

JUNE/JULY 2023



mission *Kansas*



SUSTAINABILITY STARTS AT HOME

MISSION RESIDENTS USE ALTERNATIVE
SYSTEMS TO HELP WITH ENERGY COSTS

Page 6

LEARNING THE BIRDS AND THE BEES

You can find honey and eggs in
backyards right here in Mission

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WELCOME TO SUMMERTIME IN MISSION!

Welcome to summertime in Mission! The kids are out of school, the days are longer, the grass is greener, and things seem to move just a little more slowly. The Mission Market is in full swing on Thursday nights, the water at the Mission Family Aquatic Center is calling your name, and there are plenty of outdoor activities happening in our parks.

Our second issue of the Mission Magazine this year is focused on sustainability. The cover story features two local families in Mission who are bringing sustainable practices right into their backyards by raising chickens and keeping bees. Alice Ames and Lee Ryherd find that producing eggs and honey, respectively, is both a cost effective and sustainable way to provide these popular commodities for their families. I know I enjoyed reading more about how you can make this work at home, though it takes quite a commitment to be successful in these endeavors!

The magazine also features two local families who have invested in alternative energy sources for their homes. Sustainability Commission member Josh Thede and his fiancée Ellen Ramsey installed solar panels on their home last fall and are already seeing the benefits. They were one of eight residents who pulled City permits to install residential solar panels in 2022. Bill and Cathy Thomas have been reaping the benefits of their geothermal heating and cooling system since 2009. Growing up during the energy crisis, Cathy shares with us how saving water and utilizing alternative energy has always been of importance to her.

Next, Jessica Carlson shares her experiences with biking in Mission - especially her dedication to biking her three young daughters to school and to sports practices, which she has done for



a number of years. Making an investment in a Bunch Bike has allowed the Carlsons to help maintain healthy and sustainable transportation habits. Jessica will be the first one to tell you that the best way to get to know your city is on a bicycle!

We are also proud to feature a story highlighting how three of our local businesses are incorporating sustainability into their operations. Several of our Mission entrepreneurs across various sectors - a hair salon, a coffee shop, and a brewery - share their commitments not only to environmental sustainability but also to things like a sustainable living wage. We are excited to continue to highlight their successes and the successes of other retailers and services providers throughout the Mission community.

The final story in this issue showcases the "Kids Feeding Kids" program. The Consumer and Family Services teacher at Horizons High School has partnered with Pete's Garden to bring an important program on food waste, food insecurity, and giving back to the community to the students in her classroom. I'm always inspired to discover these kinds of opportunities right here in our metro area.

I hope there is something in this issue that piques your interest or challenges you to explore more sustainable practices in your own daily life. And, whether your summer plans have you sticking close to home or taking off on a new adventure, I encourage you to find the time to relax and refresh!

Sollie

-Sollie Flora, Mayor

On the cover:

Thanks to a city ordinance Jochen Silveira, Charlotte Russell-Ames and Alice Ames are able to raise chickens in Mission.

Photo by
Kathy Delorenzo



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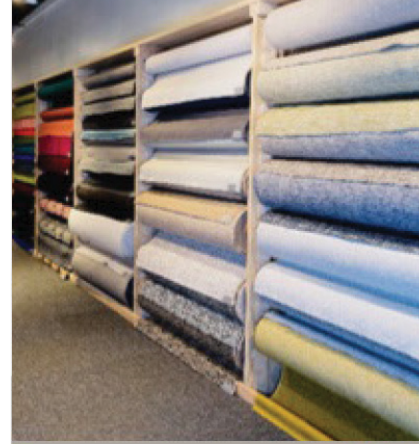
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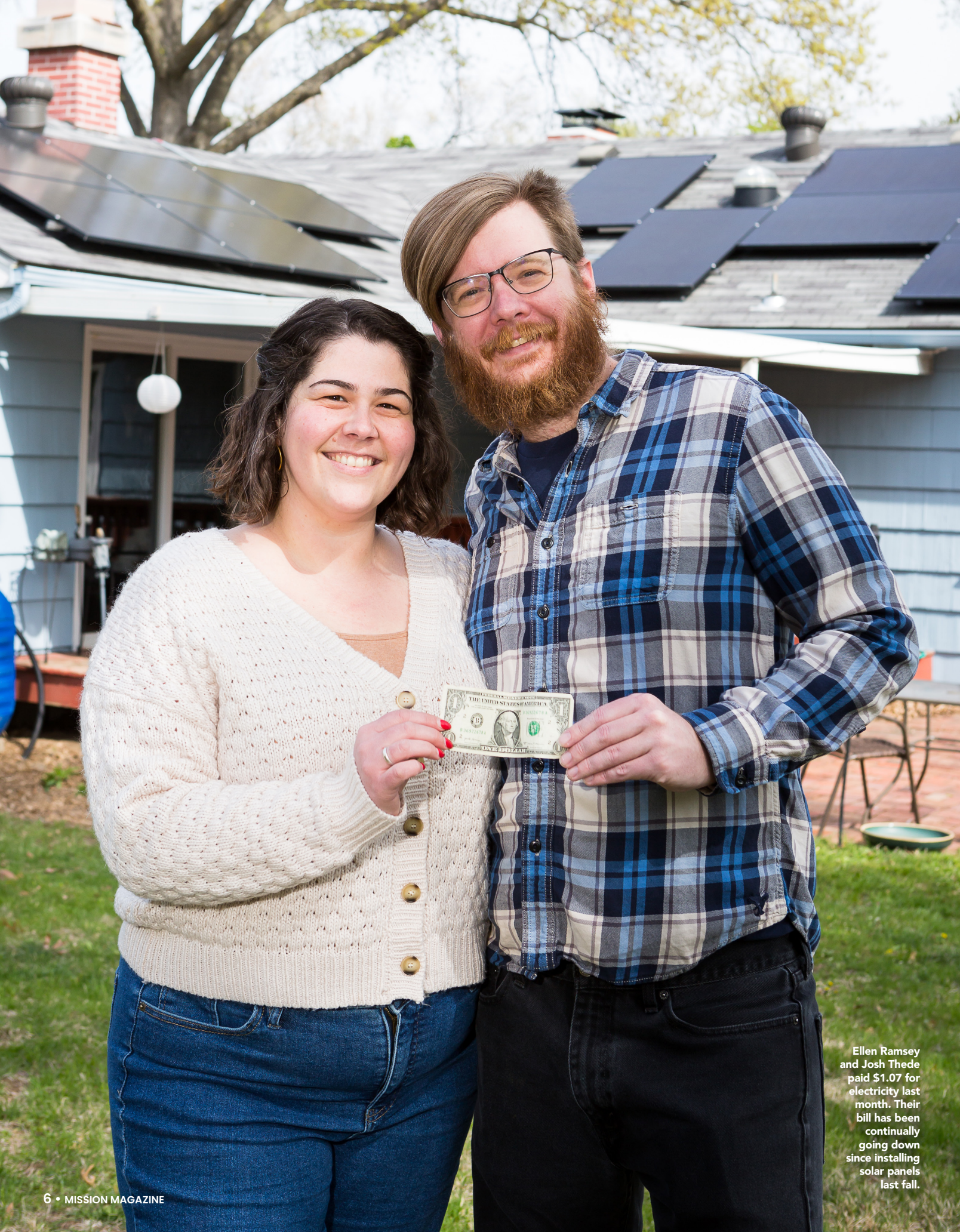
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Ellen Ramsey and Josh Thede paid \$1.07 for electricity last month. Their bill has been continually going down since installing solar panels last fall.

Sustainability starts at home

Mission residents use alternative systems to help with energy costs

By Kris Baker • Photos by Kathy DeLorenzo

The sun was shining brightly over Mission, illuminating the large, shiny solar panels on the roof as Josh Thede walked across his backyard. He points over to the large rain barrels leaned against the side of his house. "They collect all the water we use for our plants back here," Thede said. "We can water the whole yard with what we are able to collect in the barrels."

This is just one example of how the ideas of reuse, recycling and renewal are becoming more visible around town. Recently several Mission residents have taken steps to make their homes more sustainable. Missionites have a strong reputation for their focus on community, and now some locals want to get the word out about their commitments to the environment. "We just wanted to do our part," Thede said about the recent

improvements to his house. "These issues are really important to us and so when we were able to add solar, we were excited to do it. We wanted to be part of the solution."

Solar power for a dollar

It was late fall 2022 when Thede and his fiancé Ellen Ramsey installed 23 solar panels on their Mission home. Though not realized overnight, the benefits have occurred quickly. "We have seen our electric costs go down since we put in the solar panels," Ramsey said. "It's easy to use; we just flip a switch, and all of our electricity comes from the solar panels now. We hoped we would save money by installing them, and we have." With each passing month, the savings have increased. Thede and Ramsey's last electric bill was just one dollar and seven cents.

"When we got the bill we couldn't

believe it," Ramsey said. "The savings worked out exactly as we hoped."

Another big factor in their decision to install the solar panels was a 30 percent federal tax credit that was available. After the tax credit, the cost for the solar panels was in the high \$20,000 range. Thede said programs and incentives like this help the decision to install solar panels make sense. "We are advocates of the 'Three P's', planet, people and prosperity," Thede said. "All three are connected and doing things that are good for the planet and other people is also good for your own prosperity."

In 2022, eight residents pulled permits to install solar on their homes. There are several companies who can perform the installation and Thede said the process only took a few hours. For more information Thede said there are several resources online including ussunsolar.com and drawdown.org.



Twenty-three solar panels line the roof of Thede and Ramsey's Mission home.

Digging down for geothermal energy

Across town, another local couple chose to look down to the earth for their energy needs. Mission residents Cathy and Bill Thomas installed a geothermal heating and cooling unit in their home in 2009. The system itself provides heating and cooling which eliminates the need for two separate units. "We saw it on This Old House where we learned the unit uses the consistent 50-60 degree temperature underground as a starting place to heat or cool your home," Cathy said.

After doing their own research to find an installer, it took just a day for the company to drill a hole in the Thomas's backyard and install the equipment in their basement. "It made sense to us," Bill said. "I am dollar-driven and we were hoping to use less electricity and lower our utility bills."

In the winter their costs stay relatively the same as with a traditional system, but during the summer months their energy use and costs go way down. Cathy says she used to enjoy comparing the usage graphs online and seeing how low it would go. More than saving money, however, geothermal units save energy. This is something Cathy has taken an interest in for as long as she can remember. "We grew up during the energy crisis, so my awareness of



Bill and Cathy Thomas use less power in their home after installing their geothermal unit, which controls heating and cooling.

how often I turned on the lights, ran the dishwasher or did the laundry was high," Cathy said. "I have always been interested in saving water and alternative energy."

Cathy contends she has grown up in a time with a new emphasis on environmental issues.

"The EPA started when I was 11 and I have seen the impact it has had to improve our air and water," Cathy said. "I think sustainability can be helped by individual actions but the most impact will come from institutional changes and with governments working together." Cathy believes the City of Mission is a leading advocate for sustainability in the area, but there is always more that can be done.

Government and residents working hand in hand

Many local residents are passionate about the overall sustainability of Mission. Cathy Thomas is interested in saving and cultivating indigenous plants. Josh Thede is an engineer who focuses on recycling and is on Mission's Sustainability Commission. He and Ellen are planning their all-natural green wedding. "You don't have to be perfect, but everyone can do something," Thede said. "I'm excited to see all the local volunteers we have and all of the green spaces we have here in Mission. The City takes the cause of sustainability seriously, and with everyone working together, it's never too late to make a difference."



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bunch

With her trusty cargo bike, Jessica Carlson gives her kids (Lana, Cora and Vera) a lift to school.

FOR THE LOVE OF BIKING

Mission mom bikes her kids to school

By Kris Baker • Photos by Kathy DeLorenzo

Jessica Carlson believes the best way to really get to know a city is on the back of a bicycle. She can often be seen going up and down the hills of Mission on her bike, navigating the streets and avenues. If you see her you might also notice three young passengers enjoying the ride as well.

Carlson has been taking her three young girls to school everyday on her bike for a number of years. She started by attaching a trailer to the back of her bike. Then she discovered an electric cargo bike, a bike with a large carrying cart with enough room for all her kids to grow.

"I've always been an avid biker," Carlson said. "So this was a great way to save on gas and get to spend some time with the girls. This bike was a great fit."

Biking the kids to school and to their



sports practices means Carlson is always on the move, taking Vera to preschool, Lana to first grade and Cora to third. She says her oldest is now starting to ride her own bike alongside.

"I hoped to pass down a love of biking, and I think it's working," she said. Her trips have taught her how to avoid the

busy intersections and get around any congestion. "Riding a bike also makes you a better driver," Carlson said.

Carlson said she is often stopped on her rides and asked about the bicycle. She is more than happy to answer questions and she can also be found online at bunchbike.com. There people can sign up with Carlson for a test ride of their own. She said she would be happy to see more riders in Mission, along with a few more bike lanes opened.

Along with being a healthy and environmentally-friendly habit, Carlson believes bike riding is also good for mental health. "Slow down and take in more of your surroundings," Carlson said. "You become more aware of your place, and you feel more of a connection to your environment because of that."



Dad Mitch Carlson often joins Jessica and the girls on their trips around Mission.

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Alice Ames collects eggs from the chicken coop her family built in their backyard.

LEARNING THE BIRDS & THE BEES

You can find honey and eggs in backyards right here in Mission

By Kris Barker

Photos by Kathy DeLorenzo

When taking care of chickens, one of the first things you need to learn is how to protect your animals from predators. When raising bees, many are surprised to learn that it takes more time than one might think.

These are just some of the insights shared by Mission residents Alice Ames and Lee Ryherd. Ames and Ryherd have joined a growing number of people in the city raising livestock on their property. Popular commodities like eggs and honey are always in demand and raising your own is a sustainable and cost effective way to provide for a family. Not a lot of space is required and it can be rewarding work. The animals themselves can even begin to feel like part of the family. Small-scale livestock raising has been shown to be environmentally beneficial as well. Recently a couple of Mission home owners shared their story of how they entered this world.

Local family has several feathered friends

Why did the chicken cross the road? Or in this case why did the chicken cross the yard? This was the question Alice Ames was asking herself one warm spring day in 2018. Ames was sitting out back of her house when she saw a chicken right outside her fence. The chicken was near the street and looked to be in distress. Ames was able to round-up the chicken and deliver the chicken back to her neighbor's home where it lived. After talking with her neighbor about all the benefits of raising chickens, Ames decided to try it for herself.

"I got hooked pretty quickly," Ames said. She bought her first chicken and the family was able to buy a coop online and assemble it in their backyard. They have maintained the coop with parts they got from Mack True Value Hardware, and

now her brood has grown to five. "They all have a lot of personality," Ames said. "The kids love feeding them grapes and we have really bonded with them."

Each chicken produces about one egg a day and collecting has become another fun, family activity. The biggest concern is actually the safety of the birds. A lot of local wildlife would love to make Ames' feathered companions into their next meal. "If they are out of the coop we have to watch them and be on guard duty," Ames said. "Other than that, we just maintain their environment and watch them grow. They have become part of the family."

Mission man earns his stripes as a beekeeper

Lee Ryherd grew up around bees. His parents raised them when Ryherd was in high school. In the winter of 2020 Ryherd

inherited all of his parents' beekeeping equipment when they were looking to downsize. Ryherd knew the city allowed backyard beekeeping, so it seemed like a golden opportunity to try a new project that would be enjoyable and help with sustainability.

Soon Ryherd had 10,000 new residents living on his property. If that sounds like a lot of bees, Ryherd said that's just par for the course. "Their numbers fluctuate; sometimes it goes up to 50 or 60 thousand," Ryherd said. "Controlling their numbers is one of the most important parts of the job. That and keeping them safe from pests."

This is now Ryherd's fourth season keeping backyard bees and he has averaged around 50 pounds of honey each season. "Once your friends and family know you are raising bees, the honey goes fast," he said. In addition to requests for honey, the buzz about Ryherd's bees has spread in other ways. A couple of years ago a neighbor had a potential hazardous nest of bees on their property. Ryherd investigated. After discovering they were not his bees, he was able to round them up and move them to his hive. "It worked out. I got some free bees," Ryherd laughed.

The bees are one way that Ryherd and his family think about the environment.



Ames' brood produces about one egg per chicken daily.

"We try to be as sustainable as we can," he said. "We go to the Farmers' Market. We grow our own vegetables and honey. The fact Mission allows for backyard bees and chickens is a plus. They also try to educate people on what can be recycled and what can't. There are a number of sustainability resources people can take advantage of in Mission."

Ryherd is a member of the Northeast Kansas Bee Association and they have given him a lot of advice. "It takes more time than you think," he said. "You have

to check the hive every two weeks. You have to be concerned with safety. You have to be an actual beekeeper, and not just a bee-haver."

To keep backyard bees or chickens Mission residents must obtain an Accessory Animal Permit. For more information on the city's ordinances on raising chickens and bees and to apply for a permit visit the City's website at missionks.org and search chicken + beekeeping permits.



Lee Ryherd uses specialized equipment when harvesting the honey produced by his backyard bees.

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Mission's Sustainability Commission

Mission's Sustainability Commission takes an active role in promoting sustainable development and best practices in City activities and operations, advocating for policies that position Mission for a successful future.

These eleven appointed volunteers meet monthly and advise the Council on policies, programs and budget recommendations impacting the natural environment, the economy and the people in our community. City Council liaisons Debbie Kring and Hillary Thomas join the Commission each month to aid in keeping their work closely connected to the Governing Body.

The Commission members take their work seriously, but they have fun doing it! You can see them out in the community participating in clean-up events, offering holiday light recycling annually, and most recently coordinating and hosting a multicity Environmental Fair. For more information on the Sustainability Commission and their work in Mission, please visit the City's website at www.missionks.org



Sustainability Commission members at the recent Community-wide Clean-up Event



Memorial Flag Fund

The American flags are once again waving once again along Johnson Drive as part of the City's Memorial Flag Fund project. If you would like to honor a current service member or veteran, please contact Mission City Hall at 913.676.8368 or erandel@missionks.org for more information or to donate. A full list of honorees is available on the City's website.



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"If I Were Mayor..." Poster Contest Winners Recognized

The 2023 winners of the "If I Were Mayor..." poster contest were recognized by Mayor Flora at the May City Council meeting. The contest, now in its third year, provides students in kindergarten through sixth grade a chance to share what they would do if elected to serve as Mayor of Mission. The wisdom, compassion and insight displayed in all of the contest entries was remarkable and offers an important reminder that, in the hands of these future leaders, things look pretty bright. "I was impressed with the thoughtfulness and the big ideas presented in the posters," Mayor Flora said. "Our young residents are engaged and paying attention to the world around them. It's truly encouraging to imagine them becoming the leaders of tomorrow." The students' posters included themes of inclusivity, sustainability, economic development and community building. Congratulations to the 2023 winners!



George, Lana, Mayor Flora, Cora, Claire and Henry share their winning poster entries at a recent City Council meeting.

2023 Street Projects

The 2023 Street Preservation Project for Mission's residential streets is officially underway, and work will continue throughout the summer construction season. The projects include street and stormwater improvements, partial driveway approach removal and replacement, and full-depth pavement reconstruction in the following areas:

- W. 61st Terrace, Lamar Ave. to Woodson Street
- Riggs Avenue, 53rd Street north to dead end
- Reeds Road, 51st Street east to city limits
- Beverly Avenue, 57th Street to 56th Street

In addition to the residential streets under construction, a \$5.2 million project to improve Foxridge Drive from Lamar Avenue to 51st Street is also underway. The scope of work includes full depth pavement reconstruction; sidewalk and retaining walls; stormwater improvements; traffic signal buyout and replacement; streetlights; and pavement markings.

These improvements are funded in part by the dedicated revenue raised by the 3/8-cent street sales tax. You can view the latest information about the projects online at missionks.org/streets

**PAVING
THE WAY**

Look Back: 2007 Mayors Climate Protection Act Signing

As we look back more than 15 years to the historic signing of the Mayors Climate Protection Act of 2007, one thing stands out: the leadership role the City of Mission played in sparking sustainability goals for our region is undeniable.

In 2007, Mayor Laura McConwell, along with a committed city staff and council, began to face climate and sustainability issues head on in response to a comprehensive plan that turned attention to the water is-

ssues Rock Creek presented. After community visioning and a comprehensive plan by Hyatt Palma highlighted the \$38 million worth of retail and residential property located on a flood plain, former Mayor McConwell remembers “it was imperative that we turn our attention to understanding water, watershed, our creek and the clean water issues. So, we had an opportunity to do it better.” Learning about best practices for water in our region led to looking at energy consumption, recycling opportunities, creating more walkable spaces and many other sustainable practices that could be implemented alongside the improvements to Rock Creek. “It’s all small pieces of the bigger picture when it comes to sustainability,” McConwell said.

Following a local government retreat in Grand Lake, Colorado, city staff and councilmembers formulated a goal to move the discussion surrounding sustainability to the top of the region’s agenda. Hosting the largest single-day signing of The U.S. Conference of Mayor’s Climate Protection Act, a national initiative, would bring concerned parties together and allow first tier suburbs to join forces in tackling some of the issues that affect all of us.

“Each of the different cities in our area have different lanes, and we needed to look at the big picture and be sure we were working with our partners. It was a matter of thinking ahead and communicating with all the entities when a project was being done,” McConwell noted. While initially encountering doubt and a bit of resistance to the idea, McConwell and other key city staff and councilmembers forged forward.

Although she spearheaded the plan, McConwell notes that she did not act alone. “Everybody played a different role for the common good of the vision, and everyone had a different passion, but we all kept



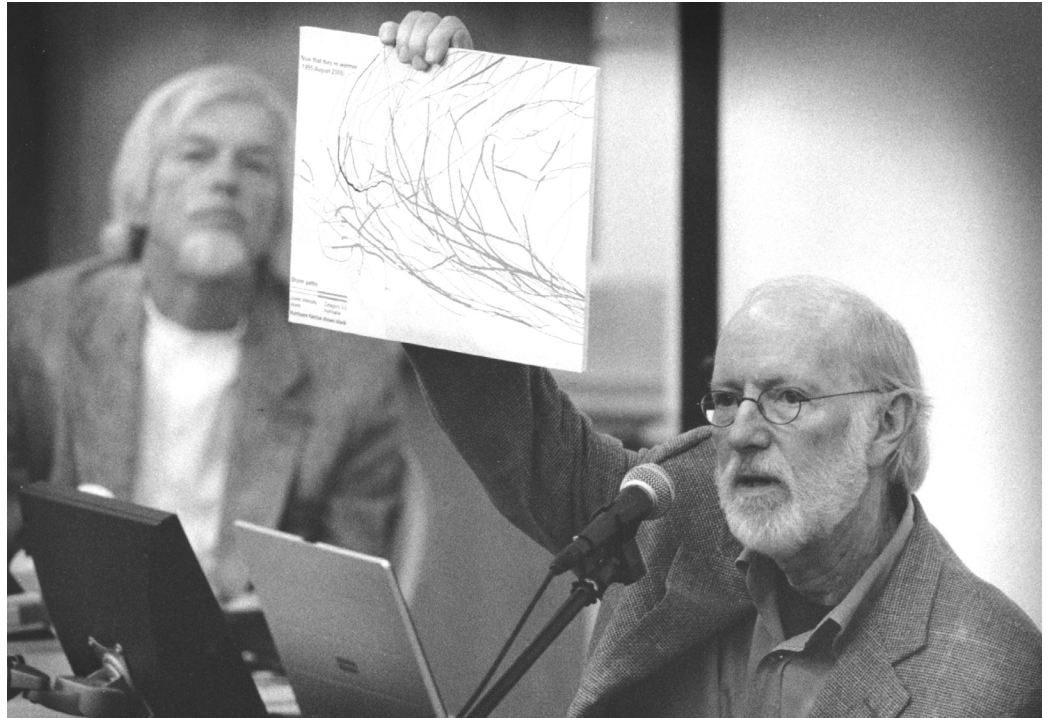
Sixteen Mayors from throughout the region joined together in 2007 to sign the Mayors Climate Protection Agreement.

Look Back (Continued)

working at it...to get [neighboring cities] on board." When facing skepticism, McConwell noted "I kept telling people that all roads lead to Mission. At one time or another, so many people have had a Mission story as part of their lives. Whether they were born here, went to school here, worked here or any number of things." Being good stewards of this crossroads meant moving sustainability issues forward and hoping they caught on to neighboring cities.

McConwell remembers Mission was on the cutting edge of many sustainability

issues before neighboring cities, a fact that sometimes gets overlooked. "Mission was the first to offer curbside recycling through Deffenbaugh, and the first to have Ripple Glass for glass recycling." Successes in accomplishing some of the goals set in motion through the Mayors Climate Protection Act sometimes feel slow, but steady progress continues, McConwell remarked. "Turn around and look at where we started, and now look how far we've come. When you do that you realize it might have been slow, but you have really moved quite a long way. You've just got to be the tortoise!"



Bob Mann (founder and former CEO of Bridging the Gap) and Bob Berkebile (BNIM Architecture and influential environmentalist) present at the 2007 Sustainability Conference organized by the City of Mission.

What was the Mayors Climate Protection Act?

On Friday November 2, 2007, local mayors from around the Kansas City region gathered at Rockhurst University to sign the Mayors Climate Protection Agreement. The City of Mission in concert with Rockhurst University and the City of Gladstone, Missouri hosted an event at which sixteen local mayors from both Kansas and Missouri took part in the signing. This set the national record for the most signings of the U.S. Mayors Climate Protection Agreement for a region in a single day. Among other things, the agreement calls for participating cities to inventory their greenhouse gas emissions and take steps to reduce them to 7% below their 1990 levels by the year 2012.

(Source: City of Mission Press Release, 2007).

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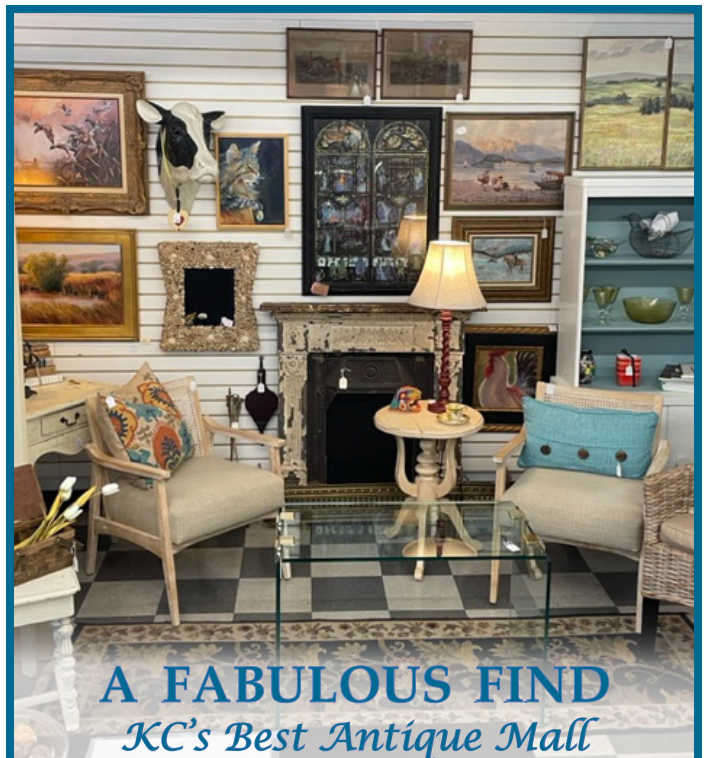
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The crew of Elevate Organic Hair Salon practice sustainability in many ways including their affiliation with Green Circle Salons.

Photo by Courtney Weibe.

LOCAL BUSINESSES PUT THE SPOTLIGHT ON SUSTAINABILITY

by Kris Baker

In addition to residents, the businesses of Mission have addressed the issue of sustainability in a number of unique and creative ways. Gone is the myth that being environmentally friendly is not cost effective. These businesses have come up with ways to help the environment, as well as their own bottom dollar.

Elevate Organic Hair Salon

Jennifer Doppelt opened Elevate Organic Hair Salon in October of 2022 with the focus on being a low-tox, holistic self-care studio, implementing sustainable practices and using a whole-person approach to beauty and wellness. They partner with trauma-informed hair artists, holistic estheticians, massage therapists, and Energy Healers to offer services that care for the mind, body and spirit of their clients..

"For us sustainability is at the heart of everything," said Mal Shannon, director of marketing and community building at Elevate. "We base our purchasing

choices on it, create policies that support it, and do our part to partner with other businesses that align with that mission and vision. We also translate sustainability into sustainable income, encouraging our team members to set their own hourly pricing based on their own needs and forgo tipping for income that is as sustainable as it can be."

A huge component of Elevate's commitment to the earth is their affiliation with Green Circle Salons. By joining with Green Circle they can recycle almost every piece of waste that goes into their services; including gloves, foils, plastic and even hair. Elevate recently received their 2022 Carbon Neutral certification based on how much they have offset their carbon footprint. Elevate is also a retail-light space when it comes to products. They choose to support companies that use post-consumer recycled packaging or easily recycled packaging like aluminum or glass and then focus on offering refills instead of entirely new products.

"To us sustainability is important

because we only have one earth," Shannon said. "We have one planet to leave to the future generations and we want to leave it in the best shape possible. The beauty industry sends hundreds of pounds of waste to landfills every minute and for us it was vital to do things differently. By taking simple steps we can fight the excess waste while still serving our clients well."

Elevate also believes that business and government can work together for positive change.

"We have noticed some great beginning steps including forming the Sustainability Commission, offering a recycling table at events, and organizing a cleanup day for Earth Day," Shannon said. "We're excited to see how we can best partner with the City as a small business and look forward to helping them implement more projects such as pollinator-friendly native landscaping, increased walkability, and paper and cardboard recycling for businesses." Elevate Organic Hair Salon is located at 5420 Johnson Drive.

Sandhills Brewing

Growing up in the sand hills of Kansas, Jonathan Williamson developed an appreciation of the land. So when he, his brother and a friend decided to open up their own brewery, two things were clear immediately. The name would be Sandhills Brewing, and they would try to be as sustainable as possible. This can be particularly difficult when running a brewery. Beer is mostly water, and it takes a lot of water to make beer.

ZERO WASTE

All of the grains Sandhills Brewing use when making their beer is donated to a local farmer to feed their cattle.

"We have tried to be sustainable in other ways," Williamson said. "We use recyclable materials. Whenever we have food trucks we try to make sure all the plates and utensils are environmentally friendly. We use less plastic. We put a big focus on it."

Williamson said their sustainability plan is two-fold. The first is to address energy consumption. They have a second location in Hutchinson that is run completely on solar power, and their plan is to convert the Mission location to solar as well. "We wanted to own the building first," Williamson said. Owning their building and putting down roots is part of their commitment to the community.

"I want to be in business for the next 50 years," Williamson said. "That is the other part of our plan. We want a sustainability of people; when we hire someone we want them to be in it for the long term. The better the business can do, then the more we can invest back into the city." He would like to see the City invest in fewer paved areas and more natural walking areas.

Williamson believes Sandhills fills a unique niche in Mission. "Our goal is to be a community hub," Williamson said. "There is work, there is home, and then there is the other place; the place where you hang out with your friends, talk and have a beer. We don't have TVs. This is about getting to know your neighbors. It's a different style, but it's an important role." Sandhills Brewing is located at 5612 Johnson Drive.

Mission Board Games/Urban Prairie Coffee/Primrose

Sustainability is no game to local entrepreneur Mason Hans. Owning three



Jonathan Williamson tends the bar at Sandhills Brewing.

Photo by Kathy DeLorenzo.

businesses in Mission means that Hans knows a lot about resource management. Hans, along with his parents and business partners Jason and Julie Hans, opened Mission Board Games, 5605 Johnson Dr., in December of 2016, Urban Prairie Coffee, next door to Mission Board Games, in September of 2017 and The Primrose, a craft cocktail bar at 5622 Johnson Dr. in September of 2022.

A focus on the downtown community led Hans to open a store for board games, as well as the coffee bistro. "I was always passionate about community, games and competition and felt that

downtown Mission was the perfect space for a game store where avid gamers and casual gamers and families would all feel welcomed and have a place to play," Hans said. "We opened Urban Prairie Coffee when Twisted Sisters closed. The former owner was a wonderful neighbor and asked if we'd like to take the space after she left. And because of our passion for community, it felt important to keep a local coffee shop in downtown Mission."

Though Hans' shops are about fun and enjoyment for the customers, they are serious work to him. Part of the work is about addressing sustainability. "For our coffee shop, we encourage customers to bring in their own thermos, mug, or bottle for drinks and we offer 50 cents off their drink if they do," Hans said. "For all of our businesses we pay for a recycling dumpster for paper and cardboard and separate glass recycling. We also plan on installing a water fountain/water bottling refilling station (like you would see in an airport) next month."

For Hans these steps are a necessary part of owning a local business. "We think being ecologically conscious is important for the health of our community," Hans said.

So whether a coffee lover, drink connoisseur or true gamer, a visit to these local Mission businesses is a visit to a locally-minded and ecologically aware establishment.

If you would like to share information about how your business (or those you frequent) are addressing sustainability, please contact Emily Randel at 913.676.8368 or erandel@missionks.org.



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Diane Mora and Theresa Love team up to bring important life lessons to local students.

SERVING WITH LOVE

Local educators, programs and businesses team-up to combat hunger

Story by Robyn Fulks

In Theresa Love's Family and Consumer Sciences (FACS) classroom at Horizons High School in Mission, lessons in sustainable food practices, food insecurity and caring for your fellow humans are being taught. Love, a former elementary school librarian, gets a thrill out of welcoming students she taught at the elementary school level into her high school

classroom. Joining Love in her efforts are Diane Mora and Tamara Weber of Pete's Garden and Kids Feeding Kids, a local food rescue committed to less food waste and more family meals.

Pete's Garden, the brainchild of Weber, was launched in early 2020 just prior to the COVID-19 pandemic. Weber's guiding principle was reducing food waste in the Kansas City area while helping families

struggling with food insecurity. She initially launched the program with the goal of bringing corporate dining partners on board to donate surplus food. She and her team designed programming, outreach and community connections to bring much needed, healthy and affordable food to all corners of the region.

The onset of the pandemic, however,

altered how people worked (and ate) in offices around the world. Those changes required Weber to get creative in her quest for change. Now three years into their work, Pete's Garden is buoyed by large corporate partnerships with Aramark/Kansas City Chiefs and Sporting KC/City Foods and Events, along with KC Hopps Restaurant Group. They partner with local restaurants such as Eddie V's, The New Theater & Restaurant, and Brancato's Catering, in addition to businesses that are still using corporate dining such as Hallmark Cards and the Stowers Institute, and private schools with catered meals such as Pembroke Hill School and Rockhurst High School to donate surplus food on a regular basis. Weber remembers the days when donating surplus food was considered to be an unsafe and unsanitary practice. She works hard through educational outreach to teach companies surplus food donation is not only safe and easy, but also can help a business realize their sustainability goals as well.

This is where Mora and her program, Kids Feeding Kids, comes in. This program takes those surplus food donations and brings them to classrooms for students to learn firsthand how they can make a difference in



Tamara Weber, Executive Director of Pete's Garden, joins Horizons High School students in packaging food for distribution.



Food packaged by students and ready for delivery area service providers.

reducing food waste and ending food insecurity. Students work through Kids Feeding Kids programming to not only pack meals to be distributed to community partners such as Operation Breakthrough, Head Start programs and other community groups, but also to learn lessons in sustainability and what food insecurity means and the people it affects. At the end of each session, Mora sends out a student survey to obtain feedback for the program. She believes, on average, six percent of the students she meets with will note in their survey feedback that learning about food insecurity taught them those insecurities may exist in their own homes. They also note they learned there are resources and help available for families whose incomes may be above the poverty level, but well below a living wage.

According to their website, Kids Feeding Kids "supports educators with a standards-based food justice

and culinary curriculum that focuses on increasing food access, reducing food insecurity, and raising awareness around the social and environmental impacts of food waste. Educators receive lesson plans along with all the ingredients and supplies they need to help their students plan, prepare, and distribute a take-home meal for families in their school community. This can result in up to 1,000 meals."

This work is exactly what Love and her FACS students are doing on a chilly March day in Mission. Kids Feeding Kids has delivered large frozen portions of extra prepared food, this time from food recovery partner The New Theatre & Restaurant in Overland Park. Love's students are busy scooping, measuring, cutting and assembling family style meals for families in need at Operation Breakthrough. Kids Feeding Kids™ brings programming, supplies, real-life learning and a sense of pride to students all over the Kansas City area by allowing them to learn about food insecurity and food waste and the solutions available to cure both problems.

Love and Mora connected during a Shawnee Mission School District real world learning luncheon. Mora was there to discuss partnerships between her program and district staff who may be interested in bringing the program into their classrooms. Of the 35 or so staff members Mora met that day, Love was the one who reached out and welcomed the program to become part of her curriculum at Horizons. It's easy to feel the connection they share through the students they love working with and the families they are happy to be able to help feed each day.

For more information on Pete's Garden or the Kids Feeding Kids program, please visit petesgarden.org or contact Diana Mora at dianemariemora@gmail.com



Pete's Garden's works to keep food waste out of the landfill and provides healthy meals for families.



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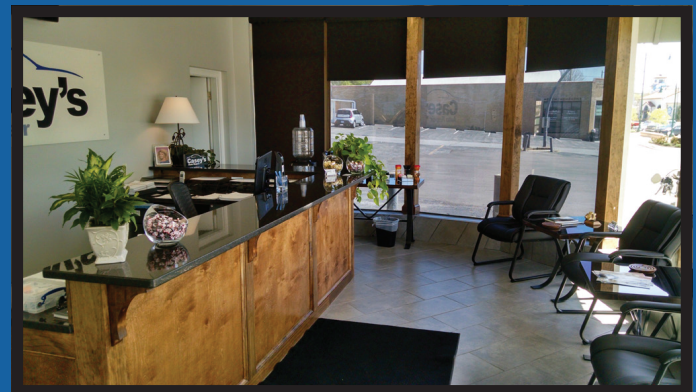
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