KANSAS CITY (AP) — The Kansas Center for Autism Research and Training at the University of Kansas has opened, with plans to train professionals to work with people with autism spectrum disorders.

The new University of Kansas center has a contract with the Kansas Department of Social and Rehabilitation Services to train autism professionals. It’s anticipated that the training initiative will turn out about 50 autism specialists a year, along with 100 more people with less expertise who could provide respite care, for example.

Plans also call for boosting the autism clinics at the University of Kansas’ medical campus in Kansas City, Kan.

“For many of us parents who’ve been knocking on the door at KU for the last five to 10 years, it’s an answered prayer,” said Kirsten Sneid, one of the founders of a Johnson County-based support group for families affected by autism spectrum disorders.

She expects it to serve as an anchor in the metropolitan area, pulling in money and volunteer energy, and collaborating with education and mental health institutions to provide comprehensive help for families.

The new center is supported by several financial gifts, including $1 million pledged by the University of Kansas. The estate of Wanda and Thomas Pyle, of Chase County in central Kansas, has contributed $1 million to the cause. And the Kansas City Young Matrons has committed to giving an amount probably between $70,000 and $90,000.

Currently, 45 faculty members from throughout the university are involved in autism projects, and 29 research projects under way pertain to autism spectrum disorders. The projects reflect “a commitment across the life span,” said Debra Kamps, an autism researcher at the University of Kansas.

Although the Kansas center won’t immediately join in the hunt for the causes of autism disorders, Kamps said she knows that the university’s autism researchers are interested in joining the effort to unravel that mystery. She’s confident that the center’s mission and scale will only grow.

Given the complexity of autism, which now is thought to encompass a broad range of disorders with different symptoms and causes, more research and training manpower absolutely is needed, said Janet Farmer, executive director of the Thompson Center for Autism and Neurological Disorders at the University of Missouri-Columbia.

She said the Thompson Center is one of 13 autism research centers in the Simons Simplex Collection, a joint effort to unravel why one family member, seemingly out of the blue, develops autism in the absence of any known family precedent.

“It takes a lot of people looking at it from many perspectives to move the research forward, especially at a pace that would satisfy families looking for answers,” she said. “Being able to work together as partners in research networks is an especial strength. We need people to look at health-related issues, at education issues, family support, behavioral management.”
“It takes a lot of people looking at it from many perspectives to move the research forward, especially at a pace that would satisfy families looking for answers.”

— Janet Farmer
Stone part of number one debate team

Christopher Stone of Derby, a sophomore political science major and son of Douglas and Gloria Stone, was a part of the University of Kansas debate team which ended the 2007-08 season ranked number one in the country in the National Debate Tournament varsity rankings.
Local students are top scholars graduating with KU Class of 2008

Shea Fairchild and Jonathan V. Nugyen are among the more than 165 members of the Class of 2008 that will be recognized as top scholars during commencement at the University of Kansas on Sunday, May 18.

Each year, KU Awards its most prized four-year scholarships to students whose academic records and other qualifications make them eligible for selection. These students are Chancellors Club Scholars, Elizabeth M. Watkins-Emily Berger Scholars, Solon E. Summerfield Scholars, Endowment Meritorious Scholars, National Merit Scholars, National Hispanic Scholars and National Achievement Scholars. KU Endowment manages the funds for these scholarships.

Shea, daughter of Don and Pam Fairchild, has earned a Bachelor of Science Degree in Sports Science. Jonathan, son of Tam and Thuy Nguyen is a Biochemistry major. Both are Maize High School graduates and were named Endowment Merit Scholars.

Endowment Meritorious Scholarships provide $500 to $2,500 a year for four years to high-achieving students who enhance the diversity of the student body.
KANSAS CITY (AP) — The Kansas Center for Autism Research and Training at the University of Kansas has opened, with plans to train professionals to work with people with autism spectrum disorders.

The new University of Kansas center has a contract with the Kansas Department of Social and Rehabilitation Services to train autism professionals. It’s anticipated that the training initiative will turn out about 50 autism specialists a year, along with 100 more people with less expertise who could provide respite care, for example.

Plans also call for boosting the autism clinics at the University of Kansas’ medical campus in Kansas City, Kan.

“For many of us parents who’ve been knocking on the door at KU for the last five to 10 years, it’s an answered prayer,” said Kirsten Sneid, one of the founders of a Johnson County-based support group for families affected by autism spectrum disorders.

She expects it to serve as an anchor in the metropolitan area, pulling in money and volunteer energy, and collaborating with education and mental health institutions to provide comprehensive help for families.

The new center is supported by several financial gifts, including $1 million pledged by the University of Kansas. The estate of Wanda and Thomas Pyle, of Chase County in central Kansas, has contributed $1 million to the cause. And the Kansas City Young Matrons has committed to giving an amount probably between $70,000 and $90,000.

Currently, 45 faculty members from throughout the university are involved in autism projects, and 29 research projects under way pertain to autism spectrum disorders. The projects reflect a commitment across the life span,” said Debra Kamps, an autism researcher at the University of Kansas.

Although the Kansas center won’t immediately join in the hunt for the causes of autism disorders, Kamps said she knows that the university’s autism researchers are interested in joining the effort to unravel that mystery. She’s confident that the center’s mission and scale will only grow.

Given the complexity of autism, which now is thought to encompass a broad range of disorders with different symptoms and causes, more research and training manpower absolutely is needed, said Janet Farmer, executive director of the Thompson Center for Autism and Neurological Disorders at the University of Missouri-Columbia.

She said the Thompson Center is one of 13 autism research centers in the Simons Simplex Collection, a joint effort to unravel why one family member, seemingly out of the blue, develops autism in the absence of any known family precedent.

“It takes a lot of people looking at it from many perspectives to move the research forward, especially at a pace that would satisfy families looking for answers,” she said. “Being able to work together as partners in research networks is an especial strength. We need people to look at health-related issues, at education issues, family support, behavioral management.”
“It takes a lot of people looking at it from many perspectives to move the research forward, especially at a pace that would satisfy families looking for answers.”

— Janet Farmer
Stephanie Gomez, a senior at the University of Kansas, has been selected to be a banner carrier during commencement month.

Gomez, the daughter of Steve and Diana Gomez, is a graduate of Newton High School. She is majoring in human biology and Spanish, and is senior class treasurer.

Thirteen students who excel academically were chosen to carry banners. They will lead their fellow graduates in the march down Mount Oread into Memorial Stadium at 2:30 p.m. May 18.
Bethel hosts Kansas Section meeting of math association

It's not often a Bethel College team can boast of defeating The University of Kansas. When it comes to solving mathematics problems, however Bethel did just that, in a competition that was part of the annual spring meeting of the Kansas Section of the Mathematical Association of America, held May 2 and 3 on the Bethel College campus.

In a close three-way race, Bethel's problem-solving team of Kyle Claassen, sophomore from Andover, Matthew Hershberger, sophomore from Clay Center, and Paul Regier, junior from Newton, finished just behind Kansas State's team and just ahead of KU's.

More than 100 people attended the meeting, organized by Christopher Earles, Bethel assistant professor of mathematics, in keeping with his duties as chair-elect of the Kansas Section (he became chair at the close of the May 3 business meeting).

Stephen J. Brams, professor of politics at New York University, was the keynote speaker. His areas of interest and research are game theory and its applications, particularly in political science and international relations, and social choice theory particularly as applied to voting and elections.

His Friday evening talk was titled “How Democracy Resolves Conflict in Difficult Games,” and his Saturday afternoon talk was titled “Voting Systems that Combine Approval and Preference.”

Bethel College is a four-year liberal arts college affiliated with Mennonite Church USA. Founded in 1887, it is the oldest Mennonite college in North America. Bethel is known for its academic excellence and was the highest ranked Kansas college in the national liberal arts category of U.S. News & World Report’s listing of “America’s Best Colleges” for 2008.

For more information, see the Bethel Web site at www.betheiks.edu.
Allison Ingram is the 2008-09 director of social interaction for the Hispanic American Leadership Organization (HALO) at the University of Kansas. HALO assist KU with statewide outreach events for Hispanic high school students, participates in area festivals and cultural events, and co-sponsors programs with the Sabatini Multicultural Resource Center.

Ingram is a sophomore in human biology with a concentration in anthropology. She is the daughter of Michael and Amber Ingram of Andover.
CORRECTIONS

- The list of Top Area Private Sector Employers in the April 25-May 1 edition of the Kansas City Business Journal omitted Truman Medical Centers, which has 3,056 full-time equivalent employees. Truman is a private, not-for-profit corporation.
- A story in the May 2-8 edition of the Kansas City Business Journal incorrectly reported the launch of a supply-chain management degree program. The University of Kansas School of Business program will launch in the fall.
KU MEETS COMEDY CENTRAL

Professor on ‘Daily Show’

A University of Kansas professor will be Jon Stewart's guest tonight on Comedy Central's “The Daily Show.”

David Perlmutter, who also is KU's associate dean for graduate and research studies, will talk about his new book, Blogwars, which explores the history and phenomenon of political blogs.

Perlmutter has written three books and is editor of a fourth.

Laura Bauer, lbauer@kcstar.com
Humboldt High School’s journalism students received first place at the Kansas Scholastic Press Association’s State competition at the University of Kansas on Saturday, May 3. Eleven Humboldt High School students competed in 18 different categories. These students placed at the Regional competition in February in order to earn a chance to compete at the State competition.

Those who placed individually at the State competition were: senior Karna Carlson, Theme Development, 2nd place; senior Emily Hauser, Sports Photography, honorable mention; sophomore Alexis Hosack, Theme Development, honorable mention; senior Haley Huffman, Editorial Cartoon, honorable mention, News Writing, honorable mention, Newspaper Design, honorable mention; Junior Bailey Myers, Feature Writing, 2nd place, Newspaper Sports Writing, 2nd place; senior Bethany Wolverton, Feature Photography, 2nd place, Cutline Writing, 3rd place, Editorial Cartoon, honorable mention; senior Sarah Works, Theme Development, 2nd place; and sophomore Kassidy Young, Theme Development, honorable mention, Yearbook Sports Writing, honorable mention.

Also winning an award at the opening ceremony of the competition was the Cub Tracks newspaper as it was one of three 3A high school newspaper staffs in the state of Kansas to earn All-Kansas honors.

“I am very proud of our journalism students; they have worked very hard this year to earn this honor, and it has paid off” said Kim Isbell, adviser.

STUDENTS ATTENDING the competition included (front, from left) Bailey Myers, Alexis Hosack, Michelle Sollars, Haley Huffman, and (back, from left) Kassidy Young, Karna Carlson, Sarah Works, Shelby Novotny, Bethany Wolverton, and Kim Isbell. Those unavailable for photo were Emily Hauser and Megan Dillow.