



**BUFFALO COUNTY
HISTORICAL SOCIETY**

“Mapping Buffalo County”

Welcome to the 37th Annual Trails & Rails Museum’s Christmas Tree Walk!



Step into Buffalo County’s past as you stroll through a dizzying array of trees and festive decorations. Many volunteers and participating nonprofits and community organizations dedicated their time to creating the ornaments and decorations for these trees. We appreciate all the time and hard work they spent to delight us with these warm, comfortable displays during the cold and windy Nebraska winter.

Vote for the tree that best demonstrates this year’s theme!

How to vote: You can help determine which non-profit will win the **grand prize, \$100**, with your vote. Purchase tickets for **\$0.25 each, or 5 for \$1** and place them in the container at your favorite tree’s location. Tickets may be purchased at the front desk and final vote counts will be tallied after the event is over. (Daily leaderboards will be updated after 4pm each day.) This event is free to the

public, although free-will donations are always encouraged. All proceeds from this event go toward the cash prizes to the first- and second-placed non-profit trees, and directly back to support the ongoing historical preservation and programming at the Buffalo County Historical Society.

Participating Organizations/Contact Information

American Automobile Experience: Jeff Knapp, (308) 233-5120

“The Archive Clippers”: BCHS, bchs.archives@hotmail.com

BD Construction: (308) 234-1836

Central Nebraska Auto Club: Brad Kernick—Vice President: bkernick@frontiernet.net

Country Crossroads Quilt Guild: Facebook: Country Crossroads Quilt Guild; Jess Greni; Lesli Martin; Kelly Wentz@Quilterscottage

Cub Scout Pack 135: Cassy Kvasnicka

Ft. Kearney Chapter Daughters of the American Revolution: Lori O’Brien, Regent; 20 West 27th Street, Kearney, NE 68847; 308-440-0734

“The Hills” (Buffalo Hills and Windy Hills Elementary Schools) 4th Grade Students

The Graduate Student Association (GSA): unkgsa@unk.edu

Kearney Area Children’s Museum: Cassie Larreau- cassie@kearneychildrensmuseum.org or 308.698.2228 ext. 4

Kearney Community Learning Center-Park: Allison Morris, allmorris@kearneycats.com

Kearney Lions Club: Mike Geiger 308-238-3670; Gordon Smith 308- 440-6438

Kearney Literacy Council: kearneyliteracy@gmail.com

Kearney Rescue Cats: Sherry Morrow, 308-440-5384; kearneyrescuecats.org; Facebook: Kearney Rescue Cats’ KearneyRescueCats@gmail.com

Kearney Woman’s Club: Lisa Atchison, President; atchisonlisa6@gmail.com; 308-991-2353

Nebraska State Historical Society: Broc Anderson, broc.anderson@nebraska.gov

Phi Alpha Theta, Pi-Nu Chapter: Advisor: Dr. Torsten Hombberger; 308-293-1947; hobergert@unk.edu

Two Rivers Public Health Department: Hayley Jelinek, Health Educator

Merry Christmas from *your* BCHS/Trails & Rails Museum!

Not a Society member? **Join Today!**

Follow us on Facebook and Instagram at “BuffaloCountyHistoricalSociety”

Visit our website for additional events, programs, and resources: www.bchs.us

Trails & Rails Museum is owned and operated by the **Buffalo County Historical Society**

710 W. 11th St., PO Box 523, Kearney, NE 68848-0523

www.bchs.us bchs.us@hotmail.com (308) 234-3041

American Automobile Experience

Mission of the Organization: To perpetuate and educate people on the love of all types of vehicles.

Date founded/began operating in Buffalo County: November 2011

Organizational accomplishments in 2024: Reorganized and relaunched with a new name.

We had 5-6 car shows and a drive-in movie adjacent to our facility.

Organization's contact information: Jeff Knapp, (308) 233-5120

How does your organization's tree fit the theme "Mapping Buffalo County"? Automobiles are an integral part of the mapping and expansion of Buffalo County.

The Archive Clippers

Mission of the Organization: To preserve Buffalo County history.

Date founded/began operating in Buffalo County: Forever (March 1843)

Organizational accomplishments in 2024: Continued indexing, sorting, and camaraderie.

Organization's contact information: BCHS

How does your organization's tree fit the theme "Mapping Buffalo County"? The maps show areas, towns, etc. of Buffalo Co. The blue ribbon indicates rivers throughout the county.

BD Construction

Mission of the Organization: BD serves as your construction manager, and we become your trusted advisor on all matters related to your building project with a single goal in mind: to provide you with the best value for your construction dollar.

Date founded/ began operating in Buffalo County: 1983

Organizational accomplishment in 2024: BD Construction carries on our legacy of building for the future of our community and beyond by partnering with schools and healthcare facilities to bring their vision to life.

Organization's contact information: (308) 234-1836

How does your organization's tree fit the theme?: We are going to decoupage maps of Buffalo County onto ornaments and include projects we have done.

Central Nebraska Auto Club

Mission of the Organization: The enjoyment of all types and all ages of vehicle.

Date founded/began operating in Buffalo County: Circa 1987.

Organizational accomplishments in 2024: Very successful Cruise Nite week

Successful indoor car show

Awarded an automotive scholarship

Donated over \$11,000 to charitable organizations

Organization's contact information: Brad Kernick—Vice President: bkernick@frontiernet.net

Country Crossroads Quilt Guild

Mission of the Organization: The goals of the Country Crossroads Quilt Guild are to promote the appreciation of the art of quilting through educational meetings, exchanges, and sharing ideas.

Date founded/began operating in Buffalo County: 1985—1st President Mary Bennet

Organizational accomplishments in 2024: To achieve these goals this year, we have sponsored a program for our guild and the public, about the history of feedsack fabric and quilts.

Members participated in and taught a class at the state quilt guild show as “white glovers.”

Guild members helped staff at Trails & Rails to refold the quilts in the museum's quilt collection.

A year-long service project has been to make quilts for CHI Good Samaritan to make patients warm and comfortable.

Organization's contact information: Facebook: Country Crossroads Quilt Guild

Jess Greni; Lesli Martin; Kelly Wentz@Quilterscottage

Cub Scouts, Pack 135

Mission of the Organization: Cub Scouts is a fun, family-oriented program for children ages 5 to 10, focused on building character, confidence, and leadership skills. Through a variety of engaging activities—such as outdoor adventures, crafts, community service, and teamwork—Cub Scouts learn important life values like kindness, respect, and responsibility. The program is designed to help children develop a strong sense of community, make lasting friendships, and earn badges that recognize their accomplishments. It's a great way for young kids to explore new interests while growing in character and confidence.

Date founded/began operating in Buffalo County: We have been part of the Kearney community for over 70 years.

Fort Kearney Chapter Daughters of the American Revolution

Mission of the Organization: The object of our National Society Daughters of the American Revolution is to perpetuate the memory and the spirit of the men and women who achieved

American Independence; to promote the development of an enlightened public opinion; and to foster patriotic citizenship.

Date founded/began operating in Buffalo County: 1908

Organizational accomplishments in 2024: We, along with the Buffalo County Historical Society, opened the time capsule at Centennial Park. A few months later, we added new items to the collection and buried it in a steel box to protect the contents. It will be opened again in 50 years.

We laid a wreath at the Memorial Day Service at Kearney Cemetery, presented a ROTC award to UNK Senior Madeline Hinze, provided lunch for Habitat for Humanity workers and presented flags to the three new homeowners this Fall, set up a display at the Great Platte River Archway for Constitution Week, added a shelter and picnic table to the America 250 marker at the Archway, participated in the Veterans Day parade, helped serve breakfast to Veterans and their families at Horizon Middle School on Veterans Day, and continue to find ways to honor military personnel in our area.

Organization's contact information: Lori O'Brien, Regent; 20 West 27th Street, Kearney, NE 68847; 308-440-0734

How does your organization's tree fit the theme "Mapping Buffalo County"?

"The Hills" (Buffalo Hills and Windy Hills Elementary Schools) 4th Grade Students

How does your organization's tree fit the theme "Mapping Buffalo County"? KPS elementary students learn all about their community, county, and state in social studies class. Our decorations showcase all the amazing things to do, see, and hear all over the map in Buffalo County!

The Graduate Student Association (GSA)

Mission of the Organization: As UNK's only graduate student focused organization, the Graduate Student Association is a way for graduate students to network among similar minded peers as well as meet others from different graduate programs. As an organization, we seek to advocate for, inform, and connect students during their time as UNK Lopers, whether they are online or in person. We are committed to equity for all graduate students, to giving them a voice, and to providing the best possible experience for their graduate education.

Date founded/began operating in Buffalo County: The Graduate Student Association was founded in 2022 with the purpose of acting as a voice for graduate students to graduate faculty, staff, and administration through representation within the Graduate Council.

Organizational accomplishments in 2024: In 2024, the Graduate Student Association (GSA) achieved significant milestones, reflecting its growing impact and dedication to enhancing the graduate student experience. With increasing membership and engagement, the GSA introduced new events throughout the semester, all met with strong turnout and positive feedback. Along with recently being recognized as 'Student Organization of the Month' by the Student

Government, the GSA also played a pivotal role in organizing the first-ever *NU GSA Graduate Student Professional Showcase*, fostering collaboration among graduate students across the University of Nebraska system. These accomplishments highlight the GSA's commitment to creating a vibrant, supportive, and inclusive community.

Organization's contact information: unkgsa@unk.edu

How does your organization's tree fit the theme "Mapping Buffalo County"? Our tree fits the theme "Mapping Buffalo County" by celebrating the integral role of graduate students at UNK, a cornerstone of Buffalo County's educational and cultural identity. Through decorations that highlight graduate education and UNK pride, the tree showcases the diverse academic journeys and contributions of graduate students who shape the community's future. This blend of scholarly and local spirit reflects Buffalo County's dynamic landscape and the vital connection between UNK and the region.

Kearney Area Children's Museum

Mission of the Organization: The Kearney Area Children's Museum inspires play, exploration, and discovery through interactive experiences.

Date founded/began operating in Buffalo County: Founded in 1989.

Organizational accomplishments in 2024: 2024 has been an exciting year for KACM! We proudly introduced the Freeman Foundation Asian Culture Exhibit Series: Celebrations, a vibrant showcase of New Year traditions from diverse Asian cultures. Our Auto Alley exhibit also made its debut, giving kids hands-on experiences in mechanics, and we updated our Kid STEM Studio to spark even more interest in engineering. This year, we welcomed 49 field trips, hosted 35,000 guests to date, and grew to 1,186 members, with 137 families supported through our Sharing & Caring Scholarship. Ticketed events saw an impressive 17% growth, driven by a dedicated team, including our strong board of 21 members. We are excited to see what 2025 brings!

Organization's contact information: Cassie Larreau- cassie@kearneychildrensmuseum.org or 308.698.2228 ext. 4

How does your organization's tree fit the theme "Mapping Buffalo County"? We are excited to show how different elements in Kearney Area Children's Museum represent how children across Buffalo County experience their communities. We will highlight each exhibit and where elements of those exhibits are found throughout the county (ex. Public safety, which features the fire truck and cop car, we will highlight the KVFD, KPD, etc.).

Kearney Community Learning Center-Park

Mission of the Organization: KCLC is an academic-based program offered after school and during the summer at Bryant, Central, Emerson, Kenwood, Northeast, Park, Buffalo Hills, Windy Hills, Meadowlark, and Sunrise Middle School.

Date founded/began operating in Buffalo County: 2004

Organizational accomplishments in 2024: We serve over 500 students daily!

Organization's contact information: Allison Morris, allmorris@kearneycats.com

How does your organization's tree fit the theme "Mapping Buffalo County"? Our students' hand-crafted ornaments show how much we love living in Buffalo County!

Kearney Lions Club

Mission of Organization: To create and foster a spirit of understanding among the peoples for humanitarian needs by providing voluntary services through community involvement and international cooperation.

Date founded/began operating in Buffalo County: February 12, 1941 club chartered.

Organizational accomplishments in 2024: Lions collected, sorted and sent for recycle over 3000 pair of glasses for use in 3rd world countries. We assisted in paying cost of eye exams and purchase of glasses for 13 individuals. We provided vision screening for students in Kearney Public Schools.

Organization's contact information: Mike Geiger 308-238-3670; Gordon Smith 308- 440-6438

How does your organization's tree fit the theme "Mapping Buffalo County"? Buffalo County is mostly rural areas. In early years going to town was a big trip and most people did not buy their tree decorations, many made homemade decorations. Crochet ornaments have been a decorating option for many years.

Kearney Literacy Council

Mission of the Organization: Kearney Literacy Council is dedicated to eliminate functional illiteracy in the Kearney area. We believe the abilities of reading, writing and effective communicating are critical to personal freedom and quality of life. Therefore, Kearney Literacy Council aims to encourage a love of reading in people from birth to 99 and encourage them to become lifelong readers.

Date founded/began operating in Buffalo County: Approximately 1970

Organizational accomplishments in 2024: In 2024 we have worked to expand tutoring in person. **We are still in real need of individuals who would be tutors** for the many eager to learn students we have. We gave baskets of books (books from Sequel Book Store) for each Habitat for Humanity home "family," and provided books and education to many people through Goodfellows Christmas Baskets and United Way Back Packs. Board members volunteered as readers for the Polar Express fundraiser. We are looking forward to a robust 2025 with more person-to-person tutoring.

Organization's contact information: kearneyliteracy@gmail.com

How does your organization's tree fit the theme "Mapping Buffalo County"? The Kearney Literacy Council works with people to map their individual path to literacy. The map garlands and ornaments on the tree represent the parts of the path. We start by ASSESSING individual

needs. Next we develop a PERSONALIZED PLAN. Third, we use STRATEGIES of phonics instruction, vocabulary and guided reading to reach GOALS. We regularly MONITOR PROGRESS to ensure successes along the **mapped path**. If you would like to be a part of someone's journey and path to literacy, please, email us.

MERRY CHRISTMAS!!

Kearney Rescue Cats

Mission of Organization: Our mission at Kearney Rescue Cats is to match our adoptable cats with their new forever home. We also promote Trap, Neuter, and Return (TNR) services, helping stray and abandoned cats in the community. **Kearney Rescue Cats is focused on humanely reducing the feral cat population in Kearney through the practice of Trap-Neuter-Return and by providing assistance with rescue/re-homing of kittens and cats.**

Date founded: Fall of 2020

Organizational accomplishments in 2024:

Fund Raisers:

*Mardi Paws (Spaghetti/with no Balls Dinner) * 3 Micro Chip Clinics *Easter fund raising event at McCues *Garage Sales in April and September * Gambinos Pizza Fund raiser 2 times * Raising Canes fund raiser * Luminary Night August *Pizza Ranch (three times) *Pizza Ranch Card Sales *Shoe Collection Project (3 times) *Aluminum can collecting *Soul Fest (a thriving mind, body, spirit expo) *Mission Possible Donation Program *T-Shirt sales 4 times a year

Other Projects

*Radio Program Talk of the Town (monthly) * Middle School Program on Cats (2 times)
*Winter Shelter Cat project and distribution *Volunteer Fostering of all cats

Organization's Contact Information: Sherry Morrow, 308-440-5384; kearneyrescuecats.org

Facebook: Kearney Rescue Cats

KearneyRescueCats@gmail.com

Mapping Buffalo County Theme is addressed by the names of towns where we have placed adopted cats shown on the tree. We serve all of Buffalo County.

Kearney Woman's Club

Mission of the Organization: The objective of the KWC shall be to promote fellowship among the women in our community; to unite our influence for the betterment of educational, social, and moral conditions; and to assist the youth and organizations in this region. Our members give their time, talents, and resources to improve the quality of life through our volunteer service to others.

Date founded/began operating in Buffalo County: Organized in 1888

Federated with the General Federation of Women's Clubs in 1911. (GFWC)

Organizational accomplishments in 2024: Our projects include support of: Buffalo County Historical Society, Kearney Public Library, COMPASS, SAFE Center, Crossroads Missions, Jubilee Center, Habitat for Humanity, Help Care Clinic, FAN, YRTC, Head Start, Access Period, March of Dimes, Heifer International, local food pantries, KPS Title 1 schools, Kearney Area Concerned Citizens, Goodfellows, and Shriners hospitals. We also own our own clubhouse located at 723 W. 22nd St. It is the Downing Memorial Woman's Club House and it was placed on the National Register of Historic Places in December of 1991. We maintain the restoration/repairs of this beautiful historic Kearney home.

Organization's contact information: Lisa Atchison, President; atchisonlisa6@gmail.com; 308-991-2353

How does your organization's tree fit the theme "Mapping Buffalo County"? Our tree is adorned with little pick-up trucks cut from maps. Also, all of the villages, towns (past and present) plus the city of Kearney are named and displayed. We designed it to represent traveling across our wonderful county in an old pick-up truck.

Nebraska State Historical Society: Historic Sites

Mission of the Organization: The Nebraska State Historical Society collects, preserves, and opens to all, the histories we share.

Date founded/began operating in Buffalo County: The Nebraska State Historical Society was founded in 1878 and has Historic Sites all across the State of Nebraska.

Organizational accomplishments in 2024: The Nebraska State Historical Society Historic Sites had an incredible year with visitors coming from all around the world. Between Chimney Rock, Fort Robinson, Senator George W. Norris Historic Site, Neligh Mill, and John G. Neihardt Historic Site, we had more than 27,000 visitors during the busy tourism months.

Organization's contact information: Broc Anderson, broc.anderson@nebraska.gov

How does your organization's tree fit the theme "Mapping Buffalo County"? As the Historic Sites Department of the Nebraska State Historical Society, we have five Historic Sites across the State of Nebraska that map the diverse aspects of our history. The handmade ornaments and tree topper highlight these Sites, where they are located, how far they are from Buffalo County, and why they are important to our State's history.

Phi Alpha Theta Pi-Nu Chapter

Mission of the Organization: We are a professional society whose mission is to promote the study of history through encouraging research, good teaching, publication, and the exchange of learning and ideas among historians. We seek to bring students and teachers together for intellectual and social exchanges, which promote and assist historical research and publication by our members in a variety of ways.

Date began operating in Buffalo County: 1970

Organization accomplishments in 2024: The Phi Alpha Theta Pi-Nu Chapter is an active student organization on campus. We have one officer meeting each month and we have monthly activities that show our presence on campus. The Pi-Nu Chapter is also growing. We have recruited thirty-three new members, who already have their membership certificates. We also supervise and guide the History Club, which does not require formal membership and is a relaxed, history-centered campus club that welcomes all interested students to find community in history-related activities and topics.

Organizational contact information: Advisor: Dr. Torsten Homberger; 308-293-1947; hombergert@unk.edu

How does your organization's tree fit the theme? Our ornaments included framed pictures of Buffalo County museums and ornaments purchased at a museum in Buffalo County.

Two Rivers Public Health Department

Mission of the Organization: A healthy community for all!

Date founded/began operating in Buffalo County: July 13, 2004

Organizational accomplishments in 2024: Completed a collaborative community health assessment in partnership with CHI, KRMC, and BCCP.

Organization's contact information: Hayley Jelinek, Health Educator

How does your organization's tree fit the theme "Mapping Buffalo County"? We will have pictures of places in the district.

**Thank you for joining us for the 37th Annual Christmas Tree Walk.
May all of your holiday celebrations be joyful, warm, and filled with
laughter and happiness.**

