

Thrivent Member Network – Heartland Region

Network News

About the newsletter

Network News provides financial insights, local stories, local partnerships and upcoming events happening in your region.

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Thrivent Financial Advisors are planting seeds of generosity



Kendra Troncale hosted “Brynlee’s Birthday Bash,” an event complete with bounce houses, youth interactive tables, face painting, fire trucks, the organization Heroes for Kids, and a bake sale. Funds were raised to support the family of Brynlee, who was diagnosed with High-Grade Glioma, an aggressive type of brain tumor.

Thrivent Action Teams make an impact in SEMO

Kendra Troncale, a financial advisor in the SEMO area, checks in with clients at each meeting to see if they are using their Thrivent Action Teams (TAT) and if there are organizations the client is passionate about supporting. She discusses the [75 ideas for action sheet](#) to help ideas flow. She and her office staff are there to help their clients every step of the way, from helping them fill out the form their first time to being on the phone as they call in to complete their TAT application.

Kendra shares, “Clients are sometimes surprised that they have so many benefits available to them and how easy the process is. Thrivent Action Teams are one of the programs that each Thrivent member over the age of 16 has access to—it is something we can offer

to help all our clients with.”

She also highlighted what a difference they make: “Since we live in rural Missouri, TATs help support smaller organizations in a big way. This has made a large impact in our communities and is involving more and more clients.”

How else does Kendra’s team support? If clients have t-shirts or supplies left over from their TAT, they can drop them by their office so if someone else needs more shirts or supplies they can access them. Their team shares and asks clients to share photos on social media about their TATs so that they can help raise awareness in the community.



Kicking Goals for a Great Cause: The Inaugural “Goal for Good” Charity Soccer Tournament

Jonathan Pickens, a Financial Advisor in Washington, MO, shared about the tournament he organized: “This past October, I had the privilege of organizing the first-ever ‘Goal for Good’ charity soccer tournament in my hometown, hosted at my former high school. This event marked the realization of a long-held dream: to unite my community and raise funds and awareness for a local non profit in a unique and meaningful way.

As a lifelong soccer enthusiast—still managing to play weekly at age 44 (though my back has other opinions!)—I’ve built a network of incredible friends and teammates over my 37 years in

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the game. These connections proved invaluable as I rallied players and teams to support this cause.

For our inaugural tournament, we partnered with the Franklin County Foster Closet, a local non profit led by Amber Raney. Amber and her team provide free clothing, hygiene products, and furniture to foster children and foster families, easing their transition into new homes. Since founding the Foster Closet just five years ago, Amber has created a vital resource for the community, and I wanted this event to raise both funds and awareness for their incredible work.

With the field secured and October 26 marked on the calendar, the planning began! The tournament’s catchy name, ‘Goal for Good,’ helped generate excitement, but the real focus was on maximizing support for the Foster Closet.

How We Made It Happen

Fundraising was a top priority, and Thrivent Action Teams played a key role. This program provides up to \$250 in seed money to Thrivent clients for community projects. With the help of four other Thrivent clients, we used these funds creatively:

- **Swag Bags:** My Action Team dollars went toward assembling player swag bags, sold at the tournament to benefit the Foster Closet.
- **Sponsor Banners:** Another client created and purchased a tournament banner featuring logos of businesses that donated to the Foster Closet, which was displayed at the tournament.
- **Baked Goods Sale:** Thrivent dollars helped purchase ingredients for a bake sale at the event.
- **Food and Clothing Drive:** The remaining two Thrivent clients used their funds to kickstart a food and clothing drive for the Foster Closet, hosted during the tournament.



- **Auction Items:** We auctioned off autographed items signed by my brother, a former professional soccer player, to increase funds raised at the event.

Despite having just 30 days to plan, we successfully recruited eight teams, with each team’s \$150 registration fee going directly to the Foster Closet. Amber and her team were on site to share their mission, inspiring additional donations from attendees.

Making It a Day to Remember

Twelve volunteers helped ensure the day ran smoothly, from staffing the check-in table to serving food and drinks. Even our referees volunteered their time! The event was well-organized and filled with camaraderie—especially for my team, which won first place! (Thanks to some strategic recruiting of my 19-year-old nephew and his friends!)

An Incredible Outcome

In total, the ‘Goal for Good’ tournament raised nearly \$5,500 for the Franklin County Foster Closet. The success of this event has inspired plans for a second annual tournament—and many more to come!

This experience reinforced the power of community and the impact we can make when we come together for a shared goal. Here’s to more goals scored, funds raised, and lives touched in the years ahead!”

Are you inspired to plant seeds of generosity?

Thrivent Action Teams empower clients with membership to put generosity into action.

Where can you make a meaningful difference in your community? Identify a need, then apply to lead a fundraiser, service activity, or educational event. Thrivent provides the resources, digital tools and inspiration you need to bring a Thrivent Action Team to life—including up to \$250 in seed money. Gather your friends, family, or neighbors, and get started today!

Get started and apply by visiting our [Thrivent Action Teams website](#).

A look at living generously in 2024



Thrivent Action Teams completed:
10,377



Funds raised:
\$15,952,170



Volunteer hours given:
868,980



Choice Dollars® directed:
\$1,498,015

Thank you for your generosity—you are making an incredible impact in your community and around the world!

How is Social Security calculated?



Whether you're approaching retirement or you have years to go, you probably wonder how much you can expect to receive in Social Security benefits. If you know how Social Security is calculated, you can feel more confident about planning to live out your retirement years the way you want to.

Let's take a look at the Social Security formula, so you can determine how much income you can expect and how it will fit into your overall retirement strategy.

How credits determine Social Security eligibility

Before getting into the dollars and cents of your monthly benefit, you need to know a bit about [how Social Security works](#). Your eligibility for the Social Security program's retirement and other benefits depends on how much you've worked and paid Social Security taxes.

You earn credits based on the amount of your wages and self-employment income, and you become eligible for the Social Security retirement program once you've accrued 40 credits. You can get a maximum of four credits per year, so it takes everyone at least 10 years of working to become eligible.

In 2024, you get one credit for every \$1,730 of employment income earned during the year. To get the maximum of four credits, you have to have made at least \$6,920 in employment income. Credits only determine eligibility—not your benefit amount.

Main factors that affect your Social Security benefit amount

The core idea of Social Security is that the taxes collected from you and other workers contribute to a funding system that provides you with a payout to help support you during your post-career retirement years.

Your benefit amount, however, isn't a simple percentage of your monthly paycheck when you were working. It's based on how much you earned from working, how long you worked and at what age you opt to take Social Security benefits.

01 Lifetime earnings and Social Security benefits

Using records of the Social Security tax payments you've made over the years, the Social Security Administration calculates your lifetime earnings. This number helps determine a key figure of the Social Security calculation: your average indexed monthly earnings.

02 Understanding average indexed monthly earnings (AIME)

Social Security benefits are set up to give you a percentage of what you earned on average in a month during your working years. This number is your average indexed monthly earnings.

The "indexed" part involves adjusting your total income based on the year it was earned so inflation isn't as much of a factor.

For this calculation, your indexed lifetime earnings (for your highest-earning 35 years, if you worked longer than that) are divided by the number of months you worked—35 years (420 months). This yields a monthly amount that's the average you earned: your AIME.

The bend points formula

Next, your average indexed monthly earnings are divided into portions, called [bend points](#), that are adjusted each year for inflation and the costs of living. In 2024, the bend points at full retirement age are:

- 90% of the first \$1,174 of your AIME
- 32% of AIME between \$1,174 and \$7,078
- 15% of AIME over \$7,078

These portions are then added together to determine your primary insurance amount (PIA). This is the amount you would receive at your full retirement age.

03 The impact of retirement age on benefits

You can start Social Security benefit payments as early as age 62. However, the government incentivizes waiting to take Social Security benefits by giving you a higher payment if you wait until your full retirement age (FRA) or later.

Your FRA depends on the year you were born. For those born in 1960 or later, the FRA is currently 67.

At your FRA, you get 100% of your benefit. This amount changes if you claim Social Security before or after that.

What's your full retirement age (FRA)?	
If you were born in:	Your full retirement age is:
1943–1954	66
1955	66 and 2 months
1956	66 and 4 months
1957	66 and 6 months
1958	66 and 8 months
1959	66 and 10 months
1960 and later	67

Early vs. delayed retirement: The pros and cons

- If you take benefits before FRA, your payment is permanently reduced based on your age. For example, claiming at the youngest possible age—62—means you'll get just 70% of [what you would get at FRA](#). That reduction becomes smaller each month that you wait to claim. A 64-year-old retiree, for instance, would have their benefit reduced to 80%.

- If you take benefits after reaching FRA, your benefit will be permanently higher. The benefit amounts steadily increase until you reach age 70, where it tops out at 124% of what you'd get at FRA.

Many people opt not to take Social Security until later so their long-term payment is higher. Delaying the start of your payments, to age 70 if you can, is one way to try to [get the most out of your Social Security benefits](#). However, what's best for you depends on your individual circumstances, factoring in your finances, health, life expectancy, etc.

Social Security formula example

Let's put all the calculations together. Let's say that Cameron has worked for 35 years, averaging \$96,000 a year when adjusted for inflation and wage growth based on his retirement year. The Social Security Administration would divide his lifetime earnings by 420 months to yield his average monthly indexed earnings of \$8,000 per month.

For the first \$1,174 of Cameron's monthly earnings, he gets 90% in monthly Social Security benefits, or \$1,056 in benefits.

For his earnings between \$1,174 and \$7,078, Cameron will get 32% in monthly Social Security benefits. This bucket of earnings is \$5,904, so 32% of that will be \$1,889.28 in benefits.

For his earnings above \$7,078, Cameron receives 15% in monthly Social Security benefits. He earned \$922 in this portion, and 15% of that amount yields an additional \$138.30 in benefits.

To calculate his primary insurance amount (PIA), Cameron adds \$1,056, \$1,889.60 and \$138.30 to yield a retirement Social Security benefit of \$3,083.90 per month. The final step is to decide at what age he'll retire.

For example, Cameron might opt to retire at age 64. Then his benefit would be reduced by 20% to \$2,467.12. Or Cameron

could opt to retire at age 69.5, yielding a 20% bonus and giving him \$3,700.68 per month.

Optimizing Social Security for you

Choosing when to claim your Social Security benefits—at age 62, 67, 70 or somewhere in between—is a personal decision. You'll need to factor in your other retirement savings accounts, any pension or annuities you have, your health, whether you plan to continue working and other factors. Using financial planning tools, you can examine what your benefit would be at various ages and make an informed decision from there.

A [Thrivent financial advisor](#) can help you weigh your options, whether you want to boost your benefits by working a few more years or you're happy with getting a smaller benefit in return for additional time in retirement. Together, you can assess your credits, work to understand how the Social Security formula applies to you, and make thoughtful projections about how your overall retirement strategy should look.

Interested in learning more about Social Security?



Join us in June for Maximizing Social Security, a workshop presented by Mary Beth Franklin. See details in the Events section of this newsletter.

*Thrivent financial professionals have general knowledge of the Social Security tenets. For complete details on your situation, contact the Social Security Administration. Hypothetical example is for illustrative purposes. May not be representative of actual results. Past performance is not necessarily indicative of future results.



Direct Thrivent Choice Dollars

Choice Dollars expire 3/31/2025

Some Benefit Members can recommend where a portion of Thrivent's charitable outreach funds go*. It's your opportunity to spread joy to a cause you cherish. Need inspiration? Our catalog (bit.ly/searchtchoice) includes over 45,000 organizations. If you don't see the organization you would like to direct to, you can nominate them to be added at bit.ly/nominatechoice. Choice Dollars from 2024 expire on March 31, 2025, so direct today!

To direct Choice Dollars, simply go to thrivent.com/directnow.

Curious? Learn more about membership benefits at bit.ly/tmemberbenefits.

*Thrivent will pay up to \$300,000 in online processing fees per calendar year for personal donations made through Thrivent's online giving platform. The Thrivent Choice® charitable grant program engages Thrivent members in providing grants that support charitable activities, furthering Thrivent's mission and its purposes under state law. All grant decisions, including grant recipients and amounts, are made at the sole discretion of Thrivent. Directing Choice Dollars® is subject to the program's terms and conditions available at thrivent.com/thriventchoice. Member benefits and programs are not guaranteed contractual benefits. The interpretation of the provisions of these benefits and programs is at the sole discretion of Thrivent. Thrivent reserves the right to change, modify, discontinue, or refuse to provide any of the membership benefits or any part of them, at any time. You should only purchase and keep insurance and annuity products that best meet the financial security needs of you and your family and never purchase or keep any insurance or annuity products to be eligible for nonguaranteed membership benefits.

You don't need financial experience to become a financial advisor

- Thrivent is a dedicated veteran's reemployment supporter.
- Thrivent is looking for those with a background in hospitality, sales, real estate, education, and more.
- Thrivent pays you to study and get your FINRA licenses so you can start helping clients align their finances to their values.



Learn how you can transfer your skills and make an impact as a Thrivent financial advisor: thriventcareers.com.

Thrivent provides Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) without regard to race, religion, color, sex, gender identity, sexual orientation, pregnancy, national origin, age, disability, marital status, citizenship status, military or veteran status, genetic information, or any other status protected by applicable local, state, or federal law. This policy applies to all employees and job applicants.

2025 Calendar of Events

For additional events, details or to RSVP, visit our website at thrivent.com/member-network/heartland or email HeartlandTMN@Thrivent.com.

March

Keeping the Tax Man Away

Presented by Debbie Taylor

If taxes are a topic you avoid, this event is for you. It's common to think you'll pay less taxes in retirement because you're earning less. But not without planning.

- Find out why tax planning is a 'must do.'
- Learn ways to make the most of Roth IRAs.
- Manage your tax brackets now and in the future.

Dinner will be served.

March 11 – Virtual livestream, 5:30 p.m. CT

March 12 – Marriott St. Louis West, St. Louis, MO 63141, 6 p.m. CT

March 13 – Virtual livestream, 6:30 p.m. CT

Register for the [in-person St. Louis](#) event.

Register for the [virtual livestream events](#).

April



Joy In Generosity

Join us for the 2025 Thrivent Member Network Annual Celebration of Membership.

As a purposed-based financial services organization, we come together each year to celebrate the countless ways you—our members—inspire generosity and help improve people's lives and communities.

Enjoy an exclusive event! You'll hear how Thrivent clients have impacted our community and the positive different made in 2024.

April 25 – Buckner-Ragsdale Event Center, Cape Girardeau, 6 p.m. CT

You don't want to miss this special free event—[sign up today](#).

June

Maximizing Social Security Benefits

Presented by Mary Beth Franklin

Learn the impact of eligibility requirements on your Social Security benefit and discover the importance of creating a strategy that's right for you.

- Learn how working in retirement can reduce your benefits.
- Discover how claiming age may affect benefits for retirees and surviving spouses.
- Understand how retirement income affects Medicare premiums.

Dinner will be served.

St. Louis and virtual livestream options, 6 p.m. CT

St. Louis live event—[save your spot](#) today!

Virtual livestream options can be found [on our events page](#).

Stay Connected

To receive the most up-to-date information on events, activities and communication, please update or add your email address by logging on to thrivent.com or calling 800-847-4836.

Thrivent is a membership-owned fraternal organization, as well as a holistic financial services organization, providing financial advice, investments, insurance, banking and generosity programs to help people make the most of all they've been given.

thrivent[®]

Advice | Investments | Insurance | Banking | Generosity

No products will be sold.

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