

Kansas Currents

K-STATE RESEARCH AND EXTENSION NEWS

Central Kansas Extension District

centralkansas.ksu.edu

July - August 2025

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Wellness

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Family Resource
Management



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Social Security Fairness Act Restores Benefits for Public Service Workers

In January 2025, Congress passed the **Social Security Fairness Act**, eliminating two long-standing provisions — the **Windfall Elimination Provision (WEP)** and the **Government Pension Offset (GPO)** — which had reduced Social Security benefits for over 2.8 million public service workers.

Who Was Affected?

Workers with **non-covered pensions** — meaning jobs where Social Security taxes weren't withheld — were impacted. These included:

- Teachers
- Police officers
- Some federal and local government employees
- Other public service professionals

What Medicare Recipients Need to Know

If you're now receiving Social Security benefits due to this change:

- **Your Medicare Part B premium will be deducted automatically from your monthly Social Security payment.**
- Until then, **keep paying your Medicare bill** as usual to avoid loss of coverage.
- If you pay using **Easy Pay (ACH)** or online banking, you **may need to cancel those payments** once SSA starts deducting your premium.

You may receive **two notices from SSA:**

1. Confirmation that WEP or GPO was removed
2. Notification of your adjusted monthly benefit and any **retroactive payment**

Next Steps for Individuals

You may be eligible for benefits on your own record, or as a spouse or surviving spouse.

Check with SSA if:

- You've **moved** and may have missed a notification
- You're **not sure if you applied** for spousal or survivor benefits
- You were previously denied due to WEP or GPO

Visit ssa.gov or call **1-800-772-1213**.

NEW APP: Protect Your Medicare from Fraud!

Just launched — the **SMP Medicare Tracker** app helps you **track appointments, catch fraud, and learn how to stay safe** from Medicare scams.

- ☑ Record visits & services
- ☑ Report suspicious activity
- ☑ Play the interactive **Fraud Busters** game
- ☑ Get scam alerts & prevention tips

🎧 **It's FREE and available now!**

📱 Download “SMP Medicare Tracker” in the App Store or Google Play

🔗 More info at smpresource.org

Medicare Enrollment Made Simple

Dr. Mehmet Oz Turns 65 and Shares His Experience

As he turned 65 in June, CMS Administrator Dr. Mehmet Oz is using his own Medicare enrollment experience to help Americans better understand how to sign up for Medicare and select the coverage that best fits their needs.

Through a new video and social media series, Dr. Oz is guiding Americans through the Medicare enrollment process, offering practical advice and easy steps to follow.

“Millions of Americans become eligible for Medicare each year, and this year, I’m one of them,” said Oz. “The good news is, Medicare.gov makes it easy to get started, whether you’re signing up for the first time or exploring options. Everyone’s situation is different, but the most important thing you can do is get informed early and make the choices that are right for you and your family.”

Dr. Oz’s Medicare Enrollment Tips:

- Start early – Learn about your coverage options before turning 65.
- Understand your path – Your enrollment steps may vary depending on whether you are receiving Social Security or have employer coverage.
- Use Medicare.gov – This official site offers clear, personalized guidance to help you choose the right plan.

Where to Watch and Learn More:

- Visit Medicare.gov
- Follow Dr. Oz on X, Instagram, and Facebook for more tips and updates

Source: CMS.gov (2025)





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PRESERVE THE HARVEST

Do you want to make the most of your garden or local farmers' market purchases? Preserve your garden's bounty at its peak!



Canning Basics

<https://shorturl.at/JTnT2>



Freezing Guide

<https://shorturl.at/ueaEl>



Dehydrating

<https://shorturl.at/UuJP7>



Storage Tips

<https://shorturl.at/ChVOF>

Kansas State University Agricultural Experiment
Station and Cooperative Extension Service
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About Us

K-State Research and Extension is your connection to research-based knowledge and resources to individuals, families, farms, and communities across Kansas to help them improve their lives.

Contact Us

785-309-5850

or

785-392-2147

lmnewman@ksu.edu

Scan this QR code for
additional home food
preservation resources.





Reducing Food Waste, Saving Money

Cut Waste, Save Money: Smart Food Planning Tips from K-State Extension

Did you know that **30–40% of food in the U.S. goes uneaten** each year? That's not just waste—it's **money in the trash**. According to K-State's Sharolyn Jackson, a family of four loses **about \$3,000 annually**, or **\$56 a week**, on food that never gets eaten.

Top tips to waste less and save more:

- **Plan before you shop:** Check your pantry, fridge, and freezer first—use what you already have.
- **Stick to a list:** Avoid impulse buys and build your list around weekly meal plans.
- **Mind portions:** Restaurant-size meals aren't the norm at home. Buy for your family's true appetite.
- **Use it twice:** Freeze leftovers in single servings for busy days—think of them as "planned-overs."
- **Stretch scraps:** Save spoonfuls of leftover veggies in the freezer to make soups.
- **Buy fresh wisely:** Only purchase what you can realistically use or preserve.
- **Donate extras:** If you can't use it, local food pantries often can.

Source: Melgares, K-State Research and Extension news service (2025)

Simply Produce

Simply Produce is a produce bundle program between Central Kansas District and Gene's Heartland Foods in Minneapolis.

Community members can purchase produce bundles containing fresh fruits and vegetables for \$15+tax at any register located at Gene's in Minneapolis. Contents in the monthly bundles do vary from month to month.

July – Program paused during July due to Ottawa County Fair
 August purchase dates: August 7-12. Pick-up date and time:
 Friday, August 15 12-12:30 p.m.

Purchasing location: Gene's Heartland Foods located at 218 W 3rd, Minneapolis
 Pick up location: Community Bible Church located at 929 N Rothsay, Minneapolis



5% Acidity Vinegar—The Standard for Pickling

For pickling, the recommended vinegar to use is one with 5% acidity. This is also known as 50 grain vinegar. While most vinegars are at 5% acidity, some are not. Therefore, shop wisely and read the label. The percentage may be on the front of the label or in the ingredient statement.



Typical distilled white vinegar and apple cider vinegar has 5% acidity, but it depends on the brand. There are some alternative vinegars, such as a “pickling vinegar base” which is only 2.5% acidity. There are no pickle recipes developed for this type of vinegar for canning, but it could be used in a refrigerator pickle. Do not use “cleaning” vinegars as they are too high in acidity.

How Much Caffeine Do You Consume?

Some of us need that daily caffeine boost to get us going! But do you really know how much caffeine you consume each day?

The International Food Information Council has an online Caffeine Calculator -<https://tinyurl.com/4zz2f52w> - to help you out. Safe consumption for healthy adults is up to 400 mg/day. For example, two 8 oz cups of coffee has 192mg of caffeine.

Healthy pregnant lactating women can consume low to moderate amounts, about 300 mg/day or less. Caffeine values in this tool are based on the USDA Food Data Central Database.

Baking Pie in Disposable Pans

With county fairs gearing up soon, so are bakers to bake a prize-winning pie. But getting the pie to bake properly in a disposable aluminum pan can be a challenge. Aluminum does not hold heat and bakes slowly.



Here are some tips to prevent soggy bottom crusts:

- For blind baking, increase baking time up to 10 minutes or until golden brown.
- For double-crust pies, place pie pan on a preheated baking sheet or baking stone.

For double-crust pies, set the pie inside a glass or stoneware pie pan for more heat transfer. Another option is to shop garage sales for glass pie pans that you don't want returned!

Source: Cook's Illustrated



Join us at the Fair

Ottawa County Fair – July 15-18
Fair Theme: Stayin' Alive in 2025

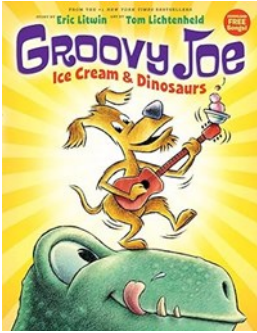
Tri-Rivers Fair—July 31—August 4
Fair Theme: Fairadise



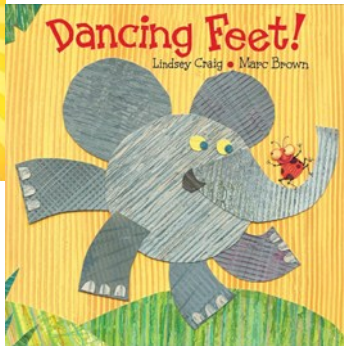
StoryWalk® Locations

There are several StoryWalk® locations in our district. There is one located in Gypsum at the park, there is a new StoryWalk® that has been installed at the park in Assaria and there is one located at Markley Grove Park in Minneapolis.

Families are encouraged to visit all the StoryWalk® locations this summer. North Ottawa County USD 239 Parents as Teachers, USD 306 Parents as Teachers, and Central Kansas District are excited to offer this fun activity for local families and visitors.



“Groovy Joe Ice Cream & Dinosaurs” by Eric Litwin can be found in Assaria.



“Dancing Feet!” by Lindsey Craig will be featured in Gypsum.



“Goodnight, Goodnight, Construction Site” by Sherri Duskey Rinker will be featured in Minneapolis.

A StoryWalk® promotes both literacy and physical fitness for families in a fun and exciting way. The StoryWalk® contains laminated pages from a children's book that are attached to signposts, which are along a path for families to walk and read. "The StoryWalk® Project is the creation of Anne Ferguson and the Kellogg-Hubbard Library from Montpelier, Vermont and it is described as: "An innovative and delightful way for children and adults to enjoy reading and the outdoors at the same time." Learn more about The StoryWalk® Project here: http://www.kellogghubbard.org/storywalk_

Fireworks Safety Tips

For many, the Fourth of July holiday is a time to celebrate with barbecues, parades and fireworks. But, experts say, when it comes to fireworks, it's best to leave it to the professionals.

If consumer fireworks are legal where you live, here are a few tips from the National Safety Council:

- Never allow young children to handle fireworks.
- Always have adult supervision.
- Wear protective eyewear.
- Never hold lighted fireworks in your hands.
- Don't point or throw fireworks at another person.
- Only light one firework at a time.
- Watch them from a safe distance.

Source: Mayo Clinic



Deterra Drug Deactivation Packets

Deterra drug deactivation packets are pouches designed to safely and conveniently dispose of unused, expired, or unwanted medications at home or in a clinical setting. They use a process called MAT12 Molecular Adsorption Technology to deactivate medications with activated carbon. This renders the medication inert, unavailable for misuse, and safe for the environment.

Deterra drug deactivation packets

Here are some of the key features of Deterra drug deactivation packets:

- They can deactivate prescription and over-the-counter medications, including pills, patches, liquids, creams, and films.
- They are easy to use and require a simple three-step process.
- They are environmentally friendly and safe for disposal in regular trash.
- They are available in a variety of sizes to accommodate different medication needs.



If you are looking for a safe and convenient way to dispose of unused or unwanted medications, Deterra drug deactivation packets are a great option. We have a limited supply available for pickup in the Salina and Minneapolis

Medicare Open Enrollment

October 15-December 7

Call For Your Appointment After September 1st

785-309-5850

Review Your Medicare Part D Options for 2026

It's crucial to evaluate your Medicare Part D plan annually during the Open Enrollment Period to ensure it meets your medication needs and budget. The K-State Extension – Central Kansas District offers no-cost Medicare counseling in both the Salina and Minneapolis offices.



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Central Kansas Extension District

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Address Service Requested

The enclosed material is for your information. If we can be of further assistance, feel free to call or drop by the Extension Office.

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