

# Rebuild our rural communities

By Ron Wilson  
Huck Boyd Institute

“Our state was created by pioneers who came here and built their homes. Then they got together with their neighbors and built their churches and their schools and their communities. We need to do that again.” Those are the words of Cheryl Lyn Higgins, a passionate advocate of rural communities. She is the director of a new initiative which is benefitting rural Kansas.

Cheryl Lyn Higgins is director of Neighborhood Initiatives for the Sisters of St. Joseph, a Catholic order based in Concordia. The Sisters of St. Joseph was founded in France in 1650.

In 1836, several sisters traveled from France to what was then the U.S. frontier. In 1883, they set up a school in Concordia and organized other schools and hospitals around the region. At Concordia, they established a motherhouse to serve as their convent and academy. In 1902, the cornerstone was laid for a new motherhouse, which is an awesome five-story brick building that now serves as headquarters for the Sisters’ activities and home for more than 30 retired Sisters. Other Sisters are living and working in other communities around the region.

“Earlier in the century, the Sisters ran orphanages and hospitals to meet the needs of that time,” Cheryl Lyn said. “Now they are working on how to meet the needs of our current time.” They are also concerned about the depopulation of rural communities. One way of respond-

ing to such community needs is a new project they call Neighborhood Initiatives, directed by Cheryl Lyn Higgins.

Cheryl Lyn is from Winfield originally. She was a newscaster and radio station manager in south central Kansas and northern Oklahoma before becoming the Chamber of Commerce director in McPherson and subsequently in Junction City. Among many other activities, she operated an outstanding community leadership development program.

In 2010, her son saw a listing for the position of Director of Neighborhood Initiatives for the Sisters of St. Joseph and encouraged her to apply. Ultimately she got the job.

“It’s a real credit to the Sisters that they genuinely want to serve the people in these communities,” Cheryl Lyn said. “And, they were willing to allow us to experiment with this position.”

The first part of this new outreach was to hold community conversations to identify the most pressing needs. Those needs varied, but a common theme was the need for leadership. So, Cheryl Lyn drew on her previous experience and designed a leadership development program for communities where Sisters are located, such as Ellis, Kansas, a town of 1,852 people. Now, that’s rural.

“Some people have been in leadership positions for a long time, but not enough new people are stepping up to serve,” Cheryl Lyn said. “The mayor of Ellis has been mayor for 15 years. In

the last five years he has waited to file for re-election until the last possible day, in hopes that someone else would step up. And apart from elective office, we need others who will give their time and effort for their communities in various ways.”

In September 2011, a community conversation was held in Ellis. Subsequently a leadership class was launched, involving people from various walks of life and even including a high school student. “We have been so delighted with the results,” Cheryl Lyn said. “Class members are already working on housing initiatives and downtown revitalization, and taking ownership of next year’s program.”

It went so well that such leadership development is now being offered to any rural community in the region at no charge whatsoever. Participants do not pay any fee. Requests have come from as far away as Wellington. For more information, go to [www.csjkansas.org/neighborhood-initiatives-2](http://www.csjkansas.org/neighborhood-initiatives-2).

To Cheryl Lyn, local grassroots leadership will be needed to make a difference and fight the pattern of rural depopulation across the state. We salute the Sisters of St. Joseph for fostering such leadership.

“There’s a wealth of opportunity in our communities: Buildings to be renovated, history to be preserved, and downtowns to be revitalized with small businesses,” Cheryl Lyn said. “Like the pioneers, we have the spirit to rebuild our civic, religious, and economic communities.”

# The gardening classroom is dismissed

Kay Melia  
vkmelia@yahoo.com

Attention all gardeners, and students of the gardening mystic! School is back in session, and for our first classroom session, here’s what I want you to do. Grab a pencil and a sheet of paper, and follow my directions carefully, because there may be a snap quiz later.

On your paper, please describe to me the one single treat that you harvested from your garden this summer that gave you and your family the greatest eating enjoyment. Name only one. I know it isn’t easy, but I want just the ONE thing you enjoyed the most. I’ll give you some time here to think about it and to write down your answer.

All done? Alright, pass your papers down to the end of the row, and I’ll pass along a few of your answers to the class.

Here’s one that says “a fresh picked cucumber, sliced, a big sweet onion, sliced, a little salt and pepper, and slathered in ranch dressing.” Wow! My mouth is watering already. Here’s another one. “A bowl of small new potatoes, creamed with freshly picked peas, and cooked only until the potatoes are tender.” How about this one...“A generous helping of young tender green beans fresh out of the garden, cooked with little bits of bacon and onion.” This one says “the very first ripe cantaloupe of the season!” Amen, brother! Hold it here...who submitted this one? “Several

small zucchinis, sliced and baked casserole style with plenty of onion and lots of cheese.” One of you out there has a great sense of humor!

Here’s a couple of others. One says ‘the first big head of cabbage of the season, shredded and dressed into a delicious bowl of cole slaw.” One more here. “A big ripe tomato, sliced, with a sprinkle of salt and pepper. Slicing is optional.” I see there are several papers expressing a similar sentiment.

Well, you all did good, and nobody has to stay after school. Of course, there’s no way you could mess up this little quiz, unless you forgot to plant a garden last spring.

Here’s MY response to the question. “A big bacon, lettuce, and tomato sandwich, made with two slices of slightly toasted whole wheat bread, three slices of bacon fried not quite crisp, and a big leaf of lettuce. Butter one slice of the bread, and generously spread real mayonnaise on the other slice. Slice the tomato carefully so as not to lose any of the precious juice, and place the slices between the bacon and the lettuce...not next to the bread. Add a little salt and pepper. Repeat the process as often as you can before the first freeze of the season, because it’s going to be a long time before tomato picking time next summer!”

Class dismissed. Unless one of you happens to have a big ripe watermelon stashed under your desk!

# Annual factual story contest encourages Kansans to enter

The Kansas Historical Foundation announced that entries are being accepted for the Annual Kansas Factual Story Contest. Sponsored by the Native Sons and Daughters of Kansas, the contest encourages written preservation of factual, unpublished happenings and anecdotes in the lives of Kansans today and yesterday.

The contest is open to everyone. Stories must be true and unpublished, set in Kansas, and limited to 750 words. One entry per person, and entries will not be returned. Entries must be submitted electronically by e-mail no later than Nov. 1. The author’s name, mailing address, and phone number must be included on the essay. Send entries to Terry Marmet, Kansas Historical Foundation, membership@kshs.org. Include “Beech Memorial Contest” in the subject line of the email. The Kansas

Historical Society may preserve all stories in their collections

Olive Ann Beech, of Wichita, provided winners with cash awards for over 30 years. Following her death, her daughter, Mary Lynn Oliver of Wichita, has continued this support. The Beech Memorial Cash Awards are 1st place, \$175; 2nd place, \$125; 3rd place, \$100; and \$50 each for two honorable mentions.

A panel from the Kansas Historical Society and the Foundation will judge entries. Winners will be announced and recognized at the annual meeting of the Native Sons and Daughters of Kansas Friday, Jan. 25 in Topeka. For more information, contact Terry Marmet, Director of Operations for the Kansas Historical Foundation, at 785-272-8681, ext. 209 or membership@kshs.org.

# Duplicate Bridge

There were three tables for Duplicate Bridge played Wednesday night at Norton Manor. The results are as follows: first place went to Norman Nelson and Myron Veh. There was a 3-way tie for second place between David Graham and Janice Persinger, Jackie Porter and Joyce Sumner and Bob Jones and Carla Latimer.

# Wedding Announcement



Mr. and Mrs. Ed Kirtley and Mr. and Mrs. Bryan Matzek announce the upcoming wedding of their children, Adrianna Marie to Derek Wayne on Sept. 22, 2012 at 3:01 p.m. at Lincoln Avenue Baptist Church in Woodward, Okla.

The groom-to-be is the grandson of Jaynell and the late Gene Matzek of Norton, and the great-grandson of the late Jay and Lyala Stambaugh of Great Bend, and the late Rickie and Frank Matzek of Norton. He is also the grandson of the late Cecil and Goldie Harper of Elizabethtown, Ky. and of the late Pauline and Ramond Harper of Elizabethtown, Ky. and the great-grandson of the late Ada and Stanford Thomas of Elizabethtown, Ky.

The bride-to-be is the granddaughter of the late Wilson and Betty Kirtley of Boise City, Okla. and of the late Bert and Collene Coffi

of La Grange, Calif., and Janice Senderling of Yuma, Ariz.

Derek grew up in Woodward, Okla. and graduated from Sharon-Mutual and attended OSU-OKC for his Associates in Business. He is attending Northwood to complete his bachelor’s in business. He is a long-time employee with Weldon’s Truck Parts Incorporated with their purchasing department in Woodward, Okla.

Adrianna is from Stillwater, Okla. She graduated from Guymon High School and attended Oklahoma Panhandle State University in Goodwell, Okla. She then transferred to Oklahoma State University in Stillwater, Okla and graduated with her Bachelor in Science in Elementary Education. She is currently working on her Master’s in Special Education and is graduating in May of 2013.

# MEALS ON WHEELS

The schedule for Meals on Wheels for Sept. 3 through Nov. 11 is as follows:  
Sept. 3-9 Community volunteers  
Sept. 10-16 Norton Correctional Facility, contact Kelly Gill (877-3389 ext. 76667)  
Sept. 17-21 Northwest Kansas Library System, contact Alice Evans (877-5148)  
Sept. 22-23 Community volunteers  
Sept. 24-30 Norton Lions Club, contact Jon Boxler (877-5128)

Oct. 1-7 Church of God, contact Marilyn Colip (877-2461)  
Oct. 8-14 Mid-Century Federated Club, contact Eunice Neiltopp (877-2439)  
Oct. 15-21 Knights of Columbus, contact Chris McDiffett (877-2216)  
Oct. 22-28 Norton PEO, contact Deb McClymont (877-5441)  
Oct. 29-Nov. 11 United Methodist Church, contact Jean White (877-3935)

# Woodland improvement funds available

Kansas landowners wishing to implement conservation practices by improving tree stands may be eligible for federal funding assistance through the Environmental Quality Incentives Program.

A forester visits the landowner’s property to identify natural resource concerns, such as gaps or dead trees in windbreaks and shelterbelts.

If the property has sufficient resource concerns making it eligible for funds, the forester creates a conservation plan and submits it to the Natural Resource Conservation Service, which ranks applications based on priority. Atchison said most Kansas applicants receive fund-

ing. Foresters also examine the species present in woodland areas. Most woodlands in Kansas are not managed, leading to an abundance of trees like honey locust and Osage orange, which are less beneficial than trees such as black walnut or bur oak.

The official deadline for applying for the program is Nov. 16. Forester contact informa-

tion is available online at [www.kansasforests.org](http://www.kansasforests.org) or by calling the Kansas Forest Service state office at 785-532-3310.

Call Mike with all  
your social news.

877-3361  
mstephens@nwkansanews.com

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**NORTON THEATRE**

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**POTATOES FOR SALE**

*We have new Pontiac, Kennebec, Russet, and Yukon Gold Potatoes for Sale*

**Weather Permitting, We Will Be Digging Saturdays**

**September 1 and 8 from 8:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.**

The field location is Northwest of Orleans 5.2 miles on Highway 136 to 715 Rd. then west 2.5 miles to C Rd., then 1/2 mile south. From Stamford, go 4 miles north on Main Street to 715 Rd., then 1 mile east to C Rd., then 1/2 mile south. Signs will be posted. They are \$12.00 per bag (about 50 lbs.) and you pick them up.



**Bob and Joe Culver, Orleans, NE**

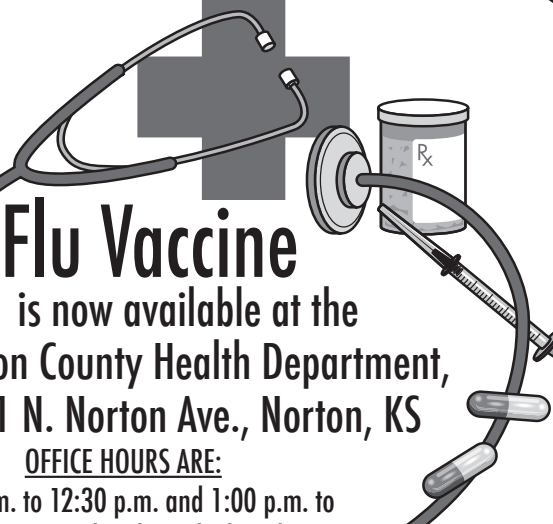
**Field Phone (308) 991-4776 or (308) 868-3235**

**IN LOVING MEMORY**

**Georgia Evalyn Stevens**

SEPTEMBER 8, 1912 - JULY 31, 2009

The daughter of George H. and Elva M. (Ellis) Madden was born in Grand Island, NE. Her grandparents, John and Nancy Madden homesteaded north of Norton in 1873. She grew up in Norton and attended local schools. Her first marriage was to Ed Coshaw. She later married Vester Butts and had a daughter, Patricia. They moved to Kansas City in 1943, where she worked in a defense plant during World War II. She was active in her daughter's Camp Fire group, Rainbow assembly and president of her PTA. She later worked as a hostess and cashier in restaurants in Kansas City, and retired from Putsch's Coffee House after 16 years. She returned to Norton where she was active in the Eagle's Auxiliary and Rebekah Lodge. She married Ralph Stevens in 1982. She moved to Wheatland, MO in 1993 to be nearer to her daughter and family. She lived there independently until shortly before her death. She enjoyed tole painting, ceramics and crocheted many beautiful pieces which are treasured by her family: daughter Pat Miller, Pittsburg, MO., grandson Brad Miller, Grandview, MO., granddaughter Brenda Shriner and husband Mike, Overland Park, KS., great-granddaughters McKayla and Kiera Smith and sister Donna M. Roberts and husband Vernon, Norton, KS.



**Flu Vaccine**

is now available at the

**Norton County Health Department,**

**801 N. Norton Ave., Norton, KS**

**OFFICE HOURS ARE:**

**8:00 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. and 1:00 p.m. to 4:30 p.m.-Monday through Thursday**

**8 a.m.-12:30 p.m. Friday**

**NO APPOINTMENT NECESSARY**

**For Questions, Please Call: 785-877-5745**