

# Lawrence Kansas Campground Returns To KOA System

After a seven-year absence, the Kansas City West/Lawrence, KS KOA has returned to the Kampgrounds of America family.

Owners Ralph and Kim Newell are certainly no strangers to KOA. They have owned the campground in Lawrence for the past 17 years, and also owned the Branson, Missouri KOA for nine years before selling that campground in 2015.

Just over seven years ago, the Newell's and their Lawrence campground left the KOA system.

"In the past seven years, we did manage to improve our business for the youth market," Ralph said. "But the biggest thing we saw after the transition was a sharp drop off in our overnight camper business."

The Newell's said they feel they won't have any problem retaining their youth market, but felt they needed the widely known and respected Kampgrounds of America brand on the campground in order to bring back their over-the-road overnight campers.

"We are right on Interstate 70, so now we want to gain some of that over-the-road traffic back again," Newell said.

Shawn Blackwell has been managing the Lawrence campground for the past four years, and is looking forward to the park's return to KOA Yellow.

"We are really starting from the ground up again," said Blackwell. "We all have to learn things the KOA way from the website to the new signs." Blackwell said the campground now has eight Deluxe Cabins, five basic Cabins, 62 RV sites and 18 tent sites, as well as sites available for monthly campers. A new RV storage lot should be ready in April.

There's also no lack of activities at the Kansas City West/Lawrence KOA with its two playgrounds, gem mine, shuffleboard, horseshoes and kid's zip line. There's also a recreation center for arts and crafts and an indoor meeting/birthday party room.

Ralph Newell, who was a member of KOA's former Marketing Partners team of franchisee advisors, said two key factors brought him back to KOA.

“The first was KampSight,” he said. “It’s a great program because, as offsite owners, we will be able to help manage the property remotely very easily.” The Newell’s now live most of the year at their home near Tampa, Florida, where they spend their time “flipping” houses and restoring cars.

He said the second factor for returning their Lawrence campground to Kampgrounds of America was the world famous KOA Directory, which puts about a million copies of complete campground maps and guides into the hands of North American campers each year.

“The over-the-road traffic that we are really after is driven by the KOA Directory,” Newell said. “It’s vital to our business.”

Ralph and Kim said they expect to transition the Kansas City West/Lawrence KOA to the KOA Holiday brand within a year. “We have the University of Kansas nearby, and the Lawrence campground is still a great park for children and grandchildren. It has a lot of offer, and we’re very glad to be back with KOA.”

