LIBRARIAN'S SHELF

New library is a place open to everyone

ANNE KINNISON

As the old advertisement goes, "We have come a long way baby!"

After two tries at a library run by volunteers in the 1870s and 1880s, in the 1890s the City Council agreed to allow the installation of several bookcases in the City Council chambers. Then in 1901, Miss Fannie Geer was hired as the first paid librarian for $12 per month. In 1915, the Carnegie Library Foundation donated $13,000 for the construction of a library which served Columbus residents until the 1976 purchase of an office building from NPPD for the next library. Prior to the 1976 purchase of that building, the Columbus Library Foundation was formed in 1971.

The residents of Columbus approved the reauthorization of the one-half percent city sales tax at the May 10, 2016, election. This sales tax was approved for funding police and fire facilities and a library/cultural arts center.

This sales tax will cease upon the later of the completion of such projects, or the date on which the municipal bonds are paid off. The City Council chose to construct the police station and fire station prior to the new Community Building, which includes the library, city hall, and children's museum, and opened on July 8, 2023.

The Columbus Library Foundation is celebrating donors to the new library building with the unveiling of a donor wall recognizing major donors of $5,000 and above. The celebration is on Sunday, Sept. 28, from 2 to 4 p.m. Watch your mail for an invitation if you donated $100 or more toward the construction of the new library. Also, be watching for our upcoming webpage to go live, which will allow people to make contributions to the Columbus Library Foundation.

The new library isn't just a building. It is a place that is open to everyone. Every resident of the city of Columbus can have a library card. If one lives outside the city limits but owns property within Columbus or works inside Columbus, they also are eligible for a free library card.

Some of the things one can do at the library are: check out a book, read a magazine, download an e-book or audio book, research your family history, host or attend a meeting, listen to a story, check out a movie, use a computer to apply for a job, or research information for a class or paper.

"Libraries are the heartbeat of our communities," Laura Bush once said. "They're places where we learn, discover and connect. They enrich lives and inspire growth."

COLUMBUS COMMUNITY HOSPITAL COLUMN

How to handle a fever

When your body detects an illness, it responds by raising its temperature to fight that illness. This is known as a fever — a condition that helps you fight various infections, bacteria and viruses.

DR. KEVIN MONTGOMERY

Symptoms that may prompt you to check your child's temperature include:

- Dry mouth
- Earache
- Vomiting
- Poor appetite
- Pale appearance
- Skin rash
- Sore or swollen joints
- Sore throat
- Stomach pain
- Limpness
- Difficulty breathing
- Whimpering

An infant may have high-pitched crying, fussiness and swelling of the soft spot on the head.

It's tempting to feel your child's forehead to check for a fever, but this isn't a reliable method. Instead, use a thermometer meant for taking human temperatures.

There are three types of digital thermometers that can be used for accurate readings: multi-use, temporal and tympanic. The standard for fever varies based on your child's age and how you take their temperature.

When a child has a low fever but can eat, drink, sleep and play normally, treatment may not be necessary. You can provide care at home by keeping your child comfortable and doing the following:

- Dress them in light clothing. Offer a blanket if they have chills or are shivering.
- Make sure your child gets plenty of rest.
- Provide fluids, such as water and soups, to prevent dehydration. Ice pops and flavored gelatin can also help with hydration and sore throats.
- Use over-the-counter medication to help reduce the fever.

If your child has a fever that lasts more than 24 hours (for children under 2 years old) or three days (for children over 2 years old), contact your child's doctor. You should also call if they still feel or act sick after the fever has subsided.

Seek emergency medical attention immediately if your child:

- Has a fever that rises above 104 F repeatedly.
- Is younger than 3 months old with a rectal temperature of 100.4 F or higher.

You should also seek medical attention if your child has a fever and:

- Additional symptoms, such as stiff neck, severe headache, severe sore throat, rash, and nausea and vomiting.
- Behavior changes, such as being more tired or fussy than usual.
- A compromised immune system.
- Exposure to scorching temperatures, such as an overheated car.
- Seizures.

If you're not sure whether a fever has risen to the level of an emergency, call your primary care provider or visit the nearest emergency room.

State supreme court rejects double jeopardy defense in Omaha case

JUSTIN DIEP
Omaha World-Herald

The Nebraska Supreme Court on Friday upheld a motor vehicle homicide conviction of an Omaha woman who argued she was unconstitutionally punished twice for the same drunk driving incident.

The high court's decision affirms the conviction and sentence of Maylesha Lewis, who was prosecuted twice for a 2020 car crash after her passenger died months later from his injuries.

Days after the crash, Lewis was charged with driving under the influence, resulting in serious bodily injury. She pleaded guilty to the felony charge and was sentenced on March 22, 2021, to 30 months in prison with 18 months of probation to follow.

Authorities said in October 2020, Lewis was driving near 110th and Harrison streets in Omaha when her car left the road and collided with a light pole. Thomas Martin, a passenger in the back seat who wasn't wearing a seat belt, sustained serious head trauma and was taken to the hospital in extremely critical condition.

When police spoke to Lewis at the hospital, according to an arrest affidavit, she admitted to drinking alcohol and smoking marijuana. Her preliminary breath test showed a blood alcohol level "well over" the legal limit.

For months, Martin was moved between hospitals as doctors attempted to save his life, but he remained in a non-medically induced coma and never regained consciousness. He was diagnosed with a significant traumatic brain injury, acute respiratory failure and a cerebral spinal fluid leak, among other injuries. Martin died in hospice care on June 17, 2021.

A few months after Martin's death, Douglas County prosecutors charged Lewis with DUI motor vehicle homicide.

Lewis' lawyers contended that she could not be charged with DUI motor vehicle homicide because of double jeopardy, a constitutional provision that protects people from being prosecuted or punished twice for the same offense.

Her attorneys argued that DUI causing serious bodily injury and DUI motor vehicle homicide are the same offense for the purposes of double jeopardy, because the serious bodily injury count is a lesser-included offense of motor vehicle homicide.

District Court Judge Peter Bataillon ruled in Lewis' favor and dismissed the motor vehicle homicide charge. He said that prosecuting Lewis again would result in her being punished multiple times for the same offense, and that in order for her to be found guilty, prosecutors would have to prove all of the elements of the underlying serious bodily injury charge. Bataillon said that these situations both consti-

Nebraska official's deal with Kenya draws online backlash

ANDREW WEGLEY
Lincoln Journal Star

Nebraska's secretary of state signed a rogue memo with Kenya's government earlier this month promoting economic partnership and cultural exchange between the Cornhusker State and the African country in a move that drew online criticism and, eventually, condemnation from Nebraska's governor.

Secretary of State Bob Evnen signed a memo of understanding Sept. 2 with a Kenyan diplomat agreeing to promote student and teacher exchanges, encourage the "lawful mobility of students and apprentices," and promote temporary migration for employment and job training, among other things.

Pillen

The memo — which Evnen's office did not publicize domestically, though it made headlines in Kenya — makes no mention of any specific industry. But in a TikTok video posted by the Kenyan diplomat, Evnen pointed to commercial truck drivers who he said were being partially trained in Kenya before finishing training in Nebraska.

"We have a shortage of commercial drivers in the United States who drive tractor-trailer combinations, and that's something that this MOU is going to facilitate," he said in the video, before emphasizing that the deal would be used to help the countries explore partnerships in other fields, such as medicine and nursing.

But the memo has since become a lightning rod on social media, where trucking influencers cast the deal as one meant to replace American truckers with Kenyan drivers, often using nationalist rhetoric in the posts, suggesting Kenyan-born people drive dangerously and carry communicable diseases.

And Nebraska Gov. Jim Pillen on Thursday sought to undercut the memo, releasing a statement suggesting Evnen did not have the authority to sign it.

KENNETH FERRIERA JOURNAL STAR FILE PHOTO

Secretary of State Bob Evnen fields questions from reporters during a news conference in the Capitol Rotunda on Friday, Sept. 13, 2024. Evnen signed a rogue memo with Kenya's government earlier this month, drawing backlash from trucking influencers and, eventually, the governor.

Influencers seized on the memo and photographs of the same Kenyan diplomat, Diaspora Affairs Principal Secretary Roseline Njogu, pictured at Werner Enterprises during a visit to the Omaha-based trucking company as part of a trade mission to Nebraska last year.

They accused Evnen and Werner of conspiring "to replace American truckers with migrants from Kenya, while the US trucking industry is in a protracted freight recession with thousands of companies closed." The American Trucking Associations has estimated the industry faces a shortage of nearly 80,000 drivers, a figure that could double by 2031.

In a social media post, Werner said it is "not involved in any agreements or discussions regarding the recruitment of Kenyan truck drivers to the United States. Any claims suggesting otherwise are just false."

A spokeswoman for Evnen's office noted the memo he signed with Kenya "says nothing about truck drivers and specifically requires full compliance with all state and federal laws."

Pillen's office, meanwhile, undercut the memo altogether Thursday afternoon, calling it "nonbinding."

In a news release, his office said Evnen didn't coordinate the memo with Pillen in advance and said the memo "does not represent the policy of the government of the State of Nebraska."

In the same news release, the director of Nebraska's Department of Motor Vehicles said the DMV "will continue to diligently ensure only individuals with lawful status in the United States receive Nebraska driver licenses of any type" at Pillen's direction.

Pillen's statement, which marked a rare public scolding of one Republican state officer by another, suggested the governor, not Evnen, is "principally responsible for conducting" foreign trade relations.

Nebraska's secretary of state serves myriad roles in state government, including as the state's chief diplomat responsible for promoting commercial, educational and cultural exchanges between the state and foreign countries.

Visit to would-be ICE jail sparks more questions

CINDY GONZALEZ
Nebraska Examiner

McCOOK, Neb. — Frustrated by a dearth of information coming her way, a Nebraska lawmaker showed up unannounced this week at the state prison system's Work Ethic Camp more than four hours from her home district.

State Sen. Margo Juarez of Omaha has been an outspoken critic of Gov. Jim Pillen's plan to repurpose the state prison in McCook into an ICE detention center, which he announced Aug. 19. The planned prison conversion in this rural community of about 7,200 residents came at the State of Nebraska's request in response to the Trump administration's deportation push.

Upon her arrival Wednesday, Juarez was provided a guided tour, which the Examiner was not allowed to join. Afterward, she said she was impressed with the grounds and the prison property's current use: preparing low-risk inmates with programming to ease their reentry into society.

However, she shared concerns. Among them: worries about crowded conditions — both for a future migrant population and for the broader state prison system that will likely absorb the 186 Nebraska inmates being relocated to other prison facilities from a rehabilitative setting in southwest Nebraska.

"There is no way that I believe 300 people could be housed in that McCook facility," she said, noting that an area of the prison currently used for teaching appeared to be one of the likeliest spaces for expanding bed space. "I can just see them squeezing these double bunk beds into these rooms."

Midwest hub for ICE

Pillen has said up to 300 migrants awaiting deportation are to be housed in the repurposed center, which the state will run in partnership with the U.S. Department of Homeland Security's Immigration and Customs Enforcement. The governor has said he envisions the facility as a Midwestern hub for ICE.

As of Thursday, the Work Ethic Camp had 155 of its 186 state inmates left to relocate. State senators have said the McCook facility, which opened in 2001, was originally designed for 100.

On Thursday, a spokesperson for the Nebraska Department of Correctional Services said the state anticipates that the McCook facility will begin housing its new population of migrant federal detainees in October.

After talking with current Work Ethic Camp inmates about their circumstances, Juarez said she wants the state to consider early release rather than relocation for incarcerated people within a year of completing their criminal sentences.

"To me this circumstance is so unique," Juarez said. "I'm advocating for as many people to be released as possible. If there are men there that are ready to be let go, I think they should be able to go home."

Juarez discussed her interaction with one McCook inmate, who told her he had six months until his scheduled release and had earned a spot helping in the prison's kitchen, where he said he was picking up cooking skills. He told her he was anxious that he could be transferred to a facility with fewer privileges.

Said Juarez: "What kind of setback are these guys going to be enduring when they get moved?"

A prison system spokesperson, in response, said the department does not have the authority to release individuals early. (That's up to the Parole Board.)