Historian:
Radical change lies ahead

KU professor sees similarities in 1930s, today

By DUANE SCHRAG
Salina Journal

When towering dust storms darkened the Plains states' skies in the 1930s, Americans who had long cherished their independence from government had a change of heart.

By reinventing their economic model, Americans survived the crippling Depression. But the solution was only temporary, said Don Worster, a professor of American and ecological history.

Today, America — indeed, the whole world — faces new storms.

"The solution we found in the 1930s has become our nemesis," said Worster. Worster, distinguished professor of American History at the University of Kansas' Hall Center for the Humanities, gave a lecture titled "Feeling the heat: Global warming and the future of the Great Plains" at the Salina Art Center on Tuesday evening.

He believes America will have to do nothing less than reinvent the role of government. The author of "Dust Bowl: the Southern Plains in the 1930s," which received the Bancroft Prize in American history, Worster sees parallels between

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Change / Professor says 1930s expansion was bad long-term

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the 1930s and today.
While the dust storms were certainly the product of drought, they also were caused by a “speculative fever” that gripped the agriculture community.

“This is the lecture I would have liked to have given from the gallery in Topeka the other day,” Worster said, a reference to the intense legislative effort to allow two new coal-fired power plants in Holcomb.

Depression made worse
Farmers in the early part of the century plowed up vast areas of native prairie. This expansion put immediate self-interest ahead of long-term public good, Worster said. When the drought hit — the worst the Midwest experienced in the 20th century — it was the perfect storm.

“Drought was a necessary factor, but it wasn’t a sufficient factor,” he said.

Faced with the devastating Depression, Americans rethought their opposition to government intervention. Federal relief became a way of life. Even when commodity prices are high, federal farm programs remain strong.

“All times have become bad times,” he noted.

But the expansionist mindset that played a critical role in spawning the dust storms never went away. If anything, it gathered momentum. Technology was harnessed to create ever-greater crop yields. Water resources were tapped. Fossil fuels — oil, natural gas, coal — were extracted and burned at accelerating rates.

The result is that rivers no longer flow like they used to, and Earth’s climate is changing at a “radical, unprecedented, dangerous rate.”

“Can we prevent the crisis looming before us simply by following the logic that got us into this situation?” Worster asked.

Whom do you believe?
Asked about those who doubt that humans are accelerating global warming, Worster said that while dissent is invaluable to advancement of science, there is no question but that the world’s climatologists agree that human behavior is playing a critical role.

Long-term climate models suggest that the United States will warm more than the rest of the world.

“What is bad for the Earth’s atmosphere is bad for Kansas agriculture,” he said.

He offered an analogy: If 90 percent of the experts warned that a tornado was approaching, which group would you heed?

Worster said that not only will Americans have to find new sources of energy, those will not be a substitute for cultural and moral innovation. They will have to find an alternative to the expansion economy that energized the 20th century, he said.

This is a view that seems to have more currency outside America than in.

“It is mainly Americans who seem reluctant to under-
Rachel K. Miles, Baldwin City, has been named an Elizabeth M. Watkins-Emily Berger Scholar at the University of Kansas, Lawrence.

She is a senior majoring in accounting and business administration.

She is the daughter of Deanna Miles.

She graduated from Baldwin High School.
Coal-fired plant bill stays alive

BY KEVIN FLAHERTY
THE MORNING SUN

TOPEKA – Rep. Bob Grant, D-Cherokee, was talking Friday when he said he thought the Holcomb coal-fired plant might find a way to get back to life.

He said that after the House failed to override the veto of Gov. Kathleen Sebelius, mentioning that it seemed to be an issue with a lot of games played behind the scenes.

Well, game on.

The coal-fired plant was revived over the weekend, stowed away on a conference committee bill that includes economic development projects for other places across the state. Rep. Julie Menghini, D-Pittsburg, said because it was attached to that bill, it could not be extracted and voted on separately.

“It’s supposed to make it harder for legislators from those areas to vote against the bill,” Menghini said. “Though honestly, I think that all of those are projects that are going to happen anyway.”

Menghini said she didn’t know how the plan would work out, though she said she didn’t think that Sebelius would go for it. Menghini has routinely voted against the coal-fired plant, asking that it be more focused on alternative energy sources. Meanwhile, Grant and Sen. Jim Barone, D-Frontenac, have voted for the bill.

“Obviously, here in the Senate, we’ve overridden the veto and have voted for it,” Barone said. “In the House, they can’t get it past the veto yet. But of course the talk is that they weren’t done trying, and I’m sure they are not.”

Both chambers also passed a budget, though they were far apart.

“We have to come out of here with some kind of a budget,” Grant said. “It may not be worth a damn, but we have to come out with something.”

The difference in the two is a large sum of money – Menghini called the Senate version “stripped down,” while the House one featured more items.

“I continue to believe we’re spending too much money,” Barone said. “When you put fiscal year 08 and FY 09 together, you’re spending nearly $800 million more than you’re bringing in.”

Menghini said she preferred the House’s version, which funded more programs.

“We’re trying to find some middle ground,” Menghini said. “I guess we’ll see.”

Local legislators were also able to see a hometown kid this week. Both chambers passed a resolution congratulating the University of Kansas

PLANT: Bill

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1A

trifecta – the Orange Bowl champion football team, the national championship basketball team and the debate team that scored more points than any other squad in the country. Among the football team’s representatives was Kerry Meier, a former standout at Pittsburg High School.

“The people of the state, and the people of the area ought to be pretty damn proud,” Grant said. “It’s not often you can have three champions from the same school. To me, it’s pretty damn good.”

As for the rest of the issues, Grant said he didn’t know when legislators would return home.

“I think we’re going to be here awhile,” Grant said. “That old feeling is coming back.”
USD 250 to host Spring Honors for teachers

Annual Pittsburg Community Schools Spring Honors Reception will be held at 3:45 p.m. today in the lower level of Pittsburg Memorial Auditorium.

The event, held on National Teacher Day, is sponsored by the USD 250 Board of Education and the Pittsburg Education Association. All staff members, retired teachers and friends in the community may attend. Refreshments will be served.

A piano prelude will be provided by Beverly Chouinard, retired teacher. Dr. Rich Ellis, board president, will welcome guests.

Retiring teachers include Mary Beth Dunlavy, special education inclusion teacher at Pittsburg Community Middle School; Gayle Henrickson, at-risk teacher at PCMS; Patty LeFever, sixth grade basic studies teacher, PCMS; Kathleen Owsley, English teacher at Pittsburg High School; Debbie Pate, art teacher at PCMS; and Pam Thomas, PHS English teacher.

Retiring teachers will be honored at the reception with a card shower and remembrances from the Pittsburg Education Association. They will be introduced by colleagues and have a chance to give a response concerning their career and future plans.

Pittsburg Education Association Scholarship will be awarded to Rebekah Carlton, PHS senior who plans to pursue a degree in elementary education.

Certificates awarded by the University of Kansas for 25 years of service to the teaching profession in Kansas will be presented by Gary Price, USD 250 superintendent. They will be awarded to Patty LeFever, Greg Lopez and Jack Weaver, PCMS; Pam Kolath and Sandra Godsey, Lakeside Elementary School; and Lori Mendicki, Meadowlark Elementary School.

Service pins for years of service in USD 250 will also be presented by Price. Recipients will include: Missy Vaclav, Cory Gibson, David Hudson, Gary Seminick and Kristen O’Brien, five years of service; Michelle Casey, Larry Downing, Janice Malan, Kelly Collier and Diana Oertle, 10 years; Bryan Mahnkten, Brenda Penner, Mel Anderson, Daniel Moss, Teresa Spangler and Lee Brunetti, 15 years; and Pam Kolath, Christy Watt and Tom Wheeler, 20 years.

Those with 25 or more years of service will be honored with service pins and framed certificates. Recipients will be as follows: Connie Huddleston, George Nettels Elementary School, Rebecca Barrett, PCMS, and Peggy Polsak, Westside Elementary School, 25 years; David Turnbull, PCMS, Debbie Grisolano, Meadowlark Elementary, and Gene Hendrickson and Kathleen Owsley, PHS, 30 years; and Joella Reid, PCMS, Phillips Scorse, Meadowlark Elementary, and Valerie Gardner, Westside Elementary, 35 years. A special honoree will be Suzanne Marshall, Westside, with 40 years of service to USD 250.

Other teachers who have received awards throughout the year will receive certificates. Included will be Rebecca Turnbull, PCMS, who received the Clyde U. Phillips Outstanding Educator Award from Pittsburg State University; Angela Lewis, PCMS, and Donna Zerr, PHS, Clyde U. Phillips Distinguished Service Award nominee; Mike Elder, PHS, Kansas Skills USA Advisor of the Year; and Brandy Stanley, Lakeside Elementary School, Outstanding Supervisor, USD 250 Board of Education, Pittsburg Education Association.

Also to be honored will be Gayle Henrickson, PCMS, Jane Lopez, Lakeside, Abbey Poling, PHS, and LaDonna Pyle, Meadowlark, nominee for the Anna Fintel Excellence in Education Award.

USD 250 Globe Award winner Teresa Spangler, PHS, will be honored, along with nominees Babs Tims, Greg Shaw, Diane Jackson and Brenda Penner.

Appreciation of Professional People Leading Education (APPLE) Awards will be given by the Pittsburg Education Association. Winners are Patty LeFever, PCMS, Thank You Award for her service to PEA; and Lynette Wescott, Involve Award for her work involving the community in a club designed to help middle school girls make healthy choices.

PEA also received an APPLE award from UniServ Southeast for having the highest percentage of membership at 93 percent.

The reception is coordinated by PEA co-presidents Michelle Casey and Sherry Turnbull, and Anita White, vice president. Also being recognized will be Mary Ann DeMott, PEA treasurer, and building representatives Missy Vacca, Donna Pryor, Terri Wood, Michelle Broxterman, Stacy Foster and Rhonda White.
House leaves, Senate upset

Chambers to try anew Monday; coal unresolved

By Tim Carpenter
THE CAPITAL-JOURNAL

The Legislature decided against making a last-ditch appeal Saturday night to authorize expansion of a coal-fired power plant in southwest Kansas by linking the controversial energy project to three unrelated economic development measures.

House Speaker Melvin Neufeld, R-Ingalls, gavelled out the House at 8 p.m. and vowed to return Monday rather than beat the drum again on behalf of the $3.6 billion expansion sought by Sunflower Electric Power Corp.

The Senate reluctantly left 45 minutes later, with Senate Majority Leader Derek Schmidt, R-Independence, and Senate Minority Leader Anthony Hensley, D-Topeka, expressing disappointment at the abrupt end of business.

"The House has unexpectedly left the building," Schmidt said. "That makes it somewhat difficult to make progress on the remaining issues."

Hensley said Neufeld didn't notify the Senate leadership of his decision to bolt from Topeka, guaranteeing the wrap-up portion of the 2008 session would extend into a second week.

"It came as a complete surprise, and I think stunned everybody," Hensley said. "I believe the situation we're in right now is a disgrace of the process of a bicameral Legislature. We're now in this quandary of not knowing exactly where we're going or what we're going to be able to accomplish."

Please see CHAMBERS, Page 10A
Chambers: Sebelius says don’t link issues

Continued from Page 1A

The breakdown left unresolved the key components of the state’s new budget and resolution of the coal issue pitting Democratic Gov. Kathleen Sebelius, who vetoed two Holcomb coal bills this session, against the Republican-led House and Senate, which has failed during the past four months to carve out veto-proof pro-coal legislation.

Sebelius said Saturday she would most likely veto this third strike at coal if adopted by the Legislature. “I have the same opposition to the key components of the coal bill that I’ve had from day one,” the governor said.

She remains opposed to the 1,400-megawatt coal plant proposed by Sunflower, arguing it would add 11 million tons of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere and contribute to global warming. The Kansas Department of Health and Environment blocked the project in October by denying Sunflower an air-quality permit.

The Senate twice gathered two-thirds majorities to override the governor on Holcomb construction bills, but the House fell short of 84 votes necessary to complete the override.

The latest strategy by Neufeld is to blend in a single bill authorization of the Holcomb project with three unrelated economic development projects. One element is extension of a tax break created by the state last year to help Hill’s Pet Nutrition or other Kansas corporations spending $100 million on an expansion and creating at least 100 new jobs. The package contains state financial support for a huge rail and truck shipping complex under development in Johnson County and alteration of the state-wide IMPACT program designed to lure new businesses to Kansas.

Neufeld, who framed the Sunflower project as economic development initiative for southwest Kansas, said the new bill should be referred to as an economic stimulus package rather than a coal bill.

“Sebelius said she suspected the merger of such a diverse list of public policy topics in the same bill might violate the Kansas Constitution based on prior rulings by the Kansas Supreme Court.

“This bill is likely to be unconstitutional,” she said. “By calling the building of coal plants economic development doesn’t make them economic development.”

The governor also said she was disappointed Neufeld continued to allege she attempted to bribe legislators on the coal issue by inviting them to fly on her state plane to NCAA basketball tournament games involving The University of Kansas and Kansas State University. Six House members and five senators accepted flights to Omaha, Neb., Detroit or San Antonio. Most of these legislators voted against the coal project, but two in the group support the Holcomb development.

Neufeld reiterated the sentiment Thursday after the House coal-bill override failed.

“I have consistently, throughout my term in office, tried to attend a whole variety of activities and events that highlight Kansas kids and Kansas schools,” Sebelius said. “I try to fill the plane with whoever is a supporter of that school, whoever is around. I just find it very offensive that he would choose to somehow allege that people who wanted to come to the KU basketball were being bribed.”

Sunflower and its two out-of-state partners want to build two 700-megawatt units in Finney County. About 85 percent of the new power would be consumed by customers in Texas and Colorado.

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Sen. Ralph Ostmeyer, R-Grinnell, rests while health care costs are discussed in the Senate during a long day of business Saturday. The Legislature will try to conclude its wrap-up session Monday.
GREENSBURG — A YEAR LATER

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Name and vision
color tornado town

They’re rebuilding lives,
but not all are staying

By James Carlson
THE CAPITAL-JOURNAL

GREENSBURG — Atop a grain silo at the edge of this tornado-ravaged town, Dennis McKinney peered out over the pockets of buzzing construction, past the new art gallery and the new convenience store, to the water tower partially repainted — "GREENSBURG," it read.

It is the anchor of a town where McKinney has lived for 24 years, where his children grew up.

"This is what we do, we build back our homes," he said of the post-twister progress. "This is a great community to raise a family, a great community to retire in."

Down on the ground, inside the workforce center nearby, Amber Boyles cries while she weaves a similar tale with a different ending.

ONLINE Go online for video, a photo gallery and story archives from the Greensburg tornado. www.cjonline.com

The 32-year-old was born and raised here, a fourth-generation resident of Greensburg where she had lived in her parents' old two-story yellow house on the east side of town. Before that, she rented a home built half a century ago for a measly $90 a month.

"I've been at every home in this town, to sell stuff when I was in school or for my kids," Boyles said. "I've seen it all."

McKinney and Boyles — one, the Democratic leader of the Kansas

Please see GREENSBURG, Page 8A

When President Bush visits Greensburg today, he will see the work of Lucas Kleinsasser, an employee of Maguire Iron. Kleinsasser is pictured climbing to the top of a new water tower in the tornado-ravaged town as he paints "Greensburg, Home of the Big Well." Toward the center of the photo is a nearly complete "green" art gallery being constructed by University of Kansas architecture students.
Amber Boyles and her family are struggling to remain in Greensburg, but housing prices might force them to leave town.
Greensburg: Conflicts cloud rebirth

Continued from Page 1A

House and the other, a mother of two boys — were two of the nearly 1,000 Greensburg residents who were displaced in the 200 mph twister a year ago today. To both, Greensburg is home, but their place in the town’s future differs.

One year after devastation struck, Greensburg progresses but still shows signs of the storm. More land lies vacant than is covered in reconstruction, and the trees are still shorn off, bare as if from a scary movie.

What does this town mean to people one year later?

It was an overwhelming experience for a former mayor and an election defeat for some in city government. It is an experiment in “green” living for residents and a public relations boon for companies. For some, such as Boyles, Greensburg looks like the past as she is priced out of her home. For others, such as McKinney, it is the future.

The perfect life

Lonnie McCollum sought a quiet retirement in Greensburg but only found more controversy.

The retiring superintendent of the Kansas Highway Patrol returned to his hometown in 1999 after spending the previous year in contentious contract negotiations with state troopers. He wanted to cool off, he said, to simplify life.

He found that peace in Greensburg, a community he loved, and where the feeling was reciprocated. McCollum was elected mayor in 2006 in a write-in campaign.

On April 27, 2007, he commented to his wife, “Things are going great,” he said. “It was about as comfortable as it gets.”

A week later, the winds swirled and life changed.

In a town meeting inside a tent days after the storm, McCollum brought up the idea of rebuilding in an environmentally sustainable way. He had had ideas prior to the tornado about how to revitalize the town where the population had dropped from 2,800 half a century ago to 1,400.

With a clean slate, this was a chance to build the right way.

“I wanted us to become a focal point of America,” McCollum said.

But he says he met resistance to anything other than rebuilding quickly.

“I’m not sure if my vision was too big or I didn’t communicate it very well, or maybe people were hurt too much and just wanted a roof over their heads,” he said.

He understood that sentiment, he said. He had lost his home, too. But to some others, McCollum was too early to the idea of going green and was dictating rather than listening.

“There’s a difference in doing something the democratic way and the dictatorship way,” said Bethel Thonesbery, a city councilman at the time.

As he faced tougher opposition, McCollum made a decision he had never made about anything in his life — he quit.

“He wasn’t able to deal with things, understandably,” said Mitzi Hesser, director of public health for Kiowa County.

McCollum defends his decision to leave his post and the town for good. His house was destroyed, and he didn’t have insurance. His life was in shambles.

“All the memories I moved back there for were gone,” he said.

The events that unfolded one year ago have left a mark on the former highway patrol superintendent, who now lives and works 30 miles down the road in Pratt.

“I’m probably not welcome back there,” he said. “They’d say, ‘He’s an idiot and always has been.’”

How to grow

The tornado, and decisions in its aftermath, also spelled political doom for the

PRESIDENT’S VISIT

What: President Bush will give the commencement address at Greensburg High School’s graduation.

Where: Greensburg High School practice gym, 600 S. Main St., Greensburg

new mayor and two city council officials.

In the chaos of a town destroyed, frustrated residents pushed for reconstruction, said Bob Mitchum, a city councilman who wasn’t re-elected in elections last month.

“It was all, ‘Let’s get going, let’s get going!’” he said of the post-tornado sentiment.

“But you don’t start down a highway without knowing where you’re going.”

Some council members, such as Mitchum, urged patience. They needed to plan before building wherever and whatever, Mitchum said.

But Bob Mosier, the former superintendent of Greensburg schools, said the coun-
Council had a difficult time obtaining building codes and moving the rebuilding process.

“I just don’t think they were moving forward enough,” Mosier said.

Some decisions by the mayor also pushed buttons for Mosier and others.

In September, Mayor John Janssen, who stepped in for McComb, helped implement a $400 charge for the city to mow unruly lawns. When citizens complained, Janssen told a newspaper, “Ask if they want some cheese and crackers with that whine.”

“He irritated some people badly,” Mosier said.

Bob Dixson, the mayor-elect who enters office Monday, said Janssen’s push for a three-block-long park on Main Street also was too much for some people who thought tax-paying businesses should go in downtown.

“He should have backed off when he saw it wasn’t going his way,” Dixson said.

Rep. Dennis McKinney, the Kansas House minority leader, points out over the town from the top of a grain elevator. McKinney lost his house in the tornado but has been among the first to rebuild.

Bob Dixson, the incoming mayor, creates post holes for a new fence made of straw and recycled milk jugs outside his home in Greensburg. Dixson takes office on Monday.
Continued from Page 8A

Janssen is a regular guy, not a politician, said Greensburg city administrator Steve Hewitt, and his park idea just caught some people off guard.

"If you're not frustrating some people, then you're not thinking enough, you're not doing your job," Hewitt said.

Janssen said he took unpopular stances, but they were the correct ones for the city's long-term health. He said his ousting was part of a backlash against the tornado.

"You couldn't blame the hospital, you couldn't blame the school," he said. "People looked to the ty:"

Green crusade

Following the tornado, Greensburg provides an unprecedented chance to build a sustainable city.

Red-faced from the sun last week, Dixson fiddled with his new privacy fence made of straw and recycled milk jugs.

"Out here, we're the original recyclers," the incoming mayor said of his farming community.

When complete, Greensburg most likely will be the "greenest" town in America. At least six public buildings will be LEED-platinum certified, the highest energy-efficiency rating available. Only 65 buildings in the United States currently have that designation, none of them in Kansas.

The General Motors dealership will be green, so will the new school and the John Deere dealership.

Many of the town's residents are building back green as well. Dixson's home has energy-efficient windows, "insulation out the kazoo" in the walls and an on-demand water heater.

At the nearby Methodist church going up, new foam-insulated concrete and the highest-quality insulation in the roof will reduce utility costs by half, said McKinney, a church member.

"It's a living laboratory where people can come and experience what a sustainable town can look like," said Daniel Wallach, executive director of the nonprofit group Greensburg Greentown.

But building "green" increases construction costs by an average of five percent to 10 percent, and some just can't afford it, said Throneberry, the former councilman.

"There's going to be some people that can't make it," he said.

Hewitt is unapologetic.

"If they feel like we're pushing it, they're absolutely right," he said.

He added, "It's almost become a crusade."

Pulling in green

McKinney likes to tell the story about people who ask if Greensburg, a small conservative town, is filled with a bunch of tree-huggers. No, he tells them, we are capitalists.

"The attention from building green helps generate investment from outside," he said.

Frito-Lay, which plans to advertise on the new television channel Planet Green, donated $1 million on Friday to Greensburg's business incubator.

Caroma has pledged 400 of its low-water flush toilets, Permaflow donated 50 environmentally friendly drain traps, and Evolve gave 260 low-flow showerheads.

Honda has given the town a Civic that runs on natural gas, GM donated two hybrid Tahoes, and Ford donated its hybrid Escape.

"Corporate America hears about us and wants to get involved so they can tell the world they're a green company," Hewitt said.

Wallach, with Greensburg Greentown, said the national spotlight on the town provides a lot of bang for business' buck when it comes to donations.

"These opportunities don't come along very often," he said.

Businesses looking for places to locate also have noticed Greensburg. Kim Alderfer, assistant city administrator, said like any small town, Greensburg fell all over itself to lure companies before the storm.
Not anymore.
"We’re currently talking with five different companies interested in coming here solely because of our move toward green," Alderfer said.

Hewitt sees the green push as good stewardship but also as an opportunity.

"We have to do something special in Greensburg because we could be forgotten tomorrow," he said.

Finding home
One day after the tornado hit, someone asked McKinney if he would rebuild.

"Absolutely," he responded.

"Then I had to go check with my wife," he said, laughing.

Greensburg is the chance at an innovative rebirth for many, but more importantly to McKinney, it is his future, and he never questioned that.

"We rebuilt quickly," he said. "Somebody needed to be showing construction. If I was asking people to move back to town, I should rebuild. Sometimes you have to lead with more than words.

Walking around the town, he points to his former neighbor’s house where his kids once played. If they fell down, someone was always there to pick them up, he said.

"Why wouldn’t you rebuild in a place like that?" he asked.

To Dison, "Greensburg is unlimited potential for the future." It is also the community his kids grew up in.

On the other side of town, Steve and Connie Dawson were constructing a white picket fence two weeks before their daughter’s wedding in the yard. Connie paused to talk about the days following the twister when she told her family: "We’re taking a vote. I vote we move."

"It seemed like God was maybe pointing us in another direction," she said.

Her daughter, son and husband pointed to Greensburg. She lost the vote 3-1.

"It’s probably good," Connie Dawson said. "I like it here. It’s home."

Nowhere to live
Greensburg used to be home for Amber Boyles. But the unavailability of low-cost housing threatens to dislodge this fourth-generation Greensburg resident from the only town she has ever known.

"Affordable housing has gone from being a problem to a crisis," McKinney said.

Boyles currently lives in one of the more than 140 trailers south of town in what residents call "FEMAville," a reference to the Federal Emergency Management Agency that provided the housing.

She used to pay just $200 in rent for a house with her two boys and husband, who drives a semitrailer. Now she is one of many shaking her head.

Greensburg’s decades-old homes bought for $30,000 offered those of limited means a chance to pay rent as low as $200. But with higher material prices and the cost of builders traveling to Greensburg, constructing a similar house now will cost $100,000 minimum, says Jack Manske, a developer building 32 duplexes on Main Street.

"Everyone’s feeling the sticker shock," he said.

Manske’s development, paid for in part by federal tax credits, includes 16 income-restricted units renting for up to $400. Another 16 are open to anyone and will rent for up to $700.

But Boyles’ family makes too much money to qualify for the less expensive duplexes and not enough to afford the more expensive units. She tried to apply for a loan through the U.S. Department of Agriculture rural housing program, but she made too much to qualify for its low interest rates, as well.

"They’re really worried about their incubator," she said, referring to the downtown business incubator. "Why can’t they find a way to find homes?"

Jeff Robinson lives in FEMAville, too, and also falls into that gray area.

"There isn’t anywhere to live," he said.

Manske responds that many of those who said they wanted rentals in housing surveys after the storm said they had significant incomes. Manske talked with the Kansas Housing Resource Agency and together determined they would build as many nonincome-restricted houses as low-rent ones.

"We all agreed these are the people we want to come back," he said about those making more money. "They fuel the economy."

Boyles can’t believe her situation. She is looking to move her family now, but nearby towns, such as Haviland and Mullinville, don’t have any housing in her price range now either.

"I want to stay," she said, pausing as tears ran down her cheeks. "Badly."

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Alex Flores, left, and Marco Mata work on a roof at Prairie Pointe Town homes, one of the housing developments that Greensburg native Amber Boyles is concerned she won’t be able to afford, forcing her to move from town.
Maguire Iron employees finish painting one side of a new water tower in Greensburg. The tower has twice the capacity of the old tower. The wind turbine in the foreground will help power a nearly completed arts center.
She is probably best known as the star and co-writer of "Lisa Picard Is Famous."

Today, though, Lecompton native Laura Kirk will be reading for her audience. The script is "American B.S. (Border Sentry)," and Kirk and other actors will be reading in the Oldfather Studios at The University of Kansas, Kirk's alma mater.

"This is a good way to develop a screenplay," Kirk said. "You can hear problems pretty quickly."

Kirk, who now resides in rural Connecticut with her husband and two children, is also the producer of "American B.S.," written by Ranjit Arab, and has cast a reading of the play in New York.

"I'm getting more into producing. Writing is harder to keep up with children; it needs that flow," Kirk said.

She has had roles in "At First Sight," "A Boyfriend for Christmas," "Murder Without Conviction" and "The Time Machine." She's one of the stars in the Kevin Willmott production "Bunker Hill."

"Producing is nice," Kirk said. "I can help shape things, but I don't have to work on it every day."

Although she's moving more into the producing and writing side of the film business, Kirk said she still auditions at least once a week. Those auditions might be for commercial, film or theater roles. Although Kirk played in musicals during her years at Perry-Lecompton High School, she said she's only recently auditioned for a musical.

"I've done plays where I sing, but I haven't done a straight musical," she said, noting that a lot of auditions are based on how an actor is seen, and since she has done a lot of independent work, she's often looked at for that type of role.

"I like doing independent work," Kirk said, explaining that the people making those are "more passionate. They feel like theater because of that passion in making the product."

That passion is one of the reasons Kirk enjoyed her role in "Bunker Hill," which will begin a run Friday at Liberty.
Hall in Lawrence. She sees parallels between her character and her real life.

"Hallie is a woman who grew up in a small town, moved to New York, then back to a small town," Kirk said. "It was easy for me to step into those shoes."

She said one of the most interesting comments she received on her role as Hallie came from her brother Paul after the film's premier: "He said, 'You're just like you are in real life in that film.' At first I was pretty frustrated, but my husband said, 'That's a great compliment.' After I thought about it, that actually is a pretty high compliment. You can't always be as natural as you are in real life."

The reading of "American B.S." is part of Alums Come Home events at KU.

"I try to visit KU classes when I can to talk about my own journey from New York and Los Angeles," she said. Kirk said she's open to giving advice and will meet people for lunch.

"I also try to use and recommend Kansans for projects I'm working on," then adds with a chuckle networking or the Kansas mafia.

Part of the reason she does this because she remembers what it was like to go to New York with only $100; the other part is because she remembers the "nudges she got at critical points along the way." One nudge came from Jane Lucas, her drama teacher.

Laura Kirk is doing a reading of "American B.S." at KU.
Laura Kirk said her brother told her this character, Hallie in the film “Bunker Hill,” was like Kirk in real life.

instructor in high school, who urged her to attend KU; other nudges from professors and directors at KU led to an internship, a tour in Japan, and a scholarship nomination.

Even though this help has led her to success in acting, writing and producing, Kirk said she’d still like to make “madcap comedy adventure with good guys and bad guys.” She said there isn’t much out there the whole family can see, something she has become more conscious of as her children grow older. “Rather than complain about what I audition for or what’s out there, I just have to find it and make it,” Kirk said. “It’s not easy to do, but I think I’ll spend my life doing this.”

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KU faculty, staff to tour area

Special to The Hays Daily News
LAWRENCE — For the 11th year, the University of Kansas will sponsor a whirlwind tour of Kansas for more than 40 faculty and staff members, many of whom are new to the state.

The Wheat State Whirlwind Tour will hit the road May 19 to 23, visiting more than 20 communities and passing through 30 counties while covering in excess of 1,000 miles of roadway.

Northwest Kansas stops include Lucas, Palco, Goodland, Oakley and Ness City.

Participants on this year’s tour are professors, deans and staff members from the Lawrence campus; KU Medical Center in Kansas City, Kan.; KU School of Medicine-Wichita; and the Kansas Law Enforcement Training Center, a division of KU Continuing Education.

Chancellor Robert Hemenway, who started the Wheat State Whirlwind Tour, said the annual trip is an invaluable experience for the participants.

“Year after year, the tour has proven to be an outstanding way for KU faculty and staff to get out and learn firsthand what makes this great state tick,” Hemenway said. “They not only learn about its history, landscape and economy, they get a better understanding of where KU’s students come from and meet some great people along the way.”

Highlights of this year’s tour include the Brown v. Board of Education Historical Site in Topeka, Landoll Corp. in Marysville, Lake Wilson, the historic African-American pioneer community Nicodemus, a ride with buffalo in Scott County, Fort Larned, the Underground Salt Museum in Hutchinson and the Kansas Law Enforcement Training Center near Yoder.

New stops on this year’s tour include an overnight stay in Goodland, a tour of the Ness City bank known as the “Skyscraper of the Plains,” the Spearville Wind Farm and lunch at the Wheatland Cafe in Hudson. A dinner with alumni in northeast Kansas will be May 20 at the Prairie Castle/Kuhrt Ranch in Edson. Three of the “Eight Wonders of Kansas” are on the itinerary: Monument Rocks in Gove County, the Underground Salt Museum in Hutchinson and the Flint Hills.
Pratt Community College is proud to announce that Vic Braden is the 2008 Outstanding Alumnus of the Year. Vic is a 1978 graduate of Pratt High School. He received an Associate of Science in Political Science from Pratt Community College in 1980. His other degrees include a Bachelor of Science in Business from Northwestern Oklahoma State University in 1982, a Master of Arts in Public Administration from Kansas University in 1995, and a Juris Doctorate from Washburn University in 1997.

Vic’s military career began upon his ROTC commission at Northwestern Oklahoma State University in 1982. His military assignments include tours in numerous locations in the United States, Korea, and Germany. Vic’s military deployments include a combat tour in Saudi Arabia, Iraq, and Kuwait during Operation Desert Storm in 1990 and 1991, and a peacekeeping tour in Bosnia-Herzegovina during Operation Enduring Freedom in 2003. His military education includes an Army War College Fellowship at Harvard University’s Kennedy School of Government in Cambridge, Massachusetts, during the 2004/2005 school year. Vic is a qualified UH-60 Blackhawk Senior Army Aviator. His current assignment is the Brigade Commander of the 69th Task Force. Vic holds the rank of Colonel.

Vic’s prosecutor career began in 1998. After serving as an Assistant County Attorney in Jefferson County and Riley County, Vic was hired by the Kansas Attorney General in 2006 to prosecute violent crimes. Since assuming this position, Vic’s main focus has been representing the State of Kansas in murder cases, including death penalty cases.

Victor J. Braden was born and raised in Pratt, Kansas. He is married to the former Marla Wray of Sawyer, Kansas. They have two grown daughters, Chelsea and Emily.

Braden will be the featured speaker at the PCC commencement ceremonies on May 9. He will also be honored at a luncheon at noon in the Riney Student Conference Center.
Skyline journalists tops at state

Five students from Skyline High School placed at the Kansas Scholastic Press Association state journalism competition last weekend and placed first in the 1A Sweepstakes category as a team.

Over 100 Kansas high schools proved their journalism talents at the KSPA contest May 3. The contest took place at the University of Kansas, with a total of 1,059 students qualified for the state contest by placing at one of the six regional contests in February. Skyline had seven students place at Regionals to qualify for State. At the state contest, students participated in 18 different categories.

The big winners for Skyline included seniors Abby Anell and Jeremy Courtney. Anell placed first in Editing and second in Yearbook Sports Writing.

"I was extremely happy for Abby as it is very hard to place in the Editing category, so taking first is a huge accomplishment," journalism adviser Judy Hampel said.

Courtney placed in three categories. He received second in Editorial writing, second in Newspaper Design, and honorable mention in Yearbook Copy Writing.

"It was really cool placing that good because I didn't place last year," Courtney said.

Courtney was the only Skyline competitor who placed in every category that he entered.

"Jeremy's skills in journalism improved greatly throughout the year and his hard work paid off for him at State," Hampel said.

Placing third in Newspaper Design was sophomore Lindsey Lykins. Two other seniors received honorable mentions in their categories. Jeanize Cilliers was in the Infographics category and Ashley Perry was in the Layout/DPS category.

This is the first time since 2000 that the team placed first in the Sweepstakes. Skyline students were also Sweepstakes winners in 1996, 1997 and 1999.

"I was surprised that we placed first and proud at the same time," Anell said.

Placing second in the Sweepstakes was Troy High School. St. Francis Community High School took third.
Proudly displaying their team award are five Skyline High School journalism students. They placed first as a team for the 1A Sweepstakes award at Lawrence on Saturday. Students are (front) seniors Jeanize Cilliers and Abby Anell, and sophomore Lindsey Lykins; (back row) seniors Jeremy Courtney and Ashley Perry. Not pictured are photographers Katie Becker and Jordan Gilleece, both juniors, who also had entries at the competition.