Special Issue: Reviewing a Decade in JoCo
LETTER FROM LEADERSHIP

Looking back on a decade of collaboration

As we are about to turn the calendar page not only to a new year, but to a new decade, it is the perfect time to look back at some of the highlights in our county from this past decade. We know that the cities in our county, as well as the metro and the region, have made major advancements this past decade, and we applaud them. Due to space constraints, what you’ll see in this issue of JoCo Magazine are just a few highlights from Johnson County Government.

For this issue we, along with county leadership and staff, thought back on the decade and suggested the improvements or enhancements that stood out in our minds from the past 10 years. We also received suggestions from county residents who participated in our #DecadeinJoCo contest. Thank you to all who shared your thoughts on the most important milestones from this decade.

None of what we accomplished this decade could have been done without the crucial collaboration we have with all levels of government, non-profits and so many other community partners. We cannot name them all, but a few examples of collaboration from this decade include:

• Regional CORE 4 partnership with Jackson County, Unified Government of Wyandotte County/Kansas City, Kansas, and Kansas City, Missouri.
• Working with our JoCo cities every day on planning for stormwater, street improvements, public safety, the NotifyJoCo mass alert system, and much more.
• Joining with dozens of community partners for the Johnson County Complete Count Committee to make sure our residents understand the importance of participating in the 2020 Census.
• Partnering with the private sector on initiatives such as the Black & Veatch MakerSpace at Johnson County Library, Johnson County Mental Health Center’s Peer Driving Program and all of the local employers who have provided jobs to people we serve through the Department of Corrections, Johnson County Developmental Supports and the Mental Health Center.

Thank you to all partners who have contributed to the success of Johnson County this decade.

Most importantly, thank you to the residents of Johnson County. Thank you for living here, working here, volunteering, serving on boards or commissions, and voting. Thank you for coming to Board of County Commissioners meetings, telling your commissioner what is important to you, engaging with our communications platforms, attending public meetings and events, and working with us every day.

We hope you enjoy reminiscing about the past decade with us, and we wish you a very happy new year as we enter the 2020s together.

Ed Eilert
Chairman, Board of County Commissioners

Penny Postoak Ferguson
County Manager

On the cover: As the decade draws to a close, we’re looking back on all that we’ve accomplished and improved since 2010. From new parks and libraries to investments in transit and public safety to new programs and services that support our county’s most vulnerable residents, there’s a lot to be proud of. Our cover collage represents just a sampling of these successes; for more, check out the full story on pages 10-14 and look for the Decade in JoCo logo throughout the magazine to see what residents thought were the greatest improvements from this decade.
Ways to engage with JoCo

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

Social media
Facebook, Twitter, Instagram: @jocogov

By phone
Call Center: 913-715-5000
Kansas Relay Operator: 800-766-3777

Board of County Commissioners’ meetings:
Attend a board meeting weekly at 9:30 a.m. Thursdays on the third floor of the Administration Building, 111 S. Cherry St., in Olathe or watch online at boccmeetings.jocogov.org.

Johnson County Elected Officials
Ed Eilert, Chairman
Becky Fast, 1st District
Jim Allen, 2nd District
Steve Klika, 3rd District
Janeé Hanzlick, 4th District
Michael Ashcraft, 5th District
Mike Brown, 6th District
Steve Howe, district attorney
Calvin Hayden, sheriff

Pictured above: Kill Creek Park visitors will soon be treated to this dramatic view of the park and surrounding landscape at the top of the new Russell and Helen Means Observation Tower. The 45-ft. structure, accessible by both stairs and an elevator, is expected to open this winter.
ALL AMERICAN CONSTRUCTION, INC.

$500 OFF

Kitchen, Basement, or Bathroom Remodel*

Call 913.222.4379

• Kitchen & Bathroom Remodels
• Basement Remodels
• Room Additions
• Tile & Hardwood Floors
• Decks & Fences
• Licensed & Insured

Follow us: www.paint-America.com


All American Painting, Inc.

Painting America one house at a time

Call 913.222.4379

☆ Licensed & Insured General Contractors
☆ Free estimates for painting, wood rot, window & gutter repair
☆ Residential & Commercial

$500 OFF
A full interior paint job*

County and cities work together to solve flooding problems

Johnson County’s Stormwater Management program needs the public’s help to tackle the issue of flooding. All residents are invited to help identify flooding and other stormwater-related concerns by completing an online mapping tool at map.social/JohnsonCountyKSFloodingSurvey.

Johnson County is now looking at solving problems the way nature intended, on a watershed basis.

The masterplans will also identify potential solutions to address water quality impairments and aging infrastructure.

While the survey will remain active until August 2020, information that is gathered will begin to be used immediately as the department begins to formulate masterplans for each of the county’s six watershed organizations.

Local help for gambling addiction

Johnson County Mental Health Center officially launched its own gambling treatment program in September, becoming the only community mental health center in the area to offer these services. The program includes treatment for problem gaming or gambling, for such things as casinos, bingo and online poker. The program is credentialed by Beacon Health and Kansas Department of Aging and Disability Services. The program is funded by the Problem Gambling Grant of Kansas and open to any qualifying JCMHC client at no cost. To find out more about the program, please call JCMHC customer service at 913-826-4200.

Getting ready for the 2020 Census

As the 2020 Census approaches, the Johnson County Complete Count Committee continues to educate the public about the who, what, when, where and why on the census through the Count Me In JoCo awareness campaign. Data from the 2010 Census brings $6 billion to Kansas annually and determines legislative districts. It’s important that everyone is counted in 2020.

There are several ways to get up to speed on this topic and get your questions answered.

- Visit countmeinjoco.org.
- Follow #CountMeInJoCo on Facebook and Twitter.
- Email info@countmeinjoco.org.

quotable

“It was fabulous. It was very touching. I feel honored, along with all our veterans.”
— Mary Cox, Overland Park resident, retired lieutenant colonel and Desert Shield/Desert Storm veteran speaking after the county’s annual Veterans Day observance. The event took place Nov. 11 at the American Legion Post 153 hall in Olathe. Read Mary’s story and learn more about the Veterans Day observance on page 16.
Don’t know what Vladdin, VooPoo Drag Nano or Smok Nord mean?

BY MICHELENE KRUGER AND NICOLE BROWN

You’re not alone, but chances are the young people in your life do. These are some of the newest vaping devices to hit the market in 2019. They resemble flash drives, charging devices, key fobs, pens, lighters, etc. The most popular brand is JUUL.

While cigarette smoking rates have plummeted, there has been an astronomical rise in vaping among young people. According to the Surgeon General, in 2018, more than 3.6 million U.S. youth, including 1 in 5 high school and 1 in 20 middle school students, used e-cigarettes. These devices are attractive to youth both in design and nature of delivery. Match your device to your outfit, put a designer “skin” on it, or choose your “juice” flavor like you choose your favorite cereal or candy.

Of equal concern are the many cases of vaping-related illnesses and deaths reported since the Centers for Disease Control began collecting information in August 2019. Cases involve individuals who used products with THC, products without THC, or both. The cause of the outbreak is currently unknown. The CDC strongly recommends refraining from using e-cigarettes/products, particularly those containing THC.

If you don’t use cigarettes or vape – don’t start! If you are an adult cigarette smoker and want to quit, consider using one of the six Food and Drug Administration-approved nicotine replacement therapies. Some are available by prescription only and some are sold over the counter. E-cigarettes have not been shown to be an effective cessation tool. The Kansas Tobacco Quitline is a free support service available to everyone by calling 1-800-Quit-Now.

Unsure if your teen is vaping? Talk with them and ask what they are seeing or experiencing at school or with friends. Remain nonjudgmental but share facts and concerns. If your teen is vaping, offer resources and consult your family physician.

Learn more online at e-cigarettes.surgeongeneral.gov or cdc.gov and search “electronic cigarettes.”

Have you started planning your spring garden yet?

Go to containtherainjoco.com to learn about rebates for butterfly gardens and rain barrels!
Johnson County never had a yellow brick road, but red bricks helped to pave the roadway system out of the rut.

In the late 19th and early 20th century, most streets were either dirt or gravel. Potholes and ruts were common, taking their toll on vehicles. Muddy roads after rains added hours to normal travel times.

Two of the county’s main roads – Kansas City Road in Olathe and Metcalf Avenue in Overland Park – were paved with brick in the mid-1920s. The wizard of all bricklayers was James Garfield Cleveland Brown, a member of the Oneida Indian Nation, known as “Indian Jim.”

The paving of Kansas City Road in 1925 was a major project starting in Olathe, running through Lenexa, connecting to downtown Overland Park at 85th Street, now Santa Fe Drive, and joining Metcalf Avenue. The bricked road, spanning 21 miles, followed the old Santa Fe Trail route from Olathe to Westport. It has since been paved and replaced by I-35.

The grand opening of Kansas City Road on Sept. 12, 1925, featured a bricklaying contest between Indian Jim and Frank Hoffman of El Dorado, Kansas. They competed in laying bricks on an 833 foot stretch of unfinished road.

Indian Jim won the competition by paving slightly more than 416 feet of Kansas City Road with 46,664 bricks (218 tons) in seven hours and 48 minutes in drizzling rain and 60 degrees. He placed 1,755 more bricks than Hoffman. Indian Jim averaged laying almost 100 bricks every minute. Each brick weighed eight pounds.

As part of his contest winnings, Indian Jim received a $200 prize (about $2,941 in 2019) along with his regular wages of $2 per hour. He was also presented with a medal designating him as the Middle Western Champ in bricklaying, but Indian Jim had a broader claim to fame in mind.

“Indian Jim and the Building of the Kansas City Road” marker was completed in 2007 by students in the Olathe North High School 21st Century Program. The marker is located in a pocket park at Poplar Street and Kansas City Road. The rest is history.
Make food safety a holiday tradition

BY JENNIFER DUNLAY

Holiday feasts with family and friends are fun, but beware of uninvited party guests. Foodborne germs can crash your event and make people sick with food poisoning. Keep these food safety tips in mind when preparing food for large groups.

**Keep it clean:** Wash your hands with warm water and soap for at least 20 seconds before and after handling food and after using the bathroom, changing diapers and handling pets. Wash cooking surfaces and utensils and countertops with hot soapy water after preparing each food item. Consider using paper towels to clean up kitchen surfaces. If you use cloth towels, launder them often in the hot cycle.

**Cook food thoroughly:** Use a food thermometer to make sure foods are cooked to the right temperature. Check the chart at right for temperature guidelines. If you’re microwaving food, follow recommended cooking and standing times. Cold spots – areas that are not completely cooked – can provide a hiding place for germs. For this reason, use the extra minutes food should rest to finish cooking.

**The two-hour rule:** After food is cooked, keep hot foods hot in slow cookers or warming trays (140°F or warmer) and cold foods cold by placing serving dishes on ice so they stay chilled (40°F or lower). Refrigerate or freeze any perishable food within two hours. The temperature in your refrigerator should be set at or below 40°F and the freezer at or below 0°F.

Pregnant women are at an increased risk for food poisoning, so take extra care if you’re pregnant or preparing food for someone who is. Pregnant women should avoid eating raw or unpasteurized milk and products made with it, such as soft cheeses, as these products may contain *listeria*. Raw seafood and alcoholic beverages are also a no-no if you’re pregnant.

If your favorite thing about holiday food is the leftovers, divide them into smaller portions or pieces and place in shallow containers. Refrigerate leftovers for three to four days at most. Freeze leftovers if you won’t be eating them soon. It’s OK to put hot foods directly into the refrigerator.

For more tips on how to prevent food poisoning or foodborne illness during the holidays, visit [cdc.gov/foodsafety/prevention](https://www.cdc.gov/foodsafety/prevention).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Food</th>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Internal Temp (°F)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ground meat, meat</td>
<td>Beef, pork, veal, veal, lamb</td>
<td>160</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mixtures</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Turkey, chicken</td>
<td></td>
<td>165</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fresh beef, veal, lamb</td>
<td>Steaks, roasts, chops</td>
<td>145</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rest time: 3 minutes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poultry</td>
<td>All poultry</td>
<td>165</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pork and ham</td>
<td>Fresh pork, including fresh ham</td>
<td>145</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Rest time: 3 minutes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Precooked ham</td>
<td>Note: Reheat cooked hams</td>
<td>165</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>packaged in USDA-inspected plants to</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>140°F</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eggs and egg dishes</td>
<td>Eggs</td>
<td>Cook until yolk and white are firm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Egg dishes (such as frittata, quiche)</td>
<td>160</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leftovers and</td>
<td>Leftovers and casseroles</td>
<td>165</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>casseroles</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seafood</td>
<td>Fish with fins</td>
<td>145 or cook until flesh is opaque and separates easily with a fork</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Shrimp, lobster, crab and scallops</td>
<td>Cook until flesh is pearly or white, and opaque</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Clams, oysters, mussels</td>
<td>Cook until shells open during cooking</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Chart information provided by the Centers for Disease Control.
Hope for the holidays
Public Safety Food and Toy Drive provides a happy holiday to those in need

BY CLAIRE CANAAN

The holiday season is upon us again and while most families are gathered around tables of food and with gifts under the tree, many families in our community are struggling to make ends meet. Since 2003, the Johnson County Public Safety Toy & Food Drive has provided food, toys and assistance to thousands of Johnson County children. Donations also support numerous Johnson County domestic violence shelters and food pantries.

Over the years, the group has grown to include law enforcement officers from the Sheriff’s Office; Gardner, Shawnee and Overland Park; firefighters from Johnson County District #1, Johnson County District #2, Olathe, Shawnee and Overland Park; Johnson County Med-Act paramedics and numerous volunteers from those organizations.

The JCPSTFD is a charitable 501(c)3 organization, founded by law enforcement officers, firefighters, paramedics and caring community members to provide food and/or toys to Johnson County families in need during the holiday season. Every November, collection points are set up in front of local Walmart locations for one weekend to gather donations of toys, food and gift cards.

2019 was no different – public safety and community volunteers set up in front of five local Walmart locations on Nov. 23 and 24 to collect donations that went right back into giving Johnson County families hope for the holidays. Organizers are continually amazed by the generosity of Johnson County residents who are willing to donate a few dollars or toys for their neighbors in need. In 2018, your generous donations made it possible to help approximately 187 families (about 873 individuals) and we have you – the people who make up Johnson County – to thank for it!

For more information on our mission and future collection dates, visit foodandtoydrive.org.

You’re No. 1!
Parental disapproval is the No. 1 reason kids say they don’t drink.
Have you told them it’s wrong?
Protect your kids from the serious consequences of underage drinking.
Talk. It Matters.
A Decade in JoCo

New programs, parks, innovative solutions, and more - we’ve made a lot of progress in 10 years! As the decade draws to a close, we look back on Johnson County from 2010 to the present and reflect on how Johnson County Government has worked to make the county a better place to live, work and raise a family.

BY JODY HANSON

Do you remember what was happening in January 2010 as we embarked on a new decade? A massive earthquake struck Haiti. Simon Cowell departed “American Idol.” Avatar broke box office records and Ke$ha’s song “Tik Tok” held the #1 spot for singles on Billboard.

In Johnson County, January 2010 came in cold. In fact, a winter storm cancelled what would have been the first Board of County Commissioners meeting of the decade on Thursday, Jan. 7. From a frigid start emerged a decade of achievements, improvements and enhancements in Johnson County*.

Balancing efficiencies with resident satisfaction

In 2010, Johnson County Government continued to recover from the Great Recession of 2008. In the years that followed, the organization balanced the budget with less property tax revenue, and fewer staff, but without significant impact to services.

“All told, the county found $46 million in annual budget reductions, including the elimination of 428 positions – all without layoffs – while maintaining a stable mill levy,” said Johnson County Board of County Commissioners Chairman Ed Eilert. “During this same time, the county’s population and demand on services both increased.”

*We wish we could include everything in this article, but we can’t. Please look for other decade highlights throughout the magazine.
As we entered this decade, Johnson County Government conducted business more efficiently while maintaining the highest level of resident satisfaction. The county consolidated several departments during these years, including Treasury and Financial Management, Emergency Management and Emergency Communications, Health and Environmental Departments, and merging the Johnson County Museum with Johnson County Park and Recreation District.

“During this decade, innovative thinking and hard work helped us to save Johnson County taxpayers $1 million annually with department consolidations,” said County Manager Penny Postoak Ferguson. “Entering an agreement with KCATA for the county’s transit operations led to additional savings of $2.5 million. I’m proud that at the same time, we continued to improve our resident satisfaction ratings.”

Investing in public safety and criminal justice
Johnson County is known nationally for innovations in public safety and criminal justice, many of which happened this decade. In 2010, the Council of State Governments Justice Center selected Johnson County as a national learning site to improve outcomes for individuals with mental illnesses in the criminal justice system. In 2015, Johnson County served as one of only four launch sites for the Stepping Up initiative, a national effort to decrease the number of people with a mental health concern in our jail system. In 2018, Johnson County was one of seven counties in the nation named as a Stepping Up Innovator County.

Another partnership this decade was with the University of Chicago’s Data Science for Social Good fellowship program. In 2016 and 2018, Johnson County and DSSG used data to identify individuals who had frequent contact with the criminal justice system or were likely to be arrested within the next 12 months.

Enhancements to public safety and criminal justice in Johnson County programs and facilities introduced this decade include:

- Co-responder program: a collaborative program of Johnson County Mental Health Center, the Johnson County Sheriff’s Office and local police departments that embeds a mental health clinician with law enforcement.
- Crisis Intervention Team: a training program designed to improve the way law enforcement and community partners respond to people experiencing mental health crises.
- A new single radio system used by both public and non-public safety agencies across Johnson County, eliminating the need for multiple systems in which agencies could not talk to each other.
- Youth & Family Services Building and collaborative programs with the Department of Corrections and the Mental Health Center.
- Johnson County Sheriff’s Office Criminalistics Laboratory.
- Olathe Detention Center/Central Booking Facility.
- Launch of NotifyJoCo mass notification system and update of the Emergency Operations Center.
- Vacant grocery store repurposed as the Justice Annex.

Two important additions to the public safety and criminal justice landscape in Johnson County began this decade and will come to fruition in the next. After years of studying for the need for a new courthouse and our own medical examiner facility, Johnson County Government asked residents to consider a 10-year, quarter cent public safety sales tax, and voters approved the measure in 2016.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Johnson County Courthouse</th>
<th>New Medical Examiner facility</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Address</strong></td>
<td>119th and Ridgeview, Olathe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Scheduled opening</strong></td>
<td>Mid 2020</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Budget</strong></td>
<td>$193 million</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Description</strong></td>
<td>$21 million</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>33,000 square feet, single story</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Major benefits</strong></td>
<td>ADA accessible with outside ramps, zero-stair entries and accessible courtrooms; enhanced security with separation of criminal defendants from victims, witnesses and jurors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Increase autopsy rates to meet national benchmarks, state of the art technology, provide reliable data for public health to identify trends and emerging diseases</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
“The voters’ decision will allow us to meet the growing needs of our criminal justice system for the foreseeable future,” said Steve Howe, district attorney. “These facilities will ensure that we can continue to provide justice for all people.”

New libraries, new parks

Johnson County consistently receives high marks for its parks and libraries in our annual community survey. In 2016, the Board of County Commissioners approved mill levy increases for Johnson County Park & Recreation District and the Johnson County Library to implement their master plans. However, county residents also benefited from improvements or additions that took place before 2016.

Johnson County Library/Johnson County Park & Recreation openings/renovations this decade

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Month</th>
<th>Event</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>June 2011</td>
<td>New Century Fieldhouse opened</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nov. 2014</td>
<td>Camp Branch Glade Park opened</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June 2015</td>
<td>Stilwell Community Park opened</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jan. 2016</td>
<td>Improvements at Central Resource Library</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>July 2017</td>
<td>Lexington Lake Park opened</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April 2018</td>
<td>Antioch Park Dodge Town play area renovation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 2018</td>
<td>Shawnee Mission Park Beach House renovation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aug. 2018</td>
<td>Monticello Library opened</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sept. 2018</td>
<td>Big Bull Creek Park and Stilwell Community Park Inclusive Playground opened</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June 2019</td>
<td>Lenexa City Center Library opened</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June 2019</td>
<td>Meadowbrook Park opened</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>July 2019</td>
<td>Shawnee Mission Park Inclusive Playground opened</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In our recent #DecadeinJoCo contest, in which residents were asked to share their favorite improvement from this decade, almost 60% of responses mentioned a Johnson County park or library.

Repurposing an iconic entertainment center

Residents also mentioned the Johnson County Arts & Heritage Center as a #DecadeinJoCo highlight. During the prior decade, operations inside the iconic King Louie building at 8788 Metcalf in Overland Park shut down – the ice-skating rink in 2007, and the bowling alley in 2009.

Johnson County Government purchased the building in 2011 to house the Johnson County Museum, which had been searching for a new home for years. At the time, its location in a 1927 building in Shawnee suffered from flooding and crowding. In 2015, the county’s Triple AAA credit rating lead to a better-than-market interest rate on $21.5 million in bonds to renovate the building and create what is now the Johnson County Arts & Heritage Center.

Those who lived in Johnson County in 2016 may remember a significant part of this project, when the county took the museum’s historic 1950s All-Electric House on an 8.5-mile overnight journey that began in Shawnee and ended as it slid into the former ice rink space. Anticipated to take 10 hours, the 11 miles per hour trip took about half the time with no mishaps.

JCAHC is not just the home of Johnson County Museum; it is an arts and culture hub for the community. Amenities managed by the newly created Culture Division of JCPRD include:

- A flex theater, along with rehearsal space and a workshop, for The Theatre in the Park spring, fall and winter productions.
- An arts studio for Johnson County Developmental Supports’ Emerging Artists program.
- Classroom space for JCPRD classes, programs and camps that focus on dance, music and the arts.

Shawnee Mission Park bike paths
• An Overland Park Historical Society location that houses many artifacts and memorabilia, including items from the old King Louie building.
• Site for advance voting in person.
• Event space, including an outdoor patio area and catering kitchen, for community rentals.

“It’s hard to imagine Johnson County, let alone the Kansas City region, without the Johnson County Arts & Heritage Center,” said Sarah VanLanduyt, executive director, Arts Council of Johnson County. “Beyond its arts and humanities programming, JCAHC is helping to raise Johnson County’s arts profile and showcase our vibrant arts community.”

New ways to support vulnerable populations
County government has always been charged with supporting our vulnerable populations, such as our senior adults, low-income households, people with a mental health concern, and individuals with an intellectual or developmental disability.

In 2015, Johnson County Developmental Supports and Johnson County Mental Health Center introduced the Community Behavioral Health Team. CBHT provides one-on-one case management and therapy services to people with an intellectual or developmental disability who also have a mental illness.

“I just wanted to thank you for helping Tim. I’m so glad you have worked with him on his struggles. You make a difference and it shows,” Kathy Curtis, the parent of a participant, recently shared with the CBHT.

During this decade, JCDS began to develop specialized programs, and, with partner Friends of JCDS, housing for individuals served who also have Alzheimer’s Disease or dementia, a dual diagnosis that is becoming much more common as people with disabilities live longer.

Over the past 10 years, county staff, along with other partners, developed new ways for individuals served by JCDS, JCMHC and the Department of Corrections to earn income by working in the community. These include the Department of Corrections College of Trades, JCDS’s Project SEARCH, End Dependence Kansas, Papercrete Works, Emerging Artists programs and the JCMHC’s peer driving program.

This decade saw an increase of attention on the challenges of affordable housing and homelessness. For example, Johnson County Human Services partnered with the Shawnee Mission School District (Project HOME, 2015) and the Olathe School District (Impact Olathe, 2016) to create one-stop resource shops for families at or near homelessness. In 2019, Human Services added a Housing Resource Recruiter to help find new landlords that will take Housing Choice Vouchers (Section 8.)

Technology makes it easier to do business with Johnson County
The county is always looking for new ways to increase the efficiency of how the public does business with us. When possible, functions are provided online so residents and businesses can take care of business, even on evenings and weekends. Here are a few of the improved technologies Johnson County Government introduced this decade:

• Property owners can look up appraisal and tax information, along with a lot of other data, pay taxes or make residential appraisal appeals online.
• Pretty much any library resource now comes with an “e” in front of it, as in eBooks, eLearning, eMagazines and eNewspapers.
• With electronic document recording, title companies can submit their documents for recording electronically and have them recorded and returned within 24 hours.
• Contractors, design professionals and residents can apply for building and trade permits by uploading application materials and paying fees online.

Infrastructure and transportation improvements
Johnson County Government’s biggest capital project in history, rebuilding the Tomahawk Creek Wastewater Treatment Facility, began construction in 2018. Built in 1955, the facility treats wastewater from parts of Leawood, Overland Park, Olathe and Prairie Village. Due to population growth, the current facility is not able to handle all of the increased flow, and sends about 60% to Kansas City, Missouri. When the project is complete in 2021, the facility will treat all flow, saving the county a projected $16 million a year.

“This project will allow us to protect the environment, improve treatment operations and provide the most cost-effective, long-term solution for customers,” said Johnson County
For the first time in a quarter of a century, the Johnson County Airport Commission opened a new runway this decade. The completely rebuilt runway will provide business development opportunities, such as charter services, recreational flying and fix-based operators, creating jobs and building economy at the Johnson County Executive Airport.

While not specifically county projects, other notable infrastructure projects from this decade included The Johnson County Gateway Project, the Lone Elm interchange, and increased usage of roundabouts and diverging diamond intersections throughout the county. Johnson County Public Works was involved in infrastructure work required for supporting the intermodal facility and Logistics Park development in Edgerton.

The county has also studied public transit to make it work better for residents while being as cost effective as possible. Early in the decade, the county partnered with 10-10 Taxi, a local cab company, and Reveal Management Services, a local dispatching service. Effective February 2015, a cooperative agreement with the Kansas City Area Transportation Authority created a management consolidation of Johnson County Transit, known informally as “The Jo.” The system is now part of the RideKC network, making it clearer to residents that they can use the bus to move all across the KC metro.

“This management consolidation resulted in greater efficiencies and cost savings for Johnson County, as well as opened the doorway to new ways of thinking about public transit,” said Josh Powers, who manages the transit agreement for the county.

In 2016, the county was able to better serve seniors and riders with disabilities through flexibility of Special Edition, a shared ride program providing curb-to-curb transportation.

Today, Johnson County continues to study fixed route service, improving service in heavily used areas and decreasing routes with less use. In 2019, the county piloted a micro transit program. When paired with more traditional forms of public transit, this app-based, on-demand service helps Johnson Countians get to medical appointments, jobs and other places more efficiently.

**Leaving the county better than we found it**

In 2011, the annual community survey revealed that 87 percent of residents said it was important for Johnson County Government to support sustainability programs. Throughout this decade, several county initiatives have worked to protect our natural resources.

In 2015, the county partnered with an outside firm that specialized in behavioral-based energy management. The recommendations resulting from the partnership led to the county saving $1.5 million in energy costs over four years.

Also this decade, the county partnered with the city of Olathe on a compressed natural gas fueling station (2018) and added the first all-electric vehicle to its fleet (2019).

**A growing county with a strong economy**

Key indicators show that our economy is stronger now than it was at the beginning of the decade.

- 2010 began with a 6.5% average unemployment rate for the year prior. The January – September average for 2019 (the most recent figure available) is 2.9%.
- In 2010, the average value of a home in Johnson County was $249,000. Today, the average is $330,000.

In addition to economic growth, Johnson County’s population increased about 12% over the past decade. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, we had 539,396 residents at the start of 2010. Our current estimated population is 603,000. Research from Wichita State University predicts that we will reach one million residents in just over 30 years; our senior population is expected to double in that same time frame. Growing numbers of residents, especially older adults, will create a need for increased services from the county.

“One of the biggest improvements I’ve seen this decade has been the new Johnson County Courthouse. This has been talked about for several years and is now a reality!”

- Sharon Rodriguez, Olathe resident

“Our county, including our local economy, is strong,” said Chairman Eilert. “We will continue to rise to challenges and make Johnson County a place where people want to live, work and raise a family for decades to come.”
The JCCC campus experienced several upgrades and new additions in 2019 — all of which will build a brighter tomorrow for our students, faculty, staff and community. 

Don’t take it from us, a recent Independent Student Satisfaction Survey found that 9 OUT OF 10 STUDENTS WOULD RETURN TO JCCC to continue their education.

Looking ahead, 2020 will mark the completion of our Campus Transformation Project. Thanks to this initiative, students are benefiting from a renovated gymnasium, the new Fine Arts & Design Studios and the Hugh L. Libby Career and Technical Education Center. We will soon open our Enhanced Campus Front Door which includes the highly-anticipated outdoor sports complex and Student Center entrance.

Visit jccc.edu to discover all we have to offer.
Johnson County’s 2019 Veterans Day observance on Nov. 11 saluted women veterans in honoring all veterans from all wars.

The event, which normally occurs outdoors, was moved inside the American Legion Post 153 hall in Olathe because of cold and snowy weather.

A video of four women veterans, who were profiled in the November-December issue of The Best Times, was created by Johnson County and shown at the event. Each veteran shared unique stories about their military service, including serving in World War II, the Vietnam War, Desert Shield/Desert Storm and Afghanistan.

The event had two WWII veterans in attendance, including Mabel Johnson, who turned 105 years old a week before Veterans Day. She was born Nov. 4, 1914, four months after the start of World War I. She is probably the nation’s oldest member of the Coast Guard’s women reserves, or SPARs, making her the oldest woman veteran of the Coast Guard, and probably the oldest woman veteran in Kansas.

Johnson, then Mabel Eversen, joined the newly-created SPARs at age 28. SPARs is an acronym from the Coast Guard’s motto, Semper Paratus, Always Ready.

Johnson was one of approximately 11,000 women who volunteered to become SPARs in WWII. Trained as a storekeeper, Johnson remained stateside during the war, serving at the Coast Guard’s Ninth District Office in Cleveland, Ohio. She was honorably discharged in 1946.

Louise “Lou” Eisenbrandt was an Army combat nurse in the Vietnam War. She has Parkinson’s disease from exposure to Agent Orange, a controversial herbicide used as a defoliant during the war. She encountered Agent Orange when cutting clothing off wounded soldiers as she prepared to treat them.

Eisenbrandt joined the Army in May 1967 while in nursing school at age 21 to pay for her education. She completed officer’s training school in 1968 and received orders for Vietnam in September 1969, joining the 91st Evacuation Hospital in Chu Lai. In the final nine months of her one-year tour of duty, she worked in the emergency room. Eisenbrandt recalls that the emergency room was a steady stream of wounded soldiers with a wide range of injuries, from bullet and shrapnel wounds to double and triple amputees. Most patients lived; some didn’t.

Four years ago, she published a book, Vietnam Nurse: Mending and Remembering, based on a journal she kept while serving as a combat nurse.

Mary Cox, a retired lieutenant colonel, is a Desert Shield/Desert Storm veteran. She joined the Army in January 1972 as a junior in the nursing program at Kansas City’s Avila College. Like Eisenbrandt, Cox took advantage of the Army Student Nursing program that covered the remainder of her college expenses.

In her military career spanning almost 21 years, Cox served as a critical care nurse, then later as a nurse anesthetist. Her last assignment was chief nurse anesthetist at the 8th Evacuation Hospital at Fort Ord, California. The hospital was deployed in mid-December 1990 to Kuwait. In early January 1991, Fort Ord personnel were sent to Saudi Arabia to set up a 400-bed
evacuation hospital before Desert Shield became Desert Storm on Jan. 16. The evac hospital operated on 177 enemy prisoners of war and took care of some 600 inpatients and 15,000 outpatients from American and ally coalition forces.

Now a deputy with the Johnson County Sheriff’s Office, Hana Modrell joined the U.S. Army in 2011 after four years in the Reserve Officer Training Corps at the University of Central Missouri. Following completion of basic chemical training at Fort Leonard Wood, she was initially assigned to the 82nd Airborne Division 4th Brigade Combat Team at Fort Bragg, North Carolina, and deployed to Afghanistan in March 2012. She served as the brigade force protection and chemical officer in overseeing defense against possible chemical, biological, nuclear or radiological threats. Modrell was on active duty for four years and then served a year in the Army Reserves.

According to the Defense Department, women now make up approximately 20% of new recruits, 15% of active duty military (up from 11% in 1990) and 18% of National Guard and military reserve forces.

Just as the number of women in uniform has been growing, so has the number of women veterans. According to the Department of Veterans Affairs, women made up approximately 9.4%, or more than 1.8 million of 20 million veterans in the nation in 2017, the latest information available. Kansas had slightly more than 194,000 veterans, including almost 18,000, or 9.26%, women veterans.

VA projections indicate women will make up 20% of the nation’s total veteran population in the next 30 years.

Online access to both the video and the magazine cover stories about the women veterans is available on the county’s website at jocogov.org.

---

Workplace culture inspired innovation in Johnson County Government this decade

BY JODY HANSON

This Decade in JoCo began with hundreds fewer employees than in prior years. Johnson County Government leadership and staff worked together to offer the same high-quality programs and services residents have come to expect. What motivated that effort?

High Performing Organization: The organization committed to becoming a high performing organization, training all employees in the County’s LEAP (Leadership Empowers All People) program. Employees thrive in a culture of continuous improvement where leadership is not just encouraged, but expected, at all levels.

Innovation Team: The county repurposed existing resources to create an Innovation team. Still in its early stages, the team identifies opportunities for innovation throughout the organization and pitches in to help implement good ideas that will improve life for our residents.

Leadership in Action: Created in 2018, the annual Leadership in Action (LIA) award recognizes the top 1% of our workforce for going above and beyond to find efficiencies, save taxpayer dollars, improve life for residents and more.

Internal policies and processes: Guided by departments including Human Resources, Treasury and Financial Management and the Legal Department, several teams of employees from throughout the organization, at all levels, examined the way we evaluate employees, reward performance and provide leave benefits. Employees made recommendations to county leadership and policymakers resulting in updates to some systems and structures that better align with our culture and the marketplace.

Residents benefit from this culture that spurs creative thinking, innovation, finding new solutions, collaborating and continuous improvement.
Mark your calendar

Here is just a sample of some of the Johnson County events you can enjoy in the upcoming months. You can find more at jocogov.org.

### January 2020

- **Wednesday, January 1**
  County offices closed for New Year’s Day.

- **Monday, January 20**
  County offices closed for Martin Luther King Jr. Day.

- **Thursday, January 23**
  Project SEARCH information night. This nine-month internship and education program helps individuals with disabilities find integrated employment. This event will also be offered on Feb. 4. Contact forrest.austin@jocogov.org for more information.

- **Friday, January 24**
  50 Plus opioid crisis education event. Learn about the ongoing opioid crisis in Kansas from 1:30-2:30 p.m. at Matt Ross Community Center. Register at jcprd.com.

- **Wednesday, January 29**
  Celebrate Kansas Day! Learn more about the state’s history at kshs.org.

### February 2020

- **Monday, February 10**
  Hearts Alive art sale featuring works from the Emerging Artists and Papercrete Works programs. Both programs support artists with intellectual and developmental disabilities. 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. at Johnson County Arts & Heritage Center.

- **Friday, February 14**
  50 Plus Valentine’s Day lunch and bingo. Treat yourself to a catered lunch and 12 games of bingo! Singles and couples welcome. 11:30 a.m. at Roeland Park Community Center. Register at least one week in advance at jcprd.com or call 913-831-3359.

- **Saturday, February 29**
  Kids in the Kitchen: Breakfast for Champions. 10 a.m. to 12 p.m. at 11811 S Sunset Drive, Room 1060. Call 913-715-7000 to register.
March 2020

Monday, March 2

Women and the Vote digital exhibit opens at the Johnson County Museum. On display in the Cultural Commons and free to view any time the museum is open (9 a.m. - 9 p.m. M-F, 9 a.m. - 5 p.m. Saturday). Visit jocomuseum.org to learn more.

Friday, March 20

First performance of The Theatre in the Park’s “Be More Chill”. Indoors at the Johnson County Arts & Heritage Center. Visit theatreinthepark.org for showtimes and tickets.

Tuesday, March 24

Chairman Ed Eilert presents the State of the County. Details to come on jocogov.org.

Developmental Disability Awareness Month & World Down Syndrome Day

March 2020

March is an important month: it is Developmental Disabilities Awareness Month. A developmental disability is a chronic condition present before age 22 due to physical and/or mental impairments such as intellectual disability, cerebral palsy, epilepsy, autism or Down syndrome, among others.

Additionally, March 21 is World Down Syndrome Day. This date, 3/21, represents the triplication of chromosome 21 that is unique to people with Down syndrome.

We recognize Developmental Disability Awareness Month and World Down Syndrome Day to celebrate the contributions that people with intellectual and development disabilities make to our communities, economies and our lives. It is also a call to advocate for the rights of people with disabilities and promote inclusion.

Johnson County Developmental Supports is the agency within county government that serves people with IDD. We hope you will celebrate with us and show your support by sharing the stories of people with IDD on social media in March. Use the hashtags #WDSD20 and #DDAwareness20 and tag us! One fun way to get involved is to share a photo of yourself in brightly colored socks with #LotsOfSocks and/or #RockYourSocks for World Down Syndrome Day!

Follow us on facebook.com/JoCoJCDS and on Twitter @JoCoJCDS for more information. Learn more about JCDS at jcds.org.

Making connections at Johnson County Library

January - April 2020

We can find connections on every conceivable scale, from the subatomic bonds in the smallest building blocks of matter to the massive interconnected root system of the 80,000-year-old Pando aspen grove. We are each a collection of connections, our root systems shaped by influences of our families, friends, collaborators and heroes. Your libraries can help you connect with these big ideas, and more.

The Spring 2020 library theme is Connections. In this hectic modern world, we build bridges, knock down walls and create networks to fight isolation and forge strong connections around the globe. Ideas and inspiration spread across the boundaries of location, medium, class and culture. Our links and bonds each tell a story about who we are and where we've been.

This spring at Johnson County Library, we invite you to discover what connects you. A full list of themed programming is available at jocolibrary.org.

Spring 2020 thematic programs that can help you make connections:

• “Connect with Em-PAW-thy” featuring animals and educators from Wayside Waifs.
• Legislative Coffee sessions that connect you with your elected officials.
• National Genealogy Day Resource Fair and Open House which will help you connect with your family history.
A treasure trove of history
A behind-the-scenes look at Johnson County Museum’s carefully curated and preserved collection
BY LORI SAND

If you’ve ever visited at least one of Johnson County’s museums, either at the Johnson County Arts & Heritage Center in Overland Park or the Lanesfield Historic Site in Edgerton, you have seen just a fraction of the treasure trove entrusted to museum staff in a public trust partnership.

The museum’s long-term and rotating exhibits feature 708 objects, which represents only 2.4% of the total collection. In total, the museum has 20,000 2- and 3-D artifacts and more than one million images, including 40,000 negatives associated with the Sunflower Ordnance Plant, and more than 200,000 images from the Sun Newspaper Collection. Additionally, researchers can access nearly 960 titles in the museum’s reference library. By volume, the collection totals around 300 cubic feet of material.

Anne Jones, the museum’s curator of collections, noted the importance of specific criteria regarding acquisition of historical artifacts. Acceptance is determined by the museum’s Collections Committee. Materials appropriate to the collection must meet specific criteria regarding:

- **Geography:** materials created or used in the county, or which have a direct connection with events that occurred in the county, or direct connection to county residents.
- **Chronology:** materials from all time periods in the county’s history, up to and including the present.
- **Condition:** must be able to be stored, protected and preserved under conditions that ensure availability for exhibit and/or research.
- **Information:** must be well documented as to origin, context or history or an exceptional example of a particular type needed to fill a gap in the collection.
- **Collecting Plan:** does not constitute excessive duplication within the collection.

Jones and a co-worker, Josh Jordan, are responsible for the cataloging, storage and display of the entire collection.

For more information about the museum’s collection, contact Jones at anne.jones@jocogov.org.

Celebrate a Retro Xmas at Johnson County Museum

The Johnson County Museum is celebrating the 60th birthday of the aluminum Christmas tree throughout the holiday season. This icon of the Space Age, with its futuristic twist on traditional Christmas décor, was a major 1960s holiday fad. Through Jan. 11, 2020, these shiny beauties are the star of a special exhibit, Dreaming of a Retro Xmas.

“In 1959, the first successful aluminum tree—under the brand name Evergleam—was made and sold by the Aluminum Specialties Company in Manitowoc, Wisconsin. For the next 10 years, American buyers purchased aluminum trees in a dazzling array of colors, needle configurations and heights,” said Andrew R. Gustafson, curator of interpretation.

Just as fast as aluminum trees came on the scene, they disappeared from American living rooms and appeared in dumpsters and thrift shops. Today, the once-futuristic Atomic Age aluminum tree has become a retro icon, a piece of sought-after mid-Century Americana.

More than 20 aluminum trees in different colors and styles are displayed in the 1950s All-Electric House at the Johnson County Museum. Pulled from the private collection of Steve and Mary Pruitt, the trees recall childhood nostalgia for many Johnson Countians.

“The All-Electric House is our largest collection item, and we typically arrange the interior at Christmas time to look as if you have just walked into a great mid-Century holiday party,” Gustafson said. “This year, the house will serve as a showroom for the amazing Pruitt Collection. We are so excited to honor the aluminum tree!”

For more information about Johnson County Museum, the only organization dedicated to preserving, collecting and interpreting the county’s history, call 913-826-2787 or visit jocomuseum.org.
Smith bridges the gap in first year as co-responder

BY KEITH DAVENPORT

In July 2019, Tanise Smith started as a co-responder with Johnson County Mental Health Center (JCMHC) embedded in the Gardner-Edgerton School District. This is the first time a co-responder, a mental health clinician, is within a school district. Smith collaborates with counselors and social workers, providing support to students in crisis situations. She also responds to any on-site crisis, providing an assessment, de-escalation and connection to resources.

The Johnson County Board of County Commissioners and the Gardner-Edgerton School Board approved this embedded co-responder program in 2019 as a one-year pilot.

“USD 231 is finding innovative ways to implement mental wellness care,” said Jessica Murphy, co-responder team leader with JCMHC. “We want to improve the school experience and get everyone the support they need. Historically, we’ve partnered with police; now it’s time to get in the schools.”

Smith provides crisis intervention when needed, but is also focusing on preventative efforts by connecting with kids outside of a crisis moment. Families have been made of aware of the position and have been reaching out for assistance when needed.

In addition to crisis intervention, Smith also aims to prevent mental health crisis by working with both students and staff.

“By normalizing moments of distress for the students and teaching them that these moments don’t have to dictate their entire day, we’re reducing the stigma. The students know they have support,” Smith said.

It’s no surprise that parents also benefit from the services. They don’t have to navigate the ever-changing mental health system alone. The services provide the “right intervention, at the right time, by the right individual,” which is the mantra of the co-responder program.

“We are bridging the gap. There have been so many bridges built,” Smith said. “It has been amazing to witness.”

“In the past 10 years I think the biggest improvement has been in our roads. The ‘tunnel that leads to nowhere’ is a great improvement to the flow of traffic around 75th and 87th Streets!”

- Teresa Sanders, Olathe resident

Funeral services, casket and vault starting at $6975.00

- Serving the community since 1963 with quality services and pricing to meet the needs of every family.
- Our facility accommodates receptions and meals following a service or burial.
- We can also arrange and conduct funeral and cremation services that are burying in another cemetery.
- Unlike many other area funeral homes, we have a price guarantee for our pre-arranged funeral and cremation plans.

Thinking about pre-arranging?
For more information, visit our websites or contact John Frownfelter at 913-451-1860.
Mrs. Krishnan’s Party
An interactive celebration for all ages
One of New Zealand’s most successful touring theatre companies, Indian Ink, brings its original interactive play Mrs. Krishnan’s Party to Overland Park. Overzealous wannabe-DJ James invites some friends (you—the audience) as a surprise. The guest list keeps growing, so Mrs. Krishnan throws the party of her life! The closer your seat, the more involved you are in the performance, especially when vegetarian dal is served.

ENDLESS VARIETY, MATCHLESS TALENT!
Tickets start at $25! Build a season package of 5 SHOWS (or more) and save 10%.

PAID ADVERTISEMENT
Mild mannered custodian is a master with a paintbrush

Custodian uses gift to brighten spaces and bring hope

BY LORI SAND

He maneuvers a broom and mop during the day, quietly completing his custodial tasks for the Johnson County Department of Corrections; but David Judd has really made a name for himself for what he has done with his artist brushes on his off-hours.

Judd’s artistic talents became known to his co-workers a few years ago when he entered a single canvas in the 2015 ArtsKC art show. That exposure grew into the opportunity to paint a dozen murals in three adult and youth facilities for the Department of Corrections. His talent is appreciated daily by his co-workers, the troubled youth served by corrections, and the general public. He also caught the assignment editors’ eye of several local media outlets.

“Dave’s art encourages kids to reconnect with their strengths and abilities to endure adversity,” said Cathy Clark, mental health clinician at the Youth Detention Center.

And that’s exactly what Judd shoots for every time he creates a mural, employing a blend of fantasy and nature.

“I saw the need for inspiration and chose to respond to that,” Judd said.

And inspired them he has.

“I say, ‘Do you know who did this art?’” Clark said. “And they look at me like, ‘No, isn’t it somebody famous?’ And I say, ‘No, it’s the guy who’s doing your floor today, and they’re like ‘That guy? Wow!’”

Consequently, some of the kids have begun to dabble in art. Judd’s talent is also a topic of their conversation and they admire their custodian’s work. His gift keeps on giving to those who need it most.

---

JoCo Consumer Protection Division encourages safe online shopping

BY EMILIE BURDETTE

Nearly a quarter of all annual retail purchases occur during the holiday season and more than half of that spending occurs online, according to Lifelock. This amounts to more than a billion dollars in sales. Unscrupulous businesses and fraudsters lurk online, trying to scam their way to as much of that money as possible.

In order to avoid becoming a victim of scams, AARP suggests setting and sticking to a budget for holiday spending to avoid getting swept up into regrettable or unsafe purchases, particularly those that offer seemingly unbelievable deals that expire quickly. Other tips include:

• Visit only trusted websites, particularly those you’ve successfully purchased from in the past.
• Research businesses in advance. Review return policies, delivery schedules and warranties, as well as a business’s rating with the BBB.
• Beware of unsolicited emails. Don’t click on website links within emails; type the address directly into your browser.
• If possible, pay with credit cards rather than releasing funds directly from your bank account via debit card or wire transfer.
• Create strong passwords and change them regularly.
• Don’t give out your Social Security number! Legitimate businesses will not request this information online.
• Track packages that are out for delivery and be prepared to quickly retrieve items from your doorstep after delivery.

Additionally, many people generously contribute to charities during the holiday seasons. Several of the tips mentioned above also apply to charitable giving. Beware of unsolicited requests and emails from unknown individuals soliciting money, and do as much research as possible before donating. Kansas Charity Check, kscharitycheck.org, provides detailed information about charities registered in Kansas, including the percentage of money actually committed to the charitable organization.

If you have any questions or need assistance, contact the DA’s Consumer Protection Hotline at 913-715-3003 or visit da.jocogov.org/consumer-protection.

Emilie Burdette is an assistant district attorney with the Johnson County District Attorney’s Office.
The legislative powers of Johnson County Government are vested in a seven-member Board of County Commissioners that exercises its authority to ensure the general health, safety and welfare of the public. The board is composed of an at-large chairman and one representative from each of the six districts in the county.

Chairman Ed Eilert
913-715-0500

Becky Fast
1st District
913-715-0431

Jim Allen
Vice chair, 2nd District
913-715-0432

Janeé Hanzlick
4th District
913-715-0434

Michael Ashcraft
5th District
913-715-0435

Steve Klika
3rd District
913-715-0433

Mike Brown
6th District
913-715-0436

Coming soon: Charter Commission and Citizens Visioning Committee

Two groups involving Johnson County residents did important work during this decade: the Charter Commission and the Citizens Visioning Committee. This ongoing work helps ensure we are operating county government in the best manner possible, as well as providing the programs, services and quality of life our residents want.

The Charter Commission
The first of its kind in Kansas, the Home Rule Charter is a legislative document that defines the structure, powers, purpose and functions of our county government. We appoint a 25-member Johnson County Charter Commission every 10 years to review the charter and make recommendations to the Board of County Commissioners for revisions. Any changes to the Home Rule Charter require approval at an election.

During this decade, the BOCC established the 2011 Charter Commission on Jan. 13, 2011, and received the Charter Commission’s final report on Feb. 9, 2012. It did not include any amendments to the Home Rule Charter.

Citizens Visioning Committee
The BOCC appointed the Citizens’ Visioning Committee in January 1996, to develop a 20-year vision for Johnson County and to recommend the future role of county government in achieving this vision. In 2009, the BOCC re-established a citizens committee to produce a shared Community Vision which defines specific goals and recommends strategies to preserve, strengthen, and improve the overall quality of life in the Johnson County community.

The CVC made its report in November 2011 and described the kind of place they wanted Johnson County to be over the next 20 years, focusing on economic vitality, health, safety, sustainable development and other themes.

What’s next for these initiatives?
The BOCC will appoint the next Citizens Visioning Committee in 2020 which will make its report in 2021. The BOCC will appoint the next Charter Commission in 2021 to make its report in 2022. Please watch JoCo Magazine and the county’s other communication channels for information on these groups. Reports from past years are available at jocogov.org.
Cozy up at home with eResources from Johnson County Library

By Christopher Leitch

If the holidays bring a new device into your life, you can explore a world of eResources at Johnson County Library. We’re a handy destination when it’s cold outside and you’re cozy at home or in your office.

The eLibrary is our electronic ‘branch’ where you can access our growing collection of digital resources. And what content! If the last time you visited a library was a while ago, you might be surprised by what we offer online:

- **eBooks and eAudiobooks**: We have an ever-expanding list of titles that you can access from your phone or device on two user platforms, Axis 360 for all ages and BookFlix for kids. Axis 360 lets you check out up to 10 titles for a maximum of three weeks. Instructions for most devices are right there on the website.

- **Magazines and newspapers**: Stay informed and check our comprehensive list of titles for your favorite. Magazines are provided through a service company, RBdigital. You’ll set up an account with them and then browse to your heart’s content. Access to digital newspapers varies by publisher. We do carry The Kansas City Star, New York Times and Washington Post, among many others.

- **eLearning**: Browse platforms for kids and adults alike. We have dedicated pages for Homework Help, for kids and for teens. We’ve added a new product this year, Brainfuse, that provides live tutoring assistance in English and Spanish, as well as many other features. Adult researchers will benefit from direct access to ReferenceUSA and other databases for career planning, investment research, genealogy and consumer information.

- **Streaming video**: Watching videos at your desk or on your device is easy with our Naxos Video Library. This is an extensive video library of classical music performances, opera, ballet, live concerts and documentaries. Look for new streaming options coming in 2020.

Our mobile app makes it easy to use the library catalog to find and discover titles, manage your account and get the location and title availability information you want. Visit jocolibrary.org/elibrary to get started.

Some of our eResources are ready to use right away, especially if you are accessing from a public PC in one of our 14 branches. If you are accessing from home, office or a portable device, you’ll need a library card to log in and use, check out or download eResources.

If you already have a Johnson County Library card/account, you can log in with that number. If you are a JoCo resident and new to the library, sign up for an eCard. You can convert to a conventional card later if you think you’d like access to our analog materials. Your eCard gives you immediate access to our eLibrary.

Whatever your digital content needs might be, Johnson County Library can help you meet them during the cold winter months. Check us out at jocolibrary.org/elibrary.

“Without a doubt one of the biggest enhancements of the past decade is the fabulous Arts & Heritage Center. The county has successfully re-imagined the museum experience, including some wonderfully useful meeting and performance spaces... All of this demonstrates the county’s commitment to preserving Johnson County’s rich history and heritage.”

- Bob Frohoff, Prairie Village resident
Three Questions for three employees celebrating ten years with Johnson County Government

BY LORI SAND

Matthew Curry  Sergeant, Johnson County Sheriff’s Office
I supervise the evening shift and manage staffing for the Sheriff’s Office Communications Division (911 dispatch).

What do you like most about your job? Providing an effective connection between the public and our first responders is very important. Serving the public well requires both good communication and efficient support from our databases; I enjoy making sure this happens.

How does the work you do affect the lives of Johnson County residents? We answer 911 and nonemergency calls within our dispatch areas (which includes Olathe, Merriam, Mission, Roeland Park, Westwood, Fairway, De Soto, Edgerton, Gardner, Lake Quivira and Spring Hill, as well as the unincorporated areas of the county) in order to dispatch police or connect the caller to Fire and Med-Act dispatch. In 2017 and 2018, we answered more than 260,000 calls from the public, including more than 85,000 911 calls each year.

What is the most significant improvement in your department in the past decade? We have become a regional backup center capable of hosting other dispatch agencies operating both within and along the county borders. This helps ensure everyone in the area has access to 911 and police dispatch services, regardless of natural disasters or equipment failures.

Duncan Martin  Case Manager, Johnson County Mental Health Center
I assist individuals whose lives have been impacted by both mental illness and incarceration or legal involvement in developing safe and effective strategies for reaching their goals and independently meeting their needs.

What do you like most about your job? I most value the privileged insight I get into the daily lives of a wide variety of people. This helps me to guard against cynicism and remember that the vast majority of people are seeking safety, stability and autonomy, and are trying to meet their needs to the best of their abilities.

How does the work you do affect the lives of Johnson County residents? As a member of the forensic team, I work with clients whose lives have been impacted by both mental illness and legal involvement. I support these clients as they adjust to challenges associated with returning to the community following a period of incarceration. I also assist by connecting them to resources and establishing support systems.

What is the most significant improvement in your department in the past decade? I have observed an increase in helpful trainings, both for staff members and the community at large, including the center's involvement in suicide awareness and prevention efforts, and support provided to communities and schools in the aftermath of such tragic events.

Argelia Woods  Lead Customer Service Specialist, Department of Health and Environment
I handle front desk duties, perform biometrics on clients, provide WIC outreach at various locations, and help new moms with breastfeeding issues.

What do you like most about your job? It’s very rewarding to see how many people we help every day.

How does the work you do affect the lives of Johnson County residents? Our nutritionist program offers supplemental healthy foods and nutrition information for women, infants and children who live in our community. We are helping our community to be healthy.

What is the most significant improvement in your department in the past decade? In 2013, we started our WIC community garden with the idea that we will be helping our WIC clients to have access to more healthy foods. The first year we harvested 1,200 pounds and so far this year we have harvested 3,700 pounds. This effort has been a great success. In January 2018, we launched the eWIC card which our clients now use to buy WIC-approved foods. This was a big accomplishment for the entire state of Kansas.
10 things
Johnson County didn’t have 10 years ago

In our feature story on pages 10-14, we shared about dozens of new programs, services, buildings, improvements and enhancements that emerged in Johnson County this decade, but there’s so much more to celebrate! Here are a few things we haven’t mentioned yet.

1. **Electric vehicle charging stations**
   “I think that one of the most important improvements in Johnson County is the addition of electric charging infrastructure for vehicles. Currently this contribution is still undervalued, but it will play a big role moving forward.” Nathan Kovac, pictured above with his daughters Wendy and Cora, charging their car at Meadowbrook Park.

2. **Veterans Treatment Court**
   The mission of VTC is to identify veterans in the criminal justice system and, when eligible, place them into treatment and court supervision as an alternative to incarceration.

3. **Johnson County Government Citizens Academy**
   This program helps to inform the public about our programs, services and role in the community. Held twice a year, the 10-week Academy is free of charge and includes presentations and tours.

4. **Chief Medical Examiner**
   Dr. Diane Peterson is Johnson County’s first chief medical examiner. Her goal is to provide high-quality death investigations to Johnson County. She also serves as the state statute-required county coroner.

5. **Self Help Center**
   Located on the first floor of the Johnson County Courthouse, the Self Help Center provides free access to court system information plus help with paperwork for family law cases such as divorce, paternity, child support and name changes.

6. **Black & Veatch MakerSpace at Johnson County Library**
   At the Central Resource Library, patrons can record music, do 3-D printing, use a sewing machine, build with tools and more.

7. **WIC Community Garden**
   The WIC Community Garden educates, empowers and feeds clients in the Women, Infants and Children (WIC) program. County employees and volunteers plant, cultivate and harvest the garden, located outside the Health Services Building in Olathe.

8. **6 by 6 Ready to Read Initiative**
   Johnson County Library’s early literacy program identifies six skills kids should have by their 6th birthday and helps build those skills. “The 6 by 6 Ready to Read initiative gave me new ideas that I tried with the boys as they were becoming emerging readers. Now in middle and high school, the boys still love reading and look forward to their free summer reading book each year,” said Polly Blair, mom of two, elementary visual arts teacher.

9. **Diabetes Prevention Program**
   This weekly program provides participants with a trained lifestyle coach who coaches them on nutrition, incorporating daily physical activity, meal planning and coping with the inevitable challenges that arise.

10. **A road named for an astronaut**
    At New Century AirCenter, a street at the intersection just east of Prairie Village Drive and Moonlight Road now boasts the name “John Glenn Way.” Before Glenn became the first astronaut to orbit Earth in 1962, he trained in a two-seater Stearman plane in the first class at the Olathe Naval Air Station in 1942, which is now the Johnson County Airport Commission New Century AirCenter.
“Enchanting and enlightening!
A whole new way to view the world!”
—Brian May, CBE, Queen guitarist and songwriter

“There is a massive power in this that can embrace the world. It brings great hope... It is truly a touch of heaven.”
—Daniel Herman, former Minister of Culture of the Czech Republic

“It’s also a story of incredible hope and incredible spirit... I’m deeply inspired and profoundly moved.”
—Rita Cosby, Emmy Award-winning television anchor

“Truly brilliant. There’s nothing like it. Everyone in the audience is going to go home and say, ‘You’ve got to see this show,’ and they’ll be sold out. So get to the ticket office right away...”
—Lee Meriwether, actress

“A must see!”
—Broadway World

“A life-changing experience. Entertainment of the highest order.”
—Stage Wispers

March 28–29 • Kauffman Center

Secure Best Seats Now! ShenYun.com/KC 913-701-SHOW (7469)