

Karen Johnson – KC photos

This is Kansas Profile. I'm Ron Wilson, director of the Huck Boyd National Institute for Rural Development at Kansas State University.

One a day. That sounds like a vitamin, or maybe a doctor's prescription. But one a day has turned out to be part of a creative idea being used by a woman who is sharing photographic images of her community using modern technology. It's today's Kansas Profile.

Karen Johnson is a retired attorney in Johnson County, Kansas. She lives in the suburban town of Westwood, population 1,521 people, which is part of the greater Kansas City urban area. But Karen has rural roots, having grown up in the Rice County town of Alden, population 165 people. Now, that's rural.

Karen's family moved to Hutchinson while she was a girl. She graduated from Hutchinson High School and Hutchinson Community College before going to KU. There she met and married a guy from Kansas City and that is where they settled.

Karen's husband went on to a 40 year career as a medical photographer with the KU Medical Center. Karen got her law degree and joined a lawyer in Kansas City, Kansas. "There were not a lot of opportunities for women attorneys in those days," Karen said.

When she and her husband had two children, Karen stayed home with the kids. She later went back into law practice and retired from a large Kansas City-area law firm. One family pursuit which came naturally was photography.

"My husband was a professional photographer," Karen said. "He was also a post-polio patient, so I used to go along sometimes and help with the photo shoots." She carried cameras and tripods and became an excellent photographer herself.

Their two children naturally picked up the photography bug as well. "My son and daughter are excellent photographers," Karen said. "It seems to run in the family." In recent years, Karen ventured into the world of Facebook where she could post pictures and communicate electronically with family and friends.

One day Karen and her daughter were having a conversation and the talk turned to her photos. "She knows I like to take pictures and I have lots of them," Karen said. In the course of their discussion, an idea came up: What if she was to post on Facebook one of her pictures from Kansas City every day?

It sounded like fun, and Karen decided to give it a try. She set a goal of one a day: Every day she would post a different photo image relating to her hometown of Kansas City.

This was not some promotional campaign from the city or the chamber of commerce. It was her own initiative, simply to have some fun and share her photos with others. In true lawyer-like fashion, she developed a list of topics or subjects and organized a schedule for posting them.

"These might be people or events or places or buildings," Karen said. She posts a brief commentary about each one. "They are all taken by me or by my camera." For example, her son used her camera to take a picture of Karen with her grandchildren Lucas and Ruby. That one was posted on September 9, 2012, which was Grandparents Day.

"I try to post pictures which are apropos to a given holiday," Karen said. For example, she found a relevant image to post on Labor Day. On the day of the

presidential debates, she used a picture of ducks swimming in the park and asked in her commentary if the candidates would have their ducks in a row?

Her first picture was of Harry Truman's house in Independence, Missouri. The list now includes everything from Pick a Peck of Pretty Peppers at a farmers market to statues and fountains to an eagle atop the Wyandotte County Courthouse.

Karen is sharing these attractive images of her community using social media technology. What if other communities or counties would set a goal to post pictures of their special features on a constant basis?

One a day. No, not a medical prescription, this is a daily commitment by this women photographer to share pictures of her community. We commend Karen Johnson for making a difference by capturing these images and sharing them daily.

For the Huck Boyd National Institute for Rural Development, this is Ron Wilson with Kansas Profile.