GOLDEN YEARS

March, April, May 2026

East Central Kansas
Area Agency on Aging

Serving - Anderson - Coffey - Franklin - Linn - Miami - Osage

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Greetings

In January of 2026 my walking partner and I took a hike on a very cold day as the first hike of our 36th year of walking together. We have walked 4-5 times a week year-round and for the last 30 years have always started at 5:30 a.m. There is usually nothing on our schedules at that time of day to keep us from going! During this time, we have solved a lot of problems, talked through world events, dealt with medical issues, watched our families change and bought a lot of walking shoes!

The key to any benefit of wellness is consistency and finding a good and reliable person or group to keep you consistent. She knows I am waiting for her, and I know she is waiting for me. We hold each other accountable, and we make it easier to hit the floor every morning at 5:00 a.m.

We hope this issue provides you information on how you can find the parts of wellness that help you be your best self!

Leslea, Director, ECKAAA

Welcome notes from Deb

I feel like spring is really when the new year starts. After weeks of clouds, the return of color to nature brings me back to life. Outside is where I want to be - tinkering with the chicken coop, attempting to get something (anything!) that I plant to grow, wandering about with the kids & dogs, and imagining all the possibilities of the future (which will definitely include baby goats!). In this issue, you'll explore the eight components of mental health. For me, caring for plants and animals touches every one of them—connecting me to nature, nurturing my spirit and emotions, keeping my body and mind active, and reminding me that the most meaningful things in life are often the simplest. I hope you are inspired to nourish your body, mind, and soul.

Brandi, Marketing & Outreach

May is Mental Health Awareness Month

What is Mental Health Awareness Month?

Mental Health Awareness Month, an annual observance founded by Mental Health America in 1949 to highlight the importance of mental wellbeing, educate the public, reduce stigma and promote support for those affected by mental health conditions. Each year, individuals and organizations come together to raise awareness and advocate for better mental health care and resources. (National Council for Mental Wellbeing)

Why is Mental Health Awareness Important?

Mental Health Awareness Month helps people recognize the ways mental illness impacts their lives and the lives of others. Recognition and education are important ways to remove the stigma associated with mental illness. Talking openly about mental health can reduce the misconceptions and can encourage those who are suffering to seek help and support.

It's important for caregivers, friends, and loved ones to understand the impact that mental health has on daily life. When people are better educated on these conditions, they can better support and help someone dealing with a mental health issue.

The Components of Mental Health

Emotional Wellness: Coping effectively with life's stressors and maintaining satisfying relationships.

Spiritual Wellness: Expanding your sense of purpose and meaning in life.

Intellectual Wellness: Recognizing your creative abilities and finding ways to expand your knowledge and skills.

Physical Wellness: Caring for your body through regular physical activity, nutrition and adequate sleep.

Environmental Wellness: Occupying pleasant, stimulating, and safe environments that support your well-being.

Financial Wellness: Feeling satisfied with your current and future financial situations.

Occupational Wellness: Finding personal satisfaction and enrichment through your work or volunteering.

Social Wellness: Developing a sense of connection, belonging, and a reliable support system.

*These dimensions are interdependent. Neglecting one often leads to problems in others, while **improving one can create a positive ripple effect** throughout your overall health.*

Your Emotional Wellness

The article “6 Mindfulness & Meditation Tips for Seniors & Older Adults” states mindfulness and meditation techniques support older adults by syncing the body and the mind to create a sense of calm. With regular mindfulness practice you may notice decreased stress, anxiety and pain, improved focus, memory, mood, and resilience, increased body awareness, and a stronger connection to the things really that matter - gratitude, presence, and closeness with others.

Calm.com lists the following techniques and practices as short, simple, and effective - without requiring strenuous focus or physical effort:

Breath-focused practices: Pay attention to your breathing without changing it. This can be done in any sitting, lying, or standing position. Even a few slow breaths can help the mind settle and ease stress.

Body awareness techniques: Try a body scan - in a lying or sitting positon, close your eyes and focus on your toes and feet. Slowly move up the body to your ankles, lower legs, knees, upper legs, hips, torso, fingers and hands, back, neck, head, and each feature on your face.

Loving-kindness meditation: This is a short, caring phrase that you repeat quietly to yourself. A simple option is “may I be happy, may I be healthy, may I live with ease. Adjust these words to better suit your individuality or situation. You can try integrating some slow, deep breaths as you repeat the phrase.

Sensory grounding: You can bring your attention back to the present moment by focusing on each of your senses. Name one (or more) things that you see, hear, smell, taste, and feel.

Light mindful movement: Mindful movement can include anything that brings your attention to your body without straining either one- chair exercises or yoga, simple stretches, walking, or any movement that you enjoy.

6 Mindfulness & Meditation Tips for Seniors & Older Adults. January 29. Calm.com.
6 mindfulness and meditation tips for seniors and older adults — Calm Blog

May I be happy, may I be healthy, may I live with ease.

Your Spiritual Wellness

In the article "Age and Spirituality: The Key to Holistic Wellbeing in Later Years", Elder Care Alliance states "those living in the most wisdom-filled days of their lives, cultivating spirituality is crucial to aging well and maintaining good physical and mental health. Here's how spirituality can positively impact aging adults:

It Provides Purpose - research shows that maintaining a strong spiritual core can help you find purpose in your life. A sense of purpose can decrease the likelihood of developing depression.

It Strengthens Relationships – adults that recognize the link between spirituality and aging tend to form stronger connections.

It Boosts Mental Health – engaging in spiritual practices can increase feelings of hope, peace, self-esteem, inner strength, and enhances the relationship with yourself and others.

Ways that you can nurture your spirituality include meditation & mindfulness practice, prayer or contemplation, connecting with nature, and practicing gratitude by acknowledging the positive aspects of your life.

It's easy to start a gratitude journal, all you need is a notebook.. Try the **3-2-1 method** below:

3 things I'm thankful for: _____

_____

2 things I'm looking forward to: _____

_____

1 thing I'd like to improve, make progress on, or complete:

_____

see pages...for guided meditations.

Your Intellectual Wellness

The National Institute on Aging defines cognitive health as the "ability to think, learn, and remember clearly." There are endless activities to keep your brain active, some popular options include BINGO, card games, puzzles (physical, number, and word), crosswords, word searches. See pages 14-16 for ways to keep not only your brain active, but your body & social life as well! Cognitive Health and Older Adults

Try finding all 8 components of mental health! (emotional, spiritual, physical, intellectual, environmental, financial, occupational, social)

A	X	C	L	A	X	K	N	L	S	S	N	D	N	N	L	X	L	M	F
L	F	U	N	X	Z	S	A	A	G	P	Z	L	W	A	T	A	U	C	F
R	T	W	L	U	W	C	E	U	S	Q	G	Y	I	P	I	N	A	P	F
G	H	S	T	H	I	X	M	T	G	E	B	C	V	C	D	U	S	T	L
N	X	F	N	S	P	T	O	C	U	K	O	R	N	K	M	M	R	A	D
E	E	N	Y	S	H	V	T	E	J	S	Y	A	X	Q	L	E	N	X	C
A	N	H	N	R	O	G	I	L	Y	R	N	A	D	J	W	O	I	F	K
U	P	V	H	F	X	H	O	L	V	I	B	H	W	M	I	K	O	L	P
N	Y	O	I	L	R	E	N	E	F	E	F	H	P	T	G	P	J	Y	V
G	T	W	U	R	S	Y	A	T	B	Y	C	O	A	G	W	F	B	Y	G
Y	N	O	N	I	O	R	L	N	S	U	D	P	R	R	H	K	A	Q	K
S	Z	Q	U	O	N	N	K	I	O	M	U	N	J	S	H	I	Z	F	R
N	P	I	A	Q	E	M	M	Z	K	C	L	H	O	O	M	Y	J	P	C
V	N	I	R	H	R	T	W	E	C	N	R	Z	A	Q	G	Q	D	F	N
U	O	L	R	T	C	E	K	O	N	S	H	X	Z	B	I	B	Y	P	C
H	B	T	X	I	Y	V	Q	R	I	T	A	K	Z	H	O	W	H	D	N
C	A	J	N	Q	T	P	F	G	W	W	A	D	X	R	Q	A	N	M	F
S	K	I	K	C	B	U	K	R	K	P	H	L	Y	A	J	S	O	O	I
Q	K	M	J	W	B	A	A	L	X	A	I	E	M	G	N	L	U	M	O
Z	P	F	S	O	J	Y	A	L	N	N	Z	D	D	O	T	D	M	B	B

See page...for brain games!

Your Physical Wellness

In the article “How Physical Activity Enhances Mental Health and Combats Loneliness in Older Adults”, the author states “as people age, maintaining both physical and mental well-being becomes increasingly important. While improving physical health is often the focus, the benefits of regular physical activity extend far beyond the body. For older adults, **engaging in exercise can significantly enhance mental health, reduce feelings of isolation, and improve overall quality of life.”**

Effects of exercise on mental health:

- release of endorphins, the body's natural "feel-good" chemicals.
- reduce stress, lift mood, and boost cognitive function.
- improve memory and delay the onset of age-related cognitive decline.
- prevent social isolation - exercising with friends in the community or joining a fitness group promotes social well-being.

Tips for Older Adults to Stay Active (and combat loneliness):

1. Try low-impact exercises such as gentle yoga, swimming, or walking.
2. Consider group activities - look for local senior centers or community groups offering exercise classes or walking clubs.
3. Be consistent - set a schedule to help you stay committed & connected.

How Physical Activity Enhances Mental Health and Combats Loneliness in Older Adults | Meals on Wheels Central Texas

May is National Arthritis Awareness Month

Arthritis is a condition that causes inflammation in the joints. Osteoarthritis is the most common and typically occurs in old age as the body naturally breaks down cartilage between the joints. This break down causes bone to rub together, causing pain, swelling, and loss of motion of the joint. Over time, these changes can affect the bones, tendons, and other joint tissues. However, you can help prevent and manage arthritis by exercising regularly, eating clean & maintaining a health weight. Low-impact exercises such as yoga and water aerobics are the best options to prevent further joint degeneration.

see pages 14-16 for ways to stay active in your county!

Your Environmental Wellness

Your environment impacts all 7 components of your mental health. Multiple studies have shown that **spending time in nature is one of the best things you can do for your wellbeing**. Going on a walk outdoors with a friend is a simple way to support not only your environmental wellness, but also your emotional, social, physical, spiritual, & intellectual wellness. Because walking is free, it also supports your financial wellbeing! When you can't go outdoors - bring nature indoors. Open the curtains for natural sunlight, open the windows for some fresh air, maybe adopt a house plant or two (which also improve indoor air quality!).

National Walking Day is April 2nd!

see pages 14-16 for physical activities & resources!

Your Financial Wellness

If you are experiencing positive financial wellness that means that overall, you feel secure and in control of your money. If you find yourself avoiding bank statements or bills, feeling significant guilt about using your money, or are obsessively monitoring your bank account, you may may be experiencing financial anxiety. A recent survey by AMFM Healthcare found that 87% of respondents have felt financial anxiety. Persistent financial worry can negatively impact every component of your mental health. **If you are losing sleep over money concerns, please visit one of these resources:**

- **Mental Health America - mhanational.org/finance**
- **Crisis Text Line - 🌐 Financial Stress and Anxiety Resources**
- **HelpGuide.org -**
  🌐 Coping with Financial Stress - HelpGuide.org

Your Occupational Wellness

The Wisconsin Institute on Healthy Aging defines occupational wellness as “the feeling of contribution or fulfillment from a job, volunteer work, or other. The belief that you’re making a positive impact on the organization, the community, and/or society as a whole. The best part - you don’t have to leave your home to make a difference. If you enjoy crafting, sewing, knitting, or working with your hands in general - there is an opportunity for you! Wisconsin Institute for Healthy Aging. (n.d.). *Age Well*. Retrieved 3/6/26 from, Age Well | WIHA .

- **Createtodonate.org** offers free tutorials and patterns to make items for cancer patients, NICU babies, elderly patients, and more!
- Sewing Labs is a Kansas City based organization keeps donations local - visit their website for simple sewing projects that benefit pediatric patients at St. Lukes, low-income senior living centers, and unhoused individuals throughout KC. **thesewinglabs.org**
- Midwest Missions provides health and hygiene kits to nonprofit organizations. Some of the kits request sewn items which include sweaters for babies, cloth bags, quilts, sleeping mats, and feminine hygiene items. **midwestmission.org**
- Local animal shelters are often in need of blankets, toys - check out “5 Easy Crafts to Make for Your Local Animal Shelter” this website provides simple instructions to make blankets, toys, and more! **wagwalking.com**

Your Social Wellness

In the article *Social Wellness and Seniors*, the Elder Care Alliance states that "social wellness centers on relationships and community. To experience happiness and a positive sense of well-being, seniors need to have good relationships with family and friends and feel connected to their community." Seniors who engage with a support network of family and friends are able to better manage stress, stay more active, recover from illness more quickly, and tend to live longer lives. While social isolation results in cognitive, emotional, & physical decline. Engaging in social activities positively contributes to all components of mental health! Elder Care Alliance. (March 3, 2024). *Social Wellness and Seniors*. Retrieved 3/6/26 from https://eldercarealliance.org/blog/social-wellness-and-seniors/.

Ways you can stay **SOCIAL**:

Silver Sneakers - attend a local exercise class.

Organized Outings - visit a local historical site, art gallery, or park with friends.

Card games - play a card game with a neighbor, friend, or group - check with your local library for senior groups.

Invite friends, family, or neighbors over for an activity - cooking, baking, gardening, or games...the options are endless!

Adult day programs - ask your local recreation or senior center about their senior programming options. You even might be able to attend a low-cost day trip with transportation provided.

Life-long Learning - meet a friend a the library, try an art or music class, or engage in a volunteer activity (see page 12 for opportunities!).

Senior Activities, Classes, & Resources in Franklin County

OTTAWA
RECREATION COMMISSION
705 W. 15th St.
785.242.1939

The Classics (50+)
Day & Overnight Trips

We enjoy 2 trips a month with our 50+ patrons! This is a great way to experience new forms of recreation while making new friends! Trips are published quarterly (most trips are via charter bus). Past trips have included tours of Arrowhead Stadium, Allen Field House, visiting the Clydesdale Horses, season tickets to the New Theatre, murder mysteries, ceramics, & more!

Adult & Senior Classes

- Pilates w/ Mimi
- Silver Sneakers
- Yoga Basics & Chair Yoga
- Upstairs Fitness Center &Open Gym
- Cell Phones 101
- Internet Safety
- A Night to Remember

ORCKS.org

FR CO Commission Chambers, 1418 S. Main St. Ottawa

APRIL 21, 2026 | WOMEN'S HEALTH OVER THE AGE OF 65

Bridget Abney, MD; AdventHealth Ottawa OBGYN

Learn how to stay healthy, active, and independent as you age! This session highlights common health changes, preventive care, and practical strategies to support physical, emotional, and overall well-being in later life.

RSVP by Tuesday, April 7 by calling 785-229-3530.

Questions? Call 785-229-3530 • www.franklincoks.org/health

Franklin COUNTY KANSAS

East Central Kansas Area Agency On Aging

Funded thru a grant from ECKAAA as funded by the Older Americans Act through the Kansas Department for Aging and Disability Services. ECKAAA does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, nationality, origin, sex, age, religious belief, or disability. If you feel you have been discriminated against, you have the right to file a complaint with the ECKAAA, 1-800-633-5621. (TDD: 1-800-766-3777)

Lunch n' Learn

Each Month!

OTTAWA MEMORIAL AUDITORIUM 1919

LIVE CONCERTS & EVENTS IN OTTAWA, KANSAS

OTTAWAMEMORIALAUDITORIUM.COM

April, May, June Events

- *Music Bingo (free, monthly!)*
- *Presentation: Women in Agriculture*
- *Duke Mason Band (benefit event for Hope House)*
- *Hank Thompson's Brazos Valley Boys*
- *Murder Mystery Dinner Theater*

Art Jam + Live Bluegrass Jam

Every Wed 5-8 pm Every Wed 6:30-8 pm

Bring your own ART to our weekly Art Jam, held in our Art Studio and meet other artists working on their own art. Great way to find new inspiration and make new friends, while listening to LIVE music.

Paint, craft, build, and create projects for only $5 EVERY FRIDAY!

the collective HeART Creative

204 S Main St. Ottawa, Kansas
(785) 248-4772
thecollectiveheartstore@gmail.com

STAINED GLASS, CANDLE MAKING, MOSAICS, KNITTING, CROCHETING, PAINTING PROJECTS, AND SO MUCH MORE!

Senior Activities, Classes, & Resources in Anderson & Coffey Counties

Garnett Senior Center
128 W. 5th Ave.
785.448.0065

- Meals served M-F 12PM
- Friendship Day: 1st Wed. of the month @ 12 p.m.
- Birthday Day: 3rd Wed. of the month @ 12 p.m.
- Pitch: Every Thurs. @ 6 p.m.

Prairie Spirit Trail State Park

The Prairie Spirit Trail State Park runs from Ottawa to Iola, offering plenty of recreation and enjoyment for birdwatchers, cyclists, walkers, joggers and anyone with a desire to explore the heartland.

- **Counties: Allen, Anderson, Franklin**
- Length: 51 miles
- Trail end points: W Tecumseh St. (Ottawa) and W Bruner St. (Iola)
- Trail surfaces: Asphalt, Crushed Stone

The Chamber Players Community Theater

Thelma Moore Community Playhouse
140 W. 5th Ave. Garnett, KS

- Tickets: Adults $25/Students $20
- Reservations: 785.304.16.83
- Tickets sell out FAST!

All the funny for half the money!

Garnett Public Library

Remember When Wednesdays
The 2nd Wednesday of each month – talk about the past and enjoy some tasty refreshments. Archer Room @ 10AM.

Burlington Recreation Center

1110 Shea St. Burlington, Kansas
620.364.8484

- **Monday Movies @ 1:30 p.m. (ongoing)** - several ladies have been watching a movie on Monday afternoons - come enjoy a heart warming, wholesome movie.
- **Tuesday Cards @ 1:00 p.m. (ongoing)** - enjoy card games and great conversations.

Indoor Pool Hours & Classes

Morning Water Aerobics (all fitness levels) $1/class

- easy on your joints
- a great way to gain fitness & flexibility
- work at your own pace
- enjoy the water & time with friends!

Mon., Wed., Fri. @ 8:30am

Mon., Wed., Fri. 5:15 - 7:00 am
Mon.-Fri. 8:30-10:00am
Mon.- Thurs. 3:30-7:30pm
Friday: 3:30–5:30 pm
Sat. & Sun. 2:00–5:30 pm

BINGO FOR A CAUSE

Support Floyd Lewis Foundation & enjoy BINGO every week @ Rock Creek County Club!

Every Wednesday
Doors Open 5:30 PM
BINGO @ 6:30 PM
304 N 16th St
Burlington, KS

Resources & activities - Linn, Miami, Osage

HIVE LIBRARY
connect • engage • transform

Mon, Wed & Fri

Chair Exercise
Mon, Wed, & Fri
11:30 a.m.
Join us for easy chair exercises. You can come for one day or everyday, we will be here no matter what!

HIVE Library at Pleasanton KS
752 Main St.
Pleasanton, Kansas 66075
► Library Hours
Mon - Fri: 10am - 5pm
► Phone
(913) 352-8554

MONTHLY!
MONDAY, APRIL 6TH
11:00-11:30 AM
Remembering
with Holly
LOUISBURG SENIOR CENTER
504 S. METCALF RD.

SHARE STORIES, PHOTOS, & MEMORABILIA
CONTACT: HGILLOGLY@LOUISBURGLIBRARY.ORG

Homebound Library Delivery

(913) 837-2217

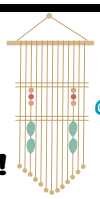
LOUISBURG library

The Louisburg Library provides outreach to community members who are unable to visit the library or do not have someone to pick up materials for them. **We will deliver materials** to residents in individual residences within the library district, senior living sites or nursing centers. These services are available for individuals or groups.

Paola Pathways
Connecting our Community

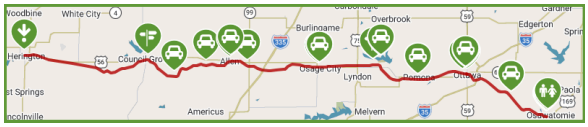
A multi-use trails system connecting the community of Paola, Kansas. The system links key locations throughout the city. Trails include a variety of surfaces and distances designed for walkers, runners, and bicyclists. In addition to seating at each trailhead, donor-sponsored benches are located along the trail to provide a place to sit and enjoy the scenery.

Pickleball
Wildcat activity center
7 S. Peoria St Louisburg, KS
Mon., Wed., Fri. 7:30 - 9:00 am
FREE! No Experience Req'd!



SENIOR CENTER EXPLORES:
MACRAME COASTER
@ LOUISBURG SENIOR CENTER
APRIL 24, 2026
10:00 – 11:30

FLINT HILLS TRAIL "MILE ZERO" OSAWATOMIE, KS



Resources & activities - Miami & Osage...guided meditations, gratitude