

July 16, 2008

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## **The City: Clerk says people support him on Commandments**

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### Commandments **poster**

Greene County Circuit Clerk **Steve Helms** said response has been mostly positive about his decision not to remove from his office a **poster** bearing the Ten Commandments.

**Helms** said most of the calls he received after his decision was reported supported him in placing the **poster** in the lobby of his office and declining to take it down at the request of Springfield resident Gary Wright.

Wright said he believes posting the Ten Commandments in a public building is unconstitutional and has said he might file suit if the **poster** is not taken down.

For now, Wright will try to enlist the help of Americans United for Separation of Church and State, a Washington, D.C., group that handles such issues. He might also write to Greene County judges about the **poster**.

VeteransNew center expected to open in county next year

A new veterans center to provide readjustment counseling and family outreach is expected to be open in Greene County in late 2009.

The center will be staffed by four mental health professionals and social workers, the Department of Veterans Affairs said last week.

Greene County is among 39 sites nationwide where new veterans centers will be built. It was chosen based on an analysis showing it is one of 15 counties with more than 50,000 combat veterans in surrounding areas not currently served by a vet center. The Greene County center will accommodate veterans in southwest Missouri. "The VA wants to increase access to readjustment counseling, and provide outreach to all combat veterans and their families," said Gary Collins, a team leader at the St. Louis Vet Center.

Although Springfield appears to be a likely site, Veterans Affairs spokesman Jim Benson said the exact location of the Greene County center hasn't been decided.

ArrestMan jailed, charged with resisting arrest after chase

A Springfield man was jailed after leading Greene County sheriff's deputies on a pursuit early July 6.

Sheriff's Capt. Randy Gibson said the chase began on Campbell Avenue, just south of the Springfield city limits.

After following Terry M. Heitman, 49, on a "medium speed chase" through a neighborhood near Kickapoo High School, deputies stopped the vehicle with spike strips. Heitman tried to run but was subdued with a Taser.

Heitman was charged with resisting arrest and held on \$50,000 bond. He also was held on a Cole County warrant for fraud and is on federal probation and parole for fraud.

Several residents of the neighborhood where Heitman lived and was arrested about 12:45 a.m. July 6 took issue with the zeal displayed by deputies as they pursued him.

After reviewing in-car video of the chase, Chief Deputy Jim Arnott said it appeared deputies acted appropriately.

Heitman could face additional charges. He also could face punishment for violating the conditions of his release from federal prison for a 2002 conviction for identity theft.

**Lawsuit**Deputy's relatives sue over fatal vehicle crash

The family of a Greene County deputy killed in a traffic crash Oct. 6 has filed a wrongful death suit against a volunteer firefighter authorities say caused the accident.

The suit by the widow and children of Deputy Gary McCormack accuses volunteer firefighter Joshua C. Douglas of negligence in causing the fatal accident. It also names as a defendant the Ebenezer Fire Protection District, for which Douglas volunteered.

Neither the Ebenezer department nor Douglas' attorney in a criminal case filed after the crash could be reached.

The suit filed by Stephanie McCormack alleges her husband's death was caused by "the negligence, carelessness and recklessness" of the fire district and by Douglas. It asks for a fair and reasonable sum of money, citing funeral costs, the loss of a father and husband, and "severe pain, personal injuries and mental distress" McCormack suffered before his death.

The crash occurred about 4 a.m. as McCormack and Douglas were responding to a report of a crash with "unknown injuries." Douglas' pickup truck collided with McCormack's cruiser at Farm Road 145 and Greene County WW.

A Missouri Highway Patrol investigation found Douglas at fault, because he faced a stop sign at the intersection and McCormack did not.

Douglas also faces a misdemeanor charge of careless and imprudent driving. He pleaded not guilty.

Douglas' attorney, Bert Twibell, has asked that the misdemeanor case be dismissed because Douglas has no recollection of the crash and would be unable to assist with his own defense.

**Robbery**Tips wanted on man who robbed People's Bank

Authorities were searching for a man who robbed a bank in southwest Springfield.

The man, who robbed the People's Bank of the Ozarks at 3000 W. Republic Road about 2:05 p.m. July 9, was considered armed and dangerous, the FBI said.

The suspect is described as a white man in his late 20s or early 30s, 5 feet, 9 inches to 5 feet, 11 inches tall, weighing 160 to 180 pounds, the FBI said. He also has a brown-red goatee. The FBI said he may be a construction worker.

Anyone with information is asked to call the Greene County Sheriff's Department, 868-4040, or the FBI, 882-3303.

**Greene County Jail**Jailer fired for removing warrant from database

After firing a Greene County jailer who cleared his own arrest warrant from a records database, Sheriff Jack Merritt says the department is keeping closer tabs on who accesses the system.

Steven J. Donovan, 25, of Springfield was terminated July 8, but had been on administrative leave prior to that.

Donovan is charged with a misdemeanor for misuse of official information by a

public servant. Prosecutors said he cleared an arrest warrant on himself by using the Missouri Uniform Law Enforcement System — MULES — a statewide database of information containing individuals' criminal history and traffic records.

The Phelps County warrant had apparently been dismissed, but Donovan became frustrated and was tired of waiting for authorities to correct the problem, according to a probable cause statement. Donovan told authorities he would not have removed the warrant had he known it was illegal.

"Still, it did not justify what he did," Merritt said.

The sheriff said he was disappointed by Donovan's actions.

"He was a very good employee and I hated to lose him, but he just made a very poor choice," Merritt said. "It really didn't fit into his nature to do something like that, because he knew better."

Arrest is scheduled for Aug. 19.

City Council Portion of street may be renamed for Bob Barker

The City Council will consider renaming Brower Street between Jefferson and Sherman avenues in honor of longtime TV game show host Bob Barker.

Barker, a 1947 graduate of Drury University and a staunch advocate of animal rights and spaying-neutering, is the former host of the popular "The Price Is Right" television game show.

The segment of Brower is just north of Chestnut and runs into the Drury campus.

In February, Barker donated \$1 million to establish the country's first undergraduate course on animal ethics at Drury.

Springfield resident Kitty Lipscomb said she wanted to do something to recognize Barker's contributions — and to note his connection to Springfield.

"Bob Barker has been a tremendous supporter of Springfield," she said. "He's been a good example for our young people."

Door-to-door sales Alarm company not working with police

The Springfield Police Department has received reports that representatives of an alarm company have been going door-to-door to sell home security systems.

It has been alleged by some reporting parties that they were told the city of Springfield and the Springfield Police Department have contracted with the alarm company to sell the home security systems.

Neither the city nor police department endorses or contracts with any alarm company for the purposes of selling a product, officials said. They urge people to be wary if the claim is made by any company or its representative.

Fatality Woman dies of injuries after Division Street fire

A woman injured in a June 27 fire died a week later.

Assistant Fire Chief David Hall said Delores Hill, 72, who died at 12:38 a.m. July 4, was the third fire-related fatality in Springfield this year.

"She is also the second to die from a fire while smoking and using home oxygen," he said.

Hill was smoking and using home oxygen to aid breathing when the fire broke out in the 500 block of West Division Street.

"Neighbors heard several loud explosions," Hall said. "Those were the oxygen bottles exploding."

Parenting Skills program offered for parents of toddlers

Need some useful advice about the care and development of your toddler?

The Women's Center at CoxHealth is sponsoring a program, "As Your Child Grows ... Toddler Times," for parents of children ages 15 months to 3 years old. The free event is at 7 p.m. July 22 in meeting room 2 at Cox South hospital.

Parents will learn from Cox child life specialists and representatives from Parents As Teachers how to help toddlers with the skills of sharing and peer interaction, and more.

There is no fee, but registration is requested by calling 269-5239.

House fireBlaze does \$30,000 in damage on Robberson

A Springfield house fire caused \$30,000 in damage to the structure, according to Springfield Assistant Fire Chief David Hall.

About 1 a.m. July 7, neighbors reported smoke coming from the roof of a house in the 2000 block of North Robberson Avenue, Assistant Fire Chief David Hall said.

As firefighters started to attack the fire, flames were coming through the roof.

A firefighter fell through the floor of the house into the basement while fighting the blaze, but was not injured.

There was no one home at the time of the fire.

Fourth of JulyFireworks complaints mostly near city limits

Although the July 4 holiday weekend brought relatively few fireworks-related complaints inside city limits, Greene County deputies kept busy chasing violations in the surrounding area.

Capt. Randy Gibson of the Greene County Sheriff's Department said one trend deputies tackled involved motorists illegally tossing fireworks from moving vehicles.

Gibson said the holiday weekend featured mostly routine fireworks violations, but was much busier than usual.

"We had dozens of complaints," he said. "It was a three-day weekend, so use and misuse continued right on past the Fourth all the way up to (Sunday) night."

He said much of the problem comes from people who gather just outside the city limits of Springfield, where fireworks are banned by municipal ordinance.

"They'll go to the first intersection where it's legal and set them off there," Gibson said. "For the people who live there, it's like a war zone. Eventually we have to send a patrol car out there at 1 or 2 in the morning to tell people 'that's enough.'"

He said one of the biggest problem areas was at the intersection of Farm Roads 123 and 146, near the subdivision of Jackson Place and Hattiesburg Hill.

Springfield Assistant Fire Chief David Hall said he was unaware of any fire-related problems over the holiday weekend.

"There didn't seem to be as many incidents in the city," Hall said. "It probably helped that it rained."

There was a fire caused by fireworks on June 24. Hall said children accidentally shot fireworks into an open SUV window, causing the vehicle to burn completely.

EventExpect food, games at ADA celebration

An Americans with Disabilities Celebration is scheduled for 4:30-9 p.m. Aug. 1 at the Southwest Center for Independent Living, 2864 S. Nettleton Ave.

There will be free food, games, inflatables and a huge display from a national organization about the history of the ADA, information on the Independent Living

Philosophy and disability culture and movement.

For brochures about the event or for details, call Stacy Parkhurst, 886-1188.

United WayCargill donates \$50,000 for Pacesetter Campaign

A \$50,000 gift from Cargill Meat Solutions has jump-started the United Way of the Ozarks' 2008 campaign, which officially starts Aug. 28.

Cargill Inc. of Wichita, Kan., purchased Willow Brook Foods in Springfield in late March and is closing the local plants.

Its gift is the first in the Pacesetter Campaign, designed to set a standard for the community-wide campaign, running about one month before the official kickoff.

The gift will be significant in reaching the pacesetter goal of \$600,000.

The community is invited to the official campaign kickoff at Hammons Field Aug. 28. Admission is \$15 which includes a Bull Pen Patio Picnic at 5:30 p.m. and a ticket to the game at 7:10 p.m.

To reserve tickets, call Trudy Fischer at 863-7700.

CourtsMan sentenced to more than 12 years on child porn

A Springfield man was sentenced to 12 years and seven months in prison for attempting to transfer child pornography, federal prosecutors said.

Travis Wayne Claxton, 35, was sentenced July 9. The court also ordered him to forfeit a computer and hard drive used to commit the crime.

Claxton pleaded guilty in November to attempting to transport child pornography to another person over the Internet. He also admitted possessing at least 10 images of child pornography.

Park Central SquareDemolition of canopy likely to begin Aug. 1

A Springfield company that previously removed two canopies from Park Central Square was the lowest bidder by far to remove the last one.

The Springfield City Council was scheduled to review the \$45,000 bid by Rensch Construction Inc. at Monday's council meeting.

Phil Broyles, the city's assistant public works director, said the two other bids were at least twice as high as Rensch's.

Removal of the steel canopy is part of the renovation of the sidewalk area around the square. The canopy demolition is expected to begin by Aug. 1.

The canopy removal is part of a nearly \$1 million effort by the city to renovate and widen the square's perimeter sidewalks, create space for outdoor dining and make it more appealing for downtown visitors.

City UtilitiesNew power plant on track for 2010 completion

The new 300-megawatt Southwest 2 power plant is on schedule and on budget for completion in 2010, officials said last week.

Springfield City Council members got a bird's-eye view of progress on the plant July 8. They watched crews pouring concrete on the rim of the new chimney that now soars 329 feet above the ground.

The crews have 184 feet to go before the chimney shell is completed, likely in August, and becomes the tallest structure in southwest Missouri (excluding TV towers).

The 300-megawatt Southwest 2 will provide enough electricity to power Springfield through about 2017.

AppropriationsBlunt requesting funds for city, county projects

U.S. Rep. Roy Blunt is requesting funds for several Springfield and Greene County projects.

The projects are in the House commerce, justice, science and the energy and water appropriation bills that recently passed the House Appropriations Committee. Blunt's requests include:

- \$800,000 for the Greene County Emergency Operations Center to purchase specialized equipment.
- \$700,000 for the Springfield Police Department to replace and upgrade its records system.
- \$500,000 for the Corps of Engineers to complete pre-construction engineering to mitigate flooding along Jordan Creek.
- \$500,000 to help build an environmentally friendly and energy efficient roof on the Greene County Courthouse.

HealthFree workshop to teach how to cope with pain

A free six-week workshop about pain management and other coping skills for people with chronic conditions begins Thursday.

St. John's Arthritis Center and the Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services are offering the series, "Living a Healthy Life with Chronic Conditions," Thursday through Aug. 21. Classes will be from 10 a.m. to noon at St. John's Health Plans Building, 3265 S. National Ave.

The workshop is geared for people with arthritis, asthma, diabetes, heart disease, chronic respiratory diseases, depression, osteoporosis, fibromyalgia and lupus. Topics include pain management, stress management, exercise, sleep disorders, relaxation and communication skills.

Registration is required. Call 820-3665 or toll-free 800-835-5197 to register.

MSU Foundation sets record for fiscal year fundraising

Missouri State University's foundation fundraising effort has set a record.

The MSU Foundation's gifts and commitments total \$14,050,400 for the fiscal year ending June 30, MSU said. That figure surpasses the previous record of \$11,826,286 set in 2006.

The foundation has averaged nearly \$1 million per month since 2005.

The fundraising effort has resulted in adding 40 endowed funds this year. More than 8,000 MSU alumni contributed donations this year.

Greene County Wanted: Historic photos of county courthouse

Greene County officials are seeking photographs of the county courthouse for an upcoming centennial restoration project.

Photos showing the courthouse's original exterior, interior and landscaping will be used for research for possible restoration of the building's original features by 2012. County Administrator Tim Smith said the county is particularly interested in photos showing interior architectural details, like gas light fixtures, paint colors and the building's original skylights.

Smith said the county also is interested in photos showing the 1912 building's parapet — a low wall of detailed stone work that lined the top perimeter of the courthouse until weight issues caused it to be removed in the 1960s.

If you have photos of the courthouse or need more information, call Smith at 868-4861 or Jenny Fillmer Edwards at 829-6019 or 379-5713.

