



FEBRUARY / MARCH 2016

# • *Your Hometown* • Mission

**Mission is starting  
point for KC  
Thunder Ride**

*Motorcycle ride over  
Memorial Day weekend  
raises money for  
veteran's causes*



*Janay A  
Eco Bridal*

Mission designer creates bridal gowns  
with vintage and organic materials



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## Making meaningful connections in 2016

Each New Year is a reflection of the past as well as a celebration of the new! What did I accomplish in 2015 that no one else has done or something that I can say “dazzled the world?” Doing something that “dazzled the world” is pretty extreme, but accomplishing something that dazzles the people and community around me is doable.

As I reflect on 2015, a group of 30-plus volunteers overwhelmed our community by pulling together to give of themselves and their talents to 57 families who would not have otherwise enjoyed the holidays. Add Pat Quinn and his KC Thunder Riders and we were really overwhelmed. They wrapped and delivered gifts to the homes with a smile on their face and big hearts! (I promise I will never again badmouth motorcyclists on the roadways). You will truly enjoy reading how the KC Thunder Riders commemorate Veteran’s Day.

The gifts and food that the City of Mission collects for the holidays is distributed to Rushton Elementary and Santa Fe Elementary Schools along with Shawnee Mission North High School. A long awaited food pantry is now in place in both elementary schools and thanks to the generosity of Trinity Lutheran Church, they will also be supplying food to Rushton monthly. How awesome is that? And with the information in their story, you will discover

how you or your organization may help.

At the age of 9, did you ever dream of campaigning for a safe route to school for not only yourself, but your classmates as well? As you read about Lola Gravatt’s process, you will be amazed and dazzled that a fourth grader was so impressive.

Amazing others with your talents runs throughout Mission! Even if you aren’t getting married or having a wedding in your family, you will enjoy reading how Janay Mallela creates stunning dresses out of recycled and organic materials. Her story might give you an idea of how you can concoct an item of beauty out of the goodies you have sitting around your home.

The year 2016 is Mission’s 65th birthday! Is the number 65 a big number in your life? Will you be turning 65, been married 65 years or lived in Mission 65 years? Please let us hear from you. I can be reached at 913-671-5864 or sgibbs@missionks.org.

Stay tuned — as we will be dazzling you with lots of Mission information that may just amaze you!

Suzie Gibbs  
Councilmember, Ward IV

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### On the cover:

JANAY MALLELA, OWNER OF JANAY A ECO BRIDAL.  
PHOTO BY KRISTIN MCCOPPIN/POND PHOTOGRAPHY

# Mission

*Your Hometown*

FEBRUARY / MARCH 2016

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## In seach for a new Dentist

### The new year

always brings new commitment to one's health, and this starts with choosing good, reliable health care professionals. So choosing a dentist should not fall short of those expectations.

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How your Dentist handles emergencies, during and after business hours.

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Making sure the Dentist and staff put your needs first, not letting an insurance company dictate what your care can/ or can not be. Does your Dentist participate with your insurance company.

Are appointments available to address any concerns you have with treatment to ensure that you know the plan from beginning to end, and everything in-between.

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# Janay Eco Brides





# Mission designer specializes in sustainable gowns

BY LINDA FRIEDEL • PHOTOS BY KRISTIN MCCOPPIN / POND PHOTOGRAPHY

Every bride deserves the gown of their dreams and that's exactly what Janay Mallela, owner of Janay A Eco Bridal in Mission, wants to give every bride she meets.

Janay designs wedding dresses, putting a fresh twist to the saying "something old, something new" for brides. The unique Mission bridal shop specializes in using organic and re-cycled materials whenever possible, and is one of the few designers in the country to offer such services.

While a lot of heirloom dresses or vintage fabric is used, Janay said you won't find your grandmother's dressmaker at the shop.

"It's a hip stylish alternative," Janay said. "I'm like a fairy godmother who connects someone with the dress of their dreams."

Her business is located at 5939 Woodson and specializes in designing custom bridal gowns and re-styled heirloom bridal gowns. Janay also makes mother-of-the-bride dresses, bridesmaids' gowns, ball gowns and provides alterations for bridal shops. The eco-spirited designer applies sustainability and green practices to everything from organic fabrics, accessorizing with locally made products to housing in a repurposed building. All garments and products are sewn in-house with the most vintage and organic materials Janay can get her hands on.

"Our process is ecofriendly. It's very personal," Janay said. "Amazing people come to me. I get to create for them. All my clients are awesome and independent. They appreciate something that is handmade."

Brides meet with Janay face to face in her Mission shop to design the gown of their dreams. Out-of-town customers converse with her electronically via Skype. Most of her brides are local residents from the Kansas City metro or live within a five-hour drive. Brides from Europe, Australia and across the country call on her services as well. Whether you meet Janay in person or electronically, her services are the same quality.

"I really like to walk people through the whole process of having their gown made," Janay said.

## Meeting with the brides

The process starts with a consultation. In person, she meets with brides in her shop, with rooms filled with beautiful laces, trim, earrings, necklaces, gowns and veils. Brides can browse through Janay's portfolio while she asks what elements they want in their gown. She sketches while they talk. The initial meeting takes approximately one hour.

"We have that dream dress discussion," she said. "That's when I make that rough sketch. Usually we have the whole gown designed in the first meeting."

It's not just about the gown, Janay said, explaining that when she designs she thinks about the entire picture from head to toe. She likes to incorporate the perfect necklace, custom veil or customized jewelry into each bridal ensemble.

"I'm about the whole look coming together," she said. "That right accessory makes the whole look."

## Styling with Janay

Janay uses organic cottons and silk hemp for new gowns. For heirloom gowns, she designs creative modifications such as opening up the backs of the dresses to modernize them. She adds linings, giving gowns more structure or boning for added support.

According to the designer brides like a "huge range" of styles, including short gowns, long gowns, simple gowns, embellished gowns and poofy ballroom styles. One of Janay's favorites is the "convertible" gown where the bottom skirt on the dress can be removed to make a shorter dress for dancing and mobility. Another popular fit today is sheath cut gowns, or dresses that are fit to flare. She embellishes them with jeweled belts, fabric flowers and vintage jewelry.

Janay loves to create surprise elements in her gowns by using such things as dyed fabrics with a hint of color, hidden pockets, dyed tool or the netting under the dress, again for a subtle color effect. She also likes functionality and comfort.

"I really like creating something unique for a bride," she said. "I like clean designs, but I like a lot of textures together."

Janay says she loves working with people.

"Everyone is so different," she said. "I like putting all the accessories all together. That's a really fun part."

Janay's custom bridal gowns start at \$1,700, which includes fittings and alterations. She said a new gown at a bridal store typically starts at \$1,500 and does not include alterations. The average gown at Janay A Eco Bridal costs \$2,500, but ranges to \$5,000.

## The beginnings

Janay hails from a family of creative people who worked with their hands. Her father was a toymaker, her mother made dolls and her grandmother sewed for all of her children. In junior high Janay designed and sewed costumes for church

**Left:** Janay Mallela, owner of Janay A Eco Bridal, meets with brides at her shop, located at 5939 Woodson for consultations, fittings and alterations. She meets with out of town clients electronically through Skype.





**Above Left:** Erin Hotchkiss is a seamstress at Janay A Eco Bridal. The local bridal business is one of the few in the country that specializes in vintage bridal gowns and gowns made with organic materials. **Above Right:** Janay provides services from consulting and designing bridal gowns to fittings and alterations. Here the designer assists Amy Kariotis.

plays and Christmas pageants. She made doll clothes as well as her own clothes. She made her first wedding gown at 18 years old.

“I was raised around a creative process,” she said. “I always wanted to be a designer.”

After graduating from high school, Janay attended Southwest Missouri State University for one semester, then moved to Kansas City where she launched a wholesale clothing business. While running the business and providing custom work, she earned a degree in fashion merchandising from Metropolitan Community College — Penn Valley. As a custom designer, Janay was constantly getting requests for wedding gowns.

“The way I got into it was organic,” she said. “It just evolved.”

## Move to Mission

Before moving her business to Mission three years ago, Janay operated from her home in Kansas City, Missouri’s Hyde Park area. She wanted to find a more central location, however, and searched on Craig’s list. When the vintage building in Mission popped up on the screen, it was love at first sight. It had just what she needed. The ranch-styled shop houses a production room with three industrial sewing machines, a changing room, a fitting room, consultation room, office space, break room and storage for fabrics and gowns.

“I loved the location,” she said. “It’s central for all my clients. It’s really safe. This building had room to grow.”

Janay has the ability to produce a dress a week. The time it takes to make a bridal gown varies. The time between the first consultation and the final fitting can be anywhere from six months to a year. Most of her projects take about six months.

Many of the brides who live out of town travel to Janay’s shop

for fittings and alterations. In some cases, when brides have the budget, Janay travels to them. Prospective brides need to schedule appointments online through Janay’s website at [www.janay-a.com](http://www.janay-a.com).

The name, Janay A Eco Bridal is unique like her business. Janay is the owner’s first name. “A” represents Alexandra and Andrews, her middle and maiden names, and Eco Bridal signals gowns crafted with organic fabrics.

Erin Hotchkiss is a seamstress at Janay A Eco Bridal. She develops the patterns from Janay’s sketches, then stitches the gowns together. She said working with Janay is inspirational.

“She is very authentic to who she is,” Hotchkiss said. “She finds ways to translate her passion to her business. She’s really inspiring.”

**Below:** Janay A Eco Bridal uses vintage jewelry and locally-designed accessories to embellish the uniquely-designed bridal gowns.





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# HONORI

*Memorial Day*





# NG VETERANS

## *weekend motorcycle ride benefits veterans*

*Pat Quinn, Mission resident and founder of KC Thunder Ride, leads a benefit motorcycle ride from Mission on Sunday, May 29. Riders and non-riders are welcome.*

BY LINDA FRIEDEL

If you are looking for a way to salute veterans this spring, take a ride.

Mission will be the starting point for “KC Thunder Ride — Rise of the Phoenix,” a 210-mile motorcycle ride to benefit veterans. Event organizer and KC Thunder Ride Founder Pat Quinn said veterans, non-veterans, bikers and non-bikers are all invited to participate.

KC Thunder Ride will start at Hy-Vee at 6655 Martway St. in Mission on Sunday, May 29, rain or shine. Registration, check in and breakfast is from 8 to 9:30 a.m. The cost is \$40 for bike riders and \$20 for bike passengers or participants who wish to ride a bus. Registration fees include a T-shirt, breakfast, snacks, lunch and a raffle entry.

Quinn thought 2015 would be the end of the KC Thunder Ride, but people kept asking him about the next year’s ride. That convinced him there was just too much interest to call it quits.

He wants to attract 500 bikers this year to raise \$30,000 for veterans. The money will be divided between two agencies — St. Michael’s Veterans Center, an organization that provides apartments for homeless or nearly homeless veterans, and Wounded Warrior Project, a veteran’s service organization. In the past six years, KC Thunder Ride has raised \$70,000, and has funded programs such as the Honor Flight Program, Volunteer Services Department and the VA Hospital in Kansas City, Missouri.

The Mission resident encourages those who don’t ride to help the cause as well.

“You can donate on the website if you don’t want to ride.”

### A RIDE WITH A PURPOSE

People from past rides continue to tell Quinn what a great event KC Thunder Ride is. This year’s version, “Rise of the Phoenix,” will leave from the Hy-Vee parking lot at 9:30 a.m. They will take a scenic trip to Mound City, Kansas, where the

group will stop for fuel, snacks and the first of several drawings and giveaways. From there, bikers will steer to the National Cemetery in Fort Scott, Kansas, to lay a wreath and hold a short program. After the ceremony they will motor to Historic Fort Scott to lay another wreath, eat lunch and hold a final drawing. Quinn’s daughter, Carrie Quinn, a captain in the Army, will serve as speaker at the memorial program.

“We honor the fallen. We honor the current military.”

Quinn says the program is emotional for him.

“Generally I tear up at every one of the ceremonies,” he said. “It’s all these people that come together and keep coming.”

Most of the bikers are Kansas City area residents. Others travel from St. Joseph, Grain Valley and Odessa in Missouri, and Omaha, Nebraska. Some bikers have participated all six years.

Unlike other popular rides, “This one has a purpose with a destination,” Quinn said. “We go to veteran’s memorials.”

Some memorials and veterans’ cemeteries riders have traveled to in the past years are closer than others. They’ve visited All Veterans Memorial in Topeka, Kansas, World War I Liberty Memorial in Kansas City, Missouri, War Mother Memorial at Haskell University in Lawrence, Kansas, National Cemetery in Leavenworth, Kansas, and Missouri Veterans Cemetery in Higginsville, Missouri.

Quinn founded the event because he wanted to help with veterans’ causes. For years, he contributed \$30 annually to the Wounded Warrior Project, an agency he respects. They offer services from donating personal care items to assimilating veterans into civilian life after multiple tours of duty.

“I thought if I got 100 guys together who contributed \$30 a pop, that would be a lot,” Quinn said. “I had seen what the Wounded Warriors do. They are taking care of a lot of issues that vets won’t and can’t take care of because they don’t have the funding.”

KC Thunder Ride is a labor of love for Quinn. It takes more

*Continued on Page 14*

Left: Pat Quinn founded KC Thunder Ride to raise money for veteran’s causes. The ride starts at the Mission Hy-Vee on Sunday, May 29. This year’s goal is \$30,000. To register for the ride or to make a donation visit [www.kcthunderride.com](http://www.kcthunderride.com). Photo by Kristin McCoppin/Pond Photography



than 50 volunteers to plan and run the event. Volunteers block intersections, serve as escorts for riders, register participants and pass out snacks and lunches. One volunteer, Mike Overmyer, a Mission resident and friend of Quinn's, has designed the T-shirts each year.

"People appreciate what the ride stands for and what it does," Quinn said. "There are a lot of people out there who want to support the military."

### CENTURIONS

The first 125 riders to register earn the title of Centurion and receive extra "perks," as well as a challenge. Centurions are given a Challenge Coin, challenging them to raise \$100 in contributions from families and friends. They are invited to a party to meet with representatives from St. Michaels and the Wounded Warrior Project to learn how the organizations serve veterans. They are also eligible for an extra raffle drawing.

"It's a bonus for being one of the first to register," Quinn said.

### BOOT BLOCK

To boost donations for the KC Thunder Ride, volunteers from the event will collect donations during a "boot block" to take place in Mission over a weekend still to be determined in April. The boot block will be held at two intersections — Johnson Drive and Broadmoor and Johnson Drive and Lamar.

Visit [www.kcthunderride.com](http://www.kcthunderride.com) to register or make a donation. For additional information contact Quinn at [pquace2003@msn.com](mailto:pquace2003@msn.com) or at 913-207-3106.

## KC Thunder Ride — Rise of the Phoenix

**Registration:** [www.kcthunderride.com](http://www.kcthunderride.com)

**Date:** Sunday, May 29

**Location:**

Ride starts at Hy-Vee, 6655 Martway St.

**Bike riders:** \$40

**Bus riders or bike passengers:** \$20

Donations may be made through the website, [www.kcthunderride.com](http://www.kcthunderride.com); the schedule may be viewed on the Web as well.

**Below:** Bikers with KC Thunder Ride will depart from Hy-Vee in Mission at 9:30 a.m. on Sunday, May 29, for a 210-mile ride. The event, which benefits veterans, features a scenic ride to Mound City, Kansas and a memorial program at the National Cemetery in Fort Scott, Kansas. Non riders are welcome to ride a bus. Photo by Jill Casey





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# Mission Bulletin Board

## Meeting Notice

Mission City Council Meetings:  
7 p.m. at City Hall  
March 16 & April 20

**HAPPY  
ANNIVERSARY!**



*Congratulations to  
Lucky Brewgrille,  
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**15 years**  
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**2016**



**Saturday, March 26, 2016  
at Sylvester Powell Jr.  
Community Center (North Side)  
10 a.m. – 2 p.m.  
Free Admission!**

*Bring the family for the annual Bunny Eggstravaganza! This exciting holiday event features egg hunts for all ages plus clowns, balloon artists and a visit from two very special bunnies. Bring your camera and basket to hold all eggs, candy and prizes. See inside back cover for more details.*

**65**

Will you celebrate a 65th birthday in 2016? Is a 65th wedding anniversary celebration on tap for 2016? Will 2016 mark the 65th year you've lived in Mission?

If you or someone you know can answer "yes" to any of these questions, we want to talk to you! Please contact Suzie Gibbs at 913-671-8564 or [sgibbs@missionks.org](mailto:sgibbs@missionks.org).



## Thank You!

### FAMILY ADOPTION BLESSINGS

Fifty-seven very deserving families had a grateful Thanksgiving and a very Merry Christmas due to the enormous generosity of our City of Mission residents and businesses. See page N2 for more information.

## Save the Date

Grab your fancy hats and bowties for Rushton PTA's 18th annual fundraising auction. Enjoy an evening "At the Derby" with your friends. Silent and Live Auction with dinner and drinks! Saturday, March 5. Sylvester Powell Jr. Community Center. To RSVP and purchase tickets please visit [www.rushtonpta.org/auction](http://www.rushtonpta.org/auction)

## Calling Farmers Market Vendors!

The Mission Farm and Flower Market opens May 7 for the 2016 season!

Do you know a farmer, grower, beekeeper, baker, cheesemaker or anyone else interested in being a vendor at the market? Please have them contact Emily Randel at 913-676-8368 or [erandel@missionks.org](mailto:erandel@missionks.org).

More information at [www.missionks.org/market](http://www.missionks.org/market).



Mission Farm and Flower Market  
Saturdays, 7 a.m. - 1 p.m.  
May-September  
Johnson Drive & Reeds Road



## Happy 106<sup>th</sup>

Best wishes to  
Mission resident  
Gertrude Stern who turns  
106 on Feb. 27!

## Happy 105<sup>th</sup>

Best wishes to Sally Duncan  
who turns 105 in March!



# SOMETIMES IT TAKES A DOG TO TEACH US A LESSON

## *Family dog inspires children's book about stewardship for Mission author*

Matt Schoenfeld's heart for kids and love of reading led him to create a fun kids book that also has an important message.

Matt is a lover of words and stories, and in 2009 he published his first children's book, titled: "Mulligan and the Barbeque Grill." His inspiration for the book was a goofy Siamese cat and their family dog.

"We actually had a dog named Mulligan," Schoenfeld said. "He was the funniest, smartest dog — and he did a number of remarkable things."

"I just started making a list of the zany things that Mulligan did," said Schoenfeld, "and soon the books came flowing out of me. It only took me a few days to write all three."

In addition to Mulligan the real-life dog, Schoenfeld's desire to become a children's author was motivated by a famous Siamese cat. As a father active in his children's lives, he visited their elementary school weekly to read stories out loud to their classes. He especially enjoyed reading the "Skippyjon Jones" stories by Judith Byron Schachner, a children's book series about a Siamese cat who thinks he's a Chihuahua.

"I loved the Skippyjon books because they were active, fun and silly. But I also noticed they were missing something ... a moral to the story," Schoenfeld commented. It was during that time Schoenfeld began to imagine his dog Mulligan as a character in a book.

"Mulligan and the Barbeque Grill" is the first book in the "My Dog Mulligan" series. Schoenfeld hopes to one day also publish the next two books in the series, "Mulligan and the Slithery Snake" and "Mulligan and the Tummy Ache."

Each story focuses on an aspect of Schoenfeld's favorite topic and the theme for the other 15 adult books and curriculums he has authored — stewardship. Stewardship is described by Schoenfeld as "being the faithful manager of the things God has given us to take care of for Him."

"Mulligan and the Barbeque Grill" keys in on taking care of possessions. The message in "Mulligan and the Slithery Snake" is about



taking care of relationships. "Mulligan and the Tummy Ache" centers on taking good care of your body.

The Mission author, who is a registered investment advisor for VALIC, said the book is actually based on a true story of one of Mulligan's exploits, and he and his wife Cynthia (who grew up in Mission) appear in the book. "Mulligan and the Barbeque Grill" is set at their first house in Roeland Park, but the next two books take place in their current back yard in Countryside. The action in the book revolves around an incident when Mulligan, their 20-pound "Westie" (West Highland Terrier), mysteriously managed to topple their heavy barbeque grill off of the patio. "Mulligan and the Barbeque Grill" is a 22-page book written for children in grades kindergarten through fourth. It is full of rich colors, action-packed illustrations and the loveable Westie, Mulligan.

Above: Mission resident and author Matt Schoenfeld published "Mulligan and the Barbeque Grill," a children's book inspired by the family dog. The book's message is about caring for possessions. Photo by Kevin Blayney



# Come Hear All About Us!



*Choose your date:*

**Saturday, March 5**  
at 1:30 p.m.

*or*

**Wednesday, March 16**  
at 10:30 a.m.

*Refreshments will be served.*

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Schoenfeld's creativity stretches into the realm of songwriting too. In 2010 he became the co-lyricist of the University of Kansas fight song, "I'm a Jayhawk." He won the song writing contest sponsored by the University of Kansas Alumni Association to redo the lyrics that had become obsolete due to conference realignment.

"The funny thing about that song is it's probably the most played, but least sung, song in the history of music," Schoenfeld said.

The Mulligan book is illustrated by Kansas City-based artist Ron Wheeler of Cartoon Works. "Ron did a masterful job bringing Mulligan to life. It's amazing to see the action he can create in his illustrations," noted Schoenfeld. The book is available for \$10 at his webstore ([www.abundantlivingministry.org](http://www.abundantlivingministry.org)).

A companion curriculum to the book which has been used from the Midwest to Canada is also available for Sunday school and Christian-school teachers who want to teach children the importance of wise management of their possessions. It includes three stewardship lessons, an audio book by the author and a local voice actor, games and activities. Schoenfeld also wrote the lyrics and produced the "My Dog Mulligan" theme song that accompanies the curriculum.

The process of creating the curriculum and theme song was a



Mulligan is the beloved family dog that inspired Matt Schoenfeld's children's book.

collaborative effort between Schoenfeld's friends and local professionals, such as teachers, artists, musicians, singers and an audio engineer. It was a labor of love for all.

"It was really rewarding to collaborate on a project like this with so many talented folks," he said. "I hope the book and curriculum are able to help a lot of kids."

"The curriculum reinforces the overall message of the book," Schoenfeld said. "It's pretty tightly focused on teaching kids: 'take care of your things.' That's the key lesson, but Mulligan as the foil allowed me to deliver the message in a really fun way for kids to learn. It was especially rewarding to hear our former nanny tell us that her little boy wanted her to read my book to him every night."

Cynthia, Matt's wife said, "The book is special because it keeps alive the legacy of a remarkable dog who gave our family so much joy. It's terrific to share that joy with others through the book."

Before he ventured into the world of children's literature, Schoenfeld focused his writing on personal finance, investing, and estate planning. In all, he has published 19 books and curriculums, 15 for adults and four for children.

"For years I had taught personal finance, wise planning and generous giving to adults all over the country," he explained. "Through the antics of Mulligan, it's been very rewarding to find a new, fun way to teach kids about stewardship. Like Skippyjon, "Mulligan and the Barbeque Grill" is silly, and fanciful and fun, but it also ties in an important moral that is really need in our culture."



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## Police Body Cameras Now in Use

**P**olice body cameras have been in the news, and Mission's police officers were recently equipped with them. The department began researching the use of body worn cameras in 2014. After a year of testing, the department decided to purchase cameras from the same company that has provided our police in-car video systems for over a decade. Using the same company allowed for more streamlined implementation and coordination with our current video system.

Last October, Mission's officers began using the body worn cameras in the field. Every officer is issued a cam-

era, and they are used when there is any enforcement action during a shift. The Mission Police Department believes the cameras will help document police activities, aid in the successful prosecution of court cases, and add a layer of transparency and accountability.



## *A One-Stop Resource for Aging Services*

**T**he Johnson County Area Agency on Aging, through Human Services, offers a phone number that is a single point of entry for services for those 60 and older. A specialist will help you locate resources such as:

- in-home services
- congregate and home-delivered meals
- transportation
- legal assistance
- insurance
- housing and more.

Call 913-715-8861 to speak with an aging information specialist today.

## NEW STREET ID SIGNS COMING TO YOUR NEIGHBORHOOD



**P**ublic Works staff will be replacing Street ID signs from 55th Street south to Martway. Over the past few years, street ID sign replacement has been one of the most requested items from citizens. Many of the signs have faded or become illegible. The new signs meet the current standards set forth in the Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices (MUTCD). The most notable changes are the sizing of characters and reflectivity requirements. The signs are produced in-house

and installed by Public Works staff.

Last winter, all street ID signs, from 55th Street to the northern City limits were replaced, including sign posts. This round of replacements will include 244 ID signs at 61 intersections.

Once the 2016 program is complete, approximately one-half of the City's signs will have been updated. The Public Works Maintenance Program anticipates all street ID signs will be replaced in four years.



Dear Friends and Neighbors,

I always look forward to a new year and the possibilities we have ahead of us. In 2016 we will be completing several comprehensive studies and updates that were started last year. The Comprehensive Plan update and Parks Master Plan will be finalized in the coming months. Thank you to all who participated in the work of these groups. Both of these documents will help us focus on future development city-wide, and prioritize improvements to our many parks. We are also conducting a Safe Routes to School study that will help us to identify and improve walking and biking routes for our students. We'll be sharing additional information as all of these projects wrap-up in the coming months.

Mission residents will elect four councilmembers in April. Councilmembers have four-year terms, which are staggered, so in April residents will elect one councilmember from each of our four wards. Election day is Tuesday, April 5th. Important dates related to the upcoming election are listed on page 3 of this newsletter. Please take a moment to read these and contact the Johnson County Election Office if you need to register to vote or have questions regarding your polling place.

The Mission Farm and Flower Market



is growing and will be open for business on Saturday, May 7th. Located on Johnson Drive near Reeds, it will include a wide variety of vendors – many returning for their second year with us, and many new ones!

If you were not a market shopper in 2015, I hope you will join us on Saturdays in 2016.

The Welstone senior apartments at Martway and Broadmoor are seeing their first residents arrive – welcome to Mission! This is a great addition to our community and we look forward to getting to know our new neighbors who will be calling the Welstone home. Now that the apartments are completed, the City is taking bids for the planned improvements to the pocket park at the corner of Martway and Broadmoor. Plans include a small plaza area with a shade structure, and will complete the many improvements we have seen over the past few years in this area.

Our newsletter includes information on upcoming events sponsored by Parks & Recreation, our Public Works program to replace street ID signs, the Police Department's upcoming Citizen's Academy, and their new body worn cameras. If you have questions, concerns, or would like to share your ideas for Mission, don't hesitate to contact me ([mayor@missionks.org](mailto:mayor@missionks.org)) or City staff (913-676-8350).

Some residents have asked about the status of The Gateway Project. At the Jan-

uary City Council Meeting, the Governing Body approved the preliminary site plan that was submitted by the developer. That plan was extensively reviewed and recommended for approval by the Planning Commission and the City's professional staff as being in compliance with the City's zoning regulations. This approval is just the first of several steps before the project can go forward, and public input will be welcomed at each step. In the upcoming months, the Council will consider the terms and conditions of a development agreement with the developer – those terms and conditions will include a financial analysis of the project, whether or not economic incentives are warranted or necessary, building timelines, and financial assurances. If the project goes forward, you can be assured that the City Council will have done as much as possible to ensure a successful project and one that will benefit the City.

Our annual Bunny Eggstravaganza is just a month away - I look forward to seeing you and your family at the Community Center on March 26th!

Sincerely,

Steve Schowengerdt  
Mayor

## THANK YOU FOR YOUR GENEROSITY!

The City of Mission "Holiday Elves" helped to make the holidays brighter for many families in our area. Many helping hands, loving hearts, and volunteers provided:

- Thanksgiving meal baskets (turkeys/hams and all the extras, including fresh fruits and vegetables) to 57 families
- Food baskets (turkey, ham, milk, bread, fruits, vegetables, staples, and a tin of popcorn) to 55 families for Christmas
- Received hugs and shared tears with 31 families as they received food and gifts for their loved ones ranging from baby dolls, skateboards, camping equipment, cosmetics and toiletries, dinnerware and comforters, to gift cards
- Distributed 19 bikes to children ages 5 years to adults

- Collected over 3,000 pairs of socks with the help of St. Michaels Men in Ministry, which were donated to the UPLIFT Organization along with clothing, coats, blankets, and candles
- 116 hand knitted scarves given to moms, dads, kids, and grandmothers
- Lots of fun help from the KC Thunder Riders
- Received donations from 25 cents to \$1,000 from Mission residents

To all of the many volunteers, businesses and organizations – your generosity continues to amaze us while warming the hearts of Northeast Johnson County families. Thank you!





## SPRING ELECTIONS

The City of Mission will hold City Council elections on April 5, 2016. One councilmember from each ward will be elected for a four-year term. Below is a listing of important dates for this upcoming election. Remember, the Johnson County Election Office can assist you with voter registration, identifying your polling place, and sample ballots ([www.jocoelection.org](http://www.jocoelection.org) or 913-782-3441). For Mobile Election Notification, text VOTEKS, your address and ZIP to 74574. Within 60 seconds a return message will display your polling place name and address.

<b>March 1</b>	Spring Primary Election ( <i>Ward 3 only</i> )
<b>March 15</b>	Last day to register to vote
<b>March 16</b>	Advance voting by mail begins
<b>March 29</b>	Advance voting in person begins at Election Office, 2101 E. Kansas City Rd., Olathe
<b>April 4</b>	Advance voting in person ends ( <i>12:00 noon</i> )
<b>April 5</b>	Spring General Election

## SAVE THE DATE!

**Bunny Eggstravaganza - March 26**

**Farmers Market Kick-off Party - May 3**

**Mission Farm & Flower Market Opening Day - May 7**

**City-wide Garage Sale - May 12-14**

**Mission Family Aquatic Center Opening - May 28**

**Backyard Campout - June 24**

**Mission Summer Family Picnic - July 9**

**Battle of the Brisket BBQ Contest - September 16-17**

## Making Safe Routes to School for Mission Students

Mission is receiving federal funds to support students safely walking and biking to school. Staff and Olsson Associates, the consulting firm retained for the study, have visited Rushton, Highlands, Horizons, and Shawnee Mission North schools to gather feedback on the conditions that make walking and biking difficult. Public meetings, key person interviews, and traffic engineering studies are all part of the information gathering process.

The study period will conclude early this spring. Recommendations could include changes to streets and sidewalks, installing new pedestrian amenities like paths or crossing beacons, and adopting programs that educate and encourage students to walk and bike to school safely. The project team has already identified multiple changes - such as unlocking gates and trimming plantings - that will immediately improve walkability and bikeability.

*Questions? Feedback? Contact Glen Cole at [gcole@missionks.org](mailto:gcole@missionks.org) or at 913-676-8365.*



## MISSION FARM & FLOWER MARKET

The Mission Farm and Flower Market will be back Saturday, May 7th. These winter months have us dreaming of bright red tomatoes and juicy peaches. You can help prepare now for another great season! Here are a few ways:

- Refer a vendor
- Sign up to volunteer
- Sign up to receive market emails and text alerts
- Follow the market on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram
- Attend the market kick-off party Tuesday, May 3rd from 4:30-7:30 p.m. at the Market
- Tell your friends about the market, and make a plan to meet them there May 7th!

Visit [missionks.org/market](http://missionks.org/market) for more information. We can't wait to see you this Market Season!

**Saturdays, May through September**  
7 a.m. - 1 p.m.  
Johnson Drive and Reeds Road

## HOUSEHOLD BATTERY RECYCLING IS BACK!

Keep your batteries out of the landfill. Look for the Big Green Box at the north entrance of the Community Center and behind the counter at City Hall. Common household alkaline batteries will be collected and shipped for certified recycling. The battery recycling program is sponsored by Mission's Sustainability Commission.



## CALLING 9-1-1: THE BEST OPTION

You know to call 9-1-1 in case of an emergency. Sometimes you second guess yourself and wonder if calling will burden the system or take away from other calls. For emergencies, there is no substitute for calling 9-1-1 because:

- 9-1-1 automatically connects your call to a dispatcher, no matter the time of day
- 9-1-1 calls are coordinated across different agencies to get you the fastest response, even if it isn't by a Mission officer
- 9-1-1 calls track the location of your call and improve response time
- 9-1-1 calls are recorded, helping with future investigations

The dispatcher's job is to send the officer as much information as possible. Knowing how to describe your location is especially important when calling from a cell phone. For more information on what to expect when calling 9-1-1, visit [missionks.org](http://missionks.org) and search "9-1-1"

**If you think you should call, call 9-1-1!**

## Citizens Police Academy

Apply now for Mission's 2016 Citizens Police Academy, which will be held on Thursday evenings, March 31st through June 2nd. This 10-week program exposes participants to:

- **Investigations (Criminal, Death, Other)**
- **Patrol Operations**
- **DUI and Traffic Enforcement**
- **Less-lethal Weapons/Firearms**
- **Interview and Interrogation Techniques**
- **Domestic Violence Situations/Response**
- **Search and Seizure**
- **Defensive Tactics**

Behind the scenes tours of the Johnson County Adult Detention Center, Emergency Communications Center, and Criminalistics Laboratory are also scheduled. Participants graduate on June 2nd, and will have opportunities to stay connected to the Department by assisting at volunteer events.

Academy size is limited to 20 participants. There is no cost to participate, but applicants must reside or work in Mission, be at least 18 years of age, and pass a background check. Applications are available by contacting Sgt. Rob Meyers at 913-676-8333 or [rmeyers@missionks.org](mailto:rmeyers@missionks.org)



## MISSION CITY HALL

6090 Woodson Road, Mission, Kansas 66202

Open Monday through Friday 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

Phone: 913-676-8350 • Fax: 913-722-1415 • [www.missionks.org](http://www.missionks.org)

### COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE AND FINANCE & ADMINISTRATION COMMITTEE MEETINGS

1st Wednesday every month, 6:30 p.m.  
(overflow business considered on the second Wednesday  
of the month as necessary, 6:30 p.m.)

### CITY COUNCIL MEETINGS

3rd Wednesday every month, 7:00 p.m.

### COUNCIL WORKSESSIONS

4th Wednesday every month, 7:00 p.m.

*All meetings are open to the public.*

## GOVERNING BODY

Mayor Steve Schowengerdt.....913-481-3235  
City Hall Office.....913-676-8350

### COUNCILMEMBERS WARD I

Pat Quinn.....913-207-3106  
Jason Vaughn.....816-839-3585

### COUNCILMEMBERS WARD II

Amy Miller.....913-677-0169  
Arcie Rothrock.....913-568-2872

### COUNCILMEMBERS WARD III

Jennifer Cowdry.....913-257-5788  
Debbie Kring.....913-722-6901

### COUNCILMEMBERS WARD IV

Suzanne Gibbs.....913-671-8564  
David Shepard.....913-671-8521



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# KEEPING THE FAMILY TOGETHER

*Mission couple enjoys tasty tradition of making tamales*

BY BARBARA BAYER

For many, tamales are a tasty treat that can be eaten any time of year. Mission's Aragon-Sharp family enjoys making them, and eating them, every December.

How did Yolanda Aragon and her husband of 25 years Francis Sharp become the hosts of the annual Aragon family tradition? Simple.

"I'm the organizer and the most sentimental of the bunch," said Aragon.

Sharp earned his job of steaming the tamales, because he "was the only one really paying attention when Yolanda's mom told everyone how to do it."

Aragon's earliest memories of making tamales as a family go back to when she was about 7 years old. Her mother, aunts and cousins gathered at her house to make a large batch.

As a child, Aragon said her job was to spread the masa (cornmeal dough) and eat the finished product.

"I didn't appreciate all the behind-the-scenes things my mom did to get ready for the tamales. I had no idea."

When Aragon's mother Juanita was alive, she was in charge of the tamales. There is no written recipe for the tamales, and the family continues to make them by feel, just like family matriarch did for so many years.

"She was the judge for when the consistency was right. So until she said the masa was right, we kept kneading it and adding whatever she would say," remembered Aragon.

Today Aragon organizes the annual family gathering — this year that included about 13 people of all ages — and started the tradition in 1990. The tamale making took a hiatus from about 1998 to 2007 when Aragon and Sharp moved to Cincinnati.

"Nobody made tamales while we were gone. Nobody really took the initiative," she said.

They moved back to the area in 2008, choosing a home in Mission because it was centrally located, easy for Sharp to get to his job in downtown Kansas City, and a short drive to visit other relatives. The tamale-making party then found a place back on the calendar.

By this time Juanita Aragon was living in a nursing home, but



she wanted to help make the tamales.

"So she spent the day with us and helped make the tamales," said Aragon, as the memory brought tears to her eyes.

The work begins even before they get together with each sibling (two brothers and a sister) having a job. Aragon typically pre-orders the masa from the El Taquito Manufacturing Plant in Kansas City, Kansas. They purchase about 25 pounds — one pound of masa produces about a dozen tamales. Many of the other ingredients — including the chilies and the ojas, the outer corn husks you don't eat — can be purchased at the Roeland Park Price Chopper.

They doctor up the premade masa a bit, adding salt and some broth from the pork, as well as "a little bit of the chili to give it some color because it's real pale."

Often Aragon and Sharp are also responsible for purchasing the cheese and cooking the meat for the filling. Generally, they produce three flavors of tamales — pork, made from Boston pork butt, chicken and cheese.

"It's back-breaking work to stand there and shred all that meat," Aragon said, noting it also takes two to three hours to cook the meat.

Another sibling makes the sauce, starting by soaking the 3 pounds of dry ancho chili pods overnight (after pulling off the stems and taking out most of the seeds).

If you are making anything with chilies,

**Above:** Yolanda Aragon makes tamales every year in her Mission home. Photo by Scott Fishman





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**Above:** Among the family members who helped make tamales at the Aragon-Sharp home late last year is Jaxson Elder, the youngest member of the production crew, and his mother Jamie Aragon, Yolanda's niece. They are spreading masa (dough) on ojas (corn husks). Submitted photo

Aragon said you must pay particular attention not to touch your eyes.

"The last time I made the sauce my eyes were on fire. I rubbed my eyes and honestly I had scrubbed my hands three or four times ... it is very, very painful."

After the chilies have soaked, they need to be blended and strained, Aragon explained, "because you don't want the skin in the sauce, just the juice."

On tamale day, the siblings and their families gather at Aragon's home around noon. The first step in the assembly process begins at the dining room table that's been extended to add extra work space. There the crew will spread the masa on each oja.

"The masa must be spread on the smooth side of the oja, otherwise the masa will stick to the ojas," she said, explaining that for when you open it up to eat it, it doesn't stick to the ojas.

The next step is to fill the masa with the meat and sauce. Then the oja is "folded into thirds like a letter and pinched closed so the filling doesn't spill out."

Now it's time to cook the tamales, and the Aragon-Sharps do that in a huge stock pot that used to belong to Aragon's mother and has been in the family at least 50 years. It's held up well, she noted, "because we only use it one time a year!"

Inside the pot is two pieces of 2 by 4, wood notched together, that are as old as Aragon. A piece of wire mesh is placed on top of the boards. Both keep the tamales from sitting in the water. The tamales are stacked on the mesh and wood structure to steam. The pot fits about seven and a half dozen tamales at a time and they steam for about an hour. Most years they steam four pots of tamales, meaning they produce approximately 350 tamales.

Once the tamales are cooked, the work crew digs in.

"As soon as we are finished, everyone grabs a plate and starts eating," she said, noting that most of the time there is nothing else on the menu. "Usually we just stand around eating tamales, because that's all we want. We eat them fresh out of the pan." Sometimes other delicacies are served such as Stars (Spanish rice made with pasta in the shape of stars), beans, guacamole and chips, and fruit. Beer, wine and eggnog are on the beverage menu.

The family usually snacks while making the tamales.

"I make soup ahead of time because we get started early and we know we won't be eating until 5 or 6, and we have veggies."

As with every traditional favorite, Aragon said some years the tamales turn out better than others. She notes there is a legend that says that if you are arguing or if there is tension in the atmosphere, "they don't turn out quite right. Every Mexican who has ever made the tamales will tell you that. My brother reminds us every year."

Aragon worries the tradition might die out when her generation passes on.

"Our son, who lives in Louisiana, probably will not carry it on, but my niece might. ... I'm hoping she does."

"It's a lot of work. You could buy them and pay \$15 or \$20 for a dozen and call it a day."

Aragon enjoys the day.

"We grew up being with family, but nothing fancy. It's important to keep that going. I can hear and feel my Mom telling me to keep the family together..."



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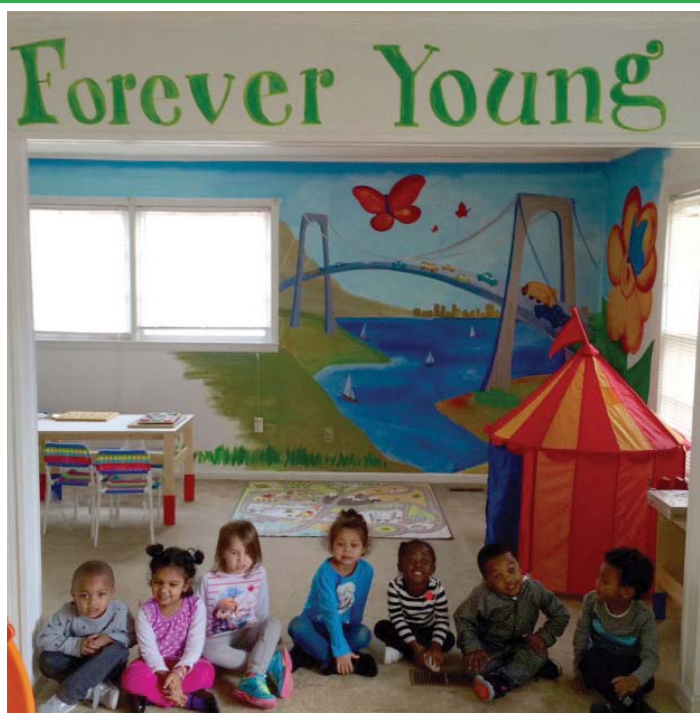
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# SCHOOLS STOCK FOOD PANTRIES FOR LOCAL FAMILIES

*Santa Fe and Rushton elementary schools have established food pantries to serve up nutrition as well as compassion for the families who attend their schools.*

## SANTA FE ELEMENTARY



Santa Fe Elementary School is an amazing school with a big heart, says Kellie Heckerson, school secretary.

Heckerson established a food pantry that she says would not be possible without the ongoing generosity from families and staff at Santa Fe and beyond.

"It's my way to give back," she said. "I can give my time. I can put people together. That's the important thing to do."

Heckerson launched the project five years ago in honor of former school nurse Dee Chaffin who provided Christmas gifts to Santa Fe families each year. Henderson saw a bigger need.

"We have a lot of families with grandparents raising kids," she said. "We have families who are hard-working with one and two jobs. They fall through the cracks. They make too much money to get assistance. They may not have enough money to go to the grocery store."

Some food pantries limit families to just one visit per month, Heckerson said. The school doesn't do that.

"I'm not going to turn anyone away," she said. "People don't have to justify why they need food."

Families who access the pantry remain anonymous. They contact Heckerson via email or phone or stop by during school hours. She escorts parents to the food pantry, then lets them privately choose their items.

"They can shop for what they need," Heckerson said. "We want to allow our families to have as much dignity as possible."

Heckerson stocks the pantry with products such as canned meals,

cereal, pasta, bread and peanut butter and jelly. To supply fresh foods, the pantry's refrigerator stores eggs, produce and milk. Families collect toilet paper, soap, toothpaste and shampoo from a cabinet containing personal care items.

Henderson lets families know about the service through the school's newsletter where she also solicits donations. Contributions flow from parents, the city of Mission, Asbury Methodist Church and the PTA. By fall of 2015, the pantry had collected 1,500 food items.

Student Council officers assist Heckerson with the project. They sort, shelve and keep inventory of items. They say it's fun to be helpful and they learn new skills.

"I like knowing how it feels helping others and not focusing on yourself," said Zach Setzkorn, sixth grader and Student Council officer.

## RUSHTON ELEMENTARY



Rushton Elementary School successfully launched its food pantry this year.

"We're modeling it after Santa Fe," said Debbie Coleman, the school secretary who runs it.

Coleman followed Santa Fe Elementary School's food pantry program for several years, waiting for the right opportunity to initiate one at Rushton. When an empty classroom became available, Coleman took action.

"All the stars fell into place."

Coleman wants to find a permanent home for the pantry, but

**Left:** Kellie Heckerson, school secretary at Santa Fe Elementary, back row, launched a food pantry at Santa Fe Elementary School five years ago. Officers from the Student Council help sort, stack and keep inventory of items in the food pantry. From left on the first row are sixth graders Sam Cloud, Zach Setzkorn, Lilli Quartz and Angie Zumbrunnen.

**Right:** Debbie Coleman, school secretary at Rushton Elementary School, founded a food pantry at Rushton in the fall of 2015. The refrigerator was donated by Trinity Lutheran Church. From left are Director of Family Life at Trinity Lutheran Church Rhonda Synovec, food pantry parent volunteer Inez Holland and Debbie Coleman.



said the empty classroom serves as great starting point. She initially stocked the food pantry with donations from a food drive conducted last November, resulting in approximately 4,000 food items. More contributions followed. Rushton families and their employers, Hy-Vee, Trinity Lutheran Church and the City of Mission became steady donors. Coleman is grateful for the community's support.

"We've given a lot of food out," Coleman said. "We have awesome parents."

Like Santa Fe's food pantry program, Rushton also offers personal care items in addition to perishable and nonperishable foods. Trinity Lutheran Church, a longtime partner of Rushton Elementary, donated a refrigerator to the cause, allowing them to offer fresh produce, meats and dairy products to families. The church will continue to donate food and funding for the project, said Rhonda Synovec, director of Family Life at Trinity Lutheran Church.

"Food insufficiency is huge in Johnson County," Synovec said. "People don't think about that in Johnson County."

As with Santa Fe's program, the school secretary is a phone call away if a family needs assistance. Coleman will meet with parents in the school office, then walk them to the food pantry to collect what they want. Milk is the product most in demand, Coleman said, followed by peanut butter, jelly and hot and cold cereals.

There is always a bigger need at the end of the month, noted parent volunteer Inez Holland, who helps in the pantry once a week. Amy Simeonov, Rushton's principal, said the new pantry has made an impact on the families they serve.

"Our families have access to fresh food that they would not necessarily have," Simeonov said. "Kids that eat healthy are then much more available for learning."

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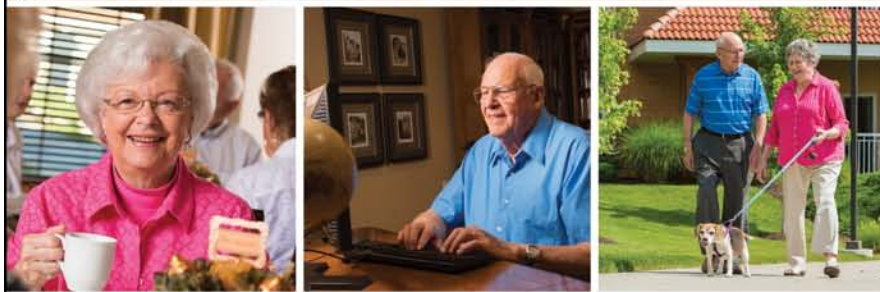
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# Fighting for people's rights

## YOUNG MISSION RESIDENT TAKES HIGH ROAD FOR SAFE ROUTES

BY LINDA FRIEDEL • PHOTO BY SCOTT FISHMAN

Like many students her age, fourth-grader Lola Gravatt regularly walks to school. Unlike other children her age, this Highlands Elementary School student is not happy about the condition of the pathway she needs to get to school and she is taking steps to improve it.

This problem has bothered the 9-year-old for the four years she has been attending Highlands.

"The paths are just horrible. They are so crooked, I'm scared I'm going to fall and trip," Lola said.

Lola, the daughter of James Gravatt and Alexis Ballentine, says that the "once awesome paved paths" have been allowed to fall into disrepair. Because of her fear of the outdated pathways, she chooses to walk or pedal her bicycle on the sidewalk adjacent to the busy Roe Avenue. That route also makes her nervous. She worries about cars turning into side streets along Roe.

"It is very unsafe," Lola says.

Lola wants the pathway to be usable once again so children in the future can benefit from a safe route.

### ADVOCATING AT CITY HALL

Lola was inspired to take action after reading an article on PVPPost.com. The story announced Mission City Council's Safe Routes to School Phase I Study, which was paid for by a \$20,000 federal grant to determine travel habits of students in four area schools: Highlands, Rushton Elementary, Horizons High School and Shawnee Mission North High School. After seeing the article, Lola decided to write a report on the barriers that children encounter walking and biking to Highlands.

Lola's nine-page report entitled, "Paths are the best way for Mission kids to get to Highlands Elementary," included her opinion, the Prairie Village Post news article, a map of the Highlands Elementary School boundary, pedestrian and bicycle paths, and photos with descriptions of the existing paved pathways. Lola enjoyed researching, shooting photos and writing the proposal. It was the first time this young Mission citizen tackled a project of this magnitude.

"It was fun," she said. "I got to really inspect the path. You had to make sure you had all the right pictures. It was a new experience."

After completing the project, she contacted City Councilman Dave Shepard to show him the report. Shepard and the staff were impressed with Lola's findings and recommended that she present her thoughts to

the City Council's Community Development Committee, which she did in November 2015. The issues in Lola's report tied in closely with the City's work on a Safe Routes to School Study and Lola was asked to provide input to the consultants working on that project.

Lola realizes that only some of the physical improvements on her wish list will be completed while she's still a student at Highlands, but is pleased that others will benefit from the project. Phase I, a nine-month assessment to measure vehicles, bicycle and

pedestrian counts will complete this spring and Phase II, the implementation of physical improvements such as sidewalk construction and pedestrian crossings will begin after that.

"I know it won't happen for me," she said. "I would like other people to have safe routes. I don't want other kids to get hurt. I like to help people."

Now that she has a taste of city politics, Lola says she would consider becoming a politician in the future.

"The good side of politics is you get to know other people's ideas," she said. "The bad side is people get really mad."

She hasn't jumped into school governance yet either and is not a member of the student council.

She does look forward to running for president in fifth grade when she is eligible to run as an officer.

"I want to be the president next year," Lola said. "I like the leadership part. You are big on making decisions. It's fun making decisions."



**Above:** Lola Gravatt, a fourth-grader at Highlands Elementary School is an advocate for safe routes to her school.

### BEYOND MISSION

Lola's community projects cross into other arenas. In January she completed a one-year research project of a local cemetery, locating every U.S. veteran who had previously been unknown. In 2015 she was appointed a project manager of a local nonprofit, Support Special Operations Forces. On Veterans Day in 2015 she arranged for vehicles to be provided at no cost to two active duty U.S. veterans in need and in October of 2015 Lola worked with the Kansas City, Missouri City Council to authorize legislation honoring U.S. veterans who have been awarded the Bronze Star, Silver Star or Medal of Honor free parking city-wide. Lola says her friends think it's pretty cool that she takes on civic projects. A member of Mensa, Lola sees herself as a litigator someday.

"What I want to be when I grow up is a lawyer," she said. "I like fighting for people's rights."



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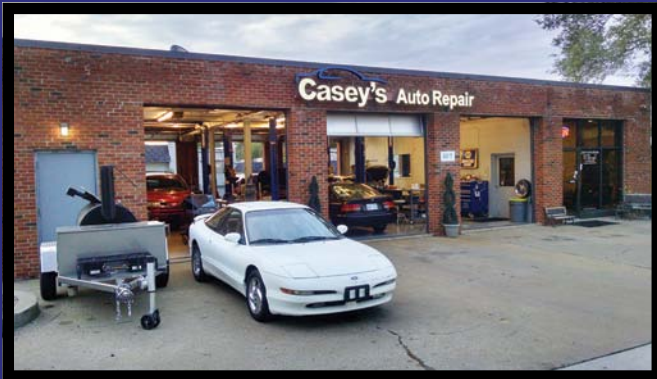
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