Finally.

The long-awaited Mizzou Center, the focus of much speculation and later some controversy, has officially opened.

With great fanfare, a great high school jazz band, some food, balloons and a sunny sky, representatives from the city of Blue Springs and the University of Missouri opened the doors Tuesday to what they call the anchor, the magnet that will attract students, researchers and, hopefully, aspiring companies to Blue Springs and the greater Kansas City area.

Jacqueline Clark, president of the Mizzou Alumni Association, could remember a time years ago when Mizzou wasn’t quite so close.
"At that time," Clark said, referring to some 20 years ago, "Mizzou was so far away from Blue Springs. We can’t begin to say how much we’re pleased that there will be more emphasis on Mizzou here."

While the doors were opened Tuesday, it will take the next few weeks to complete finishing touches on the approximately 8,000 square feet of office space on the first floor of the Heartland Financial Building. Once fully operational, the center will offer six department services, with others planned for the future.

Mayor Carson Ross said the concept started years ago and that its opening Tuesday signified success not just for the city but for the metropolitan area as a whole.

"People will stop and take note," Ross said.

The Mizzou Center was initially to be the first building constructed for the hugely ambitious Missouri Innovation Park, an estimated 118-acre complex that is expected to house research facilities and start-up companies that focus primarily on the animal health and life sciences. The Mizzou Center would be that location where research would take place, where graduate students assist on-site companies (both established and start-ups).

But the university announced in March that it was, for the time being, scaling down its original plans due to budget concerns. Instead, the university would lease space at the Heartland Financial Building and build momentum from there.

Several university officials were present Tuesday during the ceremony, including Missouri Chancellor Brady Deaton and Provost Brian Foster.

Deaton said he believes Blue Springs is "leading the pack." With more than 25,000 Mizzou alumni living in the Kansas City area, he said that was a significant pool from which to draw support and, hopefully, a workforce.

"The tenants of this building will build partnerships, develop smoother transitions for technology transfer and create jobs," Deaton said in a prepared statement.

Al Black, previous west central regional director for MU Extension, was named director of the Mizzou Center and promised great things for the area.

"This center is going to grow and expand," he said, adding in a prepared statement issued beforehand:

"It’s exciting to know that I’ll play a part of building something that will fundamentally change the landscape of (the university) in the Kansas City region. It also will create opportunities for jobs, build connections with students, become a rallying point for alumni and assist our development efforts."
Others present on Tuesday included Leo Morton, University of Missouri Kansas City chancellor, who said the university must be more competitive with other universities throughout the area – as well as collaborative.

Warren Erdman, vice chairman of the University of Missouri Board of Curators, said the center is a reflection of the times at hand.

"We're going through tough times in Missouri," he said, "but we'll look back and realize these were also the best days for Mizzou."

Later that night at the annual Blue Springs Economic Development Corporation banquet, Lisa Franklin, chairman of the board of directors, compared the last year to a Hollywood film – minus stars, of course.

"We looked at ourselves as an action movie – a thriller, sometimes scary," she said. "But we persevered."

Both Franklin and Brien Starner, president of the EDC, complimented the city for its cooperative nature and willingness to do more. In addition to the innovation park, a project that has commanded most of the attention since it was first unveiled in late 2008, Starner said the EDC remains focused on other issues, including highway corridor development throughout the city.

For instance, the EDC recently assembled several task forces, including one that will investigate industrial parks and the kinds of companies that typically locate in them.

AT MIZZOU CENTER

The following list is of services that will be offered at the Mizzou Center in Blue Springs

- MU Academic Programs, which will provide advising, workshops, career development and educational opportunities for undergraduate and graduate students in person and via video conferencing.
- MU College of Engineering and Missouri Procurement Technical Assistance Center, which will counsel businesses in the metro area to help them procure federal, state and local government contracts.
- MU College of Education, School of Information Science and Learning Technologies, which will provide website usability testing for businesses, government agencies and others, tapping faculty expertise to design training programs and information services.
- MU College of Veterinary Medicine, which will help develop and extend research partnerships within the KC Animal Health Corridor.

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Mizzou Center launches in Blue Springs, names Black as director

Kansas City Business Journal

A scaled-back version of the Mizzou Center launched Tuesday in Blue Springs, complete with a leader.

The University of Missouri said Al Black, who was west-central regional director for the MU Extension, has been named as director of the facility, which is envisioned as a research, continuing education and community outreach facility. The center is intended to forge a closer connection between MU research and Kansas City-area industry leaders.

"Mizzou is a major economic driver for the state," Chancellor Brady Deaton said in a release. "The tenants of this building will build partnerships, develop smoother transitions for technology transfer and create jobs."

Black will oversee programs based at the center, including the MU School of Information Science and Learning Technologies, MU Extension Food and Nutrition, MU College of Veterinary Medicine, Missouri Procurement Technical Assistance Centers with the MU College of Engineering, Mizzou Career Services and the MU Office of Research.

Black said in the release that he'd always hoped MU would have a larger physical presence near Kansas City and that the Mizzou Center is the ideal situation.

The center will "fundamentally change the landscape of the University of Missouri in the Kansas City region," create job opportunities, build student and alumni connections and help the university's development work, he said.

The Mizzou Center is leasing about 8,000 square feet in the Heartland Financial Building in Blue Springs, said Mary Jo Banken, director of the MU news bureau. Initially, the university had hoped to occupy — through a lease or lease-purchase agreement — a roughly 32,000-square-foot building that was to anchor the proposed Missouri Innovation Park that the Blue Springs Growth Initiative Inc. is developing at Interstate 70 and Adams Dairy Parkway. But a bleak financing outlook prompted the university to scale back plans.
Missouri launches new university center in Blue Springs

By The Associated Press
May 18, 2010 | 8:51 a.m. CDT

COLUMBIA — **MU officials are turning their attention to the Kansas City area** with an open house for the new "Mizzou Center" in Blue Springs.

The event was scheduled for Tuesday afternoon in leased quarters in the Kansas City suburb. The rented office space is the first step toward a center that will include university research and economic development offices.

The city of Blue Springs is building a 500-acre biological services complex called Missouri Innovation Park that will feature the university as its anchor tenant.

University leaders planned to announce the Mizzou Center's new director at the open house.
MU-Columbia event focuses on teaching excellence

The Associated Press • May 19, 2010

COLUMBIA, Mo. (AP) — With spring graduation over, the University of Missouri is preparing to honor some top-notch teachers.

The university is hosting a two-day “Celebration of Teaching Excellence” that concludes today. Speakers include author and Fast Company magazine columnist Dan Heath and neuroscientist-turned-middle-school teacher Judy Willis.

Missouri will also honor three faculty members nominated for the national Professor of the Year award: chemistry professor John Adams; music educator Wendy Sims; and professor of atmospheric science Tony Lupo.
COLUMBIA MISSOURIAN

Nixon to cut next year's budget by additional $350 million

NO MU Mention

By Ben Wieder

May 18, 2010 | 5:16 p.m. CDT

COLUMBIA — Nearly half a billion in cuts were not enough.

In March, Gov. Jay Nixon called on legislators to trim next year's budget by $500 million. When the budget passed April 29, the House Budget Chairman Allen Icet, R-Wildwood, said they made it most of the way, reducing it by $484 million.

But on Tuesday, the state's budget director indicated in a statement that Nixon would soon be announcing roughly $350 million in additional cuts to the budget for the next fiscal year, which begins in July.

Linda Luebbering said the tuition-freeze deal reached by Nixon and Missouri college presidents in November is likely to remain intact unless the state's economic picture becomes a lot worse.

"It's definitely one of the highest priorities," Luebbering said.

Under the terms of the deal, Missouri's public colleges and universities agreed not to raise in-state undergraduate tuition next year in exchange for preserving 95 percent of their funding for next year.

She said there is no single place the cuts will come from and that finding the savings will be difficult.

"We're looking everywhere in the budget," she said.
Nixon released his initial budget recommendation for the 2011 fiscal year in late January when he gave his State of the State address. By early March, Nixon said his recommendation would likely need to be cut by an additional $500 million to account for continued declines in state tax revenue and the uncertainty of additional federal funds included in his recommendation.

When the budget passed in late April, Nixon praised the bipartisan effort between his administration and the General Assembly that led to passage of a "fiscally responsible budget."

But the budget was banking on the passage of several cost-cutting pieces of legislation, many of which didn't pass. The proposed budget called for the elimination of three state holidays, and only one was eliminated. Changes to the state retirement system didn't pass either, and of several proposed departmental reorganizations, only the transfer of the State Water Patrol into the State Highway Patrol occurred.

Some of the measures did pass, including reductions for some Medicaid reimbursements. But the budget was relying on $125 million in savings from all of the pending bills, and the few that passed generated only $36 million in savings.

Luebbering said that the budget had allotted federal funds for expenses that were not eligible for federal money, and it made unrealistic projections about Medicaid caseload growth.

"It could very well happen," she said when referring to the Medicaid caseload estimates, "but we can't count on it at this time."

Nixon is planning to unveil the additional cuts when he signs the budget in early June, Luebbering said. Nixon signed the budget in late June last year, but she said he is hoping to sign it earlier this year to give state departments more time to adjust.
Staff get show-and-tell turn

MU honors the work of non-faculty.

Photo by Nick King | Buy this photo

By Janese Heavin

Tuesday, May 18, 2010

They don’t get the job security that comes with tenure. They don’t become emeriti when they retire. And they don’t get the attention that accompanies the research of their academic counterparts.

Latricia Vaughn makes adjustments to one of her scrapbooks on display Tuesday morning as part of Staff Recognition Week. She said it took three years to create the albums.

But staff members at the University of Missouri are the ones who keep the operation running, from the receptionists who greet high school students on college tours to the groundskeepers who make sure campus property is landscaped when graduates celebrate commencement.

“No one really thinks about them,” said Marijo Dixon, chairwoman of MU’s Staff Advisory Council. “You can’t have a university without students and classes or without faculty, but you also can’t have a university without staff who support those faculty members and researchers and students. It takes every one of us to make campus a place we can be proud of and a place, I think, the whole city can be proud of.”

It’s Staff Recognition Week at MU, allowing those who generally work behind the scenes to come forward for a little public thanks. The weeklong event kicked off yesterday with an awards ceremony at which Chancellor Brady Deaton praised the employees’ roles on campus.

“You are the voice and the face of the university — the first impression of students, faculty, parents and guests,” he said in prepared remarks. “And it is a good impression.”

Today and tomorrow, employees have a chance to impress in a different way. For the second year in a row, Room 201 at Ellis Library has become an arts and crafts gallery where staff members have a chance to show off their personal hobbies. The gallery, showcasing baskets, bows and arrows, paintings and other projects, is open to the public.
Latricia Vaughn, a secretary in nuclear engineering, opted to bring two scrapbooks she assembled. Vaughn, who studied art at Columbia College, said it took her three years to create the albums, so she was happy to have a chance to show them off.

"I put a lot of hours into this," she said, thumbing through a scrapbook of her 1975 wedding.

When he's not serving as foreman at Bradford Farm or working on his own farm, Ben Naylor travels the state taking photographs of bluegrass and country musicians. The black-and-white images of Willie Nelson, Hank Williams Jr., Kenny Rogers and others he brought are just a small part of his collection, he said. Naylor's photographs have been displayed twice at the Missouri State Fair, but for the most part, this is a rare chance for the public to see them. "I don't show them too much," he said.

Greg Cook, a reimbursement assistant in child health at University Hospital, brought samples of his upholstery work on refurbished chairs. It's a craft he picked up while studying business at Columbia College, and now he does upholstery jobs on the side.

Cook said he was happy to have a chance to dust off his work for public display.

Staff Recognition Week, he said, is "a chance to be recognized for what you do. With the economy like it is, this is about the best pat on the back you can get these days."

Reach Janese Heavin at 573-815-1705 or e-mail jheavin@columbiatribune.com.
CHICAGO — Jim Delany says considering expansion for the Big Ten is just a matter of good sense.

"There's been a lot of change in the country," Delany, the conference commissioner, said Tuesday at scheduled league meetings. "We're looking at the long-term implications."

Delany said that the Big Ten needed to look into expansion to remain viable, but promised nothing would be done unless it was deemed prudent for the conference. The Big Ten announced that it would look into expansion in December, and Delany said he is still evaluating the situation.

He said one of the reasons for looking into conference expansion is to try to combat national demographic changes that have shifted the population from the Midwest to the South.

"The Midwest is not growing in the same way as in the 20th century." Delany said. "We need to look forward to 2020, 2030."

Demographics could make gaining ground for the league's television operation important. The Big Ten Network, which was founded three years ago, is the financial dynamo that makes the Big Ten the envy of college sports. The network has made the league the richest in the nation. Subscription rights from the network allow the conference to share more money per year with their 11 member institutions than any other conference.
Delany promised that nothing would be decided in the near future. No votes will be taken regarding expansion at the Big Ten's annual directors and chancellors meeting in June. If expansion were to happen, Delany said, the conference would reach out to schools and encourage them to apply. Institutions that apply would need directors and chancellors from eight member schools to vote them in to join the conference.

Delany was adamant that the 12-to-18 month timetable announced in December remains in place, meaning nothing official will happen until the end of the college football season. The Big Ten last expanded in 1990, when the conference added Penn State. Delany said that expansion process took eight months.

By adding just one school, the conference would be able to host a championship football game, a contest that could bring in more than $10 million annually. But adding more than one school would allow the Big Ten Network to saturate new markets. Before the Big Ten Network, having 12 members in the Big Ten would not have been a solvent business practice for the conference, Delany said.

The Big Ten hired the Chicago-based investment firm William Blair & Company to analyze the financial impact that expansion would have on the conference. Its report said the Big Ten would make money if they expanded by one or more schools. Missouri was one of those schools studied, according to a Chicago Tribune report. Delany and William Blair & Company cited confidentiality agreements when asked about the report.

Expansion is not on the official agenda for the spring meetings, but the topic was discussed informally. The Big Ten football and basketball coaches, along the league's athletics directors are using the spring meetings as informational sessions on the ongoing expansion process.

Delany said that expansion would not be on the official agenda for the June administrators meetings either, but he guaranteed it would be discussed.

Delany refused comment when asked about schools not currently in the Big Ten Conference and could not outline a schedule for how the expansion process would continue. The most he would say about possible additions is that a new member would have to be a good match for the Big Ten.
"This is not about conferences, this is about institutions finding a fit," Delany said.

Delany said good quality for a new member is membership in the Association of American Universities, which all current members of the Big Ten belong to. Missouri, which has been a member of the association since 1908, is one of three institutions pictured on the AAU's website.

Rutgers, Pittsburgh, Nebraska and Syracuse are also members of the AAU, but Notre Dame, which the Big Ten has tried to bring into the fold before, is not an AAU school.

"AAU membership is very important," Delany said. "It's part of who we are. It makes an institution."
Coach Gary Pinkel appears in motorcycle safety awareness ads

By Elisa Essner
May 19, 2010 | 12:01 a.m. CDT

COLUMBIA – Missouri had just lost a football game, and coach Gary Pinkel was, it turns out, too distracted to drive.

But he took his motorcycle out anyway and lost control of the bike on a country road.

"I was going around a curve, and I was going too fast," Pinkel said. "I wasn't there, mentally."

He was lucky enough to remember some advice a friend gave him and just let the bike fall, though he tumbled about 25 feet in the grass. He suffered no major injuries. His Harley needed $300 in repairs.

"I learned a great lesson, something I'll always remember," Pinkel said of his accident.

That was seven years ago.

This summer, Pinkel will become the poster child for motorcycle safety — literally. He will appear in a series of ads created by the Missouri Coalition for Roadway Safety as part of its "Share the Road" campaign.

The ads show Pinkel seated on his bike; the billboard shows him wearing a helmet and dressed in a leather jacket, gloves and sturdy shoes. He got in the habit of dressing for safe riding over the years that he's been a motorcycle enthusiast.

Pinkel said he started riding motorcycles against the wishes of first, his mother and then his wife, Vicki.
"In high school, my mom wouldn't let me have a motorcycle, but I always found ways to ride with my friends," he said. "Thank God I never got hurt, and she never really found out."

He bought his first bike in 2003, when he finally "got clearing" from his wife. Now he rides his 2007 Harley-Davidson FLTR Road Glide as often as he can, though he said it's "not nearly enough."

"I always wear my helmet, appropriate clothes and shoes," Pinkel said. "Some people 'leather up,' but in the summer I usually stick to jeans and a T-shirt. Sometimes I wear my leather chaps."

Deaths on the decline

The goal of the roadway coalition campaign that Pinkel is part of is to sustain the trend of decreasing motorcycle fatalities, which fell in 2009 after having increased for years.

"Motorcycle fatalities have been generally on the rise for the past decade," said Melissa Black, outreach coordinator in the Missouri Department of Transportation. "We have made motorcycle safety a priority in Missouri, and it's good to now be seeing some positive results."

In 2009, there were 85 motorcycle fatalities in Missouri, a 21 percent decrease from the 107 fatalities in 2008, according to an April 30 release from the coalition. The decline is part of a nationwide trend: Motorcycle deaths decreased in 2009 by at least 10 percent in the U.S., according to the release.

Black cited the efforts of the coalition, which includes MoDOT and 29 other groups, as a major force behind the decrease in Missouri.

The coalition, created in 2004, coordinates the efforts of various roadway safety advocates and focuses on education, engineering solutions, emergency medical services and law enforcement.

Although the coalition has been successful in helping reduce overall traffic fatalities in Missouri, deadly motorcycle accidents have been more difficult to address, Black said.
This could be because of the ever-growing number of licensed motorcyclists — nearly 350,000 — in the state. Black added that fatal motorcycle accidents often involve bikers riding without a valid license.

As the number of motorcyclists on the road increases, the coalition’s emphasis on safety and awareness becomes even more important, Black said.

"This is a message we need to promote not just to motorcycle riders, but also to other motorists," she said. "Everyone needs to be more aware."

**A recognizable example**

The coalition approached Pinkel about the campaign two or three years ago, Black said.

"We were looking for someone with a little more recognition in the area, someone people might actually listen to," Black said. "Plus, he's a very avid motorcyclist. It was a good fit."

Pinkel said he was initially uncomfortable with the idea of appearing in the ads.

"I like to be involved in the community, but I try to stay out of that kind of thing," he said. "I don't want to be so visible."

Now that he's been cast as the coalition's poster child, Pinkel said he's become the object of a few jokes. "I've taken a lot of hits from my friends," he said with a laugh.

Pinkel said he decided to participate in the campaign because it's something he believes in.

"You have to be so remarkably focused (on a motorcycle)," he said. "And you have to be so smart about riding your bike."
BP oil spill poses PR dilemma for nonprofits

Recipients of largess from the petroleum giant may have to disassociate themselves from the firm. Aquarium of the Pacific in Long Beach won't remove BP's name from its new sea otter habitat.

By Mike Boehm and Louis Sahagun, Los Angeles Times

May 19, 2010

Four years ago, when the giant oil company BP donated $1 million to the Aquarium of the Pacific in Long Beach, the contribution seemed like a good deal for both an oil company trying to burnish its environmental credentials and a venue trying to draw more visitors.

Then, last month, a BP oil rig exploded in the Gulf of Mexico, causing one of the largest oil spills in U.S. history. With the BP Sea Otter Habitat set to open this week, a potential feel-good moment has turned into a public relations landmine.

The aquarium is planning a press preview Thursday, but BP officials might not attend.

"They said they did not want to hurt the reputation of the institution," said Jerry Schubel, the aquarium's president. "They even asked, 'Would you prefer that we not be there?' I said, 'No. Without your support we could not have done this.' I hope they continue to support us."

Since the spill, aquarium officials have discussed how best to handle BP's sponsorship of the new venue, Schubel said, although he added that there had been no debate about removing BP's name. "That never occurred to me. We're comfortable about the course we have taken," he said. In the wake of the spill, the aquarium will host a forum this fall on ocean oil drilling, he said. "The challenge is, 'What can we learn from this going forward?' "

Nonprofit institutions often face difficult decisions when big corporate givers hit highly publicized rough spots. One of the largest examples in recent years involved Enron, which was a major giver to cultural and educational charities.

The University of Missouri kept its Kenneth Lay Chair in Economics, despite faculty objections that the Enron chief executive's $1.1-million contribution in 1999 had been tainted by the scandal that engulfed the Houston energy company two years later.

The university came to a different conclusion in 2004 about its newly opened Paige Sports Arena, which was named in honor of Elizabeth Paige Laurie by her parents, who made a
fortune from Wal-Mart and contributed $25 million. The venue became the Mizzou Arena
after ABC's "20/20" revealed that young Paige had paid a fellow student to do her coursework
at USC.

How institutions handle such questions depends largely on whether the donor's scandalous acts
are directly at odds with the recipient's mission, said Paul Dunn, an expert on corporate ethics at
Brock University in St. Catharines, Ontario, and author of a 2008 study, "Strategic Responses by
a Nonprofit When a Donor Becomes Tainted."

At an art museum, "you may have a donor who says, 'I'm very concerned about the environment,
therefore I wouldn't give to your museum because BP has polluted the gulf,' " Dunn said. But he
doubts that such complaints could gain traction. "I fail to see a connection between oil
[pollution] and paintings --- other than that paintings have oil in them."

But the Aquarium of the Pacific, where BP's initials are modestly inscribed next to a map of the
sea otter's range, could face some heat. "People can see a direct link there. Aquatic animals are
being harmed by the disaster," Dunn said.

"Any organization that has BP's name on it throughout the world should be saying, 'We have a
potential issue here,' " he said.

There are many such organizations. BP's corporate largess is evident at cultural institutions
worldwide. In the Los Angeles area, besides the aquarium, BP has donated $25 million each to
the Los Angeles County Museum of Art and public television station KCET since 2004.

Executives at LACMA and KCET said last week that they have not heard of any negative
comments about BP's sponsorship --- either before the gulf disaster, or since.

But the oil spill clearly has bruised BP's corporate image, with Congress, environmental groups
and President Obama slamming the oil company's handling of the crisis.

Terry O'Day, executive director of Environment Now, a Santa Monica advocacy group, said the
Aquarium of the Pacific may yet have to make a tough call. "Generally I tend to say, 'Take the
funds and do your good work.' " But the gulf spill "does recast things in a different light. This
has to be an example that's on the moral line for them. They'll have to wrestle with that."

Like O'Day, Joel Reynolds, director of the Natural Resources Defense Council's programs in
Southern California, wouldn't say whether BP's name should remain on the exhibit. But "the
reality is that anything associated with the name BP is going to be tarnished as a result of this
catastrophe."

BP's environmental record in Southern California was blemished before these gifts. After a 1990
tanker spill off Huntington Beach, it paid $21.9 million in cleanup and settlement costs. In 2002,
it paid the state $45.8 million to settle a suit over pollution from leaking gasoline storage tanks.
Later, leakage of smog-forming chemicals at its refinery in Carson resulted in $81 million in
fines and other payments.
BP’s Houston-based charitable foundation averaged worldwide donations of nearly $48 million annually from 2006 through 2008, according to its most recent federal filings. BP is one of the corporate sponsors of the Audubon Aquarium of the Americas in New Orleans.

Toby Odone, a spokesman in London, said Friday that the gulf oil spill will "have no impact whatsoever" on how much the BP Foundation gives, or which recipients it chooses.

Melody Kanschat, LACMA’s president, said there’s no need for museum leaders to strategize over how to address possible complaints.

"We would tackle any issue as it came up," Kanschat said.

At KCET, BP was the leading funder of "A Place of Our Own" and "Los Ninos en Su Casa," award-winning educational programs aimed at caregivers of young children. As if the station would consider taking BP’s name from its studio if the worst fears in the gulf came to pass, Executive Vice President Mary Mazur declined to answer. "You’re asking me to look into a crystal ball and speculate, which is something I’m not able to do," she said.

At the aquarium, officials are getting ready to welcome the public to the newly expanded sea otter exhibit, with its new corporate name.

Schubel, the aquarium’s president, said despite the oil spill, the aquarium is still open for future partnership with BP. He is aware this might upset some environmentalists.

"I worry about these issues all the time," he said. "But I worry more about how the aquarium can do the right thing, which is to help the public understand."
ST. LOUIS POST-DISPATCH

Police join effort to save psychiatric services
By Christine Byers and Blythe Bernhard
ST. LOUIS POST-DISPATCH
05/19/2010

ST. LOUIS — Virtually every day, a St. Louis County police officer takes a mentally ill person to the St. Louis Metropolitan Psychiatric Center for care.

It provides treatment not available in a jail and offers services better suited to a psychiatric incident than an emergency room, according to county police Sgt. Barry Armfield.

He said Tuesday he fears that option may vanish.

The Missouri Department of Mental Health plans to close the center July 1 to emergency and acute-care psychiatric patients, as part of its plan to save the cash-strapped state about $7 million.

Mental health workers and advocates protested outside the facility at 5351 Delmar Boulevard in April, saying the elimination of emergency psychiatric care could lead to increases in homelessness, crime and hospital overcrowding.

Now, the St. Louis Area Police Chiefs Association is pleading with the private sector and community leaders to save the center.

"We take the hardest-to-serve and most noncompliant there," Armfield explained. "These people aren't going to go away (just) because they close the MPC. They'll still be there."

Across the Missouri side of the region, police officers handle about 200 incidents a month involving the mentally ill. About 89 percent end with trips to emergency rooms, including MPC.

Police do take some to hospitals, especially if they have insurance, family support or doctors there already, Armfield said.

"If they don't have insurance, the hospitals have to eat that cost," he said. The people in need, "have a better chance at MPC of being treated longer and getting outpatient services."

The typical acute psychiatric patient has a mental illness such as bipolar disorder or schizophrenia, comes to the facility in a crisis and is usually released within 10 days, after adjustments to medications.

About a year ago, two similar state-run facilities elsewhere in Missouri were saved.

In Columbia, the University of Missouri now runs all operations at the Mid-Missouri

Mental Health Center.

In Kansas City, Truman Behavioral Health took over emergency and acute care at the Center for Behavioral Medicine, leaving the Department of Mental Health to oversee longer-term care beds. That arrangement has worked "very well," said Marsha Morgan, chief operating officer for behavioral health at Truman Medical Center.

The hospital's share of the beds has been running at about 96 percent occupancy. Morgan expects to break even on costs.

"For us, it made sense," Morgan said. "It was an opportunity to get people who were mentally ill out of our medical emergency department and get them to where psychiatrists, psychiatric nurses and social workers are, so they could get appropriate care and give our medical emergency department a chance to focus on traumas and other emergencies."

In St. Louis, members of the Missouri Hospital Association plan to talk with state officials on Thursday about the impending closure of MPC, said Laurent Javois, regional executive officer for the Department of Mental Health.

"I'm still hopeful that a community partner will come forward ... But if the community remains silent on this, it's likely that no partner will come forward," Javois said.

Dr. John Lynch, chief medical officer at Barnes-Jewish Hospital, said he is not aware of any movement to transfer MPC's operations to BJC HealthCare.

SSM Health Care has no plans to take over operations at MPC, said John Eiler, executive vice president for behavioral health.

"We already have about 30 percent of the patients that are being treated in any hospital for psychiatric illness," Eiler said. "We really don't have the capacity to open new beds or pick up more capacity to meet this community need."

Last year, SSM looked into leasing some operations at the MPC, but decided the facility was too far from SSM's other hospitals to provide coordinating medical care.

The agreements in Kansas City and Columbia are between hospitals in the same vicinity, Eiler noted.

St. Louis-area hospitals have already seen an increase in mental health patients, including transfers from police departments and jails, as MPC has gradually reduced its capacity in recent years, Eiler said.

Armfield said police officers find that those who fit their criteria for treatment at MPC tend to fare better than they would after a short stay at a hospital.
"They have the relationships and know who fits where," Armfield said. "If we don't use those resources, we know we will see them again. And it might be worse."
BUCHANAN, N.Y. — Concerns for a primitive and endangered sturgeon and other denizens of the Hudson River have raised the prospect that the Indian Point nuclear plant, the biggest power producer in the New York metropolitan area, could be shut down.

But closing the plant would slash 18 to 38 percent of the energy available to a power-hungry region and deprive the plant's owner, Entergy Nuclear, of hundreds of millions of dollars in profits. That leads many experts to believe there are real-world solutions well short of a shutdown.

"I would think that in the end, there has to be some kind of a compromise because I don't see how you replace that kind of power," said environmental lawyer Charles S. Warren, a former regional administrator with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. "Recycling and windmills don't get you there."

At issue is the water Indian Point pulls in from the Hudson River, as much as 2.5 billion gallons a day — to make steam and cool the two reactors, making it the largest industrial user of water in New York. Screens keep out most full-grown fish, but baby fish, fish eggs and other life forms are sucked in, tossed around, warmed up and sent back out, often dead or worse for wear. Some of the fish that hit the screens are also killed or injured.

The state Department of Environmental Conservation refused last month to grant a water quality permit that Entergy must have to renew its federal licenses and continue operating into the 2030s. The DEC found that the current "once-through" water system kills nearly a billion organisms a year, including the shortnose sturgeon, which is endangered in New York.
The DEC said it is illegal to kill any shorthose sturgeon, one of 140 species of fish in the Hudson River, including striped bass, American shad, the protected Atlantic sturgeon and river herring.

A 2008 study — disputed by Entergy — blamed power plants, in part, for a decline in 10 of 13 "signature" Hudson River fish species since the 1970s.

The DEC also found Indian Point in violation of the federal Clean Water Act, with leaks of radioactive tritium, strontium-90, nickel and cesium polluting the river.

The agency said Indian Point can operate legally only if it converts to a more environmentally friendly water-recycling system known as closed-cycle. That process was a condition of the plant's original licenses in the 1970s but has been stalled with various appeals and settlements.

Entergy contends building the necessary cooling towers would cost more than $1 billion, with a 10-month plant shutdown.

A full shutdown of Indian Point is exactly what many environmentalists and some politicians in the area have hoped for, especially since the 2001 terrorist attacks, when one of the hijacked jets flew over the plant on its way to the World Trade Center.

Critics contend that the plant's proximity to New York City — 35 miles from midtown Manhattan — makes it a tempting target; that the densely populated suburbs around Indian Point could never be properly evacuated in an emergency; and that recent problems with warning sirens and radioactive leaks betray carelessness.

Alex Matthiessen, president of the environmental group Riverkeeper, called for Indian Point's "early retirement" and said the DEC's ruling "put us closer to realizing a future without Indian Point."

After failing to get the plant closed over the evacuation issue in 2003, plant critics focused on relicensing, which is well under way and involves studies by the Nuclear Regulatory Commission and public hearings. The NRC is in the midst of its own environmental study.

The NRC has never denied a license renewal for a U.S. nuclear power plant, but spokesman Neil Sheehan said the commission cannot issue new licenses without the state water permit.

Entergy Nuclear is appealing within the DEC and can go to court if it loses. If that delays federal relicensing, the NRC could allow Indian Point to continue operating in the interim, Sheehan said.

If Indian Point doesn't get the new licenses and replacement power plants don't get built, New York might be in a bind. Indian Point produces about 2,000 megawatts of power, which is about 18 percent of what New York City and Westchester use at peak demand times. The percentage rises as high as 38 percent at other times.
"Without Indian Point, on the hottest August afternoon, you just hope you have enough backup power," said William Miller, professor of nuclear science at the University of Missouri in Columbia. "If there isn't enough, you start rolling brownouts and blackouts."

David Lochbaum, director of the nuclear safety project for the Union of Concerned Scientists, an environmental research and citizen action group, said there's already a bottleneck in transmitting power into New York, and "If Indian Point's not up, the bottleneck gets worse. Without that nearby source, more power produced elsewhere has to come in."

Riverkeeper's Matthiessen said the industry is trying to "scare the public into believing Indian Point power is indispensable: the lights would go off, subways would stop running and our hospitals would stop operating. None of that is true."

If the power grid would do better with Indian Point open, so would Entergy. A study for New York state legislators found that in 2009, Indian Point earned a pretax profit of $436 million.

"Plants like that are cash cows," said former NRC member Forrest Remick.

Closed-cycle cooling is neither new nor uncommon, but under various owners, Indian Point has successfully resisted it for 30 years. More than a third of the nation's 104 nuclear plants already use the technology, and it's required for all new large power plants — not just nuclear — in New York. On May 4, California regulators ordered coastal power plants to begin phasing out the "once-through" cooling process. In March, New Jersey ordered Exelon Corp. to retrofit its Oyster Creek nuclear plant with closed-cycle cooling. And in Ohio, activists are pushing for a cooling tower at a Lake Erie power plant, even as owner FirstEnergy Corp. installs gate-like devices to cut down on the fish kill.

Lochbaum said New York is on solid ground with its objections to Indian Point.

"It's not black and white, where one side is wrong and one is right," he said. "We'll see how the courts weigh those factors."

Courts might find it hard to ignore a 2009 Supreme Court ruling that the federal government can weigh costs against benefits in deciding whether to order power plants to undertake environmental upgrades that would protect fish.

New Yorkers should keep the bigger picture in mind, Lochbaum said.

"It would behoove us to remember that regardless of what happens now, at some point Indian Point isn't going to be there. Demand is only going to go up and we should plan for that."