

FESTIVALS: Area artists entering their busy season. **3A** | **VOLLEYBALL:** McAuley Warriors win 2 matches. **1B**

Former CJ chamber director charged

Nicholas Howard accused of stealing, fraudulent use of debit device

BY JOHN HACKER
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CARL JUNCTION, Mo. — A former executive director of the Carl Junction Chamber of Commerce was charged

Tuesday with one felony count of stealing and eight misdemeanor counts of fraudulent use of a debit device for allegedly using chamber funds for personal expenses.

Nicholas Howard, director of the chamber from December 2023 to spring 2026, is scheduled for his first court appearance in the Jasper County Courts Building at 9 a.m. Wednesday, Oct. 7,

before Judge Nicole Marie Carlton.

A summons was mailed to him, so he has not been arrested as of Wednesday.

Carl Junction police Detective Blaine Bowman wrote in the probable-cause affidavit filed with the charges that the department started its investigation April 17, 2026, after the chamber contacted police about the suspected theft of organiza-

tional funds by Howard.

Members of the chamber's board told police they confronted Howard about "numerous unauthorized charges" made on chamber-issued credit cards and that Howard admitted the unauthorized use began in June 2025.

In a recorded interview with Bowman and former Carl Junction police Detective Greg Dagnan, Nicholas

admitted to using the chamber credit card to pay a personal baggage fee associated with a trip to Florida.

The statement said a review of bank statements found eight unauthorized charges totaling more than \$750 from November 2025 to March 2026 to companies such as Paramount Plus (four times), Netflix (twice), the city of Carl Junction and Nintendo.

Arvest donates \$11,000 to Joplin project

Ronald McDonald House in need of renovation

BY JOHN HACKER
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Joplin's Ronald McDonald House is well maintained, but like any house approaching three decades of use, it could use a makeover.

Arvest Bank employees and Joplin market President Richard Winesburg on Wednesday brought help for that makeover with a check presentation for \$11,000 to the \$225,000 needed for a renovation.

"For the past 28 years, we have had some incredible spaces for our families to stay in," said Lori Jones, executive director of Ronald McDonald House Charities of the Four States. "We can sleep up to six families, and the home has been very well cared for, but it is time for an update. We really wanted to update the aesthetics of the rooms — we're adding some new lighting and art and bed linens. But the major change is we're totally renovating the bathroom, including adding a walk-in shower. So many of the families that we serve are postpartum moms, and so being able to give them the convenience and the comfort of a walk-in shower is really going to be a nice upgrade."

Tera Lankard, community marketing manager with Arvest, said the donation came from the Arvest Foundation, which exists "to support organizations that are doing great work."

"We're excited to be able to support the Ronald McDonald House, which does some incredible work in the Four-State Area," she said. "The Ronald McDonald House meets families at such a critical time in their lives when they're experiencing a lot of stress and anxiety in an unexpected crisis."

Jones said with the gift from Arvest, Ronald McDonald House has about

SEE **RENOVATION**, 2A

Crossroads of U.S.

Jefferson Highway celebration in Joplin set for this weekend

BY DEBBY WOODIN
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Joplin will re-create the days when Schiffer-decker Park served as a tourist camp for travelers who took to the nation's newly fledged pastime, traveling new or recently built highways.

While the 100th anniversary of Route 66 has captured a lot of attention over the last year, Joplin also is home to another historic motorway, the Jefferson Highway.

Representatives of states and local governments convened a national meeting in 1915 in New Orleans to organize the Jefferson Highway Association. The highway was to be a permanent road stretching from Winnipeg, Manitoba, to New Orleans.

Joplin's businessmen wanted the city to be part of the new highway, a crossroads involving the Jefferson Highway and Route 66. The Jefferson Highway would be routed through Iowa, Minnesota, Texas and Louisiana as well as Missouri and Oklahoma.

The City Commission of the day appointed several prominent businessmen to attend the meeting on the city's behalf: John F. Wise, president of Miner's Bank; W.R. Baker, manager of the Connor Hotel; Frank L. Yale, secretary of the Joplin Club; and John M. Malang, of the Joplin Special Road District.

As a result of a compromise

SEE **HIGHWAY**, 2A



A sign in Murphysburg recognizes Joplin's connection to the Jefferson Highway.

GLOBE | DEBBY WOODIN

Colorful Sunbeams light up Route 66 during Joplin stop

Rare sports cars touring Mother Road

BY DEBBY WOODIN
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An unusual and colorful parade of sports cars stopped in Joplin on Wednesday during a tour on historic Route 66.

One by one, Sunbeams

— 26 of them — where lined up on the World Street Painting Festival site at 1717 W. Seventh St. Tucked into parking spaces, their hues ranged from dark green to light blue, dark blue and bright red.

Sunbeams are rare, said one of the visitors, Steve Britton of the San Francisco Bay Area.

The classic sports cars represent two models, the Sun-

beam Tiger and the Alpine. The difference between the models is that the Alpine is a two-seat roadster that uses a four-cylinder engine, while the Tiger is equipped with a powerful Ford V-8 engine that produces that throaty sports car roar.

The leader of the expedition, Claudia Trippel, of the Sunbeam International Club, started making arrangements about a year

and a half ago to bring the group and its cars on a tour of the Mother Road during its 100th anniversary celebration this year.

While some individuals plan their trips independently, most of those involved in clubs or organizations work with hospitality organizations such as Visit Joplin to get information and make arrangements for visits at significant locations.

"We also work with a lot of organizations that are preceptors (experienced guides) who actually sell tours," said Patrick Tuttle, director of Visit Joplin, the city's convention and visitors bureau.

In this case, the Sunbeam group spent Tuesday night in Joplin after starting the journey in Springfield, considered the birthplace of Route 66 because that is

where the iconic highway number Route 66 was assigned and finalized when the highway was designated in 1926.

The Sunbeam group pushed on Wednesday morning to get to Route 66 attractions in Galena, Kansas, and beyond. Before the drivers head home, their journey will take them

SEE **CARS**, 2A