



Get ready for the Paola Roots Festival |  
**INSIDE**



16th ANNUAL  
PAOLA KANSAS  
**ROOTS FESTIVAL**  
AUGUST 22 & 23, 2025  
BACK TO OUR ROOTS!  
THE MIAMI COUNTY  
REPUBLIC

Section highlights  
Miami County Fair  
winners |  
**PAGES C1-C8**



## Students kick off new school year

STAFF REPORT

Students throughout Miami County and the surrounding region kicked off a new school year this week, and there were plenty of photos taken.

Paola police officer Ben Rakoski visited with students outside of Cottonwood Elementary on the first day of school Wednesday, Aug. 13.

One of those students was Marshall Smail, who was starting his first day of first grade.

Rakoski, the new school resource officer, was all smiles as he gave students high fives and hugs on their first day back.

“I haven’t had a first day of school for 10 years,” he said with a smile.



Janneil Crader, principal of Rockville Elementary in Louisburg, gives a high five to Elena Bowman, who was starting second grade on Thursday, Aug. 14.

Marshall is the grandson of Dave Smail, former Paola police chief.

Brandon Powell had an emotional day Aug. 13 when his daughter, Sydney, started her senior year at Osawatomie High School.

Allie Pace was all smiles for her first day at Louisburg High School on Aug. 13. She is a freshman.

Teacher Ashley Sullivan got

to start her first day back at Cottonwood Elementary with pictures and a hug from her daughter, Ainsley, who is entering third grade at Sunflower Elementary.

Jackson and Rose-Aleigha walked into Cottonwood Elementary together for their first day of kindergarten.

Willow and Guy Johns had back-to-school night at Osawatomie Middle School on Tuesday, Aug. 12.

It was the first time the siblings were in middle school together. Willow is in eighth grade. Guy is starting sixth grade.

Janneil Crader, principal of Rockville Elementary in

Louisburg, was busy giving hugs and greeting students on the first day of school Thursday, Aug. 14.

“This is a fun part of the job,” she said.

**FOR MORE FIRST DAY OF SCHOOL PHOTOS, SEE PAGE A5.**

## Local governments schedule budget hearings

BY BRIAN MCCAULEY  
bmccauley@cherryroad.com

Local governments in Miami County are finalizing their 2026 budgets, with most choosing to exceed the revenue neutral rate (RNR).

In order to be revenue neutral, a taxing entity must set the mill levy at or below the RNR. The mill levy is the rate in which property taxes are collected, and the RNR is the rate that would generate the same amount of property tax revenue as the previous year based on the current year’s assessed valuation.

City councils, school boards, county governments and other governmental entities must schedule RNR hearings in addition to their regular budget public hearings if they intend to exceed the revenue neutral rate. Most schedule both hearings during the same meeting.

Members of the public are invited to attend the meetings and speak about the proposed

BUDGETS / PAGE A2

## Paola pursuing bonds to pay for \$1.05 million water projects

BY BRIAN MCCAULEY  
bmccauley@cherryroad.com

PAOLA – Paola city leaders are moving forward with plans to use general obligation bonds to pay for three water projects totaling \$1.05 million.

The city’s primary focus is addressing streambank erosion along Wea Creek near 311th Street that is threatening the stability of the city’s main water line from the Marais des Cygnes Public Utility Authority (PUA).

Paola and Louisburg currently purchase water from the PUA, which has a water plant along the Marais des Cygnes River near 343rd Street and Victory Road.

A primary waterline extends from the plant to 311th Street where it crosses Wea Creek and travels north to Paola’s primary water tower near Cottonwood Elementary.

The waterline runs along the north side of 311th Street within the 35-foot Miami County road easement along Wea Creek, but city officials have learned that continued erosion of the Wea Creek streambank has increased the risk of breakage of the water line.

Paola City Manager Randi Shannon has discussed the issue with Paola City Council members during multiple meetings. It was stated that a major break in the line could potentially result in a loss of service for all 2,086 residential and 384 commercial customers. It also could result in future increases in fees to help cover the cost of the repairs and water loss, according to city documents.

Paola city officials plan to relocate the waterline to the south side of the road to fix the issue at an estimated cost of \$600,000.



Streambank erosion along Wea Creek near 311th Street is threatening the stability of Paola’s primary waterline. The city plans to relocate the line to the south side of the road.

City officials also plan to update outdated city meters to radio-read versions at an estimated cost of \$250,000, and replace certain water service lines to reduce lead and copper, as required by regulations, at an estimated

cost of \$200,000.

The water projects total \$1.05 million, and Shannon said the city is permitted to move forward with using bonds to pay for the project without having an election per state statute

under the Water Act.

Shannon said the bonds are expected to be paid off in four years, and city leaders shouldn’t have to increase the mill levy because they can use the existing bond and interest mill levy

that is being used to pay off previous bonds used to construct the Paola Justice Center. Those bonds should be paid off in 2026, when payments will start being made on the new bonds for the water projects, Shannon said.

Paola City Council members, during their July 8 meeting, unanimously approved a project authorization ordinance that is the first step in the bond issuance financial process.

During their Aug. 12 meeting, the council members agreed to move forward with private placement through the Rural Water Financing Agency for the general obligation bonds.

They also adopted an ordinance authorizing the issuance of the bond series with the principal amount not to exceed \$1,050,000,

WATER / PAGE A2

Basement leaking? What are you wading for?

# MID PLAINS WATERPROOFING

620-664-4598

Commercial - Industrial - Residential

★ Free Estimates ★ Insured ★ Chemical Grout Injection ★ No Excavating

[www.midplainswater.com](http://www.midplainswater.com)