

THE JOPLIN GLOBE

TUESDAY | APRIL 21, 2026

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MSSU: Indoor pool closed because of maintenance costs. **3A** | **BASEBALL:** Missouri Southern sweeps Missouri Western. **1B**



Vietnam veteran fighter pilot Sam Gaskill (center) cuts the ribbon on the Freedom of Flight Museum's newly restored T-33 in a ceremony last week at the old terminal for the Joplin Regional Airport. **GLOBE | JOHN HACKER**

Volunteers celebrate restoration of jet trainer

T-33 has been in hanger for years getting rust spots fixed, new paint job

BY JOHN HACKER
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Dozens of people, including volunteers at the Freedom of Flight Museum, city officials and veterans, gathered to mark completion of the restoration of an old U.S. Air Force jet trainer in preparation for its eventual move to a new home.

The T-33 has been in a hanger at the Joplin Regional Airport for more than three years having rust spots patched and getting a new paint job in a restoration effort led by Freedom of Flight Museum Board President Darryl Coit and museum curator Ernie Trumbly.

U.S. Air Force veteran and former state Rep. Sam Gaskill, 94, was among the 50 or so people on hand to celebrate the restoration with a ribbon-cutting.

Coit said the parking spot on the concrete just outside the former Joplin Regional Airport terminal is a temporary stop for the plane, which is headed to a more prominent display near the south entrance to the airport.

"We have big plans for it," Coit said. "This is just the first step to a bigger plan to put in what we call a veterans honor park out at the entrance to the airport on Highway 171. What we'll have out there is this airplane on a pedestal in that area just east of the road into the airport off of 171. And around the pedestal, there will be a block wall and on the wall will be ceramic tiles for pictures of veterans."

Coit said veterans of all branches of the service will be honored and people will be able to use their smartphones to view

SEE JET, 2A

A second purpose



Talyn and Gary Clinton, of Webb City, cross the finish line at the annual 5K and Walk for Autism on Saturday. **GLOBE | JOHN HACKER**

Annual 5K and Walk for Autism draws hundreds, raises tens of thousands

BY JOHN HACKER
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The 2026 Freeman 5K and Walk for Autism drew just shy of 1,000 people and raised a little more than \$50,000 Saturday.

The annual event is a major fundraiser for students attending the Bill and Virginia Leffen Center for Autism in Joplin to help children diagnosed with autism attend classes and get the help they need at the center.

Vicky Meiseler, CEO of Ozark Center, which is part of Freeman Health System, said this is the 18th annual 5K and Walk for Autism

and the sixth year the Leffen Center has partnered with Freeman to hold the events.

"Not all families have the resources that it takes to be able to access the extensive services that are required for children with autism, so the funding really helps with those families to be able to get those services," Meiseler said. "In the 18 years we've been having this event, it has taken on a second purpose — it's a huge community event. Over 870 people are here running, but that doesn't include all the volunteers, the vendors, people who just came out to



The 2026 Freeman 5K and Walk for Autism drew nearly 1,000 runners, volunteers and others Saturday. **GLOBE | JOHN HACKER**

watch other people walk and run.

"I'd gather there are at least 900 to 950 people in this vicinity early this morning in the cold celebrating with each other, talking to each other,

laughing. You see people running up and hugging. I think it's just turned into a really cool event."

Meiseler said the 5K run was only part of the

SEE 5K, 2A

National group seeks land that was part of Newtonia battlefields

The Ritchey Mansion, pictured here in 2021, still stands in Newtonia, the site of two Civil War battles. The front of the house is original, with the back half added in later years. **GLOBE FILE**



Campaign covers 438 acres in 5 states

BY JOHN HACKER
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NEWTONIA, Mo. — A national preservation group has identified an opportunity to protect 21 acres near Newtonia, site of two Civil War battles.

The American Battlefield Trust last week announced a campaign to raise \$374,000 to protect 438

acres of battlefields in five states.

"Without action, this hallowed ground could be lost to development — warehouses, subdivisions and commercial projects — erasing forever the landscapes where the course of the war, and the nation's future, were shaped," the trust said in its announcement.

The trust said the 438 acres are valued at more than \$3.8 million, but 90% of the money has already been raised and that every dollar given for the purchase can be matched at more than 10-to-1.

Jared Herr, with the American

Battlefield Trust, said in a statement, "This (Newtonia) property abouts the Civil War cemetery and has been subdivided for residential development. If not preserved, it will likely go to a developer for housing."

Tom Higdon, with the Newtonia Battlefields Protection Association, which has worked for decades to protect the property, said last week: "There was action on this site with troops on both sides of the 1862 battle moving back and

SEE LAND, 2A

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