

Hometown NEWS

Local News & Stories by Local People *Girard* Girard & Crawford County

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Spring ushers in local produce and flower sales in Southeast Kansas

BY JOSIE GRONAU
HOMETOWN GIRARD

►► As an agriculturally rich community, residents of Girard don't have to look very far to find locally grown produce, flowers, herbs, or even animal products. The beginning of spring has encouraged this commerce even further.

Recently, the Bathhouse Trading Company has achieved a long-time goal of opening a farm stand. Owners Keegan and Steven Koehler have grown produce for their household for years, but at this point in their lives, felt like they were able to grow their business even further. Bathhouse Trading Company has always had the focus of all-encompassing wellness, and the farm stand is just another way to achieve that.

So far they have tomatoes, petunias and hanging baskets, and they are planning on adding a few more varieties such as marigolds and San Marzano tomatoes. One of their most popular flowers this season has been the black petunia.

As far as animal products go, they will soon offer farm fresh eggs and currently offer alpaca



The Bathhouse Trading Company sells petunia hanging baskets at the new farm stand right outside their storefront Saturday, April 12. These hanging baskets are one of the many items the company has incorporated into their business in order to promote all-around wellness. Other current items include tomatoes and alpaca beans along with products coming soon, farm fresh eggs and marigolds. JOSIE GRONAU/HOMETOWN GIRARD

beans, a soil amendment that can be spread around the base of plants, mixed into potting soil, or dissolved into plant water. The pellets are

great for avoiding plant burns and there's no odor.

Part of all-encompassing wellness is taking care of the soul. Keegan is a huge believer in spending

time outdoors because of this and their products give customers an opportunity to do this.

Other stores in the area have also been preparing

for spring. The McCune Farm to Market has been advertising their fresh Florida strawberries in 1 or ½ lb flats.

Beauty Lynn Greenhouse's opening day was on April 10 and they are now open Monday-Friday 1-6 p.m., Saturday 10 a.m. to 6 p.m., and Sunday 1-5 p.m.

Misty Morning Farms will also begin offering their farm boxes starting in May. These subscription boxes can be ordered in small, medium, or large and provide customers with weekly deliveries of seasonal vegetables and fruits. Misty Morning Farms will be attending the Pittsburg and Webb City farmers markets later this month.

Of course the Girard Farmers Market will also bring locally grown and handmade products to the residents of Girard. The market will begin on Tuesday, July 1 from 4-6 p.m. and will take place every following Tuesday through the end of September.

Girard provides the ideal community to source all of these local products, and for now residents can still enjoy the wide variety of options listed above in anticipation of the Girard Farmers Market.

* * *

Federal grant will allow major improvements at Water Street Apartments

BY PHILIP STEVENS
HOMETOWN GIRARD

►► The Girard Housing Authority has secured a \$286,378 federal grant to address a long-standing issue at the Water Street Apartments—crumbling parking lots and chronic flooding.

"It is amazing. Amazing. That is a lot of money for us," said Desiree Humble, Director of the Housing Authority, which oversees the 24-unit apartment complex built in 1967. The 2024 Emergency Disaster Capital Fund grant was awarded through the Office of Capital Improvement (OCI), part of the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). Humble applied for the grant nearly a year ago following a conversation with a HUD official at a spring NARO (National Association of Housing and Redevelopment Officials) conference.

The grant will allow the Housing Authority to completely reconstruct the west-side parking lot on Water Street—where flooding has been an ongoing concern—as well as add new parking on the north side and make

important grading and drainage improvements.

"We have literally talked about this for five years and we have talked about this grant for a whole year," Humble said. "I'm sure [the residents] all look at me like I'm blowing smoke by now, but this is a huge deal."

Humble explained that Water Street Apartments is fully federally subsidized and operates on two key funding sources: an annual operating subsidy and a capital improvement grant. Both must be applied for and are calculated based on occupancy, performance, and property scores. The operating subsidy is used to cover daily expenses not covered by rent, which is income-based—as low as \$50 a month and capped at \$467 a month.

Because the annual capital improvement grant is relatively small—between \$36,000 and \$53,000 over the past five years—larger projects require saving funds over

See "FEDERAL GRANT WILL ALLOW MAJOR IMPROVEMENTS AT WATER STREET APARTMENTS" Page 4.

Girard offers a variety of Spring events

BY JOSIE GRONAU
HOMETOWN GIRARD

►► Girard has two busy upcoming weekends filled with many events to celebrate the spring season with one another.

On Saturday, April 19, Girard Events will be hosting the annual Easter Egg Hunt at the square. The first section will begin at 10 a.m. which includes children 0-2 years. 2-3 years will take place at 10:05 a.m., 4-5 years at 10:10 a.m., special needs at 10:15 a.m., 6-7 years at 10:20 a.m., and 8-10 years at 10:30 a.m. The eggs will be distributed throughout one age group at a time to prevent kids from hunting in the wrong areas or at the wrong time.

Along with the egg hunt there will also be prizes, photos with the Easter Bunny, and a variety of vendors and organizations. These include the Girard FFA presenting the Easter Petting Zoo, Girard Public Library presenting the story walk, and Artistic Impression by Angela offering free face painting, paid for by Girard Events.

This event would not be possible without all of the sponsors. Golden Egg Sponsors include Eastside Cafe, donating the age 0-2 tricycle, the French family, donating the age 2-3 tricycle; Girard General Store, donating the age 6-7 bicycle; ScottCo LLC, donating the age 4-5

bicycle; Sprouts Preschool, donating another age 4-5 bicycle; Weimar Farms and Catering, donating the age 8-10 bicycle; and Brian Tatum State Farm, donating the special needs gift card.

Girard Medical Center sponsored helmets and the Girard Firefighters Association sponsored bicycle safety pads to go along with every bike as well.

The Long Branch Office Suites are hosting a Chamber Ribbon Cutting on Friday, April 25 to celebrate the opening of their business which leads into another busy weekend.

On Friday, April 25 and Saturday April 26 the Girard City-Wide Garage Sale will be in full swing. This event is organized by Hometown Girard and garage sale ads can be submitted to publisher@hometowngirard.com for only \$10 for up to 30 words or \$15 for up to 50 words. This also includes the participants address, hours, and location which will be added to the online and in-newspaper map.

The Spring Fling, organized by the Girard Chamber of Commerce, will take place on Saturday, April 26 from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. and will be held at the square. There are a total of 14 vendors with the goal of increasing foot traffic in the downtown area. This idea came about because Harrigans' Barn and the City-Wide Garage



Girard's Spring banners placed around the Square welcome visitors and residents to events like the Annual Easter Egg Hunt, Spring Fling, City-Wide Garage Sale, and Harrigans' Barn Spring Market. COURTESY PHOTO/GIRARD CHAMBER

Sale are already bringing people to the area. This gives shoppers another opportunity to connect with local vendors and enjoy a day in Girard. If the weather is not ideal, the chamber has planned to move the event into the Civic Center.

Chamber President Kylie Smith noted, "By adding Spring Fling to the mix, we

aimed to create an even more vibrant and engaging atmosphere that benefits our local businesses and the entire community."

There are a wide variety of opportunities to shop local, support the economy, and fellowship with residents, so take advantage of these busy weekends and connect with your neighbors.



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Federal grant will allow major improvements at Water Street Apartments *Cont. from cover*

“This is going to change the landscape, literally. And [we can] start making real improvements for our residents.”

– Desiree Humble,
Girard Housing Authority director

multiple years. A recently completed project on the south side of the property expanded parking from three spaces to fifteen, using up most of the banked funds. That project helped alleviate some issues but wasn't enough to solve the longstanding flooding problem in the west lot.

In April 2024, the area was hit with heavy rains over three days, resulting in extensive water damage to the parking area and making it nearly unusable. That storm event qualified the property for the Emergency Disaster Capital Fund grant.

The scope of the new project is significant. It will expand and improve the parking, and tackle drainage and water management, aligning with a separate water line replacement project the City of Girard has planned for the same area.

“My understanding is that the city is getting ready to put their water project out for bid. Their water line on Water Street literally runs underneath our parking, so the timing couldn't be better,” Humble said.

She's currently working with Fort Scott-based architect Rick Zingre & Associates and AG Engineering in Uniontown to finalize construction plans and prepare the bid package. While there is no exact start date, she's hopeful work will begin before the end of the year.

“The next step is getting the construction plan. Then we'll put it out for bid, review bids, and

hope that we get a good response,” Humble said. “We're at the mercy of so many different people's timelines—and the weather.”

Humble says the impact of the project will be more than just cosmetic. With this funding in place, the Housing Authority can now redirect previously earmarked capital improvement funds to other needed upgrades, like replacing outdated heating and air units—some dating back to 1996—and modernizing additional apartment interiors. Eight units have already been updated; sixteen remain.

“We've been kind of bandaging some of those [HVAC units] for several summers,” she said. “Now that we know we've got this parking situation covered, we can move ahead with those.”

Water Street Apartments serves elderly and disabled residents, and having reliable, accessible parking is especially important. Until now, during heavy rains, some residents with mobility issues had to move their cars to higher ground—often to the nearby Catholic church lot—and walk back in poor conditions.

“This is going to change the landscape, literally,” said Humble. “And hopefully, it means we can stop just fixing things as they break and start making real improvements for our residents.”

A formal celebration with residents was planned for Tuesday to share the good news.

Heartland-sponsored teams earn honors at 2025 SunPowered Student Challenge

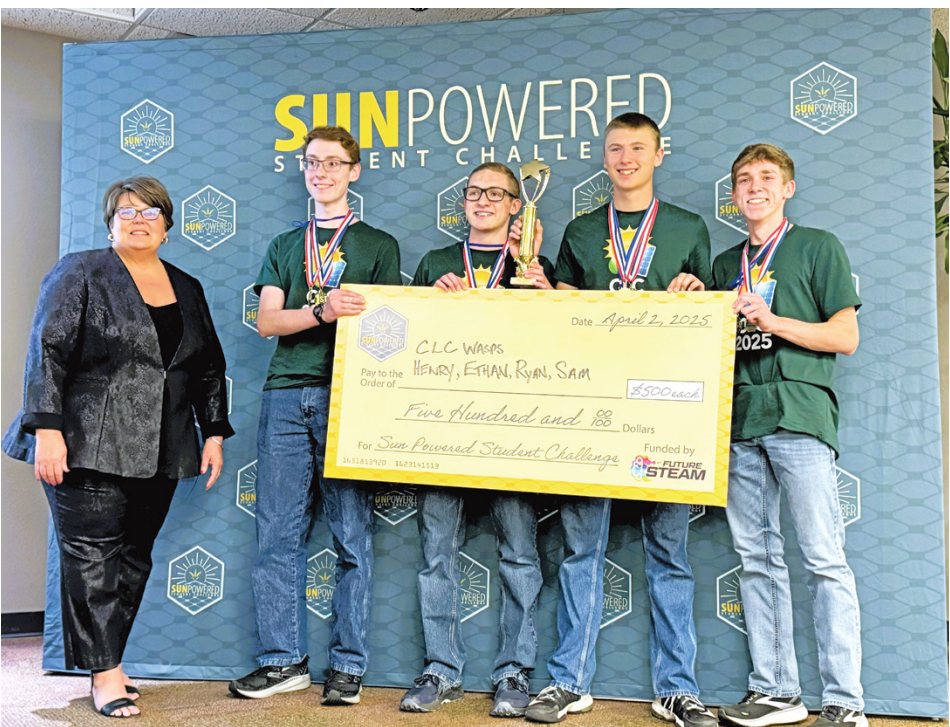
BY PHILIP STEVENS
HOMETOWN GIRARD

►► High school students from across Kansas gathered at Wichita State University on April 2 for the second annual SunPowered Student Challenge, which is a hands-on, high-stakes competition that blends engineering and critical thinking with solar energy innovation.

Among the standout teams were three sponsored by Heartland Rural Electric Cooperative, all of which took home top honors for their work in solar design and system integration. The event is presented by Future STEAM and co-founded by Heartland REC, Kansas Electric Cooperatives, Pitsco Education, and Ten80 Education. It's goal is to prepare the next generation of energy professionals by engaging them in real-world problem-solving.

The Christian Learning Center's team, the CLC Wasps, claimed first place overall and won the Performance Challenge. Led by science teacher Scott Cain, the Fort Scott-based team impressed judges with their mastery of solar power system balancing and application.

“A lot of people think more solar is always better, but that's not how the grid works,” said Heartland



CLC Wasps Take First Place. Henry, Ethan, Ryan, and Sam from the Christian Learning Center in Fort Scott pose with their trophy and a giant check after winning first place and the Performance Challenge at the 2025 SunPowered Student Challenge. The team was sponsored by Heartland REC. COURTESY PHOTO/HEARTLAND REC

CEO Mark Scheibe. “This challenge teaches students that energy has to be balanced, timed, and integrated into the system.”

The Uniontown Eagles, representing USD 235 Uniontown, earned the Curb Appeal Award for their innovative and visually compelling solar designs, which demonstrate how functionality and aesthetics can complement one another.

Meanwhile, Columbus Solar from USD 493 Columbus teamed up with the K.E. Helios Heroes

from USD 273 Beloit to win the Collaborative Challenge, an award that recognizes teamwork and strategic cooperation between student groups.

The SunPowered Student Challenge includes a 20-hour preparatory curriculum followed by an in-person competition, where student teams design, test, and troubleshoot solar energy systems in front of a panel of industry experts.

“We don't just need people who know how to install solar panels—we

need problem solvers who understand the whole system,” said Scheibe. “And that's what we're helping build through the SunPowered Student Challenge.”

Heartland REC supports schools throughout its 12-county service area in Southeast Kansas and played a central role in this year's event, continuing its commitment to workforce development and energy education.

For more about the challenge, visit www.heartland-rec.com.

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(L) Malachi Melton, with the Girard Fire Department, surprised young Alex for his birthday celebration. COURTESY PHOTOS/BRADLY POWELL

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