

# Kansas homeless shelters see rising need for help

By Roxana Hegeman

**Associated Press Writer**  
WICHITA — A weak economy is taking its toll on some of the state's most vulnerable citizens as homeless shelters across Kansas see more demand for their services.

New Beginnings in Hutchinson has a waiting list of families trying to get into its homeless shelter, some waiting two weeks to a month, or more, for an opening.

The Salina Rescue Mission has seen the number of homeless men more than double in about a year.

And a winter homeless overflow shelter in Wichita expects to house

more people this year than at any time in its 12-year history.

Shara Gonzales, director of New Beginnings, said the Hutchinson shelter reached capacity in 1994 and has had a waiting list since. The shelter can house 22 people now, but the number of people seeking shelter peaked at 78 in June and has stayed about the same since then.

"We are seeing more and more families in cars, and that didn't used to be the case here," she said.

It was a trend that started with welfare reform, as many families lost benefits when they were unable to comply with the welfare-to-work programs,

Gonzales said. The problem has grown as more people lose their jobs in Hutchinson.

"The layoffs and economic downturn have made a significant impact on people who would never ask for our services," Gonzales said.

About half the people the shelter serves are families. It used to take an average of three months for a homeless family to find a house again and set up a home, now it is taking four months or longer, she said.

At the Salina Rescue Mission, Rev. Steve Kmetz said it used to be that the men who stayed in the shelter did not have difficulty finding low paying jobs

in restaurants or manufacturing. Now they are having to work harder to find jobs.

About a year and a half ago, the number of men looking for shelter there hovered around 18 each night. That went up to 40 late last year and now stands at around 50. So far, the Salina shelter has been able to provide at least a mattress on the floor for those who needed it.

"At this point, we have had an overflow," Kmetz said. "We certainly have the square footage, but we don't have enough staff to be able to manage that many men."

In Wichita, homeless shelters are

full. An overflow shelter opened last week to care for record numbers of people needing shelter.

"During cold winter months there is not enough room," the Rev. Sam Muyskens, executive director of Inter-Faith Ministries, told The Wichita Eagle.

In the gymnasium of the St. Paul's United Methodist Church, volunteers set up about 30 cots to accommodate additional homeless, mostly men who are unemployed or whose minimum-wage jobs can't cover rent.

Those who check in got a free meal and the use of a cot and three thin military blankets for the night. No pillow.

No privacy.

"It's not a comfortable place to be," said Sandy Swank, director of housing and homeless services for Inter-Faith. "It is a horrible place to be. It's the flu season. There are sick people here. Angry people here. Lot of mentally ill people here."

Muyskens said area officials think more people will be seeking shelter this year than at any other time in the overflow shelter's 12-year history. The shelter is open from December through February.

"We are seeing far more people seeking food and emergency services," Muyskens said.

## Head quits due to closed meetings

TOPEKA (AP) — The head of a government review team appointed by Gov.-elect Kathleen Sebelius quit Tuesday because the teams' meetings have been closed to the public.

The move by state Sen. David Adkins, R-Leawood, came as more than a dozen Kansas news organizations, including *The Associated Press*, negotiated with Sebelius' transition staff over her decision to have the government review teams meet in private.

Adkins notified Sebelius' transition office of his decision in a faxed letter, the contents of which he declined to make public.

But he told *The Kansas City Star*, in an interview for a story in today's editions, that he disagreed with Sebelius' call to close the meetings held by his public-safety budget committee, which is part of Sebelius' top-to-bottom review of the deficit-burdened state budget.

"For me, it's as simple as when the people's business is being discussed, people have a right to be there," Adkins said. "The (budget) problem is of such

magnitude that I think we owe it to ourselves as policy-makers to take as many people along on this journey as possible."

Adkins also cited scheduling conflicts that prevented him from attending either of his committee's first two meetings. "The meetings were scheduled without consulting my calendar," Adkins said.

Tuesday's talks were held as word spread of a pending lawsuit challenging Sebelius' decision to have the teams conduct closed-door meetings prior to making any recommendations to her.

Sebelius previously said the meetings don't fall under the Kansas Open Meetings Act and that keeping discussions private will foster frank and candid discussions.

Mike Merriam, attorney for the news organizations, said he spoke at length Tuesday with Sebelius staffers.

"The governor-elect's transition team has expressed a desire to resolve this issue out of court and they have invited further discussions on that

point," Merriam said.

"We will know by midmorning tomorrow whether that can be done or whether we will be filing a lawsuit," he said.

Sebelius spokeswoman Nicole Corcoran-Basso said discussions were ongoing in the hopes of reaching an agreement.

An attorney general's opinion has said the teams, named by Sebelius last month, do not fall under the Open Meetings Act until Sebelius becomes governor on Jan. 13.

But Merriam disagreed, saying, "We think these review teams that Sebelius has established should be subject to the Open Meetings Act."

Adkins said he had told reporters that his hearings would be open to the public. But at his committee's first hearing two weeks ago, the panel's acting chairman closed the hearing even though reporters showed up to cover the proceedings.

Sebelius' other committees are examining infrastructure, economy, human services, agriculture and resources.

## Lawyer will check filer's background

LAWSUIT, from Page 1

duce documents that prove she defamed his character.

In the request, Shalz on behalf of his client, is asking for documents, statements, or other reports from Davis' attorney, Larry G. Michel of Salina.

Sears denied all allegations made by Davis and requested a judgment in her favor for costs and relief as the court believes equitable.

An administrative hearing was held on Wednesday, Nov. 20, relating to the

original allegations made by Staats against Hildyard in late April.

Two days after those initial allegations, Staats was reported to have recanted the statements. The results of the administrative hearing have not been publicized, nor are any of the parties involved commenting, since these types of hearings are not open to the public or conducted in a legal setting.

## Stuckey's fire still being investigated

FIRE, from Page 1

Koch and Sarah Divine, the manager, were a couple and lived in the apartment behind the restaurant.

The night of the fire, Baughn said, Divine was visiting another Stuckey's employee. Both Divine and Koch have been interviewed, he said, but he hasn't seen results of the interviews.

Stuckey's is also a gas station and Baughn said the gas storage tanks had been filled the day before the fire. Fire fighters did a good job of keeping the flames away from the gas pumps, he said, and dousing the pumps with water. The storage tanks will probably be emptied, he said.

The Grinnell Stuckey's manager said the owner of the Brewster restaurant is a Georgia man named Fred Miller. She said she has no idea how the fire started.

"What you guys hear is what we hear," she said.

Cameron said Melvin Dale, one of the office's 12 investigators, has been assigned to the case along with K-9 handler Mark McCleary and his black Labrador Retriever Roxanne.

Cameron said Dale will be searching for the origin and cause of the fire. He will interview Koch and Divine, he said, and other witnesses and authorities who helped put out the fire.

Cameron said Roxanne is trained to detect hydrocarbons found in gasoline, petroleum and other fossil fuels.

The K-9 unit is usually called in when there are multiple origins of a fire, he said, but can be brought in for other reasons as well. He said he didn't know why the dog was used this time.

Cameron said the investigation could span months. "This is a very complex investigation," he said

## Mediator sides with Colorado in battle

DENVER (AP) — A lawyer appointed by the Supreme Court has backed Colorado's calculation for the amount of money owed Kansas in the states' long-running battle over use of Arkansas River water.

On Monday, Special Master Arthur Littleworth agreed that Colorado owes Kansas \$28.9 million for taking too much water from the river from 1950 to 1994.

Kansas had sought \$52.8 million in damages, claiming Colorado owed it interest on damages during that time. Colorado's calculation includes interest on damages incurred starting in 1985, when Kansas filed its lawsuit against Colorado.

The U.S. Supreme Court still must approve Littleworth's recommendation, said Ken Lane, spokesman for

Colorado Attorney General Ken Salazar.

"This is a significant victory for Colorado and confirms Colorado's position," Salazar said Tuesday.

Kansas Attorney General Carla Stovall had not seen the decision but her spokesman, Mark Ohlemeier, said:

"It is our understanding that this is just the special master's recommendation and that this is not final," Ohlemeier said. "This will be looked at very carefully by the attorney general's office and we'll decide at that time what our next step will be."

The Supreme Court ruled in 1995 that Colorado violated the 1949 Arkansas River Compact by allowing farmers to pump too much water.

Last year, the court ruled Kansas is entitled to money as well as water from

Colorado. Since then, the two states have been arguing over how much.

## Tiny Kansas City suburb merges

COUNTRYSIDE. (AP) — The mayor of this tiny Kansas City suburb finally got what he wanted.

On Tuesday, Ken Davis' constituents voted Countryside out of existence.

After a divisive campaign that literally pitted neighbor against neighbor in the six-square-block enclave, the city's residents decided overwhelmingly to merge with neighboring Mission.

# Explore the wide world of the Web



# We can connect you tonight... not next week!

**We have new high speed digital lines!**  
**nwkansas.com** is your key to the Internet. We offer reliable service, fast digital connections and full access to the Internet, the World Wide Web and E-mail all in one package for one low monthly fee\*. We have knowledgeable customer service people to help you get connected, and plenty of lines to take your calls. We are your local Internet Service Provider with people who can answer your questions. In most cases, you can be hooked up today. We have the newest digital incoming lines, and a high speed frame relay to carry your traffic.

**Infinite variety on the 'Net**  
There's a whole new world waiting out there. Whatever you're interested in, the Internet, with its millions of postings and services, has it. Weather, time of day, art, archives, news, hobbies . . . If you can imagine it, someone has put it on the Internet.

**\*Special rate offer**  
With a payment of **\$99.80** (four months base service) we give you a month of service free and free set-up (\$19.96 per month average rate. We are offering an annual rate of **\$198** (four months free service).

Use it for business. Use it for school. Use it for pleasure. Use it just to find out what's out there. Pick a topic and search the entire World Wide Web for it ... in just seconds.  
**E-mail for fun and profit**  
E-mail is fast, affordable and inexpensive. From your computer, you can send and receive messages anywhere in the world . . . for no charge . . . once you have an Internet connection.



# nwkansas.com

Local Tech Support • Same-Day Connection\* • Friendly People to Help  
The Goodland Daily News • 1205 Main, Goodland, Kansas, 67735 • 785 899-2338  
\*In most cases; we'll try anyway.