
GOLDEN YEARS

JULY AUGUST SEPTEMBER 2026



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eckaaa.org
785.242.7200



117 S. Main St.
Ottawa, KS

Director's Greeting

The summer season brings a change to both the weather and to familiar routines - the days get longer, schools are out, & people take vacations. Summer can be a great time to commit to a healthier lifestyle.

Increased daylight hours in the morning & evening make it easier to get outdoors for a walk - the air is cooler, the wind is calmer, & you get the benefit of a beautiful sunrise or sunset. Fresh produce from the farmers markets provides a great way to work more fruits and vegetables into your diet. You can find more information about the hydrating benefits of fruit on pages 11 to 13. While fresh fruits nurture your body outdoor activities such as gardening benefit your mind and soul. Perhaps you'll find some green-thumb inspiration learning about horticulture therapy on page.....

As our routines change with the seasons, remember that it's never too late to tend to yourself by eating whole, hydrating foods, and moving your body in ways that nurture you from head to toe.

Enjoy this edition of Golden Years—we hope to bring inspiration to your summer season!

Sincerely,
Leslea Rockers,
ECKAAA Director

ECKAAA Upcoming Events

Cup of Comfort:
Caregiver Support Groups
(see page 3 for details)
Meetings Every Month!



July 8th at 10:00: **New to Medicare Seminar** @ ECKAAA
Office 117 S. Main St., Ottawa

July 15th at 10:00: **Stuff-a-Cow**
and Farm BINGO (Carbondale)

Chair Yoga for Arthritis: every
Wed. of each month @ 2:00
203 E. 4th St., Ottawa - enter at
the South door

Lunch on Us: Men's Health
Over the Age of 65
1418 S. Main St. Ottawa
(see page 13 for details!)

LUNCH & LEARN

Caregiver
Educational
Series

More
topics,
dates, &
locations!

Details
Coming
Soon!

Caregiver's Corner

Supporting the Caregiver Behind the Care

Caring for loved ones is one of the most meaningful roles to take on. It can also be physically and emotionally exhausting. Many caregivers put their own needs last. However, taking care of yourself is essential. Here are some simple ways to support your own wellness while being a caregiver:

1. Take Breaks, even if they're short - stepping away for 15 minutes can help reset your energy. Consider looking into respite services to help you fully recharge.
2. Stay connected - caregiving can feel isolating. Joining support groups and connecting with others who understand your situation can make a positive difference.
3. Keep Up with Your Own Health - Attending regularly scheduled doctor appointments, prioritizing nutritious snacks, & maintaining a sleep schedule adds up. You can only care for others when you care for you too.
4. Ask for Help - ask family and friends or use local resources to help reduce your stress and prevent burnout.
5. Give yourself Grace - there is no perfect way to be a caregiver and some days will be harder than others. Focus on what can do, one day at a time.

By Kimberly, Caregiving Coordinator
ECKAAA



Linn CO: 1st Tues.
9-10 Hive library
752 Main St. Pleasanton

Franklin CO. 2nd Tues.
1-2:30 ECKAAA Office
117 s. Main St. Ottawa

Miami CO. 3rd Tues. 9:30-11
K-State Research &
Extension
913 N. Pearl St. Suite 1 Paola

Osage CO.
4th Tues. 9:30-11 am
Community Covenant Church
331 N. Topeka Av. Osage City

Anderson CO. 3rd Fri.
10-11:30 Garnett Housing
Authority: Park Place II 200
Parkside Place

Coffey CO. 1st Fri. 9:30-11
Coffey County Library
410 W. Juniatta St.
Burlington

For questions or caregiver
support & resources contact:
Kimberly Miller
ECKAAA Caregiver Coordinator,
785-242-7200 or
kimberlym@eckaaa.org.

From Our Neighbors

Celebrate the Americans with Disabilities Act!

The Resource Center for Independent Living, Inc. (RCIL) will be celebrating the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) during their RCIL Friends Group meetings in July! The ADA is one of the disability rights movements that became a part of American History since July 26, 1990.

If we didn't have the ADA, we wouldn't have curb cuts, ramps, automatic doors, elevators, accommodations in the workplace, and accessible transportation that allow people with disabilities to be involved and independent in their communities. These are just a few examples of things supported by the ADA that everyone with or without disabilities benefit from every day.

RCIL Friends are groups of individuals who all experience disability and meet monthly for peer counseling to address disability needs and issues in the community. They share information about disability related topics such as health and wellness, safety, transportation, and direct support worker concerns. The groups also use their time together to do crafts or other recreational activities.

RCIL Friends groups host in person meetings in El Dorado, Emporia, Eureka, Fort Scott, Iola, Osage City, and two groups in Topeka.

RCIL also offers an online RCIL Friends group meeting via Zoom once a month.

The ADA was a positive change for people with disabilities. However, not all places follow the ADA guidelines. Many RCIL Friends groups are working on community advocacy projects. Some of the projects they are advocating for are changes in their communities such as crosswalk button extenders and a few crosswalk safety projects. If you would like to get involved or learn more about RCIL Friends groups, contact RCIL in the Osage City office at 1-800-580-7245.

By Beth Burnett
Information and Outreach
Coordinator/ILS
Resource Center for Independent
Living, Inc.



End-of-Life Conversations: Planning That Honors Your Wishes

Talking about end-of-life preferences can feel uncomfortable, but it is one of the most practical gifts you can give your loved ones.

End-of-life communication works best as an ongoing process and recurring conversations over time, (continued on the next page)

(planning that honors your wishes, continued) rather than a single “one-and-done” talk. Experts recommend starting while you are mentally, physically, and emotionally well, before a crisis occurs. This helps both the family and health care providers understand your values and goals if you ever cannot speak for yourself. A simple way to begin is to choose a trusted person or people and a comfortable time and place. You can open the conversation with statements such as: “I need your help with something,” or “I need to talk about the future—will you help me?” Let the conversation flow naturally, without steering it in a particular direction or rushing it.

If you are the trusted person who has been asked to be a part of this conversation, try to set a goal to listen more than you speak. Be patient, avoid judgment, and use open-ended questions like “What do you think?” and “How do you feel?” If emotions get to a point where things are becoming too stressful, it’s okay to pause and return to it later. Continuing the conversation over time can help everyone feel more prepared and supported.

While these discussions may not always be easy, they create opportunities for connection, understanding, and peace of mind. By taking small steps now, you are helping ensure your wishes are known and honored, giving both you and your loved one greater confidence and comfort in the days ahead.

By Janae McNally
Adult Development & Aging
& Family Resource Management
Kansas State University



With Honor

ON JULY 4, 2026, AMERICA WILL
CELEBRATE 250 YEARS OF
AMERICAN INDEPENDENCE

The Declaration of Independence, adopted by the Continental Congress on July 4, 1776, is one of the most beautiful and important political documents in history. Written primarily by Thomas Jefferson, The Declaration not only proclaimed American Independence from Great Britain, it also enshrined Americans’ natural rights as the cornerstone of our republic. “We hold these truths to be self-evident,” Jefferson masterfully wrote, “that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.”

By Deb Henningsen
Administrative Project Assistant
ECKAAA

Tending to You

Self-Care Seminar Brings Connections

In recognition of Mental Health Awareness Month in May, community members gathered at Dutch Country Café in Lane, Kansas. Mary Sumner of Anderson County Senior Life Solutions hosted a conversation on selfcare and mental wellbeing.

Sumner explained that aging brings changes with retirement, shifts in identity, and sometimes loss but it also offers an opportunity for growth.

Encouragingly, Sumer shared that this stage of life is about redefining purpose and holding onto the wisdom built over the years. Staying connected through friendships, family roles, or community involvement can help maintain that sense of identity.

Self-care, she emphasized, goes beyond surface-level comforts. It's about setting boundaries, showing compassion, and making choices that protect your time and energy - to remember that you can say that you can say yes, no, or negotiate, and you don't have to decide right away.

- Simple daily habits can make a meaningful difference:
- Prioritize sleep with a calm, screen-free routine
- Eat balanced meals to support energy and strength, the scale no longer matters
- Stay active in ways you enjoy
- Connect regularly with others
- Practice mindfulness and deep breathing - exercises such as inhaling for four counts, holding for two, and exhaling for eight can help calm the nervous system.

If you're not feeling like yourself for an extended period, seeking professional support is an important step toward better health. By making intentional choices each day, the golden years can remain a time of purpose, connection, and well-being.

By Kimberly Miller, Caregiver Coordinator
ECKAAA



Above: Mary Sumner of Senior Life Solutions discusses self-care with community members
Left: Attendees connect with one another over lunch.



Community Developmental Disability Organization News

Kansas Aims to Make HCBS More Person-Centered

The Home & Community Based Services (HCBS) Intellectual Disabilities and Developmental Disabilities (IDD) Waiver in Kansas is a Medicaid program that aims to provide home and community-based services to eligible participants who would otherwise require institutionalization. The waiver seeks to promote the independence, integration, and inclusion of individuals with intellectual or developmental disabilities in their communities.

In order to create more a more “person-centered, flexible, & equitable system” the IDD waiver is undergoing changes to align with federal requirements. These changes are being referred to as “Waiver Modernization Initiatives.” To find out more about changes and updates you can visit the Kansas Department for Aging and Disability Services → Services and Programs tab → Long Term Services & Support → Kansas IDD Waiver Modernization Initiative. Additionally, webinars are held the last Thursday of the month from 4:30 to 5:30 pm.

Sources:
Kansas Department for Aging & Disability Services, www.kdads.gov
Wilkinson, Katie. (2023 August, 17). KS Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities Waiver. *Givers.com*.

By Brandi Potter,
Marketing & Outreach Specialist
ECKAAA

Across the Fence: Local Folks & Stories

Let the Good Times Roll

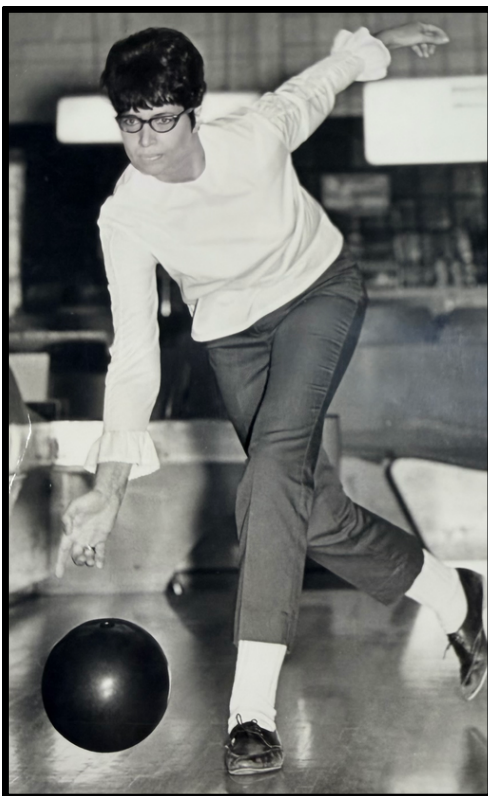
In 1957, Clarice Dengel was a senior at Emporia State University, studying to become a teacher. To fulfill her required physical education credits, she enrolled in a bowling class. Walt Dengel was also a senior at ESU. One seemingly ordinary day, Walt’s fraternity was setting pins at the local bowling alley. They didn’t know it at the time, but that afternoon on the lanes would set their lives on an unexpected path. “I saw those long legs!” Walt said with a huge smile and a sparkle in his eyes.

Over the next year, all their dates took place at the bowling alley. “It was the only place we could afford,” Clarice explained. A short time later, Walt and Clarice moved to Abilene, Kansas, where Clarice worked as a sixth-grade teacher and Walt joined the military. They married in December of 1958 and found out they were expecting their first child in February of 1959. “And that was the end of that!” Clarice said amusingly, referring to the quick conclusion of her teaching career. Though she did spend a bit more time in the classroom filling in for another teacher. Her time in the classroom may have been short—but her best bowling days were yet to come.

Clarice and Walt continued to spend their date nights on the lanes (continued on the next page).

(good times, continued) Walt, who had bowled since childhood, naturally attempted to coach Clarice. "Do you want a picture of Walt pretending to teach me how to bowl?" she joked. Throughout our conversation, Clarice humorously referenced Walt's early bowling "advice" back when she was still a novice. Walt's advice focused on technique, Clarice, however insisted that to be any good at the sport, you need a well-fitting ball and properly oiled lanes.

After being joyfully entertained with bowling stories from the past, I eagerly bowled a game with Clarice. She smoked me 125 to... well, I'll just say she won by a landslide. If we could have scored the game by laughs, we would have tied—though Walt might have edged us out. I'd like to think all the cracking up he did wasn't entirely at the expense of my gutter balls. Along with giving me a few pointers, Walt teased, "Your name ought to be 'Duster!'" My ball did a thorough job of dusting the gutters - there was no denying that! Clarice encouragingly added, "I was you once!"



Meanwhile, she made the sport look like slicing a piece of perfectly moist cake with a pristine, smooth knife. With a brief pause at the approach, she rolled her twelve-pound ball down the lane as if it were gliding on butter. If I hadn't known its weight beforehand, I would have guessed the ball was nearly weightless.

Prior to involuntarily upgrading to a more modern ball, Clarice spent forty years bowling with a heavy-duty rubber ball that was later dubbed the "burn ball" (If you see Walt, be sure to ask him about that story!). In 1967, at twenty-seven years old, Clarice used the "burn ball" to become the record holder for Ottawa's highest-scoring single game in the women's division. She rolled a stellar 289, which included ten consecutive strikes. To put this in perspective, a casual bowler averages just 70 to 100 pins per game.

Walt is also a record-breaker. At a state tournament in Topeka, (continued on the next page)

Kansas his team posted a 2806, setting the record for the lowest score in tournament history. "We never did any good at the state tournaments, but we had a really good time!" Walt said, laughing. Don't let that score fool you, though. One of his best memories was made at a completely different state tournament. The event kicked off in February, and his team was the very first to bowl. They set the bar high and remained in first place through the entire tournament, which didn't end until June! Throughout the years, Clarice, now 89, and Walt, 90, have played in several leagues in Kansas—including Abilene, Lawrence, and Olathe. Upon retiring in the late 1990s, they moved to The Villages in Florida, where they bowled morning and night. Mornings were dedicated to neighborhood teams, while evenings were reserved for competitive league play. They literally "followed the bowling season," returning to Kansas during the summer months. In 2013, they moved back to Kansas permanently, and currently play on the Ottawa senior league at Fusion Alley.

As we walked out the doors, Walt advised that I could join their senior league in about thirty years—however, I'm still not entirely sure if he was referring to my age or my current skill level. One thing that is absolutely certain: sixty-nine years on the lanes guarantees a lifetime of memories.

By Brandi Potter
Marketing & Outreach Specialist
ECKAAA



Above: Clarice & Walt Dengel at Fusion Alley in Ottawa, KS

Among Friends: Events Recap

Intergenerational Events Brings Connection & Memories

East Central Kansas Area Agency on Aging's Intergenerational program provides opportunities to bring different generations together to share interests and meaningful moments. Working on an activity together encourages casual (continued on the next page).

(connections & memories, continued)
conversations that bring people closer.
Our Intergenerational Program is
designed to connect young people with
seniors for shared learning experiences.
During one visit, a young participant, who
had come to the nursing home for the
stuff-a -bear activity discovered that the
nursing home was not a scary place after
all. He left with a new outlook and a happy
memory.

Over the past several years, ECKAAA has
had the enjoyment of bringing
generations. We look forward to seeing
new faces as the Intergenerational
Program continues to grow.



Above: Intergenerational activity participants
enjoying a conversation. Below:
Intergenerational participants stuff a bear
together



By Deb Henningsen
Administrative Project Assistant
ECKAAA

ECKAAA & SERC Physical Therapy Partner for a Fall Risk Event

Jessica Schaub from SERC Physical
Therapy held a Fall Risk Assessment event
at the ECKAAA office in Ottawa, and
Garnett. Attendees participated in
assessments which included tasks to
measure balance. Results of the screening
determined a fall risk level of high,
moderate, or low.

Several attendees who regularly participate
in Silver Sneakers exercise classes at the
Ottawa Recreation Center had great results.
Many scored a low risk of falling.

Falls are caused by several factors.
Increased risk factors results in a greater
chance of falling. Risk factors are
categorized as intrinsic - such as advanced
age or a history of falls; or extrinsic - such as
tripping hazards in the home or if grab bars
are available to use.

To prevent falls, you can:

- Fix loose or uneven steps and handrails.
- Remove slippery rugs, or use double-sided tape or non-slip backing to secure the rugs to the floor.
- Clear floors and walkways of items that present a tripping hazard.
- Keep frequently used items on the lower shelves or countertops (all step-stools should have a grab-bar).
- Place a lamp close to the bed where it's easy to reach and install nightlights in outlets near the floor.
- Use a non-slip rubber mat or self-stick strips on shower/tub floors.
- Install grab bars next to and inside the tub, and next to the toilet.

Feeling Your Best

What Your Garden Gives Back

The other day, I was lying on the couch at home. I didn't want to do much; I was tired and, frankly, lazy. After sulking around the house, I went outside to walk through the garden. I spent about 10 minutes cleaning up mulch and pulling weeds and realized that my mood had shifted - the rest of my day looked brighter.

Researchers call this "Horticulture-Based Therapy". A fancy term with simple actions - pulling weeds, growing food, watching flowers bloom, and other horticulture activities is a natural therapy for our minds and bodies. Several scientific reviews have found that gardening activities have a positive impact on a range of mental health outcomes, such as depression and anxiety symptoms, stress, mood disturbance, and cognitive function.

The benefits of horticulture based therapy continue as we age. A 2024 umbrella review published in Systematic Reviews evaluated 40 studies which looked at the impact of gardening on well-being concluded that "horticulture-based therapy had a positive impact on the mental and physical well-being of people with dementia, mental disorders, those with physical long-term conditions, as well as older populations".

Caring for a garden requires us to move our bodies, the sun delivers a healthy dose of vitamin D, and the mental health benefits are numerous. On the days you don't want to do much, remember just 10 minutes of getting outside and getting your hands dirty can improve your day and your overall health!



Sources:

Pantiru et al. "The impact of gardening on well-being, mental health, and quality of life: an umbrella review and meta-analysis." *Systematic Reviews*. 2024

By Lauren Gammill
Horticulture & Natural Resources Agent
Frontier Extension
Kansas State University

LUNCH ON US!

July 21, 11:30 - 12:30:

Men's Health Over the Age of 65:
presented by **Dru Nichols, MD.**

Ottawa Family Physicians

Join Dr. Nichols for a practical conversation focused on men's health - common concerns, preventative, care, & long-term wellness after the age of 65. RSVP by Tuesday, July 14th
call 785.229.3530



Choosing Fruits When Living with Diabetes or Prediabetes

Summer is a great time to enjoy fresh, in-season produce, especially fruits. If you or someone you know is living with diabetes or prediabetes, you may wonder how these fruits can fit into a healthy eating plan.

Although fruits contain natural sugars and carbohydrates, they also provide vitamins, minerals, antioxidants, water, and fiber. These nutrients can help you stay hydrated, feel full longer, support healthy digestion, lower blood pressure, and better manage blood glucose levels.

Fruit can also satisfy a sweet craving and be a healthier alternative to desserts that contain added sugars and little to no fiber. Additionally, fruit can be a convenient snack option that is often more nutritious.

People who are living with diabetes or prediabetes can still enjoy fruit as part of a balanced diet. The key is moderation and portion control.

Examples of fruit portions that contain about 15 grams of carbohydrates include:

- 1 small piece of fresh fruit (baseball size)
- 1/2 cup (4 oz) of 100% fruit juice
- 1 cup of berries or chopped melon
- 2 tablespoons dried fruit
- 15 cherries or grapes

- Half of a banana
- 1/2 cup canned fruit in its own juice or water

The Dietary Guidelines for Americans recommend consuming at least two servings of fruit each day. Fruit comes in many forms – fresh, frozen, canned, dried, or juice. The American Diabetes Association offers the following tips:

- Add protein or healthy fat (like peanut butter with an apple) to help slow digestion.
- Choose canned fruit packed in water or in its own juice and with no added sugar.
- Use dried fruit in small amounts because – check the label for the serving size and amount of carbohydrates.
- Whole fruit is better than juice because it has more fiber.
- Treat jellies and jams like sugary condiments and use them sparingly – they will spike blood glucose.

Sources:

American Diabetes Association,
diabetes.org
Dietary Guidelines for Americans,
dietaryguidelines.gov

By Chelsea Richmond
Nutrition, Food Safety, and Health Agent
K-State Extension, Frontier District
Kansas State University



Feeling Your Best

Hydration: Your Best Defense Against Summer Heat

As we move into another Kansas summer, it's a good time to pause and check in on one of the simplest and most powerful ways to protect your health: staying hydrated. Water makes up 55–75% of the adult body, and it keeps everything running smoothly. It helps with digestion, temperature control, joint lubrication, cell function, and even removing waste from the body.

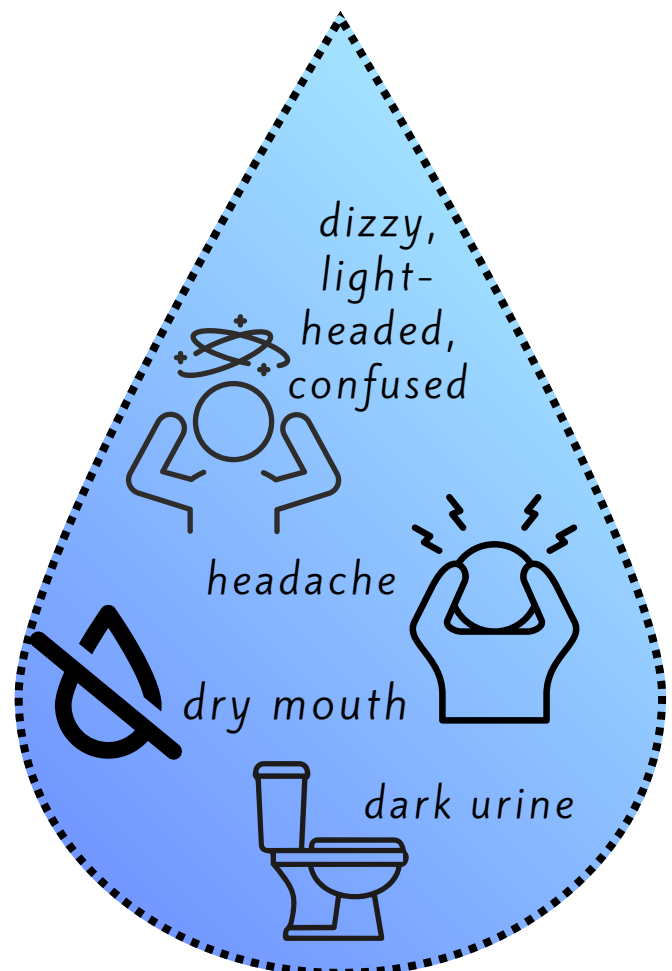
For older adults, staying hydrated becomes even more important. Hot, humid weather puts extra stress on the body, and seniors are at a higher risk for dehydration and heat-related illness. This isn't about doing anything "wrong" — it's simply how the body changes with age. As we get older, our bodies don't cool themselves as efficiently. We sweat less, our heart rate responds differently to heat, and many common medications — such as diuretics, blood pressure medicines, or antihistamines — can increase fluid loss. On top of that, the sense of thirst naturally declines with age. You may not feel thirsty until your body is already running low on fluids.

Dehydration can sneak up quietly. Early signs may include dark urine, dry mouth, headache, or feeling weak or light-headed. More serious dehydration can lead to confusion, constipation, urinary tract infections, heat exhaustion, or even heat stroke.

The good news is that small, steady habits make a big difference.

- Sip water throughout the day — not just when you feel thirsty.
- Enjoy hydrating foods like melon, berries, cucumbers, and soups.
- On very hot days, try to stay indoors between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m.
- Wear lightweight clothing.
- Spend time in air-conditioned spaces when you can.
- By taking simple steps and listening to your body, you can stay safe, comfortable, and healthy all summer long!

By Cassidy Collins
K-State Extension Coffey County
Family and Community Wellness Agent



Medicare News

IF THINKING ABOUT
ENROLLING IN MEDICARE
MAKES YOU FEEL LIKE
THIS...



THEN, COME TO OUR

NEW TO MEDICARE SEMINAR

Call ECKAAA at
785.242.7200
to register!

Seminars will be
held at the
ECKAAA office -
117 S. Main St.
Ottawa



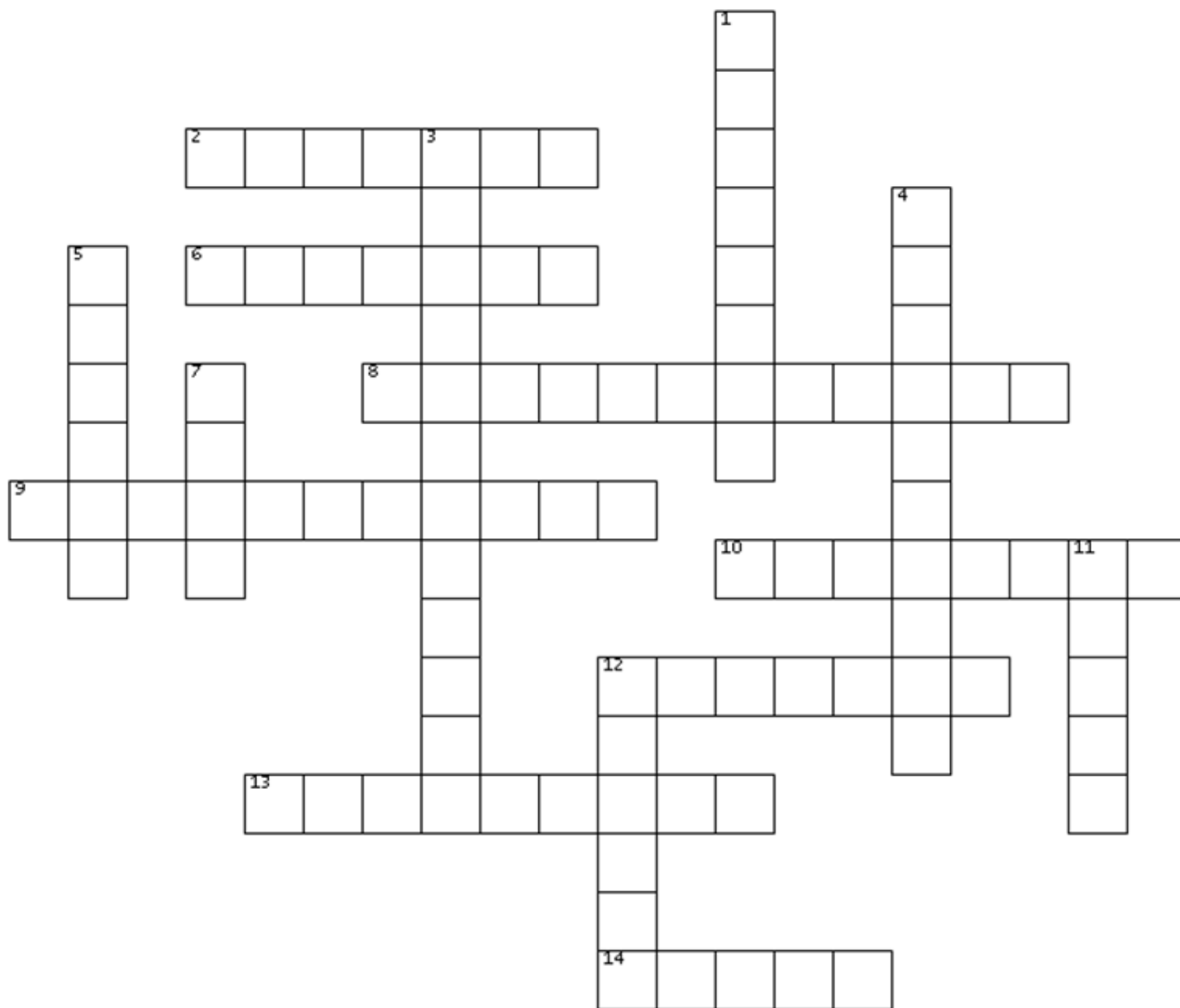
JULY 8TH
10:00

OCT. 14TH
10:00



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Scrambled: Games For Your Brain!



ACROSS

- 2. Statue in New York Harbor holding a torch
- 6. What the colonists fought to win
- 8. City where the Declaration was signed
- 9. — Document signed in 1776 announcing freedom
- 10. Body that approved independence in Philadelphia
- 12. One who loves and defends their country
- 13. Explosive sky show lighting up the night
- 14. National bird of the United States

DOWN

- 1. The original thirteen ____
- 3. — Colors of the American flag
- 4. First president and Revolutionary general
- 5. "The Star-Spangled ____"
- 7. Month of America's birthday
- 11. Fifty of these appear on the flag
- 12. A festive walk down a downtown street on July 4th



117 S. Main St.
Ottawa, KS