KU develops alert system

LAWRENCE — More than three months after a gunman killed more than 30 people at Virginia Tech, officials at the University of Kansas have begun testing a system to alert students and faculty to similar on-campus emergencies.

The new system allows police and fire officials to notify the university’s public safety dispatchers of potential emergencies and then relay an emergency message to one building or the entire campus.

Bob Rombach, the university’s fire marshal and architect for Design and Construction Management, said officials at Virginia Tech had limited options in April when they tried to issue a campuswide alert between two series of shootings by a student.
Eisenbise, Hall selected as Dole Scholars

The Dole Institute of Politics at the University of Kansas recently announced 128 new Sen. Robert J. Dole Public Service Scholars for the 2007-08 academic year.

Honorees include 2007 Sabetha High School graduates Maria Eisenbise and Matthew Hall, who will each receive a $1,000 scholarship.

Eisenbise plans to attend Kansas State University; her major is undecided. Hall will attend Washburn University, where he plans to major in physical education.

Stacy Sudbeck of Seneca, a graduate of B&B High School, is also a Dole Scholar. She will attend K-State and major in education.

The scholarships are renewable for three years, and recipients are required to engage in 100 hours of civic activities annually.

Recipients also must have a cumulative grade point average of 3.0 or higher on a 4.0 scale.

The recipients, all 2007 Kansas high schools graduates, represent the largest class of Dole scholars since the program began in 2005.

Funded by NASA, the scholarships are distributed among the state’s four congressional districts to ensure the broadest statewide participation.

“This year, the Dole Institute received a second federal grant, and we are able to offer nearly three times the number of scholarships as in each of the previous two years,” said Bill Lacy, institute director.

The scholarship program began with a federal grant that funded 40 scholarships each in 2005 and in 2006. With the addition of the 128 scholarships awarded this year, the total number of Dole scholars comes to 208.

Aligned with the primary mission of the Dole Institute, the scholarship program encourages young Kansans to get involved in politics, government and community service.
LAWRENCE — Irving Johnson, 82, who established the Irving Johnson Professorship in Molecular Biology in 2004 with a $507,000 gift to KU, has added another $500,000 to that fund.

A leading scientist in the pharmaceutical industry for 35 years, Johnson is known for his research that led to the genetic engineering and commercial production of human insulin.

Johnson earned his doctorate in zoology from KU in 1953.
Wallace man scours area, seeking fossils

The Associated Press
WALLACE — Jerome “Pete” Bussen is a self-professed smart-aleck.
He’s proud to wear the moniker, gleefully acknowledging that with just an eighth-grade education, he’s righted mistakes made by otherwise well-educated people.

And while he scoffs at the notion of working with title-bearing college professors, he is well-read.
There are differences, he said, among those with common sense and those with little more than a title.

Bussen frequents the Fort Wallace Historical Museum, reading nearly everything he can put his hands on. Books fill his Spartan residence — a bachelor pad — part of a metal building that includes a garage. Out back is yet another building, his fossil barn — the Goofy Slope Museum of Natural History.

Inside are thousands of fossils.
You see, Bussen is a fossil hunter.
He also was an archaeologist, collecting hundreds — if not thousands — of Indian artifacts from Wallace County, and says he’s identified all of the Indian sites in the county. He also was a farmer, a farm hand and a grocer. His interests include history, geology, archaeology, water and religion.

He’s also perhaps the most frugal man you might ever meet. When the Wallace community sought to move its water supply from the nearby Smoky Hill River, near where he was born, Bussen revolted when they also wanted to double water rates.

He told them to cut off his water supply.
He makes do by toting 5-gallon containers of water from the same area Wallace abandoned in favor of a better supply of water several miles to the south. He says he learned to take a good sponge bath while serving in Korea.

He also shuns air conditioning in his home, just as he does in his car, which he says has almost 250,000 miles on it.
But he considers himself wealthy because he donates a significant share of what little he does make to Christian-based charities.

This is a man who enjoys talking, telling a tale of something that has taken place during his 80 years in the Logan and Wallace county area.
Bussen takes great pride in his fossil discoveries, and...
is quick to show how they were included in a book on Kansas fossils by Mike Everhart.

He’s donated a Xiphactinus to the Cincinnati Museum, for example, noting that 1.5 million people have viewed it.

“How long would it take for a million and a half people to go through Sternberg, for example, let alone here?” he said of Fort Wallace. “Like this, it’s good here. But it’s too far off the beaten path. We’re too far out in the desert.”

Bussen started collecting fossils after closing the grocery store he owned in Wallace. In addition to the Xiphactinus — a huge sea-going fish — he’s also found three pliosauras.

The first one, he said, went to the Trenton, N.J., State Museum of Paleontology.

“I’ve got a lot of deeds of gifts laying around,” he said.

Bussen is able to detail information about fossils that once lived in the ocean that covered Kansas millions of years ago. He’s also able to tick off a list of some of the more pre-eminent paleontologists.

Some he respects. Others he disdains.

“Don’t go back to college,” he cautions. “You’ll get dumber than you are now.”

People get entrenched in education, he said, and are no longer willing to question what others have found. That, he said, is what paleontologists should do — question everything.

“I’m a readaholic,” Bussen said. “I can read fast and can retain it.”

Bussen’s start in paleontology came because of his interest in archaeology.

“We got into archaeology the same way back in the ’50s,” he said. “We didn’t know beans.”

He’s never seen that as a barrier. Instead, Bussen said, he’s located 140 Indian sites in Wallace County. Virtually all of it, he said, has been donated to The University of Kansas.

His interest in archaeology started when a Feb. 19, 1954, black blizzard hit the area.

“It forgot to rain,” he said. “And it blew all the topsoil off and left all the arrowheads exposed.”

He told of chiseling fields in an open-cab tractor for a farmer to keep the dust from blowing, and stopping each time he saw an arrowhead.
Boyda pushes for med reform

By Mike Hall
THE CAPITAL-JOURNAL

Upcoming cuts in Medicaid reimbursement rates will mean pharmacies receive only 36 percent of what they pay to purchase the needed medications, according to U.S. Rep. Nancy Boyda, D-Kan.

Boyda conducted a news conference Monday at Jayhawk Pharmacy, 2860 S.W. Mission Woods, to describe a bill she has sponsored to head off those reductions.

If her "Save Our Community Pharmacies Act" isn't passed, she said, the cut in Medicaid reimbursement rates would "cripple many community pharmacies, potentially triggering a health care crisis in rural Kansas."

The reduced reimbursement rates were ordered in 2005, when Congress required Medicaid to change its formula for reimbursing pharmacies for prescription drugs. The cuts originally were to go into effect in July, but in late June the reductions were put off until January 2008. The delay was created when Boyda crafted a letter expressing concern over the cuts and got 107 other members of Congress to sign it with her.

She said the estimate that the new rates would provide only 36 percent of the pharmacies' costs came from the nonpartisan Government Accountability Office.

Joining her at the news conference was Michael K. Conlin, owner of Jayhawk Pharmacy, and Melissa Rufenacht, president of The University of Kansas chapter of the National Community Pharmacy Association.

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Clamping down on piracy

It's a college-worthy problem.

How do you balance a reportedly antiquated business philosophy with the speed of digital technology and the ignorance and invincibility of youth while simultaneously trying to protect yourself from an international organization that has threatened to sue anyone who doesn't get the answer just right?

The answer, according to officials at local universities, isn't easy.
Background
The Recording Industry Association of America since February has sent more than 2,400 prettication settlement letters to universities in an effort to clamp down on illegal file trading on college campuses. Last month alone, the RIAA sent letters to 23 universities, including 14 to The University of Kansas.

The letters were sent to university officials and identified an Internet protocol address where illegal activity occurred. The officials were asked to forward the letter to the appropriate student and to provide the student's identity to the RIAA. In the letters, the RIAA offers to settle with students before filing a lawsuit.

According to the law, as outlined at www.copyright.gov, a person found guilty of sharing materials without the copyright owner's permission can be fined as much as $150,000 for each infringed work.

Universities respond
Effective this fall, KU is enacting a zero-tolerance policy. ResNet Internet access, which is available to students living in campus housing, will be terminated permanently for any student identified by the RIAA.

The college had been using a three-strike policy, in which students were given warnings and were made to attend educational sessions to learn about copyright laws and KU's student disciplinary processes. "After the three-strikes went into effect, instead of going down, the number of incidents almost tripled," said Tod Confer, director of university relations. "It may be that the slap on the wrist makes people think they are immune."

Cohen said KU received 345 notices in the past year, up from 141 notices in 2005.

However, officials have refused to identify the students to the RIAA unless they are given a subpoena. "We are not just going to hand over the information of our customers willy-nilly," Cohen said. "We are not their agent, and we don't want the students to increase the misconception that we are acting on their behalf."

Washburn University, which has received a few notices over the years, also is concerned with how it is perceived by its students, said Michael Gunter, chief information officer. "We don't want to be known as an institution that tolerates any type of copyright activity," he said. "At the same time, we take our mission very seriously, as being an educational facility. We would rather work with the students than get in an adversarial position with them."

Gunter said college officials use marketing materials from the RIAA and work closely with student government to increase student awareness of the law and penalties. "(Students) are being very responsible," Gunter said. "I am just as pleased as can be that we don't have to even consider doing anything like KU is doing."

An official at Kansas State University said piracy isn't a problem on campus because of some software that was created in house. "We have received no complaints from the RIAA and continue to be proactive about preventing the downloading of illegal content," said James Lyell, associate vice provost for information technology services.

BUSINESS 101
The business model has to keep up with consumer reality to remain effective. And that, said Michael Gunter, chief information officer for Washburn University, is a key problem with the Recording Industry Association of America.

"You essentially have a business model that was rooted back when I was a kid and they were selling vinyl records," Gunter said. "That model of selling physical goods to students doesn't really work anymore. They don't want to buy physical items; they want portability and spontaneity."

Gunter said the recording industry was built on selling plastic, and people were forced to buy an entire album, tape or CD just to get the one or two songs they wanted. "Now you can select the songs you want a la carte," he said. "It is a different business, and I think (the industry) is still struggling with that."

Gunter said the motion picture industry could be facing the same problem in five or six years if the amount of bandwidth available in people's home increases substantially. The only way around it, he said, is if officials there learn from the RIAA's problems and develop a new business model that addresses personal digital technology.
Ballad of Black Jack is set for Lawrence stage

Long-time Baldwin City standard runs Aug. 9-12

SPECIAL TO THE SIGNAL

LAWRENCE — The stage musical “The Ballad of Black Jack” will be presented Aug. 9 through Aug. 12 at Lawrence Arts Center theater. The historical play depicting events in Douglas County in 1855-56 is among the opening events of annual “Civil War on the Western Frontier” activities in Lawrence.

This year’s production is directed by Jack Wright, a professor of theater at Kansas University. Wright has directed more than 90 productions over his career, including many musicals.

“I have always been drawn to the history of our country and especially to the Civil War era,” Wright said. “The fact that the first battle of the Civil War may have been in our area and that John Brown thought enough of the skirmishes here in Kansas and Missouri to come out and get involved in the anti-slavery issue was fascinating to me. I wanted to play a small part in the retelling of that story.”

“This is the 21st production of the show, but it is the first time it has been led by an outside director,” said Bob Newton, who sits on the “Ballad” board and appears in his 12th production of the play. “For the first 14 productions the playwright, Don Mueller, directed the play himself. For the past six years it was directed by long-time cast members.

“Now Jack Wright, as a professional director, is bringing a fresh face to the production,” Newton said.

Barbara Wasson, a veteran of many Lawrence Community Theatre musicals, is choreographer, and Pamela Gibbs is music director.

Mueller, a Baldwin City playwright and composer, wrote “The Ballad” in 1970 for Baldwin’s centennial celebration. It proved to be popular and was performed annually as part of the Maple Leaf Festival in October for many years.

It was performed one year, 1986, as the opening production of the newly-remodeled Liberty Hall in Lawrence, and then the show was gone for 14 years. In 2001, it was brought back to the Maple Leaf Festival. Last year’s production was at Lawrence Arts Center in August as the lead-off event for Civil War on the Western Frontier activities.

The play deals with the pro-slavery versus free-state tensions in Douglas County in 1855-56, culminating in the Battle of Black Jack near present-day Baldwin City in 1856. The show features historical characters Gov. Charles Robinson, Jim Lane, Sheriff Sam Jones, Col. Edwin Sumner, Capt. James Abbott, John Brown and his sons, and two settlers from Ohio, Jacob Branson and Charles Dow. Dow was murdered in a property dispute with his pro-slavery neighbor, Franklin Coleman, and Coleman framed Branson for the murder. When a posse led by Capt. Abbott freed Branson from Sheriff Jones’ custody, the furious Jones sacked Lawrence.

John Brown and the Pottawatomie Creek Massacre also are depicted in the play. In addition, there is a love story and comedy from the playwright’s pen and 15 original songs. About half the cast of 39, ages 6 to 76, are “Ballad” veterans and about half are newcomers.

Performances are Aug. 9, Aug. 10 and Aug. 11 at 7:30 p.m., and Aug. 12 at 2:30 p.m. Tickets are $14 for adults, $7 for students, and a family ticket (up to 2 adults and 4 students) is $35. The show is not recommended for children under age three because of the battle scene noise. All seats are reserved. Tickets may be purchased by credit card over the phone or at the Lawrence Arts Center Box Office, 940 New Hampshire St., (785) 843-2787.

Among the cast are many people from Baldwin City. They are: T.J. Danley, Tom Holland, Louisa Holland, Steve Absher, Brandon Holland, Barbara Holland, Robin Miller, Sarah Beach and Sarah Cigard. On the Ballad board from Baldwin City are Mueller and Kirk Brown.
The Ballad of Black Jack, written by Baldwin City’s Don Mueller, will headline Civil War festivities in Lawrence next week. The play runs Aug. 9 through Aug. 12.
TOPEKA — Commissioner of Insurance Sandy Praeger has named Cindy Hermes as director of the Government and Public Affairs Division and Bob Hanson as public information officer.

Hermes previously served as the Kansas Insurance Department’s public liaison for the Governmental Affairs Division. Hanson is new to the department, coming from a media, education and public relations background.

Hanson is responsible for correlation and development of media, publication and public relations activities for the department. He will also be a liaison for the National Association of Insurance Commissioners, of which Praeger will be president in 2008.

Hanson began his duties July 25 after spending the previous five years managing Kansas newspapers. He most recently was the managing editor of The Osage County Herald-Chronicle in Osage City.

His background includes several years teaching high school English and journalism and five years in marketing communications at Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Kansas. He has a master’s degree in English from Fort Hays State University and a bachelor’s degree in journalism from The University of Kansas.
Kansas teachers recognized for
25 years of teaching

The School of Education at the University of Kansas has recognized more than 880 Kansas teachers with certificates honoring them for 25 years or more of service in education. Eleven Cherokee County teachers were among the recipients. Two teachers honored this year each have more than 40 years of service in education in Kansas.

"Teaching is such a vitally important career, that it is our privilege to recognize these individuals who have dedicated their lives to working with students," said Rick Ginsberg, dean of the School of Education. "As an educator and parent, I know how significant teachers are in the lives of our children. It is an honor for the School of Education to offer this small gesture of appreciation to the fine teachers across the state of Kansas who have devoted their professional careers to the field."

KU's School of Education annually asks Kansas school district officials to recommend educators who should receive recognition. Certificates are issued based on responses from individual districts statewide; some school districts do not participate in the recognition program.

Teachers being recognized are: Claudia Cox of the Riverton Unified School District, has 25 years of teaching in Kansas.

Marty Failing of the Riverton Unified School District, has taught secondary middle for 19 years in Kansas.

Patricia McCorkle of the Riverton Unified School District, has been teaching elementary school kids for 20 years in Kansas.

Linda Crotts of the Baxter Springs district has been teaching elementary school kids for 25 years in Kansas.

Pam Greninger of the Baxter Springs district has been teaching elementary school kids for 31 years in Kansas.

Garrell R. Haddock of the Baxter Spring district has been a counselor for the middle and secondary kids for 35 years in Kansas.

Barbara Hall of the Baxter Springs district has been teaching elementary school kids for 32 years in Kansas.

Greg Kissel of the Baxter Springs district has been teaching middle school kids for 29 years in Kansas.

Nancy Roberts of the Baxter Springs district has been teaching elementary school kids for 29 years in Kansas.

Steve Taylor of the Baxter Springs district has been in administration in elementary, middle, and secondary schools for 26 years in Kansas.

Janet Williamson of the Baxter Springs district has been teaching elementary school kids for 32 years in Kansas.
Rene Jamison (Mrs. Dustin) recently earned a Doctorate of School Psychology from the University of Kansas. She graduated from Kansas State University with a Bachelor's Degree in Psychology in 1998 and from Southern Methodist University with a Masters Degree in Clinical Psychology in 2000. Rene is currently employed by the Kansas University Medical Center's Development Disabilities Center specializing in autism.

Congratulations Rene!