

THE COMMUNICATOR

A Wyandotte/Leavenworth Area Agency on Aging Publication

2023 - January/February

Volume 31, Issue 1

Ruth E. Jones, Executive Director

FROM THE DIRECTOR'S DESK



First, on behalf of all staff at the Wyandotte Department on Aging (AAA), we wish to extend best wishes for a happy, healthy, and prosperous 2023. While we step off to a brand-new year, we'd like to share some accomplishments made in 2022. We also had a few down sides to the year.

One of our most significant downers was that we lost two beloved members. A 20 plus year volunteer, and a 25-year valuable staff member of the AAA. Both passings were so unexpected and shook the fiber of the agency. However, we remain committed in keeping their memories alive, for all the many attributes they added to the Aging department.

On an up note, the AAA was able to close some critical gaps in service. We outfitted our 8 congregate meal sites with new steam tables, serving equipment, refrigerators, and tables/chairs. Each site also received 65" Smart TVs for virtual exercise and nutrition education. These type of upgrades at the sites had not been addressed in more than 20 years, due to lack of funding.

Bridging the Digital Divide and combatting social isolation in our senior population was another gap in service that was addressed. Lessons learned from the pandemic revealed that the use and need for technology was vastly increased as schools, jobs and businesses shut down around the country. Moving to technology devices for tele-health, staying connected to family and relationships was critical during the pandemic. A partnership with AT&T will allow the AAA to get more seniors trained and acclimated to technology and help impact the digital divide in our community.

With transportation a huge barrier for seniors, the AAA was able to award 4 meal sites with beautiful 12-passenger vans that will assist with transporting interested seniors to the meal site. Strangers Rest Baptist Church, Vernon Multi-Purpose Center, Bethel Neighbored Center and Victory Hills Baptist Church were recipients of the vans. This was a major investment in the nutrition program and is the first time in the 40-year history of the local Aging Department or the State Unit on Aging, that transportation vehicles were approved for purchase. This was one of our proudest moments of the year.

Continued support from our state and local partners is vital to the sustainability of programs for our older adults. Our seniors who have worked and served in this county and country for many years, deserve our greatest efforts to help them to have the best quality of life as they enjoy and live in their sunshine years.

In this issue:

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 - *Low Income Energy Assistance Program*
 - *Senior Utility Tax Rebates*
 - *Health New Year Resolutions for Older Adults*
 - *Weighing Heavy In Our Hearts*
 - *Christmas In October Event Held*
 - *Upcoming Nutrition Education Classes*
 - *Common Symptoms of the Flu*
-

TIP SHEET: HOME SAFETY TIPS FOR OLDER ADULTS

Information provided by HealthAging.org

With a growing number of older adults living independently, it's increasingly important to make sure that they're safe at home. Falls, burns, and poisonings are among the most common accidents involving older people. Older adults who live alone may also become the victims of criminals who target older people. If you're an older adult living on your own, or care for an older person living alone, here's what you need to do to stay safe.

KEEP EMERGENCY NUMBERS HANDY

Always keep a list of emergency numbers by each phone. Write this information in large enough print that you can read it easily if you are in a hurry or frightened. Be sure to list number for Poison Control (1-800-222-1222), a family member or friend to call in case of emergency, and your healthcare provider's office.

PREVENT FALLS

- Don't rush to answer the phone. Many people fall trying to answer the phone. Either carry a cordless or cell phone or let an answering machine pick up.
- When walking on smooth floors, wear non-slip footwear, such as slippers with rubber/non-slip bottoms or flat, thin-soled shoes that fit well.
- If you have a cane or walker, use it at all times instead of holding onto walls and furniture.

SAFETY PROOF YOUR HOME

- Make sure all hallways, stairs and paths are well lit and clear of objects
- Use rails and banisters when going up and down the stairs.
- Tape all area rugs to the floor so they do not move when you walk on them.

PROTECT AGAINST FIRE AND RELATED DANGERS

- If there is a fire in your home, don't try to put it out. Leave and call 911. Know at least two ways to get out of your apartment or home.
- When cooking, don't wear loose clothes or clothes with long sleeves.
- Replace appliances that have fraying or damaged electrical cords.
- Don't put too many electric cords in one socket or extension cord.



- Install a smoke detector and replace the battery twice a year.
- Never smoke in bed or leave candles burning, even for a short time, in an empty room.
- Make sure heaters are at least 3 feet away from anything that can burn, such as curtains, bedding or furniture. Unplug space heaters when not in use.

AVOID BATHROOM HAZARDS

- Set the thermostat on the water heater no higher than 120° to prevent scalding.
- Have grab bars installed in the shower and near the toilet to make getting around easier and safer.
- If you're having a hard time getting in and out of your tub, or on and off the toilet, ask your provider to help you get a special tub chair or bench and/or a raised toilet seat.

PROTECT YOURSELF AGAINST ABUSE

- Keep your windows and doors locked at all times.
- Never let a stranger into your home when you are there alone.
- Talk over offers made by telephone salespeople with a friend or family member before making decisions.
- Do not share your personal information, such as social security number, credit card, bank information or account passwords.
- Always ask for written information about any offers, prizes or charities and wait to respond until you have reviewed the information thoroughly.
- Do not let yourself be pressured into making purchases, signing contracts, or making donations. It is never rude to wait and discuss the plans with a family member or friend.

MEDICARE STATEMENTS

Tips for Protecting Yourself and Medicare

WHAT IS A MEDICARE SUMMARY NOTICE (MSN)?

Beneficiaries enrolled in Original Medicare (Parts A and B) receive Medicare Summary Notices or MSNs. Medicare only mails MSNs every three months, but you can view your MSNs 24 hours a day by visiting Medicare's [Medicare.gov](https://www.medicare.gov) website which allows beneficiaries in Original Medicare to log into (or create) a secure Medicare account to view their most recent MSNs, track claims made on their behalf, and check payment status. Creating a free, secure account with Medicare allows you to review all bills processed within the past 36 months.

WHAT IS AN EXPLANATION OF BENEFITS (EOB)?

Beneficiaries enrolled in Medicare Advantage (Part C) plans or Medicare Prescription Drug Plan (Part D) receive Explanations of Benefits or EOBs. EOBs are mailed monthly if services are received, however, beneficiaries can check with their plan to see if they have an online service for accessing claims made on their behalf and payments status.



SMP

Senior Medicare Patrol

Preventing Medicare Fraud

WHAT DO MSNs and EOBs EXPLAIN?

- What the health care provider billed
- How much Medicare paid
- The amount approved by Medicare
- What the beneficiary may be billed for payment

USING YOUR MSN OR EOB TO DETECT FRAUD, ERRORS, AND ABUSE

- Review your Medicare statements as soon as they arrive to ensure all of the services listed were actually received. Reviewing your MSN or EOB is one of the best ways that you can help detect potential errors, fraud and abuse.
- Keep a record of medical visits, tests, receipts for services, and equipment you have received. A *My Health Care Tracker*, which you can get from SMP, can help you keep a record.
- Compare your MSN or EOB to your receipts and records with your *My Health Care Tracker*. If you notice any mistakes, or have questions, call your provider or plan with your questions. If you still have questions or need further help, contact your local SMP!

Information provided here was supported in part, by grant number 90MPRC0002 from the U.S. Administration for Community Living, Department of Health and Human Services, Washington, KC 20201. Grantees undertaking a project under government sponsorship are encouraged to express freely their findings and conclusions. Points of view or opinions do not necessarily represent official Administration for Community Living policy.

COLD WEATHER RULE

November 1, 2022 through March 31, 2023

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.ks.gov.

LOW INCOME ENERGY ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

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 2023 LIEAP application period begins mid January until the end of March.

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.

SENIOR UTILITY TAX REBATES

Residents of Kansas City, Kansas 65 years of age or older can apply for a Utility and/or Sales Tax Rebate. If you live in Bonner Springs or Edwardsville, these rebates are not available to you.

HOW DO I QUALIFY?

If you answer yes to all of these questions, one or both of these rebates could be available to you:

- ⇒ Are you a resident of Kansas City, Kansas?
- ⇒ Were 65 years of age or older during the entire previous year?
- ⇒ Is your gross income from all members of your household \$25,000 or less?



WHEN CAN I APPLY?

You can only apply for the Utility and/or Sales Tax Rebates from January 2 through March 31 of every year.

WHAT DOCUMENTS DO I NEED?

1. Your contact information (full name, complete home address, date of birth and telephone number). If you want your check mailed to a different address, please provide the mailing address and mark separately as your preferred mailing address.
2. Proof of income for all persons living in your home. Documents accepted are:
 - ⇒ W-2, 1099
 - ⇒ Social Security statement (received at the beginning of the year showing how much you received for the previous year (usually has pink boxes with total amounts on the form))
 - ⇒ Railroad retirement statement
 - ⇒ Veterans disability statement
 - ⇒ Bank interest statements
 - ⇒ Food stamp award
 - ⇒ Child support income
3. If you pay BPU, Gas or AT&T bills, you will need copies of your previous year's utility bills. You can obtain copies of your BPU bills by calling BPU. Be sure to tell them you are applying for the Utility Rebate.

HOW DO I SUBMIT MY DOCUMENTS?

MAIL - Mail your documents to the Clerk's Office. They will return your original documents to you.

FAX - Fax your documents to the Clerk's Office at 913-573-5299

EMAIL - Email your information to the Clerk's Office at clerk-westwycokck.org

IN PERSON - Bring your information to the Clerk's Office during regular business hours. The Clerk's Office will copy your personal information and return to you while you are here. They will keep your utility bills and return those to you when they have completed your application.

HOW LONG WILL IT TAKE TO RECEIVE MY REBATE?

The Clerk's Office will process your application and mail you a copy for your records within 10 business days of their receipt. You should receive your rebate check from the Unified Government approximately 4-6 weeks after your application has been processed.

HEALTHY NEW YEAR RESOLUTIONS FOR OLDER ADULTS

Welcome to 2023! No matter your age, there is no better time to get started on your wellness goals. Discover the top health resolutions you can try today.

GET ENOUGH SLEEP

Even as an older adult, you should aim for seven to nine hours of sleep per night. This amount of rest helps to maintain your immune system and improves memory and concentration.

EAT WELL & STAY HYDRATED

A healthy diet is one of the simplest health goals for seniors. Following a healthy diet can help protect against cancer, heart disease, Parkinson's, and Alzheimer's, as well as common illnesses caused by viruses and bacteria.

STAY SOCIAL

The importance of social interaction cannot be overstated. Loneliness is known as a "silent killer" of seniors. Stay connected with family members and reach out to your friends - it's never too late to make new ones!

EXERCISE

Staying physically active is one of the best health goals for seniors in the new year. Studies have shown that regular exercise has many benefits for seniors.

- Weight management
- Alleviation of depression
- Strong bones and muscles
- Better sleep
- Improved balance and fall prevention
- Decreased risk of heart disease, type 2 diabetes, high blood pressure and high cholesterol

Aim for at least 30 minutes of exercise per day. Low-impact activities like biking, walking, tai chi, water aerobic and yoga are popular exercise options for many older adults.

PRACTICE PREVENTION

It is easier to prevent illness than to treat it. That's why a key new year's resolution for seniors focuses on preventative health measures. Here's a few ideas to get you started:

- Schedule your annual physical and screenings to detect and monitor chronic conditions and/or cancer.
- Get vaccinated against the flu and other common viruses.
- Actively manage your medication.
- Wash your hands frequently.

KICK YOUR BAD HABITS

One of the most popular new year's resolutions for seniors involves quitting smoking and/or drinking. Smoking directly relates to cancer, high blood pressure and can even worsen conditions like osteoporosis. Drinking has plenty of long-term health risks, but it also increases your risk of a fall.

MAINTAIN YOUR PURPOSE IN LIFE AS YOU AGE

All the health goals for seniors aren't just related to physical health, it's been proven that optimists are more likely to reach - and surpass - the age of 85. You should make an effort to manage your stress, relax and focus on spiritual growth, not the perceived limitations of age.

NEWSLETTER DONATIONS ENCOURAGED

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.

Help us continue to provide this important publication by becoming a sponsor.

Donations should be made payable to:
Wyandotte/Leavenworth Area Agency on Aging
849 North 47th Street, Suite C
Kansas City, Kansas 66102.

Thank you to the following for their donations:

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

Names are listed in alphabetical order.

Ann Schriver

- _____ \$100 **Advocate**
defensor
- _____ \$50 **Benefactor**
benefactor
- _____ \$25 **Patron**
patrón
- _____ \$10 **Contributor**
contribuidor
- _____ **Other**
otro

WEIGHING HEAVY IN OUR HEARTS

The Staff and Director of the Wyandotte/Leavenworth Area Agency on Aging wishes to extend our deepest condolences, thoughts and prayers to the family and friends in the passing of Mrs. Modestine Bell.



Mrs. Bell has been a faithful and committed volunteer with the Area Agency on Aging since 2004. She would grace our office with her quiet and sweet spirit and was always willing to serve and assist us whenever she was needed.

Mrs. Bell also served on the Wyandotte/Leavenworth Silver Haired Legislature from 2010 until current. Her devoted advocacy brought senior issues to the forefront and helped improve the lives of all seniors across Kansas.

We considered Mrs. Bell family, and we will certainly miss her quiet demeanor and cheerful encouragement to all of us at the Area Agency on Aging. We know that her beautiful smile and most gracious spirit of servitude will keep her memory alive in our hearts and minds.

Our Deepest Sympathies



It is with a heavy heart that the Wyandotte/Leavenworth Area Agency on Aging extends our deepest sympathy and condolences to the family of Andrala Lynn Randle.



Her work family is heartbroken without her. We will miss her warm smile and contagious laughter, her genuine compassion for others, and her creative nature for celebrating life.

As soon as she stepped through the office doors, she brought the sunshine with her. Her joyful laughter could be heard throughout the office. She was beloved by seniors and used her sense of humor to comfort them in their time of need.

Lynn dedicated her career to helping seniors with over 20 years of service with the Unified Government of Wyandotte County. She started her career in Transit with the Meals on Wheels Program and later as an Information Specialist in the Aging Department.

She was born with the gift to spread joy to all she encountered. She never knew a stranger. Although Lynn is no longer with us, she will live forever in our memories.



Send an email to:
60Plus@wycokck.org
with your request.

Join our mailing list



Wyandotte/Leavenworth Area Agency on Aging

Follow Us on FACEBOOK

Or visit our playlist on the Unified Government's YouTube Channel

GROUNDHOG DAY

Groundhog day is celebrated on February 2nd every year for a reason. It's known as a "cross-quarter" day, meaning it falls at the midpoint between one season and another.



Annually, a ceremony is held in Punxsutawney, PA, centering on a semi-mythical groundhog named Punxsutawney Phil. He will rise from his burrow and check for his shadow where he predicts if there will be six more weeks of winter.

CHRISTMAS IN NOVEMBER EVENT HELD

On November 17, 2022, the Wyandotte/Leavenworth Area Agency on Aging held its *Christmas in November* event. The event gave four vans to congregate sites within the county to help senior citizens travel to the sites, avoiding isolation, and be part of the community.



Mayor Tyrone Garner spoke to about 100 event attendees who braved the temperatures to be a part of this event. Free hot chocolate, popcorn, and hot dogs were handed out, and attendees were able to take a peek inside the vans.



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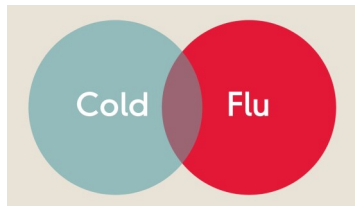


HOLIDAYS observed - OFFICES CLOSED

- New Years Day (Mon., Jan 2, 2023)
- Martin Luther King, Jr Day (Mon., Jan 16, 2023)
- President's Day (Mon., Feb 20, 2023)

COMMON SYMPTOMS OF THE FLU

FEVER - Most flu cases begin with a fever that can last four or five days before breaking. A fever is the body's natural defense against the flu.



MUSCLE PAIN - Full body aches are one reason we feel awful when we have the flu. As white blood cells fight the flu, their activation along with the immune system can cause this soreness.

FATIGUE - Intense weakness and exhaustion are common symptoms of the flu. Weakness and fatigue can last three weeks or longer in older adults, especially if they are suffering from a chronic illness or weakened immune system.

COUGH - Flu and colds are respiratory diseases, which mean they attack the respiratory organs. In both cases, coughing is common and expected.

SNEEZING - Colds and flu are spread easily by sneezing or coughing. To prevent infecting people in the vicinity, it is important to practice proper hygiene when coughing or sneezing, covering the mouth and nose, using tissues, and frequently washing your hands.

LOSS OF APPETITE - Dehydration and a loss of appetite are common, which can be challenging if diarrhea, nausea, or vomiting accompany the flu.

K-STATE Research and Extension Wyandotte County

The Wyandotte/Leavenworth Area Agency on Aging, in partnership with K-State Research and Extension Office will be holding four classes in 2023 based around the topic of Nutrition.

The classes will include a cooking tutorial that will be prepared before the session's participants. Attendees will also receive a copy of the recipe.

Dates Scheduled: 2pm - 3:30pm

- January 11
- April 12
- July 12
- October 11

All presentations will be held at the Neighborhood Resource Center (NRC) building at 50th & State Avenue, Kansas City, KS

Call 913-573-8531 to RSVP



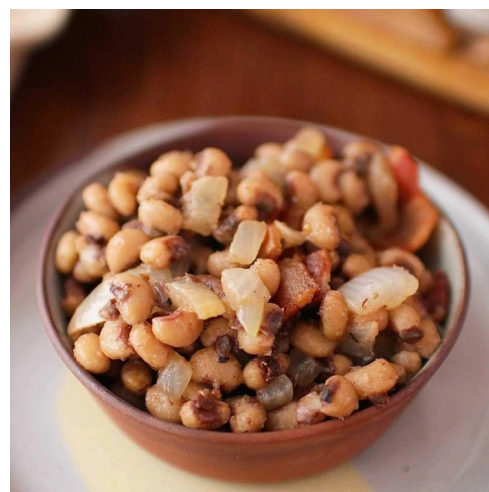
EASY BLACK EYED PEAS

INGREDIENTS:

- 2 strips bacon, cut into 1/2 inch pieces
- 1/2 cup chopped onions
- 1 clove garlic, minced
- 1 (15-ounce_ can black eyed peas, rinsed and drained

DIRECTIONS:

- Cook the bacon pieces in a 2-quart saucepan over medium heat until crisp.
- Add the chopped onions and minced garlic and cook for 3 minutes, stirring occasionally.
- Add the black eyed peas to the onions and reduce heat to low. Cook stirring occasionally for 10 minutes.
- Serve.



THE NEW YEAR IS HERE!

Find and circle all the words hidden in the grid.

- AQUARIUS
- ARROW
- BALL DROP
- BLACK EYED PEAS
- BLACK HISTORY
- CAPRICORN
- CHAMPAGNE
- CHEERS
- CHOCOLATE
- COLD WEATHER RULE
- CUPID
- DIET
- FLURRIES
- GOALS
- GROUNDHOG DAY
- HEARTS
- HOMESTEAD
- LINCOLN
- MARTIN LUTHER KING
- MIDNIGHT
- NEW YEARS
- NOISEMAKER
- PISCES
- PRESIDENTS DAY
- PUNXSUTAWNEY PHIL
- RESOLUTIONS
- STREAMERS
- SUPERBOWL
- TAX REBATE
- TIMES SQUARE
- TOAST
- VALENTINES DAY
- WEATHERIZATION
- WEIGHT LOSS
- WINTER

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WYANDOTTE/LEAVENWORTH AREA AGENCY ON AGING

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**PRESORTED STANDARD
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JANUARY >>>

NEW YEARS DAY

Sunday, January 1, 2023

NEW YEARS DAY OBSERVED

Monday, January 2, 2023
Unified Government Offices Closed

MARTIN LUTHER KING DAY

Monday, January 16, 2023
Unified Government Offices Closed

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

FEBRUARY >>>

GROUNDHOG DAY

Thursday, February 2, 2023

SUPERBOWL SUNDAY

Sunday, February 12, 2023

VALENTINE'S DAY

Tuesday, February 14, 2023

PRESIDENT'S DAY

Monday, February 20, 2023
Unified Government Offices Closed