

Awards of Excellence 2011

News & Writing Categories

Feature Story	2
News Story	8
Investigative Story.....	17
Series.....	23
Editorial Writing.....	30
Local Business Story.....	36
Government/Political Story.....	42
Religion Story.....	48
Agricultural Story.....	54
Youth Story.....	60
Education Story.....	71
Column Writing.....	77
Sports Story.....	83
Sports Feature Story.....	90
Sports Column Writing.....	98
Headline Writing.....	106
News & Writing Excellence.....	112

Photography Categories

News Photo.....	118
Feature Photo.....	124
Sports Photo.....	130
Photo Package.....	136
Photo Illustration.....	142
Best Use of Photos.....	144

Design Categories

Editorial Pages.....	150
Sports Pages.....	156
Special Section.....	162
Feature Package.....	168
Infographic.....	174

Design & Layout Excellence.....	176
Front Page.....	182
Community Service Project.....	188
Web Site.....	194
Online Video (News).....	200
Online Video (Feature).....	204

Advertising Categories

Grocery Ad.....	208
Professional Service Ad.....	214
Furniture Ad.....	220
Hardware Ad.....	226
Fashion Ad.....	230
Automotive Ad.....	236
Classified Display Ad.....	242
Specialty Ad.....	246
Healthcare Ad.....	252
Political Ad.....	258
Entertainment Ad.....	262
Agricultural Ad.....	268
Ad Series of Campaign.....	274
Community Event.....	280
House Ad.....	286
Adptable Promotion.....	292
Online Ad (Static).....	298
Online Ad (Motion).....	302
Online Ad Promotion.....	306

Sweepstakes

2011 Sweepstakes.....	308
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FEATURE STORY

Nondaily Division 1

FIRST PLACE

Derby Informer

Kyle McCaskey

Wonderfully constructed, the rare newspaper story that brings tears.

SECOND PLACE

The Mirror

Benton Smith

Touching and informative, this article explores the connective power of the role-model relationship.

THIRD PLACE

Baldwin City Signal

Jimmy Gillispie

The excitement of the victory and the author's enthusiasm for the subject matter glow.

FEATURE STORY

Nondaily Division 2

FIRST PLACE

Hiawatha World

Philip Lane

This entry stood out among many good features due in part to the topic. But it would not have placed first without excellent writing, good use of quotes and smooth transitions.

SECOND PLACE

Washington County News

Tom Parker

Not your routine weather story! The writer takes the reader on a snow-clearing journey, with the result being you have been there, experiencing both the weather and Anderson's humor and joy in life.

THIRD PLACE

Ellsworth County Independent/Reporter

Linda Mowery-Denning

The writer sets the scene with a sensual description of the prairie chickens. Good blend of information and quotes.

FEATURE STORY

Nondaily Division 3

FIRST PLACE

High Plains Journal

Doug Rich

Good mix of agricultural sources and put-a-face-on-it farmers.

SECOND PLACE

Kansas City Business Journal

Rob Roberts

Nice job of bringing a national issue home.

THIRD PLACE

Kansas City Business Journal

Steve Vockrodt

We all want to know where the rich people are. This story tells us not only that, but WHY.

Fall harvest sets record in Kansas

Kansas always will be known around the world as the Wheat State, but corn is definitely king this fall.

Kansas' corn growers are projected to harvest 607.2 million bushels of corn from 4.7 million acres. Total bushels are down three percent from the August estimate of 629.2 million bushels but still up one percent from last year's record production of 598.3 million bushels. The 4.7 million acres planted to corn is the highest planted acreage for corn in Kansas since 1936.

KCGA
In 1977 when Earl Foote of Bucyrus and other growers formed the Kansas Corn Growers Association, the national average yield per acre was 90 bushels. This year's current KCGA president, Bob Timmons from Wilson County, will have a farm average of 150 bushels per acre in a poor production year for southeast Kansas. The year that Timmons experienced on his farm was common for many producers in Kansas and explains why the state will set a record for acres planted to corn and a record for bushels of corn harvested in 2010.

"There will be some good yields around, but our yields won't be one of them," Timmons said.

Timmons follows a crop rotation of wheat, double crop soybeans, and corn. Field conditions were so wet last fall that they did not get any wheat planted, and those acres went to either full season soybeans or corn. That situation was repeated across the state of Kansas, which planted 600,000 fewer acres of wheat last fall.

The wet field conditions continued into the early spring. When Timmons should have been planting corn, he was still strip tilling his fields.

(Continued on Page 3-A)

Journal story & photo by Doug Rich.
Design and illustration by Lance Ziesch.



Harvest Issue

FEATURE STORY

Daily Division 1

FIRST PLACE

Ottawa Herald

Courtney Servaes

An informative look at special education services. The child, Devon, puts a case to the issues, but reporter didn't stop there - she went on to include the important school district facts and figures.

SECOND PLACE

Winfield Daily Courier

Allen Twitchell

Nice blend of current tour/tourist and the history of the locations

THIRD PLACE

Arkansas City Traveler

Foss Farrar

Good use of the guy's obituary (1960) to help fill in the blanks of his life.

FEATURE STORY

Daily Division 2

FIRST PLACE

Manhattan Mercury

Jerry Wofford

Nice job of putting a face on the moving away that happens annually at the end of the school year in Manhattan. Glad to see the use of American Community Survey statistics on moving to back to up the gist of the story.

SECOND PLACE

Hays Daily News

Mike Corn

Good use of one event to tell the story of all that plaques the fur market; good job of keeping reader at the fur auction but bringing in the fur bearer biologist, for example, to educate.

THIRD PLACE

Manhattan Mercury

Kimber Wallace

Not your usual river story. Nice combination of local sources, court decisions and focus on Hittle.

FEATURE STORY

Daily Division 3

FIRST PLACE

Kansas City Star

Sarah Benson

This series of profiles stood far above all entries in story telling and beautiful prose. Each individual's story is told in a compelling and interesting manner. Well done.

SECOND PLACE

Kansas City Star

Cindy Hoedel

Great story, wonderful writing, compelling quotes. It is a good example of the writing that transcends features and sports. Readers had to love it.

THIRD PLACE

Topeka Capital-Journal

Jan Biles

A compassionate portrayal of a difficult subject. The writing is exceptional.

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Advertiser:
Section/Page/Zone: /YR001/METRO
Description:
Ad Number:
Insertion Number:
Size:
Color Type:

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12.22.10 (vol. 34 Issue 39)

TURNING POINTS

A fatal house fire, the loss of a baby, homelessness, and dismemberment made these people stronger 19

FREE

HOLIDAY BLOAT: Ink's form letter (p. 8), local Christmas music (p. 42) and 37 NYE events (p. 13)

NEWS STORY

Nondaily Division 1

FIRST PLACE

The Mirror

Shawn Linenberger

It would have been easy to allow the piece to become maudlin, but the reporter effectively kept the emotion in check. Great work.

SECOND PLACE

Basehor Sentinel

Matt Erickson

An excellent example of tremendous cops reporting - full of detail - you even got the names of the dogs and their weights.

THIRD PLACE

Basehor Sentinel

Estuardo Garcia

Good story telling and a lesson in how we all need to watch out for each other.

NEWS STORY

Nondaily Division 2

FIRST PLACE

Osawatomie Graphic

Travis Perry

Fantastic lead. Routine story comes to life with some great detail. Good quotes and a great conversational style makes this the best of the bunch.

SECOND PLACE

Atchison Globe

Mary Meyers

This clearly wasn't the most pressing news of the day, but it was likely the most talked about. Misuse of the word "infer" is unfortunate but otherwise a nicely told story.

THIRD PLACE

Oberlin Herald

Steve Haynes

Writer does a great job of telling the story of what happened. I had to search though to find the real news. Story would have benefited from a summary of the important information, such as victim's condition, toward top of story.

NEWS STORY

Nondaily Division 3

FIRST PLACE

Johnson County Sun

Loren Stanton

Compelling story about neighbors banding together to improve their neighborhood. Great sourcing and writing and good eye for a great story.

SECOND PLACE

Kansas City Business Journal

Mike Sherry

Well-written and concise, this story obviously had high reader interest. Good content throughout.

THIRD PLACE

Kansas City Business Journal

Aly Van Dyke

Great analysis piece that crystalizes the battle on health care. Concise and complete.

NEWS STORY

Daily Division 1

FIRST PLACE

Ottawa Herald

Courtney Servaes

Beautifully written account of an emotional event.

SECOND PLACE

Fort Scott Tribune

Michael Pommier

Well done account of a dramatic rescue.

THIRD PLACE

Augusta Daily Gazette

Belinda Larsen

Thorough, well-documented, with good explorations of hazardous waterway. Important story on topic of interest to readers.

NEWS STORY

Daily Division 2

FIRST PLACE

Emporia Gazette

Monica Springer

Great effort to gather information on the victims under time pressure. Creative use of facebook posts to describe loss. Comprehensive coverage.

SECOND PLACE

Hays Daily News

Gayle Weber

Nice daily work, great details and imagery.

THIRD PLACE

Garden City Telegram

Rachael Gray

Emotional, well-told story of a horrific event. Great details and narrative.

NEWS STORY

Daily Division 3

FIRST PLACE

Kansas City Star

David Klepper

Outstanding analysis of the sweeping change in the country's cultural and ethnic landscape from a local perspective.

SECOND PLACE

Kansas City Star

Judy L. Thomas

Candid and balanced exposé - on "kinder/gentler" militias and what drives their expansion.

THIRD PLACE

Topeka Capital-Journal

Jan Biles

Straight forward reporting relates how a killer fell through the cracks of the social support system.

America's new look

By David Klepper

Credit: The Star's Topeka correspondent

Sunday, June 27, 2010

Edition: METROPOLITAN,
Section: NATIONAL/
WORLD, Page A1

GARDEN CITY, Kan. Your home can be your birthplace. Or where you raise a family. Or where you bury your kin. For a growing number of immigrants, home is far west Kansas in a city of 28,000, a world away from Mogadishu, Mexico City and Myanmar.

It's where women in burqas stroll down a Norman Rockwell Main Street festooned with early Fourth of July banners. And where a Buddhist temple sits alongside grocery stores selling Mexican soft drinks and 50-pound bags of jasmine rice.

"This is my home. I want to become American," said Abshiro Warsame, a Somali woman who works the late shift at the nearby Tyson beef packing plant.

Warsame came to the United States seven years ago, after her husband was murdered. A U.S. flag hangs in her small, shared flat. In her spare time, she studies English and Spanish.

It's a new look for the heartland -- and perhaps a glimpse of where America is headed.

By 2050, the Census Bureau predicts, the United States will have a new minority: whites. Already, non-Hispanic whites are the minority in California, Texas, New Mexico and Hawaii, and about one in 10 U.S. counties.

America's future arrived early in Garden City. New census numbers show that whites now account for just under 50 percent of Finney County's 42,000 residents. Latinos make up 45 percent, with blacks and growing numbers of Africans and Asians rounding out the rest.

The county is the latest in Kansas where whites are the new minority.

According to projections, the 2010 U.S. Census will show that whites will be the minority in as many as four Kansas counties: Finney, Seward, Grant, and Ford. All are southwestern Kansas counties that supply labor to meat packing plants. Non-Hispanic whites for years have been a minority in Wyandotte County, with its large African-American and Hispanic populations.

Missouri has no county like that -- but that's

likely to change in the next decade. Already, minorities make up more than 40 percent of those under 20 years of age in Jackson County, a sign that minority populations are gaining demographic ground and not just in rural areas.

Across the nation, the new immigrants are bringing with them new challenges for established communities. Schools are searching for more money to hire interpreters. Governments are struggling to integrate newcomers in a strange land. Long-time residents are adapting to neighbors who look, cook and speak differently.

Not surprisingly, some people are pushing back.

Arizona sparked a political firestorm earlier this year by passing a law to crack down on illegal immigration. Just last week, citizens in Fremont, Neb., -- also a meatpacking town -- approved a law prohibiting businesses and landlords from hiring or renting to illegal immigrants.

But the changes may be inexorable. The white population is aging and birthrates are falling. Hispanic birthrates are rising. So is legal immigration. Meatpacking centers such as Garden City offer an attractive destination during a down

economy, with plentiful jobs that require few skills and little training.

Like their predecessors, the new immigrants bring their own cultures and controversies. Last month, Somali residents ruffled some feathers in Garden City after they requested a Muslim-only section in the city cemetery for religious reasons.

“This is our home now,” said Abdulkadir Mohamed, a Somali Muslim and translator at the Tyson plant who moved here in 2006. “But we need a place for us in the cemetery.”

Although most in town are handling the religious differences well, the request touched off a debate that exposed holes in the city’s seemingly strong ethnic tapestry.

“We’ve been too politically correct for too long,” said Leonard Hitz, a former Marine, retired banker and self-described cowboy poet. “If you want to come to this country and be an American, you’re welcome. But learn the language and assimilate.”

While other rural Kansas communities see populations dwindle and economies decline as their young people move away,

Garden City is growing.

But into what, many wonder?

“This community doesn’t look like it once did in the ’50s and ’60s,” said former mayor Nancy Harness. “But you know, the communities that look the same way they did back then? They’re all dying. These people bring fresh blood. They bring children.”

The plant Lunch break at the Tyson plant erupts into a riot of language and color.

Tall Somali women glide by in flowing red and green gowns. Groups of tired-looking men chat in Burmese -- one of the 14 languages spoken in the plant.

Many carry shiny meat hooks and the thin, straight blades used to carve cattle into roasts, loins, T-bones and strip steaks.

The plant was once the largest beef processing plant in the world, butchering up to 5,700 cattle a day. Tyson employs 3,100 workers, more than the next six largest employers in Finney County combined. The plant buys \$1 billion worth of cattle each year, many from nearby ranches.

Wages start at \$12.30 an hour, and it’s tough, bloody work.

The plant has long relied on immigrant labor willing to do it, according to plant manager Paul Karkiainen. Tyson hires interpreters to translate for the many ethnicities. Signs in the lunch room are posted in three languages: Spanish, English and Vietnamese.

“We probably could add a few new ones,” said Jonathan Galia, a Baptist minister who works as the plant chaplain.

All Tyson plants employ chaplains such as Galia, who minister to workers and help integrate them into the community. He left his native Philippines 17 years ago. Now a citizen, Galia worked as a hospital chaplain before taking the job at the plant.

“You have to reach people where they are,” Galia said of his unusual parish.

Sometimes that means reaching across a religious divide. Islam requires adherents to pray five times daily. To accommodate new Muslim workers, Tyson set up separate prayer rooms for men and women. The company also supplied prayer rugs, each outfitted with a compass to allow Muslims to pray toward Mecca.

The rooms fill up with workers from Myanmar,

Ethiopia, Sudan and Somalia.

“If we didn’t have this, we could not work here,” said Somali immigrant Farah Hanaf, 26. “It shows that they accept us.”

Galia works with members of each ethnic group to resolve conflicts. Earlier this year, he helped put together a Coalition of Ethnic Minority Leaders to work on improving assimilation.

“We try to send the message of, ‘Hey, you’re not a refugee forever. This is your home now,’” Galia said.

But some point out that it was somebody else’s home first.

The reception

Although the rest of the nation has been loudly debating immigration policy in recent years, Garden City has been quietly going about the business of integration for generations.

The city’s first immigrants were white settlers who displaced Native Americans. The railroad and a sugar beet plant attracted Mexican immigrants looking for work.

Over the years, they and their descendants learned English, became citizens and started businesses. Now, three or four generations later, the older immigrants watch as new immigrants from even

farther away follow in their great-grandparents’ footsteps.

“You see them everywhere,” said Yuri Chavez, a lifelong resident of southwest Kansas. “But they don’t bother people. I believe if you leave other people alone they’ll leave you alone.”

The city’s long history with immigrants may make it more welcoming today, experts noted. Kansas State University anthropology professor Janet Benson researched immigration in Garden City in the ’80s and ’90s and was struck by what she calls the city’s “quiet accommodation.”

“People get used to each other,” Benson said. “Our ancestors did. One of the ways they did it was through the legal system and the political arena. As people become citizens they learn about their rights. They vote. And that’s how we change as a people.”

Omar Flores moved to Garden City eight years ago from Chihuahua, Mexico. He said he rarely encounters anti-immigrant hostility.

“This town is different,” Flores said while taking his 2-year-old daughter, Adaliz, to a local carnival.

“They’re more welcoming. I

think they're used to it."

School Superintendent Rick Atha agreed. He moved to Garden City five years ago, after spending most of his career in Missouri schools. He said he was surprised at how well the community was adjusting.

"Diversity is not new here. It's third, fourth generation," Atha said. "There's more of a tendency to embrace rather than reject or deny. It's what makes the agribusiness economy work. It's who we are."

Despite the recent recession, unemployment in Garden City is below state and national averages. While two-thirds of the counties in the Great Plains lost population in the last 60 years, Finney County has grown.

That immigration is in Garden City's self-interest may explain why few in this town speak openly against it. Hitz, the cowboy poet, said he counted several Vietnamese immigrants as close friends. It's not immigrants that bother him, he said, but those who show no interest in assimilating.

He strongly objects to talk of giving Muslim residents a special corner of the public cemetery. If it's good enough for everyone else, he reasons, it should be

good enough for them.

"I couldn't go to another country and say 'I'm not accustomed to your ways, so I'm going to stick with mine,'" Hitz said.

"They wouldn't stand that. This country is a melting pot. What's made this country great is that people came here for the freedoms, and in the process they assimilated."

Debbie Jordan is a longtime resident, business owner and a leader in the local "tea party" movement.

"The people I talk to here are in the complete support of the Arizona law," Jordan said. "The government needs to secure our borders."

Jordan said she had no problem with her new neighbors -- as long as they got here legally. Jordan owns a mobile home park and rents to many Mexican-Americans. She said she had come to respect their work ethic.

She is concerned, however, that the immigrants could take jobs from long-time residents.

"It's nothing against the people," Jordan said. "But the plants and the factories bring them in and meanwhile we've got all these people (in the country) unemployed."

The challenges

The immigration tsunami hit Garden City's

schools hardest.

Imagine the challenge of teaching 3,000 schoolchildren who speak a language other than English. The district, which has 7,400 pupils, had to hire more English language teachers. Even the cafeteria menu was changed to offer familiar foods.

But thanks to the community's number of low-income immigrant households, the school district receives more money than other districts. Indeed, Garden City schools get \$60 million in state and federal funding, compared with the \$40 million received by the similarly sized De Soto district.

"It's a real challenge, but I consider it more of an opportunity," Superintendent Atha said. "Because if a teacher really wants to make a difference with kids, Garden City is a great place to teach. Because we do have really needy kids that are really hungry for learning."

Police also are coping with a rise in crime.

Several years ago, Garden City briefly became one of the more dangerous cities in Kansas because of drug-fueled gang violence. Crime rates have stabilized now, but last month police

met with representatives of each ethnic group to discuss a new strategy that will place an officer in each neighborhood.

Several ethnic leaders told police that immigrants sometimes feel uncomfortable contacting the authorities.

"Some of these people have no concept even of democracy or of law enforcement," said Galia, the Tyson chaplain. "When you see a Somali shake hands with a police officer, it's a very special thing."

Local leaders have pushed the federal government for years to open an immigration office so residents wouldn't have to drive to Wichita or Kansas City. So far, it hasn't happened.

Instead, much of the day-to-day work of integrating newcomers falls to a state-funded social service agency known as the Adult Learning Center. The center works with immigrants to find housing, jobs and health care. It also translates government forms and helps them work toward citizenship or their GED.

"Every day is a little different," said Velia Mendoza, the center's refugee coordinator, who has taught immigrants how to use unfamiliar appliances such

as washing machines and microwave ovens.

During one stop at an apartment complex catering to Burmese immigrants, Mendoza was swarmed by women. One wanted help translating a letter. Another wanted to know how she could find out whether her application for food stamps had been approved.

"Sometimes they just need a little help," Mendoza said. "Next time, they'll be able to do it themselves."

The dream
A few miles east of the Tyson plant, several Somali men sit in the shade of a tree, smoking and discussing a recent World Cup soccer match. Because Somalia can't field a functioning government, let alone a World Cup soccer team, the men root for South Africa.

Across the street, dozens of Burmese children ride bicycles and run barefoot. Most are Karen, a minority that for years fought for independence in Burma. Thousands still live in refugee camps along the Thai border.

Now, hundreds live here in a bare-bones apartment complex that rents two-bedroom units for \$500 a month.

Inside one, Ta Poh Poh, 42, watches her two daughters, 5-month-old Paw Sher Gay and 6-year-old Paw Sher Wah. Despite her young age, Paw Sher Wah wears the makeup customary for most Burmese girls and women.

Awards from Paw Sher Wah's elementary school hang proudly on the wall. So does a cheap clock -- still in its original clear plastic and cardboard packaging. The family didn't know the packaging was supposed to be removed before hanging the clock.

Suddenly, the door opens and their father arrives from shopping at Walmart. Ta Ma Lahtoo, 45, works the late shift at Tyson. It is a good job, he said through a translator. Hard work but worth it.

"We are going to stay here for our children," he said.

Ta Poh Poh nods. She likes Garden City's small-town feel and the endless horizons of the high plains. But she knows all too well that fate can take strange turns.

"What place belongs to us?" she said. "We'll stay here as long as we can."

Ko "Kujo" Kyaw also rents one of the apartments for his wife and three children. Until last year, the 39-year-old Burmese immigrant had

one of the toughest jobs at the plant. Using a long blade, he would slit the throats of cattle to drain their blood immediately after slaughter.

But sometimes the animals aren't quite dead. They lash out violently with their powerful hooves. Kyaw wore a protective face mask to avoid injury.

One day last year, he sliced a finger with his knife. Surgery repaired the injury, but he said he lost his job anyway. Now he works as a makeshift taxi driver, making a few bucks driving other immigrants around town.

Like many Americans today, he worries about what will happen if he can't find regular work. He doesn't want to leave Garden City.

"I feel like I belong here," he said. "Muslim, not Muslim, it doesn't matter. Here in a democratic country, it doesn't matter. Here we are all the same."

Kyaw and his wife, Ne Lar, lived for two years in a refugee camp before being approved for resettlement. Their youngest child -- named Look Man -- was born in Garden City three months ago.

They hold big dreams for him.

"He's a citizen. He'll have lots of opportunity,"

Kyaw said, laughing and scratching his dark skin with his injured finger.

"You never know. He could be president."

INVESTIGATIVE STORY

Nondaily Division 1

FIRST PLACE

Basehor Sentinel

Kaitlyn Syring

A good story demonstrating a problem faced by a local government. Well-written.

SECOND PLACE

Basehor Sentinel

Matt Erickson

Interesting story that is well researched.

THIRD PLACE

Derby Informer

Kyle McCaskey

A comprehensive look at a larger issue. Well-researched.

INVESTIGATIVE STORY

Nondaily Division 2

FIRST PLACE

Hiawatha World

Joey May and Ike Larson

Solid story with comprehensive background.

SECOND PLACE

Marion County Record

Ben Kleine and Adam Stewart

Well-researched series that continued to follow the issue.

THIRD PLACE

Hiawatha World

Joey May and Ike Larson

Good follow-up on a large community issue.

INVESTIGATIVE STORY

Nondaily Division 3

FIRST PLACE

Kansas City Business Journal

Rob Roberts

Far and away the best entry. Well-researched and written, the graphics help illustrate the issue. Good enterprise.

SECOND PLACE

Wichita Business Journal

Chris Moon

Good story that shows several sides to the tax exemption issue. Excellent breakdown of areas affected.

THIRD PLACE

Johnson County Sun

Chuck Kurtz

Good job of putting faces on a big community issue. Well researched and written

INVESTIGATIVE STORY

Daily Division 1

FIRST PLACE

Ottawa Herald

Meagan Patton-Paulson

Meagan looked for reasons behind the tensions at city council meetings and found some of the sources. She interviewed citizens and analyzed records and pinpointed problems on a local issue. Good timeline, but PDF's of records would have been good.

SECOND PLACE

Colby Free Press

Staff

Lots of stories looking at decline made me wonder how they sold ads for a section on that topic. Good job reporting numbers, but graphics and more outside analysis would have helped.

THIRD PLACE

Leader & Times

Jessica Crawford

Fact-checking a letter to the editor paid off. A rumor was dispelled.

INVESTIGATIVE STORY

Daily Division 2

FIRST PLACE

Newton Kansan

Cristina Janney

Well-written stories. Good presentation of numbers. Putting a face on this issue - suicide victim Jake, plus April Reynolds - gave this story the edge.

SECOND PLACE

Newton Kansan

Cristina Janney

Good writing on impact of state budget cuts on local health care. It would have been even better with patients telling their side of the story.

THIRD PLACE

Manhattan Mercury

Jerry Wofford

Digging into the files shed light on past charges against a man charged in a cold case. PDF's on old records could have make this come to life better.

INVESTIGATIVE STORY

Daily Division 3

FIRST PLACE

Kansas City Star

Mark Morris, Brady McCollough and Mike McGraw

Wow! The reporters kept digging and kept finding gold. Perseverance paid off. This investigation yielded amazing results for readers and led to numerous indictments and reforms.

SECOND PLACE

Kansas City Star

Mike McGraw and Glenn E. Rice

Great reporting on a cold case. The reporters got information even before police investigators in more than one instance. Very compelling writing.

THIRD PLACE

Lawrence Journal-World

Shaun Hittle

In a category with many very good entries, what set this apart was not only putting a face on the problem, but also showing readers to what extent the reporters went to get their information.

SERIES

Nondaily Division 1

FIRST PLACE

Norton Telegram

Carolyn Potts

Interesting series on servicemen who gave their lives for the country. Well researched and well written.

SECOND PLACE

The Mirror

Shawn Linenberger

A “community-minded” feature that readers would follow as a series. Well sourced and good writing.

THIRD PLACE

Phillips County Review

Kirby Ross

Good explanatory series about this project and its impact on the community.

“Not knowing was the worst,” said Wanda (Colip) Stephenson, Norton, sister of 1st Lt. Glenn McCubbin, who was shot down May 19, 1968 over North Vietnam.

Ms. Stephenson was only 15 years old at that time but she said when ‘that car’ drove in – we knew. She and her parents, Lewis and Martha (McCubbin) Colip, and her other brother Harold McCubbin, were enjoying a Sunday dinner when officers from Offutt Air Force Base, Omaha, Neb., came to deliver the news that their son and brother was missing in action. She said the family was in shock

The family learned from military reports that Lt. McCubbin along with another Air Force officer, Capt. Joe Davies, comprised the crew of a F-4D Phantom fighter jet on a night mission over North Vietnam. Their target was a bridge northwest of Dong Hoi, North Vietnam. The two men and their

plane failed to return from the mission. According to coordinates given, their last known location was near the city of Ron in North Vietnam. A search was immediately begun for the two officers.

A radio signal was picked up in a location that could not be exactly established, but the families were told the transmission was coming from across the border into Laos, some 50 miles from the city of Ron. The voice could not be identified. A second transmission was received from about 30 miles deeper into Laos. Lt. McCubbin and Capt. Davies were never found. Lt. McCubbin was 24 years old.

Ms. Stephenson said her brother, who voluntarily joined the Air Force, was doing what he wanted to do more than anything else – fly. She said, “Glenn loved to fly. After the Air Force, he planned to be a commercial pilot.” She said she still has the MIA bracelet with her

brother’s name on it.

Lt. McCubbin graduated from Norton Community High School in 1960. He studied at Kansas University for two years then attended the Air Force Academy for two years. He returned to Lawrence in the fall of 1963, graduating in 1965 with a Bachelor’s Degree. He joined the United States Air Force and received his pilot’s training at Reese Air Force Base, Lubbock, Texas, graduating in December of 1966. He was made a 1st Lieutenant in 1967 and was sent to Vietnam in October of 1967. After being declared “Missing in Action”, Lt. McCubbin was advanced to the rank of Captain and, later, to Major. He was officially declared “Killed in Action” ten years later on May 9, 1978.

In 1988, a joint United States/Vietnamese team, under the auspices of the Joint Task Force for Full Accounting, visited

the region where Maj. McCubbin's plane went down. Witnesses were interviewed regarding the incident. Some villagers described the crash of an aircraft like that of Maj. McCubbin's and said human remains were recovered from the crash site but, no evidence of that was ever given to the team.

In 1991, the crash site was excavated and "biologic evidence" was recovered. The evidence was taken to the military's central identification laboratory in Hawaii for examination but, the results yielded no identification of either crewman.

It was in July of 2006 that the McCubbin family was contacted to supply a DNA sample to possibly identify remains being held at the laboratory. An uncle, Delmar E. Fredde, provided a sample. "You can imagine," said Ms. Stephenson, "That after all those years, the family would be a little skeptical."

Confirmation soon came that the recovered remains were indeed, those of Maj. Glenn McCubbin. Harold McCubbin, flew to Hawaii to bring his brother home. Ms. Stephenson said, "Harold was satisfied with the results and we have to accept what happened to Glenn. I just wish Mom could have known about Glenn before she died in 1991."

A private memorial service was held May 9, 2007 at the family farm northeast of Norton. Ms. Stephenson said the family was offered a military funeral but, the only thing they wanted was a "fly over". She said it was a perfect day and at precisely the perfect moment, a huge Air Force B-52 flew over the exact spot where the family stood with their brother's cremated remains. She added that, at the family's request, the date of his death was changed, on his military grave marker, from May 9, 1978 to May 19, 1968, the day his plane

went down.

Ms. Stephenson remembers her brother as a person who liked people of all ages. She said at the potluck dinner held at the 4-H Building in honor of her brother before he left for overseas, he made a point of talking to everyone of the more than 100 people attending. She said he was always considerate of others.

Maj. McCubbin was awarded several medals including: the Purple Heart; the Distinguished Flying Cross with oak leaf clusters; the Air Medal with eight oak leaf clusters; the Air Force Commendation; and a Presidential Unit Citation.

Ms. Stephenson said it is great the Vietnam Moving Wall is coming to Norton. Especially because there are so many men from the area listed on the Wall. She said, "It is quite an honor."

Several members of the McCubbin family will attend the opening ceremonies on Thursday,

Sept 23 when a wreath will be layed by the Wall to honor her brother and the three other Norton County men who died in that war.

SERIES

Nondaily Division 2

FIRST PLACE

Gardner News

Corbin H. Crable

The writers conversational tone carries the reader through this series.

SECOND PLACE

Kingman Leader - Courier

Nancy D. Borst

Reporter does a good job of explaining why sales tax is being sought. Third story offers good perspective statewide. (I will be googling to see if the tax was ultimately approved!)

THIRD PLACE

Atchison Globe

Patty Moore

Thorough lineup of talking to caregivers and agencies. Then putting a face to it with the Schnuetzes, and then hitting the legislators.

SERIES

Nondaily Division 3

FIRST PLACE

Johnson County Sun

Chuck Kurtz

This is a very ambitious series that taps into local sources for their analysis of the massive health care reform passed by Congress. It was an excellent effort to localize a national story that will affect this newspaper's readers. Good sources provided useful perspectives. Congratulations on the effort!

SECOND PLACE

Marysville Advocate

*Julie Perry, Sarah Kessinger and
Katelynn Hasler*

This newspaper delved into an important local issue: a ballot initiative seeking to increase sales tax. The stories clearly show why government wants the extra money and how it could help the community. Seemed a little light on views of taxpayer groups opposed to the tax - but perhaps there weren't any.

THIRD PLACE

Wichita Business Journal

Josh Heck

The Journal did a solid job of explaining the issue of the health care overhaul. Appropriately, the information was geared toward the business audience to which the publication caters. Breakout boxes helped simplify the story.

SERIES

Daily Division 1

FIRST PLACE

Ottawa Herald

Courtney Servaes

Excellent survey of danger on local roadways - with personal stories that drive the tragedies home.

SECOND PLACE

Ottawa Herald

Staff

The Herald fulfills its watchdog imperative, using statistical breakdowns to good effect.

THIRD PLACE

Ottawa Herald

Staff

An in-depth look at a local struggle mirroring a national problem.

SERIES

Daily Division 2

FIRST PLACE

Newton Kansan

Cristina Janney

Excellent series looking at various aspects of the suicide issue. Well-written and informative. Great effort in providing people stories.

SECOND PLACE

Newton Kansan

Cristina Janney

Great look and effort in localizing a state and national issue. Well-researched and relevant.

THIRD PLACE

Manhattan Mercury

Staff

Creative series for sports fans and travelers alike. Interesting and fun.

SERIES

Daily Division 3

FIRST PLACE

Wichita Eagle

Roy Wenzl

Phenomenal series. I couldn't stop reading it. Well-written, emotional and powerful.

SECOND PLACE

Kansas City Star

Joe Robertson, Rick Montgomery, Mark Davis, Mara Rose Williams and Bill Reiter

Thorough, well-written. Excellent reporting. It was a tough decision. Truly wonderful reporting.

THIRD PLACE

Topeka Capital-Journal

Staff

Thorough reporting, great effort to find new angles in a common topic. Good writing and action tips for readers.

EDITORIAL WRITING

Nondaily Division 1

FIRST PLACE

Goodland Star-News

Tom Betz

Editorials delved into LOCAL issues with understanding and a point of view. Good job.

SECOND PLACE

Goodland Star-News

Tom Dreiling

Entertaining writing about issues on all of our minds.

THIRD PLACE

Ellis Review

Nickole Byers

I liked the way she weighed in on how the newspaper is treated, and how public meetings are operated.

EDITORIAL WRITING

Nondaily Division 2

FIRST PLACE

Atchison Globe

Joe Warren

In one editorial, Warren sees through a possible “tax cut” by connecting the dots to a fee increase. In another, he calls out arguing public officials. In a third, he encourages support for local business. These are good, important local positions to take and he does so with a clear writing style. Good job.

SECOND PLACE

Marion County Record

Eric Meyer

Eric Meyer calls city “dysfunctional” and tells the school board president he is wrong. His strong opinions serve his readers.

THIRD PLACE

Ellsworth County Independent/Reporter

Linda Mowery-Denning

Clear writing on important local issues.

EDITORIAL WRITING

Nondaily Division 3

FIRST PLACE

Johnson County Sun

Bob Sigman

Sigman's editorials are important state topics. Were direct and well researched. The reporting, as in an editorial about a proposed taxpayer bill of rights, gave him an edge in a very competitive category.

SECOND PLACE

Kansas City Business Journal

Brian Kaberline

Strong, knowledgeable writing. "Kansas misfires with gun bill" may have been the best single editorial in this division.

THIRD PLACE

Marysville Advocate

Sarah Kessinger

I really liked Kessinger's strong local positions and her no-nonsense treatment of secretary of state candidate Kris Kobach.

EDITORIAL WRITING

Daily Division 1

FIRST PLACE

Winfield Daily Courier

Dave Seaton

The class of the field. Seaton's opinions are short, direct and clear. They advocate for openness in local decision making. They pull no punches. They are excellent.

SECOND PLACE

Ottawa Herald

Jeanny Sharp

Strange opinions about the behavior of young people, and a good look at two ballot questions

THIRD PLACE

Arkansas City Traveler

David A. Seaton

CLEAR writing about good local issues.

EDITORIAL WRITING

Daily Division 2

FIRST PLACE

Garden City Telegram

Dena Sattler

Sattler's editorials separated themselves in this very deep set of good entries with the humanity that came through in her writing. Editorials about dividing a cemetery for Muslim burials and about the misguided use of immigration is addressed by a local religious leader put a human touch to big issues.

SECOND PLACE

Emporia Gazette

Chris Wallace

Clear, persuasive, direct writing, about important local issues.

THIRD PLACE

Emporia Gazette

Ashley Knecht Walker

See comments for second place. In a near tie with her colleagues. I enjoyed the indignation in the porn-related eddy.

EDITORIAL WRITING

Daily Division 3

FIRST PLACE

Topeka Capital-Journal

Ric Anderson

Anderson's writing was simply the best. Consider this line: "Kansas House Speaker Mike O'Neal is once again involved in something that smells bad. Like midsummer roadkill in a feed lot dumpster bad." Perfect! His opinions are entertaining and persuasive, sharp and well defined. They take no prisoners and leave no question where his paper stands. Exceptional work.

SECOND PLACE

Kansas City Star

Matthew Schofield

The beauty of these editorials is that they call for specific, visionary action - a new national park and 100 miles of bike lanes. Bold conversation starters are rare - too rare - on editorial pages today. Very nice.

THIRD PLACE

Topeka Capital-Journal

Frederick J. Johnson

Thoughtful, definitive, well-stated opinions.

LOCAL BUSINESS STORY

Nondaily Division 1

FIRST PLACE

The Mirror

Estuardo Garcia

Well sourced enterprise story that looks at natural business impact, but also future potential to affect schools. Nice use of art and graphic elements.

SECOND PLACE

Basehor Sentinel

Matt Erickson

Timely seasonal enterprise on the future of Christmas tree farms, including the human dimension.

THIRD PLACE

The Mirror

Elvyn Jones

Solid story looking at local business making money from a traveler's worst fear.

LOCAL BUSINESS STORY

Nondaily Division 2

FIRST PLACE

Belleville Telescope

Deb Hadachek

Strong lead in grafs capture your attention and pull you into a well written story that connects this business and its products with the world - literally.

SECOND PLACE

Belleville Telescope

Deb Hadachek

Interesting feature on the latest product likely to attract revenue for a well-known family of entrepreneurs.

THIRD PLACE

Washington County News

Tom Parker

Strong reporting and writing with detail and color, giving insight into the workings of a local green house.

LOCAL BUSINESS STORY

Nondaily Division 3

FIRST PLACE

Kansas City Business Journal

Steve Vockrodt

Catchy lead draws you into a story about an unusual business known nationally. Solid writing on a story that provides a new insight into the legal and lawsuit/trial process.

SECOND PLACE

Wichita Business Journal

Josh Heck

Strong story that goes beyond the potential impact to take a look at the real, case specific impact of federal health care changes

THIRD PLACE

Marysville Advocate

JoAnn Shum

Nicely written story that combines human dimension with the economic boost body shops get from deer collisions.

LOCAL BUSINESS STORY

Daily Division 1

FIRST PLACE

Iola Register

Susan Lynn

Well written story on the incredible impact one man has had on Burlington and ultimately its economic base. Story also went beyond the one sourcing common in many entries.

SECOND PLACE

Winfield Daily Courier

Allen Twitchell

Solid look at the impact on small businesses, but overall economic benefit the mammoth retailer brings. Timely.

THIRD PLACE

Parsons Sun

Jamie Willey

Good look at how the area is faring in the economic climate. Rich sourcing and depth.

LOCAL BUSINESS STORY

Daily Division 2

FIRST PLACE

Emporia Gazette

Jeremy Shapiro

Strong enterprise package that provides historical lesson and assesses what's at stake in the future. Nice mix of photos and informational graphics.

SECOND PLACE

Garden City Telegram

Shajia Ahmad

Solid story that looks at how the region can capitalize on a trend toward wind energy.

THIRD PLACE

Manhattan Mercury

Kimber Wallace

It's hard not to want to read a story that leads with "Marilyn Monroe should have visited the Little Apple." Nice look at jewelry retail cluster and competition.

LOCAL BUSINESS STORY

Daily Division 3

FIRST PLACE

Topeka Capital-Journal

Jan Biles

Strong enterprise looking at decline of local stores battling big box retailers and what it means for communities.

SECOND PLACE

Hutchinson News

Amy Bickel

Excellent look at how a quirk in the law stands between a community reaping millions from an industry event.

THIRD PLACE

Wichita Eagle

Dan Voorhis

Strong writing and detail - including the economic impact - draws me into a story that might otherwise have been a dry history lesson.

GOVERNMENT/POLITICAL STORY

Nondaily Division 1

FIRST PLACE

Basehor Sentinel

Matt Erickson

Clearly the best in the category. Writer does a nice job of telling what could have been a typical meeting story. He makes the reader care about a routine topic such as a job title.

SECOND PLACE

Basehor Sentinel

Matt Erickson

An interesting story with an imaginative lead that captures the reader's attention. One complaint: A band-aid approach is usually a temporary fix. That's clearly the case here.

THIRD PLACE

Baldwin City Signal

Jeff Myrick

The writer does a nice job of telling the story. Second and third paragraphs are a bit repetitive, slowing the reader at a critical point in the story.

GOVERNMENT/POLITICAL STORY

Nondaily Division 2

FIRST PLACE

Washington County News

Great local look at a national topic. Complete with good use of social media and strong presentation

SECOND PLACE

Gardner News

Danedri Thompson

Nice job on this records-based look at campaign finance in the city council race. Sharp claim, detailed writing, makes for a strong accountability piece.

THIRD PLACE

Atchison Globe

Mary Meyers

Detailed, authoritative, crispy writing explains the budget choices facing the elected officials.

GOVERNMENT/POLITICAL STORY

Nondaily Division 3

FIRST PLACE

Johnson County Sun

Loren Stanton

Strong anecdote grabs the reader and the writer's conversational style keeps us reading. Italic type at the beginning is a little distracting, but the story-telling is strong.

SECOND PLACE

Olathe News

Jim Sullinger

This is clearly a political work story, but the writer does a nice job of making it interesting to the average reader. Nice preview of the coming session from a local perspective.

THIRD PLACE

Wichita Business Journal

Daniel McCoy

Story does a nice job of explaining a political debate that might have a big impact on the state economy. Very readable report.

GOVERNMENT/POLITICAL STORY

Daily Division 1

FIRST PLACE

Winfield Daily Courier

Allen Twitchell

Compelling story about the real life implications of a lack of funding for needed services. Highly dedicated, long time mental health workers contemplating going to work in a casino truly speaks to the reality of the economic situation.

SECOND PLACE

Leavenworth Times

Tim Linn

Good, solid, unemotional reporting on a project that may not be completed, because of economic constraints.

THIRD PLACE

Arkansas City Traveler

Foss Farrar

It seems to be a universal story: most people want public transportation until it's time to pay for it. Good reporting about a quality of life/business issue.

GOVERNMENT/POLITICAL STORY

Daily Division 2

FIRST PLACE

Manhattan Mercury

Whitney Hodgin

Thorough, fair report on a compelling topic

SECOND PLACE

Dodge City Daily Globe

Eric Swanson

Good local angle on major national topic

THIRD PLACE

Manhattan Mercury

Bill Felber

Lots of figures, but eye-opening info.

GOVERNMENT/POLITICAL STORY

Daily Division 3

FIRST PLACE

Wichita Eagle

Tim Potter

When a government agency's follow-up on an abuse report is questionable and a child later is found dead, that's an important story. The disturbing story is told thoroughly and fairly.

SECOND PLACE

Kansas City Star

Joe Lambe

Story exposes a troubling gap in laws and explains how patients in psychiatric or rehabilitation centers are vulnerable to becoming victims at hands of caretakers. Well done. Solid reporting and writing.

THIRD PLACE

Lawrence Journal-World

Chad Lawhorn

Story told using personal circumstances to illustrate how a government agency is falling short of fulfilling its mission of protect tenants. The story is well reported and well told.

RELIGION STORY

Nondaily Division 1

FIRST PLACE

The Mirror

Shawn Linenberger

A delightful story told with charm and wit. The writer does a great job with a story that could have easily been a parody.

SECOND PLACE

Bonner Springs Chieftain

Caroline Boyer

Not merely a story about a person with a collection, this depicts how the pastor uses the collection in her ministry.

THIRD PLACE

Derby Informer

Jeremy Shapiro

Good story about a little-known sport.

RELIGION STORY

Nondaily Division 2

FIRST PLACE

Marion County Record

Susan Berg

The lead and historical background put this story first. Fr. Kapaun link to Pilson should have been referenced early in the story, however.

SECOND PLACE

Marion County Record

Adam Stewart

A close second. An example of two verses he translated differently than others and why might have put this in first place.

THIRD PLACE

Atchison Globe

Mary Meyers

The topic, sound writing and good use of quotes placed this story above the remainder of entries.

With aching feet and tired muscles, a group of 70 walkers arrived Sunday morning at Pilsen, to be joined later by hundreds for a special Mass.

The 60-mile walk over a three-day period was to walk in the shoes of Pilsen native and sainthood candidate Father Emil Kapaun.

Kapaun and other soldiers were forced to walk 20 miles per day for more than 14 days to reach a prisoner-of-war camp during the Korean War. Kapaun ministered to troops during the war, saying Mass from the hoods of jeeps, being captured by the enemy, and eventually giving his life in a POW camp, all the while serving the Lord.

The group began its pilgrimage with 34 walkers at 6:30 a.m. Friday from the Church of the Magdalene in Wichita, staying Friday night in Whitewater, and Saturday night in Aulne before reaching their destination. By the time the group was completing its last leg Sunday morning, it was 70 members strong.

“The purpose of the pilgrimage is to engage in spirited journey with our bodies in honor of Father Kapaun and promote his cause for sainthood,” organizer and Catholic priest Eric Weldon said Sunday morning during a break from the walk on Remington Road, southwest of Marion. “We are walking in holiness.”

This is the second year for the pilgrimage. Weldon started with four walkers last year and ended with 11.

Sunday’s walkers ranged in ages from 10 to 65, representing more than a dozen parishes in Wichita, Andale, Schulte, and Marion County.

Laura Klenda of Lincolnville joined the group Friday afternoon; Denise Bina of Marion joined the walk Sunday.

“I was asked to participate and so I did,” Klenda said.

She couldn’t join them until later because she was with Centre High School students at the state FFA convention in Manhattan.

“I want to support the Father Kapaun effort,” Klenda said.

Bina did it to honor Father Kapaun and to experience the spiritual pilgrimage.

“We are so busy that we rarely take time to listen,” she said, to nature or to God. “God’s talking to us all of the time but sometimes we can’t hear Him.”

Bina said she enjoyed the morning walk, having the opportunity to listen to nature and pray with the other walkers.

“We’ve prayed two rosaries so far,” she said.

Among the walkers was Chase Kear of Colwich who was severely injured in a pole vaulting accident in 2008. He and his family had been featured on the television show “20/20” and believe Kear recovered from the near-fatal accident because of intercession by Father Kapaun.

The Kear family has been interviewed by church officials regarding the case for Kapaun’s sainthood.

Saturday’s hot weather took its toll on one walker, causing him heat exhaustion. But the walker had recovered by Sunday and took his place with the group.

An entourage of a small bus, van, and passenger car followed the group, offering medical aid, snacks, drinks, and cool respite as needed.

A lunch was provided Saturday in Peabody and Marion County Knights of Columbus grilled hamburgers and hot dogs Saturday night. The group camped at Aulne Methodist Church grounds Saturday night. The church remained open during the night in case of storms.

Mass was held at 3 p.m. Sunday at St. John Nepomucene Church-Holy Family Parish in Pilsen in honor of Kapaun.

Steps to sainthood

For the past two years, Marion County Catholics have been leading the way to have one of their own be named to sainthood. For the past year or more, the Wichita Catholic diocese has been assisting in the cause.

The Roman Catholic Church’s pro-

cess leading to canonization involves three major steps.

First is the declaration of a person’s heroic virtues. After which the church gives him the title of “venerable.”

The second step is beatification, when he would be called “blessed.”

The third step is canonization or declaration of sainthood.

At various steps in the canonization process, evidence of miracles is presented to church authorities. In general, two miracles need to be accepted by the church as having occurred through the intercession of the prospective saint.

Church authorities have interviewed individuals regarding possible miracles with reports being reviewed by the Vatican.

About Father Kapaun

Kapaun was born April 20, 1916, to Enos and Elizabeth Kapaun, on a farm three miles southwest of Pilsen.

He graduated from Conception College in Conception, Mo., in June 1936 and was ordained at Kendrick Theological Seminary, St. Louis, in June 1940.

He returned to Pilsen after ordination and assisted the parish priest until he was appointed parish pastor in December 1943.

Kapaun volunteered with the Army and was sent to India in April 1945. He was promoted to captain in 1946 and returned to the U.S.

He was appointed pastor of a church in Timken, reenlisting in the Army in 1948.

In July 1950, Kapaun’s unit was stationed in South Korea and Chinese Communists captured him in November 1950.

While captured, the priest administered to the dead and dying, performed baptisms, heard confessions, and celebrated Mass.

Despite personal physical suffering, Kapaun continued to attend to the sick and wounded.

He died of pneumonia May 23, 1951.

RELIGION STORY

Nondaily Division 3

FIRST PLACE

Johnson County Sun

Chuck Kurtz

Strong lead captures attention of reader and solid storytelling keeps it. Writer does a nice job of telling the story of an amazing child.

SECOND PLACE

Miami County Republic

Jesse Trimble

The headline is weak, but the lead captures the reader. Writer does a nice job with what could have been a routine assignment, providing a readable and interesting story.

THIRD PLACE

Olathe News

Dawn Bormann

Writer tells a story most of us probably never considered. The traditional church service has little to offer someone who can't hear. A very interesting story - well told.

RELIGION STORY

Daily Division 1

FIRST PLACE

Arkansas City Traveler

Foss Farrar

There were several good entries in this category. Farrar tells us of a man who was on a fact finding mission and gives us a story of faith in action. Good job!

SECOND PLACE

Leader & Times

Jessica Crawford

Summarizing a speech for print can be tricky. Crawford did the job very well.

THIRD PLACE

Ottawa Herald

Courtney Servaes

Nice touch on a story about a different approach to worship.

RELIGION STORY

Daily Division 2

FIRST PLACE

Manhattan Mercury

Kimber Wallace

A well written story that captures the human dimension at its best. The writer clearly self edited, making the story a reasonable length, but still capturing the relevant details and outcome.

SECOND PLACE

Garden City Telegram

Shajia Ahmad

Well written feature that provides insight and understanding of an annual ritual.

THIRD PLACE

Hays Daily News

Diane O'Brien

Writer grabs you with the lead. Nice writing with detail on a daily that could have read routine.

RELIGION STORY

Daily Division 3

FIRST PLACE

Lawrence Journal-World

Shaun Hittle

Important investigative series on a difficult topic. Thoughtfully executed and carefully told. Well-done.

SECOND PLACE

Kansas City Star

Laura Bauer

Touching story about kids helping the homeless. Very well written. Nice storytelling.

THIRD PLACE

Hutchinson News

Kathy Hanks

Who says religion stories have to be serious? The cardboard Jesus traveling with this couple and Kathy Hanks' great writing made me smile. Nicely done.

AGRICULTURAL STORY

Nondaily Division 1

FIRST PLACE

The Mirror

Elwyn Jones

Good historical look at what is likely a landmark to many, giving way to what some may call progress.

SECOND PLACE

Baldwin City Signal

Jeff Myrick

What a hoot! Fun piece on an older gentleman who loves what he does more than his accolades.

THIRD PLACE

Rush County News

Linda Kenyon

Fun story on same real cattle producers using old methods because they work better.

AGRICULTURAL STORY

Nondaily Division 2

FIRST PLACE

Atchison Globe

Patty Moore

The first few graphs set the scene - I could see it.

SECOND PLACE

Belleville Telescope

Deb Hadachek

An educational look at specialty crops with a good mix of feature and hard numbers.

THIRD PLACE

Marion County Record

Ben Kleine

Good glimpse at how cattlemen are making ends meet and at the innovations of the group.

AGRICULTURAL STORY

Nondaily Division 3

FIRST PLACE

Olathe News

Jim Sullinger

Story looks at a lesser-known aspect of the down economy. If people aren't buying houses, they aren't buying trees or shrubs for their yards. Telling numbers - trees that should have sold for \$2100 bringing \$172 - bring it home.

SECOND PLACE

Kansas City Business Journal

Mark Kind

In a category filled with farm stories, this entry was unique in telling the story of agri-company merger.

THIRD PLACE

Miami County Republic

Brandon Steinert

Story includes a nice sampling of the factors that have made it difficult for family farms to stay in the family.

AGRICULTURAL STORY

Daily Division 1

FIRST PLACE

Iola Register

Bob Johnson

Story uses one farmer to tell about changes in agriculture - and buttresses the story with appropriate numbers

SECOND PLACE

Arkansas City Traveler

Foss Farrar

This story about the third annual “pasture to plate” tour stood out among the more typical agriculture stories in this category. Who knew chefs want to understand more about their raw materials?

THIRD PLACE

Leader & Times

Larry Phillips

When it comes to farming, many stories deal with the little guys. This writer took a look at one of the big guys and some of the regulations he fears.

AGRICULTURAL STORY

Daily Division 2

FIRST PLACE

Great Bend Tribune

Karen La Pierre

Reporter did an excellent job of telling a story that could have been deadly dull and made it compelling.

SECOND PLACE

Manhattan Mercury

Bryan Richardson

A well-reported and well-told story that sucked me in. Grain science can be interesting and the timeline was useful.

THIRD PLACE

Manhattan Mercury

Kimber Wallace

Excellent opportunity to localize a global story. Well done by Kimber Wallace.

AGRICULTURAL STORY

Daily Division 3

FIRST PLACE

Wichita Eagle

Hurst Laviana and Rick Plumlee

Excellent reporting and writing to provide the long view on an important story. Several papers went after this story; the Eagle nailed it.

SECOND PLACE

Topeka Capital-Journal

Corey Jones

Good job of bringing the humor dimension to a large but under reported story.

THIRD PLACE

Wichita Eagle

Dan Voorhis

A story that affects everyone - good business, economics and ag reporting - all in one story.

YOUTH STORY

Nondaily Division 1

FIRST PLACE

The Mirror

Elvyn Jones

Sparsely written, well-crafted piece told without the reporter adding any of her own emotion - the facts had enough on their own. Great piece about an amazing kid.

SECOND PLACE

The Mirror

Benton Smith

It's easy to tell from the quotes these two genuinely like working together - even the cool teenager.

THIRD PLACE

Basehor Sentinel

Kaitlyn Syring

Good story about a kid trying to make a difference in his community.

YOUTH STORY

Nondaily Division 2

FIRST PLACE

Marion County Record

Ben Kleine

A good feature about using a unique means of connecting with kids.

SECOND PLACE

Marion County Record

Susan Berg

Competent handling of a serious subject.

THIRD PLACE

Atchison Globe

Katy (Blair) Moore

Good use of quotes.

Often the most difficult part of an elementary school guidance counselors' job is calming down a student down from an intense emotion, whether it be anger or sadness, to get to the root of the trauma and find a solution.

"I have students write," MES counselor Kris Burkholder said. "I have some listen to calming music or do a physical activity to calm down before we discuss what happened. Ever since I've had Halo, she's calmed them down."

A young girl burst into Burkholder's office upset, crying emphatically after someone had slighted her on the school playground. Burkholder asked her what was wrong, and tried to calm her down.

That's when the school's therapy dog in training, Halo, emerged from her kennel after taking a nap. Without any prompting, she laid her head on the student's lap. The girl deliberately stroked the black lab puppy's head and the student gradually became docile.

Burkholder was able to ask the girl what happened and work through the problem.

"It just calmed her to pet Halo," Burkholder said.

Burkholder was looking to enlist a therapy dog for four years, dating back to when she was working as a counselor in Herington. She thought the benefit of the calming influence of a dog outweighed the distraction it could present to young students.

To learn about therapy dogs, she shadowed White City counselor Cindy Gant and her labradoodle. She followed other counselors with therapy dogs in Wichita.

Through that time, Burkholder was looking for a chance to bring a dog to MES. USD 408 already had a policy in place for therapy dogs.

The opportunity presented itself with a litter of puppies at Cindy Ragland's kennel at Flint Hills Retrievers.

Ragland primarily raises Labrador retrievers as hunting dogs. The skills of obedience, loyalty, and patience

are important for hunting dogs, but therapy dogs need those characteristics plus an innate gentleness.

Ragland has only had two dogs at her kennel that possessed the qualities of therapy dogs: Halo and Halo's aunt Belle.

Belle works with Ragland at Opportunity, Achievement, and Survival in Society an alternative day school program in the Marion County Special Education Cooperative Building in Marion. OASIS is a program that specializes in working with students that struggle with anger and stress.

Belle lives with Jim and Joni Crofoot.

"When they go home they're a regular dog," Ragland said. "When I put the collar on, it's like putting a uniform on. She's going to work."

Belle is full-grown at approximately 80 pounds, and has developed her skills as a therapy dog.

Ragland and Belle will begin in the back of an OASIS class. Never leashed, Belle will sense students who are hiding problems at home or school. She will then nudge their elbow and present her head for solace.

"All dogs have intuition," Ragland said. "I just don't think you can train that."

OASIS teacher Melissa Ziemmermann said Belle's ability to notice students having a bad day clues them into work that needs to be done with a student.

Belle is also an incentive for students to behave and a method to calm students during bouts of anger or stress.

"We have some pretty challenging kids," Ziemmermann said. "Even with some of the high school students it works."

Students will take Belle for a walk after getting upset at another student or a teacher. Zieammermann said when students will not express themselves to a teacher, Belle provides them an outlet. They can walk Belle around the building and release that frustration.

Students at OASIS gain points for

good behavior for hunting dogs, but therapy dogs need those characteristics plus an innate gentleness. One of the items is treats for Belle. Students can also work toward earning walks and other activities with Bell.

Zieammermann said Belle has a special bond with foster students because of her consistency.

"As consistent as staff try to be we're human," she said. "They always notice when she's gone."

The same traits that Ragland noticed in Belle she immediately witnessed with Halo. She saw a gentleness and trainability in the puppy that were necessary. She immediately started her on simple obedience training and introducing Halo to different indoor environments.

Ragland approached Burkholder about the dog and the MES guidance counselor jumped at a chance to have a therapy dog at MES.

Burkholder named Halo for her saint-like patience. A staff member who bought a puppy from the same litter was amazed at the calm temperament of the dog.

"Everyone is like, 'I can't believe she's a puppy,'" Burkholder said. "She's so gentle."

But the four-month old black lab puppy is still in training. She goes to obedience training every Tuesday in Valley Center. She will eventually receive therapy dog training and can be certified at a year old.

Her training also extends to her time at MES. Burkholder has used exercises where she has Halo calmly sit and watch students file down the hallway, keeping her from approaching them for attention.

Halo is like a new student at MES, if the new student were immediately popular. She garners attention from students and staff alike. Long days at the elementary school full of attention can tire Halo, often when she is in Burkholder's office she reclines on a sloping chair and dozes.

Burkholder has become attached to Halo since they started working together this past September. She was initially worried how she and Halo

would interact but recently said Halo is her counseling. Burkholder tries to give the dog other chances throughout the day to be a normal puppy.

“Sometimes I do kind of feel like I’m mean,” Burkholder said. “We have to be firm. When she’s in my office we’ll play.”

The firm training has paid off already. Two boys who routinely have trouble controlling their anger have come into Burkholder’s office and pet Halo to de-escalate.

“The kids will sit right in that chair and she’ll crawl right into their laps” Burkholder said.

Halo has yet to develop her intuition. Burkholder hopes that she will eventually be able to pick out children on the playground who may feel lonely.

MES Title I teacher Shannon Cooper has also expressed interest in using Halo as a reading dog. Students struggling to read can use a dog as a subject. Bell is a reading dog at OASIS and has served the same roll at MES.

“There’s no intimidation,” Ragland said. “A dog is non-judgmental.”

Halo has already had unseen benefits. One MES boy was dreadfully afraid of dogs before Halo entered the MES world. Burkholder talked to the students parents and they thought Halo could be used to conquer the student’s fear.

From then on, Burkholder was conscious of the situation and kept Halo on a leash around the student’s class. As time passed, the student started to let go of his fear.

On Sept. 23, the student approached Burkholder and asked if he could pet Halo.

“He knows Halo won’t hurt him,” Burkholder said. “He’s learning to trust.”

YOUTH STORY

Nondaily Division 3

FIRST PLACE

Olathe News

Dawn Bormann

A good read. I feel like I met the girls.

SECOND PLACE

Johnson County Sun

Chuck Kurtz

Compelling story.

THIRD PLACE

Johnson County Sun

Kristin Babcock

Good storytelling about an annual event.

Kavya Shivashankar stole the hearts of Kansas Citians and the world when she won the 2009 Scripps National Spelling Bee.

But the world hasn't seen nothing yet.

Meet Vanya Shivashankar -- Kavya's 4-foot tall little sister. The 8-year-old will be the youngest contestant at the 2010 Scripps Bee, which starts today. It's Vanya's first time, but she's hardly a rookie.

The vivacious Olathe youngster has been hamming it up among the Scripps bee crowd since she was 4. While Kavya was focused on stage, Vanya was her cheerleader and ambassador in the crowd.

"She was a social bee...making friends and talking to people," said Kavya, 14.

TV cameras often gravitated toward the little sister who had a ball during breaks from the intense competition. A scrapbook photo shows the youngster being carried by a bee pronouncer one year.

But now it's Vanya's turn to shine on stage. And she is focused on her goal.

"I want to be just like my sister," Vanya said proudly with a smile that would melt even the most hardened adult.

As for her chances to win this year, the Regency Place Elementary student is realistic.

"It's a possibility, but no," Vanya said matter-of-factly.

Vanya is going with all intentions to win the bee, but she knows it's her first year and there are others with more experience. If she wins, the sisters would be the first siblings to win the top prize.

"I just want to try my best this year," said Vanya, who is sponsored by The Olathe News.

The 2010 Scripps spellers range in age from 8 to 15, but 80 percent are between the ages of 12 and 14, according to Scripps. Many contestants will tower over the petite girl, who will enter fourth grade in August.

"She's going to be so tiny. I don't know how she's going to reach the microphone," her father, Mirle Shivashankar said.

If Vanya is intimidated by the competition, few would know.

"She's too young to be nervous. She's seen that stage," her father said.

In fact, Vanya said she is most excited to meet other contestants and reconnect with bee families.

"We all encourage

each other," Vanya said.

The process isn't nearly as fierce as it may look on TV.

"It's a competition but we all understand it's not a competition with each other. It's against the dictionary," Mirle Shivashankar said. "Some kids get out of the spelling bee and sit down and cheer for others."

Yet Vanya does have some clear advantages over the other 272 spellers, including three others from the Kansas City area. For starters, she's been there before and has studied alongside the reigning champion. Vanya watched and learned as her father and sister studied together for years. Now Kavya helps tutor her little sister.

Parents Mirle and Sandy Shivashankar said if there is a family dynasty then it wasn't instigated by them. Years ago they agreed to help Kavya when she declared her dream of bringing home the Scripps trophy. The girls quickly became captivated with "bee week."

"It's not just about spelling. It is a lot of fun," their father explained. "You have 300 families with the same interests."

Years ago Kavya memorized words, but the family soon realized there was little emotional let alone educational value in that process. They changed their approach and instead taught their children to learn root words. Once they knew the spelling and meaning, it became fun for them unravel unfamiliar words.

“It’s not enjoyable if it’s memorizing,” her father said.

In addition, the girls understand the words and can use the knowledge for various subjects in school. Vanya wants to be a cardiac surgeon and Kavya wants to be a neurosurgeon.

“The words are going to be used in her life,” Mirle Shivashankar said. “There’s a lot more take away. It’s not just spelling.”

Refining that technique means that Vanya is perhaps more prepared than Kavya was at her first Scripps bee.

“Kavya had a much bigger vocabulary at 10, but Vanya has the fundamentals,” Mirle Shivashankar said. “So she can handle new words much better.”

Yet Vanya’s parents are careful not to force the process on their girls. School work takes priority. Vanya’s

parents have kept her study sessions short.

“She can’t focus for that long. She’s too young... it all has to be balanced,” her father said.

“We want them to be good citizens,” Sandy Shivashankar said.

Vanya is left with plenty of time to play.

“I like acting and singing and dancing,” she said. “I like riding my bike, swimming and playing piano.”

Kavya can no longer compete, but she’s encouraged her sister to enjoy every minute.

“The whole experience is just a great thing. I know I won’t forget it for the rest of my life. I want her to have that same experience,” Kavya said.

For her part, Vanya’s love for her older sister is evident in her support, body language and even her word list. When asked if Vanya has a favorite word, she was quick with an answer.

The word means poetic composition and appears on Scripps’ official word list.

“It’s Kavya.”
CALL FROM THE CHIEF

The Shivashankar family went on a planned run-of-the-mill White House tour

Tuesday morning. But by that afternoon, they had received a call from the White House. President Obama has asked to meet Kavya, the 2009 bee winner, and her family, on Thursday.

ON TV

Round Three of the Scripps National Spelling Bee will be shown live on ESPN3, 12:15 to 4:15 p.m. Thursday. The semifinals will air live on ESPN from 9 a.m. to noon Friday. The finals will be shown live on ABC, 7 to 9 p.m., Friday.

YOUTH STORY

Daily Division 1

FIRST PLACE

Ottawa Herald

Meagan Patton-Paulson

Moving story about a kid with terminal cancer. Nicely written and reported. Great read!

SECOND PLACE

Chanute Tribune

Stu Butcher

Interesting story about a teen with a great sense of adventure. Very good personality/youth profile.

THIRD PLACE

Leavenworth Times

Tim Linn

Good story telling. Good quotes. Nice topic. Well done.

YOUTH STORY

Daily Division 2

FIRST PLACE

Manhattan Mercury

Kimber Wallace

Well-sourced, this story drives directly at an important issue for kids and parents.

SECOND PLACE

Manhattan Mercury

Jerry Wofford

A fresh twist on school year-end coverage.

THIRD PLACE

Manhattan Mercury

Jerry Wofford

A solid report considers gardening for kids from experiential and nutritional angles.

YOUTH STORY

Daily Division 3

FIRST PLACE

Kansas City Star

Laura Bauer

The writer has a wonderful conversational style. She gets to the heart of the story and captures the emotions of her characters. Nicely done.

SECOND PLACE

Kansas City Star

Laura Bauer

The story grabs you right away and won't let go. Laura Bauer is a gifted writer who knows how to craft a story.

THIRD PLACE

Kansas City Star

Sarah Benson

The writer tells a story of people who make a living navigating the world of social media. An interesting story told well.

Here he is, on the one day he really can't be late, stuck in traffic.

Bumper to bumper headed south on Interstate 35. Looks like a parking lot.

No way, Ja'Ron Nichols thinks to himself, is he going to get to the theater in time.

By now, the other contestants are singing, taking their turns on stage to rehearse. Loosening up with a live microphone. Feeling what it'll be like, in the face-heating warmth of the spotlight, with hundreds of people watching them perform -- in just two hours.

Yet for this Wyandotte High School senior, who at age 3 would grab the microphone at church and demand to sing, all he can do is sit helpless in his maroon 2001 Pontiac Grand Am. Just praying the traffic soon lets up as he frantically goes over his lyrics. His friend in the passenger seat listens and critiques.

If I can see it, then I can do it. If I just believe it, there's nothing to it.

Ughh, Ja'Ron thinks to himself. Something's off. Not hitting the right notes at the right time. Sure sounded better at home.

The metropolitan area's first KC SuperStar

competition, a Jewish Community Center knockoff of the "American Idol" sensation, is on the line. So is the \$5,000 prize awarded in the August finals, and boy, could he use that for tuition at the University of Kansas this fall.

Ja'Ron knows he has to nail it if he wants to make the cut tonight and perform in the finals set for late August. He and 21 other semifinalists -- members of the reality show generation, starstruck and hungry to make it big -- will vie for 10 spots in the finals.

Traffic still isn't moving. Better go over the lyrics again.

* * *

A few miles down that highway and across Interstate 435, Stephanie Cain is on stage. Her bright yellow sundress and long blond hair illuminate an otherwise dim theater.

It's just after 5 p.m. on a Thursday.

Here inside White Theatre on the expansive and tidy Jewish Community Center campus, Stephanie is ready to shake it. Walk onto the stage as if she owns it.

The music to "Walking on Sunshine" booms from the speakers. Instantly, she becomes Dance Girl,

her fingers snapping and shoulders moving up and down to the beat.

Dang, she misses her cue to start singing. Good thing this is rehearsal.

"Uhhh," she says and does a little dance of frustration.

Stephanie is a theater girl from Blue Valley North, having performed in musicals throughout high school. Admittedly, she doesn't sing pop -- show tunes are more her style.

Yet at her March audition, SuperStar judges loved her. Out of 15 points possible in each category, she received 14.5 for vocals and 14.25 for stage presence.

"Nice musical theatre voice," one judge wrote.

"Small Taylor Swift."

"Musical Theater," offered another.

And that's what worries Stephanie. She wants to come across as more pop music. Sing into the eyes of audience members, not above their heads, like theater students often are taught.

Many of the singers here tonight aim for the same thing. Like Stephanie, they learned to sing playing a character on stage.

If they were on

“American Idol,” often-grumpy judge Simon Cowell might say they’re more suited for a cruise ship lounge, not a contemporary music competition.

Others, such as Olathe Northwest’s Brianna Swift, have been trained in classical music. Already accomplished on cello and piano, Brianna writes many of her own songs, constantly jotting down ideas whether she’s in class, working at Scooter’s coffeehouse or trying to do homework.

Chloe McFadden, the last to audition in March and already a standout in the competition, has singing in her blood. Dad is a member of the McFadden Brothers, a national tap dancing/singing group, and her sister Gina made it to the Top 40 on “American Idol” a few years back.

Still more of these KC SuperStar competitors sing just because that’s all they’ve loved to do since they were toddlers.

“Sometimes, I sing everything I say,” says a confident Shelby Britton, a freshman from Gardner-Edgerton High School.

By the end of this night, half of these kids will start searching for a song to sing in the finals, hoping to

make their marks. Winning SuperStar means more exposure, good things to come.

The others will wonder where they went wrong, what they did the judges didn’t like. But, at least, they’ll feel good that they made it this far.

For some, the ones who didn’t make it to the semifinals, the road wasn’t as smooth.

* * *

Weeks before this night, at two auditions, judges sat through about 150 tryouts. The good ones made it here.

The others, the ones who didn’t have the stage presence or couldn’t sing all that well or not at all, they didn’t get a call back.

Like the young lady who looked down at the floor, her hands intertwined as her voice let out a high wispy sound.

She rarely looked up, made no real eye contact with the four judges sitting at a long table in front of her. She fidgeted. She rocked from side to side for a few seconds.

At one point, she pushed up the sleeves of her shirt in a nervous gesture. Still singing.

That was on the third Sunday of March, the first audition for KC SuperStar.

The judges -- three singing/theater professionals and the director of the Jewish Community Center -- sat through nearly six dozen singers that day. Tapping their feet to the good songs and singers, keeping straight faces for the not-so-good.

This definitely wasn’t for the weak, this four-hour session of nonstop singing tryouts. The judges listened, jotted down notes. Rated each singer on vocals and stage presence.

They said little to the singers, waiting for them to make their exits before sharing a few words with one another.

“Once she lost her pitch, she lost everything,” one judge says about the teen who flubbed the words to the Beatles’ “Let it Be.” “She lost everything.”

She didn’t make it to tonight’s stage.

Neither did a contestant who kept his eyes shut during the song. Or the teen who showed up to the second audition in dress pants, suit coat and tie, looking like the president of the Young Republicans.

Some contestants were fun. Like Brianna Swift, the girl who’s going to play the piano and sing an original song at tonight’s semifinals.

She belted out a spirited “Can’t Hurry Love” during her auditions, pumping energy into a room that needed some.

Other contestants showed their nerves, such as the girl who attempted a recent Sara Bareilles song as her left leg twitched uncontrollably. For nearly the entire song.

Another, clad all in black, sang Nirvana’s “Lithium.” One judge’s written comment said it all: “I need Lithium now.”

“Just like ‘American Idol,’ we’ve seen a mix,” says judge Jacob Schreiber, executive director of the Jewish Community Center, who first launched this idea when he was working in Georgia six years ago.

To which judge Jay Coombes adds: “At least we haven’t had any William Hungs yet.”

(Remember Hung? He’s that guy from several seasons ago who sang so badly he became an Internet sensation.)

And sure enough, they found the talent for tonight. ***

More than half the contestants have had their practice turn on stage when Ja’Ron finally shows up. He’s pretty calm by now.

Being late is

nothing new for him, a big guy with a soft yet deep singing voice. Seems as if he’s always in traffic. Or lost in it.

So much so, it has become a little inside joke.

“In traffic,” said Tammy Ruder, an organizer of this competition, as she smiles and tells someone why Ja’Ron hasn’t arrived yet.

His first audition, he was the second to the last to perform because he got lost after going to another location and then struggled to maneuver his way through Johnson County to the right one.

For one of the workshops, where judges worked individually with the semifinalists, he hit traffic again. Nearly 30 minutes tardy.

Now, tonight, he strolls in an hour late, appearing oh-so-calm, like the guy at a dinner party who meant all along to show up just as the food’s put on the table.

Some of the singers don’t know what to expect from him. They’ve heard him sing only a little or not at all.

And truth be told, Ja’Ron -- with his quiet demeanor and face that rarely

flashes an emotion -- doesn't carry himself like a singer who's all that. He's humble, says Andrea Watts, his choir teacher at Wyandotte High. No ego.

"Once he starts going, I'm telling you, he can change the light in the room," Watts says. "He lights it up."

It's 40 minutes before showtime when Ja'Ron gets his chance to rehearse. He takes the stool, wraps his hands around the microphone and waits, his head tilted down toward the wood floor stage.

Other singers chat quietly, not paying much attention. Until he starts singing.

I used to think that I could not go on. And life was nothing but an awful song....

I believe I can fly.

Everyone's silent, just listening.

"That's that one kid," someone whispers.

"Oh, he's going to win," whispers another.

* * *

Thirty-five minutes to showtime, and the seats inside White Theatre begin to fill with parents and grandparents, friends and other family members and some members of the public.

Austin Stang's cheering section gets here

early, toting four fluorescent signs flashing his name. He's the senior from Blue Valley High School, the one with preppy good looks and a near flawless voice for ballads.

Tonight, he's singing Michael Bubl .

A couple of rows in front of Austin's family is Mark Sommerer, whose daughter, Sara, is set to sing Patsy Cline. He hasn't stopped smiling since he walked in.

And then there's Natalie Bright's grandma and grandpa. Her parents couldn't come, so they're here to represent the family, just a few rows back from the stage.

Their granddaughter has been singing for years. She has even tried out for "American Idol," making one cut but not getting to Hollywood.

"She didn't get this from our side," grandma Chris Peterson says, laughing.

Back in the green room, the semifinalists scarf down food and try to calm their jitters.

Eric Morris paces the floor. Competitors are filling plates with cold-cut sandwiches and chips.

Not hungry, he goes for just a handful of pickles. Admittedly, he's nervous.

"I'm usually more of a theater guy," he says, a

fedora hat still holding down his curly hair. "I'm usually up there acting like someone else. Now it's just me. I feel more vulnerable."

More pacing. Eric, who has a strong appreciation for the Rat Pack and moves on stages like a Dean, Frank or Tony would, will head to Webster University in St. Louis this fall to study musical theater.

As he paces, Monica Sigler eats from a packed lunch she brought from home, crackers and cheese. A ninth-grader from California Trail Junior High in Olathe, she's one of the youngest here. It's her time to shine, to break out from the years of singing at home, a love that started back when she was 3, singing the song "Chim Chim Chir-ee" for the family video camera.

She has never really been on a stage before, alone and singing.

Within minutes, she's alone in her corner of the room, her hands in front of her and arms hanging between her knees. She lowers her head, her mop of curly hair hanging down as she goes over the words in her head, mouthing them to herself.

Just a few minutes to go.

* * *

Here's the thing about

singers, performers. Nerves often come before the show, before they step onto the stage.

Then, it's like they're at home.

As Austin put it: "When you get out there, you forget about everything because we're singers, and that's what we do."

So goes tonight.

Stephanie struts the stage first, snaps her fingers and brings on the attitude. Stephen Sullivant works the piano keys as he sings, and his mom soaks in every word from the fourth row. She whistles when he's done.

These kids are pretty good, people whisper in the crowd.

Ja'Ron? He's No. 5 in the program, but the fourth to sing because one contestant had to be taped earlier.

He nails it.

Eric brings the Rat Pack to life, dancing with the microphone, fiddling gracefully with his hat -- though he does leave out a little flip of the hat he practiced in rehearsal.

On this night, it helps that Steve and Sam Passer -- a father-and-son hosting duo -- are here to lighten things up.

"We'll talk to you a few seconds, to help you relax, ask you something

easy," Steve told the young people in rehearsal. "There'll be an algebra question, too."

Just kidding.

But there are impersonations, courtesy of Sam, a high-schooler himself. Barney Rubble makes an appearance, as does Rodney Dangerfield. Maybe Sam should find a stand-up comedian contest to compete in.

Time for the judges to take over.

"Now the waiting begins," Austin bellows as the singers leave the room.

* * *

Mark Sommerer comes up to daughter Sara, fresh from singing "Crazy," that smile still there. Only a little bigger.

"You nailed it," her dad says. "It was great."

Then he rattles through the others.

"The girl in the red dress at the piano? Lovely," he tells his daughter. "And I loved the guy with the hat."

Another girl, close to the end, not as good.

This time in the hallway, with the judges in a side room somewhere deciding, feels a little like court. Like when at the end of testimony, a jury goes to the

deliberation room to make a decision.

Only this is a lot happier.

“You were awesome,” someone yells to Chloe. “You did so good. You did the best.”

“I’m glad I’m not a judge,” another says.

Emily Monrad is nervous. Doesn’t know how this thing is going to go. She feels good about the performance.

Eric, he’s still pretty calm. And people sure are loving his hat. Plus the way he brought the old-style music to life on stage.

Time to go in. The verdict is back.

* * *

The teens break apart, separating in rows between curtains back stage. The stage spotlight waiting for them.

They’ve been chattering nonstop since they performed, talking about nerves and missed notes and funny things the father-and-son hosts said. Now they’re silent.

No eye contact with the others. Eyes straight ahead. Waiting. More waiting.

Just say the first name already.

“Chloe McFadden.”

“Chloe, that’s you,” yells a voice.

Dumbfounded, she fumbles with the curtain and makes her way to the stage.

What the contestants don’t know is that the winners are being announced in reverse order. Those who sang last announced first.

“Sara Sommerer.”

Looks like Patsy Cline served her well.

The singers strain their necks every few seconds just to hear the faint call of the next name.

“Jillian Jamison.”

Ja’Ron takes a deep breath before every name, hoping to hear his. Others keep their hands clasped and heads down, almost like they’re praying.

No doubt they’re doing the math in their heads.

Stephen Baldwin. Eric Morris. He jogs on stage, the hat still on his head.

Anthony Fortino.

Left in the curtains are some of the night’s standouts. A few look nervous.

Austin Stang stands closest to the stage. Ja’Ron somewhere in the middle.

Brianna waits in back.

Through auditions, judges have thought these three were among the top.

“Ja’Ron Nichols.”

He can finally exhale.

But Austin and Brianna can’t.

She has already given herself the mental pep talk.

His family and friends wait nervously.

And now the name.

“Brianna Swift.”

* * *

Don’t fall. Just don’t trip.

Brianna tells herself this as she walks from the curtain darkness to the light of the stage.

Where are my feet? That’s it, one in front of the other.

On another big night for Brianna, at a curtain call on her high school stage last fall, she ended the evening, well, on a low note. She’d just played Rosie in “Bye Bye Birdie,” and the cast was getting thunderous applause. Then, as a group, they backed up for the curtain to come down.

Brianna forgot about that bench behind her. And there she went, over backward. Family and friends didn’t know whether to laugh or be concerned.

So, tonight, she wants to stay on her feet.

And she does.

Nine singers fill the stage as finalists for the first KC SuperStar. Two others had to leave early.

Judges ended up picking 11 finalists because

they couldn’t pick between two. Which two, they don’t say.

As they head to the green room to gather their belongings, those who made it try to keep the celebrating down.

A few teens gather around Austin. No doubt one of the most shocking names not called.

“Hey, I’m on to the next thing,” he says, brushing off the disappointment. “Now I can concentrate on one thing instead of two.”

As finalists keep reliving the night with their families, Ja’Ron hops in his Grand Am with his friend and drives off.

Playing a joke on his mom, Ja’Ron just called to tell her he didn’t make it.

Now he’s headed to her work, where he’ll show her a printed list of finalists. His name on there.

To reach Laura Bauer, call 816-234-4944 or send an e-mail to lbauer@kccstar.com. THE COMPETITION

The goal of KC SuperStar is simple. Find the best high school singing talent the metro has to offer.

And along the way, if all goes well, as it has in Georgia, Indiana and Pennsylvania, the local Jewish Community Center will

have accomplished its goal. Pulling together teens from all backgrounds and spiritual beliefs and showing everyone that the JCC is all-inclusive.

“This is a way for us to get a presence in the community,” says Tammy Ruder, director of cultural arts for JCC. “To show that we’re here for all races, all religions. ... Some people still think you have to be Jewish to come to our campus, use our facility.”

The center knows this kind of outreach works. Or at least it did in Georgia when Jacob Schreiber, JCC’s executive director, launched his first “American Idol”-like competition, Campus Superstar.

His group raised thousands of dollars for the Hillel campus Jewish ministry, and the idea was copied in other Hillels in Indianapolis and Pittsburgh.

The 11 KC SuperStar finalists will perform Aug. 29 at Yardley Hall at Johnson County Community College. Actor George Wendt (“Cheers”) is scheduled to host the event. More at www.jcckc.org; click “Youth Programs.”

EDUCATION STORY

Nondaily Division 1

FIRST PLACE

Bonner Springs Chieftain

Melissa Treolo

Compelling story of a teacher who is an example for not only his students, but everyone he encounters. Why wasn't this a page 1 story? Great piece.

SECOND PLACE

Bonner Springs Chieftain

Nicole Kelley

Much more than a wood shop class is going on here. Well reported story.

THIRD PLACE

Derby Informer

Jeremy Shapiro

Few things impact a high school in the way the choice of scheduling does. Good piece with pro's and con's of both styles.

EDUCATION STORY

Nondaily Division 2

FIRST PLACE

Marion County Record

Ben Kleine

Good human interest story

SECOND PLACE

Atchison Globe

Katy (Blair) Moore

Good enterprise and sourcing. Interesting topic.

THIRD PLACE

Belleville Telescope

Veronica Barrington

Good explanation of a complicated issue.

"This is the main thing that is stopping me from having the life that I want," Danielle Smith said.

Smith dropped out of Herington High School when she was 17 years old. A month later, she learned she was pregnant with her daughter Suni.

"I hated school. I didn't go some days because I didn't feel like going," Smith said. "All my teachers told me that I was smart. I wanted to be a teen; I wanted to go out and have fun."

As her daughter is about to turn 3 and she is about to get married in October, Smith decided three years after dropping out that she would go back to school. She enrolled at Marion High School Thursday. She decided to go to Marion, instead of the Learning Center in Hillsboro, because she lives a block from the high school.

"Usually kids this age don't come back; they go to the learning center," MHS guidance counselor Phoebe Janzen said. "It's not very often that kids will come back to classroom schedule."

Smith said that she has five and half credits to make up.

"I might have to go all year," she said.

Smith needs a high school diploma to become a registered nurse. She has already taken and passed a test to become a certified nursing assistant. When she graduates from high school, she plans to take online classes through Phoenix University.

Smith is wary of what the high school experience is going to be like.

"It's going to be weird," she said. "I'll be the oldest person there."

But, Smith already has a stable relationship and a family.

"He thinks of (Suni) as his own daughter," Smith said of her fiancé.

She is willing to put up with the awkwardness of her return to high school to move on to the next chapter of her life.

EDUCATION STORY

Nondaily Division 3

FIRST PLACE

First Infantry Division Post

Shandi Dix

Interesting story on how the military steps in to address a community issue. Good writing.

SECOND PLACE

Johnson County Sun

Kristin Babcock

A good feature on the lighter side of improving student test scores.

THIRD PLACE

Wichita Business Journal

Josh Heck

Sets the tone well for impact of budget cuts. Some specific local examples would have elevated this to first or second place depending on the examples.

EDUCATION STORY

Daily Division 1

FIRST PLACE

Ottawa Herald

Courtney Servaes

The writing style sets this apart. So does the enterprise required to report it.

SECOND PLACE

Leader & Times

Robert Pierce

Hard-hitting story on a serious issue.

THIRD PLACE

Winfield Daily Courier

Allen Twitchell

This story looks not only at the effect this school closing will have on the students, but also the community.

EDUCATION STORY

Daily Division 2

FIRST PLACE

Newton Kansan

Cristina Janney

Important investigation and analytical pierce about school bus stop arm violations. Well-sourced and reported.

SECOND PLACE

Hays Daily News

Gayle Weber

Interesting look at how schools are adapting to funding shortfalls. Great story idea and nicely done.

THIRD PLACE

Manhattan Mercury

Jerry Wofford

Good explanatory journalism on what Singapore-style math is all about. Great coverage for parents and students.

EDUCATION STORY

Daily Division 3

FIRST PLACE

Hutchinson News

Ken Stephens

An important look at financial funding equity in schools. Good analysis. Story is told in a way that all readers can understand it.

SECOND PLACE

Wichita Eagle

Dion Lefler

Great trend story exploring why incidents in school are increasing and what Wichita schools plan to do about it. An important topic handled very well.

THIRD PLACE

Kansas City Star

Lee Hill Kavanaugh

Very well-written article about a principal making a difference in the lives of her students. Well done.

COLUMN WRITING

Nondaily Division 1

FIRST PLACE

Osawatomie Journal

Jim Hornbeck

Hornbeck's hallmark is self-deprecating humor, and he pulls it off with understated flair.

SECOND PLACE

Derby Informer

Jeff Cott

Cott's columns are timely and topical and he hits a rare grasp of local foibles.

THIRD PLACE

Wyandotte Daily News

Mary Rupert

Rupert's grasp of local issues and institutional knowledge lend valuable insight to readers.

COLUMN WRITING

Nondaily Division 2

FIRST PLACE

Atchison Globe

Joe Warren

This writer placed 1st because his columns urged the reader to action. Good writing, good commentary, appropriate topics relevant to readers' lives.

SECOND PLACE

Marion County Record

Susan Berg

I like the way this columnist ties in actual events to her commentary: the little dog, the flat tire, the retiree's fall. More concise than many entries in this category, but long enough to make her point.

THIRD PLACE

Washington County News

Tom Parker

An insightful thinker. The reader waits for the confrontation in "The right way of living" however - or a non-confrontational anonymous letter sent later, even? Good writing!

COLUMN WRITING

Nondaily Division 3

FIRST PLACE

Johnson County Sun

Bob Sigman

These are hard-hitting columns that pull no punches. It's very compelling material handled well.

SECOND PLACE

Miami County Republic

Terrie Cole

The obituary column was best, but even the others had enough details and conveyed enough emotions to pull me into her narratives.

THIRD PLACE

Go 24/7

Ashley Strehle

These columns are what they purport to be small talk and yet Ashley's quirky perspective on everyday life is quite entertaining.

COLUMN WRITING

Daily Division 1

FIRST PLACE

Ottawa Herald

Tommy Felts

A very high quality of writing brings Felt's entries to the top. It would have been nice to see some local topic among the entries though. (The Ottawa Herald is remarkably blessed with columnists, with Felts, Linda Browns and Meagan Patton.)

SECOND PLACE

Ottawa Herald

Linda Brown

Again, very good writing. She brings us into her topics. The local topic on flash mobs was the weakest part of the entry. We had to wait awhile before she got to her point. Still a very good entry.

THIRD PLACE

Colby Free Press

Marian Ballard

Her impassioned defense of the free speech ("Free Speech Sometimes Uncomfortable") should be discussed in civics classes. Good entries.

COLUMN WRITING

Daily Division 2

FIRST PLACE

Manhattan Mercury

Javier Gonzalez

Conversational, breezy writing style draws you into topics of broad nature that many can relate to; writer also allows us into his personal space quite effectively.

SECOND PLACE

Emporia Gazette

Antonia Felix

Well written columns with right amount of context and logical arguments or conclusions.

THIRD PLACE

Emporia Gazette

Ashley Knecht Walker

Well written columns on family topics and issues sure to pull in readers.

COLUMN WRITING

Daily Division 3

FIRST PLACE

Kansas City Star

Matthew Schofield

These columns are fascinating. The writer's use of examples from real-life not his own - makes his work stand out.

SECOND PLACE

Topeka Capital-Journal

Mike Hall

An interesting, fresh perspective on familiar issues.

THIRD PLACE

Kansas City Star

Mike Hendricks

An entertaining "Everyman" column.

SPORTS STORY

Nondaily Division 1

FIRST PLACE

Basehor Sentinel

Chris Wristen

A profile and coverage of a regional meet in one story offers readers lots of information and perspective. Good writing.

SECOND PLACE

Basehor Sentinel

Chris Wristen

Nice background woven into game coverage. Great quotes!

THIRD PLACE

The Mirror

Benton Smith

Great writing and nice description of a personal victory.

SPORTS STORY

Nondaily Division 2

FIRST PLACE

Osawatomie Graphic

David Wolman

Well written feature on a basketball camp that teaches more than basketball. Good observations by the reporter.

SECOND PLACE

Louisburg Herald

Andy Brown

Good description and detail about the resignation of two long time coaches. Handled with sensitivity.

THIRD PLACE

Osawatomie Graphic

David Wolman

Nice recap of a state title.

SPORTS STORY

Nondaily Division 3

FIRST PLACE

Johnson County Sun

Mark Dewar

A wonderful retelling of a team finding its destiny. Great quotes and the “Hoosiers” reference is a nice touch.

SECOND PLACE

Miami County Republic

Gene Morris

Great game coverage and descriptive writing.

THIRD PLACE

Johnson County Sun

Mark Dewar

Touching profile of a family and team dealing with the aftermath of a team’s suicide. Good storytelling.

SPORTS STORY

Daily Division 1

FIRST PLACE

Augusta Daily Gazette

Jeremy Costello

A good lead sets an emotional tone for this wrestling roundup.

SECOND PLACE

Iola Register

Jocelyn Sheets

A good lead and close ties together this nice wrap-up of a tennis match.

THIRD PLACE

Junction City Daily Union

Eric Brown

A solid game story of a team which has fallen twice in close games.



FIRST PLACE

Hays Daily News

Diane O'Brien

The story was an impressively structured narrative of how a basketball player returned to play despite a serious knee injury. It was compelling all the way through.

SECOND PLACE

Manhattan Mercury

Joshua Kinder

The story kept flowing thanks to interesting quotes and a nice mix between quotes and description of key periods of the game.

THIRD PLACE

Garden City Telegram

Brett Marshall

Track is a different sport to cover with many different athletes and story lines. This writer did well to balance them all and also give some historical perspective to the winners' accomplishments.

CHAMPIONS



TMP-Marian seniors Sophia Schippers, left, Jessa Stramel, center, and Kaylee Hoffman hoist the Monarchs' Class 3A state championship trophy following their win against Marion on Saturday at the Hutchinson Sports Arena.

Sports Ticker



Fourth place

The Quarter boys finish fourth in Class 1A. Page B3



Home action

The Tigers basketball team hosts NW Missouri at Long Pine. Page B4

XII From K.C.

Kansas and Kansas State own the Big 12 Tournament. Page B5



Bulldogs third?

Osborne competes Saturday for third place in 2A. Page B2



Center of attention

Carey Weisman is heading back to Kansas City. Page B2

TMP outlasts Marion for first state crown

By DIANE GASPER O'BRIEN
osobrien@manhattanmercury.com
HUTCHINSON — They didn't have to work overtime this one, either, but they sure had to work hard.
The Thomas-Monarch Prep-Marian girls won their first state basketball championship Saturday by holding off a determined Marion team, 26-14, in the Class 3A title game at the Sports Arena.
That gave the three seniors on the team — Kaylee Hoffman, Sophia Schippers and Jessa Stramel — the third state title in their three-year athletic careers.
"That was also helped TMP-Marian win state softball titles their freshman and sophomore years.
"What a fantastic what to our seniors," said TMP-Marian coach Alan Billinger, who also coaches the school's softball team.



TMP-Marian sophomore Rachel Jacobs goes up for a shot during Saturday's game.

Both times, Marion senior Julia Zover hit back to keep the Oaks close.
Her Zover, who scored 19 points in the first half, picked up her third foul just two minutes before intermission and scored just two points in the second half.

Tiger men advance to semifinals in Texas

By CONOR NICHOLL
cnicholl@citynews.net
WICHITA FALLS, Texas — Through the last six weeks of the regular season, Fort Hays State University men's basketball coach Mark Johnson saw his team finish 2-5. The struggling Tigers sometimes didn't play, in what Johnson labeled "attack mode." Johnson talked with his team and several players individually, including senior guards Willie Hessel and Devin Greer, asking them to play hard, don't hesitate and be aggressive.
On Saturday, the attacking and

physical Tigers, ranked 14th in NCAA Division II, defeated University of Central Oklahoma, 80-64, in the first round of the NCAA tournament on the campus of Midwestern State (Texas University).
Fort Hays, the regional's No. 3 seed, improved to 21-6, while Central Oklahoma, ranked sixth in the region, finished the season at 22-7.
"This weekend, this regional, we were just going to attack," Johnson said. "If it is good enough, it is good enough. If it's not, it's not. But we are going to go down attacking on the offensive end and trying to make things happen."
The victory produced the second NCAA tournament victory in the nine-year Johnson era, first since a victory over St. Cloud State in 2005-06. The Tigers will face University of Central Missouri (26-3), the Mid-America Intercollegiate Athletics Association regular-season champions and the regional's

second-ranked team, today at 4:30 p.m. FHSU split with UCM during the regular season, including a 76-62 home loss on Feb. 13 that Greer called "outstanding."
"We got off to such a great start to our season and probably to be quite honest, we were not as good as our 13-1 record was, but anytime you get off to a great start, you build and anticipate and have expectations," Johnson said. "The last thing you want to do is come here and lose and go home."
See TIGERS, B6

SPORTS STORY

Daily Division 3

FIRST PLACE

Kansas City Star

J. Brady McCollough

This story captures the depth of Kansas' heartbreaking loss while putting it in perspective. Great writing!

SECOND PLACE

Topeka Capital-Journal

Austin Meek

Nice play by play with good perspective on "celebration" penalties and what they can cost a team. The writer captured the emotion behind the call.

THIRD PLACE

Hutchinson News

Brad Hallier

A great example of finding the story behind the story. Very compelling writing!

OKLAHOMA CITY They call him brother, warrior, competitor, ultimate teammate, so as Sherron Collins worked his way around the locker room on Saturday night giving out hugs and telling his guys to keep their heads up, the Kansas Jayhawks cried deep, gulping cries, trying to breathe normally as the pulse of their season slipped farther and farther away.

Collins broke his embrace with KU senior Mario Little, who redshirted this season, and walked back to his locker, head down. Nobody, especially the man himself, could have foreseen Collins' career coming to an end as shockingly and abruptly as it did in a 69-67 second-round NCAA Tournament loss to upstart Northern Iowa at the Ford Center.

"Next to my son, it's probably the worst thing to happen to me in my life," Collins said between bursts of tears.

Collins was referring to the premature death of his firstborn child, Sherron Jr., during June of his freshman year at KU. After a night that saw him lose control emotionally on the floor several times and finish with 10 unspectacular points,

Collins was trying to find some perspective, a way of placing his hurt in his own historical context.

Because worse things have happened to Collins. He grew up in a Chicago housing project without his father, who was in jail for selling drugs. He lost Sherron Jr. and had a very public and humiliating civil lawsuit against him after his sophomore season at KU that was eventually dropped. He got through all of these things and set himself up to have one of the great careers in Kansas history.

So if this is the worst thing to happen to Collins in his mind -- the pain that comes from a five-turnover night and a zero-for-six performance from three-point range -- then Collins has done OK for himself in Lawrence.

"This is a place I call home," Collins said. "I gotta go back to Chicago. It's fine. I love being in Lawrence. I wanted to go out the right way."

The top-ranked and top-seeded Jayhawks, who will have to live with a 33-3 final record and the feeling that their immense potential was never reached, wanted to send Collins out on top. In fact, they never considered that they would not give Collins

the fairy-tale ending he had earned until it was over, until Northern Iowa sharpshooter Ali Farokhmanesh's three-pointer gave the ninth-seeded Panthers a 66-62 lead with 34 seconds left.

That's when the crimson-and-blue hearts watching all over the country began to break like this was Arizona in 1997 or Rhode Island in 1998. This one is way up there on the list, way higher than the first-round outs to Bucknell in 2005 and Bradley in 2006. These Jayhawks were anointed, more entitled to greatness from the start than the 2008 team that eventually cut down the nets.

Self told his assistants in the locker room that this was probably his most painful defeat.

"To put ourselves in the situation we were in, they don't come around every year," Self said. "You got to make the most of those opportunities when you're granted them. That's probably what stings the most."

Self said he didn't know if he would ever watch the tape. If he does, he will see how Northern Iowa took KU out of its rhythm offensively from the

beginning, how the Panthers got to most of the loose balls and made the shots that counted. He'd see the Jayhawks fall behind 47-35 with 13:12 left and then switch to a full-court press.

He'd see his team take control, playing with purpose because they were playing for Collins as much as themselves, and he'd see the lead cut to 63-62 with 42.8 seconds left on a Collins short jumper. Then he'd see the press backfire in the most crucial moment, allowing Farokhmanesh an open look in transition, and he'd have to credit the kid for letting it fly.

"I really didn't think he was going to shoot it," KU guard Tyrel Reed said.

The Panthers were like that all night. They felt it was their game just like the Jayhawks. Northern Iowa was playing for its seniors, too, six of them. For Kansas, it was only Collins, the 130-game winner, the No. 5 all-time KU scorer. He will always be loved by Jayhawk nation, but the fact remains, in 2009 and 2010, the Collins-led teams did not sniff a national championship.

That reality is what had Collins' teammates all stirred up.

"For that guy to go out like that made me so

emotional," KU forward Marcus Morris said.

Last season in KU's Sweet 16 loss, Collins missed a key free throw and fouled Michigan State's Kalin Lucas on a crucial three-point play down the stretch. Saturday, he spent much of the game griping at the referees and couldn't pull his team out of an early hole. But his teammates will be forever loyal to their leader.

"There's nobody I would go to war with but Sherron," Reed said. "He's the ultimate teammate, ultimate competitor."

SPORTS FEATURE STORY

Nondaily Division 1

FIRST PLACE

The Mirror

Benton Smith

This was a good sports feature with a news angle. It's also well-sourced and written.

SECOND PLACE

Basehor Sentinel

Nick Bratkovic

A nice feature about a father and son state title duo.

THIRD PLACE

Basehor Sentinel

Matt Tait

Nice lead and a solid story...would have liked to have seen more sources.

SPORTS FEATURE STORY

Nondaily Division 2

FIRST PLACE

Louisburg Herald

Andy Brown

Nice inside look at how football coaches prepare for a season and a game. Well written and nice sourcing.

SECOND PLACE

Kingman Leader - Courier

Nancy D. Borst

Well written profile of a former Kansas Jayhawk helping his alma mater. Good quotes.

THIRD PLACE

Ellsworth County Independent/Reporter

Mark McCoy

Great feature on drag racing and an 11 year old with a competitive spirit. Good explanation throughout the story.

SPORTS FEATURE STORY

Nondaily Division 3

FIRST PLACE

Olathe News

Tod Palmer

This tells the story of a disabled triathlete in a dignified way befitting of the athlete himself.

SECOND PLACE

Johnson County Sun

Mark Dewar

This profile of a high school tennis prodigy is descriptively written and mixes in quotes from a variety of sources.

THIRD PLACE

Shawnee Dispatch

Chris Wristen

This is a nice feature story on the relationship between teammates on a high school baseball team.

SPORTS FEATURE STORY

Daily Division 1

FIRST PLACE

Chanute Tribune

Jason Peake

Readers have a new favorite NFL player, and one who treats his grandma as Freeman does is all right.

SECOND PLACE

Leavenworth Times

Sara Mettlen

Subject's ministry work needed to be higher in the story.

THIRD PLACE

Iola Register

Jocelyn Sheets

Subject - trapshooting - is untraditional, but made an interesting lead.

SPORTS FEATURE STORY

Daily Division 2

FIRST PLACE

Manhattan Mercury

Cole Manbeck

Behind-the-scene look at a questionable “contract” in \$3.2 million of deferred compensation. Lots of sourcing. Good reporting.

SECOND PLACE

Hays Daily News

Conor Nicholl

Many writers likely wouldn’t think to write this story. Daily News readers likely happy Conor Nicholl did.

THIRD PLACE

Emporia Gazette

Jeremy Shapiro

Nice telling. Chapter headlines are used in logical places.

SPORTS FEATURE STORY

Daily Division 3

FIRST PLACE

Kansas City Star

Kent Babb

An extremely important story told through the words of those who have suffered brain damage or are risking it now. A completely honest, well-written package that would be important reading for everyone not just sports fans.

SECOND PLACE

Kansas City Star

Bill Reiter

Heartbreaking portrayal of an athlete in crisis. Story-telling at its best.

THIRD PLACE

Kansas City Star

Terez Paylor

A story of persuasiveness and courage. Extremely well written.

MORGANTOWN, W.Va. The essence of a man is light brown and soft, and the segmented pieces float in translucent containers of formaldehyde.

The “brain bank” at the Brain Injury Research Institute is an undecorated storeroom, about the size of a walk-in closet. It’s locked and rarely seen by outsiders, and there’s a sign in the hall that declares the area “restricted.”

Once inside, a neurosurgeon named Julian Bailes reaches inside a bottom-shelf cabinet in this drab, small room, and removes a glass jar with a green label. The brain inside belonged to Mike Webster, the former offensive lineman for the Pittsburgh Steelers and the Chiefs.

Bailes pulls two more containers from the cabinet. The first brain belonged to former pro wrestler Chris Benoit, who in 2007 committed suicide after killing his wife and son. The next belonged to former Bengals wide receiver Chris Henry, who died in December 2009 after jumping or falling from a moving pickup truck.

The room smells sour when the formaldehyde is exposed, and the light brown pieces bob in the liquid.

All three men

participated in high-impact professional sports. All three suffered severe and permanent brain damage. Webster and Henry played pro football, and the researchers at the institute believe that the game’s repetitive pounding was responsible for the damage.

“Why would people still play football?” says Bennet Omalu, a neuropathologist and co-founder of the institute. “But I must warn you: That is a sociological question.”

These athletes didn’t know much about brain injuries, which hasn’t become a nationwide concern until recently. The NFL distributed a fact sheet this month to all players. But even if past players, including Henry and Webster, had been aware of the risks, it probably wouldn’t have mattered. Sports is one of America’s most addictive drugs, and with money, fame and glory as possibilities, the risks grow cold in the shadow of the rewards.

“For some people, it’s a way out of poverty. For some people, it’s a passion,” says John Murray, a sports psychologist based in Florida. “And they’re willing to take that risk.”

In this room, the brains are specimens:

dull and lifeless. But they once were more than just an archetype. More than an organ, even. The brain is the most vital and personal part of a person, and more than any other, it defines who he is, who he was and who he’ll be. Damage it, and he’s never the same.

But each day, in football games and practices across the country, players keep pounding their heads in pursuit of all the glory that could happen -- and ignore the consequences that many never consider.

“We had a lot of great things in our lives because of football,” says Mike Webster’s youngest son, Garrett, who works now at the Brain Injury Research Institute. “But in a way, that life was robbed from us. Now is when we look back and say: ‘I wish he had retired earlier, or wish he had never been drafted, or wish he had gone off and been a farmer.’”

The hits are like shotgun blasts, helmets smacking into other helmets, pads into other pads. This sound is a reason why this game rules the American sports landscape.

The Chiefs are working on a goal-line drill

during a practice at their Arrowhead training facility. Linemen smack into each other, and beyond the helmet's polycarbonate shell and thick interior padding, and past another layer of protection, the scalp and skull, the brain bounces within a cavity that doesn't provide a snug fit.

Ask players how their minds are holding up after years of this. Chiefs guard Brian Waters, 33, says he has recurring migraines. Safety Jon McGraw, 31, says he can't remember things. He has forgotten hours, even a full day, of his life.

"Sometimes it comes back. Sometimes it doesn't," McGraw says. "It might be a lot more significant than anyone was thinking. Every year, you've got to take that into account and just say: 'What are the costs?'"

Now, ask how they can protect themselves. Most have no idea. Wear a better helmet? Maybe. Quit? Not a chance.

McGraw has read about the risks of brain injuries. Worse, he has had several concussions -- "enough to be concerned about," he says -- but the game isn't easy to give up.

Neither is the lifestyle. McGraw's contract calls for him to make \$845,000 this

season. Waters will make \$2.9 million. Chiefs rookie safety Eric Berry signed a contract for a guaranteed \$34 million over six years, and third-year defensive end Glenn Dorsey lives in a \$1.4 million home in Lee's Summit. Expensive cars crowd the players' parking lot.

The attention isn't bad, either. Fans line the steel barricades after training-camp practices to get a glimpse of their favorite players, then scream for autographs. If McGraw or Waters go away, so do the money and admiration.

For his part, Waters says that after 10 seasons, he is committed. If that means there will be consequences in his future, he says, at least his children will be financially secure.

"Football is the job that I chose," Waters says. "Understanding the repercussions of playing it for a long time is just part of the deal."

McGraw says he tries to stimulate his mind as best he can. He works crossword puzzles and plays the violin and guitar. He also has promised his wife, Gretchen, that he'll never be carried off the field.

"She's concerned," McGraw says, "but at the same time she wants me to do

it as long as I'm enjoying it. I always tell her: 'Whatever happens, I'm going to walk off.'" "

But McGraw can control that no more than any other player. If it does happen, is that a signal to retire? As usual, it's just not that simple.

His voice booms with authority, but the sentences are jagged and uneven, like a skipping CD.

"I used to be able to rattle stuff off, man," he says. "I can't even find words most of the time."

Bill Maas played defensive line for 10 seasons with the Chiefs and in Green Bay. He says there have been plenty of consequences.

"Continual ringing in my ears, 24 hours a day," he says. "It won't go away."

Maybe it's the head injuries. Maybe it's the game.

"A hard battle on a nightly basis to get a good night's sleep," he says. "People have committed suicide over that."

Maas says he remembers the moment his life changed. He was a freshman at Pittsburgh, a happy-go-lucky kid in the early 1980s. During a practice, coaches put him in a one-on-one drill against star offensive lineman Mark May, and May leveled him.

The first time, Maas says, he got back up and, confused as to the drill's purpose, adjusted his helmet and again lined up to face May. A whistle blew, and May again wiped out Maas. That's when something happened in Maas' brain.

"The turning point," he says. "I absolutely f----- lost it. I went ape s--- bonkers. I ripped his helmet off and started beating the f---- -- living tar out of him. The defensive coordinator jumped on my back, and I could hear him screaming: 'Maas, I love you, I love you!'"

"I was out of my mind. I found that's where you've got to go to continually want to do something that aggressive and something that unnatural. It's embedded in you. By the time you come out, it's too late."

Maas says he learned that day to ignore reason, logic and pain. He says that because of this, he played with more abandon during his career than perhaps he should have, and his future is murkier. He's forgetful, and he needs sleeping pills to drift off. He says he lost his innocence that day, and when he looks in the mirror now, a battered and debilitated 48-year-old stares back.

"I look at my son,"

he says of 21-year-old Billy, "and I see him as I once was."

Maas says he suffered damage to the frontal lobe of his brain, and that damage could shorten his life. It almost certainly will shorten the life of his mind. He has to keep a notebook nearby to avoid forgetting things.

But one thing he has no trouble remembering is the glory. It wasn't the money or lifestyle that appealed to Maas, but rather that feeling of importance when the helmet came on. High school players are kings on Fridays when they walk the halls in their football jerseys, and college players are treated like celebrities and flown to 80,000-seat cathedrals. Brett Favre is a living example of how players, for one reason or a dozen, can't walk away.

"So addictive," Maas says.

Maas says his favorite thing was having a result each week, knowing whether you failed or succeeded, and learning how to do better next time. Pride or shame, and that feeling of a next chance -- Maas says most people go their whole lives without experiencing such black-or-white fulfillment.

Those who study the

examples at West Virginia's "brain bank" suggest that there are enough reasons for players to play smarter or to avoid the sport altogether. Sitting in his office, still wearing his scrubs from a morning surgery, Bailes says that the brains his staff has examined suggest that NFL players are 19 times more likely to be diagnosed with Alzheimer's disease or dementia.

That's a sobering fact for football players, regardless of whether they've suffered concussions. Henry, the Bengals receiver who died last year, hadn't been diagnosed with a concussion in more than two decades of playing football.

Still, microscopic images of Henry's brain show dark splotches of scar tissue and evidence of frequent damage that, Bailes says, could have been caused by one horrific hit or hundreds of unremarkable ones. The researchers also found that Henry's brain was rust-colored, compared with a healthy brain's light blue.

Maas says he has considered donating his brain after his death, knowing his own light-brown lump would be a fascinating specimen. He admits it's possible that, in a decade or two, he might

not even remember his son's name.

So what if there was some way to tell himself at age 17 what he was in for? The challenges, the sleepless nights, the uncertainty. And, yes, the glory. Would he put himself through it again?

Maas doesn't hesitate.

"That same guy that was 17 is the same guy now," he says. "I'd go for it. I'd do it again tomorrow. Right now. No question.

"Maybe that's just how I am."

High school kids in oversized shoulder pads file down a hill at Rockhurst, toward the stadium and one of the final practices before the team's 2010 opener. Quarterbacks work on their drops, and linemen practice their footwork.

If past generations say they would've been unable to quit football, it's unlikely that today's players will give it up no matter what they learn. The warnings are increasing, and the examples are rising. But there are just too many draws to the game, and there's nothing in that room in West Virginia yet to change that.

For now, much of the work at Brain Injury Research Institute centers on identifying problems and hasn't yet begun yielding many solutions.

The institute is working with the NFL -- Bailes and Omalu say that, until Henry's death, the league ignored their findings -- which has begun listening and trying to educate players about the risk of head injuries. Omalu says the institute is in pursuit of answers, but when it comes to the brain, the same things that make it fascinating, make it complicated.

"The understanding is changing," Omalu says. "The perception is changing. The attitude is changing."

During that Rockhurst practice, tight end Dan Tapko takes a break near the sideline. He's one of Kansas City's best high school players, 6-foot-5 and 240 pounds, and he has committed to Oklahoma. He says he's heard the chatter about concussions and head injuries, but he doesn't think much about it.

"There's no way you can possibly be one of them," says Tapko, 18, who adds that he's never been diagnosed with a concussion but suspects he has suffered at least one. "If you let the worry take over, that can be a bad thing."

And football, to Tapko and thousands of others his age, represents promise and fulfillment, goals yet to be realized. Why would people still play? Because it means

walking the halls and saying hello to people who know you, even if you don't know them. It means the first August burst of the stadium lights and the musty smell of a post-practice locker room. And it means standing on a sideline during an overcast afternoon and dreaming of running out of an NFL tunnel.

Tapko smiles as he considers a question.

"I wouldn't say I'd give anything," he says. "But I'd put in the sacrifice. It's a childhood dream. The opportunity to be paid to do something you love; 80,000 people in your stadium? It's once in a lifetime.

"It's like anything in life: There's ups and downs. That's what life is. You've got to take the downs with the ups."

Tapko walks toward the field, where his teammates are practicing blocking drills. This is the one with all that contact, where the brain bounces within the skull, where with every collision, the essence of men, even young men, is at risk. Tapko smiles again as he glances toward the group.

"I'd rather not think about it now," he says, lifting his helmet to his chest. "Big game Friday night."

He turns and slides

his helmet into place, then runs back out to a place where there's opportunity and risk -- a place where no good player ever thinks he'll lose.

SPORTS COLUMN WRITING

Nondaily Division 1

FIRST PLACE

Derby Informer

Kyle McCaskey

Funny, detailed, entertaining. The clear winners.

SECOND PLACE

The Mirror

Benton Smith

Good storytelling.

SPORTS COLUMN WRITING

Nondaily Division 2

FIRST PLACE

Atchison Globe

Hank Layton

The conversational writing style is great.

SECOND PLACE

Osawatomie Graphic

David Wolman

Life lessons are brought out from a player and coach. Great idea for a column.

THIRD PLACE

Louisburg Herald

Andy Brown

Way to man up and admit that guy sports get more coverage than girl sports. This is a brave sports columnist.

SPORTS COLUMN WRITING

Nondaily Division 3

FIRST PLACE

Olathe News

Tod Palmer

Analysis, insight, a conversational tone - this is very good work!

SECOND PLACE

Shawnee Dispatch

Chris Wristen

All three columns shed light on local people and local athletic endeavors. That's exactly what a local sports columnist should do.

THIRD PLACE

Miami County Republic

Gene Morris

Column on the Nation Project is very intense, very moving.

Board shows wisdom in vote on 'pay-for-play'

Among our country's favorite leisure-time activities, wise-cracking criticism of government officials or governing bodies, ranks pretty high on the list.

Kansas Citians routinely rip Mayor Mark Funkhouser, conservatives love to bash President Barack Obama with as much vitriol as liberals slammed President George W. Bush during the preceding eight years.

Sports fans are no exception. Grumbling among college football fans prompts Congress to rattle its saber about the Bowl Championship Series (BCS) every year, and the NCAA in general is another fan-favorite whipping boy.

But sometimes, the powers that be get it right and deserve a little praise for doing so.

Few would deny that today's economic times are tough. The Olathe School District administration and School Board are facing tough funding challenges as a result of that economic turbulence, which prompted Topeka repeatedly to slash school funding.

Thankfully, though, the Olathe School Board

didn't overreact to the dollars crisis and instead exercised common sense.

Among proposed fees the board considered at last week's monthly meeting was a participation fee for co-curricular and extra-curricular activities, but ultimately no action regarding the "pay-for-play" fee was taken, which effectively kills the concept for the 2010-11 school year.

It's a win for Olathe's youth.

Studies have consistently shown that students who are engaged in school activities outside the classroom, which includes but isn't limited to athletics, get better grades, exhibit more discipline and have a better self-image on average.

From a student's physical and social well-being to simply keeping at-risk students engaged in the academic process, there is no doubt that co- and extra-curricular activities are a necessary and valuable part of the educational experience.

Creating a fee, even one that is easily waived by a school's principal, creates a participation barrier for some students that the community should never tolerate.

In a county as affluent as Johnson County and a city as relatively well-

to-do as Olathe, it's easy to dismiss what many would find to be nominal fees, but the reality of life west of the state line paints a far different picture.

According to the district's own figures, nearly 62 percent of students participate in activities such as athletics, art club, pep band, drama, yearbook, student council, math club and National Honor Society among the myriad other co-curricular and extra-curricular offerings at the district's high schools and junior highs.

Nearly one in five, again by the Olathe School District's own study, qualify for free or reduced lunch programs.

Even a nominal \$50 fee per student puts a burden on families that doesn't need to be there, which is why board member Harlan Parker was adamant that he will never support such a fee.

"I just believe that it eliminates opportunities for kids. That's my biggest concern. It would limit chances for kids to participate," Parker said. "In the long run, it (a pay-for-play fee) serves as a detriment to our district and to our students."

Parker would know. He was talked into running track as a senior in Butte, Neb., qualified for state and later used the skills he learned to advance his Army career. If there were any fee, it's an opportunity he would have been forced to pass up.

"As we go through life, we find these things that have a profound and lasting impact," Parker said. "It's just one that happened to me and struck a chord with me."

Few of life's experiences endure. Those moments that resonate decades later and become the bedrock of one's character and very existence don't happen every day.

But every day some student somewhere is deeply affected by a teacher in the international language club or a coach who takes the time to listen. We don't know what those moments will be, but limiting the chance for them to occur would be a shame.

"I don't know who paid for (my trip to state) or how I got there, but the good people of Butte were willing to use taxpayer dollars to make it happen and I benefited greatly from that," Parker said. "As a school board member, I didn't want to be in a position to eliminate those opportunities."

Good for him, and good for the rest of the board as well.

The economic issues will ease with time, though there will always be tough choices. But as long as the well-being of our Olathe's youth remains the primary concern of those making decisions, our children's future is in good hands.

State titles are special, but so too is the quest

There were lots of tears last Saturday for the Olathe North football team after the final seconds ticked off the clock and the team met for its final on-field huddle after the Kansas 6A state championship game.

It hurts to come so close to a cherished goal only to fall one win short.

In that moment, emotions can be overwhelming. It feels like that sadness won't ever dissipate.

Of course, it does. Soon enough, hopefully, some perspective comes, and that is what I think it more important than the final score.

In fact, forget the final score. It doesn't and shouldn't

matter for the Olathe North players and coaches.

Title games are special and, because of that, there's a good chance that even 40 years from now the Eagles will still remember in excruciating detail every touchdown Wichita Heights scored at Washburn's Yager Stadium.

Still, that shouldn't take away from the 2010 football season at Olathe North, nor should it be used to define or judge this flock of Eagles.

It's easy to forget that coach Pete Flood's team lost more talent than most teams are ever blessed with after last season's undefeated championship run.

Lucas Vincent could be seen beating the war drum Saturday at Arrowhead Stadium after he and his Missouri teammates walloped Kansas.

Tre Walker already is making an impact for bowl-bound Kansas State.

Last year's Simone Award winner, James Franklin, scored 10 touchdowns for Nebraska-Omaha.

The list goes on, too. Conventional wisdom said that the Eagles had to take a step back this fall.

There were too many

holes to plug along the offensive line, throughout the defense and in the backfield for Olathe North to repeat the success it had a year earlier.

Week three brought with it a shutout loss, only the second since 1981 when Olathe South opened and Olathe High School officially became Olathe North.

Worse yet, that 25-0 loss to Olathe East in September was the first shutout defeat against a city and Sunflower League rival.

It seemed to confirm the speculation that the Eagles weren't good enough to compete for the Kansas 6A state title again.

That loss allowed outsiders to write off Olathe North without a second thought.

But a funny thing happened on the way to the Eagles' demise.

The coaches made a few changes, the players continued to buy in, refused to get discouraged and worked even harder during the next three weeks in preparation for district play.

When the regular season's most important three games arrived, Olathe North was in domination mode.

The Eagles roughed up Lawrence, Free State and rival Olathe Northwest

in succession by a combined 114-16 score on the way to an easy district title.

Olathe North, which finished 11-2 and won a share of the Sunflower League title with those wins, then rattled off a few more playoff wins, adding regional and sectional championships, before meeting Olathe East again in a 6A semifinal.

With a substate title on the line along with revenge and a berth in the championship contest, Olathe North showed how far it had come from that mid-September loss, knocking Olathe East from the state playoffs once again.

It's easy to focus on that final game and let it cast a shadow over the season, but that would be a colossal mistake.

The journey is much more important than the destination.

Sure, it's always more fun to reach that last destination and claim the ultimate prize. Like Heights coach Rick Wheeler said after the win, "They were keeping score, so we tried to win."

Still, that shouldn't detract from what the Eagles collectively accomplished.

It shouldn't take away from

the effort and the enormous strides made by Olathe North's revamped offensive line of Tyler Berry, Joe Scruggs, Sam Todd, Josh Finley and Jake Quickel.

It does nothing to sully Kyle Swartz's reputation as one of the smartest, most dedicated players ever to don an Eagles uniform.

It doesn't dim the two-way brilliance displayed by Adonis Saunders and Victor Simmons, who will remain teammates at the next level with Kansas.

One game shouldn't define the year-long sacrifices and strides made by Olathe North.

A champion's legacy

A parent asked me Saturday as I waited outside the Olathe South girls basketball team's locker room following the Falcons' 54-49 victory in the Kansas 6A state title game if this year's Falcons were the best team in the program's history.

I wasn't full prepared to give an answer in that moment. I know I said something in reply, but I hadn't had time actually to give the question appropriate consideration.

For starters, I haven't

seen every Olathe South team and, in years past when quizzing coach Steve Ingram about it, he'd point to teams from the early 1990s as tough squads to top.

Those teams were chock full of local legends: Rachel Matakas, Carrie Stewart, Nicole Palmer and Jodie Gullett -- players who set a pretty high bar for today's generation of Falcons.

That claim is backed up by Ingram's "career grade" stat, similar to the NBA's efficiency rating. Only five players in program history, including the aforementioned quartet, have career grades higher than 1,000.

Still, now that I've had time to catch my breath after a whirlwind four days and earnestly consider the question, I've decided that the simple answer is this: Absolutely and without a doubt.

The 2009-10 Falcons have something no other team in school history can claim, a Kansas 6A state title and, like it or not, winning is the bottom line in sports. There's a reason the score is kept.

Now, I can't say whether this year's girls, if transported in some sort of hot-tub time machine back to 1991, would beat a team led by Stewart or Matakas.

Nobody can make such a decree with any real authority.

But I can say this: Taking the season as a snapshot, the Olathe South girls proved to be the best team in Kansas (with apologies to unbeaten Andover Central). No other group of Falcons can make the same boast.

Thus, it seems clear that this year's South squad -- seniors Kelsey Balcom, Ebonee Bell, Navia Palu and Brooke Rinehart along with juniors Natalie Knight and Laura McKnight and sophomore Megan Balcom -- stands alone.

I didn't put Ingram on the spot and ask him to name the best team in program history. Because he was still basking in the thrill of the win, there's no doubt how he'd have answered the question.

But he made certain to point out that South's girls earned every accolade and word of praise that already has and will continue to come their way.

"It's awesome for them, and it's so fitting," Ingram said. "We have a little saying called 'deserve to win,' and if a group ever epitomized that, this group epitomized that with what they did after practices, stuff on Saturdays

and Sundays, stuff in the summertime. I think it was more than what some other people would do, and I thought they really deserved to win."

But South's breakthrough wasn't just a breakthrough for the program.

True, no flock of Falcons before them had won state, but it's also true that no girls basketball team in the city's history owned a state title until 5:31 p.m. Saturday when the final buzzer sounded inside William Lindsay White Auditorium.

That's amazing to think about when you consider the quality of players South and its city rivals, Olathe East and Olathe North, in particular, have produced through the years.

The win against Wichita Heights then was not only validation for Ingram, validation for the Falcons, but also for Olathe's girls basketball scene generally.

"It's definitely bittersweet, because we're so excited and worked so hard for this," Rinehart said. "It's such a happy moment, but at the same time it's our last game together and we're best friends, so it's going to be hard to leave each other."

Still, it somehow seems fitting that the final

and indelible mark left by this year's Falcons will be the tears of joy shed together upon finally winning state for the first time in their last game as a group.

SPORTS COLUMN WRITING

Daily Division 1

FIRST PLACE

Leader & Times

Earl Watt

Watt's enthusiasm and passion comes through as he comments on local events.

SECOND PLACE

Arkansas City Traveler

Joey Sprinkle

A good columnist explores an issue (the KHSAA fair play debate) and tells us why we should care. (such as his column on the Negro Leaguers) Nice job.

THIRD PLACE

Iola Register

Jocelyn Sheets

Pretty good insights.

SPORTS COLUMN WRITING

Daily Division 2

FIRST PLACE

Hays Daily News

Randy Gonzales

Gonzales' history with sports in the area shows, as does his conversational style of writing.

SECOND PLACE

Garden City Telegram

Brett Marshall

The three entries are a good mix of creativity and working sports news into 2 column.

THIRD PLACE

Manhattan Mercury

Cole Manbeck

I specifically like the column about the KSU coaching controversy.

SPORTS COLUMN WRITING

Daily Division 3

FIRST PLACE

Topeka Capital-Journal

Tully Corcoran

A versatile, incisive columnist. The writer makes the reader feel like the reader is down on the field of play and inside the locker room.

SECOND PLACE

Lawrence Journal-World

Tom Keegan

A talented writer, he was able to combine disparate threads into a more cohesive, salient point.

THIRD PLACE

Topeka Capital-Journal

Kevin Haskin

The writer shows a nice variety here: a eulogy, an opinion on current events and a game commentary.

HEADLINE WRITING

Nondaily Division 1

FIRST PLACE

The Mirror

Elvyn Jones

Clever but not too cute; these headlines set good tone for the text to follow

SECOND PLACE

The Mirror

Shawn Linenberger

Poetry in headlines? Not always the best idea, but it works well here. Colorful choice of words, verbs in graduation sub-head.

THIRD PLACE

Baldwin City Signal

Jeff Myrick

Solid headlines on page 1. Packages lead the reader into the day's premiere story.

HEADLINE WRITING

Nondaily Division 2

FIRST PLACE

Atchison Globe

Joe Warren

Cadillac branch headline elevated this one to the top.

SECOND PLACE

Marion County Record

Eric Meyer

Really good effort in all headlines to grab the reader's interest

THIRD PLACE

Times-Sentinel

Travis Mounts

'Whirled Peace' headline provided the boost to make this entry a winner.

HEADLINE WRITING

Nondaily Division 3

FIRST PLACE

Johnson County Sun

Mark Dewar

“Unmatched Sock” was my favorite headline in the category, but all Dewar’s entries were clever and fit the story.

SECOND PLACE

Olathe News

Rick Babson

A close second. I really liked the “He’s 1 in 10” headline as well as the “Signs” entry.

THIRD PLACE

Kansas City Business Journal

Russell Gray

Some clever business related headlines.

HEADLINE WRITING

Daily Division 1

FIRST PLACE

Arkansas City Traveler

Joey Sprinkle

Putting a catchy hammer on a story requires a deft touch and Sprinkle seems to have it. “Silence of the Rams” about St. Louis’s quiet approach to the NFL draft is a very smart headline.

SECOND PLACE

Iola Register

Staff

“Crispy chicken Rules the Roost” - Nice!

THIRD PLACE

Arkansas City Traveler

Sydney Bland

“New Business Gives Fare Notice” about a taxi service - Nice!

HEADLINE WRITING

Daily Division 2

FIRST PLACE

Manhattan Mercury

Megan Moser

Clever, accurate, original.

SECOND PLACE

Manhattan Mercury

Bill Felber

These headlines really caught my eye and made me want to read more.

THIRD PLACE

Manhattan Mercury

Javier Gonzalez

Somewhat cliché, but still interesting.

HEADLINE WRITING

Daily Division 3

FIRST PLACE

Wichita Eagle

Lisa McLendon

Love the “Ministers in Disbelief” headline.

SECOND PLACE

Hutchinson News

George Woods

Clever without being too clever.

THIRD PLACE

Topeka Capital-Journal

Patrick Kelly

I wish the selection were better. Good, but not stellar.

NEWS AND WRITING EXCELLENCE

Nondaily Division 1

FIRST PLACE

Bonner Springs Chieftain

Solid writing and editing across the paper - news, features and sports.

SECOND PLACE

Basehor Sentinel

Good mix of news and features. Writing is solid. Good job on failing grocery store story.

THIRD PLACE

The Mirror

News judgment is good. Pretty solid writing.

NEWS AND WRITING EXCELLENCE

Nondaily Division 2

FIRST PLACE

Atchison Globe

Best overall writing and editing in the division. Real effort to put news in the lead and then support it with good writing. Nice job!!

SECOND PLACE

Kingman Leader - Courier

This paper shows that someone cares about the writing - though the feature writing is far better/tighter than the news writing.

THIRD PLACE

Osawatomie Graphic

A ton of local content - Charlene Sims and Travis Perry deserve a day off now and then.

NEWS AND WRITING EXCELLENCE

Nondaily Division 3

FIRST PLACE

Johnson County Sun

Writing is solid and tight - real effort to keep leads short and informative - Page 1 editorial column is consistently strong and it takes some guts to put it on page 1 each week!!

SECOND PLACE

Shawnee Dispatch

Tab format well used - lots of briefs that have had good editing - leads and headlines are well written and useful. Good job with what seems to be limited resources.

THIRD PLACE

First Infantry Division Post

Lots of bylines, which tells me someone is doing a lot of good teaching and editing - writing seems to be consistently good.

NEWS AND WRITING EXCELLENCE

Daily Division 1

FIRST PLACE

Ottawa Herald

Some nice writing here - good use of language in hard news as well as features. Solid across all sections

SECOND PLACE

Chanute Tribune

Good mix of full stories and briefs. Leads tend to run long, but the writing is pretty solid otherwise.

THIRD PLACE

Junction City Daily Union

Nice to see a verb like “muddle” in a news lead - several folks at this paper write well - Megan Molitor, for example.

NEWS AND WRITING EXCELLENCE

Daily Division 2

FIRST PLACE

Hays Daily News

A paper that seems to be written, edited (and designed) for the reader. Writing and editing are bright and useful. Good paper.

SECOND PLACE

Manhattan Mercury

What a joy to read. A paper that still looks like a newspaper!! Writing and editing are solid across all sections.

THIRD PLACE

Great Bend Tribune

Good, solid writing across all sections. Leads tend to run long, but that's not a major issue.

NEWS AND WRITING EXCELLENCE

Daily Division 3

FIRST PLACE

Lawrence Journal-World

Wow!! Across every section, across every venue. (news, features, sports, briefs, opinions, etc.) These folks are doing things right. (writing, editing, story play) Very solid in a state with a lot of good papers!

SECOND PLACE

Topeka Capital-Journal

This paper is proof that solid reporting, writing and editing still prevails!! It looks like a newspaper and offers everything that it should. Well-written and well edited.

THIRD PLACE

Kansas City Star

This paper has resources, but also knows what to do with them. Writing, editing and presentation are all strong. -A joy for the reader.