



## *A Word to Carry into the New Year*

by Sarah Duggan, Community Relations Director

As one year comes to a close and another begins, many of us find ourselves reflecting on where we've been, what we've learned, and what we hope to carry forward. For several years now, I've marked this transition by choosing a personal *Word of the Year*, a simple practice that has become a meaningful way to set intention without pressure.

In past years, my words have met me exactly where I was. *Patience* reminded me to slow down and meet life's challenges with grace. *Lean into joy* encouraged me to pause and truly appreciate the moment I was in. Last year, my word was *Energy* — a conscious focus on how and where I was directing my time, attention, and heart.

As I look ahead to this new year, the word that keeps rising to the surface is *Exuberance*. And yes — for those who enjoy looking to the stars for a little insight (or at least a bit of fun), choosing exuberance may come as no surprise coming from a Leo. Whether you see astrology as meaningful guidance or harmless

hokeyness, I'll happily own that this word feels right at home.

Exuberance is a wholehearted way of being. It's enthusiasm paired with presence, joy infused into everyday moments, and a willingness to engage fully — even when life feels uncertain or routine. To me, exuberance is about approaching each day with curiosity, gratitude, and an openness to connection.

To keep my Word of the Year close, I've found a simple, tangible reminder that I carry with me each day. For both 2025 and now 2026, I've designed a bracelet through Little Words Project ([littlewordsproject.com](http://littlewordsproject.com)), a modern take on the friendship bracelets many of us remember, featuring my chosen word. This year's bracelet is *Life of a Showgirl*-themed, a playful reflection of exuberance itself and, yes, a subtle nod to Taylor Swift, stackable friendship bracelets, and the joy of wearing something that feels personal, expressive, and just a little bit fun. (*Life of a Showgirl* is the title of Swift's 2025 album.)

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## WORD, from page 1

That's the beauty of a *Word of the Year*. Unlike resolutions, which can feel rigid or overwhelming, a word offers flexibility. It acts as a gentle compass rather than a checklist — something to return to again and again as circumstances shift and seasons change.

If this practice resonates with you, I invite you to try it yourself. Consider choosing a word that reflects what you want to cultivate in the year ahead. You might write it in a journal, carry it with you during quiet moments of reflection, wear it as a daily reminder, or share it with others as a source of accountability and inspiration.

If you're looking for inspiration, here are a few words others may find meaningful:

~ **Unafraid**: for moving forward with

confidence, even when the path feels uncertain

~ **Calm**: a steady anchor amid change, noise, and busy days

~ **Curiosity**: an invitation to ask questions, explore, and remain open

~ **Presence**: a reminder to fully inhabit each moment as it unfolds

~ **Renewal**: for embracing fresh starts and restored energy

~ **Trust**: confidence in yourself, in others, and in the unfolding journey

As we step into this new year together, my hope is that each of us finds a word or a guiding intention that brings clarity, encouragement, and meaning. Here's to a year filled with purpose, connection, and perhaps a little more *exuberance* along the way.

## ***Choose Your Word in 5 Easy Steps***

**#1, Reflect.** Answer the following questions. Jot down the first thing that comes to mind, no self-editing. Once you review your responses, you will have a better sense of the direction you would like to go, or what you feel may be lacking in your life.

What could I use more of in my life? \_\_\_\_\_

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What could I use less of in my life? \_\_\_\_\_

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What characteristics would I like to have? \_\_\_\_\_

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By the end of the day, I feel \_\_\_\_\_

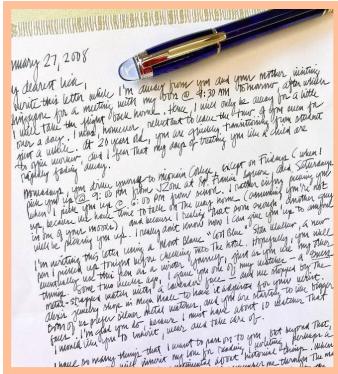
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How do I want to feel? \_\_\_\_\_

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**#2, Visualize.** The emphasis here is *feel*. What does the perfect day *feel* like? How do you want your morning routine to feel? How do you want to feel throughout the day and right before you go to bed?

You also can mediate or sit in silence for a couple of minutes and ask yourself, "What word do I want to focus on in 2026?"

**#3, Create a List.** Without editing, spend 10 minutes creating a list of words that come to mind.

# A WORD OF THE YEAR, A FRIENDSHIP BRACELET, AND A LITTLE SPARKLE

**#4, Review & Refine.** Review your list and narrow it down to your three favorites. Circle or highlight those three words.

Chances are you'll see a theme going on between the words you wrote down. Do any of the words jump out at you? Make you feel excited, nervous, scared, or uncomfortable? **Trust your gut and let the word pick you.**

**#5, Ask the Question.** Are you committed to the word you chose, or are you merely interested?

Once you've chosen the word you want to commit to for 2026, jot it down where you will see it regularly.

# Merry & Bright



by Sarah Duggan, Community Relations Director

Christmas is celebrated in countless ways across the globe, shaped by culture, history, and local customs. Yet no matter where or how it's observed, the season is rooted in the same enduring themes of hope, generosity, reflection, and the joy of being together.

In many European countries, Christmas Eve is the heart of the celebration. Families gather for candlelit meals, share traditional foods passed down through generations, and attend midnight church services. In Germany, outdoor Christmas markets transform town squares into glowing winter villages, filled with music, handcrafted gifts, and the comforting aromas of roasted nuts and warm spices. Scandinavia embraces light during the darkest days of the year, often celebrating with candles, evergreen décor, and quiet moments of togetherness.

In Mexico and throughout parts of Latin America, the nine-day tradition of *Las Posadas* reenacts Mary and Joseph's search for shelter, bringing neighbors together through song, prayer, and celebration. In Italy, Christmas is marked by long, lingering meals where conversation and connection are just as important as the food itself.

Here in the United States, Christmas traditions are as varied as the families who celebrate them, including decorating trees, baking treasured recipes, singing familiar carols, exchanging gifts, and finding meaningful ways to give back to others.

For me, Christmas Eve is my favorite part of the entire season. I look forward to the simple rhythm of the day — baking and cooking, preparing for the

evening ahead, and slowing down amid the busyness of December. One of the most meaningful moments each year is attending a Christmas Eve church service, where the sanctuary glows with candlelight and voices join together to sing *Silent Night*.

At home, our Christmas Eve traditions continue around the table with a meal of meatloaf and mashed potatoes — comfort food that feels just right on a winter night. Our three girls open their Christmas pajamas, and each year they also receive a new ornament. Those ornaments are stored in their own boxes throughout the year, with the hope that someday, when they move out and begin their own traditions, I'll be able to hand them their boxes to start their own Christmas trees.

After cookies and milk are set out for Santa and the girls are tucked into bed, the house grows quiet. My husband and I pour a glass of wine and settle in to watch one of our favorite Christmas movies, *National Lampoon's Christmas Vacation*.

What makes Christmas traditions so meaningful isn't how grand or elaborate they are, but the intention behind them. Whether celebrated across generations, cultures, or continents, these moments connect us to one another and create memories that last well beyond the season. On behalf of everyone at Meadowlark, I wish our residents, families, community members, and dedicated staff a very Merry Christmas. May your holiday be filled with peace, warmth, and joyful moments shared with those you hold dear, and may the spirit of Christmas carry with you into the year ahead.

## EVENTS & OPPORTUNITIES

### Even More About Artificial Intelligence

**Friday, Dec. 26, at 2 p.m.**

All are invited to a presentation with Wesley Fryer, son of resident Tom Fryer, as he shares "Even More About Artificial Intelligence." The presentation will be at 2 p.m. Friday, Dec. 26, in the Community Room.

### Social Circles

**Tuesday, Dec. 30, at 2 p.m.**

All residents are invited to attend Social Circles each Tuesday at 2 p.m. in Prairie Star Restaurant. This is an informal opportunity to gather with others who call Meadowlark home and get to know one another. Join us!

### New Years Eve Party

**Wednesday, Dec. 31, at 6:30 p.m.**

Ring in the New Year with music, dancing, and fun in the Event Center starting at 6:30 p.m. Wednesday, Dec. 31! Meadowlark welcomes back Johnny Cyrene, the Prairie Rose DJ, who has been sharing his love of classic country and '50s-'60s hits since 2006.

Enjoy an evening of great tunes and good company, with an early countdown and toast at 8 p.m. All are welcome!

### Prairie Star Writers

**Tuesday, Jan. 6, at 1 p.m.**

Join the Prairie Star Writers Group for the session "The Great Outdoors (Focusing on Details)" at 1 p.m. Tuesday, Jan. 6, in the Patriot Room.

Explore how vivid details bring writing to life as you reflect on meaningful outdoor places—from quiet fishing spots to childhood prairies—that shaped who you are. Share memories, sharpen your storytelling, and invite readers into the landscapes that nourished you.

Prairie Star Writers meets on the first and third Tuesdays. Upcoming dates include Dec. 16, Jan. 6, Jan. 20, Feb. 3, and Feb. 17. All are welcome!

### Weekly Ecumenical Communion Service

**Thursday, Jan. 8, at 9:30 a.m.**

Join us beginning Thursday, Jan. 8, from 9:30 to 10 a.m. in the Community Room for a weekly

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MARIANNA KISTLER  
**BEACH**  
MUSEUM OF ART

## Art Engagement from the Beach Museum of Art

An artist may want to create an overall atmosphere or mood within an artwork. For example, a composition may feel warm, inviting, cold, lonely, happy, or solemn. The use of visual elements can conjure emotions. Items may appear soft and pale or dark and detailed to create atmospheric perspective. The art element of value makes use of light and shadow to create expressive tone. The artist's compositional choices such as how to portray trees, light sources, and the texture of other objects all enhance the immersive experience. As you gaze at this print on the greeting card, what mood do you feel? What elements do you observe the artist using to evoke these emotions?



**Season's  
Greetings**

Herschel C. Logan (United States, 1901 - 1987), *Season's Greetings* (card), mid-20th century, Woodcut on paper, KSU, Marianna Kistler Beach Museum of Art, gift of Peggy L. Sondergard & Samuel H. Logan, 2019.13

# RESTAURANT SPECIALS

<b>Sunday, Dec. 28</b>	<b>Sunday Brunch</b> Brunch Menu available from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m.	<b>\$16</b> <b>Dinner</b> Beef Tips Mashed Potatoes & Gravy Broccoli
<b>Monday, Dec. 29</b>	<b>\$11</b> <b>Lunch</b> Cheeseburger Sliders French Fries	<b>\$17</b> <b>Dinner</b> Chicken Fajitas Refried Beans Mexican Rice
<b>Tuesday, Dec. 30</b>	<b>\$10</b> <b>Lunch</b> Bacon-Cheddar Egg Salad <i>Served on a Croissant</i> Breakfast Potatoes	<b>\$15</b> <b>Dinner</b> Beef Stroganoff Garlic Breadsticks Roasted Broccoli
<b>Wednesday, Dec. 31</b>	<b>\$11</b> <b>Lunch</b> Buffalo Chicken Wrap Sweet Potato Fries	<b>\$14</b> <b>Dinner</b> Fried Pork Cutlet Mashed Potatoes & Gravy Green Beans
<b>Thursday, Jan. 1</b>	<b>\$9</b> <b>Lunch</b> Ham & Black-Eyed Pea Soup Cornbread	<b>\$14</b> <b>Dinner</b> Garlic-Rosemary Chicken Smashed Potatoes Broccoli
<b>Friday, Jan. 2</b>	<b>\$11</b> <b>Lunch</b> Pizza Bar	<b>\$25</b> <b>Dinner</b> Sesame Crusted Ahi Tuna Grilled Avocado Salad Jasmine Rice
<b>Saturday, Jan. 3</b>	<b>\$11</b> <b>Lunch</b> BBQ Chicken Sandwich Broccoli Salad	<b>\$15</b> <b>Dinner</b> Fried Chicken Mashed Potatoes & Gravy Corn

# Weekly Opportunities Calendar Dec. 28 to Jan. 3

**Sunday • Dec. 28** *Put your trash at the curb!*  
8:45 a.m. ~ Transport to College Ave UMC, ME  
9:30 a.m. ~ Sunday Morning Fellowship, ME  
10:00 a.m. ~ Transport to College Ave UMC, ME  
10:00 a.m. ~ Worship Service, CR/**1960**  
10:30 a.m. ~ Transportation to FUMC, ME  
11:00 a.m. ~ Worship Service, CR/**1960**

**Monday • Dec. 29** *Trash pick-up*  
]9:30 a.m. ~ Seated Strength, CR/**1960**  
9:30 a.m. ~ Memory Care Partners Group, **STM**  
10:30 a.m. ~ Weights 101, CR/**1960**  
11:00 a.m. ~ Rock Steady Boxing, **PF**  
11:30 a.m. ~ Sit & Be Fit, CR/**1960**  
1:00 p.m. ~ Parkinson's Exercise Class, CR/**1960**  
7:00 p.m. ~ Community Bingo, CR

**Tuesday • Dec. 30**  
10:00 a.m. ~ Memory Activities Class, EC  
10:00 a.m. ~ Mat Yoga, KSU CL  
10:30 a.m. ~ Steady Yourself, CR/**1960**  
11:15 a.m. ~ Chair Yoga, CR video/**1960**  
2:00 p.m. ~ 10-Point Pitch Group, GR  
2:00 p.m. ~ Social Circles, PS  
3:00 p.m. ~ Coffee Corner, EC

**Wednesday • Dec. 31**  
9:00 a.m. ~ Messenger Team, KSU CL  
9:30 a.m. ~ Seated Strength, CR/**1960**  
10:00 a.m. ~ Walmart/Dillons Shopping Trip, ME  
10:30 a.m. ~ Weights 101, CR/**1960**  
11:30 a.m. ~ Sit & Be Fit, CR/**1960**  
2:00 p.m. ~ Tai Chi, **1960 only**

**Wednesday • Dec. 31, continued**  
3:00 p.m. ~ Sing-a-long, FHR  
4:00 p.m. ~ 4th Floor Social  
6:30 p.m. ~ New Years Eve Party, EC

**Thursday • Jan. 1** *Happy New Year!*  
10:30 a.m. ~ Steady Yourself, **1960 only**  
11:15 a.m. ~ Chair Yoga, **1960 only**  
1:00 p.m. ~ Parkinson's Exercise Class, **1960 only**  
5:30 p.m. ~ Meadowlark Circle Dinner, MR

**Friday • Jan. 2**  
9:00 a.m. ~ Rock Steady Boxing, **PF**  
9:30 a.m. ~ Seated Strength, CR/**1960**  
10:30 a.m. ~ Weights 101, CR/**1960**  
11:30 a.m. ~ Sit & Be Fit, CR/**1960**  
2:30 p.m. ~ Fanny & Furby, KR  
3:00 p.m. ~ Catholic Mass, CR

**Saturday • Jan. 3**  
9:00 a.m. ~ Tai Chi, **1960 only**  
9:30 a.m. ~ Band Bust Exercise Class, **1960 only**

Room Abbreviations	
<b>1960</b> , TV Channel 1960	ME, Main Entrance
BR, Bison Room	<b>MM</b> , 120 Scenic Drive
CR, Community Room	MR, Manhattan Room
CY, Courtyard	<b>PF</b> , Peakform Wellness Center
EC, Event Center	PR, Patriot Room
FHR, Flint Hills Room	PS, Prairie Star Restaurant
GC, Grosh Cinema	<b>STM</b> , St. Thomas More Church
KR, Kansas Room	VBL, Verna Belle's Lounge
KSU CL, KSU Classroom	<b>WPL</b> , Wamego Public Library

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ecumenical communion service. The service follows Protestant liturgy and will be led by Rev. Melanie Nord. Individual communion cups will be used, and gluten-free wafers are available. All are welcome to attend.

## Grief & Loss Education Program

**Tuesday, Jan. 13, at 1 p.m.**

Meadowlark invites residents and guests to take part in a compassionate 8-week Grief & Loss Education Program designed to support anyone grieving the loss of a loved one. Each weekly

session offers a meaningful blend of education, community connection, and practical tools to help participants navigate the emotional, physical, and spiritual impacts of grief at their own pace.

The program will meet on Tuesdays, Jan. 13 through March 3, from 1 to 2 p.m. in the Flint Hills Room. This initial series is dedicated to healing after the loss of someone close.

Looking ahead, a second 8-week series will begin in April, created especially for those adapting to significant life changes.



## GROSH CINEMA SHOWTIMES

MONDAY TO SATURDAY 1:00 P.M. / 4:00 P.M. / 7:00 P.M.

SUNDAY 2:00 P.M. / 6:00 P.M.

**SUNDAY:** Dec. 28

**RESIDENT REQUEST**

**A CHRISTMAS STORY** (1983) PG, 1 hr. 33 min. *Comedy, Family, Holiday*

Cast: Peter Billingsley, Melinda Dillon, & Darren McGavin

In December 1940 a young boy named Ralphie Parker attempts to convince his parents, teacher, and Santa Claus that a Red Ryder Range 200 Shot BB gun is the perfect Christmas gift.

**MONDAY:** Dec. 29

**RESIDENT REQUEST**

**STAR WARS: RETURN OF THE JEDI** (1983) PG, 2 hr. 11 min. *Adventure, Action, Sci-Fi*

Cast: Mark Hamill, Harrison Ford, & Carrie Fisher

After rescuing Han Solo from Jabba the Hutt, the Rebel Alliance attempts to destroy the second Death Star while Luke struggles to help Darth Vader back from the dark side.

**TUESDAY:** Dec. 30

**FALL INTO WINTER** (2023) TV Movie, 1 hr. 25 min. *Comedy, Romance*

Cast: Lori Loughlin, James Tupper, & Cherion Drakes

Follow Kerrie, as she has to work next to her nemesis "Brooks," her brother's high school best friend that now owns half of Kerrie's family-owned candy shop.

**WEDNESDAY:** Dec. 31

**SLIDING DOORS** (1998) PG-13, 1 hr. 39 min. *Drama, Fantasy, Romance*

Cast: Gwyneth Paltrow, John Hannah, & John Lynch

After personal and professional setbacks, a woman experiences an alternate reality.

**THURSDAY:** Jan. 1

**FREAKIER FRIDAY** (2025) PG, 1 hr. 50 min. *Comedy, Family, Fantasy*

Cast: Jamie Lee Curtis, Lindsay Lohan, & Julia Butters

Twenty-two years after Tess and Anna endured an identity crisis, Anna now has a daughter and a soon-to-be stepdaughter. As they navigate the challenges that come when two families merge, Tess and Anna discover that lightning might strike twice.

**FRIDAY:** Jan. 2

**RESIDENT REQUEST**

**MY FAIR LADY** (1964) G, 2 hr. 50 min. *Musical, Family, Romance*

Cast: Audrey Hepburn, Rex Harrison, & Stanley Holloway

In 1910s London, snobbish phonetics professor Henry Higgins agrees to a wager that he can make a crude flower girl, Eliza Doolittle, presentable in high society.

**SATURDAY:** Jan. 3

**RESIDENT REQUEST**

**AN AMERICAN IN PARIS** (1951) G, 1 hr. 54 min. *Musical, Drama, Romance*

Cast: Gene Kelly, Leslie Caron, & Oscar Levant

Three friends struggle to find work in Paris. Things become more complicated when two of them fall in love with the same woman.