



LEADERSHIP

FOR A *HEALTHY*

KANSAS

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**Kansas Health Foundation**



# LEADERSHIP

FOR MORE THAN 20 YEARS, THE KANSAS HEALTH FOUNDATION HAS REMAINED  
COMMITTED TO FUNDING LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT INITIATIVES THROUGHOUT THE STATE.  
THIS PUBLICATION TAKES A LOOK BACK AT THE IMPACT OF THESE EFFORTS AND  
HIGHLIGHTS THE PROMISE OF THE RECENTLY ESTABLISHED KANSAS LEADERSHIP CENTER.

## LEADERSHIP FOR THE *LONG TERM*

Soon after the Kansas Health Foundation was created, its leaders made a listening tour around the state to get a reading on residents' top health-related concerns. Many of the answers were expected – heart disease, cancer, diabetes.

One was not: a lack of leadership in Kansas to tackle the complex issues affecting the health and welfare of Kansans.

For that reason, leadership development has been a core concern of the Foundation since its early days. This report looks back – and forward – at those efforts.

## FACING THE *PROBLEM*

The idea that Kansas communities lacked leadership on health matters seemed surprising at first. After all, most areas had doctors, hospital administrators, elected officials and volunteers who traditionally filled that role.

But changing demographics meant that leadership base was aging by the 1980s. Economic challenges and a population drain,

especially of younger people, had weakened many communities.

**“One of the most constant things that came up was the regeneration of new leadership in their communities,” said Steve Coen, president and CEO of KHF. “The leaders who had been in their roles for many years were getting older and nobody was taking their places.”**

KHF, created in 1985 from the sale of Wesley Hospital, possessed impressive resources. But Coen and other KHF officials knew that simply throwing money at problems would accomplish little in the long term.

“We felt we couldn’t make progress on the health and wellness issues until there was a really good leadership infrastructure,” said Deanell Tacha, a former KHF board member who is now dean of the Pepperdine University School of Law.



Steve Coen, president and CEO of the Kansas Health Foundation

## *STARTS AND STOPS*

KHF’s first response came in 1992, when it hosted a Leadership Institute for about 200 people in Wichita. Despite its name, the program was mainly informative in nature, teaching participants about health policy but not necessarily how to use that knowledge. This event and its successor, the Kansas Health Foundation Leadership Conference, were held annually until 2007.

**“We knew we needed to do more,” Coen said. “That was not going to change the state.”**

## **“LIKE FRESH RUNNING WATER”**

“It was just like fresh running water,” said KCLI alum Cheryl Lyn Higgins, who was managing a radio station in McPherson at the time. “Those sessions were just incredible. They gave us tools that taught us how to bring people together, people who didn’t have the same vision or perception, and how we could go about working as a team to find shared perspective.”

So in 1999, following more listening tours, KHF launched the Kansas Community Leadership Initiative (KCLI), which worked with local leadership programs across the state that were often run by chambers of commerce.

Prior to KCLI, those community leadership programs were mainly meet-and-greet affairs – that is, give participants tours of the courthouse, hospital and other local institutions and introduce them to area leaders.

KCLI brought participants to Wichita for three days of training in a program called 21st Century Leadership.

“ We felt we couldn’t make progress on the health and wellness issues until there was a really good leadership infrastructure.”

Deanell Tacha

McPherson incorporated the tools into its local leadership program and also into the creation of a comprehensive community visioning project.

**“Most of our interest was in youth,” Higgins said. “If you create a healthy environment for youth, they’ll be connected with the community and remain there.”**

Today, Higgins is coordinator of neighborhood initiatives for the Sisters of St. Joseph in Concordia, teaching leadership tools in rural communities served by that organization.

“I learned they have no difficulty identifying what needs to be done,” Higgins said. “The real challenge in many communities is a lack of leadership. There are people who are not trained, nor do they have the desire to lead. If we’re going to

stem the loss of population in Kansas, then we need leadership in every community.”

KHF’s Fellows program was also launched in 1999. The program brings approximately 20 health leaders together seven times over

12 months for extensive leadership training and content knowledge. Held approximately every two years, it has graduated 129 Fellows to date.



Cheryl Lyn Higgins, coordinator of neighborhood initiatives for the Sisters of St. Joseph

➤ **“We need leadership in every community.”** Cheryl Lyn Higgins

**“I WALKED AWAY WITH A  
BETTER UNDERSTANDING  
OF THE CHALLENGES  
WE FACE.”**

**CHRISTY HOPKINS**, GREELEY COUNTY ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT DIRECTOR,  
TALKING ABOUT THE KANSAS HEALTH FOUNDATION FELLOWS PROGRAM

## KANSAS LEADERSHIP CENTER

In 2005, KHF showed it was even more serious about leadership development when its board approved a 10-year, \$30-million grant to start the Kansas Leadership Center (KLC).

Establishing the Center as a separate entity, without "health" in its name, didn't signify a lessening interest in leadership on health issues, but rather a recognition that the problems and solutions are multifaceted.

**"What we've found is that the health of a community is more than just health care," said Jeff Usher, a senior program officer at the Foundation who oversees the organization's leadership grants. "It's economic health, it's emotional health, it's quality of life and social connectedness. They all have an impact on health."**

KLC was created to manage the Foundation's existing leadership

programs and produce new programs of its own. In 2006, Ed O'Malley was hired as the first KLC president and CEO. Usually described as a former state legislator, O'Malley's background is more varied than that. A Kansas State alum (1997) from Roeland Park, Kan., O'Malley ran leadership courses for his fraternity after graduating, then worked in succession for then-Gov. Bill Graves, the Overland Park Chamber of



Commerce and in private business development. Appointed to a seat in the Kansas House in 2003, he won two more terms on his own.

"I found the (Kansas Leadership Center) project exciting enough to leave politics," O'Malley said.

### A NEW APPROACH

O'Malley's first job was developing a curriculum for civic leadership. As a starting point, KLC staff and consultants conducted interviews and focus groups with more than 100 Kansans representing a wide range of backgrounds and expertise.

The programs developed by KLC, first rolled out in 2008 and 2009, are significantly different than those offered previously. They are based on a number of principles, including:

- Leadership is inherently risky and conflict should not be avoided, but rather addressed in the open.
- Getting people to make decisions and take action often requires putting pressure on them, or "raising the heat."
- Leaders must know the difference between technical and adaptive problems, with the former often being solvable through additional money or manpower, while the latter require more fundamental changes.

The Center and its faculty have also taken a new approach to teaching these concepts. Sessions are not like classrooms in which students absorb knowledge

from a teacher, nor are they modeled after some of the "team-building exercises" familiar to many.

**"I did not want to make the Kansas Leadership Center some place where people do 'trust falls,'" O'Malley said.**

Instead, participants are pushed to examine and develop their leadership capabilities right then and there, through free-ranging discussions, experiments and other exercises. One tactic used by KLC

facilitators is simple silence, removing themselves from a classroom interaction and letting participants hash it out themselves.

"They put us in some challenging situations," said Ron Wilson, who attended a five-day KLC training session called, "Context and Competencies," and who works for the Huck Boyd National Institute for Rural Development at Kansas State University. "They let us wallow in our confusion, created a situation where we were really struggling with clarity –



**"I found the project exciting enough to *leave politics.*"**

Ed O'Malley



what's our purpose here? They didn't help. They forced us to exercise our own leadership, dig deep and decide what we were going to do."

Wilson said the challenge was worth it.

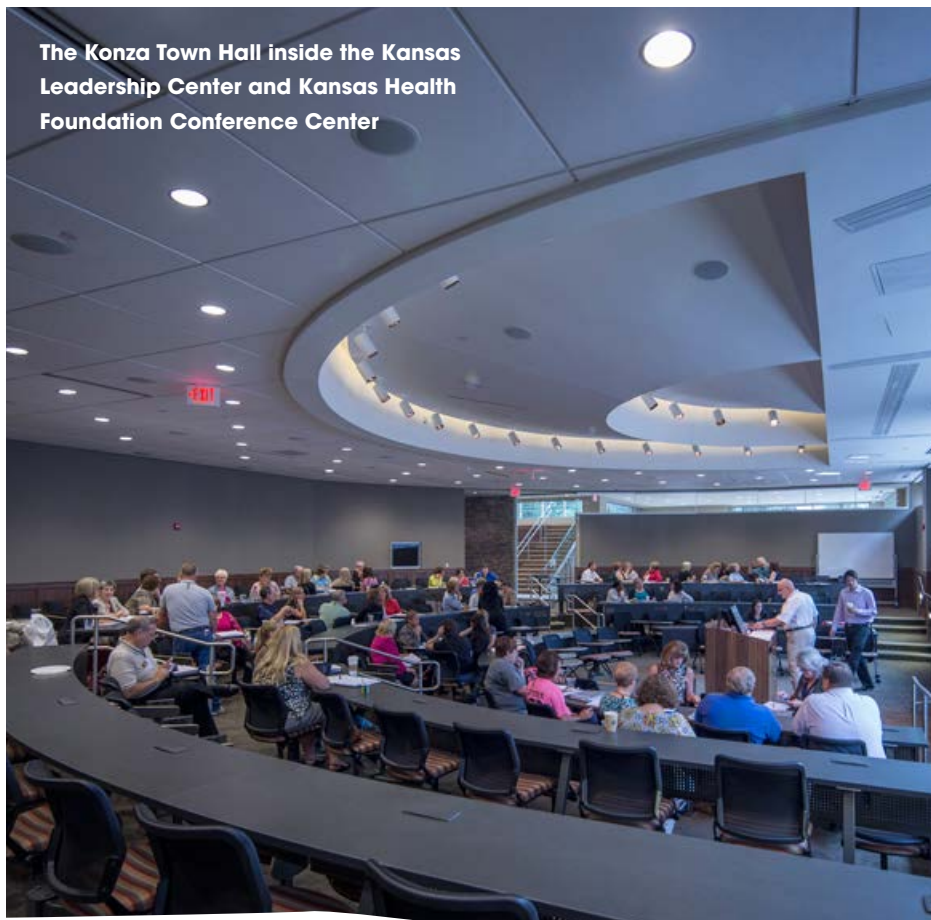
**"Virtually everything we do now, we're using those competencies – (as in) is this an adaptive or technical challenge?"**

Dan Partridge, director of the Lawrence-Douglas County Health Department, is part of the most recent Fellows cohort to receive its training through KLC. He noted that the Center's concepts are making their way around the state, but that, like any proposal to do things differently, they will take time to be adopted and may never be accepted by everyone.

"I just came from two days of meetings of local health departments where we talked about these competencies a lot," Partridge said. "It was mixed reviews because we really push people to be honest and not rush to solutions. There was some discomfort."

### REPORT CARD

Twenty-one years after the Foundation held its first leadership training, and eight years after it started KLC, it's fair to ask what difference these efforts have made. O'Malley listed some ambitious goals in "For the Common Good: Redefining Civic



The Konza Town Hall inside the Kansas Leadership Center and Kansas Health Foundation Conference Center

➤ **"We really push people to be honest."** Dan Partridge

"I THINK THIS IS  
ONE OF THE MOST  
*REMARKABLE*  
STATEWIDE PROGRAMS."

SUZANNE MOOMAW, ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR OF URBAN AND ENVIRONMENTAL PLANNING, UNIVERSITY OF VIRGINIA

“I did not want to make KLC some place where people do *‘trust falls.’*”

Ed O'Malley

Leadership,” a recently published book he wrote with David D. Chrislip. Among them was increasing the capacity for civic leadership in the areas of health, education, economic development and the environment.

Has that been achieved?

**“I think it’s too early to say, to be honest,” O’Malley said. “I know we’re engaging people who are connected to all those types of efforts, and we believe we are better at helping those people exercise leadership.”**

Coen said the Foundation never envisioned a quick fix for the leadership deficit.

“Those are big things to tackle,” he said. “You’re not going to be making big changes in those areas quickly. I think we’re beginning to develop leaders to make those changes. They’re certainly coalescing the right people around those issues. I think they’re going down the right path.”

Post-training surveys of KLC participants show that 90 percent find the experience helpful, although some find it difficult to put all the elements into actual use.

### **WITHIN REACH**

KLC employs 17 people full time and 35 others, mostly facilitators, on a part-time basis. It offers 10 leadership programs at present, ranging from those open to anyone to some targeted at specific audiences such

as newly elected state lawmakers or faith leaders.

What’s ahead for the Center? One goal is to become more connected with the business community.



“How do we engage the for-profit world in helping the betterment of communities?” Coen said. “It’s not that they don’t care. It’s hard to bring them to the table sometimes. They’re busy in their own world.”

When KHF and KLC have worked with local chambers of commerce in the past, the results have been impressive, he said.

“That opened a door to us in communities that we didn’t have

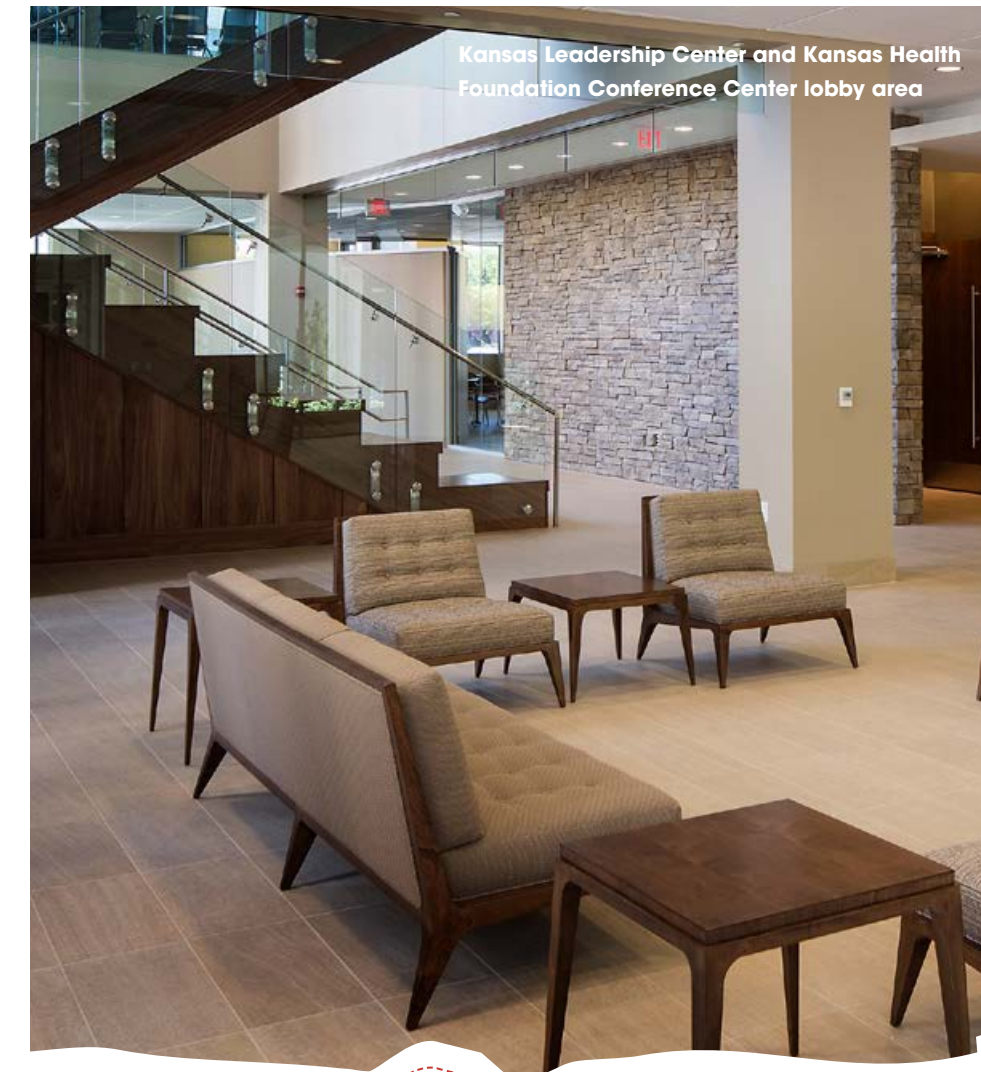
before,” Coen said. “That gives you a lot of credibility when businesspeople are promoting it.”


About 1,000 Kansans a year now participate in KLC programs. According to a survey, about half go on to share what they learn with others, meaning there’s a ripple effect.

Still, 2.9 million people live in Kansas, so there’s plenty of work left to do, O’Malley said.

“There are two really big things we have to do,” he said. “Continue to get better at building the leadership capacity of people. And number two, we’ve got to find a way to reach more and more people in Kansas. We’ve got to build enough civic capacity so that the state has the ability to make progress on those issues that are important.”

**“The best way to sum it up,” he said, “get better and reach more people.”**





*LEADERSHIP*  
BY **EXAMPLE**

THE IMPACT OF FUNDING LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT  
INITIATIVES THROUGH THE YEARS



## PRINCIPLES INTO *PRACTICE*

Terry Woodbury had been active in urban Wyandotte County for 30 years when the Kansas Health Foundation's Fellows program gave him a new focus – helping rural, small-town Kansas.

**“I was watching rural communities slip and become less capable with their government, less capable of drawing young people back, all of those things,” he said. “What I saw was our communities had too little capable leadership.”**

The Fellows program is a yearlong experience that immerses about 20 policy and health decision-makers in what's called an “intensive leadership development experience.” Woodbury was part of the second of seven Fellows cohorts.

After completing the Fellows program, Woodbury, who'd grown up in rural western Kansas, started Public Square Communities, a private company that now works with 17 communities around the state (including two urban areas).

Once invited into a community, facilitators from Public Square try to identify and develop its leaders, then get four major sectors of civic life – business, education, government and human services – to work together.



Decatur County

Some examples:

- **Greeley County, which sits on the western edge of Kansas and is the least populated county in the state:** “When we started there nine years ago, they would say they were at risk of folding as a rural community,” Woodbury said. Today, the county and its towns have consolidated their governments and economic development efforts, and the population decline has been reversed. “They’ve gone from survival mentality to a growth mentality in nine years, which I would say is a substantial shift for any community to make,” he said.
- **Decatur County, in northwest Kansas:** Here the Public Square process brought multiple groups and entities together to renovate Sappa Park in Oberlin. “It had been very attractive in the past, but it had deteriorated. They decided to use the park as their regional magnet, to create an image and traffic and community confidence,” Woodbury said. “Today, that park is beautiful and attracting people and they are proud to say they were able to do it together.” The process was also used to extend a local airport runway, over initial objections that the project would be a waste of money.
- **Fort Scott, in southeast Kansas:** The city struggled after a fire gutted historic downtown properties. Using the Public Square process, the town agreed to several goals, including a new aquatics park, renovating a park in a low-income area and a major new river development. “Today, Fort Scott is in a very different position,” Woodbury said. “The downtown is stronger. People are working together.”



Fort Scott downtown

Woodbury, who is semiretired after handing over leadership of Public Square to Liz Hendricks, notes that she and nearly all of Public Square's facilitators have gotten training through the KLC

“We are essentially putting their principles into practice,” Woodbury said.



Fort Scott aquatics park

➤ “They’ve gone from *survival* mentality to a *growth* mentality.” Terry Woodbury



A wall at Rosville's volunteer-built park



Rosville playground

## ROSSVILLE *RISING*

The city of Rosville might not have its much-splashed-in swimming pool, and the Kansas Health Foundation almost certainly wouldn't have its current board chair, if it weren't for the Foundation's leadership programs.

Today, Shelly Buhler serves as chair of the Foundation's Board of Directors, but it was just 12 years ago that she was serving as mayor of Rosville and she received training at the Foundation to become a facilitator of community leadership programs. She also recruited several Rosville residents into the KCLI program.

**"That was a pretty critical time," Buhler said. "We were going through a lot of changes in Rosville and that really helped."**

There was conflict over the direction of local schools, but the bigger challenge was the same one facing many small communities: how to attract and keep young residents.

Community members had been talking about the need for a swimming pool for 20 years to give Rosville's youth a healthy outlet for their energy. Buhler helped start a community foundation to raise money, which came in the form of donations from local people, grants from outside organizations, and local children who collected aluminum cans and operated lemonade stands.

"They kept us excited and on track," Buhler said of the town's youth.

With the momentum from the pool, the town also built a new playground and has recently been approved for a downtown beautification grant. Its Take A Second, Make A Difference program for high schoolers, started with help from the Foundation, remains active.

Today, Buhler is in her second term as a Shawnee County commissioner and serves as chairwoman. She joined the Foundation's Board of Directors in 2007 and was sworn in as chair in July 2013. She has also worked as a facilitator with educational, medical and community organizations, but none dearer to her than her home of Rosville.

"I still refer back to and have a whole resource notebook of what we learned there," she said of her leadership training. "Are we still on track? Are we still a performing community? Are we working our way out of chaos? All those tools they give you to try to help you."



Shelly Buhler, KHF Board chair, at the Rosville pool

➤ "Are we still a performing community?" Shelly Buhler

## WHEN LEADERSHIP AND FAITH CONVERGE

When daunting questions and challenges face a community, who steps forward to take the lead in finding answers and solutions? Sometimes it may be the local government. Other times it may be established business leaders. But for a growing number of Kansas communities, another group is stepping up to make a civic impact: the faith community.

This movement is bolstered by the Leadership and Faith Transforming Communities program administered by the KLC. The program, launched in 2009 with a \$1.1-million grant from KHF to the United Methodist Church of Kansas, invites churches around the state to send teams of four to seven members through an intensive leadership training experience. The first phase of the program was focused on United Methodist churches, and more than 280 people from 58 different congregations participated.

**“Our feeling has been that if we want to transform the civic culture, we need to find key leverage points. Faith communities are a key leverage point,”** said Ed O’Malley. **“People of faith, after all, are called to work in the community, to help thy neighbor, to make the world a better place.”**

As part of this leadership experience, the church teams were directed to identify and take action on a community challenge. The types of challenges



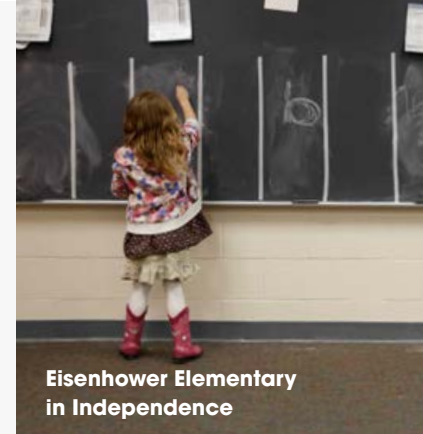
In the motor lab at Independence’s Eisenhower Elementary, children can practice their motor skills through games and activities

faced varied greatly, but the common thread was the impact being made by these churches.

The First United Methodist Church of Independence felt something must be done regarding childhood obesity and early learning, and set out to engage early childhood professionals, teachers and others who cared deeply about children.

**“The teachers immediately understood that children who had not developed certain muscle strengths would spend energy trying to stay in their seats, seeing what was on the board, keeping their place in a book and have little energy left over for academic learning,”** said Marilyn Gregory, who was active with the Independence team.

Their efforts led to a local elementary school adding a motor lab, which consists of



Eisenhower Elementary in Independence

activities and play equipment designed to promote motor-skill development. According to administrators at the school, the teachers working with younger students see a direct link between student progress in the motor lab and academic improvement in the classroom.

Children were also a focus for the Eureka United Methodist Church team, which partnered with the local school district to meet the need for childcare on late-start mornings or

days when the school day started at odd times due to teacher in-service.

The inconsistent schedule put many working parents in a bind, but church members stepped up to allow parents to drop off children at regular school times and know they were in a safe environment at the church. The children were not only fed a healthy breakfast, but also got to participate in fun activities before being bused to their schools.

The program’s success raised the profile of the church, led to numerous articles in the local paper, and also a working partnership with the local county health department. Stories are similar throughout the state, as other churches addressed issues of poverty, cultural diversity and ministering to the homeless.

The reach and impact of the initial phase led the Foundation to provide

KLC with an additional grant to expand the program, this time to open it up to all denominations in Kansas. It’s just another example of how leadership training in one environment leads to better quality of life for entire communities.



Kids participate in motor lab

➤ Leadership training in one environment *leads to better quality of life* for entire communities.

## NEW CENTER “A LIVING ROOM FOR KANSAS”

The new Kansas Leadership Center and Kansas Health Foundation Conference Center was built with a mission in mind.

Sunlight streams through tall windows that look out onto Wichita’s downtown, past interior glass walls that make it easy to see from room to room.

“We think natural light helps bring energy,” said Ed O’Malley, of KLC. “It’s also about transparency – something that’s highly valued at the Center.”

A wall of Kansas limestone anchors the lobby, a space O’Malley calls “a living room for the state of Kansas.” And a big one at that: Its casual

furniture can be removed to create a banquet hall for 200.

Also on the first floor is the Konza Town Hall, a semicircular space for up to 200, with chairs that swivel and acoustics that make a microphone unnecessary.

“The idea is that participants see each other’s faces,” O’Malley said. “All the focus isn’t on the facilitator.”

Upstairs are smaller rooms for classes and meetings, and the Center’s staff office – actually just one large office.

“There are no private offices,” O’Malley said. “There’s a lot of space for collaboration.”

Many rooms have walls that can be

written on, and easily wiped off, to save paper and create what O’Malley calls an “organic look.” One bathroom is equipped with showers, to encourage building users to ride their bikes to work or take a jog during lunch.

The third floor is currently unoccupied and designed to allow organizational growth for either the Center or the Foundation. Having the Foundation next door will also open new ways for the organizations to collaborate in the future.

“I think we’re going to find new ways of working together because of the proximity and access,” O’Malley said.



Interior spaces of the Center



Kansas Leadership Center and Kansas Health Foundation Conference Center

➤ “There’s a lot of *space for collaboration.*” Ed O’Malley