

# ADE DAILY NEWS CLIPS

April 13, 2013

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## **Bookcase project to give 50 children books (Log Cabin Democrat)**

The Conway Bookcase Project will gift bookcases and starter libraries to 50 local children in the ninth annual awards ceremony slated for Sunday, April 21 at the Faulkner County Library in Conway.

A Bookcase for Every Child, founded in 2005, is the group that oversees bookcase projects now found in seven other communities. The mission of the group is to provide books to children and increase literacy among children in low-income families.

Founder Jim Davidson said, "This being our ninth annual ceremony means that we have given 450 personalized bookcases and a starter set of books to preschool children who are at greatest risk in all of our society."

The ninth annual ceremony's keynote speaker will be Kathy Powers, Arkansas Teacher of the Year in 2011.

Powers is a fifth- and sixth-grade reading and language arts teacher at Carl Stuart Middle School in Conway.

She has a masters degree in reading education from the University of Central Arkansas.

She was one year ago selected as one of 35 teachers in the United States to travel to China as a National Teacher of Excellence.

In August 2012, Powers was named a National America Achieves fellow, which allows her to travel and talk to national education policy makers. She has been a teacher for 20 years.

She was most recently appointed to the Arkansas Commission for Closing the Academic Achievement Gap.

Other speakers will be Conway Police Chief A.J. Gary, Davidson, pastor Tim Kellerman, Conway project committee member Mickey Cox, and pastor Bobby Tucker.

Conway committee members are Davidson, Nancy Mitchell, Mickey Cox, Archie Musselman, Stanley Russ, Mary Boyd, Dr. Charlotte Green, Linda Linn, Dr. Larry Pillow, Ruth Voss, Cliff Garrison and Dr. Amanda Moore.

The ceremony begins at 3 p.m.

The Mayflower Bookcase Project will hold its first awards ceremony May 23.

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## **Lion Fever High school students get firsthand look at UAPB (Pine Bluff Commercial)**

Hundreds of high school students from as far away as Indiana and Georgia gathered at the University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff on Friday as part of Lion Fever Day.

The UAPB Office of Recruitment hosted the annual event that gave prospective juniors and seniors a chance to tour the campus and to meet with faculty, staff and current students.

“We had almost 800 students from throughout the state of Arkansas as well as from Indiana, Atlanta, St. Louis, Louisiana, Mississippi and Texas,” UAPB Director of Recruitment Lee Hardman said. “It was a great turnout. During the program we talked about financial aid, the admissions process, the University College and the Honors College.”

Hardman said the students were broken into two groups, with one given a campus tour while the other took part in the college recruitment fair. The two groups then switched.

The campus tour gave students the opportunity to learn about the buildings where classes take place as well as the heritage of the university with a stop at the UAPB Museum and Cultural Center.

“They were able to hear the band and view a step performance,” Hardman said. “We had a good group of students. They all represented their schools well. We didn’t have any problems. All of the UAPB students that took part in the event did a good job.”

Hardman said members of the student government participated in the program as well as representatives from the campus Greek organizations.

Hardman said students were able to speak with representatives of every department on campus from aquaculture/fisheries to residential life and to have their questions answered so that they might leave with a better understanding of UAPB.

“Lion Fever Day is a tradition which dates back 20 or more years,” Hardman said. “We want students to have an opportunity to come to our campus to see for themselves what UAPB has to offer in the realm of education.”

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## **2 awarded achievement scholarships (Arkansas Democrat-Gazette)**

Anna Udochi, a student at Conway High, and Leonard Cooper, a student at eStem Public Charter High School in Little Rock, are among 800 students in the nation to win National Achievement Scholarships for outstanding black students.

The scholarships are for \$2,500.

The scholarship program is a privately financed academic competition established in 1964. The program is conducted by National Merit Scholarship Corp., a not-for-profit organization that operates without government assistance.

Udochi is planning a possible career in astrophysics. Cooper's intended career is in medicine.

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## **New life sought for old high school (Arkansas Democrat-Gazette)**

Turning Eureka Springs' historic high school building into a water park or open-air market were two ideas discussed during a three-day planning session this week.

Both ideas would preserve the 62-year-old building's exterior walls but would require gutting the interior.

The roof would be replaced if the building became a water park. If it became an open-air market, there would be a covered area around the perimeter of the walls for booths, but the center of the building would be uncovered.

Other options include renovating the building or tearing it down to make way for an undesigned "mod nouveau" structure.

The 7-acre high school campus closed in January when the school district opened a new high school on Lake Lucerne Road. The school district has been trying to sell the old campus for \$1 million.

The 24,096-square-foot main high school building, designed by T. Ewing Shelton of Fayetteville, features 10-foot exterior walls chiefly made of glass blocks. Glass accounts for 7 feet of the walls, while concrete blocks account for 3 feet.

Shelton patented the design, called Maximlite, using it in more than 50 schools in 16 states and Canada. The Eureka Springs school was one of Shelton's first Maximlite buildings.

The old high school campus also includes a 29,195-square-foot gymnasium and a 13,471-square-foot classroom building.

In a town where 50-year-old buildings are considered historic, leaving the exterior walls of the old high school standing might appease members of the city's Historic District Commission.

But Dee Bright, chairman of the commission, wasn't about to approve any designs during the planning sessions.

"I'm not commenting," she said. "They have to bring their plan and the commission will look at it and weigh the options and look at the guidelines at that point. But until it's presented ...."

Bill Featherstone, chairman of the Eureka Springs Parks and Recreation Commission, said the tourist town doesn't have a public swimming pool, but needs one.

"It's not like we don't have pools in Eureka, but a lot of them are pretty small and proprietary," he said, referring to hotels and motels with swimming pools.

"When we do these public meetings, swimming pool and community center are always the two at the top of the list," said Featherstone. "Those are the two things that almost everybody mentions. There's not even a close second. Everything else comes in way behind."

A swimming pool and community center can be accomplished with an "aquatic park," he said.

"I think a lot of people when they saw that, they didn't roll their eyes, but it kind of overwhelmed them," he said of the water-park proposal.

Featherstone said swimming pools are high-maintenance and expensive but can be tourist attractions.

Ed Levy, a principal with Cromwell Architects Engineers of Little Rock, who was assisting with the architectural planning, said he thought the open-air market was the most practical idea.

It would be a less expensive option, said Featherstone.

"That has a lot of merit," he said. "There was a lot of support for that in the meeting, but I think it was because people were being pragmatic. That's something that can be done at a fairly reasonable expense and quickly. It's not a pipe dream."

Curtis Turner, superintendent of Eureka Springs School District, said he didn't get the sense that there was a preferred option among the six that were presented.

"I really didn't get a sense of any rendition being favored over the others," he said. "This was totally a starting point of looking at options."

Turner said he didn't have a favorite. "This decision is going to be left up to public input," he said.

Mark Peterson, a professor of community and economic development with the University of Arkansas' Division of Agriculture in Little Rock, led the meetings. They were part of the division's Breakthrough Solutions strategic planning program to help cities.

Architects from Cromwell Architects Engineers of Little Rock assisted with the meeting and will be working on designs for the property.

Turner said Breakthrough Solutions will return in May for a one-day follow-up meeting. This week, the public meetings were held Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday.

If money were not a concern, Featherstone said, he would prefer the mod nouveau building.

According to the slideshow presentation, that building would be a “radical new architectural statement” that could serve as a museum, visitors center and culinary school.

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## **Home-schoolers’ team path in bill (Arkansas Democrat-Gazette)**

A proposal to codify regulations that govern the participation of home-school students in interscholastic activities at public schools was endorsed Friday by the Senate Education Committee

House Bill 1789 by state Rep. Mark Lowery, R-Maumelle, is legislation that has been dubbed the “Tim Tebow Law,” a reference to the Heisman Trophy winning quarterback who was schooled at home but played sports at a public high school.

If it passes, it would apply to home-school students who want to participate in public-school sports and in bands, choirs and other nonathletic activities that the Arkansas Activities Association governs.

The committee endorsement came after the bill was amended to address concerns that it would provide a loophole that would allow students who are failing academically to continue to participate in high school sports.

The amendment states that any student who withdraws from a school that belongs to the Arkansas Activities Association to be home-schooled won’t be able to participate in an interscholastic activity in the resident school district for a minimum of one year after the student withdraws.

The result: A public student about to be benched because of bad grades won’t be able to withdraw, switch to home-schooled status and keep playing for the same team.

“It basically gives home school students the same opportunity to participate in athletics with some stipulations that they meet the same criteria other student athletes are required to meet,” said Sen. Jim Hendren, R-Sulphur Springs, who presented the bill to the committee on Lowery’s behalf.

The bill ran into trouble in the House Education Committee, in part because the Arkansas Activities Association had rules similar to the bill that were set to go into effect this summer. But it gained momentum after it was discovered that the new association regulations allowed - but did not require - public schools to include home-schooled students in interscholastic activities.

“I think both sides of this issue realized they needed to come together, do an agreed-upon bill and provide some additional opportunities for students who simply want to play sports or be in the band or sing in the choir,” said Jerry Cox of the Arkansas Family Council, who was among those who helped forge the compromise.

The Arkansas Association of Educational Administrators was among the early opponents of the bill but now supports it. Danny Knight, representing the organization, told the committee his organization hopes, if the law is enacted, that it could serve as a recruiting tool, suggesting that if home-schooled students were offered the opportunity to participate in athletics or other interscholastic activities, they might want to take French or another class at the school.

The bill requires that home-schooled students participating in interscholastic activities reside in the district where they participate in extracurricular activities.

“So if the parents are paying taxes in the district, it’s only fair they have the opportunity to utilize some of the services as long as it doesn’t place a hardship on the district,” Hendren said.

Also Friday, the committee endorsed House Bill 1939 by Rep. Charlotte Douglas, R-Alma. The bill would require local school district boards to reserve a place on their monthly agendas for the district’s personnel policy committee.

The committee is composed of administrators and employees elected by their co-workers. The committees can make recommendations on personnel policies.

Douglas and other bill supporters said the legislation was necessary because some district superintendents didn’t allow personnel policy committees time on the school board agenda, or did so only after prodding.

Representatives of the school board and educational administrators associations opposed the bill, saying it targeted a problem that doesn’t exist in most districts. Mike Mertens of the Arkansas Association of Educational Administrators warned that the agenda item could turn some school board meetings “into gripe sessions.”

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## **Senate balks at ballot measure (Arkansas Democrat-Gazette)**

The Arkansas Senate balked Friday at referring to voters a proposed constitutional amendment to make it harder for citizens to place measures on Arkansas ballots but supported placing on the 2014 ballot an amendment to require legislative approval of state-agency rules and regulations.

On the 89th day of the 2013 session, the House rejected 80 General Improvement Fund appropriation measures, and a House committee declined to recommend approval of a bill to create a voter integrity division in the secretary of state’s office.

Senate Joint Resolution 16 by Sen. Bill Sample, R-Hot Springs, which would have made it more difficult for Arkansans to propose constitutional amendments, gained only 11 votes. It needed 18 to pass the 35-member Senate. The bill could return - lawmakers have referred it back to the Senate State Agencies and Governmental Affairs Committee, where it could be amended.

Under SJR16, any initiative petition for a proposed constitutional amendment would be disqualified - and denied a 30-day extension to collect more signatures - if too many of its signatures were invalidated by election officials after the initial deadline.

If fewer than 90 percent of its signatures were valid, the petitions would be tossed out.

Arkansas law requires that supporters of a proposed constitutional amendment collect signatures from a number equal to 10 percent of registered voters in the previous race for governor. And they can't all be collected in a single county.

To qualify for the ballot, supporters must collect signatures equal to 5 percent of the voters in the previous governor's race in each of at least 15 counties.

To get the grace period, the measure would require that 90 percent of the statewide signatures be valid and that 90 percent of the signatures in each of the 15 counties be verifiable.

SJR16 is backed by two powerful Arkansas entities - Stephens Production Co. and the Oaklawn Jockey Club - that opposed unsuccessful constitutional amendments, respectively, to raise the severance tax on natural gas and to establish several casinos.

It's opposed by the Family Council and the American Civil Liberties Union's Arkansas chapter.

Sample told senators that his proposed constitutional amendment is a good common-sense measure that sets "the bar high enough that we don't have to worry about fraud and deception."

But Sen. Johnny Key, R-Mountain Home, said the proposed amendment would make it difficult for citizens to petition their government.

#### LEGISLATIVE APPROVAL OF AGENCY RULES

In a 32-1 vote, the Senate approved referring to voters a proposed constitutional amendment to allow the Legislature to enact a law requiring that the administrative rules of a state agency not become effective until they are reviewed and approved by the legislative committee charged with oversight.

It's Senate Joint Resolution 7 by Sen. Jonathan Dismang, R-Searcy.

The review and approval of a legislative committee could occur during a regular, special or fiscal session of the Legislature or outside of a session under the proposal.

#### ETHICS, TERM LIMITS AND PAY AMENDMENT

At the request of Sen. Jon Woods, R-Springdale, the Senate referred another proposed constitutional amendment to the Senate State Agencies and Governmental Affairs Committee to be amended.

It's House Joint Resolution 1009 by Rep. Warwick Sabin, D-Little Rock.

The proposed amendment would prohibit direct political contributions from corporations and unions and delay lawmakers' ability to become lobbyists for two years; there's currently a one-year ban. It also creates an independent citizens commission that would set salaries for lawmakers and other elected officials.

Sabin said he decided to change HJR1009 after extensive conversations and e-mail correspondence with Little Rock lawyer Scott Trotter after he received a memorandum from Trotter on Monday night that criticized the ethics measure.

“As a result, I have worked with Sen. Woods and [the Bureau of Legislative Research] to draft a long amendment to HJR1009 that addresses almost all of his many and very detailed concerns,” Sabin said.

Trotter headed Common Cause, a nonpartisan, nonprofit organization that describes itself as being “committed to honest, open and accountable government,” in Arkansas from 1988 to 1999 and spearheaded or helped craft several ethics initiatives during that time.

He said the proposal contained “too many loopholes” for lobbyists to be effective and has too many flaws in the “set up and authority” of an independent commission that would set salaries for elected officials. Legislatures now have to vote themselves raises.

Friday evening, Trotter said he is glad the proposal is being amended.

“As I understand them at this time, the amendments to HJR1009 result in substantial improvements that include (1) enhanced restrictions on gifts from lobbyists to public officials, (2) the potential for adoption of needed adjustments to the salaries of elected state officials and judges through a measured process open to the public, and (3) the revision and inclusion of definitions and other terms that clarify and strengthen the key provisions of HJR1009,” Trotter wrote. “My appreciation is extended to Rep. Warwick Sabin and Sen. Jon Woods for carefully considering input late in this legislative session from a citizen who in past years spent considerable time promoting ethics in government.”

Sabin said Woods’ decision to send the amendment back to committee came after state Rep. Andrea Lea, R-Russellville, the committee co-chairman, agreed to re-convene the joint committee to consider the amendment Monday.

Sabin said making such a move late in the session is a gamble.

“We are taking a very big risk by putting the amendment back before the committee at this late juncture, because a lot could go wrong as a result,” he said. “But I hope it demonstrates our good-faith effort to address all of Scott’s concerns.”

## CONCUSSION PROTOCOLS

In a 32-0 vote, the Senate approved Senate Bill 1158 by Sen. David Sanders, R-Little Rock, to require the state Department of Health to develop concussion protocols similar to those developed and implemented by the Arkansas Activities Association to protect all the state’s student athletes.

The guidelines would include pertinent information and forms to inform and educate coaches, youths and their parents or guardians about the nature and risks of concussions and head injuries including the risks of continuing to play after a concussion or head injury.

## VOTER INTEGRITY UNIT

The House State Agencies Committee rejected a bill that would create a “voter integrity unit” under the secretary of state - the same measure the committee approved two days earlier.

Senate Bill 719 by King was referred back to committee by the House after its original passage Wednesday so it could be amended to remove a redundant Freedom of Information Act provision, which opened the bill to additional questions by the committee and public comment.

Susan Inman, a member of the state Board of Election Commissioners, said the voter integrity unit would be duplicating work that was already done by the nonpartisan board.

She said the unit would be acting alone in its investigations of election complaints without oversight.

Rep. John Catlett, D-Rover, asked King whether the secretary of state, which would oversee the unit, was partisan.

“No, it’s not a partisan position. That’s totally inaccurate,” replied King. “Elected officials are not partisan. We do bipartisan things all the time in voting on different bills. Mark Martin was elected by the people; he wasn’t elected by the Republican Party.”

The bill was one of three sponsored by King and approved by the committee Wednesday.

## REJECTED APPROPRIATIONS

Eighty General Improvement Fund appropriation measures failed to clear the House, receiving 72 votes.

The rejected batch of measures included appropriations for the state’s Department of Veterans Affairs, Economic Development Commission and Department of Education, among others. The bills, which were authored by one or a handful of sponsors, required 75 votes to pass the 100-member House.

No one spoke against the bills after they were presented by Rep. Duncan Baird, R-Lowell, co-chairman of the Joint Budget Committee.

Baird said the House has already passed about 20 general-improvement bills that were sponsored by all 100 members.

Funding for the appropriations will be dependent on the general improvement funding bill that the House will consider next week, he said.

## INSTRUCTIONS FOR PAID CANVASSERS

The House State Agencies and Governmental Affairs Committee rejected a bill to require sponsors of initiative and referendum petitions to submit information about paid canvassers to the secretary of state.

Rep. John Vines, D-Hot Springs, said Senate Bill 821, by Sen. Keith Ingram, D-West Memphis, is aimed at discouraging forgeries in the petition process by requiring the sponsor to provide paid canvassers with information on the state's laws.

But several members questioned whether the bill would impair a person's right to petition the government.

"I think it's more burdensome than beneficial," said Rep. John Walker, D-Little Rock.

#### CONCEALED GUNS IN CHURCH SCHOOLS

The House approved and sent to the governor a bill that would permit churches that operate schools on their property to allow concealed handguns on school grounds.

Senate Bill 896, by Sen. Bryan King, R-Green Forest, passed the 100-member House 57-8.

Rep. Bob Ballinger, R-Hindsville, said the bill clarified language after the passage of Senate Bill 71, which allows churches to determine whether concealed handgun licensees could carry on church property.

#### BALLOT DESTRUCTION

The House voted 83-0 in favor of a bill that would make it a crime to destroy ballots or ballot-related materials until two years after an election is certified.

Rep. Charlene Fite, R-Van Buren, said Senate Bill 961 by King would allow a period for investigations into election misconduct. The county board of election commissioners would ultimately order the destruction of the ballots.

Under the bill, violators would face one to six years in prison and a fine of up to \$10,000.

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### **Teacher collapses in school bathroom; dies (Channel 40/29, Fort Smith)**

FORT SMITH —A teacher at Darby Junior High School in Fort Smith collapsed in a school bathroom early Friday morning, according to Dr. Gordon Floyd, Deputy Superintendent. The teacher was taken to a hospital but did not survive.

The death was a shock to everyone, said Dr. Floyd.

Counselors were at the school to provide support for students and staff. Students still took Benchmark exams Friday.