

# News

## VF graduate earns KBOR distinction

Valley Falls High School has recognized graduating senior Skylar Neiberger as a 2025 Kansas Board of Regents scholars curriculum completer.

This KBOR distinction is awarded to seniors who have completed four units of English, four units of math, three units of science, three units of social studies, and two units of world language.

Students that complete this curriculum and meet other requirements, may be designated as State Scholars, which makes one eligible to receive the Kansas State Scholarship as provided by the Kansas Legislature.

“Valley Falls High School and USD 338 is very proud of Skylar and her dedication to excellence in and out of the classroom,” said VFHS Principal Greg Morgan.

Skylar intends to attend



Skylar Neiberger

Kansas State University to study nutrition, health, and nursing with the hopes of eventually becoming a labor and delivery nurse.

She is the daughter of Brad and Amber Neiberger, Valley Falls.

## Tomato Talk: Options to give tomatoes a lift

**K-State Extension news**  
Late May and early June are an important period for one of home gardener’s favorite crops – tomatoes.

Kansas State University horticultural expert Cynthia Domenghini said tomatoes need support to remain upright. If left to grow on the ground, she notes, tomatoes receive less airflow and are at greater risk for disease.

“Support structures keep the fruit off the ground, which helps reduce contamination from contact with soil,” Domenghini said.

Is there a right or wrong way to support tomatoes? “Maybe...” Domenghini said.

For small, container tomatoes, traditional cages purchased at local stores can be effective. The cages often come in fun colors, but tend to be more expensive than building your own. “The support they provide is minimal and often insufficient for most tomato varieties,” Domenghini said.

She suggests home gardeners build their own cages using concrete reinforcing mesh.

“With a roll 150 feet long and five feet tall, you can create multiple tomato cages and trellises to support climbing plants,” she said. “The openings between the wires are large enough to fit your hand through for harvesting and allow even large slicing tomatoes to slide through.”

To make your own tomato cage, cut the wire to the desired length and create a cylinder that will wrap around the plant. As an example, Domenghini notes that cutting wire to a length of six feet will make a cage that is almost two feet in diameter.

Wrap the cut wires around the other end of the panel to make a cylindrical shape. “To keep the cage in place, you will need at least one or two wooden stakes,” she said. “Hammer them into the soil several inches and attach the cage to them using wire or garden tape.”

Another support method is a trellising system known as ‘basketweave’ or ‘stake and weave.’ With plants in a row, place a T-post in the ground between every few plants, and a T-post at the beginning and end of each row.

“When plants are about one foot tall, tie a strand of twine to the T-post at one end of the row,” Domenghini said. “Walk the length of the row holding the twine and wrapping it around each T-post as you pass.”

At the end of the row, she adds, wrap the twine around the T-post and return to the start while again wrapping the twine around each post.

“As you come upon plants, they should be carefully placed between the strings for support,” Domenghini said. “When you reach the starting point, cut the twine and secure it to the T-post. As the plants grow, add twine higher up on the posts in the same pattern. Twine should be added every 8-12 inches, or at least before the plants begin to droop.”

Domenghini and her colleagues in K-State’s Department of Horticulture and Natural Resources produce a weekly Horticulture Newsletter with tips for maintaining home landscapes and gardens.

Interested persons can subscribe to the newsletter, as well as send garden and yard-related questions to hortsupport@ksu.edu, or contact the local K-State Research and Extension office.

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Does it matter when I put mulch around my tomato plants?

Great question! We know mulch is a temperature regulator. Typically, we think of it as a good thing, as it keeps the soil from getting too hot during the summer.

However, that also means that if applied early in the spring, it is going to slow down the soil from warming up when our warm-season veggies really need it to. It may also retain too much moisture due to slower evaporation rates.

So, it is best to wait until the soil has warmed up, usually late May to early June, before adding mulch around tomato plants.

— Cynthia Domenghini, horticulture specialist, cdom@ksu.edu

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## March of Dimes report card gives Kansas a ‘D’

**by Pat Melgares**  
**K-State Extension news**

A Kansas State University extension agent is hailing the success of a pair of programs that have helped to address a high rate of preterm births in the state.

Monique Koerner, a family community wellness agent in K-State Research and Extension’s Cottonwood District, called the state’s preterm birth rate “concerning.”

“The chronic conditions that many in our state face is concerning,” she said. “But there are a lot of ways that we can help improve the health of our maternal child health population.”

In its 2024 Report Card highlighting the collective factors that contribute to maternal and infant mortality and morbidity in the United States, the March of Dimes called the nation’s preterm birth rate “alarmingly high.”

The report notes that in 2023, more than 370,000 babies were born preterm, about 10.4% of all births. Kansas was one of 15 states that earned a ‘D’ on the report card, with 10.5% of all births considered preterm.

The March of Dimes’ report notes that chronic health conditions caused by smoking, hypertension, unhealthy weight and diabetes contribute to high rates of preterm births in Kansas.

Koerner has recently introduced a prenatal education program called Becoming a Mom to help expectant mothers with support and guidance. The free classes are available in several of the state’s counties currently, and are supported by the Kansas Department of Health and Environment, Kansas Perinatal Community

Collaboratives, and the March of Dimes.

The six-week, prenatal education class – one session per week – is available to expectant mothers and their “support people,” according to Koerner.

“We’ve had several dads come to our classes, as well,” she said. “Really, anybody that is there to support the mom is welcome, because we want them to get the education, too.”

The classes cover such topics as an overview of pregnancy, health, nutrition, exercise, stress, labor and delivery, infant feeding, infant care (including safe sleep and car seats), family planning, mental health and more.

“We also invite people from the local community to come in and talk with the participants,” Koerner said. “One of my goals for this class was to break down the barriers that might exist in the community. If people have names and faces and have met people, it will be easier to reach out to those resources when they need them.”

Koerner also helped to establish an event called a Community Baby Shower in Ellis County in April, which drew 42 participants.

“We’re going to have to have a bigger venue next year because I think this is just going to grow,” she said.

The event provided education for infant care, and those who completed Safe Sleep instruction received a free portable crib, and other giveaways. Koerner said extension agents in other parts of the state are also hosting events similar to the Community Baby Shower.

More information on these or similar programs to help expectant and young mothers is available at local extension offices in Kansas.

## Baseball

2-1A Valley Falls Regional – May 21 in Valley Falls – Semifinals – Valley Falls over Jefferson County North 7-0; Doniphan West over Oskaloosa 2-1; Championship – Valley Falls over Doniphan West 4-1.

3A Bishop Ward Regional – May 21 in Overland Park – Semifinals – Jefferson West over Heritage Christian Academy 6-5; Perry-Lecompton over Osawatomie 8-3; Championship – Jefferson West over Perry-Lecompton 12-2.

Records	W-L
<i>Northeast Kansas League</i>	
Valley Falls	22-4
Oskaloosa	18-7
Jefferson County North	6-20
McLouth	4-17
<i>Big East League</i>	
Jefferson West	26-2
Perry-Lecompton	16-11

## Softball

3A Wellsville Regional – May 20 in Meriden – Quarterfinals – Jefferson West over Royal Valley 4-3; Perry-Lecompton over West Franklin 15-9;

May 21 in Wellsville – Semifinals – Jefferson West over Perry-Lecompton 14-7; Championship – Jefferson West over Santa Fe Trail 6-3.

2-1A Mission Valley Regional –

May 20 in Topeka – Quarterfinals – McLouth over Lyndon 11-0; Oskaloosa over Jefferson County North 10-0; Rossville over Valley Falls 7-6;

May 21 in Eskridge – Semifinals – Rossville over McLouth 6-5 (9); Oskaloosa over Mission Valley 5-0; Championship – Oskaloosa over Rossville 4-1.

Records	W-L
<i>Northeast Kansas League</i>	
McLouth	27-1
Oskaloosa	22-5
Valley Falls	11-13
Jefferson County North	8-17
<i>Big East League</i>	
Jefferson West	22-5
Perry-Lecompton	9-19

## City . . .

(Continued from page 1)

future work is done at that location.

While no approval was sought for the new walking trail in advance of beginning its construction, Lanter said the Corps was fine with those improvements so far, given trees were only cut within the mandated time frame.

The canopy structures at the ballfields were also installed without approval, and the city administrator will work with the Corps to obtain a permit retroactively by providing paperwork and plans for the project.

No violations were found with the city’s structures (such as the shop) which are situated on Corps ground.

### Sewer Project - Phase 2

A public hearing kicked off the second bi-monthly meeting of May for the second phase of the city’s sewer project. The only question from citizens came from Dianne Heinen, who asked about further price increases to residents’ water bills with the project.

The council reiterated that the only additional increases will come as a result of the ordinance passed at the beginning of the project a couple of years ago which mandates a percentage increase each year until the project (which is funded through a 40-year note) is paid off.

Following the hearing, council members voted 4-0 (with member Jason Heinen absent) to move forward with the project, allowing for a Community Development Block Grant application to be submitted on the city’s behalf in an attempt to secure another \$600,000 in grant monies. A similar grant was obtained by the previous council for Phase 1 of the project, which included replacing and rehabilitating the sewer and manholes in the oldest portion of the town, north of K-16. Phase 2 will focus on the sewer and manholes on the south side of the highway.

“This is the last step you guys need to take,” stated City Attorney Andrew Werring. “Now it’s in my hands and the engineer’s hands to get everything done on or before the application deadline of June 15.”

Submitting the application by that date gives the city its best shot — two chances at grant money earmarked for this purpose. The application will be reviewed and the first grant will be awarded around July 7. According to Werring, if the city does not make the cut for this first, smaller, pool of grant money, it will have another shot at funds to be awarded in October or November.

### City Lake Eminent Domain

Yet again, the vote on an eminent domain ordinance for City Lake was deferred until the next meeting of the council, at the recommendation of Werring.

“As long as we’re making what appears to be progress, I think it’s a good idea to keep tabling this,” he stated, reporting conversations have continued between the city attorney and the Schmeissner family’s attorneys on the matter.

“It’s kinda sad, again. We were hoping to get people out there June 1 of last year, and again we are going to go past June 1 of this year,” Mayor Jeanette Shipley said. “It’s kind of disheartening because there’s a lot of people looking forward to it.”

Werring reiterated that an agreeable resolution between both parties would be best for all involved, and he assumes access will be available to the public sometime this summer if terms are agreed upon.

“If we don’t reach a solution and file a suit, they will not have

access to it this summer — it will be fall at the earliest,” he said.

The vote to table the issue was unanimous.

### Open Positions

Two letters of interest were received for the open position of the Valley Falls Housing Authority board. The letters came from Angie Durand and Laura Reichart — the same two parties interested the last time a position opened up and was given to City Councilman Kevin Loy.

A motion to table the decision between the two candidates until next meeting was unanimously agreed to, in order to speak to the interested parties. The next City Council meeting will still be in advance of the next housing authority meeting.

No letters of interest were submitted for the open resident position on the code enforcement committee.

### Permits

Lisa Abramovitz appeared before the council to request a permit for her annual fireworks stand, A-Z Fireworks, which will be located on the highway in the BeOutdoors parking lot. A change in state statute allows the business to operate earlier this year and Abramovitz intends to take advantage of the change, opening June 20 and closing July 5.

Council members voted unanimously to approve the permit, with the caveat that the city’s own ordinance be changed to match the state statute at its next meeting.

### Trail Maintenance

Following last meeting’s conversation regarding which entity is responsible for maintenance and upkeep of the Doodlebug Trail, the Valley Falls Recreation Commission submitted a letter to the city absolving itself of the responsibility.

The letter stated that the organization had researched its files and cannot find any evidence of a contract between it and the city regarding maintenance of the trail.

“Hopefully the work and money we put into the trail is a catalyst for future trail systems in the community,” the letter stated. “However, the current Recreation Commission has determined to focus (its) efforts and funding on other needs within the community and hereby relinquish any future responsibilities to the Doodlebug Trail including the maintenance and upkeep.”

While the city maintains an overall contract with the Corps of Engineers for the lease of its lands, subcontracts are necessary for other entities utilizing said land. Such a sublease apparently did not exist for the Doodlebug Trail between the city and the Rec Commission. As the original agreement was made years ago, between what are likely very different members in each organization, there is little to go back on.

“Part of the agreement in putting in the trail was they would pay to maintain it and that’s why the council allowed them to do it,” said Councilman Bret Frakes, who was city administrator at the time. “That was the original agreement.”

### Election

Two council seats, those currently held by Brett Dallman and Loy, and the mayoral position at Valley Falls, will be on the next ballot. As of last Friday at press time, Dallman, Loy, and Shipley had all formally filed for their own positions, with no competition. The filing deadline is June 1.

The next regular meeting of the council will be at 6:30 p.m. Wednesday, June 4, at City Hall.

## County . . .

(Continued from page 3)

split. The subdivision is located along 130th Street approximately 1,750 feet east of K-4.

Lot 1, a platted lot, covers 10 acres and had been zoned Rural Residential. It now consists of two five-acre parcels, both of which are zoned Suburban Residential.

When the Planning Commission took up the case April 28, it voted 4-0 to recommend to the board that the Watsons’ request be approved.

PR2025-04 encompassed a request from Ralph and Sharon Porter to consider the final plat of Porter Estates, a proposed three-lot subdivision covering 29.21 acres to be located at 2978 Ferguson Road.

Z2025-04 encompassed a request from the Porters to rezone what had been known as the Edwardson Subdivision, shifting it from the Suburban Residential classification to the Rural Residential classification, and to rezone part of an existing tract, switching it from the Rural Residential classification to the Suburban Residential classification.

When the PC handled the case on the 28th, it voted 4-0 to recommend to the board that the Porters’ requests be approved.

Z2025-05 encompassed a request from Don and Mary Hurd to rezone part of an existing tract to facilitate the creation of a seven-lot subdivision covering 160.41 acres at 2926 Linn Road.

Lot 1 will continue to be zoned Agricultural, while Lot 2, Lot 3, Lot 4, Lot 5, Lot 6 and Lot 7 will now be zoned Suburban Residential.

When the PC dealt with the case on the 28th, it voted 3-1 to recommend to the board that the Hurds’ request be approved. According to the Memorandum Metzger made available to the paper, the PC member who cast the dissenting vote wanted to see the existing tract preserved and was concerned about the possibility that the creation of Lots 2-7 could adversely impact traffic along 31st Street.

In a related matter, by consensus the board approved the preliminary plat for the Hurds’ subdivision, Pork Chop Hill.

DP2025-01 encompassed a request from Lonita Kress to amend the current Development Plan for Kress Kennels, 2422 Union Road, Lawrence, to allow for the removal of two open-sided carports that are to be replaced by an enclosed, climate-controlled structure measuring 18’ x 65’.

When the PC looked at the case on the 28th, it voted 4-0 to recommend to the board that Kress’ request be approved.

Voting 3-0, the board OK’d the proposed issuance of a cereal malt beverage license to the Heart of America Antique Steam Engine and Model Association for the 2025 McLouth Threshing Bee. It also authorized Christy to sign the license

on behalf of the governing body.

The proposed issuance of a new county credit card to Angela Cloyd was OK’d by the board on a 3-0 vote. Christy was authorized to sign the necessary paperwork on behalf of the board.

Cloyd works for Auxiliary Services.

Finally, Christy and Walbridge informally decided (i.e., no vote was taken) that the board wouldn’t meet the following week.

### Executive Sessions

At the request of Metzger, the commissioners met privately with him and County Counselor-designate Jonathan Ehrlich for five minutes so that the client group could be given legal advice under the attorney-client privilege exception to KOMA. “Contracts” was identified as being the subject that was to be discussed. Afterward, Christy announced that no binding was taken.

At the request of Christy, the commissioners ultimately met privately with Ney and Ehrlich for a total of 25 minutes so that they could be given legal advice under the attorney-client privilege exception to KOMA. “Inter-agency issues” was identified as being the subject that was to be discussed. Afterward, Christy announced that no binding action was taken.

The meeting adjourned at 2:55.



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