

# Santa event planned at library

**John Richmeier**  
Leavenworth Times

Santa is coming to the Leavenworth Public Library.

The library's annual Saturday with Santa event is scheduled to take place from 10 a.m. to noon Saturday. The library is located at 417 Spruce St.

The event is free and open to the public.

Library Director Matthew Nojonen said the event generally draws between 150 and 200 children.

"It's usually a very good crowd," he said.

He said each child will receive a free book from Santa Claus.

According to the library's website, there will also be crafts and other activities for children as well as snacks.

The library requires children who are under the age of 9 to be accompanied by a parent, adult guardian or responsible caregiver who is 16 or older.

# Year-end holiday travel expected to set record

## AAA Kansas

AAA projects 122.4 million Americans will travel at least 50 miles from home over the 13-day year-end holiday period beginning Dec. 20 and ending Jan. 1. This year's forecast is a 2.2% increase over 2024, surpassing last year's record of 119.7 million travelers.

Nearly 1.25 million Kansans will be traveling during the holidays, up 1% from last year. Nearly 92% of them, or 1.14 million, will drive to their destinations. More than 43,000 Kansans will travel by air,

while another 50,500 will go on cruises or travel by train or bus.

"Year-end travel is a mix of family road trips, friend getaways, and tropical vacations" said Stacey Barber, vice president of AAA Travel. "Holiday celebrations look different for everyone, but a common thread is the desire to travel, whether it's returning to your hometown or exploring new destinations."

AAA projects 109.5 million Americans will travel by car for their year-end trips, an increase of 2% compared to last year. Driving is

the overwhelming favorite among all modes of transportation because of its convenience and low cost. This year, 89% of holiday travelers nationally will take road trips.

Gas prices are lower compared to last holiday season when the national average was \$3.04 to end 2024. For the first time in 4 years, the national average dropped below \$3 a gallon this month, and prices could continue dropping as 2025 comes to a close. According to AAA's Fuel Prices tracker, as of Dec. 10, the average gas price in Kansas is \$2.60, which is 10th lowest in the nation.

## County

Continued from A1

August, Flee and co-defendant Jessica Flee pleaded no contest to misdemeanor cruelty to animals. They were charged after a poodle they owned was found abandoned and severely malnourished near Tonganoxie Drive and 199th Street.

The two women were sentenced to probation and told they could not possess any animals while on probation.

Amanda Flee continued to live at the rural Tonganoxie residence. She was ordered to serve a 10-day jail sanction in November after it was discovered she continued to have multiple animals on the property, according to a news release from the County Attorney's Office.

Kyle Anderson, environmental technician and code enforcement officer for the county, said Wednesday that water and electricity had been shut off to the house multiple times during the last year. He said water is currently shut off. If water service were to be restored,

the house's septic system would fail because of a significant leak.

Anderson said county staff determined after an inspection that the home is unfit for human habitation.

A sign declaring the home uninhabitable was posted on the property Nov. 20.

John Jacobson, director of planning and zoning for the county, said Wednesday's hearing formalized the placard that had been posted at the house. He said the hearing also gave the responding party the opportunity to make their case.

No one spoke during the hearing on behalf of the property owners. But a volunteer who helped remove dogs from the property spoke Wednesday as well as a neighbor of the property.

County Counselor Misty Brown said she does not believe anyone is living at the property now.

"If there is, there shouldn't be," Jacobson said.

He said the placard posted at the entrance to the home prohibits occupancy. He said this can be enforced by the Leavenworth County Sheriff's Office.

Brown said the homeowners will be provided a letter concerning their due process rights.

"They can appeal the matter to district court, or if they agree, they can proceed with either tearing down the structure or remodeling the structure so it is up to code," she said.

Jacobson said the property owners would have to produce a plan for addressing problems at the residence. He said the Leavenworth County Planning and Zoning Department would follow up to make sure the house meets the minimum criteria for an inhabitable space.

If nothing is done, the structure will continue to be considered uninhabitable, he said.

The vote to approve the order was 3-0. Commissioners Mike Smith and Willie Dove were absent.

Also Wednesday, commissioners approved a request for the county to vacate a portion of Fall Leaf Road.

Even though a right-of-way was established for the road, it had never been developed.

## Street

Continued from A1

The plan is being put together as part of a study that is looking at Seventh Street between Fort Leavenworth and Haymarket Square.

Wednesday's event was the second open house to be hosted by representatives of the project. The open house featured display boards of concepts being considered for things such as traffic calming strategies and a gateway monument at the north end of the corridor. One display board listed lighting and bike and pedestrian paths as project priorities.

The city of Leavenworth received a \$58,500 Planning Sustainable Places grant last year for the corridor study. The grant was awarded through the Mid-America Regional Council.

A website has been set up for the project. It

can be found at [experience.arcgis.com/experience/8b5e71b89f544404abf1bfd57563c3b2/page/HOME-PAGE](https://experience.arcgis.com/experience/8b5e71b89f544404abf1bfd57563c3b2/page/HOME-PAGE).

The website includes an interactive map that allows people to mark locations along the corridor where they believe additional parking or cosmetic enhancements are needed. People can also mark locations where they think conditions are unsafe for pedestrians.

People can also mark locations to make other suggestions for the corridor.

According to a schedule posted on the website, the plan resulting from the study will be presented in February, first to the Leavenworth Planning Commission and then the City Commission.

Kim Portillo, director of planning and community development for Leavenworth, city officials will take the concepts from the plan for use in the future. She said the city may seek grants for implementation of components of the plan.

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