

Op Ed Piece on Public Service Employee Recognition Week

Since 1985, the first full week of May has been celebrated as Public Service Recognition Week. It is an opportunity for citizens across the nation to offer a simple thank you to the men and women whose work maintains and improves our communities every day. This year Public Service Recognition Week is May 6-12.

Across the state, today's newspaper headlines reflect the breadth of triumphs and tragedies our Kansas communities confront on a daily basis. A fire at a small business, a drop in the homeless population, more vigor introduced in a school program, improvements to a roadway—the stories are so typical that we scarcely take notice unless they affect us personally. But they point to the thoughtful daily efforts of the thousands of public servants across the state whose work quietly enhances our lives.

Every story about a fire highlights the risks our fire fighters make daily, not only to save lives but also to limit damage to allow life to return to normal as quickly as possible. Those affected by the fire will be able to continue to work, to contribute economically to society, and ultimately take care of their families because of the work of the fire fighters, fire department management, city/county managers, and elected leaders who ensured resources were available and trained staff members were ready to respond.

To track the homeless population, public servants have searched under bridges, ventured into abandoned buildings, and made nighttime visits in places most of our parents told us not to go, in order to find the makeshift shelters. To bring about a decline in the homeless count, human service experts, policy analysts, grant writers, and elected officials have made tough choices to direct resources to taking care of vulnerable people in our communities.

Implementation of a vigorous new academic program demonstrates the commitment among teachers and administrators to a brighter future for young people and for the state as a whole. The creation and launch of such an initiative requires countless afterschool hours, additional training, and personal investment by many and represents the willingness of the school board and administrators to think beyond what is to what could be.

These activities capture only a sliver of the efforts public servants make every day to create better lives for all of us. Access to health care, bridge maintenance, safe intersections—most days these stories don't make the headlines. Instead we read about big scandals, political fights, and controversial policies. We take for granted the countless contributions of public service employees that make our world better, but we have a chance to change our focus for the week of May 6-12, 2012.

The animal control officer catching the loose dog, the teacher calling at night to share a concern about your child, the county health nurse who provides a vaccination, the road worker who fixes that annoying pothole—all of them enhance the quality of our lives. Please visit www.kupmc.org/PSRW to find ideas on how to thank the public service employees who impact your life.

Thousands of public service employees in Kansas work hard each day to keep us safe and healthy, to teach the next generation, to protect our property, and to make Kansas a great place to live. To all of them, thank you.

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