



Kassi Brown



Darren Dennis



Nichole Kuhn



Jaycee Moore

School districts welcome new staff

All Osage County school districts are either back in session or will be soon, and all have new staff. Burlingame USD 454 has five new staff members, Lyndon USD 421 has three, Marais des Cygnes Valley USD 456 has one, Osage City USD 420 has eight, and Santa Fe Trail USD 434 has 10. Three Lakes Educational Cooperative has also hired eight new staff members.

We sent a request to the schools and asked the new staff to send us a little information about themselves, along with a photo, as a way to introduce themselves and help readers become better acquainted with those who will be working with our children. Following are new staff from Burlingame, Lyndon, Marais des Cygnes Valley, and Osage City. Next week, new staff from Santa Fe Trail and Three Lakes Educational Cooperative will be featured.

Burlingame USD 454

Kassi Brown

My name is Kassi Brown, and I have been hired as the third-grade teacher at Burlingame Elementary School. This will be my sixth year as a teacher.

I am a 2021 graduate of Emporia State University, with a Bachelor of Science in Elementary Education.

I also possess a Family and Consumer Sciences Endorsement.

I recently moved from Wakeeney to Topeka. I have two fur babies, Winnie and Ellie, who are both corgis.

I previously taught fourth grade at Wheatland Elementary in Grainfield, for two years. Before that, I was a Family and Consumer Sciences teacher and FCCLA adviser in Wakeeney. Fresh out of college, I taught fourth grade in Goodland.

My goals for this year include teaching students not only academics, but valuable life skills, helping students find their love of learning, and allowing each student to feel welcome, safe and excited to come to school.

In my free time, I enjoy baking, sewing, shopping, and spending time with my family.

Something interesting about me is that I have taught both elementary and high school.

Darren Dennis

My name is Darren Dennis, and I have been hired as the superintendent at Burlingame USD 454. This will be my 37th year in the profession.

I am a 1988 graduate of the University of Kansas, with a Bachelor of Science in Engineering degree in Social Studies Education. I also hold a master's degree in Curriculum and

Instruction, and a Doctorate in Education Administration from KU.

I recently moved from Shawnee to Topeka. I have been married to my wife, Sue, a kindergarten teacher, for 35 years. We have three children, Jonathan, David (who is married to Gaby and has two kids, Paloma and Ezra), and Steven. We also have two dogs, Tiki and Festus.

I previously was Chief Academic Officer at Shawnee Mission USD 512, assistant superintendent at Garden City USD 457, and principal at Ottawa USD 290, among other places.

My goals for this year include getting involved in Burlingame and supporting the growth of students throughout our system.

In my free time, I enjoy reading, biking, and walking with my wife.

Something interesting about me is that I student taught in London, England.

Nichole Kuhn

My name is Nichole Kuhn, and I have been hired as the Title 1 reading interventionist at Burlingame Elementary School. This will be my 24th year as a teacher.

I am a 2003 graduate of Emporia State University, with a bachelor's degree in education. I also received my master's degree in education (reading

specialist) from Fort Hays State University in 2010.

I live in Admire. I have been married to my husband, Dustin, who works for USD 251, for 21 years. We have one child, Maddie. We also have two newly adopted kittens, Juice and Vader. Our previous cat, Bobtober, lived to be 20 years old.

I previously taught at USD 252 (South Lyon County), USD 501 (Topeka Public Schools), and USD 251 (North Lyon County). I have been an elementary classroom teacher, middle school ELA teacher, and Title 1 reading interventionist. While with USD 501, I was also the consulting teacher for Reading Intervention (K-8).

My goal for this year is to build reading confidence through my small group instruction.

In my free time, I enjoy traveling, baking, reading, attending sporting events, and spending time with friends and family.

Something interesting about me is that I have visited all of the lower 48 states, plus Washington, D.C., and the Hawaiian vacation is booked.

Jaycee Moore

My name is Jaycee Moore, and I have been hired as a second-grade teacher at Burlingame Elementary. This will be my

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Osage County sales tax drops

LYNDON — Consumers and businesses in Osage County should be paying a half-cent less in sales tax following the expiration of a temporary countywide tax used to help finance the county's law enforcement center.

The half-cent sales tax expired this summer, reducing the county sales tax rate by 0.5 percentage point. The change took effect July 1 as part of the Kansas Department of Revenue's quarterly sales tax rate updates.

The change apparently caught some businesses by surprise, with some continuing to charge the previous rate after July 1.

The half-cent tax dates to a Feb. 8, 2022, special election, when Osage County voters approved the measure 1,149 to 505.

The tax was part of the county's plan to replace its aging sheriff's office and jail facilities in Lyndon. County commissioners proposed the half-cent countywide sales tax as a temporary four-year

measure to help finance construction and startup of the new law enforcement center. The tax was designed to automatically expire after four years.

Construction of the new facility began in 2023, and the sheriff's office and corrections division moved into the completed law enforcement center in early 2025. The facility includes the sheriff's office, emergency communications center, and a 124-bed corrections facility.

With the temporary tax now expired, businesses should make sure their point-of-sale systems are using the correct rate for their location.

Kansas sales tax rates can change at the beginning of each calendar quarter — Jan. 1, April 1, July 1 or Oct. 1. Businesses and consumers can verify the correct rate for a particular location through the Kansas Department of Revenue's online sales tax rate information.

Santa Fe Trail bond fails

Voters in the Santa Fe Trail USD 434 school district overwhelmingly rejected a nearly \$26 million bond issue Tuesday that would have consolidated the district's schools onto two campuses and funded major renovations and additions.

Unofficial election results showed 84.4% of voters opposed the bond proposal in the Aug. 4 primary election. (1,618 no to 299 yes)

The proposal called for closing the Overbrook and Scranton elementary school buildings and consolidating students into facilities in Carbondale. Under the plan, students in kindergarten through fifth grade would have attended Carbondale

Attendance Center, while students in grades six through 12 would have attended Santa Fe Trail High School.

Both Carbondale Attendance Center and Santa Fe Trail High School would have undergone renovations and additions to accommodate the additional students. Plans for the high school included a new wing and additional classrooms, with middle school students occupying a separate portion of the building while having access to some high school programs and opportunities.

Superintendent Faith Flory said before the election that declining enrollment and the cost

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Osage County Commission

Solar debate dominates commission meeting

LYNDON — Opposition to large-scale solar development again dominated the Osage County Commission meeting Aug. 5. Commissioners Heather Kuder and Brandon Smith attended the meeting in person, while Commissioner Les Holman participated by telephone.

Several residents used the public comment period to express support for Kuder and Smith for their position on the moratorium.

One resident, Nina Flax, told the commissioners, "I just wanted to thank you also for standing strong on supporting the moratorium on solar, and I for one know that if I need to pay higher property taxes, I will."

Kenny Graham also thanked the two commissioners for their position and raised concerns about both solar development and data centers.

"Want to really thank both of you for standing real strong on solar," Graham said.

Graham argued that counties should be cautious about relying on promised economic benefits from energy developments, particularly when projects may later be sold to another company.

"The other thing you're going to run into, the developers of these systems, even though they do a promissory cost to the county or

to the schools, once they sell that as a development to somebody else, you're back to the negotiating tables," Graham said.

The solar discussion became more contentious when Holman responded to some of the concerns being raised about the potential environmental effects of solar panels.

Holman said solar technology has improved and he does not believe the panels pose the degree of environmental danger some opponents contend.

"The solar panels, the technology's come a long way," Holman said. "Um, it's still not perfect, but they're not near as toxic as they once were."

Holman later expanded on his position.

"I don't believe that these things are as toxic as people make it out to be," Holman said. "I think at the end of the day, people just don't want to look out and see solar panels. And I get that. I totally understand it. But when we're using the basis of people are going to die to keep something like this out of our county, I think that's foolish."

His comments prompted push-back from members of the audience.

One resident, Stacy Graham, said opponents were not against economic development, but were concerned about potential long-term

consequences to the county's land and water.

"We are not people against progress," Graham said. "We are people against poisoning. The poisoning of our waters, the poisoning of our land, and the poisoning of our air through noise pollution from data centers. Once this county, once this land becomes an industrial complex, it will never and can never go back to agricultural prospects again. It's done for."

Thelston Kuykendall questioned Holman directly about his educational background after he discussed his research into solar technology.

Holman responded, "I have a bachelor's of business administration science and project management."

When asked whether he was a scientist qualified to test the toxicity of a solar farm, Holman answered, "No, I'm not."

Kuykendall said the concern was that the county could approve something before its potential effects were fully understood.

"My point is, I wouldn't just assume and jump forward into something that could poison all of us," Kuykendall said.

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Star Block building progresses



Dan Rukes/Herald-Chronicle

Work continues on the Star Block building in Osage City. Recently, store names were added to the outside of the building, along with signs, and crews began building cornices and gables that evoke the originals that made the building so distinctive when it was built in 1883.



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