Author, wife pledge $1.5 million to Missouri Libraries

COLUMBIA, Mo. (AP) — Author William Trogdon and his wife, Jo Ann, have pledged a $1.5 million estate gift to support rare books and special collections at Missouri Libraries. The couple also donated $100,000 for scholarships to the university's School of Health Professionals.

Trogdon, also known as William Least Heat-Moon, is best known for his book "Blue Highways."

The university said Friday the endowed gift will go to the existing William Trogdon Libraries Fund, which buys and conserves rare materials at the libraries.

The latest gift brings the couple's total donations to the libraries to $3.5 million. That does not include rare and unique works from their personal collection.

The School of Health Professions gift will create the Ralph Grayston Trogdon Scholarship, which will support disabled students who want to become health care practitioners.

Couple gives $1.6 million to MU libraries, scholarships

By Megan Favignano

Friday, September 11, 2015 at 12:22 pm

A $1.5 million estate gift will add to the University of Missouri libraries endowment for rare books and special collections.
Columbia residents Jan and William Trogdon also pledged to give the university $100,000 for scholarships in the MU School of Health Professions. MU held a news conference at Ellis Library on Friday to discuss the Trogdons’ donation.

“Books are important artifacts in our culture,” William Trogdon, an author and MU alumnus, said in a written statement. “My love for books — their look, feel and even their smell — is something inherent within me. This passion that exists for Jan and me, as well as our love for Ellis Library, has made this a very easy decision.

The endowed gift will be added to the William Trogdon Libraries Fund. The fund aids in the purchase and preservation of rare books related to American exploration, travel and topography and Native American studies.

While library resources can be accessed digitally, Chancellor R. Bowen Loftin said Friday people still are drawn to libraries to collect their thoughts and study.

“We still want to be here,” Loftin said. “It’s a place that brings us together.”

The School of Health Professions will use the Trogdons’ $100,000 to create the Ralph Grayston Trogdon Scholarship, which honors William’s father. The scholarship will be awarded to students with physical disabilities who are studying to become health care practitioners. William Trogdon said his father instilled in him the value of service to others.

School of Health Professions Dean Kristofer Hagglund said in a news release it’s important that the school’s students are as diverse as the communities they will serve as health care providers.

“The Trogdons’ generous gift will provide financial help to students with disabilities, removing one of the barriers to their education, and contributing to the diversity of the future healthcare workforce,” Hagglund said.

William Trogdon, also known as William Least Heat-Moon, has published nine books about history and travel, including the New York Times best-selling book “Blue Highways.” He said Friday that as a freshman at MU in 1957, he didn’t realize how important the library would become for him. William Trogdon also shared his passion for MU’s library in a 2007 MU library publication.

“For the first time, I saw how immense and complex was the world of books. It was a realization that has never left me,” William Trogdon wrote in the 2007 library publication. “Even more importantly, in a roundabout way, it brought my wife, Jan, and me together.”

Jan Trogdon found a manuscript by William Clark that had been in Ellis Library since 1928, and it led her to introduce herself and her project to William Trogdon.

William Trogdon has earned five degrees from MU: bachelor’s degrees in English and journalism, master’s and doctorate degrees in English and an honorary degree. Jan Trogdon is an
attorney, historian and author. The University of Missouri Press published her book “The Unknown Travels and Dubious Pursuit of William Clark” this month.

The Trogdons’ endowed gift brings their total donations to MU libraries to $3.5 million. They also have donated and pledged to donate rare books from their personal collection to the library.

“I can never give enough to repay what this university has allowed me to do,” William Trogdon said Friday.

COLUMBIA MISSOURIAN

Local author William Trogdon donates $1.6 million to MU

LAUREN PUCKETT, Sep 11, 2015

COLUMBIA — Author William Trogdon and his wife Jo Ann have pledged $1.6 million to MU Libraries and the MU School of Health Professions.

The bulk of the gift, $1.5 million, will help preserve rare books and special collections at Ellis Library on the MU campus. An additional $100,000 will provide scholarships to MU students with physical disabilities training to work in health professions.

The donation was announced Friday morning in the colonnade of Ellis Library.

The $1.6 million gift will add to the existing William Trogdon Libraries Fund, bringing the Trogdon family's total donations to MU Libraries to $3.5 million.

The money given to the library system will be used to purchase and conserve rare materials related to American exploration, travel and Native American studies. The endowment to the School of Health Professions will create the Ralph Grayston Trogdon Scholarship in honor of William Trogdon's father.
Trogdon cited his father as a huge influence in his love of reading and writing. He said his father encouraged him to read even before he started kindergarten.

“Just by teaching me what those dark letters of ink on paper meant, my father changed my life,” said Trogdon, author of nine books including the best-seller "Blue Highways." He writes under the name William Least Heat Moon.

Trogdon’s wife, Jo Ann, an attorney and historian, is the author of "The Unknown Travels and Dubious Pursuits of William Clark," published by the University of Missouri Press in September.

"We're here to celebrate their love of books," Chancellor R. Bowen Loftin said during the announcement ceremony.

Trogdon said in a news release that the scholarship would also honor his father "in a way that would assist others seeking careers in health professions."

Kristofer Hagglund, dean of the School of Health Professions, noted in the news release that the scholarship would benefit a vital segment of the student population.

“The Trogdons’ generous gift will provide financial help to students with disabilities, removing one of the barriers to their education, and contributing to the diversity of the future health-care work force,” he said.
MU receives 1.6 million for libraries and scholarships


COLUMBIA, Mo - The University of Missouri received more than one million dollars Friday morning as a gift from Columbia residents Jo Ann and Willian Trogdon.

The money will enable the purchase and conservation of rare books and materials in several fields, including American exploration, travel and topography, and Native American studies.

Additionally, $100 thousand of that money will go to the MU School of Health Professions to create a new scholarship.

The scholarship will support health profession students with physical disabilities who hope to one day become health practitioners.
COLUMBIA - Columbia residents Jo Ann and William Trogdon have pledged a $1.5 million estate gift to the University of Missouri in support of a rare books and special collections endowment for the MU Libraries. The Trogdons have also given $100,000 to support scholarships in the MU School of Health Professions.

The endowed gift will increase the existing William Trogdon Libraries Fund, which will allow for the purchase and conservation of rare materials in the fields of American exploration, travel and topography, and Native American studies by the MU Libraries. The Trogdons' latest gift brings their total donations to the MU Libraries to $3.5 million, not including rare and unique works from their personal collection that have been or will be donated to the MU Libraries.

The gift to the MU School of Health Professions will create the Ralph Grayston Trogdon Scholarship, in honor of William's father. The scholarship will support School of Health Professions students with physical disabilities who aspire to become health care practitioners.

"One of my earliest and fondest memories are of my father teaching me to read," Trogdon said. "Books are important artifacts in our culture. My love for books - their look, feel and even their smell - is something inherent within me. This passion that exists for Jan and me, as well as our love for Ellis Library, has made this a very easy decision. Further, my father was a man who believed in service, who believed in helping people, and we felt like we should do something to honor him in a way that would assist others seeking careers in health professions."

"We are very appreciative to the Trogdons who have demonstrated their passion for books and libraries with a perpetual endowment that will enrich generations of MU students and scholars to come," MU Chancellor R. Bowen Loftin said. "The Trogdons' generous gift will help us further MU's mission of providing a first-class education and unparalleled research opportunities for our students."

"Will and Jo Ann Trogdon have long shown their generosity to the MU Libraries," said Jim Cogswell, director of MU Libraries. "The Trogdon Libraries Fund is the most prominent
illustration of this, but they have long supported us in other ways. In our Adopt-a-Book program, for example, the Trogdons are among the top five donors to that fund, which enables the repair or conservation of rare books. This most recent gift will ensure their legacy to MU and its libraries forever."

"It's important that our students-future health care providers-are as diverse as the populations they will serve in their communities," said Kristofer Hagglund, dean of the School of Health Professions. "The Trogdons' generous gift will provide financial help to students with disabilities, removing one of the barriers to their education, and contributing to the diversity of the future health care work force."

William Trogdon, also known as William Least Heat-Moon, is internationally known for his New York Times best-selling book, Blue Highways. He has published a total of nine books about history and travel, and he holds five degrees from MU.

Jo Ann Trogdon is an attorney and a historian, and her book, The Unknown Travels and Dubious Pursuit of William Clark, was published by the University of Missouri Press in September, 2015.

THE TIMES OF INDIA

Natural compound can cut breast cancer risk

A natural compound found in herbs such as parsley and vegetables like celery and broccoli could reduce the breast cancer risk for women who have undergone hormone replacement therapy, researchers from University of Missouri have found.

The team from University of Missouri-Columbia found that as human breast cancer cells develop, they tend to take on stem cell-like properties which can make them harder to kill.

Here, the natural compound luteolin was used to monitor stem cell-like characteristics of breast cancer cells and the team saw a vast reduction in this phenomenon, further proving that the natural compound exerts its anti-tumour effects in a variety of ways.

In most circumstances, hormone replacement therapies improve the lives of menopausal women and achieve excellent results.

"Nevertheless, research has proven that a higher incidence of breast cancer tumours can occur in women receiving therapies that involve a combination of the natural component estrogen and the synthetic progestin," explained Salman Hyder, the Zalk Endowed professor in tumour angiogenesis and professor of biomedical sciences.

Most older women normally have benign lesions in breast tissue.
These lesions typically don't form tumors until they receive the 'trigger' -- in this case progestin - that attracts blood vessels to cells essentially feeding the lesions causing them to expand.

The new study shows that when the supplement luteolin is administered to human breast cancer cells in the lab, benefits can be observed including the reduction of those vessels "feeding" the cancer cells causing cancer cell death.

Hyder further tested laboratory mice with breast cancer and found that blood vessel formation and stem cell-like characteristics also were reduced in vivo or inside the body.

"We feel that luteolin can be effective when injected directly into the bloodstream, so IV supplements may still be a possibility," Hyder noted.

The early-stage results of this research are promising.

"If additional studies are successful within the next few years, the university officials will request authority from the federal government to begin human drug development."

The research was published in the journal Springer Plus.

How Parents Make Things Worse For Struggling College Students

When a teen is having trouble, talking more about the issue isn't always the solution

It’s a familiar, annual sight during the college orientations I run: at the snack break, a handful of sad looking students peel off from the crowd, wearing carefully curated first-day outfits and clutching their phones. They cluster along the edges of the room, or just outside, murmuring quietly to their parents. If their hair is long enough, it will hang over their faces to cover tears.

I imagine the nervous parents pacing on the other end of the line, stomach in knots as they listen to anguished kids. For many of them, it is the first time they will nurture their children at a distance. Many are surely thrilled that their struggling teen calls at all. After all, isn’t a kid who bends your ear what we call a parenting win?

It depends, researchers say. Psychologists have identified a style of communication between parents and adolescent children that can have the opposite effect of soothing. Co-rumination occurs when we dwell with our kids on their problems, worry about a problem’s causes, focus on a child’s negative feelings and egg each other on to keep talking. Originally discovered in 2002
as a phenomenon occurring among friends, co-ruminating – also called perseverating or overthinking aloud with a companion — has been linked by University of Missouri psychologist Amanda Rose to both closeness in relationship and anxiety and depression.

In other words, repetitive talking about problems brings us closer, but it can also make us unhappy. Co-rumination also interferes with people’s ability and motivation to solve problems, too, largely because it’s more about talking about challenges than taking action to address them. It is more likely to occur among girls and women.

In 2008, Christine Calmes and John Roberts, professors at the State University of New York in Buffalo, found that undergraduates who co-ruminated with a parent were more likely to say they suffered from anxiety. The researchers speculated these conversations were more “passive, repetitive and negative” compared to worries shared with others. And in 2013, Rose and Erika Waller published data in the Journal of Adolescence that strongly suggested adolescents who co-ruminated with their mothers were more likely to do it with friends, and to develop “internalizing symptoms” like depression and anxiety. In their study’s conclusion, Rose and Waller advised that “mothers who co-ruminate with their adolescent children should be aware that they may be modeling a communication style that, if replicated with friends, could have negative emotional consequences.”

Is the answer to change your phone number, ignore SOS texts, or avoid talking about their problems? Of course not. You can, however, take a moment to consider whether you’re co-ruminating with a struggling child. Calmes and Roberts take pains to point out that “it is the manner in which…pairs are discussing problems, as opposed to the fact that they are discussing problems, that makes co-rumination depressogenic.”

Or, as my mom always says, “It’s not what you say, it’s how you say it.”

You might ask yourself these questions:

- Do you spend most of your quality time with your child talking about their problems, and for a long time? Does this tend to happen every time you see each other or talk?
- Do you spend a lot of time talking about how bad they feel as a result of their problems?
- Do you spend a lot of time trying to figure out parts of their problem that you can’t understand, the reasons why the problem has occurred, and every bad thing that might happen because of the problem?
- Do you encourage them to keep talking about their problems at different times?
- Do you do this instead of doing other activities together?

Co-ruminating conversations are often painfully circular: we go around and around as we wonder, speculate and emote about our problems. What we don’t do is problem solve and make a decision. Long conversations that dwell on hard feelings can keep kids tethered to their parents at the very moment they need to strike out on their own. To shift away from co-ruminating with your child, you’ll need to let go together of what you don’t (or can’t) know the answer to, and embrace what is in your control to change.
ORID is a problem solving method that was developed to help individuals and groups break free of indecision. You can also use it to redirect conversations that are becoming too ruminative.

Say your child is talking with you about a roommate she doesn’t like. The roommate is inconsiderate and unfriendly and, on top of that, doesn’t seem to realize he’s a royal slob. Your daughter sounds despondent: it’s only the second week of school. How will she survive for an entire academic year?

Your first line of questions should be objective: ask her what she actually knows to be true. What events have occurred? What has the roommate said and done? What did your daughter say or do in reply? Stick with the who, what, where, when and how. No whys. Don’t let your daughter start editorializing (Can you believe how rude she is? How am I going to study when he’s so insanely loud?!). Remain on the solid ground of evidence, and what she knows to be true right now.

Your next set of questions are reflective: How does she feel about this? Is she angry? Betrayed? Disappointed? Let her vent a bit about how the roommate assignment process is rigged, and whether pitching a tent on the quad is legal.

Now, move to interpretive questions: What does this mean for her? What is the impact of having an inconsiderate, unfriendly roommate? How will that affect her emotionally, socially and academically?

Finally, move to decisional questions: What is she going to do about this, and how can you help her? What campus resources are available, and what’s the best next step? Is it to confront her roommate, talk to residence life staff, or try to switch rooms? What’s the school’s policy and protocol?

One sign that your child might prefer co-ruminating is that you get blown off when you direct him to the decisional questions. This is where you might hear, It’s hopeless. There’s nothing I can do. I can’t believe he left his dirty laundry on my bed! Or: I knew I should have gone to that other school.

Here’s what you might say in response: “I know you’re upset. I get it, and I would be, too. But at some point, we have to move forward, try to address what’s happening and make this better for you. The best way for us to move forward is to figure out your next steps. Let’s do that together.” Empathy will be key. When your child believes you really respect what he’s feeling, he’ll be much more likely to trust you.

Co-ruminating is, at its core, a bad social habit. It’s not genetic, nor is it unavoidable. It can help to imagine co-ruminating as a track your conversation is chugging along. We have to shift onto a more positive conversational track to start generating better thoughts. This fall, as kids set out on new adventures, the real parenting win won’t just be a phone that rings, but a conversation that combines empathy with problem solving, refuses to linger in sadness, and nudges them into the next chapter of their lives.

MU professors develop app to help teach ninth-graders physics

YUAN YUAN, 1 hr ago

COLUMBIA — A new app created by MU researchers is meant to help ninth-graders learn physics and help teachers teach it.

The app, Exploring Physics, is meant to take particular physics curriculum already being taught in a number of public school districts, including Columbia's, and make it available digitally. The Exploring Physics curriculum app is designed to replace traditional lecture-based learning with discussions and hands-on experiments.

“The idea in the app is to have students learn by doing stuff,” said Meera Chandrasekhar, the co-creator of the app and a curators' teaching professor in the MU Department of Physics and Astronomy. “Even though it’s a digital app, it actually involves using quite a lot of hands-on materials.”

The app was developed as a combination of traditional workbook, textbook and laboratory book, Chandrasekhar said.

“It gives enough instructions step by step,” Chandrasekhar said, “so if there is something they didn’t know before, it’s easy to pick up.”
As a digital interactive curriculum, the app took advantage of modern technology to add animation, video clips and classroom discussion to engage students in a more interesting and efficient learning process, she said.

In class, students will be able to draw their design with given experiment instruments — for instance, a bulb, a battery and a wire — and write down their findings. They can also submit their drawing and answers to their teachers for grading and feedback through the app, Chandrasekhar said.

The app includes nine eUnits, covering motion, forces, Newton’s Laws, momentum, energy and electricity. Three of the eUnits will be available later this month. The last one will come out in 2017.

The app, co-created with Dorina Kosztin, another teaching professor of the MU Department of Physics and Astronomy, is a byproduct of a $5 million multi-year National Science Foundation grant led by Chandrasekhar. The just-concluded grant, "A Time for Physics First," is a partnership among MU and 37 core partner school districts in Missouri. These school districts came to the program and agreed to teach students physics in ninth grade.

The Physics First program contributed to the movement of sequencing high school courses in a different way so that ninth-graders learn physics first, before chemistry and biology, Chandrasekhar said.

“Research shows the foundational science is physics and a good foundation makes the other sciences make sense,” said Martha Tyson, chairwoman of Battle's science department and a Physics 1 teacher.

Battle's teachers are in the process of buying teacher copies of the app so they can make the best decision for their classes, Tyson said.
“The Exploring Physics app is an incredible resource for teachers and can be used very effectively with students,” Tyson said. “Our teachers balance paper with digital. We think both are important and have their place.”

School districts can decide how they want to sequence their classes. With Columbia Public Schools’ decision to participate in the program, Columbia students now take physics in ninth grade, Chandrasekhar said.

The Physics First project was designed to address one of the challenges brought by the change of curriculum sequence: a lack of teachers who are available to teach physics in ninth grade.

“It’s a large grant to teach teachers how to teach ninth-grade students physics,” Chandrasekhar said. “There really wasn’t a laid-out curriculum of methodology that students or teachers could use before. Without teaching curriculum, teachers had to keep constructing all day-by-day materials. For each teacher to do so, that was a lot of work, and it also put lots of pressure on them.”

According to a survey of the administrators from the partner districts, they were very positive and want to continue teaching physics in ninth grade in the future, Chandrasekhar said.

Tyson got involved in the program as a participant and was trained for three years. She said it transformed her teaching and gave her better tools.

“I would never return to the ‘old way’ I used to teach physics,” Tyson said. “My students grasp concepts with a much deeper understanding of the material. They not only perform better in physics, but in mathematical understanding as well. These skills also set our students up for success on the ACT and other standardized assessments.”

Still, the Physics First curriculum created some challenges for schools.
“The hard part is that, to institute it, you need to put in certain amount of money for the equipment because it is a hands-on class,” Chandrasekhar said, “and then you have to have training for teachers. School districts get to figure out how to keep teachers’ strength.”

Over the years of the grant, the classroom curriculum has been revised. “We keep revising it based on the input from teachers after they tried this and that,” Chandrasekhar said.

The same will be true for the digital content.

COLUMBIA MISSOURIAN

United Way kicks off MU campaign

ERIN QUINN, Sep 11, 2015

COLUMBIA — This year’s United Way campaign on the MU campus launched Friday with a goal of $600,000 to be raised by Dec. 1.

The community-wide Heart of Missouri United Way campaign has set a goal of $3 million for 2015. MU’s portion of the goal represents 20 percent of the total.

This year’s campaign will give donors control of where their money goes. Donations can be designated to the main fund, a county, a specific agency or one of four target areas — education, income, health and safety net (emergency services).

Just before noon on Friday, Tim Evans, one of the campaign’s tri-chairs, ran up to the stage at Traditions Plaza in a cape and mask to address the crowd. He introduced himself as “The Antidote, the enemy of all things toxic.”

“What could be more toxic than poverty?” Evans said. “Think about it: our neighbors, our friends, our loved ones. Somebody is affected by these things and that is toxic.”
Evans and Truman the Tiger demonstrated the campaign’s motto of “Just One More” with a push-up contest. Truman won by just one more, with four push-ups to Evans’ three.

Last year, United Way raised over $2 million for 31 different agencies, according to the organization’s 2014 report.

Phillip Berger, who works for an agency funded by United Way, spoke at the kickoff over the sound of the bells at Reynolds Alumni Center playing MU’s alma mater and fight song.

“When these agencies succeed, we all succeed, and Mizzou is a vital component to our collective success,” said Berger, the director of marketing, planning and special projects for the Family Health Center.

“With nearly 20 percent of Boone County residents currently living in poverty, no single agency can fully address the complexities of this issue. It takes all of us working in the same direction, it takes partnerships, it takes United Way.”

Supervising editor is Jeanne Abbott.

MU hosts DigiHealth Conference 2015

The University of Missouri is currently hosting the DigiHealth 2015 conference. The meeting, hosted by Mizzou Advantage, said in a press release that they hope the conference will open new doors and allow programs at the university to utilize digital media storytelling to help people better understand “the burden of confusing statistics and provide a better understanding of health.”
Keynote speakers Pip Hardy and Tony Sumner spoke at 9 A.M. Thursday morning about their program “Patient Voices,” which aims to communicate patients and clinicians’ stories about their experiences in healthcare. Together they have more than 1,000 stories in the past 12 years and 600 of them are released. Their book about the “Patient Voices” program entitled, “Cultivating Compassion: How Digital Storytelling is transforming healthcare,” discusses how people are using this method to improve or learn about healthcare.

Faculty and students of MU attended breakout sessions and spoke with them at a question and answer forum about their program.

Both Hardy and Sumner said that telling these stories allows viewers to “walk in someone else’s shoes for a few minutes”.

“Whether these stories are told or not, the stories are always there,” said Sumner.

Event coordinator Jenny Travers believes implementing digital storytelling here at MU is a must.

“DigiHealth is here because digital health storytelling is becoming more and more prominent in the health care industry and the University of Missouri is a prime location for a concert in digital health storytelling,” said Travers. “We have a nationally ranked medical school, a top-notch journalism school and a new program this fall in digital storytelling. With these three elements, why not be a leader in digital health storytelling?”

The conference continues today with more breakout sessions and concludes Friday at 4 p.m. Travers said that DigiHealth will hopefully be back in two years to see how far digital health storytelling has come at MU.

Climatologists track weather patterns to predict coming winter

By Jan Wiese-Fales

Sunday, September 13, 2015 at 12:00 am

Spotlighted on the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) website earlier this week was the headline “Contiguous U.S. experiences 12th warmest summer on record.” Data in support of the headline indicate that from June to August, the average temperature in the contiguous United States was 72.7 degrees Fahrenheit, fully 1.3 degrees above the 20th century
average. Nationally, this summer was the 16th-wettest on record, at .82 inch above average. Both data sets have been collected since 1895.

NOAA operates the National Centers for Environmental Information (NCEI), where comprehensive oceanic, atmospheric and geophysical data are collected and archived. They are responsible for “preserving, monitoring, assessing and providing public access to the nation’s treasure of climate and historical weather data and information.”

As something that all of us have in common and over which none of us has dominion, few topics are of greater interest to mankind than the weather.

Thomas Jefferson kept a daily record of the weather from 1776 to 1816 and recruited people to observe and report on weather conditions in six states. What we now know as the National Weather Service was instituted in 1890 under the Organic Act with 2,000 weather observation stations. Today there are in excess of 12,000 stations.

Drilling down from NCEI in the National Climate Services Partnership are five regional climate centers. At the state level are the American Association of State Climatologists (AASC) and the AASC Recognized State Climate Offices (ARSCO).

Missouri is included in the Midwestern Regional Climate Center with eight other states. The regional centers look at the impacts of climate in their specific sectors, allowing them to develop climate information on “climate-sensitive issues such as agriculture, climate change, energy, the environment, human health, risk management, transportation and water resources.”

Our ARSCO office is the Missouri Climate Center at the University of Missouri (climate.missouri.edu). Since 1988, Pat Guinan has served as Missouri’s state climatologist.

In his monthly weather reports, Guinan summarizes the overall weather patterns in the state and compares them to historical data, noting trends and unique events. He also discusses the Missouri Agricultural Statistics Services report on the weather’s impact on crops and provides a slew of charts and graphs in support of the report.

Guinan said that what sticks out in this year’s growing season is not only how wet it was May through July, but also the frequency of rain events.

In April, the climatologist noted that temperatures were above normal for the month but precipitation statewide was slightly below average.

May also was slightly warmer, following a seasonal trend of mild springs since 2000.

“May is climatologically Missouri’s wettest month, and this year was no exception,” reported Guinan. “Rainfall was well above average with preliminary data indicating an average statewide total of 7.48 inches, or 2.71 inches above normal. It was the wettest May since 2002 and the 13th-wettest May on record.”
One of Guinan’s charts showed the top 20 wettest Mays in Missouri over the past 120 years and what occurred during the ensuing summer. He noted, “It is evident summers tend to be more seasonable or cooler as well as experience near average to wetter conditions following an unusually wet May.

“Additionally,” he continued, “wet soil moisture conditions at the onset of summer can act to suppress maximum temperatures when more of the sun’s energy will be used in evaporating available moisture.”

June 2015 was the ninth-wettest on record, and temperatures were 1.4 degrees above the normal average. July was the fourth-wettest on record. Temperatures in July were seasonal, and humidity was high. August temperatures were 2.5 degrees below the normal average and rainfall was .13 inch above the long-term normal average.

“It’s also significant to note the May through August 2015 average precipitation total for Missouri is 26.04 inches and ranks as the second-wettest May-August on record,” Guinan reported. “Only May-August 1915 was wetter, with a total of 27.71 inches.”

Farmers suffered this year because rain prevented them from getting into their fields to plant crops. And because consistently wet soil deprives plants’ roots of the oxygen they need, both field and garden crops took a hit — unless they were grown in raised beds.

Looking ahead, Guinan reported the Climate Prediction Center indicates an enhanced likelihood of below-normal temperatures in our section of the state for September through November, but precipitation is predicted to be about normal.

I like the sound of normal, but normal or not, I’m not ready to think about December’s weather.

**Right-to-work override fight likely to dominate veto session**

By Rudi Keller

Sunday, September 13, 2015 at 12:00 am

When Hubbell Power Systems and Local 86821 of the IUE-CWA union reached consensus on a one-year contract extension last year, the company agreed to increase wages by 25 cents an hour, and the union agreed to meet monthly to talk about cutting costs.
Already providing benefits at the Centralia plant was a union-paid energy expert who found about $130,000 in annual savings, said Robert Shuler, president of the local. Shuler, who works in the plant as a forging operator, said the energy savings plan helps keep jobs in Centralia.

“Unions aren’t there to beat the company down,” Shuler said. “We are there to try and make the company as much money as we can while they provide the good living wage.”

Like union leaders across the state, Shuler opposes the right-to-work legislation that could come up for a vote Wednesday in the General Assembly.

Lawmakers are meeting for their annual veto session and the fight about “right-to-work” is the most divisive item on the agenda. Democratic Gov. Jay Nixon vetoed the bill, which united Democrats in opposition and split the Republican majority.

Supporters argue that enacting right-to-work will attract investments by major corporations like automakers, provide workers freedom from paying union dues used for political donations and lift the state’s economy.

“Right to Work states outperform their non-Right to Work counterparts,” Patrick Werner of Americans for Prosperity wrote in a letter to lawmakers signed by 80 conservative groups from across the country, including the American Legislative Exchange Council, or ALEC.

Opponents say right-to-work hurts the middle class by weakening unions’ power to bargain with employers, driving down wages and workforce quality.

The bill’s fate is in the hands of 23 House Republicans and three Senate Republicans who opposed it in the spring, but if right-to-work is defeated, the issue will not go away. It unites the six GOP candidates for governor and sets them apart from Attorney General Chris Koster, the likely Democratic candidate in 2016.

Union members, including Shuler, will fill the Capitol on Wednesday to encourage the bill’s opponents to stand firm. The charge for right-to-work is being led by business groups and conservative activists who will hold an override rally featuring Lt. Gov. Peter Kinder — one of six GOP candidates for Nixon’s job — in the House lounge.

After a summer of intense lobbying on both sides, most public statements from Republican opponents indicate they have not changed their minds. “I’m not flipping, and I’m sure the others feel the same,” Rep. John McCaherty, R-High Ridge, wrote in a Sept. 3 tweet directed to House Speaker Todd Richardson, R-Poplar Bluff, and two others.

The first vote will be held in the House. In 2013, Republicans suffered an embarrassing defeat when they pushed a tax cut bill to a vote in the veto session, knowing it had no chance of passing. Rep. Eric Burlison, R-Springfield, has been sponsoring right-to-work legislation for the past five years and said he won’t be deterred by another defeat.
“I am going to be pushing that we take the vote,” Burlison said. “I want to have a vote, this is an important issue and people want to see where people stand. My hope is that we have the numbers and I am optimistic that we do.”

When the first right-to-work laws passed in Florida and Arkansas, factories producing the weapons that won World War II ran around the clock and labor union membership, favored in government contracts, was at an all-time high.

The Florida version, passed in 1944, was a one-sentence amendment to the state constitution guaranteeing that “the right of persons to work shall not be denied or abridged on account of membership or non-membership in any labor union or labor organization.”

The version vetoed by Nixon is a more complex bill. If approved, it would make Missouri the 26th right-to-work state by banning union contracts that include a requirement that workers join a union or pay fees for representation.

Any new contract including such a clause would be void. Any employer, union official or member attempting to enforce such a clause or “agreement, understanding, or practice, written or oral, implied or expressed” would be subject to criminal penalties of up to 15 days in jail. Any worker who was subject to such a contract could sue.

The bill would direct prosecuting attorneys “to use all means at their command to ensure ... effective enforcement.”

Nixon, in his veto letter, challenged every claim of greater prosperity made by supporters. “Right to Work laws create a less-skilled workforce, drive down wages and directly interfere with a business owner’s right to contract,” Nixon wrote.

Unions count on support from members to win higher wages and better benefits for workers. If a large portion of a company’s workers are not members, it makes the threat of actions like picketing or a strike less credible, taking away union leverage at the bargaining table.

After the first states adopted right-to-work, the idea gained momentum and was adopted in 12 states by 1948 and eight more by 1963. Only three more states enacted right-to-work during the next 50 years until Michigan in 2013 and Wisconsin in March. Missouri voted on right-to-work in 1978, defeating it with a 60 percent majority.

Boone County was the only county with more than 20,000 votes to support right-to-work in 1978, with 59 percent in favor.

Six of the eight states that border Missouri are right-to-work states, with Kansas in 1958 and Oklahoma in 2001 the latest to join the list. The record for population and income growth in the nine-state region is mixed.

Three right-to-work states have had faster population growth than Missouri and three have lagged behind since 1940, before the first law was enacted. Median household incomes increased
faster than Missouri from 1984 to 2013 in four adjacent right-to-work states, while inflation-adjusted household incomes in two, Kansas and Oklahoma, declined.

Median household income in four of the right-to-work states was less than Missouri’s median in 1984. Only one, Iowa, is now greater. Oklahoma, which had a greater median than Missouri in 1984, was more than $6,500 behind Missouri’s $50,311 median in 2013.

A 2012 survey of corporate site selection ranked right-to-work as the 11th most important factor in decisions, with labor costs, highway accessibility and availability of skilled labor ranked as the top three. While it is not the most important, right-to-work seems to be a decisive factor at the beginning of the process for many companies, said Jim Gann, director of business engagement at the University of Missouri Office of the Vice Provost for Economic Development. Gann devotes a portion of his time under a contract to work as economic development director for Boonville and Cooper County.

At a conference for site-locating consultants and lawmakers sponsored by the Missouri Economic Development Council, Gann said, one consultant estimated that as many as 70 percent of his clients will only consider right-to-work states for new investment.

“I really don’t have a personal stand on right-to-work, but I was curious,” Gann said. “I know what kind of projects I see and have responded to, but I have no idea what I never see.”

If unionization rates were higher in Missouri, Gann said, right-to-work might be more important. In Missouri, the 2014 union membership rate was 8.4 percent.

The consultants said that their clients “in many cases don’t care,” Gann said. “They know what they think they know.”

In 1986, when Republicans controlled all but one statewide office and Democrats held majorities in the legislature, a large union rally in Jefferson City drew promises from officers, including then-Secretary of State Roy Blunt, a Republican, to oppose right-to-work.

All the Republican candidates for statewide office now in the General Assembly voted in favor of the bill Nixon vetoed. Mike Louis, president of the Missouri AFL-CIO, said he appreciates labor’s supporters in both parties but worries about the drift of the Republicans.

“I think what has changed the most is that the far, far right wing has taken over the Republican Party and that the moderate Republicans who support the middle class have been beaten in primaries in Missouri because of funding by people like ALEC and the Koch brothers,” Louis said.

The issue is not about unions themselves but the way they operate, Burlison said. Right-to-work will not transform Missouri’s economy overnight, but it will open it to more opportunities, he said.
Under current law, unions can negotiate for restrictive clauses in contracts that require anyone covered by the contract to pay the costs of representation regardless of whether they join the union. Shuler said that in his local at Hubbell, those who object to the fee may direct it to a political fund of their choosing as an alternative.

No worker should be required to pay anything if they object to the union and don’t want to belong, Burlison said.

“The most important thing is that workers get back the freedom that they should never lose,” he said. “They should not have to pay for or join an association they have never wanted to be a part of.”

Republican opponents are enduring a high-pressure campaign to change their votes, said House Minority Leader Jake Hummel, D-St. Louis. A failed override vote would only aggravate factionalism in the GOP majority, he said.

“I don’t know why they would want to have a vote,” Hummel said. “If they don’t have enough votes, why would they bring it up?”

Sweet revolution: Posthumous exhibit meant as catalyst, not just farewell

By Amy Wilder

Sunday, September 13, 2015 at 12:00 am

None of us is an island. Each of us lives beyond our own boundaries, marking the hearts and minds of those around us, When artist and University of Missouri faculty Eric Sweet died April 6, his life left an invisible, but tangible and indelible, impression on the lives of those he touched.

As an artist, he left invisible but tangible marks on the surface of his work, and with these marks, pushed through the physical and ideological facades that shape the Western world. These marks are evident in a current exhibition of his work at the George Caleb Bingham Gallery.

Sweet was something of an anarchist, say his survivors. That is not to say he wanted to overthrow the government or society — at least not in the conventional sense. He held dear the
revolutionary idea that each of us should think for ourselves, seek knowledge, question and rethink boundaries as needed — and provoke one another to do the same.

“He had been applying for a job for like three years — 30-40 permanent positions per year — and with each of those applications, he would have to write a teaching philosophy, which he was constantly revising. As an educator, and an artist, he was constantly revising what he had held to be true before,” said Sweet’s wife, fellow artist and MU educator Catherine Armbrust, who curated the show.

“He talked a lot about how, with a background as an artist, you can then become anything you want,” she added. “You’re a creative problem solver. You’re an entrepreneur, and that’s what the world needs. You perceive things in a different way; that’s really what he encouraged his students to do — to challenge their perceptions and what they thought was true. ... As an anarchist, it’s not about disorder. It’s about thinking for oneself. He challenged them to think.”

This summer, Armbrust curated a retrospective of his work at MU’s Craft Studio gallery. It was bright and busy and represented more of a full career. The walls strained to contain a young artist’s scattered explorations and experiments.

This show is quieter; minimal, spare — a more focused look at the last five years of his work, which he had reduced to essential forms. At first glance, the gallery seems austere and blank: white furniture arranged more or less symmetrically; antiseptically placed white rectangles bisect the walls at eye level. And then you get closer and see the impressed surfaces.

“Because I titled them both ‘The Revolution/Evolution of Sweet,’ I wanted them both to be about how he had evolved as an artist,” Armbrust said.

In the more recent body of work, “interestingly, there’s a contrast ... between work that’s finished — that he literally finished himself — and work that is in process, unfinished or he never got started on it, even though he had the materials.”

Serial bodies of work explore ideals: ideal city designs, ideal conditions for storing artworks, ideal architectures. And each of these ideals is subtly broken; imperfect.

“These are all from actual buildings,” MU art Professor Matt Ballou said of some of Sweet’s embossed hexagonal building structure diagrams, which set up patterns and present them with breaks and blanks. “There are places where adaptations were made; things were taken away. ... It becomes organic when they actually had to build it.

“They appear to be symmetrical, but they’re not. In some sense this goes along with his idea of utopian structures: ideal structures which are not actually ideal,” Ballou added. “They’re not perfect. They’re not bilaterally symmetrical.”

At the far end of the gallery, Sweet’s unfinished work moves further from form into formal idea: Two projects are presented with Armbrust’s written explanations of his plans and the materials that would have been used. One involved creating signs and posting them, guerrilla-style, on the
Katy Trail to provoke hikers to see things differently. Another would have involved carving into blank vinyl record disks.

“There’s something about them as icons; they almost feel complete,” Ballou said. “They feel pregnant with potential. ... Here you’ve got so many avenues of his life: loving music and vinyl, and loving printmaking. And then taking away the ink from printmaking, almost as an act of faith in something else: faith in the impression as opposed to the mark. ... The vinyl records, without their grooves, become a place where there would have been something.”

Sweet’s unfinished works represent the culmination of reading and study. The result is not simply a memorial but a catalyst for those who see it: a prompt and a provocation to see the contours of the world and move to reshape conceptions and perceptions.

“He was constantly seeking and researching,” Armbrust said. “That’s why I included, with the show, the desk that has his books on it. ... That’s just a small portion of the books he would have to do his research. He was constantly reading and exploring to try and expand his mind so that he could help other people expand their minds — so that he would have inspiration and connection to the world around him.”

Armbrust wrote in a statement for the piece “500 Drawings of One Cup” that Sweet “maintained that there was no such thing as originality, that all thoughts and ideas are influenced from what came before you and what surrounds you.”

“It’s not that it’s new or original,” said Ballou of the power of Sweet’s work. “It’s that it’s uniquely inflected. It’s filtered — it’s almost like every time we see something again, or every time we speak something again, or every time we remix something, we participate in that creation. We participate in that structure of meaning. But we don’t have to pretend that we’re the originators.”

“The show is so personal to me, and I’m so proud of the work that he’s done,” Armbrust said, “so I feel like I’ve tried to give as much information as possible — enough insight into his brain — while still curating a space where there are definite connective tissues. ... I really hope people can see that evolution: the way he was moving through the work, and the way the work was evolving.”
A task force created to study the city’s infrastructure meets for the first time this week, but city leaders are already divided about the group’s role.

The first meeting of the Mayor’s Task Force on Infrastructure is scheduled for 7 p.m. Monday. On the agenda is the organization and scheduling of the task force’s work — the topic of behind-the-scenes debate since the group’s formation.

When it was established in July by the Columbia City Council, the nine-member task force was asked to study and evaluate how the city operates and maintains its sewer, stormwater, electric and transportation infrastructure, developing a long-term plan and reviewing priorities and funding. Within one year, the infrastructure evaluation would be submitted to the city council.

The task force’s scope of oversight does not include the city’s water utility or electric utility — except electricity in the downtown area. Water and nondowntown electricity were removed from the task force’s scope with a divided 4-3 city council vote.

Council members excluded the two utilities from the group’s purview because the Water and Light Advisory Board already oversees them. The downtown electric utility was included in the group’s scope of review because Mayor Bob McDavid said the area is already near capacity again, even after a $1.4 million project to extend the Rebel Hill feeder line to the area to increase capacity by 5 megawatts.

Task force member Bill Weitkemper said he would like the group’s oversight to expand to include water and electricity citywide. He said he hopes the task force can look at establishing a more equitable billing structure for utilities, but that it cannot accomplish those things for the water and electric utilities without a change in scope.

“We have to follow what the council decides, although I wanted it expanded,” Weitkemper said.

Weitkemper said he plans to take his case for an expanded scope to the city council next week.
McDavid said the city has a sophisticated Water and Light department and board and that Water and Light Advisory Board Chairman John Conway, who is also on the task force, has “forgotten more about electricity than anyone on that task force will ever know.” Conway asked the city council in July to remove the two utilities from the task force’s scope.

**McDavid said he wants to include the city’s “number one economic driver” in the analysis: the University of Missouri. No one has analyzed how much electricity a larger MU student population will need in 10 years or where the power will come from, McDavid said.**

Task Force member Katrina Boles said she can see arguments for and against expanding the task force’s oversight. She hopes for robust public participation.

“I hope this is not just city staff talking to nine people about the issues,” Boles said.

Third Ward Councilman Karl Skala, who cast the sole vote against forming the task force, said he is concerned about the group playing “political football” and getting little done. He said as he understands it, the panel’s goal is to inform the public about city plans for infrastructure and promote progress on projects.

“If that’s true, then this task force won’t dive into the issue of finance ... and how we might deal with maintenance issues,” Skala said.

A permanent commission outside of the Water and Light Advisory Board has been discussed.

The Downtown Leadership Council drafted a report last year on how the city can better maintain its infrastructure needs. That report recommended establishing a permanent commission to monitor infrastructure. Officials were also considering establishing an infrastructure commission as part of an attempted settlement in a lawsuit filed against the city about its approval of a downtown student housing development built by Opus Development Co.

The lawsuit is ongoing.
Pet-friendly policy helps Stephens students adjust to college

By Megan Favignano

Saturday, September 12, 2015 at 12:00 am

An 11-month-old bulldog chomped on a cardboard box in Searcy Hall at Stephens College while playing a game of tug-of-war with sophomore Bethanny O’Keefe.

“I’m a dog lover,” O’Keefe said. “It reduces my stress.”

O’Keefe works at the college’s doggy day care, which is available to any student on campus who has a dog. The college has been pet-friendly for more than a decade and allows students to bring cats, dogs, hedgehogs and other pets along when they move in.

Student Life Director Alissa Pei said there are about 96 pets living at Stephens this year. The pet-friendly policies help students adjust to college life, she said.

“It helps students take a piece of home with them to college,” Pei said.

While the majority of pets students bring are cats and dogs, there also are rabbits, a chinchilla, hedgehogs and hermit crabs living on campus. Last year, one student had a pet pig.

“She was super clean and very quiet,” Pei said. “You’d never know there was a pig living next door.”

The college only prohibits spiders and snakes on campus. Of the college’s seven residence halls, two are completely pet-friendly and one is partially pet-friendly. Every student who brings a pet pays a one-time, nonrefundable $200 fee to cover any room damage and services like doggy day care.

Harli Harris, a freshman pre-veterinary student, said Stephens’ pet-friendly policies attracted her to the college.

“I just love walking outside and seeing all of the animals,” Harris said.
Harris received her pet albino hedgehog, Penelope, as a Christmas gift last year. When Harris studies in her room, Penelope often curls up next to her and sleeps.

Sophomore Elise Schinsky’s cat has a similar habit. Schinsky took in her cat, Briar, almost one year ago after someone else on campus found him. They were going to take the cat to a shelter, but Schinsky said she grew up with cats and wanted to adopt him.

Schinsky didn’t plan to have a pet when she moved into the residence halls at Stephens. But she said having Briar makes her dorm room feel more like home.

“He always runs to the door when I come in,” Schinsky said. “When I’m walking, I’ll see him up in the window just staring.”

Schinsky, a fashion design major, said she feels bad when she comes home late from working in the studio. Being home enough to care for the pet can be a challenge, Schinsky said. When student pet owners are not home, the college requires they put their pets in cages and kennels.

The doggy day care can help ease that challenge for dog owners. Summer Godshall, a freshman student who works at the day care, described it as a great alternative for dogs who otherwise might be locked in a crate while their owner is in class.

“If I was a dog, I’d get bored,” Godshall said.

While at the day care, staff members take the dogs outside every two hours and allow them time to go to the bathroom and run around in one of the campus’ two fenced areas for dogs.

That socialization, Godshall said, is particularly important for dogs in the foster program that Stephens has operated for about four years. The college works with local animal shelter Second Chance to place foster cats and dogs with students. The students, who receive a scholarship for fostering the animals, care for the cat or dog and work closely with Second Chance to market the pet at events.

“It’s helping a pet get to their forever home,” Pei said.

The campus also plans activities around its pets, including events that teach students to make dog treats and a Halloween pet parade.

“We do programming that incorporates pets because they’re as much a part of our student population as our students,” Pei said.

The University of Missouri allows animals kept in cages or aquariums on campus.

MU allows most rodents and reptiles, according to its residential life website, but it doesn’t permit cats or dogs.