

Take Kansas Home seen as way to expand tourist sales, interest

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Carver, adding that she and her staff are excited about it. The items are displayed nicely, she said, and there are good people participating.

It's generating excitement among potential vendors as well, she said; six people have already picked up applications, and they were thrilled to have their work displayed in the gift shop.

"I've heard a lot of positive comments," she said.

Carver said she's sorry to hear northwest Kansas artists who had work at the travel center felt unwelcome in the new program, and she

hopes they will reconsider.

Everyone is welcome, she said; it is open to artists and craftspeople across the state — nobody was shut out. The travel center is owned by the state, she said, and has to promote the whole state, not just northwest Kansas.

If artists feel the fee for the program is too much, she said, they could look into getting a small business grant. Sometimes grants are available from the Sherman County Economic Development Council, she said, or other organizations, such as the federal Small Business Administration.

The center has four computers just for ordering, Carver said, which are connected to the state's secure

system. Sometimes, she said, visitors get excited when they see the computers and think they can get on the Internet, but they are just for ordering from the gift shop. They are not on wireless internet or anything at risk of being hacked into, she said,

so ordering is secure.

The gift shop opened Tuesday, April 22, Nicol said. Thirteen vendors are planning to display their work, she said, and a couple of others were interested but decided they aren't able to at this time.

The shop has room for a lot more, she said, and the web site has unlimited space. She said they are still judging some applications and would welcome more.

Nicol said she isn't concerned about the fees being too much for

artists with small businesses. The exposure on the web site is a lot for the cost, she said.

"We didn't run into artists saying they couldn't afford the \$250," Nicol said. "Most said they didn't have enough product to fill large orders."

Artists question program costs, process

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County Convention and Visitors Bureau; Mona Carver, supervisor at the Goodland center; Gov. Kathleen Sebelius; and state Rep. Jim Morrison of Colby, who represents this area.

Cooper said her display at the travel center enticed tourists to make an unplanned visit to Goodland.

"They were delighted to be able to see my work and take their purchases with them," she said. "If they ordered custom work, they were more than willing to wait for as long as it took for the completion and shipping, knowing the quality of the piece when it was delivered to them."

"People who are now fortunate enough to have the means to travel and search for unusual items appreciate the person-to-person contact in

my home-based studio and gallery, are thrilled with the quality of my work, happy at the prices and able to find space in vehicles of all sizes to transport same."

Cooper said she has had many positive experiences in meeting travelers and has been contacted by some who bought art while here who wanted more later.

Displaying at the travel center was a positive experience, she said; the staff there was always good to work with.

"I am disappointed that the state of Kansas has allowed this program to progress beyond a brain-storming session," she wrote in her letter.

Charging for it makes a real difference, said Charlie Norton, the Leoti artist who created the 2 1/2-times-lifesize bronze sculpture

of "Buffalo Bill" Cody at Oakley, but the three-day turnaround to ship is an even bigger concern.

Bronze sculptures have a high cost to produce, he said, adding the short turnaround would require him to keep a large inventory. That's a lot to pay interest on, he said.

Norton had a replica of Oakley's statue at the travel center and is working on a line of miniatures, but felt the cost of working with TakeKansasHome.com would be a bigger risk than he wants to take.

"I wish I had a crystal ball to know what the economy is going to do," he said. "I think tourism will slow down because of the high cost of fuel and high food prices."

Goodland artist Elwyn Vatcher said he is considering displaying his watercolors for sale, but is still

evaluating the information to see if the program will work for him. He had displayed his work at the travel center and even did watercolor demonstrations for travelers.

Sharon Harper of Goodland had displayed Barbie dolls wearing wedding dresses she crocheted. She said she opted not to apply and pay the fees because she wasn't trying to turn her dolls into a business.

"I didn't care whether I sold any or not," she said. "I was just glad to show them off for awhile." — Sharon Corcoran

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'Taste of Kansas' Saturday

Visitors to the state Travel Information Center west of Goodland on Saturday will be in for a surprise or two, as the center will offer free food and gifts, along with prize drawings.

The center, on I-70 eastbound at mile marker 7 between Kanorado and Goodland, will hold "A Taste of Kansas" from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. Saturday to commemorate National Tourism Week from May 10-18.

The center will give out bottled water and sunflower seed packets until supplies run out, said supervi-

sor Mona Carver, and visitors can take the seeds home to plant their own sunflower patch.

The center always has free coffee during regular hours, she said, and will serve that as well as free popcorn for the event. Some of the vendors in the TakeKansasHome.com gift shop will have free samples available, she said, and there will be drawings for prizes donated by several towns across the state.

It will be a good opportunity to launch the new gift shop, Carver said.

Artist on-line program change causes friction

PROGRAM, from Page 1

price of \$12.50 or more.

Items entered can include Kansas-make fine arts, food, kids stuff, home decor, music compact disks, seasonal, crafts, textiles, books, jewelry, unique gifts under \$25 or "other." The jury will choose 15-20 items in each category.

Not included are products assembled from kits, items that demean Kansas or depict it in a negative fashion, preprinted quilt tops, plastic items, dolls or doll components not created by the artist, manufactured or imported baskets or items

that infringe on any copyright.

The contractor is accepting applications for the program, developing the web site and will pay the vendors monthly for their sales. The program will feature "amazing Kansas culture as it is represented in artisan goods," said Becky Blake, director of the Travel and Tourism Division.

"This project will test whether exposure to such products will cause people to travel to the areas in Kansas where the featured products are produced," she said, "and if we can produce sales for artisans in Kansas."

County at-large bill passes

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"Sen. Ostmeyer called me the day we passed it in March," Tiede said. "I asked him at that time if we could keep the districts. It was my mistake to ask."

"I talked to the person writing the bill and he said we could not do that, and I told him to go on with the at-large language. I did not intend that to cause a problem. I will take responsibility for that."

The commissioners agreed to send a letter to Burgess and the

other conference committee members and had Rumpel draft it. Each signed the letter, which was mailed April 8, with copies to Ostmeyer and Rep. Jim Morrison (R-Colby), who have helped with the bill.

The Legislature returned to work on Wednesday, and there had been no word from Topeka about the fate of the bill until it was reported being passed on Saturday.

The governor has 10 days to sign the bill, veto it or allow it to become law without her signature.



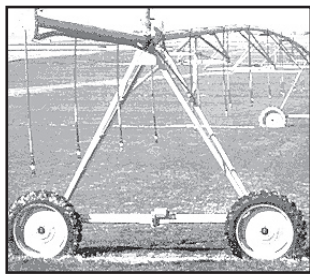
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