

**Humanities Kansas  
Report to TIAK  
December 2019**

Humanities Kansas is spearheading a movement of ideas to empower the people of Kansas to strengthen their communities. Since our founding as an independent nonprofit in 1972, Humanities Kansas has pioneered programming, grants, and partnerships that share stories to spark conversations – drawing people together and generating new ideas. A two-minute video about HK is available here: <https://www.humanitieskansas.org/get-involved>

In 2018, our work reached 1 in 6 Kansans across 116 communities. HK supported 679 events and grants and partnered with 193 local organizations.

Highlights from 2019 include:

**Think and Drink with Sarah Smarsh:** In October, HK welcomed Kansan Sarah Smarsh, best-selling author of “Heartland: A Memoir of Working Hard and Being Broke in the Richest Country on Earth,” to Overland Park for a sold-out event that featured fast-paced conversations about Big Ideas. Smarsh’s presentation kicked off the “Ad Astra: Working Hard in the Heartland” initiative and sparked conversations about what it means to be working class in 21<sup>st</sup> Century Kansas. Upcoming events include storytelling and open mic events at the Emporia Public Library.

HK continues to feature **Story Chasers**, an Instagram initiative featuring micro-stories from community events all across the state. It’s a way to share the stories of Kansans – stories that carry our culture – and to promote the rich cultural life of communities in our state. Story Chasers pop up at rodeos in Dodge City, food truck festivals in Lawrence, and band concerts in Bonner Springs. They talk to people, snap a photo of themselves in at the event, and share on Instagram. To find out more, visit [humanitieskansas.org](http://humanitieskansas.org) or HK’s Instagram: @humanitieskansas.

**Poet Laureate of Kansas** In April, Huascar Medina was named the 2019-2021 Poet Laureate of Kansas. As Poet Laureate, Huascar promotes the humanities as a public resource for all Kansans through readings and discussions about poetry in communities across the state. Huascar is a poet, writer, and performer who lives in Topeka. He currently works as a freelance copywriter and as the Literary Editor for sevenitefve magazine publishing stories that spotlight literary and artistic events in northeast Kansas. His poems can be found in his collection *How to Hang the Moon* published by Spartan Press. He is the winner of ARTSConnect’s 2018 Arty Award for Literary Art. His book *Un Mango Grows in Kansas* was released in 2019. To bring Huascar to your community, visit [humanitieskansas.org](http://humanitieskansas.org).

**Coming up in 2020:** Humanities Kansas presents the Crossroads: Change in Rural America in 16 communities. Crossroads comes to Kansas as part of HK’s partnership with the Smithsonian Institution’s Museum on Main Street program, a one-of-a-kind initiative to bring the resources of the Smithsonian to small towns and rural communities with populations under 20,000. *Crossroads: Change in Rural America* is a Smithsonian Institution traveling exhibition drawing on the history and culture of rural America to provoke fresh thinking and spark conversations about the future and sustainability of rural communities. With support from Humanities Kansas and the Smithsonian, the *Crossroads* exhibition gives Kansas communities the chance to explore how their community has adapted to change over the last century. Hosts sites will develop a complementary exhibition that tells their community’s unique *Crossroads* story and create public programs that spark important conversations to enhance people’s understanding of life in rural Kansas.

The exhibition opens in August 2020. Crossroads Smithsonian Host Sites are:  
Bowlus Fine Arts Center, Iola  
5.4.7 Arts Center, Greensburg  
Kauffman Museum, North Newton  
Independence History Museum and Art Center  
The Volland Store, Alma  
Norton County Arts Council

In addition, 16 communities will be presenting exhibitions and public programs exploring the theme of change in rural America (they do not host the Smithsonian). A full list can be found at [humanitieskansas.org](http://humanitieskansas.org).

**Stay Informed!**

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