

Who can you borrow a cup of sugar from?



Connie Mason Michaelis
Guest columnist

Where should you live as you age? Most of us move several times throughout our lives. We begin in a family home, then branch out to college, an apartment or into marriage. As our families grow, we often move again, needing more bedrooms, more space, more room for life to unfold. Sometimes a job relocation or a new relationship prompts yet another move. For the most part, these transitions feel like progress, new chapters, new adventures. Moving may be a lot of work, but it usually signals growth. And then, something shifts.

It is my observation that many older adults reach a point where they stop considering whether their living situation still fits their lives. They stay put, often proudly, in a four-bedroom home when only one bedroom is needed. The attic is full, the basement is full, the garage is full — all containing decades of life and memories. What once represented abundance and accomplishment can quietly become an albatross. But the issue is not just space, it's connection.

Research increasingly tells us that one of the most significant health risks as we age is isolation, especially for those living alone. A large home does not provide companionship; as a matter of fact, it amplifies the feeling of emptiness.

A familiar neighborhood does not guarantee community. In fact, neighborhoods change. The friends who once lived nearby may have moved

away. The rhythm of the street may now belong to younger families rushing off to work each day. What once felt like a built-in social network can slowly, almost invisibly, disappear.

So, I've boiled this down to one simple but powerful question: Who can you borrow a cup of sugar from? It's an old-fashioned question, but it reveals something essential. Do you have neighbors you know well enough to knock on their door? Are there people nearby who would notice if you didn't come out for a few days? Is there a sense of mutual care, of casual connection, of belonging? If the answer is no, it may be time to consider a new kind of move — not one driven by necessity but by intention.

This doesn't mean giving something up. It means choosing something new. It might look like a 55+ community, where neighbors are in a similar stage of life. It could be a smaller home in a neighborhood designed for connection. Perhaps it's a place with a Home Owners Association that takes care of the physical demands of homeownership, freeing up time and energy for living.

The goal is not to fit your life into your house, but to fit your house into your life. As we age, our needs evolve. There is great freedom in recognizing that a well-chosen environment can support not just how we live, but how we age. Maybe the next move isn't about downsizing. It's about right sizing.

So, ask yourself: Who will you borrow a cup of sugar from?

The answer might just lead you to your next great adventure.

Find Connie's books "Daily Cures: Wisdom for Healthy Aging" and "The Way Grandmothers Are" at www.justnowoldenough.com.

Screwworm

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used to sterilize male flies that are released into the wild where they mate with females and produce unfertilized eggs.

The U.S. has since worked to maintain a biological barrier in Central America that contains the pest to South America, but that barrier broke down in recent years.

Kansas has two members of Congress on the U.S. House Agriculture Committee, which had a hearing with USDA secretary Brooke Rollins on June 4.

U.S. Rep. Tracey Mann, R-Kansas, told Rollins he appreciates "all the work that you've been doing to fight New World screwworm. We all know this is a all hands on deck moment, and appreciate your great leadership."

U.S. Rep. Sharice Davids, D-Kansas, noted that "cattle is a \$15 billion industry in Kansas" and an outbreak would be costly to producers. The screwworm "can devastate livestock herds," which would "threaten ranchers' livelihoods."

"This is absolutely a significant threat to the American cattle industry and has the potential to further raise beef prices at the grocery store," Davids said.

Davids asked Rollins, "Why should

Kansas ranchers and consumers facing high beef prices have confidence that the USDA has this under control?"

"This is a problem that our country faced in the '50s and '60s — and we beat it," Rollins said.

She said after the biological barrier in Panama was breached and the fly reached Mexico, "The models predicted that it would be on our side of the border, nothing could stop it, by last summer."

The USDA has been building sterile fly production facilities — "that's how we beat it in the '50s and '60s; that's how we'll beat it again" — because existing production capacity was only about 100 million flies a week when 400-500 million is needed.

"We had gotten to the point because no one thought it was going to be a threat again," Rollins said of the existing production capacity.

Rollins said the "real threat" is in south Texas.

"We do not believe this will be an infestation," Rollins said.

"We'll be able to isolate each case. We've had a year to prepare because we pushed it off a bit, and we've got the teams on the ground ready to go."

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The screwworm was previously eradicated from the U.S. using the sterile insect technique, where radiation is used to sterilize male flies that are released into the wild where they mate with females and produce unfertilized eggs. The U.S. has since worked to maintain a biological barrier in Central America that contains the pest to South America, but that barrier broke down in recent years.

Voting

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bach and Secretary of State Scott Schwab, a pair of Republicans who held a press conference in Topeka on Nov. 5.

"Noncitizen voting is a real problem," Kobach said, claiming, "It is something that happens fairly frequently."

Schwab said Kobach should "be prepared to be busy" as Kansas uses the SAVE system to help identify cases of noncitizen voters. Kobach told reporters he expected there to be "a very large number."

"I thought when we would do this we might find three or four, and it's going to be closer to hundreds," Schwab said.

But Kobach said, "It's going to be more likely in the thousands."

Since then, the two state officials have publicly identified three total criminal cases charged in court — though a handful of others may remain under investigation.

Ex-mayor is one of three noncitizen voting cases charged in Kansas

Schwab testified before a congressional committee in April, including about running Kansas voter rolls through the Systematic Alien Verification for Entitlements system, or SAVE.

"To date," Schwab told Congress on April 16, "the attorney general has brought two criminal indictments and my office has referred seven more suspected noncitizens to the attorney general."

The only specific case he identified was that of Ceballos.

After an event in Topeka on May 19, *The Capital-Journal* asked Schwab how many cases in addition to that of Ceballos had been filed.

"We've turned three or four over to the attorney general that SAVE has flagged," Schwab said. "They don't share with us where they're at in the investigation."

Meanwhile, Kobach has publicly identified three cases of alleged noncitizen voting that his office is prosecuting.

The first is Ceballos, whose charges in Comanche County were announced at the November press conference. After



Secretary of State Scott Schwab told reporters that his office had turned over three or four cases on potential noncitizen voting to Attorney General Kris Kobach. EVERT NELSON/THE CAPITAL-JOURNAL

The *Capital-Journal* obtained the affidavit in that case, Ceballos' attorney said his client didn't realize he wasn't allowed to vote as a permanent resident.

A plea deal in April reduced Ceballos' charges from six felony election crimes to three misdemeanors, and the state judge sentenced him to probation and \$2,000 in total fines. Federal officials subsequently ordered Ceballos to report to immigration detention.

The second is Jose Luis Gomez Sr. He was charged in Reno County in December.

Court records indicate there has yet to be a hearing in the case — and it is unclear if there ever will be. When Kobach publicly announced the case in January, he said Gomez "is currently in custody in Oklahoma pending deportation, following federal immigration proceedings."

The third is Edwin Francisco Ramirez-Guerra. He was charged in Sedgewick County in December. While Kobach didn't issue a press release announcing the case, he did identify it in a footnote of an amicus brief filed with the U.S. Supreme Court in March. The Ramirez case doesn't appear to have been previously reported by Kansas media.

The affidavit in the case, made public after a request from *The Wichita Eagle*, written by an investigator for Kobach's

office alleged Ramirez voted in 2024 after becoming a permanent resident. The criminal case remains ongoing with a preliminary hearing scheduled for June 18.

A spokesperson for Kobach's office didn't respond to a request for comment, including questions on whether there have been any cases beyond those three and why the number of cases isn't in the hundreds or thousands.

Schwab says SAVE system wasn't used in Ceballos case

President Donald Trump's administration has taken steps to provide state election officials with data from Social Security and the SAVE system. Schwab has said the Social Security data will help identify deceased voters in registration databases while the SAVE data will help remove noncitizens.

SAVE is a federal program intended to help government agencies confirm citizenship and immigration status. It is administered by the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services within the U.S. Department of Homeland Security.

Schwab told Congress that SAVE is "one of the most important tools states have to verify voter information" on citizenship.

When the Ceballos case was first an-

nounced, Schwab and Kobach refused to say whether the SAVE system was used because it was part of the investigation.

But that didn't stop the two state officials and the Trump administration from using the Ceballos case to tout the SAVE program. Schwab and Kobach talked at length about SAVE.

Matthew Tragesser, the then-spokesperson for USCIS, said in a November statement on the Ceballos case, "This is just the beginning — SAVE is exposing bad actors and safeguarding the integrity of our elections like never before."

A second press release that month quoted the DHS's then-assistant secretary Tricia McLaughlin praising the SAVE program as "a critical tool for state and local governments to safeguard the integrity of elections across the country."

After Ceballos was convicted in April, acting assistant secretary Lauren Bis also praised the SAVE system. DHS touted that SAVE had identified more than 24,000 cases of "potential" noncitizen voting.

In a written submission to Congress from January, Schwab referenced the Ceballos case and said, "His name was flagged by both the SAVE program and the state's temporary driver's license report."

But speaking to reporters in Topeka on May 19, Schwab said the SAVE system wasn't actually used in the Ceballos case.

"No, in that one, it was not used in that one," Schwab said in response to a question from *The Capital-Journal*. "What happened is he was going through immigration process to become a U.S. citizen. When you do that, they always ask you, 'Have you ever voted?' He goes, 'Yeah, as a matter of fact I'm a mayor.'"

"The reason why he was on the voter rolls was because he registered before HAVA, and so we didn't even ask for tax ID numbers or anything. If you wanted to register, you just registered. So he's basically grandfathered."

Schwab indicated the SAVE system has been used to identify other Kansas cases.

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