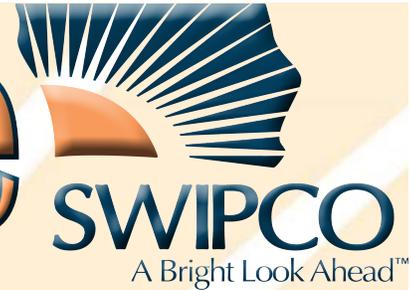


# The Update



**October 2022**

Serving the Counties of Cass, Fremont, Harrison, Montgomery, Mills, Page, Pottawattamie, and Shelby

## SWIPCO holds 47th Annual Meeting

50 stakeholders from diverse backgrounds gathered at the Lied Public Library in Clarinda on Thursday, September 22nd for Southwest Iowa Planning Council's (SWIPCO) 47th annual meeting and luncheon. The morning started off with a tour via SWITA buses of local success stories. Stops included the Clarinda Carnegie Art Museum, J's Pizza & Steakhouse, Weil's Clothing, Page County Courthouse, and the Glenn Miller Birthplace and Museum. The Lied Public Library, J's Pizza & Steakhouse, Weil's Clothing, and the Glenn Miller Museum had all been assisted with grant writing/administration by SWIPCO in the past.



*John McCurdy, SWIPCO Executive Director, discusses SWIPCO's role in the CDBG Downtown Façade Revitalization for Clarinda in front of J's Pizza & Steakhouse which was a participant in this project*

Following the tour, a welcome from Clarinda Mayor Craig Hill, and lunch, the SWIPCO meeting kicked off with Todd Valline, SWIPCO Board Chair doing introductions. SWIPCO Executive Director John McCurdy and Transit Director Mark Lander presented seven partnership awards for entities that had a strong partnership with SWIPCO over the 2022 fiscal year. The awardees were: Gilbert Thomas, Bank Iowa; Bear Creek Archeology; Curtis Architecture & Design; Clarinda Area Volunteers; Iowa Economic Development Authority; Tom Shipley, Iowa Senate; Olmsted & Perry Consulting Engineers, Jim Olmsted and Steve Perry.

SWIPCO staff were also recognized for years of service milestones: Ann Anstey (5 years) Rhonda Oliphant (5 years), Tammy DeBord (15 years) Sandy Hansen (15 years), and Christy Pederson (15 years). Richard Stehly was recognized as SWITA Driver of the Year. Also, former SWITA Fleet Manager Kelly Davis was posthumously recognized. Kelly passed away this year after retiring from 28 ½ years of service to the region.

SWIPCO and SWITA staff presented the annual report with highlights from the year from public transit, community development, revolving loan fund, and administrative services. SWITA Transit Director Mark Lander reported that

SWITA provided 480,229 rides over the past year which is up from 377,547 rides provided in fiscal year 2021. This is the most rides by a rural public transit system in Iowa ever. "We are seeing a lot of growth in our work routes like Monogram and OSI, and I think we are on target to provide 500,000 rides by the end of fiscal year 2023," Lander said. SWIPCO also routinely provides grant writing and administration services to its member communities in Cass, Fremont, Harrison, Mills, Montgomery, Page, Pottawattamie, and Shelby Counties and brought over \$120 million in grants to the region in fiscal year 2022 alone.

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### Upcoming Grants Deadlines from Planning

Dani Briggs  
Planning Technician II

Many of the programs that we work with are deadline driven. Some of the most common deadlines that are on the horizon are listed in the table at right. Some grant applications can take a long time to put together, for example, Community Development Block Grants (CDBG) typically need engineering work done and an income survey. Other grants come together more quickly. If your community has a need now or on the horizon, keep in mind that part of your membership in SWIPCO is access to our experienced community development staff, and most of the grants that we write are done for free. If you have any questions, please contact Community Development Specialist Dani Briggs at 712-243-4196 and we will help you however we can!

#### Upcoming grant deadlines:

- Quarterly water/sewer CDBG: January 1, April 1, July 1, and October 1, 2023
- Downtown Revitalization CDBG—November 1, 2022
- Upper Story Conversion CDBG—November 1, 2022
- Neighborhood Revitalization Planning CDBG—November 1, 2022
- Community Facilities CDBG—open until funds are gone
- Theater Community Catalyst CDBG—pre application due December 15, 2022
- Iowa West Foundation
 

o <u>Letter of inquiry due</u>	o <u>Grant application due</u>
January 1, 2023	January 15, 2023
May 1, 2023	May 15, 2023
September 1, 2023	September 15, 2023
- Community Attraction and Tourism—January 15, 2023
- Catalyst—pre applications due January 27, 2023
- Wellmark Foundation Grants—early spring
- RPA 13 TAP (Cass, Fremont, Montgomery, and Page)—due around March (dependent on State)
- RPA 13 STBG (Cass, Fremont, Montgomery, and Page)—January 27, 2023

### Birthdays & Anniversaries

Daurine Petersen  
Human Resource Coordinator  
Birthday on October 7



Leslie Wright  
Community Development Specialist I  
Birthday on October 17

### TRANSIT TALK

Kristen Templeton  
Transit Coordinator

SWITA drivers transported the Iowa Western Community College band to the Hoff Arts Center on Monday, October 3rd, for the Honor Flight Celebration. SWITA drivers also provided transportation the following morning to the airport for the Honor Flight Veterans who departed for their trip to Washington D.C. to visit the memorials honoring their service and sacrifice.



We are fortunate here at SWITA to have the opportunity to work with amazing organizations like the Honor Flight Network.

# STAFF MEMBER SPOTLIGHT



The Southwest Iowa Planning Council (SWIPCO) is happy to welcome Mindy Jensen to our staff in the role of Communications Coordinator. Mindy will oversee community outreach, public engagement, and media communications for SWIPCO and SWITA. She will work to increase awareness of public transit services in order to better connect the people of the Southwest Iowa region to employment, school, and wherever they need to go.

“I have lived in Southwest Iowa the majority of my life and I am passionate about being part of an organization that helps people here every day,” said Jensen. “This position offers me an opportunity to make a difference by getting the word out about the countless ways this organization makes our region a better place to live.”

Jensen is a graduate of Atlantic High School and has a bachelor’s degree in Intercultural Communications from Dana College. She has many years of experience working with the public and setting up services for community members through her role as a community-based case manager. She is also an accomplished photographer.

“Mindy is a great addition to our team. Also, she has over 15 years of experience connecting our disabled friends and neighbors to community services as a case manager. Couple that with her training and experience as an effective communicator and I have great confidence that she’ll do a wonderful job better connecting us to our members and clients,” SWIPCO Executive Director John McCurdy said.

The Southwest Iowa Planning Council (SWIPCO) welcomes Aaron Koontz as a Grants Specialist. He will work with SWIPCO housing programs to ensure that the agency and the communities it serves are doing what needs to be done per grant regulations. He will help clients navigate through rules and procedures and application paperwork.

SWIPCO and the Southwest Iowa Housing Trust Fund operate a wide range of programs, including housing repair, down payment assistance, demolition of dilapidated houses, and lead abatement. SWIPCO also provides building inspection services and currently has more than 1,500 rental units in its inspection program. Koontz will assist with all of these programs and will be an asset to the agency.

Koontz, a graduate of Denison High School, said “I have lived in Southwest Iowa all my life, and I am excited about helping this region of rural Iowa thrive and become a better place to live. Through my position, I will be able to help others while ensuring that we stay in compliance with multiple programs.”

“He is great with people and is an effective communicator. He has a great eye for detail, and he brings many years of experience working as a legal specialist and a legal coordinator at PayPal,” SWIPCO Executive Director John McCurdy said.



# Dennis Nelson drives Atlantic residents where they need to go



Dennis Nelson drives a taxi for Southwest Iowa Transit Agency (SWITA) in Atlantic and prides himself on getting people where they need to go. Drivers like Dennis are vital to rural communities as they allow people to get around when they otherwise would have no access to transportation on their own.

SWITA serves eight counties in southwest Iowa and has 100 vehicles and 70 drivers. SWITA has taxi services in Atlantic, Glenwood, Harlan, Missouri Valley, Red Oak, and Shenandoah. Taxi rates are \$2.50 per ride for the general public

and \$2.00 per ride for riders over 60. Atlantic taxi hours are 7am to 10pm Monday through Saturday and 7am to 5pm Sundays and during peak hours two vehicles are always on the move. The agency also has work routes that transport workers to employers such as OSI and Monogram Foods. It also offers medical transportation, student transportation, has a summer fun bus, and provides a range of other transportation services. SWITA buses are ADA accessible, and service is open to everyone.

Dennis has worked as a driver for SWITA for almost 4 years now and he has spent the last 3 years as a taxi driver for residents in Atlantic. "I enjoy the work. I was bored sitting at home after I retired, and I like getting to talk to all my passengers throughout the day as I take them to where they need to go," Dennis said.

Dennis lives in Atlantic with his wife and he enjoys spending time with his family. He has 1 child from his first marriage and 5 stepchildren and several grandchildren. Most of his career had been working on farm equipment, but when he retired, he decided he had a lot more to contribute to the community. "SWITA is a good place to work, and I like how kind and helpful everyone in dispatch is for us drivers," said Dennis. "After working this route for 3 years, I still feel like there is never a dull moment in this job. I can drive 100 miles in a day and never get bored with driving my passengers."

## Sherri Clark joins SWIHTF Board of Directors

The Southwest Iowa Housing Trust Fund (SWIHTF) is pleased to announce that Sherri Clark, the Executive Director of Nishna Productions, Inc. has joined its board of directors. The SWIHTF is a 501(c)3 non-profit organization whose mission is to improve the housing options for low to moderate income individuals in the Southwest Iowa counties of Harrison, Shelby, Cass, Mills, Montgomery, Fremont and Page. Over the past 5 years the trust fund has rehabilitated over 120 homes, assisted more than 100 homebuyers secure \$8 million in home mortgages, and demolished 18 dilapidated houses that were beyond repair. The SWIHTF is administered by the Southwest Iowa Planning Council (SWIPCO) in Atlantic.



Housing trust fund board chairman, Red Oak City Administrator Brad Wright said, "I've known Sherri a long time and she brings years of non-profit management experience to the housing trust fund board team. The organization she leads, Nishna Productions, Inc., is an outstanding provider of services to our disabled residents and she understands how fundamental the need for affordable housing is for everyone."

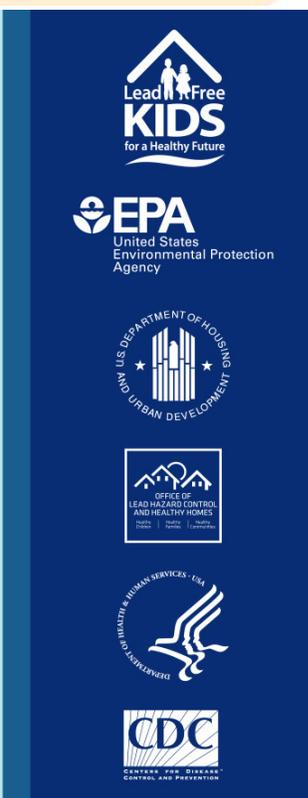
The trust fund is funded by grants from the Iowa Finance Authority and the Iowa West Foundation, as well as the generous support of the boards of supervisors of the counties it serves.



# National Lead Poisoning Prevention Week

Oct. 23-29, 2022

- Get the Facts
- Get Your Child Tested
- Get Your Home Tested



## SWIPCO Accepting Applications for the Residential Lead Paint Abatement Program

National Lead Poisoning Prevention Week is celebrated October 23-29, 2022. SWIPCO will recognize this week and promote the Residential Lead Paint Abatement Program, which will allow for lead-based paint removal in homes across the 7-county area served by the Southwest Iowa Housing Trust Fund, which SWIPCO administers.

Lead Hazard Reduction Program Coordinator, Nicole Rhodes, says the program will allow for lead hazard reduction in approximately 35 housing units and build a more skilled workforce in the region. "This is really a great opportunity for us to get some of those lead hazards out of the way and make southwest Iowa a safer and healthier place to live for everyone, especially kids who are particularly vulnerable," said Rhodes. "The other side of it is that we're helping to get contractors certified to do the work, so that outlasts this program and will continue to benefit the community in the years to come." Rhodes says that to qualify, homes must be built before 1978 and homeowners must meet certain income guidelines specific to the county where they live.

For questions on this program or to request an application, contact Nicole Rhodes, Grants Specialist II at [nicole.rhodes@swipco.org](mailto:nicole.rhodes@swipco.org) or by calling 712-243-4196 / 866-279-4720.

Lead can be found throughout a child's environment.



- 1 Homes built before 1978 (when lead-based paints were banned) probably contain lead-based paint.
- 2 When the paint peels and cracks, it makes lead dust. Children can be poisoned when they swallow or breathe in lead dust.
- 3 Lead can be found in some products such as toys and toy jewelry.
- 4 Lead is sometimes in candies imported from other countries or traditional home remedies.
- 5 Certain jobs and hobbies involve working with lead-based products, like stain glass work, and may cause parents to bring lead into the home.



2 Certain water pipes may contain lead.

# From the Desk of the Executive Director...

**John McCurdy**  
Executive Director

Fall is perhaps the busiest time of the year. Harvest is in full swing, school and the associated activities are back up and going, and there seems to be a general rush to get all those things done that just need to happen before winter is upon us. We at SWIPCO and SWITA are certainly busy and there is no lack of projects and needs in our corner of heaven in Southwest Iowa. I am extremely lucky to work with the good people here at SWIPCO, and we've been fortunate to welcome many new faces in the last few months. Every one is a valued addition to our team. We also have more positions to fill as there is no shortage of work. Of course, that need is not simply limited to us in our particular agency. It can be hard with so much transition going on, both in our ranks and with the agencies we work with and contractors who work for us. But, it is better than the alternative—too few jobs, no activity, no progress.



*Construction worker working on removing paint on a CDBG Downtown Façade Revitalization building in downtown Stanton*

This month we'll say goodbye to a wonderful member of the SWIPCO team, Leslie Wright. For almost three years Leslie has been our flood recovery coordinator, and done an excellent job at that. She was of major help in the flood buyout program and other work to stabilize and build the foundation of recovery from the Floods of 2019. Recently, she's been instrumental in managing our disaster recovery housing program, which will build around 250 homes and invest over \$80 million into our region. She's also helped with all sorts of other applications and plans. We'd love to keep her here, but, her hometown council of governments in Huntsville, Alabama has her perfect job and she must go. I don't blame her—I had an opportunity 16 years ago to move back to Cass County from Centerville to work for SWIPCO, and I do not regret that one bit! I spoke with her new boss and she said "someday we'll all be working for Leslie." I politely agreed, and I believe she probably will someday, but I'm not moving to Alabama. Thank you, Leslie!

## SWIPCO STAFF ROSTER

<b>John McCurdy, AICP</b> Executive Director	<b>Ann Anstey</b> Grants Specialist II	<b>Ashley Hayes</b> Community Development Specialist	<b>Christy Pederson</b> Transit Reporting Coordinator
<b>Mark Lander</b> Transit Director	<b>Michael Ballinger</b> Maintenance Assistant	<b>Dee Holtz</b> Administrative Assistant	<b>Nicole Rhodes</b> Grants Specialist II
<b>Karen Mauer</b> Administrative Services Director	<b>Dani Briggs</b> Planning Technician II	<b>Mindy Jensen</b> Communications Coordinator	<b>Phil Richter</b> Building Inspector I
<b>Rhonda Oliphant</b> Finance Manager	<b>Tracy Clark</b> Transit Scheduler III	<b>Cindy Johnson</b> Transit Scheduler I	<b>Kristen Templeton</b> Transit Coordinator
<b>Daurine Petersen</b> Human Resources Coordinator	<b>Tammy DeBord</b> Grants Specialist III	<b>Aaron Koontz</b> Grants Specialist I	<b>Kristine Stokes, AICP</b> Community Development Specialist
<b>Kersten Abild</b> Transit Scheduler II	<b>Mark Hansen</b> Fleet Mechanic	<b>Matthew Lee</b> Building Inspector II	<b>Leslie Wright</b> Community Development Specialist
	<b>Sandy Hansen</b> Grants Specialist III		<b>Teresa Wright</b> Finance Specialist