

THE CITIZEN

ISSUE TWENTY-FOUR • SPRING 2019

Your official source of information about the Unified Government of Wyandotte County/Kansas City, Kansas

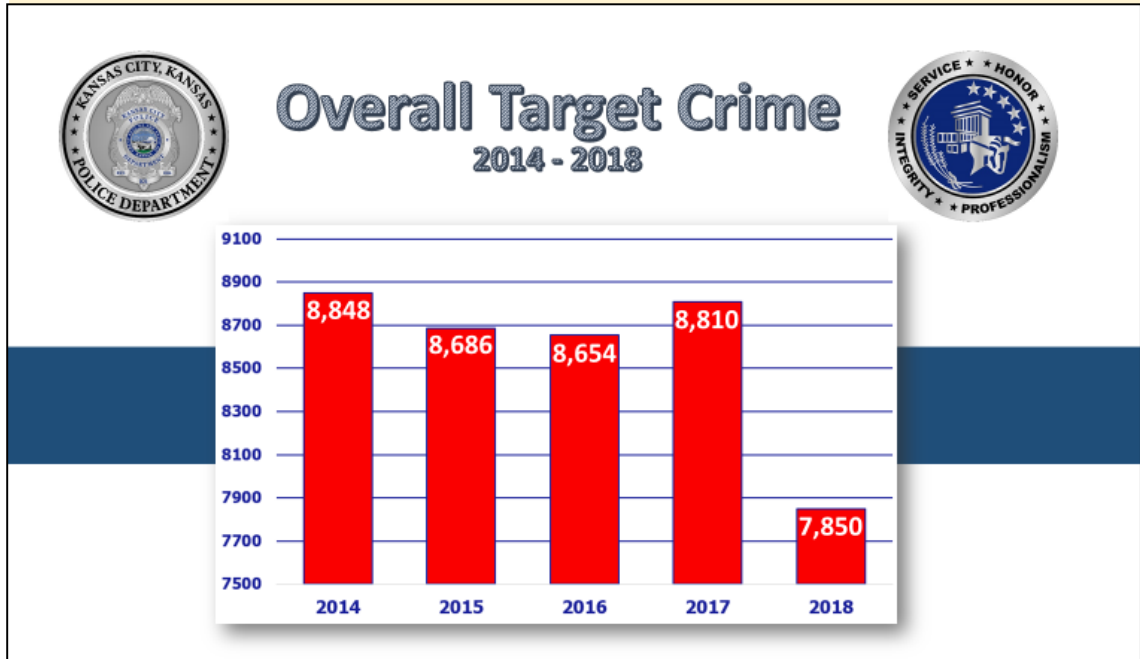


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Dramatic Drops in KCK Crime



By Mike Taylor
Unified Government Staff

Overall crime in Kansas City, Kansas dropped nearly 11% in 2018 over the previous year. Incidents of total crimes decreased from 8,810 in 2017 to 7,850 in 2018.

Homicides declined by 14.6%, while drive-by shootings showed the sharpest drop at 17.6% from the year before.

KCK Police Chief Terry Zeigler credits a new approach to crime-fighting known as Project ACT (Addressing Crime Together) for much of the improved statistics. Project Act is a data-driven approach to policing which also relies on stronger partnerships with citizens and community groups.

Police have also stepped-up their communication with citizens. Chief Zeigler used Twitter 1,738 times in 2018, reaching followers 3.8-million times with news of crimes and police investigations.

KCK Police also arrested fewer people in 2018. 8,386 citizens were arrested in 2018, while 13,606 people were arrested in 2014. Police handled 136,303 calls for service in 2018 with 140 complaints filed with Internal Affairs. That's only 0.001% of calls which resulted in a complaint being filed against Police. Looking at it another way, only one complaint was filed for every 974 calls.

See more about the drop in KCK crime on page 3.

Wyandotte County Health Ranking Not Improved

Wyandotte County ranks 99th out of 102 Kansas counties measured in the 10th annual County Health Rankings. That means Wyandotte County is one of the unhealthiest areas in the state. The ranking is unchanged from last year when the Wyandotte County was also 99th.

"It can be disappointing to see a low ranking, but these rankings, change slowly," states Terry Brecheisen, Director of the Public

Health Department of the Unified Government.

The rankings are based on over 30 factors that influence health such as employment, access to care, community safety, poverty and educational attainment. And the rankings are based on data that is three to five years old.

Brecheisen says several important measures of Wyandotte County residents' health are trending

See CUT TAXES Page 2 ►



Stay Connected with the UG

Website More than 2.7-million people a year use the Unified Government Website to stay informed and do business with their local government. Check it out at www.wycokck.org

UG ENews Source Every week the Unified Government sends an informative electronic newsletter to your email inbox. Sign-up by going to the UG Website and click on the "I Want To" drop down box.

UGTV UG Commission meetings, Standing Committee meetings and Budget workshops are broadcast on UGTV, along with lots of other information and programs about the community. Tune to Channel 2 on Spectrum cable and Channel 141 on Google TV.

Facebook The Unified Government is officially on Facebook with it's Kansas City, Kansas Unified Government page. It's easy to take part. Just go to www.facebook.com/cityofkck. Click the "Like" icon and you'll be a member of the Kansas City, Kansas Official FB Page of the Unified Government.

YouTube The Unified Government's efforts to communicate with citizens and promote the community don't stop there. The Unified Government Channel on YouTube displays a number of videos about interesting and important issues and events as well. Just go to www.YouTube.com/officialwycokck to see our videos.

Social Media In addition to the UG Website, Facebook, UG ENews, UGTV, YouTube and The Citizen Newsletter, the Unified Government also helps you stay connected through Next Door and Twitter.

The Citizen Newsletter is published by the Unified Government of Wyandotte County/Kansas City, Kansas, 66101. It is mailed to every residential address in Wyandotte County. Due to postage costs, copies are not mailed outside Wyandotte County. An electronic version is posted on the official Unified Government website at www.wycokck.org. Comments or questions can be sent to Mike Taylor, Public Relations Director at mtaylor@wycokck.org.

In accordance with the Department of Justice regulations, the Unified Government's Equal Employment Opportunity Plan (EEOP), is available on the Unified Government website at www.wycokck.org.

Get Ready for the 2020 Census

By Gordon Criswell
Unified Government Staff

Although the 2020 Census will not occur until April 1, 2020, the Unified Government has started preparing to ensure that all residents of our County participate in the official census count. Article 1, Section 2 of the US Constitution requires that every ten years a count of population and housing results be reported to the President, all fifty states and the American people.

The Census data is used by state and local governments to determine the number of representatives from each state, to draw congressional and state legislative districts, school districts and voting precincts, distribution of federal dollars to the state (which is passed to counties based upon a formula), enforcement of voting rights and civil rights and to inform organizational decisions (e.g. where to locate, size of markets for businesses).

A Complete Count Census Committee has been established through Mayor Alvey's Office for the purpose of developing and implementing a plan to increase citizen participation in the population count of all residents of Wyandotte County. The Complete Count Committee is composed

of representatives from across different sectors of the community to include community organizations, businesses, education and faith-based organizations, for example. Each resident will be impacted by the census as representational boundaries have to be redrawn based upon population increases or decreases. Wyandotte County will undertake redistricting to redraw Commission district boundaries based upon any changes in population. Below is a timeline for redrawing boundaries:

- Late March/early April 2021, census data received by each State
- Fall 2021, Unified Government will go through redistricting process
- December 2021, Unified Government Commission will certify changes to commission boundaries

All residents are encouraged to complete their census information on April 1, 2020. It is important that every resident in every household is counted accurately. If you would like more information or want to get involved with the Complete Count Committee, please contact the Unified Government at (913) 573-5024.

Mayor Alvey Focused on KCK Neighborhoods

By Lauren Cooper
Unified Government Staff

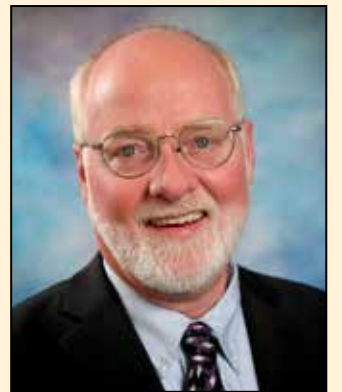
A sense of pride stands strong in the heart of Mayor David Alvey when calling Kansas City, Kansas his home. Mayor Alvey's childhood memories reside among the neighborhoods of Wyandotte County, and his family heritage runs deep within the community.

"Alvey Hill is what they called my neighborhood growing up because so much of my family resided in one area, my grandparents lived within one minute away," said the Mayor.

Wyandotte County is a thriving community rich in history, businesses and restaurants owned by those residing in the county. Whether Italian or Mexican, the local food tells a story and with every bite you get a taste of home.

"Kansas City, Kansas is special to me because it's always been an immigrant community. You can tell the history of the nation through the history of Wyandotte county in so many ways. I like the authenticity of the place," said Alvey.

The Mayor and various departments of the Unified Government are working on an initiative to improve the quality of life of its residents. "From Our Neighborhoods



Up" initiative is all about taking a neighborhood-centric approach towards growing the city," said Alvey.

The Mayor says it is important that neighbors, churches, and Unified Government all work together for the good of everyone residing in Wyandotte. "The most important players are the residents, and the work of Unified Government is to empower, engage, and give guidance towards improving the quality of life," said Alvey.

The initiative is working towards building a fiscally resilient future, starting with the downtown area of KCK. Plans are underway for a KU Health Systems Strawberry Hill campus and the new MERC grocery store. In addition to downtown development, there will also be trail, street, and park improvements.

"I want the city to continue to grow and improve and part of that is paying attention to what is going on in our neighborhoods," said Alvey.



UG Public Works plowed
107,000 miles of snow
and ice covered streets in
Winter 2019

KCK Crime Report

HEALTH RANKING


cont. from page 1

positively: Alcohol-related driving deaths, the teen birth rate, the ratio of primary care physicians to population, the high school graduation rate, and unemployment are all going in the right direction. But other measures have trended negatively. These include the adult obesity rate, rate of sexually transmitted infections, and rate of children in poverty.

A relatively new feature of the County Health Rankings is the ability to examine the disparities in health status between Black, White, and Hispanic populations. According to data reported in the Rankings, 18% of White children in Wyandotte County are living in poverty, compared to 34% of Hispanic children and 42% of Black children.

“Wyandotte County has a proud heritage of having multi-ethnic and multi-cultural communities within its borders,” states Brecheisen. “The goal is to achieve health equity for all residents, defined as attainment of the highest level of health for all people,” said Brecheisen.

“Good work is being accomplished by employees at the Public Health Department and our community partners,” Brecheisen said. “We are all working hard to improve the health of our Wyandotte County residents. “Additionally, initiatives like Healthy Communities Wyandotte (www.hcwyco.org) continue to organize efforts to reduce the burden of tobacco use, improve the built environment to make physical activity easier, and work with local and state policymakers to pass laws that improve public health.”

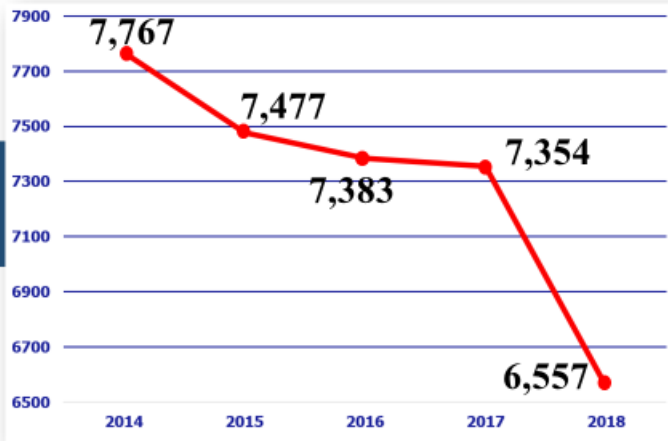
In 2017-2018 the Health Department and community partners conducted a Community Health Assessment and then launched a 2018-2023 Community Health Improvement Plan (CHIP). It expands and aligns work in the areas of: Violence Prevention, Access to Healthcare, Jobs and Education, and Safe and Affordable Housing. (www.wycokck.org/health/plan.aspx). 



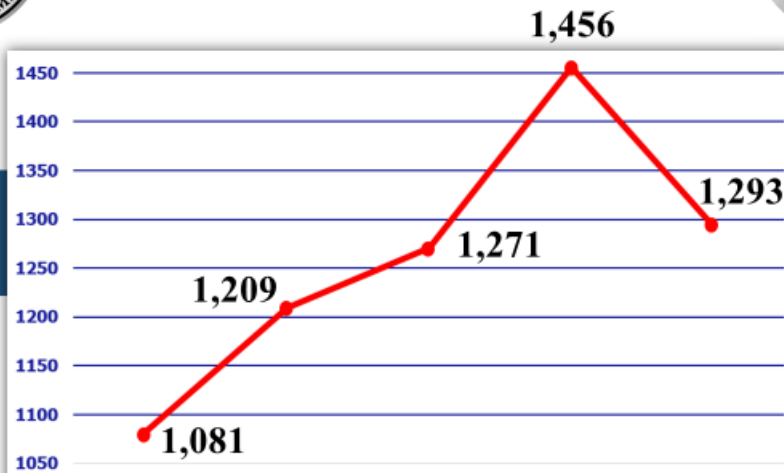
UG Water Pollution Control treated 7.1-billion gallons of wastewater in 2018



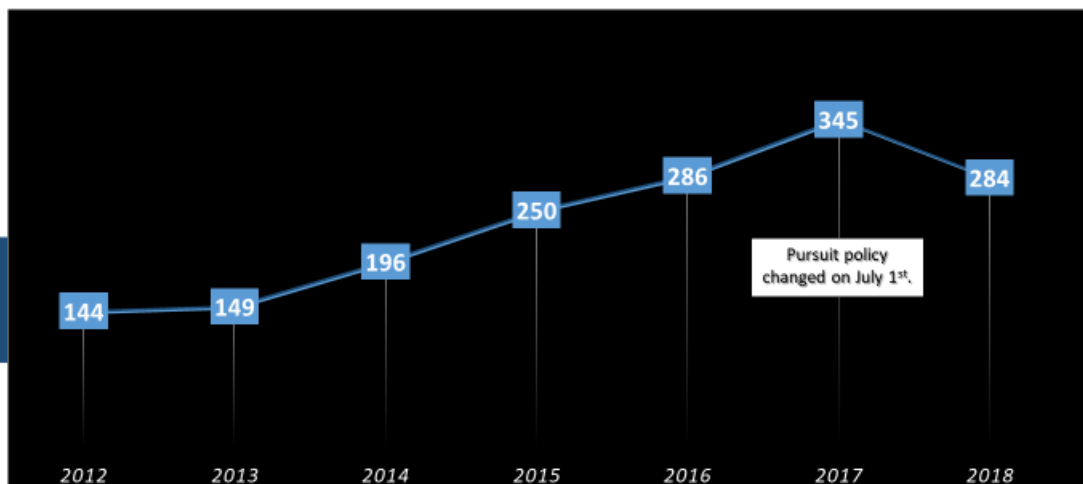
Property Crime 2014 - 2018



Violent Crime 2014 - 2018



Drive-By Shooting Data



July 1, 2017, The Kansas City, KS Police Department implemented a national model for crime fighting known as “Data Driven Approaches To Crime & Traffic Safety” due to the rise in violent crime and particularly drive-by shootings. Once the pursuit policy was changed to allow for pursuits of any crime, there were 30 fewer drive-by shootings the second half of 2017 than the first half. The graph clearly shows a 17.5% decrease in drive-by shootings from 2017 to 2018, we believe this is in part due to our pursuit policy change. We also saw an 1% decrease in violent crime in 2018. The KCKPD was awarded \$700,000 by the federal government because of our crime fighting initiatives.

SOAR Shows 3 Years of Progress

Three years ago, Unified Government staff begin tearing down bureaucratic silos to improve the community. Department leaders met and realized how processes to deal with blight, abandoned housing and code violations often stepped on each other and were not coordinated. That has all changed.

As 2019 is underway, the Unified Government of Wyandotte County and KCK is wrapping up year three of a five-year initiative focused on improving quality of life through housing. Methodically, vacant houses are being turned into liveable, taxpaying homes. The Stabilization, Occupation and Revitalization (SOAR) program is on track to improve 10,000 blighted, abandoned and code-violating residences.

The "Propertunity Knocks program" gives approved and vetted contractors an incentive to buy unfit homes and rehab them into habitable structures. The UG doesn't give contractors the deed to the homes they buy from the bank until contractors make enough renovations to meet code requirements for a habitable structure.


"What we've seen in those neighborhoods where a house has been taken from a status of vacant and dilapidated to a nice-looking, new home is the neighbors are doing things because they are invigorated to see the investment in their neighborhood. That makes us really excited because we know what we're doing is working," said Melissa Sieben, assistant county administrator for the Unified Government.

Sieben said about 60 properties are in varying stages of the Propertunity Knocks program.

In 2018, Unified Government Commissioners allocated \$3-million for demolitions. In that span, crews tore down 77 unfit homes.

In 2019, the UG plans to unveil the first-of-its-kind registry of vacant properties. Most databases only include vacant homes that have been foreclosed, or where ownership is back in the hands of banks. By partnering with ProChamps, Sieben said the UG will be the first municipality in the United States to have a registry that includes privately owned vacant homes.

"What it does is it gives staff here the opportunity to monitor and watch those properties, but also make sure they're not being a problem for their neighbors," Sieben said. "They're making sure they're mowed, that the houses are secured, and that they're staying in condition that could be re-inhabited in the future."

The SOAR program is also working to head off problems in neighborhoods which are reaching a "tipping point" where the neighborhood could fall into major problems. 



More Land Bank Rehab Program Success

The award-winning Land Bank Rehab Program hit a record high! 3817 N 55th St just cleared its final inspection to meet the program requirements. This recent daycare and former Knights of Columbus hall has always been zoned residential since its construction. The direction was to restore it to use as a private residence.

The bank appraisal of this latest rehab came in at \$250,000! Talk about taking a vacant space to a vibrant place! This is an impressive win for the program, J Bloc, and the UG!

Stay tuned for an open house announcement. For more details contact Chris Slaughter at cslaughter@wycokck.org or 913-573-8977. 





The Merc Co-op Grocery is Coming to Downtown KCK

The Merc Co-op has signed an agreement to open a 14,000 square foot grocery store at 5th & Minnesota in Kansas City, Kansas. The store is set to open in early 2020.

Where did this expansion plan come from?

The co-op's board and managers first discussed the KCK opportunity with owners at our November 2017 Annual Co-op Meeting, but expansion has been a topic at the board level for quite some time. To make it possible for more people to own and engage in the co-op model and to increase the good that we can do within our communities, the board rewrote our Ends in 2015 to say The Merc Co-op will be a "thriving consumer owned cooperative in our region."

How is this expansion being paid for?

The Unified Government of Kansas City, Kansas/Wyandotte County (UG) has demonstrated how much they value creating access to healthy food by mitigating our financial risks. They will fund all of the estimated \$6 million equipment, fixtures and furnishings with proceeds from the sale of the Hilton Garden Inn. The co-op will pay property taxes and utilities.

Can I shop at the co-op if I'm not an owner?

Yes! Everyone can shop. Anyone can own. There are perks and benefits to ownership, and when owners shop they earn points towards a year-end rebate. Find out more at www.themerc.coop/ownership.

Who are the decision-makers? Do the member-owners have to vote on this?

The board of directors, elected by the co-op's owners, decided to allow the general manager to pursue the project. More information on the co-op's board and how they operate can be found at www.themerc.coop/board.

How soon would the store open?

Early 2020. Construction will begin by early summer 2019.

Where will shoppers park?

The grocery store will have nearly 60 dedicated spaces within the current lot at 5th & Minnesota. Additional street parking will be available as soon as this spring.

Who will work at the KCK store?

The co-op will hire approximately 20-25 new employees to staff this store. We have made it a priority to hire individuals from the KCK community to reflect the ethnically diverse demographics. More

information about co-op employment can be found at www.themerc.coop/employment.

Who is building the store?

The UG selected McCown Gordon Construction (KCMO).

Who is designing the store?

The UG selected International Architects Atelier (KCMO). The UG held two community input sessions in February to receive feedback on the architect's proposed designs. That feedback shaped the plans to move ahead with the rendering featured above.

The UG has discussed selling the building to a private owner. What does that mean for the co-op?

With long-term sustainability, the co-op would have the option to purchase the property.

Will art be incorporated into the project?

Art will be a feature at the corner of 5th & Minnesota. The co-op hopes to incorporate murals as well.


Will this store be the same as the store at 901 Iowa?

While the store will be the same as the Lawrence store, it will remain a full-service grocery store with produce, salad bar, packaged meat and seafood and grocery as well as a deli and cafe. The specifics of what this store will look like have not been determined, and product selection will depend on what the KCK community wants and needs from a local grocery store.

What will expansion mean for local producers?

We look forward to expanding current partnerships and building new relationships with local KCK farmers and producers.

What does this mean for prices?

Access and affordability is necessary, which is why we offer more affordable options and our store brands, Field Day and Best Choice. We currently accept SNAP/EBT and will launch WIC in 2019. In addition, we offer the MercShare+, a program that provides ownership subsidies and 10% discounts to those on food assistance. As the co-op grows, we increase our buying power - which means better prices for our shoppers. 

Parks and Rec News

By Angel Obert
Unified Government Staff

Fishing season is underway at Wyandotte County Lake and Pierson Park. Wyandotte County Lake is stocked with Rainbow Trout and catfish. Pierson is full of catfish. All totaled, the lakes are stocked with 8 tons of trout and nearly 9 tons of catfish.

Movies in the Park hit the big screen on June 7th, July 12th and August 9th.

You can wind down from a long week at Yoga in the Park, classes starting on August 27th. Follow the WYCO Parks and Rec Facebook page for dates and details.

We are super excited to announce that we've received a grant from the National Fitness Campaign for an outdoor fitness court at Huron Park and will be partnering with local groups to fund the project. Antici-

pated build date is Spring 2019. More details coming soon!

In addition to this we have lots of upgrades to our parks and facilities. Minor renovations at James P. Davis Hall underway and we are gearing up for facility opening (restrooms, spray parks, and pool) along with checking all docks and cable making sure they are ready to go.

We are repairing ballfield fixtures in preparation for Spring and Summer Sports, fixing and preparing to set out soccer goals for the season. Sports programs being offered by Parks and Recreation this Spring include Soccer, T-Ball, Machine Pitch and Baseball.

Lastly, Parks and Recreation would like to invite the community out for our Annual Christmas in July at Wyandotte County Lake on Saturday, July 20th from 9am-12pm. This event includes activities for the whole family as well as a



Workers stock Wyandotte County Lake with 6,500 pounds of Rainbow Trout.

pontoon boat parade in the evening with fireworks to follow! Decorate your pontoon in Christmas

theme to win! Follow us on Facebook to stay up to date on this event as it gets closer.



Pesky Potholes

As long as there are paved roadways, there will also be potholes. Recent snowstorms and extreme temperature fluctuations have increased the number of potholes on city streets, but the UG Public Works team has been hard at work

patching when weather permits. Since November 2018, crews have used 252.28 tons of asphalt to fix more than 2,000 potholes. The community is encouraged to report potholes by calling 311 or utilizing the myWyco app.



Wyandotte County has 68,202 land parcels. 74% are residential. 2018 property values increased a median average of 6.7%

Right-of-Way Mowing Changes

Thank you to everyone who mowed and trimmed in the right-of-way on their property last year! In the past, Public Works mowed or trimmed the right-of-way in many areas, but the two most recent Citizen Surveys showed that street maintenance is a higher priority.

Street maintenance programs require a committed and disciplined approach to ensure costly roadways last as long as possible. To meet the expectations of residents, the Board of Commissioners worked with staff to phase out right-of-way mowing in 2018.

Beginning in 2019, Public Works will only mow and trim publicly-owned property in the right-of-way. "This change will allow Public Works to focus resources on curb replacement, alleyway improvements, and increased pothole patching," said Dave Reno, Public Works Community Engagement Officer.

Beginning this spring, property owners will be responsible for mowing or trimming the right-of-way on their property. Roadside ditches should also be maintained, but vegetation may not be entirely removed or killed with-

out approval from the Unified Government. For undeveloped or agricultural land, property owners only need to maintain the first 25ft from the road or curb edge.

The Public Works department looks forward to focusing on what is most important to everyone in Kansas City, Kansas through this change. To learn more about right-of-way mowing or trimming, visit wycokck.org/mowing. Contact Public Works at (913) 573-5400 with questions or concerns.

KCK Fire Department Looking for Recruits, Especially Women

According to the International Association of Women in Fire and Emergency Services, only about 4% of our nation's firefighters are women. The Kansas City Kansas Fire Department is currently a little more than 6% female. Improving these numbers is one of several recruitment priorities. These percentages are slightly higher in law enforcement but recruiting women

Camp Fury concept is designed to introduce girls to careers in fire service, law enforcement, and emergency medical services




into public safety careers continues to be a challenge for most communities.

In 2009, two female firefighters from Arizona launched an innovative camp, designed to introduce girls to careers in the fire service, law enforcement, and emergency medical services. Camp Fury is a collaborative effort between local

chapters of the Girl Scouts of America and public safety agencies. In June of 2019, Catching Fury, the introductory Camp Fury camp, is coming to Kansas City! Catching Fury is a one-day camp for rising 8th and 9th grade girls and will be held June 22, 2019 in KCMO and June 29, 2019 in KCK.

The Kansas City Kansas Fire Department has partnered with the Wyandotte County Sheriff's Office, the Kansas City Missouri Fire Department, the Kansas City Missouri Police Department, and the Girl Scouts of NE Kansas/SW Missouri to develop and host our own KS/MO camp.

The Camp Fury concept is three progressive camps. Catching Fury, Camp Fury, a week long immersion camp for rising 10th, 11th and 12th grade girls, will be held summer of 2020. Camp Fury Executives is a leadership camp for 12th grade girls to help prepare them to take on the world post high school. 



BECOME
A
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POSITIVE CHANGE IN
OUR COMMUNITY

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An average of 50 young people a night turn out for boxing and mentoring by KCK Police and community leaders at the Police Athletic League. The PAL gym is located in the remodeled St Mary's Church at 5th and Ann in downtown KCK.



Website: www.wycokck.org



3-1-1.

One easy number to contact the Unified Government with questions, concerns, complaints, comments or to pay taxes. Just call, go online or use the mobile app.

2019 Unified Government Commission



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