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American Flag Tips for the 250 Year Celebration



As the United States prepares to celebrate its 250th birthday in July, Flag Day took on new meaning this year.

"If you thought the 250th birthday on July 4, 2026 was the only milestone this year, think again," according to the website ProudandFree.com. "The whole summer of 2026 is shaping up to be a patriotic marathon."

Flag Day kicked it off this week. The

■ Please see CRISIS page 3



By **Clint Decker**

History teaches that America's roots were grounded in Christian principles. Those foundations, however, were laid nearly 300 years before July 4, 1776.

In September 1492 an Italian explorer boarded his ship from the Canary Islands, off the coast of

northwest Africa. He captained a fleet of three vessels with experienced sailors on a dangerous expedition where no man had travelled before. For 32 days they sailed the Atlantic Ocean westward (thinking they were heading to the Indies), without seeing land. But on October 12, 1492, on the 33rd day, one of the crew cried out, "Land

ahoy!" Soon after, Christopher Columbus, one of history's greatest seamen, stepped off the Santa Maria and onto the sands of the New World. He landed in present day Bahamas.

What was his purpose after landing? Columbus wrote, "There be a church and abbots or friars to

■ Please see AMERICA page 2

Archaeologists Uncover Rare Early Image of Jesus

The face of Jesus emerging from a sealed Roman-era tomb in northwestern Turkey does not look like the familiar image known to most Christians today.

Archaeologists near Iznik, the ancient city of Nicaea, have uncovered a rare third-century fresco showing Jesus as the Good Shepherd, clean-shaven, youthful but dressed in Roman-style clothing while carrying a goat across his shoulders. Researchers say the find

adds an important piece to the long Christian history of ancient Anatolia, where the faith spread under Roman rule and later helped shape the doctrine still confessed by churches around the world.

The Associated Press reported that the fresco was found in an underground burial chamber in Hisardere, near Iznik. The city is better known in Christian history as the site of the

■ Please see JESUS page 2

Union Pacific's famed Big Boy 4014 returns to Topeka



Union Pacific's famed Big Boy No. 4014, the world's largest operating steam locomotive, journeys to the East Coast this summer for the first time as part of a historic coast-to-coast tour to celebrate America's 250th anniversary. The tour includes a Fourth of July celebration in Philadelphia, major display events in eight cities and more than 50 whistle-stops in 10 states, including stops in several Kansas Cities.

In addition to the public display days, rail fans can see this historic machine in action at over four dozen whistle-stops, generally 15- to 30- minutes long. One of

■ Please see BIG BOY page 2



Christian, Jewish leaders lobby for increased funding to protect houses of worship

Religious leaders are encouraging Congress to invest \$1 billion in a federal program to enhance security at houses of worship.

Sens. Jacky Rosen, D-Nev., and James Lankford, R-Okla., recently introduced the bipartisan Jewish American Security Act, which calls for increased funding for the Nonprofit Security Grant Program. The bill would require the Department of Education to develop and implement a comprehensive framework to combat antisemitism on college campuses; invest \$1 billion in security resources for at-risk houses of worship and other nonprofit institutions; and hold large social media platforms accountable by requiring transparency regarding their handling of antisemitic content online. Representatives Dan Goldman, D-NY, and Mike Lawler, R-NY, introduced the companion bill in the House of Representatives.

The issue also has drawn attention in Missouri and Kansas. Missouri recently created a statewide task force on nonprofit safety and security, which includes churches, synagogues and other houses of worship. Gov. Mike Kehoe signed the measure in July 2025 as part of Senate Bill 71, creating the Missouri Task Force on Nonprofit Safety and Security. Its purpose is to study and recommend safety and security changes for nonprofits, including faith-based institutions.

Kansas does not have a comparable recently signed state task force law, but Kansas does administer the federal Nonprofit Security Grant Program through the Kansas Highway Patrol, which announced the FY2025 funding opportunity for nonprofits at risk of attack.



Kansas churches, synagogues, mosques and other nonprofits also can apply through the program for physical security improvements. The Kansas Highway Patrol describes the program as funding for “target hardening” and other physical security enhancements for nonprofits at high risk of terrorist attack.

“Our nation is facing an epidemic of antisemitism,” Rosen said. “Year after year, we are seeing unprecedented levels of antisemitic violence and harassment. Jewish Americans are being targeted, attacked and killed simply because of who they are. This alarming trend demands a comprehensive, bipartisan approach that addresses both the seeds and the impacts of this vile hatred.

From social media to college campuses, we’ve seen how this bigotry manifests into real-world violence against Jews.”

Hostility and hate crimes against churches across the country have risen significantly in recent years, according to the Christian Post. The Family Research Council identified 1,384 acts against U.S.

churches that occurred between January 2018 and December 2024. “These acts are destructive and have the potential to intimidate religious communities,” according to the council. “Therefore, they deserve to be condemned.”

In addition to increased funding to help secure houses of worship, the bill also would allow funds to be used to hire public safety officers as direct employees.

“The security guards at Temple Israel and the Islamic Center in San Diego were the difference between saving lives and not,” said Eric Fingerhut, president and CEO of the Jewish Federations of North America. “Security guards who work for the institution are so much more effective. They know the buildings, the families, the employees. They know when something is out of sorts.”

—Dwight Widaman

AMERICA

continued from page 1

administer the sacraments, perform divine worship, and to convert the Indians.” He also stated about his mission, “With a hand that could be felt, the Lord opened my mind to the fact that it would be possible to sail from here to the Indies... This was a fire that burned within me who can doubt that this fire was not merely mine, but also of the Holy Spirit.” Christopher Columbus’ discovery of the New World opened the door for European colonization of the Amer-

ica’s. And what was Columbus’ life and mission founded upon? Christian ideals. 284 years before July 4, 1776, Christian principles began taking root in America.

In September 1620, another ship set sail across the Atlantic, The Mayflower. It left Plymouth, England with over 100 passengers and crew. Among them were the Pilgrims, a religious group. After 66 days on the sea, in November, the ship landed in present day Provincetown, Massachusetts. Why did they come? According to their first governor, William Bradford, they were truly Christian pilgrims, on a journey of obedience to God. Before

they disembarked the ship they drafted and signed one of America’s founding documents, the Mayflower Compact, which states, “Having undertaken for the glory of God and advancement of the Christian faith, and the honor of our king and country, a voyage to plant the first colony in the northern parts of Virginia, do by [this legal document and charter] solemnly and mutually, in the presence of God and one of another, covenant and combine ourselves together into a civil body politic...” What were the Pilgrims’ lives and mission found upon? Christian ideals. 156 years before July 4, 1776, Christian principles contin-

ued to take root in America.

Praise God for Christopher Columbus and the Pilgrims, for without them and the Christian principles they built and lived by, there would be no United States of America.

John Adams was one of the 56 signers of the Declaration of Independence and our nation’s second president. In 1813 he told Thomas Jefferson, “The general principles on which the fathers achieved independence were the general principles of Christianity.”

Though we celebrate and praise God for our history, how is our nation today? Are we as a nation continuing

to live by the Christian principles we were founded upon? There is reason to doubt as everywhere we go is godlessness and immorality, giving The Almighty ample reason to be angry with us. On this 250th anniversary, let us examine our national ways, confess our sins and turn to the Lord God for undeserving mercy. The Bible says, “Seek the Lord while he may be found; call upon him while he is near; let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; let him return to the Lord, that he may have compassion on him...” (Isaiah 55:6-7)

JESUS

continued from page 1

Council of Nicaea in A.D. 325, where church leaders debated the nature of Christ and adopted what became known as the Nicene Creed.

That early image matters because it comes from a time before later Christian art fixed the now-familiar image of a bearded Christ. It also predates the cross becoming Christianity’s dominant visual symbol.

Eren Erten Ertem, an archaeolo-

gist from Iznik Museum, told the AP the frescoes showed “a transition from late paganism to early Christianity, depicting the deceased being sent off to the afterlife in a positive and fitting manner.”

Turkish archaeologists said the tomb likely dates to the third century. Its sealed condition helped preserve the painting, leaving visible details that normally disappear in damp or disturbed burial sites.

The Good Shepherd image was common among early Christians. Scholars have long noted that early

believers used shepherd imagery to emphasize care, rescue and eternal life, themes rooted in Scripture and also familiar in Roman-era art.

The Iznik discovery is part of a wider pattern of finds in Turkey, where archaeologists have identified churches, tombs, inscriptions and artifacts tied to the growth of Christianity under Roman rule. The region was not a side road in church history. It was one of the main roads, yet today most sites remain unexcavated. The Apostle Paul was born in Tarsus and John

spent some of his final years in Ephesus, a site that Metro Voice included on a 2025 Steps of Paul tour to Greece and Turkey. Tradition says that Mary, the mother of Jesus, also lived in Ephesus in her later years.

Researchers also continue to study how early Christians lived alongside the Roman imperial cult, which honored emperors with religious devotion. Until well into the second century, followers of Christ typically gathered in synagogues as the fledgling movement was still seen as a part of Judaism.

Both Jewish and Gentile believers shared the same persecution for their faith in Jesus under Roman rule. That pressure helps explain why some New Testament writings, especially Revelation, use sharp language about empire, worship and loyalty.

Modern Turkey is overwhelmingly Muslim, but its landscape still holds layers of Christian history. The fresco near Iznik, say historians, does not change the basic story of early Christianity. It makes part of that story easier to see.

BIG BOY

continued from page 1

these stops will be in Topeka.

The Big Boy will arrive at Union Station in Kansas City on July 21st at approximately 4:20pm. It will be available for public viewing on July 22 from 9am to 1pm and then from

6-8pm.

Big Boy is scheduled to arrive in Topeka the next day, July 23 at 12:15pm. It will be at Great Overland Station until 12:45pm. The schedule

then shows its arrival at Salina at 6pm. It will depart the next day at 9am for Wilson and Hays.

Public viewing is free and usually involves interaction with operators.

Up close viewing of the sheer size of Big Boy, as well as the sounds of the steam engine and its whistle are all part of the experience.

More than “Pizza with a Side of Jesus”

Church youth ministry tends to look like this:

Around 6:15 on a Wednesday night, teens start to trickle into the church gym. Youth leaders greet them by name, asking about their weeks and following up on prayer requests. Some students socialize in the corner while others grab basketballs.

At 6:30, the youth pastor calls the group together for a game. Laughter and shouts echo through the gym as the teens play. Around 7, everyone files into the youth room and swarms the snack table. A few students grab guitars and head to the front to lead worship. Two dozen voices ring out in praise to God before the group settles into prayer and teaching.

The youth pastor brings students a message. Hands go up. Someone asks a hard theological question. A few scribble notes in a journal. Afterward, leaders gather students into small groups to discuss what faith in Christ really looks like beyond the walls of the church.

Strong Youth Ministry in Action

The above story is based on my own real youth group experience and is an example of what youth ministry done well can look like—a place where fun and friendship exist alongside mentorship and spiritual growth.

Ricky Sands, my former youth pastor at Westbrooke Church in Overland Park, Kan. and now senior pastor at First Baptist Church (FBC) in Weston, Mo., always tried to run youth ministry with that goal in mind.

“In a perfect world student ministry



should be supplemental to what kids are already being disciplined in the home,” Sands says. “And all I’m doing is coming in and affirming biblical ideas that have already been taught to them... My goal was to be supplemental to the students, and also I wanted to help equip parents to be the primary disciple-makers.”

When Sands was growing up, he shares, the youth group environment was what he described as “glorified babysitting,” meetings that were heavy on the chaos and fun but very light on Jesus. He wanted to push back on that culture “in every possible way.”

“We had large youth groups, but so many kids in the youth group that I was going to as a kid have left the faith because there just wasn’t a strong foundation there,” Sands says.

People leaving the faith after graduating from youth ministry isn’t just anecdotal. According to Lifeway Research, in 2019, two-thirds of churchgoing teens dropped out for at least a year as a young adult.

As a youth pastor, Sands made an effort to engage the entire family. He tried to meet with a different family every Wednesday night to check in with the

parents, pray with them, see how the student is doing at home, and just generally pour into them.

But beyond family engagement, Sands’ main emphasis for youth ministry was being in the Word.

“The bulk of the time that we spent there was in Bible study,” he explains. “We

exposited scripture together. We walked through books of the Bible together.”

Wednesday night meetings would have a message or teaching to encourage the students midweek, while Sunday mornings, Sands says, looked more like a Bible study with conversation and discussion.

The former youth pastor modeled his philosophy after a book on student ministry by Samuel Bierig, which claimed that students can handle verse-by-verse expository Bible teaching. “It would serve [students] well to not have cherry-picked verses that only deal with felt needs,” Sands says.

At Westbrooke, Sands led a year-long Bible study through the YouVersion app, which was open to the entire church body. He explains that it gave students the opportunity to hear from adult Christians, and for youth ministry to not be so isolated.

While Sands placed a heavy emphasis on Bible study, he also wanted to make sure the youth program wasn’t devoid of fun altogether. The youth often went on trips—including an annual one to Silver Dollar City—and held get-to-

■ Please see PIZZA page 4

C5 Luncheon to feature Dillon Walls of Called to Greatness

The July C5Alive POWER Luncheon will be held on the 9th at 11:30am at the Celtic Fox.

The program will feature Dillon Walls, Campus Minister for Called to Greatness.

The mission of Called to Greatness is to make disciples of Jesus who can go on to make more disciples.

The youth and college today aren’t actually learning how to thrive in their schools, careers, families or communities. They are crippled by depression, anxiety and purposelessness. Called to Greatness exists to help these young people live better by meeting Jesus, becoming disciples, and going out to change the world. We train students to see that their faith is not limited to their own “personal walk with Jesus,” but to recognize Jesus as King over every area of their life.

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



Walls

developing and uniting leaders in community businesses, non-profits and churches.

Upcoming luncheon dates are Aug. 13, Sep. 10, Oct. 8, Nov. 12, and Dec. 10.

Coming up on August 13 will be Ambassador Sam Brownback.

C5 also hosts other events, including EASTERFEST, the annual Topeka Easter Fun Fair, held in NOTO Arts District.

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 Individuals and home-based businesses are now available.

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 at 785-640-6399.

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FLAG

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site called it the “opening act for Independence Day.”

The June 14th holiday commemorates the day in 1777, when the Second Continental Congress passed the Flag Resolution. That resolution established the design of the American flag: 13 alternating red and white stripes and 13 white stars on a blue field. Each stripe and star stood for one of the original colonies. Before that vote, there was no single official flag. Continental Army units carried different banners. Ships flew various ensigns. The Flag Resolution gave the young nation a unified

symbol, and it stuck. Flag Day has been observed since 1916, when President Woodrow Wilson issued a presidential proclamation.

Here are seven ways to include the American flag in your 250th celebrations this year:

- Fly your flag all day.
- Attend a Flag Day ceremony connected with one of the many activities around the area.
- Teach kids the flag’s history. Walk them through the Flag Resolution.
- Replace a worn flag. If it is faded or frayed get a new one or consider a special 250th flag tied specifically to the nation’s birthday.
- Visit a military memorial. Many will hold 250th observances with color

guards this year.

• Teach your or grandkids the Pledge of Allegiance. It’s part of the tradition. Help pass down the respect for the flag and nation to a new generation.

• Fly your flag all summer. People who fly their American flag regularly, are shown to have better attitudes about their neighbors, community and country in general. It fosters patriotism.

“The semiquincentennial isn’t just about one date,” the website said. “It’s about recognizing 250 years of American identity, and the flag is the single most visible symbol of that identity.” Flying your flag carries extra weight this year. “It connects the original 13-star banner adopted in 1777 to the 50-star flag hanging on your porch right now.”

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Research Confirms the Healing Power of Prayer

Modern medicine is recognizing what the Bible has long taught – prayer provides physical and mental as well as spiritual healing benefits. Adult patients experienced significant relief from pain and anxiety after just five minutes of in-person prayer, according to a study at the University of Maryland School of Medicine’s Department of Family and Community Medicine.

“Prayer is powerful and beneficial on many levels,” Jesse Bradley, pastor of Grace Community Church in Washington, D.C., told Fox News Digital. Prayer is the most used form of complementary medicine in the United States, relied on by more than four in 10 Americans, the study said.

All participants in the study previously had reported experiencing moderate to severe pain, anxiety or



both. Following their standard medical appointments, the patients were randomly assigned to one of two groups: the prayer group, in which participants received five minutes of in-person Christian prayer delivered by a

trained volunteer, and the music group, where they spent five minutes listening to music. The researchers then tracked changes in the participants’ self-reported pain and anxiety levels at multiple intervals — immediately after the

five-minute session, at two weeks and at six weeks.

The study, published in “The Annals of Family Medicine,” revealed that although patients in both groups showed improvements, those in the prayer group reported substantially greater relief. For pain reduction, the individuals who received in-person prayer experienced greater drops in pain intensity immediately following the session. This superior level of relief remained evident during the two-week follow-up compared to the music group, the researchers found.

For anxiety reduction, the benefits of prayer were even longer-lasting. The prayer recipients reported significantly greater reductions in anxiety immediately after the session, and these positive effects remained statistically significant at

both the two-week and six-week checkpoints.

“We expected that patients who expected prayer to work would benefit more, but that wasn’t what we found,” said. Dr. Katherine Jacobson, assistant professor of family and community medicine. “Religious affiliation, religious intensity and expectancy of healing did not predict who improved. Benefits appeared across a wide range of patients, including those not of the Christian faith and those who did not expect the intervention to help them.

“For physicians and health systems, the study supports continuing to ask patients about spiritual care preferences as part of whole-person care and considering whether trained Christian volunteer prayer practitioners could be integrated into outpatient settings for interested patients.”

PIZZA
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gethers outside of church. He says these outings reflected the family nature of the body of Christ. He frequently provided opportunities for the students to fellow-

ship and develop stronger relationships with each other.

“The goal was always having at the front of our minds [that] we’re a family,” he says. “We’re brothers and sisters in Christ and we do things that families do. And when we do those things, we grow closer together.”

The Fruit of the Right Foundation

Sands’ approach to student ministry is just one example, but it reflects the broader model that produces lasting results. Research links Bible engagement among teens to stronger spiritual formation. One Barna study found that 84% of Bible-Engaged teens say they have a better understanding of their purpose in life.

However, even in a strong youth ministry, outcomes are unpredictable. Students still leave the faith. That’s why, for Sands, success doesn’t rest on attendance numbers or producing guaranteed spiritual results.

“Success is faithfulness,” he says. “Success is going to come back on me, not on results.” He believes it is everyone’s duty, not just as leaders but as Christians in general, to be faithful to their calling and fulfill the Great Commission.

He also says that God is ultimately the one who produces fruit. “You want to plant seeds in the hearts of young people that the Lord will water and grow.”

that you’re weak.” He shares that he applied this to his own time in student ministry. He jokingly called himself “an old man trapped in a young man’s body” who struggled to come up with the “fun” side of things, so he put one of the youth leaders in charge of the games and activities.

Sands also warns youth leaders not to fall into the trap of comparison. “It can get really discouraging when your metrics for whether or not you’re doing a good job are what the other youth ministry or church is doing.” He shares that he has struggled with comparison in the past.

Why Youth Ministry Matters

According to The Open Generation, 62% of teens globally are open to the Bible, but only 8% are “Bible engaged.” 30% are not engaged with the Bible at all. Barna reports that only a third of U.S. teens are “committed Christians,” with

the rest consisting of nominal Christians or non-Christians. But over half of all teens surveyed say they are motivated to learn more about Jesus.

With these stats in mind, the need for strong youth ministry is clear. Many students desire to learn about Christian teachings. And some have never had exposure to Christian teachings at all. But if what they learn is weak and shallow, focused more on fun than truth, then a weak foundation follows.

Sands’ position as senior pastor at FBC Weston, he says, has only strengthened his belief in the importance of youth ministry.

Drawing on Ephesians 4, Sands says, “It is our job to equip the saints to carry out the work of the ministry, not to do all the work of the ministry.”

At his church, he continues to lead the youth group, forming a firm foundation built in the hearts of young students.

By Lyra Thompson | Metro Voice

Putting it into Practice

For people going into youth ministry now, it can be hard to know how to strike that right balance of both fun and deeply committed to the Bible. Sands offers some advice.

“Know your strengths and weaknesses,” he says. “Build a team around you that will complement you in areas



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Kansans are rebuilding some of the ancient city of Etzanoa. Now you can visit

A new immersion center in Arkansas City is highlighting a settlement that has been called one of the most influential cities in ancient North America.

Some estimates say the city of Etzanoa housed up to 20,000 ancestors of the Wichita Tribe in a complex society. It flourished along the Walnut River from about 1450 to 1700.

The settlement dispersed as Europeans took over the area. However, Etzanoa refused to remain buried.

People in Arkansas City always suspected the area had a large indigenous population. They kept finding arrowheads, bits of pottery and tools.

"People have been finding artifacts in this area since the 1880s," Etzanoa Conservancy director Georgia Zavala said. "They would plow, and then they'd get stone tools pulling up in their field."

The story of Etzanoa involves Spanish

Kansas, and there are so many people who don't know Wichita is a tribe of people," tribe member Derek Ross said in an interview.

The research in Arkansas City isn't new information to the Wichita Tribe.

"I'm 62 years old. I've been Wichita all my life," Ross said. "So I'm knowledgeable about our language, our customs, our heritage and our history. It's not a surprise to me what information people are learning about today."

Spanish explorers set out across the Great Plains looking for cities of gold and large populations of Native Americans. Conquistadors encountered the city and called it Etzanoa, or The Great Settlement.

These explorers kept detailed notes of their expeditions and encounters with the indigenous people.

The Etzanoa population figure of



Derek Ross is constructing a grass house at the Etzanoa Immersion Center in Arkansas City. He is using native prairie grass for building material, just as the settlement's residents did.

conquistadors, buried artifacts and an advanced city that challenges common assumptions about how people lived on the Great Plains. But most of all, it involves the Wichita Tribe, whose ancestors built Etzanoa.

Today, the tribe is headquartered in Anadarko, Oklahoma. But their name remains associated with many things in Kansas, including the largest city in the state.

Derek Ross is constructing a grass house at the Etzanoa Immersion Center in Arkansas City. He is using native prairie grass for building material, just as the settlement's residents did.

"You can ask people in Wichita,

20,000 is based on these Spanish expeditions. Some scholars think the Spanish were over exaggerating the population. Others say the large amount of artifacts being found around Arkansas City supports their claim.

After decades of confusion about the orientation of the Spanish maps, archeologists determined Etzanona was centered around Arkansas City.

Wichita State University archeologist Donald Blakeslee used this new understanding of the Spanish maps to start digging in the area. These digs have found evidence of conflicts between Spanish conquistadors and native populations detailed in the notes.



The Etzanoa Immersion Center in Arkansas City recently opened to tell the story of the ancient Kansas settlement. A model grass house being built a Wichita Tribe member will highlight how Etzanoans lived and worked.

Further investigations, like drone surveys, revealed large earthworks buried around the area. These explorations, along with the consistent flow of artifacts, give a better picture of life at Etzanoa.

That picture challenges several long-held views of Native Americans in the Great Plains. The people of Etzanoa weren't nomadic hunters and gatherers, but had a complex community and agriculture.

"In order to have a city of 20,000 people, that would require government discipline, structure, social services, education," Ross said. "When people think about Native Americans, they think about people who are randomly roaming about the prairie."

Etzanoans lived in grass houses with crops between the residences. They produced enough food, tools and clothing to support the large population.

"Obviously, they hunted bison primarily, and they would sometimes have to travel to find herds for that," Zavala said. "They practiced agriculture year round, growing corn, squash, pumpkins, as well as sunflowers."

Along with agriculture, they had a form of centralized government and managed extensive trade routes.

Objects made from materials not usually found in the Great Plains, like obsidian and turquoise, appear at the site. Buffalo pelts were found as far away from Europe, suggesting the Etzanoans

traded with incoming explorers.

The artifacts reveal an advanced civilization. Ross said often people think of Native Americans dancing around a campfire, when Etzanoa tells a different story.

"That's people homeschooling their children. That's people raising families. That's people providing social services, probably welfare," Ross said. "The same things that you would find in Washington, D.C., today were found in the governments and the leadership of Native American tribes."

The conservancy opened the new immersion center in Arkansas City in June. It aims to educate people about Etzanoa, the city's rediscovery and its people. The center features informational displays, virtual reality tours and nature trails.

Georgia Zavala, director of the Etzanoa Conservancy, gives a tour of the new immersion center in Arkansas City.

Zavala hopes to eventually build an amphitheater to tell the Wichita Tribe's story since Etzanoa. She said it's important for the tribe to be involved.

"People have been living in this area for thousands of years," Zavala said. "The immersion center is only looking at a small scope of that time period. It's important to acknowledge that we're not the first people here. We won't be the last."

Ross is currently building a grass house at the immersion center to demonstrate how his ancestors lived. Like most of Etzanoa, it's a feat of engi-

neering. Made of cedar poles and covered with blue stem grass, the houses were designed to shed water and insulate.

He hopes the story told at Etzanoa is not only looking to the past. The Wichita people continue to contribute to American society. They aren't just confined to the Great Plains or Anadarko, Oklahoma.

"Etzanoa is a story of resilience, and it's a story of forgiveness and it's a story of moving forward," Ross said. "All the Indians went away, is what kind of people think. But Native American people, particularly my family and our tribe, are a meaningful part of the world that's going on today."

Roger Mener reports from the Wichita area for the Kansas News Service. You can email him at nomer@kmuw.org.

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COMMISSION FOR KIDS?

Dear Dave,

I'm trying to wrap my head around your commission method of giving money to kids. We have an 11-year-old and a 16-year-old. Should they have individual lists of tasks, or should there be one big list they both work from on a first-come, first-served basis? Also, should giving, spending and saving be a mandatory part of the commission structure? Is there a time when children should age out of the commission structure?

A. I really like the "age out" part of your question. So, let's look at the entire scenario as an evolution. For starters, you should teach kids to work and manage money early, but at an age-appropriate level. We

don't send 3-year-olds to the salt mines. We might send a 16-year-old there ... I'm kidding, of course. But it's not unfair to expect more of a 16-year-old and teach them with more sophistication and detail than you would a preschooler.

If you tell a 3-year-old to clean up their room, those of us who have had kids that age know the child will put away two or three toys — and you'll do 90% of the actual work. Then, the kid gets lots of high-fives and praise for being the best room-cleaner on the planet. Oh, and here's a dollar for doing one of your chores.

The point at that age is to teach them to make an emotional connection between work and money. Work creates money. It's a simple concept, but I still talk to folks in their 40s and 50s every day who can't seem to grasp the idea. After that, you can move on to things that are a little more complicated. You have to clean the room yourself. It's your turn to feed the dog. And tasks get a little bigger, and little more complicated. This is a great time to introduce them to

the uses for money — I'm talking about giving, saving and spending — and how to do all three.

By the time they're 16 or so, they should know enough about money and how to handle it properly that you can help them open their own checking and savings accounts. Cosign on the accounts for them, and as they begin mak-

ing more money through things like after-school and summer jobs, they can practice managing their finances on a different level with parental oversight.

But the real point behind the commission structure is this: If you do the work, you get paid. If you don't do the work, you don't get paid. When they're younger,

and maybe don't want to do a job here and there, that's okay. They're kids. What you're doing is new to them, and it's a learning process. But if it goes on for a couple of weeks, or they decide they're just not going to do anything — that's not an option. They're going to learn to work.

— Dave

Are Annuities Good or Bad? Understanding the Pros, Cons, and If One Is Right for You

By Roger Shumaker
Financial Professional
at The Retirement Team



Planning for retirement has never been simple. Rising prices, longer life expectancies, and uncertain investment markets have many seniors asking one important question: **Will my money last as long as I do?**

That concern is one reason annuities have become increasingly popular. Television commercials promise guaranteed income for life. Financial advisors often recommend them as a way to create a dependable paycheck after retirement. Yet critics argue that annuities can be expensive, confusing, and difficult to get out of once you've signed the contract.

So, are annuities good or bad? The honest answer is that they can be both. Like a hammer or a power tool, an annuity is simply a financial tool. Used appropriately, it can solve a problem. Used incorrectly, it can create one. Understanding how annuities work—and who they are designed to help—can make it easier to decide whether they deserve a place in your retirement plan.

What Exactly Is an Annuity?

An annuity is a contract between you and an insurance company. You invest money either through one large payment or several smaller payments over time. In return, the insurance company agrees to make payments back to you, often beginning immediately or at a future date.

Many retirees purchase annuities because they provide something that's becoming increasingly rare: guaranteed income. For people who worry about outliving their savings, knowing that another check will arrive every month can provide tremendous financial confidence. Think of it this way: while investments such as stocks and mutual funds can rise and fall with the market, many annuities are designed to

provide predictable income regardless of what the stock market is doing.

Why Some Retirees Love Annuities

One of the greatest fears among retirees is running out of money. According to numerous retirement surveys, many seniors worry more about exhausting their savings than they do about death itself. An annuity can help reduce that fear by creating an income stream that continues for life if structured that way.

That guaranteed income can help pay for essential monthly expenses such as: Mortgage or rent, Utilities, Groceries, Insurance premiums, Medications, etc. When those basic expenses are covered, retirees often feel more comfortable using other savings for travel, hobbies, or helping family members.

Another benefit is predictability. Retirement income from investments can fluctuate dramatically during market downturns. Watching account balances decline during a bear market can be stressful, especially when you're withdrawing money to pay monthly bills. With many annuities, the monthly payment remains the same regardless of market performance. For retirees who value stability over aggressive investment growth, this consistency can be especially appealing.

Tax Advantages

Another feature that attracts some investors is tax-deferred growth. Money inside many annuities grows without being taxed each year. Taxes generally aren't owed until money is withdrawn. For retirees who have already contributed the maximum to retirement accounts or who are looking for additional tax-deferred savings opportunities, this feature can be attractive. However, tax benefits alone usually aren't a good reason to purchase an annuity. The overall costs and features should always be considered.

Not All Annuities Are the Same

One reason annuities generate so much confusion is that there isn't just one type. Some provide fixed interest rates. Others allow your earnings to fluctuate with investment markets. Still others are tied to market indexes while offering varying degrees of protection against losses. Each type comes with different levels of risk, potential reward, fees, and complexity. That's why two people can have completely different experiences with annuities. One retiree may own a simple, low-cost contract that performs exactly as expected, while another may purchase a complicated product filled with expensive optional features they never use.

The Drawbacks You Should Understand

Although annuities offer valuable benefits, they also have disadvantages, and perhaps the biggest criticism is that some contracts are difficult to understand. Insurance companies often include numerous options, riders, guarantees, restrictions, and legal disclosures. Even financially savvy individuals sometimes struggle to compare one annuity to another.

Another concern is cost. Certain annuities include annual management fees, administrative charges, insurance expenses, and optional riders that increase the total cost of ownership. While not every annuity carries high fees, buyers should always ask for a complete explanation of every charge before signing.

Liquidity can also be an issue. Many annuities include surrender periods that last several years. During this time, withdrawing large amounts of money may trigger surrender charges that reduce the value of your investment. That means an annuity generally should not contain money you might need for emergencies. Maintaining separate emergency savings remains an important part of retirement planning.

■ See RETIREMENT TEAM on page 10



— THE —
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The Retirement Team is a team of financial professionals that specialize in helping retirees and those about to retire.

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Staying on Track When Markets Feel Uncertain

By Jim Hanna

Geopolitical developments, economic policy changes, inflation data, and interest rate shifts regularly influence the markets. While recent headlines may feel unsettling, market volatility is not unusual — and uncertainty has always been part of investing. What often matters most during these periods is not reacting to the news itself, but focusing on what you can control and ensuring your financial plan continues to support your long term goals.

Whether you're early in your career, approaching retirement, or already drawing income from your portfolio, periods of market volatility can serve as a useful reminder to revisit your strategy and confirm it still aligns with your needs, priorities, and comfort level with risk.

If you're decades from retirement. Market swings can feel uncomfortable, but they also provide an opportunity to reassess your perspective on risk. Investing always involves some degree of uncertainty, and how you react emotionally when markets move up or down can offer insight into whether your current portfolio still fits your risk tolerance. Taking time to reflect on that response can help ensure your strategy is appropriate for your circumstances.

With a longer time horizon, short term market fluctuations often become less meaningful. Historically, markets have recovered from downturns over time, and what feels significant today may ultimately appear as a temporary setback in hindsight. Consistent investing, such as dollar cost averaging, can also help turn volatility into an advantage by spreading investments over time rather than trying to time the market.



Hanna

If you're nearing retirement. As retirement approaches, diversification becomes increasingly important. Different asset classes and investment types often respond differently to economic conditions, and a broadly diversified portfolio can help manage risk during periods of volatility. Reviewing your allocation across stocks, bonds, cash, and other investment vehicles can help ensure your portfolio reflects both your income needs and your comfort with market movement.

It's also wise to consider how your investments are positioned for your upcoming expenses. Funds you expect to use in the early years of retirement may benefit from being invested more conservatively, while assets with a longer time horizon can remain focused on growth and keeping pace with inflation. Striking the right balance between protection and continued growth is key as you transition toward retirement.

If you're already retired. Market volatility can feel especially personal once you're relying on your savings for income. Reviewing your withdrawal strategy during uncertain markets can help protect your long term financial security. If your portfolio experiences decline, it may be worth reassessing how much you're withdrawing to ensure your income remains sustainable over time.

While equities may still play a role during a retirement that could last several decades, preserving your savings base is critical. Evaluating your stock exposure within the context of your overall financial plan can help ensure you're not taking unnecessary risk while still allowing your portfolio the potential to grow over the long term.

Regardless of where you are in your financial journey, market movement provides an opportunity to step back

and compare your investment strategy to your goals. Are you still on track? Even if the answer feels uncertain, there are steps you can take to regain clarity and confidence. Working with a financial advisor can help you stay focused, adapt to changing conditions, and move forward with a plan designed to support your financial goals — even when the markets feel unpredictable.

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(Approved until 06/30/2027)

Tens of Millions May Be Owed an IRS Refund, but Must Act Now To Secure It

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



A recent court decision in Kwong v. United States held that Internal Revenue Code § 7508A(d) should be applied to the COVID-19 federal disaster period and that most tax penalties or interest paid for the time period should be refunded. So, if you paid IRS penalties or interest on a tax return between January 2020 and July 2023, there's a real chance the government owes you money back. This isn't something that will happen automatically, though, and action is required by July 10th.

Tens of millions of taxpayers are impacted by this and should file what is called a protective claim, or their refund opportunity may be permanently lost. To file a claim, Form 843 must be mailed to the IRS (they do not allow this form to be sent electronically) with a postmark date no later than July 10th. You don't even have to know the exact amount you believe you're owed in order to file your claim, though fully filling out the form with this information should speed the refund process along.

It may be a while before any refunds are issued. Currently, the court ruling is under appeal and that process could easily take a year,

potentially more. The IRS is also not currently well-equipped to handle the time-intensive task of reviewing millions or tens of millions of paper forms and manually issuing refunds.

If you don't still have access to your returns, you can log in to IRS.gov and examine tax transcripts for tax years 2019-2023 to find out how much you may be entitled to or consult your tax preparer.

You'd think, if the IRS owes you money, that they'd be obligated to just give it to you; unfortunately that is not the case. This situation, like many others involving taxes and the US tax code, highlights the difference between the 'well advised' and the 'unaware' in how much the IRS takes and keeps of one's hard earned dollars. If you'd like to become one of the well advised, call 785-330-9292 or visit our website www.RetireFromTaxes.com to schedule a complimentary strategy session with someone on our team at Retirement Portfolios.

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

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I Am NOT Setting Dates for the Second Coming, But Things ARE Different Today

By Dr. Michael Brown

When I came to faith in Jesus at the age of 16 in 1971, we were told that all signs pointed to Jesus returning very soon, possibly any minute. Hal Lindsey's bestselling book *The Late Great Planet Earth* laid it all out, Jerusalem was back in Jewish hands, and the counterculture revolution was the final rebellion prophesied in the Bible. Surely, we thought, He'll be back any moment now.

That was more than 55 years ago, and since then, many other predictions have come and gone.

There was the bestselling book *88 Reasons Why the Rapture Will Be in 1988*, which not only predicted the year of the rapture but also the date: September 12, 1988.

When a friend asked if I planned to read the book, I told him I would read it on September 13.

I didn't take it seriously at all. Harold Camping of *Family Radio* infamously predicted Judgment Day and the return of Jesus on May 21, 2011. (This was actually the last of a number of wrong predictions he made.)

And, while not predicting dates, the mega-bestselling *Left Behind* series by Jerry Jenkins and Tim LaHaye had millions of Christians expecting an "any moment" return of the Lord.

There was also a viral video released in 2025 claiming that the Second Coming would take place on September 23 or 24, 2025.

It was tied to a pastor's reported vision and to claims about *Rosh HaShanah*, which some linked to hidden meanings in Hebrew and other prophetic symbolism.

Talk about reading things into the

biblical text that are not there!

That's why I posted a video on September 18, 2025, titled, "*Why Jesus Is Not Returning September 23.*"



In fact, on September 17, 2017, I posted an article titled, "*Sorry to Tell You, But Jesus Is Not Returning on September 23*" – meaning, September 23, 2017.

The exact same date was predicted 8 years earlier.

When will we learn?

That's why, on September 10, 2025, I posted an article titled, "*Longing for His Return Rather Than Date-Setting.*"

And that's why, in light of these failed predictions, which have been made for most of Church history, the last thing I'm going to do is set dates.

Date-setting is not just dangerous business. It is also a great distraction.

It's possible Jesus will not return for

another 100 years, or even longer. Until that time – be it in the very near or distant future – we have work to do for Him.

And that must be our focus.

That's also why, when people have said to me over the years, "But things are different now," I tell them, "I've heard that *many* times before."

Yet, to be totally candid—and without setting dates—it's clear that things are different today, more than at any other time in my life (and I'm 71 now).

From a technological point of view, the rise of AI has given rise to some very plausible doom-and-gloom predictions. And even if the worst of these predictions prove to be completely overblown, it seems clear that the lives of countless millions of people could change dramatically in the next few years.

Some real upheaval could be at hand.

■ Continued on next page

Where is Your Passion?



**CLINT
DECKER**

President and
Evangelist
with Great
Awakenings, Inc.

Speaking Truth

Would any coach want an entire team of mediocre football players? Would any business want a company of uninterested employees? Would any pastor want to lead a congregation of complacent believers?

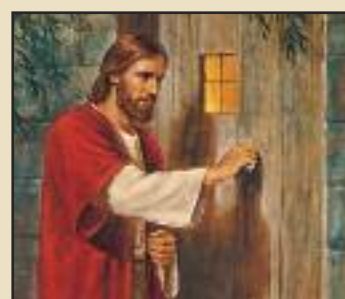
No, of course not, and neither would Jesus. He condemned such attitudes in His followers. There was a group of Christians that lived in the city of Laodicea, that once lived like this and Jesus called them out, saying, "I know your works: you are neither cold nor hot. Would that you were either cold or hot! So, because you are lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I will spit you out of my mouth." (Revelation 2:15-16)

Jesus used temperature language to illustrate where professing believers stood in relationship with Him. The

Laodicean's did not have a cold distant relationship, nor a passionate one with Christ. They were somewhere in the middle, which Jesus called--lukewarm.

The believers had good biblical doctrine. They were morally upright, not lazy, a group of doers always getting much done. Consequently, their divine rebuke did not result from their beliefs, morals or activity. Instead, it came from their attitude toward Jesus. They acknowledged Him, talked about Him, but they did not operate their church, nor live in dependency on Him. And anyone that visited the church, or spent time with any of the believers could sense this. Someone may not have been able to put their finger on it, but clearly, something was wrong.

This is the state of so many churches today. They have wonderful buildings, faithful congregations, dependable supporters, encouraging weekly services, but something is missing. It is the state of many believers also. They declare their belief in Christ, attend church services, have been baptized, take communion, have gone through confirmation and donated their hard-earned money to the church. However, Jesus says to them what He said to the Laodicean church, "Those whom I love, I reprove and



discipline, so be zealous and repent." (Rev. 3:19) Like those in Laodicea, many believers today are missing a zealotness for Christ. There is no burning passion for Him. Just a contented lukewarmness. And others can feel it. Amidst the professions and religious activities something is missing.

In love for His church, Jesus comes to its door and patiently knocks. All the while, the door remains closed to dependency on Him. Even so, He still knocks, waiting for anyone to come and welcome Him back in. However, if they refuse His patient knocking, He will "spit them out of His mouth." But if they respond and turn from their lukewarmness to a renewed walk with Him, He offers a great promise of blessing upon them.

Take time to examine the spiritual condition of your church and your own walk with Christ. Where is the passion for Jesus? Where is the boiling

love for Him? Where is the heavenly zeal? This is not about feelings, but about the bent of one's whole life and the spiritual state of a congregation.

Listen to Jesus' loving and persuasive words to His precious bride, "I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and eat with him, and he with me. The one who conquers, I will grant him to sit with me on my throne, as I also conquered and sat down with my Father on his throne. He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches." (Rev. 3:20-22)

Hear the Spirit's call to His church and respond. Repent of your lukewarmness and be awakened to a fresh zeal for Christ.

A prayer for you – *Lord God, search my heart. Point out if I have strayed from you and lost my zeal. I repent of my love for the world and dependency on myself. I turn to you asking that you pour out upon me a renewed passion and love that burns with a raging fire, that nothing in this world can extinguish. 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.

Constitution Hall Topeka: The Kansas Free State Capitol

By Carolyn Cogswell

Journalist and editor Noble L. Prentiss (1839-1900) once wrote that Kansas was "the hottest, coldest, driest, wettest, thickest, thinnest country in the world," and from 1854 to 1861 it could also have been called the bloodiest.

Through the passage of the Kansas-Nebraska Act (1854) Kansas became a territory and the period between 1854 and 1861, referred to as the territorial period of Kansas history, was fraught with danger and violence in what has been referred to as the "Civil War before the Civil War" or "Bleeding Kansas" before the first shots were fired at Fort Sumpter.

The Kansas-Nebraska Act provided for citizens moving to Kansas and Nebraska to decide whether or not they wanted to be a free or a slave state. Many expected Kansas to be a slave state and Nebraska a free state. But in 1855, in a stone building at what is now 427-429 S. Kansas Avenue, in Topeka, the first of four Kansas constitutions was drawn up.

Constitution Hall is open on Topeka's First Friday Art Walk from 5 to 8 PM and by appointment. Here, visitors can see the restored building that housed the early Kansas Senate and House of Representatives, hosted other community events including church meetings, other social gatherings and was crucial in operations of the Underground Railroad.

Historian William Seale wrote,

• "Friends of the Free State Capitol received an initial grant from the Kansas Legislature in 1998 to restore Constitution Hall in Topeka, the Kansas Free State Capital at 427-429 S. Kansas Avenue. The City of Topeka, the National Park Service, and private donors have contributed stabilization funds."

• The "present roof is the original, built of ad-hoc timber and farm implements, attesting to the building's authenticity.

The original limestone walls and native timber floors are intact."

• The daughters of the American Revolution in 1903 and early Kansas Historical Society executives identified Constitution Hall as the "first permanent structure built in Topeka."

• "Constitution Hall is a recognized historical landmark for nearly 150 years."

The nonprofit Friends of the Free State Capitol, Inc. owns Constitution Hall Topeka and has restored the native stone building. Among current trustees is Chris Meinhardt, a retired architect and a founder of the organization.

His major role has been to engage restoration professionals and programs such as historian William Seale in his research and reporting, which led to listing in the National Register of Historic Places.

The major initiating effort was assisting with building nomination to the National Underground Railroad Network to Freedom, the congressionally authorized National Park Service Program. This effort and successful nomination led to retaining Seale.

Meinhardt listed five keys in restoration of Constitution Hall Topeka that may excite Topekans about its preservation and community support now that it's restored.

1. Here in 1855, the first Kansas constitution was inspired by the Declaration of Independence, especially that all people are created equal.

2. The Topeka Constitution radically banned slavery in the future state when all the nation expected it would be a new pro slavery state.

3. The Lane Trail, from Topeka northward to freedom in Canada, was operated by the Free State militia headquartered in Constitution Hall Topeka.

4. The nationally important story of Topeka's Constitution Hall is inseparable from the nationally important story of

Lecompton's Constitution Hall.

5. Cyrus K. Holliday, the great Santa Fe Railroad founder, is responsible for arranging to build Constitution Hall and from within its native stone walls, made Topeka the capital of Kansas.

The Constitution Hall website adds that, "In 1855, Free State leaders sought to prevent the westward expansion of slavery by drafting the first of four Kansas Constitutions. On July 4, 1856, the U.S. Army forcibly dispersed the freely elected Topeka Legislature. And antislavery pioneers operated the western frontier's Underground Railroad by way of the Lane Trail, assisting hundreds of people escaping slavery to freedom in the North."

Craig Miner wrote in Kansas, *The History of the Sunflower State*, 1854-2000, "On June 27, 1855, settlers organized a Kansas Democratic Party in a meeting chaired by a firebrand and an electrifying speaker recently arrived from Indiana—James H. Lane. . . Leavenworth and Atchison were the main Pro-Slavery towns while Lawrence and Topeka were Free State centers. A gaggle of smaller towns—Kickapoo, Franklin, Tecumseh, Wyandotte, Quindaro, Delaware, Sumner, Emporia, Doniphan, Ft. Scott, Osawatimie, Palermo, Elwood, Lecompton, Grasshopper Falls, Manhattan, and Council Grove, among those of some pretension—rounded out the primitive panoply within the next several years." (p. 48)

The four constitutions drafted during the territorial period include:

• Topeka Constitution (1855): An anti-slavery constitution, passed in the U.S. House of Representatives, but rejected by the Senate.

• Lecompton Constitution (1857): The Lecompton constitution was created entirely by pro-slavery men, protected slavery, was blocked by Congress.

• Leavenworth Constitution (1858): Drafted by radical abolitionists. It was ap-

You might say, "So what does this have to do with the return of Jesus?"

Perhaps nothing, although it is urgent that we wake up and push back against this ideological cancer.

On the other hand, the Bible predicts a day when "all nations" will gather together to wage war against Jerusalem and the Jewish people living there (see Zechariah 12:1-3; 14:1-2).

In light of the out-of-control rise in global antisemitism, with much of the hatred focused on the nation of Israel, such a scenario seems much more plausible.

In that sense, things are different today. It is high time we got on high alert.



proved by territorial voters but rejected by the U.S. Congress.

• Wyandotte Constitution (1859): Drafted by a convention of free-state delegates in Wyandotte (now part of Kansas City, Kansas), this document successfully outlawed slavery and established the state's modern, permanent borders (giving up the vast western territories of "Big Kansas"). It was approved by voters in October 1859 and formally took effect when Kansas entered the Union on January 29, 1861.

Tom Shine, in a piece called "How Kansas Got its Constitution" (KCUR, NPR in Kansas City), wrote that the Wyandotte Constitution. . . was only assured in Washington after four Southern states seceded from the Union and withdrew their senators.

"The remaining Senators approved the bill on Jan. 21, 1861. Eight days later, President James Buchanan signed it into law and Kansas became the nation's 34th state.

"Since then, the state constitution has been amended nearly 100 times. Some of the changes have been pretty dry, like

how to calculate the tax on boats.

"Many others, though, have dealt with the major social issues of the day, like prohibition, women's suffrage, gambling, gay marriage, the right to bear arms, and now, abortion."

Scott Rothschild of the Lawrence Journal-World reported, "When pro-slavery forces sacked Lawrence in 1856, they destroyed the printing presses of the anti-slavery newspapers, called the Kansas Free State and the Herald of Freedom.

"Later, anti-slavery forces collected some of the remaining lead type from one of the papers, melted it down to make cannonballs and fired them at their pro-slavery enemies, yelling, 'Another issue of the Herald of Freedom!'"

The history of our state and of our capital city presents a dramatic and dynamic, fantastic and fascinating array of challenges as well as defeats and tragedies that have all contributed to the survival for 250 years of our great United States, and the journey of Constitution Hall Topeka may be one of the most striking pivot points in that story.

■ Continued from previous page

But that's not my main focus here.

Instead, I want to point to something unprecedented in my lifetime, namely, the rapid, insidious rise of a virulent and violent antisemitism right here in America, let alone around the world.

Article after article begins with a litany of the latest violent attacks on Jews, in America, in England, in Australia, and more.

Social media influencers with millions of followers openly praise Hitler or express their fervent desire to see Jews suffer and die. And news of the slaughter of Jews results in an orgy of online hatred, with calls for more Jews to die.

To repeat: this is unprecedented in my lifetime, and even attempting to document a fraction of it would require more of a book than an article.

To give one example from within the last week, a woman riding a New York City subway began complaining about "the Jews" stealing wealth, before shouting that, "Jews are eating kids." She then assaulted a young Orthodox Jewish woman, pulling out a fistful of her hair.

What utter madness—and yet more and more people believe more and more vile things about "the Jews," whether it be the Jews in Israel or the Jews next door.

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Vacation Bible Schools This Month

PANDAMANIA VBS – July 27-30, 5:45-7:30pm, Central Park Christian Church, 1535 SW Clay St. flemingmom@verizon.net. Kickoff carnival July 26 at 5:45pm. Pre-K to 5th grade. <https://centralparkcc.breezechms.com/form/3200c97531>

SCUBA VBS – July 8-10, 5:30-8pm, Berryton UMC, 7010 SE Berryton Rd. Dinner will be served. To register go to: berrytonumc.breezechms.com/forms/entries/1015315

RAINFOREST FALLS VBS – July 20-24, 9am-12pm, Prince of Peace Lutheran Church, 3625 SW Wanamaker Rd. <https://vbspro.events/p/pop2026>

EMERALD CROSSING VBS – July 26-30, 5:30-8pm, East Side Baptist Church, 4425 SE 29th St. Register online at esbcks.org/vbs



Emerald Crossing VBS
July 26 - 30 • 5:30 - 8 pm
3 years - 6th grade
 Pre-register at esbcks.org/vbs
 or call church office at **785-379-9933**
East Side Baptist Church, 4425 SE 29th St. • esbcks.org

Vacation Bible School Remains a Key Outreach for Churches

If you grew up in church in the United States, chances are you have been involved in Vacation Bible School (VBS) in some way, whether you attended as a kid, volunteered, or took your own children. VBS programs in their earliest forms have been around for over a century, serving thousands of children every year. For many churches, VBS is one of their biggest outreach opportunities, bringing in families from all over the community.

From Summer Lessons to Church Tradition

Summer Bible education for kids is not a new concept. The earliest forms date back to 1866 in Boston with C. B. Eavey, an education professor at Wheaton University. VBS as it's known today emerged a few decades later, developing mostly around the East Coast in the 1870s to 1890s.

According to a book on the history of Christian Education by Arlo Ayres Brown, "These summer programs... reportedly lasted five weeks and included not only Bible content but also worship, music, open-air games, 'expressional activities' like sewing, weaving, basketry and hammock-making, plus talks on patriotism and hygiene."

The concept of summer Bible schools spread to the Midwest and West in the early 20th century. By 1922, there were about 5,000 five-week-long summer Bible schools established across the U.S. A year later, the first standard VBS curriculum was created. The 1950s saw approximately 60,000 VBS programs with a combined total of about 500,000 volunteers, serving around 5 million students nationwide.

Memories of VBS Across Generations

In the 1950s, many churches also hosted something called "Weekday Church School," where elementary school students could leave school for an hour and attend a nearby church.

David Cobb, Kansas City, Kansas resident and Metro Voice News reader, shared his experience with Weekday Church School. His mother was the secretary of a church in KCK, where she was in charge of the program.

"This was probably in the late '40s, early '50s," Cobb recalls. "Some of the students would go to the Catholic Church for their catechisms... Others would go to Protestant churches and



have a program very similar to Vacation Bible School, except it was during the school day."

Cobb also grew up attending VBS himself from the mid-1950s to mid-1960s. He remembers learning Bible stories, having time to play and eating a snack, a very similar structure to today. All of his children attended VBS in the 1980s and 1990s, which allowed Cobb to see the ways VBS programs have changed over the years.

The biggest changes he notes are technological advancements and safety concerns. Cobb recalls learning Bible stories from flannelgraph, an early tool similar to Velcro, in contrast to the heavy reliance on screens in VBS today. He also shares how loose safety used to be. "Then, any person in the church could volunteer and be at VBS and do anything. By the time my kids got there, it was a little bit more structured, and nowadays, you've got to almost get fingerprinted in order to work with kids."

Why VBS Is Changing

The number of churches offering VBS peaked in the 1990s, with a 2013 Barna report estimating that 80% of churches in the U.S. had a program in 1997. In the 2000s and 2010s, the country saw a slight decline in VBS. The Barna study indicated that approximately 68% of churches offered VBS in 2012. As of 2025, that number was 64%, according to a survey conducted by Concordia Supply.

Some practical reasons for the decline include the growing financial cost, the time commitment required, other church programs taking precedence, and churches already offering other kids' programs. An increasingly secular society has also led to less interest from

families and children and a general decrease in church attendance.

There are also many factors that indicate what kinds of churches are most likely to host VBS. Statistics from the Barna study also show that Baptist churches are the most likely denomination to offer a VBS program, especially those located in the South. Nearly three-fourths of churches in the American South had VBS in 2012.

The size of the church also plays a role. Churches with a congregation of 250 or more and an annual budget of at least \$500,000 statistically host summer programs more than smaller ones.

Why VBS Still Matters

Vacation Bible School has gone through many eras and evolutions, from all-day affairs that lasted nearly half the summer to shorter, fast-paced events with unique themes. Across Kansas City and beyond, VBS remains a key program in churches of all sizes. It serves as outreach, building community with families and inviting them to the church, and as a way to introduce children to the gospel message in an engaging and accessible setting.

—Lyra Thompson / Metro Voice



metrovoicenews.com
Check Out Our New Breaking-news Website.

Parents are the Key to Kids Retaining Their Faith

One of the best ways for parents to pass their faith on to their children is to practice what they preach. Parents play the most decisive role in determining whether children retain faith in God as adults, according to new research by the Institute for Family Studies.

Children whose parents attend church weekly, for example, are more than twice as likely to attend church themselves as adults (26 percent), compared to those raised in homes where their parents don't routinely go to serv-

ices (12 percent). Additionally, nearly half of parents who prayed daily raised children who carried a daily prayer habit into adulthood, compared to less than one-third of parents who did not maintain a regular prayer routine. The study also found adult religious commitment was higher when both parents attended church with their children (41 percent vs. 29 percent).

Although the study noted that younger people are more likely than previous generations to report no religious affiliation, it

pointed to data showing active church involvement is a significant predictor of future faith. Teenagers who participated in youth groups, attended church camps and engaged in other faith-related events were twice as likely (22 percent vs. 9 percent) to attend weekly church services in their mid- to late 20s.

Among other key findings:

- Religious practice in childhood is highly predictive of religious practice in adulthood.
- Higher parent-child relationship quality in childhood is asso-



RETIREMENT TEAM

continued from page 7

Inflation Can Become a Challenge

Another factor retirees sometimes overlook is inflation. A monthly payment that feels comfortable today may not stretch nearly as far twenty years from now. For example, groceries, healthcare, housing, and utility bills often become more expensive over time. Some annuities offer income adjustments that help offset inflation, but these features may reduce your initial payment or increase the cost of the contract. When evaluating an annuity, it's worth asking how your purchasing power may change over a long retirement.

Who Might Benefit Most?

Financial professionals often suggest that annuities work best for individuals who prioritize dependable income over maximizing investment returns.

You may be a good candidate if you:

- Want guaranteed monthly income.
- Are concerned about outliving your retirement savings.
- Prefer predictable payments rather than market fluctuations.
- Already have emergency savings available.
- Like the idea of creating your own pension.
- On the other hand, an annuity may not be the best fit if you:
 - Need frequent access to your money.
 - Are comfortable managing investment portfolios.
 - Want maximum flexibility.
 - Are seeking aggressive long-term investment growth.
 - Have not yet built an adequate emergency fund.

Like any financial decision, personal circumstances matter more than general rules.

Questions Every Buyer Should Ask

Before purchasing any annuity, don't hesitate to ask questions. A reputable financial professional should be willing to explain every detail in plain language.

Some of the most important questions include:

- What type of annuity is this?
- What guarantees are backed by the insurance company?
- What fees will I pay?
- How long is the surrender period?
- Can I withdraw money if I need it?
- How much income will I receive?
- Does the income last for life?
- What happens if I die before receiving all my money?
- Are there optional features that increase costs?
- How financially strong is the insurance company issuing the contract?

If you don't fully understand the answers, it's perfectly reasonable to seek a second opinion.

Beware of High-Pressure Sales Tactics

Unfortunately, some retirees have attended "free dinner" seminars or sales presentations where they felt pressured to purchase an annuity immediately. Financial decisions involving retirement savings should never be rushed. Take the contract home. Read it carefully. Discuss it with family members if appropriate. Consider consulting a trusted financial advisor who isn't compensated for selling that particular product. If someone insists that an offer is available "today only," that's often a reason to slow down rather than speed up.

The Bottom Line

So, are annuities good or bad? Well,

the answer depends on what you're trying to accomplish. For retirees seeking dependable income they cannot outlive, an annuity may provide valuable financial security and peace of mind. For others who want greater flexibility, lower costs, or higher investment growth potential, different retirement strategies may be more appropriate. An annuity should never be purchased simply because it's popular or because someone says it's the "best" investment available. Instead, it should be evaluated as one possible piece of a larger retirement plan.

The best retirement strategy is rarely built around a single product. Instead, many successful retirees combine several income sources—including Social Security, savings, investments, pensions, and, in some cases, annuities—to create a plan that fits their unique goals and lifestyle. The more you understand your options, the more confident you'll be in making financial decisions that support the retirement you've worked so hard to achieve.

If you would like to schedule a no-obligation review of your own retirement plan, call Roger at 785-478-7808.

: This material is for informational purposes only and should not be construed as investment, tax, or legal advice. All investing involves risk, including the possible loss of principal. Past performance is not indicative of future results. Individuals should consult with a qualified financial professional regarding their own specific situation.

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ciated with stronger retention of religious belief and practice in adulthood.

• Higher parental marital quality is associated with greater faith transmission.

• Congregational involvement on the part of both parents and adolescents is linked to higher levels of faith commitment when children reach adulthood.

Researchers determined that churches should dedicate time and resources to equipping parents to lead spiritual formation at home.

"Studies demonstrate that parental modeling, shared faith

practices and the quality of parent-child relationships are among the strongest predictors of adult religiosity," the report concluded. "When faith is embedded in everyday routines through conversation, ritual and visible commitment, children are more likely to internalize it as part of their enduring identity. Taken together, this body of evidence underscores the need for analysis of how family processes operate in practice and which specific parental behaviors most effectively foster durable Christian commitment."

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Lots happening this summer in North Topeka

MURAL UNVEILING - July 2 will feature a Bridge Art dedication at 4 pm unveiling the Kansas Avenue Memorial Bridge Mural. The entire community is invited to join us beneath the bridge as we celebrate the completion of this remarkable public art project that honors the rich history, people, and stories of North Topeka.

This community-driven project brought together more than 90 volunteers, local leaders, artists, students, and residents to help transform the bridge into a vibrant walking museum of possibility. The unveiling celebration will include:

- A first look at the completed mural
- Brief remarks from the mural team and the NOTO organization
- A ribbon-cutting ceremony
- Refreshments and time to visit with the artists

FIRST FRIDAY MUSIC IN RED-BUD PARK - July 3, 6-9pm. Ginger Cat

& the Dirt Road Dogs. Also, Delta Haze will be playing at Compass Point.

Summer Concert Series continues July 17 with Unfit Wives performing from 6-9pm in Redbud Park. Unfit Wives are a high-energy, all-female bluegrass string band known for their feisty harmonies, sharp songwriting, and unapologetic spirit. Since forming in 2019, they've grown into a dynamic five-piece group that blends traditional roots influences with bold, modern storytelling. Their original songs celebrate individuality and challenge expectations, while their lively performances, filled with hot licks, humor, and powerful vocals, have captivated audiences everywhere from intimate venues to major regional stages.

NOTO also features live music on a regular basis at **Artismo Gallery & Bistro**



and Compass Point.

For more event information visit explorenoto.org/.

Other upcoming events in North Topeka:

NORTH TOPEKA COMMUNITY BAND CONCERT - July 6, 7:30pm, Garfield Park Gazebo

WOODSHED MARKET - Every Sunday 9-2 in the Woodshed parking lot. Vendors & food trucks.

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

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

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. For info: 785-224-8803.

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

FREE MOBILE FOOD DISTRIBUTION - 4th Tue. through Nov., 9am, 1231 NW Eugene St. Randel Ministries,

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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

SATURDAY CRUISE NIGHTS — 5-9pm: 1st Sat: Spangles, 29th & Topeka Blvd (Cruise the Blvd!); 2nd Sat: Fairlawn Plaza; 3rd Sat: The Dugout, 17th & Fairlawn; 4th Sat: The Pad; 5th Sat: The Dugout.

FREEDOM FESTIVAL AT WAMEGO — June 30-July 4, 6-10pm, Wamego. Carnival. July 4: car show, antique tractor show, a parade at 6 p.m., a free concert at 7:30 pm & 10:30 pm. Spectators sitting in a full 360-degree circle around the fireworks performance

CELEBRATE AMERICA: A CAPITOL KANSAS CONCERT — July 2, 7 - 9 pm on the grounds of the Kansas Statehouse. The first hour will feature opening remarks, an invocation, an appearance by Kansas Poet Laureate Traci Brimhall and music by the Capital City Chorus. The Topeka Symphony Orchestra from 8 to 9 p.m. will perform a patriotic concert highlighting this nation's music and heritage, said a Visit Topeka press release. A lights and fountain show synchronized with music at Every Plaza follows. Bring chairs or blankets. Food trucks on-site, and a beer garden will be available in front of the Celtic Fox

HHHS FOOD TRUCK NIGHT — Jul. 3, 4-8pm, 5720 SW 21st. Food and local bands. Bring a lawn chair. Helps homeless animals.

FIRST FRIDAY MUSIC IN REDBUD PARK — July 3, 6-9pm. Ginger Cat & the Dirt Road Dogs

LOPEZ/CRUZ FIREWORKS SHOW — July 3, 9pm, Sante Fe park

FIRST FRIDAY ART WALK BRIDGE ART DEDICATION — July 2, 4pm, under the Kansas Avenue Bridge. Ribbon cutting, acknowledgments, refreshments

SPIRIT OF KANSAS FIREWORKS & BLUES FESTIVAL — July 4, 9am-11pm, Lake Shawnee - Reynolds Lodge. Blues festival 11-8, kids activities, vendors, food trucks, car show 9-3, fireworks at 10pm.

WALNUT VIEW 4TH OF JULY PARADE — July 4, 10:30am parade & potluck, SE 34th Terr. & SE Burton.

INDEPENDENCE DAY CELEBRATION — July 4, 10am, Grace Cathedral

COLLINS PARK NEIGHBORHOOD JULY 4TH PARADE — July 4, 11am. 15th & Collins

OVERBROOK INDEPENDENCE DAY CELEBRATION — July 4, 6pm at Overbrook City Lake. Food Trucks • Snow Cones • Inflatable Water Slide & Basketball (free) • Free Watermelon & Glow Sticks • Face painting. DJ Dusty Workman. FIREWORKS 9:45pm

LIVE AT LUNCH — July 8, 11-1, Every Plaza. Savanna Chestnut, food trucks

OSAGE COUNTY FAIR — July 9-11, Osage City Fairgrounds. Carnival, exhibits, entertainment, and fun. See Osage County Fair Association on facebook for details.

C5Alive "POWER" LUNCHEON — July 9, 11:30-1, at Celtic Fox. 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, Aug. 13, 11:30-1, Celtic Fox, featuring Sam Brownback

EATS AND BEATS — July 9, 6-9pm, Every Plaza. Atomic Cowboys opening for Undercover

FRIDAY FLICKS — Jul. 10, 7pm, Every Plaza. "Rocky IV" is showing. Food Trucks on hand: Hook & Que, Unique Treats, Kona Ice. Kids activities. Movie starts at

8pm.

CORNER MARKET — July 11 (2nd Saturdays) 29th & Adams. 20+ Vendors, food trucks, music, kids activities

CAR SEAT CHECK LANE — July 11, 9-12. YMCA, 3635 SW Chelsea Dr. Get your car seat installation checked by a certified technician quick, free.

SECOND SATURDAY CONCERT SERIES — July 11, 5:30pm, Downtown on SW 8th in front of Celtic Fox. The Bash

KANSAS AUG. 4TH PRIMARY REGISTRATION DEADLINE — July 14. sos.kansas.gov

EATS AND BEATS — July 14, 6-9pm, Every Plaza. Justin Fowler opening for Howard Mahan

FIESTA TOPEKA — July 14-18, Our Lady of Guadalupe Church, 201 NE Chandler. Great food, music, rides, and more

FIESTA TOPEKA PARADE — July 11, 10:30am, Downtown

LIVE AT LUNCH — July 15, 11-1, Every Plaza. Demitro Gonzalez, food trucks

SUMMERTIME BLUES — July 15, 6-9pm, Gage Park Amphitheatre. Velvet Blues Revue, Smoke This & Unique Treats Food Trucks. Free event.

FRIENDS OF THE LIBRARY BOOK & MEDIA SALE — July 18-19, 9-3, 1515 SW 10th Ave. Open to the public! Shop high-quality used books, DVDs, CDs, audiobooks and records. On the 19th, fill a grocery bag for \$10

LIVE AT LUNCH — July 22, 11-1, Every Plaza. Rick McClellan, food trucks

EATS AND BEATS — July 23, 6-9pm, Every Plaza. Mike G opening for Stranded in the City

FOR THE CULTURE KS FEST — July 24-25, Every Plaza. Celebrate African American culture, featuring music artists, creatives, impactful speakers, businesses, vendors, and much more.

PANCAKE FEED AT SHAWNEE CO. FAIR — July 25, 7-11:30am, Stormont Vail Events Ctr. \$7 all you can eat.

SHAWNEE COUNTY FAIR - July 23-26, Stormont Vail Event Center. Find all the information on the fair at www.shawneecountyfair.org

GOLDEN CONNECTIONS RESOURCE FAIR — July 25, 9am, Ag Hall. Helping older adults stay engaged, supported, and inspired through meaningful connections—with services, resources, and with their community.

LIVE AT LUNCH — July 29, 11-1, Every Plaza. Jarrod Casner, food trucks

EATS AND BEATS — July 30, 6-9pm, Every Plaza. Evolution opening for Mikey Needleman Band

TOUCH A TRUCK — Aug. 1, 9-11am, Christ Lutheran Church, 3509 SW Burlingame. Free snacks for all. Free book for first 100 kids.

ONGOING EVENTS

DOWNTOWN TOPEKA FARMERS MARKET - Saturday's thru Oct., 7:30am-noon, 6th & Harrison. The open-air market is full of fresh fruits and vegetables, herbs, arts & crafts, flowers, home-baked goods, etc.

BREAD BASKET FARMERS MARKET — Every Saturday 7:30am-1pm, West Ridge Mall parking lot, south end.

MONDAY FARMERS MARKET — Mondays 7:30-

11:30am, thru Sep. 14, Topeka & Sh. Co. Library, 10th & Washburn. (closed Memorial Day & Labor Day)

FARMERS MARKET - Hoyt, Wed. 3-6

ROSSVILLE FARMERS MARKET - Thu. 4-6 at the city park by the pool

OVERBROOK FARMERS MARKET — Mon. 4-6 at the fairgrounds (until Labor Day)

LAWRENCE FARMERS MARKET — Sat. 7:30 — 11:30am, 824 New Hampshire St

PERRY LECOMPTON FARMERS MARKET — Fri. 4-6:30pm, parking lot of the former Thriftway

MOTHER TERESA'S FARMERS MARKET — Saturdays, July 1 — Sep. 9, 8:30-11:30am, 2014 NW 46th St.

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 rhonl@tsclpl.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 Ade-lines, 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 will have its monthly food distribution. No ID or proof



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July 9, 11:30-1: "POWER" Luncheon at Celtic Fox. Dillon Walls with Called to Greatness, helping college kids thrive in schools & careers.

Free Admission. Order lunch from menu if desired.

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

Save the Dates!

- Aug. 13: POWER Luncheon, 11:30-1: John "Iron Man" Cantrell
- Sep. 10: POWER Luncheon, 11:30-1: Chad Parks, S.H. Coach
- Oct. 8: POWER Luncheon, 11:30-1

For info: www.C5Alive.org or [Facebook.com/C5Alive](https://www.facebook.com/C5Alive)



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

WOODSHED MARKET — Sun. 9-2, 1901 N. Kansas Ave.

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 grandoprpy@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. 10am-12pm, Oakland Church of the Nazarene: 939 NE Oakland

HARVESTER FREE MOBILE FOOD DISTRIBUTION — 3rd Saturday each month, 10-11am, Oakland Church of the Nazarene: 939 NE Oakland

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

MEETINGS & CLASSES

***Check before going to a meeting or class to see if any details have changed. We don't always get the updated info in a timely manner.**

CHRISTIAN WRITERS GROUP OF TOPEKA - 1st & third 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.flocritkans.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, dave.mathias@sbcglobal.net, or Betsy Thompson, betsythompson@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.

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!

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.

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, Sun-

rise Optimist Complex, 720 NW 50th St. 246-1291.

NARVRE Meeting (Nat'l Assn of Retired and Veteran Railroad Employees): 2nd Tue each month at Museum of the KS National Guard, 125 SE Airport Dr, 9:30AM.

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 rlm4017@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.

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 tgstopeka.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 Wana-maker. 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 biblequizzier.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 communication 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



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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.highlandheightscc.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.

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.

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

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.

See complete calendar at metrovoicenews.com

World Vision Study Measures Children's Experience of God's Love

The Christian humanitarian organization World Vision is launching the Measuring the Experience of God's Love in Children (Hope & Love Measure) study designed to understand how children experience and understand the love of God.

The research was developed by World Vision in collaboration with theologians, psychologists and researchers from Harvard University, Duke University and Claremont Graduate University. Interviews were conducted with more than 600 children across Albania, Bolivia, Iraq, Lesotho, Senegal, Sri Lanka, Thailand and Uganda. The project establishes that children are not passive recipients of care but active participants in their communities, and moral and spiritual beings whose capacity to feel loved and hopeful is foundational to their well-being.

The six signs of hope are:

- Compassion: A hopeful child is compassionate and aware of the needs of others, seeks to show

kindness and appreciates when people show compassion to them.

- Purpose: A hopeful child is expressive and an active agent in community life, constantly learning and pursuing their dreams and aspirations.

- Resilience: A hopeful child has both the inner strength and the capacity to draw strength from relationships, to face life challenges with courage. They learn and grow stronger from experience.

- Joy: A hopeful child feels joy in simple experiences and has a grateful heart, which allows them to celebrate the kindness of others.

- Wisdom: A hopeful child understands that they have value as a person, reflects on what they are learning through life experiences, sees the wisdom in demonstrating strong character and tries to act accordingly.

- Personal faith: A hopeful child trusts in God, has a relationship with Jesus, sees the work of the



Holy Spirit and finds meaning in spiritual practices and rituals.

"World Vision has known for decades that experiencing the love of Jesus makes a meaningful difference in the lives of the children, even in places where it's toughest to be a child," President and CEO Edgar Sandoval Sr. said. "The Hope & Love Measure scientifically validates this belief, showing that as children experience God's uncon-

ditional love through caring family and community relationships, there are measurable signs of hope, resilience and long-term well-being. These signs can then help World Vision, schools and church partners develop ways to increase that hope within vulnerable children through programs and services that ultimately strengthen families and communities."

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entertainment

“House of David” Actor Optimistic About Christian Media

Michael Iskander, who plays the role of King David in the popular series “House of David,” said God is using the arts in a powerful way.

“God is pouring out his Spirit onto media,” he told Crosswalk recently. “You think about the Renaissance, all the art and all the beauty that came out of that time period was for God.”

The Renaissance sparked an explosion of creativity in the arts and included such legendary artists as Leonardo da Vinci and Michelangelo.

The former Broadway actor has said the response to the biblical drama has reached beyond faith audiences.

“People have come up to me from all walks of life, not just Christians, and they talk about how much they love it,” he told the Associated Press.

“House of David” has drawn more than 44 million viewers worldwide, according to the streaming service.

The series loosely follows the life of David, including his fight with a lion, killing Goliath and eventually ascending to become king of Israel. The second season follows David’s transition from a shepherd to a warrior.

“We actually haven’t lived with the internet that long,” Iskander said. “I think



gence.”

Although he grew up in a Christian home, he said his own relationship with God has deepened dramatically after taking the role of David.

“It’s changed everything for me,” he said. “Everything about David is pointing to Christ. You read Psalm 22: ‘They pierce my hands and feet, they divide my garments among them, they cast lots.’ All of this language is present in the Old Testament and through David. So it’s been transformative for me.

“I always say: I felt like I was dead, and now I’m alive. God gave me my heartbeat, he gave me my breath. Not that I

munion with the Catholic Church after growing up in the Coptic Orthodox Church.

“The calling became more and more clear that Christ wanted me in the Catholic Church,” he told OSV News.

He also said playing David taught him more about dependence on God.

“I knew that if I was going to fight, I cannot fight alone. I have to have God by my side,” he said. “In that way, David inspired me and reminded me of the closeness that I need to have with Christ.”

When people watch the show, Iskander hopes they see God in David.

“I just want them to know and to see David’s heart,” he told OSV News. “And ultimately, at the center of his heart, is God.”

He told the Associated Press that his goal in playing David was to show the humanity of a biblical figure often viewed as larger than life.

“My personal goal was to bridge that gap and to show people that they make mistakes just like us,” he said.

Iskander said his faith also shapes how he thinks about acting and future roles.

“My faith always comes first,” he said. “That’s No. 1. And so, I guess I look at everything through that lens. I don’t see why there should be a separation between art and faith. I’m very lucky with David. I get to worship when I go to work. That’s a blessing. I hope more people are inspired by faith in their art.”

The second season of “House of David” currently is streaming on Prime Video.



it’s actually the perfect time for God to step in and say, ‘Hey, I’m wanting to be there for you. I want to be on your screens. I want to be there when you listen to music, when you pray. I want to be surrounding you with my love at every corner of the world, and I’m calling you wherever you are. And so I think that’s the ultimate reason for the resur-

wasn’t in the faith already, but I think God is really calling all of us to a deeper love for him, a deeper conversion, a deeper relationship. That’s what God is after, He’s not after anything else except for the heart.”

Iskander, a 24-year-old actor who moved from Egypt to the United States as a boy, recently came into full com-

Heroes of the Bible Featured in New Shannon Bream Book



The heroes of the Bible still have powerful lessons for Christians today. Fox News host Shannon Bream shares some of these stories in her new book, “Nothing Is Impossible with God: Eleven Heroes. One God. Endless Lessons in Overcoming.”

“I wanted to really devote some time to them, because they all have this thread of overcoming,” she said in an interview on CBN. “And sometimes, it’s external things coming at them; sometimes it’s their own internal rebellion. We’ve all dealt with that. Maybe it’s self-doubt, maybe it’s fear, maybe it’s loneliness.”

The stories in the book are as relevant today as they were in biblical times.

“These stories have always resonated with me with that common thread of overcoming something,” Bream said. “So I thought I want to include ones that do come from across the spectrum, because I think they’re all just so relatable to things that we walk through now. Maybe we’re not going to be Gideon actually leading an army into battle. It may feel like that sometimes, though, with what you have going on in life.

“But whether it’s a financial battle,

a broken family, a bad diagnosis, the death of a loved one, all of those things are never a surprise to God. And I think he gives us the grace of seeing other people walk through those things.”

Ultimately, Bream wants to bring encouragement to others through seeing these things unfold and applying the lessons to their own lives.

“You think about Moses, and we know he was the writer of what’s known as the Torah, or those first five books of the Old Testament,” she said. “So every time he’s talking about his own failures, I have to stop and remind myself, ‘Moses was writing this. He was writing this down and saying, like, ‘this is where I got this wrong. This is where I disobeyed. This is where I argued with God.’”

Bream encourages people to turn to prayer in their own lives, comparing it to a personal conversation that can be engaged in traffic, in the shower, while cooking or while doing any other activity. “Just knowing he’s listening to that, it doesn’t have to be formal,” she said. “You don’t have to be sitting in a pew. God is just waiting to be in conversation with you anytime.”

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Chris Pratt Stays Focused Amid Hollywood Idolatry

Actor Chris Pratt says his Christian faith, not movie stardom, is what steadies him in an industry he says can turn celebrities into idols and then tear them down.

Pratt made the comments on "Not Dead Yet," a podcast hosted by former U.S. Sen. Ben Sasse and political analyst Chris Stirewalt. The conversation ranged from fame and family to the pressure that comes with being one of the most recognizable actors in Hollywood.

"My entire worldview is shaped on my understanding of God and on what I've learned from reading the Bible," Pratt said.

That is not a throwaway line for Pratt. The actor, known for "Guardians of the Galaxy," "Jurassic



World," "The Super Mario Bros. Movie" and "The Lego Movie," has become one of the more openly Christian stars in mainstream entertainment. He has talked before

about prayer, Scripture and the need to keep fame in its proper place.

On the podcast, Pratt said Hollywood is built around a strange kind of attention. Audiences elevate actors, he said, but the same culture often turns on them.

"I work in a business where we create idols," Pratt said. "And we worship them. And no one is worthy of worship. And so not only do we create idols to worship, we create idols to burn."

Pratt was careful not to sound as if he hates the business that made him famous. He said he loves America, the West and Hollywood. Movies and entertainment, he said, are not wrong in themselves. People are allowed to rejoice.

But he said something goes wrong when fame fills a place meant for God.

Pratt made a similar point in 2018 at the MTV Movie & TV Awards, where he received the Generation Award and used part of his speech to tell young viewers, "God is real. God loves you. God wants the best for you." Vogue called the speech one of the night's most talked-about moments.

In the podcast, Pratt said success by itself does not answer the deeper questions.

"That's why I need God," he said, "because having a nice house and a cool car and the ability to go on whatever fishing trip I want doesn't satisfy."

Pratt also said his faith shapes his home life. He said his role as a husband and father includes loving his wife, Katherine Schwarzenegger Pratt, and staying willing to speak plainly about Jesus, even in a town where that can make people uncomfortable.

Mel Gibson's 'Resurrection' Film Wraps Production

Much anticipated movie follows "The Passion of the Christ"



Principal photography has been completed on "The Resurrection of the Christ," Mel Gibson's sequel to the 2004 film "The Passion of the Christ." The filming concluded ahead of schedule after shooting for 134 days in Rome, Bari, Ginosa, Craco, Brindisi (Torre Guaceto), and Matera.

"Mel is a true visionary, with an artist's eye for scale and a storyteller's instinct for emotional truth," said Adam Fogelson, chair of Lionsgate Motion Picture Group. "Every image we've seen from set feels like a masterwork painting brought to life. There are very few directors who can operate at this level of epic spectacle while at the same time delivering such depth and conviction. Mel has crafted a film of extraordinary ambition that audiences worldwide have been waiting to experience for over 20 years."

Lionsgate will release the film in North America, the U.K. and Latin America and will team up on the film's release with major international distribution partners

"I'm deeply grateful to my incredibly talented cast and crew for pouring their hearts into this production," Gibson said. "Together, we created something powerful. This film represents a major part of my life's work, and it has demanded everything of me as a filmmaker and as an artist. This is far more than a film to me. It's a mission I've carried for over twenty years to tell what I believe is the most important story in human history."

"Reuniting with many of my original collaborators from 'The Passion of the Christ' — true masters of their craft — allowed us to bring this story to the screen exactly as I envisioned it, with the tremendous support of my longtime partners, Adam and the team at Lionsgate."

"The Passion of the Christ" debuted to an opening weekend of \$83 million on its way to taking in \$370 million in North American theaters and more than \$610 million globally off a \$30 million production budget.

Industry observers say "Resurrection" will likely break that record.



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What Code Inspectors Wish Homeowners Knew

When homeowners doing work on their property consider a cheaper route, for example, hiring a contractor who doesn't want to pull permits, they may not realize the risk they are taking. But they should know that there is no "undo" button on a disaster.

That's one reason behind the International Code Council (ICC) Building Safety Month, a campaign that reinforces the need for the adoption of modern, regularly-updated building codes, and helps communities understand what it takes to create safe, sustainable structures. As part of the campaign, two building safety professionals are sharing some important basics they wish homeowners knew.

building official in the Building Division for the City of Kissimmee, Florida, says one of the most important safety concepts is the "The Path of Egress." Codes require bedroom windows to be a specific size so occupants can escape a fire, and so firefighters can get in while wearing their equipment. "Any modification, like adding bars to windows or changing a floor plan, must preserve that clear path to the outside."

Rocco also recommends keeping the area around bedroom windows clutter-free. "In an emergency, time spent removing items from the exit path are valuable seconds that might make the difference."



at-home maintenance task is inspecting exterior deck and balcony framing integrity. Deck ledger boards often fail because the connection to the house rots or was never flashed correctly. This is something people don't think about until it collapses.

"If you see the wood deteriorate, if it feels soft or is cracking, have a professional check it out. Basically, if it doesn't look safe, it's probably not," he says. "And pay attention to deck railing to ensure it's not loose. The last thing you want is for a guest to lean on it during a BBQ and fall through to the ground, however far that is."

Rocco also warns that decks must be used safely. Homeowners intending to place a hot tub on their deck should check with a licensed professional to verify if additional support will be needed. Also, it's not recommended to cook on decks with roofs. "BBQ fires can happen easily if left unattended. If those flames get hot and high enough, your steak won't be the only thing burnt," says Rocco.

Water Intrusion

Slow plumbing leaks are the biggest “snowball” culprits, according to Rocco. A tiny drip can lead to structural rot and toxic mold before a spot on the drywall appears. Another is foundation drainage. If soil settles and slopes toward the house, water will eventually undermine the foundation, leading to costly structural failure.

"Beyond structural damage and harmful mold, water intrusion can damage electrical systems, increasing the risk of fire or shock, and it often goes undetected until significant harm has already occurred," says Ryan Smith, the building official for the City of Columbia Heights, Minnesota.

Water Heaters

Homeowners often overlook sediment flushing for water heaters, warns

Rocco. Mineral buildup at the bottom reduces efficiency and can cause the tank to overheat and fail prematurely.

Vents

Smith reminds homeowners that snow buildup on the side of the house can plug up vents and turn off the furnace. "You have to clear snow around the furnace vents – and if they turn off, that is the first place to check."

Scope

Homeowners should never go beyond the scope of an approved building project. "We don't know if requirements are met, what materials are used, or if there's proper ventilation. Going beyond the scope of what's approved is

dangerous," says Smith.

Products

“We’re seeing products being purchased from Amazon sellers that don’t meet minimum code requirements,” says Smith. From luxury sinks to bogus smoke detectors, homeowners should ensure any product they purchase is UL listed and approved for use in their jurisdiction.

International Codes

ICC's codes and standards play an important role in creating safe, affordable and sustainable structures. Homeowners can read up on I-Codes and see more safety tips at ICC's Building Safety Month at <https://www.iccsafe.org>.

Egress
Albert Joseph Rocco Jr., the deputy

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Rocco notes that one often-ignored

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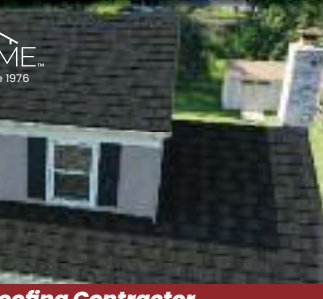
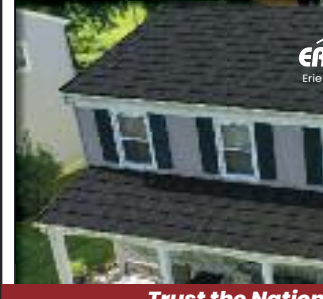


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sports

U.S. World Cup Team Leaders Boldly Share Faith



The U.S. soccer team got off to a strong start in the World Cup by defeating Paraguay in its first match. Many players rely on their Christian faith to keep success and failure in perspective, in soccer and in life.

Star player Christian Pulisic is a leader on and off the field who shares Bible verses on Instagram, CBN News reported. In his 2026 docuseries called “PULISIC,” he highlights the importance of his Bible-reading routine and discusses his men’s Bible study that he calls “Bible Time” with his teammates.

Pulisic also told CBS in a 2021 postgame interview how his Christian faith gives him drive and strength in the sport: “I’ve had to continue to prove myself over and over again,” he said. “But as always, I reach out to God, and he gives me strength. With that behind me, nothing can stop me, really.”

Goalie Matt Freese recently spoke with Sports Spectrums’ “What’s Up” podcast on how his faith opens doors for his career. “God’s given me so many opportunities within this game and within my career,” he said. “I still have a role to play in that. I still have to do my part and take that opportunity and do something with it.”

From midfielder Weston McKenzie, whose social media bio declares “All glory to God,” to defender Chris Richards helping run Bible studies, many players on the U.S. team are serious about their faith. As these current players, such as Pulisic, McKenzie and Freese, actively share their Christian faith, Jesse Bradley, a former player, is an example of how Christi-

anity has long-established roots in the U.S. Men’s National Team.

In an interview coming soon on a new podcast by CBN Sports, Bradley revealed how his support for the team and their faith in Christ inspired him to launch watch party outreaches during the World Cup.

“Our strategy was to start the World Cup Nations United Using World Cup to Build Disciples with a watch party,” he said. “Then we have 100 physical watch-party kits that we give out to people in our church. So they will all be having watch parties in their homes until July 19. Multiplication was the vision.”

Savanah Bananas Player Takes Faith on the Road

The Savanah Bananas baseball team is packing stadiums across the nation, including Kauffman Stadium in Kansas City recently. They already have drawn more than 100,000 fans twice in 2026 as the baseball version of the Harlem Globetrotters and are spurring new teams.

Robert Anthony Cruz, better known as “Coach RAC,” is one of the team’s most recognizable personalities, having built a following through his instructional videos but now entertaining fans with the team’s blend of baseball and showmanship. He also openly shares his Christian faith.

“It’s the only thing that has satisfied my soul – sincerely,” he told writer Michael Foust, with Crosswalk. “I have experienced hitting a home run in front of a ton of people, I’ve experienced a bunch of people wanting my autograph and all that — and the more that the spotlight is put on me, the more I realize it’s not meant to be on me.

“And so myself and so many of my teammates have experienced the joys of doing life with Jesus, and nothing else compares to it. And so for me, I can’t help but be outspoken about it, because I love people and I want them to experience that same peace and joy.”

Life before the Savanah Bananas

Cruz played college baseball at Biola University and then signed with the Washington Nationals in 2021, believing his lifetime dream of



playing in Major League Baseball was within reach. “I thought I was one step closer to achieving my childhood dream of playing pro ball, and wound up getting released in 2022,” he said.

In a 2025 profile by Biola Magazine, Cruz said his faith helped shape how he handled both success and disappointment in baseball. “Faith is a part of everything I do on the field,” he said. “That means I don’t have to get my affirmation from performing well. I don’t have to be a star to feel content inside, because my value comes from the one who created me.”

He then turned to posting coaching videos as a way to make money and continue pursuing his passion for the game, eventually leading to an opportunity with the Bananas. The Bananas began as a college summer team before moving to full-time ex-

hibition barnstorming games in 2023.

“It’s just been on a meteoric rise since I joined,” he said. “I never could have envisioned being where I’m at.

Christianity is so prevalent that players hold weekly Bible studies and even have organized worship nights in cities across the country.

“We intentionally meet every week, and we need that time together, because we’re playing on the road,” Cruz said. “We don’t have a local church community that we’re rooted in, because we’re always gone playing on the road, so having that time with each other is huge.

The faith movement has spread through the clubhouse.”

Cruz has said his goal with the Savanah Bananas is “to be a good ambassador for Christ in everything I do, with the Bananas and beyond.”



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Whole Grains Linked to Lower Cancer and Heart Disease Risk

Healthy eating could prevent more than 80,000 cancer cases each year in the United States and help even more people prevent heart disease and diabetes. One simple way to eat better is to add more whole grains, because as many as nine in 10 people aren't getting the amounts recommended for health and wellness, said Dr. Graham A. Colditz,

associate director of prevention and control at Siteman Cancer Center at Barnes-Jewish Hospital and WashU Medicine in St. Louis.

Wheat, oats, rice, corn and barley offer the most benefit when they are whole grains — that is, when they include the three key parts of the natural grain kernel: bran, germ and en-

dosperm. Bran and germ are rich in fiber, vitamins, minerals and other healthy compounds. When the bran and germ are removed during processing, they become refined grains.

The new dietary guidelines for Americans recommend focusing on eating whole grains over less-healthy refined grains. Whole-wheat bread and brown rice are classic whole-grain foods compared to their refined versions, white bread and white rice. Most adults should aim for two to four servings of whole grains a day, with one serving equaling a half cup of cooked oatmeal, a cup of dry breakfast cereal or a slice of bread.

Colditz recommends these options:

- Snacks
 - Whole-grain pretzels, whole-grain pita chips and whole-grain crackers
 - Whole-grain granola with Greek yogurt
 - Air- or pan-popped popcorn
 - Breakfast
 - Oatmeal or whole-grain oat dry cereal
 - 100 percent whole-wheat toast
 - Whole-wheat or whole-grain buckwheat pancakes
 - Lunch
 - Whole-wheat spaghetti or whole-wheat pasta salad
 - Sandwich with 100 percent whole-wheat bread
 - Rice bowl with brown rice
 - Dinner
 - Soup or stew with added barley or brown rice



• Burrito with whole-wheat tortilla and brown rice

• Whole-grain veggie burger with whole-wheat bun

When eating out, ask about whole-grain options for bread, buns, tortillas, fillings or side dishes. They may not always be listed on menus, or if they are, may not be highlighted. But

they're becoming more common options at many restaurants and can be an easy way to sneak more whole grains into our days.

"Adding more whole grains to our weekly menus can help us do just that," Colditz said. "It can take a little extra time and effort to make the switch. But it's 100 percent worth it."

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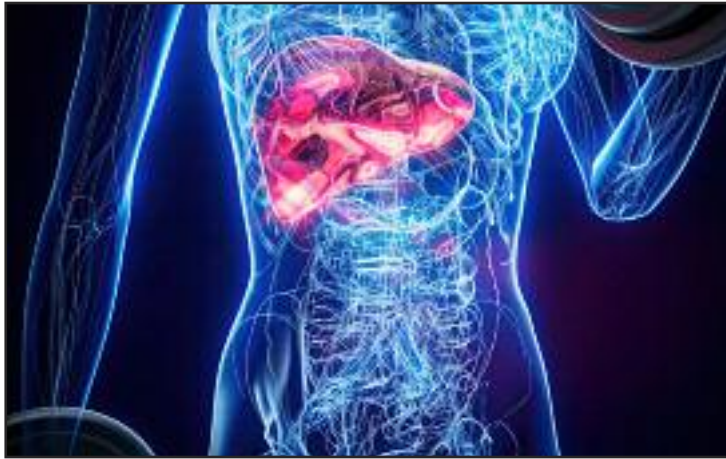
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Avoid Liver Cancer With These Tips



The liver is one of the most vital, yet often overlooked, organs in the body. It clears toxins from the body, stores energy and helps with immunity. There are many good reasons to take steps to improve our liver health, and none is bigger than helping lower the risk of liver cancer.

“Liver cancer doesn’t get as much attention as some other cancers, but it’s serious,” said Yikyung Park, a cancer researcher and professor in the Division of Public Health Sciences at WashU Medicine in St. Louis. “Although it’s not one of the most common cancers, it is a leading cause of death from cancer, ranked fifth in

men and seventh in women.”

Key causes of liver cancer include heavy alcohol drinking, infection with the viruses hepatitis B or hepatitis C, and scarring of the liver, called cirrhosis. Smoking, obesity, diabetes and a condition called fatty liver disease also increase risk. Many of these factors can overlap with each other. But there is good news.

“Liver cancer is preventable,” Park said. “Reducing risk factors and getting regular medical care are important, especially for people who know they already have some type of liver disease.”

Work on boosting liver health

with these steps:

- Get a screening test for hepatitis B and hepatitis C. Infection with these viruses can damage the liver and increase the risk for cancer. It’s recommended that all adults get a simple blood test for each. It’s usually just a one-time appointment.

- Get vaccinated for hepatitis B. This is a safe and effective way to prevent infection with hepatitis B. Although most U.S. adults have been vaccinated, many have not. Encourage new parents and expectant parents to follow guidelines and protect their children with the vaccine as well.

- Limit alcohol. Zero is best. With the many other risks from moderate drinking, not drinking is the healthiest choice overall.

- Maintain a healthy weight. Focus on healthy eating and physical activity. Weight gain and obesity increase the risk of a condition called fatty liver disease, which is an increasingly common cause of liver cancer.

- Don’t smoke. Liver cancer is one of many cancers caused by smoking.

“Simple actions can have real benefits,” Park said. “Knowing hepatitis B and hepatitis C status and making lifestyle changes — like not smoking, eating a healthy diet and getting to a healthier weight — can lower the risk of liver disease and the risk of liver cancer.”

Summer Tips to Help Protect Your Family from Carbon Monoxide

Carbon monoxide (CO) is a poisonous, flammable gas that is impossible to see, smell or taste — making it easy to assume you’re safe when danger may already be present. So, whether you’ll be vacationing away from home, or planning a “staycation” this summer, take extra steps to help protect yourself and your loved ones from CO.

According to UL Standards & Engagement, more than one-third of U.S. homes have no CO detection and nearly 30% of Americans say they do not need or are unsure if they need a CO alarm in the home if a smoke alarm is present. The reality? Both smoke and CO alarms are essential for safety.

Carbon monoxide can begin causing symptoms such as headaches and nausea at a concentration of around 200 parts per million (ppm). Kidde, a trusted leader in fire and CO safety for more than 100 years, has introduced a new line of CO alarms featuring advanced detection. Select Kidde alarms are designed to alert to low levels of CO, providing critical early warning before levels become dangerous. This early detection is especially important for more vulnerable populations — including older adults, children and pets — who may experience symptoms at concentrations below 70 ppm and can benefit from earlier opportunities to take action.

The new line also includes battery-powered CO alarms that can help provide safety and peace of mind at your



travel destination. “While some travelers take routine measures to help protect their homes from carbon monoxide while they are away — many do not consider the same safety risks at their destination,” says Isis Wu, president of Global Residential Fire & Safety at Kidde.

Wu notes that an absence of comprehensive industry regulation has left a significant safety gap for travelers. Electrical Contractor Magazine reports that only 14 states in the United States currently require the installation of CO detectors in hotels and motels, and there is no federal law requiring hotels to install CO detectors in every guest room.

During the busy summer travel season, Kidde is reigniting Destination Safety, which is the brand’s education-first initiative that helps empower travelers to take control of their safety. Kidde’s Travel Safety Checklist includes key tips on how to do just that:

- Pack a AA-battery operated CO alarm for use at your destination. To help avoid damage to the device, pack it carefully. You should also be sure to remove batteries prior to travel and reinsert them upon arrival. Note: these devices are for use in conditioned spaces only. They are not approved for RV or boat use. Test the device before use to ensure proper operation.

- Test your home smoke and CO alarms before leaving and ensure all heat-producing appliances are turned off. Also, install smart alarms that offer real-time notifications.

- Call your hotel or rental to inquire about CO devices.

- Once you arrive, make sure the hotel alarm and your own alarm are present and working.



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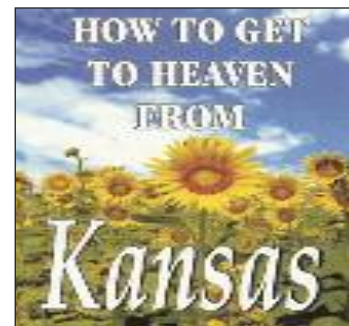
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1. Realize you are a sinner. Everyone starts the same place spiritually. "For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God." (Rom. 3:23). Sin's penalty keeps you out of Heaven and condemns you to Hell, separating you from God. Romans 6:23 says, "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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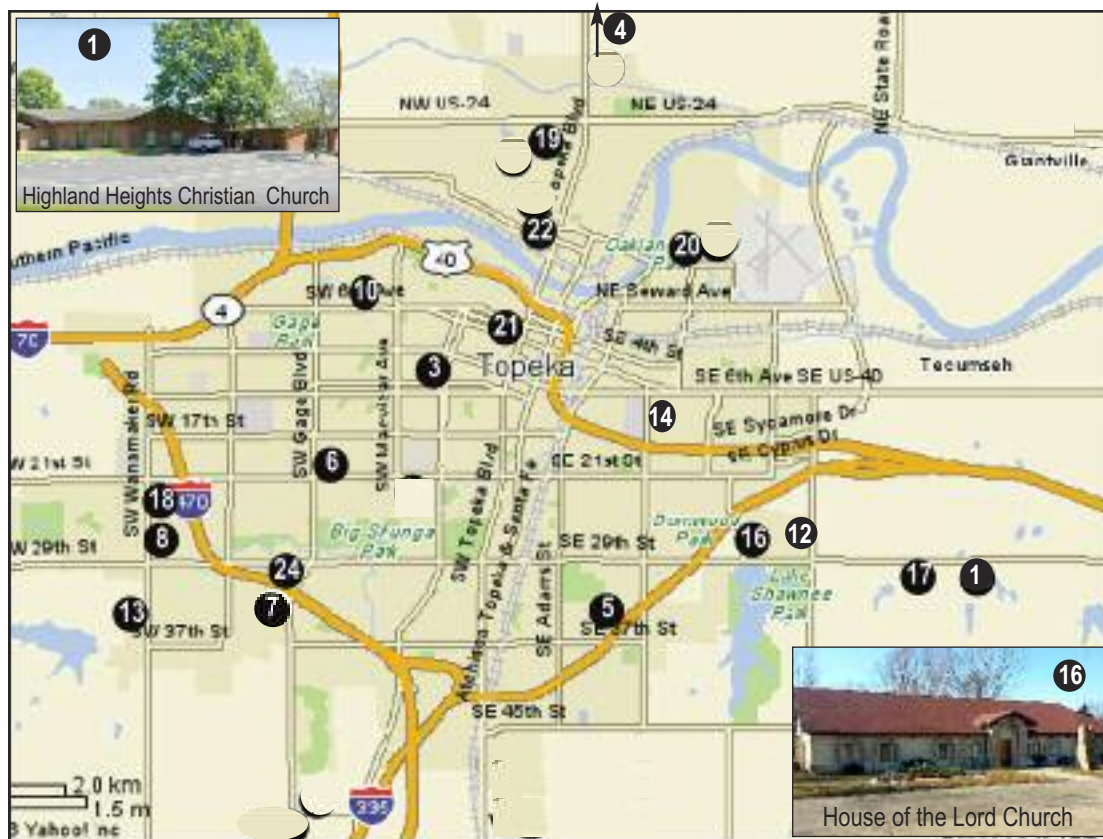


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Sunday 9:30 a.m. Wednesday 6 p.m.
Pastor Bob Spagnuolo 785-273-3506
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- | | | |
|--|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Live music • Craft & vendor fair • Food trucks • Kids games & activities • Inflatables | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Petting zoo • Face painting • Gifts & Décor • Clothing & accessories • Non-profit information | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pet care services • Carnival Games • Cake Walk for kids • Trunk or Treat • Pumpkin decorating |
|--|---|---|

HEALTH & WELLNESS FAIR PRESENTED BY HEALTH & WELLNESS MAGAZINE

- | | |
|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Health screenings • Safety instructions & education • Health & Wellness products & samples • Health information & education | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fitness information & demonstrations • Gymnastics & Exercise demonstrations • Personal Safety Items & Education • Emotional & Mental Health Information |
|--|--|

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