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ROLLOVER ACCIDENT



Ray Nolting/Sun photo

The Labette County Sheriff's Office, the Kansas Highway Patrol, Labette Health Ambulance Service and Osage Township firefighters responded to a rollover accident at 3:48 p.m. Friday on Gray Road just south of 21000 Road. The driver of the sport utility vehicle, Vernell J. Hawkins, 19, Parsons, was southbound on the blacktop and lost control of the vehicle on gravel. The Toyota 4-Runner entered a pasture on the west side and became airborne after hitting a fence. The vehicle rolled and ended up on the passenger side. Hawkins was taken to Labette Health for treatment of possible injuries.

Kansas adds record-setting 5,418 cases of COVID-19

MISSION (AP) — Kansas added a record-setting 5,418 new coronavirus cases Friday as hospitals warned that staffing was being seriously strained and the state's top public health official said many local officials "haven't done anything" to check the surge.

The increases in confirmed and probable cases brought the state's total to 97,633, a 5.9% increase from Wednesday. With the influx, the seven-day daily rolling average rose to 1,779 cases, which is almost three times as high as it was just a month ago, data from the Kansas Department of Health and Environment shows.

The state also added 79 COVID-19 fatalities Friday to bring the total to 1,166. Deaths have more than doubled since mid-September.

Dr. Lee Norman, the head of the state health department, said cases "are just skyrocketing" because people are spending more time indoors and attending public events and family gatherings without being diligent about wearing masks or social distancing. He said he's worried that cases will spike again from family Thanksgiving get-togethers.

"It doesn't show any sign of leveling off, let alone going down," Norman said Friday during an Associated Press interview. "There's no place to hide, and what used to be relative protection by being in rural areas is no protection anymore."

Norman also blamed inaction by county commissioners. State law allowed Kansas' 105 counties to opt out of a mandate for people to wear masks in public issued in July by Democratic Gov. Laura Kelly, and most

See COVID-19, Page 6.

Neosho County discusses health department complaints

By Greg Lower
 The Chanute Tribune

ERIE — Neosho County Health Department employees have dealt with long hours and angry residents during the coronavirus pandemic, commissioners heard Thursday evening.

Administrator Teresa Starr updated

the commission on the issues during the regular county meeting Thursday. Commissioner David Orr said the department is the hottest topic about which he gets complaints from constituents.

Starr discussed issues with sports during the pandemic and said she is not ready to do what some health directors have done by quarantining an

entire team during an outbreak.

She said volleyball is considered a close-contact sport like basketball, which is just starting its season. She said for football, she watched video footage with coaches to track players' exposure, whether they are on the sidelines or the field and for how long.

See NEOSHO, Page 6.

DEATHS

Obituaries or notices for the following people can be found on Page 2 in today's Sun:

- Ken Swender
- Ellen Baker
- Joseph Ruttgen

FUNERALS

TEREASA RICHARDSON, 60, of Frontenac, service at 2 p.m. Saturday at Parsons Church of the Nazarene.

RICHARD WILLIS, 97, of Wichita, service at 1 p.m. Sunday at Mount Hope Cemetery, Galesburg.

CATHERINE BUSH, 73, formerly of Parsons, service at 10 a.m. Nov. 16 at McCune Cemetery.

JACK 'BOB' SCOTT, 89, of Tulsa, formerly of Dennis, service at 1:30 p.m. Saturday at Pleasant Hill Cemetery southeast of Dennis.

ELLEN 'BETTY' BAKER, 97, of Parsons, service at 1:30 p.m. Monday at Memorial Lawn Cemetery.

BRENDA HOUSKA, 80, of Hull, Texas, service at 10 a.m. Monday at Faith and Family Funeral Services, Batson, Texas.

JOSEPH RUTTGEN, 19, of Erie, service at 11 a.m. Nov. 14 at Tony's Function Junction, south of Erie.

KENNEDY SWENDER, 85, of Parsons, service at 2 p.m. Tuesday at Parsons Nazarene Church.

Molestation hearing may have to wait until next year

By The Sun Staff
 news@parsonssun.com

It may be into the new year before a pre-trial hearing takes place in a child molestation case.

A hearing on pre-trial motions was to take place this week, but a defense attorney asked to delay it to give him time to find an expert to evaluate his client.

Jered W. Bybee, 36, is facing five off-grid felonies in Labette County District Court: One count of aggravated indecent liberties with a child, three counts of aggravated criminal sodomy and one count of sexual exploitation of a child. The off-grid felonies could result in life in prison with no parole for at least 25 years. Bybee also faces 17 counts of sexual exploitation of a child, all

mid-level felonies, and three misdemeanors for allegedly sodomizing animals.

One of the motions to be heard this week was to determine if Bybee's statements to law enforcement could be heard at trial.

This week, Bybee's attorney, Forrest Lowry, said he wanted to engage an expert to evaluate Bybee. The expert may be in pharmacy or psychiatry. The Kansas Attorney General's Office is prosecuting the Bybee case.

A status hearing is set for Dec. 21 to see where Lowry stands in retaining an expert. A motions hearing may be set at that time. Bybee remains jailed on a \$100,000 bond.

In other cases:

— A Parsons man made a first appearance

See CASES, Page 6.

VIKING MURAL



Colleen Williamson/Sun photo

Parsons High School sophomore Rayce Baker works on a mural of a Viking she is painting in the main north-south hall of the school. She created the drawing last year, but because of the COVID-19 pandemic closing the school building, she did not get to finish her project, leaving her to wrap it up this year. Baker anticipates she will be done right before the winter break.

COVID-19 CASES IN SOUTHEAST KANSAS (cumulative)

| LABETTE * | MONTGOMERY ** | CHEROKEE * | CRAWFORD * | NEOSHO * | WILSON |
|-------------------|--------------------|-------------------|--------------------|-------------------|-------------------|
| CASE TOTAL: 452 | CASE TOTAL: 751 | CASE TOTAL: 767 | CASE TOTAL: 1,605 | CASE TOTAL: 349 | CASE TOTAL: 143 |
| CURRENT CASES: 61 | CURRENT CASES: N/A | CURRENT CASES: 91 | CURRENT CASES: 209 | CURRENT CASES: 66 | CURRENT CASES: 28 |
| RECOVERED: 391 | RECOVERED: N/A | RECOVERED: 668 | RECOVERED: N/A | RECOVERED: 283 | RECOVERED: 117 |
| HOSPITALIZED: 18 | HOSPITALIZED: N/A | HOSPITALIZED: 7 | HOSPITALIZED: N/A | HOSPITALIZED: N/A | HOSPITALIZED: 13 |
| TESTS: 4,824 | TESTS: 6,479 | TESTS: 3,750 | TESTS: 9,092 | TESTS: 3,291 | TESTS: 2,880 |
| DEATHS: 6 | DEATHS: 6 | DEATHS: 8 | DEATHS: 14 | DEATHS: 0 | DEATHS: 4 |
| POP%TESTED: 24.59 | POP%TESTED: 20.36 | POP%TESTED: 18.81 | POP%TESTED: 23.42 | POP%TESTED: 20.63 | POP%TESTED: 33.78 |
| POP%ILL: 2.202 | POP%ILL: 2.355 | POP%ILL: 3.832 | POP%ILL: 4.134 | POP%ILL: 2.187 | POP%ILL: 1.650 |

KANSAS: 97,633 cases; 4,067 hospitalizations; 1,166 deaths; 578,687 negative tests; 23.21% population tested; 3.35% ill.
 NATIONAL: 9,715,652 cases; 235,988 deaths; 152,507,113 tests; 46.13% population tested; 2.94% ill.

* Counties did not update case numbers Friday.

** Montgomery County no longer provides updated case numbers; its numbers will come from KDHE.
 Sources: www.kdhe.gov; Johns Hopkins COVID site, coronavirus.jhu.edu/map.html; health departments; county websites.

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