



United Community Services  
of Johnson County

# CommunityREPORT

Spring 2016

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## UCS Welcomes New Executive Director

As Karen Wulfkuhle prepares for retirement, Julie Brewer is poised to take the reins as executive director of United Community Services of Johnson County. Brewer will begin her new role in mid-May and Wulfkuhle will complete her service at the end of the May.

“Karen is leaving behind an incredibly stable organization,” said Jill Quigley, UCS board member who chaired the transition committee. “While we’ve had to come to terms with the fact that Karen is leaving, we feel confident that she is doing so with UCS well-positioned for the future.”

Brewer’s diverse background dovetails nicely with the focus of UCS, according to Quigley. She said the six-member committee charged with finding Wulfkuhle’s successor was impressed by Brewer’s appreciation of UCS as a dynamic organization that is one of the community’s most valuable planning assets.

**“Real and effective solutions begin with a plan well-grounded in thoughtful collaboration and research, which is the hallmark of**

**UCS,” Brewer said. “I am thrilled to be joining this team of professionals and volunteers and continuing its legacy of community action leadership.”**

Brewer and her husband, Steve, moved to the Johnson County area in July of 2011. She immediately embraced our community through volunteer efforts including advocacy roles for the Blue Valley School District. She has served as a Court Appointed Special Advocate for CASA of Johnson & Wyandotte Counties and currently serves as a professional advisory member for the Kansas City Chapter of CHADD.

Before relocating, Brewer served as the first chief operating officer of Learning Community of Douglas and Sarpy Counties in the Omaha, Neb. area. The Learning Community was founded to take action to reverse decades of poor student achievement an 11-member school district region.

Brewer is very familiar with United Way, one of UCS’ most significant partners. She served as both vice president of resource development and vice president of communications for the United Way of the Quad Cities Area, Davenport, Iowa. Brewer also has experience in sales, advertising, tourism, event planning and public relations. She has also owned her own marketing consulting firm for more than 15 years.

**“Julie Brewer will complement the staff’s work with honed core competencies in communication, fundraising and advocacy skills,” Quigley said. “Thanks to the work of Karen Wulfkuhle and her staff, Julie takes over an incredibly stable and respected organization. We feel confident that she will use her skills to widen the impact that UCS makes even further.”**



## YOU ARE INVITED

Please join us for a reception to welcome Julie Brewer and celebrate the work of Karen Wulfkuhle.

Friday, May 6,  
from 4-6 p.m.  
at the Atrium at  
Johnson County  
Community College.  
A program will be  
presented at 4:30 p.m.  
Reservations are not  
required.



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## 2016 UCS Human Service Summit

*Expanding Employment and Employability to Reduce Poverty and Create Opportunity*

### 2016 Human Service Summit

Tuesday, June 14, 2016

8:30 a.m. to noon

Best Conference Center,  
KU Edwards Campus

Building on the *Framework for Reducing Poverty and Creating Opportunity* poverty project that was unveiled at last year's event, UCS – along with its partners and key stakeholders – will launch a new planning process to improve and expand household sustaining employment at the 2016 Human Service Summit. See **Poverty Project Update** for more information about current initiatives.

The goal of the new planning process is to create a strategic approach and set of actions to improve and expand employment opportunities for low-income households that pay more than \$15 an hour plus benefits and offer advancement opportunities. While current unemployment levels are low, one-third of jobs in Johnson County paid less than \$15 an hour last year (e.g., less than \$31,200 annually). Local employment projections through 2022 suggest that the proportion of local households with low-income wages will continue to grow.

“In order to assure that Johnson County remains an area of opportunity and choice into the future, residents will need access to career-based skills training and jobs that can sustain their household's needs,” said Valorie Carson, UCS community planning director. “The 2016 Summit will give attendees the chance to collaborate and contribute to a new planning process that will strengthen our overall community.”

As part of the 2016 Summit, partner organizations will share how they've responded to the Call to Actions that were issued to the health and human service sector at the 2015 event. More information about the 2016 Human Service Summit is available at [ucsjoco.org](http://ucsjoco.org).

Register online at [ucsjoco.org](http://ucsjoco.org) using check or credit card by June 7, 2016.

### Poverty Project Update

Work continues to advance the three strategies outlined in the *Framework for Reducing Poverty and Creating Opportunity* research project. Recent activities outlined by strategy follow:

#### ***Make every health and human service sector job a good job.***

UCS developed a three-part workshop to guide organizations that want to implement better personnel and pay practices. Topics included increasing salaries, expanding benefits, offering more opportunities for advancement and best practices for work/life balance. Ten nonprofit organizations participated.

“We have employees who are doing incredibly important work for us,” said Docking. “Low pay leads to high turnover so we are making a concerted effort to raise the floor on wages. We're in a market where there is increasing competition from for-profit providers. Not only will raising our minimum wage help KidsTLC keep good people and attract new talent, it should also put approximately 100 employees in a better spot financially.”



Gordon Docking, president/CEO of KidsTLC presents at one of the good jobs workshops. The organization is in the midst of an initiative that will raise the pay scale over a three-year period.

### **Promote Talk, Read, Play with employees, clients, and stakeholders.**

UCS hosted five screenings of *The Raising of America* documentary to promote *Talk, Read, Play*. The campaign provides parents and caregivers support to enhance early brain development. Johnson County Government printed and distributed 2,000 program fliers. UCS also joined forces with school districts, city and county officials in a concerted effort to promote the program.

### **Increase safety net supports for adults without dependent children and transitional age youth.**

UCS is in the process of conducting research and interviews with stakeholders to determine system strengths and gaps for supporting youth who age-out of foster care. A report detailing findings will be published in June.

Visit [ucsjoco.org](http://ucsjoco.org) to download the framework and call to action or contact Kathryn Evans Madden, UCS poverty project manager at [kathrynm@ucsjoco.org](mailto:kathrynm@ucsjoco.org).

## **Q & A with Karen Wulfkuhle**

*Retiring UCS executive director shares her thoughts on the past, present and future*

### **How has the vision of the community members who founded UCS impacted Johnson County?**

UCS founders recognized a strong network of human service organizations is essential to a thriving community where everyone can fulfill their potential and contribute fully to our economy. Nearly 50 years later, there are numerous examples of human service programs that were created or enhanced as the result UCS' efforts in the areas of data analysis, convening, mobilizing resources and/or policy advocacy.

### **How has the landscape of Johnson County changed since you joined UCS?**

In my 30 years at UCS I've watched Johnson County's population double, translating to a dramatic growth in demand for human services by people from all socio-economic levels. The significant increase in poverty since the early 2000s led to forging a partnership with Johnson County Government to raise public awareness and build the community's capacity to respond to poverty effectively.

Another change is the political environment. UCS has a rich history of working with elected and appointed state officials to adopt policy changes that improve outcomes for those served by the safety net. Today, those opportunities are limited.

### **As you hand over the reins, how would you describe the organization that you are leaving?**

I'm humbled to leave a strong and stable organization behind. UCS is a reliable source for information on trends and human service issues, a trusted convener and facilitator to address community needs, a partner with local government to leverage their collective response to human service issues, and a partner with United Way to inform their planning for collective impact.

The leadership transition will be seamless because the success of UCS has reflected a gifted staff – both past and present. Community planning is built on relationships. The UCS staff is skilled at building relationships and trust, which brings people to the “table” where the planning work happens. They are poised to continue the good work they are doing without missing a beat.

### **Have you thought about how you will spend your retirement?**

My planning skills don't extend to my personal life, so my plans for retirement aren't well developed yet. I do know that I will often reflect on the memories from 32 years of doing meaningful work I love, alongside a talented staff, dedicated board members and caring community members.



The UCS staff (l. to r.) Christie Corbin, Karen Wulfkuhle, Marya Schott, Kathryn Evans Madden and Valorie Carson.

## ATF and HSF Grant Applications

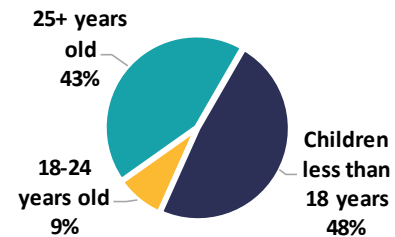
UCS manages two grant allocation processes on behalf of contributing cities and County Government – Alcohol Tax Fund (ATF) and Human Service Fund (HSF). The 2017 request for proposals for both funds will be released in mid-May with grant applications due in July. **More information is available at [ucsjoco.org](http://ucsjoco.org).**

## Homelessness in Johnson County

On the night of January 26, 2016, 153 persons in 70 households were identified as homeless in Johnson County, Kansas through the annual point-in-time count of homelessness.

- The median age of those who were homeless in Johnson County was 19 years. 74 were under the age of 18.
- 10 of the 153 homeless were unsheltered – living in their cars, abandoned buildings, and in tents in public spaces. 7 of the 10 were youth between the ages of 17-19 years.
- 60% of homeless households were employed, with 3 of 5 employed households working 40 or more hours a week.

Homeless Point-in-Time Count  
Johnson County, 2016



2015 UCS Annual Report can be viewed and downloaded at [ucsjoco.org](http://ucsjoco.org)

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