

# Amazing Aging!

**For Seniors and Those Who Love Them**

A free publication of the Jayhawk Area Agency on Aging, Inc.  
Advocacy, Action and Answers on Aging for Shawnee, Jefferson and Douglas Counties

WINTER 2020



## *Our Mission*

Jayhawk Area Agency on Aging, Inc. advocates on aging issues, builds community partnerships and implements programs within Shawnee, Jefferson, and Douglas counties to help seniors live independent and dignified lives.

- Is a 501(c)3 non-profit organization
- Is funded by tax-deductible contributions, federal funds, under state general funds and funds through local governments
- Does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, sex, national origin, age, religion, or disability



Georgie Stebbins, Perry, stands in front of a few of the tables holding trays of African violets which she grows and hybridizes. Story begins on page 3.

# A Message from Susan Harris, JAAA Executive Director

Welcome to 2020! It always amazes me how fast each year seems to fly by.

Medicare Open Enrollment has ended and the SHICK counselors have enjoyed a break over the holidays. Even though Open Enrollment is over, that does not mean our counselors are still not hard at work. Counselors are available year round to assist any Medicare Beneficiary with questions. Individuals coming onto Medicare as a new beneficiary appreciate the opportunity to talk with a trained counselor to review all the options available and get the information they need to make a decision regarding their



Susan Harris

Medicare coverage.

Jayhawk will begin the planning and allocation processes for Older American's Act services that will be funded during Fiscal Year 2021. This is a process that includes reviewing the needs of the communities we serve and making decisions regarding services that will be funded through the Older American's Act. Our allocations committee meets for three days reviewing proposals, looking at current services provided, and determining where the dollars Jayhawk receives under Older American's Act will best meet the needs of the communities we serve. This is not a simple

task as Jayhawk recognizes that there are far more needs than funding allows.

Jayhawk is also starting strategic planning process for current and future years. By 2030, one in five people in America will be 65 or older. With funding levels for services and supports not

increasing in proportion to the increased potential need, planning for services and supports for older adults will be vital. We will be seeking out input from provider agencies, older adults, caregivers, and others during this process as we look forward to the future.

## CHAMPSS Orientation Sessions

**Lawrence:** Lawrence Public Library, first Monday of each month at 2 p.m.

**February 3    March 2    April 6**

**Shawnee County:** JAAA, first Wednesday of each month at 1:30 p.m. Shawnee residents must call JAAA receptionist to register for an orientation.

**February 5    March 4    April 8**

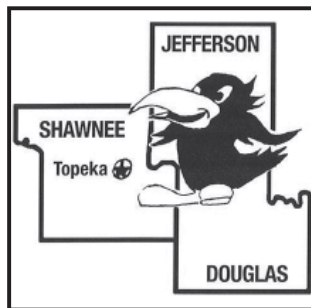
**Jefferson County:** residents may enroll at Topeka or Lawrence orientation sessions.

- Amazing Aging is a publication of Jayhawk Area Agency on Aging, Inc.
- Funded by annual contributions from readers like you, and advertising
- Copies distributed: 6,000+

You are encouraged to write us at:

Jayhawk Area Agency on Aging, Inc.  
2910 SW Topeka Blvd.  
Topeka, KS 66611-2121  
(800) 798-1366 or (785) 235-1367

Marsha Henry Goff, editor



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*Amazing Aging* strives to provide readers with the information they need to live independent and productive lives. We also seek to feature stories of seniors who are active as workers, volunteers or engaged in hobbies. If you know a senior you would like to see featured in a future issue, please contact editor Marsha Henry Goff at [mhgink@netscape.net](mailto:mhgink@netscape.net) or write to her in care of JAAA, 2910 SW Topeka Boulevard, Topeka, KS 66611.

# Georgie Stebbins' eye for beauty

By Marsha Henry Goff

Georgie Stebbins, 91, has an eye for beauty, a strong belief in hard work and a charming — often self-deprecating — sense of humor. Growing up on a farm with chores to perform from an early age made her a responsible and mature 18-year-old when she met her future husband at a dance in Oskaloosa in October, 1945. M.L. Stebbins, five and a half years older than Georgie, was a combat-wounded World War II veteran who fought through Italy with the 88th Infantry known as the “Blue Devils.”

Her father was reluctant at first to permit Georgie to date a soldier, but when he learned the young GI was the nephew of one of his good friends, he allowed the couple to date. Soon Merrill Lee Stebbins, known as Bood, was loved by her family and she by his. In January of 1946, Bood and his brother borrowed money to open a store in Perry which they named Stebbins Brothers Grocery. Commodities were still rationed and some foods — syrup, vanilla, shortening and more — were difficult to get. Meat shortages continued and in July, 1946, even bread was rationed.

Georgie and Bood married in September and in October, the young couple borrowed money and bought out Bood's brother's interest in the store. The wedding was on Saturday and on Monday, Georgie went to work at the store. “He always told people he proposed because he



Georgie stands in front of a few of the shelves containing the African violets she loves.

needed a clerk,” says Georgie with a grin. “We bought cream and eggs. I learned to candle eggs and test cream. There was a little old train called the puddle jumper that went through Perry so in the evening about 4:30 or 5:00 o'clock we took it to the puddle jumper and they took it to Topeka.”

But Bood did not intend to be a storekeeper forever. From the time he was a child and stood on a stump in his backyard and sold the old rooster over and over, his life's dream was to be an auctioneer. In 1949, he saw an ad for an auctioneering school in Decatur, Indiana, that he could attend using the

GI Bill. Georgie was only 21, but she ran the store during the three-week session Bood was away. As soon as he returned, he put her to work clerking for him as an auctioneer. Although she did not realize it, she was breaking a glass ceiling for women auction clerks.

“Women didn't clerk in those days and there were just a little handful of men who didn't treat me very good because they thought I was invading their territory. Most men treated me really, really good. If it rained, they'd come up with an umbrella or they'd offer me something to drink.”

Georgie and Bood were the

youngest merchants in Perry when they owned the store. Now she marvels that she is the only storekeeper from the 1940s still living. Perry Pride asked her to give a talk about their store. She complied with that request and still has her notes from that talk.

When the couple sold the store, Georgie went to work for the bank at Perry. Auctioneering was not a fulltime job so Bood continued as a custodian at the Perry grade school, a job he had held since 1946, and also drove a school bus. In an effort to build his auctioneering business Bood often worked at sales

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# Using your Medicare or Part D insurance is not always the cheapest way to go

By Marsha Henry Goff

We all know that prescription drugs are expensive. A savvy shopper also knows that the same drug is priced differently from one pharmacy to another. Sadly, it can be a lot of work to determine where you can find the cheapest price for the same medication. It shouldn't be that

hard. It isn't practical to call pharmacy after pharmacy shopping for the lowest price.

You frequently see ads for medical discount applications and wonder whether they are as advertised. I recently learned that Good Rx, a free discount program, can sometimes save you more money than using your Part D insurance to buy

prescription drugs. One asthma inhaler that was nearly \$60 out-of-pocket using insurance was only \$22 with Good Rx. When you can get the drug for less out-of-pocket money than your copay, why wouldn't you?

At my local Walmart pharmacy, a pharmacist told me that he tries to tell patients the drug they are purchasing is cheaper

with Good Rx or another similar product. "But sometimes," he admitted, "we are so busy and have such a long line waiting that I cannot take the time to show them the App." A local Walgreen's pharmacist says she, too, often tells people about Good Rx to save them money.

Even without Good Rx, sometimes paying cash is less expensive than paying the co-pay. Some insurance companies put a gag order on pharmacists and do not allow them to tell consumers the cash price, but this practice is fairly rare. Although change in Washington can be excruciatingly slow, as part of President Trump's blueprint for transparency in lowering the cost of pharmaceutical drugs, a recent White House directive requires pharmacists to tell customers the cash price *if* the customer asks.

We are conditioned to think that insurance is the cheapest way to go. It isn't always. JAAA Executive Director Susan Harris notes that a relative often pays a cash price for ER visits and minor surgeries and saves money over what he would be required to pay if he used his insurance. Because of that knowledge, she offers this advice: "It's important for folks who are looking at trying to control their health care costs to make sure they are asking their providers if there's any discount for cash. Simply ask, 'Is it less expensive if I don't use my insurance?'"

You might be surprised how much you can save.

## Perry-Lecompton High School's annual Veteran's Day Program with Gov. Laura Kelly and Col. Jarrod Frantz



Boy Scout Troops 88 and 89 served as Color Guard, Governor Kelly addresses the audience and the audience watches a video entitled "Thank you, veterans" showing the importance of honoring those who served. (Photos by Susan Warriner)

The annual USD 343 Perry-Lecompton Veterans Day program on November 11 featured Gov. Laura Kelly as a special guest speaker. Perry-Lecompton Veterans and active military and their spouses were honored before the program with a hot breakfast.

Gov. Kelly addressed the audience and also had the opportunity to visit with some of the veterans in attendance.

USAF Col. Jarrod Frantz also spoke to veterans and students. An alumnus of PLHS, he reminded those in attendance who listened intently that, "Most

of us go about our day-to-day lives and we take that for granted, and we worry about some of the more trivial things, and we forget what allows us to have that prosperous life and our freedom. It's our folks serving that are ready to lay down their lives to protect that freedom."

barns in Topeka and Lawrence for no pay just so people could hear his voice.

“The Perry people stood behind Bood his entire life,” Georgie says, “and they wanted to help him launch his new career. When a cattleman wanted to sell his herd, he picked Bood to auctioneer but wanted an older auctioneer with him so Skillet Skiles stepped in to help.” Soon confidence in Bood’s auctioneering skills had grown so much that by the time Georgie gave birth to their daughter Treva Jean in 1957, Bood asked her to, “Stay home and raise our daughter.” He worked at other jobs along with his auctioneering. He continued to drive the school bus and sold real estate for 25 years, first with Elmer Jackson in Topeka and later with Haverty and Hatfied in Lawrence.

As supportive as Georgie had been of Bood’s aspiration to become an auctioneer, Bood was equally supportive — and extremely proud — of Georgie’s interest and skill in growing African violets. He always had more confidence in Georgie and her many abilities than she had in herself.

Shortly after they moved into their home in 1951, Georgie bought a few African violets for the bay window, but the house grew so cold that winter that they did not survive. On a trip to California, she saw a miniature African violet with variegated leaves and double pink blossoms in a flower shop. “Of course I had to buy it and I brought it back from CA and had it for I don’t know how

many years but then stores like Gibson’s at Lawrence and grocery stores started selling African violets.”

Unfortunately, she did not know how to take care of them, nor did she know an expert she could consult. She joined the African Violet Society and subscribed to their magazine. Still, although the magazine provided a lot of growing information, it was confusing because while one article said to use a certain fertilizer, another article advised against using that same fertilizer. “At first I got real frustrated,” she says, “then I decided to use my own common sense and treat them the way I’d want to be treated.”

Georgie studied, experimented and gradually learned what she needed to know to grow beautiful potted African violets that thrive in trays sitting on shelves under lights in her basement. At one point, she had about 500 violets; now that number is around 300. “I lost about 200 African violets in the last couple of years. The centers got real small and unfortunately by the time you see that, they are too far gone to recover.” She learned that the pH (potential Hydrogen) in her water was too high. The pH for African violets should be between 6.8 and 7. When she tested her water using pH testing kits for fish tanks, she learned the pH was over 8. She treated the water with Epsom Salt which is what one uses for a high pH, while vinegar is used for a low pH.

Georgie has a system for keeping track of her violets. Yarn of any color designates her mother plants, G’s in front of the violet’s name indicates that she grew the plant from seed, and Lee’s

(her husband’s middle name) before the violet’s name means she hybridized or crossed the violet. Hybridizing — creating a new violet — is tedious work, but the results are often stunning. Her first effort using one parent ended up with nine baby plants, each a different color.

(Please see pages 6 and 7 for color photos of a few of Georgie’s African violets.)

She laughingly relates a story about a consignment auction one spring where she took some of her African violets for sale, but didn’t want buyers to know

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## Rick’s Wood Crafts 941 E 535 Road 785-840-8960

In the last issue of *Amazing Aging*, we mistakenly left out a photograph of Rick Harrell’s beautiful boxes lovingly-designed to hold a loved one’s ashes.

Rick also crafts cedar chests, tables, quilt racks, chairs, hobby horses, clocks and so much more. Browse his offerings in his Amish-built shop south of Clinton Lake in Douglas County.



# Georgie Stebbins

CONTINUED FROM PAGE THREE

beautiful African violets.” Boon — always proud of Georgie’s work — offered, “My wife grew them!” Another man exclaimed,

“Well, my wife would kill them.” After her violets sold, a woman asked her about the care they required and Georgie explained, adding, “It’s such a joy, but another thing is if you feel down or you feel sad or

you feel depressed, it will really bring you out of it.” A man walking by overheard her comment, turned around, walked back to her and pronounced, “You must be depressed a lot!”

Depressed is not a word one

would use to describe her; love is. Her eye for beauty is not only for her beautiful African violets but for the multiple flower beds she tends in spring, summer and fall. “I have all your old

CONTINUED ON PAGE SEVEN



**Lee's Super Duper** is an absolutely gorgeous violet that Georgie created by hybridization.



**This deep red African violet dubbed Tomahawk** is one of Georgie's mother plants and is designated as such by the yarn tied around the marker.



**Back in Time has fantasy blossoms**, which means that each blossom contains more than one color (i.e., a mixture of dark and light of the same color or even different colors).



**This violet hybridized by Georgie is named Lee's Dolly.** Both parents (Sapphire Halo and G's Treva Cross) are blue, but this lovely violet turned out to be pink.

# Georgie Stebbins

CONTINUED FROM PAGE SIX

fashioned cottage flowers, like coreopsis. I love coreopsis! Garden phlox. I love the garden phlox. Daylilies. I love daylilies.

Hollyhocks! I love hollyhocks. I love my yard work.”

She also loves her daughter, son-in-law and grandson C.J. and was thrilled to have them for Thanksgiving dinner at her home. “When C.J., a mechanic

who works for the state, told fellow-workers who were discussing how they spent the holiday that he went to Grandma’s and she cooked the dinner, they asked how old I was. One’s grandmother was 95, older than

I, but she was in a wheelchair. I am blessed and I know I’m blessed.”

Georgie Stebbins has discovered that hard work caring for the people and flowers she loves is the best way to live.



Georgie points to the different parts of a Chimara African violet. A chimera in mythology is a beast containing the parts of two or more different animals. In African violets, a chimera will have different color sections due to two different gene components growing side by side.



Blue Boy is the first named African violet. African violets may live for 50 or more years, some say indefinitely.



This stunning double-blossom Mindi Brooke violet has mosaic variegation which produces little streaks and splashes of color.



The Sapphire Halo violet boasts the distinctively beautiful Tommie Lou foliage. Clothespins are used to lower the leaves.

# Fear is sometimes love's defining moment

By Marsha Henry Goff

*This article was originally published in my Jest for Grins column in the Lawrence Journal-World, but I think readers might enjoy a little humor about love near Valentine's Day. And, yes, my husband actually did drop a snake on me in a silo. With two sons, it wasn't the last snake I'd see ... or not see. More than once, my young snake geeks would ask, "Mom, have you seen my snake?" as they searched for a tiny garter snake or not-so-tiny 14 foot nose-to-tail Burmese python on the loose. And yet I loved them all ... husband and kids, I mean, not the snakes. —MHG*

Valentine's Day can be defined with a word of one syllable: LOVE! But defining the emotion of love is considerably more difficult. I personally have always thought that love is marrying someone even after they've dropped a snake on you. It happened to me. I was 15 and madly in puppy love with Ray, who — lacking etchings — was proudly showing me the new silo his parents had built on their farm west of town.

As we stood inside the empty silo, I noticed a bird nest sitting on the rung of a built-in ladder leading up to the rounded top. "Hey," I said to Ray, "why don't you climb up and see if there are any baby birds in the nest?"

Ray scaled the ladder, reached over his head into the nest and pulled out a yard-long black-snake. I learned two important lessons that day. First, Ray will hold a snake about as long as Minnie Pearl's brother will hold

a hot horseshoe. Second, when someone drops a snake on you in a silo, there's no place to run except in tight circles.

I know that many women make it a policy not to marry any man who drops a snake on them. But I obviously will, so that is love to me.

Love to my friend Darlene is not killing her husband when she found out that he had squirreled away several hundred dollars of "hide-out" money. Don't ask me how she discovered his stash — I promised not to tell — however I have a strong suspicion that love to her husband is staying married to someone who sneaks a peek inside his billfold.

Love to Mom was not getting a divorce or hiring a hitman when Dad accepted a Cessna 140 in payment of a legal fee. The family had lots of uses for the money and no use at all — according to Mom — for an airplane. In all the years Dad owned that plane,

Mom, deathly afraid to fly, never got within 50 feet of it. "I'll fly with you when I can keep one foot on the ground!" she promised Dad. And she was as good

as her word. But my sisters and I frequently flew with Dad because Mom decided that — while the plane would certainly crash if she were a passenger — it wouldn't crash with her husband and kids in it.

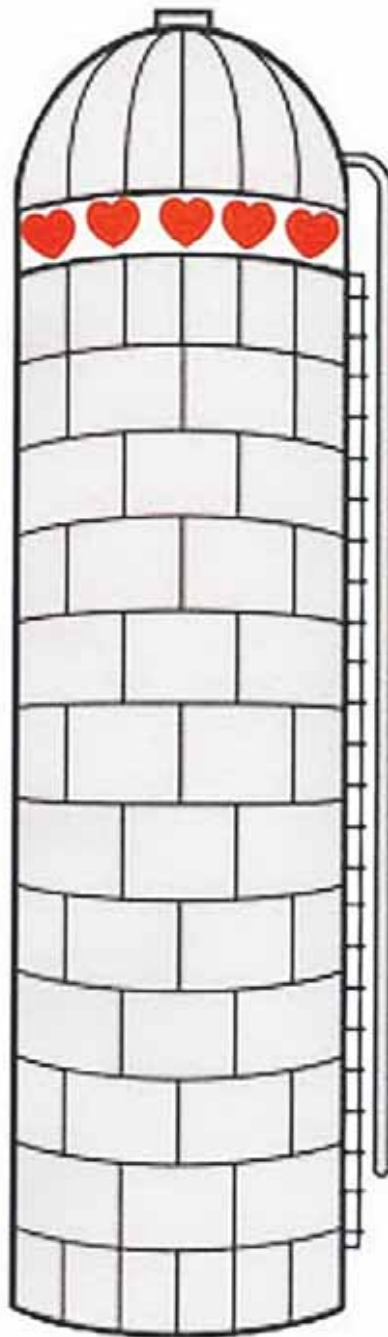
I've always believed that to my Grandma Maude, love was crossing the Cimarron River astride a horse after a flood washed out the bridge. She and Grandpa Jake forded the river on horses in the morning, then she led back his mount — needed for farm work during the day — while Grandpa walked the remaining mile to town where he taught school and moonlighted as a barber. The fording process was repeated in reverse at night, often in the dark. Grandma crossed the river on horseback four times a day for many months. Now that

may not seem like love to you, but consider this: Grandma Maude — as fearful of water as Mom was of airplanes — never learned to swim.

I have always thought that the grandest evidence of love was expressed by King Edward VIII when he gave up his kingdom to marry the woman he loved. That is simply a gesture so romantic that it cannot be topped. But my friend Barb was the recipient of the most romantic gesture I've heard of recently. While she and her husband of less than a year were dating, he asked if she liked roses and Barb explained that she liked carnations better because they lasted longer. When he invited her to dinner at his home a few evenings later, almost every room contained huge vases of carnations! I'm pretty sure Barb couldn't have felt more cherished if Dave had abdicated a throne for her.

Still, it's been my experience that while men will show love, most are not interested in talking about or analyzing it — so it is a wise woman who can recognize love when she sees it. The best example I have of Ray's love is that he spent eight hours one August day traipsing over the Custer Battleground with me while I searched for markers of various cavalrymen who died there. It was hot and dusty and I suffered one of the worst sunburns of my life, but — although signs warned visitors to watch out for them — Ray didn't encounter a single snake. As far as I'm concerned, I still owe him one!

Happy Valentine's Day!





# **JAAA hosts free AARP Tax Preparation**

**Call 785-235-1367 now for an appointment!**

**Volunteers will prepare Federal Income Tax Returns and State Returns including the Homestead Credit.**

**AARP volunteers will begin preparing taxes on Monday, February 3.**

**Appointments on Mondays and Tuesdays only.  
Make your appointment now as slots fill up fast.**

**Volunteers will NOT prepare:**  
**Schedule C — Profit or Loss from Business with expenses in excess of \$25,000;**  
**Complicated & advanced Schedule D — Capitol Gains & Losses;**  
**Schedule E — Rents & Royalties (prepared only at site discretion);**  
**Form SS-5 — Requests for Social Security Number;**  
**Form 8615 — Minor's Investment Income; and**  
**Returns for clients currently involved in a bankruptcy proceeding (prepared only at site discretion).**



*Shawnee, Jefferson & Douglas Countie.*

# Senior Resource Center of Douglas County offers transportation options to Eudora and Lecompton seniors

By Marsha Henry Goff

Living in a small town near Lawrence can be both wonderful and challenging for seniors. On the one hand, a smaller community with a slower pace and friends who have known you for decades is comfortable for many; on the other hand, with no municipal transportation, if family and friends are not available to take seniors who no longer drive to the store or medical appointments — especially if the latter are in Lawrence — the location is challenging indeed.

The Senior Resource Center of Douglas County is hoping to ease that challenge by providing Eudora with a van driven by volunteers who will take seniors 60 and older for shopping, medical visits or hair appointments any place in Douglas County from 7:00 a.m. to 3:30 p.m., Monday through Friday. Eudora seniors may request a ride from Eudora Senior Wheels by calling 785-727-7876. There is no set charge for rides, but seniors are asked to contribute according to their ability to pay.

The more drivers who volunteer and complete the required training, the more rides the service can offer. Those interested in volunteering should call Heidi Briery, Senior Resource Center transportation services director, at 785-727-7876. Volunteering as a driver is a hands-on-the-wheel and rewarding way to help your fellow citizens.

The transportation program

in Eudora is patterned after the program that has been in place and worked effectively in Baldwin since 2012. When Baldwin City Senior Wheels started, Baldwin City government supplied \$1,500. In addition to supplying the vehicle, The Senior Resource Center will cover the cost of fuel, vehicle maintenance and insurance for the Eudora van and has not yet requested money from Eudora city commissioners although one member of the commission suggests that she and other commissioners might be receptive to such a request.

Megan Poindexter, Senior Resource Center Executive Director, says that they recognized the need for transportation and “have been working on this for some time.”

SRC has also recognized the need for transportation in Lecompton and on January 7, 2020, the Lecompton Shopping Shuttle was introduced. The eight-passenger vehicle transports Lecompton seniors to the Dillon’s and Walmart stores at Sixth and Wakarusa in Lawrence. The bus departs from the Lecompton United Methodist Church, 402 Elmore Street, at 10 a.m. on the second Tuesday of each month. If demand is sufficient, a second trip will be added.

The Shopping Shuttle service is offered to Lecompton seniors because the community has no grocery store. Round-trip fee is \$10. Seniors may reserve a ride by calling 785-727-7876.



## JAAA gets around! Look for us!

### Caregivers' Support Groups

**Baldwin Methodist Church**, first Wednesday of each month, 1 p.m. - 2 p.m.

**February 5 March 4 April 1**

**Topeka/Shawnee Library**, second Monday of each month, 3:30 p.m. - 4:30 p.m.

**February 9 March 9 April 13**

**JAAA**, third Friday of each month, 12:00 noon - 1:00 p.m.

**February 21 March 20 April 17**

### Events and Presentations

**Medicare Monday**, we'll answer your Medicare questions, Topeka Public Library, 1 p.m. - 3 p.m.

**February 3 March 2 April 6**

**Do It Yourself Medicare Part D**, Topeka Public Library, third Monday of each month 1:00 p.m.

**February 17 March 16 April 20**

**Grey Wolves in Meriden**, Meriden United Methodist Church, third Tuesday of each month, 11 a.m.

**February 18 March 17 April 21**

**Medicare Quarterly Evening**, Topeka Public Library, 6:00 p.m. on **April 13**

# Caregiver Support

## *Boundaries*

By Michele Dillon

JAAA ADRC Supervisor

A lot of caregivers come into my office and tell me that mom/dad say they don't need any help and won't accept any. As we continue the conversation I discover that they don't need any help because the kids are helping them with their day to day affairs.

Is your loved one truly independent? Are they independent because you are setting up their meds and appointments; taking them to appointments and the grocery store and making meals? If so, they are truly not independent. You need to have a discussion with them about your time and set up some boundaries. If they know you are not available they would be more receptive to outside help.

The conversation might go something like, "Mom I'm not able to help you as much as I have in the past." If it will help make a list of the things you do so they can visually see what is you provide. If they still insist they don't need help, and they are competent to make decisions then truly step away. They are adults and can make their own decisions. You are not responsible for them. At this point, they will realize that they can't do it. You can come back and help them set up some assistance by reassuring them that bringing outside help in is a way to keep them independent at home and continuing to deny they need help will get them in long term care much faster. A

lot of the older generations are in the mindset that as soon as a professional comes in that means they are going to be put in a home when, in actuality it's the exact opposite.

The experts at Jayhawk Area Agency are here to assist you in the journey. We can help with the conversation with your loved one. We can help discuss the cost effectiveness of staying home and help develop a plan of care for maximum financial savings. Some services cost minimally for someone else to take over tasks like medication set-up or grocery delivery. Other services like Home care can be a bit more expensive but we can assist you in figuring out the times to

use them. They might only need help in the morning and evening so paying for 24 hour nursing care doesn't make sense and is not cost effective.

We can also help narrow down the list of who provides the service based on hours needed and what you are looking for. We don't refer, we just provide some Options counseling so you can make informed choice.

My final thought for caregivers is this. Please do not dictate to your loved one what they need to do. They should always have the final say in their own care. Even when dementia is a factor allow choice as much as possible. The more you control them the more push back you will receive. It can be a big relief to loved ones if you ask, "What do you want to do?" or "What do you think?"



Michele Dillon

## 15th Annual Lawrence Area Partners in Aging

### RESOURCE FAIR FOR SENIORS

Tuesday, March 10, 2020 from 10 a.m.-2 p.m.  
Sports Pavilion at Rock Chalk Park

- FREE! No cost to attend!
- Freebies, handouts, brochures.
- Exhibits featuring a wide range of businesses and organizations.
- Drawings for grocery store gift cards  
Courtesy of LAPA.
- Many vendor giveaways.

And much, much more from local businesses and organizations that serve seniors in Douglas County!



This is the 15th annual event that seniors and their caregivers will be talking about all year. Don't miss it!  
For more information, call 785-832-0754  
and ask for Michele Dillon or email  
[LawrenceAreaPartnersinAging@gmail.com](mailto:LawrenceAreaPartnersinAging@gmail.com)

# Compromise on the expansion of Medicaid is a win-win

By Marsha Henry Goff

Everyone wins when Republican and Democrat officeholders work together for the common good. That appears to be the case in Kansas where Democrat Governor Laura Kelly and Republican Senate Majority Leader Jim Denning have reached a compromise on a plan to expand the Medicaid program in Kansas.

The compromise gives Gov. Kelly the expansion of Medicaid covering an estimated 150,000 people she has long-desired while giving Denning a program that he proposes to decrease private health insurance premiums that would make it less likely people will drop current private plans for Medicaid.

Because bipartisan majorities in the Kansas House and Senate support Medicaid expansion, the compromise bill is likely to pass. While Denning originally

proposed increasing tobacco taxes to pay for his proposal, the compromise instead gives the state a year to devise a premium-reduction program and drops the tobacco tax increase.

"Compromise is hard. It's messy and it's slow, but it is so worth it," Kelly told expansion supporters. She explained that the compromise would not automatically translate into a bill signing, but said she was optimistic that it would. Denning added, "In the spirit of compromise, we have a really good, complete plan."

Under the new expansion proposal Medicaid coverage would be extended on January 1, 2021, to Kansas residents earning up to 138% of the federal poverty level or \$29,435 for

a family of three. It would allow the state to charge new Medicaid participants a premium of up to \$25 per individual and \$100 per family and would ask hospitals, which would economically benefit by the expansion of Medicaid, to kick in \$35 million a year to cover some of the state's costs. Kansas taxpayers pay 40 percent of Medicaid costs while the federal government uses funds collected in taxes to cover 60 percent of the cost of the Medicaid program.

Kansas' current Medicaid program covers more than 341,000 low-income elderly and disabled individuals at the cost of \$3.8 billion annually. Gov. Kelly says the expansion would cover an additional 150,000 although the nonpartisan, nonprofit

Kansas Health Institute says it would cover about 130,000 more people but projects that about 55,000 of them would switch to Medicaid from private insurance.

Senate President Susan Wagle worries the plan will expand a "broken system" and will not address rising health insurance premiums. Some GOP conservatives believe a work requirement should be imposed on those Medicare beneficiaries who are able to work. While not including a work requirement for the able-bodied, the compromise does incorporate Denning's suggestion for a "robust" program that would refer Medicaid recipients to services to assist them in finding and training for jobs.

Call Kevin at  
(785) 841-9417  
to place your  
display ad in  
the SPRING  
2020 issue  
of Amazing  
Aging!  
The deadline is  
April 15.

Celebrating  
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