Concordia may face housing shortage

Ethanol plant, wind farm construction projects to create large demand

By TIM UNRUH
Salina Journal

CONCORDIA — Rex Istas and Blake Hendrix are not so sure a housing shortage looms for Concordia and Cloud County.

But with an ethanol plant and a wind farm under construction — both at the same time for a while — in the Concordia and Cloud County areas, there are worries it could get crowded.

Add to that the expanding enrollment at Cloud County Community College, and there could be problems.

The Concordia-based CloudCorp economic development group estimates some 450 construction workers will be in the county from April through December this year, with a peak in May.

Istas, owner of an RV park in north Concordia, wouldn’t mind a little more demand for his camper hookups.

“I’ve had (the RV park) for about 20 years, and the only time I get any business is when the pipeliners come through. It’s hit and miss,” he said.

He could have a full park once the Everton Energy ethanol plant project restarts this spring. Rough dirt work was completed last fall, said Hendrix, the vice president of operations.

Hendrix expects 100 to 150 workers on the job when construction restarts on the $240 million plant.

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Housing / Demand to rise

Between then and late spring of 2009, Hendrix said, there could be a maximum of 400 ethanol plant workers in town. “We haven’t had any housing issues. We expect the workers to be spread out over this county and maybe other counties,” Hendrix said.

Some will bring RVs or trailers. Others will rent houses in the country or apartments in area towns, he said, and still others will stay in motels.

Dirt-working equipment has been assembled south of Concordia to begin work on a place for a construction equipment yard for the $340 million Horizon Energy wind farm, said Kirk Lowell, CloudCorp executive director.

The 200-megawatt farm is expected to be operational before the end of this year, he said.

Hendrix said there will be overlaps in the two construction projects.

Housing a major concern

Housing is a major concern right now to Richard Underbakke, community college president.

“We’ve got a very finite housing supply,” he said.

The college has just over 700 students after experiencing a 10 percent enrollment growth this past fall.

With publicity from Cloud County Community College’s new wind energy training program and “a more aggressive approach to recruiting,” Underbakke anticipates another 10 percent increase this fall.

There is room for 236 students to live on campus, but the college is expanding to 271 by this fall.

“The rest live either at home or in off-campus rentals,” Underbakke said.

Concordia might combat the crunch by allowing short-term permits for RVs to park in manufactured housing districts, such as in a vacant lot or in someone’s large back yard where utility services are available, City Manager Mark Skiles said.

At their Wednesday night meeting, city commissioners table the temporary-use permit ordinance until their March 19 meeting.

The workers are welcome, Skiles said, because they will be eating at restaurants, spending money for groceries and other supplies.

“It’s a short-lived infusion of cash, but we want to take advantage of it as much as we can,” Skiles said. “There is no negative here, other than the potential effects on the college.”

The spoils of success

The Cloud County Register of Deeds office has become a clearinghouse for local and area rental property. That list is available online at www.cloudcountyks.org, Register of Deeds Judy Lambert said.

Since the list was first posted six weeks ago, she said, two houses have been rented and removed from the list.

City leaders are unsure how many of the 70 to 80 new permanent jobs created by the ethanol plant and the wind farm might be absorbed by the current work force, and how many new faces they will produce.

A 2003 study by the University of Kansas Policy Research Institute commissioned by CloudCorp showed that 688 people commuted out of Cloud County daily to work, while 589 commuted into the county.

“We don’t know how many of those commuters will look at the primary jobs and maybe take them,” Lowell said.

For now, he said, Concordia is dealing with spoils associated with success.

“It just a growth issue, and with that comes some pain,” Lowell said.
LAWRENCE — The Dole Institute of Politics at The University of Kansas will host the First Annual Tuttle Lecture, “Fight the Power,” at 7:30 p.m. Monday.

The lecture will feature Leon Litwack, a retired University of California-Berkeley history professor.

Then at 7:30 p.m. Tuesday, the Dole Institute will host a lecture on “Ike’s Final Battle: The Road to Little Rock and the Challenge of Equality,” featuring Kasey Pipes, an author and former Bush White House speechwriter. A book signing will follow the lecture.

Both lectures are free and open to the public. For more information, call (785) 864-4900.
The future of foreign languages at Washburn Rural High School may lie in a quiet classroom where Mandarin Chinese is taught.

On Wednesday morning, three students gathered there to stare at a screen while a teacher and other classmates were beamed to them from other parts of the state. What could eventually become the school's foreign language past — a small German class — sat next door watching a video.

When principal Ed Raines looks at foreign language enrollment numbers, a lack of certified German teachers and China's growing role in the world, the future seems obvious. Rather than looking at Chinese as a bonus option, augmenting the school's three main languages of Spanish, French and German, Chinese will be transitioned to one of the school's three main languages. And if downward enrollment trends don't change, German could be sacrificed.

But for German teacher James Schoonover, the decision could be a devastating blow to the program he plans to retire from this school year. As far as he is concerned, the broader the opportunities a school can offer, the better.

"Those high school years can be spring-
Language: Changing to Chinese called strategic

Continued from Page 1A

boards for all sorts of things," he said.

Next to Spanish and French, German is one of the most commonly taught languages in the state.

Kansas' history of German immigrants — there are still populations in some areas who speak German — has played into that. And with the exception of a time during World War I when anti-German sentiment meant the language was dropped from many schools, German has had a place in many Kansas classrooms.

During the Cold War, German was a strategic language in accessing communist Eastern Europe, Schoonover said, and it remains an important language, he said.

"It's more so given the leadership in the European Union and is the bridge to East Europe," he said.

But transitioning the focus to Mandarin Chinese is strategic, Raines said. It is the most commonly spoken language in the world, while German doesn't make the top 10. Like Spanish and French, he said Mandarin Chinese is one of the official languages of the United Nations.

And on a smaller scale in the hallways of Washburn Rural, enrollment in German has slipped, while enrollment in Spanish and French has climbed — so much so that Raines said he will probably need to add a Spanish teacher in coming years.

"That led to a conversation about what foreign language do we think is going to be more beneficial for kids long term — 10 to 15 years from now," Raines said. "That led to Chinese just because of China's increasing economic power, the pretty widespread perception they are going to play an increasing role in world policies in coming years."

Mandarin Chinese has come on slowly in the school — in part because the distance-learning program limits the number of students to 10. Nine students are signed up to take the second-level course next year and 14 are enrolled to take the first-level course, although Raines said numbers continue to grow. In a few years, he said the district likely will look at hiring a teacher for Mandarin Chinese in the school.

Still, Schoonover wonders if Chinese actually will become popular among high school students. It is far more difficult to learn than German, and the difficulty of learning German is one thing that discourges students from taking his courses, he said.

Carol Vogel, who teaches German and future foreign language teachers at Washburn University, notes that many students choose German because of their family heritage.

"Just my opinion, I question frankly if in the Midwest there will be as great a success in those programs as there might be in areas where there are communities close by (where Mandarin Chinese is spoken)," she said.

Also playing into discussions in Washburn Rural is the availability of teachers. Foreign language teachers are in short supply throughout the state and especially for German.

Until recent years, the state had just one or two people licensed to teach Mandarin Chinese. But with the opening of The University of Kansas Confucius Institute, the addition of Chinese to a national language initiative, and an agreement between China and the Kansas State Department of Education to bring in visiting teachers, the numbers are rapidly expanding.

Even at Washburn Rural, German still may have a long-term future. Students who start German 1 next year — and German I will be offered despite some early questions — will be provided instruction in German as long as they desire during their time in the high school.

If enrollment rebounds, Raines said German will continue to have a place in the lineup of classes.

"Ideally," he said, "it would be nice to have four or five different foreign languages."

But what those languages are may be less important than students' exposure to foreign languages, some argue.

"I think any foreign language is a good to learn," said Melanie Manares, a consultant with the Kansas State Department of Education, who works with the visiting teachers from China. "It doesn't matter which one it is, and it doesn't matter if it's going to be useful for everyone in the future."

Washburn Rural senior D.J. Cunningham likes the variety. He is taking both Spanish and Mandarin Chinese this year.

"I like language classes," he said. "I was going to take Arabic, too, but they decided not to offer it."

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Ticket talk

Could Gov. Kathleen Sebelius or Sen. Sam Brownback be on the presidential ballot in November? Sebelius has endorsed Democratic hopeful Barack Obama and is frequently mentioned as a potential running mate for the senator from Illinois. Brownback has campaigned for Sen. John McCain, who has secured the Republican nomination, and would appeal to social conservatives turned off by McCain. In what political analyst Jennifer Duffy called “America’s favorite parlor game,” Daily Dose asked her and others for their assessment of Sebelius and Brownback as potential vice presidential candidates.
PROS: One thing she brings is the ability to unite the party and to address a large base of women who supported Hillary Clinton. The other thing she does is continue that ability for Obama to appeal to independents. She has a very strong track record of doing that in Kansas.

CONS: Her biggest drawback is she doesn’t have much experience on the national stage. She has no foreign policy experience. So on the biggest issue that faces Obama, foreign policy relative to Iraq and relative to foreign threats, she would not be able to bring experience.

PROS: Being selected vice president is like taking the Hippocratic Oath — first do no harm. She’s a moderate and a woman, which could work for and against her. I think being a moderate may be more important. And she has the executive experience that Obama needs.

CONS: She is a woman. It’s a question about how good they feel about a ticket of complete firsts. If you were going to ask who was the more effective surrogate (campaigning in Ohio), her or (Ohio Gov.) Ted Strickland, who campaigned for Clinton, you’d probably have to say Strickland.

PROS: She’s a successful governor from a red state. She has a good government record. She was one of Time’s top five governors. She’s won various awards and accolades for her governing style. And she has attracted the interest of the mainstream media.

CONS: She’s from a state that, even with her on the ticket, would be a longshot for the Democrats to win in. There are other candidates who bring you a little more — someone like Jim Webb, the senator from Virginia, who is a white male, which I think is more important this time.

PROS: She would have predicted that George Bush 41 would have chosen Dan Quale, and I wouldn’t have predicted that his son would then pick Dick Cheney. It’s not unusual for a person like Brownback, who may appear to be a second-tier candidate, to occasionally come up from the back bench and get the nod.

CONS: He dropped out before Iowa, and that was largely because his campaign was beginning to fail, even before the first primary. When he had a chance to appeal to (conservative) voters, he wasn’t their first choice.

PROS: Brownback is clearly a serious conservative, and his credentials are clearly very solid. For someone like John McCain, who is searching for someone to shore up that conservative base, Brownback would be a very reasonable choice on the issues.

CONS: The downside is that in his primary campaign, he just went nowhere. He seemed to have no capacity, or very little, to connect with a wide swath of the electorate. And clearly, Mike Huckabee did. So I think I would be very surprised to see Brownback on the ticket.
"A number of years ago after I'd been retired for four or five years, a colleague asked me why I was in the office all the time," said Gunn, who is a professor emeritus at KU. "I told him that writers never retire, they just go out of print.

"Of course, that may not be true now with digital printing," he added with a smile.

With 40 books he has either written or edited — a 41st one will be out before long — it's not likely Gunn will be out of print anytime soon. And with 215 pages of another novel in progress, neither does it appear he has plans to really retire.

"I had no idea what it meant to be a career writer," he said. "My first ambition was to be an electrical engineer, but I wasn't very good at it. I had to take a class in metalworking and could never make a gear that was usable. They were all a bit lopsided."

He took an essay writing class and found he could write.

"I came here (KU) and got a degree in journalism, but I never wanted to write news; I wanted to write features," he said.

After trying his hand at graduate courses in playwriting at Northwestern University and becoming somewhat disillusioned with the genre, he came back to Kansas City, Mo., his hometown, and wrote his first science fiction story.

"I sent 'Paradox' to Astounding and Amazing and got the standard rejection slips," Gunn said, "but finally got paid $80 for it. I got really encouraged by that, although I eventually realized I couldn't make a living at it."

That first story published in 1949 was only the beginning. Gunn went on to write short stories, novels, plays, screenplays, radio scripts, articles and criticism, with most of his work in the field of science fiction, a literary form he became enthralled with as a teenager. His stories have been dramatized on radio and television, and one of his novels, "The Immortals," was made into an ABC-TV Movie of the Week and later into an hour-long series in 1970-71.

In addition to writing and editing, Gunn is also known for the science fiction classes he has taught at KU and online: the Intensive English Institute on the Teaching of Science Fiction, which alternates its focus between novels and short stories, and the Writers Workshop in Science Fiction.

"I've always enjoyed working with writers who want to master their crafts, and I think I have a knack for identifying what writers are trying to accomplish and suggest ways they can achieve their intentions," Gunn said. "I've been fortunate enough to attract a number of talented students, three of whom have won the $5,000 grand prize of the Writers of the Future contest, and many others have published one or more stories or novels."

A past president of the Science Fiction Writers of America and the Science Fiction Research Writers of America and current director of the Center for the Study of Science Fiction, Gunn has received many awards and honors for his writing. He has also been the guest of honor at numerous regional science fiction conventions here and abroad, and this April he'll receive a College of Liberal Arts and Sciences Alumni Distinguished Service Award from KU.

Perhaps his greatest achievement, however, came last year when he was named the Damon Knight Memorial Grand Master by the Science Fiction Writers of America.
This award is given by the Science Fiction and Fantasy Writers of America to a living author for lifetime achievement in science fiction and/or fantasy.

Despite all these honors, the 84-year-old Gunn still said that writing is hard work. “If it were easy to do, everyone would do it. But there’s a sense of accomplishment when you’ve done what you set out to do,” Gunn said. “When I don’t write, I don’t feel like myself. I don’t feel like I’ve earned my place in the world for that day if I haven’t written anything.”

Carolyn Kaberline is a freelance writer in Topeka. She can be reached at ckaberli@aol.com.
Dr. James Gunn, professor emeritus at The University of Kansas, edits and writes science fiction.

By Carolyn Kaberline
SPECIAL TO THE CAPITAL-JOURNAL

LAWRENCE — Although he’s been retired for nearly 15 years, James Gunn can be found in his office at Wescoe Hall on The University of Kansas campus almost every day.
COMMUNITY CALENDAR

Support your local sheriff — A fundraiser for the Nemaha County Sheriff's Residence and Jail, 113 N. 6th in Seneca, will be from 11 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. Thursday at the historic site. On the menu are vegetable beef soup, chili, ham and bean soup, cornbread, relishes, ham sandwiches, dessert and drink, for a freewill offering. Along with lunch will be tours of the building, which is on the National Register of Historic Places. It was constructed in two parts, one in 1879 and the second in 1907. The building blends Italianate features and details with early 20th-century colonial period features and details. The Nemaha County Historical Society has its museum there with artifacts from the county's early days.

Fabulous flora — The Flint Hills are home to nearly 1,000 species of vegetation, and Dr. Craig C. Freeman will be describing some of them in "Simple Sublime Statistics: The Flora and Vegetation of the Flint Hills." His talk at 3:30 and 7 p.m. Saturday at the Kaw Mission State Historic Site in Council Grove is part of the mission's 2008 educational program series, "Our Fabulous Flint Hills: The Hills Are Alive!" Freeman is a research scientist at the University of Kansas. The program is free. Information: (620) 767-5410.

Take flight — Youth ages 7 to 14 can learn more about the wild blue yonder through the Aviation Class at the Combat Air Museum at Forbes Field in Topeka. The class runs from 9 a.m. to noon during the local spring break week, March 17-20. The fee is $40; a flight in a light aircraft at a later date can be added for $40 more. Enrollment is limited. Call (785) 862-3303.

There she is — Girls will be lining up at Republic County High School in Belleville on Saturday night for the Kansas Junior Miss finals. This pageant, which is a preliminary to America's Junior Miss scholarship pageant, is open to the public. Information: (785) 527-5950. The high school is at 24th and P streets.

Classic on stage — Theatre Atchison brings Rudyard Kipling's "The Jungle Book" to the stage for six performances next weekend. Showtimes are 7 p.m. Friday; 2, 4 and 7 p.m. Saturday; and 2 p.m. March 16 in the theater at 401 Santa Fe. Tickets are $5 for all ages and are available at the door or reserved by calling (913) 367-7469.

Set sail — Feel the tropical breezes as the Rodgers and Hammerstein musical "South Pacific" opens at the Columbian Theatre in Wamego. The curtain goes up at 7:30 p.m. Friday, and performances are scheduled through the weekend and the weekends of March 28 and April 4. The dinner portion of the dinner theater will be catered by Puffy's Steak and Ice House in Maple Hill. Tickets are $37.25 for adults and $20.75 for children for dinner and the show. Make reservations or get more information at (800) 899-1893 or www.columbiantheatre.com.

Show pride — Beatrice PRIDE's annual Palm Sunday breakfast will be from 8 a.m. to 1 p.m. March 16 at St. Malachy's Church Hall. The church is at 311 Williams; Beatrice is in Marshall County, north of Frankfort on K-99 highway. Information: (785) 353-2492.
Alternative springbreak will be learning experience for area student

LAWRENCE — For spring break this year, 49 University of Kansas students took their pick of seven getaway spots — but not exactly for a carefree vacation. Their sandy beach might be a Hurricane Katrina recovery site, and their night on the town could turn into a 48-hour homeless experience.

KU students will work March 15-22 with agencies in Florida, Illinois, Mississippi, South Carolina, Texas, Utah and Washington, D.C. Their roles will include providing volunteer help with issues such as children’s services, conservation, health care, hurricane relief, language and culture acquisition, environmental preservation and people with disabilities. The program costs participants $250 ($210 for site leaders) and covers their transportation, housing and meals.

The student-run Alternative Breaks program centers on service-learning trips that offer students a unique opportunity to make volunteer efforts part of their educational experience. After students are selected for the program, they are required to attend the Special Projects in the Community course to prepare them for their trips.

An Alternative Spring Break counts as one unit for the University Honors Program, which requires students who want to graduate with honors to complete one or two honors units outside the classroom.

Ben Berning, Shawnee senior, and Ashley Bloom, Hutchinson senior, are Alternative Breaks co-directors. Heidi Pierson, Clay Center junior, and Lake Wooten, Mission Hills senior, spring break site coordinators, selected the sites.

Mauntell Renee Ford, daughter of Howard Ford, Cedar Vale, will participate in the Alternative Break to rebuild lakeshore in Lakeshore, Miss.

This small Mississippi town was hit hard by Hurricane Katrina in 2005 and still needs help rebuilding more than 5,000 homes in the community. Participants will help rebuild homes for residents who were not covered by insurance. The program is affiliated with a local church but KU students are only expected to assist with recovery efforts of this program. They also will work with volunteers from across the country to help residents repair their homes or distribute food and supplies.

For more information visit, www.rebuildlakeshore.com
Cedar Vale KU student to spend spring break helping rebuild Mississippi town

LAWRENCE — Mauntell Renee Ford, a freshman from Cedar Vale, is one of 49 University of Kansas students who took their pick of seven getaway spots for spring break — but not exactly for a carefree vacation.

Ford will be among a group of students going to Lakeshore, Miss., to help with its rebuilding. This small Mississippi town was hit hard by Hurricane Katrina in 2005 and still needs help rebuilding more than 5,000 homes in the community. Participants will help rebuild homes for residents who were not covered by insurance. The program is affiliated with a local church. KU students are expected to assist with recovery efforts of this program. They also will work with volunteers from across the country to help residents repair their homes or distribute food and supplies. For more information, go to www.rebuildlakeshore.com.

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Leavenworth County makes big donations

BY SHAWN LINENBERGER
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Margaret Landis, of Fort Leavenworth, contributed $1,000 to the John McCain campaign. She said she's never donated to a candidate before but felt so strongly about McCain that she decided she would try to help the man she described as "a veteran who served his country."

"I truly believe in this guy," she said. "He believes the same I do on issues, and I think he is willing to work with Democrats as well as Republicans."

She said now more than ever, campaign contributions are determining the success of a candidate. She believes that as a "regular" person, contributing to a campaign gave her the chance to get involved and influence the outcome of the election.

She's not alone among military personnel and civilians at Fort Leavenworth making contributions.

Since the last congressional race, $5,415 has been sent in contributions from Fort Leavenworth.

That's a drastic difference from Fort Riley, near Junction City in Geary County. No money has been donated during that time from anyone in the Fort Riley zip code.

A GIVING COUNTY

Countywide, donations in Leavenworth County exceeded Kansas counties of similar or larger size.

As an example, Leavenworth County, with $53,040, donated nearly as much as Wyandotte County, which contributed $53,778.

Per person, based on total population, Leavenworth County contributed 72 cents per person, while Wyandotte gave just 34 cents per person.

Geary County, as mentioned before, is home to Fort Riley. That county donated a total of $14,625, or 52 cents per person.

Like Fort Leavenworth with Kansas University in neighboring Douglas County, Fort Riley is next to Kansas State University in Riley County.

Douglas County made $170,578 in federal contributions, or $1.70 a person; Riley County made $83,767 in donations, or $1.33 a person.

Individually, Leavenworth donated $32,000 or about $90 per person; Tonganoxie $3,200, or about $1.17 per person; and Lansing $11,425, or about $1.24 per person.

Basehor and Linwood both donated $500, while Easton had a $250 contribution.

LINWOOD MAN CARRIES DONATIONS

Jeff Coatney was solely responsible for the contribution out of Linwood. He donated $500 to the National Republican Congressional Committee.

Coatney, owner of the New Linwood Café, said he doesn't have a set amount for contributing to the campaigns and he doesn't necessarily do it every year.

"I don't have any set amount and it's mainly issue-oriented," he said. "If there's a certain issue that I feel should go a certain way, I will contribute."

Coatney added that he generally has found the Republican Party in line with his own thinking, although he doesn't consistently vote Republican.

"I will vote for a Democratic candidate if they are a superior choice," Coatney said.

Regarding this year, Coatney explained there was no specific reasoning for his contribution. It simply was a general contribution. He didn't identify any candidates for the presidency who he thought were especially praiseworthy. He is, however, most sympathetic with John McCain's campaign.

When stacked against most cities in eastern Kansas, most communities in Leavenworth County donated more per person than any other except Topeka or the two major college communities in the state.

PAYING HER "DUES"

Tonganoxie resident Mildred McMillion did not make specific campaign contributions since the last congressional race.

However, she did donate $200 to the Democratic National Committee. The Georgia native who is a Tonganoxie School Board member, said she annually makes a payment to the DNC and calls it her "annual dues."

However, she wasn't always a Democrat. She was raised a Democrat, but when McMillion moved to Tonganoxie, she met a woman who told her "anyone who is anybody in Tonganoxie is a Republican."

"When I moved out here I wanted to be somebody," McMillion said with a laugh.

She served as a precinct person for the Republican Party, but later helped campaign for President Jimmy Carter in his unsuccessful re-election bid. McMillion, who went to college with future First Lady Rosalynn Carter, said she's been donating to the DNC since that time.

And this year, she said she feels as though she has another interest with Hillary Clinton. When Bill Clinton was governor of Arkansas, he served as chairman of the bipartisan Education Commission of States in 1990.

McMillion, who previously served on the Tonganoxie School Board and Kansas State Board of Education before returning to the Tonganoxie board, attended
an ECS convention in which she didn't have notes. She didn't refer to notes.

"I just kind of kept track through the years with them. No personal relationship, but heard talk," McMillon said. He kept an eye on their doings.

Her statistics, her facts; she and everything."

As for the Democratic and Republican parties, McMillon had this to say: "To tell you the truth, I have not found that much difference between the two parties. It's the person."
During her three-week stint at the Washington Clinic, nurse practitioner student Audra Walter assisted in medical procedures that normally would have been passed on to specialists, at least in urban areas.

Walter, who graduates from the University of Kansas at the end of July, was here as part of her rural clinical rotation, a program designed to introduce medical students to procedures and practices faced by rural or underserved communities.

“There’s a difference between urban and rural medical care,” she said. “In urban areas, patients are referred more to specialists. In rural areas, though, practitioners care for more types of treatments.”

While at the clinic, Walter assisted in procedures as varied as surgeries for hernias and carpal tunnel syndrome as well as births.

Walter, who was born in Clyde, the daughter of Terry and Brenda Koch, but now lives in Eudora, a small town east of Lawrence, earned a bachelor’s degree from Fort Hays State University in 2004 and completes her master’s degree from KU this summer.

After graduation, Walter hopes to work in a small town. “That’s what I’m familiar with,” she said. She also hopes to work in family practice because she enjoys working with patients of all ages.

Mostly, she’ll just be glad to be out of school. “I’m ready to be done,” she said.