

Obituaries

RUDOLPH AUGUSTINE JR.

Rudolph Augustine Jr., age 86 of Hill City, Kansas passed away Friday, September 19, 2025 in Hill City.

Funeral services will be 10:00 AM Friday, September 26, 2025 at St. Mary Catholic Church in Ellis. Burial will follow in the church cemetery.

Visitation will be Thursday 5:00 PM - 7:00 PM and Friday 9:00 AM until service time all at the church.

A combined parish vigil and rosary will be 7:00 PM Thursday at the church.

Services in care of Keithley Funeral Chapel 400 E. 17th Ellis, KS 67637

JAMES COOK

6/18/1950 - 9/11/2025

James K. “Jim” Cook, 75, of Parsons, passed away on September 11, 2025, at Hospice House in Kansas City, Missouri.

James Kenneth Cook was born on June 18, 1950, to Kenneth and Helen (Aspegren) Cook in Ottawa, Kansas. He grew up and attended elementary school in Ottawa. After graduating from Belleville High School in Belleville, Kansas, he attended Fort Hays State University.

While in college, he began a long newspaper career. He was a reporter with the Hays Daily News until 1978. From 1978 to 1985, Jim was the editor for the Chanute Tribune. He worked for Harris News Service from 1985 to 1992. In 1992, he became the managing editor for the Parsons Sun, a position he held until 2005. From 2005 to 2010, Jim was the Labette County Emergency Manager.

Over the years, he served as a board member for the Osa and Martin Johnson Museum in Chanute and the Parsons Public Library.

He had a music collection of over 30,000 songs on his computer. Collecting beer signs and other beer related items was also one of his favorite hobbies.

Survivors include:

His wife Jadeen (Zeigler) Cook of Parsons, Kansas.

One son Dennis Cook of Parsons, Kansas.

His mother Helen Cook of Phoenix, Arizona.

One brother Dennis Cook of Phoenix, Arizona.

He was preceded in death by his father, Kenneth Cook; and one brother, John Cook.

To honor Jim’s wishes, there will not be a funeral service. His family is planning a Celebration of Life that will be announced at a later date.

Memorials are suggested to the Parsons Public Library. These may be left at or mailed to Forbes-Hoffman Funeral Home, P.O. Box 374, Parsons, KS 67357.

Online condolences may be left at www.forbeshoffman.com.

Heartland Community Foundation Surpasses \$10 Million in Assets as It Celebrates 18th Anniversary

Submitted

Happy 18th birthday to the Heartland Community Foundation! This week, the organization celebrates nearly two decades of inspiring local philanthropy — and the timing is extra special: at the close of fiscal year 2025 on June 30, Heartland surpassed \$10 million in assets for the first time, ending the year at \$10,271,155.25.

“Reaching this milestone is a moment of pride for everyone involved with Heartland — our donors, board members, staff, and the entire community,” said Sarah Meitner, Executive Director. “Every dollar entrusted to us is a vote of confidence in our local nonprofits and a commitment to building a stronger future for our region. It’s exciting to celebrate both 18 years of service and the power of generosity coming together to make a real difference.”

During fiscal year 2025 (July 1, 2024 – June 30, 2025), Heartland granted \$691,954.80 to local nonprofits and community organizations, supporting programs and initiatives across Ellis, Rooks, and Trego counties.

Now home to more than 140 funds and supported by nearly 725 donors in fiscal year 2025 alone, the foundation’s resources include an operating endowment of \$2,010,134.68, countywide unrestricted funds totaling \$3,919,532.90, and numerous donor-directed funds. Heartland offers six primary fund types to meet most charitable goals — including donor-advised funds, which can be a tax-advantaged vehicle for giving — as well as funds for individuals, families, businesses, organizations, and tributes. These tools make it easy for donors to give strategically, flexibly, and in alignment with their passions.

Since its founding in 2007 by 47 visionary donors, Heartland has



HCF 2025 Board and Staff (Submitted)

grown into the region’s trusted resource for charitable giving. The foundation’s permanent and endowed funds are invested for long-term growth, allowing Heartland to provide reliable grantmaking and support for local nonprofits year after year. By taking care of the giving, Heartland allows nonprofits to focus on what they do best — serving families, seniors, children, and neighbors across Ellis, Rooks, and Trego counties.

“Heartland is the hub for charitable giving in our community,” said Josh Dreher, Board Chair. “From education to healthcare, food security to community development, Heartland makes it easy for donors to amplify their impact. Every gift, whether large or small, is pooled, invested, and granted in a way that ensures it goes further and makes a lasting difference.”

The foundation’s work extends beyond grantmaking. Heartland inspires philanthropy by providing tools, resources, and expertise to help donors give in ways that are strategic, impactful, and aligned with their passions. Over the years, Heartland has granted nearly \$5.4 million back into the region, supporting a wide array of causes and

programs that strengthen communities now and for generations to come.

As Heartland celebrates its 18th anniversary, the foundation extends heartfelt thanks to its founding donors, current and past board members, staff, and supporters, whose vision and dedication have shaped Heartland into a permanent pillar of regional philanthropy. We also want to extend a special thanks to the Dane G. Hansen Foundation, for their continued investment, match dollars, pass-through dollars, and other ways they have supported Heartland and the other county community foundations in Northwest Kansas. And, we extend a special thank you to the Greater Salina Community Foundation, our host community foundation, and their staff and board for providing administrative, strategic, and investment support to Heartland and the other affiliates. Together, we have created a vehicle for generosity that makes giving easy, accessible, and impactful for everyone, no matter the charitable passion.

For more information about the Heartland Community Foundation and ways to give, visit www.heartlandcommunityfoundation.org.

KIDS

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relating to placement stability, mental health and trauma screens, and capacity and crisis intervention teams. In a statement, Secretary Laura Howard touted how the audit showed most kids were in stable placement in the 2024 calendar year.

“We remain committed to maintaining these results and pressing

forward to fulfill the remaining commitments,” Howard said.

Still, advocates say the report shows there is more work to do to improve the foster care system, with many issues from the previous audit popping up again. While 92% of children in state custody are in stable placement, children without a permanent home continue to experience “extreme” instability.

In 2024, 341 kids bounced around

temporary homes six or more times. These kids account for just 4% of children in custody, but experienced 50% of the total moves last year.

In addition, 100 children spent more than 300 nights without placement, compared to 57 kids and 83 nights the year prior. The study also showed that Black children were more likely to face instability.

Many regions of the state showed improvements in placement stability, but Teresa Woody,

litigation director for Kansas Appleseed, pointed to worsening rates in Sedgwick County and western Kansas. Most of the Kansas kids who experienced placement instability were in those areas. She said short-term placements have more than doubled in those regions since 2021.

“It is especially concerning,” Woody said, “that many of the children in these regions who lack stable placements are children as young as 2 years old.”

That corresponds with an increasing need for foster care in Sedgwick County, which includes Wichita, over the past five years. One in four Kansas kids in the foster care system are from Sedgwick County, according to the state.

Placement instability is also feeding into unmet behavioral and mental health needs, Woody said. While Kansas met its obligation to provide initial mental health and trauma screens and expanded access to crisis

intervention services, the study showed a little more than one-third of kids who need mental health services did not receive appropriate care.

“Too many children in Kansas’s foster system...go without desperately needed mental health care,” said attorney Kamala Buchanan-Williams of the National Center for Youth Law. “Kansas has a long way to go to meet the needs of all the children in its care.”

RHID

Continued from A1

Creek Sewer District rates will increase to \$86 per month. “And our next concern is the roads. I’ve had to replace the struts on our cars—that was a \$3,000 bill—because the roads are all pot holes, cratered and wash-board,” said Mr. Dinkel.

Chair Berges told Mr. Dinkel that 2000 feet of Reservation Road

is part the RHID and Commissioner Nathan Leiker stated that he believed Canterbury to Logan Dive is good. He also stated that the Commissioners have been working with Public Works (PW) Director Brendan Mackay to improve some of the interior subdivision roads.

Chair Berges stated that the undeveloped property currently yields only \$17 per year in tax revenue to the County and that the creation of the

RHID is only to help development occur faster, if development is possible. Following Mr. Dinkel’s comments, Vice Chair Neal Younger requested County Administrator Darin Myers show on-screen page 93 from the September 16, 2025 County Commission Agenda which estimates the 25 Aggregate Fiscal Impact for the County to be \$300, 914 (based on the 2024/2025 Mill Levy.)

Vice Chair Younger then asked Duane Kuhn, President of the Big Creek Improvement District to comment on residents sewer concerns.

“As far as the sewer goes, we can handle everything that we have at the present time,” said President Kuhn. He added that additional pump may be required when the new homes are constructed. He confirmed

for Chair Berges that the City sends one bill for the District’s sewage which is divided equally among residents. President Kuhn also noted that noted that Pepsi is tied into the County for sewage, not the Big Creek District. “It’s metered into the City and we’re charged by cubic feet just like city people, only at a higher rate. And the City’s not willing to negotiate that part anymore,” President Kuhn said. He added that the District’s contract with the city allows the rate to be raised “anytime they feel its necessary.”

President Kuhn commented that he does not feel the sewer rates for those who live outside Hays are fair.

“Until we started talking about this RHID, I had no idea of this problem,” said Commissioner Leiker. He added that the

Hays sewer rates do not go through the County Commission.

During the Public Hearing, Mr. Pray answered questions from residents opposing the project and responded to concerns. He reported that all test wells in the area, which have been drilled 65 feet deep, have hit water between 28 to 32 feet.

“So we’ve had really good water so far out there. My understanding on the sewer is that whether we put this development in or not will have no affect on sewer rates whatsoever,” said Mr. Pray. He stated that he intends to arrange a meeting with President Kuhn in the near future to see if it would be possible to share expenses to improve roads for everyone throughout the subdivision.

“That’s something I’m going to push and while the road is paved from Reservation to Logan, consider paying the rest of the development.” Mr. Pray said.

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