SWKS News

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Grant County Gives Raises $420,562

The spirit of community giving was on full display November 20 as the Grant County Community Foundation hosted the Grant County Chamber Coffee at The Creek, celebrating the achievements of the 2026 Grant County Gives campaign while announcing plans for another major community event in the coming year.

The 15th annual Grant County Gives campaign, held November 1–7, brought together hundreds of donors, local businesses and nonprofit organizations in a collective effort to strengthen Grant County. The campaign generated an impressive **$420,562 in community impact**, demonstrating the generosity and continued commitment of area residents to supporting local causes.



Logo Courtesy of GCCF

The total included $257,194 contributed through 725 community donations, a $100,000 match from the Patterson Family Foundation and $63,368 through the local match fund. Altogether, 40 participating funds benefited from the annual giving campaign, which helps provide financial support to organizations and initiatives serving

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State Orders Restrictions To SWKS Irrigation Water

By: Tyler Hook

State intervention follows disagreement over local conservation plans as officials seek to slow depletion of the Ogallala Aquifer

A major change in how groundwater is managed across Southwest Kansas is on the horizon after state officials announced new restrictions on water use, a decision that could have lasting implications for agriculture, businesses and communities throughout the region.

On November 20, the Kansas Department of Agriculture's Division of Water Resources announced the establishment of a Southwest Kansas Intensive Groundwater Use Control Area, commonly referred to as an IGUCA. The designation establishes new limits on groundwater withdrawals, with the first five-year allocation period scheduled to begin January 1, 2028.

The decision follows years of concern about declining groundwater levels in the Ogallala Aquifer, the underground water supply that has supported irrigated agriculture and economic development across much of the High Plains for generations.

State officials maintain that action is necessary to preserve the region's remaining groundwater resources. However, the decision also follows a disagreement between state regulators and Southwest Kansas Groundwater Management District No. 3 over whether the district's proposed conservation measures adequately addressed the problem.

Why Is the State Taking Action?

Much of Southwest Kansas relies on groundwater drawn from the High Plains Aquifer system, particularly the Ogallala Aquifer. Unlike a reser-

See **Restrictions,** Page 5

Death Notices

Emily Bree Myers passed away at her home in Deerfield, Kansas, on November 9, 2026. A true Friday's child, Emily was born on October 30, 1998, in Pittsburg, Kansas. She attended school in Frontenac, Kansas, and graduated in 2017. At age 16, she took her first job making sushi rolls for a local restaurant. She was proud of her kitchen skills and creativity and had developed the best date night pasta recipe. She became a CNA and began to pursue a nursing career, but as the COVID pandemic began, she could no longer follow that path.

A private family gathering will be held at a later date. Donations in honor of her life may be sent to Finney County Humane Society, 124 North Fleming Street, Garden City, Kansas 67846.

Robson Funeral Home of Garden City is overseeing the arrangements. Our thoughts and prayers are with her family, friends, coworkers, and students during this difficult time.

Ruth Elaine Sipes,81, passed away in Elkhart, Kansas, on Saturday, November 14, 2026. She was born on July 10, 1945, in Texas County, Oklahoma, to her parents, Charles William (Bill) and Myrtle Marguerite (Mahnken) Myers. She lived a life centered on faith, family, hard work, and the people and communities she loved.

A memorial has been established for Morton County EMS; in the care of Robson Funeral Home, PO Box 606, Elkhart, Kansas 67950.

Visitation will be held on Thursday, November 19, 2026, from 10:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. at Robson Funeral Home in Elkhart, located at 120 Grant Street, Elkhart, Kansas.

Funeral services will be held on Friday, November 20, 2026, at 2:00 p.m. at First Church of God of Elkhart, Kansas. Burial will follow at Elkhart Cemetery, Elkhart, Kansas.

Betty Jo Bailey, 72, of Garden City, Kansas, passed away on Saturday, October 17, 2026, just eight days before her 73rd birthday. Born October 25, 1953, in Denver, Colorado, Betty Jo was the daughter of Gomer Wallace Bailey and Fern (Miller) Bailey. She grew up the fourth of five children, alongside her brothers Jay, Terry, and Jerry and her younger sister, Barbie.

Caring for others was not simply Betty's profession. It was who she was.

Her nursing career spanned an extraordinary 54 years. Throughout those decades, she cared for people from all walks of life, often meeting them during their most vulnerable moments. She understood that nursing was about more than medicine. It was about listening, offering comfort, showing empathy, and treating every person with dignity. Those qualities shaped the relationships she built with patients, families, students, and colleagues throughout her career.

In accordance with Betty's wishes, cremation arrangements are being handled by Garnand Funeral Home. The family plans to celebrate her life in both Kansas and Colorado at a later date, with details to be shared when arrangements are made.

Malina Sue Newby Hertel, known to family and friends as Sue, passed away peacefully on October 19, 2026, in Oregon at the age of 67, surrounded by her loved ones.

Born on April 14, 1959, in San Diego, California, to Joe and Ermalee Newby, Sue moved to Garden City, Kansas, as a young child. Garden City remained her home for most of her life, where she raised her family, formed lasting friendships, and became a valued member of the community.

She will be remembered for her generous spirit, enduring friendships, and deep love for her family. Her memory will be cherished by all who knew her.

Michael Lee Colvin, 68, passed away on November 9th, 2026, at Pioneer Manor in Hugoton, Kansas.

He was born on February 4, 1958, in Liberal Kansas to Bill and Virginia (Shunk) Colvin.

Mike completed High School in Liberal and then managed Pizza Huts for High Plains Pizza.

Visitation will be from 9:00 AM – 6:30 PM, Friday, November 13, 2026, at the Hornung Family Funeral Home, 1212 W. 2nd Street, Liberal, Kansas. Family will be present to greet friends from 4:30 PM – 6:30 PM.

A private family funeral service will be held on Saturday.

In lieu of flowers, please make a memorial gift to Pioneer Manor, in care of Hornung Funeral Home, 1212 W 2nd Street, Liberal, KS 67901.

Condolences may be sent to the family at www.hornungfuneralhome.com.

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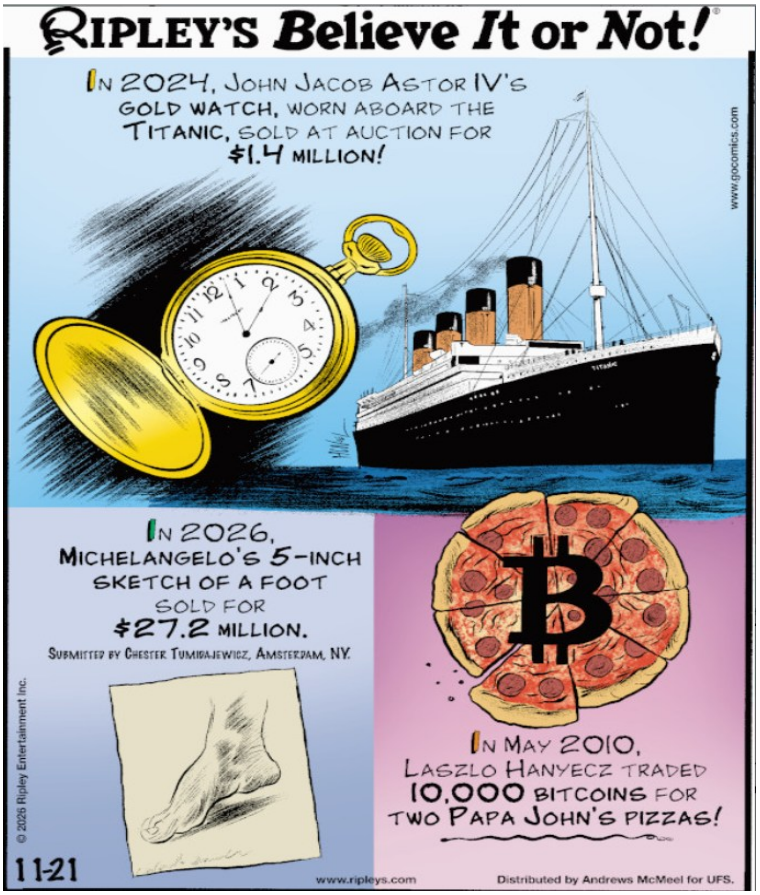

Thank You For Reading the 9th Edition of the SWKS News, we hope you enjoyed it and look forward to your continued patronage!

Sincerely,

Tyler Hook - Publisher

GAMES

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16 Words-Thanksgiving



Inflation: The Silent Theft Of Your Retirement

Courtesy of Milo Milosevich

Have you ever noticed how much more expensive everyday items have become? Groceries, insurance, utilities, healthcare, and even a night out for dinner seem to cost considerably more than they did just a few years ago.

That's inflation, and it can be one of the biggest challenges facing retirees.

Inflation is simply the increase in the cost of goods and services over time. While a little inflation is a normal part of a growing economy, its long-term impact on retirement savings can be substantial.

Consider this example. Suppose you retire with $500,000 in savings. That sounds like a significant amount of money today. But what happens if inflation averages just 3% annually over the next 15 years?

At that rate, you would need approximately $779,000 in 15 years to purchase what $500,000 buys today. In other words, your purchasing power has declined even though your account balance hasn't changed.

This is why retirement planning involves more than simply protecting the money you've accumulated. Your investments must also be considered in terms of their ability to keep pace with rising living expenses.



Some investments, including stocks, have historically provided opportunities for long-term growth that can help investors combat inflation. However, they also involve market risk and can lose value.

This creates an important balancing act for retirees. Being too aggressive can expose savings to unnecessary market fluctuations, while being too conservative may leave your purchasing power vulnerable to inflation.

The right approach depends on your retirement timeline, income needs, risk tolerance, and overall financial situation.

One of the biggest mistakes retirees can make is assuming that the amount of money they need today will be sufficient 20 or 30 years from now.

When planning for retirement, don't just ask whether your money will last. Ask whether it will continue to buy the lifestyle you've worked so hard to achieve.

For More Questions You can Contact Milo at milo@hpyretirement.com

Gives

Continued from Page 1

the Grant County community.

The foundation also recognized the businesses, organizations and individuals who contributed to the campaign's matching funds. Match donors were recognized at the Platinum, Gold, Silver and Bronze levels, with contributions ranging from $100 to $2,000 or more. Their support helped extend the reach of individual donations and encouraged additional community participation.

The Patterson Family Foundation played a particularly significant role through its $100,000 contribution, helping amplify the impact of local giving. The campaign once again demonstrated how contributions of all sizes can combine to make a substantial difference for nonprofit organizations and community programs.

With another successful Grant County Gives campaign in the books, the foundation is already looking ahead to its next opportunity to bring the community together.

During the Chamber Coffee gathering, the foundation announced that tickets are now available for its **second annual Rooted & Radiant Gala**, scheduled for January 30, 2027, from 5 to 10 p.m.

This year's gala will feature the theme **"Masks, Magic, & Mardi Gras!"**, promising an evening of celebration, fellowship and community support. The event will build upon the foundation's continuing efforts to connect residents, encourage philanthropy and celebrate the organizations and individuals who make Grant County a stronger place to live.

Those interested in purchasing tickets or learning more about the upcoming gala may contact the Grant County Community Foundation at **620-356-4223**.

The foundation is located at 123 S. Main Street in Ulysses and continues to serve the community through its mission of supporting, connecting and growing local charitable efforts.

From the hundreds of donations collected during Grant County Gives to the upcoming gala, the foundation's message remains clear: **Together, we make a difference.**

Garden City Propane
1304 N. Massey Ferguson RD, Garden City, KS 67846 | (620) 276-8903

Restrictions

Continued from Page 1

voir that can refill relatively quickly following heavy rainfall, portions of the aquifer receive very little natural recharge compared with the amount of water withdrawn each year.

For decades, irrigation wells have allowed farmers to produce crops in a region where rainfall alone often cannot support the same level of agricultural production. That water has also helped sustain livestock operations, agricultural businesses and the communities that depend upon them.

The difficulty is that groundwater has been withdrawn faster than nature can replace it in many areas. As water levels decline, wells may produce less water, pumping becomes more difficult or expensive, and some wells may eventually become unusable.

Kansas Chief Engineer Earl Lewis emphasized the seriousness of the situation in announcing the new restrictions.

"Knowing that the total depletion of the aquifer could take hundreds or thousands of years to reverse, the economic devastation of the communities and the impact to agriculture in the region would be brutal and irreversible in our lifetimes," Lewis stated.

He added that the state must follow legislative direction to reduce water consumption and preserve a viable supply for future generations.

The challenge is not simply one of keeping irrigation wells operating. Groundwater availability also influences land values, agricultural production, employment, local tax bases and the long-term economic outlook of rural communities.

What Led to the Restrictions?

The state's action stems from House Bill 2279, legislation passed by the Kansas Legislature in 2023 that placed additional groundwater conservation responsibilities on the state's groundwater management districts.

Under the law, districts were required to identify priority areas experiencing groundwater problems, seek input from local water users and develop plans to reasonably address those concerns.

The districts were required to submit their action plans to the state's chief engineer by July 1, 2026.

Southwest Kansas Groundwater Management District No. 3, headquartered in Garden City, developed a conservation proposal intended to address declining water levels while providing a locally directed approach to groundwater management.

Earlier in 2026, the district discussed a long-term conservation approach involving gradual reductions in groundwater use. The proposal sought to stabilize groundwater conditions over time while allowing agricultural producers to adjust their operations.

However, the Kansas Department of Agriculture determined that the district's submitted action plan did not reasonably address the groundwater declines identified within the district.

Under the 2023 legislation, that finding required the chief engineer to develop and implement an alternative action plan.

The result was the November 20 announcement establishing the Southwest Kansas IGUCA.

What Is an IGUCA?

An Intensive Groundwater Use Control Area is a legal tool that allows the state to impose additional restrictions on water use when groundwater conditions warrant intervention.

Kansas law provides for such designations when groundwater levels are declining excessively, withdrawals equal or exceed natural recharge, water quality is deteriorating, or other conditions require additional regulation in the public interest.

An IGUCA can establish limits on groundwater pumping, restrict additional water appropriations and impose other corrective measures intended to protect water resources.

In the Southwest Kansas designation, the state has established five-year water quantity allocations for non-domestic water rights within the designated boundaries.

Importantly, the restrictions are not limited to agricultural irrigation. According to the state, the allocation system applies to all non-domestic water rights within the IGUCA, regardless of their type of use.

This means the restrictions may affect agricultural, industrial, municipal and other non-domestic water users whose rights fall within the designated area.

The precise effect on an individual operation will depend upon its water rights, location and assigned allocation.

The allocations are defined as of November 20, 2026, but the initial allocation period does not begin until January 1, 2028.

The intervening period provides time for affected water users to receive information about their allocations and prepare for implementation.

How Will This Affect Farmers and Water Users?

For agricultural producers, the new restrictions introduce another consideration into long-term decisions about irrigation, crop selection, equipment investments and land management.

A five-year allocation establishes a quantity of water that may be used over a specified period rather than relying solely on the traditional annual authorized quantity.

Such an approach can provide flexibility in how water is distributed across individual growing seasons, while still requiring users to remain within their overall allocation.

For example, a producer may face different irrigation demands during a dry growing season than during a year with more favorable rainfall. Multi-year allocations can help accommodate those differences, subject to the provisions of the order.

However, producers will need to carefully monitor their water consumption and understand the restrictions assigned to their individual rights.

The announcement does not mean every farmer will lose the same amount of water or

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that all existing wells must immediately reduce pumping.

Instead, affected water-right holders will receive individual notices explaining their allocations.

The exact reduction for a particular well or operation should not be assumed until the applicable allocation has been reviewed.

For communities, the consequences could extend beyond individual farms. Changes in irrigated acreage, crop production and agricultural spending can influence local businesses, employment and public revenues.

At the same time, supporters of stronger groundwater conservation argue that allowing water supplies to continue declining without sufficient intervention presents an even greater long-term economic risk.

Local Groundwater District Responds

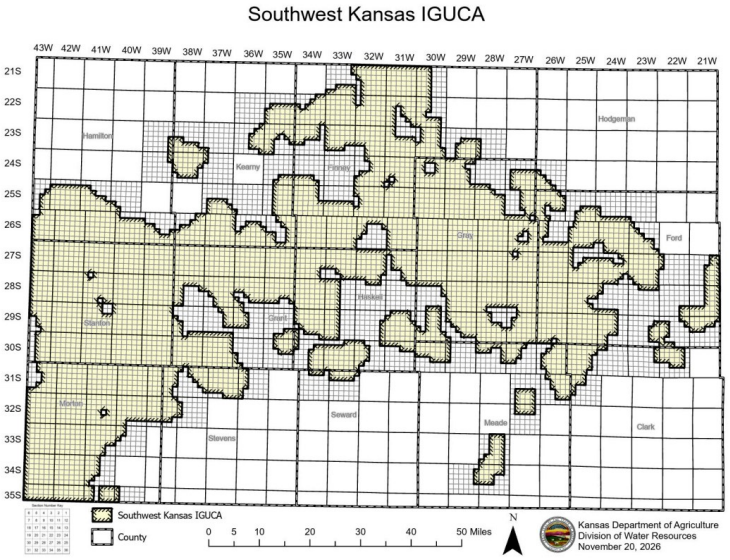
The state's decision follows discussions between regulators and Southwest Kansas Groundwater Management District No. 3 concerning the district's conservation proposal.

Minutes from a special meeting of the district's board of directors on October 28 provide insight into the district's response before the state formally announced the IGUCA.

The meeting was called to order by Board President Chad McCormick at 3 p.m. and included discussion of the district's work under Kansas Statute 82a-1044, the provision governing priority groundwater areas and action plans.

Board members entered executive session to discuss legal matters with counsel concerning the statute.

Following those discussions, board member Andrew Moser introduced a motion acknowledging and accepting a letter from legal counsel for the Kansas Department of Agriculture stating that the district's submitted action plan did not constitute a final judgment.



More Information can be found at agriculture.ks.gov

The motion also expressly retained the district's right to appeal, if necessary.

Mike O'Brate seconded the motion, which passed unanimously with eight votes in favor. McCormick, as board president, did not vote because the president votes only in the event of a tie.

The action demonstrates that the district formally acknowledged the state's position while preserving the possibility of challenging the decision through available legal procedures.

The minutes do not establish that an appeal was subsequently filed, nor do they document a final legal resolution of the disagreement.

The distinction is important because the state and the district have been addressing the same underlying problem — groundwater depletion — while differing over the adequacy of the locally proposed response.

What Happens Next?

The immediate next step will be communicating the restrictions to affected water-right holders.

The Kansas Department of Agriculture has indicated that individual letters will be sent explaining the water quantity allocations assigned under the IGUCA.

Additional information and public meetings are also expected in the coming months, allowing water users to ask questions and better understand the requirements before implementation.

For those with irrigation wells or other non-domestic water rights, reviewing the official IGUCA boundary map and individual allocation information will be particularly important.

Water users should also distinguish between their existing authorized water rights and the quantity they may actually be permitted to withdraw under the new restrictions.

Questions remain about how the requirements will affect individual operations and whether additional legal or administrative developments may occur before the restrictions take effect.

The state's announcement establishes a significant new regulatory framework, but the practical consequences will become clearer as individual allocations and implementation details are communicated.

A Turning Point for Southwest Kansas

For generations, the Ogallala Aquifer has helped transform Southwest Kansas into one of the nation's important agricultural production regions. Irrigation made possible the expansion of crop production, supported livestock and related industries, and contributed to the development of communities throughout the area.

The same resource now presents one of the region's most difficult long-term challenges.

Reducing groundwater use may require difficult economic adjustments, particularly for producers whose operations depend heavily on irrigation. Yet continued depletion also carries consequences that could be far more difficult to reverse.

The debate is therefore not simply about how much water can be pumped in the coming years, but how Southwest Kansas can maintain a productive agricultural economy while preserving enough groundwater to support future generations.

With the first allocation period beginning in 2028, farmers, businesses and communities now face an important period of preparation.

T

he decisions made in the coming months and years will help determine not only how the region uses its remaining groundwater, but also what kind of agricultural and economic future Southwest Kansas can sustain.

For More Information:

The Kansas Department of Agriculture has established an information page at **www.agriculture.ks.gov/SWKS-IGUCA**. Questions may also be directed to the Division of Water Resources Garden City Field Office at 620-276-2901 or 620-765-7110, or the Stafford Field Office at 620-234-5311.

Earl Brookover: How SWKS Became the Beef Leader



By Tyler Hook

There was a time when cattle raised on the Great Plains were shipped hundreds of miles away to be fattened and slaughtered. Western Kansas was cattle country, but much of the money associated with finishing and processing those animals was earned elsewhere. That began to change in 1951 when a Scott County native named Earl Brookover recognized an opportunity that would forever alter the agricultural landscape of Southwest Kansas.

Brookover's idea was relatively simple: Instead of shipping cattle and grain out of Western Kansas separately, why not bring them together? With expanding irrigation, abundant feed grains, a favorable climate and access to cattle from the surrounding Plains, the region possessed the ingredients needed to develop a commercial cattle-feeding industry.

What followed helped create an agricultural economy that would attract machinery manufacturers, grain handlers, transportation companies and eventually some of the nation's largest meatpacking operations.

A Farm Boy With a Vision

Earl C. Brookover was born October 8, 1906, in Scott County, Kansas. Raised on his family's dryland farm, he understood the difficulties of producing crops where rainfall was unpredictable and drought could erase months of hard work.

While attending high school, Brookover worked on an irrigated farm and witnessed how supplemental water could improve agricultural productivity. The experience sparked an interest that would shape the remainder of his life.

Brookover pursued civil engineering at Kansas State College, graduating in 1934. His career took him to irrigation and land-development projects in Texas, California and Peru before returning to Scott County to develop irrigated farms of his own.

In 1947, Brookover and his wife, Denelda, moved to Garden City, where he began developing farmland capable of supporting cattle feeding. He recognized that irrigation from the Ogallala Aquifer could produce substantial quantities of corn, grain sorghum and other feed crops in a region traditionally dominated by dryland wheat farming and grazing.

Yet Brookover was thinking beyond growing more grain. He recognized that feeding it to cattle locally could add value to agricultural production while creating an entirely new industry.

The Birth of Commercial Cattle Feeding

In October 1951, Brookover established what is recognized as the first commercial cattle feedyard in Kansas and the Midwest, located just north of Garden City.

Cattle feeding itself was not new. Farmers and ranchers had fattened livestock for generations, and commercial feeding operations already existed elsewhere. What distinguished Brookover's undertaking was bringing large-scale commercial feeding to the agricultural conditions of the High Plains.

The original operation consisted of six pens capable of holding approximately 200 cattle each, providing an initial capacity of roughly 1,200 head.

Unlike traditional farm feeding, Brookover developed a business that could feed cattle belonging to other owners. Customers paid for feed and services until their animals reached market weight, allowing ranchers to utilize specialized feeding facilities without constructing their own.

The arrangement also reduced the need to transport enormous quantities of bulky feed grain to distant feeding centers. Instead, cattle could be brought to Southwest Kansas, fed locally and shipped to market.

The concept proved successful. By 1968, Brookover Feed Yards had expanded to a capacity of 27,000 head, complete with feed mills, storage tanks, silos, grain dryers, livestock scales and specialized trucks.

Historical court records indicate cattle were typically fed for approximately 130 days, gaining an average of two and a half pounds daily. What began as a relatively small operation had become a carefully organized commercial enterprise.



Harry Oswalt: The Man Behind the Machinery

Brookover's vision also created an opportunity for another Garden City innovator, Harry Oswalt.

Born in Indiana, Oswalt entered the industrial workforce after leaving school in the eighth grade. He eventually worked in automobile manufacturing before relocating to Garden City in 1931, where he established Industrial Machine Works.

After his shop was destroyed by fire in 1947, Oswalt briefly operated the Kansas Mortarless Brick Company.

In 1951, Brookover approached Oswalt with a problem. His expanding cattle-feeding operation needed a more efficient way to remove silage from storage pits and deliver it to livestock.

Oswalt and his son, Harry Jr., developed machinery to mechanize the process. Their work led to the establishment of Oswalt Industries in 1952 and the development of the Ensiloader, which reduced the labor required to supply large numbers of cattle.

As commercial feeding expanded, Oswalt Industries developed feed mixers, grain dryers, truck-mounted manure spreaders and specialized delivery systems. The company's weighing and ration-mixing equipment also allowed feedyard operators to measure ingredients more accurately and produce consistent feed mixtures.

What began as machinery designed for one Garden City feedyard eventually developed into an equipment business serving commercial livestock operations worldwide.

In 1969, Butler Manufacturing Company of Kansas City acquired Oswalt Industries,

incorporating its products into Butler's agricultural equipment operations. The business was later sold to Heyco Inc. in 1986, and the Oswalt equipment legacy eventually became associated with other manufacturers, including Roto-Mix in Dodge City.

Harry Oswalt Jr. also pursued additional manufacturing ventures, including Mega Manufacturing and the Piranha ironworker, a machine used for cutting, punching and shaping metal.

The Oswalt family's industrial legacy demonstrated how agricultural expansion could support an entirely different sector of the regional economy: manufacturing.

The Rise of the Golden Triangle

Brookover's success attracted attention throughout the cattle industry. Other producers and investors began recognizing the advantages of commercial feeding in Southwest Kansas, leading to additional feedyards throughout the region.

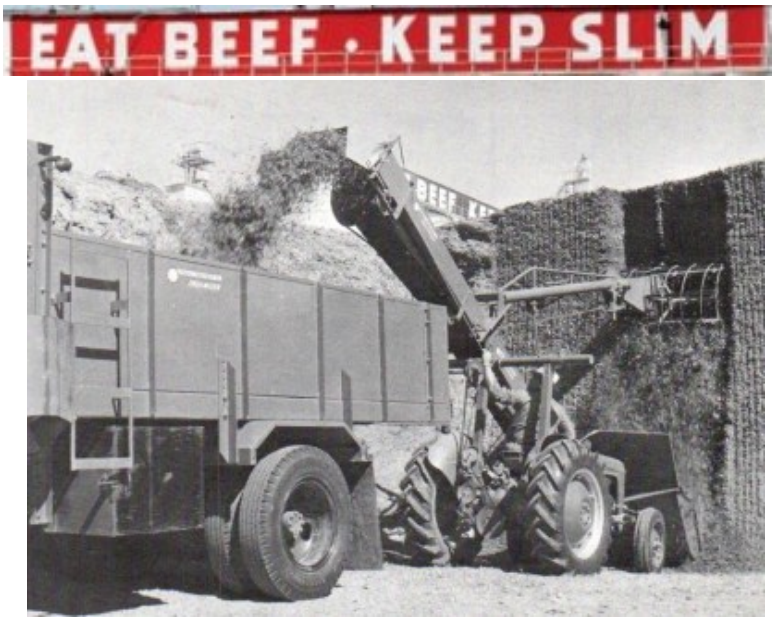
Garden City, Dodge City, Liberal and surrounding communities became increasingly important centers of livestock production.

Historically, much of America's meatpacking industry had been concentrated in railroad and industrial centers such as Chicago, Kansas City and Omaha. Cattle were shipped to those locations for slaughter and processing.

The expansion of High Plains feedyards helped change that pattern. Rather than transporting finished cattle long distances, meatpacking companies began establishing facilities closer to the feedyards.

This concentration of feeding and processing operations became associated with the "Golden Triangle of Beef Packing."

Brookover's operations eventually stood within approximately 60 miles of five



major meatpacking facilities, illustrating how concentrated the industry had become.

The transformation brought thousands of jobs and created opportunities for trucking companies, equipment dealers, grain elevators, construction businesses, veterinary services and numerous other industries.

An Industry Measured in Millions

The scale of the transformation is perhaps best understood through modern agricultural statistics.

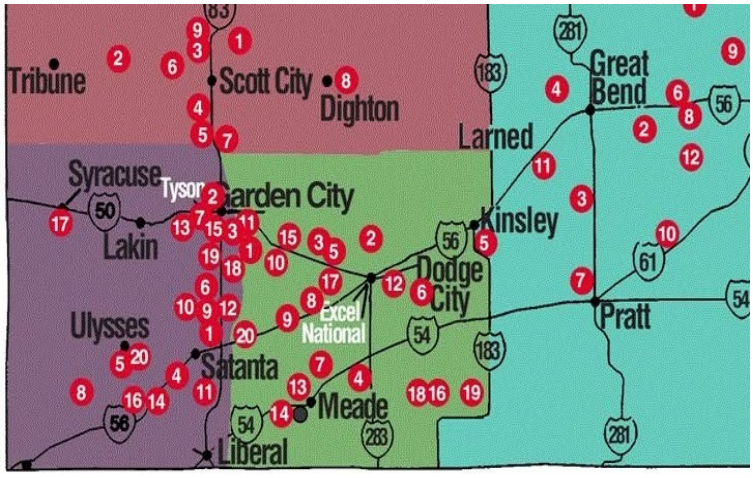
According to the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Kansas had approximately 5.85 million cattle and calves on January 1, 2026, including roughly 2.48 million cattle on feed.

The Kansas Livestock Association reports that cattle and calves generated approximately $14.8 billion in agricultural cash receipts during 2024, accounting for 61 percent of the state's agricultural cash receipts.

Kansas also ranked second nationally in commercial cattle slaughter during 2025, with approximately 5.9 million head processed.

Today, Brookover Feed Yards remains family-owned, operating facilities near Garden City and Scott City with a combined feeding capacity of approximately 100,000 head.

From an original capacity of 1,200 cattle, the family business has grown into an operation capable of accommodating more than 80 times that number.



2024 Graphic By Feed Lot Magazine To Show Kansas Feedyards

A Legacy That Continues

The agricultural transformation Brookover helped initiate also created challenges that remain important today.

Large-scale irrigation depends heavily upon groundwater from the Ogallala Aquifer, where decades of pumping have contributed to declining water levels. Interestingly, Brookover himself recognized the importance of conservation and was among the early agricultural leaders who warned policymakers about the consequences of excessive groundwater withdrawals.

Today, Southwest Kansas faces the challenge of preserving its groundwater resources while maintaining the agricultural economy that developed around them.

Brookover did not invent cattle feeding, irrigation or agricultural mechanization. Instead, he recognized how those practices could be brought together in a place where others had not fully appreciated their potential.

With the ingenuity of individuals such as Harry Oswalt, an agricultural idea became a regional industry that helped reshape American beef production.

The story of Earl Brookover is ultimately more than the history of one successful feedyard. It is the story of how Western Kansas farmers, engineers, machinists and entrepreneurs transformed a challenging agricultural landscape into one of the most productive beef-producing regions in the world.

What began in 1951 with six cattle pens north of Garden City became an industry measured in millions of animals, billions of dollars and generations of economic opportunity.

And it all began with a Scott County farm boy who believed there was a better way to make Western Kansas agriculture work.

In A World Of Strong Egos, Be Kind

By Tyler Hook

There is something about Thanksgiving that ought to make us stop and think. Not just about the turkey on the table, the family gathered around it, or the blessings we have accumulated over another year, but about the kind of people we have become along the way.

We live in a world that seems to grow louder by the day. Everyone has an opinion, everyone has a grievance, and everyone seems determined to have the last word. We have become remarkably good at telling others what they are doing wrong and increasingly poor at recognizing what they are doing right. Somewhere along the way, we began confusing confidence with arrogance, disagreement with disrespect, and kindness with weakness.

And I cannot help but wonder what we are gaining from it all.

In a world full of strong egos, perhaps the strongest thing a person can do is simply be kind.

I have encountered a great many people throughout my life, from the fields and pastures of Western Kansas to the newspaper offices, meeting rooms, and community gatherings that fill my days. Some have been extraordinarily successful, others have struggled to make ends meet, and many fall somewhere in between. But one thing I have come to realize is that the people who leave the greatest impression are seldom the ones who tell you how important they are.

They are the ones who make you feel important.

They are the neighbor who stops to help when your vehicle breaks down. The volunteer who spends an evening serving others without expecting recognition. The person who calls just to check on someone they haven't heard from in a while. The individual who offers a kind word when the rest of the world seems determined to offer criticism.

These are not grand gestures. They seldom make headlines, earn awards, or attract much attention. Yet they are the very things that hold our communities together.

I sometimes think we have forgotten that everyone we encounter is carrying something we cannot see. The person who seems short-tempered at the grocery store may have just received terrible news. The coworker who seems distracted may be struggling with something at home. The neighbor who hasn't been around lately may be dealing with loneliness, grief, financial troubles, or a thousand other burdens that never find their way into casual conversation.

We are quick to judge what we see and slow to consider what we don't.

I have certainly been guilty of it myself. There are days when exhaustion gets the better of me, when frustrations pile up, and when my patience wears thinner than I would like to admit. There are times when I have spoken too quickly, taken something personally, or allowed pride to interfere with good judgment.

I suspect most of us could say the same.

But acknowledging our imperfections is not a sign of weakness. It is a reminder that we are human, and that the same grace we hope to receive from others ought to be extended in return.

One of the greatest challenges of our time is that we have become convinced that every disagreement requires a winner and a loser. Whether it is politics, religion, business, or something as insignificant as a difference of opinion at the coffee shop, we seem to have developed an overwhelming desire to prove ourselves right.

There is nothing wrong with having convictions. In fact, I admire people who stand firmly for what they believe. But convictions should not prevent compassion, and being right should never become more important than doing right.

You can disagree with someone and still respect them. You can defend your beliefs without belittling another person's. You can be successful without looking down on those who have taken a different path.

And perhaps most importantly, you can admit when you are wrong without losing an ounce of your worth.

As Thanksgiving approaches, I find myself thinking about the people who have helped shape my life. Some are still here, while others are no longer around the table. Some taught me through their words, others through their actions, and a few through lessons I didn't particularly appreciate at the time.

The older I get, the more I realize how quickly life changes. One Thanksgiving, a familiar chair is occupied, the stories are being told, and the laughter fills the room. Another year, that chair sits empty, and suddenly the things that once seemed so important hardly matter at all.

The argument you were determined to win becomes meaningless. The grudge you held onto seems foolish. The time you could have spent together becomes something you would give almost anything to have back.

Life has a way of teaching us that lesson, sometimes far more painfully than we would prefer.

That is why I believe Thanksgiving ought to be about more than expressing gratitude for what we have. It should also be an opportunity to consider what we give to others.

Do we offer encouragement, or do we contribute to discouragement? Do we build people up, or do we spend our time tearing them down? When someone makes a mistake, are we the first to criticize or the first to lend a hand?

And when we walk away from a conversation, do we leave the other person feeling better or worse for having encountered us?

Those are questions worth asking, not just during the holidays, but throughout the year.

Here in our small communities, we depend upon one another far more than we sometimes realize. Our schools, churches, businesses, volunteer organizations, and local institutions survive because ordinary people choose to do extraordinary things for their neighbors. They give their time, their resources, and often a considerable portion of themselves without asking for anything in return.

Imagine what our communities could become if we approached every interaction with that same spirit.

If we offered a little more patience to the person learning something new. If we thanked those whose work often goes unnoticed. If we gave people the benefit of the doubt before assuming the worst. If we spent less time measuring our own importance and more time recognizing the value of others.

We would not eliminate every disagreement, hardship, or disappointment. Nor should we expect to. But we might make this world a little easier for someone else to navigate.

And that, I believe, is worth something.

As we gather around our Thanksgiving tables this year, I hope we remember that gratitude is not simply something we say before a meal. It is something we demonstrate in how we treat the people around us.

Call someone you haven't spoken to in a while. Forgive an old disagreement. Thank the people who have stood beside you. Make room at the table for someone who might otherwise spend the holiday alone. And if you have the opportunity to make someone's day a little brighter, take it.

We will all be remembered for something. Some for their accomplishments, some for their words, and others for the way they made people feel.

I would much rather be remembered as someone who showed compassion than someone who always had to be right.

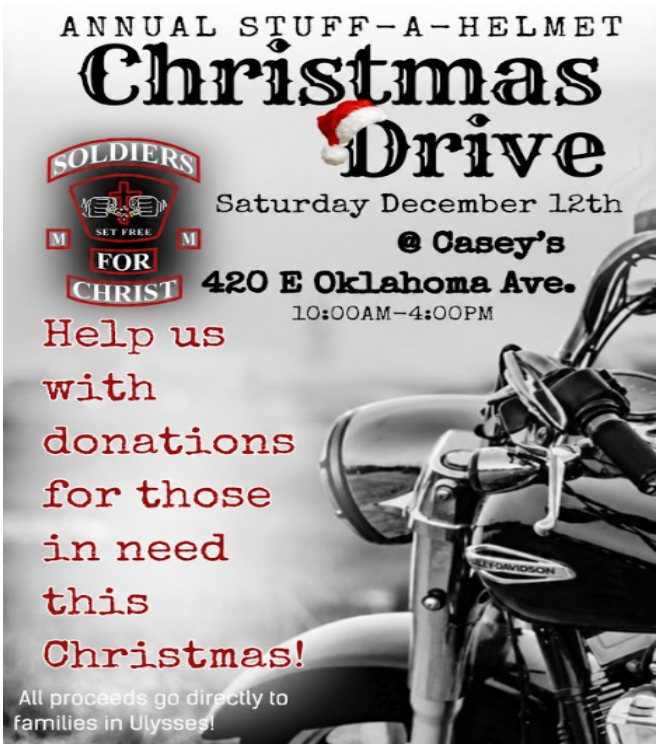
After all, when our time here is finished, I doubt anyone will care how many arguments we won, how much attention we commanded, or how successfully we defended our pride. What will matter is whether we made a difference in the lives of those around us.

In a world of strong egos, be humble. In a world of harsh words, be gentle. In a world where everyone wants to be heard, take the time to listen. And in a world that can sometimes seem to have forgotten the value of compassion, above all else, be kind.

Happy Thanksgiving, and may we all find a little more to be thankful for in one another.

Soldiers For Christ Bring Christmas Giving To Ulysses

By: Soila Ochoa—Reporter



As the Christmas season approaches, Soldiers for Christ Motorcycle Ministry is preparing to bring the community together to help local families in need through its annual Stuff-A-Helmet Christmas Drive.

The event is scheduled for Saturday, Dec. 12, from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. at Casey's, located at 420 E. Oklahoma Ave. in Ulysses. Community members are encouraged to stop by and contribute to the ministry's efforts to make Christmas a little brighter for families facing financial challenges.

Originally established in Texas, Soldiers for Christ is a nonprofit motorcycle ministry that has expanded into several communities over the years. Chapter C, based in Liberal, Kansas, continues the organization's mission of serving others through faith, fellowship and community involvement.

Throughout the year, members participate in church activities and charitable events, including Toys for Tots. The Stuff-A-Helmet Christmas Drive is another way the ministry reaches out to families who could use additional support during the holidays.

The Christmas fundraiser was introduced to Ulysses last year after a new member joined Chapter C and helped bring the tradition to the community. Through the generosity of local donors, two Ulysses families received assistance during the Christmas season.

Building on that effort, members are returning to Ulysses this December with hopes of reaching more families and continuing the tradition of giving.

Both cash and digital donations will be accepted during the event, with all proceeds going directly toward helping families in Ulysses.

For those interested in contributing or learning more about the Stuff-A-Helmet Christmas Drive, Kenneth Holmes can be reached at 620-309-7926.

CACF to start offering services to a 13-county SW Kansas area

Community Action Coalition for Families was recently awarded the Kansas Community Services Block Grant, totaling $325,000 for FY 2026. Formerly known as Liberal Area Coalition for Families, the Coalition will provide services in Finney, Ford, Grant, Gray, Hamilton, Haskell, Hodgeman, Kearny, Meade, Morton, Seward, Stanton, and Stevens counties.

The Coalition has been operating in Seward County since 2001 and expanded into Stevens and Haskell counties four years ago. "This grant allows us to serve a portion of the service area previously monitored by Harvest America," Sarah M. Foreman, CACF executive director, said. "While we will be offering services immediately, we look forward to conducting a needs assessment in each of the 13 counties to establish priority needs and services moving forward."

CSBG provides flexible funding that is designed to address localized needs by supporting programs tied to housing, utility assistance, employment, nutrition, emergency services, and education.

This month, CACF will start offering rental assistance, utility assistance and hygiene products. Families must show proof of being at least one month behind in rent if asking for rental assistance and proof of one month's past due on utilities. The Coalition will also be offering LIEAP application assistance, SNAP assistance, marketplace navigation, Medicaid eligibility and guidance on local community resources.

"The Coalition will continue to provide an on-demand food pantry, operate the Liberal Farmers Market, and a variety of other grant-funded activities," Foreman said. "We have been successful through the years in bringing in more than $7 million in grant dollars to our region, and we see this as a way to provide stable support to our organization as we provide needed services."

For more information about the services CACF will be providing, visit the website at www.cacfks.org and click on the "Get Help Now" button or call 620-655-7177.





On Veterans Day Barb Sullins presented Marvin Meile (Lower) and Remon Rexroat with a Quilt of Valor! Thank You Marvin & Ramon for your service! C/O Josephine Jellison







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COMMUNITY CALENDAR | NOV. 27 - DEC. 4, 2026

FINNEY COUNTY

Fri 11/27: 4 p.m. Anime Night, library; 7 p.m. Blushing Artiste, Garden City Arts.
Sat 11/28: 10 a.m.-4 p.m. Christmas Market, First Christian Church; 10 a.m. Acrylic Pour Junior.
Sun 11/29: 2:30 p.m. Sunday FunDay, library.
Mon 11/30: GCCC classes resume; 5 p.m. Water Walking, Parrot Cove.
Tue 12/1: 1 p.m. Garden City Commission; 4 p.m. Holcomb MS girls basketball vs. Scott City.
Wed 12/2: 3 p.m. GCCC/K-State partnership signing; 4:30 p.m. Pokemon Club, library.
Thu 12/3: 4 p.m. Holcomb Scholars Bowl at Garden City; 5:30 p.m. Holcomb wrestling.
Fri 12/4: 5-9 p.m. Windsor Christmas Market; 7 p.m. Christmas tree lighting, Stevens Park.

SCOTT COUNTY

Mon 11/30: 8 a.m. Airport Commission; 3 p.m. HS Scholars Bowl at Tribune.
Tue 12/1: 4 p.m. County Commission; 5 p.m. sales tax grant deadline.
Thu 12/3: HS Scholars Bowl at Garden City; MS girls basketball vs. Hugoton.
Fri 12/4: 8:30 a.m. Reality U; HS girls wrestling at WaKeeney.

STEVENS COUNTY

Fri 11/27: Courthouse closed; 2 p.m. Pioneer Manor Bingo.
Sat 11/28: 2 p.m. Pioneer Manor Bingo; 7 p.m. I Play Rocky.
Sun 11/29: 3:30 p.m. Pioneer Manor social.
Mon 11/30: 5 p.m. Moscow basketball jamboree; 8 p.m. Al-Anon, 1405 Cemetery Rd.
Tue 12/1: 1 p.m. Mah-Jongg, library; 2 p.m. Pioneer Manor Bingo.
Wed 12/2: Hugoton FFA leadership events, Garden City; 5 p.m. Moscow pancake supper.
Thu 12/3: 1 p.m. Mah-Jongg; 4 p.m. Moscow Scholars Bowl.
Fri 12/4: 10 a.m. Pioneer Manor Men's Group; 2 p.m. Bingo.

GRANT COUNTY

Fri 11/27: No school, USD 214.
Tue 12/1: 9 a.m. County Commission; 4 p.m. Kepley MS wrestling at Hugoton.
Wed 12/2: Junior Leadership; Ulysses HS early release.
Thu 12/3: 6:30 p.m. Miracles & Magic Light Parade, Main Street, Ulysses.
Fri 12/4: 10 a.m. Chamber Coffee, New Beginnings Church.

SEWARD COUNTY

Sat 11/28: 4 p.m. Liberal HS basketball jamboree.
Mon 11/30: Liberal Christmas Tour of Lights begins.
Tue 12/1: SCCC graduation petition deadline; 4:30 p.m. Liberal girls basketball vs. Perryton.
Wed 12/2: SCCC evening finals begin; 9 a.m. Books, Coffee & Donuts.
Thu 12/3: SCCC withdrawal deadline; Liberal boys swimming at Salina South.
Fri 12/4: 6 p.m. Liberal girls basketball home; 7 p.m. SCCC Winter Concert, Showcase Theater.

HAMILTON COUNTY

Fri 11/27: No school, Syracuse.
Sat 11/28: HS basketball showcase and alumni game.
Mon 11/30: JH basketball vs. Elkhart.
Tue 12/1: 8:30 a.m. County Commission; HS basketball at Wallace County.
Thu 12/3: JH basketball at SWH; 6:30 p.m. Grades 3-6 Christmas concert.
Fri 12/4: No school; HS basketball vs. Holcomb.

MORTON COUNTY

Fri 11/27: No school, Elkhart and Rolla.
Sat 11/28: Elkhart basketball jamboree at Liberal.
Mon 11/30: Elkhart/Rolla MS basketball at Syracuse; 11 a.m.-1 p.m. FAFSA help, Elkhart HS library.
Tue 12/1: Rolla blood drive; 4 p.m. JV Scholars Bowl at Minneola.
Thu 12/3: Elkhart/Rolla MS basketball vs. Sublette; Rolla JV Scholars Bowl at Garden City.
Fri 12/4: No school, Rolla; Elkhart basketball vs. Leoti.

KEARNY COUNTY

Fri 11/27: No school, Lakin; Deerfield fall break ends.
Mon 11/30: 4 p.m. Deerfield Scholars Bowl at Greeley County; 4:30 p.m. Lakin MS basketball at Sublette.
Tue 12/1: 6 p.m. Deerfield basketball vs. SWH.
Wed 12/2: 6 p.m. Lakin City Council, 121 N. Main.
Fri 12/4: 6 p.m. Deerfield basketball vs. Hodgeman County.

HASKELL COUNTY

Mon 11/30: 4:30 p.m. Sublette MS basketball vs. Elkhart; 5 p.m. Satanta basketball jamboree at Moscow.
Tue 12/1: 4 p.m. Satanta JV Scholars Bowl at Minneola; 6 p.m. Holiday Concert.
Wed 12/2: 7 p.m. Satanta City Council.
Thu 12/3: 4 p.m. Satanta Scholars Bowl at Garden City; JH basketball at Ashland.
Fri 12/4: 4:15 p.m. Satanta basketball at Meade.

STANTON COUNTY

Fri 11/27: No school, USD 452.
Mon 11/30: 3 p.m. Scholars Bowl at Greeley County; 4:30 p.m. JH basketball vs. Wichita County.
Wed 12/2: 9 a.m. FFA at Garden City; 5:30 p.m. Johnson City Council, City Hall.
Thu 12/3: 4 p.m. JH wrestling at Cimarron; HS basketball at Granada.
Fri 12/4: FFA Chili Cookoff; 2 p.m. girls wrestling at Trego.

