

# THE VOICE

Trusted Voice From The Community's Perspective



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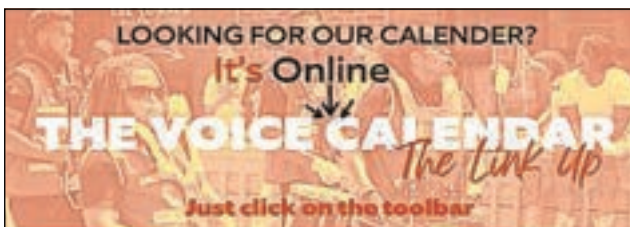
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FRIDAY, AUGUST 8, 2025

## MORE WAYS TO CONNECT

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## While We Were Sitting at Home Not Voting, Guess What Happened?

How failing to vote locally is fueling gerrymandering and political disenfranchisement.

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

This month, Kansas held local elections and the turnout was disgraceful.

Too many people still don't grasp that local and state races really matter — they shape what happens nationally.

Over the last few decades, while we stayed home, Republicans showed up and voted in state and local elections. As a result, they've gained and held control of state legislatures across the country, including Kansas and Missouri.

And, now, those same

legislatures are executing Donald Trump's agenda to erase Black political representation from Congress.

After the 2020 Census, Republicans used their state-house power to redraw congressional maps. The stated purpose of redistricting is, after the census, to balance population across districts. But Republicans weaponized it — slicing up Democratic areas and merging them into Republican strongholds to lock in their advantage.

We saw it in Wyandotte County. In an attempt to turn the only Democratic congressional seat in Kansas, during redistricting, they split Kansas City, KS, in half.

The heavily Black, heavily Democratic section was shoved into the heavily Republican District 2. Then, to make

sure District 2 didn't lean too Democratic, they carved out Lawrence — a liberal base — and dropped it into the sprawling, rural District 1.

That scheme failed. But Republicans are trying again — this time targeting Kansas City, MO, and Congressman Emanuel Cleaver and Black-represented congressional districts across the country.

At Trump's urging, GOP legislatures are considering breaking with tradition (and possibly the law) to redraw maps now — mid-decade — to secure more Republican seats in Congress before the next election.

And the people making those decisions? The same "unimportant" state lawmakers many ignored on their ballot — in Missouri, Texas, Louisiana, and other GOP-controlled states.



Emanuel Cleaver  
FRANMARIE METZLER

Here's the kicker: America isn't as Republican as these legislatures make it look. In Kansas, only 45% of registered voters are Republican, but they hold 69% of the seats in the state legislature. In Missouri, Republicans make up 42% of registered voters, but Republican hold 62% of the seats in the state's General Assembly.

That gap exists because far too many of us aren't even registered — and many who are don't bother to vote in local and state races.

## Behind the Cartoon: Fire the Messenger

**By Clay Jones**

Recently, the commissioner of the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS), Erika McEntarfer, delivered a negative jobs report. Trump, our Dear Leader and Fascist in Chief, didn't like those numbers, so Hair Fuhrer fired her.

TACO said, "I've had issues with the numbers for a long time. We're doing so well. I believe the numbers were phony, like they were before the election, and there were other times. So I fired her, and I did the right thing." OK, Shitler.

Firing people for delivering bad news is a fascist move. It

was popular with the likes of Joseph Stalin, Saddam Hussein, and dare I say it, Adolf Hitler. Trump and Hitler both fired generals they didn't trust.

Former U.S. Treasury Secretary Larry Summers said: "Firing the head of a key government agency because you don't like the numbers they report, which come from surveys using long-established procedures, is what happens in authoritarian countries, not democratic ones."

Friends of BLS, a group whose members include two former commissioners of the agency, said, "When leaders of other nations have politicized

## CARTOON



economic data, it has destroyed public trust in all official statistics and in government science."

Trump asked reporters Aug. 2, rhetorically, "Why should anybody trust numbers?"

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# Justice Department Targets New York Attorney General, a Trump Foe

By Associated Press

President Donald Trump's Justice Department is zeroing in on New York Attorney General Letitia James with a subpoena for records related to the \$454 million civil judgment she won against Trump for lying about his wealth, a person familiar with the matter has told The Associated Press.

The subpoena is part of an investigation into whether James violated Trump's civil rights, another person said. The people could not publicly discuss details of the investigation and spoke to the AP on the condition of anonymity.

Another subpoena seeks records related to James' lawsuit involving the National Rifle Association, a person familiar with the matter said. On top of that, U.S. Attorney General Pam Bondi recently named

a special prosecutor to help conduct a mortgage fraud investigation into James.

James has sued Trump and his Republican administration dozens of times over his policies as president and over how he conducted his private business empire. Trump vowed on the campaign trail to seek retribution against his opponents, and the moves against James are among the most serious yet against Trump's political foes by the Justice Department.

Here's what to know about James and the escalating investigations:

### 'The Art of the Steal'

During her 2018 campaign, James branded Trump as a "con man" pledging to shine a "bright light into every dark corner of his real estate dealings."

As soon as she took office,

James launched several lawsuits over his immigration and environmental policies. She inherited a state lawsuit against Trump's charitable foundation and steered it to a settlement that included a \$2 million fine.

She filed another civil lawsuit against Trump in September 2022, alleging that his company deceived banks, insurers and others by overvaluing assets and his net worth on financial paperwork.

### Trump Says James Never Intended to be Fair

In 2024, a New York judge ruled that Trump lied for years about his wealth and ordered him to pay \$354.9 million in penalties plus nearly \$100 million in interest.

Trump is appealing the judgement. He also posted a \$175 million bond to halt the state from collecting what he

owes and seizing his assets.

Trump has long complained James' comments about him, prior to her election, show she never intended to be fair.

### Mortgage Fraud Investigation

FBI Director Kash Patel in May confirmed James was being investigated after a Trump administration official accused her of mortgage fraud.

The investigation centers on forms James signed in 2023 while helping a niece buy a home in Norfolk, Virginia.

This week, Bondi named Ed Martin as a special prosecutor to help conduct a mortgage fraud investigation into James. Martin leads the Weaponization Working Group, which is examining Trump's claims of anti-conservative bias inside the Justice Department.



New York Attorney General Letitia James speaks Feb. 16, 2024, in New York. AP PHOTO/BEBETO MATTHEWS



## Your Caregiving Journey: Navigating relationships, resources, and respite.

Join AARP Kansas and the Central Plains Area Agency on Aging for a day of workshops and resources focusing on self-care, best practices, and networking with other caregivers.

### 2025 Caregiver Summit

Wednesday Aug. 27, 9:30 a.m. – 2 p.m.

Registration URL: <https://events.aarp.org/EvWBa9>



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## In Your Community



# Kansas City, KS, Will Have a Female Mayor

Results in six other Wyandotte County primary races.

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

**K**ansas City, KS, residents advanced two women in the primary race for mayor, guaranteeing the city only its second female elected mayor in history.

Attorney Rose Mulvany Henry and KCPS Foundation CEO Christal Watson advanced to the November general election, winning out in a field of six candidates – four females and two males – in the primary.

**Mulvany Henry**, received 3,619 votes or 31%

**Christal Watson**, received 3,031 votes or 26%

In 1995, Carol Marinovich became the first woman elected

mayor/CEO of Kansas City, KS, (and Wyandotte County, following government consolidation). She served from 1995 to 2006.

Kansas City, MO, has also only had one female mayor, Kay Waldo Barnes, who served two consecutive four-year terms from 1999 to 2007.

A total of 11,663 people cast ballots in the Aug. 5 primary election, accounting for about 12% of the county's 92,606 registered voters, according to unofficial election results published by the Wyandotte County Election Office.

## Other Wyandotte Commission Races

In addition to the mayor's race, Wyandotte County had 24 other candidates vying in six different races. Here's how those races ended.

In the District 1 Wyandotte

Commission race, five candidates ran to fill the seat currently occupied by Commissioner Gayle Townsend, who chose not to seek reelection. Advancing to compete in the general election for that seat covering northeast Kansas City are:

**Jermaine Howard**, with 462 votes or 35%

**Lisa Walker Yeager**, with 301 votes or 23%

Walker Yeager is also running for a seat on the Board of Public Utilities.

In the District 5 seat that has been occupied by Mike Kane since 2005, Kane did not seek reelection. Three people competed in this primary. Advancing are:

**Carlos Pacheco III**, with 1,930 votes or 56%

**LaVert A. Murray**, with 762 votes or 22%

In District 8, incumbent

Commissioner Andrew Davis competed against three other candidates but advanced to the general election. Votes and the other candidate advancing are:

**Andrew Davis**, with 616 votes or 40%

**Jacob Handy**, with 393 votes or 25%

In the District 2 At-Large Wyandotte Commission race, five candidates ran to fill the seat being occupied by Tom Burroughs, who chose not to seek reelection to this seat and instead ran for mayor. Burroughs did not advance in the mayor's race, ending his eight years on the commission.

Advancing in this race are:

**Andrew Kump**, with 1,354 votes or 33%

**Philip Lopez**, with 1,163 votes or 29%

Lopez currently represents District 6 on the commission. If



Christal Watson



Rose Mulvany

he wins this race, the commission will appoint an individual to fill the balance of his unexpired term.

## Other Wyandotte Races

First-term Wyandotte County Sheriff Daniel Soptic competed against two candidates. Advancing along with Soptic to the general election is Celisha Towers, who competed in 2021. The votes each received are:

**Daniel Soptic**, with 6,451 votes or 57%

**Celisha Towers**, with 2,473

votes or 22%

The BPU At-Large District 1 race had four candidates competing for the seat that's currently occupied by Mary Gonzales, who has served on the board for 20 years and is not seeking reelection. The two BPU candidates who received the most votes are:

**Lisa Walker Yeager**, with 3,841 votes or 39% (Yeager also advanced in the District 1

Wyandotte Commission race)

**Gary Bradley-Lopez**, with 2,336 votes or 24%

# Attention Begins on Wyandotte County Races That Didn't Have Primaries

Races for more BPU seats, school board and KCKCC Board of Trustees are ready to gear up following the primaries.

**N**ow that the crowded and busy primary races are behind us, it's time for the races without primaries to get in gear ahead of the November elections. Among them are two more seats on the BPU Board, three positions on USD 500 School Board and three seats on the Kansas City Kansas Community College Board of Trustees.

## BPU Races

Incumbent **David Haley** has a big-name competitor for his At-Large Position 2 seat on the BPU Board of Directors. He's being opposed by former KCK Mayor **David Alvey**.

Mary Gonzales, who has served on the BPU board since 2005, is not seeking reelection to her BPU District 2 seat. Running for her seat are **Chase Cook** and **Neal Palmer**.

## KCKPS School Board

Cook, an attorney, works as senior corporate counsel at MRI Global and serves on the board of directors of CASA of Wyandotte and Johnson Counties. Neal Palmer retired from J.E. Dunn in 2024 as senior vice president. He served for 17 years on the Piper USD 203 School Board.

There are two incumbents up for reelection on the Kansas City Kansas Public School Board and one open position to be filled, due to the May 2025 resignation of board member **Maxine Drew**. The two incumbents – **Rachel Russell** and **Wanda Kay Paige** – are running to keep their seats.

Vying against them are:

**Sheyvette Dinkens** – identifies as an entrepreneur, author, counselor, educator, real estate agent and passionate advocate for children. She's formed a coalition with Russell identifying their coalition as the "Student Success Side."

**Pamela Penn-Hicks** – is a retired federal employee who has been active in the community, has served on the Police Advisory Board, her

neighborhood association and on a USD 500 Educational Task Force. She ran for Wyandotte Commission District 4 in 2023.

**Jocelyn Strickland-Egans** – is a retired teacher and instructional coach who taught in KCK for 35 years. A former Sunday school teacher and superintendent, she's the author of a series of children's books, "A Sunday Kind of Joy."

**Josh Young** – identifies as a Republican, according to his website, and believes it's important "for all students, and all citizens of USD 500, to be represented and reflected on the School Board."

## KCKCC Board of Trustees

There are two full terms on the KCKCC Board of Trustees up for election and one seat open to complete the two-years of the unexpired term of board member MaryAnn Mosely, who died in 2024.

**Linda Hoskins Sutton** and **Brad Isnard** are seeking reelection to their seats. **Mary Ricketts**, who was selected by the board to fill Mosely's seat, is



David Haley



Brad Isnard



Linda Hoskins Sutton



Rachel Russell



Mary Ricketts



Wanda Paige

seeking election to fill the rest of that term.

Running for the at-large seat occupied by Sutton and Isnard are **Joe Caiharr** and **Geoffrey Kump**. Running to complete Mosely's seat are **Jammie Johnson** and **Alex Sanchez**.

Caiharr is a KCK police officer and the husband of Edwardsville Mayor Carolyn Caiharr. Kump is an attorney who works as corporate counsel for

Shamrock Trading Corporation and serves as vice chair for Bishop Ward High School Board of Trustees.

Johnson, who ran for a seat on the board of trustees in 2023, worked in education for 25 years. She works as a graduate program director in the William Allen White School of Journalism at the University of Kansas.

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Wichita school board candidates (L-R) Diane Albert, Mackenzi Truelove, Kathy Bond, and Amy Jensen have advanced to the general election in November.

## Jensen, Truelove Will Face Incumbents in Wichita School Board General Election

By Suzanne Perez  
KMUW

Board president Diane Albert and Mackenzi Truelove were the top vote-getters for the District 1 seat on the Wichita Board of Education, which represents parts of east and northeast Wichita. Incumbent Kathy Bond will face retired teacher Amy Jensen in District 5.

Albert received about 34% of the vote. Truelove, who is a regulatory coordinator at the University of Kansas Medical Center in Wichita, came in second with 30%, according to unofficial results.

In District 5, which covers west Wichita, incumbent Kathy Bond and Amy Jensen were the top vote-getters in a five-candidate primary.

Bond, a retired business owner and substitute teacher, garnered about 37% of the vote, according to unofficial results. Jensen, a retired teacher, finished a close second, just four votes shy of Bond.

The general election is Nov. 4.

Two more board seats — Districts 2 and 6 — are up for election in November. They did not have enough candidates to require a primary.

Truelove, 33, described herself in a KMUW questionnaire as “the most left-leaning” school board candidate.

She said she was motivated to run in part because of a \$450 million school bond that voters narrowly rejected in February. Truelove supports putting

another bond issue on the ballot to rebuild and repair Wichita schools.

She will face Albert, who was part of a conservative slate of candidates elected to the board in 2021.

Albert supported putting the bond issue to voters in February. She said her priority as a board member is improving student achievement and “keeping academics at the center of every decision.”

The District 5 race will pit Bond, a conservative, against Jensen, a registered Democrat who is active with the American Federation of Teachers.

Bond said she will not support putting another bond issue to voters until there is “substantial academic improvement” and increased trust from the community.

Jensen said she would support another bond issue if district leaders engage with the community and more clearly outline the specific needs of the schools.

Wichita school board members serve four-year terms and receive no pay for monthly meetings and other work. They oversee a budget of about \$1 billion and set policy for the state’s largest school district, with about 46,500 students.

Major issues in the Wichita school board race include a \$450 million bond issue that voters narrowly rejected earlier this year, as well as the potential closure of four elementary schools. Current board members have given an initial go-ahead to put another bond issue to voters next year.

# Race to the Finish Begins as DeShazer and Shepard Advance in Primary

After a contentious primary among five candidates, a low-voter turnout advances Shepard and DeShazer in District 1.

By Meg Britton-Mehlisch  
KMUW

Joseph Shepard, a non-profit program director and former Sedgwick County Democratic Party chair, was the top vote-getter in the District 1 Wichita City Council primary election Aug. 5.

LaWanda DeShazer, a community engagement specialist and former Sedgwick County fire administrator, was second in the balloting. Both Shepard and DeShazer will advance to the general election on Nov. 4.

Shepard, who was endorsed by incumbent District 1 councilman Brandon Johnson, finished with 48% of the vote in the five-person field. He had more votes than DeShazer (20%) and third-place finisher Chris Pumpelly (17%) combined.

Johnson, who is prevented from running again due to term limits, has held the seat for the last eight years.

Shepard and DeShazer emerged from a field of five Democrats who spent the summer campaigning to represent Wichita’s north-central district.

Along with Shepard and DeShazer, the candidates were Pumpelly, the campaign manager for former Mayor Brandon Whipple; Aujanae Bennett, a community advocate who’s been central to fighting for health testing for residents impacted by the chemical spill at 29th Street and Grove; and Darryl Carrington, a community leader in the Fairmount



Joseph Shepard (right) had a strong primary day showing, winning 48% of the vote for the District 1 seat. LaWanda DeShazer (left) narrowly beat out Chris Pumpelly for second place on the ballot in the general election in November. (CREDIT: BONITA GOOCH)

neighborhood.

In his endorsement, Johnson described Shepard as a “trusted advocate” and said that he had a “rare ability to bring people together and fight for those often left behind.”

DeShazer netted an endorsement from Kansas state Rep. Ford Carr, who represents much of the area of District 1 in the legislature.

On primary night, DeShazer said she felt her performance in the primary — despite Johnson’s endorsement of Shepard — demonstrated a grassroots support in the district for her campaign.

“I didn’t have the current city councilman endorsing me,” DeShazer said from her campaign watch party at Love & Co. Kitchen and Cocktails. “I had people that were willing to do the work

and boots on the ground. Those are the people that I resonated with, and I think I will continue to resonate with moving forward.”

DeShazer said the next several months of campaigning will be spent making sure residents understand the differences between her and her opponent. She emphasized a difference in experience, casting herself as a political newcomer.

Some of DeShazer’s supporters have taken a different approach, noting that she was born in the district and owns a home there. Shepard moved to Wichita to attend college at Wichita State University and rents a home in the district.

He said that those critiques, as well as criticism of his personal friendships with

See **PRIMARY** Page 15 →

# Wichita General Elections Will Feature 3 Other Races

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

Now that we're past the primaries, campaigning will step up on other races where a primary wasn't required.

In Sedgwick County, primary races are held when four or more candidates file to run in a race. The primary reduces the number of individuals in each race to two.

## Wichita City Council Races

There are two other Wichita City Council races up for election.

Incumbent **Mike Hoheisel** is seeking reelection to his District 3 seat on the city council. The district covers much of southeast Wichita. Running against him is **Genevieve Howerton**. We could not find any additional information about Howerton.

Before being elected to the city council, Hoheisel



Maggie Ballard

worked in construction for more than 20 years and was involved in several social justice causes, including voting rights and criminal justice reform.

Incumbent **Maggie Ballard** is also seeking reelection to her District 6 seat, which covers parts of north Wichita. Running against her are **Margaret Wheeler Shabazz** and **Brett Anderson**.

Before joining the council, Ballard founded the



Hazel Stabler

nonprofit Paxton's Blessing Box to address food insecurity. She also owned several businesses, including Maggie's Scotch and Soda and the Riverside Perk. Shabazz, who has been an activist since she was a teen as part of Hope Street, is running to address safety and homelessness in Midtown Wichita. (Here's a link to a story The Voice wrote on Shabazz after she filed to run – <https://bit.ly/4llak2r>.) Anderson, who has a



Mike Hoheisel

degree in engineering technology, has lived on the north end since 2006. His platform focuses on property tax reform and a focus on core services.

## School Board Races

District 2 of the USD 259 school board covers parts of east and southeast Wichita. Incumbent **Julie Hedrick** is seeking reelection to the seat and is being opposed by **Brent Davis** and **Valerie Most**. Hedrick retired from USD 259 as director of



Julie Hedrick

facilities and has been on the board since 2018. Her top priority is advocating for teachers and other employees in USD 259. She also supports funding a bond issue to improve district facilities.

Brent Davis owns Complete Education, an educational services business that helps students get their best scores on standardized tests. He ran against Hedrick in 2021 and against Melody McCray-Miller in 2023. His

focus is on increasing student performance and getting the district's finances in order.

Most was a high school teacher for USD 259 for 29 years. She supports the bond issue and believes transparency in the district is important.

Incumbent **Hazel Stabler** is seeking reelection to represent District 6. She is running against **Amy Warren**. Stabler was a para-educator in the schools and sees herself as an outsider. She initially didn't support the bond issue but eventually supported putting it on the ballot.

Warren is a clerical substitute in the district and served on the state board of education's blue ribbon task force on cell phone use in classrooms. She has three children in the district and thinks it's important to get a parent on the board.

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# Kansas City-Based Cult Members Sentenced for Forcing Minors into Years of Unpaid Labor

By The Voice News Service

Six former high-ranking members of the Kansas City, KS-based cult United Nation of Islam (UNOI) have been sentenced for their roles in a forced labor conspiracy that victimized multiple children.

UNOI, founded by the now-deceased Royall Jenkins — who claimed to be Allah — operated under the guise of religion while running a network of businesses including restaurants, bakeries, gas stations, and factories. From 2000 to 2012, UNOI leaders used manipulation, abuse, and coercion to force more than a dozen minors — some as young as 8 — into grueling, unpaid labor across the KC area and other cities including New York, Newark, Cincinnati, and Atlanta.

On Aug. 7, Kaaba Majeed, 51, was sentenced to 10 years in prison. Five co-defendants also received prison or probation sentences: James Staton (5 years), Randolph Hadley (5 years), Daniel Jenkins (4 years), Dana Peach (4 years), and Yunus Rassoul (5 years probation). All were convicted in 2024 after a 26-day trial. Majeed was convicted on five additional counts of forced labor. Two others who pleaded guilty will be sentenced in September.

“These defendants were supposed to care for children,” said U.S. Attorney Ryan Kriegshauser of Kansas. “Instead, they exploited and abused them for profit.”

Court documents and trial evidence



United Nation of Islam Youth speak at a town Hall. UNOI members have been sentenced after being convicted late last year of manipulation, abuse, and coercion to force more than a dozen minors — some as young as 8 — into grueling, unpaid labor.

revealed that UNOI lured children from their families with false promises of education and training. Once isolated, children were subjected to harsh punishments, restricted communication, and made to work up to 16 hours daily in unsanitary conditions.

The cult leaders lived comfortably while victims endured deprivation and trauma.

One of the defendants, Dana Peach, was also one of Jenkins’s wives. All defendants enforced strict cult rules and worked to maintain complete control over the victims, who were



Solomon, the founder of UNOI, proclaimed himself to be Allah. Even though he was from the east coast, he made Kansas City the organization’s hub.

forced into childcare, housework, and labor in UNOI businesses.

The FBI Kansas City Field Office investigated the case alongside the Dept. of Labor and the New York State Dept. of Labor.

Assistant Attorney General Harmmeet Dhillon said the case shows the Justice Dept.’s commitment to fighting child labor trafficking: “These sentences reflect our relentless pursuit of perpetrators and our determination to seek justice for survivors.”

**Anyone with information about human trafficking can contact the National Human Trafficking Hotline at 1-888-373-7888 or visit [www.humantraffickinghotline.org](http://www.humantraffickinghotline.org).**

## Battle Between Leavenworth & CoreCivic Continues in Court

Plan to reopen troubled prison as an ICE facility is not sitting well with many Leavenworth residents and leaders.

By The Voice News Service

Leavenworth officials and residents are pushing back against CoreCivic’s plan to reopen its shuttered prison as an Immigration and Customs Enforcement detention center, citing both zoning rules and the facility’s troubled history. On Aug. 6, CoreCivic attorneys asked a Leavenworth District Court judge to dismiss three counts in a case filed by the City of Leavenworth, pushing to end the court battle affecting its closed Leavenworth prison.

After hearing arguments, Judge John Bryant said he would take the issues under advisement. He gave no timeframe for when he would make a decision.

The prison, now called the Midwest Regional Reception Center, closed in 2021

after losing a federal contract and facing repeated accusations of poor conditions. CoreCivic wants to repurpose it to hold about 1,033 ICE detainees and has already received a \$5 million start-up payment from the federal government, with up to \$22.6 million available over six months.

City leaders argue the facility lost its “grandfathered” status under zoning laws after sitting idle for more than a year. They say CoreCivic must apply for a special use permit before reopening. The company insists no permit is required and is fighting in court to bypass the process.

A federal judge recently dismissed the city’s case for lack of jurisdiction, leaving the fight in Kansas district court. CoreCivic is asking a local judge to dismiss several claims,

including a public nuisance allegation, while the city seeks to block any detainees from arriving until the permit issue is decided.

The dispute has sparked protests and renewed criticism of CoreCivic’s record. “They expect us to have amnesia about their track record,” said ACLU of Kansas spokeswoman Esmie Tseng, pointing to concerns about detainee treatment and worker exploitation.

CoreCivic has offered the city \$1 million up front if it reopens, plus \$250,000 annually to the city and \$150,000 to police. But many officials and residents say no amount of money justifies the return of a facility they believe harmed the community.

The court’s decision will determine whether the prison’s gates stay locked — or open once again.



The City of Leavenworth has filed suit to keep CoreCivic, a federal contract prison that operated in the city, from reopening as an ICE facility. All money isn’t good money, seems to be the opinion of Leavenworth officials.

## CELEBRATING CULTURE

# African-American Festivals Light Up Kansas & Kansas City

By Bonita Gooch  
Editor-in-Chief

From the rich traditions of Africa to the resilience of the Black Pride movement, cultural festivals have long been a cornerstone of African-American life.

Today, African-American festivals in Kansas and the Kansas City area carry that legacy forward, transforming streets, parks, and historic districts into vibrant hubs of culture. From spring to late summer and into fall, these gatherings are more than events — they are living celebrations of history and heritage.

They bring together foodies drawn to soul food and African-inspired cuisine, music lovers chasing the sounds of jazz, gospel, R&B, and hip-hop, art enthusiasts exploring paintings and crafts, and families sharing in the joy of community.

Held in the heart of our neighborhoods, these festivals connect generations, preserve traditions, and welcome all who want to experience the spirit of African-American culture.

We offer this guide to some of the best African-American cultural festivals in the region. Some of them you've already missed for this year, but others are just ahead of you. If we missed your event, email [guillory@tcvpub.com](mailto:guillory@tcvpub.com) and she'll let you know how to have your festival included.



## JUNETEENTH

Juneteenth has become THE major celebration of many of our communities, with even some of the smallest communities joining in the celebration, like the quaint, historic town of Weston, MO, just north of Kansas City.

Each year, we print an extensive calendar of Juneteenth events and celebration just ahead of the holiday. If you want your event included next year, it's free. Just submit the event in our online calendar. <https://www.communityvoiceks.com/submit-community-events>.

We'll have the Juneteenth calendar in our June 12, 2026, issue but online as early as you submit it.



## 148TH ANNUAL NICODEMUS HOMECOMING EMANCIPATION CELEBRATION

NICODEMUS, KS

You missed the first 147 years of this historic celebration, but you can get the dates on your calendar now for the 148th celebration, next July 23-26. This celebration, always held the last weekend of July, began after the formerly enslaved African Americans founded the town; they began gathering each summer to honor freedom and community. The event draws descendants, visitors, and history lovers for a weekend of parades, music, food, sports, and fellowship in the nation's only remaining western town established by Black homesteaders after the Civil War. <https://www.facebook.com/nicodemushomecoming>





**137TH ANNUAL HUTCHINSON EMANCIPATION CELEBRATION HUTCHINSON, KS**

Not quite as old as their neighbor to the north's celebration, but historic in its own right, the annual Hutchinson Emancipation Celebration is held the first weekend in August.

Like Nicodemus, the celebration has become a homecoming weekend for many of the town's natives who've moved away, but the whole community joins in, as do visitors looking for a great weekend. The celebration's packed weekend of events includes a spirited Family Fun Night Jazz in the Park, a festive parade, a community picnic, an upbeat dance, and a heartwarming Gospel Festival capped off with a classic ice cream social. <https://www.facebook.com/HutchinsonEmancipation>



**AFROKc FESTIVAL KANSAS CITY, MO**

Not quite a Juneteenth event, but always held during Juneteenth month, this dynamic one-day celebration brings together food lovers, music fans, art enthusiasts, families, and entrepreneurs to explore African and Afro-diasporic culture through vibrant rhythm, creativity, and connection in a single, powerful evening.

The 2026 event, titled "Bridging Continents, Celebrating Community," will take place at Unity Temple on the Plaza (707 W 47th St.) on Sat., June 14. There's an African Market, free to the public, followed by the festival, a ticketed affair showcasing live music, art, fashion, authentic cuisine, and cultural showcases. <https://www.afrokc.com>

For The Culture Festival, Topeka, KS, downtown This dynamic, multi-day celebration of Black heritage and excellence in Topeka, KS, is held annually in late July and features a blend of cultural events, including live music performances, art exhibitions, food vendors, and community activities, all aimed at honoring and uplifting African-American culture. [forthe cultureks.org](https://www.forthecultureks.org)



**HOT DOG FESTIVAL KANSAS CITY, MO**

The Heart of America Hot Dog Festival, created in 2013 by the Negro Leagues Baseball Museum, is an annual summer celebration that ties America's national pastime to its beloved ballpark snack — the hot dog — while raising funds for the museum. Although the exact date varies each year, the event consistently takes place in early to mid-August.

The event features food vendors serving creative and classic hot dog recipes, live music, games, and family-friendly entertainment. This year the festival's concert lineup included Eric Benet, Silk and Rose Royce. <https://www.nlbm.com/events/heart-of-america-hot-dog-festival>



**816 DAY CELEBRATION KANSAS CITY, MO**

This celebration, named after the city's area code, takes place yearly on or near Aug. 16, and gained official status in 2018 when then-Mayor Sly James designated it as an official city holiday.

"What started as a simple idea in 2015 has now become one of KC's largest anticipated annual events," said Brian "Bizzy" Benton, founder of the day's official event.

Last year, the event that started in the 18th & Vine Jazz District moved uptown to the Kansas City Power & Light District, where it will be held again this year on Sat. Aug. 16. In addition to food trucks and vendors, enjoy entertainment, performances, DJs, a streey style dance battle and a two-stepping hour. [Facebook.com/816day](https://www.facebook.com/816day)



## THE YUMA STREET CULTURAL FESTIVAL

MANHATTAN, KS

This new festival will take place Sun. Aug. 31, in the Historic Yuma Street District that was home to the city's African-American community. The event will feature live music spanning R&B, Afrobeat, soul, and hip-hop, including performances by Divine Nine Greek organizations. Attendees can enjoy a vibrant food village featuring Afro-Caribbean and soul food, an art and vendor market, kids' activities, and historical tours highlighting local legends like Jackie Robinson and Martin Luther King Jr. The festival brings the community together to honor culture, history, and creativity in a lively, family-friendly setting. [www.blackflinthills.com/yuma](http://www.blackflinthills.com/yuma)



## THE KANSAS CITY REGGAE MUSIC & JERK FESTIVAL

KANSAS CITY, MO, RIVERFRONT

This year marks more than 30 years for this three-day celebration of Caribbean culture, music, and cuisine is held annually at Berkley Riverfront Park. The 2025 festival is Sept. 5-7. It includes a diverse lineup featuring two stages of live music, including reggae, dancehall, and world music performances. The festival also offers a Caribbean food court, artisan markets curated by Art Garden KC, kids' activities, and a Canna Village with wellness and cannabis experiences. Each day has a unique theme: World Music Night on Friday, Dancehall Night on Saturday, and Roots & Culture on Sunday. [friendsofreggae.com](http://friendsofreggae.com)



## 913 DAY

KANSAS CITY, KS

We're not sure if it will return this year, but certainly people in the Dotte will find ways to show their love for their city. Check online for updates. [www.facebook.com/913DAY](http://www.facebook.com/913DAY)

### Did We Miss Your Festival?

Let us know about your festival or upcoming events. You can post any event information for free on our website calendar. Also use it to search for upcoming events in your area.

To get to our online calendar – go to our website at [communityvoiceks.com](http://communityvoiceks.com). On the toolbar, you'll see events calendar. That's where you can search for events. Also, you'll see a link for those interested in submitting their event.

If you're a non-profit organization, reach out to us about discounted advertising and event sponsorship.



## 18TH & VINE ARTS FESTIVAL

KANSAS CITY, MO

This will be the third year for the 18th & Vine Arts Festival, a dynamic three-day celebration of Black art, culture, and community held in Kansas City's historic 18th & Vine Jazz District. One of the later festivals of the year – this year it's Sept. 22-28 – features a diverse lineup of activities, including a fashion showcase, live music performances, art exhibitions, and culinary experiences. The festival serves as a platform for artists to showcase their work and to honor the transformative power of Black art. [www.18thandvineartsfestival.com](http://www.18thandvineartsfestival.com)

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[cpaaa.org](http://cpaaa.org)  Central Plains Area Agency on Aging

# Obesity-Related Cancer Deaths More Than Triple

By The Voice News Service

Cancer deaths related to obesity have risen sharply over the past two decades, especially among older adults, women, non-Hispanic Black individuals, and people living with obesity in rural areas, a U.S. study has found.

“Obesity is a well-known risk factor for various cancers, but its contribution to cancer-specific mortality over time hasn’t been systematically quantified at a national level,” lead investigator Faizan Ahmed, MD, with Jersey Shore University Medical Center, in New Jersey, told Medscape Medical News.

“Clinicians should recognize obesity not just as a cardiovascular or metabolic risk factor but as a significant oncologic concern,” Ahmed said.

## Higher Risk for 13 Cancers

According to the CDC, 40% of adults are living with

Obesity is a health risk, but did you know it’s a cancer risk?

OKIDOKIBOT  
AI ART GENERATOR



obesity. Obesity is associated with a higher risk for 13 cancers, which make up 40% of all cancers diagnosed in the U.S. each year.

They are:

- adenocarcinoma of the esophagus,
- postmenopausal breast cancer,
- Cancers of the:
  - colon and rectum,
  - uterus
  - gallbladder,
  - upper stomach,
  - kidneys,
  - liver,
  - ovaries,

- pancreas,
- thyroid,
- meningioma, and
- multiple myeloma.

To see the trends in obesity-associated cancer deaths over the past two decades, Ahmed and colleagues analyzed CDC data for 33,572 obesity and cancer-related deaths.

They found that the overall age-adjusted mortality rate gradually increased from 3.73 per million in 1999 to 13.52 per million in 2020. “That’s more than a tripling in obesity-related cancer mortality rates over 20 years — a striking

rise,” Ahmed said.

“To put it in context, this is a steeper increase than seen in many other chronic disease mortality trends during the same time period. It signals a rapidly escalating public health burden,” he noted.

## Underappreciated Link

The link between obesity and cancer-related mortality is “often underappreciated,” Ahmed told Medscape Medical News.

“Our findings emphasize the need to prioritize obesity screening and management as part of comprehensive cancer prevention. Counseling patients on weight management should be reframed as a critical component of reducing long-term cancer risk,” he said.

Ahmed also noted that socioeconomic factors could be driving the increase in obesity-related cancer deaths.

“While BMI is a contributing factor, disparities in socioeconomic status, access

to preventive care, delays in diagnosis, environmental exposures, and cultural factors likely play a larger role in the observed variations across gender and race.”

“For instance, certain minority groups may encounter systemic barriers to cancer screening and obesity treatment,” Ahmed said.

To tackle the problem of rising rates of obesity-related cancer deaths, Ahmed said policy initiatives should move from downstream management to

upstream prevention.

Ahmed said this would include:

- universal access to cancer screening programs,
- public health campaigns that normalize obesity management as a cancer prevention strategy;
- policies promoting equitable access to healthy foods, physical activity, and early intervention services; and
- incentives for primary care to integrate weight management into routine visits.



## Your Weekly Health Boost – Straight to Your Inbox

If you’ve been missing our free “Health Wednesday” newsletter, you’ve been missing a lot.

We launched “Health Wednesday” because, too often, African Americans find themselves on the wrong side of nearly every major health statistic — from heart disease and diabetes to cancer and life expectancy.

Our free weekly newsletter delivers timely, trusted health news, practical tips, and vital resources straight to your inbox, so you can take charge of your health and the health of your family.

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### SOME OF OUR RECENT HEALTH ARTICLES

#### Continuous Glucose Monitors are in Vogue.

Do You Need to Track Your Blood Sugar?

#### US Overdose Deaths Fell 27% Last Year, the Largest One-Year Decline Ever Seen

#### DIY Air Purifier Assembly to Support Gordon Parks Elementary Academy Wichita

Lupita Nyong’o with a big smile and wearing shades standing in front of a U.S. Congress Seal on a wall.

#### Deion Sanders Had Bladder Cancer.

What to Know About a Disease that’s More Common in Men

#### Black Americans Hit Hard as Medical Debt Rule Tossed

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WICHITA FEDERAL CREDIT UNION

# Melting Pot Theatre Ushers in Bold Leadership and Powerful 2025–2026 Season

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

KC Melting Pot Theatre (KCMPT), Kansas City's premier Black theatre company, is beginning a new chapter with a bold leadership structure and a powerful upcoming season exploring Reckoning, Reflection & Resilience.

Founded in 2013 by Harvey Williams, KCMPT began as a platform for one of Williams' original plays and quickly grew to champion underrepresented voices and showcase Kansas City's rich pool of theatre talent. By late 2014, it became the sole anchor company at Just Off Broadway Theatre, and in 2017, it achieved nonprofit status under the leadership of Williams and Artistic Director Dr. Nicole Hodges Persley.

Dr. Hodges Persley, who led the company for nearly a decade, concluded her tenure

at the end of the 2024–2025 season. She helped elevate KCMPT into a nationally recognized home for Black theatre, expanded programming to include historical Black plays, deepened community engagement, and launched the Black Women Directors Program. She has now turned her focus to The Black Performance Project, a multimedia arts incubator she first conceptualized at the University of Kansas in 2019.

With her departure, KCMPT has moved to a rare co-artistic directorship — one of the only Black regional theaters in the nation led by a team of Black women directors:

**Melannie Walker** – Artistic Director, Operations

**Ile Haggins** – Artistic Director, Programming

**Lynn King** – Artistic Director, Education

All three are distinguished theatre artists and alumni of

the Black Women Directors Program. Founders Harvey Williams and his wife, Linda Williams, remain with KCMPT as Executive Directors and continue to serve on the organization's Board of Directors.

## 2025–2026 Season Highlights

The upcoming season blends classics and contemporary works that tackle urgent social themes:

**Night, Mother** – By Marsha Norman – Sept. 18–27, 2025

Pulitzer Prize-winning drama about mental health, family bonds, and the need to be heard.

**Death of a Salesman** – By Arthur Miller – Dec. 4–13, 2025

A reimagined staging of the American classic centering voices often excluded from the dream it depicts.

**Long Time Since Yesterday** – By P.J. Gibson

– March 12–21, 2026

A reunion of friends unearths buried truths, love, and grief.

**Like Six O'Clock** – By Lewis Morrow – World Premiere, June 11–26, 2026

A powerful new play examining moral choices in the wake of violence.

"KC Melting Pot Theatre continues its commitment to amplifying stories that expose hard truths, celebrate resilience, and demand to be heard," said the new artistic leadership team in a joint statement. "This season is a call to witness, to feel, and to reflect on the complexities of our shared human experiences."

Season subscriptions and single tickets are now on sale. Visit [www.kcmeltingpot.com](http://www.kcmeltingpot.com) or call (816) 226-8087 for more information.



The Old and the New: The news artistic team for Melting Pot Theater poses for a photo with the outgoing artistic director. From (L-R) Lynn King, Ile Haggins, Melannie Walker and Dr. Nicole Hodges Persley.

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# Cooking With Love — Literally

Inspired by their grandmother's soul food legacy, the Love siblings are serving up family history with a modern twist.

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

The Love Family name holds weight in Wichita. It means great music — and it means great food.

Rudy Love Jr. is keeping the family's musical legacy alive. Now, siblings Adrian "Bub" Love and Kiavoni Judie are stepping up to continue the family's culinary tradition.

This September, the brother-and-sister duo will open **Love & Co. Kitchen and Cocktails**, following in the footsteps of their grandmother Ahnawake Love, who operated Mama Love's Kitchen in the late 1990s.

While Mama Love's offered classic soul food favorites — collard greens, fried chicken, baked macaroni and cheese, and fried catfish — Love & Co. will serve what Judie calls "**Modern Soul Food.**"

"I want to prepare some of the same dishes our grandmother did," said Judie, who will serve as head chef. "But not like a Sunday meal, where you had to go take a nap after. A little bit fresher, with some of the same



A recent taste testing at Love & Co. included chicken lollipops on coleslaw, served with collard green-artichoke dip and cornbread chips.

flavors, because we don't eat the same way we did back then."

The dishes won't necessarily be "upscale, upscale," she adds, but they'll be unique.

"You won't feel like you're eating something you could make at home. You'll feel like you're having an experience — on your plate and in the room."

## Judie's Culinary Roots

Judie says her passion for

cooking started in the kitchen at Mama Love's.

She learned in the kitchen alongside her grandmother and aunts and quickly determined it was something she liked.

After Mama Love's Kitchen closed, she went to culinary school and, after cooking a while at Chef Anthony Carr's Restaurant 155 and Spoons, she joined the cooking team in Wichita State University's international dorm.

Hired initially as a baker, she worked her way up to facility manager. She stayed until the dorms closed in 2017, learning under two experienced chefs, who showed her the ropes.

## Taste Testing the Menu

As part of the ramp up to their opening, Love & Co. is previewing dishes through a series of exclusive events.

They held the first testing on Aug. 1. Next up are two ticketed events:

• **Sat., Aug. 9: A 1990s/2000s R&B Brunch Taste Testing Party**



Siblings Adrian "Bub" Love and Kiavoni Judie are stepping up to continue the Love family's culinary tradition when they open Love & Co. Kitchen and Cocktails.

## • Sun., Aug. 10: A Wine Tasting Pre-Launch Event

These events are part of Judie's strategy to test and refine the menu before launch.

Highlights from the Aug. 1 tasting included sample sizes of:

**Chicken lollipops** on coleslaw, served with **collard green-artichoke dip** and **cornbread chips**

**Oven-roasted potato wedges** and **fried okra**, paired with a spicy mayo-based sauce

A take on **beef Wellington**: meatloaf in puff pastry, served with tomato-beef sauce

A version of her mom's **ice cream pie**, made with vanilla ice cream, an Oreo crumble crust, salted peanuts, and chocolate

## Specialty Drinks & Sweet Sips

Adrian and a son have been developing a line of specialty **lemonades**, which will come in both regular and **spiked** varieties. These will be available through the restaurant's **drive-thru window**, along with a curated selection of **exotic teas and coffee**.

## The Location & the Vibe

The restaurant will be located at 1720 E. Douglas — just east of Hydraulic and across from Tanya's Soup Kitchen. Still can't find it? Look for the historic red rooster on the roof. Love has affectionately named him Lil' Red.

The building, formerly home to The Donut Whole, features two distinct spaces:

## Want to Taste for Yourself?

Tickets for the upcoming tasting events (Sat., Aug. 9 Brunch and Sun., Aug. 10 Wine Tasting with Charcuterie) are available on Eventbrite @ Love & Co.

• **The front area**, which they've transformed into a sultry red space with chandeliers and exotic lighting, offers an intimate dining vibe. Seating is limited to 73, so expect seats to be in high demand.

• **The back area** houses the bar and will also



The main dining room filled with guests for a recent menu preview.

See LOVE Page 15 →

# Troy Andrews: A Vision, a Camera, and a Calling

From YouTube to Tubi, his films are reaching millions.

By Bonita Gooch & Ty Davis  
The Community Voice

Wichita-based filmmaker Troy Andrews is building a global fanbase and a growing film catalog — all from right here in Kansas. As the founder of DrewVision Cinema, Andrews has proven that you don't need Hollywood to make movies that resonate around the world.

Over the past few years, Andrews has quietly established himself as a serious voice in independent filmmaking. His films have been picked up for distribution, featured on Tubi, and racked up millions of views on YouTube.

Even more impressive: he's done it using local actors and talent, filming entirely in and around Wichita.

## From in Front of the Camera to Behind

Troy's journey into filmmaking began with acting.

"I started off acting," he said. "I loved storytelling and being on camera. Then, while working for a cable company, I bought a camera and started shooting short films. That's when I knew this was my calling."

What started as filming weddings, events, and music videos organically grew into a professional venture — DrewVision Cinema — a company he considers both a cinematic enterprise and a ministry of purpose.

## God-Given Vision

Troy sees every film as a ministry. Even without heavy-handed messages, his stories are rooted in faith, with many inspired by biblical themes and characters woven subtly through the storylines. They invite reflection without preaching.

"DrewVision was a vision from God," said Andrews. "It's about people, purpose, and healing — from the inside out."

For example, his first feature film, "Seeds," draws light inspiration from the story of Samson and Delilah. It follows a gifted man who lets lust and pride derail his purpose. When he falls for the wrong woman — sent as a distraction — his calling begins to unravel.

The film explores how small compromises plant destructive seeds that grow into devastating consequences. With raw emotion and spiritual undertones, "Seeds" struck a nerve with viewers — especially men — grappling with temptation, purpose, and the high cost of ignoring God's warnings.

Its realism, and powerful themes helped it soar past 5 million views on YouTube. Released in 2024, the



Troy Andrews (left), founder of DrewVision Cinema, gets behind the camera with Angelo Garibaldi, director of photography.

movie gained even more attention on Tubi, landing on the streaming channel's popular list six times in one year.

"Seeds' showed me it was possible to make meaningful films in Wichita — and have them reach people around the world," he said.

That success opened the door to his second feature, "Snooze," landing in Tubi's No. 1 spot in Romance and Black Storytelling for 12 months.

## Local Power

What started as a solo passion project has grown into a full-fledged production company. Thanks to a tight-knit and dedicated team, including his wife Sasha Andrews as executive producer, Troy has developed a highly efficient production model.

From actors to producers and writers, Andrews has built a creative ecosystem that not only tells stories but also nurtures local

voices and careers.

Beyond his wife, some of his core collaborators include:

- Natalie Rolfe, Producer
- Micah Dennis, Lead Writer
- Angelo Garibaldi, Director of Photography (Humble Greatness Studios)

This list represents just a portion of the cast and crew; many others play a vital role in bringing every film to life.

Each DrewVision Cinema project features Wichita-based talent, both in front of and behind the camera. Andrews actively mentors many of the local actors involved in his films, helping them grow with each production.

What once took six months to film now takes just six weeks, with one final week reserved for finishing touches.

"We learned how to respect people's time while still getting the quality we needed. That structure changed everything," he said.

His third feature film, "Blair," debuts on Fri., Sept. 5, at Wichita's Regal Warren East. Blair explores how our choices affect others, leading to cycles of pain or healing.

## Major Momentum & Growth

DrewVision Cinema continues to expand its reach with a growing library of original films and his goal is to complete five feature films in the next 12 months.

He also works hard on his craft, Andrews credits his success not to flashy effects or big budgets, but to consistency, clarity of vision, and the power of authentic storytelling.

"We're proving you don't need to leave Wichita — or sacrifice your voice — to make an impact," says Andrews.

With distribution deals in place, streaming success, and a production pipeline that's both lean and effective, Andrews is blazing a trail for what independent filmmaking can look like in the Midwest.



The cast and production team of "Snooze" attend the movie's premiere last February. Of course, they're snoozing.



**Charles "Sto" Dwayne Stovall, 79**  
Jan. 9, 1946 - Aug. 1, 2025 Service will be held at 10 am on Tue., Aug. 12 at Old Mission Cemetery. 3424 E 21st.

**Keith Johnson, 57**  
June 29, 1968 - July 28, 2025 Service will be held at 11 am Aug. 19 at St. James Missionary Baptist Church, 1350 N Ash.

**Minnie Cudjo, 100**  
Feb. 8, 1925 - July 25, 2025 Service was held Aug. 7 at New Jerusalem Baptist Church.

**Ester Shirie Duckett - Smith, 72**  
Sept. 2, 1952 - July 22, 2025 Service was held Aug. 2 at St. Mark UMC

**Sampson Dempsey, 81**  
Aug. 26, 1943 - Aug. 1, 2025 Service will be held at 1 pm on Sat, Aug. 16 at St. James Missionary Baptist Church, 1350 N Ash

**Lois Latney, 89**  
Dec. 24, 1935 - July 29, 2025 Service will be held at 11 a.m. Aug. 20 at St. Mark Cathedral, 1018 N. Dellrose.

**Joann Lachelle Presley, 50**  
Sept. 9, 1974 - July 27, 2025 Service was held Aug. 8 at Mizpah Baptist Church.

**Phyllis Smith, 61**  
Sept. 19, 1963 - July 24, 2025 Service was held Aug. 8 at North Heights Christian Church.

**Willie B. Taylor Sr., 91**  
Feb. 1, 1934 - July 19, 2025 Service was held Aug. 9 at North Ash Church of the Nazarene.

**PRIMARY, from Page 5 ↓**

conservative members of the city council, distract from the substance of the campaign.

"Folks are ready to stop the political theater, the partisan bickering, and they want to get things done for their community, for their children, for their grandchildren, for the next generation," Shepard said. "That's what we want to do."

Shepard says that his primary day performance shows that his proposals around homelessness, affordable housing and community development are resonating.

Neal Allen, an associate professor of political science at Wichita State University, chalks Shepard's results up to his connection with Wichita's business community.

"Wichita politics is currently and likely will

always be very friendly to real estate developers and any entity that can put forward a claim to grow jobs and to support economic development," Allen said. "Joseph Shepard, in his campaign, has showed that he will likely be a progressive, but business-friendly Democrat."

Shepard raised nearly \$40,000 in campaign donations to DeShazer's \$9,000 before primary day.

**Wichita City Council District 1**

|                   |              |
|-------------------|--------------|
| Aujanee Bennett   | 405          |
| Darryl Carrington | 145          |
| LaWanda DeShazer  | 743          |
| Chris Pumpelly    | 601          |
| Joseph Shepard    | 1,745        |
| <b>TOTAL</b>      | <b>3,639</b> |

**LOVE, from Page 13 ↓**

serve as a coffee and tea shop during the day. They'll offer homemade baked goods for breakfast and lunch will also be available in this area. This side is brighter and more casual during the day, but for those who just want a cocktail, it offers an intimate space to mix and meet.

**Family, Vision & Drive**

While Judie handles the kitchen, Love is the out-front man. He'll handle the front of the house, operations, the ambiance and the crowd. Judie, the older sibling by nine years, recognizes her brother's

added value.

"His mind is like a race car," she says. "He's always thinking of new ideas and finding the right people to bring them to life."

Judie, who spent several years in and out of Wichita, began spending more time in town when mom Shirley Love became ill. After she passed in February, he committed to staying — and building something meaningful in her honor.

"The main thing is, we both want this so bad," Judie said.

They both miss her immensely, but the added value in doing this together is they know she'd be proud.

**What to Expect**

Love & Co. may open in phases:

- They hope to begin drive-thru service for coffee, teas, and spiked lemonades around Labor Day
- They're projecting a soft opening around Sept. 15

**Planned Hours:**

- Sunday through Thursday: 5 a.m. – midnight
- Fridays & Saturdays: Full kitchen open until 2 a.m.
- Saturday Brunch: As a weekly event

**Pricing:**

- Main dishes will range from \$15 to \$55

**WYANDOTTE, from Page 4 ↓**

**Wyandotte Commission District 7**

Despite all the interest in running for office this year in Wyandotte County, Chuck Stites, the incumbent commissioner from District 7, is running unopposed. This will be his second term representing the western WYCO district. He previously served on the Edwardsville City Council.

**MBE / WBE INVITATION TO BID**

**JEDUNN** JE Dunn Construction Company is bidding Grandview Pkg. 3 – Grandview High School/ Butcher-Greene Elementary School and request your bid proposal for applicable material and/or labor.

01.74.02 – Final Clean; 02.41.00 – Selective Demolition; 03.30.00 – Concrete; 04.20.00 Masonry; 05.00.00 – Structural & Misc. Steel; 07.20.00 – Sprayed Insulation; 07.90.00 Thermal & Moisture Protection; 08.10.00 – Doors, Frames & Hardware; 08.40.00 Entrances, Storefronts, Curtainwalls Glazing; 09.30.00 – Ceramic Tiling; 09.50.00 Acoustical Ceilings & Drywall; 09.65.00 – Resilient Flooring & Carpet; 09.67.00 Resinous Flooring; 09.90.00 – Painting & Wallcovering; 10.14.00 – Signage; 12.20.00 Roller Window Shades; 12.30.01 – Rough & Finish Carpentry, Casework, Specialties; 12.66.00 – Bleachers; 21.00.00 – Fire Protection; 22.00.00 – Plumbing; 23.00.00 – HVAC; 26.00.00 – Electrical & Fire Alarms; 27.00.00 – AV Systems

Bids will be received by JE Dunn via BuildingConnected.com until August 14 th , 2025, at 2:00 PM.

**PRE-BID CONFERENCE** - A Pre-Bid Conference will be held at the Grandview High School Cafeteria, 2300 Highgrove Rd, Grandview, MO 64030, at 10:00 AM on August 1st, 2025, for the purpose of answering any questions regarding the above scopes of work on the project. The meeting will be followed by a job walk at both Grandview High School and Butcher-Greene Elementary School.

JE Dunn invites subcontractors to call if any assistance is required or questions arise concerning work segmentation, work and contract requirements, or the form of proposal requested.

Questions should be directed to Kent Le, Project Manager, by phone at (816) 984-5011, or by email at kent.le@jedunn.com.

EOE, Minority/Female/Disability/Veteran/Sexual Orientation/Gender Identity

**Sunday, August 24, 2025 • 11:00 a.m.**



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# Fans in the Air, Boots on the Ground: Inside 2025's Biggest Black Cultural Hit

Black America's 2025 summer anthem might be more than just a song—it's a line dance with deep cultural roots. "Boots on the Ground," by South Carolina rapper 803Fresh, has taken over family reunions, block parties, cruise ships, and festivals across the country. Wherever African Americans gather, fans wave in the air to the viral refrain, "Where them fans at?"

## The Story Behind the Song

From the moment you hear the first fan pop, it's hard not to sing along with South Carolina native 803 Fresh's track Boots on the Ground, a song deeply rooted in gospel and soul influences.

In a March 2025 interview

with WIS 10, 803 Fresh explained that the song's lyrics were inspired by his experience at trail rides, where he noticed dancers with fans—an image that stayed with him. "I seen the dancers, they had fans," he said. "And then I went to the next trail ride, and I didn't see no fans. So I was like, 'Where the fans at?' and it just went crazy."

## Where the Dance Comes From

While 803 Fresh created the song, the dance that's sweeping social media and cookouts alike was brought to life by Georgia-based choreographer Tre Little. The "Boots on the Ground" line dance started as a spontaneous moment when Little heard the song playing

in his backyard and felt compelled to move.

Recording his steps—including a stumble or two—he shared the dance tutorial on social media, and within a week, it had gone viral with over 100,000 views. What began as a happy accident quickly became a nationwide sensation, with line dancers everywhere learning the moves.

## Southern Soul Music

Boots on the Ground brings the Southern Soul genre of music to the foreground. Southern soul music is a deeply emotional and energetic style that emerged from the American South in the 1960s, combining gospel-inspired vocals with the raw grooves



803Fresh, the singer behind the hit Boots on the Ground, definitely has a hit, but will he ever be able to top it.

of rhythm and blues.

Iconic artists like Clarence Carter and Mel Waiters are the standards of the genre. The songs are known for their heartfelt storytelling and soulful melodies, like when

Waiters sings about "having his best time at the hole in the wall," and "I came out to have a good time, that's all that's on my mind.. I got my money and I got my whiskey and tonight I'm real tipsy."

## Beyonce's Influence

The song's cultural moment follows the impact of Beyoncé's 2024 "Cowboy Carter" album, but in the South, trail-ride culture has long involved cookouts, colorful cowboy attire, and horseback rides through neighborhoods, blending celebration with heritage.

## Line Dance History

The track joins a long legacy of radio-friendly line dances embraced by Black communities, from the "Electric Slide" to the "Cupid Shuffle" and "The Wobble." Like those hits, "Boots on the Ground" offers a shared experience that crosses generational lines while honoring cultural history.

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