

The Update

July 2026

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



Iowa West Foundation Home Repair Grant Funds Help Transform Atlantic Residence

ATLANTIC – The Southwest Iowa Housing Trust Fund (SWIHTF), operated by Southwest Iowa Planning Council (SWIPCO), assists individuals with housing repair needs throughout the region. SWIHTF has a mission to improve affordable housing options in Southwest Iowa and address health, safety, and energy efficient deficiencies in owner-occupied homes. Grant funds from the Iowa West Foundation play a vital role in helping SWIHTF get many projects to the finish line as a supplement to other grant programs.

A recent project in Atlantic had truly transformational results. Atlantic resident Tammy Dill had a friend refer her to the SWIHTF Housing Repair Program and she and husband Randy got on the list. When their time came for assistance, an inspector was sent out to assess needs. Energy and safety deficiencies were identified and it was determined that new siding,



Atlantic resident Tammy Dill sits on the newly reconstructed steps of her home following repairs through the Southwest Iowa Housing Trust Fund Home Repair Program.

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reconstructed porch steps, and sealing around the front door were repair priorities for the home at 1111 Locust Street in Atlantic. Harbin Construction worked on the project, completing updates near the end of June. “The siding looks awesome,” Tammy Dill stated, “I’m so glad they could help us and appreciate everything they did.”

Continued..

Housing Repair continued...

SWIPCO Building Inspector Matthew Lee said, "This is one of my favorite projects we've had recently. The results really turned out great and transformed the look of the property and improved safe access."

Dill said she would recommend the program to others, "I would recommend others to get on the list, but they do need to be patient. There is a wait and a process to go through but the staff was very helpful and answered my questions."

In Fiscal Year 2026, SWIHTF renovated 48 homes in total. Iowa West's grant of \$150,000 was used to help complete 18 of these homes, along with \$240,000 of other grants from the Iowa Finance Authority.

Ultimately, at the end of this Iowa West Foundation Home Repair Grant, 38 Southwest Iowa residents were impacted with a safer and more efficient living environment.

SWIHTF is grateful for the partnership with the Iowa West Foundation, which makes more projects feasible and in turn positively impacts more residents of Southwest Iowa.

If you have a need for your home and would like information about what assistance could be provided and the process involved, please contact SWIPCO at 712-243-4196 or 1-866-279-4720.



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SWITA Provides 3,200 Rides During Harlan RAGBRAI

HARLAN - An annual Iowa tradition rolled through a part of the Southwest Iowa Transit Agency (SWITA) region again this summer as RAGBRAI made an overnight stop in Harlan on Sunday, July 19th.

SWITA was proud to help with shuttle transportation in Harlan for the big day, ultimately providing 3,200 rides around the city.

Handling the large influx of people is a big challenge for communities along the RAGBRAI route and especially for the overnight stop hosts. SWITA has consistently stepped up to help provide transportation for overnight towns in our region and were happy to do it again. Once the day's riding is done many individuals need transportation to entertainment, retail stores, campgrounds, and more throughout the community. SWITA works with host towns to develop shuttle routes to move people around to those needs.

SWITA Transit Director Mark Lander said, "I felt the organizing committee had a good plan for the shuttle route. We had a few hiccups but a number of drivers step up to make things run fairly smooth and get the job done."



SWIPCO Seeks Nominations for Ron Kohn Servant Leadership Award

ATLANTIC-- Is there anyone in your community that provides great civic leadership but goes unrecognized? Please consider nominating them for the Ron Kohn Servant Leadership Award presented by Southwest Iowa Planning Council (SWIPCO).

This award recognizes a public servant (an elected official, government employee, or an appointed member of a government board or commission) that has gone above and beyond to provide exceptional leadership, mentoring, and other contributions to a local city or county (from within Cass, Fremont, Harrison, Mills, Montgomery, Page, Pottawattamie, or Shelby County).

This recognition is being given in honor of the late Ron Kohn, former SWIPCO Policy Council Member, Mills County Supervisor, and Mayor of Glenwood. Ron was a shining example of community leadership from his time in office to his time as an educator in the Glenwood School District. Ron's passion for teaching extended well past his time in education. He worked to make sure others interested in local government had someone to lean on as they learned their way.

This is the 2nd year for the award that will be given annually to a local leader that carries the same passion for the region that Ron had. The recipient will have demonstrated a commitment to innovation, community engagement, and the advancement of public service in Southwest Iowa. Our Inaugural winner was Glenwood Police Chief Eric Johansen. Chief Johansen received the award during SWIPCO's 50th Anniversary Celebration and Meeting on September 25, 2025, in Atlantic. He was nominated by Glenwood realtor and former Mills County Chamber Director Jennie Davis and Ron's widow Joanne Kohn presented him with the award.

If you would like to nominate someone for this award, please complete the simple form located on the SWIPCO website www.swipco.org. The nomination deadline is August 25, 2026. All nominees will be recognized, and the winner will be presented with the award at the SWIPCO Annual Meeting on Thursday, September 24, 2026. Nominators will be encouraged to attend and help present the award winner as well.

Thank you for your support in our effort to recognize talented local leaders. We look forward to continuing to honor Ron Kohn's legacy with this award.

Questions can be directed to SWIPCO Communications Coordinator Chris Parks at chris.parks@swipco.org or 712-243-4196 ext. 228



L-R: Joanne Kohn, Widow of Ron Kohn; Eric Johansen, Inaugural Ron Kohn Servant Leadership Award Winner; John McCurdy, SWIPCO Executive Director.

Birthdays & Anniversaries



Matthew Lee

Building Inspector II
Birthday Month



Mike Ballinger

Safety Coordinator
6 Years of Service



Ashley Hayes

Community Development Specialist II
4 Years of Service



SWITA by the Numbers

	June 2026	YTD (Since July 1)
Total Miles	161,952	1,976,441
Total Hours	8,564	108,848
Total Rides	39,219	517,710

June Rides by Service		June Rides by Demographic	
Workforce Rides	8,887	Disabled	20,878
Taxi Rides	5,025	Elderly	2,811
Student Rides	6	Other Gen. Public	15,530
Other	25,301		

Upcoming Grant

Information:

- Iowa DNR Resource Enhancement and Protection (REAP) Program
August 15, 2026
- CDBG Commercial Façades Program
August 17, 2026
- CDBG Upper-Story Rehabilitation Program
August 17, 2026
- CDBG Community Facilities
August 17, 2026
- CDBG Water, Sewer, and Stormwater Fund
September 1, 2026
- Revitalize Iowa's Sound Economy (RISE)
September 1, 2026
- Alliant Energy Foundation
September 15, 2026
- Water Recreation Access Cost-Share Program (WRAC)
September 30, 2026
- Small Business Energy Audit Program
May 1, 2029 (Ongoing, first-come basis until funds exhausted)

From the Desk of the Executive Director

John McCurdy

Our front-page story gives credit where credit is due as the Iowa West Foundation has been a great supporter of the trust fund's housing repair program. I thank them very much, and hope to continue that good work into the future.

That kind of grant work, where SWIPCO identifies a need, finds a funding source, writes a successful grant application, and then spends those funds on repairs in the community is a very direct way that SWIPCO is working to improve the lives of residents of Southwest Iowa as well as improve overall conditions in our communities. There are an obvious cause and effect there, and we're glad to make that happen.

The path to some of our positive impacts is sometime less direct. One example came up the other day in a discussion with one of our building inspectors, Phil Richter. Phil mentioned how he had conducted a rental inspection in a town that won't be named here, and it was awful. He had a large write up. He hadn't heard anything much and then saw that renovations were taking place at that property. What he learned was that the owner of the rental decided it wasn't worth it to them to make the repairs and sold it to someone else, who is completely gutting and fixing up the property.

That is what we call a "win." Someone who couldn't maintain a property got out of the way because the code was enforced and someone who is going to do it right is turning a stinker into something that will be an asset to the city. We didn't have to subsidize it, we just had to fairly enforce the city's laws. In many situations like that, inaction is actually a handout to bad actors. Action creates motivation which yields positive results. If your community would like to take action, let us know!

SWIPCO STAFF

John McCurdy, AICP
Executive Director

Mark Lander
Transit Director

Daurine Petersen
Administrative Services Director

Rhonda Brown
Finance Manager

Brandie McFarland
Human Resources Specialist

Kersten Abild
Transit Scheduler II

Ann Anstey
Housing Programs Coordinator

Mary Auten
Grants Specialist I

Michael Ballinger
Safety Coordinator

Barb Boggs
Grants Specialist I

Dani Briggs
Lead Planner

Tracy Clark
Transit Scheduler III

Tammy DeBord
Grants Specialist III

Mark Hansen
Fleet Mechanic

Ashley Hayes
Disaster Recovery Coordinator

Julie Hays
Transit Scheduler I

Dee Holtz
Administrative Assistant

Matthew Lee
Building Inspector II

Chris Parks
Communications Coordinator

Nicole Rhodes
Grants Specialist II

Phil Richter
Building Inspector I

Kyle Rock
Maintenance Assistant

Kristen Templeton
Transit Coordinator

Teresa Wright
Finance Specialist