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## Dennis Hinman honored for 51-year firefighting career

BY BRIAN MCCUALEY  
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PAOLA — Dennis Hinman was 26 years old in the fall of 1973 when a few of his friends convinced him to sign up as a volunteer for the Paola Fire Department.

Dennis was working for Phillips Petroleum Company but had a flexible schedule and decided to take on the new challenge.

He never imagined the volunteer opportunity would become a life-long passion. Dennis has spent the past five decades watching the Paola Fire Department grow and evolve into a top tier unit of first responders, but he now realizes it's time to turn in his gear for good.

Dennis is retiring from the fire department, effective Aug. 31, and he was honored for his work and received his 50-year service award during the Aug. 13 meeting of the Paola City Council.

His fellow firefighters showed up in their dress uniforms to support Dennis, and he was also joined by family members, including his wife, Ella; daughter, Paula; son, John; and grandsons Jake and Trevor.

Family has always been important to Dennis, and the Hinman firefighting legacy lives on through his children and



Paola volunteer firefighter Dennis Hinman (right) receives his 50-year service recognition award from Human Resources Director Jessica Newton during the Aug. 13 meeting of the Paola City Council.

grandchildren.

His son, John, is a 30-year veteran of the Paola Fire Department who currently holds the rank of captain. John also works full-time for the Leawood Fire Department.

John's sons, Jake and Trevor, also both volunteer for the Paola Fire Department and have pursued full-time firefighting careers with other departments.

Jake works for the Overland Park Fire Department, and Trevor just started with the De

Soto Fire Department.

"I'm proud of all of them boys," Dennis said. "They'll bend their backs to help you."

That family atmosphere has permeated the entire department, and Dennis said what he will miss most is the close-knit relationships between the firefighters.

He can recall countless times they came together to help each other and the community.

In 2012, when a 9-year-old girl was hit by a vehicle and killed while riding

a bicycle on Osage Street near Wallace Park, Dennis remembers Paola firefighters coming together to build a wooden ramp for her twin sister, who was injured in the accident.

"They're all a good group of guys," Dennis said. "Although, some you like more than others," he added with a smile.

One of his best friends on the department was Morris Schroeder, who passed away in December 2023 at the age of 80.

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## Celebrating 35 years of Roots Festival memories

BY GENE MORRIS  
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PAOLA — A musical reunion weekend is coming to celebrate the 35th anniversary of the Roots Festival.

The festival will take place Friday, Aug. 23, and Saturday, Aug. 24.

The festival started out as families coming together for a barbecue at Wallace Park. It has grown every year since, moving to Park Square as a musical celebration of all things small town.

While it still draws many family and friends and classmates from Paola, the Roots Festival also brings in people from across the state of Kansas and Missouri.

The Blue Moon All-Stars are back again, honoring their friend Peter Hasselquist, the "One Man Band." It is a tradition the Blue Moon All-Stars have kept since Hasselquist passed away.

While they perform to keep Hasselquist's memory alive, the Blue Moon All-Stars also pay it forward to help others studying the arts reach their dreams.

Roots Festival organizer Lee Mott, who manages the fund for the Blue Moon All-Stars, said the group awards two \$500 scholarships to a boy and a girl who graduate from a school in Miami County

with plans to study instrumental, vocal music, dance or other artistic pursuits.

Don't Know Dorothy is another local band coming back to celebrate with family and friends. Don't Know Dorothy returns to the Roots Festival stage for the first time in nine years.

Don't Know Dorothy is a Kansas City, Mo., based band, featuring lead singer and guitarist Luke Johnston, keyboardist and singer Ian Johnston and bass guitarist Mike Reynolds of Paola.

Ian and Luke Johnston and Reynolds are graduates of Paola High School. The three played music together while attending high school and attending the Lighthouse Church in Paola.

Neon Harvest is another band showing off some talented hometown musicians like Paola graduate Ray Williamson on guitar and vocals and Osawatomie graduate Greg Branson on guitar.

The 35th anniversary brings back previous Roots Festival legends like Mr. Sipp, Hamilton Loomis and Anthony Gomes.

Mr. Sipp, a 2024 Grammy award winner, is back for his third time on the Roots Festival Stage. Castro Coleman, "Mr.

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## Paola school board approves revenue-neutral budget

BY BRIAN MCCUALEY  
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PAOLA — Paola USD 368 won't be collecting any more property tax from its residents in the 2024-2025 budget than it did the prior year thanks to a revenue-neutral budget recently approved by Paola school board members.

Board members unanimously approved the budget during their Aug. 12 meeting following a public hearing and presentation by Jimmy Hay, the district's director of finance and business.

No members of the public spoke during the budget hearing.

The school district's total mill levy, which is the rate in which property taxes are collected, will drop from 49.546 to 47.968 in order



Jimmy Hay, Paola USD 368's director of finance and business, gives a budget presentation during the Aug. 12 meeting of the USD 368 Board of Education.

to keep the budget revenue neutral because the district's assessed valuation increased about 5.7 percent.

The school district's total taxes levied are actually projected to decrease from \$11,618,432 to

\$11,387,737, according to the notice of budget hearing.

Hay said the increase in assessed valuation is both a blessing and a curse, as it

**BUDGET / PAGE A3**

## Back to school



Twins Martin and Mateo Vazquez were excited to start kindergarten together Wednesday, Aug. 14, at Rockville Elementary in Louisburg.

**MORE BACK TO SCHOOL PHOTOS ON A6**

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