

## Roy and Bobbi Reiman – Netawaka Fitness Center

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

“Our fitness center – is getting nearer – use it often – you’ll love your mirror.” That’s a message on a series of roadside signs in sequence – Burma Shave style – that one sees on the way to the fitness center in Netawaka, Kansas. It’s today’s Kansas Profile.

Roy and Bobbi Reiman are major donors who helped build this wonderful family fitness center in Netawaka. Bobbi is from Netawaka and graduated from high school there. In fact, she was valedictorian – of a class of 9. Her parents ran the Snappy Inn café in Netawaka.

Bobbi went to work in Topeka. She became executive secretary to the editor of Capper’s Farmer newspaper. There she met a young man named Roy Reiman. Roy had grown up on a farm in Iowa and graduated from Iowa State before taking the job in Topeka. The two married and began a long life and career together.

Roy’s career took them to Milwaukee. He worked in a business which produced magazines for various companies. One day he came home and announced he was quitting his job to do freelance work. “We had four kids and were expecting a fifth,” Roy said. “My wife was very brave and supportive.” He put a typewriter on a tv tray in the basement and started working.

Roy went to an ag editor’s meeting in Chicago where it was announced that a 1.3 million-circulation farm magazine was dropping its women’s section. “I thought to myself, ‘That’s more than a million jilted farm women,’” Roy said.

He set out to create a magazine targeted to the interests of those farm women. What’s more, he had the radical idea of supporting the magazine entirely through subscriptions, with no advertising. The magazine was called Farm Wife News, and it was an immediate success. Eventually it was renamed Country Woman.

That was the beginning of a whole series of Reiman Publications magazines such as Farm and Ranch Living, Country magazine, and Reminisce. At one point, Reiman Publications had 14 national magazines, 16.3 million subscribers, and 640 employees. “Every eighth home in America got one of our magazines,” Roy said.

The Reimans sold the business in 2000 and established a foundation. When Bobbi heard about the plans for a fitness center in her hometown of Netawaka, they became major donors. “We’ve always believed in giving back,” Bobbi said. “We hope this center can help revitalize the whole area,” she said.

There had been interest in a health clinic in the area. With the increased emphasis on wellness, the plans evolved into a fitness center which could serve the entire region.

In September 2013, the Netawaka Fitness Center opened its doors. This beautiful 30,000 square foot facility includes a fully-equipped weight room, cardio and fitness equipment, a full-size basketball court, an indoor sports training turf room, aerobics, dance, health and wellness classes, event space, childcare facilities,

and an 8,000 square foot heated swimming pool with wheelchair access. The event space and concessions area is named Snappy Inn Café after Bobbi's family restaurant, complete with historic photos of the community. A physical and respiratory therapy service is based in the facility as well.

"We've had some really gratifying experiences," Bobbi said. They were told about a wheelchair-bound woman who said, after therapy in the pool, "It's the first time I've been out of pain in two years."

Today the Netawaka Family & Fitness Center has 700 members and is seeking more. The facility has become a community gathering place, especially popular with retirees from the surrounding area who use the indoor walking track and like the opportunity it provides to make new friends.

Burma Shave-style signs with humorous messages are posted around the community to promote the center. The center is a huge asset for the rural town of Netawaka, population 143 people. Now, that's rural.

For more information, go to [www.netawaka.com](http://www.netawaka.com).

We commend Roy and Bobbi Reiman and the board and staff of Netawaka Family & Fitness Center for making a difference by building health and fitness in this way. As the signs said: "If getting fit – is what you oughta – then bring your bod – to Netawaka."

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