Trevan McGee, son of Lyndol and Bridget McGee of Bucklin received his degree from Kansas University during the fall semester. He received a Bachelor of Arts in Theatre and Film, and Bachelor Science in Journalism.

KU conducts only one formal ceremony each year, and many students graduating in the fall or summer terms will return for the traditional walk down the hill and into Memorial Stadium on Sunday, May 18, 2008.
St. John makes staff changes
Hospital hires new development associate, gift shop manager

SPECIAL TO THE CURRENT

The Providence St. John Foundation recently added two new staff members.

Erinn Scott is the new development associate for St. John Hospital, Leavenworth, and Sue Mathe is the new gift shop manager for Providence Medical Center, Kansas City, Kan. and St. John.

“We are excited to have Erinn and Sue on board. They both have outstanding experience in their respective fields that will benefit the Foundation and the hospitals,” says Mary Ellen Clark, foundation executive director.

Mathe will oversee the daily operations of the shops, including inventory, ordering and merchandising.

“My goal is to satisfy the needs of our customers, providing cost-effective, creative gift ideas,” Mathe said.

Proceeds from gift shop sales support the Providence St. John Foundation.

Prior to joining the foundation, Mathe worked for 13 years as the assistant manager of a gift shop called Simply Southwest in Pratt. Before that, she worked at a local drug store. Mathe grew up in the Quindaro area of Kansas City, Kan. She now makes her home in Shawnee. She has three grown children and three grandchildren.

As development associate, Scott will be responsible for raising funds to support the foundation’s goals, coordinating special events, and promoting the foundation in the Leavenworth area.

“My goal for the foundation is to reach out to our community as partners in support of the hospital’s mission,” Scott said.

Before joining the foundation, Scott worked at the Marriott Hotel on the Country Club Plaza as an event manager. She also has worked as the convention services manager for Interstate Hotels and Resorts in Kansas City, Oklahoma City, and Dallas.

Scott has a bachelor of arts degree in communication studies from the University of Kansas.
Historic preservationists are concerned a proposed project would mar KU's Mount Oread.

By DAVID KLEPPER
The Star's Topeka correspondent

LAWRENCE | Residents of this college town are particular about what goes on their beloved Mount Oread. This is Kansas, after all, where "mounts" are hard to come by.

Now, talk of putting an upscale hotel on Mount Oread has some worried about the city's skyline and the preservation of a historic neighborhood at the center of the University of Kansas campus.

The seven-story Oread Inn would sit just down the street from the student union and a stone's throw from the football stadium. The hotel would replace some rundown buildings and already-closed businesses, including The Crossing, a popular campus bar, and the Yellow Sub sandwich shop.

In addition to hotel rooms, the plans call for some retail businesses — likely a restaurant — and condominiums. Developers intend to ask the city for public financing to make the project work.

Partners in the project include the owners and operators of Lawrence's historic Eldridge Hotel on Massachusetts Street. They say the Oread Inn would fill an upscale niche that's now unfilled at the KU campus.

"Of the Big 12 schools, we are the only college community that doesn't have a hotel on campus or within one block of campus," said Nancy Longhurst, general manager of the Eldridge and a member of the Oread Inn project team.

Even critics of the hotel plan say the idea is commendable. The neighborhood association has endorsed the plan.

But critics of the project — mostly architects and historic preservationists — say the hotel's design doesn't fit with the historic neighborhood. They worry that a hotel atop the hill will irrevocably alter the city's skyline. And not for the better.

"People don't understand how big and massive this building is going to be," said Dennis Brown, president of the Lawrence Preservation Alliance. "It is going to change the skyline."

Mount Oread hosts the university's Campanile and Fraser Hall, the stone building that's visible from miles away. It's in many ways the heart of the University of Kansas campus and, consequently, Lawrence.

A landmark for settlers traveling west, the hill was a staging area for marauders before the Civil War and later the site chosen for KU. Every KU graduate knows its contours; the "walk down the hill" is a graduation day rite of passage.

City Commissioner Mike Amyx said the project could be a great fit for the university and the city.

"It's a real positive," Amyx said. "It could be a wonderful project for the city, and it's connected pretty closely to the University of Kansas. It would be great for alumni or visitors to the city."

To Brown, comments like these indicate that the commission is going to approve the hotel despite concerns. He said approval of the Oread Inn is "probably a done deal."

There are two historic districts near the potential hotel site. The city's Historic Resources Commission, which oversees protection of historic buildings, unanimously voted to reject the hotel project because of its size and design. Supportive City Commission members overruled that decision but sent the project back to the committee when the developers tweaked the design.

The new design had a new facade designed to blend better with surrounding buildings. The overall height was reduced by six feet.

Committee members said the changes were a good start, but they still worry about the hotel's effect on the neighborhood. Though the committee isn't obligated to protect Lawrence's skyline, member Michael Sizemore, an architect, said he wonders how the hotel will look next to the Campanile and Fraser Hall.

"If it's going to be on our skyline I would like it to be a landmark structure," he said. "It should reflect our community."

One retired KU architecture professor said he's so concerned about the possibility of putting a "sore thumb" on the city's skyline that he called for a gathering of architects last week at the library. He said he hoped the group could come up with a better design.

"The first design was about as bad as anything I've ever seen," said Dennis Domer. "We still have a long way to go."

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The Oread Inn would be near KU's football stadium.
Prominent Kansas AIDS researcher dies of heart attack

KANSAS CITY, Kan. (AP) — A prominent University of Kansas AIDS researcher who was developing a vaccine aimed at helping poor people around the world fight the virus has died of a heart attack.

Opendra “Bill” Narayan, 71, a senior faculty member at University of Kansas Medical Center, died Monday.

Narayan gained prominence more than a decade ago after developing a form of HIV that caused a disease in monkeys that was similar to AIDS in humans. He used his new animal model to test vaccines, and received close to $50 million in grants — including more than $16 million from the National Institutes of Health — for research at the medical center.

“Dr. Narayan was a brilliant researcher and professor,” University of Kansas Chancellor Robert Hemenway said in a statement on the school’s Web site. “His pioneering work on HIV/AIDS brought international acclaim to himself and the university. On behalf of the entire KU community, I offer deepest condolences to his family, friends and colleagues.”

His colleagues say they will continue his work.

“I hope I and others will be able to take his legacy and move forward,” said James Laufenberg, president of Lenexa-based ImmunoGenetix, a company Narayan helped found to bring his AIDS vaccine to market. “I, for one, will do everything I can.”

Laufenberg said his company was working on an application to the Food and Drug Administration for permission to test Narayan’s vaccine on a small number of people, and hoped to begin clinical trials within two years.

Narayan’s vaccines were not intended to prevent people from becoming infected, but he had demonstrated that vaccinated monkeys did not become ill after being infected with the simian version of HIV.

He was looking for an easy-to-administer vaccine that could help people in less-developed countries who could not afford expensive drugs.

“Bill had a very clear altruistic side,” said Paul Cheney, a KU Medical Center neuroscientist who collaborated with Narayan on research. “He saw that to stop AIDS around the world was going to take another approach.”

Narayan came to the medical center in 1993. He was a distinguished professor and chairman of the department of microbiology, molecular genetics and immunology. Prior to that he was on the faculty at Johns Hopkins.

“You could see the twinkle in his eye every time he made a discovery,” said Paul Terranova, vice chancellor for research at the medical center. “He had this excitement for what he was doing. It was work, but it was fun for him.”

Visitation is scheduled from 5 to 8 p.m. Friday at the Amos Family Chapel in Shawnee.

First runner-up in Miss Kansas USA competition

Ashley Blanchat, daughter of Katherine and Ron Blanchat was one of the 60 young women who competed in the Miss Kansas USA Pageant held in the Holidrome in Lawrence. Ashley is a sophomore at the University of Kansas majoring in communications.

The contestants were judged in three categories: evening gown, swimming suit and personal interview. Judges narrowed the field to ten finalists and then five before selecting one of the five as winner. Ashley was one of the five and was judged first runner-up in the Miss Kansas USA competition. She is the granddaughter of Verna Lee Coleman.
Lawrence Journal-World, on public transportation:

A plan to seek joint proposals from prospective operators is another positive step toward combining the city and Kansas University public transit systems.

Lawrence city commissioners will be asked to authorize city staff to issue a joint request for proposals to operate the city’s T and KU’s bus system beginning in January 2008.

KU officials had specifically negotiated a contract that would end at the same time as the city’s contract to facilitate seeking a joint RFP.

The city’s public transit administrator is careful in his background memo to city commissioners to say that seeking a joint proposal is unlikely to reduce the city’s costs for operating the T.

Rising costs for fuel, insurance, wages, maintenance and other expenses are expected to make it impossible for the city to maintain its current level of service for a comparable cost after the current contract runs out.

The RFP will specifically ask for cost estimates on a reduced schedule of operation to lay out various options for commissioners.

Even though the city and KU may not see immediate cost reductions, it only makes sense in the long run to seek additional coordination between the two bus services.

Operating two separate public transportation services in a town the size of Lawrence simply isn’t efficient.

The city may face some painful choices as it negotiates a new contract to operate the T. The bus system is a costly venture for the city, but it may become increasingly important if rising fuel prices prompt more people to take advantage of public transportation.

Whatever the future holds for public transportation, it seems that both KU and the city will benefit from working together to meet those needs. A full merger of the two bus systems may make sense in the future, but for now, a joint contract for the operation of the two systems is a step in the right direction.
The names of more than 1,600 candidates for degrees for the fall 2007 semester at the University of Kansas have been announced by the Office of Registrar.

Graduate and undergraduate degrees are conferred in December based on work completed during the fall semester. Because KU conducts only one formal commencement ceremony each year, many students graduating in the fall or summer terms will return for the traditional walk down the hill and into Memorial Stadium on Sunday, May 18, 2008.

Five of KU’s 13 colleges and schools conducted recognition programs or hooding ceremonies earlier this month to honor those planning to graduate at the end of the semester: the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences, the School of Business, the School of Engineering, the School of Law.
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Among the students completing degree work was Matthew Paul Prior of Rossville, son of Dennis and Janice Prior, bachelor's degree in sociology.
Boyda touts earmarks headed to 2nd District

BY SCOTT ROTHSCHILD
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Funds for cancer research at Kansas University, road improvements at Clinton Lake and barracks at Fort Leavenworth were among the numerous budget earmarks for the 2nd Congressional District, U.S. Rep. Nancy Boyda, D-Topeka, said Thursday.

The funds were included in the appropriations bill approved by Congress and headed to President Bush for his signature.

The spending measure contained $387 million in new federal funding for the district, including $86 million in earmarked funds.

Of those, $414,000 will go to KU for drug research.

Scott Weir, director of the office of therapeutics, discovery and development at KU, said the funding will help purchase research equipment that will promote KU’s effort of obtaining designation as a national cancer center.

Having the equipment, he said, puts KU in a stronger position to get more federal research projects to work on potential new drugs for cancer treatment, prevention and control.

“It fits in with the whole drug discovery strategy that we have,” he said.

In addition, $2.8 million in federal funding will go toward improving the road below Clinton Lake dam, Boyda said.

“This isn’t a perfect bill, and it should have been much better.”

Nancy Boyda
2nd District congresswoman

Lew Ruona, project manager for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers at Clinton Lake, said the 18-foot-wide road is too narrow.

“We want to widen it and overlay it,” he said.

But the big ticket spending in the district, which includes Leavenworth County, went to the military.

Fort Leavenworth will receive $55 million for construction of a barracks complex and $11.6 million for the initial phase of a chapel complex.

Boyda said passage of the appropriations bill was “bittersweet” because while it provided needed funding for law enforcement, road and infrastructure improvements and strengthening military bases, it failed to address numerous other needs.

“This isn’t a perfect bill, and it should have been much better,” Boyda said.

She said the House passed a bill to fix the Social Security disability backlog, but it was vetoed by President Bush. And, she said, Democrats approved a bill to fully fund changes under the military base realignment and closure process, but then “it got bogged down in politics.”

— Staff writer Chad Lawhorn contributed to this report.
Proposed hotel stirs concern

LAWRENCE — A proposal to build an upscale hotel on Mount Oread has stirred up concern about the city’s skyline and the preservation of a historic neighborhood at the center of the University of Kansas campus.

The seven-story Oread Inn would be close to the student union and would replace a few rundown buildings and already-closed businesses. The proposal also includes retail businesses.

Some architects and historic preservationists say the hotel’s design doesn’t fit with the historic neighborhood. They worry that a hotel atop the hill will alter the view of the city.

Developers say the Oread Inn would fill an upscale niche that’s now unfilled at the campus.