Luke Welsh of Lee’s Summit sat on a cement block wall Wednesday at South Fourth Street and East Stewart Road giving directions to Mark Twain Hall while playing an accordion. Some people pointed at Welsh and laughed. Parents with students stopped to ask directions.

Welsh is a Residential Life adviser at Mark Twain Hall at the University of Missouri, where he is studying communication and religious studies.

“We have the final day of moving today, getting MU students back on campus, and so I’m just out here at this corner spot, where it’s pretty lonely and pretty quiet, … just trying to keep myself entertained,” Welsh said.

Welsh gave drivers directions to keep them going one way on Fourth and to make traffic flow smoothly. Then he turned back to his accordion and searched for the bass and chord buttons with his left hand while playing the piano keys on the right side of the accordion and began playing a song.

“My grandpa bought it for me more than a year ago. He called in to the show. I guess it was one of those morning talk shows where they buy things and they sell things. He just called in and said, ‘Hey, I’m looking to get my grandson an accordion,’ ” he said.

Jack Pitlyk, Welsh’s grandfather, lives in Florissant. Welsh said the accordion, which is a Hohner Contessa IIM, is from the 1940s and has a distinct musty smell.

Welsh played the piano before taking up the accordion. He couldn’t find anybody who taught accordion, so he just figured it out by drawing on his musical background playing guitar, viola and drums in addition to the piano.

Welsh comes from a musical family. His mother, grandpa and great-great-grandpa all played instruments.

Welsh can play almost any song on the accordion by ear. “Kind of like those guys who play at the piano bar, … that same type of thing,” he said.
Welsh can play about 30 songs that have more-intricate chords.

“The hardest thing is definitely the left hand. It’s got 120 buttons over here. This is the full-size” accordion, he said. “There’s three little buttons that have notches that I can feel to kind of tell where I am on it, so if I make a big jump I can go, OK, here’s that button. I’m supposed to be here.”

Welsh said he gets some strange looks from passers-by.

“Everybody likes it. A lot of people stop to listen, or they will start laughing and pointing. I mean, it sounds negative, but it’s in a positive way,” he said laughing.
Demand will drive SEC Network

By BLAIR KERKHOFF

NO MU MENTION

Want the SEC Network? Ask for it.

That’s the message Justin Connolly brought to the Tiger Club of Kansas City on Tuesday. Connolly is an ESPN vice president for college networks who will oversee Southeastern Conference sports coverage.

“That’s a big piece of why I’m here,” Connolly said. “It’s an outreach effort to fans, to let them know well in advance it’s coming.”

The SEC Network, set to launch in August 2014, will air 45 football games and more than 100 men’s basketball games. On the day when the SEC announced its 2013-14 basketball schedule, Connolly wouldn’t speculate which of those matchups might be SEC Network targets for the next season.

But some of the attractive ones will be.

“There’s an understanding between the conference and the schools that in order to make this thing go, to run well and draw the attention of consumers and distributors, that we’re going to have to schedule meaningful games that will resonate with fan bases,” Connolly said.

That goes for football as well.

ESPN and the SEC are banking on attractive content for fans to demand the network as part of a basic tier lineup on distributors such as Time Warner Cable, Cox, Comcast, Dish and DirecTV. The SEC already has secured a deal with AT&T U-verse.

According to industry analysts at SNL Kagan, ESPN receives more than $5 per month from each of its 100 million or so subscribers, making it the most expensive channel on your cable bill.

Some have speculated that the SEC Network may charge an additional $1 per month in subscriber fees in the league’s 11-state footprint, including Missouri.
CBS will continue to have first choice on football, including the SEC football championship game, and men’s basketball games.
ST. LOUIS • Missouri transportation officials are preparing a temporary fix to the rough ride motorists endure on the Poplar Street Bridge.

The pavement work is expected to take two weekends and will begin after Labor Day, Deanna Venker, MoDOT’s area engineer for the city of St. Louis, said Tuesday.

Traffic lanes on the Poplar Street Bridge — which carries Interstates 55, 70 and 64 across the Mississippi River — have been patched and repatched over the years.

The span’s deck is a steel box of sorts, and crews have found it difficult to make pavement adhere to it properly.

“The major projects we have done over the past 12 years were permanent fixes that have failed,” Venker said.

Transportation officials hope the temporary measure will last two to four years, until a more lasting repair can be put in place after the new Stan Musial Veterans Memorial Bridge opens next year north of the Edward Jones Dome to carry a realigned Interstate 70.

Venker said exposed portions of the steel Poplar Street Bridge deck become slick during rain and snow.

Westbound lanes will be permanently repaved when MoDOT begins replacing ramps along westbound approaches next year. The eastbound lanes will be repaved when the remaining ramps are replaced beginning in January 2016.

MoDOT is working with its counterparts at the California Department of Transportation and the University of Missouri in Columbia to research a more permanent solution to the pavement adhesion problem.