

# The Record

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## Teacher Wins National Award

By Dr. Jim Haas

Turner Elementary School teacher Lexcee Oddo thought December 4th would be a normal day at school. It turned out to be a day she will never forget.

That afternoon, she took her class to an assembly in the gym where more than 700 students and faculty found themselves facing a group of dignitaries including their principal, the Turner District superintendent, and Kansas Commissioner of Education Dr. Randy Watson. After a few remarks, the commissioner said everyone was about to hear a surprise announcement and introduced Jennifer Fuller, Vice-President, Milken Educator Awards, who explained that only one Kansas educator wins the award each year and that the award includes a check. She had some fun with students multiplying \$25 x 10, then by 10 again, and 10 again to \$25,000. That is serious money, and excited students saw Fuller open an envelope and say, "The Milken Educator Award for Kansas goes to ... Lexcee Oddo." The gym erupted in applause as Ms. Oddo accepted an oversize

replica check. She and a guest will go to Washington, D.C., next June where she will receive the real check during a Milken Educator Forum with all the 2025-26 state award winners and attend panels, round tables, and networking activities.

Drawn to a teaching career by her older sister who teaches in Blue Valley and by an influential sixth-grade teacher in Olathe, Oddo is a graduate of Olathe South High School with a B.S. from Kansas State and an M.S. in educational administration from Emporia State. She taught second grade at Turner Elementary for six years before teaching English as a Second Language (ESL) to 150 students this year. She will be summer school principal in 2026.

Oddo attributes her success to having high expectations for her students, to her knack for motivating them to adopt those expectations, and to creative and effective lessons. She says she knows her ESL students are succeeding when their reading confidence improves. She fortifies her classroom skills through continuing study of the science of reading and expands her broader professional growth by attending an ongoing leadership academy.

The Milken Awards, which have been called the Nobel Prize of education, were created by Lowell Milken in 1987 to give "outstanding educators the recognition they deserve for their important work—ensuring a bright future for every student." More than 3000 exemplary teachers, principals, and



specialists have become Milken Educators, usually in early- or mid-career for what they have accomplished and for what they can contribute in the future. Honorees join the national Milken Educator Network, a valuable resource to those shaping the future of education.

A Milken Award is a surprise. There is no way to apply; candidates are identified by state departments of education using a variety of sources and are not aware they are being considered. Invited guests don't even learn the name of the school until two days before the ceremony and are cautioned to not mention "Milken" when they arrive in order to keep the surprise alive.

Attending the Turner Elementary ceremony were a dozen past Milken Award winners including a former principal of the school when it had been Pierson Jr. High 30 years ago and a Pierson student at the time who won the award while teaching at Sumner



CONTINUED ON PAGE 2



By Sharon Hoover

This is the time of the year when I thank all those who have been involved with the Turner Community Garden. Wyandotte County Master Gardeners have provided much needed expertise. Without them, we would have no Pollinator Garden, aquaponics, butterfly pollinator garden, and orchard. Thanks to Vicki, Jane, Tina, Penny, Wilonna, Beth and Ted. Without them, Calvin and Jim wouldn't be able to take care of the vegetable garden. Thanks

# Comin' & Goin' Turner Style

also to Turner High and Middle School student volunteers and BPU summer employees who spent their time with us. A former Family Tree Nursery employee, Shannon, has recently returned to volunteer a few hours a week to help. All volunteers who work in the garden on a regular basis are entitled to a share of the produce grown. Even though, our garden did not produce as much in the past and our market sales were low this year, we were able to donate several hundred pounds of vegetables to The First Baptist Church of Turner. We are always looking for volunteers, just a few hours a week. Spring will be here before you know it and time to plant.

Thanks to those who supported us in other ways, saving Best Choice

Labels, Janet, Ron, Linda and Lil. A shout out to Turner Recreation Commission and their summer camp program which allows Master Gardeners to teach grade school children the importance of growing and eating fresh vegetables. Our plot renters did a fantastic job of keeping their areas neat and clean and were successful in their growing efforts.

The garden partners with several other organizations including the Turner Neighborhood Center adjacent to the garden that holds Turner Community Library craft and activity classes, Parents As Teachers, Turner Community Connection, Safe Neighborhood Group, and the Area on Aging Senior luncheon program. In the summer

several of these groups meet in the garden itself. Thanks to everyone who participates in our programs. It's been fun meeting new and interesting people this year.

Now I only have one library event for next week and it is really off my radar. "Belly Dancing with Kimberly" at Schlagle Library on Saturday, December 20, at 1pm. In this class for all ages, they will break down the techniques of each movement and then combine them together with Arabic music for a full belly dance experience. Registration Required. [kckpl.org](http://kckpl.org).

MERRY CHRISTMAS AND HAPPY HOLIDAYS!!!

That's it for now. Until next time, stay safe and be kind to those around you.

## Stock Market Insights

# The High Cost of Europe's Green Energy Ambitions

**Dr. Richard Baker, AIF®, is the CEO and executive wealth advisor at Fervent Wealth Management.**

My wife is a little disappointed. We are recent empty-nesters, and for the first time in years, there is no one home to look forward to her Advent calendar full of little notes and candy. Still, her disappointment isn't anything like the disappointment that Europeans are feeling this winter.

For years, European leaders told their citizens that if they went all in on the green energy transition, it would create an enormous number of green jobs and cheap energy while drastically reducing carbon emissions. Twenty-ish years into the green energy transition, it's clear that European Union (EU) leaders haven't delivered. Carbon emissions are down, but the reality is that fewer energy jobs are available, and Europe now has some of the highest energy costs in the world.

Europe has significantly reduced carbon emissions on its continent by 30% since 2005; in comparison, the US has reduced its carbon emissions by only 17% over the same period, but Europe has paid a high price to

do so. The rush to switch to green energy has driven EU energy prices to more than double those in the US and four times those in China. More specifically, Germany now has the highest electricity prices in the developed world, and the U.K. has an electricity shortage so severe that it is paying 80% more than the U.S. and will have to ration energy use this winter. The promised cheap energy, if it ever comes, could still be decades away. Sadly, instead of a job boom, there are fewer net energy jobs.

These high energy prices aren't just hurting their citizens; they are holding back their economy. Two chemical plants in western Germa-

ny are closing due to high energy costs, as is another chemical plant in Scotland, because Europe's green policies have made manufacturing there so expensive that it has become uncompetitive. Another company wants to build two data centers in Frankfurt, Germany, but the local energy company told them they would have to wait until 2035 before there would be enough energy to power them. These are just a few of many examples.

So what happened? They were too aggressive and had bad timing.

The EU went all in on the Green

CONTINUED ON PAGE 3



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## Milken Award...

...from page 1

Academy in KCK. A former Pierson science teacher became a Milken Educator while principal at Baldwin High School, making Otto the fourth Milken Educator with ties to the same Turner school, a notable record

in a state with more than 40,000 teachers and principals.

The Milken Family Foundation Educator Awards serve to inspire both current and future quality educators, and more information is online at [mff.org](http://mff.org). Their motto is, "The future belongs to the educated." Teachers like Lexcee Oddo are building that future every day.



## Market Insights... ...from page 2

transition before it had transmission lines (the big lines that transfer energy long distances) in place to move the sporadic burst of energy that wind/solar provide, nor did they have a way to store it for later use. Transmission lines are expensive and time-consuming to build. Dwayne Fulk, CEO of City Utilities of Springfield, MO, states that land acquisition, construction, and everything else needed to put transmission lines in service can take up to four years in the US. The EU literally started shutting down fossil fuel power plants before it had built enough transmission lines to replace the coverage area with green energy. Then, to make things worse, Russia started a war in Ukraine, which caused the cost of gas to dramatically rise and caused interest rates to also increase, making the green energy construction loans more expensive.

The EU put its political beliefs ahead of financial common sense.

The US, China, India, and Brazil added green energy to existing energy grids while also building fossil-fuel power plants; unlike Europe, which chose to switch to green energy immediately. This devotion to ideology without common sense has created energy shortages, which, in turn, are driving up energy costs. Europe largely replaced fossil fuels with solar and wind power, while also imposing heavy carbon taxes and subsidizing green energy, leading to the closure of many fossil-fuel power plants. The UK last year became the first large, industrialized country to shut down all of its coal-fired power plants while also banning any new offshore oil and gas drilling. Denmark has passed laws to eliminate gas for home heating by 2035, yet it has no substitute energy in place.

I'm not saying Europe shouldn't add renewable energy to its grid; it should, but it has to do so where it makes sense. For example, adding wind turbines to Spain's high plateaus or solar in the EU countries around the Mediterranean Sea,

which gets lots of sun. Do so where it makes financial sense and where there are transmission lines to send it to the rest of Europe.

Europe has a mess on its hands because it prioritized climate change over common-sense financial realities. If they had a more balanced approach to their green transition, it wouldn't be crippling its industry, limiting Europe's ability to attract new business like artificial intelligence that brings jobs and tax revenue. We must be good stewards of the earth, but we also must be mindful of how it affects those entrusted to us. I remain neutral on Developed International stocks, but I will continue to watch this developing energy crisis.

I found a balanced approach with my wife's Advent calendar. She likes putting in sweets, and I enjoy eating them. So she is continuing to put chocolates in those little pockets for me, and now we are both happy.

Have a blessed week!

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Sources: 1. Europe's Green Energy Rush Slashed Emissions—and Crippled the Economy By Tom Fairless and Max Colchester

2. [https://www.globalpetrolprices.com/electricity\\_prices/](https://www.globalpetrolprices.com/electricity_prices/)

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# Red Cross urges holiday cooking and decorating safety to prevent home fires

***The Red Cross responds to 20% more home fires during the holiday months***

Home fires increase significantly during the holiday months, often sparked by cooking accidents, unattended candles or unsafe decorations. The American Red Cross of Greater Kansas City and Northwest Missouri urges everyone to take simple steps to stay safe while celebrating—from keeping a close eye on what’s cooking to checking holiday lights and decorations for hazards. By taking precautions now, families can help prevent tragedies and enjoy a safer, happier holiday season.

“One in five people the Red Cross assists after home fires are helped in just the holiday months,” said JoAnn Woody, Executive Director, Red Cross of Greater Kansas City and Northwest Missouri. “Home fires can strike quickly, leaving you with as little as two minutes to escape. Help protect your loved ones by practicing your home fire escape drill until everyone can get out in less than two minutes.”

**COOKING SAFETY TIPS** Follow these safety tips and visit [redcross.org/fire](http://redcross.org/fire) for more information, including a fire escape plan to practice with your family.

- \* Stay in the kitchen when you are frying, grilling or broiling food. If you must leave the kitchen for even a short period of time, turn off the stove.

- \* Use a timer to remind yourself that the stove or oven is on.

- \* Avoid wearing loose clothing or dangling sleeves while cooking.

- \* Keep kids and pets at least three feet away from cooking areas.

- \* Keep anything that can catch on fire — potholders, oven mitts, wooden utensils, paper or plastic bags, food packaging, and towels or curtains — away from your stove top and oven or any other appliance that generates heat.

- \* Clean cooking surfaces on a regular basis to prevent grease buildup.

- \* Consider purchasing a fire extinguisher to keep in your kitchen.

- \* Always check the kitchen before going to bed or leaving home to make sure all stoves, ovens and small

appliances are turned off.

**HOLIDAY DECORATING AND HEATING SAFETY** December is the peak month for candle fires — which cause about 20 home fires a day on average in the U.S. — and heating equipment remains one of the leading causes of home fires.

- \* Provide at least three feet of space for all heating equipment. This is critical because most home heating fire tragedies occur when flammable items like furniture, rugs and drapes are too close.

- \* In addition, never leave space heaters unattended — as they’re involved in most fatal home heating fires.

- \* If you must use a space heater, place it on a level, hard and non-flammable surface, such as a ceramic tile floor. Don’t place it on rugs and carpets, or near bedding and drapes. And turn it off every time you leave the room or go to sleep.

- \* If you must use candles, keep them away from anything that could burn, and place them out of reach from pets and children. Never leave burning candles unattended.

- \* You can also help keep your family safe by testing your smoke alarms monthly and practicing your home fire escape plan until everyone can escape in two minutes or less.

- \* Visit [redcross.org/fire](http://redcross.org/fire) for more information, including an escape plan to practice with your family. You can also download our free Emergency app (search “American Red Cross” in app stores).

Smoke alarms save lives. Install a smoke alarm near your kitchen, on each level of your home, near sleeping areas, and inside and outside bedrooms if you sleep with doors closed. Use the test button to check it each month. Replace all batteries at least once a year. If you cannot afford to purchase smoke alarms or are physically unable to install one, the Red Cross may be able to help. Contact your local Red Cross for more information

**HOME FIRE CAMPAIGN SAVES LIVES** Since October 2014,

the Red Cross Home Fire Campaign, working with community partners, has saved at least 2,489 lives by educating families about fire safety, helping them create escape plans

and installing free smoke alarms in high-risk areas across the country. To learn more about the campaign and how you can get involved, visit [redcross.org/homefires](http://redcross.org/homefires).



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