



Time to catch a drift

SAM DIETER/Colby Free Press

Brothers Teagun (left) and Kyler went sledding Saturday afternoon (left). Teagun lost his disc on the way down the ditch just north of College Avenue near the water tower (left). He then ran and slid down to retrieve it (below).



Immigration exhibit to open at Fort Hays State

Most Kansans can trace their heritage to another part of the world.

This is the unique story told in “Americans by Choice: The Story of Immigration and Citizenship in Kansas,” a new exhibit opening Thursday, Jan. 3, at Forsyth Library on the Fort Hays State University campus.

Some came in search of a better life for themselves or their children. Many came to join families or friends. Between 1865 and 1880, Kansas attracted immigrants at a faster pace than anywhere else in the United States. The state’s population grew from 107,205 in 1860 to 1,428,108 in 1890, thanks to the irresistible promise of a better life through land and jobs.

In 1870, 13 percent of Kansas’ total population was foreign-born. Employment opportunities, a lower cost of living and the ease of integrating into communities in a meaningful way continue to attract many new immigrants.

Today, 6 percent of all Kansans are foreign-born. And, each year, the U.S. District Court for Kansas conducts about 20 naturalization ceremonies where people who have completed the requirements for citizenship take the Oath

of Allegiance and become U.S. citizens.

Beginning Jan. 3, the exhibit will open to the public from 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Monday to Friday, closed on weekends and on Monday, Jan. 21. New hours will begin on Tuesday, Jan. 22, when the exhibit will be open from 7:30 a.m. to 10 p.m. Monday to Thursday, 7:30 a.m. to 7 p.m. Friday, 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Saturday and 1 to 10 p.m. on Sunday. Admission is free. The exhibit will close Wednesday, Feb. 20.

The exhibit illustrates the paths to citizenship taken by Kansas settlers from around the world over the past 150 years and personalizes the story of immigration and citizenship – who came, where they came from, why they came to Kansas and why they chose to become U.S. citizens. It features photographs, documents, quotes and interactive books describing major laws affecting immigration and naturalization over the past 150 years, the consequences of those laws and how they directly affected the life of a Kansan.

The exhibit was commissioned by the U.S. District Court for the District of Kansas to highlight the court’s role in the naturalization process. A permanent exhibit of the same title

is installed at the Robert J. Dole Courthouse in Kansas City, Kan.

“I speak for every one of the judges on this court,” said the Hon. Kathryn H. Vratil, chief judge, “when I say that participating in naturalization ceremonies is one of the highlights of our professional life. It helps us reaffirm and refocus ourselves on the values that we hold very dear to our hearts as American citizens.”

From 1931 to 2010, more than 75,000 new citizens were naturalized in Kansas, an average of 2,400 a year.

The exhibit was developed by Jean Svadlenak, a museum consultant based in Kansas City, Mo., with more than 35 years of experience in history.

“I have been captivated and inspired by the people I’ve met through this project,” Svadlenak said. “Their personal stories give meaning to immigration and citizenship facts and figures. Working on this project has given me a deeper appreciation for my own American citizenship.”

For information, contact Patty Nicholas, archivist at the library, at pnichola@fhsu.edu or by calling (785) 628-5901.

Versailles’ royal molecatcher still on the job

Thomas Adamson

Associated Press

VERSAILLES, France – The king is dead, but the molecatcher lives on.

He even signs SMS messages: “Molecatcher to the king.” It’s been over two centuries since Louis XVI was guillotined on Paris’ Place de la Concorde, but the job of hunting the underground pest that so troubled French monarchs on the grounds of the Versailles palace still exists.

Its current holder carries on, business as usual, with a task that hasn’t changed in centuries.

“It might sound funny, but it’s serious work. My job is to make sure molehills don’t deface Europe’s finest gardens,” says 36-year-old Jerome Dormion, the latest in an unbroken 330-year line of mole-killers in the royal palace and gardens visited by six million people a year. “We still have visiting dignitaries, too. Imagine if they were to see them!”

Dormion – who started out as a regular gardener before noticing a niche in the molecatching market – keeps the roughly 800 hectares (2,000 acres) of magnificent hor-

ticulture mole-free. The grounds include fountains, an orangery, glistening landscaped grass, Marie Antoinette’s cherished farm and famed gardener Andre Le Notre’s Royal Path and Grand Canal.

He takes the work very seriously – but there’s the odd flash of humor.

“I’m known as the king’s molecatcher because Versailles is still the palace,” he says. “The king might be gone, but the palace still has moles, loads of them.” He smiles: “Which is good, as it keeps me in work!”

Versailles is a veritable hotbed for moles, unlike some other European palaces, since it lies in the verdant countryside some 12 kilometers (7.5 miles) outside the Paris city walls. Across the channel, Britain’s Queen Elizabeth II need not furrow her regal brow, as

her palace in London, is protected by city foundations that prevent moles from digging through to the royal residence.

At Versailles, large mounds of earth mark out the path of the mole’s underground kingdom, in which Dormion sets dozens of archaic-looking traps featuring two metal prongs that smash together to break the neck.

“It resembles a guillotine,” says Dormion with a wry smile. He tried poison for a while, but decided the contraption invented in the 1600s was the best, not to mention most faithful to the historic role.

For their part, moles, solitary underground creatures with giant paws for digging, outdate even the oldest kings of France.

Shape new year with good attitudes

It is almost 2013! As a new year starts, it’s like we are looking at a blank slate, waiting to be written on.

We may be excited or anxious about what this new year might hold for us. But either way these words of wisdom can be a guide for daily life.

“Watch your thoughts; they lead to attitudes. Watch your attitudes; they lead to words. Watch your words; they lead to actions. Watch your actions; they lead to habits. Watch your habits; they form your character. Watch your character; it determines your destiny.”

The unknown author of this wisdom tells us our silent and perhaps subconscious choices shape our future. Every aspect of our lives, at home and at work, can be improved if we use our power to think, reflect and make conscious choices about our thoughts, attitudes, words, actions and habits.

We may complain about our circumstances and what others did to us. There may be temporary comfort in the feeling of being powerless and blameless and receiving sympathy when things aren’t going right, but it is temporary and “victims” end up leading unsatisfied lives.

Powerful emotions like fear, insecurity, anger, frustration, grief and depression make us the most vulnerable to “victimitis.” These strong emotions can be so overwhelming that we believe our state of mind is inevitable. Our only hope is that these bad feelings will go away on their own. Yet, it’s during these times that using our power to choose our thoughts and attitudes is the most important. We can’t make pain go away, but we can refuse to suffer.

Even when we don’t like any of our choices, we do have choices – once we realize “we can take control.” It isn’t easy, but what we do and how we choose to feel about ourselves can have a profound impact on the quality of our lives.

Taking personal responsibility for our happiness and success can be scary, but the payoff is enormous. Although we can’t make our lives perfect, we can make them better – usually a lot better.

Our choices reveal our character, but more importantly they shape our character. Thus, the more aware we become of the choices we make every single day – choices about our attitudes, words, actions and reactions – the more power we have over our own destiny.

Senator Bob Bennett of Utah said, “Your life is the sum result of all the choices you make.... If you can control the process of choosing, you can take control of all aspects of your life. You can find the freedom that comes from being in charge of yourself.”

It’s true. When we accept responsibility for our choices, we take charge of our lives. Yet, one



Diann Gerstner

• Knowledge for Life

of the most common rationalizations for moral compromise is the claim, “I had no choice.” Executives who cheat to protect their jobs, athletes who take illegal performance-enhancing drugs to stay competitive and employees who resort to lying to get what they want frequently convince themselves they were forced to do what they did.

This self-delusion of powerlessness is particularly strong in teenagers who struggle to deal with hormone-intensified impulses and emotions that can create moods and urges that seem beyond control. Despite the power of intense desire, fear and fury, we always have the power to choose what we think, say and do – even when we’re under tremendous pressure, and even when we don’t like our options.

There is the story of Jason, a construction worker, who took a sandwich out of his lunch bag, looked at it and threw it on the ground yelling, “Baloney again! I hate baloney.”

A co-worker said, “If you hate baloney so much, just ask your wife to make you something else.”

Jason replied, “That’s the problem. My wife didn’t make the sandwich. I did.”

Lots of people continually make their own baloney sandwiches and then act as victims when it’s time to eat them. The baloney sandwich is a metaphor for things we do to ourselves that make our lives tougher. Einstein defined insanity as doing the same thing over and over again and expecting a different result.

For some, the problem is personal relationships. Thus, intelligent people driven by loneliness, sexual attraction, irrational romanticism or a rescue mentality disregard their good sense and core values by repetitively getting involved with people who are bad for them.

Others have baloney sandwich jobs. They ignore their instincts and experience, thinking they can put up with unkind or dishonorable bosses or unfulfilling, demeaning jobs. Sooner or later, unhealthy relationships and unrewarding jobs will become intolerable.

If you don’t like baloney sandwiches, take control of your life – identify the values that are really important to you and don’t compromise them.

For 2013, take control of your life and get rid of the baloney sandwiches. Wishing you all the best.

Diann Gerstner is the family and consumer sciences agent for the Thomas County Extension office.

Cheetahs get workout at track

HOUSTON (AP) – Two cheetahs from the Houston Zoo usually confined to cages have been allowed to run through part of a horse track when the regular racers weren’t around.

The 5-year-old male siblings name Kito and Kiburi were allowed to roam this month at a grassy fenced part of Sam Hous-

ton Race Park in Houston.

The *Houston Chronicle* (bit.ly/Waku9S) reported that the zoo officials, starting in August, took the big cats to the park on leashes. Curator Beth Schaefer says the cheetahs were calm with their trainers.

The cheetahs in November were allowed off their leashes with no problems.

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