



Area woman appointed to council

By Sam Dieter

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Virginia Hopper of Gem has been helping senior citizens long enough that she didn't have to ask for her latest job.

"They called and asked if I'd be interested," she said. "I guess someone had put my name up to them."

Hopper was appointed to the Kansas Advisory Council on Aging in November by Gov. Sam Brownback.

At least half the members of the council must be 60 or older, the website said. Their job includes advocating for the elderly with the state government and agencies.

"We kind of advise the governor on the conditions of the area for the elderly," Hopper said.

Hopper said she has been work-

ing with and for elderly Kansans in several ways for about 45 years. She has worked with the state guardianship program since 2001 and in the Silver-Haired Legislature since about 2007. She said the legislators must be 60 years old or older, too.



V. Hopper

The guardianship program, Hopper said, is meant to provide support to older people who don't have any friends or family members around to take care of them. Over the years, Hopper said, she's been a guardian for four older people.

"It's just being a friend," she said, "just like finding a friend and you get to befriend them and enjoy them."

The Silver-Haired Legislature meets once a year in the fall, when the regular legislature is out.

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County OKs fee increase for landfill

By Christina Beringer

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Thomas County commissioners approved a 3 percent fee increase for the county landfill last Monday, raising the prices on all types of waste except clean concrete, which will be accepted for free since the county can grind it for use on roads.

The rates were effective as of Jan. 1.

Landfill Supervisor Larry Jumper first talked about the increases at his annual meeting in September, and then proposed them to commissioners Oct. 15.

People can expect to pay \$1 more per ton on construction and demolition waste, fencing and wood scraps, grain dust, pallets, undrained appliances, heavy coiled cable, municipal solid waste delivered by municipalities

and contract haulers and cardboard that could be recycled.

Fees for dirty construction and demolition waste containing trash and uncut tarps, municipal solid waste mixed with yard debris and some hauls brought in from out of the county will go up \$2 per ton.

The biggest increase was set on whole tarps that should be cut into manageable strips, because of the large amount of space they take up. The landfill has increased the charge by \$6 to \$80 per ton.

Commissioner-elect Mike Baughn suggested that in the future, commissioners approve changes in fees earlier in the year, around May, to give area cities the opportunity to include the increases in their budgets. All agreed this is a good idea.

Commissioner Paul Steele said he expects a continuing annual increase of 3 percent.

Massage therapists may need licenses

By Kevin Bottrell

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Several organizations will be pushing the Kansas Legislature this year to approve a bill that would require massage therapists to be licensed.

The main force behind the bill is the Kansas chapter of the American Massage Therapy Association with help from the national association and the group Associated Bodywork and Massage Professionals.

Paige Harper, a Goodland therapist and member of the association, said only six states do not license massage therapy. The association tried last year to get a bill passed, but it never made it

out of committee.

"With so many new legislators, we have a lot of education to do," she added.

If the bill is passed and signed by the governor, massage therapists would be required to pay \$100 for a two-year license. They would be required to take six credit-hours of continuing education a year.

"It sets a minimum standard of education and raises the profession up," Harper said.

Harper said those already practicing massage therapy will be grandfathered in but would still have to do the continuing education.

One of the aims of the effort is to make it more difficult for prostitution and human-trafficking rings to operate under cover of the massage profession. In recent



Kids spend Sunday making a snow fort

Donte Whitfield (above left) and Jonah Thompson and some friends decided to spend Sunday making a snow fort in the front yard. The boys first decided to make the fort for a snowball fight (left), Whitfield said. They made the job easier by making snow bricks with the help of a shovel and a cooler (below). Neighbor kids Alexie Epp (bottom left), Bryendan Powell and Jonah's little brother, Job Thompson, helped with the fort. Whitfield said they were planning on building a complete square out of snow, "and then we'll find something to do with it."

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