Kansas Association of Retired School Personnel

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UNIT NEWS

Smith County

The Smith County Retired School Personnel unit held their September meeting on the 4th at the St. Mary's Catholic Church parish hall in Smith Center, KS. Mike and Beccy Isom prepared a sirloin steak dinner with salad, baked potatoes, and homemade rolls. Joan Nech prepared dessert with a brownie sundae.

Sixteen members and guests attended with two potential new members checking the unit out. Membership was the main topic of business with unit president Mike Isom reporting on the $100 membership grant given by KARSP. Isom challenged the members to bring one prospective individual to the December meeting. A drawing was held with the lucky winner taking a very nice fall arrangement which was created and donated by Mike and Beccy Isom.

Mike Isom also reported on the September 11, 2001 memorial ceremony that will be held on the 25th anniversary of the tragic events at the Smith Center vs Phillipsburg football game. Isom wrote the ceremony, got the Kensington American Legion and the Smith Center VFW to perform the ceremony. The ceremony will occur prior to the rival Smith Center vs Phillipsburg football game on September 11, 2026. A highlight will be students from both schools carrying a 30x50 foot American Flag across the football field. The two service organizations will have a color guard and a firing squad. Taps will be played by an army veteran who is a math teacher at Smith Center High School.

Isom used this ceremony as an example of volunteer work that helps the community. By organizing the event, he assisted the Smith Center High School principal Travis Elliott which would have been time consuming for him. Isom relied on his prior military service to write and contact the veteran organizations. Just an example of how we retirees can still serve our communities that we live in.



Thanks to Mike Isom for submitting this report.

Dickinson County

The Program was about the CEO Dickinson County program where Junior and Senior students from 4 schools in the county –Abilene, Chapman, Solomon, and Herington can fill out an application to be part of the program. 40 county businesses donate dollars to the program where they visit businesses, business leaders meet with them and they get to take part in the business where they learn skills needed in that place of work. Entrepreneurial skills, communication skills, budgeting, and creating their own businesses are just part of the learning experience.

(Continued on Page 3)

NOW THAT THE HEAT HAS BROKEN, IT'S TIME FOR US TO GET READY FOR WINTER



Jerry Henn
KARSP Executive Director

After a long, hot summer, cooler temperatures are finally arriving, and many of us are ready to enjoy some fresh air. Fall is a wonderful time of year, especially for us experienced retired employees who have spent much of the summer trying to stay cool. But before we get too comfortable with the cooler weather, now is a good time to start preparing for the winter months ahead.

One of the first things to do is get your home ready for colder temperatures. Check your furnace or heating system to make sure it is working properly. If you haven't had it serviced in a while, consider scheduling a maintenance check. Replace furnace filters, check smoke and carbon monoxide detectors, and make sure windows and doors are sealed to keep the cold air out. A little preparation now can help prevent an uncomfortable—and potentially expensive—surprise when the first cold spell arrives.

Fall is also a great time to take care of outdoor chores before winter weather makes them more difficult. Clean out gutters, put away garden hoses, and check sidewalks and steps for loose boards, cracks, or other hazards. Make sure outdoor lights are working and that you have a supply of ice melt or sand for slippery walkways. If you need help with these jobs, don't hesitate to ask family members, neighbors, or someone you trust. There is no need to climb a ladder or risk a fall just to save a few dollars.

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KARSP

STRENGTH IN UNITY

Winter preparation also means taking care of yourself. As temperatures drop, make sure you have warm clothing, gloves, hats, and comfortable shoes with good traction. Keep blankets handy and check your supply of necessary medications. If you take medication regularly, plan ahead so you don't run out during a snowstorm or icy weather. It is also wise to keep some easy-to-prepare food, bottled water, flashlights, batteries, and a charged cell phone available in case winter weather makes it difficult to leave home.

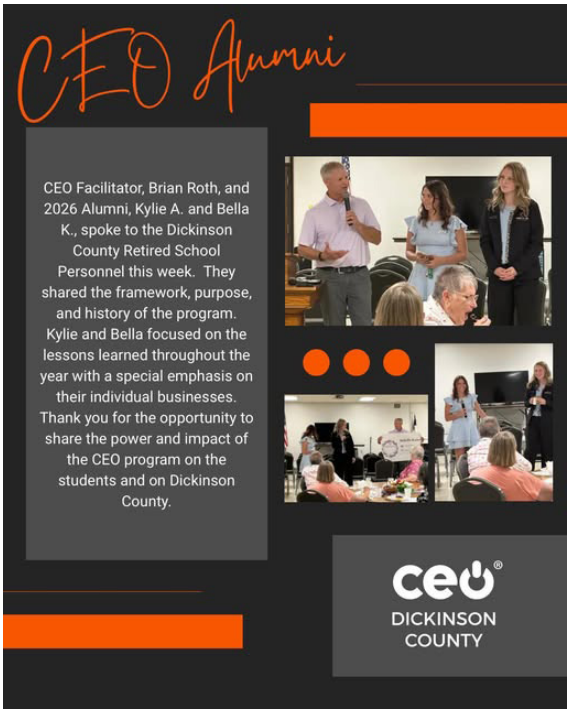
Another important part of getting ready for winter is staying connected with others. Shorter days and colder weather can sometimes lead to more time spent indoors and less social activity. Make plans to stay in touch with friends, family, and neighbors. A regular phone call, lunch with a friend, or participation in a community activity can make winter more enjoyable. If you know another senior who lives alone, check in on them from time to time. A simple phone call can make a big difference.

Finally, don't forget to enjoy the beautiful days that fall has to offer. Take a walk when the weather is pleasant, enjoy the changing leaves, visit with friends, or spend time outdoors while the temperatures are comfortable. Getting ready for winter doesn't mean giving up the fun of fall. It simply means taking a few steps now so you can be safer, more comfortable, and better prepared when the cold weather arrives.

The bottom line: We may be glad that the summer heat has finally broken, but winter will be here before we know it. A little planning today can help make the coming months safer, healthier, and more enjoyable. And remember, asking for a little help now is much easier than trying to fix a problem when the snow is blowing and the temperature is below freezing!

As always, protect yourself and your family. Stay warm this winter and make sure you get out to vote.

(Continued from page 1, Unit News)



During the business portion of the meeting, four new members were welcomed to the group: Sonya Anders, Tim Johnson, Jenna Langvardt, and Donna Reynolds. The local group was awarded a membership grant by the state association to help in recruitment of new members. Anyone who has worked in the schools and is now retired can call membership chair Debbie Elliott or President Tom Schwartz to join the local association. Each year an education scholarship of $500 is awarded to a student taking classes to become an educator. This year the scholarship was given to Hilary Katzenmeier working to complete her FACS education degree.

Wendy Klosterman talked about the PFAC report at Memorial Hospital and also about how members of DCRSP turned in almost 6,200 volunteer hours in the last year. The dollars collected at the September meeting were given to the Abilene Core Community

program. Reports were given by Tom Schwartz on his participation in the Silver Haired Legislature and the work they are presently doing to set the priorities for the next legislative session. He also talked about the upcoming elections and the importance of voting for people who represent your beliefs.

Thanks to Tom Schwartz for submitting this information.

Leavenworth Area Retired School Personnel Association

Hello to everyone from the Leavenworth Area Retired School Personnel Association! LARSPA has some exciting news to share.

Each year we donate money to our county libraries that hold summer reading programs for kids. This year we were acknowledged by the Lansing City Library in the Lansing Connection publication for our donation.

A local member, Jim Mathis, was recognized in the Leavenworth Times by the Leavenworth City Rec Department. Jim, who coached and played tennis for years, received recognition for his years of service organizing tennis tournaments held in Leavenworth in the spring and the fall. Over 56 years Jim has organized 136 tournaments and kept all the tournament records. These tournaments had different age brackets. There is a plaque hanging on the wall by the Rec Department at the Leavenworth Riverfront Community Center that displays the names of every winner winning four or more tournaments.

In August, we held an Ice Cream Social for members and prospective members. This year was our second annual event. Both years have been productive in bringing in new members. Our third annual social will be held in August 2027.

After each of our meetings we have a program. This month we were honored to have the co-founder, Elaine Belardo, of The Deeper Window Association, a 501(c)3 organization dedicated to aiding families navigate dementia. Elaine and her husband, (Ret.) Rear Admiral Jose' H. Belardo, MSW, JD, founded The Deeper Window Association after he was diagnosed with early-stage Alzheimer's. Jose' passed away from this disease at the age of 50. The organization encourages families to have proactive courage and true hope. Services and social engagement programs are provided to those living with dementia along with support groups, education, and resources for the caregiver(s). What started out as one day a week services and activities is now up to three days a week staffed by volunteers with the hope of expanding the facility. With expansion more relatable service and programs can be provided, for example, agricultural events for farmers diagnosed with dementia. Some of our members volunteer at The Deeper Window Association. We were able to collect and donate $190 to this very much needed organization.

With the help of the First United Methodist Church in Leavenworth, Elaine also organized a support group for widows of all ages of which some of our members participate in the monthly activities.

Our October program will be Landon's Legacy that is another non-profit started by a family that lost their high school senior in a car accident in the fall of 2023. Landon's Legacy is set up to assist lower income students with items needed to help them be able to achieve graduating without the struggle for the smaller things so many students take for granted, such as bookbags, clothes, shoes, sports fees, etc. Our November program is going to be our local S.W.A.T., and they will be bringing the "Bear Cat" for us to see.

That's ALL FOLKS!
Sue Lednicky, Acting President

Cowley County Area
This unit's September meeting was held on September 23 at Pizza Ranch in Ark City. They had a traditional "Getting To Know You" meeting. At the beginning of the school year they handed out New Teacher Totes, Caring for Kids Hygiene Bags, and Feminine Products Pouches. Schools receiving the Teacher Totes were Ark City, Cedar Vale, Winfield, and Oxford. Teachers in these schools were also encouraged to apply for the KARSP Foundation Grants for 2027. Cedar Vale requested 10 Boy Hygiene bags and 10 Girl Hygiene Bags. Oxford requested 25 Feminine Products Pouches. The schools were all very appreciative of these donations.

Thanks to Tamara Butcher for submitting their newsletter to the Meadowlark.

GETTING READY FOR THE NOVEMBER 3 ELECTION?

This election season, as you attend forums or even have candidates for state office, including governor, knocking on your door, here are some great questions to raise:

- If elected, will you support a Kansas Public Employees Retirement System cost of living adjustment?
- If elected, will you include funding for KPERS COLA in your annual budget recommendations? (Gubernatorial candidates only)
- If elected, will you publicly support a KPERS COLA?

Stay updated!

Be sure to visit ksretirees.org for additional information.



WE, THE PEOPLE

As I read Ernie's words in the preceding article, I was reminded of the beginning of the constitution written in 1776…We, the people, need to take our state and country back. As retired educators we need to educate ourselves on the candidates, ask those questions, and we need to VOTE. We cannot wait for someone else to take care of us; we need to do all we can to make sure those who are elected are there for the best interest of each of us and of our nation and state. I appreciate all of the work Ernie and Jerry do for our organization to keep us informed. We need to follow their advice and do all WE can.

Dee Schwinn, Meadowlark editor.

THE KARSP BOARD WILL MEET ON OCTOBER 9, 2026 IN GODDARD AT THEIR CENTRAL OFFICE AT 10:00 A.M.