

ENGAGE

QUARTERLY MAGAZINE 2023 ISSUE 2

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Before we spring into our second ENGAGE of the year, let's take a moment to look back to the end of February and early March, when we hosted another series of Member Benefits Showcases. There were three events in all, and it was great to see so many members there. Thanks for the

impressive turnout and glowing reviews. If you missed out, don't worry – we plan to do more events in 2024!

Now for the issue at hand. With summer upon us, we have some hot topics to cover. We'll show you how to maximize your Blue Benefit Bucks (BBB) Over-the-Counter Benefit. We'll point you in the direction of

timely, affordable health care, help raise awareness of early signs of Alzheimer's disease, and encourage you to hit the pool more often.

We'll also treat you to a recipe for Black-eyed Pea Salad that's good for you and very tasty. Plus, we'll introduce you to a remarkable 90-year-old named Florence who is full blooded Italian and full of life! She's a gift to her family, and an inspiration to everyone she meets, including me.

Lori Rund

Vice President of Government Programs,
Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Kansas City (Blue KC)

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DON'T MISS OUT ON MEMBER REWARDS

We're halfway through 2023 and there is still time to earn member rewards for the positive efforts you make in your health journey. You can earn up to \$50 a year by participating in a combination of five different preventive health activities.

1. Annual physical exam (\$20 reward)
2. Breast cancer screening (\$20 reward)
3. Ten (10) or more SilverSneakers® in-person gym visits in a calendar month (\$10 reward)
4. Flu shot (\$10 reward)
5. COVID-19 booster (\$10 reward)

Reward dollars will be loaded on your BBB card 8-10 weeks after the date of your completed activity.

WHAT'S YOUR MEMBER REWARD STATUS?

Blue Medicare Advantage has partnered with NationsBenefits® to administer this valuable benefit. Registering and checking your rewards is easy. Just visit [BlueKC.NationsBenefits.com](https://www.BlueKC.NationsBenefits.com). For account assistance, call NationsBenefits at **(877) 208-2596** (TTY:711).

HAVE MORE QUESTIONS?

Call our local and dedicated Customer Service team at **(866) 508-7140** (TTY:711).

AT HOME ON YOUR MEMBER PORTAL

Your Member Portal is your home for all things related to you and your Blue Medicare Advantage plan. It's the place to manage your benefits and get the most out of your coverage. What else can you do on the Member Portal?

- View recent claims
- Find care
- Pay your bill
- Get a digital copy of your ID card

SAVE THE DATE

ANNUAL NOTICE OF CHANGE

Learn about the new 2024 benefits that come with our Blue Medicare Advantage plans. It's a great opportunity to learn about changes, coverages, and costs – so you can choose the right plan for you.

OCTOBER 4, 5, 10 & 11

Stay tuned for additional information closer to meeting dates.

MEMBER BENEFIT SHOWCASES ARE A BIG DEAL

Why do we host Member Benefits Showcases? Because the more our members know about their health plans, the healthier they can be. These fun, informative events are the perfect opportunity to meet in person with Blue KC staff and vendor partners – and learn how to get the most out of your benefits, how to use your Blue Benefit Bucks, and how to access all your Benefit Extras.

Our 2023 events were so well-attended that we plan to hold more of them. So, if we missed you this year, keep an eye out for future dates in 2024.

As always, if you have questions about your benefits, we're here to answer them. Call your award-winning Customer Service Team at (866) 508-7140 (TTY: 711) 8 AM – 8 PM, Monday - Friday.



YOUR BLUE BENEFIT BUCKS OVER-THE-COUNTER BENEFIT

Your Over-the-Counter (OTC) benefit allowance is one wallet on your BBB card. You can use this OTC benefit to buy non-prescription drugs and everyday health-related items such as:

- Pain relievers
- Antacids
- Fiber supplements
- Vitamins
- Cough drops
- First aid supplies
- Toothpaste
- And more

Before making a purchase, be sure to double check what's covered by Medicare. For more specific information about what items are available to you, log into your MyBenefits portal at [BlueKC.NationsBenefits.com](https://www.BlueKC.NationsBenefits.com).

CONVENIENT WAYS TO SHOP FOR OTC PRODUCTS

1. Shop in store.

Use your BBB card to buy eligible OTC items at Walmart, Walgreens, CVS, and Rite Aid stores nationwide.

2. Shop online.

Go to [BlueKC.NationsBenefits.com](https://www.BlueKC.NationsBenefits.com). Online orders come with free, two-day shipping.

3. Call NationsBenefits at (877) 208-2596 (TTY:711)

For personalized service for online orders, just call NationsBenefits at the number listed above.

4. Shop the OTC Product catalog.

You can request a catalog on [BlueKC.NationsBenefits.com](https://www.BlueKC.NationsBenefits.com). Use the order form and follow the ordering instructions.

Have OTC benefit questions?

For questions and account assistance, contact NationsBenefits, 24/7, at **(877) 208-2596** (TTY:711). You can also call your local Blue Medicare Advantage Customer Service Team at **(866) 508-7140** (TTY:711).

Watch Now:

Scan to watch our informative Over-the-Counter benefit video.





NANIE SPARKLES WITH LIGHT, LOVE AND GRATITUDE

Photograph by Cara Baeres Photography

FLORENCE LEBER AND HER FAMILY. BACK ROW: MARCUS BELL, SHANE & CARA (LEBER) DANNER, MARY (LEBER) & GUY TAMBURELLO, PJ & KORRINE TAMBURELLO, CARA NICHOLE & JOE BEARES. FRONT ROW: FRANCESCA LEBER HOLDING BABY SOFIA, NICOLAS DANNER, FLORENCE (FLO) LEBER HOLDING LEO AND JOE JOE BEARES. NOT PRESENT, DR. FRANK TAMBURELLO

Florence Leber shares the details of her life as if they happened yesterday. At age 90, her mind is sharp, her memory is vivid, and her stories captivate. Known by her grandchildren as Nanie Sparkles, she is considered a family treasure and credits her strong mental fitness to her life that is brimming with non-stop family and social interactions.

"My nieces and nephews tell me I've got a mind like a trap. I can recall most everything about my past," Florence explains. "My mother was a Simone. She was born in Montalbano, a village in Messina, Italy. My father was a Mendolia. He was born in the coastal town of Partanna in Sicily. They were married on December 24, 1916."

"When I was born, my dad was 50 and my mother was 38. I was baptized at the Holy Rosary Catholic Church at 911 East Missouri Avenue, close to the City Market. I am a thoroughbred ... 110 percent Italian," Florence adds.

She's one sharp cookie. We're in for a treat.

Life in Kansas City's Little Italy

"My father had a big sausage company, the Mendolia Sausage Company, at 400 Brooklyn," Florence recalls.

Mendolia was a familiar name in Columbus Park, an area known as Kansas City's Italian neighborhood since the late 19th century.

Sundays started with church bells. "We had to go to 9 a.m. mass because most Italian men wanted their pasta with meatballs at 12 o'clock,"

"My nieces and nephews tell me, I've got a mind like a trap. I can recall most everything about my past," Florence explains.

Florence says with smile. "We'd spend the whole day with family."

In the afternoon, the family would gather in the living room for music. "Dad loved to hear us play our instruments, whether it was good or not," Florence recalls. That meant anytime Florence was at the piano – and her sisters were on their respective accordion, harmonica, and violin – there was plenty of clapping.

Florence's next chapter

In 1955, at age 22, Florence married Frank Leber. Frank was also 110 percent Italian but had a German-Irish surname because he was adopted as a child by his step-father when his mother remarried after she became a widow. "We got married in the true Italian Catholic tradition at Holy Rosary," Florence explains.

Before the couple started a family, Florence worked as a loan closing officer for Merriman Mortgage Company. "I was always very detailed. Maybe too much," confesses the former business school graduate. By age 27, Florence was the head of the department.

"It was a big, important job, with a lot of responsibility," Florence reflects. "The Merriman's helped me build an amazing career. I met a lot of important people in Kansas City."

Florence retired from the mortgage company in 1965, two years before the birth of her first child. In the years to come, Florence would pour her heart and soul into building a home and a life of her own.

From wife and mom to Nanie Sparkles and Flo-Flo

After 33 years of raising a successful family, and enjoying a happy, prosperous marriage, Florence lost her husband. "Frank died on July 16, 1998, of pancreatic cancer. It was a sad time ... everyone called him Sonny."

Today, as pictured in her family photo, Florence surrounds herself with her two daughters, two sons-in-law, five grandchildren, and three great grandchildren – not to mention, countless nieces, nephews, and friends. When the grandkids were little, they called her "Nanie Sparkles" because she always had something glittery on. Now that they're older, they call her "Flo-Flo."

Florence lives in the Northland with her daughter Mary Camille Tamburello, son-in-law Guy, a professional chef, and Guy's mother Jean. "They treat us wonderfully and Guy cooks a gourmet meal every night," Florence says with appreciation.

It's an open door here," she explains. "It's just like my mother's home was – everyone is welcome, anytime. There's always food. It's a beautiful situation."

What makes her the family treasure?

Florence isn't shy about saying that she's very popular with her family. Or, for that matter, admitting that she likes to talk. "I've always been friendly, outspoken, true to the cause, and interested in what others are doing," Florence professes.

"I'm involved with all my family and in what all the kids are doing, and they keep me up on everything. As for my grandkids, I give them five-star ratings, they're wonderful," she shares. No one lives more than 20 minutes away, and her grandchildren join her for dinner three days per week.

Florence has diabetes and has been living with chronic back pain from three collapsed discs. For the last several years she has relied on a walker to help her get around. Because of her age, her doctor has advised against surgery and uses stretches and exercises. She sees her doctor at Spira Care for all her primary care needs. "Blue KC Medicare Advantage has a great plan with lots of extras. With my policy, they give you a physical, take care of bloodwork, and there's absolutely no charge," she touts. "They (Blue KC) also offer an app to help me with my balance."

While she may not be as mobile as she used to be, there's no stopping the 90-year-old, thanks in large part to her daughter, Cara Danner who cheerfully manages most all of her transportation needs. Florence is always ready for activities at

preschool, church events, baseball games, and happy hours with friends. She gets her nails and hair done every Thursday. And she's looking forward to boating all summer long on Smithville Lake aboard her family's boat named "Papa's Big Water."

A perfect name

The former high school reporter still loves putting pen to paper. Florence shares, "I write things down about how I feel, about my family. I'm beyond blessed because I've had a beautiful life, starting with my parents and husband."

The name on her birth certificate reads "Fortunate." (Pronounced For-too-nata.) Florence explains, "Translated in Italian, it's fortunate, which means lucky. And yes, I've been very, very lucky." ■

"Blue KC Medicare Advantage has a great plan with lots of extras. With my policy, they give you a physical, take care of bloodwork, and there's absolutely no charge," she touts. "They (Blue KC) also offer an app to help me with my balance."



KNOW WHERE TO GO FOR CARE

You have many choices of where to go for medical care. How do you choose wisely? How can you be sure to make the right call? A lot depends on the nature and severity of your condition. And a lot depends on what's most convenient for you at the time.

We're here to walk you through your options, so that you can do what's best for your health – and your wallet. After all, there's no reason to spend more than you have to on out-of-pocket medical costs.

PRIMARY CARE PROVIDER (PCP) COST \$0 (IN-NETWORK)

The go-to place for managing your healthcare. Your primary care provider (PCP) monitors your overall health and should help coordinate all the care you receive. Your PCP knows your medical history best, so it's always smart to consult with them before seeking alternate care.

VIRTUAL CARE COST \$0

Telemedicine, also known as virtual care, is just another way we keep our Medicare Advantage members as healthy as possible. This added benefit makes it easy and convenient for you to get the care you need and can be more cost effective than visiting the ER for an illness that's not an emergency – especially if your primary care is unavailable, weather is bad, you get sick when traveling in the U.S., or don't feel well enough to leave home.

URGENT CARE/RETAIL CLINIC COST \$50 (IN-NETWORK)

Immediate care for pressing, but not life-threatening conditions. In some communities, urgent care facilities are open 24/7. Retail health clinics, located within retail stores, are also designed to handle minor, non-emergent health issues at your convenience. Retail health clinics are typically staffed by licensed nurse practitioners, physicians assistants, and sometimes physicians. The wait time is generally shorter than an emergency room and more affordable.

EMERGENCY ROOM/COMMUNITY HOSPITAL COST \$95 - \$125

Immediate care for life-threatening emergencies. Always go to the emergency room (ER) if your health is in danger or call 911. However, for less severe injuries or illnesses, the ER can be expensive, with copays up to \$125 depending upon your plan and wait times can average over four hours.

Guide to finding the best care options

Getting the right care, at the right place and the right time is good for your health – plus it can save you money!

	Primary Care Provider*	Virtual Care	Urgent Care/ Retail Clinic*	Emergency Room/ Community Hospital \$95–\$125
	\$0	\$0	\$50	
Mild Asthma	✓		✓	
Minor Headaches	✓		✓	
Sprains, Strains	✓		✓	
Nausea, Vomiting, Diarrhea	✓		✓	
Bumps, Cuts, Scrapes	✓		✓	
Burning with Urination	✓		✓	
Coughs, Sore Throat	✓	✓	✓	
Ear and Sinus Pain	✓	✓	✓	
Eye Swelling, Irritation, Redness or Pain	✓		✓	
Minor Allergic Reactions	✓	✓	✓	
Minor Fevers, Colds	✓	✓	✓	
Rashes, Minor Burns	✓	✓	✓	
Vaccinations	✓			
Back Pain	✓		✓	
X-rays			✓	
Animal bites			✓	
Stitches			✓	
Cut or wound that won't stop bleeding				✓
Any life-threatening or disabling condition including difficulty breathing				✓
Sudden or unexplained loss of consciousness				✓
Chest pain, numbness in face, arm or leg; difficulty speaking				✓
Severe shortness of breath				✓
High fever with stiff neck, mental confusion or difficulty breathing				✓
Coughing up or vomiting blood				✓
Major injuries				✓
Possible broken bones				✓

*In-network providers

LET'S MAKE ALZHEIMER'S LESS OF A MYSTERY



According to the Alzheimer's Association, every 66 seconds someone in the United States develops Alzheimer's disease. There are over 6 million Americans living with Alzheimer's, with 3 million new cases diagnosed each year.

The greatest known risk factor is increasing age. Symptoms first appear late in life, and most people with Alzheimer's are 65 and older. As our aging population continues to grow, we can expect the number of Alzheimer's cases to rise as well.

Researchers are still working to discover the root cause of the disease, but it's widely believed to be due to the abnormal buildup of proteins in and around brain cells. This damage begins a decade or more before symptoms begin to show.

What is Alzheimer's Disease?

Alzheimer's is a degenerative brain disease that causes problems with memory, thinking, and behavior. Over time, the symptoms become severe enough to interfere with daily tasks. Alzheimer's is the most common form of dementia, and accounts for 60-80% of dementia cases.

10 Early Signs of Alzheimer's

The Alzheimer's Association has identified 10 early signs. It's important not to ignore them. If you experience any of the following, make an appointment with your doctor.

1. Memory loss that disrupts daily life.

One of the early signs of Alzheimer's is forgetting recently learned information. This can include everything from important dates or events to asking the same questions over and over.

2. Challenges in planning or solving problems

People with Alzheimer's may find it more difficult to make and follow plans, as well as work with numbers. Monthly household bills can feel insurmountable.

3. Difficulty completing familiar tasks

Alzheimer's patients find it hard to complete daily tasks like organizing a grocery list or driving to a familiar location.

4. Confusion with time or place

People with Alzheimer's can lose track of dates, seasons, and the passage of time. It may be impossible to process things that aren't happening right now.

5. Trouble understanding visual images and spatial relationships

For some people, having vision problems is a sign of Alzheimer's.

6. New problems with words in speaking or writing

Following or joining a conversation is often difficult for people living with Alzheimer's. They are likely to stop in the middle of a conversation, repeat themselves, and struggle with vocabulary.

7. Misplacing things and losing the ability to retrace steps

It's common for people with Alzheimer's to put things in strange locations, lose things, and accuse others of stealing things from them.

8. Decreased or poor judgement

Individuals may experience changes in judgement or decision-making. They may pay less attention to keeping themselves clean and make bad choices about money.

9. Withdrawal from work or social activities

Because conversation can become difficult, an individual may pull away from hobbies, social activities, and favorite engagements.

10. Changes in mood and personality

When people living with Alzheimer's are out of their comfort zones, they can become confused, suspicious, depressed, fearful, or anxious. ■

SOURCES: Alzheimer's Association, National Institutes of Health, act.alz.org

THE POWER OF MUSIC TO PRESERVE MEMORIES



Music can have a very powerful effect on anyone but for those living with Alzheimer's or other dementias, it can be therapeutic. Music can be like a bookmark in our lives and can unlock memories and emotions – this includes listening to music, singing, or playing instruments.

PARK FOR A PURPOSE

Join Blue KC and the Alzheimer's Association – Heart of America Chapter in the Fight Against Alzheimer's Disease

Kansas City Irish Fest
at Crown Center
Sept. 1–3, 2023

Parking by suggested donation*:

Blue KC parking lot
intersection at
22nd & Grand Blvd.
Kansas City, MO 64108

*All proceeds benefit Alzheimer's Association

NOW THAT'S A PUZZLE

	2	5		6	1	7		9
7		1	4		5	2		
	4		3		2		8	5
	6		5		9		7	1
	3				7			4
5				4			2	8
8				3	6	5		
		3		5		4		7
2		6		1				

Sudoku is a logic-based puzzle in which missing numbers are to be filled into a 9 by 9 grid of squares which are subdivided into 3 by 3 boxes so that every row, every column, and every box contains the numbers 1 through 9.

3	9	8	4	1	7	9	5	2
7	9	4	8	5	2	3	1	6
2	5	1	6	3	9	4	7	8
8	2	6	3	4	1	7	9	5
4	5	9	7	8	6	2	3	1
1	4	7	9	2	5	8	6	3
7	1	3	7	9	2	5	8	6
6	5	1	2	7	3	9	4	8
3	6	2	5	9	4	1	8	7
9	4	7	1	6	8	5	2	3

SPLASH YOUR WAY TO BETTER HEALTH THIS SUMMER



While fireworks are lighting up the summer sky, our goals to exercise might be fizzling out. But don't wait until January to start over. It's important to your health and well-being to stay active year-round. One way to get going again involves water, and lots of it.

The pool provides a low-impact, joint-friendly environment. Swimming is a great way to exercise, and swimmers and non-swimmers alike can participate in water aerobics or aqua therapy. SilverSneakers® can help you get started.

Using the pool to exercise may:

- Reduce arthritis and joint pain. The buoyancy of the water gives you freedom of movement while providing support and helping to relieve pain and stiffness.¹
- Improve strength, flexibility, and balance. Studies show that aqua therapy exercise improves lower body strength, power, flexibility, agility, and balance.² Building strength in the water can help prevent falls on dry land, such as making it easier to recover from a stumble.
- Lower systolic blood pressure (SBP). This is the pressure in your arteries when your heart beats. Exercising in an aquatic environment is a great alternative for people who have high blood pressure.³ It may help lower SBP which has been shown to significantly reduce the risk of cardiovascular disease.⁴

SilverSneakers is a health and fitness benefit designed specifically for adults 65+, and is included with your Blue Medicare Advantage plan at no additional cost. SilverSneakers is more than a fitness program – it's a way of life. With SilverSneakers, you get access to:

- memberships to thousands of fitness locations,⁵ (many have pools)
- group exercise classes⁶ designed for all abilities
- instructors trained in senior fitness
- fun activities held outside the gym

- SilverSneakers On-Demand online workout videos for at-home workouts, available 24/7
- SilverSneakers LIVE full-length classes and workshops (exercise with others, but from the comfort of home)
- SilverSneakers GO mobile app with workout programs, location finder and more

Discover a health and fitness benefit for adults 65+. Go to [SilverSneakers.com/GetStarted](https://www.silversneakers.com/GetStarted) to get your SilverSneakers ID number today.

Always talk with your doctor before starting an exercise program.

¹ Arthritis Foundation. (n.d.). *Hit the Pool to Relieve Joint Pain*. Retrieved March 6, 2023, from <https://www.arthritis.org/health-wellness/healthy-living/physical-activity/other-activities/hit-the-poolncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3820233/>

² Kim SB, O'sullivan DM. *Effects of Aqua Aerobic Therapy Exercise for Older Adults on Muscular Strength, Agility and Balance to Prevent Falling during Gait*. *J Phys Ther Sci*. Retrieved March 6, 2023, from <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3820233/>

³ Pereira Neiva H, Brandão Faíl L, Izquierdo M, Marques MC, Marinho DA. *The effect of 12 weeks of water-aerobics on health status and physical fitness: An ecological approach*. *PLoS One*. Retrieved March 6, 2023, from <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC5978883/>

⁴ Bundy JD, Li C, Stuchlik P, Bu X, Kelly TN, Mills KT, He H, Chen J, Whelton PK, He J. *Systolic Blood Pressure Reduction and Risk of Cardiovascular Disease and Mortality*. *JAMA Cardiol*. Retrieved March 6, 2023, from <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC5710614/>

⁵ Participating locations ("PL") are not owned or operated by Tivity Health, Inc. or its affiliates. Use of PL facilities and amenities are limited to terms and conditions of PL basic membership. Facilities and amenities vary by PL.

⁶ Membership includes SilverSneakers instructor-led group fitness classes. Some locations offer members additional classes. Classes vary by location.

SilverSneakers is a registered trademark of Tivity Health, Inc. © 2023 Tivity Health, Inc. All rights reserved.

“OPEN LETTER” INSTALLATIONS HIT HOME, BIG TIME



The Kansas City Royals and Blue KC – the Official Health Insurance Partner of the Royals – are expanding their partnership to reduce the stigma about behavioral health in our community. In the third season, the **SHUT OUT THE STIGMA** initiative is driving home a powerful message about the ways interactions during the post-game car ride home can impact a young athlete’s self-confidence and self-worth.



The **“Open Letter”** is a series of installations measuring **10 feet high by 7 feet wide** with personal statements from local young athletes about the impact of those interactions. The purpose is to raise awareness about behavioral health and educate parents, guardians, grandparents, and coaches about how some conversations, while meant to be helpful, can do more harm than good.

CATCH THE SHUT OUT THE STIGMA “OPEN LETTER” INSTALLATIONS

You’ll find one at the Blue Valley Recreation Activity Center in Overland Park, KS and the other at the Kansas City MLB Urban Youth Academy in Kansas City, MO.

BLACK-EYED PEA SALAD RECIPE

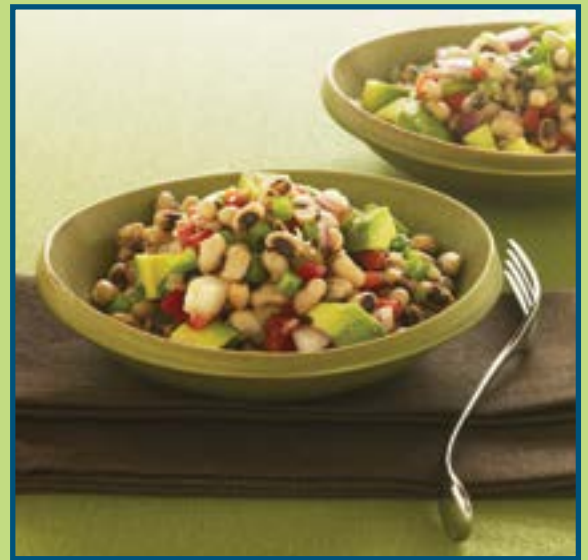
INGREDIENTS

For the salad:

- 2 cans of black-eyed peas, drained and rinsed
- 2 cups of cherry tomatoes, sliced
- 1 large red bell pepper, diced
- 1 cup of corn: fresh, canned, or thawed from frozen
- ½ cup red onion, finely diced
- ½ cup of parsley or cilantro, chopped
- 1 avocado, ripe

For the dressing:

- 3 tablespoons balsamic vinegar
- 2 tablespoons lemon juice, freshly squeezed
- ¼ cup extra virgin olive oil
- 1 teaspoon salt
- ½ teaspoon black pepper



INSTRUCTIONS

1. In a separate, small bowl combine balsamic vinegar, fresh lemon juice, salt and pepper. Slowly whisk in olive oil and continue whisking until fully blended and smooth. Set aside.
2. Place black-eyed peas, tomatoes, bell pepper, corn, and red onion in a large bowl.
3. Drizzle the salad with dressing.

4. Halve avocado and remove the pit. Dice the avocado flesh while still in the skin.
5. Add diced avocado and parsley. Gently fold in.

NOTE: May be served immediately or chilled in refrigerator at least four hours or overnight. Serve as a side or as a main dish.

Bon Appétit!



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For accommodations of persons with special needs at meetings call **(844) 239-4038**, (TTY:711)

Medicare Advantage Compliance and Fraud, Waste & Abuse Hotline (anonymous 3rd Party Vendor): **(844) 227-1790**, (TTY:711)

[MyBlueKCMA.com](https://www.MyBlueKCMA.com)

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HEALTH AND WELLNESS OR PREVENTION INFORMATION.

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HOMETOWN CUSTOMER SERVICE

Meet **Shelley Dotson**, Blue Medicare Advantage customer service representative who is proud to live and serve in the Kansas City metro area. ***"I love working at Blue KC. The members that we serve everyday are our friends and neighbors. Working with our members is a great opportunity to support the community that we live in."***

GOT QUESTIONS?

No question is too big or too small. Reach your local team at **(866) 508-7140** (TTY: 711)