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WORKING IN RHYTHM WITH NATURE

Mission couple creates safe haven
for plant life, wildlife with carefully
cultivated yard

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RESET AND RENEW THIS SUMMER IN MISSION

This issue of the Mission Magazine is full of reminders that summer is officially here! With the sounds of children laughing at the pool, packed restaurant and brewery patios across town, Thursday nights at the Mission Market, and maybe even some fun travel plans, we can all enjoy a slightly relaxed pace. Even if you don't get to take advantage of a true "summer break," there's something about this season that encourages us all to reset and renew.

Our cover story features the fruits of Todd and Sally Johnson's labor, who have poured their time, energy, and knowledge into their yard in Mission's Countryside neighborhood, intentionally designed with a focus on conservation. Their commitment to providing a safe haven and habitat for insects, birds, and other wildlife reminds us that we are simply stewards of the natural resources entrusted to our care. I also like their description of their welcoming and inclusive "front-yard neighborhood" and encourage you to think about using your front yard or front porch to interact with your friends and neighbors.

I was interested to learn about the fun and creativity that Amy Major is unleashing at Wee Create KC to foster community and family-togetherness through art. Tucked away in the Mission Mart shopping center, the story highlights how she has fulfilled her dream of creating a place for kids to "get messy" and explore art. Her



philosophy of encouraging creative freedom and expression promotes confidence and pride in her class and party participants. What a fun summer (or year-round)

activity to check out for our local kids!

This issue also includes profiles for the remaining four City Councilmembers. I hope you have enjoyed the chance to "get to know" your elected officials a little better. As I'm sure you've seen, we're a diverse group of folks who love all of the unique things our City has to offer. I know I speak for all of us when I say please don't hesitate to contact us with your comments, questions or feedback. We're here to work with you to ensure Mission thrives!

The last two stories in this issue focus on a classic summer pastime — baseball! Mission resident Tom Coffman and co-author Pat O'Neill share the long road they traveled to learn about "Ted Sullivan — Barnacle of Baseball" as they researched their new book. Truly a labor of love for these two friends, they uncovered an interesting and colorful past of an important "player" in baseball history.

And finally, in our "Remember When" feature, we highlight stories from area residents about their Little League experiences growing up. From schoolyard back-stops to uniforms emblazoned with the logos of local business establishments, summertime has meant baseball in Mission for many decades.

I hope you enjoy this issue as much as I did! Please remember to come explore the Mission Market on Thursday evenings through August (one of my favorites!) and experience the Mission Family Aquatic Center (MFAC) or one of our parks during this summer season!

Sollie

-Sollie Flora, Mayor



On the cover:

Mission residents Todd and Sally Johnson stand on the pathway to their carefully cultivated backyard.

Photo by Denise Elam.

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PUBLISHER.....David Small
EDITOR.....Denise Elam
ADVERTISING EXECUTIVE.....Angie Riffel
GRAPHIC DESIGNER.....Mike Nickells
EDITORIAL BOARD.....Stoney Bogan
Trent Boultinghouse
Cathy Casey
Kate Deacon
Kathy Lockard
Mark Raduziner
Laura Smith



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Working in Rhythm with nature

Sally and
Todd Johnson,
gardeners, soil
cultivators
and Mission
residents.



Mission couple creates safe haven for plant life, wildlife with carefully cultivated yard

By Denise Elam

Other than the impressive hedges, sprawling greenery and a custom-built water fountain, the first thing you might notice when you walk into Todd and Sally Johnson's front yard is a brownish, round bird bath with an electrical cord hanging beneath it.

"People have commented on how ugly my bird bath is, and it is ugly," Sally said matter-of-factly. "But it plugs in, so in the winter, I have water for the birds."

Sally said she's willing to sacrifice the appearance of the heated bath for the benefits it provides to birds during the winter months.

"When Todd goes out to refresh the water, within 20 minutes I'll have three different birds sitting on the rim: a robin, a cardinal and a sparrow, and they take turns taking baths," she noted.

Much of the Johnsons' yard is cultivated with the same sense of conservation and careful planning. Take for instance the parsley, dill and fennel by the front patio, intentionally planted to attract small, wiggling green caterpillars each year.

"Last year I got three rounds of caterpillars coming," she said. "They're black swallowtail butterflies ... last week, they ate all the dill and all the parsley so I had to make an emergency trip to the nursery to get more parsley ... they weren't ready to go make cocoons yet."

Sally's journey as a gardener and wildlife cultivator began when she was young. She grew up watching her parents garden.

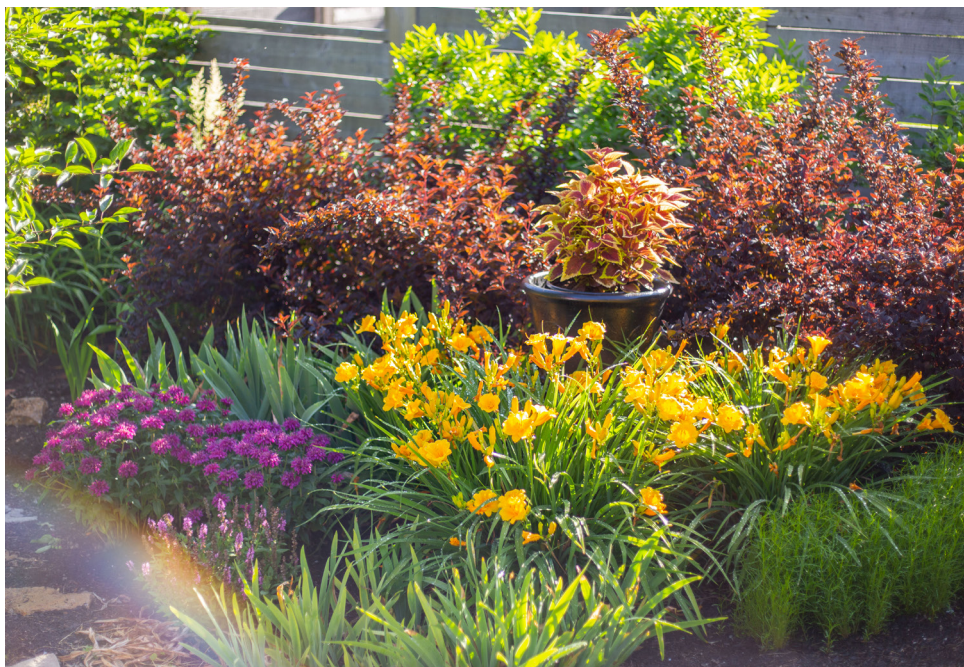
"It's just natural for me," she said.

She and her husband, Todd, started their first garden in the early years of their marriage. They've been working outside together ever since. Sally even studied to become a master gardener at one point.

In 2019, the pair moved to Mission and bought a house on West 62nd Street. The house had been with its original owner for 70 years before they purchased it and it was in great shape. What was missing, however, was the greenery the couple was used to.

"The gardening style was from a long time ago," Sally said.

They decided to completely overhaul the yard, save for a few long-standing trees. In the three years since the first



The Johnsons plant flowers that benefit nature and can be dried and used for decoration later.

"What people will say to me, they'll see my plants growing, and they'll say, 'Oh, your soil is so much better than mine.' And it is better, but it's only because I made it better; my yard is not better than your yard."

— Sally Johnson

shovel was driven into the dirt, they've created a red-brick patio, added shrubbery along the front of the house, devised a brick walkway to the backyard, planted a small raised vegetable garden and installed several sculptures within the property — all accomplished on weekends, when they're not working their own full-time jobs.

"We just started from scratch. It doesn't

take that long. We do all of our own work ... He's my secret weapon," Sally said, referring to Todd. "That's why I have a nice yard — it's not me."

Todd helps to do a lot of the heavy lifting and is the mastermind behind the couples' operations. Two years ago, he discovered the key to a thriving yard — and it was practically right under their noses. Well, their neighbors' noses, at least.

In the fall of 2020, he noticed a leaf removal company drive into the neighborhood, lugging a large-sized trailer behind them. He watched as they raked and disposed of the leaves in a few of his neighbors' yards. Intrigued, Todd approached a worker and asked what he planned to do with the leaves once he had removed them.

"He said, 'Well, I have to pay to take them to the composter,'" Todd recalled. "I said, 'Why don't you leave me a load?'"

So he did. And each year since, Todd has shredded those leaves into his own homemade fertilizer mixture, much to the intrigue of his neighbors.

"She (a neighbor) said, 'Let me get this straight, we pay this guy to come pick up

our leaves to dump them on your yard?"

Todd recalled. "But it saves him money and we get incredibly great soil."

Soil is the key to cultivating a successful and thriving garden, according to Sally.

"What people will say to me, they'll see my plants growing, and they'll say, 'Oh, your soil is so much better than mine,'" Sally said. "And it is better, but it's only because I made it better; my yard is not better than your yard."

By simply reusing what you already have, Sally said you can create the best nutrients for the soil.

"We spread the soil with the leaf mold and the next spring, any place we've put the leaves in the fall, if you dig in, you've got more worms than anywhere else in the yard," she noted. "Just by putting leaf mold in, it allows the worms to do their work, and you have better soil. So it's all just working in rhythm with nature."

With how clay-heavy the soil is in this region, Sally said it's more apt to become weighed down by moisture, causing many plants to die when their roots remain wet for extended periods of time.

"That's why improving your soil, making it more arable, gives you good, healthy plants," she said.

The other key component is compost, which the Johnsons buy in place of mulch.

"We don't buy mulch because it doesn't enhance the soil," Sally said. "With the leaf mold and compost, it's all what nature provided to begin with and it nourishes the soil ... a lot of people, they buy dyed mulch; that's not me. I'm trying to work in tune with nature. I also like that what I'm putting here is natural."

Nature conservation and preservation is important to the Johnsons, who try not to use any toxins in their garden. Their goal is to create a safe haven for wildlife to thrive in.

"You hear so much now about the butterflies and the bees that are endangered," Sally noted. "If you walk into my yard by peak summer, I'll have over 100 bees at one time."

The final key the Johnsons shared is this: don't forget to water your plants in the winter, too.

"It takes three to five years for a shrub or tree to mature enough so that they can withstand a lot," Sally said. "So that means you have to water in the winter. More plants die from a lack of water in the winter than because it's cold."

To keep up with the winter waterings, Todd suggests watering plants during the holidays.

"I'll generally water on Thanksgiving, Christmas, Martin Luther King Day,



By adding a door to the entrance of their backyard, the Johnsons created a new "room" for visitors to explore their lush greenery and blooming flowers.

Valentine's Day and St. Patrick's Day, depending on whether or not we've got snow," he said.

In the three years since they began their cultivation journey, the Johnsons have seen incredible growth on their property. They credit this to the three-year rule outlined by Dennis Patton, a Johnson County K-State extension horticulture agent and contributor to the KC Gardens column in the Kansas City Star.

"We live by this," Todd said. "It takes three years: the first year is sleep, the next year is creep, and the third year is leap."

This philosophy basically means that the first year after planting, plants may exhibit little to no noticeable signs of life or growth. The second year, much remains the same, but beneath the surface their roots are creeping larger and larger. And by the third year, the plants are blooming, thriving and larger than ever.

"By the third year, they leap, if you've done it right — if you've done the soil

right and water them in winter," Todd advised.

Content with their leaping, the Johnsons don't have many future plans for their yard. Sure, they may add a few plants here and there, but they are proud of the work they've accomplished together, with nature at the forefront.

And they've enjoyed living in Mission, citing its friendly, community-first environment. They call it a "front yard neighborhood," due to many of their neighbors being social and lounging on their front patios versus isolating themselves on a back deck. They spend quality time with others in the neighborhood at least once a month.

"We have lived in several lovely neighborhoods, but Mission distinguishes itself by having a front-yard atmosphere and neighbors who are inclusive of all ages, even us who are 10 or 20 years older than most people on the street," Sally said. "They're just really nice people."

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Amy Major, owner of Wee Create KC, inside her studio at 5311 Johnson Dr. in Mission. Photos by Denise Elam.

A SPACE TO EXPLORE ART, GET MESSY AND BE IN COMMUNITY WITH OTHERS

Wee Create KC encourages creative freedom and expression for 'Wee' ones

By Denise Elam

Every artist knows — when inspiration strikes, it's important to act on it.

So when former art teacher Amy Major felt a spark of inspiration to create her own neighborhood art space for kids, she didn't waste any time daydreaming. She began researching other successful art studios on Instagram, like Merri Cherry in Los Angeles, and felt confident that this was her next big career move.

"I told my husband, 'Okay, this is what I want to do,'" she recalled. "And I knew it was going to take me a while to get it going."

Opening a studio was always in the back of her mind after retiring from an eight-year career in elementary art education in the Blue Springs School District. She was glad to take some time to stay home with her children, but admittedly missed teaching. She dreamed of creating a space for children and their families to explore art, get messy, relieve stress and have the free will to experiment and express themselves.

"I had talked about dabbling a little bit



and doing at-home classes or something like that in our basement," she said, explaining that a lack of space and the messiness of paints kept her from acting on those ideas. "I wanted to be with kids and teach kids but didn't want to go back to working for someone else full time in the formal educational system."

After sharing her dream with her husband, Major began work on a website and created a business plan. In 2017, it all

came together in a space at 89th and Roe Boulevard.

"It was the perfect spot," she said. "I used to go to the building before leasing it and sit outside, look at it, and plan."

She opened Wee Create KC in the fall of 2017 inside a 900-square-foot studio space. Classes ranged from three different age group offerings, including: Wee Warhols, 18 to 36 months; Kiddie Kahlos, 3 to 5 years; and Learning Leonardos,

kindergarten through third grade.

"In 2019, we started feeling like it was time to expand," she said, explaining that business was booming. "We wanted to do things that I knew that space was too small for, like host larger class-sizes, add more classes and throw bigger birthday parties."

In the winter of 2020, she began the search for alternate spaces and then the COVID-19 pandemic hit. She pivoted to virtual classes and take-home art kits, but it was hard.

"It went fine, but with the philosophy that I really started this business on, which is community and family-togetherness, and with kids needing that social interaction and being together, it just didn't really work for us," she said. "The parents really loved it and they were so thankful to still have something for their kids to do at home."

By November of 2020, after a long, hard year of pandemic restrictions, Major felt she couldn't do it anymore; virtual learning was not conducive to the hands-on learning she was most passionate about.

"So I moved Wee Create KC to my basement," Major recalled. "I made at-home kits and would drive around and deliver them, all over the city, up north to way out south," she said. In early 2021, she and her husband began the search for a new permanent location.

They discovered a spot inside the Mission Mart Shopping Center in April of 2021.

"I was super excited," she recalled. "It was such a great location with Ovation Dance Academy next door and close to me and the community I live in."

Major and her husband completed renovations to the space in the spring of 2021. The new location opened on June 7, 2021.

"We had like a month to get everything

done, and we did it," she said. "From then on, we've been here and it's been great; we love it."

Aside from classes, Major also hosts themed summer camps, birthday parties and the occasional pop-up shops. Popular summer camps include Welcome To Hogwarts, a Harry Potter-themed camp, Fidgets and Sensory Fun, a tinkering camp and Dollhouse Design, a camp with an interior-design theme.

"Kids really seem to like them," she said. "They're all drop-off camps, and they're all in the afternoon, from 12:30 to 3:30."

Wee Create offers themed birthday parties on weekends that include a 2-hour time slot with customizable options. Parties are available for kids ages 1-10 years old.

"We can do pretty much any theme," Major said, noting that Minecraft, Minnie/

"We explore many art elements and principles, such as line, color, shape, texture and pattern. Our projects are designed to encourage creative freedom and expression while developing age-appropriate abilities like gross and fine motor skills, problem solving and social interactions."

--Amy Major, owner, Wee Create KC

Mickey Mouse and Trolls are a few party themes they've customized in the past.

Classes work in seasonal sessions, typically running for eight weeks at a time, and include painting, tinkering and sensory exploration. Generally, kids complete six to eight projects per class and participate in activities based around a theme, like butterflies or Disney's Encanto.

"We explore many art elements and principles such as line, color, shape, texture and pattern. Our projects are designed to encourage creative freedom and expression while developing age-appropriate abilities like gross and fine motor skills, problem solving and social interactions," she said. "The children are gently guided through the use of different art materials without the emphasis of a final product."

Major enjoys giving children an outlet to express themselves. She believes art education is important for kids and gives them the autonomy to make their own choices.

"Physical activity is just as important as being creative," she said. "Everybody has a different skill set."

In the future, she hopes to add ceramics, her art medium of choice, to the mix. She would also love to host more open studio classes, perhaps every other week and on the weekends so more working parents can attend classes with their children.

"Those are open to everybody. You don't have to sign up or register, just pay when you come," she said. "That's been really popular."

In the past five years, Major has been blown away by the sheer creativity of her students; they always add their own unique flair.

"It just goes back to that community of building a piece of art together," she said. "I've seen kids come in that are really hard on themselves... but by the end of the week, they start to feel like, 'Okay, we're all doing our own thing. This is okay.' They're just really proud by the time they leave."

Wee Create KC is located at 5311 Johnson Dr. in Mission. For more information, visit weecreatekc.com.



Major's students helped decorate this Wee Create KC sign; it proudly hangs in her studio space in Mission.



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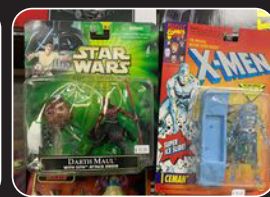
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Mission Police Department Brings Back Popular Citizen's Academy

After a two-year hiatus, the Mission Police Department is excited to host its Citizen's Police Academy beginning in September. The Citizen's Police Academy gives attendees an opportunity to learn about many aspects of policing such as crime scene processing, defensive tactics, traffic stops, decision-making under stress, and the mental health co-responder program.

Participants also tour the Johnson County Adult Detention Center, the Johnson County Emergency Communications Center (dispatch), and have an opportunity to ride along with an officer on patrol. This is a great opportunity for officers and residents to build relationships, which ultimately helps keep Mission safe.

The Citizen's Police Academy begins on Thursday, Sept. 1, 2022 at 6:30 p.m. and meets every Thursday evening until Oct. 27, 2022. Space is limited. Please



visit the City's website at www.missionks.org to apply, or call 913.676.8300.



There are some new plantings at City Hall. The variety of plant types are all native to this area, requiring less water and no fertilizer to thrive. These plants will fill in and create habitat for all kinds of pollinators and their deep roots will pull carbon down into the soil and absorb rainwater before it runs off into the stormwater system. It's a great climate action solution that looks nice, too! Thanks to City Roots Nursery for the planting design and installation and the recent education session for Mission's Sustainability Commission pictured above.



Ward I – Trent Boultinghouse

Hometown: Girard, Kansas

Occupation: Reporting and Metrics Manager

Years in Mission: 6

On Council since: December 2019



What is your favorite thing about your current job?

I work for an international legal services company where I help create graphs, charts, and data "stories" for our leaders to make decisions about the company. My favorite part is seeing how larger trends in the world show up in the data I use.

What causes are you passionate about?

As a Spanish and Portuguese speaker, I am passionate about Latin America and its culture. I was lucky to live in the region for three years in my 20s and met many wonderful people who made me feel at home while I learned the languages and went through culture shock. Here at home, I am passionate about helping immigrants who might be going through the same thing.

What are you looking forward to accomplishing as a Councilmember?

The biggest achievement so far in my term was passage of the Facilities Conservation Improvement Program (FCIP), which guarantees cost savings and a cleaner environmental footprint at our City facilities. That project also replaced all of Mission's streetlights with cleaner LED bulbs. I also helped secure one-time funding for a mental health co-responder in our police department; something I would love to make permanent.

What are you currently reading (or a recommended read)?

I'm nearly finished with *White Teeth* by Zadie Smith, but one of my all-time favorites is *Lincoln in the Bardo* by George Saunders.

What are you most likely to be caught listening to on repeat?

For the longest time it was emo (I know), but I also have a soft spot for early 90s alt-rock and grunge. Recently I've been listening to a lot of Alice in Chains and the new red dirt country album, "American Heartbreak" by Zach Bryan.

What's your favorite way to spend a day off from work?

It's nice to go for a walk or a run around town any day of the week, but if I'm also off work I'll grab a coffee or beer downtown with my wife and slow time down.

What's your favorite food?

I really like Mexican food, specifically chilaquiles for breakfast.

Who or what inspires you in your career?

My family.

Favorite thing to do in Mission?

I love to run here, especially now that it's nicer weather. Seeing the city on foot is such a different perspective than in a vehicle. It's so nice to put on a good playlist and run through places like Streamway Park, Broadmoor Park, Waterworks Park and the Rock Creek Trail.

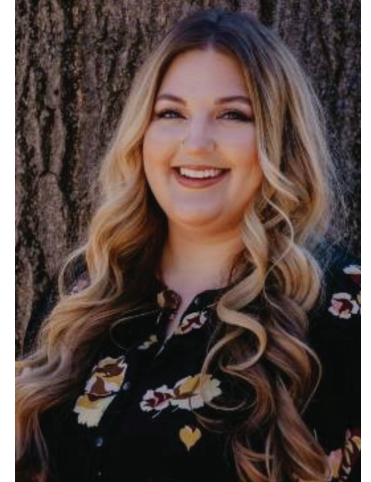
Ward II – Mary Ryherd

Hometown: Leawood, Kansas

Occupation: Implementation Project Lead for Cox Automotive
I live and work in Mission!

Years in Mission: 5

On Council since: January 2022



What is your favorite thing about your current job?

Right now, I'm working with teams in Canada and Bolivia, and the cross-country collaboration and getting to work with people from different backgrounds and places really fills my bucket and keeps me motivated.

What causes are you passionate about?

I feel like I'm finding new passions every day, but right now I'm really focused on social justice, women's rights, and sustainability.

What are you looking forward to accomplishing as a Councilmember?

Parks are first and foremost for me in Mission! Parks are so much more than just a place to be outside — they also improve mental and physical health. I'm looking forward to continuing to see parks be a spot of focus for us.

What are you currently reading (or a recommended read)?

I'm currently reading Isabel Allende's *A Long Petal of the Sea*, and *On Food and Cooking* by Harold McGee.

What are you most likely to be caught listening to on repeat?

Spotify tells me Bruce Springsteen is my top artist, but I'm also probably listening to Dolly Parton, Glass Animals, Vulfpeck, The Strokes and Soda Stereo, among others!

What's your favorite way to spend a day off from work?

Ideally, I'd be hopping on a plane to travel somewhere neat! But if I'm staying home, I'm headed to a farmers' market to find goodies to bake up into something spectacular.

What's your favorite food?

I have the biggest soft spot for Mexican food. Specifically, mole or al pastor tacos.

Who or what inspires you in your career?

This may be cheesy, but my husband Lee. He is a total force, and someone I look up to each and every day. He is so incredibly passionate about the little things, like taking care of our beehives, and the big things, like designing safe and effective civil engineering projects. He makes me want to work harder, be kinder and give more.

Favorite thing to do in Mission?

I'm at Mission Market during the summer, frequenting our lovely local breweries and hanging out at our amazing parks!

Ward III – Kristin Inman

Hometown: Marshalltown, Iowa

Occupation: Payroll Tax Specialist

Years in Mission: I have lived in Mission twice for a total of 16 years. I bought my first home here from 1998-2004. I moved back in 2013.

On Council since: April 2016



What is your favorite thing about your current job?

I am a data person, so I love drilling down the numbers to find incongruent data.

What causes are you passionate about?

Making sure that municipal governments remain nonpartisan and that national political agendas are omitted from local governance.

What are you looking forward to accomplishing as a Councilmember?

I strongly believe that we need to take care of the assets we currently have before allocating tax dollars on new and shiny items. I would also like to have a policy regarding short-term rentals in our single-family neighborhoods.

What are you currently reading (or a recommended read)?

I am currently reading *The Palace Papers* by Tina Brown. I am fascinated by the Royal family. I also read a lot of true crime novels.

What are you most likely to be caught listening to on repeat?

Rapper's Delight by the Sugar Hill Gang.

What's your favorite way to spend a day off from work?

Day trips are a favorite!

What's your favorite food?

Italian. I miss Italian Delight being here in Mission, but we still get pizza from the location on State Avenue almost every Friday night.

Who or what inspires you in your career?

My grandmother was elected to the Iowa State House as well as the Iowa State Senate and she inspires me when it comes to public service.

Favorite thing to do in Mission?

I absolutely love to walk the neighborhoods, the parks as well as the Mission business district. There is so much to see regarding the diverse architecture and the beautiful mature trees

Ward IV – Ben Chociej

Hometown: Kansas City, Missouri

Occupation: Software Engineer

Years in Mission: 5

On Council since: December 2021



What is your favorite thing about your current job?

In my day job, I am a software engineer for a fast-growing technology company that aims to improve the customer's experience in the process of purchasing or refinancing homes. There are still so many business processes that are paper-based, chaotic affairs, and it is interesting and challenging to write software than can improve those experiences.

What causes are you passionate about?

The causes I'm passionate about are what spurred me to run for office. The most pressing issues facing us, both locally and on a broader scale, include climate change, social and economic justice, and accessible and walkable neighborhoods. I believe the way we plan and develop cities dramatically impacts these issues, and I spend a lot of energy and time learning how to help Mission grow in ways that prepare us for a strong, resilient future.

What are you looking forward to accomplishing as a Councilmember?

Delivering a strong action plan as a member of the Climate Action Task Force is at the top my list, along with aggressively implementing those recommendations. I'm also excited at the prospect of reforming zoning codes and implementing our updated Comprehensive Land Use Plan to build denser, mixed-use neighborhoods with infrastructure designed for all users, not just cars.

What are you currently reading (or a recommended read)?

I'm currently reading *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* by Jane Jacobs, and can recommend *Walkable City* by Jeff Speck as well as *Curbing Traffic: The Human Case for Fewer Cars in Our Lives* by Melissa and Chris Bruntlett.

What are you most likely to be caught listening to on repeat?

Podcasts! Mostly about engineering, urban planning, politics and cooking. Musically, it can change a lot. These days it's likely to be Johnny Cash or Queens of the Stone Age. Longstanding staples include bluegrass, alt-rock, and electronic.

What's your favorite way to spend a day off from work?

Taking my daughter someplace fun like the zoo, working on home improvement/DIY projects, or if the weather's nice, doing absolutely nothing other than being outside and enjoying the day.

What's your favorite food?

Anything spicy or smoky — Mexican (real or Tex-Mex), Thai, barbecue, Vietnamese — but if you make me pick one thing, it'd probably be burnt ends.

Who or what inspires you in your career?

Improving things! Taking apart a complicated machine, system, or problem, spending a lot of time understanding every little part, and then trying to make it better. Nothing else is as intellectually or professionally motivating for me. I get to do it in my day job and it's the same for City business – diving in to development plans, minutes and ordinances with an eye toward building a better Mission.

Favorite thing to do in Mission?

Walking around and enjoying everything Mission has to offer! We have such a diverse array of spaces and things to do within a 10-15 minute walk and there's almost always something interesting going on.

Go Green 2022!

Save Our Planet & Your Pocketbook!

Saturday, Sept. 17, 2022, 9 a.m. – noon,
Powell Community Center
6200 Martway St. Mission, Kansas

Join us for Go Green 2022! This FREE family-friendly environmental fair aims to show you how each small step you take can help reduce your carbon footprint at home, school and work and save money while doing so. Local businesses and nonprofits will provide information and items to help you live a more sustainable life.

Go Green 2022! will include vendors, children's activities, door prizes, giveaways, and entertainment. You're invited to come learn more about how being green can save green through energy efficiencies, local products and more.

Go Green 2022! is hosted by the cities of: Fairway, Merriam, Mission, Mission Hills, Mission Woods, Prairie Village, Roeland Park, Westwood and Westwood Hills.



PAVING THE WAY

The 2022 Street Preservation Project is in full swing! The work will continue throughout the summer construction season. This year's projects include street and stormwater improvements in the following areas:

62nd Street, Woodson to Lamar Avenue
Reeds Road, 49th Street to 50th Street
Outlook Street, 49th Street to 51st Street

The projects include stormwater improvements or repairs; curb and gutter and driveway approach removal and replacement; and fulldepth pavement reconstruction. They're funded in part by the dedicated revenue raised by the 3/8-cent street sales tax renewed by voters in 2021.

You can view the latest information about the projects and information on the streets being designed for 2023 on the City's website at www.missionks.org/streets.



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See page 22 in this magazine for more information on this free, family event!



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Do you have a Championship Tree?

Nomination forms are available at the Powell Community Center or online at missionks.org. Nominations are accepted year round. For more information, contact Penn Almoney, Parks + Recreation Director at 913.722.8210 or palmoney@missionks.org



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What's not to "LOVE" about the new tennis courts in Andersen Park?

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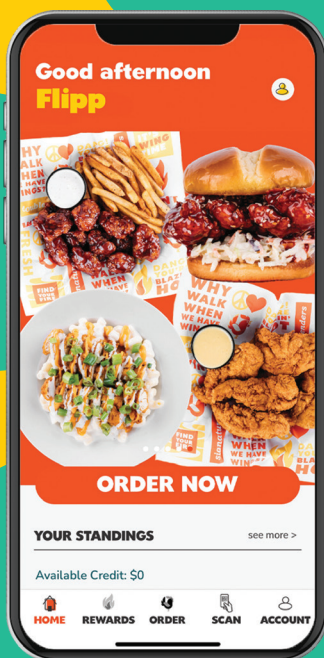
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Telling the mostly true story of the 'barnacle of baseball'

Local authors explore the life and history of Ted Sullivan, a pioneer of early baseball

by Denise Elam

He was known as the "daddy" of baseball, a pioneer of the sport in its infancy. He founded the Northwest League and the Texas League and was credited with discovering Charles Comiskey. In the history books, he is considered to be one of the first to back scouting and even claimed to invent the now widely-used term, "fan," (short for fanatic) to describe those who loved the sport and its players.

But do you know who he is?

Most don't. That's exactly why local authors Tom Coffman and Pat O'Neill set out to learn the true story behind legendary Irish-American baseball manager Timothy Paul "Ted" Sullivan in their new book, "Ted Sullivan — Barnacle of Baseball."

And boy, it was an adventure the two could have never imagined.

It began, as most great stories do, during a round of beer between two longtime friends.

Tom Coffman, lifelong Mission resident and government contracts manager for GFL Environmental, and Pat O'Neill, author and retired executive from O'Neill Marketing & Event Management, had worked together for at least a dozen years on both professional and personal fronts.

The two bonded over their shared Irish roots. So when, over a drink, they began to discuss the Irish connection between one of America's most beloved pastimes, they said aloud, "He'd be a great story."

And it was settled. From that moment on, the two began the laborious, but fun process of researching just who Ted Sullivan was and why his notoriety dwindled throughout the years. All they really knew about him at the start was that he managed the Kansas City Cowboys back in the 1880s, he was Irish-American, and he coined the term "fan." It was a good starting point that left them eager to know the full story.

Their research took them to Dubuque,



Tom Coffman and Pat O'Neill, longtime friends and authors of "Ted Sullivan — Barnacle of Baseball."

Iowa, where Sullivan created a minor league that made him famous in his day.

"We went through the typical microfilm set in the basement of Carnegie Library there, and in Clinton, Iowa — we visited a couple of other places he was in his early career," O'Neill said.

The friends felt even more confident that Sullivan would make a great subject for a book when they learned that at St. Mary's College in St. Marys, Kansas, Sullivan mentored a freshman on the baseball team named Charles Comiskey, a founder of the American League and

lifelong friend of Sullivan's. Sullivan became his scout, broker and adviser for 50 years and brought Comiskey to Dubuque to play on his minor league team, kicking off Comiskey's career.

"The team in Dubuque was part of the first legitimate minor league in baseball history," Coffman said. "One of the first things he did was create history."

As they made their way through the microfilm, an analog storage medium using film reels which are exposed and developed into photographic records (typically used to store

paper documents, periodicals, legal documents, among others), they soon realized the huge undertaking this would become.

"We're two college slackers," O'Neill joked. "I don't ever remember doing a footnote in college."

This was going to be work. And a lot of it.

"It was an arduous process assuaged by neighborhood saloons where we'd go at the end of the day to see what we had — to see what fish we had caught," O'Neill said.

They learned that Sullivan had ties to Dubuque, St. Louis, Kansas City and eventually ended up in Washington, D.C. as manager of the Washington Senators. They traveled to D.C. to visit the library archives and managed to dive into old electronic newspaper records bearing Sullivan's name.

"We bugged the guy at the archives in the Washington, D.C. library so often, he goes, 'Here's my code, don't tell anybody,'" O'Neill recalled. "We got another portal through newspapers.com, and lo and behold, 3,000 unduplicated articles later, we had his life's story."

But even with all the information at hand, it wasn't enough. Coffman and O'Neill hired translators to better understand the documents printed in



Ted Sullivan, pictured here, is known for creating the profession of scouting and signing more players than anybody in his day.

other languages. They hired experts to track down Sullivan's family history to learn when he came to America and who his relatives were.

"We had somebody run down his will for us," Coffman said.

They learned that Sullivan was ubiquitous in his time; he was frequently quoted in papers and magazines.

"The whole industry knew him, he was one of the most important guys," Coffman said. "He created the whole profession of scouting, he signed more players than anybody in his day, including several hall-of-famers."

Sullivan was also the first player-agent and coined the term, "canned" to refer to getting fired.

"When he'd fire someone, he'd say, 'Take your lunch can and go home, you're done,' so that's how people got 'canned' thanks to Ted Sullivan," O'Neill explained.

Sullivan began Kansas City's first professional baseball team, the Unions, later known as the Cowboys due to their fans' rowdy nature in the stands.

"The players, most of them were Irish-American ball players, and they were notorious for running umpires out of the stadium, starting fights, fans throwing lit cigars at the players and terrorizing them," O'Neill said.

"But in Kansas City, baseball was so new, they ate it up," Coffman said. "They made bank. They made serious money, and they played on Sunday."

They also learned that Sullivan was a

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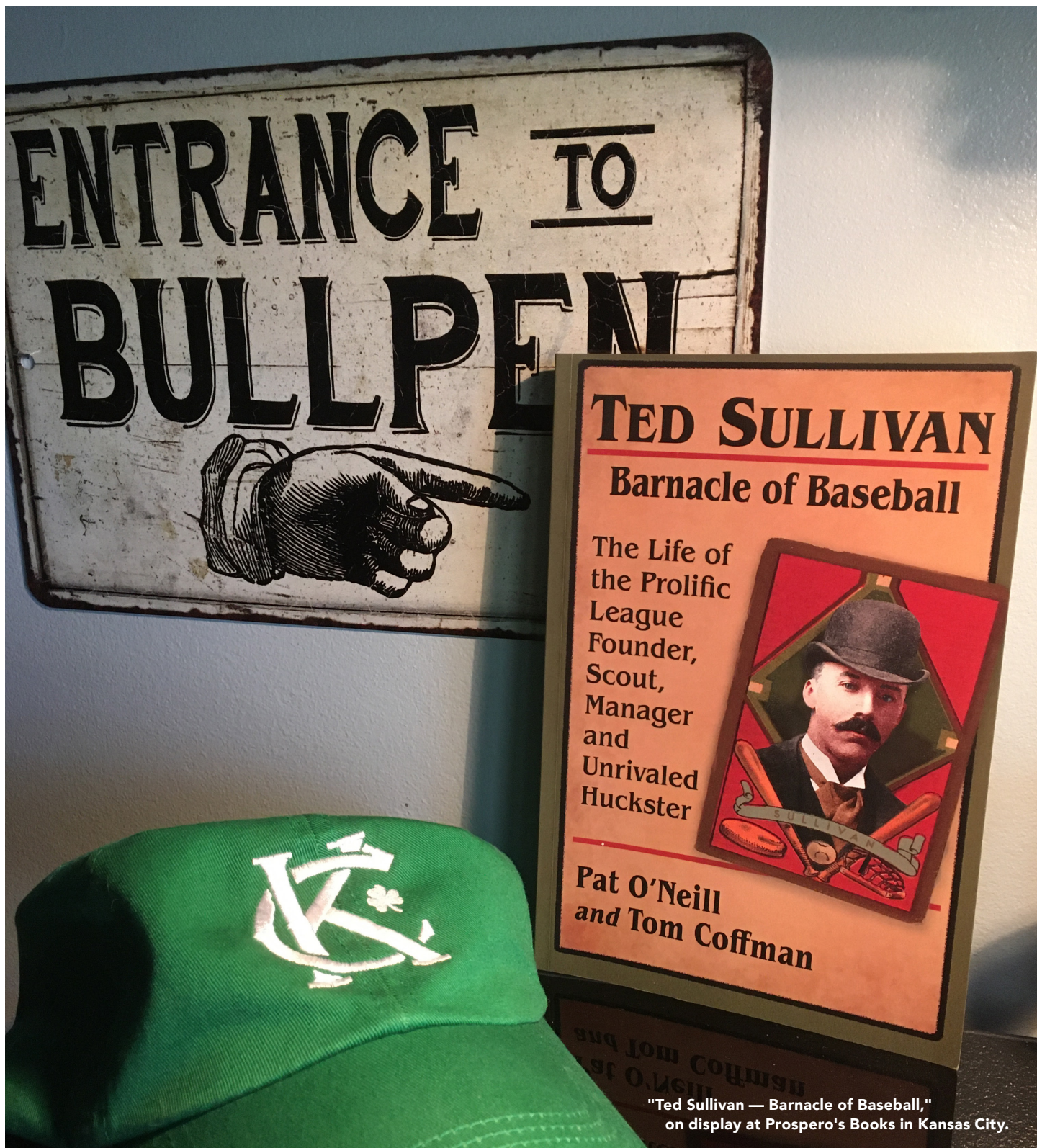
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hustler who knew how to con his way into a fortune. They describe him as a bit of a "Music Man," someone who traveled to cities, amassed a fortune, and left before things got rocky.

"He did 'The Old Ted Sullivan,'" O'Neill said, noting that a columnist coined that phrase. "He'd go to towns all over America who wanted baseball teams, start one, once they ran out of money

and it got bad, he'd hop the train and leave."

And that's ultimately where the title of their book came from — from Sullivan's own character.

"Damon Runyon, who was a famous sports journalist, called him the 'barnacle of baseball' because he was everywhere and stuck to everything, in little towns and big towns, all over the country,"

O'Neill said.

Despite the dark sides to Sullivan, some of which became roadblocks during the process (and are explained at length in the book) one can't deny his impact on modern day baseball.

"He founded the Southern League, which is still in existence, he founded the Texas League which is still in existence, and a dozen other leagues," Coffman said.



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Not only does the book explain Sullivan's life in detail, it also dives into the social, racial and political issues of his time as an Irish-American in the 1800s. Coffman and O'Neill chose not to shy away from the truth, some of which was shocking to learn.

"We decided we're going to take this head on," Coffman said. "It's not the most flattering thing for our subject, for the journalistic profession, or for the Irish; we're not going to cover it up. We're not going to hide it. It's part of the story. We're storytellers."

Some have asked if the stories in the book are true. To that, O'Neill has to laugh.

"We're writing about the biggest B.S.-er in the history of baseball," he said. "It's true as far as that goes."

As their publishing adventure comes to an end, one thing's for certain: it was a fun ride.

"We were entertained the whole way," O'Neill said. "And the bottom line is, Tom and I had a good time. It was fun, even if it was more work than we ever did in college ... We found a lot of humor in it, a lot of frustration and a lot of disappointment in putting together his life story."

"Ted Sullivan — Barnacle of Baseball" is available on most platforms, including Amazon. Since its publication in



Pat O'Neill (left), Kansas City Royals legend Frank White (middle) and Tom Coffman (right) discussed Ted Sullivan and the early days of baseball at Prospero's Books on June 5.

September of 2021, Coffman and O'Neill have been asked to appear at the Milwaukee Irish Festival and to discuss racism in the early days of baseball with former Royals player Frank White Jr. Read

more about the book at irishcentral.com/roots/history/ted-sullivan-barnacle-of-baseball.



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Rushton Cardinals, 1963. Photo courtesy of Steve Bussjaeger.

This vintage photo highlights 70s style, summer bicycles and Mr. Rushton's farmhouse in the background. Photo courtesy of Randy Wenger.



TAKE ME BACK TO THE BALLGAME!

LOOKING BACK ON MISSION'S LITTLE LEAGUES

by Kate Deacon

For children in Mission in the 1950s and 60s, baseball was a rite of passage, and summertime was synonymous with the crack of the bat and long afternoons running the dust-covered bases at the schoolyard, preparing to take on the local rival of the day.

At that time, elementary schools fielded their own teams. Mission resident Ned Scott remembers the draw of the schoolyard field well.

"All the schools at that time had the old backstops, and every kid knew where all those fields were," he said. "Some of them were not much more than dust and dirt, covered with anthills, and then a big old backstop. But that's all we'd need."

The fields weren't evenly graded and landscaped, making for variations in play at each location.

Steve Bussjaeger, proud player for the Rushton Elementary Cardinals recalled that the Rushton field had a slope to it.

"You'd hope you could hit that ball and get it rolling down toward the playground," he said. "If it started rolling that way all the way to the playground, you'd know you had a homerun."

Memorable features of the Rushton field included an old vacant farmhouse (one lucky job was retrieving the balls from the roof and gutters once a month), a meadow with a resident horse in the pasture (everyone's favorite spectator), and an electric fence (which offered ample opportunity for daredevil bets).



Mission's Hickory Grove school boasted a Championship Girls Baseball team in 1931. As former Shawnee Mission North teacher Ned Scott remembers, Johnson County embraced the sport for females long before its time — "There was even a really nice field that was girls only, and we wished we could play there!" Photo courtesy of the Johnson County Historical Society.



The Queen of Baseball, Mission's own Peggy Gunn was crowned at Segner Field in 1951. Mission residents Jim Nichols and Jim Pfeiffer attend. Photo courtesy of the The Kansas City Times.



VACATION BIBLE SCHOOL @ Rushton Elementary School

Hosted by Christ Church Mission,
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And every team had a designated fence climber to fetch the runaway balls.

Aside from the elementary schools with robust programs like Rushton and Hickory Grove, 3&2 teams were sponsored by local businesses.

"I played for Lutz plumbing," Scott recalled, "and Tom Lutz would rush home from work in his plumber's overalls and be back there pitching balls at practice."

To Scott, baseball was part of the American dream of the 1950s.

"We had role models with our coaches,"

he noted, "Almost all of them were World War II vets who came home with a GI bill, bought a house in Mission, maybe opened a small business, raised a family and coached a baseball team."

The sport was so popular that the Johnson County Sun featured a weekly report of team standings from the youth leagues. It was common practice for young readers to scope out the other teams in the paper.

"You'd see a list of teams, and there were always two or three at the bottom that didn't win at all," Scott said. "In the long run, those 0-18 teams might have been the best teams I played on. Lutz Plumbing was one of those teams. We learned a lot about life."

Van Johnson, who played for Smak's Drive In at age 10, also remembers those losses well.

"We lost every game that year, but we got to play at Segner Field, which seemed like the major league stadium to us," he said.

Formerly located at 87th and Farley Street in Overland Park, Segner Field boasted gleaming lights, a real wooden fence, a concession stand and an old-fashioned scoreboard. Playing at Segner was a memorable highlight for many Mission players.



Mission Bowl Baseball Team, 1961.

Bussjaeger has fond memories of a summer's worth of baseball — equating it to a summer's worth of freedom.

"You'd hop on your bike and spend the day at the Mission pool, the ball field, head all over town. That changed when I had to get a job at Katz Drugstore at 16, but it was good while it lasted," he said.

For Bussjaeger, those early lessons paid off; he later found success in many sports, including the triathlon, which he credits to the discipline and values of sportsmanship he absorbed from those early days on the baseball team.

"You never know what you might apply later in life," he emphasized.



Ashe Menswear Team, 1956. The 3&2 Baseball was largely sponsored by local businesses, such as the Mission Bowl and Ashe Menswear. Photos courtesy of the Johnson County Museum.



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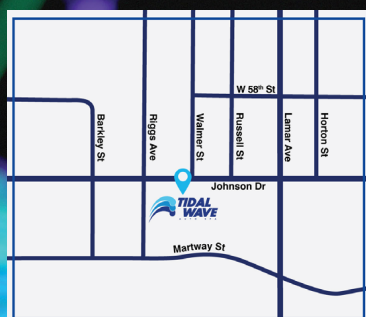




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Spend Your Summer with Mission Parks + Recreation!

Under the Sea Pool Party

Bring the family to the pool for an Under the Sea Pool Party! Music, games, a pinata, photo booth and more!

- SAT: July 30, 5-10PM
- Mission Family Aquatic Center
- 8-10PM - Moana (PG)
- Movie Ticket (required): \$4

Yoga on Deck

Meditate with the soothing sounds of gently lapping water. Enjoy the beautiful summer evening while the sun sets. Wine tasting provided at the end by Aubrey Vineyards.

- TH: July 28, 8PM
- Mission Family Aquatic Center
- \$18

Movie in the Park

Bring your lawn chair, grab a seat and enjoy a FREE movie in the park with Mission Parks + Recreation. Movie will start at dusk!

- F: August 12 - Broadmoor Park - Space Jam, A New Legacy (PG)

MPRD's 1st Cornhole Tournament

Round robin seeded into single elimination tournament. Teams of 2 - all skill levels welcome!

- SAT: August 20, Check-in at 12:30PM, Games begin at 1PM
- Beverly Park
- Prizes for 1st, 2nd, & 3rd place



Check out these new park improvements!

Andersen Park Tennis Courts:

- New tennis court concrete surface, fence and lights
- ADA access
- New court markings for 2 tennis courts and 4 pickleball courts

Mohawk Park (construction starting soon):

- New restroom and pavilion
- Connection from existing trails to new plaza amenities
- New (relocated) parking lot

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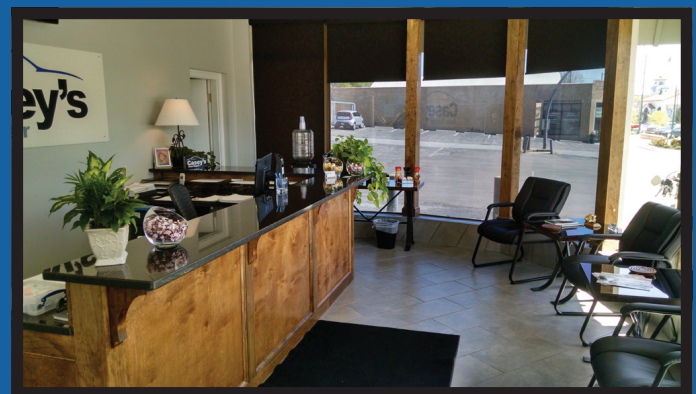
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