

# The Bluestem Post



The truth about assisted living

page 3

## IN THIS ISSUE:

PROFESSIONAL  
*Getting to know Bluestem PACE*

WELLNESS  
*The power of community  
in group exercise*

COMMUNITY  
*Full-scope optometry care for  
small-town communities*

# CONTENTS

<b>FEATURE</b>	<b>3</b>
The truth about assisted living	
<b>INSPIRATION</b>	<b>5</b>
Mind and body	
<b>PROFESSIONAL</b>	<b>6</b>
Getting to know Bluestem PACE	
<b>WELLNESS</b>	<b>8</b>
The power of community in group exercise	
<b>COMMUNITY</b>	<b>9</b>
Full-scope optometry care for small-town communities	
<b>LIFESTYLE</b>	<b>10</b>
Bluestem U lifelong learning	

*On the cover: Clara King, Schowalter Villa Mullet Place Assisted Living resident, and Cherie Wohlgemuth, assisted living concierge, work on technology together. Learn more about life in assisted living on page 3. Photo by Gavin Peters.*

## 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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# The truth about assisted living



*Alda Wedel, a resident at Schowalter Villa's Mullet Place Assisted Living, visits with friends over lunch at Hesston Bakery and Cafe, which is conveniently located at Mullet Place.  
Photo by Gavin Peters.*

The story Bluestem Communities assisted living residents tell about moving to assisted living often carries themes that feel familiar to others within the community. Namely, that moving to assisted living can be a difficult decision to make, but, despite the fear that comes with the unknown, it's worth it.

*“Knowing that we would be well cared for as we aged influenced our decision to choose to live here.*

– Clara King

Bluestem Communities offers assisted living at each of its life plan communities – Suderman Assisted

Living at Kidron Bethel Village in North Newton, Kansas, and Mullet Place Assisted Living at Schowalter Villa in Hesston, Kansas. Assisted living brings a balance of independence, personal care and individualized health services based on each person's unique needs. It's another step in relinquishing some of the responsibilities of everyday life so you can focus on the parts of life that bring you joy, and so you can live a life where you're thriving rather than just getting by.

Alda Wedel, a resident at Schowalter Villa's Mullet Place Assisted Living, fills her days with life-giving friendships and activities.

“There are so many friendships that have developed,” said Wedel. “Several of us gather to work on a puzzle every night after dinner. It's an opportunity to connect and have fun with one another.”

Wedel is also an enthusiastic participant in the activities offered through the Life Enrichment program.

“Every couple of weeks, Life Enrichment arranges for community outings,” Wedel said. “We've visited museums and art galleries, and sometimes we just go out to eat. I always look forward to those trips because they are enjoyable and I get to enjoy the company of others.”

Wedel's move to assisted living was prompted by health concerns her now late husband was having.

“It was a difficult reality to accept at first,” said Wedel. “But now I'm grateful to be here because I keep busy with enjoyable activities and I don't have to worry about managing some of the more routine things of life.”

The first step in preparing to make a

*continued*



move to assisted living is recognizing the signs of when it might be time to make that move. This is often prompted when people feel like their day-to-day tasks are getting to be challenging for them. If you are using all your energy to keep up your home and don't have the time or energy to

socialize with friends and family, that is a perfect time to make a transition. Instead, use your time and energy to do what you enjoy.

"I just couldn't do my housework or those kinds of things anymore, so we knew it was time to do something different," said Marilyn Mosiman, a resident at Kidron Bethel Village's Suderman Assisted Living.

Mosiman's husband, Don, had also recently made the move to Kidron Bethel Village's Bethel Health Care Center following a stroke. Having him under the same roof with the ability to see each other every day was an added benefit of choosing Kidron Bethel Village.

"Part of what helped our family choose Kidron Bethel Village was that health care and assisted living are connected," said Mosiman. "We are able to see each other every day. He comes over to assisted living every day for lunch and supper, and we spend the day together here. We like to play Bingo and sometimes we just watch TV together in my room. It also works well for our children to come visit us both in one place, and we're able to have family gatherings all together here."

Mosiman notes that even though she could recognize the need for more daily assistance, the transition was still difficult.

"Moving off of the farm we lived on



*Though the Mosimans live in different care settings at Kidron Bethel Village – Marilyn at Suderman Assisted Living and Don at Bethel Health Care Center, they are under the same roof and spend the majority of their days together. Photo by Rachel McMaster.*

for 65 years was one of the most difficult things I've gone through," she said. "When you don't really know what to expect, it's difficult to plan for. I'm grateful for the conveniences of being here, though. I wasn't driving anymore, and my daughter was bringing my groceries and helping me with housework. Now all of that is just taken care of for me, along with having help managing my medications. I'm content here."

At Bluestem Communities, assisted living residents receive three meals daily, weekly housekeeping and laundry service, 24-hour access to a licensed nurse, medication administration, life enrichment activities, chaplain services and more. Between the two life plan communities, those considering Bluestem Communities assisted living have seven floor plans from which to choose, including two-bedroom and

one-bedroom homes.

Clara King moved to Schowalter Villa independent living with her now late husband in 2004, and made the transition to assisted living in 2014. She also thrives off of taking part in provided activities, and helping to facilitate some of her own. In March 2022, she helped arrange for assisted living residents to piece and tie comforters that have been sent to Ukrainian refugees. A year later, they had completed more than 70 comforters.

"Knowing that we would be well cared for as we aged influenced our decision to choose to live here," said King. "All my needs are met, and the people here care for me. Relating to staff who truly care for me as a person is important and because of this, I know I am valued here." **TBP**



Rev. Caitlin Hendrix, MDiv, BCC  
*Kidron Bethel Village  
interim chaplain*

## Mind and body

The great wisdom traditions of the world recognize that our minds and bodies are interconnected. More importantly, they embody that recognition through a variety of practices that can be integrated into daily life. In that spirit, I suggest that incorporating practices of gratitude and physical activity into our daily lives can have a powerful positive impact.

### GRATITUDE

Gratitude is simple to practice and may improve mood, agency and quality of life for people of all ages. A 2021 publication from Harvard Health noted that people who wrote down things that they were grateful for during the previous week reported a greater sense of well-being and happiness with their lives (“Giving Thanks Can Make You Happier,” Harvard Health Publishing, Aug. 14, 2021). An article from the National Institute on Aging stated that “When people have higher levels of gratitude, they tend to have lower levels of depression, better sleep quality and stronger biomarkers, such as higher rates of good cholesterol. In addition, they are better able to handle stress and are more socially connected” (“The Many Gifts of Gratitude,” National Council on Aging, Apr. 26, 2018). Here are three simple ways to foster more gratitude in your life.

- Make a list of things you are grateful for.
- Write a thank you note.
- Go out of your way to thank someone.

### ACTIVITY

Regular physical activity has been linked with a wide range of physical and emotional health benefits. Seniors who are physically active have fewer health issues, live longer and report a higher quality of life than those who are inactive (“Physical Activity is Medicine for Adults,” BMJ Postgraduate Medical Journal, 2012). While many experts recommend 150 minutes of physical activity per week for older adults, any amount of activity is beneficial. Some simple ways to increase your level of activity include:

- Walking (indoors, outdoors or on a treadmill).
- Bicycling (stationary or traditional).
- Regular physical therapy.
- Join a group exercise class at the Bluestem Wellness Centers.

Small, simple practices that are adapted to our capacity and circumstances can have a significant impact on our spiritual and emotional well-being. Consider trying some new practices in your routines!





# Getting to know Bluestem PACE

When it comes to care opportunities to journey with seniors through the aging process, there are options, and Bluestem Communities offers many of them.

Not every option requires seniors to move to a new home to receive the care they need. Bluestem PACE (Programs of All-Inclusive Care for the Elderly) supports individuals age 55 and better who have complex medical needs to remain living in their own homes for as long as possible by coordinating comprehensive care. Bluestem PACE serves seniors in a six-county region of McPherson, Reno, Harvey, Marion, Rice and Saline counties.

“Bluestem PACE offers participants an alternative to traditional residential care homes by enabling them to stay in their homes and communities while providing a full spectrum of medical and supportive services all from one source and administered and coordinated by the interdisciplinary team,” said Justin Loewen, Bluestem PACE Executive Director.

The program operates from a primary location in McPherson, Kansas, and an alternative care site in Hutchinson, Kansas. Both locations provide on-campus access to primary care physicians, therapy services, social services and personal care, as well as a day center. The

day center is a place for participants to spend time between on-campus care appointments or while their at-home caregivers tend to other responsibilities during the day. Transportation is a unique feature at Bluestem PACE. Drivers pick up participants at their homes and take them to and from the day center and to specialty appointments as needed.

“This coordination of care reduces the burden of managing schedules for participants and their at-home caregivers,” said Loewen. “Bluestem PACE also provides services that address the psychosocial and functional needs of participants. Together, the comprehensive



Chris Deck, Bluestem PACE Director of Physical Therapy Rehab, works on therapy exercises with a PACE participant. Photo by Gavin Peters.

services work to prevent gaps in care and result in better outcomes for participants.”

PACE is a national care model that has existed since the early 1970’s. Bluestem PACE was added as part of Bluestem Communities in 2016. Since that time, it has grown to serve more than 100 seniors in the service area. It has also received national recognition for various aspects of care services within the PACE model of care.

“PACE has been my saving grace,” said Leslie, a Bluestem PACE participant.

Leslie became a Bluestem PACE participant in July 2022 after hitting a low spot medically and personally.

In 2015, she suffered an extreme medical event including two brain aneurysms, a massive stroke and a heart attack.

“Recovering from everything that happened to me really changed me,” said Leslie. “I had always been very social and outgoing and someone who just loved people. As I recovered, I became withdrawn. My aneurysms and stroke left me with occasional forgetfulness and difficulty saying what I wanted to. I was so self-conscious about it that I isolated and became really depressed. Over time, my overall health became really bad.”

After a couple of months of receiving Bluestem PACE services, Leslie’s

health improved dramatically.

“Until I started with Bluestem PACE, I hadn’t realized how sick and weak and sad I had become. Now, laughter has truly become an everyday part of my life again. The staff and other participants here at PACE are my family. Everyone understands that each person has their struggles, and we don’t have to explain it or try to make others understand why we are the way we are.”

To learn more about Bluestem PACE, visit [bluestempace.org](https://bluestempace.org). Schedule a tour or consult at 844-588-7223. **TBP**



Leslie, a Bluestem PACE participant, visits with a friend at the Bluestem PACE day center. Photo by Gavin Peters.

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[bluestemcommunities.org/about](https://bluestemcommunities.org/about)



# The power of community in group exercise



Strength training group exercise class at Kidron Bethel Village. Photo by Tyler Stutzman.



Teara Leonard  
Bluestem Wellness Center Director, Kidron Bethel Village

When it comes to exercise, there are many things you can choose to get your body moving. Group exercise classes are one option that offer more than just a boost to your physical wellness; they also offer a unique opportunity to make friends and improve your overall health and wellbeing.

Bluestem Wellness Centers have a location at each of the Bluestem Communities life plan communities – Kidron Bethel Village and Schowalter Villa. Programming includes a variety of land-based and pool-based group exercise classes to fit whatever wellness goals you might be looking for – get in shape, learn a new skill or just have fun with friends. Bluestem Communities residents have a free membership to both locations. The public can also join as members of Bluestem Wellness Centers with dual membership, including free participation.

“Previously, walking outside had been my only exercise routine,” said

Carolyn, a Bluestem Communities resident. “After we moved to Kidron Bethel Village, we decided to take advantage of the wellness group classes. I have appreciated the structure and exercise. But the unexpected benefit has been the opportunity to meet new people and develop friendships. It’s two benefits in one.”

## BENEFITS OF GROUP EXERCISE

- Motivation – Working out with a group provides a greater sense of motivation and accountability.
- Fun – Group exercise is a great way to have fun and get in shape at the same time.
- Variety – With both land- and pool-based group classes, you’re sure to find something that fits your individual needs and goals.
- Support – Working out with a group provides a sense of camaraderie and support. Everyone in the group is there to help each other reach their goals, and this can be incredibly motivating. Friendships

are often formed through group exercise classes, and these kinds of social interactions are beneficial to overall wellness.

- Results – With the added motivation and support of the group, you’re more likely to push yourself and get the results you want.

“I enjoy attending various group exercise classes,” said Bonnie, a member of the wider local community. “Laughter often fills the room as the instructor guides us through exercises that strengthen our muscles, limber up our stiff joints and increase our heart rates. Each participant is free to adapt any exercise to suit their own needs and abilities.”

If you’re ready to unlock the power of community and discover the benefits of group exercise, visit [bluestemcommunities.org/amenities/wellness](https://bluestemcommunities.org/amenities/wellness) to see a schedule of classes and learn more. Like and follow Bluestem Wellness Centers on Facebook. **TBP**



# Full-scope optometry care for small-town communities

A headline on the Legacy Eyecare website reads: “Better Vision Through Personal Care.” That personal care is what Dr. Mark Abrahams and Dr. Aaron Johnson value most about practicing in their communities. With offices in McPherson, Hesston and Hillsboro, Legacy Eyecare serves a rural area with small communities that allows the doctors to build relationships with patients in order to offer them top quality care.

Legacy Eyecare’s presence in the local communities is equally valuable to the population who benefits from having the latest technology in optometry services in their hometown, including many Bluestem Communities participants and residents.

A neighbor to both Bluestem PACE in McPherson and Schowalter Villa in Hesston, Legacy Eyecare has been a valuable resource for Bluestem Communities since Dr. Abrahams founded the practice in 2015. Bluestem PACE is partnered with Legacy Eyecare in McPherson to provide primary care optometry for all participants local to McPherson. Many Schowalter Villa residents use the services provided at the Hesston office, and the optician at the Hesston office also makes routine visits to the Schowalter Villa campus to adjust glasses.

“As a small business owner, we really value relationships with organizations like Bluestem Communities,” said Abrahams. “As people age, vision changes become more prevalent. Having the capacity to know our patients well and keep their eyes healthy is an important part of our work.”



*Dr. Mark Abrahams (left) and Dr. Aaron Johnson (right) operate Legacy Eye Care clinics in McPherson, Hesston and Hillsboro, which offer top-of-the-line optometry services with personal, small town connection. Photo by Rachel McMaster.*

Dr. Abrahams and Dr. Johnson offer a full spectrum of primary care optometry services, including routine eye exams and diagnostics and treatment for eye diseases and disorders, including cataracts, glaucoma, macular degeneration, retinopathy and diabetic retinopathy. The practice also partners with local ophthalmologists for eye surgeries so post-surgery follow up appointments can be at Legacy Eyecare’s clinics.

“When our patients are having vision issues or corrective surgeries, we want the process to be as uncomplicated for them as possible,” said Abrahams.

Befitting of its name, Legacy Eyecare carries a long legacy of care in each of its communities and tells a full-circle story of care. Dr. Mark Abrahams took over the McPherson practice in 2015 from a retiring doctor and named his new practice Legacy Eyecare in honor of his grandfather, Dr. Norman E.

Abrahams, who practiced optometry in Hillsboro for more than 40 years. In 2020, Legacy Eyecare merged with the Mid Kansas Eyecare clinics in Hesston and Hillsboro, which had been operated by Dr. Paul Unruh since the early 1990’s. Dr. Unruh had worked under Dr. Norman Abrahams and took over the Hillsboro practice from him, later expanding to Hesston. Dr. Aaron Johnson joined Legacy Eyecare in 2020.

“We always encourage patients to not ignore changes in their vision,” said Dr. Johnson. “The nature of being a small practice means we can address any issues quickly to restore vision or prevent vision loss.”

Find Legacy Eye Care in McPherson, Hesston and Hillsboro, and online at [legacyeyecareks.com](https://legacyeyecareks.com). The practice is accepting new patients. **TBP**



# Bluestem U lifelong learning

Local seniors – both those living at Bluestem Communities and those from wider area communities – have been expanding their minds and improving their overall wellbeing with Bluestem U.

Having just finished its second semester, Bluestem U is a lifelong learning program that was launched in 2022 in partnership between Bluestem Communities and its higher education neighbors – Bethel College in North Newton, Kansas, and Hesston (Kansas) College. The program seeks to provide lifelong learning opportunities for individuals age 55 and better.

“Bluestem U is the best thing to happen recently in our community,” said Marjean Harris, local Newton, Kansas, resident who took the spring 2022 semester course offering “Slowing Down to the Speed of Poetry.”

A multitude of studies point to the benefits of lifelong learning and the overall wellness it provides participants.

“Continued learning experiences are so important to every person’s quality of life regardless of age and

in keeping sharp both mentally and physically,” said Julie Miller, Bluestem Communities Lifelong Learning Program Manager.

The first two semesters of Bluestem U both offered three courses, each meeting once per week for four to seven weeks. Courses are taught by current or former faculty or staff at the partnering colleges or area experts in particular subject matters. Registration for each course is \$50.

Jim and Bonnie Miller, Bluestem Communities residents at Kidron Bethel Village, jumped into the Bluestem U program with both feet.

“We loved the first Bluestem U courses we took,” the Millers said. “We met so many wonderful people and enjoyed the exposure to the wide-array of topics. We took all three offered courses again in the second semester and they were equally fantastic. It’s so great to meet people and learn new things!”

Visit [BluestemU.org](https://bluestemU.org) to see details about upcoming semesters, courses offered and to register. **TBP**



Brad Guhr (left), instructor of “Prairie Landscaping 101,” works with George and Jeanette Leary on a landscape plan. Guhr is the Prairie Restoration/ Education Coordinator at Hesston College’s Dyck Arboretum of the Plains. Photo by Tyler Stutzman.



Bonnie (left) and Jim (right) Miller with Kevin Wilder, instructor of “Happy Habits from Positive Psychology.” Photo by Tyler Stutzman.



Raylene Hinz-Penner (center), instructor of “Slowing Down to the Speed of Poetry,” discusses a book with Bluestem U participants Barbara Kauffman (left) and Marjean Harris (right). Photo by Gavin Peters.

## Welcome home to Bluestem Communities.



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[bluestemks.org/availablehomes](https://bluestemks.org/availablehomes)



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*"I wish I would have  
moved sooner!"*

GERALD  
Resident of  
Bluestem Communities



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# UPCOMING EVENTS 2023

## GARDEN PARTY

June 3

Hesston, Kansas

## KIDRON BETHEL VILLAGE CAR SHOW

June 9

## SCHOWALTER VILLA CAR SHOW

June 17

## KIDRON BETHEL VILLAGE FIREWORKS EXTRAVAGANZA

July 4

## SAVE THE DATE! BLUESTEM GALA

November 2





3001 Ivy Dr.  
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The Bluestem Post is published to share information, fellowship and fun with participants, residents, staff and friends of Bluestem Communities.

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