

Celebrate Kansas Day at our annual Cure for Cabin Fever event

**Sunday, January 29, 2023, 4:00-6:00 pm**

Join us at the Konza Prairie Meeting Hall (stone barn) at the headquarters of the Konza Prairie Biological Station. Enjoy a speaker, musical performance, and soup potluck feast. Invite your friends and bring a soup and/or bread to share.



**Program: Aubrey Streit Krug, PhD**  
**Director of Ecosphere Studies, The Land Institute**

Audrey will join us to discuss The Land Institute’s work in relation to the Great Plains, and a perennial future for this prairie region.



**Performance: Ann Zimmerman**

Ann sings the prairie into universal language. Her music celebrates the joy, sorrow, grandeur, and silliness of life, especially life on the windy plains. She backs her rich voice with piano, guitar, and the audience itself.

Research

Education

Conservation



Winter 2023

## 2023 New Docent Training

If you’ve ever been interested in learning more about the Konza Environmental Education Program’s docent team, here’s your chance!



New docent training begins:  
Tuesday, March 21st @ 9:00 am  
Training fee: \$40

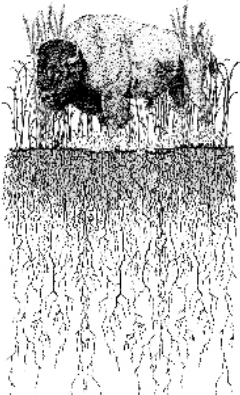
Training will continue every day from 9:00 am – 12:00 pm – Tuesday through Friday – from March 21st until March 31st.

All of the training occurs in the classroom of the Hulbert Center (stone house) at the Konza Prairie headquarters.

There will be a new focus on the skill of interpretation for this year’s training class. There will be less emphasis on facts and figures and more energy put towards how to engage visitors and connect them with the tallgrass prairie ecosystem.

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## KPBS Director's Report John Blair

Dear Friends of Konza Prairie,

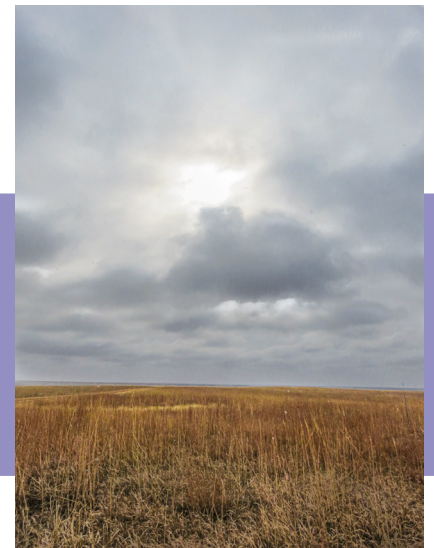
In this last newsletter of 2022, I'd like to highlight some recent activities in the areas of research, conservation, and outreach. In addition to hosting two major national research programs (the Long-Term Ecological Research Program and the National Ecological Observatory Network), we supported the activities of numerous local and visiting scientists working to advance understanding of tallgrass prairies. In 2022, this included scientists and graduate students from at least two dozen universities across the US. These researchers are addressing cutting-edge questions across a diverse range of topics - from plant-pollinator interactions to the impacts of woody plant encroachment on hydrology and biogeochemistry to the effects of bison on plant diversity and resilience to drought. In 2022, research from Konza Prairie led to 40 peer-reviewed publications and seven graduate student theses or dissertations. This brings the cumulative number of research publications from Konza Prairie to over 2000! Collectively, the research done here is advancing science and building a rich and detailed understanding of tallgrass ecosystems, which is necessary for managing and conserving these grasslands.

A unique feature of Konza Prairie is the watershed-level fire and grazing treatments that are critical for both research and conservation. In 2022, we burned nearly 5,000-acres to maintain the long-term fire treatments and manage woody plant encroachment, a growing concern throughout the Central Plains. In addition to increasing fire frequency in the bison area, we did some targeted removal of trees to increase grazable area for the bison. We had a very smooth and successful fall bison round-up and even recruited the assistance of a visiting researcher from South Africa. A total of 97 bison were sold and 239 were kept. The somewhat smaller herd size is part of an effort to promote fire and reduce woody plant cover in the bison-grazed watersheds. Additional conservation-related research at KPBS includes the completion of a 12-year prairie restoration project in former agricultural fields that will allow researchers to assess how climate variability affects the establishment and recovery of restored prairies.

Outreach activities in 2022 included field trips for classes from several universities and research-oriented tours for multiple government agencies (USDA, NASA) and other organizations. Konza scientists also responded to numerous requests for interviews from local and national media, which highlights the relevance and importance of the research done here. We even worked with a production team creating a documentary on the importance of grassland conservation for PBS!

I will close by wishing you a healthy and happy New Year and thanking you for supporting KPBS. Your support is essential for advancing the research, conservation, and education/outreach goals of the station. I look forward to seeing many of you at FOKP events in 2023! As always, please feel free to contact me (jblair@ksu.edu; 785-532-7065) with any questions or concerns about Konza or to find out more about how you can contribute to our long-term goals.

Dr. John Blair  
University Distinguished Professor  
Edwin G. Brychta Professor of Biology





## Time to molt!

My first year as FOKP president is coming to an end, and I could not be prouder of the work the board members did this past year. Our membership is strong with over 700 members! The Visions of the Flint Hills brought in over \$25K this past month, which is fantastic! A special thanks to Kelly Yarbrough for her continued leadership and innate ability to recruit artists and to Jill Haukos and the rest of the team for supporting the event. The pandemic brought change to how we operate and interact as a team, making it easier for people to join remotely, as life pulls us in multiple directions. We continue to find a balance between “That’s how we’ve always done it” with “Hey, this isn’t working anymore.”. It requires a healthy dose of change, which can be painful yet beautiful. Luckily, your board is a highly functional team, and their passion for the prairie runs deep.



Increasing awareness of Konza Prairie is at the forefront of what we do as a board. It is imperative that we not only educate others about this irreplaceable resource, but it is imperative that we cultivate the next generation of prairie aficionados. That means we need to do things differently. It’s time to molt! Diversify our recruitment strategies. Be mindful in our messaging. Engage with new audiences as if the prairie’s life depended on it. And it does. We each have our reasons for supporting the amazing work and education that occurs on the prairie. Each of our members has a story to tell, and there is someone in your circle who needs to hear it! Each one, reach one, but this year, each one BRING ONE. We now have the ability to add new FOKP members at events. It all starts with a simple, “Hey, have you ever heard of the Konza Prairie?”. Invite new people and bring them to an event. The board and I will be there to welcome them!

The FOKP board is meeting in December to discuss potential changes to our bylaws and leadership term limits, review current events and initiatives, and create processes that can more effectively serve our membership—from committee structures to establishing a volunteer network to revising our communication strategies and monthly meetings. In the coming year, we plan to identify new ways to broaden our impact without compromising our bandwidth, working smarter not harder, to free up time to better connect with you and future members. We are confident our proactive approach will lead to a more connected and informed community, capable of furthering the mission of KPBS, KEEP, and associated programs. As always, we will keep you informed of any changes and where we could use your help. Happy Holidays, and have a wonderful and healthy New Year!

### 2023 KONZA Calendar!!



FOKP Calendar available:

- Flint Hills Discovery Center
- Claflin Books
- During FOKP events
- Konza Prairie Headquarters



## From the Stone House Director of Education - Jill Haukos

### Citizen Science – using Chronolog

Using the general public as a source of scientific data is not a new concept. The National Audubon Society’s annual Christmas Bird Count is a wonderful example of a citizen-produced data set that gives scientists insight into the winter avian populations around the world.

Such is the inspiration behind “Chronolog”, a citizen science project – that is now at Konza Prairie - that harnesses the power of the cell phone, specifically the camera function of a cell phone. It’s a phenology (study of timing and changes over time) project where visitors to a site take a photo of a specific area and email that photo to an address. Once submitted, the photo joins the sequence of all the other photos that have been taken of that same site. Because the photos were taken on different dates, the sequence of photos is a compelling view into the changes to the site over time.

Chronolog provides a frame to hold visitors’ phones in place, ensuring that the photo is taken at the same direction and angle as all other photos of the site. A metal sign accompanies each photo frame and provides directions on how to take the photo and where to email it.

Konza Prairie has two Chronolog photo frames, and, while they’re located at the same place, they are looking at two different views. They are on a metal stand along the Nature Trail, just past the bridge over Kings Creek.

One photo frame is directed towards Kings Creek and the other frame is directed in the opposite direction looking at the restored brome field.



There are Chronolog locations all over the United States, including the two views of Konza Prairie. You can find them at <https://www.chronolog.io>. Check it out and start submitting your photos!

## Docent Spotlight- *Susan Kamphaus*

### Konza Environmental Education Program



#### What motivated you to become a Konza Prairie docent?

When I retired from working 41 years in USD 475, I was open to opportunities of learning and meeting new people. Two of my friends, Retta Kramer and Buz Bruzina, encouraged me to think about being a Docent on the Konza Prairie. I was excited to think I would be learning new things and could still be working with young people. After visiting with each of them I decided to apply for this venture and began my training in the winter of 2019.

#### What are some of your hobbies and interests?

I have always liked being outdoors and taking walks. I enjoy reading books and houseplants interest me and I have more than I need. I like to try new things. I enjoy keeping busy and working with different organizations in my community and helping others. When you expand your circle of activities you continue to enlarge your learning curve. I am also busy with a variety of activities in my church. We have three grandchildren so spending time with them is also a gift.

#### What has been the best part of being a volunteer at Konza Prairie?

I don’t have one thing I like best about being a Docent, but meeting and sharing about the Konza with new people of all ages is such a joy. I feel this opportunity has been a gift to me to expand my interests and have the fun of sharing with others and you get to be outside! When we are excited about the beauty of the Konza we hope others want to come back and share with their friends.

#### What brings you the most joy in your life?

My family and faith are important to me. Life has many gifts, so I think the most joy is taking advantage of the opportunities that we are given. If we stay open to new adventures and continue to learn, our lives will be filled with beauty amidst the trials along the way.

# *Congratulations!* Konza Rock Stars!

Congratulations to our new Konza Rock Stars – an award established in 2018 as the highest award available to be awarded to a person who has provided exemplary service to the Friends of Konza Prairie. Awardees receive a piece of Konza Prairie itself – a unique piece of limestone from the bison area that is engraved and painted with the Konza Prairie Biological Station logo. No one piece is the same.



## *John Briggs*

Past Director of the Konza Prairie Biological Station  
Past KPBS site researcher  
Past Co-Director KNZ LTER



## *Darrett & Shelly Gunderson*

Both 2-term Treasurers for FOKP  
KEEP Docents - Class of 2006  
Volunteers for the Summer Teachers' Workshop  
Volunteers for Wildflower Walk



## *Jim Koelliker*

Past FOKP President, Secretary, Program Chair  
Current Chair of the FOKP Calendar Committee  
KEEP Docent  
Superintendent of parking for all Konza Prairie events

### **Past Konza Rock Star Award Recipients:**

- 2018: Diane Barker, Karen Hummel
- 2019: Joe Gelroth, Donna McCallum, Valerie Wright
- 2020: Cindy Jeffrey, Stormy Lee Kennedy, Ken Stafford
- 2021: Chod Hedinger, Mike Haddock, Greg Zolnerowich

I'm a PhD student at the University of North Carolina Greensboro (UNCG), working with Dr. Sally Koerner. Dr. Koerner is a global change and community ecologist who has been doing work at Konza for the past decade and has now given me the opportunity to work here, as well!

I grew up in Lancaster, Pennsylvania, but I moved to North Carolina in 2021. Like a lot of us, I've loved nature since I was little. I used to take a journal out into the woods as a kid and write down observations about the plants and animals I found - I think that my young self would be thrilled to know that I'm basically still doing that today! But surprisingly, I didn't even consider ecology as an option until I was halfway through my undergraduate degree. I found out that "ecologist" could be an actual career, did some undergraduate research in a community ecology lab to try it out, and haven't looked back since!

My parents were a huge influence on my love for nature. We would go hiking every weekend and camping at least once a month, and they were extremely active in encouraging my love of science in general and in exploring the amazing world around us. I went through a lot of "dream jobs" as a kid (archaeologist, marine biologist, cowboy, astronaut...), and now I'm amazed they managed not only to keep up (and put up!) with it, but also recognized the threads that connected them all and used them to foster my love for science and nature.

Grazing is an important part of grasslands, and grazers like bison and cattle are frequently moved on and off of the land. To better understand the effects of these grazers on grasslands, my research looks at how two key communities, plants and soil microbes, respond to changes in grazing. Plants and soil microbes are closely intertwined, but they are usually only studied separately from one another. I am also investigating how common global changes alter both the relationships between these communities and how they transition from being grazed to ungrazed and vice versa. This work will help answer important questions about how grassland communities shift over time under changing grazing and environmental conditions, which can help us better understand and manage tallgrass prairie and other grasslands in an era of global change.

It's hard to choose, but one of my favorite things is getting to spend early mornings out on the prairie. The sun rising over the hills as the bison find a promising spot to graze, listening to the insects and the birds and the wind, getting ready for a long day of hard work... there just isn't anything else like it!

My least favorite thing is probably that I can only spend three months out of the year here! (But no, seriously - it's gotta be the ticks.)

At this stage in my career, I'm not sure that I have a dream job yet. But I would love to wind up somewhere where I could continue doing grassland research and fieldwork, mentor others, and build solid relationships between researchers, land managers, and the public.

Unsurprisingly, I love hiking and camping, but I also like to cook (and eat!), play video games, and read.



Graduate Student



I am originally from Powhatan, Virginia, west of Richmond in central Virginia, but I have been in the Midwest for the past eight years. I went to undergrad at Valparaiso University in NW Indiana, and then got my Master's at Miami University in Oxford, Ohio.

I have always been fascinated with the natural world, especially weather and climate. I originally was planning on majoring in meteorology during undergrad. However, meteorology lacks the big field component that I wanted to have. During my sophomore year, I took a field job in the Boundary Waters of Minnesota with the Forest Service and came back wanting to make a career out of that.

One of my undergrad professors, Dr. Laurie Eberhardt, really sparked my interest in field biology and ecology with the courses she taught. Her classes opened up the beauty and complexity of the world around us. They also required individual research projects, which allowed me to start asking big ecological questions that I wanted to continue to pursue in graduate school.

I work with Dr. Zak Ratajczak, an assistant professor in the Division of Biology. His lab focuses on the resilience of ecosystems to changing environmental drivers, such as climate, with a particular focus on grassland systems.

My research focuses on the effects of mega-grazers (bison) on woody encroachment and bison's influence on reverting an encroached grassland back to open grassland. Woody encroachment is one of the most dire threats to remaining grasslands across the globe, especially our mesic grasslands in North America. Understanding what increases or decreases woody encroachment is vital to conserving our few remaining grasslands. Additionally, the role our native grazer, bison, play in the grand scheme of woody encroachment is unknown. They could decrease woody plants by trampling, browsing, rubbing, or potentially other mechanisms. However, they can increase woody plant dominance by reducing the competitive ability of graminoids and decreasing fire severity as they are grazers, removing large amounts of grass biomass. My research could have implications for how we manage and restore our prairies.

I love the feeling I get when I look across open grassland, the smell of the bison, and the sound of grass in the wind. There is something that connects to me on a primal level at Konza and the Great Plains in general. Grasslands and savannas are humans' evolutionary home, and whenever I am out on Konza I feel a little closer to our distant ancestors.

My least favorite thing: Most people would say the ticks, but I think it is the wind, especially in the winter. It bites, and there is no place to hide.

My dream job would be a remote research position in a National Forest or National Park where I have access to hundreds of miles of trails.

All of my spare time is spent running. I compete in ultramarathons and currently am focusing on the 50-mile distance. Hopefully, I plan on doing a 100-miler in the next year. I am part of an ultrarunning team and hope it may turn into a part-time career. I spend a lot of time running around Manhattan and Konza. Running in grasslands is one of my favorite ecosystems to run in with the vastness; it goes back to my love for grasslands as a whole; running in them just feels right on a deeper level.

## 2022 Visions of the Flint Hills Update

Kelly Yarbrough

We've had a wonderful response to our "Visions of the Flint Hills" art show benefit this year, but the show isn't over yet! We've extended the show at Kansas City's Buttonwood Art Space until December 14, 2022, so that everyone has time to make those special holiday purchases. All work can be viewed and purchased online at: [ButtonwoodArtSpace.com](http://ButtonwoodArtSpace.com) or in person at Buttonwood during business hours.

Planning and executing this fundraiser for FOKP takes almost a full year and a whole team of dedicated volunteers. Many thanks to Susan Adams, Alicia Firstbrook-Stott and Mary Gordon for joining the planning and fundraising team this year. And, thank you to our wonderful local sponsors who generously supported this year's event: Dianne Shumaker and Bob Southard, the Flint Hills Discovery Center Foundation, The Nature Conservancy, Civic Plus, WTC, Meadowlark Hills, Native Lands LLC, Blueville Nursery, KanEquip, Bayer Construction, Northern Flint Hills Audubon Society, the Volland Foundation, Burnett Automotive, and City Barrel.

We also partnered with the K-State Alumni Association to host their Kansas City community at Buttonwood in early October, and had a great turnout! Thank you to Alan Fankhauser and Amy Button-Renz for organizing this wonderful evening.

Our official opening reception on October 7 was also a great success! Painter Diana Werts served as our 2022 juror, Melissa and Bob Atchison provided music, and Stephanie Manes of the Ranchland Trust of Kansas was our Honorary Chair of the evening. We also tried a fun, new way to educate visitors about the prairie by inviting a few partners to set up "learning rooms" inside some of Buttonwood's offices. Big thanks to Native Lands LLC for being our "seed room", the Flint Hills Discovery Center for repping our "fire room" and Jill Haukos for bringing lots of touchable, dynamic prairie artifacts! FOKP President Brian McCornack also put together some great videos that show highlights from this evening. Check those out on Konza Prairie's YouTube channel!

Adjacent to the "Visions of the Flint Hills" show, we also invited some artists to show work on site at Konza during FOKP's annual meeting on September 25, a mini-show we call "Art in the Barn".

A huge shout out to our perennial partners in this effort, Macy Vulgamore with Buttonwood in Kansas City and Jill Haukos, for keeping this effort on track and successful for its 14th year! We are so grateful to be able to support both FOKP and regional artists with this fun, dynamic show!





# Fall Annual Meeting - Art in the Barn



## The KPBS Staff:

**Director** John Blair, Ph.D.  
**Assistant Director** Eva Horne, Ph.D.  
**Administrative Asst.** Barb Van Slyke  
**Director of Education** Jill Haukos  
**KPBS Project Manager** Patrick O'Neal

The Friends of Konza Prairie (FOKP) promote the interests of Konza Prairie Biological Station as they pertain to its mission of Research, Education and Conservation. Membership in FOKP is open to all individuals, groups and businesses that share an interest in the common goal of supporting the Konza Prairie Biological Station.

For FOKP membership and general information, call 785-587-0441, or visit the Konza Environmental Education Program (KEEP) website at: <http://keep.konza.ksu.edu> Also, see the back of this issue for a membership form.

## The FOKP Executive Board:

**President** Brian McCornack  
**President-elect** Susan Adams  
**Secretary** Retta Kramer  
**Treasurer** Noah Busch  
**Historian** Joe Gelroth

### The FOKP board members:

Susan Adams	(3-yr term expiring Dec. 2024)
Noah Busch	(re-election 3 years Dec. 2020)
Jim Koelliker	(3-yr term expiring Dec. 2022)
Retta Kramer	(3-yr term expiring Dec. 2023)
Tawnie Larson	(3-yr term expiring Dec. 2024)
Brian McCornack	(3-yr term expiring Dec. 2023)
Marcia Rozell	(3-yr term expiring Dec. 2022)
Jeff Watson	(3-yr term expiring Dec. 2022)
Jerrold Westfahl	(3-yr term expiring Dec. 2023)
Kelly Yarbrough	(re-election 3 years Dec. 2020)

### Ex-officio and Honorary members

The Nature Conservancy- Rob Manes  
KPBS Director- John Blair  
Director of Education- Jill Haukos  
KSU Foundation- Trevor Jueneman  
Historian- Joe Gelroth  
Honorary Board Members- Stormy Kennedy and Valerie Wright

Friends of Konza Prairie  
Kansas State University  
Division of Biology,  
116 Ackert Hall  
Manhattan, KS 66506-4901  
785-587-0441  
#308



#### MISSION

Konza Prairie Biological Station (KPBS) is a native tallgrass prairie preserve owned by The Nature Conservancy and Kansas State University and operated as a research station by the Division of Biology. The Friends of Konza Prairie (FOKP) promotes the interests of KPBS as they pertain to its mission of research, education and conservation.

## Bison & Bluestem is published by the Friends of Konza Prairie New and Renewing FOKP Members

Thank you all for your support of the Friends of Konza Prairie!

Members who have newly joined or renewed their membership since the last issue of the Bison & Bluestem include:

#### Little Bluestem—Individual

Mary & Donald Breneman  
Stephen Coulson  
Richard L. Hartman  
Sue Carolyn Hunt  
David & Alicia Stott  
Mindy & Bruce Thierolf  
Tonya Tomory

#### Little Bluestem—Family

Jocelyn & James Baker  
John & Joan Blair  
Stephen Bridenstine  
Jane & Randy Greber  
The Hugo Family  
Katherine Hummels  
Gary & Cindy Jeffrey  
Stormy & George Kennedy  
Tom & Andrea Krauss  
Dennis & Elaine Lang  
Donna McCallum  
Carol & David Pacey  
Carolyn Roberts  
Marcia & Tim Rozell  
Marcia Stockham  
Rodney & Judith Taylor  
Elisabeth & Richard Vanderlip  
Tom & Ronnie Whalen

#### Big Bluestem

Mitch & Susan Adams  
BBN Architects Inc  
Kary Bloom  
Tim & Morgan Bonnell  
Myron & Nancy Calhoun  
Christopher Claflin  
Bill Cutler & Elisabeth Suter  
Elizabeth Dodd  
Larry & Laurel Erickson  
Craig & Jane Freeman  
Stanley & Letha Glaum  
Laura Gullickson  
Rob & Toni Gunderson  
Thomas & Chris Herald  
Dave Hodgson  
Kathy Hund  
Stephanie Reeck  
Bill & Linda Richter  
Bob & Elaine Shannon  
Tom & Kristie Taylor  
Jim & Beth Turtle  
Fred & Judy Works

#### Flint Hills

Rachel & Daniel Andresen  
Terry & Ginny Arthur  
Denis M. & Donna M. Callaghan  
Daniel & Susie Higgins  
Phil Jeffries  
Bryce & Sheena Koehn  
Carl & Marty Reed  
Mary Beth Reese  
Susan K. Reimer

#### Prairie Chicken

Clay Harvey & Patty McGivern  
Joe & Anne Jezak  
Jay & Doris Merrill  
Ken & Nina Warren

#### Bison

Earl Allen  
Dan & Beth Bird  
Floyd & Gayle Dowell  
Joe & Janette Gelroth  
Sue Maes & Dennis Hemmendinger  
Caroline Thorington

#### Tall Grass

Bill Baack  
Gail Bryan  
Marlis Dagg

#### Community Memberships

Francis Abellera & Marjorie Balinbin Abellera  
Luisa Baez Molina  
Charles Barden  
Christa Barker  
Corey Beckendorf  
Shawn Becket  
Jacqueline Becks  
Brandon Bellamy  
Michelle Book  
Lesley Boroughs  
Jacob Brasher  
Brett Bussart  
Noah Camfield  
James Carrell  
Kapua-Lohnni Coats-Rood

Vanessa Colunga  
Kendra Cool  
Griffin Davis  
Katie Delapaz-Santillan  
Kaylee Eckart  
Judy Elias  
Jessica Fouard  
Jesse Freeman  
Vincent Garcia  
Melissa Gates  
Tucker Gibbs  
Haeley Greenleaf  
Gary Gresham  
Rayonta Hankins  
Ricky Hartwick  
Julia Hernandez Muniz  
Kristen Hoffman  
Robert Horton  
Dulce Inda Ramirez  
Eric Johnson  
Diana Jones  
Clayton Jones  
Byron Jones  
Michael Jorrick  
Maria Kaszanics  
William & Susan Koning  
Zachary Leblanc  
Willard Leslie  
Dennis Lindsey  
Matthew Ludwig  
Jeffrey Lusk  
Emanuel Manwaring  
Christian Marshbanks  
Calah Mathews  
Joseph Matthews  
Amanda Mayflower  
Amy McCurdy

Michael McDiffett  
Courtney McLaurin  
David Messerla  
Jolinda Mierny  
Michele Montgomery  
Teresa Oldham-Dixon  
Felipe Ornelas-Lopez  
Daniel Ortiz Santiago  
Lon Phelps  
Rafael Ramos  
Emma Reitz  
Chelsea Rezabek  
Kenisha Rivera  
Briana Robinson  
Dale Rusche  
Rachel Sanders  
Ashley Schell  
Keaton Shives  
Nathan Simonsson  
Jacquelyn Smith  
Kimberlie Snare  
Dylan Spann Lough  
Zakkyah Thomas  
Frank Throckmorton  
An Vu  
Angela Vujosevic  
Sean Walsh  
Jimmy Warner  
Anamarie Weber  
Shirleen Weiss  
Eugene Williams  
Katie Williams  
Eugene Williams  
Michael & Marsha Witt  
Mckinsey Wohler  
Richard Woodyard  
Tamera Worman  
Terri Wyrick  
Austin Zbierski