Connecting with the tribe

By Hilary Lewis

Special to The Chronicle

Every travel experience has the potential for discovering other Jews. The pay off is in playing "Jewish Geography" once connected. It seems that Jews are all related or know someone who knows someone that we went to school or camp with. Needless to say, those who have lived in different cities are even a greater wellspring of connections. Teens who have been to a youth movement convention become virtual conduits for parental reconnecting. Almost everyone who goes to Israel greets familiar faces on Ben Jehudah Street in Jerusalem. Standing in line for a latte or to change a flight often curiously leads to conversations with members of the "tribe" who know or work with friends, relatives or acquaintances.

My husband strikes up rich conversations with total strangers who turn out to enjoy playing "Jewish Geography" with him. On a recent cruise, I took the lead in this pursuit by getting to know Mrs. Margolin from Connecticut as we stood in the endless check-in line. Not only did she know Kansas Citians, but her husband dabbles in magic as does mine. For the rest of the week, we just kept running into this "active in their synagogue" couple.

Schlepping up the hill in Saint Thomas allowed us to greet other Jewish travelers in the quaint synagogue with the sand floor. At this juncture, the local rabbi served as the spark plug for tidbits of historical connecting. This pleasant interlude provided insight into Jewish life in the Caribbean, as well as the traumas of travelers from other parts of the world. A visiting Israeli couple advised my husband not to wear his Jewish emblem T-shirt for safety reasons.

At 5 p.m. on Fridays, Jewish travelers on cruise ships are invited to gather for Kabbalat Shabbat. A gorgeous challah, kosher wine and 10 different printed services welcome the seagoing congregants. Young and old introduce themselves and trade informative information which leads to, what else, a quick game of "Jewish Geography." On our recent 40th wedding anniversary cruise, we learned from the traveling Houstonians that Rabbi Daniel Horwitz (formerly rabbi of Congregation Ohev Sholom in Kansas City) was now an assistant rabbi at a large conservative Houston congregation and that one woman's daughter was seriously considering going to KU because she heard that there is a great Jewish campus life. To the mother of the KU Hillel director, me, that was very exciting and affirming information. We eventually blended our voices in familiar Debby Fried melodies and then went off to dine, gaze at the marvelous sunset, and feel the pleasure of connecting with other members of the tribe in prayer.

As a child, my mother read the phonebook in each town we visited looking for the number and locations of Jewish institutions and places of interest.

A friend, who is now planning a trip to China, is using the Internet to discover Jewish places of interest to visit. Obviously, the methodology has grown more sophisticated but the result will be the same. Jews are on the look out for one another. We cleverly assure the "game" by identifying places which have the potential for "tribe" encounters.

It is exciting to think that the Jewish people are all one big family. Chance meetings or at planned destinations, we just start conversations with strangers, who turn out to be the best friend of the second cousin that we knew from our summer in Israel or Hillel, etc., etc.

Hilary Lewis is principal of the Community High School of Jewish Studies, a project of CAJE, the education arm of the Jewish Federation.
State OKs STAR bond district

JACK WEINSTEIN

A proposed sales tax and revenue bond development in Olathe got a much-needed blessing Tuesday night.

After the Kansas secretary of commerce approved the designation of a STAR bond district at 119th Street and Renner Road, the City Council officially created the district.

Ben Hart, the city's strategic financial management director, said the move doesn't mean the state has approved STAR bonds for the project, which could include extensions of the University of Kansas' Natural History and Spencer Art museums.

"It's the first step in a very long process," Hart said. "We'll be back before you a number of times."

STAR bonds are state-approved tax incentives paid for by revenue generated from the sales taxes at a development. Typically, STAR bonds are granted for entertainment and tourism districts that expect to draw visitors to the area.

Developers seek more than $140 million in STAR bond financing to help offset the cost of the approximately $347 million project.

A STAR bond district never has been created in Johnson County.

See DEVELOPER, Page 3A
Developer will prepare final plan

From Page 1A

The secretary of commerce conditionally had approved a STAR bond district a few years ago at 119th and Renner for an arena across the street from where Bass Pro Shops now resides.

Tim Danneberg, city spokesman, said the state's conditions weren't viable for Olathe, so that project didn't move forward.

John Petersen, an attorney for Indianapolis-based developer MaeGrace LLC, said although the proposal is in its early stages, plans have called for 150,000 to 175,000 square feet of museum space, which may include the Museum of World Treasures, now in Wichita. The developer also hopes the more than 680,000 square feet of retail space — including Bass Pro Shops — would create a destination shopping development. A 225-room hotel and some commercial development have been included in the proposal, Peterson said.

The next steps include a redevelopment plan and a STAR bond plan that the city must approve before it goes to the secretary of commerce, Hart said.

A final proposal must be submitted to the secretary of commerce within 90 days, but the developer doesn't want to wait that long, Petersen said. He said MaeGrace hopes to return the proposal to the city for approval in 30 to 45 days.

"We want to keep it moving," he said.

If STAR bonds are approved, the city cannot apply sales tax revenue generated at Bass Pro Shops before the district was created toward the project.

— Contact Jack Weinstein at 764-2211, ext. 130, or jweinstein@theolahenews.com.
Grad studies effects of texting in car

ARLEY HOSKIN

Friends don’t let friends text and drive.

Olathe South High School graduate Erik Nelson wants get this message out — but not while he is driving.

Nelson, who will be a senior at the University of Kansas this year, received a research grant from the university’s honors program to study the effects of text messaging while driving.

Nelson plans to graduate next spring with a degree in cognitive psychology and wants to study psychology at the graduate level.

He started his research last fall with a survey of 328 university students.

“The most interesting thing about it is that it is relatively unstudied,” Nelson’s said.

Nelson’s survey results revealed that 100 percent of participants talk on cell phones while driving, at least occasionally. About 50 percent of respondents who said they thought talking on the phone while driving is dangerous said they still answer the phone every time it rings when they drive.

See SOUTH, Page 3A
South graduate does study on texting

From Page 1A

"There is a pressure to be available," Nelson said.

The results showed 72 percent of respondents send
text messages while driving.

"That 72 percent is pretty surprising," Nelson said.

Text messaging allows individuals to use cell phone
buttons to type messages
that are sent to other cell phones.

"It's a relatively new function," Nelson said.

Nelson will continue his research this fall by using a
driving simulator to measure
how alert drivers are
while sending text messages.

Professor Paul Atchley
is assisting Nelson with
the research. Atchley has
researched the effects of cell
phone usage and driving.

He said most people do not
realize how much talking
on cell phones impairs the
ability to drive.

"People using cell phones
actually perform worse than
drunk drivers," Atchley
said.

Nelson admits that he has
been in situations where he
has used his phone while
driving, but he said he never
sends text messages while
behind the wheel.

Nelson said he hopes the
results of his research can
be applied, whether by policy-makers or drivers.

"Everybody knows it's
dangerous, but they may
not know how dangerous," he said.

— Contact Arley Hoskin at
764-2211, ext. 133.
Developer, city have 90 days to submit plan

From Page 1A

The decision also is planned.

Adding the Museum of World Treasures, which now is in Wichita, has been proposed, but Danneberg said Kerr was concerned about that component. Kerr also wants to discuss how the funding would be applied relative to what already has been built at the site, Danneberg said.

Bass Pro Shops opened in February across the street from the where the museums would be. If STAR bonds are approved for the project, the city could not apply sales tax revenue generated at the store before STAR bond approval toward the project.

Danneberg said if the council moves forward with this project, it likely will have ample discussions with Kerr to make sure the project is in the best position to secure STAR bond funding.

A number of general conditions also must be met for STAR bond approval, said Bob North, chief attorney for the secretary of commerce.

The project plan must include a description of the project, a feasibility study proving its financial viability that includes sales tax projections and other sources of revenue, a market study and a marketing study, North said. He added that more conditions needed to be met.

"From a certain perspective, we can’t say what we need or want because each one of these projects is evaluated individually," he said. "...It’s probably not appropriate to discuss that because each project is going to have its own characteristics.

"It’s not as simple as do this, this and this, and you’ll get approved for STAR bonds.

The city previously had applied for STAR bonds at the same location for an arena. North said that then Secretary of Commerce Howard Fricke had specific concerns about some components of the project.

In a Sept. 15, 2004, letter to Mayor Michael Cope- land, Fricke asked that the city receive several written commitments from retailers. Specific commitments including Bass Pro Shops
occupying more than 125,000 square feet, Sears occupying 189,000 square feet and ESPN SportZone occupying at least 10,000 square feet.

Fricke also asked that a written agreement be secured with one of two management companies for the arena.

If those and other minor conditions were met, Fricke would have approved $50 million in STAR bond funding for the project.

Danneberg said Tuesday that some of those conditions weren't viable for Olathe.

John Petersen, an attorney for MaeGrace, said the city and developer have 90 days to submit the STAR bond project plan to Kerr. He added that he hopes it happens sooner.

— Contact Jack Weinstein at 764-2211, ext. 130, or jweinstein@theolathenews.com.
Dear Editor:

Audio-Reader Network, the radio reading service for the blind and visually impaired in Kansas and Missouri, would like the citizens of Wyandotte County to know how grateful we are to *The Wyandotte West* for donating a newspaper subscription to be read on air to people who are no longer able to read for themselves.

We read the local news to people who suffer from macular degeneration, vision complications due to stroke or diabetes and other eye ailments. The donation of the paper means that we can serve even more people, free of charge, so that even though they have sight issues, they are still in touch with their community. Mill levy increases, cards of thanks, anniversaries, obituaries, letters to the editor and other local news you can't get any other way is read via closed circuit radio or on the Internet.

We wanted to express the gratitude of our staff, volunteers and thousands of listeners to *The Wyandotte West* and give people who may not be aware of our services the opportunity to learn about them. You can visit our website at reader.ku.edu or you can call toll free at 1-800-772-8898.

Thanks for helping us share the gift of sight through sound.

Peggy Sampson
Outreach Coordinator
Audio-Reader Network
University of Kansas
Letter to the editor

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Peggy Sampson
Outreach Coordinator
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University of Kansas
Local students attend KU music camps

More than 380 junior high and high school students from Kansas and 16 other states arrived at the University of Kansas this summer to attend one of four Midwestern Music Camps.

Those attending from the Kansas City, Kansas, area were Anthony Oden, Harmon High School, Marching Band Leadership Camp; and Erika Jackson, Piper Middle School, Marching Band Leadership Camp.

KU's School of Fine Arts and Department of Music and Dance offer the camps. David Clemmer, director of athletic bands and assistant band director at KU, leads the camps.

The camps provide instrumental, vocal and keyboard students a variety of musical experiences, including opportunities to participate in full symphony orchestras, choirs, bands, jazz ensembles and music classes.

This year's camps and dates were: Junior High Band and Orchestra Camp, June 10-16; Senior High Band, Orchestra and Choir Institute, June 17-23; Marching Band Leadership Camp, July 8-12; and Jazz Workshop, July 8-13.

KU's Midwestern Music Camp was created in 1935 by former band director Russell L. Wiley. Under Wiley's direction, the camp became the second largest and second oldest music camp in the United States. The camp was often visited by some of the world's most well-known conductors and artists, such as Andre Previn, Percy Grainger, Sir Vivian Dunn and Carmen Dragon.
Five Sumner graduates named Dole Scholars

The Dole Institute of Politics at the University of Kansas recently announced 128 new Sen. Robert J. Dole Public Service Scholars for the 2007-08 academic year.

The recipients, all 2007 Kansas high schools graduates, represent the largest class of Dole scholars since the program began in 2005. Funded by NASA, the scholarships are distributed among the state's four congressional districts to ensure the broadest statewide participation.

The scholarship program began with a federal grant that funded 40 scholarships each in 2005 and in 2006. With the addition of the 128 scholarships awarded this year, the total number of Dole scholars comes to 208.

The new scholars will enroll this fall at one of the six Kansas Board of Regents universities or Washburn University in Topeka. Regents universities are KU, Emporia State University, Fort Hays State University, Kansas State University, Pittsburg State University and Wichita State University.

Aligned with the primary mission of the Dole Institute, the scholarship program encourages young Kansans to get involved in politics, government and community service.

"Dole scholars represent the best among Kansas high school graduates," said Barbara Ballard, director of the scholarship program and associate director of the Dole Institute. "Dole scholars are required to engage in 100 hours of civic activities annually. We hope that their experiences will influence them throughout their lives to become involved citizens."

Recipients receive a $1,000 scholarship, renewable for three years, and commit to completing 100 hours of civic activities annually. Kansas high school seniors who have volunteered in community and public service in their communities and who have a cumulative grade-point average of 3.0 or higher on a 4.0 scale are eligible.

The following Kansas City, Kansas, students were named Dole Scholars: Jose Leal, Sumner Academy of Arts and Sciences, who will attend Kansas State University as an undecided major; Ashley Riley, Sumner Academy, who will attend the University of Kansas as a nursing major; LeAndrea Wilson, Sumner Academy, a pre-medicine major who will attend the University of Kansas; Laura Hochman, Sumner Academy, an education major who will attend the University of Kansas; and Javier Jones, Sumner Academy, who will attend Kansas State University as an engineering major.
Piper graduate receives grant award from KU

Hannah Marie Nusz, sophomore in African and African-American studies at the University of Kansas, was one of 28 undergraduate students awarded a grant of about $1,200 from the university’s honors program for work on a research project.

The Piper High School graduate’s research project is titled “Evaluation of Case Study AIDS Clinic and AIDS Awareness Strategies in Uganda.” Her advisor for the project is Alice Lieberman, professor of social welfare.

Nusz is currently in Uganda working at an AIDS clinic teaching children afflicted with the disease. She is scheduled to return to Kansas City, Kansas, in early August.

“The Undergraduate Research Award competition is a testimony to KU’s longstanding commitment to provide undergraduates with a first-rate education. The one-on-one collaboration between these students and their mentors embodies learning in its purest form,” said Mark Nesbitt-Daly, associate director of the honors program and co-chair of the University Honors Council Research Committee.

The awards program, now in its 50th year, supports original research by undergraduates from the Lawrence campus and are provided by special funds made available by the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences, Office of the Vice Provost for Research and the Office of the Provost.

The University Honors Program provides enriched educational opportunities to KU’s most academically talented, motivated and promising students through honors courses, programs and tutorials. Stanley Lombardo, professor of classics, directs the program.

Members of the University Honors Council selected the students using criteria such as the quality of the proposal, the student’s academic record and ability to complete the proposed research project, the project’s potential contribution to knowledge and the educational value of the research to the student.
Foundation awards grants to agencies in Wyandotte County

At its July board meeting, the Health Care Foundation of Greater Kansas City (HCF) approved five Safety Net grants totaling $828,000 to benefit residents of Wyandotte County.

HCF received 56 grant applications totaling approximately $10.8 million. All grant applications were reviewed by staff and outside reviewers. In total, HCF approved about $5.7 million in Safety Net grants to 39 organizations that provide services to improve access to quality health care for the uninsured and underserved, including the following five grants to organizations in Wyandotte County:

- $83,000 to the Kansas University Endowment Association for its JayDoc Free Clinic to fund general operating expenses and allow expansion to a third night of operation;
- $100,000 to KU Health Partners, Inc., for operating expenses for the Silver City Health Center;
- $150,000 to Riverview Health Services, Inc., to connect clients with health care services and provide health literacy services for the uninsured and underserved;
- $315,000 to Southwest Boulevard Family Health Care Services of Greater Kansas City, the Duschens Clinic and the Turner House Children's Clinic to enhance the collective capacity to deliver medical care for the underserved poor in the urban core of Wyandotte County;
- $180,000 to the Unified Government Public Health Department and the Kansas Children's Service League for Healthy Families Wyandotte and Healthy Families Johnson, which provide intensive in-home services to pregnant women and new parents of at-risk infants.

"HCF is committed to making health care services available to everyone in our community," Gurnie Gunter, HCF board chair, said. "These agencies fulfill a critical role in providing health care to some of our most vulnerable citizens and we are proud to support their efforts with these Safety Net grants."

For more information, visit the HCF website at www.healthcare4kc.org.