THE JOPLIN GLOBE

TREE-LIGHTING CEREMONY. A3 | MSSU FOOTBALL LOOKING FOR NEW HEAD COACH. B1

joplinglobe.com TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 17, 2026 $3.00

Public can view plans for Fidelity interchange rebuilding

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The public will get a chance to see changes coming to Interstate 44 in Southwest Missouri during a meeting Tuesday.

The changes are part of the Forward 44 project to update Interstate 44 from St. Louis to the Oklahoma state line.

A groundbreaking for Forward 44 was held over the summer in Springfield, with some of that work underway. Work on one of the local projects, the Fidelity interchange, will not begin until later this winter, according to the MoDOT. A separate groundbreaking is planned but no date has been announced.

Construction for Forward 44, which also includes work in Lawrence, Greene and other Missouri counties, is slated for completion in 2031.

A come-and-go style meeting is scheduled for 4:30-6 p.m. Tuesday, Nov. 17, at the Victory Christian Center, 13996 Burr Oak Road, just southeast of the Fidelity interchange between I-49 and I-44 in rural Jasper County.

No formal presentation is planned but people can ask questions of MoDOT officials who will be on hand.

MoDOT said plans at include:

• Modernizing the interchange by removing the loop ramps and installing direct connect ramps on flyover bridges for for traffic movement from I-44 to I-49 and vice versa.

• Improve the intersection of Missouri Route 59 and Burr Oak Road south of the interchange by converting it to a roundabout.

People can see detailed drawings of these changes at **https://www.modot.org/projects/forward-44-southwest-i-44-improvements-project.**

Other improvements in Newton, Jasper, Lawrence, Greene, Webster and Laclede counties include:

• High friction surface treatment on the I-44 curves east of Range Line Road in Joplin.

• Pavement improvements on I-44

See **FIDELITY** on A2



Globe file

The Fidelity interchange cloverleaf will be replaced with a new design to make the transition between merging highways safer.

PLACE TO PLAY

Neosho adding park to west side near golf course



Courtesy image

This artist rendering shows part of the inclusive playground planned for the new Rocketdyne Park in Neosho.

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NEOSHO, Mo. — Neosho is adding a new park in an area of the city that has been growing for several years, and it is bringing back a name that has been associated with the city since the dawn of the Space Age.

City officials, contractors, community leaders and residents gathered just behind the Spring Valley Golf clubhouse on Monday to break ground on the new Rocketdyne Park, a two-and-a-half acre park scheduled for completion near the end of 2027.

Neosho officials said it has a budget of almost $5.1 million that has been saved up for the past two to three years in the city's general fund.

That budget will pay for pickleball courts, a 50-foot-by-50-foot pavilion with restrooms, an inclusive playground with equipment that can be used by people with limited mobility and a splash pad.

"There will be something for people of all different ages and abilities and I think it will be something we can all be proud of," said

See **PARK** on A2



John Hacker | Globe

Neosho Parks Manager Kenny Balls speaks to the crowd at the groundbreaking for the new Rocketdyne Park and what it will bring to the city.

New StoryWalk features eccentric scientist

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Families looking for an outing on a warm winter day may find fun by visiting "Professor Nincompoop."

Professor Nincompoop is the star of the latest StoryWalk installed in Leonard Park by One Joplin, which has brought several books to the trail around the park, 408 S. Turk Ave.

One Joplin encourages families to get outdoors, enjoy reading and explore Leonard Park to improve health, education and economic well-being, according to information provided by the group.

StoryWalks are displayed on 18-inch-by-24-inch signs along the walking trail at Leonard Park. They are updated every few months.

Recent StorkWalks have included:

• "Look Up!" by local author and illustrator Isaiah Basey, known as Izzy B.

See **STORYWALK** on A2

MSSU welcomes international students for Thanksgiving celebration

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Missouri Southern State University hosted its fifth annual international Thanksgiving celebration Sunday.

"It's good for international students to have this experience," said Kokoro Shinoda, a Japanese student from the Greater Tokyo Area. "A good event to provide for the international students ... It's probably my favorite event Southern hosts."

The purpose of the event is to introduce international students to the American Thanksgiving holiday, including its food, history, traditions and customs, according to MSSU.

The event this year saw more than 50 students from more than 12 countries.

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