Boone County tourism increases in 2016; Mizzou a big factor


BOONE COUNTY, Mo. - Statewide, Missouri saw an increase in tourism in 2016 compared to 2015, Boone County included.

More than a 3 percent increase in tourists visited Missouri in 2016 compared to 2015.

According to the Missouri Division of Tourism, the University of Missouri had a big reason in why Boone County saw an increase.

Dan Lennon with the division told ABC 17 News that ever since Mizzou joined the SEC it put Columbia on the map for a lot of tourists.

"I think joining the SEC has really increased our visitation," he said, "That part of the country (Southeast) didn't know about us and now we are a really attractive place to visit."

Despite game attendance being low, Lennon said the amount of advertisements visitors were exposed to allowed people to want to return to Columbia, Missouri, and Boone County.

Another reason for a increase in tourism statewide and locally has to deal with airport access.

Although the Columbia Regional Airport is undergoing changes, the convenience for some travelers was noted.

"Airports become more important," he said, "Anytime you can make it easy for someone you start to bring more people in for maybe a nice weekend."
Forty-five percent of visitors in Missouri were from the state. Lennon told ABC 17 News that— that is possible because they consider anyone traveling more than 50 miles, spending the night at a hotel, as a visitor.

Along with tourism numbers increasing, the number of tourism related employment in our state increased by an additional 10,000 jobs.

**THE KANSAS CITY STAR.**

**DECEMBER 28, 2016 5:58 PM**

**Former UMKC Chancellor George Russell dies at 95**

**George A. Russell, former chancellor of the University of Missouri-Kansas City and president of the University of Missouri system, died Tuesday at age 95.**

Russell was chancellor of UMKC for 14 years before being named MU president in November 1991. He served in that role until 1996.

Russell’s tenure as chancellor at UMKC was a period of transformation for what had been a commuter school.

“Under George Russell’s leadership, UMKC evolved into the modern, comprehensive, research university it is today,” Chancellor Leo E. Morton said in a statement released Wednesday.

“Thanks to him, Kansas City has a great university worthy of a great city. It is a powerful legacy.”

Supporters saw Russell as a respected educator and an outspoken critic of antiquated ideas about state aid to education in Missouri. They said he worked for improved mechanisms of funding for higher education.

As UMKC chancellor, Russell won public and private funds for the campus, notably a student recreation center and a continuing expansion of the library. He also restructured much of the academic bureaucracy at the university, including the creation of the School of Basic Life Sciences.

Russell’s businesslike approach to education earned him the respect of the city’s civic elite. He sat on the boards of directors of the J.C. Nichols Co., Boatmen’s Bank of Kansas City and Kansas
City Power & Light Co. He was also a member of the Agricultural Hall of Fame board of governors and served on the board of trustees for the Truman Library Institute.

Russell, as president, also made his mark on the University of Missouri system.

“Most notably under his tenure the university introduced a robust financial plan to realign its resources on a scale unmatched in the country,” interim president Michael Middleton said in a statement Wednesday. “His efforts allowed the UM system to answer critical needs including competitive faculty recruitment, infrastructure maintenance and repair and enhancement of student financial aid, among many others.”

Russell’s tenure as president, however, was not without controversy.

One of his first actions was to announce cuts in at least 600 jobs at the university’s four campuses and in its administration. The cuts were needed, he said, to deal with shrinking state funding and the failure of Proposition B, a tax increase earmarked for education. A few months later, Haskell Monroe announced that he would resign as chancellor of the University of Missouri-Columbia, saying he could not preside over endless cuts in university operations.

In 1992, dozens of students from the University of Missouri-Columbia were threatened with arrest and suspension from school when they blocked a hallway in the University of Missouri system administration building. The students were protesting the lack of student representation on a committee searching for Monroe’s replacement. Russell had denied their request.

Russell was born July 12, 1921, in the Missouri Bootheel town of Bertrand. One of his childhood buddies was future Gov. Warren Hearnes.

During World War II, Russell fired a .50-caliber gun from the tail of a Navy dive bomber and later flew in a test-flight crew experimenting with solid-fuel rockets.

After the war, Russell stayed in the Navy, where he worked in research and development. He married Ruth Ann Ashby of Charleston, Mo., on Nov. 11, 1944. The couple had four children.

Russell earned a bachelor’s degree in electrical engineering from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology in 1947 and a master’s degree and doctorate in physics from the University of Illinois in 1952 and 1955. He became an associate professor of physics at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign in 1962 and rose to vice chancellor. He left in 1977 for Kansas City.

Visitation will be 1-2 p.m. Friday followed by a service at Langsford Funeral Home, 115 S.W. Third St., Lee’s Summit.
UPDATE: George Russell, former UM System president, dies

STAFF AND WIRE REPORTS, 14 hrs ago

COLUMBIA — George Russell, former president of the University of Missouri System and a longtime chancellor of the University of Missouri-Kansas City, died Tuesday at his home in a Kansas City retirement community, UM announced Wednesday.

Dr. Russell was 95. The cause of his death was not released.

He was appointed UMKC chancellor in September 1977 after serving as a vice chancellor for research and dean of the Graduate College at the University of Illinois. He remained chancellor for 14 years, then was appointed president of the UM System in July 1991, replacing C. Peter Magrath. He was 70 when he took the job, and he retired in 1996.

UM Interim President Michael Middleton issued a statement Wednesday saying he was saddened to learn of Russell's death.

"Dr. Russell’s decisive leadership greatly strengthened the university," Middleton said. "Most notably under his tenure, the university introduced a robust financial plan to realign its resources on a scale unmatched in the country.
"His efforts allowed the UM System to answer critical needs including competitive faculty recruitment, infrastructure maintenance and repair and enhancement of student financial aid, among many others. His legacy of public stewardship remains strong in Missouri higher education.”

UMKC said in a news story on its website that Dr. Russell’s tenure as chancellor there "marked a period of dramatic growth and progress." He presided over the university’s transformation from a commuter school to a true research university, the report said.

“Under George Russell’s leadership, UMKC evolved into the modern, comprehensive, research university it is today,” UMKC Chancellor Leo E. Morton said. “Thanks to him, Kansas City has a great university worthy of a great city. It is a powerful legacy.”

The UM curators' appointment of Dr. Russell to system president didn't happen without controversy. After 5½ hours of deliberation the curators picked Russell for the job without conducting a search or consulting faculty after Magrath announced he would leave the position.

Jim Sterling, a professor in the Missouri School of Journalism, was a curator when Dr. Russell was hired. Sterling said he was hired in “kind of a hurry” because he had previously been considered for the job and was well known as UMKC chancellor.

Sterling said that Dr. Russell was able to raise tuition by $1,000 per student over a four-year period, which allowed the campuses to pay faculty competitive salaries, meeting Big-10 and Big-8 averages at the time.

"One of the things I am really proud of was making the hire of George Russell during the time I was on the board," Sterling said.

John Cozad, another curator during Dr. Russell's tenure, said the tuition increase also reduced a large inventory of unfunded maintenance — including "laboratories in disgraceful condition" — to "approximately zero."
After Dr. Russell became president of the UM System, a Columbia Missourian reporter covered his appointment. He said at the time that the state and country were entering an age when higher education would be subjected to "close scrutiny" and the institution might have to eliminate programs and tighten its belt.

"The mystique about higher education — that cloak that's been around our shoulders — has been taken off," Russell said during a speech after he was named UM president. "Higher education is going to be subjected to the same cold winds of scrutiny that every other institution in the country faces."

"I think that's the first time that's happened in higher education, and we're going to have to do something about it. We're going to have to explain to the public the value of what we do."

Fred Hall, who was a curator from 1993 to 1999, said Russell was one of the finest administrators he ever worked with.

“George did an outstanding job of physically repairing all four of the campuses, raising funds to pay the faculty competitive rates and worked with the board very closely,” Hall said, also giving credit to Gov. Mel Carnahan for supporting the university system.

Another curator John Lichtenegger, who worked with Dr. Russell for four years, said that one of his greatest achievements was increasing the selectivity of the UM System campuses by boosting admission requirements. The change lead to “unprecedented increases in enrollment,” Lichtenegger said.

"The excellence of the university and its status as a premiere educational institution was greatly enhanced by the leadership of Dr. Russell,” he said.

Dr. Russell, nicknamed "Bullet," was living in John Knox Village when he died, according to an obituary posted on the Langsford Funeral Home's web page. The obituary provided these additional details.
George Albert Russell was born July 12, 1921, in Bertrand, Missouri, and was a 1938 graduate of Sikeston High School.

He enlisted in the U.S. Navy in 1940 and went on to officer training, serving in World War II and rising to the rank of lieutenant commander. He also earned a bachelor's degree at the University of Pennsylvania, a master's degree in electrical engineering from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and a doctorate in nuclear physics from the University of Illinois.

After a 20-year career in the Navy, Dr. Russell taught physics at Southern Illinois University and then went into administration at the University of Illinois, becoming dean of the Physics School and then vice-chancellor for research.

In 1977, he was named chancellor of the University of Missouri-Kansas City, a position he held until being named president of the University of Missouri System in 1991.

He traveled the globe with his wife, Ruth Ann, to whom he was married for 58 years, and he developed friendships across many cultural backgrounds, according to the obituary.

He was preceded in death by his wife; his parents, George and Martha (Cramer) Russell; two sisters; and a brother.

Survivors include his four children, George (Tricia) Russell III, of Macomb, Illinois, Frank (Linda) Russell of South Lake, Texas, Ruth (Darrell) Vaughn of Pleasant Hill, and Andy (DeAun) Russell of Lee’s Summit; 16 grandchildren; 13 great-grandchildren; a sister, Martha Krewson, of Huntsville, Alabama; two nieces; and a nephew.

Services are scheduled for Friday at Langsford Funeral Home, 115 W. Third St. in Lee’s Summit. Visitation will be from 1 to 2 p.m. Military and graveside services were planned for 10 a.m. Monday at the IOOF Cemetery in Charleston, Missouri.

In lieu of flowers, memorial contributions are suggested to Lee’s Summit Meals on Wheels, P.O. Box 1393, Lee’s Summit, MO 64063.
Charter schools could see growth under new Republican governor

With both a Republican governor and General Assembly in place in 2017, Missouri could see an expansion of charter schools.

Every year, the General Assembly introduces measures to expand charter schools in the state. Now, they’re only in St. Louis and Kansas City.

Governor-elect Eric Greitens hasn’t said where he stands on charter school expansion — only that he would do whatever is best for children. On the national front, President-elect Donald Trump’s nominee for education secretary, Betsy DeVos, is a strong proponent of charter schools.

In its legislative priorities, the Columbia Board of Education said it opposes redirecting funds to unproven charter schools.

The University of Missouri sponsors five charter schools. Two others the university had sponsored closed in July.

Gerry Kettenbach, director of MU charter school operations, said there’s a misconception among some people that charter schools are private schools benefiting from tax money without the obligation. He said charter schools are public schools with a level of autonomy, meaning they have to follow fewer regulations than public schools.

The office of quality schools with the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education reviews sponsor applications for new charter schools in the state. Chris Neale, assistant commissioner of education for the office of quality schools, said with the political agenda in the state, it wouldn’t surprise him to see a move in the direction toward expansion of charter schools.

Neale said all charter schools in Missouri are required to have a sponsor and that most are sponsored by universities. The charter schools are required to be organized as a not-for-profit organization, but sponsors can contract with for-profit companies to operate them — though none of the charter schools in Missouri has a contract with for-profit companies.
Neale said any local school board can sponsor a charter school in their district or that outside entities can sponsor a school in districts outside the two largest cities if the district is unaccredited or has had provisional accreditation for three years.

The performance of the state’s existing charter schools is mixed. Three charter schools achieved 100 percent of possible points on their 2016 annual performance report: the 689-student Ewing Marion Kauffman School in Kansas City, sponsored by MU; the 1,002-student University Academy in Kansas City, sponsored by the University of Missouri-Kansas City; and the 393-student North Side Community School in St. Louis, sponsored by the University of Missouri-St. Louis.

But beyond that, the results vary widely. Of the 39 charter schools, 12 had APR scores of 60 percent or lower.

The Better Learning Academy in St. Louis, with a 28 percent APR score, and Jamaa Learning Center in St. Louis, with a 43.6 percent APR score, were the two that MU closed. The Jamaa Learning Center also had financial problems, and Kettenbach said most charter schools close because of financial problems. He said sponsors have a responsibility to close charter schools if they’re not performing.

“I think it’s part of the deal in exchange for not having some regulations, you’re going to have more autonomy,” he said. “With that autonomy comes accountability.”

Kettenbach said charter schools usually are smaller and can devote more individual attention to students, as well as having a more nimble operation.

“They’re able to be flexible with how they operate,” he said.

Columbia Public Schools Superintendent Peter Stiepleman said the legislature shouldn’t experiment with charter schools until it fully funds the foundation formula and puts money into preschool education.

Phyllis Chase was CPS superintendent from 2003-2008. Now director of the Charter School Center, she said her background had made her skeptical about charter schools when she took the position.

She promoted University Academy, one of the schools that achieved 100 percent on the 2016 APR, where nearly all students come from high poverty households.
and the 56 graduates in 2016 had $6 million in scholarships. But she also acknowledged poor-performing charter schools.

“The difference with charter schools is the stakes are high,” Chase said. “When our schools are not achieving, those schools close.”

MISSOURIAN

**As he gets ready to join MU, Vinzé calls ASU 'a wonderful ride'**

JACOB SCHOLL, Dec 28, 2016

COLUMBIA — As Ajay Vinzé shifts to MU as the new dean of the Trulaske College of Business, he is leaving behind Arizona State University, the institution he's called home for 18 years.

“It’s been a wonderful ride for me,” Vinzé said. “My decision to come to Missouri took absolutely nothing away from ASU or my love for ASU and what I’ve experienced here.”

Vinzé said the opportunity was too good to pass up, pointing to MU’s membership in the Association of American Universities and its status as a regionally recognized university. He said the opportunity came at a good time personally, as both of his children are grown and out on their own.

With every transition comes growing pains, of course. Many of Vinzé’s colleagues at the W.P. Carey School of Business hold him in high regard and said he leaves a large hole in both the department of information systems and the university.

“He’s been a great friend,” said Raghu Santanam, chair of the information systems department at the Carey School of Business. “It’s hard for me to see him leave, but this is something that he has been wanting to do, so I’m happy for this next stage in his career.”
Santanam said Vinzé has been the inspirational leader of the department and it will be next to impossible to replace him.

Robert St. Louis is a professor in the department and was at ASU when Vinzé was hired in 1998. He said Vinzé’s impact on ASU reaches far beyond the business school into the university itself.

“I’m happy for Ajay but sad for the department,” St. Louis said.

According to his colleagues, Vinzé has plenty of interests outside of academia. He's an avid racquetball player, knows a lot about cricket and loves to learn about cultures around the world.

“The man is a walking, talking encyclopedia on cricket,” said Eric Wertheimer, associate dean of graduate initiatives at ASU.

“We’ve had, for a number of years, a group of us that go to the gym and play racquetball,” Santanam said. “When everyone is tired and wants to leave, he’s the one who keeps wanting to play another game.”

“Whenever he travels, he tries to immerse himself in the culture of wherever he’s at,” St. Louis said. “He brings a very worldly view on any subject you can think of — it’s very interesting.”

“I’m going to miss the hell out of him,” Wertheimer said.

When asked, his colleagues were happy to pass along messages to Vinzé when he arrives at MU.

“Tell him to stop by Phoenix whenever he’s traveling through,” Santanam said.

“My advice to him, as a friend,” said Benjamin Shao, associate professor in the information systems department, "is to get more sleep.”

Vinzé takes up his position as dean at MU next week.
MU Athletics chef realizes dream of becoming a children's author


COLUMBIA - When Stephen Evans took a volunteer trip to the Maldives to help out as a sports coach, he had no idea his life would be changed forever.

Evans traveled to 23 countries before the age of 22 while in the Navy, but it was that trip to the Maldives that helped him go on a path he thought he would never see.

Evans is a chef for Mizzou Athletics and has worked there for seven years. In his spare time, he writes children stories on his phone.

While in the Maldives, a school principal told Evans what the volunteer program really needed was someone who could help the children learn English.

Evans saw it as the perfect opportunity to turn his hobby into something useful.

So he returned home and put together a small book he called Maldivian Stephen filled with pictures of his trip and simple sentences to help the children learn. Evans returned the following year and gave each of the students a book. He read it to them and also read them one of the stories he had on his phone.
"It was just amazing, you know? You could feel the energy from them and it was just like, wow. So I came back on fire ready to make books," Evans said.

After trying hard to make contacts, Evans had a friend put him in touch with an artist who could illustrate his books.

Evans met with Mic Ru, a fellow veteran, five days later and they agreed to work together.

When Evans' debut book was finally published, his mom got her copy first.

"She called me crying because she was happy. And i remember thinking 'now I want to see the book!' But that meant a lot," Evans said.

He said making the book happen took a lot of work, but was more than worth the effort.

"It gives me a different perspective. You know, it just calms everything else that's going on a lot of the times," Evans said.

A licensed social worker said Evans' experience show how important it is to have a hobby. Debbie Diner said not taking time from the day to pursue a passion can affect how a person lives.

"You can't have the quality of life you need. We forget that as we get into adulthood that stuff is just as important as when we were kids," she said.

Evans will continue to work at his full-time job, but hopes to make many more books.