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mission kansas



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On the cover:
Mack Hardware Owner
Kelly Mack

Photo by:
Robyn Fulks

WELCOME FALL!



As we head into fall, we continue celebrating Mission's 75th anniversary and the stories of the people, families, and businesses that have helped shape our community. You'll find that this issue of the Mission Magazine is filled with them.

Our cover story features Mack Hardware, a business whose story actually began before there even was a City of Mission. The Mack family opened its hardware business here in 1946, five years before our incorporation, and today third-generation owner Kelly Mack continues a tradition that has endured for eight decades. Through all the changes along Johnson Drive and in the hardware industry, Mack Hardware has remained the kind of place where customers are known, questions are welcomed, and someone is always ready to help solve a problem.

That same sense of connection is the central theme running throughout this issue and informing our 75th anniversary celebrations.

Another longtime Mission business, Mission Kitchen and Bath, celebrates more than 30 years of transforming homes while building its own family legacy. Founded by Al Felman, the company now includes his daughter, Alexandra Kindred, as co-owner. Yet another wonderful example of one generation building upon the foundation created by the one before it.

For more than 40 years, Keith + Associates Dentistry has cared for generations of Mission families. What Dr. Don Keith began in 1983 has grown and evolved under his son, Dr. Bill Keith, while remaining firmly rooted in Mission. Even their longtime home at 6299 Nall has an interesting connection to our community's past as the former national headquarters of the NCAA.

This issue also introduces you to the Bruce family, whose Mission story spans five generations. It is difficult to separate their family history from the history of our community itself. They built homes here, raised families here, served in Mission's fire department, and found countless other ways to give back. Nearly a century after Charles and Anna Dake arrived in what would eventually become Mission, their descendants continue that connection today.

Finally, we look back at the history of fire service in Mission, from a small volunteer department formed in 1939 to today's Consolidated Fire District No. 2. The equipment, training, and responsibilities have changed tremendously, but the commitment to answering the call and serving neighbors has remained constant.

These stories remind us that a city's history is about much more than buildings, streets or dates on a timeline. It is about people who choose a place, invest in it, care for it, and pass that sense of belonging to the next generation.

As we celebrate 75 years of Mission, I hope you enjoy getting to know a few more of the people and stories that have made us who we are and continue to make Mission a special place to call home.

-Sollie Flora, Mayor

Additional copies of the Mission Magazine are available at participating advertisers. You can also view it on the City's website, www.missionks.org. To advertise in Mission Magazine or to share a story idea contact Laura Smith at 913.676.8352 or lsmith@missionks.org.

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Kelly Mack, owner of Mack Hardware in Mission, is the third-generation owner of this family business.

MACK HARDWARE

A MISSION TRADITION SINCE 1946

Story and Photos by Robyn Fulks

Walk through the doors of Mack Hardware on Johnson Drive and chances are someone will ask what you are looking for before you've made it very far.

Maybe it's a particular screw, or a replacement piece for something that broke in a 70-year-old house. Perhaps it is a plumbing fitting you can't quite describe. Or maybe you've brought the broken part with you and are hoping someone can figure out what it is.

For generations of Mission residents, that's simply how a trip to Mack Hardware works.

Mack Hardware traces its roots to 1946, five years before Mission incorporated as a city in 1951. And today, third-generation owner Kelly Mack carries on a family business that has watched Mission grow up around it

BEFORE THERE WAS A CITY

The Mack family's history in the hardware business is intertwined with its history in lumber and building materials.

Kelly's grandfather, W.W. Mack, was part of a family with deep roots in the Kansas City area's lumber business. Mack Lumber Co. operated in the Argentine neighborhood of Kansas City, Kansas, where the elder Mack relocated to from upstate New York in the late 1890's, with the family eventually expanding its business interests across the county line.

Mack Hardware in Mission dates its beginning to 1946, when Mission was still unincorporated. At the time, the community clustered around Johnson Drive with the surrounding countryside rapidly giving way to postwar suburban development. Returning veterans were starting families. Houses were going up throughout northeast Johnson County. New streets, schools and businesses followed.

Kelly Mack recalls that the original location of Mack Hardware in Mission was just a few blocks east of where it stands now on Johnson Drive. The current building was built by Mack's grandfather in 1948 and housed several different businesses on the east and west ends of the building prior to Mack's expansion into those spaces. The hardware store has always occupied the center part of the building.

Before an expansion in 2016, the west end of Mack Hardware previously housed A-1 Direct Maytag and before that was the headquarters for The Gas Service Company, the predecessor to Kansas



A payment drop box and safe in the front wall of Mack Hardware hearkens back to the pre-2016 expansion and when the space housed The Gas Service Company, the predecessor to Kansas Gas Service.

Gas Service. You can still find the original payment drop box and safe in the front wall of Mack Hardware if you know where to look. The east part of Mack Hardware, prior to expansion in 1994, housed Nolte's Carpet and O.M. Ashe's clothing store prior to the eastward expansion.

A FAMILY BUSINESS

The second generation of the family was Kelly's father, Schuyler Mack. Born in Kansas City, Kansas, in 1932, he eventually became president and owner of both Mack Lumber Co. and Mack True Value Hardware. Mack Lumber remained in Argentine until it closed in 1988 due to urban renewal development in the area, while the Mission hardware store continued to grow.

When Schuyler passed away in 2021, he left a business legacy that had already passed to another generation.

Kelly has operated the Mission store for approximately three decades. Family businesses lasting three generations are increasingly uncommon. Independent neighborhood hardware stores may be even more so.

> "Becoming part of the True Value brand was an easy decision for us. (It meant) more buying power, a larger reach, and stronger support for our small business."
>
> – Kelly Mack, owner of Mack Hardware

BECOMING A TRUE VALUE

The Mack family joined the True Value brand in 1968 and has remained part of the conglomerate ever since. As an independent hardware store, joining True Value gave Mack Hardware more buying power and name recognition and opened up opportunities to carry more products their customers were looking for. "Becoming part of the True Value brand was an easy decision for us. (It meant) more buying power, a larger reach, and stronger support for our small business," Kelly shared about the family's decision to make the move.

Mack is proud of their True Value connections and their long-standing success with the brand. The True Value sign became familiar on Johnson Drive, but the name before it, Mack, remained the important one locally.

SURVIVING THE BIG BOXES

The retail world has changed dramatically since 1946. Shopping centers replaced more traditional downtown districts. Home improvement warehouses arrived, offering endless aisles of merchandise, but Mack Hardware stayed. Its competitive advantage wasn't size, it was knowledge.

Customers routinely describe a store where employees don't simply point toward an aisle but help figure out the problem. Today's store offers the kinds of products and practical assistance that have long defined the neighborhood hardware store.

Mack credits his customers, more like friends or family, rather than just people stopping in to buy a nut or a bolt. With personalized service provided by his knowledgeable and loyal staff, and his smile and warm welcome most often found in the aisles or behind the cash register, Kelly has grown his family business while remaining true to the customer service-oriented, helpful, and welcoming place his grandfather built.

It is an old-fashioned business model that remains surprisingly relevant: Bring us the problem and we'll help you solve it. That relationship with customers has allowed Mack Hardware to hold its own even with national home-improvement retailers just minutes away.

EIGHT DECADES ON JOHNSON DRIVE

Mack Hardware's story doesn't simply occupy a place in Mission history. It predates the city itself. Since W.W. Mack opened the doors in 1946, Mission became a city. Johnson Drive evolved from a small-town commercial street into the heart of a growing inner-ring suburb. Generations of families bought their first homes, raised children, remodeled kitchens, fixed leaky faucets, planted gardens and patched together things they weren't quite ready to replace.

And for the entirety of the city's history, someone named Mack has been behind the counter at Mack Hardware ready to help. There are larger hardware stores. There are newer hardware stores. But it would be difficult to find one with deeper Mission roots.

Mack Hardware is located at 6004 Johnson Drive and can be reached at 913.432.3104.



Kelly Mack and his staff are dedicated to helping customers tackle projects big and small.

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Mission Kitchen and Bath Co-Owners Al A. Felman and Alexandra (Felman) Kindred

MISSION KITCHEN AND BATH

FATHER / DAUGHTER DUO CELEBRATE 30 YEARS OF REWARDING REMODELS

By Mia Katz
Photos by Mission resident Gregory Kindred

Mission Kitchen and Bath understands the importance of kith and kin in the remodeling and repair of every kitchen and bath. Started in 1994 by Al A. Felman, CKBR (Certified Kitchen and Bath Remodeler) the more than 30-year-old business has done more than assist homeowners across the Kansas City area in reimagining kitchens, bathrooms, and interiors that welcome family and friends with personalized designs and meticulous craftsmanship. In 2015, the undertaking became a family affair as (aptly named) daughter Alexandra (Felman) Kindred joined the enterprise as a part-time office assistant while studying at Johnson County Community College – an evolution that turned full-time and ultimately led to her current role of co-owner.

"At first, it was a convenient and flexible way to earn some income while I was in school," Kindred says. "However, I found that I really enjoyed the work. I discovered that I had a natural ability to relate to people, which made the client-facing parts of the role really rewarding. As I took on more and more responsibilities, eventually coming on full-time in 2020, I came to realize that I could make a real impact and help improve the company."

Mission Kitchen and Bath understands the importance of kith and kin in the remodeling and repair of every kitchen and bath.

Kindred has memories of the business when she says it began in the dining room of her family home on West 60th Terrace down the street from old Mission Mall,

where she and her sister, Ali, were raised.

"Back then, the business was a one-man show," she says, with her father, a longtime veteran of the residential construction industry, doing it all … estimating, bookkeeping, selling jobs, even swinging a hammer. "My family moved to a larger house on the other side of Mission in 2001 and my dad was able to carve out space in the basement for the growing business." Eventually, the business grew too big for the basement, and a new place to rent was discovered just down the street. "We only recently moved to another location, still in Mission," Kindred says. So, we've been in Mission for our entire 30+ years of business!"

Kindred credits her father for building what she says is a "really incredible foundation" as evidenced by their longevity and stream of repeat customers. "I see my role as bringing us into the modern age, updating the foundation so that we can keep going for another 30 years," she says. She thanks him for instilling not only practical wisdom, but also the most critical values of transparency and honesty – something she shares sets the business apart from those of other remodelers.

"We break everything down, part by part, item by item, so that the client feels like they know what is going on and that they have agency and control over the process," she says. "Our competitors don't spend this kind of time up front. It's a lot more work on our end, but it's worth it to make sure that the client is happy – not only with the end result, but with the entire process."

Reflecting upon the business he began in Mission all those years ago, Felman recalls one especially challenging project with a happy result was the remodeling of a 1922 second floor bath in a concrete home located in Brookside.

"We suspect that the builder had been trying to prove you could build with concrete as economically as wood framing, so the whole thing was poured concrete — exterior walls, interior floors, support joists, everything," he says. "The interior walls were concrete with expanded steel wire mesh. The real challenge was that the bath's interior walls followed the line of an adjoining circular staircase, so nothing was square or straightforward. We enlarged the shower and tiled all the walls and flooring to work with that curved layout. It was technically demanding and required a lot of on-the-fly problem solving, but when it was done, it turned out to be a real showstopper."



Al and Alexandra perform a final walk-through for a remodel in a Mission home.

> "I see my role as bringing us into the modern age, updating the foundation so that we can keep going for another 30 years."
> – Alexandra Kindred

Contributing to the team's success is the fact that all of the work is handled in-house.

"Our project managers are also our estimators and designers," Kindred says. "And our craftspeople are our employees, not subcontractors. That matters to us. When someone is working in your home, we know who they are, we've trained them, and we stand behind their work."

Felman echoes his daughter in explaining the business is employee-driven, from designer-project managers to their talented craftsmen. "That's how we've built this business and how we keep the quality consistent," he says.

Both father and daughter share their best advice for 30 years of business success is The Golden Rule.

"In my experience, you can judge a company's performance by how well they treat their employees," Felman shares, and his daughter agrees. "This especially applies to tradespeople. So at the end of the day, be fair in all your dealings: with your clients, your suppliers, your partners. Treat people right, and the business will follow."



Mission Kitchen and Bath can be found at its new location at 5800 Foxridge Dr, Suite 105, Mission, KS 66202. Learn more at www.missionkb.com or on Facebook at facebook.com/MissionKitchenBath.





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Mission's Family Adoption Program Kicks off 20th Season

For many local families, the holiday season brings celebrations, traditions and time spent together. But for some it can also bring added financial stress. For twenty years, Mission's Family Adoption Program has helped make the season a little brighter by connecting the generosity of our community with families who might benefit from some extra support.



The program has become a meaningful Mission tradition, bringing together residents, businesses, community organizations and City employees to provide gifts and other assistance during the holidays. The details may change from year to year, but the goal remains simple: making sure Mission families know their community is thinking about them.

Last year we served approximately 70 families with a meal at Thanksgiving, and gifts and grocery gift cards for the winter holiday. This year, Mayor Sollie Flora is asking for support from residents, local businesses, and community partners through the Mayor's Holiday Giving Fund. Your contributions, help us respond to needs as the holiday season approaches.

One of the things that makes the program special is that people adopt a family and shop for requested items. You can take tag from the angel tree, make a financial contribution or help behind the scenes. Together, these individual acts of generosity add up to something much bigger.

Whether you are a long-time supporter or would like to consider getting involved for the first time, we hope you will join us! With your support we can help make the holidays brighter for families right here at home.

Additional information about the 2026 Family Adoption Program, including how to adopt a family, contribute to the Mayor's Holiday Giving Fund or otherwise participate can be found on the City's website at www.missionks.org.

Support Your Local Businesses During Johnson Drive Construction



If you have traveled Johnson Drive between Metcalf Avenue and Lamar Avenue recently, you already know: construction is underway, and getting through the corridor requires some extra patience.

The work along Johnson Drive is one of the largest infrastructure projects the City has undertaken in recent years. With a total investment of more than $12 million, the project represents much more than simply putting a new surface on the street. When completed, the corridor will include reconstructed pavement, significant stormwater improvements, upgraded traffic signals and streetlights, improved sidewalks and pedestrian connections, landscaping, new amenities and a HAWK pedestrian crossing.

The project is supported by $6 million in federal transportation funding and approximately $1.8 million through Johnson County's CARS program, substantially reducing amount of local funding.

We have to admit, however, that getting from today to the finished product, is challenging.

Construction began this summer, and the traffic-control necessary to complete the work safely and efficiently has created delays for motorists and, more importantly, real impacts for businesses along Johnson Drive. The City understands the frustrations and is working constantly with the contractor to minimize impacts wherever possible.

Please remember, all of the impacted businesses (listed on the opposite page) are still open, and they need your support.

Throughout construction, access to businesses will be maintained, although the route you use to reach a particular destination may change as work progresses. Drivers should watch for signs, allow additional travel time and use extra caution around construction crews and equipment.

The inconvenience we are experiencing now is tied to a much larger investment in Johnson Drive's future. Beyond replacing aging infrastructure, the project is designed to create a safer, more accessible and more attractive corridor for motorists, pedestrians, residents and businesses.

Major projects like this require patience, and we appreciate everyone who has adjusted a route, slowed down through a work zone or made an extra effort to visit a favorite Johnson Drive business.

There is plenty of work still ahead, but each phase brings us closer to a Johnson Drive built to serve Mission for decades to come. For project updates and additional information, visit the City's website, or contact the Public Works Department at 913-676-8375.





All Businesses Along Johnson Drive/Martway Are Open!

Your support and continued patronage are important during construction. If they were worth visiting before, they are worth the extra effort to get there now.

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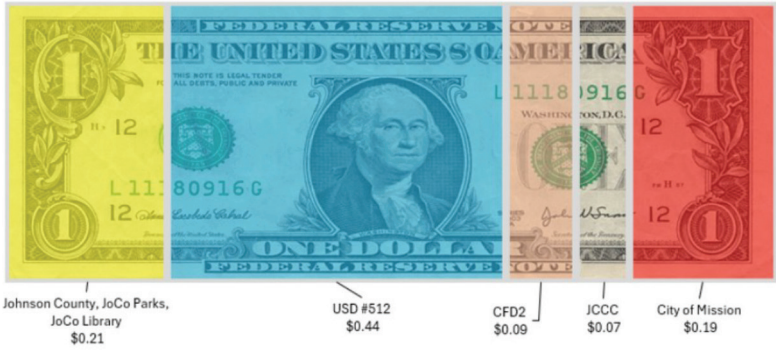


Mission's 2027 Budget Adopted

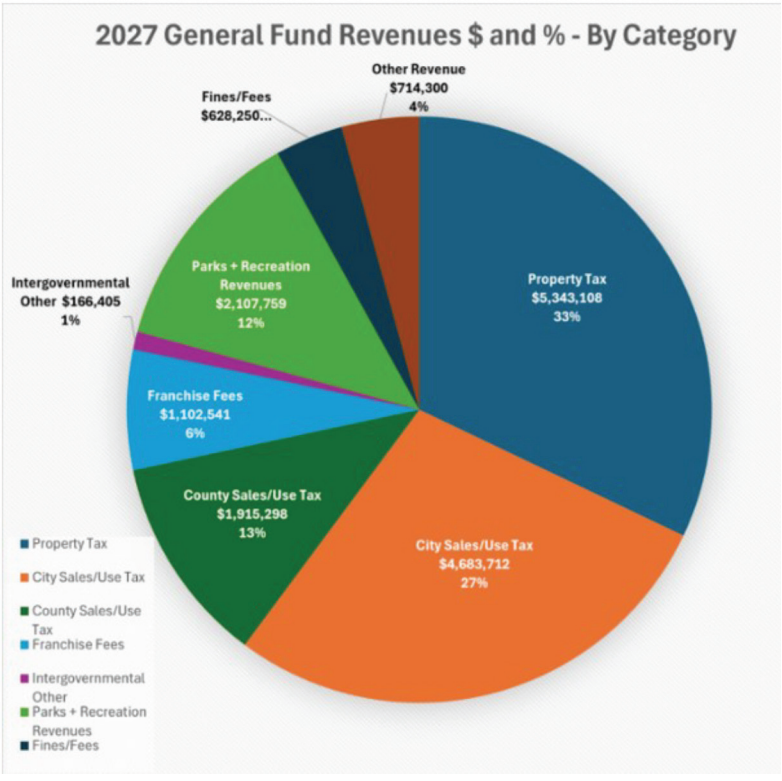
After several months of discussion, review and community conversation, Mission's 2027 budget was formally adopted in mid-September. At every stage of the 2027 budget discussions, the City Council and staff focused on maintaining the services residents rely on today while preparing for the future needs and investments.

The 2027 budget process centered around five basic questions: Where are we today? What has changed? What do we need to maintain? What choices do we need to make? And where are we headed? Those questions guided conversations with the City Council throughout the process and provided a framework for sharing information with residents. To review the complete recommendations and considerations presented in connection with the 2027 Budget, please visit the City's website at missionks.org and search "Budget Development Process."

The 2027 budget holds the City's mill levy constant at 22.025 mills. While growth in property values generates additional revenue for the City (approximately $135,000 in 2027). For every dollar of property tax residents and businesses pay, $0.19 goes to Mission. All other taxing jurisdictions receiving the majority of property tax dollars paid ($0.81).



The 2027 budget continues funding for core services including police, public works, parks and recreation, community development and general City operations, while also looking ahead to significant infrastructure and organizational needs. Investments in streets and outdoor parks continue to be a central focus in the City's annual budget. Additionally, maintaining a strong fund balance (reserves) is an important priority for the Governing Body.



Mission continues to leverage outside resources whenever possible, bringing in more than $19.56 million over the last six years alone. Federal, state and county funding helps stretch local dollars further on major infrastructure projects, including the Johnson Drive reconstruction, stormwater improvements and outdoor park amenities.

Following adoption, the budget becomes the financial roadmap for the coming year, but the work of planning ahead never really stops.

Thanks to everyone who has followed the process, asked questions and helped shape the conversation about Mission's priorities and future. We look forward to continuing to serve you.

LOVE MISSION IN 2026

Spooky Walk
Friday, October 16
6:00 p.m.
Streamway Park

Go Green Environmental Fair
Saturday, October 17
9:00 a.m.
PCC

Thanks for Seniors
Thursday, November 19
11:30 a.m.
Powell Community Center

Holiday Lights & Festive Sights
Friday, December 4
5:30 p.m.
PCC

Pearl Harbor Remembrance
Monday, December 7
11:00 a.m.
PCC

75th MISSION Kansas 1951-2026

Eager to learn more about what's happening in Mission in 2026 & 2027? Keep an eye on our website calendar at www.missionks.org/events or use the QR code for more details!



Dr. Don Keith and son Dr. Bill Keith have offered dental services for more than four decades in Mission.

MORE THAN 40 YEARS OF SMILES

A MISSION DENTAL PRACTICE GROWS WITH THE COMMUNITY

By Laura Smith • Photos provided by Keith + Associates

In a community celebrating 75 years of history, some of the best stories are found in businesses that become part of everyday life. These are the places generations of families visit and names longtime residents recognize because they continue to call Mission home.

For more than four decades, the dental practice Mission residents know today as Keith + Associates Dentistry has been one of those places.

The story began in 1983, when Dr. Donald "Don" Keith established his dental practice in Mission. Before becoming a dentist, Keith earned a degree in pharmacy and later graduated from the University of Missouri-Kansas City School of Dentistry.

Over the years, Keith developed a patient base that included Mission residents and families from throughout northeast Johnson County.

"I grew my practice in Mission by getting to know the people. I was a part of the chamber, attended city council meetings and even considered running for mayor at one point," says Dr. Don Keith.

Longtime residents may remember the practice by another name: Keith & Wilson.

The Keith & Wilson name became familiar when Keith practiced in partnership with Dr. Barry Wilson. Dr. Wilson eventually retired for health reasons, but the name remained part of Mission's collective memory.

A PERMANENT HOME ON NALL

In 1990, the growing practice moved to 6299 Nall Avenue, establishing the location that remains its home more than 35 years later.

The address already had an interesting place in Mission history. In 1973, the national headquarters of the NCAA

relocated there from downtown Kansas City, Missouri, operating in Mission for more than 25 years before relocating to Indianapolis in 1999.

> "When I graduated and knew we needed to expand, there was never a choice to leave the location we had come to love over the years. It was our home, in fact we decided to purchase the building for the sole purpose of making sure we could never be displaced."
> – Dr. Bill Keith

A SECOND GENERATION

Keith's son, Dr. Bill Keith, didn't initially follow a straight path into the family business.

Before becoming a dentist, Bill built a career that included work in finance, accounting and real estate. Eventually, dentistry, and the family practice in Mission, called him in a new direction. He attended the UMKC School of Dentistry, the same dental school as his father, joined the profession and purchased the practice from his father in 2018.

For a family-owned business, transitioning from one generation to the next raises a challenge: How do you preserve relationships and a reputation built over decades while preparing for the future?

For Keith + Associates, the answer was a combination of continuity and investment.

"When I graduated and knew we needed to expand, there was never a choice to leave the location we had come to love over the years. It was our home; in fact we decided to purchase the building for the sole purpose of making sure we could never be displaced," says Dr. Bill Keith.

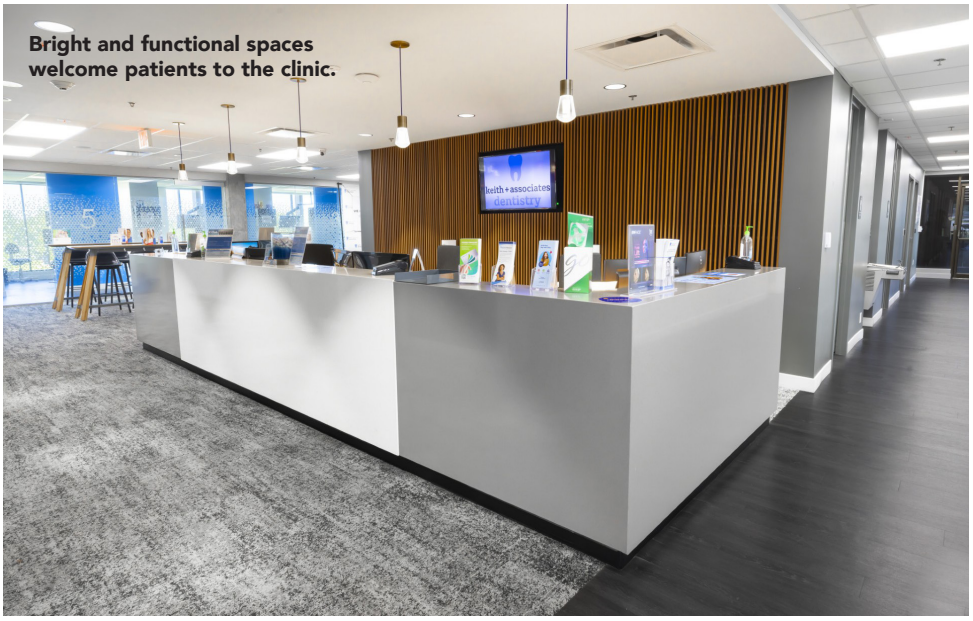
Soon after the transition, the Mission office underwent a major renovation and expansion. In 2019, the practice grew from approximately 13 treatment rooms to 23 and incorporated new technology and services, including digital tools, same-day crown capabilities and an in-house dental laboratory.

PASSING THE TORCH

In April 2022, nearly four decades after opening his practice, Don Keith retired.

By then, what began as a single dentist's practice had grown into Keith + Associates Dentistry, with multiple dentists and an expanded range of services.

Yet the family connection remained. In fact, keeping it all in the family, Dr. Bill



Bright and functional spaces welcome patients to the clinic.

is married to Ashley (Wilson) Keith, Dr. Wilson's niece. Ashley has served as the office's COO for nearly 10 years.

Today, someone walking through the doors at 6299 Nall enters a modern dental practice with layers of Mission history, too.

There is the young dentist who chose Mission in 1983, the Keith & Wilson name remembered by longtime residents, a building with its own unusual history and a son who followed his father into dentistry.

Seventy-five years of Mission history is made up of stories just like this one — businesses and families that put down roots, grow, change and choose to stay.

For the Keith family, that story has been unfolding in Mission across generations, and there are plenty of smiles to show for it.

Keith + Associates Dentistry is located at 6299 Nall Ave, Mission, KS 66202. To learn more, visit missiondentist.com.

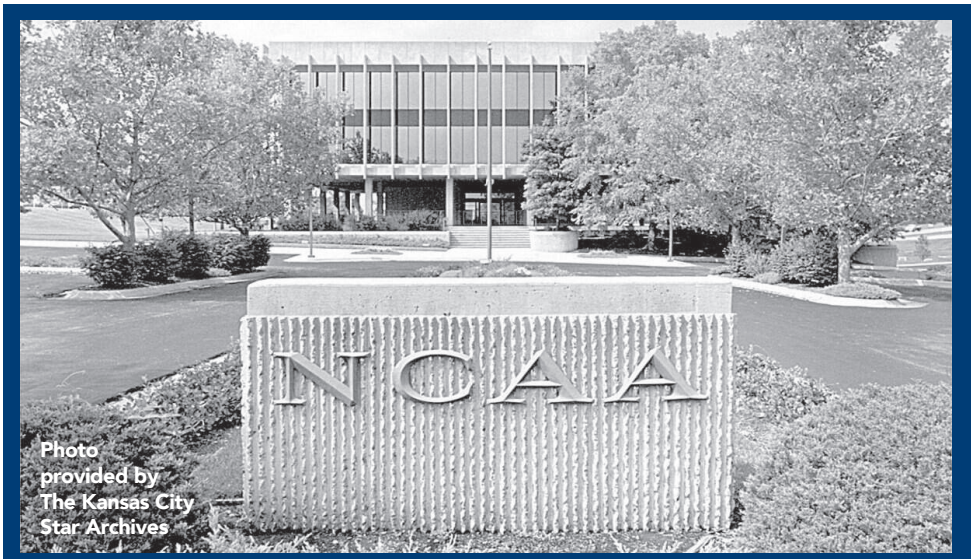


Photo provided by The Kansas City Star Archives

DID YOU KNOW?

March Madness Has Mission Roots

Before patients visited 6299 Nall Avenue for dental appointments, the building was part of a much different Mission story. It served as the national headquarters for the NCAA from 1973 until 1999 when it was relocated to Indianapolis.

During those years, the committee selecting teams for the NCAA men's basketball tournament met at the Mission headquarters. Historical accounts place those meetings on the building's third floor, the same floor where Keith + Associates can now be found. That means some early decisions that helped shape what we now know as March Madness were made right here in Mission.

From college athletics to community dentistry, 6299 Nall has more than one story to tell.

MISSION
PUBLIC WORKS

Johnson Drive Reconstruction
Traffic Impacts

Phase 1 Inside lanes closed for median removal. No left turns permitted.

Phase 2 Eastbound lanes on the south side of Johnson will be fully closed, with two-way traffic maintained in the existing westbound lanes.

Phase 3 Storm connection will take place. Broadmoor at Johnson will be closed.

Phase 4 Westbound traffic lanes on the north side of Johnson will be fully closed. Two-way traffic will be maintained on existing eastbound lanes.

Phase 5 Median work will be completed during this phase.

Phase 6 Final roadway surfacing and pavement markings will be installed.

IMPORTANT DATES
★ 2026 General Election ★

October 13
Voter Registration Deadline
Last day to register to vote or update your voter registration information. Unaffiliated voters may affiliate with either major party at any time.

October 14
Advance by mail ballots begin mailing
To voters who have completed an application. Applications are available online at JocoElection.org/AdvanceVoting.

October 17
Early In-Person Voting Begins
12 locations open the same days and the same hours across the county. A full list is available online at JocoElection.org/AdvanceVoting.

November 2
Early In-Person Voting Ends
All 12 locations open from 8:00 a.m. to 12 p.m. (noon)

November 3
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The home at 6520 W. 53rd Street has been in the same family for four generations. Frank Bruce (center) bought his parents' home in 1961. His daughter, Deborah (Bruce) Rushing, purchased the house in 1997 where the family's fifth generation, Jackson and Julia Rushing were raised.

Photo credit: Greyson Bruce

FIVE GENERATIONS, ONE MISSION

This story has been updated from a story by Heather Swann originally published in a 2011 issue of the Mission Magazine.



The second and third generations of the family to live in Mission were, from left, Frank, Gertrude, Murrel Sr. and Dick Bruce.

Some families trace their history through old photographs or names written in family Bibles. For the Bruce family, much of that history can be traced through the homes and streets of Mission.

There is the house at 5212 Riggs where Charles and Anna Dake settled a century ago, the home at 6520 W. 53rd St. that has remained in the family for generations, and the house on Lamar that became the scene of both tragedy and renewal.

Together, those places tell the story of a family that didn't just watch Mission grow. They helped build it, protect it and make it home.

A FAMILY ARRIVES IN MISSION

The story begins in 1926, when Charles Dake came home to the family's Kansas City, Missouri, house and announced to his wife, Anna, that he had found a farm to buy.

They loaded their four children into the car and headed to 5212 Riggs Road in rural Johnson County. What Charles called a "farm" was essentially four residential lots with a two-bedroom house, but they bought it anyway.

Anna planted gardens, fruit trees and an orchard. The family kept chickens and had a canning cellar in the basement, while Charles delivered ice for the City Ice Company.

The Dakes had found their home in what would eventually become the City of Mission.

BUILDING AND PROTECTING A COMMUNITY

Their daughter, Gertrude, met Murrel Francis Bruce at a dance at Campbell's Lake. The couple married and moved into a one-room house near 58th and Woodson, where their son, Murrel Francis "Frank" Bruce Jr., was born May 10, 1938 — on the kitchen table.

> "Mission was a great place to grow up. All the charm of a small town, but a short bus ride to all the amenities of a big city."
> – Frank Bruce

Mission looked very different then. Johnson Drive was a two-lane brick highway, the community had one streetlight and just over 30 businesses, and cows, chickens and even a few horses could still be found nearby.

"Mission was a great place to grow up," Frank remembers. "All the charm of a small town, but a short bus ride to all the amenities of a big city."

In 1939, Murrel became involved with the community's fledgling volunteer fire department. What began when someone discovered he knew how to drive the department's new Dodge fire truck grew into a 46-year career. Murrel eventually became full-time chief of Mission Fire District No. 1, retiring in 1984.

He and his brother also helped physically build the community they protected, constructing about 20 homes in Mission.

Public service passed to the next generation. Frank joined the volunteer fire department at 21 and served for 30 years, including approximately two decades as assistant fire chief.

HOMES PASSED THROUGH GENERATIONS

The Bruce family's ties to Mission can also be followed through its houses.

In 1948, Murrel and Gertrude moved to 6520 W. 53rd St. When they moved to 5706 Lamar in 1961, Frank purchased the 53rd Street house. He later purchased his parents' Lamar home.

That house became the site of tragedy on March 8, 1995, when a basement fire resulted in the line-of-duty death of firefighter Donald Koebel. The house was rebuilt, and Frank and his family returned exactly one year later.

Deborah Bruce Rushing, Frank's daughter, spent part of her childhood at the 53rd Street home and purchased it herself in 1997. Her children, Julia and Jackson, became the fifth generation to call Mission home.



The first generation of the family, Anna and Charles Dake, moved to Mission in 1926. They lived at 5212 Riggs.

FIVE GENERATIONS — AND A "MISSION TRADITION"

Today, Julia is a University of Kansas graduate living in Olathe, but she hopes to return to Mission when she is ready to purchase a home. Jackson remains a Mission resident.

Deborah has continued the family tradition of public service. After nearly a decade working in special education at Rushton Elementary, she graduated from the Kansas Law Enforcement Training Center and joined the Shawnee Mission School District Police Department. She now serves as a school resource officer at Shawnee Mission South.

Frank also remained active in Mission long after his firefighting days, serving on several boards and commissions and as the city's first historian.

For Deborah, that willingness to participate is as much a part of Mission's history as the houses her family has called home. She created the "I Grew Up In Mission" Facebook page to connect current and former residents who share those memories and the attachment she calls "Mission Tradition."

"Neighbors still make an effort to get to know one another and help each other out," she said.

A century after Charles Dake brought Anna to see a "farm" she wasn't particularly impressed with, their descendants have built homes, raised families, answered fire calls and served their community all while continuing to call Mission home.

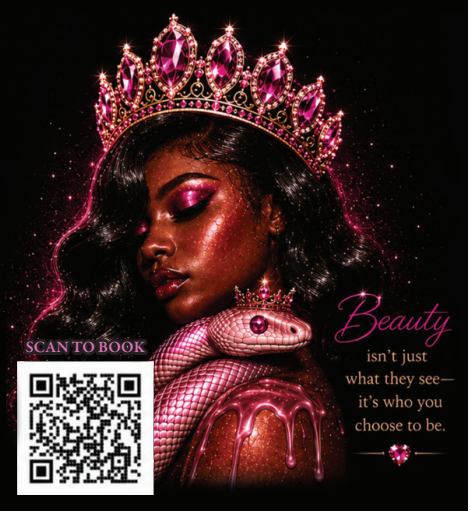
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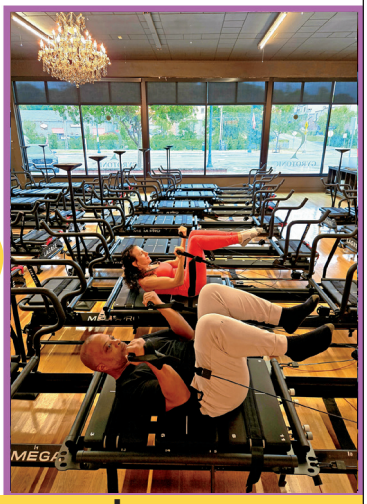
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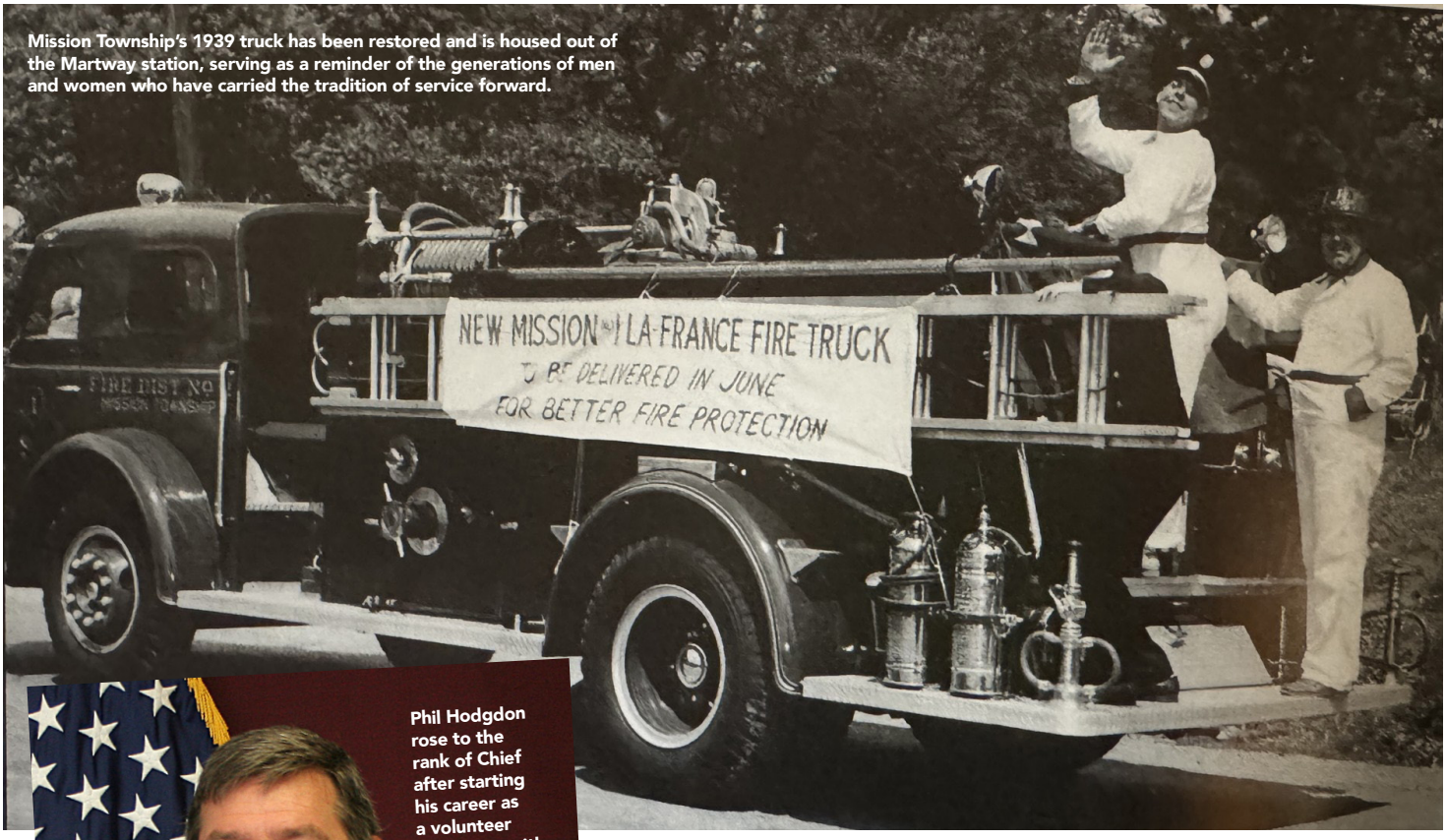
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Mission Township's 1939 truck has been restored and is housed out of the Martway station, serving as a reminder of the generations of men and women who have carried the tradition of service forward.



Phil Hodgdon rose to the rank of Chief after starting his career as a volunteer firefighter with the Mission Fire Department.

ANSWERING THE CALL

MISSION'S FIRE SERVICE THROUGH THE YEARS

By Laura Smith

Photos provided by CFD2 and City of Mission Archives

In Mission's early days, protecting a growing community from fire depended heavily on neighbors helping neighbors. Fire stations were modest; equipment was limited and most of the people answering the call were volunteers.

From those beginnings grew a fire service that would evolve alongside Mission itself, eventually becoming part of the larger regional Consolidated Fire District No. 2 (CFD2). It is a story that stretches back more than 87 years.

MISSION'S FIRE DEPARTMENT TAKES SHAPE

Mission's fire service traces its roots to 1939, when the department was organized as the Mission Hills Acres Fire Department.

Among those early firefighters was Murrel Francis "M.F." Bruce Sr., whose connection to Mission's fire service also began in 1939, when he helped drive the department's new Dodge fire truck (see story pg 24) to a fire. It was the beginning of a 46-year career with the Mission Fire Department that would eventually result in Bruce becoming the full-time chief of Mission Fire District No. 1.

Throughout the County, various other fire departments were forming and consolidating and Mission's department was only one piece of a larger fire service taking shape as communities across northeast Johnson County grew and became increasingly connected. In 1962, Fire Districts No. 2 and No. 3 merged to create Consolidated Fire District No. 2.

For more than two decades after that consolidation, Mission continued to maintain its own fire district. Then, in 1988, the two histories came together

JOINING FORCES

On Oct. 1, 1988, the organization known today as Consolidated Fire District No. 2 of Northeast Johnson County was created. For Mission, the change marked the end of nearly 50 years of an independently operated local fire department, but not the end of Mission's role in the fire service.

One of Mission's firefighters provides a fitting link between the two eras.

Phil Hodgdon began as a volunteer with the Mission Fire Department in 1979 and became a full-time firefighter with Mission Fire District No. 1 in 1987. When Mission and CFD2 consolidated the following year, Hodgdon continued serving with the new organization.

He rose through the ranks and, in 2007, became fire chief of CFD2.

A firefighter whose career began with Mission's independent department was now leading the organization created, in part, through its consolidation.

MORE THAN FIGHTING FIRES

What firefighters do has changed dramatically since Mission's first crews began answering calls in 1939.

Fire suppression remains central to the mission, but today's firefighters also respond to medical emergencies, vehicle crashes, hazardous situations and countless other calls for help. Beyond emergency response, the district works to prevent emergencies through inspections, public education, fire prevention and preparedness.

CFD2 serves eight communities — Mission, Prairie Village, Roeland Park, Fairway, Westwood, Westwood Hills, Mission Woods and Mission Hills — from three stations staffed around the clock.

For Mission residents, though, perhaps the most visible connection to all that history remains Station 21 on Martway. Fire trucks have been leaving that building to answer Mission calls since the 1970s. But the history behind those doors reaches much further back – to M.F. Bruce and Mission's earliest firefighters, the Johnson Drive and Beverly Avenue stations, and the 1988 consolidation.



In 1988, the history of Mission's fire protection was complete with the consolidation to CFD2.

> "We have such an interesting and rich history built upon the traditions and foundations laid by many firefighters who served before us."
>
> – Chief Steve Chick, CFD2

Current CFD2 Chief Steve Chick says, "We proudly embrace the history that has made CFD2 what it is today. What once started as several smaller organizations serving segments of these communities is now a respected destination department, where many Fire/EMS professionals strive to get hired. The men and women serving our eight cities today have a great deal of pride in working at CFD2. We have such an interesting and rich history built upon the traditions and foundations laid by many firefighters who served before us. How we do the job, and what is required of us, may have changed a lot - but a common goal over the last 87+ years has been to provide the best possible services to the communities we serve."



The Martway Station continues to serve Mission residents with dedicated, professional first responders.

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