

Topeka/Lawrence EDITION

The Area's Most Complete Event Guide

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 7, 2026

5-6 PM - DINNER, 6:30 PM PROGRAM

SPECIAL GUEST SPEAKER:

DAN MEERS



MASCOT, MOTIVATIONAL SPEAKER, AUTHOR, AND FAMILY MAN
(FORMER KANSAS CITY CHIEFS MASCOT K.C. WOLF)

GROUNDHOG SUPPER

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Forrest Frahk, Tori Kelly

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CELEBRATING FAITH, FAMILY AND COMMUNITY IN NORTHEAST KANSAS

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NEW RESIDENT churchguide

Bethel Baptist Church



See Inside
Back Cover!

New Kansas Laws Went Into Effect January 1



Kansas lawmakers passed more than 125 new laws during the 2025 legislative session. While most took effect July 1, several additional changes began last week. Among them is a new online system to verify vehicle insurance, with some parts of the system not starting until 2026. Registration fees are also increasing for electric and hybrid vehicles to help offset declining gas tax revenue.

Drivers will now have more specialty license plate options, including a black-out plate, a Route 66 plate, a Kansas FFA plate, and a Hunter Nation plate.

Election law also changed, requiring

■ Please see NEW LAWS page 5

Leaving Their Religion



Why do some Americans leave their religion while others stay?

A new Pew Research Center report explores why some people continue to identify with their childhood religion, why others have decided to leave it, and why others don't identify with any religion at all.

Most U.S. adults (86%) were

raised in a religion. Our data shows that the nature of their religious experiences as children – that is, whether they were mostly positive or negative – plays a significant role in whether they stay in their childhood religion as adults.

Many U.S. adults (35%) have moved on from the religion of

their youth, according to our analysis. Yet most Americans have not, including a majority – 56% – who still identify with their childhood religion. Another 9% weren't raised in a religion and still don't have one today.

Most U.S. adults who still identify with their childhood religion

■ Please see RELIGION page 2

Blue Cross and Blue Shield, St. Francis health system reach agreement



Patients with Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Kansas health insurance will be covered in network when they receive care from the St. Francis campus in Topeka after the two organizations reached agreement last week.

"Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Kansas is pleased to announce that the University of Kansas Health System St. Francis will remain in the Blue Cross network for 2026, ensuring continued access to local care for our members," according to a BCBS statement.

The University of Kansas St. Francis campus said in a Monday statement that their patients with BCBS of

■ Please see BLUE CROSS page 2

Community Christian School to bring 'KC Wolf' to Groundhog Supper

Chiefs long-time mascot Dan Meers will be keynote speaker

Community Christian School of Overbrook will hold its annual Groundhog Supper on Saturday, February 7, 2026, with dinner served 5:00–6:00 PM. Featured guest speaker Dan Meers, former Kansas City Chiefs mascot KC Wolf, will present at 6:30 PM.

Meers is a nationally known mascot, motivational speaker, author and family man. He is in demand across the country as a popular speaker at venues of all types.

"For those who have watched Dan perform as KC Wolf, it's easy to see that he is quite a character. For those of us who know the man inside the costume, it is obvious he is also a man of character. Hearing his incredible story

■ Please see WOLF page 2



Americans are turning back to the Bible for guidance, according to new research

Weekly Bible reading overall has climbed to 42 percent, up 12 points from a 15-year low of 30 percent in 2024. Among self-identified Christians, the rate is 50 percent, which is the highest level in more than a decade. Young adults are driving this surge, with nearly half now engaging with scripture weekly.

Millennials jumped an unprecedented 16 points, reaching 50 percent who now say they read the Bible weekly.

Gen Z mirrors this pattern, rising from 30 percent to 49 percent in just one year.

Boomers, who consistently held the highest levels of Bible reading, now show the lowest levels of weekly Bible



reading of all generations at 31 percent.

Gen X has held steadier, now rebounding to 41 percent. This comes

at a time when digital Bible engagement has made it easier for younger generations to engage with Scripture. The YouVersion family of Bible

apps has reported multiple days of record engagement throughout the year and will celebrate one billion installs this month, a milestone reached years faster than anticipated.

“Bible reading is rising again across generations, marking a reset to faith engagement levels we haven’t seen in a decade,” said David Kinnaman, CEO of Barna Group. “People aren’t just curious about faith — they’re opening scripture for themselves. This trend aligns with other signs of renewal we’ve seen in our research, like growing commitments to Jesus and increased church attendance.”

The data also reveal a striking reversal in gender patterns. Although women historically been more likely

to read the Bible weekly, 2025 data show that younger men are now reading the Bible more than younger women. Weekly Bible reading rates are 54 percent for Gen Z men and 57 percent for millennial men, compared to 46 percent for Gen Z women and 43 percent for millennial women.

Although more Americans are reading the Bible, findings show that fewer hold strong beliefs about the Bible’s accuracy. In 2000, 43 percent strongly agreed that the Bible is totally accurate in the principles it teaches. This number fell below 40 percent in recent years but now sits at 36 percent. Even among self-identified Christians, only 44 percent strongly affirm the Bible’s accuracy.

RELIGION

continued from page 1

credit the following as extremely or very important reasons:

- They believe the religion’s teachings (64% of adults who identify with their childhood religion say this).
- Their religion fulfills their spiritual needs (61%).
- Their religion gives their life meaning (56%).

Reasons people say they left their childhood religion

Americans who’ve left their childhood religion most commonly cite the following as extremely or very important reasons behind their decision:

- They stopped believing in the religion’s teachings (cited by 46% of people who were raised in a religion and have left that religion).

- It wasn’t important in their life (38%).
- They just gradually drifted away

(38%).

Reasons people say they are religiously unaffiliated

When asked to evaluate the importance of several possible reasons why they don’t identify with a religion, the reasons religiously unaffiliated adults most commonly describe as extremely or very important include:

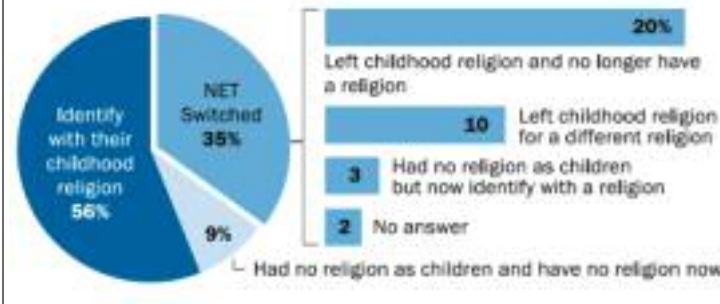
- They believe they can be moral without religion (78%).
- They question a lot of religious teachings (64%).
- They don’t need religion to be spiritual (54%).

The timing of religious switching

- Americans who switch religions tend to do so early in life: 85% who have switched say they did so by the age of 30. This includes 46% who switched as children or teenagers.
- Even the oldest adults in our survey, Americans ages 65 and older, are far more likely to say they switched religions before turning 30 than after-

56% of U.S. adults identify with their childhood religion

% of U.S. adults who ...



ward.

How parents are raising their children, religiously

- 43% of parents say their children attend religious services at least monthly.
- 25% say they talk with their children about religion extremely or very often; an additional 31% say they do

this somewhat often.

- 22% say they are raising their children in extremely or very religious households; 34% say their children are being raised in a somewhat religious household.

Differences across social and demographic groups

- Among U.S. adults who were

raised in a religion, 73% of Republicans and independents who lean toward the Republican Party still identify with the religion in which they were raised, compared with 56% of Democrats and Democratic leaners.

- Meanwhile, Democrats who were raised in a religion are more likely to be religious “nones” today – that is, atheists, agnostics or “nothing in particular” – than Republicans who were raised in a religion.

• Among adults ages 65 and older who were raised in a religion, 74% still identify with that religion, while 11% identify with a different religion than the one they were raised in. Another 13% do not identify with any religion.

• On the other hand, among adults under 30, 55% still identify with their childhood religion, while 10% now identify with another religion and 35% are not affiliated with any religion.

WOLF

continued from page 1

will not only give you an appreciation for Dan Meers the mascot but, more importantly, for Dan Meers, the man behind the mask.”

— Tony Dungy, former NFL head coach

This event is open to the public with no admission fee. All funds raised will

go directly to the CCS Scholarship Fund, providing tuition assistance for the 2026–2027 school year.

School officials invite the public to come for a night of good food, meaningful connection, and an inspiring story, all while helping make Christian education accessible for more families in the community.

The event will be held at Grace Community Church, 310 E. Eighth St., Overbrook

About CCS

Established in 2022, Community Christian School of Overbrook is a new Christian school with small class sizes and a biblical curriculum. Founded and supported by several area churches, CCS is open to students from Overbrook, the surrounding areas and beyond.

The mission of Community Christian School is to train in truth and righteousness and fully develop each child in body, mind, and spirit. CCS seeks to

equip students to be lifelong learners and to build up the next generation academically and spiritually.

CCS has a designated scholarship fund that gives relatives, friends, churches, employers, etc., the opportunity to make a tax deductible contribution. Donations may be designated to benefit certain students or programs – such as Music, Speech, Drama, Art, Math or Science – at CCS.

Individuals, businesses or churches

may also donate to the General Scholarship Fund, so that students who apply for a scholarship can awarded 25% or more of tuition costs.

A Memorial Scholarship Fund can also be established upon request.

For more information, visit www.ccskansas.org, or contact by phone (785-670-6403) or email: ccs.kansas@gmail.com. The school is located at 310 E 8th Street in Overbrook, KS, 66524.

BLUE CROSS

continued from page 1

Kansas plans won’t experience care

disruptions and do not need to take any action.

The two organizations had been unable to reach agreement for the St. Francis system to be in network,

which concerned insurance customers who didn’t want to lose their health providers if a contract wasn’t in place by the end of the year.

“This agreement reflects our com-

mitment to ensuring patients across the region have uninterrupted access to care,” St. Francis said in a statement.

The St. Francis campus in Topeka

is owned by Ardent Health, which manages operations, and the University of Kansas Health System. Ardent is based in Brentwood, Tennessee.

—Morgan chilson / Kansas Reflector

Regular Church Attendance of Children May Predict Faithful Adulthood

Children who attend church regularly at age 12 and have a good relationship with their parents are more likely to continue attending church as adults, a recent survey by the nonprofit group Communio found. The study began as a response to a Pew Research Center study that found that 28 percent of U.S. adults are religiously unaffiliated.

Among those who reported weekly faith conversations with their parents, churchgoing adults demonstrated a higher ability to forgive those who had hurt them, as well as a greater sense of belonging in their church community. The study also found that those adults who had weekly conversations with their parents are 2.5 times more likely to have faith conversations with their own children. There was an even higher incidence among those who reported daily faith conversations, with these adults being 7.5 times more likely to have faith conversations with their children than those who had less frequent conversations with their parents while growing up.

Fathers play a particularly impor-



tant role in the faith formation of their children. Those who attended a church service with their dad at least weekly or more frequently were much more likely to attend church regularly as adults and reported higher ability to forgive. However, those who had a strong relationship with their father were less likely to have open faith conversations with their children, a gap that Communio noted as a ministry opportunity. Overall, 48 percent of regular churchgoers said they do not have at least weekly faith conversations with their own children.

Communio encourages parents to “sanctify everyday rhythms,” such as using a regular pickup time from school as a time to engage in faith conversations. It also encourages parents to ask questions, drawing their children’s attention to the ways God has been present throughout their day.

“The good news here is any Christian parent not already having these conversations with their kids can take a step today to make this a regular part of their routine,” said J.P. De Gance, founder and president of Communio.

Former Muslim’s Conversion Testimony Inspires Others

Former Muslims can make powerful evangelists when they encounter the truth of Christianity. Ex-Muslim Harun Ibrahim recently shared his conversion story on “The 700 Club.”

He was born in Israel to Arab-Muslim parents, studied in a Jewish school and married a devout Christian woman. After years of examining these religions, he was faced with a choice: Judaism, Christianity or Islam. Ibrahim ultimately decided to follow Christ, thanks to his praying wife and a timely encounter with a random man on the street.

“Well, you are not going to be in the kingdom of God, because Jesus said that no one will come to the father except through him,” the man told him. “And I really didn’t like that. I said, ‘You are rude.’”

The man began to share the gospel with the young Muslim and encour-



aged him to actually read the Bible. “He challenged me to read this Bible verse, and it was in the gospel of John,” Ibrahim said. “And I read the gospel of John seven times in a row. I just like really loved the person called Jesus. I couldn’t resist. I just had to accept him as my redeemer, as my savior.”

The new convert served many years as a missionary, reaching Muslims in Arab nations, and later started Al Hayata Ministries in 2003 to boldly

preach the gospel and challenge Islam. Since then, the ministry has seen more than 100,000 people come to faith in Jesus Christ. “Our vision extends to equipping believers who come from Muslim backgrounds with the necessary tools and knowledge to fulfill the Great Commission,” according to a

statement on its website.

For many Muslims, accepting Christ means being rejected from family and potentially losing their lives. Ibrahim encourages Christians who have a desire to reach Muslims to begin praying first. “When you start praying for the Muslim world,” he said, “God will guide you in what to do.”

The New York Times reports that there’s a movement towards Christianity by Muslims.

C5 Luncheon to focus on Stewart & ‘The Bridge’

The January C5Alive POWER Luncheon will be held on the 8th at 11:30am at the Celtic Fox.

The program will feature Chris Stewart of The Bridge, a mentoring program focusing on empowering Topeka youth to become servant leaders through mutually transforming relationships.

Admission is free, and lunch can be ordered from restaurants on site if desired. RSVPs and inquiries can be sent to info@C5Alive.org.

“POWER” luncheons are held the 2nd Thursday each month and are open to the public. C5Alive is dedicated to creating Christian culture in the Capital City, by developing and uniting leaders in community businesses, non-profits and churches.

Upcoming luncheon dates are, February 12 featuring Wabaunsee Co. Sheriff Kirsch; March 12 featur-

ing Iron Man John Cantrell; and April 9, 2026. Coming up in August will be Ambassador Sam Brownback.

C5 also hosts other events, including EASTERFEST, the annual Topeka Easter Fun Fair, held this year on March 28 in NOTO.

C5 members also sponsor luncheons and other events as a way to promote their organizations.

C5 is currently holding a membership drive with special incentives for new members. Lower-priced memberships for small and home-based businesses are now available. Individuals may join for \$20. A list of current members and more information is available on the website at www.C5Alive.org, at www.facebook.com/C5Alive, or by calling Lee Hartman at 785-640-6399.



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EasterFest Coming Back to NOTO area for 11th year

The 11th Annual Topeka EasterFest returns to the NOTO Arts District for 2026. This year, the event will be held Saturday, March 28 (the weekend before Easter).

The Big Egg Hunt and Fun Fair will be held at Veterans Park, in between Kansas Avenue and the Kansas/Quincy bridge. In the large parking lot behind the NOTO district there will be childrens activities, inflatables, a petting zoo, food trucks and other vendors.

There will be live music at Redbud Park, with more vendors and activities in that area, including the popular cake walks!

More food trucks will be next to the NOTO Arts Center across the street, with more vendors inside.

Even more vendors and activities will



be available up and down Kansas Avenue, and in the breezeway connecting

the Avenue to Veterans Park.

Up to three thousand people have attended the event in the past to take part in the activities.

Every year, dozens of churches, businesses and non-profit organizations set up vendor booths and kids' games as part of the family fun fair.

This year more NOTO storefronts will join in the fun with outdoor booths and sales.

"We've had a great response and new entries each year at EasterFest," said Kevin Doel, one of the organizers. "I expect it to just keep growing every year."

The Family Fun Fair will consist of activities geared toward children and families, as well as health & wellness vendor booths, vendor exhibits, and more. Live perform-

ers will be on hand all day as well. Back are the ever-popular cake walks,



along with face painting, and some new food trucks.

There is still room for more EasterFest sponsors and participants for the Vendor Market, Entertainment Stage, Food Court, etc.

Volunteers are also needed to help with the entire event.

Major sponsors for EasterFest include Luxury Motor Cars, The Learning Center, Ernest-Spencer Metals, Rooter-Man Plumbing, Downing Septic, Stormont Vail Health, Emerald City Cosmopolitan Club, Lions Club, Kaw Valley Bank, Health & Wellness Maga-

zine, SoulFire Nutrition, College HUNKS Movers Capital City Flooring, and Kansas Fencing.

Media partners and sponsors include TV25, WIBW, WREN Digital Media, Majic 107.7, Apha Media, KFGB 97.7 FM, and Metro Voice.

Proceeds from the event will benefit Let's Help and other local non-profits.

The event is coordinated each year by C5Alive.

For more information or to volunteer, visit Topeka EasterFest 2026 on Facebook, email info@C5Alive.org or call/text 785-640-6399.

News Briefs: 60% of surveyed say 2026 will be better; 3D-printed houses; new apartment complex downtown

WalletHub's national resolution survey found that nearly 60% of people believe 2026 will be better for their wallet than 2025, yet only 26% of Americans planned to make finance-related New Year's resolutions. The survey also includes findings on people's motivations for making resolutions, their financial expectations and anxieties, and more. You can check out some of the key results below.

• **Hope for a More Prosperous Year:** Almost 60% of people say that 2026 will be better for their wallet than 2025.

• **Less Money to Celebrate With:** More than 3 in 5 Americans expect to spend less money on New Year's plans this year compared to last year.

• **New Year, New Financial Goals:** More than 1 in 4 Americans are planning to make finance-related New Year's resolutions.

• **Building Savings Tops Financial Resolutions:** 31% of people making a financial resolution say they want to save more.

• **Inflation Anxiety Persists:** More than half of Americans say inflation is



their biggest financial concern for 2026.

• **Quiet Commitments:** Nearly 3 in 5 people say they will keep their resolutions a secret this year.

New 3D-printed homes are making their way to the Capital City.

Developer Trident Homes asked Topeka's City Council for help during its Dec. 16 meeting to keep costs down for new homeowners. It asked city leaders to approve a resolution to establish a new Reinvestment Housing Incentive

District in Topeka.

Trident Homes reports that it provides both flexibility and affordability to prospective homeowners with its business model of providing reasonably-priced 3D-printed homes. The company has the option to buy several plots of land throughout Topeka.

"We can find a situation where everybody wins with that formula and it's really important for us to do everything, so this incentive included, do everything we can to help defray the costs of the

person buying the house," said Christopher Stemler with Trident Homes.

The Kansas Department of Commerce describes an RHID as a program designed to help developers with the construction of housing in communities through the financing of public infrastructure improvements. The RHID captures the incremental increase in real property taxes made by a housing development project for up to 25 years, creating revenue that can be used for reimbursement for incurred costs or to settle debt service on bonds.

The tracts of land listed in the RHID agenda item include several areas around the city. The proposed project aims to construct 80 affordable single-family homes.

• 22nd Terrace and Southwest Westport Drive southwest of the junction between 21st Street and I-470.

• 29th Street and Wittenberg Road west of Aquarian Acres.

• Colley Creek No. 8, extending from Cambridge Avenue south from 46th Street to connect to 48th Street.

Topeka's City Council approved the

resolution. City staff will now submit the RHID application to the KDOC for review.

The Topeka City Council approved a resolution in December for the Reinvestment Housing Incentive District for Project View District Apartments.

The Project View apartments will be located downtown between SW Van Buren Street and SW Jackson Street, as well as between SW Sixth and Seventh Street.

The apartment complex will consist of 192 total units, including a mix of studio, one-bedroom and two-bedroom apartments:

• 28 studio units averaging 480 square feet.

• 102 one-bedroom units averaging 775 square feet.

• 36 two-bedroom units averaging 1,083 square feet.

• 26 two-bedroom units averaging 1,400 square feet.

The project received state approval in June because Topeka is experiencing a shortage of quality housing.

US Economy Poised for Solid Growth in 2026, Experts Say

The turbulence that defined the U.S. economy in 2025 is expected to ease next year.

Following President Donald Trump's unveiling of his sweeping global tariffs plan, the consensus on Wall Street was that the United States would potentially face a downturn or, at the very least, a stagflation-type scenario: anemic growth, high inflation, and elevated unemployment.

Those economic forecasts had appeared to be materializing after the economy contracted by 0.6 percent in the first quarter. However, in the following months, gross domestic product (GDP) growth rebounded to 3.8 percent in the second quarter and 4.3 percent during the July–September period.

If the Atlanta Federal Reserve's widely watched GDPNow Model fourth-quarter estimate of 3 percent is accurate, full-year growth will be 2.8 percent—higher than the 2.1 percent Blue Chip consensus.

While surveys continue to highlight consumers' frustrations with stubbornly high prices, the data show that inflation has steadied, easing to 2.7 percent in November.

In the first year of the president's second term, consumer prices have risen by approximately 2 percent, compared with an increase of about 6 percent during President Joe Biden's first year.

Trump's tariff pursuits have also helped the White House achieve its goal



of narrowing the trade deficit.

In September, the U.S. trade gap unexpectedly shrank to \$52.8 billion, the lowest level since June 2020. This was driven by a sizable increase in exports and a minuscule rise in imports.

The president has attributed these improvements to his administration's trade pursuits.

"Tariffs are creating great wealth, and unprecedented national security for the USA," Trump wrote in a Dec. 27 Truth Social post. "Trade deficit has been cut by 60 [percent], actually unheard of. 4.3 [percent] GDP, and going way up. No inflation! We are respected as a country again."

Employment conditions, meanwhile, have continued to cool off from the red-hot levels of the post-COVID-19-pandemic era.

The unemployment rate rose to 4.6 percent in November—the highest

reading since September 2021. Although this remains historically low, market watchers fear that economic uncertainty could adversely affect payrolls, prolonging the recent trend of a "low fire, low hire" environment.

Although a multitude of headwinds gripped the U.S. economy throughout 2025—the government shutdown, "K-shaped" trends that saw stronger growth enjoyed by the wealthy, and tariffs—the nation shrugged them off.

Looking ahead, economic observers are optimistic about 2026, although with some reservations.

Boom Town

The world's largest economy could face boom times as a series of tailwinds support the U.S. marketplace.

Goldman Sachs projects next year's growth will be 2.6 percent.

BNP Paribas and the St. Louis Federal

Reserve's December 2025 Blue Chip Economic Indicators suggest the consensus 2026 GDP growth rate will be 1.9 percent.

"2026 is expected to be a solid year for the economy," Mark Malek, chief investment officer at Siebert Financial, said in a note emailed to The Epoch Times. "Fiscal stimulus is about to kick in from the One Big Beautiful Bill Act, continued [artificial intelligence capital expenditure], smaller trade deficits, and the Fed."

White House officials are betting big that fiscal stimulus from the One Big Beautiful Bill Act will be a victory for Main Street and Wall Street, contributing to growth prospects.

"We're going to go back to the kind of non-inflationary growth where working Americans do better than supervised workers. Lower-income households do well," Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent told Fox Business earlier this month.

"Main Street, Wall Street can both do well. And my guess is both have a very good year next year."

The Federal Reserve's less restrictive monetary policy stance could be another boon for the economic landscape.

Officials lowered interest rates three times in 2025, and the Fed is expected to cut rates at least once more in 2026. While the market has already priced in lower interest rates, they could begin to work their way through the economy as next year progresses.

At the same time, the central bank's

policy path in the second half remains uncertain as the president is expected to replace Chair Jerome Powell when his term expires in May.

"The focus now shifts to thresholds for January and 2026 and whether Powell can credibly signal a pause," Christian Hoffman, head of fixed income at Thornburg Investment Management, said in a note emailed to The Epoch Times.

"With just one cut penciled in for 2026 and one for 2027, the Fed is threading the needle between risk management and not completely ignoring inflation."

The continued buildout of artificial intelligence, rising U.S. stock forecasts, and strong household balance sheets could be additional contributors to gross domestic product.

But while there is reason for optimism, there could still be risks ahead, according to Rick Pederson, economist and chief strategy officer at Bow River Capital.

"I'm positive about the economy in 2026, with some reservations," Pederson said in a note emailed to The Epoch Times.

"I don't believe a recession is coming for a number of reasons, but that doesn't mean there aren't risks. It's going to be an interesting year. I expect positive economic growth, but it won't be without a few micro-level surprises.

—Andrew Moran / Epoch Times

NEW LAWS

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advance mail ballots to be received by 7 p.m. on Election Day instead of up to three days later.

Other new laws update how Kansas manages and distributes 911 funding and modernize several insurance regulations, including changes to premium taxes and the structure of the Kansas Department of Insurance.

Lawmakers also approved new protections for public funds held by financial institutions.

In addition, Kansas updated long-outdated guardianship and conservatorship laws. A new Office of Early Childhood was created to combine childcare and early education programs by 2026.

Lawmakers also passed measures to strengthen security around Kansas military bases by limiting foreign ownership and certain drone use.

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DON'T RISK IT ALL

Dear Dave,

My husband is a good, hard-working man, who has been stuck in a job he really doesn't like for almost 10 years. He came to me the other day with an idea to cash out his 401(k) and use the money to open a business. He has always loved the idea of going into business for himself, and I want him to be happy, but I'm not sure this is a good idea. Do you have any advice?

Donna

Dear Donna,

A. Yes, I do have some advice. And it can be summed up in one word. Don't. I admire your husband's spirit, but the way he wants to approach this turns the entire situation into a trap. Think about

it. If his business idea doesn't work out, you guys have lost your retirement savings, and bankruptcy becomes a very real possibility. Diving head-first into opening a new business just because you're bored with your current situation, or tired of answering to others, is not a good idea.

Look, I get it. Lots of folks have an entrepreneurial spirit. And everyone I know like that wants to live their dream. The problem is these dreams can turn into nightmares, for the entrepreneur and everyone around them, if they don't plan wisely and very carefully ahead of time.

In my mind, one definition of a nightmare in business is "going all in." When you're playing cards, this means betting everything on a single hand. You never go "all in" when it comes to business. So, for the moment, the first question he needs to ask himself is this: How can I live my dream without going all in?

For starters, he needs to find something he truly loves doing and can look forward to every single day. To have any chance of success, he'll have to live and breathe that idea. I know you love this guy and want to help. So, the best thing

you can do right now is express your concerns about his idea, and offer to help him think about what he could do every day that would make him smile. Once he has the answer to that question, the next step is figuring out how to start that business without putting your en-

tire financial world in danger. In other words, how can he save up some money—and start small—instead of blowing your entire savings or going into debt?

If you have some cash other than your emergency fund or retirement fund, it's

okay to use some of that. But never, ever, go into debt to start a business, or pledge every dime you have to something that could be a complete disaster.

It's not an either/or proposition. He doesn't have to risk it all to get away from a job he hates and live his dream!

It's Not Too Late: You Still Have Time to Contribute to an IRA Until April 2026

By Susan Shumaker
Tax Professional at
The Retirement Team



The year 2025 has come to an end, and if you think that you've missed your chance to boost your retirement savings, here's some good news: it's NOT too late. You still have time to contribute to an Individual Retirement Account (IRA) for the 2025 tax year all the way up until April 15, 2026. That extra window can make a meaningful difference for your long-term financial future.

Understanding the IRA Contribution Deadline

One of the most helpful (and often misunderstood) features of IRAs is their contribution deadline. Unlike many financial goals that reset on December 31, IRA contributions for a given year can usually be made up until the federal filing deadline of the following year.

That means contributions made between January 1, 2026, and April 15, 2026, can still count toward your 2025 IRA contributions, as long as you properly designate them for that year.

Why This Extra Time Matters

Life gets busy. Unexpected expenses, job changes, or simply forgetting can push retirement savings down on the priority list. The extended IRA deadline gives you a second chance to:

1. Catch up on savings if you couldn't contribute earlier
2. Use a clearer picture of your income and tax situation
3. Make smarter decisions without rushing at year-end

Even contributions made later can still benefit from long-term compounding growth.

Traditional vs. Roth IRA: A Quick Reminder

When making your IRA contributions, you can choose between:

- Traditional IRA - Contributions

may be tax-deductible (subject to income and * plan coverage rules), with taxes paid when you make withdrawals in retirement.

- Roth IRA - Contributions are made with after-tax dollars, and qualified withdrawals in retirement are tax free.

Both options allow you to take advantage of the extended deadline, as long as you meet eligibility requirements and have earned income for the year you are contributing to.

SEP IRA and SIMPLE IRA Deadlines: What Business Owners Should Know

If you are self-employed or own a small business, retirement plans like SEP IRAs and SIMPLE IRAs also come with important deadlines—some of which offer flexibility similar to traditional IRAs, and others that require earlier action.

SEP IRA Contribution Deadlines

A SEP IRA (Simplified Employee Pension) is especially flexible when it comes to timing. Contributions can generally be made up until the business's tax filing deadline, including extensions.

- For many businesses, this means contributions can be made as late as October 15, 2026, if a tax extension is filed.

- SEP IRA contributions are typically employer contributions, even for self-employed individuals.

This extended deadline makes SEP IRAs a powerful option for business owners who want to wait until they know their final income before deciding how much to contribute.

SIMPLE IRA Contribution Deadlines

A SIMPLE IRA works a bit differently and has stricter timing rules:

- Employee salary deferrals must be made by December 31, 2025.

- Employer matching or non-elective contributions generally must be made by the employer's tax filing deadline, including extensions.

Additionally, a Simple IRA plan must be established by October 1 of the year for which contributions are made, making advance planning especially important.

Why These Deadlines Matter

Understanding the different contribution deadlines helps you to avoid missed opportunities and penalties. Whether you're an employee, freelancer, or small business owner, knowing which plans allow late contributions - and which do not - can significantly impact your retirement strategy and tax planning.

Small Steps Still Count

You don't need to maximize every plan to make progress. Even partial contributions improve your financial future. What matters most is taking action when you can - and using every available window wisely.

Take Action Before the Clock Runs Out

If you're planning to make retirement contributions for the 2025 tax year, be sure to:

- Confirm which plan you're contributing to
- Understand the specific deadline that applies
- Properly designate contributions for the correct tax year
- And be sure to inform your tax preparer if you made any contributions so that they can be properly reported on your tax returns

The bottom line is encouraging: it's not too late. Whether through a traditional IRA, Roth IRA, SEP IRA, or SIMPLE IRA, you still have valuable time to invest in your future - and every step forward counts.

*Always consult with a knowledgeable tax advisor for your own particular situation.

If you would like a complementary personalized review of your own tax situation, Susan Shumaker can be reached at 785-478-7808.



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Important Advice for the ‘Sandwich Generation’

By Jim Hanna

If you're between the ages of 35 and 60, you may be feeling a financial pinch from both your growing — or grown — children and your aging parents or in-laws.¹ You may also find yourself juggling your work commitments and the expectations of family members for your time and support. As a member of what's known as the sandwich generation, you're not alone.

Unlike previous generations where children left their homes earlier and more permanently, today children tend to live at home longer — or move out and return over time, sometimes with their own children in tow. And parents tend to live longer, often spending 25 years or more in retirement. If you're wondering how to keep yourself financially on track in the face of these competing demands, the following strategies may help.

Pay yourself first. Instead of paying your bills and other expenses and then saving what's leftover, automatically route a portion of your paycheck to your 401(k), Roth IRA or other retirement savings account — and encourage your working children to do the same. This ensures you're regularly investing in your future financial security. And because of the power of compound interest, the sooner you or your children start this habit, the better their chances are of accruing wealth. Immediate needs and expenses can loom large; establishing a routine of saving regularly can help provide financial stability in later years.

Talk openly about finances. Discuss the basic tenets of sound money management with your children to help them develop good saving and spending habits at an early age. According to the Parents & Finances study published by Ameriprise Financial, 70% of parents involve their children in family financial de-

cisions to help instill values and principles.² Helping children understand the role that money plays in your family can allow them to grasp where they can contribute within the family finances. On the flip side, it's equally important to talk with your parents about their plan for meeting their financial obligations in the years ahead. This includes knowing what — if any — plans and financial resources they have, should they become ill or incapacitated.

Make sure financial and legal documents are up to date. Whether it's you, your parents or your children, it's important to determine whether you'll need a Durable Power of Attorney, a Healthcare Proxy, a Living Will and a Last Will and Testament. It's also key to review and update beneficiary designations on investments and insurance policies because they may outweigh what is stated in a will. In addition, it's wise to keep a list of your financial accounts and passwords — and know where your parents and children keep theirs — in case one of you needs to step in for another. And don't forget to keep these documents in a safe and secure place.

Discuss long-term care insurance. One of the greatest challenges when it comes to planning for retirement is trying to predict future healthcare expenses. In-home health care costs or a lengthy nursing home stay can be very costly. If you or your parents don't already have long-term care insurance, it may be wise to look into it to see if it fits with your family's goals and options. Talk with siblings or other trusted family members about what a possible care plan could look like for your parents and for yourself. While conversations around long-term care can be tough to initiate, it's often easier to bring everyone together while you and your parents are still healthy and in good mental capacity.

Explore resources to help offset costs. If your children are attending college, research the scholarship opportunities or work-study programs that may be avail-

able to them. Also, find out whether your parents qualify for any federal, state or local benefits for their care. This knowledge can help all of you make better and more informed decisions about budgeting, school choices, loan options, and other financial choices that need to be made.

Set limits. If you have the desire and financial resources to support adult family members, it's important to balance your generosity with ensuring you have enough money to last through retirement — and support your family's own financial independence. Be clear with your children and parents about how much financial support you are realistically able to provide. If you choose to give them money, establish whether it's a loan that needs to be repaid or a gift that does not. When loaning money, document the conditions of the loan in writing and have both parties sign and date the agreement so that there are no misunderstandings.

Managing the responsibility that comes with being a member of the sandwich generation can be difficult. For help understanding how to plan for your future while caring for those who matter most to you, consult a reputable financial advisor. An advisor can help you create a financial strategy that makes sense for your unique situation.

1—Pew Research Center, “More than half of Americans in their 40s are ‘sandwiched’ between an aging parent and their own children.” <https://www.pewresearch.org/short-reads/2022/04/08/more-than-half-of-americans-in-their-40s-are-sandwiched-between-an-aging-parent-and-their-own-children/>

2— Ameriprise Financial Parents & Finances Study, 2025.

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How the Big Beautiful Bill Raises Taxes on Retirement Accounts

By Ryan Shumaker
Smartvestor Pro

Ryan hosts a radio show Saturdays at 7:30am & Sundays at 8am on FM93.5/AM1440. Listen anytime at RetireLawrence.com/Radio



The nine most terrifying words in the English language are “I’m from the government and I’m here to help,” according to Ronald Reagan. Shortly after the Big Beautiful Bill passed, the Social Security Administration sent out an email to all with an online account that the bill had essentially eliminated taxation on Social Security. The problem is that this was not true and a few days later a correction was posted on their website. Notably no second email or alert was sent out correcting the false statement, just a footnote on their webpage.

What really happened with the Big Beautiful Bill is that anyone that is 65+ will now pay tax on \$6,000 less of their income, whether it is Social Security or something else, through a new bonus deduction. So unless you were in a very small group of people that paid tax on \$1 to \$6,000 of your Social Security and no tax on anything else; taxation on Social Security was not eliminated. There is one big caveat to this new deduction too if you're not a member of this very small group. If

your income starts getting too high, you start losing the deduction. For those filing single that threshold is \$75,000 and for married it is \$150,000.

So how does this new deduction lead to an increase in taxes on retirement accounts? Simple. If you want to take money out of a pretax retirement account like an IRA, or most 401ks, and you're near or above these thresholds you'll start facing a double tax. You'll pay the normal taxes due on the retirement account withdrawal plus you'll have to pay additional taxes due from losing some or all of the new tax deduction. We walked someone through a scenario recently that would have seen them pay an over 48% tax on a pretax retirement account withdrawal because of this scenario! Since this person had assets in other accounts, we recommended they take the money from a different account rather than face losing nearly half to Uncle Sam.

This isn't the only new hit a retiree can face under the Big Beautiful Bill either. If you pay a lot in state and local taxes, you might get hit with a new phase out on those deductions as well. If you itemize your deductions and do charitable giving, you'll only be able to deduct any charitable gift that is over 0.5% of your income and will actually

■ See RYAN SHUMAKER on page 9



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America First, Christian Nationalism, and Antisemitism

By Dr. Michael Brown

Is there a connection between the America first movement and the rising tide of Jew-hatred in America? And will Christian nationalism lead to antisemitism?

Obviously, to answer these questions, we must define what we mean by “America first” and “Christian nationalism,” since for many adherents, these are extremely innocuous terms.

At best, and in the most non-threatening terms, “America first” simply means that while we don’t ignore the rest of the world, we put the needs of our country first. Nothing sinister. Nothing isolationist. Cer-

tainly nothing antisemitic.

As for “Christian nationalism,” it may have a broader range of potential meanings than “America first.” At best, and in the most non-threatening terms, it simply means that we love Jesus and we love our country.

Again, nothing sinister. Nothing isolationist.

Certainly nothing antisemitic.

Not only so, but many MAGA Republicans, who would identify as both “America first” and “Christian nationalists,” are extremely pro-Israel, primarily because of their evangelical Christian roots.

But are there other ways in which these concepts and movements can

lead to antisemitism?

More ominously, are they already contributing to the rise of antisemitism in America?

The answer to both questions is a definite yes.

This is because, in short, the Jewish people are the perennial scapegoats who are easily “othered” – viewed as outsiders or potentially dangerous or having other allegiances.

And so, the more nationalism rises, especially when it has a non-Jewish foundation, the more Jews are viewed with suspicion, hos-



tility, and even hatred. “We must get rid of these dangerous Jews!”

■ Continued on next page

The Good and The Bad in 2025



**CLINT
DECKER**

President and
Evangelist
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Speaking Truth

The great college basketball coach, John Wooden, once said, “Without proper self-evaluation, failure is inevitable.” Why? Because one needs to know the state of things based on a given standard, whether they have succeeded or failed. Without evaluation one has no idea where they are headed or how they are doing, and therefore they will face failure at some point. So let us evaluate 2025, according to God’s standards, and see how we did.

1. Record low birth rates. In July, a report came out stating our new birth rate is 1.6 children per woman. This is a record low and far beneath the population replacement rate of 2.1. This is alarming! It communicates that young people are rejecting God’s plan for marriage and family. Our young are instead remaining single, moving in together outside of marriage or having no children. Experts predict this trend will continue for the next 75 years.

2. Assassination of Charlie Kirk. On September 10, while Charlie Kirk was holding a microphone on a college campus, and preparing to answer a question about mass shootings, he was shot and killed before a live in-person and internet audience. Millions around the world watched in horror. Why? For his message. The killer and those who supported his cowardly act, rejected Charlie’s biblically principled message. This is deeply concerning because it communicates how millions of Americans support violence against people who courageously speak God’s truth on controversial moral issues.

3. Record illegal immigration numbers. During President Joe Biden’s administration at least 8 million illegal immigrants entered the United States. A record number. This was terribly concerning, but more so, has been the evangelical church’s response to President Donald Trump’s effort to find and deport those illegals. Church leaders protested these efforts, declaring the biblical mandate to welcome the stranger, while deceptively neglecting to mention the pain and suffering mass illegal immigration has brought upon millions of families.

In 2025, our nation has sinned against God in these and in many other ways. For we have justly suffered with

God’s hand of judgement against us. Yet, in the face of His justice, we saw His mercy.

1. College campuses. In February, God led a woman to organize a worship event at Ohio State University. During winter temperatures over 6,000 students showed up, heard the gospel, cried out to God and a couple thousand turned to Jesus while many were baptized in the back of rental trucks. This effort was duplicated at multiple



college campuses in 2025.

2. Mass baptisms. In June, God led a man to unite a remnant of faithful churches to preach the gospel, call people to repent of their sins and then be baptized in the name of Jesus. That effort resulted in hundreds of churches joining together to baptize nearly 30,000 people across America.

3. The Charlie Kirk effect. In September, immediately following Charlie’s death, God miraculously began drawing people to Himself. Many churches reported a 15% to 30% in-

crease in attendance, while Bible sales rose by 36% in September alone. Thousands went to church for the first time, testified to a new faith in Jesus, were baptized, attended prayer vigils across America, and over 100 million heard the gospel around the world at Charlie’s memorial service.

Praise God for His undeserved mercy. He once said, “I was ready to be sought by those who did not ask for me; I was ready to be found by those who did not seek me... I spread out my hands all the day to a rebellious people...” (Isaiah 65:1-2) God is not finished with America, nor any nation, nor even you or me. In the face of our disobedience, His merciful arms remain open wide through the glorious cross of Christ. As we move into 2026, let us have hope in this. Confess your sins before God, turn from them and yield yourself fully to Jesus that you might walk in the fullness of His blessings.

A prayer for you – Lord God, we confess our national and personal sins. Forgive us, O God! Cleanse us and make us holy. Whatever it takes. Change us, that we might glorify you in all we do in 2026. In Jesus’ name. Amen.

—Clint Decker is President of Great Awakenings. Share your comment at cdecker@greatawakenings.org and follow his blog at clintdecker.blogspot.com.

■ Continued from previous page

Recently, a far-right politician in Poland named Grzegorz Braun, speaking outside the Auschwitz concentration camp, of all places, stated that, “Poland is for the Poles,” and “Jews have their own state – Israel.” According to Braun,

“Jews want to be super-humans in Poland, entitled to a better status, and the Polish police dance to their tune. They take pleasure in trampling on us, the Poles.”

Yet there are only 10,000 Jews in Poland today out of a population of 38 million. How on earth can they be viewed as such a threat? (The Holocaust wiped out more than 90 percent of Poland’s 3.3 million Jews, whose history in Poland dates back 1,000 years.)

Tragically, this has been a pattern throughout history, especially when religious fervor joins together with a strong nationalistic spirit. The Jewish people do not belong, and their very presence constitutes a threat.

Consider for a moment that, when it comes to the State of Israel, anti-Zionists view the Israelis as White Europeans who displaced the indigenous, non-White, inhabitants of the land, the Palestinians. (Ironically, the majority of Israeli Jews today are of non-European origin, many hailing from the Middle East and Northern Africa, while more than half of the population of Israel would qualify as non-White.)

Here in America, to quote the words of the 2019 Poway synagogue shooter John Earnest (a professedly

‘devout Christian’), “I just shot up a synagogue because I’m defending my nation against the Jewish people, who are trying to destroy all white people.”

So, in Israel, the Jews are the White European invaders. In America, these same Jews are the ones destroying our White European heritage.

This is “the demonic logic” of antisemitism, as self-contradictory as it is absurd.

Yes, according to Earnest’s manifesto,

“It is unlawful and cowardly to stand on the sidelines as the European people are genocided [sic] around you. I did not want to have to kill Jews. But they have given us no other option.”

Murdering Jews was his ‘Christian’ duty. As he wrote,

“You cannot love your own race if you do not hate those who wish to destroy it.”

But it is not just demented killers like Earnest spouting such dangerous drivel. Increasingly, in some America first, Christian nationalist circles, similar rhetoric is being heard, even if it is not as overtly murderous.

This is simply history repeating itself.

As noted by Prof. Reena Sigman Friedman, it was in this strong nationalistic spirit that Wilhelm Marr, a German journalist,

“coined the term ‘antisemitism’ in 1879 to describe the Jew-hating League that he had formed. Anti-Jewish rhetoric was prevalent in Central and Western Europe at the time, voiced by writers across the political spectrum.”

Marr “claimed that Jews were ‘conquering’ and ‘subjugating’ Germany, and ‘the western world’ as a whole.”

“According to Karl Duehring, a German economist and philosopher writing in 1881, Jews were a foreign race that had ‘infiltrated’ Germany to the country’s detriment.”

Automobile pioneer Henry Ford popularized similar ideas in America in the 1920s with the publication of his four-volume work, *The International Jew: The World’s Foremost Problem*. The title says it all.

That’s why,

“In a 1923 interview for the Chicago Tribune, Hitler said, ‘We look on Heinrich Ford as the leader of the growing Fascisti [Fascist] movement in America. We admire particularly his anti-Jewish policy ... We just had

his anti-Jewish articles translated.”

Hitler even praised Ford in his infamous *Mein Kampf* and proudly displayed a portrait of Ford in his private office.

And what happens when the call for Christian nationalism translates into a full-blown Christian theocracy? Both history and logic tell us that Jews, easily singled out as “non-Christian,” do not fare well in such environments.

Today, we are being told by so-called Christian nationalists that “the main challenge to” unifying the country is “organized Jewry in America” and that it is “Zionist Jews” who are the real threat to America.

Yes, according to these views, the Jews are a real threat to White America, among the worst of the “replacers.” That’s why some of the protesters shouted at the 2017 “Unite the Right” rally in Charlottesville, “Jews will not replace us.”

According to other antisemitic tropes, “the Jews” who control Hollywood, the media, the banks, and the government, want to subvert the nation through every kind of immoral behavior, all while funneling billions of dollars into genocidal Israel. Those evil Jews!

And as if this was not enough, there is the ever-growing, equally dangerous, antisemitism of the left. But of course!

Patriotic American Christians would do well to remember the words of our first president, George Washington, who famously wrote to the Jewish community of Newport, Rhode Island in 1790,

“For happily the Government of the United States, which gives to bigotry no sanction, to persecution no assistance, requires only that they who live under its protection should demean themselves as good citizens, in giving it on all occasions their effectual support.”

He closed with this wonderful expression of hope:

“May the children of the stock of Abraham who dwell in this land continue to merit and enjoy the good will of the other inhabitants; while every one shall sit in safety under his own vine and fig tree, and there shall be none to make him afraid.”

May Christian Americans who love both their faith and their country echo these sentiments today.

RYAN SHUMAKER

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see a tax increase compared to before. Higher earners will see the worst of this when it comes to charitable giving as they’ll only get 35 cents on the dollar as a deduction instead of 37 cents on top of not being able to deduct the first 0.5% of their income. Thankfully a provision similar to what happened during COVID where an individual can deduct up to \$1,000 (married is \$2,000) of any cash gifts to charity even if not itemizing deductions made its way into the final version of the bill, but those that do more giving will still be worse off than before.

These are just a few of the many gotchas in the new tax code with this bill. Some went into effect last year, while others just started this year. Tax planning for and in retirement just got even more important and impactful than it was before if keeping more of

your own money is important to you. After passing the Big Beautiful Bill there were a lot of declarations similar to “I’m from the government and I’m here to help.” Those in or near retirement would be wise to heed what Reagan said about those words and even wiser to seek help from a financial advisor or firm that specializes in the type of tax planning we do at Retirement Portfolios.

Other great articles about retirement, investing, and tax reduction can be seen at RetireFromTaxes.com/Blog.

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Missouri Tax Credit Helps Pregnancy Centers, Adoption Efforts

A little-known provision of Missouri's tax code is quietly shaping how private dollars flow to some of the state's most vulnerable children and families, offering sizable incentives for donations to organizations involved in adoption, foster care and pregnancy support.

Under Missouri's Pregnancy Resource Center and Maternity Home tax credit programs, qualifying gifts can return as much as 70% of a donation directly to a taxpayer's state tax bill. The credits are not deductions, which merely lower taxable income, but much-preferred credits that actually reduce the amount owed to the state dollar for dollar. Both individuals and businesses can participate.

Tax helps fund pregnancy resource and adoption services

Among the largest and most established recipients is Missouri Baptist Children's Home Children and Family Ministries, commonly known as MBCH. Founded in 1886, MBCH operates foster care, adoption services, maternity housing and family support programs across much of the state. Donations of \$100 or more to MBCH may qualify for the 70% credit when funds are directed to programs approved under the state's Pregnancy Resource Center or Maternity Home statutes.

The LIGHT House, a faith-based maternity home affiliated with MBCH, also qualifies. It provides housing, counseling and practical assistance to pregnant women, particularly those facing homelessness or family instability.

Supporters of the program say the credits allow Missourians to redirect tax dollars toward services the state would



otherwise struggle to provide on its own.

"If you know you have a Missouri tax bill, this gives you the option of investing that money directly in children and families instead of sending it straight to Jefferson City," said Anita Widaman, the publisher of Metro Voice, who also works with many of the organizations. "It's a partnership between taxpayers and the state."

MBCH agrees, saying the program is a great option for Missouri taxpayers wanting magnify their donations.

"Each year, with the projected annual budget for MBCH, there is a 'gap' between what is received in fees for services provided by our ministries and the actual costs of those ministries," Juston Gates, President of MBCH, told Metro Voice. "That budgetary 'gap' is covered each year via investment income and donor gifts. Our receipts through Tax Credit donations represent a large portion of the 'gap' income."

The math is compelling

The math can be compelling. A donor who contributes \$100 receives a \$70 credit against Missouri income taxes. In more

complex scenarios, donors can apply credits across multiple tax years if their liability is lower than the credit amount, a feature that appeals to higher-income households and businesses.

"Missouri Tax Credit donations are a practical way for a donor to utilize what would be due in relation to state income tax annually to instead support a charity or ministry that has personal meaning and value," Gates says. "Tax credits are just that, credits related to the state income tax collected by the Missouri Department of Revenue, and not simply a deduction for charitable giving."

MBCH is not alone. Several other Christian and pro-life ministries across Missouri qualify for similar credits if they meet state requirements. These include pregnancy resource centers that provide free pregnancy testing, ultrasounds, counseling, parenting classes and material support such as diapers and car seats. Maternity homes offering residential care for expectant mothers also qualify under a separate but related credit.

In the Kansas City area, eligible organizations include Birthright of Greater Kansas City, Catholic Charities of KC-St. Joseph and Rachel House.

There are a lot of people who don't take advantage of the program

Birthright, a well-established pro-life organization, offers support through 13 offices across the state. Glenda Merten, Birthright-Kansas City director, says the donations through the PRC partnership make a big difference but more need to learn about it. "There are a lot of people who don't take advantage of the program. We have quite a few that do," she told Metro Voice this week. "You don't have to itemize to take advantage of it, and you

can even take it from your IRA."

Parkville Women's Clinic says many of their faithful donors have expanded their giving because of this special incentive. In a video on the organization's website, they say it's a "game changer."

Janie Baker, PWC's Director of Operations, said it's about stewardship. "Thanks to the Missouri Pregnancy Resource Center Tax Credit program, generous supporters can give in a way that maximizes both stewardship and impact," she told Metro Voice. Baker says that in 2024, 184 donors used the program. They helped "ensure women and families receive compassionate, Christ-centered care," she stated.

Many of these groups openly identify with Christian missions and emphasize alternatives to abortion

Across the state, other organizations include Lifeline Pregnancy Care Center, New Beginnings Pregnancy Care Center in Springfield, Lutheran Families and Children's Services of Missouri, and a network of smaller crisis pregnancy centers operating in rural communities. Many of these groups openly identify with Christian missions and emphasize alternatives to abortion, though eligibility is based on services provided rather than religious affiliation.

In recent years, Missouri has expanded the use of tax credits tied to child welfare. The Champion for Children Tax Credit, which took effect this year, allows donors to claim up to 70% of a contribution made to qualifying child advocacy and foster care organizations, including child advocacy centers that assist abused and neglected children. The credit is capped at \$50,000 per donor per year and may be carried forward for up to four years.

The programs operate on a first-come, first-served basis, and credits are limited annually by the state. Nonprofits often urge donors to act early in the calendar year or well before December, when allocations may run out.

Pro-abortion activists have been critical of the support these organizations are getting. They argue that public policy should remain neutral on reproductive issues and question whether tax credits indirectly subsidize organizations with specific moral viewpoints. They're even

against the program in its support of adoptive and foster services.

Supporters counter that the programs are voluntary and reflect Missouri lawmakers' preference to bolster private charities that reduce pressure on the foster care system and support women in crisis as well as at-risk children.

State officials note that the credits are designed to leverage private generosity rather than replace public funding. By encouraging donations, the state avoids the full cost of providing similar services while retaining oversight through certification and reporting requirements.

For donors who itemize deductions on their federal returns, the benefits can extend beyond Missouri taxes. The portion of a gift not covered by the state credit may still qualify as a charitable deduction, potentially lowering federal income taxes as well.

For organizations like MBCH, the credits have become an essential fundraising tool. Leaders there say the program has helped stabilize funding for foster placements, adoption services, pregnancy resources, and maternity housing at a time when demand continues to rise.

As Missouri lawmakers debate broader child welfare reforms, the tax credit programs remain one of the state's most tangible incentives for citizens to play a direct role in caring for children, families in crisis, and pregnancy challenges — one redirected tax dollar at a time.

While organizations plan their 2026 budgets and the clock is ticking for the deadline to get your 2025 donation counted towards this year's state taxes, now is the time to have a lasting impact. Make your donation before the end of December.

Marten, with Birthright-Kansas City, says the donations through the program provide peace of mind, and she's grateful for every penny. "It was always difficult to make ends meet at the end of the year," she said. She said she's grateful as it offers more financial stability at the end of the year and it's easier to plan budgets for the future.

"We don't have to worry now," she told Metro Voice, echoing what other ministry leaders told us. "We can help every woman who enters our doors."

Christian Family Adoption

Austin K. Vincent

ATTORNEY AT LAW

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akvlawgm@gmail.com

For more information visit: Christianfamilyadoptionks.com



KFL March & Rally for Life Returns to Kansas Capitol Building

The Kansas March & Rally for Life is held annually in Topeka to inspire state legislators to stand boldly for life as they begin their legislative session.

Kansans for Life Schedule of Events

10:00 AM: Walk through the AFTERMATH Traveling Memorial & Display, located on the first floor of the Capitol. This display honors the 19,467 lives lost to abortion in Kansas in 2023.

10:00 AM: Stop by the Pregnancy Resource Center and Kansans for Life tables on the second floor of the Capitol to learn more about the life-saving work taking place. You can also take time to schedule a Capitol tour, meet with your legislators, or watch the legislative process in action.

12:00 PM: Join pro-lifers in a march from the Topeka Performing Arts Center to the south steps of the State Capitol. Bring your smiles and energy!

12:15 – 1:15 PM: Attend the Rally for Life on the south steps of the State Capitol. Hear inspiring speakers, learn about this year's legislative agenda, and more.

1:15 PM: After the Rally, head inside to walk through the AFTERMATH Display & Memorial, meet with legislators, take a Capitol tour, or watch the legislative process in action.



Other pre-march pro-life activities (not organized by KFL)

9:00 – 11:30 AM : Catholic Ignite

event at the Topeka Performing Arts Center (TPAC), featuring pro-life speakers and Catholic Mass. Details here.

tails here.

8:00 – 11:40 AM : Lutheran (LCMS) Kansas District Life Conference. Details here.

10:30 – 11:30 AM : Non-denominational prayer service at the Kansas State Capitol, Room 221-E

Parking can be found under the capitol (2 hours maximum), on the

streets surrounding the Capitol, and at various parking garages (8th Ave, between Kansas & Jackson; 9th & Kansas Avenue; Quincy between 6th & 7th; and Quincy between 9th & 10th). Find locations on the map above.

For questions or more information visit www.kfl.org or contact kfl@kfl.org.

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- Kansas Wesleyan University • Kansas Christian University
- Lindenwood University • Lee University • Liberty University
- Mission University • Missouri Baptist University • Newnan University
- Northwest Christian University • Oklahoma Wesleyan University
- Olivet Nazarene University • Oral Roberts University • Ozark Christian College
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Jeremiah 1:5

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North Topeka boasts a wide variety of activities

A Nashville style songwriter showcase, Songs From the Heartland, will take place on January 16 at 7pm at Compass Point, 800 N. Kansas Avenue, featuring three popular wordsmiths trading songs and stories for one night only! Performances are scheduled for Gary McKnight, Garrett Rake and Caleb Nelson. Doors open at 6pm. Get tickets for this event at www.dirtygirladventures.com.

Thursdays in NOTO feature an Open Jam 5-8pm at Artismo Gallery & Bistro; Compass Point Yoga 5:45-6:45pm at 800 N. Kansas Ave.; and College Night at Footpool NOTO, 800 N. Kansas Ave.

ROG & THE RAM JETS will perform Jan. 3, 6pm, at Doughboyz Pizza, 1312 N. Kansas Ave. Roger Randel and his squad will playing til 9pm. Come enjoy a family friendly jam session inside! Rog is the Pastor at Family of God Church and can be found on 97.7 FM Radio

The 4TH ANNUAL VALENTINES SIP & SHOP will be held Feb. 7, 10-5, at Woodshed Event Center, featuring food trucks, vendor market and a full bar.

NOTO will host the 11th ANNUAL TOPEKA EASTER-FEST on Mar. 28, 10am-3pm, in the NOTO Arts District on North Kansas Avenue, in Redbud Park, and in Veterans Park & the connecting breezeway. The Big Egg Hunt begins at 10am in Veterans Park (between NOTO and the Kansas Ave. Bridge). Food Trucks will be on hand and the Family Fun Fair will continue until 3PM, including vendor booths, children's games, food trucks, face painting, inflatables, and more. Live music and other entertainment, along with more vendor booths, will be on



hand at Redbud Park. More food trucks and vendors will be located in NOTO Arts Center and parking lot across the street. In addition, sidewalk merchants will be located up and down Kansas Avenue. For more info: Topeka EasterFest on Facebook, info@C5Alive.org or 785-640-6399.

Axe throwing leagues are now forming at Odin's Lair. Call 785-214-3798 for details.

Pancakes & PJs, a Daddy/Daughter Dance, will be held Feb. 21 at The Brownstone, 4020 NW 25th. Nominate a deserving dad or father figure and his girl for a chance to attend the Daddy Daughter Dance at no cost. <https://forms.gle/KER45oiWU8pNWsQx5>. There will be two sessions: 1-3pm and 4:30-6:30pm. Tickets at <https://www.ticketleap.events/tickets/thebrownstonetopeka/pancakes-pj-s-daddy-daughter-dance>

Don't forget First Friday, which has been bringing people to the area in record numbers. Besides the Art Walk in NOTO, other North Topeka businesses have begun joining in and coordinating complementary events.

Entertainment can also be found on First Fridays, at various venues during the artwalk up and down the Avenue as well

Visit explorenoto.org for more information event listings.



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the events calendar

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Get your event Highlighted in Blue in print, our online calendar and promoted in social media for only \$29!

FAMILY-FRIENDLY EVENTS

ROG & THE RAM JETS — Jan. 3, 6pm., Doughboyz Pizza, 1312 N. Kansas Ave. Roger Randel and his squad will be playing til 9pm. Come enjoy a family friendly jam session inside! Rog is the Pastor at Family of God Church and can be found on 97.7 FM Radio

TOPEKA FARM SHOW — Jan. 6-8, Stormont Vail Events Ctr. tradexpos.com

ING NETWORKING GROUP — Jan. 7, 11:30am. All welcome, free to attend, order from menu if desired.

NATIONAL BLUE BLOOD DRIVE — Jan. 7, 10-4, Topeka Police Dept, 320 S. Kansas Ave. American Red Cross to host a Blue Blood Drive in recognition of National Law Enforcement Appreciation Day. call 800-RED-CROSS or use the sponsor code "COPS" on the Blood Donor App (see QR code below) or at www.redcross-blood.org (Search by zip code 66603).

'SOUP'ER BOWL COMMUNITY DINNER — Jan. 7, 5:30-6:30pm, Tecumseh UMC, 335 SE Staton Rd, Tecumseh. To-go orders available. \$10 donation requested.

RED CROSS BLOOD DRIVE — Jan. 8, 9-3, Christ Lutheran Church, 3509 SW Burlingame. Call 800-RED-CROSS or visit www.redcrossblood.org (sponsor code: TopekaCLC). Bring a photo ID, drink plenty of water and eat prior to your appointment. Save time at your appointment by completing RapidPass - pre-reading and questions - the DAY OF your appointment via the blood donor app or visit www.redcrossblood.org/rapidpass.

C5Alive "POWER" LUNCHEON — Jan. 8, 11:30-1, at Celtic Fox. Featuring: Chris Stewart from The Bridge speaks on transforming Topeka youth. Free admission. Meals available from menu if desired. Please RSVP to info@C5Alive.org so we know how many to expect. Open to the public - bring a friend!

SAVE THE DATE. C5 POWER Luncheon, Feb. 12, 11:30-1, at Celtic Fox: Featuring Wabaunsee County Sheriff Eric Kirsch

MUSEUM AFTER HOURS — Jan. 9, 5-8pm, Kansas Museum of History, 6425 SW 6th Ave. An exciting program about John Brown! Register for the in-person event here: <https://forms.office.com/g/ZQneqYbaZK>. A new speaker program the second Friday of each month. On these nights, admission to the museum gallery will be free from 5-8pm.

CAR SEAT CHECK LANE — Jan. 10, 9-12, Mission Township Fire Dept., 3101 SW Urish Rd. Get your car seat checked. While supplies last, seats will be available for families that meet requirements.

BIBLE READ A THON — Jan. 10, 12:30 — 2:30pm, Rotunda of Kansas Capitol, old Supreme Court room on 3rd floor. Bring your Bible; children are welcome! At the sound of the shofar the Bible Reading will begin, for the 5th year of reading the entire Bible out loud in the capitol of Kansas.

FIRST ANNUAL EAGLE DAYS — Jan. 10-11, Lecompton Empowerment Building, 640 E. Woodson Ave., Lecompton. Live Eagle Presentation by Operation Wildlife at 2pm each day. One-hour event. Limited Tickets are \$3.00 Child and \$6.00 Adult at the door only. We will have the Community Building Open January 10th and 11th from 8am to 6pm. Stop in and see us. We will have free coffee, hot chocolate, Eagle viewing site maps, silent auction fundraiser and more.

FAMILY TO FAMILY EDUCATIONAL WORKSHOP — Jan. 12, 6-8:30pm, Countryside UMC, 3221 SW Burlingame

Rd. First of 8 consecutive Monday classes. In Topeka or surrounding area? Have a family member who struggles with their mental health? This class is for you. Register at: Susan Wallace, 785-231-7253 or walice@swbell.net

JAM4DAN19 Jam For Dan — Jan. 16-18, Celtic Fox. Lots of Bands will participate. Suggested \$5 donation. <http://jam4dan.com/j4d19> <https://jam4dan.com/about.html>

ING NETWORKING GROUP — Jan. 21, 11:30am. All welcome, free to attend, order from menu if desired.

BLEEDING KANSAS - Sundays from Jan. 25-Mar. 1, 2pm, Constitution Hall Historic Site, 319 Elmore, Lecompton. A series of talks and dramatic interpretations on the violent territorial and civil war history of Kansas 1854-1865. Actors will portray Kansans from this turbulent era. Adm: \$5 adults.

KRPA CONFERENCE & TRADE SHOW — Jan. 27-29, Hotel Topeka, 1717 SW Topeka Blvd. Kansas Recreation and Park Association meets. Register at <https://krpa.org/event-6351244>

MARCH & RALLY FOR LIFE — Jan. 28, 8am-3pm, Kansas Capitol. Pro-life speakers and meetings with legislators. For more info: kfl@kfl.org

KANSAS DAY — Jan. 29 marks the date in 1861 when Kansas officially became the 34th state of the United States

4TH ANNUAL VALENTINES SIP & SHOP — Feb. 7, 10-5, Woodshed Event Center. Food trucks, vendors, full bar.

2ND ANNUAL CEDAR LAWN FARM VALENTINE'S EVENT — Feb. 7, 10-2, 12741 SW K4 Hwy. For details, see Cedar Lawn Farm on facebook.

C5Alive "POWER" LUNCHEON — Feb. 12, 11:30-1, at Celtic Fox. Featuring: Wabaunsee County Sheriff

Eric Kirsch. Free admission. Meals available from menu if desired. Please RSVP to info@C5Alive.org so we know how many to expect. Open to the public - bring a friend!

SAVE THE DATE: C5 POWER Luncheon, Mar. 12, 11:30-1, at Celtic Fox: Featuring Iron Man John Cantrell

NIGHT TO SHINE — Feb. 13, 6-9pm, Vaerus Event Center, 6410 SE Forbes Ave. at Forbes Field. This complimentary prom event for teens and adults ages 14 and older with special needs is sponsored by the Tim Tebow Foundation and Grace Community Church. Guests walk the red carpet, are greeted by paparazzi, and enjoy dancing and royal treatment. Attend, volunteer or contribute - details and registration can be found at www.nighttoshinetopeka.com

MIDWEST CHRISTIAN COLLEGE EXPO — Feb. 28, 10am - Noon. Colonial Presbyterian Church: South KC Campus, 9500 Wornall Rd. Kansas City, MO 816-524-4522

TOPEKA HOME SHOW — Feb. 28, Stormont Vail Events Ctr

KANSAS KIDFEST — Mar. 7, 10-4, Maner Conference Center, 1717 S. Topeka Blvd. Inflatables, Face-painting, Activity Stations, Interactive fun for curious minds, Live Performances, Interactive Exhibitors, Hands-on experiences. Email hello@tastyfestivals.com to learn more about event & exhibitor opportunities. FREE Admission. Upgrade your experience with an Adventure Wristband (\$12.99 at KansasKidsFest.com)

11th ANNUAL TOPEKA EASTERFEST: FAMILY FUN FESTIVAL & VENDOR FAIR — Mar. 28, 10am-3pm, in the NOTO Arts District on North Kansas Avenue. The Big Egg Hunt begins at 10am in Veterans Park (between NOTO and the Kansas Ave. Bridge). Food Trucks will be on hand and the Family Fun Fair will continue

until 3PM, including vendor booths, children's games, food trucks, face painting, inflatables, and more. Live music and other entertainment, along with more vendor booths, will be on hand at Redbud Park. More food trucks and vendors will be located in NOTO Arts Center and parking lot across the street. In addition, sidewalk merchants will be located up and down Kansas Avenue. For more info: Topeka EasterFest on Facebook, info@C5Alive.org or 785-640-6399.

ONGOING EVENTS

SK8AWAY LEARNERS SESSIONS - Every Saturday morning 11-1, Sk8away, 815 Fairlawn Family fun environment and the best deal in town, \$8 per person but an adult skates for free with paid child! sk8away.net; 785-272-0303; manager@sk8away.net

SENIORS NUTRITIONAL LUNCH — Weekdays, except holidays, at noon at Auburn Civic Center, 1020 N. Washington Street. Minimal cost per person. Reservations/cancellations required 24 hours in advance by calling Meals on Wheels of Jefferson & Shawnee Co. at

295-3980. Each meal includes 1% milk & sugar-free items for diabetics. 215-0064.

MEDICARE MONDAYS — First Mon. ea. month, 1-3pm. Topeka/Sh. Co. Public Library, 1515 SW 10th. Jayhawk Area Agency on Aging offers Senior health insurance counseling. 580-4545 or rhoil@tscpl.org

COUNTRY AND BALLROOM DANCING - Thursdays 6-9pm. Croco Hall. Info: 379-9538, 478-4760.

FIRST FRIDAY ART MARKET — Downtown and NOTO arts district. Arts, antiques, fine crafts, flea market items, snacks, beverages, entertainment and more.

TOPEKA ACAPPELLA UNLIMITED AUDITIONS — Topeka Acappella Unlimited is looking for female singers who would like to sing four-part acappella harmonies. Topeka Acappella Unlimited is a Chapter of Sweet Aedlines, International. Cindy Patton: 785-640-7403

HARVESTERS MOBILE FOOD PANTRY, 1st & 3rd Sat, 2-3pm, Shawnee Heights UMC parking lot.

FREE MOBILE FOOD DISTRIBUTION — 4th Tue. thru Nov., 9am, 1231 NW Eugene St. Randel Ministries, Inc., in partnership with Harvesters and Family of God Church

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C5Alive POWER Luncheons are held 2nd Thur. each mo.

Jan. 8, 11:30-1: "POWER" Luncheon at Celtic Fox. Featuring Chris Stewart of The Bridge.

Free Admission. Order lunch from menu if desired.

Open to the public. RSVP to info@C5Alive.org



Save the Dates!

- Feb. 12: POWER Luncheon, 11:30-1 - Sheriff Kirsch
- Mar. 12: POWER Luncheon, 11:30-1 - Iron Man Cantrell
- Mar. 28: 11th Annual EASTERFEST in NOTO, 10:00-3:00

For info: www.C5Alive.org or Facebook.com/C5Alive

will have its monthly food distribution. No ID or proof of income required, first come first served. Distributing fresh produce and other items to families in need. 785-234-1111. RandelMinistries.com

TOPEKA PUBLIC LIBRARY PLAY BUS — Every Tuesday, 9:30am-noon, Lakeview Nazarene Church, 2835 Croco; Then 1-3pm at Auburn Community Center. Enjoy story time, play opportunities, books for check-out & take & make art. 785-266-3247.

OPEN INDOOR COURT PICKLEBALL — Sundays at 4pm, Berryton United Methodist Church (7010 SE Berryton Rd. All ages and abilities welcome.

WOODSHED MARKET — Sun. 10-3, 1901 N. Kansas Ave.

FAMILY NIGHT AT COSMOS COURT — Tuesdays, 5pm, Cosmos Court, 909 S. Kansas Ave. Pizza, salads, hot dogs, nachos, soup and more! Get a 16" Pizza, 2 side salads, and 4 cups of ice cream for only \$30!

FRIDAY NIGHT FUNNIES — Every Friday at Cosmos Court, 909 S. Kansas. Weekly comedy show is only \$15, or two for \$25.

CORNER MARKET — 2nd Saturdays. 29th & Adams. 50+ Vendors, food trucks, music, kids activities,

KANSAS PRAIRIE PICKERS — Fourth Sun. ea. Month, 1pm, Auburn Community Center. Foot-stomping, hand-clapping tunes. Concessions available

GRAND OTTAWA OPRY - 2nd & 4th Saturday, 5:30PM- pre-show, 6PM showtime, Ottawa Memorial Auditorium, 301 S Hickory, Ottawa. Tickets are \$15 and only at the door. Ph. 785-241-6762, email grandopry@gmail.com. GrandOttawaOpry.com

HARVESTER'S PROGRAM FOR SENIOR CITIZENS - every second Sat., takes place at Christian Lord Ministries, 2421 SE California. Call 266-4979.

HOPE HOUSE FREE COMMUNITY CLOTHING BANK — Wed. 6-8pm and Sat. 12-3pm, Oakland Church of the Nazarene: 939 NE Oakland

HARVESTER FREE MOBILE FOOD DISTRIBUTION - 2nd Saturday each month, 1:30-3pm, Oakland Church of the Nazarene: 939 NE Oakland

FIRST SATURDAY BREAKFAST BUFFET — 7:30 AM - 10:00 AM, Shawnee Heights UMC, 6020 SE 44th

KIDS for JESUS! - Wednesday's 7 - 8pm, Lakeview Church of the Nazarene, 2835 SE Croco Rd. Bring your friends, family, neighbors, enemies! For info: 785-266-3247, FB: Topeka Lakeview Nazarene, Email: Lakenaz@aol.com

MID-WEEK PRAYER & BIBLE STUDY - Wednesday's, 7-8pm, Lakeview Nazarene, 2835 SE Croco Rd. You are invited! Contact info: (785)266-3247, FB: Topeka Lakeview Nazarene

LOL "LADIES OF LAKEVIEW" - Lakeview Church of the Nazarene, 2835 SE Croco Rd. Monthly Women's Ministry Events! (Cooking, Crafts, Outreach, Bible Study, Fellowship!) Call the church office for info: (785) 266-3247, Facebook: Topeka Lakeview Nazarene Email: LakeNaz@aol.com

ROOTED CHRISTIAN HOMESCHOOL CO-OP: Colossians 2:6-7. Monday's 12-4pm. Cooking class for 4th graders & older at noon. Call the Church Office for more information. Lakeview Church of the Nazarene, 2835 SE Croco Rd. Church: (785) 266-3247. Facebook: Topeka Lakeview Nazarene. LakeNaz@aol.com

MEETINGS & CLASSES

CHRISTIAN WRITERS GROUP OF TOPEKA - 1st & 3rd Mondays, 7pm at the Hughes Room 205 of the Topeka Library. Workshop for aspiring writers. Each participant is asked to bring five copies of a two page type written sample of a work in progress. After reading the pages aloud each participant is allowed an equal number of positive and negative comments offered in a spirit of helpfulness. If you would like to read something email Charles at jcccw@gmail.com

SENIORS PITCH CLUB - Every Tuesday 1 pm at Garfield Community Center. First visit free then a dollar per visit for coffee and replacement cards

CRAFTY, SKILLED OR CREATIVE VOLUNTEERS NEEDED to develop outdoor lighted displays at Ward Meade Park events. Contact Elsie, 785-256-2920.

CONCERNED WOMEN FOR AMERICA MEETING - Join

other concerned people to pray and unite in action for Shawnee Co. and our Nation. For info about monthly meetings: 702-328-7835 or ks.cwfa.org.

THE HEAT — FREE fitness classes for the community. Located at Florence Crittenton Services Center for Integrative Health, 5423 SW 7th. www.flocritkansas.org

DEAF WORSHIP SERVICE — 3rd Sun., 3pm, Faith Lutheran Church, 17th & Gage. Also, every Sun. 9:30am service is interpreted.

TAI CHI FOR HEALTH — Mon. 10-11 at Lowman United Methodist Church and Thu. 9:30-10:30 at Topeka Zoo. No training needed, just watch & follow. Contact Madon Daily at 505-424-8989 or madondaily@gmail.com. To Join from Home via Zoom, contact Madon for the Zoom link.

PICKLEBALL — Mon. & Wed, 1-3pm, First Baptist Church, 3033 SW MacVicar Ave. Park on West Side, where the gym is located. Contact Dave Mathias, davemathias@sbcglobal.net, or Betsy Thompson, betsyjthompson@gmail.com.

SHEPHERD'S CENTER BOOK CLUB - 1st & 3rd Mon. 2-4pm at Westminster Presbyterian Church, 1275 SW Boswell Ave. Call: 785-249-3258 or email shepherdstopeka@yahoo.com for the book of study.

SMS - STRENGTH, MOBILITY, STABILITY EXERCISE GROUP (SMS) Mon. 9-9:30am, Arbor Court, 4200 SW Drury Lane. Tue. & Thu. 9-9:30am, Rosehill Place, 3600 SW Gage Blvd # 97. Tue & Thu, 10-10:45, Grace UMC, 2627 SW Western Ave. Call Anne Crawford at 785-273-4527 or email anne.crawford@cox.net.

SENIOR FIT & FUN PROGRAM - Every Mon., Wed., and Fri at 1:30 at Pleasant Hills United Methodist Church, 4525 NW Button Rd., 785-246-1737.

TOPEKA LIONS CLUB — 1st Mondays at Noon - 1 pm at The Capper Foundation, 3500 SW 10th Ave. Park on the North side. RSVP by Fri. for lunch/pay at the meeting. Visitors welcome. TopekaLions.org/contact-us to make reservations. WE SERVE!

BOY'S TRAIL LIFE & AMERICAN HERITAGE GIRLS TROUPS - Every Mon. 6pm, Cornerstone Comm. Ch., 7620 SW 21st. Faith-based scouting programs, age 5-18. Register: cornerstone-topeka.com. 478-2929.

TOPEKA NEEDLEWORK GUILD - Every Mon. (except holidays) 9a-11a in the Menninger Room of the Topeka Public Library. Bring a project to work on as we share our needleworking skills and ideas.

CHRISTIAN HOMESCHOOL CO-OP - Monday's, 1-4pm, Lakeview Nazarene, 2835 SE Croco Rd. Contact info: (785)266-3247, FB: Topeka Lakeview Nazarene

SENIOR ADULT EXERCISE CLASS - Tuesday's 10am, Lakeview Nazarene, 2835 SE Croco Rd. All exercises will be done from a chair, will help you get up out of a chair, and climb stairs safely! Contact info: (785)266-3247, FB: Topeka Lakeview Nazarene

TOPEKA LINCOLN CLUB — 1st Tue. of month, 7pm, Topeka Public Library. Discussing our greatest President, Abraham Lincoln, and his times. The public is welcome. For info, Kirk Nystrom 785-235-6977.

SUNRISE OPTIMIST CLUB — Every Tue., 6:30am, Sunrise Optimist Complex, 720 NW 50th St. 246-1291.

NARVE (Nat'l Assn of Railroad Veteran Employee) - 2nd Tuesday each month at 9:30AM @ Museum of the Kansas

National Guard, 125 SE Airport Dr, Topeka

MENNINGER BIBLE CLASSES - Tuesdays 11am-12:30. Amerus Room, YWCA, 225 West 12th. A new study group for Year One of Flo Menninger's course on Four Years through the Bible. Read and discuss Genesis through First Kings. Nominal charge for materials. For info call the YWCA at 233-1750 or Clara Gamache at 785-408-5433. (The Bible study is also taught on Sat. mornings on 101.5 FM radio.)

FRATERNAL ORDER OF EAGLES Aerie 4319: 1st & 3rd Tue. 7pm; Auxiliary: 1st & 4th Tue. 6pm, 2941 SE Fremont Street. An international non-profit organization uniting fraternally in the spirit of liberty, truth, justice, and equality, to make human life more desirable by lessening its ills and promoting peace, prosperity,

gladness and hope. www.foe.com 785-266-7307

DUPLICATE BRIDGE - Tuesdays and Thursdays at 12:30PM at The Woman's Club of Topeka, 5221 SW West Dr. Bill Gates and Warren Buffett play duplicate bridge! It is great for your brain health. For additional information email janescola@hotmail.com.

O.W.L.S. (Older Wise Loving Saints) - meets the second Tuesday of the month. Location varies and can be found at www.faithfamilylife.com

MAP GROUP (MEMOIRS, ANCESTRY, PHOTOS) - VIA ZOOM - 4th Wed. 10-11:30am. Contact Rich McReynolds at rim4017@gmail.com. Via Zoom link

FAMILY HISTORY WRITING GROUP - 2nd Wed. 10-11:30am, Lowman United Methodist Church, room 12.

Do you have great family stories to tell and want to pass them down to the next generation but don't know where to start? shepherdstopeka@yahoo.com

S.W.A.G. (Spiritual Warriors Anointed by God) youth group - Wed at 7:00 p.m. 3710 NW Topeka Blvd.

AWANA — Every Wed., 6-8pm, First Southern Baptist Church, 1912 SW Gage Blvd. Bible based program for children & youth ages 3-HS. For info: 272-0443.

AWANA — Every Wed., 6:30pm, Bethel Baptist Church, 4011 N. Kansas Ave. Bible based program for children & youth ages 3-HS. For info: 286-0467.

AWANA — Every Wed., 6:30-8pm, Auburn Christian Church. Bible based program for children & youth ages 3-HS. For info: 256-2515.

FUNDRAISER: GROUNDHOG SUPPER

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 7, 2026

5-6 PM - DINNER, 6:30 PM PROGRAM

SPECIAL GUEST SPEAKER:

DAN MEERS



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VIP LUNCHEON FOR SENIORS — Every Wed., 10:45 Bible Study and meal at Noon, Topeka Church of the Brethren, 3201 NW Rochester Rd. (1 mile north of Dillon's North). FREE lunch with Christian fellowship, devotions & entertainment provided by Topeka North Outreach. Free will donations accepted. For info: 785-224-8803 or vip@topekanorthoutreach.org.

STUDENT IMPACT — Every Wed., 6–8pm, First Southern Baptist, 1912 SW Gage Blvd. Youth games, teaching, worship, small groups. For info: 272-0443.

CHRISTIAN CHALLENGE — Every Thurs. 7–9pm, First Southern Baptist, 1912 SW Gage Blvd. Worship for college students.

TOPEKA COSMOPOLITAN CLUB: The Club that fights Diabetes — Meetings: first three Thursdays of every month, 12 noon, at the Topeka Country Club.

INTENTIONAL MOM - 1st & 3rd Thurs., 9-11:30am, Topeka Bible Church Auditorium, 1135 SW College. For all moms, helping to be intentional! 234-5545.

OPERATION BACKPACK — 1st Thurs., 6pm, Indian Creek Elementary School, 4303 NE Indian Creek Rd. Volunteers assemble Weekend Snack Sacks for low-income students. No assembly in August. Sponsored by Topeka North Outreach: 286-1370.

LINE DANCING - 2nd & 4th Thu. 1:30-3:30 at First Baptist Church, 3033 SW MacVicar Ave. Contact Karen Botkin at 785-945-6785 or Jim Baer at 785-256-2432 or jimbaer73@gmail.com to register.

BRIDGE GROUP - 1st & 3rd Thu. 1- 3:30pm, at Our Savior Lutheran Church, 2021 SW 29th St. To play, arrangements must be made by Mon. 5pm with Joan Arterburn at 408-5174.

TOPEKA GENEALOGICAL SOCIETY — 4th Thurs., 7pm, Topeka Shawnee County Public Library, 1515 SW 10th St. No program in Nov. or Dec. Promotes & stimulates the education, knowledge & interest of the membership & the public in family history, genealogical records & research. 233-5762 or lgstopeka.org.

KINGDOM ADVISORS TOPEKA AREA STUDY GROUP - 3rd Thu., 11:30am-1pm via Zoom. Christian financial professionals: financial planners, accountants, attorney's & insurance agents invited. For info: kingdomadvisors.org or Jim Hanna, james.c.hanna@ampf.com or 785.357.6278 x19.

A GOOD YARN CLUB — 2nd & 4th Sat., 9-11am, Wanamaker Rd Baptist Church, 2700 SW Wanamaker. Doing Good for Others: Knitting & Crocheting for Local Charities, free yarn, needles, hooks & patterns. All are welcome. Info: Anne, 785-272-9249 or kittens812@sbcglobal.net

TOPEKA GEM AND MINERAL SOCIETY - 4th Fridays, 7:15pm, 1st Congressional Church, 1701 SW Collins.

BIBLE QUIZZING — 1st Sat. Learn God's Word & have fun with area Christian youth age 9-19. YFC/YEA style quizzing & rules. 913-593-6427 or biblequizzing.org.

MONTHLY SCORE MEETING — 1st Sat., 8-9:30am, Washburn Tech, 5724 SW Huntoon (enter east doors facing Huntoon). No RSVP or fee is required. Small business owners are invited to a Breakfast Roundtable discussion with members of SCORE (Service Corps of Retired Executives). Info: 234-3049.

TOPEKA GREAT LIGHT AGLOW — For info contact Vickie Lynch at greatlighttopeka@gmail.com.

SUPPORT GROUPS

PARKINSON'S SUPPORT GROUP meets 1st Thursday every month at 5:30 pm, Midland Hospice House, 200 SW Frazier. Jean Barton 785-478-9045.

HOPE AND HEALING ACADEMY harnesses the power of horses to transform the human spirit. For info: 785-224-4232 or www.hopeandhealingacademy.com.

OVERCOMER'S OUTREACH ANONYMOUS RECOVERY SUPPORT GROUP — Mondays 6:30-7:30pm, at Be Filled Of South Topeka, 200 Airport Rd, Bldg. 818 Suite 1. Led by Pastor Bill Ritchey. 785-817-2802

BINDING UP THE BROKEN HEARTED — Sessions offered for women who suffer from the after-effects of abortion. All the women who lead these sessions have had an abortion and have received healing from God's Word. For info, contact local Healing Hearts representative Shelly Brush, First Southern Baptist Church at shelly.b@healinghearts.org. All communi-

cation is confidential and secure.

MIDLAND CARE GRIEF SUPPORT Groups: Building A, 200 SW Frazier Circle; Every Mon., 4-5pm: 12 Week Adult Group for Recent Loss 1st and 3rd Thu., 10:30am & 5:30pm—Ongoing Adult Group 1st and 3rd Thu., 5:30pm: Ongoing Young Adult Group (4-18 years of age) For All Groups: Call for start dates and info packet. Group and individual grief support available upon request. Info: 785-232-2044 ext.341

CAREGIVER SUPPORT GROUPS - Jayhawk Area Agency on Aging provides an opportunity for caregivers to get together and share their ideas and feelings. 2nd Monday, 3:30pm, Topeka public library, Anton Rm. 3rd Friday, 12 noon, Jayhawk Area Agency on Aging, 2910 SW Topeka

ABORTION RECOVERY SUPPORT — Providing services for women & men who suffer from Post-Abortion Syndrome. Kay Lyn at KLCarlson20@cox.net.

AL-ANON is a support group for families and friends of alcoholics. For info on meetings in the Topeka area email ais-topeka@kansas-al-anon.org or 785-215-1045. All correspondence confidential

PURSUIT FOR SEXUAL PURITY — Men struggling with pornography & sexual addiction. This bible study/ accountability group uses the Pure Desire book by Ted Roberts. For info: 249-9509. All inquiries confidential.

ALZHEIMER'S SUPPORT GROUPS — Monthly support group meetings for caregivers of individuals with Alzheimer's disease or a related dementia. All of our programs have moved from in-person to virtual.

Caregiver support group via Skype 9:30am every other Wednesday. Email Hayley Young at hdyoung@alz.org or call 785.379.3067 for the meeting link and other info.

Caregiver Support Group via Google Hangouts, 4:30pm every other Wednesday. Email Hayley Young at hdyoung@alz.org or call 785.379.3067 for the meeting link and other info..

COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS/BEREAVED PARENTS GROUP — 4th Mon. in Formation classroom at Most Pure Heart of Mary, 17th & Stone. Discussion starts 7pm; fellowship & refreshments 8:30. 785-272-4895

CAREGIVERS GROUP - Caring Hearts of Hope meet 2nd & 4th Tuesdays 5:30-6:30pm at Highland Heights Christian Church. Encouragement in God's word and prayer as well as conversation and sharing, open to all those who care for others with illnesses such as Alzheimers, dementia, cancer or other debilitating illnesses or injuries. For info: "Weekly Class List" at www.hilandheightsscc.com or call 785-379-5642.

FIBROMYALGIA & CHRONIC FATIGUE SYNDROME SUPPORT GROUP — 2nd Tue., 7-9pm. First Congregational Church, 17th and Collins. For info: Randy at 785-969-4038 or TopekaCFS@outlook.com.

GRANDPARENT/RELATIVE CAREGIVER SUPPORT GROUP — 3rd Tue., 6:30-8pm, 2nd floor meeting room, St. Francis Hosp., 1700 SW 7th. For info: Sharla, 286-2329; Jennie (English/Spanish) 231-0763.

HEALING AFTER LOSS TO SUICIDE (HeALS) - Topeka support group meets the 1st and 3rd Tuesday of each month from 6:30-8, at 1st Congregational Church, 17th and Collins. For info: Topeka.heals@gmail.com or 785-380-9309.

DIVORCECARE PROGRAMS — (For updates check www.divorcecare.org) locations and times:

WED. — 6:30pm, Topeka Bible Church, 1101 SW Mulvane. Cost: \$15. Child care provided. For info: 379-0505 or www.divorcecare.org.

WED. — 6:45 — 8:45pm, Walnut View Christian Church, 3634 SE 37th St. (just East of 37th & Croco). Cost: \$10 registration (scholarships available). The video seminar series featuring

some of the nation's foremost experts on divorce and recovery topics, combined with support group discussion of the materials. Complimentary child care children up to the fifth grade. Info: 266-7550 or walnutviewcc@att.net.

WED. — 6:30pm, Northland Christian Church, 3102 NW Topeka Blvd. No Cost. 785-286-1204, www.northland.cc

CELEBRATE RECOVERY — Every Fri., 6pm, 1912 Gage Blvd. A Christ-centered program, based on 8 principles found in Jesus' Sermon on the Mount. Applying these Biblical principles, become free from addictive & dysfunctional behaviors. crtopekaks.org.

PROSTATE CANCER SUPPORT GROUP — First Thursday, 3pm, St Francis Hospital, Room 300 on 2nd floor. For info: Jim 785 806 3266

TOPEKA NAR-ANON FAMILY GROUP — For families & friends who are affected by someone else's narcotic addiction. Every Mon. 7pm; Every Sat. 10am. First Baptist Church, 3033 SW MacVicar, Enter Door A, Room 211. www.naranonmidwest.org

COVENANT KEEPERS — 3rd Sat. Group for people who want to see their marriage saved when their spouse wants out. 816-453-0884 or 816-966-0927

MOMS-IN-TOUCH PRAYER GROUP — Every Wed., 2:30-3:30pm, Library at Cair Paravel-Latin School. Experience God's power through prayer as we lift our students, teachers, staff, administrators & board up to the Lord. For info: 357-0369.

GAMBLERS ANONYMOUS — Every Wed, 7pm, St. Francis Hospital, meeting room #8.

PRISON OUTREACH MINISTRY — Every Tue., 7-9pm, Topeka Women's Prison, 815 Rice Rd. Reaching out to those who can't come in, finding freedom behind bars, inspiring inmates to seek salvation during a difficult time. Providing support & guidance through the Holy Spirit to offer strength. Director: Don Garner, 286-0489 or faithfamilylifeministries@gmail.com.

BIKERS AGAINST CHILD ABUSE — NE Kansas Chapter (B.A.C.A.) 3rd Sun., 4 pm American Legion, 3800 SE Michigan. Open to the public. For info: 817-5801.

Send your calendar events to voice@cox.net
See complete calendar at metrovoicenews.com



Friday, February 13th, 2025, 6-9 p.m.

Vaerus Event Center

6410 SE Forbes Ave., Suite 2 at Forbes Field

This complimentary prom event for teens and adults ages 14 and older with special needs is sponsored by the Tim Tebow Foundation and Grace Community Church.

Guests walk the red carpet, are greeted by paparazzi, and enjoy dancing and royal treatment

Details and registration can be found at
www.nighttoshinetopeka.com



entertainment

Animated Movie “DAVID” Inspires Families Over Holidays & Beyond

And Joseph also went up from Galilee, from the town of Nazareth, to Judea, to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and lineage of David.

The story of Christmas in the gospel of Luke is filled with memorable characters, from the young Joseph and Mary to the awestruck shepherds in the field to the radiant angels who announced Christ's birth. However, it may be easy to overlook a legendary figure from the Old Testament who is central to the story – King David.

Just in time for Christmas, the new animated movie “DAVID” from Angel Studios is now in theaters. Producer and director Phil Cunningham of Sunrise Animation Studios spoke with Metro Voice from South Africa about the movie and the legacy of David.

“I think that DAVID is a perfect story for our times on so many levels but will zone in on two aspects,” he said. “First, he is far from perfect but lives his life wholeheartedly, holding nothing back. We live in a moment in history where people are often paralyzed by fear, but he was an ordinary person who did not shrink back but lived with all his heart. He lived bravely, and if you read history it is interesting to note how he inspired his generation to do and achieve incredible things. I think he can inspire our generation.

“Second, I think globally we live with a leadership crisis and this story, through the characters of Saul and David, unpacks two leadership styles. One is power hungry, controlling and paranoid, and the other is expansive, brave and a servant-style leadership. Hopefully, his story inspires our younger generation to lead with humility, courage and in the service of others, not themselves.”

Cunningham credits his mother, whom he calls “the most incredible human being,” for inspiring him to make the movie.

“When we were 14-years-old, she was like, ‘Phil, by your age, David was fighting Goliath, Daniel was in the lion's den. What are you doing with your life? Get out there. Step out. Take a risk. Have an



adventure,” he said. “Then over 30 years ago, I was canoeing down a beautiful river in Africa called the Zambezi. You could canoe for four days and five nights and not see a human being but just elephant, buffalo, lion, beautiful thunderstorms and sunsets. This is where the idea of telling David's story was birthed.”

He believed David could inspire viewers to face the giants in their own their lives.

“My wife, Jacqui, has been an integral part of making this film, encouraging us all to step out, dream bigger and dare greatly,” he said. “Walking through Paris with her, we stood under the Arc de Triomphe and marveled at the scale and attention to detail in the architecture. It was a very inspiring moment, and looking around at the apartments and office blocks in Paris, we thought as filmmakers it is possible just to just churn money and knock out ordinary buildings, or we can dream big and try and create an ‘Arc de Triomphe’ movie that stands as a beacon of inspiration to this generation.”

He chose to make an animated movie instead of live action because of its ability to transcend age, race and cultural barriers to reach as broad of an audience as possible. The story follows David from shepherd boy to king, touching on his moral failures as well as successes, but in a family friendly way.

“Most movies are a positive change arc, but the story of David is a testing arc,” he said. “The character stays consistently strong, but the world around him changes, as in ‘Hacksaw Ridge.’ Of course he is human within the context, but he fails. When he's fearful, he cries

out to God, but ultimately the big change is in the world around him.”

The Legacy of David: Imperfect, Honest, and Hopeful

Although countless movies, books and television stories have told the timeless story of David, it never ceases to fascinate and inspire audiences.

“The story of David is the ultimate underdog story, and it has absolutely inspired generations for millennia,” Cunningham said. “David is one of the most inspiring characters in human history: a warrior, poet, shepherd and king. In the book of Acts, God says, ‘I found in David, son of Jesse, a man after my own heart.’ I was like, ‘Wow, imagine if we could make a movie about David. It would give us a glimpse of God's own heart. This beautiful heart that is expansive, full of adventure, joy and kindness, not boring, not dull, not austere. It could inspire a generation.’”

At the same, David was far from perfect, like everyone else.

“We are all flawed, we all make mistakes, but what we love about David is that he held nothing back,” he said. “When he was full of joy, he spoke it out. When he was full of fear or anxious or had questions, he voiced that. You'll see in the movie that there's a big moment where he questions God, and he says, ‘Why, God?’ And I just love that, because it gives us permission as humans not to sanitize our approach to God, just to talk out our fear, our hope, our joy, our concerns.”

If David could find redemption, so can anyone.

Hayley Erbert Celebrates ‘Miracle’ Pregnancy 2 Years After Life-Saving Brain Surgery



After a health scare two years ago, dancer Hayley Erbert couldn't be more grateful for the upcoming birth of her first child.

“Two years ago today, I was given a second chance at life through life-saving brain surgery,” Erbert, wife of DANCING WITH THE STARS' Derek Hough, wrote on Instagram. “In these two years, I've gone through every human emotion imaginable, the kind that cracks you open and the kind that puts you back together. I've reclaimed parts of myself I thought I'd never find again, rediscovered who I am, and moved through seasons of loss, triumph, joy, endless fear, grief, healing, and quiet hope.”

In December 2023, she was diagnosed with a “cranial hematoma and underwent an emergency craniectomy.”

“It was a whirlwind to say the least... But I'm truly grateful for it all, and so incredibly proud of myself and my body for everything it has endured. What a miracle it is that two years ago I was fighting for my life... and now, here I am creating life,” the dancer added.

Erbert and Hough announced the new addition to their family in July.

“Already so loved ♥️” they wrote in a

joint Instagram post.

In the time since nearly losing her life, Erbert has also returned to dancing, and the couple performed together in Washington D.C. on the one-year anniversary of her surgery.

“But tonight, we changed the story of that room. We transformed it, from fear to beauty, from uncertainty to faith, and from despair to triumph,” Hough shared in December 2024. “And having Dr. Mai, the man who saved her life, standing on that stage with us made it all the more powerful. We got to share a moment on stage thanking him for the gift of more time, more memories, and more love.”

“This year has taught us so much about grace, how the more we acknowledge it, the more we experience it. Beauty is all around us if we open our eyes to it, and faith can guide us even in the darkest moments,” he continued. “I'm so grateful to Hayley, she has blown me away with her resilience, strength courage and pure elegance in how she has moved through this experience. I am in awe everyday. To the team at MedStar Washington Hospital for their care, and to all of you who've supported us along the way.”

ants in their life.

“I think faith based projects can connect with people at a deep level, if they are told well and do not preach or push an agenda. Well-told, they can leave the viewer first of all entertained and then perhaps inspired at a heart level. One of the other great things about David's story is that he is a very unifying character as he is held in high esteem in the Jewish, Muslim, Christian and secular world. People from different faith backgrounds and non-faith backgrounds can all relate.”

For more information about “DAVID,” visit the website: www.angel.com/movies/david.

Forrest Frank Announces 'Jesus Generation Tour' with Tori Kelly and Cory Asbury

Get ready for "The Jesus Generation Tour" in 2026, featuring Forrest Frank alongside Grammy winner Tori Kelly and Cory Asbury, hitting 29 cities with dates starting June 1st.

Forrest Frank is teaming up with some of the biggest names in music for a 29-city tour in 2026 that is sure to rack up sold-out shows.

The Your Way's Better singer will be joined by three-time Grammy winner Tori Kelly, Reckless Love singer Cory Asbury, and The Figs, best known for collaborating with Frank on his viral hit Lemonade.

It's been dubbed "The Jesus Generation Tour" and will launch June 1 in Tulsa, Okla.

Frank won three GMA Dove Awards in October, including Artist of the Year and Pop/Contemporary Album of the Year. He earned two nominations for the 2026 Grammys.

Kelly is a mainstream/gospel artist known for blending pop, R&B, and faith-inspired music. She voiced Meena in the hit animated movies Sing (2016) and Sing 2 (2021).

Asbury is a three-time Dove Award winner who received a Grammy nomination in 2019 for Reckless Love.

The presale begins Wednesday, Dec. 10, at ForrestFrank.com, with the general public sale following on Friday, Dec. 13.

Frank told Grammy.com early this year that he wants to create for younger generations.

"When I was growing up, I didn't



n't necessarily have cool Christian music to listen to," Frank told Grammy.com. "If I was going to the gym or if I was at the beach, it seemed like there weren't really any Christian songs that would fit those facets of life, but there was great Christian music within the church and for worship. That actually kind of broke my heart; I would cry about it, and I'm not the most emotional guy.

"So, I aspired to make Christian music that I think is cool. Not everyone's going to like it, but I think it does serve a role in the sense of it being music that kids think is cool and want to have as their baseball walk-up song when they go up to the plate and listen to when they hang out with their friends."

He wants to reach a generation hungry for authenticity and truth.

"This generation is waking up to a lot of things. There's a sort of a distrust – or maybe not a distrust, but a questioning happening," Frank said. "There's a second-guessing to almost everything now because it seems like corporations have taken over the airwaves. For me, for example, I used to have a whole laundry list of health complications, and when I would go to

a doctor, he would say, 'You have this, take this medication for it.' I'd still have the issues, but then I'd have a medication overriding it and the side effects from it, without a real solution.

"Then, I finally went to a naturopathic doctor who was like, 'You're gluten intolerant. You're allergic to corn, and you're eating this all the time. Take these foods out of your diet and switch to organic and whole foods.' I did, and all of my symptoms went away.

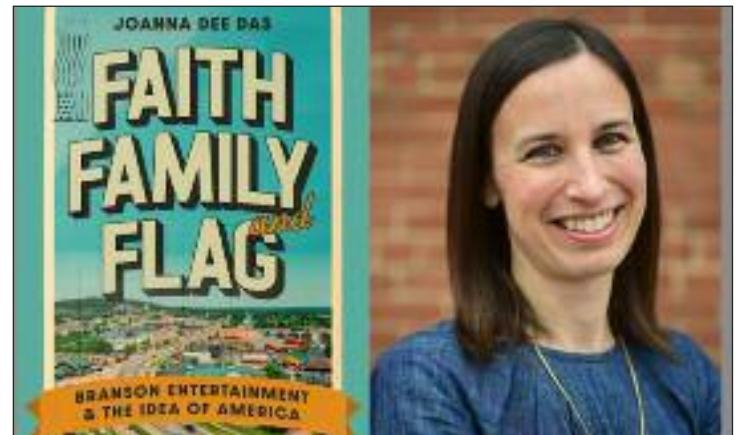
"I think more people are doing this style of questioning because they're like, man, the system's just trying to sell us this and sell us that. And I think kids are waking up to the fact that what you put in comes out; what you listen to and what you consume matters."

When asked by Grammy.com what message he would share with non-religious fans, Frank said he would urge them to seek Jesus.

"My main message is that Jesus changed my life, and every song is a reflection of that testimony. He saved my life," Frank said. "If you haven't considered Jesus, then I would consider Jesus, 'cause that's really all I have to offer – that's all my music has to offer."

—Michael Foust

"Faith, Family and Flag": New book explores Branson's enduring appeal



Branson is a top destination for Midwest families, not only for the colorful celebrations during the Christmas season but throughout the year. In her new book "Faith, Family and Flag: Branson Entertainment and the Idea of America," Washington University professor Joanna Dee Das delves into the area's appeal.

"In the 20th century, a lot of American cultural critics consolidated around the idea that listening to a whole opera or symphony, or a three-hour play, was high-brow," she told St. Louis Public Radio. "Branson keeps alive a vibrant tradition of variety entertainment, where most of the songs people sing are covers. The jokes are corny. There is also the kind of classic comedic figure of Branson entertainment: the hillbilly. So Branson has been subject to mockery when really, to me, it's a vibrant part of the American popular tradition."

Her book also explores the complexity of Branson's political identity. Christian principles, family orientation and patriotic tenets run through productions presented on its stages.

"There are some people for whom faith, family and flag are universal values that are prepolitical, that these are values of human beings," Das said. "Others take up the mantle of that 'faith, family and freedom' trifecta that has been a part of conservative political campaigns since the 1980s and see it as a particular vision of America that

is exclusive to others. Different people in Branson feel different ways."

The seeds of the book were planted more than 20 years ago, when Das was a New York University graduate student. She felt the premise of Thomas Frank's best-seller "What's the Matter With Kansas?" had missed something with his argument about "white, middle- and working-class Americans voting with their cultural interests but against their economic and social interests."

"What popped into my head at that moment was: 'He's wrong. If he would visit Branson, he would see how these strands of culture, economics and social values all weave together,'" she said, "and that woven thread is represented by the three primary values of faith, family and flag. So it's a coherent message, not a contradiction, necessarily."

Simply put, Branson is authentic in its Midwestern family values.

"Many people there are very genuine in that being Branson's brand of hospitality, family friendliness, building community in the theater — all the things that people in the theater want to do in general across the country," Das said. "Branson is a very important place for live performance in America and can tell us a lot about this idea of the American dream, what kind of values America represents and the battle over those values."



Cold Weather Home Comfort Hacks

As temperatures drop and cozy season sets in, keeping your home comfortable doesn't mean undergoing a full-scale renovation. In fact, with a few smart upgrades, you can create a warm, inviting space - while improving your home's energy efficiency, too.

Before the chill sets in, consider these cool-weather comfort hacks, inspired by the experts at Simonton Windows & Doors, who have delivered high-quality replacement windows and patio doors designed to enhance the appearance, security and comfort of homes around the country for more than 75 years.

Install a Smart Thermostat

One of the easiest ways to increase comfort while also reducing heating costs, installing a smart thermostat allows for automatic temperature adjustment, keeping your home warm while it's occupied and conserving en-

ergy when you're away. Over time, these intelligent devices learn your schedule and habits, and can be controlled remotely from a smartphone to let you turn on the heat prior to arriving back at home.

Replace Older Windows

If your windows are drafty or difficult to open, it may be time to upgrade. Modern replacement windows can dramatically improve energy efficiency and insulation. High-quality options from Simonton, including DaylightMax and 6200 Sliding Windows and 5500 and 6500 Double Hung Windows, meet the highest standards of performance and reliability, having successfully earned the prestigious Good Housekeeping Seal following rigorous testing. Designed



with security and weather resistance in mind, these windows are known for their durability, wide range of styles and advanced energy-saving features.

"This is a testament to the unwavering commitment we have to bring the best products to building professionals and homeowners," said Kate Land, vice president of product and innovation at Cornerstone Building Brands, parent company of Simonton. "For more than 75 years, the Simonton brand has given homeowners confidence that they are investing in windows that truly deliver the highest quality and performance. This recognition solidifies our place as an industry leader customers can rely on."

Add Insulating Window Treatments

Window treatments can do more than just add a design element to your home's interior. Options like layered drapes, thermal curtains or cellular shades can help reduce heat loss. Remember to open your curtains or blinds during the day to let in natural light and close them at night to trap warmth and keep your spaces comfortable. This can also help circulate the air in your home and reduce the chances of condensation on your windows when the temperature dips.

Seal Gaps and Keep Weatherstripping Clean

Even the smallest of gaps around windows or doors can allow cold air to seep in. Check weatherstripping for wear and tear, replace as needed and use expandable foam or caulk to seal large gaps. Keeping the areas around doors and windows clean can also help maintain a tight seal and prevent winter's chill from invading your comfortable space.

Upgrade Patio Doors

Old or inefficient patio doors can let in drafts and drive up energy bills. Replacing them with energy-efficient models, such as Simonton Contemporary Sliding Patio Doors, can help maintain comfort and enhance your home's appearance. Fully customizable with a wide range of colors, interior woodgrains and hardware finishes, the doors are designed with a narrow frame for more natural light without sacrificing energy efficiency. Plus, optional high-density SmartCore foam can further improve thermal efficiency, allowing you to enjoy winter's beauty from the comfort of the indoors.

Add Insulation

Inspect your attic, basement,

garage and crawl spaces for spots where insulation may be lacking. An easy and affordable way to retain heat and improve efficiency, adding pre-cut insulation into bays between ceiling joists or blowing in loose-fill insulation over the existing layer can help keep your home warmer all season long.

By making a few smart upgrades and prepping your space for the cold weather ahead, you can maximize comfort and energy efficiency. To ensure your home stays comfortable this winter and beyond, visit simonton.com for more solutions.

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sports

49ers quarterback Brock Purdy donates cars, Christmas gifts to military families' children



Brock Purdy, the starting quarterback for the San Francisco 49ers and an outspoken Christian, made Christmas brighter for several families. He gave military veterans and families with children battling pediatric illness a holiday haul that included jerseys, game tickets, footballs and brand-new Toyotas topped with large red bows, "Crosswalk Headlines" reported.

Purdy is in his fourth year in the league and is widely considered one of the NFL's best quarterbacks, having guided the 49ers to two NFC Championship appearances and a Super Bowl berth. Toyota released a video showing Purdy presenting the gifts to the families and expressing gratitude for their strength and perseverance.

"We appreciate every single one of you guys sitting here and for what you guys have done and what you guys stand for," he told the families. "We look up to you just for your fight and your courage -- we appreciate all of you guys."

Each family received goody bags with a ball and the specially designed rivalry jerseys the 49ers will wear in the regular season finale against the Seattle Seahawks. Each family also received tickets to the game, an announcement that drew cheers from the crowd.

But the giving didn't end there. Purdy guided the families outside, where he revealed each of them would receive a new car. "We just wanted to help you all out as best we could," he said.

One attendee, a military veteran who had been deployed three times, expressed disbelief at the moment. "I didn't know what to expect, and then the surprises just kept on going and going," he said.

Toyota also will make the vehicles wheelchair accessible for families who need it. "Thank you for giving us encouragement and motivation to keep going in life," Purdy told one child in a wheelchair.

Purdy openly expresses his Christian faith and introduces himself on his social media pages as "Believer in Christ" and "Follower of Christ."

"I've never been the biggest, the fastest, the strongest or any of that," he said in an earlier interview. "I feel like I've always sort of had to fight for what I get and work for what I get. But God's always given me an opportunity, whether that was in high school, college and then obviously in the NFL I put my faith and trust in him, and he's gotten me where I am."

Heisman Trophy winter Fernando Mendoza gives God credit

Fernando Mendoza, the quarterback for the University of Indiana, was awarded the highest honor in college football. But as he accepted the Heisman Trophy, he kept an even greater honor in perspective.

"I want to thank God for giving me the opportunity to chase a dream that once felt the world away," he said.

Mendoza led his team to undefeated 12-0 regular season that saw the Hoosiers climb to No. 1 in the nation for the first time in history and win their first Big Ten championship since 1967. He played a critical role in Indiana's success, performing with poise under pressure and delivering come-from-behind victories in critical games against Oregon, Ohio State and Penn State.

Despite this year's success, he was not heavily recruited out of high school and transferred to Indiana from the University of California this season in search of an opportunity to improve.

"I want every kid out there who feels overlooked, underestimated to know I



was you," Mendoza said during his acceptance speech. "I was that kid, too. I was in your shoes. The truth is, you don't need the most stars, hype or rankings. You just need discipline, heart and people who believe in you -- and you need to believe in your own abilities. I hope this moment shows you that chasing your dreams is worth it, no matter how big or impossible they seem."

He posted on Instagram a picture of himself holding the Heisman Trophy with the caption, "God Did" and cred-

ited weekly Bible studies for helping him and his teammates bond and grow closer to God. Mendoza regularly referenced his faith during interviews this year. After the Hoosiers defeated Ohio State to capture the conference title, he told a national TV audience, "I want to give all the glory to God. We were never supposed to be in this position, but by the glory of God, the great coaches, the great teammates, everyone we have around us, we were able to pull this off."

Baltimore Ravens players serve students by washing feet

Professional athletes are not always known for showing humility, on or off the field. However, several members of the Baltimore Ravens football team recently led by example when they washed the feet of local schoolchildren before giving them new shoes.

Quarterback Lamar Jackson, running back Derrick Henry and receiver Jay Flowers participated in the event in which elementary students learned about personal finance while also receiving new shoes and witnessing an act of servant leadership.

"Ravens players served students today by washing their feet and providing them with new shoes," the team posted on social media, according to "Crosswalk Headlines." "These acts of service, led by our team chaplain, represent the importance of humility and serving others."

The New Testament recounts a powerful story of Jesus washing his disciples' feet on the night before his crucifixion, during the Last Supper, as an example of humble, servant leadership. According to John 13, Jesus "poured water into a basin and began to wash his disciples' feet, drying them with the towel that was wrapped around him."

The participating players are outspo-

ken about their faith.

"I always keep God first, because without him, there is no Lamar Jackson," the quarterback said. "I give him all his praise, the glory, the honor. When you feel like you're bigger than the Lord, that's when all that success dies."

Henry has been just as explicit about where his priorities lie. The All-Pro

running back is known for drawing crosses under his eyes before every game, a practice he says is meant to honor God publicly and consistently. "I'm big on prayer and giving God thanks for everything that I have," he said. "I put God first in everything I do, and I wouldn't be where I am without him."



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10 Doctor-Recommended Health Resolutions for 2026

With a new year ahead, the American Medical Association (AMA) is offering Americans 10 evidence-based tips for staying healthy in 2026 and beyond:

- Get health screenings: Schedule preventive visits, tests and screenings so your physician can catch conditions before they become more serious.

- Manage stress: Mental health is part of overall health. Techniques such as meditation, deep breathing and yoga can help reduce stress. Ask for help from a mental health professional when you need it.

- Be physically active: Start the year off by prioritizing physical activity. Strive for at least 150 minutes of mod-

erate-intensity activity or 75 minutes of vigorous intensity activity each week. If you have a sedentary lifestyle or primarily sit for long stretches at work, build in frequent breaks to stretch and move throughout your day.

- Follow a healthy diet: Drink water instead of sugar-sweetened beverages and eat nutritious, whole foods, including fruits, vegetables, whole grains, nuts and seeds, low-fat dairy products and lean proteins. Avoid unhealthy ultra-processed foods, especially those with high levels of added sodium, saturated fats and sugar. Drinking sugary beverages, even 100% fruit juice, is associated with a higher mortality risk, according to a study published in JAMA Network Open.

- Stay hydrated: Drink plenty of water or other beverages composed mostly of water, such as milk or herbal tea, to avoid dehydration and to keep your body functioning properly. Even mild dehydration can drain your energy and make you tired. Adult men should get about 15.5 cups of fluids a day and women should get 11.5 cups, according to the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine.

- Get plenty of good sleep: To maintain your health and emotional well-being, most adults need 7 to 9 hours of quality sleep. Rest helps boost immunity and improve mental clarity.

- Update vaccinations: Vaccinations remain the best defense against flu and other serious respiratory viruses. Since significant flu activity can stretch into May, it's not too late to get a flu shot. The AMA recommends vaccination as long as the threat of flu remains. Talk with your physician or other health care professional to determine which vaccines are right for you. To cut through vaccine confusion and have open, honest conversations with your physician, first go to the AMA website for evidence-based information. For help finding a flu vaccine in your area, visit [GetMyFluShot.org](https://www.getmyflushot.org).

- Drink in moderation: If consuming alcohol, do so in moderation as de-



finied by the U.S. Dietary Guidelines: up to one drink per day for women and two drinks for men, and only for adults of legal drinking age.

- Quit tobacco, nicotine and e-cigarettes: Ask your doctor or health care professional for resources and guidance to help quit smoking, vaping or using other nicotine products. Make your home and car smoke-free to eliminate secondhand smoke exposure.

- Follow medication directions: When taking prescriptions, store them safely to prevent diversion or misuse, and properly dispose of any leftover

medication. If you're prescribed antibiotics, complete the full course to prevent antibiotic resistance.

For more health tips and resources visit ama-assn.org.

"With the holiday cookies eaten and those missed workouts officially last year's worry, the new year is a great chance to refocus on the healthy choices you want to make in 2026," said AMA president Dr. Bobby Mukkamala. "Even tiny changes now can snowball into major gains for your long-term health."

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Fact Check: Test What You Know About Heart Health

As you age, your doctor's interest in your cholesterol level is likely to increase. That's no coincidence. High cholesterol and age are two significant risk factors for heart disease, which is the leading cause of death in the United States.

You may not be able to slow the hands of time, but elevated low-density lipoprotein (LDL) cholesterol, also known as "bad" cholesterol, is one of the most significant addressable risk factors for the development of cardiovascular disease. Uncontrolled high LDL-C can lead to death, heart attack, stroke or the need for a coronary revascularization.

While statins are considered first-line treatment for people with high LDL cholesterol, an estimated 29% of patients stop taking their statin within the first year, based on findings published in the "American Journal of Cardiology." Up to 30% of people have some degree of statin intolerance, according to research published in the "Journal of Clinical Lipidology."

Test your heart health knowledge and learn more about managing your risk factors, including high cholesterol, with this quick quiz:

1. Do cardiovascular diseases, including heart disease and stroke, claim more lives in the U.S. than all forms of cancer and accidental deaths (the Nos. 2 and 3 causes of death, respectively) combined?

Yes. Cardiovascular disease is the No. 1 killer of men and women in America and worldwide, killing more people than both cancer and accidents each year.

2. According to the American Heart Association, which of the following are true?

• Men are more likely to have heart attacks at a younger age than women.

• Women experience different symptoms indicating potential heart disease.

• Women have a higher risk of fatality because their symptoms are frequently misunderstood or misdiagnosed, leading to delayed treatment.

All are True. While many factors are at play, one major underlying issue is historically, women simply haven't been well represented in clinical trials of heart-related conditions. However, Harvard Health reports that culture is slowly changing and some of the gaps are starting to close.

3. Does statin intolerance mean statins are not effective?

No. On the contrary, statins are the standard of care to lower LDL cholesterol. However, some people cannot take statins at any dose because of statin intolerance symptoms such as muscle pain, while others may have their LDL cholesterol remain uncontrolled because they are not able to take higher doses.

4. Are women more likely to be statin intolerant than men?

Yes. According to the National Institutes of Health, being female is a risk factor for statin intolerance.

5. If a person is statin intolerant, are there other treatments available to help lower their uncontrolled LDL-C?

Yes. Alternative treatments are available for people with statin intolerance. A health care provider can help explain what options are available if you experience potential statin-associated side effects.

6. Are muscle-related symptoms typically the most common



side effect of statins?

Yes. Muscle pains or cramps (myalgias) are the most common symptoms people experience. Your health care provider may run tests or change your medication to address these symptoms.

For more information on statin intolerance, talk with your health care provider or visit statinalternatives.info.

How to Lower Bad Cholesterol

LDL cholesterol, commonly referred to as "bad" cholesterol, leads to plaque in your arteries, reducing blood flow and potentially damaging your cardiovascular system.

If your bloodwork shows elevated LDL cholesterol levels, you can take steps to reduce it.

1. Eat a healthy diet low in saturated and trans fats and high in fiber, with an emphasis on fruits, vegetables and whole grains.

2. Get at least 30 minutes of exercise daily, and if you carry extra weight, work to lose it.

3. Talk to your health care provider about cholesterol-lowering medications, which can help lower bad cholesterol and reduce the risks associated with heart disease.

— Family Features



Why you need dental insurance in retirement.

Medicare doesn't pay for dental care.¹

That's right. As good as Medicare is, it was never meant to cover everything. That means if you want protection, you need to purchase individual insurance.

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¹"Medicare & You," Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services, 2025. ²"Aging changes in teeth and gums", medlineplus.gov, 4/17/2022. ³FairHealth, Inc. National average dental fees. Data current as of July 2025; subject to change.

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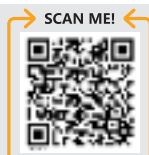
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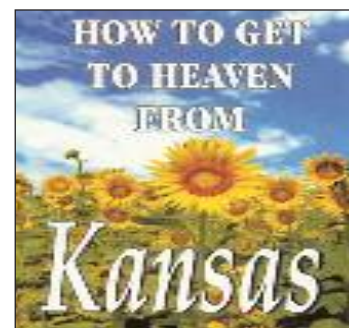
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1. Realize you are a sinner. Everyone starts the same place spiritually. "For all have sinned and come short of the glory of god." (Rom. 3:23). Sin's penalty keeps you out of Heaven and condemns you to Hell, separating you from God. Romans 6:23 says, "The wages of sin is death." Sin brings both physical & spiritual death. "And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death." (Rev. 20:14).

2. Realize Jesus paid the penalty. Jesus Christ's death, burial, and resurrection provided a way for you to go to heaven and restore your relationship with God. "But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." (Rom. 5:8). Since Jesus, God's Son, was the only One who could pay for our sin, He is the only Way to Heaven.

3. Repent of your sin and receive Jesus as your Savior. In order to go to Heaven from KANSAS, or anywhere else, you must accept Christ by calling on Him in prayer. He tells us in Romans 10:13, "For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved." Use the following prayer, or one similar to it, to receive Him now:

Dear Lord Jesus, I know I am a sinner. I believe that you died and rose again for me. Please forgive me of my sin, become Lord of my life, and take me to heaven when I die. I am trusting you completely, and in nothing I can do. Thank you Jesus! Amen.



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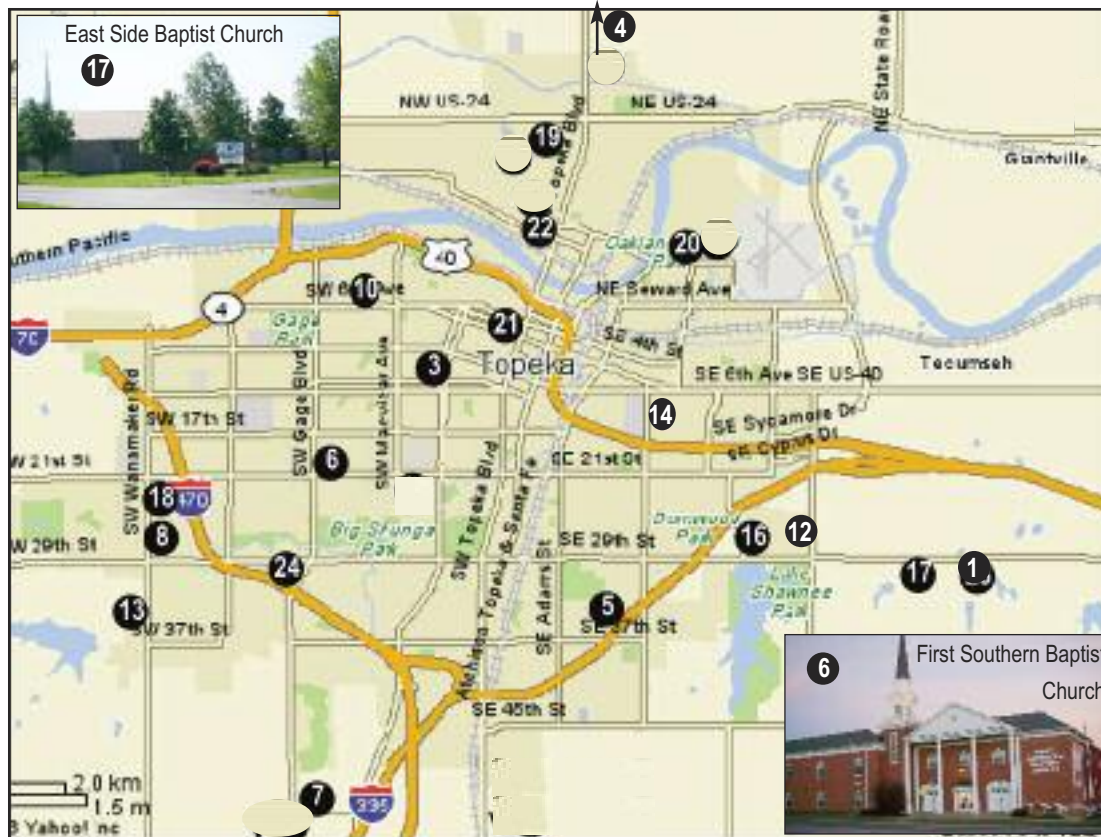
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Fun Fair open 10 am - 3 pm at NOTO Arts Center, Redbud Park, Veterans Park & connecting breezeway to N. Kansas Avenue! **Big Egg Hunt** starts at 10:10am at **Veterans Park**! **Food Trucks** open 9 am - 3pm at **Veterans Park** and **NOTO Arts Center**. **Live music** 10:15 - 3. **Vendor Market** open 10 am - 3 pm at **Veterans Park**, **Redbud Park**, **NOTO Arts Center** & on **Kansas Avenue**. Craft stations, **face painting**, **Easter Bunny photos**, **Petting Zoo**, **Inflatables**, **Carnival Games**, **Cup Cake Walks**, and more! (no parade this year due to traffic restrictions)

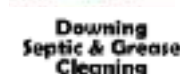
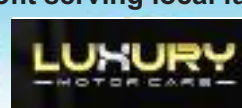
Volunteers needed! Contact:

info@C5Alive.org or 785-640-6399

For booth, sponsor & parade entry information:

info@C5Alive.org or 785-640-6399

Funds raised will be shared with a local non-profit serving local families



SATURDAY, Mar. 28, 2026 • 10 AM - 3 PM

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