Features

Applying machine learning and innovation for social good

County to honor local war veterans

Where can you find this winding yellow path? Flip the page!
LETTER FROM LEADERSHIP

Increasing our commitment for helping those with mental illness

Statistics can be staggering. Approximately 1 in 5 adults in the U.S. experiences mental illness in a given year, equaling more than 111,000 Johnson County residents. In the first half of 2018, twice as many Johnson County teenagers took their own lives compared to all of 2017. Half of all chronic mental illness begins by age 14. It’s important to remember that behind every statistic there is a person, a family and a community.

Despite effective treatment, there are long delays between the first appearance of symptoms and when people get help. Last year, nearly 10,000 Johnson County residents sought treatment at the County’s Mental Health Department; more than 6,100 for emergent crisis services.

One of the Board of County Commissioners’ four strategic priorities is to advance the self-sufficiency of vulnerable populations, including those with mental health needs. While the need for services has increased, state funding, until very recently, has significantly decreased. Thousands of Johnson County residents rely on the Johnson County Mental Health Center, and we are committed to increasing resources towards this effort.

In the 2019 Budget, the Board increased the funding for the Mental Health Center by $4.2 million in an effort to maintain the current level of service to the community. In that budget, the Center will get six additional staff, including three new case managers and additional preventive services resources.

In addition to the increased 2019 commitment, in September the Board authorized the immediate use of increased state funding and fee-generated revenue to authorize three new full-time positions, and expand two part-time positions to full time. We were pleased to add those positions without using additional county taxpayer dollars.

Two new positions will allow for more walk-in clients to be seen at our Olathe and Shawnee clinics. That service experienced a 10 percent increase in usage in 2017 over the prior year. In addition, an Assisted Outpatient Treatment position will expand to full-time. This position delivers outpatient treatment, under court order, to adults with severe mental illness, assisting individuals who have experienced repeated hospitalizations or arrests.

The other 2018 positions will help clients find competitive employment. Work fosters self-esteem, provides coping strategies for psychiatric symptoms and facilitates the recovery process. We added a dispatcher who will assist the Mental Health Center transportation program, where clients earn income by providing rides to other clients to work, school and medical appointments. We also increased a Vocational Case Manager from part-time to full-time to further support employment and educational opportunities.

With all of the resources we provide, we know we cannot do this work on our own. Thank you to the Johnson County school districts, the 13 cities who participate in our co-responder program, the ongoing work of the Johnson County Suicide Prevention Coalition, and all of you in the community striving to help those with mental health concerns.

We are committed to making mental health a priority, and applaud others in Johnson County who share our passion for this important mission.

On the cover: The Stilwell Community Park opened to the public on Sept. 29. It features Johnson County Park and Recreation District’s first inclusive playground, enabling everyone to play together without physical or social barriers. JCPRD developed the park in partnership with the Stilwell Community Organization. More information is available at jcpRD.com.
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Ways to engage with JoCo

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

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

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

Board of County Commissioners’ meetings:
Attend a weekly Board of County Commissioners meeting at 9:30 a.m. Thursday on the third floor of the Administration Building, 111 S. Cherry St., in Olathe or watch on your smartphone or mobile device, or online at live.jocogov.org

Johnson County Elected Officials
Ed Eilert, Chairman
Ron Shaffer, 1st District
Jim Allen, 2nd District
Steve Klika, 3rd District
Jason Osterhaus, 4th District
Michael Ashcraft, 5th District
Mike Brown, 6th District
Stephen M. Howe, District Attorney
Calvin Hayden, Sheriff

Pictured above: Johnson County District Courts recognized Constitution Day on September 13. Constitution Day celebrates the United States Constitution, signed on September 17, 1787.
In short

**Live stream the new county courthouse**

In July, following a ceremonial groundbreaking, work launched in earnest on the building phase on the county’s new courthouse.

Now residents can check out the progress on this county project online, though a live stream video of the site.

The new 28-courtroom courthouse is being built in downtown Olathe across Santa Fe Street, directly north of the existing courthouse building and directly west of Olathe City Hall.

Visit jocogov.org/courthouse to access the live feed and to find more information about this project.

**Free bus rides on Election Day**

On Election Day, Nov. 6, fares on all RideKC bus routes serving Kansas City, Johnson County, Wyandotte County and Independence will be free.

Find bus routes:

**By phone:** call 816-221-0660 weekdays, between 6 a.m. and 7 p.m. and provide your starting address and polling place address.

**Online:** Use the trip planner on the homepage of RideKC.org.

Paratransit riders should call 816-842-9070 to arrange a ride.

**New health clinic hours in Olathe**

Starting Oct. 1, the Johnson County Department of Health and Environment added additional service hours at its Olathe health clinic located at 11875 S. Sunset Drive.

**The Olathe clinic is open EVERY Friday from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.** giving clients additional time for walk-in services and appointments. The Mission clinic is closed on Fridays. Both clinics are open late on Wednesdays from 10 a.m. to 6:30 p.m.

Directions, hours and a list of walk-in clinic services are available at jocogov.org/jcdhe.

**Opening of Big Bull Creek Park**

On Sept. 22, the Johnson County Park & Recreation district opened the first phase of Big Bull Creek Park. The park includes 2,060 acres, positioning it to be the largest park in the JCPRD park system.

The first phase of the park includes Sunflower Road access, a combined park police and park maintenance, and group camping area. Construction began in spring 2017.

Learn more about the amenities of this new park at jcpard.com.

**quotable**

“Johnson County residents have benefited from Maury’s wealth of experience in health and human services, social service administration, criminal justice, legislative affairs and workforce development.”

— Penny Postoak Ferguson, County Manager

Postoak Ferguson appointed Maury Thompson as Deputy County Manager effective Aug. 26 after serving in the interim role beginning in Jan. 2018.
Living with chronic pain caused by stenosis of the spine affects every part of your life. It keeps you from enjoying the good things in life—time with kids and grandkids, playing golf, even working in the yard. It would be nice to get out of bed—just one morning—without pain.

Every time you try and push through the pain, like standing or walking for a long period of time, you pay for it over the next 2-3 days with even more pain.

The good news is that there are now safe and effective treatments that address the cause of pain stemming from spinal stenosis without medication or surgery.

What is Stenosis of the Spine?

Spinal stenosis is a narrowing of the spinal canal or open space within your spine, which can put pressure on your spinal cord and the nerves that travel through the spine. Spinal stenosis occurs most often in the neck and lower back. Pain occurs when the narrowing affects your nerves.

If a nerve is squeezed, pain occurs in the back, legs, neck, arms and hands, all depending on the location of the narrowing. You may even experience numbness or tingling in the legs and feet.

In order to fix this, you have to reverse the stenosis by opening these spaces within your spine. If you can stop the narrowing and begin widening these spaces again, your pain will be significantly reduced or even eliminated.

This is why many other treatments may not have worked for you. Medications, injections, and even surgery don’t correct the fundamental issues occurring in your spine.

The Single Most Important Solution For Spinal Stenosis

At Renuva Back & Pain Centers, we use an exclusive treatment protocol that has been tried and proven with thousands of patients around the country to significantly reduce and even eliminate pain.

This protocol is a combination of leading edge, FDA cleared technologies and treatment methods that treat the cause of pain and help to heal nerve damage to stop the pain, burning, numbness, and tingling.

Results vary from patient to patient, but the overall results have been remarkable.

With this leading edge treatment program you too could soon be doing the things you enjoy most again.

Find Out if Renuva Can Help You

We understand how difficult it can be to choose a doctor and a treatment program that is right for you. For a few days only, we’re offering our new patient evaluation for only $39 (normally $257).

You will meet with Dr. Michael Riley, D.C. to discuss your medical history and talk about your symptoms. You will also have time to ask questions about your condition and any concerns you may have.

This evaluation includes a thorough exam including a full MyoVision scan and digital x-rays (if needed) to pinpoint the cause of your pain, along with two treatments to see how your body responds and whether our therapy might work for your condition.

Here’s What To Do Now

Call by November 30th and receive everything for only $39 (normally $257). Call our office today at 913-884-1152 between the hours of 8 am and 5 pm, Monday through Friday.

Why suffer with years of misery? Don’t live in pain when you may have the solution you’ve been looking for all along.

renuvacenters.com

Here Is What Some Of Our Patients Are Saying:

“Just when I thought I was going to need back surgery, I found out about Renuva. After working in nursing for 40 years, I tried pain injections for a year and it did an OK job masking the pain. Renuva found the cause of my pain. This is by far the best thing that has happened to me to relieve pain without surgery.”

- Debra D., Overland Park, KS

“I was getting ready to call my doctor and get scheduled for surgery when my friend told me about Renuva and had me call for an appointment. I was hesitant at first but as soon as I left from my first appointment I could feel relief. I can honestly say that a month after finishing my treatments I feel like I could run a mile. I have recommended Renuva to a lot of people. The doctor is wonderful and you can see that the staff truly care about you. If anyone is suffering from any kind of pain, I recommend giving Renuva a chance!”

- Joseph J., Overland Park, KS

Offer includes:
- Examination
- X-Rays (if needed)
- Two CoreCare™ Treatments

Call by November 30th Get 2 Treatments For Only $39

Call: 913-884-1152
The 1920s are often remembered as the “Roaring Twenties”—full of flapper fashion, jazz music and undermining Prohibition in neighborhood speakeasies. But the decade also had a less-well-known, darker side. At the same time as a new pop culture emerged around cinema and radio, increased electrification led to a rise in material culture, and the advent of the automobile revolutionized nearly all aspects of American society. Beneath the surface of all this prosperity was real turbulence.

“A new modern era begins in the United States after the war, and our special ‘The Turbulent Twenties’ exhibit highlights those changes in the social, cultural, political and economic lives of Americans,” said Museum Director Mindi Love. “Behind the veil of American victory and prosperity, the 1920s were a decade of tumult and fractured American society. The decade saw the rise of nativist movements including a resurgence of the Ku Klux Klan, voting rights for women, and national prohibition. The 1918 flu pandemic, often referred to as the ‘Spanish Flu,’ also had a lasting impact.”

“The exhibit explores the 1920s in Johnson County, the state of Kansas, and on the national front...drawing connections between that decade and our current society and culture,” Love said. “Several museum events and programs tied to the exhibit will underscore these themes.”

The Turbulent Twenties exhibit is included in the price of museum admission: $5 for adults, $4 for seniors and $3 for children. Museum members are admitted at no charge. More information is available online at jcprd.com/762/About-The-Museum.
The 2018 Johnson County Veterans Day Observance will honor local veterans of the Vietnam War era as special guests in conjunction with the U.S. Department of Defense’s ongoing 50th Anniversary Commemoration of the Vietnam War.

The celebration, which annually honors veterans of all wars, is scheduled for Saturday, Nov. 10, at Antioch Park, 6501 Antioch Road, in Merriam. The observance event begins at 11 a.m. and will take place at the Vietnam War Veterans Memorial located within the park complex.

Johnson County has been designated as a Commemorative Partner to present Defense Department’s Vietnam War 50th Anniversary lapel pins to local, eligible veterans. Each recipient will also receive a Certificate of Appreciation from Johnson County Government for his or her military service.

“It is never the wrong time to say thank you to any and all veterans and that is especially true for so many Vietnam War veterans who were never properly thanked when they returned home,” said Ed Eckert, chairman of the Johnson County Board of County Commissioners.

Every veteran with honorable service during the Vietnam War is eligible to receive a certificate and lapel pin. This includes veterans with service stateside and those who served in other capacities during that period.

Eligibility dates to receive a lapel pin are for honorable military service from June 1, 1954, to May 15, 1975.

A list of more than 375 eligible veterans interested in receiving recognition has been compiled and provided to the defense department to ensure an adequate number of lapel pins is available along with completion of Johnson County’s certificates for the upcoming presentation.

Event organizers are hopeful that other Commemorative Partners will participate in the Veterans Day event. The list includes Bishop Miege High School, Roeland Park; Marine Corps League Chapter (Nov. 10 also is the Marine Corps birthday) in Lenexa; six DAR chapters, including one in Westwood, two in Prairie Village and three in Overland Park; and the Greater Kansas City Chapter of AUSA (Association of U.S. Army) in Overland Park.

The Vietnam War Veterans Memorial at Antioch Park was dedicated 44 years ago on Veterans Day. The memorial lists the names of 57 Johnson County casualties of the war. Most of them were in their late teens or early-to-mid 20s when they died in Vietnam. The youngest was 18; the oldest was 35. Most were Army soldiers or Marines. They were among the 753 Kansans killed in action during the war.

More details of the Veterans Day celebration will be provided on the county’s website at jocogov.org as the event is finalized.

**Traditional event activities include:**

- Speeches honoring all veterans
- Patriotic music and songs
- Presentation of colors
- Placement of memorial wreaths by local veteran organizations
- Playing of “Echo Taps”
- A rifle salute

More information about the Vietnam War 50th Anniversary lapel pin can be found at vietnamwar50th.com.
What do you get when you blend shredded paper, cement, water and some fly ash thrown in for good measure? It’s called papercrete...similar to concrete...and provides job skills for people who may otherwise have challenges finding employment.

Papercrete Works is a social enterprise program created by Johnson County Developmental Support staff and clients with intellectual and developmental disabilities. The program provides clients ages 18 and older with social interaction, integration into the community, a feeling of independence and a strong sense of pride in their work. Plus, the employees earn an hourly wage for their efforts.

Debra Bartholomew, JCDS team leader, started Papercrete Works almost four years ago with Brian Skibbe, assistive technology specialist and Tiffany Hanna, activity coordinator. The three were tasked with testing formulas and securing studio space.

A crew of employees and staff work together to pour the mixture into molds to create products such as picture frames, planters, decorative bowls, letter tiles and benches. Two pours a week produce 280 pieces. Skibbe makes some of the molds and others were purchased with program grant funds. The papercrete products range in price from $5 to several hundred dollars.

“We go through about two pounds of paper a day to mix up ten gallons of papercrete,” Ziesenis said.

Bartholomew couldn’t say enough about the support the program has received from the community. For example, the papercrete mixture was a project supported by Geiger Concrete.

“We’ve tried many recipes,” Bartholomew said. “They were instrumental in helping us develop the formula.”

She also mentioned that Gillpatrick Woodworks donates wood the employees use to build desktop stands for letter tiles.

With grant assistance, Papercrete Works is piloting the fabrication of park benches for the Johnson County Park and Recreation District. The plan is to install six benches in county parks.

Employees in this part of the program work two days a week from 9:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m.

Two days a week Wickstrom and Ziesenis then work out of a studio in the InterUrban ArtHouse in downtown Overland Park. The program initially received a grant from the Kansas Creative Arts Industries Commission, allowing JCDS to rent the studio space.

The connection with the InterUrban ArtHouse is another for which Bartholomew is grateful. “Our employees learn appropriate social interaction, especially here,” she said. “Several local artists in residence are willing to teach them as well. The InterUrban ArtHouse is integral to our success. They collaborate with us and another JCDS program, the Emerging Artists, on art shows where our employees also learn independence, sales and marketing.

“All of these experiences enable the people we work with to hold a community job,” Wickstrom noted.

“Our employees have evolved so much,” Wickstrom added. “It’s a confidence thing for them. I believe they are most proud of being integrated into the community.”

The staff oversees the work in the studio of six employees, including Marlena, Malek and Ted. And what does Marlena think about the program?

“I like that I get to do a variety of things and it brings out our creativity,” she offered. “I’ve also helped sell at a couple of shows here and there been many instances when people look at our work and are inspired.”

“Those of us who are involved are very passionate about our work,” Bartholomew explained. “We are able to watch people grow, gain confidence and independence, and become so focused and dedicated to their jobs. They have a real sense of ownership.
And while the people we support have made some major gains, the staff also get their hands dirty, working right alongside them.”

Sharing the studio space with JCDS is Teresa Hughley, case manager with the Johnson County Mental Health Adolescent Center for Treatment. ACT is a 30-bed residential facility for adolescents experiencing problems due to a substance use disorder. The partnership between JCDS and ACT began in mid-June, following discussions which identified the needs of both populations and how the ACT youth could assist the employees in Papercrete Works.

“This experience is a great opportunity for us to collaborate,” Hughley said. “It also provides our youths with some new coping skills.”

Kevin Kufeldt, program manager for ACT, said, “The kids return from the InterUrban ArtHouse experience ecstatic about the artwork they produced and are excited for their next trip.

“Volunteering at the ArtHouse is a wonderful opportunity for ACT youth to learn more about working with others and giving back to their community,” Kufeldt said. “Several of them have declared that they would like to return to the ArtHouse as a volunteer once they complete treatment.”

For more information about Papercrete Works, please visit papercreteworks.com.
Many people may be surprised to find out just how much volunteers do on a daily basis for Johnson County Government. In 2017 alone, 12,648 residents volunteered more than 330,000 hours of their time to give back to their community. Industry experts value that time to be worth more than $8 million.

Community members can choose to serve more than a dozen different county departments and agencies. The WIC (Women, Infants and Children) Community Garden, Meals on Wheels, Museum and District Attorney’s Office are just a few of the options available. Volunteers love sharing about their experiences, both about how their service impacted others and how it affected them.

**Teaching kids to cook**

Ricardo and Sonia Moreira started volunteering in “Cooking with the King” at the Juvenile Detention Center more than two years ago. This weekly program teaches minors in the detention center how to cook and provides some spiritual support.

The opportunity to help kids during a difficult period in their lives is what inspired the Moreiras. They could be positive influences while the kids still have chances to turn their lives around.

On one occasion, Sonia took an Uber across town and got into a conversation with the driver. She found out that the driver had been in the Juvenile Detention Center and participated in their program at the time. The driver credited the experience with his new direction in life as an adult.

**Organizing a food drive**

When Ava Collins, 14, needed to complete a project for her Girl Scout Cadette Silver award, it didn’t take long for her to decide on a project — host a food drive.

“It was kind of like a calling,” she explained, “knowing how many people in this world don’t have food or don’t have the opportunity to get decently good food.” She knew she wanted to make a difference in the community where she lived.

Since it was her project, her parents left her to take the lead. Collins coordinated with the manager of the Lenexa HyVee grocery store, scheduled a date for the food drive, recruited volunteers, prepared information to hand out and figured out how to get the food they collected to the Johnson County North Central Multi-Service Center.

Her food drive ran for six hours in front of the HyVee. She and her team gave information to shoppers as they walked into the store and collected donations as they walked out. In total, Collins and her friends collected 1,130 pounds of food.

Scheduling the event and time management were the two biggest challenges, said Collins, but after they collected several hundred pounds in the first hour, she knew it was all worth it. Ava has learned from the experience and plans to host another similar drive next year.

**How you can get involved**

Residents learn more about volunteer opportunities by contacting the department they’re interested in working with or by going online to jocogov.org/volunteer-information-services.

Local volunteers’ experiences inspire others

*by KEITH DAVENPORT*

Ashlynn Miller, Capri Collins, Ava Collins, Avery Newton and Kate Miller collected food for a local store multi-service center along with HyVee store manager Rich Winans.

New Volunteer Management System makes volunteering easier

Three county departments are piloting a new Volunteer Management System to make it easier for residents to find volunteer opportunities. Johnson County Library, Human Services and Developmental Supports are the departments using the system to publish volunteer opportunities and communicate with volunteers.

This new system allows residents to search by department, keyword or city to find service opportunities that match their passions. Volunteers can create a secure profile account to register for specific volunteer programs or events, browse immediate needs posted by each department, sign up for training, and manage their scheduled volunteer opportunities.

Go to jocogov.org/volunteer-information-services to sign up.
Currently, Johnson County has approximately a two month supply of homes for sale, with strong demand for homes $350,000 and below. Due to that demand, residential property values continue to rise.

In 2018, 94 percent of residential real estate values increased; 29 percent of residential properties saw an increase of 5 percent or less. The areas with the greatest increase in value are in northeast Johnson County.

For property owners who may have questions about how their home’s value is determined, the Appraiser’s Office walks you through the process and answers some frequently asked questions.

**A yearlong, four-step process**

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

Discovery is done year-round, mostly through building permits, when a contractor or an individual files a permit for construction or a home addition that will add significant value to the home.

From there, County Appraiser Paul Welcome and his team list the property and gather information necessary to develop a property’s fair market value.

Using that data, the Appraiser’s Office determines the property value and mails county residents notice about their property value by March 1.

If homeowners disagree with a valuation, they have 30 days to file an appeal with the county. After an appeals hearing, the Appraiser’s Office will submit a recommendation of value back to the homeowner, either altering it or defending it. In 2018, about 6,600 property owners appealed their value and approximately half received some type of reduction.

If you have further questions, the Johnson County Appraiser’s Office can be reached at 913-715-9000 or apr-webmaster@jocogov.org.

**Frequently asked questions**

What information do you use to determine my home’s value and how does the county arrive at a specific number?

Appraisers determine market value by reviewing the various characteristics of the property as well as the overall condition of the property. With this information, appraisers consider sales in the area and analyze comparisons through the adjustment process. The result of this calculates the fair market value of the property. Fair market value is estimating what a home would sale for in an open, competitive market.

Why don’t you take into consideration the inside of my home when you determine its value?

State laws require the Appraiser’s Office to review the exterior characteristics of each property every six years. Residents who appeal have the opportunity to share estimates of repairs, photos of damages, or allow an appraiser to make a scheduled visit to review the interior of a home to help appraisers reach a valuation decision.

Where can I see the information used to determine my home’s value?

All the data used to determine home values is available to the public on the appraiser’s website: jocogov.org/appraiser. Every property owner in the county has access to the sales data used to set a home’s value. That data goes back five years and only includes valid sales in that resident’s subdivision and neighborhood.
Applying machine learning and innovation for social good

by CHRIS DEPUSOIR

Johnson County often prides itself on being a different kind of government. Finding new approaches to how we, as a community, treat those dealing with mental illness, is where the county is making great strides.

Our community does not want the jail system to be its largest mental health facility.

“Jail is not beneficial for anyone,” says Alex Holsinger, Johnson County Criminal Justice Coordinator. “Our county is taking action to address the intersection of mental health issues and jail.”

However, when jail is the traditional option, without creating other paths for persons with mental illness and possibly other complex issues, people can end up in jail when they encounter local law enforcement.

Earlier this summer, the county worked with the University of Chicago’s Data Science for Social Good fellowship program. This is the second such opportunity for the county that was selected through a highly competitive process that included hundreds of other fellowship proposals.

Data Science for Social Good

The DSSG Fellowship at the University of Chicago is a program in which 24 fellows tackled six social projects over a 12-week summer program. The key mission of the program is to “train aspiring data scientists to work on data mining, machine learning, big data and data science projects with social impact.” The fellows set out to work with governments and nonprofit organizations to create innovative data solutions to tackle real world problems.

The 2018 focus of the Johnson County project was to apply machine learning and algorithmic modeling to leverage the collaborative, collected information across several county departments. The goal — to help identify persons with a likelihood of being arrested in the upcoming 12 months, who could be assisted by the county’s Mental Health Center or other human services in the local community.

In short, the plan is to apply machine learning to assist people in the local community.

But what is machine learning?

Most of us have experience with machine learning as a consumer but may rarely know it. When you purchase a product on an online shopping site, and subsequently receive suggestions or recommendations on additional purchases, that’s a marketing-based application of machine learning. Information you provide to the site identifies probable items of interest (or need) based on your purchases and those of similar consumers.

Simply, machine learning uses data provided to create a statistical model (through a code-based algorithm) to predict a particular outcome.

The fellowship program created a prototype model to predict the top 200 residents who may be at-risk for returning to jail in the following 12 months.

The application of the model depends on information provided by interaction of residents with various county entities. The implementation of the DSSG model depends on the collaboration and support of the County Manager’s Office, the Mental Health Center, MED-ACT, Emergency Medical Services, Department of Corrections, Sheriff’s Office along with local law enforcement, including Olathe and Overland Park police departments.

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Here is a snapshot of 2017 booking and rebooking rates.

The county jail sees a fair number of clients with mental health issues along with other human service needs.

A key outcome for this project is to proactively reach out to people to break the cycle of recidivism and connect them to services that improve their quality of life.

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Johnson County Jail rebooking rates

<table>
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<th>Month</th>
<th>Number of Persons Booked with Elevated SMI Risk</th>
<th>Percent Also Booked During Prior Year</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jan '17</td>
<td>400</td>
<td>25%</td>
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<td>Feb '17</td>
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<td>30%</td>
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<td>20%</td>
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<td>355</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
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</table>

jocogov.org  Fall 2018
The University of Chicago fellowship team met up with its counterparts in Johnson County this summer to see how its machine learning application would affect actual people.

L to R: Ben Stenhaug*; Pedro Saleiro*; Jin Yao, Johnson County Human Services data analyst; Alden Green*; Christiana Smith*; Maury Thompson, deputy county manager; Alex Holsinger, criminal justice coordinator; and Iris Kalka*. *Denotes DSSG Fellow

The goal of applying this machine learning is to leverage existing county staff to reach out to residents and connect them to services and resources that would increase their success in staying out of jail. This is a proactive application of machine learning using existing personnel and resources. This will result in positive results for at-risk county residents along with cost savings for local taxpayers by reducing the likelihood of jail time or emergency medical services.

“We want to use existing resources to make sure we are proactively reaching out to folks who might benefit from mental health resources,” said Rob MacDougal, clinical director of Emergency Services at Johnson County Mental Health Center.

Not a new direction for the county

The current iteration of DSSG is not the county’s first foray into finding alternatives to jail to apply to the local criminal justice system.

In May 2015, the Council of State Governments Justice Center, the National Association of Counties and the American Psychiatric Association Foundation launched The Stepping Up Initiative with a goal of reducing the number of people in jail who may be experiencing a mental illness. Johnson County was one of the first counties to sign on to this initiative.

Just three years later, in May 2018, the same groups selected Johnson County as one of seven counties in the U.S. as a Stepping Up Innovator County for its expertise in helping people in the criminal justice system who experience mental illness. Over the past few years, many collaborative efforts in the county and partnering cities have led to criminal justice and mental health outreach changes.

In addition, Johnson County was previously part of the DSSG fellowship program in 2016 to develop an analytic model to identify individuals who had frequent contact with the criminal justice system, Emergency Medical Services and the county

Mental Health Center. To maintain patient privacy, all the data was de-identified. This first fellowship yielded an increased accuracy rate to predict persons who may be at-risk for being booked into jail.

Take a look at “What JoCo is doing” on page 14 for a snapshot of alternatives to jail that local jurisdictions have created to improve outcomes for local residents.

Application for social good in JoCo

Late this summer the county’s team took ownership of the algorithm; however, the University of Chicago’s Center for Data Science and Public Policy will continue to assist the county through the end of this calendar year.

Staff members assigned to this project are working to fine tune the coding before applying it. The team is learning the methodology — the intersection of information from many sources. To be clear, Johnson County’s application of machine learning is rare. This is an attempt to apply machine learning to human services and quality of life.

The selling point is that the county is applying technology and using existing staff and resources to keep people out of jail, helping people in the community.

In addition to the human impact, there is also a cost benefit. Keeping people out of jail and out of emergency medical crises costs less. It costs about $36 per booking along with $85 to $150 (depending on special needs) per day in jail, so finding alternatives eliminates these jail-related expenses. And by proactively reaching out to at-risk individuals for care and treatment options, contact for emergency medical services

Keeping people out of jail and out of emergency medical crises costs less. It costs about $36 per booking along with $85 to $150 (depending on special needs) per day in jail, so finding alternatives eliminates these jail-related expenses.

continued on page 14 >>
What JoCo is doing to help residents

In 2016, Johnson County District Court started the state’s first Veterans Treatment Court. The program offers diversion and probation tracks to allow eligible veterans voluntary participation in a 12- to 18-month program that includes court appearances, drug and alcohol testing, treatment, recovery support meetings and a mentorship program. VTC is a collaborative effort among the Sheriff’s Office, Mental Health Center, District Court, JIMS (see below) and the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs.

The county’s Crisis Intervention Team program is built on a strong partnership among local law enforcement, mental health, the District Attorney’s Office and family advocates. CIT training aims to enhance officer skills in responding safely and creatively to mental health calls, reduce repeat calls for service and unnecessary arrests by connecting individuals with mental health crises to appropriate treatment options and reduce the likelihood of needing to use physical force.

My Resource Connection (MyRC) is a secure data application developed to support county residents’ success. MyRC allows county service providers to obtain information about other county services a particular client may be receiving to assist in determining additional human services needs along with support programs that may be available.

In 2016, the county adopted an electronic Brief Jail Mental Health Screen into the jail’s booking process to record baseline information. It’s a validated mental health screen developed by Policy Research Associates Inc. to help entities identify persons who may be in need of mental health evaluation and only takes 3 – 5 minutes to complete. If the assessment indicates a mental health need after someone is booked into the county jail, the county’s Mental Health Center contacts identified individuals within 72 hours of release and offers connection to appropriate services to help decrease likelihood of recidivism.

The Co-Responder program is a collaborative effort involving the Mental Health Center, local police departments and EMS services that embed a trained clinician into respective law enforcement agencies. Currently, the county has eight co-responders, representing 11 police jurisdictions and 14 cities, plus Emergency Medical Services.

The Justice Information Management System (JIMS) is an integrated records management system that collects information about individuals from booking through release from jail or termination from probation. JIMS allows county groups to cross-reference approximately 28 years of jail data and 24 years of district court case information.

Ditch the bag — and free up your recyclables

by BRANDON HEARN

For those residents who are passionate about recycling, the rules always seem to change. What is allowed in your curbside recycle bin can seem more confusing than ever. At the same time, putting the correct items in your recycle bin is more important than ever.

One thing that hasn’t changed is that you should never bag your recyclables in plastic bags. Plastic items such as grocery bags, sandwich bags, or other plastic wraps also cannot go in your curbside recycle bin.

Why?

Plastic bags and wraps can get caught in the machinery at the recycling facility, lower the value of other recyclables and lead to recyclable materials going to the landfill. Instead, our recycling items should be left loose in the bin.

Plastic grocery bags, plastic wraps (e.g., dry cleaning bags, bubble wrap, and shrink wrap around cases of bottles and paper products) and other film-like material should go in the trash or, when applicable, go to a local grocery store for recycling. To ensure that your recycling efforts don’t go to waste, you can follow these simple steps:

1. **Ditch the bag**: plastic bags and wraps don’t belong in your curbside recycle bins.

2. **Free up your recycling**: keep your items loose in the bin. Bagged recycling could end up in the landfill.

3. **Recycle at other locations**: take your clean bags and wraps to area grocery stores that accept these items.

To learn more about recycling options for plastic bags and a range of other strategies, visit [jocogov.org/recycling101](http://jocogov.org/recycling101).

Fall 2018
A century ago, John Lewis Barkley became a war hero. Forty years later, he helped to create the Johnson County Park District.

During the first half of his life, he was a Missourian; in the second half, he was a Kansan. Barkley claimed he was a descendant of Daniel Boone.

Born on Aug. 28, 1895, and raised at his family’s farm near Holden, Mo., where he graduated from high school, Barkley was a student at Warrensburg Teachers College, now the University of Central Missouri, until the start of World War I when he left college and enlisted in the Army in 1917.

As part of his military training, he received special instruction as a sniper, observer and scout at Fort Riley, Kan. Assigned to Company K of the 4th Infantry Regiment, 3rd Division, Barkley arrived in France in the spring of 1918.

He was an Army private first class (PFC) when he earned the Medal of Honor in combat on Oct. 7, 1918, near Cunel, France. Barkley was stationed in an observation post near the German line where he witnessed an enemy advancement. Using a captured enemy machine gun he mounted on a disabled two-man French tank near his post, he single-handedly repelled two German counterattacks, killing or wounding a large number of the enemy.

The “WWI – Through their Eyes” exhibit at Kansas City’s Liberty Memorial World War I Museum details his heroic actions, noting: “After hostilities had ceased, there were over 4,000 expended machine gun rounds found in the tank.”

Barkley was awarded the Medal of Honor by Gen. John Pershing in 1919. His heroism also earned him the French Croix de Guerre, the Italian Cross of Military Valor, the British Distinguished Service Cross, the French Medallie Militaire, the Belgian War Cross and the Montenegrin Medal of Bravery. His WWI victory medal carried six battle clasps.

Following the war, Barkley worked for a time as a private detective in Kansas City, Mo. In 1930, he wrote a book titled No Hard Feelings! about his war experience. With about 4,000 copies printed and only a few sold, the book flopped. The book was reissued in 2012 under the new title Scarlet Fields. No information was available on printing and sales of that version of his WWI memoirs.

According to information provided by the Johnson County Park and Recreation District (JCPRD) and Johnson County Museum, Barkley came to the county in 1936, settling in Mission Township where he married Marguerite Mullen, a descendant of early pioneers – the Walmers.

He was a landowner and dairy farmer whose property straddled today’s Johnson Drive. Barkley was known for stopping traffic on the road twice daily as he moved his cattle from barn to pasture and back.

In the early 1950s, with a population of approximately 65,000, acquisition and development began for a park system to benefit a growing Johnson County. Barkley and other members of the Shawnee Mission Sertoma Club led this task when they asked the Kansas Legislature to create a special park district in Johnson County.

As a result of efforts by the Sertoma Club, legislation was passed in 1953 that would allow a district to be formed upon petition to the county, signed by 5,000 fully qualified electors. This goal was achieved in 1954 when the club presented 7,309 signatures on petitions to the Board of County Commissioners. Concurrently, special legislation was obtained from state lawmakers for a three-quarter mill levy for park operation and maintenance.

The county board created the Shawnee Mission Park District on Jan. 12, 1955. The following year, a bond issue of $1.1 million for land purchase and park development was passed by county voters. The bonds were used for purchase and initial development of land for three parks.

Barkley was appointed the park district’s first superintendent in December 1956. He was responsible for touring the undeveloped countryside in Johnson County in search of parklands.

He personally negotiated the acquisition of 1,250 acres in Shawnee and Lenexa that would become Shawnee Mission Park along with 44 acres for development of Antioch Park in Merriam. Dedicated on May 25, 1958, Antioch Park was the first park in the Shawnee Mission Park District.

A neighborhood park was also established in Shawnee. Approximately an acre in size, it was named Bluejacket Park and later became the site of Old Shawnee Town.

Barkley retired as superintendent of the park district in 1963.
Reduce, reuse, recycle — repeat. That is the mantra of waste reduction and the work of the solid waste management coordinator, Craig Wood, with Johnson County’s Department of Health and Environment (JCDHE).

Since Wood joined the department nine years ago, he has seen an encouraging trend in the county.

“I’m most proud of the fact that since 2009, our population has increased by about 100,000, yet we currently produce almost the same amount of trash as we did back then. That means each Johnson County resident has reduced his or her individual waste generation. That is amazing and I hope we continue that trend,” Wood said.

Every few years, JCDHE conducts a waste characterization study to see how the overall waste stream of Johnson County has changed since the initial waste study in 2006. As with the 2006 study, three sites were selected within the county, including the Johnson County Landfill, the city of Olathe Transfer Station and the APAC-Reno Construction and Demolition Debris Landfill in Olathe. Representative samples were taken from each location and analyzed to see what the Johnson County waste stream is comprised of, allowing JCDHE staff to conduct future solid waste planning efforts.

In the 2016 study, some of the main waste streams included (percentage by weight):

- Total paper fibers - 30 percent
- Food - 23 percent
- Total plastics - 18 percent
- Glass - 4.8 percent
- Yard waste - 3 percent

In 2012, the county implemented waste restrictions on the landfill. Consequently, people are now composting yard waste.

“A lot of folks are mulch mowing now, which decreases water consumption for lawns and lessens the transportation of waste to the landfill, generating a variety of benefits,” Wood said.

“Three percent of landfill waste can be attributable to residual amounts of yard waste now.”

The northeastern portion of the state generates approximately 1.3 million tons of municipal trash annually, with 23 percent of the landfill being food. “Some of the food that gets thrown away is usable,” Wood said. And surprisingly to some, consumers, not restaurants and businesses, are responsible for the bulk of that waste.

Wood suggests that waste prevention is most desirable and can be attained in a variety of ways.

Reduce

Shopping

- Make a list.
- Check the pantry for ingredients you have on hand.
- Don’t stray from the list.
- Practice moderation. Be aware and buy it only if you need it.
- Take your own shopping bags. If you don’t have one and can easily carry your purchase, consider declining a store-provided bag.

Preparation

- Collect your scraps for compost.
- Use the entire vegetable. For example, don’t peel potatoes. There are a lot of nutrients in the skin.
- If you have leftovers, make a plan for using them.
- Practice food preservation: canning, making pickles from cucumbers, making jellies and jams.

Reuse

Secondhand

- Consider buying gently-used items.
- When you tire of your own belongings, rather than disposing of anything that is usable and has a reasonable amount of life left, consider donating it and possibly benefit from the tax deduction.
- Be sure you’re not just passing along the responsibility of disposal by ensuring:
  - It is accepted – many charitable organizations will only accept certain items.
  - It is clean – dirty shirts and muddy shoes are not something anyone will want.
  - It is in working order – a broken iron isn’t going to do anyone any good.

For more information, please contact Craig Wood, solid waste management coordinator at 913-715-6917.
Recycling
Recycle bins
• You may think you’re recycling, but when you bag your recyclables or put plastic bags and product wrap into your recycle bin — your recyclables could end up in the landfill. Plastic bags get caught in the machinery at the recycling facility, and lower the value of other recyclables.
• Free up your recycling by keeping your items loose in the bin.
• Questions about whether items are accepted for curbside pickup? Visit DHE at jocogov.org/Recycling101.

Recycling drop-off
• Take your clean bags and wraps to area grocery stores that accept these items.
• What do you do with eyeglasses, tires, batteries or fire extinguishers to name a few items? Be sure to visit recyclespot.org for the answer to this and a wide variety of other recycling questions. The site is a service of the Mid-America Regional Council which serves the Kansas City metropolitan area.
• Did you know that only about 20 percent of donated clothing goes back into the community? The average American has about 70 pounds of clothes annually to donate or throw away. The vast majority (around 85 percent) of those old clothes either end up in landfills or are sold to recyclers because they are dirty, in poor condition (torn, worn, missing a button, etc.), or because the sheer amount of clothing overwhelms the organization’s ability to store, process and sell it. recyclespot.org can address that concern as well.

Wood advises that source reduction is an effective way to minimize landfill use.
“Buy what you need and use what you buy,” Wood said. “It helps your bottom line, too. What a great deal!”

Johnson County Executive Airport completes hangar rebuilding after wind damage
by AARON OTTO

On March 6, 2017, a significant weather event hit the Johnson County Executive Airport (located at 151st and Pflumm Road in Olathe). As we celebrate completion of the rebuilding that took place, we look back at what happened.

Straight line winds caused more than $3 million in damage to three privately leased hangers and five county-owned T-Hangar buildings.

Johnson County Airport Commission Deputy Director Larry Peet surveys the damage. Other inspectors and engineers also assessed the buildings.

In December 2017, the Johnson County Board of County Commissioners approved a $3.1 million contract to rebuild the hangars.

The Johnson County Airport Commission received building permits from the City of Olathe on April 30. Foundation work began on May 8.

The first two hangars were open for use on October 5 and the remaining three hangars are expected to be back in service in the coming weeks.
Join a Book Group at Johnson County Library

by CHRISTOPHER LEITCH

The only thing as enjoyable as a good book is talking about it with new friends. There is no better place than Johnson County Library to read new books and to meet the people who love them.

Ten of the library’s 14 branches host regular book groups that meet monthly to discuss their reads. Several of the branches, Blue Valley, Gardner, Leawood Pioneer and Shawnee, host two different groups, owing to the popularity of chatting about what you’re reading. Each group is led by one of the branch librarians who helps the group make their seasonal selections and facilitates conversation. Groups meet year-round, even during the annual student-focused Summer Reading program.

Each Johnson County Library book group has a discrete reading list for each season, reflecting the diversity of interests across the County. A few of the groups are organized around a theme. For instance, the 1920s Book Group that meets at Shawnee Town emphasizes 1920s mystery titles in their selections. The Silent Book Group at Gardner communes quietly over the joy of reading. A few of the groups, at Cedar Roe, Gardner, Oak Park and Shawnee, host a Holiday Book Party in December.

Some of the groups meet off-site in local coffee houses and restaurants. The De Soto Book Group, for example, meets at TriCentury Bank in De Soto during hours the library there is normally closed. There is even a group, that meets at Cedar Roe, devoted to the rigorous “Great Books” program. This group reads works chosen by the Great Books Foundation, an independent, nonprofit educational organization that creates reading and discussion programs. This enclave discusses books using the “shared inquiry” format that enables exploration of the ideas and meaning found in what’s read. “Shared inquiry” centers on interpretive questions that have more than one plausible answer and lead to engaging and insightful conversations about the text. The moderator is available to discuss the session with participants and will reserve a copy of the anthology.

A couple of the popular titles this fall/winter include Killers of the Flower Moon: The Osage Murders and the Birth of the FBI by David Grann, for the Leawood Pioneer Library Wednesday Afternoon Book Group, and The Japanese Lover by Isabel Allende, at the Lackman Library Book Group. You’ll find a current list of groups, meeting times and places, and book selections on the library’s web site: jocolibrary.org/events/bookgroups.

JoCo health department offers flu vaccine

Provides better protection for adults over age 50

by JENNY DUNLAY

Influenza (flu) can have devastating health effects on adults over age 50. Compared to younger adults, those over age 50 are more likely to have chronic medical conditions, putting them at an increased risk of flu-related complications that can lead to hospitalization and even death. Studies show that an annual flu vaccine is the best available way for older adults to reduce their risk of severe influenza and potentially serious consequences.

The Johnson County Department of Health and Environment (JCDHE) now offers the Flublok® Quadrivalent vaccine which contains three times more active ingredients than all other quadrivalent influenza vaccines; making it a good choice for older adults and those with compromised immune systems. In a clinical study of 9,000 adults of 50 years and older, people who received Flublok® were more than 40 percent less likely to get influenza than those that received a seasonal flu shot. Flublok® does not contain any preservatives, egg proteins, gelatin or latex which allows adults who are sensitive to these ingredients another choice for flu protection.

In addition to older adults and those with chronic medical conditions, pregnant women and children under age 5 are also more susceptible to flu-related complications, according to Lougene Marsh, director of JCDHE. “We recommend that everyone over the age of 6 months get a flu shot by the end of October so they’re protected when flu season hits — usually right after the holidays through February.”
It’s a matter of perspective. Most people consider fall leaves to be trash. Let’s challenge that thinking. Instead, view leaves as waste that has value. The key is knowing how to properly repurpose and manage them. Let’s look at how to turn leaves into treasure.

The problem with leaves
Leaves are work. They must be removed from the lawn or they’ll suffocate the grass, killing it over the winter. But leaves can create problems when not disposed of properly. Leaves from neighborhood trees that exit your yard create serious problems elsewhere.

In the woods, leaves fall naturally into streams. Streams and ponds can handle this natural loading and survive in balanced harmony with fish and wildlife. Excess leaves disturb a balance of this natural loading. Leaves raked into or left in the streets can pile up and move downhill when it rains, flowing into storm drains. Large masses of leaves can plug a storm drain and cause water to backup, creating flooded streets.

Leaves that enter storm drains wash directly into county streams, overloading the water with organic matter. Leaves are full of nutrients, phosphates and nitrogen. Leaves that naturally fall into streams contribute to this issue, but the waterway can handle this breakdown for a healthy ecosystem.

Streams overloaded with leaves are quickly thrown off balance. This imbalance results in fish and aquatic life kills. Imbalances also result in excessive spring algae growth in neighborhood ponds. Homes associations and property owners spend thousands of dollars to treat their ponds.

Avoid temptation
When leaves are viewed as trash it is easy to think, “What is the quickest way to get rid of them?” Consequently, many people sweep or blow them into the street. While it’s an easy solution, it creates problems downstream for all.

Please do not rake leaves off the lawn into the streets. Better yet, when raking your lawn remove the leaves from the street gutter to reduce their impact on local water quality.

Good news — disposal options
There are several ways to properly handle leaves. County residents have the option of raking the leaves and collecting them in paper lawn bags, sending them off to a municipal or commercial composting facility. Although this option may be best for many, it requires work and the expense of bags can add up. It does keep our water clean but it adds to our carbon footprint.

The best option is to turn leaves into treasure by putting them to use at home. The easiest option is mulch mowing and your lawn mower does the work for you.

Mulch mowing requires mowing frequently so that the blades finely chop the leaves, allowing them to naturally break down and return nutrients to the soil. Leaves can be safely returned into the grass as long as they do not pile up on the turf.

Leaves can also be bagged by the mower and used as mulch. Leaves are the mulch of the forest floor so use them in your own landscape instead of buying mulch each spring. You can’t get more local than that and it’s free. Simply empty the mower bag around your trees and shrubs.

Composting is another option for many. It takes effort but the return of rich organic matter is wonderful for our area’s clay soils.

It all boils down to your perspective. If treated as trash, fall leaf removal becomes a chore. Fall leaves become a treasure only when you see their value and use them to improve your landscape.

More information about fall leaf management can be found at johnson.k-state.edu.
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.

Ron Shaffer
1st District
913-715-0431

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

Steve Klika
3rd District
913-715-0433

Jason Osterhaus
4th District
913-715-0434

Michael Ashcraft
5th District
913-715-0435

Mike Brown
6th District
913-715-0436

Chairman Ed Eilert
913-715-0500

This rendering is part of the proposed new plaza at the entrance of Shawnee Mission Park to honor John Barkley, as part of JCPRD’s capital improvement plan for 2019.

continued from page 15 >>

Following completion of a dam across Mill Creek and creation of a lake for recreation and fishing, Shawnee Mission Park was dedicated for full use in May 1964. Barkley died two years later at age 70.

In 1969, the Shawnee Mission Park District’s name was changed to the Johnson County Park and Recreation District. JCPRD remains the only special park district in Kansas.

In 1977, the main entrance to Shawnee Mission Park, 7900 Renner Road, was renamed Barkley Drive and Plaza in his honor along with the opening of the John Barkley Visitors Center. The facility was closed and razed in 2016 with construction of a major addition to the administration building to house the park police headquarters and visitor services.

Work is now underway for design and construction of a new John Barkley Plaza at the entryway of Shawnee Mission Park. The project is on the JCPRD’s capital improvement program for 2019. A conception plan for the plaza has been approved, paving the way for final design and the award of a construction contract by the end of this year or early next year.

A future project schedule is still being developed, but construction of the John Barkley Plaza is expected to start in the second half of 2019 with anticipated completion in spring/summer 2020. His contributions to Johnson County and wartime bravery remain important chapters as part of Johnson County’s history.
New Sheriff’s Office foundation established to provide support in time of crisis

by CLAIRE CANAAN

In 2018, law enforcement across the country has seen 107 line-of-duty deaths. Not included in these numbers are law enforcement deaths while off duty. From automobile crashes, gunfire, felonious assault while on duty, cancer diagnoses, heart attacks and suicides off duty, the cause does not make the loss any less traumatic for the family and friends left behind. When an officer dies, it sends shockwaves through a department. Families are left with a void they’ll never be able to fill. Financial worries compact the already present traumatic stress that spirals into an unbearable burden for some individuals. In an effort to combat these fears and provide a resource to employees, family members and partners directly affected by a crisis of any caliber, the Johnson County Sheriff’s Office established the Johnson County, Kansas Sheriff’s Charitable Assistance Foundation.

The Johnson County, Kansas Sheriff’s Charitable Assistance Foundation is a 501(c)(3) not for profit organization that was formed in the first quarter of 2018 to provide a supportive, hopeful environment for Sheriff’s Office employees, family members and partners during times of crisis. The seven-member board consists of volunteers in the community, four of whom are retired law enforcement officers, appointed by the sheriff to manage the foundation as a separate and distinct entity.

The goal of the Sheriff’s Charitable Assistance Foundation is to provide financial assistance to the families of Johnson County Sheriff’s law enforcement officers killed in the line of duty, public service members in need in the Kansas City metro or other charitable activities deemed appropriate by the board. The foundation meets on a quarterly basis. If you would like to contribute to this nonprofit organization, or have fundraising ideas, please contact Brittney Wray with the Johnson County Sheriff’s Office at 913-715-5504 or brittney.wray@jocogov.org.

Board of Directors

- Robert (Bernie) Johnston, president, Retired law enforcement officer, three-year term
- Phil Hodgdon, vice president, five-year term
- Jennifer Chick, treasurer, five-year term
- Vince Werkowitch, secretary, Retired law enforcement officer, four-year term
- Travis Hicks, five-year term
- Ed Schlesselman, Retired law enforcement officer, three-year term
- John Zemites, Retired law enforcement officer, four-year term

Veterans Treatment Court has four new graduates

by JODY HANSON

On Aug. 29, a packed courtroom celebrated four more graduates of the Veterans Treatment Court. This marked the Johnson County District Court’s sixth graduation in this program and its largest graduating class yet. The mission of the VTC is to identify veterans in the criminal justice system and, when eligible, get them into treatment and court supervision as an alternative to incarceration.

The recent graduation ceremony included speeches from Judge Timothy P. McCarthy, who spearheaded the effort to bring VTC to Johnson County, as well as Kansas Supreme Court Justice Lawton Nuss and Major General Clyde J. “Butch” Tate II, a military lawyer who previously served as the 19th Deputy Judge Advocate General of the United States Army. U.S. Senator Jerry Moran delivered the keynote speech.

“The four veterans we honor today are on a path to provide us with leadership,” said Senator Moran at the ceremony. “Our country desperately needs you as role models.”

Seventeen graduates in total have completed the Veterans Treatment Court program in Johnson County since 2016.

To learn more about Johnson County’s Veterans Treatment Court, including program information, links to media coverage and an informational video, visit courts.jocogov.org/cs_vtc.aspx.
**Three Questions**

for three employees of Johnson County Government

by LORI SAND

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**Satchel Biron**
Resource navigator, Human Services Department

Part of My Resource Connection, I help solve our residents’ needs. I’ve been employed by the county for five years.

---

**James Davis**
Residential appraiser, Appraiser’s Office

The Appraiser’s office discovers, lists and values all taxable property. I’ve been employed by the county for nearly two years.

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**Ivy Swift**
Election coordinator, Election Office

With over 380,000 registered voters, I clarify the election process. I’ve been employed by the county for 14 years.

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### What do you do?

I determine appropriate referrals for families and individuals who are experiencing problems within the home (anger, financial, mental health, parenting, etc.) and would benefit from community services. I am also a state approved mediator to conduct onsite domestic mediation to assist in the creation or modification of a parenting plan.

I collect data so the Appraiser’s Office can determine the value of each property in Johnson County.

Voter registration is the main part of my job. I work with new voters and name, address and party affiliation changes for current voters. Recently, I helped voters better understand the unique rules of the partisan primary process. During elections, I support the rest of our team on a number of processes and procedures.

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### What do you like most about your job?

My favorite part of my job is being able to work directly with people in our community.

I get to see new homes being built and am involved with the process from the start of construction all the way through the sale of the home. It’s amazing to watch new subdivisions blossom and expand all over Johnson County.

I grew up in a household where my parents were election workers, so it feels good to continue that legacy of service. I started working for the Election Office as an election worker 14 years ago, which helped me earn my current full-time role one year ago.

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### How does the work you do affect the lives of Johnson County residents?

The work that I do affects Johnson County residents in a positive way. I explain, answer questions and give general information about family court rules, procedures and practices and all the available resources in the community to help people have a better understanding of potential services in order to empower them to make an informed decision they feel confident about.

The work I do affects residents in many ways — from drawing a new home that a resident might move into, to confirming and updating data characteristics on a recently sold property. I ensure everything is as accurate as possible, which helps the Appraiser’s Office find the true market value for all the homes in Johnson County.

It’s my hope that the services we provide at the Election Office make the voting experience easy and enjoyable for our voters and gives them confidence in the voting process.
Johnson County is a great place to live, work and serve the community. Many people may wonder how can they give back or help the community. Here are 10 ways to get involved with Johnson County Government right now.

1. **Deliver meals to homebound seniors.**
   Johnson County Area on Aging’s Meals on Wheels delivers 600-650 meals each day to homebound seniors. Meals are delivered from 10:45 to noon, Monday through Friday. Just helping one hour per week makes a difference to a homebound senior. Call about Meals on Wheels at 913-715-8895.

2. **Provide transportation to a medical appointment or the grocery store for a resident who no longer drives.**
   Catch-a-Ride is a volunteer transportation program for residents who are 60+, disabled or have no other means of transportation. The program operates 8 a.m. – 5 p.m., Monday through Friday. For details, call 913-715-8900.

3. **Host a food drive for neighbors in need.**
   Johnson County Human Services Department operates four Multi-Service Centers (MSC). The MSCs provide utility assistance, Kansas City Medicine Cabinet vouchers, food pantries, and case management to qualifying residents in need. For more about hosting a food drive, call 913-715-8859.

4. **Deliver educational programming.**
   Johnson County K-State Research and Extension trains volunteers to help deliver quality educational programming. Opportunities include horticulture, management of natural resources and natural areas, food safety and nutrition, Medicare counseling, tax preparation assistance, and 4-H youth development. For more information, call 913-715-7000.

5. **Teach English as a second language.**
   Johnson County Library utilizes ESL volunteers. Volunteers create and lead lessons for weekly English language classes. For more information, call 913-826-4642.

6. **Surround yourself with books.**
   Johnson County Library operates three bookstores through the Friends of Johnson County Library. Volunteers are needed to sort donated materials. Find out more by calling 913-492-4791.

7. **Help support someone with a disability to be a part of the community.**
   Spend time with clients who have an intellectual or developmental disability and have chosen to spend their weekdays engaging with the community and providing volunteer work. To learn more, call 913-826-2670.

8. **Use your green thumb to help feed local women and children.**
   The WIC Community Garden seeks all levels of gardeners for the 2018 season. All produce grown and harvested goes directly to Johnson County WIC (Women, Infants and Children) clients. For more information, call 913-715-6938.

9. **Love history? Love working with kids?**
   The Johnson County Museum has opportunities to assist with museum programming, special events, docent-led exhibit tours, visitor services and behind-the-scenes work. For more information, call 913-826-2787.

10. **Not sure where you want to serve in Johnson County and want to learn more about county services and programs?**
    Apply for the Citizens Academy. The Citizens Academy is a ten-week, evening program that allows community-minded individuals to learn about how the county operates thorough behind-the-scenes tours, hands-on activities, and conversations and classes with county staff. Learn more and apply online at [jocogov.org/citizensacademy](http://jocogov.org/citizensacademy).
MARK YOUR CALENDAR FOR ELECTION DAY
polling locations are open from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m.

FIND YOUR POLLING LOCATION
and view your sample ballot by entering your first name, last name and date of birth at voter.jocoelection.org

ON ELECTION DAY, REMEMBER TO BRING
A government-issued photo ID is required to vote.

For more information, contact the Johnson County Election Office at 913-715-6800 or jocoelection.org