Appreciating the power of knowledge

"Hey, everybody, there's a gunman on campus, we're on lockdown!"

Those were the words I heard as I sat in my office a week ago Friday at The University of Kansas. My supervisor shouted the words as he came out of his office moments after we had finished our weekly staff meeting. For a few moments, I felt the fear surge through my body as I had thoughts of the recent tragedy at Virginia Tech.

Quickly, staff members raced around our building locking all the doors and checking those that are normally locked to begin with. It was about 10:30 in the morning when the incident occurred. However, from the beginning there was a considerable amount of confusion concerning the nature of this "reported gunman.

After the staff meeting, I went to my office to check for messages. I noticed that my voice mail light on the phone was flashing, so I checked this first. Several were from students and other university staff, but one was a message sent to the entire campus. I don't have the time the message was sent, but I know it had preceded the announcement to lock down our building. According to the message, there had been an "unconfirmed report" of a man seen carrying a rifle near the center of campus. The message went on to state the campus "was not on lockdown," but we should report any suspicious activity to the University Police. I think we were supposed to stay inside, too.

After the voice mail and the announcement from my supervisor, I immediately logged on to the Internet to check my e-mail and see if any more information was available on KU's Web site. To my surprise, there was no announcement or message concerning the situation with the gunman. I did not find a message from the university on my e-mail account either.

By now, many of you have seen the television coverage and read the news reports about the incident. The spokesman for the university reported that an e-mail had been sent to the campus at 10:10 am. The university later explained that some technical issues had prevented the message from being sent.

While this is frustrating, I could accept the fact that the e-mail system had malfunctioned. The newly launched text messaging system for KU students, faculty, and staff is not fully operational either. These things take time.

What I don't understand is why the university did not post information on the KU Web site. Many of us are more likely to check our cell phones or the Internet before we check our voice mail. In fact, many students and university employees do not have a telephone or voice mail.

Had this incident occurred during the regular academic year, there would have been numerous employees at the libraries, computer labs and food courts who would have been in the dark.

Thankfully, nothing came of this sighting, but I hope The University of Kansas is much better prepared the next time around.

Nicolas Shump is a doctoral student in American studies at The University of Kansas. He can be reached at Nico1225@sunflower.com.
Topeka Capital-Journal
Topeka,KS
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Press club honors C-J

The Capital-Journal

KANSAS CITY, Mo. — Topeka Capital-Journal reporter Tim Carpenter was named Journalist of the Year by the Kansas City Press Club on Saturday evening.

That group also gave The Capital-Journal a gold award in the public service category for the newspaper’s project that prompted the Schools For Fair Funding organization to open some of its financial records.

The Capital-Journal filed its lawsuit in July after Schools for Fair Funding — a nonprofit organization funded only with public money paid by 19 school districts — had for months refused to release documents about its finances. Eventually, the group released more than 2,000 pages of documents, though some were heavily redacted.

“The research, the variety of sources and the quality of reporting and writing were absolutely excellent,” a judge wrote.

“The Capital-Journal is proud of its role in shining the light on previously undisclosed documents in the schools for fair funding case,” said Capital-Journal managing editor Wayne Stewart.

The awards were among 11 the newspaper received during the press club’s annual Heart of America Awards banquet in Kansas City, Mo. The Capital-Journal competed...
against other daily newspapers in eastern Kansas and western Missouri with circulations of more than 50,000.

The contest was open to articles and photographs published in 2006. It handed out gold awards for first place in various journalism categories, silver awards for second place and bronze awards for third.

Carpenter was chosen journalist of the year for a wide range of articles he wrote.

Those included pieces on immigration; a controversy involving Kansas Supreme Court Justice Lawton Nuss; and questions about then-Congressman Jim Ryun’s acquisition of a Capitol Hill home from a political group with ties to admitted felon and former lobbyist Jack Abramoff and indicted Rep. Tom DeLay, R-Texas.

“The judges reaffirmed my belief that Tim Carpenter is one of the finest investigative journalists anywhere,” said Stewart, the paper’s managing editor.

Carpenter also received a gold award in the general reporting category for articles he wrote about immigration as part of a series in which Carpenter, photo director Thad Allton and interpreter Cooper Allton traveled to Mexico on a 47-hour bus trip to learn why people risk their lives to immigrate. Most of the series focused on how Kansans are affected by the issue.

A judge wrote that Carpenter’s articles were “above and beyond other papers on immigration. Stuff you can’t get anywhere else. Fantastic. Really appreciated the trip to Mexico information.”

Carpenter, 45, of Lawrence, was hired as a special projects reporter in February 2004. He was a reporter at the Lawrence Journal-World from 1988 to 2004 and was a reporter with United Press International in Topeka from 1986 to 1988.

Capital-Journal columnist Ric Anderson won the gold award in the contest’s news column category with an entry that consisted of three columns.

“Clever, offbeat column,” a judge wrote. “It brings home the point, usually with a smile. Bright.”

Capital-Journal photographer Mike Burley won two gold awards. One was in feature journalism for a photo titled “Heat Wave” that showed two girls cooling off in a refrigerator at Topeka’s Blaisdell Pool. The other was in sports photojournalism for “Chasing Glory Days,” a photo of the winner of the women’s 1,500-meter race at the Kansas Relays.

The Capital-Journal took home two silver awards. One went to Jason Hunter in the photojournalism feature category for “Snack Time,” a photo of a family at a drive-in movie theater. The other went to the Capital-Journal staff in deadline reporting for its coverage of a strike at the Good-year Tire & Rubber Co.

Third-place awards went to Jan Biles in feature reporting for “An Evil Wind,” a look back at Topeka’s 1966 tornado on its 40th anniversary; and to Kurt Caywood in sportswriting column writing for a column he wrote saying University of Kansas President Robert Hemenway bears the brunt of the responsibility for problems in KU’s athletic department.

The Capital-Journal won one honorable mention award, which went to Carpenter for his coverage of a controversy over whether Nuss broke judicial rules by improperly communicating with Senate President Steve Morris about a Supreme Court order requiring the state to boost funding at K-12 public schools.
More funds flow into statewide campaigns

Political scientists say voters benefit from extra money

By CHRIS GREEN
Harris News Service

TOPEKA — Prospective voters shouldn’t expect the pre-election barrages of campaign mailings and TV political ads to end in Kansas anytime soon.

A recently released state report shows the amount of money flowing into campaigns for statewide offices and Kansas House seats has nearly doubled over the past two decades, although the figures don’t reflect inflation.

The increase comes while election costs have jumped nationally. However, two Kansas political scientists say the state’s trend might not be particularly worrisome.

Chapman Rackaway, assistant professor of political science at Fort Hays State University, said state political campaigns remain cheap by comparison.

“We still campaign in a pretty bare-bones fashion,” Rackaway said.

Plus, voters do benefit from being able to hear political pitches bought through campaign dollars, University of Kansas political science professor Burdett Loomis said.

“I honestly think that’s good for democracy,” Loomis said. “I think we want to watch out for spending too little.”

The recent state Governmental Ethics Commission analysis of campaign finances shows that in the 2006 cycle, candidates for statewide offices, including governor and attorney general, took in a record $13.187 million. That’s up from the $7.61 million spent on those races in 1986.

Gov. Kathleen Sebelius, a Democrat running for re-election, took in more than $5.3 million during the 2006 cycle.

Candidates for seats in the state House of Representatives garnered a record $5 million in campaign contributions for the 2006, up from the $1.72 million collected in 1986.

In all, the figure shows that over the past 20 years, political contributions to state and House races have nearly doubled from $9.3 million to $18.2 million. The totals for state Senate seats, last contested in 2004 and up for a vote in 2008, and weren’t included in the report.

Inflation a factor

Both Loomis and Rackaway said that much of those increases could be attributed to inflation.

Nearly everything costs more in 2006 than it did in 1986. According to an online federal labor statistics calculator, $1 had the same buying power in 1986 for urban households that $1.84 had in 2006.

If that inflationary rate is used to adjust previous campaign donation totals, the increase in contributions dwindles to about 6 percent spread over a 20-year period.

A lot more money

However, even if campaign contributions to candidates haven’t grown much in inflation-adjusted dollars, that doesn’t mean there haven’t been changes in who’s donating the money, and a general increase in money’s influence over Kansas politics.

Out-of-state groups have significantly stepped up their contributions, spending $2.3 million in 2006, about four times more than 1986.

Increased contributions by individuals, political action committees and businesses, corporations or unions, also exceed the rate of inflation.

Plus, the state report only accounts for dollars directly donated to candidates, transactions that account for just a portion of money channeled into state political campaigns.

In recent elections, the state has seen a significant increase in activity by independent groups, said Carol Williams, executive director of the state Governmental Ethics Commission.

Their efforts can be difficult to quantify because third-party groups don’t have to report which candidates they want to elect or defeat.

In addition, Williams said, other interest groups that have flexed their muscles recently don’t have to file reports at all because they don’t tell people how to vote.

Still, it’s safe to say, Williams said, that there’s more money being spent in influence elections than in the past, even factoring in inflation.

“There’s just a lot more money that goes into politics.”

Primary force

Spiking amounts of money spent on politics is a national issue, said Mary Boyle, a spokeswoman for Common Cause, a Washington, D.C.-based group that promotes open, accountable government.

In 1976, the average winner in a U.S. House race spent $87,000, or about $300,000 in 2006 dollars, Boyle said. U.S. Senate winners from that era spent $809,000 or $2.2 million in inflation adjusted dollars, she said.

Last year, in comparison, House winners spent an average of $1.3 million on their campaigns, and Senate winners spent an average of $9.6 million on their campaigns, Boyle said.
Such figures have prompted Common Cause to back publicly financed campaigns that offer public dollars to candidates who accept spending limits. Just a handful of states, including Arizona and Maine, have chosen the approach.

“Our elections should be about the quality of people running instead of who has the most money to buy an election,” Boyle said. “That’s why we need public financing.”
TOPEKA - Prospective voters shouldn't expect the pre-election barrages of campaign mailings and TV political ads to end in Kansas anytime soon.

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Working through grief in Greensburg

BY EDDIE HALL
The Hutchinson News
ehall@hutchnews.com

Seeing the gamut of emotions displayed in the aftermath of the Greensburg tornado is one thing.

Trying to explain the emotions is another, said Marvin George, pastor of the Greensburg First Baptist Church and president of the Kiowa County Pastoral Alliance.

As George has dealt with his own losses and ministered to others dealing with theirs, he's seen anger, sobbing grief, denial and hope.

"When you force someone into a paradigm shift in 15 minutes, there are bound to be repercussions emotionally, spiritually and in every way," he said. "That's what we're feeling right now in Greensburg. It's a wonder we don't have half the town in whiplash treatment."

The range of emotions is natural and will continue to be as residents go through different stages of grief associated with a traumatic loss, said Dr. Pam Botts, interim director of counseling and psychological services at the University of Kansas.

The Kübler-Ross grief cycle, developed by Swiss doctor Elizabeth Kübler-Ross, identifies seven stages people experiencing a traumatic loss typically move through. The stages include shock, denial, anger, bargaining, depression, testing and acceptance.

Botts warned that not everyone will go through each stage in order, and that the grief process isn't something that "ends" after a person experiences the various stages.

George said he's noticed different personality types are handling the trauma differently.

"It seems like those with ... personalities like mine, after the initial shock and awe of it said, 'Let's get busy and do things. Let's work on fixing stuff. Let's pour all our energy into that mentality and not let our emotions have room to work,' " he said. "Then, as the days go by, we start running out of things to keep us busy."

He said others, who prior to the tornado might have been more laid back, were more grief-stricken right after the tornado.

"It was, 'Everything is gone, what am I going to do tomorrow? What am I going to do right now,' " he said. "It was that way until they came to a point where they were so emotionally drained that they just couldn't cry any more. They'd hit rock bottom and that's the point when they'd start grasping at the hope strings God has dropped down and saying, 'We are safe. We are OK.'"

Botts said emotions, no matter what they are, can be very intense and don't often happen "in a straight line."

"One day can be pretty OK and the next day can be just awful," she said. "Even some months later there can be something that triggers a memory or just the emotion. People can suddenly feel anxious or sad, and that can be triggered by an image or a smell or something that doesn't even seem related.

"It's important for people to know that it's a natural process for them to go through and that it doesn't stay that way. The bad days won't stay there."
Depression often comes when the trauma begins to sink in and individuals realize what has happened and experience the feelings that they’ve been ignoring.

In the testing and acceptance stages, individuals recognize they must look for realistic steps they can take toward normalcy and then become actively involved in moving forward.

This might be saying, "OK, what are the resources, what do I still have, what can I count on, who can be supportive," followed by a feeling of, "this is awful—but I’m now going to look at what I can do."

Source: Dr. Pam Botts, KU interim director of counseling and psychological services

**How to deal**

Dr. Pam Botts, KU interim director of counseling and psychological services, said developing some type of routine and "family time" is also helpful.

For those wanting to help loved ones through the trauma, Botts said, "Send food."

"I’m very serious," she said. "Things like that can help people get back to everyday life."

She added that establishing some type of regular weekly phone call can help set up a routine and also provide those going through the trauma a time to talk.

**Free crisis counseling available**

The Kansas Department of Emergency Management is offering free crisis counseling for those suffering stress, anxiety or depression as a result of the severe storms that hit Kansas between May 4 and May 18. To register, call the Crisis Counseling Referral Line at 1-888-582-3759.

— Edie Hall
Business in Kansas | Beefing up tax cuts and incentives encourages new investment

State Changes Climate

Policymakers also are betting on creating more revenue for the state so it won’t have to raise taxes.

By Jim Sullinger
The Kansas City Star

The news was unsettling to the political establishment in Kansas. Job and business growth was caught in the slow lane. And high taxes were partly to blame.

Art Hall, an economics professor at the University of Kansas, delivered that message to state lawmakers early last year.

Major property tax increases arising from reappraisal in the late 1980s had slowed new business investment to a crawl in the ensuing decade, Hall said. And the economy still was growing more slowly in Kansas than in surrounding states.

Since then, Kansas politicians have been on a mission to catch up with states like Missouri, where the tax climate is regarded as more friendly.

In the last two years, lawmakers have either cut taxes or offered incentives worth $572 million over the next five years.

By comparison, seniors and the poor will receive nearly $189 million in tax breaks. And the middle class is paying as much as always.

Business clearly has the ear of state officials, and there may be more to come. Next year the business lobby will be pushing for a cut in the state’s corporate income tax.

"Capital investment will flow to the states that are most receptive to investment," Lt. Gov Mark Parkinson is telling chambers of commerce. "It’s important that we have a tax structure and an incentive package that encourages investment in Kansas."

Anecdotal evidence is emerging that the strategy could be working.

Kansas added 32,800 jobs in the year ending April 30, 2007, according to a new report, more than three times the number of jobs added in 2006. And it was no coincidence, said Kansas Revenue Secretary Joan Wagnon, that General Motors decided on a big expansion at its Fairfax plant in Kansas City, Kan., just as lawmakers were removing the property tax on new business machinery and equipment.

"There was communication with GM," she said.

By spending money to woo business, policymakers are betting those businesses will generate revenue for government services, so the state won’t have to raise taxes.

"It’s pure supply-side economics.

But this approach also has some lawmakers worried that if the economy falters, the rest of us will have to pick up the tax burden.

Senate Minority Leader Anthony Hensley, a Topeka Democrat, remembers how tax cuts in the 1990s, along with rampant spending, threw state government into a budget crisis several years later.

"The result? Passage in 2002 of the biggest general tax increase in state history.

"I’m very concerned about going down that slippery slope again," he said.

A bioscience success

The effort to spur job growth started in earnest in 2004 legislation encouraging the bioscience industry to come to Kansas.

Rep. Kenny Wilk of Lansing, who helped write the legislation, said Kansas will spend $588 million in the next five years through the state’s bioscience authority to recruit new technology companies and help others expand.

Among those benefiting was JaCam, a chemical company in Sterling, Kan., that went from 45 employees five years ago to 130 today.

"We’ve had a lot of growth, and the authority has been a big part of that," said Jason West, company vice president.

One of the big success stories for the authority was Quintiles Transnational Corp., an Overland Park company involved in drug development.

Tom Thornton, the authority’s president, said Quintiles moved to Kansas from Missouri last year, and he projected 520 new jobs by 2012. The company was offered $15 million in incentives from local officials in Kansas and the bioscience authority.

Quintiles has 767 employees, Thornton said, adding that the company expects 1,000 eventually.

Thornton said companies helped by the authority have produced 1,200 new jobs, with 1,600 more projected by those firms.

The last two years have been busy with a wave of tax initiatives.

The business machinery break, for example, was proposed by the Democratic governor and embraced by the largely Republican legislature.

"That was a huge lever on the economy in terms of moving a big boulder out of the way," said Wagnon, the revenue secretary.

That tax cut was one reason a California company, Swift...
Cor Aerospace, decided to add a factory in Wichita. Within five years, the company plans to have 200 new employees there. While the new machinery exemption was being debated, major U.S. automakers were deciding which plants to expand and which to close. For that reason, lawmakers decided to put the tax break into effect six months earlier than planned.

With the bill nearing passage, General Motors announced it would build a new line of cars, the Saturn Aura, at the Kansas City Kan., plant and spend $190 million to do it. The company later announced a $208 million investment to build a redesigned Chevrolet Malibu at the plant. The tax cut may not have been the only factor, but Wilk believes it helped. "The idea is to keep Kansas competitive in the global marketplace," said Wilk, chairman of the House Tax Committee.

But Missouri officials, still smarting over losing the NASCAR track and surrounding development to Kansas, have been cutting taxes and boosting business incentives in a bid to compete with Kansas and other states. The Missouri legislature this year voted to phase out taxes on Social Security benefits over six years, which will cost the state an estimated $154 million a year when fully in effect in 2012.

Lawmakers approved 23 new or expanded tax credits, providing taxpayer subsidies for activities as varied as selling beef cattle, donating to maternity homes, filming movies, buying a hybrid vehicle and preserving Civil War battlefields. The total subsidies were projected to reach at least $103 million a year.

And subsidies for ethanol and biodiesel were more than tripled, reaching $41.78 million in state funds, an increase of $279 million from the previous year. And lawmakers boosted total funding for economic development by 17 percent, to $305 million next year.

Trouble ahead?

Even before those changes, the Tax Foundation, a nonpartisan Washington think tank, ranked Missouri 15th among the 50 states for having a business-friendly tax climate. Kansas was ranked 31st. Officials at the foundation said the recent tax reductions should move Kansas into a better spot on future lists. The question is whether the state will see a commensurate payoff in economic growth.

Count Judith Rogers, a taxpayer advocate living in Gardner, among the skeptics. She worries that business will benefit at the expense of individual taxpayers. "The decisions that they are making today are really going to have an adverse affect sometime down the road," she said.

On the other side is Sen. Nick Jordan, a Shawnee Republican. Two years ago, he noted, lawmakers enacted the "angel" investment credit act, designed to reward those who invest in startup businesses. The credit was limited to $2 million, Jordan said, but in its first year resulted in 139 new jobs and $36 million of new business investment.

Hall, the KU economist, said: "Fundamentally, we're doing the right thing. But this is long-haul stuff." The Star's Kit Wagar contributed to this report.

To reach Jim Sullinger, call 816-234-7701 or send e-mail to jsullinger@kcstar.com.

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**KANSAS TAX POLICY: A NEW DIRECTION**

Political leaders in Kansas hope to boost the economy and create jobs by cutting taxes for business. Here's a look at tax changes enacted the last two years for business vs. seniors and the poor. No major tax changes were enacted for the middle class.

**Tax reductions for business**

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**Tax reductions for seniors, poor**

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Web pages may not be window to the soul

**Context is important when interpreting social network sites, university professor says.**

By JONATHAN KEALING
The Kansas City Star

Much was made this week of the MySpace page thought to belong to Edwin R. Hall, and particularly to his interest in "eating small children and harming small animals."

Hall is charged with the kidnap and murder of Kelsey Smith from a Target parking lot last weekend.

A University of Kansas professor, however, said that what you see on a MySpace page is not always what it seems.

"It's important to remember the social context," said Nancy Baym, an associate professor of communication studies at KU. "What something means outside the network may mean something else inside the network."

In other words, what outsiders read as signs of a disturbed soul on a social networking site could be nothing more than an inside joke among friends, Baym said. Or it could be a sign of deeper problems, she said.

But Hall is not the only MySpace member who expresses an interest in "eating small children."

In fact, a search of MySpace profiles returns more than 200 results of sites that contain that very phrase.

As for "harming small animals," only four profiles included that phrase, two of which say that the person lives in fear of harming small animals.

Those who list "eating small children" among their interests include a wide cross section of people and interests, including one person in Wichita who claims other interests including "hot chicks (sic) that like guns and motorcycles."

Another anonymous user, however — this one from Los Angeles — couches his interest in eating small children among other interests such as writing sketch comedy, jazz, classic rock and blues music.

The media and the community have increasingly turned to social network sites such as Facebook or Livejournal in addition to MySpace as a window on the thoughts of those involved in crime or tragedy.

"It's not wrong to look in these places for information," Baym said. "It is wrong to put more or less value on the information you find there."

Baym has conducted research on how people communicate and interact through social networks, as well as how the media view and treat social networks.

As of Friday afternoon, profiles thought to belong to Hall and his wife, Aletha, had either been deleted or set to private, and only friends could view them.

"We are working with local law enforcement to assist in their investigation and have preserved all evidence related to the profile in question," MySpace said in a statement to The Kansas City Star. "We have a 24/7 team at the disposal of local law enforcement should (they) need it."

Law enforcement requested that the page be saved.