

Highway Patrol to graduate new class

Members of the Kansas Highway Patrol family are looking forward to an exciting time that is coming soon. At noon (Mountain Time) on Saturday the patrol's 75th Anniversary Celebration will take place, in conjunction with Recruit Class No. 50's graduation. The event will take place in Salina at the patrol's Training Academy.

"This is an extremely exciting time for the Kansas Highway Patrol. We are celebrating these 16 new troopers which comprise the 50th Recruit class to graduate from the Kansas

Highway Patrol Training Academy, and we are also celebrating 75 years of serving the citizens of Kansas," said Lieutenant Joshua Kellerman, Public Information Officer.

Recruit Class No. 50 began 23 weeks of training at the Patrol's Troop J (Kansas Highway Patrol Training Academy) on January 4. Sixteen recruit troopers will be graduating, and then will be sent to the counties they are stationed in for field training. This is the first class recruit class to go through the Training Academy since Class No. 49 graduated in

August 2010.

The Kansas Highway Patrol was established in 1937 to help stop the bank robberies and crime sprees of that time. Since then, the agency has grown to incorporate so many more functions and responsibilities. One thing that has remained constant through the rich, 75-year history is the Patrol's dedication to provide Service, Courtesy, and Protection to all of those traveling within our state.

Wheat in bad shape; plot tour planned

WHEAT, from Page 1

thunderstorm blew through the area. However, that storm did drop anywhere from 29 to 52 hundredths of an inch of rain.

Farmers in southern and central Kansas have begun harvesting. The latest Harvest Report, put out by the Kansas Wheat Commission and the Kansas Association of Wheat Growers, said farmers are cutting as far north as Ottawa. An elevator in Meade reported bringing in 300,000 bushels of wheat by Thursday, a long way off from its projected 1.2 million. Yield appeared to be in

around 20 bushels per acre.

In Hillsboro, things are looking better. A farmer there reported 50 bushels per acre with test weights around 62 pounds per bushel.

Harvest in northwest Kansas will likely begin at the end of this week or sometime next week, Falk said, which is about two weeks earlier than normal.

Falk is holding a wheat plot tour at 5:30 p.m. tonight at the F&J Farm, about 10 miles north of Goodland on K-27. The discussion will include wheat varieties, diseases and nitrogen management.

Books on growing up chosen for awards

EMPORIA – Two books about young girls dealing with growing pains have been judged the best by Kansas schoolchildren.

"11 Birthdays" by Wendy Mass (Scholastic Books) and "Confetti Girl" by Diana Lopez (Little, Brown Books for Young Readers) are the recipients of the 2011 William Allen White Children's Book Awards.

The William Allen White Children's Book Award program was founded in 1952 by Ruth Garver Gagliardo, a specialist in children's literature for Emporia State University. One of the few literary awards that asks young readers to choose the winners, the program is directed by Emporia State University and supported in part by the Trusler Foundation.

Both authors have been invited to the awards celebration, set for Saturday, Oct. 6 in Emporia.

"11 Birthdays," selected by voters in Grades 3 through 5, is the story of Amanda, who is excited to celebrate her 11th birthday – except everything goes wrong, starting with not celebrating with her best

friend, Leo. They've shared every birthday of their life, but are on the outs.

When Amanda goes to sleep that night, she's just glad the day's over. But, the next morning, her birthday starts all over again.

"I was really thrilled and honored to learn that '11 Birthdays' had won the William Allen White Children's Book Award," said Mass. "I had so much fun writing this book about friendship, forgiveness, and second chances (and third, fourth, fifth chances, etc!). It means a lot to me to know that the children of Kansas had fun reading it. What more could a writer ask for?"

Mass is the New York Times best-selling author of 12 novels for young people, which have been translated into 14 languages and nominated for 50 state book awards. Her titles include "A Mango-Shaped Space," which was awarded the Schneider Family Book Award by the American Library Association; "Leap Day," the "Twice Upon a Time" fairy tale series, "Every Soul a Star," "Heaven Looks a Lot Like the

Mall," "Jeremy Fink and the Meaning of Life" and "Finally." Her most recent books are "The Candymakers" and "13 Gifts."

Mass writes more than books – she wrote the storyline for an episode of the television show "Monk," titled "Mr. Monk Goes to the Theatre," which aired during the show's second season. She tells people her hobbies are hiking and photography, but really they're collecting candy bar wrappers and searching for buried treasure with her metal detector. She lives with her family in New Jersey.

"Confetti Girl," chosen by readers in Grades 6 through 8, is a clever and honest story of a young Latina girl navigating growing pains in her South Texas city. Apolonia "Lina" Flores is a sock enthusiast, a volleyball player, a science lover, and a girl who's just looking for answers.

Even though her house is crammed full of books (her dad's a bibliophile), she's having trouble figuring out some very big questions, like why her dad seems to care about books more than her,

why her best friend's divorced mom is obsessed with making cascarones (hollowed eggshells filled with colorful confetti), and, most of all, why her mom died last year. Like colors in cascarones, Lina's life is a rainbow of people, interests, and unexpected changes.

"What makes winning the William Allen White Award so special is that students select the winner," Lopez said. "I used to teach middle school, so as I wrote 'Confetti Girl,' I kept thinking about my students. I wanted to write a book that they would like. That's why I got so excited when I heard I won the award. Thank you, Kansas!"

During the October awards celebration, schoolchildren from across the state of Kansas travel to Emporia for special events including lock-ins, author readings and book signings along with a parade through downtown Emporia to the awards ceremony itself. Many teachers use travel to the book awards as incentives in their school reading programs.

Government launches program to help retrain military veterans for civilian jobs

Unemployed veterans between the ages of 35 and 60 can now apply for new benefits to cover education costs for up to one year through a joint U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs and U.S. Department of Labor program that focuses on retraining 99,000 veterans for high-demand jobs.

"Our veterans have made this nation stronger through their service, and they deserve our continued support," said Secretary of Labor Hilda L. Solis. "This new program will help unemployed veterans expand their skills and compete for good jobs."

As part of a provision of the Veterans Opportunity to Work to Hire Heroes Act of 2011, the Veteran Retraining Assistance Program al-

lows qualifying veterans to receive up to 12 months of assistance equal to the full-time Montgomery GI Bill – Active Duty rate, currently \$1,473 per month.

Veterans can apply on a first-come, first-serve basis for programs that begin on or after July 1. Assistance under this benefit program ends on March 31, 2014.

To complete an application, a veteran will need to know his or her direct deposit information (bank routing number and account number), the name and location of his or her school, the program the veteran wishes to pursue and the applicable high-demand occupation.

To qualify, veterans must:

- Be 35 to 60 years old, unemployed on the day of application and

not dishonorably discharged.

- Start education or training after July 1 in a Veterans Administration-approved program of education offered by a community college or technical school leading to an associate degree, non-college degree or a certificate for a high-demand occupation as defined by the Department of Labor.

- Not be eligible for any other veterans education benefit program, such as Post-9/11 GI Bill, Montgomery GI Bill or Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment.

- Not be enrolled in a federal or state job training program within

the last 180 days.

- Not receive Veterans Administration compensation at the 100 percent rate due to individual unemployment.

Upon completion, the Labor Department will engage with participants within 30 days after their training to help them find good jobs that use their newly learned skills.

"This is a true example of inter-agency collaboration, and we are committed to the full and speedy implementation of this program to ensure the success of our veterans in the civilian labor market," said Ismael "Junior" Ortiz, deputy assis-

tant secretary for the Labor Department's Veterans' Employment and Training Service.

For information, veterans may go to the www.benefits.va.gov/VOW website or call (800) 827-1000. The

application is also online at www.ebenefits.va.gov.

For more information about the Department of Labor's veterans programs, go to www.dol.gov/vets.

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