

Thrive



Allen County

The GOOD Report



BASSETT - CARLYLE - ELSMORE - GAS
GENEVA - HUMBOLDT - IOLA - LA HARPE
MILDRED - MORAN - PETROLIA - SAVONBURG

A report on what's going well in Allen County, Kansas



“What we focus upon, we empower and enlarge. Good multiplies when focused upon. Negativity multiplies when focused upon. The choice is ours: which do we want more of?” --Author Unknown

Dear Neighbor:

Bad news is easy to come by. Good news? Not so much.

With this in mind we decided to do a report exclusively on GOOD NEWS in Allen County.

Every day, our friends and neighbors are working to make Allen County and the communities within it healthier, more vibrant places for all of our residents. These people don't do it for credit, recognition or personal gain. They do it because they believe in our county's promise, and in the people who call Allen County home.

Their efforts aren't wasted. Together we are making life better for the people who live here by increasing access to healthcare and focusing on improving our county health ranking. This work gives our county a chance to defy the odds and to be one of the few rural communities that WON'T be a ghost town a century from now.

We hope that our simply-named "GOOD" report is something you can keep as a reminder of what's going well here, and as a model for how you can spend your time, talents and treasure. We also hope you'll use it as a tool to remind people who are inclined to see the "glass" as half-empty that things aren't so bad.

Allen County is a special place to live, and it's worth fighting for. We hope you enjoy this collection of exclusively GOOD news about this place we call home.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Brian D. Wolfe".

Brian D. Wolfe
Chairman

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "David C. Toland".

David Toland
Executive Director

WORKING TOGETHER

“ We may be little, but we have a lot going on.” ”



It seems everywhere you look in Allen County, you'll find people working together to become healthier in body, mind—and in community. Groups of friends—and strangers who become friends—are joining together for fun and fitness.

Every community in the county is joining the push to improve the health and well-being of its residents, strengthening the county as a whole.

As Pat Spencer, chairman of the Friends of the Park Committee in Gas says, “We may be little, but we have a lot going on.”

Projects underway or completed around Allen County:

- 💡 A walking path with built-in exercise equipment in Humboldt
- 💡 Recycled playground equipment and a community/fitness center in Elsmore
- 💡 Moran Thrive/PRIDE's free “swim bus” takes USD 256 kids to the lola pool twice weekly throughout the summer
- 💡 lola soccer fields completed
- 💡 Yoga and Zumba classes
- 💡 One of the finest small libraries in Kansas at Savonburg
- 💡 A fitness center, library, community rooms, and a museum in LaHarpe
- 💡 The ever-growing Fees Memorial Park in Gas
- 💡 Extension of the Prairie Spirit Trail through lola and on to Humboldt...

BRINGING BACK SMILES

COMMUNITY HEALTH CENTER OF SEK INCREASES ACCESS TO HEALTHCARE

Hundreds of people are finding their smile again, thanks to the dental services provided through the Community Health Center of Southeast Kansas.

Opened in 2008, the Center is not a free dental clinic, but does provide care for anyone, regardless of their ability to pay.

Thrive Allen County and the Allen County Healthcare Foundation worked together to recruit a new dentist, Dr. Arthur Unruh, to Iola in 2011.

“Many people don’t understand the connection of dental health to overall health...until they have a dental problem,” Dr. Unruh says.

About 50 percent of those seen are children, who are a priority for the Clinic.

Co-located with the Family Physicians on the east edge of Iola, the clinic is open from 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. Monday through Thursday, and 8 a.m. to noon on Fridays. The phone number is 620-365-6400.



Do you need
a ride to the doctor
or dentist?
Call Thrive at
620-365-8128.



“ Many people don’t understand the connection of dental health to overall health..until they have a dental problem. ”

Healthful EATING



Allen Countians are making better food choices thanks to new programs and services being offered throughout the county.

💡 Thursday evenings from May through October, residents from across the county shop the **Allen County Farmers' Market** on the square in Iola. Now in its third year, the market has grown from an initial six vendors to over 37, offering homegrown produce, baked goods, jams and jellies, honey, eggs, goat cheese, arts and crafts... and more. Vision cards are accepted at the market.

💡 The **Elm Creek Community Garden** continues to expand as more residents realize the enjoyment and nutritional benefits of gardening. The garden has grown to more than 100 plots.

💡 An inspiring gardening activity involves school children in the **SAFE BASE After-School Program**. The children have developed their own garden—and the produce is being incorporated into the school lunch program and also shared with the childrens' families!

💡 Locally produced compost is sold at the Farmers' Market to encourage more Allen Countians to grow their own **garden** and enjoy not only healthy produce, but also the social benefits of gardening.

💡 With a renewed focus on **healthy eating choices**, all schools in Allen County have begun offering more nutritional options in vending machines.

"Kids who have seldom eaten fruits, vegetables or salads are asking for them now," says Cindy Ritchie, food service director for the Marmaton Valley school district. "They've learned that healthy foods are also good-tasting foods."



“...healthy foods are also good-tasting foods.”

MAKING CHANGES!

Communities throughout Southeast Kansas aren't sitting back and accepting disappointing reports on the health and economic well-being of the region.



Seventeen counties are working together in a recently organized initiative, "Project 17" to focus on the challenges facing the region.

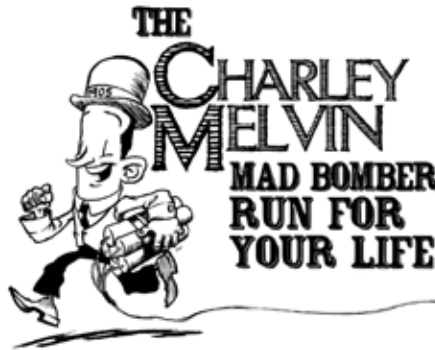
The Kansas Health Institute ranked all of the SEK counties in the bottom quarter of the state in regard to health. Seven of the nine counties ranked in the bottom 10. The negative report on our health also included the fact that almost 66 percent of the region are overweight or obese.

The area also faces economic challenges with the loss of jobs in numerous sectors across the region.

Project 17 will bring together leaders from each of the 17 counties to promote initiatives to improve the health and economics of the region and to establish region-wide goals of developing strong leadership and permanent structure.

It will be exciting to watch as the project, designed to strengthen all of Southeast Kansas, develops over the next few months.

For more information, please go to www.twsproject17.org.



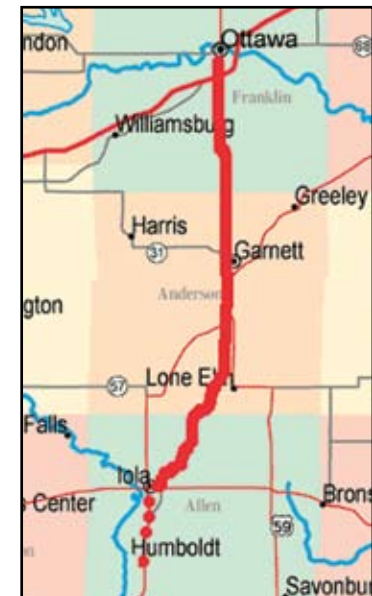
RUNNING FOR OUR LIVES... LITERALLY

- A unique and fun way to get active is to participate in the **Charley Melvin Mad Bomber Run for Your Life**.
- The event is named for a man who bombed saloons in lola in 1905 and includes a 5K run and a 3K walk—all in the middle of the night!
- This year's event will be July 13-14.
- More information is available at www.madbomberrun.com.

EXTENDING THE PRAIRIE SPIRIT TRAIL

- The Prairie Spirit Trail, which begins in Ottawa and winds through Garnett and through lola, will be expanded soon to Humboldt.

The current 51-mile trail along abandoned railroad right-of-way is a popular attraction for bicyclists, hikers and walkers. The trail includes a paved extension through lola and will soon travel another 6.5 miles to include Humboldt as a destination for enthusiasts.



New hospital happening— really!



At a time when many rural hospitals are being forced to close their doors, Allen County will soon have a new, state-of-the-art medical facility.

In an overwhelming show of unity and support, 72 percent of voters approved the construction of a new Allen County Hospital in November 2010.

A location off North Kentucky Street in Iola has been approved after much discussion. Construction is anticipated to last approximately 18 months.

The monumental task of building a new hospital has involved many hours of thought and consideration, but the end result will benefit the entire county and region—both health-wise and economically.

This is only the second time in 40 years that the entire county has voted to approve a major construction project.

“Major public projects like building a hospital are always difficult, wherever you are,” says John Masterson, president of Allen Community College.

“It was tremendously difficult for our leaders over 40 years ago to transform Iola Junior College—which was a small local college on the 3rd floor of Iola High School—into a major institution serving nearly 5,000 students annually on two campuses, 17 outreach sites, and online,” Masterson notes.

“Cost, location, and mission were all tough topics of discussion then, too. But with time and dedication, we got it done,” Masterson says.

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Thrive



Allen County

12 West Jackson Avenue
Iola, KS 66749
620-365-8128



Our Vision:

Allen County will be the healthiest rural county in the state of Kansas.

Our Mission:

To support and encourage programs, policies and resources that promote access to healthcare, healthy lifestyles and positive community conversation, with the goal of improving the well-being of residents of Allen County.



Activities -Community Visioning Services – Bi-Monthly “Community Conversations” – Annual awards for excellence in health, wellness, recreation and education – Volunteer dental transportation network – Quarterly health newsletters mailed countywide – The Charley Melvin Mad Bomber Run for Your Life 5K Run/Walk – Allen County “Meltdowns” – and SEK Meltdown

Thrive is a non-profit corporation working to revitalize Allen County through a focus on improving our county’s quality of life. We do this by building partnerships, defining needs, identifying resources, coordinating services and providing leadership on important public issues.



www.thriveallencounty.org

This report made possible in part through a grant from the REACH Healthcare Foundation.