Vaccinating Johnson County
As this magazine lands in mailboxes, we will have just marked one year since COVID-19 entered our community. March 2021 is a time to mourn lives lost, celebrate people who survived illness, and show gratitude for our community’s heroes who have been fighting the pandemic for more than a year. All of those would be appropriate ways to note a year of COVID-19 in our community.

Our current COVID-19 priority is getting vaccines into arms of people who live and work in Johnson County as quickly as possible. This major undertaking has required the collaboration of county staff, health care systems and other partners. It has included educating the public about the state’s phased plan, standing up vaccine clinics, developing processes for the public to show interest in getting a vaccination and make appointments, and creating a communication plan to share information and answer questions that come in through phones, email and social media.

While we know there is frustration among some about the availability of doses and appointments, we are making progress. Thousands of people who live and work in our community have been vaccinated. We have also worked very hard over the past few months to improve our customer service, technology capabilities and communication. On pages 6-7 we update you on the vaccination rollout and answer some of your questions.

As we look ahead to 2021, we also focus on other topics. Projects such as improvements at Central Resource Library and the Tomahawk Creek Wastewater Treatment Facility expansion are marching forward. Next month, we will dedicate the new Barkley Plaza at Shawnee Mission Park. In this issue (pages 10 and 11) we give updates on those projects. We also provide a Recycling 101 refresher for those getting ready for spring cleaning (page 13) and introduce Johnson County Library’s new library card design (page 14.)

We are also getting ready to look back at 2020. Our State of the County address, due to the pandemic, will be virtual this year. It takes place on March 30 at 11 a.m., and you can view it live from our website (boccmeetings.jocogov.org) or our Facebook page (@jocogov). While we will miss gathering with the community in person, we look forward to sharing the State of the County virtually.

Thank you for your continued patience as we proceed with our vaccination rollout while continuing to wear masks and physical distance. We believe these steps will move us closer to the finish line of this pandemic.

Penny Postoak Ferguson
County Manager
Pictured above: On January 11, in front of a virtual audience, the Honorable Kelly Ryan, chief judge of the Tenth Judicial District Court, administered the oath of office to three new and two re-elected Johnson County officials. Chief Judge Ryan swore in Jeff Meyers (District 2), Charlotte O’Hara (District 3), Shirley Allenbrand (District 6), Steve Howe (District Attorney) and Sheriff Calvin Hayden.
Fred Sherman sworn in as Election Commissioner

On Jan. 27, Kansas Secretary of State Scott Schwab swore in Fred Sherman as Johnson County’s newest Election Commissioner.

In January 2020, Schwab appointed Connie Schmidt to oversee the 2020 elections, and at that time appointed Sherman as Deputy Election Security Commissioner with the intent of him becoming Election Commissioner this year.

“This 2020 was not an easy year, especially for our local election officials who had to administer two major elections during a global pandemic,” Schwab said. “Fred was instrumental in executing two successful elections.”

Johnson County Government reorganizes departments to provide improved customer service

In an effort to create better customer service and efficiencies for our residents, the county recently reorganized the programs and services provided by two county departments, Records and Tax Administration and Treasury and Financial Management.

The reorganization divides most public-facing and internal support services into two new departments:

- **Treasury, Taxation and Vehicles:** Public-facing services including property recording, taxation, treasury and motor vehicles.

- **Financial Management and Administration:** The organization’s internal support services including accounting, financial reporting, payroll and benefits, procurement, accounts payable and risk management, plus the archives and the call center.

Restaurant and bar closing time restrictions removed from public health order

On Feb. 25, the Board of County Commissioners, sitting as the Board of Public Health, voted to remove the midnight closing times for restaurants, bars and other businesses licensed to sell alcohol on-site. No other changes were made to the health order.

Originally issued in November 2020 and extended on Jan. 28, the order includes provisions about physical distancing, mass gathering limitations and the prohibition of large-scale events. It also includes provisions for restaurants and bars, recreational and youth organized sports and fitness centers/health clubs. As of press time, the order lasts through March 31, 2021.

Visit jocogov.org/orders-and-mandates to read the order, access an FAQ, and learn more.

**quotable**

“This certification will give the New Century AirCenter a critical tool for target marketing to the aviation/aerospace community.”

— Ed Eilert, chairman of the Johnson County Board of Commissioners

Chairman Ed Eilert in the announcement that the AirCenter received AEROready™ Certification…the first aerospace industry-certified site in Kansas and the only one available in the Midwest.

**HEALTH ORDER UPDATE**

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Visit jocogov.org/orders-and-mandates to read the order, access an FAQ, and learn more.
Johnson County Community College Continuing Education is your local resource for workforce training, professional development and personal enrichment.

Whether the pandemic forced you to develop new skills or you’re simply ready for a change, we can help! Check out more than 20 online career training certificates in high-demand fields like healthcare, information technology, marketing, management and trades. If you own a business or manage a team, we also offer customized on-site training.

Explore everything JCCC Continuing Education has to offer at jccc.edu/ce

We look forward to serving you!
The quest to get hundreds of thousands of COVID-19 vaccinations into arms

Multiple partners work together for the #SleeveUpJoCo effort

BY BARBARA MITCHELL AND JODY HANSON

As the pandemic headed into the fall and winter of 2020 and we heard news about the progress of testing, manufacturing and approving COVID-19 vaccines, Johnson County Department of Health and Environment’s team began strategizing how to get vaccines administered once they became available to our county.

“We know that getting as many of our county’s residents and workers vaccinated as soon as we can is a crucial step in returning to a lifestyle where we won’t need physical distancing or other restrictions,” said Dr. Sanmi Areola, director of Johnson County Department of Health and Environment.

The process to get a dose of COVID-19 vaccine from the manufacturer, to the federal government, to the state, to the county and into an arm requires an immense and unprecedented amount of planning, coordination, logistics and collaboration on multiple levels. The availability of the vaccine remains limited at this point. We look forward to the day when vaccine supplies are plentiful.

Who decides when people can get a vaccine?

The pandemic has required the public to become well versed on a wide variety of topics: essential vs. non-essential workers, incidence rates vs. percent positivity, red zone vs. orange zone, just as a few examples. With vaccination availability, the focus turned to “phases.” Kansas released its most recent version of its phased vaccination plan on Jan. 7, which divides county residents and workers into five phases, determining when they are eligible for a vaccine.

“The state determines who gets vaccinated in what phase,” said Dr. Areola. “However, county health departments have the flexibility to prioritize different groups of people within a phase. Factors we looked at when making those tough decisions including how vulnerable a group would be if they contracted the virus, or which high-risk workers should be vaccinated sooner to keep our economy running.”

Beginning with Phase 1

JCDHE opened its first vaccination clinic on December 28, 2020 at the Sunset Drive Office Building. Following the directions of the state, JCDHE’s early clinics were for county health department workers, paramedics and other first responders. After that, the county opened up appointments for health care workers who weren’t able to get a vaccination from their own employer, such as a hospital or doctor’s office.

“JCDHE has years of experience planning and implementing vaccine clinics,” said Nancy Tausz, JCDHE Health Services director. “Using our past experience allows us to scale up to implement large COVID-19 vaccine clinics quickly and efficiently.”

Prioritization and partnerships are crucial in Phase 2

Each week, JCDHE receives an allotment of COVID-19 vaccines from KDHE and then finalizes plans for how to distribute them the following week.

The group in Phase 2 is very large (estimated at approximately 150,000) so JCDHE created three tiers in Phase 2 to prioritize those most at risk for contracting COVID-19, or those most vulnerable to extreme sickness or death if they contracted it. Tier 1 includes people 65 and older, school personnel, childcare workers, first responders and food and agriculture workers. JCDHE has been holding mass vaccination clinics for people 65 and older, beginning with 80 and older. Health care systems agreed to focus on the 65 and older population, offering vaccination appointments to their patients and in some cases, other community members in this age group. As more doses become available, those opportunities are expected to increase.

One health care system not able to vaccinate its patients found a valuable and meaningful way to assist. Currently, the vaccines have not been approved for people younger than 16.

“Children’s Mercy made the decision that if they couldn’t vaccinate their patients, they would vaccinate people who spend their workday taking care of children,” said Elizabeth

Vaccination information changes quickly. Please stay current on this topic at jocogov.org/covid-19-vaccine
Holzschuh, JCDHE director of epidemiology. “Children’s Mercy is taking care of vaccinations for K–12 educators and school staff, both public and parochial, as well as center-based and home-based childcare providers. We are grateful for this partnership.”

Filling in a gap
The federal government took care of vaccinating residents and staff of long-term care facilities and assisted living facilities as part of Phase 1. However, that federal program didn’t include independent living facilities.

“We identified the need to vaccinate nearly 2,000 residents of Johnson County independent facilities who were not covered by the federal program,” said Assistant County Manager Joe Connor. “We were able to partner with Hy-Vee’s mobile vaccination clinic program and Auburn Pharmacy to make sure this group of people eligible for vaccines in Phase 2, Tier 1 were taken care of.”

Second doses
A lot of the recent conversations and questions about vaccination have been about second doses. Both the Pfizer and the Moderna vaccines require a second booster. The manufacturers list 21 days between the Pfizer doses and 28 days between the Moderna doses.

“The CDC says that you actually can wait up to 42 days before you get the second dose, and that is an important message that we have been sharing the past several months,” said Dr. Areola. “People get very worried if they haven’t been given the opportunity to schedule that second dose right around the due date. You actually have a few additional weeks to get it taken care of.”

Other important information about second doses:

• You should get the second dose from the same provider who gave you the first dose.
• Please bring your “COVID-19 Vaccination Record Card” with you to your second dose appointment.
• Beginning Feb. 25, the Johnson County Department of Health and Environment will automatically schedule second dose appointments exactly three weeks after the first vaccine at the same time and location. You will no longer need to go online and make a second dose appointment. If you need assistance rescheduling your second dose, please call 913-715-2819 Monday through Friday from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.

When can I get my vaccine?
That question has understandably been the most popular one coming into JCDHE through phone calls, emails and social media. Getting the vaccination can save a life, prevent illness and help our community return to a lifestyle we remember prior to March 2020.

“As more doses become available this spring and into summer, getting your COVID-19 vaccination will feel more similar to getting your flu shot, with options including your doctor’s office, your pharmacy and your health department,” said Dr. Areola. “We are not there yet, but we will get there.”

Those interested in getting the COVID-19 vaccine and are eligible in Phase 2, can complete the vaccine interest form at jocogov.org/interestsurvey. The county will contact you when appointments become available. You choose how you want to be notified – a phone call, text message or email. Johnson County residents should also fill out other interest forms they come in contact with, whether through their health care system or local pharmacies.

A wealth of information on COVID-19 vaccinations, updated on daily basis, is available at jocogov.org/covid-19-vaccine.
Mark your Calendar

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

April 2021

Saturday, April 3
Orienteering Egg Hunt open to children ages 5 & older accompanied by a parent/guardian or 1 adult chaperone per group of 5. jcprd.com/register (search for #9196)

Tuesday, April 6
Tai Chi offers a slow and gentle exercise for endurance, flexibility, and muscle strengthening. All experience levels welcome. Four 50-minute sessions for $36. $40 for nonresidents. jcprd.com/register (search for #8109)

Wednesday, April 14
Mental Health First Aid gives people the skills to help someone developing a mental health problem or experiencing a mental health crisis. $25 per participant. Limited scholarships available. For more information or to register: JCMHEvents@jocogov.org or 913-715-7880.

Wednesday, April 21
Families can experience a bit of life in 1904 — from completing farm chores to taking lessons inside in a one-room schoolhouse. Activities offered according to grade level (K-6). Sessions are 2 hours and group size will be limited. Sessions offered each day at 10:00 and 1:00. Lanesfield Historic Site, 913-715-2570.

Virtual tour to focus on the Holocaust

The Johnson County Park and Recreation District’s 50 Plus Department is sponsoring a virtual presentation on the Holocaust and a tour of the St. Louis Kaplan Feldman Holocaust Museum at 9 a.m. Tuesday, April 6.

Amy Lutz, historian, docent and the communications and social media manager for the museum, will provide a virtual opportunity to tour some of the museum’s exhibits and will share the history of the Holocaust through a photographic narrative.

The museum is dedicated to preserving the legacy of the Holocaust, education about its causes and illustrating how what happened during this tragic period relates to our lives today. Visit jcprd.com/register and search for #8590.

CDDO Resource Fair planned for April

The Johnson County Community Developmental Disability Organization (CDDO) Resource Fair returns April 5-8, with virtual events for individuals seeking Intellectual and Developmental Disability services, families, providers and jobseekers. Learn about employing people with disabilities, IDD service eligibility, the waitlist, how to become an affiliate provider, employment opportunities for direct care staff, and more!

Hosted in conjunction with the Johnson County Public Library, this event connects individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities, service providers and local businesses with critical resources. This annual fair is an opportunity to learn more about the IDD system in Kansas that may be hard to navigate.

Participants will learn how the CDDO supports families in Johnson County, how a diversified workforce which includes people with disabilities benefits the business community, growing their career in the IDD field, and how to get on the waitlist to access IDD services. The eventful week will end with a celebration of essential, frontline workers in Johnson County who persevered through COVID-19 to provide excellent care to individuals in service.

Guest speakers include representatives from LEND, University of Kansas City Developmental Disabilities Life Span Institute, and Managed Care Organizations, in addition to CDDO staff, local service providers and business leaders. As always, the event is free and open to the public. Registration is encouraged, but not required. Visit jocogov.org/cddo to learn more.
**May 2021**

**Tuesday, May 4**
Fabulous Foliage! Flowers are usually thought of as the stars of the show in our gardens. But flowers come and go. It is the foliage that is the workhorse throughout the season. Plants with distinct foliage deserve more attention in our landscape. This class will open your eyes to the wonderful world of fabulous foliage to complete the look in your garden. Register at the K-State Extension Office website.

**Thursday, May 13**
Enroll your little one in Little Critter’s Day Out: Spring Peepers (Ages 3–5). Child must be fully potty trained to participate in this program. Your Little Critter will enjoy 3 hours of fun and education! Activities will vary by theme, but we will have a snack, make a craft, play games, and see an animal visitor each day. Visit jcprd.com/register (search for #7777) for more information.

**Monday, May 31**
County offices are closed for Memorial Day.

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**June 2021**

**Friday, June 4**
Opening night for Theater in the Park’s production of ‘Mamma Mia!’ ABBA’s hits tell the hilarious story of a young woman’s search for her birth father. This sunny and funny tale unfolds on a Greek island paradise. All performances begin at 8:30 p.m. The musical runs through June 12 at Shawnee Mission Park. For more information, visit theatreinthepark.org

**Saturday, June 5**
Experience all the Johnson County Museum has to offer — free of charge!

**Mondays in June**
Each week in June gives kids (Ages 6–9) an opportunity to explore the Johnson County Museum and our kid-sized community, KidScape! Discover history through crafts and projects inspired by our signature and temporary exhibits. New activities and explorations each week. Campers must have completed kindergarten to attend.
- June 7 – 11 RetrO Week
- June 14 – 18 On the Farm
- June 21 – 25 Transportation
- June 28 – July 2 Community
Major county projects march forward this spring

BY ELISSA ANDRE, ALEX SZERWINSKI, RICHARD SMALLEY

Johnson County is moving forward with major projects, including improving a sports complex, expanding a vital wastewater treatment facility and making a busy library even more user friendly.

Central Resource Library becoming even more user friendly

Johnson County Library is making several improvements to its Central Resource branch, located at 9875 W. 87th St., in Overland Park. Construction is now underway and anticipated to wrap up by the end of the year.

Visitors will enjoy a relocated Kids area with more natural light, a dedicated storytime room, an improved Teen section, a drive-thru for picking up holds and a reworked exterior drop off lane. Many staff spaces are getting their first renovation since 1995 including the Materials Handling spaces, through which new materials, holds and other library items flow, are being reorganized for improved efficiencies. A handful of public meeting rooms are also being added or relocated.

Most of the building, including the Black and Veatch Makerspace, is closed during construction, but a small portion of the lobby remains open as “Little Central.” Little Central offers access to holds pickup, materials return inside the branch, public PCs, printing, Wi-Fi and restrooms. Additional needs may be handled at the other 13 branches (jocolibrary.org/locations). The location closest to Central is Oak Park Library, 9500 Bluejacket St., in Overland Park, which recently began Curbside Holds Pickup service and installed a new exterior returns bin.

Get regular construction updates on the library website, jocolibrary.org, and by following @jocolibrary on social media.

2021 significant year for construction at Tomahawk Creek Wastewater Treatment Facility

Groundbreaking for the expansion of Tomahawk Creek Wastewater Treatment Facility occurred in April 2018. Despite challenges over three years including soil conditions, extreme wet weather and the pandemic, the project is on time and on budget.

The structural concrete is essentially finished, and work continues on the masonry and brick veneers. Equipment installation is underway, including items such as pumps, 10-foot diameter disk filters and centrifuges. The contractor is working through functional startups of completed buildings and processes to verify everything performs as intended.

Later this year, the team plans to commission the facility and begin treating flow. This process will involve introducing wastewater over several weeks, operating the mechanical equipment and building up the right biology needed for treatment. Once it has been confirmed that the water quality requirements required by the state are met, the reclaimed water will be discharged to Indian Creek. Final completion of the project will be in 2022.

For more information and details about the project, visit jcwtomahawk.com.

Sports complex visitors to enjoy new fan zone clubhouse building

Exciting developments are underway at the Johnson County Park and Recreation District’s Mid-America Sports Complex in Shawnee. This year, visitors can look forward to a new fan zone clubhouse building, a new concession/restroom building for the softball quadrant one (fields 1–4), a new entry gate/ticketing area, and new synthetic field turf for fields 1–4.

The project also includes new field lighting with LED lighting systems for all 12 fields, irrigation system improvements and the installation of security/data systems. Keep up on the latest by following @MASCPark on Facebook or at jcprd.com.

On page 11, learn about a JCPRD project opening this spring, and the history behind it.
They’re all online!

JCPRD has once again planned more than 500 great spring and summer programs, including classes, camps, and special events. There’s something for all ages, from preschool to active adults. You will find them all online at JCPRD.com/activities. To enable us to be more flexible with our programs, we’ll no longer be printing the My JCPRD Activities catalog.

On the next two pages, you’ll find directions on how to find all the programs on our website, and tips on how to easily navigate to find your favorites.

And if our fun and healthy programs aren’t enough to motivate you to check out our website, we’re also planning a series of weekly program discounts to be announced each Wednesday beginning April 7.

50 Plus program listings are now also included in each issue of Johnson County’s The Best Times magazine. If you’re looking for our 2021 summer camp listings, the May through August program listings do contain a number of camps, but our 2021 Summer Camp Guide was printed and mailed in late January and you can find copies in Johnson County Library branches and JCPRD facilities, and all those listings are online at JCPRD.com/camps.

Follow our Trail to Savings promotion to save on programs!

Wow! Follow us on Facebook and Instagram each week to discover discounts on specially selected programs. Beginning April 7 and running through at least May 26, the Trail to Savings will offer several discounted programs each Wednesday and patrons will have until midnight that day, or until the programs fill, to sign up and receive their savings. Find the weekly listings at JCPRD.com/discounts. You’ll have to hurry because the discount is offered for one day only!

Be sure to like our Facebook and Instagram pages for reminders about the discounts - search for JCPRD parks.

Check back weekly because you never know which programs may be discounted next!
Not sure what you are looking for?

This is what you will find at JCPRD.com/activities

**VIEW THE CATEGORIES**

- **Fun For All**
- **Preschool**
- **Youth**
- **Special Populations**
- **Adult**
- **50 Plus**

First look under the age group

Then by interest category

We’re taking every precaution to provide a safe environment for learning and social engagement.

**Interest Categories**

Aquatics  Birthday Parties  Camps  Early Childhood  Enrichment & Special Interests  Fine & Performing Arts  Fitness & Health  Gymnastics  Heritage & History  Nature & Outdoors  Special Events  Special Pops  Special Olympics  Sports  Sports Leagues Adult  Sports Leagues Youth  Travel

Visit JCPRD.com/activities or call (913) 831-3359 for information and/or to register
Already know what you’re looking for?

This is what you will find at JCPRD.com/register

Search by keyword or activity number

During inclement weather go to rainoutline.com and search JCPRD for updates on trails, parks, facilities, and programs

We have space for your next event, details at JCPRD.com/rentals
Swing into spring & summer, visit JCPARD.com/golf today!

MAY - AUGUST SPECIAL EVENTS

- **Enchanted Fairytale Forest** (All Ages)
  May 1, Ernie Miller Nature Center

- **Family Bingo Night** (All Ages)
  May 7, Roeland Park Community Center

- **Free Day at the Johnson County Museum**
  June 5, Johnson County Arts & Heritage Center

- **HP3 5K, 10K, & 15K** (All Ages)
  May 8, Heritage Park

- **50 Plus Anniversary Special - Gameshows of the 80s**
  May 20 & Aug. 19, Roeland Park Community Center

- **S’mores Family Geocaching** (All Ages)
  May 21 & July 9, Shawnee Mission Park

- **Museum Exhibit: Paul McCobb - America’s Designer**
  Begins May 22, Johnson County Arts & Heritage Center

- **Shawnee Mission Park Adventure Race** (All Ages)
  May 22, Shawnee Mission Park

- **50 Plus Summer Shindig**
  May 26, Meadowbrook Park Clubhouse

- **A Day in the Park** (All Ages)
  June 5, Shawnee Mission and Kill Creek parks

- **The Great American Family Campout** (All Ages)
  June 5, Shawnee Mission Park

- **Free Fishing, Boating, Archery Weekend** (All Ages)
  June 5 & 6, JCPARD parks where activities are permissible

- **Treasure Tails Geocaching** (All Ages)
  June 6, Meadowbrook Park

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

- **Summer Solstice Party** (All Ages)
  June 19, Meadowbrook Park Clubhouse

- **50 Plus Travel Show**
  June 29, Meadowbrook Park Clubhouse

- **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

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

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

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

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

Visit JCPARD.com/activities for details and registration information

For current employment opportunities go to JCPARD.com/jobs
Shawnee Mission Park has a newly redesigned eastern entrance with a memorial plaza honoring John Lewis Barkley. Barkley was a World War I Medal of Honor recipient, a dairy farmer, land developer and the first superintendent of the county’s park district.

“John Barkley had a love for nature, combined with a vision and dedication to provide public park space for the community to enjoy outdoor recreation and nature,” said Jeff Stewart, Johnson County Park and Recreation District executive director. “This was the great beginning of developing a park and recreation system highly valued by the community and nationally acclaimed.”

Barkley came to Johnson County in 1936, settling in Mission Township and marrying Marguerite Mullen whose farming family settled in Johnson County prior to the Civil War.

“Dad didn’t talk much about the war. Not really at all,” said his daughter, Joan Barkley Wells. “He liked to describe himself as a Missouri backwoodsman and a Kansas dairy farmer.”

After the dairy operation ceased circa 1950, Barkley helped develop the farm for commercial and residential use. In the early 1950s, with a county population of approximately 65,000, he led acquisition and development for a park system to benefit a growing Johnson County.

Barkley acquired approximately 1,300 acres for development of the first two parks in the Shawnee Mission Park District, now called the Johnson County Park and Recreation District (JCPRD) since 1969. He retired as superintendent of the park district in 1963 and died two years later at age 70.

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

The new John Barkley Plaza features seat walls, a shade pavilion, a drinking fountain, a BikeShare rack and a bike-fix-it station along with an existing flagpole near the park entrance. Users of the plaza will have access to existing restrooms in the nearby JCPRD Administration Building, available whenever the park is open. Informational kiosks, including a park map, will be located near the north and south parking areas.

Barkley Wells believes her father would be humbled by these tributes.

“I think he would be surprised, really, about having something like this (plaza) in his honor,” she said. “He would also be really surprised about how the park district has grown to what it is now. He would be really pleased.”

Dedication for the new John Barkley Plaza is set for April 24 (tentatively scheduled to start at 10 a.m.) with a public ceremony requiring physical distancing and face masks.
Protecting our county’s resources and leaving our community better than we found it requires the collaboration of Johnson County Government and its residents. As we head into warmer weather and the season of “spring cleaning,” residents can learn more about the county’s role in sustainability, along with brushing up on the contributions they can make.

Household Hazardous Waste (HHW)
Since 1993, Johnson County Government has operated a HHW facility, allowing Johnson County residents and small businesses to safely dispose of unused or unwanted chemicals. Located in northern Johnson County, this facility accepts paint, stain, batteries, household cleaners, used gasoline and other household chemicals.

Since it first opened, the county’s HHW facility has collected more than 12 million pounds of waste from more than 200,000 residents such as Cheryl Johnson.

“I am grateful to have a place to take my old paint and chemicals that keeps it out of the environment,” Johnson said. “The staff is so helpful and makes it easy to do the right thing.”

In 2019, 113,600 lbs. of materials were reused through the HHW FreeStore. Nearly 10,000 gallons of usable latex paint were recycled through the Paint Recycling Program. Usable latex paint is mixed into several different colors on site, available for purchase for $20–$35 per 5-gallon bucket.

“Giving these items a second life and keeping them out of the environment where they could pollute our water and soil or end up in the landfill benefits everyone,” said Trent Thompson, Johnson County’s environmental programs manager.

Johnson County is exploring locations for a future HHW facility site. More information on this program is available at jocogov.org/hhw or by calling 913-715-6907.

Green Business Program
Unlike residential households, access to recycling in businesses, schools and places of worship is not required. However, many of these organizations are passionate about protecting the environment. Through the Green Business Program, Johnson County helps organizations start recycling programs, provides education to their employees and customers, or to begin composting. Since 2010, the Johnson County Green Business program has worked with 165 organizations and certified 108 of them.

For the past several years, Johnson County has worked with the Shawnee Mission School District to develop a composting and recycling program in the cafeterias of all its schools and administrative centers. What started as a grassroots effort at Briarwood Elementary has grown into a program that has reduced waste by more than 200 tons per year. Johnson County has worked with the district to educate students about the benefits of waste diversion and coordinate signage.

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

If you are interested in learning more about this program, applying for assistance, or looking into becoming certified, contact Charles Marx at charles.marx@jocogov.org or 913-715-6981.

Solid Waste Management
In Kansas, counties are responsible for solid waste planning including trash, recycling, composting, construction and demolition waste, and other reduction and reuse efforts. In Johnson County, these efforts are led by the Johnson County Solid Waste Management Committee. The committee is a group of mayoral appointed representatives from several Johnson County cities and representatives from different solid waste industries that work in the county. Along with Health and Environment staff, they plan for the future of solid waste in a quickly growing county.

Solid Waste Management plans are completed every five years, with the most recent plan completed in 2019.

- 2007 plan: Required recycling services for all single-family homes and restricting yard waste from the landfill. These efforts increased the diversion rate (how much we are keeping out of the landfill) from 21% to 29%.

- 2013 plan: Focused on reducing waste from businesses and schools, increasing diversion rates from 29% to 38%.

- 2019 plan: Expanding the Green Business Program, looking for a new Household Hazardous Waste facility, decreasing the amount of food waste going into the landfill (currently at 20%), and expanding recycling access to multi-family housing.

The Solid Waste Management Committee meets every other month on the second Wednesday starting at 6 p.m. Interested residents may attend these meetings which are currently being held over Zoom. More information on future meetings can be found at jocogov.org or by calling Brandon Hearn at 913-715-6936.
Getting ready to do some spring cleaning? Please keep these FAQs and resources handy as you find unwanted items.

What can I do with my e-waste?
Johnson County electronic recycling events usually begin in March. Charges may apply depending on the item. Electronic recycling locations include the City of Olathe Household Hazardous Waste facility (for Olathe residents ONLY), Secure E-Cycle located off of I-35 and Lamar, additional locations can be found at jocogov.org/recycling101.

How about clothes, toys, furniture?
Donation and recycling options can be found at recyclspot.org.

What do I do with my glass?
Glass should never go in your regular curbside recycle. Ripple Glass (the big purple bins) provide a wonderful option for glass recycling. Accepted glass: food and beverage glass, drink glasses, candle jars, glass cosmetic jars, windows. Not accepted: Lightbulbs or mirrors.

Can I recycle plastics?
Yes and no. You can recycle SOME plastic bottles and containers with the #1–7 inside arrow symbol on the container. The main numbered plastics accepted for recycling are #1 (drink bottles), #2 (milk jugs, detergent) and #5 (yogurt containers). More information is available at jocogov.org/recycling101.

What can I do with leftover paints or chemicals?
The Johnson County Household Hazardous Waste facility located in the northeast part of the county is open year-round, you can schedule a drop off at jocogov.org/hhw or by calling 913-715-6907. Olathe also has a facility that any Johnson County resident can use, more information can be found at olatheks.org/government/utilities/recycling/household-hazardous-waste or calling 913-971-8600.

Plastics NOT to put in your recycle bin:
Any type of plastic not a bottle or container or without a number on it. No plastic bags, film, product wrap, plastic straws or utensils.

What shouldn’t I put in my recycle bin?
Styrofoam cups, takeout containers, frozen food containers, medical and personal hygiene products, paper towels, napkins and tissues (could possibly be composted), shredded paper, tanglers (i.e. hoses, VHS tapes, hangers or similar items that could get tangled in recycling equipment.)

What can I do with my food waste?
Food waste should never go in your recycle bin. Reducing food waste by buying the correct amount of food is the first step. You can also extend the life of your food by freezing. Composting is another option and can either be done in your backyard or by using one of two companies that provide curbside collection: Food Cycle KC (foodcyclekc.com) and Compost Collective KC (compostcollectivekc.com).

What can I put in my recycle bin?
Cardboard: Flatten boxes but no need to remove the tape. Wet or food contaminated cardboard should go in the trash. If cardboard won’t fit in your bin, find a community drop off locations at recyclspot.org.

Paper: Paperboard (cereal boxes, food boxes), mail (no need to remove the plastic window), office paper, magazines, catalogs, phone books, and newspaper. Paper cartons are accepted if empty and rinsed out. All recyclables should be free of food waste and liquid.

Metals: Accepted metals include aluminum cans, steel/tin cans, and clean aluminum foil and pans. Loose lids and caps may not be recycled because of their size. Other scrap metal can be recycled at the Overland Park Recycling Center, other options can be found at recyclspot.org.

Questions? Contact Brandon Hearn with the Johnson County Department of Health and Environment at brandon.hearn@jocogov.org or 913-715-6936.

Follow Johnson County Recycles
jocogov.org
What if you had a card in your pocket that served as a 24/7, all-access pass to information, entertainment, education and resources that may improve your quality of life? It doesn’t come with a monthly subscription, data charges or tuition fees. It never runs out of battery or is out-of-date, and there are hundreds of trusted customer service representatives ready to customize your experience.

Sound intriguing that one, simple card can offer so many benefits, with no fine print? You may have this card in your wallet already—it’s your Johnson County Library card. If you don’t have one, it’s free and easy to get one. To get a physical card, bring your current ID to one of our 14 locations. If you only want to access our extensive collection of online resources rather than check out materials, Johnson County residents can sign up for an eCard on jocolibrary.org to start exploring right away. New cardholders can choose from three new sleek, simple card designs in red, blue and black. The black cards are designed to be customized, reading “The card preferred by…” followed by a blank space to make it your own. Children (and adults!) can also personalize the cards with our new Johnson County Library stickers, featuring our beloved 6 by 6 characters.

Modern libraries are about so much more than books; both new and lifelong cardholders may be surprised at just how much we have to offer. You can check out DVDs, music and video games, access hundreds of eResources from on-demand homework help to Consumer Reports and learn new skills through online courses. And though many in-person services are currently virtual due to the pandemic, you can discover your family history through our Genealogy Center and access high-tech equipment through our Black and Veatch MakerSpace.

Even if you can’t make it into a Library branch, you’ll never be without reading material. We offer more than 50,000 eBook and eAudiobook titles and a large selection of local, national and global eNewspapers and eMagazines, all available to read on the device of your choice. If you prefer to watch something, you can stream television shows, documentaries, indie films, live theatre and kids’ favorites from around the world.

Our expert Librarians also serve the community through hundreds of interactive, timely and engaging programs each year, including over 800 virtual programs since summer 2020. From daily story times and weekly book parties on Facebook, to author visits, workshops, concerts, film screenings, career development and financial planning seminars, and even our annual Writer’s Conference, the Library offers a safe place to explore your interests and connect with your community. Once we are able to offer in-person programming again, we’ll continue to host a wide range of virtual events you can enjoy from wherever you are.

Johnson County Library truly has something for every age, interest, background and dream. Next time you’re looking for something to do, have a question to answer, or are ready to rewrite your life’s story, we hope you’ll turn to the Library first. All you need is one Library card to get started.
April is National Volunteer Month

Johnson County Government thanks volunteers who helped out during COVID-19

BY BRANDY HODGE, AMBER BOUREK-SLATER, JOSH KING, REBEKAH BRANCH

Johnson County Government relies heavily on volunteers. During COVID-19, several volunteer opportunities may have changed, but remained crucial for the organization. In honor of April as National Volunteer Month, we thank our community members who helped during this difficult time.

Aging and Human Services
Volunteers are crucial for delivering meals to seniors, transporting residents to medical appointments, and running food pantries. During the stay-at-home order, Johnson County Government employees took on those roles. Last summer, volunteers willing to assist during the pandemic came back, and new ones offered to pitch in.

“When we were ready to bring back volunteers, a recruitment campaign ensured enough volunteers were available to deliver meals,” said Brandy Hodge, community relations manager, Aging and Human Services. “Nearly 300 new volunteers joined our team, many of them after the pandemic began. Thanks to them, residents received a hot, nutritious meal and a welfare check from a friendly face.”

In order to keep volunteers as safe as possible, AHS made some adjustments to processes and schedules and added requirements for social distancing in a vehicle and mask wearing. Food pantry volunteers transitioned to a curbside service for the many households struggling with a loss of income during the pandemic.

Volunteers make voting possible in Johnson County
The Johnson County Election Office was not alone in the struggle to find enough election workers during a pandemic. This predicament became a national topic, with former presidents, celebrities, late-night news personalities and social organizations making recruiting election workers a priority.

An unimaginable number of new volunteers answered the call in Johnson County. In the eight months leading up to the election, nearly 3,200 residents applied — a total that eclipsed the applications received in the previous four years combined. Voluntary election workers showed up at polling places at 4:30 a.m. on Nov. 3 to make voting possible in the middle of a pandemic.

“Their smiles, hidden by their masks, were felt by the voters that they served with courteous, professional service,” said Josh King, Johnson County Election Office Assistant Election Commissioner. “Our elections in 2020 would not have been possible without their generous and selfless support.”

COVID-19 changes the volunteer experience at the Johnson County Library
COVID-19 sidelined nearly a thousand library volunteers at home for three months while Johnson County Library coordinated plans for their safe return. With the limited availability of PPE early on, some volunteers used that time and their sewing skills to create masks.

150 library volunteers completed online COVID-19 safety training and returned, masked, in June 2020. Volunteers in public-facing roles, such as at the Friends of Johnson County Library bookstores, have been wearing masks behind plexiglass partitions. These volunteers have also showed resiliency as capacity limits have changed shifts.

During the pandemic, Corinth branch volunteer Melinda Speak saw an increase in the volume of holds material that she shelves. “I think it speaks to the important roles that the library plays and how people are spending more time at home with books, movies and music,” said Speak.

When COVID-19 prevented the Friends of the Library popular used-book sales and limited traffic in its bookstores, the Friends began utilizing more volunteers to help with online book sales. The Friends’ Sort Center is now open six days a week, with two different volunteer shifts a day to ensure social distancing. This dedicated group of both longtime and new volunteers has increased online sales by 150%.

Continuing Research and Extension programming for the community
Thanks to volunteers, Johnson County K-State Research and Extension continued several programs, with some adjustments. Extension Master Gardeners practiced social distancing outside, wore masks and limited the number of volunteers on projects. They maintained their current seven demonstration gardens while creating two new gardens in Prairie Village and Shawnee.

Extension Master Food Volunteers continued many programs during the pandemic, including Extension Master Food Volunteers, who held cooking classes via Zoom.

Extension Master Food Volunteers held four Zoom cooking classes, delivering ingredients to people who registered. The Extension Master Naturalists created a program that allows people to have bluebird boxes in their own yard.

Johnson County Extension received a grant in September aimed at helping with social isolation in older adults due to COVID-19. Volunteers helped host free virtual events to bring social connections with other people in a safe environment.
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 Johnson County Board of County Commissioners (BOCC) unanimously approved a resolution to establish a 25-member Charter Commission with eight members named by the board. The other 17 charter members were appointed by organizations representing state legislators, political parties, chambers of commerce, council of mayors and rural Johnson County.

Establishment of a Charter Commission is required by the county’s Home Rule Charter. Under the provisions of the charter, the BOCC must convene a commission every 10 years to study and make recommendations about the structure and operations of the county government, including possible amendments to the charter. The commission must submit a final report of its findings and recommendations by March 1, 2022, to the BOCC.

The county’s first Charter Commission was established in May 1999 and issued its report a year later with recommendations that the county adopt a Home Rule Charter form of government along with three interrelated questions for voters to decide in the operational structure of county government:

• Appointment of a County Manager and elimination of three elected officers – County Treasurer, County Clerk and Register of Deeds – with the positions to be appointed by the County Manager.

• Increase the number of the Board of County Commissioners from five to seven members, including a publicly elected, At-Large Chairman.

• Non-partisan elections for County Commissioners.

Johnson County voters approved all three questions in the November 2000 General Election.

The county’s second Charter Commission was formed in January 2011 and issued its final report in February 2012. The commission proposed no amendments to the county’s Home Rule Charter that would have required voter approval.

Welcome to new BOCC members:
Johnson County Government and the BOCC welcome new 2nd District Commissioner Jeff Meyers, new 3rd District Commissioner Charlotte O’Hara and new 6th District Commissioner Shirley Allenbrand. Find their bios at jocogov.org/BOCC.
More than 200,000 Johnson County residential property owners received their annual Notice of Appraised Values (NOAVs) for 2021 earlier this month. In Johnson County, about 89% of residential values increased for the 2021 valuation year. The average increase across the county is around just under 5% (excluding sales and new construction) and 88% of residential property values increased by 10% or less or experienced a reduction in value.

Areas that experienced the highest value increases:
• Parts of Prairie Village (Central)
• Merriam/North Overland Park
• DeSoto
• Older areas of Shawnee
• Merriam
• Southeast Johnson County

How is my property appraised?
“By state law, property is appraised at fair market value as it exists on Jan. 1 of each year,” said Johnson County Appraiser Beau Boisvert. “Fair market value means the amount that a well-informed buyer is justified in paying, and a well-informed seller is justified in accepting, in an open-competitive market.”

A property’s appraised value will go up or down depending upon the local housing market. When supply is low and demand for homes is high in the area, property values go up. The County Appraiser uses local market sales data to generate a property value and analyze the property based upon its age, size, style of construction and replacement cost. In order to stay in compliance, the County Appraiser must appraise homes within 90 to 110 percent of their value.

How to appeal
The Appraiser’s Office has installed a permanent drop box at its building, located at 11811 S. Sunset Drive in Olathe. For the convenience of our property owners, it is located outside next to the building’s front-loading zone.

The drop box is for residents to drop off Informal Appeal Applications and evidence only. In 2019 the County Appraiser’s office introduced a webpage and residential online appeal option which is available for commercial property owners beginning this year. The online appeal uses a unique PIN provided to the property owner on the mailed NOAV. The webpage allows residents to access our mapping and property value information in a single location. Residents can find a PDF version of their NOAV on the webpage as well.

The deadline for commercial appeals is March 17. The deadline for residential appeals is March 31.

For more information about NOAVs, to appeal online and to view the 2021 Johnson County Appraiser’s Office Revaluation Report, please visit jocogov.org/appraiser.
Grass clippings can either be good or bad for the environment, depending on how you treat them. They can feed your lawn or impair water quality. The choice is yours.

Clippings make their way into ponds and streams, where they decay and release harmful nutrients. When this organic matter breaks down, it overwhelms the water creating algae growth, harming fish, causing murky water, and increasing purification cost.

It is easy to keep clippings and organic debris out of streams and ponds. Discharge the clippings back on the yard, instead of blowing them into the street. The lawn acts like a thirsty sponge catching and holding the clippings where they decompose. Once broken down, they improve soil and release nutrients back into the lawn. As much as 25% of the fertilizer used goes back into feeding the lawn. After mowing, sweep or blow them back onto the lawn. Next time you reach for a glass of water, take pride in knowing you did your part to ensure it’s crystal clear and refreshing.

Over the years, The Best Times has made several changes.
- **September 1982:** Began as a bimonthly newspaper, originally called The Best Years. The name was changed to The Best Times a year later because of a registered trademark conflict.
- **March 2000:** Opened to advertising with the goal of making it largely self-supporting and less dependent on county budget funding.
- **September 2000:** Became a monthly publication.
- **May 2014:** Changed to the current magazine format.
- **July 2016:** Returned to a bimonthly publication to address escalating costs.

A recent survey of readers indicated 98% prefer receiving a printed The Best Times by mail, which is why the print version will continue for an audience surpassing 73,000 households. Whether digital or print, The Best Times’ purpose remains unchanged — to inform, educate and support 60-plus adults in Johnson County.
The Adult Residential Center College of Trades (COT) program teach inmates the technical skills necessary to complete a specific job and the soft skills necessary to maintain and be successful on the job. Current courses available include welding, blueprint, construction, OSHA, forklift, culinary and digital literacy.

Juvenile Detention youth stay connected to the community and help solve problems with the Discovery Education Program through Uncover KC. Projects have included activity bags for homeless shelters, chew toys for animal shelters, and marketing materials for social justice organizations. While helping others, participants develop empathy for those in need.

When a police interaction involves children in need of care or youth charged with law violations, this triage tool, in partnership with law enforcement, ensures youth and families have their needs met. Intake Specialists connect youth and their families to support services and case management and ensure youth accountability.

Due to COVID-19, both facilities at the Juvenile Detention Center and Adult Residential Center had to stop in-person visitation. We quickly modified visitation by utilizing virtual technology because we recognize the importance of ensuring the individuals in our custody maintain connections to their loved ones.

Positive Behavior Supports (PBS) encourages success by being proactive and preventative. A client’s positive behavior is recognized and reinforced immediately and consistently when they demonstrate the expectations. Staff redirects clients when their actions may lead them into a troublesome situation and help them develop more acceptable actions before things escalate.

This program is for individuals in the justice system experiencing housing insecurity. Participants can continue working, receive transportation to and from their job, and get help looking for permanent housing. Individuals can stay in the program for up to 60 days at no charge while saving money for housing.

Corrections partners with Olathe Public Schools, Olathe Police, Olathe Fire, Johnson County Mental Health Center, Olathe Public Library and many community volunteers. The Spot provides a safe, free space for the Olathe youths, grades six through twelve, to build their social capacity and work with mentors every Tuesday from 3–5 p.m.

Eligible people awaiting plea/sentencing/trial can stay in the Adult Residential Center, rather than jail, to receive individualized programming and work release. To assist in helping them keep their jobs, Corrections has partnered with the University of Notre Dame’s Lab for Economic Opportunities on a study that will measure outcomes such as success during probation, employment/wages, financial security and long-term recidivism.

Both clients and the community benefit when you get involved with Corrections. We rely on volunteers to provide support and community engagement to the clients we serve, as many of them feel disconnected and unwanted by society. We look forward to these volunteer opportunities becoming available again after the pandemic.
#SleeveUpJoCo

1. **Tell us who you are.**

If you are eligible for Phase 2 and haven't already, complete an interest survey online at [jocogov.org/covid-19-vaccine](http://jocogov.org/covid-19-vaccine)

2. **Be patient while looking for an opportunity.**

In Phase 2 we are vaccinating people 65 and older, emergency responders, teachers and other high-contact workers. Your health care system may reach out to you and check their websites frequently as well as pharmacies. As we get more doses, opportunities will increase.

3. **Be safe.**

Even after you receive your second dose, you will want to take the same precautions you’ve been taking all along:

- wear a mask
- wash your hands
- stay 6 feet apart

Vaccination information changes quickly. Please stay current on this topic at [jocogov.org/covid-19-vaccine](http://jocogov.org/covid-19-vaccine)

We are here to help and inform you!

**Call us!**
913-715-2819

**Email us!**
jcdhe@jocogov.org

**Visit our website!**
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