EHS STUDENT WINS CAR IN SCHOOL DRAWING

BY BOBBI MLYNAR
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Jeff Wolfe drove to school this morning in his mom's 1990 Ford Ranger pickup truck. This afternoon, he'll drive home in a wine-colored 1996 Chevrolet Monte Carlo.

Wolfe, a junior, won the car in a drawing held today at Emporia High School as part of the Renaissance Car Giveaway and Scholarship Recognition. The car, which has 80,000 miles, was donated by Longbine Auto Plaza, Emporia Motors, and John North Ford. The car also sports a new set of wheels donated by Mel's Tires.

Wolfe's mother, Tammy Edmiston, was as pleased as her son by his win.

"It's so exciting," Edmiston said. "I'm a single parent and we have car issues right now."

The Monte Carlo solved them, though Wolfe admitted he did enjoy driving the pickup truck.

"This is cool," he said. "It's something new."

Wolfe was one of 10 students whose names were drawn from a hopper full of names of students who had qualified to compete for the car.

He was the seventh student to slip behind the wheel and try a key drawn from a bowl of keys.

"I was joking with Anna (Young), 'You're walking,'" Wolfe said. Young had been No. 6 to try a key.

To be eligible for the prizes, special awards and the car, students needed to excel in academics, maintain good school attendance, and stay out of the principal's office because of behavior problems this year.

Students eligible for the Renaissance

Please see Car, Page 3

Jeff Wolfe throws the peace sign after winning a car through the Renaissance program at Emporia High School. The car was donated by all three new car dealers in town.
CAR

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Car Award must also have parental permission to take ownership of a car.

This is the 11th year that the three new car dealers have donated a used car to the EHS Renaissance program.

The car had not been part of the plans, according to Deanne Korsak, enrichment services teacher who worked on introducing the program at the school.

There was to have been an "honor card," Korsak said. "The kids heard 'car,' so the word spread like wildfire. So, we approached the new-car dealers. ... They always come up with a great car."

Renaissance also awards scholarships totaling $3,000 to students to attend Emporia State University, Kansas State University and the University of Kansas.

The 2007 scholarship recipients are: Emilia Chiroy, Erik Calderon, Josh East and Jennifer Newell, Emporia State University; Tyler Thompson, University of Kansas; and Anna Young, Kansas State University.

Eligibility for the scholarships also is based on student academics and attendance, teacher recommendations and an essay.

The Renaissance program is a nationwide effort to motivate and encourage students and staff by rewarding academic excellence, according to information from Nancy Horst, community relations director for the school district.

"It was established at Emporia High School in 1996 to promote academics, attendance and attitude," Horst said. "It has wide support from the Emporia business community, which donates prizes and meals" throughout the year.

During the school year, students can receive Most Valuable Attitude cards from any teacher for doing something good, Horst said. The cards make students eligible for prizes given away in weekly drawings. Prizes range from free meals and services at local businesses to special parking privileges.

Next week, students with perfect attendance will be recognized at a special lunch sponsored by Subway. Students in the AAA Club will be recognized at an ice cream party sponsored by Modern Air Conditioning. Students qualify for the AAA Club if they have a grade point average of 3.8 or better, at least one quarter of perfect attendance and no office referrals for disciplinary actions.
Rejoicing in students’ accomplishments

You have brains in your head. You have feet in your shoes. You can steer yourself any direction you choose.

So begins one of my favorite books by Dr. Seuss, "Oh, the Places You’ll Go!" This book is particularly valuable to me because I received it as a college graduation gift from one of my favorite teachers, Wayne Wingo.

I have thought of this book and its message as I begin to review application files for the Dean’s Scholars Program that I help coordinate at The University of Kansas. Our program is designed to identify promising undergraduate students who have a desire to pursue graduate study and eventually enter the professoriate.

I consider myself an evangelist when it comes to academic life. I do my best to sell my students on the myriad advantages that come from pursuing a life of teaching, research and mentoring.

I find it especially rewarding and reassuring to learn every year how many young men and women have a dream similar to my own. One of the chief pleasures of my work with these young aspiring scholars is to be able to live vicariously through their accomplishments and career goals.

Over the years, I’ve taken great pleasure in celebrating the awards and scholarships they win as they continue down a path that I hope will lead to their entrance into the so-called “Ivy” Tower.

Few things are as exciting and simultaneously daunting as having as many choices as these talented students do. Their ambition and diligence has provided them with such a dizzying array of professional opportunities. However, the hard part is to make peace with the choice they have to make as they embark upon their own academic and intellectual journey.

This process inevitably reminds me of the similar decisions I had to make and continue to make in my own picaresque journey through academia. It’s human nature to wonder if I’ve made the right choices.

At this time of the year, I’m reminded of the difficult decision I made when I decided to not forego my college eligibility, after a stellar freshman year of basketball at Reed College, in pursuit of glory and riches in the NBA. I was shocked to learn that there’s not much of a demand for 5-foot, 10-inch power forwards.

Similarly, I’ve learned my abbreviated football career, which consisted of not even half a year of freshman football, didn’t prepare me for the rigors of the NFL. These professional scouts have such limited imaginations.

The underwhelming response to my presidential candidacy in an earlier column has forced me to rethink my political future, too.

Thankfully, I have discovered a love for teaching that will hold me in good stead for the next few decades. I’m very fortunate to have not only found a job, but also a profession and vocation. Who could ask for more?

Nicolas Shump is a doctoral student in American studies at The University of Kansas. He can be reached at Nico1225@sunflower.com.
Process starts over in apartment fire trial

By Steve Fry
THE CAPITAL-JOURNAL
LAWRENCE — The re-trial today of Jason Rose, the 21-year-old apartment dweller accused of starting a massive fire that killed three of his neighbors and injured 18 more, will repeat much of the prosecution testimony from the first trial that ended in a mistrial on Feb. 12.

"We’re going to tee it up and do it again," Douglas County District Attorney Charles Branson said last week.

"Otherwise, “we’ll move forward pretty much like we did last time,” Branson said. Branson declined to say where in the re-trial that Robinson would testify.

Assistant public defender Ron Evans declined to comment about the upcoming trial, citing a gag order issued by Douglas County District Judge Jack Murphy. The gag order blocks prosecution and defense attorneys from talking about the case outside court.

The Douglas County District Attorney’s office subpoenaed Robinson as a witness after anonymous remarks appeared in the online version of the Lawrence Journal-World on Feb. 9, the fourth day of the trial in which the writer said Rose allegedly said he would set his own apartment on fire once he had one.

For much of Feb. 12, a Monday, jurors had listened to hours of video-taped interviews of Rose by Lawrence Police Sgt. Troy Squire and Special Agent Christie Weidner of the federal Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives as they questioned Rose about the fire in 2005 on Oct. 9, 10 and 11.

Jurors had viewed part of the Oct. 11 questioning in which investigators confronted Rose, challenging him that it required more than a piece of paper to start the Boardwalk fire. During a long interview a day earlier, Rose admitted starting the fire in the same area determined by BATFE investigators to be the starting point, Squire told jurors.

But Squire said Rose "minimized" his part when he said he dropped a burning piece of paper on the apartment building’s wooden surface. Squire told Rose it took more to start the fire than a piece of paper.

Jurors broke for lunch as the prosecution part of the trial wound down. But the time to resume the trial came and went.

The judge agreed the witness should testify, but he granted a defense motion to declare a mistrial and scheduled the retrial to begin today.

During the first trial, Evans painted his client as an immature young man who gave investigators what they wanted under relentless questioning.

"Jason basically is 7 years old," Evans told jurors in opening statements. Evans described Rose as child in a man’s body whose development shut down when he suffered “massive abuse” as a child.

One prosecution witness portrayed Rose differently. A fast-food employee arriving home from work identified Rose as the man near the area where other witnesses said they first saw the fire. The man twice said an epithet in a direction below him and swore and yelled as she climbed the steps to her apartment.

In other testimony in the first trial:

■ A resident across the street from the burning apartments watched one woman collapse in the flames that consumed the 76-unit Boardwalk Apartments.

Surrounded by flames, the woman on the third floor took three steps before she fell to her knees, then collapsed forward with her hands together. Three residents pitched themselves from the third floor to escape the flames.

■ Another witness videotaped the fire, describing it as an “incredibly hot” fire that melted plastic toys across the street from the burning apartments.

■ Another witness described how she ran through the fire, suffering burns to her hands, feet and face.

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Lawmakers wary of CMS deal

By Dave Ranney
KHI NEWS SERVICE

Legislators are questioning a Kansas Health Policy Authority-struck deal that calls for the state putting up almost $100 million to settle a series of long-simmering disputes over Medicaid spending.

"Frankly, I have a hard time trusting CMS (Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services)," said House Social Services Budget Committee Chairman Bob Bethell, R-Alden. "There's too much that's gone on over the years:"

Bethell and the committee's ranking minority member, Rep. Jeny Henry, D-Cummings, want the agreement to be in writing.

"There needs to be a paper trail," Henry said.

Henry and Bethell are upset because in their respective professions — Bethell is a nursing home administrator; Henry runs a program for the developmentally disabled — they have dealt first-hand with unexpected changes in federal policies.

"They change the rules in midstream," Henry said.

Rule clarification

But Tom Lenz, head of the regional Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services office in Kansas City, Mo., said CMS hasn't changed the rules in this case, it's clarified them — and it's clarified them because Kansas and other states have bent the rules like pretzels.

"An example would be the use of Medicaid dollars to rebuild Hoch Auditorium," Lenz said, referring to the building on the Kansas University campus that was gutted by fire after being struck by lightning in June 1991.

To pay for its restoration, then-Gov. Joan Finney used $18 million from the $185 million her administration had finagled from the Disproportionate Share Program, a Medicaid-funded initiative designed to offset hospitals' costs of caring for the indigent.

Disproportionate Share also provided $18 million for the library at Kansas State University $10.7 million for a technology center at Pittsburg State University and $8 million for a science building at Fort Hays State University.

Though the expenditures were legal and much-celebrated, Lenz said they also were an example of states' readiness to find and exploit loopholes in Medicaid policies.

"Most people, I think, would question using Medicaid to build a building," he said.

The loopholes were later closed but not until after the universities got their money.

CMS hasn't changed the rules, Lenz said, it has strengthened its oversight. It has also clarified regulatory language that allowed states to leverage federal funds.

But as health care's ever-rising costs claimed bigger and bigger chunks of the federal budget, the Bush administration told CMS to stem the abuse.

"That was six or seven years ago," Lenz said. "Based on some of the egregious claiming practices that had been developed, the decision was made to bring some fiscal integrity back to the Medicaid program and to enhance our financial oversight of the states' management of the program."

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Formula flaws

Subsequent audits and reviews uncovered wholesale abuse in the way the state's special education programs were figuring their costs. The programs, for example, used a billing formula based on 12 months' worth of costs even though the regulation limited the calculations to nine months.

"They (SRS) built in a 33 percent profit margin," Lenz said. "These were straightforward errors."

The special education formula flaws were the subject of a $37.5 million governor's budget amendment introduced last week. Other amendments addressed:

- Shortcomings in policies governing the state's mental health, substance abuse and child welfare programs.
- Little or no documentation that children in special education
and foster care received the services billed to Medicaid.

Questions surrounding the use of local and county revenues — rather than state revenues — as Medicaid match.

Some — not all — of these issues stemmed from decisions made during Janet Schalansky’s tenure as secretary at the Department of Social and Rehabilitation Services from 1999 to 2004.

It’s true, she said, mistakes were made.

“We and some other states really pushed the envelope to try to find the point where Medicaid was going to draw the line in the sand,” said Schalansky, who’s now the executive director at the Kansas Children Service League. “In some situations we were right and we drew more Medicaid and we still are today; in others, they pushed the line back a little bit and SRS is settling with them.”

The envelope pushing, she said, was driven by a then-sluggish economy and state revenues not keeping pace with the demand for social services.

“When money was tight in the early 2000s, we were encouraged by people to see what we could do to get more from Medicaid, Schalansky said. “The regional CMS office frequently shared with us what other folks were doing — we were looking at other states’ (Medicaid) plans, looking at other states’ waivers, and looking for redefinitions of services so they would fit Medicaid.”

Clinton vs. Bush

Schalansky said she and others knew some of the initiatives were likely to rile CMS.

“It was clear to me that there might come a time when we’d have to pay some of it back — and we hoped for better economic times so we could pay it back,” she said.

SRS, she said, soon found itself in uncharted policy waters.

“If you waited to get (approval) in writing, you would never do it because it wasn’t going to happen,” Schalansky said. “If it was advantageous to the state at that time, we knowingly took the risk. The perception was that until we got some clear definition, it was sort of like a loan.”

Adding to the confusion was a change at the White House.

“My view is simple: The feds changed the rules — the written rules didn’t change, but the attitude toward what would be allowed did change,” said Schalansky’s predecessor, Rochelle Chronister, who ran SRS from 1995 to 1999.

“The Clinton administration encouraged states to do more with Medicaid; the Bush administration doesn’t want to spend that much,” said Chronister, a former Republican state legislator from Neodesha.

Chronister said neither she nor Schalansky did anything wrong.

“We didn’t set out to create a problem,” she said. “But if you’re not going to tell states where the line is, then the states are going to push it as far as they can.”

Though CMS-ordered changes in the state’s social-service network are now pegged at almost $100 million, health officials say the state’s getting a bargain.

“We have to pay back $37.5 million on the special education stuff, but it just as easily could have been 10 times that amount,” said Barb Langner, an associate professor at the University of Kansas School of Nursing who has been helping coordinate the Kansas Health Policy Authority’s negotiations with CMS.

“There’s a lot of liability sitting out there if they wanted to play hardball,” Langner said.

Joe Tilghman, vice chairman of the health policy authority board, called the settlement “a great thing, absolutely,” adding that it’s been endorsed by CMS’s national director, Dennis Smith.

Smith didn’t return calls seeking comment.

“They’re anxious to get this cleaned up — just like we are,” Tilghman said.

Not in writing

Tilghman, a retired CMS regional administrator, said it’s unrealistic to expect the federal agency to put its agreement in writing.

“You’re not going to see a letter from someone in the federal government saying, ‘We absolve you of all your past sins.’ It just doesn’t happen,” he said. “The best you’re going to get is a handshake and a nod.”

Still, Tilghman said he’s “99.9 percent confident” that CMS will uphold its end of the deal.

“It’s pretty much a lock,” he said. “I can’t imagine them changing it — I’ve never ever seen anybody go back and renege on this type of stuff.”

Lenz said in his view the agreement already is in writing. “It’s what’s in the approved state (Medicaid) plan,” he said.

If the state stays within the plan and adheres to CMS regulations, there won’t be trouble, he said.

“Based on my conversations with the health policy authority, I feel very comfortable that that’s the path we’re on,” Lenz said. “We’re moving in the right direction.”

At the health policy authority, Langner said the agency is committed taking a less adventurous approach in its dealings with CMS.

“We are getting clarification from CMS Regional on anything we are unsure about, and they, typically, are bumping it upstairs to CMS in Baltimore,” Langner said. “So there is no gray.”

Much of the agreement, she said, is tied to reforms in the state’s payment methodologies and documentation procedures.

“In the past, the payment methodology wasn’t one that CMS could look back on and say, ‘Yes, we’re covering true costs,’” she said. “The calculations were not as rigorous as they could have been, and the data used to produce those calculations was minimal.”

Drafting a memo

Bethell said he’s asked the health policy authority to draft a memo outlining its understanding of the settlement.

“There needs to be some sort of paper trail,” he said. “I don’t want to come back five years from now and have them say, ‘Oh, by the way...’”

Bethell said he expects to have a copy of the memo by the end of the week.

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KU camps give kids hands-on education

The Capital-Journal

LAWRENCE — First, The University of Kansas Natural History Museum encouraged kids to play with their food.

Now, the museum wants them to get muddy, dig for fossils, launch rockets and solve mysteries at its summer camps.

The museum’s camps are hands-on science activities for boys and girls ages 8 to 11. The one-day camps are scheduled from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. June 18 through June 28. Registration for each $80 camp began Tuesday. Scholarship support is available for qualifying children.

For information about the camps, including registration and scholarship applications, visit www.nhm.ku.edu/Hdocs/DayCamps.html or call (785) 864-4173.
Growing up in Tree City changed Bonner native

Bonner Springs’ devotion to trees has resulted in more than just making the city a prettier place to live. It changed the life of a Bonner Springs High School graduate.

Noelle Barger Morris, class of 1994, said if there were one moment to which she could trace the roots of her commitment to the environment, it was Arbor Day, 1988, when she was in sixth grade at Southwest School.

That year, she had won an art contest whose theme was the importance of trees. As her prize, she won a young tree. Upon being presented with it, she immediately wondered how she would get it home. So, Morris (then Barger) donated it to the school, which would later be renamed Bonner Springs Elementary School.

Morris planted the tree on the front lawn between the old section of the school and the new in an Arbor Day ceremony.

In a letter to potential investors of the company she started a year ago, Morris recalled how she would be excused from class to water the tree.

That tree was about 6 feet tall then. When Morris visited Bonner Springs and her tree last summer it towered over the school at about 40 feet in height.

“I hope they never cut it down,” Morris said Friday.

Unfortunately, it turned out that’s exactly what happened, as the Chieftain discovered Monday. The tree had been removed months ago to make way for the new library at the school.

Barb Pickert, secretary at the school, said the administration had tried to get the contractor to save the tree, but it was too big to be moved, the contractor said.

Morris was crestfallen to hear of the tree’s demise.

“That’s really upsetting, just because it symbolized so much,” she said.

Nevertheless, the death of that maple tree can’t change the fact that its planting had been the seed for a lifelong interest and concern for the environment for a Bonner

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Springs native.

Morris majored in biology and environmental science at the University of Kansas, and interned at the San Diego Oceans Foundation. Now, she’s an executive director of the nonprofit organization, which works to protect the sea around San Diego.

Last year Morris started her own nonprofit company, EPIC, to sell environmentally friendly cleaning products.

Now Morris works at both organizations part-time, and EPIC is doing well.

“We have an application pending with Wal-Mart,” she said, which would mean national distribution. Now the only way to buy the company’s products is through its Web site, http://www.products4causes.com, or at the San Diego-area shops that carry them.
Olathe North High School honored seniors Thursday who accepted scholarships to colleges throughout the country. The academic signing was an all-school assembly recognizing 69 seniors. Counselor Janet Bachnick said this year’s senior class received more than $4 million in scholarships — which is significantly more money than in years past.

“This was a very academic senior class,” Bachnick said.

The signing was Olathe North’s second. About 30 students participated last year.

“We doubled the amount of kids that were honored (this year),” Bachnick said.

Olathe North is graduating its first class of the district’s 21st Century program. Students in the selective program take advanced placement classes and specialize in specific areas of study.

Bachnick said those students received several of the scholarships totaling more than $4 million.

Anna Doolittle was recognized Thursday with 68 of her classmates at Olathe North High School for receiving academic scholarships. The students’ scholarships totaled more than $4 million.
North students recognized

scholarships recognized Thursday.

"They are the movers and shakers of this school, and it has paid off," Bachnick said.

Bachnick organized the signing to honor seniors and motivate sophomores and juniors.

Bachnick said more than 69 seniors have received scholarship offers, but Thursday's ceremony recognized only seniors who have committed to a college or university.

Students selected colleges as far away as New York and as close as Olathe.

The University of Kansas and Kansas State University had the most scholarship recipients with 16 and 13, respectively.

Senior Chelsea Brown, who will attend KU next year, said she enjoyed the ceremony.

"It was nice that they had something for academics like they have for sports," Brown said.

Brown plans to participate in the university's honors program this fall. She said good grades helped her land her scholarships.

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Trustees exchange fire over college gun policy

DO YOU WANT TO ARM HALF THE STUDENTS ON CAMPUS?

JACK “MILES” VENTIMIGLIA
EDITOR

Board members exchanged verbal fire while discussing safety during the Johnson County Community College trustees meeting April 19.

Arming campus security would not prevent a Virginia Tech-style rampage, Public Safety Director Gus Ramirez said.

“There’s no way that you can stop something like that,” Ramirez told the board. “When they’ve got it in their minds that they’re going to do it, they’re going to do it.”

Trustee Ben Hodge questioned the point of an unarmed security force.

Trustee Jon Stewart asked Ramirez, “When is the last time that you had to use lethal force on this campus to stop some action?”

“Never.”

“Good.”

Moments later, Hodge asked, “Here’s the most important question in my mind: Can you provide my employees, my students, a 100 percent guarantee that you will be there, or someone from your office will be there, in the event of a personal attack? And that something like pepper spray, or a knife, or a gun on their part would not be the only thing that would stand between them living or dying? Can you offer that – a 100 percent guarantee?”

“I can offer you a 100 percent (guarantee) that we’re going to respond to any calls for assistance,” Ramirez said.

“But you cannot guarantee,” Hodge replied, “these people that by the time you respond they may not be dead already.”

“No, I can’t do that.”

Several voices rose, with Stewart’s emerging. He asked, “What’s your point?”

“Are you joking?” Hodge fired back. “Are you joking? What’s my point?”

“Do you want to arm half the students on campus?” Stewart asked. “Is that your point?”

“My point is, do I support the rights of females on this campus to carry pepper spray? You’re damned right!” Hodge said.

Ramirez left the podium and the board’s SAFETY POLICY DISPUTE, 5A
Safety policy dispute leads to exchange of verbal shots between college trustees

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discussion about drafting safety policy changes moved into other areas before drifting back to comments that the University of Kansas and Kansas State University ban guns on campus. Hodge said students face a problem when they cannot carry guns onto campus.

"That is a major inconvenience for law-abiding citizens who have licenses," Hodge said. "We're telling them whether they're 25 or 60 years old, and... worked across the street at Price Chopper, we're telling them that they have to go home, drop their gun off and then come back to the school. That's a major inconvenience."

"I'm of the view that people have a right to defend themselves. The only thing that will protect somebody is their own self-defense. And I'm not going to support a policy that takes their rights away."

As a member of the Kansas House, Hodge said, he has witnessed people's rights being taken away quietly.

"I can't believe that we even had a suggested policy that would take away the rights for men and women on this campus to carry their own pepper spray, and so I don't think this was adequately thought through," Hodge said.

Board Chairman Lynn Mitchelson said a board committee planned a safety policy review in May. Stewart said the board needed facts, including that fewer than two-tenths of 1 percent of Johnson Countians have licenses to carry concealed weapons.

"So I'm not sure how many people are going to be inconvenienced," Stewart said.

"That could be just as much an argument for it as against it," Hodge responded.

"I think we've had adequate time to discuss this," Mitchelson said, reminding the board of the planned May discussion.

Hodge argued, "This hasn't been discussed. The only reason we're waiting until May is (we're) waiting on the governor. We're not being proactive on this issue. We're just waiting for other people to react and that's not leadership, that's not the leadership that the people of Johnson County want on this issue."

Present law bans concealed guns on campus.

Stewart said, but the bill Gov. Kathleen Sebelius vetoed might change some of those rules. The Legislature on Wednesday entered a veto session that could challenge her veto and affect plans for college policy.

Mitchelson said the board's process calls for committee members to discuss plans and make recommendations to the board.

"There's a Human Resources Committee, of which you're a member, that's dealing with this issue," Mitchelson told Hodge.

Hodge said people have waited for months for the college to adopt a safety policy.

"Mr. Hodge," Stewart replied, "if you would attend the HR committee
meetings, we could have discussed this earlier."

"I appreciate your cheap shot," Hodge said. "Where have I been during these committee meetings? I've been in the Legislature and have I attempted to communicate during those times? Yes."

"We have scheduled meetings for your convenience," Stewart said. "You should show up."

Trustee Shirley Brown-VanArsdale said she looked forward to discussing whether campus security members should be armed. School resource officers serving area school districts carry firearms, and all are police officers who are on call.

"We need to have that dialogue to discuss how it impacts us, and especially your feelings that we've heard tonight," VanArsdale said.

The discussion veered into other matters until Hodge brought back the safety policy issue.

"According to this constituent, there's a bank in Johnson County, at least one, that has already been robbed and they continue, as they have right to do, to post a 'no weapons' sign on the premises, and while I've never robbed a bank... If I were, I would probably go to that bank over a bank where I knew there would be a guard or someone who might try to stop me from hurting other people or taking the property," Hodge said. "And we need to remember on this campus that Virginia Tech incident proved to us that, no matter what our policy is, there will be people who will attempt that thing.

"And while I hope I was not too hard on Gus, and I don't think this is what he was saying, but he was close to saying -- and that was why I challenged him -- that there is nothing we can do to prevent violence and that is simply not true. ...

"No, Jon. I'm not saying carry concealed weapons on campus. I would not be opposed to that, but I'm not pushing for that. ... And Gus did have a point, that if there is someone who wishes to take a gun on campus, they're going to do it anyway. And so the question is: Do we take every-
‘Critical steps’ await backers

JACK "MILES" VENTIMIGLIA

"There are a couple of critical steps to go," Gov. Kathleen Sebelius said while signing the Johnson County Education and Research Triangle bill April 19.

About 50 people attended the signing ceremony at the University of Kansas Edwards Campus, 15020 Metcalf Ave., Overland Park.

Sen. Barbara Allen, R-Overland Park, introduced and stood behind Sebelius during the signing. Allen later said the Johnson County Commission will choose whether to let voters decide the tax issue.

Commission support remains in doubt because members also seek funds for more jail staffing and facilities.

Allen said she thinks commissioners will allow the triangle tax vote.

"The momentum right now is obviously with the research triangle legislation and the beauty of this proposal is we have two years (to achieve passage). The commission will have the opportunity to fully understand the proposal," Allen said. "Everything I’m hearing is positive and I am extremely optimistic that we will get this through the commission and that they will vote to put this on the ballot."

Triangle advocate Bob Regnier said supporters know the jail situation concerns commissioners.

"If we can get the jail issue resolved in one way or another, I think we’re going to get support from the majority of the County Commission," he said.
Commission," Regnier said. "Individually, they've spoken about the positive potential attributes of this idea."

Presiding Commissioner Annabeth Surbaugh has said the triangle sounds good, but details are needed. The Community Foundation seeks details through research, triangle spokeswoman Mary Birch said.

“Our next step is to complete an economic impact study and we hope to try to put together a plan working with the community, both elected officials and civic leaders,” Birch said. “We hope to get (this) on the ballot some time next year.”

Supporters plan to give voters construction details to the square foot; name degree programs universities in the triangle would offer; specify research projects; and estimate maintenance and operations costs.

The proposed tax would fund research facilities and staff at the Kansas State University Innovations Campus in Olathe, with a focus on food security and animal health research; the Kansas University Edwards Campus, with the focus on science, math and engineering; and the KU Medical Center, which would open a cancer research center in Westwood.

Sebelius gave reasons why she supports the measure. “Bioscience research has an amazing potential for new treatments and cures. We want those cures to be discovered here in Kansas. That's why we've made the recruitment of bioscience companies a top priority and why we've invested in bioscience research and education at our universities.”

Sebelius said, “There are also good jobs created by bioscience research, so there's an economic benefit as well. The triangle will help bring cutting-edge research to this area, which will then benefit the entire state.”

Birch applauded as Sebelius signed the bill. “It's an incredible partnership opportunity, with K-State being world class in animal health and safety; and KU and cancer; and then with the engineering degrees and the safety and technology degrees we can bring to the community,” Birch said after the signing.

Lt. Gov. Mark Parkinson, Olathe, said prior to the signing that he doubted – when approached by Birch and others about a year ago – that the triangle measure would advance so quickly.

“I was happy to once again be proven wrong,” Parkinson said.

Sebelius said she considered the measure “innovative and novel,” but had expected gaining passage in Topeka to take a couple of years.

While signing the bill, Sebelius said triangle supporters have work to do.

“This is not really the end of the conversation,” she said. “This is the beginning.”
AMONG FRIENDS: With Lt. Gov. Mark Parkinson, Olathe, seated at her right hand, and state leaders watching, Gov. Kathleen Sebelius on April 19 signs into law a bill that enables creating the proposed Johnson County Education and Research Triangle. The bill enables the County Commission to decide whether to place a tax measure to pay for the triangle on the ballot. If the commission takes the step, then voters would have the final say about whether to pay for the proposal.

Supporters say they want the measure on the November 2008 ballot.

SEN. BARBARA ALLEN, at right, a cancer survivor, played a leading role in getting the bill through the Senate by holding up other legislation until the triangle bill passed.
National Safe Kids Week

April 28 – May 6, 2007 is National Safe Kids Week. We would like to take this opportunity to remind everyone of the importance of using appropriate safety restraints for all individuals in motor vehicles.

- The safest place for any child is in the back seat. If a child must ride in the front seat, be sure to move the seat as far back as possible.
- All children under age 4 must be in a federally approved child safety seat.
- Use rear facing infant seats for children from birth to at least 20 pounds and at least one year of age.
- Use forward facing seats for children over 20 pounds and at least one year old to about 40 pounds and four years old.
- All children ages 4-7 must be in a booster seat unless:
  - Weighs more than 80 pounds
  - Is taller than 4 feet 9 inches
  - Any child who cannot sit with his or her back straight against the vehicle seat back cushion or who cannot sit with knees bent over a vehicle’s seat edge without slouching should be in a booster seat.
- Booster seats work by raising a child up so the lap and shoulder belt are positioned safely. Booster seats reduce the risk of injury by 59% as compared to only using seat belts.
- All children under age 14 are required to be protected by a safety belt.
- The lap belt should rest low and snug across the pelvic area on the hip bones – the lap belt should never rest on the stomach area.
- The shoulder belt is snug across the chest and rests flat across the center of the collar bone – the shoulder belt should never be placed behind a child’s back or under the arm.
- All individuals over in the front seat of any vehicle are required to wear safety belts.
- All individuals should wear safety belts regardless of age or where they are sitting in any vehicle.

To promote National Safe Kids Week the Harper County Health Department/Harper County Home Health Agency has obtained a limited supply of infant safety seats and booster seats to give away. If you are in need of an infant safety seat or booster seat, please contact the Harper County Health Department at 620-842-5132 for additional information.