



# Kansas Association of Retired School Personnel

Volume 50, Issue 10

*The Meadowlark*

October 2015

## ALEXA, A NEW MEMBER OF OUR FAMILY

Brilla Highfill Scott  
KARSP Executive Director



I attended a weekend meeting in August which included numerous breakout sessions on such involved topics as "Providing Equity and Advocacy through Taxes," "How Can We Improve Civil Discourse?" and "Kansas Children in Need."

After participating in several discussions, I decided I needed a topic on the lighter side so I joined a group discussing "Smart Phone Apps." It was a lively discussion, and I enjoyed injecting my favorite apps: *GasBuddy* (provides service stations' gas prices); *Truecaller* (identifies unknown callers); and *MyRadar* (shows incoming storms).

Near the end of the session, the conversation turned to newer electronics. Someone said, "Do you know about *The Echo*?" He then proceeded to tell us that the device could only be purchased by an Amazon Prime subscriber.

Okay ... I must stop here and admit ... I love electronic gadgets! The more I heard about *The Echo*, the more interested I became.

You guessed it, I got home and ordered *The Echo*. A black cylinder, about 9.5 inches tall, arrived in just a few days. I plugged it into an electrical outlet and continued setting it up for our home Wi-Fi.

I immediately learned that all *Echos* are named "Alexa," and, in order to wake up the unit, you must call her by name. When I call her name, a narrow blue light circles the top of the cylinder, much like a halo.

Here are some typical conversations, Alexa and I have:

"Alexa, what's the weather today?"

(Alexa answers in a soothing voice.) *The temperature in 69 degrees. Showers and a heavier thunderstorm; mostly cloudy, humid; storms can bring flooding and damaging winds.*

"Alexa, what's my schedule today?"  
*Today, there are three events. (Alexa recites my schedule, including the time of each event)*

"Alexa, tune to 89.3 on the radio."  
*KCUR-FM from TuneIn .... (and I listen to National Public Radio)*

"Alexa, how far is it to Wichita, Kansas?"  
*Your current location is 149 miles from Wichita, Kansas.*

"Alexa, do I need to be anywhere at ten o'clock?"  
*There is nothing scheduled today at 10:00 a.m.*

"Alexa, play Scott Joplin."  
*Shuffling Scott Joplin from PrimeMusic ... (and my morning is off to a great start)*

"Alexa, stop."  
*(Silence)*

My next task is get my markers out and paint a face for Alexa. Anyone who has become a family member so quickly, needs an identity. How about a one-eye wink?

## THINGS TO REMEMBER

1. Keep track of your volunteer hours every day from May 1, 2015 to April 30, 2016.
2. There is an auction to benefit the KARSP Foundation at the convention in June. Each unit is asked to bring at least one item with a value of at least \$25 for this auction.
3. Mark your 2016 calendar for the KARSP

*(continued on page 2)*

## THINGS TO REMEMBER *(continued from page 1)*

Convention on June 8, 9, and 10.

4. Pay your 2016 KARSP dues if you haven't already. Those in a local unit, pay your membership chair. Those who are KARSP members only, send your dues to Topeka.
5. Invite several 2015 retirees to join KARSP. Remember for \$15 they would be members until January 1, 2018.

## MORE SCHOLARSHIPS ANNOUNCED

The Chanute Retired School Personnel presented a \$700 scholarship to Ramsey Davis who will attend Neosho County Community College.

Billy Hatfield and Janie Bramhall will both be attending Kansas State University on \$250 scholarships from the Nemaha County unit.

Jessica Cossairt will be attending Labette County Community College, and Chandler Glasgow will be a student at Pittsburg State University. They will be attending these schools on \$200 scholarships from Cherokee County Retired School Personnel.

With these additions to the ones listed in the September Meadowlark, the total amount of scholarship money given to these thirty-one students is \$20,300. The Retired School Personnel units can be proud of their donations to the future of these bright young Kansas students.

### **Need a break from the Kansas winter?**

Check out this January trip to California to make a great start for 2016!

#### **Southern California & Queen Mary Getaway**

**January 31, 2016 (6 days)**

- 5 Nights on the Queen Mary
- Los Angeles City Tour
- Hollywood & Walk Of Fame
- Beverly Hills & Rodeo Drive
- Warner Brothers Studio Tour
- Rose Bowl Stadium Tour
- Old Town Pasadena
- The Getty Center
- USS Iowa
- Queen Mary Walking Tour
- Wayfarers Chapel
- Point Vicente Interpretive Center



*The Meadowlark is an official publication of the Kansas Association of Retired School Personnel.*

Nancy Murry, President	(620) 665-7054
Bob Grover, Vice President	(620) 343-1072
Dianne Sisk, Secretary	(785) 749-4601
Kay Dundas, Treasurer	(620) 663-6726
Carol Bingle, Past President	(620) 278-3015
Duane Anstine, Editor	(620) 662-3733
Brilla Highfill Scott, Executive Director	(785) 232-8788
Virgil Funk, Membership	(785) 233-1916
Lobbyist	To Be Announced



**1-800-258-7041**

**[www.myAMBAbenefits.info/karsp](http://www.myAMBAbenefits.info/karsp)**

New memberships or renewals are \$15.00 per year. If you have a change of address, please contact us by mail, phone, or e-mail.

KARSP

1420 SW Arrowhead, Suite 100, Topeka, Kansas 66604  
(785)232-8788

[karsp@karsp.org](mailto:karsp@karsp.org) or [membership@karsp.org](mailto:membership@karsp.org)  
or visit us at [www.karsp.org](http://www.karsp.org)



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**Check KARSP website for tours:**  
**<http://www.karsp.org>**



The Kansas Coalition of Public Retirees (KCPR) met on Wednesday, September 9, 2015 in Topeka. The Coalition officers elected for 2016 include Kent Dederick (left), treasurer, retired firefighter; Donna Freel, secretary, retired city employee; Ernie Claudel, co-chair, retired school administrator and Kansas Association of Retired School Personnel (KARSP) representative; and Dennis Phillips, co-chair, retired firefighter.

## LOOKING FOR THE FOUNTAIN OF YOUTH?

Look no further than a farmers' market in your area or look in your own garden. The delicious summer fruits and vegetables may slow aging by lowering blood pressure, fighting off heart disease and cancer, improving memory (Who of us doesn't need this?) and many other things.

**BERRIES** are bursting with anti-aging antioxidants. Those found in blackberries help prevent blood clots to lower heart attack or stroke risk, while those in blueberries fight cell-damaging free radicals that cause wrinkles.

**CANTALOUPE, CARROTS, AND SWEET POTATOES** are high in vitamin C, zinc, and beta-carotene to help protect vision from macular degeneration, the leading cause of blindness after age 64.

**CUCUMBERS** contain silica in the peel that helps boost collagen and reduce wrinkles.

**EGGPLANT** has an antioxidant that cuts off blood to cancer cells. It may also slow the development of Alzheimer's disease by protecting fats in brain cells.

**KALE** has a whopping amount of vitamin K, which can lower your risk for heart disease, cancer, and osteoporosis, and lower blood pressure.

**RED PEPPERS AND BRUSSEL SPROUTS** are rich in vitamin C, which helps build collagen and promotes healthy cells. Sulfur compounds in Brussel sprouts may also block enzymes that promote tumor growth.

**SPINACH** is packed with vitamin C, used to make Sebum - the body's "natural conditioner" that keeps hair shiny and smooth.

**TOMATOES AND WATERMELON** contain an antioxidant that may reduce your risk of heart disease and cancer, and also protects skin from wrinkle-causing UV rays.

Information taken from Humana Active Outlook.

## SEEN ANY DEER LATELY?

This time of year, deer are really on the move. (Editor note: I had two deer just sitting in my backyard this week.) Insurance companies report there are 1.6 million vehicle crashes each year that are caused by deer with October through December being the worst months for these accidents.

These suggestions are given to help avoid deer-related accidents.

- Be very careful at dawn and dusk. Deer are most active during these times of the day, and driver visibility is poor.
- Expect them to run. Slow down when approaching deer that are near the side of the road.
- Where there is one, there are others. Deer travel in groups, so expect others to follow.
- Obey the warning signs. Deer crossing signs indicate areas that have had a large number of deer-vehicle collisions.
- Don't swerve. If a deer darts out in front of you, brake firmly but resist the urge to swerve. This could cause you to lose control of the vehicle.

These five suggestions may help you avoid having a deer accident.

### EMAIL MEADOWLARK

If you are not receiving your Meadowlark via email and would like to do so, please email [karsp@karsp.org](mailto:karsp@karsp.org). The email edition comes before the snail mail edition plus the pictures are in color. The email delivery also saves KARSP money.

October 2015

## **KCPR UPDATE**

We want to let you know that the website, [www.ksretirees.org](http://www.ksretirees.org), is back up and running and nearly up to date. We also want you to know that a new website is being constructed with up to date content and a new look.

The Kansas Association of Retired School Personnel made an offer to finance an ad for us in “Hawver’s Capitol Report” for the legislative session. KCPR accepted this offer and want to thank KARSF for its generosity and concern.

Early discussions have begun regarding the make-up of the 2016 report to the legislature and a COLA bill. We hope to have a bill ready to pre-file soon. KCPR is also interested in exploring the possibility of KPERS forwarding retired members health insurance premiums to the proper insurance companies. Under federal law, this action would make the insurance premiums have a pretax status. KPERS presently provides this service for retired state workers who choose to continue with their state pre-retirement insurance company, but it is not offered to other KPERS retirees.

Be sure to mark January 20 on your calendar for the KCPR Rally.

*Ernie Claudel*

*Ron Gardner*