

SEDALIA DEMOCRAT Progress 2022

MARCH 12, 2022

The Sedalia Democrat's annual Progress edition is a special supplement to your daily paper that explains how the community has progressed over the past year. The special edition includes content covering the topics of Business, Community Service, Faith, Government, Education, and Arts and Entertainment.

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Government • Education

Road and Bridge has a busy year

A box culvert is installed by the Pettis County Road and Bridge Department on Ringen School Road in southeast Pettis County in October 2020. DEMOCRAT FILE PHOTO

By Skye Melcher

skyem@sedaliademocrat.com

The Pettis County Road and Bridge Department had a busy year fixing county roads and bridges for residents.

Pettis County had placed a significant emphasis on the county bridges and maintenance of county roads.

Eastern Commissioner Israel Baeza added that over the last two to three years, the county has wanted to make sure it is addressing the deterioration of current roads before adding more roads.

“The other piece I want to touch on again is on the bridges,”

Baeza said. “We’re a county that’s very aggressive on bridges and to put into perspective we currently have 21 bridges on a list that could be considered poor condition.”

These are bridges that need to be addressed in the near future. Out of the 21 bridges, the county is currently working on seven, meaning 14 remain that need to be worked on.

Pettis County has 166 bridges and currently, four are closed.

“The issue you run in with bridges is you can fix five bridges and then maybe next year you have another seven added to that list,” Baeza said. “It’s a never-ending battle but again, we are

trying to stay on top of it.”

During the pandemic, the Missouri Department of Transportation wasn’t doing bridge inspection so, in 2021, the Pettis County Commission was hit with a list of bridges that needed to be addressed immediately.

An issue the department has seen in the past few years is a labor shortage.

“I do want to commend our crew at the Road and Bridge and the people who are there,” Baeza said. “They have been able to keep us on schedule with everything that’s been proposed and everything we want to do.”

See **ROADS** | 2A

The expansion of technology in small schools



DEMOCRAT FILE PHOTO

Third grade student Ethan Twenter works on his computer during class Thursday, Nov. 5, 2020, at Green Ridge School. Because he was practicing social distancing by staying at his desk, which was more than 6 feet from his fellow classmates, he was allowed to lower his mask while he worked.

By Skye Melcher

skyem@sedaliademocrat.com

Schools have had it tough in the last three school years, working their way through a pandemic and also keeping kids learning when they can’t be in the classroom.

During the pandemic, many small schools started building up their technology base so students could still be able to learn.

Examples include expanding Chromebook grants so each and every student could have access to school work and building their broadband internet so students would have better access when they are sitting in the classroom.

School districts have

been running into issues when expanding technology, such as industry restraints like shipping and product availability.

Green Ridge R-8 School District Superintendent Jamie Burkhart said the district’s one-to-one program allows each student in the school to have a Chromebook during the class day.

“We have also updated our business lab with new computers for that department,” Burkhart added. “Because of these technology upgrades, we are also upgrading our bandwidth through MOREnet from 100 megabytes to 250 megabytes. Through eRate, we are upgrading our Wi-Fi access points as well.”

See **TECH** | 3A

Water and sewer get major upgrades

Solar power helps reduce rates

By Chris Howell

chrish@sedaliademocrat.com

The past year has seen city streets torn up for months as major upgrades to sewer and water systems are being completed.

“We started in 2018 with a major upgrade of all of our water mains,” City Administrator Kelvin Shaw said. “Particularly around downtown, the oldest part of town where the water mains were the oldest.”

A water department project set out to rehab an aging water system.

“We went out and issued a certificate of participation, so basically part of \$13 million and through the water department and part of that was rehabbing them,” Shaw said. “Part of that was getting them moved out of the streets and under the sidewalks, which makes them easier and more



PHOTO BY CHRIS HOWELL | DEMOCRAT

The City of Sedalia’s Main Street lift station, 3000 W. Main St., seen Monday, Feb. 28, received major work this past year including a solar array intended on keeping energy costs, and water rates, lower.

cost-effective to maintain going forward.”

Public Works Director Brenda Ardrey explained the scope of the multi-year project.

“We actually finished the nearly \$13.7 million, project three and four

of phase one of water improvements,” Ardrey said. “Project three was a fairly large project in an older area of town, project four was around the Main Street water tower, started there and went down Mill Street to Third, on Third

from Mill to Washington.”

Moving everything from under the streets to under the sidewalks kept streets torn up around town for months, but once water mains were finally under the sidewalk, the unseen infrastruc-

ture is now good for many decades.

“As far as the water mains, obviously you’ve got to have the infrastructure there to handle the growth and to continue to provide the services,” Shaw said. “Some of the

water mains were so old that they basically grew shut. We were spending so much money on doing repairs because you’d repair it and months later, you’re digging up 10 feet further down because it busted there, you’re just putting band-aids on top of band-aids.”

Getting them out from under the streets will keep workers from having to tear up the street every time there is a break, or a water tap is needed.

“It’s tough to tear up the sidewalk, but it’s a whole lot cheaper to put the sidewalk back and patch that than it is the streets,” Shaw said. “It makes the streets a lot easier to maintain. With the modern technology of being able to do boring and all of that, it’s less disruptive and so they put the new pipes in, which will hopefully last another 100 years.”

See **UPGRADES** | 5A



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2021-22 sees higher county revenues, new landfill ordinance

By **Skye Melcher**
skym@sedaliademocrat.com

The Pettis County Commission has had a busy year as it is getting back to normal after the pandemic has begun to turn around.

Presiding Commissioner David Dick said it has been a little different year and that every year after COVID has been a different year.

“We ended up with CARES money last year and the ARPA funds came; that was a little bit of a process to get those,” Dick said.

The county has received one of two payments of \$4.1 million and the commission is still trying to figure out how to distribute it because rules have been changed several times in the process.

“Again, that is not meant to sit on, we don’t want to sit on it. We didn’t want to spend it and have to give it back because that would have us upside down financially,” Dick said.

An important aspect that returned in the past year was bridge inspections done by the Missouri Department of Transportation. Bridge inspections are done every two years.

“They’re back in process of doing that and we wound up with several bridges closed by them and another little bit of that aspect is the inspector that had been doing them had retired,” Dick said. “So we got a new inspector, so you got different eyes looking at things and that’s OK but we weren’t ready for that.”

The Democrat previously reported there were several bridges abruptly closed in the spring and summer that are in the process of being fixed.

One of the biggest things on the commission’s radar this past year has been the proposed waste management ordinance that was passed on Feb. 24.

The landfill had county residents and the commission going back and forth for months on whether there should be a new landfill in Pettis County. Residents driving down U.S. Highway 50 could see the multitude of signs and hay bales stating “Farms Not Landfills.”

“I would equate it as two things, an educational process,” Dick said. “That’s actually kind of more than two aspects



Pettis County Commissioners Israel Baeza, David Dick and Jim Marcum hosted Concerned Citizens of Pettis County Mark Rieckhoff and Britni Schorran on Thursday, May 13, 2021, in the commission chambers at the Pettis County Courthouse.



Pettis County Commissioners Jim Marcum, David Dick and Israel Baeza hear from local farmer David Gerken and people concerned about the proposed landfill Thursday, Feb. 24. An overflow crowd barely fit in the third-floor courtroom at the Pettis County Courthouse.

because the commission doesn’t normally put forward a lot of ordinances like this and so we have to learn the process and do that right.” Then the content is up for discussion.

Once the ordinance was passed, Eastern Commissioner Israel Baeza posted some key points on his Facebook page:

- Completely eliminates an exclusion for a host agreement.
- No solid waste management facility shall be located less than 3 miles from a city, school, church, platted subdivisions, or any parks.
- No solid waste management facility shall be located

closer than three-quarters of a mile of an occupied dwelling.

- No solid waste management facility shall be located closer than 200 feet of the property line of the solid waste management facility.
- Protects the geologic or hydrologic conditions within and around the boundaries of a solid waste management facility.
- There shall be no more than one solid waste management facility operating at the same time in Pettis County.
- Any person or company violating the provisions of this section shall not be permit-



The Pettis County Commission hears from Steve Jeffery during the public hearing Feb. 24.

ted to establish and operate a solid waste management facility within Pettis County.

Another high point for the county is that revenue has been up in the past year. Dick thanked residents because they have chosen to spend their money at home in Pettis County, which benefits the county.

The Commission has also given all county employees a \$1 raise in the 2022 budget.

Dick also noted the opening of the 911 Joint Communications Center and Sheriff Brad Anders’ first year in office.

Dick mentioned offered another highlight of the last year: how many elected offices

chose to handle the pandemic.

“I think just the ability of the folks here at the courthouse to respond creatively to the ways that folks needed to engage as they chose to do so with COVID,” Dick said. “We looked outside of the box.”

That includes an updated Recorder of Deeds website that allows people to apply for marriage licenses online and look for deeds easier. The website is still being updated with county records.

“I think it just makes the information accessible in whatever form they choose to use it,” Dick said.

Skye Melcher can be reached at 660-530-0144.



Pettis County Road Department worker Daniel Sparks stands on a top stone spreader as it lays a layer of rocks on Rattlesnake Road near Smithton in October 2021. In front, a truck lays down a layer of prime oil. This is part of the process of turning a gravel road into a chip and seal road.

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Roads

From Page 1A

Baeza added that residents don’t realize that when it snows, there are nine or 10 people who cover the entire county when it comes to plowing the roads.

“These guys come to work every day, they’re dedicated to what they do and they go out on the job and do the best they can with what they have,” Baeza said.

The crews did have a long stretch of nice weather to work with this past year. Much of the work the road and bridge crews do is dependent on the weather and how hot and cold the roads will be.

Western Commissioner Jim Marcum talked about the \$2.7 million budget for the Road and Bridge Department and the cost it takes to fix a road.

“We spend probably a million dollars a year just on asphalt repairs and about \$700,000 to \$800,000 to put road rock on top of them...” Marcum said.

Along with this, about \$1 million is spent on payroll for road and bridge employees. This leaves a little bit of money for equipment purchases.

The Road and Bridge department may see a possible increase in supply costs, such as road

2021 Road and Bridge Stats

BRO Bridges

- BRO #35 Myers: \$376,329 (construction and engineering)
- BRO #36 Elm Branch: \$382,845 (construction and engineering)
- BRO #37 Swisher: \$386,794 (construction and engineering)

Soft Match Credit

- Springfork Bridge: \$401,322 construction, \$59,900 engineering. Project began Dec. 13 and expected to be completed in early 2022. Eighty percent back in soft match credit to be used on future BRO Bridges.

Roads

- County-wide chip seal roads: Estimated 50 miles.
- County-wide new roads: Estimated 7 miles.
- County-wide mill and asphalt relay: 3,098 feet or about a half-mile

rock. The county will find out as the commission starts opening bids, which can affect how many roads they are able to fix.

“We try to still do it, it’d just be less roads to fix but we still do our same standards,” Marcum said. “We do so much rock, like if we do the regrinding it’s 4 to 8 inches depending on what the road is. It’s just we have to do one less road if we run out of money.”

During the last year, the department was OK with supplies but Marcum is more concerned for 2022.

Marcum spoke on some high points for the department over the past year, mentioning that the crews completed quite a few roads.

“I believe we’ve done really well for what we

have,” Marcum said.

Regarding the current labor shortage, Marcum said the county needs around 34 people and they have around 17 at the moment.

“We’re doing the best we can with what we got,” Marcum said.

Residents can fill out road maintenance request forms at pettiscommission.com/contact-us or contact Baeza directly at baezai@pettisco.com or 660-620-0213.

“It’s very important when people reach out because we can be proactive when it comes to addressing it,” Baeza said. “We do appreciate people having that open communication with us and it does help us serve them better.”

Skye Melcher can be reached at 660-530-0144.

COVID leads to changes in small schools

By **Skye Melcher**
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The pandemic has affected school districts across the country since March 2020 when it forced them to shut down and move to online learning.

When students returned to in-person learning for the 2020-21 school year, they were met with many changes that later relaxed in the 2021-22 school year. Some of the school districts that were greatly affected by the pandemic were small schools.

While some didn't have mask mandates, many had to spread classes to being taught in cafeterias and school libraries to follow social distancing guidelines.

All the Pettis County superintendents meet every two weeks with the Pettis County Health Center to discuss how COVID is looking for schools.

Pettis County R-V (Northwest) Superintendent Amy Fagg said every school district had to have a Safe to Return school plan.

"Last spring, we had a lot more mitigating strategies in place than what we do this school year," Fagg said.

During the spring semester of the 2021 school year, students were required to wear masks during school and during sports. Pettis County R-V had to spread out to the cafeteria and the school library.

Once the 2021-22 school year began, students were not required to wear masks at school.

"This school year, it went from a 6-foot rule to a 3-foot rule. Because of our size of the student population and the size of our classrooms, we could do 3 feet without putting people in the cafeteria..." Fagg said.

Other policies and procedures that have also changed at Northwest are the contact tracing and quarantine guidelines and no longer taking everyone's temperature every day.

"Now the only time we do the contact tracing is if you yourself test positive or somebody who lives in your house with you," Fagg said.



PHOTOS COURTESY OF PETTIS COUNTY R-V SCHOOL DISTRICT

ABOVE: Pettis County R-V students sit together in class during the 2021-22 school year. Some students are still wearing masks after the district's policy changed from requiring masks to being optional. **LEFT:** Students from the Pettis County R-V (Northwest) School District wear masks as they read together in the 2020-21 school year. Students were required to wear masks during this school year before switching to mask optional in 2021-22.



If someone is fully vaccinated and comes in contact with someone who is positive, they don't have to quarantine.

"Basically overall, everything is a relaxing of everything," Fagg said.

Morgan County R-1 (Stover) Superintendent Matt Unger said his district never had a mask mandate and stayed mission-focused.

"We were able to offer online for those parents that had fears and we offered full in-person," Unger said. "We stayed mission-focused. Teachers wanted students to remain active and we took reasonable precautions and tried to separate students the best we could in the classrooms."

Unger said one of the benefits of Morgan County is it has great high-speed internet, which helped assist in the delivery of instruction for students who were online.

Morgan County also changed the way it hosted some events



PHOTO COURTESY OF MORGAN COUNTY R-1 SCHOOL DISTRICT

Morgan County R-1 students sit together while they dissect in class. Superintendent Matt Unger said the district is back to business as usual for the 2021-22 school year.

between the 2020-21 and 2021-22 school years.

"Last year, we did not do as many grandparents days, muf-fins with moms and we did not have those events," Unger said. "This year has been more business as usual when it comes to activities at school. We're having regular awards assemblies and

inviting parents in for those. I still think that in some of the extracurricular contests you're not seeing some of the crowds pre-COVID."

Unger added that his community was ready to get back to as much normal as possible in the 2021-22 school year and that a lot of the initial fear was gone.

One of the things both schools had in common throughout the last few years was a small number of COVID cases. Both schools experienced a couple of days this year where they had to shut down due to high COVID numbers in staff.

Skye Melcher can be reached at 660-530-0144.

Tech

From Page 1A

Green Ridge has also purchased additional equipment for classrooms that can be used to support instruction and learning, including document cameras, projectors, headphones and microphones.

"Since our students all have devices in class, we have many programs that we use like Evaluate, Espark, Brain Pop, Aimsweb and Boardworks for instruction or assessments," Burkhardt said.

Through grants, Green Ridge has also received three 3-D printers, interactive smartboards, photo equipment, science probes, and GPS equipment.

"Our teachers are receiving professional development for these items and are using them with our junior high students," Burkhardt said.

Burkhardt continued by saying how thankful Green Ridge is that the staff and students have many opportunities to use technology as another tool to support learning and exploration.

Another school district that has worked on its technology since the beginning of the pandemic

is the Smithton R-VI School District.

Smithton Superintendent David Bray said that when the school first closed, the school had to think about remote education, so the district started amassing Chromebooks as quickly as possible, which allowed the district to do one-to-one.

Once students were allowed to come back from the shutdown, the school continued to use those Chromebooks in the classroom.

"It really changed the way our teachers were able to give students access to the materials and resources," Bray said.

Bray added that no matter what, inside or outside the classroom, the teachers organize everything around the district's digital platform, Google Classroom.

"It has really bridged a few things there as far as students connecting to resources and classrooms outside of that one 45-minute block of time during the day," Bray said.

Bray said the access allows students to support students in the classrooms and eliminates some of the barriers that used to be there like students losing work.

Smithton has also increased its connectivity across campus and is still

working on that. "Our tech plan has improved and we have high-level access points throughout the building," Bray said.

Bray added that this has helped continue education when students are out due to illness, especially COVID-19.

"Having one-to-one technology has allowed us to stay connected to our students when they are not here," Bray said. "That's certainly the biggest advantage we have seen to date but as we find ourselves moving, hopefully, away from the current pandemic, we hopefully will see greater advantages to that one-to-one technology."

This one-to-one technology allows teachers to have more mobility than they ever have in the past.

Every year, the school replaces a set of Chromebooks, which means that one is being replaced roughly every five years.

Smithton continues to work on building its technology across campus outside of Chromebooks, such as introducing an augmented reality table that will help students have more hands-on learning and a C-Pen that will help students who have been diagnosed with dyslexia.

Skye Melcher can be reached at 660-473-9638.



Crystal Williams answers a question for Hayden Grose while subbing at Smithton High School Monday, Nov. 2, 2020. Monday was Williams' second day to substitute in the school that year. Williams, who babysits, worked in the school district for 16 years.

DEMOCRAT FILE PHOTO



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Sedalia alternative learning reaches 25 years

By **Skye Melcher**
skyem@sedaliademocrat.com

In 2022, Whittier High School is marking its 25th anniversary after expanding its class sizes, graduation sizes and learning possibilities.

Whittier began as an alternative school with a small class load and it has gone full circle since then. The school has more than 90 kids split between the day and night classes.

Whittier Assistant Director BJ Curry said the school has gone through a lot of transition through the years.

“But basically it’s here to help students that for one reason or another that struggle in the regular high school setting,” Curry said. “It’s where we had students who discipline problems and things to now, where we’re more of a credit recovery school (for those who struggle academically).”

The 25th anniversary is something nobody ever imagined at Whittier.

“I think it was stopgap for a period of time they envisioned much shorter than this,” Curry said. “We’ve been lucky to have a school board extremely supportive of us and through the last 25 years, especially since I’ve been here, a central office that’s extremely supportive of here.”

In turn, Whittier students have reaped the benefits of the support by those two entities and throughout the community. Each year, Whittier’s graduating classes get larger.

Many students who attend Whittier were students who struggled at Smith-Cotton High School for various reasons; a common reason is how large the school is.

“That’s what we do over here, we’re a family,” Curry said. “We treat our students like family and that’s one reason we feel like it’s so successful because our staff makes those connections to those students.”

Director Martin White said Whittier has a lot of bright students, they just lack structural skills, so the school tries to sharpen those skills.

Most students who attend Whittier High School tend to graduate early and while school is important to them, it may not be the most important thing in their lives.

“Most kids want to get in and out as quick as possible,” Curry said. “We try to accommodate that but the main reason we accommodate that is because if we can get a student in and out, that opens a spot for somebody else to get in.”

Curry added that they are trying to help as many students as they. School officials have to turn students down every year,



A large motto hangs across the wall at Whittier School stating “We are the Whittier Family.” Family is a big component of how Whittier operates.



Students at Whittier School sit together in math class. The school has more than 90 kids split between the day and night classes.

so they want to get those students in as soon as possible.

Whittier is helping students learn how to be job-ready once they graduate from high school, whether it be going to college to earn a degree for a career or working once they graduate. The goal is to get even more students ready for a career after graduation.

Curry said the people who deserve the most credit for getting kids to walk across the

graduation stage are the educators within Whittier school.

Two of the longest-standing educators at Whittier are Jennie Guerrini, 22 years, and Kelly Birdsong, 18 years.

Birdsong and Guerrini echoed Martin and Curry’s sentiments that Whittier is like a family, even more now than before.

Guerrini said she’s excited about Whittier being open for 25 years. She added that Whit-

tier is seen as more positive in the community and they have more graduates.

“Just seeing them go across that stage is really what we’re happy about,” Guerrini said.

Birdsong added that it’s an incredible feeling of satisfaction.

“I could probably speak for everyone here, I know for me, I worry more about my failures than my successes,” Birdsong said. “That’s probably not the best way to look at it. It’s a very

rewarding place to see these students develop and grow and get that shot.”

Birdsong added that there have been more students and staff added.

“We could do more, we still have more demand out there that we can usually meet,” Birdsong said. “They shell shocked me today saying 25 years and I was like, ‘where did it go?’”

Skye Melcher can be reached at 660-530-0144.



Whittier School began as an open plan room before the addition of classrooms and offices in later years.



This kitchen was a more recent addition at Whittier School to expand its classes to home economics.

Upgrades

From Page 1A

“We did lose a contractor during that project,” Ardrey said. “The bonding company took over and provided us a new contractor and it did not cost the city any additional money. We were thrilled with the replacement contractor, he actually brought that project in

nearly on time after a 60-day hiatus in the middle of the project.”

“We also worked from Sixth Street from Ohio to Lafayette, that is all new piping and we did from Third Street to Saline Avenue and under the Union Pacific rail, that is the first new water pipe under the rail in over 50 years in the City of Sedalia, so we’re proud of that,” Ardrey said.

Wastewater projects are fewer, however, there is a rehab project on the Main

Street lift station, 3000 W. Main St. The city is just beginning construction on the nearly \$2 million Central lift station that’s going to replace the Menards lift station as development moves west. The Thompson Meadows north lift station, which is roughly 50 years old, is being replaced by the new Pelham Drive lift station. Those are due to come online in the next six to eight months.

“We did see a nearly \$1 million solar project in the city of Sedalia this year,”

Ardrey said. “We now have solar arrays at our Main Street lift station, the 16th Street water tower, the Pelham Drive lift station, the water filtration plant and two of our wells, as well as the animal shelter. We put those solar arrays in place to hopefully reduce our overall electric usage from the grid, which will reduce our power cost to the community.”

Chris Howell can be reached at 660-530-0146.

Merged systems increase efficiency at Joint 911 Call Center

By Chris Howell
chrish@sedaliademocrat.com

Pettis County Joint Communications assumed responsibility for all 911 calls in Pettis County at 11 a.m. Aug. 16, 2021. The combined communication units of the Sedalia Police Department and the Pettis County Sheriff's Office merged into the new Pettis County Joint Communications facility housed in the basement of the Sedalia Municipal Building. The merger eliminated the redundancy of dual systems and provided better service.

"That was a huge deal for us being able to pull that together," City Administrator Kelvin Shaw said. "Under the old system, it basically would know where you were calling from and then it could route the call."

Sedalia and Pettis County 911 response was fragmented, leading to a host of issues.

"The city was doing the city police, city fire, as well as the ambulance district for the county," Shaw explained. "The county was doing the rest of it, the Sheriff's Department and the County Fire."

When a call was received from outside the city limits, the system would know and automatically send it to the county dispatch. If they needed an ambulance, then they would physically transfer the call to the city dispatch to dispatch the ambulance.

"Maybe the reason why they needed an ambulance is they were stabbed," Shaw said for an example. "Well is the person still there? Now we need to transfer you back to get the Sheriff's Department to send a deputy. In those situations, seconds count."

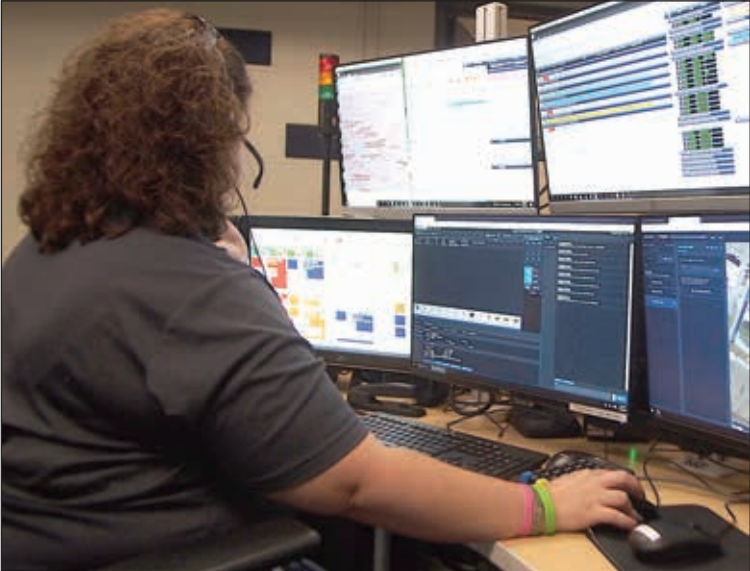
Equipment was past its lifespan and the city was scrambling to get parts.

"We literally were getting



DEMOCRAT FILE PHOTOS

The Pettis County Joint 911 Call Center, seen in late August 2021, began county-wide operations Aug. 16, 2021. Calls for Sedalia Police, Sedalia and Pettis County Fire, Pettis County Ambulance and the Pettis County Sheriff's Office all are now answered there.



Communications Specialist Brianna Kimball operates one of seven identical dispatch positions at the Joint 911 Call Center in late August 2021.

spare parts out of museums for the 911 equipment," Shaw said. "And so it was to the point where we really had to do something, that equipment was

eventually going to fail and, you know, when they upgrade the systems, the software no longer works, so you have to upgrade the hardware to get

the new software."

The City and County worked together to get an Any Device fee passed.

"You used to have landlines and that was where the tax for the 911 came," Shaw said. "People are getting rid of their landlines and have gone to cell phones, so the better way to fund the 911 is an Any Device fee, which the voters were good enough to pass."

The dollar-a-month fee now helps the joint 911 center service the area.

"Of course, that doesn't pay for all of the 911 cost," Shaw said. "It doesn't even come close, but it does give us the ability to upgrade our equipment, combine the two systems together and now each of the three agencies, the primary agencies are contributing to the rest of the cost. We did a joint dispatch agreement

where the city puts in around \$300,000, the county puts in \$200,000, I believe Pettis County Ambulance District puts in \$150,000."

"I can tell you that we have received compliments and support from all of the responder agencies," said Dannelle Lauder, Director of Pettis County Joint Communications. "They have reiterated over and over again that the service they are receiving from dispatch has expanded and improved tremendously over the split systems that we previously had. From an administrative standpoint it is easier to track personnel and administrative as well as technical issues and concerns," Lauder continued. "The system overall is working smoother, better and faster than it has in the past."

Chris Howell can be reached at 660-530-0146.

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Faith • Community

High fuel, forage and fertilizer contribute to a hard year

When asked about progress over the past year in Pettis County agriculture, Amy Breshears with the MU Extension Office opened with one of the few successes in what has been a hard year.

"I'd say one of the successes I've seen at least is with COVID money for example helping meat processors out," Breshears said. "So maybe a little more return to people looking locally for food and trying to find local food sources."

"I think in some cases for producers who are ready, and I'm thinking of meat protein, that could be a benefit if that was something that they wanted to do," Breshears said.

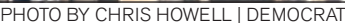
Unfortunately, the past year has had few bright spots with farmers being hit from all sides.

“We’re seeing some hard things like cost of fertilizer or cost of fuel going up,” Breshears said. “It’s hard to find labor, so that sounds terrible to say on the heels of some successful things.”

The mixed bag of good and bad news made Breshears' next statement both easier to comprehend and also indicative of the plight facing farmers in these difficult times.

"It's sort of been great," Breshears said, "and then it's been really hard, and frankly, I just think it's going to get harder."

MU Extension Office field specialist in livestock Gene Schmitz has a unique view of the squeeze being put on cattle



and crop producers alike.

izer and chemicals are up, and certain chemicals that are in very, very short

See AGRICULTURE | 2B

Area churches have struggled to survive for the last two years while going through a pandemic. In 2020, each had their own way of bringing God's word to their congregations; in 2021, churches saw a roller-coaster of gathering and not gathering, still due to COVID, but each although weary, see signs of hope on the horizon.

Fifteen pastors of the Pettis County Ministerial Association recently spoke to the Democrat about this past year — their challenges and hopes for the future in a landscape filled with COVID.

PCMA President Pastor Chad McMullin, of First Christian Church, noted he feels each pastor is “continuing to be forced

to make adjustments” at a pace they are “growing more accustomed to.”

"I think our church members have really done well in carrying these ministries in difficult times," he added. "I think many of us are seeing somewhere between 50 to 75% of our worship people coming back for in-person (services)."

McMullin said in his congregation, the online ministries are continuing to “blossom” as well.

“The opportunities for service and outreach continue to be things that the churches try to do,” he said. “We try to be connected to all of those things.”

"I think it's been pretty incredible what the people of the church have been able to do through a pandemic and in a pandemic," he continued. "I think we'll be stronger — I don't think we are there

See CHURCHES | 2B

The progress on the Heckart Community Center has been remarkable since its groundbreaking ceremony June 11, 2020, and on March 18, the Grand Opening ceremony will mark its completion.

"It has come a long way," said Sedalia Parks and Recreation Director Amy Epple. "We are now days away from opening, so it's getting real. I'm right now over here doing the walkthrough."

As Paric Construction just finished construction, and Eple walks her final inspection, the pride of accomplishment is

evident in every worker and
community center employee.

"It was a dream of Sue Heckart and a lot of the citizens in Sedalia to have something like this," Epple said. "It's been a long time coming and has been in the works for over 20 years. I can't really speak for Sue, but I do know that she's very excited to see a dream and vision that her mom and dad had really happening. It's going to be such

a crown jewel for Sedalia.”

City Administrator Kelvin Shaw said plans for a community center had been kicked around since before he was on the job, but they could never get enough traction.

"We couldn't have done it without the generosity of Sue Heckart," Shaw said. "Her foundation gave a gift that gave us the kind of base to where we

could put it in front of the voters and the voters passed that by roughly 80%, which was just phenomenal. It really is heartening to know that the voters wanted it that much and were willing to pay for it. Finally the stars all aligned and we were able to get this done.”

See HECKART | 6B



The new sign at the Heckart Community Center, seen Monday, Feb. 28. The 90,000-square-foot facility will open March 18.

Pavilion project to bring events to downtown

Public-private partnership hailed

By Chris Howell
chrish@sedaliademocrat.com

This past year saw a public-private partnership between the City of Sedalia and Furnell Companies work to build a pavilion, shelter, and restrooms on the lot at South Ohio Avenue and East Second Street.

“The City is redoing some of the streetscape and sidewalks and concrete work their part of the project,” Community Development Director John Simmons said. “It’s a big asset for downtown to have a new event pavilion for their weddings as well as they’ve agreed that the city will have use of that pavilion for the Scott Joplin Festival so the Scott Joplin Festival uses the pavilion during their festival and then also 20 additional dates throughout the year that the city can use it for city events.”

Furnell Vice President Erica Eisenmenger is spearheading the project and, with the city, is creating a space capable of drawing more people to the heart of Sedalia.

“Our hope is to drive some more foot traffic, some more activity, downtown in general,” Eisenmenger said. “It will spread out where people will travel downtown. There’s a lot to see and do so we hope people take



The Downtown Pavilion Project, at Ohio Avenue at Second Street, seen Monday, Feb. 28, is a public-private partnership designed to bring more events, and people, to downtown Sedalia.

advantage of that. For our pavilion, we’re envisioning weddings, gatherings, performances, and other community events like having Santa there during the holiday season. The Parks Department has also expressed some interest in hosting community events there.”

City Administrator Kelvin Shaw is pleased with how the public-private partnership with

Furnell has worked to the advantage of the people of Sedalia.

“It’s just another opportunity to draw people downtown, to keep them downtown, to enjoy our historic downtown, and keep things vibrant,” Shaw said. “It really does create a synergy because we can do a whole lot more together than we could individually.”

Furnell is currently

constructing the pavilion, and the City will provide sidewalks, lighting, a shelter and restrooms, which will be available to the public when there are no events.

“Probably in the next week or so we’ll start pouring spaces for the diagonal parking along the corners of the lot and we will have access there for food trucks and things like that,” Eisen-

menger said.

“It’s a good way to get a project done,” Simmons explained. “We were looking at building a pavilion there as the City and we were struggling with ways to fund it. The Furnell Companies came forward and said they had an idea, they’d like to build a pavilion there, so it just all made sense.”

Furnell Companies representatives say they

are pleased with the city and the partnership formed for the Downtown Pavilion project.

“We were lucky to be able to come together with the city to work on this project,” Eisenmenger said, “and we’re grateful to be able to do the public-private partnership and we’ve had nothing but a good experience.”

Chris Howell can be reached at 660-530-0146.

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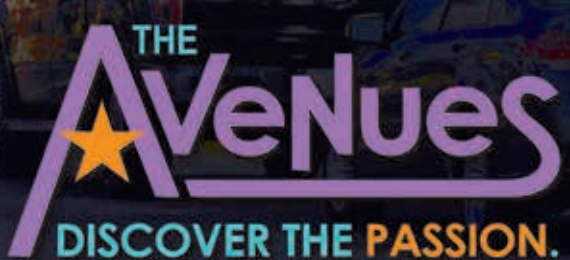
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Completed Katy Trail now spans Missouri

By Chris Howell
chrish@sedaliademocrat.com

The Katy Trail opened in its entirety in August 2021 as a large section through Sedalia was finally completed. In co-operation with state, county and city governments, funding was obtained and rights-of-way were finalized.

“Sedalia happened to be the only place where there was a break in the trail,” City Administrator Kelvin Shaw explained. “We got that fixed and we’re no longer known for that, we’re actually known for being one of the hubs along the trail. Now we get a lot of activity, a lot of folks coming through that you know going down and seeing the historic Katy Depot and all those kinds of things.”

In May 2019, the Missouri Department of Natural Resources hosted a groundbreaking ceremony at the Katy Depot to commemorate the beginning of a \$2.5 million infrastructure project.

The project to close the approximately 3-mile gap in Sedalia, the only gap in the 240-mile Katy Trail State Park, was decades in the making.

The City of Sedalia announced in October 2018 it had received a \$1 million grant from the federal Recreational Trails Program. DNR invested another \$1.3 million in its share of the project outside city limits. The department also covered the 20% matching costs for the city’s grant.

The Katy Trail previously broke off on East Griessen Road north of Sedalia, directed visitors with signs to go south along North Engineer Avenue and continued west until it reconnected at the Katy Depot. Local officials had said it was dangerous for bicyclists, horseback riders and pedestrians to share these streets with vehicles.

Walkers and cyclists can now make their way east from the Katy Depot along widened and specially marked sidewalks that lead to improved trails and rest areas.

“It kind of fits in with the Community Center as well in keeping people healthy and giving them opportunities for recreation,” Shaw said. “Tourism as well. It took a lot of work and planning getting it routed down the city streets and along a sidewalk, working with the citizens, they deserve credit for helping continue this project.”

One of those widened sidewalks is on the trail along Fourth Street in front of Timothy Staten’s house.

“It’s just a little bit wider, it really doesn’t bother me,” Staten said. “I mean, it’s just a normal sidewalk, I can understand why they wanted this.”

Negotiations had to be made with property owners, land rights had to be obtained and the construction of the modified sidewalks, trails and signage had to be completed.

“We had very patient homeowners in that area because it rained so much that year,” Public Works Director Brenda Ardrey said. “It took longer than expected. We got some frustrated calls and rightly so. Construction is not something you want in your front yard in a wet year. Everyone was very good to work with, we found fixes and workarounds, sometimes we just need a plate in their driveway. It’s a good neighborhood to work with.”

The Katy Trail is the world’s longest rail-to-trail project at 240 miles and runs from Clinton to Manchens. Staten frequently sees people exploring the trail, which passes in front of his home.

“There’s been a lot of bicycles, there’s been people walking up and down it too,” Staten said. “It gives me a little bit more to shovel but it doesn’t bother me at all, you know, people riding up and down. My grandkids really love it because they can ride up and down on their bikes.”

More information on Katy Trail State Park can be found at MoStateParks.com.

Chris Howell can be reached at 660-530-0146.



PHOTO BY CHRIS HOWELL | DEMOCRAT

Widened sidewalks and new signage along Fourth Street helped complete the Katy Trail through Sedalia. The trail officially opened in August 2021.



LEFT: Pettis County Presiding Commissioner David Dick holds the ribbon for Missouri Department of Natural Resources Director Carol S. Comer as local and state dignitaries opened the completed Katy Trail at the Katy Depot during a ceremony in May. DEMOCRAT FILE PHOTOS



State, county and local officials turn the first shovels of dirt during a groundbreaking ceremony for the Katy Trail connection project in Sedalia in May 2019 at the Katy Depot. From left, Sedalia Mayor John Kehde, state Rep. Brad Pollitt, Missouri Department of Natural Resources Director Carol Comer, Gov. Mike Parson, Pettis County Presiding Commissioner David Dick, Katy Trail Sedalia Inc. President Dave Brown, and Missouri State Parks Director Ben Ellis.



Carter Haaland, 30, and Trevor Born, 32, stand outside Pro-Velo Cycle Sports in July 2021 before starting their journey to Boonville on the Katy Trail.

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From left, Sedalia Parks and Recreation Director Amy Epple, Paric Project Manager Dan Close, Gracyn Imboden, Avery Epple, and Gabby Fatka tour the lobby of the Heckart Community Center in April 2021.

Heckart

From Page 1B

The idea of a Sedalia community center has been discussed for more than a decade. It began to really take shape in 2019, and voters approved two tax issues in August 2019 that helped make the project possible, along with the Heckart Family Foundation's donation.

With roughly 80% voting yes on both questions and 24.2% registered voter turnout, the

one-eighth cent park sales tax increase and removal of the June 30, 2026, sunset provision on existing capital improvement sales taxes passed with flying colors during the August 2020 special election.

"In life, we need to embrace moments and milestones that bring people together," Heckart said during the 2020 groundbreaking ceremony. "Today is one of those moments. The Heckart Community Center has always been a dream of mine because it is an opportu-

nity to honor the legacy of my parents, Del and Stella Heckart, while investing in the people of Sedalia..."

"Our community deserves a place where we can come together and create shared experiences and memories," she added. "A community center is a representation of what our community can do together. It is made possible by your approval of the tax levy and I thank you."

The 90,000-square-foot facility features basketball courts, swimming pools, a fitness center, a senior center



Sue Heckart, left, toured the Heckart Community Center with Sedalia Parks and Recreation Director Amy Epple in mid-January.

and rooms for a variety of activities.

"This is a place that's for everyone in Sedalia," Epple said. "It doesn't matter what your age or your interest is, there's something here for everyone."

Shaw has toured the facility several times and can't wait until the Grand Opening where he can share the Heckart Community Center with an eager public.

"I have looked at it when we were reviewing the plans and designing it and all of that kind

of good stuff," Shaw remembered. "And yeah, 'this is gonna be pretty cool, this can be pretty neat, and it's gonna be pretty big,' but there's nothing like going in it, and seeing how big it really is. Every time I've taken anybody in there, they just kind of go, 'Wow.' You know, it's the most general comment."

Epple and her staff are worn out by the amount of work but are also hoping to soon can share the Heckart family's vision.

"We're very excited, we're anxious for the

public to get inside and see what you invested in," Epple said. "This is an investment by the taxpayers and in memory of Sue Heckart to her family as well. I know my staff has worked extremely hard and they're still pushing through to the finish line to get everything ready for the Grand Opening. We're just really excited to see all the laughter and memories that are going to be made inside this facility."

Chris Howell can be reached at 660-530-0146.



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From left, Ward 1 Councilman Jeff Leeman, Parks and Recreation Director Amy Epple, Parks and Recreation Board President Jerry Case and Sue Heckart participate in the groundbreaking ceremony for the Heckart Community Center in June 2020.

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Business • Health

Economic development growing in Sedalia, Pettis County

Great manufacturing year despite COVID pandemic

By Chris Howell
chrish@sedaliademocrat.com

Sedalia and Pettis County's economic development is diverse and robust thanks to larger industries expanding or moving into the area.

"When a lot of folks say manufacturing is dying, it's not a growing industry, I'd beg to differ," said Jessica Craig, Executive Director of Economic Development Sedalia-Pettis County. "In Sedalia-Pettis County, we're seeing a lot of growth."

Coming out of a difficult two years, Craig finds pride that local companies faced the pandemic and emerged intact and have even expanded.

While many plants were shut down in other countries, Pettis County actually saw growth.



DEMOCRAT FILE PHOTO

WireCo employees pose next to spools of 5" cable in October. WireCo recently invested \$15 million to update equipment, making the facility more modern and efficient.

See **ECONOMIC** | 5C

Katy Trail Health builds, opens new facility



PHOTO BY FAITH BEMISS | DEMOCRAT

Katy Trail Community Health opened a new 13,800-square-foot facility on West Main Street on Feb. 28. The facility has one physician, Dr. Alicia Albers, and one nurse practitioner, Jenie Bruce, on the first floor. Optometry is on the lower level and administrative is on the second floor.

By Faith Bemiss
fbemiss@sedaliademocrat.com

A new \$2.5 million, downtown Katy Trail Community Health facility opened on Feb. 28 on West Main Street featuring 13,800 square feet and offering several new services.

Chief Executive Officer Chris Stewart said the building was constructed with funds strictly from Katy Trail, not with funds from grants. Jodi King, the assistant to the chief medical officer, dental officer and operations officer, said the lower floor houses an optometrist and staff education room, while the first floor has one physician, Dr. Alicia Albers, one nurse practitioner, Jenie Bruce, and their care teams consisting of a patient services representative and a care coordinator.

"The care coordinator helps with any social determinants of health," King explained. "So, any transportation, any language barriers, any food, clothing insecurities. They're just a great resource."

"Our care coordinators also do Medicaid applications," she continued. "They help with those, they are certified to assist

with that application. And also, when it comes time for marketplace enrollment, they are able to assist with that."

The first floor has a radiology department, a pharmacy with a drive-thru plus a behavioral health department and telehealth. The second floor houses administrative offices.

"I've been with Katy Trail now for almost four years now," King said. "And we've had our mobile units that we've put in place, but yes, this is the first construction project of any type."

She added the decision to build the facility downtown is so the services can be more centrally located and more accessible.

"Katy Trail, we're a federally qualified health center and we reach a diverse population," she noted. "And we just felt the need in this area, the center of Sedalia."

Although the medical area of the building opened on Feb. 28, King said the pharmacy and optometrist will not be ready to go until April or May. The Imaging Department will be open in late March.

See **KATY TRAIL** | 4C

Bothwell gets certifications, continues COVID treatments



New education programs to help with staffing

By Nicole Cooke
ncooke@sedaliademocrat.com

As Bothwell Regional Health Center continues to navigate the COVID-19 pandemic, it has seen many challenges and accomplishments along the way.

New pandemic problems

When looking at COVID patients from 2020 compared to 2021 and 2022, Chief Medical Officer Dr. Phillip Fracica said the biggest differences are the severity and acuity of the illness. Last winter, Bothwell had all nine ICU beds filled with ventilated and critically ill COVID patients, and the hospital was close to running out of ventilator beds. This winter, he said there are generally two or three COVID patients in the ICU.

"However, that didn't mean this was an easier winter because there were some other differences," he said. "Two years into COVID, there's been steady erosions of staffing and people who were exiting the health care workforce. Some were health professionals close to retirement and decided this was a good time to get out. Some of them were people who were attracted by national shortages and would rather do contract labor. Some of those people could double or triple their income by doing that. Paradoxically, after a year of doing that, I'm way ahead of the game of where I thought I'd need to work five more years but now I can retire."

He said those staffing challenges mean fewer open beds.

Last winter, people were avoiding health care facilities, canceling elective surgeries and not coming to the Emergency Department. Now, the ED has about two-thirds of the volume it did before the pandemic.

"(Last winter), it was very intense on severe acuity COVID but better staffing and lower overall demand for service," Fracica said. "This winter, we haven't seen critical COVID illness, but we've had multiple times where we don't have enough staff to fill beds, so we have to transfer patients to other facilities that are also short. Not an easier winter but a different type of problem."

Fracica said the impact of vaccination and new COVID treatments is seen in the lower acuity cases.

Fracica also said influenza cases are back up after an almost non-existent flu season in 2020-21.

Coping with staffing issues

Fracica noted that contract labor is much more expensive than full-time

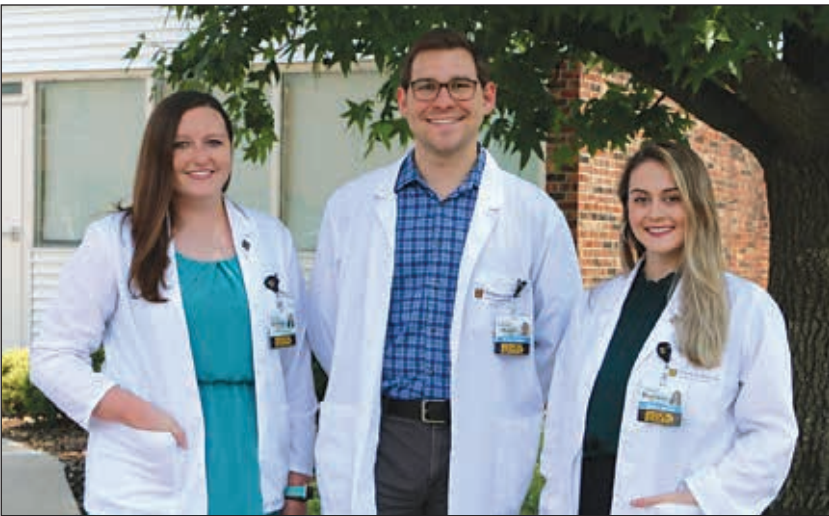


PHOTO COURTESY OF BOTHWELL REGIONAL HEALTH CENTER

From left, Brittany Marshall, Mags Gutierrez and Brittany Marshall. The trio are third-year medical students at the University of Missouri-Columbia School of Medicine and are spending a year at Bothwell Regional Health Center learning about treating patients across the spectrum of care from a variety of Bothwell providers.

employees, leading to roughly double the cost of caring for patients in the hospital.

"We made a strategic decision that we were not going to reduce critical services, so whatever it took, we were going to make sure we had adequate staffing in ICU and in key critical areas," he said. "We didn't need to do that. We could have taken the position some other hospitals have taken to not use the outside expense of contract labor and staff as much as we can with full-time. ... That wasn't the decision we made, for better or for worse."

"The consequences of that, we've done quite well with higher revenue than we've ever had, things are going quite well, but that's offset by a crippling financial burden of a large expenditure on the contract labor in order to keep those critical services open."

He said there were several months where it was difficult to transfer patients, so Bothwell decided to "do whatever it takes" to provide care for patients in the community, regardless of the financial burden.

"Knowing that there's not a good option to transfer a patient somewhere else, they are depending on us," he added.

Gaining certifications

Bothwell earned certification as a Level III acute stroke-ready hospital by The Joint Commission in November 2019. In March 2021, Bothwell was designated a Level III Missouri ST-elevation myocardial infarction (STEMI) Center by the Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services, Time Critical Diagnosis Unit. According to a news release, STEMI is a serious type

of heart attack where one of the heart's major arteries that supplies oxygen-rich blood to part of the heart muscle is blocked.

The hospital is nearing the end of the process to be certified as a Level III trauma center. In late February, Fracica said the trauma survey had been completed and the hospital had already implemented recommended changes. Now Bothwell is awaiting official notification from the state.

Fracica said the certifications help reduce confusion about where ambulances can take patients. He explained that ambulance services typically take trauma, stroke or STEMI patients to a care center with that specific certification, so now patients have more care options closer to home.

"That will also allow EMS to take patients from the community who want to get treated here; we're the closest facility," Fracica said of trauma certification. "Previously, if they were able to, there was some interpretation of state laws and rules that they had to pass our hospital on the way to the next community, which sometimes didn't have the services we had. We had an on-call orthopedic surgeon and if the patient had a fracture, they went to a trauma-certified hospital, but it didn't have an orthopedic surgeon on call; that creates complications. We think that will make a big impact."

He further stated that regulations state if it is a devastating, life-threatening emergency trauma, EMS is instructed to bring the patient to the closest health care facility, regardless of certification.

See **BOTHWELL** | 3C

Planning places PCHC at the forefront of COVID

Community programs return to health center

By Faith Bemiss
fbemiss@sedaliademocrat.com

It was beneficial as the pandemic unfolded for the Pettis County Health Center to fall back on the strategic plans that had been put in place years before COVID-19.

PCHC Administrator JoAnn Martin said during 2021 the center focused on COVID and trying to protect the community. PCHC provided information to people and families on how to protect themselves and it provided immunizations.

Vaccine program on target

“We as a community actually had a very exemplary vaccine program,” Martin noted. “And it was the result of all of those years of emergency preparedness planning that we had been doing since this became a public health issue, which was all the way back in 2002 when I started to work here.”

She added when the center was presented with the opportunity to provide vaccines to the community the partnership between Katy Trail Community Health and Bothwell Regional Health Center, the Health Center “came into play very quickly.”

“We each looked at where our strengths were and how we would best contribute to providing vaccines to all those who wanted to be vaccinated,” Martin said.

When they got the message that the Missouri National Guard was coming, the staff at BRHC were able to present the Guard with a vaccination plan.

“We were ready to go as soon as the vaccine became available,” she said. “Which, I think, was really great evidence of all that planning we had done for all those years.

“That has obviously been a major focus of 2021 for the Health Center,” she continued. “The vac-

cine, and just the general notifying people of their positive cases, providing instructions, answering questions, lots and lots of questions — and we tried to provide the best available information.”

Martin said they were aware that it seemed like the “guidance was changing.”

“Even though it seems like we’ve been living with COVID forever, it’s only been two years,” she explained. “So, the science will change as we understand more about what the virus does.”

She added the Health Center and the community have also been through various variant outbreaks.

“Delta and omicron being the most challenging,” Martin stated. “That’s kind of been an overriding focus for the Health Center in 2021. Although, despite all of those, we have basically been able to transition back to do a lot of other programs that we did before the pandemic started.”

Programs begin again

One program that has received more attention this past year is the PCHC’s Narcan Distribution Program. The Health Center received a supply of Narcan that was distributed to first responders, “primarily to law enforcement and fire.”

“In 2021, with assistance from the United Way and some other funding, we were able to increase our supply to create the community program,” Martin said. “The community program allows anyone to come in (and) request Narcan.”

PCHC offers a brief education program that explains how to use it and the staff provides a small bag with the Narcan along with resources for those struggling with substance abuse.

Along with the Narcan Program, the Health Center



DEMOCRAT FILE PHOTO

Pettis County Health Center Administrator JoAnn Martin is tested for COVID in June 2020 at the Missouri State Fairgrounds. Martin recently said that pre-planning helped with implementing COVID vaccines in a prompt and timely manner in 2021.

continued its Women’s Wellness Program, the regular Immunization Program, the Safe Kids Program, the Positive Youth Development Program and the Teen Outreach Program.

PCHC has also added a prevention specialist position. Tia Smith will work on substance abuse prevention for young people ages 13 through 18.

“Then, we are continuing our work with the Mental Health Coalition,” Martin said. “We’ve probably not been able to do as much in 2021 as we would have liked to.

“But one thing we were able to do was to enhance our referral program,” she added. “Working with Sedalia PD so that if law enforcement officers meet someone who is in need of mental health services, they can make a direct referral to our mental health coordinator, Dawn Williams.”

Moving forward into 2022

Plans for 2022 include working on PCHC’s Community Health Assessment.

“We’re going to take a little dif-

ferent approach,” Martin said. “In that, we’re going to look at what we call some of the social determinants of health.

“Those are things such as housing, access to food, the access to the opportunity for recreation,” she continued. “Those kinds of things that have a significant impact on an individual’s health and wellbeing, but are a little bit different than what we traditionally think of.”

The program will address issues concerning obstacles to seeing a doctor or dentist or finding employment.

“We’re going to be focusing on those when we do our community health assessment,” Martin added. “Then we will use the information ... to work with our partners to develop what is called a Community Improvement Plan.”

She added it will take most of 2022 to complete the plan.

In the last two years, PCHC hasn’t been able to focus on some of its Chronic Disease Prevention activities.

“Some of those things unfortunately has been sat on the back burner trying to get through COVID,” Martin explained. “But we have approval from our board to hire an additional staff member to focus primarily on those areas.”

Women’s health and moving into digital age

She added another “exciting program” that began last year and will be put into “high gear” this year is the Women’s Health Outreach Program.

“We know a lot of women put off preventative health services during the pandemic for a variety of reasons,” she noted. “And we also know there are parts of our county where there are transportation issues and timing issues to get into Sedalia.”

Martin said they have a grant through the Department of Health and Senior Services to go into the smaller communities in the county to bring services closer to women who may need them.

She noted a “big change” for PCHC this year is the transition to an electronic health management system this year. With the system, the center will be able to better track everything they do and provide the community with better data. Currently, the center uses all paper records but through funding, it can move into the digital age.

“We are in the process of training for it now,” she said. “So, hopefully by the summer, we’ll be up and running and ready to go.”

PCHC will continue with its in-person WIC services, Vital Records Services and its Child Care Health Consultation Program.

The center is also working to revive its Medical Reserve Corps.

Faith Bemiss can be reached at 660-530-0289 or on Twitter @fbemiss.

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 Pulmonology Daniel Woolery, DO Physician 660.827.7990	 Pulmonology William Woolery, MD Physician 660.827.2526	 Pulmonology Rene Boland, ACNS-APN Nurse Practitioner 660.827.2526	 Pulmonology Shawna Sapaugh FNP-C Nurse Practitioner 660.827.2526	 Physical Therapy Bothwell PEAK Sport & Spine 660.827.6800	 Rheumatology Amr Edrees, MD Physician 660.829.8888	 Sleep David Kuhlmann, MD Physician 660.827.9573
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Local funeral homes navigate through the pandemic

By Faith Bemiss
fbemiss@sedaliademocrat.com

The COVID-19 pandemic caused challenges for nearly every industry, including the funeral home industry. Those effects were felt locally at Sedalia’s numerous funeral homes.

Heckart Funeral Home

Navigating through the pandemic has been a challenge for the funeral industry and Jeff Page, who co-owns Heckart Funeral Home with his wife Megan, said he still remembers the home’s first COVID death in 2020.

Page noted 2020 was when “everything changed.”

“I will always remember the first COVID death we had,” he said. “I was called by the coroner in the county, and it was in the middle of the night.

“I remember to this day the fear in his voice,” Page continued. “Because it was uncharted territory. He even asked me, ‘do you want to take care of this?’ I said, ‘well of course.’”

Page added he remembers going to the hospital and everyone including himself was “smocked up from head to toe.”

“We were all just scared,” he said. “From there, of course, we’ve had many, many more COVID deaths, sadly.”

As time went on, he and the staff became more accustomed to handling COVID deaths, but they still remain careful and wear PPE.

“But it’s become fairly commonplace by this point,” he said. “So, the fear factor is gone, thankfully.”

Early during the pandemic, Page said they had crowd-size limitations.

“At one point, we were down to only 15 people per gathering,” he noted. “And that was very hard, because most families, the immediate family is at least 15 or more people.”

He added people were good about following the rules for the most part, but some didn’t understand why.

“It was very difficult,” Page said. “Very difficult on the families.”

Eventually, funeral homes were allowed to have 25 people and then for a while it went to a percentage of the building’s fire

occupancy.

“But thankfully none of those things lasted very long,” he said. “We made it through.”

Page said the home has “implemented a few things” during the pandemic to help alleviate crowds. Live streaming the funeral service has become prevalent.

“It’s not a perfect solution,” Page noted. “Because it is so very public — a lot of families don’t want it because anybody in the world could watch it.”

Heckart offers live streaming, although the more popular option is recording the service and then sharing it with family.

“Another thing we did for a while was called ‘Hugs from the Heart,’” he explained. “People could ask for a balloon to be present at the service with a message from them.

“And we’d tell families that this balloon represents this person or family that wishes they could be here with you today, but can’t,” he continued. “And that was very popular.”

Currently, Heckart is back to having regular services, but for those who wish to not be in crowds, the live stream and recordings are there for them.

“Another thing I noticed in 2020 . . . when the pandemic first began, I noticed how important viewing was to families,” Page said. “What I was finding, when nursing homes shut down, people weren’t able to see their loved ones for weeks, maybe months.

“When the person actually died, this setting was the first opportunity to see their loved one,” he continued. “So, we had quite an emphasis on viewing, whether it be burial or cremation.”

He added it was and is extremely important for families to spend time with their loved ones.

Heckart also has software that allows staff to do funeral arrangements via email and/or over the phone if people aren’t comfortable coming to the home in person or if they can’t travel due to the pandemic.

Rea Funeral Chapel

For Rea Funeral Chapel, COVID caused owners Brad and Sarah Rea to postpone building a new facility on West 16th Street.



PHOTO COURTESY OF HECKART FUNERAL HOME

Jeff and Megan Page, owners of Heckart Funeral Home, stand with their children Jonah and Jude.

Brad Rea told the Democrat when COVID hit in 2020, they decided to purchase land at 3510 W. 16th St. The land was purchased in 2021 but they decided to wait on construction.

“It was planned, started, and COVID hit and we postponed it,” he noted. “Instead of doing both land and construction, we just did the land purchase only until all of the pandemic calmed down.

“And then material prices went out the roof, now they are starting to come back down again,” he continued. “So, we’re still right now in the process of building and hopefully we’ll break ground this year.”

The current building on South Limit Avenue is around 5,000-square-feet with parking for 55 vehicles. The new facility will be 9,400-square-feet and have parking for 85.

Rea noted the chapel is seeing an increase in the families they are serving. He said, just as Jeff Page of Heckart said, he believes the increase is not due to COVID as much as it is due to the Baby Boomer generation growing older and dying.

He added as for COVID deaths, he’s finding often people are no longer COVID positive but are passing due to the effects of COVID.

“People who are getting COVID, they are making it through the COVID,” he noted. “And they’re not in the COVID protocol anymore, but they still have the effects . . . that’s affect-

ing them and they can’t get over it.

“So, basically the death is due to COVID, but it’s past COVID,” he explained. “But it’s still a COVID death.”

He added COVID hasn’t affected them business-wise, although in 2020, people who wanted to do a traditional funeral opted for cremation because their families were quarantined and couldn’t attend a funeral.

“So, they had to wait two, three weeks out so their families could come to the service,” Rea explained.

Staff at Rea’s was also low during the beginning of the pandemic due to two employees leaving. One left due to concerns about COVID and one left for employment elsewhere. Rea said because the chapel is an essential business, they couldn’t close.

“We were short-handed, but we made it through,” he noted.

He added his wife, Sarah, came on board full-time instead of part-time, which was helpful.

Rea said they opened Rea Funeral Chapel in 2009 and he’d seen changes in the funeral industry before COVID hit.

“Cremation for the last 15 years is becoming more popular,” he noted. “And it’s not because of people that can’t afford traditional (funerals), it’s just because that’s what they prefer.

“And I think a lot of that is your Baby Boomers, that era,” he added. “Back 20, 25 years ago, your parents and your grandparents put



PHOTO COURTESY OF REA FUNERAL CHAPEL

Brad and Sarah Rea, the owners of Rea Funeral Chapel located on South Limit Avenue, have plans to break ground on a new facility this year.

back or had a life insurance policy for burial.”

He said he remembered in the early 1990s they would see about five cremations a year. Last year Rea Funeral Chapel handled 291 deaths with 60% of those being cremations.

He said nowadays, people choose cremation to save land or because they don’t want to be buried. Rea added there is no wrong or right decision when it comes to traditional burial or cremation.

“You can have a memorial service or a funeral service to honor and pay tribute to your loved one no matter what you do,” he said. “It’s respectful and dignified — it’s not wrong either way.”

McLaughlin Funeral Chapel

Information provided by Jason Weiker, the owner of McLaughlin Funeral Chapel, stated the Chapel, located in Downtown Sedalia since 1880, “has always had a reputation for, and will be long remembered for their excellent business practices, great kindness and caring, and civic pride.”

The funeral chapel, which originally was paired with a furniture store, had access to cabinet makers who provided the funeral home with caskets.

After being owned by the McLaughlin family for 130 years, McLaughlin Brothers Funeral Chapel was purchased in December 2009 by Jason and Bethany Weiker, who own Weiker Funeral Home in Slater.

“Upon the purchase, the name of the business was changed to McLaughlin Funeral Chapel; however only the name has changed, as the Weikers honor, and continue the strong traditions of service, caring, and respect for which the McLaughlin family was known,” Weiker noted.

Following the purchase of the funeral chapel, the Weikers did extensive remodeling and updating with new paint, lighting, carpeting, furniture, and a new state-of-the-art selection/arrangement room, which offers families a large selection of caskets, urns, and vaults. The fleet of automobiles is continually being updated, as are the practices in the funeral service industry. The funeral chapel continues to offer families the traditional services of full-viewing visitations and funeral ceremonies at the funeral home and churches, as well as graveside services at cemeteries.

“In addition to those services, the practice of cremation is seen as a growing trend nationwide, and the chapel is there to service that need as well,” Weiker said. “As the funeral industry changes and progresses, the staff at McLaughlin Funeral Chapel remain up to date with those changes, while honoring and continuing the strong traditions of service, caring and respect for the families they serve.”

Faith Bemiss can be reached at 660-530-0289 or on Twitter @flbemiss.

Bothwell

From Page 1C

“There’s some irony in that,” he said. “The really severe cases that needed a full trauma team and heart surgeon to open up the chest, those were coming to us because they couldn’t wait for transport to Columbia and then the ones we were perfectly capable of handling and should’ve come here were going to other communities because of certification. It was almost backward.”

Training the next generation

Fracica said from his perspective, some of the biggest recent developments at Bothwell are the education innovations with the University of Missouri-Columbia.

About three years ago, Bothwell became a cooperative site where MU medical students could do some basic third-year training. MU then created a pilot program for a new way of providing third-year education. Fracica said traditionally, the first two years of med school is mostly classroom learning, then the third year is learning how to deal with patients. It’s usually divided into various sections such as internal medicine, OB/GYN, etc.

“There’s been a national and

international movement to have kind of a different way of doing that training for integrated curriculum. That involves the student going into a primary care clinic that sees all patients — some need surgery, some need hospital care,” Fracica explained. “They spend the whole year based in that primary care practice. Instead of three months then a different assignment, they’re basically in that practice the entire year. . . . It’s a whole different way of structuring things.”

Bothwell is the first hospital providing that training for MU. Next year Hannibal will be added, followed by St. Joseph. He said he’s excited about the program and that it’s going well.

Fracica said data indicates students who go through that type of third-year training are more likely to practice primary care medicine and in a rural community, so it’s an effort to improve health care staffing in those areas.

“Other research is on empathy and sensitivity and the idea of keeping a focus on the patients as people and not as a disease and conditions,” he added. “Students who go through that training seem to keep a lot more of that and are less likely to be impersonal and see patients as diseases and not as people.”

Bothwell is also less than a month away from finding out

which two fourth-year med students will be matched with Bothwell for its new residency program. The program’s first year will be spent at MU with one day per week at Bothwell. The second and third years will be spent entirely working at Bothwell, seeing patients in clinic and the hospital.

“One of the reasons why we wanted to participate in that is because we felt that down the road in three years, we would be starting to see people graduate from the residency program who went through training in our community,” Fracica said. “One of the issues with where people choose to practice, it’s not at all unfrequent that the place where people do their training, if given the opportunity to stay, they’ve been living there last several years, their instructors and professors would now be their colleagues and partners. That can be attractive to have someone who taught you how to be a doctor to now want you in their practice.”

He said the challenge previously was that local students would go to med school and not return to the area. Now, they will be familiar with Bothwell’s facilities and staff.

“Every year we’ll have two new residents practicing in our community,” he added. “They’re free to go wherever they want, but since they trained here, we could recruit them.”



PHOTO COURTESY OF AUDRA REICHERT

Operating room nurse Audra Reichert, of Illinois, travels to Bothwell Regional Health Center each week as a traveling nurse.

Over the last eight years, Bothwell has recruited seven primary care physicians and two remain. In the last year, five new physicians have joined Bothwell practices and Fracica said all of them indicated one of the reasons they chose Sedalia was because they were excited about participating in the residency program.

New cancer technology

In 2021, Bothwell obtained a new linear accelerator for the Cancer Center. The equipment allows for more precise imaging and aiming capabilities, which helps cause less damage to surrounding tissue. The new machine is also faster.

Fracica also talked about Bothwell’s three lung specialists, Dr.

Gabriel Anders, Dr. Dan Woolery and Dr. William Woolery. He said Anders and Dan Woolery were trained in advanced diagnostic techniques.

Using ultrasound imaging with a scope while looking at breathing passages of the lungs helps identify lung cancer. Fracica said this could lead to an early-stage diagnosis, which leads to an enhanced ability to treat with radiation.

Periodic low-dose CT scans can also help locate small growths that could be lung cancer in patients with a significant smoking history or a high risk of developing lung cancer.

“The combo of the low dose CT, the ultrasound and the new radiation oncology accelerator have upped our game in cancer care,” Fracica said.

Fracica said Bothwell has also started to work with an organization that provides personalized genetic testing of cancers. When a biopsy is taken, a doctor looks under a microscope to see what kind of cancer it is, but it is now also sent off for genetic analysis. Fracica said the doctor gets a report of all the genetic mutations specific to that cancer, “which has a huge role in being able to get more precision in customizing the drug therapy.”

Nicole Cooke can be reached at 660-530-0138 or on Twitter @NicoleRCooke.



Jenie Bruce, the nurse practitioner at Katy Trail Community Health's new facility, sits in her office on opening day, Monday, Feb. 28.



Dr. Alicia Albers sits in her office in the new Katy Trail Community Health facility, 305 W. Main St.

PHOTOS BY FAITH BEMISS | DEMOCRAT

Katy Trail

From Page 1C

The new facility will have increased technology such as Smartboards and televisions that can be used for presentations. On the medical floor, there are a total of six exam rooms and a lab.

There is no walk-in clinic at the new facility, but it is accepting new patients. Those wishing to become patients may call Katy Trail at 660-826-4774.

After three years of planning, Katy Trail Community Health hosted a groundbreaking ceremony for its second Sedalia site in August 2020. It was constructed by Preferred Construction in conjunction with Rob Rollings Architects.

"We have been planning to open a second site for about three years when we officially grew out of our 821 Westwood site," Stewart said during the 2020 ceremony on behalf of Katy Trail Board President Mary Nell Strautman, who was unable to attend due to illness. "Our staff, patient as ever, has been finding creative ways to operate in a very tight space. We



DEMOCRAT FILE PHOTO

Local officials involved with the new Katy Trail Community Health location help kick off the project during a groundbreaking ceremony hosted by the Sedalia Area Chamber of Commerce in August 2020.

have four care coordinators in a small office, we had three nurse practitioners working out of the same office, our nurses have had to share a space where they are literally shoulder to shoulder for the last several years."

Once the new facility is complete, that will allow part two to begin: renovations at the current facility. Stewart previously told the Democrat that plans include adding a dental operatory designed to serve people in

a wheelchair and redesigning the medical areas.

Katy Trail Community Health's downtown facility, 305 W. Main St., is open from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Friday. The clinic at 821 Westwood

Ave. will be the only clinic open on Saturday. Katy Trail also has locations in Marshall, Versailles and Warsaw.

Faith Bemiss can be reached at 660-530-0289 or on Twitter @flbemiss.



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New rail spur helps bring Nucor online

By Chris Howell
chrish@sedaliademocrat.com

After two and a half years of grants, applications, regulatory approvals and construction, the Sedalia Rail Industrial Park was officially connected to Union Pacific rail in 2021.

“The city is looking towards the future,” Public Works Director Brenda Ardrey said. “We view Nucor as the anchor tenant in a large industrial park. There’s potential for others to connect to that rail spur, it’s not limited to just Nucor.”

Working with the Federal Rail Administration, which provided Sedalia \$10 million in grant funds, the rail spur was constructed.

“We have nearly \$1.75 million remaining,” Ardrey said. “We could put a transload facility in that would allow for community manufacturing that does not have enough business perhaps to warrant their own rail spur. This was our first experience at railroad construction, but Sedalia has a long history with rail. We did have a rail engineer, someone with lots of experience that was involved in that, but the day-to-day management of a construction project was very similar to roadway construction.”

Large industries are now looking at Sedalia as a potential manufacturing site that offers the infrastructure they need.

“With the new rail park coming online companies are looking for more than one way to move their product,” said Jessica Craig, Executive Director of Economic Development Sedalia-Pettis County. “Now with rail and road access along with having a large area of potentially developable acres that can be served with water, sewer, natural gas, and electricity, those are all pieces of the recipe and why we are being asked to compete for these large scale development mega-projects.”

The Sedalia Industrial Rail Park, located east of North U.S. Highway 65, was established in December 2018 as a joint venture between the City of Sedalia, Pettis County, and EDSPC.

The idea to create a rail-served industrial park began several years ago after Craig heard from numerous large-scale companies looking for rail-served property to construct new facilities. At the time, such property didn’t exist in Pettis County. Craig and city and county officials began looking at available land with proximity to the highway and railroad.

Multiple lines spurred off the UP mean easier on and offloading of material within the rail park and plenty of room for future growth.

“Our new \$240 million rebar micro-mill in Sedalia



PHOTO BY CHRIS HOWELL | DEMOCRAT

The Sedalia rail spur completion now serves Nucor Steel as the industrial park’s anchor tenant. Three spur tracks connect to the UP live line and will serve the rail park’s additional industries.

uses recycled scrap to produce up to 380,000 tons per year of steel rebar for construction in the Kansas City region,” Ron Kessel, Nucor General Manager, said. “Nucor chose this location, in part, due to the logistical advantages that can be realized from the region’s rail system. Manufacturers like us rely heavily on an effective rail system for transporting our inbound scrap and outbound shipments of finished to steel.”

Craig said that in some of the recruitment projects EDSPC is working on, Pettis

County is the only Missouri location with the site attributes a company is seeking. She noted the new industrial park is creating excitement for the Missouri Department of Economic Development as well for that exact reason.

In addition to attracting new companies, Craig said the new rail line will benefit existing Pettis County companies that have expressed interest in utilizing rail service.

“The rail was built with more than Nucor in mind. They are the anchor tenant but it was

built with three different rails, so it can serve as more than just Nucor,” City Administrator Kelvin Shaw said. “It gives them a real efficient way to get railcar traffic off the rail live line and then put it back onto the live line. That was a little over a \$10 million grant that we received from the federal government, and it was tough to manage, but we got it all pulled together and got it done. It’s now open and Nucor’s getting a lot of use out of it.”

Chris Howell can be reached at 660-530-0146.

Economic

From Page 1C

“It’s been a successful year, we were able to announce two major expansion projects, the Prysmian group expansion and then the WireCo expansion,” Craig said. “Prysmian Group has been known as Alcan Cable, General Cable, that company is part of the Prysmian Group. They have over 29,000 employees globally. That’s a great example of a company that could have invested anywhere, but because the environment locally is supportive of growth, they chose to invest in the plant in Pettis County. I think that speaks volumes to our proactive business climate.”

In February, Prysmian Group announced plans to expand its manufacturing facility at 20213 Whitfield Road in Pettis County, just outside the city limits of Sedalia. Prysmian Group celebrated its 50-year anniversary in 2018 and has been known locally as Alcan Cable and General Cable. Prysmian Group acquired the company in 2018.

According to a news release, it is a world leader in the design, manufacture and sale of wire and cable products for power distribution, specialty, telecoms, trade and installers and energy projects.

According to the release, the Sedalia facility employs 175 people and manufactures aluminum building wire products for commercial and institutional construction markets.

Prysmian Group planned to expand the facility in two phases, according to the release. Phase one, which was completed prior to the announcement, was a \$3.5 million investment for new equipment purchases, existing building renovations and additional jobs. A new machine was installed that processes aluminum building wire, which is in high demand, and will increase capacity. This addition included an expansion of distribution operations in Sedalia. Prysmian Group planned to hire 30 new employees in Pettis County

for phase one.

Phase two was expected to have a similar plan to add equipment and personnel.

Other local businesses have invested in capital equipment as well as they have invested in Sedalia.

“WireCo World Group chose to invest \$15 million to update 60-year-old equipment, making that facility even more efficient, productive, and competitive,” Craig said.

In August, WireCo WorldGroup Inc. announced a \$15 million expansion of its facility on Oak Grove Lane in Sedalia.

At the time, WireCo employed more than 160 employees in Sedalia and with the expansion, planned to hire around 18 more employees.

WireCo WorldGroup is a global leader in manufacturing and distributing steel wire rope, synthetic rope and electromechanical cable for use in industrial markets including rigging, oil and gas, and mining industries.

WireCo WorldGroup has facilities in Chillicothe and Kirksville as well as its manufacturing and distribution center in Sedalia.

The Missouri Works program helps companies such as WireCo expand and retain workers by providing access to capital through withholdings or tax credits for job creation. WireCo also received assistance from Missouri One Start, a division of the Missouri Department of Economic Development, with its recruitment and training needs.

Improvements in Sedalia such as the Heckart Community Center are attractive to industry looking to relocate here and Craig uses Sedalia’s modern features to lure them.

“That helps us tell a story about the livability features,” Craig said. “A lot of projects are being driven by where people are, and where the talent is, and where job seekers are. The more the community can be viewed as attractive to talented people, the more likelihood

we can grow our industrial footprints. The new Community Center is a tremendous asset that we see coming online as well as the (Olen Howard) Workforce Innovation Center, that’s a huge milestone asset that we are showcasing in our recruitment efforts.”

In the last five years, Economic Development has worked with companies to expand their facilities or build new locations in Pettis County resulting in 1,398 new jobs, 1,630 retained jobs, and capital investment of \$426 million. Those new jobs now result in a net payroll of \$80 million to the community with an average annual salary of more than \$56,000.

Chris Howell can be reached at 660-530-0146.



DEMOCRAT FILE PHOTO

In August, Gov. Mike Parson congratulates employees of WireCo WorldGroup on the announcement of a \$15 million expansion at their Sedalia manufacturing and distribution facility. Pettis County Presiding Commissioner David Dick listens to Parson address the crowd of more than 100.

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Art • Entertainment • Sports

Facilities, expansion help move SFCC athletics forward

By Bryan Everson
bryane@sedaliademocrat.com

Soon enough, nearly all State Fair Community College athletes who step foot and compete in it will have been born after the opening of the Fred E. Davis Multipurpose Center.

It's not as though the school didn't have plenty of athletic history prior to that point when the facility ushered in teams in 2001, but it was a significant step forward, and the start of a new Roadrunners' era.

Call it the first move from the Renter's Era into the Owner's Era.

When current athletic director Darren Pannier was hired in May 1998 as volleyball coach, the college rented the Agricultural Building on the Missouri State Fairgrounds. Unfortunately, it didn't boast standards for the sport.

"We had to figure out how

we'd insert the standards to the floor," Pannier said. "We came up with an idea, but they wouldn't allow us to drill a pin in the concrete."

Just as he did to field a full roster months after being hired, Pannier explained the drilling and anchoring that made the accommodations to play work, as well as that transitional period. His volleyball team practiced at Convention Hall and in front of the area for what would be the Multipurpose before it was even conceived. The program's first match was at what's now Smith-Cotton Junior High.

"What a breath of fresh air [the Multipurpose] was for our campus, the students and student-athletes," Pannier said, adding the reminder that it allowed for practices early in the morning, not just when the Fairgrounds gates were open.

See SFCC | 5D



The Lady Roadrunners play their final regular season game Feb. 22, 2001, in the Birdcage on the Missouri State Fairgrounds. The move for State Fair Community College athletics, including both men's and women's basketball, into the Fred E. Davis Multipurpose Center later that year marked a new chapter for the institution's sports.

FILE PHOTO BY SYDNEY BRINK | DEMOCRAT

Liberty Center and Sedalia Symphony revive programs

By Faith Bemiss
fbemiss@sedaliademocrat.com

After much uncertainty during the first year of the COVID-19 pandemic, arts and entertainment slowly returned in 2021 and 2022.

Liberty Center Association for the arts

After a year of a complete shut-down in 2020 due to COVID, the Liberty Center Association for the Arts is finding a comeback for 2021 and 2022.

LCAA Executive Director Diane Burnett said January and February in 2021 were slow but by March, programs and events were being hosted again at Hayden Liberty Center. She added last year was almost a "normal year" compared to 2020.

In March 2021, Studio A Dance Conservatory gave a dance performance and Sacred Heart School hosted an event at the center. LCAA also hosted the Sedalia Visual Art Association "Spring Fling" art show reception on March 26.

"We really took off after that," she noted. "Looking back, it wasn't as bad as we thought it was."

In April 2021, LCAA presented a play, "Too Much Light Makes the



DEMOCRAT FILE PHOTO

After a long hiatus, the Liberty Center Association for the Arts presented a live play, "Too Much Light Makes the Baby Go Blind," April 29-May 2, 2021. During a rehearsal at LCAA, actors Megan Drianis, left, Melissa Turner and Marco Caesar shout "long live this play" as they perform "Zenith," one of 30 two-minute plays in the production.

Baby Go Blind."

During the summer and fall, the center introduced five outdoor concerts, which were well received.

"Sometimes we had a big crowd," Burnett said of the concerts. "We had like over 300 something for Dirt Road Addiction."

"We had smaller crowds for some of the other ones, but boy

they (the audience) liked them," she continued. "The bands were well-liked and the people that were there seemed to really enjoy them."

Also during the summer, the LCAA Junior Theatre presented "We Will Rock You," along with another junior production, "Something to do with William Shakespeare," in October.

"And of course, we've had art shows all along," Burnett said. "A big one was the Trail's End show and we're doing that again ..."

The Trail's End show was a juried art exhibit that included prizes. It was on exhibit in September and October last year.

In November, LCAA presented the play "All Together Now."

Moving forward into 2022, Burnett said the play "Calendar Girls" brought in a crowd in February. The largest crowd for one night was around 153 people.

"We had bigger audiences than we've had since I've been here," Burnett said with a smile.

See SYMPHONY | 2D

PHOTO BY FAITH BEMISS | DEMOCRAT

Sedalia Symphony member Cindy Decker portrays a Cuckoo with her instrument during the performances of "Le Carnaval des animaux" Feb. 27.



DEMOCRAT FILE PHOTO

The Scott Joplin International Ragtime Festival will return this year after canceling for the last two years due to COVID. The festival will be hosted from June 1 through 4.

Scott Joplin Festival gets green light for 2022

By Faith Bemiss
fbemiss@sedaliademocrat.com

After two seasons of COVID, the Scott Joplin International Ragtime Festival will return this year and will be hosted June 1 through 4 in downtown Sedalia. The theme is "Women of Ragtime."

Scott Joplin Ragtime Foundation Board President Doug Freed said the decision was made by the 14 board members during a meeting on Feb. 28, after a discussion on declining pandemic case numbers.

Featured performers this year include Clint and Ramona Baker, Anne and Jeff Barnhart, Taslimah Bey, Danny Coots, Bill Edwards, Marty Eggers, Virginia Eskin, Frederick Hodges, Brian Holland, Dave Majchrzak, Marilyn Nonken, David Reffkin, Joyce Richardson, Martin Spitznagel, Squeek Steele, Adam Swanson, Virginia Tichenor, Stephanie Trick, and Bryan Wright.

"One of our board members Bill Edwards ... works for the Veterans Administration and he gets a monthly report from the CDC," Freed said. "It looks good, (cases) are going down and the federal government is eliminating all mask mandates."

Freed said at present, masks will not be required at the festival and the decision on vaccinations will be made in May.

One item he and the board are excited about is the new pavilion at Second Street and South Ohio Avenue being built by the Furnell Companies.

"The festival headquarters will be at (Hayden) Liberty Center, as it's always been," he explained. "Then, of course, we'll continue to have the Stark Pavilion under the tent ... on Fifth Street as it's always been."

"The real new thing that I'm really excited about is the Furnell pavilion," he continued. "Underneath the roof, that platform is 2,000 square feet of space — it's big. Then out front, they think there will be seating for 300."

See SCOTT JOPLIN | 3D



During the Winter Children’s Concert with the Sedalia Symphony Feb. 27, Sarah Kehl, 9, was selected to conduct “Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star” on stage at the Heckart Performing Arts Center.

PHOTOS BY FAITH BEMISS | DEMOCRAT

Sedalia Symphony

From Page 1D

Auditions are completed for the upcoming musical, “Legally Blonde,” which will be presented the last weekend in April and the first weekend of May. “That’s exciting,” Burnett noted. “We had a good group audition for that and it’s going to be a big musical.” She added “Legally Blonde” will be the first traditional musical at the Hayden Liberty Center in eight years. LCAA also hosted its fundraising gala the “Celebration of the Century” on March 5, something that hasn’t been done in more than 20 years. This summer, the LCAA Junior Theatre will present “Matilda” and committees are already planning a new lineup of outdoor concerts for 2022. Burnett said plans are moving forward for a permanent outdoor stage and workers have poured the footings for the stage. She added she and the LCAA Board feel like everything is moving in the right direction for 2022. “This year looks great,” she noted. **Sedalia Symphony Orchestra** In the last year, the Sedalia Symphony has seen many changes, including a new conductor, in-person performances again, and prospects of a history book

along with a documentary. In October 2021, after more than 18 months, the Sedalia Symphony Orchestra presented its first live performance since the pandemic began in March 2020. The 87th season opened with many new symphony members and a new director, Conductor Jerrode Marsh. Marsh, who is the director of music at Saint Paul Lutheran High School in Concordia, came on board last summer. Information provided by the Sedalia Symphony said since coming to the school, she founded the award-winning Saint Paul Chamber Choir, developed the Saint Paul Orchestra, and in 2018 led her concert choir on its first international choir tour through five European countries. In addition to leading ensembles and community events, she teaches the dual credit Music Appreciation course and maintains a private piano studio in her home. Marsh has a Bachelor of Music in Piano Performance from Portland State University and a Master’s and Doctorate in Piano Performance from the University of Texas at Austin. She came to Concordia in the fall of 2015 from Frankfurt, Germany, where she worked for nearly two decades as a professional musician, performing extensively as a piano soloist, collaborative artist, and conductor throughout Germany, Austria, and England. She replaced former conductor Luke Lyons, who resigned to pursue a doctorate. Marsh said last summer she was excited to be working with the Sedalia Symphony. She once worked as a vocal coach, accompanist, and chamber musician for the Frankfurt Opera, the Austrian American Mozart Academy in Salzburg, and the Undergraduate Operate Program at The University of Texas in Austin, and is looking forward to working with professional musicians once again. In February, Marsh conducted the Winter Children’s Concert with the Sedalia Symphony. The performance highlighted fun, musical numbers specifically geared toward youth along with the chance for one child to help conduct a number on stage. Sarah Kehl, age 9, was selected to come on stage and conduct “Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star.” Marsh said she believes that was the first time for a child to have the opportunity to direct a selection during a concert. “We are hoping that this will give

students an opportunity to feel what it is like to be 100% involved in the concert — nothing like taking that baton and getting sound back,” Marsh noted. Symphony Board member Anne Tempel is also working on two projects for the Symphony, a history book that will be written by Sedalia historian Beck Imhauser and a documentary that will be produced by KMOS-TV in Warrensburg. Tempel said the idea for a history book on the Sedalia Symphony came to her when she visited Reader’s World last year. While there, she saw a shelf with all types of books on the history of Sedalia but no book on the symphony’s history. “I was thinking there should be a space on this shelf for the Sedalia Symphony,” she explained. “Why is there no book about the history of the symphony? It is the second oldest symphony in the state, behind St. Louis — one of the oldest in the country.” She added that over the years, the symphony has kept many scrapbooks with all sorts of history enclosed within their covers, and she knows many people who have historical knowledge about it. “That’s how I got the idea,” she added. “And it’s not originally my idea, because I talked with (board member) Barbara Schrader about it, and she has thought about it before as well.” Tempel said KMOS-TV agreed to film the February concert, so she inquired if they would want to shoot a documentary of the symphony also. “I reached far into the stratosphere and they came back even more excited about the possibility of a documentary,” she said. “That’s where we’re heading next.” Tempel has already amassed interview material from Willis Ann Rosenthal Ross, the daughter of Abe Rosenthal, and Francis Johnston, the wife of Harold Johnston. She’s also spoken with Schrader and Betty Sue Viterna. “This could be a really neat documentary,” she added. “With all the scrapbook material and extensive archives from all the past year’s materials.” She added she was thankful to the Symphony Board, Marsh and the orchestra members for their help in getting the projects off the ground. For more information or to donate Sedalia Symphony historical items, visit sedaliasymphonyorchestra.com. Faith Bemiss can be reached at 660-530-0289 or on Twitter @flbemiss.

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Art supplies are organized and ready to go in the Cooney Studio, upstairs at the Hayden Liberty Center. Liberty Center Association for the Arts Executive Director Diane Burnette said 2021 was almost a normal year for LCAA.

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Daum support stays strong during the pandemic



During the pandemic, Daum Museum of Contemporary Art Director and Curator Thomas Piche’ Jr. stands next to a painting at the museum wearing a mask.



Vicki Weaver, Daum Museum of Contemporary Art director of education, talks to students during one of the museum’s “Daum Escapes,” an art program for school children. The program was discontinued temporarily in 2020 due to COVID.

By Faith Bemiss
fbemiss@sedaliademocrat.com

The Daum Museum of Contemporary Art continues to make its way through another year of COVID with fewer restrictions as was seen in the 2020-21 school year, all the while retaining the support of its members and community.

Daum Museum of Contemporary Art Director and Curator Thomas Piche’ Jr. said one of the things that’s been encouraging throughout the pandemic is that the Daum’s membership program has stayed steady.

“And our members have stayed very steadfast,” he said. “I think philanthropic giving overall has dropped, and we have not experienced that to a great degree.

“The Missouri Arts Council continues to be very supportive,” he added. “The (State Fair Community) College is supportive. So, in terms of our economic community, support has remained steady and we’re really grateful for that.”

Piche’ said during 2020, at the height of COVID, the museum resorted to virtual programs and people would hear from the museum on a regular basis. He believes keeping the line of communication open helped keep the members involved.

“And now that we’re back with exhibitions, they’re getting announce-

ments again,” he said. “We’ve tried to keep our Facebook ads up-to-date ... and I think a lot of people have strong feelings about the value of having this museum in Sedalia.”

As restrictions eased, Piche’ said the museum opened three shows, including “The Rule of Three,” last spring. All three shows were from the permanent collection since the Daum still wasn’t accepting off-site exhibits due to the pandemic. “The Rule of Three” exhibit remained up through last summer.

“We decided that because the visitation had been so reduced that it hadn’t been seen by a lot of people,” he noted. “So, we kept it on view.

“Then in the fall we did our first show with outside artists since the Jane Booth (show) went up in the start of 2020,” he continued. “That was the ‘Regeneration’ exhibition with nine artists from Kansas City.”

He added, the Daum hasn’t had any in-person public programs since March 2020, including art receptions, due to the pandemic.

“We’ve done a few very small tours, primarily with the college students,” Piche’ said.

The popular “Daum Escape” geared toward school children from across the area was also stopped in 2020 and 2021 due to COVID.

“We keep pushing



In February, Daum Museum of Contemporary Art Director and Curator Thomas Piche’ Jr. stands beside a large charcoal drawing by Erica Daborn. Piche’ said throughout the pandemic, the Daum’s support has remained strong.

forward,” he noted. “We have had exhibitions up, we’ve been open to the public during our regular schedule.

“We keep looking at all the information we can get on the pandemic,” he continued. “As far as I can reckon, that is telling us what we should be doing and not doing.”

Piche’ said plans moving forward include the new show “Dialogues with Mother Earth,” which was installed in February in the Freed Gallery.

The large charcoal drawings measuring up to 72-by-175-inches were

created by Erica Daborn, who was born in England and now resides in Mexico. The 10 narrative pieces were created on canvas over a 10-year time span and will exhibit at the Daum until May 29. Alongside each piece, Daborn includes a statement about the art that presents scenarios to the viewer. Information provided by the museum said the drawings place the viewer into the future and challenge them to “examine deeper issues.”

The show was delayed in opening in January due to a surge of the COVID omicron variant after

Christmas break.

“We put it off a month and our team is all vaccinated and boosted,” he explained. “So, we decided that we could go forward.”

He added the museum is hoping to have Daborn come in April and have an outdoor reception. Depending on how the pandemic is this spring, Piche’ also hopes to have small groups of school children tour the exhibit because of its “strong teaching component.”

The Daum will celebrate its 20th anniversary this year and plans are in the works for a fall exhibit.

“In the fall, they will be doing a big show, looking at 20 years of collecting at the Daum,” Piche’ said. “So, that will be a permanent collection show. But they are hoping to bring out old favorites and the most significant works collected during that time.”

He is also hoping “Daum Escape” will also resume in the fall.

“It’s typically been an October/November program,” he noted. “We’ll see what happens with that in the fall.”

Faith Bemiss can be reached at 660-530-0289 or on Twitter @fjbemiss.

Joplin

From Page 1D

He added the festival only plans to set up 200 chairs at both the new pavilion and at the Stark Pavilion. The new pavilion will replace the small gazebo and chairs will be set up underneath a 40-by-80-foot tent. The Stark Pavilion stage is inside a 30-by-70-foot tent. Both will be safe from extreme sun and rain.

“I think that’s going to be a wonderful, wonderful addition to our festival,” Freed said of the new pavilion.

He said the board members are thankful the contract with Furnell states the festival will not have to pay to use the pavilion during the event each year.

“That’s a really incredible thing,” he added. “To even put up a tent is about \$3,000, so that is really wonderful. And I think that will really improve the festival.”

The board has also decided to add a third venue in the Women’s Waiting Room at the Katy Depot. It will serve as a practice space for entertainers and will be open to the public. Freed said they haven’t made the final decision on where the



Besides ticketed events hosted at the Hayden Liberty Center, the Scott Joplin International Ragtime Festival will host many free events inside the Stark Pavilion and the pavilion being built by the Furnell Companies.

Scott Joplin Bookstore will be, but he noted it possibly will be either at the Katy Depot or the Hayden Liberty Center.

“One of the reasons we’re having the Katy Depot is we get a lot of correspondence from musicians across the country that want to come here and perform,” he explained. “And they’ll even do it for free, but what they want is an opportunity to play before the festival crowd. And it’s a great resume item for them.”

He said they used to offer that option to musicians years ago and it was always successful, so it will be added to this year’s festival.

On Wednesday night, June 1, the festival will host a meet and greet with

an open bar from 6 to 8 p.m. at the new pavilion. Freed also noted since the floor is smooth, they also plan to host a live band with dancing.

Festival planners have 24 musicians lined up this year and Freed believes there may be more added by June 1. Ticketed venues will take place at the Hayden Liberty Center with all the free events at the other sites. Ticketed events will cost \$26 for afternoon performances, \$31 for Thursday and Friday night performances and \$36 for the Saturday evening performance.

Chris Robinson will oversee the special free events for non-festival performers. At past events, the Supermatics, a dance band

from Kansas City, and a local gospel choir performed at the Stark Pavilion.

“That’s a new thing and that’s our way of reaching out to the community,” Freed said.

He added the one thing that helped the Scott Joplin Festival survive that two years was the implementation of Syncopated Saturday Nights.

Due to the pandemic and no in-person festival, an online concert series was established and viewed on YouTube or Facebook. It was hosted every other month and featured two musical artists and a host. Freed said it was well-received — the last Syncopated Saturday Night, before the festival, will take



At present, 24 musicians are slated to perform at this year’s Scott Joplin International Ragtime Festival. Scott Joplin Ragtime Foundation Board President Doug Freed said that number may increase before the event begins June 1.

place the last of March.

“We’ve tried to keep it (the festival) alive by having Syncopated Saturday Night,” Freed said. “It has been an incredibly successful festival program. We had no idea when we created it.

“It has been successful in the sense of the number of people who are listening to it and then also the amount of donations we’re getting for those performers,” he continued. “The foundation doesn’t keep a penny of any of that ...”

Freed added due to the series, the foundation grew its donor’s list and noted he believes that will benefit this year’s festival.

“I’m excited about that, to see how it will impact the festival,” he said. “But at

least it kept it alive during these dreadful two years.”

A media release sent out on March 1 stated Scott Joplin Artistic Director Bryan Wright is compiling concert schedules and Symposia Director Bill Edwards is working on arranging symposia presentations. Special events this year will include an Early Bird Social/Dance, a Donor Party, and the traditional After Glow.

As soon as all details are finalized, a festival schedule and ticket order form will be made available via email distribution database, on the website, and a mailing to others on the Sedalia festival fan list.

Faith Bemiss can be reached at 660-530-0289 or on Twitter @fjbemiss.

Tourism beginning to rebound after 2020-21 decrease



A young girl yells in glee as she rides the Bumble Bee Bop at the Carnival at the 2021 Missouri State Fair. With pleasant weather and the humidity down, the Carnival was full of families with children. 2021 marked a return to a full-scale fair after pivoting to a Youth Livestock Show in 2020 due to the pandemic.

By Skye Melcher
skym@sedaliademocrat.com

Sedalia-based tourism has been extremely down since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic. It is impacting local communities across the state from a financial perspective as well as a direct impact on tourism-related jobs.

Sedalia Convention & Visitors Bureau Executive Director Carolyn Crooker added that in 2020, there was a statewide decrease in visitation and spending that resulted in a \$682.9 million decline in local and state taxes collected.

“Our Sedalia area lodging taxes in 2020 were down over \$332,000 from 2019 but have rebounded in 2021 to pre-pandemic lodging tax levels,” Crooker said. “In 2021, we had 136,500 visitors and \$78,544,858 in revenue from our tourism-related businesses.” This is according to the Department of Revenue classification codes reported by

Pettis County tax receipts.

Crooker added that Sedalia is fortunate to have good outdoor attractions such as the Katy Trail, Missouri State Fairgrounds, and Sedalia Parks, as well as venues that are capable of comfortably accommodating social distances for attendees. All of these signs indicate growth in visitors in Pettis County.

“However, there is some concern expressed. Hotel managers are wary of inflation and maintaining supplies to operate their hotels,” Crooker said.

She added that there has been a change in the demographics of the hotel guests in the past year:

- The leisure guests increased due to short “staycations” as travelers wanted to stay closer to home and had stimulus money, which may be gone now.
- The business traveler as well as military groups that maintained normal travel had a room of their own versus a shared room,



DEMOCRAT FILE PHOTOS

Sedalia tourism is rebounding after COVID caused many cancellations and numerous events will return to Sedalia in 2022, such as the Midwest Stud Ram Sale to be hosted this summer.

which increased occupancy for the hotels. The government and many companies have been cleared for double occupancy, which will result in fewer rented rooms.

- The business traveler is still down, and the business group market is practically extinct.

Many of the events that were canceled due to the pandemic in 2020 and 2021 are coming back in 2022.

“Many of these events returning have a tremendous economic impact to the Sedalia area, some as high as \$2 million,” Crooker said.

- The Regional Robotics Competition April 1-3 at Smith-Cotton High School will be back after being canceled for two years.
- The Scott Joplin Inter-

national Ragtime Festival will June 1-4 in downtown Sedalia in outdoor venues and the Hayden Liberty Center. It is also back after canceling for two years due to COVID.

- The Stud Ram Show will be hosted June 14-18 in the Swine Barn and Sheep Pavilion on the Missouri State Fairgrounds. The annual event will include its first youth show in the Suffolk breed, which will make it an even larger event. The show was hosted in 2021 after being canceled the previous year due to COVID.
- After a four-year absence, the Master Amateur Retriever Club is coming back to Sedalia for an event from May 21-27.
- The Missouri State Festival Square & Round

Dance will be back Oct. 7-9 in the Mathewson Exhibition Center after canceling due to COVID.

- Battle on the Katy is a high school-age wrestling tournament that was canceled due to COVID but is back on for Dec. 16-17.

Many of the events that Crooker listed are revenue boosters for the city of Sedalia, but one of the biggest revenue boosters is the Missouri State Fair. After having a modified year in 2020, the fair was back in full swing in 2021, bringing in thousands of travelers and dollars.

The 2022 funding requests to the Sedalia Area Tourism Commission have been approved for the Missouri State Fair for \$80,399 and to the CVB

for \$397,195.80 for a total of \$477,594.80. Funding requests for the CVB take in eight entities:

- Sedalia Destination Marketing and Administration: \$298,034.84
- Daum Museum Destination Marketing: \$21,251
- Scott Joplin Destination Marketing: \$31,620
- Katy Depot Destination Marketing: \$11,650
- Sedalia Parks Department Destination Marketing: \$6,224
- Liberty Center Destination Marketing: \$21,656.24
- Sedalia Visual Art Destination Marketing: \$850
- Downtown Sedalia Historic District Destination Marketing: \$5,889.72

Skye Melcher can be reached at 660-47-9638

Come visit Warsaw

2022 Community Events

For more information visit www.welcometowarsaw.com

March 19-Warsaw Pubs and Poker	Master Series Competition 6-7- Ozark Cigar Box Guitar Music Festival
April 10th Down & Dirty Mountain Bike Race	6- Taste of Benton County BBQ Festival
30-Art Walk/Wine Stroll	
May 13-14- Outdoor Adventure Show	September 2-3- Benton County Rodeo
21-22- Mo Championship Mountain Bike Race	17- Warsaw Junk Market
June 10-11- Warsaw Jubilee Days	October 1st - Quarter Mania
18- Warsaw Junk Market	15-16- Warsaw/Kaysinger Heritage Days
July 2- Drake Harbor Fireworks	28- Warsaw Halloween Hoopla
9th - Epic Gravel Bike Race	November 5th- Country Crafts Collectibles Show
August 5-6- KCBS Sanctioned	6- Butterfield 60 Gravel Race
	December Kaysinger Christmas
	9-10- Warsaw Christmas at the Harbor

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COLE CAMP, MISSOURI

2022 Community Events

United Methodist Church Fish Fry

Sat, April 9, 5pm – 7pm
Cole Camp United Methodist Church, 107 N Booneville Rd, Cole Camp

Swimming Pool Fundraiser Dinner

Sun, April 10, 11am – 1pm
St Paul's Lutheran Church, 205 W Jefferson St, Cole Camp

United Methodist Church Easter Egg Hunt & Picnic

Sat, April 16, 12pm – 2pm
Ezekiel Williams Park, 609-401 W Grother St, Cole Camp

Opening Day Farmers Market

Sat, May 7, 8am – 12pm
Cole Camp Pavilion on Main St

Picnic n' Pickin' in the Park

Sunday, May 22, 2022
Ezekiel Williams Park, 609-401 W Grother St, Cole Camp

Triple Creek Golf Course Memorial Day Tournament

Monday, May 30, 2022
Triple Creek Golf Course - Cole Camp

City Wide Garage Sale

Saturday, June 4, 2022
Cole Camp Community

United Methodist Church Fundraiser Breakfast

Sat, June 4, 8am – 10am
Cole Camp United Methodist Church, 107 N Booneville Rd, Cole Camp

Antique and Classic Car Cruise

Sat, June 4, 4pm – 8pm
Downtown Cole Camp

Jaycee June Beer Garden

Sat, June 4, 7pm – Sun, June 5, 12pm
208 W Main St, Cole Camp

Saengerfest (German Singing Festival)

Sat, June 11, 2pm – 6pm
208 W Main St, Cole Camp (Jaycee Garden)

Booze & Bluegrass in the Gardens

Saturday, June 25, 2022
Cole Camp Jaycee Garden

St. Paul's Ice Cream Social

Sun, June 26, 6pm – 8pm
St. Paul's Lutheran Church, 205 W Jefferson St, Cole Camp

United Methodist Church VBS

Tue, July 5, 2022, 9am – 12pm
Wed, July 6, 2022, 9am – 12pm
Thu, July 7, 2022, 9am – 12pm
Ezekiel Williams Park, 609-401 W Grother St, Cole Camp

MSTPA Sanctioned Tractor Pull

Saturday, July 9, 2022

Cole Camp Tractor Club Grounds (Just East of Cole Camp)

Annual Zucchini Races

Sat, July 16, 2022, 5pm – 8pm
North Maple Street, Cole Camp, MO (Downtown Cole Camp)

Antique - Classic - Farm Tractor Pull

Saturday, Aug. 27, 2022
Tractor Club Grounds - Cole Camp

Cole Camp Fair Queen Contest

Sun, Aug. 28, 2022, 7pm – 8pm
Lutheran School Auditorium - 204 E Butterfield Trail, Cole Camp

Triple Creek Golf Course – Labor Day Tournament

Monday, Sept. 5, 2022
Triple Creek Golf Course

Cole Camp Fair

Sept. 8 – 10, 2022
Downtown Cole Camp

Jaycee Fair Beer Garden

Sept. 8 – 10, 2022
J.C. Gardens - Cole Camp
Thursday 8 pm - 1am, Friday 7 pm - 1 am,
Saturday 11 am - 6 pm and 7 pm - 1 am.
Live entertainment every day.

Antique Tractor Club Farm Show

Sept. 22, 23, 24, 2022

Antique Tractor Pull

Sept. 24, 2022
Both at Tractor Club grounds – East of Cole Camp

Oktoberfest in Cole Camp

Saturday, Sept. 24, 2022
Cole Camp Jaycee Gardens

Mt. Hulda Church Fish Fry

Sun, Sept. 25, 2022, 4:30pm – 5:30pm
Mt. Hulda Church - Hwy B - South Cole Camp

Pumpkinfest

Saturday, Oct 29, 2022
Downtown Cole Camp

American Legion Homestyle Supper

Sat, Nov. 12, 2022, 5pm – 7pm
American Legion Post 305, 201, N Maple St, Cole Camp

Christbaumfest Christmas Theme Craft Show

Sat, Nov. 19, 2022, 9am – 5pm
Lutheran School and J.C. Building - Cole Camp

Christkindlmarket

Fri, Dec. 2, 2022, 5pm – 8pm
Downtown Cole Camp

For more event info visit

<https://www.colecampmo.com/>

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