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Senator Moran Visits SWKS Communities

By: Tyler Hook

U.S. Senator Jerry Moran spent much of the past week traveling across western Kansas, meeting with community leaders, visiting local businesses and schools, and announcing investments in public safety and infrastructure. His stops included Ulysses, Garden City, Lakin, Leoti, Montezuma, Sublette and Marienthal, where discussions centered on rural development, education, economic opportunities and the needs of local communities.

In Leoti on Tuesday, October 13, Moran announced federal funding secured through his position as chairman of the Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice and Science to



High Five Adventure Park in Ulysses- Courtesy Photo

support the Wichita County Sheriff's Office. The investment will assist with purchasing a new patrol vehicle and installing automated external defibrillators (AEDs) in patrol

cars. Moran met with Sheriff Kasper and his deputies, recognizing their work in serving the county and emphasizing the importance of providing

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The Price Of Preserving Yesterday

By: Tyler Hook

History has a way of disappearing quietly. Not always through the demolition of an old building or the passing of someone who remembers how things once were, but sometimes through something as simple as a line removed from a county budget.

Across the country, museums and historical societies are facing increasing financial pressures. Rising operating expenses, declining funding and difficult budget decisions have placed many institutions in uncertain positions. Here in Kansas, the recently an-

nounced financial troubles facing the Sternberg Museum in Hays have brought renewed attention to the challenges of keeping these institutions open.

Closer to home, the Kearny County Historical Society recently announced that it will receive no county appropriation for the 2027 fiscal year, leaving the Kearny County Museum dependent upon reserve funds, private donations and potential grants to continue operating.

According to Museum Director Julie Grubbs McCombs, the historical society has

sufficient reserves to cover operations through 2027, but its financial future beyond that remains uncertain. County commissioners have expressed a desire to see the museum remain open, although no commitments regarding future funding have been made.

The historical society is now evaluating ways to reduce expenses and increase revenue. Some programs and services that have traditionally been offered free of charge may eventually require admission or participation fees, including the organization's An

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Death Notices

Linda Diane Mitchell, a devoted wife, mother, grandmother, and lifelong servant of her church and community, passed away on October 19, 2026, in Amarillo, Texas, following a prolonged illness. She was 85 years old. Linda lived her entire life in the town she loved, and she leaves behind a legacy of faith, music, and kindness that touched nearly everyone who crossed her path.

A funeral service celebrating Linda's life will be held at 11:00 a.m. on Saturday, October 24, 2026, at the First Church of God in Elkhart, Kansas. Burial will follow at the Elkhart Cemetery. Visitation will be Friday, October 23, 2026, from 2:00 p.m. until 7:00 p.m. with family present from 4:00 p.m. until 7:00 p.m. at Garnand Funeral Home in Elkhart. The family invites all who knew and loved Linda to join them in giving thanks for a life so beautifully lived.

Memorial donations may be made to the First Christian Church Memorial Fund in Elkhart, Kansas, or to the Morton County Library in Elkhart, Kansas, in care of Garnand Funeral Home, P.O. Box 854, Elkhart, KS 67950., two institutions that were close to Linda's heart and that she served faithfully for so many years.

Brent Richard McMillan was born on May 30, 1973, to Daniel & Nancy (Hoeme) McMillan and grew into a cherished son, brother, and friend to those lucky enough to know him.

Brent was called home on Saturday, October 10, 2026,

surrounded by his family and friends at St. Francis Hospital in Wichita, Kansas, after a brief illness.

Funeral service will be held at 10:30 a.m. on Thursday, October 22, 2026, at Trinity Lutheran Church in Garden City with Pastor Daniel Kinley officiating. A graveside service will be held at 2:00 p.m. Central Time, also on Thursday, October 22, at the Kendall Cemetery in Kendall, Kansas.

Virginia Ann (Baier) Green, 77, was born in January 1949, and after 2022 Covid and a long illness, passed on October 4th, 2026.

Virginia "Ginger" passed away peacefully on October 4th at her home, with her family, and Hospice of the Prairie, of Dodge City. Born in Garden City, Kansas, Ginger graduated from Holcomb High School, in 1967. She married her boyfriend, and forever best friend, Dennis C. Green, at St. Mary Catholic Church in 1967.

A Celebration of Ginger's life will be announced and will be held in the park, with friends and family, at a later date.

Mack E. Hudson, age 89, passed away on Friday, October 16, 2026, at Morton County Hospital in Elkhart, Kansas. He was born on January 10, 1937, at the family home in Parker County, Texas, to Charles and Estelle (Weir) Hudson.

Viewing will be held on Sunday, October 18, 2026, from 2:00 to 4:00 p.m. and Monday, October 19, 2026, from 9:00 to 11:00 a.m. at

Garnand Funeral Home in Elkhart. Funeral services will be held Monday, October 19, 2026, at 2:00 p.m. at the Garnand Funeral Home Chapel in Elkhart. Interment will follow at Elkhart Cemetery.

Sue Ann "Suzi" (Griffin) Watson, 78, of Sublette, Kansas, passed into the arms of her Savior on Sunday morning, October 18, 2026, at her home in Sublette. Suzi was born on March 10, 1948, in Lubbock, Texas, to Meryle B. and Dickie Darleen (Cook) Griffin. In 1963, her family relocated to Kansas, where she attended Sublette schools, graduating from Sublette High School in 1966.

Visitation will be held from 5 to 7 p.m. on Wednesday, October 21, 2026, at Weeks Family Funeral Home & Crematory in Sublette, KS, where the family will receive friends during that time. Funeral services will be held at 10 a.m. on Thursday, October 22, 2026, at Sublette Christian Church, with Pastor

Cory Barnett of Seeds of Hope Church officiating. Interment will follow at Haskell County Cemetery in Sublette, KS. Memorial contributions may be made payable to Seeds of Hope Church in memory of Suzi Watson and mailed in care of Weeks Family Funeral Home & Crematory, P.O. Box 1200, Sublette, KS 67877.

Vyrna "Kay" Lucas, 87, of Liberal, passed away on Friday, October 16, 2026 at her home, surrounded by her loving family.

She was born on July 1, 1939 to Edward and Margaret (Burkholder) Dunham at Trenton, NJ.

There will be no viewing, as cremation has taken place.

Memorial Service will be 2:00 pm Saturday, October 31, 2026 at the Miller Mortuary Chapel, with Pastor Jimmy Holman officiating.

Memorials are suggested to the Liberal Animal Shelter in care of Miller Mortuary PO Box 826, Liberal, KS 67905-0826.

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SUBMITTED BY CHESTER TUMIDAJEWICZ, AMSTERDAM, NY.

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Thank You For Reading the fourth Edition of the SWKS News, we hope you enjoyed it and look forward to your continued patronage!

Sincerely,

Tyler Hook - Publisher

GAMES

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Farm Animals

Angel

- Senior dog (in his golden years)
- Neutered male
- Enjoys walks and leisure time
- Needs to be an only dog

Ben

- 10 months old
- Shepherd mix
- Gets along with other dogs
- Enjoys playtime
- Calm and submissive

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for more information.

Letters To The Editor

The following numbers can be found at sos.ks.gov Kansas registered voters as of June 2026: Republican -891,106; Unaffiliated-596,216; Democrat-496,464.

I would like to encourage all my fellow unaffiliated voters to turn out to the polls on November 3rd, 2026 for the 2026 Midterm election and to strongly consider casting their votes to make KANSAS a

more purple state.

I believe it is never good to allow one party to have too much power and as unaffiliated voters with no allegiance to any party we must act as an equalizer to maintain a balance between the Left and Right as they struggle to dominate our politics and our country.

-Michael Neal

beyond the headlines and political rhetoric, and do not be afraid to question what you hear, regardless of its source.

Perhaps most importantly, **vote according to your own conscience, even when it comes down to a matter of principle.** There may be times when the candidate who best represents your beliefs does not share your usual political affiliation, and there may be issues on which you disagree with those you generally support. Independent thought should never be discouraged simply because it does not fall neatly along party lines. Our responsibility as voters is not to demonstrate loyalty to a political organization, but to make thoughtful decisions about those entrusted with representing us.

An informed electorate is essential to a healthy democracy. We will not always agree on the direction our government should take, nor should we expect to. The freedom to disagree, debate and ultimately cast our own ballots is among the most important rights we possess as Americans. Whether Republican, Democrat, Libertarian or unaffiliated, every eligible voter has a voice worth hearing.

As November 3 approaches, I encourage everyone to remember that elections are about far more than political victories and defeats. They are about the kind of communi-

ties, state and nation we hope to leave for future generations.

Research the issues, question the candidates, stand by your principles and, above all, exercise your right to vote. The choice belongs to you, and that is precisely how it should be.

— Tyler Hook, Editor

PRICE nual Meeting and Dinner.

Community fundraising will also become increasingly important. The museum's fourth annual Night at the Museum event, scheduled for Tuesday, October 20, brings together numerous local organizations, businesses and volunteers in support of the institution. Partners include the Lakin Recreation Commission, Kearny County Sheriff's Department, Golden Plains Credit Union, Kearny County Bank, Lakin Fire Department, Lakin High School Forensics team, Roots & Branches Genealogy, Lakin Community Empowerment Group and Bloom and Brush.

McCombs emphasized that the historical society remains committed to keeping the museum open for future generations while continuing to preserve the artifacts and historical collections entrusted to its care.

For me, this issue strikes particularly close to home. Many members of my family have dedicated years of their lives to preserving history through museums and historical organizations across our region. I presently serve at the Grant County Historic Adobe Museum and have seen firsthand the tremendous amount of work, dedication and volunteer effort required to maintain these institutions.

Our local museums are far more than collections of old photographs, documents and artifacts. They are classrooms without walls, repositories of community identity and important attractions that bring visitors into our towns. They preserve the stories of the

people who built our communities, the hardships they endured, the innovations they developed and the lives they lived.

In rural western Kansas, where so much of our history exists in the memories of families and the collections of small institutions, losing a museum can mean losing pieces of our collective identity that may never be recovered.

I encourage everyone to take time to visit and support the museums throughout our region. Attend their programs, bring your children and grandchildren, volunteer your time, purchase a membership or make a donation when possible. Even something as simple as encouraging an out-of-town visitor to stop at a local museum can make a difference.

These institutions contribute to education, tourism and community pride in ways that are not always reflected on a financial statement. Their value cannot be measured solely by the number of people who walk through their doors or the dollars required to keep the lights on.

We often speak of preserving our rural communities for future generations. Preserving the history that shaped those communities is an important part of that responsibility.

Once a museum closes, reopening its doors is never guaranteed. And once history is lost, no amount of money can always bring it back.

Our museums have spent generations preserving our stories. Perhaps now is the time for us to make certain their own stories do not come

Letters To The Editor do NOT reflect the Opinion of SWKS News. If you have something you want considered send it to editor@swksnews.com for consideration today!

Regional Business Honored

By: Tyler Hook

Several southwest Kansas businesses and organizations were among those recognized during the 2026 *To The Stars: Kansas Business Awards*, hosted by the Kansas Department of Commerce. The annual awards celebrate businesses and organizations making significant contributions to economic development, workforce growth and community vitality across the state.

MJE Livestock Equipment received the **Apprenticeship Champion Award for the Southwest Region** in recognition of its commitment to developing skilled workers through the Registered Kansas Apprenticeship Program (RKAP). According to Kansas Farm Bureau, the company has demonstrated innovation in overcoming the challenges of providing technical instruction in rural Kansas, where access to specialized training programs can be limited.

Through flexible and non-traditional educational approaches, MJE has established apprenticeship opportunities supporting essential positions

such as diesel mechanics, welders and heavy equipment operators. By incorporating apprenticeships into its workforce development strategy, the company has worked to create sustainable career opportunities while addressing the growing demand for skilled labor. MJE Chief Operating Officer Heather Jantz attended the awards ceremony alongside her husband, Aaron Albers, and was pictured with Lieutenant Governor David Toland.

Other southwest Kansas

honorees included the Finney County Public Library in Garden City, which received the statewide Healthcare/Nonprofit Award. Cat-Tales in Elkhart was recognized with the Southwest Region Mainstreet Momentum Award, while Broce Manufacturing of Dodge City received the Southwest Region Manufacturing/Distribution Award.

Flora Food Group, an international food manufacturer with a production facility in Hugoton, received the Randi Tveitaraas Jack International

Business Development Award. Headquartered in the Netherlands, the company markets products including Country Crock and I Can't Believe It's Not Butter in more than 100 countries. Its Kansas operations also include a major manufacturing facility in Johnson County. The award recognized the company's contributions to international business development and Kansas' presence in global markets.

The recognition of businesses and organizations from communities including Elkhart, Hugoton, Dodge City and Garden City highlights the diversity of economic activity taking place throughout southwest Kansas. From manufacturing and agriculture-related industries to community services and workforce development, these organizations continue to play an important role in supporting employment, local investment and economic opportunities across the region.



Heather Jantz COO MJE, David Towland Lt Gov & Aaron Albers

Kansas Cowboy Hall Of Fame Winners

By: Tyler Hook

The Kansas Cowboy Hall of Fame at Boot Hill Museum in Dodge City has announced its 2026 inductees, recognizing individuals and ranching operations that have made lasting contributions to the state's western heritage. Established in 2002, the Hall of Fame annually honors cowboys and cowgirls who exemplify the traditional values of integrity, honesty and self-sufficiency while preserving the history and lifestyle of the American West.

This year's honorees include Karen Atterberry Duncan of

Dighton, Cowgirl Entertainer; Jeff Davidson of Eureka, Cowboy Historian; Charles Henry Hyer of Olathe, Cowboy Legacy/Lifestyle; Black Diamond Angus Ranch/Warner Angus Ranch of Spearville, Rancher/Cattlemen; Colette Baier of Hardtner, Rodeo Cowgirl; and William Eugene Lowery of Greenwood County, Working Cowboy. Each was selected for contributions to Kansas' ranching, rodeo, entertainment and cowboy traditions.

"It is my great privilege to announce the newest inductees into the Kansas Cowboy Hall of Fame," said Hall of Fame Chairman T. Kim Goodnight.

"Since 2002, we have proudly celebrated the enduring legacy of the cowboy." Goodnight congratulated the inductees for their dedication to preserving and celebrating the history of the American cowboy and the state's western heritage.

The induction celebration will take place Saturday, November 7, beginning with a free public social hour from 3 to 5 p.m. at Boot Hill Distillery, featuring the release of the special edition Rancher/Cattlemen Single Barrel Bourbon Whiskey. The induction dinner and ceremony will follow at Boot Hill Museum, with doors opening at 6 p.m. and

the program beginning at 6:30 p.m. Tickets are \$35, and reservations may be made by calling 620-227-8188 or visiting www.boothill.org.

Boot Hill Museum will also be open from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. on both Saturday and Sunday, with complimentary admission available to guests presenting their Hall of Fame induction tickets. The annual event continues a tradition of recognizing the people and ranching legacies that have helped shape Kansas' western identity for generations.

Info C/O FB

Morton County Sheriff Issues Statement

By: Sheriff Tom Thrall

I feel the need to give an update about the status of the Sheriff's office since my appointment to the office in July, plus share some concerns.

When I first took office, I had much to do to get oriented, so I divided my attention between orientation, normalizing daily operations, and identifying a longer-term plan to rebuild the department roster, which must be done to have a full patrol schedule and proactive policing.

The tasks below were items of urgency needing immediate attention:

- An agreement was reached to compensate the service dog handler for nearly 2 years of post-employment care of dog. The dog was at the end its service age, so it was retired and transferred to the permanent possession of the handler.

- The intra-county civil actions I inherited with the office have been resolved.

- Invoicing and delinquent payments to vendors seems to be resolved. The county payment system requires paper invoices for approval. Most vendors mail an invoice. Once received in the mail it is vouchered, approved by the Sheriff, transferred to the clerk, reviewed, presented for approval to the commissioners, then paid; ideally these steps occur and the vendor is paid before the next vendor billing cycle. Any neglect or oversight or delay anywhere in this process will create an overdue or delinquent account.

- The evidence inventory and disposal effort is ongoing. Additional evidence items have been found in storage areas and added to the inventory list. For a small number of

the items inventoried, research is needed to verify the statute of limitations or evidentiary value of the items. If the statute of limitation has expired or the case is closed the evidence item can be disposed of. The records for these older cases are stored in an area of the courthouse which was impacted by the broken courthouse A/C so we paused the research until cooler weather. Ultimately, with over 1500 evidence items listed, a blanket disposal order will be requested of the court and the bulk of the evidence no longer needed will be disposed of by legally appropriate methods.

- Sheriff Fees are being delivered to the treasurer twice monthly as recommended. Sheriff fees are statutory fees for certain Sheriff tasks which includes: court ordered drug testing, VIN inspections, MVR records, fingerprinting, civil process, or offender registrations.

- The Sheriff's vehicle fleet ranges in age from 2015 to 2022, with mileages between 84k to 191k. A few of the parked vehicles have lower miles but need some mechanical work to be usable. We are repairing those with good residual value and will divest those with higher mileage and worse condition, in addition to working with the commissioners to establish an ongoing

replacement strategy.

- VIN inspections- All county VIN inspection programs in Kansas are administered by KHP, subject to biannual officer training updates and onsite VIN program audits. Morton LEC officers recently renewed certification and the VIN program received a favorable KHP on site audit.

- I recently completed the KLETC assigned recertification study program and passed the challenge exam and have renewed my Kansas Law Enforcement Officer certification.

Recruiting and hiring officers proves to be much more difficult than expected. I've reworked the personnel budget to try to find opportunity, and by giving up another position I can offer better compensation to the remaining roles, but even so, with traditional advertising I still receive few applicants. In this post covid labor market, workers are trending away public sector employment. Most rural communities were not aware of this labor market shift so are not aware of the difficulty in recruiting and retaining career level public employees.

This is easily understood if we look at the last several years. In 2024 Morton SO employed 6 full time & 2 part time officers (Shelby, Marc,

Josh, Mandy, Ron, Theresa, Thad, Chris); City of Elkhart 3 full time officers (Drake/Nate/David). Also, Morton LEC had 4 full time dispatchers, 1 jailer, 1 records clerk. However, by mid to late 2024 several vacancies occurred within local law enforcement which remain unfilled to this day. Due to elections, resignations, investigation, Sheriff recall, and Giglio pressures- collectively the local agencies have lost 5 full-time officers, 1 part-time officer, and a jailer. Including the jailer, this is a 62% loss of sworn officers in 2 years.

It should be a lasting lesson, it's easier to collapse a workforce than to reconstruct it. In addition to the factors above, there exists a regional perception that the Giglio assertions in Morton County were subjective, with little due process for the officers. This perception becomes a reputation which could be impacting our recruiting efforts among potential certified officer candidates.

The operating budget is always a concern of every administrator. In examining the budget declines of recent years, I must be blunt and tell you with each annual budget reduction this agency will provide less service than the previous year. The expected 2027 budget is 21% less than the 2025 budget. Proactive enforcements like drug investigations or rural patrol or other discretionary services will be impacted. Lack of proactive enforcement always results in increased crime. If we are resource constrained, it is reasonable then to ask the public to do their part to minimize those behaviors that drain our resources, such as keeping your livestock fenced, secure



Moran

Continued from Page 1

rural law enforcement agencies with necessary equipment.

On Wednesday, October 14, Moran joined members of the Haskell County Rotary Club to recognize their efforts in developing a community splash pad. The project, made possible through local fundraising and Kansas tax credit and grant programs, is intended to provide additional summer recreational opportunities for children and families. Moran thanked Rotary President Nick Leon, Sheriff Troy Briggs and club members for their continued investment in the community.

During a stop in Ulysses, Moran toured High Five Adventure Park and Apex Fitness Center alongside Economic Development Director Bob Dale and business owners Dr. Bradyn and Whitney Bishop. The couple relocated from Utah to operate Prairie Vista Dental and later expanded their involvement in the community by renovating the former popcorn center into an indoor recreation facility. The attraction features trampolines, ball pits and slides and report-

edly hosted 30 birthday parties during the previous month. Moran pointed to the business as an example of how private investment can strengthen rural communities and provide additional opportunities for families.

In Garden City, Moran met with law enforcement officials, elected leaders and community stakeholders to discuss concerns surrounding recent federal immigration enforcement activity in southwest Kansas. The meeting provided an opportunity for local officials to share perspectives on public safety, immigration enforcement and the effects of federal operations on area communities.

Moran expressed support for border security and enforcement of immigration laws while also emphasizing the importance of ensuring that immigrants maintaining lawful status have access to U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS). He reiterated his longstanding support for establishing a permanent USCIS presence in southwest Kansas and said he would continue working toward the return of mobile immigration services. Moran also indicated

his willingness to work with the Department of Homeland Security toward establishing a full-service field office in the region. Among those participating in the discussion were State Senator Dr. Bill Clifford, State Representatives Bob Lewis and Lon Pishny, County Commission Chairwoman Vicki Germann, Mayor Tom Nguyen and Sheriff Steve Martinez.

Another significant announcement came in Lakin, where Moran visited Kearny County Airport to announce an \$11 million investment toward construction of a new runway. The project is expected to improve airport infrastructure and accessibility, particularly for air medical transportation serving the region. During the visit, Moran also received updates on Kearny County Hospital's planned expansion and renovation. Hospital officials have been working with the U.S. Department of Agriculture to secure long-term financing for a new clinic and improvements to the hospital's long-term care facility.

Education was another focus of the senator's travels. At South Gray High School in Montezuma, Moran met with

students, teachers and administrators and toured the campus. Assistant Principal Mark Applegate and student leaders Jonalee Zwegardt and Angelina Thiessen discussed the school's programs and efforts to prepare students for opportunities beyond graduation.

Moran also visited Heartland Mill in Marienthal, a farmer-owned milling business established in 1985. During the visit, he met with employees and learned more about the company's operations, which provide a market for Kansas wheat producers while supplying flour to customers. The stop highlighted the continued importance of agriculture and locally operated businesses to the western Kansas economy.

Throughout the week, Moran's visits reflected a broad range of issues facing rural Kansas, from maintaining essential public services and improving infrastructure to supporting small businesses, agricultural producers and educational opportunities. The meetings also provided local residents and officials an opportunity to communicate their concerns and priorities directly to their representation in Washington, D.C.

your valuables, lock your vehicles at night, follow the laws, and avoid those criminal behaviors that brings law enforcement to your door.

All this brings us to a sobering reality. If you recall- my intention when taking office was to be here long enough to rebuild the department to a firm footing for stable succession before the next election. DO NOT be lulled into believing this is accomplished or successful. Yes, we've moved past the community conflict which got us here, and yes, I've solved some urgent tasks, and yes, I am advertising job vacancies, but overall, the long-term goal of re staffing the agency is elusive. Unless I

can rebuild the department, this effort will result in failure. This hiring effort is my most pressing administrative concern and should be your concern too. I have limited time to make this effort and if I cannot reconstruct this department the leadership vacancy will repeat again on my departure.

Now that I've explained the situation, I need your creative support to help with recruiting. I have 2 officer vacancies needing filled. Law enforcement can be a tremendously rewarding vocation for the right person. Feel free to share my advertisements. If someone has social media marketing talent I can leverage, I need your help. I'm also con-

sidering the value of a volunteer recruiting committee who might bring talents I don't have who could help promote our needs via social media campaigns or other creative methods. The bottom line, I need to use every tool I can find to recruit candidates for long term success, and time is my most scarce resource. I admit this message is unorthodox, but time is short and I must be aggressive.

I have an open Deputy position I can pay between \$23.00 hr. and \$26.00 hr. depending on certification and experience. I have a salaried Under-sheriff position I can offer \$59,280 yr. My efforts so far have been to attract certified

officers, because while they need orientation they are already trained and can be productive quickly. I also value attracting officers who will make this their home to continue to invest in the community that invests in them. Even better if they have families and can appreciate the small-town familiarity and pace.

I continue to want to build a dynamic law enforcement team that will succeed me when I leave and set the foundation for solid law enforcement for years to come.

As always, thanks for your support;

Sheriff Tom Thrall

Kansas Student Reading Crisis Continues

By: Tyler Hook

More than half of tested students remain below grade-level proficiency as educators and policymakers confront longstanding literacy concerns

Kansas education officials are reporting improvements in student reading and mathematics scores for 2026, but the latest results reveal a troubling reality: More than half of the state's tested students are still unable to demonstrate proficiency in English language arts at their respective grade levels.

The Kansas State Department of Education announced October 19 that students had made measurable gains over the previous year, with fewer students scoring at the lowest performance level and more reaching proficient or advanced levels. However, the improvement comes against a backdrop of longstanding concerns over literacy and whether Kansas schools are adequately preparing students with the reading and comprehension skills necessary for adulthood.

According to an analysis by the Kansas Policy Institute, approximately 46% of Kansas students tested proficient in English language arts in 2026, compared with 45% in 2025. That leaves roughly 54% of tested students below the state's proficiency benchmark. While this does not mean those students cannot read, it indicates that a majority have not demonstrated the reading, writing and language skills expected at their grade level.

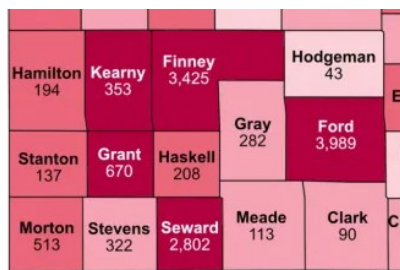
The distinction is significant. Kansas divides student assessment results into four performance categories. Level 1 indicates a limited ability to demonstrate grade-level knowledge and skills, while Level 2 indicates a basic understanding. Levels 3 and 4 represent proficient and advanced performance, respectively. Students scoring in the

lower categories may possess reading skills but struggle with comprehension, vocabulary, interpretation or other academic expectations.

The concerns are particularly relevant in southwest Kansas. A 2025 Kansas Policy Institute analysis of 2024 assessment data identified Ford, Finney, Grant, Kearny, Seward and Sherman counties among those with the highest estimated percentages of students demonstrating limited reading ability. The organization estimated that more than 150,000 students statewide fell into this category, an increase from approximately 98,000 in 2015. While the organization described these students as potentially functionally illiterate, that designation is not an official state assessment classification. Changes to Kansas testing standards also complicate comparisons with the latest 2026 results.

The Kansas Policy Institute has raised additional concerns about the state's testing standards, arguing that changes introduced with the 2025 assessment make historical comparisons difficult and may present an overly favorable picture of student achievement. The organization points to results from the National Assessment of Educational Progress, commonly known as the Nation's Report Card, as evidence that reading proficiency remains a significant challenge.

State education officials, meanwhile, emphasize that the latest results represent genuine year-over-year improvement under the current assessment system. English language arts scores showed a one-



% of students with limited ability to read
 10-19% 20-29% 30-39% 40%+
 Graphic From KansasPolicy.org
 from 2024 KSDE Assessment

percentage-point reduction in students performing at Level 1, while the percentage reaching proficient or advanced levels increased by

1.46 percentage points.

The results also varied by grade. Tenth-grade students recorded a 2.2-percentage-point reduction in Level 1 English language arts scores, while seventh and fifth graders also showed improvement. Third-grade students, however, experienced a slight increase of 0.1 percentage point in the lowest performance category, raising continued concerns about literacy development during the earliest years of education.

The implications extend far beyond classroom report cards. Reading proficiency is a foundation for nearly every other academic subject, from understanding mathematical word problems and scientific concepts to studying history and developing practical skills. Students who struggle with reading may face additional obstacles in pursuing higher education, technical training and employment opportunities.

For rural Kansas, where communities depend upon a skilled workforce to sustain agriculture, manufacturing, healthcare and small businesses, educational outcomes carry long-term economic significance. Reading comprehension is essential for understanding equipment manuals, safety procedures, technical instructions and the increasingly complex information encountered in modern workplaces.

Kansas has taken steps to address these concerns through structured literacy initiatives

and additional teacher training. According to the Department of Education, nearly 14,900 Seals of Literacy had been added to educator licenses as of September 30, 2026, reflecting participation in literacy-focused professional development. State lawmakers have also established requirements intended to strengthen reading instruction, identify struggling students earlier and provide targeted interventions.

Other educational indicators have shown improvement. Chronic absenteeism declined to 17.8% during the 2025–2026 school year, down from 24.5% during the 2021–2022 school year. Teacher vacancies also decreased by 28%, from 2,204 in spring 2025 to 1,588 in spring 2026. Both developments may help schools provide more consistent instruction and support.

Nevertheless, the central concern remains. Even with modest improvements, a majority of Kansas students taking state English language arts assessments have not reached the established proficiency benchmark. The results raise questions about how quickly struggling students can receive assistance and whether current improvements are sufficient to close persistent learning gaps.

For parents, educators and communities, the challenge is not simply improving statewide percentages but ensuring that individual students acquire the skills necessary to succeed. Reading is more than an academic requirement; it is a fundamental tool for independence, opportunity and participation in society.

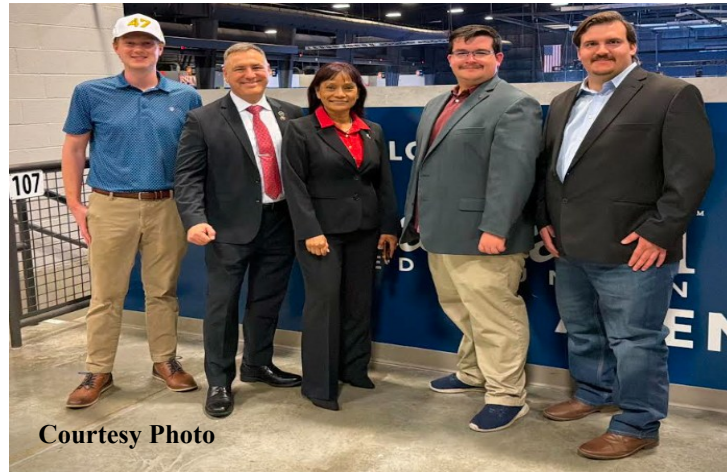
The latest scores suggest Kansas is making progress, but they also demonstrate how much work remains before grade-level reading proficiency becomes the expectation rather than the exception.

Southwest Kansan Perspective of Trump Rally

Courtesy of Mickey Mason
My name is Mickey Mason. Since this is my first piece for SWKS News, I feel it is only right to introduce myself. I was born, raised, and graduated in Ulysses, and completed two undergraduate degrees at Fort Hays State University earlier this year. After interning with U.S.

Senator Jerry Moran, working with former Kansas Governor Jeff Colyer, and now working alongside State Representative Pat Proctor, who is on your ballot for Secretary of State, I'm back home in Southwest Kansas.

As anyone in Grant County knows, driving to Wichita isn't "just around the bend" like a trip to Garden City. My dad and I had a serious debate about whether we should make the drive for President Donald Trump's recent rally—especially after a notification from the campaign reminded us that getting a ticket did not guarantee a seat. That morning at 6:30 a.m., knowing doors opened at 2:30 p.m., pre-program remarks started at 4:30 p.m., and the President was set to speak at 6:00 p.m., we realized we were in for a long day. I reminded my dad of Wayne Gretzky's famous line: "You miss 100% of the shots you don't take." Hitting the road by 8:00 a.m., we arrived in Park City just before noon to find an overflowing overflow lot, not even mentioning the main lot. Guided by local law enforcement, we parked on a nearby frontage road and walked half a mile to the entrance line, which had



Courtesy Photo

already stretched deep into and around the grass overflow lot. Along the way, I reconnected with several familiar faces—fellow FHSU alumni, party members (and friends of the party), and even a fellow Ulysses native, Tylar Winegarner.

By 5:30 p.m., Secret Service opened additional screening lanes to accommodate the massive crowd. Right around that time, we all got to see the President on his arrival, as he did his colorful fly over, Airforce One overhead. Inside, speakers addressed the growing arena crowd, with a big screen and speakers carrying the program to those of us in the security lines. The stage featured Kansas State Treasurer Steven Johnson with the invocation, Former Army Colonel State Rep. Pat Proctor leading the Pledge of Allegiance (with brief remarks), Kim Attwater performing the national anthem, along with remarks from Kansas AG Kris Kobach, Rep. Derek Schmidt, Rep. Tracey Mann, Rep. Ron Estes, Senate President and candidate for Governor Ty Masterson, Sen. Roger Marshall, and rock star Ted Nugent.

By this time, I had been fortunate enough to score floor seats on the President's left, just six or so rows deep. The 6,500-capacity arena was packed, with likely thousands more dedicated supporters remaining outside, many of whom were let in as seats opened up. When President Trump took the stage, the energy in the room was electric with bright lights, U-S-A chants, and overall cheers. He opened by recognizing Senator Roger Marshall and Ty Masterson, which was a recurring point of the speech, and for the conservative ticket in Kansas. Throughout his speech, when a few isolated protesters attempted to disrupt the event, they were swiftly and decisively escorted out by security, keeping the focus right where it belonged, with the President's playful banter about the disturbances. Trump delivered a strong address on foreign policy, pointing out recent unrest across European nations and the destruction of historic monuments, boldly promising that such lawlessness will never be tolerated in the United States. In reflection, he celebrated his victorious return to

the White House, and forcefully defended American heritage, religious freedom, and Christian values against globalist pressures and radical ideologies.

He shared a clear objective on domestic priorities; protecting the integrity of women's sports, securing our southern border, and rejecting mass amnesty for illegal immigrants. He commanded the room with his pointed humor and energy, at one point playfully feigning an exit before doubling back to deliver even more remarks on military strength and peace through strength in the Middle East. Consider watching full remarks on Youtube.

As a 23-year-old who missed the chance to see President Trump when he visited Topeka in 2018 or Wichita in 2016, I was awestruck. Standing just 50 feet away from the leader of the free world, a man who has reshaped American politics, was beyond a powerful moment. As he spoke about his military actions in the Middle East, I was stunned by the notion of considering the raw power I was witnessing ahead. For me, it was an honor to be one small voice representing Southwest Kansas in welcoming our President. I love seeing our neighbors make the long drive to stay engaged, connected, and heard. Showing up to these civic events, getting involved, and voting in November are the highest forms of citizenship. This is what keeps our region, our state, and our nation strong.

Now That's Rural: Ellie Bowman

At a glance: After successfully reopening a farm and home store in Kinsley, Ellie Bowman was asked to do the same in Elkhart. She did so with a grand reopening in April 2026 with more than 400 people attending. She said the community has welcomed her with open arms.

Transition can be one of the most challenging factors for rural businesses as generations and markets change.

Today we will meet a young rural-preneur who is helping another rural business to adapt, change and succeed.

Ellie Bowman is the manager of Prickly Pear Farm, Home and Lumber in Elkhart, Kansas. Bowman grew up in Lewis and earned a degree in agribusiness from Kansas State University. With support from her parents, she purchased the lumberyard in Kinsley and rebranded it as Prickly Pear Farm and Home.

With a fresh look, expanded offerings, and emphasis on customer service, she was able to double the Kinsley store's business in the first year. Her work to build the business led to her being recognized by the Kansas Department of Commerce as the 2024 To The Stars award winner as the Under 30 Entrepreneur of the Year.

That award caught the attention of Morton County economic development director Alexis O'Hair, who



Photo Courtesy of Huck Boyd Institute

mentioned it to the owners of the local lumberyard in the county seat of Elkhart. The lumberyard had been family-owned for nearly 40 years, but one of the key owners had died and the following generation had moved away.

The owner's daughter, Sheena, reached out to Bowman. "I was asked to come look at the store and see what could be done," Bowman said. She first came and visited the store in February, 2025.

"I walked into that store for the first time and said to myself, 'I would build this place in my dreams,'" Bowman said. In August, she stepped into the role of manager with support to enhance the store.

Bowman found that several steps were needed. "We needed to find a new supplier, we needed to reset the store, and we needed to serve the community more effectively," she said.

She jumped in and went to work. By October they had a new computer system in place and by November they had reset the store with the new supplier. In the

spring, they reopened the greenhouse next door, which had closed four years previously.

In April 2026, the store had a grand reopening and was rebranded as Prickly Pear Farm, Home and Lumber, similar to Bowman's store in Kinsley. The building next door became the Prickly Pear Potting Shed and Greenhouse. "We'll have mums in the greenhouse this fall," Bowman said.

"More than 400 people came to the grand reopening," she added. "It was really exciting. We had food trucks and a big celebration."

"The response from the community has been overwhelmingly positive. I absolutely love it. This community has welcomed me with open arms."

For Bowman, the priorities are customer, community and people: "It all comes back to customer service. There can be great results if you're willing to give your all to help customers succeed."

She greatly appreciates the community of Elkhart.

"Elkhart does it really well," Bowman said. "There's an active chamber and economic development office. There are people in the community who care."

Are there young people willing to find opportunities in small town Kansas? Bowman is an example.

"I guess this proves I'm rural by choice," said Bowman, using the term coined by rural advocate Marci Penner to describe young people who are opting for a rural lifestyle and positively impacting their communities. Bowman has chosen to live in the community of Elkhart, population 1,888 people. Now, that's rural.

For more information, look for Prickly Pear Farm, Home & Lumber on Facebook.

Business transitions can be one of the most challenging stages in the life of a small business. We commend Ellie Bowman for making a difference with entrepreneurship in a retail business in a rural community. She is applying the good business principles from her first store to another and helping both to succeed. Those are positive transitions.

And there's more. When Bowman arranged for a different hardware supplier, she signed on with an independent supply company that also happens to be based in Kansas. We'll learn about that next week.

Audio and text files of Kansas Profiles are available at

www.huckboydinstitute.org/kansas-profiles.

American Roots Plains' Tradition

By: Tyler Hook

The history of John Deere in western Kansas is closely tied to the growth of agriculture across the High Plains. As farms expanded and mechanization transformed farming during the twentieth century, implement dealerships became essential to rural communities. Among the most recognized of those dealerships was American Implement, a company whose history reflects both the evolution of modern agriculture and the growth of western Kansas itself.

The story began in Garden City in 1926, when the Carter Brothers opened a John Deere dealership in the Woolsworth Building. During the early years of mechanized farming, dealerships often operated out of modest storefronts while serving farmers transitioning from horse-drawn equipment to tractors and modern tillage machinery.

Only a few years later, in 1930, the dealership became a company-owned John Deere store and adopted the name American Implement Company. Operations moved into the McCoy Motor Company building on North Main Street in Garden City. The dealership's early staff included Russell McGuire, Harold Janssen, Frank Hartung, Robert Lehner, and Frank Farrar. As agriculture expanded throughout western Kansas, the dealership quickly became one of the largest in the state, with equipment arriving by the trainload to meet growing farmer demand.

The expansion of irrigation, improvements in farm machin-

ery, and increasing wheat production across western Kansas created strong demand for tractors, combines, and tillage equipment.

Garden City emerged as an important agricultural hub, and American Implement grew alongside the region's farming economy.

In 1943, A.C. Gottschalk purchased the dealership and renamed it American Tractor & Implement. Six years later, in 1949, the dealership relocated to the Five Points area of Garden City, continuing to expand as farming operations throughout the High Plains became larger and increasingly mechanized.

By the late 1960s, agriculture was changing rapidly once again. Farms were growing larger, equipment was becoming more sophisticated, and dealerships needed additional space and service capabilities to meet farmers' needs. In 1970, ownership of the dealership transferred to Duane Koster, who assumed the role of General Manager at only 26 years of age.

Koster brought both education and industry experience to the business. A 1961 graduate of Garden City High School, he earned a degree in Business Administration from Kansas State University in 1965 before beginning his career with

the John Deere Company in 1966. Prior to taking ownership of the dealership, Koster served as a territorial manager for John Deere covering areas near Wichita and Oklahoma.

Under Koster's leadership, plans were quickly developed to construct a larger facility west of Garden City along U.S. Highway 50. The new location provided room for future growth and reflected the changing scale of agriculture across western Kansas. The investment proved timely. Between 1969 and 1975, reports noted dealership sales increasing nearly twenty-fold as demand for larger and more advanced equipment surged throughout the Plains.

The growth of the dealership mirrored the prosperity of agriculture during the 1970s. High commodity prices and strong export demand fueled rapid farm expansion throughout the Midwest and Great Plains. American Implement became known not only throughout Kansas, but across much of the western United States. By 1976, the dealership had reportedly sold equipment into nearly every state west of the Mississippi River, while also handling requests from states including Mississippi, Minnesota, Iowa, Illinois, and Missouri. Interest in equipment even extended internationally, with inquiries arriving from Australia.

As agriculture evolved, so did the dealership. American Implement steadily expanded beyond Garden City through acquisitions and mergers with

1926 "50 YEARS OF SERVICE" 1976



The first John Deere tractors were sold in 1926 by Carter Brothers Hardware, located in the Woolsworth building.

In 1930, the dealership, American Implement Company became a company owned store and was located in the Sears building, with service work done in the basement.

The dealership was sold to A. C. Gottschalk in 1943 and renamed American Tractor and Implement. In 1949 the business moved to a new building at 5 Points, where the Appliance Mart is located today.

In January 1970, the present owners purchased the dealership and the store's name was changed to American Implement, Inc. The store retained the four employees of the former dealer and with the new manager, Duane Koster, employment totaled five.

In July 1970, the dealership moved two miles west on Highway 50 into a nearly new 8,400 square foot building. Since 1970, we have had the following expansions: 1971 - 3,360 square feet; 1972 - 6,680 square feet; 1973 - 5,760 square feet; and in 1976 - 7,500 square feet or a total of 31,700 square feet of building.

In 1970, we employed five persons! Today we employ 25, with one employee, Phil Sheehy, having been with the store since 1935. 1975 total sales are 20 times larger than 1969 total sales. New and used equipment sales are primarily made within a 60 mile radius of Garden City, but equipment has been sold in nearly every state west of the Mississippi and Minnesota, Iowa, Illinois, and Missouri to the east. We have had numerous sales inquiries from Australia. American Implement, Inc. ranks within the top handful of John Deere dealerships in the nation.



AMERICAN IMPLEMENT INC.

West Highway 50 Garden City 275-4114

July 2nd, 1976 Garden City Telegram

See American, Page 12

other John Deere dealerships across western Kansas and eastern Colorado. In 1984, the company purchased the John Deere dealership in Colby, followed by the Scott City dealership in 1989.

The pace of expansion accelerated during the 2000s and 2010s. Colby Implement purchased Oakley Implement in 2006. In 2008, American Implement acquired Cornerstone Sales, adding locations in Ulysses, Hugoton, Elkhart, Kansas, and Walsh, Colorado. Additional acquisitions followed, including Goodland Greenline in 2012, the merger with Colby/Oakley Implement the same year, and the merger with Unruh Foster in 2013, which added locations in Dodge City, Montezuma, and Sublette. Later that year, American Implement acquired the Leoti dealership from 21st Century Equipment. In 2017, the company acquired Golden Rule, adding locations in Johnson and Syracuse.

Today, American Implement operates sixteen locations throughout western Kansas and one in Walsh, Colorado, employing approximately 400 people. The dealership organization serves communities stretching across the High Plains, including Garden City, Dodge City, Colby, Hugoton, Goodland, Scott City, Syracuse, Johnson, and many others throughout the region.

The company built much of its reputation around used farm equipment, adopting the slogan "Supermarket of Used Equipment." Alongside new John Deere machinery, American Implement developed extensive inventories of used



Courtesy Photo

tractors, combines, hay equipment, tillage tools, sprayers, seeding equipment, and construction machinery.

Despite its growth, the company has continued emphasizing its connection to rural communities. With many of its locations situated in small

also extended to Garden City Community College. American Implement contributed major financial support toward the college's John Deere expansion project, helping strengthen hands-on learning opportunities for students pursuing careers in agriculture

AMERICAN IMPLEMENT®

High Plains towns, American Implement has remained heavily involved in local organizations, scholarships, and agricultural education programs. The dealership has long supported Kansas FFA and National FFA programs while also providing annual scholarships through its Ag Future Scholarship Program.

The Koster family's support for agricultural education has

and diesel technology. In recognition of the family's contributions, Garden City Community College named both the John Deere Expansion Classroom in the Jarmer Technical Annex and the college's Experimental Crop Plots in honor of the Koster family.

Duane Koster's influence extended well beyond the dealership business. In addition to operating American Imple-

ment, he opened Garden City Datsun in 1976 and became involved in several other local businesses, including Finney County Feedyard. He also served as president of the Garden City Chamber of Commerce, president of the Garden City Country Club, and as a board member of the YMCA. His commitment to the community eventually led to the purchase of Southwind Golf and Dining. Eventually his son Chad Koster later assumed operations of the family dealerships.

Throughout its history, American Implement has reflected the same values that shaped much of western Kansas agriculture: hard work, innovation, community involvement, and a willingness to adapt to changing times. From its beginnings in a small Garden City storefront in 1926 to its growth into one of the region's largest John Deere dealership organizations, the company's history mirrors the larger story of agricultural development across the High Plains.

As modern agriculture continues to evolve through precision technology, larger machinery, and advanced farming systems, American Implement remains tied to the traditions that built the dealership nearly a century ago — serving farmers, supporting rural communities, and helping carry forward the agricultural heritage of western Kansas.



Koster Family 1995 Courtesy Photo

We Are Always seeking histories to research & write about

The Space Between Who We Were and Who We Become

By: Tyler Hook

There comes a time in nearly every life when the things we once understood so clearly no longer seem to make sense.

The road we were certain would lead somewhere suddenly ends. People we expected to walk beside us are no longer there. Plans unravel, familiar answers disappear, and we find ourselves facing questions we never imagined having to ask.

Sometimes change arrives like a storm. Other times, it comes so quietly that we hardly recognize it until we look around and realize life is no longer what it was.

We call these moments crises. We see them as setbacks, interruptions, or failures. Yet perhaps some of the most important chapters of our lives are written during the moments we would most like to forget.

Perhaps falling apart and coming together are not always as different as they seem.

Much of our identity is built around what we do. We are farmers, teachers, parents, business owners, and countless other things. But what happens when the children grow up, the business closes, or the work that once defined us is no longer ours?

We can spend a lifetime building an identity around something that was never guaranteed to last.

Yet who we are has always been more than what we do. Our worth cannot be measured entirely by a title, an accomplishment, or another person's opinion.

Life also teaches us the painful reality of separation. People move away. Friendships fade. Families change. Death leaves empty chairs at familiar tables. Sometimes we must leave behind not only people and places, but dreams we once believed were certain.

Loss has a way of showing us what truly mattered. We remember the ordinary conversations, the familiar voices, and the little moments we once took for granted.

We cannot always keep what we love, but we can carry forward what it taught us.

Then there are the tests that reveal our character.

It is easy to speak of honesty when telling the truth costs nothing. Easy to be generous when we have plenty. Easy to show kindness when life is treating us kindly.

But who are we when circumstances are unfair, patience runs thin, and doing the right thing becomes difficult?

Character is not simply what we believe. It is what we practice when those beliefs are challenged.

Some challenges, however, cannot be overcome through determination alone. They require patience.

We wait for opportunities, answers, better circumstances, and the results of years of effort. In a world accustomed to immediate gratification, waiting can feel remarkably similar to failure.

But a farmer cannot hurry the harvest. The ground must be prepared, the seed planted, and the season allowed to unfold. No amount of impatience will make the wheat ripen sooner.

Not every delay is a denial, and not every quiet season is an empty one.

Other experiences change us in ways we never expected. Mistakes reveal our shortcomings. Disappointments challenge our pride. Criticism forces us to consider whether we have room to grow.

Like steel shaped by heat or rough lumber smoothed by a plane, we are often refined through experiences that are anything but comfortable.

And sometimes the lesson is not to become tougher, but

kinder. Not louder, but wiser. Not more certain of ourselves, but more understanding of others.

There are also moments when even our deepest beliefs are shaken.

Faith, whether rooted in religion, humanity, or hope for tomorrow, is easy to speak of when life makes sense. It becomes harder when the questions outnumber the answers.

Why did this happen? Why now? Why, after doing everything right, did things turn out so differently?

Questioning does not always mean we have lost faith. Sometimes it means we are searching for a reason to hold on.

And perhaps faith is not always believing that everything will work out as planned. Sometimes it is finding enough hope to face another morning without knowing what lies ahead.

Eventually, life confronts us with another difficult truth: we cannot control everything.

We are taught to work hard, persevere, and never surrender. Those are admirable qualities, but there comes a point when holding on can do more harm than letting go.

Some situations cannot be repaired through greater effort. Some losses cannot be reversed. Some answers may never come.

Surrender is not necessarily defeat. Sometimes it is accepting what cannot be changed and refusing to let yesterday consume tomorrow.

I often wonder how much of life we spend waiting for everything to finally settle down.

Once the bills are paid, the crops are harvested, the children are raised, or the next problem is solved, we tell ourselves we will finally enjoy living.

But life seldom works that way. One season ends, another begins, and the finish line

keeps moving.

Maybe the purpose of life was never to reach a point where nothing challenges us. Maybe it is learning to find meaning while those challenges unfold.

Here on the High Plains, we understand that not every season produces a harvest. Some years bring timely rains. Others bring drought, disappointment, and the difficult decision to begin again.

Yet we do not judge the value of the land by a single season.

Why, then, are we so quick to judge the value of our own lives by a single difficult chapter?

Every person we encounter is carrying a story we cannot fully see. The neighbor at the grocery store, the stranger passing on the highway, or the friend who seems to have everything figured out may be facing struggles we know nothing about.

A little patience may mean more than our advice. A kind word may accomplish more than criticism. And understanding may be the greatest gift we can offer.

Not every hardship comes with a lesson. Not every disappointment becomes a blessing. Some losses simply hurt, and some questions remain unanswered.

But a difficult chapter does not make a failed life. An unfinished dream does not make a wasted one. And losing our way does not mean losing our future.

We are all living somewhere between who we once were and who we are becoming.

Perhaps the greatest measure of a life is not how many storms we managed to avoid, but whether, having weathered a few ourselves, **we learned to offer a little shelter to someone else.**

Tigers Defeat Colby On Homecoming

The Ulysses Tigers celebrated Homecoming with a 62-12 victory over the Colby Eagles on Friday, Oct. 16, in front of their home crowd.

Colby kicked off to start the game, with Malichah Garcia returning the ball for the Tigers. Ulysses wasted no time getting on the scoreboard as Stryker Berglund scored the first touchdown with 10:10 remaining in the first quarter.

Berglund added two more touchdowns, with Tyce Perez scoring a two-point conversion to give Ulysses a 21-0 lead at the end of the first quarter. Lucas Morphos also came up with an interception for the Tigers.

Ulysses continued its strong offense in the second quarter. Berglund scored another touchdown, followed by touchdowns from Corbin Lopez and Julian Garcia, extending the lead to 41-0.

Colby's Nathan Cates put the Eagles on the scoreboard late in the second quarter, making it 41-6.

The Tigers extended their lead to 48-6 early in the third quarter. Josh Eddie added a five-yard touchdown run, followed by a successful extra-point kick from Mateo Cruz, making it 55-6.

Eddie scored again in the fourth quarter on a 30-yard run, extending the lead to 62-6 after a successful kick.

With 6.5 seconds remaining, Colby called a timeout for one final play. Soteto scored for the Eagles as time expired, bringing the final score to 62-12.

The Homecoming victory improved Ulysses' season record to 5-2, as the Tigers finished the night with a commanding win over Colby.



#7 Caden Ledesma, #13 Stryker Berglund, #23 Malikah Garcia, #52 Jaxon Hauser
Photo & Story By Solia Ochoa

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PET & SPOOK PARADE

OCTOBER 30
LINE UP AT 4PM

KIWANIS	KIWANIS
Pet and Spook Parade 2026	Desfile de Mascotas y Fantasmas 2026
When: Halloween, October 30, 2026	Quando: Halloween, 30 de Octubre, 2026
Line up at 4:00 p. m., parade starts at 4:15 p. m.	Haga fila a las 4:00 p. m., el desfile comienza a las 4:15 p. m.
Where: START: line up & get treat coupon at the intersection of W. Trail St. and S. Lincoln Ave.	Dónde: COMIENZO: haga fila y obtenga un cupón en la intersección de W. Trail St. y S. Lincoln Ave.
END: Redeem treat coupon at Tobias Park	FIN: Entregue el cupón en el parque Tobias
Who: Everyone gets a treat bag if you get a coupon at the beginning of the parade!	Quién: Todos recibirán una bolsa de dulces si recibes un cupón al comienzo del desfile

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★ **DEBE TENER UN CUPÓN PARA OBTENER UNA BOLSA DE DULCES!!** ★

KIAAA Athletic Director Of The Week



Middle School. He later spent three years as head principal at Scott Community High School before returning to Garden City.

"Being back at my alma mater and having the opportunity to lead our athletic department is incredibly meaningful to me," Bayer said. "This school and its athletic programs played an important role in shaping who I am today, and now I have the opportunity to give back." A former college football player, Bayer emphasizes high expectations, accountability and leading by example, noting that "Titles do not make someone a leader, their actions do."

Bayer believes success extends beyond athletic victories, finding his greatest reward in watching former students become successful adults and contributing members of their communities. He hopes to continue strengthening Garden City's athletic traditions while supporting coaches and student-athletes. Bayer and his wife, Brooke, have three children, Quinten, Griffin and Dawsyn.

Garden City High School Athletic Director and Assistant Principal Matt Bayer has been named Athletic Director of the Week by the Kansas Interscholastic Athletic Administrators Association (KIAAA). Bayer, a 2005 Garden City High School graduate, is in his third year serving in his current role after returning to his alma mater in 2024.

Bayer earned his bachelor's degree from Fort Hays State University and a master's degree in School Administration from Emporia State University. He began his career in Garden City in 2010 as a physical education teacher and coach before serving six years as assistant principal and athletic director at Kenneth Henderson

Send Us your News Tips, Photos, Birth Announcements, Community Highlights. Our goal is to continually grow this publication to reflect the rich and diverse community of South Western Kansas!

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COMMUNITY BULLETIN

OCTOBER 23-30, 2026

FINNEY COUNTY

FRI 23

No school - Garden City & Holcomb
4-8 pm - Karis Trunk or Treat
5 pm - Great Pumpkin 5K, Garden City
7 pm - Holcomb football at Guymon

SAT 24

10 am-5 pm - Peddler's Market
3-6 pm - Haunted Halls scavenger hunt
5-8 pm - Downtown Trunk or Treat

SUN 25

10 am-4 pm - Peddler's Market

MON 26

5:30 pm - Library Board meeting

TUE 27

6 pm - USD 457 orchestra concert

THU 29

No school - Holcomb; conferences
6 pm - Trunk or Treat, Hidden Trail

FRI 30

No school - Holcomb
6-8 pm - GCCC Trunk or Treat

GRANT COUNTY

FRI 23

No school - Ulysses & Hickok
Chamber Coffee - Masonic Lodge
7 pm - Ulysses football vs. SW Heights

SAT 24

Volleyball sub-state; XC regionals
5:30-10 pm - Wicked Wonderland, Main St.

MON 26

4 pm - Kopley girls BB at Holcomb
5 pm - Ulysses JV football at SW Heights

WED 28

10:30 am - Preschool story time

THU 29

6 pm - Kopley wrestling parent meeting

FRI 30

Chamber Coffee - Pioneer Electric
4-6 pm - Main Street Trick-or-Treat
Ulysses football playoffs - TBD

HASKELL COUNTY

FRI 23

2:30 pm - Sublette Wall of Honor
7 pm - Satanta football vs. Deerfield
7 pm - Sublette football at Elkhart

SAT 24

Volleyball sub-state & XC regionals
6 pm - SAAC event, 4-H Building
Sublette Wall of Honor banquet

MON 26

Satanta PICO balloon launch
4 pm - Scholars Bowl at Satanta

TUE 27

4 pm - Scholars Bowl at Lakin

THU 29

2:30 pm - Sublette Halloween parade
Sublette football bracket game - TBD

FRI 30

No classes - Sublette USD 374
Volleyball state tournament - TBD

KEARNY COUNTY

FRI 23

No school - Lakin
7 pm - Lakin football vs. Chaparral
7 pm - Deerfield football at Satanta

SAT 24

9 am - Lakin XC regionals at Norton
Volleyball sub-state - TBD

SUN 25

1-4 pm - Pumpkin painting, Deerfield Rec

MON 26

5 pm - Lakin JV football vs. Dodge City

TUE 27

4 pm - Scholars Bowl at Lakin

THU 29

7 pm - Deerfield football vs. Billings
Lakin football bracket game - TBD

FRI 30

7 pm - Deerfield Zombie Run doors open
Lakin playoff/state events - TBD

MORTON COUNTY

FRI 23

No school - Elkhart & Rolla
Elkhart football vs. Sublette
Elkhart Pink Out / Senior Night

SAT 24

Elkhart XC regionals
Elkhart volleyball sub-state

MON 26

No school - Elkhart; no Rolla preschool
8 am-5 pm - County Commission
4 pm - Rolla Scholars Bowl at Satanta

WED 28

Elkhart ACT WorkKeys testing

THU 29

3 pm - Rolla costume parade
Elkhart Zombie Run

FRI 30

No school - Rolla
Elkhart Elementary Halloween parade
Volleyball state tournament begins

STEVENS COUNTY

FRI 23

No school - Hugoton
6 pm - Hugoton football at Goodland
7 pm - Moscow football at Ingalls

SAT 24

10 am - XC sub-state at Buhler
Volleyball sub-state - Hugoton/Moscow

MON 26

Stevens County Commission
4 pm - Scholars Bowl at Satanta
4 pm - Hugoton JV football vs. Goodland

TUE 27

4 pm - Hugoton Scholars Bowl at Lakin

WED 28

9 am - FFA horse evaluation, Garden City

THU 29

4 pm - Hugoton MS girls BB at Cimarron

FRI 30

Hugoton football bracket game - 7 pm
Moscow football playoffs - TBD

STANTON COUNTY

FRI 23

3:40 pm - Homecoming coronation
Football vs. South Gray - home

SAT 24

Volleyball sub-state
10:30 am - XC regionals, Belleville

MON 26

3:30 pm - Elementary book fair
4-7 pm - Parent-teacher conferences

TUE 27

3:30 pm - Elementary book fair
4-7 pm - Parent-teacher conferences
4 pm - Scholars Bowl at Lakin

WED 28

9 am - FFA at Garden City

THU 29

2:15 pm - Elementary Halloween parade
Football bracket games - TBD

FRI 30

No school - USD 452
Football playoffs / volleyball state - TBD

SEWARD COUNTY

FRI 23

9 am-5 pm - Library Fall Book Sale
7 pm - Liberal football at Hays
7 pm - SW Heights football at Ulysses

SAT 24

9 am-noon - SketchUp, Baker Arts
9 am-5 pm - Library Fall Book Sale
4 pm - Cosmic Bowling, Ayr Lanes

MON 26

5 pm - SCCC Trunk or Treat
6 pm - Liberal Rec Trunk or Treat

TUE 27

5:30 pm - Liberal City Commission
5 pm - Library family board games

WED 28

10 am - Library story time

FRI 30

4 pm - Kiwanis Pet & Spook Parade
5-9 pm - United Way Halloween Bash

HAMILTON COUNTY

FRI 23

No school - Syracuse
8-11:30 am - Parent-teacher conferences
Syracuse football at Ellinwood - TBD

SAT 24

Volleyball sub-state
Cross-country regionals

TUE 27

Scholars Bowl at Lakin - TBD

WED 28

FFA event at Garden City
K-12 picture retakes
HPL meeting at Lakin

THU 29

8 am - PK-6 PUPS assembly
PK-6 Halloween parade
2:45 pm - PK-6 Halloween parties
Football bracket game - TBD

FRI 30

No school - Syracuse
Volleyball state at Salina - TBD

Compiled from local calendars. Times, locations and postseason schedules are subject to change; verify with organizers.



Billy's BLUE DUCK BBQ | **Billy's AYR LANES**

MONDAY - THURSDAY 11:00 a.m. to 11:00 p.m. | **FRIDAY & SATURDAY** 11:00 a.m. to Midnight | **SUNDAY** 11:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m.

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