Features
Veterans Treatment Court’s second anniversary
County and local partnerships with SAFEHOME
Happy New Year, Johnson County!
The beginning of a new year is a great time to reflect on how far we’ve come in the past 12 months and look ahead to the issues the next year has in store for our community.

We welcome 2018 in great financial health with the county’s general obligation bonds once again having attained a triple-A rating by Moody’s Investor Services, Standard & Poor’s Global Ratings and Fitch Ratings. The county’s Library Public Building Commission (PBC) bonds were rated by Moody’s and S&P and also received triple-A ratings from both agencies. The county PBC was rated triple-A by Moody, with a double-A rating by S&P, slightly lower in light of the property tax lid imposed by the state.

2017 was a very busy year for our county staff as we opened new park land at Lexington Lake and held groundbreakings for Big Bull Creek and Meadowbrook. We opened the Arts & Heritage Center which has received accolades from the community and beyond. We’re in the process of building new libraries in Shawnee and Lenexa with capital improvement plans for other branches. Our new courthouse project, approved by voters just over a year ago, is on schedule, with demolition work underway in downtown Olathe. Also, the new coroner facility/medical examiner plans are moving forward. And we’ve started the work to replace the Tomahawk Wastewater Treatment Plant, a significant county project, for the purpose of bringing savings to wastewater customers in the future.

It’s now the time of year for all of us to begin the challenging work of setting the 2019 budget. The planning process gets underway in the next several weeks. Departments are now beginning to review their budgets. On March 29, the county commission will meet to go over proposed budget items, and on April 26, the BOCC reviews the 2019 budget and capital improvement plan, which is the county’s annual financial plan for the physical assets, such as improvements to existing county facilities, constructing and improving roadways, and funding of wastewater and storm water projects.

In May, the board hears budget requests from departments, and on May 24, will consider the final fiscal year 2019 budget. The maximum expenditure budget will be set for publication June 14. All budget discussions and decisions will be in open meetings. An opportunity for public feedback is available during the public hearing scheduled for July 30. The 2019 budget will be adopted Aug. 9, 2018.

We are starting 2018 with new leadership. Interim County Manager Penny Postoak Ferguson, appointed effective Jan. 1, has been a part of our county’s leadership team since 2010. She has a long history of public service in city and county government. I have every confidence in her leadership skills as we develop a new budget, continue to work on strategic priorities, and look at how to best position Johnson County for success in 2018. Congratulations, on your new role, Penny!
MONTICELLO LIBRARY

22435 W. 66th St., Shawnee
Opening: planned 3rd quarter 2018
Total project cost: $18.1 million

Monticello Library will “seal the envelope,” as they say in the construction trade, as winter sets in. Once the exterior of the building is closed up, work begins in earnest to finish the interiors and to make the building systems operational while librarians are assembling the collection. By spring 2018, the building’s interior surfaces will be the bright, modern colors and textures seen in the animation on the Library web page, jocolibrary.org/locations/monticello.

BLUE VALLEY LIBRARY

9000 W. 151st St., Overland Park
Schedule and project budget in process

The September 2017 Blue Valley Library public input process received responses from more than 2,000 residents. Neighbors and Library users offered their views on placement of the Library on the site, number of stories and various parking solutions. The input received is informing the ongoing Library and City of Overland Park study for this important Library project scheduled for 2022.

LENEXA CITY CENTER LIBRARY

8778 Penrose Lane, Lenexa
Opening: planned mid-2019
Total project cost: $21.1 million

The Board of County Commissioners and the Library’s Board of Directors broke ground for Lenexa City Center Library on Nov. 28, 2017. This stunning new facility comprises approximately 40,000 square feet on two levels. This will double the size and replace the existing Lackman Library. The dynamic open floor plan at Lenexa City Center Library will permit rearrangement when needed, as the Library’s service population grows and changes.

To learn more, visit jocolibrary.org/locations.
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Ways to engage with JoCo

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

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

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

In person
Attend a weekly Board of County Commissioners meeting at 9:30 a.m.
on Thursdays on the third floor of the Administration Building, 111 S. Cherry St.,
Olathe, KS 66061.

Johnson County Elected Officials

Ed 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 H. Hayden, Sheriff

If your group or organization would like to apply for a proclamation from the BOCC, contact penny.pearson@jocogov.org or 913-715-0501.
A request form can also be downloaded on the county website — jocogov.org/webform/request-recognition. The submission and approval process may take several weeks, so please submit your request well in advance.
In short

It’s not too late. Get your flu shot today.

When you see signs reading “get your flu vaccine,” you might ask if it’s too late to get vaccinated. No, it’s not too late! While the sooner you get vaccinated, the more likely you are to be protected against the flu when activity picks up. Vaccination into January and beyond can be beneficial during most flu seasons.

“Flu season usually peaks between December and March, but activity can occur as late as May,” said Lougene Marsh, director of the Johnson County Department of Health and Environment. It takes about two weeks for antibodies that protect against influenza virus infection to develop in the body, so it’s best to get vaccinated early. For millions of people every season, the flu means a fever, cough, sore throat, runny or stuffy nose, muscle aches, fatigue and miserable days spent in bed. Millions of people get sick, hundreds of thousands are hospitalized, and thousands to tens of thousands of people die from flu each year. Some people are at high risk for serious flu-related complications that can lead to hospitalization and even death. People at high risk include pregnant women, children younger than 5, especially children younger than 2 years old, people 65 and older, and people who have certain medical conditions, such as asthma, diabetes or heart disease.

Flu vaccines are offered in many locations, including doctor’s offices, pharmacies, urgent care clinics and JCDHE’s walk-in immunization clinics in Olathe (11875 S. Sunset Dr.) and Mission (6000 Lamar Ave.).

Reach the appraiser’s office by visiting jocogov.org or 913-715-9000.

Free tax preparation help runs Feb. 1 to April 15

Johnson County K-State Research and Extension will offer free income tax preparation in 2018 at the Sunset Drive Office Building for people with an annual household income of $54,000 or less. The service will run Feb. 1 to April 15, 2018.

This ever-growing county service has three steps: Volunteers help file federal and state returns electronically; volunteers are trained in the latest tax information and help find deductions that may increase income refunds; volunteers can inform taxpayers about special tax credits for which they may qualify such as the earned income tax credit, child tax credit and credit for the elderly or disabled.

Free tax preparation assistance is available Wednesdays and Thursdays, noon to 4:30 p.m., and Saturdays, 8:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. More information is available at 913-715-7000 or at johnson.k-state.edu.

Short supply of homes, strong demand to cause appraised values to go up

Homebuyers looking for a residence in Johnson County are finding only a two-month supply. The market trend for homes under $350,000 have the least amount of supply.

This strong demand means residential property values continue to rise, therefore, most residents’ appraised values will go up again in 2018.

The Johnson County Appraiser’s responsibility is to value property at fair market value; the price it would bring on an open, competitive market. Sales activity is reviewed to arrive at the value.

In August 2017, the appraiser’s office formed the Residential Reappraisal Advisory Committee composed of realtors, lenders and fee appraisers, to advise the county of current residential market trends. In this past year 95 percent of residential real estate values increased. The areas with the greatest increase were in De Soto, Gardner, Lake Quivira, Lenexa, Mission Hills, Olathe, Overland Park, Prairie Village, Shawnee and Spring Hill.

By March 1, residents will receive a Notice of Appraised Value. Homeowners have 30 days to file an appeal to provide additional information, ask questions and discuss concerns. The county appraiser’s staff makes the appraisal process transparent by publishing data used to determine home values at jocogov.org/appraiser.

Reach the appraiser’s office by visiting jocogov.org or 913-715-9000.

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Quotable

“The library has always been an important community asset. In every survey we take, the library ranks very high with interest and support. It’s indicative of the pursuit of information and knowledge that is the hallmark of our community.”

— Johnson County Commission Chairman Ed Eilert
Join the Johnson County community in celebrating

The Life and Legacy of

Martin Luther King Jr.

Jan. 7

MLK 50th Anniversary

Commemorating the life and legacy of Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.
One Man · One Dream · One Hope · One Theme
3 – 5 p.m. • Johnson County Community College, Carlson Center Yardley Hall

Keynote speaker: Ryan M. Jones, historian, National Civil Rights Museum

Special guests and performances including Storling Dance Theatre, William Baker Festival Singers, Galen Gaut and Dr. Cynthia “Mama J” Johnson.

Jan. 8 to Feb. 28

Johnson County Museum: Hidden Stories from Johnson County’s African American Community

In commemoration of the 50th anniversary of Martin Luther King Jr.’s death, the museum is mounting an interactive multi-media exhibit highlighting Johnson County’s African American neighborhoods, institutions and individuals.

Free admission at the Johnson County Arts & Heritage Center, 8788 Metcalf Ave., Overland Park, KS, 66212.
To learn more, visit jocoahc.org or call 913-826-2787.

Jan. 11 & 12

MLK Exhibit

The city of Gardner will provide a MLK Exhibit at the Gardner City Hall, 120 E. Main St., from 8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Jan. 14

14th Annual Martin Luther King Jr. Legacy and Scholarship Awards Dinner

Social: 5:50 p.m.  Dinner: 6 p.m.  Program: 7 p.m.
Marriott Kansas City Overland Park, 10800 Metcalf Ave.

The Martin Luther King Jr. Legacy and Scholarship Awards Committee along with the NAACP, representing Olathe, Overland Park and Leawood, Kansas, announces its 14th annual Martin Luther King Jr. Legacy and Scholarship Awards. This is the largest MLK celebration in Johnson County, Kansas.

Jan. 14

A View from the Mountaintop: 18th Annual Olathe MLK Celebration

3 – 5 p.m. • Bell Cultural Arts Center, Mid-America Nazarene University
2030 E. College Way, Olathe

MidAmerica Nazarene University and Olathe School District join the city of Olathe in this joint celebration. The district has a MLK student art competition and celebrates with the city at their MLK Celebration.

Keynote speaker: Johnson County 10th District Court Judge Rhonda K. Mason

Entertainment: Lester Estelle, Leigh’s School of Dance and the Prairie Trail Middle School choir

Awards: Olathe Middle School and High School MLK Essay, Visual and Multi-Media Contest Winners

Jan. 15

Martin Luther King Jr. Day of Service

10 a.m. to 5 p.m. • Olathe Downtown Library

No cost. Public is encouraged to drop in and work on service projects for local nonprofits.

For more details about these events and additional events at Johnson County Library, be sure to visit jocogov.org/jocomag.
Implementation of JCPRD Legacy Plan continues in 2018

by DAVID MARKHAM

In all, the Johnson County Park and Recreation District is planning $35 million in projects, including nearly $18 million in new projects and the remainder in carryover projects from past years. The Legacy Plan provides a comprehensive framework for managing open space and recreational resources through 2030.

Here’s a snapshot of three JCPRD priority projects:

**Big Bull Creek Park** is a 2,000-acre park expected to open in May with a combined park police substation and maintenance building, a discover nature playground with shelters and restrooms, and a group campground. Located between Gardner and Edgerton, these Phase I development projects will be spread over three areas.

**Meadowbrook Park** in Prairie Village is an 80-acre component of a mixed-used development on the site of the former Meadowbrook Country Club. Expected to open in late spring or early summer 2018, the park portion will include a destination playground, nature play area, large pavilion shelter, outdoor fitness equipment and the 10,000-square-foot Meadowbrook Park Clubhouse.

**Inclusive playgrounds**, designed to enable all children to play together without physical or social barriers, are being developed by JCPRD at two sites. Construction is expected to start by late February, with a playground at Stilwell Community Park opening in early July, and another near the north Walnut Grove area of Shawnee Mission Park opening in early September.

Stay up-to-date on county park and recreation projects at jcprd.com.

Flexible membership options for all. Discount for Lenexa residents. Now a SilverSneakers approved facility.

COmE ON, GET ACTIVE!

**Full-service fitness floor**
**Group fitness classes**
**Indoor pool**
**1/6-mile elevated track**
**Multiple gyms**

LENEXA RECCENTER

17201 W. 87th St. Pkwy., Lenexa, KS 66219

LENEXA.COM/RECCENTER • 913.477.7529 (PLAY)
SAFEHOME partners with county, local authorities to create a safer community

Support and resources for survivors of domestic violence

by CHRIS DEPUSOIR

Domestic violence exists in Johnson County. In 2011 alone, seven of the 11 homicides in the county were domestic homicides.

SAFEHOME is a valuable resource for victims and survivors of domestic violence. It has operated in Johnson County for more than 36 years and serves the residents of Johnson and Miami counties. The organization’s mission is to break the cycle of domestic violence, providing 24-hour hotline support, shelter, advocacy, counseling and prevention education classes in the community. But SAFEHOME doesn’t operate in a vacuum. To successfully assist residents in crisis, community partnerships are necessary.

A priority for the organization is saving lives and being part of the county’s public safety system. According to Janee’ Hanzlick, president/CEO of SAFEHOME, a marked reduction in domestic homicides in Johnson County came about in July 2011 when District Attorney Steve Howe implemented the state’s first lethality assessment protocol (LAP).

The LAP is administered by local law enforcement when they come in contact with victims of domestic violence. The LAP is a research-based tool that, based on the victim’s responses to a series of questions, can indicate an increased risk for homicide or life-threatening violence. If there is a lethal or immediate threat, local law enforcement connects the victim with SAFEHOME — calling SAFEHOME’s 24-hour hotline while on the scene of an incident, immediately providing victims a resource and service that may be life-saving and life changing.

The application of LAP is a true public safety-community partnership. In this county, it involves the Johnson County District Attorney’s Office, SAFEHOME, District Court Services, Johnson County District Court judges and local law enforcement agencies. Law enforcement administers it; SAFEHOME connects with victims in crisis. The assessment information is passed to the district attorney (who identifies repeat offenders or victims) with any court and legal proceedings (when judges can determine bonding).

“We’re saving lives,” Hanzlick said. That statement is reinforced by Howe and Assistant District Attorney Megan Ahsens. Though it took some time to properly implement the LAP across so many law enforcement agencies, it has been an effective way to make victims aware of the level of danger they may be in.

In 2012, there were four intimate partner (IP) homicides, down from seven the previous year. In 2013 and 2014, there was one each year and zero IP homicides in 2015 and 2016. To date in 2017, there is one IP homicide. Since the program started, no victims who received the LAP by Johnson County law enforcement have been murdered.

“Cooperation among agencies to end the cycle of domestic violence in our community is the right thing to do for people in need — in their most vulnerable moments,” Howe said.

The county’s domestic violence court program prosecutes domestic violence at the county level and assures mandatory prosecution of charges through the county’s district attorney’s office. In addition, the approximately 1,200 persons who annually apply for a protection from abuse order (PFA) at the county courthouse will also receive the lethality assessment. The district attorney’s office reports that about 80 percent of PFA applicants’ LAPs indicate “high lethality” threat. These respondents can immediately be referred to one of the two SAFEHOME domestic violence advocates who work in the district attorney’s office.

According to Ahsens, the DA’s office and SAFEHOME have been able to present Johnson County’s model to other counties in Kansas including Franklin, Leavenworth, Wyandotte, Sedgwick, Douglas, Miami, Cowley and Lyon, and Aurora, Colorado.

Each year, SAFEHOME touches thousands of lives. It provides domestic violence education to local law enforcement, community groups, and middle and high schools. The organization runs a 60-bed shelter for adults and children. They provide counseling to more than 1,300 people annually — at no cost — along with support groups, legal services, housing and financial advocacy, and technology and safety training.

SAFEHOME is a privately funded organization, relying on donations and volunteers to help provide a high level of service to the community.

If you or someone you know needs help, call SAFEHOME’s 24-hour abuse hotline at 913-262-2868.

To learn more about SAFEHOME or to get involved, visit SAFEHOME’s website safehome-ks.org.
Strengthening Families helps families to grow

by LORI SAND

It’s been said that child-rearing is one of the hardest, most important jobs there is. Many Johnson County families have benefited from additional support from the Strengthening Families Program (SFP). The program not only enables them to significantly improve their parenting skills, but to improve their family relationships.

The program promotes positive behavior change and provides other benefits, including a reduction in problem behaviors, delinquency and alcohol and drug abuse in children, and improvement in social competencies and school performance.

The family skills training program offers interactive lessons for parents and children ages 3 to 5, 6 to 11 and 12 to 16. The sessions are led by caring facilitators/Helpers who are invested in the success of each family. Training courses consist of parenting skills, children’s life skills and family skills taught together in 14 sessions. Each week begins with a family meal that includes informal family practice time and group leader coaching.

“I believe the 45 minutes that these families sit down for dinner each week make the biggest impact on them,” said Megan Clark, prevention coordinator at the Johnson County Mental Health Center. She has worked with the program since 2013, first as a facilitator and now as a site coordinator. “Their first reactions are, ‘This is weird and awkward,’ but by the end of the program, they look forward to this quality time they carve out. Dinnertime discussions go a long way to help children understand the role of the parents. And parents learn what their children need and how to support them.”

Parents attest to the program’s value

The parental comments on the program evaluations tell the true story of how life-changing this time can be:

“Thank you for this beautiful bonding and learning time for my daughter and me. We have learned so many useful skills, and this program has opened doors to communication and a close bond for my daughter and me.”

“I was so excited to see how much my son and husband looked forward to coming.”

“I would do it again, if I could.”

Program fosters community collaboration

“Johnson County has embraced the Strengthening Families Program as an effective tool to support local families through education, skill building and community resources. Not only has this program yielded incredible benefits for participating families, but it has displayed an extraordinary example of true community collaboration,” said Shana Burgess, director of prevention and community relations with Johnson County Mental Health.”

Program content is based on three main themes/learning objectives including communication, connecting and setting limits.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parents learn:</th>
<th>Children learn:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>to increase desired behaviors in children by using attention and rewards, clear communication, effective discipline, substance use education, problem solving and limit setting.</td>
<td>effective communication, understanding feelings, coping with anger and criticism, stress management, social skills, problem solving, resisting peer pressure, consequences of substance use and compliance with parental rules.</td>
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Locally, there are a variety of partners who are involved in creating and sustaining SFP.

<table>
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<th>Agencies involved:</th>
<th>Faith partners involved:</th>
</tr>
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<tr>
<td>Johnson County Mental Health Center, Department of Corrections, Court Services, Human Services, Developmental Supports and District Attorney’s Office; KVC; Overland Park Police Department; and Olathe Police Department.</td>
<td>First Baptist Church of Overland Park, Overland Park Church of the Nazarene, First Baptist Church of Gardner, Faith Journey Church, Pathway Community Church, Christ the Servant, Redemption Church, Heartland Community Church, Christ Community Church, First Presbyterian Church of Gardner, First Light Church and Fellowship Bible Church.</td>
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Opportunities to get involved

There are many ways to become involved, including serving as a site host, a facilitator, a site coordinator or a meal donor. In addition, the program accepts monetary donations to offset the expenses of meals, incentives, graduation and necessities for the families.

For more information about the Johnson County program, visit the webpage at jocogov.org/strengtheningfamilies. If you're interested in getting involved, contact Megan Clark at 913-715-7880 or megan.clark@jocogov.org.
My name is Dr. Michael Riley, D.C., Founder of Renuva Back & Pain Centers, and I want to help you determine if our CoreCare™ treatment protocol is right for you.

Many back and neck pain sufferers struggle to find lasting relief with physical therapy, chiropractic, acupuncture, or pain management alone. Plus, many patients experience harmful side effects from medications or failed surgical procedures.

The problem is that back & neck pain are symptoms of a medical condition, not a diagnosis. Often, these symptoms are treated but the biomechanical and physiological conditions causing the pain are not. For this reason, Renuva developed CoreCare, a comprehensive non-surgical and drug-free approach that addresses both the symptoms and the cause of your pain.

CoreCare uses innovative FDA approved technologies to address three areas that are key to achieving lasting pain relief:

1. CoreCare treats the source of the pain to achieve relief as fast as possible.
2. CoreCare improves structure to fight against and prevent degenerative related conditions that cause pain.
3. CoreCare restores function so the body can heal properly and fight against disease related conditions that cause pain.

Finally, A Non-Surgical, Drug-Free Option.

So, what does CoreCare include? New research in a treatment called Photobiomodulation (PBM) is having a profound effect on patients suffering from chronic pain from low back to arthritis. PBM Therapy has thousands of papers published on it, and been shown to aid in damaged tissue regeneration, decrease inflammation, relieve pain and boost the immune system.

Before the FDA would approve Class IV Lasers for PBM Therapy they required evidence that it was safe for use on humans. This lead to studies on safety but also numerous studies on the effectiveness of PBM therapy.

One study from Lasers in Surgery and Medicine found that 70% of back pain patients who received PBM therapy maintained pain relief at their 1 month follow-up vs. only 28% of back pain patients who received a Lidocaine injection.

Another study by the American College of Physicians found that pain medication and steroids were limited in improving pain outcomes or treating low back pain.

For patients with chronic low back pain, ACP recommends that physicians and patients initially select non-drug therapies like multidisciplinary rehabilitation, PBM therapy and spinal manipulation — all of which are included in Renuva’s 5-phase CoreCare treatment protocol.

Could this Non-Invasive, Natural Treatment be the Answer to Your Pain?

For January & February, we’re running a special offer where you can find out if you are a candidate for CoreCare with PBM Therapy and receive two treatments.

What does this offer include? Everything we normally do in our New Patient Evaluation. Just call by February 28th and here’s what you’ll get...

- An in-depth consultation about your problem where we will listen (really listen) to the details of your case.
- A complete neuromuscular examination.
- A full set of digital x-rays (if needed) to help determine the cause of your pain.
- A thorough analysis of your exam and x-ray findings. If you’re not a candidate, we promise to tell you and help you find another doctor or treatment, if possible.
- Two CoreCare treatments allows you to experience this amazing treatment and learn if this could be your pain solution, like it has been for so many other patients.

Call by February 28th and you can get everything I’ve listed here for only $39. The normal price for this type of evaluation including digital x-rays is $275, so you’re saving over $200 by taking me up on this offer.

Remember what it was like before you had these problems — when you were pain free and could enjoy everything life had to offer? It can be that way again.

Don’t neglect your problem any longer – don’t wait until it’s too late and the damage is irreversible.

Call by February 28th and let us know you would like to come in for the CoreCare Evaluation. Our office is located at: 10787 Nall Ave, Ste 110, Overland Park, KS 66211

We look forward to helping you become pain free!

Sincerely,

Dr. Michael Riley, D.C.

Call Now Before the Pain Gets Worse!

913-884-1152
Efforts underway to build new Johnson County Courthouse

by SHARON WATSON

County officials have taken a number of steps toward building the new Johnson County Courthouse following 2016’s public vote approving a quarter-cent public safety sales tax to fund it and a coroner/medical examiner facility.

The 28-courtroom courthouse will be built across Santa Fe Street directly north of the existing courthouse building and west of Olathe City Hall in downtown Olathe. The courthouse will take approximately 30 months to construct and will position Johnson County’s judicial needs for the next 75 years as the county expects to add about 10,000 residents each year.

Since the November 2016 vote, the Johnson County Board of County Commissioners adopted a resolution to levy the additional quarter-cent sales tax countywide for a period of 10 years, beginning April 1, 2017. The BOCC also amended the county’s Capital Improvement Program to include and authorize the courthouse and coroner/medical examiner facility projects.

The Public Building Commission approved the projects and the sale of bonds.

To address concerns about parking, the county negotiated with property owners in recent months for property in the block located directly north of the site of the new courthouse. The county purchased the property to ensure adequate parking adjacent to the new facility.

The county issued a number of requests for proposals (RFP) for professional services, including an owner’s representative and design criteria consultant. Both were approved in early 2017 and have been working on the county’s project requirements.

On Nov. 2, 2017, the Board of County Commissioners voted to approve the JE Dunn/TreanorHL/Fentress contract as the design-build team. Ongoing updates are available online at jocogov.org/public-safety-project-updates.

As part of the public safety sales tax that voters approved on Nov. 8, 2016, the county seeks to build its first medical examiner facility. And the process to build the facility is well underway. The intended location for the medical examiner building will be on Sunset Drive near the county’s Criminalistics Laboratory in Olathe; the county already owns this land.

In 2017, the designers (PGAV Architects of Westwood and SmithGroup JJR of Phoenix) and construction manager (McCarthy of Overland Park) were selected following the posting of a request for proposals and competitive selection process. At this time, the project team expects that the Board of County Commissioners will set the GMP — guaranteed maximum price — in October 2018, allowing for a groundbreaking shortly after in the fall. The construction is projected to be completed in late 2019 with the facility becoming fully operational in 2020.

To create a facility that meets industry best practices and standards of accreditation, a team has toured and reviewed other medical examiner facilities including the Office of the Chief Medical Examiner, the statewide facility for Maryland, and the Office of the Medical Investigator, the statewide facility for New Mexico.

“The planned medical examiner facility will have a positive impact on the community,” said Assistant County Manager Maury Thompson. “We will be working with law enforcement across the county and will have tissue harvesting capabilities.”

Of course, there are a couple of years to go before the facility is operational, but the county’s medical examiner facility will touch several county departments and agencies along with other community partners including Johnson County Facilities and Maintenance, Department of Health and Environment, Emergency Management and the Sheriff’s Office. The county seeks to have the facility headed by a medical examiner — an appointed, board certified forensic pathologist.

As more information becomes available, such as early conceptual drawings of the building, it will be posted online at jocogov.org/public-safety-project-updates.
‘A hand up, not a hand-out’
County treatment court gives veterans a second chance
by AUSTIN FALLEY

Garrett Cleek had a plan to kill himself.
The Olathe resident was a U.S. Army combat medic stationed in Afghanistan. He returned home suffering from mental illness and terrible nightmares, feeling the need to carry his firearm with him everywhere.

“I was on my way there,” he said. “I wanted to do it. I was making a plan.”

Cleek isn’t alone in his post-service struggles. According to data released in September by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, risk for suicide was 22 percent higher among veterans when compared nationally to non-veteran adults.

In 2014 alone, 88 veterans in Kansas committed suicide — nearly 70 percent with a firearm.

The Washington Post released a report in 2015 finding that more than half of the 2.6 million Americans sent to fight in the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan suffer from physical or mental health problems linked to their service and deployments.

Cleek was eventually arrested for assault and was facing charges before being introduced to Johnson County’s Veterans Treatment Court.

Veterans Treatment Court

In January 2016, Johnson County District Court held the first Veterans Treatment Court in the state of Kansas. Its mission is to identify veterans in the criminal justice system who can be placed into treatment and court supervision as an alternative to serving jail time.

The program assists veterans charged with low-level felony or misdemeanor offenses such as DUls, drug-related charges or domestic violence charges. Veterans arrested in Johnson County are given the option to apply to the treatment program. If they complete it, the felony charge does not stay on their record.

VTC offers two alternatives to jail — diversion and probation tracks. Both tracks allow eligible veterans to voluntarily participate in a 12- to 18-month program composed of court appearances, drug and alcohol testing, treatment, recovery support meetings and a mentorship program.

The treatment court is a team effort in Johnson County composed of judges, prosecutors, public defenders, law enforcement, mental health professionals, a Veterans Affairs representative, a probation officer, program coordinators and volunteer veteran mentors. To date, six veterans have graduated from Johnson County’s program.

Treatment court process

The county’s treatment court meets every two weeks at the county courthouse with Judge Timothy McCarthy of the 10th Judicial District of Kansas. He spearheaded the effort to introduce a veterans treatment court in 2016.

Before each session, Judge McCarthy reviews confidential reports from Veterans Affairs that provide him a full history of each veteran’s treatment — individual and group counseling, recommendations from medical professionals on their needs, and other data.

McCarthy said nearly all of the veterans in treatment court suffer from post-traumatic stress disorder and more than half are recovering from traumatic brain injuries.

Many veterans ending up in the court system are using substances to deal with their trauma. “They were basically using a substance to treat their PTSD,” McCarthy said. “We’ve seen a commonality to the problems these guys have, and you’ve got to be able to work through the use of those substances.

“If you can identify the right population of people that are only in the criminal justice system because of a mental health or substance issue, I think we’d be miles ahead to treat them as opposed to incarcerating them.”

Veteran treatment courts have a relatively new place in the court system, McCarthy said. It began in 2008 in Buffalo, New York.
When a drug and mental health court judge determined that the veterans he saw needed both services tailored to their unique challenges.

“When I interviewed with the district attorney and the assistant, I didn’t feel like a criminal,” Cleek said. “I’m not — I’ve never been in trouble before. The tone of this whole thing has been like a hand up, not a hand-out.”

“People are seeing the success of treatment courts and seeing our veterans succeed, so I think it’ll lead to an expansion of this method,” McCarthy said.

**Mentor and friend**

Cleek said having his mentor, Dave Stroman of Overland Park, a Vietnam War veteran, changed his outlook on life.

“Dave probably saved my life,” Cleek told The Kansas City Star. “He’s always been there, and he checks up on me. … It’s like a bond you don’t have commonly. I’ve got best friends I’ve known from childhood, but they’ve never had someone actively try to (really) kill them. And Dave has. I have. We can talk about stuff and just let go and not have to hold back or justify emotions.”

Stroman volunteered for the program because he saw it as an opportunity to help fellow veterans in their time of need.

“I’ve been where he has gone recently,” Stroman said. “I’ve been through it. It’s good to be able to help those guys who are dealing with it a few generations after me.”

Stroman said many more resources are available today for veterans struggling with post-service trauma than when he returned home from serving in the U.S. Army in Vietnam. He said he hopes veterans will use the resources available to them when they need help.

“Unless you’ve been there, you don’t share the problems and challenges you went through,” Stroman said.

Any veteran can apply to the program, but to be eligible, you must be a county or Kansas resident or qualify for Veterans Affairs benefits. Today, 300 treatment courts in 40 states offer services to veterans. In the metropolitan area, veterans treatment courts are offered in Jackson and Clay counties and the city of Kansas City, Missouri.

**A beginning**

Cleek graduated from the treatment court Oct. 25, 2017, after 18 months; his mentor, Dave Stroman, stood by Cleek’s side as he thanked everyone who helped turn his life around. He said the treatment court allowed him to tackle many of the problems that led him to consider taking his life.

Looking back on the last 18 months, Cleek has something to say to his pre-treatment-court self. “It is possible that this won’t be such an imposing and overshadowing force. Something very powerful in every facet of your life. It will be, for the most part, behind you. It won’t keep you up at night forever.”

To veterans dealing with similar trauma and looking at their options, Cleek said the ball is in their court.

“People who have resources to help with these issues, they don’t have radar and they don’t have X-ray vision,” he said. “People do care, but if you stay locked up in your room and stay inside your head, you’re not going to get those resources. That’s a big thing.”

Cleek said he often hears from peers who refuse to deal with their trauma because they don’t want to burden others. He responds with a simple metaphor: “Say you’re building something and you don’t have the right tools. What are you going to do? You simply go get the right tools. You go somewhere that has the resources and get them so you can continue to do what you need to do for yourself.”

“To a large degree, you are in charge of your fate. People are reaching out all over; you’ve got to reach out back.”

**Veterans who are in crisis or having thoughts of suicide can call the Veterans Crisis Line at 800-273-8255, chat online at VeteransCrisisLine.net/chat, or text to 838255. Veterans interested in being a mentor to someone in the program are encouraged to contact Colleen Abraham at 913-715-3316 or colleen.abraham@jocogov.org. Johnson County's Mental Health Center offers 24-hour emergency services available at 913-268-0156.**
Regional system offers specialized transit services
by JOSH POWERS

The ability to reliably get where you need to go is crucial, no matter who you are. For many county residents, that can often mean owning a car (or two); for the thousands of people who travel throughout the region using public transit, that means RideKC.

For unique populations who face challenges accessing regular transportation, RideKC in Johnson County provides specialized transit services designed to improve mobility options for every circumstance. The county has long provided services for eligible riders (RideKC Freedom, formerly known as Special Edition) who are not fully ambulatory or may face developmental challenges.

Beginning in 2016, RideKC introduced a pilot program that uses a mobile app for your smartphone with same-day, on-demand service for both ambulatory and non-ambulatory riders called RideKC Freedom On-Demand.

The program, which is currently available in Prairie Village, Overland Park, Fairway, Mission and Roeland Park, provides curb-to-curb service without a reservation for up to four trips per day.

RideKC has also recently introduced a new pass program called “Free Fare for Veterans” in recognition of the service and sacrifice of the veterans in our community. In partnership with the Kansas City Area Transportation Authority (KCATA), the Kansas City Department of Veterans Affairs and the Veteran Community Project (VCP), active duty or former service members ride for free on general public transportation in the region. Since the implementation of the program, there have been more than 500,000 boardings in the region by veterans — allowing them greater access to employment, health and medical services, and mobility in general.

As the transportation landscape evolves and new technologies are developed, RideKC in Johnson County and throughout the region will continue to be responsive to the needs of our riders.

For more information on RideKC Freedom On-Demand, the Free Fares for Veterans program or any transit services, visit ridekc.org or call 816-221-0660.

Making connections to the right job
by JODY HANSON

County government may not be the first place when thinking about organizations that help people find jobs. However, for nearly two decades several different departments and agencies of Johnson County Government have worked together on a similar goal — supporting people who receive services from the county in their efforts to find competitive employment.

A group called County Supported Employment Partnership (CSEP) began in 2000, when employees from Johnson County Developmental Supports (JCDS) and Johnson County Mental Health (MHN) teamed up with the Human Resources Department to place their clients who were seeking work into positions within county government. CSEP provides several services to the county, including:

• Evaluate job openings and applicants to create good matches.
• Provide on-site job coaching.
• Recommend clients who could fill temporary work assignments.

“A few years ago we kept the CSEP acronym but changed the word ‘county’ to ‘community’ to broaden our efforts,” said David Hanson, vocational services team leader at MHN. “Today, our group includes the Department of Corrections and we all collaborate to find jobs in the community for people we serve.”

In the past 18 months, CSEP has hosted three job fairs. In some cases, they are the traditional format where local businesses have information tables and the job seekers visit them, learning about job opportunities and making contacts.

“We’ve also flipped that model and have held two reverse job fairs, where job seekers hosted their own tables with displays that showcased their skills and interests and distributed copies of their resumes,” said Beth Johnson, director of day and employment services for JCDS.

One of those job seekers, Tyler Smith, networked with a contact from Dillard’s Distribution Center at a reverse job fair. That connection eventually lead to a job.

“Sometimes people with disabilities need help finding work,” Tyler said. “I’ve been working at Dillard’s for a year now and I’m grateful to CSEP for helping me find a great paying job.”

CSEP is holding its next job fair on April 10, 2018, from 1 – 3 p.m., at the Johnson County Administration Building (111 S. Cherry St., Olathe.) If you are an employer interested in attending, contact Aubree Casper at 913-826-4069.
Mental Health Center tapped for national study

by AUSTIN FALLEY

A unique county program was recently tapped for a national study. In September, the Johnson County Mental Health Center kicked off a national transportation study led by UnitedHealthcare.

The year-long research pilot will examine how mental health clients get to work, school and medical appointments.

UnitedHealthcare, one of the largest health care companies in the world, selected Johnson County to study the effects of transportation services provided to clients who use Medicaid. The health care company chose Johnson County to conduct the study following a review of programs from across the country.

“UnitedHealthcare said they only want to partner with Johnson County because what we’re doing here is basically above and beyond what they found anywhere else in the country — not just the state, but the country,” said Tanner Fortney, director of operations at the Mental Health Center.

Fortney said that UnitedHealthcare hopes to better understand Johnson County’s transportation model to see how it can benefit other mental and behavioral health centers nationwide. He added that the county’s transportation model is tailored to each client’s needs.

Uniquely, the Mental Health Center’s transportation staff are themselves clients, providing fellow clients rides to work, school and medical appointments. According to UnitedHealthcare’s findings, Johnson County is the only local government in the U.S. to use this model.

The study will look at two questions:

- Does on-demand transportation for clients result in fewer missed appointments, fewer emergency service needs and reduced health care costs?
- Do interventions provided by consumer drivers through the use of transportation services lead to improved clinical outcomes that could be integrated into a clinical model of care?

The Mental Health Center’s transportation model began in the late ’90s.

The center has longtime success in finding jobs for its clients using an individual placement support model — a common approach to helping people with mental illness gain employment.

Deputy Director Susan Rome said that over time, the individual placement support model has become engrained in the Mental Health Center’s culture.

“Work is part of our identity,” Rome said. “When people are struggling and unable to work, they connect it to their self-worth and value. While that isn’t necessarily how others view them, it can be really important for people to have this structure, be able to earn income and have some control of their lives.”

Having a routine and building a support system are important aspects to addressing mental illness.

“It’s an obligation to get up in the morning,” she said. “It’s a solid purpose outside of yourself.”

The study will compare groups of clients who use the county’s transportation services versus those who use Medicaid options. The pilot runs Oct. 1, 2017, to Sept. 20, 2018, and a final report will be published following the study to determine if observed outcomes had statistical significance.

“One of the best things to help our clients overcome some of their illness is having something to focus on besides just the illness,” Fortney said. “Having a job and a career, or even going to school, is the epitome of that. It’s really important for us to break down barriers for clients who don’t have rides to get to school so they can get an education and ultimately get to work.”

Fortney said it has been encouraging to see how grateful clients are for transportation services and how eager transportation staff are to help their peers.

“For them, they’re really passionate about helping other clients,” he said. “They really care about getting them to work. That means about as much to them — as far as getting them meaning in their life — as having a job itself, knowing that they’re helping others.”

From October 2017 through September 2018, Johnson County Mental Health will be conducting a study to better understand the county’s transportation model. A final report will be available after the end of the study period.
The South Park desegregation case: a critical step toward equity

The milestone case of Brown v. Board of Education, when advocates for 39 African American students demanded and fought for educational rights came five years after a little known, but equally groundbreaking, case occurred in Johnson County.

The South Park community

South Park, an integrated community in Johnson County, was founded in 1887. Kansas had never been a Jim Crow state, but state statute in 1879 allowed first-class cities with populations exceeding 15,000 to maintain segregated school systems.

South Park was originally integrated for education. Walker School housed both black and white children when it opened in 1888 until 1912 when a new school was constructed for white students only.

An educational disparity

The new building had indoor plumbing, an auditorium and a cafeteria. It also had one teacher and one classroom for each of its eight grades, plus a music teacher and a kindergarten.

When the black parents of Walker School students attempted to enroll their children at the new facility, the district trustees denied access, contending that enrollment was based on the attendance areas drawn up for each school.

Booming in world war and post-war

Johnson County’s population boom began in the early 1940s in the midst of World War II when the Sunflower Army Ammunition Plant near De Soto was activated. Opened in 1942, the plant produced smokeless powder and other propellants for the nation’s military. The plant attracted waves of new residents who flocked to the facility for the unheard-of wage offered — more than $1 per hour. At its peak in 1945, the plant employed 12,067 people.

Dropping anchor by ‘Prairie Navy’

At the same time, the Olathe Naval Air Station was created at the edge of Gardner to train “Prairie Navy” fighter pilots during and for several years after the war. The military complex was a beehive of activity and was commissioned to house approximately 2,000 enlisted men and 100 officers.

The GI Bill stimulated a building boom that provided housing and other benefits to returning veterans. According to the Johnson County Museum, more houses were built between 1946 and 1951 than the previous 120 years.

Incorporating cities

Many of the new residential neighborhoods and developments were located in northeast Johnson County. Prairie Village was originally platted in 1941. Eleven cities were incorporated from 1948 to 1972.

In the 1950s, the organizing and building of a countywide park system and community libraries helped enhance the quality of life in Johnson County. Following WWII, the county’s population nearly doubled between 1940 and 1950, and more than doubled in the 1960s.

Native American history is all around JoCo

The most popular tribal name in Johnson County is Shawnee, as the county was created on reservation land that once belonged to the Shawnee tribe.

The city of Shawnee had three name changes in its history — Gum Springs, Shawnetown and finally Shawnee in honor of the Indian tribe.

Chief Charles Bluejacket, an historically important Shawnee Indian chief, Methodist minister, prosperous farmer and landowner, served as the official interpreter in treaty negotiations between the tribe and the federal government. In Shawnee’s Herman Laird Park, a life-size bronze statue depicting Bluejacket with two of his 23 children memorializes the historic figure.

Olathe, too, has an historic connection as a Shawnee word meaning “beautiful.” The city’s history includes Chief Black Bob, of the Hathawekela division of the Shawnee tribe and head of the Black Bob Reservation. Black Bob Park, Black Bob Road and Black Bob Elementary School all honor his legacy.

Read the entire article “Native American heritage is all around us in JoCo” from the Spring 2016 at jocogov.org/jocomag.
Introducing OneAssist
A resource for anyone and all county services
by CHRIS DEPUSOIR

OneAssist is the starting point to reach any of the departments, agencies and services offered by Johnson County Government. OneAssist — 913-715-5000 — will connect you to the county’s five-person call center.

Did you write that down? 913-715-5000

County officials made a conscious decision to make sure its OneAssist phone lines were staffed by people, not an automated system. “Setting up the call center to be handled by actual staff allows us to assist people directly and accommodate the needs of our community,” said John Bartolac, director of Records, Tax and Administration “We provide a simple way to interact in a way that meets the public’s needs.”

OneAssist lines are open during regular county business hours, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m., Monday through Friday. As of the end of October, the team had answered more than 86,000 calls this year. Call center staff say the court system brings in the most frequent calls.

More than a call center

The staff who answer calls from residents and others are dedicated people who have a broad knowledge of all county departments and agencies so they can respond to most questions. They want to minimize the number of transfers for callers. And they take satisfaction in being friendly, and operating in a way that delivers on the county’s mission “to provide exemplary government functions and services to keep our community healthy and safe…”

Staff receives regular training on county operations, new initiatives and new systems and information as they come onboard. At times, they assist not only county residents but others outside the county, people without computer access who need guidance.

The OneAssist team is serious about providing the information that their callers need, even if they have to do research and make a follow-up call.

So, when you need help finding the right connection in Johnson County Government, OneAssist is the place to call at 913-715-5000. ℹ️

Sheriff’s Office branches out to recruit diverse workforce

by CLAIRE CANAAN

The Sheriff’s Office is the fastest growing law enforcement agency in Johnson County, composed of more than 500 sworn officers and support staff of approximately 150 employees. With a full range of public safety duties, the Sheriff’s Office provides the highest level of law enforcement services to county residents.

As with any agency, turnover creates a need to fill vacant positions. The Sheriff’s Office Personnel Division works to fill open sworn and support-staff positions with qualified candidates. In the last three years, the Sheriff’s Office has had an increased presence at career fairs throughout the Midwest. In addition to career fairs, the Sheriff’s Office recently branched out and participated in community events such as Hispanic Heritage Day, Turkish Food Fest, Gay Pride Festival and the Asian Cultural Festival.

On the surface, the goal of attending these events may be perceived simply as a way to fill positions; however, taking a deeper look, one can see there is much more to gain by attending.

Deputy Tivol Lewis has been with the Sheriff’s Office since 2012. During her tenure, she’s worked in various divisions such as Detention, Communications and, most recently, Personnel. Deputy Lewis has been an important part in the Sheriff’s Office hiring success over the last year. She has attended events hosted by different cultural organizations and recognizes benefits both to the community and the Sheriff’s Office. “The majority of these events are representative of family and often foster relationships founded on both trust and support, which lay the foundation for positive community relations,” Deputy Lewis said.

The office strives to cultivate positive relationships with the community and being involved in these events provides that opportunity.

“During times of crisis, it is these relationships that are responsible for the resiliency exhibited by both law enforcement and the public,” Lewis said. “These relationships are how first responders survive and uphold our promise to serve and protect in their day-to-day duties when called upon to do so. After all, our community is us and we are them; neither can exist without the other.” 📢
Best Times Digest

Neighborhood centers offer fun, food and comradery

by GORDON DAVIS

The Johnson County Area Agency on Aging (AAA) provides nutritious meals at six neighborhood centers throughout Johnson County. In addition, neighborhood centers offer a variety of services, activities and educational programs for older individuals in the community.

Center sites offer friendship, fitness, opportunities for socializing, and regularly share great learning opportunities and a place to renew and re-energize!

Where are the neighborhood centers located?

- Merriam Community Center
  5701 Merriam Dr. — 913-677-2048
- Matt Ross Community Center
  8101 Marty St. — 913-648-2948
- Gardner Senior Center
  128 E. Park — 913-856-3471
- Lenexa Senior Center
  13425 Walnut – 913-888-6141
- Spring Hill Civic Center
  401 N. Madison – 913-592-3180
- De Soto Civic Center
  32905 W. 84th St. — 913-585-1762

Who can attend a neighborhood center?
A hot noon meal is available for anyone age 60 or older and their spouse. People under age 60 are welcome to eat lunch, but must pay for the full cost of the meal.

How do I make a reservation for a lunch meal?
Call the neighborhood center by 11 a.m. the day before.

How much will the meal cost?
The suggested donation for a person age 60 and older and their spouse is $3 per meal. No one is denied a meal if they are unable to donate. Meals are funded in part through the Older Americans Act and the Kansas Department for Aging and Disability Services.

What activities are provided at the neighborhood center?
Each center offers a unique variety of social activities and informative educational programs.

What hours are the centers open?
Neighborhood centers are open Monday-Friday, 9 a.m. – 1 p.m. A meal is served daily at 11:30 a.m.

What kind of meals are served?
Meals are planned to meet the nutritional needs of older adults. Diabetic substitutions are available as modification to regular diets (no concentrated sweets such as cakes with frosting, sweetened fruit pies). Monthly menus are available to participants at all center locations and are also available through the department’s website, jocogov.org/hsd.

Milk and bread are served daily, and menus may be subject to change. Nutrition education for each month is printed on the back of each menu.

Do the neighborhood centers close when the weather is bad?
Centers will close if road or weather conditions are hazardous.

- Listen to one of the following radio stations: KCMO-AM 710, KCMO-FM 94.9 or KMBZ-AM 980, KLTH-FM 99.7 or watch one of the following TV stations: KMBC TV-9, KSHB TV-41, KCTV-5 or WDAF TV-4 regarding the closure of Johnson County neighborhood centers due to the weather.
- Call the central Olathe office at 715-8888 after 9 a.m. to check if a neighborhood center is open.

Neighborhood centers have many volunteer opportunities. Volunteers are needed to assist in meal service, social activities and educational programming. Contact the volunteer coordinator at 913-715-8859.

Gordon Davis is an information specialist with the Johnson County Area Agency on Aging and the Aging and Disability Resource Center.
The new year brings with it anticipation for tomorrow. At JCCC, the anticipation is palpable.

With our largest campus transformation to date on the horizon, we’re renovating, we’re building and we’re creating — all to better serve our students and community. And we’re keeping tuition rates flat for our students.

From education to experiences, JCCC puts tomorrow within reach. Set your new year into motion and visit www.jccc.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. The board meets weekly on Thursdays, 9:30 a.m. at the county administration building, 111 S. Cherry St., Olathe. Residents can also view board meetings online at jocogov.org.

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

**Ron Shaffer**  
1st District  
913-715-0431

**Steve Klika**  
3rd District  
913-715-0433

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

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

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

**Mike Brown**  
6th District  
913-715-0436

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### Eilert to be honored at 14th Annual MLK event

On Monday, Jan. 15, 2018, Chairman Ed Eilert will be honored with the Martin Luther King Jr. Legacy Award from the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) chapter representing Olathe, Overland Park and Leawood. This award honors Chairman Eilert’s service on the Johnson County Board of County Commissioners (both as 4th District representative and as chairman), as six terms as mayor of Overland Park, chairmanship on the National League of Cities as well as the NLC Board of Directors and as leadership on the Johnson County Research Triangle Authority.

For more information about this event, visit the MLK events webpage on jocogov.org/jocomag.

### County celebration honors local veterans

On Saturday, Nov. 11, 2017, local residents and veterans attended the county’s annual Veterans Day event held at the Korean War Veterans Memorial in Overland Park.

The event included the Korean Consulate honoring Korean War Veterans.

More images available via [flickr.com/photos/jocoksgovt](flickr.com/photos/jocoksgovt).
Be prepared for winter weather
by LORI SAND

It’s wintertime! That means drivers could face challenges on the road in coming weeks if they aren’t prepared. Now is a good time to make preparations for possible snow, ice and frigid conditions while traveling.

Prepare your vehicle
Perform routine vehicle maintenance before a winter road trip, including:
• Check tire tread and pressure often.
• Replace windshield wipers every six months or when you begin to notice decreased effectiveness.
• Use windshield washer fluid with antifreeze that has a rating minimum of -40 degrees and be sure to keep your reservoir full — and carry an extra container in your trunk!
• Have a mechanic check your vehicle’s heater, defroster, battery, brakes, lights, oil and exhaust system.
• Make sure you have sufficient antifreeze level in the radiator.
• Keep the gas tank at least half full to prevent frozen gas lines.
• Does your vehicle have rear-wheel drive? If so, consider weighing it down with sandbags.

Build a vehicle prep kit
County emergency management recommends a kit that consists of a cell phone charger, blankets, a flashlight with extra batteries and an ice scraper. For icy conditions, make sure you have a snow shovel and a large bag of salt, sand or kitty litter handy for traction under tires.

If you’re traveling to remote locations or long distances, make sure to pack some energy bars and bottled water. Other items you might consider packing include flares, jumper cables and a first aid kit.

Reliable road condition information for the KC Metro:
• Web: kcscout.net
• Twitter: @kansascityscout
• Facebook: KansasCityScout

For conditions in Kansas, visit kandrive.org or follow Kansas Department of Transportation on Twitter (KDOTHQ) or Facebook (KSDOTHQ). Always check the weather and road conditions along your route before a long drive this winter.

Crave that spring green?
It all begins with a soil test!
Johnson County residents, get a FREE soil test

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

• Find out your soil’s nutrient and pH levels
• Save money on fertilizers — know the right type and amount to apply
• Proper fertilization promotes a healthy lawn and reduces chemical runoff that can pollute our waterways
Three Questions for three employees of Johnson County Government

by LORI SAND

Jeffrey Malotte
Senior Planner, Department of Planning and Codes

Jeffrey represents the interest of the public at large in unincorporated (outside city limits) Johnson County by reviewing subdivision development and zoning proposals, providing staff support for the Planning Commission, the zoning boards, and the BOCC.

Silvana Botero
Domestic Team Member, District Court Services

Silvana coordinates the supervised exchange and visitation programs, in addition to working with parents in mediation and conciliation.

Jasmin Moore
Sustainability Program Manager, Dept. of Health and Environment

Jasmin advances county initiatives promoting sustainability including climate resiliency, food policy, energy, health equity, increasing efficiency and reducing spending.

One of the county’s goals is to leave the community better than we found it. How will you achieve this in your current role?

In my role on the Diversity and Equity work group, I participate in difficult discussions and conversations about discrimination and racism. These conversations are necessary to begin to acknowledge problems and then find a path to a better county, both in government and in the community. Breaking down discriminatory barriers definitely let’s us leave the community better than we found it.

As a domestic court services officer, I provide services and facilitate dialogue between parents who are going through divorce or separation. I feel that the community and individual families benefit when we assist parents to reach agreement and make decisions based on the well-being of the children.

Johnson County defines sustainability as the responsible management of resources to meet the environmental, economic and human needs of today and generations to come. As sustainability program manager, working toward a better future is a part of everything that I do.

What’s your New Year’s resolution?

My resolution is always to never make New Year’s resolutions. I believe that self-improvement is a daily process.

My New Year’s resolution is to exercise three times a week for 30 minutes each time.

Get more sleep.

How did public service inspire you to work in county government?

Both of my parents were federal public servants, so I had good examples. As a planner for Johnson County, I represent the public interest in community development projects that, in most instances, contribute to making this community a good place to live. Believing that I make a positive difference in the development of my community is a powerful motivator for me.

Understanding and working for a diverse community were my inspirations to become a public servant.

I am inspired by being a part of something big. Local government has a responsibility to serve all of its residents, and the policies and programs that it provides have the potential to improve the lives of hundreds of thousands of people. I hope that the work I do as sustainability program manager has a long-lasting, positive effect on the residents and businesses of Johnson County.
10 things you can find on My Resource Connection

My Resource Connection — ims.jocogov.org/rc — connects individuals needing assistance with resources that can help meet their needs. The assistance that individuals may need are many and varied. Thankfully, there are many organizations in the greater Kansas City area that are able to address these needs. The My Resource Connection website is hosted and maintained by Johnson County Government. Significant contributions of data come from United Way 211 of Greater Kansas City, various departments within Johnson County government, and the Unified Government of Wyandotte County/Kansas City, Kansas.

These are the ten most searched services:

1. Food pantries
   A balanced diet is important for everyone, especially growing children.

2. Affordable rental housing
   low income/subsidized private rental housing, apartments that accept Section 8 Housing Vouchers, rent payment assistance
   Did you know that there are nearly 170 apartments in the area that accept Section 8 Housing Vouchers?

3. Employment/job finding assistance
   There are many temporary employment agencies which can provide an important first step back into the workforce.

4. Clothing
   With the onset of winter, these resources can provide warm coats, hats, scarves, gloves, boots and shoes among the many necessities we all require.

5. Dental care
   Dental care is an important aspect in maintaining nutritional health, appearance and quality of life. Did you know that heart disease, diabetes, Alzheimer’s disease, cancer and stroke can all be tied to poor oral health?

6. Child support assistance
   Collection of child support should be sought as soon as possible. The more arrears accrue the more difficult it is to collect.

7. Homeless shelters
   These resources offer temporary residence for homeless individuals and families, providing them with a safe place to sleep out of the weather.

8. Transitional housing
   Among the listings are supportive housing for veterans, supportive living for eating disorder recovery and a felony friendly program which in addition to housing offers jobs, programs and other help for felons.

9. Community mental health agencies
   According to the National Alliance on Mental Illness, approximately 1 in 5 adults in the U.S. (about 18.5 percent) experiences mental illness in a given year.

10. Early childhood education
    Deemed by the National Education Association as one of the best investments our country can make, early childhood education can improve the education and general life experience of young children.

Visit MyRC at ims.jocogov.org/rc.
It’s not too late to recycle your holiday decorations!

**Recycle your holiday lights**

Broken holiday lights can be recycled at local Westlake ACE Hardware locations through Sunday, Jan. 12.

You can also take your lights to several area electronic recyclers including Secure E-Cycle, Surplus Exchange or the city of Olathe Household Hazardous Waste facility.

More information about light recycling is available online at recyclespot.org.

**Holiday tree recycling**

After your family has finished with your live holiday tree, think about recycling it. Local cities across the county offer various locations for recycling natural trees.

- Make sure to remove all lights and decorations from your tree before recycling.
- Here are some locations for holiday tree recycling:
  - Young’s Park, 7701 Antioch Rd.
  - Indian Creek Recreation Center, 10308 Marty St.
  - Quivira Park, 11901 Quivira
  - Overland Park Arboretum and Botanical Gardens, 8909 W. 179th St.
- **JCPRD locations:**
  - Shawnee Mission Park, The Theatre in the Park
  - Heritage Park, Marina parking lot
  - Kill Creek Park, Marina parking lot

Just a reminder — artificial trees are not recyclable. Consider donating it. Otherwise, it goes in the trash.

For more recycling options, visit recyclespot.org.

According to JCPRD, recycled trees can be repurposed into:

- Temporary fish habitat
- &
- Mulch cover for trails