

# State News

# Classifieds

## 187,000 Kansas children miss out on free summer meals despite eligibility

**The Coffeyville Journal**  
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SUN Bucks program provides eligible families with \$120 per school-aged child for summer groceries

**BY GRACE HILLS**  
*Kansas Reflector*

An estimated 187,000 Kansas school-age children could have received free summer meals last year — their families just didn't submit the application.

Of the 193,000 potential applications estimated by the United States Department of Agriculture for the SUN Bucks program, according to the Kansas Department for Children and Families, there were 5,645 submitted — only 3%. The program, also known as the Summer Electronic Benefits Transfer program, gives families a \$120 summer grocery card per eligible school-age child.

While most eligible children did not receive the SUN Bucks, 59,265 families automatically received them, according to DCF. The number of families who automatically received benefits were not counted into the 193,000 potential applications. Children in a household that had already submitted paperwork to receive free or reduced-price school lunches or applied for monthly food assistance programs, for example, were auto-enrolled. Families auto-enrolled for this summer received a letter in January.

The majority of states that offer SUN Bucks auto-enroll children in Medicaid. Kansas does not.

Haley Kottler, campaign director for food access at Kansas Appleseed, says DCF can't auto-enroll children on Medicaid because of capacity issues with its internal system.

"If systems were integrated and updated, approximately 60,000 more eligible children could be au-



**Kansas Department for Children and Families data shows only 3% of eligible Kansas children received summer food assistance through the federal Summer Electronic Benefits Transfer program.** (Sam Bailey/Kansas Reflector)

to-enrolled in SUN Bucks," Kottler said.

**Why were applications so low?**

After federal funding was approved, families had from Aug. 12, 2024, to Oct. 15, 2024, to apply. This year, families have from Jan. 27 to Aug. 29 to apply — enlarging the window from two to seven months.

Kottler identified the small time-span as a reason for the low number of applications. The original application deadline was Sept. 11, 2024, and Kottler fought to change it. But she said that even with the extended window, applications didn't increase.

"It made it really challenging, because a lot of families just didn't know they were able to utilize this benefit," Kottler said.

Erin LaRow, a spokeswoman for DCF, said her department spread the word via social media campaigns, messaging within the DCF phone system and self-service portal, a dedicated webpage and a statewide news release.

The department also shared a

fact sheet, both in English and Spanish, with the Kansas State Department of Education.

David Rubel, a New York City-based education consultant, looked at 12 states' potential number of applications vs applications submitted. He found the percentage of applications submitted in every state was less than 20%.

North Carolina had the highest results, with 19.3% of applications submitted, followed by Missouri, with 18.3%. He said the comparatively robust numbers are because of communication about the SUN Bucks program from school districts.

"It's all about the school districts getting the word out to their families. And why I emphasize the school districts is because they're the only ones who have the current contact information for the families," Rubel said.

Amber Wheeler, the superintendent of Humboldt School District — which has 33% of students approved for free and reduced-price lunches — said it has posted a

DCF infographic on their social media accounts.

Robin Button, the food and service director for Fort Scott School District — with 56.7% of students approved for free and reduced-price lunches — said it plans on posting the infographic and mentioning the program at its town hall.

**'Chilling effect' of recent politics**

In the wake of President Donald Trump's promise to deport more people — and the use of federal documents to identify them — immigrant families are wary of submitting more documentation. While the Kansas DCF website states that receiving SUN Bucks would not affect a family's immigration status, fear remains.

"There's a chilling effect when it comes to programs like this," Kottler said. "It's absolutely causing them fear and to not apply."

Trump and tech billionaire Elon Musk have been pushing spending cuts — a crusade that has trickled down to state-level officials.

At the Kansas State Board of Education's April meeting, a motion failed to allow KSDE Child and Wellness services to enter an agreement with the Kansas Association of Broadcasters to run public service announcements about summer meal programs. This means that stations associated with KAB won't air promotional materials about the Summer EBT program.

In the 2025-2026 Kansas legislative session, Republicans attempted to insert a provision in the budget that would ban the use of SUN Bucks on candy or soda. Democratic Governor Laura Kelly vetoed the provision — and while the Senate overturned her veto, the House did not — ultimately upholding her veto.

LaRow with DCF said the department has received 1,294 SUN Bucks applications as of April 11.

## Cybercrime topped \$16B in 2024; seniors hit hardest with \$4.8B

**MURI ASSUNÇÃO**  
*New York Daily News*

Internet crime cost U.S. consumers \$16.6 billion in 2024 — an increase of more than 30% compared to the previous year — and seniors were hit the hardest with a \$4.8 billion loss, the Federal Bureau of Investigation announced Wednesday.

The staggering numbers are reflected in the FBI's annual internet crime report, which analyzed approximately 860,000 complaints of suspected cybercrimes filed with the FBI's Internet Crime Complaint Center (IC3) last year.

According to the report, the most reported cybercrimes last year were extortion, personal data breaches and phishing/spoofing — forms of email compromise scams designed to trick victims into revealing

personal information. The highest number of complaints came from victims in California, Texas and Florida.

Overall, adults 60 and older submitted nearly 150,000 complaints to the IC3 in 2024 — the most in any age group — and suffered the most losses at nearly \$5 billion.

By comparison, individuals aged 20 to 29 filed just over 71,000 complaints last year, for a total loss of \$540 million.

While fraud accounted for the majority of reported financial losses in 2024, ransomware was once again "the most pervasive threat to critical infrastructure," with complaints increasing by 9% compared to 2023, according to B. Chad Yarbrough, FBI's operations director for criminal and cyber.

The rise in losses in 2024

— the highest ever recorded — is particularly alarming given the FBI's "significant actions" aimed at making it harder for cybercriminals to succeed.

"Scammers are increasingly using the internet to steal Americans' hard-earned savings," Yarbrough said. "And with today's technology, it can take mere taps on a keyboard to hijack networks, cripple water systems, or even rob virtual exchanges."

Since its launch in 2000, the IC3 has handled complaints spanning a wide range of cybercrimes, including hacking, online extortion, and identity theft.

Over the past five years, it has averaged around 836,000 complaints annually — roughly 2,200 per day. By contrast, in its early years, the center received about 2,000 complaints each month.

## • Caney City Council

*Con't from Page 1*

be held May 5, will give the Council a chance to vote whether or not to pass the revenue bond ordinance.

After reiterating that, while they can discuss items that are on the agenda, they cannot vote on the items due to lack of quorum. He then moved on to discuss the ordinance on tiny houses, explaining that in the past, the discussion of tiny homes had come up but was overlooked. This time, City staff has come up with stipulations that would be put into an ordinance regarding the residences. "Six hundred square feet would be the minimum," he stated Monday evening. "That keeps from sheds being classified as homes in this ordinance." The new ordinance has set backs and lot size stipulations outlined clearly. Other specifications would be that the home cannot reside on a lot less than 1000 square feet, that it must have two doors and be equipped with electric and/or natural gas and it must be affixed to the property by an actual permanent foundation among other items.

The Council also talked about the need for increased staffing in certain areas, specifically in code enforcement. Elliot suggested that the City convene

with Independence or Coffeyville, who have active code enforcement officers and find out how they could go about creating the same position within the City of Caney. "Frankly, I understand that we're on a limited budget and that we don't want to put a strain on our citizens, but when you can enforce fees and fines for some of the really kind of dangerous situations, you know you should," Sibley said. Elliot suggested setting up a time to meet with the City of Coffeyville to ask questions regarding how to shape and mold Caney's own code enforcement office. Once city staff does that, then they can be tasked with finding a person to become an administrator of the code enforcement department. "If we can appoint him as the administrator of code enforcement, then he can go to the [Planning and Zoning] meetings and work with the zoning board," Elliot continued, "But then, we need to focus on cleaning up the zoning board and/or holding them more accountable."

Other discussions included possibly reducing the number of council members to just four and a possible reduction of ward from four to two, or eliminating them. No decisions were made in this short meeting. The next meeting of the Caney City Council will be held May 5 at 6:00 p.m., with a work session being held April 28.

## • County Commissioners

*Con't from Page 1*

reports on CR 6200. "There is a big void underneath the structure," stated Beurskens. "Due to that, we had to close the road." Beurskens explained that the road was washed out from underneath and was no longer being supported by anything other than a slab of concrete that was only six to seven inches thick. He stated that it surprised him that the trucks going over the road had not fallen through. The engineers determined that the structure could not be repaired and would have to be completely replaced. Commissioner Bever asked if the Road and Bridge crew could do the work. Beurskens replied, "We are down to three individuals on the bridge crew right now out of eight positions. As it sits today, we don't have the man power to do that and that would be a significant sized project." Chair Cordray thanked the residents for their comments and added, "It is not falling on deaf ears. That's why we are looking into it to see what is going to be the best for that. We have tasked Brandon with looking into the count. That's why we want to take our time. It's drug out. I agree. We had this conversation a year ago, but we just want to make sure that we are making the right decision."

Jacob McCallie, president of the Coffeyville Amateur Radio Club, provided some information about their endeavors to raise awareness for amateur radio. They were awarded a grant to build a communications trailer for community outreach. They will take the trailer to Dalton Defender Days, Neewollah, Katy Days and other community events. They also plan to use this trailer at the local area schools for STEM activities. "If you have a cell phone, you have a radio. The principles are exactly the same," stated McCallie. "The final piece of this trailer project is emergency preparedness. Amateur radio plays a huge part in emergency preparedness." When cell phones and internet are down during natural disasters, amateur radio can still be utilized to call for aid. The Coffeyville Amateur Radio Club is still raising funds and looking for community support.

Kori White, Assistant County Administrator and Jonathan Booe, County Administrator, presented the invoice for the audit from Jarred, Gilmore and Phillips for discussion. The Commissioners approved paying the \$15,000.

White then presented the county health insurance stop-loss policy for signature. The chairman signed the Aetna stop-loss policy.

The next meeting of the County Board of Commissioners will be held on Monday, April 28 at 9:00 a.m., in the lower level of the Judicial Center. Everyone is welcome and encouraged to attend. Meetings are available by live-stream on Facebook @montgomery-countyks or at mgcountyks.org.

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### Helpful Tips

**Did you know?**

Disinfecting garden tools can help ensure the long-term health of plants and vegetables. According to the University of Minnesota Extension, plant pathogens, including bacteria, fungi and viruses, cause diseases that can damage and even kill plants. These pathogens can be transferred to plants and infect them through bits of soil and plant debris that get stuck on common gardening tools, including shovels and pruners. Pathogens are microscopic and invisible to the naked eye, which is why even tools that appear clean may still contain harmful substances on their surfaces that can prove life-threatening to plants. Disinfecting tools at the appropriate time, such as when the tools are being stored in fall or before using them in spring or after using them to remove infected plants, can prevent the damage caused by invisible pathogens. Avoid using strictly bleach to disinfect garden tools, as the UME notes that bleach corrodes metal and can therefore render tools that require sharp edges ineffective. A homemade solution that's nine parts water and one part bleach can be used to effectively clean shovels, spades and rakes. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention notes that isopropyl alcohol (rubbing alcohol) in concentrations of 70 percent or more can effectively disinfect surfaces for bacteria, fungi and viruses. Such a solution can be used to disinfect hand pruners and other small hand tools. Store-bought cleaners with an active ingredient that is .1 percent alkyl dimethyl benzyl ammonium saccharinate also can be effective when disinfecting small hand tools as well as small pots and saucers.