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Pray for
America



Sherman and Mary Jane Smith are shown with several of the craft items that inmates of Ellsworth Correctional Facility in Ellsworth, Kansas have made. The Smiths, who purchased these items at special events, have been involved in prison ministry at the facility once a month for the past seven years.

Troy Couple Finds Joy in Prison Ministry

By Mary Winder
Chief reporter

Sherman and Mary Jane Smith of rural Troy utilize their outgoing personalities along with their deeply-held religious convictions to carry out the special volunteer work of prison ministry.

This is not some whim for the Smiths. In a clear display of dedication, the couple has been making the three and one-half hour drive to Ellsworth, Kansas to the Ellsworth Correctional Facility once each month for the past seven years, with the exception of the months that the prison was off-limits to visitors during the COVID-19 pandemic. They attend non-denominational Sunday church services with the prisoners there and then spend the rest of the morning talking to them, praying with them, and just demonstrating that someone cares about them.

"Sherman and Mary Jane come in on a monthly basis to minister to the incarcerated. Showing up every month has built a bridge of mutual understanding and communication between volunteer and inmate," explains Chaplain Tim Hammye, who works at the facility. "These two come in and are quick to give a side hug, ask about the inmates and family, and smile and shake a hand. Their warm and open hearts and welcoming smiles make a big difference to men who feel isolated and alone."

"Often, there is only one Chaplain at the Sunday service," Hammye continues. "He or she cannot meet the needs of every individual. Having volunteers whose sole purpose is to encourage and notice the residents makes all the difference in the world."

It was former Troy USD #429 Superintendent Sue King and her husband, John, who introduced Sherman and Mary Jane to prison ministry.

"Sherman was on the school board when Sue King was superintendent from 2007 to 2013," says Mary Jane. "We met John, Sue's husband, at a Troy High School play. We sat at the same table and I asked John about a book he was reading, The Richest Man Who Ever Lived. It was about King Solomon."

This meeting and Sue and Sherman's work with the school district led to a friendship between the two couples. The Kings invited the Smiths to accompany them to Lansing Correctional Facility in Lansing, Kansas, where John would volunteer to preach sermons. Mary Jane and

Sherman accepted the invitation and found that they liked volunteering at a prison. A few others from the Christian Church in Troy, where the Smiths are members, also volunteered at this prison.

"That was our first experience with prison ministry," says Mary Jane, noting that they just volunteered occasionally at Lansing as guests of the Kings at that time. "John had just asked us and we thought, 'That's nothing we've ever done before. Why not?'"

Later, the Kings moved to Lakin, Kansas, and both John and Sue did prison ministry at Bent County Correctional Facility in Colorado. The Smiths also accompanied the Kings to this facility to conduct prison ministry a few times, but it was quite a long trip for the Smiths to make from Troy to Bent County, Colorado.

The Kings then moved to Salina, Kansas about seven years ago, and John became involved in prison ministry at the Ellsworth Correctional Facility. Once again, he invited Sherman and Mary Jane to join him and Sue in prison ministry there. The Smiths decided to become officially involved as volunteers at this prison, rather than just going to the prison occasionally as guests of the Kings.

In 2018, Sherman and Mary Jane underwent special background checks and took the training course required to become official volunteers at the prison.

"After we passed the course, we got a badge that gave us access to any prison in Kansas," explains Mary Jane. "We have to take a two-hour refresher course each year."

As part of the course, Sherman and Mary Jane learned guidelines about interacting with the inmates. For instance, the volunteers are not supposed to provide the inmates with details about their lives.

"They want us to be vague about our lives and not tell the inmates exactly where we live or information about our family," says Mary Jane. "We get to know the inmates, but we are supposed to be careful about getting too close. They don't want us to let down our guard and have us become too sympathetic to the inmates."

"You have to be careful how much of a relationship you build with them, but you do build relationships," adds Sherman.

The Smiths either go to Ellsworth for just the Sunday of their scheduled visit each month, or sometimes they

Wathena Council Approves Fall Festival Street Closures, Discusses Nuisance Properties and City Purchases

By Melanie Davis
Chief reporter

The City of Wathena held its regular council meeting on Monday. Councilman Jarod Jackson was absent.

Heather Cluck attended on behalf of the Wathena Fall Festival Committee and presented a list of requested street closures for the upcoming festival scheduled for August 29–31, 2025. She also submitted requests for the annual beer garden event and noted changes to the festival this year, including repositioning the stage to provide a better viewing angle and reduce sun glare. Superintendent Tim Smith will check electrical access for the new location. Cluck shared additional updates, such as the VFW hosting a cornhole event and a separate cornhole activity for teens. The children's parade will begin at noon, and the main parade will start an hour earlier than usual, at 1:00 PM instead of 2:00 PM.

"These changes are just a test run," Cluck said. "If we find something doesn't work, we'll make necessary adjustments for next year."

She also announced that the Doniphan County Services Workshop will host their annual dinner in their new building. On Saturday afternoon, Doniphan County Pet and Rescue will offer lunch, and Riverside High School's After Prom group will help run evening booths, as in previous years.

Following discussion, Councilman Aaron Cluck motioned to approve the requested street closures

for the fall festival and the beer garden. The beer garden will be held on August 29 from 6 PM to 11 PM and August 30 from 4 PM to 11 PM, located between 3rd and 4th Streets. Councilman Bob Ryser seconded the motion, and it carried. Cluck thanked the city for its continued support.

Police Chief Dennis Thompson reminded the council of a checkpoint scheduled along Highway 36 on August 23. He also addressed ongoing nuisance property concerns. He reported that the property at Sherman Road and Toulon Road has until August 11 to mow the lawn. Councilman Cory Shue noted that some work has already begun. Thompson added that AW Outdoor Works, LLC., Wathena, KS., has agreed to do the work there—cleaning the ditch, cutting the trees, and mowing the lawn, with the bill to be sent to the city and added to the property's tax roll.

Thompson stated that citing owners of abandoned vehicles remains a priority. The council briefly discussed continued complaints about the property on Highway 36 next to the Fastgas convenience store.

Councilman Aaron Cluck made a motion to purchase a set of tires for a police vehicle, not to exceed \$1,500 including mount and balance. The motion carried.

Cluck also motioned to purchase an F-600 truck for the City of Wathena through Farmers State Bank, in the amount of \$242,000 to be paid over five years. Ryser seconded and the motion carried. Shue abstained.

Expansion of Euler Scholarship Funds

They had a vision. One that included a helping hand for those who wanted to make their lives better. Earl and Elmyra (Susie) Euler, prior to their deaths, made arrangements for several scholarships to commence after they died to aid students and graduates from Wathena High School; Central High School; Missouri Western State College; and Highland Community College. These all began in 2013 and over the last 11 years over 20 scholarships have been granted.

Over the years, less persons from the now consolidated school, Riverside High School, have submitted applications for scholarship funds and therefore in June of 2024, the Board of Trustees kept the Euler's original vision in mind when they requested, and the District Court approved, an expansion of the use of the current scholarship funds. This expansion provides for scholarships to also be available for graduates of Wathena High School and/or Riverside High School who are continuing to further their studies and/or careers through additional education, including trade schools. The funds are also available for those that have previously been awarded scholarships from the Euler Scholarship funds for renewal.

To be eligible for these scholarship funds, the following requirements must be met:

- Be a graduate of Wathena High School or Riverside High School;
- Be actively enrolled in or have applied for entry into an accredited college or technical school and working towards a degree or certification;
- If currently enrolled have a 3.0 GPA; and
- File an application for receipt of funds and provide said application to the Wathena/Riverside Alumni Board of Trustees.

Applications are available from Robyn Euler Johnson (785-741-1561/rjohnson@rainbowtel.net)

spend the weekend in the Ellsworth area. If they are going there for just one day, they leave their home at 3:30 a.m. on Sunday morning, so they can be at the facility by 7:00 a.m.

There are actually two facilities they visit in Ellsworth. The larger one is a medium-security correctional facility. The other is located across town and is a minimum-security facility. The inmates at both facilities are all adult males, and they are of a wide variety of ages. The two facilities can house up to a total of 915 inmates, with the minimum-security facility being the smaller of the two.

The Smiths visit the medium-security facility first. After their arrival, they go through a check-in process that involves passing through a scanner and having their badges scanned. Security is always of utmost importance. The Smiths are then allowed to walk to the Spiritual Life Center, the name for the church building for the inmates. It is located on a hill near

the center of the facility's campus.

"It is a beautiful circular building with a steeple and stained glass windows," explains Mary Jane, noting that the Spiritual Life Center was built using funds from donations, grants, and tithes from the inmates. "The sanctuary holds up to 300 people. There are probably about 150 people who come each Sunday."

When the Smiths arrive, a band made up of inmates is usually practicing. Sherman and Mary Jane shake the greeters' hands when they enter the building. They then attend the church worship service with the inmates. This service typically includes singing, announcements, prayer requests, and John King's sermon. After the service, the Smiths spend time with the inmates.

"We greet them, visit with them and catch up on what's going on with them, and pray for anyone who needs prayer," Mary Jane says.

continued on page 2

Commissioner Submits Check to Address Road Project Concerns

By Melanie Davis
Chief reporter

Doniphan County Commissioner Wayne Grable submitted a check in the amount of \$9,352.50 to Doniphan County during the July 29 Commission meeting, offering to cover the overage on a road project completed in October 2023 by Engemann Dozing Company, Inc.—a company owned by his brother-in-law.

Engemann originally estimated the work on Old Kiowa Road at \$16,000. Additional work increased the final invoice to a total of \$25,352.50. Grable had offered to pay the difference at the time, but the other two commissioners voted for the county to pay the full amount.

After further discussion last week, Grable gave the check to County Clerk Peggy Franken along with a letter and asked her to present it to the board. The letter read:

"Peggy, Enclosed you will find a check for \$9,352.50 for the reimbursement of the Old Kiowa Road project. Engemann Construction (Roger Engemann) sent this bill for additional work done over his estimate to complete this project. The original estimate was \$16,000.00. I offered to pay the additional bill when it first came before the board but the other two commissioners both agreed this wasn't necessary and the county would pay this bill. However, since that time it has been brought up to me several times that, 'since we paid Roger'..."

Would you please present this to Commissioners Hall and Collins and let them decide whether to accept this payment or the bill has been and is considered Paid in Full. The decision is in their hands and I will accept their decision either way.

As of now I no longer expect this bill to be referred to again and expect this matter to be finished. I will not allow anyone to use my personal or professional relationship with any contractor to try to bully me.

Wayne"

Commissioner Bobby Hall rejected the offer, stating the board made a decision and that was the end of it. Commissioner Tim Collins agreed, saying, "What's done is done, and the board is moving forward."

"That's exactly why I presented the check," Grable said. "So that could be the end of it and we could move forward. So the board's decision is the board's decision. I know we can't do anything about people coming here to ask us questions about it, but as far as I'm concerned there doesn't need to be any more discussion about it at all. It was the board's decision."

Commissioner Collins asked County Attorney Charles Baskins for clarification on whether a commissioner must abstain from voting if a family member is involved in a contract or negotiation. Baskins said he would gather information and provide an answer at next week's meeting. Commissioner Grable responded that if the board is going to examine his familial ties, the same should be done for the other two commissioners.

The board then turned to the unfinished 275th Road culvert project.

Commissioner Grable presented a list of policy suggestions for the county to consider. "These are just suggestions, and I just wanted you all to take a look at them so we can discuss them and you all can make any changes or additions as well," he said. "But I think before we accept a bid we need to figure out what went wrong there. Maybe we don't make any changes, I don't know."

Among his suggestions: require contractors to verify bond insurance and disclose in advance any subcontractors they plan to work with.

Commissioner Collins questioned that requirement. "If you were to bid 40 miles of blacktop to be laid on the highway, you're going to have many different contractors," he said.

"Okay," Grable responded. "Well, since Keenan [Baird] walked away from this job [275th Road culvert], are you going to allow him to bid on this project?"

Grable then informed the board that Wade Joyce of Joyce Dozing—a contractor who submitted a bid to complete the 275th Road project—had contacted him directly.

"He called last week to introduce himself and we had a good conversation," Grable said. "During that call I just went ahead and asked him if Keenan would be working with him on the project if we accepted his bid, and he admitted to me on the phone Keenan would be working with him. I have absolutely nothing against Wade Joyce—I don't know him, really. But I'm suggesting that Keenan doesn't do another project for the county for 5 years. I don't know, maybe it's three years, maybe it's one."

Commissioner Hall said he would consider the suggestions.

The board briefly discussed moving forward with hiring a county Road Supervisor. Hall said he still supports the move. Road Manager Lindsay Norris reminded the board that the county has had a good working relationship with Schwab-Eaton, PA engineers, who can handle project design and oversight at an hourly rate.

Grable said the cost could add up quickly. Norris explained that hiring engineers helps ensure projects are done correctly from the start, and would relieve the board from having to manage every detail. The board agreed to continue reviewing the Road Supervisor job description Norris had provided in a previous meeting.

Following additional road and bridge discussion, Commissioner Hall motioned to hire Urban Construction, Inc. to complete the 275th Road culvert project. Commissioner Collins seconded, and the motion carried.

Commissioner Hall also motioned to pay Third District Road and Bridge employee Dan Whetstone an additional \$500 per month to serve as acting Road Foreman until Chris Schultz returns from medical leave. Collins seconded, and the motion carried.

Hall added that the board has been addressing recent comments regarding the Meals on Wheels program and is actively working toward a resolution.

RNR Mailing Notice

Doniphan County property owners will be receiving in the mail Notices of Estimated Ad Valorem Tax information. This is not a tax bill, no payment is due at this time. The notice is for informational purposes only, pursuant to K.S.A. 79-2988; a law providing transparency in taxation. The notice provides information on the property's value, current year tax estimates (to be billed in November) and prior year tax (recently paid). The notice also provides information on public hearings to be held by taxing districts, prior to adoption of the 2026 budget, who propose a tax increase. Reminder: This is for informational purposes only, no payment is due at this time. Tax statements will be mailed in November with the first half of taxes due on or before December 22, 2025. Questions regarding information on the notice can be directed to County Clerk Peggy Franken at 785-985-3513. For questions or concerns on property values please contact the Doniphan County Appraiser's office at 785-985-3977. Questions or concerns regarding proposed tax amounts should be directed to the taxing district by attending the public hearing or contacting its representatives.



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