As we head into the summer season, some may want to get outside to enjoy Johnson County’s parks, trails and lakes. Others may want to spend some time in the air conditioning with a good book or magazine borrowed from the Johnson County Library, or refresh themselves on our county’s history at the Johnson County Museum or the Lanesfield Historic Site. Your summer plans may include a combination of these activities and many more.

While we are optimistic that every administered vaccination is getting us closer to life prepandemic, we are not there yet. As of May 1, Johnson County is no longer under a mask mandate. However, our Board of County Commissioners adopted a resolution on April 29 strongly recommending vaccinations and other strategies to control the spread. The resolution also strongly recommends businesses, organizations and the public follow the latest guidance from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Kansas Department of Health and Environment and our Department of Health and Environment and local health officer. In this issue, we will share feedback from community members who explain why they made the choice to get vaccinated.

Nothing tastes more like summer than fresh produce grown on a farm and made available at a farmers market. In this issue, we take you on a tour of the farmers markets in our county, with details on where and when to visit them. We also offer tips on decreasing food waste in your household, including information on composting for those who are so inclined.

For Johnson County Government, summertime means hard work on preparing, discussing and adopting our budget for the following year. In this issue’s BOCC column, we give you an update on what is perhaps our most important policy decision every year, and we have details on how the public can have their thoughts heard on this topic.

Speaking of engagement, an effort to have the public weigh in on the discussion of renaming a Johnson County creek will soon get underway. In this issue, we give you the history of the creek, introduce you to the effort to consider a new name and offer details on how you can get involved in the discussion.

Whatever your plans are for this summer, we hope you are able to safely spend time enjoying the amenities and activities Johnson County has to offer. We wish everyone an enjoyable and safe summer.
A new memorial plaza honoring the Johnson County park systems first superintendent was officially dedicated on April 24 near the refurbished entrance to Shawnee Mission Park from 7900 Renner Road.

The John Lewis Barkley Plaza tells the story of Barkley, a Medal of Honor recipient from World War I, and the evolution of the Johnson County Park and Recreation District. He served as the first park district superintendent from 1956-1963. Barkley died in 1966 at age 70.

The plaza features seat walls, a shade pavilion, a drinking fountain, a bike-share rack and a bike repair station, along with an existing flagpole near the park entrance. The main drive to Shawnee Mission Park was named Barkley Drive in 1977.

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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 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, virtually, by watching online at boccmeetings.jocogov.org or on Facebook (@jocogov).

Johnson County Elected Officials
Ed Eilert, Chairman
Becky Fast, 1st District
Jeff Meyers, 2nd District
Charlotte O’Hara, 3rd District
Janée Hanzlick, 4th District
Michael Ashcraft, 5th District
Shirley Allenbrand, 6th District
Steve Howe, district attorney
Calvin Hayden, sheriff
Focusing on youth health

Johnson County Mental Health Center and Johnson County Department of Health and Environment are promoting the Whole Healthy You campaign, developed by Kansas youth and the Kansas Department of Health and Environment to bring holistic healthy messaging to Kansas youth and young adults. The goal is to change the way youth think about health, giving them the facts and steps to follow to live a healthy life physically, mentally and emotionally.

The areas covered include:

- Fitness and physical activity
- Healthy eating
- Healthy relationships
- Social media
- Substance use

Follow the campaign on Facebook at facebook.com/jocohealthdept and facebook.com/JOCOMNH. More information on the Whole Healthy You campaign can be found at kdheks.gov/whyks.

Chairman Eilert delivers 2021 State of the County address

During a first-ever virtual presentation, Chairman Ed Eilert’s 2021 State of the County address focused on the county’s and community’s pandemic recovery and response effort. He also highlighted 2020 achievements including opening or making substantial progress on major capital projects such as the new Johnson County Courthouse and the Tomahawk Creek Wastewater Facility.

In addition to the event being virtual, Johnson County Government digitized its annual report. The annual report, A Resilient Community, is available at annualreport.jocogov.org.

Johnson County families still under financial strain due to the pandemic can stay in their homes, keep current on their utility bills and stay connected thanks to the Kansas Emergency Rental Assistance program. KERA offers up to 12 months of assistance with current or past due rent and past due utility and internet bills, including electric, gas, water, wastewater, trash removal and home energy services. Renters can apply for assistance with all, some, or any one of the services offered.

More information is available at kshousingcorp.org/emergency-rental-assistance. Help with the application is available through United Way’s 211 helpline.

Johnson County is the first county in the Kansas City region to receive Communities for All Ages recognition with a bronze level certification by the Mid-America Regional Council recognizing the county’s efforts preparing for its growing older population.

“Johnson County is focused on creating livable communities to improve the quality of life for all our residents, including older adults.”

― Debbie Collins, director of the Johnson County Department of Aging and Human Services
Johnson County Community College is proud to be one of 19 Kansas institutions awarding the new Kansas Promise Scholarship starting Fall 2021.

This exciting program was created to prepare qualified Kansas students for high-demand jobs. It offers the perfect opportunity to launch a career, gain new skills or advance in a current job.

Scholarship funds are waiting for students enrolling in eligible two-year associate degree or career and technical education programs in these fields of study at JCCC:

- IT and security
- Physical and mental healthcare
- Advanced manufacturing and building trades
- Language interpretation and translation, including sign language

We look forward to taking part in this groundbreaking statewide initiative to help even more students find their tomorrows at JCCC.
COVID-19 vaccinations have been available in Johnson County for the past several months. Along with masks and physical distancing, they are important public health tools to containing the spread of the virus. As of June 2, 42.3% of Kansans have received one vaccination and 35.6% are fully vaccinated, while 52.3% of eligible Johnson Countians have received one vaccination and 44.9% are fully vaccinated. People have various reasons for seeking COVID-19 vaccinations and some community members have shared their thoughts on why they chose to be vaccinated.

**Amy Korf, Age 39**  
*Key Account Manager, Pharmaceuticals*

In my profession, I know how long it takes to bring a drug to market and get approval from the FDA, so I have concerns. But my mom was adamant that I do this, so I got the vaccine to keep the family peace. Sometimes you just need to put others above yourself. Seeing how important this is to someone I love very much was the deciding factor. I very much enjoy family gatherings and being able to participate fully brings me joy.

**Margaret Taylor, Age 61**  
*Nurse case manager*

I work in a hospital so was able to be get vaccinated early on. There was no question about whether I would be vaccinated, doing what I do and working with those I do.

**Steve Stites, M.D., Age 61**  
*Chief Medical Officer, University of Kansas Health System*

The science is real! And, the vaccine works. I wanted the vaccine’s science to work for me and to keep me and my family safe. We have given over 70 thousand doses, and our patients are doing great!

**Patti Weinrich Davis, Age 82**  
*Freelance portrait artist and former publisher of KC metro’s Travel Host and grandmother of nine grandchildren*

I wanted to get vaccinated because I thought it would help everyone around me and that it might save my life (as a cancer survivor) and my kids’ lives. It’s really reassuring for me and my neighbors and for me to know that I’m safe around my son and my daughter.

**Sarah Christy, Age 40**  
*Graduate student*

I got vaccinated to protect my clients. Being in mental health, I think it’s important to provide the best care I can and that means face-to-face relationships.

**Dan Knox, Age 58**  
*Semi-retired*

I believe that getting the vaccine is important to do so we can stop the virus and I don’t want to die from it! However, being an introvert, I really don’t see that this will change my daily life much.

**David Lindstrom, Age 66**  
*Self-employed, DML Properties, LLC (former commissioner for Johnson County)*

I am in good health and work hard to stay fit. I have no underlying conditions, but I am over 65 years of age. I got the COVID-19 vaccine because my personal doctor recommended that I do so when it became available to me. In addition, I have lost several friends to the COVID-19 virus. I received my second shot the first week in April.

I personally believe that this vaccine is safe.
Henry Jimenez, Age 53
Employed by Mazda

I feel like it is my civic responsibility to get vaccinated. I know that I will feel much safer and won’t be putting my parents at risk.

Dana Hawkinson, M.D., Age 46
Infectious Disease physician,
Medical Director Infection
Prevention and Control
University of Kansas Health System

I got vaccinated because of knowledge bias. I know from my training that vaccines work; they prevent individual disease and complications of those diseases. I have received vaccinations since I was a child, it was just what we did. We know vaccination prevents a great magnitude of suffering that would otherwise be prevalent in individuals and communities as a whole. We live in a time and place where we don’t have to see the suffering earlier generations had to endure, especially in children. In regard to the COVID-19 vaccine specifically, I know it will protect me from the disease and potential complications like the blood clots and long-haul symptoms. It is also regarded as an act of charity to those around me and my community.

Anthony Woolridge, Age 49
Maintenance worker

I just wanted to get vaccinated so that I would be safe. I interact with a lot of people and so far I managed not to get sick, but now I feel better knowing that I’m protected.

Bob Regnier, Age 72
Banker, Executive Chairman and CEO of Bank of Blue Valley and a director of the Victor and Helen Regnier Charitable Foundation

I got the COVID-19 vaccine because I see it as doing my part to help put this devastating pandemic problem behind us. It will protect me, my family and friends. It will allow me to travel to see my grandkids. I listen to local medical professionals like Dr. Lee Norman and national professionals like Dr. Anthony Fauci who recommend vaccination. Dr. Norman and Dr. Fauci are the Walter Cronkites of my medical world.

Bill Kohl, Age 73
Retired railroad engineer for Union Pacific

I have a multitude of co-morbidities, and felt like my life was at risk. I became a hermit, then decided to fight to get the vaccination when it was hard to come by at the beginning, as a way to extend my life.

Rev. Bobby L. Love, Sr., Age 62
Senior Pastor of the Second Baptist Church of Olathe

After much prayer and consideration, I got the vaccination primarily to help mitigate the potential spread of this dreadful virus and keep myself, family and congregation safe. I count it as a blessing to have my active 93-year-old mother (she got her shot as soon as she could) to visit with daily and certainly did not want to compromise her well-being, nor that of the Senior Saints within the congregation. In addition, many of my clergy colleagues in the KC Metro Area and across the nation have died from COVID-19 complications. It was very important to me as a son, husband, father, grandpa, neighbor, friend and pastor, to get my vaccination as a demonstration of love for those I deeply care about.

Editha Propst, Age 90

I figured that not wanting to get the virus is a really good reason to get the shot. I really don’t expect that this will change things much for me in day-to-day life, although I do go to church, so those people might be glad I got vaccinated.

Stay up-to-date on COVID-19 developments at jocogov.org/coronavirus.
Mark your Calendar

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

June 2021

- **Tuesday, June 15**
  - Youth Mental Health First Aid – 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. (virtual). Register by calling 913-715-7880 or emailing jcmhcevents@jocogov.org.

- **Thursday, June 17**
  - Museum: Virtual Program - Refugee Families in the Greater KC Area - Who are they and how do we get involved? Dr. Sofia Khan, director of KC for Refugees and JoCo resident, shares her personal experiences and talks about the U.S. refugee program. Must register to receive program link. Call 913-831-3359 to register.

- **Thursday, June 24**
  - Adult Mental Health First Aid – 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. (virtual). Register by calling 913-715-7880 or emailing jcmhcevents@jocogov.org.

- **Friday, June 25**
  - Wonders of Discovery at the Pollinator Prairie – 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. Registration not required.

July 2021

- **Sunday, July 4**
  - Celebrate Independence Day!

- **Thursday, July 15**
  - QPR Suicide Prevention Training – 9 to 10:30 a.m. (virtual). Register by calling 913-715-7880 or emailing jcmhcevents@jocogov.org.

- **Thursday, July 15**

- **Thursday, July 15**
  - Summer Salads - Virtual via Zoom – Attend our sizzling Summer Salads class to get ideas for refreshing and unique salads, including grilled, as well as quick and easy ones. This class is FREE to the community! Register by email at marlys.larson@jocogov.org.

- **Tuesday, July 27 – Sunday, August 1**
  - Don’t miss the Johnson County Fair at the Johnson County Fairgrounds in Gardner. jocokansasfair.com
August 2021

Thursday and Friday, August 5 – 6
Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training (ASIST) – 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. each day (in person)
Register by calling 913-715-7880 or emailing jcmhcevents@jocogov.org.

Tuesday, August 17
Medicare Basics - Virtual via Zoom – Educational class for adults who are 65 and older, newly retired or considering retirement soon. This program covers the four basic parts of Medicare and helps you to begin the process of working through the Medicare maze! Register by visiting johnson.k-state.edu/classes-events and clicking on “Medicare Basics.”

Thursday, August 19
Museum: Virtual Program – Modernism in the Suburbs – Join KC Modern members as they present on the history of Mid-Century Modern architecture in the Postwar boom era in Johnson County. Must register to receive program link. Call 913-831-3359 to register.

September 2021

Monday, September 6
Take a break for Labor Day!

Thursday, September 16
QPR Suicide Prevention Training – 9 to 10:30 a.m. (virtual). Register by calling 913-715-7880 or emailing jcmhcevents@jocogov.org.

Paul McCobb: America’s Designer
May 22, 2021 – January 7, 2022
The greatest American designer you don’t know
Paul McCobb designed functional and versatile items for the postwar American consumer in the Mid-Century Modern (MCM) era. He sought to improve the way Americans lived through mass produced yet high-quality pieces that were available in department stores as well as high-end galleries.

This groundbreaking temporary exhibit at the Johnson County Museum will feature dozens of items from a private collection. Whether you grew up with McCobb’s products, are a recent MCM aficionado, or just love exploring good design, you will not want to miss this exhibit!

Enjoy a geocaching party
Johnson County Park & Recreation District offers geocaching parties in several of our parks. This modern-day scavenger hunt uses GPS to direct participants to find hidden caches. It’s a unique outdoor activity for friends and families to enjoy. Our staff will prepare the caches, loan the GPS devices, provide instruction and include a shelter rental. Check for dates and times by visiting jcprd.com and searching for “geocaching.” For more information, email lisa.eagle@jocogov.org or call 913-826-3161.
The history of Negro Creek, and the campaign to change its name

BY GERALD HAY

A grassroots campaign to change the name of Negro Creek in east-central Johnson County is gathering steam with plans for community engagement in the months ahead.

The efforts include a special website with more information and a way to suggest new names for the creek. The small waterway meanders through several neighborhoods and a few small parks in southern Overland Park and Leawood, including portions of the Iron Horse Golf Course.

The creek is one of six geographic places in five Kansas counties, including Johnson County, and 757 sites in the nation with Negro or a related term in their names.

The Negro Creek Renaming Committee has started a lengthy and complicated process with a goal to come up with a new name for the small creek that garners local, state and federal support and approval. The committee includes officials from Overland Park, Leawood and Johnson County; representatives from the Kansas African American Affairs Commission and Kansas Water Office; and members of the Johnson County NAACP and the Johnson County Task Force for Racial Equality.

Heading into the summer, efforts are aimed at engaging and educating the Johnson County community and residents on the history of the creek’s name, importance of renaming the creek and agreeing on a new name.

The campaign includes an email link (creek@jocogov.org) for questions/inquiries and a website (jocogov.org/creek) by Johnson County Government. The website will include historical information and research about the creek, maps and photographs, renaming process and upcoming public engagements.

The website and email link will also provide the opportunity to submit questions and name suggestions for the creek. Suggested names will be collected and compiled for consideration. Details will be publicly announced when ready.

Plans include possible placement of historic markers/signs at publicly accessible portions/trails of the creek to explain the history of the original name.

Flowing as a tributary branch off the Blue River in Missouri that juts into Johnson County, the creek snakes along a 6.5-mile watery path amid an 8.6 square mile watershed. It enters the county at the state line between 149th and 150th streets and ends between Nall and Metcalf avenues and 150th and 159th streets.

According to the 21-page “History and the Origins of the Name of Negro Creek, Johnson County, Kansas” report by University of Missouri-Kansas City researchers, Negro Creek was first listed on a regional map, including Johnson County, in 1856. It was a year after the county was created in the Territory of Kansas.

Five possible origins of the creek name were explored, including a possible bygone route of the Underground Railroad. The research found no documented sites of the Underground Railroad in Johnson County.

The leading theory, and the likely origin for the name, was a story of a fleeing Black slave who killed himself near the creek to avoid being recaptured and returning to slavery.

The report cited the first documented references to Negro Creek were in the 1856 map and in a small article printed in 1879 by the Weekly Progress, a newspaper published in Spring Hill. The newspaper called attention to the creek and linked its name to the suicide of the runaway slave. The article did not indicate when the death occurred.

Changing the name will take time with the upcoming community input and with required support for the chosen new name by community organizations, two city governments, the Johnson County Board of County Commissioners and state agencies.

The U.S. Board on Geographic Names, a federal agency, has the final say on standardizing geographic names in the nation and typically changes a name only if local support for the change is strong. Once an application for a new name has been submitted, the process can take up to six months for a decision.
JCPRD’s Seasonal Highlights June - August 2021

Find your summer fun under JCPRD

job
jam

join-in

jazz
jig

jump
jog

journey

joke
journal

canoe

ceramics

children

crafts

challenge
cycle

camp

coach

compete

cards

celebrate

create

persevere

pedal

practice

perform

preserve

pitch

pump track

photography

play

promote

pickleball

program

participate

race

relax

ride

read

rehearse

reel

recover

reel

run

discover
dive
decorate
dance
draw
disc golf
dribble
defend
dog
dedicate

drive
dream

Find programs for all ages at JCPRD.com/activities
Warm weather, sunny days, and relaxed COVID restrictions will very likely mean that fun summer activities of all kinds are in high demand this year! JCPRD is planning a variety of programs for your summer enjoyment.

Here are a few of our favorite activities for your consideration.

Most programs require advance registration.

With 17 parks and more than 10,000 acres, and over 100 miles of paved and single-track trails, including a little more than two miles of trail which quietly opened earlier this year at the future Cedar Niles Park in Olathe, JCPRD has plenty of green space for you to explore.

The months of June, July, and August include eight Overnight Saturday fishing opportunities at four JCPRD lakes. Bring the bait and tackle, a flashlight, and all applicable permits and licenses and take part on June 5 and July 17 in Heritage Park; June 12 and Aug. 7 in Kill Creek Park; June 19, July 24, and Aug. 14 in Shawnee Mission Park; and July 10 in Lexington Lake Park.

TimberRidge Adventure Center, which consists of about 200 acres of diverse landscapes adjacent to Kill Creek Park in Olathe, is planning a series of programs for families this summer. These include a Family Fun Camping Event on June 11,

On scorching summer days when you’re looking for something indoors to do, visit the Johnson County Museum and its Becoming Johnson County signature exhibit as well as the KidScape experience for kids. For the rest of the year, a temporary exhibit titled Paul McCobb - America’s Designer will be on display and is included with museum admission.

The 50 Plus Department recently resumed in-person walks including Spring Stroll at Stoll Park on June 9, and a Wednesday Walk at Burr Oak Conservation and Trails on June 30. Current season day trips have already filled and extended travel is restarting; visit JCPRD.com/50plustravel for details. The department is also continuing to celebrate its 50th season in 2021 with anniversary special programs including Totally 80s Music Bingo on June 30, and Gameshows of the 80s on Aug. 19.

While some have already filled, there are still spaces in a variety of JCPRD Summer Camps, but register ASAP for your best choice of programs!

And remember, JCPRD.com is your primary source of information about all of our programs!

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**BEACHES & MARINAS**

**Shawnee Mission Park Marina**

_Last rental one hour before close_
- Open daily 10 am - 6:30 pm through Aug. 8
- Open weekends only Aug. 9 - Sept. 6
- Reserve boats online up to 7 days in advance of rental date

**Kill Creek Park Marina**

_Last rental one hour before close_
- Thursdays & Fridays: Noon - 2:30 pm
- Saturdays: Noon - 5:30 pm
- Sundays: Noon - 4 pm

**Shawnee Mission Park Beach**

_Open through Aug. 8_
- Mondays, Wednesdays, Fridays, Saturdays, & Sundays: Noon - 6 pm
- Tuesdays & Thursdays: Noon - 5 pm
- Open Water Swim Training
  - Tuesdays and Thursdays: 5:30 pm - 6:30 pm advance registration required

**Kill Creek Park Beach**

_Open through Aug. 8_
- Thursdays & Fridays: Noon - 3 pm
- Saturdays: Noon - 6 pm
- Sundays: Noon - 5 pm

SMP boat reservations are available online!

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We have space for your next event, details at JCPRD.com/rentals
Permits

**Fishing Permits**
- Johnson County Residents 16-64/nonresidents 16 & older $10/$20
- One Day Permit (including trout) 16 & older $10

Kansas State Fishing License may also be required, depending on age.

**Annual Trout Permits**
- Ages 16 & older - residents/nonresidents $15 / $20
- Ages 15 & under - residents/nonresidents $10
- Combination Fishing & Trout Permits
- Johnson County residents/nonresidents $25 / $40

**Boating Permits**
- Johnson County residents/nonresidents $20 / $30
- Johnson County resident over 65 $15
- One Day Permit $10

**Combination Fishing & Boating Permits**
- Annual - (Ages 16-64) - residents/nonresidents $30 / $50
- One Day Fishing & Boating $20
- Combination Fishing / Boating/Trount
- Annual - residents/nonresidents $45 / $70
- Johnson County resident over 65 $30

**Archery**
- Annual residents/nonresidents (13 & older) $15 / $20
- One Day Permit - residents/nonresidents (13 & older) $5/$7

**Overnight Saturday Fishing Opportunities - JCPROD.com/permits**

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Summer Camps Still Available!
JCPROD.com/camps

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Summer 2021 lineups

**Live Stage Performances**
- **CURTAINS** - June 18 - 26
- **CINDERELLA** - July 2 - 10
- **HALF TIME - GOTTA DANCE** - July 16 - 24
- **NEWSIES** - July 30 - Aug. 7

**Movies in the Park** - $1 per person
- **Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets** - June 22
- **Disney's The Little Mermaid** - July 6
- **Disney's Moana** - July 20
- **Disney's Tangled** - Aug. 3
- **Disney & Pixar's The Incredibles** - Aug. 13
- **Disney & Pixar's Up** - Aug. 20

theatreinthepark.org

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Ernie Miller Nature Center
**Amphitheater Programs** (All Ages)
Friday nights at 7 pm through July.
Register at JCPROD.com/register - search for “Amphitheater.” Call (913) 826-2800 for details.

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**June - August Special Events**
Visit JCPROD.com/activities for details and registration information

- **Museum Exhibit: Paul McCobb - America's Designer**
  Thru Jan. 2022 at Johnson County Arts & Heritage Center

- **Flag Day Family Geocaching** (All Ages)
  June 14, R Park

- **50 Plus Anniversary Special - Totally 80s Music Bingo**
  June 30, Matt Ross Community Center

- **50 Plus Parking Lot Concert & Dinner**
  July 1, Roeland Park Community Center

- **50 Plus Fourth of July Tea Dance**
  July 2, Meadowbrook Park Clubhouse

- **50 Plus Travel Show**
  July 8, Meadowbrook Park Clubhouse

- **S'mores Family Geocaching** (All Ages)
  July 9, Shawnee Mission Park

- **Shawnee Mission Triathlon & Duathlon** (Ages 11 & Older)
  July 11, Shawnee Mission Park

- **Evening in the Park** (All Ages)
  Aug. 8, Theatre in the Park in Shawnee Mission Park

- **Kill Creek Park Triathlon** (Ages 15 & Older)
  Aug. 14, Kill Creek Park

- **50 Plus Anniversary Special - Gameshows of the 80s**
  Aug. 19, Roeland Park Community Center

- **JCPROD Kids Triathlon** (Ages 14 & Under)
  Aug. 21, Kill Creek Park

- **Preschool Tropical Luau** (Ages 2-5 with Adult)
  Aug. 27, Meadowbrook Park Clubhouse

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For current employment opportunities go to JCPROD.com/jobs
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.

**Johnson County Board of County Commissioners**

**Chairman Ed Eilert**  
913-715-0500

**Becky Fast**  
1st District  
913-715-0725

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

**Jeff Meyers**  
2nd District  
913-715-0432

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

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

**Shirley Allenbrand**  
6th District  
913-715-0436

BOCC focused on 2022 Budget

Each summer, a Board of County Commissioners priority is to adopt the following year’s budget. On Thursday, May 6, Johnson County Manager Penny Postoak Ferguson proposed her FY 2022 budget. It maintains and, in some areas, slightly enhances the programs and services provided to nearly 610,000 residents.

Throughout May, the BOCC heard presentations from all of the departments, agencies, offices and outside agencies with more details on goals and needs for 2022. June 17 is the date for the BOCC to set its maximum expenditure budget for publication (please watch jocogov.org and social media for details.) Following legal publication, the BOCC cannot, by law, increase the budgeted expenditures, but can decrease the operating budget or taxing levels.

The proposed FY 2022 mill levy is 18.549 mills for the county’s general fund taxing district and includes a quarter-mill rollback. It retains Johnson County’s position of having the lowest general fund mill levy among all 105 Kansas counties. The proposed budget includes constant mill levies for the Library Taxing District (3.905 mills) and Park and Recreation Taxing District (3.093 mills).

The budget proposal the BOCC is considering totals approximately $1.38 billion, with $941.2 million in expenditures and $436.1 million in reserves. Out of those reserves, $185.6 million are for Johnson County Wastewater, and when you subtract other designated reserves, $178.4 million remains for the general fund reserves.

The proposed budget includes a total of 4,135.43 full-time equivalent (FTE) positions next year, including 24 new FTEs. These include three in MED-ACT for ambulance service stabilization, four for Park Police and six for the Sheriff’s Office for security at the new courthouse. Funded requests in the FY 2022 proposed budget align with the BOCC’s priorities and annual community survey feedback.

The BOCC invites Johnson County residents to attend the public hearing on the FY 2022 budget scheduled for Aug. 23. The Board is scheduled to adopt the new budget on Sept. 2. Both events are scheduled to take place at the Johnson County Administration Building, 111 South Cherry St., in downtown Olathe. Please watch jocogov.org for any updates. Details of the county manager’s proposed FY 2022 budget are available at jocogov.org/budget.
Boats, beach reads or boosting your JoCo IQ:
Ways to have a fun AND safe summer

BY NICOLE BLACKWELL, JENNIFER DUNLAY AND LAURA HUNT

There are plenty of ways to enjoy summer safely, even with COVID-19 still lingering. Whether getting off the grid outdoors or plugging into a virtual event, Johnson County offers several options for summer fun.

Start a new outdoor activity

Warmer weather drives residents out to Johnson County’s parks, lakes and trails. If you still feel more comfortable around others outdoors and want to avoid a crowd, try a kayak, canoe or pedal boat in the lakes at Kill Creek and Shawnee Mission parks.

Emily Brown, a Shawnee resident, took up kayaking during the pandemic. “I started looking for ways to stay active outdoors during the pandemic, and I had tried kayaking a few times in the past,” Brown said. “Kayaks were hard to come by in stores, but my family was able to rent kayaks for a few hours at Shawnee Mission Park and had a great time on the water. I ended up buying a kayak this winter and have been out on the water every chance I can get this spring!”

You can rent a kayak, canoe or pedal boat at the marinas at Kill Creek and Shawnee Mission Parks. Book your boat online at jcprd.com/marinas.

There’s also plenty of fun to be had on dry land in JCPRD parks. Check out the paved seven-mile Kill Creek Streamway Park Trail in western Johnson County.

Looking for a longer path? Try the Gary L. Haller Trail in the Mill Creek Streamway Park with approximately 17 miles of pedestrian and bicycle trails. You can download a trail guide complete with maps at JCPRD.com.

If you are looking for peace and quiet, Kill Creek Park is your destination. Don’t miss the stunning views from the Russell and Helen Means Observation Tower.

Looking for something a little more challenging? Shawnee Mission Park has several trails for mountain biking/hiking that offer a more rugged experience.

Don’t forget these safety tips while enjoying the parks, trails and lakes:

- Make life jackets a must if you hit the water.
- Pack sunscreen and bug repellent.
- Don’t get overheated.

Pick up a beach read at a Johnson County Library

Whether you enjoy reading in the sunshine or in the air conditioning, you can find your next page-turner at the library.

Johnson County Library kicked off its annual Summer Reading Program on June 5. Sign up for a library card, place holds on books and start logging what you read at jocolibrary.org/summerreading.

Kids, teens and adults can look forward to book clubs, virtual programs, contests and activities designed to make reading fun. This year’s theme is Tails and Tales, and kids can claw and paw their way through animal stories, contests, trivia and activities with partners including KSDS Assistance Dogs, Clearwater Aquarium, The Barn Sanctuary and Topeka Zoo.

All events are virtual this summer, and free books (that kids can keep!) will be distributed through community partnerships. Download your reading log and learn more about Summer Reading at jocolibrary.org/summerreading.

Other ways to combine summer fun and education

The Johnson County Museum, located inside the Johnson County Arts & Heritage Center at 8788 Metcalf Avenue in Overland Park, has enhanced cleaning protocols in place for your safety. Visit jcprd.com/330/Museum to find an event or exhibit that appeals to your sense of summer fun.

To further explore Johnson County history, visit the Lanesfield Historic
Site. The site is open to the public from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. on the second Saturday of each month, with free admission. The limestone schoolhouse is the oldest operating schoolhouse in Johnson County.

Remember these COVID safety tips:

- While the CDC says fully vaccinated people don’t need to wear masks in most cases, continue to watch for symptoms of COVID-19, especially if you’ve been around someone who is sick. If you have symptoms of COVID-19 or you’ve been told you were exposed to COVID-19, schedule a test at JCDHE’s clinic in Olathe: jocogov.org/schedule-covid-19-test.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water or use hand sanitizer.
- Get vaccinated as soon as you can.

Enjoy a live musical or movie under the stars this summer

After a year of being shut down due to the pandemic, Theatre in the Park is back! The outdoor venue at Shawnee Mission Park is offering a season of live musicals through Aug. 7, including “Cinderella” from July 2 to July 10 and Disney’s “Newsies” from July 30 to Aug. 7!

If family movies are more your style, you have several “Movies Under the Stars” from which to choose through Aug. 20.

Check out schedules, buy tickets and get more information at theatreinthepark.org.

Choose your lawn

It all starts with a soil test!

If you crave that spring green, fertilize this September.
- September fertilization is critical to your lawn’s health
- Applying just the right kind and amount of fertilizer saves you money and protects our water quality
- Get one free soil test and personalized recommendation for your lawn from a local university expert

Start your lawn off right!
JoCo Residents, get one FREE soil test.

Learn more at johnson.k-state.edu or call 913.715.7000

Funding provided by the Johnson County Stormwater Management Program. Limit one per Johnson County household.
Farmers markets provide healthy food options for people at all socioeconomic levels. The federal Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and Double Up Food Bucks incentive program help low-income residents stretch their dollars at participating farmers markets in Lenexa and Overland Park. SNAP recipients can use benefits from a government-issued debit card to buy a variety of foods. Double Up Food Bucks offers a matching amount to purchase fruits and vegetables.

Shop at farmers markets and you’ll eat food that is currently in season, which is generally when it is most nutritious. Products are at peak levels of ripeness and flavor. More than 85% of vendors travel fewer than 50 miles to sell at a farmers market, according to the nonprofit Farmers Market Coalition. Most food at farmers markets is minimally processed and in its most natural form. Vendors often go to great lengths to grow, raise and make their products. They may employ sustainable farming methods, sell chemical- or pesticide-free goods, and harvest or prepare foods right before the market. A 2015 survey by Farmers Market Coalition and American Farmland Trust found that three out of four farmers who sell at farmers markets use practices that meet or exceed organic standards.

Farmers markets foster entrepreneurship. They serve as incubators for small businesses that want to test new products — from farmers to ranchers to artisans. Shopping at a farmers market is a unique experience where vendors and customers get to know each other and form mutually beneficial relationships.

“The quality is so much better and I like knowing I’m helping a small business/family do what they love,” said shopper Julie Young.

When food is produced, processed, distributed and sold within the same region, more money ends up staying in the local economy. Farmers take home upwards of 90 cents for each dollar of sales at farmers markets, according to the Farmers Market Coalition. That’s far more than the 14.6 cents that typical American farmers and ranchers receive from every food dollar consumers spend (National Farmers Union).

Make a regular trip to local farmers markets part of your family tradition. Check out our tips for navigating farmers markets like a pro. Then use the map on the back cover to seek out a new market to visit in Johnson County this summer.
How to shop a farmers market like a pro

Here are 10 tips to make the most of your next visit to a local farmers market:

1. Get to know what’s in season so you have the right expectations. Check seasonal produce charts or ask staff at the info booth.

2. Arrive early if you want the best selection and to avoid crowds.

3. Bring a basket or reusable bags to hold your goods while you shop.

4. Leave pets at home. This is best for health and safety reasons, as well as the comfort of others.

5. Make a list, but don’t stick to it. Shop based on what looks good and plan your menu around what you find.

6. Take a preliminary lap around the market to see what’s available, and check pricing before making your purchases.

7. Don’t hurry. Farmers markets are for strolling.

8. Get to know the vendors. Ask about their farming practices or how they make their products.

9. Payment methods vary. All vendors accept cash (small bills are best), but many also accept debit/credit cards or other digital payment methods. Some markets offer tokens that vendors will honor.

10. Try something new each time you visit. Ask a vendor for suggestions about how to use a product. Set aside part of your budget for unexpected finds.

Reducing food waste

BY BRANDON HEARN

Each year, up to 40 percent of food in the U.S. is not eaten. In addition to wasting resources such as water, energy, fertilizers and cropland, nearly all the food that is wasted ends up in landfills, where it releases methane, a known contributor to climate change. In Johnson County, food waste is one of the fastest growing parts of our waste stream. From 2009 to 2015, food waste increased from 17 percent to 26 percent of all residential materials that end up in our landfill. With more than 60,000 Johnson County residents experiencing food insecurity and lack of access prior to the pandemic, it is more important than ever to address the issue of food waste. Below we will highlight some of the efforts going on in Johnson County.

Johnson County Food Policy Council was created to help address food waste in the county by advising the Johnson County Board of County Commissioners and recommending policies to strengthen the local food economy and improve access to healthy food. They will also be launching SAVE THE FOOD Johnson County to combat food waste by raising awareness and changing behavior.

Composting options in Johnson County

While getting usable food into the hands of people struggling with hunger and food insecurity is the number one priority, composting non-usable food is also an important part of reducing food waste. In addition to backyard composting, there are two companies that will collect your food waste.

Compost Collective KC provides curbside collection of food waste for composting. In addition to curbside composting across most of Johnson County, they also offer a bin swap program that allow residents to swap out their bin at a participating retail location. They accept all kinds of food scraps, as well as coffee filters, napkins and paper towels. Once collected, they replace the compostable liner and take the material to Missouri Organic Recycling where it is processed into compost. In 2020 alone, they collected approximately 160,000 pounds of food waste in Johnson County, keeping it out of the landfill. Learn more at compostcollectivekc.com.

Food Cycle KC is located in Shawnee, but services most of Johnson County. They also provide curbside collection of food waste for households, businesses and special events. However, the materials they collect are processed into compost on their farm. Food Cycle KC currently serves over 300 households, kept 45,000 lb of food waste out of the landfill in 2020, and donated two tons of compost to area school gardens. In May, they also planted an orchard in partnership with Giving Grove. Get more info at foodcyclekc.com.

Interested in learning more about these options? Please contact Brandon Hearn with the Johnson County Department of Health and Environment:

brandon.hearn@jocogov.org
913-715-6936
National partnership gives hope to incarcerated residents and those impacted by mental illness

BY THERESA FREED AND KEITH DAVENPORT

Johnson County resident Xavier Ramon Garza says thanks to the support he received through the Johnson County Department of Corrections and the court system he’s been given a second chance at life.

“My case was presumptive prison, and I was looking at up to 160 months,” he said. “Prior to my sentencing date, I really made strides to show and prove I was worthy of a second chance.”

Ramon Garza’s story is not unlike others. He struggled with addiction and came in contact with law enforcement and the justice system. But through the resources and support found in Johnson County, he overcame addiction, received training, obtained a commercial driver’s license and has a bright future.

“I am proud of the progress I have made,” he said. “I now have over three years of sobriety and have the opportunity to raise my family.”

There are many success stories that have emerged from Johnson County’s Department of Corrections Adult Residential Center (ARC). Programs focus on reducing recidivism and helping residents address the root cause of criminal behavior and change the trajectory of their path. They’re given individualized plans to address issues such as addiction, mental illness, coping with challenges, building healthy families, employment and more.

“We can help individuals through early interventions put their pasts behind them and embrace a future filled with hope,” said Robert Sullivan, Department of Corrections director. “There is no one-size fits all formula. It takes strong supports, caring staff and participants to have the will and desire for more in their lives.”

Notre Dame’s Wilson Sheehan Lab for Economic Opportunities has taken notice and is studying the impact of staying in a community-based work-release facility pre-trial, instead of a traditional jail setting. Researchers are evaluating inmates’ community re-entry, probation experience and likelihood of recidivism. The study notes the economic and social costs associated with detention.

The study, in partnership with Johnson County, is a randomized controlled trial. Researchers will compare the recidivism rates and employment outcomes of individuals who stayed in the ARC with those who did not.

Notre Dame’s interest in successful Johnson County programs to help those in contact with the justice system doesn’t stop there.

Mental health screening and outreach significantly reduce recidivism among those with mental illness

In a separate, but related, partnership with the University of Notre Dame’s Wilson Sheehan Lab for Economic Opportunities, a recent study confirmed that Johnson County’s Brief Jail Mental Health Screening (BJMHS) and mental health outreach program significantly reduces the number of people with mental illness returning to jail. The initiative is a partnership between Johnson County Mental Health Center (JCMHC) and Johnson County Sheriff’s Office. Residents of Johnson County who identify with a serious mental illness (SMI) after taking the BJMHS had a reduction in returning to jail at 60, 180 and 360 days after release from jail compared to those who screened with an SMI who were residents of neighboring counties and did not receive outreach.

“The results of the research confirm what we’ve seen in real life within our community,” said Johnson County Mental Health Center Director Tim DeWeese. “People are getting the care they need and we’re reducing the cost on both the criminal justice and health care systems. This is good for the individuals and the whole community.”
When an individual is booked in the jail after arrest, they undergo the BJMHS to determine if they are in need of further mental health assessment or treatment. JCMHC’s team within the jail provides mental health support while an individual is incarcerated. Upon release, case managers from JCMHC reach out within 72 hours after release to those who score on the BJMHS as greatest need for ongoing support to provide support and information about mental health services. Of those eligible for outreach, more than one quarter have been connected to mental health services.

“This program could become a model across the region or even the nation,” said Johnson County Sheriff Cal Hayden. “This is an example of the good that can happen for a community when government agencies work together and share information.”

The BJMHS and outreach program are two significant features of Johnson County’s commitment to the Stepping Up Initiative, a national commitment to reducing the number of people with mental illness in jails. Johnson County was one of the first four counties in the nation to commit to the goals outlined in the initiative when it first launched in 2015. In 2018, Johnson County was one of seven counties in the nation to be named a Stepping Up Innovator County. This designation went to counties considered leaders in the initiative that are committed to helping provide training and information for other counties.

Kansas, we’re here to help you access care and resources for Coronavirus (COVID-19)

Scan the QR Code to visit the COVID-19 Vaccine Resource Locator
Phil Kuhn  
Crew Leader for Johnson County Public Works

I do a variety of jobs, from shoveling asphalt during patching operations, to running hydraulic excavators while replacing crossroad culverts and driveway pipes. We plow snow in the winter and maintain paved and gravel roads during the spring, summer and fall.

What do you like most about your job? This question is tough as there are several answers. I work with a great group of people with awesome comradery. I almost never do the same thing longer than a week or two, constant variety. My favorite is probably clearing brush along the roadside with the Gradall excavator.

How do you manage the summer heat while on the job? Hydrate, hydrate, hydrate!!! The county is awesome and provides us with water and ice, as well as sunscreen. I make sure to take frequent breaks if working around hot asphalt or the crack seal machine. We always make sure we keep an eye on our coworkers for signs of heat exhaustion.

How does the work you do affect the lives of Johnson County residents? Every day we keep our road network intact by doing general maintenance such as grading gravel roads, patching potholes and trimming trees along the roadside. Winter operations fighting snow and ice is our most important job. Emergency vehicles need clear roads to travel and residents need to have safe passage to school, work, etc. I’m proud of the work we do and take great pride in it even though most people will never know.

Anthony Deters  
Airfield Maintenance Specialist I

My team and I perform maintenance on our airfields, New Century AirCenter and Johnson County Executive Airport. We do maintenance on airfield pavement, lights, signs and more than 200 t-hangars.

What do you like most about your job? I enjoy operating on the airfield the most. Whether I’m performing inspections, repairing lights or pushing snow, I like the fact that I can work in an environment that I love and that I can assist the public at the same time.

How do you manage the summer heat while on the job? Staying hydrated by drinking plenty of water is the most effective way to stay cool. Work permitting, wearing looser fitting clothes can help as well.

How does the work you do affect the lives of Johnson County residents? Whether our team is pushing snow or preparing for an airshow, we make it our priority that our airfields are safe, clean and open for business for pilots, fixed base operators and the public. Our airports are some of the busiest in Kansas, so it is important that our team ensures our airfields and their respective airspace are as safe as possible.

Franco Gutierrez-Riva  
Park Police Officer

We provide emergency response services to patrons using any and all Johnson County Park and Recreation District Parks and Facilities.

What do you like most about your job? As a park police officer, I have the opportunity to explore everything that the Johnson County Park and Recreation District has to offer. Whether it be on the trails, both paved and unpaved, in one of our facilities, on the playgrounds, or even on our lakes, I get to interact with our community while they are out having fun.

How do you manage the summer heat while on the job? WATER, WATER, WATER.

How does the work you do affect the lives of Johnson County residents? As officers, we respond to all calls made by our park patrons. We help residents with any emergency they may face while in the park district as well as assisting with any questions or concerns they may have.
1. Johnson County’s airports at New Century AirCenter and Executive Airport logged more than 102,000 takeoffs and landings in 2020, which made our county’s airport system the busiest in the state, with the highest totals seen in over a dozen years.

2. Did you know we provide rail services to several businesses at New Century Business Park, moving nearly 700 rail cars last year?

3. Johnson County added the first all-electric vehicle to our fleet of county vehicles in 2019. Electric vehicles produce no ozone, are cheaper to drive and save the county money.

4. New in 2021, Olathe Public Schools uses our Compressed Natural Gas (CNG) fueling station to fuel 30 CNG-powered school buses. Several Johnson County departments use the station, as does the city of Olathe.

5. Micro transit allows you to order curb-to-curb Rideshare service from your phone or an app for only $1.50 per ride, Monday through Saturday, 6 a.m. to 8 p.m.

6. Pass outlets, transit centers, buses equipped with Wi-Fi and bike racks, and park and ride all make public transit in Johnson County more convenient. Give it a try by visiting ridekc.org.

7. This summer, you may see a Johnson County Public Works crew chip sealing a road in the unincorporated area. Each year, Public Works chip seals an average of 30 miles, costing about $12,000 per mile, versus an overlay cost of $100,000 per mile.

8. Johnson County offers a dust control cost-sharing program to residents living on a gravel road. A magnesium chloride product is sprayed on the gravel road in front of these residents’ homes to help reduce dust during the dry summer months.

9. Each year, Johnson County partners with our cities on the County Assistance Road System (CARS) program, providing funds to construct and maintain the major arterial roads in the cities where you live and drive. The average CARS funding expenditure during the last five years is just under $16 million per year.

10. In 2018, Johnson County’s BOCC voted to invest $1.65 million from the CARS fund into a project to improve the bottleneck at I-35 and 75th Street. KDOT widened I-35 from three to four lanes, completing the project in December 2020.
Farmers markets in Johnson County

Check with each market about current COVID-19 precautions and expectations.

Look inside: Learn more about farmers markets on pages 14–15

Gardner (GardnerFarmersMarket.org)
Thursdays through Sept. 9 from 4–7 p.m.
Cornerstone Park (adjacent to Gardner Aquatic Center and Johnson County Fairgrounds), 136 E. Washington St.

Lenexa (Lenexa.com/FarmersMarket)
• Tuesdays through August from 9 a.m.–1 p.m.
• Saturdays through October from 8 a.m.–noon
Lenexa civic campus, 17201 W. 87th St. Pkwy.

Merriam (Merriam.org/FarmersMarket)
Saturdays through September from 7 a.m.–1 p.m.
Merriam Marketplace, 5740 Merriam Drive

Mission (MissionKS.org/Market)
Thursdays through August from 4:30–8 p.m.
5635 Johnson Drive

Olathe (OlatheKS.org/FarmersMarket)
• Wednesdays through Sept. 15 from 7:30 a.m. until items are sold
• Saturdays through Oct. 23 from 7:30 a.m. until items are sold

Two locations:
Stagecoach Park, 1205 E. Kansas City Rd.
Black Bob Park, 14500 W. 151st St., Field One

Overland Park (OPKansas.org/FarmersMarket)
• Wednesdays through September from 7:30 a.m.–1 p.m.
• Saturdays through Dec. 4 from 7:30 a.m.–1 p.m.
Matt Ross Community Center, 8101 Marty St.

Park Place - Leawood (ParkPlaceLeawood.com/FarmersMarket)
Saturdays through Oct. 16, 7:30 a.m.–noon
Park Place Village, NE corner of 117th Street & Nall Avenue, market runs along W. 116th Place (between Ash Street and Rosewood Street)

Shawnee (cityofshawnee.org/residents/moonlight_market)
• Saturdays through Oct. 30 from 7 a.m.–noon
• June 17, July 15, Aug. 19, Sept. 16 and Oct. 21 from 4–8 p.m.
Shawnee City Hall parking lot, 11110 Johnson Drive

Spring Hill (Facebook.com/SpringHillFarmersMarketKS)
Saturdays through Sept. 11, 7:30–11:30 a.m.
406 W. Nichols St.