

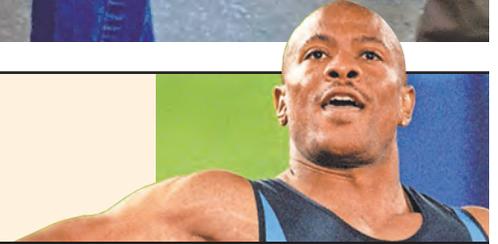
THE VOICE

A Trusted Voice From The Community's Perspective



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THE VOICE

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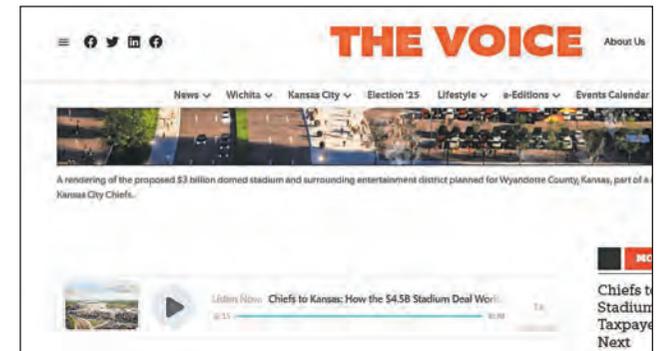
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For now, audio is **automatically available on new stories** as they're published. As time allows, we may go back and add audio to select older stories our readers continue to revisit and share.

And let us introduce you to **Jace** — the voice you'll hear. He's one of us. His tone is warm, familiar, and grounded, designed to make our readers feel at home. And just to be clear: Billy Bob nor Karen will ever read to you on THE VOICE. This is about meeting our community where they are — and making trusted local news easier to access than ever.



Calling All Love Couples!

By Voice News Service

Our annual Love Couples issue returns Feb. 6, and we're now accepting nominations for one of the most popular editions of the year. We're looking for married couples whose relationships shine—through commitment, laughter, faith, resilience, or simply making it work day by day.

We want couples of all ages and backgrounds: young love, longtime love, church couples, street couples—if it works for you, it works for us. Our goal is to reflect the full diversity of

our community and share real stories of love, growth, and partnership.

If you're married—or know a married couple with a great love story—we invite you to nominate them.

Nomination forms are available at communityvoiceks.com. Click More, then Love Couples. Not sure what this entails. Click the link to see our 2025 Love Couple print edition. <https://bit.ly/49N3KyU>

Couples also appear on our social outlets.

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Annual Kansas Black Legislative Day Set for Feb. 9 in Topeka

Education, networking, access and dialogue remain central to the purpose of Black Legislative Day.

By The Voice News Service

Kansas Black Legislative Day returns to the state capitol on Monday, Feb. 9, offering African Americans and allies from across the state an opportunity to learn about key legislative issues, network, and take part in civic engagement at the highest level of Kansas government.

The annual event has grown steadily over the



Attendees at the 2025 Kansas Black Legislative Day gathered with Kansas Gov. Laura Kelly.

years, now drawing nearly 200 Black leaders and interested citizens who come

together to better understand the legislative session, discuss issues affecting

Black Kansans, and engage directly with the policymaking process.

Kansas Black Legislative

Day is widely viewed as a highlight of the legislative civic calendar, bringing community voices into the heart of state government.

According to **Stacey Knoell**, executive director of the **Kansas African American Affairs Commission**, the continued growth of the event has shaped several changes this year aimed at improving the overall experience for attendees.

This year, the formal presentations will be held in the newly remodeled Docking State Office Building, located adjacent to the capitol.

Previously, sessions were held in the capitol rotunda, but the building's acoustics — combined with heavy foot traffic and the open design — made it challenging to deliver presentations in a focused, distraction-free setting. The Docking Building

provides a more suitable space for presentations, discussion and shared meals, allowing attendees to fully engage with the program.

In addition to the main speaking sessions, participants can take part in small-group visits to the House and Senate galleries to observe floor proceedings, as well as attend selected committee meetings throughout the day. These experiences are designed to give attendees a firsthand look at how legislation moves through the Kansas Statehouse and how advocacy can influence outcomes.

The program will feature a group of well-informed presenters who are fully engaged on issues of importance to the Black community at the state level.

The day will also include an address by **Gov. Laura Kelly** and updates from members of the Kansas Black Legislative Caucus. Organizers say the combination of education, access and dialogue remains central to the purpose of Black Legislative Day.

Tickets for Kansas Black Legislative Day are \$15 and include lunch and participation in all workshops and related activities. On the day of the event, registration opens at 9:30 a.m., sessions begin at 10 a.m., and the program concludes at 2 p.m., allowing participants to return home before the end of the business day.

Tickets can be purchased online at **CommunityVoiceKS.com** by clicking "More" and then "KBLD Tickets" or by clicking the QR code in the ad on page 12 of this issue. The 2026 Kansas Black Legislative Day is sponsored by **The Community Voice** and the Kansas African American Affairs Commission.



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What District One Can Expect From New Councilmember Joseph Shepard

Shepard outlines early priorities and how he plans to lead.

By **Bonita Gooch**,
Voice Editor-in-chief

When **Joseph Shepard** takes office next week, he will step into leadership of one of Wichita's most complex and historically significant districts — carrying both the expectations of the community and the responsibility of shaping what comes next.

Shepard was elected to represent District 1, a district that includes some of Wichita's oldest neighborhoods, areas facing long-standing economic and housing challenges, a growing Hispanic population, and College Hill — one of the city's most historic and affluent neighborhoods. As he prepares to begin his term, Shepard says his focus will be on turning priorities into action — particularly in housing, economic opportunity, and neighborhood stability.

Priorities for His First Term

Asked what he plans to focus on during his first term, Shepard said housing will be his top issue.

District 1 contains a large share of the city's rental housing, much of it older and in need of repair. Shepard said the city must continue addressing landlords who fail to maintain safe living conditions, particularly repeat offenders. At the same time, he said housing policy must recognize the complexity of the rental market, including the reality that challenges can involve both landlords and tenants.

Shepard said effective housing policy should include stronger accountability for chronic problem landlords while also avoiding unnecessary displacement of tenants. The goal, he said, is to improve housing conditions without worsening housing instability for residents who are already vulnerable.

Economic development is another priority Shepard identified, particularly when it comes to helping minority-owned businesses in District 1 grow.

He said many entrepreneurs are encouraged to start businesses but need additional support to expand, hire employees, and

compete for larger opportunities. Shepard said he wants the city to look closely at how its policies, partnerships, and incentive programs can better support business growth in historically underserved areas.

Shepard also said he is interested in broader strategies aimed at building stronger neighborhoods and reducing youth crime and violence, noting that these challenges require long-term thinking, prevention, and community engagement.

Support for the Sales Tax Ballot Issue

Shepard says he supports the proposed one-cent city sales tax that the City Council recently advanced to a vote by residents in March.

"I'm supportive because it will give city departments needed relief as it relates to helping our unhoused neighbors, catching public safety up on needed infrastructure and free up \$197 million dollars in the city's Capital Improvement Program to be able to do innovative things in the district," Shepard said.

Shepard acknowledged concerns about the regressive nature of sales taxes — meaning they place a proportionally greater burden on lower-income residents — particularly because the tax would apply to everyday purchases, including groceries. He said those concerns deserve serious consideration as voters weigh the proposal.

Support From His Predecessor

Outgoing Councilmember Brandon Johnson said Shepard brings the mindset needed to succeed in elected office.

"He has the right attitude and ability to get things done," Johnson said. "You can't knock him down without him getting back up. He will admit when he's wrong, which I think is a good quality."

Johnson said Shepard's collaborative approach may be misunderstood by some, but he has seen it work.

"He's a collaborator, which sometimes can bite him," Johnson said. "But I've seen personally where that works."

Johnson added that leadership on the City Council takes time to learn and requires patience, persistence, and an understanding of

how systems function — qualities he believes Shepard brings to the role.

A Different Leadership Style: Letting People In Earlier

While Shepard credits Johnson with laying a strong foundation in District 1, he said his own leadership style will differ in how and when the public is brought into discussions.

Shepard said he wants residents involved earlier in the process — before issues reach the City Council agenda and decisions feel finalized.

"When people first hear about something at the council bench, it can feel like the outcome is already decided," Shepard said. "That's when trust starts to break down."

Shepard said inviting residents into conversations earlier — even when ideas are still forming — creates better outcomes and stronger accountability. He emphasized that early engagement does not mean every detail is settled publicly, but it does mean people should not be surprised by decisions that directly affect their neighborhoods.

"That's part of respecting the community," he said.

Background and Path to Wichita

Shepard moved to Wichita after high school to join his father and stepmother, who

were already living here. His father had accepted a role as senior pastor at St. Paul AME Church, anchoring Shepard's connection to the city.

Before moving, Shepard finished high school early in California, worked full time, and took college classes at night. After visiting Wichita and touring Wichita State University, he enrolled just weeks before the semester began.

He earned both his bachelor's degree in criminal justice and a master's degree in public administration from Wichita State University, paying out-of-state tuition throughout his studies. A first-generation college graduate, Shepard has said his experiences with housing instability and a sibling's involvement in the criminal justice system shaped his views on equity and public service.

Professionally, Shepard has worked in leadership development and higher education, including roles with the Kansas Leadership Center and Newman University, and currently leads a leadership-focused program.

Shepard plans to commit to the City Council role full time, following the approach taken by both Brandon Johnson and LaVonta Williams. He acknowledged that the council salary represents a financial step down from private-sector work, but said District 1 requires consistent presence, accessibility, and engagement.



Joseph Shepard, District 1's incoming councilmember, steps into the role with support from current leadership and a commitment to lead in his own way.

What Losing a Friend Taught Me About Sepsis

A sudden loss reveals why awareness matters more than we realize

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

One year ago, I wrote about the sudden death of a close friend, Bob Tutt. Just two weeks earlier, he had been healthy. Then, without warning, he died from a blood clot — a condition I knew almost nothing about until it took someone I loved.

This year, I'm writing about another friend — also named Bob. Bob Thompson, like Bob Tutt, was healthy just weeks before his death. And like the loss before it, his death was sudden and devastating. Bob Thompson died of sepsis — a disease I was familiar with, but one I never imagined could take someone I knew so quickly.

I was wrong. And once again, I'm writing in the hope that sharing

even a small amount of information might help save a life.

In April 2024, I wrote about sepsis following the death of former Kansas City Chiefs cheerleader Krystal “Krissy” Anderson, who died shortly after giving birth. That story focused on the alarming and disproportionate number of Black women who die from pregnancy-related complications. What I failed to fully communicate then — and what I understand now — is just how broad, fast-moving, and deadly sepsis can be, especially when it isn't caught early.

Sepsis is notoriously difficult to diagnose. That reality makes personal awareness critical. Knowing the signs — and insisting that worsening symptoms are taken seriously — can make the difference between life and death.

What Is Sepsis?

Sepsis is the body's extreme and life-threatening response to an

infection. Instead of only fighting the infection, the immune system begins damaging healthy tissue and organs, triggering widespread inflammation. At the same time, abnormal blood clotting can restrict blood flow to vital organs, leading to organ failure.

What Causes Sepsis?

Sepsis begins with an infection. Common sources include:

- Respiratory infections such as pneumonia
- Urinary tract infections, especially in people with catheters
- Skin infections, including wounds or surgical sites

An infection in almost any part of the body can lead to sepsis.

Why Speed Matters

Sepsis is a medical emergency. Treatment must begin immediately. With early diagnosis, many people survive. Without treatment, severe sepsis is often fatal. Even with

treatment, 30% to 40% of people with septic shock — the most severe stage — do not survive. In some cases, death can occur within 12 hours.

Who Is Most at Risk?

Sepsis can affect anyone, but higher-risk groups include:

- Adults over 65
- Pregnant people and newborns
- People with chronic illnesses or weakened immune systems
- Hospitalized patients or those with catheters, IVs, or breathing tubes

Sepsis doesn't always announce itself loudly — but ignoring symptoms can be deadly. Awareness saves lives.

There's a lot more to know about Sepsis. To learn more, click the QR code on this page. We'll answer these important questions:

- **What are the symptoms of sepsis?**
- **How is Sepsis Diagnosed?**
- **How is Sepsis Treated?**
- **How do you Prevent Sepsis?**



Wichitans were surprised late last month with the shocking announcement of the death of Chief Bob Thompson, Wichita's First Black Admiral Windwagon Smith. Here's what killed him and what we must learn from his death.

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What Wyandotte County Must Get Right Before Any Chiefs Stadium Deal

Mayor Christal Watson is right — there’s still a lot to be done before any Chiefs deal is final

By Bonita Gooch and James Coleman

As state leaders promote a deal to bring the Kansas City Chiefs to Kansas, Mayor Christal Watson has made one thing clear: nothing is final, no agreements are complete, and Wyandotte County should not rush into commitments that could have long-term consequences for residents.

Watson, who serves as mayor of Kansas City, Kansas and CEO of Wyandotte County, has said she will not negotiate in headlines and that decisions must be rooted in facts, transparency and long-term responsibility. On that point, she is right — and her caution underscores how much work remains before local leaders can determine whether the deal truly serves the community.

While state officials have outlined broad economic promises, many of the most important questions for Wyandotte County and Kansas City, Kansas are still unanswered. Protecting residents will depend not only on understanding what parts of the deal are non-negotiable, but also on negotiating the strongest possible local agreements around what remains open.

Based on analysis from public finance experts, economists and past development experience, here are the key issues Wyandotte County and Kansas City, Kansas should be examining now as talks continue.

1. Locking Down Which Local Taxes Are — and Are Not — Pledged

One of the most immediate questions for local government is whether city or county sales tax growth would be pledged to help repay STAR bonds.



Under most STAR bond structures, the state’s portion of sales tax growth is used to repay debt. Cities and counties, however, can be asked to contribute their own sales tax growth — a decision that is optional, but significant.

Local leaders are seeking clarity on:

- Whether city or county sales tax growth would be pledged
- Whether liquor taxes are included
- Whether any future local tax increases are anticipated

Keeping local sales taxes out of bond repayment unless there is a clear upside and strong safeguards is one of the few financial levers Wyandotte County directly controls.

2. Requiring Final STAR Bond District Boundaries — in Writing

Another major concern is the

size and shape of the STAR bond district itself.

County officials are expected to insist on:

- A final, legally binding map — not a concept or preliminary outline
- Clear explanations of why boundaries are drawn as proposed
- Transparency about what types of sales are captured
- Confirmation of which existing incentive districts are excluded

The reason is simple: a large district can capture sales tax revenue from everyday purchases that have little to do with the stadium. Once boundaries are set, they are extremely difficult to change.

3. Protecting the Property Tax Base and School Funding

Large developments often receive property tax abatements, sometimes lasting decades. While such incentives can spur construction, they also delay contributions to schools and local services.

Wyandotte County leaders are expected to examine:

- Limits on property tax abatements
- The length of exemptions
- Payment-in-lieu-of-taxes (PILOT) agreements
- Guarantees that property tax contributions begin once construction is complete

Schools rely heavily on property taxes, and a stadium that remains exempt for years can shift the burden to homeowners and other taxpayers.

4. Securing Public Safety and Infrastructure Funding Up Front

Stadiums bring major demands on local services, particularly on event days.

- Those costs include:
- Police overtime
 - Fire and emergency medical services
 - Traffic control
 - Road maintenance and infrastructure wear

Local leaders are expected to

push for:

- A dedicated public safety and infrastructure fund
- Annual payments from the team or district
- Contributions that increase with inflation

Without such provisions, local governments risk covering those costs through property taxes or general funds.

5. Requiring Independent Financial Stress Testing

Projected economic benefits often rely on optimistic assumptions. Wyandotte County leaders are expected to seek independent financial analysis, not projections prepared by the team, the state, or bond underwriters.

- Independent experts can model scenarios such as:
- Lower-than-expected sales
 - Economic downturns
 - Event cancellations
 - Inflation spikes

See DEAL Page 12 →

Village West Worked — But Is a Chiefs Stadium the Same Kind of Deal?

When Kansas officials point to past success using STAR bonds, Village West in Kansas City, Kansas, is often the example they cite.

Built with the help of STAR bonds more than two decades ago, Village West transformed undeveloped land into a regional shopping and entertainment destination anchored by Legends Outlets, Kansas Speedway and what is now Children’s Mercy Park. The district draws visitors year-round and generates steady sales tax revenue that helped repay its bonds and spur additional development.

Supporters of the proposed Chiefs stadium say that success shows the STAR bond model can work. Critics say the comparison only goes so far. Why Village West Worked

Village West’s strength has always been consistency. Retail stores, restaurants and entertainment venues are open 365 days a year, producing daily sales tax activity. Visitors come not just for events, but to shop, dine and spend time — often staying longer and spending more.

That steady flow of everyday spending made sales tax projections more predictable and helped limit financial risk over time.

How a Stadium Is Different

A football stadium operates on a very different schedule. The Chiefs would host eight or nine regular-season home games a year, with additional playoff games, concerts and special events. On those days, spending spikes dramatically. On

most other days, activity is limited.

That makes the surrounding development critical. Hotels, restaurants and entertainment venues must fill the gaps between events to generate the kind of consistent sales tax growth that helps large projects succeed financially.

There is also a difference in scale. The proposed Chiefs project involves billions of dollars in investment — far more than Village West — and would rely on a much larger STAR bond district. Because the proposed stadium project is far larger than Village West, it could generate more economic activity — but it would also tie up a much larger share of future sales tax revenue for decades.

See VILLAGE WEST Page 12 →



Legends Outlets in Kansas City, Kansas anchors the Village West development, a STAR bond-financed project often cited for its steady, year-round retail and entertainment activity.

As Chiefs Talks Continue, What a Community Benefit Agreement Really Means



Construction jobs and workforce training are often a central focus of community benefit agreements, which aim to ensure local residents share in the economic impact of large development projects.

As discussions continue about a potential move of the Kansas City Chiefs to Wyandotte County, some supporters have pointed to Community Benefit Agreements, or CBAs, as a way to ensure local residents share in the benefits of a major development.

CBAs are increasingly common in large, publicly supported projects — but they are often misunderstood.

What is a Community Benefits Agreement

A Community Benefit Agreement is a separate, legally binding agreement between a developer or team and community organizations, sometimes with the involvement of local government. It is not part of the STAR bond financing itself and does not change how bonds are repaid.

CBAs are designed to address who benefits locally from a large project. They typically focus on workforce, neighborhood and community investments rather than public finance.

Common elements of CBAs include:

- Local hiring and job training commitments
- Targets for minority- and women-owned business participation
- Funding for youth programs or workforce pipelines
- Payments or grants to community organizations
- Neighborhood improvement funds

The specifics vary widely and depend on what is negotiated.

What CBAs Do — and Don’t — Do

Community Benefit Agreements can deliver real, tangible benefits, particularly for residents living near a project or seeking access to new jobs and contracts.

What they do not do is replace public revenue.

- CBAs generally:
- Do not fund police, fire or emergency services
 - Do not pay for roads, utilities or infrastructure
 - Do not protect city or county budgets if tax revenues fall short

- Do not backstop STAR bond debt
- In other words, CBAs can complement a development, but they do not solve the long-term fiscal questions that local governments must address separately.

Who Typically Benefits

CBAs are usually structured to benefit:

- Specific neighborhoods
- Workforce groups
- Nonprofit organizations
- Local small businesses

They rarely place money directly into city or county general funds unless intentionally designed to do so.

That distinction matters. A project can include a strong CBA and still leave local governments responsible for ongoing service costs.

How CBAs Could Fit Into the Chiefs Talks

If Wyandotte County and Kansas City, Kansas pursue a CBA as part of stadium discussions, it would likely focus on:

- Ensuring local residents are hired during construction and operations
- Creating pathways to higher-wage jobs
- Supporting community organizations impacted by increased traffic and development

Local leaders would still need to separately negotiate:

- Tax protections
- Infrastructure funding
- Public safety costs

Those issues fall outside the scope of a Community Benefit Agreement.

Why This Matters for Residents

CBAs are often presented as proof that a project will “give back” to the community. They can — if negotiated carefully and enforced consistently.

But they are not a substitute for sound financial terms.

For residents, understanding the difference helps clarify what CBAs can realistically deliver — and what questions must still be answered elsewhere.

What Maurice Greene Teaches Young Athletes After Olympic Gold

After dominating the world stage, Greene finds purpose in preparing the next generation.

By **Matt Resnick**,
Voice Contributor

Maurice Greene never approached competition thinking about winning. Instead, the former Olympic sprinter focused on doing the work correctly — trusting that excellence would take care of itself.

“What made me different from a lot of athletes is that I didn’t go into events thinking about winning,” Greene told The Community Voice in an exclusive interview. “I went in thinking about executing. And if I execute, the rest takes care of itself.”

That mindset helped propel Greene from Kansas

City to the pinnacle of global track and field, where he became one of the most dominant sprinters of his generation. Decades after earning Olympic gold and world championship titles, Greene continues to apply that same philosophy — now as a physical education instructor and track-and-field coach guiding high school athletes in Gilbert, Arizona.

“I’m just trying to give back to the young kids,” Greene said. “The hope is that my knowledge helps them get to the next level.”

Greene rose from Kansas City’s highly competitive track scene as a standout at F.L. Schlagle High School in

the early 1990s. He said it is important for his students to understand that his success was built without shortcuts, relying instead on discipline, fundamentals and relentless work.

“You have to put in the hard work before you can get to the show,” Greene said.

Greene said younger athletes today often expect immediate success or recognition without committing fully to the training process. His coaching philosophy centers on execution and mastering the basics before chasing results.

Greene received a track scholarship offer from the University of Kansas but chose not to follow the traditional Division I route. Instead, he attended Kansas City Kansas Community



In this September 2010 photo, Maurice Greene brings the baton over the line to win gold for the USA in the 4x100 relay. PA IMAGES / ALAMY STOCK PHOTO

College and later Park University while continuing to train in Kansas City under long-time coach Al Hobson. He eventually relocated to Los Angeles to work with renowned sprint coach John Smith.

“If you can reach your fullest abilities, we can get your college paid for. So let’s work to be the best that we can.”

In addition to coaching track, Greene also serves on the school’s football coaching staff. He said the value of track and field often goes overlooked, even though it plays a critical role in developing elite football players.

“Kids see that other sports receive more notoriety, but every great football player ran track,” Greene said. “So if they want to be great at football, I suggest they also get into track and field.”

“I train a lot of young athletes, and I tell them there is a college out there for you,” Greene said.

“Kids see that other sports receive more notoriety, but every great football player ran track,” Greene said. “So if they want to be great at football, I suggest they also get into track and field.”

“Kids see that other sports receive more notoriety, but every great football player ran track,” Greene said. “So if they want to be great at football, I suggest they also get into track and field.”

Ascending to new heights

Al Hobson, a longtime Kansas City-area track coach who mentored Greene during his high school and college years, said Greene’s competitive drive was fueled early by a

rivalry with his older brother, Earnest. Earnest Greene was a junior college national champion and a competitor at the 1992 Olympic Trials.

“My brother is probably the biggest reason I accomplished many of the things I did,” Greene said. “I just wanted to be better than my brother. We were all-around athletes who wanted to showcase everything we could do.”

Greene also followed in the footsteps of other elite Kansas City sprinters trained by Hobson, including Schlagle standout Raydale Hill, Northeast High Olympian Tim Harden, and Wyandotte’s Wendell Gaskin, a USA Junior national champion. While Hobson said Hill was the most naturally gifted

See **GREENE** Page 10 →



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Mon., Jan. 19, 9 am - 1 pm
Martin Luther King, Jr. Holiday Celebration Event

Ellis Fine Arts Center 2108 S Horton St.

9 a.m. - 2 p.m. - (Food Drive) "Day of Service" - Join us as we collect canned and non-perishable food items to donate to the Beacon. Anyone in the community is invited to drop off canned and non-perishable food.

10:30. - 11:30 a.m. - Showing of the PBS home video documentary "In Remembrance of Martin". In the FSCC Ellis Fine Arts Center/Auditorium. FREE.

12 p.m. - 1 p.m. - (Lunch & Learn) - "The Dockum Drugstore Sit-In"

Presented by Dr. Prisca Barnes, Storytime Village, Inc., Wichita. Wichita's Black students organized and staged a sit-in in 1958 at Wichita's Dockum Drugstore. What transpired, how it ended, and the lasting impact it had on race relations in the city is the focus of this talk. • Gumbo soup lunch, drinks, and dessert will

be available for free. • Photo promotion taken with "I Stand For" signs"

HUTCHINSON

Fri., Jan. 16, 6 pm
Financial Empowerment & Kids Night

Stringer Fine Arts Center, 600 E. 11th Ave.

Events: "Money Mastery 101" seminar for adults and a concurrent "Kids Movie Night" for children.

Sat. Jan. 17, 11 am
Vendor Fair

Stringer Fine Arts Center, 600 E. 11th Ave.

Featuring local community organizations, social clubs, and small businesses. Community Celebration & Gospel Concert

Sun., Jan. 18, 2026, at 2:00 PM.
MLK Celebration

Stringer Fine Arts Center, 600 E. 11th Ave.

A large-scale gathering featuring inspirational speakers and soulful musical performances from local church choirs and the college.

Mon. Jan. 19, 10 am
Unity Project (MLK Day of Service)

Stringer Fine Arts Center, 600 E. 11th Ave.

A community service project focused on local needs; past projects have included community clean-ups and creating encouragement cards for local seniors.

JUNCTION CITY

Sun., Jan. 18, 3 pm
Gospel Music Tribute

Second Missionary Baptist Church, 701 W. 10th St.

The event honors Dr. King's legacy through music, spiritual reflection, and community fellowship. It is a collaborative effort involving various local church choirs and musical groups. Free

Mon., Jan. 19, 10 am

C.L. Hoover Opera House MLK Ceremony

C.L. Hoover Opera House, 135 W. 7th St.

Theme "Being Non-Violent in a Violent World". Free

KANSAS CITY

Sun., Jan 11, 2:20 pm
2026 Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Interfaith Service

Community Christian Church, 4601 N Main

Faith leaders Bishop Frank Douglas, Dr. Sofia Khan, Rabbi Talia Kaplan and Mark Johnson speak and bring religious dialogue, common ground and understanding. Journalist and change agent Lewis Diuguid is special guest. Join us! Dr. Vernon Percy Howard, Jr., President

Mon. Jan., 19, 9:30 am - noon

Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Speaker Program & Nature Walk

Bruce R. Watkins Cultural Center, 3700 Blue Parkway

9:30 - 10 am Check-in, registration, and warm refreshments at the Cultural Center.

10 - 11 am. Keynote address and opening plenary.

11am - noon. A guided nature walk along Brush Creek, focusing on the connection between humans and nature. The walk is led by a U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Ranger.

Mon., Jan., 19, 10:30 am
KCK MLK Holiday Celebration

Memorial Hall, 600 N. 7th St Trfwy

A pre-service program begins at 10:30 am, followed by the main celebration at 11 am. Youth Praise Dancers, KCK Community Orchestra and other invited guests. MLK Mass Choir, Rosie's Dance Studio, Krysti's Dance Studio, MLK scholarship awards. Guest speaker Dr Claybon Lea Jr., Senior Pastor Mount Calvary Baptist Church



Fairfield & Suisun City CA

Mon., Jan., 19, 6 - 8 pm
SCLC-GKC Martin Luther King Jr. Mass Celebration

Community Christian Church, 4601 Main St.

Interfaith Dialogue / Musical Performances / Awards and Recognition / A Call to Action: Led by SCLC-GKC President Dr. Vernon Percy Howard Jr.

Mon, Jan. 19, 8 am
UMKC Dr Martin Luther King Jr 28th Annual Holiday Observance

UMKC Student Center, 5100 Cherry St.

From Vision to Action: Entrepreneurship, Purpose and Commitment. Explore how Dr. King's legacy of justice, economic empowerment and service continues to inspire purpose-driven leadership today. Continental breakfast provided. Featured speaker Chris Goode, founder and CEO Ruby Jean's Juicery

MANHATTAN

Sat., Jan. 17, 2 - 4 pm
Manhattan MLK Jr. Community Celebration

Manhattan Arts Center, 1520 Poyntz Ave

30th year of the Community Celebration with Art & Writing entries and distinguished speaker, Shed Mayberry III. Music, refreshments and birthday cake.

Sat., Jan 24, 8 am - 1 pm
MLK Day of Service

Leadership Studies Building, 1300 Mid Campus Dr.

Campus and community members are invited to serve on the annual MLK Day of Service, hosted by HandsOn Kansas State! All ages are welcome. Volunteers will begin the day with breakfast and a program at the and then head to service locations - transportation will be provided if needed. Individuals or groups register at this link: https://kstate.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_cN5JeUB6JZHFO

OLATHE

Tue., Jan 20, 9:30 pm
20th Annual MLK Community Celebration

MidAmerica Nazarene University, 2020 E. Sheridan St

Theme: "Called to Beloved Community: Our Sacred Work". Honoree: Rev. Darryl Answer will be presented with the Martin Luther King, Jr. Living Legacy Award for representing the values of Dr. King's legacy.

SALINA

Sun., Jan. 18, 3:30 pm
Citywide Interfaith Community Service

St. John's Lutheran Church 302 S. 7th St.

Features keynote speaker Rev. Carl Frazier, pastor at

See **MLK Page 10** →

Take the next step on your

Leadership Journey

STEP 1:
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STEP 2:
GAIN SKILLS

STEP 3:
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Explore our 2026 programs: KansasLeadershipCenter.org

**Albert "Steve" Stephens, 67**

May 14, 1958 - Jan. 2, 2026

Service will be held at 10 am on Fri., Jan. 16 at New Testament Baptist Church, 1833 N. Hydraulic.

Josephine "Jo" Brown, 96

Dec. 15, 1929 - Dec. 31, 2025

Service will be held at 3 p.m. on Sat., Jan. 17, at St. Mark United Methodist Church, 1525 N. Lorraine Ave.

Kenneth Haney, 73

July 30, 1952 - Dec. 30, 2025

Service was held Jan. 8 at New Beginning 7th Day Adventist Church.

Venita F. Diggs, 67

Feb. 19, 1958 - Dec. 26, 2025

Service will be held at 11 a.m. on Sat., Jan. 17, at Calvary Baptist Church, 2653 N. Hillside.

Leon Tisdale, 89

May 23, 1936 - Dec. 22, 2025

Service will be held at 10 a.m. on Sat., Jan. 10, at North Heights Christian Church, 3030 N. Hillside.

Katherine J. Hicks, 87

April 15, 1938 - Dec. 20, 2025

Service was held Jan. 3 at St. Paul AME Church.

Phillip Owens, 86

Feb. 28, 1939 - Dec. 18, 2025

Service was held Dec. 30 at Jackson Mortuary Chapel.

Malia Larissa Nicole German, 25

Sept. 12, 2000 - Dec. 12, 2025

Service was held Dec. 27 at St. Mark Cathedral Church of God in Christ.

GREENE, from Page 8 ↓

athlete he ever coached, Greene's combination of talent and relentless drive set him apart.

Toppling an Olympic legend

Still relatively unknown on the national stage, Greene announced his arrival in dramatic fashion at the 1995 Texas Relays in Austin, Texas — fulfilling a promise he made years earlier.

"Maurice told me if he ever got the chance to race Carl Lewis, he was going to beat him," Hobson recalled. At the time, Lewis was the reigning Olympic champion in the 100 meters and widely regarded as the face of track and field.

Hobson said last-minute negotiations were required to get Greene into the race. The field also included elite sprinters Donovan Bailey and Tim Montgomery.

"That year, the 100 meters was loaded with five or six of the best runners in the country," Hobson said.

Moments after the starter pistol fired, the crowd of more than 30,000 at Texas Memorial Stadium watched Greene surge from an outside lane to a stunning first-place finish.

Hobson said Greene's triumph at the Texas Relays vaulted him into the national spotlight.

"He was getting into all the big events after that," Hobson said. "Everybody wanted to see him run."

Circling back to Greene's greatness

Hobson said Greene's work ethic remains unmatched among the athletes he coached.



At one time there were six of these signs around Wyandotte County. This, the last of the signs, is now in the Kansas City Museum. Maurice Greene, a Kansas City native, was the World's Fastest Human from 1999-2004. He was a 5--time World Champion as well as an Olympic Champion winning 4 medals: 2 Gold in Sydney, 1 Silver and 1 Bronze in Athens

"He's the most determined athlete I've ever coached," Hobson said. "All he wanted to do was practice and train."

Hobson added that if there were a Mount Rushmore for Kansas City athletes, Greene would assuredly belong on it. A five-time world champion and four-time Olympic gold medalist, Greene boasts credentials unlike any other Kansas City-raised athlete before or since.

As far as future plans, Greene said he is preparing to launch a podcast, The Speed Lounge, in early 2026.

"I'll be talking about sports and entertainment," Greene said. "I think I should be able to line up some pretty good guests."

MLK, from Page 9 ↓

New Hope and Love Community Church and a board member for the Center of Peace and Justice in Topeka.

Mon., Jan. 19, noon.**MLK Jr. Day Youth Program**

St. John's Missionary Baptist Church 215 S. Chicago St.

Designed to inspire local youth, this program typically includes musical performances from local schools' music departments.

Mon., Jan. 19, 2026, 7 pm**Kansas Wesleyan University MLK Commemoration Service**

Kansas Wesleyan University, Sams Chapel in the Pioneer Hall.

Keynote Speaker: University trustee Kirk Holt. Performances: Musical selections by the groups Rise Up! and the Wesleyan Chorale. FREE

TOPEKA**Thu., Jan. 15, 1 - 2 pm****The Governor's Martin Luther King Jr. Program**

Kansas State Capitol 300 W. 10th, Topeka, South steps

The governor's annual march and proclamation ceremony celebrating the legacy of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. If weather does not cooperate, event will begin indoors in the first-floor rotunda.

Sat., Jan. 17, doors open 5:30 pm, dinner 6:30 pm**Living the Dream, Inc. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr Birthday Celebration**

Ramada Hotel and Convention Center, Regency Ballroom, 420 SE 6th.

Guest Speaker: Kevin Willmott won an Academy Award and the BAFTA for co-writing with Spike Lee the feature film, Blackkklansman. He co-wrote and is the Executive Producer of the critically acclaimed film, Chi-Raq also directed by Spike Lee. \$85

WICHITA**Mon., Jan. 19, 7:30 am****A.R.I.S.E. 10th Annual Dr Martin Luther King Jr Heroes and Sheroes Scholarship and Awards Breakfast**

Rhatigan Student Center, WSU



Tickets may be purchased from an A.R.I.S.E. member or by calling 316-258-2749 \$40

Sat. Jan. 17, 11 am - 2 pm Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Commemoration & Awards Luncheon

BEGGS BALLROOM 1845 N Fairmont, Wichita

Join the Eta Beta Lambda Chapter of Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Inc. at our annual Commemoration & Awards Luncheon. Keynote Speaker: Larry Randle Jr. Vice President of Manufacturing Operations, Textron Systems Tickets \$50 www.ictalphas.org

Mon., Jan. 19, 12 - 5 pm**Greater Wichita Ministerial League Martin Luther King Jr Celebration**

WSU Metroplex, 5025 E 29th.

Keynote Speaker Bishop Herman Hicks

Mon., Jan. 19, 8 am - 11:30 am**2026 MLK Day of Service: Wichita Habitat for Humanity**

Century II, 225 W Douglas.

Join over 150 volunteers for an incredible morning dedicated to framing the walls of safe, affordable homes. Gather your team for a fun and rewarding experience that directly helps families build a brighter future. We will construct and stand all of the interior and exterior walls of two, three-bedroom homes. Construction will take place inside the Bob Brown Expo Hall at Century II Performing Arts & Convention Center. Free

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SERVICE BEFORE STATISTICS

Progressive Church's Approach to Community Care

How a Wichita church's no-strings model has turned faith into a trusted community hub.

By TyJuan Davis
Community Voice

On the last Friday of every month, the line starts forming early outside **Progressive Missionary Baptist Church**. Some people arrive hours before distribution begins. Some sit quietly in their cars. Others talk softly with neighbors they've come to recognize over time.

No one is rushed. No one is questioned.

Inside the church, this scene isn't viewed as a problem to manage—it's a responsibility to honor.

"We're not running a membership drive," says **Buck DeShazer Sr.**, senior pastor of Progressive. "We're on a Jesus drive."

That philosophy—service without strings—has quietly

transformed Progressive Missionary Baptist Church into one of Wichita's most consistent community hubs for families facing food insecurity, economic strain, and unmet basic needs.

A Community Hub Built on Trust

Located in northeast Wichita, Progressive Missionary Baptist Church has become a place people return to because they know what to expect: dignity, consistency, and help without judgment.

Through its outreach arm, the Progressive Community Outreach Program (PCOP), the church responds to immediate needs while building long-term trust—particularly among individuals who may be wary of institutions that come with requirements or expectations.

Pastor DeShazer's leadership is rooted in lived experience and a theology that prioritizes action. Under his guidance, Progressive has focused less on numbers and more on presence—being there, month after month, even when resources are stretched.

"If people are willing to wait," he often says, "we're willing to serve."

Responding to Hunger, One Month at a Time

Progressive's mobile food drive began during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020. While many emergency programs have since scaled back, the need has not.

In partnership with the **Kansas Food Bank**, the church distributes food on the last Friday of each month, serving between 125 and 200 families per distribution.

The church also participates in the **Wichita Food Bank** Commodities Program, providing USDA-supported food on the third Saturday of designated months. When both distributions occur in the same month, nearly 300 households receive support—helping families stretch limited grocery budgets and maintain stability.

The long lines are a visible reminder that food insecurity remains a daily reality in Wichita. Progressive's response has been steady: show



Volunteers from Progressive Missionary Baptist Church work together to load food for families, with rows of prepared packages ready for distribution.



Progressive Missionary Baptist Church Pastor Buck DeShazer Sr. and church secretary Regina McCarty, help lead the church's day-to-day ministry and community outreach.

up, keep serving, and don't turn people away.

Addressing Hygiene Insecurity With Care

Food isn't the only need Progressive addresses.

Through a partnership with **Simply Hygiene**, the church provides free hygiene

supplies directly from its building during regular weekday hours—offering assistance discreetly, not just during large events.

Families can receive essentials such as diapers, toilet tissue, shampoo, soap, laundry detergent, toothpaste, and personal-care items for men and women. When available, the program also includes hair and skin-care products designed to meet the needs of African American families.

By offering hygiene support consistently and without barriers, the church helps families protect their health—and their dignity—while easing financial pressure.

Faith in Action, Day by Day

While Pastor DeShazer provides spiritual and visionary leadership, the church's day-to-day operations rely on a small but committed team. Among them is Regina McCarty, the church secretary, whose role often places her at the first point of contact for people seeking help.

Her presence helps ensure that those calling or walking through the doors are met with clarity, compassion, and direction—reinforcing the church's role not just as a place of worship, but as a dependable resource.

Committed to the Long View

Despite having a modest congregation and limited

financial resources, Progressive Missionary Baptist Church continues to expand its vision. Plans are underway to transition toward a full-time pantry and commissary space—an expansion that would allow for more frequent food access, improved storage capacity, and **expanded hygiene and clothing support** for individuals and families in need.

The goal is to create a more stable, accessible system of care that meets people where they are, without limiting help to once-a-month distributions.

"Feeding the body is often the first step toward healing the heart," Pastor DeShazer says.

At Progressive, that belief isn't a slogan—it's a monthly commitment.

HOW TO GET CONNECTED

Progressive Missionary Baptist Church

2727 E. 25th Street North

Wichita, KS 67219

316-685-1328

Individuals, families, and community partners may call or visit the church office for information about food distributions, commodities schedules, hygiene assistance, or partnership opportunities.

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

St. Paul
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Pastor Pamela M. Hughes Mason

In-Person and Virtual Worship Experience Sundays at 11AM

LIVE

CELEBRATING THE LEGACY TOGETHER



DEAL, from Page 6 ↓

Making those analyses public allows residents to understand both the upside and the risk.

6. Getting a Clear Answer if the Project Underperforms

One of the most important questions remains unanswered: **What happens if sales tax growth falls short?**

Local leaders are expected to seek written confirmation that:

The city and county are not backstopping stadium debt

Property taxes would not be used to bail out the project

Ambiguity on this point represents long-term financial risk.

7. Locking in Local Hiring and Contracting Guarantees

Past development projects have shown that economic growth does not automatically benefit local residents.

Wyandotte County officials are expected to look for:

- Local hiring thresholds
- Minority- and women-owned business participation
- Clear enforcement mechanisms, not just aspirational goals

8. Tying Local Participation to Measurable Benefits

If the city or county contributes financially in any way, leaders are expected to tie that participation to performance benchmarks, such as:

- Sales tax performance
- Job creation targets
- Community investment commitments

If targets are not met,

local contributions should scale down automatically.

9. Slowing the Timeline – Publicly and Deliberately

Finally, Watson has emphasized the importance of not rushing decisions.

That includes:

- Using the full review window
- Holding public forums
- Sharing documents early and openly

“Listening matters,” Watson said, noting that accountability and long-term benefit must outweigh pressure and speculation.

As discussions continue, the central question for Wyandotte County is not whether the Chiefs would bring attention or activity, but whether the final deal protects residents, taxpayers and the county’s future.

VILLAGE WEST, from Page 7 ↓

A Lesson, Not a Guarantee

Village West demonstrates that STAR bonds can support successful development when spending is sustained and clearly tied to the project area. It does not guarantee that every large, event-driven project will produce the same results.

That distinction is why Wyandotte County leaders say they must carefully examine how a stadium-centered development would function day to day – and whether it can deliver long-term benefits without creating new financial strain.

In the end, Village West offers a lesson, not a blueprint: steady activity matters, scale matters, and the structure of the deal can be just as important as the attraction at its center.

REGISTRATION NOW OPEN!

KANSAS BLACK LEGISLATIVE DAY 2026

February 9, 2026
Kansas State Capitol

SCAN



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THE VOICE