The Tribune's View
MU bargain

By Henry J. Waters III
Columbia Daily Tribune
Sunday, January 8, 2012

Kiplinger's says MU is among the “Best Values in Public Colleges,” ranking 79th out of the top 100 in costs, retention, graduation rates and student debt. Truman State University ranked 23rd.

Rep. Chris Kelly, D-Columbia, said, “It’s another small building block in appreciating what a good university it is despite the state’s failure to fund it,” an argument that probably won’t gain universal support from outstate lawmakers for increasing UM System appropriations.

The UM budget faces a steady headwind, a traditional skepticism about sending hard-earned tax money to the eggheads in Columbia, so to speak. As one of their largest spending items, higher education budgets always are vulnerable as lawmakers and governors look for ways to balance budgets.

It would be good, as Kelly says, for the state to provide more funding for the university, and I think Gov. Nixon would be willing, but that accomplishment would have to start with a fundamental increase in public funding for the entire budget, a proposition opposed by majority Republicans in today’s General Assembly.

By current political culture, we are a red, parsimonious state, variously regarded as a disease or a blessing. Around here we sort of think it’s a disease, but we’re in the minority.
How well Missouri colleges perform may soon determine how much state support they get

By Dale Singer, Beacon staff
Posted 7:50 am Fri., 1.6.12

MU mention page 2

With state support down and demand for accountability in education up, Missouri's public colleges and universities may soon see dollars from Jefferson City parcelled out in a new way: performance funding.

A task force convened last year to study the plan has made recommendations to the Coordinating Board for Higher Education, which is expected to vote next month. Paul Wagner, the state's deputy commissioner for higher education, said the changes would mean a whole new way of funding Missouri's public campuses.

"A lot of people assume that the distribution among schools has something to do with how many students they have or what programs they have," Wagner said. "But that's not really the case. There are no policy considerations at all."

Instead, Wagner said, allocations of state money pretty much depend on what a school has received in previous years.

Under performance funding, he added, there would be "an incentive for improvement. Schools would not be compared to one another. They would only be compared to themselves. It's about improvement, not just staying the same."

Funding for public higher education in Missouri has been steadily declining in recent years, and the outlook for improvement any time soon is uncertain. So the task force that studied the issue noted clearly that its proposed model is based on the assumption that the state would provide a stable, adequate financial base.

It added that to start the discussion, "its recommendations first acknowledge that the current base funding levels for Missouri public institutions are universally inadequate and, in some members' opinion, inequitable, and new investments in base funding should continue to be the top priority..."
of the Coordinating Board in advocating for increased appropriations for higher education."

State Rep. Chris Kelly (right), a Democrat from Columbia who is serving his second tour of duty in the Missouri House, doesn't disagree with that goal. But, he says, because current levels of state support are far from adequate, shifting the emphasis to performance funding is a somewhat disingenuous attempt to change the subject.

Besides, he adds, institutions are already being funded based at least in part on how well they are doing.

"The theory that this is not happening now is nonsense," he said. "We are constantly re-evaluating their performance.

"We haven't adequately funded them in 20 years. We have made tons and tons and tons of cuts. The subject is that we are underfunding these places. It's not that they are underdelivering."

Declining dollars

Reviewing the recent history of state support for Missouri's public colleges and universities, Wagner said the high point came in 2002, when the appropriation was starting to approach $1 billion. Then the tech bubble burst and the first recession of the past decade started driving that figure down.

Now, he said, the level of support is about $800 million, and for the last couple of years, a chunk of that money has come from the federal stimulus program. The money from Washington -- close to $200 million -- let the state divert some of its support for public campuses to other needs, but now, that source is about to disappear.

As Gov. Jay Nixon's administration was putting together its budget for the fiscal year that begins this July, it floated the idea that could have further weakened support for higher education. It talked of plugging the state's budget hole in part by borrowing $107 million from the University of Missouri and other schools, then repaying the money over time.

The idea was met with almost universal opposition, and this week the governor said it is off the table. Kelly said he was skeptical about the plan from the first.

"I don't see why any university president or board would trade millions of dollars for some vague promise from this governor or this legislature," he said. "I also believe it would probably be unconstitutional because it requires that the money be paid back by future legislatures, and this legislature cannot pass things that are binding on future legislatures."

The real answer, he said, is not moving money around but raising new revenue, specifically the state's tobacco tax, which at 17 cents a pack is the lowest among the 50 states.

"There is not going to be money to fund higher education as long as we decide year after year to take care of the cigarette lobby and not raise cigarette taxes," Kelly said. "We should not be
proud of having the lowest tax in the nation. I would be much prouder of funding things like the nursing school at UMSL than having a cigarette tax that is less than one-fifth of what Oklahoma has."

Wagner agrees that performance funding has to start with dollars that are adequate.

"No performance funding is going to be successful if it's not funded," he said. "At this point, it's hard to be optimistic for the state being able to come up with new resources in the next few years. In some ways, that makes this the best time to set up the plan, so it will be in place when new money is available."

Five measures of success

The task force on performance funding noted that its strategy has been proposed in Missouri before, but follow-through has been weak. "With national trends in higher education moving toward a greater emphasis on performance driving the allocation of state dollars," it added, "the time was right for Missouri to revisit performance funding and develop a new model."

The panel said performance measures should apply only to new appropriations, then be built into an institution's base appropriation for future years. It said that the funding allocated on the basis of performance should not exceed 2-3 percent of any school's state funding in any given years.

The task force said Missouri's public four-year colleges and universities should be judged on five factors to determine whether any one of them receives the extra money based on performance, with each factor earning 20 percent of the total available:

- Student success and progress, with schools judged either on how many freshmen return for their sophomore year or how many first-time, full-time freshmen successfully complete 24 credit hours in their first academic year.
- Increased numbers of degrees granted, based either on total degrees or how many students earn their degrees in six years or less.
- Quality of student learning, judged by improvements made in general, made by students in their major field or scored on tests required to gain a professional or occupational license.
- Financial responsibility or efficiency, judged on the percent of expenditures spent on an institution's core mission or an increase in revenue per student that falls at or below the increase in the consumer price index.
- A fifth measure would be specific to each college or university.

Greater accountability

Wagner said that at a time of tight money, coupled with calls for more accountability on how those dollars are spent, performance funding can help schools that are already doing well do even better.
States across the country are using such measures, he added, and Missouri should join them.

"A lot of states' higher education budgets are built on input," he said, "but now they are looking more at output, not enrollment or programs but graduates and successful completion of things. Missouri is jumping on that same train."

Doing so, Wagner said, can lead to fundamental shifts at colleges and universities about how education is carried out and how students can benefit.

"In my view," he said, "this is not necessarily about the money as much as it is about getting everyone on campus start thinking with a different mindset. Let's take a closer look at why students leave. Are there things we could do to keep them in the mix?

"It's not necessarily driven solely by money, but because funding is so tight, you can really galvanize a campus around simple, straightforward goals that may not have been in the forefront of everyone's minds."

Nikki Krawitz, the vice president for finance and administration at the University of Missouri system, said the school's four campuses not only have those goals in mind, but they are already moving forward in those areas.

"The performance funding measures are all related to efforts that the University of Missouri has had under way for years," she said in an email, "including increasing retention rates, graduation rates, professional licensure of its graduates, and research funding and efficient use of resources for the core missions.

"Being rewarded for what we are already doing, and agree is important, is great."

Whether performance funding dollars would be extra, and whether they would even be available, remains unclear. But Krawitz said the concept works for the four-campus system.

"Any increase in funding would be welcomed," she said. "We are confident of our ability to deliver performance in the areas that performance funding is focused on and be rewarded for our performance.

new money for higher ed

Wagner said lawmakers often are incredulous when they hear that there is really no clear explanation about why one school gets one amount and another gets more or less than that.

"Lots of legislators do want there to be some sort of policy rationale about how we distribute money among the colleges," Wagner said. "At least with the distribution of new money, institutions that perform well will get a little bit more than the institution that doesn't perform well."

For his part, Kelly would like to see more dollars coming in altogether, to help Missouri students
and the state as a whole. For example, he notes that 1,000 nurses from other countries are hired every year in Missouri because the state doesn't have the capacity to train its own. UMSL, he said, which has done a good job managing its money, could use more to beef up its nursing program.

"Why shouldn't Missouri kids get those jobs," he said. "Because we don't want to raise the cigarette tax? The university is literally eating itself from within. It's cutting and cutting and cutting and cutting and cutting."

In the end, Wagner says, it is Kelly and his colleagues in the General Assembly who will decide whether performance funding is put into place -- and whether it gets the financial support it needs to work.

"The determination is finally made by legislators," he said. "We hope if they buy into the performance funding model, actual performance funding would follow. But they don't have to follow it. They really have carte blanche about what their options are.

"I think you would see at the campus level a lot more focus on the issues that are reflected in the performance funding measures. You would see more concerted effort to increase graduation and retention rates, to support students in key fields like science, technology, engineering and math. You would probably see more cooperation among institutions in terms of best practices and success stories in how they have addressed issues. Everyone already understands these issues are important. This would put quite a bit more focus on it."
Idea develops for Tiger fan zone downtown

By Andrew Denney

Columbia Daily Tribune

Sunday, January 8, 2012

With the University of Missouri’s move to the Southeastern Conference coming this fall, a host of new fans of visiting football teams will be coming to Columbia for game days, and local business leaders want to make the most of it.

Recent discussion has focused on the possible establishment of a pregame and post-game destination near the MU campus to help show fans a good time.

The exact details of the idea, including a specific location, have yet to be established, said Greg Steinhoff, an executive at Veterans United Home Loans and former director of the Missouri Department of Economic Development. But he said he and other business leaders working to develop the idea are calling the destination area “Tiger Town.”

He said those discussing the idea have put a lot of consideration into establishing it in Columbia’s downtown.

“We really want to give visitors a great first impression of our community so they go back and tell their friends and family, ‘Hey, you should check out Mizzou,’ ” Steinhoff said.

There have been early indications that, although SEC fans generally will have to travel farther to see their teams play the Tigers than fans from most Big 12 schools did, the long distances won’t keep them away from Columbia. Just days after Missouri’s 2012 football schedule was released, SEC fans already were snapping up reservations at local hotels.

Steinhoff said the idea for Tiger Town came from research into game-day events in other university cities. One example is The Grove at the University of Mississippi, a 10-acre wooded meadow in the center of campus that on game days becomes a massive tailgating area.

Rick Means, CEO and president-elect at Shelter Insurance, and Bob Gerding, former chairman of the Columbia Chamber of Commerce and a partner at accounting firm Gerding, Korte and Chitwood, have been working together to develop the idea.
Means said he gathered some inspiration for Tiger Town from Norman, Okla., home of the University of Oklahoma, where his daughter operates a business. He said several blocks near the OU campus are blocked off on game days to allow fans to roam freely and enjoy the festivities.

Means and Gerding will present the Tiger Town idea Tuesday at a meeting of the Downtown Community Improvement District. The meeting begins at 4 p.m. and will take place at The District offices, 11 S. Tenth St.

CID Executive Director Carrie Gartner said although the idea for Tiger Town is still in its formative stages, the idea of local leaders working to bring more foot traffic downtown is “great news.”

“People working hard to bring people downtown is always a good thing,” Gartner said.
Missouri seeks new look at unsolved campus murder

Seven years after a University of Missouri microbiology professor was stabbed and stuffed into the trunk of his car, which was then set on fire, campus police are asking a multistate law enforcement organization to help in the investigation.

Jeong Im, 72, was found dead in his car in campus parking garage on Jan. 7, 2005. In the seven years since the murder, university police have enlisted help from other agencies, including the Mid-Missouri Major Case Squad and a homicide expert, with no success.

Now, the Mid-States Organized Crime Information Center in Springfield has been asked to look into Im's death, The Columbia Daily Tribune reported Thursday (http://bit.ly/xDCu3t). The organization is one of six regional centers that help local police agencies solve major crimes.

"We want to give it another set of eyes," said campus police chief Jack Watring.

Im, a protein chemist and microbiologist, immigrated to the United States from Korea four decades ago. He received a doctorate from the University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill and subsequently worked at six other American universities before joining the Missouri faculty in 1987.

Im's family moved to California after his death, but Watring said the department regularly keeps in touch with his wife, Tesuk. Former professor Henry Liu, a vocal advocate who kept pressure on police to solve the case, died in a car crash in 2009.

But Watring said his officers didn't need outside pressure to continue investigating the case because it is a cloud hanging over the department.

"Our guys want to solve it so bad," he said.

A $25,000 reward has been offered for information leading to an arrest.
The department has a rough sketch of a person who might be connected to the case. It shows a slender white man, between 6 feet and 6-feet-2 inches tall with brown wavy hair who was wearing a painter's or drywall mask in the area of the parking garage the day Im was killed.

Police found an Old Hickory kitchen knife with an 8-inch blade at the scene. Investigators also are looking for the owner or driver of a faded red 1980s model Ford F-150 pickup spotted near the crime scene.

"If anybody has any information _ no matter how small or minor they think it is _ if they were in the area that day and saw or heard anything, please call us," Watring said.
A New Plan for Detecting—and Fighting—Melanoma Cancer Cells

By medGadget

Melanoma is an aggressive skin cancer that often metastasizes, or spreads, to other areas of the body where it forms secondary tumors. These tumors can be more dangerous than the initial tumor itself, thus providing motivation to find ways to detect metastatic cells while they circulate in the blood prior to implantation elsewhere. Single cell detection has proved difficult and many times patients present with large-sized tumors that can be visualized by CT or MRI.

Biomedical engineers at the University of Missouri have just announced the development of, and plans to commercialize, a detection system of circulating melanoma cells in a blood sample. They rely on photoacoustic technology, or laser-induced ultrasound, which the press release describes below:

The scientific underpinning for this invention involves photoacoustics, or laser induced ultrasound. [Principal Investigator John] Viator uses this tool in conjunction with the properties of density, light, heat, and color to cause cancer cells to react in a manner that makes them detectable and different from surrounding cells.

A first step in the testing process is to use a centrifuge to separate a patient's blood into white blood cells and red blood cells. Melanoma cells are about the same density as white blood cells, but less dense than red blood cells, so melanoma cells are naturally thrown in with white blood cells as the blood separates.

The resulting batch of white blood cells (plus any cancer cells present) is then pumped through narrow tubing that contains a tiny glass box, where the cells are hit with a short pulse of high-intensity laser light as they pass by. Since white objects reflect light, the white blood cells are not affected, but any cell with pigment will absorb the light. The intense laser beam heats such a cell rapidly, causing thermo-elastic expansion, which in turn causes the expanding cell to emit a measurable pressure wave. Detection equipment senses this photoacoustic wave and thus locates the cancer cell.

Using this method, a pigmented melanoma cell stands out "like a big black 18-wheeler running down the freeway among thousands and thousands of white Priuses," Viator said. Pigmented
melanoma cells can be separated from the healthy white blood cells and then individually tested using biomolecular assays or imaging.
On college campuses, mental health emerges from the margins

Monday, January 9, 2012
By ALAN SCHER ZAGIER ~ The Associated Press

COLUMBIA, Mo. -- Mention first aid on a college campus, and most people will point toward the student health center, or perhaps an emergency medical kit in the nearest classroom or residence hall.

University of Missouri psychologist Christy Hutton has a different definition. As coordinator of a new Mental Health First Aid training program, she and partner Sharon Thomas-Parks are teaching campus employees who come in close contact with students -- from professors and deans to advisers and admissions officers -- how to better recognize and respond to signs of mental illness.

The training effort began a decade ago in Australia, with counselors in Missouri and Maryland among the first to bring the program stateside in recent years.

"Missouri is on the cutting edge of doing some really important work on mental health," said Hutton, outreach coordinator at the campus counseling center.

The nearly 200 people who participated in a 12-hour training session at the Columbia campus last week heard a barrage of statistics from the two women that drive home the pervasiveness of mental health problems on campus.

According to the pair, 75 percent of mental disorders develop before age 25. College students are 70 percent more likely to develop mental illness than other adults, and nearly 10 times more likely to have a drug or alcohol problem. They're also far less likely to receive treatment.

"You're more likely to come across someone who needs mental health first aid than someone who needs the Heimlich maneuver or CPR," said Thomas-Parks, a former university psychologist who is now a private consultant.

Throw in student stress over grades, finances, romances, job prospects and more, and the risk factors only escalate. The American College Health Association reports that between 28 percent and 37 percent of college students seriously consider suicide, which is the second leading cause of death among those ages 15 to 24.
Organizers hope that the sessions will also encourage participants to openly discuss mental health issues, which often remain on the margins, even after the mass shootings on campuses such as Virginia Tech and Columbine High School, Thomas-Parks said. The program is also offered to churches and community groups.

"Stigma is the biggest barrier for people with mental illness," she said. "Fighting the stigma surrounding mental illness is often worse than fighting mental illness itself."

The training helps participants learn how to identify depression, anxiety, psychosis, substance abuse and other problems among students and co-workers. It offers additional resources, from websites to crisis hotlines, tries to puncture some of the common misconceptions surrounding mental health problems, and encourages campus employees to feel comfortable stepping outside their areas of expertise -- if only to encourage a student or colleague to seek help, not diagnose or treat the problem.

"We're not going to teach you how to be a therapist," Hutton told participants.

Lynn Carruth-Rasmussen, academic advising director for the College of Education, called the training "extremely helpful, and much needed."

"In the advising world, there's sometimes the perception that we just deal with students on an academic level," she said. "But we come into contact with all of these types of issues. We want students to know that we're here, and we're available."

From role-playing exercises to candid conversations about suicide, the training exercises made participants feel comfortable discussing issues that often invite discomfort, said Michelle Bollinger, a career services coordinator in the College of Education.

"It's been so taboo in the past," she said. "And now it's in the open."
Drunks are aware but don’t care, MU study shows

ST. LOUIS POST-DISPATCH

Associated Press

Saturday, January 7, 2012

A new study says people who commit blunders while under the influence of alcohol know they’re doing it; they just don’t care.

This means buzzed or drunk people who engage in embarrassing or harmful behavior can’t blame it on not having control, said researcher Bruce Bartholow, associate professor of psychology at the University of Missouri.

Although this isn’t the first study that shows alcohol alters the behavior of those who consume it, “It’s the first to show they don’t care that they’re making mistakes,” said Bartholow, chief researcher on the study.

Brain tests during the study of 67 people in Columbia showed that alcohol dulls a mechanism in the brain that tells individuals to put on the brakes when they realize they’re making mistakes.

When the mechanism is working, “They slow down and try not to make the mistake again, or they take corrective action,” Bartholow said.

Introduce alcohol and people are more likely to disregard the moral stop sign, he said, even though they know what they’re doing.

The study involved people between the ages of 21 and 35, students and nonstudents.

Researchers gave a third of the participants drinks with enough alcohol to raise their blood levels to just under the legal driving limit of .08 percent, Bartholow said. They all got the same amount so researchers didn’t measure if the effect was gradual.

Researchers gave a third of the participants placebo drinks; they didn’t know whether the drinks contained alcohol.

A third consumed drinks they knew contained no alcohol.
Then the groups were given tasks designed to elicit mistakes. Researchers measured changes in participants’ mood, their accuracy in computer tasks and how they perceived their accuracy in the tasks.

Bartholow said the researchers used devices on the participants to measure brain activity as the subjects took the tests. Medical technology exists to measure brain activity for impulse control, emotion, mood and other functions.

Nondrinkers had normal activity in the part of the brain that regulated recognizing mistakes. Drinkers had less activity, he said.

Nondrinkers who made mistakes slowed down and tried to correct the errors, he said. Drinkers made less of an effort or simply moved past their errors, the researcher said, even though they knew they’d made errors.

Researchers also interviewed participants after the tests, which helped affirm the findings in the tests, he said.

The dulling of the brain’s mistake alarm only occurred among people who had alcoholic beverages, he said.

“Normally, someone who makes mistakes is aware and makes an effort not to make that mistake again,” Bartholow said.

The people in the alcohol group were less likely, however, to slow down and be more careful, but they realized they had made errors.

“Using alcohol doesn’t allow someone to escape culpability,” he said.

Douglas Schuerer, a surgeon with Barnes-Jewish Hospital, said the findings aren’t surprising. “This says that people should think before they drink,” he said.
Volunteering can help you meet 2012 goals at the same time

by Connie Midy - Jan. 6, 2012 12:34 PM
The Republic | azcentral.com

When Phoenix sisters Brenda Ruiz and Yanneth Montes began volunteering in 2006, they knew their efforts would help legal residents who had arrived here from other countries become U.S. citizens.

They didn't expect the personal benefit, the hours of quality "sister time" spent working on the shared mission of U.S. Rep. Ed Pastor's citizenship drives.

Another bonus: "It's good for our kids to see us doing something for others," Ruiz says.

When Fountain Hills couple Judie Agee and Steve Thomas first lent a hand to non-profit groups, they had no idea that 13 years later and in their 60s, they'd still be in excellent health, busy with work but with energy to spare for Project Linus and Wild at Heart.

"Volunteering helps the volunteers in tons of ways," Agee says, many of them related to physical and emotional well-being.

Dividends range from the seemingly small (she and her husband, for example, have too little free time to become couch potatoes) to the more dramatic (a recovering drug addict whom Agee knows knits for people in need, keeping her hands and mind occupied constructively).

People who volunteer regularly have lower blood pressure, healthier hearts and fewer symptoms of depression than non-volunteers, research led by Purdue University professor Kenneth Ferraro has found.

And in a 2011 study led by University of Missouri professor Gustavo Carlo, rural teens who engaged in altruistic activities such as volunteering were shown to be less likely than others to abuse alcohol or drugs in young adulthood.

So if "become a volunteer" is on your list of New Year's resolutions, you might want to consider socially conscious multitasking: picking a project that will help you achieve your other goals for 2012.

Following are perennially popular resolutions, with examples of community-service opportunities to make your aims easier to accomplish.
Resolution: Quit smoking

If you volunteer as a Phoenix park steward, you won’t want cigarette-induced shortness of breath to slow you while you maintain trails, clear litter and perform other duties in the city’s desert parks and mountain preserves.

Or if you join Project Linus (projectlinus.org), your hands will be too busy making blankets for seriously ill kids, burn victims and others in need of comfort to stop and take a puff. Besides, tobacco smoke would taint your handiwork.

Resolution: Lose weight

Working in the Tigermountain Foundation's Garden of Tomorrow will build your appetite for healthful eating. Volunteers perform tasks including composting, weeding, maintaining the chicken coop and picking fruits and vegetables. For a barbecue that follows work in the garden, volunteers are asked to bring a nutritious food to share.

Resolution: Exercise more

Sports Day with KEEN pairs volunteers and young people who have disabilities for non-competitive activities such as basketball, dancing and games of Duck, Duck, Goose.

KEEN stands for Kids Enjoy Exercise Now, and exercise-averse volunteers will learn that they can enjoy it, too, in the company of these exuberant youngsters.

Resolution: Spend more time with your family

With your kids age 6 and older, host a Saturday-morning Birthday Bash for homeless youths at the Watkins Basic Needs Shelter, a program of UMOM New Day Centers. Volunteers decorate the facility and oversee party activities and are asked to bring store-bought refreshments for party guests.

Or, in the comfort of home, your family can prepare sack meals and deliver them to Save the Family Foundation of Arizona (savethefamily.org). The organization provides transitional housing and other services for homeless families and the working poor.

Resolution: Make new friends

Working side by side on a common cause lends itself to easy conversation and new friendships. Sort, organize and price donated items at a Hospice of the Valley White Dove Thrift Shoppe. Or work with Project CURE to sort and pack medical supplies for shipment to hospitals, clinics and orphanages in other countries.

Resolution: Reduce TV time
TV shows will lose their pull when you connect with real people who need your company. Play bingo at Fillmore Gardens with people with disabilities and older adults. Enjoy table games, including Monopoly and Yahtzee, with seniors at Capri Care Center. Or read with kids ages 4 through 8 in the library of the Salvation Army's homeless shelter for families.

Resolution: Be more positive

It's hard to be anything but positive when you're tutoring kids at your neighborhood school, rocking babies at a hospital or walking dogs awaiting adoption at the Arizona Humane Society (azhumane.org), Maricopa County Animal Care and Control (maricopa.gov/pets) or other animal-rescue groups.

Resolution: Help the environment

The all-volunteer Wild at Heart (wildatheartowls.org) relies on kids through older adults who worry about dwindling wildlife populations and habitats and want to restore balance to the natural world. Volunteers help with community education and the rescue, rehabilitation, relocation and release of raptors.

Resolution: Improve career prospects

Teaching basic computer skills to others will hone your own skills. And, although resume-building may not be your primary goal, the service will make your civic-mindedness a plus for prospective employers.

Goodwill of Central Arizona's career centers use volunteers to teach first-time computer users how to apply for jobs online, create documents, search the Internet and perform other tasks.

Details:

Unless otherwise noted, you can find details about these community-service opportunities through volunteer-coordinating agency HandsOn Greater Phoenix (handsonphoenix.org).
Turtles affected by exposure to chemical

By Janese Silvey

Columbia Daily Tribune

Saturday, January 7, 2012

Turtles exposed to a banned chemical that still lingers in the environment were smaller and had lower bone density than unexposed turtles.

That's from a study recently released by Casey Holliday, assistant professor of anatomy at the University of Missouri's School of Medicine, and his wife, Dawn Holliday, an assistant biology professor at Westminster College in Fulton. The pair teamed up to study the impact of pentachlorobiphenyls, commonly referred to as PCBs, on turtles because they are an indicator species used to gauge the health of an entire ecosystem.

PCBs were manufactured until 1977 but banned by the Environmental Protection Agency in 1979. Because they break down slowly, they're still in the environment. The researchers studied PCB 126, a version of the chemical compound once used in pesticides and electric transformers.

Turtles exposed to the chemical for six months not only had stunted growth but also were less functional than unexposed peers. Lower bone density, for instance, can cause turtles problems when they try to stay underwater for long periods of time. Additionally, turtles with low bone density are more likely to produce eggs with thinner and more-vulnerable shells.

Exposure to PCB also caused more juvenile features, so affected turtles with smaller, weaker jaws had a tough time cracking the shells of hard prey, such as crabs.

Scientists know people harbor PCBs in tissues, but little is known about the effect the chemicals have on people. Previous studies have shown those accidentally exposed to the chemical through spills or accidents have linked exposure to stunted growth.

Because humans are high on the food chain, they are more susceptible to PCB accumulation, Casey Holliday said. As large animals eat smaller exposed animals, the chemical stays in the food chain and is deposited in fat cells. That means even people not directly exposed to extreme amounts of PCB might see effects.

“This research will help us understand these effects better,” he said.

The study was published in the journal Aquatic Toxicology.
Bald eagle release fulfills Macon hospice patient's wish

By Kip Hill
January 8, 2012 | 7:24 p.m. CST

MACON — Ruth Payton, 82, did her part to fulfill a long-held dream on Sunday. The bald eagle she was releasing, however, was less than cooperative.

Payton pulled the string attached to a kennel door, to reintroduce Watson, a mature bald eagle, into the wild. Whether due to the large crowd that had gathered to witness the event or lingering effects of the 60 mile-plus car ride north from the MU Veterinary Teaching Hospital to Macon, Watson stayed put.

Among friends, family and numerous curious onlookers, Payton, who has been diagnosed with terminal hemolytic anemia, was given the opportunity to see a bald eagle up close Sunday afternoon by Hospice Compassus and the Raptor Rehabilitation Project at the MU Veterinary Clinic.

The project recruits MU student volunteers to work with trained doctors in nursing birds of prey back to health and returning them to the wild.
Payton said she has wanted to see a bald eagle up close for a long time.

"It's a national bird, and I just wanted to see one," Payton said.

Her daughter Becky Sevits said her mother has always been patriotic, and that was a major reason for her wanting to see an eagle up close.

"Parades make her cry; seeing a soldier in uniform makes her cry," Sevits said.

In addition to hemolytic anemia, which causes the destruction of red blood cells, Payton also suffers from leukemia and partial blindness that only affords her peripheral vision, granddaughter Sierra Sevits said.

"That's why she wanted to see an eagle up close, because the pictures don't really do the eagles justice," she said. "But she will sit there with her little magnifier, looking at these eagles."

To qualify for hospice care, a patient usually must have a prognosis of six months or fewer to live. Randi Petre, a licensed social worker at Hospice Compassus, said that before receiving hospice care, Payton was receiving blood transfusions at a rate of up to once every two weeks that would leave her weak, ill and pale.

Payton told one of her hospice nurses about her desire to see an eagle, Petre said. The Hospice Compassus team is asked to keep an ear out for the wishes of patients with terminal illnesses.

From there, the hospice's Dream Team, a group formed roughly a year ago that focuses on fulfilling these wishes, took over. Past wishes have included helping a patient host a family Christmas and making it possible for a patient to attend a Missouri football game, Petre said.

During an Internet search, Petre came across an article written by Tracey Berry, director of external relations at the MU College of Veterinary Medicine, who told Petre about the Raptor Rehabilitation Project.

Petre said the efforts of the school and project to make Payton's dream come true have been nothing short of amazing.

"They were all so gracious, enthusiastic and wanted to help," Petre said. "Right from the get-go, they said if they couldn't make this happen, they were going to find someone that could."
Petre, who has been working with Payton for about the last six months, said the family was shocked and speechless Wednesday when told of the plan to release Watson with Payton in attendance.

"Ruth put her hand over her mouth and got really tearful," Petre said.

Watson, named for the sidekick in the BBC Television series "Sherlock," was brought to the MU Veterinary Medical Teaching Hospital on Dec. 5. Elizabeth Groth, president of the project and a third-year veterinary student, said Watson exhibited signs of blood toxicity upon being admitted.

Those symptoms include the inability to stand, and if the bird can stand, there are signs of ataxia, or lack of muscle coordination, Groth said. Over the past month, Watson has received multiple treatments to remove lead from her blood.

The project treated 85 birds of prey in 2011, Groth said, including four bald eagles.

On Sunday, a crowd of onlookers that included both relatives of Payton and others from the Macon area gathered close to the back of a white Jeep as workers unloaded a large kennel with Watson inside. When Payton pulled the string, Watson seemed to want to just stand in the kennel. After a few tense moments and some coaxing, Watson took a step out and immediately took flight to the east over Long Branch Lake.

Those with cameras followed the flight of the eagle against the gray January sky. Payton remained surrounded by family, including grandson Matthew Sevits. Sevits has a tattoo of his grandmother's name across his lower neck, surrounded by two roses. He said he had it done before visiting his grandmother in the hospital a couple of years ago. Since then, the family, including Payton, has gotten matching tattoos of four-leaf clovers on the big toe of their right foot.

"She's just, all-around, an awesome woman," Matthew Sevits said. Though Payton said she wished she'd gotten a better look at Watson before she flew away, she was grateful for having her wish fulfilled.

Sierra Sevits said the release gave her grandmother a chance she hasn't had while raising a family.

"She never got to do anything like this," Sevits said. "She's been so busy raising kids that she's never got to do anything special, for her."
Ethanol producers now face future without a subsidy

DAVID NICKLAUS dnicklaus@post-dispatch.com 314-340-8213 | Posted: Sunday, January 8, 2012 12:05 am | (65) Comments

It's time for a little belt-tightening — but only a little — in the Corn Belt.

A federal tax credit for ethanol expired on Jan. 1, leaving producers of the corn-based fuel without a subsidy that had existed in one form or another since the 1970s.

The loss of the subsidy is squeezing ethanol distillers' profit margins, and it may be starting to push up the retail price of gasoline. If there is an effect at the gas pump, though, it's vanishingly small.

The tax credit amounted to 45 cents per gallon of ethanol, and most pumps dispense fuel that's 10 percent ethanol and 90 percent gasoline. At most, then, the loss of the subsidy could add 4.5 cents to the pump price.

Pat Westhoff, co-director of the University of Missouri's Food and Agricultural Policy Institute, says it's more reasonable to assume that the ethanol distillers will bear some of that cost.

"More of it is being reflected in lower prices to ethanol producers rather than in higher prices to ethanol consumers," he said.

At most, then, Westhoff thinks motorists might pay a couple of cents per gallon more. That's not much in a world in which weather, financial markets or other events can cause prices to jump 20 cents overnight, as they did last week.

Taxpayers will save the $6 billion that they handed to ethanol blenders last year, but unfortunately this doesn't end the government's involvement in deciding what we put in our tanks. It still mandates that the fuel industry blend 13.2 billion gallons of ethanol this year.

"The dominant policy today is the renewable fuel standard," says Wallace Tyner, professor of agricultural economics at Purdue University. "The subsidy was largely redundant, which is one reason the industry quit fighting for it. They basically surrendered months ago."
Think about it: Ethanol producers are guaranteed a market for their product, no matter how costly it gets. What industry wouldn't like such a deal? And for years they got a tax credit that made their product even more profitable.

As profit margins shrink, smaller ethanol distilleries may be particularly vulnerable. Big companies such as Archer Daniels Midland can afford to take a hit, says William O'Grady, chief market strategist at Confluence Investment Management in Webster Groves, but "the smaller, less efficient producers will be hurt and may even go out of business."

The severity of that squeeze will depend on world commodity markets. Ethanol's not as profitable if corn prices rise sharply or oil drops dramatically.

Producers have to keep an eye on sugar prices too, Tyner says. Brazil makes ethanol from sugar cane instead of corn, and a tariff on foreign ethanol also expired at the end of 2011. That's not an issue right now, because the U.S. is a net exporter of ethanol, but things can change quickly.

"If the world price of sugar fell, so Brazil decided to produce less (refined) sugar and more ethanol, then there's a big problem for the domestic ethanol industry," Tyner said.

Sugar, he adds, is among the more volatile agricultural commodities. Its world price has doubled in the past couple of years but could easily go the other direction if Brazil has a bumper crop.

If that happens, U.S. taxpayers may again need to beware of ethanol producers' seeking subsidies. They were quiet about the tax credit's expiration, but this politically connected industry isn't yet ready to let the free market run its course.
COLUMBIA MISSOURIAN

Burch Drive to close Monday for construction of chiller plant

By Lauren Schad
January 7, 2012 | 5:27 p.m. CST

COLUMBIA—Burch Drive, west of Trowbridge Livestock Center at MU, will be closed starting Monday, according to a notice from MU Campus Facilities Road Information.

The stretch of road, connecting Ashland Road to East Campus Drive, will be closed until the completion of the East Campus chiller plant, located northeast of Trowbridge Livestock Center. The chiller plant is needed to provide more water capacity for facilities in MU’s Southeast Gateway and East Campus, according to the notice.

The completed construction project will include a chilled water plant to help supply the chilled water loop, according to a budget document from the MU Board of Curators. The project will provide chilled water for new campus buildings and additional capacity after old chillers are removed.

Construction is expected to be completed in spring 2013.
The Triumph of Kodakery: The Camera Maker May Die, But the Culture It Created Survives

By Alexis Madrigal

The popularizer of photography is on its corporate deathbed, but the culture it created is stronger than ever.

Think about what we mean when we talk about a gadget. They are technological objects that are personal, primarily used for entertainment, branded, and planned to obsolesce. The companies that sell them often make some small amount of money on the gadget itself and a large amount of money on the purchases you make using the gadget.

This core gadget business, which makes its annual pilgrimage to Las Vegas next week for the Consumer Electronics Show, has multiple roots in the 19th century. One could argue that Edison began it or that Singer's sewing machines should be seen as its most important precursor or that Remington mastered the art of selling the gadget to profit from the accessories. Maybe pistols, or pocket watches or even, as historian Yoni Applebaum suggested, Eli Terry's fashionable clocks, which debuted in 1816, deserve spots in the gadget family tree.

But Kodak may be the most direct ancestor of the gadget business as we now recognize it and certainly of the mobile, social variety that now has such currency. The power of the company’s brand in the early 20th century presages the power of Apple at the beginning of the 21st. Kodak sold a certain kind of life that people were eager to lead just as the Cupertino’s outfit does today.

Despite Kodak's century of successes, the Wall Street Journal reports the company is likely to file for bankruptcy in the coming weeks. Even if it doesn't, the corporate grandfather of the gadgets business is now struggling along with a market capitalization that looks more fitting for a penny stock than an industrial giant.
This is one of the sadder corporate endings in recent memory. Kodak is the company responsible for the popularization of taking photographs and the creation of a culture of life recording that has never been stronger. Kodak may not survive, but Kodakery lives on.

Before George Eastman founded Kodak, photography -- or any way of capturing an image -- was the province of experts. Here's one preposterously long sentence on Kodak's significance from an 1890 article that appeared in the popular technical journal *Manufacturer and Builder*:

Most of our readers, whether photographers or not, know enough of the subject to be aware of the fact that the very general popularity of this fascinating scientific recreation is due almost entirely to the adoption, by the Eastman Company, of Rochester NY, of the ingenious idea of combining with a camera, of such small dimensions and weight as to be readily portable, an endless strip of sensitized photographic film, so adjusted within the box of the camera, in connection with a simple feeding device, that a succession of pictures may be made -- as many as a hundred -- without further trouble than simply pressing a button.

The magazine is describing Kodak's use of a roll of film instead of plates. This effectively "shrunk the memory" of the camera, so that many more exposures could be made. The Kodak No. 1 came loaded with film, making it a ready-to-use device. In fact, it came with 100 exposures, which University of Missouri scholar Nancy Martha West estimated was 10 times more photographs than an average middle-class family owned in 1888, the year the camera debuted.

"Simply by 'pressing a button,' ads assured the American public, amateur photographers could realize what had been a dominant hope of American culture since the early nineteenth century: the hope of effortless abundance," West wrote in her 2000 book, *Kodak and the Lens of Nostalgia*.

Effortless abundance, you say? What could describe our current world of shareable digital photography better than effortless abundance? Our social, mobile moment is the realization of the original Kodak vision.

So, let's take a trip back to that time. During George Eastman's tenure, Kodak was a blanket advertiser, placing ads in many, many magazines from the 1890s onward. Kodak was such a household word that the company struggled to keep it from becoming generic.

"The trade-mark 'KODAK' was first applied, in 1888, to a camera manufactured by us and intended for amateur use," one advertisement explained. "It was simply invented -- made up from letters of the alphabet to meet our trade-mark requirements. It was short and euphonious and likely to stick in the public mind, and therefore seemed to us to be admirably adapted to use in exploiting our new product."

The fear that people might mistake some no-name camera for the Kodak is palpable. And for good reason. The company was not trying to promote photography generally -- though it did -- but Kodak's cameras and film and developing machines specifically, which were grouped under the heading, "Kodakery."
West explains that Kodak was not just a photography company. Rather, it promoted notions about what should (and should not) be recorded that were sometimes in sync with the times and sometimes helped to push certain ideas into the culture. West notes that before Kodak, photographs of death and other somber themes were far more common than in the snapshot era that followed. Kodak pitched its cameras, through a series of different ad campaigns, as vehicles for capturing good times, good memories, good stories. Not war, but the letter a soldier would read to comfort himself while in the trenches.

Kodak's themes resonated with a newly wealthy, pre-Depression American population that liked to go on vacation and camping. It said to them: you can capture the good life with the press of a button. It also said to them: if you don't take a picture, it's not as authentic as if you did. Kodak positioned itself -- and photography, by extension -- as the arbiter of reality with the slogan, "Prove it with a Kodak." This particular bit of Kodakery lives on in the Internet dictum, "Pics or it didn't happen."

Photographs came to represent something more than a portrait. They became extensions of our minds; they replaced our memories. And within all that abundance, some order became necessary. Takers of many photographs had to figure out what was worth including. Kodak offered advice in the form of pamphlets and "little books" and ads, West argues, that pushed photographers into nostalgic modes of thinking.

"[Kodak] taught amateur photographers to apprehend their experiences and memories as objects of nostalgia," West writes, "for the easy availability of snapshots allowed people for the first time in history to arrange their lives in such a way that painful or unpleasant aspects were systematically erased."

Snapshots were a kind of social media: they were designed to be shared in the once-ubiquitous albums of yesteryear. As with Facebook Timeline, the photo album was supposed to begin as soon as one was born and should continue until they day one died.

While Mark Zuckerberg called Timeline "an important next step to help you tell the story of your life" that would allow you to "highlight and curate all your stories so you can express who you really are." John Updike reminds us in a 2007 essay that Kodak once had the slogan, "Let Kodak keep the story."

"The camera both exalted and invaded domestic privacy," Updike writes, crediting a 1938 pundit with the line, "Candid photography is making us human goldfish." I recalled the stories of gyms banning "Letting Kodak keep the story constituted one more formerly human operation delegated to machines," Updike continues. "Our anniversaries and children's birthdays were remembered for us, in caches of snapshots."

While the chemistry and technology in Kodak cameras were important, it was the Kodak life that people were buying -- even using Kodak as a verb, as in, "I Kodak." Perhaps that looks more familiar in today's marketing syntax: iKodak.
"No matter what your hobby may be, a Kodak will help you enjoy it the more," one advertisement held. You'll enjoy it more because unlike the lived experience, you'll be able to "highlight and curate" just the good stuff.

Combine Apple's with-you-everywhere gadgets with Facebook's new auto-autobiographical tools and these gadgets are like autotune for personal history. You record your off-key voice and when you play it back, every note is perfect. That's the triumph of Kodakery.
The Tribune's View

Budget gap

How to fund state government

By Henry J. Waters III

Columbia Daily Tribune

Sunday, January 8, 2012

NO MENTION

Gov. Jay Nixon will tell the Missouri General Assembly on Jan.17 what its members already know. In recent years the state budget has been patched together using federal “budget stabilization funds” that run out this year, leaving a projected $450 million deficit.

Local lawmakers fret most openly about funding for education, which faces an almost certain cut in the coming budget. To avoid these reductions, Nixon floated the idea of borrowing money from five large colleges to be repaid over seven years by the state, an idea now apparently off the table.

Legislators complain the governor makes plans in the secrecy of his office and springs them without consultation. The governor does keep to himself much of the time, avoiding contentious political arguing. With this tactic, he avoids receiving personal flak but also fails to gain needed support in the General Assembly, where eventually he will need it.

Politically, the governor’s isolationism seems to work. In a state and a year when Republican conservatives are more popular, the Democratic incumbent is on his way to an easy victory in November.

It’s hard to pin blame on either party for the state’s budget woes. The nation is recovering slowly from a three-year revenue pinch, and shortage of revenue does cause an unusual amount of discipline in setting public spending priorities, a difficult situation but not without benefit. When revenue increases exponentially, public budgets will keep pace and politicians will enjoy not having to make hard choices. It’s human nature.

Today, though, our state is facing revenue gaps in basic areas of public infrastructure such as transportation facilities and, yes, education.
Officials have kept our state budget intact and maintained a good credit rating, but in recent years needed public spending would have been impossible without help from Washington.

We are not alone, and we have weathered the storm better than other states with similarly declining revenues, but next year will be what some politicians call a cliff year, a time when we go over the edge on our way to a hard bump at the bottom before we can start the slow climb back upward.

If tight economic times temper the steel in our psyches, we’re in for a bit more leavening.