

# Free in Franklin County: Friday coffees

By McKenna Nease  
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In Franklin County there's a lot to see and experience. From biking to running and shopping to dining.

To highlight activities that don't cost any money, The Ottawa Herald is exploring ways to experience the area with no out of pocket costs.

This week the Friday Coffees with the Ottawa Area Chamber of Commerce (OACC) is



Supporters of Friday coffees meet nearly every Friday featuring a new business or organization, each week through the year.

making an appearance on the Free in Franklin County list.

From 8-9 a.m. nearly every Friday, and sometimes on other days in the

week, the OACC meets in the community for coffee and a light breakfast.

This event is open to the public and provides more than treats and coffee.

It provides opportunities to learn about the hosting organization/business.

Networking in this atmosphere is possible as people have the chance to meet business owners, directors, residents and people that work and serve on the Franklin County and Ottawa commissions.

Usually the host gives a short presentation or announcement about what they have to offer and any announcements about new things they have

happening.

Ribbon Cutting Ceremonies in town are also a part of OACC's mission to drive support of the town and celebrate new businesses.

Both of these events by the OACC have been ongoing since at least 2008.

Office Manager Sherri Lund, and President Ryland Miller have worked alongside each other with other leaders in the community organize events like this.

Since Miller became

President of the organization, there has been a lot of growth with these events from having some a month to having one or more each week.

The Executive Committee and Board of Directors continuously work together with Miller and Lund to organize and run these events and encourage people to have a good time.

The OACC has grown over the years and consists of about 300 people or organizations.

## Ottawa continues quarter million dollar budget request

By McKenna Nease  
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Ottawa Commission recently spoke about nearly a quarter million dollars to many community programs and organizations and has yet to make a decision.

The next meeting will take place July 7 and will continue the conversation and declare a decision.

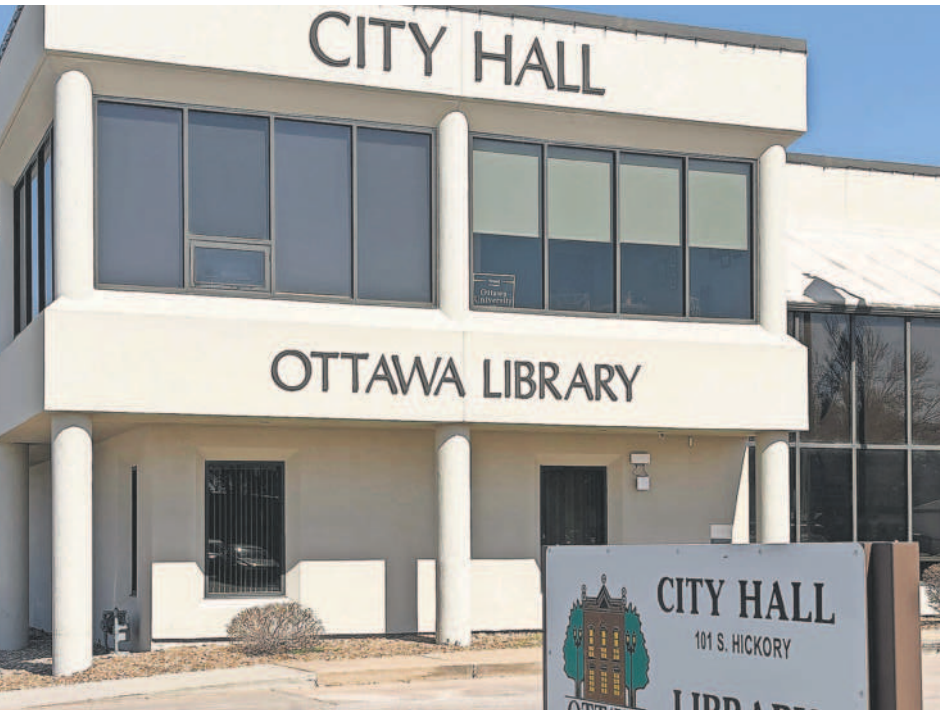
According to Finance Director Landis and Director of Public Works-Interim Welsh at an Ottawa Commission put together a formal request of \$201,246

be allocated to Prairie Paws, Veteran's Day Support, City Band, Franklin County Development Council, Ottawa Main Street Association, Ottawa Fireworks and the Elizabeth Layton Center.

Discussed at the commission meeting the official proposed budget which was prepared by Director Landis and Director Welsh. The proposal included an additional request of \$46,549 and it was pushed to July 7 commission meeting as well. The funds are designated for

first-time applicants from the Ottawa Chamber of Commerce, the Franklin County Coalition to End Homelessness, Hope House and the Franklin County Child Advocacy Center.

All of these funds create opportunities for the organizations run effectively and support the mission to make Ottawa a great place to live. The funds effect how others see the community in the space of non-profits, public service, private business and health of the community and it's residents.



McKenna Nease/ Ottawa Herald  
Ottawa Commission reviews the 2026 operating budget for community groups.

## National report findings on child well-being in Kansas

By Sunni Battin

The good news from the annual Kids Count is Kansas ranks 14th overall in the U.S. in terms of child well-being with a reduction of children in single parent families.

Additionally, fewer children lived in poverty in 2023 when compared to an earlier time but the report also showed areas of concern and improvement, particularly in education.

The national report from the Annie E. Casey Foundation, a nonprofit striving to improve child well-being, uses government

data in order to offer a snapshot of how children are doing across the nation. Data in the areas of economic well-being, education, health, family and community are reported on.

Overall, the state did well on economic well-being. In three of the four areas, they fared better than in 2019. In addition to child poverty being down, children with parents not having secure employment and children in homes with a high housing cost burden, also decreased.

In the four areas that Kids Count reports on, Kansas struggled the most in

education. There was a rise in preschool age children (ages 3 and 4) that were not in school, at 55 percent in 2019-2023, up from 53 percent in 2014-2018. Also, fourth graders were lacking in reading skills with a 6 percent increase — 72 percent in 2024 and 66 percent in 2019.

“Kids nationwide (including in Kansas) are still seeing the difficult effects on their education due to the pandemic and recovering from learning loss during those early COVID years,” said Jessica Herrera Russell, Senior Communications

Manager of Kansas Action for Children. “Additionally, more children have suffered various adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) since 2020. Research shows that ACEs that disrupt a child's environment can affect other areas of their life, from education outcomes to emotional regulation and even their physical health. Taking money away from schools will only worsen the problem by limiting what K-12 educators can do for the children in their communities.”

Another potential concern is eighth graders

falling behind in math, with a 7 percent jump. In 2019, Kansas was at 67 percent and in 2024 increased to 74 percent. The singular positive news on education was a 2 percent decrease of high school students not graduating in a timely manner.

For health, the state's results stayed the same including children with no health insurance and low birth-weight babies. There was a surge of teen and child deaths per 100,000. The area of family and community saw improvements including drops in children living in high

poverty areas, kids in familial homes with no high school diploma and teen births per 1,000 as well as fewer kids with single parent families.

“Kansas saw more fully employed parents in 2023 than years prior, so families are generally better off financially due to more stable employment. Many families are also still feeling a financial boost due to economic relief plans post-2020, such as the enhanced federal child tax credit and improved access to assistance programs like SNAP and Medicaid,” Russell Herrera said.



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