Seniors should sign up for drug plans this month

Open enrollment for the Medicare Part D drug plans began on November 15th and will run through December 31st.

In Kansas, about 220,000 of the 400,000 beneficiaries are already enrolled in a plan. If you haven't signed up for a drug plan, now is the time. And, if you enrolled in a plan for 2006, I recommend that you do some homework on the new plans being offered for 2007.

Many beneficiaries believe that since they've already chosen a plan, they don't need to do anything this year. But most plans have changed their costs and benefits for 2007.

It is important to compare your plan with others being offered in Kansas, to be sure you choose the one that best meets your needs. Your



insurance carrier should have in- drug benefit and can confuse Mediformed you by Oct. 31st of impor- care beneficiaries. Taking the time tant changes for 2007 in a letter to review the following may save called the Annual Notice of Change.

If you haven't received one, call them and ask for it. If you choose to will be \$24 (the same as 2006) but stay with your current plan, you 40 percent less than had been predon't need to do anything. You will dicted for 2007; be automatically re-enrolled in the plan you chose for 2006.

Last year, many beneficiaries ex- ter gap coverage or more brands of pressed concern that too many drug medicine;



drug plans unnecessarily complicates the you more confusion and frustration

> in the long run: • The average premium for 2007

• Some premiums may be more expensive, but they may offer bet-

• Deductibles will increase from drug carrier and their supplemen- surance.org or call us at (800) 432-\$250 in 2006 to \$265 in 2007;

• The average number of drugs covered by insurers will increase by 13 percent to 4,390 in 2007. A word of caution - beneficia-

ries with a Medicare Advantage Plan need to be aware that a Medicare Supplement policy will not provide any coverage to anyone enrolled in a Medicare Advantage Plan.

Several beneficiaries in Kansas have learned this the hard way. Some kept their Medicare Supplement after enrolling in Medicare Advantage only to learn later that their supplemental insurance would pay nothing and essentially was useless to them.

Beneficiaries need to make sure

tary insurance will work together before changing from regular

Beneficiaries in Kansas can receive personal assistance during this enrollment period by contacting Senior Health Insurance Counseling of Kansas (SHICK) at (800) 860-5260 or call the Medicare help line at (800) 633-4227 or visit medicare.gov.

open enrollment doesn't end until December 31st, enrolling early will help ensure that you can get the prescriptions you need on January 1.

For more information about any insurance sold in Kansas, I invite Department toll-free at (800) 432you to visit the Kansas Insurance 2484 or visit www.ksinsurance.org that their Medicare prescription Department web site at www.ksin for more information.

2484.

Sandy Praeger, Kansas Insur-Medicare supplemental insurance. ance Commissioner, oversees the activities of the Kansas Insurance Department, which is headquartered in Topeka. Her objective is to protect consumers and help maintain the financial stability of the insurance industry.

The department regulates and monitors the activities of 23,000 One final note: Even though the resident agents, 48,000 non-resident agents and 1,684 insurance companies licensed to do business in the state. It offers financial, actuarial, legal, computer, research, market conduct and economic expertise. Call the Kansas Insurance

Now is time to service equipment

Late fall or early winter is a good time to service power equipment such as mowers, tillers and garden tractors.

Run the equipment out of gas or treat the existing gas with a stabilizer, as untreated gas can deteriorate over time. If using a stabilizer, run the engine long enough for untreated gas in the carburetor bowl to be burned and replaced.

This is also a good time to replace the oil (and filter, if present) since the engine is warm.

Check and replace the spark plug if necessary.

Some gardeners also apply a light sprayable oil into the cylin- parts and do all the other things counties.



Check and clean air filters and replace if necessary. Many mowers and tillers have a foam prefilter that can become filthy with use. If allowed to become too may not run at all.

Sharpen blades, clean tines, tighten screws, replace broken covering Sherman and Wallace



der through the spark plug hole. maintenance takes some time and effort, it pays for itself by reducing frustration and lost time due to poorly performing equipment during a hectic spring.

Dana Belshe is agricultural dirty, engines will run poorly or agent for Kansas State University Research and Extension and the Sunflower Extension District,

Group tries to build community

What is it? and What are they trying to accomplish?

These are questions I have heard several times when the topic of Shine on Sherman County has been brought up. What we are is a group of citizens trying to build the community and bring all citizens together to form a unified voice.

We want your input, ideas, help and community spirit.

After the "community conversation" on Oct. 17, we knew that several issues in our community needed some special attention.

We know that our youth want and need a place to go and hang out. They want the opportunity to be respected and to learn what they can do to help. They need the chance to get involved in business and community service so they can have a retreat were put to work to develop memory of being involved in a pro-



them to return home after school and start a business or their family.

We know that citizens want to make some changes on the appearance of the town they live in. They know it can be done, and now they have the drive to change things.

These are just two areas that were discussed at the Vision Retreat on Monday, Dec. 4. People nominated from the conversation to attend the a vision, a statement of what we economic development director.

want people to know and to say about Sherman County 10 years in the future.

We know this process won't happen over night, but when citizens join

gressive community that wants forces to get things done, we know it will be accomplished.

So as you are sitting there reading this, please know that this effort is taking place. We are planning, researching and getting more and more people involved so one day people say: Sherman County Shining On... An Engaged Community, Building Economic Diversity through family, agriculture, energy, transportation and business.

Tiffani McMinn is Sherman County

Famous satirist brings humor to hospice after reprieve from death

Leave it to Art Buchwald to bring humor to hospice. Last February, the famed satirist was diagnosed with terminal kidney failure, given three weeks to live and transferred to a hospice for a quiet good-bye.

During the five months he spent at a Washington D.C. hospice, Buchwald said he was asked one question a lot: "What is it like to die?'

His answer, "I don't know, because I haven't died. I thought I was going to, but then something changed.

"Instead of going straight upstairs, I am going to Martha's Vineyard," Buchwald wrote in his syndicated column in July.



between Martha's Vineyard and his care for individuals whose expected Washington home. His kidneys had life span is less than six months. failed last winter, and Buchwald However, according to experts, decided he'd rather let nature take about 8 percent of people admitted its course than undergo dialysis.

leg was amputated in February. vices Inc. serves about 5 percent Then, as he sat in the hospice salon more than one year. day after day holding court for a variety of visitors, Buchwald's kid- that demonstrates our inability to Buchwald is once again writing time to leave the hospice. Instead of dying, he's written a physicians to be honest about their

death experience: "Too Soon to Say Good-bye."

Buchwald's case is not unique, however. Hospice is generally defined as palliative

to end-of-life hospice care actually This decision came after his right live beyond one year. Hospice Ser-

There has been study after study neys started working again. It was project life expectancy. Research shows that individuals want their

book about his near- illness, but predicting how long any one person might live is tough!

> Hospice programs are also caring for more individuals with a noncancer illness. While cancer can have a fairly definite trajectory, illnesses such as kidney disease, chronic lung disease, Alzheimer's or ALS (Lou Gehrig's Disease) often progress more slowly.

So hospice programs are caring for



some way beyond six months, but hos- have had such a good time with hospices serve most people less than one month. Hospice Services' median length of stay is presently 17 days.

for Art Buchwald turned into, as he put it, "months of living, eating, and

laughing with my friends." is now teaching all of us how to live, providing end-of-life care for more and to die. Yet he's quick to add, "I than 23 years.

pice. I am going to miss it."

Sandy Kuhlman is the executive director of Hospice Services Inc., What started out as a deathwatch Box 116, Phillipsburg, Kan. 67661. Contact her, Julia Schemper or Jennifer Kibbee at (800) 315-5122. Hospice serves northwest and Perhaps as important, Buchwald northcentral Kansas and has been

220 West 2nd Goodland, Kan. 67735 890-3625

his column and dividing his time

matters of record

Accidents

The following accidents were investigated by the Goodland Police Johnson's Ford. The drivers door of 1995 Mitsubishi owned by Rusty Department:

Nov. 9 – 1300 College. A 2002 Ford owned by Ronald Skinner was legally parked along 13th Street accident occurred.

Nov. 10 — 3:08 p.m., 2100 Com-Johnson was parked and unoccu-

pied and a 2004 GMC owned by the right rear. Barrera left the scene. Reva J Bauman was parked next to Johnson's car blew open in the wind Robinson was parked on Main beand struck the passenger side of the tween 7 a.m. and 2 p.m. when an Bauman GMC.

Nov. 12 – 3:35 p.m., 500 Grand. when an unknown vehicle ran into A 1979 Dodge driven by Janet K-27. A 1999 Toyota driven by the car. It was not known when the Swartz was heading south on Grand Michael D. Bauer was stopped at the and crossing Fifth when a 1992 intersection of 16th and K-27 when Pontiac driven by James M. Barrera a 1998 Dodge driven by Nancy M. merce. A 1999 Ford owned by Ryan entered the intersection heading east. Cloyd failed to stop completely and

Nov. 16 – 3 p.m., 1100 Main. A unknown vehicle hit the Mitsubishi. **Nov. 17** – 12:06 p.m., 1600 South The Barrera car hit the Swarz car on struck the Bauer Toyota in the rear.

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January Consultant Schedule

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Jeffrey Rumbyrt, M.D. Jan. 15 Sherri M. Beck, Au. D. Jan. 10 & 24 Barry Smith, M.D. Vijay Subbarao M.D. Jan. 11 Thursdays by Appointment Charles Ruggles, M.D. Jan. 4 & 25 Sarah Linton, RD, LD M - F Alfred N. Carr, M.D. Jan. 5, 19 & 26 Gerald Poticha, M.D. TBA Jeffrey D. Huston, M.D. Jan. David D. Beck, M.D. Jan. 11 & 25 Jeffrey Cross, M.D. Jan. 4 & 18 Laura Rokosz, M.D. Jan. 10 & 24 Jan. 3, 5 & 24 Steven J. Gulevich, M.D. David Forschner, M.D. Jan. 17 Martin Rubinowitz, M.D. Jan. 9 Brian Joondeph, M.D. Jan. 17 Jan. 2, 8, 15, 23 & 29 David Pfoff, M.D. John Gargaro, M.D. Feb. 5 Tim Birney, M.D. Jan. 15 Armond Hatzidakis M.D. Jan. 8 James Holmes, M.D. Jan. 22 Jan. 29 Edward Parks, M.D. Raj Bazaz, M.D. Jan. 15 Kevin Nagamani Jan. 10 Jan. 5, 10 & 19 John C. Faul, M.D. Erik Ouderkirk, D.P.M. Jan. Ken Weisiger, M.D. TBA Professional Radiology Services WEEK DAYS Karl Chambers, M.D. Jan. 18 Lisa Paxton Monday - Thursday Fred Waters, CADC III Mondays Darrell D. Werth, M.D. January 30 Wallace Michael Curry M.D. January 9

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