

AREA NEWS IN BRIEF

Sedgwick County commissioners to meet tonight

Sedgwick County commissioners will meet at 7 p.m. today for their regular meeting.

On the agenda are several grant applications and a resolution to preserve funding for Wichita-area highway projects.

The meeting is open to the public. The public should enter through the front doors of the Courthouse, 525 N. Main. Commissioners meet on the third floor.

The commissioners are meeting in the evening because they plan to be in Topeka to meet with local legislators earlier in the day.

— Deb Gruver

Teens' escape plot foiled by facility's evacuation

A plot by three teenage girls to escape a juvenile detention facility was foiled by bad timing Monday night, and they found themselves having to evacuate wearing only towels.

The girls, two age 16 and one 17, soaked a washcloth in a flammable liquid, put it in a vent and set it on fire shortly after 8 p.m. at the Liberty juvenile detention facility at 2050 W. 11th St., near 13th and McLean, Lt. Doug Nolte said. Their plan, he said, was to slip away as the center was being evacuated because of the fire alarm.

But the smoke detector didn't go off as soon as they expected, so to cover their absence they jumped in the shower, Nolte said. Then the fire alarm went off.

The staff evacuated the 55 girls who are housed there — including the three girls who were in the shower, clad only in towels. Eleven staff members were also evacuated.

Everyone returned to the facility after the washcloth was found and discarded, Nolte said.

— Stan Finger

Chick-fil-A campout contest under way

Wichita's first free-standing Chick-fil-A at Central and Rock is scheduled to open at 6 a.m. Thursday.

But the craziness starts sooner.

The chain famously gives away coupons good for free Chick-fil-A food for a year to those who camp out to be the first in line. Between 5:45 and 6 a.m. this morning, those who have gathered outside the restaurant will be given a number. At 6 a.m., managers will draw 100 numbers. Those people will be invited to camp out until 6 a.m. Thursday, when they'll be let inside and handed an envelope that contains their prize — the right to one free Chick-fil-A meal a week for a year. Campers have to stay in line for a full 24 hours or they forfeit the prize.

If 100 people haven't joined the line by 6 a.m., managers will continue to accept participants until they have 100.

— Denise Neil

Calif. man sentenced for Dodge City bank holdup

KANSAS CITY, Kan. — A California man is going to prison for the armed holdup of a Dodge City bank in October 2010.

The U.S. Attorney's Office says 33-year-old Angel Garcia Aguirre, of Santa Paula, Calif., was sentenced Tuesday to 12 years and three months.

Garcia Aguirre pleaded guilty last year to one count each of bank robbery and brandishing a firearm, admitting he and another man robbed a Bank of America branch in Dodge City on Oct. 21, 2010. He said he stood in the lobby while the other man jumped over a teller's counter and grabbed money.

Garcia Aguirre was shot and wounded by police the following day when he climbed out a window of a home where investigators confronted him and tried to scale a fence.

— Associated Press

Kan. budget for schools criticized

BY JOHN HANNA
Associated Press

TOPEKA — A proposed \$14 billion state budget being considered in the Kansas House drew bipartisan criticism Tuesday because it would withhold some education funds and push school districts to tap their cash reserves first.

Republicans who pushed the spending plan through the House Appropriations Committee defended it as a responsible budget that sticks closely to most recommendations from GOP Gov. Sam Brownback. The measure

would reduce the state's overall spending by about 4 percent, or roughly \$650 million, during the fiscal year that begins July 1.

But the committee made several significant changes to Brownback's proposals before endorsing a bill containing the budget Monday night. It eliminated \$29 million in new dollars for the state's 286 school districts to cover higher-than-expected costs during the current school year, forcing districts to absorb those costs and encouraging them to dip into their reserves.

"They've put money back for cash-

flow purposes and projects they see in the future, and they've tried to save for that, and we've said, 'No, you can't do that,'" said Rep. Doug Gatewood, D-Columbus, who serves on the committee. "It's a shame."

The House is expected to debate the proposed budget Friday. The Senate Ways and Means Committee is drafting its own spending plan and could vote on it Friday. The final version of the budget will be drafted by negotiators for the two chambers.

The state commits more than \$3 billion of its tax dollars, roughly half the total, to aid to public schools,

but lawmakers cut base aid per pupil last year by almost 6 percent to help balance the budget, dropping it to \$3,780 per student. Brownback proposes no further cut in the figure for the next fiscal year, but districts have seen both higher enrollments and more students in programs for children at risk of failing.

But many Republican legislators, particularly Brownback's fellow conservatives, are frustrated with criticism from educators over cuts in state aid because school districts' cash

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Summerlike weather is perfect for playing outside



Photos by Mike Hutmacher/The Wichita Eagle

ABOVE: Lauren Slaughter's sons Tanner, 5, top, and Ethan, 2, ride the teeter-totter at Sedgwick County Park on Tuesday. The high temperature in Wichita was 78 degrees on Tuesday, with highs at or near 80 forecast for the rest of the week.

LEFT: Brian Aderhold cooks up some burgers and brats for a family get-together at Sedgwick County Park on Tuesday.



Ex-East High teacher jailed, suspected of sex crimes

BY TIM POTTER AND SUZANNE PEREZ TOBIAS
The Wichita Eagle

A former East High School educator now teaching in Eudora has been arrested in Wichita on suspicion of four counts of rape, two counts of indecent liberties with a child and one count of electronic solicitation of a child, records show.

Kurt M. Brundage, 32, of Lawrence, was arrested Friday in the 1500 block of South George Washington Boulevard in Wichita, jail booking records show.

Brundage has not been charged but was booked into jail on suspicion of the alleged sex crimes. This week investigators plan to present their findings to the Sedgwick County District Attorney's Office, which would determine whether charges are filed.

Brundage had taught freshman English at East High in the pre-International Baccalaureate program before becoming a teacher in Eudora, east of Lawrence.

Three of the four rape counts were listed as "circumstances unknown," and one of the rape counts was listed as "sexual intercourse without consent and use of force." The two indecent liberties counts are where "offender believes child" is 14 or older and less than 16, booking records show.

All of the alleged crimes occurred in Sedgwick County, said Wichita police Lt. Jeff Weible, head of the Wichita-Sedgwick County Exploited and Missing Child Unit. The time period of the alleged crimes is Jan. 2, 2010, to Feb. 1, 2012, according to a police report. The report, dated

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Kansans spot meteor in early morning sky

BY STAN FINGER
The Wichita Eagle

A flash of light in the early morning sky over the Great Plains on Tuesday lit up social media and cyberspace as witnesses tried to figure out what they had seen.

"It was like the whole sky lit up for just a second," Joe Kleinsasser said in an e-mail about what he saw as he drove from Hillsboro to work at Wichita State University at about 6:45 a.m.

More than 50 people in five states — Oklahoma, Kansas, Arkansas, Nebraska and Missouri — reported the flash to the Lunar Meteorite Hunters website on Tuesday.

Bob Henry, program director at the Wichita State University Lake Afton Observatory, said the light appears to have been a meteor about the size of a baseball.

"Something that size is going to be very, very bright and very, very noticeable," Henry said.

Based on a detailed description he was given, Henry said, the meteor was traveling north to south about 20 degrees to the north of the moon at about the same elevation as the moon. It had a greenish blue tint before it broke up.

"They actually happen a lot more often than we realize," Henry said. "Half the time, it's light outside so we don't see them."

The Earth is hit by meteors more than 100 times a day, he said. Only a few are noticed by humans, however, because of daylight or cloudy skies or because they happen over the ocean or when people are asleep.

Derek Pinkston captured the meteor on a surveillance video in Haysville and posted it on YouTube.

"Thought it was pretty cool, but wish I would have captured the trail," he wrote on Twitter in response to a question.

Henry said witnesses to the meteor should feel fortunate.

"For a meteor to get noticed by humans takes unusually good luck," he said by e-mail.