

THE VOICE

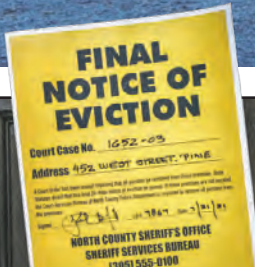
A Trusted Voice From The Community's Perspective



SPECIAL KCK DEVELOPMENT SECTION

BREAKING BARRIERS, BUILDING LEGACY

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THE VOICE

VOLUME 31, NUMBER 22
FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 22, 2024

LOOKING AHEAD

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Sign Up for Our Weekly Newsletter: If you don't have time to stop by the website on a regular basis, sign up for our weekly newsletter. Once a week, we'll send you a newsletter summarizing our top five stories of the week.

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If You're Not Reading Us Online...

YOU'RE MISSING A LOT

Here are a few of the stories we've published exclusively online. Go check them out online or sign up for our one of our newsletters so you don't miss any of our great news.

WHERE CAN YOU FIND THE VOICE?

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Dear Kansas City Readers,

As members of The Voice team move around Kansas City covering stories of importance to our KC readers, we're getting to know more and more of you and learning more about the stories you want to know and hear more about.

What we're also learning is how much our Kansas City readers appreciate the quality work and coverage our publication provides. My response when I hear this is always the same,

A Message to Our Kansas City Readers

"Thank you, but it takes a lot of work."

Producing quality stories like those in this issue on development in Kansas City, KS, and our exclusive on KCK Mayor Tyrone Garner choosing not to run for reelection, along with thousands of other great KC stories, requires a great deal of work and a great deal of resources and time.

Providing this level and quality of reporting is inherent to our mission:

"To cover news and fill information gaps of importance to the African-American communities we serve, as a way to empower them to create positive change in their lives and their communities."

I'm writing you today to let you know, we are stretched as

far as we can go, but there is so much more we want to do and so much our readers are asking us to do. There are stories to tell, issues to investigate, and countless resources to connect our community with. Yet, to expand our efforts and maintain the quality of our reporting, we need to grow our team — a necessity that comes with significant costs.

KANSAS CITY, earlier this month, we launched an online fundraising campaign to help us keep the stories coming. So far, our support from Kansas City has been limited.

If you believe in our mission and the positive impact our work has on your community, we ask you to consider making a one-time or recurring

contribution. Your support will enable us to continue delivering trusted, empowering information that uplifts our community and helps individuals create change in their own lives.

Thank you,
Bonita Gooch
Editor-In-Chief

P.S. You can support us by donating online or mailing a check to:

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2918 E. Douglas
Wichita, KS 67214

Nominate Someone You Admire for Person of the Year?

Deadline for nomination is Mon., Dec. 16

By **Bonita Gooch**
Voice Editor-in-Chief

Our community heroes often don't know we consider them as such. They just go about doing work in the community, not expecting recognition. However our community is better because of them.

They are definitely making a difference and we want to recognize them.

Who do you think is a person of the year in your community? Think broadly when you consider a person to recognize. Heroes come in all shapes and sizes, sexes and ages. They're not always a person in a suite or in a position of importance.

Nominating someone is easy

and online.

In January 2025 we'll recognize a person of the year in both of our markets – Wichita and Kansas City – and you can help select them.

We're accepting nominations now through Mon. Dec. 16.

The decision will be made by a select committee from each community and will be based totally on the committee's opinion about the impact the nominated individuals have made. However, multiple applications for the same individual might carry some weight in their decision making. So, if you feel strongly about the person you nominate, encourage others to nominate them as well.

Nomination forms can be found online at communityvoiceks.com/person-of-the-year or uds this short link <https://bit.ly/4ekZGVF>

Nominate Someone for PERSON OF THE YEAR?

- Our community is better because of him or her
- Heroes come in all shapes and sizes, sexes and ages.
- They're not always a person in a suite or in a position of importance.

Click to nominate someone or learn more

Nominations Open Thru Monday, Dec. 16

THE VOICE

No, there's not a big prize with this recognition. We'll recognize both winners with a story in our print and online edition with a

place of honor as the cover photo for that issue, on our website, and a physical recognition of the honor.

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Over Citizens' Opposition City Moves Ahead With Plans for George Floyd Square

By Voice News Service

It has been 4 1/2 years since the south Minneapolis area around the site of George Floyd's police killing organically evolved into a place of protest and reflection. And it's remained largely unchanged since 2020.

Now, after two years of community workshops and a nine-month engagement process held this year, the city voted to move ahead with a plan to reconstruct the entire area in and around 38th Street and Chicago Avenue, despite complaints of citizens who attended the meeting.

The city's plan will rebuild the area with new streets, green spaces, a raised traffic circle in the intersection, pedestrian street lighting, wider sidewalks, upgraded pedestrian ramps and narrower travel lanes but big enough to accommodate bus rapid transit service.

After Floyd's killing, protests sprang up where he died outside what was then called Cup Foods, and protesters took control of the four-block area surrounding the intersection. Streets were closed to traffic and it evolved into an autonomous zone with little police intervention until



The proposal to renovate George Floyd Square would leave in place the iconic raised fist installed by sculptor Jordan Powell-Karis at 38th and Chicago.

June 2021, when the city removed concrete barriers and eventually reopened the street to traffic.

Construction would begin next year, after the five-year anniversary of Floyd's killing. City officials did not have cost estimates.

The city also indicated they would like to have a nonprofit redevelop the "People's Way," a former Speedway gas station where protesters still meet regularly, into a community-centered space.

The city has no plans to disturb the "Say Their Names Cemetery" – a symbolic cemetery on a city-owned flood pond at 37th Street and Park Avenue South with headstones for Black people who lost their lives at the hands of the police.

"Mourning Passage" – a list of the names of people killed by police that is repainted on the street annually – would remain, though slightly north of its current location.

While calling the square "a sacred place," the city's plan would restore full vehicular access to the neighborhood, but traffic would be calmed with curb extensions, raised trail crossings, a raised intersection and wider sidewalks.

Community Vision

The city's acknowledgment of continued "emotion" by citizens of the neighborhood over the city leading the work at the square was an understatement. At a town hall meeting held

before the City's vote, those in attendance called for a delay in moving forward with plans for the square, with some saying there weren't enough Black voices involved.

The protestors called for more progress toward protestors' original 24 "demands for justice," which include requiring police officers to maintain private liability insurance and firing some leaders of the Minnesota Bureau of Criminal Apprehension, before development proceeds, particularly at the People's Way.

Jeanelle Austin, lead organizer of the event, questioned why the city prioritized street construction over community needs:

"What good is it to pour \$5 million into new streets just for people to sleep on them?" she asked. Her words reflected the frustration many residents feel about the city's approach, which they see as rushing forward with construction plans without taking enough time to address the more pressing needs of those living in the neighborhood.

Austin emphasized that the community is just beginning to heal, and rushing through the process risks losing sight of the deeper issues at play.

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EXPLAINER

What's All the Fuss About Medicaid Expansion?

No doubt, Medicaid expansion will be a major issue debated during the 2025 Kansas Legislative session. What exactly is Medicaid expansion all about, who supports or opposes it and why?

By Bonita Gooch
Editor-in-Chief

For more than a decade, despite the support of Kansans for expanding Medicaid, the Kansas Legislature has repeatedly voted against it. As legislators prepare to head back to the capitol in January for the 2025 session, certainly the merits of Medicaid Expansion will be discussed, yet again.

It's been 11 years since the expansion of Medicaid became an option for states under the Affordable Care Act, or ObamaCare. It's been so long that some of you may not remember what the dispute is all about and why Medicaid Expansion means a lot to so many and so little to the majority of Kansas' legislators.

Back to the Beginning of Obamacare

When it was approved in 2010, the Affordable Care Act only covered individuals and families with an income equal to or above the federal poverty level (FPL). The idea was that people below this level might have trouble paying the monthly premiums under the ACA.

For those individuals, the program proposed the expansion of Medicaid coverage by the states with the federal government offering to pay up to 90% of the cost.

In Kansas, the existing Medicaid program (known as KanCare) already covers low-income children, pregnant women, elderly Kansans and people with disabilities. However, non-disabled, childless adults are not eligible for Medicaid.

To qualify for Medicaid, non-disabled parents must earn less than 33% of the federal poverty level, or about \$8,520 annually for a single mother with two children.

So, individuals who earn more than 33% of the federal poverty level and less than 100% of the federal poverty level fall into what is called the Medicaid gap. They're too rich to qualify for Medicaid and too poor to qualify for ACA.

Individuals in the Gap, Plus

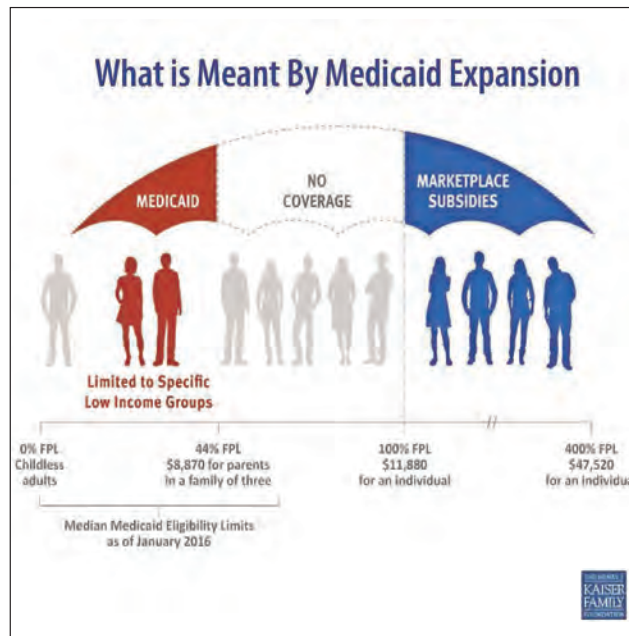
ACA planned for the individuals in the coverage gap to be covered by the state's expansion of Medicaid. In addition, ACA called for the expansion of Medicaid not just to the 100%. However, the Kansas Legislature voted not to expand Medicare, despite the Federal government's agreement to cover 90% of the cost.

In Kansas, there are about 152,000 adults who could qualify for health insurance coverage if KanCare was expanded. Estimated project Medicaid expansion would add 95,000 adults aged 19-64 and nearly 50,000 children to the KanCare rolls.

To date, all but 10 states have voted to expand Medicaid.

Support for Medicaid Expansion

Support for Medicaid expansion in Kansas remains high, according to a new survey by the Docking Institute



The Kansas Legislature has been debating expansion of Medicaid since 2013, when it first became an option for states, and since then the facts in this 2016 graphic haven't changed much. Medicaid expansion would extend coverage to individuals in the white area. These are individuals who currently make too much to qualify for Medicaid but too little to qualify for coverage under the Affordable Care Act. FPL means federal poverty level.

of Public Affairs at Fort Hays State University.

More than 72% of respondents to the Kansas Speaks survey said they support expanding Medicaid, up slightly from last year. That includes over 63% of Republicans and nearly 90% of Democrats.

"It's a little remarkable that there's been such a constant drumbeat of support," for expansion, said Docking Institute director Brett Zollinger.

According to the Kansas Health Institute, Medicaid expansion would allow an estimated 152,000 more low-income Kansans to receive coverage under the government healthcare program. Analysts say many people who would be covered by expansion are working jobs that don't offer

health insurance.

There was a slight increase in the portion of respondents who think that the people who would obtain coverage through Medicaid expansion deserve the benefit.

The survey also found that there was a more than 11% increase in the portion of Kansans who agreed that expanding Medicaid would help rural hospitals remain in business by reducing uncompensated care costs for hospitals, especially in rural areas.

Several rural hospitals in the state have closed in recent years, including closures last year in Fort Scott and Herington, which have threatened timely access to emergency medical care.

Opposition to Medicaid Expansion

Opposition to Medicaid expansion in Kansas among members of the state legislature often stems from a mix of ideological, financial, and political concerns.

Many conservative legislators believe in limited government and prefer market-based solutions. They oppose an expanded role for government in healthcare. They favor market-based solutions to healthcare issues rather than government-funded programs.

Their financial concerns include the state's responsibility for 10% of expansion costs, which critics argue could strain the budget and divert funds from other priorities. There is also fear that federal funding might decrease in the future, leaving Kansas to cover more expenses.

Some lawmakers advocate for work requirements for Medicaid recipients, arguing expansion without such provisions discourages employment. Critics sometimes claim that the current Medicaid program sufficiently covers the most vulnerable populations and that expanding it would provide benefits to able-bodied adults who could potentially secure private insurance.

Political resistance to the Affordable Care Act (ACA), of which Medicaid expansion is a component, also plays a role, as does lobbying from conservative groups, who frame it as a step toward socialized medicine.

While proponents argue that Medicaid expansion could help struggling rural hospitals stay open by reducing uncompensated care costs, opponents counter that expansion does not guarantee financial stability for these facilities.

The Debate Continues

In 2017, as the Kansas Legislature headed back to Topeka, President Donald Trump had just been elected, as had a large number of Republicans who campaigned on a platform to overturn the Affordable Care Act. Then-Kansas Gov. Sam Brownback, who opposed expansion, said it would be foolish to expand Medicaid given the Republicans' plan to repeal Obamacare.

That year, Rep. Susan Concannon, who introduced a bill to Expand Medicaid on behalf of the Kansas Hospital Association, countered that it would be foolish not to take advantage of claiming billions of additional federal dollars and covering more than 100,000 additional low-income Kansans.

That year, the Republicans failed to repeal Obamacare, and, since then, their very vocal opposition to the Affordable Care Act has diminished as Americans' support and use of the program has expanded.

What hasn't changed is the annual loss of federal financial support that could help cover 100,000 or more of Kansas' most vulnerable citizens or Kansas Republicans' opposition to Medicaid Expansion, even as other legislatures across the country see the light and help strengthen the health of all residents.

The health of citizens in states that have expanded Medicaid generally shows better overall health metrics and reduced health disparities, while non-expansion states struggle with higher uninsured rates and worse health outcomes, particularly among vulnerable populations.

Stealing From Kansas City's Poor

Thieves use bogus machines to scan EBT cards and rob food stamp accounts

By Suzanne King
The Beacon



A scam to steal food stamp benefits from some of Kansas City's poorest families picked up again this summer.

Thieves installed inconspicuous gadgets at grocery store checkouts, many along Independence Avenue in Kansas City's northeast, and skimmed the data — and dollars — right off the EBT (electronic benefit transfer) cards the state issues to distribute aid.

Missouri officials believe they have largely contained this latest wave of fraud that's stolen grocery money from about 1,500 people.

“(But) they’ll come up with another scheme,” said Dana Carrington, chief of investigations with Missouri’s Department of Social Services.

The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, or SNAP, is one of 15 federal food aid programs. Combined, they reach a quarter of all Americans each year. SNAP dollars, which are designated to low-income people, can be used to buy groceries.

States distribute SNAP on EBT cards that look, and can be used, like a credit card. But unlike

credit cards, which contain a chip that makes data harder to steal, EBT cards leave information like account numbers and PINs unencrypted. When someone swipes an EBT card’s magnetic strip through a phony card reader, they’re basically handing over the keys to their food stamps.

How SNAP or Food Stamp Dollars Are Stolen

Carrington said criminals often place skimmers at self-checkout stations in small bodegas where security is limited. Most often, the stores are in poor neighborhoods. Once an EBT card is swiped and account data is captured, criminals can transfer it to a cloned card. And that’s how money is stolen.

In the latest scam to target Kansas City, criminals use the EBT card data they’ve stolen in Kansas City and elsewhere. Then they cash that

information in by setting up phony storefronts in New York City. That makes it look like they were buying groceries there, when they were actually just draining accounts.

Victims can apply to have stolen funds reimbursed. Carrington said that process typically takes a couple of weeks. The federal government has money set aside for reimbursing victims of card skimming, however, those federal reimbursement funds are only guaranteed through Dec 20. After that, federal money designated for reimbursements will run out if Congress doesn’t act.

While some states are looking at issuing more secure chipped EBT cards, Missouri doesn’t have plans to do that. Chipped cards are more expensive, and their cost would fall to states without federal help.

In the meantime, Carrington said it’s important for people to take precautions so they can avoid being

victims of benefit skimming.

He advises people to:

- Avoid self-checkout stations at stores, which are more likely to have card skimmers;
- Change their card identification or PIN number frequently; and
- Set up their account to block out-of-state purchases.

How to Contact Missouri EBT Customer Service?

If you suspect that your card has been compromised, call 800-997-7777.

You can report a loss and begin the process of receiving replacement benefits by completing an Electronically Stolen Benefit Replacement Request form. <https://bit.ly/4fUP94K>

For more information about how to avoid being a victim of fraud, visit <https://mydss.mo.gov/ebt/protect-benefits>

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2025-26 FAFSA Now Open: 5 Things to Know

Don't wait to fill out this financial aid form. Getting an early start can help maximize your award.

By Associated Press

You can now fill out the 2025-26 Free Application for Federal Student Aid. The Dept. of Education officially released the financial aid form this week to all students and families after months of testing.

Submitting the form should be on your priority list if you're going to college next year, even if last year's application was a nightmare.

The 2024-25 FAFSA debuted an updated version of the financial aid application



Two of the most important tips for completing your FAFSA are to get it done sooner than later and to check and double-check for accuracy.

that was meant to streamline the process for students and their families. Unfortunately,

its rollout was anything but smooth. Many students faced considerable delays that impacted their college enrollment plans.

The 2025-26 FAFSA initially seemed destined for similar issues when the Oct. 1 release was pushed back, but additional rounds of testing appeared to go more

smoothly as it incorporated feedback from students, parents and schools. The final round of testing, which started on Nov. 18, was opened to all students and contributors. Over 140,000 students successfully submitted applications during the testing period, according to the DOE website.

"More students are receiving federal financial aid this year compared to last year, and more students are receiving Pell Grants," said U.S. Secretary of Education Miguel Cardona during a press call.

Despite all the challenges, experts still say it's crucial to fill out the FAFSA before heading to college. This free form unlocks access to various types of federal financial aid, including grants, work-study

and student loans.

1. Submit the Form as Soon As Possible

One of the best moves you can make when pursuing financial aid is filling out the FAFSA early. It's important to submit your application as soon as you can, because some financial aid is distributed on a first-come, first-serve basis. If you wait too long, you could end up with significantly less financial assistance than if you had applied earlier.

Typically, the form becomes available on Oct. 1 each year. However, the 2025-26 FAFSA only became available to a limited number of students in October while the DOE collected feedback and worked through technical glitches.

It's also important to get your FAFSA in ahead of your college and state deadlines. Each school sets its own FAFSA deadlines, but they often fall sometime between January and March. You can check your state's deadline on the Federal Student Aid website.

2. Create Your FSA ID

Before you can start filling out the FAFSA, you'll need to create your account on the StudentAid.gov website. This includes setting an FSA ID, which is your unique username and password.

Anyone who contributes to the FAFSA will need their own FSA ID. If you're a dependent student, that means that both you and at least one parent will each need your own FSA ID. A senior education official noted that one of the frequent issues encountered during FAFSA testing was that parents hadn't created their own FSA ID, which takes time to be approved, and can delay the



Unfortunately, some of the problems encountered in the past have occurred when Social Security numbers and dates of birth were entered incorrectly,"

CATHY MUELLER
Mapping Your Future

application process.

Unless you're a citizen of the Freely Associated States, you'll have to enter your Social Security number to create your StudentAid.gov account. Parents don't need to have an SSN, but they must enter their SSN if they have one.

It's essential that you enter the information correctly the first time, according to Cathy Mueller, executive director of Mapping Your Future, a financial aid literacy organization.

"Unfortunately, some of the problems encountered in the past have occurred when Social Security numbers and dates of birth were entered incorrectly," she added.

See **FAFSA Page 23** →

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Two Holiday Markets Showcase Black Businesses in KC's Urban Core

G.I.F.T.'s holiday events feature Black Santa, local chef, and free family photos

By **Thomas White**
Kansas City Reporter

Kansas City's Generating Income For Tomorrow (G.I.F.T.) is expanding its community impact this holiday season with two signature Black Business Markets, expected to draw approximately 500 shoppers from across the metro area to their Business Center on Prospect Avenue. "We're excited to bring the community together to support local Black business owners during this important season," said Brandon Calloway, Co-Founder and CEO of G.I.F.T.

Up first is the Small Business Saturday Market Sat., Nov. 30,

running from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. The event will feature Chef Jenette Williams from Loaded With Flavor, alongside numerous vendors offering beauty care products, art pieces, and jewelry.

The holiday celebrations continue on Sat., Dec. 14 with G.I.F.T.'s Holiday Business Market, where families can enjoy free photos with Black Santa while exploring offerings from local entrepreneurs. Chef Williams will return for this event as well, joining other food trucks and vendors at the market.

"These markets not only provide a unique shopping experience but also contribute to our mission of closing the racial wealth gap in Kansas City," said Calloway. "We believe that



fostering collaboration and community support is key to addressing inequities and creating a stronger, more inclusive city for all."

Founded in 2020, G.I.F.T. has established itself as a crucial force in addressing Kansas City's racial wealth gap. As a small-business accelerator, the organization has already provided \$1.8 million to 74 Black-owned businesses, resulting in the creation of 135 jobs in the urban core. These markets align with G.I.F.T.'s mission to support Black business owners in historically redlined neighborhoods through grants, marketing services, and free business resources and education.

Both markets will be hosted at the G.I.F.T. Business Center,

Small Business Saturday Black Business Market

Beauty care, food trucks, art, jewelry, Chef Jenette Williams from Loaded With Flavor

5008 Prospect Ave, KCMO

Sat, Nov. 30 from 11 a.m. - 4 p.m.

Holiday Black Business Market

Black Santa (free photos), food trucks, vendors, and Chef Jenette Williams

5008 Prospect Ave, KCMO

Sat, Dec. 14 from 11 a.m. - 4 p.m.

providing a festive opportunity for holiday shopping while supporting the organization's ongoing mission of creating a stronger, more inclusive Kansas City through economic empowerment.



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Wichita Black & Brown Vendor Holiday Event Sat. Nov. 30

Wichita residents will have their opportunity to support Black-owned businesses this holiday season at "Buy The Block," on Small Business Sat., Nov. 30, 10 a.m. to 2 p.m., 108 St. Francis.

The event is a shopping opportunity, but a good time

as well.

Sponsored by Bringing it Black, who offered similar opportunities in the past, this year's event will feature various Black and Brown owners as well as entrepreneurs of The Black Print and Left on Read.

Everyone is encouraged

to support small businesses and buy local on Small Business Saturday, held nationally the day after Black Friday. Local vendors deserve our support and they offer unique and creative items that cannot be found in big box stores.



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Health Insurance

It's Insurance Signup Season

Medicare and Affordable
Care Deadlines
Approaching

By Voice News Service

It's that time of year again — yes, it's time to buy Christmas presents — but in the midst of the holiday season don't forget to secure your health coverage for 2025.

It's also time to re-enroll in health insurance season.

Medicare open enrollment runs through Dec. 7. Open enrollment for health care through the Health Insurance Marketplace and runs through Jan. 15, 2025.

However if you want to avoid a gap in your coverage, you need to apply no later than Dec. 15, 2024 to guarantee **coverage** beginning Jan. 1, 2025. For individuals who apply between Dec. 16 and Jan. 15, their coverage will begin Feb. 1, 2025.

Experts recommend that you take a look at your insurance plan each year and take into consideration your changing health care needs. Your current insurance may no longer be the best match for your needs. In addition, new policy options are available each year.

ONLINE READING

Medicare or Medicare Advantage

Medicare advantage may not actually be a long term advantage. Learn more in this story on our website. www.communityvoiceks.com.



Best Fruits for Diabetes

Fresh or frozen fruits that are low on the glycemic index should be your go-to, as they're full of fiber and other nutrients

By Cleveland Clinic

Fragrant, fuzzy peaches. Juicy, sweet watermelon. Tart and tangy berries. There's nothing like fresh-picked fruits available at farmers markets or produce stands near you.

But is fruit bad for people with diabetes? If you have diabetes, you might be a little wary of nature's candy and the sugars they hold.

"But don't be scared of fruit," says registered dietitian Kate Patton, MEd, RD, CSSD, LD.

Stay up-to-date on reporting that amplifies the stories, voices, and perspectives of Black Wichita, Kansas, and Kansas City

Patton shares which fruits are best to eat if you have diabetes and how to make them a part of your healthy diet.

Can You Eat Fruit if You Have Diabetes?

Yes! While fruit contains carbohydrates that your body processes into sugars, you need healthy carbs found in fruit to help fuel your brain and red blood cells. And though fruit contains natural sugars, its high fiber content balances the sugars.

"Fiber slows down digestion," explains Patton. "That helps us feel full longer and prevents spikes in blood sugar."

Plus, fruit is packed with vitamins, minerals, fiber and antioxidants that may help lower your risk of cancer and heart disease.

Best Fruits for Diabetes

All fruits are good for you, even if you have diabetes. But consider using the glycemic index — a way

to classify foods that contain carbohydrates and how quickly they may raise your blood sugar — to help you make the best choices.

The glycemic index is based on a scale of 0 (zero) to 100. Low-glycemic foods have an index number of 50 or less. Low-glycemic fruits, which won't cause major swings in your blood sugar, include:

- Apples
- Cherries
- Peaches
- Raspberries
- Apricots
- Pears
- Grapes
- Oranges
- Strawberries
- Blueberries
- Grapefruit
- Pomegranates
- Figs
- Nectarines
- Kiwifruit
- Avocados

Overall, the best fruit for people with diabetes — and everyone, really — is fresh fruit. Whole fresh or frozen fruits should be your go-to, as they're full of fiber and other nutrients.

"Eat the rainbow. Different colors of fruits and vegetables have different vitamins, minerals and antioxidants," shares Patton. "To get all the good stuff, look for a ROYGBIV of fruits and veggies — from red strawberries to deep purple blackberries and all the colors in between."

Fruits to Avoid With Diabetes

There aren't any fruits that are considered bad. But some fruits are high on the glycemic index,



Yes, individuals with diabetes can eat fruits, but choose wisely.

meaning they can cause a quick rise in your blood sugar and have an index number of over 70.

While you don't need to avoid these high-glycemic fruits, you should limit or eat them in moderation:

- Bananas
- Mangoes
- Pineapple
- Raisins
- Watermelon

Another tip? Processed fruits like applesauce and canned fruits aren't as good for people with diabetes, as they have less fiber and might have added sugar, and, therefore, can increase blood sugar more quickly.

Choose canned fruit packed in juice instead of syrup and natural applesauce without added sugar. Dried fruits can also be healthy, Patton says, but watch your portion size and choose types without added sugar. For example, two tablespoons of raisins contain as many grams of carbohydrates as a small apple.

"Also, fruit juice has a lot of concentrated sugars without any fiber, so it can increase blood sugars quickly," she cautions.

If you're really craving juice, limit your portion to a half-cup serving.

How Much Fruit Should You Eat?

Dietary guidelines recommend five servings of fruits and vegetables every day. That's true whether or not you have diabetes.

As fruits have more calories and sugar than veggies, try to strike a balance. Patton recommends breaking up your five servings into three veggie servings and two fruit servings.

Also, try to space out your fruit throughout the day. (In other words, don't eat an entire bag of grapes in one sitting.)

"In general, one serving is a small- to medium-sized piece of whole fruit (about the size of a tennis ball), or 3/4 to 1 cup of fruit like melon or berries," she clarifies.

Bottom Line?

It's a common misconception that fruit is bad for people with diabetes. But fruit is part of a healthy diet and can be enjoyed in moderation.

Remember: Education is key. If you have questions about what fruit to eat and how much, it's always smart to get guidance from nutrition experts before you dive into that bowl of watermelon.

"Check in with a diabetes educator or a registered dietitian to develop a healthy meal plan," Patton advises.



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MANJURUL/GETTY IMAGES

Most U.S. Adults Plan to Skip an Annual COVID Vaccine.

By Voice News Service

About 6 in 10 people say they probably won't get an updated shot this year, despite the CDC's recommendation that everyone do so, according to results of a new survey from the Pew Research Center.

When asked why people wouldn't get an updated COVID vaccine, 61% said a major reason was that they don't think they need it, and 60% said a major reason is that they are concerned about side effects. Cost was a factor for 14% of people, and 46% of people said they don't get vaccines in general.

There were some differences in intention to get vaccinated based on a person's age. Among people ages 65 and older, 27% said they had already gotten the vaccine, and another 27% said they probably will get the shot, leaving

45% who said they probably won't roll up their sleeves. People ages 30 to 49 years old were the least likely to plan on getting a COVID shot – 66% said they probably won't get one.

Public health officials say everyone should get an

annual COVID vaccine, just as they should get a flu shot, because the vaccines are formulated each year to target virus strains predicted to be in wide circulation. Also, immunity – either from past vaccination or past infection – wanes over time.

Get Your Shots Ahead of the Holidays

Health officials say now is the time to get your flu shots and COVID-19 vaccines to protect yourself and those around you.

Flu cases tend to spike after the first week of November, according to the CDC. With Thanksgiving, Christmas holidays and events right around the corner, it would be good to get your vaccination right away.

Dr. Delana Wardlaw, a family physician in Philadelphia, reminds us the vaccine needs about two weeks to build up immunity.

Doctors say don't wait for the viruses to peak before you take action.

Lawsuit Settlement Will Reduce Inmates' Wait for Mental Health Assessments

Kansas has agreed to increase to increase treatment beds and address chronic understaffing and underfunding.

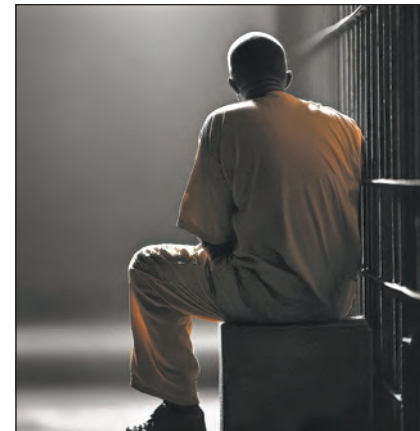
By The Voice
News Service

A settlement has been reached in a class-action lawsuit that will reduce the wait times for people awaiting competency evaluations and restoration services at Larned State Hospital, the largest psychiatric facility in Kansas.

The lawsuit represented four individuals who, at the time the case was filed, were on the waitlist for comprehensive mental health care treatments they desperately needed.

Because of the delay, their cases were stalled and they were being held in jail awaiting the assessment. Among them was G.W., a Native American man who was incarcerated for 31 months awaiting competency services for a sentence that, if he was convicted, would have been for just six months.

In the settlement, KDADS commits to increasing the number of treatment beds available at Larned State Hospital while addressing the chronic understaffing



Inmates in Kansas waiting for competency evaluations may have spent more time in jail awaiting their evaluation than they would have been sentenced to for the crime they committed. This settlement hopes to fix that.

and underfunding that has contributed to the facility running at a limited capacity. By January 2025, KDADS will reopen 30 currently closed beds with best efforts to open 52 additional beds by January 2027.

"This settlement is more

than a legal agreement; it's a lifeline for those who have been lost in the system, a promise that their dignity and humanity will no longer be ignored," said Lauren Bonds, executive director of

See **INMATES** Page 23 →



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FROM RETAIL RUINS TO URBAN RENEWAL

KCK's \$1B Midtown Station Project

Local developer plans sustainable, walkable community with solar power and workforce housing at former Indian Springs Mall site.

By **Thomas White**
Kansas City Reporter

Erik Murray remembers visiting Indian Springs Mall as a child when it was still the commercial heart of Kansas City, KS.

Now, he's leading the development of a billion-dollar project to transform the site into a sustainable urban community featuring more than 1,500 new homes, retail spaces, and a 30-acre solar microgrid.

For nearly two decades, the former Indian Springs Mall site has stood as a symbol of unrealized potential in KCK. The mall's story is a familiar one - opened in 1971, it thrived through the 1980s before beginning a steady decline in the late 1990s.

By 2007, the Wyandotte County Unified Government had acquired the property through eminent domain for \$8.4 million, and in 2016, the mall was finally demolished. Multiple developers have come and gone, each with grand plans that ultimately fizzled. This time appears different. After a competitive bidding process where three firms submitted proposals, Murray's vision stood out. The UG's review committee, initially hesitant about earlier versions of the plan, was "astonished" by the final proposal, according to County Administrator David Johnston. "I think we've got the right plan, the right team, and honestly, it's the right time," says Murray. "We are delivering on a project in an area that has suffered from decades



Erik Murray

of disinvestment."

The team led by Murray is the development firm Eastside Innovation Kansas LLC. Murray partnered with Jonathan Arnold of Arnold Development Group, who helped develop the booming River Market area in Kansas City, MO. After watching development flourish in western Wyandotte County and working on successful projects just north and south of the former mall site, Murray believes the 90-acre property encompassing the former Indian Springs Mall is primed for revival. His experience developing a business park two miles south and several projects in nearby Riverside has shown him what's possible. "As someone from this community, we kind of have this chip on our shoulder," says Murray. "We've been told that we're less than, or that our community is less than, that's just [not true]. These things are possible: why not here, why not now?"

Site Transformation Plan

The development, dubbed



An aerial view of the site with 635 in the foreground shows the first build area on the 90-acre former Indian Springs Shopping Center site. The vacant lot at the top of the photo is the 30-acre site that will house the development's solar microgrid and the land to the top and right of the photo is a 12-acre area for single-family homes.

Midtown Station, will consist of four distinct parcels:

- **Main Site (50 Acres):** The heart of the project will feature 1,475 apartment units, 280,000 square feet of retail space, a 168-room hotel with a convention center, and community amenities.
- **Solar Microgrid (30 Acres):** South of Orville Avenue, land previously considered unusable due to mining will host a solar microgrid, providing net-zero energy for residential and commercial spaces.
- **Single-Family Homes (12 Acres):** West of 47th Street, single-family homes and townhouses will bridge the development with nearby neighborhoods.
- **Highway Retail Zone (1.5 Acres):** A former gas station site at 47th and State Avenue will feature EV

charging stations and traveler amenities.

Affordable By Design

The development takes a comprehensive approach to affordability. The passive house construction methods pioneered by Arnold can reduce energy costs by up to 85% compared to conventional buildings. "We have embedded sustainable design, we have embedded affordability, we have embedded creativity and innovation into every aspect of this project," says Murray.

In addition to the planned solar microgrid, residents and businesses will benefit from enhanced building insulation and energy-efficient design features that further reduce utility costs.

Insurance costs will also be lower thanks to the resilient construction methods and sustainable design features, creating additional savings



Midtown Station is designed as a walkable urban village where residents can access everything they need within minutes of their homes. Also planned are lots of gathering and green spaces.

for residents.

"Everybody only thinks about the bottom line when they think about affordability, and that's the rent or the mortgage," says Murray. "But as we look at it holistically, we can reduce utility costs and we can reduce insurance costs; we think affordable by design is really going to be a huge driver of this project." Midtown Station is expected to be a mixed-income neighborhood with luxury

penthouses and low-income housing, but the bulk of the housing will focus on what Murray calls the "missing middle." He says most of the housing is aimed at "teachers, firefighters, healthcare and factory workers," but the development will appeal to everyone in the area. "Kansas City, KS, is the second most diverse community in the

See **URBAN RENEWAL**
Page 17 →

Wyandotte Wins

Wyandotte County is experiencing a boom in development

By Thomas White
Kansas City Reporter

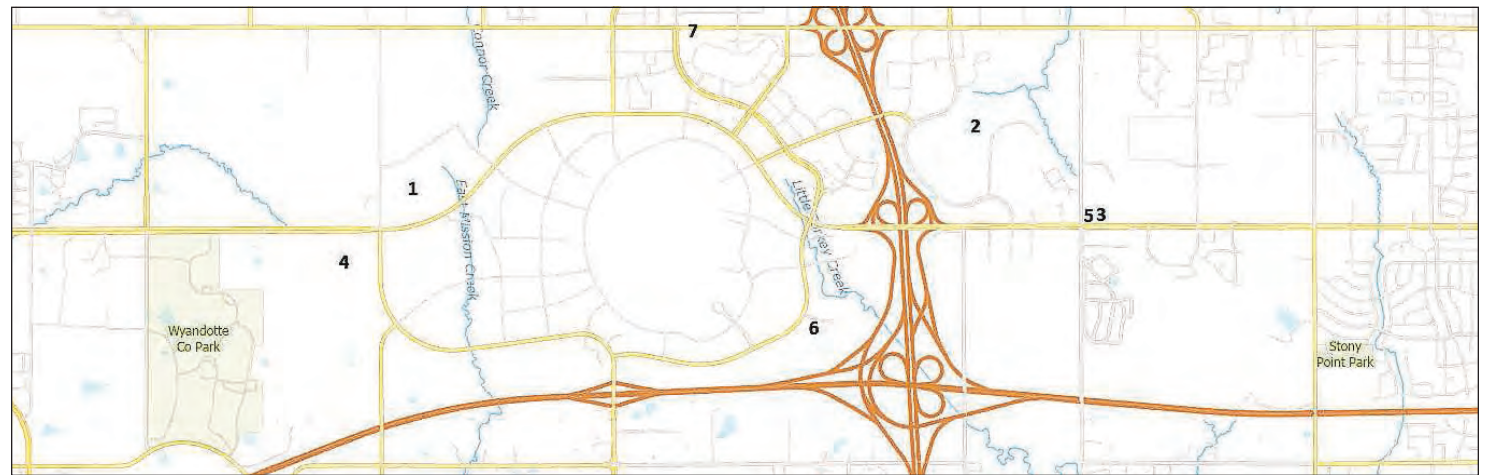
Once dismissed as KCMO's quiet western neighbor, Wyandotte County has methodically transformed itself into one of the Midwest's most dynamic development stories. Its western edge has blossomed into Kansas's premier tourism destination, drawing millions of visitors to the sprawling Village West/Legends entertainment district. Meanwhile, downtown KCK has sat largely overlooked, waiting for its moment. But that narrative is finally beginning to shift.

"The Village West area kind of takes care of itself now," says Lavert Murray, UG Economic Development Advisor. "What we're trying to do with downtown is to make our neighborhoods seamless— create true mixed-income neighborhoods where the physical facilities don't define who lives in that neighborhood."

With more than \$800 million in new projects taking shape in western Wyandotte and over \$325 million in long-overdue development now flowing into downtown KCK, the county appears poised for its next chapter of growth – one that could finally start to bridge its historic east-west divide.

Western Wyandotte

Western Wyandotte County has no shortage of development. What began with 400 acres and a plan for Kansas Speedway and Nebraska Furniture Mart in 2001 has evolved into a massive entertainment district, attracting millions of visitors annually. The Village West/Legends area has grown well past that initial 400 acres and has become Kansas's biggest tourism draw. The area features major attractions like Children's



KCK American Royal



Margaritaville Rendering

Mercy Park (home to Sporting KC), Great Wolf Lodge, the Plaza at the Speedway strip shopping center, and the Legends Outlets shopping center. This growth in the area continues with hundreds of millions in new development underway.

1) American Royal Complex - Northwest of Kansas SpeedwayThe American Royal, a longstanding Kansas City institution since 1899, is relocating from its historic West Bottoms location in Kansas City, Missouri, to a new complex near the Kansas Speedway in Kansas City, Kansas.

The complex is 60% complete and is expected to open fully in early 2026, with the potential to host some events in late 2025 if portions are completed ahead of schedule.

2) Margaritaville Hotel- Former Schlitterbahn Water Park site

The latest in the rapidly expanding Margaritaville Hotel and resort chain, the Kansas City location is set to open in 2025. The \$150 million project will feature 229 guestrooms



Mattel Theme Park Rendering

with signature Jimmy Buffett-inspired decor. Amenities will include an outdoor resort-style pool, an indoor pool, family-friendly entertainment and activities, meeting and event spaces, retail outlets, and Margaritaville-inspired restaurants and bars.

The hotel is part of the larger Vacation Village development, an \$838 million project that includes attractions like an indoor athletic training facility, Big Shots Golf, and an interactive

museum.

3) Home Field Complex - 9250 State Ave

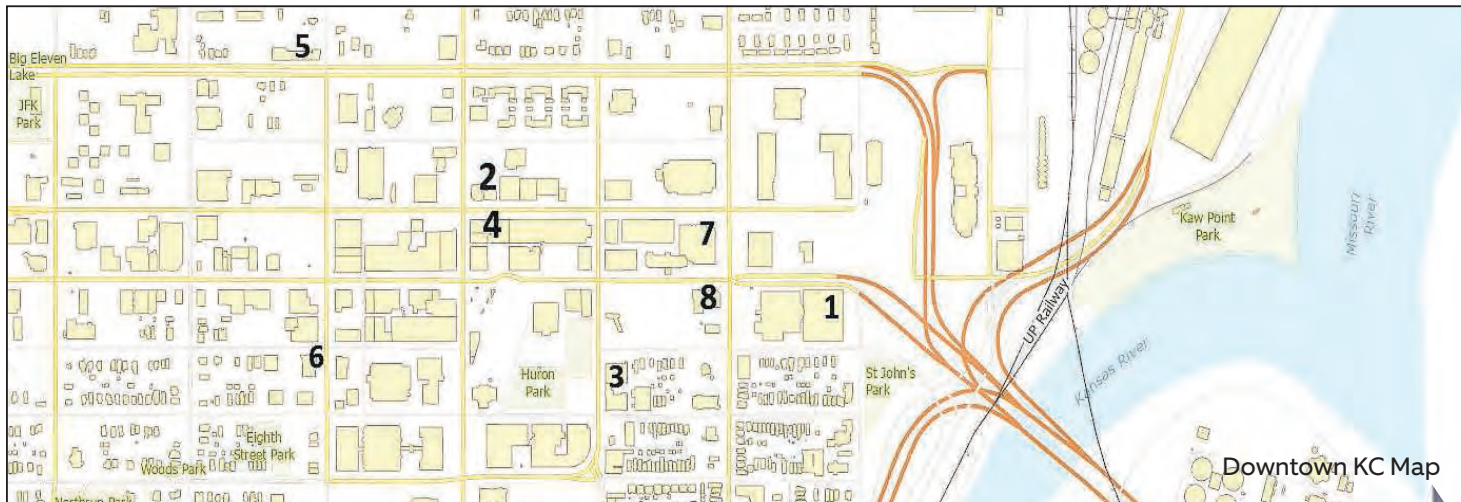
The Homefield Kansas City complex, which opened in spring 2023, is one of the region's most ambitious sports developments. Spanning 150,000 square feet, the indoor arena features 10 basketball and 12 volleyball courts, with the capacity to host major tournaments and training events. The complex also includes nine all-turf baseball and softball diamonds, completed at a cost of \$55 million.

Homefield is designed to accommodate future expansion, including potential indoor soccer facilities to complement nearby outdoor soccer fields. The development also features a residential component, with modern apartments integrated into the site.

4) Mattel Adventure Theme Park - Bonner Springs

The company behind Barbie and other

See **WYANDOTTE** Page 16 →



Downtown Development

By Thomas White
Kansas City Reporter

While the Legends area in western Wyandotte has flourished into a thriving entertainment and retail destination over the past two decades, downtown KCK has faced persistent challenges in attracting new development and investment. The stark contrast between these two areas has long been a concern for local leaders and residents alike. However, a wave of recent developments and newly announced projects signals a potential turning point for downtown KCK's revitalization. With more than \$325 million in major projects completed, under construction, or in advanced planning stages ranging from affordable housing to mixed-use buildings and educational facilities, these investments are aimed at breathing life back into the historic heart of Kansas City, Kansas.

1) Minnesota Avenue Triangle Project - 4th and Minnesota Avenue

The Minnesota Avenue Triangle Project hopes to take a parking lot owned by the UG and transform it into much-needed downtown development. Through a year-long RFP process, the UG selected developer Flaherty & Collins to build the \$145 million+ two-phase project at Fourth St. and Minnesota Ave.

The first phase, with a \$73.8 million price tag, features a 12-story tower with 244 apartments that will break ground in May 2025, with completion expected in 2027. The second phase will add a low/mid-rise building with 228 units. The project includes a concealed parking garage, nearly 27,000 sq/ft of ground floor retail space, and expanded parks that connect with the riverfront. Rent is projected to range from \$1,075 to \$1,980 a month.

2) Kansas City Kansas Community College Downtown Campus - 7th and State Ave

The \$100 million Kansas City Kansas Community College downtown campus spans two blocks between 6th and 7th Streets and hopes to transform the area. Anchored near the historic Seventh Street Methodist Episcopal Church, the project will feature a four-story, 100,000-square-foot educational facility with plans for a Swope Health clinic and a CommunityAmerica Credit Union branch on site.

The project's location near existing social services for the homeless has led to discussions of relocating the nearby Frank Williams Center and Wilhelmina Gill Center to create a more comprehensive service hub elsewhere. Construction is underway at the KCKCC downtown campus, and it is expected to be completed by June 2025.

3) City Hall Lofts & City Hall Place - 805 N 6th St

City Hall Lofts and City Hall Place are affordable housing projects developed by The Eagle Point Companies. Together, the two properties add 102 affordable units to downtown KCK. City Hall Lofts, originally a mixed-income development, and City Hall Place were built using the Low-Income Housing Tax Credit. City Hall Lofts is currently leasing, and City Hall Place is scheduled to open in 2025.

4) Town House Apartments - 1021 N 7th St

A historic property that received a \$40 million restoration and modernization. When built in 1951, it was an exclusive downtown hotel but has since been converted to provide affordable senior (55+) housing. The 13-story tower still has some of the building's original opulent features but today offers modern one and two-bedroom apartments.

5) Boulevard Lofts - 800 Washington Blvd

Boulevard Lofts was the first new apartment development in the downtown area in 30 years. The \$15 million complex, completed in late 2023 after a four-year construction period delayed by COVID-19, offers 50 units



ranging from one to three bedrooms. The project emerged from a partnership between Riverstone Platform Partners and Community Housing of Wyandotte County and transformed a previously blighted five-acre property that contained five dilapidated buildings.

6) Y Lofts - 900 N. 8th St

The Y Lofts is a senior housing development that transformed the historic YMCA building into a residential community for individuals aged 55 and older. The project was completed in April 2024,

7) Jack Reardon Convention Center Redevelopment - 510 Minnesota Ave

Developer Willie Lanier Jr.'s \$25 million proposal, which would receive \$9.5 million in tax incentives from the city over 20 years, aims to transform the dormant downtown convention center into a mixed-use development.

The proposed development would replace the existing 30,000-square-foot convention center with two residential buildings containing up to 100 market-rate apartments, 7,000 square feet of retail space, and a downsized 7,500-square-foot convention space. Under the agreement, the Unified Government would pay \$1 million from a maintenance fund to secure access to the new convention space for at least

10 annual events at a 50% rental discount. The project has faced multiple setbacks since its initial 2020 approval, including opposition from Mayor Tyrone Garner over the loss of the convention center and ongoing challenges in securing private financing. The county commission gave the project another nine-month extension in April 2024. If Lanier secures the necessary financing during this extension period, construction is expected to take 14 months to complete.

8) MERC Co+Op Grocery - 501 Minnesota Ave

MERC Co+op, formally known as Community Mercantile, expanded to KCK from nearby Lawrence, KS, during the COVID-19 pandemic. The grocery store was a collaborative effort between MERC Co+op, which wanted to open a second location but lacked funding, and the Unified Government, which needed an operator for a new grocery store to combat a food desert.

Financing of the project came through multiple sources, including LISC Kansas City, the Healthy Food Financing, and General Obligation Bonds. What distinguishes the MERC from a traditional grocery store is its cooperative ownership model and community-focused approach.

'One Phone Call'

\$687K Program Offers Immediate Aid to Gun Violence Victims

Wyandotte County District Attorney's office teams up with Ad Hoc Group Against Crime to deliver help for victims of gun violence.

A mother's death in a drive-by shooting and a family left struggling to repair bullet-riddled walls sparked an eight-year quest by Wyandotte County District Attorney Mark Dupree to help gun-crime victims with immediate, practical needs.

That quest has finally found funding through a new \$687,000 federal grant program that will help victims and witnesses of gun violence with emergency services, from fixing broken windows to covering medical equipment costs.

The program, L.E.T.S. R.A.P.P. (Lessening Effects of Trauma, Strengthening Resources Assistance Prevention and Partnerships), emerged from a 2017 case that deeply affected Dupree.

"It was one of the first cases that I dealt with when I got into office: a drive-by shooting in the inner city," Dupree said. "The house was riddled with bullets, and the cars in front of it were riddled with bullets, and, sadly, a mother lost her life."

Within a week, the 19-year-old surviving son came to Dupree's office, seeking help to repair windows and walls so he could care for his younger siblings. But there was nowhere to turn.

"When I had to tell this young man who was suffering from the loss of his mom and figuring out how to care for his younger siblings that we had nothing for him," Dupree said. "That bothered me." The L.E.T.S. R.A.P.P. program — a partnership of the Wyandotte County DA's office and AdHoc Group Against Crime — eliminates such gaps through a streamlined process.

Victims of any gun violence incident in Wyandotte County



Thanks to a grant from the Kansas State Crisis Intervention Program (SCIP), the Wyandotte County District Attorney's office has funding to help victims of gun violence get their lives back together.

occurring between April 2024 and March 2026 need only make a single phone call to begin receiving help. Cases don't need to be charged through the DA's office to qualify.

For immediate needs, help can arrive the same day. Otherwise, within 48-72 hours, a team, including a DA's victim advocate, investigator, and AdHoc staff, visits to assess the situation. Once they confirm the connection to gun violence, contractors are dispatched to begin repairs or services.

The program covers an extensive range of needs. Beyond fixing damaged property like bullet-riddled walls or broken windows, it can provide crisis case management, housing support, and even emergency relocation. Medical needs are also covered, including equipment, therapy, and hospital co-pays. Even accessibility modifications like wheelchair ramps can be funded.

"The only thing that a gun-crime survivor needs to do to get help is make a phone call," Dupree says. "That's it."

This streamlined approach marks a departure from typical assistance programs. There is no income verification, criminal background check, or lengthy paperwork process.

"I'm not asking you how much money you make. I'm not asking you, 'do you have a criminal history,'" Dupree says. "Is the window broke? Yes, it's broke. Did the violence happen? Yes, alright, it's getting fixed."

The funding comes through Kansas' State Crisis Intervention Program (SCIP), part of a broader initiative to prevent gun violence and support victims. The state's SCIP Advisory Board, comprising representatives from law enforcement, courts, behavioral health, and victim services, specifically prioritized programs that could provide immediate, practical assistance to gun violence victims.

According to state data, Wyandotte County had the highest firearm death rate in Kansas from 2018 to 2021, at 30.5 per

100,000 people. The county's program aligns with SCIP's focus on enhancing community programs that reduce trauma and connect victims with wraparound services.

The path to funding for the L.E.T.S. R.A.P.P. program wasn't direct. Between 2017 and 2023, Dupree's office pursued multiple avenues, approaching city and county commissioners, seeking state support, and applying for various grants. The breakthrough came when his office was selected for the \$687,000 federal grant, enabling a partnership with AdHoc Against Crime.

For Dupree, the program represents more than just practical assistance — it's about building trust between law enforcement and the community they serve.

"Many prosecutors across the country don't believe that it's our job to do this [they think] my job is just to lock people up and throw away the key, right?" Dupree said. "Well, I grew up in this community and have seen what crime does to individuals."

He believes this approach will help build relationships that make the community safer. When victims receive immediate help, they're more likely to cooperate with law enforcement in the future.

While Dupree acknowledges the two-year program might not meet every need, he sees it as an important first step to demonstrate the community's requirements and potentially attract more funding.

"For far too long, many victims in our community have not received the assistance, the support, or help that is necessary," Dupree says. "We're trying to help fix windows, trying to help fix doors, and help put lives back together. And it affects your neighbor, your cousin, your family, and, prayerfully, not you." Funds are already being distributed and are available on a first-come, first-served basis. If you or someone you know qualifies for assistance, call the AdHoc Group Against Crime for an assessment at 913-308-7555.



Why is Mayor Tyrone Garner Not Seeking Reelection

VOICE EXCLUSIVE: What has the one-term mayor accomplished, and who is he's endorsing.

By Bonita Gooch
The Voice Editor-in-Chief

Even with strong support from the community, Wyandotte County and Kansas City, KS, Mayor Tyrone Garner says he's decided, after just one term, not to seek reelection. "It is a tough decision," Garner says he reached after considerable prayer.

Clear about his future direction, Garner decided to announce his decision earlier rather than later to clear the way for potential candidates who might not choose to run with him in the race.

"In all fairness, I just wanted to make sure that people have time, if they wanted to run, to prepare to hit the ground running," says Garner. "June of 2025 [the filing deadline] will be here before you know it."

Garner, who often found himself at odds with the 10 members of the Board of Commissioners, says no one is running him away. Instead, he feels he's accomplished what God put him in the position to do – identify problems and be a visionary who instills in residents hope and a belief in the possibilities of what Wyandotte County can be.

THE PEOPLE'S MAYOR

Under the Wyandotte County Unified Government, Garner, 55, serves as the mayor of both Kansas City, KS, and the county government, which includes all cities in Wyandotte County. He's the first African American to serve as mayor of KCK or the 25-year-old unified government.

He was elected in November 2021 and took office the following month. His term expires in December 2025.

His popularity within the community, particularly the city's African-American community, led The Community Voice to tag him "The People's Mayor." It's a moniker he's fond of and others have embraced.

"He's a people's person," says Carolyn Wyatt who worked in Garner's first campaign. "He's out in the community seven days a week talking to people in the community. He has a heart for the people, particularly the people of Northeast Kansas City."

His supporters see the mayor as a positive voice for change from the good-old-boy network, with its reputation of corruption, that has grappled the city for decades. To many, Wyandotte County has an unfortunate reputation for operating within a culture of cronyism, nepotism, and a lot of questionable activities.

That perception was just part of the challenges



Mayor Garner at Wyandotte County's recent tree lighting ceremony and parade. Garner says, he was asked numerous times about whether or not he would be seeking reelection. He decided to announce his decision sooner than later, to give others plenty of time to pull their campaigns together.

Garner inherited when he entered office. Garner says he also inherited a city nearly \$1 billion in debt, crumbling infrastructure, a perception of high taxes and BPU fees, disinvested and under-served areas, a disconnect between the four cities in Wyandotte County, and a perception of city leadership more inclined to cater to politically aligned circles, and less to the everyday hard-working people in Wyandotte County.

Garner's campaign platform hit hard at these issues, with the candidate insisting his fight would be for:

- Fiscal responsibility,
- Streamlined government,
- Real property tax relief and BPU fee relief,
- Investment in the disinvested,
- Responsible development incentives,
- Equitable delivery of resources and services,
- Equitable public safety,
- Infrastructure improvements,
- Expanded economic development outside of Village West,
- Transparency and open communication with residents,
- Community unity,
- Enhancement of WMBE opportunities,
- Engaged leadership, and
- Being a leadership voice for everyday people that is committed to inspiring hope.

There was resistance to his message of change, but it resonated with enough voters to help the mayor eke out a 200-vote victory over first-term incumbent Mayor David Alvey.

MAYOR'S PLATFORM ACCOMPLISHMENTS

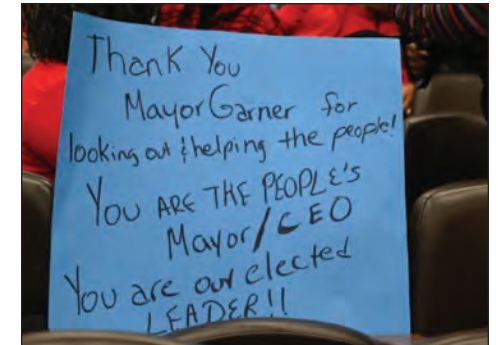
Through cooperation and collaboration, along with the strong support from constituents, Garner has been able to deliver on a large number of his platform items, and, three years later, Wyandotte County is beginning to reap the results of those efforts.

However, delivering change in highly political environments can be slow, sometimes messy and difficult to achieve.

Each of the past three years during the city's budget process, KCK residents have packed the council chambers to demand cuts in their property taxes, and the mayor has always been their very vocal champion. The first two years, the commission voted against their wishes.

This year, the mayor and the citizens scored a win. While the commission didn't vote for a tax rate decrease, in the true spirit of collaboration, they voted to set the tax rate at a level that ensured the city collected the same amount – not more – in tax revenue as the year before.

That's just one reflection of the positive changes – small and large – Garner has been able to



Mayor Garner's popularity within the community led The Community Voice to tag him "The People's Mayor."



Mayor Garner can be found out in Kansas City, Kansas, and Wyandotte County almost daily, and several times per day. It's helped develop his reputation as the People's Mayor.



Mayor Garner isn't afraid to pitch in and work hard for the community. Here he joins in at a community cleanup.

accomplish with the support of the commission and the UG management and employees.

Garner, who rose up through the ranks in the Kansas City, Kansas, Police Dept., included equitable public safety in his campaign platform. With the help of Police Chief Karl Oakman, District Attorney Mark Dupree and Sheriff Daniel Soptic, Wyandotte County is

See **GARNER** Page 16 →

WYANDOTTE, from Page 12 ↓

beloved toys plans to open Mattel Adventure Park in Bonner Springs, KS, by 2026. The family-friendly entertainment destination will feature attractions based on Mattel's iconic brands, including Hot Wheels, Barbie, and Thomas & Friends. The

park aims to offer a variety of experiences, such as roller coasters, immersive theaters, and themed dining options.

This will be Mattel's second adventure park, following the opening of their first location in Glendale, Arizona.

5) Kansas City Quilt Museum - 94th and State Avenue

The Kansas City Quilt Museum, developed by Kansas native Linda Houston, is expected to draw 100,000 visitors a year. The project will feature exhibit space, quilting classes, and a variety of quilting-related programs. Inspired by the success of similar museums, Houston wants to create a hub for quilting enthusiasts.

6) Buc-ee's Travel Center- 601 Village West Parkway

Kansas is getting its first Buc-ee's, a popular Texas-based gas station chain known for its food court, beaver mascot and clean restrooms. The massive 74,000-square-foot facility will feature 120 gas pumps and 12 EV charging stations,

making it one of the largest Buc-ee's locations in the country.

Construction is set to begin in May 2025 and will take approximately two years to complete. Once operational, the facility is expected to employ around 200 people and is projected to attract over 4 million visitors annually.

7) Legends Apartments - 1879 Village West Pkwy

Legends 267, a \$54 million luxury apartment complex, opened in February just next to The Legends Outlets. The eight-story development spans 509,221 square feet and features 267 units above a three-story, 620-space parking garage.

GARNER, from Page 15 ↓

experiencing historically low levels of violent crime.

Garner also ran on a platform of infrastructure improvements, including upgrades and maintenance for bridges, roads, sidewalks, and parks. He helped prioritize street resurfacing, particularly on the city's east side, and led the commission in approval of funds to help renovate a number of city parks that had been ignored for decades.

The city's bridges remain an issue that there are not enough funds to address, leading The Kansas City Star to write an article about the county almost becoming landlocked.

DEVELOPMENT IN WYANDOTTE COUNTY

Development in Wyandotte County is booming. Wyandotte County Economic Development estimates

more than \$1 billion in development projects are planned or already under construction in the county.

Village West, now the No. 1 destination in Kansas, continues to be a major attraction for developers. Scheduled to come or open soon are the American Royal facility, Margaritaville, a family tourist attraction that will include a Top Golf, and Kansas' first Buc-ees, just to name a few.

However, Garner has remained persistent about growing development in the city's eastern core. Earlier this year, the Wyandotte County Commission passed a resolution committing to focus heavily on redevelopment and revitalization proposals in eastern Kansas City, KS – considered any area east of I-635.

Thanks to a creative Request for Proposals process where the city sought

out developers to build on three city-owned sites – two new developments are in the works. While just outside I-635, a proposal for the development of the former Indian Springs Mall site was announced earlier this month.

A second development, a six-story high-rise apartment building overlooking the Missouri River in downtown KCK, was also approved. Located at 4th Street and Minnesota, it's the site of the old Holiday Inn. The third project at 18th Street and Quindaro was designed to jumpstart redevelopment along the city's historic Black business district thoroughfare but failed to receive a proposal despite great incentives from the city.

These are two of many development projects underway in eastern Wyandotte County, including a number of projects that will help

revitalize downtown KCK. Similar to riverfront projects in Oklahoma City and San Antonio, this is a project that could have a major impact on the development of KCK.

To learn more about development in Wyandotte County, see the story in this issue. That story includes an extensive list of the upcoming development projects that will help change Wyandotte County's look and feel.

BPU PILOT

It's hard to like taxes, but the Payment in Lieu of Taxes (PILOT) is a tax that's almost universally despised in Wyandotte County. PILOT is tacked on to residents' monthly water and electric bill, issued by the city-owned Board of Public Utilities (BPU.)

Garner has fought to separate the PILOT from BPU bills, calling the separation an issue of morality that must be addressed.

"It [PILOT on the utility bill] guarantees money to the government because if you don't pay it, you get your lights and your water cut off," says Garner. "That moral compass is skewed in the wrong direction because you shouldn't put that [PILOT] on the backs of people that depend on basic life-sustaining things such as water, clean water, and electricity."

Earlier this year, Garner

spearheaded a task force to look into separating the PILOT from the BPU bill. Following this year's budget hearings, citizens believed the PILOT was set to be removed from their utilities, leading to frustration when it wasn't.

Garner says it is one of those issues he, the commissioners, UG staff, and BPU board members and staff will continue to work on.

"This debate is not over; this work is not done," says Garner. "For as long as I am mayor, I will continue to work to deliver on the reasonable requests of residents demanding change."

HIS LEGACY

Garner has a full year left in office, and he says he's not through working for the people. He hopes in his final year to accomplish more of the things he set out to do.

He says he will continue to forward policy recommendations to the Unified Government that will further solidify what he terms a "community-driven agenda."

However, as he weighed his decision not to seek reelection, he says he feels satisfied that he's accomplished a lot of what he was put into office to do.

He's particularly proud of the positive change he sees in Wyandotte County residents.

"We've got people thinking differently. We don't have to be the less-than community; we can be just as great as any other community," says Garner. "I think God just wanted me to open people's eyes, to see our value, to reimagine and improve Kansas City, KS, for all that love and call Wyandotte County home."

"They have hope now, and I think that hope will be there whether I'm mayor or not. People are seeing If they come together, they are powerful. They can bring about whatever changes they want. They don't need a Tyrone Garner to do that for them because it's not what I can do, it's what everybody can do together. All the people have to do is stay unified as a people. At this point, I think my mission is done."

MAYOR'S ENDORSEMENT

Garner says he will not be endorsing any candidates to replace him as mayor. Instead, he says elections should be community driven.

However, he wants the citizens of Wyandotte, on their own, to get engaged and educate themselves on the candidates and to understand a candidate's commitment, or lack thereof, to a true spirit of service and shared success for all.

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URBAN RENEWAL, from Page 11 ↓

entire country, and we're going to pay homage to that in this project," Murray says. "It's not going to focus on or cater to any one specific group or any one specific income."

Community Amenities and Innovation

Midtown Station is designed as a walkable urban village where residents can access everything they need within minutes of their homes. Arnold sees Midtown Station as a new kind of neighborhood where everything residents need is just a short walk away.

"People simply want vibrant places to live, work, and play within a 15-minute walk of home, and that's exactly what we're delivering here," Arnold said. Midtown Station Features include:

- A Community Greenhouse: A



The project has community health and sustainability in mind with its 15,000-square-foot community greenhouse inspired by successful projects like Omaha's No More Empty Pots program.

15,000-square-foot facility will produce crops equivalent to 400 acres of farmland, partnering with local nonprofits to distribute produce through farmers markets and subsidized food boxes.

- Innovation Hub: Modeled after KCMO's Keystone Innovation District,

there will be a physical space for collaboration between entrepreneurs, universities, and corporate partners to collaborate and grow new businesses.

- Entertainment and Recreation: Public gathering spaces, outdoor recreation, and entertainment venues will be

available.

- 24/7 Daycare: A facility is planned to support local workers, including those on second and third shifts at nearby employers like the GM plant.
- Food, Drink, and Retail: Murray says Midtown station will try to attract high quality local tenants for their 280,000 square feet of retail space

The development will also feature both local and national retailers, though specific tenants are still being determined. The team is working with Crossroads Retail Group to attract businesses that have historically overlooked the area despite its strong traffic counts and central location.

Transit and Connectivity The Kansas City Area Transportation Authority (KCATA) bus transfer center at the site will remain and potentially expand. UG Transit Director Deasiray Bush says the development will

enhance quality of life and stimulate economic growth.

Plans include expanded transit services and improved connections to major employers as the development progresses.

Timeline and Phasing

The project will unfold over multiple phases:

- Near-Term (2025): Final development agreements are expected by Feb. 2025, with construction beginning mid-year. EV charging stations and initial retail spaces are targeted for completion ahead of the 2026 World Cup.
- Phase One (2026-2027): This phase will deliver the first residential units, commercial spaces, and the innovation hub, along with initial food and retail offerings.
- Future Phases (2027-2035): Additional residential and commercial

components, the hotel and convention center, and expanded transit services will follow.

The full build-out could take six to 12 years, depending on market conditions. Murray's team is preparing both an accelerated four-phase plan and a more conservative seven-phase approach to adapt as needed.

For Murray, whose family has deep roots in KCK, Midtown Station represents more than a redevelopment—it's about redefining what's possible in eastern Wyandotte County. By combining sustainable design and inclusive development, the project aims to transform a symbol of decline into a vibrant community hub.


"As someone who grew up in KCK," says Murray, "It brings me great pride to be in position to deliver on a landmark project that will make our entire community Dotte Proud."

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A New Court Program Offers Mediation Instead of Eviction

Officials want more people to use this program that so far has handled just 50 cases. Tenants as well as landlords can request mediation.

By Celia Hack

KMUW & Wichita
Journalism Collaborative

Harold Linde, a landlord in Wichita, has participated in a new mediation program that offers landlords and tenants an alternative to eviction.

The program manager estimates around 50 landlord-tenant cases in Sedgwick County had been mediated as of late September, more than a year after the program begun. Meanwhile, the county typically sees around 5,000 eviction filings, or more, per year.

Landlord Harold Linde knocks on the door of a wood-paneled home just south of Kellogg.

“Come on in,” his tenant calls from inside.

As Linde steps inside the three-bedroom home, he ushers a barking dog away from the front door. Inside, Linde meets the tenant, a grandmother who lives in the house with her daughter and two grandchildren. She’s in a recliner, where she’s largely confined due to health challenges.

“Are you fixing to evict us again?” she asks Linde.

This summer, Linde had filed an eviction against the family because they owed him \$950 in back rent. The grandmother asked not to be named out of concern that making her story public could affect her credit report.

“No, no. We’re trying to work this through a mediation,” Linde tells her. “We’re – I’m trying to work this out.”

Linde is one of the few landlords who participates in a new voluntary landlord-tenant mediation program offered in Sedgwick County’s 18th District Court. Through the program, Linde worked out an agreement with the family living south of Kellogg; he was paid some back rent so they could stay put.

The grandmother living there says she, for one, is happy about that.

“I don’t know how I could possibly afford more rent anywhere else,” she said. The family pays \$600 a month.

The mediation program offers landlords and tenants an alternative to eviction: a neutral mediator – approved by the court system – brings both parties together in an attempt to work out an agreement.

“Anytime things are going to trial, there is some inherent risk to both sides. You’re leaving the determination up to the judge,” said Abigail Lessman, the eviction resolution program manager who oversees mediation.

“In a mediation, ... each party gets to play an active role in ... creating the agreement that is eventually reached.”

The mediation program began in early 2023 as part of an eviction resolution program that aims to reduce filings in Sedgwick County. Yet Lessman said just a small fraction of evictions have gone to mediation; she estimates around 50 cases as of late September.

“

In a mediation, ... each party gets to play an active role in ... creating the agreement that is eventually reached..”

ABIGAIL LESSMAN.
Eviction Resolution
Program Manager

Meanwhile, the county typically sees around 5,000 eviction filings, or more, per year.

“It’s an unfamiliar territory for landlords and tenants to really consider mediation within the context of eviction,” Lessman said.

“So, that has still been a challenge as far as increasing the interest and awareness of mediation as an option.”

Still, Lessman said that the cases that go to mediation almost always end in agreement between the tenant and landlord. That’s how the program measures success.

Why Mediation, and What Is It?

In 2020, an eviction moratorium was temporarily put in place nationwide to deal with the pandemic.

As COVID raged on, courts started looking for creative strategies like mediation to reduce evictions, said Samira Nazem, who leads the eviction diversion initiative at the National Center for State Courts.

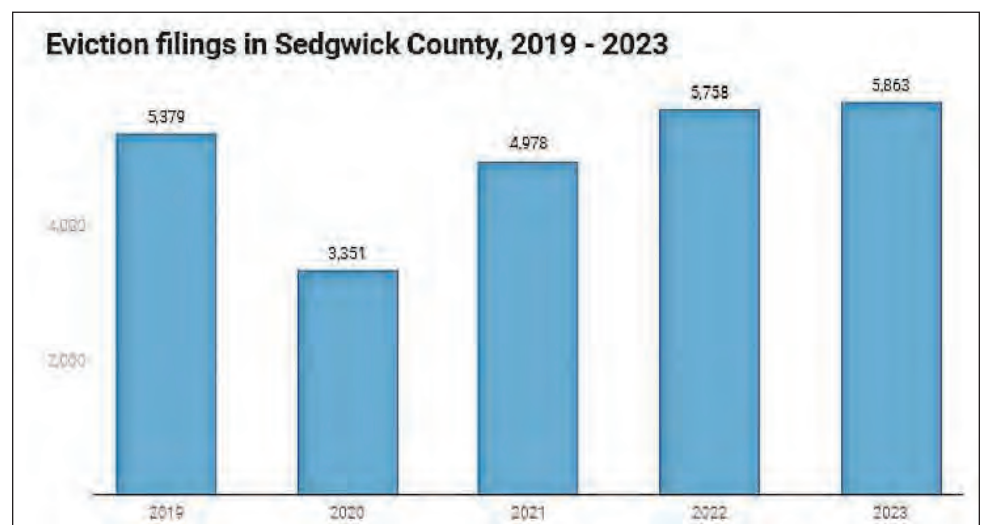
With a \$10 million gift from Wells Fargo, the center helped fund eviction diversion pilot programs in courts across the country, including in Sedgwick County.

Abigail Lessman is the Eviction Resolution Program Manager for the 18th District Court in Sedgwick County.

“We wanted ... to make eviction diversion a permanent part of the fabric of housing courts, rather than something that was really just time bound and connected to the pandemic,” Nazem said.

Lessman runs the Eviction Resolution Program in Sedgwick County as the sole employee. On most days, she connects tenants with community organizations that offer resources like rental assistance or free legal advice.

But she also runs the



SOURCE: FORCIBLE DETAINERS CASES FILED IN THE 18TH DISTRICT COURT (CELIA HACK)

voluntary tenant-landlord mediation program. Any tenant or landlord can contact her to request mediation, before or after an eviction is filed. Lessman loops in the other party and their attorney, if they have one. She then connects the landlord and tenant with a court-approved volunteer mediator, who helps the two parties find common ground.

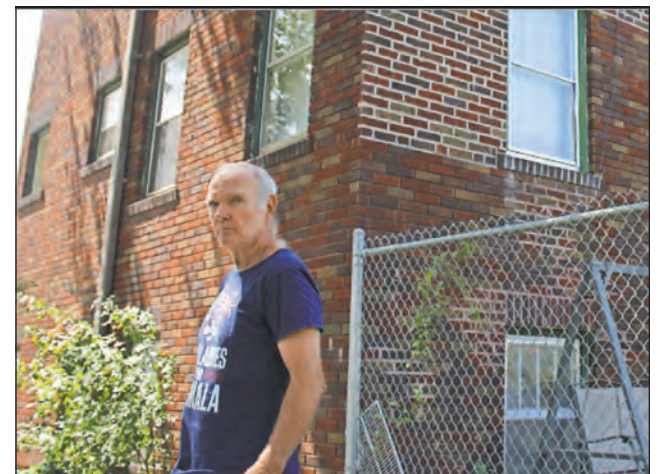
In mediation, landlords and tenants can reach all sorts of agreements. Maybe the tenant stays in the unit and works out a payment plan with the landlord. Perhaps the tenant still has to move out.

“While they may be vacating their unit, either way, they’re vacating it on their own terms, with dignity and without an eviction judgment on the record that’s going to cloud their ability to secure new housing,” Nazem said.

If the two parties don’t reach an agreement, the landlord can continue to pursue eviction.

Skepticism About Mediation

Sometimes, Lessman meets tenants whose relationship with their landlords has deteriorated to the point that they don’t want to attempt



Harold Linde, a landlord in Wichita, has participated in a new mediation program that offers landlords and tenants an alternative to eviction.

CELIA HACK

mediation.

More often, though, she said she hears hesitance from landlords. Lessman said one roadblock is that local property managers, who often operate on behalf of the owner, sometimes don’t have the authority or discretion to try mediation instead of court. Nazem said cities around the U.S. face similar challenges.

“Larger-volume property management companies that have hundreds and hundreds of units and are often ... going into court with dozens of cases on a single day may have less

interest or ability to mediate cases,” Nazem said.

Other property owners may not be interested in mediation by the time they file an eviction in court, said Shannon Kelly, who works as an attorney for Eviction One. She often represents landlords in eviction court.

“The eviction filing with the court is generally their ... last option because they’ve already done everything else they can to help the tenant,” Kelly said. “So at this point, asking for

See **MEDIATION** Page 19 →

Wichita Groups Offer Help to Residents Seeking Removal from Police Gang List

Dec. 7 session aims to help residents clear their names after discriminatory policy overhaul.

By Thomas White
Kansas City Reporter

In the wake of a landmark settlement that could remove thousands from Wichita's controversial police gang database, local organizations are stepping up to help residents navigate the newly created appeals process.

Destination Innovation Inc.'s youth advocacy program Progeny, alongside the ACLU of Kansas and Kansas Appleseed,

will host their second Gang List Info Session on Dec. 7 at the Build and Rebuild Education Center, 1751 N. Ash. The free event runs 1-3 p.m. and will provide legal information, notary services, and assistance with appeal forms.

The session comes after an August settlement that mandated sweeping changes to a police practice that disproportionately targeted Black and Latino residents. Under previous policies, people could be added to the gang list for wearing certain colors, visiting specific businesses, or attending family gatherings - often without their knowledge.

Being on the list carries serious consequences. Listed individuals face increased

Wichita Gang List Info Session

Build and Rebuild Education Center

1751 N. Ash,
Wichita Dec. 7 at
1 - 3 p.m.

Free

police surveillance, minimum \$50,000 bail amounts if charged with crimes, and potential discrimination in employment due to background checks showing gang affiliation.

City data revealed stark racial disparities in the list's composition. Black residents made up 60% of the list while comprising only 10.9% of

Wichita Gang List Info Session:

Saturday Dec. 7th, 1-3pm @ the Build and Rebuild Education Center (1751 N. Ash)

Learn how to find out about and appeal your gang status in Wichita.

FREE:

- Legal information
- On-site notaries
- Gang status review and appeals forms
- Copiers







Wichita's population. Latino residents represented 25% of those listed despite being 17.2% of the population. White residents, who make up 62.8% of Wichita's population, were only 6% of those listed.

The settlement created

new rights for those on the list, including notification of their status and an appeals process - resources that will be explained at the December session.

The police department's revised policy, which took effect

in August, could remove about two-thirds of the 5,500 people currently on the list. The changes include stricter criteria for adding someone to the list and the removal of all gang associates and inactive gang members.



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MEDIATION, from Page 18 ↓

an additional mediation ... doesn't help a lot."

Mediation is also available before an eviction is filed in court. But Kelly said she does not see this as a helpful option because communication between the landlord and tenant has typically broken down before an eviction filing.

Kelly - who also serves as the president for the Mediation Center of Wichita - says she is a proponent of mediation in certain cases: those in which neither landlord nor tenant have a lawyer. That's less common in eviction court, where landlords are more likely to have an attorney.

This subset of cases is where Lessman has narrowed her focus. She proactively brings mediators to eviction court on Thursday mornings, when the judge sees cases where both the landlord and tenant represent

themselves. Landlords and tenants can choose in the moment to step into a conference room to speak with the mediator. If the mediation fails, the case moves forward in front of the judge.

Nazem said the strategy of offering mediation to landlords without a lawyer is common across the country.

"We often find that the self-represented small mom-and-pop landlords who are not regular users of the court system may be particularly good fit for mediation," Nazem said. "Because it really takes some of the stress and complexity out of having to navigate court."

So Who Does Participate, And Why?

Linde, the landlord, represents himself in eviction court. He's found some mixed success with the mediation program, which he's participated in multiple times. The

mediation with the grandmother and her family who live south of Kellogg resulted in Linde receiving \$900 in back rent.

Linde said the family is still behind on rent, but he's not upset. Keeping the family in the home actually prevents expensive vacancies and turnover, he said.

"The last people that moved out cost me five grand," he said. Mediation can also be cheaper and less time-intensive than filing an eviction, Lessman said. It costs between \$56 to \$122 to file an eviction case in court.

Aside from money, Linde said he participates in mediation because he knows what it's like to receive second, third, even fourth chances. During his childhood, teens and 20s, he said he dealt with mental health challenges and homelessness.

"I owe society ... because it's

been so good to me."

Linde said the volunteer mediators are unbiased and have helped him calmly work through challenging conversations with tenants. He added that even if a mediation doesn't always work out exactly the way he wants it to, his rental homes - about 40 in total - still typically turn a profit.

"I'm not going to lose. Most of these other landlords ... they can get beat out of a couple months rent," Linde said. "They can lose some money. They're not going under."

One of the best parts of mediation, Linde said, is how it closes the divide between tenants and landlords - allowing both parties to feel more ownership of the ultimate decision that gets made.

"These tenants go away so angry," Linde said. "... It can make a better society if people walk away happier at the outcomes.



See our featured events page 21 and 22

WICHITA

Nov. 26, Nov 29 & 30, & Dec. 1, hour vary by day: 10th Annual Midian Shrine Festival of Trees. Midian Shrine Center, 140 N. Topeka. Jump-start your holiday season. Enter raffles to win your favorite tree & all its swag, Sweet Shoppe to tickle your sweet tooth, vendors for Christmas shopping and Claumopolitans to warm you up. COST \$5 Click for more details and times.

Sat., Nov. 23, 8 - 10:30 pm: Dr. Wayne Goins Jazz Quartet, Walker's Jazz Lounge, 252 N. Mosley. Immerse yourself in the rich harmony, intricate rhythms, and soulful improvisation and a night of unparalleled jazz brilliance. COST \$15

Sun., Nov. 24, 6 pm: Ceremony of Lights 2024, Friends University, 2100 W. University. Join in on illuminating the historic Davis Clock Tower. Enjoy an evening of carols and festive music from the Friends University Singing Quakers and the Friends University Band, Christmas trees, cookies and cocoa, and more. Santa will also be making a special appearance and available for photos. **FREE**

Mon., Nov. 25, 5:30 - 7:30 pm: Operation Holiday Volunteering, 701 E. 37th St N. Spread some holiday cheer by volunteering together.

Tue., Nov. 26, 5 - 6:45 pm: Doc & Talk - National Alzheimer's Discussion Awareness, Wichita Public Library, 4195 E. Harry. Watch a showing of the film, "Alzheimer's: Every Minute Counts" an "urgent wake-up call about the national threat posed by Alzheimer's disease."

Sat., Nov. 30, 3 - 5 pm: Miss Wichita 2025, Evergreen Recreation Center, 2700 N. Woodland. Join us for the Miss Wichita 2025 Competition, the local preliminary to Miss Kansas, for an afternoon of poise, intelligence, beauty, and grace. Women will compete for the honor of representing the City of Wichita and Sedgwick County as Miss Wichita, Miss Sedgwick County, and Miss Air Capital at the 2025 Miss Kansas Competition. <https://bit.ly/4fvmhjL>

Sun., Dec. 1, 1:30 - 5 pm: Madison Avenue Church of Christ, Ministerial

Installation Dinner/Program. Marcus Welcome Center, 1845 Fairmount St. RSVP to Cashapp - \$MadisonAVECOC or text GIVE to 844-989-3381. COST \$20

Mon., Dec. 2, 5:30 - 8:30 pm: Youth Horizons Benefit - A Christmas Gala, Wichita Marriott, 9100 Corporate Hills. Enjoy a 3-course dinner, music from the Friends University Singing Quakers, a special performance by popular local soloist Angelica McRae-Breathett, the Kapaun Mt. Carmel Madrigals, live and silent auctions, and heartfelt stories from their Mentor and Foster Residence Programs. All proceeds will support the Youth Horizons mission of providing stability and hope to area youth in need. COST \$60 <https://bit.ly/48UsLWN>

Dec. 5 - 7: Great Holiday Decoration Exchange, Urban League of Kansas, 2418 E. 9th. Free holiday decorations to spruce up your home and bring some cheer during the holidays. Sign up and the UL team will put together a package of decorations to fulfill your needs plus give you an opportunity to shop for other decorations. Donations are needed and can be dropped off at Urban League. Sign up at <https://wfk.ms/3Qzc0i>

Sat., Dec. 7, 10 am - 5 pm: Wichita Art Museum Holiday Open House with free admission to Robert Peterson: Somewhere in America exhibit: Wichita Art Museum, 1400 Museum Blvd. Celebrate the season with fun and festive. Peterson renders African American life beautifully and joyfully, rejecting stereotypes to celebrate the "Black experience as [he] knows it." More info: <https://wam.org/.../robert-peterson-somewhere-in-america>. **FREE**

Sun., Dec. 8, 4 pm: 41st Annual Dennis Family Christmas Concert - "Repeat the Sounding Joy," Tabernacle Bible Church, 1817 N. Volutsia. **FREE**

Thu., Dec. 5, 7 pm: WIBA Winter Wonderland, Ruffin Building, 100 N. Broadway. Enjoy a festive, magical night as we turn the atrium of the Ruffin Building into a winter wonderland. There will be 5 themed food stations, open bar, tastings, video wall, and more. Wear your favorite festive cocktail attire & bring your holiday cheer. Must be registered to attend. \$75. <https://members.wiba.org/ap/Events/Register/01Ha2gqsmtwCR>

Sat., Dec. 7, 6 - 9 pm: 60th Birthday Bay: David & Will, The Center, 1914 E. 11th St. David Usher and William (Bill/Will) Vann are turning 60 and it's going to be a throwback. Bring those pictures from when they had hair lol. There will be food, games, music and lots of laughs. This is designed to celebrate them while having fun with all the other Robinson, South and East High friends that turned

60 this year. RSVP here <https://forms.gle/XvdBWWtwsjPjXMD7A>.

Sun., Dec. 8, 3 - 5 pm: Holiday Black Business Circle, Wichita State Connect, 1845 N. Fairmount. Celebrate the excellence of Black-owned businesses with holiday shopping. Start your holiday off right by supporting Wichita talent. COST: 1 CANNED FOOD.

KANSAS CITY

Sat., Nov. 23, 8 pm - 1 am: The All Black Everything X'perience, Elevation Grille, 6141 Blue Ridge Blvd. Come dressed in your finest all-black attire, ready to shine, celebrate, and create unforgettable memories. Sagittarius, this night is for you. An unforgettable night hosted by Tez Carter & Tony Keith with vibes by DJ D-Shot bringing the heat all night long. COST \$10 [Sagkc.eventbrite.com](https://sagkc.eventbrite.com)

Fri., Nov. 29, 6:30 - 7 pm: 2024 Christmas Tree Lighting Event, Crown Center, 2450 Grand Blvd. Witness the illumination of one of the largest Christmas trees in the nation. Be a part of this Kansas City spectacular with an all-new lighting event. Crown Center President Stacey Paine will welcome Mayor Quinton Lucas and Hallmark Stars for the countdown to light the tree, with a new light show and fireworks to follow. **FREE**

Wed., Nov. 27, 8:30 am: PRE-THANKSGIVING BRUNCH & CONCERT, Gem Theater, 1615 East 18th St. This event brings together great music, delicious food, and community spirit, all while supporting a worthy cause. A portion of the proceeds will benefit the Kemp McGee Arts Culture & Community Foundation and their HBCU Scholarship, helping fund community programs and support students pursuing higher education at HBCUs. COST \$40 <https://bit.ly/3UHTjEX>

Fri., Nov. 29, 10 pm: Fade To Black - The All Black Affair, BLVD Nights, 2805 Southwest Blvd. The biggest all Black Affair in the Midwest. COST \$15 and up.

Sat., Nov. 30, 8 pm: Chicago Beau in Gospel Lounge, Knuckleheads, 2715 Rochester. For this special event, Chicago Beau will grace the legendary Gospel Lounge stage with some of Kansas City's top musicians. Expect an explosive night of musicians coming together to celebrate the deeply rooted history of Blues with an exciting rhythmic performance. COST \$25.

Sat., Nov. 30, 7 pm - Midnight: Old Gold & Black Gala Masquerade Edition, American Jazz Museum, 1616 E. 18th St. Get ready to dance the night away in your finest old gold and black attire, with a touch of mystery behind your dazzling masquerade mask. By Alpha Phi Alpha

Fraternity, Inc. COST \$40+ <https://bit.ly/3YEKnMO>

Sat., Nov. 30, 9:30 pm - 2:30 am: Flip Int'l 10th Annual All Black Attire, Cable Event Center, 1327 Burlington St. Get ready to slay in your best all-black outfit at the 10th Annual Flip Int'l All Black Attire event. This is your chance to show off your style on the Red Carpet and mingle with fellow attendees in a classy and elegant setting. COST \$10+ <https://bit.ly/3YEcOiQ>

Sat., Nov. 30, Union Station's Holiday Pop-up Celebration, Union Station, 30 W. Pershing Rd. Hop Farfalla Merry Market with more than 20 of KC's top vendors, enjoy free live entertainment. Food trucks and holiday adult beverages. Welcome the massive, decorated CPKC Holiday Train. Close out the day with a free fireworks finale celebrating Science City's 25th anniversary. **FREE**

Thu., Dec. 5, 5:30 - 8 pm: Professional Women of Color Winter Wonderland Holiday Gala, Negro Leagues Baseball Museum, 1616 E. 18th St. Live entertainment from KIM KEYS - so pull out your dancing shoes. In addition, there will be a festive holiday buffet, signature drinks + cash bar, vendors, door prizes, and more. COST \$65

Sat., Dec. 7, 7 - 9:30 pm: A SOULful Christmas, 900 Linwood Blvd. Performances by Douglass Walker, Jae Renee, Carlton Rashaad, Marlin Hatcher Jr, Ashley Brewer, O'Dell Talley, and hosted by Sean Tyler. COST \$30

Sun., Dec 8, 10 am: International Sunday, Victorious Life Church, 3400 Paseo Blvd. Featuring Pastor Alex Illash from the Ukraine to discuss issues of Ukraine. Uplifting worship with Bishop Mark C Tolbert, overseer and Elder CD Collier, Senior Pastor. **FREE**

Sat., Dec. 14, 9 am - 12 pm: 16th Annual Breakfast With Santa!, ArtsTech, 1522 Holmes St. A festive tradition bringing families together to support ArtsTech programs - Youth Programs for ages 12 years to teens. Enjoy a free picture of you and your family with Santa. There will be gifts for youth (17 & under). Unlimited pancakes - while they last, a gift bag raffle, and holiday fun with family & friends. **FREE**

Tue., Dec. 31, 6 pm - 1 am: New Year's 2025, Stoney Creek Hotel Kansas City, 18011 Bass Pro Dr. Let's ring in the New Year 2025 together with a night full of joy, laughter & unforgettable memories, with Carmichael Musiclover & Urban Mystic. Two DJs will light up your night and keep your dancing pleasures on deck. DJ Foots (Mr. Make Ya Feet Hurt) & DJ Tee Stylez (Ladies of The Core). COST \$125+

Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority to Host 71st Kansas City Debutante Ball

By The Voice News Service

The 71st Debutante Ball, with the theme "Diamonds of Excellence," will serve as the presentation to society of 23 debutantes from across the Kansas City Metropolitan Area.

The ball, sponsored by Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc. – Beta Omega Chapter of KCMO and The Ivy Community Service and Educational Foundation, Inc., along with its Steering Committee, will be held Fri., Nov. 29, at the Sheraton Kansas City Hotel at Crown Center.

Members of the Steering Committee, along with chapter members, have served on various committees leading up

to the ball, including a career seminar, etiquette presentation, Mother Deb Tea, parent orientation and service projects.

The first Debutante Ball was initiated in 1951 by Mildred Althouse of Beta Omega and Lillian Orme of Mu Omega chapter of Kansas City, KS. Its initial purpose was to raise funds to help support the sorority's Delta House in Lawrence, KS.

The house was maintained by the sorority until open housing laws were passed. The first ball was held at the American Legion Hall at Linwood Blvd. and Paseo in KCMO.

Since its beginning, the ball has been held the Friday evening after Thanksgiving. In the 1970s, a scholarship

component was added to the presentation program.

For more than 30 years, Beta Omega and Mu Omega AKA chapters co-hosted the ball. Since 1983, the chapters have alternated years hosting the ball.

Throughout the years, the Debutante Ball has awarded thousands of dollars in scholarships, has made an impact on the lives of hundreds of young ladies, and is still considered one of the major social events of the year.

The Beta Omega Chapter has been serving the KCMO area since 1920. Omega Tillman is chapter president. For the 2024 ball, the general chair is Latonya Thomas Patton and the general co-chair is Carla



2024 Debutante Ball Steering Committee listed from left to right:

Row 1: Carla Gunner (general co-chair), Dr. Evelyn Williams (ISCEF president), Omega Tillman (Beta Omega president), LaTanya Thomas Patton (general chair), Dr. April Sutherland (head consultant), Tonya Taylor (consultant), Lauren Patton (consultant), Dr. Juana Hishaw (consultant)
 Row 2: Susan Smith, Angela Husband, Kimberlyn Jones, Kimberly T. Jones, Kelly Nevels, Michelle Fuller, Ann Winston, Vanessa Tucker
 Row 3: Leontra Foreman, Tracie Nash, Katherine Hayes, Twyla Lindsay, Pam Peppers, Mallory Malone, Vickie Russaw, Dominique Campbell
 Row 4: Mable Ramey-Moore, Lydia Owens, Levora Wittmore, Wendy Blackmon, Monica Randle, Lessie Thompson
 Row 5: Yolonda Carson, Dr. Cleora Taylor, Teresa Johnson, Lauren Ward, Latrece Hindsman, Ashley Garrett

Gunner. The Ivy Community Service and Education

Foundation, Inc., serves as the charitable arm of Beta Omega

Chapter. Dr. Evelyn Williams serves as president.

Join The Voice for Black Trivia Night in Wichita

A fun, hype, and casual event for families to enjoy during the Thanksgiving holiday weekend.

By Bonita Gooch
Editor-in-Chief

The family has gathered in Wichita for the Thanksgiving weekend. What's there to do, now that you've eaten the turkey and shopped on Black Friday?

We've got the answer! Join The Voice and friends on Black Friday for a game of Black Trivia. The fun will be held Fri., Nov. 29, from 7 to 9 p.m., at Harvester Arts at the Lux, 120 E. 1st St. Old timers will remember the location as the old KG&E building in downtown Wichita.

We promise you don't need to be a Black history expert to win. There will be all levels of questions that people, young and old, young and old, will



be able to answer. You may not know all the answers, but a reasonable team of players should be able to answer a lot of the questions in each round.

Here's how it works. We suggest you play as a team of four, but you can bring a bigger or a smaller team. If you like, we can match you with other players to form a team. A team of four is ideal since we're planning prizes for teams of four.

Play starts at 7 p.m., but doors open at 6:30 p.m.

We'll play as many rounds of 10 questions as we can fit in. We're estimating four rounds. There will be prizes given to the winners of each round. Yes, you can win multiple rounds, but the big prize will be bragging rights.

It will be a fun hype evening with music by Pioneer DJ Don in The Mixx. There will be a bar with drinks where you'll be asked to make a donation. Note, the drinks aren't free. We expect you to make a

donation, with the funds going to benefit the programs of Harvester Arts. Because alcohol will be sold, this is not an event for children, so leave the kids at home.

Grandma and grandpa will find this event enjoyable and you may find them an asset for answers to some of the older school questions. Hope you got the picture, this is a grown-folks-of-the-family event.

Another option, it's a great event for your friends who are all back in town for the holiday.

And it's affordable. Admission is just \$15. Tickets can be purchased online at www.communityvoiceks.com/black-trivia-night-2024 or use this short link <https://bit.ly/3OjLBxb>. We encourage people to purchase tickets in advance. Credit and debit cards will not be accepted at the door.

Trivia is growing in popularity across the country, but Black people are often challenged to do well when the questions include a mix of

questions on country or classical music and other questions that don't align with our

culture. This is an event all about OUR culture.

Come on out and have fun.



Soul of Santa Brings *Holiday Magic* with Expanded Community Celebrations

Tree lighting ceremonies, concerts, toy giveaways and a new ice skating rink are all in store this holiday season.

By Thomas White
Kansas City Reporter

The temperature is dropping but The Soul of Santa “Do Good” Foundation is heating up Kansas City’s holiday season with an expanded lineup of events that combine community giving with festive celebrations – from free breakfasts to concerts promoting peace and unity.

The foundation’s newest addition is “The Soul of Santa Winter Wonderland

on Ice,” gliding into the historic 2000 Vine Building from Nov. 15 through Jan. 2. This extended ice skating attraction brings a touch of seasonal magic to the East Side, offering Kansas Citians a chance to twirl and spin through the holiday season.

The yuletide season kicks into high gear Nov. 27 at The Shops on Blue Parkway, with a double-header of holiday cheer. The evening begins with the tree lighting ceremony featuring “Power Book III: Raising Kanan” actor Erika Woods and KC’s own rapper/entrepreneur Kemet Coleman flipping the switch.

The celebration continues with the “Peace for the Holidays” anti-violence concert. The concert features an impressive lineup of local talent, including XTA-C, Fatty the Driver, The Royal



Tree lighting ceremonies, concerts, toy giveaways and a new ice skating rink are all in store from The Soul of Santa this holiday season.

Chief, Roblo da Star, Hitman Donnie, Flawless Victory, and Ayinde Jones.

The spirit of giving then takes center stage with two free community breakfasts

and toy giveaways. The first community breakfast and giveaway is set for Nov. 30 at the Shops of Blue Parkway followed by a Dec. 7 event on Vine Street. Both events



Tucker Lott, founder of the Soul of Santa “Do Good” Foundation.

begin at 9 a.m. and include toy and winter clothing giveaways, plus the chance to take pictures with The Soul of Santa himself.

While these events are free, registration is required and spots fill up quickly.

The holiday festivities culminate on Dec. 6 with the foundation’s signature annual Holiday Benefit Concert.

Kansas City’s Blair Bryant & Friends will present “A Very Funky Christmas” at the Gem Theater following the 18th & Vine Historic Jazz District tree lighting ceremony. Bryant, who has carved his path in the smooth jazz world with four Top 15 singles and collaborations with industry legends, will put his special spin on holiday classics.

The concert benefits the foundation’s mission of connecting high-functioning individuals with disabilities to resources through personalized workforce development plans inspired by Lott’s late daughter Aria, who lived with epilepsy.

For more info about any of these events, to register for the free breakfasts, or to purchase concert tickets, visit TheSoulOfSanta.org.

KC Melting Pot Theatre Debuts New Psychological Thriller ‘Jawbone Crack Quick’

Show Times for “JAWBONE CRACK QUICK”

Just Off Broadway Theatre, 3051 Central St., KCMO

Thu, Dec. 5 at 10 a.m. and 7:30 p.m.

Fri, Dec. 6 at 7:30 p.m.

Sat, Dec. 7 at 7:30 p.m.

*Sun, Dec. 8 at 2 p.m.

Wed, Dec. 11 at 7:30 p.m.

*Thu, Dec. 12 at 7:30 p.m.

Fri, Dec. 13 at 7:30 p.m.

Sat, Dec. 14 at 7:30 p.m.

*Post-show talkback with cast and crew

Tickets:

General Admission - \$30

Seniors (60+)/Students/Veterans - \$25

Community Nights (Wed & Thu) - \$20

Available at KCMeltingPot.com or 816-226-8087

The world premiere runs Dec. 5-14 at the Just Off Broadway Theatre.

By Thomas White
Kansas City Reporter

What defines a victim – and what reveals a villain?

The KC Melting Pot Theatre (KCMPT) delves into this profound question with “Jawbone Crack Quick,” a gripping psychological thriller making its world premiere Dec. 5-14. The production is part of KCMPT’s milestone 10th anniversary season, and the play continues the company’s tradition of amplifying complex Black narratives while pushing the boundaries of storytelling.

Playwright and actor Lewis Morrow, known for works such as “Baybra’s Tulips” and the “Black Matters” trilogy, wrote the stage play and stars in the lead role. Morrow takes center stage as Walt, a man wrestling with the



Lewis Morrow is both the playwright and lead of “Jawbone Crack Quick.”

psychological fallout of a violent home invasion.

What initially appears to be a story of survival soon morphs into a harrowing exploration of identity, betrayal, and hidden truths. Walt’s wife, Sandrin – portrayed by Aalayah Norwood – finds her world upended as a mysterious detective, played by Karis Harrington, unearths secrets from Walt’s past that cast doubt on everything she knows about her husband.



“Jawbone Crack Quick” is a world debut play running Dec. 5 - 14.

The play promises to combine tightly woven suspense with sharp, character-driven storytelling.

The play is directed by Ile Haggins, fresh from helming KCMPT’s groundbreaking all-Black production of “Who’s Afraid of Virginia Woolf.”

The creative team behind the production includes Warren Deckert on lighting, Dennis Jackson on sound design, and Lynn King managing costumes and stage direction. Morrow also contributes as the set designer.

Together, the team transforms the intimate Just Off Broadway Theatre into a pressure cooker of emotion and suspense, where audience members will feel as if they are part of the unfolding tension.

KCMPT’s selection of “Jawbone Crack Quick” for its 10th season aligns with its mission to celebrate African American theater. This season’s theme, “The Past as Present,” pays homage to the works of August Wilson while presenting new plays that examine modern Black experiences.

FAFSA, from Page 6 ↓

3. Determine Whether You're a Dependent or Independent Student

Dependent students must fill out the FAFSA with at least one parent, while independent students can fill out the FAFSA on their own. There are a number of questions you can ask yourself to determine your dependency status, such as:

- Are you 24 or older?
- Are you pursuing a master's or doctoral degree?
- Are you a veteran or currently serving on active duty in the U.S. armed forces?
- Were you an orphan, ward of the state or in foster care before the age of 13?
- Are you married?

If you answered yes to any of the above questions, you could be considered an independent student. If your answer is no, you're a dependent student.

Dependent students must fill out the FAFSA with the help of at least one parent. If your parents are married and filed taxes jointly, for instance, only one parent needs to contribute to the form (although they need to report information for both parents). If your parents are married and filed taxes separately, then both will need to contribute to the

FAFSA.

4. Gather Your Information Ahead of Time

Having all your important documents organized ahead of time can help make for a smoother FAFSA application. The FAFSA will ask for your and your contributor's contact details, as well as details about your finances. Among the information you may need:

- Tax returns from two years prior
- Current balances of any bank accounts
- Net worth of investments, businesses and farms
- Child support records

In the new version of the FAFSA, you must consent to transferring federal tax information directly into the form using the Financial Aid Direct Data Exchange. Refusing this automatic transfer will disqualify you from receiving federal student aid, even if a contributor enters tax information into the form manually.

5. Review Everything for Accuracy

While the old FAFSA asked you 108 questions, the new FAFSA asks significantly fewer. But while the form is shorter, you don't want to rush through it. The student aid website says it should take less than an hour to complete, but

set aside extra time to make sure you understand each question and provide accurate answers.

Before you hit submit, review everything to ensure all your answers are correct. Errors could result in delays, which could impact your financial aid awards.

Where to Ask for Help

Filling out the FAFSA can feel daunting, especially if you've never done it before. Fortunately, there are resources that can help you along the way.

Within your FAFSA form, you'll see various question mark icons that, when clicked, provide tips on how to answer a question. You can also find answers to common questions at FAFSA Help, as well as via a chat with Federal Student Aid's virtual assistant, Aidan.

If you want to speak with a human, you can access live chat, send an email at the Federal Student Aid Information Center or call 800-433-3243. Cardona said the contact center has increased staffing this year and will expand its nighttime and Saturday hours beginning Nov. 22 through March 2, 2025.

Finally, you can reach out to your high school counselor or your college's financial aid office for help.



Ramon Darnell Davis Sr., 66

March 27, 1958 - Nov. 14, 2024
Service will be held at 11 a.m. Tue., Dec. 3, at Holy Savior Catholic Church, 3000 E. 13th St.

Christopher Grant Granman, 59

May 7, 1965 - Nov. 13, 2024
Graveside service was held Nov. 13 at Kechi Cemetery.

LaiKeta R. English, 69

May 27, 1955 - Nov. 9, 2024
Service was held Nov. 22 at Jackson Mortuary Chapel.

Jerry Criner, 64

May 2, 1960 - Nov. 8, 2024
Service will be held at 11 a.m. Sat., Nov. 23, at New Hope Baptist Church, 1001 N. Ohio.

Israel Dean Alford, 76

June 1, 1948 - Nov. 7, 2024
Service will be held at 11 a.m. Sat., Nov. 23, at New Jerusalem Baptist Church, 1625 N. Madison.

Armelia Leequilla Jones-Posey, 58

Dec. 31, 1965 - Oct. 28, 2024
Service was held Nov. 16 at Greater Pentecostal COGIC.

Roy Hughes, 72

May 4, 1952 - Oct. 26, 2024
Service was held Nov. 8 at New Jerusalem Baptist Church.

Willie Wilkerson, 78

July 14, 1946 - Oct. 25, 2024
Service was held Nov. 14 at Tabernacle COGIC.

Aulline Ray, 104

Sept. 29, 1920 - Nov. 2, 2024
Service was held Nov. 13 at Jackson Mortuary Chapel.

Cornelius R. Carter Jr., 76

Aug. 9, 1948 - Oct. 26, 2024
Service was held Nov. 15 at New Testament Non-Denominational Church.

Jayvon Dyrell Lee Cobbins, 22

Nov. 13, 2001 - Oct. 21, 2024
Service was held Nov. 16 at Madison Avenue Clubhouse.

INMATES, from Page 10 ↓

the National Police Accountability Project of the National Lawyers' Guild.

The Lawsuit

The settlement was reached in response to a class action lawsuit filed in May 2022 citing wait times as long as 13 months for competency

evaluations and restoration treatment for people facing criminal charges.

The case was filed by The American Civil Liberties Union of Kansas, along with the NPAP and Stinson LLP, against the Kansas Department of Aging and Disability Services (KDADS), which runs the forensic unit at Larned State Hospital.

Competency evaluations are assessments conducted to determine whether a person has the mental capacity to understand and participate in a specific activity or decision-making process. In legal context, the evaluations determine whether someone is mentally competent to stand trial, enter a plea, or make legal decisions.

Recently, wait times for competency evaluations at the hospital have become so long that people may spend more time waiting in jail for an evaluation or treatment

bed, pretrial, than they would face in prison if they were convicted, with approximately 148 people on the waiting list for competency evaluations.

"This is a huge step in the ongoing work to ensure our state's detention practices do not criminalize mental health issues," said Monica Bennett, ACLU of Kansas legal director. "Remaining in the jail environment is devastating and deeply harmful even for those whose mental health is not in question, and condemning Kansans to languish across the state in their county jails was contradictory to our values of justice."

The backlog has been described as one of the most severe mental health crises in the state, as individuals may remain incarcerated longer than they would if convicted simply because the state cannot accommodate timely evaluations.



Minister of Worship Arts

Tabernacle Bible Church of Wichita, Kansas is seeking a passionate, spiritually grounded individual to lead and inspire our Worship Arts Ministry. The Minister of Worship Arts will oversee all musical aspects of our worship experience, fostering an environment where creativity and faith flourish. If you have a heart for worship, a vision for leading diverse teams, and the ability to connect our congregation to God through artistic expression, we'd love to hear from you!

To apply
visit www.tabernaclebiblewichita.com
to submit a profile and upload a resume which are the first steps in the application process. For additional information, contact (316) 681-3954.

NOTICE OF PUBLICATION
IN THE EIGHTEENTH JUDICIAL DISTRICT
DISTRICT COURT, SEDGWICK COUNTY, KANSAS
IN THE MATTER OF THE MARRIAGE OF
RALPHINA K PERRY (Petitioner)
and
SWARAY S PERRY (Respondent)
Case No. SG24-DM006266
PURSUANT TO CHAPTER 23 OF KANSAS STATUTES
ANNOTATED NOTICE OF SUIT THE STATE OF KANSAS TO:
YOU ARE HEREBY NOTIFIED that a petition has been filed in the District Court of Sedgwick County, Kansas by Petitioner, praying for an absolute decree of divorce, and you are hereby required to plead to such petition on or before the 23th day of DECEMBER 2024, in said court at Wichita, Sedgwick County, Kansas. Should you fail therein, judgment and decree will be entered in due course upon said petition.

RALPHINA PERRY
Petitioner



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The Kauffman Foundation's refreshed grantmaking strategy is designed to foster equitable economic mobility for Kansas Citians – regardless of their race, gender, or geography. We aim to uplift opportunities that drive impactful change and remove systemic barriers, setting generations on the path to prosperity.

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“

We're more dedicated than ever to doing hard things – even if uncomfortable – for the sake of innovation and possibility.”

– Dr. DeAngela Burns-Wallace
*President and CEO,
Kauffman Foundation*