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Sunday, Jan. 10, 2016

Sikeston, Missouri \$1.50

Eureka! Sisters reunited



PHOTO COURTESY OF ROBIN WUNDERLICH, THE EUREKA HERALD

Troy Whitaker Shaw, right, of Eureka, Kan., greets Tonya Whitaker Kellett, on Jan. 1. Kellett was kidnapped by her father in 1966, who gave her to a family in Sikeston, Mo. In December, thanks to Ancestry.Com, she was reunited with her biological sister.

Former Sikeston resident finds long-lost birth family after nearly 50 years apart

BY ROBIN WUNDERLICH
The Eureka Herald

EUREKA, Kan. - For many, the start of a new year is all about resolutions and setting goals. But for the family of Tonya (Whitaker) Kellett, Jan. 1 was the day they reunited with the loved one they lost nearly 50 years ago.

On Jan. 1, Tonya made the nine and a half hour trip from Hendersonville, Tenn., to Eureka, where she was united with a sister she hadn't seen since 1966, as well as many other family members.

Kellett and her sister, Troy (Whitaker) Shaw, of Eureka, were separated in June of 1966, when they were just 4 years and 18-months-old, respectively. Their parents,

Doris Winn and Jay Whitaker, were going through a divorce.

The life-altering event took place when their mother took the girls to visit their aunt in Coffey County. The girls' father abducted Tonya from the home, changed her name and birthday, and two years later gave her to a family in Sikeston, Mo., who later adopted her.

Secrets and lies

Being 4 years old at the time, Kellett has vague memories of the day she was taken from her mother. She remembers a woman with dark black hair with the popular beehive style hair-do and a young child (now known as Troy) standing next to her in a doorway.

Their father later told Kellett that her

mother and sister were killed in a car crash.

At the age of 14, their father re-entered Shaw's life and told family members that Tonya had died. On a different occasion he said that she was crippled and in a home.

Their father never shared information about Kellett's adoption, nor gave the reason as to why he gave her to a family in Missouri. He passed away in 1994.

Without much to go on, and with Kellett's name being changed from Tonya Janeen Whitaker to Tonya Marie Scott, it was near impossible to find each other. That was until both sisters entered their DNA to Ancestry.com.

See **Sisters**, page 2A

Butler County jail suicide settlement reached

BY MICHELLE FRIEDRICH
SEMO News Service

CAPE GIRARDEAU, Mo. - A federal judge recently approved a \$275,000 settlement in a wrongful death lawsuit filed by the mother of a Poplar Bluff, Mo., man who committed suicide while being held in

the Butler County Justice Center in 2014.

Along with the money to be paid by Butler County and its insurance company, the county agreed to provide suicide-related training as part of the settlement.

The suit was filed by Poplar Bluff Attorney Steve Walsh in

U.S. District Court in Cape Girardeau

on behalf of both Adam Butch Banks' estate and his mother, Teresa Ann Weathers Bright, against Butler

County and former corrections officers Robert Reed and Adam Younger.

It had alleged Banks' right to

be protected from known risks of suicide, provided adequate medical care and protection from deliberate indifference to substantial medical needs, as well as due process, were violated under the 14th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution and Missouri's wrongful death statute.

Sikeston marathon runner has worldwide online audience

■ Husband, wife host podcasts which reach 20,000 per episode

BY LEONNA HEURING
leonnah@standard-democrat.com

SIKESTON - The odds are favorable Sikeston residents have seen Angie Spencer running through town or on a treadmill at the local YMCA.

They just may not have known who she was.

"I do run every morning and I feel like I've explored most

of Sikeston's streets on foot, and I also run on the treadmill and take yoga classes at the YMCA," said Spencer, an avid marathon runner.

Spencer is also the voice of the Marathon Training Academy podcast, which garners 20,000 downloads per episode. The 38-year-old has given training tips through her podcast and blog for the last five years and has managed to amass a large and loyal audience.

"Our show reaches over 20,000 downloads per epi-

sode," said Trevor Spencer, Spencer's husband and podcast co-host. "And we've been featured by the Huffington Post as one of the '19 Best Health and Fitness Podcasts of All Time.' It really has been a fun journey for us."

The podcast, which was started in 2010, is the main way Spencer gets her message out into the world. She also coaches runners virtually through an online community called The Academy. Members of the Academy hail from all over the world.

"We have a lot of members from the U.S., but there are also members from Canada, Australia, the U.K., New Zealand, Germany, Singapore, China, Norway and Sweden," Spencer said.

However, the podcast is still catching on in Southeast Missouri, she said.

The Spencers moved to Southeast Missouri in 2007 and to Sikeston in 2008, she said. Although Angie Spencer graduated from Montana State University with a degree in nursing, she didn't start run-

State rep set for challenge of second year

■ Rone calls his first year as legislator a learning process

BY LEONNA HEURING
leonnah@standard-democrat.com

SIKESTON - His first year as a state representative was definitely a learning experience for Portageville resident Don Rone.

Even though Rone taught history for five years, he said the due process is a bit more complicated than even when he taught it.

"The slowness of it is just unbelievable," Rone said Friday during a phone interview with the Standard Democrat. "To get something done, it takes so long. It is a good process and it's good to make sure you're doing things right, but it's slow."

As an official for 149th District, Rone represents portions of New Madrid, Pemiscot, Mississippi and Scott counties.

"I've enjoyed it and learned a lot, and I've met some of the finest people you'd ever want to meet from all over the state representing their districts," Rone said. "It's been an honor to be up there (in Jefferson City)."

The Missouri General Assembly convened Wednesday for the regular session in Jef-

erson City, and Rone said he was ready for what it had in store.

"That first year, you learn the process," Rone said. "Things are going better (this year) already."

Among the first issues the House will address this legislative session is an ethics reform bill, Rone said.

"The (House) Speaker (Todd Richardson) made it very clear on Thursday ethics is the high priority of his," Rone said. "We're going to hold meetings on Monday to start the process. He put it in high gear to get that done and run the system."

As a result, Rone said he thinks Missourians will see some substantial ethics bills passed this session.

"It will be very meaningful what we'll do," Rone said.

Rone noted the majority of politicians he's worked with at Jefferson City are there for the right reasons.

"A few bad apples can rot. See **Rone**, page 2A



Rone

Event helps flood victims meet needs

BY BEN KLEINE
SEMO News Service

■ Help is available for those impacted by floods locally

CAPE GIRARDEAU, Mo. - The floodwater in their Dutchtown yard was over their heads. Inside the house, it was up to their waist. Kristy and Justin Shoemaker lost everything in the span of two weeks.

They doubt anything inside the house can be salvaged, and the house itself is probably beyond repair, too. Kristy believes the best course of action will be to burn everything inside so the house does not become a health hazard for their neighbors.

They were offered a buy-

out, but the house was built by Justin's grandfather, and they did not want to leave. Because they were in the buyout territory, they said they were ineligible for flood insurance.

"We're alive, that's the only thing that matters," Justin Shoemaker said.

Making matters worse, Justin Shoemaker is unemployed; he was trying to get on disability for epileptic seizures. He used to own his own tree trimming service, but that's a dangerous job even when the chainsaw operator is not at risk for a seizure. Shoemaker suffered a seizure during the flood while he was helping a neighbor put up sandbags, and he was rescued by the Cape Girardeau Fire Department.

Justin and Kristy Shoemaker have three children. See **Flood**, page 2A



Angie Spencer



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AREA DEATHS | Page 5A

Billie Dowling
Garry Prince
Margaret McQuay

Jan. 8
Jan. 6
Jan. 7

Mary Spraggs
Danny Sweatt

Jan. 7
Jan. 5

SUNDAY'S WEATHER



Sunny

High: 27 Low: 18