

Olsburg Community Pride

The Kansas Pride program is a citizen-based approach to improving the quality of life in the more than 60 enrolled communities in Kansas. Since 1970, the Pride program has grown and evolved, like the Kansas communities, to meet their ever changing needs. Pride has assisted and encouraged communities to prepare for the future by building on their past and forming a vision of the future. The constant challenge to remain viable and provide a high quality of life can be achieved through the comprehensive Pride approach. Pride encourages citizens to work together to identify community improvement projects.

The program is co-administered through the Kansas Department of Commerce and K-State Research and Extension. Kansas Pride Inc is a nonprofit organization.

Each year the Pride Program gives out two awards, the first one is the Star Award, which recognizes outstanding projects that address a community need, a higher level of citizen involvement and enhances the quality of life in Kansas. The second of these awards, the Community of Excellence Award, is awarded to communities that are following a community improvement process.

Olsburg is a small town nestled in the Flint Hills of Kansas. There are 192 people residing in the city limits and approximately 200 or more in the rural area. According most historians, Olsburg was founded in 1880 when the Kansas Central Railroad ran its line thru this area. Some historians can go back as far as 1853. Most of the original settlers were Swedes and Norwegians. It is said that Ole Trulson migrated to the area in 1862 and some say he gave his name to Olesburgh. He also established the first post office. Others say that when that when Ole Johnson established his drug store in 1880 that the town was name after him. Burgh is the Swedish word for town. The name Olesburgh was anglicized to Olsburg November 7, 1887.

The Swedish Methodist Church began in 1880, and then in 1881 a Swedish Lutheran Church was established. In 1880 a school house was built then destroyed by a tornado and rebuilt in 1882. All the churches took turns, holding their meetings in the school house, as it was the first public building. Many of the buildings built in the late 1800's and early 1900's are still in use today. One of those buildings still in use today is the crockery store which was build around the turn of the century. As the city came together in the 1880's Olsburg proved it was and still is a city that can come together for a good cause. As the Topeka Daily Capital said in 1889, "Olsburg has always had that... element of big moral character."

The city of Olsburg joined the Pride program in 1979 but never extended its enrollment, then re-enrolled in 2001. In 2002 Olsburg won the Community of Excellence award for a variety of projects. Several funding raising events were held to help fund the annual summer festival; signs were erected at the city limits embellished with the Swedish Dala Horse. Also in 2002 the Olsburg Community Pride group came together and painted the house of a deserving resident.

In 2006 Olsburg was awarded the Community of Excellence award for their monthly newsletter, which reflects the pulse of life in the community. Olsburg Pride Newsletter promote new and existing businesses, links residents to service providers, offers news on community events, welcome new members into the community (including birth announcement), shares historical events and perspectives and celebrates and mourns the events of life in the community. The more than 300 Pride Newsletters are sent out each month is one of the many projects this motivated, broad thinking group utilizes to hold the attention of the community.

Also in 2006, Olsburg Community Pride was awarded the Star for their "Olsburg Community Swimming Pool". The Olsburg Pride decided that a pool would be a safe and healthy way to occupy the leisure time of the children during the summer time. A \$50,000 private donation started the fundraising. Olsburg citizens got busy planning and raising the additional \$33,000.00 needed to complete the pool. Community members put in hundreds of volunteer hours working on all phases of this gigantic undertaking. The residents of this small, but mighty city opened their pocketbooks and gave from their hearts to make this pool a reality. The pool staff offers swimming lessons and healthy water aerobics. The pool also provides summer jobs for teens and adults alike. Olsburg Community Swimming Pool is a proven asset to the community.

In 2007 Olsburg Pride decided it was time to update the city park and replace the sand under the existing equipment. After going to Onaga, to view their new playground and some product research, a decision was made to use recycle tire mulch under all playground. At the 2007 Festival Pride launched a series of fundraisers for the park. And naturally the first idea snowballed and soon as decisions was made to update the whole park. Many asked why this renovations needs to be done. Our answer was few swings, a small jungle gym and a four-way teeter totter does nothing to activate a child's creativity let alone offering any type of physical stimulation.

A small community was formed with the intent to construct a park that will get the community involved and promote physical activity. This will provide the children of Olsburg and their families a clean, safe and age-appropriate play to play. Children, regardless of size of the town and financial status, should have a secure and fun place to enjoy. This will, also, enhance the opportunity for the families to socially interact with others in the community.

The Olsburg City Park Enhancement Project includes:

- Building a wooden children's train close to the site of the original railway (completed spring 2008).
- Replacing sand under exiting playground equipment with recycled tire mulch.
- Installing new tennis/basketball/volleyball/badmintons/hopscotch court.
- Replacing old tennis court site with new, age appropriate playground equipment.
- Erecting a memorial entrance into the park.
- Renaming the park Barn Parkera, which is Swedish for children's park.