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

FALL 2010

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, state general funds and funds through local governments
- Does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, sex, national origin, age, religion, or disability

If you do not want to be on our free newsletter mailing list, please give us a call.

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Visit us online at www.jhawkaaa.org
Q & A: National Health Insurance Reform

By Sandy Praeger
Kansas Insurance Commissioner

The Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act passed recently has made significant changes to federal law regarding health insurance. Kansas Insurance Commissioner Sandy Praeger provides the following information to help you understand the many issues surrounding this health insurance reform legislation.

The following information is provided as a service of the Kansas Insurance Department. Remember to also check the documents and links on our main internet health page, or call: 785-296-3071 or 800-432-2484 (in Kansas only)

National Health Insurance Reform Frequently Asked Questions for Seniors

Will my Medicare benefits be cut under the new law?

No, the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (PPACA) does not eliminate or reduce benefits provided under Medicare.

I currently have a Medicare Advantage plan. Will I be able to keep it?

Yes. The PPACA does not require individuals to drop their Medicare Advantage coverage. It should be noted, however, that Medicare Advantage plans are not guaranteed renewable. Carriers may pull out of a market at the end of the year, forcing enrollees to change carriers or return to Medicare. The PPACA does cut payments to Medicare Advantage plans, which could result in carriers pulling out of more areas.

My prescription drug costs push me into the “doughnut hole” every year. Will I receive any relief under the new law?

Seniors who reach the gap in prescription drug coverage known as the “doughnut hole” will receive a $250 rebate in 2010. Over time, Medicare will gradually phase in additional subsidies in the coverage gap for brand name drugs, beginning in 2013, and generic drugs, beginning in 2011, until the gap is completely eliminated in 2020.

When will the new preventive care improvements begin?

Under the PPACA, all Medicare beneficiaries will receive preventive services without cost-sharing beginning Jan. 1, 2011. In addition, Medicare beneficiaries will be given access to a comprehensive health risk assessment and creation of personalized prevention plan.

I have a Medicare Supplement (Medigap) plan. Must I make any changes to my plan under the new law?

No, the PPACA does not require seniors to change their Medigap coverage. However, the law will be adding cost-sharing requirements to plans C and F that are sold after January 1, 2015.

Need help getting the long-term services and supports you need to maintain your independence, like:

- Hiring or managing a personal care attendant,
- Making modifications to your home to make it more wheelchair accessible,
- Applying for or appealing an application for federal disability benefits, or
- Choosing the prescription drug plan that’s right for you?

Then give us a call! Here at Topeka Independent Living Resource Center our goal is to help people get the assistance they need to remain independent in their own homes.

For more information call us at 785-233-4572 or (outside of Topeka) 1-800-443-2207.
Jayhawk Area Agency on Aging, Inc. (JAAA) Guardian Angel program helps those seniors who are in need of just a little help.

Due to the generosity of Barney and Joan Braymen and the assistance of Topeka Community Foundation, JAAA has set-up a fund specifically designated to supplying items which will help JAAA’s low-income senior clients remain independent!

If you would like to donate to the Guardian Angel Fund call (785) 235-1367!
Dorothy Flory named 2010 Donna J. Kidd Award winner

A native Kansan, Dorothy spent most of her life in Nortonville, Kansas. Married in 1942, Dorothy has four daughters, nine grandchildren, nine great grandchildren and has fostered 20 children. Dorothy’s hobbies include embroidery, reading and mowing her yard. She also enjoys making greeting cards using her computer. Dorothy volunteers at her church and the Village Villa Rehab and Care Center with the Meals on Wheels program there. In the early 1980’s, Dorothy was a trailblazer along with Joyce Clark and Donna Kidd herself in implementing the Meals on Wheels program in Nortonville, Kansas. Dorothy has been with the Meals on Wheels program ever since. Dorothy finds fulfillment in helping others. The best thing for anyone to do is help your neighbor and give them a smile. Dorothy also enjoys spending time with her family and friends.

The Donna J. Kidd Award recognizes an outstanding older person who is making a significant contribution to seniors in their community through employment and/or volunteer work. A tireless champion for seniors and aging issues in the community, Donna J. Kidd was Executive Director of Jayhawk Area Agency on Aging from 1976 to 1997.

Explore Your Options books help seniors find services

The 18th edition of Explore Your Options, a publication provided by the Kansas Department on Aging and the Area Agencies on Aging, is now available to help seniors locate programs and services in their areas.

The EYO includes an overall guide to provide an understanding of services available to help seniors stay in their homes; an explanation of housing and long-term care options; and maps and lists of agencies and organizations that may provide more information.

A companion book provides a listing of services and providers available in each county. The books are specific to each Area Agency on Aging, with listings for each county in the AAAs coverage area.

Both books are available through the Area Agencies on Aging. They also can be ordered from KDOA. Electronic versions are available for reading online or downloading on the KDOA website, www.agingkansas.org.
Executing a Power of Attorney relationship

Attorney-in-Fact/Agent
Individual or entity appointed by the principal to act in their place.

Power of Attorney (POA)
Grants an individual or institution the power to make decisions about property and financial affairs, typically ending at death or incapacitation. It can be as limited as granting authority to pay monthly bills or as broad as managing all financial decisions.

Durable Power of Attorney (DPOA)
A Power of Attorney that survives incapacity. This Power of Attorney requires language specifying that the power does not cease in the event of incapacitation.

Durable Power of Attorney for Health Care Decisions
Power of Attorney granting authority to an individual to make health care decisions, including authority to review medical records, when you are no longer capable of making those decisions.

Tips for Creating an Effective POA/DPOA
- You must be mentally competent to consent to a POA/DPOA.
- A POA/DPOA must be in writing, signed by the principal and acknowledged by a Notary.
- If you are unable to physically execute a POA/DPOA you may designate an adult to sign on your behalf, in the presence of a Notary Public.
- Read the POA/DPOA and know/understand what powers you are giving to the POA/DPOA.
- Specify all powers granted in the POA/DPOA. Make sure all powers are clearly deemed and if you want to limit any powers, those limitations must be spelled out as well.
- Make sure the attorney-in-fact understands the powers being given to them and how you want those powers to be exercised.
- Remember: You are the boss.

Selecting Someone to Be Your Attorney-in-Fact

Financial Expertise
Your attorney-in-fact may have to handle all financial dealings on your behalf. Do they have any expertise to assist in these dealings? Are they capable of managing finances? Theirs and yours?

Organization is Key
Your attorney-in-fact must be capable of keeping track of all of your assets, pay your bills, balance your checkbook, etc... in addition to handling their own finances.

Location, Location, Location
Where your attorney-in-fact lives may be important in handling your affairs properly and timely.

Time Management
How busy is the person(s), and will they have the time to devote to handling your finances, in addition to all of their other responsibilities?

Communication
Is this person good at communicating with others, including family members, doctors, care givers, and YOU? Communication is very important and can protect you and your assets from exploitation.

Privacy and Trust
Your attorney-in-fact may have access to very personal information so you must trust this person.

Openness
When possible, let a family member, friend or someone besides the attorney-in-fact know about your Power of Attorney.

Dear Kansans:

Entering into a Power Attorney relationship is one of the most important decisions Kansas seniors will make. Seniors can grant the power for things as simple as paying bills to issues as complex as health care decisions.

Because of the wide range of options and concerns, it is crucial that seniors give careful consideration to all of the possible choices available under a Power of Attorney document.

My office and the State of Kansas offer a wide variety of services for Kansas seniors, among them collaborating with agencies such as the Area Agencies on Aging, which provide caution to the process of templating this process.

This article highlights many of those questions and provides contact information for resources that seniors can utilize in making these serious decisions. However, it is by no means comprehensive, so please consult with a private attorney prior to executing a Power of Attorney.

Sincerely,
Steve Six
Kansas Attorney General

TERMS
Principal
Individual executing the Power of Attorney or Durable Power of Attorney, granting power to an attorney-in-fact.

Steve Six

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

When do I seek legal advice?
The decision of whether and how to use a Power of Attorney is an important one that can affect your health and livelihood. You should seek competent legal counsel for assistance to make sure the Power of Attorney document accomplishes what you intend.

What type of lawyer should I see?
Estate planning can be very complex, especially for lawyers that do not specialize in that particular area of the law. Just like you would want to see a heart doctor for a heart problem, you should seek counsel from an estate planning attorney about your Power of Attorney.

What if my attorney-in-fact does not carry out my wishes?
As long as you remain competent to appoint an attorney-in-fact, you can revoke the Power of Attorney. If you are no longer competent, others must step in to protect your interests and take appropriate steps under the law in the event your Power of Attorney is not followed.

S.O.S.
Senior Outreach Services

785-233-1730 X 3229

A Mental Health Wellness Service providing:
- Free Assessment
- Individual & Family In-Home Counseling
- Consultation for Caregivers

Senior Outreach Services

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AMAZING AGING!
Jest For Grins

To place your ad in Amazing Aging!, please call Kevin at 785-841-9417.

Meriden Home Care
Meriden Adult Services-Plus, Inc.
Serving Jefferson, Shawnee and Douglas Counties for 13 years

Dedicated to Quality Care
Skilled Nursing Care
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Participating in Senior Care Act &
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785-484-2699 • meridenhomehealth@embarqmail.com

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After 30 Years. Still Providing
"Clean. Safe. Affordable Housing"
for qualified seniors and non-elderly disabled!

Rent Based on Income
No Utility Bills
24 HR Emergency Response
Close to Shopping
Church Services
Card Games & Crafts

Exercise Group
Library
Entertainment
Well Maintained
Great Neighbors & Friendly Faces

Call Manager Karol Freeman
(785) 266-5656
2929 SE Minnesota • Topeka
Heart of America Hospice

We are proud to serve Shawnee, Jefferson, Douglas and many surrounding communities with 24-hour on call nurses for visits and admissions as well as bereavement, chaplain, social worker, home health aide, and volunteer support. We assist patients and family wherever you call home.

800-396-7778
Caregiver’s Corner

Topeka Area Caregiver Support Groups

Caring Choices
For A Lifetime

A complete continuum of care

Lexington Park
Independent Living Apartments
1011 Cottonwood 273-4545

Lexington Park
Assisted Living Apartments
1021 SW Fleming Ct. 233-7511

Lexington Park
Nursing & Post Acute Care
1031 SW Fleming Ct. 440-0500

Across from Gage Park on 10th

www.lexingtonparkcommunity.com

Money smart. Value strong.

Kansas credit unions help people all over the state achieve their financial dreams. More than half a million Kansans choose credit unions as safe places for their money and financial needs.

WHY? Kansas credit unions are money-smart. They offer great services for checking, savings, credit cards, loans – and more. And they’re value-smart: Just ordinary people helping people, providing resources and flexibility consumers need in both good times and tough times.

Make your own money-smart move to a Kansas credit union today.

Visit your local credit union or call Kansas Credit Union Association at (800) 362-2075. Also at kcua.coop.

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Free Audio Publications for Your Convenience

By Kristine Warren
Social Security District Manager, Topeka

Perhaps you’ve been planning to read that booklet on Social Security benefits for some time now, but you never seem to find the time to sit down with it. If only you could listen to an audio version, just as you might listen to the latest novel by your favorite author on audiobook.

Now you can. Social Security offers more than a hundred publications in audio format, in both English and Spanish. You can find them at http://www.socialsecurity.gov/pubs/alt-pubs.html.

At Social Security, we want to make sure you can get the information you need. That is why we offer our publications in print, online in both Internet and PDF versions, and some in audio format. You also can get publications in Braille, in enlarged print, and even cassette or CD.

Social Security is committed to using technology to improve the customer service experience. Learning about any aspect of Social Security’s programs is easier than ever, in the format that works best for you. As Social Security celebrates its 75th anniversary this year, service choices continue to expand. These days, you can even get a personalized estimate of your future benefits and apply for those benefits online.

From the comfort of your home, you can access information about Social Security. Take it a step further and use the audio publications in combination with the Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) section to get answers to over 700 questions.

If you were planning to plug in the ear buds and listen to a little music tonight, why not play the Social Security publication you’ve been putting off? It’s never been easier to learn about Social Security. Just visit www.socialsecurity.gov and select the “Forms and Publications” link on the left side of the page. Welcome to our online library. Whatever your preferred format, we’re here for you.

Frequently Asked Questions:

What is the difference between a Mail order pharmacy and an online pharmacy?
A mail order pharmacy is an actual licensed pharmacy with a physical location and licensed pharmacists who fill the prescriptions with due diligence that is required of a licensed pharmacist. An online pharmacy can simply be a call center set up anywhere that forms out prescriptions to any wholesaler or pharmacy in the world that offers the best price. The online pharmacy is usually NOT a licensed pharmacy. Therefore they do not have all of the safety standards in place. They offer some incredible low prices to get people to order, but they can have some very dangerous products. If a price "sounds too good to be true" – it is.

Are all drugs sold in the US made in the US?
No. While a good deal of research and development is done in the US, most of the drugs are manufactured elsewhere and sent into the US and to other countries. Most of the generic drugs sold at well known large pharmacy retailers are purchased from the same suppliers that our pharmacies use.

Why do some drugs have different names or appearances?
The pharmaceutical industry will change the names of a drug for different countries so they can track where it is being sold. They will also change the color and shape of pills for different medications. For example, Nexium, “The purple pill” is only purple in the US.

How do generics compare to Brand and why are they available overseas and not in the US at the same time?
All of the generics we get are from manufacturing facilities that provide generics at the present time to the US market. Generics are available in other countries sooner than the US because the same patent protections do not apply to other countries. Generics must be made of exactly the same formulation that the brand is made from. It can have a different binder, but must be the same medication. All drugs being manufactured go through the same stringent requirements as the brands.

What about all the counterfeit drugs that are becoming prevalent?
The pharmacies that we work with have strict quality control and operate to the highest standards. All medicines that enter into their pharmacy system are obtained by licensed wholesalers, not brokers. These are wholesalers licensed by the drug manufacturers to ensure product safety. The drugs are all manufactured in FDA or its equivalent agency inspected plants. Drugs are randomly sent to independent labs for further testing to ensure the quality and safety by each of our pharmacies.

Sample Drug Prices

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Medication</th>
<th>U.S. Price</th>
<th>Our Price</th>
<th>You Save</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Abilify, 30mg, 100 pills</td>
<td>$2546</td>
<td>$530</td>
<td>79%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Actos, 45mg, 90 pills</td>
<td>$819</td>
<td>$224</td>
<td>72%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aricept, 10mg, 90 pills</td>
<td>$781</td>
<td>$244</td>
<td>68%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Benicar, 15mg, 3 pills</td>
<td>$383</td>
<td>$129</td>
<td>66%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cymbalta, 60mg, 90 pills</td>
<td>$471</td>
<td>$171</td>
<td>63%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dopemidine, 10mg, 100 pills</td>
<td>$19</td>
<td>$9</td>
<td>73%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lantus, 0.35%, 3 ml bottle</td>
<td>$126</td>
<td>$30</td>
<td>76%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Namenda, 10mg, 30 pills</td>
<td>$342</td>
<td>$150</td>
<td>56%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nexium, 40mg, 90 pills</td>
<td>$582</td>
<td>$147</td>
<td>74%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plavix, 75mg, 90 pills</td>
<td>$543</td>
<td>$155</td>
<td>71%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Premarin, 0.625mg, 84 pills</td>
<td>$177</td>
<td>$42</td>
<td>76%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Propacca, 1mg, 90 pills</td>
<td>$234</td>
<td>$93</td>
<td>60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Singular, 10mg, 90 pills</td>
<td>$412</td>
<td>$147</td>
<td>64%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spiriva, 18mcg, 90 pills</td>
<td>$646</td>
<td>$162</td>
<td>74%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Viagra, 100mg, 16 pills</td>
<td>$311</td>
<td>$91</td>
<td>70%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vitarin, 1/400mg, 90 pills</td>
<td>$383</td>
<td>$199</td>
<td>48%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Xolatant, 0.01%, 1 bottle</td>
<td>$93</td>
<td>$33</td>
<td>64%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zetia, 10mg, 100 pills</td>
<td>$395</td>
<td>$142</td>
<td>64%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zyprexa, 20mg, 100 pills</td>
<td>$3318</td>
<td>$389</td>
<td>88%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Canada Drug has been in business in Topeka since October of 2003. As a company, our goal is to help people by saving them huge amounts of money on their prescription drug costs. We have a widespread client base across the U.S. The three pharmacies we work with are actual dispensing, licensed and insured facilities. They only dispense from valid prescriptions. Our Overseas Pharmacy spends extra money to insure the safety of the medications they sell by having the medications batch tested at independent labs; and blister pack almost all products to insure no counterfeit enters the system. Our job at Canada Drug is to offer the safest products with substantial savings and the best customer service we can provide. Our many repeat customers and longevity in this business attest to our efforts. We have saved our clients hundreds to several thousand dollars yearly. Let us do a free cost analysis on the list of drugs you take and then you can compare. We would love to help you and have you share your vision.

Best Regards,
Eric Ens, President

Save up to 80% on Prescriptions
785-272-6100

5938 SW 17th St
Suite 400
866-804-6100
JAAA Board of Directors

Douglas County (3 members)
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Lawrence, KS
John Studdard
Lawrence, KS
Seat Open
Term expires Sept. 2012

City of Lawrence (2 members)
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Lawrence, KS
Gary D. Hale
Lawrence, KS

Jefferson County
Tom Ryan, Chair
Valley Falls, KS
Gary Fowler
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Seat Open
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City of Topeka (2 members)
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Marie Pyko
Topeka, KS

For information on serving on the JAAA Board of Directors, please call Jocelyn at 785-235-1367 or 800-798-1366.

JAAA Advisory Council

Douglas County (3 members)
Seat Open
Term expires Sept. 2010
Seat Open
Term expires Sept. 2011
Seat Open
Term expires Sept. 2012

City of Lawrence (2 members)
Cathey Parsons
Lawrence, KS
Seat Open
Term expires Sept. 2013

Jefferson County (4 members)
Larry Martin
Valley Falls, KS
Mel Gray,
Perry, KS
Lynn Luck
Oskaloosa, KS
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Term expires Sept. 2012

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Lawrence, KS
Seat Open
Term expires Sept. 2010

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Sudoku

© Puzzles by Pappocom
Fill in the grid so that every row, every column and every 3x3 box contains the digits 1 through 9 with no repeats.

Solution on page 15
Humor, Laughter and Radiant Health

Dr. Bob McBrien
Salisbury, MD

It is a wise person who said you do not stop laughing because you are growing old; you are growing old because you stop laughing.

We need the healing power of laughter daily. Where do we find our daily dose? Sometimes life brings us a laugh from an unexpected source. Curiously, one source is church bulletins. Thanks to the internet, I can share with readers the funny announcements that are posted in a serious source: Church Bulletins. Just imagine sitting in church, a place for being reverent and reading one of the notices you find below:

Actual compilation of actual Church Bulletins and Service bloopers:

Our next song is “Angels We Have Heard Get High”.

Don’t let worry kill you—let the church help.

Remember in prayer the many who are sick of our church and community.

For those of you who have children and don’t know it, we have a nursery downstairs.

Weight Watchers will meet at 7 p.m. at the First Presbyterian Church. Please use large double door at the side entrance.

Jean will be leading a weight-management series Wednesday nights. She’s used the program herself and has been growing like crazy!

The rosebud on the altar this morning is to announce the birth of David Alan Belzer, the son of Rev. and Mrs. Julius Belzer.

This afternoon there will be a meeting in the South and North ends of the church. Children will be baptized at both ends.

Tuesday at 4:00 p.m. there will be an ice cream social. All ladies giving milk will please come early.

This being Easter Sunday, we will ask Mrs. Lewis to come forward and lay an egg on the altar.

The service will close with Little Drops of Water. One of the ladies will start quietly and the rest of the congregation will join in.

Next Sunday a special collection will be taken to defray the cost of the new carpet. All those wishing to do something on the carpet should come forward and do so.

The ladies of the church have cast off clothing of every kind. They can be seen in the church basement Saturday.

Thursday night—Potluck supper. Prayer and medication to follow.

Eight new choir robes are currently needed, due to the addition of several new members and to the deterioration of some older ones.

The senior choir invites any member of the congregation who enjoys sinning to join the choir.

At the evening service tonight, the sermon topic will be “What is Hell?” Come early and listen to our choir practice.

During the absence of our pastor, we enjoyed the rare privilege of hearing a good sermon when A. B. Doe supplied our pulpit.

The Rev. Adams spoke briefly, much to the delight of his audience.

The church is glad to have with us today as our guest minister the Rev. Shirley Green, who has Mrs. Green with him. After the service we request that all remain in the sanctuary for the Hanging of the Greens.

The eighth graders will be presenting Shakespeare’s Hamlet” in the church basement on Friday at 7 p.m. The congregation is invited to attend this tragedy.

The 1991 Spring Council Retreat will be hell May 10 and 11.

Pastor is on vacation. Massages can be given to church secretary.

Please join us as we show our support for Amy and Alan in preparing for the girth of their first child.

Scouts are saving aluminum cans, bottles and other items to be recycled. Proceeds will be used to cripple children.

PLEDGE FORM

Yes! I support the mission of
Jayhawk Area Agency on Aging, Inc.

Here is my tax-deductible contribution.
Name: __________________________________________
Address: _________________________________________
City: ___________________________ St: ____ Zip:_______

* Guardian Angel Fund
* Where Needed Most
* Contact Jocelyn Lyons at (785) 235-1367 for
details or to discuss other options of support

Level of Giving
☐ $25
☐ $50
☐ $100
☐ Other ______

Method of Payment
☐ Check Enclosed
☐ Bill Me
☐ Monthly
☐ Quarterly
☐ Annually

Thank you for your support!
Jayhawk Area Agency on Aging, Inc. is a 501(c)3 non-profit organization

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Salisbury, MD

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The church is glad to have with us today as our guest minister the Rev. Shirley Green, who has Mrs. Green with him. After the service we request that all remain in the sanctuary for the Hanging of the Greens.

The eighth graders will be presenting Shakespeare’s Hamlet” in the church basement on Friday at 7 p.m. The congregation is invited to attend this tragedy.

The 1991 Spring Council Retreat will be hell May 10 and 11.

Pastor is on vacation. Massages can be given to church secretary.

Please join us as we show our support for Amy and Alan in preparing for the girth of their first child.

Scouts are saving aluminum cans, bottles and other items to be recycled. Proceeds will be used to cripple children.
Flu Vaccine: It’s Time to Let Go of Your Excuses

By Jason Eberhart-Phillips, MD
Kansas State Health Officer

People who turn down the flu vaccine year after year tend to rely on one or more of six common excuses to justify their decisions not to get immunized.

This year, as Kansas gears up to immunize more people than ever before against influenza, these excuses are all looking increasingly feeble. Let’s examine each one in detail:

**Excuse #1:** “I never get the flu, so I don’t need the vaccine.” If you’ve been living on this planet for more than a couple decades and you’ve never been infected with the influenza virus, you are a very rare individual. Congratulations!

Unfortunately, your past performance in avoiding this disease is no guarantee of future success. With no prior exposure to influenza and no artificial immunity from past immunizations, you are setting yourself up for a potentially serious encounter when the flu comes to your community in the months ahead.

Why take the risk of missing work or school, feeling miserable and possibly landing in the hospital, when you can avoid all that by simply rolling up your sleeve and getting the vaccine?

**Excuse #2:** “I got the vaccine once, and I came down with the flu anyway. The vaccine doesn’t work.” Do you know for sure that you became infected with the flu that year? Many common respiratory infections masquerade as influenza, but none of these can be prevented with the flu vaccine.

Chances are you never had the flu that season, but there is a small possibility that you did. The vaccine doesn’t protect everybody, especially in the first two weeks after you get a dose, or if you are more than 65 years of age. But getting vaccinated definitely improves your odds against getting seriously ill or dying from the flu, regardless of your age.

This year, for the first time, there is a high-dose version of the flu vaccine for people over age 65 years of age. Clinical trials show that it induces a stronger immune response. So now you have a new option to consider if you’re old enough for it and you really believe that the regular vaccine didn’t protect you well in the past.

**Excuse #3:** “I hear that sometimes people get the flu from the vaccine.” This is utter nonsense, like alligators in the sewers. Give it up. The vaccine stimulates your body’s immune system to protect you against flu viruses, and sometimes causes a brief and very mild flu-like reaction. But it does not cause the disease itself.

**Excuse #4:** “I hear that the vaccine causes serious side effects. I’d rather take my chances with the disease than risk harm from the vaccine.” After tens of billions of doses have been given to people throughout the world for many decades there is ample proof that flu vaccines are very safe.

Sure enough, bad things like serious neurological events, heart attacks and car accidents do happen occasionally to people recently immunized against the flu. But these same rare occurrences happen at roughly the same frequency to people who were not recently immunized. Such unfortunate events appear to be only coincidental with immunization.

Even if there is a link between flu vaccination and certain alleged side effects, the chances of serious harm from getting the vaccine are hundreds or thousands of times lower than the chances of harm that may come from getting infected if you are not immunized.

**Excuse #5:** “I don’t like shots. Who does? But a little needle stick once a year sure beats several days of being sick in bed — or worse.

Still, if you’re seriously phobic about needles and you’re between two and 49 years of age, ask your health provider about the nasal spray vaccine. It’s just as safe and just as effective as the injection, and it may be the right vaccine for you.

**Excuse #6:** “I don’t think I’m in a high-risk group. I don’t want to take vaccine away from people who really need it.” A few years ago this altruistic excuse had a ring of truth.

But this year there will be plenty of vaccine for everyone. And for the first time almost everyone in America over the age of six months is recommended by public health authorities to get the vaccine, regardless of your underlying health.

Unless you are one of the rare people over six months of age who has a genuine medical reason not to be immunized, there is no good reason this year not to get the flu vaccine.

So go ahead. Get the flu vaccine now from your doctor, your local health department or your community pharmacy.

You know it’s the right thing to do to protect yourself, your family and your community from a potentially serious infection. This year you haven’t got any more excuses!

- Dr. Eberhart-Phillips is the Kansas State Health Officer and Director of Health in the Kansas Department of Health and Environment. He can be reached at jeberhart-philips@kdheks.gov. Go to his blog at: www.kdheks.gov/blogs/dr_jeasons_blogs.htm.

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October 27, 2010 from 11:30-1:00pm

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