Unexpected destination: Small town lures retirees with health care, family feeling

KARREY BRITT KBRITT@THEWORLDCO.INFO
SABETHA, KAN.

Most communities need mountains, a nearby ocean or college to attract retirees.
Nemaha County has none of the above, but is doing just that.

It is the only Kansas county considered a retirement destination by the U.S. Department of Agriculture. To be considered such a destination, a community's population of those age 60 and older must have grown by at least 15 percent between 1990 and 2000 as a result of people moving into the area.

"It is a very interesting situation," said Laszlo Kulcsar, a demographer and director of the Kansas Population Center at Kansas State University. "It's like a fascinating social phenomenon."

Nemaha County is in northeast Kansas and has about 10,700 residents. Its biggest towns are Sabatha and Seneca; each has about 2,500 residents. The closest cities are Topeka and St. Joseph, Mo., which are about 60 miles away.

Quiet community

Kulcsar said he believes the Apostolic Christian Retirement Village in Sabatha has been key to the county's retirement designation. The village has grown from a 26-bed nursing home in 1961 to a continuum care area with 210 residents.

"They seem to be attracting people who left Kansas back to Kansas," he said.

Consider Betty Jane Kusler, 82, who grew up in Wamego and raised her children in Kansas City, Kan. She moved to Colorado in 1982. Kusler, who was stricken by polio at age 26, said she looked at nursing homes in Colorado before moving to Apostolic Christian Retirement Village, which is 13 miles away from one of her seven children who lives in Bern.

"Mountains are beautiful, but nothing takes the place of farm-land. I he hills just roll," she said. Kusler also enjoys the peace and quiet of a small farm community. She said there are too many people and cars in Colorado.

In Sabatha, she can guide her electric wheelchair on nearby streets to a spot under a tree on a hill. It's one of her favorite places.

"I watched the formation of a storm and I thought, 'Oh, how beautiful,'" she said.

The natural beauty isn't the only thing that enticed Kusler to move there in January 2005; she said it was the health care and friendly atmosphere.

"It's just like they have known you forever," she said of the staff.
"It's not just the physical care, but the mental as well. Laughter and happiness can do wonders."

Thriving health care

While many rural communities are struggling to get one doctor, Sabatha has five doctors, four dentists, several chiropractors and a dialysis center. The Sabatha Community Hospital completed a new 27,000-square-foot, $5 million addition about five years ago.

"For a small town, it is pretty strong in health care," said Ed Strahm, administrator at the Apostolic Christian Retirement Village. "People can get the medical help they need here."

Dr. Chris Tramp recently began practicing in Sabatha after receiving his doctorate at Kansas University. He returned to the area where he grew up because of the town's cleanliness, schools and health care.

"They just have a really good medical system here, and it's attractive to doctors to be here, honestly, because the medical system is so established," Tramp said.

He also said the town is safe.
"We are well behaved," he said, laughing.

Apostolic Christian Retirement Village, which is open to all religions, is like a community within Sabatha. It has 97 apart-
ments, 12 assisted living apartments and a 94-bed nursing home on 22 acres. There are several dining rooms, libraries and activity rooms. There is a fitness center, two banks, a therapy room and small store. The buildings are connected with handicap-accessible hallways. Outside, there are walking paths and a pond.

“We’re like a family,” said Virginia Howerton, who was working on one of numerous puzzles in an activity room with another resident. They had participated in a group morning exercise and planned to join others for lunch.

Howerton, formerly of nearby Morrill, said she planned to live there until she “kicked the bucket” whether it be in the apartment she bought six years ago or in the nursing home.

Not only does the retirement village offer continuum care, but convenience for others such as Ramona Breeden, 78, who has a daughter with multiple sclerosis. In 1994, Breeden and her late husband bought two apartments and had an adjoining door built so their daughter could live in one. Their daughter now lives in the nursing home area which can be accessed without going outdoors. Breeden’s twin sister Leona Lukert now owns the other apartment.

“My sister has 11 grandchildren and they just go tearing through her apartment and into mine,” Breeden said. “We love it.”

The sisters grew up in Sabetha, but Breeden moved back after living in Nebraska.

At Apostolic Christian Retirement Village, the apartments are from 670 square feet to 1,050 square feet and range in price from $58,000 to $106,000. They are sold like a home.

Setting an example

Joan Whittenburg, 84, said she worked in at least seven nursing homes in Topeka before moving into the nursing home in the Apostolic Christian Retirement Village.

“It’s clean and we have a lot of fun here,” she said of singing, playing dominoes and taking out-of-town bus trips to places such as Wamego, Topeka and Omaha.

Despite few eating places and no movie theater, Sabetha Mayor Dave Emert said the town offers plenty of activities such as concerts, swimming, a nine-hole golf course and sporting events. He said his father, who has lived in the retirement village for three years, often has to turn down invitations.

“There’s just too much going on,” he said.

Emert and Strahl said the key to Sabetha’s survival has been its manufacturing industry, which has drawn former employees and employees’ relatives to retire in Sabetha. The retirees help fuel the health care system.

“Along with retirement, comes the Medicare income that keeps our hospital going,” Emert said. “Sabetha is a unique community in the fact that we have about 2,500 jobs in a town of about 2,400 people. We support a lot of the smaller communities around us.”

K-State’s Kulcsar has received two grants to research the socioeconomic structure and population trends of Nemaha County. They are looking at the relationship between the retirement community and businesses.

“Retirement migration can be an engine of sustained economic growth,” Kulcsar said. “If it is something that can help these small communities survive, then maybe we can come up with a model that could be useful for other small communities.”
Farming links seen from Midwest to China

Editor's note: A senior at the University of Kansas, John Kuhn went on a university-sponsored trip to China, travelling through major cities, industrial areas, and the extreme rural countryside. Part of the program—Kansas Asia Scholars—http://www.kas.ku.edu/ is an outreach component, in which students try to make Asia accessible to communities throughout Kansas.

Originally from Courtland, a town of about 300 in the north central part of the state, he grew up around smaller newspapers.

"We are the children of our landscape..." — Lawrence Durrell

China. For us, the word conjures up exotic images: dragons, gongs, an Orientalist vision of martial arts and bamboo. Recently, I (who'd never been off the continent) was provided the chance to test these notions during a KU-sponsored trip. We aimed at the broadest possible view of China, visiting ancient temples and modern malls, rural Shaanxi and downtown Shanghai.

For me, the most striking part of this experience was our visit to a farming village in central China. Initially alien, it resembled something out of medieval Europe: scythe-wielding old women harvested wheat, irrigation was performed with furrows, not pipes, and the resulting grain was spread on the roads to be threshed by the wheels of passing vehicles before being repeatedly raked to separate out the chaff. These sights were accompanied by even more bizarre images: flooded lotus fields reflected the sun and the occasional temple dotted the roadside.

However, the strangest part of my time in rural central China was not how alien everything felt, but how familiar it seemed. This area is geographically strikingly similar to Kansas—the same terrain, the same rainfall, the same primary crops. It was uncanny, really, to travel to literally the opposite side of the world and discover again the landscape of my childhood. And not just the landscape, though the endless wheatfields, dirt roads, and cloudless skies were there, alright. The real shock was the people: the same sunburnt farmers talked shop outside the local store, the same sulky teenage girls idly raked the wheat, and the same wives brought dinner out to the fields.

The primary lesson in this, of course, is that Durrell is right. The people I met were, in translation, markedly similar to the Kansans I grew up with. The irrelevance of distance and the primacy of agriculture is a compelling truth I could not have imagined before my trip.
KU investigating mailing of discarded records to three area newspapers

By JOHN HANNA
Associated Press Writer

TOPEKA - Records discarded at the University of Kansas were mailed anonymously to three newspapers, prompting a campus investigation Wednesday. It was the second report in two months of such a breach of students' privacy.

The records included what appeared to be graded exams, job applications, change-of-grade forms, class rosters, seating charts and copies of health insurance cards and immigration forms, according to editors at the newspapers. Some of the documents contained credit card numbers, Social Security numbers and student identification numbers, they said.

The records were mailed in manila envelopes, with a letter in each packet. Each letter said the papers had come from the university's math department or its recycling center. The letter's writers claimed to be former math teaching assistants or current employees of the recycling center, and they were critical of how the math department handled its records.

"Our No. 1 concern is protecting these individuals from any compounded exposure and launching an investigation," university spokeswoman Lynn Bretz said.

Bretz also issued a statement asking news organizations that had received the documents to return them. She said doing so would protect patients' privacy and allow the university to contact students whose records were mailed. Also, she said the university needed the documents as evidence in its investigation.

In July, The University Daily Kansan, the campus newspaper, reported that documents were left in vacant offices in Wescoe Hall, which was being renovated. The documents included graded exams, student essays and schedule-changing forms. Earlier this month, university officials announced a new program to improve the protection of private information.

"Obviously the sorts of records that are in these packets are private and should have been protected," Bretz said. "Safeguarding personal information is a priority at KU."

The Kansan and the Lawrence Journal-World received their packets Tuesday, and The Kansas City Star received documents Wednesday, their editors said.

"They looked like they came straight from a filing cabinet," said Erick Schmidt, the Kansan's editor.

The Kansan planned to return what it received in the mail to the university but was keeping a single copy of each record in a locked safe. He said the newspaper needed a copy of the records for its reporting.

"We're just trying to tell a story and get the word out to people that this kind of stuff is going on," Schmidt said.

Dennis Anderson, the Journal-World's managing editor, said the newspaper would allow the university to review what it had received, but not make copies or retrieve the originals. He said the paper's attorney concluded the documents were its property; they were locked in a filing cabinet.

Later, in a story on its Web site, the Journal-World said it would destroy the documents after its reporting was finished. He said the newspaper wouldn't make any information in the documents public.

"The story's not us," Anderson said. "The biggest concern is that the documents must be taken care of."

The Star hadn't decided Wednesday whether, it would return the documents or destroy them after its reporting was finished, editor Mark Zieman said. He also assured students that information in the records wouldn't be made public.

"These documents weren't disposed of properly originally, and we will certainly make sure they are this time," Zieman said.
Rope rescue training continued Wednesday for Fort Scott firefighters at one of Fort Scott’s tallest buildings located on First Street downtown.

ABOVE — Capt. Dale Bollinger lowers himself and firefighter Michael Miles safely to the ground. The length of their descent is about 40 feet.

AT RIGHT — FSFD Lt. Eric Shoemaker rappels down the side of the building. Firefighter Steve Gass, who plays the role of rescuee, is attached to Shoemaker.

The training exercise, taught by instructors through the University of Kansas Fire and Rescue Training Institute, teaches firefighters how to properly lower people out of buildings via ropes. Fellow firefighters gradually lowered the men to the ground through the use of ropes and cable pulleys inside the third floor of the building. This type of rescue is used during situations where the building is in the process of collapsing.
Records mailing is probed by KU

TOPEKA (AP)—Records discarded at the University of Kansas were mailed anonymously to three newspapers, prompting a campus investigation Wednesday. It was the second report in two months of such a breach of students’ privacy.

The records included what appeared to be graded exams, job applications, change-of-grade forms, class rosters, seating charts and copies of health insurance cards and immigration forms, according to editors at the newspapers. Some of the documents contained credit card numbers, Social Security numbers and student identification numbers, they said.

The records were mailed in manila envelopes, with a letter in each packet. Each letter said the papers had come from the university’s math department or its recycling center. The letter’s writers claimed to be former math teaching assistants or current employees of the recycling center, and they were critical of how the math department handled its records.

“Our No. 1 concern is protecting these individuals from any compounded exposure and launching an investigation,” university spokeswoman Lynn Bretz said.

Bretz also issued a statement asking news organizations that had received the documents to return them. She said doing so would protect students’ privacy and allow the university to contact students whose records were mailed. Also, she said the university needed the documents as evidence in its investigation.

In July, The University Daily Kansan, the campus newspaper, reported that documents were left in vacant offices in Wescoe Hall, which was being renovated. The documents included graded exams, student essays and schedule-changing forms. Earlier this month, university officials announced a new program to improve the protection of private information.

“Obviously the sorts of records that are in these packets are private and should have been protected,” Bretz said. “Safeguarding personal information is a priority at KU.”

The Kansan and the Lawrence Journal-World received their packets Tuesday, and The Kansas City Star received documents Wednesday, their editors said.

“They looked like they came straight from a filing cabinet,” said Erick Schmidt, the Kansan’s editor.

The Kansan planned to return what it received in the mail to the university but was keeping a single copy of each record in a locked safe. He said the newspaper needed a copy of the records for its reporting.

“We’re just trying to tell a story and get the word out to people that this kind of stuff is going on,” Schmidt said.

Dennis Anderson, the Journal-World’s managing editor, said the newspaper would allow the university to review what it had received, but not make copies or retrieve the originals. He said the paper’s attorney concluded the documents were its property; they were locked in a filing cabinet.

Later, in a story on its Web site, the Journal-World said it would destroy the documents after its reporting was finished. He said the newspaper wouldn’t make any information in the documents public.

“The story’s not us,” Anderson said. “The biggest concern is that the documents must be taken care of.”

The Star hadn’t decided Wednesday whether it would return the documents or destroy them after its reporting was finished, editor Mark Zieman said. He also assured students that information in the records wouldn’t be made public.

“These documents weren’t disposed of properly originally, and we will certainly make sure they are this time,” Zieman said.
Fall enrollment trends...

Enrollment increases in western Wyandotte County

by Mary Rupert

An ongoing building boom in western Wyandotte County is fueling enrollment growth in the Piper School District, while enrollment to the east, in the Kansas City, Kansas, School District, appears to be holding steady.

Enrollment in the Piper district is up about 60 students this year, to about 1,588, Superintendent Steve Adams said last week.

A Kansas City, Kansas, district spokesman said preliminary enrollment figures on Sept. 13 showed nearly the same amount of students as last year at this time. The figures for the Kansas City, Kansas, School District last week were 19,283, as compared to 19,299 on Sept. 12, 2006, according to David Smith, assistant to the superintendent for communications.

A study by RSP Associates indicates the Piper district's enrollment will more than double, growing by 224 percent during the next 10 years, Adams said. As a result, Piper has a plan to expand and build more classrooms. The bond issue will be placed before voters in November.

"That study's been invaluable for us," Adams said. The analysis came within two students of predicting this year's enrollment growth, he added.

With more people moving into the district, growth is coming at
all levels, he said. Initially, the district is seeing most growth at the middle and secondary levels, and after four to five years, data indicates a growth spurt at the lower levels, as well, he said.

By the numbers of new homes in Piper, one would not guess there is a national housing slump. There were 117 new housing permits in the Piper district this past quarter, Adams said.

"They talk about the housing slump, but builders keep right on building," Adams said.

He said about half of the new homes will have school-age children, and half are empty-nesters. Adams said he had heard last month that enrollment is increasing this year in the Bonner Springs district and decreasing in the Kansas City, Kansas, district, but those figures were not final.

Enrollment is officially counted on Sept. 20 for purposes of determining school funding, he said.

Adams said the 10-year study for Piper showed growth of 6.7 percent in the early years and almost 10 percent by 2017. Since the land in the Piper area will not be built out by then, it's "just touched the tip of the iceberg," Adams said.

The Piper district has been strict about enforcing its out-of-district policy, Adams added.

"We have turned away over 60 students this year," he said. He

see ENROLLMENT, page 3

---

Enrollment

continued from page 1

said the students did not live in the district, and the law says that the student's primary caregiver must be a resident of the district. Most of the students who were turned away were residents of the Kansas City, Kansas, school district, he added.

Even when the Piper district adds more classrooms, it probably won't change the residency policy, because the community values the policy, Adams said.

"With the rapid growth, we're going to have to work pretty hard to stay ahead of the wolf," Adams said.

In the Kansas City, Kansas, district, the past few years have shown declining enrollment, so no change is good news, Smith said.

"We're excited – it feels like we're going to hold even," he said.

Official enrollment numbers will be taken on Sept. 20, he said. Each year, some students wait until after Labor Day to enroll, he added.

"Overall population numbers are declining in the county, so that may have some effect," Smith said.

Full-day kindergarten, offered district-wide for the first time this year, may have attracted some new students who might otherwise not have enrolled, Smith said.

Kansas City, Kansas, has indeed been losing population for the past few decades. According to figures from the Institute for Policy and Social Research at the University of Kansas, Kansas City, Kansas, lost 2.09 percent of its population between April 2000 and July 2006, a loss of 3,065 people.

Bonner Springs increased by 325 people, or 4.8 percent, in the same time, and Edwardsville increased by 364 people, or 8.78 percent, from 2000 to 2006, according to the institute's figures. In Leavenworth County, the nearby city of Basehor added 1,285 people, a 57.42 percent increase, during the same years.

The Institute projects that population in Wyandotte County will increase 3.2 percent from 2000 to 2025.
The Kansas Board of Regents is not an organization shy about touting its success. Last week, it proudly boasted that for the first time, enrollment at the state’s six universities had exceeded 90,000 students.

The record mark was established because of an overall increase in enrollment of 557 students.

What the Regents didn’t point out was had it not been for the student body at Fort Hays State University, there would have been no need for such a press release. FHSU accounted for 466 of the increase, by far the growth leader. In fact, our local university has set the pace for the past five years with its 62.1 percent spike in enrollment.

Fort Hays is even ahead of its own aggressive enrollment goals. With 9,588 students either on campus or in the Virtual College, FHSU is well on its way to hitting the 10,000 target it has set for 2010. This, in turn, should help boost efforts to reach 15,000 students by the year 2020.

That growth will bring its own challenges in the forms of physical space and faculty requirements. We’re confident the long-range plan under development adequately will address all such needs.

We’re hoping the attractiveness of Fort Hays State University will attract close attention by the Board of Regents. The growth here is helping overcome declines at both the University of Kansas and Emporia State University. Such efforts should be rewarded, whether through additional funding for long-term maintenance or a larger share of scholarship funding.

With its affordable success model, FHSU is helping raise the bar for all university students in the Sunflower State.
Dr. De Luna joins local Clinic office

Miranda De Luna, MD, is new at the Wichita Clinic family medicine facility at 120 W. Josephine in Augusta.

Dr. De Luna received her medical training at the University of Kansas School of Medicine and recently completed her residency in Family Medicine at Wesley Family Practice Program, Wichita.

During her residency she received awards of excellence for chief resident and outstanding clinician-third year.

Dr. De Luna specializes in the following treatment for all your family: Geriatric Medicine, Women's Health, Pediatrics, Chronic Disease Management, and Preventative Medicine.

Dr. De Luna joins Tracy Baker, MD, and Alice Meyer, MD, at the family medicine practice in Augusta. Appointments may be made with Dr. De Luna by calling 316-775-5432.
Fall festival open to everyone

Decorate a pumpkin!

Contributed by JAMIE YONASH

The Belle Plaine Parent Teacher Organization is proud to offer our second annual Community Fall Festival. This year the festival will be held on Saturday, Oct. 6 from 4 to 8 p.m. at the high school commons and gymnasium area.

We have some wonderful activities planned. This festival is designed for all ages and everyone in the community is invited to attend. We will have concessions available so you can eat dinner while you have fun. Food will be available in the commons area. We will have train rides out in the parking lot for the smaller children.

A pumpkin decorating contest will be held outside in the parking lot. Pumpkins can be painted from 4 to 6 p.m., then they will be judged. Children can take their pumpkins home after 7 p.m. Cash prizes are offered for different categories and age levels.

We are excited to have a huge obstacle course inflatable, a moonwalk and a giant inflatable slide in the gym for children of all ages to play on. There will be fall crafts for kids to make. We will have a booth of Sandy Candy, which is always a favorite. There will be a room of Bingo! This year we are doing a Kid’s Bingo and the prizes will be geared for kids of all ages and adults can play too!

As always, we will have games. This year the beloved Cake Walk is back. We will also have the Pop Toss, Fishing Game, Duck Pond and Lollipop Tree. The games have great prizes and are very fun to play. We will have a clown on site who will do balloon animals and will keep us all entertained!

Our Silent Auction is bigger than ever. Here is just a preview of some items to be auctioned off: tickets to Disney World, American Girl Doll, Wichita Thunder tickets, Indoor Water Park passes, National Baseball Hall of Fame passes, Behind the Scenes Live Broadcast Tour of.
K.A.K.E. Studios, Gift Cards to lots of area restaurants and activities. We will have the following themed baskets as part of the silent auction: Wichita State University, the University of Kansas, Kansas State University, Scrapbooking, Toys, Pampered Chef, Kansas City Chiefs, Movie Night, Out to Eat, Disney, Family Fun, Lake Lovers, Camping Basket and more! This auction will be awesome. The auction will run from 4 to 7 p.m. All items must be paid for that night, in the form of cash or check, between 7 and 8 p.m. and can be picked up after payment is received.

Punch cards will be sold at the door for $5 each. Each card will have 20 punches on it. The punches can be used for everything except the silent auction.

If you would like to donate a cake for the cake walk, two-liters of pop for the pop toss or items for the silent auction or Kid's Bingo prizes, please call Jamie as soon as possible at 488-2933.

P.T.O. hopes you will come out and bring your families for a great evening of fun and community!
Three El Dorado students graduate from KU

Times News Report
degree in economics, El Dorado High School graduate; Jonathan Lore, son of Cathy and Ben Lore, bachelor of general studies in economics, EHS graduate; and Sylvia Orozco, prof 1 certificate in internal medicine, a graduate of Monta Vista High School in Cupertino, Calif.

Several El Dorado students graduated from the University of Kansas this summer as part of the class of 2008.

Among the students graduating were: Rusty Glenn, son of Ginger Glenn, master or arts