



Smith Center Chamber Banquet
March 21st @ the VFW in Smith Center
Doors open at 5:30 PM
RSVP to the Chamber Office at 785-282-3895

THE *Smith County* PIONEER

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SCMH announces new Tele-Behavioral Health Services

Life changes fast. Losing a job, caring for aging parents, getting a new diagnosis, struggling with relationships, or facing financial pressure can leave anyone overwhelmed. Many people have similar experiences. Nearly one in five U.S. adults regularly faces anxiety or depression. Rates are even higher in rural communities.

To meet this need, Smith County Family Practice joined the Kansas Rural Tele-Behavioral Health Network. This initiative links rural clinics with behavioral health resources, enabling patients to access counseling and mental health care more quickly without leaving their communities.

Integrated Behavioral Health uses a team approach to bring mental health services into primary care. This integration improves access, allows for earlier intervention, and helps create personalized care plans that address both mental and physical health needs.

As part of this program, the clinic added nurse behavioral health care managers. These nurses work with primary care providers to help patients create care plans and get ongoing support. Patients receive help for anxiety, grief, stress, relationships, or financial issues. Patients who need more support can access counseling and psychiatric specialists via telehealth.

This benefit ensures patients receive expert help for complex concerns like PTSD, bipolar disorder, and substance use disorders.

With telehealth, patients connect face-to-face with specialists from home or a private location. This makes it easier for people in rural areas to access care. Our providers believe mental and emotional health matter as much as physical health. This program ensures our community has compassionate support when needed.

For information about integrated behavioral health services through Smith County Family Practice, call (785) 282-6834. You are not alone.

USDA staffing shortages could threaten Farm Program

According to NAFEC, the group of farmers and ranchers all across the nation elected to serve on local FSA Committees, continued understaffing in our local FSA Service Centers is creating major problems getting the work done to deliver programs that producers need to survive. We have FSA offices across the country that have no employees in them and are only open one day a week. There are also many more with only one employee.

As a result, when someone is sick or on earned vacation, the offices are closed. To make matters worse, FSA is still under a general hiring freeze for permanent employees. In some cases temporary employees can be hired. However, spending six months

training a temporary employee, only to lay them off, is a waste of time and financial resources.

USDA has the funding approved by Congress to lift the hiring freeze. We need all hands-on deck during these difficult times. NAFEC's job is to support and advocate for our Farm Service Agency's local offices to be able to provide the programs and support for our local farmers and ranchers. From local natural disasters to low prices and the need for emergency payments, we as Farmer Elected Committees and our FSA County Employees, are here to help our producers. The work needed cannot be accomplished only using computers; you need employees for the input to create the pay-

ments producers are eligible for.

NAFEC also has concerns that moving the headquarters staff to regional centers will make it more difficult for commodity organizations and groups such as NAFEC to meet with the decision makers currently located in one spot. These moves may also disrupt USDA's work which is required to keep our local offices functioning to serve producers. Finally, NAFEC wants to make sure policy makers keep their eye on the deepening farm crises across Rural America. We desperately need USDA to keep providing programs to help family producers survive this looming crises.

Veterans Town Hall and Health Fair scheduled in Kensington

Veterans across north central Kansas and south central Nebraska are invited to attend the Fourth Annual Veterans Town Hall and Health Fair on Saturday, March 28, at the American Legion Hall in Kensington, Kansas. The event helps veterans connect directly with representatives who can assist them with health care enrollment, benefits, and available support services.

A free-will donation breakfast will be served from 8:30 to 10:00 a.m., followed by the Town Hall and Health Fair from 10:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.

The event will feature representatives from the Kansas and Nebraska VA Health Care System and the Kansas Office of Veterans Services, who will be available to help veterans sign up on the spot for VA health care and other earned benefits. Veterans should bring

their DD-214.

The event makes it easier for veterans and their families to access information and services in one place.

"This Town Hall is about making sure our veterans know they are not alone and that help is available," Charles Griffith, the event organizer, said. "We want veterans to leave with the information and connections they need to support their health and well-being."

Attendees will have access to a wide range of resources and educational topics, including:

The PACT Act and expanded VA benefits

Care in the Community programs

The COMPACT Act and Mission Act

Women's veteran health services

State benefits and property tax programs

What's new for veterans in 2026

QPR suicide prevention information

Telehealth services

Education and trade school opportunities

Mobility and accessibility assistance

Local and regional partners participating in the event include High Plains Mental Health, Smith County Health Department, Valley Hope, Smoky Hill Foundation, and the Smith County Drug & Alcohol Council.

The event is hosted by Smith County Memorial Hospital, the Kensington American Legion Fred Marran Post, and the Office of U.S. Senator Roger Marshall.

Veterans from across the region are encouraged to attend and bring questions about their health care, benefits, and available support programs.



A Dose of Sunshine

This little lady is catching some sunrays after lunch. Warm temps only lasted the first part of the week. She was born the first of March.

Joleen Brewer/SCP

IRS warns taxpayers about scams

The Internal Revenue Service today announced its annual Dirty Dozen list of tax scams for 2026 that threaten the tax and financial information of taxpayers, businesses, and tax professionals.

The Dirty Dozen is part

of a broader campaign conducted through the Security Summit, a partnership among the IRS, state tax agencies, and the nation's tax industry, and reinforced by outreach efforts tied to National Slam the Scam

•Continued on page 9

Community EVENTS

SMITH COUNTY COMMUNITY CONNECTION

Submit your "Community Connection" the Pioneer today!

Stop By the Office or Call 785-282-3371
 Email your notice to pioneer@ruraltel.net

Upcoming Events

March 17- St. Parick's Day/Chamber Board Meeting @ 5:15pm

March 21- Smith Center Chamber of Commerce Banquet. Doors open at 5:30pm @ the VFW in SC

March 29- Palm Sunday

April 3- Good Friday

April 5- Easter Sunday

Regular Meetings

Smith Co. Commission, Mondays at 8:30 a.m.

USD #237 School Board, 2nd Monday of each month at 7 p.m.

S. C. City Council, 2nd and 4th Mondays of each month at 6pm

Deadlines: Mondays at noon for ads. Fridays for Legals and Obituaries

Regular Meetings

Smith Co. CommissionMondays at 8:30 a.m.

USD #237 School Board2nd Mondays at 7 p.m.

USD #110 School Board2nd Mondays at 7 p.m.

Smith Center City2nd and 4th Mondays at 6 p.m.

Kensington City2nd Mondays at 5 p.m.

Lebanon City2nd Tuesdays at 7 p.m.

Gaylord City2nd Wednesdays at 7 p.m.

Athol City1st Mondays at 7 p.m.

Cedar City1st Monday at 7 p.m.

Deadline: Mondays at noon for 'Community Connection' notices.

inside:

This week:
 Weekly Moviepg 2
 Townshippg 3
 Opinionpg 4-5
 Community News..pg 8
 Classifiedspg 11
See more inside!

Obituaries
 Bill Long
 Page 2

Church
 Church service information
 Page 3

Opinion page
 Editorials, cartoons & more!
 Pages 4-5

Letter to the Editor
 Voices from all corners!
 Page 5

Meeting minutes
 Page 8



Page 10

Smith Center City Council Meeting
March 31st @6pm

Call Joleen at 785*282*3371 to get your Church Easter information listed in the Pioneer

SCHS
Thursday, 3/12
 - Last day of the 3rd-9 weeks
 - 8th Grade Field Trip
Friday, 3/13
 - No School: Teacher Flex Day
Saturday, 3/14 - Sunday, 3/22
 - SPRING BREAK!! No School
Good Luck, Lady Red & Redmen!!

Weekend Outlook

FRIDAY
 High: 64°F Low: 40°F
 Partly cloudy

SATURDAY
 High: 71°F Low: 36°F
 Partly cloudy

SUNDAY
 High: 45°F Low: 22°F
 Partly cloudy skies with gusty winds 20-30 mph

Information from The Weather Channel printed is current as of press time; subject to change

Crop Report
 Prices effective at closing of March 11, 2026 courtesy of Trinity Ag in Smith Center
 WHEAT...\$5.35
 CORN...\$3.73
 MILO. \$3.28
 SOYBEANS...\$ 10.94

Growing to meet your financial needs, while keeping our focus on individual services.
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