



NEWSLETTER

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DECEMBER 2025

STRONG MINDS, STRONG COMMUNITIES: CLOSING THE YEAR WITH GRATITUDE

DECEMBER 5: INTERNATIONAL VOLUNTEER DAY

Each year, International Volunteer Day recognizes the incredible people who give their time, skills, and hearts to make their communities stronger. Volunteers are the backbone of positive change—whether they're mentoring youth, organizing local events, supporting health initiatives, or simply showing up when help is needed most. Here in Western Kansas, volunteerism takes many forms. Teachers who lead after-school programs, neighbors who check in on one another, and community members who step up to serve on local boards or committees all contribute to a culture of care and connection.

This December 5th, take a moment to:

- **Thank** someone who has volunteered in your school, organization, or community.
- **Explore** new ways to serve—big or small acts of kindness both matter.
- **Reflect** on how volunteering strengthens not just communities, but personal well-being and purpose.



CLOSING THE YEAR WITH GRATITUDE

As 2025 comes to a close, we want to extend our heartfelt thanks to the educators, schools, community partners, and supporters who make Project FRONTIER possible. Together, we've strengthened connections across Northwest Kansas, expanded access to mental health education, parent and community resources, and created meaningful opportunities for youth, families, and communities.

This year has been one of growth, collaboration, and impact—from hosting local events and trainings, to developing tools that help schools and families support emotional wellness. Every shared idea, partnership, and conversation has helped move our mission forward. As we look ahead to the new year, we're inspired by the progress we've made together and excited for what's still to come. Your continued support helps us grow stronger, healthier communities—thank you for being part of this journey!

Volunteers don't just make things happen—they make things better. Together, we can continue to grow communities that thrive on compassion and collaboration.

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NEWSLETTER

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DECEMBER 2025 - PAGE 2

SEASONAL AFFECTIVE DISORDER (SAD) AWARENESS MONTH

As daylight hours shorten and colder weather settles in, it's common to notice shifts in energy, motivation, or mood. For some, these changes are more than the "winter blues." Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD) is a form of depression that follows a seasonal pattern, typically appearing during late fall and winter when natural light is limited.

While SAD can affect anyone, it often appears in regions with shorter daylight hours and can impact concentration, sleep, appetite, and overall mood. The good news? There are many effective strategies to manage symptoms and protect mental well-being during this time of year.

Ways to Support Yourself or Others

- **Soak up natural light** whenever possible—open blinds, sit near windows, or take a short outdoor walk each day.
- **Create structure and consistency** in your daily routine, especially around sleep and nutrition.
- **Incorporate movement**—even light exercise boosts serotonin and energy levels.
- **Stay socially connected** with family, friends, and community groups, even when you don't feel like it.
- **Seek professional support** if symptoms of sadness, fatigue, or loss of interest persist for more than two weeks.



If you or someone you know needs additional help, **High Plains Mental Health Center** offers accessible services and crisis support across Northwest Kansas. You can visit hpmhc.com/contact-us to find your local office, connect with providers, or learn more about available resources.

By increasing awareness, we foster understanding—and that understanding helps us check in with ourselves and support those around us through the darker months.



NEWSLETTER

WWW.PROJECTFRONTIER.ORG

DECEMBER 2025 - PAGE 3

HOLIDAY SELF-CARE & BOUNDARY SETTING



The holidays can bring both joy and overwhelming feelings. Between school events, travel, and expectations, it's easy to forget to slow down. Practicing intentional self-care and setting boundaries helps maintain balance during this busy season.

Self-care doesn't have to be elaborate—it's about protecting your energy and prioritizing what truly matters. Healthy boundaries allow you to be present and enjoy the moments that mean the most without feeling stretched too thin.

Consider these mindful tips:

- **Pause before saying yes.** It's okay to decline invitations or requests if they don't align with your needs or values.
- **Schedule downtime.** Block off quiet moments in your calendar for rest, reflection, or family connection.
- **Focus on presence, not perfection.** Memories are made through laughter and connection— not flawless plans.
- **Establish spending and gifting limits.** Acts of kindness, time, and words of appreciation often mean more than material gifts.
- **Practice gratitude daily.** A simple reflection on three things you're thankful for can shift your mindset and reduce stress.

To help you care for yourself this season, we've included a **Self-Care Advent Calendar** with this month's newsletter! Each day offers a small, practical idea to nurture your mind and body — because little moments of self-care add up to big changes over time. Use it as a gentle reminder to pause, breathe, and give yourself the same kindness you offer to others.

As you move through the season, give yourself permission to slow down, breathe, and find joy in the simple things. Remember—self-care is not a reward you earn at the end of the day; it's the foundation that helps you thrive through it.





NEWSLETTER

WWW.PROJECTFRONTIER.ORG

DECEMBER 2025 - PAGE 4



INTRODUCING THRIVE THREAD!

We're excited to launch **Thrive Thread**, a monthly newsletter designed to weave together bite-sized insights on mental wellness, brain science, growth mindset, and community connection.

Each issue offers simple, practical ideas you can use right away – all delivered in a friendly, creative format that supports our shared goal of helping every member of our families, schools, and communities learn, grow, and thrive.

What makes **Thrive Thread** extra special? You get to choose exactly what you want delivered to your inbox. Pick the topics that matter most to you, and we'll send personalized content that fits your interests and your pace.

The first edition of **Thrive Thread** will begin landing in inboxes January 15th, and we can't wait to share it with you!

Sign up [HERE](#) to choose your topics and get the first issue delivered straight to your inbox!!



LOOKING AHEAD

As we prepare for 2026, Project FRONTIER remains committed to building resilient, connected, and thriving communities across Western Kansas. Thank you for your continued support in promoting mental health awareness, expanding education and resources for families and schools, and strengthening the connections that make our rural communities so special. Together, we are helping Western Kansas grow stronger—one relationship, one resource, and one conversation at a time.

Wishing you a peaceful and joyful holiday season!

