Robert Castillo is a man of many talents. While he has received most of his recognition from playing his upright bass in his band The Sextet, he has recently ventured into visual public art. Originally from North Kansas City, Robert moved around the country before returning to the area, this time calling Rosedale home. I had the chance to interview him and get a glimpse into his creative life.

**Sarah:** What brought you to Rosedale?  
**Robert:** I didn’t really start playing jazz music until I went away for college, and the more I explored this style, the more I wanted to return to Kansas City and reconnect. The Kansas City jazz scene is so tight-knit and welcoming and is actually drawing more artists from other big markets — L.A. and New York — who want to get involved in the creative life.

**Sarah:** What about your music?  
**Robert:** I had the chance to interview Robert Castillo, a musician who brings creativity to Kansas City.

Robert Castillo plays the upright bass in concert.

One of your recent installations, Held, has received a lot of recognition, as it is a timely visual with the recent resurgence of the Black Lives Matter movement. Can you tell me more about this?

**Robert:** Held is my first piece of public art, and I designed it to be a visual promotion of unity in diversity, which is what community is all about. I had created it a while back, but the timing of the installation on one of the KC street car stops lined up perfectly with the political scene of today.

**Sarah:** Can you tell me more about the metro area?

**Robert:** The Kansas City jazz scene is so tight-knit and welcoming and is actually drawing more artists from other big markets — L.A. and New York — who want to get involved in the creative life.

**Sarah:** How has the pandemic affected your music career?

**Robert:** The pandemic has been tough. I dug deep into meditation, and this actually helped me to develop a lot of skills. I learned to slow down, dug deep into meditation, and be still. From that I gained more interest in creating my own art and music. Has that mindset helped you continue to create during the pandemic? Yes! One idea that I always come back to is that one has to overcome the paralysis of the “first draft”. We fear creating something bad, or imperfect. Ideas are like babies; we have to nurture and guide them to grow. When babies first learn to walk, we expect them to fall down and make mistakes, and the same is true for your first attempt at a creative venture.

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**Sarah:** What about your music?  
**Robert:** I had the chance to interview Robert Castillo, a musician who brings creativity to Kansas City.
New Shade Trees Coming to Rosedale

By Erin Stryka

Fall is coming and so are trees! The Heartland Tree Alliance planted 68 shade trees outside KCK homes in 2019. Now, in Rosedale, volunteers will plant 32 Sugar Maples, Serviceberries, Royal Rendrop crabapples, and Tree Lilacs on October 16. Rosedalians who are willing to water a tree for two years and who would like a tree planted in front of their homes can sign up at bridgingheg.org/heartland-tree-alliance/treeforkck/.

In partnership with the United Government of Kansas City, Kansas and the Kansas Forest Service, trees will be planted in the public right-of-way, typically 10-15 feet from the street or the tree well between the sidewalk and the curb. There is no cost to you. The Heartland Tree Alliance will provide the trees, mulch, watering bag, and will even plant the tree. The only ask of you is to water the tree weekly for the first two years in its new home.

Rosedalians Devon Teran has been volunteering for many years in his neighborhood. “Healthy tree cover makes for healthier neighborhoods,” says Teran. “They slow down traffic, save energy, and just make everything feel better. It is important for us to plant trees in our neighborhood now, because for so many of our older homes, the original trees are no longer there, and they have not been replaced. Now is the best time to plant the trees and develop our neighborhood in the ways that will keep it beautiful for the next 50 years.”

Elizabeth Johnston serves RDA

By Samantha Burton-Bosket

When Elizabeth Johnston, graphic designer and illustrator for extraordinary, moved to Rosedale, one of the first people she met was an RDA staff member. The rest was fate; RDA maintained a consistent relationship with her in everything she does.

RDA for 15 years, her total volunteer experience spans 45 years of connecting and bettering the communities in which she has lived. Elizabeth uses her knowledge in design to help farmers, consistent, harmonious, and professional marketing and branding, with quality being a priority in everything she does.

Unified Government considers Complete Streets ordinance

By Erin Stryka

Back in 2011, in response to advocacy from Rosedalians and many other Wyandotte Countians, the Unified Government adopted a Complete Streets resolution. The resolution states that when the Unified Government makes significant changes or repairs to our streets, they should do so with the needs of all street users in mind: drivers, bus riders, bikers, and pedestrians of all ages and abilities.

The Complete Streets resolution contributed to many positive changes for our community; improved sidewalks, safer pedestrian crossings, new bike lanes on South West Blvd., and new sidewalks around each Rosedale elementary school. Anyone walking around Rosedale, however, can see that we have a long way to go.

During the Covid-19 pandemic, the Unified Government Planning Department has proposed several emergency changes to the way we use public and outdoor spaces, including allowing businesses and restaurants to conduct sales on sidewalks and changing the regulations governing mobile food sales. These changes support local businesses and help residents stay safe and healthy while still enjoying their neighborhoods.

Now the Planning Department is considering a Complete Streets ordinance as a next step. An ordinance arises from a resolution in a couple of key ways. First, a resolution declares the Unified Government’s intent to use Complete Streets principles to guide street construction, while an ordinance requires that those principles be followed. Second, an ordinance includes specific design guidelines that increase street safety. For this reason, those guidelines would be selected to maximize safety during the pandemic.

Rainbow Summer Program readers carry on tradition

By Alissa Workman

Walking into the Fellowship Hall of Rainbow Memorial Church at 8 a.m. on a summer morning, I’m greeted with 100 students who have enough energy while I’m wishing I would have had time to grab that second cup of coffee. “Good morning… GOOD morning… GOOD morning…” the scholars sing and cheer before we sit to a colorful story about how it’s okay to be different. They then teach me some favorite cheers; there’s cool cats, brown cows, reading is cool, wiggly burritos, and some friendly banter about the grade levels among all of the best. No matter how you felt when you walked in, you leave with a smile on your face and the encouragement of 100 “you’re specials” and “you got this!”

For 15 years, the Rainbow Summer Program (and its predecessor, Rainbow Freedom School) has been a staple in the Rosedale community, providing much-needed outreach to the Heart-of-school-programming in a welcoming environment for six weeks every summer. At the same time, it provides community members the opportunity to spend a morning with the youth, sharing their stories and experiences while maybe learning a few things from the in-person, one constant remained: a steady stream of volunteer readers who wanted to share their time and experiences with the students. Despite the changes, a diverse set of readers still showed up to support the program: Rainbow Church members, community volunteers, RDA board members, and local officials such as Mayor David Avery and Representative Sharon Davids. RDA is grateful for each reader for giving their time and, working through the Hiccup, to ensure at least one constant during an otherwise unsteady time for Rosedale youth.

Let’s be rock solid together!

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