Central Kansas District

KANSAS CURRENTS

Family and Consumer Science Newsletter

November / December 2026



If you haven't already scheduled your appointment to go over your Medicare Part D with Melissa, please do so today. Appointments are quickly filling up!

In-person appointments are available in both Ottawa and Saline counties. Phone appointments are available as well.

Avoid Health Insurance Scams During Open Enrollment

Health insurance scams happen year-round, but they pick up during Open Enrollment for Medicare and the Marketplace. If you're looking to find a new plan, you might search online. But before you click on a search result, remember: scammers and dishonest businesses sometimes pay to appear at the top.

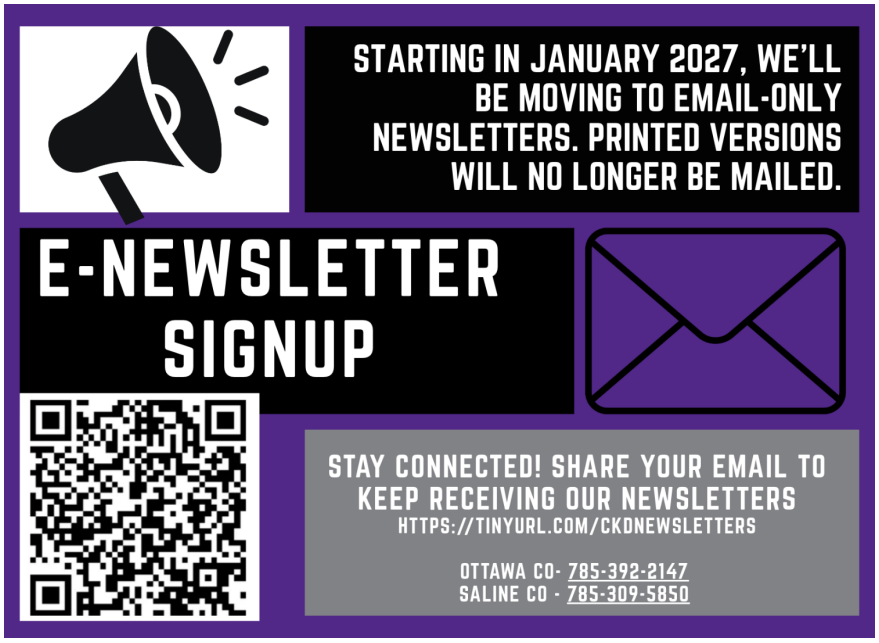
Bad actors often use web addresses that look similar to government website addresses. They also use keywords and official-looking logos to make you think you're at the real Healthcare.gov or Medicare.gov when you're not. If you use the link or phone number in the ad, you might end up paying for a scammy plan that's not health insurance, or expose yourself to medical identity theft.

How can you avoid health insurance scams as you search for options?

- **Type the name of the website directly into the search engine.** For Medicare, it's Medicare.gov, or call 800-633-4227. To compare health insurance plans, check your coverage, or find out if you qualify for savings, go to HealthCare.gov or call 800-318-2596.
- **Take your time.** Look for small "Ad" or "Sponsored" labels next to search results to identify paid ads. Scroll past paid ads and be sure to look for the .gov ending.
- **Get help to compare costs, coverage, and plans.** You can also get Medicare help through your local Senior Health Insurance Counseling for Kansas. For additional help with ACA plans, visit HealthCare.gov and click "Find Local Help."

Reprinted from Federal Trade Commission - Consumer Advice. The FTC works to stop deceptive and unfair business practices and scams, and to help consumers like you recognize and recover from them.

https://consumer.ftc.gov/



Thawing Your Turkey Safely

Frozen turkeys are safe indefinitely, but once thawing begins, bacteria can grow quickly if the temperature isn't controlled. Never leave a turkey on the counter, in the garage, or in the car — always thaw using one of three safe methods:

Refrigerator: Allow 24 hours for every 4–5 pounds at 40 °F or below. Example:

- 4–12 lbs: 1–3 days
- 12–16 lbs: 3–4 days
- 16–20 lbs: 4–5 days
- 20–24 lbs: 5–6 days
  A thawed turkey can stay in the fridge 1–2 days before cooking.

Cold Water: Allow 30 minutes per pound. Submerge the turkey (in a leak-proof bag) in cold water, changing the water every 30 minutes. Cook immediately after thawing.

Microwave: Follow manufacturer's instructions and cook immediately after thawing.

Reminder: Never thaw a turkey at room temperature — the outer layer enters the "Danger Zone" (40–140 °F) where bacteria multiply rapidly.



A whole turkey is safe cooked to a minimum internal temperature of 165 °F throughout the bird. Always use a food thermometer to check the internal temperature of your turkey and stuffing. For reasons of personal preference, consumers may choose to cook turkey to higher temperatures.

Happy Thanksgiving

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.

November purchase dates: Nov 12-17. Pick-up date and time: Friday, Nov 20, 12-12:30 p.m.

December purchase dates: Dec 10-15. Pick-up date and time: Friday, Dec 18, 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.

FAFSA Virtual Drop-In Help Events

Need help completing the 2027-28 FAFSA? Join a FAFSA Virtual Drop-In Help Event for free, one-on-one assistance from knowledgeable financial aid professionals across Kansas. These sessions are designed to help students and families navigate the FAFSA process and get their questions answered.

- Thursday, November 19, 2026 (5:45pm - 7:15pm)
- Thursday, January 28, 2027 (5:45pm - 7:15pm)
- Thursday, February 18, 2027 (5:45pm - 7:15pm)

For more information, check out: https://www.kasfaa.org/

Kansas Association of KASFAA Student Financial Aid Administrators

Canning Equipment Storage



For some home canners, the canning season is ending. Here are some tips to store equipment so it is in good working order for next season.

Clean equipment with hot soapy water. Any grease or food residue left behind can lead to bacterial growth or mold growth. Always check small parts of equipment for any leftover food residue.

1. Hard water can leave a darkened residue, especially on aluminum. Fill the canner with water above that hard water area, add 1 tablespoon cream of tartar to each quart of water and bring it to a boil, covered, until the dark area disappears. Drain out this water and wash with hot, soapy water, rinse and dry completely.
2. On pressure canners with gaskets, remove rubber gaskets and wash. Check for cracks or brittleness. Check the rubber plug in the lid for cracks or dryness. Both of these items can be replaced.
3. Check the vent pipe to be sure it is clear. Run a string, small piece of cloth or a pipe cleaner through the hole to clear any food residue.
4. Now is a good time to check dial gauges for accuracy. Many local Extension offices have the dial gauge testing equipment to test Presto, National, Maid of Honor and Magic Seal brands. We cannot test All American pressure gauges or any other brands of gauges.

Charlie Cart Brings Hands-On Food Education To The Community

K-State Extension's Central Kansas District and the Salina Emergency Aid Food Bank are partnering to bring the Charlie Cart, a fully equipped mobile teaching kitchen, to our community.

The Charlie Cart makes hands-on food and nutrition education possible in schools, childcare settings, libraries, and other community locations without a traditional kitchen. Activities may include cooking demonstrations, taste tests, food preparation lessons, and learning practical food safety and nutrition skills.



This partnership combines the Food Bank's work to improve food access with Extension's research-based nutrition and wellness education. Together, we hope to help community members build the skills and confidence to prepare nutritious foods.

Interested in partnering with us? We welcome conversations with schools, childcare providers, libraries, senior-serving organizations, and other community groups interested in hands-on cooking and nutrition education. Contact one of Central Kansas District's offices to explore opportunities to use the Charlie Cart in your programming.

"How Can I Stop Spam Calls?!"

Setting up "Call Screening" on your cell phone

What Is Call Screening? Call screening is a built-in tool for your phone to automatically:

Identify callers - Screen or silence unknown numbers - Block spam and fraud calls
Answer calls on your behalf using AI
Provide a real-time transcript so you can decide whether to pick up

IPHONE

Open Settings
Select Apps
Select Phone
Scroll down to "Screen Unknown Callers"
Toggle on your choice: Never, Ask Reason for Calling, or Silence

SAMSUNG

Open the Phone app
Tap the three-dot menu in the top right corner
Select Settings
Tap Call Screening (or Bixby text call)
Toggle the switch to "ON"

GOOGLE

Open the Phone app >>> Tap the three-dot menu in the top right corner
Select Settings >>> Tap Call Screen >>> Turn on Automatically Screen Calls
Choose your protection level: Maximum, Medium, or Basic.

Make sure to also...

AVOID SHARING YOUR NUMBER PUBLICLY.

Many spam lists originate from websites, contest forms, or online accounts that expose your phone number.
Here's how to stay private:

- AVOID POSTING YOUR NUMBER ON SOCIAL MEDIA, FORUMS OR CLASSIFIEDS.
- BE CAUTIOUS WITH "FREE" WI-FI NETWORKS OR APPS REQUESTING UNNECESSARY PHONE PERMISSIONS.
- USE ALTERNATE NUMBERS (LIKE GOOGLE VOICE) FOR ONLINE SIGNUPS.
- REMOVE DATA-SHARING PERMISSIONS FROM APPS THAT DON'T NEED YOUR PHONE ACCESS.

PROTECT DETECT REPORT

SMP Senior Medicare Patrol
Preventing Medicare Fraud



Getting Ahead of the Holidays: Smart Money Moves

The holidays are approaching, and so are the expenses. A little planning now can help reduce stress and keep your budget on track.

Before you start shopping:

- ☑ Review upcoming expenses that may compete with holiday spending
- ☑ Set a total holiday spending limit
- ☑ Make a list of all holiday costs, not just gifts
- ☑ Divide your budget across the paychecks remaining before the holidays

Planning ahead allows you to spread out costs, avoid last-minute spending, and enjoy the season with greater peace of mind.

Remember, a little preparation now can help you enjoy the holidays without carrying financial stress into the new year.

Happy Holiday and Happy New Year!

Notice of Non-Discrimination in languages other than English. Reasonable accommodations for persons with disabilities, including alternative means of communication (e.g., Braille, large print, audio tape, and American sign Language) may be requested by contacting the event contact (Lisa Newman or Melissa Schrag) two weeks prior to the start of the event. Contact Lisa at 785-309-5850 or lmnewman@ksu.edu or Melissa at 785-309-5850 or meliss89@ksu.edu. Requests received after this date will be honored when it is feasible to do so. Language access services, such as interpretation or translation of vital information, will be provided free of charge to limited English proficient individuals upon request.

KANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY | Extension Central Kansas District

Central Kansas Extension District
2218 K-State Road North
Salina, KS 67401-8196

Address Service Requested

District Extension Agent:

Lisa Newman
Family & Community Wellness

Melissa Schrag
Adult Development and Aging

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