

‘Friends of the Library’ marks 50 years of service

Lily Hansen
The Times

The Friends of the Wamego Public Library marked its 50th Anniversary April 22. This group has served the community in countless ways since its inception, including participating in Read Across America, organizing Thanksgiving pie sales in partnership with Wamego High’s culinary arts department, providing books for students with the Little Free Library and Kansas Reads to Preschoolers, along with a myriad of activities supporting the Wamego Public Library. Most notably, in 2016 the Friends of the Wamego Library was able to become a 501 C3, making it possible to secure the grants needed in order to begin renovations to the library. The renovations have enhanced the library’s functionality and design, cementing its place as a community pillar. Additionally, the organization provide \$500 scholarships. Any high school senior is welcome to apply

as long as they have volunteered a small amount of time to help out at a library. Kelly Nordberg, program manager of the Wamego Library, spoke about the positive impacts the Friends of Wamego Libraries help and shared that its all “very community based. The Friends contributions to Wamego have been awarded on multiple occasions, most recently with the 2024 Wamego Area Chamber of Commerce Impact award.” A bingo night will be held May 8 at the Columbian Theater to help fund raise for the group. Other ways to get involved would be to volunteer time at the Wamego Public Library or fundraising events, donate any used books, or as Nordberg said, “contributions are always appreciated.” The Wamego Public Library contributes substantially to the community, support of any sort is highly valued as well as necessary. For more on the Friends of the Wamego Public Library, visit the website at wplfriends.com



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Friends of the Library members Susan Patrick and Nancy Schoepner pose in front of the “bookshelf” recognizing contributors.

County hears budget requests

Loryn Clauson
The Times

The Pottawatomie County Commission on Monday began hearing budget request so for 2026. Several area agencies sent representatives to the commission meeting. Lori Feldkamp and Liz Holle with Big Lakes Development Center presented their proposed budget. They highlighted the work Big Lakes does with adult day services, residential services, center-based employment and training, community employment and case management. Fifty-one individuals are served in Pottawatomie County. Both Feldkamp and Holle discussed the growing need for transportation, and the costs associated with that. A majority of Big Lakes clientele are unable to drive themselves, and transportation is necessary. However, the cost for a fully accessible bus has grown from the pre-Covid era of around \$65,000 to over \$130,000 with an almost two-year waiting list. With that growing cost buses are on the road longer, and the maintenance cost continues to grow.

The proposed budged has a two percent increase of \$3,839 and totals \$195,803. Both Feldkamp and Holle also explained that with state policy changes the budget request will most likely increase next year. However, they also highlighted that the community based services model overall is far less expensive that the state institution model from decades ago. Feldkamp would love to see more funding from the State but emphasized to the Commissioners “What you do pay for makes a huge difference.” Erica Christie, executive director, 3Rivers Inc., noted in her request the organization’s focus on youth with disabilities transitioning to both employment and higher education. 3Rivers as an organization is statute based and required by state law and Christie said it was growing. They recently brought in Leavenworth County, now totaling 13 counties served, and added an additional 1.5 staff to help with the case load.



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Jared Barnes and Traci Manges were recognized for their service to the county. Pictured, Manges with commissioners Dee McKee, Terry Force, Gary Yenzer, Bill Drew and Merl Page. Not pictured: Jared Barnes.

“We just keep growing and its great,” she said. Commissioner Merl Page congratulated Christie on her new position as Executive Director and told the meeting, “She is an incredible individual and I just know her being at 3Rivers is a good thing.” Christie hoped that the commission could contribute to help with the funding gap, and alleviate the deficit of \$37,893. The Chief Executive Officer of the Community Cares Ministries, Susan Inskeep spoke to the commission next. Inskeep emphasized a change in the mission, to refer out to other agencies. Many items are done in-house, but if need-be the organization assists individuals in outside help, as an example, they work with the hospital which has Charitable Care. Community Care Ministries will help patients walk through the system to get the services they need. They are working with Pawnee Mental Health to have telehealth appointments in the Community Care Ministries building, alleviating the need to travel to Manhattan. They offer medical equipment and have household goods for those who may need. They also offer help with prescription drug costs. Inskeep also would love to have a dentist on staff, but struggles to find anyone who would be willing to work for a reduced cost. Typical rates run between \$120 to \$180 per hour. Inskeep hoped the commission would help the organization to continue to

provide all these services at no cost to county residents. The County Extension Office brought their budget request before the Commission as well. Erin Tynon spoke to the popularity of 4-H in the county. Pottawatomie County has the third most enrollment in all of Kansas, including the more densely populated counties. This year there are 380 registered members, with 72 of them being completely new to 4-H. FHLP Jack Lindquist with the Flint Hills Regional Leadership Program spoke to the Commissioners, bringing two graduates from the program, Susan Adams the former director of the Flint Hills Discovery Center, and Paul Schliffke the Chief of Police in Wamego. All three discussed the benefits of the Leadership Program to the region. The program consists of nine sessions across the region. It begins in September and ends in February. Each session is held in a different county and allows participants to hear and better understand the challenges across the region, as opposed to focusing simply on their own county. Both Adams and Schliffke spoke highly of the program’s benefits to them in their differing roles. Both were able to network with other program participants in the region to assist them in their professional setting. “The goal is to teach leadership skills” but with a focus on regionality,” Lindquist explained. Page encouraged the county to have an employ-

ee apply. The commissionersd approved the \$1,000 as a Founding organization investment to the 2026 program. Applications to the program will be posted online beginning May 15 and will run through July 20.

FRAUD ALERT

The Pottawatomie County Register of Deeds, Betty Jo Abitz updated the Commission on the April numbers. She also spoke about the counties initiative to promote property fraud detection. Pottawatomie County has partnered with PropertyFraudAlert.com to help protect county residents. The program is free and outsources all alerts to the company. Abitz told the Commissioners that 362 people have signed up online and there has already been 90 alerts. The company notifies residents if any document is recorded on your property, allowing fraud deterrents. Residents can sign up online.

SERVICE AWARDS

On Monday the County Commissioners recognized Jared Barnes for 10 years of service with the Fire Department, and Traci Manges for 20 years of service at the Register of Deeds Office.

NEWS BRIEFS



Stolen trailer sought by PTSO.



Blue Zuzuki motorcycle sought by sheriff.

PTSO investing theft, hit-and-run incidents

Staff Report

The Pottawatomie County Sheriff’s Office is looking into two recent incidents, according to a press release. On April 30, deputies responded to a theft report in the 7000 block of Junietta Rd., rural Manhattan. An older, white enclosed single action Pace Journey trailer was reported stolen. The trailer is approximately 10’ long and 6’ wide, with “Schultz Construction General Contractor” on the side. The second incident, also reported on April 30, is for a hit-and-run incident at the 4000 block of Nature Ave., rural Manhattaan. A bluze Zuzuki GSX-8R motorcycle hit a mailbox and drove away. Anyone with information on either incident is asked to please call Det. Kidd at the PTSO, 785-457-3353 or leave a tip on the crime-stoppers link at www.ptsheriff.com.

Pawnee renames Hayes Dr. location

Staff Report

Pawnee Mental Health’s facility at 1558 Hayes Drive, Manhattan (Pottawatomie County), has been renamed the Behavioral Health Access Center, according to a press release. The new name better represents the wide range of essential behavioral health services housed within. The building is home to several critical programs, including Crisis Services, the Crisis Stabilization Unit (CSU), Social Detox services and Same Day Access (SDA). While the CSU retains its name, renaming the overall facility reflects the integration of available services under one roof. The CSU continues to offer 24/7 voluntary treatment for individuals experiencing an acute mental health crisis. The 11-bed unit provides short-term, intensive therapeutic support in a safe, supportive environment, helping individuals stabilize before transitioning to ongoing community-based care.

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REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

City of Garnett, Kansas, Comprehensive Plan

The City of Garnett requests proposals from qualified consultants or firms to review city comprehensive plan and develop comprehensive plan for the City. The new, updated plan will provide vision, goals, objectives, and policies to guide the City’s development and redevelopment for the next 20 to 25 years. The plan will guide the City Commission, Planning and Zoning Commission, staff, developers, property owners, and residents on the appropriate growth and redevelopment for the City. The updated plan will integrate all aspects of urban development, including demographics, land use, public facilities and infrastructure, transportation, environmental, and economic growth recommendations. A critical component of the plan will be setting a vision for the City’s development and redevelopment, including areas in the City and possible annexation land. The vision component will need to analyze existing and future infrastructure needs and how technology will play a role in community outreach and City operations. The qualified consultant will need to take a creative and innovative approach to reviewing the needs of the community, while obtaining public input about the plan. The planning process shall develop a comprehensive vision for the City, business opportunities, amenities and programs, as well as complement the recently-completed parks plan.

SUBMITTAL DEADLINE

One (1) electronic copy in PDF format, in accordance with this RFP, will be accepted no later than 3:00 PM CST on May 30, 2025 and shall be submitted via the following email address: dwilson@garnettks.net

Full document and information are available at www.simplygarnett.com.

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