

# The Bluestem Post



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INSPIRATION

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*Diversity, equity, inclusion and belonging*

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*On the cover: A Kidron Bethel Village resident and life enrichment staff member work on embroidery projects together. Intergenerational connections are an important part of life at Bluestem Communities. Learn more inside.*

## LIVE WELL WITH BLUESTEM COMMUNITIES

Bluestem Communities is a nonprofit organization in south central Kansas that serves seniors through various living options, care settings and care-centered services. Bluestem Communities locations include Kidron Bethel Village in North Newton, Schowalter Villa in Hesston and Bluestem PACE (Program of All-Inclusive Care for the Elderly) in McPherson and Hutchinson.

### MISSION STATEMENT

*Bluestem Communities' mission is to have a positive impact on quality of life by promoting lifelong wellness, purpose, choice, genuine connection and personalized care with Christian compassion.*



BLUESTEM PACE  
KIDRON BETHEL VILLAGE  
SCHOWALTER VILLA

*To learn more about Bluestem Communities' services and locations visit [bluestemks.org](https://bluestemks.org)*

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*Children from Hesston Intergenerational Child Development Center play parachute games with grand-friends. Photo by Rachel McMaster.*

*A proud young Easter egg-hunter shows off his treasure to a group of Kidron Bethel Village residents. The campus collaborates with the local Parents as Teachers group to host the hunt on campus. Photo by Ashley Nesser.*

## Life and learning across generations

About six decades and very different life experiences separated the two women sitting next to each other in the Schowalter Villa lounge. One was a college student just beginning to explore the life that lay ahead of her, the other a health care resident reflecting on life lived to that point. Despite their obvious differences, the two found connection points as they shared about their college experiences, the places in which they grew up and their hobbies and interests.

“Intergenerational connections are important because the older you are, the more you’ve learned, and the more you learn, the more you have to share with those who haven’t had as much life experience,” said the Hesston College student, Josalyn Wipf. “I think the younger generation, or at least me personally, can miss the joy in the little things. I enjoy hearing the older generations’ stories of growth,

sadness, love and college mishaps. There is so much value in listening to someone’s story and learning from them.”

Bluestem Communities is intentional about fostering intergenerational experiences that bring life-giving connection and benefits for all parties. Each of Bluestem’s life plan communities – Kidron Bethel Village in North Newton and Schowalter Villa in Hesston – have the unique benefit of being located next door to colleges that offer connection points across the generations – Bethel College and Hesston College, respectively - and Schowalter Villa houses the Hesston Intergenerational Child Development Center. In addition, a number of high school and college students are employed by Bluestem Communities and connect with residents and participants regularly in their work. The campuses also host summer Junior

Volunteer Programs for teenagers, and a variety of other connection points happen regularly with all ages throughout the wider community.

The Hesston Intergenerational Child Development Center, a community daycare that has had its home at Schowalter Villa since 2005, provides daily interaction between residents and children. The children lovingly call their resident companions “grand-friends.”

“Intergenerational programs let adults be connected to young kids, which they may not have much opportunity for otherwise,” said Jill Moore, Schowalter Villa Life Enrichment Coordinator and Intergenerational Coordinator. “The adults benefit by doing things with children at their side that they wouldn’t do otherwise, and we see them all succeed and have fun.”

*continued on next page*

*Life and learning across generations continued*

Some of the youngest children do morning exercises with assisted living residents, with the children mimicking their grand-friends touching their toes, raising their arms and more. The preschool-age children meet with grand-friends weekly for an organized activity such as balloon batting, parachute time, playing bells and target pitching. Both groups benefit from practicing brain and coordination skills, and the serotonin boost of spending time together.

“Children like to receive compliments

and attention from their grand-friends, see smiling faces and play games,” said Moore. “There is always lots of laughter and mutual learning.”

Residents who live at Bluestem Communities have a lifetime of experiences – both personal and professional - that they are able to share with the younger generations with whom they cross paths. Having close proximity and close relationships with their neighboring colleges allows for many unique opportunities for the generations to connect through

classes, social interactions and more.

Bethel College business professor and chair of the Business Department, Dr. Allison McFarland, Ph.D., MBA, arranged for her Consumer Behavior class to meet weekly at Kidron Bethel Village with participation from Kidron Bethel Village residents.

“The course looks at internal and external factors that influence the consumption of goods and services,” said McFarland. “Each week, students

*continued on page 10*



Hesston College student Josalyn Wipf visits with a Schowalter Villa resident while getting ready for a round of balloon ball. Photo by Rachel McMaster.



Kidron Bethel Village resident Mel Voth discusses articles with students in the Bethel College Consumer Behavior class. Photo by Rachel McMaster.

# BLUESTEM

*learning for life.*

## Are you 55 and better?

Bluestem Communities has partnered with our neighbors, Bethel College and Hesston College, to offer Bluestem U, a lifelong learning experience for those age 55 and better. Join us to enjoy the college experience with all of the fun but none of the homework!



Learn more and register at [BluestemU.org](https://BluestemU.org) or call 316-836-4846.



Suzanne Wolcott, MDiv, LCSW  
Clinical Social Worker, Bluestem PACE

## Mental health moments

When we talk about “wellness,” many people focus on physical health, but true wellness means looking at our whole selves, physical, mental, and spiritual. All of these parts of ourselves are crucial for overall well-being and quality of life.

Take note of where you are mentally and emotionally. Do you find joy in life, or do you routinely find yourself focusing on negatives? Here are some places to start as you give more focus to your mental health.

**1. Practice self-care and self-reflection.** Self-care is not about bubble baths and shopping sprees. It’s about tending to your spirit in such a way that you can be present in your life as a version of yourself that you can consistently be proud of and satisfied with. It’s about working on those parts of you that are hurting so that you don’t spill your pain out onto those that you love and are responsible for. Fill your life with the kinds of experiences and relationships that allow you to bring your best self into the room as often as possible. There is no shame in saying honestly to yourself and others, “I want peace in my mind and in my home, so I’m doing the work to get that as much as I am able.”

**2. Dealing with differences.** It’s important to understand that people’s life experiences shape their behavior, and most of the time, that behavior is not about us. Often, true criticism of others is closely related to our own self-judgements. We judge people at the same level and with the same language that we use to judge and criticize ourselves. Managing differences really starts with managing ourselves with some grace. When we remove ourselves from others’ behaviors, it allows us to not take things personally and

frees us to maintain boundaries and curiosity instead of defensiveness.

**3. Facing grief.** Grief is a process that works to make peace with who or what was once true and present but no longer is. Research shows that grief unacknowledged comes back to us in ways that we do not anticipate, so good mental health relies on grieving well. Grieving well looks different for each person, but for everyone it involves acknowledging grief and making peace with it rather than stuffing it down or ignoring it. You may want to talk about your grief with others. You may adopt new practices that allow you self-reflection. The grief we carry matters because it is just the word “love” in a different language and with a different voice.

If you would benefit from talking through mental health strategies with someone, you can reach out to a mental health professional in the community, the social workers at Bluestem PACE, or the chaplains at Bluestem Communities. [TBP](#)



# Walk, run, fun into wellness

Teara Leonard

Bluestem Wellness Center Director, Kidron Bethel Village

In today's fast-paced world, neglecting physical health in favor of other priorities can be tempting. However, maintaining a healthy lifestyle is essential for overall well-being, and adding something with a team and community angle makes it even more fun.

A group of Bluestem Communities residents and staff chose wellness and community for Hesston Recreation & Community Education's annual Emma Creek Classic 5K in late April as part of the Bluestem Steppers team. The Emma Creek Classic is a fun and engaging event encouraging participants to walk or run to better health. It is one of the largest women's-only 5K's in the state of Kansas. The event is open to females of all ages and fitness levels, making it an inclusive and accessible opportunity for everyone to get active. Schowalter Villa resident Virginia Stutzman was recognized as the oldest participant at age 94.

"I feel encouraged and inspired that there are so many generations that come together to participate in the Emma Creek," said team member Bethany Schrag.

One of the key benefits of participating in the 5K is the sense of community it fosters. By joining with others who are committed to wellness, participants can motivate each other and create a supportive environment for achieving their fitness goals. This sense of camaraderie can be incredibly motivating and inspiring, helping individuals set new goals and stay on track with their exercise routines long after the event has ended.

In addition to promoting physical health, exercise can also promote mental and emotional

well-being. It can reduce stress, improve mood and boost overall mental well-being. Participants can experience these positive effects first-hand and enjoy a sense of accomplishment as they finish.

"The Emma Creek Classic embodies the idea of people supporting each other and promoting a healthy lifestyle," said team member Julie Miller. "That's why I value being a part of it; it's not just a race, but a celebration of togetherness and well-being."

Plan now to be part of the Bluestem Steppers for the Emma Creek Classic in 2025! Watch for details early in the year. [TBP](#)



Bluestem Communities residents and staff come together every year to be the Bluestem Steppers team for the annual Emma Creek 5K. Photo by Jason Jones.

## Welcome home to Bluestem Communities.



See available independent living home options here:  
[bluestemks.org/availablehomes](https://bluestemks.org/availablehomes)



**KIDRON BETHEL VILLAGE  
SCHOWALTER VILLA**  
888-388-7445 | [bluestemks.org](https://bluestemks.org)

## Right sizing your life

Moving is notoriously daunting. Regardless of where you're at in life or the reasons behind the move, leaving one place for another – perhaps a home you've been in for many years – brings waves of memories and nostalgia that can make the change feel difficult. Also, no one wants to determine which of their things need to go and what will make the move to a new home.

clutter or just too much stuff can cause people to be distracted, feel overwhelmed and frustrated, causing anxiety, indecision and stress.

Therein lies the beauty and a benefit of moving – the opportunity to downsize or right size. Moving to a new home is the perfect opportunity to evaluate your new space and make conscious decisions around what you

items they would like to have, consider passing those items on to them right away rather than listing them in a will. It allows your loved ones a longer time to enjoy the pieces in their homes, and gives you the opportunity to see them enjoying them as well. Don't be offended if they don't have the same sentimental attachment to items that you do. They may be trying to simplify their lives of things, too!



*Schowalter Villa independent living residents enjoy fellowship together in the Prairie Lakes neighborhood. Photo by Gavin Peters Photography.*

But consider it from another angle. Maybe you don't actually need everything you have. Maybe downsizing would make your home and life easier to manage. The National Association of Professional Organizers says that we only use about 20% of the things we own. What kind of impact is that unused 80% of things having on our lives?

Studies indicate that living with

actually use and need. Identify the things you use daily. Then weekly. Then monthly. What's left? Would it truly inconvenience you to let go of those things?

When it comes to family heirlooms or other items with sentimental value, begin by asking your children, grandchildren and other loved ones which pieces are special to them that they would like to have. If they identify

If you need extra support determining the things you need in your life, there are professional services that specialize in helping people downsize, move and transition to the next step in life.

Even if a move isn't in your immediate future, if you feel like you could do with less stuff, it's always the right time to begin the process of right sizing your life. **TBP**

## Diversity, equity, inclusion and belonging

With more than 875 residents and participants and about 600 employees across its four locations, Bluestem Communities is a diverse organization with people who represent many ideas and lived experiences. To recognize and honor those differences, over the last couple of years, Bluestem Communities has been giving focused attention to the area of diversity, equity, inclusion and belonging (DEIB). An organization-wide DEIB Group that includes staff from each location meets quarterly to seek ways to build a culture of belonging at Bluestem Communities.

A group made up of staff and residents at Kidron Bethel Village has been particularly committed to the work, as well. The Kidron Bethel Village DEI group has been meeting regularly for more than two years to explore systems of inequality and make Kidron Bethel a supportive, welcoming environment for all people. Led by Life Enrichment staff members Cortnie Michaelson and Aspyn Dawson, the group meets monthly to discuss a particular theme or idea, coordinates a book study and hosts monthly movie nights with films that spark further discussion. A Schowalter Villa group, led by maintenance staff member Rhyen Naab, launched in April.

“We strive to be a safe and welcoming space for different thoughts and perspectives through empathy and listening with intent,” said Michaelson. “We have a rich resident history of activism, and saw a desire on campus to have discussions and spark change.”

All interested Bluestem Communities residents, participants and staff members are welcome to take part in their campus-specific DEIB group at any time, or contact leadership from the Bluestem Communities group for more information. Leadership contacts – Ariana Kauffman, vice president of Marketing and Communications; Tonya Keim, executive strategic coordinator; Clark Roth, vice president of Human Resources. [TBP](#)



*The Kidron Bethel Village DEI group visited The Kansas African American Museum in Wichita in honor of Black History Month. The group meets monthly to discuss issues of diversity, equity, inclusion and belonging. Photo by Cortnie Michaelson.*

## Dementia education for all

Bluestem Communities will host a Dementia Forum on Wednesday, July 17, at Kidron Bethel Village’s Kidron Hall. The event is free and open to the public, particularly those who provide care for individuals living with dementia. One continuing education credit will be offered for those who need it through LeadingAge Kansas.

Amy Siple, APRN, will speak on “Understanding Dementia & Caring for Those Who Have It.” Siple is a national speaker and author on healthcare issues that impact older adults and the empowerment of healthcare givers. In addition, she has been serving the primary care needs of residents in long-term care as a nurse practitioner for more than 24 years.

Siple’s Dementia Forum presentation will review the most common types of dementia and help participants understand why challenging neuropsychiatric symptoms (behaviors) occur. The presentation will explore strategies for interacting with someone with dementia and tips for de-escalating someone with agitation.

Several local health care organizations will also be present to visit with participants about the resources and services they provide.

Doors for the event open at 6 p.m., with the presentation at 6:30 p.m. The information booths will be open from 6 to 6:30 p.m. and 7:30 to 8 p.m. [TBP](#)

# Planning today for impact tomorrow

Mike Lamb

*Fund development consultant*

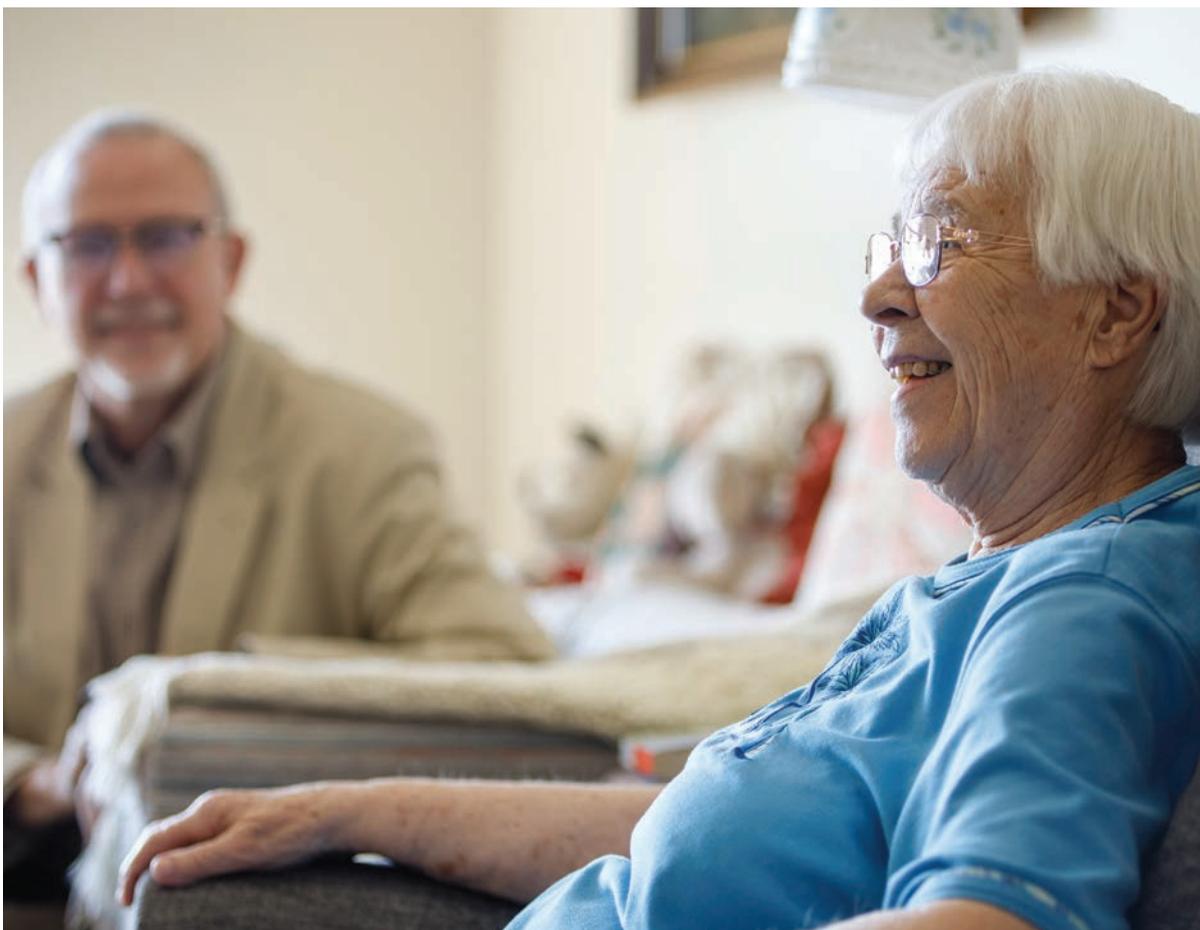
Broadly defined, estate planning allows us to take control of what happens to what we own when we die. Some mistakenly believe that they won't have an "estate", assuming that this refers to those with a fancy mansion and luxury cars. Most of us will have estate assets in the form of a house, car, retirement account, land, bank account, personal property and/or investments. By planning now, you can direct what you own to the people and programs you hold most dear. Without a plan, the courts decide what happens to your assets according to intestacy laws. Estate planning also provides for the care of minor children and important healthcare decisions, designation of those who can make decisions on our behalf (healthcare power of attorney and durable power of attorney) and designation of the person or entity who will settle our estate (executor or trustee).

Implementing an estate plan is an important part of the stewardship of the assets we worked hard to accumulate over the course of our life, and something all adults should have in place. It does not have to be expensive or complicated. The services of an attorney are well worth the investment to create a will or trust. Other planning aspects may include retirement plans (IRA or 401 (k)) and life insurance.

For some, a planned gift or legacy gift is an important part of the estate plan. By including the charitable entities they supported during their lifetime in their overall plan, these people realize great satisfaction. Nonprofit organizations, like Bluestem Communities, can be included as beneficiaries in a will, trust, life insurance policy or retirement plan. This type of legacy gift allows us to promote the values and mission of these programs with assets we will no longer need.

For help getting started with an estate plan or information on how to create a legacy gift, contact Bluestem Communities Fund Advancement at 316-836-4826.

*J. Michael "Mike" Lamb lives in Hesston with his wife, Susan. Mike earned his bachelor's degree from Wichita (Kan.) State University (WSU) and a master's in business administration from Friends University (Wichita, Kan.). He also earned the Certified Fund-Raising Executive credential. For 25 years, Mike served as a vice president for the WSU Foundation, and is now semi-retired, assisting several area nonprofits in fund development. Mike is an active member of Hesston Mennonite Church. [TBP](#)*



*Photo by Gavin Peters Photography.*

*Life and learning across generations continued*

and Kidron Bethel participants utilize a research article focusing on a specific topic to guide their discussion. My goal has been to provide an opportunity for Bethel College business students to engage with consumers representing a different generation and to be able to call upon this experience later in their marketing careers.”

“In my career I taught business classes at several universities,” said Kidron Bethel Village resident Mel Voth. “I was excited about the opportunity to meet with the Bethel College business class because I longed for discussions with a younger generation of business students. Discussing various topics with a younger generation was interesting and informative to me. There is so much quality of life that is brought about only in involvement with younger individuals.”

As witnessed through the smiles, laughter and captivated conversations, hearing about others’ experiences and opinions creates space for connection and understanding

rather than making uninformed judgements about other generations.

“Intergenerational connections are important to me because I know I can learn a great amount from other generations, and I value the answers they give me,” said Kate Eichelberger, a Bethel College student in the Consumer Behaviors class. “I am extremely grateful to be presented with the opportunity to connect with the Kidron Bethel Village residents, and it is one of the highlights of my Bethel College experience.” **TBP**

## Creativity, connection and curtain calls

The players at Newton Community Theatre are people that you encounter in regular, every day life. They work at local business and for local organizations. They also have a passion for nurturing the arts in the community.

“We welcome anyone passionate about community, local arts and culture, and theatre to get involved with our shows as a performer, volunteer, audience member or donor,” said Aaron Tschetter, Newton Community Theatre Board President.

Newton Community Theatre began informally in 1965 when a young Newton High School graduate, Sam Nance, organized and produced a few shows at the Santa Fe School auditorium. Arlo Kasper, Bethel College drama instructor, and Helen Canzoneir, were co-producers. The next year, the joint venture produced a couple of more plays, and officially became known as the Bethel College and Newton Community Summer Theatre Workshop. The first couple of years generated enough interest in the community, that in 1967 the official name of the organization was changed to Newton Community Theatre, and the first Board of Directors was established.

“We are proud to be celebrating more than 55 years of local theatre in the Newton community,” said Tschetter. “Newton Community Theatre is about coming together

to put on a show, but we believe there are benefits that go far beyond the show. It’s a way for us to highlight what makes our community special. It’s a lively gathering place where performers, volunteers and staff can dive into their creativity, forge new friendships and take pride in their contributions, all while tapping into the incredible talent pool we have right here in our community. For the audience, it’s a delightful escape and the joy of sharing moments with friends and neighbors.”

Although the frequency of productions has changed over the decades, the current iteration of Newton Community Theatre does one mainstage show during the summer, and a fundraiser during the winter. Depending on the show, talent of all ages and experiences are able to hone their theater skills.

“We usually have a wide group of individuals involved in our shows,” said Tschetter. “Some are long-time theatre veterans, but many come with little or no theatre experience. We have production staff, such as directors, stage managers, technical directors, visual and audio technicians and more. We also have very talented performers who are all sourced from the surrounding area, and can range in age from elementary school-aged children to those who are retired.”

Newton Community Theatre is currently preparing for their summer 2024 show, *Guys and Dolls*, a beloved musical theatre classic set in Depression-era New York City. Show dates are July 19 through 21. Check the "Newton Community Theatre, Kansas" Facebook page for ticket information.

"Community theatre truly embodies the spirit of togetherness, making us smile, sparking conversations and reminding us of the magic that local theatre brings to our lives," said Tschetter. **TBP**



**Wednesday, July 17, 2024**

3001 Ivy Dr., North Newton, Kansas

**6 to 8 PM**

Program 6:30 to 7:30 PM  
Information resource booths open before and after program.

## UNDERSTANDING DEMENTIA & CARING FOR THOSE WHO HAVE IT



**SPEAKER:**

**AMY SIPLE**

*Nurse Practitioner • Educator • Speaker*

Questions? Call 316-836-4866  
or visit [bluestemks.org/events](https://bluestemks.org/events)



# UPCOMING EVENTS 2024

## KIDRON BETHEL VILLAGE CAR SHOW

June 7

## SCHOWALTER VILLA CAR SHOW

June 15

## KIDRON BETHEL VILLAGE FIREWORKS EXTRAVAGANZA

July 4

## BLUESTEM COMMUNITIES DEMENTIA FORUM

July 17

Kidron Bethel Village



*Join the club.*

A GREAT PLACE TO ENJOY LUNCH WITH FRIENDS.

Join us for dine-in or curbside to-go!



[watersedgehesston.com](https://watersedgehesston.com)  
701 S. Main St. Hesston, KS



3001 Ivy Dr.  
North Newton, KS 67117

The Bluestem Post is published to share information, fellowship and fun with participants, residents, staff and friends of Bluestem Communities.

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316-836-4837 or [rachelm@bluestemks.org](mailto:rachelm@bluestemks.org).

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