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HO! HO! HO!

WHERE ARE YOU, BLACK SANTA? PAGE 15



Star Palmer Wins Prize
Pinnacle Prize Winner For Work
Within Lgbtq+ Community **Page 7**



Joey Thomas
Eastside Barber Planting
Seeds of Hope in KC **Page 17**

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THE VOICE

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LOOKING AHEAD

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on our website. Not just current and recent issues. You can read issues dating back several years. Go to www.CommunityVoiceKS.com, click on "e-editions." Plus, our archive is searchable. If there's a particular story you're looking for, just enter a defining word for the story in the search box.

We're on Our Winter Break

We'll be back with our next print edition on Mon. Jan. 10. In the meantime, we will be posting on our website at communityvoiceks.com.

You can also keep up with our coverage via our newsletters. Sign up, They're free.

WHERE CAN YOU FIND THE VOICE?

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A Message to Our Kansas City Readers



Bonita Gooch

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, "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
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Join The Voice for Black Trivia Night in Wichita

It's culture!! It's history!! It's FUN!!

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.

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Prosecutor Fani Willis is Removed From the Georgia Election Case Against Trump and Others

By Associated Press

A state appeals court on Thursday removed Fulton County District Attorney Fani Willis from the Georgia election interference case against Donald Trump and others, the latest legal victory for the president-elect in criminal cases that once threatened his career and freedom.

The case against Trump and more than a dozen others had already been stalled for months over an appeal related to a romantic relationship Willis had with special prosecutor Nathan Wade, whom she had hired to lead the case.

Citing an “appearance of impropriety” that might not typically warrant such a removal, a Georgia Court of Appeals panel said in a 2-1 ruling that “this is the rare



Fulton County District Attorney Fani Willis speaks during a news conference, Aug. 14, 2023, in Atlanta.

AP PHOTO/JOHN BAZEMORE, FILE

case in which disqualification is mandated and no other remedy will suffice to restore public confidence in the integrity of these proceedings.” Willis’ office immediately filed a notice of intent to ask the Georgia Supreme Court to review the decision.

But pursuing a criminal case against a sitting president is a virtual impossibility. And Trump will return to the White House having overcome efforts to prosecute him and empowered by a Supreme Court ruling granting him presumptive immunity for any “official acts” he takes in office.

The development comes weeks after Justice Department special counsel Jack Smith abandoned two federal prosecutions against the incoming president, and as sentencing in a separate hush money case in New York is indefinitely on hold as a result of Trump’s victory in November over Democratic Vice President Kamala Harris.

A grand jury in Atlanta indicted Trump and 18 others in August 2023, using the state’s

anti-racketeering law to accuse them of participating in a wide-ranging scheme to illegally try to overturn Trump’s narrow 2020 presidential election loss to Democrat Joe Biden in Georgia. The alleged scheme included Trump’s call to Georgia Secretary of State Brad Raffensperger urging him to help find enough votes to beat Biden. Four people have pleaded guilty.

Trump told Fox News Digital that the case “should not be allowed to go any further.” The president-elect added: “Everybody should receive an apology, including those wonderful patriots who have been caught up in this for years.”

Steve Sadow, Trump’s lead attorney in Georgia, said the

See WILLIS, Page 14 →

Louisville Police Reform Agreement Prompted by Breonna Taylor Killing

By The Associated Press

The U.S. Justice Department and the city of Louisville have reached an agreement to reform the city’s police force after an investigation prompted by the fatal police shooting of Breonna Taylor and police treatment of protesters, officials said Thursday.

The consent decree, which must be approved by a judge, follows a federal investigation that found Louisville police have engaged in a pattern of violating constitutional rights and discrimination against the Black community.

Louisville Mayor Craig Greenberg said the consent decree “builds upon and

accelerates the transformational reform of community policing” in Louisville. He noted that “significant improvements” have already been implemented since Taylor’s death in March 2020. That includes a city law banning the use of “no-knock” warrants, which were commonly used in late-night drug raids.

Taylor, a 26-year-old Black woman, was roused from her bed by police who came through the door using a battering ram after midnight on March 13, 2020. Three officers fired shots after Taylor’s boyfriend, saying he feared an intruder, shot an officer

See TAYLOR, Page 31 →

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

Kansas Democratic Party Chair Jeanna Repass Launches Bid for DNC Vice Chair

By Bonita Gooch
Editor-in-Chief

Kansas Democratic Party Chair Jeanna Repass has launched her bid to become the next vice chair of the Democratic National Committee.

The 448-member Democratic National Committee (DNC) is the principal executive leadership board of the United States Democratic Party. The committee has “general responsibility for the affairs of the Democratic Party between National Conventions, coordinates strategy to support Democratic Party candidates throughout the country for local, state, and national office, and works to establish a ‘party brand’ and to formulate

the party platform.”

As state Democratic Party chair, Repass is one of two guaranteed members of the committee from Kansas.

In addition to the national chairperson, the organization has five vice chairs. This year, probably because of the party’s poor performance in the November elections, neither the chair nor any of the vice chairs are seeking reelection.

The party lost the White House, control of the Senate, and failed to regain control of the House. Without a clear leader, the party is looking for a new leadership team to help develop a platform, focus and messaging that connects with many of the Americans it lost in the November elections.

Repass hopes to be part of that team.

“Over the next four years, Democrats must be ready to take on the Trump agenda and show the American people that there is a better path forward for our country, and I am ready for that task,” said Repass in a launch video. “In the next two months, I look forward to listening to folks across ideological and geographic divisions and help chart a new course that will rebuild and strengthen the



Democratic Party.”

Repass is the first African-American female to chair the Kansas Democratic Party and is one of only eight Black female party chairs in the country. She ran for Kansas secretary of state in 2022 and has extensive experience in grassroots advocacy and organizing.

“My experience as the chair of the Kansas Democratic Party gives me a unique perspective for how our national party can not only make inroads with voters in red states but also win in these tough elections,” she said.

Current Democratic National Committee Chair Jaime Harrison, who became a darling of the media during the presidential campaign, announced his decision not to seek reelection shortly after

the election.

Candidates to replace him jumped into the race shortly after his announcement. Martin O’Malley, a 2016 Democratic presidential candidate and former Maryland governor, became the first notable figure to jump into the race. Ken Martin, who is the chair of Minnesota’s arm of the Democratic Party, and a current DNC vice chair, has also announced his campaign.

Vice chairs not seeking reelection are:

- Gretchen Whitmer, governor of Michigan
- Tammy Duckworth, U.S. senator from Illinois, and
- Keisha Lance Bottoms, former Atlanta Mayor

The DNC elections will be held Feb. 1 at the party’s winter meeting in National Harbor, Maryland.

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Event Promoters, Hotels & Lodging Sites Will Have to Disclose Extra Fees Up front

Consumers will avoid the surprise of so-called “junk fees” that drive up the price of concerts and hotel stays.

By Associated Press

The Federal Trade Commission will soon require hotels, vacation rental platforms, and live event promoters to disclose any fees upfront when they list prices.

The FTC said consumers

often see advertised prices for hotel rooms, short-term rentals, and tickets to sporting events and concerts only to be surprised later by so-called “junk fees,” including resort fees, cleaning fees, processing fees and other extra charges.

“People deserve to know

upfront what they’re being asked to pay without worrying that they’ll later be saddled with mysterious fees that they haven’t budgeted for and can’t avoid,” FTC Chair Lina Khan said in a statement.

The rule is scheduled to go into effect in 120 days.

Ticketmaster said it supports the new rule.

“Ticketmaster has long advocated for all-in pricing as a nationwide industry standard, and we’re pleased to see the FTC mandate the necessary changes to make ticket-buying more transparent for fans,” the company said.

Four of the FTC’s five commissioners voted to approve the rule. Commissioner Andrew Ferguson, who is President-elect Donald Trump’s choice to replace



If you’re tired of all the surprise fees on concert tickets and hotel stays, you’ll be pleased by this new Federal Trade Commission rule.

Khan, was the lone dissenting vote.

The rule requires lodging and ticketing businesses to clearly and conspicuously disclose the true cost – including all mandatory fees – when they display any pricing. Businesses that exclude taxes or shipping fees from advertised prices must also disclose them before customers enter any payment information.

The FTC estimates the rule will save U.S. consumers 53 million hours per year of time spent searching for the true price of lodging or events.

The new rule doesn’t do

anything to lower the fees, but a lawsuit filed by the Dept. of Justice might help reduce the fees on concert tickets. DOJ sued Ticketmaster and its parent company, Live Nation Entertainment, earlier this year.

The government asked a court to separate the companies, saying they have a monopoly on concert promotion and ticketing that drives up prices for consumers.

The Biden Administration also has targeted the fee practices of U.S. airlines, banks and online payment platforms.



Another Government Ruling Will Help Airline Travelers

Just in time for the holiday travel season, a new U.S. Dept. of Transportation rule has gone into effect mandating automatic refunds for significantly delayed or canceled flights. Learn more about this policy and how it works in our online story at CommunityVoiceKS.com.



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Star Palmer Wins Pinnacle Prize for LGBTQ+ Community Support Work

The recognition comes with a \$100,000 cash award.

By **Thomas White**
Kansas City Reporter

Star Palmer was caught between worlds when she got the call – one foot in the shower, one foot out.

But the news on the other end of the line would change her life: she had won the Pinnacle Prize, a recognition that comes with a \$100,000 cash award.

“I was super ecstatic, in shock, disbelief,” says Palmer.

That disbelief stemmed partly from Palmer’s natural reluctance to spotlight her achievements. As the founder and executive director of Our Spot KC, a nonprofit providing housing and support services to the LGBTQ+ community, Palmer has always focused on the work rather than recognition.

“This is my passion work,” says Palmer. “I do it because it needs to be done, not because I want to put it on social media and say, ‘Hey, I did this,’ that’s



Star Palmer

just not who I am.”

Palmer is still processing what to do with the prize money, though she’s considering putting it toward retirement – a luxury many nonprofit leaders can’t afford.

“Like many growing nonprofits, we don’t have 401(k)s, and it was just two years ago that we were able to offer insurance for my employees – we’re at that ground level,” says Palmer.

Finding Her Purpose

Palmer’s path to being a celebrated nonprofit leader began in an unexpected place – the construction industry. As a union sheet metal worker, she completed a five-year apprenticeship and worked on major projects including Kauffman Stadium and the Kauffman



Palmer helps prepare meals at Lion House, a transitional home for members of the LGBTQ residents run by members of the community.

Center for the Performing Arts.

A tragic turning point came in fall 2014, when a close friend was murdered in what appeared to be a hate crime based on his sexuality. Palmer felt local law enforcement dismissed it as “another statistic,” so she partnered with the Kansas City Anti-Violence Project (KCAVP), a local LGBTQ nonprofit, to investigate. They took the story to the national press, and organized fundraisers for the victim’s daughters, which finally got local FBI and police to engage with the case.

Through this work, KCAVP

offered Palmer a job that she accepted despite a substantial pay cut.

“I took a quarter of my previous paycheck going from construction to nonprofit,” says Palmer. “But this was important work.”

Over the next few years, she worked her way up from answering phones to management, witnessing firsthand the gaps in services for LGBTQ individuals.

Building Something New

Palmer founded Our Spot KC in 2016 after spending much of her time at KCAVP

trying to secure spots in domestic violence shelters for LGBTQ individuals. There was a particular challenge with queer men and trans individuals, who were often turned away from facilities that historically only served women and children.

“I told my director at the time and the board, ‘We need to have our own housing,’” says Palmer. “My job literally is just calling out these shelters and trying to get them to not discriminate against our folks.”

The statistics behind Palmer’s urgency are stark:

- Nationally, 40% of individuals experiencing homelessness identify as LGBTQ, despite representing only 8-10% of the general population

- Of those LGBTQ individuals experiencing homelessness, 75% are people of color

“You have to look at the social determinants,” says Palmer. “It’s connected to domestic violence from family members, whether that’s your parents kicking you out or whatever the case may be. Religion, homophobia, transphobia, there’s just a lot of

factors there.”

Building Bridges

Palmer’s approach to community work emphasizes education and understanding over confrontation. When addressing misconceptions about the LGBTQ+ community, she believes in creating opportunities for learning rather than conflict.

“At the end of the day, we’re all human,” says Palmer. “It shouldn’t matter who someone sleeps with or how they identify, but we know that in different cultures, that has been the case.”

She advocates for what she calls “calling in versus calling out” – creating spaces for honest dialogue and growth.

Growing Impact

Today, Our Spot KC’s flagship program, Lion House, provides transitional housing and rapid rehousing for LGBTQ+ youth, adults, and families facing homelessness. The organization has served 5,600+ meals and provided 2,300+ hours of life skills workshops.

“We’re not just putting

See **PRIZE**, Page 13 →



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Wichita Receives \$500,000 Grant for Environmental Job Training

Workforce Alliance of South Central Kansas will use the Environmental Protection Agency funding for environmental job training.

By Bonita Gooch
Editor-in-Chief

Workforce Alliance of South Central Kansas has been announced as one of 16 agencies across the country to be awarded a Brownfield Job Training Grant. The Workforce Alliance will use the \$500,000 in grant funding across two years to help recruit, train and place workers for community remediation and restoration projects.

- The job training will be in key environmental areas, including:

- Lead and asbestos abatement
- Hazardous waste operations and emergency response
- Mold remediation
- Environmental sampling and analysis and
- Other environmental health and safety training

Individuals typically graduate from the program with a variety of certifications that improve their marketability and help ensure that employment opportunities are not just temporary contractual work, but long-term environmental



Members of the community, including (front row) Aujunae Bennett, president of the NorthEast Millair Neighborhood Association; former Wichita City Councilmember Lavonta Williams; and (back row, center) Adrienne McAlphine, community member and community engagement officer for the Environmental Protection Agency, were on hand for the announcement of the Brownfield Job Training grant. They are joined by leaders from other underserved communities in Wichita and representatives from the EPA and Workforce Alliance of South Central Kansas.

careers.

According to Jim Lawing, president and CEO of Workforce Alliance, the organization has a goal of training 90 people under the program, but he anticipates reading even more through the use of additional funding the organization has access to. Particular training

programs to be offered will coincide with industry demand.


Individuals who complete the program will graduate with certifications that qualify them for skilled trades.

“These are pretty quick training programs. These

See **GRANT** Page 14 →



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Business Briefs



Kimberly DeWitt

Kimberly DeWitt Announced as Kansas First Chief Data Officer

The Kansas Office of Information Technology Services announced Kimberly DeWitt as the State's Chief Data Officer. Creation of the newly established position reflects a growing recognition of the

importance of data in state government.

"Data... can unlock endless possibilities for serving Kansans," said DeWitt. "By fostering collaboration, promoting data-driven decision-making, and advocating for innovation, I am excited to demonstrate how data can empower state agencies."

DeWitt brings over 20 years of experience in information technology (IT) leadership to her role, including expertise in data analytics, strategy, and project management. Her private-sector experience includes leadership roles at organizations like Card Compliant, Sprint, and Black & Veatch, where she focused on technology implementation and data-driven solutions.

DeWitt last appeared in The Voice as a candidate for

the District 35 Kansas House seat in Kansas City, KS. She lost in the primaries.

Kauffman's Reorganized Grant Making Awards 55 Capacity Building Grants

In its first round of grants announced after the Kauffman Foundation rolled out its refreshed grantmaking strategy in August, the company announced it has awarded 55 organization Capacity Building Grants totaling \$11.2 million to 55 organizations. The grants are designed to strengthen the internal effectiveness and long-term stability of 501(c)(3) nonprofit charity organizations by fostering sound leadership, strong boards, professional development for staff, technology, evaluation, strategic planning, communications, and sustainability. This is the first round of grants announced

after the Foundation rolled out its refreshed grantmaking strategy in August.

"We heard loud and clear that grantees needed funds to grow their reach and achieve impact – and we responded," said Allison Greenwood-Bajracharya, Kauffman's chief impact and strategy officer.

These one-time, short-term grants were awarded to charities that demonstrate a specific capacity gap and that are aligned with the Foundation's strategic priorities and focus areas.

Among the 55 grant recipients were:

- Connections to Success
- DeLaSalle High School
- LINC Stronger Families Together
- High Aspirations
- Prospect Business Association
- Redtail Academy
- Sisters in Christ
- DEED Foundation
- The Transition Academy
- Transition Academy
- Youth Volunteer Corps



Aonya Barnett

Safe Streets Kansas Receives Funding From Opioid Settlement Funds

Safe Streets Wichita, an organization focused on education and harm reduction for substance misusers, is one of 32 Kansas organizations that will receive more than \$8.5 million in grant awards in the third round of funding using money recovered through opioid legal settlements.

Funded organizations were selected by the Kansas

Fights Addiction Grant Review Board with grants awards this round prioritizing strategies related to treatment, recovery, hard reduction and linking people to support services and care.

This a change in direction by the review board. After they received feedback from the first year of grant making, the board refined its RFP process to further target immediate needs experienced across the state.

The KFA board originally had planned not to exceed \$6 million in funding for this third grant cycle, but after seeing the quality of projects proposed, the board agreed to provide more than \$2.5 million in additional funding.

Organizations were funded across the state. For a complete list of funded organizations see our story @communityvoiceks.com/health. FOR MORE INFORMATION ABOUT SAFE STREETS KANSAS, SEE OUR STORY @ [HTTPS://BIT.LY/3DPTFKJ](https://bit.ly/3DPTFKJ).



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1,000 More Steps a Day Could Reduce Risk of Depression

Study suggests this simple exercise could reduce the blues.

By Associated Press

Physical activity has been shown in past studies to be helpful to mental health, and a new study says just the steps you take each day could lead you to a reduction in depression symptoms.

A study published this month in the journal JAMA Network Open found that a higher daily step count is associated with fewer depressive symptoms.

“Our study provides further evidence that encouraging people to be active, regardless of the type or intensity of the activity, is an effective strategy for preventing depression,” said lead author of the study Dr. Bruno Bizzozero-Peroni, a postdoctoral researcher at the Health and Social Research Centre, University of Castilla-La Mancha in Spain.

The research was a meta-analysis, reviewing 33 studies involving more than 96,000 adults. The data suggested that the number of steps linked to reduced depression symptoms are fewer than you might think, said Dr. Karmel Choi, clinical psychologist and assistant professor at Harvard Medical School. Choi was not involved in



A new study confirms it, more steps helps reduce risk of depression. Read, to learn how to make it happen.

the research.

“We typically hear it’s good to get 10,000 steps a day, but here, even 7,000 steps seem to translate to better mental health,” she said.

Particularly encouraging is that even a little increase in your daily step counts can help -- as little as 1,000 extra steps in a day can potentially reduce the risk of future depression by 9%, said Dr. Brendon Stubbs, a National

Institute for Health and Care Research Advanced Fellow at King’s College London, in a statement. Stubbs was not involved in the latest research.

More studies are needed, however, because the studies included in the meta-analysis were largely observational and were focused on the general population rather than people with clinical depression, meaning researchers cannot say

if taking steps impacts depression or if people with depression just move less, Choi said.

The Movements That Work For You

While there are gaps in the research that call for more work to be done, it isn’t surprising that more movement was associated with a reduction in depression symptoms. And taking more steps isn’t the only move you can make toward better mental health, Choi said.

“Step count is a nice proxy for physical activity, which has been consistently shown to have beneficial effects on depression risk,” she added. “That said, we should remember that step counts best capture certain kinds of movement, such as walking or running, and may be less well-suited to capture activities like yoga.”

Whether it’s steps or hours, the mental health literature consistently suggests that moving to some extent is better than not moving at all.”

Where to Find the Motivation

Many people struggle with finding the motivation to exercise -- and adding depression on top of that can make it even harder to get started.

Setting goals and tracking activity doesn’t always seem to help,

Dr. Michael Noetel, senior lecturer in the School of Psychology at the University of Queensland in Australia.

“Instead, I think we have to defer to more established wisdom about what works,” he said, pointing to support and accountability.

You can find those by joining a fitness group, getting a trainer or asking a loved one to go for a walk with you, Noetel added.

“Taking a few steps toward getting that support makes it more likely that you’ll keep going,” he said.

And whether your thing is weight training or walking, you need to make the activity enjoyable to keep it up.

“Be kind to your future self by making exercise as easy and attractive as possible, like getting yourself an audiobook or a trial at a yoga studio,” Noetel said.

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Biotin: Too Much of a Good Thing Could Be a Problem

This popular supplement for hair and nail growth can cause inaccurate lab test results.

By Cleveland Clinic

Biotin, or vitamin B7, plays an important role in your overall health and well-being. And while biotin supplements can be a healthy addition to some people’s routines, they can come with a downside, too.

The Cleveland Clinic’s Dr. Matthew Goldman, a family medicine practitioner, shared info about the side effects of biotin supplements,

and why it’s important to stop taking any supplement containing biotin before having certain laboratory tests.

Negative Side Effects of Biotin

Biotin is typically considered to be a safe supplement. It’s water-soluble, which means that what your body doesn’t use passes through your urine.

Although rare, biotin may

cause these side effects:

- Allergic reaction (typically resulting in skin rashes)
- Nausea
- Cramping and abdominal pain

But the biggest drawback?

High levels of biotin can interfere with the accuracy of certain common lab tests. Meaning, if you take a supplement with biotin and then get bloodwork and other lab tests to rule out, say, a thyroid condition (or a host

of other tests), the results may not be accurate.

Biotin and Bloodwork

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) issued a safety alert warning about the risks of biotin affecting lab tests. The organization shares this complete list of tests that biotin can interfere with.

Affected tests include those used to diagnose conditions such as:

- Thyroid disease
- Heart disease
- Pregnancy
- Anemia
- Cancer

“High levels of biotin can lead to falsely high or low results on lab tests that use biotin-streptavidin technology, which is common in several lab tests,” Goldman said.

See BIOTIN Page 14 →





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PRIZE, from Page 7 ↓

people in a program and paying their rent,” says Palmer. “We’re truly surrounding them with resources and a sustainability plan that they’ve identified for themselves, [we’re] working with them and not for them.”

Palmer’s impact extends beyond housing. She leads the Kansas City Pride Community Alliance, breathing new life into KC PrideFest and Parade after 15 years of stagnation. The event has grown to become the city’s largest parade outside of sports championship celebrations.

Our Spot KC recently purchased a 29,000-square-foot navigation center with plans to transform it into a comprehensive community hub. The space will house a cafe, dance studio, content studio, and co-working space for LGBTQ+ businesses.

Palmer also plans to launch several major initiatives in 2025, and Our Spot KC has begun entering the development realm to address affordable housing shortages, aiming to control rental costs for their community.

Pinnacle Prize Co-Winner Builds Community with Soccer

Alongside Star Palmer, Mariya Goodbrake received this year’s Pinnacle Prize for her work transforming the lives of refugee youth through soccer. Goodbrake herself lived as a refugee before eventually settling in KC in 2013.



Mariya Goodbrake

Goodbrake then founded Global FC, a program that uses soccer as a tool to empower the city’s refugee youth in historic Northeast KC. Beyond the game, the program offers mentorship, tutoring, life skills workshops, and a supportive community for young people who have experienced displacement and resettlement. Serving youth from 29+ countries, Global FC helps them navigate cultural adjustments, build confidence, and develop leadership skills.

By creating an inclusive environment centered around soccer, Global FC fosters intercultural understanding and provides a space where youth can grow academically, socially, and emotionally. Goodbrake’s work also earned her the 2019 United Nations World Citizen of the Year Award for KC.

“The political climate that is coming - we don’t know where that puts any LGBTQ organization,” says Palmer. “We’re trying to buckle down and prepare as best as we can and roll with the punches as they come. Historically, the LGBTQ

community and the Black and Brown communities have had to be resilient and build on one another and work in tandem, and we’re prepared to continue to do that.”

For more info about Our Spot KC’s programs and services, visit OurSpotKC.org.

MAY YOUR CHRISTMAS BE BRIGHT & MERRY

From: Your friends at Choices Medical Clinic, Inc.®

What is the Pinnacle Prize?

The Pinnacle Prize, often compared to a local version of the MacArthur Foundation’s “genius” grant, is a \$100,000 annual award given to two individual change makers in Kansas City. Established in 2021 by the late Kenneth and Ann Baum, the Prize honors bold and innovative leaders making a lasting impact. Unlike many grants tied to specific projects, this award is for the recipients to use however they wish with no strings attached.

GRANT, from Page 8 ↓

could be two to six to eight weeks, and that person could be out and ready to earn money," said Lawing, who projects program graduates could easily be hired for \$19 to \$20 per hour.

Lawing says the program will likely begin taking applications in March and that the program is open to anyone; with the funding used in an individualized way to help people "where they are." Some of the money will be used to help remove barriers like childcare and transportation issues.

"Anyone is eligible. They just may be coming at us from a different angle," said Lawing. "We may have to do a little more work with them upfront in order to get them where they need to be at the end, but definitely [the program is] open to anybody."

The training program will be conducted locally by ISI, a national leader in environmental remediation that also offers environmental industry training and certification programs. Under the grant, participants will receive the training free of charge.

ISI may hire some of the employers, but there are other participating businesses

who've agreed to interview individuals who complete the program but there are no guarantees for employment.

"We want to provide access, so it's really going to be up to that individual to complete the training, to be ready to work, and then we will give them the opportunity," said Lawing. "But I think with that kind of skill set they'll be coming to the program with, employers will be hiring these folks pretty, pretty quickly."

The Environmental Protection Agency supports the training program because it helps develop local workforces needed to tackle and mitigate critical environmental issues in local communities.

Since 1998, EPA has awarded 430 Brownfield Job Training grants totaling more than \$113 million. With these grants, 23,400+ individuals have completed training, and 17,400 individuals have been placed in careers related to land remediation and environmental health and safety.

Over the last five years, the average starting wage for these individuals is approximately \$23 per hour.

With funding from the Biden Administration's Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act, funding for the training program has more than doubled during the past few years.

BIOTIN, from Page 11 ↓**When Should You Stop Taking Biotin Before Lab Tests?**

The typical recommendation is to stop taking biotin at least 72 hours before having tests done. But that guidance can vary depending on the test to be performed and how much biotin is in your supplements.

"If you're concerned about how supplements might affect future or previous lab results, speak to a healthcare provider and the lab performing the test. Let them know about any medications and supplements you take," Goldman said. "Making sure everyone is on the same page can help ensure you receive accurate lab results and get the best care."

What's more, biotin deficiency is rare. And while

you may think a bottle of supplements will give your hair or nails a healthy boost, the science on their effectiveness is limited.

How Much Biotin is Too Much?

Even relatively low doses of biotin supplements can affect lab results. But the higher the dose, the greater your risk.

"Even the biotin content found in common multivitamins can interfere with lab tests," Goldman said. "Higher doses, like the amounts found in supplements for hair and nail health, are more likely to cause issues."

Talk with a healthcare provider if you're concerned about the effects biotin supplements can have on your health or their influence on your lab results.

WILLIS, from Page 3 ↓

ruling was "well-reasoned and just." He said the appeals court "highlighted that Willis' misconduct created an 'odor of mendacity' and an appearance of impropriety that could only be cured by the disqualification of her and her entire office."

"This decision puts an end to a politically motivated persecution of the next President of the United States," Sadow wrote in an emailed statement.

Representatives for Willis did not immediately respond to a text message seeking comment on the ruling.

The allegations that Willis had improperly benefited from her romance with Wade resulted in a tumultuous couple of months in the case as intimate details of Willis and Wade's personal lives were aired in court in mid-February. A defendant's motion alleged that Willis and Wade were involved in an inappropriate romantic relationship and that Willis paid Wade large sums for his work and then benefited when he paid for lavish vacations.

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Black Santa: Where Are You?

Other than on t-shirts and figurines, Black Santas remain too rare, despite a history that dates back 80 years.

By Bonita Gooch
Editor in Chief

In 2013, journalist Aisha Harris, a writer for Slate Magazine, created an uproar when she penned a column, "Santa Claus Should Not Be a White Man Anymore."

In the viral, now-historic column, Harris questioned an increasingly diverse world without an increasingly diverse image of Santa.

"Isn't it time that our image of Santa better serve all the children he delights each Christmas?"

Instead of a person, she suggested replacing the centerpiece of kids' holiday dreams with a Christmas penguin, thereby nullifying the race issue surrounding Santa.

Needless to say, that issue didn't catch on. Instead, she recalls in her 2023 book, "Never in my life had I been called a n----- more times than in the aftermath of Santa Penguin."

More than a decade later, a post like that might garner even more hatred, not less. Racial hatred seems more rampant now than a decade ago, with anti-woke haters clinging even more tightly to their White privilege. They're offended when the Santa at their local mall is Black.



A Black Santa doesn't have to be a duplicate of the traditional Santa. This Santa reflects the culture Black children see regularly and may feel more comfortable with.

However, they expect everyone else to accept their vision of Santa as just the way it's supposed to be. They find themselves mad not just at the others but the corporate hacks they accuse of being woke.

Santa representation is growing, but it has a long way to go. While Black Santa figurines, cards, photos and decorations are more prevalent, nearly 80 years after the placement of the first Black department store Santa, live, melanated Santas remain too hard to find.

The History of Santa

The history of the Santa Clause we know today traces back to Saint Nicholas, a fourth-century bishop in

Turkey, who was known for his generosity and his art of secretly providing gifts to the destitute.

The history of his gift giving and legacy as a protector of the poor laid the foundation for Santa Claus.

As his reputation expanded, in Holland the concept of St. Nicholas morphed into Cinder Claus, or Sinterklaas. The Dutch celebrated with a feast on Dec. 6 where children would leave their shoes out to be filled with treats. When they immigrated to America in the 1700s, the Dutch introduced this tradition to America.

Traditions and Santa Claus evolved over the years, but many of the customs of Santa were solidified with the introduction and popularity of the

1823 story "A Visit from St. Nicholas," better known as "Twas the Night Before Christmas."

This poem established Santa as a fat, jolly guy who came down the chimney and flew around the world on his sled pulled by flying reindeer.

Santa's visual identity was further developed through a series of illustrations in Harper's Weekly, with artist Thomas Nast solidifying Santa's identity as a White man, with a white beard who wears a red suit trimmed in white.

Black Santa Arrives

As the prominence of Santa's role in the celebration of Christmas grew, Black children found themselves questioning whether Santa Claus was just for White children. There are reports of Black children writing to Black newspapers looking for answers as far back as the 1940s.

Yes, there were early Black Santas: White people in Blackface, performing demeaning and dehumanizing caricatures of Black people. But we won't count those as Black Santas.

In segregated America, Black parents couldn't take their children to the downtown department store to visit Santa. Blacks couldn't shop in those stores. So, Black people did what we always did during segregation, we created our own.

Black Santa came to the hood. He showed up at Black churches, Black schools and events sponsored by Black organizations, most often carrying a bag of fresh fruit, nuts and

hard candy for each child.

However, in larger cities in the 1940s, White families fled to the suburbs. White retailers, hoping to survive, opened their stores to Black residents who had moved into the area. Those families began demanding Black Santa Clauses in return for their patronage.

The first Black Santa Claus was hired by a White department store in 1943. It was at Blumstein's in Harlem, a store that had previously not allowed Black shoppers. Not far behind them, Black Santas were hired at Chicago and Detroit department stores, with the first Santa Claus in Detroit hired at J.L. Hudson's in 1946.

However, integration slowed the expansion of Black Santas. Black Americans began to abandon their community stores to shop uptown, where they were welcomed, albeit not so warmly. White Santa, who was paid to accept all children, did so regardless of whether he wanted to or not.

In the midst of integration, Black stores and Black Santas suffered greatly.

Black Empowerment

In the late '60s and early '70s, when Negroes became Black and began to exert their cultural identity, the segregated stores that accepted Black Santas were no more and despite welcoming Black dollars, White-owned stores didn't welcome Black Santas.

Black Santa enjoyed a comeback

See **BLACK SANTA** Page 31 →

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Omega Psi Phi Senior Banquet

Is a 38-Year Labor of Love

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

In what has become a do-not-miss event for Wichita seniors, members of the Gamma Upsilon Chapter of Omega Psi Phi Fraternity in Wichita sponsored their 38th Annual Wendell Smith Senior Citizens Appreciation Banquet on Sun., Dec. 15, at Wichita State University's Marcus Welcome Center

More than 150 seniors attended the event, where they received a delicious home-cooked meal catered by Jodee B Catering and every senior in attendance received a gift.

"No matter what, this is an event we make sure happens every year," says Larry Burk chapter advisor.

The brothers started the event as a way to give back and show appreciation for seniors in the community.

"We want them to know we honor them and that they're worthy of recognition," said Burk, the chapter's adviser.

Several years ago, the



chapter named the event in honor of one of their long-serving chapter members, Wendell Smith, who passed on but was active until his health would no longer allow him.

Every year, Santa (Joseph

Patrick, Jr.) appears at the event, but this year, he brought along one of his pesky elves (Harry Willis.)

The event chair was Brother Rodney Jones. The Chapter's Basileus is Col Johari Hemphill.

Black Santa Exhibition Brings Holiday Joy to KC

Bruce R. Watkins Center showcases winter wonderland & Black Santa collection through Jan. 7.

By **Thomas White**
Kansas City Reporter

For decades, Wilhelmina L. Stewart collected Black Santas that showed off her community's strength, joy, and holiday spirit. Now, her cherished collection finds a new home this winter at the Bruce R. Watkins Cultural Heritage Center, offering Kansas City families a chance to experience Christmas through a lens of Black excellence and celebration.

"These are modern pieces meant to uplift Black people around the holidays," says Emiel Cleaver, executive director of the center.

The exhibition transforms the cultural center and museum into a festive wonderland, featuring more than a dozen unique Black Santa figurines that Stewart carefully curated over her lifetime.

As former president of the nonprofit Friends of Bruce R. Watkins until her passing earlier this year, Stewart understood the power of positive representation, especially during the holidays.

Visitors will discover Santa figures of all sizes, from intimate workshop scenes to grand holiday displays.

The collection features Black Santas in both traditional and contemporary outfits, accompanied



by Black Mrs. Claus figures, angels, carolers, and elves - creating a complete celebration of African-American holiday traditions.

More to Explore

Beyond the Santa collection, the center features a winter wonderland theme throughout the building. Visitors can also view the permanent Bruce R. Watkins exhibit that includes a documentary about his life as an activist in Kansas City (he was the first African American elected to the city council and a co-founder of Freedom, Inc.); an exhibit on Buffalo Soldiers; and a monthly rotating display by the African American Artists Collective.



Wilhelmina L. Stewart Black Santas Collection Exhibition

Runs through Jan. 7
Bruce R. Watkins Cultural Heritage Center & Museum
3700 Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd, KCMO
Tue. - Sat. 10 a.m. to 6 p.m.

FREE

Seeds of Hope: How an East-Side Barber Works to Better His Community

Joey Thomas, through his Know Joey? Foundation, has used his skills and his will to make a difference right where he was planted.

By Thomas White
Kansas City Reporter

On a chilly November morning, hundreds of KC families are lined up outside the Urban Youth Academy near 18th and Vine, drinking coffee and hot chocolate.

There's no baseball practice or youth program to attend – they were there because a local barber decided nearly two decades ago that his community deserved better.

They were there to become one of the nearly 1,000 families to receive – for free – a turkey and all of the fixing for their Thanksgiving dinner courtesy of Joey Thomas and his Know Joey? Foundation's network of volunteers and collaborators.

“Seventeen years ago, our goal was that we just wanted to feed people,” said Thomas. “Give them some hope. Let them know that there's somebody who cares.”

The event has grown from a grassroots effort to feed 25 families, with Thomas informally selling hot dogs on the side of the road to raise the funds to cover the costs.

Now, the event is a major collaboration with partners including the Kansas City Royals, Harvesters, C&C Produce, Barham Family Farms, and even Chiefs wide receiver Rashee Rice, who donated 50 turkeys.

In 17 years, Thomas' goal is still the same, “but we've been able to build on it, and we want to keep building on that by helping the whole household for more than just one day.”

The giveaway is now a two-day event, held the week before Thanksgiving – with the Turkey Tuesday food drive and Win Wednesday giveaway in KCK and KCMO.

The two-city giveaway has turned into a friendly competition between the two cross-state teams, competing to see which location can collect and distribute the most turkeys and supplies.

This year, the Missouri side won with 510 turkeys to the Kansas side's 430.

Those who registered received free turkeys, fresh produce, eggs, and all the traditional Thanksgiving sides. As a result, nearly 1,000 families received a free Thanksgiving meal, feeding up to 10,000 to 20,000 people. The Win Wednesday event also connected families with community support services like the Black Mental Health Initiative.



Joey Thomas, with a turkey who lives despite Thomas' antics, has been giving back to the community for 17 years. He started with his Fresh Cuts Fresh Start campaign for students returning to school. This year, his Thanksgiving dinner giveaway helped nearly 1,000 families in the Kansas City area.

Getting to Know Joey Thomas

The story of how a barber from 42nd and Bellefontaine became a community leader starts long before any turkey giveaways or charitable foundations.

Growing up on KC's east side in the 1980s, Thomas learned early lessons about survival and community. Raised by a single mother after losing his father, he watched his neighborhood struggle with violence and drugs.

Rather than being defeated by circumstance, Thomas drew motivation from them, learning what paths to avoid and developing an entrepreneurial spirit from an early age.

“Man, if you go broke, you get creative,” says Thomas. “Growing up, my brothers and I had an excellent mother who taught us how to survive, how to hustle, and how to do everything.”

His first business venture started at 12, working in his mom's hair salon. Young Joey would act as a concierge for clients, even selling umbrellas on rainy days to protect fresh hairstyles. These early experiences laid the groundwork for his future as both a businessman and community leader.

In 2007, Thomas opened Joey Cuts Barber Salon near 39th and Indiana, in what was then considered one of KC's most dangerous areas. Some questioned investing in the neighborhood, but Thomas saw beyond the



Joey Thomas, right front, has a great team of volunteers who help make his Thanksgiving giveaway drive a success.

statistics to a community rich in love and support, even if not in financial resources.

“Bloom where you are planted,” says Thomas.

Thomas later expanded into a larger shop in the Lincoln building, which is today the 180V Barber Salon. He's won the People's Choice Award for Best Barber and Best Barber Shop in addition to honoring his Know Joey? Foundation.

Thomas is a serial entrepreneur beyond his foundation and barbershop. His family operates Frosty Frogs Water Ice, which provides a fat-free, dairy-free ice cream alternative. They've secured status as Gates Bar-B-Q's official dessert provider and are preparing to open a new storefront next to the Gates 12th and Brooklyn location.

Fresh Cut Fresh Start

The same year he opened his first barbershop, Thomas launched what would become one of his foundation's flagship programs: Fresh Cut Fresh Start (FCFS). The program offers free haircuts to students the week before Kansas City Public Schools begin.

“We started Fresh Cut Fresh Start to

introduce the business to the neighborhood and show our commitment to helping the community, and they really responded,” says Thomas.

The initiative began with a modest goal of providing 25 students free haircuts. That first year, they provided 27 hair cuts and surpassed their mark. Today, FCFS serves hundreds each year and offers comprehensive support, including free backpacks, educational resources, health screenings, and mentorship opportunities.

The program's impact became clear when Thomas encountered a student who relied on Fresh Cut Fresh Start for their only haircut of the year. Experiences like that strengthened Thomas' resolve to continually expand the foundation's work.

Thomas is working toward a “Fresh Cut Fresh Start 3.0” program that will be implemented inside schools. The idea is to incentivize academic achievement by providing free haircuts each quarter – when report cards come out – to students maintaining a 3.0 GPA or better. It will also include

See **HOPE**, Page 18 →

City-Wide Kwanzaa Celebration Returns to KC

A free week-long Kwanzaa celebration unites the community through cultural performances, discussions, and an African Marketplace.

By **Thomas White**
Kansas City Reporter

The National Black United Front - Kansas City Chapter (NBUF-KC) is bringing its signature Kwanzaa celebration back to the 18th & Vine Jazz District.

This year's theme is "Why We Must Win," with Kwanzaa coordinator Jawanza Hardy connecting the celebration's theme to current challenges facing the Black community.

"Although the current political climate does not appear to bode well for Black people in this country, we have always faced adversity since we first landed on these shores," Hardy says. "We are a resilient people who have fought for our liberation throughout our existence."

The week-long celebration runs from Dec. 26 through Jan. 1. Most events will take place at the Gem Theater, with the final celebration moving to the Nefertiti Ballroom in Kansas City, KS.

The celebration will feature free nightly programs highlighting each of the Nguzo Saba (Seven Principles) that form Kwanzaa's foundation.

Each evening will begin with an African Marketplace at 6 p.m., where local vendors, artisans, and food purveyors showcasing their work. The programs will start nightly at 7 p.m., with John Riley serving as MC throughout the celebration.

Here's what attendees can experience each day:



Kwanzaa Kinara candle-holder with mshumaa, candles that represent seven principles. *KURT STRAZDINS*

Dec. 26 (Umoja/Unity): The Esoke Cultural Arts Center will kick off opening night with traditional African dances. Under the direction of Yaminah Muhammad and musical director Quarieb Muhammad, performers will present "Lomban, The Dance of The Joli" and "Ekon Kon." NBUF-KC will present the Charles Miller Black Liberation Award to Janay Reliford, who founded Camp C.H.O.I.C.E and leads the KC Reparations Coalition. Reliford has also created "African History Saturdays," a monthly educational program exploring African heritage.

Dec. 27, (Kujichagulia/Self-Determination): Art In Motion and the African Centered College Preparatory Academy (ACPREP) will host an exploration of "Arts in Education" through a multicultural performance. Directed by Danny Diallo Hinds, the

evening will feature dance, music, spoken word, and dramatic interpretations rooted in Alkebulan educational practices, highlighting the empowering role of self-expression and cultural pride.

Dec. 28 (Ujima/Collective Work and Responsibility): Brothers Liberating Our Communities (BLOC), a 501(c)(3) dedicated to increasing Black male educators in schools, will lead this evening's program. Executive Director Cornell Ellis will guide discussions on academia, achievement, and collaborative futurism, emphasizing the importance of collective work in addressing systemic gaps in education.

Dec. 29 (Ujamaa/Cooperative Economics): The Divine Nine, historically Black Greek organizations, will showcase their collective impact through community service and innovative programs. The Black Student Solidarity Network (BSSN), based at Lincoln Preparatory Academy, a group of activist students at Lincoln College Preparatory Academy, will present their vision for youth activism, focusing on economic empowerment and community engagement.

Dec. 30 (Nia/Purpose): The A-Flat Youth Orchestra, led by founder Darryl A. Chamberlain, will perform musical selections by icons such as Grover Washington and Barry White, marking their sixth Kwanzaa celebration appearance. Highlights include the return of the "Name That Tune" event, special performances by Asa Barnes, the TNC Youth Choir, and pianist Angela Ward.

Dec. 31 (Kuumba/Creativity): The American Jazz Museum will host this celebration at the historic 18th & Vine Jazz District. Through interactive exhibits and live performances, attendees will experience Kansas City's jazz legacy and the museum's role as a cultural and educational hub since its founding in 1997.

Jan. 1 (Imani/Faith): The week concludes with the Unity Feast at the Nefertiti Ballroom, 1314 Quindaro Blvd. Beginning at 3 p.m., the afternoon gathering encourages community members to reflect on Kwanzaa's principles and share food to celebrate faith and fellowship. Attendees are invited to bring a dish to contribute (no pork).

Wichita Kwanzaa Events

Enjoy the first day of Kwanzaa with a celebration hosted by the Sedgwick County Council of Elders and the Wichita Branch NAACP, Thursday, Dec. 26, 2 pm, The Center, 1914 E. 11th St. FREE.

The Wichita Public library is also sponsoring a Kwanzaa celebration, Thursday, Dec. 26, 2:30 - 3:30 pm, Wichita Public Library, 711 W. 2nd St. Learn about this special holiday, enjoy crafts with family and friends, and come together with community. FREE.

HOPE, from Page 17 ↓

mentorship opportunities and scholarships for graduating seniors, creating a sustainable cycle of

community investment in its youth.

Through all his ventures, Thomas maintains a focus on uplifting the community that shaped him.

From the first barbershop on

39th Street to today's multifaceted foundation serving thousands, Thomas has shown that transformation starts with seeing possibilities where others see problems.

Through his foundation's work, he's proving that when you bloom where you're planted, you can help others grow too.

"It's a very small piece of what it

takes when it comes to community development," Thomas says. "It's a small taste of what we can truly do when we all just work together for a common goal."



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WICHITA KANSAS

3 Ways Officials Can Make Homes Affordable in Kansas

Home and rental prices have skyrocketed in recent years because of a housing shortage. That's leading to a rise in homelessness and could be hurting the economy.

By Dylan Lysen
Kansas News Service

A housing shortage in Kansas has sparked skyrocketing home prices, making it much harder to purchase a home. State lawmakers have taken notice and are considering ways to create more affordable housing.

A special committee in the Kansas Legislature reviewed the situation and suggested several ideas that may be able to alleviate some of the problems. But none of the ideas include large new programs or major state funding.

Rep. Sean Tarwater (R-Stilwell), who led the committee, said the state approved affordable housing initiatives in recent years. He said those changes have not had enough time to make a significant difference yet.

"We've got to be cognizant of the programs that we currently have before we start piling on new programs," Tarwater said, "and we've got to make sure the ones we have work."

Still, the state has a long way to go. Housing advocates estimate it would take several thousand new homes built each year just to meet demand. And construction costs keep rising as well. So it could take years before the shortage is resolved.

The lack of housing is also contributing to rising homelessness in the state.

While home prices are rising, so are home and apartment rental costs. Advocates serving the homeless say Kansas had the sixth highest rent price increase in the country in 2023. Data in Johnson County also shows more than half of homeless people there have some sort of income, but still can't afford a place to live.

The housing shortage may also hurt the economy. Rep. Leah Howell (R-Derby) said she's heard from business owners who are having a hard time filling positions because new employees can't find housing.

Here are some of the ideas the committee is recommending:

Reviewing Tax Incentives

Federal tax credits for affordable housing projects are not new but were not regularly utilized. Housing development in Kansas took off once the state joined in on providing its own tax credits.

The Legislature enacted the Affordable Housing Tax Credit in 2022, which can be coupled with federal benefits to further

incentivize developers to build more affordable housing in the state. The Kansas Housing Resources Corporation, which oversees those state tax credits, shows that it helped develop nearly 5,000 homes over the last two years.

The committee suggested looking at whether the state can find more opportunities to couple state tax credits with federal funding opportunities to create an even larger impact.

But lawmakers said they also want to review whether some incentives should be spread out, rather than coupled with the federal funding or connected to other state tax credits, to make sure they are dispersed and support more housing projects.

Reworking State Zoning Laws

Kansas zoning laws are currently based on land use. Some communities want to create more mixed-use zoning, like allowing multi-story buildings with businesses on the ground floor and apartments above.

Jamie Sauder, president of the Kansas Association of Realtors and a city commissioner in Emporia, said his community tried creating a new comprehensive plan that would have implemented form-based zoning. That focuses more on the appearance of a property, rather than its use. So buildings can be mixed-use.

However, the city and Lyon County could not enact the plan, because state law requires land-use zoning. So a property can only have one use, like commercial or residential. Mixed-use zoning is allowed, but it usually requires a special permit. That also gives people in the community an extra chance to block a project they don't like.

Sauder said amending the state law could allow cities to enact form-based zoning. That and streamlining could allow more housing development. He said form-based zoning also promotes housing density and makes property more affordable.

"It puts more people using the same amount of infrastructure (together)," Sauder said, "which means it's cheaper. Property taxes go down."

Sen. Renee Erickson (R-Augusta) said she wants the Legislature to consider reworking state zoning laws to allow more flexibility for cities to create local solutions.

But she said she wants lawmakers to be careful and not go too far. She said any changes should not restrict a community's



Kansas lawmakers have taken some action on addressing the state's housing shortage. In 2022, they approved new state tax credits that match federal tax credits for affordable housing, which were used to build these Mission 43 housing units in Kansas City, KS.

local control of zoning.

Sealing Eviction Filings

When a landlord begins an eviction process in court, they must provide notice to the renter and then file a lawsuit. However, that filing is a public court record and can be held against a renter when they try to find new housing, even if they are never formally evicted.

For instance, a renter could fall behind on paying rent and a landlord could then file an eviction notice. The renter could resolve the issue and the eviction case does not proceed in court. But that filing is still on the renter's record, and a landlord of a different property could point to that as a reason to disqualify them.

Christina Ashie Guidry, director of policy and planning for United Community Services of Johnson County, told lawmakers that it's unfair to renters who are never formally evicted.

She said landlords in Kansas file more than 14,000 eviction filings each year, but only half of them are finalized.

"It stays on your record, publicly searchable, forever," Guidry said. "That is despite the fact that half of these cases are never

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With rents like these identified as "exception values," no wonder nearly half of Kansas renters pay more than 30% of their income on housing costs, a level that's considered "cost-burdened."

prosecuted."

The committee recommended sealing the filings in court, meaning they won't be publicly viewable.

That won't create more housing, but it may provide relief to low-income renters who have previously faced eviction and are struggling to find a home.

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Wichita City Council Approves Expanded Enforcement on Homeless Encampments

By Stefania Lugli/
Wichita Journalism
Collaborative

The Wichita City Council voted Tuesday evening for stronger enforcement of an ordinance against illegal camping. The move, which supporters argued would simplify the ordinance, came after two hours of public comment.

The council voted 4-3 in favor. Enforcement will begin in

January.

The new limits approved by the council allow for rapid removal of reported encampments by law enforcement, city workers and contractors by eliminating the need to post notices to vacate. A particular focal point will be locations that “pose health and safety concerns” such as doorways, sidewalks, areas near bridges, bus shelters, playground and the multi-agency

center campus.

Fines for illegal camping will also be lowered from up to \$500 to up to \$200. The ultimate fine is at the discretion of a judge who can substitute the cost in community service for \$10 an hour. Opponents still worried that allowing for more clean-ups would result in more arrests and create more instability for Wichita’s homeless.

But Wu said the spirit of

the ordinance was to help rather than harm homeless individuals.

“This is not a sweep to criminalize homelessness, this is to encourage individuals in our community on our streets, on sidewalks and underneath bridges that literally have a bed right now. And it’s a 24/7 shelter so that means you do not have to leave,” she said.

Wu reminded attendees that an illegal camping

ordinance with punitive measures has existed since 2013 and said that Tuesday’s ordinance change will “simplify” language. According to officials, only five people have been arrested and put in jail for illegal camping violations in five years – one person was prosecuted. Wu joined Council members Dalton Glasscock, J.V. Johnston and Becky Tuttle in voting for the changes.

Council members Brandon Johnson, Maggie Ballard and Mike Hoheisel opposed it, expressing concern that it was being rushed. More review was needed, they said, to determine whether stricter enforcement would really convince a homeless person to seek shelter. Ballard was in favor of tabling the ordinance until it could be reviewed by the Homelessness Task Force.

Y’S Job Prep Program Provides Training Now and Jobs This Summer

By Voice News Service

The Greater Wichita YMCA’s long-running Job Prep initiative is recruiting students now for summer employment jobs this summer.

Funded through the Y’s Strong Community Campaign and sponsored by Koch Industries, Job Prep is a free program that creates work-ready teens through training, development, certifications in the classroom and time/experience in the workplace.

In-person Job Prep sessions begin next month at the Downtown and Steve Clark Y branches, but there are also Job Prep sessions at six area high schools: North, South, East West, Southeast and Heights.



Late bus transportation is available for students who take job prep at a high school location.

“We know how valuable Job Prep can be to teens who are looking for direction in their

lives, and we are honored to work with USD 259 to reach out to even more youth,” said Tyrone Baker, who heads the initiative as the Y’s Community Development Senior Program Director. “In the 16 years since



we created Job Prep, we’ve seen countless teens discover their true potential and begin to believe in themselves after

attending the sessions and being hired for the summer by one of our partner businesses.”

Job Prep classes meet for two hours in the evening once a week for 12 weeks starting the week of February 3. Teens must be between the ages of 15-17 to participate in JOB PREP at Y branches; sessions at area high schools are for students between the ages of 16-17.

“Our goal is to give students the tools they need to succeed in their path after high school, and Job Prep is a wonderful addition to those efforts,” said Gil Alvarez, deputy superintendent, Wichita Public Schools. “We are proud to work with the Greater Wichita YMCA to support our community’s youth



and celebrate all that they can accomplish and contribute to the world around them.”

As part of the Job Prep curriculum, participants learn to:

- Find and review job postings;
- Prepare and submit a job application;

See TRAINING Page 31 →

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Sylvester Thompson

KCK Police Launch High-Tech Crime Center

Real Time Intelligence Crime Center combines video monitoring, license plate readers, and gunshot detection for rapid police response.

By Thomas White
Kansas City Reporter

In just two weeks since its launch, the Kansas City Kansas Police Dept. says its new Real Time Intelligence Crime Center (RTICC) has already prevented several violent crimes and drug deals,



To have a great community, you have to have a safe community."

TYRONE GARNER
KCK Mayor

marking what they call a "quantum leap" in the department's ability to protect the community.

The state-of-the-art facility, housed in what was once an abandoned room in KCKPD's East Patrol Division, represents a significant investment in public safety technology that's already showing results.

Only 150 police departments nationwide have access to this level of technology.

"This is going to be a game-changer for us and our community," says Police Chief Karl Oakman.

He noted that violent crime in KCK has dropped 62% since 2020, a trend he believes the new center will help continue.

The RTICC facility operates like a high-tech command center, with intelligence analysts monitoring multiple screens showing real-time video feeds from across the city. These analysts can immediately relay critical information



Like this shot from an episode of "NCIS Los Angeles," entertainment is the new reality in Kansas City, KS, with the recent opening of its Real Time Intelligence Crime Center.

to officers responding to calls, helping them know exactly what they're walking into. The system also enhances police accountability and officer safety through real-time tracking of all patrol vehicles. Every police car's location is displayed on the center's massive 15-foot, 4K video wall, allowing supervisors to

monitor response times and ensure proper coverage across the city.

Mayor Tyrone Garner, himself a retired police officer with 32 years of service, praised the initiative.

"To have a great community, you have to have a safe community," Garner said. "It's a great start in innovative ways to use technology to find ways to keep the great people of Kansas City, KS, safe."

The center's technology includes license plate readers, traffic cameras, and a sophisticated gunshot detection system that comes with an innovative twist. When the sound of a shot is detected, the system syncs with video to show officers what happened in the area before the shot was fired.

Capt. Kevin Fithian, who oversees the center's operations, shared a success story that shows how the RTICC works.

When a carjacking occurred at a gas station in downtown KCK, analysts entered the victim's license plate number into the system. Within 30 minutes, plate readers and video tracked the stolen vehicle to 78th and State Ave. Analysts watched the suspect park and exit the car via security cameras and guided officers to make an arrest.

"We went from hoping to get your car back to solving the crime in 30 minutes," says Fithian. "And we did it without putting anyone at risk from a high-speed chase."

The center is currently



Wichita Rolled Out Real Time Crime Center In June 2024

The Wichita Police Dept. rolled out a similar Real Time Crime Center in June with a town hall meeting where they explained the new system, the technology they had put in place at that time, and their plans to expand the system in the upcoming year.

Learn more about Wichita's Real Time Information Center in this article on our website.

staffed Mon. through Fri. from 8 a.m. to 11 p.m. by four intelligence analysts, one detective, and one captain. Plans are in place to expand to 24/7 coverage as staffing allows.

See **HIGH-TECH** Page 23 →

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HIGH-TECH, from Page 22 ↓

Funding for the center came from multiple sources, including the unified government, county commissioners, and a federal grant secured through Sen. Jerry Moran's office. The department has installed 37% of its planned camera network, with more installations ongoing.

To make the system even more effective, KCKPD is inviting residents and businesses to join their "Connect KCK" security camera registry. The voluntary program allows community members to register their security cameras with the department, creating a broader network of surveillance that can help solve crimes faster.

Residents and business owners interested in registering their security cameras can visit KCKPD.org and find the registration link under the crime tab. Registration takes about 30 seconds and allows police to quickly contact



KCKPD Chief Karl Oakman announced the implementation of the Real Time Intelligence Center and its initial success at a recent press conference.

camera owners if a crime occurs in their area.

The department stressed that this is a voluntary program and that privacy concerns are taken seriously. When a crime occurs, police can quickly identify which community members have cameras in the area and request footage that might help solve the case.

"I can say without a doubt that these police officers moving forward into the next generation are what great policing is all about," says Garner. "Even being short-staffed, they put this community in an era of historic lows in violent crime ... it really helps make Wyandotte County a great and safe place to live, work, and raise a family."



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Happy Holidays

Have a wonderful, safe holiday season!



DAD'S CONCLAVE New Program Helps Fathers Thrive

Fathers can access free parenting resources, earn up to \$4,500 in child support relief, and job placement assistance.

By Thomas White
Kansas City Reporter

Like many new fathers, Nelson Gabriel learned parenting through trial and error. His earliest days of fatherhood included backward diapers and confusion about car seats—experiences that shaped his mission to help other fathers succeed.

“Parenthood isn’t cookie cutter: today, this might work; tomorrow, it might not work,” says Gabriel, director of the nonprofit Made Men. “But the basic principles of being there, being present in your children’s lives—that’s what matters.”

That philosophy drives the

Dad’s Conclave, a new support program in Kansas City, KS. After a successful launch that helped multiple fathers with child support modifications, GED enrollment, and employment documentation, the program is expanding to meet twice monthly.

“We had a great turnout and saw real impact right away,” Gabriel says. “We’re seeing positive results and hope these fathers will spread the word to others.”

The Conclave will now gather on the second and fourth Saturday of each month at 626 Minnesota Ave., on the third floor, from 10 a.m. to noon.

“What I believe deep in my heart is that if the dad’s okay, he’ll take care of everybody,” says Gabriel. “When the father’s not in the right place, the rest of it’s not gonna work out.”

Through program participation, fathers can earn up to thousands off their Kansas state child support arrear— the portion of child support owed to the state, not the amount that goes to children’s custodial parents.

They can earn \$1,000 by committing to program attendance, another \$1,500 by getting a GED, and other incentives up to \$4,500 from Kansas.

“This doesn’t take money away from the kids,” Gabriel says. “We’re helping fathers get back on track while ensuring support continues flowing to their children.”

Kansas Child Support representatives attend to help fathers address warrants and payment issues without risk of arrest.

The program offers comprehensive support including:

- Job placement helping

Upcoming Dad’s Conclave meetings:

- Dec. 18
- Jan. 11
- Jan. 25
- Feb. 8
- Feb. 22

The program welcomes all fathers regardless of age or circumstances. To register for the Dad’s Conclave, visit bit.ly/DadsConclaveKCK.

fathers earn at least \$45,000 annually

- GED completion assistance
- Peer mentoring
- Insurance industry career training
- Initial needs assessment to identify fathers’ current situations in one of five categories: crisis, vulnerable, safe, building capacity, or empowered— with the goal of moving toward empowerment

The program is free to attend, with both in-person and virtual



attendance options available. A free breakfast is provided for attendees.

Two veteran fatherhood advocates help lead the program:

- Bishop Luther Baker, who runs a young fatherhood program in St. Louis.
- Bishop Timmy Lee Hood, who facilitates the Kansas City sessions as part of Made Men, the nonprofit organizing the conclave.

Gabriel, who grew up without a father himself, sees the program as critical for

strengthening families and communities. The program’s success has inspired plans for statewide expansion, with virtual participants already joining from Wichita.

“We’re really trying to be that resource for those men, having them where they can come and talk, be dads, and work together,” says Gabriel. “Our vision is to make this available across Kansas, partnering with churches and community organizations to reach fathers wherever they are.”

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WICHITA

Thu., Dec. 26, 2 pm: Kwanzaa Celebration, The Center, 1914 E. 11th St. Celebrate the first day of Kwanzaa hosted by the Sedgwick County Council of Elders and the Wichita Branch NAACP. **FREE**

Thu., Dec. 26, 2:30 - 3:30 pm: Celebrate Kwanzaa, Wichita Public Library, 711 W. 2nd St. Learn about this special holiday, craft with family and friends, and come together with community. **FREE**

Fri., Dec. 27, 8 pm: Craig Owens and The Bodo Ensemble, Walker's Jazz Lounge, 252 N. Mosley. The Bodo Ensemble explores contemporary composition methods, global percussion, and diverse rhythms, all infused with the improvisational flair of jazz's post-bop tradition. Members of the Bodo Ensemble lineup include: Miki Masuda Jarvis, upright bass; Charles Rumbach, drums; David Lord, guitar; Ellen Johnson Mosley, flute; Craig Owens, guitar, flute, percussion. **COST \$15**

Fri., Dec. 27, 9 am - 3:30 pm: Via Mobile Mammography Van, HealthCore, 2707 E. 21st St. You must schedule an appointment. Contact HealthCore to schedule. Regular breast health screenings help find breast cancer early when it is most treatable and has the most treatment options. Women over 40 are eligible for screening if it has been at least 12 months since your last mammogram. Insurance will be filed for you if you participate in private, commercial, or other insurance, including Medicare or Medicaid.

Fri., Dec. 27, 6 pm: WAM Nights - Drop in Coloring for Adults, Wichita Art Museum, 1400 W. Museum Blvd. Join artist Sontia Levy-Mason, owner of Get Ya Color On Studios, for a relaxing evening of coloring. Bring a friend, get a drink from the bar, and unwind with custom-designed coloring sheets inspired by "Robert Peterson: Somewhere in America." **FREE**

Fri., Dec. 27, 5 - 7 pm: Jazz it Up Duo,

Walker's Jazz Lounge, 252 N. Mosley. Dexter Curry and Kamdon Fuqua light up the lounge with their dynamic sound, blending jazz and soul for a night of unforgettable music. **FREE**

Fri., Dec. 27, 6 - 8 pm: Artist INC Alumni Showcase, Harvester Arts at the Lux, 120 E. 1st St. Artists include: Ric Dunwoody, Janet "Toni" Federico, Malissa Long, Mike Miller, Samantha Gales, Kinta McGhee, Kevin Kelly, Landen Swearingen, Lindsey Kernodle, Dale Small, Geli Chavez, Chloë Cloud, Andres Levaggi Villanueva, Trisha Coates, Kelsy Gossett Dennis, Suspicious Glaze, Sarah Chavez, and more. **FREE**

Sat., Dec. 28, 7 pm: Black Trivia Night, Harvester Arts at The Lux, 120 E 1st St. Join The Community Voice for fun at Black Trivia Night! **\$15**

Sat., Dec. 28, 7 - 11:30 pm: The Elegant Affair, Hyatt Regency Wichita, 400 W. Waterman. Join us for an evening filled with elegance, luxury, and class. Dress to impress, indulge in delicious cuisine and refreshing drinks while enjoying live entertainment. **COST \$35+** <https://bit.ly/4gLbYZj>

Tue., Dec. 31, 3pm - 1 am: New Year's Eve Ball Drop, Norton's Brewing Company, 125 N. St Francis. Champagne toast at midnight. Balloons drop at midnight - many balloons will have prize tickets attached, including a 55" flat screen smart TV. **FREE**

Tue., Dec. 31, 9 pm - 1 am: Omega Psi Phi, Gamma Upsilon New Year's Christmas Party, The Winslet Venue, 1550 N. Lindberg Cir. Music by DJ Rickey and Kimberly Paige plus cash bar. Limited tickets available. Tickets available from Curtis Whitten at 316-518-8074 and Harry Willis at 316-992-1420. **COST \$125+**

Wed., Jan. 1, 12 - 1 pm: New Year's Day Community Workout, Foundation Fitness, 2512 E. Douglas. Kick off your new year right with an all-levels friendly workout. Bring your friends, neighbors, parents, & kids. Hang out afterward to learn more about Foundation & why you need to start your 2025 health & wellness journey. **FREE**

Thu., Jan. 2, 2:30 - 3:30 pm: Candy Cane Carnival, Wichita Public Library, 711 W. 2nd St. Test your skills at classic and unique carnival games. For ages 5-12. **FREE**

Fri., Jan. 3, 11 am - 2 pm: Imagination Playground, Wichita Public Library, 711 W. 2nd St. Come and use Imagination

Playground's Big Blue Blocks to design and build your own playscape. For ages 5-11. **FREE**

Sat., Jan. 18, 11 am - 1 pm: Sister Circle Brunch - How to Thrive in '25, Petroleum Club, 100 N. Broadway - 9th Floor. A panel featuring notable women. For info, contact cm@cmeleadup.com or 316-512-1190.

Mon., Jan. 20, 7:30 am: ARISE 9th Annual Dr. MLK Heroes and Sheroes Scholarship Breakfast, Rhatigan Student Center, Beggs Ballroom, WSU. For tickets call 316-258-2749. **COST \$30**

Mon., Jan 20, noon: Martin Luther King Jr Celebration, WSU Metroplex, 29th & Oliver. Keynote Speaker: Pastor Kneeland Brown, Tabernacle Bible Church. Vendors & community resources available. **FREE**

KANSAS CITY

Mon., Dec. 23, 7:30 - 10:30 pm: Christmas Jazz Nights, Arts on Broadway, 3550 Broadway Blvd. Eboni Fondren is a dynamic entertainer who brings passion and excitement whenever she takes the stage. **COST \$25+** <https://bit.ly/3CTUwTy>

Dec. 26 - 31, 6 pm: 43rd Annual City-Wide Kwanzaa Celebration, Gem Theater, 1615 E. 18th St. African Market and program. **FREE** (See story Page 18 for details)

Sat., Dec. 28, 2:30 - 4 pm: Mindful Black Woman: Spiritual Support Group, Mother Earth Coffee - Hyde Park, 3504 Gillham Rd. This is a space for pro-Black non-religious spiritual women to share mental health concerns and growth. Writing clubs, breathwork, and meditation. **FREE**

Tue., Dec. 31, 6 pm - 1 am: New Year 2025, Stoney Creek Hotel Kansas City, 18011 Bass Pro Dr. Let's ring in 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 pleasure on deck. DJ Foots (Mr. Make Ya Feet Hurt) & DJ Tee Stylez (Ladies of The Core). **COST \$125+**

Tue., Dec. 31, 7 pm- 1 am: New Year's Eve Live Music, Uptown Lounge, 3400 Main St. Stay for a few hours or stay for the night. Ring in 2025 and a complimentary champagne toast at midnight. DAVID BASSE JAZZ: David Basse on drums and vocals, Eric Kaplan on B3 organ and piano, Mikole Kaar on sax, flute and vocals; and MICHAEL

RORAH & TYREE THE DRUMMER. **COST: \$25** <https://bit.ly/3P1HlCS>

Tue., Dec. 31, 9:30 pm - 2:30 am: Afrocaribbean N.Y.E Ball, Cable Event Center, 1327 Burlington St. Celebrate the New Year in style at an Afrocaribbean themed ball. Get ready for a night of fantastic music, delicious food, and amazing company. Put on your best outfit and dance the night away and count down to the New Year. **COST \$30** <https://bit.ly/3P52V9G>

Wed., Jan. 1, 3 pm: 43rd Annual City-Wide Kwanzaa Celebration, Nefertiti Ballroom, 1314 Quindaro Blvd. Bring a dish (no pork). **FREE** (See details page 18)

Fri., Jan. 3, 6 - 10 pm: Kauffman Center Post-Holiday Party, Pennway Place at Studio Dan Meiners, 2500 W. Pennway St. It's time to let loose and celebrate the end of the holiday season in style. Get ready for a night of great music, delicious food, and fantastic company. **FREE**. Register at <https://bit.ly/3VMSH1f>

Sat., Jan. 4, 12:30pm: Black Women Get Fit - January 2025, Southeast Community Center, 4201 E. 63rd St. The Ultimate Day Party, a mind body & soul experience. **FREE**

Sat., Jan. 4, 10 am - 1 pm: Crafting your Year! A Vision Board Party, ArtsKC - Regional Arts Council, 106 Southwest Blvd. This public event is an opportunity for creatives of all kinds — writers, editors, graphic designers, filmmakers, makeup artists, photographers, and beyond — to come together and design a vision for the year ahead. **FREE**

Sat., Jan 18, 9 am: Dr. MLK Jr. 27th Annual Holiday Observance. Dr. UMKC Student Atterbury Success Center, 5000 Holmes. Join the KC Alphas-Beta Lambda Chapter, for the annual MLK Holiday Breakfast. Panel discussion, "What's Next for the Black Community".

Mon., Jan 20, Support unhoused members of Johnson County by packing winter survival kits. Partnership with Johnson County Community College's Center for Student Involvement (CSI), and the JCCC Honors Department to honor Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s legacy through service. There are 3 ways you can participate: On MLK day and help us pack kits and make blankets. Send a donation to help purchase blanket making supplies or purchase lunch for the volunteers. Visit our Amazon Wishlist to purchase supplies for the survival kits.

Submit Your King Holiday Events

Our King Holiday calendar of events will be printed in our Jan. 10 issue. To make sure your event is listed, make sure to have your event info submitted by Fri., Jan. 3. Submit your King event, or any event, using this QR code.



A New Kansas City Program Steers Residents to Mental Health or Drug Care Rather Than Custody

The KC REACH program aims to address mental health, substance abuse and homelessness by providing care instead of police intervention for nonviolent crises.

By Mili Mansaray
Kansas City Beacon

You see someone in the midst of a mental breakdown, or high on drugs.

Call 911 and they may get arrested. Things could get worse from there. They might



Riders wait for the Prospect Max bus at the 31st Street stop, in the first corridor to be included in the REACH program. (MILI MANSARAY/THE BEACON)

lose their job, their apartment. Rather than get the care that could pull them out of a crisis, they could land in custody and spiral into further

trouble.

So a new program funded by the Kansas City Council offers another response: A call to an alternative number

could hook the person up with a mental health clinician, a social worker or another professional to get them help.

Kansas City's fledgling Responding with Empathetic Alternatives and Community Health, or REACH, program aims to cut crime and keep people committing nonviolent offenses out of jail.

The program launched in December and operates along the Prospect Avenue corridor from 27th Street to 45th Street. It offers a shortcut to help with homelessness, mental health issues and substance abuse problems.

So instead of calling 911 and making it a police problem, residents can call 816-513-6010 or submit an inquiry at reach@kcmo.org to put REACH on the case.

"People don't have to find themselves ... in the criminal legal system in order to get the care they need," said

Derek Buford, a leader with Decarcerate KC, the organization behind the REACH campaign. "We cannot have the police be our care providers."

How does the REACH non-emergency line work?

The Kansas City Council approved \$1.2 million for the program, which sprang from a joint effort of the Kansas City Fire Department, the Kansas City Area Transportation Authority and the Kansas City Police Department.

Representatives with the program said they are still establishing the hours of operation.

REACH was deployed along Prospect because of its high poverty rates and lack of community resources, factors that contribute to higher levels of crime. The Prospect Max bus between 27th and 45th streets will also be part of REACH's coverage, meaning residents can call for assistance while

using the bus in this area.

If it works, said 6th District Councilmember Johnathan Duncan, it will be expanded across the city.

The next expansion phase will be downtown, leaders with Decarcerate KC said.

Duncan said interest already exists to expand to the Hickman Mills and Ruskin neighborhoods.

Proponents say REACH will also ease the burden on police, 911 dispatchers and the courts.

"Keeping someone in the Jackson County jail costs around \$2,000 per month per person," Decarcerate KC leader Croatia Black said. "We are overfunding the police department and continuing to strengthen the system that we know isn't working. This is giving a different option for how we deal with conflicts in our communities."

Duncan said REACH is housed within the Kansas City Health Department and is in the process of hiring workers to answer calls and respond in person.

While REACH does not include police, he said KCPD has met with the REACH committee to ensure that officers in the field understand the program and can request help from it.

"An officer's main objective is to enforce the law," Duncan said. "The purpose around this is to ensure that we're not responding to every problem with a hammer because not all problems are nails."

The Kansas City Fire Department or paramedics may respond alongside REACH in cases involving medical issues.

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ROBERT PETERSON
SOMEWHERE IN AMERICA

Robert Peterson, *American Muscle*, 2022. Oil on canvas, 60 x 80 inches. Rose Family Art Collection

WED - SUN: 10 AM - 5 PM FRI: 10 AM - 9 PM
WWW.WAM.ORG/PETERSON
1400 WEST MUSEUM BOULEVARD, WICHITA, KANSAS 67203

Robert Peterson: Somewhere in America is organized by the Wichita Art Museum. This project is supported in part by the National Endowment for the Arts.

North Newton Native Wins 13th Annual Sassy Award

April May Webb Wins International Jazz Vocal Competition that was part of TD James Moody Jazz Festival in New Jersey.

By Bonita Gooch
Voice Editor-in-Chief

April May Webb, a native of North Newton, KS, is the winner of one of the most prestigious honors for jazz singers, the 13th Annual Sarah Vaughan International Jazz Vocal Competition, also known as the “Sassy Award” for Vaughan’s nickname.

The award, named for the singer who started her career singing with Charlie Parker and Dizzy Gillespie and became a great herself, offers outstanding jazz singers a platform for embarking on a career in the music business, and offers audience members a chance to discover the jazz stars of tomorrow.

The competition began with more than 220 entrants from 21 different countries. They were whittled down to five finalists, who performed

at the TD James Moody Jazz Festival at the New Jersey Performing Arts Center in front of a live audience and a distinguished panel of judges on Nov. 24.

Entrants were judged on vocal quality, musicality, technique, performance, individuality, artistic interpretation, and ability to swing. Ultimately, it was Webb who received the top honor and a \$5,000 cash award.

One of the top annual vocal competitions in jazz, winning a “Sassy” has become a building block for many artists’ careers, including 2019 winner Samara Joy, who went on to score a Grammy Award in 2023 for Best New Artist.

Webb’s Career

Webb is a musician, composer, educator, and co-founder of the jazz ensemble Sounds of A&R.



April May Webb grew up just north of Wichita in North Newton, KS and started like many vocalists, singing in her church. But her brothers loved jazz, which helped seal her future course.

The group’s third album, “Questions Left Unanswered,” was released in 2021, peaked at No. 12 on the National Jazz Week Charts and landed on Jazz Week’s Top 50 Jazz Albums for the year.

She is also a 2023 Chamber Music America Grant recipient and 2023 Jazz Road Artist, and has toured with jazz legends such as Thelonious

Sphere Monk III and was selected by NEA Jazz Master Dee Dee Bridgewater as a Woodshed Network recipient.

Webb took center stage in internationally known artist Tschabalala Self’s New York play “Sounding Board” and made history as the first Black woman to graduate from the William Paterson University Jazz Education

Program.

“I’ve been doing this for a very long time. I have three albums out with my band. I have two solo albums out,” Webb told a reporter for UK Jazz News. “So, sometimes you just need that attention grabber for people that literally just didn’t know who you are. You’re now getting that exposure.”

Personal

Webb and her husband, a Julliard-trained musician whom she calls her coach, now live in Connecticut, but

she’s originally from North Newton.

The 33-year-old grew up in a musical home and like many professional singers, she sowed her singing roots in the church. In this case, she and her two older brothers sang at Second Baptist Church but they also toured the Midwest with their group Webb 3, singing both gospel and jazz.

Her parents, Stanley and Felicia Webb, still reside in North Newton. Her brothers, Nathan and Jacob Webb, live on the East Coast.

Arts Partners Receive Grant for Moyer’s STEMusic Project

By Voice News Service

Teaching artist and aerospace engineer Roy Moyer III and several community partners have been tapped by Wichita’s Arts Partners for a creative STEMusic project that will culminate with the creation of a bilingual musical album for kids. The intent of the project is to promote careers in science, technology, engineering, and math through music.

The project will include a youth summer camp where participants will help develop and record the album, design the cover artwork, and learn about the career opportunities in aviation in Wichita.

Funding for the project will come from a new City of

Wichita Arts Thrive grant program. The grant is made possible through a \$75,000 grant from the National Endowment for the Arts.

Along with the Arts Partner, two other projects received funding from the grant.

Local artist Michael Davenport will curate an exhibition celebrating the diversity of LGBTQIA+ experiences in Kansas with his “Threads of Pride” project. The artist will work with middle and high school Gay/Straight Alliance (GSA) and Pride clubs across Kansas to create 3ft x 5ft quilt panels reflecting their experiences. Inspired by the AIDS Memorial Quilt, these panels will offer a visual narrative of what it means to grow up LGBTQIA+ today. The panels



Roy Moyer

will be displayed throughout the Wichita community during Pride month in June 2025.

Ballet Wichita will confront past social bias by engaging two choreographers, Mollie Sansone and Yusha-Marie Sorzano, to produce the ballet “Breaking Boundaries.” The ballet will be presented in a non-traditional performance

location and will elevate Ballet Wichita’s commitment to equity and inclusion. The performance will be inspired by the Dockum Sit-In and Wichita’s aviation history while challenging the stereotypes of ballet and the art form’s history of body, gender, and racial bias.

Each of the recipient organizations will receive a \$25,000 Arts Thrive grant.



Kerry Washington stars as Captain Charity Adams commander of the Six Triple Eight Army Corps unit.

The Six Triple Eight

A Real Life Story

Tyler Perry’s latest film for Netflix, *The Six Triple Eight*, is out this week. The film is the true story of the 6888th Central Postal Directory Battalion, the only predominantly Black unit in the Women’s Army Corps unit, who faced prejudice and segregation while deployed in Europe in 1945.

Kerry Washington stars as Captain Charity Adams the real life leader of the Six Triple Eight. Want to know the story of these women and

their daunting mission, check out our 2022 story about the battalion written around the time they were awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor.



GO HERE: <https://bit.ly/4iNrEwU>

Robert Peterson's 'Somewhere in America' Exhibit Offers Authentic & Real Depiction of Black Americans

More than 40 works about childhood, masculinity, domesticity, and protest constitute the artist's first major museum exhibition, which is on view through Jan. 5.

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

"Somewhere in America," the exhibit of work by Oklahoma-based African-American artist Robert Peterson, spoke to my heart.

I'm not an art critic, but I'm a fan of art and try not to miss any exhibits dedicated to the work of Black artists.

The Wichita Art Museum usually treats our community to an exhibition of work by at least one Black artist or artists each year, so I made my way – later than I would have liked to – to see this exhibit.

I was moved by the enormity and uniqueness of this exhibition. While "Black art" runs the gamut,



"I am forever," 2024. Oil on canvas, 54 by 114 inches. Collection of the artist. Images courtesy of the Wichita Art Museum

sexual. It's intimate, and it made me wish for more times like that, lazing around enjoying the one I love.

Black love is beautiful love and Black people are beautiful just the way we are, and Peterson's exhibit reminds us of that with his intricate details that bring you into these pictures that are often so oversized that you're not allowed to ignore them. And the eyes – yes, the eyes – staring right at you, connecting with you in an oh-so-familiar way.

This is Peterson's first major museum exhibit and it's curated by the Wichita Art Museum. The museum so believes in Peterson and his work that they've reached an agreement with Peterson to send the exhibit on a two-year tour to museums across the country.

While the museum owns a few Peterson pieces they may display from time-to-time, if you don't see this exhibit of more than 40 Peterson paintings before it leaves in January, WAM officials say you'll never see the work in its entirety in Wichita again.

Do you know someone who doesn't like art or who doesn't believe art, especially art in museums, speaks to or represents them?

Then this is an exhibit you should bring them to as a great holiday treat, a date night excursion, or even a family outing where Black youth can see the grandness, value and beauty of who they are.

Robert Peterson: Somewhere in America

Wichita Art Museum thru Jan. 5.
1400 W. Museum Blvd.

Museum hours: Wed. - Sun. 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. (Fri. nights until 9 p.m.)

Exhibit admission price is \$12. Free for WAM members, college students with ID, and youth 18 and under.

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In partnership with the
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what I saw wasn't anything I was expecting. How could it be, since I'd never seen anything like it before?

Instead of depictions of upscale and glamorous Black people in their finest regalia, or historic Black people who reflect a time long ago, or modernistic depictions of Black people that exaggerate our features or style, Peterson's work depicts Black Americans you can easily find "somewhere in America."

I recognized these people. These are people I know. They're not White-lensed depictions of who we are. Peterson knows us and we see us in his work: our features, our clothes, our posture, our culture.

Peterson's depictions of us are, above all, authentic, which is what makes them so unique. His authenticity, combined with the pure quality of his work, is part of what's catapulting Peterson as one of the rising stars in America's art scene

"He seems intent on giving Black Americans the aesthetic treatment they've been denied: the treatment of royalty, of saints, of heroes, and of legend," writes Jeromiah Taylor, a freelance art critic for Wichita online arts magazine "The Shout."

Peterson's exhibit is dominated by paintings of Black men, who rarely show up in art. His paintings aren't of the suited brothers. Instead, he focuses on the "bros." The ones wearing do rags, with their pants sagging off their thin but slightly muscled frames.

These are the brothers you can imagine playing pick-up basketball in the park and hanging around later for some Black-male bonding over some 40s or a blunt.

His work also features Black families and even rarer, Black children, another group rarely depicted in art. He also features Black intimacy in a subtle and familiar, not sexual, way.

I found this intimacy especially engaging in two of the exhibit's pieces. There's a photo of two Black men showing affection for each other. It's unique, because showing physical affection for each other isn't something you'd expect from Black males. And, no, the men aren't gay.

Another painting that hit me like an arrow, was a photo of a Black couple lazily enjoying time in bed together. Again, the depiction isn't

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Wilson Pike, 72

Sept. 7, 1952 - Dec. 14, 2024
Service will be held at 10 a.m. Mon., Dec. 23, at New Salem Missionary Baptist Church, 158 N. Madison Ave.

LaTricia E. Brown, 72

May 12, 1952 - Dec. 10, 2024
Service will be held at 11 a.m. Sat., Dec. 28, at St. Mark United Methodist Church, 1525 N. Lorraine Ave.

Linda Roach, 67

July 8, 1957 - Dec. 9, 2024
Service will be held at 1 pm Mon, Dec. 30, at Jackson Mortuary Chapel, 1125 E. 13th St.

Tracy D. Tucker, 64

June 15, 1960 - Dec. 8, 2024
Service will be held at 11 am Sat., Dec. 21, at Holy Savior Catholic Church, 1432 N. Erie.

Gary L. Busby, 57

April 5, 1967 - Dec. 6, 2024
Service was held Dec.19 at Jackson Mortuary Chapel.

Giles Davis, 62

April 26, 1962 - Dec. 4, 2024
Service will be held at 1 p.m. Sat., Dec. 21, at Jackson Mortuary Chapel, 1125 E. 13th St.

Tony Bullock, 66

June 30, 1958 - Dec. 3, 2024
Service will be held at 11 a.m. Sat., Dec. 21, at Greater Pentecostal COGIC, 730 N. Cleveland.

BLACK SANTA, from Page 15 ↓

during the Civil Rights Movement, where he began to show up as a symbol of empowerment, instead of a symbol of segregation.

Across the country, Black Santas reflected cultural pride, often wearing African-inspired attire and sporting black gloves over raised-fist hands, and perfectly groomed afros. But that wasn't enough.

The popularity of Black Santa figurines, cards, t-shirts, and other paraphernalia became easy to find, but the jolly guy himself didn't become mainstream. Most often, Black Santa was relegated again to community events, where Black parents clamoured to get a culturally picturesque moment.

It wasn't until 2016 when the Mall of America hired Larry Jefferson as its first Black Santa, sparking both celebration and racist backlash.

Today, some stores hire Santas to match



Kansas City resident Tucker Lott portrays Soul of Santa as an alternative to Santa Claus, instead of a Santa clone.

the demographics of their community and others offer Santas of different races for shoppers to choose from.

However, in a country where 40% of the population identify as people of color, and a full 60 years after desegregation and 80 years after the first Black Santa was hired by a department store, Black Santas are still too rare of a find.

TAYLOR, from Page 3 ↓

in the leg. Taylor was struck several times and died in her hallway.

This undated file photo provided by Taylor family attorney Sam Aguiar shows Breonna Taylor in Louisville, Ky. (Courtesy of Taylor Family attorney Sam Aguiar via AP, File)

This undated file photo provided by Taylor family attorney Sam Aguiar shows Breonna Taylor in Louisville, Ky. (Courtesy of Taylor Family attorney Sam Aguiar via AP, File)

Taylor's mother, Tamika Palmer, attended the announcement but said she wants to see more action, not words, by city officials.



This undated file photo provided by Taylor family attorney Sam Aguiar shows Breonna Taylor in Louisville, Ky. COURTESY OF TAYLOR FAMILY ATTORNEY SAM AGUIAR via AP/FILE

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TRAINING, from Page 21 ↓

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The deadline for teens to apply for the 2022 Job Prep program is Fri., Jan. 10. Applications can be found at ymcawichita.org/jobprep.

Businesses that would like to learn more about becoming part of the Job Prep program are invited to contact Job Prep Program Director Nicole Hernandez at nicole.hernandez@ymcawichita.org or 316-776-8179.



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Wishing you a blessed holiday and prosperous 2025.**

