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YOUR NORTHEAST NEWS TEAM

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Historic Northeast Lofts Groundbreaking Marks Construction Phase

Dorri Partain
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Prior to a groundbreaking ceremony on Thursday, Dec. 3, design renderings showcasing the Historic Northeast Lofts project's concept greatly contrasted with interior walls marked by years of graffiti and neglect. After years of planning, funding and remediation, Arnold Development Group, along with numerous City and federal partners, celebrated the next phase –- construction -- of this multi-million dollar redevelopment at 5401 Independence Ave.

Formerly known as the Hardesty Federal Complex, this multiple-building site has seen its share of redevelopment plans in the past decade. Arnold Development, led by Jonathan Arnold, first announced his project for housing, retail and amenities in February 2021.

Earlier this year, Nomad Develops announced a partnership that would re-envision the complex's Building 10 as the Historic Northeast Public Market, opening in summer 2027.

Building 10 was the site for the press conference and design showcase, including a solar array that will provide up to 50 percent of the complexes' energy needs.

After Mayor Quinton Lucas welcomed attendees, City Council representative Crispin Rea, Fourth District-at-Large, spoke about growing up nearby, in the Blue Valley neighborhood, and thinking it was just a blighted industrial site where nothing would ever happen to reshape its future, but he now believes this project is transformational.

"It doesn't do this project justice to call it 'transformational'," said Rea. "Knowing the challenges this neighborhood has had, this isn't a place that sees a lot of economic development."

Rea also acknowledged the partnerships, private and public, city and non- city, that made it possible to get to this point, as well as funding for toxin remediation through the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). David Cozad, EPA Region 7 Acting Deputy Regional Admin, spoke next about the challenges of this project.

"The EPA has injected $10 million total Brownfields Funding (for remediation) to help get this going," said Cozad. "Back then, in 2022, we stood in this very spot to talk about what this might be, what this could become. And today, before our eyes, we see it's going to be all that."

"Too often, contamination stymies redevelopment, flat out prevents it. Places like this stay empty, dilapidated, deteriorating. The EPA Brownfields program is about changing that, and turning eyesores into assets, and that's why the EPA is excited to be a part of this," Cozad said.

Developer Jonathan Arnold spoke about the history of all the buildings on this site and its uses, from a 1919 garment factory and warehouse, to a federal complex during and after World War II. The challenge for him and his team was to figure out the best mix for a successful redevelopment.

"For the last two decades, myself and the team I've had the privilege of working with,(the challenge) has been setting what works- what actually moves the needle for families trying to build stable lives," said Arnold.

Arnold described a complete community, from 395 residential units in the main building, along with a community center and child daycare, a public market, fitness center, and healthcare and job training in the complex's additional buildings. Additional amenities would include a walkable streetscape, landscaping and public spaces, and a pool and rooftop garden for loft residents.

Loft units will offer a range of living options from studios to four-bedrooms, with 83 percent reserved for those within 30-80 percent of the AMI (Average Median Income).

"This is what a neighborhood looks like, when it's designed around what families need," Arnold stated.

Mayor Quinton Lucas, officials, and community members were invited to sign a nearby wall, then went outside and posed for photos as the official "groundbreaking" took place.

Arnold Development Group has completed similar projects, converting warehouses into RM West at 234 W. 4th St. Construction is expected to be completed in 2028.


Photo by Dorri Partain

COMMUNITY CALENDAR

Tuesday, Dec. 9- Public Meeting, Bi-State Sustainable Re-investment Corridor, 5 to 7 p.m. Don Bosco Senior Center, 580 Campbell Ave. Learn the latest developments with this new transit initiative, enjoy drinks, snacks and door prizes available. Spanish translation provided. For information visit https://www.marc.org/bi-state-sustainable-reinvestment-corridor

Thursday, Dec. 11- Coffee, Culture and Conversation, 10 to 11 a.m., 2659 Independence Blvd.
Join Inky the Newscat and the staff of The Northeast News for coffee, treats, and a discussion about community news. Sponsored by the Northeast Kansas City Chamber of Commerce. Free.

Saturday, Dec. 13 & Sunday, Dec. 14- Dickens Carolers at The Museum of Kansas City, 3218 Gladstone Blvd. Enjoy the classic songs of Christmas performed live on the Grand Staircase from 10 a.m. to 7 p.m. on Saturday and 12 to 4 p.m. on Sunday. Free.

Saturday, Dec. 20- Calvary Temple's Breakfast with Santa, Calvary Temple Assembly of God, 5607 St. John Ave. Children from age 0 to 19 are invited to have breakfast with Santa Claus and receive a toy and photo. Reservations required, RSVP at the Calvary Temple Food Pantry (across from the church), open on Tuesdays from 9 a.m. to 11:45 a.m. by Dec. 12.

Saturday, Dec. 20- Pancake Day, 8 a.m. to 2 p.m., Eleos Coffee House, 3401 Independence Ave. Serving up pancakes, eggs and sausage, build your own plate for $1.00 each.

Celebration Marks Long Life of Historic Liberty Tree

Dorri Partain
Managing Editor

History lovers, tree "huggers", and just curious folks — wanting to get up close and personal with a tree that's been declared the oldest in the state— gathered to pay tribute to "Frank the Liberty Tree" on Saturday, December 6.

Located in the side yard of the residence of Thomas Harris and Jessica Thomas at 328 S. Monroe, this burr oak was already over 100 years old when their home was built circa 1900 and has sheltered and offered shade to generations since.

"Frank" was cataloged as a Liberty Tree during the American Bicentennial in 1976 and was nominated by then-owner Frank McLaughlin. Owners Harris and Thomas found the original certificate hanging in the home when they purchased it last August and decided to call the old oak "Frank" in his honor.

Concerned about Frank's age and health, they contacted the Missouri Department of Conservation and received the sad news that a root fungus had taken hold and for safety concerns, Frank would have to be removed.

With a tree that is so well-known to the community, Harris and Thomas, along with second-floor tenant Crystal Beasley, decided to honor Frank's long life with a party, champagne toast, and a chance to share memories with others. With being new to their home and the Northeast community, "We don't have memories," Thomas shared on Saturday.

Invited guests included Fourth District-at-Large City Council representative Crispin Rea, who spoke about all the events that have occurred in Frank's lifetime.

"I had to do some research to look back on what was happening 250 years ago," said Rea.

"On this date, 250 years ago, the Second Continental Congress wrote their first formal response to King George's Proclamation of Rebellion. A year later, and a couple of weeks later, Washington crossed the Delaware (River) on that fateful night on December 25, 1776. This tree is pre-Revolutionary Way, pre-Lousianna Purchase, pre-Civil War, pre-World War I, World War II- all these incredible things that have happened in the world."

"I look forward to what we can grow next- I don't know that we'll plant a tree that will last another 250 years," said Rea.

To answer questions about the tree's health and how it will be removed, Ron and Tiffany Gamm of Alpha & Omega Complete Tree Services spoke about how the root fungus was caused by improper pruning, which caused a cut that didn't heal and allowed water to seep into the tree. While damage at the base of the tree is clearly visible, they won't know how much the tree has rotted until they begin to take it down.

Ron Gamm announced to the crowd in attendance that after discussions with the home owners, they believed there was no immediate danger and would not begin removal until January 4, 2026, when America would begin celebrating 250 years of independence.

Following a toast (champagne or sparkling cider) led by Beasley to Frank and his legacy, attendees walked around the tree, took photos, and gathered bits of loose bark as mementos. Thomas said the Gamms had offered to salvage a piece of the Liberty Tree and have it made into a cutting board or some other useful memento.

On Sunday, via email, Beasley, Thomas and Harris thanked everyone who came by and visited with them and Frank.

"What began as a simple idea to honor a part of Missouri history became one of the most heartfelt community events we have ever been part of."

A GoFundMe account has been set up to help defray the cost of removal, which has been estimated to total $9000, an unexpected expense.

To donate, go to https://www.gofundme.com/f/frank-the-liberty-tree-a-final-farewell-to-250-years

For those interested in any salvageable wood cut from the Liberty Tree, sign up at his link:

https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSfKn8oBG0z4lJgDbxJc-JsYaxx0FDFbk-rhvfB49ACxbls7xaQ/viewform?usp=publish-editor

Read Northeast News' previous coverage of the Liberty Tree at: https://northeastnews.net/pages/liberty-tree-family-tree/

Photo by Dorri Partain

Earlier this year, the Missouri Department of Conservation inspected the Liberty Tree and discovered an extensive root fungus had taken hold. **Photo by Dorri Partain**

Kansas City Proposes Ban on "Gas Station Drugs" Amid Rising Health Concerns

Bryan Stalder
Contributor

Kansas City leaders are moving to crack down on a range of unregulated psychoactive products found in gas stations, convenience stores, vape shops, and smoke shops throughout the city. On Thursday, Dec. 4, Mayor Quinton Lucas introduced Ordinance 251028, which would prohibit the sale of substances commonly marketed as "gas station drugs," including kratom, Delta-8 and Delta-9 THC edibles, nitrous oxide cartridges, and a growing list of synthetic intoxicants.

City officials say the proposal comes after years of mounting concerns about health risks, overdoses, and public safety issues tied to businesses that sell these products. Many of the substances are marketed as "natural" or "legal alternatives" to marijuana or pain relievers, but they remain unregulated and unapproved by the FDA.

"Unregulated gas station drugs are sold with virtually no oversight," Mayor Lucas said, announcing the measure. "These products are marketed as legal alternatives but can be just as dangerous as controlled substances. We cannot allow items that contribute to addiction, overdoses, and neighborhood instability—especially those affecting our children—to remain on our shelves."

Local community leaders say those concerns echo what they see on the ground. Laura Birdsong, Resource Team Manager for the Independence Avenue Community Improvement District, said products like kratom or synthetic cannabinoids have been contributing to dependency and health crises in the neighborhoods her team serves. "There is no benefit in this world run rampant with an opioid crisis to offer masked products that have the same effect," she said. "They create a dependency or leave people experiencing horrific withdrawals. I personally am happy to see the city taking measures to hinder exposure to substances that can cause harm, especially when it comes to protecting our youth."

The Health Department recently examined a polysubstance overdose death in which kratom was detected, prompting renewed scrutiny of the herbal stimulant and sedative. Federal health agencies have long warned that kratom may be addictive and can produce opioid-like effects at higher doses. Delta-8 and Delta-9 THC products, often sold in colorful packaging or in edible form, also lack FDA approval and have been linked nationwide to adverse reactions ranging from severe anxiety to loss of consciousness. Studies and toxicology reports have raised questions about their purity, potency, and the chemicals used in their production, particularly for Delta-8 products synthesized from hemp-derived CBD.

Medical experts warn that the accessibility of these substances makes them particularly concerning. Many teens and young adults are able to purchase them over the counter, often unaware of the potential for unwanted or negative effects. Some health care providers have reported a rise in adolescent use and say emergency rooms are seeing more patients who have combined these products with alcohol or other substances. Doctors caution that even substances labeled as "plant-based" or "natural" can carry significant risks, especially when sold without testing or regulatory oversight.

City officials say the risks don't end with personal health. According to the Public Safety Task Force, several Kansas City businesses that sell these intoxicants have also been the sites of repeated disorder, police calls, and nuisance activity. The task force has recommended in multiple cases that shops stop selling such products to help reduce crime and improve neighborhood safety.

Councilman Nathan Willett said concerns extend to products being marketed toward younger customers. He pointed to "7-OH," a kratom metabolite, and similar derivatives being packaged in ways that appeal to teens. "KC is stepping up to do something about it," he said.

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Photo by Laura Birdsong

What These Substances Do

Kratom: A plant-derived stimulant at low doses; can produce sedative or opioid-like effects at higher doses. Not FDA-approved; concerns include addiction, anxiety, and respiratory depression.

Delta-8 / Delta-9 THC: Psychoactive compounds related to marijuana. Delta-8 is typically synthesized from hemp and may contain chemical byproducts; Delta-9 is the primary intoxicant in cannabis. Both can cause impairment and, in some cases, severe anxiety or hallucinations.

Nitrous Oxide Misuse: Recreational inhalation can lead to oxygen deprivation, loss of consciousness, and long-term neurological damage.

What the Ordinance Would Do

- Ban the sale of unregulated psychoactive substances in gas stations, convenience stores, vape shops, and smoke shops.
- Impose $750–$1,000 daily fines for violations.
- Allow business license suspension or revocation for continued sales.
- Exempt FDA-approved medicines and legitimate industrial or medical uses of nitrous oxide

New Exhibit Honors the Legacy of Black Firefighters in Kansas City

Bryan Stalder
Contributor

A new exhibition at the Black Archives of Mid-America is shining a long-overdue spotlight on the Black firefighters who helped build and protect Kansas City — often under unequal and segregated conditions, but always with the same courage and responsibility as their white counterparts.

The exhibit, titled "KC Fire," is a collaboration between the Black Archives and the Kansas City Fire Historical Society (KCFHS). Drawing from both organizations' extensive collections, the display brings together more than a century of history through artifacts, images, and stories rarely seen by the public.

Inside the Rotating Gallery at the Archives, visitors move through decades of firefighting history: well-worn helmets, early alarm boxes, intricately crafted nozzles, and heavy canvas hoses that once raced through the streets on horse-drawn rigs. One standout piece — a preserved horse collar used by early fire companies — reminds guests just how far fire service technology has come since the late 1800s.

Historic photographs line the walls, capturing the faces of Black firefighters whose service dates back generations. Many served during eras when firehouses, promotions, and even daily assignments were shaped by segregation. One longtime firefighter and historian involved in the project summed up the exhibit's power simply: the artifacts represent "the same work" — the same danger, the same responsibility — even when equality was not yet part of the job.

The community got its first look at the exhibit during a special opening reception on Dec. 4, where attendees enjoyed refreshments, participated in a fire-department history trivia game, and met some of the organizers who helped bring the project together.

The partnership behind the exhibit reflects the missions of both institutions.

The Black Archives of Mid-America, founded in 1974 by historian Horace M. Peterson III, has grown from a personal passion project into one of the region's primary stewards of African American history. Its collections document the stories, achievements, and cultural contributions of Black Kansas Citians through research materials, photographs, oral histories, and exhibitions. The Archives' permanent gallery, With My Eyes No Longer Blind — named after a Langston Hughes poem — traces Black life in Kansas City from its earliest days to the present.

Likewise, the Kansas City Fire Historical Society, established in 1990, is dedicated to preserving the history of a fire department that dates back to 1868. The society collects artifacts, documents, and oral histories with the goal of eventually establishing a public museum honoring Kansas City's fire-service heritage.

Together, the two organizations are highlighting a chapter of civic history that has too often gone unrecognized: the Black men and women whose service protected Kansas City's neighborhoods through decades of change.

"KC Fire" is on display at the Black Archives' Rotating Gallery, 1722 E. 17th Terrace, through Dec. 29, 2025. Admission is free.

What to Know If You Go

Location & Hours: The exhibit runs at BAMA's Rotating Gallery at 1722 E 17th Terrace in the 18th & Vine District — Monday through Friday, 9 a.m.–5 p.m.; Saturdays and Sundays by appointment only.

Admission: Free.

Programs & People: The December 4 opening reception offered a chance to meet both historical-society representatives and archive staff, learn more about Black firefighting history, and see rare artifacts and photographs up close.

Kansas City Fire Department Chief Announces Retirement

Bryan Stalder
Contributor

Kansas City Fire Chief Ross Grundyson, a 30-year veteran of KCFD who has led the department since early 2023, has announced he will retire in January 2026. Grundyson shared the news with fire department officials this fall, saying the time was right "to pass the torch" after more than two years as chief.

As part of this transition, Grundyson will help City Manager Mario Vasquez select his successor. The city is conducting a nationwide search and recently relaxed its educational requirements for the position, shifting its focus toward operational experience in large urban fire departments.

Last week, the city introduced three finalists for the job—none of whom come from within KCFD. Craig Buckley, Michael Marino, and Michael Mire, were introduced to the public at a forum hosted at the Kansas City Public Library's Plaza Branch (4801 Main St.) on Thursday, December 4. Each candidate presented their vision for KCFD, focusing on leadership, community trust, innovation, and employee development, with plans for a new Chief expected soon after the nationwide search. These candidates have backgrounds in Houston, Orlando and the Washington, D.C., regions.

Their introduction marks a notable shift for the department, which had seen interest from internal leaders, including two KCFD deputy chiefs. However, the final pool now consists entirely of outside applicants. Kansas City Fire Department (KCFD) Chief Grundyson's departure closes a chapter marked by both challenges and progress within the department, while the city looks ahead to selecting a new chief who will guide KCFD into its next era.

Creating a Parent or Holding Company

Dr. Adrienne B. Haynes, Esq., Contributor

Creating an umbrella company to manage new or existing businesses is a type of business combination. When deciding to undertake this transaction, there are several factors to consider. Prudent business owners should thoroughly consider the implications of creating a parent or holding company, including a liability and choice of entity analysis, as well as how to manage the transfer of ownership for already existing businesses.

Creating a Parent Company

The decision to streamline all businesses under an umbrella company may be done through the creation of a parent company or a holding company.

Holding Company

A holding company is a company formed to control other companies, usually confining its role to owning stock and supervising management. It does not participate in making day-to-day business decisions in those companies.

Parent Company

A parent company is a corporation that has a controlling interest in another corporation (called a subsidiary corporation), usually through ownership of more than one-half of the voting stock.

Legally, the two entities are very similar. Both may take the form of a Limited Liability Company ("LLC") or a Corporation. They must be registered with the State's Secretary of State Office and if the business is formed as a corporation, it must observe corporate formalities.

Liability Analysis of a Holding or Parent Company

The purpose of creating entities is to shift the risk of being sued to the entity and away from our person, and thus, our personal assets. The creation of a holding or parent company provides another layer of liability protection to the owners. With the proper legal structures in place, if subsidiary company fails or is sued, it does not affect the entire business empire. If a subsidiary company were to be sued, usually only the assets and operations of that business are considered in the litigation. However, this liability protection does not exist if the parent or holding company is sued.

Corporate Veil

The legal assumption that the acts of a corporation are not the actions of its shareholders, so that the shareholders are exempt from liability for the corporation's actions.

Piercing the Corporate Veil

The judicial act of imposing personal liability on otherwise immune corporate officers, directors, or shareholder's for the [business'] wrongful acts.

However, courts have pierced the corporate veil of limited liability if certain factors are present. In order for a court to pierce the corporate veil when a subsidiary is sued, which would expose the parent company to liability, one or more of the following factors must exist to indicate injustices and inequitable consequences:

- Fraudulent representation by business directors
- Undercapitalization
- Failure to observe corporate formalities
- Absence of corporate records
- Payment by the corporation of individual obligations; or
- Use of the corporation to promote fraud, injustice, or illegalities

Specifically in Missouri, the courts have applied a three part test, as held in Radaszewski v. Telecom Corp. To pierce the corporate veil, one must show:

- Control, not mere majority or complete stock control, but complete domination, not only of finances, but of policy and business practice in respect to the transaction attacked so that the corporate entity as to this transaction has at the time, no separate mind, will, or existence of it's own; and
- Such control must have been used by the defendant company to commit fraud or wrong, to perpetrate the violation of a statutory or other positive legal duty, or dishonest and unjust act in contravention of plaintiff's legal rights; and the aforesaid control and breach of duty must proximately cause the injury or unjust loss complained of.

Business strategies for avoiding piercing of the corporate veil include:

- Having a diversified portfolio of businesses owned by the parent company,
- Ensuring that the business has insurance (a consideration in the undercapitalization analysis), and
- Making sure that the parent company treats the subsidiaries are separate businesses (subsidiary does business in its own name, no undocumented transfers of funds, consider separate business insurance, subsidiary has its own assets)
- Ensuring that owner's treat the business entity as separate than themselves.

When a parent company is sued, the subsidiary companies are at risk because when they are owned and controlled by the parent company, they are assets, and thus, liable to be used to satisfy a judgment or debts. In Missouri, courts have generally held that while a creditor may be allowed a court order to the profits of a subsidiary, they cannot take possession of the ownership interest or affect the management of the company. Activities outside of general management and supervision of the subsidiary companies should be limited as to not open up the parent or holding company to suit.

This article is an overview of business formation legal considerations, and does not cover every legal right or obligation, consideration, exception, or restriction. These decisions are complex and should be well researched and discussed with professionals before being made.

Northeast Chamber of Commerce Collaborations

Community Generosity Shines in NEKCCoC Thanksgiving Basket Drive

Bryan Stalder
Contributor

As Thanksgiving came and went in the Historic Northeast, the spirit of generosity proved stronger than ever. Following this year's Thanksgiving Food & Essentials Basket Drive, the Northeast Kansas City Chamber of Commerce (NEKCCoC) is celebrating the kindness and compassion shown by residents and local businesses alike.

Thanks to the outpouring of support from neighbors across the Northeast community, the Chamber was able to identify residents in need and provide each of them with a Cosentino's Price Chopper gift card, donated directly by the NEKC Chamber of Commerce. These gifts ensured that these folks could shop for groceries and essentials to maintain a warm and dignified holiday season.

In addition to the gift cards, community members and neighborhood businesses contributed a variety of food, household supplies, and comfort items. Many of these donations were delivered to the Northeast High School Food Pantry — known as the Northeast Village Pantry — where they will continue to support students and families throughout the upcoming winter season. A Cosentino's gift card was also included in the pantry delivery, expanding the reach of this year's drive even further.

While the Thanksgiving Basket Drive officially wrapped up before the holiday, its impact will be felt well beyond a single week of celebration. The NEKCCoC expressed gratitude for everyone who donated, nominated families, or helped spread the word, noting that this year's success is a testament to the strength and compassion of the Historic Northeast.

Northeast High School Village Pantry, © **NortheastNews, 2022**

The donations to the pantry come at a critical time for Northeast High School students, many of whom face economic challenges at home. Nearly all students qualify for free or reduced lunch, and the Viking Village Pantry provides additional support to help families stretch their resources.

Run by alumni of the school, the pantry has grown from

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Sponsored by these NEKC Chamber Members:

a small bookshelf of dry goods into a multi-room operation that offers food, clothing, and other essentials. Volunteers work to provide fresh vegetables, protein, and shelf-stable meals that help students stay nourished and focused in the classroom.

The pantry also offers a clothing closet, stocked with gently used and donated dress clothes for interviews, school events, and other important occasions. Students often volunteer alongside alumni, learning skills like folding, sorting, and organizing items — building confidence and work experience while giving back to their own community.

"The pantry isn't just about food and clothing," said pantry supervisor Roberta Holt-Kipper, Class of 1969. "It's about letting students know that someone cares about them, that they have support in their corner."

By donating to the Thanksgiving Basket Drive, community members not only helped families celebrate the holiday but also strengthened the ongoing work of the Viking Village Pantry, ensuring that students and families in the Northeast have resources and care throughout the winter months.

NEKC Chamber member benefits:

Monthly Business Section: The Chamber sponsors a monthly business section in the Northeast News. Businesses that commit to a monthly ad enjoy an annual feature story on their business.

Monthly Newsletter: Monthly member newsletter with updates on upcoming events, new businesses, workshops, and other important news impacting the Northeast business community.

Technical Assistance: The chamber provides technical assistance and referrals to help with business plans, developing working capital, and business licenses and permits.

After Hours Events: The Chamber invites members to host periodic After Hours events. These informal gatherings provide opportunities to enhance new and old relationships; exchange ideas on products, services, and sales; and meet new business owners and government officials.

Commercial Listings: The www.nekcchamber.com website provides free commercial property listings to members. property descriptions and a map help to encourage new businesses in the Northeast area. Non-members pay a fee for these listings.

Public Policy Advocacy: The Chamber promotes policies for economic development in the Northeast. Its Governmental Affairs Committee works with officials to keep members updated on business growth issues.

Facade Rebate Program: The Independence Avenue CID also offers member businesses the opportunity to apply for facade rebate funding to assist in updating or improving the exterior of their retail outlet in the CID's footprint.

A New Glow Behind the Green Door at PH Coffee

Bryan Stalder
Contributor

As someone who has spent more hours than I can count at PH Coffee — meeting neighbors, hosting conversations, doing work I should have finished days earlier — I've always appreciated how this place keeps finding new ways to root itself deeper into the community. The café has long been one of those rare neighborhood anchors where you can walk in at any time of day and find someone you know, or someone you're glad to have met. So when I started hearing whispers about a new speakeasy taking shape just beyond the café, my curiosity kicked in quickly.

Called Public House, this 21-and-up hideaway is tucked into the neighboring annex space — just far enough from the main café to feel like a discovery, but close enough to feel connected. It officially opened its doors with an "emerald experience" the weekend of November 28–29, a nod to the Wizard of Oz–inspired theme that gives this space a whimsical, glowing personality. But the décor is only the first impression. The intention behind it is what carries through.

"We wanted to create a space at night that provides a similar experience to PH Coffee during the day — a place to gather with friends and neighbors and be yourself," explained owner Eric Rosell. The result is a small, thoughtfully-designed room filled with soft lighting, comfortable seating, and the kind of warm hum that encourages lingering. Behind the bar, an intentionally curated menu features cocktails, natural wines, local beers, and small bites made in-house.

"We provide a curated list of crafted items from cocktails to small bites with different price ranges to allow each of our neighbors to come enjoy the space," Rosell said.

Public House is refined without being pretentious, cozy without feeling cramped, and — most importantly — deeply in tune with the spirit of PH Coffee. It's the kind of place where you can have a quiet conversation, slide into a booth with a friend after a long week, or simply enjoy being around other people who call Historic Northeast home.

Photo by Bryan Stalder

For now, the speakeasy will be open every Friday and Saturday from 6 to 10 p.m., a schedule that already feels like a natural extension of the café's daytime role as a community hub. And the neighborhood response has been immediate.

"The reaction from the community has been really positive," Rosell said, "with some guests letting us know how a place at night has been missing in our area for some time, and our Public House is providing a space for them to gather with their friends and neighbors."

On Friday, December 5, I spent about three hours, and you can read more about that experience at northeastnews.net. I'm sure that Public House is going to become one of those after-dark staples that keeps our neighborhood feeling connected, creative, and alive. Sometimes all a community needs is one more welcoming light glowing on a quiet street, inviting you in.

PH Coffee and Public House are located at 2200 and 2202 Lexington Avenue.

It was a busy weekend in Historic Northeast!

Residents had no shortage of things to see and do, from the Pendleton Heights Holiday Homes Tour and the Northeast Arts KC Open Studios to the Champagne Celebration of Life for Frank the Liberty Tree. PH Coffee's new cocktail bar, The Public House, hosted the second weekend of its "Emerald Experience," and Northeast Pizza stayed bustling after earning a 7.7 rating from internet personality David Portnoy last week.

The Northeast News team made an effort to stop by each event, but with limited print space, we can't include all our photos—so be sure to visit northeastnews.net to see all of our photographs.

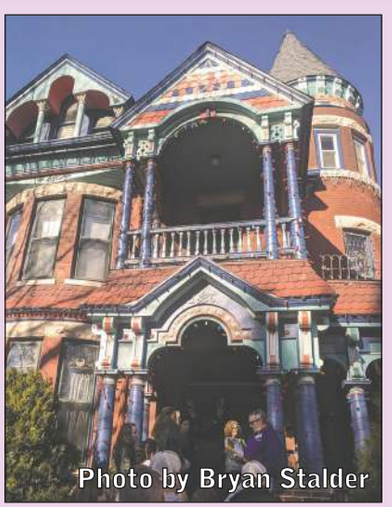


Photo by Bryan Stalder

Photo by Dorri Partain

Northeast News Belongs to All of Us — Let's Protect It

Bryan Stalder
Contributor

For more than nine decades, The Northeast News has been a constant in a neighborhood that is always changing. Our community has welcomed wave after wave of new Americans, working families, and people who arrive here searching for stability, possibility, and a place to belong. Through all of it—economic downturns, cultural shifts, political disagreements, and the everyday challenges of community life—the newspaper has remained: a free, local source of information created by and for the residents of Historic Northeast.

The truth is, sustaining a community newspaper has never been easy. It takes long hours, tight budgets, creativity, and a deep love for the neighborhood. It's also true that, over the years, people haven't always agreed with the paper's decisions, tone, coverage, or leadership. That's normal. A community as diverse and passionate as ours will never see every issue the same way. But disagreement should never turn into discrediting. When misinformation, personal grudges, or half-truths are directed at a small local newspaper, the real damage isn't to a single person—it's to the entire community that depends on accurate, local reporting.

The Northeast News has always welcomed a wide variety of voices. Editorials have been written by people from across the political spectrum, and the paper has consistently published letters to the editor, community perspectives, and commentary from residents of all backgrounds. True community journalism is not about one person's agenda—it's about creating a public square where everyone has access to trustworthy information and everyone has the chance to be heard.

Today, this newspaper is doing exactly that. It is opening its doors wider than ever to neighborhood writers, artists, photographers, and storytellers. It is providing space for emerging voices, citizen-journalists, and creatives who want to contribute to something larger than themselves. In an era when social media arguments spread faster than facts, having a trusted local platform—one not driven by algorithms or sensationalism—is rare and valuable.

As we enter the holiday season, it's worth remembering what binds us together. Northeast is a neighborhood built on resilience, optimism, and generosity. We don't always agree, but we always show up. Supporting our community newspaper is one of the simplest ways to show up for each other. Donations help keep this work going—especially now, when contributions through the end of the year are matched through the Institute of Nonprofit News NewsMatch program. But support isn't only financial. Sharing your talents, your stories, and your time strengthens the paper and, in turn, strengthens the neighborhood.

Illustration by Bryan Stalder

Bryan Stalder

Negativity is easy. Unity is work—but it's the kind of work that pays dividends for generations. If you value local voices, local history, and local storytelling, then we invite you to push past the noise, focus on what matters, and help ensure that Northeast News continues into its next century.

This paper belongs to all of us. Let's keep it going—together.

"Gas station" drugs

Continued from page 5

Community safety teams along Independence Avenue say they've seen firsthand how these products can contribute to disorder. Bobbi Baker-Hughes, District Manager of the Independence Avenue Community Improvement District, said her organization routinely discusses the issue during its weekly security meetings. "The CID supports the efforts of state, county, and city officials to regulate these products," she said. "We discuss the impacts that arise from the sale of these products as well as solutions for how to deal with the consequences of them at our weekly safety and security meetings. We invite the public to attend these meetings any time."

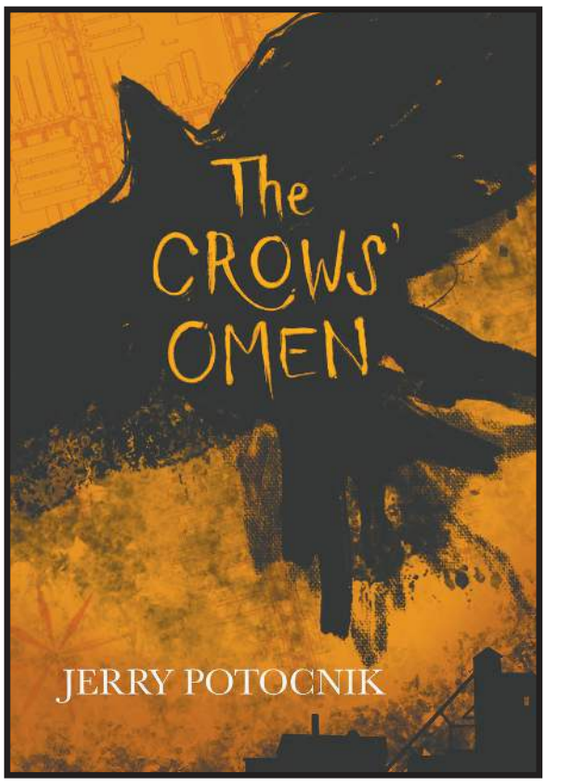
Under the proposed ordinance, stores caught selling these products could face fines of $750 to $1,000 per day, along with potential suspension or revocation of their business licenses. The ordinance outlines several factors the city can use to determine a violation—such as products being kept hidden behind counters, being advertised with language suggesting psychoactive effects, or being linked to repeated "disorder" calls. The measure exempts FDA-approved medications and legitimate uses of nitrous oxide in medical, dental, food service, and industrial settings.

If passed, residents may notice some products disappearing from store shelves, as well as increased inspections at businesses known for selling hemp-based or synthetic intoxicants. City leaders say the goal is not only to protect public health but also to address chronic nuisance issues tied to certain retailers.

At the time of press, the ordinance was scheduled for discussion in the City Council's Finance, Governance, and Public Safety Committee on Tuesday, December 9 at 10:30 a.m. in the City Council Chambers. Look for more details in our online story.

The Journey Begins

An excerpt from the novel "The Crows' Omen," written by Jerry Potocnik



A week earlier, signs had appeared all over town:

Wanted! Coal miners for Weir City, Kansas, land of Paradise. Coal 3 feet, 10 inches high. One dollar per ton per day, paid twice a month, in cash. Special trains leave Birmingham on June 28. Get ready and join your friends in the Land of Plenty.

The train rolled out of Birmingham as scheduled in the late afternoon. The black passengers, mostly men but also a few women and children, embarked on a new and wonderous journey. They were excited to plant new roots. With nearly three hundred on board, they were on a path to Weir City. Overnight, the train made a special stop, in Memphis, where twenty white men cloaked under the cover of darkness loaded more than a dozen wooden crates into a freight car, then climbed aboard the last passenger car which had been empty.

Sol Porter had a window seat but never saw the guards board the train. He was twenty-one, tall and slender, with wide shoulders and long arms. He could throw a baseball faster than any man in Jefferson County, black or otherwise. He'd never been inside a coal mine before, but he wanted to see the world and put some money in his pocket.This seemed as good a way as any. In the seat next to him was a shorter man of huskier build, at least ten years his senior. The man had only one possession: a King James Bible. He eventually struck up a conversation with the younger passenger. "So you think they'll treat us good in Weir City?" the man asked.

"I sure hope so," Sol answered. "That K&T man told me, 'Y'all ain't gettin' much down here. Up there ya get better pay and a chance to be your own boss, with real wages, a house and transportation to where ya can be free!'" He couldn't help but be hopeful for what lie ahead.

"Amen to that!" the other man replied, but then asked, "Hey, what's K&T, anyway?"

Sol chuckled. "You know, the place we goin' to work for." He was surprised the man didn't know that already.

The other passenger was incredulous. "We ain't goin' to work for K&T," he said. "This train is bound for Central Coal & Coke."

Sol quickly dropped his smile and tried to reconcile the information. "But they said the train for K&T leaves on the twenty-ninth."

The other man began to laugh. "But today's the twenty-eighth. You got on the wrong train!"

Sol was dumbfounded.

The man could see his young companion was in distress, so he let the laughter fade away. "Hey, man, don't worry 'bout it. We all goin' to Weir City. If workin' for K&T means that much to ya, I'm sure ya can just walk over there and get on with them. Sounds like they need lots of workers up there for some reason." He then offered a hand to the younger man. "By the way, my name's Poor Williams."

Sol was still addled but took his hand. "Nice to meet ya," he said. "My name's Sol Porter."

A few seconds passed in silence before Poor started shaking his head once more, then laughed all over again. "Got on the wrong train. Now how 'bout that?"

Sol could finally see the humor in it, too, and laughed with him. Eventually, though, he asked, "So why you goin' to Weir City? For the money?"

Poor thought about the question. "Nah, man. Money don't mean much to me. I mean, don't get me wrong. I like havin' a few dollars in my pocket like everyone else, but that ain't why I'm on this here train." He held up the Bible for the young man to see. "God wants me there."

"He does?" Sol asked, not understanding the comment. "Why?"

"Don't know why. He ain't told me yet. He just said go. I reckon he'll tell me later."

Sol wasn't so sure about that. "You a religious man or sumthin'?"

Poor replied with a quote from Proverbs: "'Trust in the Lord with all thine heart. And lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths.'"

Sol was impressed. "So you are a religious man."

"How 'bout you?" Poor asked. "You believe in God?"

"Yes, sir." Sol was quick to answer but then stumbled. "I mean, I think I do. But I don't go to church or nuthin' like that."

Continued on next page

Novel's connection to Historic Northeast

Jerry Potocnik
Sponsored Content

The Crows' Omen is a work of historical fiction authored by local attorney Jerry Potocnik. It's about two brothers navigating perilous times while mending their broken relationship. It has all the ingredients of a page-turner: suspense, intrigue, deception and betrayal. While most of the characters are fictional, a handful are based on real-life people such as Robert Alexander Long and Richard Keith. In 1899, as the story begins, both men were industrialists who lived in the Northeast and were prominent members of KC society.

It is well known that "R.A. Long" is the man who built Corinthian Hall, now the Museum of Kansas City. He was the major shareholder of Long Bell Lumber Company, which once operated more than 50 lumber yards in the western US. What is less known is that he got his start in southeastern Kansas. In 1874, Robert, his cousin Victor Bell, and another young man left Kansas City and journeyed to Columbus, Kansas to start a hay bailing business, taking with them a shipment of lumber to be used in erecting sheds. Unfortunately, a persistent drought and the death of their young friend plagued the infant start-up, and Robert and Victor soon called it quits. But when they dismantled the sheds, they quickly learned about another important commodity: lumber. Local farmers and ranchers were eager to buy the lumber, which set the men on a new course. From this humble beginning, Long-Bell Lumber Company was born. In 1891, the cousins moved their headquarters to Kansas City, and Robert moved his family into a large home along Independence Boulevard.

Richard Keith also lived in a mansion on the Boulevard. He made his name and wealth in coal, starting with his first coal yard in Quality Hill in 1871. Eventually, he and an experienced coal man named John Perry formed a partnership called Keith & Perry, which operated several mines in Missouri. In 1887, the men erected a building on the southwest corner of 9th and Walnut called the Keith and Perry Building, a handsome six-story building with a rounded corner and a conical roof. Their company occupied the first floor. (Long-Bell Lumber Company eventually had the third floor). With an infusion of eastern money in 1893, the business rapidly expanded under a new name, Central Coal & Coke, and it invested heavily in the Weir-Pittsburg Coalfield. By the end of that decade, the company operated mines in seven states and employed thousands of men.

Richard and Robert appear in The Crows' Omen almost in dualistic fashion, like a devil and angel act, which is a common storytelling troupe but also a psychological metaphor for internal conflict. How to amass great fortune while giving back to the community? Robert Long, for one, was well known for his philanthropic endeavors (i.e., the WWI Memorial).

Both men had close ties to southeastern Kansas. It's where Robert started his company, and it's where Richard had considerable interests. Much of the real-life connections and interactions between these men are lost to history now, but in the novel, they are friends of sorts though different in both thought and demeanor. Robert's character is reserved and attentive while Richard's character is impulsive and brash, but together, they make an enjoyable though odd pair who rely on each other while guiding their respective companies through troubled waters.

The reader also will delight in scenes depicting local landmarks like Union Depot (i.e., the train depot before Union Station), the Thayer Building and the Keith and Perry Building. A Flemish Queen Anne-style home in Historic Northeast also plays an important role.

But perhaps the greatest attribute of The Crows' Omen is its ability to connect us to the past. It's a history lesson told through the lives of fictional men and women who toiled and rejoiced in the workings of everyday life during the Gilded Age. Anchored by imperfect yet relatable characters, this story will grab you from the first page, and it won't let go.

The Crows' Omen

Continued from previous page

"Well, that's OK, 'cause it won't help ya none anyways if ya don't first open your heart."

"How I do that?"

"I can't tell ya. You gotta find your own way. Or he'll do it for ya."

"How's he gonna do that?"

"I don't know that neither. He works in mysterious ways. But he told me to go to Weir City. He wants me there for some reason. Maybe he wants you there too."

"For what?" the young man asked, now taking a serious tone. He'd never considered God might have a plan just for him.

"I don't know, but he got a reason for everything. You'll find out when we get there."

Read more in our December 24 issue, or buy a copy of The Crow's Omen, available at local bookstores, Amazon, or at thecrowsomen.com.

Classified & Service directory

1932 Fun Fact

In December 1932, downtown Kansas City department store Emery, Bird, Thayers, "The Store of a Million Gifts", advertised a unique Christmas greeting option using the latest technology. SPEAK-O-PHONE records, with a studio on the sixth floor, let shoppers "send greetings in a novel way."

This ad stated "If you can't be 'there' for Christmas, send your thoughts as you would speak them by SPEAK-O-PHONE records. Your voice recorded perfectly, experienced Studio Director is in charge."

Priced per record from 75 cents to $1.75.

Moto Haiku by Sam Crowley

My fortune cookies!
"Take a walk and clear your mind"
(I hope I don't get mugged)
"Find joy in little moments"
(Feeding my critters)

More fortune cookies
"Many successes this year"
(Lottery ticket?)
"Celebrate your mental health"
(I'll have a party)

Even more cookies
"Follow your inner guru"
(Where will it take me?)
"Enthusiasm coming"
(I hope it comes soon)

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602 Notices

OUR NEXT issues will be published December 24 and January 7, 2026. Ad deadlines are noon Friday the week before the next publish date.

MARR AND COMPANY, P.C.

Certified Public Accountants

AICPA
Employee Benefit Plan Audi Quality Center Member
Government Audit Quality Center Member

COMMUNICATIONS WITH THE BOARD

November 17, 2025

Board of Directors
Hope Leadership Academy
Kansas City, Missouri

We have audited the financial statements of Hope Leadership Academy (the "Academy") for the year ended June 30, 2025, and have issued our report thereon dated November 17, 2025. Professional standards require that we provide you with information about our responsibilities under generally accepted auditing standards and *Government Auditing Standards*, as well as certain information related to the planned scope and timing of our audit. Professional standards also required that we communicate to you the following information related to our audit.

Our Responsibilities under U.S. Generally Accepted Auditing Standards and *Government Auditing Standards*

As stated in our engagement letter dated July 10, 2025, our responsibility, as described by professional standards, is to express an opinion about whether the financial statements prepared by management with your oversight are fairly presented, in all material respects, in conformity with the cash basis of accounting. Our audit of the financial statements does not relieve you or management of your responsibilities.

As part of our audit, we considered the internal control of the Academy. Such considerations were solely for the purpose of determining our audit procedures and not to provide any assurance concerning such internal control.

As part of obtaining reasonable assurance about whether the financial statements are free of material misstatement, we performed tests of the Academy's compliance with certain provisions of laws, regulations, contracts and grants. However, the objective of our tests was not to provide an opinion on compliance with such provisions.

Our responsibility for the supplementary information accompanying the financial statements, as described by professional standards, was to evaluate the presentation of the supplementary information in relation to the financial statements as a whole and to report on whether the supplementary information is fairly stated, in all material respects, in relation to the financial statements as a whole.

Planned Scope, Timing of the Audit, and Other

An audit includes examining, on a test basis, evidence supporting the amounts and disclosures in the financial statements; therefore, our audit involved judgment about the number of transactions to be examined and the areas to be tested.

Our audit included obtaining an understanding of the organization and its environment, including internal control, sufficient to assess the risks of material misstatement of the financial statements and to design the nature, timing and extent of further audit procedures. Material misstatements may result from (1) errors, (2) fraudulent financial reporting, (3) misappropriation of assets, or (4) violations of laws or governmental regulations that are attributable to the Academy or to acts by management or employees acting on behalf of the Academy. We did not note any internal control related matters that are required to be communicated under professional standards. We did note one instance of noncompliance with the Missouri Revised Statutes for securing deposits in the Schedule of State Findings in the reporting package.

We performed the audit according to the planned scope and timing previously communicated to you about planning matters.

Significant Audit Findings

Qualitative Aspects of Accounting Practices
Management is responsible for the selection and use of appropriate accounting policies. In accordance with the terms of our engagement letter, we will advise management about the appropriateness of accounting policies and their application. The significant accounting policies used by the Academy are described in Note 2 to the financial statements. No new accounting policies were adopted and the application of existing policies was not changed during the year ended June 30, 2025. We noted no transactions entered into by the Academy during the year for which there is a lack of authoritative guidance or consensus. All significant transactions have been recognized in the financial statements in the proper period.

As the financial statements are presented in accordance with the cash basis of accounting, accounting estimates were not a part of the financial statements prepared by management.

Certain financial statement disclosures are particularly sensitive because of their significance to financial statement users. We noted no such disclosures.

The financial statement disclosures are neutral, consistent, and clear.

Difficulties Encountered in Performing the Audit
We encountered no significant difficulties in dealing with management in performing and completing our audit.

Corrected and Uncorrected Misstatements
Professional standards require us to accumulate all known and likely misstatements identified during the audit, other than those that are trivial, and communicate them to the appropriate level of management. No material misstatements were identified to be corrected.

Disagreements with Management
For purposes of this letter, professional standards define a disagreement with management as a financial accounting, reporting or auditing matter, whether or not resolved to our satisfaction, which could be significant to the financial statements or the auditor's report. We are pleased to report that no such disagreements arose during the course of our audit.

HOPE LEADERSHIP ACADEMY

STATEMENT OF RECEIPTS, DISBURSEMENTS AND CHANGES IN FUND BALANCES – CASH BASIS – BY FUND

For the Year Ended June 30, 2025

	General Fund	Special Revenue Fund	Totals
RECEIPTS:			
Local	$ 173,493	$ 56,825	$ 230,318
State	511,146	1,041,643	1,552,789
Federal	234,044	0	234,044
Total receipts	918,683	1,098,468	2,017,151
DISBURSEMENTS:			
Instruction	311,696	751,807	1,063,503
Support services - students	156,011	82,451	238,462
Support services - instructional staff	22,136	96,932	119,068
Support services - general administration	76,436	6,612	83,048
Support services - building level admin	5,054	160,666	165,720
Business support services	110,955	0	110,955
Business support - fiscal services	89,900	0	89,900
Operation and maintenance plant services	187,708	0	187,708
Student transportation	179,104	0	179,104
Food services	96,321	0	96,321
Support services - central office	13,712	0	13,712
Support services - central office	3,162	0	3,162
Total disbursements	1,252,195	1,098,468	2,350,663
Net changes in fund balance	(333,512)	0	(333,512)
FUND BALANCE - JUNE 30, 2024	765,274	0	765,274
FUND BALANCE - JUNE 30, 2025	$ 431,762	$ 0	$ 431,762

Management Representations
We have requested certain representations from management that are included in the management representation letter dated November 17, 2025.

Management Consultations with Other Independent Accountants
In some cases, management may decide to consult with other accountants about auditing and accounting matters, similar to obtaining a "second opinion" on certain situations. If a consultation involves application of an accounting principle to the governmental unit's financial statements or a determination of the type of auditor's opinion that may be expressed on those statements, our professional standards require the consulting accountant to check with us to determine that the consultant has all the relevant facts. To our knowledge, there were no such consultations with other accountants.

Other Audit Findings or Issues
We generally discuss a variety of matters, including the application of accounting principles and auditing standards, with management each year prior to retention as the governmental unit's auditors. However, these discussions occurred in the normal course of our professional relationship and our responses were not a condition to our retention.

Other Matters

With respect to the supplementary information accompanying the financial statements, we made certain inquiries of management and evaluated the form, content and methods of preparing the information to determine that the information complies with cash basis of accounting, the method of preparing it has not changed from the prior period and the information is appropriate and complete in relation to our audit of the financial statements. We compared and reconciled the supplementary information to the underlying accounting records used to prepare the financial statements or to be financial statements themselves.

This information is intended solely for the use of the Board of Directors charged with governance and management of Hope Leadership Academy and is not intended to be and should not be used by anyone other than those specified parties.

Marr and Company

Marr and Company, P.C.
Certified Public Accountants
Kansas City, Missouri

Right now is an extremely important time to support local journalism. From November 1 through December 31, 2025, every donation made to The Northeast News will be matched dollar-for-dollar through the Institute for Nonprofit News' NewsMatch program. That means your contribution has double the impact — helping us continue to provide reliable, community-driven news and information to every household in our neighborhood.

HNE MEDIA IS A 501c3 NON-PROFIT ORGANIZATION AND ALL DONATIONS ARE TAX DEDUCTIBLE.

DONATE!

Help Inky climb to the top of the Christmas Tree!

Ho-ho-hold onto your tinsel, readers! 'Tis I, Inky, the adventurous feline. My Christmas wish is acquiring a purr-fect view from the very top of the Christmas tree—and I need your help to get there. Your mission: guide me along the winding branches, avoid getting tangled in twinkling ornaments, and help me paw-sitively reach the star at the top!