



**HELP
OTHERS**

**SUPPORTING OLDER KANSANS
WHERE THEY LIVE**

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978 ARAPAHO RD
INMAN, KS 67546

PREPARED BY:
KANSAS SAMPLER FOUNDATION



HERE ARE A SERIES OF ACTIVITIES THAT KANSANS IN COMMUNITIES OF ALL SIZES CAN CONSIDER TO HELP OUR STATE'S OLDEST RESIDENTS SUCCESSFULLY AND SAFELY AGE IN PLACE.

These activities were suggested by older Kansans, their family members, and experts in working with seniors. They are generally activities that a neighbor or a volunteer could undertake during the course of a day; however, they could also be part of a system that a civic organization or local government could organize to become part of the supporting fiber of a community.

THE KANSAS SAMPLER FOUNDATION IS COMMITTED TO PRESERVING RURAL CULTURE. PART OF THAT CULTURE IS ENSURING EVERYONE WHO LIVES IN RURAL KANSAS FEELS WELCOME AND SUPPORTED.



PROVIDE THOUGHTFUL GENERAL SUPPORT

Commit to checking in regularly with older Kansans. Help with their houseplants, retrieving their mail, taking care of their trash and recycling. Offer to help opening jars when they get their groceries or lifting heavy items or assisting with car maintenance tasks. They might need help with buying, mending or laundering clothes or organizing coupons or picking up library books. Offer to help solve problems they might encounter.

MAKE AND KEEP SOCIAL CONNECTIONS

Safe social visits or making connections to friends and family can go a long way. An older person might need help to send emails to friends and family; maybe they would like to start a new hobby, or would like company to attend a function or event.

HELP WITH TRANSPORTATION

Offer to run errands like picking up groceries. If it's safe to be out and about, helpers could provide rides to the grocery store or doctor or to visit friends and family. Check with local transportation agencies to learn more about their options and help connect elders with those services.

PROVIDE TECHNICAL SUPPORT


Check in to see if an older person needs help with their cell phone, whether it's how to use it or checking for software updates. Offer to help them connect with family via video chat or watch grandkids participate in live-stream events. Help navigate a new Smart TV or computer.

HELP INSIDE

Change light bulbs or furnace filters - don't forget smoke detector batteries! Check to make sure doors and windows have working locks and are secure. Maybe occasional light cleaning would be a big help - loading and unloading a dishwasher, helping with laundry or tidying up. Check the refrigerator and toss expired food.

HELP OUTSIDE

Mow a lawn, sweep a sidewalk, scoop snow. Salt sidewalks. Clean rain gutters or help with landscaping. Haul items to the dump.





OFFICE HELP

Offer to help an older person understand when mail or phone calls might be a scam. If a helper is a trusted person, assist with paying bills, convert to automatic billing, or act as a representative if there's a problem with a utility company. Check the answering machine and assist with social media.

ANIMAL ASSISTANCE

Walk a pet, take the pet to a veterinarian for vaccinations and routine care, help place a pet, talk through decisions that might need to be made about pets. Just sit and enjoy a pet with their owner!

FAMILY CONNECTION

Offer to be a contact for family members to make sure the volunteer help is working for everyone and provide updates as needed.

THIS CAN GO TWO WAYS!

In addition to providing physical support, find out how an older person can contribute back to the community in a meaningful way. Learn more about their interests, talents, abilities, knowledge base, resources, dreams, and help them develop a healthy aging plan. It is not uncommon for an elder person to feel like they are no longer needed. Find out what they are living for. This might mean arranging or connecting with classes to teach cooking or sewing skills, or helping in a community garden; "fix-it" classes to help teach younger people how to repair household items; or storytelling sessions for small children. If meeting in person is not feasible, consider providing additional help to set up an older person with video conferencing capabilities.

**IT'S A WIN FOR ALL WHEN EACH PERSON FEELS
SUPPORTED AND IS INVITED TO CONTRIBUTE.**

BE CREATIVE!

One important thing to remember that age issues are situational. Some people over 70 are still professionally active and contributing in ways that society can see and value. On the other hand, there are many people over 70 (and younger) who would benefit from volunteer support, especially when family no longer lives in the area. The important thing to keep in mind is that even small steps can make a big difference in making someone feel included, cared for, and safe in a community.

HOW TO GET STARTED

Check to see if there is an existing local organization that connects volunteers with needs. There can be value in the central clearinghouse for knowing who has the skills and the availability to help - and can answer a “community call button” to respond to needs. The best models put the older person at the center of a solution or an initiative. Or, start checking in with an older person you may know and offering to help.

ABOUT THIS LIST

The Kansas Sampler Foundation took part in a project funded by the Sunflower Foundation to find ways to address the “social determinants of health” - the factors in a community that can support or detract from health outside of a healthcare setting - to improve the health of rural Kansans. Our goal was to find a system or a set of activities that would help our state’s oldest residents successfully and safely age in place. What we learned was very motivating and will be extremely helpful in taking this information to the next level -- which is creating a system that connects local volunteers with individual and community needs. We’re currently calling this next level our 8-98 Plan. It will involve communities mapping local talents, skills, knowledge-sets, resources and volunteerism and matching those assets to the needs of residents and the overall community. The key to this will be the connecting agents who will match up the two aspects (those willing to help with those who need it).

We reached out to Kansans, especially seniors, to find out more about their experiences and what is working well in their towns. We also reached out to Kansans who work closely with older folks, whether taking care of their own families or working with community programs that serve elder Kansans.

THANK YOU: We would like to thank the members of our network who responded to our call for submissions that helped build this list. We extend a special thank-you to several people who provided an additional wealth of insight into this work: Cheryl Rickers of Plains; Connie Michaelis of Manhattan; Melisea Rhodes of Arma; Kathleen Holt of Cimarron; and Robert Little of Community Village Lawrence.