



# COTTONWOOD

## Thumbprint

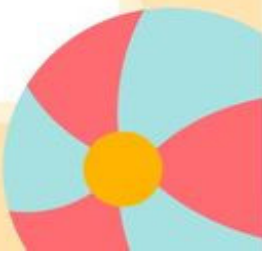





June 2025 No. 492





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# Colleen's Column



It is hard to believe that the month of May has come to an end. Welcome summer! And like the earlier months of 2025, May has been busy and productive. Here are just a few of the highlights:

## Funding

Funding proposals for Jefferson and Douglas County were prepared and submitted. While the bulk of Cottonwood's funding comes through the State, we do get a portion from the counties in which we provide services.

## Legislative News

On the legislative front, we received notice that there will be a Special Committee on Health and Social Services in Topeka this summer. It's a very aggressive agenda including the review of:

- The state's process in developing a plan to comply with federal requirements for Targeted Case Management (TCM) conflict of interest mitigation
- Current projections for the IDD waitlist + strategies to end it
- Potential impact if the service limitation was set at 25 hours/week
- Strategies to address IDD waiver workforce issues

We will be watching, attending and testifying during this process. And, as always, we will be strong advocates for our organization, staff and consumers.

## CDDO

CDDO contract negotiations. CDDOs contract with the State to provide this service annually. Cottonwood's Angela Levy is a significant resource to the negotiation team and serves as a real leader in this process. As of this writing, an agreement has not been reached but we are hopeful it will happen soon. I can't begin to describe the amount of work and analysis that the CDDO leaders have put into this process.

## Licensing

I am so proud that we came through our licensing review smoothly! This is a testament to our quality of services, administrative management via policies and plans. Huge shoutouts to everyone who worked to prepare for the site visit and an even bigger shoutout to all of you for your part in the quality work we do.

## Source America

Nina VanSchmus and I attended the Source America (SA) (<https://www.sourceamerica.org/>) annual conference in Indianapolis. SA is a Central Nonprofit Agency in the AbilityOne Program that works in the federal contracting space. Its primary mission is the employment of individuals with disabilities. It sources contracts for products, like our cargo straps, as well as other services for the military customer. Over 400 non-profit agencies across the country provide products or services through this program.

## Salute!

Planning for [Salute!](#) is running at a fast and furious pace. It is shaping up to be another fantastic event that raises funds and connects with the community about all things Cottonwood. Our Community Relations & Development team do amazing work. This 3-day event requires intense planning and coordination! Thanks to Ettie and Kari, along with their volunteer committee, for making this such a special event.

## Shoutout to Abby!

I just want to give a HUGE shoutout to one of our Residential staff, Abby, who was filling in at Michigan House over the weekend. There was a man down on the street, an apparent hit-and-run victim. Abby began doing chest compression while waiting for the ambulance to arrive. Later, Abby told her supervisor that while she was a bit shaken, she was so glad that she knew what to do from the training she had received from Cottonwood! Yet one more fantastic reason we are Cottonwood Strong!

Please don't hesitate to reach out if you have questions or would like to know more. Let's keep moving forward all!



21 Years  
James Bermudez

19 Years  
Mary Williams

18 Years  
Nina Van Schmus

13 Years  
Jessica Wood

11 Years  
Dani Featherby

10 Years  
Melissa Rowland

6 Years  
Katie Moore

3 Years  
Alicia Duncan  
Thomas Cluchey  
Dianne Olcott

2 Years  
Grace Fornwall  
John Downing



1 Year  
Tim Cormack  
Nathaniel Babin  
Karsyn Robertson  
Brandy French  
Andrea Pagan  
Hunter Weeks





# Happy Birthday Staff



**Amelia Rylko—June 3rd**  
**Jennifer Devers—June 3rd**  
**Vivian Long Fernandez—June 4th**  
**Ava Wieser—June 5th**  
**Matt Wilson—June 5th**  
**Joel Pfannenstiel—June 9th**  
**Derek Bost—June 9th**  
**Alison Brown—June 11th**  
**Rissa Brinkley—June 13th**  
**Danny Troop—June 14th**  
**Tim Cormack—June 15th**  
**Carson Sloan—June 19th**  
**Destiny White—June 19th**  
**Heather Poort—June 23rd**  
**Miguel Ramos—June 26th**  
**Whit Fast—June 27th**  
**Anna Grier—June 28th**  
**Christopher Smith—June 28th**



# Happy Birthday

## Consumers





To: All Cottonwood Staff  
From: Heather Thies, Agency Safety Co-Chairperson  
RE: Hot weather concerns for consumers and vehicles

**Hot weather is on its way!**

It's time to review the Cottonwood Vehicle Policy #02-009.

“All vehicles are to be locked after use by the driver. This is a safety precaution that is necessary to prevent passengers from sitting in a **too hot** or too cold vehicle. Never leave the motor running in an unattended personal or Cottonwood vehicle. This means that a staff person is present and, in a position, to prevent a consumer in engaging any part of the driver's console.”

Staff must decide whether a staff person needs to be in the driver's seat to provide adequate protection.

If you choose to leave your locked vehicle running, please be advised that it is a violation of city ordinance to leave a vehicle running and unattended whether it is locked or not. For our purposes, keep the vehicle locked if it is running. For those staff wishing to cool down their cars please invest in a second set of keys to allow the car to run with the doors securely locked.

**Have a safe spring and summer season.**

**“SAFETY IS EVERYBODY'S BUSINESS!”**



**VOTING COMING SOON!**

**June 1–7**  
*Best of*  
**LAWRENCE**  
*2025*

[CLICK HERE](#)

**VOTE FOR US!**  
**June 1st - 7th**

**Best Non-Profit (Adult/Senior Services)**

Cottonwood, Inc.

**Best Place to Work (Large, 100+ employees)**

Cottonwood, Inc.

**Social Media (Org. or Non-profit)**

Cottonwood, Inc.

**Nonprofit Event—Salutel A Festival of Wine & Food**

Cottonwood, Inc.

**Nonprofit Event—Mass St Mosey**

Cottonwood, Inc.

**Best Service (Staffing Agency)**

JobLink

**Community Leader**

Colleen Himmelberg

**Administrative Assistant (non-profits/gov./groups)**

- Jane Bowers

- Shelley Langston



Thanks to a Source America grant, Cottonwood Industries has a new sign!



## June 2025 Employment Anniversaries and New Jobs in the last month

Wolf (Pope), Kane (Bryan)	22	Best Buy
Beard, Kenneth S	16	Taco John's -6th
Schuchart, Trent A	15	Lawrence Douglas County Housing Authority (CW)
Morgan Jr., Michael L	10	Stoneback Appliance
Peterson, John P	7	KU-South Dining Commons-Oliver/Downs Halls
Grammer, Cayla E	4	CSL Plasma
Anderson, Harper D	3	KU-KU Bookstore-Kansas Union
Cassett, Derek D	3	Game Nut Entertainment
Jackson, Jonathan C	3	Dillons(Lawrence)
Davis, Malaika L	2	Clinton Parkway Nursery
Hieger, Timothy J	2	Proficio
Jellison, Raquel L	2	Douglas County Appraisal Office
Mathews, David M	2	Christal K-9
Owens, Kyle J	2	TJ Maxx
Stone, Karen L	2	SACK
Copp, Tanna Casey F	1	Regal Southwind
Davis, Malaika L	1	Chipotle Mexican Grill -6th
O'Brien, Alexzander S	1	Taco Bell -Bonner
Smith, Addison N	1	Pioneer Ridge Independent Living Center



Trent - 15 years



Michael - 10 years



Louise - 2 years

# CONGRATULATIONS!



Adams, Jeremiah D	Auto Zone
Berlin, Benjamin E	Wheatfields Bakery
Hall, Karias N	KU-South Dining Commons-Oliver/Downs Halls
Harris, Lily	SpringHill Suites
Phillips, Madelyn	Murry Mobile Lab
Storms, Payton C	Wendy's -Kasold



Karen - 2 years







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**EMPLOYEE**  
*of the month*  
June 2025

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**Amy Carpenter**

**How long have you worked at McDonald's?**  
*I have been working there for 2 years.*

**What do you do there?**  
*Dry serving trays, place paper liners on trays.*

**What is your favorite task to do at work?**  
*My favorite task is making sure the serving trays are dry and presentable for the customers.*

**Why do you like your job?**  
*Paid employment. My team is very supportive and makes me feel like an important part of the team.*

**What advice can you give about being a good employee?**  
*Do the best you can. Always be honest to gain/have respect from your boss and teammates.*

CONGRATULATIONS!

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**EMPLOYER**  
*of the month*  
June 2025

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# Spring



# Planting



## Aster House



Spring is the perfect time to get your hands dirty and start planting herbs and vegetables! Thanks to Silver Bells, Aster is proud to make good use of their brand new, raised garden bed.

Fresh, home-grown tomatoes are a treat and watching them grow provides a connection to the wonders of nature. With plants donated by staff member Bonnie M. directly from her farm, consumers at Aster will also benefit from planting a variety of aromatic herbs that will add flavor to their dishes and beauty to the garden.



### **1. Choose the Right Spot:**

Ensure your plants get plenty of sunlight. Most herbs and vegetables need at least 6 hours of direct sunlight daily.



## **Some Planting Tips**

### **2. Prepare the Soil:**

Good soil is the foundation of a healthy garden. Mix in compost or organic matter to enrich the soil.



### **3. Water Wisely:**

Water your plants early in the morning or late in the evening to minimize evaporation. Keep the soil consistently moist but not water logged.



# MAKING THE MOST OF MAY AT RETIREMENT!



Finding our Green Thumbs!



Arts and Crafts!



Visiting Old Friends!



# HAPPY ANNIVERSARY, RETIREMENT!

This month we celebrated  
one year at our new home!





# IN OUR RETIREMENT ERA!





# Life Enrichment



**Clay  
Leaf  
Prints**



**Game  
Club**

**Flower  
Making**



**Egg Carton  
Craft**



**Homemade  
Pickle Makin'**







## Print Making



## Bowling Club



## Basketball



## Cinco de Mayo In the park

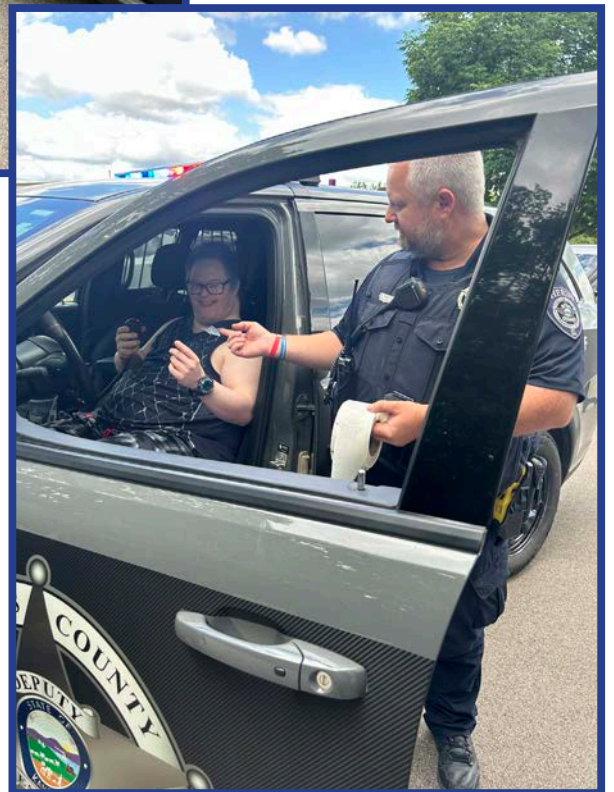
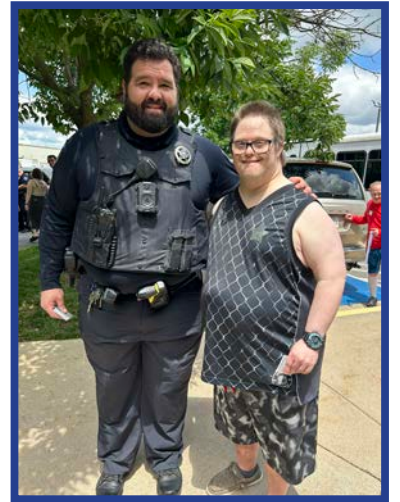


What an exciting afternoon we had with Deputy Weinmaster & Master Deputy Whitis from the Douglas County Sheriff's Office!

Our day programs were buzzing with excitement as we got a hands-on look at their amazing work. From sitting in the patrol car and speaking into the microphone (so cool!) to watching the incredible drone operations in action — we were absolutely amazed! To top it all off, everyone received their very own sheriff badge sticker, and the smiles said it all.









## WELCOME TO THE TEAM

**DILLON**

DEPT: RESIDENTIAL

Favorite Color: *Dark Blue - indigo*

Hobbies or Interests: *Reading...non-fiction...scientific journals.*

Favorite Food: *Chicken Parm (made by mom 😊)*

Last book or show you watched:  
Book: *Ken Miller books about consciousness.*

What music puts you in a good mood?  
*Sam Barber*



## WELCOME TO THE TEAM

**ASHLEY**

DEPT: CORE

Favorite Color: *Black*

Hobbies or Interests: *My kids. Fishing, swimming and maybe camping soon!*

Favorite Food: *Mexican*

Last book or show you watched:  
Book: *Currently watching 9-1-1 shows. Criminal Minds, Blue Bloods.*

What music puts you in a good mood?  
*Old R&B*



# WELCOME!

## WELCOME TO THE TEAM

**LOGAN**

DEPT: RETIREMENT/CORE/  
LIFE ENRICHMENT

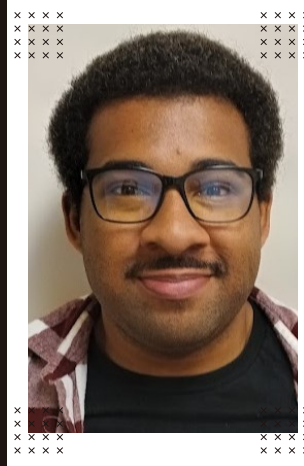
Favorite Color: *Blue*

Hobbies or Interests: *Likes to write. Been working on a comic book for 6 years.*

Favorite Food: *Pizza - Glory Days Chicken BBQ)*

Last book or show you watched:  
Book: *Watching Arcane on Netflix*

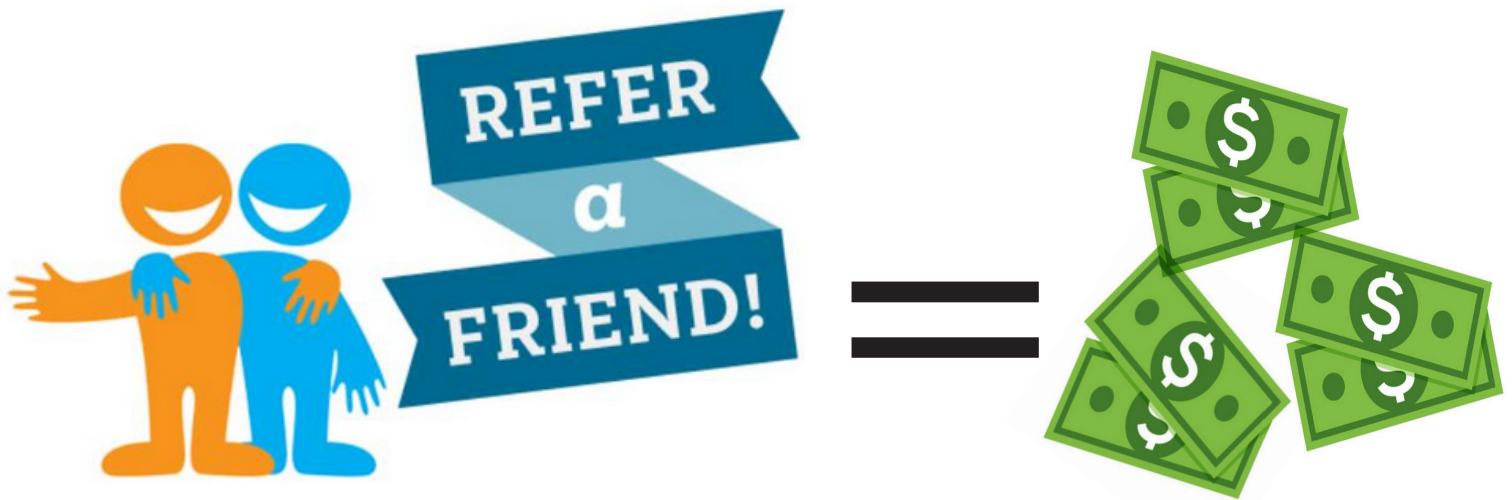
What music puts you in a good mood?  
*All music - musical theater*





# Spread The Word! We are hiring!

And there's something in it for **YOU!**  
Make sure to tell your friends, etc. to put your name on their application.



1. At completion of the long application - **\$10**
2. At hire + orientation + satisfying background check - **\$100**
3. Upon first 90 days + completed initial trainings - **\$200**

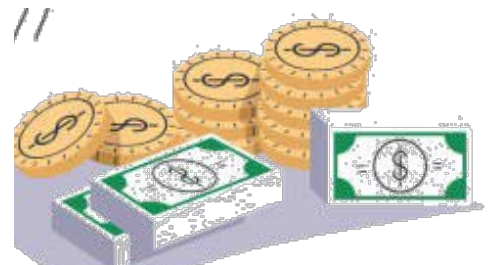
If the referring employee quits during the above process, rewards stop immediately.

Only one referring employee can get credit for an applicant: however, each referring employee can get credit for an unlimited number of applicants.

Supervisors are not eligible to receive any rewards on applicants they directly supervise.

The Human Resources Department will be responsible for carrying out this program and for answering any questions that may arise.

## Staff Recruitment Awards Program





**Best Non-Profit (Adult/Senior Services)**

Cottonwood, Inc.

**Best Place to Work (Large, 100+ employees)**

Cottonwood, Inc.

**Social Media (Org. or Non-profit)**

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[CLICK HERE](#)

**VOTE FOR US!**  
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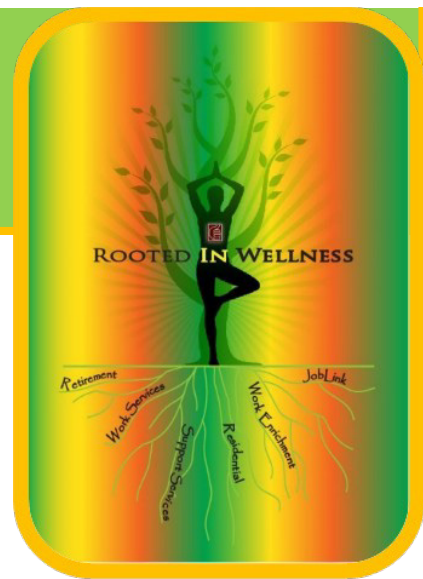
Would you be brave enough to  
hold a snake?

Well, Lisa B. was brave enough.  
She went to Pet World and look  
what she has draped around her  
neck !!!





# Promoting & Supporting Wellness



## National Men's Health Month

National Men's Health Month is a special time in June to learn about men's health issues, like heart disease and mental health. It reminds us that men should see doctors regularly and make healthy choices to live a happy and long life.

### What is Men's Health Month

June is Men's Health Awareness Month, emphasizing the importance of men's well-being. It aims to raise awareness about various health issues affecting men, such as heart disease and mental health. Encouraging men to schedule regular check-ups with healthcare providers is a key focus. Promoting healthier lifestyle choices, including diet and exercise, is central to the campaign. Ultimately, Men's Health Month seeks to enhance men's overall health and quality of life.

### Men's Health Month History

National Men's Health Month began in the United States to address disparities in men's health. It gained Congressional recognition in 1994, formalizing its importance. Observed throughout June (1-30), it raises awareness about men's well-being. The event encourages men to prioritize preventive healthcare measures. Its mission is to promote a proactive approach to men's health. It strives to improve men's overall physical and mental well-being. Men's Health Month continues to grow as a vital health awareness initiative. Men's Health Awareness Month, originating in the U.S. in 1994, raises awareness and encourages proactive health measures for men's well-being.



## Men's Health Month Purpose

Here is the basic purpose of the Men's Health Awareness Month:

Raise awareness about critical men's health concerns, including disparities. Promote routine health check-ups to prevent and detect issues early. Encourage men to adopt healthier lifestyles, from diet to exercise. Tackle the stigma surrounding men's mental health and encourage discussions. Highlight the significance of early detection in managing diseases. Advocate for a proactive approach to improving men's overall well-being. Men's Health Month focuses on raising awareness, preventive care, and healthier living to enhance men's overall health and quality of life.

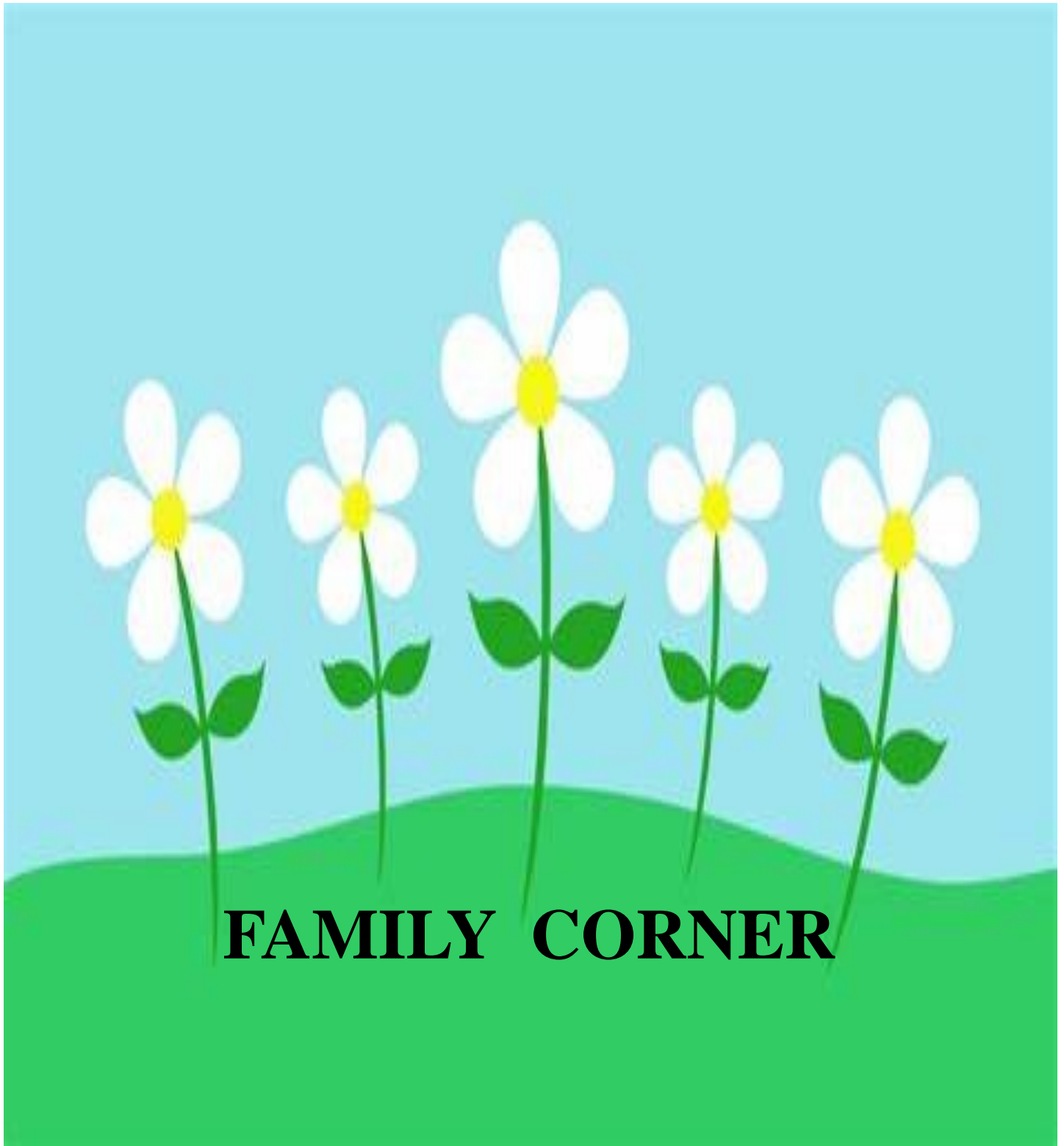
Men's Health Awareness Month holds importance in several ways:

Tackles significant disparities in men's health outcomes, promoting equity. Fosters early detection and prevention strategies for male-specific health issues. Encourages open conversations, breaking down barriers surrounding men's well-being. Highlights the profound impact of lifestyle choices on men's health and longevity. Inspires a sense of personal responsibility, empowering men to prioritize their well-being. Provides a platform to challenge the stigma surrounding men's mental health. Aims to drive down the overall mortality rate among men through awareness and action. Men's Health Month is vital for addressing disparities, promoting early detection, and encouraging open conversations about men's well-being to ultimately reduce mortality rates.

Here are ten interesting facts to celebrate Men's Health Month:

1. Men are more likely to die from the top 10 causes of death than women.
2. 1 in 9 men will be diagnosed with prostate cancer.
3. Depression affects over 6 million men in the U.S. annually.
4. Men are 24% less likely than women to have visited a doctor within the past year.
5. Men's life expectancy is around 5 years less than women's.
6. Testicular cancer is most common in young men aged 15-34.
7. High testosterone levels can lead to aggressive behavior.
8. Men are less likely to seek therapy for mental health issues.
9. Men are at a higher risk of skin cancer, especially melanoma.
10. Men's bone density decreases with age, leading to osteoporosis.





# **FAMILY CORNER**



## Who doesn't like to climb trees ?

Alyson Wingert's granddaughters, Maisie and MacKenna and her great nephew, Brody, had fun climbing the big tree.

**Alyson Wingert is the Workforce Expansion Project Manager.**

