

FIRETRUCKS: Dozens of cities, counties sue manufacturers. **4A** | **MSSU:** Softball team hosts Joplin Miracle League. **1B**

Doctors group jumps into Missouri politics

\$1.5M split between
2 political action
committees

BY RUDI KELLER
Missouri Independent

Missouri's oldest business
association is the state's
newest big political donor.
On Aug. 14, the Missouri
State Medical Association

split \$1.5 million between
two newly created political
action committees, Asclepi-
us PAC, named for the god
of medicine in Greek my-
thology, and Patients First
PAC.
The association, which
represents doctors and doc-
tors in training, already has
a committee, MO Medical
PAC, for pass-through con-
tributions from members.
But until this year, the as-
sociation had used its own

funds to contribute only
\$19,625 to political commit-
tees since 2001, Missouri
Ethics Commission records
show, and has made no do-
nations since 2014.
The money will be con-
tributed to candidates in
this year's legislative elec-
tions, said Jeff Howell, ex-
ecutive vice president of the
association. The association
supports legislation to put
limits on prior authoriza-
tion for medical services

and ending the use of
managed care for the state's
Medicaid recipients.
"We're interested in en-
suring that Missourians
have access to the highest
quality healthcare and to
reinvest in that through
those two PACs," Howell
said.
The donations imme-
diately put the two PACs
among the ranks of the
best-funded political action
committees representing

lobbying interests. Only two
donors, Michael Rayner,
part of the family that owns
the agribusiness firm Car-
gill, and retired investor Rex
Sinquefeld have contribut-
ed more to non-ballot issue
committees.
And only four PACs have
contributed or spent more
than \$1.5 million to influ-
ence this year's elections.
The donations got the

SEE PACS, 2A

CID board ends tax collection

Project stumbled when
consultant took funds

BY DEBBY WOODIN
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The board overseeing
sales tax collections for the
Hope Valley Community
Improvement District voted
Monday to end those tax
collections and return what
money had been collected
to the city of Joplin to be
used for costs related to clos-
ing out the district.

There is \$1.4 million avail-
able for that, according to
board discussion Monday.
A community improve-
ment district allows col-
lection of a portion of the
development's sales taxes to
pay for constructing public
improvements.

Hope Valley was formed
in 2015 as a 200-acre mul-
titude retail and hospitality
hub located in the Silver
Creek Galleria area along
South Range Line Road
and 44th Street. It was en-
visioned by developer Ken-
neth Steele, who had said
at the time that part of the
project cost, \$17.2 million,
was to be collected by a
CID formed to pay for con-
struction of wetlands that
would control stormwater
drainage and creek flooding
on the Hope Valley prop-
erty. He said at the time that
flooding is why the property
had not previously been
developed.

Part of the CID money
would be directed toward
impounding the wetlands
as scenic waterways and
building walking and biking
trails along them.

But the project hit a road-
block when an accountant
and consultant in forming
tax district developments,
Darrell Gross, of Republic,
had bank accounts put
in his name without the
knowledge of the develop-
ment company and the city.
He also took a large sum
of money from the Hope
Valley CID and more money
from a Neosho project for
which he was a consultant.

Joplin city officials said
in 2017 that it was learned
that \$173,000 was missing
from the Hope Valley tax
collections. City officials
then requested an investi-
gation by the Missouri State
Highway Patrol.

As a result, records ob-
tained by the city from that
investigation showed that

SEE CID, 2A

First day of school



Junior Ezaraye Kobleur takes a selfie with senior Emery Obermiller at Joplin High School on the first day of classes.

GLOBE | JOHN HACKER

Joplin students arrive for opening of 2026-27 academic year

BY JOHN HACKER
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From Little Eagles Flight School for
4-year-olds and kindergarten for
5-year-olds to seniors at Joplin High
School, Monday's first day of classes
came with bang as thunderstorms moved
through the area.

But that didn't dampen enthusiasm.
Seniors Catherine Williams, Reid Stanley
and Chaney Hawkins were walking and
talking in the high school parking lot Monday

SEE SCHOOL, 2A



Wind and rain
picked up
in the Joplin
High School
parking lot
just as seniors
Louise Curchin,
Chaney
Hawkins, Reid
Stanley, Cath-
erine Williams
and Kennedy
Schwab were
posing for a
picture on their
first day of
school.

GLOBE | JOHN
HACKER

Congressman talks tourism during visit to Route 66 Drive-In Theatre

Burlison, business
leaders also go to sites
in Joplin, Neosho

BY JOHN HACKER
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CARTHAGE, Mo. — Tourism
is a major economic contribu-
tor in Southwest Missouri and
U.S. Rep. Eric Burlison took a
number of business leaders and
others to locations in Carthage,
Joplin and Neosho recently to
promote the tourist gems.

He started the tour Friday
morning just west of Carthage
on the Mother Road to bring
attention to the Route 66 Drive-
In Theatre, which has been
drawing crowds with popcorn,
candy, a family atmosphere and
the biggest of big screens for 64
of the past 77 years.

Owner Nathan McDonald said
the theater opened Sept. 22,
1949. It was closed in 1985 and
used as a junkyard, but it wasn't
torn down. In the late 1990s,
the owners cleaned out all the
junk, reopening it as a theater
in 1998.

"The screen itself is 77 years

old," McDonald said. "It got re-
done in 2010 with a new shell
put on it. The bones are still
good on the inside. They were
built in the '40s, and kind of like
a car from then, it's just made
different. It'll always be here.
But the shell was put on in 2010,
and that's about the same time
that we upgraded the projector
from 35 mm film to digital.
And then the next upgrade will
probably be some sort of laser
projection, I would imagine.
But hopefully that's after I'm
retired."

SEE TOUR, 2A



U.S. Rep. Eric
Burlison
(left) speaks
with Route
66 Drive-In
Theatre own-
er Nathan
McDonald
on Friday
during a
tourism tour
of Southwest
Missouri.

GLOBE | JOHN
HACKER

