January 15, 2014

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ROAD ARTIST

Hugoton teacher brings rideable sculpture to Baker Arts

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Gov. prepares to give State of State address

TOPEKA, AP — Kansas Gov. Sam Brownback is preparing to deliver his State of the State address and outline his legislative agenda.

The speech that evening will be to a joint House-Senate session of the Kansas Legislature. It also will be broadcast live on public television.

Brownback has already proposed planning to fill state budget shortfalls by cutting state spending and taxes, and he will outline the first year this also outlined a $5 million initiative aimed at boosting fourth-graders' scores on standardized reading tests.

The Republican governor is expected to tout the massive personal income tax cuts that Kansas enacted at his urging.

He faces a challenge from Democrat Paul Davis, a former Minority Leader of Lawrence, who's challenging Brownback in re-election this year.

City hears update on school expansion plans

By GABRIELLE MEDINO
• Leader & Times

USD No. 480 Board President Debbie Kilgore, left, and Board Vice President Kimberly Kilgore, right, discussed the district's school expansion plans at Tuesday night's city commission meeting. Kilgore, left, and the Facilities Committee, since the summer, had 20 meetings brainstorming ideas, looking at the district's facilities, and discussing current and educational issues.

They came up with various scenarios of building projects. Through the months of meetings, the board and committee members consulted meetings with McDonald's and the coffee shop as well as other locations to tap and implement input from the community as well, he said.

He noted the Voters Team made a decision to a plan at its meeting Monday night.

"We'll Monday a decision was made on a plan to be recommended to the USD 480 Board of Education," he said. "Whatever plan that the Voters Team came up with was a plan that would smooth out transitions for the district, and it was a unanimous decision a decision. The plan would

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Volunteer drivers are needed for veterans VA transportation from Liberal to Amarillo Tuesdays and Thursdays. Drivers must have a clear driving record, auto insurance and plus a physical provided by Amarillo VA. Contact Carolyn Kingham at 806-354-7811 for information.

WEDNESDAY JANUARY 15, 2014
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Topeka 17-year-old accused of planning school shooting

TOPEKA, AP — A Topeka teenager has been charged with three counts of attempted murder and a count of felony planning to shoot students at a local high school.

Shawnee County District Attorney Chad Taylor says he filed the charges against the 17-year-old Saturday after an investigation is ongoing.

Taylor was expected to give further details at a news conference Wednesday morning.

Guymon Relay For Life announces scheduled events

• Special to the Leader & Times

GUYMON, Okla. — Oklahoma Panhandle cancer fighters are urged to save the date for American Cancer Society Relay For Life of Texas County activities and fundraisers.

Relay — event committee members are set to kick off the relay to land up to the 24th Relay For Life of Texas County at the Texas County Activity Center on Friday.

Daily fundraisers for fight against cancer by relying in to raise funds for research and patient services. Relay For Life of Texas County is a fun-filled event that patient support, information and services are available by visiting cancerorg and calling 800-227.

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Plains United Methodist Men announce Ground Hog Supper date

• Special to the Leader & Times

Our Ground Hog Supper time of the year when people from the surrounding communities come together to eat.

The Men of the Plains United Methodist Church will host their annual Ground Hog Supper Wednesday Feb. 5 at the Plains United Methodist Church Fellowship Hall and everyone is invited.

Serving of a tasty meal featuring sausage with biscuits and gravy (mess and chilies starts at 5:30 p.m. Look of

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Kansas board recommends individual study plans

TOPEKA, AP — The Kansas State Board of Education is recommending — but not requiring — that the state's public schools develop individual study plans for every high school student.

The board on Tuesday approved a section "strongly recommending" the idea, which would be part of the state's Kansas high school students as they choose courses. Board members said the recommendation would be a tool for state school officials to use if they thought parents consulted to develop IEPs for every students. The Lawrence Journal-World reported.

"I think every school district should have it, but I'm hesitant to mandate it," said board member Jim Ward, a Republican. "There's more to it than just one session."

Generally, IEPs are used mostly for students in career and technical education programs. The students take a series of courses in a particular field and then work with counselors to choose appropriate high school classes for their career.

In 2011, Kansas lawmakers passed a law expanding career and technical education, which included adding the requirement for IEPs. The law also is requiring IEPs for all students and to report its decisions at the start of the last year's session.

The Kansas State Board of Education agreed Tuesday that about 80 percent of school districts offer students a chance to develop IEPs. But only about 20 percent prepare them for all high school students. Most districts that don't offer IEPs said they didn't have enough counselors, which after enough electives courses or their other time and financial priorities.

Nathan Ward, a counselor in Wichita, said that district has only one counselor for every 300 students.

Board member Kathy Busch, chair of the board, said that was only part of the problem.

"When you talk about one counselor for every 300 students, you can't expect them to assess, schools that assume one to 400, and in some schools that assume a little better ratio," Busch said.

Okla. gay marriage ban struck down; ruling on hold

The decision drew criticism from the governor, attorney general and other elected officials in this state, known as the backbone of the Bible Belt

By JUSTINA QUAMMOGUS
• Associated Press

Gay Phillips, left, her partner Sue Burton, and Mary Bishop and her partner Sharon Baldwin have a champagne toast during a celebration at the Dennis R. Neill Equality Center Tuesday in Tulsa, Okla. A federal judge struck down Oklahoma's gay marriage ban Tuesday, but heeded off any rush to the altar by setting aside his order while state and local officials carry out an appeal. (AP photo/Tim Fuller, Tulsa Tribune)

TULSA, Okla. — For the second time in a month, a federal judge has struck down a decade-old state law that bans same-sex marriages. But Oklahoma officials are not giving up.

U.S. District Judge Terence Kern on Tuesday struck down Oklahoma's voter-approved ban, but heeded the request of the state's top law enforcement officers by putting on hold while state and local officials complete an appeal.

Kern's ruling came a month after Oklahoma gay marriages began on December, when determined that Oklahoma's ban violated the protections of the U.S. Constitution's equal protection clause. His ruling was blocked with a temporary stay until the U.S. Supreme Court later overturned.

Kern said Tuesday Oklahoma's ban on same-sex marriage is "an arbitrary, irrational exclusion of just one class of Oklahoma citizens from a process established for all."

"Equal protection is at the very heart of the Fourteenth Amendment, and it must not be promised," Kern wrote. "It is not a minor commodity to be doled out selectively. Equality is a short phrase with a long and difficult history."

Oklahoma voters gave voters by a substantial constitutional amendment.

Kern's ruling came from a pretrial motion filed by a group of plaintiffs who sued to get permanent rulings that would allow them to wed. Kern's ruling Tuesday was a victory for Tulsa residents Mary Bishop and Sharon Baldwin.

Oklahoma's ban on same-sex marriage is the fourth to be struck down in a federal court since the Supreme Court, whose rulings also established same-sex marriage in New Mexico in 2013, ruled last June that gay couples in California have a constitutional right to marry.

Camille Taylor, marriage project director at Lambda Legal, said organizers have filed lawsuits challenging marriage bans in 19 states and Washington, D.C., and a new one is brought almost every week.

The Oklahoma ruling came in a lawsuit filed nearly a decade ago. Its

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