

## Joan Nothern - Glasco

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

The corner store. Many towns have those typical, traditional stores on a corner of main street. Today we'll learn about a corner store which was repurposed by a community foundation which is pursuing several strategies to keep the community viable. It's today's Kansas Profile.

Joan Nothern is a community volunteer in the north central Kansas community of Glasco. When her husband took a faculty position at K-State, she taught in an elementary school in Manhattan. While at a teachers meetings in Salina, her car wouldn't start, and a man teacher in a nearby truck gave her car a jump.

"That teacher sat next to me at every meeting after that, and he was always telling me great things about the community where he taught, which was Glasco," Joan said. When a teaching position ultimately opened up in Glasco, Joan came there to teach.

Joan became very active in the local PRIDE program and is now treasurer. A retired local physician, Dr. Claude Harwood, is the chair of the PRIDE group.

Glasco PRIDE has won many awards and actively pursued many projects through the years, as described below. In 1999, a group of volunteers created the Glasco Community Foundation so that citizens could be proactive in their community's future.

Most communities have some old buildings. Occasionally these are listed on the national register of historic places. In 2002, a major part of the Glasco downtown was designated as Glasco Downtown Historic District on the National Register.

Cloud County, in which Glasco is located, has become known as the stained glass capital of Kansas because of the beautiful specimens of stained glass there. A stained glass artisan living in Glasco was active in securing the Cloud County Stained Glass Capitol designation. Each spring the county has stained glass tours for people to see the beautiful examples of stained glass found in churches and homes around the county. All four of Glasco's churches are featured on these tours.

Glasco played a key role in the creation of the Solomon Valley Highway 24 Alliance, a nonprofit organization comprised of twenty-four communities located along US Highway 24 within Kansas' Solomon Valley. Each of these communities has a blue-roofed kiosk highlighting local attractions. These feature the eight rural cultural elements described by Marci Penner's Kansas Sampler Foundation. The President of the Solomon Valley Highway 24 Alliance is none other than Joan Nothern.

"While each town's original settlers' ancestry may have been different, whether German, French, English or African, they all had to find ways to survive, thrive and celebrate life in the Solomon Valley," says the organization's website. "Each community along the valley has its own story to tell."

Glasco is the eastern-most community among the alliance. "We would love to have a Highway 24 museum in our downtown," Joan said.

One of the structures on a streetcorner in downtown Glasco is an old grocery store building more than one hundred years old. After the store closed, the building went up for auction. Out-of-town buyers were coming with plans to dismantle the building and take away its stone. The community foundation mobilized and bought the building instead. Because of its location, they call it the Corner Store.

The Corner Store has become a site for historic displays, sales by local vendors, and histories of local veterans and families developed in partnership with the school. In 2013, the Corner Store is hosting an exhibit called The Way We Worked, with support from the Kansas Humanities Council.

In 2009, the Glasco Community Foundation was designated a Preserve America Steward, one of the first eleven so designated in the nation. A notification letter was signed by Laura Bush and came from the White House. Pretty impressive for a rural community like Glasco, population 556 people. Now, that's rural.

The corner store. It's a fixture of most rural communities, and in Glasco it has become a focal point for celebrating and displaying this community's heritage. We salute Joan Nothern and all the volunteers of Glasco PRIDE and the Glasco Community Foundation for making a difference with their commitment to community. Such commitment is not just a corner store, it's a cornerstone.

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