

THE PIPELINE



Volume 7, Issue 12

December 2011

A NEWSLETTER FOR AND ABOUT THE EMPLOYEES OF JOHNSON COUNTY WASTEWATER

Protecting our environment ♦ Serving our customers ♦ Enhancing our communities

Program recycles holiday trees

The Johnson County Park and Recreation District will again be accepting post-holiday contributions of discarded natural Christmas trees at three locations.

Collection sites are:

- the northeast corner of the parking lot at the marina at Shawnee Mission Park, 7900 Renner Road, Shawnee;
- the Heritage Park marina parking lot, 16050 Pflumm Road, Olathe; and,
- the north side of the parking lot at the marina at Kill Creek Park, 11670 Homestead Lane, Olathe.

Trees will be collected at all three sites from Dec. 26 through Jan. 30 during regular winter park hours, 7:30 a.m. to 8 p.m.

In 2010, more than 2,500 trees were “recycled.” Some of the trees will be mulched for use on trails and in landscaping while others will be used to improve fish habitat in Shawnee Mission Park.



Please turn to Page 5



JCW's 4th Quarter STARS Recipient for 2011: Abraham Vargas, (center), was recently presented the 4th Quarter STARS Award by **Jamie Silvers** (left), assistant superintendent. Abraham was an electrician's helper when he voluntarily stepped up to assume the duties of industrial electrician at DLS Middle Basin when the position was vacated. He was subsequently promoted to industrial electrician. Abraham was nominated by his co-worker, **James Rose**, second shift treatment crew member, (right). Congratulations, Abraham!

Giant brain drain as 175 go out the door

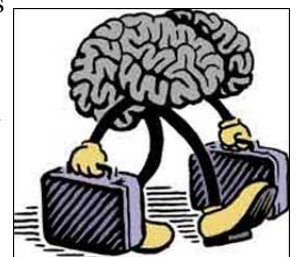
The end of the old year and the start of new year will include several office and department farewell receptions to honor 175 county employees who are participating in the Voluntary Retirement Incentive Program (VRIP).

Those leaving, including five top managers, have accepted an early retirement package in a program to further reduce the size of the county government workforce to a more balanced and sustainable size reflective of the current economic conditions.

VRIP was authorized on Oct. 13 by the Board of County Commissioners. The program was developed to offset future anticipated budget challenges by reducing overall staff and cutting positions without having to make layoffs. The county has never before offered a voluntary retirement program.

The VRIP provided eligible employees – those entitled to full or reduced retirement benefits under KPERS or KP&F – the opportunity to receive economic incentives to resign or retire from the Johnson County Government in order to generate budget reductions in salary and benefit expenses.

The program was an entirely voluntary, one-time opportunity available to eligible employees wishing to relinquish their employment with county government.



Please turn to Page 2

Giant brain drain as 175 go out the door

Continued from Page 1

The deadline for approximately 550 eligible County employees to participate in the program was Nov. 29 followed by a seven-day revocation period. In the weekly business session of the Board of County Commissioners on Thursday, Dec. 8, County Manager **Hannes Zacharias** advised the Board that the early retirement offer was accepted by 175 employees, representing approximately a third of the eligible employees.

If all 175 positions are left vacant, the projected savings (net of the incentive) would be approximately \$8.4 million in FY 2012. That, though, is unlikely.

If approximately 67 percent of the positions are not filled, the County is projected to save (net of the incentive) \$5.7 million in FY 2012.

“Every position, including departments heads, will be evaluated to ensure that it is mission critical before considering replacing the employee departing under the VRIP,” Zacharias said of the retiring employees. “We will continue to address anticipated budget shortfalls by reorganizing, restructuring, and downsizing our organization in the future, while maintaining our core services.”

Zacharias will meet with department directors to review reorganization plans as the county heads into the FY 2013 Budget process.

He acknowledges that the retiring long-time staffers will take with them “an accumulated wisdom and talent.

“We have so much institutional knowledge, all at one time, preparing to walk out the door,” he said. “There’s a lot of hard work ahead, but this is an exciting time filled with both challenges and opportunities.”

Since 2009, the county has implemented hiring restrictions that resulted in the elimination of 335.50 full time positions through attrition. The hiring restrictions will continue in 2012. The county anticipates approximately 265 additional FTE reductions are needed to meet the budget target by FY 2014 and ensure that ongoing revenue, with no tax increase, will fund operations.

He remains optimistic about maintaining essential county services to the Johnson County community and its citizens despite the loss of manpower. The county manager notes that county employees have always been efficient, and if there’s any workload spillover brought on by the early retirements, it will be fielded by those still in office.

“Our employees are exceptional that way,” he said, but warned that eliminating positions can only continue for so long before it begins to erode the county’s ability to provide services to the community.

“We’re approaching that point,” Zacharias said. “We’ll look at each position very carefully to ensure our operations are not affected by future organizational changes and financial challenges.”



So long, farewell – Gathered for a photo at their Dec. 21 retirement party are (from left): **Marie Seibel, Rosann Lucas, John Metzler, Janet Jacobs, Eddie Andrews, Bob Koch, Peggy Hiatt, and Mark Fujisaki.**

Please turn to Page 6



The Pipeline is a monthly newsletter published by the JCW director of communications for and about the department’s employees.

All questions, comments and submissions should be directed to **Lori Sand** at 913-715-8572 or lori.sand@jcw.org.

Submissions must not be more than 500 words.



Good-bye to our retirees!



Eddie Andrews
Treatment crew leader
29 years of service



Jessie Bustamante
HVAC technician
16 years of service



Danny Frederick
Maintenance crew member
25 years of service



Mark Fujisaki
Cleaning crew leader
12 years of service



Peggy Hiatt
Engineering technician
27 years of service



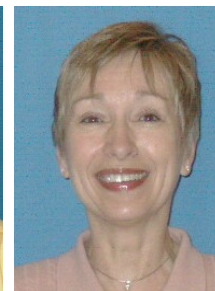
Janet Jacobs
GIS technician
26 years of service



Scott Jacobs
Treatment superintendent
29 years of service



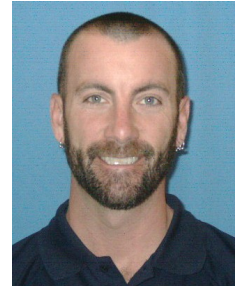
Bob Koch
LAN analyst
29 years of service



Rosann Lucas
Management analyst
24 years of service



Meet **Jamie Silvers**
Assistant superintendent
With JCW 5 years

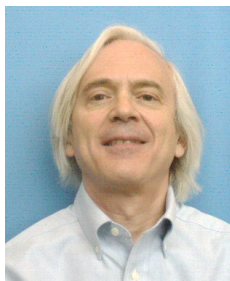


- ★ My favorite childhood memory is fishing in the creek.
- ★ My favorite food is spaghetti and meatballs.
- ★ My dream vacation is an African safari.
- ★ People know me for being easy going & very forgiving.
- ★ My most embarrassing moment was showing up for work once two hours early. I forgot to set my clock for daylight savings time.
- ★ My talent is mixing music.
- ★ The lesson I have learned is that dedication pays off. My wife is my hero.
- ★ The people I would like to meet (dead or alive) are Janet, my mother-in-law, and Vince Lombardi. In high school I was a quiet athlete, but not a “jock.”
- ★ I’m afraid of not doing enough to help my kids succeed in life. I spend too much on fuel for my vehicle and groceries.
- ★ My passion is my family. I attended FSCC and the University of Kansas.
- ★ Of all the jobs I’ve held, I most enjoyed my current position. I get to learn something new every day. I enjoy exercising and going to live concerts.
- ★ If I weren’t working for JCW, I’d probably be in the automotive industry, but hopefully, I would have just won the lottery!
- ★ Something funny — when I was a kid, I rode my bicycle into a sparked car, splitting my chin open and requiring stitches.
- ★ My New Year’s resolution is to be inspired.
- ★ My least favorite sound is the navigation lady’s voice. She doesn’t pronounce names correctly.
- ★ One thing that would be a surprise to most people is that I like to sing and dance.
- ★ I’m most proud of my family because they made me who I am.
- ★ Something I’m guilty of? Being too nice. When I grow up, I want to be a professional baseball player.



Good-bye to our retirees!

Continued from Page 3



John Metzler
Chief engineer
28 years of service



Lloyd Newman
Industrial electrician
26 years of service



Marie Seibel
Network analyst
20 years of service



David Staley
Assistant
superintendent
33 years of service

**These co-workers represent
308 years of JCW experience
and 325 years of Johnson
County experience**

Kudos to **Charles McAllister**, engineering technician, who was recently recognized with a certificate from the Kansas Association of Counties for eight years of service and commitment to county government in Kansas.

Keith Hall, assistant superintendent, recently shared the following:

I got a call a few minutes ago from a resident across the park from MCR named Dennis. He says he has been observing the progress at MCR since the letter was delivered to his door about our upcoming lagoon dredging.

Dennis says he was impressed by the pace of the work, and was happy to report that he had experienced no odors during the project. He stated that he has a background in wastewater treatment, and he knows we rarely get congratulated, so he called to say "good job."

He did not care to leave his last name, just said that he was on 48th Street.

That was nice ... it also shows how visible MCR activity is to the folks in those houses.

New Faces in New Places

Welcome to JCW



Welcome to **Laura Klemptner!** She was hired Dec. 12 as a customer service representative. Laura and her husband of 30 years have one son, Jack, and a dog, Katie. They have lived in Olathe their entire marriage. She enjoys golf, sewing and Texas Hold'em (for fun.) Laura is a graduate of SMNWHS.

Welcome to **NaTasha Ragland!** She was also hired Dec. 12 as a customer service representative. She has two siblings; a brother and a sister. NaTasha enjoys relaxing, vacationing, spending time with friends and family, and reading. She is currently working toward an associates degree at KCKCC.



Reminder from Beth Brandel—

VRIP drains JCW's IT support staff

Tony Hall, JCW's remaining ITS staff member, is on vacation through Jan. 3, 2012. While he is away, please direct all IT support questions and problems to the ITS Support Center.

If you believe you have an emergency that can't be addressed by the ITS Support Center, please check with your supervisor and consider all other options before calling Tony so he can get the most out of his vacation time. Any questions should be directed to **Beth Brandel**, director of Business Operations and Planning.

ITS-Support Center Phone:

715-1700

ITS-Support Center e-mail:

ITS-SupportCenter715-1700@jocogov.org

When Tony returns from vacation, please keep in mind that he will be JCW's only dedicated IT support staff member. While Tony will do his best to continue the outstanding IT support that JCW has come to expect, there may be times when he is unavailable to provide an immediate response to every issue.

Beth says, "I appreciate your patience as we adjust to our significantly reduced staff."

Program recycles holiday trees

Continued from Page 1

No yard waste will be accepted - only Christmas trees.

Wrappers should be removed from the discarded trees as well as any remaining decorations; particularly "icicles" and decorations made from mylar, shiny plastic, or aluminum.

There is no charge for the disposal of trees. For additional information, call the John Barkley Visitors Center at Shawnee Mission Park at (913) 888-4713.

County calls on all artists to submit works for annual exhibit

The deadline for Johnson County employees to submit art to the 2012 ArtsKC Workplace Giving Campaign Fund exhibit is Jan. 6.

All artists may submit up to three works for display. The committee will review all submissions and notify artists by Jan. 13 regarding inclusion within the exhibit.

The display will be exhibited at the County Administration Building, Sunset Office Building, and the Central Resource Library

Those who submit an entry will also be entered in an in-house competition and winners will be recognized during the Board of County Commissioners meeting on Mar. 15.

Karen Sorensen, JCW's ArtsKC committee rep, has issued a challenge to her coworkers. Last year, four JCW employees submitted artwork for exhibit. This year, if the number of JCW participants doubles from 4 to 8, then this former art instructor will offer at least one extracurricular art event and maybe more. This will be just for JCW employees (and possibly their children and grandchildren). A poll will be conducted for interest in either a "photo walk," pottery, and/or group sculpture project, etc.

The 2011 exhibit was a great success toward Johnson County's contribution to the Art Council of Metropolitan Kansas City during its first year. The campaign made Johnson County the most improved workplace in the metro.

Submit your work(s) to Gina.Hoch@jocogov.org. For more information you may contact JCW's rep, Karen Sorensen, or visit <http://jococonnect/artskc/Pages/>



Plans take shape for Employee Recognition Event - Jan. 24, 2012

Thank you to all the employees who participated in the recent survey regarding the annual JCW Employee Recognition luncheon. **Jennifer Harder**, member of the Employee Engagement Committee, reported there was a great response (93 of you) and the majority voted as follows:

MENU: There will be BBQ! The lunch menu will include pulled pork, brisket, chicken, BBQ beans, scalloped potatoes, slaw, bread, and pickles. Drinks: iced tea, water, coffee. Dessert: cake and punch. JCW has some great BBQ'ers and cooks who have volunteered.

DATE: To have the event in December. It was not possible to schedule a December 2011 event due to the STARS award quarters, but, those quarters will be revised for 2012 and the event will be held in December in 2012. The luncheon for 2011 will be Wed., Jan. 25 at 11:30.

PROGRAM: The 2011 STARS Recipient of the Year will be announced and there will be a brief recognition program.

LOCATION: The event will be held at the Old Shawnee Town Hall at 11600 Johnson Drive. This location will hold us comfortably, meet our kitchen needs, and is a bit less expensive to rent.

MAKING A DIFFERENCE: Donate \$1 or a can of food to Feed the Need for your admission to the lunch. We'll let you know soon where your admission ticket can be obtained.



THE DETAILS...

DATE: Wednesday, January 25th, 2012

TIME: 11:30 am – 1:00 pm

LOCATION: Old Shawnee Town Hall

11600 Johnson Dr.

ADMISSION:

Obtain an admission ticket by donating \$1 or a can of food for Feed The Need. (We'll let you know soon where you can obtain your ticket.)



Giant brain drain as 175 go out the door

Continued from Page 2

Letter from Hannes Zacharias, county manager

Today I am waking up to the reality that we will be saying “good-bye” to many of the 175 colleagues who are leaving as a result of our Voluntary Retirement Incentive Program (VRIP), making this the single largest mass exodus of employees in our organization’s history. The “brain drain” is staggering. With an average of 20 years of service, we will be seeing over 3,500 years of expertise leave our workforce.

I am happy for this class of talented public servants as they move on to the next chapter of their lives...able to spend more time with family, friends, and unlocking reserved passions. To this group I say “congratulations” and thank you for a job well done. We will miss you. You made this organization better than you found it.

For those of us remaining, the challenge now is to pick up the mantel of public service and carry on. I know many of you are asking...what’s next? How will we restructure our organization, our processes, and our jobs to meet the expectations of the public? Can we realistically deliver the same quality and quantity of services with this large reduction of the workforce?

The answer is: I don’t know. But what we do know is that no one of us is as smart as all of us. In these changing times, we need to rely on each other to come together to find the answers. Not in a superficial, disengaged “meeting,” but in frank and open conversations with all of the work teams involved asking the tough questions like, “What are we doing?,” “What should we be doing?,” and “What should we stop doing?” Hard work to be sure...filled with uncertainty and risk.

I believe organizations are similar to living organisms, and in a constantly changing world, species can adapt, migrate, or go extinct. We are not migrating and I have every expectation that Johnson County Government will be here for the next 150 years and beyond. Therefore, we will adapt...with your help.

I am approaching this season of change with hope and optimism. I believe we will be brave and build upon the legacy laid down by the thousands of colleagues who came before us. We will respond to our current changing times in ways that leaves this organization better than we found it.

This is a season of “rebirth.” The days are starting to get longer and a new year is approaching. I am looking forward to spending time with my family and friends...but my work family is never far from my thoughts. Bless you all – those who are retiring and those of us who are staying – and Happy Holidays to you and your family!

So, what does this exodus mean for Johnson County Wastewater?

Of the 47 JCW employees eligible to accept the county’s Voluntary Retirement Incentive Package (VRIP), 13 elected to take the option and will leave the organization between December 23 and January 20, and 10 left by December 24. Together this group of employees represents 308 years of JCW experience and 325 years of Johnson County experience and about \$813,000 in salary costs. This loss represents 520 hours per week of public service hours throughout the JCW organization, based on 40 hours per week per employee, which is probably less than actual hours worked.

During the last three years, JCW has reduced staff by 35.5 positions including VRIP, but it has not yet been determined how many will be filled.

Resulting costs savings during the past two years are as follows:

- 2011 - \$809,187 (2011 budget document cited savings from eliminating 6.5 and defunding 9 positions)
- 2012- \$399,260 (2012 budget document cited savings from eliminating 7 additional positions)
- VRIP \$813,000

“This cumulative reduction of \$2,021,447 contributes to reducing the pressure to increase the wastewater rates. The final savings of the VRIP for the 2013 budget will be determined after decisions are made as to which, if any, of these positions need to be backfilled to maintain an acceptable level of service,” said **John O’Neil**, JCW’s general manager.

“I want to express my deepest appreciation to the employees who remain dedicated to providing the first line of defense in the fight to protect public health and also protect the water quality in our receiving streams. You have risen to the challenge to date, and the challenge continues. We are all in this together and together we will meet future challenges. Please share with each other, with me, and with the rest of the leadership team your ideas on successfully meeting these challenges and your concerns as well. Thanks for your on-going dedication and service.”

Don't forget our furry friends

Individuals, families, and groups wanting to make a difference are invited to consider contributing a gift to the animals at the Ernie Miller Nature Center through a program called Holidays for the Animals.

The nature center, located at 909 N. Kansas 7 Highway, Olathe, has ongoing needs for supplies for both the animals kept at the center and the wild animals that come to the feeders.

Donations are accepted on an ongoing basis. Following is a list of items being sought:



- ◆ black oil sunflower seed
- ◆ white millet, thistle, or safflower seed (finch mix is the only seed mix accepted)
- ◆ suet cakes
- ◆ dried seed corn on the cob
- ◆ LabDiet 5001 rodent food
- ◆ ferret snacks
- ◆ pinewood shavings
- ◆ Mazuri ferret diet, non-clumping cat litter, bags of reptile bedding
- ◆ various sizes of clear

critter totes/pet keepers boxes with

- ◆ snap tops from pet stores
- ◆ bleach and laundry soap
- ◆ gift cards to Price Chopper and Petco for emergency purchases

Donors who wish to be recognized will have their names listed in the nature center's *Tracks* newsletter and in an advertisement in the spring issue of the district's activities catalog.

More information is available by calling (913) 764-7759.

Cross-functional team update

Engineering Standards
November 30, 2011

Repairs of Service Lines in Street ROW - the issue was raised as to what our role needs to be when service lines are repaired by a trenchless technology but there are sags or low slope. Following legal consultation, the conclusion was that the sewer use code needs to be modified to allow for these repairs. The service line warranty programs were discussed. Management agreed with the recommendation not to pursue this program at this time, pending the results of the pilot I/I studies.

New Retainage Law - There was good discussion of who has responsibility for updating front ends after Purchasing, Legal, the Chief Engineer and the cross-functional team buy off on changes. It was decided that **Susan Pekarek** will lead this effort. Specifically, we need to determine if we want a specifier's note with higher retainage for larger projects.

RCE where storm sewers cross under sewers - EI is using an approach that differs from JCW design standards. This issue will be discussed with **Jen Harder** and follow up will be conducted at the team's next meeting. If all agree to do away with the RCE, the design standards will need to be revised.

The next meeting is scheduled for January 25, 2012 at 8:00 am.

Communications

Combined Charges - The committee held two public meetings with regard to the proposed combined charges issues which the commissioners are considering for implementation in January

2013. Six additional meetings are scheduled; two in December and four in January. A report will be delivered to the Board in February. A webpage has been created where the presentation is available, as well as an FAQ, an opportunity to submit comments, and contact information for those with questions. Press releases have been sent to all local media, as well as service clubs, home owners associations, and local governments. An information piece is also being inserted in each wastewater bill with a message printed on the envelope noting its inclusion.



January Celebrations

Wastewater Anniversaries

1/21/1986	26	William Vulgamore treatment crew leader
1/5/1987	25	Tim O'Donnell treatment assistant superintendent
1/8/1990	22	Dennis Edrington treatment crew leader
1/31/1994	18	Elizabeth Brandel director of Business Operations & Planning
1/29/1996	16	Stuart Garmon industrial electrician
1/8/1996	16	Paul McClure line construction crew leader
1/5/1998	14	Patrick McQueen financial manager
1/6/2003	9	James Lorenz truck driver
1/26/2004	8	Stuart Lord planning engineer
1/9/2006	6	Gregory Greenwood treatment crew member
1/8/2007	5	Clint McCammon treatment crew member
1/2/2007	5	Jamie Silvers treatment assistant superintendent
1/28/2008	4	Patrick Beane engineer
1/2/2008	4	Joshua Hastings construction crew member
1/25/2010	2	James Rose treatment crew member
1/25/2010	2	Abraham Vargas industrial electrician
1/11/2010	2	Trevor Smith equipment operator

Birthdays

Kurt Winters director of Operations & Maintenance	2
Stacy Gallick asset management director	6
Julie Moser accountant	8
James Cooper pumps crew leader	11
Todd Rogers senior engineering technician	16
Kevin Reicheneker cleaning crew leader	17
Patrick Beane engineer	23
Tim O'Donnell treatment assistant superintendent	25
Zachary Hahne cleaning/inspection crew member	30
Mary Pegg treatment superintendent	30

