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# COUNTY, from page 1

## Several proclamations adopted

**National Prevention Week**  
Tyler Morton, Prevention Advocate of the 20th Judicial District Juvenile Services was joined by Central Kansas Partnership task force members and area teens to present this Proclamation. Morton introduced his representatives and addressed the Commissioners about the trends they are seeing across the nation and in Barton County.

“According to the 2023 National Survey of Drug Use and Health, an estimated 167.2 million Americans, ages 12 and older, used tobacco, vape, nicotine, alcohol or used illicit drugs within the past month,” Morton reported. “Just to give you guys perspective of what we’re seeing around the country, Kansas has been doing a great job as far as prevention efforts and getting our data to be better. When we did this last year, Kansas was ranked last. Now it’s ranked 22nd according to the 2024 State of Mental Health in America. Kansas ranked 22nd in mental health overall. So like I said, we went from being dead last to 22nd, also a vast improvement. Kansas is ranked 16th in terms of youth reporting at least one major depressive episode, 4.02% of youth in Kansas report having a substance abuse problem. The national average is 4.08%. Kind of put that in perspective with how we compare it to the rest of the country, and why the services that we’re bringing to not only our county, but also our state as well, are helping to improve these statistics dramatically.”

Morton said in Barton County, 17.3% of adults reported they’ve been strained, with 15.4% of residents surveyed reporting they are in frequent mental distress. Of those surveyed, 17% of residents reported they are in fair or poor health.

“The big survey that we use is called the Kansas Communities That Care survey, and we have the results back from the most recent,” Morton said. “Barton County has a lower percentage than the state rate for students in grades 6-8, 10th and 12th, for alcohol, vaping, marijuana and prescription drug use. So that’s the good news. Since 2022 we’ve seen these trends go down, which is awesome. We’ve stayed below the state average, which means that our efforts are working, but what we need to be working on a little bit more, and what we would ask for your support on a little bit more, is collecting data. We need more participation in Barton County in Health Awareness surveys.”

After the group read the Proclamation, Commissioner Barb Esfeld said, “I wanted you all to know that I’m proud of you for participating in Youth Crew and Rise Up. It takes time away from what you guys could be doing for fun, but it’s very rewarding as you graduate and move through the school system. But also appreciate the collaboration of

The Center and Rise Up to work with Youth Crew and Juvenile Services that make this all possible for you guys. You’re doing a good job.”

After further discussion, Esfeld motioned to adopt the Proclamation. It was seconded by Commissioner Duane Reif and it carried 5-0.

**Mental Health Awareness Month**  
Holly Bowyer, Accounting Specialist for The Center, presented details to the Commissioners about the prevalence of mental health conditions in our community while recognizing the need for intervention, awareness and inclusivity.

Bowyer said this week is Health Awareness Week (May 12-16) and there have been activities planned throughout the week.

“Our big event is Mental Health Awareness Day, Tuesday, May 20,” Bowyer said. “We’ll be here on the courthouse square from 3:30-7:30 p.m. We have about 20 other businesses that are coming to talk about the resources available in the community. We’re providing hot dogs and popcorn while supplies last, and it’s very family oriented. We want people to know the resources that are right here in their community if they do need to reach out for help. Our agency, of course, will have our booths with information about how to get started. And the theme this year is “Turn Awareness into Action.” And so we are gearing up, along with all the changes we have at the Center.”

Reading from the Proclamation, Bowyer said, “Be it proclaimed, in collaboration with the Center for Counseling and Consultation that the Barton County Commissioners recognized May 25 as Mental Health Month in Barton County, Kansas, and further that, the Commission encourages all residents of Barton County to educate themselves and others about mental health conditions, treatment options and available resources. Challenge stigma by speaking respectfully and inclusively about mental health. Seek help if they are struggling with their mental health, and encourage others to do the same. Support organizations that provide mental health services and advocacy and create safe and supportive environments for open conversations about mental health. Together, we can create a community where everyone feels empowered to prioritize their mental well being and seek help when needed.”

Commission Chair Tricia Schlesinger stated, “This is another important Proclamation. It seems like everyone knows someone who has mental health issues and needs help.”

Commissioner Shawn Hutchinson motioned to adopt the Proclamation and it was seconded by Commissioner

Donna Zimmerman. It carried 5-0.

**National Bike Month**  
Beth Frizzell from the Barton County Health Department gave a short history lesson on the local Youth Mountain Biking team, the Golden Belt Badgers, that was started this year. The team, made up of youth in grades 6-12, is part of the National Interscholastic Cycling Association (NICA). In addition to riding the races and scoring points by getting on the podium, they score points by doing Team Trail Corps. In Team Trail Corps, the youth are involved in building and maintaining our trail systems, and so our youth are working toward keeping our trails clean and safe and building new trails. And here locally, we practice at the Rotary Trail as well as Lake Barton. We’re trying to build biking in our community through this league.”

The Proclamation began, “Whereas the bicycle is an economical and environmentally sound form of transportation and an excellent tool for health, recreation and enjoyment of Barton County scenic beauty and, Whereas, maintaining a bicycling friendly community has been shown to improve citizens health, well being and quality of life, growing the economy of Barton County, attracting tourism dollars, improving traffic safety, supporting student learning outcomes and reducing pollution, congestion and wear and tear on streets and roads and, Whereas, Be Well Barton County, the Barton County Commission, the League of American Bicyclists, schools, parks and recreation departments, police departments, public health districts, hospitals, private businesses and civic groups will promote bicycling during the month of May 2025, and throughout the remainder of the year. Now therefore, be it proclaimed by the Barton County commissioners of Barton County, Kansas, that May 2025, is Bike Month in Barton County. And further, citizens are urged to be mindful of bicyclists in an effort to reduce collisions, injuries and fatalities and improve health and safety for everyone on the road, and further that citizens are reminded that biking is a low impact form of exercise and can help protect citizens from serious diseases such as stroke, heart attack, some cancers, depression, diabetes, obesity and arthritis.”

Before making the motion, Commissioner Donna Zimmerman said, “I spend a fair amount of time at Lake Wilson, and you know, there’s always been bike trails up there. I’ve seen for years and years people making use of those trails. I’ve noticed recently, entire families with children out riding up there. That’s really a great thing to see.”

Zimmerman’s motion was seconded by Esfeld and passed 5-0.

# Moran comments on effort to block Undersecretary of Memorial Affairs

WASHINGTON, D.C. (TNS) — U.S. Senator Jerry Moran (Kan.) – chairman of the Senate Committee on Veterans’ Affairs – spoke on the Senate floor Thursday to ask unanimous consent to confirm President Trump’s nominee, combat-wounded veteran retired U.S. Army Capt. Sam Brown, to be the Undersecretary of Memorial Affairs at the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), less than two weeks before Memorial Day. If confirmed to this position, Capt. Brown would be responsible for leading the National Cemetery Administration (NCA), where more than 4 million veterans and their loved ones are buried.

“Sam Brown demonstrates a history of service, love of country and commitment to serving other veterans,” said Sen. Moran. “A West Point graduate, Afghanistan combat veteran, husband and father of three, Captain Brown understands the sacrifices the men and women of the United States military and their families make every day and is well-

qualified to undertake this significant responsibility.”

Sen. Moran’s request to confirm Sam Brown by unanimous consent was objected to by Senate Democrats.

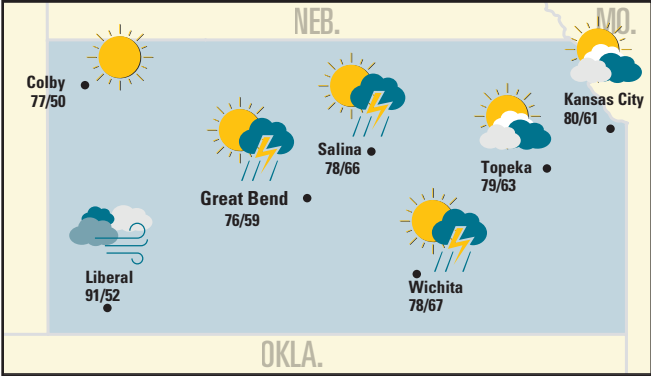
“Laying our veterans to rest with honor, serving their

families with dignity is not a Republican or Democrat issue,” said Sen. Moran. “I am discouraged that we cannot work in a bipartisan manner to confirm this qualified and capable leader for the National Cemetery Administration. That position is

responsible for carrying out our nation’s most solemn responsibility, burying our veterans.”

Kansas has three of NCA’s 156 national cemeteries, and more than 62,000 Kansas veterans and their family members are buried there.

## Forecast: Sunday, May 18, 2025



**GREAT BEND AT A GLANCE**  
Today’s temperatures: High 76° Low 69°  
Precipitation for Friday was 0.00. • Precipitation for the month is 1.07 inches.  
Sunset tonight: 8:43 p.m. • Sunrise tomorrow: 6:22 a.m.

**FRIDAY’S CLOSING**

COMMODITIES	WHIT	MILK	CORN	BNS
Location	4.63	3.39	4.24	9.61
Un Ag	4.63	3.39	4.24	9.61
Ellsworth	4.67	3.57	4.22	9.76
Kansas Common:	49.00			

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## BRIEFLY

### Ellinwood Post 320 hosting Memorial Day Services

The American Legion Post 320 in Ellinwood will host a Memorial Day service, Monday, May 26. Services will be held at St. Peter and Paul Cemetery at 8 a.m., Arkansas River Bridge at 9 a.m. and Lakin-Comanche Cemetery at 10:30 a.m.

Lunch will be served at the American Legion Post 320 building in Ellinwood following the services. Lunch will be free for all Veterans and we are suggesting a freewill donation of \$10 for non-veterans to help support and offset expenses for the American Legion.

Feel free to bring lawn chairs and enjoy a Memorial Day service to honor all Veterans and remember our great country.

### City considers quote for pavement markings

A quote for pavement markings at 10th Street intersections will be considered at the next Great Bend City Council meeting. The council meets at 6:30 p.m. Monday, May 19, at City Hall. Meetings are also livestreamed on the council Facebook page, <https://www.facebook.com/gbcitycouncil/>.

City Connecting Link Improvement Program (CCLIP) offers federal and state funds to cities for enhancing certain roads projects. The City has a CCLIP project starting on May 19 that includes pavement markings. Since Road Safe is already the sub-contractor through Venture Corporation for this work, the City requested a quote from them for additional pavement markings at 10th Street intersections. The quote came in at \$59,312. The administration recommends approval because this approach will save time and money by reducing mobilization costs. Funding will come from the street repair budget.

Other items on the agenda are a garbage and refuse license for The Bin Wranglers out of Hudson, a Bat Cats fireworks show at their opening home game on May 31, and purchase of a Dodge Ram half-ton truck for the Water Department.

### Winkelman to speak on ‘Public Health at Work’

Barton County Health Department Director Karen Winkelman will be the guest speaker when Women for Kansas meets at 2 p.m. Sunday, May 18, at the Front Door Community Center, 1615 10th

St., Great Bend. Winkelman’s topic will be Public Health at Work: Building a Healthier Community.

With 46 years in the nursing profession, and 28 of those years with the Barton County Health Department, Winkelman has seen it all – including dealing with a pandemic. She took the helm as director of the Health Department at the beginning of the pandemic in March 2020 after the previous director announced her retirement. The public is invited to come learn how the department works to keep communities healthy during new challenges of vaccine hesitancy and funding cuts.

For questions contact Pam Martin at 620-285-1083 or email [w4kgreatbend@gmail.com](mailto:w4kgreatbend@gmail.com).

### Larned man charged with two counts of felony battery of an officer

Dustin Barnes, 48 of Larned, appeared Tuesday morning, May 13, in the custody of the Pawnee County Sheriff for first appearances on a two-count felony criminal complaint.

Barnes is charged with battery of a law enforcement officer resulting in bodily harm and interference with law enforcement: resisting felony arrest.

Pawnee County Attorney Douglas McNett reports the charges stem from an incident that occurred west of the Edwards Park Public Golf Course on Monday morning. The Larned Police Department had stopped Barnes, who was on foot at the time, in an attempt to provide a “No Trespass Advisory” that had been requested by a local citizen due to an alleged incident at a private residence earlier that morning. Barnes allegedly became combative and stun guns were deployed multiple times. An officer was treated at the scene for minor injuries.

At the first appearance, Magistrate Judge Julie Cowell advised the defendant of his charges, the possible penalties if convicted, and his constitutional rights, including his right to counsel. If convicted, under the Kansas Sentencing Guidelines the defendant faces between 11 months and 34 months in the custody of the Department of Corrections, depending on his criminal history.

A preliminary hearing has been scheduled for May 27. The defendant remains in the custody of the Pawnee County Sheriff with bond set at \$20,000.

McNett noted that all defendants are presumed innocent until proven guilty.

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