

# Kansas Association of Trail Stewards (KATS)

## Third Congress

### Participant Biographies

#### Aaron Apel

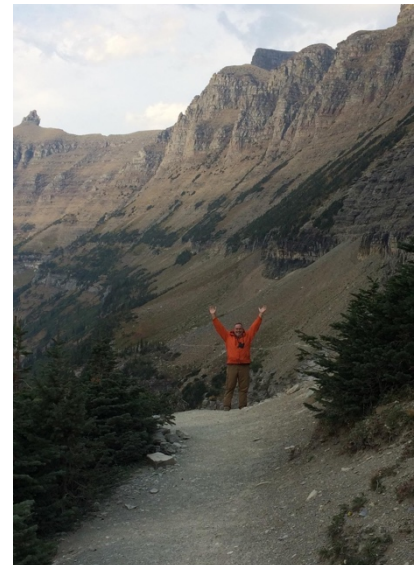
For nearly two decades, Aaron has been a tireless champion for personal health, community trail development, and entrepreneurial sustainability. He blends his deep understanding of brick-and-mortar business with a passion for connecting people to each other and the natural environments they travel through.

Aaron's expertise is as diverse as the communities he has helped foster. He's a proven leader nationally as a brick-and-mortar bike shop owner and operator, cultivating a culture of exceptional customer service and community engagement. As a tireless advocate for grassroots outdoor initiatives, he spearheaded multiple natural surface trail development projects throughout the Flint Hills, owned and operated a small trail building company, directed a \$25M recreation and trails political campaign in Manhattan, KS, and was the manager of KTC's Trail In A Box #1 for six years.



#### Jeff Bender

Jeffrey Bender, Region Supervisor, Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks (KDWP). Supervise Flint Hills Trail, Prairie Spirit Trail, Prairie Center. Oversee development of Flint Hills Trail under the Rebuilding American Infrastructure with Sustainability and Equity RAISE grant and Transportation Alternative (TA) grants as well as other initiatives.



## Elizabeth Burger

Elizabeth E. Burger, PhD, MBA, EMT, is Senior Vice President of Programs & Strategy at Sunflower Foundation, a statewide health foundation. Elizabeth leads an extensive portfolio including food access, nutrition security, and Food is Medicine; access to nature and public trails; integration of behavioral health and primary care; nonprofit capacity building; and education through Sunflower's Nonprofit Center. Elizabeth began her professional career during college working in broadcast journalism, then later transitioned to health, pursuing graduate degrees and a post-doctoral fellowship in exercise science, health promotion, obesity management and business. Before finding philanthropy, she owned a personal training business, directed hospital wellness programs, taught and did research at the university level, and directed evaluation at the American Academy of Family Physicians.



Outside of work, Burger is a certified firefighter/EMT and volunteers for her rural fire district and multiple other community boards and projects, including work to create a public nature preserve on her family's rural property. She also serves on the national board for American Trails. Elizabeth enjoys any chance to be active outdoors and appreciates all research pointing to the benefits of coffee, dark chocolate, and wine.

Education: BA in Communications, University of Tulsa; MS in Exercise Science and PhD in Health & Human Performance, Oklahoma State University; Post-Doctoral Fellowship at Energy Balance Lab, University of Kansas; MBA, Rockhurst University.

## Monica Chapman

I have been an equestrian since 3rd grade when I got my first pony while growing up in Kansas. In 1995 I entered the world of endurance riding. I have been a continuous member of the American Endurance Ride Conference (aerc.org) since 1995. I have a total of 11,500+ competition miles. Ranging from 25 mile rides all the way up to 100-mile rides in one day. I have done single day rides up to 5-day 285-mile rides all on one horse. I have competed and hauled my horses from California to Florida to Maine and competed in 30 states. I truly believe in the motto of AERC which is "To Finish Is to Win".

I have served on the AERC board as a director and officer from 2008 until recently, Feb. 2024. I serve on the American Horse Council's Recreation, Trails and Land Management Committee, since 2015. I attend the Hike the Hill Conference in Washington DC every February. While at Hike the Hill I meet with federal land managers, congressmen, and senators, advocating for smart trail usage and proper funding. I have been a member of Back Country Horsemen of Kansas since 2014. I help keep the trails in shape, plan fund raisers, and when needed guide the club on grants and land manager issues. I became a lifetime member of the Kansas Horse Council in 2009. I am currently on the board of directors for KHC.



## Jeff Carroll

Jeff is the owner of Ottawa Bike and Trail, an independent bike shop located at the intersection of the Prairie Spirit and Flint Hills Trails. He founded the shop with his wife, Leigh Ann, in 2018 to pursue his passion for cycling and to cultivate a community of cyclists while promoting Ottawa as a cycling hub in Kansas. Since its opening, Jeff has expanded Ottawa Bike and Trail to offer services beyond traditional retail, including trail transportation, twice-weekly group rides, and bike rental services. He recently opened a second location in Ottawa that focuses exclusively on e-bikes. Additionally, the shop hosts the annual Moonrise Bike Ride, a bikepacking, music, and food festival that has become the largest bikepacking event in Kansas. Prior to opening the bike shop Jeff spend 28 years as a software development and product manager in the Financial Services industry.



## David Colborn

I am married to Ambra Colborn, and we have three kids. We own Colborn Electrical Services and sit on the Medicine Lodge Peace Treaty Association Board. I am the Powwow Chairperson and Native Liaison. In addition to being the Powwow Chairperson I also maintain the Powwow Grounds at Memorial Peace Park. A facility that includes a location for powwows, get togethers, company appreciation dinners etc. Also, primitive camping and trails are scattered throughout. My family enjoys helping maintain as well as just utilizing the trails and it gives us a great place to get out in nature. I truly believe it is great for our youth to get out and get in nature. I personally know how therapeutic it is for my 6-year-old autistic son.



## Justin Cobb

I serve as the Government Relations Manager for The Nature Conservancy in Kansas. In this role, I engage in policy initiatives at the local, state, and federal levels including those involving public access and funding. My wife and I have been residents of Topeka for about two years and we enjoy traveling to various hiking destinations, although our dog Bo is biased towards running through tallgrass prairie. I owe a great deal of fond memories to the trails and those who maintain them and look forward to supporting them through this effort.





## Maureen Crist

I have been on the board of Marshall County Connection, Inc since its inception in 2006. Since that time our nine member board has developed and maintained the Blue River Rail Trail, a thirteen mile trail that extends from Marysville to the Nebraska border where it connects to the Nebraska trail system. I serve as treasurer of the board and promote the trail through our web site, and social and print media. As a small organization with a big job we all jump in to trim trees, raise funds, host events and dream up exciting new ways to add to the trail. This year it was a kids bike park!

I am also a member of the board of OneMarysville our newly combined Tourism, Chamber and Main St organization. Recently I've worked on the new community wayfinding signs and development of the Black Squirrel Bark Park.

My husband and I have lived in Marysville for over forty years. We love to travel the world and anywhere there's a new trail to experience.



## Crystal Cummins

Born in Barber County, Crystal Cummins has always appreciated the beauty of rural Kansas. After relocating during her teenage years, she and her husband returned in 2006 to raise their two children in the heart of Kansas's countryside. They love immersing themselves in nature, enjoying camping and exploring less-traveled trails and back roads. As long-time members of their local church, they actively engage in community ministry events, driven by their desire to love others as Jesus does. Professionally, Crystal has served as the City Clerk for the City of Isabel since 2009, reflecting her commitment to nurturing rural life. In 2022, she expanded her community involvement by joining the Barber County United Board (BCU), where she currently serves as Treasurer. Her involvement with BCU led her to become a key member of the Medicine Lodge Memorial Peace Treaty Trails Committee. Through her advocacy and leadership, Crystal is dedicated to enhancing the quality of life for residents across the region, ensuring the beauty and values of rural Kansas thrive for future generations.



## Lelan Dains

I serve as the Director of Visit Emporia and have a long history in the sport of cycling including being a former owner of Unbound Gravel, Gravel City Adventure & Supply Co., and spearheading initiatives such as the National Interscholastic Cycling Association (NICA) KS High School Cycling, Great Plains Gravel (a route from the border of Mexico to Canada through the plains states), and Gravel KS (an initiative to map and share iconic gravel routes throughout the state of Kansas).





## Andy Fry

I am a transportation planner for WSP in Topeka. I'm proud to ride and walk with my kids daily to school throughout the year.

I am a volunteer with the Topeka Community Cycle Project. I'm active member and advocate of Live Well Shawnee County, Topeka's Complete Streets Advisory Committee, Top City Trail Alliance, Kanza Rail Trails Conservancy, Friends of the Kaw's River Guides, KDOT's Drive to Zero efforts and KDOT's Safe Routes to School Advisory Committee. I'm happy to learn more about Kansas Association of Trail Stewards.

I was proud to have my private and work goals overlap recently in assisting in the successful grant application for \$25 million RAISE grant for Topeka for sidewalks. \$5 million of which will be a 10 foot multiuse path next to the Kansas River in Topeka from downtown to the Oakland neighborhoods.



## Mike Goodwin

I'm a Board member and treasurer of the Kansas Trails Council. Established in 1974, we are a non-profit all-volunteer organization dedicated to building, managing, and promoting trails in Kansas.

I have been involved in trail design, construction, and maintenance of trails for the past 25 years. I have had the pleasure of working with many aspiring trail builders across the state as they embark on building new trails in their community. About 10 years ago we established the Trail in a Box program to loan specialized trail building equipment and tools to groups who want to build trails.

We have recently partnered with Thrive Allen County to share management of this program and the fleet of seven trailers.

We also developed and manage the GetOutdoorsKansas website and mobile apps that displays over 4,000 miles of trails of all types across the state.



## Taryn Gregg

Taryn is the Director of Trails at Thrive. Taryn is in charge of overseeing and maintaining the Lehigh Portland Trail system.

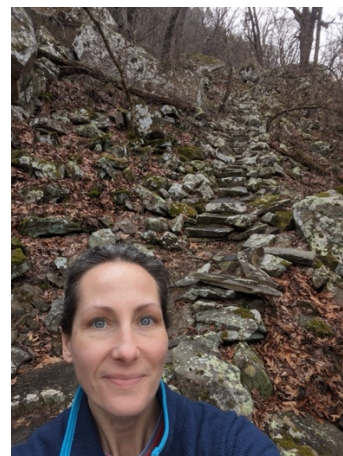
Most of Taryn's background is in the medical and education fields, working in many capacities. She has worked as a medical assistant, and most recently, a patient liaison/registration clerk and specialty clinic lead at NMRMC. Taryn has also spent time as a para in the SMD and ED classrooms and as a teacher and Warehouse Program Director at Cherry Street Youth Center.

Growing up in rural Tennessee, the Appalachian mountains were right in her backyard. She grew up with a passion for nature and exploring trails. Volunteering with the youth at her church is another love she pursues. Taryn enjoys a myriad of hobbies, including art of all kinds, baking and cake decorating, hiking, gardening, and remodeling her home in Chanute, KS, where she enjoys raising her children and loving their animals with her husband, Charlie.



## Leslie Herring

I serve as the Kansas co-chair of Mid-America Regional Council's Bike & Pedestrian Advisory Committee (2021 – present) and I am also the City Administrator in Westwood, Kansas (2020 – present). In my previous position as Assistant City Manager in Eudora, Kansas, I worked on a variety of trail and bike/ped priorities (2016 – 2020). In 2020, my family and I discovered the wealth of single-track, dirt trails around the Kansas City metro; the wealth of dirt trails in Arkansas State Parks; and also the concept of urban hiking from our home in the Westwood area; and hiking has since become a regular part of our weekly family routine. In addition to hiking for recreation and personal health, active transportation is a critical component of my family's daily life. We are an intentional single-car household, and walking to/from work, school, sports, and to visit friends is our default. As such, investments in active transportation infrastructure and supportive policies in the urbanized area have become a top priority that intersects my private and public life.



## Brittney Holum

I am a native of Independence, Kansas, and made my return to her my hometown in 2019 after building a diverse and accomplished career in various business sectors across Chicago, Minneapolis, and Austin. With extensive professional experience, she founded Arrow Advisors LLC in 2015, a small business consulting firm that specializes in marketing, branding, web design, HR/hiring functions and back-office services for small businesses throughout the country.

I am member of the inaugural class of the Rural Champions initiative through the Kansas Department of Commerce's Office of Rural Prosperity, where I'm currently leading an initiative to build new trails in Independence.

My dedication to economic development is further reflected in my service on the Independence Main Street Economic Vitality Committee, where I work to enhance the local economy.

Brittney holds a Bachelor of Science in Recreation & Sport Management, with a minor in Business Administration, from Pittsburg State University in Pittsburg, Kansas.



## Nick Jones

Nick Jones has served as the City Administrator for the City of Council Grove for seven years. Nick holds a bachelor's degree in Recreation from Emporia State, a master's degree in counseling & student development from Kansas State, and a Master of Public Administration from Arkansas State. He also holds the Certified Public Manager credential.

The City of Council Grove has added the North and South Riverwalk extensions which connect to the Flint hills Nature Trail. Both projects were funded by alternative transportation funding. The city is currently doing Safe Routes to School which will add additional walking and biking paths that connect to the Flint Hills Nature Trail.

Additionally, the city has a master plan which includes future walking and biking paths out to the nearby federal reservoir and walking and biking paths that connect to the old Santa Fe Trail rail line.



## Deb Kolb

Debra “Deb” Kolb is a 6th generation resident of Medicine Lodge in Barber County, Kansas. She has worked more than 20-years as a leader of community events and programs, promoting historical preservation, community development, and tourism, and the last five-years as Executive Director of Barber County United (BCU), a wellness focused coalition. Deb’s progressive approaches toward rural wellbeing has catapulted BCU as a recognized and engaged rural quality-of-life organization voice both regionally and at the state level. Partnering with the Peace Treaty Association, Deb has concentrated efforts towards an innovative, holistic approach towards wellness on the trails.



## Jenny Kramer

Jenny Kramer serves as KDOT’s Active Transportation Manager. She is responsible for overseeing the KDOT administered Transportation Alternatives program and serves as the state Pedestrian and Bicycle Coordinator.

Prior to working for KDOT, Jenny served as the Community Health Promotion Section Director at the Kansas Department of Health and Environment.

Jenny received a Bachelor of Science in Environmental Studies and a Master of Science in Nutrition Science, with a focus on public health, from the University of Utah.

Jenny primarily walks and bikes for transportation and enjoys the many recreational opportunities Kansas has to offer, especially when it involves lakes and rivers.





## Linda Lanterman

Linda Lanterman is the Director of Kansas State Parks where she oversees the operations of 29 state parks, the Land and Water Conservation Fund program and the National Recreational Trails grant program. Lanterman has served as Parks Division Director for the Kansas Department of Wildlife, Parks and Tourism since December of 2010, where she has led the Division to the highest revenue in our history.

Lanterman holds a degree in accounting from Wichita State University. She has served on many boards including the National Association of State Park Directors, National Association of State Outdoor Recreation Liaison Officers, and Kansas Recreation and Parks Association. Linda has experience working with local communities and constituents on outdoor recreation projects and partnerships.

Linda and her husband, Ralph, have a daughter Lexie and her husband Tucker.



## Myron Leinwetter

Myron Leinwetter lives with his wife outside Rossville, Kansas. He currently serves on the board of directors of the Rossville Community Foundation and is the Trails Coordinator. He is a retired Family Practice physician with a strong interest in Public Health.

Myron was born and raised in Atwood, Kansas, and is a lifelong Kansan. Myron is an avid long-distance runner who has completed multiple marathons including the Boston Marathon. He also enjoys trail hiking, gravel biking, gardening, prairie restoration, planting trees, and building trails. As a resident of a small rural community, he understands that collaboration with local partners is crucial to success. His challenge is to design, secure funding, and build local trails (the Rossville Community Trail and the Toadstrangler Trail) to benefit the economic, physical, and mental health of the Rossville community and Shawnee County.



## Luke Mahin

I'm the co-owner of Irrigation Ales in Courtland Kansas.

I am a micro-brewery co-owner, brewery, bartender, and mainly janitor with my wife for the last two years. Previously the director of Republic County Economic Development for eight years. I serve on the Courtland Fun Day, Courtland Arts Council, Kansas Sampler Foundation, and Republic County Community Foundation. Personally, I am working with a group of people to create a trail in Courtland that will potentially lead to outside-of-town trails. Irrigation Ales promotes gravel rides each Thursday as well as longer routes around us. We see a lot of potential with trails as a healthy way for locals and tourists to experience our rural culture revolving around irrigation in NCK and diversify our economy that is already supported by great AirBnb's in the area.



## Kelli Mark

Kelli Mark is the Director of Healthy Communities at the Sunflower Foundation. In this role she spearheads the foundation's work in food and nutrition security, as well as its Sunflower Trails program, which supports organizations and communities working to provide safe, accessible public trails and outdoor spaces where Kansans can reap the many health benefits of being more active and connecting with nature. She also works in partnership with the Sunflower programming team to lead the foundation's Food is Medicine work, which focuses on the critical role nutrition plays in preventing, treating, and managing chronic disease.

Prior to joining the foundation, Kelli spent five years in the Kansas Department of Health and Environment's Bureau of Family Health, working to improve maternal and child health across the state. While at the bureau, she served as a unit director, section chief, and director of administration and policy before rising to bureau chief. She also spent a decade working for St. Francis Health Center.

A native of Topeka, Kelli has an Associate of Liberal Studies from Barton Community College, a Bachelor of Science in Human Nutrition/Public Health from Kansas State University, and a Master of Public Administration from Wichita State University.



## Kat McKee

My name is Kat McKee. I am the Executive Director of The Quality of Life Coalition, Inc. I have a master's in library science and over 35 years of experience in business and community leadership. I bring a dynamic blend of expertise and dedication to my role.

A native of Abilene, my roots run deep in the community. My family business has contributed significantly to local infrastructure, including building and renovating swimming pools throughout Dickinson County.

I have always been active in the fitness community and have competed in and hosted many local events. I used to ride my bike and run on the shoulder of HWY 15 and on several roads with no shoulder. Having access to identified trails is lifesaving.

The Quality of Life Coalition, Inc. is dedicated to improving the lives of Abilene residents through collaborative initiatives and community engagement. Visit [www.qualityoflife.org](http://www.qualityoflife.org) for more details.



## Matt Messina

Matt Messina is a 2015 graduate of Arizona State University with degrees in Urban and Environmental Planning where he focused his studies on transportation infrastructure's impacts on the communities they serve. He began his career with KDOT in 2016 as the state's Bicycle & Pedestrian Coordinator which continued his passion to improve systems for the most vulnerable of users. In this role he began working on the first Pedestrians & Cyclists chapter of the Kansas Strategic Highway Safety Plan in 2019 and the Kansas Active Transportation Plan in 2023, the state's first since 1995. Currently, Matt serves as the Bureau Chief of Multimodal Transportation which oversees the agency's programs and initiatives related to Active Transportation, Public Transit, Freight & Rail, and Electrification & Alternative-Fuels, where safety and equity is inherent in the projects and programs we pursue.



## Thatcher Moddie

I am a young professional and City Manager, with 5 years of industry experience. I joined the team in Herington one year ago. Since then, I have learned of the community's excitement about the completion of the Flint Hills Trail. Now, I too share that excitement and look forward to planning and completing our Trail and Trail Head. As an advocate for a healthy community, recreational trails are a very important component to achieve this. I always try to consider the health benefits when thinking about initiatives in my community. When I was first pitched KATT, I knew how important the opportunity could be. It is exciting to see the potential for KATT to connect to other communities and Trail networks in Kansas.



## Nancy Nelson

Retired in 2021 from Neosho County Community College in Chanute, Kansas and relocated to Topeka, Kansas in June of 2022. Since 2021, served as the Volunteer Project Coordinator for the Osage Cuestas Trail located in Southeast Kansas and currently serving on the Topeka Parks Advisory Board through July of 2025. An avid hiker, biker, kayaker and outdoors enthusiast, I enjoy bringing back ideas from my travels and experiences throughout the United States and abroad. Rather than reinventing the wheel, I think it's important to recognize what other entities are doing to enhance outdoor endeavors, finance them, promote them and borrow what's applicable to your own situation.





## Kelli Orender

Is currently the Tourism Industry Relations Manager for the Kansas Department of Commerce. She was born and raised in Council Grove where her interest in tourism began. Kelli received her Associates of Arts degree from Cloud County Community College and her Bachelor of Science degree in Tourism and Marketing from the University of Central Missouri. In her twenty-three years at the tourism division, she has been involved in various roles actively promoting and marketing the state of Kansas. She is now charged with working directly with the Kansas Tourism Industry. She is happily married to Mike and is the mother of two wonderful kids Jake & Avery.

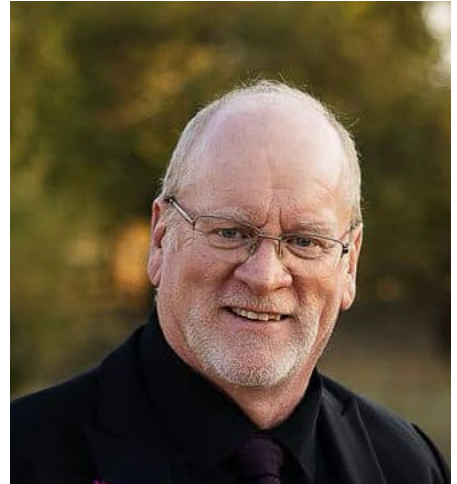


## Kevin Otterman

An avid hiker, canoeist, and kayaker, Kevin has dedicated over 30 years to trails and outdoor recreation across Kansas, Missouri, Oklahoma, and Arkansas. As a seasoned volunteer in trail maintenance and building, Kevin has worked with the Corps of Engineers in Kansas City, Tulsa, and Little Rock districts, as well as state parks in multiple states. Highlights include serving as a trail coordinator for Perry Lake and Oologah Lake and contributing as a sawyer and section volunteer on the Ozark Highlands Trail. A recurring volunteer on the Buffalo River Trail and at Hobbs State Park, Kevin also supports Arkansas Natural Heritage sites like Devil's Eyebrow and Kings River Falls.

Recognized for over 2,500 volunteer hours with the Corps of Engineers, Kevin has developed trails master plans, mapped trails using GPS since 1992, and led training for groups of up to 40 attendees. Additionally, Kevin has shared expertise at events like the Built Environment and Outdoors Summit and is a longtime Kansas Trails Council board member, currently serving as secretary.

Professionally, Kevin has extensive product management experience in outdoor, automotive, and GPS industries, including roles at Sprint/T-Mobile, Garmin, and Lowrance.



## George Pretz

George Pretz is a lifelong Miami County Kansas resident and has been a Miami County Commissioner since 2005. He has worked with Osawatomie citizens to establish mile 0 on the Flint Hills Trail. A Kansas State University graduate he has spent his entire life involved in agriculture with farming, dairy and beef cattle while serving on the Kansas Farm Bureau Board of Directors since 2004. George and his wife Marj have 4 children and seventeen grandchildren.



## Leslee Rivarola

I have served as the City Administrator in Basehor, Kansas for the last five years. Prior to my role in Basehor, I've had the opportunity to work for a few different communities in Kansas and one in Missouri. I've been an appointed member of the Johnson County Park and Recreation District Board of Commissioners since 2015, where I have served as both Chair and Vice-Chair. I believe trails are one of the most critical infrastructure components in any community.

My husband, Martin and I have a fairly large family by today's standards and have been blessed with a blended 6 children. We love traveling and try and take our family on as many trips as possible



## Mike Scanlon

Mike is a former City Manager who has served in mountain resort, college, urban and rural communities from Missouri to Colorado.

His work in Columbia as an intern started with the MKT Trail that was officially dedicated in October 1985 designed ultimately to connect the yet to be developed KATY trail. While in Merriam, KS he executed the purchase of 40 acres for the JOCO Streamway trail that connected Overland Park to Kansas City through Merriam. While in Colorado he worked on development of pedestrian underpasses and trail connections from the Town of Basalt to the Rio Grande Trail. In his last job Mike completed the Mile Zero trailhead and the final two-mile connection to the Flint Hills Trail from the City of Osawatomie. According to Mike he has always had a trail project(s) going on in every community he has served.

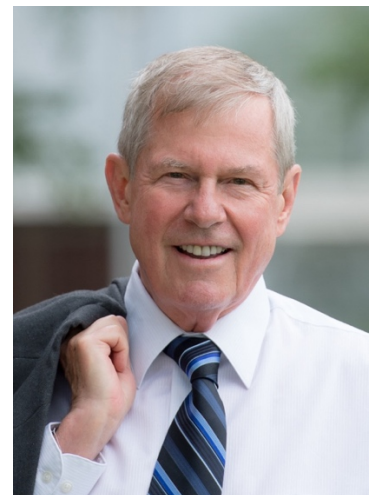
He has his own planning and consulting firm and also serves as the Interim Executive Director for the Kansas Association of Trail Stewards (KATS).



## George Semb

I have 30 years of experience analyzing private and publicly traded companies, most recently as a member of the Investment Committee at Leawood Venture Capital. I also have performed experimental research, including data collection and statistical analysis, writing research reports, and sustainability studies. I founded a software development company that managed the creation of software platforms for college textbook publishers and the US Navy.

In the late 1990s, my wife and I hiked the Pacific Crest Trail. We wrote two books about the trail, Day Hikes of the Pacific Coast Trail Oregon and Washing and Day Hikes on the Pacific Trail California. I served on the Board of Pacific Crest Trail Association for nine years. Most recently we have actively biked hundreds of miles of trails around the states of Kansas, Iowa, Minnesota, and Wisconsin.



## Josh Shaw

I have been city manager in Augusta, KS for the past 11 years. We are working on \$9 million worth of pedestrian bridge projects to complete our connection to the Redbud Rail Trail in Wichita, KS and our downtown Red Brick District will serve as the eastern trailhead destination. Our downtown district is full of shops, eateries, breweries, and other businesses oriented to servicing pedestrians and this future rail trail traffic.



## Brian Silcott

Brian Silcott brings more than 22 years of experience as a city manager and 31 years of public service. A native and lifelong Kansan, he previously served the citizens of Goddard (2008-2023), Osage City (2006-2008), and Sterling (2002-2006) serving as city manager. During his tenure as City Manager serving four Kansas communities, Brian advanced the momentum of Osage City's development of the Flint Hills Trail as well as the Prairie Spirit Trail in Goddard, leading Sedgwick County's development and expansion of trails in Sedgwick County.

A vocal advocate advancing the development of Ottawa as the crossroads of the Kansas Trail communities who believes in economic advantages created by trails for Kansas.

As a recovering ultrarunner, Brian can often be spotted with his wife Mary Elizabeth, and son Holton running, cycling, and walking on Ottawa's segments of the Flint Hills & Prairie Spirit Trails or its many miles of bike lanes.



## Michele Silsbee

Michele joined the City of Osawatomie's administration team in July 2024 as Deputy City Manager, where she brings a wealth of experience in municipal infrastructure and public administration. In her current role, she oversees the city's hard infrastructure projects, including road rehabilitation, parks and trail improvements, and utility upgrades. She also supervises the Public Works and Utilities departments, collaborating closely with the City Manager to shape and implement both short- and long-term community development plans.

Michele's tenure with Osawatomie began in 2022 when she served as Public Works Director, a role in which she was recognized as the 2024 Public Works Director of the Year by the Kansas Rural Water Association (KRWA). During this time, she led numerous high-impact projects aimed at enhancing the city's infrastructure.

A current initiative she is engaged in is the development of bike and pedestrian routes throughout Osawatomie. This project, funded by a \$1.5 million Transportation Alternatives grant, aims to connect city amenities





and historic sites to the Mile Zero Trailhead of the Flint Hills Trail, creating a more accessible and interconnected community.

Prior to her work in Osawatomie, Michele held positions with the City of Olathe and the City of Hutchinson. Michele holds an associate's degree in biology/chemistry from Hutchinson Community College, a bachelor's degree in business management from McPherson College, and a master's of public administration from the Hugo Wall School of Public Affairs at Wichita State University.

## Justine Staten

I serve as the executive director of the Kansas Horse Council, a 501c6 organization, providing leadership and direction to equine businesses, owners and enthusiasts, in a state with approximately 8,700 horse owners and approx. 120,000 horses. Serving in this capacity for over 8 years, I have served longer as a volunteer, for many years prior, and served as an assistant to the executive director. I also serve on the American Horse Council Board of Trustees and as President of the Coalition of State Horse Councils. I am a committee member for the AHC's Recreation, Trails and Land Use Committee, which addresses state and federal level issues that may be presented.

Married with two adult children, I've been a horse show mom, a saddle club officer, a 4H horse project leader, a trail rider and enjoy gathering the family cattle by horseback. A 1993 graduate from Kansas State University with a degree in Animal Sciences, I enjoy maintaining connections with many undergraduate peers who continue to serve in agriculture in Kansas.

The Kansas Horse Council recognizes the critical importance of having trails accessible close to where people live. Maintaining equestrian access is of utmost importance to us. In an era where most farmland and greenspace are rapidly transforming into urban developments, places to hike, ride and recreate are becoming increasingly scarce. Being outdoors, in contact with nature, enjoying the scenery, and interacting with animals all have positive psychological effects, generating feelings of happiness and relaxation.

## Dan Steffen

Is the Graham County Community Development Coordinator. Dan received his BA in Business Communications and his BS in Industrial Arts, from Fort Hays State University. After a short stint in Radio, he was one of the first Field Rep.'s for the Kansas Dept. of Commerce in 1987, covering N.W. Kansas. During this time, Dan received certification as an Economic Development Finance Professional (EDFP), through the National Development Council (NDC). After his position was eliminated, Dan worked for Discover Financial Services, as both a Service Rep. / District Service Supervisor and Sales/Service Executive, in the area of Business Development.

Desiring to return to the world of Economic Development, Dan returned to the Kansas Dept. of Commerce as a Regional Project Mgr. for N.W. & N.C. Kansas. From there, he worked for the N.W. KS Planning & Development Commission through the Economic Recovery from COVID, before accepting the position of Community Development Coordinator for Graham County, where he has built the Graham County Community Development Department from the ground up.



## Jared Tremblay

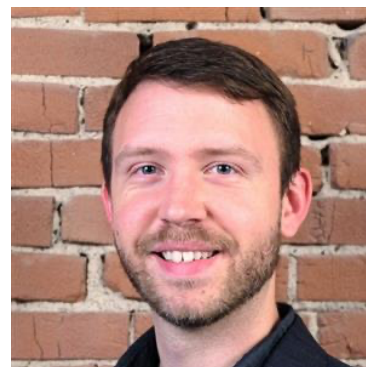
I am the Planning Manager for the Flint Hills Metropolitan Planning Organization, based out of Manhattan, KS. As a GIS professional, I enjoy using data to improve the safety & efficiency of all modes of Transportation Planning, especially walking, biking, and bussing. I have been a lead on numerous efforts including the City of Manhattan's Bike & Pedestrian Systems Plan, Safe Routes to School Reports, and the Regional Connections Plan (trails).

Additionally, I have worked with KDHE's Chronic Disease Risk Reduction grant communities on trail data collection, Active Transportation Plan creation, and demonstration project implementation. I serve as a member of several KDOT boards including the Pedestrian Emphasis Area Team, working to improve conditions for walking and biking in the Kansas Strategic Highway Safety Plan. I'm also a board member of the Gravel KS initiative, and I was the 2021 Kansas Health Champion, awarded through the Governor's Council on Fitness program. Most importantly, I ride my bike daily (multiple times) for transportation, and weekly out on the beautiful gravel roads of the Flint Hills.



## Patrick Trouba

I work as the Active Transportation Planner for Mid-America Regional Council (MARC). My work there has included production of two editions of the Greater Kansas City Regional Trails & Bikeways Map and serving as the MARC staff resource to our committee that allocates federal grant funds to active transportation projects, including trail projects. I bike often for commuting and utility purposes, so for the most part, trails are an area of untapped potential for me. I am also involved with my church's community garden and the Brookside Farmers Market in Kansas City, MO.



## Gwen Whittit

I am a retired RN who previously worked at Wesley Medical Center for 24 years, and most recently I worked as contract labor educating staff members in maternity units at hospitals across Kansas. I am married to Jim and we have 3 children and 8 grandchildren. We had been riding and running the Prairie Sunset Trail and wanted to help to keep it great! We began helping occasionally with workdays, and then became more interested in the organization responsible for the trail, Prairie Travelers.

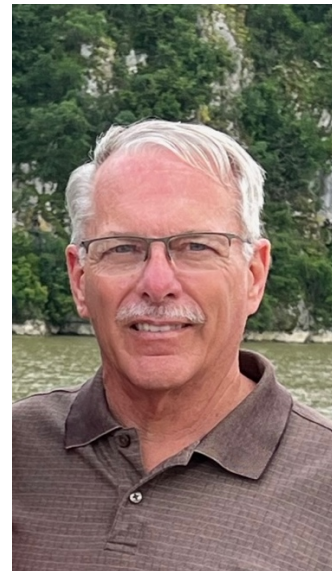
The Prairie Sunset Trail was established by the Prairie Travelers through groundwork, paperwork and hard physical work. Their first meeting was in 1998 and they acquired the first 4 miles in 2002. The PST, a "rails to trails" is now 13 miles long from west side of Wichita to Garden Plain. Currently, I am the Vice-President and I help manage the Social Media for the Prairie Travelers.



## Jim Whittit

I retired from a career as an electrician and electrical contractor a few years ago. I went through a four-year electrical apprenticeship school after high school, then worked as a journeyman electrician and contractor. My interest in the trails started many years ago when I was looking for different places to run, I enjoyed using the trails and decided I needed to give back.

I started volunteering on workdays and recently joined the Board of Directors at Prairie Travelers. We maintain the Prairie Sunset Trail that runs from West Wichita to Garden Plain. We host bicycle rides to help raise money and awareness for the trail. We have set up display tables at other community events to raise awareness. We have also been involved with the local governments along the trail to maintain a good relationship with them to make the trail more usable for everyone. We would love to see the trail extended to connect more communities.



## Anne Zajic

Anne is the Assistant Director for the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) program at the Kansas Department of Commerce and has been a part of the team since November 2021. The CDBG program has earmarked \$1 million for Sidewalks & Trails grants as part of the 2024 Annual Competition. This program funds projects to increase community engagement, health, connectedness, and vibrancy in communities. Eligible expenses include the construction of new sidewalks and trails, specifically activities that connect residents to services, community centers, schools, and recreational areas, as well as the installation of benches and resting areas along the walkways. More information regarding this funding opportunity can be found at

<https://www.kansascommerce.gov/cdbg/sidewalks-trails/>.



## Andrew Hayman

Andrew Hayman is Director of the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Program at the Kansas Department of Commerce (KDC). In this role, Andrew provides strategic direction for CDBG initiatives, manages operations, and works collaboratively with public and private partners to execute the vision of KDC. The CDBG grant program includes funding for local improvements in 10 areas, including Youth Job Training, Regional Water Planning, Architectural Barrier Removal, and building Early Childhood Education and Care Facilities.

Before coming to KDC, Andrew spent 8 years in program evaluation, public administration, and consulting. Andrew started his evaluation career as project manager at Hezel Associates, conducting evaluations of federally funded educational grant programs. He served two years as a management and program analyst for United States Department of Education supporting leadership utilizing data to measure success of programmatic objectives. Andrew earned his Master of Professional Studies in Environmental Studies from State University of New York College of Environmental Science and Forestry and Master of Public Administration from Syracuse University. He is a practitioner of project management and program evaluation principles that he will apply to improve CDBG outreach and effectiveness.

