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Congratulations, RTK Conservation Easement Coordinator Stephanie Manes!



Earlier this year, RTK Conservation Easement Coordinator, Stephanie Manes, was the recipient of the Judith F. Taggart Founder's Award at the National Mitigation & Ecosystem Banking Conference in Minneapolis, MN! This year's scholarship award was sponsored by Craig Denisoff Consulting, Davis, CA and Restoration Systems, Raleigh, NC.



Conservation Easement Update



To date, RTK has assisted 13 families close on 18 conservation easements in the Smoky Hills and Flint Hills. With nine pending conservation easements totaling over 17,000 acres, RTK will more than double their total number of acres conserved in Kansas!

New Leadership at Ranchland Trust of Kansas

By Samantha Weishaar, RTK Associate Director

With new leadership, RTK plans to take state wide conservation to the next level.

"RTK will continue its mission of conserving grasslands, but also focus on being recognized as a resource to KLA members and all Kansas landowners," said Lynn Gentine, RTK executive director.

Growth of the organization and capacity building will be the highest priority with RTK's new leadership. Gentine plans to do this by building on RTK's strategic plan and implementing specific action steps for the organization.

With under two months on the job, Gentine has been a part of RTK's largest event of the year, the Pre-Symphony in the Flint Hills. RTK welcomed Gentine and she addressed supporters say-

ing, "I am delighted to be here today as part of the RTK family. As demonstrated with a record attendance, RTK's momentum is growing."

She is looking forward to helping RTK communicate with and educate its target audience. Her first goal is to have KLA members hear more from RTK.

"RTK needs to convey better what land trusts do and the benefits conservation can have on land, landowners, neighbors and partners, both big and small," Gentine said.

RTK belongs to a national land trust group called Partnership of Rangeland Trusts (PORT), which are all agricultural land trusts affiliated with their respective state cattlemen's associations, much like RTK and KLA's affiliation.

"We want members to know that we communicate with PORT land trusts

often. This is a knowledgeable group of western and midwestern land trusts to exchange ideas with. Since RTK is a relatively young land trust, we have gained many mentors through PORT over the years and for this we are very grateful," said Gentine.

You may notice RTK already has focused on external communications and education to the public. RTK also is working on a new website and dispelling myths about conservation easement on social media. One example found on RTK's Facebook page is demonstrating what conservation easements restrict and what conservation easements allow. Conservation easements are not for everyone, but the purpose is to conserve the land for future generations.

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Eighth Annual RTK Photography Contest

By Samantha Weishaar, RTK Associate Director

RTK invites professional and amateur photographers to submit photographs for its eighth annual photo contest showcasing the natural beauty of ranching and grazing lands across the state. The competition offers Kansans the chance to explore and capture the many seasons and faces of Kansas' beauty and ranching tradition.

Participants should submit photos expressing the mission of RTK: "To preserve Kansas' ranching heritage and open spaces for future generations through the conservation of working landscapes." This may include landscape, livestock and people, with preference to grasslands, grazing land, ranchers, cattle and much more.

Participants may enter up to five photos. September 6 is the

deadline for photo contest entries. Photographs will be judged by a panel of professionals in the field of photography and RTK representatives.



2018 Grand Prize Photo by Crystal Socha

All prizes for the contest are sponsored by Wolfe's Camera of Topeka. Wolfe's will award 10 photo cards to all 10 category winners. Categories include: Grand Prize, Landscape, Livestock, People, Youth (ages 5-17), Kansas Livestock Association Member, Fan Favorite via Facebook voting and Honorable Mentions. The grand prize winner will receive their choice of an 11" x 14" stretched photo canvas or a 12" x 18" metal print of their winning photo.

For questions, contact Samantha Weishaar at (785) 273-5115 or samantha@kla.org.

Visit www.ranchlandtrustofkansas.org (News, Events, Photo Contest) for full contest rules and to enter. 🌾

OUR MISSION

To preserve Kansas' ranching heritage and open spaces for future generations through the conservation of working landscapes.

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RTK Spotlight: Scott Strickland

By Samantha Weishaar, RTK Associate Director

Scott Strickland is an RTK volunteer and serves on the RTK Development Committee. The Development Committee consists of board members and volunteers who help steer RTK's development and fundraising efforts.

Strickland has been an advocate for RTK since he learned about the organization at a Symphony in the Flint Hills event years ago. He learned even more about RTK through his KLA membership. He and his wife, Patti, have been RTK donors ever since.

Strickland was born and raised in the Kansas City area. He currently lives in Westwood and is the President of CommunityAmerica Insurance Agency, which is part of CommunityAmerica Credit Union in Kansas City. Strickland said, "I travel a great deal for my career and I was exposed to similar agricultural land trusts such as the Wyoming Stockgrowers Land Trust and Colorado Cattleman's Agricultural Land Trust that are doing good work in their respective states. I circled back to seek out RTK and get involved in my home state."

His connection to conservation started as a kid when he would wander around the fields of northern Missouri. Most of his extended family farmed and ranched in that area. He would explore the woods and creek bottoms, fish in the ponds, hunt geese and quail in the fall, and bale hay in the heat of the summer.

"Now that I have grandchildren, I want to secure a future for them to have the opportunity to fall in love with the subtle beauty of the Flint Hills, Smoky Hills, Red Hills and all points in be-

tween. RTK is committed to that same objective," Strickland said.

When Strickland discovered RTK, he was looking for ways to learn more about conservation and agriculture and where the two intersect.

Strickland said, "When you attend an event or meet with folks from RTK you quickly understand that we are honoring the heritage of ranching families by protecting Kansas lands and their legacy. There is something about RTK's work that connects the past to the future by buttoning the two together with an agricultural conservation easement."

Strickland considers himself a lifelong learner. His undergraduate degree is in accounting from the University of Missouri. He earned a master's degree at Baker University. He continues to study

what interests him. He recently completed a certificate in ranch management at Texas A&M in Kingsville, TX and a master's in environmental management through Webster University. This fall he will take online classes at Colorado State University pursuing a master's in natural resource stewardship with an emphasis in rangeland ecology.

Scott and Patti each have three children. Together they have two grandchildren with one on the way. They have a Brittany spaniel dog named Scout, a true Kansan born in the Elmdale area. In addition to continuing his education, he likes quail hunting, shooting sporting clays, fishing, reading and painting when he has a chance to get out his brushes and paints. He also serves on the state Board of Agriculture.



Scott Strickland

New Leadership at RTK

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RTK wants members to know that anyone can be supportive of conserving land in Kansas.

With many exciting changes this year, RTK plans to be in a strong position to advance the strategic plan of

the organization. Gentine will provide the momentum, structure and persistence. Once the organization is well-positioned, RTK will be able to grow rapidly and diversify across the state.

Pre-Symphony in the Flint Hills

Ranchland Trust of Kansas (RTK) donors, supporters and friends gathered on June 15, 2019, for the annual Pre-Symphony in the Flint Hills luncheon and auction. Wes, Richell and Pake Bailey hosted this year's event at the TS Herefords & Quarter Horses Ranch south of Cottonwood Falls. Kansas Secretary of Agriculture Mike Beam was recognized for his 15 years of leadership with RTK and Kansas cowboy poetry contest winners recited their winning poems. Dave Webb led a benefit auction to help further RTK's mission. The RTK board and staff extend their appreciation to Dave & Wendy Webb and the Kansas Livestock Association for sponsoring this event. Also, thank you to Kevin and Julie Kirkwood for taking the beautiful photographs of the event. Please visit RTK's Facebook page to view more photos from the Pre-Symphony event.

