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From Kansas highways
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Sharing’s reward

A Kansas City Star story about a man who has given away a fortune to people down on their luck touched me when I read it a few weeks ago. The man, whom reporters called “Secret Santa” because he insisted that he not be identified, estimated that he has given away more than $1.3 million over the past 26 years, mostly to people in the Kansas City area.

Secret Santa, whose name is Larry Stewart, decided to go public this year because he has cancer and this holiday season is probably his last for a “sleigh ride.” He says he intends to devote much of whatever time he has left on Earth speaking to groups about random acts of kindness. His hope is that he will inspire others to give as much to others as they can.

Stewart had a hardscrabble upbringing in Mississippi and things weren’t going much better in his adult life until his luck turned in a big way in the mid 1990s. But well before his financial good fortune, he had established a pattern of giving what he could. He had been impressed with the kindness he had been shown by others in particularly desperate moments.

Shortly after losing his job before Christmas in 1979 (the same thing had happened the year before), he pulled into a drive-in restaurant in Independence, Mo. When he told the cold, miserable carhop to keep the change from a $20 bill, she was so pleased that “he decided to withdraw money from his checking account – even though it didn’t hold much – and give it away to strangers,” according to the Star. He now had a mission.

This great story made me think about all of the things we have to share with others. Not many of us can give away $1.3 million, but we all have things of great value that we can share.

For some of us, it might be material things of value; for others it might be sharing our coaching skills with a little league baseball team or our math skills with a struggling student. It might be something as simple as sharing our time with someone who is lonely, or extending our understanding and grace to a grumpy co-worker who may be having a crisis at home that we don’t know about.

I’m proud that so many of our KDOT employees share of themselves by volunteering in a variety of capacities in their communities. Some of them will be featured in the pages of our newly-designed annual report that will be printed later in December. The theme of the report is “You can count on us” and these people represent the many people at KDOT who devote their time and energy to making life better for others. They are an inspiration to me and I hope they serve as role models for all of us. They have learned that giving has many rewards.

I want to leave you with three quotes (including one from Mr. Spock) that describe those rewards much better than I can. Thank you for another great year at KDOT and please travel safely this season.

“It is one of the most beautiful compensations of this life that no man can sincerely try to help another without helping himself.” – Ralph Waldo Emerson

“If you want to lift yourself up, lift up someone else.”
– Booker T. Washington

“The miracle is this – the more we share, the more we have.” – Leonard Nimoy
New information center focuses on wetlands

BARTON COUNTY - Dedication of the national Wetlands & Wildlife Scenic Byway and groundbreaking for the Cheyenne Bottoms Visitor Information Center in Barton County was something to crow about on Oct. 27.

The event celebrated the partnership of numerous state, county and local organizations working together to make this visitor area possible.

The information center was selected as a Transportation Enhancement project by KDOT in Federal Fiscal Year 2005 and received $3 million to build the facility. The visitor information area will feature interpretive displays, an observation tower and paved walkways.

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Safe Routes to Schools projects to receive funding

Two dozen proposals intended to encourage more children to walk or bicycle to school have been selected for funding through a new program administered by KDOT.

The program, Safe Routes to School (SRTS), was created under last year’s federal transportation bill – SAFETEA-LU. The intent of the program is to:

◆ Enable and encourage children, including those with disabilities, to walk or bicycle to school;
◆ Make walking or biking to school safe and appealing;
◆ Facilitate projects that will improve safety, and reduce traffic, fuel consumption and air pollution in the vicinity of school.

“Obesity rates among children have more than doubled in the past 20 years,”

Continued on page 12

On the... COVER

The Post Rock Scenic Byway on K-232 has many post rocks to see near the highway. For more photos of unique scenery near Kansas highways, see page 5.

Photo by Sonya Scheuneman

Weather system popular with public safety community

By Stan Whitley

You don’t have to be in the sky to reap benefits from the Automated Weather Observation System (AWOS) at the Fort Scott Municipal Airport.

The AWOS system has been in operation at the Southeast Kansas airport since 2003 thanks to funding provided through KDOT. The system has sensors which measure, collect and disseminate weather data to help pilots and flight dispatchers. They are given vital information to monitor weather forecasts,
Columbus Subarea office employees kicked it up a notch in July and August to complete numerous roofing, painting, and concrete jobs on various KDOT buildings in addition to normal roadway maintenance work this past summer.

The Columbus Subarea team members were honored for their efforts in KDOT’s Example of Excellence employee recognition program for the third quarter of 2006. Secretary Deb Miller and State Transportation Engineer Jerry Younger attended the event on Nov. 15 in Columbus.

Team members hauled millings to their tower site, repaired the driveway around the cable pins and completed other activities to improve the buildings and facilities around the Columbus Subarea. The crew also completely rebuilt their salt storage building and teamed up to rebuild another storage building with the Pittsburg crew.

In addition, the crew primed and painted their 200-foot by 30-foot lean-to and also formed and poured a storage bin in the structure for the asphalt patching material. They also poured new walls around their fuel pump and painted them so they could be safely seen by operators.

“This took a lot of hard work and knowledge with the best attitude any crew could display,” said Area Superintendent Wayne Nelson.

Members of the team include Britton Bauer, Jim Dahlke, John Easley, Dean Jessee, James Johnson, Edward Nutt, Ron Pillar, Rob Robinson, Phillip Robison, Kevin Rodriguez, John Ross, Shane Schuberger, and Paul Tarter.

Do you know of a KDOT group, team, unit, or office that has gone above the call of duty? Then nominate them for the Example of Excellence award. All KDOT employees are encouraged to suggest ideas and can now fill out Form DOT 1204. Once it is filled out, the nomination is then sent to the selected Division Director, Bureau Chief, District Engineer, Area Engineer, or Subarea Supervisor who can then sign the form and submit the nomination to Transportation Information.

Hard copies of the form are still available by calling Transportation Information at 785-296-3585 and require the signature of one of the supervisors listed above.

Nominations for the fourth quarter are due by Dec. 29. -K.S.
Lots of unique sites can be found while driving on Kansas highways. A small sampling of those include (top left) sunflowers on K-88; (top middle) hay bale tractor on US-36 near Marysville; (top right) giant painting of Vincent Van Gogh’s sunflowers on K-27 near Goodland; (middle right) double arch bridge near K-181; (bottom left) a chimney on K-39 near Chanute (bottom middle) a scarecrow family on K-9; and (bottom right) Burdick welcome sign.

Photos by KDOT Photographic Services
To the Kansas Dept. of Transportation:

On October 3rd while driving on I-70 just west of Kansas City, we experienced a blow out on our left rear tire. While attempting to change the tire, Russell Lambert, an employee of your department, stopped his truck and offered assistance. Words cannot express how much we appreciated his assistance. Due to age and health, I was struggling with the spare, the jack and the problem of putting on the temporary tire. Without the help of Mr. Lambert we would have been in serious trouble.

His assistance, however, did not stop with putting on the spare. He escorted us to a tire shop in Lawrence and with his help we arrived safely and had a new tire installed.

Our attempt to offer Mr. Russell a gratuity was quickly and emphatically refused. Despite our protest, he would not accept any financial gift. Mr. Russell is a credit to your department and we would appreciate it if he would receive proper recognition for his great service to myself and my wife.

Very sincerely,
Raymond A. King

Dear Secretary Miller:
The City of Eureka recently experienced a collapsed sewer main underneath State Highway 54. As City Administrator, my first call was to area KDOT staff. They immediately responded with technical expertise and equipment. KDOT employees not only addressed the current situation, but also the detour route that would be necessary during repairs. Because of them, the situation was made safer faster than we would have been able to do by ourselves.

I have yet to deal with area KDOT staff that I have not been treated cordially and professionally. Although I am sure there were others involved, I dealt with Jim Pickett and Gary Ward of Iola and Teresa Gulick of Eureka.

The City of Eureka wishes to extend their “Thanks” to these and all other individuals that may have been involved.

Mark Skiles,
City of Eureka

Dear Deb Miller:
On Thursday, September 28, 2006, at approximately 8:30am, while I was driving about four miles south of Lincolnville on US-56/77 near milepost 311 in Marion County, I observed a KDOT work crew making repairs to the roadway.

This particular crew seemed to consist of about 13 KDOT employees who were all involved with the work at hand. I was happy to see that each employee had their safety awareness vest on, the trucks had their flashing lights on, and the warning signs (traffic control signs in a work zone) had been properly posted.

I truly enjoy seeing state of Kansas employees following safety rules. Please commend this particular work crew for they definitely seemed like highly trained, conscientious professional KDOT employees.

Sincerely,
Gilford E. Samuels
Safety Supervisor
Division of Industrial Safety and Health
By Kim Stich

HUTCHINSON - Mary Haen, Administrative Assistant in Hutchinson, is on a mission to make sure our troops deployed overseas know they are appreciated.

Since Operation Iraqi Freedom began, she has accomplished this mission by sending care packages as often as possible to KDOT’s District Five employees and their relatives on active duty in the Middle East.

“The care packages are just a small way to say how much we appreciate them serving our country,” Haen said. “It’s a chance to say thank you and let them know people at home care about them and to thank them for the sacrifices the troops and their families make for us.”

Haen has a long list of items that are good to mail and tries to personalize each one (see box for suggested items).

“I find out what they like and kind of individualize the packages,” she said. “And even if it’s stuff they don’t like, they share with their unit, so it’s all put to good use.”

Haen said that military personnel serving with the people she mails packages to also send her e-mails saying how thankful they are for the care packages and the effort.

“They tell me that Americans may not like the war, but they appreciate the support the Americans show to our troops,” she said.

Haen has been invited to attend the official deployment and welcome home ceremonies for the troops but has not attended them. She said she gets “way too emotional when the troops come home.”

She does organize small welcome home receptions for the KDOT employees at the respective KDOT offices once they return. “It is fun to have their fellow co-workers in attendance and let them know we appreciate their service,” Haen said.

Recently, she was traveling near Fort Sill, Okla., and saw a welcome home convoy. The vehicles were covered with yellow ribbons and the soldiers were waving flags.

“It was an exciting moment to see them return home safely and to see the crowd’s reaction,” Haen said. “There were lots of cars pulled over and the whole route was packed with people waving. It was a sight to see. I didn’t know any of those guys coming in, but I still shed a few tears.”

Donations of items have slowed down a bit, Haen said, but she grateful for the continued assistance and support.

“As long as we have KDOT employees going over and serving our country, I’ll continue on,” she said.

Some of the items Haen mails to military personnel overseas include: personal hygiene items, food (cereal, coffee, creamer, salt, beef jerky, peanut butter, crackers, hard candy, ramen noodles, microwavable foods such as popcorn and instant soup, powdered drinks, pudding, packages of Jell-o, candy bars, granola bars, cocoa mix, potato chips, cookies, cheese in a can), batteries, playing cards, disposable cameras, telephone cards, crossword puzzles, magazines, envelopes, writing paper, ink pens and DVD movies.
I would advise anyone wishing to become a leader that they find ways to learn about all aspects of the agency. This advice applies whether or not it seems to relate to their present position.

I have noticed a distinction during my career between those who say “no one ever told me” versus those who find ways to learn what is going on in other parts of the agency. I have never found it difficult to find out what is going on if you exert a little effort and pay attention. This includes keeping abreast of what the media is saying and what the Legislature is about.

This attention to general issues of the agency will stand you in outstanding stead come interview time when someone asks, “What is your vision for the future if you get this position?”

I can honestly say that I have enjoyed every job I had with KDOT and have never gone looking for another job because of dissatisfaction. This greatly improves your chances in an interview because you are not desperate to leave where you are.

You should carefully select what you do so that you can be as certain as possible that you will enjoy it and have a positive attitude. That will make getting the next position a lot easier. I have never counted on getting a position and I have never joined in speculation about who was applying and who was most likely to get the position.

I have always had the habit of trying to learn as much as I can about an issue and a decision. Try to put yourself in the shoes of your boss (even the Secretary) and compare your decision to the one that was made and learn as much as you can about the decision. This is invaluable in understanding that there are a lot of factors to be taken into account in making a decision. You will have excellent training for when you have to make the decision and take the heat.

I have never had a fear of going and asking anyone in the agency for advice. I never felt intimidated by upper management and I can say without reservation that throughout my career everyone I have ever asked for advice or an opinion was helpful. I have always gone and talked to all members of an interview team about a position before I interviewed with them; it is amazing what you will find out about what they are looking for.

I have had a number of mentors in my career, though I may not have known they were at the time. I have always gone to who I thought was a good source for a particular issue and simply asked my question in a very straightforward manner. Without exception, no one that I have ever talked to has made me feel stupid for going and asking any question that was on my mind.

So, get engaged in the agency, learn about the issues, enjoy what you do, ask for advice, and practice decision-making. You will be a leader before you know it!

David Comstock is director of the Division of Engineering and Design.
KDOT Computer Training
– from the KCTC

Enroll by e-mail ketc@ksdot.org or call Ingrid Vandervort 785-296-8993. Questions are welcome! Supervisor’s approval to enroll is necessary.
Do you know?

Kansas - As big as you think

**Big Flight** - Born and raised in Atchison, Amelia Earhart disappeared without a trace, but not before becoming the first woman to fly solo across the Atlantic Ocean.

**Big Prairie** - America’s last great stand of tallgrass prairie, more than five million acres in the Flint Hills of east central Kansas, includes the nation’s only National Park dedicated to the tallgrass prairie.

**Big Ball of Twine** - The world’s largest ball of twine in Cawker City measures more than 38-feet in circumference and more than 16,750 pounds. More than 300,000 people visit each year.

**Big Highway** - The first section of the U.S. Interstate system was completed just west of Topeka. The eight-mile stretch of Interstate-70 opened on Nov. 14, 1956, less than four months after President Eisenhower signed the Interstate Highway Act of 1956.

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**AWOS**

Continued from page 3

plan flight routes and provide information to correct takeoffs and landings.

“AWOS has been a wonderful addition to our airport and it’s been very beneficial not only to pilots, but the public safety community as well,” said Kenny Howard, manager of the Fort Scott Airport.

“The system was installed three years ago and we are continuing to find there are a lot of outside applications for its use.”

While pilots at the airport are using the site on a regular basis, the public safety community is the most vocal supporter of the new technology, according to Howard.

The Kansas Highway Patrol, police, sheriff, and fire department find the information is a valuable tool to access weather information in real time.

Information can be accessed on a VHF radio frequency by phoning a land line number or on the Internet. Information is provided on wind direction, wind speed, wind gusts, altimeter readings and temperature and dew points. The data is updated every minute and an AWOS data log on the Internet stores information for the last 60 minutes and the last 48 hours.

“Prior to the AWOS for Internet project, the current weather conditions were transmitted and lost,” said Ed Young, KDOT Director of Aviation. “Now, the information is stored on the airport’s computer. An on-line user can track trends and access the stored data.”

Howard said law enforcement is using the data to confirm weather conditions at the time of accidents. He said wind information has been a valuable tool for the local fire department, particularly interested in wind speeds and wind gusts.

The National Weather Service Office finds the AWOS is valuable for storm spotting. Recently, KDOT received glowing praise for the system from the National Weather Service.

“They are working with the airports and a vendor to download the information directly,” said Young. “The National Weather Service uses this information to help create more accurate and specific forecasts.”

Airports throughout Kansas have been receiving state funds to address equipment and facility needs, maintenance and geometric improvements under KDOT’s Airport Improvement Program. Each year, $3 million in funding is provided to non-primary public use airports in the state under the Comprehensive Transportation Program.

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**Kudos to KDOT employees**

Matt Soper, Research Analyst at Headquarters, participated in the Chicago Marathon on Oct. 22. He ran the 26.2-mile race in four hours, 26 minutes and 29 seconds. This is his second time he competed.
Welcome new KDOT employees!

Headquarters
Brandi Baer, State Auditor II,
Office of Inspector General
Bruce Burditt, Accountant V,
Fiscal Services
Kelly Carlton, Engineering
Associate I, Design
Todd Dugan, Staff Development
Specialist I, Personnel Services
Kara LaRiviere, Land Surveyor,
Design
Dawn Lassiter, Administrative
Specialist, Office of the Secretary
Matthew Preston Applications
Developer II, Computer Services
Saul Schwartz, Technical Support
Consultant II, Computer Services
Michael Stewart, Engineering
Associate III, Construction and
Maintenance
Daniel Tritsch, State Auditor II,
Office of Inspector General
District Five – Southcentral
Lisa Zrubek, Administrative
Assistant, Hutchinson

MILESTONES

KDOT salutes its employees celebrating anniversaries in November

10 YEARS
*Pam Bean .............. Topeka
Martha Jones ............ Topeka
*Randy McAnulty ........ Iola
Tommie Phillippi .......... Independence
*Robert Richardson ...... Pittsburg
*Donald Snyder .......... Hutchinson
*Ritchie Webster ........ Greensburg

20 YEARS
*Anthony Guenther ........ Leavenworth
*Mark Meier .............. Clay Center
*Larry Umbarger II ........ Chanute
Nancy Rush ............... Topeka
*Joan Smith .............. Emporia
*John Stewart ........... Hutchinson

30 YEARS
*Fred Woods ............. Ellsworth

This information is compiled by each Office, Bureau, Division, and District.

Cheyenne Bottoms

Continued from page 3

with the entire facility to be located at the Cheyenne Bottoms Wildlife Area Mitigation Marsh on the east side of K-156 in Barton County. It is expected to be completed in summer 2008.

The Cheyenne Bottoms Wildlife Area covers 20,000 acres and is considered the largest marsh in the interior of the United States. More than 100 species of birds nest in the area and 63 species are permanent residents.

The Wetlands & Wildlife National Scenic Byway is 76 miles long and stretches between Cheyenne Bottoms and the Quivira National Wildlife Refuge. The scenic byway is one of two national scenic byways in Kansas.

The Kansas Scenic Byways Program has been awarded $134,000 in funding for interpretive signs along this byway.

Deaths

Condolences to the family and friends of a former KDOT employee who recently passed away.

James C. Kyle, 86, died Oct. 20 in Topeka. Kyle worked for KDOT 41 years and was supervisor of the sign shop when he retired in 1986.

He is survived by his wife, Myrtle, one daughter, two sisters, two brothers, and two grandchildren.
Promotions/Transfers

Headquarters
Stephen Bass, Professional Civil Engineer I, Design
Becky Klenklen-Welsh, Program Consultant I, Materials and Research

District Three – Northwest
James Antrim, Highway Maintenance Supervisor, Norton
Billy Lee, Highway Maintenance Supervisor, St. Francis

District Four – Southeast
Terry Smith, Equipment Operator Specialist, Erie
Arthur Wade, Equipment Operator Specialist, Sedan

The Bureau of Personnel Services supplies information to Translines.

Safe Routes

Continued from page 3

said Secretary Deb Miller. “It’s probably not just a coincidence that only 15 percent of all school trips are made by walking or bicycle.”

All but two of the SRTS proposals selected for the funding, which will be done through reimbursement, will involve the development of a Safe Routes to School plan. The other two projects involve infrastructure improvements, such as sidewalks. Funding for the projects, which were selected from 62 applications, ranges from $2,400 to more than $245,000.

Nationally, the federally-funded SRTS will provide $615 million to cities, school districts and other entities throughout the nation over a five-year period. Kansas will receive about $1 million this year, increasing in following years to about $1.6 million in 2009.

“Safe Routes to Schools allows KDOT to partner with communities to help keep the children of Kansas safe, secure and healthy,” said Miller.

The following cities, school districts and other entities will receive Phase I funding, which covers the costs of developing an SRTS plan:

- Baldwin, $14,780;
- Belle Plaine, $12,750;
- Concordia USD 333, $9,500;
- Conway Springs, $15,000;
- Lansing School District, $13,989;
- Leavenworth, $14,820;
- Lincoln, $9,700;
- Louisburg USD 416, $14,780;
- Lyons, $15,000;
- Marion, $14,500;
- Mid-America Regional Council, $2,400;
- Minneapolis, $12,800;
- Mulvane, $9,000;
- Neodesha, $13,300;
- Newton, $15,000;
- Parsons, $15,000;
- Plainville USD 270, $5,650;
- Stafford USD 369, $9,000;
- Sterling, $12,750;
- Unified Government of Wyandotte County, $75,000;
- Wichita Area Metropolitan Planning Organization, $15,000;
- Wichita Public Works, $15,000.

Receiving Phase II funding for infrastructure improvements are Satanta, $150,000, and the City of Sedgwick, $245,056.

Kansas Department of Transportation
Bureau of Transportation Information
Eisenhower State Office Building
700 SW Harrison, Second Floor, West
Topeka, KS  66603-3754

NOTE: This information is available in alternative accessible formats. To obtain an alternative format, contact the Bureau of Transportation Information, Eisenhower Building, 700 SW Harrison, 2nd Floor West, Topeka, Kan., 66603-3754, or phone (785) 296-3585 (Voice)/(TTY).