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Valentine answers accusations

Outgoing sheriff calls out candidate for claims made during campaign

BY DANE HICKS THE ANDERSON COUNTY REVIEW

GARNETT – Anderson County Sheriff Vern Valentine is rebutting comments made by a candidate running in the race for county sheriff as being untrue and a product of information taken out of context.

In a lengthy post on the sheriff's department Facebook page, retiring Sheriff Vern Valentine called out the comments by candidate, Garnett City Commissioner and Anderson County Emergency Preparedness Director Mark Locke both on his private Facebook account and at the recent Business and

Professional Women's political forum in Garnett. Locke took some pointed shots at the sheriff's department in a variety of areas, including playing favorites with the uneven application of department policies, lack of response to 911 hang-up calls, and staffing problems Locke implied were matters of management and not just low pay. Valentine said in his own post he could not let those attacks go unaddressed.

"I am the Sheriff, and ultimately responsible for the way the office functions," Valentine said. "I will not sit back and listen to comments that are not true."



Valentine

Locke, a Republican, is running against current undersheriff and fellow Republican Wes McClain in the August 6 GOP primary, with a write-in candidate declared in the general election.

"Our Sheriff's Department needs to be more involved with the community," Locke wrote in a post. "Instead, they are either sitting in the office waiting for the phone to ring or hiding on some back country road. I will say not everyone does this, but far too many do."



Locke

SEE RESPONSE ON PAGE 16

Biden bows out, Kansas leaders react

As expected, opinions depend on which side you're on

BY DANE HICKS THE ANDERSON COUNTY REVIEW

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Kansas politicians' comments on Sunday's news of President Joe Biden's bowing out of the presidential race, as predicted, depended on their party.

Governor Laura Kelly, who weeks ago pledged her full support to Biden even as his approval ratings plummeted, wove her

own narrative on both his years of service and his impact while in office amid record inflation, social and cultural division and two wars raging in different world theaters.

"For more than five decades, President Biden has made it his life's work to better our country for hardworking Americans," Kansas' top Democrat said.



Biden

"Above all, he has been firm in his desire to safeguard democracy in a time of hyper-polarization and divisiveness. I thank him for his service and steadfast leadership."

The state's only Democrat congressional representative was effusive in her praise as well.

"President Biden has dedicated his life to serving our country and his time as our President has restored decency to the highest office," said 3rd District Congresswoman Sharice Davids. "By stepping aside from the pres-

SEE BIDEN ON PAGE 11



THE ANDERSON COUNTY REVIEW 7-23-2024 / DANE HICKS

Kansas Highway Patrol officers take Stuart Wieland of Paola into custody Sunday morning after a pursuit from Miami and Linn counties that eventually emerged in Anderson County. Undersheriff Wes McClain said he was able to project where the vehicle would move into the county based on known information and the vehicle's location. Wieland and his passenger, Jana Speedone of Pleasanton were in Anderson County Jail Sunday awaiting charges.

Commissioners manage small property tax cut in 2025 budget

Though they'll still spend more, savings help cut levy and reduce tax requirement

BY DANE HICKS THE ANDERSON COUNTY REVIEW

GARNETT – A \$1 million reduction in county debt will allow county commissioners to spend about \$600,000 more this year, even as they lower the tax mill levy, slightly reduce property taxes overall and see a slight drop in county valuation for the first time in years.

The preliminary summary of the Anderson County's 2025 spending plan was released last week and

published in today's newspaper in preparation for the August 12 county budget hearing, which is open to the public. The budget won't be official until the public has a chance to comment on it and commissioners vote on it. The budget being approved this summer takes effect as of Jan. 1, 2025.

The savings comes in the form of a line item for "Lease Purchase Principal" under the budget's section for outstanding indebtedness. This section includes General Obligation bonds for the construction of the Anderson County Hospital of about \$23 million in 2024.

SEE BUDGET ON PAGE 3

KwiKom gets \$1.8 million in grants to expand broadband

BY DANE HICKS THE ANDERSON COUNTY REVIEW

IOLA – A regional broadband internet provider serving Central Kansas has been awarded nearly 2 million dollars in Kansas transportation funds to continue broadband expansion in Allen and Coffey counties– the largest grant award to one company of the 12 included in the latest allotments.

KwiKom Communications, originally based in Iola until it was acquired by Overland Park's WANRack LLC in January 2023, will

receive \$950,000 each to subsidize the company's investment in broadband expansion for projects in Allen and also in Coffey counties. The company will match those state funds with a little over a million dollars in its own cash to connect 159 properties in the Allen County deployment and over \$1.2 million for 173 homes and businesses in Coffey County.

The awards were part of a \$10 million Broadband Acceleration Grant package announced Friday by

Kansas Governor Laura Kelly aimed at expanding high-speed Internet to rural communities. The \$85 million, 10-year program was initiated in 2020 and is administered by the Kansas Department of Transportation's Eisenhower Legacy Transportation Program (IKE). This latest round of grants brings the program's total investment for broadband infrastructure to more than \$41.5 million.

"By connecting every region of the state to reli-

able high-speed internet, we can ensure Kansans have the resources to invest in themselves and our state," Governor Laura Kelly said of the bi-partisan economic development effort. "Broadband drives innovation, unlocks potential, and ensures everyone can participate in services essential for economic, educational, and industrial growth."

The projects focus on economically distressed

SEE GRANT ON PAGE 3

Former newspaper reporter gets \$235,000 award after 2023 raid fiasco in Marion

BY DANE HICKS

THE KANSAS INFORMER

MARION – Former Marion County record reporter Deb Gruver has received a \$235,000 settlement from the City of Marion's insurance carrier connected to an illegal search and seizure of her cell phone and newspaper property during a police raid that made press freedom shock waves nationwide last summer.

Gruver's was one of three federal lawsuits filed against the city by Record staff, and a fourth filed by city council member Ruth Herbel, whose home was raided the same day by Marion police on a warrant signed by former policy Gideon Cody and granted by District Magistrate Judge Laura Viar the same day. In all, five lawsuits were filed under federal privacy, First Amendment and search and seizure protection laws, including one from publisher Eric Meyer that also claims wrongful death in the passing of his mother the day after her home was raided.

Deb Gruver, former reporter for the Marion County Record in Kansas. Gruver quit the newspaper in the months that followed the raid.



Gruver



THE ANDERSON COUNTY REVIEW 7-23-2024 / Submitted
The Anderson County Explorers program recently received a sponsoring donation from Southern Star Central Gas Pipeline. The program is open to those 14-20 years with an interest in careers in emergency services. From left above, Explorer Advisor and Colony City Marshal Angela Gardner, advisor Anderson County Sheriff's Office Undersheriff Wes McClain, Explorer Addy Kueser, advisor and Garnett Police Department Officer Daniel Frazier, Explorer Lieutenant Kaylee Ring, Explorer Sergeant Hope Hill and advisor and Garnett Fire Department Chief Wes Skillman. Explorer Post #8008 is sponsored by the Sheriff's Office with support from the Garnett Police Department, Garnett Fire Department, Colony City Marshal's Office and Anderson County EMS.



THE ANDERSON COUNTY REVIEW 7-23-2024 / JESSIE DUNCAN
Hayden Powell won overall champion and overall grand champion honors when the Anderson County Fair 4H Geology exhibits were judged Saturday. It was the opening round of the county fair, which starts in earnest next week.