

GOLDEN MONTHS

November-December 2026

Welcome to Golden Months - a bi-monthly publication from the **East Central Kansas Area Agency on Aging**. We highlight FREE events and meals in your community. In your golden years, staying connected is the best thing you can do for your health and wellbeing. We care about you, and we want to make staying connected easier.



Above: Annie Chastain, new Ottawa resident

Sometimes the life you want is just waiting for you to make the first move, literally. Meet Annie. While she is new to Ottawa, she is not new to Kansas. She was born in the Sunflower State and lived in Lawrence as a very young child. Both of her parents were from Stockton, KS, where she spent many vacations and holidays with family. And while she has spent a large portion of her life in New Mexico, she has always dreamed about coming back home.

Annie wasn't just looking for a new place to live; she was looking for a new community, a place to call home. She researched several communities, including Lawrence, Baldwin, and Eudora but kept coming back to Ottawa. She wasn't just looking for any small town; she wanted one that was active, welcoming, and invested in its people.

Ottawa stood out because of its community involvement, local businesses, arts opportunities, healthcare access, and recreational trails. "I wanted to have an opportunity to continue to grow and be creative," said Annie. "None of those other places had the same community feel, and none of them had the opportunities that I saw in Ottawa."

"Don't put off those dreams until you're older, until retirement. Do it!"

On the day of the move, Annie drove 13 hours with her three rescue dogs. She had never seen her new house in person, knew no one, and arrived after dark. Within 20 minutes of arriving, her new neighbors knocked on the door to welcome her and give her their phone number. It's one thing to research a town and see a welcoming atmosphere online: it's quite another to experience it firsthand within your first 30 minutes.

One thing I have learned about Annie, in the four short months I have known her, is that she doesn't wait around for things to happen, and finding her community was no different. Her first stop was the library, followed by exploring downtown and introducing herself to shopkeepers. She attended Third Thursdays on Main, visited the farmers market, participated in community events, and started taking art classes at The Collective Heart Creative.

Through those conversations, she discovered more opportunities and one connection led to another. "Tell them what you're interested in. Tell them a little bit about yourself, pass the time, get to know each other, because that's where you're gonna find out about the Mahjong club, or the chess club, or the free square dancing lessons. You gotta go out and be in your community", she shared.

While Annie hasn't retired yet, she's already thinking about what she wants retirement to look like. And it doesn't involve slowing down. She doesn't see retirement as becoming a different person, she sees it as having more freedom to become an even fuller version of herself. "For me, retirement is just an opportunity to shift away from regimented, paid work for someone else to be able to focus on work that is more meaningful and valuable to me as a human being." She wants to volunteer, work with animals more, continue learning, take more art classes, explore Kansas, bike, garden, possibly sell handmade items or baked goods, and maybe even help develop community theater opportunities.

This approach to retirement is more about curiosity than apprehension. About blossoming, not shrinking. Preparing socially and emotionally, with creating relationships, learning new things, and staying physically active in addition to the financial aspects. "I think I learned that I really can make things happen, that even if it's scary, and even if you think you're gonna fail, just do it anyway, and see what happens, and if things don't go exactly the way you thought, just pivot."

Annie is adamant that anyone can do this, and it just takes a little courage to

pursue the life you want, regardless of age. "Don't put off those dreams of starting that new chapter until you're older or until retirement." If you aren't finding a sense of community that fulfills you, choose where you want to belong. Build new connections, show up, participate, and start creating a future filled with purpose.

Welcome to Ottawa Annie, and welcome home.

*By Dawnua Dawson,
Marketing & Outreach Specialist
ECKAAA*

Medicare Open Enrollment

Open Enrollment began October 15 and runs through December 7, 2026. We are offering free, one-on-one appointments in Ottawa and at satellite locations to help Medicare beneficiaries review their current coverage, compare available plans, and make informed decisions about their healthcare and prescription drug coverage for 2027.

November Appointment Schedule:

Tue 11/3: 10 a.m.–4 p.m.

Waverly Library- 608 Pearson St.

Fri 11/6: 11 a.m.–3:30 p.m.

Burlington Library- 410 W Juniatta St.

Wed 11/18: 10 a.m.–3:30 p.m.

Burlington Library- 410 W Juniatta St.

Fri, 11/20: 10 a.m.–3:30 p.m.

Garnett Library- 125 W 4th Ave.

Sat 11/21: Call for available times available at the ECKAAA Office, Ottawa

Mon, 11/23: 10 a.m.–3:30 p.m.

Osage City Library- 515 Main St.

Call 785-242-7200 if you have questions or concerns.

November 2026

Activities for those 60+

UPCOMING EVENTS

WED - 4

2 PM

Chair Yoga for Arthritis

Franklin CO. - 203 E. 4th St., Ottawa

THU - 5

11:30 AM

SERC Lunch & Learn

Franklin CO. - 117 S. Main St., Ottawa ★

FRI - 6

9:30 AM

Caregiver Support Meeting

Coffey CO. - 410 W. Juniatta St., Burlington

MON - 9

1 PM

MAPP Book Presentation

Miami CO. - 815 6th St., Osawatomie

TUE - 10

1 PM

Caregiver Support Meeting

Franklin CO. - 117 S. Main St., Ottawa

WED - 11

Veteran's Day

ECKAAA Offices Closed

2 PM

Chair Yoga for Arthritis

Franklin CO. - 203 E. 4th St., Ottawa

TUE - 17

11:30 AM

Lunch On Us: Stay Active with ORC ★

Franklin CO. - 1418 S. Main St., Ottawa

3:30 PM

Stuff-A-Turkey Intergenerational Project ★

Anderson CO. - 124 W. 4th St., Garnett

WED - 18

12 PM

Cooking for One or Two ★

Osage CO. - 127 East 6th St., Lyndon

2 PM

Chair Yoga for Arthritis

Franklin CO. - 203 E. 4th St., Ottawa

THUR 26 & FRI 27

Thanksgiving

ECKAAA Offices Closed



We offer **Grab & Go hot meals** and **congregate meals** (Mon-Fri) for those 60+ in Anderson, Coffey, Franklin, Linn, Miami, and Osage counties. \$4 donation suggested.



RSVP required on events with ★. Questions or to RSVP call 785-242-7200.
Visit our website for more info at www.eckaaa.org

UPCOMING EVENTS

WED - 2	2 PM	Chair Yoga for Arthritis <i>Franklin CO. - 203 E. 4th St., Ottawa</i>
THUR - 3	2 PM	Cooking for One or Two ★ <i>Franklin CO. - 117 S. Main St., Ottawa</i>
MON - 7	11:59 PM	Medicare Open Enrollment Ends
WED - 9	2 PM	Chair Yoga for Arthritis <i>Franklin CO. - 203 E. 4th St., Ottawa</i>
THUR 24 & FRI 25		Christmas <i>ECKAAA Offices Closed</i>
WED - 30	2 PM	Chair Yoga for Arthritis <i>Franklin CO. - 203 E. 4th St., Ottawa</i>

RSVP required on events with ★. Questions or to RSVP call 785-242-7200.
Visit our website for more info at www.eckaaa.org

As the close of 2026 arrives, ECKAAA wants to send our warmest wishes to clients, caregivers, volunteers, service providers, and community partners.

During the last year, the agency continued to provide services to those ages 60 and over through a wide range of efforts; in-home services, legal assistance, congregate and home delivered meals, health and wellness programs, Medicare education and assistance, information and referral assistance, caregiver respite, intergenerational programs, and public education. We hope all those we served found the services helpful to what they needed and that we made 2026 less stressful, more informative, and easier for whatever question was asked or service was needed.

We are incredibly grateful for the trust you and your families place in us every day to help you with aging services at the local level. We look forward to serving our communities in 2027 and wish you all a wonderful holiday season filled with warmth, good company, fond memories, and peace.

*Leslea Rockers,
Executive Director,
East Central Kansas Area Agency on Aging*

Kansas Silver Hair Legislature

Representing Issues for Kansans 60+

On Tuesday, October 6, 2026, members of the Silver Haired Legislature (SHL) met to listen to experts discuss pertinent issues that affect senior citizens of Kansas. Leslie Anderson, Kansas Association of Area Aging and Disability; Dan Goodman, Kansas Advocates for Better Care; Christy Khatib, Adult Protective Services; and Alejandro Nieto, Executive Director of Larksfield Place (a not-for-profit life plan community offering assisted living, rehabilitation, and memory support) held a round table discussion about their provided services and answered questions from SHL members.

On Wednesday, October 7, SHL members attended committee meetings at the State Capitol. Those committees were: Medicare and KanCare; Personal Needs Allowances & Application Assistance; the Senior Care Act, and Transportation, voting rights and elections. Members had the opportunity to hear experts on these topics, ask questions, and formulate Resolutions to be presented to the State Legislature.

On Thursday, October 8th, all members met to vote on committee resolutions. The resolutions that passed are as follows:

We urge the Kansas Legislature to **continue supporting and funding collaborative community-based transportation for senior citizens.**



Above: The Kansas Silver Hair Legislature is a body of Seniors who identify issues important to older Kansas adults (60+) to educate the Kansas Legislature about those issues.

We urge the Kansas Legislature to **continue supporting collaborative community-based transportation systems**, including micro-transit support in rural, remote and metropolitan areas, for the senior citizens of Kansas and to increase funding for such systems.

We urge the Kansas Legislature to **support the involvement of and control by local entities in establishing these collaborative community-based transportation systems.**

We urge the Kansas Department of Transportation (KDOT) to **study and identify transportation needs for senior citizens** of Kansas and develop and coordinate with local governments and entities (city governments, area agencies on aging, the Silver Haired Legislature and other organizations) to establish effective rural, remote and metropolitan transportation projects.

By Melody Hoffsommer,
SHL Osage County delegate



117 S. Main St.
Ottawa, KS