Now a KU film professor, Willmott praises art cinemas

By DAVID CLOUSTON
Salina Journal

Given the tools to film on their own — small, moderately priced digital video cameras — and a place for the results to be seen — YouTube, and other video-sharing sites on the Internet, what kinds of subjects might attract would-be independent filmmakers, Kevin Willmott was asked Sunday.

It's not the tools that make the storyteller, Willmott replied to Salina native and film professor at the University of Kansas, "And what sells quick, and what sells easily, and what's got a good hook. That's the kind of the movies you see in theaters in the malls."

Willmott was the attraction for about 40 people who gathered Sunday to hear him discuss America's film industry, in conjunction with the celebration of the 10-year anniversary of the Art Center Cinema in downtown Salina.

The graduate of the former Marymount College is best known as the writer and creator of the film satire “CSA: Confederate States of America.” The film, released nationally last year, is a parody of a historical documentary on what followed after the South won the Civil War.

That his film obtained national distribution after being screened at Utah's famed Sundance Film Festival for independently produced movies shows the importance that similar venues, such as Salina's art cinema, can have by showcasing thought-provoking "adult" fare, he said.

See WILLMOTT, Page A2
The biggest challenge facing independent filmmakers is mainstream Hollywood blockbusters "kind of making us dumber," by being targeted at the biggest box office market — teens and young adults, said Willmott.

Critical of cable TV

And the same is true of cable television networks, he said. Black Entertainment Television, better known as BET, has come under fire in the wake of radio host Don Imus's racist comments about Rutgers' women's basketball team, for its similarly saucy hip-hop culture videos.

"Black people use the word 'nigger' with each other based in the fact that it started when we were slaves. People called us that and we started calling each other that. It's part of self-hatred that was instilled in us through slavery.

"When black people used that term with each other, there were no white people around us. That became popularized through segregation. We can say 'nigger' and 'ho,' because white people weren't (figuratively) in the room," Willmott said. "Well, rappers brought white people into the room.

"Who listens to rap music? It's not black kids. It's suburban white kids," he said.

"They don't know the history and they think they can use the word. My kids constantly tell me about how they're having to educate their friends at school and say 'You can't say that.'"

Women remain commodified in hip-hop videos today much as they were commodified during slavery, in Willmott's view, and the black community hasn't been able to stop it, "because it's a billion, billion-dollar industry," he said.

"The reason I put the pressure on the black community is in the end, we have to be the ones to stop making the music," Willmott said. "We have to get the conscience to say 'I'm not going to be in that movie. I'm not going to write that movie, I'm not going to make that movie,'" he said.

Next up for Willmott is a proposed biographical film about basketball great Wilt Chamberlain's days at KU. Work on the film is scheduled to start next summer, he said. And Kareem Abdul-Jabbar has hired Willmott to make a documentary out of Abdul-Jabbar's book, "On the Shoulders of Giants: My Journey Through the Harlem Renaissance" which chronicles black culture in New York City after World War I, along with Harlem's basketball team, the New York Renaissance Big Five. The team, in 1939, became the first black team to win a world professional title in any sport, paving the way for the integration of the ABL, the forerunner of the NBA.

Reporter David Clouston can be reached at 822-1403 or by e-mail at sjclouston@saljournal.com.
Jackson to receive KU’s top award
Land Institute founder recognized for helping humanity
By TIM UNRUH
Salina Journal

Wes Jackson is among five recipients of the University of Kansas and KU Alumni Association Distinguished Service Citation.

“I’m pleased about it, honored and thankful,” he said. “I didn’t see this one coming.”

The awards are given to alumni and university friends who are judged to have had the courage to change the world around them, according to an article in Kansas Alumni magazine.

Nominations must have four letters of reference. They are considered based on what they’ve done to contribute to the “betterment of humanity,” said Rachel Nyp, staff writer for the KU Alumni Association.

“It’s the highest award that we give. We don’t give out honorary degrees, so it serves as that,” she said.

Jackson, who completed a master’s degree at KU in 1960, founded the Land Institute, 2440 E. Water Well, in 1976. The Land Institute is dedicated to developing natural systems agriculture.

The goal is to turn the major crops, such as wheat, corn, grain sorghum and sunflowers, into perennial plants that don’t have to be replanted every growing season.

Accomplishing that milestone would help cure soil erosion, fossil fuel dependence and chemical contamination of land and water, Jackson said.

“It’s slow, but we’re making strides. None of the so-called environmental problems have any quick fixes,” he said.

Jackson, 70, is helped by a staff of 23 year-round employees that swells to 30 or more in the summer.

“We’ve got a great group of people around here,” he said.

Distinguished Service Citation winners are chosen in the fall by a committee from the KU chancellor’s office and the alumni and endowment associations. Winners receive their awards May 18 at the All-University Supper. They will be announced during commencement on May 20.

Reporter Tim Unruh can be reached at 822-1419 or by e-mail at sjunruh@saljournal.com.
Governor seeks more money for deferred maintenance

TOPEKA (AP) — Gov. Kathleen Sebelius wants legislators to spend nearly $63 million as a first installment on long-needed repairs to state universities. Legislative budget chiefs say there will be additional money, but how much remains up in the air.

The deferred maintenance money was part of the governor’s request presented Tuesday for an additional $203 million in the upcoming budget year. The money would be added to the final budget bill lawmakers will consider when they return April 25 from their annual break.

Legislators already have sent the governor the $12.3 billion main budget to finance state government after July 1.

The governor’s request includes $47.7 million as a one-time appropriation to address the top priority needs on seven campuses, plus $15 million for unspecified maintenance projects.

“Earlier in this legislative session, I proposed a more comprehensive plan for dealing with university deferred maintenance. However, neither my plan, nor any other, has been enacted,” Sebelius said in her request to the House Appropriations and Senate Ways and Means committees.

Sebelius also asked for an additional $56.8 million for the current year, with most of that for growth in social service programs and to repay some Medicaid funds to the federal government.

The House panel began working on the budget bill Tuesday and the Senate committee will begin work Wednesday. The final version will be worked out by negotiators from the two chambers.

The governor and the Kansas Board of Regents have urged legislators to address the backlog of $663 million worth of projects.

Budget experts met this week to review state revenue and said that while the economy is in good shape, legislators don’t have large surpluses to take care of all funding requests, including state buildings, expanding social services or making huge tax cuts.

The question is what legislators eventually will do with the governor’s request for the campuses.

“I have no idea at this time how much of it will stay, but it probably will be in that ballpark,” said House Appropriations Committee Chairman Brian Chain.
Committee Chairman Sharon Schwartz, R-Washington.

Schwartz said she wants legislators to have more oversight of how the money will be spent.

"There ought to be policies approved by the Legislature rather than a line item in the budget," she said. "It's a big enough issue that the full Legislature needs to weigh in on it."

Senate Ways and Means Committee Chairman Dwayne Umbarger said deferred maintenance will be a serious contender, but just how much it will remain depends on what legislators decide.

"I'm fairly confident that we are going to designate significant resources to deal with deferred maintenance," said Umbarger, R-Thayer. "It is always the process of prioritizing and seeing where the dollars are most needed."

Umbarger said universities are the best judges of their most pressing needs.

"The institutions are more capable of prioritizing their list than we under the dome. I want to make sure we don't replace their knowledge with our perceptions," he said.

The issue of deferred maintenance at the various campuses has been a lingering one, with legislators doing little to make a significant dent in the backlog.

The last major legislative effort to deal with deferred maintenance was in 1996, when legislators authorized about $164 million in bonds to pay for repairs in a program dubbed "Crumbling Classrooms."

Earlier this year, Sebelius outlined a plan for providing $575 million to universities over six years, but the idea was a nonstarter among most legislators.
Response team trains for local rescues

BY JON RUHLEN
PARSONS SUN

The sound of power saws and hammers echoed down the street from 25th and Stevens on Tuesday, but the group of men in hard hats with industrial equipment were not rebuilding the condemned house at 2501 Stevens. Instead, they were firefighters and EMTs from throughout Southeast Kansas, learning how to shore up a building that has collapsed.

The training was part of nearly 100 hours of instruction that the 24 firefighters and EMS personnel from six agencies have been attending in recent weeks. On Friday, the nearly three weeks of training will culminate in a practical exercise in Parsons, during which the emergency personnel will put the sum of their instruction to use in a real-life situation.

It's called the Southeast Kansas Regional Response Team and it represents a new approach to disaster situations in the region. The volunteers have received training on rope rescues, trench rescues, enclosed space rescues and this week are learning about structural collapse rescues in Parsons.

The 24-man team includes firefighters from Parsons, Chanute, Iola, Coffeyville and Neodesha and EMS personnel from Labette Health. The training, conducted by the Kansas Fire Rescue Training Institute through the University of Kansas, has taken place in Chanute and Bartlett as well as Parsons.

The team is funded by a grant from the Department of Homeland Security. Once the training is completed, the team will be certified on a level that qualifies it to work with other emergency response teams in the state as well as federal agencies.

So what did local emergency personnel do before forming the team?

"We would do the best we can but whether it was done correctly is another issue," said Parsons Fire Chief Tim Hay.

Hay worked with emergency officials from Labette Health and Chanute to apply for the grant and get the team started. He said the process began in September 2006 and that the regional emphasis is necessary for large-scale disasters.

"The regional approach will be used more and more in the future," he said. "We don't have enough people, enough money, enough equipment to do it all alone."

Matt Miller, a lieutenant with the Chanute Fire Department, said recent tornadoes in Parsons...
and Girard were good examples of what a regional response team would be used for.

"The greatest danger in Southeast Kansas is weather-related," he said, which is why it is important to have a regional team. In a large-scale situation, the resources of one department are often inadequate for the scope of work that must be done.

Jay Hawks, a firefighter with the Parsons Fire Department, said the different training has been valuable but of equal importance is the chance for the entire team to work together. "It really lets us work as a team," he said. "It's easy to say you can do this or that, but until you crawl into a bad spot you don't know."

The value of including different departments has the added benefit of bringing varied experience to the table.

"It's good to step back and let everyone work," Hawks said. "If somebody comes up with an idea and it sounds safe, we'll try it."

On Tuesday morning, after the team spent the morning learning how to shore up collapsed walls to rescue people trapped inside, instructor John Troyer reviewed some of the key points before breaking for lunch.

"So, what do you think about slope floor shoring?" Troyer asked the participants. "It's a pain in the butt, isn't it? It's a pain in the butt, and there's a lot of stuff to remember."

Troyer encouraged the men to continually refresh their training on the topic and to have reference materials available when they go on scene.

Troyer is a member of the Sedgwick County Fire Department and participated in rescue work at the DeBruce Grain Elevator in 1998 after an explosion killed four people.

Troyer pointed to the incident as an example of the importance of a regional team to respond to disasters.

"At DeBruce ... we waited 26 hours for the FEMA team from Lincoln," he said, adding that the survivability rate of people in collapsed structures drops from 80 percent to 35 percent after one day.

"It puts trained responders on scene faster than ever before," Troyer said.

Rick Deibert, who oversees the training for the Fire Rescue Training Institute, said the program is in its infancy and is a new idea in emergency response in the state. However, the experience of larger metropolitan areas such as Wichita and Topeka has underscored the importance of such teams and the Southeast Kansas personnel are picking it up quickly.

"They've really come together from many different departments, including fire and EMS," Deibert said.

"With training, the guys know the hazards and it makes sure rescuers stay safe and do the most good for the victim."

The fact that the team is made up of several agencies could lead to problems with cohesion, but Troyer said the training has been remarkably free of territorial battles.

"They're working together like they've worked together forever," he said. "If they have an incident next week, they'll be ready."

Scott Kleinschmidt, a firefighter with the Wichita Fire Department and an instructor, agreed.

"Basically, what (the team) gets out of this is that the region will be at the capability of the other five regions in the state and will be used as a resource statewide," he said.

That means Parsons or Lola personnel could be called to a grain elevator explosion in Wichita or a tornado in Hoisington. It also means that other regional response teams can help in Southeast Kansas if necessary.

"This is just the first step in what has to be a long-term plan," Kleinschmidt said. "It has to be an additional resource in the state to make sure we can handle man-made or natural disasters."
Forgoing carefree getaways during KU's spring break March 18-25, 68 University of Kansas students, including Phillip Manning of Goff and Kelly Rockey of Hiawatha, spent their time volunteering at locations in the District of Columbia, Florida, Illinois, Louisiana, North and South Carolina, Utah and Wisconsin.

Manning, son of Joan and Roger Haverkamp a sophomore in Anthropology, BA, and Rockey, daughter of Phil Rockey, a sophomore in Strategic Communications, BSJ, participated in Sophomore Emergency Communities, Buras, La.

The students worked with agencies that address such issues as animal rescue, urban homelessness, conservation, health care, linguistics, environmental preservation, hurricane relief, education and help for people with disabilities.

KU's student-run Alternative Spring Breaks program offers students a unique opportunity to make service part of their university educational experience. After students are selected for the program, they are required to attend the Special Projects in the Community course.

An Alternative Spring Breaks project counts as one honors unit for the University Honors Program, which now requires students who want to graduate with honors to complete one or two honors units outside the classroom. The program costs participants $225 ($175 for site leaders) and covers their transportation, housing and meals at the sites.

The site at which Manning and Rockey volunteered works to rehabilitate communities affected by Hurricane Katrina and Hurricane Rita by providing nutritional, logistical and emotional support to residents returning to their communities to rebuild their lives. KU students worked at a community center, café and distribution center in Buras in Plaquemines Parish near New Orleans where Katrina first made landfall.

Other sites visited include Best Friends Animal Sanctuary, Chicago Cares, Give Kids the World, Kettle Moraine State Park, National Coalition for the Homeless, Newcomer Center, South Carolina School for the Deaf and Blind, Teach for America and Tree Utah.
Phillipe Manning, a sophomore at KU, was one of a group of students who volunteered at Buras, LA during spring break. Manning is shown in the back row, second from right.

Manning spends spring break as volunteer

Sixty-eight University of Kansas students have returned to school after spending spring break on service-learning projects at Alternative Spring Breaks sites in the District of Columbia, Florida, Illinois, Louisiana, North Carolina, South Carolina, Utah and Wisconsin.

Phillipe Manning, son of Joan and Roger Haverkamp, Goff, a sophomore at KU, spent his break volunteering in Buras, LA.

The students worked March 18-25 with agencies at 10 locations that address such issues as animal rescue, urban homelessness, conservation, health care, linguistics, environmental preservation, hurricane relief, education and help for people with disabilities.

KU’s student-run Alternative Spring Breaks program offers students a unique opportunity to make service part of their university educational experience. After students are selected for the program, they are required to attend the Special Projects in the Community course. If they complete all course requirements, they can earn two college credit hours.

An Alternative Spring Breaks project counts as one honors unit for the University Honors Program, which now requires students who want to graduate with honors to complete one or two honors units outside the classroom.
Universities mull security ramifications

By Taylor Atkins
THE CAPITAL-JOURNAL

Classes were canceled at Virginia Tech in the wake of Monday’s shooting. They have just begun for campus security officers across the country.

Todd Cohen, director of government and university relations at The University of Kansas, said KU, like most universities in the United States, would look at the strengths and weaknesses of Virginia Tech’s emergency plan to perfect its own.

“It’s an unfortunate learning opportunity for us,” Cohen said. “A lot of campuses will be reviewing their own security system after what happened at Virginia Tech. It’s such a tragedy. The best we can do is learn from it.”

Hundreds of questions were raised Monday afternoon as news spread of the multiple deaths at Virginia Tech. How long did it take to lock the campus down? What communication methods were used to warn the students? How many officers were needed to contain the situation?

Dean Forster, former Topeka police chief and now director of university police at Washburn University, said he had at least one officer glued to the television all day to take notes and find answers.

“I’ve got one captain in there now watching, taking in everything,” Forster said Monday afternoon. “We’ll be looking in the next couple weeks at what went right and what went wrong. We’ll apply everything to our own

Please see UNIVERSITIES, Page 6A

Continued from Page 1A

system here.”

Kansas State University, KU and Washburn each have an emergency reaction plan specific to their campus, all of which depend on communication. Spokespersons for the three universities said their plans rely on an open link between campus security and local law enforcement.

Though Virginia Tech has about 19,000 more students than Washburn, Forster said preparing for disasters is similar. Whether 7,000 students or 27,000, universities have to prepare for the worst.

“Size doesn’t make any difference. It’s just the same problem on a larger or smaller scale,” he said. “We have 14 full-time officers and 7 part-time. But with all the officers we have, we couldn’t cover the entire campus. What you have to do is have plans in place to handle any situation.”

Washburn police practiced their emergency response in September with a disaster simulation. Forster said Homeland Security Agents graded them well on the exercise, and he is confident in the university’s ability to handle emergencies.

Washburn had an annual emergency procedure review scheduled for Wednesday. Forster said information from the Virginia Tech shootings would be on the agenda.

At KU, Cohen said security officers are focusing on what communication methods Virginia Tech used to reach students.

One idea KU is looking at, he said, is a loud system, which Virginia Tech had recently installed on their Blacksburg campus. If it benefited the school during the shootings, Cohen said it would be considered as an addition to KU’s other security devices.

He said it is important to not rely on just one system.

“You need multiple layers of security,” Cohen said. “Whether it’s a loud system or e-mails or text messages, we’re looking for the best ways to reach the campus in an emergency. How can we communicate the most effectively?”

Cohen said the Virginia Tech shootings also served as a reminder of how important a campus’ mental health facilities are in preventing some emergency situations.

“We have free mental health care available to the students right on campus. There is an ongoing campaign to tell students they can get help if they need it,” Cohen said. “Unfortunately, sometimes these situations could have been avoided if students had help.”

Neither Washburn nor KU initiated any immediate emergency plans after hearing news from Virginia Tech. Forster said copycat shootings weren’t a concern.

“The shooting made us pay attention, but we didn’t initiate a plan,” he said. “We don’t want to unduly concern students. This is an open campus. We don’t want to stymie the learning experience.”

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Mulally details future focus on small cars

By Michael Hooper
THE CAPITAL-JOURNAL

LAWRENCE — While pickups and sport utility vehicles have been the bread and butter of Ford Motor Co. for decades, Alan Mulally, Ford president and chief executive officer, sees a future that includes more fuel-efficient cars.

Ford is preparing to launch a new B-sized car, which is a super mini-sized vehicle, slightly bigger than the Smart Car, which is a popular vehicle in Europe and is now selling in North America.

With fuel prices again approaching $3 per gallon, consumers have moved away from bigger vehicles, dramatically hurting sales of Ford trucks and SUVs, Mulally said.

Ford, which lost a record $12.7 billion in 2006, is pushing its smaller vehicles, such as the Focus and Fusion, which is challenging the Honda Accord and Toyota Camry.

Mulally, a Lawrence native and University of Kansas graduate, spent time Monday in Lawrence he drives a different Ford vehicle to work every day so he can get a feel for what the company is manufacturing and selling.

“Progress on this is how Ford and I will be judged,” he said.

Mulally said he was impressed with a group of KU engineering students who asked many questions about business.

“I wanted to validate and encourage them,” he said. “They are on their way.”

He encouraged students to be technically competent in their core studies and dedicate themselves to a lifetime of learning. He also encouraged students to learn to work together, be respectful of other ideas and facilitate a rich dialogue.

He said Ford was on track with its massive restructuring to return the company to profitability.

The company is cutting 14,000 white-collar jobs in addition to the 38,000 hourly employees that accepted buyouts and early retirement packages. Ford wants to reduce its total North American workforce by 29 percent to about 92,000 by the end of 2008 and close 16 plants.

Ford has mortgaged its assets to borrow up to $23.4 billion to fund the restructuring plan and cover the billions in losses expected until 2009. The company expects to burn up $17 billion in cash during the next two years. Mulally said the company would be profitable by 2009.

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Alan Mulally, president and chief executive officer of Ford Motor Co., encourages University of Kansas students on Monday afternoon in Lawrence to dedicate themselves to a lifetime of learning. Mulally, a KU graduate, was in town to speak in the Anderson Chandler Lecture Series.
The Capita I-Journal
The Dole Institute of Politics at The University of Kansas will host a Governors’ Roundtable with the former governors of Missouri, Mississippi and West Virginia at 7:30 p.m. Thursday.

The program is free and open to the public.

Former Missouri Gov. Bob Holden, this semester’s Democratic Fellow at the Dole Institute, will moderate a discussion with former Mississippi Gov. Ronnie Musgrove and former West Virginia Gov. Bob Wise. They will discuss the interplay of politics and policy in crises they have faced.

Kansas Gov. Kathleen Sebelius will join the former governors for Holden’s afternoon study group at 4 p.m. at the Institute.

The Dole Institute of Politics is dedicated to promoting public service, civic engagement and politics. It is near the Lied Center on KU’s west campus.
Early music groups perform tonight

By Bill Blankenship
THE CAPITAL-JOURNAL

The Gothic architecture of Grace Episcopal Cathedral will provide the venue for a concert tonight of ensembles who specialize in medieval, Renaissance and Baroque music.

The University of Kansas Instrumental and Vocal Collegium Musicum will perform for about an hour starting at 7:30 p.m. today in the cathedral, 701 S.W. 8th, as part of its Great Spaces Music & Arts Series.

Admission is free, but a freewill offering will be accepted.

Paul Laird, professor of musicology at KU, conducts the eight-member instrumental ensemble, which plays early music reproduction instruments from KU's large collection of such instruments and incorporates historical playing styles and techniques.

Beth Wagstrom, a doctor of musical arts degree candidate in conducting, leads the 17-singer vocal ensemble.

Steve Burk, Grace Cathedral's organist and choirmaster, said, "There is perhaps no better space in the region to hear these two fine early music ensembles."

"Grace Cathedral, with its grand, Gothic architecture, boasts excellent acoustics for both choral and instrumental music," Burk said. "Its limestone walls, marble flooring, stained-glass window and fine woodwork combine to make an outstanding aural and visual concert experience."

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