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Green River Area Development District Executive Director Joanna Shake announces retirement

Green River Area Development District (GRADD) Executive Director Joanna Shake has announced her plans to retire on February 1, 2026, concluding a distinguished career spanning three decades in economic and community development.

Shake, who began her career at GRADD as an intern in 1994 and rose through the ranks to become Executive Director in 2020, notified the GRADD Board of Directors on Wednesday at their monthly meeting. Her retirement will mark the close of a three-decade career dedicated to advancing economic development and regional collaboration in the Green River region.

"I want to express my deepest gratitude for the support and inspiring leadership that has guided my journey," says GRADD Executive Director Joanna Shake. "My career has been immensely fulfilling, with numerous challenges and successes that have helped me grow personally and professionally. I am especially appreciative of the regional spirit and collaboration that have been a

hallmark of my time with GRADD." With more than 28 years of experience in economic and community development, Shake has led transformative projects in infrastructure, broadband expansion, Brownfield redevelopment, and environmental sustainability. Before becoming Executive Director, she served as GRADD's Associate Director for Economic Development, overseeing grant administration, strategic planning, and

multi-agency collaboration across GRADD's seven-county region.

'We're excited for Jo and we're certainly going to miss her," said GRADD Board Chairman and Hancock County Judge Executive Johnny "Chic" Roberts. "While reading her letter to the board Wednesday, Jo spoke about GRADD's impact on her—but we all know it's truly about the impact she has had on GRADD. Whenever I'm out in my county and I mention GRADD, the first thing I always hear is how much people love Jo. The entire region is a better place because of her selfless service. She truly has a servant's heart, and it certainly shows."

Shake succeeded Jiten Shah, who served as Executive Director for an unprecedented 43 years. Having worked closely with Shah during her tenure as Associate Director, Shake brought both continuity and innovation to the organization's

"For three decades, GRADD has been privileged to benefit from Jo's exemplary service," says former GRADD Executive Director Jiten Shah. "Her unwavering dedication, tireless work ethic and deep commitment to the Green River Region have been instrumental in shaping the organization's success. As she enters a well-earned retirement, we reflect with gratitude on a remarkable career

and a legacy that will continue to positively impact the region for many years to come. In addition to her professional accomplishments,

Shake has remained deeply engaged in civic life, serving on the boards of the Greater Owensboro Chamber of Commerce, Impact 100, past chair of Owensboro Riverport Authority, past chair of the United Way of the Ohio Valley, appointed to the

Kentucky Housing Corporation, and graduating from the Delta Leadership Institute.

"The experiences I've gained are invaluable and have shaped my career in countless ways," says Shake. "I am grateful for the trust placed in me and the freedom I had to innovate and push boundaries. It has been an honor to work alongside such a talented and dedicated squad, contributing to the district's growth and success. I am incredibly proud of the work we have accomplished and the progress we have made."

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Opinion: Don't Let Washington Forget Communities Like Ours

By Brandon Harley, CEO of Audubon Area Community Services

What would community look like without Audubon Area Community Services?

It's not a rhetorical question. It's a future we can't afford. For 50 years, Audu-

bon Area Community Services has quietly supported families in northwestern Kenthrough job training, housing assistance, healthcare access, and early education. Every we help our neighbors navigate challenges that many in Washington only see on spreadsheets: poverty, job loss, rising costs, and housing instability. We don't do it with bureaucracy, we do it with compassion, local knowledge, and proven results.

At the heart of our work is the Community Services Block Grant (CSBG)—a small but mighty federal program that helps more than 10 million Americans every year. With just \$770 million in federal support, CSBG enables over 1,000 local agencies like Audu-



community needs. For every dollar we receive, leverage nearly four more from local and private sources, all while keeping overhead costs low. That's not just efficient, it's transformational. But today, these life-

lines are under threat.

The White House's proposed FY2026 budget eliminates CSBG and significantly reduces funding for the Low-Income Home Energy Assistance (LIHEAP), Program which helps families keep the heat on in winter and the lights on in summer. That's \$4.025 billion in resources stripped away from communities like

and ongoing challenges in meeting basic needs, these decisions would be devastating for families and communities. These aren't iust

budget decisions. They are value statements. When funding dis-

appears. programs vanish. And when programs vanish, families suffer. At Audubon, that means real people lose real support:

A mother can't afford childcare or job train-

A senior loses access to safe transportation. A man on the path to recovery has nowhere

Our services aren't

Through CSBG and partner programs, Audubon Area offers:

Emergency housing, and energy assistance

readiness through Kentucky Works, SNAP Employment & Training, and Senior Em-

ployment Programs Healthcare access via the Audubon Community Clinic, serving over 1,600 patients

year Recovery port for more than 250 men annually through Owensboro

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housing for over 450 families and weatherization to cut utility costs education Early through Head Start

Early Head Start, giving children a solid start and parents peace of mind And GRITS our transportation program? It's more than a

ride. It's a gateway to opportunity, covering 22 counties and helping people get to work, school, and healthcare appointments. This is what real

community investment looks like.

Despite the success and bipartisan support of programs like CSBG, they're now being targeted for elimination. The argument? Cost savings. But the truth is, cutting CSBG won't make a dent in the federal budget. What it will do is dismantle safety nets in communities like ours and leave counties colder, hungrier, and more isolated.

Let's not wait to find out what happens when we lose these services. Let's raise our voices before it's too late.

Our neighbors depend on Audubon Area. Audubon Area depends on CSBG. And CSBG depends on leaders who believe in opportunity for all.

Kentucky's communities, government and partners. officials must act now to preserve programs supporting our most residents vulnerable before it's too late!

Circuit Clerks Support for **Lifesaving Mission Through** 2025 Summer Raffle

The Circuit Clerks of Kentucky are once again making a lifesaving difference across the Commonwealth. Through a longtime partnership with Donate Life Kentucky Trust (Trust), they are helping to raise critical funds for transplant patients and donor families through the 2025 Summer Raffle featuring a brand-new Axis UTV as the grand prize.

This raffle is just one of the ways we continue to support the nonprofit we helped create," said Michael Boling, Hancock Co. Circuit Clerk. "Since 1992, we have been proud to stand with the Donate Life mission to ensure no family faces the donation or transplant journey alone."

Donate Life Kentucky Trust was founded by the Circuit Clerks of Kentucky in 1992 and continues to thrive because of their leadership and commitment. Over the years, their efforts have helped the donor registry grow to over 2 million Kentuckians.

Their dedication allows increased donation education in communities, scholarships, and supports thousands of families across the state. With over 1000 Kentucky kids and adults waiting for a lifesaving transplant, the need is greater than ever.

Thanks to Hopkins Co. Circuit Clerk Tanya Bowman for securing the Axis UTV donation, all proceeds from the raffle will directly support the Trust's programs including travel and lodging for donor families, care packages for transplant patients, and early kidney disease detection efforts in underserved communities.

Tickets are \$50 each and can be purchased online at www.donatelifeky.org. The drawing will take place on Aug. 20 at 2pm ET on Facebook @donatelifekentucky. Details, Terms and Conditions: https://www.donatelifeky.org/2025-donate-life-ky-

About Donate Life Kentucky Trust

Founded in 1992 by the Circuit Clerks of Kentucky, Donate Life Kentucky Trust is a 501c3 nonprofit organization that provides vital funds for transplant patients and donor families and increases public education to grow the Donor Registry through scholarships, driver's license education, and more. Learn more by going to www.donatelifeky.org or text or call or text 1-502-694-3015. Charitable Gaming Number is: ORG00001776

Charitable Organization: Circuit Clerks' Trust For Life, Inc. DBA Donate Life Kentucky Trust Details, Terms and Conditions: https://www.do-

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