

# 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 2026**



## **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



**Lois Van Liew paints a beautiful world!  
Please see story on page 3.**

# A Message from Susan Harris, JAAA Executive Director

Welcome to 2026, Jayhawk Area Agency on Aging's 50th anniversary, five decades of supporting older adults, caregivers, and families right here in our community. Jayhawk was incorporated in September of 1976, and we are excited to spend 2026 celebrating our 50th anniversary. For 50 years JAAA has helped people age with dignity, independence, and connection.

Jayhawk Area Agency on Aging helps people remain independent, supported, and safe as they age. That includes addressing needs related to nutrition, transportation, caregiver support, education, and connection to essential services within the community across the three



**Susan Harris**

counties we serve, Shawnee, Jefferson, and Douglas Counties in Kansas. Aging affects every family, whether you are an older adult today or a caregiver tomorrow. JAAA is a part of the fabric of our community,

working every day to support local older adults, their caregivers and families. We don't just provide services, or act as the funding conduit for services—we build relationships that strengthen communities. Behind every program is a real

person—a neighbor, a parent, a grandparent—our goal is quality of life not just services.

This anniversary isn't just about looking back; it's about preparing for the future. As people live longer, needs are

becoming more complex, and we are constantly evolving to meet them. We wouldn't be here without our staff, volunteers, partners and community support. This anniversary belongs to everyone who has been part of our journey.

We're celebrating 50 years of services and the countless lives touched in our communities. Fifty years strong, and our commitment to older adults and families continues every day. We're honoring our past, celebrating our present, and looking forward to supporting the next generations of older adults.

As part of our anniversary celebrations, we are honored to rename our Guardian Angel fund to the Betty Wade Guardian Angel Fund, in honor of a long-term staff member that always had the mission of Jayhawk at the forefront of her work at Jayhawk. The Guardian Angel fund is a fund that can be utilized to help older adults and their caregiv-

ers to purchase items or equipment to help older adults and their caregivers that can not be obtained through other means. Betty Wade maintained and was involved in all the purchases making sure that the funds were spent appropriately for the needs of the individuals receiving help. We honor the memory of Betty, by naming the Guardian Angel fund after her. Her service to Jayhawk Area Agency on Aging will not be forgotten and her commitment to helping older adults will continue to be a guiding force at Jayhawk.

Jayhawk Area Agency on Aging has several events planned as part of our Golden Anniversary, and we hope that you and your family can join us as we celebrate 50 years of service to the community. Stay tuned and check out our website, [www.jhawkaaa.org/event-list](http://www.jhawkaaa.org/event-list) for more information about all of these events!

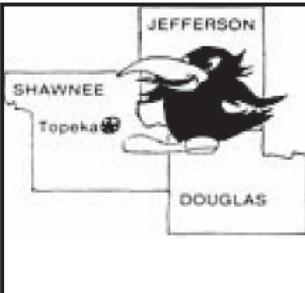
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- Amazing Aging is a publication of Jayhawk Area Agency on Aging, Inc.
- Funded by annual contributions from readers like you, and advertising
- Copies distributed: 6,000+

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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Jayhawk Area Agency on Aging does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, age, or handicap. If you feel you have been discriminated against, you have a right to file a complaint with the Agency. In accordance with ADA regulations, every effort will be made to accommodate people with disabilities. If you need special assistance, please call **Susan Harris** at Jayhawk Area Agency on Aging, Inc.

**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.

# Lois Van Liew paints a beautiful world!

By Marsha Henry Goff

"If it doesn't move, I paint it. Sit there long enough and you'll be in a painting," states Lois Van Liew, a prolific award-winning artist who lives in Topeka. She will not attempt to estimate the number of paintings she has done, saying there are "too many to count," but a conservative estimate is that she has painted many thousands because of her early start as an artist.

By the time she was 13, she was working at Centron Studios in Lawrence where she did animation in what she says was "a very old-fashioned procedure" in pre-computer days. At that same young age she painted *First Snow* in 1951, a watercolor of a neighbor's house in Lawrence. She presented that painting to her neighbor and was surprised over 70 years later to be contacted by a man in

Arizona who had purchased the painting and returned it to her. "I think he bought it for the frame," Lois explains. Perhaps, but there had to be something special about the painting that made him want to find the artist and return the work to her.

As a very young child, her mother provided her with a silver metal pencil and paper to keep her entertained — and quiet — during church services. None of that early work was saved but she always remembered "the feel of drawing" and still has the pencil. She credits her art teachers at Lawrence High School and the University of Kansas for helping her hone her craft. Although the late Elden Tefft, an internationally-known sculptor who taught at KU, encouraged her to continue in that art form, she did not with the exception of some ice sculptures she carved on a lake in Wis-



Lois poses with Topeka Mayor Michael Padilla who presented her with a certificate of appreciation for her paintings which hung in the mayor's office.

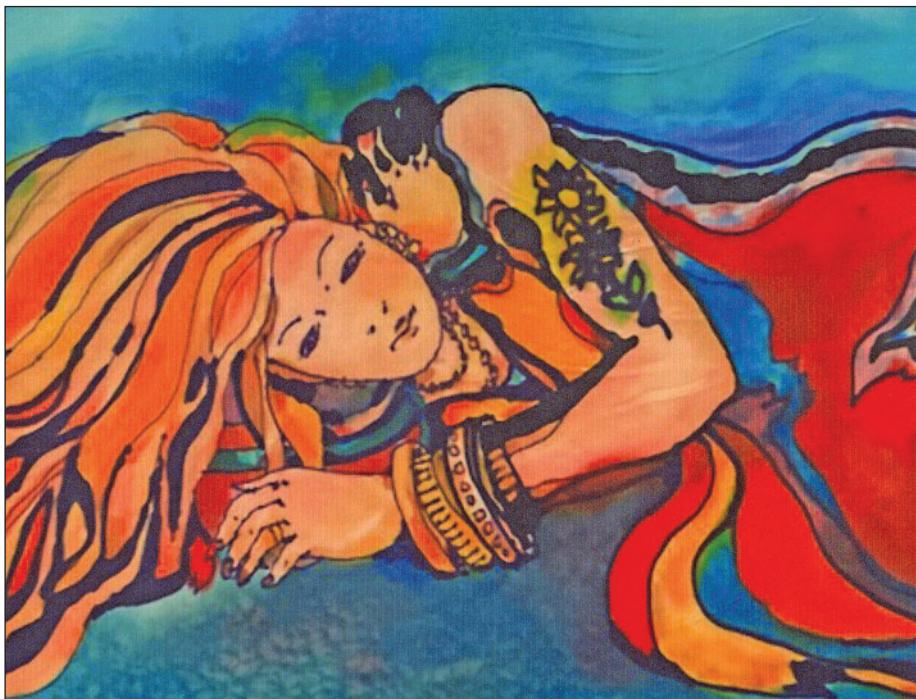
consin. She mentions carving an ice maiden full of rainbows and likes to think that when the sculpture melted, "she went up into the heavens and came back down to bless the earth with water."

For four years after graduating from KU, she taught art to high school students in Kansas City during the day and worked on her own paintings at night. That is a

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Lois poses by her painting *Music and Memory* which won Best of Show in a juried exhibit at NOTO Arts Center.



*Cultural Prism* was a silk painting in "A Rainbow Salute" exhibit in the Cloister Gallery at Grace Cathedral.

# Homestead Property Tax refunds: What you need to know

By Marsha Henry Goff

Senator Tom Holland is no longer in the Kansas Legislature but he did more than most to help seniors who have been hard hit with high property taxes with his bill K-40SVR that freezes the property taxes on their homes during the base year which is when the claimants becomes eligible for the refund. That occurs when the claimant is 65 or older for all of the base year or a disabled veteran whose total income, including 50 percent of Social Security and SSI benefits, is \$53,600 or less and whose home is appraised no higher than \$350,000 in the base year.

Holland, recognizing that Kansas real estate property taxes increase by leaps and bounds, stipulated that the property owner is still eligible even if the appraised property value rises to over \$350,000 after the base year is set. Before he left the legislature, he tried to adjust the appraised value to \$500,000 but the bill was never brought to a vote. Because the property tax you paid in your base year is frozen, you simply subtract that amount from the property tax you pay in the current year, submit Form K-40 SVR and the state refunds the difference.

For over a decade, I have used TurboTax to figure our income tax. For the 2023 tax year, I was aware of the K-40SVR refund and knew I met the qualifications. I also qualified the previous year

but did not know about K-40SVR and accepted TurboTax's judgment that I did not qualify for any Homestead claim. I called TurboTax to tell them their software was incorrect and that they were not asking the right question. The next year Turbo Tax still tried to shut out me and many other TurboTax-using qualifying seniors thereby denying us the tax savings to which we were entitled.

My frozen real estate property taxes are still too high, in my opinion, because they are just shy of \$500 a month, making me realize the truth of the statement by a legislator's father who said that we do not own our homes, but just rent them from the county. The only real cure to lower taxes is to elect county and city commissioners, state legislators and governors who do not spend so profligately. Other people's money is far too easy to spend.

Few people qualify for the best homestead refund dubbed Safe Senior (K-40PT) which refunds up to 75 percent of property tax paid each year. To qualify you must either be 65 the entire year, have a total household income, including all Social Security and SSI benefits, of \$23,700 or less and your home must be appraised at \$350,000 or less. In recent years, the statewide average refund has been between \$1,165 and \$1,285.

The Homestead Refund

(K-40H) is the least helpful to seniors. Although the maximum refund is limited to \$700, the average refund has been between \$220 and \$250. To qualify, you must be at least 55 years old for the entire year, or blind or totally and permanently disabled, or have a dependent child living in the home who is 18 or under the entire year. Total household income must be \$40,500 or less, with 50 percent of Social Security and SSI benefits included in the income calculation and your home must be appraised at \$350,000 or less.

Use the following chart when doing your taxes or show it to the person who prepares your taxes. In one case, an accountant preparing a senior's taxes did not know of K-40SVR. Make sure your preparer knows about all three programs.

## Seniors or Disabled Veterans (K-40SVR)

- At least 65 years old for all of 2023 or a disabled veteran; the surviving spouse of a claimant receiving this benefit at the time of the claimant's death will be eligible to continue receiving this benefit until the surviving spouse remarries.

- Total household income, including 50 percent of Social Security and SSI benefits, is \$53,600 or less;

- The house cannot be appraised higher than \$350,000 in the base year, but the claimant remains eligible if the valuation rises;

- This is the newest property tax refund option, enacted in 2022 to freeze property taxes at the base year. The base year is when the claimant becomes eligible for this refund. Those filing in the 2022 tax year used 2021 as the base year and subtracted the taxes paid in 2021 from taxes paid in 2022 to determine the refund. The claimant's base year continues into future tax years. The homeowner with a 2021 base year would use that when filing 2025 taxes. If a claimant moves, his base year is reset.

## SAFESR (K-40PT)

- At least 65 years old for all of 2023;
- Total household income, including all Social Security and SSI benefits, is \$23,700 or less;
- The home is appraised at \$350,000 or less;

- The SAFESR property tax refund is up to 75 percent of taxes. The statewide average refund has been between \$1,165 and \$1,285 in recent years. Fewer seniors qualify for this refund than for the Homestead Refund.

## Homestead Refund (K-40H)

- At least 55 years old all of 2023, or blind or totally and permanently disabled, or has a dependent child living in the home and under 18 the whole year;
- Total household income is \$40,500 or less, with 50 percent of Social Security and SSI

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benefits included in the income calculation;

- The home is appraised at \$350,000 or less;
- A sliding scale determines the percentage of the refund, based on income. The maximum refund is \$700. The statewide average refund under this program has been between \$220 and \$250 in recent years.

For many seniors, the homes they have owned for decades are their biggest — and sometimes only — nest egg. I once watched seniors beg Douglas County commissioners to lower their

property taxes, saying they were forcing them to leave the homes they loved. The commissioners were unmoved, I assume because they knew seniors forced to sell their homes because of confiscatory property taxes could move into subsidized senior housing built and supported at taxpayer expense.

What the Legislature needs to do is pass a bill to amend the Kansas Constitution to at least cut by half the property taxes seniors pay. The people of the state would then vote on the amendment and if it passes, as it likely will, Kansas will join the many other states that have done a much better job of looking out for their seniors.

## Message

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### Golden Connections Resource Fair

July 25, 2026, 9:00 AM – 12:00 PM

Agriculture Hall, One Expo-  
centre Dr, Topeka, KS 66612.

This event will celebrate the many ways older adults can stay engaged, supported and inspired. Whether you're retired or working, caring for grandchildren or spouses, seeking support or looking for new opportunities, this fair is for you!

### Golden Strides Fun Run

August 29, 9:00 AM – NOON  
Shelter #1 - Shawnee Lake

Join us as JAAA celebrates 50 years of service to our community. Every step you take helps support programs that empower older adults, caregivers, and families for the next 50 years.

### Golden Gala

September 25, 2026, 6:00 PM – 10:00 PM

Kay McFarland Japanese Garden, 635 SW Gage Blvd, Topeka, KS 66606, USA

A glamorous once-in-a-life-time event celebrating JAAA's 50th anniversary.

# Protect yourself from title theft

By Marsha Henry Goff

Have you seen the worrisome ads on TV about "house stealing" by a company that wants you to pay them for notification of this potential crime? House stealing or title theft occurs when a thief presents a notarized forged title or quit claim deed to your county's Register of Deeds' office which transfers your property to the thief allowing him/her to mortgage your property or take out a line of credit on it.

But worry no more because all three counties — Douglas, Jefferson and Shawnee — served by Jayhawk Area Agency on Aging can help you prevent this crime or at least nip it in the bud before real damage is done. Property owners in Jefferson and Shawnee Counties may sign up free for Property Fraud Alert, a notification service that allows you to sign up to be notified by text, phone or email at <https://www.propertyfraudalert.com/select> or you may call the Property Fraud Alert Hotline at 800-728-3858.

Douglas County has a similar program that provides the same service and you can sign up for it free on their website at <https://www.dgcoks.gov/register-of-deeds#fraud>. Once signed up, you will be alerted each time a document is recorded with your name on it in the Register of Deeds office in your county.

Although these notification services are after the fact and do not prevent fraud from happening, it gives you an early warning so you can take appropriate action if you determine possible fraudulent activity has occurred.

House stealing (aka title theft) is not a common crime and certainly does not occur as often as the ads imply. Delia Heston, Register of Deeds in Jefferson County, says that in her many years on the job she knows of only one instance she believes was a fraud attempt. Still, it can happen and if you want to eliminate the risk of losing money if a thief should try to steal your property, just register for notification and quit worrying about it.

*JAAA wishes you a  
Happy Valentine's Day!*

# Lois Van Liew

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practice she continued including one brief period where she says she worked all day and painted

all night, surviving on two to three hours of sleep. Expressing her artistic creativity is clearly a driving force in her life.

After her marriage, she lived in Texas, then moved to Wisconsin where her art was recognized by

many awards including a Woman of the Year award given by Wisconsin Women of the Arts. She returned to her native Kansas in 2004 and settled in Topeka where she continued her award-winning ways and has been active in NOTO.

Her work has been displayed in the Mayor's office, paintings have been displayed in multiple shows, including one-person shows, and she recently won Best of Show for a painting titled *Music and*

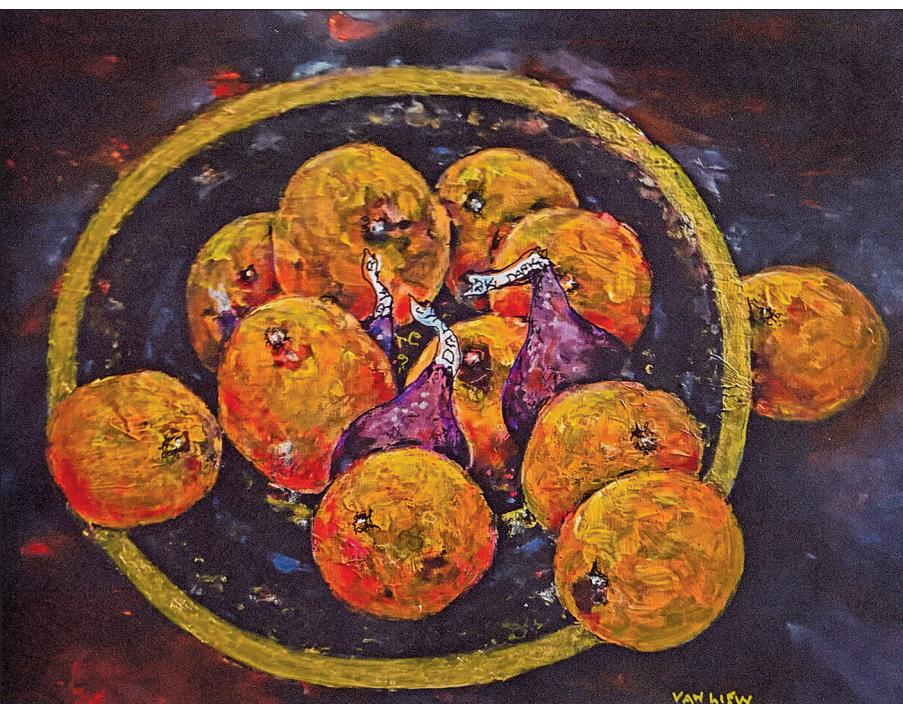
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This painting of sunflowers titled *Prairie Gold* was displayed in the Mayor's office.



*Heat of the Sun* was in the "Kansas Day Exhibit" at Washburn University International House.



*Hidden Pleasures* was in the "Bon Appetit" juried exhibit at NOTO Arts Center.



*Scenic Drive Boot Hill Road* was in "A Collective Revisited" exhibit at Beauchard Art Gallery.

# Lois Van Liew

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Memory in a juried exhibit.

In November, 2025, Grace Cathedral commemorated the fiftieth anniversary of a fire set by

an arsonist that nearly destroyed it. When someone at the cathedral asked Lois if she could paint fire, she said she had painted prairie fires. She did significant research into the fire, its cause and subsequent rebuilding of the cathedral and says she really "tuned into

fire" when she read the book *Grace Cathedral*, which the church published about the horrific event.

Also, as she was preparing to paint the cathedral on fire, she noticed the sunflowers in her garden which included a red sunflower among the customary

yellow and gold flowers. "The petals looked like flames," Lois says, "and the colors were the same. It took me only half a day to do the painting. It kind of painted itself. God is the creator and when you tune into that . . . . The arson-

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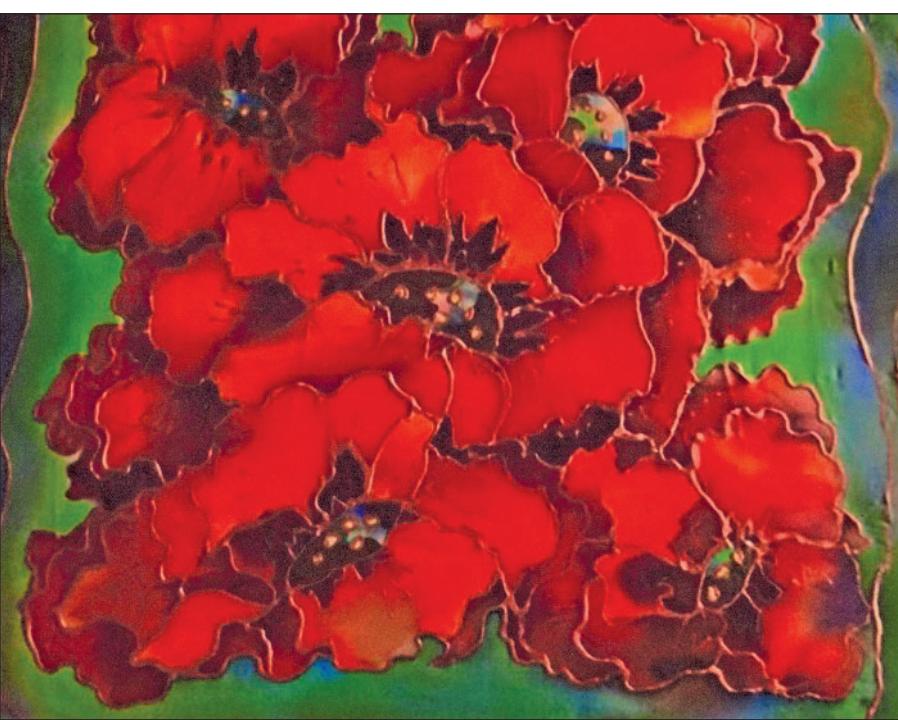
*Nuance* was part of a solo exhibit by Lois at Amused Art Gallery.



Lois stands in her basement where hundreds of her paintings are stored.



*September Dreaming* was part of "A Prairie Retrospective" exhibit in the Cloister Gallery at Grace Cathedral.



*Poppies* was a silk painting in the exhibit "A Rainbow Salute" exhibit in the Cloister Gallery at Grace Cathedral.

# Caregiver Support

## Long term care options

By Michele Dillon

JAAA Caregiver Support Specialist

The question of when and if your loved one needs long term care is a hard question to answer. Home Health Agencies can provide a lot of in-home support but there may be a time when they are no longer able to meet that need. When safety becomes a concern, decisions should be made. Safety examples would include physical safety and inability to lift, wandering out of the house, behavioral and physical abuse of the caregiver, to name a few.

Some questions to answer:

- 1) What are mom's physical needs?
- 2) Is she a wander risk?



**Michele Dillon**

3) Would she benefit from socialization with others?

4) What are the financial needs? Do we have the money to support private pay home health? Do I need to go back to work?

5) What are the emotional needs of the caregiver? This one is important. A caregiver needs to think about how much she can do and still maintain a healthy and active life.

Once it is decided that long-term care is necessary there are many options available:

**Adult Day** – Maybe you just need a break for a while to get to doctors' appointments, some pickleball or grocery shopping, JAAA, in collaboration with Grace Presbyterian Church, has a two day a week day group.

On Tuesdays and Fridays from 10-2 you can bring your loved one to socialize and engage with lunch included. \$40 a day for each day you attend. This is for early to moderate stages of the disease.

**Assisted Living** – This is for folks who need a little extra help with activities of daily living (bathing, meal preparation, housekeeping, etc.) but don't require 24-hour care. The resident will usually have their own small apartment. These facilities usually offer 3 meals a day, activities, and housekeeping. Needs such as medication management, laundering of personal items and incontinence assistance may be charged extra. Some assisted living facilities allow pets, as long as the loved one can take care of it and will accept Medicaid. A doctor, physical therapist and a beautician usually visit the resident on campus. Some offer locked units to accommodate dementia. Showers and kitchen areas are adapted for wheelchairs.

**Homes Plus** – A Home Plus

facility provides senior care in a residential setting with twelve people or less. All Home Plus facilities must be licensed with the state of Kansas, must follow strict rules and regulations of the state, and must pass yearly inspections. These facilities offer a homier environment than nursing homes and are ideal for dementia residents as there are fewer residents and it is more like home. Most homes plus facilities are private pay but a few do take Medicaid.

The level of care provided by each Home Plus facility varies from independent living to full nursing care. Regardless of the level of care, the smaller settings allow a higher staff-to-resident ratio so each resident can have individualized one-on-one nursing care 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

Residents of Home Plus facilities live like a family. They share common spaces of the home such as living rooms, dining rooms, and kitchens, but can have private bedrooms or shared

CONTINUED ON PAGE NINE

## The Role of a Caregiver is greatly valued by JAAA

Being a caregiver for someone you love is likely the hardest and most rewarding job you will ever do. Jayhawk Area Agency on Aging values your caring effort and will support you in every way possible. Our Care for All sessions give you a break while your loved one with dementia socializes, plays games, sings and has lunch. Our support groups give helpful information and allow caregivers to share experiences. We are here for you! Michele Dillon, our Caregiver Support Specialist, can answer your questions if you call her at 785-235-1367. We thank you so much for the capable and loving care you provide.

bedrooms. Home Plus facilities do not use commercial kitchens; home style meals are prepared everyday using the standard kitchens within the facility and residents are encouraged to eat together like a family.

**Nursing Facilities** – These are for people who require continual nursing care and have significant difficulty coping with the required activities of daily living. Nursing aides and skilled nurses are usually available 24 hours a day. Cost includes room and board, medication management, three meals a day, snacks throughout the day, maintenance therapy as needed, activities, bathing assistance, laundering of linens, and healthcare monitoring. Extras might include incontinence products, prescriptions, beauty shop visits and therapy. Nursing facilities try hard to make the environment as individual as possible but the majority of residents has meals at the same time and routine is common. Some facilities have a locked unit for dementia and some offer on-site dialysis.

Whatever you choose continuing to advocate for your loved one's needs is important. Letting them know a loved one's food preferences, color choice, when they want a bath, activities they will participate in and other likes and dislikes will help in the transition.

I can help you decipher which choice is best and when. Give me a call at 785-213-1713.

– Michele Dillon Caregiver Support Specialist, Jayhawk Area Agency on Aging, 785-235-1367.

**Tuesday**  
**April 14, 2026**  
**9:00 am-2:00 pm**

First Southern Baptist Church 4300 W. 6th St. Lawrence, KS 66049

## Workshop Presenters

**Jeff Sigler, PharmD,**  
*Owner of Sigler Pharmacy*

**Diane Minear, JD,**  
*Kansas Legal Services Staff Attorney*

**Michelle Watson,**  
*LMSW, LACHA Visiting Nurses*

**Scott Newby**  
*Clinical Director  
Radius Therapy*

**Elizabeth Newby, OTR**  
*Radius Therapy*

**Emily Bachert, MME,**  
*MT-BC, Harmonic Connections, LLC*

**Sarah Randolph, ACHO, CDP**  
*Owner of Carewise Advocacy & Consulting*

**Vera Long,**  
*Cedarhurst Senior Living*

## 4th Annual Caregiver Conference

### Caregiver Blind spots -

#### You don't know what you don't know

A one-day conference providing education for caregivers. Caregivers have the most difficult job when caring for loved ones. This forum will help you navigate in-home services and educate you on helping you help them.

## Conference Schedule

9:00 Registration Begins

9:30 Keynote: Jeff Sigler

Medication Mishaps ~ The dangers of polypharmacy and drug interactions

10:15 Break

10:30 Breakout Sessions

11:30 Lunch

12:30 Breakout Sessions

## Break-Out Sessions

### AM

- The Power of the POA
- Music and it's Benefits
- Decoding Non-Verbal cues

### PM

- The Importance of Recreation
- Assessing hidden fall risks
- Resentment Rerouted

## Registration

To register for this free conference, call or email:  
Michele Dillon 785-230-1713  
[mdillon@jhawkaaa.org](mailto:mdillon@jhawkaaa.org)  
or Scan the QR Code



Sponsored by



# Lois Van Liew

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ist thought he had done away with the church but instead he released the energy and love that was there when they built the church."

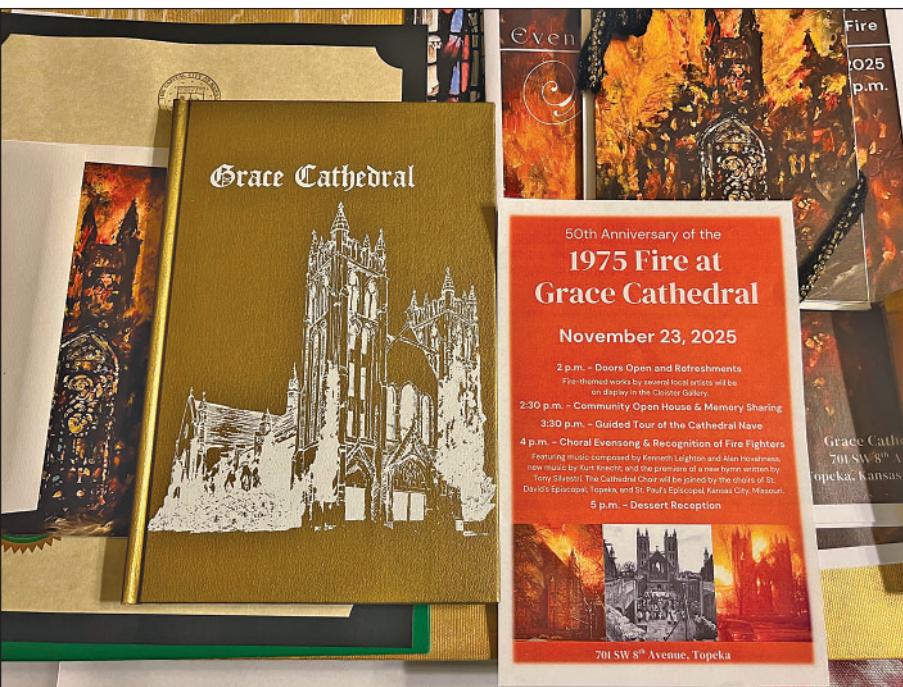
Her magnificent painting of the fire consuming the cathedral — appropriately titled *Point of Resurrection* — demonstrates that she can indeed paint fire.

Lois has never confined herself to one form of art, but has experimented with different media and styles. In 1992, she won an award in Wisconsin for a copper enamel piece and she was featured in *Silkworm* magazine in 2023 for her silk paintings. The way the paint flows when painting on silk, she says, makes it feel like she is painting

a watercolor.

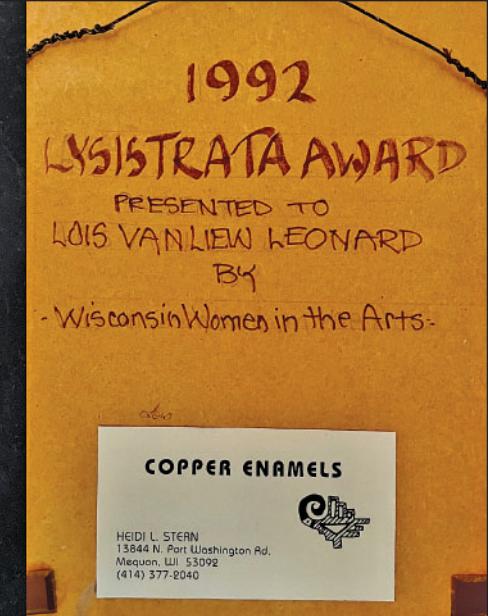
She loves to tell the story of a silk painting that sold for \$750 at a friend's boutique when she had priced it at \$475. Her original oil and acrylic paintings have sold as high as \$5,000, although the majority of her artwork is less expensive and prints, some of which are on canvas, are even more affordable while still retaining the colorful beauty of the original.

A number of her paintings will be displayed in the Art Center's upcoming exhibit if you would like the opportunity to see her work up close and personal. Lois Van Liew strives to connect with viewers of her artwork and she will continue to create while hoping with each brushstroke that her paintings will have a positive and helpful impact on their lives.



Book, 50th Anniversary of the Fire program, note cards of Lois's painting.

Please visit us online at  
[www.jhawkaaa.org](http://www.jhawkaaa.org)

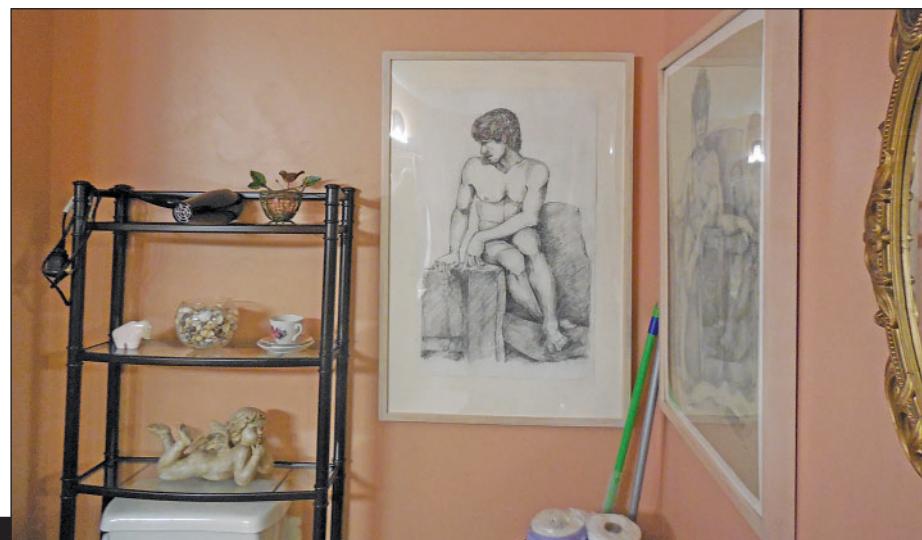
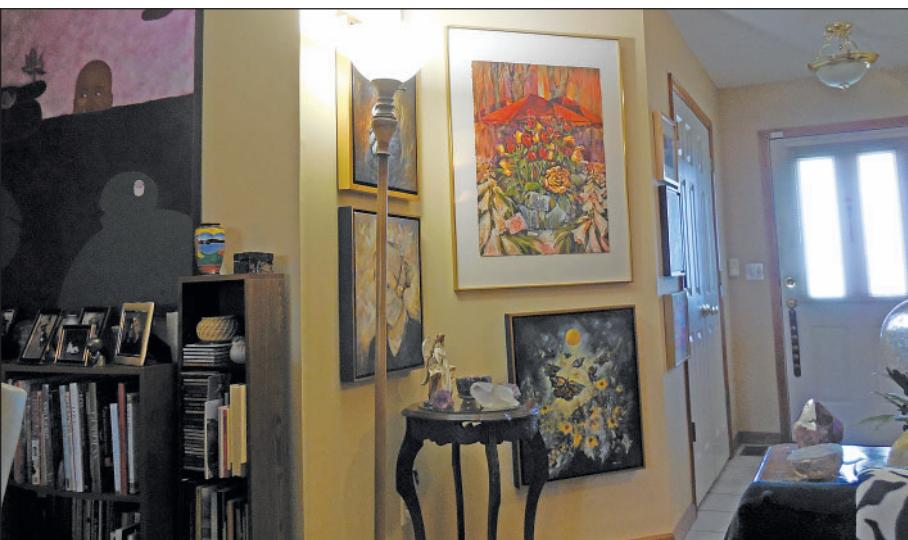
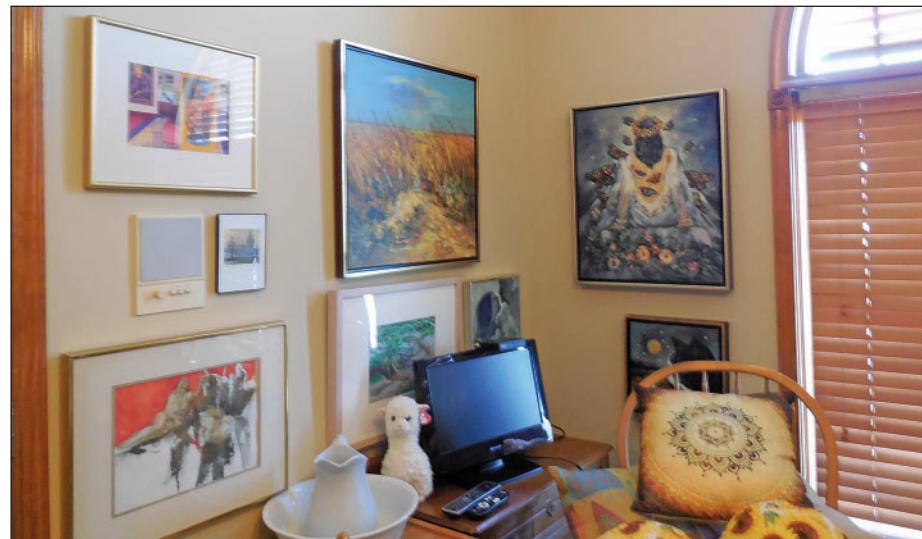


Lois won an award for this copper enamel painting.



*Point of Resurrection* dramatically illustrates the arson fire that destroyed Grace Cathedral at 701 SW 8th Avenue on November 23, 1975.

# **Lois Van Liew's walls are adorned with her paintings and a few paintings by her good friend Audrey Lemon**



**Jayhawk Area Agency on Aging  
is again hosting**

**AARP Tax Aide  
Free Tax Preparation**

**Mondays and Tuesdays  
beginning in February  
by appointment only**

**Call 785-235-1367 for appointment**