

VISIONEER



Visioneer Focus - Anita Wolgast

(The Visioneer is featuring monthly interviews with area leaders who have been involved with the visioning process and successes. This interview features Anita Wolgast, co-chair of the NOTO board.)



What's Your Job?

Anita has been co-chair of the North Topeka Arts District board since its inception in 2008. She has been active in many other community projects and events over a period of years. "Many years ago I wanted to start getting involved in the community and I have been involved. I've done some fundraising projects, like the one for the Carousel in the Park, and found how satisfying it is to get other people involved, whether it's by giving money or rolling up their sleeves to make a project happen. It's just a real joy to see everyone working together to make a vision come true. That's really what happened with NOTO," she

said.

What does NOTO have to do with Heartland Visioning and a strategic plan for Topeka?

"We've been a part of meetings that came together in the past to figure out how to move Topeka forward. I remember an event at Washburn with a huge crowd. We were sure this was going to keep going and we would make good things happen in Topeka. But, it just didn't happen." Finally we hired a consultant and they raised money to hire William Beteta and an assistant. Heartland Visioning was created. I went to some early meetings and decided, 'this time it's going to happen.'"

One of the priorities that was stated under the visioning's Quality of Life foundation for Topeka was an arts district. That led to Anita and John Hunter spending a year to develop a plan and decide on North Topeka, an area with historic buildings and years of struggle to recover from the 1951 flood, as a location for the arts district.

"When you start something like that, you have no clue what's in store, like building a bridge while you're crossing it," she said. "I have to give Heartland Visioning credit for this; they gave us access to that level of community leaders who came out to support us at our kickoff and have been supporting us ever since. I also think it's important to credit

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Heartland Visioning with going out to the community and asking what people wanted to see happen. They went out, the community said they wanted an arts district and they have shown they meant what they said. We get more than 2,000 people there on First Fridays," she said. "There's no way any of us could have gone out and created an arts district without the foundation of Heartland Visioning."

What Comes Next?

"We had several other foundations besides the Quality of Life foundation. The Education Foundation was doing some dynamic things, as did their Government, Infrastructure and Economic Development Foundations. Revamping that is crucial . I think it's also time to go through the 'review, revise, refocus' process, and Heartland Visioning is doing that right now, again going back to the community and listening to the answers to the question, 'what would you like to see happen now?' And there will likely be big areas that didn't have major support last time, but now that changes have happened, people have created new desires," she concluded.

Education and Science Park is One-of-a-



Kind

Energy, education and unique public private partnerships are combining to create an innovative area, the Kanza Education and Science Park, on the old Topeka State Hospital Grounds near I-70 and MacVicar in Topeka. It's all part of a continuing plan to create a science learning park and business destination in Topeka. Topeka Public Schools USD 501 and Westar Energy have been working together to develop the park.

In 2012, a 100 kilowatt wind turbine began producing electricity on the site. The 160-foot tower, visible from I-70, produces energy for Topeka Public Schools and provides a unique learning opportunity for students. That was the first step in creating a renewable energy learning center in an old milk barn just east of the center. Education Station will be an electrical substation where visitors can see the workings of electricity. A prairie park for outdoor science lessons also will be developed nearby. Another unique learning experience is offered at the Kanza Café, operated by Topeka Public Schools since January 2013 to let students learn about business while providing meals for café customers.

Birthday Extravaganza

November 14
6:00 pm - 7:30 pm
Sk8away

Merry Market

November 15
1:00 pm- 6:00 pm
November 16
9:00 am - 3:00 pm
Ag Hall

Capital City Crushers - Recruitment

November 14
8:00 pm - 10:00 pm
Sk8away

Laugh Lines Improv Comedy

November 16
8:00 pm
Topeka Civic Theatre and Academy

Sights and Sounds of Christmas

November 16
10:00 am - 5:00 pm
Fairlawn Plaza

Santa Paws

November 16
12:00 pm - 3:00 pm
Helping Hands Humane Society

TOP CITY Cranksgiving

November 16
2:00 pm - 3:00 pm
Washburn University Bell Tower

"Dog's Colorful Stories" Story Time

November 19,20
10:00 am - 11:00 am
Topeka and Shawnee County Public Library

Justin Moore "Off the Beaten Path Tour"

November 20
7:00 am - 10:00 am
Kansas Expocentre

The café is operated by paid staff with assistance from Topeka Public Schools volunteers and students in the Next Step program, teaching job and social skills to young people 18-21 who haven't yet graduated from high school. A vocational interaction project grant from Heartland Works helped the café hire several paid high school students to work in the café last summer. They learned hospitality skills, food design, food preparation, menu selection, food-handling procedures and food display.

The school district is selling land to businesses and seeking other business partners for educational opportunities. Topeka economic developers are able to promote the innovative area to businesses and offer tax abatements.

[Watch the Virtual Tour](#) of Kanza Education and Science Park.

Real Award for Virtual Efforts



An online virtual campus tour of Washburn University recently garnered two awards from national organizations. Washburn contractors created a virtual tour with responsive design that doesn't require Flash. That means it is more accessible on various devices and can be viewed on phones.

Washburn was recognized for Most Creative Use of Cascade Server at the Hannon Hill Cascade User Conference and was People's Choice EduStyle Higher-Ed Web Award winner from EduStyle.net in the category of Best Campus Map or Virtual Tour. The Kansas City office of Barkley-Rei designed the tour that includes videos of current students, photos and text at each tour stop.

Visit [Washburn University](#) for more information.

Federal Funds will help build Bus Shelters

Topeka RoadRunners vs Odessa Jackalopes

November 21
7:15 pm - 10:00 pm
Kansas Expocentre

CASA Holiday Homes Tour

November 22
8:00 pm -10:00 pm

Annual Holiday Bazaar

November 23
9:00 am - 3:30 pm
Garfield Community Center

How I Became a Pirate

November 23
10:30 am - 1:30 am
Washburn University Gray Theater

Public Ice Skating and Late Skate

November 23
12:30 pm - 11:45 pm
Kansas Expocentre



The Topeka Metropolitan Transit Authority announced that at least 35 new shelters will be built along Topeka bus routes over the coming two years, with 80 percent of the funding coming from a federal transportation grant. A Michigan-based firm was selected for its bid with the lowest price and highest evaluation score.

Shelter locations are not yet final, but some will be based on input received and needs expressed at public meetings in the community. The second half of the project, for the concrete pads, will be awarded this month and construction will begin and continue for the next 12 months.

The MTAA also announced that the Metro had tripled its student ridership during the summer because of its "kids ride free" program. The bus service logged nearly 61,000 youth riders this summer, compared to about 20,000 the last two years.

[Read more](#) information about the plan approval.

