeff Ramsey. “Those things can have an impact on the value, and what’s going on in each home is unknown to us.”

The appraiser’s office doesn’t go inside properties to verify characteristics which is common practice in the Midwest.

State laws require the appraiser’s office to review the exterior characteristics of each property every six years.

“We have to assume that if the outside looks typical, the inside looks typical,” Ramsey said.

Residents who appeal will often submit estimates of repair and photos of damages to help appraiser’s reach a decision.

“Our responsibility to is value property at fair market value and the price it would bring on an open, competitive market,” Ramsey said. “And, in order to arrive at that value, we have to look at the overall condition of the property.”

In 2017, about 5,000 property owners filed informal appeals with the county, a slight uptick from recent years.

The Johnson County Appraiser’s Office is online at jocogov.org. Its customer service division can be reached 913-715-9000.

Where your taxes go

Although the county collects taxes for multiple taxing jurisdictions and districts, Johnson County only retains 15.4%.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tr>
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<td>Special districts</td>
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For more details about where your taxes go, visit jocogov.org/jocomag.
Backup Prevention Program offers customers port in the storm

by SUSAN MAIER

Recent heavy rain has left some Johnson County homeowners with the frustrating challenge of sanitary sewer backups into their basements. Johnson County Wastewater (JCW) wants to help you better protect your home during these type of events with the homeowners’ Backup Prevention Program (BUPP). The program is voluntary and provides funding to eligible homeowners for installation of a backup prevention device or to make plumbing modifications to their property.

Since 2012, JCW averages 22 sewer backups annually, whereas the 1980 annual average was 400. JCW has spent in excess of $84 million since 1984 to reduce the number of wet weather-related backups into homes and businesses. Sewer capacity, cleaning and maintenance improvements over the years have reduced the risk of backups. While the risk has greatly improved in 30 years, the extreme rain events that exceed the sanitary sewer’s design capacity, such as this summer’s heavy rains, have created basement backups issues for local homeowners. The BUPP was developed to help reduce the risk of backups for these type of events.

Johnson County has installed more than 1,200 BUPP devices. After the area’s three major summer storms, JCW received more than 400 calls about sewer backups. Having a backup prevention device installed in your home can help protect a home from future backups during heavy rains, and save homeowners from dealing with cleaning up after the storms. However, a backup device will not resolve basement water issues caused by cracks in walls, floors, window well leakage or surface water flooding.

To be eligible for the program, a JCW customer must have experienced a confirmed sanitary sewer basement backup from an intense rain event that directly resulted from capacity issues in the sanitary sewer system.

Many options are available under this program, the contractor and JCW will work with the homeowner to determine the option that offers the best solution for your property.

If you feel that you should qualify for the program, you may complete and submit a Sanitary Sewer Backup Response Questionnaire online at bupp.jocogov.org, or call customer service at 913-715-8500 to have one sent to you.

More information can be found about the program on the Johnson County Wastewater webpage at jocogov.org.
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

**Ronald “Ron” Shaffer**
1st district
913-715-0431

**James “Jim” P. Allen**
Vice chair,
2nd district
913-715-0432

**Steven “Steve” C. Klika**
3rd district
913-715-0433

**Jason Osterhaus**
4th district
913-715-0434

**Michael Ashcraft**
5th district
913-715-0435

**Michael “Mike” Brown**
6th district
913-715-0436

The Arts Council of Johnson County recently participated in a study conducted by the Americans for the Arts to measure the impact of nonprofit arts and culture events on local communities. The Americans for the Arts reviewed 341 communities and areas which included all 50 states and the nation’s capital.

For 2015, the direct, measured economic activity for the county was $22.8 million, with $12.3 million generated through organizations and $10.4 million from audiences.

“Johnson County is a prime example of a region where culture and art beget success in producing a robust economic landscape,” said Ed Eilert, chairman of the Johnson County Board of County Commissioners. “Our private, public and nonprofit sector commitment to creating a community culture where the arts are celebrated is clearly evident. It is most visible in the work of the Arts Council of Johnson County, the creation of the Nerman Museum of Contemporary Art, the Percent for Art Program which has been adopted by many communities, and the investment in both the InterUrban ArtHouse in downtown Overland Park and the Johnson County Arts and Heritage Center.”

The study measured the number of full-time-equivalent jobs supported by the arts, cultural organizations and audiences — 875 full time equivalent jobs in the county, 622 from organizations and 253 from audiences. This activity generated income for local residents, local jurisdictions and state government.

More information is available online at artsjoco.org.
Veterans Day 2017

Event at Korean War Veterans Memorial at 119th St. and Lowell Ave. in Overland Park, dedicated in 2006

by GERALD HAY

Johnson County’s 2017 Veterans Day observance will recognize veterans of the Korean War during the annual salute of all local veterans from all wars.

The free public event is scheduled for Saturday, Nov. 11, at the Korean War Veterans Memorial at 119th Street and Lowell Avenue. Activities begin at 11 a.m., the traditional start of Veterans Day, formerly called Armistice Day, when an armistice was signed in France in 1918 at the “11th hour, of the 11th day, of the 11th month” (November), to end the fighting in World War I.

The highlight of the event will be awarding Korean Ambassador for Peace Medals to 33 Korean War veterans who have not yet received the commemorative medals from the Republic of Korea, often called South Korea. The medal program was established by the republic as an expression of appreciation from the Korean government to American service men and women who served in the Korean War.

Special guests will be representatives from the Republic of Korea in thanking veterans who fought to keep their country free. The Consulate General Jong-Kook Lee at the Republic of Korea Embassy in Chicago or a representative from his office plan to participate in the Veterans Day program and present the medals.

Although it’s too late to be recognized as part of the upcoming Veterans Day event, Korean War veterans or their family members are encouraged to apply for the commemorative medal by completing the application form and sending it to the South Korean Consulate Office in Chicago. Forms will be available after the Veterans Day event for individuals or family members wanting to complete an application.

While final details of the observance are still in the planning stages, the program will feature:

- Patriotic music by the American Legion Band
- A presentation of colors
- Placement of memorial wreaths by local veteran organizations.
- The playing of “Echo Taps” and bagpipe music
- A rifle salute

Wedged between World War II and the Vietnam War, the Korean War is often called the “Forgotten War.” The war began June 25, 1950. The fighting ceased on July 27, 1953, with an armistice agreement. No peace treaty has ever been signed to end the war.

This year’s Johnson County Veterans Day celebration is set for Saturday, Nov. 11, at 11 a.m. and will highlight the service of veterans from across the metro, especially veterans of the Korean War.

The three-year war claimed the lives of 36,547 U.S. soldiers, including 415 Kansans with three soldiers from Olathe, two from Mission and one each from De Soto and Gardner. More than 103,000 Americans were wounded in Korea.

There are still 7,747 American soldiers unaccounted for from the war, including 100 MIAs (missing in action) from Kansas. Five of the missing are from Johnson County (four from Shawnee and one from Gardner). Johnson County has two Medal of Honor recipients from the Korean War.

Johnson County’s annual Veterans Day observance began in 1987 with a public celebration on the south steps of the Johnson County Courthouse in downtown Olathe and later at the Olathe National Guard Armory. Since 2007, the county event has occurred at veteran memorial sites/military facilities throughout the county, including locations in the cities of Olathe, Lenexa, Gardner and Merriam along with the New Century AirCenter near Gardner.

Key partners in the observance include the Korean War Veterans Association Kansas Chapter No. 181 in Lenexa and the Korean War Veterans Association Missouri Chapter No. 2, Kansas City, Missouri; Jewish War Veterans, Mo-Kan Post No. 605; the city of Overland Park and its police department; and the Kansas Army National Guard.

More information about the 2017 Veterans Day observance will be posted in the near future on the Johnson County website at jocogov.org.
**THREE Questions**

by LORI SAND

Mike Babcock is an emergency communications specialist in the Emergency Communications Center. He helps solve problems that not only area 9-1-1 callers have, but also the problems of the departments we serve. He is trained to save lives.

**What’s a typical day like in the ECC?**
A typical day is 12 hours long, 135 calls in that time period, from medical calls to building fires and everything in between. Usually busy in the mornings, then dies down for a while. Then, afternoon is a busy spell.

**What’s the most rewarding/difficult emergency you’ve had to guide a county resident through?**
I took a call a few years ago — the caller had a gun and wanted to end his life. I spent 23 minutes on the phone with him. I was able to convince him to put the gun down and go outside.

**How do you relax on your time off?**
Relaxing with four kids requires a strategy! I enjoy hunting, woodworking and smoking meats and cheeses. I also teach the Dave Ramsey FPU class. My ideal getaway would be with my wife of 21 years, taking a motor home and touring the country, which is our retirement plan in eight years.

Mike Babcock
Emergency communications specialist

Trent Pittman, assistant director, community preparedness, administers Emergency Management’s community preparedness program. He serves as the department’s public information officer, training and exercise lead, volunteer and internship coordinator and as one of six emergency management duty officers who rotate through the primary and secondary duty officer roles.

**What’s a typical day like in Emergency Management?**
No day is exactly alike in the world of emergency management. Between major events, I spend my time promoting major preparedness events such as severe weather awareness week, national preparedness month and our primary preparedness tool, www.joco72.org.

**What’s the most rewarding/difficult emergency you’ve worked through?**
This year’s July and August flooding and wind were very challenging events that we worked. The amount of damage to Johnson County was the highest we sustained since the ice storm in 2002.

**How do you relax on your time off?**
In the summer, I’m in the pool just about every day. In the winter, I enjoy spending as much time outside as possible! Any opportunity that I get, I try and escape down to Table Rock Lake. It’s a place I grew up visiting and I enjoy sharing that experience with my daughter Lilly.

Trent Pittman
Assistant director, community preparedness

Ashley Yockey, emergency communications specialist, answers incoming 9-1-1 calls, seven-digit emergency calls and non-emergency calls. Once an accurate address is obtained and the call is posted by the call taker, we are responsible for using our resources to dispatch the most appropriate and closest fire and/or Med-Act unit to the emergency.

**What’s a typical day like in the ECC?**
A typical day is always unpredictable as we never know what kinds or how many calls we will get any given day, but we are always prepared to answer each call quickly, professionally and to the best of our ability.

**What’s the most rewarding/difficult emergency you’ve had to guide a county resident through?**
Recently I took a call involving a fatality accident, my caller was the passenger in the same vehicle that took the life of the driver, which happened to be her sister. This call was even more difficult for me because of the personal connection my family had with the family involved and also with the impact it had in the community in which we live.

**How do you relax on your time off?**
During my time off, I love spending time with family and friends. I have a 7-year-old daughter and 3-year-old son that keep me very busy on my days off, but I absolutely love it and wouldn’t trade it for anything. When I’m not busy spending time with family and friends, I love to spend my time catching up on shows, especially Dancing with the Stars and Big Brother!

Ashley Yockey
Emergency communications specialist
The county government’s workforce of about 3,800 employees could not function successfully without the thousands of people who volunteer their time and talents to boards, commissions, elections and programs.

Here are 10 things you can do as a volunteer in Johnson County Government:

### 10 Ways to Volunteer with Johnson County Government

#### 1. Community Gardeners
Gardeners of all experience levels are welcome to tend the WIC (Women, Infants and Children) Community Garden which educates, empowers and feeds WIC clients. Call 913-715-6938.

#### 2. Johnson County’s Re-blended Paint Program
Make a direct impact by reducing waste and protecting our environment. Volunteers do not handle any hazardous materials. Call 913-715-6938.

#### 3. Meals on Wheels Delivery
Deliver meals Monday to Friday from 10:45 a.m. to noon, either as a team or as an individual. Children may accompany parents and grandparents.

#### 4. Catch-A-Ride
Provide transportation for qualified riders, Monday to Friday from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. to essential appointments in the county such as medical visits and grocery store trips. Volunteers choose schedules and geographical distance they are willing to drive. Mileage reimbursement is available.

#### 5. Office Administration
Help with data entry, filing, signing greeting cards, answering phones, greeting clients, etc. in any of the HSD offices, Monday to Friday from 8 a.m. – 5 p.m.

#### 6. Creative Expressions
Decorate a Meals on Wheels lunch bag or make crafts for seniors, such as bookmarks, cards, placemats and small crafts to be included with Meals on Wheels deliveries. A virtual opportunity from home, work or school.

#### 7. Johnson County Court Services
Supervised visitation advocate volunteers must have a minimum of three hours a week on Tuesday evenings to volunteer for six consecutive months. Contact them at 913-715-7566.

#### 8. Johnson County Library
Support many of the 13 county libraries’ activities and programs. Volunteers must be 14 years or older. Contact JCL at 913-826-4600.

#### 9. Johnson County Park & Recreation District
Volunteer opportunities include the Johnson County Museum, Ernie Miller Nature Center and The Theatre in the Park, to name just a few. Give JCRPD a call at 913-826-3412.

#### 10. Johnson County Developmental Supports
Help with special events, committee work, fundraising and computer/clerical support. Contact JDCS at 913-826-2212.
NotifyJoCo is a public notification system designed to keep Johnson County residents and businesses informed about emergencies and other local events. Using personalized contact information you or your family provide, public officials will notify you of emergencies affecting your locations by phone, email or text.

Log on to NotifyJoCo.org to update your contact information and customize your preferences to receive only the notifications you wish, including:

- Weather warnings
- Non-emergency events warnings
- Disease outbreaks
- Water outages
- Public safety
- And more...

NotifyJoCo is a free public service made possible by a partnership of local governments and public utilities in Johnson County.

What you need to know, when you need to know it.

Sign up and customize your settings at NotifyJoCo.org

Data in the NotifyJoCo system is secure and private, used only by local public officials for purposes described. For more information, visit NotifyJoCo.org.