

THE VOICE

A Trusted Voice Community's Perspective



POWER SHIFT

WATSON'S WIN TOPS MAJOR ELECTION SHIFTS PAGE 2, 8 & 9

JUST CALL HER MAYOR



Brian Butler
He Trains Athletes & Leaders
Page 13



Antwan & Melissa Wed
Kansas City Council Member Robinson
Marries 'Cool Kids' Founder Daniels
Page 12

Volume 32, No. 21 · communityvoiceks.com · Friday, November 7, 2025

PRSRRT STD
US POSTAGE PAID
WICHITA KS
PERMIT NO. 560

Change Service Requested

The Community Voice
P.O. Box 20804
Wichita, KS 67208

THE VOICE

VOLUME 32, NUMBER 21
FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 7, 2025

MORE WAYS TO CONNECT

CONTACT US



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

LOOKING FOR OUR CALENDER?
It's Online
↓
THE VOICE CALENDAR
The Link Up
Just click on the toolbar

For the Culture follow
f @ **THE VOICE KC**
Local & National News+ Everything in Between
THE VOICE

WHERE CAN YOU FIND
THE VOICE?

ON YOUR PHONE
COMMUNITYVOICEKS.COM

Voters, Not Power Brokers, Reshape The Dotte

This year's elections reveal what's possible when residents refuse to sit out and let others decide their future.

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

Wyandotte County proved something this election that too many communities forget: when everyday people show up, they can outweigh political influence, big donors, and establishment expectations. In "The Dotte," voters — not power brokers — reshaped the direction of their county, and they did it with the most democratic tool they possess: their ballots.

For months, the conversation around this year's races centered on who had the money, who had the endorsements, and which candidates had the backing of the political old guard. Yet on Election Night, those assumptions collapsed. Candidates who



Mayor Elect Christal Watson was already at work in the community the day after her victory. She joined Mayor Tyrone Gordon at the Kansas School for the Blind for a ribbon cutting ceremony for their newly renovated gym.

built genuine relationships, knocked doors, attended community events, and listened deeply to residents prevailed over those positioned as early favorites.

Christal Watson's victory for Unified Government Mayor/CEO is the clearest example. She didn't enter the race with institutional support. She wasn't the pick of major business interests or political insiders. She wasn't buoyed by large PAC contributions. But

she connected with voters who often feel overlooked — Black and Hispanic residents, working families, longtime neighborhood advocates, and those who simply wanted someone who understood their lived experiences.

Her win wasn't powered by money; it was powered by trust. And trust, when matched with turnout, is stronger than any endorsement.

This is the lesson that should echo far beyond this

election season: **Democracy works exactly as intended when people participate.** Not just when they are angry. Not just when they are inspired. And not only in presidential cycles when the nation is watching. It works every time people choose to step into the voting booth, even when turnout is low and the stakes feel localized or small. Because local elections determine how streets are policed, how utilities are priced, how neighborhoods are developed, and how schools are governed. They all could have set home and believed their vote didn't matter, that the big guys would win. Instead, they didn't just cast ballots; they set a new course for their community. And they reminded every leader watching that real power doesn't come from endorsements or influence.

It comes from the voters who show up.

This is the heart of the story: **When people participate, the system responds.**

Now It's Time to Get the Work

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

Wyandotte County has spoken. Voters chose Christal Watson because they believe in her vision, her steadiness, and her commitment to the everyday people of The Dotte. But an election victory is only the first step.

Now comes the real work — and it will take more than one

person to deliver the change residents are hungry for.

We've been here before. Four years ago, voters elected Mayor Tyrone Garner with the same hope for transformation. He unseated an incumbent by fewer than 300 votes because the community was ready for a new direction. Garner was ready too, but much of his term was defined by battles with the Commission — public, prolonged, and often painful to watch. Power struggles overshadowed progress, and while his supporters stood with him, the divisions slowed the momentum Wyandotte

County needed.

That cannot be repeated.

Watson enters office with strong community backing, but what she needs now is **institutional support** — from commissioners, administrators, civic leaders, and business stakeholders who must decide whether they want progress or paralysis.

The Dotte doesn't have time for in-fighting. The problems are too big: the east side still lags behind, property tax relief was minimal, affordable housing remains scarce, and population growth has stalled. Meanwhile, downtown KCK

holds enormous potential, and the county still lacks the kind of convention center or gathering space that could anchor regional investment.

Wyandotte County is an unpolished jewel of the metro — full of history, culture, and strategic location. What it needs now is unity. Watson has the leadership style to bring people to the table, but she cannot lift the county alone.

If The Dotte wants to shine, it will require cooperation, not conflict. And, this time, everyone needs to show up — not just the voters.

THE COMMUNITY VOICE
PO Box 20804 | Wichita, KS 67214
316.681.1155 | ISSN 1090-3852
www.communityvoiceks.com

The contents of each issue of The Community Voice are copyrighted. Articles appearing in The Community Voice may not be reproduced without written permission of the Editor. All rights reserved.

ADVERTISING RATES:
Email: Hill@tcvpub.com

EDITORIAL: Readers with story or photo ideas, tips, criticisms or suggestions on coverage are urged to contact the Editor. All submissions to the paper, letters and columns are subject to editing for length, style, taste and legal considerations.

CORRECTIONS: The Community Voice strives for accuracy and fairness. Readers who believe a story or headline is inaccurate or misleading should contact the Editor.

SUBSCRIPTIONS: Published BiWeekly
\$27.95/yr. Sedgwick County
\$35.95/yr. Outside Sedgwick County
\$73.99/yr. Outside Kansas

CONTACTS:
Editor-in-Chief/Press Releases
Bonita Gooch
Wichita | press@tcvpub.com
KC | cvoicekc@tcvpub.com

Press Releases: press@tcvpub.com
Advertising: adcopy@tcvpub.com

Contributing Writers:
Thomas White | Kansas City
twhite@tcvpub.com

Advertising Sales:
Cornell Hill | hill@tcvpub.com

Office Administration:
Elaine Guillory | guillory@tcvpub.com

Applications Now Open for The Community Voice's "Great 28" Recognition Program



By The Voice Team

The Community Voice is excited to announce the launch of The Great 28 — a new recognition program honoring 28 outstanding individuals making a difference across Kansas and the Kansas City metro area.

Created as part of our 30th anniversary celebration, The Great 28 highlights the people who embody excellence, leadership, and service in their communities. From entrepreneurs and educators to artists, activists, and everyday changemakers, the program celebrates those who are shaping a brighter future in their neighborhoods and beyond.

Beginning February 1, 2026, and continuing each day throughout Black History Month, The Community Voice will feature one



honoree daily across our print, digital, and social media platforms — sharing their story, their work, and their impact with our readers statewide.

"This is our way of lifting up

people whose contributions might otherwise go unrecognized," said the editorial team at The Community Voice. "We know there are amazing individuals in every corner of Kansas and the Kansas

City metro who are quietly doing the work to make our communities stronger, more vibrant, and more united."

Nominations are now open and can be submitted online at communityvoiceks.com, click on more. The deadline to apply or nominate someone is Fri., Dec. 19, 2025.

Anyone may nominate — or even nominate themselves — but nominees must currently live in Kansas or within the Kansas City metro area. Selected honorees will be announced at the start of February and recognized throughout the month.

While there's no large cash prize or trophy attached to The Great 28, the honor itself is meant to shine a light on the everyday heroes among us — giving them the public recognition, appreciation, and

platform their work deserves.

As part of The Community Voice's ongoing commitment to empowering and celebrating our communities, The Great 28 is more than just a recognition — it's a reflection of the spirit, resilience, and excellence that define our readers and our mission.

Do you know someone whose leadership, creativity, or service deserves to be celebrated? Don't wait — visit communityvoiceks.com today to submit your nomination and help us honor 28 remarkable individuals this February.

CHECK ON YOUR CIRCLE

*Your mom, your sister,
your bestie — YOU*



Make sure you, and the women you love, take time for a mammogram — this simple step protects your health and your future. With compassionate care for women at all stages of life, mobile mammography, cancer care navigators and convenient locations close to home, we make it easy at Ascension Via Christi.

**Schedule your mammogram —
scan the QR or call 316-883-0850**



 **Ascension
Via Christi**

A System in Crisis: How RFS Brings Culture, Care, and Healing to Foster Families

Why culturally matched homes matter—and how RFS is working to create more of them.

By Ty Davis
and Bonita Gooch

For decades, Kansas' foster care system has struggled to meet the needs of Black children and families — not for lack of compassion, but because the system was never built with them in mind.

Black children remain drastically overrepresented in foster care, while Black foster homes remain in critically short supply. The result is a cycle of traumatic placements, uprooted children, and cultural disconnect that harms emotional development and long-term outcomes.

In that gap — where systemic flaws collide with cultural need — **Restoration Family Services (RFS)** has emerged as a force for change.

Founded by twin sisters **Dr. Sharilyn Ray and Marilyn Shaw**, RFS is widely believed to be the **first and only Black-owned foster care agency ever licensed in Kansas**, a milestone that came after two decades with no new providers added to the system. Their

agency, rooted in cultural understanding, professional expertise, and lived experience, is reshaping how foster care is delivered — and how families of color are treated within it.

“We didn't start this to create another agency,” Ray said. “We started this because we saw a missing voice — families who needed to see themselves represented in the system meant to serve them.”

A System Stacked Against Black Children

In Kansas, Black children make up only 6-7% of the child population but often represent **three to four times that** in foster care. Studies consistently show that Black children:

- are more likely to be removed from home,
- stay in care longer,
- move placements more frequently, and
- are often placed far outside their home communities.

Kansas' shortage of Black foster homes leads to children being sent to rural, overwhelmingly White areas



Dr. Sharilyn Ray and Marilyn Shaw lead Restoration Family Services, Kansas's only Black-owned foster agency, with a mission rooted in culture, compassion, and community.

where they are culturally isolated. Something as simple as hair care can become a challenge. Something as deep as racial identity can become destabilized.

Research shows that Black children placed with Black foster parents experience more stability, **stronger identity development, and fewer placement breakdowns.**

That's where RFS steps in.

Born Out of Calling — And Confrontation

Dr. Ray holds a BSW, MSW, and Doctorate in Social Work. Her sister Marilyn, a

retired military professional with a business degree and MSW, manages RFS's operations. Both have lived experience: Sharilyn has adopted relatives and fostered children, and Marilyn and her husband took in a relative's child to prevent them from entering state custody.

Their approach isn't theoretical — it's personal.

When they first applied to become a foster care provider in 2017, Kansas had not approved a new subcontracted agency in 20 years. Large Case Management Providers (CMPs), small group of subcontracting

provider agencies were handling all of the foster care placements, and less than effectively.

Seeing the shortcomings Ray reached out and eventually was able to become the first Black-owned and operated foster care provider in the state. Now, she's one of about 20 providers in the state who help the CMPs by recruiting and building a group of foster care homes that are available and accept placements.

They've built a strong group of foster families that

“Through Their Lenses”: A Conference for Change

To address systemic gaps head-on, RFS is hosting a three-day training and professional development conference:

Through Their Lenses
Nov. 12–14, 2025
Holiday Inn Wichita
East I-35
549 S. Rock Rd.,
Wichita, KS

The event includes a pre-conference led by Angela Tucker, a nationally recognized transracial adoptee advocate, and presentations by:

- Dr. Sharilyn Ray, RFS cofounder
- Angela Tucker, speaker & documentary filmmaker
- April Dinwoodie, adoption and identity expert
- Pastor Cameron Martin, community engagement leader
- Mayda Berrios, MS, national trauma-informed presenter

The conference offers CEUs for licensed staff and foster parents and includes breakfast, lunch, and snacks.

“This is more than professional development,” Ray said. “It's personal development. We're asking people to slow down, listen, and really see the people behind the paperwork.”

Dorothy's Lane Foster Care Provider

This summer, community nonprofit Dorothy's Lane celebrated becoming a foster home placement agency. Since 2016, the agency, led by Carol Brewer, has been active in the Wichita area offering different social services from a food and hygiene pantry to parenting classes and more.

Dorothy's Lane becomes the second black-owned foster care provider in Kansas.

“I just wanted to kind of go more into social service and helping people that needed it, that didn't know that the resources are there for them,” said Brewer.

See RFS Page 5 →



CULTURE CHANGE
you can measure.

**STRONGER TEAMS,
MORE ENGAGED EMPLOYEES and
PROGRESS ON TOUGH CHALLENGES.**



**KANSAS
LEADERSHIP
CENTER.**

Start the conversation:
KansasLeadershipCenter.org/impact

RFS, from Page 4 ↓

consists of a mix of new families eager to foster and some former foster care families and families who were with other agencies but discouraged by a system that didn't always understand them.

Ray recalls parents being talked down to, misunderstood, or judged harshly for cultural norms unfamiliar to White caseworkers.

"It wasn't just bureaucratic," Marilyn said, there was bias.

Hiring Lived Experience — Not Just Degrees

Unlike traditional agencies that staff offices with brand-new social work graduates, RFS intentionally hires people with lived experience:

- former foster youth
- former foster parents
- kinship caregivers
- culturally competent social workers
- "We don't want people who just learned foster care

in a textbook," Shaw said. "We want people who lived it and want to serve."

That philosophy is why families trust RFS — and why their placements succeed.

Serving the Children Others Turn Away

Because CMP agencies typically place children in their own network first, RFS often receives harder-to-place youth — teens, large sibling groups, and children with behavioral needs shaped by trauma.

"We accept the cases everyone else passes on," Shaw said. "And our families step up."

RFS trains foster parents to work with birth families, not against them. One foster parent took a birth mother to church, helped her clean her home, and supported her postpartum recovery. After reunification, the foster mother continued to babysit so the mother could keep her job.

Years later, that mother is thriving — and studying to become a social worker.

"That's what restoration looks like," Ray said. "Not replacing families — restoring them."

The Disproportionality Crisis in Context

Black children in Kansas enter foster care for reasons often tied to poverty, lack of support, or misunderstanding of cultural practices — not necessarily higher rates of abuse.

National studies confirm that:

Black families are more likely to be reported and investigated, even when the underlying concerns are the same as White families.

In Kansas, where African-American families make up a small percentage of the population, their overrepresentation is among the worst in the region.

"Representation matters not just for comfort, but for connection," Ray said. "When children see foster parents who understand their culture, it helps them heal faster."

The Urgent Need for More Black Foster Families

Kansas's persistent shortage of Black foster families remains one of the greatest barriers to stability for Black children in need.

Here's what it takes to qualify as a foster parent. Potential foster families must complete a 30-hour preservice training program, a full home assessment, and comprehensive background checks — and families must show they have enough income to support their own household needs.

Ray says many people who become excellent foster parents already have children and feel that adding another child won't be an inconvenience, while others are adults who cannot have children. However, she says most of all, foster families should have the desire and ability to support children through some of the most difficult times in their lives.

As a way to attract more Black foster families, Ray suggests churches identify one family willing to foster, and wrap support around them — through respite care, financial help, mentoring, meals, transportation, or simply showing love to the children they welcome into their home.

"If every church supported one foster family," Ray said, "we could change the entire system for our kids."

Restoration in Motion

From stepping in to support overwhelmed birth families to pushing back against policies that perpetuate bias, RFS shows what compassion-centered, culturally grounded child welfare truly means.

Their vision is simple:

More Black foster homes, fewer disrupted lives, and a system where every child is seen and understood.

As Ray put it:

"When you see people through God's eyes — through their lenses — restoration isn't just possible, it's promised."



Capitol Federal

HOME AT LAST

A Home-At-Last loan from Capitol Federal® offers qualified buyers:

- No minimum loan amounts
- Low down payments & competitive rates
- No up-front mortgage insurance premium
- Local service for the life of the loan
- Homebuyers education by recognized community organizations

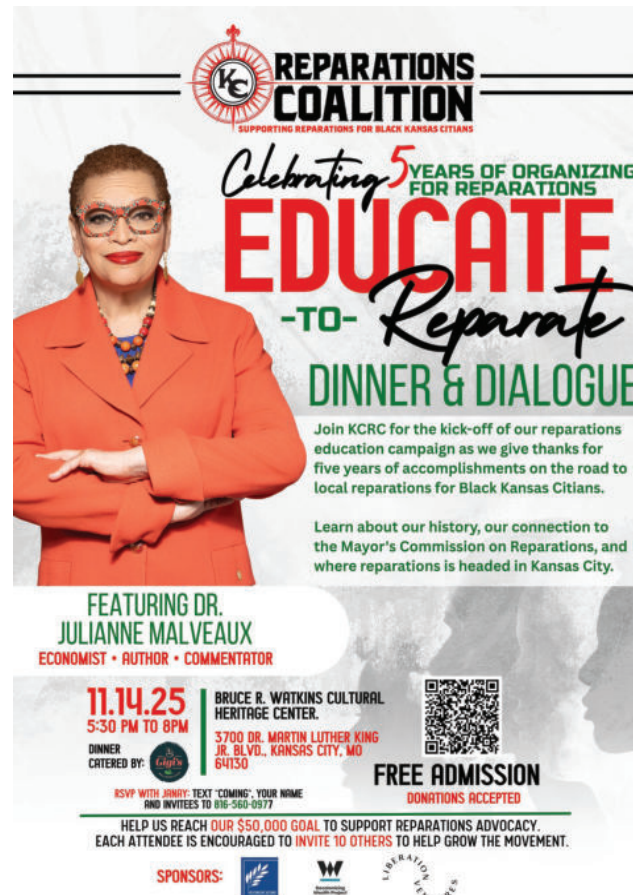


View CapFed's loan options and apply today.

Or find the right loan for your needs with a **Purchase + Improvement loan or Home Equity Line of Credit from CapFed®.**



888.8CAPFED | capfed.com

REPARATIONS COALITION
SUPPORTING REPARATIONS FOR BLACK KANSAS CITIZENS

Celebrating **5 YEARS OF ORGANIZING FOR REPARATIONS**

EDUCATE -TO- Repairate DINNER & DIALOGUE

Join KCRC for the kick-off of our reparations education campaign as we give thanks for five years of accomplishments on the road to local reparations for Black Kansas Citizens.

Learn about our history, our connection to the Mayor's Commission on Reparations, and where reparations is headed in Kansas City.

FEATURING DR. JULIANNE MALVEAUX
ECONOMIST • AUTHOR • COMMENTATOR

11.14.25
5:30 PM TO 8 PM

DINNER CATERED BY: **Light**


BRUCE R. WATKINS CULTURAL HERITAGE CENTER.
3700 DR. MARTIN LUTHER KING JR. BLVD., KANSAS CITY, MO 64130

FREE ADMISSION
DONATIONS ACCEPTED

KSPV WITH JERRY TEXT 'COMING: YOUR NAME' AND INVITES TO 816-580-9577

HELP US REACH OUR \$50,000 GOAL TO SUPPORT REPARATIONS ADVOCACY. EACH ATTENDEE IS ENCOURAGED TO INVITE 10 OTHERS TO HELP GROW THE MOVEMENT.

SPONSORS:



Missouri Sports Betting Goes Live Dec. 1

By Columbia Missourian

Starting Dec. 1, Missourians will officially be able to place sports bets. As launch day nears, nine mobile sportsbooks have received temporary licenses and are competing for new users with a range of offers and sign-up perks.

Licensed Mobile Sportsbooks

Circa Sports, DraftKings, FanDuel, ESPN BET, BetMGM, Bet365, Caesars Sportsbook, Fanatics, and Underdog.

Pre-registration and promotional sign-ups open Nov. 17. Despite some confusion, Missourians anywhere in the state will be able to register and bet with any of the nine.

How Missouri Got Here

When the U.S. Supreme Court struck down a ban on state-run sports gambling in 2018, states began passing legalization bills. Missouri became the 41st state to join in after voters narrowly approved Amendment 2 in November 2024.

Kansas had already legalized betting in 2022, luring Missourians to cross the border to place bets. Professional sports teams in Missouri—frustrated by lost revenue—helped push Amendment 2 to the ballot.

Lawmakers hoped to have betting ready by March 2025, in time for March Madness. But the Missouri Secretary of State rejected emergency rules to speed up implementation. After months of rule-making and licensing, nine mobile sportsbooks and eight casinos are now ready for launch.

What Sets the Sportsbooks Apart

Each sportsbook offers different features and promotions:

- Circa Sports caters to “high rollers” and sharp bettors, allowing large wagers and tighter spreads.
- DraftKings and FanDuel, which control nearly 80% of the U.S. market, target everyday bettors with frequent odds boosts and new-user bonuses.
- Caesars Sportsbook and Fanatics reward loyalty—Caesars users earn hotel and resort credits; Fanatics bettors receive “FanCash” redeemable for tickets or bonus bets.
- Underdog, known for fantasy contests, now includes traditional betting alongside its parlay-style pick-'em games.
- BetMGM and Bet365 cover a wide range of international sports, appealing to bettors looking for niche options.



Since a law banning sports gambling in states other than Nevada was struck down in 2018, states slowly began creating policies to legalize it. Missouri was late to the party, becoming the 41st state to legalize it when Amendment 2 was passed in November 2024 (GETTY IMAGES).

In-Person Sportsbooks

Eight Missouri casinos also received retail sportsbook licenses and will open Dec. 1:

- Ameristar Kansas City – Fanatics Sportsbook
- Ameristar St. Charles – Fanatics Sportsbook
- Harrah's Kansas City – Caesars Sportsbook
- Horseshoe St. Louis – Caesars Sportsbook
- Hollywood Casino St. Louis, River City Casino St. Louis, and Argosy Casino Kansas City – ESPN BET
- Century Casino Cape Girardeau – BetMGM

Early Promotions

Official offers begin Nov. 17, but industry trackers like Legal Sports Report expect deals such as:

- DraftKings/FanDuel: Bet \$5, get \$300 in bonus bets
- Caesars: Bet \$1, Double Your Money 20×
- BetMGM: Up to \$1,500 First-Bet Bonus
- Fanatics: Up to \$2,000 in No-Sweat Bets
- Bet365: Bet \$5 to Get \$200 or up to \$1,000 safety-net bet

Circa Sports, catering to professionals, is unlikely to offer large bonuses. Promotions generally come as site credits that must be wagered before cashing out. For instance, with DraftKings' \$300 bonus, players must use—and win—the bonus amount in a new bet before withdrawing.

Rules and Restrictions

Missouri law bars *player-specific* prop bets on college games involving state schools, though team outcomes are allowed. Betting on high school sports remains prohibited.

Otherwise, bettors can place wagers on professional, college, and international sporting events via mobile apps or casino sportsbooks.

Gambling Help and Safeguards

Anyone struggling with problem gambling can call Missouri's confidential helpline at 888-BETS-OFF (888-238-7633), available 24/7.

The Missouri Department of Mental Health also lists certified gambling counselors, though experts note that mobile betting brings faster, higher-risk behavior that may require new treatment approaches.

Under Amendment 2, the greater of \$5 million or 10% of annual sports betting tax revenues will go into Missouri's Compulsive Gambling Fund to expand prevention and treatment programs.

After years of debate, delays, and cross-border frustration, Missourians will finally be able to wager legally from home—or in person—just in time for the college football postseason and the heart of the NFL schedule.

This story originally appeared in the Columbia Missourian and is republished with permission.

What do All of These Different Types of Bets Mean?

Are you new to betting and not sure how it works? Here's a quick explainer

By Columbia Missourian

The most common bets to place are moneyline bets, spread bets and over/under bets.

Moneyline bets are straightforward: You are betting on which team or player will win a game or event.

When you place a moneyline bet, you will see odds that either start with a plus or minus. For example, if the Chiefs are playing the Broncos and the Chiefs are -150, that means they are favorites. In this case, a \$150 bet will win you \$100 (you get the original \$150 back). On the other side of the bet, the Broncos would be underdogs, let's say at +125, which means that a bet of \$100 would win you \$125 (plus the original bet).

For bigger or smaller wagers, payouts scale according to the odds. Going back to the Chiefs' -150 odds, a \$15 bet would win \$10 and a \$450 bet would win \$300.

Spread bets operate a little differently. They use a point margin, where the favorite must win by more than the listed number while the underdog can lose by that many points and still cover. For example, if the Chiefs are -3.5 (- implies the favorite) versus the Broncos, KC must win by 4 or more to cash and Denver covers if it loses by 3 points or fewer or if it wins.

Usually, both sides of spread bets feature similar odds, which are normally close to -110 (again, meaning a \$110 wager would win \$100).

Finally, over/under bets are gambles on whether or not the combined score of a game will be higher or lower than a predetermined amount. In the Chiefs-Broncos contest, let's say the over/under line is 50.5, and the final score is 30-27. The total would then be 57 (30+27), and the over would win. If the total ends up lower than 50.5, under bettors would rejoice.

Similar to spread bets, the odds on both over and under bets are generally similar and centered around -110.

You may also come across the term “parlay.” This is just a group of bets combined into one that must all win in order for the wager to pay out.

ACLU Sues Kansas Over “Pay-to-Be-Free” Probation Rules

By Source Kansas Reflector

Source Kansas Reflector The American Civil Liberties Union of Kansas has filed a federal lawsuit challenging Johnson County judges for extending probation terms based on a person's ability to pay restitution.

The suit, filed with the law firm Willkie Farr & Gallagher, represents four Kansas plaintiffs and seeks class-action status for others statewide. It accuses the state of Kansas, Attorney General Kris Kobach, and six Johnson County district judges of violating constitutional rights by conditioning freedom on financial means—even when

defendants met every other requirement of probation.

Monica Bennett, ACLU of Kansas legal director, said the practice creates two systems of justice. “There is nothing about being poor that means you should be treated differently when serving probation,” she said. “If our clients and many other Kansans were simply able to pay, their rights would be restored.”

At issue is Kansas Statute 21-6608(c)(7), which allows judges to extend probation beyond the statutory limit for defendants who owe restitution. The ACLU argues the law imposes harsher punishment on poor defendants than on wealthier ones convicted of identical crimes.

The complaint cites cases of four Kansans—Jeffrey Englund, Alicia McKnight, Debra Nicole Rice, and Alanna Carter—whose probation terms were stretched years beyond the maximum allowed by law solely because they couldn't afford restitution. McKnight has been on probation since 2016, while Carter and Rice have remained under supervision since 2018.

When probation is extended for nonpayment, all restrictions remain: warrantless searches, limits on travel, bans on entering restaurants that serve alcohol, and loss of voting rights. “Were they simply wealthier, they could eat, vote, and visit family like



Micah Kubic, executive director of the ACLU of Kansas, says Johnson County District Court judges violate constitutional rights of defendants in application of probation. In this image, Kubic addresses a crowd Oct. 8, 2024, in Kansas City, Kansas. (PHOTO BY TIM CARPENTER/KANSAS REFLECTOR)

anyone else,” Bennett said. ACLU executive director Micah Kubic likened the policy to a modern poll

tax, punishing low-income Kansans who would otherwise regain the right to vote. The lawsuit also argues

that courts effectively act as debt collectors by requiring probationers to make restitution payments through third-party agencies that add fees and interest. These costs can obscure how much a person must pay to end supervision.

According to the ACLU, the system violates the U.S. Constitution's guarantees of due process, equal protection, and freedom of travel and privacy, and even raises 13th-Amendment concerns about involuntary servitude. Plaintiffs also contend it breaches the Kansas Constitution's protections against cruel punishment, unreasonable searches, and the disenfranchisement of eligible voters.

“This lawsuit is about fairness,” Bennett said. “Freedom should not depend on the size of your wallet.”


Source Kansas Reflector

TODAY

is for welcoming you home.

With INTRUST Bank as your lending partner, we help turn the dream of home ownership into a reality. And when you finally find the right house, we make the lending experience as stress-free as possible. Our team of knowledgeable mortgage specialists are dedicated to guiding you through the process at every step of the way. Today is for dreaming big.

Visit intrustbank.com to learn more and apply online.

Member FDIC | Equal Housing Lender 

© 2025 INTRUST Bank

 INTRUST
Bank.

Tradition for TODAY.



In Wichita's Most Heated Race, Shepard Wins District 1; Albert Holds School Board District

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

Wichita's District 1 delivered the most closely watched and politically charged contests of the 2025 local elections — deciding who will represent the city's historic northeast side on both the city council and the school board.

With two strong candidates, months of debate driven by a five-candidate primary, major endorsements, and lively social engagement, the District 1 city council race proved to be one of the most contentious in decades.

Shepard Wins District 1 City Council Race

Joseph Shepard won the Wichita City Council District 1 seat with **56%** of the vote, defeating long-time community volunteer and advocate **LaWanda DeShazer**, who received **39%**.

Shepard succeeds outgoing councilman **Brandon Johnson**, who was term-limited after eight years — but Johnson was far from absent in this race. Johnson's early endorsement helped define the race, with many voters viewing Shepard as the candidate who would continue Johnson's approach and political alliances.

DeShazer, endorsed by Kansas Rep. **Ford Carr**, positioned herself as an experienced community servant prepared to bring “a different approach” to city hall. The race often reflected the still-lingering tension between Johnson and Carr, whose disagreements earlier in the year escalated into a public altercation in Topeka. For some residents, the Shepard–DeShazer matchup felt like an extension of that divide.

A Race Defined by Endorsements, Alliances & Controversy

Critics argued that Shepard was too closely aligned with Johnson and would bring “more of the same.” Supporters countered that Johnson's leadership delivered key investments in District 1, and

Shepard's continuation of that work would bring stability and progress.

Another layer of scrutiny focused on Shepard's proximity to **Wichita Mayor Lily Wu**. Shepard endorsed Wu in her 2023 race to unseat incumbent Mayor Brandon Whipple.

Some District 1 voters questioned whether Shepard's support for Wu indicated an ideological or simply a strategic alliance. Others felt his bridge-building approach could help the district navigate city hall's changing dynamics.

Shepard also faced a campaign finance controversy after accepting donations above Wichita's new \$500 contribution limit. He refunded all excess funds after watchdog Celeste Racette raised concerns. Shepard said the donations occurred before he was aware the city's home-rule finance ordinance superseded state law that allowed individuals to donate up to \$2,000 to a candidate.

Despite the controversy, Shepard's fundraising dwarfed his opponents, with his campaign list including a number of the city's major business owners and developers.

Shepard's Promises

Shepard enters office with an ambitious agenda rooted in housing, youth engagement, safety, and transparency.

Governance & Accountability:

“I will improve transparency, accountability, and proactive community engagement,” he said. “Residents should drive priorities — not react to decisions after the fact.”

Affordable Housing:

Shepard says Wichita must expand housing options, especially for renters, seniors, and people with disabilities. He supports workforce housing and increasing access to low-interest capital for minority entrepreneurs interested in developing in the district. He also calls for integrating

transitional housing for homeless individuals as they stabilize before moving into long-term housing policy.

Property & Sales Tax Approach:

Shepard supports exploring a city sales-tax proposal — if voters want it — to offset property taxes. “Tourism generates roughly 30% of Wichita's sales-tax revenue,” he said, arguing that a strategic sales tax could ease the burden on homeowners while funding infrastructure needs.

Youth Policy Engagement:

“Young people must help design the policies that affect their lives,” Shepard said. He supports youth seats on District Advisory Boards, reviving the Youth Advisory Coalition, and creating permanent safe spaces for recreation and innovation.

Addressing Food Deserts:

Shepard says solving food access is tied to population growth. Grocery stores will not invest in areas without enough residents to support them. He sees potential in addressing the issues in mixed-use developments that could include first floor groceries built

below multi-level housing projects; nonprofit partnerships and private-sector collaboration will be key.

Public Safety:

Shepard supports community-police partnerships and evaluating tech spending — such as Flock cameras — based on results. He wants intervention programs and health-system partnerships fully integrated into safety strategies.

Homelessness Response:

Shepard speaks candidly about his own experience with homelessness. “I know the reality,” he said at The Voice's candidate forum. He supports wrap-around case management, expanded sheltering, stronger transit connections, and supports filling funding gaps for ICT-1, a joint police–mental health–medical team that responds to mental health crises across Wichita. He also supports integrating transitional housing for homeless individuals as part of the support they stabilize before moving into long-term housing policy.

Shepard's election marks a generational shift for District 1. Now the real test begins: turning campaign commitments into policy action that resonates with the community that elected him.

Diane Albert Holds the School Board District 1 Seat

In the USD 259 School Board District 1 race, incumbent **Diane Albert** won with



57% of the vote, defeating challenger **Mackenzi Truelove**, who received **43%**.

Albert was part of a four-member conservative-leaning slate in 2021 that, if all four had won, would have gained control of the seven-member school board. The group fell one seat short of their goal, when they won just three of the four seats.

All of them were up for reelection this year, and Albert was the only one of the slate that retained her seat. **Hazel Stabler** and **Kathy Bond** lost their reelection bids. Meanwhile, **Julie Hedrick**, whose 2021 victory prevented a conservative takeover, **won** reelection with 57% of the vote in her race.

Albert, who hadn't campaigned heavily in Northeast Wichita during her first run, received an initially cool reception from Wichita's African-American community. However, during her first term, she worked intentionally to build stronger community relationships, which possibly reflected in her 14-point win. She currently serves as board president and has engaged with organizations like the NAACP, neighborhood associations, and educators throughout the district.



District 1 chose new leadership on the council and renewed leadership on the school board with Joseph Shepard and Diane Albert.

Watson's Upset Headlines a Night of Change Across The Dotte

Voters back Watson's forward-focused agenda while delivering sweeping changes in key down-ballot races.

By Bonita Gooch
Voice Editor-in-Chief

Wyandotte County voters delivered a decisive message Tuesday night, reshaping leadership across Kansas City, KS, and proving once again that in “The Dotte,” community power — not political machinery — still drives elections.

Turnout reached nearly 20%, and voters gravitated toward candidates who addressed the issues hitting households hardest: utility costs, property taxes, neighborhood-based economic development, and transparent governance.

The result was a clear demand for accountability and renewal.

Christal Watson Wins in a Major Upset

In the biggest surprise of the night, **Christal Watson** defeated **Rose Mulvany Henry** with **53.7% of the vote in the election for mayor and CEO of the Wyandotte County Unified Government.**

Watson entered the race without major endorsements, big donors, or institutional backing. Instead, she built a campaign rooted in neighborhood networks, faith communities, youth advocates, and working families—particularly resonating with Black and Hispanic residents, who together make up roughly 53% of Wyandotte County's population, mirroring her final vote share.

Mulvany Henry, a lifelong Dotte resident and well-known attorney and business executive, held advantages in name recognition

and establishment support. But Watson's years of grassroots engagement proved more powerful, signaling that voters wanted a leader who reflects their daily realities.

Throughout her campaign, Watson emphasized **utility affordability, PILOT reform, property tax transparency, and equitable economic development** across every corridor of The Dotte — not just the fast-growing west side. She called for a utility-relief fund tied to new developments, performance audits of major projects, and expanded tax relief for seniors and families under financial strain.

Her message—centered on fairness for households—clearly connected. Voters responded with a mandate for change.

Unified Government Commission: New Faces & Narrow Margins

District 1: Jermaine Howard Wins Big

Newcomer **Jermaine Howard** swept this race with **71.4%**, decisively defeating Lisa Walker Yeager. Yeager, who appeared on two ballots this year, struggled to gain traction in this district, where voters favored Howard's fresh approach and commitment to community-driven policymaking.

District 5: Carlos Pacheco III Captures Open Seat

Dr. **Carlos Pacheco III**, a highly funded candidate with support from a broad spectrum of supporters, won with **66%** over former city economic development coordinator LaVert A. Murray. Pacheco will succeed

longtime Commissioner Mike Kane, who retired after nearly 20 years of service.

District 7: Chuck Stites Re-Elected Unopposed

Commissioner **Chuck Stites** secured a second term without opposition.

District 8: Andrew Davis Holds On

In a fairly tight race, incumbent **Andrew Davis** won with **53.6%**, defeating challenger Jacob Handy by fewer than 200 votes — reflecting a district still closely divided on its political direction.

At-Large District 2: Kump Defeats Lopez

Attorney **Andrew Kump** defeated current District 6 commissioner **Philip Lopez**, earning **53%** of the countywide vote. Lopez, whose District 6 seat wasn't up for election, will continue in his current seat which is not up for election until 2027. Kump replaces Tom Burroughs, who left the seat to run for mayor. Burroughs, one of six initial candidates for mayor, did not advance out of the primary.

BPU Races: Haley Survives Ethics Controversy

The Board of Public Utilities races drew unusual attention after an ethics investigation resulted in the censure of board member Dave Haley and his removal as BPU Board president. Haley referred to the scandal as an “October Surprise” — an action deliberately created or timed to influence the outcome of an election.

Despite the controversy, Haley won reelection to the At-Large Position 2 seat with **52.7%**, defeating former KCK Mayor David Alvey.

Additional BPU Results

- **At-Large Position 1:** Gary Bradley-Lopez won with **55.4%** over Lisa Walker Yeager.
- **District 2:** Chase Cook narrowly edged Neal Palmer, earning **50.1%** to Palmer's 49.3%.

KCKCC Board of Trustees: Sutton Returns; Kump & Sanchez Join the Board

Three seats were up for election on the Kansas City Kansas Community College Board of Trustees this year: **two full four-year terms and one seat to complete the unexpired term** of the late MaryAnn Mosely.

Incumbent **Linda Hoskins Sutton** secured reelection with **37.5%**, while fellow incumbent **Brad Isnard** lost his bid for another term. The second full-term seat went to **Geoffrey Kump**, who finished with **25.9%**.

In the race for Mosely's unexpired term, appointed trustee **Mary Ricketts** was edged out by **Alex Sanchez**, who won with **38.1%** in a close three-way contest.

The results bring **two new members — Kump and Sanchez — onto the board**, alongside returning trustee Sutton.

Notice the **Kump**

name, brother Geoffrey and Andrew Kump are both newly elected. Andrew Kump won the at-large seat on the Wyandotte County Commission. Geoffrey, who failed in his attempt to win a seat on the UG Commission in 2021, proved more effective in his race for the KCKCC Board.

KCKPS School Board: Paige Re-Elected; Dinkens & Penn-Hicks Join

In the USD 500 school board race, where the top three candidates win seats, voters selected:

Wanda Brownlee Paige — 23.9% (re-elected)

Sheyvette Dinkens — 11.3% (new)

Pamela Penn-Hicks — 17.4% (new)

Incumbent Rachel Russell finished with 15.5%, just short of returning to the board.

A New Chapter for The Dotte

From the mayor's office to BPU, from the UG Commission to the school board, Wyandotte County voters opted for leadership that reflects lived experience, everyday struggles, and a desire for change. Across the ballot, the message was unmistakable:

The people of The Dotte are ready for transparency, fairness, and progress driven by the community — not by special interests or political inertia.



Watson's grassroots victory tops a night of major leadership shifts across The Dotte, from UG to BPU and KCKCC.

ACA OPEN ENROLLMENT UNDERWAY

Kansas and Missouri Face Uncertain Year Ahead

By Voice Health Team

Open enrollment for Affordable Care Act (ACA) health plans is now open, and despite ongoing political battles in Washington, the clock is ticking for Kansans and Missourians who want to stay insured.

Residents can shop and enroll at [HealthCare.gov](https://www.healthcare.gov) through **Jan. 15, 2026**, but to start coverage **Jan. 1**, enrollment must be completed by **Dec. 15**. Waiting until January means coverage won't start until **Feb. 1**, possibly leaving a one-month gap.

With federal subsidies set to expire at year's end, experts say it's best to lock in a plan now — before deadlines or potential cost hikes take effect.

Why This Year Matters

Since 2021, enhanced federal subsidies have helped make ACA plans more affordable. These credits, introduced under the **American Rescue Plan** and extended by the **Inflation Reduction Act**, are set to expire **Dec. 31** unless Congress acts to renew them.

Without an extension, most Marketplace enrollees in Kansas and Missouri will see higher premiums in 2026 — in addition to this year's rate hikes. Even those with private or employer-based coverage could feel the ripple effects as insurers adjust rates across markets.

How the Subsidies Changed the Game

Before 2021, ACA subsidies capped premium payments based on income for households earning up to



Democratic U.S. Sen. Chuck Schumer of New York, accompanied by Democratic U.S. Sen. Cory Booker of New Jersey, points to a poster depicting rising medical costs if Congress allows the Affordable Care Act tax credits to expire.

(PHOTO BY ANDREW HARNIK/GETTY IMAGES)

400% of the federal poverty level (FPL). For 2025, that's **\$15,650 for an individual** and **\$32,150 for a family of four**. Those at poverty level paid about **2% of their income**, rising to **10%** for those near the limit.

The enhanced credits lowered those payments for everyone — capping the maximum at **8.5% of income** and eliminating premiums entirely for households under **150% of FPL**. For the first time, middle-income Kansans and Missourians, including small-business owners and self-employed workers, qualified for help.

If Congress doesn't act, those expanded credits end Jan. 1, reinstating the so-called "subsidy cliff" that cuts off aid for families earning slightly above the limit.

ACA Marketplace in Kansas

According to the **Kansas Department of Insurance's 2026 health insurance market report**, seven companies are offering ACA coverage this year. One is new to the

market, while others posted the following average rate changes for 2026:

- **Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Kansas City:** -6.14%
- **UnitedHealthcare Insurance Co.:** +11.74%
- **Oscar Insurance Co.:** +14.44%
- **Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Kansas Inc.:** +16.65%
- **Medica Insurance Co.:** +30.76%
- **Ambetter from Sunflower Health Plan:** +33.66%

Small business plans on the ACA exchange are also climbing, with average increases of **8.4% to nearly 10%**.

Marketplace enrollment in Kansas has continued to grow — surpassing **200,000 in 2025**, up from **171,000 in 2024** and nearly **double the 98,780** enrolled in 2017.

But experts warn that rising premiums and expiring subsidies could reverse those gains. "It is difficult to project how people will respond," said Kansas insurance official **Lee Strathman**, noting that many

may drop coverage or turn to short-term or group plans. Fewer participants could raise costs even more for those who remain.

The **Kansas Hospital Association** echoed concerns, saying any loss in coverage will strain hospitals and increase uncompensated care.

Missouri Marketplace Trends

In Missouri, **Blue Cross Blue Shield of Kansas City** — which serves 30 western counties — will lower premiums by **4.1% on average**, though some plans may rise by up to **9%**.

The other eight insurers operating in parts of the state are raising rates. **Ambetter Health**, available in 109 counties, will increase by **1.9%**, while **Cox Health Plans**, offered in five southwest Missouri counties, is jumping **30.4%** on average.

Who Will Feel It Most

- **Low-income enrollees** who currently pay little or nothing could see premiums rise into the

hundreds, prompting many to drop coverage.

- **Middle-income earners and entrepreneurs** — including gig workers and small-business owners — will lose eligibility for subsidies and may face unaffordable premiums.
- **Older adults not yet on Medicare** could be hit hardest, since age-based rates already make coverage expensive.

Political Stalemate Clouds Outlook

As Congress debates the federal budget, Democrats are pushing to extend subsidies while Republicans demand an end to the partial government shutdown before negotiations continue.

That leaves consumers in limbo. For now, applicants must enroll assuming the subsidies will expire. If Congress acts later, credits will be retroactively adjusted — but missing the enrollment deadline means losing coverage regardless.

What Kansans and Missourians Should Do

Shop early: Compare plans and check your subsidy eligibility at [HealthCare.gov](https://www.healthcare.gov).

Meet deadlines: Enroll by **Dec. 15** for coverage starting Jan. 1, or by **Jan. 15** for Feb. 1 coverage.

Get free help: Certified navigators can guide you through options — find one at [localhelp.healthcare.gov](https://www.localhelp.healthcare.gov).

Stay informed: If subsidies are extended, updates will be posted quickly on [HealthCare.gov](https://www.healthcare.gov).

No matter what happens in Washington, one fact is clear: health coverage is getting more expensive. Acting early gives Kansans and Missourians the best chance to keep their insurance and avoid costly gaps in care.

TRUST WOMEN

CALL TODAY!
316.260.6934

BODY AUTONOMY IS A HUMAN RIGHT!

Kind, compassionate abortion care.



Wichita OKs Formal 29th & Grove Cleanup Plan, Free Testing Next

Union Pacific's 10-year groundwater plan clears City Council; funded free testing of residents for liver cancer to begin soon.

By Bonita Gooch
Editor-in-Chief

After decades of delay and frustration, Wichita is finally moving forward on two fronts to address the toxic groundwater contamination in the 29th and Grove neighborhood — cleanup of the site and medical testing for residents who may have been exposed.

On Oct. 21, the Wichita City Council unanimously approved a package of agreements allowing **Union Pacific Railroad** to construct and expand groundwater treatment facilities as part of a formal **10-year remediation plan**. In



addition, in compliance with an announcement earlier this year, agencies have been selected to conduct a **\$3.5 million** program for **free community health testing** for liver and kidney damage linked to the contamination. **A Long-Delayed Cleanup**

The contamination dates back to the **mid-1970s**, when **trichloroethylene (TCE)** — an industrial solvent used for cleaning metal parts — seeped into the soil and groundwater. The problem went undetected until **1994**, and the source was traced to a former Union Pacific site in **1998**

Union Pacific began working under a consent order with the **Kansas Department of Health and Environment (KDHE)** in 2002 and has since operated extraction wells and monitoring systems. The City Council's recent action formally clears the way for construction to begin on a network of treatment sites expected to remove pollutants over the next decade.

What the Plan Includes
Union Pacific will build **two new groundwater treatment facilities and expand an existing one** at three locations:

- 13th Street between Pennsylvania and I-135
- 22nd Street between Ash and Opportunity Drive
- I-135 and Murdock Avenue, near Murdock Parknote

Each site will feature small, shed-like structures

housing pumps and filters to extract, treat and return clean water into Wichita's stormwater system

Union Pacific has **180 days** from the council's approval to submit final designs to KDHE. Once the agency signs off, it will host a **public meeting** for residents to review construction plans and timelines

Health Testing Funds Secured

While construction moves forward, public-health officials are preparing to begin **free screenings for residents** who lived or still live near the contamination plume.

The **Kansas Health Foundation (KHF)** is administering **\$3.5 million** in grants to local clinics to cover testing costs — including lab work, staff time and outreach. The funds come from a coalition of state, city, county, nonprofit and private-sector partners:

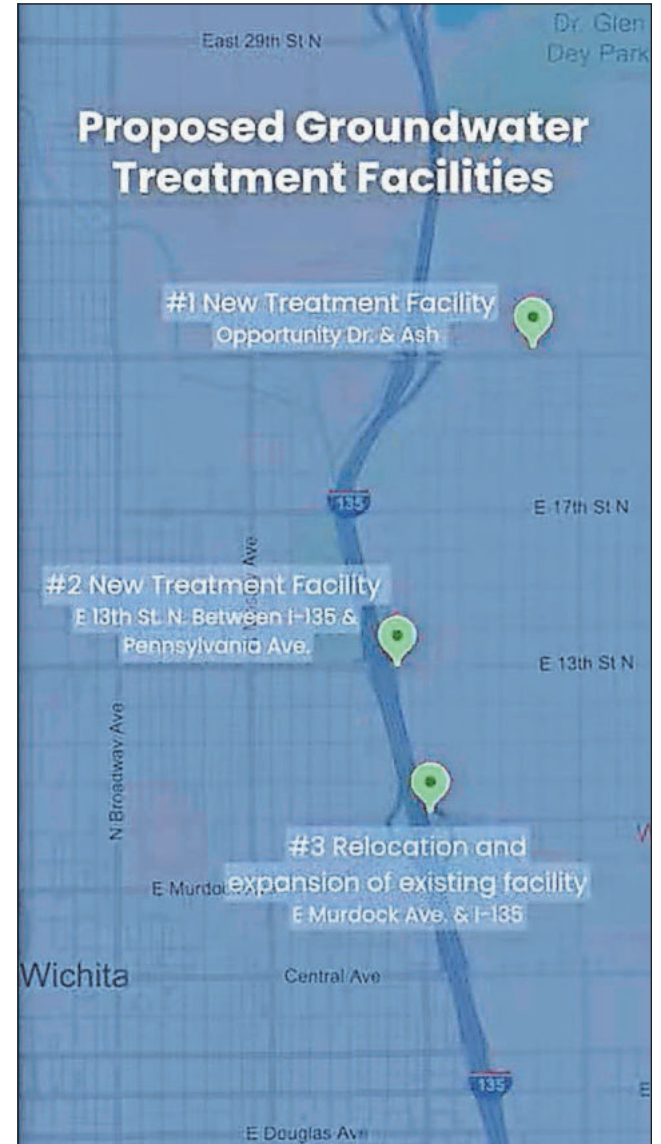
- State of Kansas: \$2.5 million
- Kansas Health Foundation: \$500,000
- City of Wichita & Sedgwick County: \$125,000 each
- Wichita Foundation, Fidelity Bank, Blue Cross Blue Shield of Kansas, Stand Together Foundation and Sunflower Foundation: \$350,000 combined

The testing program is expected to launch soon. Clinics receiving grants will provide free or low-cost screenings to anyone who lived within the affected area.

"This effort reflects what's possible when we come together across business, nonprofit, city, county and state lines for the health and safety of our community," said **Sedgwick County Commission Chair Ryan Baty**.

Ongoing Testing Urged

City Councilmember Brandon Johnson, who represents the area, urged



After 50 years, progress is happening at Wichita's 29th & Grove contamination area.

Union Pacific's 10-year groundwater cleanup is underway, and \$3.5 million has been secured for free community health testing for residents possibly exposed to toxic chemicals.

residents to take advantage of the screenings and continue annual testing for early signs of liver or kidney cancer

"Even if you feel fine, get checked," Johnson said. "Exposure to TCE can cause health problems that don't appear for years. Regular testing is the best way to protect yourself and your family."

Residents will receive

notifications once KDHE schedules its public availability meeting and once local organizations begin the spill related testing for liver cancer.

"This is about accountability and long-term safety," Johnson said. "We're finally seeing both environmental cleanup and community health action at the same time — and that's real progress for 29th and Grove."

YOUR SEASON TO UPGRADE

Auto Loans as low as **4.99% APR***

No Payments for 90 Days

WICHITA FEDERAL CREDIT UNION

wichitafcu.com/AutoUpgrade

*APR=Annual Percentage Rate

Antwan Daniels & Melissa Robinson Tie the Knot in Hilton Head

Not to show favorites, but our "favorite" city council member jumped the broom last month. Even though we weren't invited to the wedding, she was kind enough to give us an exclusive of the photos.

On Fri., Oct. 24, 2025, Antwan Daniels and Melissa Robinson celebrated their union in a heartfelt ceremony held on the picturesque shores of Islanders Beach in Hilton Head, South Carolina. The wedding took place at 5 PM and was officiated by Tim Jones, a Kansas City native and fraternity brother of the groom.

The couple delighted their guests with a beautiful sand ceremony, followed by the joyful tradition of jumping the broom, led by Antwan's fraternity brother, George Lewis. Antwan is the proud son of Tawanna Daniels and

Alan Branch, while Melissa Robinson is the beloved daughter of Maurice and Bonita Dallas, Texas, Antwan



Robinson. Originally hailing from Dallas, Texas, Antwan moved to Kansas City to take on the role of Chemistry Instructor at Metropolitan Community College, where he has earned a reputation as a dedicated educator and community advocate. He also founded "Cool Kids Chemistry," inspiring underserved youth through engaging hands-on chemistry labs.

Melissa, a passionate public servant and progressive policymaker, has deep roots in Kansas City. As a former member of the Kansas City Public School Board and current City Councilmember, she played a crucial role in regaining academic accreditation and championing economic development reform. Her unwavering commitment to marginalized communities has made her a respected leader in efforts to

See **KNOT** Page 15 →



Have You Been Missing the Voice Calendar of Events?

Our calendar is now online and big and better than ever, with link direct to the events and ticketing in many instances. Here are just a few of the items we have on the calendar for the weekend of Nov. 15. For our calendar go to communityvoiceks.com click on calendar on the toolbar. Also, you can post your event for free.

Best way to view the calendar, click list you can also sort by location. Only want Kansas City events, no problem.

Nov. 15, 6 to 10 p.m. at Venue 54 Wichita Spades With Love: Adult Game Night & Community Giveback Edition

This will be a celebration rooted in Black joy, culture, connection, and community

care. Expect classic games like Spades, Uno, Jenga, Dominos, Rummy, Phase 10, etc.; giveaways and door prizes; music brought to you by DJ Super Mario and, onsite food vendors. Host Samuel David.

Admission a food item. Register in advance (bit.ly/spadeswithlove) to receive double the door prize entries at check-in!

Nov., 1 to 8 p.m. Tapia Fades Barbershop & Lounge Overland Park, KS. KC Fade Wars 2025 – Kansas City Barber Battle & Expo

Get ready for KC Fade Wars 2025 – Kansas City Barber Battle, where barbers and stylists battle it out to create the freshest fades in town! Whether you're a barber looking to prove your expertise or a fade

enthusiast wanting to witness jaw-dropping transformations, this event is for you. See our calendar for hour-by-hour schedule.

November 15 30 pm – 9:00 pm: Median Shrine Center, Topeka Veteran's Appreciation Party

Join us as we come together to honor and celebrate our incredible veterans for their service and sacrifice. This special evening will be filled with camaraderie, gratitude, and entertainment. Soul 2 Soul: Buck O'Neil's 114th Birthday Celebration

November 15 00 pm – 10:00 pm: Little Theater, Kansas City Convention Center.

Don't miss a soulful night of Jazz

celebrating the Soul of Baseball, Buck O'Neil, in memory of his 114th Birthday.

Scintillating concerts by chart-topping saxophonist, Pamela Williams ("The Saxtress") and guitarist, Adam Hawley, to help us celebrate Buck's 114th birthday. Ladies are encouraged to wear RED. VIP option available.

Thur., Nov. 20, 7 to 10 pm: Simply Poetry Season 6 Ep 3: Ft TeiannaReAL (Chicago) Simply Sangria, Wichita.

Come out and Enjoy our 6th Year celebrating Poetry and Poets from throughout the Heartland!

Featuring TeiannaReAL (Chicago, IL) for Sols Spotlight!

The Coach Who Trains Champions — and Leaders

From high school fields to the NFL, Wichita trainer Brian Butler's program has built faster, stronger athletes — and the character to match their talent.

By Ty Davis & Bonita Gooch

The Community Voice

From Talent to Transformation

Before Brian Butler became one of Wichita's most respected athletic trainers and mentors, he was a gifted but troubled athlete trying to find his way.

Growing up on the city's west side, he excelled in both football and basketball at **Wichita Northwest High School**, where he graduated in 1993 as part of one of the school's winningest teams.

But the discipline that fueled success on the field didn't always carry over into life off it. "I was talented," Butler said,

"but I didn't have the structure or mentors to help me make quality decisions."

He admits he was chasing dreams without direction. "If I would've made it to the NFL back then, I probably would've ended up dead," he said. "I didn't have the discipline or decision-making it takes to survive at that level."

That honesty and self-awareness became the foundation for the next three decades of his life. Butler set out to become the mentor he once needed: someone who could help young athletes channel raw potential into real leadership.

For nearly 30 years, he's been shaping more than athletes — he's been shaping lives. His training ground isn't a fancy facility but any field, park, or open space where young people show up ready to work. What he builds isn't just speed or strength — it's discipline, faith, and purpose.

A Big Brother with a Bigger Purpose

Butler began coaching football in **1996** at **Wichita**

Northwest High School, where his two younger brothers, **Rashad and Sherman**, were both players. He was only **21 years old** — the youngest coach in the district at the time — and wanted to make sure his brothers had the support and discipline he'd once lacked.

"I was just being a mean big brother," he laughed. "I was trying to push them to work harder."

What started as a way to help his brothers succeed quickly caught the attention of other players. Butler told them to meet on the weekends at a field, and more and more kept showing up. Both of his brothers went on to play college ball — one even becoming a high-school All-American — and word spread about the intense, no-nonsense training sessions that produced results.

By the early 2000s, Butler had coached at several **Wichita-area schools** — four years at Northwest, a year at Clearwater, and another at South High — but his passion was what happened outside official practices. From **1996 through 2005**, he trained local athletes **for free**.

"It was pretty controversial because people didn't believe I was doing it to help people."

What others couldn't see was that Butler's training wasn't just physical, it was spiritual.

"They didn't pay me a dime," he said. "But they had to show up for the Word first. I wanted them to build their foundation on something bigger than the game."

Each session started with **scripture or Bible study**, then moved into drills and conditioning. "That was the price of admission," he said. "Faith came first."

Those early years laid the foundation for everything that followed. The lessons



Brian Butler in this 2020 photo with trainees Avery Johnson and Butler's nephew Joshua Sanders, who he also trained, after a Maize High School football game. Avery is now a second year quarterback at K-State and Sanders, is now a Missouri Science & Technology engineering major.

he taught on Wichita's open fields — faith, focus, and accountability — would become the same principles that shaped the next phase of his life and career.

From Volunteer to Visionary

In **2006**, Butler turned his years of volunteer work into a business, launching **Brian Butler Performance**. The decision didn't change his mission — it expanded his reach. His program still centered on the same goal: to build better people, not just better players.

His program trains athletes across all sports, focusing on **speed, explosiveness, agility, and core strength**.

"Your body is run by your core," Butler said. "That's what makes you function better."

Each athlete's training is individualized, shaped by their personal goals and needs.

"It's about learning how to function and be comfortable in your own body," he said. "It's kind of like gumbo — it all kind of works together."

Butler's approach drew athletes from across the city — football players, basketball players, track athletes, and more — each learning that success on the field starts with discipline off it.

Results That Speak for Themselves

Nearly 30 years after those early workouts on Wichita fields, Butler's reputation has grown far beyond local boundaries. What began with a handful of neighborhood kids has evolved into a steady roster of about **30 athletes** who train with him year-round, including some of the top prospects in the region.

Those numbers have climbed sharply in recent years, fueled by the high-profile success of **Avery**

Johnson, the Kansas State University quarterback Butler began training when Avery was in the **second grade**. Johnson's rise to college stardom has drawn new attention to Butler's program and to the results it consistently delivers.

Over the years, Butler has helped **dozens of athletes earn college athletic scholarships**, guiding them through the same process his own brothers once faced. Many have continued on to successful collegiate careers, and a few reached football's highest level. His trainees who advanced to the **NFL** include **Bryce Brown, Arthur Brown Jr., Cameron Wimbley, Tyson Hartman, Cody Whitehair, Blake Bell, and Emmanuel Lamur**.

Each name, Butler says, tells a story of perseverance and purpose. "The game

See BUTLER Page 14 →



Brian Butler trains Brayon "Bub" Scott, an Wichita 8th grader who's drawn enough attention to already have been offered a four-year college athletic scholarship.

TIME TO VOTE FOR 2026 KANSAS BLACK TEACHERS HALL OF FAME

People are encouraged to VOTE three (3) Black teachers who impacted their lives before the Jan. 7 deadline. Votes can be entered at communityvoiceks.com/submissions



Jesse Adams Mrs. Vivian Alexander Willa Andrews William Astle Voris Bailey



Wesley Bartel Mrs. Minnie Brown Frank Crawford Yvonne Day Eugene Franklin Frank Carpenter Paul George

Marion Guest Mrs. Mattye Harrison
Curtis Hightower Raip Hockett



THE VOICE

FREE COMMUNITY PARTY!
**JUSTIN FAVELA'S
FAMILY FIESTA**
SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 15 | 3-5 P.M. | 1845 FAIRMOUNT



BUTLER, from Page 16 ↓

rewards discipline," he said. "All those guys had the work ethic and character to match their ability."

Now, a new generation is following in their footsteps. Among Butler's current group is **eighth-grader Braylon "Bub" Scott**, who recently received a **full-ride offer from Delaware State University** — a remarkable milestone for someone his age.

"What stands out most about Bub is that he keeps showing up," Butler said. "With the schedule he has — school, travel, training — that takes real commitment. That consistency is special."

Building Leaders Who Last

For Butler, producing college stars and NFL players is rewarding, but it's not the ultimate goal. His greatest satisfaction comes from seeing athletes grow into

disciplined, accountable young adults who earn respect beyond the field.

Butler's goal is to develop leaders. Turning young athletes into leaders is something he's especially proud of. "There's no better way to show you're a leader than being selected captain of your team," he said.

Since 2010, **11 of Butler's trainees have been chosen as captains at Kansas State University**, an accomplishment he says reflects not just athletic skill but character.

"When people choose you to lead them, that means they trust your integrity," Butler said. "That tells me we're doing something right."

Discipline On & Off the Field

For Butler, discipline isn't just a training principle — it's a way of life. He teaches his athletes to carry the same accountability they show in workouts into the classroom and their homes.

He tells them to **sit in the front of the class, communicate with teachers, show up on time, and stand tall** — not just as athletes but as examples of what hard work and respect look like.

"Kids love discipline," he said with a grin. "They act like they don't, but they do."

That's why his message to parents is direct: be present, be consistent, and don't make excuses.

"Nowadays, I've seen some of the worst parenting in my 50 years," he said. "People say they believe in their kids but don't want to invest in them. Parents, don't take shortcuts — and don't allow your kids to either. Hold them accountable. Discipline matters."

He believes structure and consistent expectations can change a young person's future.

"I've seen kids who would've been in jail go a different direction because of mentorship and discipline," Butler said. "God used me to give them something, and they used it."

Faith & Family First

While football and fitness have shaped Butler's career, faith is what anchors his life. Married for more than **20 years**, with **four daughters and one son**, he leads at home the same way he leads on the field — through consistency, accountability, and service.

"As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord," he said. "I'm not perfect, but I know I'm here for a purpose bigger than sports."

That foundation, he believes, is what gives meaning to everything else. His faith keeps him grounded when the demands of training and mentoring grow heavy, and his family reminds him why the work matters.

For Butler, it all comes down to this: **Faith shapes the work, discipline delivers the results, and every life redirected is a win.**

Scan for more information!

www.wichita.edu/vub

VETERANS UPWARD BOUND ★★★★★
KNOW YOUR BENEFITS. EARN YOUR DEGREE. GET THE JOB.

Tutoring, Academic Advising, GI Bill & Financial Aid Navigation, Stipends, and more...

Call Today: (316) 978-6742

veterans.upwardbound@wichita.edu

Veterans Upward Bound is hosted by Wichita State University. All services are 100% FREE to eligible veterans.

Election News, from Page 8 ↓

Where Albert Stands on Key Issues Student Achievement & Board Focus:

Albert wants the board focused squarely on academics, not facilities. “My focus has been elevating student achievement and making district operations more efficient,” she said.

Next School Bond:

Albert supports bringing back a bond proposal — mill-levy neutral — and believes last year’s failure stemmed from confusion about what bond dollars can legally fund.

Cell Phone Policy:

Albert supports strict bell-to-bell no-phone policies in elementary and middle

schools, with structured limitations in high schools and stronger enforcement across campuses.

DOJ Settlement & Discipline:

USD 259 is under federal oversight for discriminatory discipline practices. Albert supports methodical, building-level implementation to ensure fairness.

DEI Cuts:

Even amid national push-back, Albert says the district must support every student. “Education is about unlocking potential,” she said. “That commitment doesn’t change because of political debate.”

Other Wichita Races

• District 3 City Council:

Incumbent Mike Hoheisel won with 60% of the vote over Genevieve Howerton

(40%). If you live in Southeast Wichita, you’re probably represented by Hoheisel. Reach out and connect if you need anything, he’s proven himself supportive of all members of his heavily minority district.

• District 6 City Council:

Incumbent Maggie Ballard won with 61% over Brett Anderson (31%) and Margaret Shabazz (7%). Shabazz was the only African-American candidate running for election outside of the District 1 city council race. Ballard

• School Board District 2:

An incumbent, Julie Hedrick won with 57% of the vote.

• School Board District 5:

Amy Jensen defeated incumbent Kathy Bond with 54%. Bond was one of the more conservative candidates who ran on the 2021 slate.

• School Board District 6: Amy Warren won with 70%, defeating incumbent Hazel Stabler. This district covers a portion of Northeast and North Central Wichita, beginning on the west side of I-135. A lot of our readers may be surprised to learn they reside in this district.

What These Results Signal for Wichita’s Northeast Side

District 1 voters chose a blend of continuity and recalibrated leadership:

• **Shepard**, a younger, movement-oriented coalition builder, represents a shift toward a more progressive and data-driven approach at city hall — while still aligned with some established political players.

• **Albert**, once viewed with skepticism, has secured

renewed trust from families who expect stability, academic focus, and fairness in a district still navigating federal oversight. The next four years will

reveal whether both leaders can translate promises into tangible improvement for one of Wichita’s most engaged — and watched — communities.



A Legacy of Service... Built upon more than 90 years of knowledge and community trust

Rose Jackson, 68

March 5, 1957 - Nov. 2, 2025

Service will be held at 2 p.m. Sat., Nov. 22, at Greater Harvest Tabernacle Church, 1700 S. Market.

Leroy Gay II, 70

July 14, 1955 - Oct. 31, 2025

Service will be held at 2 p.m. Sat., Nov. 15, at Jackson Mortuary Chapel, 1125 E. 13th St.

Samuel Peter Allen Jr., 84

Sept. 26, 1941 - Oct. 29, 2025

Service will be held at 10 a.m. Fri., Nov. 14, at St. Mark United Methodist Church, 1525 N. Lorraine.

Dwayne Latney, 63

Aug. 26, 1962 - Oct. 27, 2025

Service was held Nov. 7 at New Jerusalem Baptist Church.

Hazel King, 85

April 24, 1940 - Oct. 24, 2025

Service will be held at 2 p.m. Fri., Nov. 14, at Jackson Mortuary Chapel, 1125 E. 13th St.

Alfred “Shaun” Mathenia III, 57

Nov. 26, 1967 - Oct. 24, 2025

Service was held Nov. 6 at Jackson Mortuary Chapel.

Daniel Vickers, 72

March 7, 1953 - Oct. 23, 2025

Graveside service was held Nov. 1 at Maple Grove Cemetery.

Knot, from Page 12 ↓

combat redlining and urban core disinvestment.

Together, Antwan and

Melissa are proud parents to seven children and have a delightful granddaughter. They look forward to establishing a family church

home, nurturing their ties within the Beacon Hill neighborhood, and continuing their shared mission to serve the Kansas City

community.

Congratulations to the newlyweds as they embark on this exciting journey together!

NOMINATE AN UNSUNG HERO

We’re recognizing 28 heroes of our community during February 2026. We’ll recognize a person every day of the month.

Nominations open through Dec. 12

@communityvoiceks.com (click on more)

GIVENS
DISASTER RESTORATION
FLOOD FIRE MOLD AIRDUCT

We work with all Insurance Companies

24 HR EMERGENCY SERVICE

316-265-1315
Locally Owned and Operated 50 Years of Experience

Join us each Sunday in person @ 10 am & 5 pm for our Worship Services or online @ 10am @

Chisholm Trail Church of Christ

5833 E. 37th St. Wichita, KS 67220
316-683-1313

www.chisholmtrailcofc.org/live
Bible Classes for all ages on Wednesdays @ 7 pm

Barry L. Gainey, Minister

CLASSIFIED ADS

SMALL BUSINESS OWNERS
You’ve been asking for it
Ads priced for your budget!!

One Photo of your choice allowed

- repairmen
- retail
- rentals
- trades
- food vendors
- services

Black & White Only
This size (3.3” x 2”) Text only (other than one photo)
\$60 multiple run discounts Payment required in advance
We deserve the right to refuse any advertisement we find offensive.

Call Cornell (316) 681-1155
hill@tcvpub.com

Photo may not cover more than 1/3 of the ad. Single text photo only.

“My journey has been one of continuous growth and learning.”



Ryan P.
Retail Banking Team Manager
11 years with BofA

Bank of America didn't just recognize my potential. It actively nurtured it. Here I've had the chance to take ownership of my career and shape my trajectory thanks to the resources, training and mentorship that are available to me.

What would you like the power to do?[®]



BANK OF AMERICA



See how we're helping our employees and communities thrive at BofA.com/GreatPlaceToWork