LAWRENCE -- A group of University of Kansas students and their professor will take on a giant task Monday when they move a community building they constructed to Greensburg.

The project is the students' contribution to a reconstruction effort for the tornado-ravaged town.

The group of architectural students built the structure in a warehouse on the site of the old Farmland Industries plant. They started in January, gathering wood for the project at the former Sunflower Army Ammunition Plant in De Soto.

This week, they began disassembling their creation to get it ready for the 400-mile trip to Greensburg, which was mostly destroyed when a massive tornado struck the western town last May. The drive to Greensburg is normally only 270 miles, but the journey to transport the building will take longer because the group will go east past Wellsville before heading west to avoid overpasses and narrow roads.

The 22 graduate students will live in southwest Kansas starting Monday and stay through May 4 -- the one-year anniversary of the tornado. They will live in dorms at Pratt Community College and drive a half-hour to Greensburg each morning. They couldn't stay in Greensburg because of a shortage of buildings.

The students said they have a lot more work to do, including painting, installing electrical fixtures and laying flooring. The building will be moved to Greensburg in seven sections and completed on site.
Students from KU aid Greensburg reconstruction

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One of the students, Zack Arndt, said their deadline is May 4 but “we’d like to be done a couple of weeks before that, just so we can tie up some loose ends.”

The building will be named 547 Arts Center. It is a direct reference to the date the tornado ravaged the town: 5-4-2007.

“I don’t think my emotions could have swelled much more throughout this process because I’ve been waiting so long for it,” said Jenny Kivett, another student working on the project. “But to know it’s going to a place that needs it and to people that appreciate it and want it is something very special and exciting.”
Life Span staff recognized

Two University of Kansas Life Span Institute staff members were recognized March 6-7 at the Kansas Division for Early Childhood Conference in Wichita.

Misty Goosen received the Award of Excellence. Goosen is the project coordinator with the Kansas Inservice Training System and provides training and technical assistance to early childhood teachers across the state. The award honors an individual who has made significant contributions in the following areas of early intervention: publications, research, development of new concepts, approaches or programs, new techniques for diagnosis or rehabilitation, improved psychological or education evaluation procedures, improved administrative procedures, practical application of improved teaching devices and dynamic leadership.

Peggy Miksch received the Service to the Organization Award. Miksch is a technical assistance provider for early intervention programs serving children with disabilities, birth to 3 years of age, across the state. She also works for the Kansas Inservice Training System. The award is given to a KDEC member who has made a significant contribution to the division in areas of leadership, service, research, advocacy or publications. It was the first year the award was given.

KDEC is comprised of professionals providing early intervention and early childhood special education services in Kansas.
Eleven hours later...

Eleven hours after leaving Lawrence 7 a.m Monday, seven trucks pulling as many pieces of a prefabricated arts center chugged into Greensburg shortly after 6 p.m., depositing the components along South Sycamore Street. The seven modules, built the past couple of months by students of KU's graduate architectural class Studio 804, will now be assembled over the next seven weeks by the students on a foundation at the corner of Sycamore and Wisconsin (204 W Wisconsin is the official address). The final product—to be known as the 5x4x7 Arts Center of Greensburg—is expected to be up and running by the anniversary weekend of May 4, and first featuring the wild west motif paintings and sculpture of Gage, Oklahoma artist Mary Spurgeon. According to Arts Center board member Judy Kirk, different area artists will be featured on a rotating basis. While this structure will serve primarily as a gallery, a second to be built later will feature a classroom and dance studio. Once completed 5x4x7 is expected to have attained LEED Platinum certification, through use of solar panels, wind turbines, geothermal heating, thermal massing and other Earth-friendly systems.
KU students work to clean up campus lake

Potter Lake, lined with trees and nestled in the slope of Mount Oread, is one of the most peaceful spots on the Kansas University campus.

But often that picturesque atmosphere is disrupted by beer bottles, garbage and sometimes even the odor of rotting algae. The pollution, both by chemicals and garbage, can be so bad that the pond landed on a 1999 Kansas Department of Health and Environment list of the most polluted bodies of water in Kansas.

KU students England Porter, an Independence junior, and John Kenny, a Leavenworth senior, would like to change that.

"We see a couple of problems with Potter Lake so far," Kenny said. "That would range from water quality to accessibility to the area for students to come and hang out."

The water-quality issue is caused by the use of fertilizer on campus that then drains into the lake. The fertilizer encourages algae growth, which can trap garbage and change the color of the lake. It also can cause an odor.

Three ideas to help alleviate the lake's pollution are to eliminate drainage from Jayhawk Boulevard and Memorial Drive into Potter Lake, to reduce the amount and change the kinds of fertilizer used on campus, and to add native plants to the perimeter of the lake which would serve to filter out some of the pollutants.

"There are a number of things that could be done," Kenny said. "We're still getting ideas. We're getting new ideas all the time."

Other proposed changes include additional benches, a gazebo where musicians could perform and new paths with permeable surfaces to increase access to the south and west sides of the lake.

"The places where people could sit, where there's grass, (are) often muddied because of a lot of foot traffic and a lack of paths," Porter said. "In general, we want to make Potter Lake the icon it once was and really restore what it once had."

During the past 100 years, Potter Lake has been home to athletic events, including swimming, diving and fishing. But since the lake has become so polluted — cars were pulled out of it in the mid-1950s — those activities are not advised. The lake once was 16 feet deep but now averages less than 3 feet deep.
Panel to put funeral picketing bill on fast track

TOPEKA, Kan. — The House Federal and State Affairs Committee's chairman says a new funeral picketing bill to replace a law struck down by the Kansas Supreme Court is on the fast track in his committee.

Rep. Arlen Siegfried said the committee will take up the bill early next week.

"As soon as we have a bill, we'll have a hearing and work it the same day," said the Olathe Republican.

Normally, committees hear testimony on a bill one day and then vote at a later time whether to send it to the House.

Siegfried said the legislation will be the law, enacted in 2007, minus a "judicial trigger." The bill also would add a provision allowing people to sue funeral protesters for emotional distress.

On Tuesday, the court effectively nullified the law over its trigger requiring a court to uphold the statute before it could be enforced. The court said the trigger is unconstitutional.

It was added by legislators skittish about the Rev. Fred Phelps and his followers at Westboro Baptist Church collecting damages from the state after a successful appeal of the law.

Phelps and his followers claim U.S. combat deaths are God's punishment for the nation's tolerance of homosexuality. Phelps and his church, long known for a public campaign against homosexuality, began picketing soldiers' funerals in June 2005 and have protested at some 330 funerals in 47 states.

The court didn't address the merits of the law, which bars protesters from being within 150 feet of a funeral one hour before, during or two hours after a service ends. It also makes it unlawful to obstruct any public street or sidewalk.

The justices left standing part of the law allowing families to sue if they feel protesters defamed the dead — an exception to the general rule of law that one cannot libel or slander the dead.

The federal government and at least 37 states, including Oklahoma, have enacted similar laws.

TANKER CONTRACT: The House adopted a resolution calling on President Bush and Congress to prevent the Air Force from awarding a $35 billion tanker contract to a French company.

The House's action came on a unanimous vote. The Senate adopted a similar resolution on Friday.

Legislators are upset with the Air Force's decision to award the contract to Airbus over Chicago-based Boeing Co. The House resolution says the decision will cost the Wichita area 300 jobs and the state.

"Relying on a foreign supplier of military equipment is unwise and not in the national security interest of the country," the House resolution says.

While members of Congress from states affected by Boeing's loss are trying to get the decision overturned, others have said they're comfortable with it. U.S. Defense Secretary Robert Gates also has stood by the decision.

CHEAPER TEXTBOOKS: Cheaper college textbooks are the goal of a proposal in the House.

House members gave first-round approval to a bill encouraging professors to consider cost when they require books for their classes.

The measure came from Rep. Paul Davis, a Lawrence Democrat whose district includes part of the University of Kansas campus.

It would require each university, community college and technical college to impose policies to ensure that professors take cost into account.

He offered it as an amendment to a Senate-passed bill dealing with scholarships for ROTC students.

The amendment passed on a voice vote.

If the bill is passed by the House, senators will have to agree to the amendment before it goes to Gov. Kathleen Sebelius.

GAMBLING ALLIANCE: Four state agencies and the Kansas Coalition on Problem Gambling are trying to heighten public awareness about the dangers of problem gambling and promote the availability of treatment.

The agencies are the Kansas Lottery, Kansas Racing and Gaming Commission, Department of Corrections and Department of Social and Rehabilitation Services. They formed the Kansas Responsible Gambling Alliance.

"By creating this alliance, we work to ensure Kansans have easy access to the best problem gambling evaluation and treatment programs available," said Steve Martino, the gaming commission's executive director.

The 2007 law allowing four resort casinos and slot machines at racetracks also called for the creation of an advisory alliance.

The law also called for 2 percent of gambling revenues be allocated to the Problem Gambling and Addictions Fund.

The alliance's chief priority will be developing a Web site and toll-free number so people can find out how to get help if they seek it.
CyDex begins process for IPO

The Lenexa biotech venture will offer stock to fund clinical trials and product development.

By JASON GERTZEN
The Kansas City Star

A Lenexa pharmaceutical company is preparing to sell up to $50 million in stock to develop new drugs.

CyDex Pharmaceuticals Inc. moved toward an initial public offering of stock by filing a 333-page document this week with the Securities and Exchange Commission.

Company officials have yet to determine specifically how much money they will seek or when. The plan is for the shares to trade on the Nasdaq Global Market with the ticker symbol CYDX.

Still, the potential emergence of a new publicly traded biotechnology company is a notable development for the Kansas City region.

CyDex is a spinoff venture involving technology initially developed at the University of Kansas.

The technology is among many key innovations of Valentino Stella, a professor of pharmaceutical chemistry at the university.

The extent of the Kansas City area’s aspirations for expanding research and employment in this field is exemplified by such high-profile initiatives as the Stowers Institute.

This milestone for CyDex has been years in the making.

Previously the company focused on technology for improving drugs commercialized by such companies as Pfizer and Bristol-Myers Squibb. Licensing fees and related arrangements were the primary drivers of CyDex’s $12.7 million in sales last year.

Now CyDex is seeking money for conducting pharmaceutical tests in patients, called clinical trials, and to develop about a dozen of its own drug products.

The company, which employs about 25 workers, expects to hire more employees as it expands its research and development pursuits.

John Siebert has been chairman and chief executive of CyDex since January 2004. Previously he was president and CEO of Cima Labs and had other positions with companies such as G. D. Searle, E.R. Squibb, Bayer and Dey Laboratories.

Young biotechnology ventures often come with high risks and high costs. Similar to many of its peers, CyDex continues to invest heavily in research and development programs.

The company lost $2.6 million in 2007 and has tallied an overall deficit of nearly $22 million.

To reach Jason Gertzen, call 816-234-4899 or send e-mail to igertzen@kcstar.com.
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Dems gain ground, but Kansas still in the red

**GOP, which remains the dominant party in state, contends surge is a blip.**

**BY CHRIS GREEN**
Harris News Service
cgreen@dailynews.net

TOPEKA – Kansas Democratic Party officials may want to thank Illinois Sen. Barack Obama for a recent surge in their party’s numbers.

The state’s voter rolls have swelled by 13,159 Democrats in the wake of last month’s presidential caucuses, which generated record turnouts and handed Obama a convincing victory over rival Hillary Clinton, a New York senator.

Apparent spurred by intense interest in the presidential election and Obama’s candidacy in particular, Democrats have seen their party’s ranks grow by 3 percent statewide since the first of the year.

The jump isn’t large enough to significantly shift the political odds for the state’s Democrats. Republicans still command a large advantage in statewide party membership, and independent voters still narrowly outnumber Democrats in the state.

Still, Democratic Party officials said they were heartened to see renewed interest in their party and candidates, which they hope will carry over into the November general election.

“I think it’s a very good trend,” said Vic Moser, an Abilene Democrat and the party’s First Congressional District chairman. “For years, we’ve been drifting away with more voters moving into the unaffiliated category. I think we’re beginning to see a change in that direction.”

Republican officials, however, say they’re not convinced the jump is anything more than a one-time blip. They say it hasn’t significantly altered the state’s political climate in which the GOP still counts 45 percent of the electorate among its ranks while Democrats claim only 27 percent.

See BLUE / A9
Corrie Kangas, the Topeka-based political director for the Kansas Republican Party, said the state Democratic Party benefited from the interest in its presidential caucuses, resulting in an uptick in registrations.

"Kansas hasn't voted for a Democratic presidential candidate since 1964, and I don't see that changing anytime soon," Kangas said, referring to President Lyndon B. Johnson's lopsided victory over Arizona Sen. Barry Goldwater. "We're one of the reddest of the red states, and we're going to stay that way."

For the moment, at least, unofficial totals compiled by the Kansas Secretary of State's office showed a jump in Democratic registrations, even as Republican and unaffiliated numbers dipped slightly.

Since the first of the year, the number of voters registered as Democrats has grown from 423,309 to 445,688, more than 13,000. Over the same period, the total number of Republicans registered has dropped by 1,553, while unaffiliated voters have decreased by a count of 1,084.

'A lot of excitement'

Democrats saw their greatest gains come in the voter-rich territory of Johnson County, where their registrations grew by 4,911 voters or 7 percent. The number of Republican voters dropped by 653 registrations, and the number of unaffiliated voters dipped by 266.

The party also saw upticks in other parts of the state, adding 933 voters in the First Congressional District and 2,972 in the Second District.

Small gains came even in staunchly Republican strongholds — where Republicans typically outnumber Democrats by as much as two-to-one — including Reno, Saline, Finney and Franklin counties.

In Ellis County, where Democrats already have a strong foothold, the GOP actually grew faster than the Democratic Party, which recorded just 11 new voters. But Glenn Staab, the county's Democratic chairman, said those numbers don't count a couple of hundred registration cards from the caucus event that were recently turned in to the secretary of state's office by state Democratic officials.

Mike Gaughan, executive director of the Kansas Democratic Party, attributed the enthusiasm to what he called the high quality of the party's presidential candidates this election cycle.

Obama, in particular, has struck a chord with young voters across the nation. He also received the endorsement of the state's popular Democratic governor, Kathleen Sebelius, who's been campaigning on his behalf.

"I think there's a lot of excitement about the choices voters have this year," Gaughan said.

Still, the gains could also be a partial reflection of the different approaches the state's two major parties took toward their presidential nominating caucuses last month.

Brad Bryant, elections director for Secretary of State Ron Thornburgh, noted that while Democrats encouraged registrations as people entered their caucuses, Republicans required participants to register as Republicans several days in advance.

Kris Kobach, state GOP chairman, said many of the voters who switched their affiliations to Democrat probably already had a history of voting Democratic and just wanted to ensure they could participate in a party event.

In addition, voter registrations in the state fluctuate on a near-constant basis and simply registering doesn't ensure that voters will turn out in future elections.

Significant shift?

Joe Aistrup, head of the political science department at Kansas State University, said the trend is still noteworthy.

Democrats in Kansas have generally seen their numbers slide from the early 1990s, and Republicans have been able to maintain their numbers advantage, even as Sebelius won two terms in office, he said.

"This is a positive development for the Democratic Party, and in a sense, it changes a trend," Aistrup said. "It represents a significant shift."

Whether Democrats can translate their rising numbers into election victories come November remains to be seen.

Voters drawn to the party by Obama might lose interest by the time the November election rolls around, particularly if he loses his party's increasingly bitter nomination fight to Clinton, said Burdett Loomis, a political science professor at the University of Kansas.

"I think we'll know what the significance is a little more maybe in November," Loomis said.

However, he also said there could be more to the Democratic gains in Kansas than just the Obama phenomenon. The growth may also be a nod to the success of Sebelius and other Democratic officeholders who've worked to build the party in recent years.

For his part, Staab said he believes that Kansas Democrats should still be in good shape this fall, regardless of whether Clinton or Obama is the nominee.

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State Democrats’ numbers buoyed by Obama

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REGISTRATION: Number of local Democrats grow

(Continued from Page 1)

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**Changes in party registration**

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<th>March 1 total</th>
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*Source: Unofficial totals from the Kansas Secretary of State’s office as of March 1, 2008, compared to January 1, 2008.*
In a perfect world, there would be no need for proposals like the one introduced by Sen. Tim Huelskamp to clarify the Kansas Open Meetings Act.

But an action by some members of the Topeka City Council provides ample reason why Huelskamp’s bill deserves consideration.

The proposal by Huelskamp, a Republican from Fowler, would prohibit members of governing bodies from engaging in “serial communications.”

That term has become part of the Topeka lexicon since last December, when the city council made its end run around Mayor Bill Bunten’s veto of the purchase of a backup police helicopter.

With help from Mike Kautsch, a professor of media law at the University of Kansas, Huelskamp drafted a bill aimed at barring individual communications “that collectively involve a majority of a quorum and that share a common topic of discussion.”

Kautsch summed up the need for the bill this way: “One should not be using the exception for meetings of fewer than a majority of a quorum to generate a consensus on a single issue that ought to be discussed before the public.”

— Topeka Capital-Journal