University of Missouri chancellor shuffles duties for two administrators

By Ashley Jost

Sunday, April 6, 2014 at 2:00 am Comments (1)

With hopes of streamlining existing processes and making budgeting more transparent, University of Missouri Chancellor R. Bowen Loftin recently announced the shuffling of duties for two key administrative positions.

In an email to faculty and staff early last month, Loftin announced that the previous vice chancellor for administrative services will become the vice chancellor for operations and chief operating officer, and the budget director will become the vice chancellor for finance and chief financial officer.

“There is a need going forward to find additional ways to streamline processes so pulling finance areas more closely together into a comprehensive finance function could aid in finding new efficiencies,” Loftin wrote in the email.

With the change came some reorganization of duties. The CFO, a post filled by Rhonda Gibler, continues overseeing the budget office, but also works with business services, including accounting, cashiers, contracts and the student loan repayment center.

Previously, as budget director, Gibler dealt with much of the academic side of the university’s finances, so building a relationship with the business services side of her new post is necessary. Business services used to be housed under administrative services.

The COO, a post filled by Gary Ward on an interim basis, oversees campus facilities, the police department, human resources, environmental health and safety and MU’s multiple service operations, including KOMU, KBIA, Show-Me State Games, the clubhouse and catering, printing services and the golf course.

The new system doesn’t add any additional direct reports to the chancellor or change the overall cost of operations, according to Loftin’s email.
Loftin notes in his email that the structure MU currently has with finance-related offices is “largely based on the institutional knowledge and history of key individuals who have now retired,” which includes former vice chancellor for administrative services Jackie Jones, who retired last fall.

Gibler, MU’s new chief financial officer, said while some parts of her transformed role haven’t been determined, she does have a clear charge from the chancellor to be up-to-date on the university’s finances.

“He very much wants to feel confident that our financial house is in order,” Gibler said about Loftin. “I’m going to be asking those questions and getting that information so I can tell him here’s where the work needs to be done, here’s what we’re watching and here’s where we’re solid.”

During the next few months, Gibler said she hopes to assess the functions of departments under her new role.

After she takes that inventory, Gibler hopes to build an organizational chart that will better fit the new structure and meet her staff’s needs, she said.

“Change is change,” she said. “Part of the concern right now from staff is that we don’t have it all mapped out. We haven’t sat down and said this is how your job changes. But, that should feel like a good thing. I don’t want to make changes without understanding how it works. The worst thing we could do is break something that’s working well.”

WIDOW OF FIREFIGHTER KILLED IN COLLAPSE SUING UNIVERSITY OF MISSOURI CURATORS

April 04, 2014 9:07 am • The Associated Press

A collapsed walkway at the University Village Apartments in Columbia, Mo., is seen Saturday, Feb. 22, 2014. No residents were injured, but the Columbia Fire Department says firefighter Lt. Bruce Britt, a 23-
year veteran of the department, was killed Saturday when he fell while helping evacuate the apartment complex. (AP Photo/Columbia Missourian, Josh Bachman)

COLUMBIA, Mo. • The widow of a firefighter who was killed in February after a walkway collapsed at a University of Missouri apartment complex has filed a wrongful death lawsuit against the school's board of curators.

In a petition filed Monday, Leigh Britt alleges the curators are responsible for her husband's death because they did not properly maintain or construct the University Village Apartments, The Columbia Daily Tribune reported.

Bruce Britt died Feb. 22 when part of a concrete walkway collapsed while he was responding to reports of a possible building collapse at the apartment complex. He was crushed by the walkway's concrete deck.

University spokesman John Fougere said the school doesn't comment on active litigation.

The lawsuit alleges the curators were aware of the "dangerous condition" of the complex that ultimately led to the firefighter's death.

In late 2012, the curators considered renovating or rebuilding the complex but the project didn't occur because of a lack of financing, the petition states. The complex, which was built in 1956, houses graduate students, students who are married, have children or students older than 21.

The Britts' daughter, Stormy, is also a plaintiff. The lawsuit doesn't specify how much money the plaintiffs are seeking.

The university last month announced it would demolish University Village this summer.

University of Missouri students lobby for child care as University Village facility set to close

By Ashley Jost

Friday, April 4, 2014 at 2:00 pm
The University of Missouri’s Graduate Professional Council hosted a student forum Wednesday to gauge the interest and need for child care options on campus.

The forum follows the announcement last month that University Village, and the Student Parent Center housed in the student apartment complex, would be demolished at the end of the semester. Part of the announcement included a request from MU Chancellor R. Bowen Loftin for student, faculty and staff groups to speak to their represented bodies about child care and graduate student housing needs.

Graduate council President Jake Wright said comments from the forum echoed what he has heard during the past several weeks: “An overwhelming number of people believe the university providing child care is a tremendous benefit.”

Student parents had the chance to come in, speak their minds and then stay and listen to others or go. Their testimony will be relayed to the administration, Wright said. Wright will meet with Cathy Scroggs, vice chancellor for student affairs, in the next few weeks to discuss the issue. Scroggs sat in during part of the meeting to listen.

Wright said students expressed a need for flexible, affordable day care services for their children that were close to campus. He said more than 30 people spoke about the issue during the forum. Reporters weren’t allowed into the meeting.

Summer Schact was one of the student parents who spoke about her concerns.

“I shared how disappointed I was with the school for declaring that they’re demolishing” the Student Parent Center “without any plans after for a new center,” she told a reporter outside the meeting.

Schact has an infant son who used to be in a class with eight others at the Student Parent Center. During the past few months, since the collapse of a walkway killed a Columbia firefighter at another building in the University Village complex, the class has dwindled to two infants, she said.

Her decision to keep her son at the day care was made after reading the structural engineering reports and understanding that the wooden reinforcement beams put under the balconies of Building 602, where the center is located, made the building safe.

“Plus, we really had no option,” she said. Schact and her husband are on several waiting lists for other day care centers in the area.

Schact said it eases her mind knowing all of the comments students expressed Wednesday will be passed on to the administration.

Naomi Clark, who has had one child at the center every year for the past five years, said she worries about how students’ lives have been disrupted by the changes because of having to find alternative care for their children.
“There were a lot of high-achieving students in there who came to Mizzou because of the day care services,” she said, adding that many of those students said they don’t know what to do next.

A second Graduate Professional Council forum to better understand the need for graduate student housing was scheduled from 7:30 to 10 p.m. Thursday in Stotler Lounge at Memorial Union, 518 Hitt St. This event also is closed to the media so students can speak candidly and comfortably, Wright said.

Faculty Council hears reorganization administration positions, gets a say in which moldy books will be permanently withdrawn

By Crystal Duan

MU has changed the role of vice chancellor for university affairs, formerly held by Vice Chancellor Emerita Chris Koukola, to vice chancellor for marketing and communication. Interim Provost Ken Dean told Faculty Council during its April 4 meeting.

“It’s a change in title but it’s the same effect,” Dean said.

The chancellor has also selected all members of the permanent provost search committee, Dean said.

The committee will be chaired by Judy Wall, who is currently a Curators’ professor of biochemistry and joint curators’ professor of molecular microbiology & immunology. The other members will be eight faculty members, a dean, a staff member, a graduate student, an undergraduate student, an MU alumnus and an extension member.

Dean said the provost candidates will be identified in the summer. They will be brought to campus, hopefully, in September, with the final candidate appointed by October and undertaking all of his or her duties by winter.

Faculty Council member Dan Hooley said that MU Libraries has promised faculty they will be able to prevent certain books from being withdrawn permanently from their collections, in light of recent efforts to remediate the 600,000 books affected by mold.

While Director of Libraries Jim Cogswell told the council on Feb. 27 that some books were beyond repair, Hooley said there will be a list available by Sept. 1 of books that are scheduled for
‘permanent withdrawal.’ Faculty will be able to examine the list and identify which books they would like to keep.

“If we want it, we can say, ‘we keep it,’” Hooley said.

Hooley also said MU Libraries still needs to determine which contractor to hire for remediation and how much the university will have to delve into insurance funds to pay for the process.

Remediation funding in general is also still an issue the university is trying to address, Hooley said.

Facilities have been identified for housing and storing uncontaminated or clean books; Hooley did not specify which ones.

Vice Chancellor of Operations Gary Ward also spoke at the meeting about the Capital Review Committee, which is an advisory committee to the chancellor on issues concerning land and campus space utilization.

The committee will be chaired by an associate vice chancellor of facilities, co-chaired by the deputy provost, and have vice chancellors for University Affairs, Research, and Student Affairs representatives. Chief Financial Officer Rhonda Gibler will also be a part of the committee, with three Faculty Council appointed faculty, a staff advisory council representative, an MSA student representative and a Graduate Professional Council representative.

MU's Trulaske College of Business celebrates 100th anniversary by reflecting on school’s past, present, future

By Ashley Jost

Saturday, April 5, 2014 at 2:00 am
The University of Missouri Trulaske College of Business is celebrating its 100th anniversary by reflecting on the school’s past, present and future.

“I think when you’re in the higher education business, especially now, you can feel the crossroads that we’re at as an industry, as a service provider,” said Joan Gabel, business school dean. “It’s very exciting to feel like you’re in the middle of a revolution, but it’s also very daunting because none of us has a crystal ball.”

The college was founded in January 1914, but the centennial celebration is stretching a year: from Homecoming 2013 to Homecoming 2014. An array of events and activities, ranging from big-name speakers to online videos and stories detailing the school’s history, is all part of the yearlong party. And the entire celebration has been funded by business school donors who wanted to be part of the centennial.

“We want to not only make sure our friends and family know it’s our birthday, but also want to make sure people who don’t know us can learn more,” Gabel said.

Reflecting on the school’s past was part of the centennial celebration planning process, and Gabel said she feels “comforted” after looking back at the college’s history.

In 1914, establishing a business school was risky and seen as trendy, not scholarly, Gabel said. But 100 years later, it’s thriving.

“There’s longevity here because we’ve lasted a really long time, and we’ll continue to be here for a really long time,” she said. “It’s exciting, but it’s also humbling because it means it’s my responsibility to make that happen.”

Gabel said she doesn’t have centennial goals for the year, as setting 100-year goals would be “lofty, to say the least.”

“But, I will say, next century — I hope they feel the pride we’re feeling when we look back at things we had nothing to do with in our history,” she said. “The hope is when we’re looked back on, we’re looked at favorably.”

With an “infusion of fresh perspective” from new leadership at the university, Gabel said there couldn’t be a better time to celebrate the milestone.

To help commemorate the centennial, the business school has started to publish stories online that catalog its history. All of the excerpts are chapters of a book that will be published this fall.

There are also 11 videos of Gabel and business school alumni that will be published throughout the year. Three of the videos are already up, including one-on-one interviews with Matt Rose, CEO of Burlington Northern Santa Fe Corp.; Rodger Riney, founder of Scottrade; and Edward Rapp, a group president and executive office member of Caterpillar Inc.
“We wanted people who could talk to past, present and future,” Gabel said. “These are people who are leading enterprises that have seen significant change or those who have experienced significant change along their journey.”

Many of the fall centennial events still are being finalized. Business school alumnus David Herzog, chief financial officer for the American International Group, is scheduled to speak later this year, and there will be an event to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the MBA program. Details of the fall events will be announced when they’re available.

Part of the centennial celebration involves looking ahead, and the college has a big goal: a matching grant from the state to help construct the Applied Learning Center, a new building that would create a hub for experiential learning in business.

Mirroring the hands-on learning approach that the MU School of Journalism uses, the Applied Learning Center would give students the chance to experience real-world situations in their fields.

“Finance students would be able to trade on a mock trading floor,” Gabel said. “In that classroom, it would mimic what the trading environment is like on a real-life trading floor. The space would be set up the same, they would have to make decisions in real time and the professor would facilitate how the environment would work.”

The technology for these programs already is in use at Cornell Hall — the main part of the business school — but the college has no way to replicate the workplace environment.

“The market is telling us that that investment is something they want us to make, and business schools that are doing that are placing students better,” she said.

MU has raised money for four projects, including the business school’s Applied Learning Center, as part of the 50/50 Capital Improvement Grants program for public higher education institutions.

For the center, the university raised $11.1 million in six weeks from private donors and businesses. Administrators are hoping for a matching grant to help build the 70,000-square-foot center at Rollins Street and Tiger Avenue. The current conceptual design of the building might include an above-the-road walkway for students and faculty to travel to and from Cornell Hall.

A supplemental budget bill, which was passed by the House two weeks ago and is being heard along with the rest of the budget bills by the Senate, included funding for the new center, as well as the rest of the MU match grant programs.

The budget bills still have a long journey, but the current bill, House Bill 2019, makes funding for the projects contingent on the state having sufficient revenue later in the fiscal year.
There are a few contingency plans in the works if the General Assembly doesn’t decide to approve the grant, but for now, Gabel said she is “cautiously optimistic.”

When planning for the centennial events, Gabel said administrators wanted to give students the room to make this celebration their own.

Gabel said administrators are sponsoring more doctoral students to go to research conferences than the school typically would. In addition, the school is trying to sponsor some of the conferences that the business school community is attending to further spread the centennial message.

“If it connects to the fact that we’re turning 100 and it’s within our resource capacity, then we’ll do it,” Gabel said.

Student groups with ideas for events can submit their ideas to administrators, and, if they get approved, the college will fund their event or program.

Joanna Leath, president of the MBA Association, said her organization created a centennial representative position to help organize events and contribute to the yearlong party.

“It’s not every day that your business school turns 100,” Leath said.

While learning about the history of the school, Leath said she was surprised, in a good way, to find out how big of a role women played in the business school throughout the years. Katherine O’Neill King, the first woman to graduate from the college, graduated in 1916, just two years after the school opened, according to the business school’s website. The first woman appointed to a major teaching position in the school was Merea Williams in 1935.

Understanding the history and legacy of the school should be important to students, Leath said. To help foster that idea, the MBA Association is going to host a 1920s-themed spring formal incorporating historical aspects about the school and will host an essay contest sometime later this year.

“I was surprised they wanted students to be involved in the birthday,” Leath said. “I think a lot of times universities get really caught up in their donors, and they just want to celebrate them. Alumni have a lot to do with it, but I think it’s really cool they’re also focusing on students, too, and letting us know our legacy and history.”

Sydney Scott, College of Business relations manager for Alpha Kappa Psi, a professional fraternity, said her organization decided to help organize the Centennial Day of Service, which was yesterday.

“We wanted to find a way to get students involved in something they would really believe in,” Scott said.
Students didn’t have to be part of an organization to be part of the service day; that way, students could expand their network of peers, Scott said.

MU rehabilitation project returns bald eagle to the wild

Sunday, April 6, 2014 | 6:00 a.m. CDT; updated 6:29 a.m. CDT, Monday, April 7, 2014

VERSAILLES — Eleven months after a bald eagle was found on the side of Missouri Route 52 in Benton County, he returned to the wild.

As the door of the cage opened, Marquis, the eagle, waited a second before flapping his wings five times to cross over to the nearest tree.

A voice heard through the crowd of people said what others were thinking: "The eagle has landed."

It was a brief, fleeting moment, seemingly small. But for those involved with Marquis' recovery, it was a victory for a bird that they doubted would even survive.

On May 5, Mark Brinson answered a phone call from Benton County Conservation and learned that a bald eagle had been hit by a car on the highway in that county.
Brinson has been a volunteer for the Raptor Rehabilitation Project for three years. The project works to rehabilitate and release birds of prey into the wild. Brinson drove out from his house in Versailles and met the caller on the highway, where he saw how bad of shape the eagle was in.

"Luckily he was in shock, so he did not fight me," Brinson said. "He was too hurt to do anything."

Brinson quickly made arrangements for Marquis to be transported to the rehabilitation project in Columbia that night. Alyssa Scagnelli, a third-year veterinary student at MU, took over the eagle's care.

"He was my first eagle patient," Scagnelli said. "I had never seen that many injures in a bird before."

Marquis was in cardiovascular shock when he arrived at the center and did not respond to any stimuli. The vet stabilized him with care and medicine, but they doubted he would make it through the night.

But Marquis was alive the next morning. And over the course of several weeks, the full extent of the eagle's injuries became apparent. He'd fractured a right ulnar carpal bone, the equivalent of a wrist bone in an eagle, and had two pelvis fractures, which caused him to limp.

A dislocated shoulder prevented him from flying.

The process of healing Marquis took months, and at one point, the bird was receiving physical therapy three times a week to help it fly again.

"I did not want to give up on him," Scagnelli said.

But after all his injuries had healed, he still didn't take to flying. At this point, it seemed like he would never be released into the wild again, and the rehabilitation project prepared to find him a permanent home in captivity.
Then Marquis surprised everyone. One day when he was put back into the flight cage, the eagle unexpectedly took off in flight. That was the moment when it became apparent that an eagle few thought would survive could eventually return to the wild.

After 11 months of work, Marquis was returned to the area where he was found and was released. Many Versailles residents attended the event Saturday to see this monumental moment.

Off a winding gravel road, a group of about 30 people gathered, including his original caretakers and Versailles residents who wanted to see the occasion.

While the group awaited the arrival of Marquis, people bought raffle tickets to choose who would open the kennel and release the eagle.

Conner Crowe, 11, was the lucky winner.

"I wanted to see the eagle fly," Conner said.

Scagnelli was unsure whether Marquis would take off right away, but the eagle immediately darted to the nearest branch. Marquis spent about five minutes perched on the tree within sight before taking off again toward a nearby creek.

Marquis coasted across the cloudless blue skyline and disappeared within seconds.

"It's kind of like fostering a dog, when you have to let them go," said Scagnelli, the eagle's primary caretaker. "I'm mostly happy, but a little upset."

Most of the birds that come to the Raptor Rehabilitation Project were hit by cars, Brinson said. But unlike Marquis, most of them will never return to the wild. About 80 percent of raptors do not get released.

The project, part of the MU College of Veterinary Medicine, also focuses on educating the public about raptors and their importance to the environment. It showcased education birds at the release Saturday.

"Education birds and rehabilitation birds are handled differently," volunteer and education coordinator Woodrow Petrovic said.
Because rehabilitation birds like Marquis are to be released into the wild, they are handled by veterinary medicine students and have minimal human contact. Education birds are never going to be released.

"They are healthy but can't survive on their own," Petrovic said. "We want them to be used to people."

Brinson has pulled other birds off the roadside since the night in May when he rescued Marquis. He said he averages about 10 to 15 birds a year, usually bald eagles, red-tailed hawks or barred owls.

But this was the first time Brinson had seen one of the birds he'd rescued return to the wild.

"To see him fly off is a beautiful thing," he said.

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**University of Missouri event challenges participants to experience life in wheelchair**

By Jodie Jackson Jr.

**Sunday, April 6, 2014 at 2:00 am**

As Thomas Maggard powered a wheelchair along the running track at the University of Missouri Student Recreation Complex on Saturday, a runner “effortlessly” breezed past him.

The experience left an impression that Maggard said will help him better connect with people who use wheelchairs, and it’s exactly the kind of lesson that was at the heart of the 14th annual Wheelchair Relay.
“Understanding what it’s like to live with a disability is a valuable tool for raising disability awareness at Mizzou and in our community,” said Carmen Abbott, Wheelchair Relay coordinator and physical therapy professor in the MU School of Health Professions.

Maggard, 21, of Collins, a community north of Springfield, was among several physical therapy and occupational therapy students participating in the event that is also a scholarship fundraiser for Mizzou Wheelchair Basketball.

Eight teams of four competitors completed a circuit of activities in wheelchairs including moving objects from one place to another, playing basketball and volleyball, dressing and maneuvering through an obstacle course. Sign language “Jeopardy,” a traditional relay race and disability education were also part of the morning event.

Residence hall coordinator Nathan Cheesman said the relay was designed for students to experience “what some of our wheelchair students do everyday.”

“It teaches you to empathize with people and where they’re coming from,” said Hannah Miller, 21, a social work student from St. Louis. “It’s really hard to work a wheelchair, so you get a new appreciation” for the challenges that others face, she said.

Miller said her focus on a social work degree stems from a strong sense of social justice. She is a member of the Mizzou Unity Coalition, one of the event’s coordinating organizations.

“I don’t like when people are treated different just because they are different,” she said.

Maggard participated in last year’s Wheelchair Relay. He volunteers with a local adaptive gymnastics program and at Cedar Creek Therapeutic Riding Center. His mother is a special education teacher.

“I have a passion for helping other people,” he said.
Information firms to meet Monday.

By Jodie Jackson Jr.

Saturday, April 5, 2014 at 2:00 am

Two of the state’s three health information exchanges are based in Columbia and, so far, they are not connected. But that could soon change.

Mark Pasquale, who was hired as CEO for Missouri Health Connection just two months ago, said Friday during a health information exchange round-table event that his organization will meet Monday with representatives of the Tiger Institute Health Alliance to discuss the common goal of making all individual electronic health records available to every physician in the state.

Pasquale said Missouri Health Connection’s network already includes about 70 percent of patients in the state.

“I’m feeling optimistic,” said Michael Seda, director of business development for Tiger Institute for Health Innovation, based at the University of Missouri.

Missouri Health Connection, Tiger Institute and the Lewis and Clark Information Exchange, or LACIE, were featured during a panel discussion at yesterday’s round-table at the Courtyard Marriott. Health providers and health technology vendors were among the audience members, and some pointed out that Tiger Institute and LACIE are connected, while Tiger Institute and Missouri Health Connection are not.

In practical terms, that means the electronic health record of a patient that goes to Missouri Health Connection member Boone Hospital Center from MU Health Care or University Hospital would not be available to medical staff at the other hospital — even though the two hospitals are less than 2 miles apart.

Previous discussions about connecting the two health information networks have been stymied by disagreements over cost.

MU officials have said the Tiger Alliance wants to share data with Missouri Health Connection, but not for a fee. MHC officials have said its fees are based on the type and size of member organizations and that the Tiger Alliance was not being asked to do something other members were not doing.

Tom Selva, chief medical information officer for MU Healthcare, passed a note with Pasquale during yesterday’s roundtable. The note said: “Set the data free.” He said the patient data should not belong to any one information exchange.

“We are much closer to having that data set free,” Selva said. “I don’t think we’re that far away.”
One of the primary aims of electronic health records and health information networks is to improve quality of care and increase patient safety by having the same patient information available from doctor to doctor. The electronically shared medical record information also is seen as an important step in reducing preventable errors and duplication of treatment.

Yesterday’s event, sponsored by the Midwest Gateway Chapter of Health Information and Management Systems Society, also featured Laura Adams, president and CEO of the Rhode Island Quality Institute, which operates Rhode Island’s health information exchange.

Adams is a cancer survivor and consumer advocate who talks about how she discovered the absence of a strong health information system “at a point in time when my life was hanging in the balance.”

She remembered finding out that the results of a medical test had been available for 11 days, yet she had not been told the results were in.

“Those weren’t 11 days,” Adams said. “Those were 11 sleepless nights.”

She also talked about coming to terms with the need for a mastectomy when she discovered a radiologist’s record that said she was to have a double mastectomy — which was not true.

“What if I didn’t speak English? What if I was elderly?” she said.

MANY RETURNING MILITARY VETS BOUND FOR COLLEGE

April 04, 2014 7:54 am • BY SUSANNE M. SCHAFER

NO MENTION

COLUMBIA, S.C. (AP) — Officials from universities nationwide are getting set for a wave of military veterans going back to college after wars abroad and defense budget cuts.

A three-day conference titled "Success for Student Veterans" begins Friday at the University of South Carolina to discuss ways academia can help the new vets with the transition.

Tens of thousands of new veterans are expected to return to college or the workforce in the next several years as the military downsizes after wars in Iraq and Afghanistan and as the Pentagon budget is pared back.
The director of Veteran Services at the University of South Florida, Lawrence Braue ('brow'), is one of several participating experts and is exhorting universities to help veterans make the leap from the military to life on a college campus.

Volunteers plant trees to protect Hinkson Creek from runoff

Saturday, April 5, 2014 | 5:29 p.m. CDT
BY DOMINIQUE FELDMAN

COLUMBIA — Mud was everywhere, and Teressa Litchfield, 60, found herself continually stuck and slipping on more than one occasion as she dug holes on the bank of the storm water reservoir at the Forum Nature Area.

"This is why you have to wear boots on days like this," she said with a laugh.

Colton Allen, 23, watched and laughed as his partner for the day slipped on the muddy terrain.

The pair were digging holes to plant small trees in. They joined more than 50 other people Saturday in an effort to plant the trees that will help protect Hinkson Creek from excessive stormwater runoff and polluters.

"Hinkson Creek is in trouble, mostly because of runoff," said Steve Johnson, executive director of the Missouri River Communities Network. "There are millions of gallons of stormwater going into the creek that weren't there before. And stormwater runoff also brings oil and gas and salt into the stream."

The event, from 8 a.m. to noon, brought together more than 50 volunteers from several organizations, including the Public Works Department, the Missouri River Communities Network, AmeriCorps VISTA, MU Jumpstart, and two groups from the Columbia Parks and Recreation Department, the TreeKeepers and Columbia Aquatic Restoration Project.
Saturday’s event was part of a broader project to help protect Hinkson Creek. During the first phase, the Public Works Department designed and created a stormwater reservoir to help divert water runoff. The new trees will help create a stormwater retention pond.

"What we're trying to do here is mitigate surface area that won't absorb water anymore, and engineer ways to slow that water and clean it," Johnson said.

The volunteers planted oaks, cottonwoods and sycamores farther away from the reservoir. Closer to the reservoir, they planted river birches, elderberries and buttonbushes, all of which are suited for absorbing more water.

The reservoir and the water retention pond will work together to divert water runoff, spread it out, water the area and recharge the underground water table through plants with deep root systems, thus cleaning the water and keeping it away from Hinkson Creek, Johnson said.

"The plants are kind of like tent stakes that anchor down a tent, and the reservoir is like having someone or something in the tent to hold it down," said Miranda Challeen, who coordinated volunteer efforts for the event.

Thomas Wellman, the Public Works Department’s stormwater engineer who designed the reservoir, was surprised with how well the reservoir seemed to be working so far.

The Public Works Department is planning five to seven more water retention ponds in the area, a costly endeavor, Wellman said.

The volunteers helped take some of the burden off the city.

"Volunteering saves them money. And this is also good experience, especially for younger people," volunteer Elke Boyd said.

Altogether, the project aimed at planting about 1,700 trees Saturday, but organizers weren’t sure whether they’d be able to hit that ambitious mark. Boyd, though, was confident that they could plant them all.

"We once did 2,300 trees, and we were done by 11:30 a.m.," she said. "We'll definitely get them planted today."

Supervising editor is Edward Hart.