

AERC TRAIL GRANT  
BIG HILL LAKE  
February 8, 2019

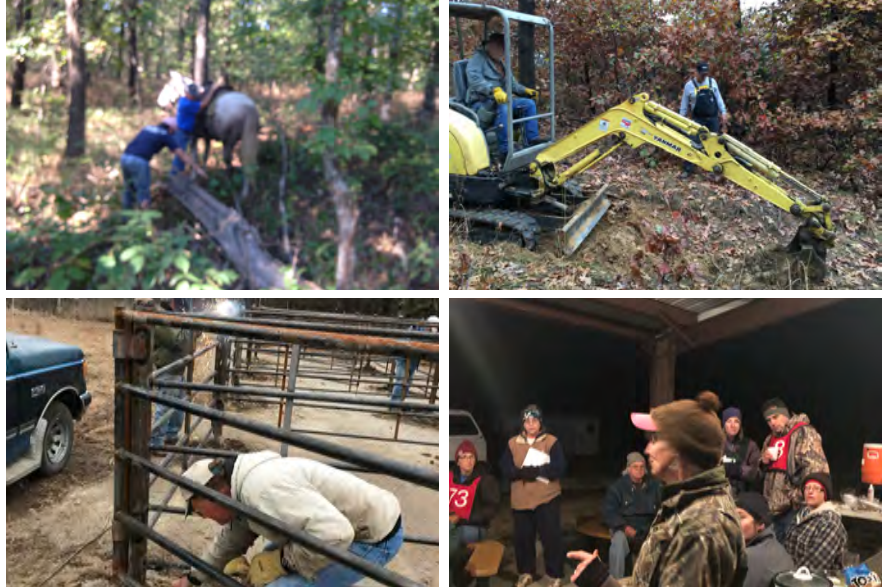
## HANDSHAKE GRANT COMPLETED



Thanks to a \$500 Trail Grant from AERC, a large group pavilion was completed October, 2018 at the Big Hill Lake Cherryvale Equestrian Camp. The building, as well as other trail improvements were completed under a Handshake Grant where partners team up with the Corp of Engineers to improve facilities. AERC was one of the six partners on the project that eventually accomplished nearly \$18,000 worth of upgrades.

**“The partners really came through for the Handshake Grant. They exceeded our expectations.”**

(Chris Hammerschmidt, Big Hill Lake Project Manager)



The group pavilion was purchased, in part, with AERC monies, and greatly enhances the site for putting on AERC rides as it serves as a meeting and eating facility and frees rides management from setting up tents and makeshift portable shelters.

The six partners, including NATRC, Back Country Horsemen, and diverse groups such as the Labette County Tourism and local Boy Scouts worked together to raise funds and re-measure and permanently mark all trail heads and set trail makers every quarter mile on the 19 miles of trail. Because of the funds collected, extra projects were completed in addition to the pavilion, including 20 pipe pens in the north horse camp.

Without the support of the AERC Trail Committee and its generous grant, these significant improvements might not have been accomplished. Corp management is in the process of obtaining a plaque, to be attached to the pavilion acknowledging the contributions of all partners, listing AERC as a valued partner.

The next project for the volunteers and the park will be to GPS map all trails and erect map signage at each Equestrian campground. Ideally, a map, available for download will also be posted on the facility web page.

THANKS to AERC for being an important contributor.





# The Chanute Tribune

\$1

TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 25, 2025

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## Three-vehicle fatality crash occurs near Iola

Iola — Just after 6 p.m. on Nov. 23, Allen County deputies, along with personnel from the Iola Fire Department and Allen County Emergency Medical Services, were dispatched to a rollover crash a quarter-mile south of Iola on Old U.S. Highway 169.

A preliminary investigation by the Allen County Sheriff's Office determined that a northbound 2006 Chevrolet Silverado driven by Deana Foster of Iola crossed the centerline for unknown reasons and sideswiped a southbound 2013 Jeep Wrangler driven by Emma Westhoff of Chanute.

The Silverado continued northbound, partially in the southbound lane, and collided with a southbound 2024 Honda HR-V driven by Meghan Sparks of Humboldt. The impact caused the Silverado to overturn and slide off the west side of the roadway, trapping the driver inside.

Westhoff reported minor damage to her vehicle. She confirmed she was wearing a seat belt and was uninjured.

Sparks' vehicle sustained heavy damage from the collision and impact with the concrete bridge structure. Deputies noted that most of the vehicle's airbags deployed. Sparks reported she was wearing her seat belt and declined medical treatment at the scene.

Iola Fire Department rescue personnel extricated Foster, who had been wearing a seat belt, from the overturned vehicle.

See CRASH, continued on page 3

## DEATHS

Obituaries for the following people can be found on page 2 of today's Tribune.

■ Roberta Knight

## LOCAL SMILES



Sawyer Warner

## THIS ISSUE

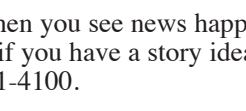
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When you see news happening or if you have a story idea, call 431-4100.



Hannah Emberton | Tribune Photo

Best of America by Horseback hosted a parade through downtown Chanute over the weekend. For more photos, see page 10.



Marsha Hayes | Courtesy Photo

Joe Sutton, National Purple Heart Trail Coordinator, speaks at Big Hill Lake, dedicating the first equestrian trail to receive Purple Heart status in Kansas. Left, Ty Martinez holds the Kansas flag and Eagle Scout Wally Carson presents the American flag. The Heartland Twisters Drill Team of Chanute stand mounted at attention with the flags from each service bench and the Purple Heart flag.

## Purple Heart Trail at Big Hill Lake dedicated with ceremony

Marsha Hayes  
Contributing Writer

CHERRYVALE — On Nov. 8, Big Hill Lake hosted a dedication ceremony to honor the official designation of a newly created three-mile trail as a Purple Heart Trail. "It's the only equestrian trail so honored in Kansas," noted Joe Sutton, National Purple Heart Trail Coordinator, who spoke at the event.

The event began with the presentation of flags by the mounted Chanute Saddle Club's Heartland Twisters Drill Team. Each member carried a flag representing a branch of the armed forces, plus a special Purple Heart flag. The riders circled and drilled in the field beside the South Equestrian Camp pavilion before lining the horses up to stand with the flags behind the campfire and speaking podium.

Eagle Scout Wally Carson presented the American Flag, followed by veteran Ty Martinez carrying the Kansas flag. Chris Hammerschmidt, Project Manager

of Big Hill Lake, Army Corps of Engineers, welcomed the crowd of around 50 people. Hammerschmidt's May 2025 proclamation declaring the trail in memory of Purple Heart veterans set in motion the trail's national designation.

Sergeant Kristi Hawley, Recruiting and Retention NCO officer, spoke of her family's long history of farming the land that is now Big Hill Lake, and her support for honoring Purple Heart veterans. Deirdre Monroe also spoke about mapping the trail and how the Purple Heart designation motivated her commitment to volunteer and never forget the sacrifices of veterans.

Joe Sutton spoke last, and his moving tribute explained the history and significance of a Purple Heart.

As the group sat at rapt attention, Sutton concluded: "And so today we dedicate this section of trail—here at Big Hill Lake—not merely as another scenic route through Kansas, but as sacred ground." He mentioned the other colored trails, but emphasized this trail is different. "It becomes a place of honor and remembrance."

Before Steve Lindsey gave the benediction, Sutton charged the group with a task. "To those who ride or hike this path, may you do so with joy, but also with awareness. Let your footsteps, or the hoofbeats of your mount, echo with gratitude. Let this trail remind you of those who gave so much of themselves."

The Big Hill Purple Heart Trail is listed on the National Purple Heart Trail registry and can be accessed from the Timber Hill Camp Area, 911 address: 488 21000 Road, Cherryvale, Kansas. Trailhead signage will be installed soon. Currently, the trail has white trail marker posts with a Purple Heart decal and quarter-mile increments in addition to blue slash marks on trees.

This trail and other improvements have been accomplished with hundreds of volunteer hours and Corps of Engineers financial and labor support. It has also been funded by past Handshake Grants, Trail Grants from the American Endurance Ride Conference, North American Trail Conference and grants from Labette County Tourism.

## RHID sent back to drawing board

Adrienne Wahl  
editor@chanute.com

A Reinvestment Housing Incentive District, or RHID, planned for Chanute has been a source of contention between the Neosho County Commission and the Chanute City Commission, with both sides blaming each other for communication failures.

At last week's county commission meeting, Neosho County Commission Chair Nicholas Galemore responded to comments from Chanute City Commissioners, claiming that the RHID would be an undue burden on the county.

"I take offense to the lack of correspondence," Galemore said.

He did not mention in his comments that his own personal business could be affected by a new apartment complex in Chanute. He and his wife, Darilyn, are listed as the owners of Pine Oaks Apartments in Chanute, according to the Kansas Secretary of State's office.

A public hearing was held Aug. 25, before Chanute passed the RHID ordinance. Before a public hearing, a notice must be published in the local newspaper to give potentially affected parties advance notice of the project. The initial hearing notice was published on Aug. 12. No public comments were made at the hearing. Darin Luebbering, the developer working on the RHID project, said he assumed that, with no objection at the hearing, no one had an issue. The RHID notification went out on the 9th of September, according to Luebbering.

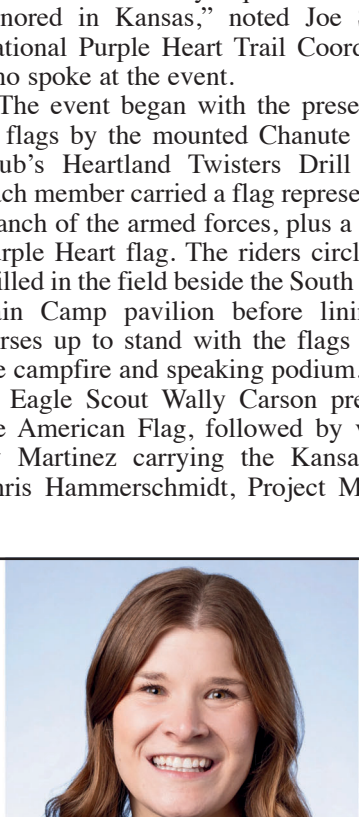
"They had from Sept. 9 till Sept. 23 to review the ordinance," he said. "They could have called the city, called me, called anybody to find out about anything."

State law gives 30 days for any other taxing entities to protest the RHID, and the county passed the resolution protesting the RHID on Sept. 23.

Before passing the resolution, there was not much discussion among the commissioners, aside from Galemore, who said it would affect Neosho County, the school district, and the college more than it would affect Chanute. Galemore did not acknowledge that he had a conflicting business interest during that meeting either.

Galemore said the burden would affect the county more than the City of Chanute because the city does not have property taxes. After the Tuesday meeting, he said it would cost the county \$770,000. However, that number comes from a state projection of what the property value would be if the complex were built without any tax incentives, not what the county currently collects.

See RHID, continued on page 3



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