

CITY OF JACKSON

OFFICIAL CITY NEWSLETTER

WINTER 2021

TAKE ME HOME PROGRAM

NEW EFFORT FROM JACKSON POLICE CREATED TO HELP MISSING PEOPLE WITH COMMUNICATION DIFFICULTIES

Realizing a loved one is missing and unable to communicate is a scary experience for families.

That's something Amy Rogers is familiar with as the principal of the Lyle Torrant Center, which serves special needs students in Jackson.

"Last year I got a call from a police officer who wanted me to identify a non-verbal student who had been found after he left his home. They were trying to get him back home safely and had no way of quickly identifying him," Rogers said.

A new program launched by the Jackson Police Department (JPD) will give caretakers peace of mind that their loved one can be easily identified and returned home.

The Take Me Home Program is designed to help missing people with Autism, Alzheimer's, Dementia, Down Syndrome or any other condition that makes it difficult to communicate.

Police have had multiple occurrences of encountering missing people with communication difficulties.

Those barriers have prevented officers from quickly finding missing people's families.

JPD encourages caretakers of people with limited speech abilities to sign up for the Take Me Home Program.

A new section of the City's website has been created for residents to learn about the program and sign up.

By going to cityofjackson.org/takemehome, caretakers can fill out an online form where they list their loved one's information such as name, address, description, condition, and emergency contact.

A current photo of the person is also required.

All of the information provided will be used by officers to care for someone who has communication difficulties.

JPD Director Elmer Hitt says Take Me Home is based on similar programs nationwide and has been successful in helping families with missing loved ones.



JPD Officer Warren Johnson with the Take Me Home website.

"The program is free to sign up and the information you provide is confidential. Enrolling in this program will assist our officers in caring for your loved one during their time of need," Director Hitt said.

Rogers welcomes the program and is encouraging parents of students with communication difficulties to sign up.

"It's a proactive way to make sure all of our community members are safe and returned home quickly. I've heard from parents who are thankful this service is available," Rogers said.

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VOTERS APPROVE BALLOT PROPOSALS

Two changes have been made to the Jackson City Charter after voters overwhelming approved two amendments in the Nov. 3 General Election.

City Charter Amendment 7.10 was approved with 77 percent of residents voting yes.

City Council and Treasurer vacancies will now be filled by a vote of residents at the next general election following the opportunity for a primary election.

The person elected to the office will fill out the rest of the vacated term.

Previously, the City Charter stated that vacancies were to be filled by a City Council appointment.

There was no mechanism

in place to fill the vacated offices by election.

This change is intended to give residents a representative of their choosing if a position becomes vacated.

The City Council will still appoint someone to fill the vacancy until an election can be held.

City Charter Amendment 5.2 was approved with 71 percent of residents voting yes.

This means residents filing to run for elected office will no longer be required to submit notarized paperwork.

Previously, candidates for elected office were required to submit notarized nominating petitions.



Voters at the King Center in the Nov. 2020 election.

A signed certificate of the circulator will now be accepted.

This change is intended to remove a barrier to running for elected office and simplify the submission process.

The City Charter amend-

ments were placed on the ballot by the Jackson City Council following recommendations from the Charter Review Committee.

More charter amendments could be added to ballots in upcoming elections for voters to consider.

12 STREET IMPROVEMENT PROJECTS COMPLETE

Smoother street surfaces, improved pedestrian access, and more lighting appeared all over Jackson in 2020 thanks to the completion of 12 street improvement projects.

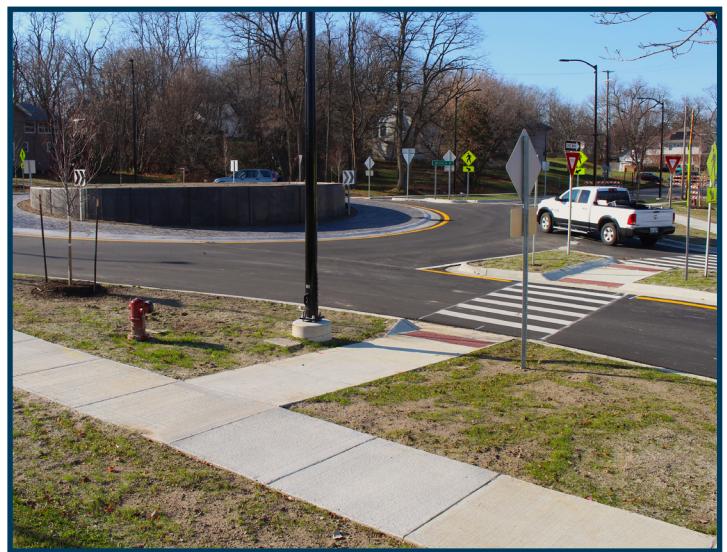
A new roundabout at the intersection of S. MLK Drive and E. Morrell Street now moves drivers through this busy intersection and acts as a gateway to Jackson's south side neighborhood.

North of the intersection near Downtown Jackson, four blocks of S. MLK Drive

was fully reconstructed.

The west side neighborhood also saw lots of street construction with the full reconstruction of W. Franklin Street between S. West Avenue and S. Brown Street.

Street resurfacings of Higby, Durand and Thompson streets between W. Michigan Avenue and Carlton Boulevard were completed in 2020, finishing a two-year long effort to resurface neighborhood streets on the City's west side.



A new roundabout is the centerpiece of a large construction project in the area of S. MLK Drive and E. Morrell Street.



CITY BUSINESS

RACIAL EQUITY EFFORTS

A new commission and City department has been created to focus on racial equity efforts in the City of Jackson.

The Racial Equity Commission and the Department of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) were officially created by the Jackson City Council last fall.

Both efforts are overseen by John Willis, the City's Chief Equity Officer.

The DEI Department will work with the City Manager to create opportunities that enhance equity within the City.

The Racial Equity Commission is tasked with reviewing City policies and procedures to ensure racial equity is a core element of government, along with making recommendations to officials on ways to promote racial justice and equity in Jackson.

Willis says the first step is doing a big assessment of where the community currently stands with equity efforts and identifying what



Chief Equity Officer John Willis

work needs to be done.

"The purpose of these efforts is to make Jackson a better place for everyone. We invite residents to be a part of this process by volunteering to serve on the Racial Equity Commission and participating in community discussions," Willis said.

Those interested in serving on the Racial Equity Commission may submit a board/commission application online through cityofjackson.org.

YOUTH COUNCIL

High school students looking to make a difference in local government are invited to serve on the newly-created Jackson Youth Council.

The 10 member council is tasked with making recommendations to the City Council concerning the needs of children, families, and young adults in Jackson.

Members will also work on initiatives that aim to improve the quality of life for young residents and families in the community.

The Youth Council is open to high



school students who live in the City of Jackson.

An online application can be completed and submitted by visiting cityofjackson.org/youthcouncil.



From the Desk of the Mayor

Derek Dobies

When we look back on 2020 years from now, I am sure we will all recall a year of hardships.

But before we put 2020 in the history books, I'd like Jackson to reflect on what we were able to accomplish during a time of great difficulties.

Despite a months-long City Hall shutdown and budget concerns, City leaders and staff never stopped working to serve residents and improve Jackson.

This past fall, I proudly watched as the ribbon was cut at the Martin Luther King Jr. Recreation Center, ending a construction project that spanned the entire pandemic and fulfilling a promise to reinvest in our south side neighborhood.

During these unprecedented times, streets were repaved, racial equity initiatives began, a record-setting election was held, families participated in safe recreation programs, and an effort to revitalize the MLK Drive corridor was started.

This dedication to community was not unique to our City government.

Local organizations like the United Way continued to step up, distributing more than 1 million pounds of food to families in need.

Area businesses also contributed to our amazing response and still found ways to expand and plant roots in Jackson.

While many challenges await us in the next year, I am comforted knowing the true grit and resiliency of Jackson will continue to lead us through 2021.

Sincerely,
Derek Dobies

1 MILLION LBS OF FOOD DISTRIBUTED IN COVID-19 RESPONSE



1 million pounds of food distributed in just eight months. It's the result of an extraordinary effort lead by the United Way of Jackson County to respond to the community's hunger needs during the COVID-19 pandemic.

In late Nov., the United Way announced 1,032,300 pounds of food had been distributed to local struggling families since the crisis began in March 2020.

This massive response is powered through the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Farmers to Families initiative, which provides fresh produce to communities across the country, and donations from the COVID-19 response fund organized by the United Way and Jackson Community Foundation.

The City of Jackson has been a big part of this food distribution effort by lending the use of City staff and facilities.

Much of that 1 million pounds of food was distributed through the Boos Recreation Center and the City's Masonic Temple building thanks to a close collaboration between the City and United Way.

Jackson community volunteers, businesses, non-profits and resident-led groups have also contributed to this large undertaking.

"If you're looking for a reason to be thankful, here it is: the can-do spirit of people and organizations uniting together to help our community," said Ken Toll, President & CEO of United Way of Jackson County.

Those interested in volunteering for the response effort may sign up by visiting uwjackson.org/volunteer.



SPOTLIGHT ON PARKS & REC

KING CENTER RENOVATION COMPLETE



Vice Mayor Arlene Robinson and community leader Henry Grayson reopen the King Center with a ribbon cutting in Oct.

A \$1.9 million effort to fully renovate the Martin Luther King Jr. Recreation Center is complete!

An outdoor ribbon cutting event, which was attended by local officials and residents, was held this past fall.

The event marked the end of a seven month effort to rejuvenate the recreation center located on Adrian Street in the south side neighborhood.

This is the first major renovation the King Center

has seen since it was built in 1968.

Outside the renovated center, residents will see new signage, a new roof, improved parking lot, bigger windows, and a new entrance.

Inside, residents will enjoy a larger commercial kitchen, expanded exercise room with weights, renovated classrooms, improved bathrooms, a new lounge area, and resurfaced gym floor.

There is also new office

space for City staff.

The King Center has been an important part of the community for 52 years.

In that time, the center has evolved beyond standard recreational offerings and now provides after-school and summer programs, free meals, tutoring, college courses, and has become a gathering place for residents young and old.

Antonio Parker, a long-time Parks and Recreation Department employee, re-

cently assumed the role of King Center Director.

Parker says he's honored to lead a center that's done so much for Jackson over the years.

"This renovation will ensure that the King Center will be here for the next 52 years to help us further serve the community," Parker said.

Recreation organizers say plans for future indoor recreation programs will be determined by COVID-19 guidelines.

LOOMIS PARK IMPROVEMENTS

Jackson's east side neighborhood is also seeing substantial investment from the City of Jackson.

The Jackson City Council approved the use of federal grants to fund renovations in Loomis Park.

A new basketball court (pictured right), lighting and walking trail has been installed in the center of the park.

The Boos Recreation Center received a new roof in Dec.

The old roof was 32 years old and causing water damage inside the building.

A new playground construction project to replace the aging wood structure is currently in the planning stages.



DOWNTOWN JACKSON ADDS NEW BUSINESSES

Despite challenges brought on by the pandemic, Downtown Jackson continues to grow and attract shoppers.

Three new businesses recently filled up storefronts, adding to the growing number of shops and restaurants that are moving downtown.

Women's clothing store Apricot Lane moved from the Westwood Mall to its new location at 180 W. Michigan Ave. in Nov.

Farm Sudz, a Chelsea-based business that offers natural personal care products, recently opened a Jackson location at 229 S. Mechanic St.

Downtown shoppers will have a new restaurant to visit with Doll n' Burgers opening a new location at 323 S. Cooper Street.

The growing local chain offers farm-fresh hamburgers and other diner favorites.

Cory Mays, Executive Director of the Downtown Development Authority, says downtown leaders are holding safe shopping events when possible to be mindful of COVID-19 concerns.

"It's incredible to see the resolve of our businesses as they find safe solutions to bring shoppers downtown. I'm looking forward to what we can accomplish together in 2021," Mays said.



Apricot Lane recently relocated to Downtown Jackson from the Westwood Mall.

IMPROVEMENT AUTHORITY CREATED FOR MLK CORRIDOR



A Jackson neighborhood is set to see big improvements following the City Council's unanimous vote to officially create the MLK Corridor Improvement Authority.

The main goal of the corridor improvement authority is to promote the redevelopment of the S. Martin Luther King Jr. Drive and Prospect Street corridors.

A portion of tax dollars from the authority district will be used to revitalize the area.

Improvements are likely to include more commercial businesses, mixed use developments, housing, landscaping, infrastructure and increased pedestrian access.

The authority was proposed by Mayor Derek Dobies and Vice Mayor Arlene Robinson.

"Our current businesses and residents will benefit from a more dense commercial dis-

trict," Vice Mayor Robinson said.

"It's important for our residents to know that this improvement authority does not mean a tax increase for them. It's simply taking a portion of taxes and reinvesting those funds in our neighborhood."

The next step in creating the authority is appointing nine members to a board that oversees the use of improvement funds.

Eight of the members must own a business or residential property in the authority district.

One of the members is allowed to live within a half mile of the district.

Residents interested in serving on the authority may apply by completing a board/commission application on cityofjackson.org.