Veterans' Travel Reimbursement Increases Today...

Veterans driving to and from Veterans Affairs (VA) medical facilities will see an increase in their mileage reimbursement rate effective Monday, November 17. The rate is increased from 28.5 cents to 31.5 cents per mile.

I have worked on this issue since first coming to Congress to assist Kansas veterans who must often travel long distances to the nearest VA medical clinic or hospital. Especially for veterans in rural areas, today's high gas prices have made it difficult for them to afford the trip to the doctor. Last year, I
Moran:
from page 2

offered a successful amendment that increased the mileage rate for the first time in more than 30 years. I was pleased that the VA spending bill Congress approved this year included this additional increase supporting our veterans. Observing Veterans Day in Medicine Lodge and Wichita...

On Tuesday, I joined school children and residents of Medicine Lodge to honor area veterans. I spoke at the Veterans Day ceremony about the importance of veterans in defending our freedoms as well as the contributions veterans continue to make in our communities. They truly deserve our nation’s gratitude. Thanks to Jerry Cullen, Superintendent for Unified School District (USD) #220, for the invitation to speak.

Later that day, I visited the Robert J. Dole VA Medical Center (VAMC) in Wichita to personally thank veterans receiving care and to the volunteers and staff who serve them. The Dole VAMC has been serving Kansas area veterans for more than 75 years.

During my visit I toured the Transitional Living Center (TLC) and the newly updated facility that provides mental health services to address veterans’ emotional well-being. Inside the TLC, I talked with veterans who served in World War II, the Korean War and the Vietnam War. These veterans talked about their tours and the years they served our country. Following these tours, I presented Tom Sanders, the Dole VA Medical Director, with a plaque of my remarks to the House of Representatives recognizing the Dole VA’s 75th anniversary this past June. Thanks to Tom Sanders for his outstanding service. Click here to view photos.

Support for Education...

Holy Family Elementary: On Monday, I visited Holy Family Elementary in Hays to read to 3rd and 4th grade students. Local officials were invited to the school to read to elementary students throughout the day. I appreciated the opportunity to take part in the students’ learning process. Thanks to teachers, Principal Jana Simon, and Amadee Staab for inviting me. Click here to view photos.

Kansas State University Alumni Event: On Monday, I attended a Hays area Kansas State University (KSU) Alumni event hosted by KSU alumni and students at the Fox Pavilion in Hays. I spoke with KSU student ambassadors and student admissions representatives and answered their questions they had for me. Special thanks to Jarrod and Stacey Jones for hosting the event; to Kara Bowman and Robby Flack, KSU student ambassadors who attended the event; and to the Hays area KSU alumni and students for the invitation.

Kansas Association of Secondary Principals Conference: On Wednesday, I spoke at the Kansas Association of Secondary School Principals (KASSP) Conference in Wichita. During the conference, the KASSP provided informational speakers and seminars for Kansas middle school and high school principals. The topics I discussed during my visit to the conference included my position on No Child Left Behind, recruiting and retaining teachers, and the importance of fully funding special education programs that provide help to disabled students. I also discussed other federally mandated education initiatives and the educational outlook in Congress. Thanks to Marty Straub, assistant principal of Hays High School for inviting me to speak. Click here to view photos.

Attending Jana Mackey’s 1100 Torches National Campaign Benefit...

On Thursday, I attended Jana Mackey’s 1100 Torches National Campaign Benefit in Lawrence. The benefit honored the life of Jana Lynne Mackey, from Hays, who became a victim of domestic violence on July 3, 2008. Those attending the event were able to participate in a silent auction to raise funds for the 1100 Torches Campaign in an effort to take it beyond Kansas to the national level.

Each year, nearly four million new incidences of domestic violence are reported in the United States, with many more unaccounted for due to fear and intimidation. Hopefully, with continued education, resources, and support, that the victims of domestic violence can overcome their situation. The 1100 Torches Campaign was created by friend and family members of Jana following her death. The Campaign serves as Jana’s call to action, that despite our personal politics, we can make a difference in the world and in turn make it a better place to live. It is the Campaign’s hope that 1100 people will be inspired by Jana’s story and through her death be motivated to answer her call to save others and change the course of history. I encourage you to learn more about Jana’s story and the impact of domestic violence by visiting the 1100 Torches campaign web site at www.1100torches.org. Thanks to Christie and Curt Brungardt for inviting me to speak. Also thank you to the many volunteers who gave their time to honor a Mackey who gave to so many lives during her lifetime. Click here to view photos of the event.

Attending Local Leadership Events in Wichita...

This week, I attended a Rotary Club meeting and the Wichita Metro Chamber of Commerce Annual Dinner in Wichita. I am honored to be given the opportunity to speak with community leaders...
throughout Kansas. Doris Kearns Goodwin was the keynote speaker and talk about her book, Team of Rivals. Thank you to Bill Maness for hosting me and to Bernie Koch for inviting me to attend the event.

National Association of Farm Broadcasters Convention...

I attended the National Association of Farm Broadcasters (NAFB) Convention in Kansas City on Thursday. NAFB members are television and radio farm broadcasters from around the nation. The convention provides them with information on how to better serve the agriculture community through agriculture related broadcast programs. It is always a great opportunity for me to attend this event and speak with broadcasters who do so much to keep our farmers and ranchers informed. Most of the discussion focused on the outcome of the recent elections and potential issues that will face Congress when the next session begins in January. Click here to view photos.

Kansas Hospital Association Awards Luncheon...

While in the Kansas City area on Thursday, I attended the Kansas Hospital Association's (KHA) annual convention awards luncheon. I enjoyed celebrating the achievements of these dedicated professionals and hearing the stories from the communities they serve. Dr. John Jeter, of Hays Medical Center, was inaugurated as the incoming board chair and I congratulate him on his new leadership position. Furthermore, I was pleased to recognize Roger Pearson, of Ellsworth County Medical Center for receiving the Donald A. Wilson Visionary Award and Maynard F. Oliverius, of Stormont-Vail HealthCare, Inc., in Topeka who received the Charles S. Billings Award. A special thank you to Tom Bell, president of KHA, and Fred Lucky, vice-president of KHA, for the invitation and their hospitality.

Attending Dole Leadership Prize Ceremony for Former President George H.W. Bush...

On Sunday, I visited the University of Kansas in Lawrence, where our nation's 41st president, George H.W. Bush, was awarded the 2008 Dole Leadership Prize from the university's Dole Institute. Bush was honored during a ceremony in the Lied Center at KU to recognize the leadership he displayed during his presidency. The Dole Institute, established at KU in 1997, was named after former U.S. Senator Bob Dole and is designed to encourage student participation and citizen involvement in public service. Thanks to KU Chancellor, Robert Hemenway.

Attending High School Performance...

I attended a Hays High School musical for the performance of "Beauty and the Beast." My daughter Alex, was a member of the cast and my wife, Robba was the accompanist. Congratulations to the students and directors for their hard work in putting together a successful and entertaining performance. Thanks to Elise Peterson, the director of the show.
Writers Get Chance At Writing Novels
By TERRY ROMBECK
Lawrence Journal-World

LAWRENCE (AP) -- Like a lot of people, Ted Boone has always wanted to write a novel but didn't think he had the time.

"I think people can sit down and watch a television show and think, 'I could have written that,' or 'I would have written it better,'" Boone says. "And I think we do that with books, too. There's a temptation to compete with the creative forces that are out there."

With one recent study showing more than 80 percent of Americans would like to write a book, it's obviously a common goal for many.

So if you're one of those who wants your own novel, get your laptop fired up — November is National Novel Writing Month.

The annual event, which goes by the shorthand NaNoWriMo, is pretty straightforward: Write a 50,000-word novel during the month of November, then upload it to www.nanowrimo.org. A computer will count your words, and if you hit the 50,000-word mark, you'll get a certificate.

"There's no magic here," says Chris Baty, a Prairie Village native who founded the event. "All we're doing is giving people a little bit of inspiration and a little structure."

Baty, who now lives in San Francisco, started the writing event in 1999 with a group of friends. They picked 50,000 words as an arbitrary number that seemed attainable but would still qualify as a short novel.

It's grown to include a nonprofit organization and more than 101,000 participants in 80 countries last year. "We all have dozens of books in us," Baty says. "Sometimes people get caught up that they don't have THE Idea, the book no one's ever written before, and it has to appear before they start writing. That idea I don't think ever comes. You just have to start writing."

That's the way it was for Lawrence resident Sara Lundberg. She attempted to hit the 50,000-word mark twice before finally attaining it last year with a fantasy story.

"It's probably going to be crap," she says of most of the NaNoWriMo novels. "Thirty thousand of the 50,000 I wrote last year are not great words. There are gems in there, though, that are amazing, that I didn't know I could write."

That may be the case, but NaNoWriMo novelists have had some luck in the past. Baty says 27 manuscripts have been sold to publishers, and the event can now tout a New York Times best-seller: "Water for Elephants," by Sara Gruen. The key, participants say, is not to worry about quality — just get words on paper.

Writing 50,000 words might sound like a difficult task.

But Boone, a lecturer in Kansas University's School of Business who serves as the Lawrence organizer for NaNoWriMo, says it's definitely attainable. He's done it three years, all with science fiction stories.

There are different strategies to getting through.

"For me what works is writing scene by scene," he says. "Some days, I'll write a chapter that's 3,000 words, which is a lot of output for a single day. The next day, I might write a single scene that's much shorter."

Others, he says, just try to get through 1,667 words a day, which puts them on pace to finish the novel by the end of the month.

And there are resources available. The organization's Web site, www.nanowrimo.org, has tips and also lists local write-ins that will happen in Lawrence in November. At those writing events, NaNoWriMo participants can get inspiration from one another and bounce ideas off of other writers.

"It's a really interesting crowd in Lawrence," Boone says. "You'll get people in full goth gear and makeup, and people who are professors. It really grabs the spirit of NaNoWriMo. People who wouldn't usually rub elbows with another see they have commonality."

If you want to participate and don't have an idea, don't fear. Boone says he often doesn't choose his topic until a day or two before Nov. 1. And even then, he doesn't have the whole thing mapped out.

"I usually find I've got a good starting point, a couple of way points in the middle I'd like to strike, and I know where I want to finish," he says. "In the process, they'll get to the point where they feel like they're not telling the story. Literally the story will take on a life of its own."

Lundberg, an administrative associate at KU, plans to write a story about vampires to fill her November writing fix. She starts getting excited about writing every year around this time.

And even if she never gets anything published, it's worth her time.
Chantz Thomas received scholarship honors during halftime ceremonies of KU-Texas football game

LAWRENCE – On Saturday, Nov. 15, the University of Kansas honored recipients of its most prestigious scholarships during halftime of the KU - Texas game in Memorial Stadium.

More than 680 undergraduates are recipients of one of six top scholarships offered at KU: National Merit, National Achievement, National Hispanic, Perfect Achievement, Summerfield and the Watkins-Berger.

This year’s scholars represent the largest group since 1999 when KU Chancellor Robert Hemenway initiated Scholars Day on the Field. About 650 are Kansans or are Kansas high school graduates. They represent 58 Kansas counties and 19 other states and countries.

“Taking our most outstanding student scholars out on the football field at halftime is one of my favorite events of the year. It allows KU to introduce our most talented students to a broad audience and it gives our top scholars an opportunity to be recognized for their accomplishments in a unique setting,” Hemenway said.

Solon E. Summerfield scholarships for men and the Elizabeth M. Watkins-Emily Berger scholarships for women are awarded to top students graduating from Kansas high schools in recognition of outstanding academic achievements, community service and leadership. Summerfield scholarships are funded through an endowment established in 1929. Watkins-Berger scholarships were first established in 1943.

Smoky Valley graduate, Chantz Palmer Thomas, (son of Greg and Lorye Thomas), was awarded with a Summerfield Scholarship.
Exhibited artwork in South Korea

Faculty and students in the Department of Art at the University of Kansas exhibited their work earlier this month at the Museum of Contemporary Art at Hongik University in Seoul, South Korea.

The International Printmaking Exchange Exhibition celebrated the Hongik University printmaking department’s 20th anniversary. The show included works from students and faculty from universities throughout the United States, China, Japan, Australia and South Korea.

Yoonmi Nam, associate professor of printmaking at KU, attended the celebration and gave a presentation on her work and contemporary printmaking in America as part of series of lectures given by invited international artists.

KU and Hongik University established an international exchange agreement in 2007. The program, initiated by Nam, allows the exchange of students between the art departments of the two universities in the spring semester of each year.

“It is a tremendous occasion for any artist to be involved in an exhibition abroad,” said Andrew Jilka, a senior from Salina. “I am indebted to the students and faculty of Hongik University for the opportunities and experiences they are providing.”

Nam said, “I hope to see this exciting exchange program and our positive relationship with Hongik University evolve over the years.”

Work by three other KU printmaking faculty was included in the exhibition: Shawn Bitters, assistant professor; Michael Krueger, associate professor; and

Kristi Arnold, lecturer and resident artist.

While in South Korea, Nam visited with three of her former students who are now teaching English there: Sam Gray, a 2005 graduate from Blue Rapis; Tracy Hedberg, a 2004 graduate from Leawood and Topeka; and Erik Sultzer, a 2003 graduate from Hays. All received bachelor’s degrees in fine arts.

Hongik University is one of the highest-ranking universities in the areas of art and design in South Korea, and its printmaking department, established in 1988, was the first of its kind in the country.

Among the students displaying their work in the show was George R. DeMoura, senior majoring in fine arts. He is the son of Lena Davis, grandson of Margaret Wade, Lucas and a LLHS graduate.
Scholarship recipient

Editor's note: The following is a letter written by a local recipient of the Hixson Opportunity Award. Christina Hixson, trustee of the Ernst F. Lied Foundation of Las Vegas, established the endowed scholarship through a $5 million gift to KU. Candidates must be graduates of Kansas high schools who, because of personal or financial challenges, might not consider pursuing a college education.

April 5, 2008, was the happiest day of my life. I came home from work expecting the usual routine: eat dinner, do homework, watch TV, and go to bed. I sat down my backpack and walked into the kitchen expecting to begin dishwashing when my mom found me. “You got mail from KU today,” she said, and I easily could have dropped my plate on the floor in a mad dash to find the letter. I had been anxiously waiting for four days for a letter to come notifying me whether or not I would be a recipient of the Hixson Opportunity Award. I found the unopened envelope resting on the computer desk. For a brief moment I considered putting off opening the letter, but needed to know: did I or did I not get this scholarship.

My mind flashed back to the night I had stayed up writing my essay for the award. I remembered crying after doing a final proofread, for I had never put so much emotion or passion into a single page of writing. I wanted more than anything for the readers of my essay to understand who I was, where I had come from, and how desperately I wanted to go to KU. I decided I was prepared to know my fate. I opened the letter and read the first sentence: “Dear Kathryn: I am pleased to inform you that you have been selected to receive a Hixson Opportunity Award to attend the University of Kansas.” I turned to my mom and cried through tears of happiness that I was getting to go to KU. That was the happiest moment my mom and I have ever shared because it was our dream that some day I would go to KU. Even though she could not financially support me, my mom always promised me that somehow I would be able to afford KU. I wish everyone could feel the sense of accomplishment and joy I had after reading my award notification letter.

Being at KU is truly a life changing experience, which would not have happened for me without the Hixson Opportunity Award. What Ms. Christina Hixson has done for me and the other recipients of this award is truly amazing, and I look up to her for it. We are complete strangers to her, and yet she is willing to put a $20,000 investment in our futures. A college education is essential in today’s job market, which is why it was so important to me to go to college. Also, my generation will someday be taking care of the Baby Boomers, which is why it is essential for this country to be prepared to handle their needs. Essentially, Ms. Hixson has made an investment in the future of the United States by providing the chance for me and the other recipients to go to school.

I have learned a lot of things since starting classes at KU, and not just inside the classroom. While I was able to breeze through high school, my classes in college demand a lot more studying time and preparation. I have met an abundance of new people, coming from every type of background imaginable. I have also learned that it is essential to own a good, comfortable pair of walking shoes so that I do not rub blisters on my feet. Unfortunately I may have found the last one out a little too late! I am having the time of my life at KU and I am discovering that I really care about what I am studying. I encourage everyone to take the opportunity to go to college here if they have it.

I really recommend any high school senior to take the opportunity to apply for the Hixson Opportunity Award, and any other scholarships available. Information about the award is available on the KU Web site, through guidance counselors, or the Office of Student Financial Aid at KU. I hope by sharing my experience with the award that I will encourage others to apply. It is truly life changing.

Kathryn Oliver
Leavenworth
University of Kansas freshman
KU Research Center Sues NIH Over Patents

LAWRENCE (AP) -- The University of Kansas Center for Research has filed a federal lawsuit claiming that two of its researchers should be listed on patents for a cancer drug.

The research center sued the National Institutes of Health because Val Stella, a professor of pharmaceutical chemistry, and Wanda Waugh, a research assistant who retired in 1999, helped create the drug Velcade.

The research center's president, Steve Warren, said Stella and Waugh made it possible for the drug to be delivered to patients in a non-toxic way.

The University of Kansas Center for Research is a nonprofit organization affiliated with the university that works to get intellectual property created by university researchers to the market.
Scholarship recipient

Editor's note: The following is a letter written by a local recipient of the Hixson Opportunity Award. Christina Hixson, trustee of the Ernst F. Lied Foundation of Las Vegas, established the endowed scholarship through a $5 million gift to KU. Candidates must be graduates of Kansas high schools who, because of personal or financial challenges, might not consider pursuing a college education.

When I was a little girl I always dreamed of becoming a professional dancer. As I grew older my dreams changed to me wanting to be a veterinarian, lawyer, and even a journalist. Although my dreams changed over the years, they all had something in common. In order to achieve any of them I knew I would need to go to college.

My senior year at Lansing High School I realized I needed to figure out what school I wanted to attend and how I was going to afford it. Not only did I need to make crucial decisions but I needed to make them fast. I knew I wanted to attend a four-year university instead of a community college but didn’t know how I was going to pay for it. As the year started to progress I started freaking out about money. I applied for several scholarships but didn’t hear back from most of them. At Lansing I was involved in several extra curricular activities. I was class president, Leadership president, head editor of the yearbook staff, co-captain of the Lionette dance team, and a member of the Kayettes just to name a few. I figured that by being so involved I would have a good chance at getting scholarships but I found out it wasn’t always enough.

Towards the end of my senior year I had come to the realization that I would most likely be going to a community college. Before I started researching community colleges I picked up one last scholarship in my school’s guidance office. The scholarship said it was for $5,000 a year and it was refundable for four years. After reading through the instructions I decided to take it home and give it a shot. To my surprise I was awarded the scholarship February of my senior year.

I am now a freshman at the University of Kansas and I love everything about it. I feel so grateful and blessed to be given such a generous award. I go to every football game I can and I have even joined an organization called Student Union Activities. KU feels like home and without the help of this scholarship I would have never experienced such a wonderful place.

I want every high school senior to know you shouldn’t give up on your dreams of going to college just because of the cost. I encourage every senior to ask his or her guidance counselor about the Hixson Opportunity Award. The award has truly changed my life and it could change yours too.

Brittany Shelton
Lansing
University of Kansas freshman
The University of Kansas honored all undergraduate recipients of its most prestigious scholarships during halftime of the KU-Texas game on Nov. 15 in Memorial Stadium.

Among the scholars recognized were Cory Bunting of Basehor; Joseph Fox of Easton; Heidi Christensen of Fort Leavenworth; Alison Cain, Maria Jackson, Harold Laurence, Megan Logan and Carolyn McKune of Lansing; Deanna Hogan, Garrett Kelly, Michelle Loewenstein, Brian Palmer and Kyle Young of Leavenworth; Caitlin Rose of Linwood; and John Davis, Tyler Gurss, Spencer Seman, Justin Smith and James Young of Tonganoxie.

More than 680 undergraduates are recipients of one of six top scholarships offered at KU — National Merit, National Achievement, National Hispanic, Perfect Achievement, Summerfield and the Watkins-Berger.

This year's scholars represent the largest group since 1999 when KU Chancellor Robert Hemenway initiated “Scholars Day on the Field.” About 650 are Kansans or are Kansas high school graduates. They represent 58 Kansas counties and 19 other states and countries.

KU currently enrolls 205 National Merits scholars, 20 National Hispanic scholars, nine National Achievement scholars, four Perfect Achievement scholars, 220 Watkins-Berger scholars and 228 Summerfield scholars.
KU Army ROTC numbers up

TOPEKA — While many new students are donning Kansas college this fall, more are also wearing green.

Officials at the University of Kansas and at Kansas State report an increase of at least 20 percent in the number of Army ROTC cadets on campus this semester.

Nationally, there are 30,721 Army ROTC cadets.

Enrollment at Kansas State’s Manhattan campus, which is within 30 minutes of Fort Riley and the 1st Infantry Division, is 155 this fall, compared with 124 last fall. Lt. Col. George Belin, professor of military science and head of Kansas State’s Army ROTC program, says cadets are matched with older students who act as mentors.

“Before they even come to K-State, we give them the personal attention that they need,” Belin said. “Once they’re here, ROTC becomes more than something they do. They become part of the family.”
KU files federal lawsuit on behalf of researchers

For inclusion on patents for cancer drug

LAWRENCE, Kan. (AP) - The University of Kansas Center for Research has filed a federal lawsuit claiming that two of its researchers should be listed on patents for a cancer drug. The research center sued the National Institutes of Health because Val Stella, a professor of pharmaceutical chemistry, and Wanda Waugh, a research assistant who retired in 1999, helped create the drug Velcade. The research center's president, Steve Warren, said Stella and Waugh made it possible for the drug to be delivered to patients in a nontoxic way.

The University of Kansas Center for Research is a nonprofit organization affiliated with the university that works to get intellectual property created by university researchers to the market. Warren said the research center brought up the patent issue in the spring of 2007 but discussions stopped because the NIH didn't agree that Stella and Waugh should be listed on two patents. The Department of Health and Human Services and the National Cancer Institute also are defendants in the lawsuit.

The two federal institutions are linked to the National Institutes of Health. The NIH said it would not discuss pending litigation.

The lawsuit alleges that the NIH and its project officer on the drug, Dr. Shanker Gupta, asked Stella to research how to make a stable liquid solution for the drug so it could be delivered safely to humans.

If Stella and Waugh are eventually added as co-inventors on the patents, the research center, Stella and Waugh could benefit financially, although Warren said he didn't know how much money they would make. "It's a very successful drug," Warren said. "It is obviously worthwhile to be an inventor on it."

Velcade is marketed in the United States by Millennium Pharmaceuticals Inc., which was acquired by the Japanese Takeda Pharmaceutical Co. earlier this year. According to the lawsuit, Millennium has exclusively licensed two patents for the drug.

Revenues from the drug generated $265.2 million in 2007 and $220.5 million in 2006, according to financial reports from Millennium.