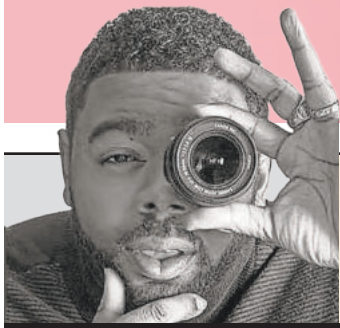


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WE SNOOZE, WE LOSE

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Final Days After Missouri Officials Made False Claims

By Mark McCormick
Kansas Reflector

There is a scene in the 2008 film "Doubt," set in a 1964 Catholic grade school, where a priest tells a story about a woman gossiping about a man she hardly knew — a situation Denton Loudermill Jr. understood when he was falsely accused in the 2024 shooting at the Kansas City Chiefs parade.

In the movie, the woman dreamed that night of a great hand pointing down at her. Seized with guilt, she went to confession.

"Is gossiping a sin?" she asked. "Yes," the priest said. "You've borne false witness against your



Falsely accused after the KC Chiefs parade shooting, Denton Loudemill's story is a warning for the digital age.

neighbor. You played fast and loose with his reputation, and you should be heartily ashamed."

Gossip haunted Loudermill in his last days as technological supercharged rumor spread at light speed, leading to death threats and slander his family

couldn't escape.

People may not remember his name, but his family will never forget how he was falsely accused in a shooting that claimed one life and injured 22, including children.

He'd stood dazed in the chaos. People screamed. Fight-or-flight hormones surged. Parents scooped up little ones, not knowing if they were running toward or away from danger.

Unlike those who ran, Loudermill froze, said LaRonna Lassiter Saunders, part of the legal team representing his family.

"He saw a woman shot and bleeding out," she said. "He was in shock. Everyone started running, but he asked himself, 'Where should I run?' He was waiting for his ride."

Public torment for this intensely private man began there. Police cuffed him and sat him on a curb where people began photographing him, assuming he was one of the shooters.

Hard to blame the police in that chaos, Lassiter Saunders said. Still, Loudermill sat helpless as photos of him spread online like a lit fuse ready to detonate.

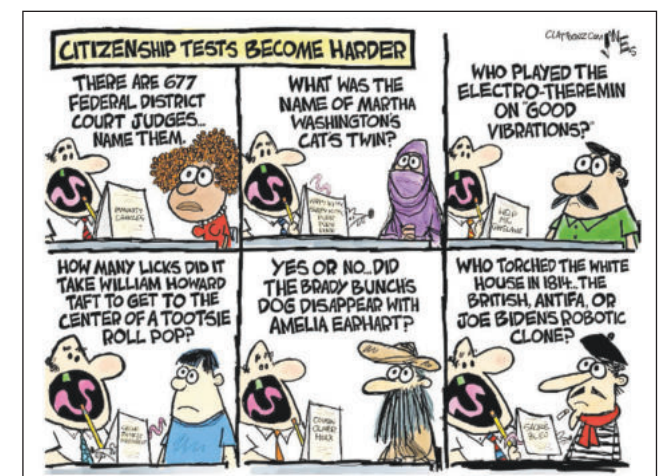
Claytoonz Will Be Gone For A While

We sadly announce that our popular cartoon Claytoonz will be gone for a while. Earlier this month cartoonist Clay Jones suffered a stroke that has partially paralyzed his right side, which includes his drawing hand. Like many other cartoonists, Clay is a freelancer whose income is tied directly to his ability to draw cartoons. He won't be able to work while he recovers from his stroke.

The Association of American Editorial Cartoonists The AAEC leadership has set up a GoFundMe fundraiser for Clay to help him through his recovery and rehab. You can find the GoFundMe here: <https://www.gofundme.com/f/clayjones>.

In one of his last cartoons, Jones spinned his biting, left-leaning political satire on the new Trump implemented U.S. Immigration Exam. The new standards went into e

Claytoonz: Citizenship Blues



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A Presidential Center Built for Community

Obama's project advances even as debates over cost, impact, and politics continue.

By Voice News Service

Construction is steadily advancing on the Obama Presidential Center — a one-of-a-kind, \$850 million campus rising in Chicago's Jackson Park — even as the project continues to draw scrutiny from political rivals and local critics. Despite the noise, former President Barack Obama remains clear about the purpose: a living, breathing institution rooted in community empowerment.

The center, which broke ground in 2021 and is expected to open in spring 2026, will house Obama's presidential museum and serve as the headquarters for his Obama Foundation's leadership programs. The 19-acre complex

is designed not as a traditional archive but as a neighborhood hub — complete with classrooms, community spaces, gardens, playgrounds, and an NBA-size basketball court. A new Chicago Public Library branch and expansive Great Lawn will offer free access for everyday visitors.

That campus-style design reflects Obama's desire to avoid the usual model of a presidential monument. "I'm not interested in a mausoleum, and I'm not really that interested in just, you know, a celebration of my presidency," Obama told *The New York Times*. "I'm more interested in: How can we use this space to activate people... To create a center for community life in a place that, frankly, has often been neglected."



Obama Presidential Center being built in Chicago, IL, USA on May 24, 2025

Criticism and Culture Wars

But while construction cranes rise, critics remain vocal.

Environmental advocates initially sued over the transfer of parkland for the project, arguing Jackson Park

should remain untouched. The lawsuit was dismissed in 2019, yet concerns linger about traffic, housing displacement, and gentrification as development surges nearby.

Some historians and archivists also bristled at the

Obama Foundation — not the National Archives — controlling the center. Rather than storing physical presidential papers on-site as other libraries do, the foundation is paying the National Archives to digitize Obama's records elsewhere. Detractors argue that reduces the research value of the facility; supporters call it cost-efficient and modern.

Adding fuel, former President Donald Trump recently attacked the center with claims that the project had "run out of money" and was "stuck." He also complained it was too focused on diversity efforts, saying Obama "wanted only women and DEI to build it." His remarks — which included insults about the design — were both unsubstantiated and widely viewed as politically motivated.

Obama and his team have largely ignored the political drama, focusing instead on tangible progress: a museum rising 225 feet above the tree-tops, a plaza named after civil rights hero John Lewis, and a glass-walled atrium honoring gun violence victim Hadiya Pendleton — tying the South Side's present to its hope for the future.

Designed with Community Input

In virtual information sessions, Obama Foundation leaders have showcased renderings shaped by resident feedback, which pushed for more green space, underground parking, and transit-friendly access to prevent congestion and disconnection from the surrounding neighborhoods.

See **OBAMA** Page 23 →

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— Ewing Marion Kauffman



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KC G.I.F.T. Awards \$100K to Troost Restaurant With Big Plans

By Startland News

Young people on Kansas City's east side need to see examples of what can be achieved when someone who looks like them works hard — and wins, said Tanyech Yarbrough, pledging to use her recent grant funding from KC G.I.F.T. to mirror entrepreneurship to her community, as well as expand her Troost eatery.

Yarbrough's Wah Gwan Afro Caribbean restaurant recently was announced as the recipient of a \$100,000 award aimed at accelerating the growth of a high-performing Black-owned business in Kansas City, MO.

The funding is expected to help Wah Gwan add an Afro-Caribbean market and juice bar, as well as grow its current dine-in and take-out traffic at 6228 Troost Ave., said Yarbrough, who founded the Jamaican and Nigerian restaurant and serves as its CEO.

"This grant gives me a chance to expand that vision, support others and keep building something that represents who we are and where we come from," she said. "I'm also most proud that I am doing that on Troost Avenue, in Kansas City."

Kansas City G.I.F.T. (Generating Income For Tomorrow) announced the new \$100,000 grant in May, opening applications to businesses that are at least 51% Black-owned; based in KCMO (preference for businesses east of Troost Avenue); in operation for at least one year; and with annual revenue of at least \$100,000.

After a four-step application process that included an in person interview, Wah Gwan was announced as the winner Sept. 20 — live on stage at the annual KC G.I.F.T. Gala in front of more than 600 people.

Since its inception in 2020, KC G.I.F.T. has distributed nearly \$2 million in grants



Tanyech Yarbrough, founder and CEO of Wah Gwan Afro Caribbean restaurant, accepts KC G.I.F.T.'s \$100,000 grant during the nonprofit's annual gala as Dr. DeAngela Burns Wallace, president and CEO of the Ewing Marion Kauffman Foundation, looks on. (CREDIT: KC G.I.F.T.)

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to 79 Black-owned businesses, resulting in the creation of more than 153 new jobs, according to impact reporting from the nonprofit.

"Our focus has always been to support Black-owned businesses that can become significant employers on the east side of Kansas City and this grant will help us do that more aggressively," Calloway, CEO of KC G.I.F.T., said of the Wah Gwan win. "This capital infusion plus the technical support that comes along with it will be another step in creating the economic engine that the east side needs, as it will facilitate business growth and job creation."

"This \$100K grant means a lot to me," said Yarbrough. "It's not just about growing my business, it's also about the love for my Jamaican and African culture. I've worked hard to create a space where people can feel

at home, taste our roots, connect through food and community."

KC G.I.F.T. this spring was announced as a grant winner itself, earning an award through the Ewing Marion Kauffman Foundation's project funding pathway to support expanded technical assistance from KC G.I.F.T., allowing the organization to boost the number of KC businesses served by 33%.

The nonprofit aims to close the racial wealth gap and reduce poverty-related crime by empowering small, Black-owned businesses in KC's historically redlined neighborhoods. Through its small-business accelerator at 5008 Prospect Ave., KC G.I.F.T. knocks down barriers to success by offering business support, marketing services, and other professional resources, the organization said.

Why Your Drugstore Is Closing

By The Voice Health News

Quick Takeaways

- **Pharmacies are closing fast** — CVS, Walgreens, and Rite Aid have shuttered thousands of stores as profits fall and shopping habits shift.
- **Prescription payments are the breaking point** — low reimbursement rates from pharmacy benefit managers (PBMs) mean many stores lose money on every prescription they fill.
- **Communities are paying the price** — closures hit low-income and urban neighborhoods hardest, leaving “pharmacy deserts” where access to medicine and health advice disappears.



This closed Walgreens near 63rd & 71 Hwy in KCMO is indicative of what’s happening, especially in inner city communities, where it is hard to find a drug store anymore.

shelves have become common in many city stores. Retail theft, along with higher security costs, has made already-struggling locations even harder to keep open.

But these challenges are just part of what are larger shifts in how Americans shop — and how the drug industry itself is structured.

Changing Shopping Habits

In the 1990s and early 2000s, big drugstore chains grew aggressively, opening new stores in nearly every neighborhood to dominate the market. They wanted to be both the **local pharmacy** and the **convenience store**. But over the past decade, consumers have changed how they buy.

Household goods and personal-care items once bought at drugstores are now ordered online or found cheaper at Walmart, Target, or dollar stores — retailers that have increased their presence in low-income and urban neighborhoods. The “front end” of the drugstore, which sells snacks, cleaning supplies, and small gifts, simply isn’t making enough money to sustain all those extra locations.

As people shop elsewhere, drugstores have leaned even harder on prescriptions — which were supposed to be their most stable business. But that’s now where they’re losing the most.

The Prescription Pinch

Most of a pharmacy’s revenue comes from

filling prescriptions, but profits from that business have plummeted. The reason, many pharmacists say, lies with **pharmacy benefit managers (PBMs)** — the powerful middlemen that negotiate drug prices between manufacturers, insurers, and pharmacies.

Pharmacies claim that PBMs reimburse them for less than what they pay to buy some drugs. In other words, pharmacies are losing money every time they fill certain prescriptions. Independent pharmacies and small-chain locations in low-income areas are hit hardest, because they don’t have the same leverage as large corporate chains.

PBMs argue that they help control costs by pushing drugmakers for rebates and discounts. But critics — including pharmacists and patient advocates — say PBMs keep too much of the savings for themselves, operate with little transparency, and have grown so dominant that they effectively control what drugs are covered and how much pharmacies get paid.

Communities Losing More Than Stores

When a pharmacy closes in a low-income neighborhood, the impact ripples through the entire community. For many residents, these stores serve as accessible health hubs — the first stop for vaccines, over-the-counter medicines, and trusted advice from pharmacists who often know their patients personally.

Without them, people must travel farther



Across the country, drugstores are disappearing — especially in low-income neighborhoods.

It’s not just theft or online shopping. At the heart of it all are sky-high drug prices and unfair reimbursement rates that make it impossible for pharmacies to survive.

for prescriptions and medical supplies — a burden for seniors, those without cars, and people managing chronic illnesses like diabetes or heart disease.

Researchers warn that this growing map of “pharmacy deserts” poses a serious threat to public health. A study in the *Journal of the American Medical Association* found that pharmacies in low-income areas, particularly those serving large numbers of patients on Medicaid, are far more likely to close. Already, one-third of neighborhoods in major U.S. cities lack a local pharmacy — and the numbers are climbing.

The Bigger Picture: America’s Drug-Price Problem

At the root of the crisis is one undeniable fact: Americans pay more for prescription drugs than anyone else in the world.

A 2024 report by the RAND Corporation found that U.S. drug prices are nearly three times higher than in other wealthy countries. That’s because, unlike most nations, the U.S. has no system of national price negotiation. Drug prices are set by manufacturers, then filtered through a maze of insurers and PBMs before they reach your pharmacy counter. Each step adds complexity — and profit — but little relief for consumers.

Recent efforts to control costs have come from both political parties. President Donald Trump signed an order to tie certain U.S. drug prices to the lower rates paid abroad, while President Joe Biden’s Inflation Reduction Act gave Medicare new power to negotiate directly with drug companies. Still, progress has been slow, and the system remains fragmented.

See **DRUGSTORE** Page 8 →

For decades, neighborhood drugstores like CVS, Walgreens, and Rite Aid anchored the corner of almost every busy intersection. They were places where people not only picked up prescriptions but also got flu shots, asked pharmacists health questions, and grabbed everyday essentials on the way home.

Now, those familiar storefronts are disappearing. And for many low-income and inner-city neighborhoods, the loss of a local pharmacy is more than inconvenient — it’s a public-health crisis.

A Wave of Closures Nationwide

The numbers are staggering. **CVS has already closed about 900 stores since 2021 and plans to shut another 271 in 2025** as part of a multi-year restructuring plan.

Walgreens, facing similar financial pressure, expects to close roughly 1,200 underperforming stores by 2027 — including about 500 this year.

And **Rite Aid, once one of America’s largest pharmacy chains, has now closed all of its remaining stores**, ending 63 years in business after a second bankruptcy filing.

Industry leaders admit the current model is “not sustainable.” Around a quarter of Walgreens’ stores are unprofitable, and closures are targeting locations struggling with high theft, declining sales, or overlap with nearby stores. CVS has also been trimming locations as it shifts toward smaller, pharmacy-focused formats.

The reasons behind the closures run far deeper than theft, though that has played a visible role. Locked display cases and empty

Why the Government Shutdown Centers on Health Insurance Subsidies

By The Voice News Service

The federal government shutdown has stretched into its third week as lawmakers remain divided over extending the **enhanced health insurance subsidies** enacted in 2021. These subsidies, which help millions afford coverage under the Affordable Care Act (ACA), will expire at the end of this year unless Congress acts.

Mark Shepard, associate professor of public policy at Harvard University's Kennedy School of Government, responded to these questions about how these subsidies work, who benefits, and what happens if they end.

Q: Why are health insurance subsidies a sticking point in the shutdown fight?

This shutdown centers on

a technical but high-impact issue: whether to continue the more generous “enhanced” subsidies that have made ACA marketplace coverage cheaper since 2021.

If Congress fails to extend them, out-of-pocket premiums will spike in 2026 for about 20 million Americans. Democrats have made continuing these subsidies a condition for reopening the government, while Republicans say the enhanced version is too costly and poorly targeted. The disagreement has left both sides dug in — and the government unfunded.

Q: Can you explain what these subsidies are and who they're for?

The U.S. doesn't have one national health insurance system. Instead, it's a **patchwork** built over decades:

- **Employer-based insurance:** Roughly **160 million**

Americans, about half the population, get private insurance through their jobs. These are mostly people in larger or better-paying companies that can afford to offer benefits.

- **Public programs:** Another **120 million** rely on government coverage through **Medicare** (for seniors and people with disabilities) and **Medicaid** (for lower-income households and children covered under CHIP).

- **The “missing middle”:** About **40–50 million people** fall in between — they earn too much for Medicaid, are too young for Medicare, and don't get insurance through work. Many are self-employed, gig workers, or employed by small businesses that don't offer coverage.

That's the group the **ACA marketplaces**, sometimes called “exchanges,” were created to serve when they launched in

2014. These are private insurance markets where individuals can buy regulated plans that meet minimum quality standards, such as covering pre-existing conditions and essential health benefits.

But there's a catch: health care in the U.S. is extremely

A “Save Healthcare” podium outside Congress highlights growing pressure to protect ACA subsidies tied to the government shutdown.

ASSOCIATED PRESS/J. SCOTT APPLEWHITE

expensive. A standard **Silver plan** on the ACA exchange costs around **\$500 per month** in 2025 — about \$6,000 a year for one person. That's before adding deductibles and co-pays.

The average employer plan actually costs even more — close to \$9,000 per person per year in 2024 — but workers rarely see the full price because employers pay part of it.

For a typical adult earning

about **\$45,000** a year, those prices are daunting. Without help, coverage is out of reach for many middle-income families.

See **INSURANCE** Page 8 →



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More Than a Summer Job

YMCA's Job Prep Builds Skills and Confidence for Life

By **Tyjuan Davis**
Wichita Reporter

In early August, the Scottish Rite Center in downtown Wichita echoed with applause as 172 teens were honored at the YMCA of Greater Wichita's annual Job Prep celebration. For the young people on stage, the event marked the end of months of hard work in a program designed to prepare them for real-world jobs and lifelong success.

For families and community members watching, it was a reminder of why Job Prep matters and how it continues to change lives across Wichita.

Job Prep is the YMCA's youth employment and leadership initiative that teaches teens how to find, secure, and keep their first jobs—while building professional and personal skills they'll use throughout life. Open to teens ages 15 to 17, the 12-week Job Prep program begins each February, followed by a 10-week summer employment period that ends July 31. The program is free for students, and transportation is provided to make access as easy as possible.

With the 2025 class complete and 2026 program recruitment is underway. For 2026, the YMCA hopes to engage between 300 and 400 students in 2026 — nearly double last year's total. It's a goal that shows how deeply the program's impact resonates with students and employers alike.

A Vision Born from a Workforce Gap

YMCA's Job Prep program began in 2007–2008. Adults were increasingly filling summer and entry-level jobs that once offered teens valuable first work experiences. Seeing this shift, Tyrone Baker, who is now the Y's Senior Program Director of Urban Outreach, recognized a growing gap.

Young people were missing out on those early jobs where they could learn responsibility and gain real-world experience. Job Prep was created to close that gap—giving teens the tools, confidence, and support to compete for and keep those early jobs.

From Participant to Program Director

One of the clearest examples of the program's impact is Natania Jetter, who joined Job Prep as a teen after her mother heard about it. She was eager to work and ready to grow. Through the program, she met mentors like Min McKenzie, now COO of the YMCA, and Tyrone Baker, who helped her build confidence, sharpen her skills, and discover her potential as a leader.

Over the years, Jetter stayed connected to the program—volunteering, instructing, and eventually joining the advisory board. Today, she serves as the Program Director for Job Prep, a full-circle moment that shows exactly what the program was designed to



Students who received special recognition at the YMCA's Job Prep celebration pose for a photo at the Scottish Rite Center in Wichita. Program Director Natania Jetter, who once participated in Job Prep as a teen, is pictured in the back row wearing a light blue suit.

do: empower young people to step into leadership.

Building Skills That Last

Job Prep is more than just an introduction to employment. Students learn how to communicate professionally, build resumes, manage their money, and present themselves with confidence. Every participant completes CPR, Automated External Defibrillator (AED), and First Aid certification free of charge, giving them a practical skill set they can carry into any field.

One of the program's signature components is the "Super Bowl" mock interview, where executives from across Wichita sit down with students for real job interviews. Their interview skills are evaluated and students who need more support receive additional coaching and try again, ensuring they're fully prepared for real-world opportunities.

Real-World Opportunities Through Partnerships

Unlike many youth



Makenna Jackson and her mother pose for a photo in front of the Y backdrop following the Job Prep celebration held at the Scottish Rite Center in Wichita. Parents and family members joined in the celebration. Makenna shows off her recognition award plus her envelope which included a monetary award.

employment programs, Job Prep doesn't simply place students into roles. Instead, the YMCA works with local companies to gather job descriptions. Students then review available opportunities, call employers directly to set

up interviews, and compete for positions. Those selected are hired as YMCA employees, and the YMCA covers their wages for up to 25 hours a week during the summer.

See **JOB PREP** Page 8→



YMCA Job Prep Program Director Natania Jetter and Y's Senior Program Director Tyrone Baker stand in front of a YMCA sign in Wichita. The two leaders represent how Job Prep connects mentorship and opportunity—Jetter once completed the program as a teen under Baker's guidance, and now helps guide hundreds of students toward their first jobs and leadership success.

DRUGSTORE, from Page 5 ↓

Until the U.S. can rein in prescription costs and reform how reimbursement works, drugstores — especially those in already-struggling neighborhoods — will keep disappearing.

What's at Stake

Drugstores were never just retail spaces. They were neighborhood fixtures, trusted by seniors, families, and caregivers. The pharmacist was often the most accessible health professional in the community.

Now, as chains close and independent stores vanish,

millions of Americans are left navigating chronic illness, medication management, and rising costs without that support.

If nothing changes — if reimbursement rates remain unfair, if drug prices stay sky-high, and if the country fails to treat access to medicine as a basic public good — the trend will only accelerate.

The corner pharmacy, once a symbol of convenience and care, is fast becoming an endangered species. And the communities that can least afford to lose them will pay the highest price.

INSURANCE, from Page 6 ↓

That's where the **ACA** subsidies come in. They ensure that people buying marketplace coverage don't spend more than a fixed share of their income on premiums. The federal government covers the rest.

As of 2025, about **24 million** people are enrolled in marketplace plans, and **22 million** receive subsidies. Still, roughly **26 million Americans remain uninsured**, a number that's barely budged since 2016. Many of those uninsured live in states that didn't expand Medicaid under the ACA, creating another gap in coverage.

"There's a big group, about 40–50 million people, who fall in the 'missing middle': they earn too much to qualify for Medicaid and they're too young for Medicare, but they don't have a job that offers health insurance." — Mark Shepard

Q: What changed with the 'enhanced' subsidies passed in 2021?

The original ACA capped premiums between 2% and 10% of income, depending on household earnings. That formula looked reasonable

on paper but proved too steep for many families. Even small increases in monthly cost caused large drop-offs in enrollment, especially among younger adults and lower-income workers.

In 2021, Congress expanded the subsidies under the American Rescue Plan, lowering the cap to **0% to 8.5%** of income. For those earning under 150% of the poverty line — about \$45,000 for a family of four — coverage became free.

That shift had a big impact. The number of people with ACA coverage jumped from **11 million in 2020** to about **25 million in 2024**, the highest ever. States that hadn't expanded Medicaid saw some of the largest gains because these subsidies filled the gap for poor adults who otherwise would've remained uninsured.

Democrats point to that record enrollment as a sign of success. Republicans counter that making coverage free to so many households invites waste, errors, and improper enrollment. Those competing views now sit at the heart of the budget stalemate.

Q: What happens if the enhanced subsidies expire?**JOB PREP**, from Page 7 ↓

This structure reinforces initiative and accountability. Students must show they're ready to work—and employers see the difference. Over the years, local companies like INTRUST Bank, Wesley Medical Center, Redbud Pediatrics, M&M Insurance, and GT Midwest have partnered with the YMCA to offer job placements, mentorship, and funding that keep Job Prep growing.

Baker still remembers the early years when Koch Industries became the first major donor. "They believed in the program before anyone else," he said. "And years later, they get to see that investment come to life in people like Natania."

A Growing Network of Opportunity

The program continues to expand—building healthcare pathways with GraceMed Health Clinic, adding HVAC training, and launching a

hands-on career expo to connect students with real career options. Jetter and her team are building new pathways in healthcare through partnerships with GraceMed Health Clinic, exploring opportunities in HVAC trades, and planning a hands-on career expo to give students exposure to diverse career fields. There are also plans to offer college tours, including visits to Langston University, to help students envision their next steps beyond high school.

Job Prep now works closely with Wichita Public Schools Future Ready Centers and the HYPE (Helping Youth Prepare for Employment) partnership—a citywide effort that unites programs like the City's Way to Work and the Workforce Alliance Youth Employment Project—to ensure every teen has access to the right level of training and opportunity. Future Ready Centers and collaborating with other youth employment efforts through the HYPE (Helping Youth Prepare

for Employment) partnership, a citywide initiative that unites programs like the City of Wichita's Way to Work and the Workforce Alliance Youth Employment Project to strengthen youth job opportunities, which includes the City of Wichita's Way to Work Program and the Workforce Alliance Youth Employment Project. The goal is to make sure every teen, regardless of their starting point, is connected to the right level of training and opportunity.

A Program That Grows With Its Students

The 12-week instruction phase begins the first week of February and runs through early May, followed by a 10-week summer employment period that ends July 31. The program is free for students, and transportation is provided to make access as easy as possible.

Last year, 365 students enrolled, with 172 receiving paid wages through YMCA partnerships. Many others used the

training to secure their own jobs, which Baker considers just as much a success. "When a teen gets hired on their own, that means the program worked," he explained.

While parents often help teens get to the program, once enrolled, students are responsible for attendance, communication, and follow-through—skills that build independence and accountability to and from the program, but once things begin, the responsibility shifts to the student. That intentional design helps young people practice independence, communication, and ownership of their own growth.

Enrollment and Contact

Enrollment opened October 1 and will remain open until classes begin in February. Teens can even join slightly after the start date if space allows.

For more information or to enroll: Email: jobprep@ymcawichita.org Phone: 316-776-8179 Website: ymcawichita.org/jobprep

Without congressional action, the subsidies revert to pre-2021 levels. The effects would unfold quickly:

1. Premiums rise sharply. The Kaiser Family Foundation estimates the average subsidized household's annual premium would more than double — from **\$888 in 2025 to \$1,904 in 2026**.

2. Millions lose coverage. The Congressional Budget Office predicts **3.8 million people** would drop insurance altogether, either because it's unaffordable or because the extra paperwork of paying premiums deters re-enrollment.

3. Markets weaken. When healthier people leave, the risk pool gets older and sicker. Insurers respond with higher prices and, in some cases, pull out of the markets. That creates a cycle of rising costs and shrinking participation — similar to what happened during the 2017–18 "repeal and replace"

debate.

While ending the enhanced subsidies could save the federal government about **\$30 billion per year**, those savings come with higher premiums and reduced coverage across the board.

Q: What would that mean for state and local communities?

The consequences don't stop in Washington. When people lose health coverage, they still need care — and often seek it in emergency rooms that must treat them regardless of ability to pay.

Hospitals then absorb those unpaid costs as uncompensated care, which strains budgets and can lead to higher prices for insured patients. State and local governments, which fund many public hospitals and Medicaid programs, often have to step in to fill the gap.

In short, what looks like a federal budget cut on paper often

turns into a **local fiscal problem** for counties, cities, and health systems.

Q: Republicans argue these subsidies are costly and prone to abuse. Are those concerns valid?

It's reasonable to worry about cost; enhanced subsidies do add tens of billions of dollars annually to the federal budget. But cutting them shifts those costs to households. And when insurance gets pricier, many people — especially younger, healthier ones — opt out. That leaves smaller, riskier insurance pools and pushes premiums up for everyone else.

Other countries with private insurance systems, like **Switzerland** or the **Netherlands**, avoid this spiral by **mandating universal coverage** and collecting premiums through taxes or payroll deductions. The U.S. briefly had a lighter version of that under

the ACA's individual mandate, but Congress repealed it in 2017.

Without such a mandate, the U.S. faces a trade-off:

- Keep subsidies generous to maintain widespread, affordable coverage, or
- Scale them back to save money but accept higher uninsured rates.

"There's no magic solution," Shepard said. "Congress has to decide how much coverage it wants and how much it's willing to pay for it."

Bottom line:

If the enhanced ACA subsidies expire, **millions could lose affordable coverage**, premiums could climb for those who remain insured, and local governments could face higher uncompensated-care costs. The debate over these subsidies is more than a budget fight — it's a defining question about what kind of health safety net the U.S. is willing to sustain.

Your Vote Matters — Get to Know Local Candidates Before You Cast It

The Community Voice expands election coverage online to give readers deeper insight into key races.

By Bonita Gooch
Voice Editor-in-Chief

2025 Election day is just around the corner and THE VOICE is doing what we do best: making sure our readers have the information they need before heading to the polls.

We've been following this year's races since day one. When filing opened in the spring of 2025, we were already on the clock. And as soon as the June 2 deadline passed, we rolled out the full lineup of local candidates — from Wyandotte County to Wichita — because there's a lot at stake this year.

But here's the great but challenging news: the number of candidates surged, and our small but committed



Christal Watson



Linda Hoskins Sutton



Jammie Johnson



Rose Mulvaney-Henry

newsroom couldn't give every contest the in-print attention it deserved. So we adapted — and expanded our coverage online.

Every candidate in our targeted races was invited to share their platforms. Many stepped up and took advantage of the opportunity — a clear sign they want their message heard by the voters who read THE VOICE. Others did not respond. So if you only see one candidate featured, it's not favoritism — it's participation.

And in a couple of Wyandotte County Commission races, neither candidate responded, leaving us no responsible way to publish a comparison.

Still, voters will find a robust slate of races covered either in this issue or on our website:

- Kansas City, KS Mayor – Christal Watson, Rose Mulvaney-Henry
- Wyandotte Co. Commission District 6 – LaVert Murray, Carlos Pacheco
- BPU Board At-Large District 2

– David Haley • BPU Board At-Large District 1 – Gary Enrique Lopez Bradley

• KCKCC Board of Trustees – Jammie Johnson, Linda Hoskins Sutton (online only)

• USD 500 School Board – Shevette Dinkins, Rachel Russel, Pamela Penn Hicks, Jocelyn Strickland-Egans

• Wichita City Council District 1 – LaWanda DeShazar, Joseph Shepard

• USD 259 School Board District 1 – MacKenzie Truelove, Diane Albert

So, if you missed the coverage of these races in our print edition, jump online to learn more about the candidates and their response to the issues that matter to our readers the most.

Of course, we'll be back online after the elections with results coverage and a look ahead.

DR. CARLOS

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COMMISSIONER ★ 5TH DISTRICT

Paid for by Pacheco for Commissioner - Jennifer Schneider Pacheco, Treasurer

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Paid for by Vote DeShazer City Council District 1. Diane Britton, Treasurer



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ROSE MULVANY HENRY
for Mayor / CEO of WyCo & KCK

As mayor, Rose will prioritize:

-  Investing in our Community and Lowering Costs for Residents
-  Modernizing and Rebuilding our Infrastructure
-  Balancing the Budget and Growing our County's Economy
-  Restoring Trust in the Unified Government

SCAN THE QR CODE TO LEARN MORE ABOUT ROSE



VOTE FOR ROSE ON OR BEFORE TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 4

WICHITA DISTRICT 1 CITY COUNCIL

The Candidates in Their Own Words

Sitting District 1 Councilmember Brandon Johnson has complete, two terms – 8 years – on the city council and can no longer seek reelection due to term limits. From a primary field of candidates, these two candidates advanced to the general election.

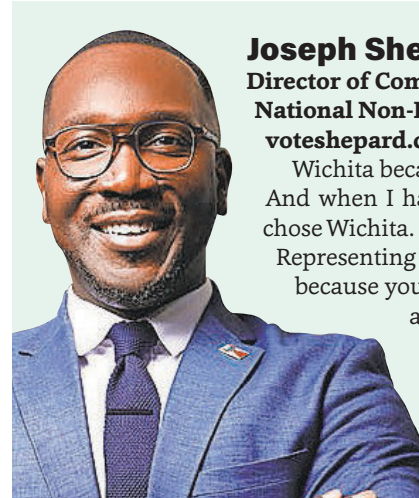
In this Q&A, we summarized the candidates' responses to the questions they were asked during a forum held on Tues., Oct. 14. Their answers to additional questions can be found on communityvoiceks.com -- click on news then elections or go to bit.ly/47g5Je6



LaWanda DeShazar, 60
Community Engagement Specialist
votedeshazer.com

I am District 1. I grew up here, I live here, and I've watched this community go from thriving — with businesses, grocery stores, and pride — to feeling forgotten. I'm running because it's time for equity on the City Council. It's time the little guy — our seniors, our kids — gets a break. They deserve lower property taxes, safe schools, safe parks, and neighborhoods that thrive.

For too long, big-dollar interests have gotten all the attention and incentives. It's time to take care of us. I'm committed to fighting for safety, economic opportunity, and dignity in every corner of District 1.



Joseph Shepard, 32
Director of Community Impact for
National Non-Profit Organization, Lead For America
voteshepard.com

Wichita became home for me at a time when I didn't have one. And when I had the chance to build a life on my own terms, I chose Wichita.

Representing District 1 takes proximity — being connected not because you're running for office, but because this is who you are. I'm focused on kitchen-table issues: stronger neighborhoods, economic advancement for everyone, and rebuilding trust between people and government. I believe in bringing people together — all backgrounds, all zip codes — so we can move District 1 forward **onward together**.

HOUSING INNOVATION

District 1 has an aging housing stock. What policies or incentives would you propose to encourage innovation of existing housing?

District 1 is short thousands of homes and needs innovative approaches. We should use vacant lots for townhomes or modular homes — like the McAfee and Jackson brothers successfully did decades ago — creating

both housing and jobs. We must rethink single-family only development and be smart with public dollars to rebuild our neighborhoods efficiently.

We need policies that support renters, seniors, and disabled residents by expanding the Homestead Act and prioritizing workforce housing. Minority entrepreneurs should have access to low-interest capital, since big banks

often deny them. Transitional housing must be part of the path to permanent housing. Housing reform must include renters, who make up a majority of Black residents in District 1.

SALES TAX VS. PROPERTY TAXES

What are your thoughts on a sales tax increase as a way to reduce property taxes?

I oppose putting the cost of fixing the city on everyday residents. Before increasing sales taxes, we must audit the budget and stop giving away deals to developers who don't pay

back what they owe. We need a better return on public investments before asking families to shoulder more costs.

A sales-tax proposal should be decided by the public. Tourism generates about 30% of Wichita's sales-tax revenue — so visitors help cover critical needs like roads, sewers,

housing, and homelessness services. We can reduce the mill levy while still supporting growth, if voters approve a strategic sales-tax investment.

YOUTH INPUT IN DECISION MAKING

How will you ensure that youth have meaningful input in decisions that affect their lives, and what is one signature initiative you would launch to support youth in District 1?

I have a long track record of empowering youth leadership in Wichita. At the NAACP Youth Council, students led advocacy on wages and education. As councilmember, I will ensure youth not only have a seat at the table but a real voice — from advisory boards

to workforce and recreation planning. Before launching new programs, I will audit City finances to redirect funds toward safe, affordable recreation spaces like youth centers and late-night activities that keep kids protected and engaged.

Young people must help design the policies that affect their lives — not as tokens, but true partners. I support requiring youth seats on District Advisory Boards and reviving the Youth Advisory Coalition to unite nonprofits and schools. My first-term youth initiative

would create permanent spaces for safe recreation, innovation, and creativity. We'll measure progress with both data — crime trends and activity participation — and youth narratives, ensuring solutions reflect their lived realities.

FOOD ACCESS

Northeast Wichita is a food desert. The Corner Store initiative has shown limited results. What would you propose to address food insecurity beyond community gardens?

We need full-service grocery stores — not only fruit and vegetable programs. The City once set aside \$1 million but it disappeared. We should "follow the money" and target

national grocery chains beyond Dillons and Walmart. Other cities have invested public dollars to save local stores — we should too. Kids deserve real food options close to home.

Food access is a health and academic success issue. I will pursue mixed-use development so new housing projects include grocery retail. We'll partner with nonprofits like

Kansas Appleseed to keep free meals available year-round and advocate for state support. Population growth and private-sector partnership are key to attracting grocery chains.

Leadership that unites. Vision that inspires.

VOTE SHEPARD ON NOV. 4!

Paid for by Joseph Shepard for District 1, Dr. Kevin Harrison Treasurer

ENDORSED BY:

- Council-member Brandon Johnson
- Former Council-member Lavonta Williams
- Wichita/Hutchinson Labor Federation
- IAFF Local I35, Wichita Firefighters
- Realtors of South Central Kansas
- Wichita Fraternal Order of Police
- Moms Demand Action Gun Sense Candidate

We Snooze, We Lose: Kansas Elections Prove It's True

Showing up in small elections has big consequences. So does staying home.

By **Bonita Gooch**
Voice Editor in Chief

In local elections across Kansas, razor-thin margins are shaping our communities. And when our communities sit out these races, our neighborhoods feel the consequences.

Take Junction City.

Earlier this year, Councilmember Al Gordon — a respected small-business owner and a strong voice for the city's Black community — ran for re-election. He knew the field would be tough: ten candidates competing for six spots to advance to the general election. Every voter could vote for up to three candidates in the race.

The stakes? Decisions about policing practices. Streetlights and sidewalks. Business development. Rental codes. Property taxes. All the issues that affect daily life.

Yet turnout told a grim story. Of approximately **13,000 registered voters** in Junction City, just **2,657** votes were cast. With every voter able to cast three votes, that meant as few as 885 votes showed up for the election — just **6.8% of eligible voters**. A handful of residents — fewer than 1 in 15 — those who would represent everyone.



Al Gordon failed to advance to the general election by one vote.

Here's how close it was:

Candidate Result	Votes
#1 Top Vote-Getter	506
Next 3 Candidates	300s
Next 3 Candidates	High 200s
5th & 6th place (tied and advanced with)	283
Al Gordon received	282

He lost by one vote. One.

And in a city where **20% of the population** is African American, that one vote could have come from:

- A cousin down the street
- A church member sitting in the pew behind you
- A neighbor who meant to vote "next time"

There were dozens — even hundreds — of Black residents who could have made the difference.

This isn't an isolated story.

In the 2023 local elections, Roeland Park, KS candidate Haile Sims — another young Black leader — lost his council race by just **five votes: 181 to 175**.

Five people. A minivan full of friends. A single extended family.

When we don't vote, we give someone else the power to make decisions for us. When we show up, we can decide the outcome.

Turnout among Black voters in Kansas



Haile Sims lost his bid for City Council by five votes.

lags behind White voters at every step:

Group	Registered	Voted
White	80.8%	71.7%
Black	66.9%	62.4%

What if we all registered? What if we all showed up?

Local elections don't look glamorous. They don't feel big. They don't flood your screen with ads. But they decide what gets built in your neighborhood — and whose priorities count.

Al Gordon was one vote shy of making sure those priorities included the African-American community.

Next time, that one vote could be yours.



USD 259 School Board District 1

Vote November 4

- Children are more than test results
- Strong teacher support
- Preparing students for careers and life

Vote for Truelove Leadership that shows

Paid for by Mackenzi Truelove Campaign, Sabrina Shoemaker, Treasurer

“Local elections don't have low stakes. They just have low turnout.”

BONITA GOOCH

Call to Action: No More Sleeping Elections

By Voice Editorial Team



When we stay home, we hand over our power. When we show up — we take it back."

VOICE EDITORIAL TEAM

Insurance Commissioner
State Treasurer
5 State Board of Education seats
All Kansas House members
Half the Kansas Senate

If you think these positions don't matter, just look around:

- In Texas and Missouri, state legislatures redrew districts to erase Democratic and Black voting power.
- They're changing election laws to make voting harder.
- They're using low-turnout



elections to lock in power.

How did Republicans gain so much control?

Not because they massively outnumber Democrats and Independents. They gained power because they show up — even when we don't.

While many slept through the "small elections," they were reshaping the map — sometimes

literally — to silence voices like ours.

That's the lesson: When we stay home, we hand over our power. When we show up — we take it back.

So don't wait for a presidential election. Don't sit out the ones that feel "too small."

- Local elections are where your voice is the loudest.
- Local elections are where

change starts.

- Local elections are where turnout can flip the result.

There's no more time for sleeping through elections. Kansas needs every one of us — especially now.

And as the old song reminds us: "Now we've got to wake up EVERYBODY, No more sleeping in bed..."

It's time to rise up — and vote.

"Wake Up Everybody"

Wake up, everybody, no more sleeping in bed
No more backward thinking, time for thinking ahead
The world has changed so very much from what it used to be
There's so much hatred, war, and poverty, whoa, oh

Wake up, all the teachers, time to teach a new way
Maybe then they'll listen to whatcha have to say
Cause they're the ones who's coming up, and the world is in their hands
When you teach the children, teach 'em the very best you can

The world won't get no better
If we just let it be

The world won't get no better
We gotta change it, yeah, just you and me

Written by Gene McFadden and John Whitehead

Kansas Nov. 4 Local Elections

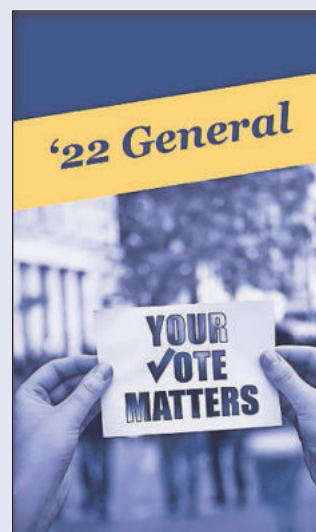
What's on the ballot?

- City Council races
- School Board elections
- Local ballot questions (varies by community)

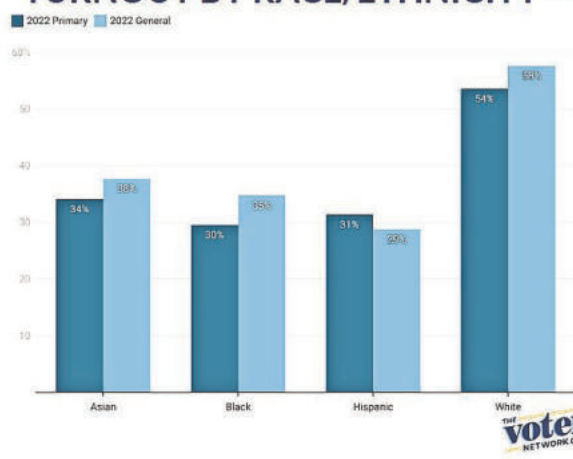
Who can vote?

- Any registered Kansas voter in their local jurisdiction
- Check or update your registration at KSVotes.org

See LOCAL Page 23 →



TURNOUT BY RACE/ETHNICITY



WICHITA DISTRICT 1 SCHOOL BOARD

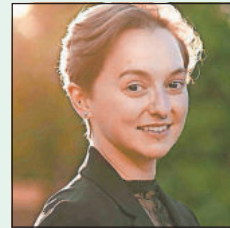
The Candidates in Their Own Words

This race faces off incumbent board member Diane Albert against newcomer MacKenzie Truelove. Both advanced from a primary race with four candidates. In this Q&A, we summarized the candidates' responses to the questions they were asked during a forum held on Tues., Oct. 14. Their answers to additional questions can be found on communityvoiceks.com -- click on news then elections or go to <https://bit.ly/47g5Je6>



Diane Albert, 43
Former Business Owner
facebook.com/DianeAlbertBOE/

I currently represent District 1 and serve as School Board President. My focus has been elevating student achievement and making district operations more efficient — separating facilities oversight from academic priorities so board meetings can focus on what matters most: educating students. I've worked to elevate the voices of teachers by bringing them into the boardroom so decisions reflect real classroom needs. Strong community relationships are central to my approach, including ongoing meetings with organizations like the NAACP and structured resident roundtables. I believe every student must be future-ready, and that requires good environments for both students and staff.



Mackenzi Truelove, 33
Senior Regulatory Coordinator
[Facebook.com Mackenzi Truelove for School Board USD 259](https://facebook.com/MackenziTruelove)

I began volunteering in 2022, canvassing, phone banking, and advocating at the state level for voting rights and other issues. I am running to be a strong advocate for diversity, equity, and inclusion — especially for queer students. Every child deserves to be treated like a human being, not just a number. I believe in ensuring students have safe, welcoming environments and access to mental-health support and community resources. I plan to show up in schools and bring others with me, so the community can see firsthand what's happening and how we can help schools improve. I want students fed, supported, and surrounded by a caring school community focused on their well-being and success.

BOND & FACILITIES FUNDING

MC Question: Would you support a future bond, and under what conditions (oversight, levy constraints, phased approach)?

I support moving forward with another bond through a mill-levy-neutral approach, meaning taxpayers wouldn't see increases over current levels. However, we must greatly improve communication and ensure people understand that bond dollars cannot be used for salaries — they are restricted funds. The failure last time was partly due to confusion about what the bond covered.

I support another bond issue because maintaining current funding is essential. If the existing bond lapses, the district would be left without needed funds. Classrooms should be safe and comfortable — teachers shouldn't have to move mid-lesson due to extreme heat or students keep coats on because it's too cold. We need money to maintain and improve school environments. Passing another bond protects students' well-being and supports learning.

CELL PHONES IN SCHOOLS

How effective is the current policy, and what improvements would you suggest?

The current policy is strong for elementary and middle schools — it effectively creates a bell-to-bell no-phone environment. High school is different because students often leave campus for lunch and should have phones for safety reasons. I'm open to removing phone use during passing periods, but the larger issue is consistent enforcement. The board sets policy; staff must implement it. Stronger implementation will improve outcomes.

I am open to eliminating phone use during passing periods in high school. Cell phone addiction is real — students chase notifications and online validation instead of building real-world connections. We need to help young people stay present and develop healthy social interactions. A stronger policy could better support learning and student well-being.

DOJ SETTLEMENT & DISCIPLINE REFORM

The district has implemented a new discipline policy due to discriminatory practices found by the Department of Justice. What more can be done to ensure fairness and uniformity in discipline policies across the district?

The DOJ settlement requires major changes, and implementing something new always comes with a learning curve. The district is methodically addressing building-by-building gaps in understanding and execution to ensure fairness. Communication must improve, and staff needs support as they transition. I am committed to careful, intentional implementation focused on student safety and equity.

Discipline is challenging because of everything kids are dealing with today. We need to address the root causes — especially mental health. Treating students with dignity and offering real support can reduce behavioral issues. When kids' basic needs are met, schools become healthier environments and discipline becomes more equitable.

TEACHER RECRUITMENT, RETENTION & SUPPORT

What incentives or support systems would help attract and retain high-quality teachers in challenging schools?

We've already prioritized competitive pay and now offer starting teacher salaries above \$50,000. We negotiate strong wage packages each year to show respect for the hard work educators do. Recruitment efforts extend beyond Kansas to nearby states, and we use signing bonuses to fill critical support positions like paras and special-education staff. Teaching has never been harder — we must demonstrate value through pay, benefits, and ongoing support to keep talented educators in the district.

Teacher pay must improve — including support staff wages — because it's hard to live comfortably on current salaries. Housing affordability is a real struggle for many educators. We also need better facilities so teachers can work in comfortable classrooms, and we must improve school climate by tackling behavioral challenges. Bringing community into the schools will support students and help teachers want to stay.



Lifelong Wyandotte Resident Retired 35 year KCKPS Educator School Board Experience

A candidate for:

- Improving Student Success
- Improving Literacy
- Improving Attendance & Graduation Rates
- Parent Engagement
- Community Partnerships
- Staff Development & Retention

Joycelyn Strickland-Egans
KCKPS School Board District #500

Sponsored by the committee to elect Joycelyn Strickland-Egans, Candidate
Justin Strickland, Chairperson



LEADERSHIP WICHITA CAN COUNT ON



Every child deserves access to a high-quality education, and every taxpayer deserves confidence that their dollars are being used wisely.

- STUDENT SUCCESS
- RESULTS DRIVEN
- FISCALLY RESPONSIBLE



LOCAL LEADERS SUPPORTING DIANE ALBERT

- | | | | | |
|---|---|--|---|----------------------------------|
| Sandra Rankin
<i>Retired Teacher</i> | Larry Burks, LTC, Ret.
<i>Retired JROTC Instructor</i> | Mario Barnes
<i>HEROS Academy</i> | Pastor Roderick Houston
<i>Greater Harvest Tabernacle</i> | Jo Lynn Bright
<i>HopeNet</i> |
| Joseph Elmore
<i>Veteran</i> | Prisca Barnes
<i>Storytime Village</i> | Coach Larry Allen
<i>Coach and Mentor</i> | Pastor Buck DeShazer Sr.
<i>Progressive Missionary Baptist</i> | <i>And many more...</i> |

Follow me on Facebook: /DianeAlbertBOE

Paid for by: Diane Albert Campaign | Steve Castro-Miller - Treasurer

MORE THAN AN ARTIST

Harold Smith Builds Space for Kansas City Creatives

His canvases celebrate the beauty and complexity of Black life — and his leadership ensures others are seen too.

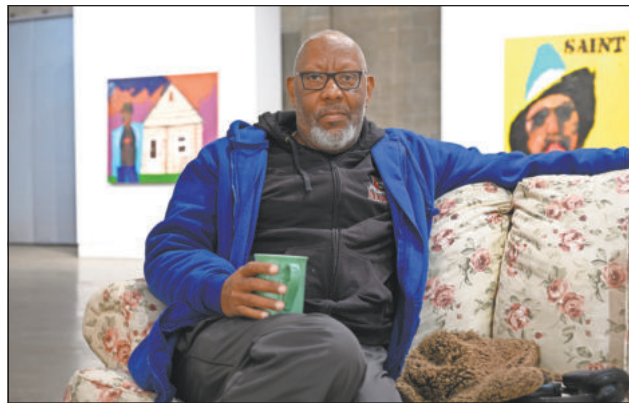
By Bonita Gooch
Voice Editor-in-Chief

Thick layers of color, scraped and spread with a palette knife, form the faces that have come to define Harold Smith's art. A self-taught artist and retired teacher who spent more than three decades in education before turning to art full-time, Smith has earned acclaim for his bold, expressive paintings that center Black identity and masculinity while challenging traditional visual narratives. Just as importantly, he has become a vital leader in Kansas City's Black art community—organizing exhibits, creating opportunities, and nurturing fellow artists so their work is seen and valued.

Smith describes himself as a Kansas City-based visual artist whose internationally

exhibited and collected work spans painting, collage, mixed media, performance, video, sound, and assemblage. His art focuses on the complexity of Black masculinity in America—what he calls “the simultaneously complementary and contradictory internal and external narratives” Black men navigate to survive and flourish. His *Man of Color* series takes on that theme directly, examining how Black men see themselves versus how society sees them, while his *Pain and Privilege* series “explores the intersection of power, privilege, pain, and identity in the Black American experience.”

His exhibitions reveal an artist in constant conversation with his culture and community. From national venues and international



Surrounded by the work that defined his residency at The Studios, Harold Smith reflects on a chapter of growth, experimentation, and community.

showings in France to local anchors like the Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art, the Lawrence Arts Center, and Charlotte Street Foundation, Smith's work continues expanding its reach.

His most recent body of work, *Around the Way Folk*, *Saints in Uncommon Places*, debuted at the Mulvane Art Museum in Topeka. The series reimagines iconic works from art history—such as Grant Wood's *American Gothic* and Vermeer's *Girl with a Pearl Earring*—with people from his own Kansas City, Kansas, neighborhood. “Basically, it's an exploration of people I consider saints,” he told KCUR. “It's also a look at Black, blue-collar communities... an examination of the culture that still exists

there.”

Smith now works from his basement studio at home, grounding his creativity in the same community where his story began.

From the Classroom to the Gallery

Smith began drawing as a child growing up in Kansas City, Kansas. He was largely self-taught, learning through observation and practice, with his first exhibit staged at the Kansas City Public Library in the 1990s. Over time, his art evolved from traditional realism to an abstract visual language defined by texture, rhythm, and cultural symbolism.

In 2021, Smith was selected as one of only ten artists for **The Studios**, a prestigious



A work from Harold Smith's *Man of Color* series, which examines how Black men see themselves—and how the world sees them.

residency that supports promising mid-career artists. Though his tenure there has since ended, the honor affirmed his status as a leading creative force and gave him space to experiment and mentor others.

He continues to curate exhibitions that expand visibility for Black artists. In early 2024, he curated *We Are Enough* at the Leedy-Voukos Art Center, bringing together 56 artists—from emerging creators to seasoned innovators—to spotlight Kansas City's artistic diversity. “These are people who have found that within them was enough to overcome the challenges life threw their way,” Smith said at the time. “They still hung on to their artistic dreams.”

Art That Lives in Community

Smith's work isn't confined to gallery walls. His

See **ARTIST** Page 22 →



Pregnancy
doesn't stop your dreams.

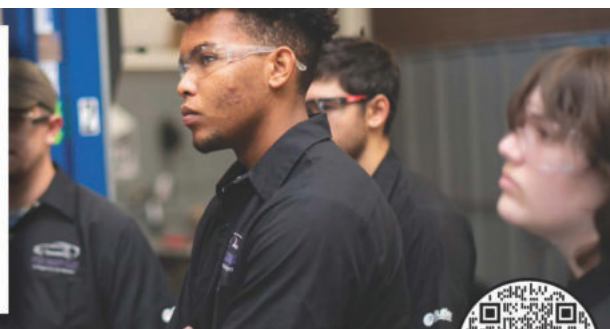
Navigating higher education while pregnant can be both challenging and empowering. Find out how we can help empower you to continue pursuing your dreams.

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Little-Known Election Set for Nov. 4 in Kansas City, Missouri

By Bonita Gooch
Voice Editor-in-Chief

Many Jackson County residents may not realize a key county charter question awaits them at the polls on Tuesday, Nov. 4. With no candidates on the ballot and minimal fanfare, a single yes-or-no measure will determine whether the county's assessor continues to be appointed or becomes an elected position.

What Question 1 Asks

Voters will decide whether to change the Jackson County Charter so that the county assessor is elected by voters rather than appointed by the county executive.

A "Yes" vote makes the assessor an elected countywide office.



Petitions are being circulated in neighborhoods and where large groups of people gather. For a location near you check

A "No" vote keeps the current appointment system.

Polls are open 6 a.m.-7 p.m. on Election Day.

Why This Question Is on the Ballot

The ballot measure follows years of strong reaction to rising property valuations across Jackson County — particularly in 2019 and 2023. Those increases led to lawsuits, state investigations, and a

ruling that the county violated Missouri assessment law. The controversy culminated in the recall of County Executive Frank White Jr. in September.

County legislators then approved putting this charter change before voters through Ordinance 5989.

How Jackson County Differs From the Rest of Missouri

Jackson County is one of the only counties in Missouri where the assessor is not elected. If voters approve Question 1, the county would fall in line with the rest of the state.

Additionally, a separate statewide measure proposed for 2026 could eventually require all counties — including Jackson — to elect their assessor regardless of

local charters.

Arguments Presented by Supporters

Supporters say an elected assessor provides direct accountability to residents who receive property valuations. Dr. Matthew Harris, a political scientist at Park University, told KMBC that the push spans both major political parties and stems from recent assessment frustrations.

Some voters interviewed have said they want the person overseeing home valuations to answer directly to the public.

Arguments Presented by Opponents

Others caution that elections could politicize a technical job that depends on

professional expertise and compliance with state law.

Current Assessor Gail McCann Beatty has defended her office's work, saying its focus is on accurate valuation and adherence to Missouri statutes. Some voters have expressed that the method of choosing the assessor may matter less than the office's performance.

If the Amendment Passes

The assessor would become a partisan, countywide elected office under timelines established by the finalized charter language.

The change would not affect tax rates, state assessment rules, or automatically alter property bills — only how the assessor is chosen and who the office answers to.

Petition Drive to Halt Missouri's New Congressional Map Faces Legal Challenges — and Surging Support

A fast-moving petition campaign is racing against the clock to halt Missouri's newly redrawn congressional districts and let voters decide their fate in 2026. The effort — led by the nonprofit People Not Politicians Missouri — aims to force a statewide referendum that could block the map until voters weigh in.

Volunteers have been canvassing neighborhoods, events, and even concerts to spread the word.

Missouri's Republican-led legislature passed the new map during a special session this fall, adding another GOP-favoring district and targeting

Democratic Congressman Emanuel Cleaver's Kansas City seat. If allowed to take effect, Kansas City would be carved into three largely Republican districts — a move critics say weakens local representation.

Under Missouri law, citizens can challenge new laws through a referendum petition. If People Not Politicians collects at least 107,000 valid signatures by Dec. 11, the map will not take effect unless voters approve it in the November 2026 election.

The campaign says it has already collected more than 100,000 signatures, with more coming daily from a statewide

volunteer network of about 3,000 people.

A Legal Fight Over What Counts

The petition's momentum has drawn immediate push-back from state leadership. Attorney General Catherine Hanaway filed a federal lawsuit claiming congressional redistricting cannot be overturned by referendum. Secretary of State Denny Hoskins — who initially rejected the petition language — says signatures collected before his formal approval are invalid.

People Not Politicians argues both officials are attempting to obstruct Missouri voters' constitutional rights.

"The constitution guarantees that people have the right to gather signatures on a referendum," said attorney Chuck Hatfield, who is representing the group. "State officials cannot unreasonably interfere with that right."

Executive Director Richard von Glahn says organizers will not slow down: "We will



People not politicians has been gathering signature rapidly, but still want more to guarantee the petition initiative is verified.

not be intimidated or distracted. This referendum will qualify, and Missourians — not politicians — will decide fair representation in our state."

How and where to sign

Petition circulators are active in:

- **Kansas City metro neighborhoods**
- **Community events and farmers markets**



Petitions are being circulated in neighborhoods and where large groups of people gather. For a location near you check For a location near you check

- **Concerts and public gatherings**
- **Door-to-door canvassing statewide**

Because district lines are unclear during the challenge, signers **leave the district column blank** — circulators fill it in later using voter rolls.

Missourians can request a signing location or connect with a local volunteer by visiting People Not Politicians Missouri on social media..

Signers must be registered Missouri voters.

What's at stake

If the petition succeeds, Missouri voters — not lawmakers — will have the final say on whether the state keeps or overturns its controversial new congressional map.

"They think we're not paying attention," said one organizer, "But Missouri voters want the last word."

TKAAM Celebrates 25 Years of Trailblazers Honoring Black Excellence in Kansas

By **Bonita Gooch**
The Community Voice

For 25 years, The Kansas African American Museum (TKAAM) has celebrated the individuals who have pushed boundaries, lifted their communities, and helped define the African American experience in Kansas and beyond. Through its Trailblazers program, TKAAM recognizes pioneers whose excellence and perseverance have paved the way for future generations.

“This is more than an anniversary—it’s a celebration of legacy, leadership, and limitless potential,” said TKAAM Executive Director Shane Carter. “Our 2025 Trailblazers Hall of Fame honorees have shown us what it means to lead with vision and impact with purpose. They reflect the brilliance and resilience that has shaped the African American experience in Kansas for generations. Their stories elevate our shared history and inspire the future. This 25th year is not just about looking back—it’s about building forward.”

A Legacy of Honoring Pioneers

The Trailblazers program began in 2000 with a simple mission: honor Kansas African Americans whose contributions have helped shape history. After recognizing its second class in 2002, the program returned in 2009 as an annual tribute — and has grown into one of TKAAM’s signature celebrations. Each Trailblazer is inducted into a prestigious “Hall of Fame,” placing their achievements among the state’s most influential legacy

builders.

The program honors individuals across four categories — education/philanthropy, aviation/STEM, performing arts, and sports — along with a Posthumous Trailblazer for those whose impact continues to resonate long after their passing.

Since 2020, the celebration has been produced as a televised and streaming broadcast, ensuring wide access to these powerful stories. Dates for this year’s program are expected to be announced in November.

Meet the 2025 Trailblazers

This year’s distinguished class includes leaders who have excelled on world stages, created new pathways in their professions, and used their influence to uplift others.

Kiah Duggins

“Rising Star” Award Civil Rights Attorney & Professor
(Posthumously)

A Harvard-educated lawyer with a passion for justice, Duggins dedicated her career to advancing civil rights and combating systemic inequity. Her service spanned both local and national arenas — from the White House to the Civil Rights Corps. Most recently, she was poised to shape new generations of advocates as a law professor at Howard University. Though her time was cut short, her legacy as a brilliant strategist and community champion continues to inspire.

Harold Miller

Aviation & STEM Trailblazer
Former Air Traffic Controller,
Wichita Tower

Miller broke barriers as the first African American air traffic controller in the Wichita Tower, joining the small 1–2% of Black controllers nationwide. His rise to supervisor in the Central Region’s air traffic division represents a milestone achievement in aviation leadership. Throughout his career, Miller overcame adversity with resilience — a message he now shares as a mentor committed to motivating youth and strengthening his church community.

Adrian Griffin

Sports Trailblazer
Professional Basketball
Coach & Former NBA Player

From Wichita East High School standout to NBA athlete and coach, Griffin has built an exceptional sports career. After playing for multiple NBA teams — including the Boston Celtics and Dallas Mavericks — he transitioned to coaching, serving as head coach of the Milwaukee Bucks and assistant coach for several NBA and USA Basketball teams. A Kansas Sports Hall of Famer with a Ph.D. in Organizational Leadership, Griffin continues to combine academic insight with athletic excellence.

Lee Pelton

Education & Philanthropy
Trailblazer President & CEO,
The Boston Foundation

Pelton leads the Boston Foundation, one of the nation’s most influential philanthropic organizations, stewarding \$2.2 billion in assets to drive impact at scale. A respected former president of Emerson College and Willamette University, Pelton

believes higher education must help solve the world’s most urgent challenges. His work — recognized nationally with numerous awards — reflects a lifelong commitment to both institutional transformation and community uplift.

Dr. Eva Jessye

Performing Arts Trailblazer
Choral Conductor,
Composer & Cultural
Visionary *(Posthumously)*

Born in Coffeyville, Kansas, Dr. Eva Jessye became one of the most influential choral directors of the 20th century. A gifted arranger, writer, and composer, she elevated African American spirituals and folk traditions into internationally celebrated art forms.

Her ensemble — originally the Dixie Jubilee Singers and later renamed the Eva Jessye Choir — became the first recognized African American professional chorus in the United States. Under her direction, the choir performed a wide spectrum of music including spirituals, jazz, ragtime, ballads, and original compositions, making appearances in radio, film, and major theatrical productions.

A Celebration That Inspires the Future

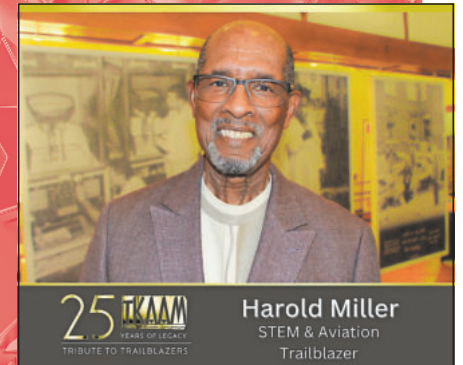
“Each honoree has made an extraordinary contribution to our state’s cultural, civic, and social fabric,” Carter said. “Their achievements remind us why this celebration matters—not only to honor the past but to inspire the future. We’re excited to share their stories with the community and continue the proud tradition of recognizing Kansas’ Black excellence.”

As TKAAM prepares to announce broadcast dates for the 2025 Tribute to Trailblazers, the museum invites the community to reflect on these accomplishments — and to continue supporting a legacy of leadership that builds toward a better future for all.



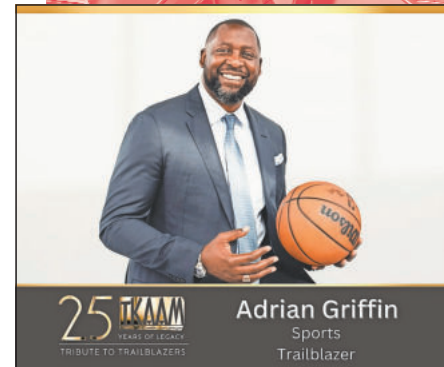
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YEARS OF LEGACY
TRIBUTE TO TRAILBLAZERS

Kiah Duggins
Civil Rights
Doris Kerr Larkins - Rising Star



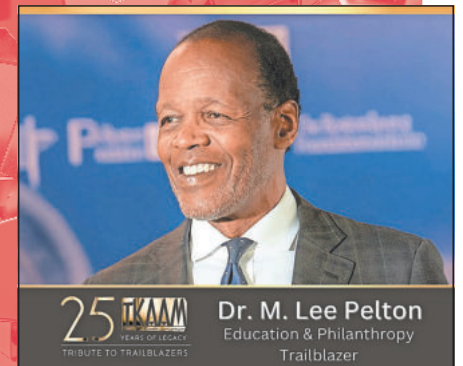
25
YEARS OF LEGACY
TRIBUTE TO TRAILBLAZERS

Harold Miller
STEM & Aviation
Trailblazer



25
YEARS OF LEGACY
TRIBUTE TO TRAILBLAZERS

Adrian Griffin
Sports
Trailblazer



25
YEARS OF LEGACY
TRIBUTE TO TRAILBLAZERS

Dr. M. Lee Pelton
Education & Philanthropy
Trailblazer



25
YEARS OF LEGACY
TRIBUTE TO TRAILBLAZERS

Dr. Eva Jessye
Performing Arts
Trailblazer

Bray Films Levels Up with Trap 48

Wichita family-run studio expands its reach — from blockbuster ambitions to a film marketing company with 2M followers on Facebook alone.

By Bonita Gooch
Voice Editor-in-Chief

Wichita's independent film community continues to grow — and Bray Films has been one of the most determined forces behind that rise. The company was launched by husband-and-wife team **Devon and Sherika Bray**, who have turned a shared creative passion into a thriving filmmaking enterprise rooted in Wichita.

On Thursday, Oct. 30, Bray Films will premiere its newest and most ambitious feature yet, *Trap 48*, at the Regal Warren East Grand Auditorium.

Bray Films began locally in 2010, shooting music videos, weddings, short films, and community events. It wasn't until 2018 that they released their first feature

film, *Pearl*. The following years brought *Pearl 2* (2019), *Unsurety* (2021), *PPP Loan Gone* (2022), *Joint Custody* (2023), *Buy Her* (2024), and *To Be Honest* (2024).

Co-owner Sherika Bray says the progress has come from trial, error, and a lot of learning on the fly. With little mentorship or insider guidance to rely on, the family built their knowledge project by project — both in front of and behind the camera.

Over time, the Brays invested heavily in their business — adding a large equipment and props inventory that supports their own creative vision while also helping other local filmmakers access items that elevate production value.

A New Frontier: Bray Elite Marketing

What many in Wichita may not know is that their son, **Devon Bray Jr.**, launched a social-media-based marketing company that has now become a major player in independent film: **Bray Elite Marketing**.

Under Bray Elite Marketing, the Facebook group Best New Tubi and Prime Movies has grown to

more than 759,000 followers. Devon Jr.'s own page reaches **450,000 followers**, his wife Naomi has **300,000** followers and mom Sherika's reaches more than **350,000** — giving the family a combined social reach that reaches nearly 2 million across Facebook alone. The Bray's daughter Elexis Bray also works in the business.

Through these pages, they promote their films — but increasingly, they are helping filmmakers from around the country market and monetize their projects. Independent filmmakers **pay Bray Elite Marketing** for targeted promotion and engagement, which translates into visibility and revenue once films begin streaming.

Distribution companies have taken notice too, contracting with the family to support film releases nationwide. While Wichita audiences are only beginning to realize the scale of this work, industry professionals in larger film cities already know the Bray Elite name.

And their success as marketers ties directly into their success as filmmakers. **Today, all Bray Films features are available for streaming on Tubi**, which has become a significant platform for independent film audiences.

Raising the Bar With Trap 48

Their newest film, *Trap 48*, marks a creative turning point for Bray Films — a project that demonstrates what years of learning, grinding, and reinvesting have built.

For this film, the Brays were intentional about leveling up the story first. They spent months studying screenwriting — structure, pacing, character arcs — and the storytelling science



Trap 48 Bray Film's latest feature length movie. The movie will premiere in Wichita on Thurs., Oct. 30.

behind the scenes.

"We really learned the science of writing," Sherika said. "The story is everything. That's what separates you when the space starts getting crowded."

Acting development was equally prioritized. Bray Films brought in Hollywood performer and acting coach **Kate Melton**, known for her role as Daphne in the *Scooby-Doo* films, to guide cast members through workshops and rehearsals. Sherika said the training made a noticeable difference:

"You'll be able to tell — the acting is way up," she said. "We didn't play with this."

More than **90 actors** appear in the film, many of them local. *Trap 48* follows intersecting characters dealing with addiction recovery, counterfeit drugs, and family loyalty — with a supernatural twist that complicates the lead character's fight for survival.

Sherika believes Wichita audiences will recognize how far the storytelling and performances have come.

"This is the best film we've

ever dropped," she said. "We dug in on everything."

Supporting a Growing Network of Filmmakers

Breaking into filmmaking can be tough — especially for those starting without industry connections. Sherika says she and Devon had to learn everything the hard way: from production techniques to the business side of getting a film seen and profitable.

"That's why we share what we know," Sherika said. "We didn't have anyone to guide us, so when we see someone trying, we want to help them move forward."

That willingness to open doors for others has already had an impact. One example is Wichita filmmaker **Troy Andrews** of DrewVision Films. He was creating strong work and building his own path, and the Brays were willing to share what they know.

Today, Andrews has **multiple films streaming on Tubi**, including his feature *Seeds*, which is expanding his audience and helping fuel the growth of Wichita's wider film community.

The Brays emphasize that Wichita has a growing pool of talented filmmakers — and the more they can support each other's success, the stronger the city's creative industry becomes.

"We want to see everybody win," Sherika said. "If we learn something, we're going to share it."

Looking Ahead: Bigger Names, Bigger Opportunities

Even as they help others rise, Bray Films continues to set new goals for themselves.

One focus is raising their visibility by working with more widely recognized acting talent. They plan to begin **using bigger-name actors from outside Wichita** in their films. In addition to stepping up their films, it will also give local performers the opportunity to work alongside seasoned professionals — and it will draw broader attention to their projects.

They're already getting noticed. Sherika says people they once only watched on television are now reaching out to collaborate — including management teams representing artists transitioning from music into film.

Those connections, combined with a growing social media reach, are opening the door to larger-scope projects, stronger placement on streaming platforms, and new audiences far beyond Wichita.

Though Bray Films continues to build national partnerships, the company remains committed to Wichita — the place where they learned, grew, and built a community of supporters.

Rooted in Wichita, powered by family, and willing to help others rise along the way.



Devon and Sherika Bray

Biden and Harris Resurface

Biden Warns of Dark Days for the Country as he Urges Americans to Stay Optimistic

By Associated Press

In the midst of the upheaval that is the Trump administration's attack on everything we believed to be normal, you may have gotten a little nostalgic for Sleepy Joe and Kamala. Well, they're back. Both were out on the roads this past weekend.

Harris was out promoting her book "107 Days" and Biden accepted an award. However, each had tidbits to share on what's going on in America and their lives.

Former President Joe Biden called these "dark days" as he urged Americans to stay optimistic and not to check out in response to what he says are attacks on free speech and tests on the limits of executive power by President Donald Trump.

"Since its founding,

America served as a beacon for the most powerful idea ever in government in the history of the world," Biden said Sunday. "The idea is stronger than any normal, you're more powerful than any dictator."

Biden, 82, was speaking publicly for the first time since completing a **round of radiation therapy** for an aggressive form of prostate cancer. He addressed an audience in Boston after receiving the Lifetime Achievement Award from the Edward M. Kennedy Institute.

He said America depends on a presidency with limited power, a functioning Congress and an autonomous judiciary. With the federal government facing its second-longest shutdown on record, Trump has used the lapse in funding to exercise new command over the government.



Biden appeared in public recently with a message of optimism in the midst of crazy. (ASSOCIATED PRESS)

"Friends, I can't sugarcoat any of this. These are dark days," Biden said. He predicted the country would "find our true compass again" and "emerge as we always have — stronger, wiser and more

resilient, more just, so long as we keep the faith."

Biden listed examples of people who are standing their ground against threats from the current administration, citing federal employees who

resign in protest, and universities and comedians that have been targeted by Trump.

"The late-night hosts continue to shine a light on free speech knowing their careers are on the line," he said.

Biden also shouted out Republican officials who vote against the Trump administration.

"America is not a fairy tale," he said. "For 250 years, it's been a constant push and pull, an existential struggle between peril and possibility."

He finished the speech by telling people to "get back up."

The Democrat left office in January after serving one term in the White House. Biden dropped his bid for reelection after facing pressure following a disastrous debate against Trump and concerns about his age, health and mental fitness. Biden

endorsed his vice president, Kamala Harris, who lost to Trump last November.

In May, Biden's post-presidential office announced that he had been diagnosed with prostate cancer that had spread to his bones.

Prostate cancers are graded for aggressiveness using what is known as a Gleason score. The scores range from 6 to 10, with 8, 9 and 10 prostate cancers behaving more aggressively. Biden's office said his score was 9.

Biden, who will turn 83 in November, completed a course of radiation therapy earlier this month. It is unclear what the former president's next treatment steps might be.

Biden will also headline an event for the Nebraska Democratic Party in Omaha next month.

Kamala Harris Hints At Another Presidential Run

'I am not done'

By Associated Press

Kamala Harris isn't ruling out another run for the White House.

In an interview with the BBC posted Saturday, Harris said she expects a woman will be president in the coming years, and it could "possibly" be her.

"I am not done," she said.

The former vice president said she hasn't decided whether to mount a 2028 presidential campaign. But she dismissed the suggestion that she'd face long odds.

"I have lived my entire

career a life of service and it's in my bones. And there are many ways to serve," she said. "I've never listened to polls."

She's recently given a series of interviews following the September release of her book, "107 Days." It looks back on her experience replacing then-President Joe Biden as the 2024 Democratic presidential nominee after he dropped out of the race.

She ultimately lost to Republican President Donald Trump.

In an interview with The

Associated Press last week, Harris, 61, also made clear that running again in 2028 is still on the table. She said she sees herself as a leader of the party, including in pushing back against Trump and preparing for the 2026 midterms.

Kamala Harris says she had responsibility to argue against Biden running

Asked in an Oct. 17 interview with AP whether she had plans for a 2028 bid, Harris said, "I haven't decided. Sincerely. I have not decided. I may or I may not. I have not decided."

Asked specifically whether she still wanted to do the job itself, she used the past tense, saying, "It's a job I wanted to do." But she noted that the only way to do it "is to run" and win.

Meanwhile, political jockeying among Democrats for the 2028 presidential contest appears to be playing out even earlier than usual.

Several potential candidates are already taking steps to get to know voters in key states, including California Gov. Gavin Newsom, term-limited Kentucky Gov. Andy Beshear and California Rep. Ro Khanna. Upward of 30 high-profile Democrats could ultimately enter the primary.



Former Vice President Kamala Harris exits the stage after the first stop on her book tour about her new book about her presidential campaign, "107 Days."

(AP PHOTO/ANGELINA)

Wichita's Next Hometown Legend

Braylon "Bub" Scott

By Tyjuan Davis
Wichita Reporter

Wichita may have just witnessed the rise of its next hometown legend. Thirteen-year-old **Braylon "Bub" Scott made history as the first middle school athlete from Wichita to receive a full-ride football scholarship — an offer extended by Delaware State University.**

A standout running back with the Kansas City Dynasty elite travel program, Bub has been turning heads nationwide with his speed, strength, and football IQ. Behind the talent is a humble young man grounded by family and faith.

A Mother's Sacrifice: "We just make it work."

Bub's mother, Tamesha Coleman, is no stranger to sacrifice. A single mother raising three children, she balances travel, training, and daily life to support her son's goals.

"It's a lot of sacrifice with two other kids," she explained. "His dad helps a lot too. We plan, budget, and make it work. I didn't expect this to happen so soon."

Bub started playing football at age 6 with a local Cowboys team before joining Kansas City Dynasty. His early success caught the attention of elite coaches, and he's now in his second full season with the program.

"The city league kind of fell apart," Tamesha said. "We

wanted something more competitive. Dynasty's coaches invested in him — checking on him, training him, helping him grow."

Faith, Character & Life on the Field

As attention grows, Tamesha keeps Bub grounded in the values that matter most.

"We pray. I talk to him about leadership, character, and humility," she said. "Talent isn't enough. It's about integrity — on and off the field."

On the field, Bub's natural instincts take over. Originally trained by his father Brandon Scott to be a quarterback, his speed and agility led him to excel as a running back.

"When I get the ball, I just run," he laughed. "I like defense too, but breaking through that line hits different."

He trains several times a week with performance coach Brian Butler to prepare for high school competition.

"High school is going to be bigger and tougher," Bub said. "I just have to be physically and mentally ready."

Bub's Perspective: "This is just the beginning."

School and discipline come first.

He carries a 3.7 GPA, participates in POWER and BAASE programs, and was selected as an AVID speaker — proving he takes his academics as seriously as football.

"I go to school, get my work



Braylon works out several times per week with Brian Butler of SPEED Performance Training

done, train from 6:30 to 8:00, then handle the rest," he said. "No time to mess around."

Travel football has taken Bub to places like Atlanta, Arizona, California, Iowa, Nebraska, Florida and more — exposing him to national competition and major programs.

Wichita has produced legends before — including Barry Sanders, who went from Wichita North High to a Heisman Trophy and a Hall of Fame NFL career. Bub isn't chasing comparisons, but his early achievements put him on a trajectory few local athletes have experienced.

"It's unbelievable," he said. "It motivates me to keep working hard, keep my head on straight, and stay focused."

He credits much of his drive to his mother's example.

"She's taught me a lot," Bub said. "Being a

leader means setting the right example. If people follow me, I have to make sure I'm doing the right thing."

Big Goals, Bigger Heart

When asked about his

future, Bub dreams big — but always with his family in mind.

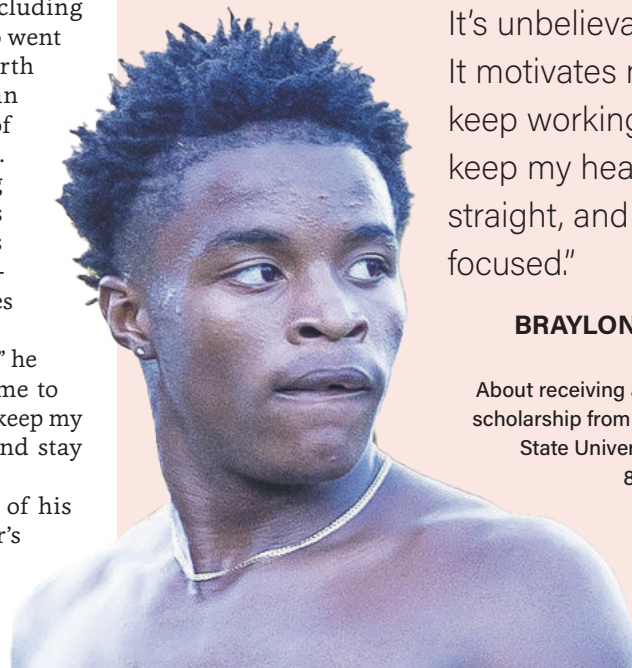
"I want to make sure my family is good," he said. "And if football ends, I want to stay close to the game — maybe



It's unbelievable. It motivates me to keep working hard, keep my head on straight, and stay focused."

BRAYLON "BUB" SCOTT

About receiving a full-ride scholarship from Delaware State University as an 8th grader.



as a sports commentator or coach. I want to come back home and help kids here."

His impact off the field has already begun. Younger players watch him closely. Coaches praise his work ethic. And his neighborhood sees him as proof that dreams can be real.

Tamesha's Message to Other Parents

"Believe in your kids," Tamesha said. "It takes time, sacrifice, and faith — but if you invest and keep them grounded, people will notice."

Final Word

At just 13, Braylon "Bub" Scott has already made history. But what's most impressive isn't his athletic ability — it's his humility, discipline, and the foundation his family has built around him.

Wichita may be looking at its next hometown legend — but Bub is focused on working hard, staying humble, and letting his actions speak for him.

ARTIST, from Page 16 ↓

community-based approach recently included *UrbanKore*, a one-day exhibition that transformed local businesses in Kansas City, Kansas, into pop-up art venues featuring work by Black artists including Deante Howard, Mahlon Cathey, Warren “Stylez” Harvey, Claude Harris III, and Daisha Maria-Breona.

“It’s about bringing visibility to artists and to the community,” he said. “We’re

showing that powerful art doesn’t just live downtown — it lives everywhere people create.”

By activating spaces that residents use every day, Smith helps ensure that art is accessible, relevant, and rooted in community identity.

Mentor, Maker, Messenger

Mentorship has become one of Smith’s defining roles. Younger artists regularly visit his studio for advice, encouragement, and critique. “People reach out, and I try

to guide them however I can,” he said. “I tell them to read, to apply for grants, to give themselves grace to find their own style. The more you know, the deeper your art will be.”

His guidance carries the weight of lived experience. Smith understands the economic and cultural barriers Black artists face—limited access to collectors, gallery representation, and buyers who relate to their narratives. “Selling art is tough,” he said plainly. “People buy what they can connect to, and that can narrow your audience.”

Yet he refuses to compromise his vision. His canvases remain unapologetically centered on Black identity—on faces, language, and expressions that affirm belonging. “I paint what I feel, what I live,” he said.

That authenticity resonates across Kansas City’s creative ecosystem. Artists he’s mentored have gone on to exhibit it across the metro, curate

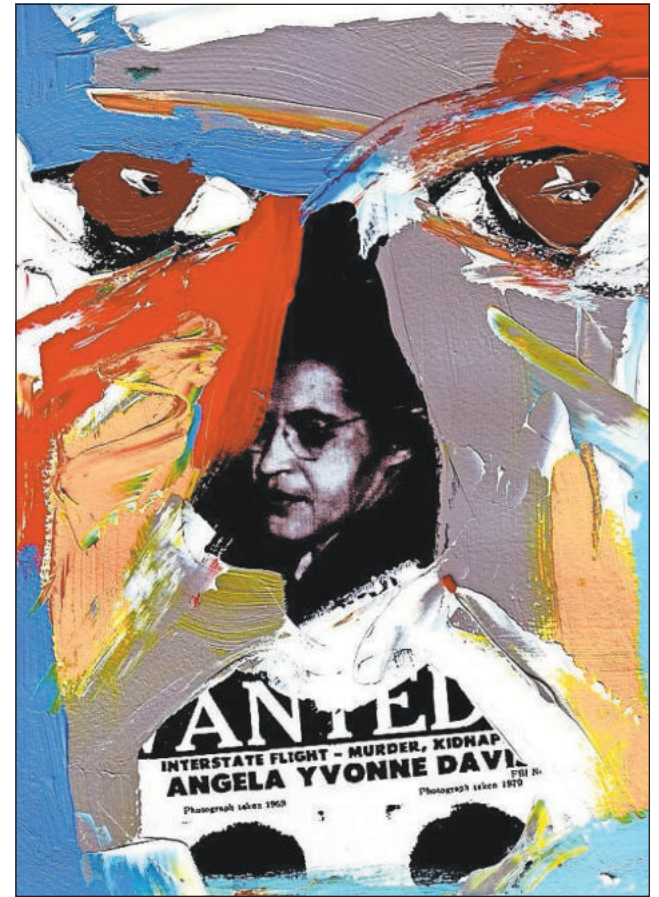
their own shows, and use art as a form of healing and empowerment.

Redefining Kansas City’s Art Scene

Through his studio practice and his efforts to uplift other artists, Smith has become a respected voice in Kansas City’s arts community—a bridge between generations and neighborhoods.

He challenges the notion that great art only comes from coastal cities. “People act like all the great art is in New York or Los Angeles,” he said. “But KC has its own art scene, and it’s more than good enough.”

From Harold Smith’s *Pain and Privilege* series, this piece pairs Rosa Parks and an Angela Davis wanted poster to reflect the cost of resistance and the power behind it.



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November 12th, 2025

Facilitated by Angela Tucker on the impact of transracial adoptions

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Foster Parent CEUs Available

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SPEAKER
Dr. Sharilyn Ray
The founder & CEO of Restoration Family Services, a non-profit organization focused on helping families & children & holistic healing.

SPEAKER
Angela Tucker
A transracial adoptee who shares her story through documentary, book, & podcast. She also mentors adoptees & advocates for adoption issues as a speaker & founder of The Adoptee Mentoring Society

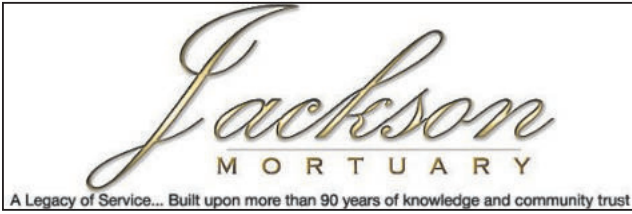
SPEAKER
April Dinwoodie
A thought leader in transracial adoption & offers tools to help people navigate differences of race, class, & culture.

SPEAKER
Pastor Cameron Martin
Pastor & Lead Administrator at St. Mark Cathedral COGIC, where he focuses on fostering spiritual growth, community engagement, and operational excellence within the church. He is the former Continuing Legal Education Director at the Wichita Bar Association.

SPEAKER
Maya Berrios, MS
The Founder & Owner of “In Her Shoes, LLC.” She is a distinguished professional speaker traveling the United States, recognized for her award winning presentations.

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Helen K. DeShazer, 80

November 10, 1944 - October 14, 2025
 Service will be held at 11 am on Sat., Nov. 1, 2025 at Progressive Missionary Baptist Church, 2727 E 25th.

Troy W. Littlejohn, 89

June 26, 1936 - October 14, 2025
 Service was held Oct. 24 at Jackson Mortuary.

LOCAL, from Page 13 ↓

Advance Voting

- In-person advance voting is open now through Nov. 4
- Mail ballots must be requested by Oct. 29 and returned by Election Day

Election Day

- Tuesday, Nov. 4
- Polls open 7 a.m. – 7 p.m. statewide

Find Your Polling Place

- VoterView.KSVotes.org
- Enter your name + birthdate to see:**
- Your polling location • A sample ballot
- Your voter status

Bring With You

- A valid photo ID (driver's license, state ID, U.S. passport, military ID, concealed carry license, etc.)
- Full list: sos.ks.gov/elections

Pro Tip

Vote all the way down the ballot — local races decide schools, policing, taxes, housing, and neighborhood investment.

ST JAMES MBC PASTORAL VACANCY

St James Missionary Baptist Church Inc. is currently seeking the servant leader whom God is calling to serve as our next pastor. Please go to our new website and click on forms for further details:

www.stjamesmbcinc.org



If you have any questions regarding the application process, please contact the Pastoral search committee co-chairs:
 Deacon Billy Dempsey @ 316 734-7096
 Cherrie Dennis Baldon @ 316 282-7713

Closing date October 31st 2025

OBAMA, from Page 3 ↓

Leaning into Chicago's creativity, the museum's form is symbolic — as if four hands are lifting upward together — and its exterior will feature words from Obama's speech marking the 50th anniversary of the Selma to Montgomery marches. Inside, rotating and permanent exhibits will explore signature milestones of his presidency, from the Affordable Care Act to the Paris climate agreement.

A fruit and vegetable garden, podcast studio, and spaces for young people to collaborate — many of them free — reflect the foundation's focus on shaping future leaders, not simply documenting past accomplishments.

More Than a Library

As the first presidential center explicitly built as a social campus, the facility aims



Obama Presidential Center Draws Criticism, Inspires Hope As Construction Continues.

to attract between 625,000 and 760,000 visitors a year, according to Deloitte estimates. That tourism boost could bring significant economic activity to South Side neighborhoods long left out of Chicago's growth.

But Obama has been consistent: the center succeeds

only if it serves the people who live around it.

"This should be a place where young people see their potential reflected," he has said in multiple public appearances.

Full Speed Ahead

Criticisms — political or

academic — won't disappear anytime soon. The center's impact on housing and development will take years to measure. But with construction on track and doors expected to open next spring, the Obama Presidential Center is moving forward with conviction.

Social Security payments to rise 2.8%, a tick below inflation rate

By Missouri Independent

The 75 million Americans who receive Social Security benefits will see a 2.8% increase in payments next year, the Social Security Administration said Friday.

The cost-of-living adjustment is just below the inflation rate of 3% announced by the Bureau of Labor Statistics, also on Friday.

The adjustment is lower than the average over the past decade, but higher than last year's. The average adjustment for the past 10 years is 3.1%, including a 2.5% increase last year. On average, beneficiaries' monthly payments will rise by about \$56, the SSA said.

Beneficiaries include

people who receive Old-Age, Survivors and Disability Insurance, as well as Supplemental Security Income.

"Social Security is a promise kept, and the annual cost-of-living adjustment is one way we are working to make sure benefits reflect today's economic realities and continue to provide a foundation of security," Social Security Administration Commissioner Frank J. Bisignano said in a statement. "The cost-of-living adjustment is a vital part of how Social Security delivers on its mission."

The tax rate for Social Security and Medicare will remain steady at 7.65% for employees and 15.3% for self-employed workers.



Social Security benefits will see a 2.8% increase in payments next year, the Social Security Administration said Friday. (PHOTO ILLUSTRATION BY ISTOCK/GETTY IMAGES PLUS)

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