

WHAT'S HAPPENING

Stop by the Area Agency on Aging to pick up your copy of the 2018 AAA Calendar



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Ruth E. Jones, Executive Director

THE COMMUNICATOR

A Wyandotte/Leavenworth Area Agency on Aging Publication

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WORDS FROM OUR DIRECTOR

Wow.....What a year 2017 was! Watching television this year became an exhausting chore and not an enjoyment. There was so much political divisiveness that even some families became pitted against each other. There was the turmoil of devastating hurricanes, wild fires, earth quakes, and mass shootings. Enough to make you not want to watch the news or TV at all!

Remember the old days when TV brought the family together... generally after eating dinner together? Most families had that one television that we gathered around to watch shows like Ed Sullivan, Milton Berle, Red Skelton, Jackie Gleason, the Smothers Brothers, and the list could go on. I remember watching the Andy Griffith show as a child, and trying to whistle to the theme song and watch as Andy and Opie walked to the river to fish. As much as I loved my own Dad, I often wished that Andy Griffith was my Dad because he was so understanding, and compassionate when it came to how he parented Opie.



In those days families were more connected. Now days, everyone has a flat screen in their own rooms and differing schedules that make it hard for families to even eat dinner together. Even when today's family is together in the same room, typically everyone is engaged in an electronic device, so there is really no real connection going on.

It is time for the country (and it starts with family) to get re-connected. We should all lay our soap boxes to the side and get back to those values as Americans that made us strong. Knowing that while we are all different, there are enough commonalities amongst us all that could bring us together working for common goals. We are stronger together than we are when we are divided.

The Area Agency on Aging (AAA) local and state network is an example of the unity that can make an organization stronger. Every region of the State of Kansas is represented with an AAA office. In spite of the politics of the day, the AAA network has remained a strong and trusted voice in our local communities. We continue to collectively advocate and administer services to the older adults and disabled citizens who rely on that trusted voice. The network is stronger collectively than we would be if we simply scratched out a piece of the pie for our own little local spaces.

The Wyandotte/Leavenworth Area Agency on Aging, and the AAA network across the state of Kansas would like to wish EVERYONE a Blessed and a very Happy and Prosperous New Year!

COLD WEATHER RULE | NOV 1 - MAR 31



CALL YOUR UTILITY COMPANY FOR MORE INFORMATION

SILVER HAired LEGISLATORS HELD ITS ANNUAL LEGISLATIVE DINNER

The Wyandotte/Leavenworth Silver Haired Legislative Delegation held its annual legislative dinner on Tuesday, November 14, 2017.

About 25 guests in attendance listened to the knowledge of Kansas SHL President Jay Rowh, as he gave a brief description of how the SHL operates and the importance of making your opinions heard by your local elected officials.

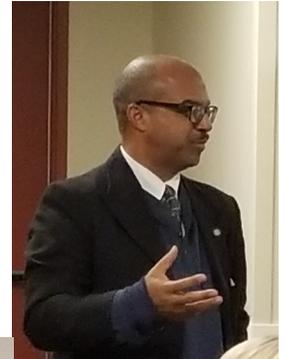
Guests speakers included Thomas Gordon, Vice President of the SHL; Karen Weber, Vice-Chair of the Johnson County Commission on Aging and Hillary Gee, Government Relations of the American Cancer Society (Cancer Action Network).

The Wyandotte/Leavenworth Area Agency on Aging and Disability Resource Center would like to thank the following elected officials for taking time out of their schedules to attend and listen to the concerns facing the seniors across the state of Kansas.

Senator David Haley - Representing the 4th District
 Senator Pat Pettey - Representing the 6th District
 Representative Kathy Wolfe-Moore
 Representative Pam Curtis
 Commissioner Jane Philbrook



UG Commissioner Jane Philbrook



Senator David Haley



Representative Kathy Wolfe-Moore



Vice Pres. Thomas Gordon, SHL



Karen Weber, Vice Chair
 Johnson County Commission on Aging



Hillary Gee, Government Relations, American Cancer Society speaks about Resolution 3501 - Urging continued support for the expansion of Medicaid.



Senator Pat Pettey



Jay Rowh, President SHL

The Kansas Low Income Energy Assistance Program (LIEAP)



The Low Income Energy Assistance Program (LIEAP) is a Federally funded program that helps eligible households pay a portion of their home energy costs by providing a one-time per year benefit.

The 2018 LIEAP application period begins Tuesday, January 16, 2018 and ends March 31, 2018.

In order to qualify, applicants must meet the following requirements:

1. An adult living at the address must be personally responsible for paying the heating costs incurred at the current residence, payable either to the landlord or the fuel vendor.
2. Applicants must demonstrate a recent history of payments toward purchase of the primary heating energy.

Benefit levels vary according to the following factors:

- ◆ Household Income.
- ◆ Number of persons living at the address.
- ◆ Type of dwelling and type of heating fuel.

Inquiries may be directed to Division of Children and Family Services at 913-279-7171 or by dialing toll free 1-800-432-0043.

Dear Newsletter Recipient:

For years "The Communicator" has served as a vital means for providing seniors in Wyandotte County important information regarding aging news, events, programs, services and much more! The newsletter's continuity depends on your donations for its existence. Please help us continue to provide this important publication by becoming a sponsor!

Respectfully, *The Newsletter Committee*

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If you would like to contribute to the cost of the newsletter, please make checks payable to:

Wyandotte/Leavenworth AAA,
Attn: The Communicator
849 North 47th, Suite C
Kansas City, Kansas 66102

Appreciation is extended to the following who have contributed toward the cost of this newsletter.

Names are listed in alphabetical order.

Clara Whitaker (Contributor)



Johnsonville Home

Please call (913) 371-3995 2419 N 22nd St
Residential (24 hour Care) Kansas City, KS 66104
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Respite Care fax (866) 371-3995

For support to help you stay at home **call PACE**
Program of All-inclusive Care for the Elderly



MIDLAND CARE
(913) 562-9951
midlandcare.org/pace

SOCIAL SECURITY PAYMENTS TO INCREASE TWO PERCENT THIS YEAR

Information provided by Gary Strauss, AARP



Social Security recipients will be getting a 2 percent cost-of-living adjustment (COLA) in 2018, the biggest increase since 2012. But it won't be enough to keep pace with the rising costs affecting millions of older consumers who depend on the monthly benefit as their primary source of income.

The COLA announcement will boost the average beneficiary check by \$27.38 a month, or about \$329 a year. The increase is the largest since a 3.6 percent hike in 2012. The adjustment was a minuscule 0.3 percent increase in 2017, and there was no change in 2016.

Indeed, while overall inflation remains relatively tamed, those on fixed incomes and struggling to make ends meet are feeling an economic pinch. Average consumer electricity bills are up about 3.5 percent over 2016, and prescription drug prices are climbing at an even faster clip.

The 2018 COLA could be crimped by higher Medicare Part B premiums. The standard premium is now about \$134 a month, but many participants pay about \$109 a month if they have the fee deducted from monthly benefit payments. A "hold harmless" provision in federal law prohibits Medicare from raising a person's Part B premiums if it reduces their Social Security benefits. For the past two years, most Medicare beneficiaries have been held



harmless because, without a significant COLA, increasing their premiums would have resulted in lower Social Security benefits.

In 2018, the COLA will be large enough to allow for the increase in premiums. Medicare costs have grown very slowly in the past few years. The increase in premiums

that some beneficiaries will see next year is an unfortunate side effect of not having a substantial Social Security COLA recently.

For many beneficiaries, even this small adjustment will be wiped out by increases in Medicare premiums and other health care costs. The Social Security Administration also announced that the maximum amount of earnings subject to Social Security tax, now \$127,200, would climb to \$128,700 next year.

This year, 42 million retirees are receiving Social Security payments averaging \$1,377 a month, or about \$16,524 a year. With the 2018 COLA, payments will average \$1,404 a month, or \$16,848 a year.

In its 2017 annual report, Social Security trustees again warned that without changes, the Social Security trust fund would be depleted by 2034.

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with your request.



SENIOR CITIZENS UTILITY TAX REBATES

The Wyandotte/Leavenworth Area Agency on Aging & Disability Resource Center (ADRC) staff assists the Unified Government Clerk's Office with the Senior Citizen's Utility Tax Rebate Program (by appointment only). To qualify for this program you must:

1. Be a Kansas City, Kansas resident. Residents of Bonner Springs and Edwardsville are NOT eligible.
2. Be 65 years of age or older during the entire calendar year of 2017 (Born before January 1, 1952).
3. Gross household income from all sources, including that of your spouse shall not exceed \$25,000.



If you are eligible, your refund will be the total of the following, not to exceed \$150.

- Gas franchise tax paid to Kansas Gas or Atmos Energy
- 90% of water pollution control charges paid to the Board of Public Utilities
- 7.9% of water and electricity paid to the Board of Public Utilities
- Franchise tax (special municipal charge) paid to AT&T telephone
- A refund on city sales tax (based on income)

FOR ASSISTANCE:

You may visit the Clerk's office Monday - Friday, 8:30am to 4pm on a first come, first serve basis. The Clerk's office is located inside of City Hall at 701 North 7th Street, KCK 66101 on the 3rd floor.

To visit the Wyandotte/Leavenworth Area Agency on Aging & Disability Resource Center, you must schedule an appointment by dialing 913-573-8531. The ADRC will assist on Tuesdays and Thursdays by appointment only.

The program runs from January 2, 2018 to March 31, 2018. For questions or more information regarding the Utility Tax Rebate Program, contact the Unified Government Clerk's Office at 913-573-5260.

COLD WEATHER RULE

November 1, 2017 through March 31, 2018

The Kansas Corporation Commission (KCC) wants Kansans to have electric, gas and water services needed to keep their home warm during the winter. The KCC also recognizes the customer's responsibility to make arrangements to pay for that service.



The Cold Weather Rule was designed in 1983 to ensure both goals are met.

The Cold Weather Rule ensures you will have electric and gas services for your home during the winter. You must make pay arrangements with your utility company to use the Rule and pay your current bill in full while paying off the overdue amount.

If you have questions regarding the Cold Weather Rule, you may call (800) 662-0027 or visit: www.kcc.state.ks.us.

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Allwell is the name for Medicare Advantage Plans from Sunflower Health Plan.

TAX CHECK OFF SUPPORTS THE LOCAL MEALS ON WHEELS PROGRAMS

Annually, Kansans filing their State income tax returns have an opportunity to help ensure their elderly neighbors continue to receive warm, nutritious meals through the Meals on Wheels Program.



The federally funded Nutrition Program for the Elderly, which provides meals to older adults at senior centers, nutrition sites and in their own homes, began more than 30 years ago.

Monies donated to the Kansas Meals on Wheels Fund through the income tax check-off are distributed by the Kansas Department for Aging & Disability Services to the local senior nutrition programs according to a formula based on the number of meals served by each program. Those funds helped fill a gap that could have otherwise crippled many meal services across the State.

The Senior Citizens Meals on Wheels Contribution Program was created in 2002 by the Kansas Legislature to allow tax payers to make voluntary donations to support home delivered meals.

Individuals receiving a state income tax refund can indicate in the designated space on the tax form an amount of their refund they would like to contribute to the Meals on Wheels Program. Contributions can range from \$1 to all of the refund.

Questions regarding the tax check off or the Wyandotte County Meals on Wheels Program may be directed to 913-573-8574.

VOLUNTEER NEEDED!

**Title: Site Leader
Assistant Site Leader**

What: Serve hot meals to seniors

When: Mon - Fri; 9am - 12:30pm

Where: Vernon Center

3436 N 27th Street, KCK

**If interested, contact Jacqui Watts at the
Wyandotte/Leavenworth Area Agency
on Aging.**

913-573-8531

Fight Fraud: Guard Your Medicare Card

If you have Medicare, you can protect your identity and help prevent health care fraud by guarding your Medicare card like you would a credit card.

Identity theft from stolen Medicare Numbers is becoming



more common. Medicare's here to help by removing Social Security Numbers from Medicare

cards and replacing them with a new, unique number for each person with Medicare. Medicare will mail new Medicare cards with the new numbers between April 2018 and April 2019.

Here are some important steps you can take to protect yourself from the identity theft that can lead to health care fraud:

- ◇ Don't share your Medicare Number with anyone who contacts you by telephone, email or in person, unless you've given them permission in advance. Medicare will NEVER contact you (unless you ask us to) for your Medicare Number or other personal information.
- ◇ Don't ever let anyone borrow or pay to use your Medicare Number.
- ◇ Review your Medicare Summary Notice to be sure you and Medicare are only being charged for actual items and services received.

If you're looking to enroll in a Medicare plan:

- ◇ Remember there are no "early bird discounts" or "limited time offers."
- ◇ Don't let anyone rush you to enroll by claiming you need to "act now for the best deal."
- ◇ Be skeptical of free gifts, free medical services, discount packages or any offer that sounds "too good to be true."

If someone calls you and asks for your Medicare Number or other personal information, hang up and call 1-800-MEDICARE (1-800-633-4227).

To learn more about protecting yourself from identity theft and health care fraud, visit www.Medicare.gov/fraud or contact your local Senior Medicare Patrol (www.smpresource.org).

YOGA AND OTHER LOW-IMPACT EXERCISE FOR SENIORS

Often times when people consider practicing yoga for improved health and wellness, the words “new age” come to mind. However, this could not be further from the truth. Yoga is an age-old practice that dates back to the dawn of civilization and combines four key elements; controlled breathing, deep relaxation, meditation and physical poses - all beneficial to seniors.

Is Yoga the Perfect Exercise for Seniors?

Yoga is diverse and dynamic and there are a variety of styles to practice, depending on your physical abilities and preferences, making it a fantastic exercise for seniors.

Restorative Yoga, for example is accommodating and gentle, focusing on low-impact stretching and muscle strengthening, while lowering blood pressure and improving emotional and mental wellness. Yoga also protects bones and joints, by putting less strain on the body than other forms of exercise and is great for keeping seniors flexible.

Meditation Yoga, provides education and teachings that improve the health and wellbeing of body, mind and spirit. Yoga is beneficial for seniors as it encourages mindfulness and directly addresses health concerns that many seniors face, including: anxiety, balance, depression, flexibility, high blood pressure, joint health and stability.

Yoga can reduce the impact of exaggerated stress responses and greatly reduce anxiety and depression. This is because yoga teaches critically important self-soothing techniques, which in turn allow people to connect with their inner self and harness their feelings. Yoga also helps to improve the physical symptoms of anxiety and depression by reducing the heart rate, lowering blood pressure and easing respiration.



Research suggests that yoga can offer a wealth of physical health benefits, as the movements and postures help to promote flexibility and reduce joint pain. In fact, research shows that yoga improves bowel disease, migraines, multiple sclerosis and osteoporosis. Studies have also revealed strong empirical evidence that yoga can offer short-term and long-term effectiveness for sufferers of chronic back pain as well as significant improvements in symptoms of people with osteoarthritis of the knees.

Other Low-Impact Exercises for Seniors

There is plenty of evidence to suggest that yoga is an all-over beneficial form of exercise for seniors, however there are other low impact exercises to consider as well:

Chair-Based Aerobics are offered at many fitness centers and senior communities. These exercises help to improve balance, cardiovascular health and muscle strength, while improving energy and reducing the risk of falls. Light weights or resistance bands can be added to aerobics for added strength training, which builds muscle and protects bones.

Swimming is a fabulous way to improve cardiovascular health, energy and strength while protecting aching or arthritic joints. The buoyancy offered by the water allows seniors to get full range of motion and strengthen muscles without the strain of weight on their body.

Tai Chi is a form of martial arts with moving sequences that focuses on meditation and mental strength. Tai Chi improves flexibility and focus and offers many of the same health benefits as yoga.

Whether you are drawn to aerobics, swimming, tai chi or yoga, the most important aspect of exercise for seniors is to get out and try it! These low impact exercises offer great mental and physical health benefits, while protecting and strengthening the body.

Anyone beginning an exercise regimen should speak with their physician prior to beginning any work out routine.

CHEESY HAM AND HASH BROWN CASSEROLE

INGREDIENTS:

- ✓ 1 (32 oz) pkg. frozen hash browns
- ✓ 8 oz. cooked diced ham
- ✓ 2 (10.75oz) cans condensed cream of potato soup
- ✓ 1 (16 oz) container sour cream
- ✓ 2 cups shredded sharp cheddar cheese
- ✓ 1 1/2 cups grated Parmesan cheese

DIRECTIONS:

- 1) Preheat oven to 375 degrees. Lightly grease 9x13 inch baking dish.
- 2) In a large bowl, mix hash browns, ham, cream of potato soup, sour cream and cheddar cheese. Spread evenly into prepared dish. Sprinkle with parmesan cheese.
- 3) Bake 1 hour in the preheated oven, or until bubbly and lightly brown. Serve immediately.



- ASH WEDNESDAY
- BALLOONS
- BLACK EYED PEAS
- BLACK HISTORY MONTH
- CALENDARS
- CHAMPAGNE
- CHINESE NEW YEAR
- CHOCOLATE
- CONFETTI
- COUNTDOWN
- CUPID
- DIET
- FEBRUARY
- FIREWORKS
- GROUND HOG DAY
- HEARTS
- HOMESTEAD
- JANUARY
- KISS
- LINCOLN
- LOVE
- MARTIN LUTHER KING JR
- NEW YEARS
- NOISEMAKER
- PRESIDENTS DAY
- PUNXSUTAWNEY PHIL
- RESOLUTION
- ROSES
- SNOWFLAKES
- STREAMERS
- SUPERBOWL
- SWEETHEART
- TIME SQUARE
- UTILITY TAX REBATES
- VALENTINES DAY
- WASHINGTON

HAPPY NEW YEAR

Find and circle all the words hidden in the grid.

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Wyandotte/Leavenworth

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JANUARY >>>

NEW YEAR'S DAY

Monday, January 1, 2018

Unified Government Office Closed

MARTIN LUTHER KING DAY

Monday, January 15, 2018

Unified Government Offices Closed

AARP TAX LINE

1-866-389-5627

Contact AARP for a free site nearest you!



The Communicator is published bi-monthly by the Wyandotte/Leavenworth Area Agency on Aging. It is funded by the Kansas Department for Aging and Disability Services through the Older Americans' Act. We assume no responsibility for the care and return of unsolicited material. Donations are suggested.

The Wyandotte/Leavenworth Area Agency on Aging does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion, age national origin, sex, or handicap.

If you feel you have been discriminated against, you may file a complaint with the Kansas Department for Aging & Disability Services at 1-800-432-3535.

Linda Ramirez, Editor

Emma Fonseca, Contributing Editor

FEBRUARY >>>

GROUND HOG DAY

Friday, February 2, 2018

VALENTINE'S DAY

Wednesday, February 14, 2018

PRESIDENTS' DAY

Monday, February 19, 2018

Unified Government Offices Closed