



MAKING CONNECTIONS

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Medicare Part D Premiums Increase for '27

Medicare Part D is a voluntary federal program that helps cover outpatient prescription medications for more than 54 million beneficiaries. Premiums for Part D drug plans are influenced by plan costs, federal subsidies, and beneficiary enrollment choices.

Medicare beneficiaries enrolled in a Part D prescription drug plan have likely received notice from their insurance company about their 2027 premium rates. Many are discovering that monthly premiums will increase next year. Of the 12 plans available, only one is expected to have a lower premium in 2027.

The primary reason for these increases is the expiration of the Medicare Part D Premium Stabilization Demonstration program, which began in January 2025. The program provided temporary subsidies to prescription drug plan sponsors that contract with the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS), helping keep premiums lower for beneficiaries.

The Part D plan with the lowest premium in 2026 is experiencing one of the largest increases. Its monthly premium is rising from \$0.00 in 2026 to \$45.30 in 2027. Meanwhile, the lowest-premium plan available for 2027 will decrease from \$9.60 per month in 2026 to \$5.30 per month in 2027.

These dramatic changes highlight the importance of reviewing and comparing Medicare prescription drug plans each year. Beneficiaries who are not currently taking medi-

cations may have selected the \$0.00 premium plan in 2026. If they do not make a change during open enrollment, they will remain enrolled in that same plan at the new premium of \$45.30 per month.

Medicare beneficiaries with a Part D plan can change their coverage for 2027 during the annual Open Enrollment Period, which runs from October 15 through December 7.

As a Senior Health Insurance Counseling for Kansas (SHICK) certified K-State Extension agent, I can provide unbiased information and resources to help you make an informed decision about your 2027 Medicare Part D coverage.

To schedule an appointment in Council Grove, call K-State Extension at 620-767-5136. In Cottonwood Falls, I partner with the Chase County Senior Center and can be reached through their office at 620-273-8511. The service is free to the public and your information remains confidential.

A word of caution: If you receive an unsolicited phone call, text message, or email encouraging you to call for help selecting a Medicare plan, proceed carefully. These contacts are often scams or marketing efforts by for-profit organizations seeking your business. Some plans marketed through these methods may result in higher out-of-pocket costs. Always verify information through trusted sources before making changes to your Medicare coverage.

Call today to make your appointment to review your options for Medicare Part D.

Kaw Council

(Continued from Page 1)

Fe traders and engaged in the trade. Carson recommended that Peter Joseph establish a mercantile business in Taos, New Mexico, where many Santa Fe Trail traders had gone but decided to open their store in Santa Fe. In 1844, Peter Joseph, Mary Ann, and their infant son, Antonio, led a wagon train to Taos, where they built a store and home. They were neighbors of Kit and Josepha Carson. There store was successful.

During the Taos Revolt following the U.S. military occupation of Santa Fe in 1846, Mary Ann and Antonio were captured by the rebels and returned safely when the revolt was crushed. Peter Joseph died in 1862. Kit Carson was an executor of his estate and helped Mary Ann and her children. She later married a Civil War veteran, Thomas Means, who abused her and was arrested. Mary Ann's son, Antonio, served as New Mexico Territorial delegate to the U.S. Congress for ten years and also held public office in New Mexico. The story of Mary Ann is mostly unknown outside of Taos. This presentation provides details of her historic life.

Leo E. Oliva earned a Ph.D. in American Studies at the University of Denver and taught history at Fort Hays State University. He is author of a dozen books, including military history of the American West, Kansas history, and the Santa Fe Trail. He was a founding member of the Santa Fe Trail Association and edited the quarterly newsletter for 25 years. He has presented more than 400 programs at museums, libraries, and historical societies, and he is currently a member of Humanities Kansas speakers' bureau with a program about Kansas railroads. He is co-authoring a book about women and the Santa Fe Trail. He served on the Kansas Historical Society board of directors for more than 20 years.

The Kaw Mission Councils Lecture Series "Westward Expansion" is sponsored the Kansas Historical Society, Friends of Kaw Heritage, Trembly, Young, and Area Founda-

Stories & Songs of the Flint Hills

by Annie Wilson – named the "Flint Hills Balladeer" by the Kansas Governor



Kansas Native Plant Society - Know Your Plant Neighbors!

"They are our neighbors and have lived here a lot longer than we have. We should know their names," I always say to students when I show them our native grasses.

This is also a core belief of the Kansas Native Plant Society (KNPS): a group of botanists, naturalists, gardeners, landscapers, farmers, ranchers, students, and horticulturists with a passion for the native plants of Kansas. Their mission is "promoting the awareness, appreciation, and stewardship of Kansas native plants."

I first learned about wildflowers and grasses from my father, who believed monitoring pasture plants and careful grazing management was a rancher's fundamental duty. That interest was later fueled by "wildflower tours" led by my district NRCS Conservationist Dale Kirkham, our county Extension Agent Mike Holder, and Professor Tom Eddy.

But that interest became a passion when a friend told me about the Kansas Native Plant Society. I began to attend their plant identification walks, where I was surrounded by experts who seemed to know every

plant – and were excited about them!

KNPS tours can be either on public lands, or on beautiful private lands where owners have granted them special permission. Many are held in the Flint Hills because we have the largest areas of un-plowed, native prairie.

On plant tours, I love leaning down and inspecting the intricate seedheads of a blooming grass or exquisite parts of a flower while one of the KNPS experts tells all about it. We invariably also learn about the butterflies, insects and birds in the vicinity. I love birdwatching but confess I get frustrated when birds fly away and hide in trees. In contrast, plants hold still, and you don't need binoculars to see them.

To further the KNPS mission, other activities include student scholarships, the popular Plant A Prairie program - free native plant gardens for schools and public places, and an information-packed website, always emphasizing the importance of preserving our few remaining areas of native vegetation.

KNPS also holds an Annual Wildflower Weekend gathering for members, and we were honored when they invited Tallgrass Express

to perform at one. No audience understood my songs about the prairie better than that one.

On social media, KNPS shares plant photos, helps people identify their unknown plants, and discusses land management, invasive species, insect relationships, and how to establish native plant habitats around your own home. They sponsor a Native Plant of the Year and Native Plant Month – all designed to help us learn about the prairie.

But I probably get the most out of their monthly newsletters. These are so packed with wonderful information, I want to save each one! They include articles on special plants and natural areas, lists of upcoming plant walks and educational events, how-to guides, book reviews and more.

If anything will help you experience the joy of our Flint Hills native prairie, it is learning even a few of the over 1000 species of forbs, grasses, sedges, rushes, trees, and other woody plants. Then, when you look down into a patch of prairie, instead of seeing a bunch of strangers, you will see "friends" – neighbors whose names you know.

For more stories & songs of the Flint Hills, see tallgrassexpress.com

CARD OF THANKS

Thank you to the family and friends of Kenny Miller for the donations and memorials to the Chase County Senior Center. We have some great stories that involve him. He was a fun guy.

Newspaper Week

(Continued from Page 1)

a community loses part of its shared identity.

Newspapers are not dead. But they are fragile, and they are under pressure.

People still read newspapers. They still value public notices. They still rely on local newspapers to understand their communities.

In other words, they still matter. Maybe now more than ever.

Robb Hicks is a third-generation Wyoming newspaperman and publisher of the Buffalo Bulletin. In 2025, Hicks, his wife Jen Sieve-Hicks, and Rob and Shaylee Mortimore stepped in after eight Wyoming newspapers abruptly closed in 2025. Together, they reopened the papers, restored local news coverage and kept those communities from becoming news deserts. Today, their growing newspaper group is focused on finding sustainable ways to preserve strong, locally owned journalism in rural communities.

Tallgrass Prairie

(Continued from Page 1)

history in which local people played a significant role. The debate over preservation of the tallgrass prairie involved questions of private property, conservation and the future of the Flint Hills landscape before a compromise was eventually reached.

The TPNR, located near Strong City, was established in 1996 and preserves a portion of the tallgrass prairie that once covered much of the central United States.

Those unable to attend the Museum After Hours program in Topeka will still be able to watch. The presentation will be streamed live on YouTube at 6:30 p.m. Friday, Oct. 9.

tions, and trusts. The City of Council Grove. A \$3 suggested donation will be collected. For more information contact 620-307-2754 or mark.brooks@ks.gov

Publisher's Pundits

(Continued from Page 1)

local businesses, churches, organizations, sports teams and, most importantly, the people who make up a community have their stories recorded. Schlageck's piece was written a decade ago, but its message about the value of grassroots journalism is one I believe is well worth repeating today.

Nancy Dosien wins

(Continued from Page 1)

gals 22-17; the Dallas Cowboys beat the Houston Texans 34-30; and the Green Bay Packers defeated the Tampa Bay Buccaneers 17-14.

The Minnesota Vikings earned a 15-10 win over the Miami Dolphins, the San Francisco 49ers defeated the Denver Broncos 24-14 and the Indianapolis Colts topped the Washington Commanders 30-13. The Chicago Bears defeated the New York Jets 23-12, the New York Giants beat the Arizona Cardinals 36-24 and the Seattle Seahawks topped the Los Angeles Chargers 30-23.

In the college games, the Kansas Jayhawks shut out the Middle Tennessee Blue Raiders 55-0, while the Iowa State Cyclones edged the West Virginia Mountaineers 45-42.

We LOVE LOCAL Businesses

Thornton to undergo ankle surgery after injury in win over Raiders

KANSAS CITY, Mo. -- After a gruesome injury cut short the best game of his career, Kansas City Chiefs wide receiver Tyquan Thornton is now preparing for surgery later this week that could give him a chance to return this season.

According to NFL Network insider Ian Rapoport, Thornton suffered a dislocated ankle in Sunday's 30-27 win over the Las Vegas Raiders.

The injury, which happened as

Thornton was tackled on a critical 55-yard gain late in the fourth quarter, will require surgery "within the week," according to Rapoport. Extensive tests were conducted Monday on Thornton's ankle after his ankle was put back into place by team doctors and he was able to fly home to Kansas City with his teammates.

"Tyquan Thornton is expected back within 12 to 16 weeks," Rapoport said sources told him. "He'll have surgery within the week and there is a real chance at a late-season or playoff return."



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