

Paola adult education program ending due to loss of funding

BY BRIAN MCCAULEY
bmccauley@cherryroad.com

PAOLA – Paola’s adult education program is ending due to a loss of grant funding, but Director Karen Ulanski-Swank is determined to find a way to keep serving community members.

Ulanski-Swank, who has worked at the Paola Adult Education Center for 28 years, said she submitted a grant application Jan. 31 for a five-year grant that would have funded the

adult education program to the tune of about \$225,000 each year.

In March, she was notified by the Kansas Board of Regents that the grant request was denied because the application was incomplete.

Ulanski-Swank said responses to three important questions on the fillable pdf were left blank, but when she checked her saved version, they were filled out. Despite multiple attempts to contact state officials to fix the misunderstanding,

Ulanski-Swank said the decision to deny the grant was upheld.

Matt Keith, director of communications for the Kansas Board of Regents, said that last year, the board opened an adult education RFP under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act.

“This was a competitive grant process with numerous applicants whose materials were reviewed by an inter-agency committee,” Keith said. “Unfortunately, the Paola Adult Education Center submitted an application that was missing many pieces of critical information. The review committee denied the application for this reason.”

Keith added that the board will continue to work with partners to ensure adult education services remain available to residents of Paola and surrounding communities.

Without funding to support the adult education program, Paola USD 368 Board of Education members voted during a special meeting April 29 to shut down the program.

Superintendent Matt Meek said it would not



File photo
Karen Ulanski-Swank (left) hands a diploma to Brandi Hoover during the 2022 GED graduation ceremony at Paola High School.



File photo
Kynleigh Smith (left) gets a hug from Chris Wheaton during the 2022 GED graduation ceremony at Paola High School. Wheaton was one of the longtime employees of the Paola Adult Education Center who had to find a new job after the adult education program was eliminated due to a loss of grant funding.

have been sustainable for the school district to take on the cost of the program.

He added that it is rare for adult education programs to be part of a school district, as most go through community colleges.

Meek praised the work Ulanski-Swank and her team has done at the Paola Adult Education Center, and he said there are other programs out there for adults looking to earn their

GEDs.

He added that the Paola Adult Education building at 1710 Industrial Park Drive will still be used for the district’s alternative education program, and the virtual program will still remain.

Meek emphasized that Paola’s graduation rate has been over 95 percent for the past three years.

Ulanski-Swank confirmed that she will remain

with the school district to oversee the alternative education program, which serves middle and high school students who lack the resources to succeed in a regular classroom.

But she said her heart hurts for the loss of the adult education program, which she has watched grow during the past 28 years.

ADULT ED / PAGE A2

Four Kids For Kritters introduces cat cabin

BY BRIAN MCCAULEY
bmccauley@cherryroad.com

OSAWATOMIE – Eunice Mollett is on a mission to save cats, and now her non-profit rescue operation south of Osawatomie has a new cabin to house felines in need of a new home.

The Osawatomie Chamber of Commerce helped celebrate the completion of the new cat cabin with a ribbon cutting and open house Saturday, June 28, at Mollett’s property at 38280 Plum Creek Road south of Osawatomie and north of Beagle.

Mollett said the event featured walking tacos, face painting, popcorn, snow cones, raffle, craft sale and a nail trim fundraiser to help supplement donations.

“It was a great day,” Mollett said. “We collected \$500 in donations. For us, that’s a huge boost.”

The cat cabin is climate-controlled and features seven double-stacked



Osawatomie Chamber of Commerce
Eunice Mollett cuts the ribbon at the site of her rescue’s new cat cabin with the help of her husband, Casey, and children, Naomi and Sam, along with other family members and volunteers.

kennels, giving the cats plenty of space. Mollett said it didn’t take long to fill up the cabin, which currently houses 16 cats, including kittens.

Four Kids For Kritters is a licensed rescue operating out of Eunice’s home, and she said the new cat cabin has been inspected and approved by the Kansas Department of Agriculture.

She started moving cats from her home to the cabin in late April. The cabin structure itself was funded by her mother-in-law,

Stephanie.

Mollett receives help from her family members and volunteers to continue her mission to help cats.

Eunice and her husband, Casey, moved from the

CAT CABIN / PAGE A2

Louisburg celebrates July 4th with Freedom Festival



Gene Morris / Miami County Republic
Rowan Wolf of Louisburg, 4, waves as he goes down a gigantic bouncy slide at the Freedom Festival on Friday, July 4. For more pictures, see Page A4.