



## K-State football showing growth in the offseason

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# BUTLER COUNTY TIMES-GAZETTE

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## Rockfest and Easter Egg Hunt

By Deanna Bonn

Families gathered on Sat., Mar. 28th at the Kansas Oil Museum for the annual Rockfest and Easter Egg Hunt, a combined event that blended hands-on learning with fun for the whole family. The event featured interactive geology activities, a spring market, live entertainment, and educational exhibits, alongside a large community Easter egg hunt hosted in partnership with Sundgren Realty.

Bailey Martin-Rutliff, Executive Director of the Kansas Oil Museum, said Rockfest is designed to highlight the role geology plays in the oil industry and its historical impact on the region.

"Geology is such an important part of Kansas oil history," Martin-Rutliff said.

"Prior to introducing geology into finding oil, it was really just a guess on where to put oil rigs," she said.

She explained that early drilling efforts had only about a 4 percent success rate, but that number increased significantly once geological science began guiding exploration.

The museum incorporated that educational focus into a variety of hands-on stations for children, including geode smashing, fossil-making with air-dried clay, rock painting, and interactive sleuthing activities.

Demonstrations and interactive exhibits were hosted by Kansas Strong. They were aimed at helping attendees better understand how oil and gas are produced and why the industry matters.

Warren Martin, Kansas Strong Executive Director, said the organization's mission is to make complex concepts more accessible.

"Our role today is the same as it is everywhere we go throughout the state, and that is to help people understand more about the oil and gas industry," Martin said.

Using physical samples, including sandstone rocks saturated with oil, Martin explained how petroleum exists underground and how it is extracted.

"A lot of people have this idea that oil is just this big puddle but this is a sandstone rock that acts like a sponge and is soaked up with oil," he said.

The Easter egg hunt, organized by Sundgren Realty, included three age divisions and a variety of prizes hidden inside the eggs.

Kelsey Sundgren said the event is designed to be inclusive and engaging for families across the community.

"We just invite families from the community to come and participate," Sundgren said.

"It's a good way for us to make sure that families in



Demonstrations and interactive exhibits were hosted by Kansas Strong. They were aimed at helping attendees better understand how oil and gas are produced and why the industry matters. (Photo Submitted)



The Easter Bunny made an appearance at the Kansas Oil Museum to celebrate Rockfest with the Easter egg hunters. (Photo Submitted)

El Dorado have something fun to do around Easter time," she said.

This year they introduced a "golden ticket"



There were three individual egg hunts divided by age group to provide opportunities for all grade school age and under, to find eggs and various prizes including candy, toys, dollar coins and even some "golden tickets." (Photo Submitted)

placed inside select eggs, allowing children to redeem for prizes. The event also featured a vendor market with a variety of local businesses, and the Misfit Kitchen food truck, which provided free meals for children in attendance.

Tony Yaghjian said they chose to participate as a way to give back to the

community.

"We've been blessed with lots of business," Yaghjian said.

"So we thought, no better way to give back to the community than coming out and supporting it and giving the kids some free hot dogs," he said.

Martin-Rutliff noted that beyond the entertainment, the event plays an

important role in connecting younger generations to the region's history and future. She added that helping children understand the industry and its opportunities remains a key goal of the museum's programming.

"Oil really helped put El Dorado on the map," she said.

## Farmer to Doctor: Health Checks Producers Shouldn't Ignore

By Jason Vance

As the average age of American farmers climbs into the late 50s, health concerns that often go unchecked in the agricultural community are becoming harder to ignore. Long days, physically demanding labor and a tendency to "push through" discomfort often lead many producers to delay routine medical care.

That's something Erin Martinez, associate director for extension programs at Kansas State University and former state aging specialist, hopes to change.

"Preventative care is key," Martinez said. "A lot of the things we see impacting producers are things that can be managed—or even avoided—if they're caught early."

One of the most important—and often avoided—preventative measures is screening for colorectal cancer. According to the American Cancer Society, adults at average risk should begin regular screenings at age 45. For many producers, that milestone has already passed.

"The risk increases as we age, so if you haven't been screened, now is the time," Martinez said.

While colonoscopies may not top anyone's list during planting or harvest, they remain one of the most effective tools for catching problems early, when treatment is most successful.

Time spent outdoors also puts farmers



Erin Martinez, associate director for extension programs at Kansas State University, advocates for preventative care for farmers.

By Jason Vance with editing assistance by AI.

and ranchers at greater risk for skin cancer. Martinez said prevention starts with practical steps like wearing sunscreen, lightweight long-sleeve shirts and wide-brimmed hats. Eye protection is just as important.

"Sunglasses aren't just a fashion statement," she said. "They help protect your eyes from UV rays, which can cause damage over time."

She encourages producers to pay attention to any new or changing spots on their skin and to seek medical advice if something doesn't look right.

Noise exposure from tractors, combines and other equipment presents

SEE HEALTH CHECKS, AX

## Kansas legislators take final shot at property tax relief as hopes fade

By: Morgan Chilson  
KansasReflector.com

TOPEKA — House and Senate lawmakers are pursuing a last-ditch attempt to deliver on their promise to bring property tax relief to constituents before the session ends.

A conference committee on taxes met Friday morning, the last day of the session, to hammer out details of Senate Concurrent Resolution 1603 that may offer a way forward.

The proposed Kansas constitutional amendment, which would go before Kansas voters in August, limits annual increases a property's assessed valuation to 9%. The assessed valuation is determined by taking 11.5% of the property's expected sale price.

For example, if a home is appraised at \$100,000, the assessed valuation would be \$11,500.

In a compromise that appears unpalatable to the House, Rep. Adam Smith,



Sen. Caryn Tyson, shown here in a Feb. 2, 2026, hearing, is working to put together a property tax relief bill that will pass both chambers. (Photo by Sherman Smith/Kansas Reflector)

a Weskan Republican, agreed to a fixed cap on assessed valuations rather than a cap based on a rolling average.

"That's a pretty significant change," he said. "Everything that we've passed in the House has had that average in. Everything that's failed has been a cap, but I'm willing to try stepping away from that as long as we can have a fixed cap at a higher rate."

Previous property tax bills proposed capping the

assessed value at 3%.

Smith proposed a 10% cap but Parker Republican Sen. Caryn Tyson negotiated the deal to 9%.

Some Kansas counties have seen assessed valuations increase by as much as 60% between 2021 and 2025, with many others falling in the 40% to 50% range, according to the Kansas Policy Institute, a proponent of capping the rates at 3%.

SEE PROPERTY TAX, AX

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Kansas Legislature passes package of elections bills that alter voting processes

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