# EMPORIA FIRE STATION 1 EARNS NATIONAL DESIGN AWARD




CHRIS WALKER/GAZETTE

*The Emporia Gazette*

Emporia Fire Station 1 has received national recognition for its design, earning the Silver Award in the Fire Headquarters category of the Firehouse Station Design Awards.

The awards recognize excellence in the design and architecture of fire and emergency service facilities across the country.

Designed by TESSERE, Emporia's new fire headquarters replaces an outdated facility with a modern station focused on improving emergency response capabilities, firefighter health and safety, and long-term operational needs.

According to the City of Emporia, the station features a response-focused layout designed to improve daily operations and emergency readiness. Advanced contaminant control systems help reduce firefighters' exposure to potentially harmful substances, while integrated training spaces allow personnel to develop and maintain emergency response skills.

The facility was also designed with sustainability, accessibility and adaptability in mind to accommodate the department's future needs.

"This recognition reflects the thoughtful planning and teamwork that went into creating a facility that supports our firefighters and the community they serve," Emporia Fire Chief Brandon Beck said.

The project was a collaborative effort involving the Emporia Fire Department, city administration, TESSERE, Crossland Construction and other project partners.

City officials said the award reflects the work that went into developing a facility intended to serve both firefighters and the Emporia community for years to come.

# ABUNDANT GRACE MEAL PROGRAM TO CONTINUE AS CITY FUNDING ENDS



Grace Methodist Church

November 2026

*Providing nourishing meals with compassion and care for our community.*

| DATE | DAY | MEAL | SIDES |
|---|---|---|---|
| Nov 2 | Monday | Southwestern | — |
| Nov 4 | Wednesday | Macaroni & Cheese | Two Fruits |
| Nov 6 | Friday | Chicken | Beans & Fruit |
| Nov 9 | Monday | Southwestern | — |
| Nov 11 | Wednesday | Macaroni & Cheese | Two Fruits |
| Nov 13 | Friday | Chicken | Beans & Fruit |
| Nov 16 | Monday | Southwestern | — |
| Nov 18 | Wednesday | Macaroni & Cheese | Two Fruits |
| Nov 20 | Friday | Chicken | Beans & Fruit |
| Nov 25 | Wednesday | *Closed for Thanksgiving* | |
| Nov 27 | Friday | *Closed for Thanksgiving* | |
| Nov 30 | Monday | Southwestern | — |

*Thank you for being a part of our community.*
*We're grateful for the opportunity to serve you!*

*The Emporia Gazette*

The Abundant Grace Meal Program will continue serving meals at Grace United Methodist Church after city funding ends Dec. 31, United Way of the Flint Hills announced Wednesday.

The city of Emporia will not renew its financial support for the program, bringing United Way's role as fiscal agent to an end. For the past year, United Way has received and administered the city's funds and provided financial oversight.

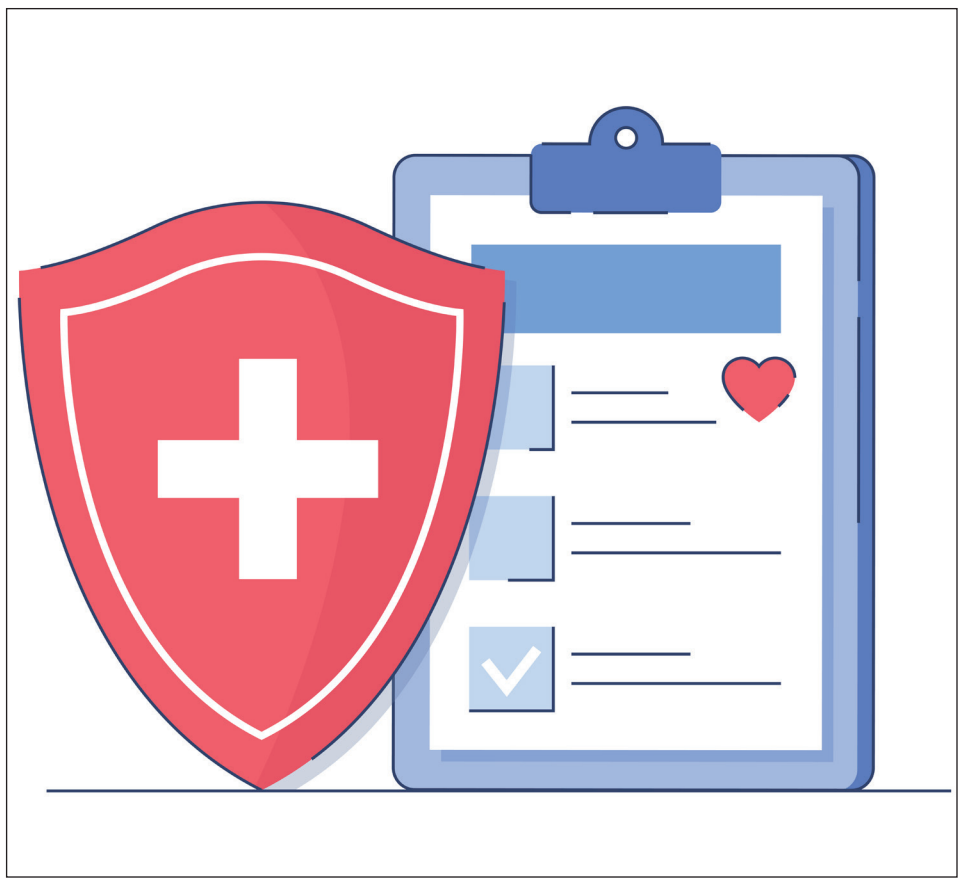
United Way separately committed emergency food relief funding to Abundant Grace through December. That support will total more than $8,000 by year's end. United Way will continue processing eligible expenses through Dec. 31 and provide a final accounting of the funds it administered.

"We appreciate the dedication of Abundant Grace, stepping up for our community in a time of need, and we will always be grateful for the meals and fellowship they have shared with our neighbors," said Whitney Johnson, executive director of United Way of the Flint Hills. "We wish the program continued success as it moves forward."

United Way said it is working with Abundant Grace on the transition and encouraged residents to donate to help keep the program running. Donations can be made through Grace United Methodist Church, 2 N. Neosho St. in Emporia. The church is setting up an online donation option. Those interested in donating or volunteering can email AJ O'Dell at office@GUMCEmporia.com.

United Way also provides monthly emergency food relief, supports the Blessing Box program and helps fund 211, which connects residents with local resources. Residents seeking help can visit the United Way office in the Kress Center, call 620-342-7564 or visit unitedwayoftheflinthills.org. They can also dial 211, text 898211 or visit 211Kansas.org.

# CHASE COUNTY RENEWS EMPLOYEE HEALTH INSURANCE, WEIGHS LIABILITY BIDS



*The Chase County Leader-News*

Chase County commissioners voted Nov. 16 to keep UnitedHealthcare as the county's employee health insurer for another year and continued reviewing two proposals for property and liability coverage.

During a health insurance discussion listed on the agenda with Freedom Claims, commissioners heard that UnitedHealthcare had agreed to take an additional 2% off its renewal quote. After the vote, commissioners asked for the final cost and the difference between that figure and the amount budgeted. They discussed using reserves to cover the gap.

Commissioners also discussed revisiting a health savings account option after the renewal. The discussion included how to help employees understand their coverage and use their benefits during open enrollment.

## Property and liability bids

Commissioners heard proposals from KCAMP and EMC, the county's current insurer. KCAMP representatives outlined coverage options and services that include defensive driving training and grants of up to $2,000 a year to help members reduce the risk of property losses and liability claims.

Kirk Engel of Scrivner Insurance, representing EMC, said the proposal would increase the county's property coverage from $31 million to $31.7 million while keeping its property and vehicle deductibles at current levels. He said the quote also includes coverage for the county's drone and liability arising from its use.

Commissioners asked for EMC's full proposal for further review. They left both bids under consideration.

## Technical college update

Flint Hills Technical College President Caron Daugherty said the college added a trainer who can train bus drivers through its commercial driver's license program. The college also has a simulator that lets high school students try commercial driving before they are eligible for the licensing program.

Daugherty said the college is raising money for a 29,000-square-foot Advanced Industry Education Center to house its power plant technology and industrial engineering programs. Both have waiting lists, she said, and moving them would free up space to expand dental hygiene.

She also highlighted the college's partnership with Chase County Health, which has brought a mobile dental unit to the county.

Road petition and other business

Commissioners asked for a list of nominees at their Nov. 30 meeting as they consider a petition to vacate part of a county road. Three residents with no stake in the petition would join commissioners in viewing the road before a public hearing.

The commission also approved $116,100.61 in warrants and the minutes of its Nov. 9 meeting. The next regular meeting is scheduled for 9 a.m. Nov. 30.

## *Stories & Songs of the Flint Hills*



***by Annie Wilson** – named the "Flint Hills Balladeer" by the Kansas Governor*

**Allegawaho Memorial Heritage Park and The Kanza Heritage Trail**

Considering that all their Kansas land was forcibly sold and they were expelled from the state in 1873, you might think the Kaw people would be quite possessive with the 168 acres in Kansas they bought back in 2002 – making sure the area only benefits Kaw people.

But you would be wrong. Instead, the Kaw Nation turned their newly restored acreage into a public park: Allegawaho Memorial Heritage Park, open to all who want to hike the native prairie, learn about Indian heritage, and enjoy the land's natural beauty.

Located a few miles southeast of Council Grove, it is on the site of one of the last Kaw villages in Kansas. Their homeland - once 20 million acres - was successively reduced in a series of coercive treaties: first down to 2 million acres, then 256,000, then 80,000, then zero. Due to poverty, disease and multiple dislocations, the Kaw population was similarly decimated: from several thousand in early times to less than 200 by 1890.

But the Kaw, also called the Kanza, have been resilient, today numbering 3,972 across the U.S. and fiercely dedicated to restoring their culture. Their purchase of Kansas land in 2002 was intended to create a gathering place in the state which bears their name. "This is where our ancestors lived, and I think if you talk with any Kaw tribal member, it has a special feeling," says elder Pauline Sharp. Kaw Tribal Chairman Jim Pepper Henry's great-grandfather was born on this reservation.

The main tribal event on the site is an annual powwow of traditional dances in the park's beautiful dance arbor, set in a meadow along Little John Creek. It is held the third weekend in June during Council Grove's Washungah Days, an event named for the last full-blooded principal chief of the Kaw Nation.

For visitors, the Kaw have created a two-mile-long Kanza Heritage Trail, which I followed recently on a beautiful fall day. It begins near the informative Welcome Center with kiosks explaining Kaw heritage, including the life of Allegawaho (al-uh-guh-WAH-ho), their last Principal Chief while in Kansas, and the park's namesake.

In 1872, Allegawaho famously resisted the expulsion of his people with an eloquent speech delivered at the Kaw Agency. One of its stabilized stone ruins remains near the park entrance, and nearby the 118-mile Flint Hills Trail also passes through the park.

I followed the Kanza Heritage Trail past the Dance Arbor to the magnificent Sacred Red Rock, returned to the Kaw people and moved to this site in 2024. Nearby is a beautiful cast stone Clan Circle featuring motifs from Kanza beadwork and inscriptions of camp and clan names.

The trail loop continues, taking walkers through the beautiful forest along Little John Creek with its ruins of limestone huts, past native and restored tallgrass prairie, and up to a dramatic scenic overlook. Walking the trail, I was delighted to see deer, wild turkeys and wood ducks, and the gentle south breeze reminded me that the Kanza's tribal name derives from the Siouan word for "south wind."

On the hilltop to the east is the 35-foot-tall Monument to the Unknown Kanza Warrior. (The Kaw Nation requests no close up photos of the monument.) Containing the remains of an unknown Kanza warrior, it was constructed to honor the memory of the Kanza people in this area and dedicated by Boy Scouts and local citizens in 1925. Notably, the owner who sold this land to the Kaw in 2000 wanted this monument to be once again: on Kaw land.

At the end of my walk, I passed a cast stone pattern featuring Kanza ribbon weaving motifs and the Kaw Tribal Seal. Around the edge inscribed in stone is this prayer: *"Wakanda – Bless all who walk here. May we know and respect all your creation and what you have taught our people. Wíblaha"'*

*For more Stories & Songs of the Flint Hills, see tallgrassexpress.com*