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**About the Cover:**
The Octave Chanute Memorial on Mainstreet in Chanute honors Octave Chanute, and the Wright Brothers. With this mobile replication of the Wright brother’s flying machine. See related article about this Southeast city and the 17 counties that are planning for a better future, beginning on page 76. Photo provided by the City of Chanute.
Kansas Government Journal

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The mission of the League shall be to unify, strengthen, and advocate for the interests of Kansas municipalities to advance the general welfare and promote the quality of life of the people who live within our cities.

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June

7 - Governing Body Meeting, Phillipsburg
14 - CAAK: Spring Meeting and CLE, Kansas City
20 - MLA: City Clerk Fundamentals, Scott City
21 - MLA: City Clerk Fundamentals, Concordia
27 - MLA: City Clerk Fundamentals, Neodesha
28 - MLA: City Clerk Fundamentals, Roeland Park

August

17 - MLA: KOMA/KORA, Hutchinson
23 - MLA: KOMA/KORA, Emporia
24 - MLA: KOMA/KORA, Merriam

Obituaries

Robert W. Blow, Jr., 67, died January 7, 2013, at his home after a long and courageous battle with cancer. Blow served on the Havensville City Council, the Havensville Volunteer Fire Department, and was a member of the Havensville Lions Club. Blow owned his own business, B.B. Automotive in Havensville.

Jean Deiter, 79, died January 8, 2013, at Midland Care Hospice of Topeka. Jean was a long time resident of Silver Lake. She served 8 years on Silver Lake School Board District 372. She served on Silver Lake’s City Council for 15 years and was a member of Silver Lake Senior Citizens. Jean was an active member of St. Stanislaus Catholic Church in Rossville for 47 years and Mother Teresa Catholic Church since 2005.

Phyllis Jean Freeman, 66, died January 8, 2013, at her home in Edwardsville. She worked for Harbor Brothers Construction for many years, and in the mid 1980s started working for the City of Edwardsville as the Treasurer until she wasn’t able to work due to illness. After she recovered from that first bout with cancer she went back to work for the City of Edwardsville as the City Clerk, a position she held for the last 24 years retiring in July of 2012. Phyllis was involved in many civic organizations such as the Bonner Springs-Edwardsville Chamber of Commerce and the Vaughn-Trent Community Services.

Michael Jackson, 48, died January 10, 2013, at his home. He was a volunteer fireman with the Cedar Point Fire Department and served on the Chase County Fair Board and Cedar Point City Council. Jackson also served as the Chase County Kansas Livestock Association Director and was a 4-H Leader. He was a founding member of the Chase County High School (CCHS) Bulldog Booster Club and was instrumental in expanding the CCHS weight room.

Harold R. Lusk, 89, died February 5, 2013 at the V.A. Hospital in Topeka. Lusk was Osage County Sheriff, and retired as Chief of Law Enforcement for the Kansas Fish and Game. He served on the Osage City Council and was a Past President of the Osage City Chamber of Commerce. Lusk was President of the Kansas Sheriffs’ Association, President of Midwest Fish and Game Law Enforcement Association, Chairman and founding member of the Capital Area Major Case Squad.
Kansas First Lady Mary Brownback announced the winners of the 2013 Kansas Book Festival Grants.

“The Kansas Book Festival works year round to promote literacy and encourage a life-long love of reading,” First Lady Brownback said. “These grants will help preserve and improve local and school libraries across the state.”

The 16 public and school libraries will share in receiving a portion of the $12,555 in grants.

On March 20, 2016, Representatives from the Blue Rapids Public Library, Rossville Community Library, Lawrence Gardner High School Library, Central Heights Elementary School Library, Lebo School Library, and Tipton Community Grade School attended the Older Worker Awards ceremony at the Topeka and Shawnee County Public Library.

The 16 public and school libraries will share in receiving a portion of the $12,555 in grants.

The Older Worker Awards ceremony honors older workers who have continued to play a very important role in the Kansas workforce and economy, as well as their employers. Honorees were selected from a pool of nominees that included workers age 55 and older, employed in both public and private sector jobs, and businesses and companies that regularly employ workers age 55 and older.

A complete list of individuals and businesses that received awards can be found at http://www.kansascommerce.com/civilalerts.aspx?AID=828.

Governor Signs Highways Bill

Kansas Governor Sam Brownback signed a bill into law that will produce consistency and savings in the operation of Kansas highways. House Bill 2234, which takes effect July 1, makes the Kansas Department of Transportation (KDOT) Secretary Mike King the Director of Operations of the Kansas Turnpike Authority (KTA).

“Secretary King said teams from KDOT and KTA will look for savings through the consolidation and reduction of assets such as land and buildings, and in the sharing of resources in areas such as technology and engineering services.

“Kansans have come to expect good highways whether they are traveling on the state system or the turnpike, and there is nothing about this operational arrangement that will change that,” Sec. King said. “It is unlikely travelers on the turnpike will notice any changes as a result of the legislation.”

King said toll revenues, which have always been used to improve and maintain the turnpike, will continue to be used exclusively for those purposes.

Kansas Ranks Among Most Friendly States For Small Business

For the second consecutive year, Kansas has received high marks in Thumbtack.com’s Small Business Survey. Kansas received an overall grade of an “A” for Small Business Friendliness, up from an “A-” in 2012. The grade was the seventh highest in the country.

The rankings were released by Thumbtack.com in partnership with the Ewing Marion Kauffman Foundation as part of its second annual Small Business Survey. The survey is based on data gathered from an extensive, nationwide group of small business owners, freelancers, and entrepreneurs in order to rank the best environments needed to help small businesses grow and succeed in places in the country to do business.

“These rankings are a great sign that we’re creating the business environment needed to help small businesses grow and succeed in the state,” said Kansas Commerce Secretary Pat George. “What is most exciting is that after scoring highly in 2012, Kansas improved over the next year, becoming an even better state for business. We have to continue to make our state as great as possible for all of the small businesses that drive our economic growth.”

Kansas received its overall grade thanks to a strong showing in several categories. Key findings revealed the following:

- Kansas scored an “A” for ease of starting a new business.
- The state also ranked highly in its licensing and environmental regulations, with an “A-” in those categories.
- The state’s grades rose significantly in tax code, improving from a “B-” in 2012 to a “B+” in 2013, and in regulations, improving from a “C+” last year to a “B+” in the current rankings.
- Kansas also received “B+” rankings in the categories of employment, labor and hiring, and zoning regulations.

Kansas Book Festival Grant Winners Announced

The Kansas Department of Commerce and the Older Worker Task Force hosted the 16th Annual Older Worker and Employers Awards ceremony at the Topeka and Shawnee County Public Library on April 10, 2013. Six individuals, one business, and seven organizations that serve or employ older workers were recognized at the event.

“It was a privilege meeting these great Kansas workers and representatives from organizations that serve them,” Kansas Commerce Secretary Pat George said. “The work ethic and experience of these workers is prized by businesses, and it’s terrific that we get to honor them. Of the many great older workers in Kansas, today’s honorees stood out for their amazing contributions to their employers, communities, and our economy.”

The Older Worker Awards ceremony honors older workers who continue to play a very important role in the Kansas workforce and economy, as well as their employers. Honorees were selected from a pool of nominees that included workers age 55 and older, employed in both public and private sector jobs, and businesses and companies that regularly employ workers age 55 and older.

A complete list of individuals and businesses that received awards can be found at http://kansasbookfestival.com/press-room/.
The City of Pittsburg and Pittsburg State University (PSU) have a long tradition of cooperation. This spirit dates back to 1914. Just 10 years after the school’s founding, a fire destroyed the primary campus building and threatened the future of the young campus. Less than 24 hours later, community members, students, and business leaders came together to pledge more than $100,000 to help rebuild the structure and assure the University’s future. Many things have changed in the City since that time, but the bond between Pittsburg and Pittsburg State continues to be a source of strength for the community.

The University has seen its enrollment grow by 10% since 2005, and more than 7,200 students currently call PSU home. The impact on our local economy from the students, faculty, and visitors is significant. A recent economic study estimates each student will spend an average of $10,225 for a total economic impact of $73 million. PSU is also our largest employer. More than 1,700 people work on campus and provide a direct economic impact of $56.5 million. We understand PSU is one of our most important economic engines, and I am confident that other "gown-towns" agree.

Like many smaller communities, the City of Pittsburg is challenged to provide the convention and hotel space needed to host large trade shows which would significantly impact our local economy.

In 2012, PSU, understanding the City’s desire for additional convention space, approached Pittsburg with a unique request. They asked the City to sell municipal bonds in the amount of $7.6 million toward the completion of their $17 million planned indoor event center. The event center was an important part of a $61.2 million capital investment plan, which included the construction of a Center for the Arts ($30 million) and a renovated and expanded Student Center ($14 million). The indoor event center would host indoor track and field competitions, provide the Gorillas an indoor practice facility for football and track, and, in exchange for its contribution, the City would use the facility to host conventions.

The idea of partnering with PSU was enticing, especially if it would allow the City to attract business not previously possible. However, Pittsburg, like most communities, was coming out of the Great Recession and had many challenges. As we assembled a team of City staff to work on PSU’s proposal, several questions were pressing. Among them:

1. Would this be an appropriate use of City funds?
2. How does this project compare with the rest of our capital projects?
3. What opportunity does this present for the citizens?
4. How will our response affect the ongoing relationship with the University?
5. What final agreement will the Commission be able to unanimously support?

With assistance from our attorney and bond counsel, we determined that we could legally issue bonds for the project. However, we found that a $7.6 million bond and the associated interest would actually bring the total closer to $9 million. Furthermore, because the City did not want to be a partial owner of a university facility located on state property, we decided to look at other options for contributing to the project.

“The hospitality industry in Pittsburg has been limited by our number of rooms and at least one large, open space. This project and the prospect of additional hotel properties, would allow Pittsburg to compete at a high level within the region.” Said, B.J. Harris, Crawford County Convention and Visitors Bureau Director.

“The new indoor event center that will be utilized by Pittsburg State University Athletics and the City to host conventions. Photo provided by City of Pittsburg.
We examined our resources and weighed the event center against other projects vying for funding. Like all cities, we had significant infrastructure and capacity improvement needs funded through traditional capital improvement funding sources, and the event center did not fall into this category. After further discussion, it was determined that the event center was in reality an economic development opportunity. The fundamental value the City would realize is the ability to host activities for organizations we previously could not serve, on a scale we previously were unable to accommodate. The economic impact of this new capability easily justified the project as economic development, and this allowed us to access other funding sources.

“This facility gives us an excellent opportunity for indoor programming, which creates a safe, comfortable environment for citizens. In a single meeting, opportunities for PSU athletes, economic development through hosting indoor track competitions, and the availability for the Parks and Recreation Department to host programs and citizen events were framed into a schedule.” Said Kim Vogel, Pittsburg Parks and Recreation Director.

As is the case with most cities, economic development is one of Pittsburg’s highest priorities. Thanks to Pittsburg taxpayers, one of the economic development tools at our disposal is a Revolving Loan Fund (RLF) financed through a quarter cent sales tax. Proceeds from this tax are used to provide low interest gap financing, grants, and capital investment for a myriad of projects. In order to loan these funds, the City requires a recommendation from the Economic Development Advisory Council (EDAC), accompanied with the appropriate financial analysis.

Since the City was primarily interested in the availability of a place to hold large conventions, it was decided the most appropriate way for the City to participate in the project would be in the form of a long-term lease. Over the course of several months, while the University was preparing their financial analysis for the EDAC and the Pittsburg City Commission, the City and the University worked on a draft lease agreement. During these discussions, we were able to come to an agreement on what would be included in the memorandum of understanding which would define our relationship.

A group consisting of representatives from the PSU Athletic Department, the Convention and Visitor’s Bureau, and the Pittsburg Parks and Recreation Department planned a year-long calendar of events to determine what could be achieved, and how many days would be available. The first priority was the University, as they would own the facility and use it to host track and field events, and to hold practices. That was always the intended primary use for the building and would account for the majority of days during each year. Hosting conventions would be the second priority and would use the majority of remaining days.

Finally, we considered the use of the building by the citizens of Pittsburg and were able to identify two opportunities. The first would give the Parks and Recreation
Department access for community events. The second would allow access to the citizens for walking around the track in the mornings.

An important part of the memorandum of understanding was the Event Coordinating Committee. It was created to manage the calendaring of activities over the course of the long-term lease. This Committee would review and schedule the calendar every six months to maximize the use of the facility. The Committee consisted of representatives from Pittsburg State, the Crawford County Convention and Visitors’ Bureau, and the City of Pittsburg Parks and Recreation Department.

When the financial analysis was completed, the University made its final presentation to the EDAC. The EDAC made a recommendation to the City Commission to support the project, however possible, in an amount not to exceed $7.6 million.

The final hurdle for the City was determining the actual financial commitment we thought was appropriate. Rather than issuing a $7.6 million bond, the City agreed to provide $1.5 million up front towards the construction of the facility and an annual payment of $175,000 for 20 years from the RLF in the name of economic development. The City and the University signed a 50-year lease for the facility that included a memorandum of understanding that could be amended without re-executing the lease.

With regard to the questions posed earlier, it was determined that this was an appropriate use of City funds and, as this was appropriately defined as economic development, bonding was not the preferred option. In addition, the City needed to participate because this was a unique opportunity for our citizens and business community to work directly with PSU.

Finally, our willingness to partner on this endeavor has solidified our relationship with Pittsburg State. The City Commission was unanimous in their support for the final agreement.

Successful partnerships involve an honest, transparent process of give and take which results in an outcome that surpasses what either party could have achieved on its own. In short, this describes our experience in Pittsburg. We are fortunate to have partnered with President Scott at Pittsburg State University, his staff, and all of the individuals who worked on finding the right solution for the community.

The lessons learned: Get the players to the table early; identify and answer the important questions regarding the project up front; spend time thinking about where you would draw your lines; be open-minded; get smart people in the room; and respect everyone’s opinions and positions.

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Right: A digital image of another part of the facility that shows the Hall of Fame and seating area. Image provided by the City of Pittsburg.

“This unique project is an outgrowth of an extraordinary relationship the University enjoys with the City of Pittsburg. While we’ve partnered on a number of projects with the City, none have reached this level of complexity and significance. Because of that, the potential benefits for both parties are enormous,” said, Dr. Steve Scott, President, Pittsburg State University.

Daron Hall is the City Manager of Pittsburg. He can be reached at daron.hall@pittks.org.
Did you know that the world’s largest baseball is in Muscotah, Kansas? The project is being spearheaded by resident Jeff Hanson and fueled by the efforts of volunteers. In true community spirit, the old water tower has been converted into a baseball that is 22 ft. in diameter. Efforts are also underway to complete a museum in honor of Muscotah native and National Baseball Hall of Famer Joe Tinker.

Joe Tinker was born July 27, 1880 in Muscotah. He was the shortstop for the Chicago Cubs and contributed to World Series wins in 1907 and 1908. The Cubs have not won the World Series since. He was elected to the Hall of Fame in 1946.

Tinker was part of the double-play trio “Tinker to Evers to Chance” which was immortalized in the poem, “Baseball’s Sad Lexicon” by Franklin P. Adams. The poem is told from the perspective of a New York Giants fan watching the Cubs to complete a double-play.

Baseball’s Sad Lexicon
by Franklin P. Adams

New York Evening Mail, July, 1910
These are the saddest of possible words:
“Tinker to Evers to Chance.”
Trio of bear cubs, and fleeter than birds,
Tinker and Evers and Chance.
Ruthlessly pricking our gnomulous bubble,
Making a Giant hit into a double
Words that are heavy with nothing but trouble:
“Tinker to Evers to Chance.”


If you have a story that you think should be shared in this column, email LKM Deputy Director Kimberly Winn at kwinn@lkms.org. Photos provided by Kansas Sampler, www.kansassampler.org.
WHY BELONG TO NLC?

The National League of Cities is THE voice for municipalities of all sizes in Washington, DC, as well as THE resource for local leaders and city staff to find solutions to the most pressing challenges in their communities.

Did you know…?

NLC shares a close relationship with the 49 state municipal leagues. It was originally formed by a core group of state leagues to ensure representation in Washington for local governments. NLC still counts all of the 49 state leagues as voting members, and cities are required to belong to their state league prior to joining NLC.

Cities who are members of the National League of Cities enjoy distinct benefits from those afforded by membership in the state municipal leagues, including:

• Representation and advocacy on the federal level,
• A vast pool of geographically diverse members to connect with,
• Its own unique set of solutions and programs designed to save your city and residents time and money, and
• Abundant NLC resources, publications, and technical assistance to help your city navigate the most difficult local government challenges.

See for yourself what it’s all about! Have your city join today and begin the NLC experience! Contact memberservices@nlc.org or (877) 827-2385, or visit www.nlc.org for more information.
Mayor Larry Wolgast proclaimed Topeka a “Purple Heart Capital City” on Friday, three days before Memorial Day.

Wolgast signed the proclamation at the request of Chapter 684, the Heartland Chapter, of the Department of Kansas, Military Order of the Purple Heart.

Chartered by Congress in 1958, the order comprises military men and women who received the Purple Heart Medal for wounds suffered in combat. Chapter 684 is composed of Purple Heart recipients in the Topeka area.

The Purple Heart is awarded to members of the U.S. Armed Forces who have been wounded or killed in combat by a declared enemy of the United States.

Friday’s proclamation said the Purple Heart is the oldest military decoration in present use, having been initially created as the Badge of Military Merit by Gen. George Washington in 1782.

The proclamation Wolgast signed encourages Topekans to “show their appreciation for the sacrifices Purple Heart recipients have made in defending our freedoms, to acknowledge their courage and to show them the honor and support they have earned.”

The proclamation recognizes the Topeka community as being supportive of those who have been awarded the Purple Heart, said Raymond L. Rhodd, past commander of the Department of Kansas for the Military Order of the Purple Heart.

Rhodd said the order’s goal is to have each of this nation’s states and territories recognize their respective capital city as a Purple Heart Capital City, with Tallahassee, Fla., having been the first to receive the distinction.

Efforts to build an aviation museum at Salina Regional Airport are getting a boost from the Peggy and Steve Fossett Foundation.

The foundation, named for the late adventurer and aviation pioneer, issued a $1 million challenge grant to help build the Wings Over Salina Museum and Aviation Experience. The grant will match contributions to the project.

Salina was the site of two of Steve Fossett’s aviation exploits.

NetWork Kansas has awarded Johnson County, the City of Parsons, and the City of Wichita with community-level economic gardening engagements through the statewide Kansas Economic Gardening Network. These community applications will support at least 16 economic gardening engagements worth more than $56,000 with second-stage businesses.

NetWork Kansas launched a second round of economic gardening engagements in October 2012 with the Economic Gardening Community application. Kansas communities can apply for one of nine openings in the program that will be awarded matching funds to sponsor the cost of economic gardening services for high-growth businesses in their area.

NetWork Kansas closed its pilot economic gardening program in 2012. The program was funded in part by USDA Rural Development and included 28 second-stage businesses in rural Kansas. In one year, participating companies increased annual revenues by a total of more than $22 million, a 25.9% increase. These companies also increased net employment by 165 full-time positions (a 29% increase) and 24 part-time positions (a 32% increase).

According to Carolyn Kennett, Economic Development Director for the City of Parsons, economic gardening is a valuable tool to help communities compete in a challenging economic environment.

“The services provided by the economic gardening program can identify market trends, potential partners, and data-based industry resources that can give our businesses an advantage for success,” said Kennett.

A partnership between the Wichita Technology Corporation and the City of Wichita facilitated the Wichita application.

“We are very excited about the opportunity to bring the resources of two nationally recognized programs to Wichita,” said Patricia Brasted, President, Wichita Technology Corporation. “Economic gardening and Innovation Engineering will be made available through our pilot program to several entrepreneurial growth companies in Wichita to enhance their growth and success.”

The state’s four veterans’ cemeteries in Fort Dodge, WaKeene, Winfield, and Fort Riley received the “Excellence of Appearance Award” from the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), Veterans Cemetery Grants Service (VCGS), and National Cemetery Administration (NCA).

“This is a great honor. The state of Kansas has four great veterans’ cemeteries that provide excellent options for the veterans and their eligible dependents,” Gregg Burden, Executive Director of the Kansas Commission on Veterans’ Affairs (KCVA).

The state received $19.3 million dollars from the Department of Veterans Affairs, Veterans Cemetery Grants Service, and National Cemetery Administration, for the construction of the four state Veterans’ Cemeteries. In 2002, the Kansas Veterans’ Cemetery at Fort Dodge was dedicated and opened, and in 2004, the Kansas Veterans’ Cemeteries at WaKeeney and Winfield were dedicated and opened. In 2009, the Kansas Veterans’ Cemetery at Fort Riley was dedicated and opened.

“Hopefully, this gives veterans and their dependents peace of mind knowing that their loved ones have been laid to rest at a place of dignity and honor, where the strive for excellence in all areas is the standard,” KCVA Cemetery Program Director Kafer Peele said.
THE NEXT CHAPTER
in Southeast Kansas

In a region where stories abound, 17 counties in southeast Kansas seek to tackle daunting problems and write a narrative of a better future

BY CHRIS GREEN
Roam long enough through the diverse and often beautiful landscape that makes up southeast Kansas and one is sure to find a compelling story.

Turn a corner and there will be a marker of the region’s profound history, one marked by bloody frontier battles over slavery that took place before and during the Civil War and brought to life by places such as the Fort Scott National Historic Site and the John Brown Museum State Historic Site in Osawatomie. Pass by its fields and trees and stumble upon small, tight-knit communities with graceful, century-old and older buildings standing sentry in downtowns. There are sprawling town squares filled by courthouses, gazebos or bandstands, which during the warmer months of the year may brim to life with concerts by community bands or festivals.

Head another direction and one might see signs of the resources that Kansans once summoned forth from the land in mighty quantities — coal, lead, zinc, and natural gas — and the railroad hubs and industrialization that have helped fuel the nation’s growth. The vast mineral wealth of the past century brought laborers from around the world to work the mines, smelters and other industries, including an influx from the Balkans region of southeastern Europe. The diversity created by that immigration is still celebrated in the region at festivals such as Little Balkans Days in Pittsburg.

In some places, there might be still echoes of the tumultuous political history that sometimes marked parts of the region — including labor unrest — and a fiercely unique spirit that has long distinguished the southeast from other parts of Kansas.

For decades, though, one of the dominant narratives has also been the region’s struggles, which include economic difficulties, deeply entrenched poverty and indicators that it’s the least healthy region of the state. These days, though, efforts are taking shape to turn the page to a new chapter for this intriguing, surprising and colorful region of Kansas.

People who live in the counties that make up southeast Kansas have started the process of writing a new story for the future. It is an effort that could change not only how others talk about the region, but also the very stories that people who live there tell about themselves.

While there’s no denying that there are difficult challenges to confront here, it’s not the only story to be told. Look throughout the region and one can also see a number of bright spots or trends emerging that represent resources to leverage or provide signs of hope for better days ahead.

It is these positive sparks that the residents of southeast Kansas will attempt to make use of or build on as they create momentum for making progress on the region’s deepest, most daunting problems. In the process, they will be working to fashion a new narrative to accompany what is hoped to be significant, sustained gains for the region over the coming decades.
Refreshing Collaboration

At the top of the list in terms of regional assets for southeast Kansas are the people who live and work there, and their commitment to making it a better place to live and work.

Ottawa City Manager Richard Nienstedt says he sees the communities of southeast Kansas “surviving and moving ahead,” even in a national economic climate that can produce difficult headwinds.

“I think what you’re seeing is people who really understand that if they can’t be better, they can’t help their community be better,” says Nienstedt, who worked in Fort Scott for 14 years before coming to Ottawa in 2007. “And, they know their community can’t progress unless they are involved and getting their hands dirty.”

Communities such as Pittsburg and Iola have launched visioning processes to set courses for better futures. Active community foundations, such as the Community Foundation of Southeast Kansas, bolster charities and address emerging community needs.

Churches across the region, too, are working to improve their communities and are stepping into new roles. The Fort Scott Church of the Nazarene recently opened a coffee shop in the community’s downtown as a way to reach out to area youth. First United Methodist Church of Independence has worked with educators and social workers to provide a program that boosts child brain development through increased physical activity. Meanwhile, Eureka United Methodist Church has launched a program to help parents with young children by providing care and activities on days when school starts late for teacher in-service training about once a month. All three churches have participated in the Kansas Leadership Center’s Leadership & Faith program.

Farmers’ markets, community gardens, races and other amenities and initiatives that support healthier lifestyle behaviors are springing up throughout the region. The first-ever Portland Alley Marathon — named for the cement produced at plants along the route from Chanute to Humboldt and Iola — happened last November and promoted regional collaboration rather than rivalry.

Kelly Peak, Special Projects Director of Development for the Southeast Kansas Education Service Center at Greenbush, says she sees examples of communities where there are high levels of engagement in making life better there.

“There are people in communities in southeast Kansas who care about their communities, and they care about the children and families in their communities. I think they’re engaging in ways that are forward-thinking and with the intention of building a strong and vibrant community.”

One example of that commitment is the interest that southeast Kansans are displaying in developing stronger leadership skills. Not only are there thriving community leadership programs, including several countywide classes, but southeast Kansans are partnering with the Kansas Leadership Center to build up their civic leadership skills to better address the region’s challenges.

Participants in the Project 17 Leadership Initiative, named for the 17 counties involved in seeking economic improvement in southeast Kansas, went through their first round of immersion-style KLC training in April and will meet again in August. Their efforts include working with a team coach to identify, plan and implement a strategy to make progress on the economy and quality of life. The initiative was chosen from among 21 applicants for the opportunity to receive leadership training from the KLC valued at up to $1 million. The goal of the partnership is to help turn the tide on the region’s tough public issues.

The Project 17 regionalization initiative to improve economic opportunities and quality of life in southeast Kansas started at the behest of four state senators in the region and sprung forward from
meaningful change ‘takes time’

the sizes of the communities throughout southeast kansas also provide some unique advantages, says gary palmer, director of development at fort scott community college. pittsburg, with a little more than 20,000 people, is the region’s largest city. other significant cities range in size from close to 1,000 to as many as 12,000.

palmer says that people living in these manageable sized communities can more easily tap into one another — and the resources that can be shared — on a personal level. smaller communities allow for the kind of genuine, quality interpersonal relationships, connectedness and support that are desired but much more difficult to attain in other, more populous parts of the country.

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For example, Palmer says, in a large metropolis, many have access to health care, but in the SEK and smaller communities, people are likely to have a physician who remembers you, your interests and sometimes even your chart. “You can count on each other, and you can team together to utilize each other’s resources and abilities and accomplish more together than you could by yourself.”

Another factor is the invigoration of younger southeast Kansans who care about what happens in their communities and the region. Several young professionals groups have sprouted up, and Nienstedt says that he’s increasingly noticed people in their 30s and 40s more actively exercising leadership in his community and making progress on quality of life issues. “I just think that generation is really concerned about the current leadership screwing up this world. I think they look at Washington, D.C., and say, ‘We don’t want our community to look like that.’”

Joyce Cussimanio, who lives in Girard and works at Neosho County Community College in Chanute, also mentions the fact that she knows a number of young SEK citizens who are moving back to the area who provide additional reasons for hope. These individuals may be able to see greater possibilities from having left the area for a time, have a different perspective, and a certain energy and commitment for creating the best of both worlds. “They have chosen to return; they see the challenges of making a living here and using their degrees in meaningful ways. They have been to the big city and want the opportunities of city life with the simplicity of the rural area of their youth.”

The significant presence of educational institutions also represents a resource for the region to tap into more. Not only is there Greenbush, but there is also a Kansas Board of Regents institution in Pittsburg State University, as well as Ottawa University and six community colleges within its area.

New assets keep springing up, too, such as a new health science building at Labette Community College in Parsons, which is scheduled to be completed in the summer of 2013. The 28,000 sq. ft. LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) certified building will have a hospital simulation lab and will house nursing, respiratory therapy, radiography and diagnostic medical sonography programs.

Such developments are an indication of strong health services being offered in the region, such as at the Community Health Center of Southeast Kansas. The federally qualified health center
not only has a growing Pittsburg clinic that takes medical, dental and behavioral health appointments, but it also has clinic locations in Columbus, Iola, and Baxter Springs.

Shawn Naccarato, Director of Government and Community Relations for Pittsburg State, says colleges and universities provide communities with important cultural opportunities, such as arts and sporting events. “These university events also provide an important avenue for developing community through shared experiences and an opportunity to connect with one another,” Naccarato says. In some communities, high schools provide a rallying point.

Higher educational institutions play a key economic development role in helping build up businesses and by producing students who are better trained to fill jobs at those companies. “I think that’s the role that higher education can play by helping folks move out of that need for state subsidy and move them towards a job,” Naccarato says. “Once we have more folks in the labor force, it will be easier to build businesses here and attract them from the outside.”

Even though the heyday of mining here is long past, southeast Kansas retains an impressive base of industries to build on. And there are, indeed, already pockets where there are jobs that need to be filled.

One can also find a number of successful, unique or noteworthy businesses operating in the region. Among them: B&W Trailer Hitches in Humboldt; Cobalt Boats in Neodesha; Watco Companies, a rail service provider, in Pittsburg; and Key Industries, which makes bib overalls and other clothing, in Fort Scott.

On the other hand, even with its assets, many people are in poverty or not self-sufficient in southeast Kansas. But the increasing willingness of people being able to recognize those issues also represents a step forward, says Richard Jackson of the Ottawa-based East Central Kansas Economic Opportunity Corp., which works to eliminate the causes and conditions of poverty in its service area.

“The number one aspect of dealing with poverty or job creation, or unemployment or drugs or gangs, I guess, is recognizing that there is a problem,” Jackson says. “That there is a concern that needs to be dealt with. I think so many times (people) want to say ‘ignore it’ or say that ‘this doesn’t happen in my community.’”

But seeing meaningful progress on difficult problems decades in the making is probably going to take time, says Tony Encarnacion of Parsons.

When Leadership Labette’s community leadership program class visited the Capitol two years ago, Encarnacion says it had the opportunity to sit down and have a substantial conversation with Governor Sam Brownback. He challenged the group to come up with some ideas that would increase social and economic outcomes for those on temporary state assistance, which ultimately helped spur a cooperative effort back home among a number of agencies, organizations, and elected officials.

“It will be really interesting to see what happens,” Encarnacion says. “You know, we realize with some of these things, you aren’t going to see a change immediately, but you might see a change in ten years.”

Being better able to both tackle tough, deeply entrenched problems while also being able to recognize and talk about the good things about southeast Kansas is also something people in the region hope to get better at over time.

“I think success tends to breed more success, and I think one of the most important things that we can do is to do a good job of telling the story when there are successes,” Naccarato says. “For some skeptics, economic improvement may not seem like it is happening anywhere fast enough and they want to see tangible results more quickly. There are also surely some for whom regionalization efforts seem akin to rearranging deck chairs on the Titanic – the ship’s going down, no matter what.”

But Kathryn Richard, Regional Director of the Kansas Small Business Development Center at Pittsburg State, says the region has a lot going for it, including existing resources for economic development. But people here will also need to avoid a “doom and gloom” outlook that overlooks good things happening in southeast Kansas, too.
“Overall, there are a lot of people that are hopeful and who are willing to work toward the betterment of southeast Kansas,” Richard says. “We just have to tell our story,” to those in the region as well as outside of the region.

For hopeful southeast Kansans, like those involved in the Project 17 leadership initiative, addressing the roots of the region’s problems means both a willingness to acknowledge the tough challenges at hand and a recognition that there are indeed good resources to utilize or build upon. Much like explorers, they’ll be venturing into unchartered territory to risk sketching out a future that can’t yet be entirely known, rather than accepting that the way things currently are — a reality that disappoints far too many — is all that will ever be.

Chris Green is the Managing Editor for the The Journal. He can be reached at cgreen@kansisleadershipcenter.org.

This article was reprinted with permission from the Spring 2013 issue of the The Journal published by the Kansas Leadership Center.

BUILDING A BETTER SOUTHEAST KANSAS:
Resources and Reasons to Hope for a Brighter Future

STRONG small-community health care services
Growing interest in CIVIC LEADERSHIP development opportunities

PARTNERSHIP and collaboration within and between communities

Growth of activities and offerings that encourage HEALTHIER LIFESTYLES

CARING PEOPLE who want to build stronger, more vibrant communities

Impressive industrial base and unique, ENTERPRISING COMPANIES

ACTIVE COMMUNITY foundations meeting community need

Increased engagement of YOUNG PROFESSIONALS

COMMUNITIES small enough to foster strong, deep relationships and connections

Existing job OPPORTUNITIES

EMERGING EFFORTS to alleviate poverty and increase self-sufficiency

CHURCHES taking on community concerns

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Mike Johnson mjohnson@bhhc.com 800.488.2930

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Insurance written through the Berkshire Hathaway HomeState Companies: Berkshire Hathaway HomeState Insurance Company (Omaha, NE) · Brookwood Insurance Company (Coralville, IA) · Continental Divide Insurance Company (Englewood, CO) · Cypress Insurance Company (San Francisco, CA) · Oak River Insurance Company (Omaha, NE) · Redwood Fire and Casualty Insurance Company (Richmond, CA). Not all coverages, products, or features of products are available in all states or through all companies.

Kansas Government Journal • March 2013
FLSA & Youth Employment Part 2

Editor’s note: Part 1 of this Legal Forum focused on youth employment is in the February edition of the Kansas Government Journal.

At what age can youth be employed as lifeguards? Fifteen-year-olds, but not 14 year olds, may be employed as lifeguards at traditional swimming pools and most facilities of water amusement parks. There are limitations to this employment. The 15-year-old must be trained and certified by the American Red Cross or equivalent organization. In addition, all other restrictions, including work hours, must be followed. Duties that can be performed by 15-year-old lifeguards include monitoring the safety of swimmers (including climbing and descending ladders to the lifeguard chair), giving swimming lessons, conducting or officiating at swim meets, using hand tools to clean the pool, and checking chemical levels. Fifteen-year-olds may also work as lifeguards stationed at the splashdown pools located at the bottom of elevated water slides. But, they cannot be employed as workers located at the top of elevated water slides. In addition, 15-year-olds may not work in chemical storage areas or near filtration equipment.

Sixteen and 17-year-olds may be employed as lifeguards, subject to the same certification requirements as 15-year-olds. They may perform any non-hazardous job for unlimited hours. Although the general rule is that they cannot operate power driven hoists, elevators, etc., 16 and 17-year-olds are permitted to operate and assist in the operation of most water amusement park and recreation establishment rides. Youth under the age of 16 may not be employed as lifeguards at natural environment facilities such as rivers, streams, lakes, ponds, quarries, reservoirs, wharfs, piers, or ocean side beaches.

What restrictions, if any, apply to youth driving on the job? Employees 16 years of age and under CANNOT DRIVE motor vehicles on public roads as part of their jobs, even if they have a valid drivers license. Employees 17 years of age MAY drive cars and small trucks on public roads as part of their jobs ONLY in the following limited circumstances: during daylight hours; the employee must have valid state licence for the type of vehicle being operated; the employee must have successfully completed a state approved drivers education course; the employee can have no record of moving violations at the time of hire; the employee may only operate a vehicle that is equipped with a seat belt for the driver and all passengers and the youth has been instructed in the usage of the seat belt and that seat belts must be used when driving the vehicle; the vehicle does not exceed 6,000 lbs. GVV; and the driving is only occasional and incidental to the youth’s employment. “Occasional and incidental” means that the youth may spend no more than 1/3 of work time in any workday and no more than 20% of the work time in any workweek driving.

Driving by 17-year-olds MAY NOT involve: towing vehicles; route deliveries or sales; transportation for hire of property, goods or passengers; urgent time-sensitive deliveries; transporting more than 3 passengers, including employees of the employer; driving beyond a 20 mile radius of the place of employment; make more than 2 trips away from the primary place of employment in any single day to deliver goods to a customer; and not more than 2 trips away from the primary place of employment in any single day to transport passengers other than employees of the employer.

Do FLSA minimum wage, overtime and record keeping requirements apply to youth workers? The short answer is “Yes.” FLSA requires employers to pay at least the federal minimum wage to all covered non-exempt employees for all hours worked. This includes youth employed by the city.

However, the FLSA does allow employers to pay a youth minimum wage of not less than $4.25 per hour to employees that are under the age of 20 during the first 90 consecutive calendar days after the initial employment. There are additional requirements regarding youth minimum wage that a city must also comply with.

A city must pay at least one and one-half times the employee’s regular rate for all hours worked in excess of 40 hours in a work week. Under certain conditions, city employees may receive compensatory time off at the rate of one and one-half hours for each hour of overtime worked, instead of cash overtime pay. Please keep in mind that 14 and 15-year-old employees are limited to the number of hours that may be worked in any workweek. Employers must also comply with all child labor laws, state and local, and comply with all record keeping requirements.

Final Advice:

The above-cited material is for city officials to use as guidelines. If a city is in doubt about whether a youth is eligible to perform the type of work for which the city is hiring, consult with your city attorney or the Department of Labor hotline, (866) 487-9243. The penalties for non-compliance with child labor laws are quite steep. In addition, the city should strive, just as with other employees, to make sure that youth employees are adequately trained to help eliminate workplace injuries. Cities should use caution in the types of jobs for which they hire youth employees.

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In Lawrence, neighborhoods are defined by their history. It is the people, places, and legendary stories that create common threads which weave throughout the lives of our residents – both present and past. In one such neighborhood, it is the common story of commerce, industry, and art which have fused to create an exciting rebirth of a blighted area that was once forgotten and left to ruin under the weight of neglect. Today, the Warehouse Arts District is an excellent example of how a community came together to save a part of their history, all the while creating a vibrant, innovative project that is being recognized on national and state levels as a successful partnership between the private business community and the local municipality.

For decades, the residents of Lawrence and City leaders struggled to develop a plan that salvaged historical buildings in east Lawrence and added needed public improvements to the neighborhood to foster redevelopment and revitalization. As a first step, in 2007 the City successfully nominated the East Lawrence Industrial Historic District to the National Register of Historic Places. This District encompasses several extant manufacturing buildings of historic architectural integrity associated with the city’s industrial past. According to the National Register of Historic Places nomination form, “The District is part of what was once a larger assembly of manufacturing, warehouse, wholesale, distribution, and rail freight-related buildings and structures that historically stretched eastward from Massachusetts Street along the railroad alignment into East Lawrence.” The anchor for the district is the Theo. Poehler Mercantile Building.

The City believed that redevelopment of this area was necessary to protect the public health, safety, and welfare of the residents. On several occasions, the City had been approached by developers interested in saving the historic structures, however, it wasn’t until the Poehler Housing Partners, L.P. proposed a partnership with the City in 2011 that a plan, which achieved both the City and the developer’s needs, was obtained. With the leadership of City
Manager David Corliss, a Development Agreement was negotiated between the City and the private developers which specified certain timelines and obligations that each entity had to meet in order to receive funding allocations from the City. The City of Lawrence’s participation in the project consisted of funding several neighborhood improvements including addressing existing drainage problems by providing adequate storm water improvements, replacing 100-year-old water infrastructure with correctly sized infrastructure and upgraded design standards, providing “complete streets” aspects to the area including pedestrian lighting, landscaping, sidewalks and on-street parking, paving and installing lighting for the parking lot and alley adjacent to the Poehler Building, paying for utility connections for the Poehler Building, and reimbursing a portion of the cost to install a fire sprinkler system at the Poehler Building. The City’s cost was $1.3 million.

The developer was required to restore and redevelop the Poehler Building into residential dwelling units, install a fire sprinkler system, and design/construct additional on-street parking. The developer was required to deposit $75,000 in advanced funding, to be held by the City, at the start of the project and would receive a portion of the advanced funds once certain benchmarks were achieved throughout the project. The developer’s cost was $9 million.

The developer’s ability to complete this project hinged on the skilled use of Federal Low Income Housing Tax Credits and Federal and State Historic Tax Credits. The historic tax credits were used for installation of solar panels at the site, which would ultimately drastically lower the tenants’ utility costs.

Throughout the redevelopment process, the City and the developer met the expectations set forth in the Development Agreement and the Poehler Loft Apartments opened in July 2012 — all 49 apartment units were leased within 24 hours of opening. The loft apartments are utilized today as a mixed-income development with rental rates reflecting workforce housing costs. The project was a finalist for a 2012 J. Timothy Anderson Award through the National Housing & Rehabilitation Association. The project was recognized as the 2012 Ad Astra Award for Innovation in Housing and Community Development by the Kansas Housing Resources Corporation.

This redevelopment is not just a story about the transformation of a building’s bricks and mortar. Lawrence is known as a community that celebrates art, creativity, and collaboration. In 2005, Lawrence was named a “100 Best Small Arts Towns in America.” For years, the residents of Lawrence yearned to see an area created in the East Lawrence Neighborhood that would stand as the central location for arts and artisans. Since the initial redevelopment of the Poehler Building, the private developers have invested in multiple adjacent buildings and are in the process of recreating the area into the central hub for the arts in Lawrence. The adjacent Cider Building recently opened as an office space for artists, event space, and fine arts gallery. Private funds have been deployed to stop the deterioration of nearby buildings as they await revitalization by the development group. Vacant lots have been cleared and cleaned in preparation for future development and previously vacant spaces in surrounding lots have been occupied with businesses that contribute to the overall neighborhood. The area has become known as the Warehouse Arts District and has quickly transformed a blighted neighborhood into a thriving cultural center.

As further commitment to the overall project, the City designated the area as a 95% Neighborhood Revitalization Area (NRA) with up to $500,000 in property tax rebated to the development team over a period of 10 years. The NRA serves as an economic development tool used to promote reinvestment and revitalization of properties, which in turn has a positive economic effect upon a neighborhood and the city in general. In 2013, the City approved an additional $800,000 in public improvements including pavement reconstruction and intersection improvements, additional parking and lighting, brick street improvements, water and storm water improvements, and utility improvements.

The Warehouse Arts District and related neighborhood transformation is successful due to several components working in tandem. To start, the developer and City had to have faith in each other to perform as promised. The developer’s previous successful projects gave the City enough comfort to move forward with the Development Agreement and dedicate over $1 million in public funding to the project. The City’s commitment to revitalization in downtown Lawrence and east Lawrence was a needed component for the developer to recognize the City would fulfill its part of the partnership. By solidifying each entity’s requirements in a binding Development Agreement with benchmarks for completion, both groups were held accountable. The model used by the City of Lawrence can be replicated in other communities as long as a savvy, reputable, and knowledgeable developer is involved and the project has access to tools from the state, city, or federal government.
including tax credits and neighborhood revitalization programs.

The City and developers are proud of what the Warehouse Arts District means to the residents of the East Lawrence Neighborhood District and the community overall. The impact of the singular decision to revitalize the Poehler Building and place needed public infrastructure in the area will be measured by the amount of development created. This project was truly a cooperative effort that would not have been possible without the synergy created by the partnership — the City alone could not have completed this project and the developer was reliant on the city’s tools and expertise to create such an incredibly successful project.

Megan Gilliland is the Communications Manager for the City of Lawrence. She can be reached at mgilliland@lawrenceks.org.
Sports Bring Communities Together

One of the best parts of municipal government is the clarity of its mission — do what’s best for the city and its residents. However, like all levels of government, differences often emerge on how to define and achieve the public’s best interests. Sometimes those disagreements can even cause incivility, hurt feelings, and damaged relationships. That’s why it’s important to step back once in a while and come together to embrace those things shared by the entire community.

One thing many Kansas citizens share pride in is their local sports teams. When a city has a great high school or college athletics program, its residents get to revel in the squad’s success, and many of their differences become secondary to the mutual pride they have in the team. In fact, studies show that such “shared group membership” is one of a handful of factors that builds group cohesiveness and improves organizational performance. Many municipal governments have embraced local sports as a part of their communities, and in the process likely have helped encourage cooperation amongst its citizens.1

In April 2008, the City of Lawrence prepared for a potentially historic community celebration. Officials estimated that tens of thousands of Lawrenceans and other KU fans would celebrate on Massachusetts Street if their beloved Jayhawks won the NCAA Basketball National Championship. Before the game, police officers visited downtown bars and restaurants and asked that they not serve beer in glass bottles or cans. Ten outside agencies reinforced the municipality’s security forces, portable toilets were provided to reduce health hazards, and streets were closed to limit traffic congestion and accidents. KU forces, portable toilets were provided to reduce health hazards, and ten outside agencies reinforced the municipality’s security forces.

The proclamation was a reciprocation of love for an athlete humble enough to remember his roots while in the spotlight. It also reflected the community’s collective desire to celebrate the accomplishments of one of their own.4

Safe celebrations, friendly wagers, and mayoral proclamations might seem like trivial measures in encouraging civility and cooperation. But, these small steps can build awareness in your citizens and governing body of their shared group membership, which can promote civil discussion and maintain healthy relationships. So the next time your city has a chance to celebrate a local sports squad or athlete, consider using that opportunity to bring the community closer together. It might remind them that they’re all on the same team.

CITIES can also use sports to build cohesion on their governing bodies. During Kansas State’s Big 12 Football Championship run last fall, Manhattan Mayor Loren Pepperd and Morgantown, West Virginia Mayor Jim Manilla agreed to a friendly challenge regarding the upcoming football game between #4 Kansas State and #13 West Virginia. The challenge consisted of the mayor from the losing University wearing the winning teams’ school colors at the next governing body meeting. As a result of a blowout Wildcat victory, Mayor Manilla donned a K-State shirt for the following Morgantown council meeting. Manhattan’s entire Commission wore K-State jerseys for their next meeting too, a picture of which went viral and ended up on ESPN’s Twitter feed. The Commission may have disagreed on several issues that night, but the contest and jerseys were a nice reminder of their mutual pride in Wildcat football.3

Some Kansas cities have also celebrated individual athletes. After hometown hero Ron Baker led Wichita State’s basketball team past #1 seed Gonzaga in the 2013 NCAA Tournament, Scott City Mayor Don Goodman made a proclamation that March 28th be “Ron Baker Day” in the city. This came after Baker had said “Scott City, I love you” during a postgame interview watched by millions across the country. The proclamation was a reciprocation of love for an athlete humble enough to remember his roots while in the spotlight. It also reflected the community’s collective desire to celebrate the accomplishments of one of their own.4

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Photo credit: Rod Haxton, Scott County Record
Some blamed it on the urban renewal of the 1970s, cutting off flow from Wyatt Earp to the downtown shopping area. Some blamed it on the death of St. Mary of the Plains College in the 1990s, and the subsequent exodus of college-age students. Some simply blamed the shifting of purchasing habits from downtown to more modern, chain stores.

Nevertheless, one hard and true fact stood firm — downtown Dodge City was suffering. Buildings began to degrade; more and more sat empty. Effort after effort was made to help revitalize the flagging business district, but none seemed to stick. It’s with a renewed hope, however, that progress has begun.

“Several members of the community have been working on downtown revitalization for several years,” said Main Street Director Chelsey Fisher. “However, a group of various community organizations got together in 2009 to reorganize efforts on downtown revitalization and from that the Main Street organization was formed in 2010.”

Three years later, over $1 million has been reinvested back in downtown Dodge City through building purchases, public improvements, new jobs, and volunteer hours. Facades have been improved, and buildings that were beginning to crumble are finding a renewed life. “The mission of Main Street Dodge City is to unite both the private and public sector by coordinating different activities that enhance and bring life to downtown,” Fischer said. “In other terms, our organization is here to unite everyone together and facilitate and guide the downtown revitalization process through public improvement projects, business and building enhancements, and downtown events and promotions.”

This cooperation between public and private entities in an effort to improve downtown also plays closely into the town’s Master Tourism plan from several years ago.

“Since downtown Dodge City is home to several tourist attractions and is anchored by two major destinations, Boot Hill Museum and the Depot Theater Company, the tourism industry plays a major role in downtown revitalization,” Fisher said. “It is our goal to develop and restore the downtown district in a way that not only entices more visitors to spend more time downtown, but is inviting to the local community as well.”

To help entice current and future downtown business owners into making reinvestments back into their buildings, Main Street Dodge City, partnered with the Dodge City/Ford County Tourism Task Force. In 2011, they established a Façade Improvement Grant Program that provides an up-to-50% grant, up to $10,000 to any downtown business or property owner wanting to make exterior improvements.

To date, this program has granted over $42,000, which has helped leverage over $90,000 of downtown façade improvements. Some businesses that took advantage of these incentives included the West Coast Plaza; located in the former Robinson Furniture building, the 2nd Avenue Art Guild, and several other boutique shops along North Second Avenue.

Leaders of the downtown revitalization are quick to point out, however, that the improvements will take time, patience, energy, and investments from the entire community.

“While we do not have a specific timeline for these improvements, the Main Street Dodge City Board of Directors has established a list of goals for 2013 that our organization will be working to achieve,” Fisher said. “Once completed, we will re-evaluate where we are and decide what steps need to be taken next.”
The path is long and arduous, but Fisher maintains optimism the project will succeed, even as its priorities and functions adjust to the local demand.

Main Street Dodge City recently received a re-investment award from Kansas Main Street, honoring the Dodge City community for having over $1 million of public and private investment in the downtown area since Dodge City was designated as a Main Street community in 2010.

“Since we began focusing on downtown revitalization back in 2009, we have seen an overwhelmingly amount of support from the Dodge City community, as well as all downtown stakeholders,” she said. “It is due in large part to all the support and contributions that we have been able to accomplish what we have thus far.”

To get involved with Main Street Dodge City, call (620) 227-9501 or visit http://mainstreetdodgecity.org/

Mark Vierthaler is a contributing writer for The Legend magazine. This article was reprinted with permission from the The Legend magazine Spring 2013 issue. He can be reached at (620) 390-9535.

**DOWNTOWN INVESTMENTS TO DATE**

- $687,040  New construction, rehabilitations, facade improvements
- $71,382  Public improvements
- $462,500  Buildings sold
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- 22  Net new jobs
- 2,331  Volunteer hours

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City Administrator

The City of York, Nebraska (pop. 7,766) is accepting applications for the position of City Administrator. York has a Mayor/City Council form of government with eight council members and 72 employees. City Administrator is an appointed position and responsible to the Mayor and City Council for coordinating, overseeing and managing the operations of all city departments. Ideal candidate would possess an emphasis on professional team leadership, progressive attitude, effective communication, public relations, participatory leadership style, strong organizational skills, good communication skills and have experience in strategic planning, management, budgeting and employee relations. Qualified candidates should possess a Bachelor’s Degree with major coursework in Public Administration, Business Administration, Economics, Finance or related fields, and a minimum of two years of responsible job-related experience in a professional management position. Salary DOQ. Benefits include but are not limited to health, dental, life insurance, employee pension, vacation, sick leave, and holidays. EO. Submit applications to League of Nebraska Municipalities, 1335 L Street, Omaha, NE 68102.

City Manager

Ogallala, NE (4,737)

City Manager: Salary: $73 - $104K DOQ. ICMA (CM) recognized in 1963; 5 managers since 1990. Last manager served 20 months. 5-member council. 42-FTE’s and 40-PTE’s. Located 3 hours from Denver and 5 hours from Omaha on Interstate 80. Excellent quality of life with abundant recreational opportunities near Nebraska’s largest lake, McConaughy. Performs high-level administrative, technical and professional work in directing and supervising the administration of city government and works under the broad policy guidance of the City Council. Ideal candidate will have considerable knowledge of modern policies and practices of public administration; working knowledge of municipal finance, human resources, public works, public safety, community development; preparing and administering municipal budgets; and, planning, directing and administering municipal programs. Ability to communicate effectively verbally and in writing; ability to establish and maintain effective working relationships with employees, city officials and the public; ability to efficiently and effectively administer a municipal government. Require graduation from an accredited four year college or university with a degree in public administration, political science, business management of a closely related field, and five (5) year of experience as a municipal administrator; or, any equivalent combination of education and progressively responsible experience, with additional work experience substituting for the required education on a year for year basis. Resume with a cover letter may be submitted to: Jane Skinner, City Clerk, at 411 East 2nd Street, Ogallala, NE, 69153; or electronically at jane.skinner@ogallala-ne.gov. The position will remain open until filled.

City Clerk

The City of Lyons is seeking a professional individual for the position of City Clerk. This is an administrative position with oversight responsibilities for the daily operation of the city. Applications will be received until such time the position is filled.

Residency: The City Clerk is required to live within the corporate city limits of Lyons beginning no later than one year after initial appointment to such position.

Education: Minimum requirement of two-year Associate’s degree but prefer Bachelor’s degree in Accounting, Business Administration or Management, Public Administration, or related field.

Experience: Successful applicant will have worked in an office environment, have good understanding of computers and technology, have supervisory/management experience with excellent technical skills in accounting, budgeting, budget analysis, financial reporting, and financial management. Applicant must possess excellent communication skills and strong interpersonal skills; have budget, finance, and management experience, basic understanding of city government, adapt well to change, have positive attitude, be proactive, self-directed, and enjoy serving the citizens of Lyons.

Duties: Includes preparing the city’s annual budget, maintaining adherence to state budget laws, supervising city personnel, preparing payroll, assisting citizens, maintaining fiscal, legal, and other public records, monitoring financial condition, preparing reports, and other duties.

Benefits: Public service EOE work environment, Kansas Public Employees Retirement System (KPERS), health/prescription/dental/eye/life and disability insurance, vacation and sick leave. Salary dependant upon qualifications.

For confidential consideration, please mail or e-mail your resume (jsweet@lyonsks.org), including salary history, to: City of Lyons Attn: John Sweet, City Administrator PO Box 808 Lyons, KS 67554

Electric Utility Supervisor

The City of St. John is currently accepting applications for Electric Utility Supervisor. Experience should include line work, power plant operation, and supervisory duties. Applications and job description available at the city office or www.stjohnkansas.com. Excellent benefit package. Applications will be accepted until position is filled. City of St. John is an EOE.

Finance Director

The City of Russell, Kansas is seeking a Finance Director. Located along Interstate 70, Russell is a city of the second class
and is the county seat with a population of 4,280. The Finance Director also serves as the City Clerk. Requirements include a Bachelor’s Degree in accounting or equivalent, additional education in public management and/or Certified Public Accountants certificate desired. Knowledge of Kansas Municipal statutory accounting and budgeting principles, investment management, INCODE municipal software and supervisory experience are preferred. Some travel is necessary. Experience in forecasting financial activity and financial positions in areas of revenue, expenses and fund balances based on past, present and expected operations. This position receives administrative direction from the City Manager. Salary range: $40,300 to $66,300, DOQ plus excellent benefits package. Send completed application, resume and three work related references to Jon Quinday, City Manager, 133 W. 8th St., P.O. Box 112, Russell, KS 67665-0112. Applications available at www.russellcity.org ADA/EOE.

Police Officer
The McLouth Police Department is accepting applications for a full-time police officer. Applicants must be at least 21 years of age, possess a valid driver’s license and a high school diploma or equivalent, have no criminal history or lengthy traffic violation record, be in good physical condition, KLETC certified, successfully pass a background investigation and other pre-employment requirements and preferably have patrol and investigation experience. The City of McLouth offers a competitive wage and benefits including BC & BS health insurance, paid vacation and sick leave and KPERS retirement plan. To obtain an application form: print from the City of McLouth website - cityofmclouth.org or from from the McLouth City Hall - 110 North Union Street, McLouth, Kansas 66054; (913) 796-6411. Completed applications with resumes will be accepted by the Chief of Police until the position is filled. The City of McLouth in an E.O.E.

Public Works Director/County Engineer
Johnson County Government in Olathe, Kansas is seeking applicants for Public Works Director/County Engineer. Johnson County is one of the nation’s premier counties, providing comprehensive services to its citizens in its role as a leading organization in the Kansas City metropolitan area. The Johnson County community is nestled in the southwestern quadrant of the Kansas City metropolitan area (combined population of 1.9 million) and exhibits all of the hallmarks of a great community: a thriving and growing business sector; nationally-recognized public schools; first-class cultural and recreational amenities; and distinctive and welcoming neighborhoods. Johnson County is a growing and diverse community of more than 544,000 residents.

The Public Works Director/County Engineer is a high visibility position supporting the County’s public works and infrastructure. The successful candidate will provide strategic direction for the Public Works Department. This position serves as a member of the County’s executive team and reports directly to the Deputy County Manager.

The ideal candidate will exhibit outstanding leadership, communication and professional engineering skills, and will possess the demonstrated capacity to successfully manage in a fast-paced public environment. Requires a Bachelor’s degree in Civil Engineering; five years of progressively responsible experience in public works management, three years of experience in administration and supervision, two years of experience in administration of comprehensive public works services and programs; or an equivalent combination of education and experience sufficient to demonstrate the ability to successfully perform the essential duties of the job. Licensure as a Kansas Professional Engineer is required.

Johnson County is an equal opportunity/equal access employer and offers a competitive salary and benefits package. The expected salary range is $105,441–$140,588. For consideration, apply online at http://hr.jocogov.org/jobs-open-public.

Learn more about Johnson County at www.jocogov.org.

Utilities Assistant Distribution & Collections Superintendent
$35,797-$52,333 DOQ. The City of Atchison has an opening in the Utilities Department for an Assistant D&C Superintendent. This position will train in the essential functions of the Superintendent. Upon successful demonstration of ability to fulfill requirements of the position, the individual will transition to position of Superintendent upon current superintendent’s retirement. Duties include, but not limited to: direct the day-to-day operations and mechanical maintenance and repairs of the City’s distribution and collection systems; oversee meter reading and customer service activities; supervision of subordinate personnel; ensure work quality and adherence to established policies & procedures. Will serve as Lead Operator for a minimum of 2 months to gain experience working with crew members and gain knowledge of existing infrastructure. Job related physical and substance abuse screen upon offer of employment. Applicants must apply on-line at www.hrpartners.com. Position open until filled. EOE.

Water & Wastewater Facilities Director
Seward, NE (pop 7,000) located just west of Lincoln, on the I-80 corridor. Seward is Nebraska’s Official 4th of July City and the Seward County Seat. Home to Concordia University, Progressive Business Courthouse Square Business District and established diversified Manufacturing-Service Businesses. Seward was recently named as one of “America’s Best Small Cities” on the Eden List. Outstanding Quality of Life Features including Schools, Libraries, Police, Fire and Community Pride. The City of Seward Water Treatment Facility is a Class II Type and the Wastewater Facility is classified as a Class III. Qualified and interested Applicants can submit the following required items by 4pm, May 10th, 2013: (1) Letter of Interest with Curriculum Vitae, Salary History and Desired Pay Range (2) Current Resume with Four verifiable references (3) Completed and signed City of Seward Job Application (4) Copies of Certifications, and other Candidate support items to: City Administrator Brett R Baker, 537 Main St – PO Box 38, Seward, NE 68434-0038. Position Interviews slated to begin on May 20th, 2013. Position open until filled. The City of Seward Nebraska is an Equal Opportunity Employer. Full Job Announcement and City Application available at: http://CityofSewardNE.com/jobs.htm.
Natural gas system design, construction, maintenance & operations services for cities.

For information contact lezli.root@blackhillscorp.com or call 785-832-3925
Planting Flowers

Well, the grandchildren were over a couple of nights ago, and I was looking for something to both entertain them and do something positive for the cause. It is always a challenge to find something that will keep small grandchildren occupied for a while, and at the same time be beneficial for the household in general.

As it turned out, I was able to identify something that seemed to be liked by our young grandchildren, that is planting flowers. There is something magical about putting a seed, bulb, or bare root in the ground, watering it a little bit, and perhaps adding a small dose of fertilizer, and then watching it spring from the ground. It is memorable, can be exciting, and apparently hit all the right buttons for the grand kids as they both eagerly went for the hand spades out in the garage.

We were planting Lamprocapnos spectabilis (Old Fashioned Bleeding Heart), which Judy had ordered as part of a good will assistance program through an organization that sells flowers, and then donates a portion of the proceeds back to individuals who need an organ transplant. In this particular case, we know the individual who is trying to raise money for a liver transplant. Thus, it was an easy and good thing to do. I feel certain that the flowers will be beautiful. There is a nice symmetry between growing flowers and helping people try and improve their quality of life through a medical procedure that could well buy them more years on this earth.

In any case, the grandchildren and I set out to plant the old fashioned bleeding heart in the back yard. Once I had identified the general area for the flowers, the question became what constituted an appropriate hole for planting these particular flowers. We began with what could best be described as scratching the surface. After a little tiny bit of dirt had been removed, the five year old decided that it was time to start planting. Grandpa, who is always the voice of reason, and I suspect often a stick in the mud, showed the children that we were planting bare rooted plants, and that we would need holes that were at least four or five inches deep to allow the root structure to be appropriately placed. This pronouncement set off a frenzy of digging which at one point involved dirt, rocks, and other debris flying through the air. I had to suggest at this point that the dirt be neatly stacked beside the holes rather than tossed in the air, thrown at one another, or simply thrown in the wind.

After an appropriate amount of digging, a little bit of complaining, but mostly just excitement about planting something that would grow out of the ground, the holes were completed and were judged by the quality control personnel on site (Grandpa) to be of sufficient width and depth. We were thus ready for the flower roots to be inserted.

So the next step was to figure out which of the root systems went into which hole. As the holes had been dug in a variety of shapes, and an equal variety of sizes, we had to decide which root best fit which hole, and finally this was accomplished. The plantings were then covered up to ground level with dirt, and a little bit of rock, to allow for both coverage of the plant and drainage of water into the root system.

It was at this point that both children wanted to continue digging holes and planting more flowers. Unfortunately, apparently due to poor planning on Grandpa’s part, we had run out of flowers. Over the past two days, when the grandchildren come over, they immediately run out to the back yard to see if their flowers have begun to grow. They can hardly wait until the flowers emerge from the soil and they can see the result of their labors.

At least two good lessons can come from this type of activity. First of all, there is a direct correlation between one’s labor, and the reward of having a pretty flower grow and bloom. Secondly, it does not happen instantaneously. Rather, there is an element of deferred gratification here that is something people in today’s world are becoming less and less willing to accept.

I think that planting flowers, and the excitement that goes with that undertaking, can be similar to what we could be doing in government at all levels. Government has become, I believe, a triage sort of operation in many cases. There are so many needs tugging at us from all angles that many in government, and probably in the business community as well, are constantly trying to simply deal with those issues as they arise. The issues have become so numerous, and often so complex that they need to be addressed not only on a day to day, but often on an hour to hour basis. Also, as mentioned above, the public’s attention span and patience seems to continue to be shorter and shorter. Because of these factors, it is certainly understandable that much of what government does today focuses on the short term. Also, the nature of the political system is always asking what have you done for me lately, which by its nature makes us work on a very, very short time line for both initiating programs, and expecting results.

Planting flowers, however, puts me in mind of the fact that one function of government, which we overlook at our peril, is that we must be planting programs and policies for not just the short term, but also for the long term. We must be willing to make investments today which will pay off for us down the road. We must try to avoid simply lurching from one problem to the next. While that may be necessary in the short term, it remains essential to city governance that cities, and those who run them, are looking down the road not days or weeks, but rather years, in trying to plan for the future and to set policies and programs in place that will allow for the growth of the community and the betterment of its citizens. Failure to do long term planning, and to simply react to the day to day pressures and forces which are acting on government, leaves the unit of government largely adrift and subject to the ebbs and flows of politics, the economy, and every other force which acts upon government in this state and country. We must be willing to plant seeds today which may not bear any flowers or fruit for a number of years but which will, in the long term, improve the quality of life for all.
LKM 2013 Annual Conference
Hotel Accommodations & Reservation Procedures

October 12-14 • Sheraton Hotel & Overland Park Convention Center • Overland Park

RESERVATION PROCEDURES:
• LKM has made special arrangements with the hotels listed to provide accommodations during our Annual Conference.
• Attendees are responsible for making their own reservations. Please contact the hotel directly.
• Reservations may not be made until after 2/1/13.
• Remember to ask for the special LKM conference rate when making reservations.

SPECIAL NOTE:
If you are making hotel reservations for someone else, please confirm with each person that they actually need hotel accommodations before making the reservation.

Sheraton Overland Park Hotel**

6100 College Blvd
Overland Park, KS 66211
913.234.2100
Rate: $137 + tax per night
Cut-off date: September 21, 2013

**Sheraton requires a non-refundable deposit equal to one night's stay in order to secure reservations.

ADDITIONAL ACCOMMODATIONS

Chase Suite Hotel
6300 W 110th Street
Overland Park, KS 66211
913.491.3333
$119 + tax per night
Cut-off date: 9/13/2013

Courtyard by Marriott
11001 Woodson Ave
Overland Park, KS 66211
913.317.8500
$109 + tax per night
Cut-off date: 9/20/2013
“STOP BEING paranoid, Julius. YOUR FRIENDS WILL never stab you in the back.”

{Marcus Junius Brutus, 44 B.C.}

It matters who you listen to.