Johnson County Arts & Heritage Center opens soon

Air, land and water: county infrastructure
Johnson County gets high marks from residents in latest community survey

Each year, we ask our residents for input on how we’re doing as a county government. It’s our way of ensuring we deliver the types of services our residents want at a high level of satisfaction.

The 2017 results are in and the numbers are up!

Our residents gave Johnson County a 97 percent satisfaction rating as a place to live, a 96 percent satisfaction rating as a place to raise children and a 90 percent satisfaction rating as a place to work.

All of these numbers are up from last year. In fact, they are well above the ratings of similar size communities across the nation and well above the national average.

The survey, conducted by ETC Institute in Olathe, selected random households by mail and phone. A total of 1,644 men and women of all ages from across the county responded.

Surveyed residents gave the county a 95 percent satisfaction level for quality of life, 95 percent for overall image of the county, 92 percent for public safety and 86 percent for overall quality of county service, the latter of which represents a 2 percent increase from 2016 and is 41 percent above the satisfaction level of counties in similar size communities in the U.S. Ninety-one percent of those surveyed indicated an overall feeling of safety in the county. Specifically in their neighborhoods, residents indicated a 97 percent feeling of safety during the day and a 91 percent feeling of safety at night.

The survey asked specific questions about parks, libraries and transit — three areas where additional funding is being allocated for new projects this year and future years:

Several years ago, the county acquired property for Big Bull Creek Park in southwest Johnson County, and this spring we are ready to break ground on the nearly 2,000 acres of park land located between Gardner and Edgerton. Two other projects, Meadowbrook Park in Prairie Village and Lexington Lake Park, a 465 acre park west of De Soto are also in the works.

A number of updates and improvements to Johnson County libraries are also underway including a major renovation to the Central Resource Library last year. A new Monticello branch in western Shawnee will break ground this spring and a new facility at Lenexa City Center will replace the Lackman branch. The Blue Valley and Corinth locations are also slated for improvements.

Johnson County’s transit system formerly called “The JO” is now part of RideKC the regional metro bus and transit system through a contract with the Kansas City Area Transportation Authority. In just the last year, a number of improvements were made in the county with routes expanding to more employment, shopping and activity centers.

The survey also asked residents what areas are most important to provide to the community and the following services ranked as the top five: 1) Emergency Medical/Ambulance Service /Med-Act; 2) Sheriff’s Office; 3) Park & Recreation District; 4) Emergency Management and Communications; and 5) the Johnson County library system.

Thank you to everyone who took the time to respond to our community survey! We appreciate the valuable insights we receive each year. It helps the county to evaluate and identify services that need improvements or modifications and determine which areas may need additional funding support in the county budget as we plan for the future.

The survey results are available at jocogov.org.

Ed Eilert
Chairman, Board of County Commissioners

Hannes Zacharias
County Manager

On the cover: The new Johnson County Arts & Heritage Center opens on June 10, 2017. The center is located at 8788 Metcalf in Overland Park.
In short

What’s up next for the county courthouse?

Travelers can help prevent spread of Zika

Johnson County Arts & Heritage Center opens soon

Best Times Digest: Elder abuse

Johnson County History: Wild Bill Hickok

Library Master Plan progress report

Air, land and water — county infrastructure

CARS and Stormwater programs partner with local cities

Have you heard about AIMS?

RideKC services expand in Johnson County

Challenges for new airport director

Tomahawk Creek project offers long-term solutions

JCPRD Legacy Plan Snapshot

Board of County Commissioners

Community Profile: SMSD recycling and composting

Three Questions

10 Things
In short

Veterans Treatment Court recognizes first program graduate

In February, the county’s Veterans Treatment Court recognized its first graduate in a ceremony at the Johnson County Courthouse. A year prior, in January 2016, Johnson County District Court held the first Veterans Treatment Court in the state of Kansas, with the mission to identify veterans in the criminal justice system, and, when eligible, to place them into treatment and court supervision as an alternative to incarceration. Veterans Treatment Court offers two alternatives to jail time — a diversion track through the Johnson County District Attorney’s Office and a probation track through Johnson County Court Services. Both programs allow eligible veterans to voluntarily participate in a 12- to 18-month program composed of court appearances, drug and alcohol testing, treatment, recovery support meetings and a mentorship program. VTC aims to help veterans who may be suffering from traumatic brain injuries, depression, substance abuse or post-traumatic stress disorder because of their military service.

RideKC Taxi voucher program continues

A taxi program that gives customers a more flexible transportation option in Johnson and eastern Jackson counties has been renewed by the Kansas City Area Transportation Authority’s Board of Commissioners. Known as RideKC Taxi, the pilot program gives seniors and riders with disabilities access to transportation any day, at any time, including holidays, for just $5 for the first 10 miles of their taxi trip. The KCATA’s renewal of the program is for one year with an option to extend it for another year in 2018. Started last July, the program has seen extraordinary growth in its first months of operation. It started with 64 taxi trips last July and has grown to 564 trips in February. Earlier this year, the RideKC program expanded to absorb a similar taxi program run by the city of Lenexa. Using 10/10 Taxi, eligible riders can use a cab to go anywhere in the region up to 10 miles for $5. About 75 percent of the cab fare within the first 10 miles is covered with a mix of federal and local funds. Customers pay the full fare after the first 10 miles. Overall, there have been nearly 2,700 trips — averaging about six miles per trip — on RideKC Taxi since it started last summer.

Regional hosta convention coming

For the first time in its 41-year history, the Midwest Regional Hosta Society (MRHS) is coming to Johnson County for its annual summer convention. *Hostas in the Lands of Aahhs* will be held June 22–24 at the Hyatt Place Kansas City/Lenexa City Center Hotel in Lenexa. The event is expected to draw hundreds of gardeners and hosta lovers from across a nine-state region; registration is open to the public.

The convention is being organized and hosted by the Johnson County K-State Research and Extension Master Gardener program in conjunction with the MRHS. The convention features educational classes, nine garden tours in Johnson County and Topeka, three catered dinners and a tour of one of the Midwest’s few hosta tissue culture labs where visitors will see unreleased hosta varieties. Regional vendors with a variety of gardening products and plants will also be available to convention attendees. Register at 2017kchostaconvention.com. Residents can call the Extension Office at 913-715-7000 for details.

quotable

“Our county has long been, and continues to be, the bread-and-butter economy for the state of Kansas and for those seeking careers and job opportunities.”

— Chairman Ed Eilert

in a March Kansas City Star article on the 2017 State of the County address
What’s up next for the Johnson County Courthouse?

Plans are underway to make the vision of the new voter-approved county courthouse a reality.

The Board of County Commissioners recently adopted a resolution to levy a quarter-cent public safety sales tax for 10 years that went into effect April 1, 2017. The board also amended the county’s Capital Improvement Program to include the county courthouse and coroner/medical examiner facility projects. And the county’s Facilities Management Department is working to procure the consultant teams needed to move this project forward. The timeline below gives a glance at the project plan from 2016 through 2021.

Stay updated on the projects at jocopublicsafety.org.

Travelers urged to wear insect repellent

by JENNIFER DUNLAY

Mosquitoes spread many types of viruses and parasites that cause diseases like chikungunya, dengue, Zika and malaria. If travel plans take you to a place where these diseases are found, the Department of Health and Environment suggests wearing insect repellent, long sleeves and pants to prevent mosquito bites. When you return home, continue to wear insect repellent for three weeks to prevent the transmission of Zika virus to local mosquitoes.

The risk of Zika is of greatest concern for pregnant women, who can pass Zika to their developing fetuses if infected during pregnancy. Because Zika infection is a cause of microcephaly and severe brain abnormalities, pregnant women should not travel to areas where Zika is prevalent.

The department will again conduct mosquito surveillance to identify if Aedes genus mosquitoes are present in Johnson County. Aedes mosquitoes are responsible for transmitting the Zika virus to humans. Traps will be set at four locations across the county and 10 samples will be taken between May and October.

This year, with funding support from the Kansas Department of Health and Environment, Culex mosquito specimens will also be tested to see if they are carriers of the West Nile Virus. Culex mosquitoes are the most common species found in the county (and the U.S.) and the main carrier of the West Nile Virus. 📊
The public is invited to take part in the highly anticipated opening of the Johnson County Arts & Heritage Center (JCAHC). “The grand opening will be a free community day,” said Johnson County Park & Recreation District Executive Director Jill Geller. “With the exception of The Theatre in the Park (TTIP) production of Grease which begins the previous night, patrons will get to enjoy all the things that the Arts & Heritage Center will have to offer at no cost on that day. Admission to the museum will be free, arts projects will be available for kids and adults, and abbreviated dance classes will be available, so patrons can try out almost every piece of the Arts & Heritage Center free of cost.”

The free day will be from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. on Saturday, June 10, at the new facility, which is located in the former King Louie building at 8788 Metcalf Avenue in Overland Park. Tickets for Grease, which is tentatively offering 14 matinées and evening performances between June 9 and June 25, will go on sale May 1. Check theatreinthepark.org for details.

The center provides an expanded new home for the Johnson County Museum, including a redesigned KidScape experience, and the 1950s All-Electric House. The museum’s signature exhibit, “Becoming Johnson County,” will occupy about 12,500 square feet of the center and display more than 400 objects. Interactive stations will spark and reinforce learning and add some fun for visitors of all ages. A 1,500-square-foot gallery space will provide opportunities to explore local stories in more detail.

**Cultural enrichment**

JCAHC provides space for multiple JCPRD programs including cultural enrichment opportunities, arts and crafts offerings, and music and dance classes, as well as TTIP offices. Also housed in the center is a 330-seat “black box” theater which provides The Theatre in the Park with a year-round venue to supplement its summer productions at Shawnee Mission Park.

“We are excited about the opportunity to continue The Theatre in the Park program throughout the year,” said Fine and Performing Arts Manager Tim Bair. “We plan to add a fall show, one or two holiday shows, and a late winter show to our indoor season. Also, we will be able to present fine arts programming that we were previously unable to offer due to lack of space. I’m excited about our theatre academy, which I hope to expand into a technical theatre institute as well.”

JCAHC has an event space for up to 330 people with an outdoor patio, both of which are available for rental, as are several other spaces. In addition, the center includes rooms for the Arts Council of Johnson County, Johnson County Developmental Supports Emerging Artist Program and the Overland Park Historical Society.

Development of JCAHC was overseen by Johnson County’s
Facilities Management Department, and the completed center will be operated and managed by JCPRD. Construction to convert the iconic building began in January 2016. The Johnson County Museum’s 1950s All-Electric House made the seven-mile journey to the new location in April 2016.

“I’m very excited because I think it will fill a real void in our community — a countywide arts center that really features everything; art, dance, theater, museum,” Geller said. “I think five years from now, our community is going to wonder how we ever got along without a facility like this.”

“I’m looking forward to the center becoming a central hub for arts and heritage in Johnson County,” Bair added. “No matter when you come to the center, you can always see something beautiful and engaging, and inspiring! I’m thrilled that we’ve also preserved a piece of architecture that holds so many fun memories for so many folks!”

Summer programs at the Johnson County Arts & Heritage Center are in the My JCPRD Activities catalog, available at all Johnson County libraries and online at jcprd.com. For more information about JCAHC, visit jocoahc.com.
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 Centers. I have been helping people with neuropathy and nerve problems for many 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 are able to release the pressure on the nerve. This allows the nerve to heal and the symptoms to go away. Numerous studies have proven the therapies we use can be effective in helping nerve conditions.

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

Cleared by the FDA in 2003, Class IV Laser devices have become the standard of care for many musculoskeletal injuries.

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

The first study showed patients who had laser therapy had 53% better improvement than those who had a placebo.

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

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.

**Will This Treatment Work For You?**

It’s time for you to find out if this treatment will be your neuropathy solution. For a few weeks only, $39 will get you all the services I normally charge new patients $257 for!

**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.
- A complete neuromuscular examination.
- A full set of digital x-rays (if needed) to determine if a spinal problem is contributing to your neuropathy.
- A thorough analysis of your exam findings so we can start mapping out your plan to being pain free. If you’re not a candidate for CoreCare, I promise to tell you.
- Plus, two treatments so you can experience this amazing therapy and learn if this could be your neuropathy solution like it has been for so many other patients.

**Call by May 31st and you can get everything I’ve listed here for only $39. The normal price for this type of evaluation, including digital x-rays is $257, so you’re saving over $200.**
Elder abuse in our community

by GERALD HAY

June 15 is World Elder Abuse Awareness Day, which raises the question: What does elder abuse look like in Johnson County? The White Collar Crime Unit of the Johnson County District Attorney’s Office is an epicenter in investigating elder abuse, prosecuting crimes and protecting a vulnerable population. Since the special unit was formed in 2003, cases of elder abuse have steadily increased.

A complex issue

Elder abuse, like other types of domestic violence, is complex. Crimes include physical, sexual, mental and emotional abuse along with passive neglect and self-neglect of a senior adult. Another type of abuse is financial exploitation — misusing, stealing, cashing checks without authorization or draining money from an older adult’s personal finances by another. Many modern scams — IRS impostors, con men posing as roofers or mulch salesmen — fall into the realm of financial exploitation.

Most likely targets are seniors who have no family or friends nearby and are frail or with disabilities, memory problems or dementia. Abuse often affects those who depend on others for help with everyday activities — bathing, dressing and taking medicine. Many involve family where abusers often are dependent on their victims for financial assistance, housing and other forms of support.

“Isolation is a red flag in elder abuse,” said Jacob Gontesky, an assistant district attorney and member of the White Collar Crime Unit.

Often abusers tell their victims where they can go, whom they can see and how they can spend their money — in other words control their decisions. In almost 90 percent of elder abuse and neglect incidents, the perpetrator is a family member, according to the National Council on Aging (NCOA), and two-thirds of perpetrators are adult children or spouses.

“Reporting of elder abuse is where domestic violence was 20-25 years ago,” Gontesky said. “It has come out of the shadow.”

One factor for the increasing reports of elder abuse is active involvement of law enforcement, criminal justice professionals and social service providers in investigation and reporting elder abuse.

“Our efforts at awareness campaigns are to educate more people — citizens, family members, social workers and law enforcement — what some may not have considered a crime may very well be one and should be investigated thoroughly,” Gontesky said.

According to the NCOA, about 10 percent of adults 60 years and older has experienced some form of abuse; some studies indicate that only one in 14 cases are reported to authorities.

Using a multi-organization approach to reports of elder abuse, the White Collar Crime Unit investigates and prosecutes all sorts of crimes and scams, involving older adult victims. The task can be complex because of medical and financial complications, a victim’s ability to testify, or reluctance of a victim to testify against relatives or even a spouse.

The district attorney’s protocol for handling elder abuse reports or financial scams involves partnering with local law enforcement agencies, and in many cases, assigning one of the district attorney criminal investigators to assist the local agency in the investigation.

Acting FAST on abuse reports

In cases where medical or financial records of the victim are involved, the White Collar Crime Unit often puts together a Financial Abuse Specialist Team (FAST team).

“With the help of the FAST teams, we have been very successful in aiding victims of abuse,” District Attorney Steve Howe said. “This unit was created to address a growing need in our community.”

If elder abuse is suspected, concerned parties can contact the local police department to file a complaint. The DA’s Office receives copies of all elder abuse reports from police agencies in Johnson County and can provide investigative assistance when requested by local law enforcement.

Detecting and reporting elder abuse is a first step. Convincing a victim to press criminal charges is more difficult because they may be afraid or embarrassed about their situation.
It has been 160 years since James Butler Hickok came to Johnson County to try his hand at homesteading before becoming an early constable of Monticello Township. During his life, he was many things—a scout, a sharpshooter, professional gambler and eventually, “Wild Bill” Hickok, legendary lawman of the Old West.

Wild frontier
According to information from the Johnson County Museum, JoCo History, Kansas Historical Society, Monticello Historical Society and other historical archives, Hickok was born in Homer (now Troy Grove), Illinois in 1837. Growing up, his father’s farm was one of the stops on the Underground Railroad, and he learned his shooting skills protecting the farm from anti-abolitionists with his father.

In 1855, Hickok left the farm to drive a stagecoach on the Santa Fe and Oregon trails. An early record refers to him as “Duck Bill” (perhaps in reference to a protruding upper lip he hid beneath a mustache), but his gunfighting skills later earned him the nickname “Wild Bill.”

The Kansas-Nebraska Act of 1854 opened up territory in Kansas to settlement and the prospect of cheap land lured Hickok west. He arrived in Leavenworth in June 1856, and soon learned the best land was already claimed. So, he waited for more Native American land to be placed on the market when a treaty with local tribes opened additional land in Johnson County.

In a letter home in November 1856, Hickok said he was looking to purchase land in Johnson County, calling it “the finest country (sic) in Kansas I ever saw” but cautioned “that the territory is wild and not yet safe for women and children.”

In 1857, he built a log cabin and claimed a 160-acre tract of land in what is now the city of Lenexa.

On March 22, 1858, Hickok at age 20 was elected one of four constables for Monticello Township, the first of several law enforcement jobs he held during his lifetime.

Tame time in Monticello
Wild Bill’s law days in Monticello were tame for the most part.

As constable, Hickok invented the practice of “posting” men out of town. He would put a list on what was called the “dead man’s tree” (so called because men had been lynched on it). Hickok proclaimed he would shoot them on sight the following day. Few stayed around to find out if he was serious.

Hickok was an active participant in the border war, serving as a scout and bodyguard for General James H. Lane of the Free-State Army. Hickok became a victim of the conflict when pro-slavery men burned his cabin in late 1858. He abandoned his farming claim in the late summer of 1859, turned in his badge, and left Johnson County, heading north to the Nebraska Territory.

Hickok was killed on Aug. 2, 1876, while playing poker in a Deadwood saloon in the Black Hills, Dakota Territory. He was 39.

Sixteen decades after his departure, Wild Bill’s brief time in Johnson County is preserved in some materials at the Monticello Historical Station and Museum at Floyd Cline Hall, 23860 West 83rd Street, Shawnee, and noted in interpretive panels at Lanesfield Historic Site, 18745 South Dillie Road, Edgerton.
In 2015, the Board of Directors of Johnson County Library approved a Comprehensive Library Master Plan. This 20-year vision identified four capital projects for development, paralleling the growth and evolution of the county. Here’s an update on two priority projects. You can stay up-to-date on library projects with a visit to the locations page of the library website, jocolibrary.org/locations.

Monticello Library
Address: 22435 W. 66th St., Shawnee
Total project cost: $18.1 million
Project type: New construction

Monticello is anticipated to break ground in spring 2017, with opening slated in mid-2018. Extensive citizen input and planning sessions with library staff and county officials help assure success of this long-anticipated branch.

Lenexa City Center Library
Address: 88th and Penrose, Lenexa
Total project cost: $211 million
Project type: New construction

The Master Plan calls for relocating the Lackman Library to a new location of about 40,000 square-feet at Lenexa City Center. This new library will expand its range of services for Lenexa and the surrounding area. Restrictions at the current site make physical expansion there impractical. The Lenexa City Center Library offers potential cost savings and operational benefits: site acquisition, shared parking and access to shared facilities such as a 250-seat auditorium for events.

A predesign study examined the opportunities and challenges of building and operating a library at this unique mixed-use urban location. This provided the library board an objective assessment of project requirements, confirmation of the proposed branch’s program and a conceptual vision for how a branch library could serve the county at this location.

Design is anticipated to last through fall 2017, with groundbreaking shortly thereafter. The new Lenexa City Center Library has an opening date of mid-2019.
Air, land and water — a snapshot of infrastructure

Johnson County Government maintains the infrastructure services — airports, roads, transit and more — that allow our community to thrive and our residents to enjoy a high quality of life.

“Our infrastructure programs play a critical role in the region’s economic health,” said deputy county manager Penny Postoak Ferguson, who oversees county infrastructure — Johnson County Airport Commission; Planning, Development and Codes; Public Works; Transit; and Wastewater; and serves as the liaison for Park & Recreation.

Johnson County Airport Commission

$6.6 million
18.8

Johnson County Airport Commission (JCAC) oversees air, rail, water and business park operations at two of the busiest airports in Kansas — New Century AirCenter and Executive Airport.

The business park includes more than 60 businesses that provide 5,000 private-sector jobs. JCAC also runs a six-mile shortline railroad to support the business park. JCAC is working to unlock more than 700 acres for new business development at New Century AirCenter.

see article, page 18

Park & Recreation

$56.3 million
468.7

Johnson County Park & Recreation (JCPRD) maintains and develops nationally recognized green spaces and recreational programs for county residents.

JCPRD operates 6,000 acres of park land and 4,000 local programs. It hosts 1.5 million participants and has 7 million park visitors. JCPRD will open two county parks later this year — Lexington Park and Big Bull Creek. JCPRD also operates the Johnson County Museum.

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Planning, Development and Codes

$2.7 million
18.1

Planning, Development and Codes provides long-term professional services — policy and demographic analysis, zoning and code enforcement, building inspectors and contractor licensing for county residences and businesses.

Planning and Zoning receives about 75 applications per year and issues 65 code violations. Building inspectors approve almost 400 permits annually. The Contractor Licensing division licenses more than 3,400 building contractor companies and is a national leader in providing contractor code education.

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### Development and Codes

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### Public Works

Public Works plans, develops and implements the county’s infrastructure policies and goals.

Public Works maintains 240 miles of asphalt roadway in the unincorporated areas of the county, 147 miles of gravel roadway and 116 bridges. The County Assistance Road System (CARS) program provides funding to local cities to help construct and maintain major arterial roadways. The Stormwater Management program provides funds to cities for water projects.

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### Transit

Johnson County Transit connects residents across the county and region to expand access to jobs, education and retailers.

In 2016, RideKC introduced expanded service offering additional trips for more frequent rider access along county routes. It also decreased fares along some express routes, including 519 Olathe Express, and decreased its 31-day express pass. It also introduced its Veterans Ride Free initiative.

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### Wastewater

Johnson County Wastewater (JCW) is responsible for the collection, transportation and treatment of wastewater produced by most county residents and businesses.

JCW serves 6,035 commercial, 113 industrial, and 17,336 multi-family and 117,122 single-family home customers in the county. In 2016, JCW cleaned 259 miles of the 2,262 miles of sewer line and treated 17.88 billion gallons of flow.

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**Key:**
- $ 2017 departmental budget
- 🏷 Number of full-time employees

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see article, page 14

see article, page 17

see article, page 19
Programs improve roads, water quality
Public Works partners with local cities for big-picture solutions
by GERALD HAY

Johnson County public works programs allocate millions in improvements to local roadways and stormwater systems each year.

Road system projects
Since 1983, the CARS (County Assistance Road System) program has annually provided funding to improve major roads and streets throughout the county. The program allocated $15.4 million in 2017.

Four CARS projects are in Overland Park, three in Olathe, two in Lenexa, and one each in Edgerton, Fairway, Gardner, Leawood, Merriam, Mission, Prairie Village and Shawnee. CARS project funding in 2017 ranges from more than $3.2 million to $88,000.

The CARS program was established to construct, maintain and improve local major transportation corridors in partnership with the cities.

Each year, cities submit a five-year road improvement plan to Johnson County Government. Using a scoring system, the county annually selects projects and allocates funds, paying up to 50 percent of the project’s construction and construction inspection costs.

Stormwater management
The 2017 Stormwater Management program is funding almost $23.3 million for design/construction projects in the cities of Leawood, Overland Park, Olathe (two projects) and Shawnee (three projects). Project funding in 2017 ranges from more than $6.2 million to just over $110,000. The program includes supplementary projects to support the program’s regional and countywide initiatives, requiring approximately $2.2 million in funding.

Regional and support projects include maintenance of the county’s stream and rain gauge network, maintenance of the countywide flood-warning system, support to the cities for compliance with state/federal water quality regulations, and funding of studies identified by cities and other stormwater activities and projects.

The Stormwater Management Program (SMP) annually provides funding for stormwater improvements and capital projects in Johnson County in partnership with the cities. The program also cooperates with other cities in the Kansas City region as part of the regional stormwater system.

Award-winning program
The Johnson County Stormwater Management Program received the Management Innovation Award from the Kansas City chapter of the American Public Works Association for its 2016 strategic business plan.

The plan represents an innovative watershed-based approach instead of the city-based organization that had been used in the past. This approach will facilitate water quality improvement and multi-purpose project and the emerging trend of integrated planning.

A watershed is an area of land that drains all streams and rainfall to a common outlet such as the outflow of a reservoir or any point along a stream channel.
Discover What Awaits

@JCCCtweet

facebook.com/JCCC411

Johnson County Community College

@johnsoncountycommunitycollege

Johnson County Community College

913-469-3803
www.jccc.edu
Have you heard about AIMS?

The Automated Information Mapping System (AIMS) in Johnson County is a division of the county’s Department of Technology and Innovation. AIMS provides location data, analysis and mapping that promote efficient and effective planning efforts by local cities and stakeholders.

City and county operations
AIMS currently has data-sharing agreements with local cities, school districts, utilities and engineering companies that allow geographic information system (GIS) data collection and use by various groups. This eliminates duplicate efforts. AIMS information systems are available 24 hours a day via the internet. In 2016, the online mapping system logged more than 1 million page hits.

The team assists many county government functions. For example, AIMS helps Johnson County Wastewater map more than 2,000 miles of pipe and provides monthly reports for JCW’s asset management program. They provide information that assists dispatching of local and emergency service vehicles; finding ideal locations for new police, fire and library facilities; and identifying utilities in need of repair. They also provide oversight, distribution and analysis for more than 250,000 address and property features, over 3,700 lane miles of roads and more.

Public resources
Although many AIMS activities are geared for use by local cities, utilities and other stakeholders, there are online tools available for public use. Location maps and information is a portal (ims.jocogov.org/locationservices) that accesses maps and information about parcels, locations and addresses in Johnson County. Just type in a Johnson County address and the webpage displays a range of information for the given location, including general plat information; city/township information along with GPS coordinates; property description, year built and utility providers; school district and elementary, middle and high school information; and nearby resources such as fire stations, libraries and parks.

AIMS also offers online mapping classes. Its “online mapping 101” class is open to the public and covers the services and functions of the county’s Online Mapping application, including website navigation, layer descriptions, search capabilities and working with the various mapping tools.

• May 17, 2017, 1:30 to 3:30 p.m.
• Sept. 20, 2017, 1:30 to 3:30 p.m.

Online mapping 101 is free to attend but requires registration at aims.jocogov.org/ProductsAndServices/AIMSClasses.aspx.

Get a healthier lawn and protect our water quality

By DENNIS PATTON

Have you ever stopped to think about grass clippings once they’re cut? Yes, they can be a pain. But did you know about their effect on the water we drink?

Research from leading universities found that lawn clippings that make their way into local ponds and streams via storm drains decay, releasing harmful nutrients nitrites and phosphates. This organic matter loads nutrients into the water, creating algae growth that will harm fish, causes murky water and increases purification costs.

It’s easy to do our part. Keep grass clippings and other organic matter like leaves out of street gutters and off hard surfaces such as walks and drives. When mowing, place your mower so that it discharges the clippings back onto the lawn instead of blowing them into the street.

After mowing, sweep or blow the debris back into the grass. The lawn acts like a safety net, catching and holding the clippings where they decompose naturally. As an added bonus, the clippings return twenty-five percent of the fertilizer back to the lawn. This helps create a healthier lawn.

Whether you’re DIY or you hire a crew, the last step is returning the clippings back to the lawn.

Best of all, when you reach for that glass of cold water when you’re finished, take pride in knowing you did your part to ensure it is not only refreshing but clean.
More opportunities to RideKC in Johnson County

by JOSH POWERS

New and expanded service. Lower fares for express routes. Free fares for veterans.

These are just a few recent offerings from RideKC — the regional partnership between Johnson County and other local governments — that seeks to make public transportation across the Kansas City region easier, more affordable and more accessible than ever before.

In July 2016, RideKC introduced expanded service on the 401 Metcalf/Plaza route, the 475 75th Street & Quivira route and 75 75th Street route, offering additional trips for more frequent rider access. The new 495 95th Street route, was also introduced, connecting the Waldo neighborhood in Kansas City, Missouri, with the Lenexa City Center development. For Johnson County Commissioner Steve Klika, new and expanded service creates economic opportunity for transit users.

“These new routes allow riders to move fluidly between Kansas and Missouri as they commute for employment,” Klika said, who also serves as chairman of the Kansas City Area Transportation Authority (KCATA). “Our new, expanded transit offerings open access to thousands of jobs on both sides of the state line.”

Public transportation in the Kansas City region serves more than the workforce. RideKC Access, a pilot program offering free fares for qualified paratransit users, was introduced in late 2016.

“RideKC Access is about giving people choices in the way they travel,” said KCATA President and CEO Robbie Makinen. “We are giving riders the option to use the service that best fits their needs, and if they qualify, they can do it for free.” The service also features “travel training” for people unfamiliar with using public transportation.

To better serve riders in Johnson County, RideKC continues to look for ways to make transit more affordable. To that end, Johnson County reduced the fares on four of its major local express routes and reduced the fare on the very popular K-10 Connector route. The K-10 route, which connects Johnson County Community College and the University of Kansas – Edwards Campus in Overland Park to the University of Kansas in Lawrence, now costs $3 each way, down from $3.50.

And as of March 1, 2017, fares on the 519 Olathe Express, 563 Shawnee Express, 569 South Overland Park Express and the Gardner-Overland Park Express are $1.50, a 75-cent reduction from the previous fare. Similarly, the price for a 31-day express pass is now $50, reduced from $75.60 to account for the lower base fares.

Another exciting offering is the new “Veterans Ride Free” initiative, made possible through a partnership with the Kansas City Veterans Administration and the Veterans Community Project. The program allows the estimated 115,000 veterans in the Kansas City region to use RideKC transit free with a RideKC Veterans Pass or other photo identification.

“Public transportation offers a critical outlet for veterans seeking to access existing services and resources,” said Chris Stout, Veterans Community Project. “For homeless veterans, mobility is often the most significant impediment to obtaining shelter, affordable housing, education and employment.”

Information about these initiatives, route schedules and maps can be found online at ridekc.org or by calling 816-221-0660.
Fresh challenges for new airport executive director
Straight-line winds cause massive damage at Executive Airport
by AUSTIN FALLEY

Aaron Otto was named executive director of the Johnson County Airport Commission in February. Weeks later, spring storms and straight-line winds caused massive damage at Executive Airport in Olathe, creating an early challenge for the leader.

In the days after the storm, Johnson County Government leaders came together to support Otto and airport staff. He says the county’s support to the cleanup is one of the benefits of belonging to a large organization.

“Even with 30 or so county departments, everyone stepped up to be very helpful in responding,” he said.

Johnson County Sheriff’s Office provided public safety services during the initial response and the county’s park police regulated the scene until security fencing was installed.

“Everyone is so busy,” Otto said. “But when a time of need arises, the entire county was just unbelievable in assisting the 15-person crew that makes up the airport staff.”

Big picture goals
Otto says his goals as executive director are diverse, and an immediate goal will be continued responsiveness to the damage and rebuilding efforts at Executive Airport.

“We’re going to build systems, strategies and structures to operate the airports in a more transparent and accountable method,” Otto said.

Johnson County Airport Commission operates the third- and fourth-busiest airports in Kansas as well as a 1,000-acre industrial park with more than 60 businesses and 5,000 private-sector employees.

As executive director, Otto also oversees a six-mile rail system that moves 1,000 cars per year and a water system that distributes close to 200 million gallons annually.

A heart for public service
Otto says that a focus on service delivery has been the common thread during his time as a public servant.

In his career, Otto has worked in state, local and federal positions, and he says those experiences have prepared him for a new role leading the airport commission.

Otto formerly served the state of Kansas as assistant state treasurer and deputy assistant state treasurer as well as on the senior staffs of two governors and lieutenant governors.

While in Washington, D.C., Otto earned a master’s degree in public administration from The George Washington University and he served as special assistant to the assistant secretary of defense and in several positions with the U.S. Navy.

“It doesn’t matter if it’s the governor’s office, state treasury or the Navy,” Otto said, “our job is to deliver services to the public. That part doesn’t change, so you’re focused on effective and efficient service delivery.”

He says his work for the state of Kansas built his skills in personnel management and organizational structure. Otto also became well-versed in budgeting and financial planning during his time as assistant state treasurer.

“What I love about every job I’ve had is every one of them has a flag, every one of them has a purpose and a mission to serve,” Otto said.

Homecoming
Otto is no stranger to the Sunflower State. A native of Manhattan, Kansas, he earned a bachelor’s degree from Kansas State University.

“D.C. is wonderful and it has a lot of unique experiences,” he said, “but to be back in your home state, you get to feel like you’re doing more service delivery, amplified more so when, in local government, you’re taking care of your neighbors.”
Tomahawk Creek project offers long-term, cost-effective solution

by LORI SAND

Several years of study and analysis were completed before Johnson County Wastewater (JCW) sought approval from the Board of County Commissioners in 2016 to improve and expand the Tomahawk Creek Wastewater Treatment Facility. Today, Johnson County Wastewater is proceeding with the detailed design phase of the largest project that the county government has undertaken in its 160-year history.

The facility was originally built in 1955 at 10701 Lee Boulevard in Leawood. It currently treats seven million gallons per day (MGD), which is 40 percent of the wastewater collected from parts of Leawood, Olathe, Overland Park and Prairie Village. The remaining 60 percent is diverted to Kansas City, Missouri, for treatment at its Blue River Wastewater Treatment Plant. That’s an expensive solution as the cost to continue to send flow to Kansas City, Missouri, and pay for treatment will substantially increase over the next several decades. Kansas City has planned infrastructure improvements that will cost $4.5 billion, an amount that will be paid by all customers.

Treatment improvements and increased flow
Treatment expenditures will already increase in the future for JCW customers due to new water quality regulations that require upgrades to the existing Tomahawk Creek facility; upgrades that will improve water quality in Indian Creek and downstream waters.

Several studies over the past 10 years were prepared to determine the future of the Tomahawk Creek Wastewater Treatment Facility. The Pre-Design Study evaluated various treatment alternatives and capacity scenarios using the latest user rate information and regulatory perspectives. The study identified $280 million (2015 dollars) in investments to expand the facility to treat all flow as the most cost-effective solution. The new plant will be built to treat an average daily flow of 19 MGD, providing capacity for the ultimate future growth in the service area.

“This long-term investment at the Tomahawk Creek Wastewater Treatment Facility preserves the high quality of life for residents,” says Susan Pekarek, general manager of JCW.

The goal is three-fold:
• Providing the most cost-effective, long-term solutions for customers.
• Improving treatment operations by applying the latest proven technologies.
• Protecting the environment and improving water quality in Indian Creek and for downstream communities.

Construction is slated to begin following the Kansas Department of Health and Environment’s approval of final design documents by early 2018; completion is expected by the end of 2021.

Before joining Johnson County Government, Otto was the second-ever city administrator of Roeland Park.

Prior to joining Johnson County Government in 2015, Otto became the second-ever city administrator of Roeland Park, Kansas, where he oversaw day-to-day operations and coordinated management of the city’s departments.

Otto says transparency and the need for consensus building are unique challenges in public management.

“The environment is a bit different from the private sector,” he said. “There are a lot of different players and stakeholders that you need to include in decision making.”

In local government, Otto said, there’s an expectation of perfection in service delivery.

“If we do our jobs well, we improve the quality of life for members of our community.”
The Johnson County
Board of County Commissioners

In 2015, the Board of Park and Recreation Commissioners approved of JCPRD’s new Legacy Plan. The plan provides a comprehensive framework for managing the county’s open space and recreational resources through the year 2030.

Here’s a snapshot of three JCPRD priority projects. You can stay up-to-date on county park and recreation projects online at jcprd.com

**Lexington Lake Park** is 465-acres located west of De Soto and north of K-10 Highway. The site includes a 30-acre fishing lake, as well as a mix of woodlands, forest and open areas.

**Completion date:** May 2017

**Big Bull Creek Park** is slated to open in late 2017, with a park police substation and maintenance building, playground, shelters, trails and group camping areas. The 2,000-acre park, located between Edgerton and Gardner, will offer recreation amenities.

**Completion date:** November 2017

**Meadowbrook Park** redevelopment in Prairie Village is a mixed-used project that includes green space owned, operated and maintained by JCPRD. The remaining acreage of the former Meadowbrook Golf and County Club will be privately developed into residential communities and commercial projects with multiple housing options.

**Completion date:** April/May 2018

They 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
Shawnee Mission School District’s Waste Diversion Program

Every year, K-12 students each throw nearly 100 pounds of trash into cafeteria trash cans, leading to thousands of tons of wasted material entering the landfill. Half eaten pizza, used napkins, whole sandwiches and partially full milk cartons, juice boxes and water bottles all fill trash cans at schools where they ultimately go to a landfill, waiting hundreds of thousands of years to decompose. These items can either be recycled or composted, avoiding the trash can altogether.

For years, the amount of lunchroom waste has been increasing. The Shawnee Mission School District is now aggressively changing this trend through a strategic partnership with Johnson County Health and Environment’s Solid Waste Division. The partnership began as a grassroots effort initiated by students and PTA members at Briarwood Elementary and has grown into a program at 32 elementary, middle and high schools. By May 2018, all 50 Shawnee Mission schools and administrative centers will be on board.

“We know our community values sustainability and expects the district to manage resources responsibly,” said Superintendent Jim Hinson. “Teaching students to think about what they add to the landfill can have a lasting effect on our community.”

It started in 2008

Parent Luci Lee gathered students and PTA members to pilot a waste diversion program at Briarwood. The team worked with parents, teachers, administrators and community partners to devise a system to recover recyclables and food from the waste stream. Word of their success spread and more schools adopted the system. By 2012, 12 schools were on board, diverting a total of 431 tons of waste from area landfills. The district provided compost service for participating schools.

“Our goal was to show that it could be done,” Lee said. “It is thrilling to see it spread to the rest of the district. Since our children have shown us it can be done, it is our hope now that the program will expand to curbside composting in neighborhoods surrounding the schools.”

Simple system

Color-coded buckets, bins and signage provide visual cues. Reusable forks and spoons are placed in a red bucket. Liquids are drained into a white bucket and the empty cartons and juice boxes recycled in a blue recycle bin. Scrunchable foil or plastic, such as condiment packages and chip bags, go into the black trash bin along with containers too contaminated with food to recycle. At the end of the line is the green compost bin where uneaten food is placed.

Unlike backyard composting, commercial composting implemented in schools can handle all food and paper. Bones, pizza, chicken nuggets, cardboard, napkins, paper cups and popsicle sticks can all go into the compost bin along with carrots and pineapple.

On average, schools have reduced cafeteria waste by 80 percent. District recycling partner Waste Corporation of America collects milk cartons, plastic and aluminum to be reconstituted into new products. More than 140 tons of food, paper and cardboard organic waste is collected and turned into compost annually by Missouri Organic Recycling. Much of the compost returns to the schools to grow more food in school gardens. More than 500 cubic yards of composted former food waste will amend the soil at the one-acre Shawnee Mission Center for Academic Achievement Urban Farm to benefit the district’s Culinary, Biotechnology and Global Systems Signature programs.

“We could not accomplish this program without the technical, financial and staffing assistance of Johnson County Health and Environment. Their support has made the difference,” said Joan Leavens, coordinator of sustainability and community engagement for the district.

Shawnee Mission Food Service is credited with reducing waste at the source through efficiency and procurement. Reusable flatware and trays have replaced disposables. Food is served in compostable cardboard boats. Water dispensers and paper cups replace plastic water bottles. Students are encouraged to “Take what you want. Eat what you take.” After lunch, kitchen staff compost the small amount of food that cannot be re-served.

The Shawnee Mission School District composting and recycling efforts have been recognized by Mid-America Regional Council Sustainable Success Stories and U.S. EPA Region 7 Food Recovery Challenge. The northeast Johnson County school district is partnering with Johnson County Health and Environment to bring this program to other local public and private schools.
THREE Questions for three employees of Johnson County Government
by LORI SAND

Molly Postlewait, senior park naturalist, has been with the Johnson County Park & Recreation District for 20 years at the Ernie Miller Nature Center in Olathe.

What would you tell someone considering a career with the Ernie Miller Nature Center?
It’s certainly not a desk job or glamorous, but you get to see the wonder and fascination of people as they learn about nature. I like to say that we are facilitators of their experience. Be prepared to work in all kinds of weather, clean up animal poo and do all kinds of physical grunt work. Every day is different.

What’s your favorite part of your job?
I love interacting with the people. It’s fun to hear their stories of what they have found on their walks. It’s very fulfilling and takes me back to my own childhood. Being in nature just makes me happy.

What would you change?
I would love to have a cage large enough for a turkey vulture so people could learn about its role in the clean-up crew. It’s one of those animals that is feared until it’s vilified. Some critters have an “ewwhh” factor, but once people learn about it, they’re saying, “Wow!”

Teresa Crane has been a customer service representative with Johnson County Wastewater for nearly 10 years.

What do you do at JCW?
My number one priority is assisting our customers, over the phone or when they walk into our office. We have other job duties in addition to answering calls. I assist customers with our website, filing claims with the bankruptcy court, refunds, making billing adjustments, stopping and starting service, and more.

What's your biggest challenge?
Keeping my composure at all times. We assist many customers who have hardships such as losing a loved one and are unable to pay their bills. Many customers don’t know what Johnson County Wastewater is, what we do, or how their bills are calculated. Sometimes we take calls from customers who call to complain that their water been turned off or their trash has not been picked up.

If you could have any other job in public service, what would it be?
I enjoy working with older adults and would love to work in a position that helps them. My dad is 93 years old. He is still living in his home, but I see a need for assisting the older generation so they can continue living in their home for as long as possible.

Anoush Fardiour, Johnson County building official, has been with the Planning, Development and Codes Department for 21 years, most of that time as chief building inspector/plan examiner.

What do you do?
I manage the department’s Building Codes and Contractor Licensing divisions. Building codes reviews, enforces, and inspects all new and existing residential, commercial and industrial projects in the unincorporated areas of the county in accordance with the county’s adopted building, mechanical, plumbing, electrical and fire codes. I also act as a fire marshal in unincorporated Johnson County in collaboration with three local fire districts. We review the life safety and fire inspection in three fire district areas and enforce the county’s adopted fire code.

What’s your favorite part of your job?
I get a great deal of satisfaction in providing answers to the public when they are working to complete a project. Many times I’ll meet with people at their kitchen counter and we’ll discuss their plans. I’m proud and honored to work as a public servant, helping to ensure public safety.

What’s your biggest challenge?
It’s a hard job — making hard decisions. I have to put my emotions aside and consider the welfare of the whole community. Many times customers have this dream of their project. Unfortunately, when I get involved to enforce building and fire codes, it’s hard for them to understand why they have to change their plans. It’s an expensive undertaking to do that in terms of fees and time.
You shouldn’t flush or pour down the sewer.

Many of these items will not only cause problems in your home’s plumbing system, but they have additional consequences for the wastewater treatment facilities, groundwater supplies, environment and wildlife.

1 • Paper towels

This type of paper is not designed to disintegrate in water like toilet paper. Flushing this is not a good idea.

2 • Floss or hair

Floss isn’t biodegradable, and while hair is, it can take up to two years to decompose. Once flushed, they wrap around other things in the pipeline, making a small clog into a bigger one in no time.

3 • Cotton balls or swabs

You might expect these items to just get soggy and breakdown in the pipeline. Not so. These can bunch together and cause a massive blockage.

4 • Wipes

Despite the claim by many of the moist wipes to be “flushable,” they are thicker and sturdier than toilet paper and do not disintegrate. One study showed toilet paper dissolved in 24 seconds while 24 hours later, the wipe was still intact.

5 • Bandages

Here’s another non-biodegradable material that can lead to clogs.

6 • Disposable diapers

These should always go in the trash because they are made from a material designed to expand when it gets wet.

7 • Personal care products

These cause a great number of clogs and sewage backups. Like disposable diapers, the absorbent material makes them too big to pass through plumbing. Plus, cotton can easily snag on any cracks or roots in the sewer line. Flush a few times afterwards and you have a big backup. Not only is this a headache, but it can lead to expensive plumbing repairs.

8 • Prescriptions and OTC medications

Medications can end up in the water supply. U.S. studies have found everything from antibiotics and hormones to mood stabilizers in drinking water supplies. Instead, dispose of them through a community medication take back program, or mix them with something inedible, such as coffee grounds, and put them in the trash.

9 • Fats, oils and grease

When these cool down, they create solid masses that block pipes and cause serious sewage problems. If you wash it down the drain or flush it, it will stick to the insides of sewer pipes and build up over time, creating blockages.

One of the worst blockages was discovered in 2014 underneath a 260-foot section of road in West London. The congealed mess of food fat, waste, wet wipes, food, tennis balls and wood planks was the size of a Boeing 747.

10 • Cat litter

Clumping, flushable cat litter might sound like a good idea, but there are ecological consequences to flushing any kind of litter. Feline feces may contain toxoplasma gondii, horrible parasites that can cause all sorts of health problems in susceptible humans — pregnant women and those with compromised immune systems — as well as in marine life. Wastewater treatment does not remove the parasite, meaning it can get into the water supply.
State statute requires Johnson County Government to collect property taxes on behalf of all taxing districts in the county (cities and townships, school districts, libraries, Park & Recreation District and the state of Kansas, to name a few). The county retains only about 15 percent of what we collect for the general county budget and disperses the rest. Here is a current breakdown of how property taxes are divided among taxing districts.

- **School districts**: 55.9%
- **Cities/townships**: 16.4%
- **County**: 15.4%
- **State of Kansas**: 1.2%
- **Special districts**: 2.2%
- **Special assessments**: 4.0%
- **Libraries**: 2.5%
- **Park & Recreation**: 2.4%

* Special assessments cover expenses such as new streets, curbs and gutters and mowing charges.

** Special districts include funds distributed to cemeteries, drainage, fire and recreation districts in the unincorporated areas of the county.