

The Prairie Doc

“Back to School, Back to Bedtime: Why Sleep Routines Matter”

By Nikki Eining CSW-PIP, QMHP

If bedtime has drifted an hour or two later over the summer, nothing has gone wrong. Late sunsets, camp schedules, vacations, and relaxed screen rules all nudge a child's internal clock later. Pulling that clock back toward a school-year schedule is real work, and it usually takes a couple of weeks of consistent effort, not one good night. It is also normal to experience some protest, stalling and a few rough mornings along the way. Sleep problems and irregular bedtimes are extremely common in childhood; roughly 20% to 30% of children are affected by insomnia at some point, so families who struggle with this are in the majority, not the minority.

It is important to be aware of the appropriate amount of sleep for your child's developing body. The American Academy of Pediatrics endorses these nightly sleep targets:

- Preschool (3–5 years): 10–13 hours, including naps
- School age (6–12 years): 9–12 hours
- Teens (13–18 years): 8–10 hours

Sleep is one of the strongest levers parents have over a child's mood and behavior. Getting the recommended hours is linked to better attention, learning, memory, emotional regulation, and mental health, while too little sleep is associated with depression, obesity, and high blood pressure.

The behavioral effects show up quickly. In studies where children's sleep was experimentally extended or restricted, kids sleeping close to 10 hours had better emotional stability, less restless and impulsive behavior at school, and a more positive mood than kids sleeping about 8 hours. Short sleep impairs the brain's "brakes" (impulse control and flexible thinking), which is why an under-slept child melts down over things they would otherwise shrug off.

If you find yourself just beginning to work on nighttime routine and sleep habits, there is good news. Children whose sleep improves over time show measurable declines in both emotional and behavioral problems. Working on sleep is not just damage control; it is an intervention to support wanted emotional and behavioral outcomes.

What are recommended

strategies?

The American Academy of Pediatrics encourages using the 4Bs. Bathe, brush, books, bed. Using a consistent, predictable, calming sequence in the same order each night signals to the brain and the body that sleep is coming. This works for teens too, in an age-appropriate form.

Keep screens off for at least an hour before bedtime, and keep phones, tablets, and TVs out of the bedroom overnight. It is normal for children and teens to play music at night. Instead of using a tablet or a phone, purchase an alarm clock with digital music ability or a radio. Creating a nighttime playlist that can be played nightly is a predictable and consistent habit that signals to the brain and body it is time for sleep.

Consistency is what makes falling asleep and waking up easier. Try to keep weekend and vacation evenings consistent with weekdays.

Sunlight in the morning helps reset the internal clock. Open windows, turn on a light, or even get outside if you can.

Monitor caffeine intake. School-age children should not consume caffeine after noon. Common hidden sources include iced tea, chocolate, soda, and certain flavored waters. In a world where energy drinks and Starbucks are popular, educate your adolescent about how caffeine impacts sleep. Research identifies that adolescents consuming energy drinks are 4.5 times more likely to sleep fewer than 6 hours

As always, annual well-child visits with your Primary Care Physician are vital. This is an opportunity to work together on strategies to support healthy sleep habits and to discuss if your child snores regularly or has pauses in breathing, is very sleepy during the day despite adequate time in bed, takes a long time to fall asleep most nights, or wakes repeatedly. These difficult experiences are treatable, and they deserve evaluation rather than more willpower.

The American Academy of Pediatrics healthychildren.org is a great resource for parents. Under the “Healthy Living” tab, you will find multiple articles and resources on exploring appropriate curfews, bunk bed safety, separation anxiety, and more.

Resources
The Role of the Pediatrician in the

Promotion of Healthy, Active Living. Pediatrics. 2024. Muth ND, Bolling C, Hannon T, Sharifi M.

Longitudinal Association of Nighttime Sleep Duration With Emotional and Behavioral Problems in Early Childhood: Results From the Danish Healthy Start Study.

Sleep. 2021. Zheng M, Rangan A, Olsen NJ, Heitmann BL.

Consensus Statement of the American Academy of Sleep Medicine on the Recommended Amount of Sleep for Healthy Children: Methodology and Discussion. Journal of Clinical Sleep Medicine : JCSM : Official Publication of the American Academy of Sleep Medicine. lullab2016. Paruthi S, Brooks LJ, D'Ambrosio C.

Association Between Objectively Measured Sleep Duration and Symptoms of Psychiatric Disorders in Middle Childhood. JAMA Network Open. 2019. Ranum BM, Wichstrøm L, Pallesen S.

Nikki Eining is a private independent practice licensed social worker who serves as the Statewide Pediatric Mental Health Care Access Program Coordinator for The USD Center for Disabilities and Owner of Grace Grit Growth Counseling LLC in Brookings, SD. Nikki brings a diverse set of experiences and passions spending over 18 years working in the mental health field. Her previous experience has focused on supporting youth and families in office, school, and community settings without outpatient behavioral health services and prevention programming. She has professional experience in clinical mental health, education, research design, non-profit, program development, and trauma-informed care practices.

Nikki is passionate about trauma and healing-informed practices, the power of protective factors and collaboration across communities to help decrease barriers for youth and families. Nikki is a Theraplay Level 1, 2 and Group trained therapist, SAPST trained prevention provider, and an ACE Interface Certified educator.Follow The Prairie Doc® at www.prairiedoc.org, Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, and Tik Tok. Prairie Doc Programming includes On Call with the Prairie Doc®, a medical Q&A show (most Thursdays at 7pm on SDPB, YouTube and streaming on Facebook), 2 podcasts, and a Radio program (on SDPB, Sundays at 6am and 1pm).

Edward Jones

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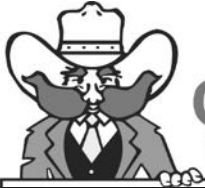


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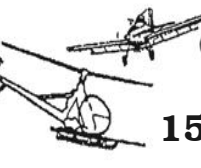
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PUBLIC NOTICE

(First published in The Hugoton Hermes, Thursday, August 20, 2026) 3t

IN THE DISTRICT COURT OF STEVENS COUNTY, KANSAS

IN THE MATTER OF THE ESTATE OF CHERYL J. FREED, Deceased

Case No. SV-2026-PR-000018

NOTICE OF HEARING

STATE OF KANSAS, TO ALL PERSONS CONCERNED:

You are hereby notified that a Petition has been filed in this court by Timothy Gale Freed, as an heir of Cheryl J. Freed, deceased, praying for the determination of the descent of all of the property described in the Petition and all other property, both real and personal, owned by decedent in

Kansas at the time of death, along with Approval of a Valid Family Settlement Agreement; and you are hereby required to file your written defenses thereto on or before, September 21, 2026 at 9:00 a.m., of said day, in said court, in the City of Hugoton, in Stevens County, Kansas, at which time and place said cause will be heard. Should you fail therein, judgment and decree will be entered in due course upon said Petition.

Timothy Gale Freed
Petitioner

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PUBLIC NOTICE

(First published in The Hugoton Hermes, Thursday, August 20, 2026) 3t

IN THE DISTRICT COURT OF STEVENS COUNTY, KANSAS

IN THE MATTER OF THE ESTATE OF CHARLES W. HARPER, DECEASED

Case No Case No. SV-2026-PR-000019

NOTICE OF HEARING AND NOTICE TO CREDITORS

THE STATE OF KANSAS TO ALL PERSONS CONCERNED:

You are hereby notified that on 13th day of August, 2026, a Petition was filed in this Court by Craig Harper, an heir, devisee, and legatee, and Executor named in the Last Will and Testament of Charles W. Harper, deceased, dated April 2, 2019 praying that the Will filed with the Petition be admitted to probate and record; and that Craig Harper be appointed as Executor, without bond.

You are required to file your written defenses thereto on or before the 21st day of September, 2026, at 9:00 o'clock a.m., of said day, in this Court, in the City of Hugoton, in Stevens County, Kansas, at which time and place the cause will be heard. Should you fail, judgment and decree will be entered in due course upon the Petition.

All creditors of the above-named decedent are notified to exhibit their demands against the estate within the later of (i) four (4) months from the date of first publication of this notice, as provided by law; or (ii) thirty (30) days after actual notice is given to any creditor. Creditors are notified that if their demands are not thus exhibited, they shall be forever barred.

Craig Harper, Petitioner

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Shading Sycamores

Insight

By Chuck Voelker
Montgomery County Rancher

Let's take stroll back to Vacation Bible School many years ago. One of the songs we learned at the McLouth non-denominational event was about a wee little man named Zacchaeus who climbed up in a sycamore tree. Centuries later, I have an issue with that particular species of tree.

What a hot summer we've had thus far! My wife and I are fortunate to have a plethora of mature trees to provide nearly all-day shade for most of the house as well as much of the backyard. Red oaks, white oaks, maples, elms, walnuts, pecans, sweet gums and a row of green ash to provide some relief, as well as habitat for numerous bird species and at least 17 squirrels. But there is one tree in particular I want to discuss at length: the American Sycamore.

We only have one of these nearby. It stands proudly 5.5 feet from the west side of the house, and overhangs three-

fourths of the garage and half of the house. At four feet above ground level, it is 3 feet in diameter. It is approximately very tall. Among its many benefits are shade, and, well, that's it. Shade.

This tree is a year-round menace. While its 4- to 8-inch leaves help to provide a wonderful protective canopy, when they begin to drop, holy cow what a mess! During hot dry summers, it will start selectively dispersing leaves to help maintain its reserves. And so, these nearly plate-sized vegetative nuisances create premature thatch. I usually just reduce their unwanted mass with the lawn-mower. Aphids also frequently feed on the leaves, excreting a sticky, sugary liquid that coats cars and outdoor furniture underneath.

As the tree grows, it sheds its bark: white, greenish and reddish-brown mottled rind that sheds in thin plates, creating a camouflage appearance on the tree.

But on the ground, holy cow what a mess! Not just little chunks, but long strips that gently float to indiscriminate landing spots; wind-shields, planting beds, walkways, clean gravel driveways or wherever the breeze of the day dictates.

Have I mentioned it also bears fruit? Well, not in the sense of anything edible or remotely useful. It bears thousands of distinctive spherical fruit balls, an inch or so wide, hanging on 3- to 6-inch stalks. They will also be expelled during dry times, but typically will turn brown, persist through winter, and eventually break apart into tiny, hairy seeds. You're lucky, your cat will carry one into the garage and play with it long enough on the rug in front of your house entry door and scatter the fine fluff to the point a leaf blower is even useless.

Yes, as a woodworker I've used sycamore in various projects. Quarter-sawn sycamore

is valued for its distinctive flake or ray fleck patterns, which are more pronounced than in plain-sawn cuts. The quality and consistency of these patterns can greatly influence the visual appeal of the finished piece. Sycamore as firewood rates somewhere between green ash and silver maple, but it needs to be seasoned as the wood actually holds a lot of water.

I'm sure ol' Zacchaeus wasn't too particular about which tree he climbed, he just wanted a better view. But from my point of view, I wish he'd chosen a more landscape friendly one.

"Insight" is a weekly column published by Kansas Farm Bureau, the state's largest farm organization whose mission is to strengthen agriculture and the lives of Kansans through advocacy, education and service.

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