

GOLDEN MONTH

October 2026

Welcome to Golden Month - a 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: Donna Didde rediscovering her creative side at The Collective Heart.

hardly walk and talk.” Her world got very small, but she knew other widows had talked about needing a year to process the grief, so she focused on just getting through those first three months. It wasn’t easy, and 15 months in, she is still navigating grief and fear while slowly reclaiming her independence.

“I would like to not be so scared of everything. I want to be more open.”

At 77, Donna is learning to trust herself again, remembering who she is on her own and making daily decisions that move her forward toward more independence. With each new decision her world keeps expanding as she rediscovers interests she had nearly forgotten about (She loves going on archaeological digs and metal detecting!) and a focus on community groups for socializing, spirituality, exercising, and creativity.

“I’m excited about the rest of my life, but I’m also scared,” said Donna. “I would like to not be so scared of everything. I want to be more open.” What Donna doesn’t fully see yet, is that each decision she has made to continue putting herself out there weekly, to exercise faithfully at Silver Sneakers, meet friends for coffee,

For Ottawa natives, the name Didde signifies a multi-generational family business, a long-standing downtown staple for office supplies, furniture, signs and more. But for Donna Didde, it represents something much more personal: a family and a name she proudly became a part of over 52 years ago.

But after the death of her husband Gerry, Donna found herself frozen and unable to make many choices at all. “I was so consumed with missing him”, she said. “It was so physically and emotionally overwhelming that I could

play Mexican Train (Dominoes), or to attend the Live Music Art Jam where she sings, creates art, and occasionally dances, she has already become a more confident, independent woman who is conquering those fears.

Donna finds inspiration in other older women she sees throughout the community who are living independently and on their own terms. And while her calendar is full, she isn't simply looking for ways to stay busy. She is drawn to experiences that create community, preserve history, and culture, support others, and keep her connected. She isn't necessarily discovering new interests but remembering an old Donna who has been there all along.

She still struggles with fear at times but her small acts of independence matter. Driving farther, eating alone, choosing where she worships, making decisions about her house, attending community activities, and preparing to travel abroad may seem ordinary, but for Donna they're rebuilding confidence in her own judgment. She is learning that fear doesn't always get to make the decision and that she can move forward in spite of them rather than waiting for them to disappear first.

"I think there's more to me than I knew there was. I just want to enjoy what time I have left. To live my life because there's so many beautiful things to do."

By Dawnua Dawson,
Marketing & Outreach Specialist
ECKAAA

Looking Back: Ottawa

The Budweiser Clydesdales were escorted through Ottawa on Sep. 10th, to the delight of hundreds of locals lined up along Main Street.



Photo credit: Steele House Photography

New to Medicare?

We are hosting a New to Medicare presentation on October 14th at 10AM at 117 S. Main St, in Ottawa, KS. This event will help newly eligible Medicare beneficiaries who have questions.

Topics Covered:

- Enrollment dates, procedures, and avoiding penalties
- Understanding costs and what Medicare covers
- How Medicare coordinates with retiree, military, or federal benefits
- Comparing Medicare Advantage, Drug Plans, and Supplemental Plans

We recommend this presentation for anyone who will be new to Medicare or retiring within the next few months. **Registration is required due to space. Call 785-242-7200 to RSVP.**

UPCOMING EVENTS

FRI - 2	9:30 AM	Caregiver Support Meeting Coffey CO. - 410 W. Juniatta St, Burlington
WED - 7	2 PM	Chair Yoga for Arthritis Franklin CO. - 203 E. 4 th St, Ottawa
	3:30 PM	Community Resource Festival for Seniors Franklin CO. - 1418 S. Main St, Ottawa
FRI - 9	12 PM	Planning for Peace & Comfort ★ Miami CO. - 913 N. Pearl St, Paola
TUE - 13	1 PM	Caregiver Support Meeting Franklin CO. - 117 S. Main St, Ottawa
WED - 14	10 AM	New to Medicare Seminar ★ Franklin CO. - 117 S. Main St, Ottawa
	2 PM	Chair Yoga for Arthritis Franklin CO. - 203 E. 4 th St, Ottawa
THU - 15	All Day	Medicare Open Enrollment Period starts. Call 785-242-7200 to schedule an apt. for help ★
	12:30 PM	Memories: Life Stories Scrapbooking Miami CO. - Osawatomie Senior Center
WED - 21	11:30 AM & 12 PM	Birthday Congregate Meal Counties: Linn, ★ Anderson, Coffey, Franklin, Miami, & Osage RSVP 24 hours in advance. *Times vary
	2 PM	Chair Yoga for Arthritis Franklin CO. - 203 E. 4 th St, Ottawa
WED - 28	2:00 PM	Chair Yoga for Arthritis Franklin CO. - 203 E. 4 th St, Ottawa

★ 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

HOW TO ORDER GROCERIES ON A SMART PHONE

Walmart



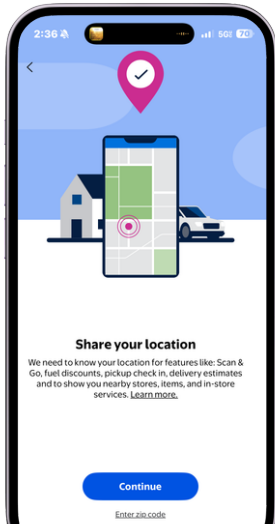
Step 1



DOWNLOAD & INSTALL THE WALMART APP FROM YOUR PHONE'S APP STORE

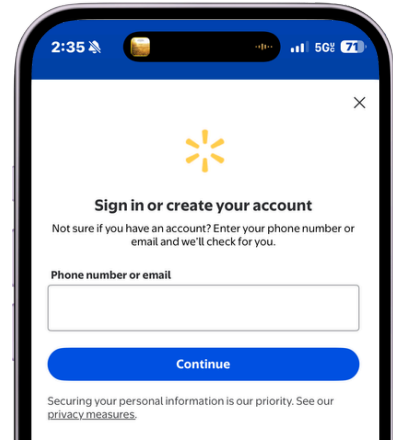
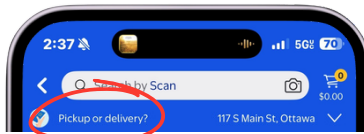
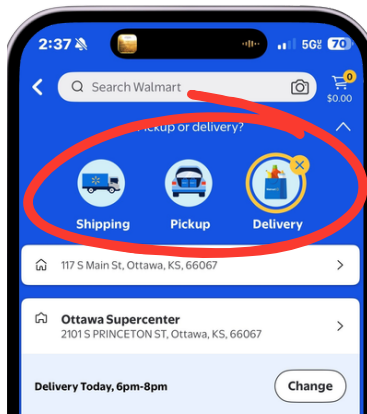
Step 2

OPEN APP - SIGN IN OR CREATE A NEW ACCOUNT WITH NAME, EMAIL & PASSWORD



Step 3

CLICK CONTINUE TO SHARE YOUR LOCATION AND CHOOSE YOUR PREFERRED WALMART
Or enter your zip code to pick your closest local store.



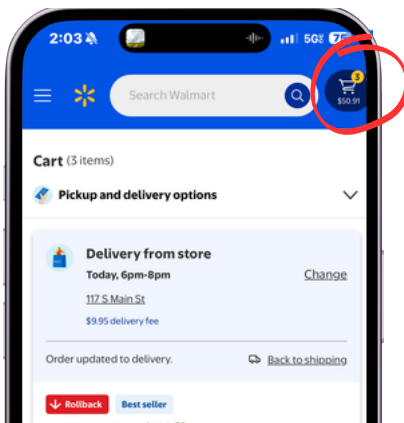
Step 4

CHOOSE SERVICE: PICKUP OR DELIVERY

Click on Pickup or Delivery, then choose 1 of 3 options. **Next-** Choose a pickup or delivery time and click **Reserve**. *Delivery costs extra.

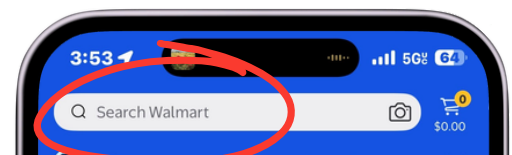
Step 5

SEARCH OR BROWSE FOR GROCERIES AND ADD ITEMS TO YOUR CART



Step 6

CLICK CART TO CHECKOUT - ENTER PAYMENT METHOD (CREDIT CARD, DEBIT, OR EBT) AND CLICK PLACE ORDER



Understanding Mental Health in Older Adults

Did you know that one in five Americans will have mental health challenges at some point in their lives? According to the National Institute of Mental Health, almost 15% of adults aged 50+ have some kind of mental health disorder. This number could double by 2030!

As people get older, many things can make mental health issues more likely. These include losing loved ones, feeling lonely, chronic illnesses, side effects from medicines, drinking alcohol, big life changes like retiring, and the stress of taking care of others.

Here are some tips to help improve your mental wellness:

- Get enough sleep:* Try to get 7 to 9 hours of sleep each night.
- Stay active:* Exercise can make you feel better and help your heart and lungs.
- Be social:* Older adults can feel lonely, which can lead to depression. Spending time with others is important.
- Eat healthy:* A balanced diet gives you more energy and helps you stay healthy.

Anxiety and depression are two common mental health issues for older adults. Severe anxiety can affect daily life, while depression makes people feel very sad for weeks or months. It's important to know that feeling depressed or very anxious is not a normal part of getting older. They are signs of problems that can be treated.

If you or someone you know feels this way, it's important to ask for help. Talk to a doctor, a friend, family, or a mental health professional. If you think about hurting yourself, please call the 988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline for support.

By Rebecca McFarland
District Director and Family and
Community Wellness Agent
K-State Extension, Frontier District

Stay Active, Stay Connected at the ORC

Staying active as we age is one of the best things we can do for our health, our independence, and our overall well-being. But being active doesn't have to mean going it alone—and it certainly doesn't have to be boring!

This month, we want to shine a spotlight on the **Silver Sneakers** class at the Ottawa Recreation Commission. For just \$1 per class, you can drop in Monday through Friday at either 8 or 9 a.m. at 705 W. 15th St.

For the past two years, Natalie K. has been leading the class and helping participants work on more than just physical strength. Her classes focus on strength, balance, memory, and recall, all important pieces of staying healthy and independent as we age.

And while the physical benefits are wonderful, ask anyone who attends, and they'll tell you that the social aspect is just as important! Our Silver Sneakers group celebrates birthdays, enjoys coffee dates, and even dresses up for special themes from time to time. There is plenty of laughter, encouragement, friendship and maybe a little friendly fun along the way!

By Amy Carlson
ORC Program Manager



Silver Sneakers is offered Mon-Fri at 8am and 9am for just \$1 at the ORC located at 705 W 15th St, Ottawa.



117 S. Main St.
Ottawa, KS