



**ORAL HEALTH KANSAS**  
ADVOCACY • PUBLIC AWARENESS • EDUCATION

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### **New initiative to reduce tobacco use in Wyandotte County**

Thanks to a grant from the Kansas Department of Health & Environment, the UG Health Department is starting a new initiative to reduce tobacco use in Wyandotte County. The Health Department is hiring a full-time program coordinator to staff the initiative. In addition, this individual will also help facilitate a new Tobacco Cessation Action Team. 25% of adults in Wyandotte County smoke cigarettes. That's 5% higher than the state average and 7% higher than the national average. Smoking is still the leading cause of preventable death in the United States. This unhealthy addiction is taking life away from our residents. You can find the job posting [here](#).

Congratulations to Wyandotte County on its commitment to reduce smoking among its

## **OHK welcomes new Operations and Communications Manager**

This week, Oral Health Kansas is excited to welcome Sonia Olmos as our new Operations and Communications Manager. She takes over the role from Sarah Franklin, who left last week to attend graduate school. Sonia comes to us with seven years of experience in a similar role at the Kansas Health Consumer Coalition, where she managed special events, as well as the day-to-day operations, finances and human resources. She holds a Bachelor's degree in Psychology and a Master's of Social Work degree from Washburn University in Topeka and spent several years working with children and families with mental health needs in Topeka and Lawrence prior to joining the Kansas Health Consumer Coalition.

Sonia's talents in managing the operations of an advocacy organization are bolstered by her deep understanding of the needs of underserved people. We know she will be an outstanding addition to our team. You can contact Sonia at [solmos@oralhealthkansas.org](mailto:solmos@oralhealthkansas.org).

## **ER Dental visits are a**

residents. Oral Health Kansas looks forward to partnering with Wyandotte's oral health team in advocacy, public awareness, education and access to oral screening and treatment.

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## Dental Champions Corner

Dr. Charles Abbick Receives Sargent Shriver Excellence Award!

The Kansas Head Start Association has selected, Dr. Charles Abbick (Class 6), Salina Family Healthcare Center, to receive the Sargent Shriver Excellence in Community Service Award. This award is a special and very well-deserved honor. Dr. Abbick will be presented the award at an annual meeting of the Affiliate Program Members Meeting in January, 2016. The award is presented to a person who has consistently and passionately dedicated excellence in service to the community. Congratulations to this outstanding Dental Champion!



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**Save the Date!**

**The 2015**

## "band-aid"

Dr. Michael McCunniff, UMKC School of Dentistry Department of Public Health and Behavioral Science Chair, was quoted in a USA Today article last week about emergency room visits for people experiencing dental pain. In the article, [ER visits for dental problems on the rise.](#) Dr. McCunniff describes emergency room dental visits as a "band-aid" and says, "Dental care is something people put off to the very end."

USA Today thoroughly explained the reasons adults end up in emergency rooms with dental pain that cannot be treated in that setting. Adult dental services are optional in state Medicaid programs, and they are not included in required coverage under the Affordable Care Act or in the Medicare program. Thus, over a third of working-age adults do not have dental insurance, and the majority of seniors lack dental coverage. Dental insurance is guaranteed for all children, but it is available to adults primarily through work-place insurance policies and privately purchased policies. Not all adults work in jobs that offer insurance, and lower-income adults often cannot afford to purchase dental insurance on their own. Over ninety percent of people who seek dental care at the annual Kansas Mission of Mercy are adults, and the majority report that they come to the Mission of Mercy because they do not have a way to pay for dental services.

When people experience dental pain and do not have a way to pay for dental services, they often go without care as long as possible and can end up in emergency rooms seeking relief from the pain. The emergency rooms can offer pain medication, antibiotics, and referrals to a dentist, but they cannot offer treatment. USA Today reported that the number of Americans visiting ER's with dental pain doubled from 1.1 million in 2000 to 2.2 million in 2012. In Kansas, 17,500 people visit emergency rooms with dental pain each year. The estimated national cost of the ER visits is \$1.6 billion per year - and this money does not go to treating the cause of the pain.

Not only is the problem costly, it also can cost people their lives. The article quotes University of Louisville professor Dr. George Kushner as saying, "People still die from their

**Oral Health Kansas  
Conference  
will be  
November 12-14 at  
Kansas State  
University in Olathe.**

Please plan to attend. Details  
coming soon!



**Join In: 2015 Kansas  
Conference on  
Poverty**

July 15-17, 2015  
Ramada Topeka Downtown Hotel  
and Convention Center

Hosted by the Kansas Association  
of Community Action Programs, the  
Kansas Conference on Poverty will  
explore the consequences of  
continuing poverty and - more  
importantly - will focus on its  
solutions. [Click here for more  
information!](#)



**Reserve your  
sugary drink**

teeth in the U.S." One of the most widely publicized recent stories of such a tragedy was [Kyle Willis](#), a single dad who was going to school to be a paralegal in Cincinnati, Ohio. He didn't have insurance, and when he experience dental pain from an abscess, he was able to buy pain medication, but could not pay for dental care. He died in August 2011 from the abscess. Kyle's story is repeated over and over again in every state in the union.

Oral Health Kansas is committed to ensuring that the Kansas Medicaid program known as KanCare offers a comprehensive dental benefit for adults. A comprehensive dental benefit can ensure low-income adults in our state have access to dental coverage. Read our [recent legislative testimony](#) about the issue. To get involved, please contact [info@oralhealthkansas.org](mailto:info@oralhealthkansas.org).

**What does the  
Supreme Courts  
decision mean for the  
ACA?**

On June 25, the Supreme Court handed down a 6-3 ruling in the King v Burwell case, which asked whether the Affordable Care Act was intended to offer subsidies to people who qualify, but live in states that have a federal exchange.

The Affordable Care Act (ACA) provides subsidies for low-income people to purchase health insurance policies in an exchange. The law assumed most states would have their own exchanges, but 34 states, including Kansas, use the federal exchange. The King v Burwell case examined the ACA language and intent about this critical issue. In Kansas, [69,979 people used subsidies to purchase health insurance through the federal exchange](#). This translates to nearly \$15 million dollars invested in our state's economy each month to help cover the cost of Kansans' health insurance. If the law had been overturned, the nearly 70,000 Kansans would have seen monthly premium increases of up

## display for the fall!

The Oral Health Kansas sugary drink display has been traveling around the state, making stops across Kansas such as Garnett, El Dorado and Erie.

Reserve our traveling sugary drink display for your event! This display is completely free, and return shipping costs are reimbursed by Oral Health Kansas. Learn more **on our website** and **email us** if you are interested in hosting the display!



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to 231% each. The vast majority of these Kansans were uninsured prior to implementation of the ACA and the availability of the premium subsidies.

Senior Analyst and Strategy Team Leader for health reform at the Kansas Health Institute, Linda Sheppard, prepared an issue brief of the ruling and what it could mean for the ACA. You may download the issue brief [here](#).

Oral Health Kansas joined scores of health advocacy organizations this year in [providing testimony](#) to the Legislature about the need to expand KanCare. Expanding KanCare would ensure low-income Kansans would have access to both health and dental care.

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