

# Q & A: Tips for smart renting

REPORTING BY KATHLEEN BARBOSA  
Staff Reporter

Vicki Benson, owner of Benson Properties in Kirksville, Mo., has been working in real estate for more than 20 years. For the past 17 years, she has been renting properties primarily to Truman and A.T. Still students.

**Index:** What do you look for in potential renters?

**Benson:** We are looking for individuals that have good credit, that has good references and if they have a pet, and we allow it at the particular unit, we are looking for good pets. Good quality people that are going to obey the rules and regulations and pay the rent on time.

**Index:** When should renters start looking for places to live?

**Benson:** Early, Early, Early, Early. [We are] used to that the tenant or the prospective tenant students would start looking maybe in February, and then it moved back to about December, and then moved on to October and so on. It seems like now I get everybody moved in at the first of August, and by the end of September I had my first rental call. The name of the game is the earlier that you get on it, the more inventory you will have to choose from.

**Index:** What questions should students looking to rent ask their landlords before signing a lease?

**Benson:** If you are paying your own utilities, you ought to ask what those utilities run, what is an average, maybe even see a printout so you know what to prepare for in your budget. Obviously you want to ask about the maintenance programs and plans. You want to know the person you're renting from has the ability to have maintenance on staff or on call and have a good maintenance plan for the properties.

**Index:** Who is responsible for the maintenance of the house?

**Benson:** As a landlord, that would be me. I expect my tenants to maintain the property as if it were your own, and all of that is found within my lease, but as far as problems or service calls on utilities or appliances or furniture — all those

things — it would be your responsibility to call me, and then I would call the maintenance people.

**Index:** What is the standard size for a rental property in Kirksville?

**Benson:** Well that would vary. Personally I own one to four bedroom properties so they might range. A one-bedroom efficiency might be 350 to 400 square feet — it might be one room like a studio apartment, but duplex to four bed might be up to 1,500 to 2,000 square feet. My typical two bedroom, one bath is 800 square feet per unit.

**Index:** What are some

signs of a good rental or a bad rental?

**Benson:** Well I think that visibly you can see what has been well cared for and what hasn't. You obviously want to look for aesthetically what's pleasing even if it's an older property. You ought to be able to tell what is being cared for. What does the carpet look like? What's the paint look like? Is it clean when you move in? Clean and up-to-date and those sorts of things are always a plus.

**Index:** Should people ask to speak to the previous renters?

**Benson:** It's always a good idea to talk to the previous tenant too, so you kind of get a feel for what it was really like being in the tenant shoes with that landlord, as opposed to just what the landlord tells you.

**Index:** What kind of furnishings should students expect?

**Benson:** For my particular units I furnish all the appliances: stove, refrigerator, dishwasher, garbage disposal, and washers and dryers. If a student needs a bed or a sofa, I have a few in storage, and if they need something I am always happy to loan it out.

**Index:** Do the rules for concerning visitors, pets and alcohol vary drastically?

**Benson:** Maybe a little. I have rules and regulations and for different areas. I would guess that for the most part landlords are asking that the parties are at a minimum.

As far as animals, I think for the most part what I hear is that most people do not want pets.

**Index:** What tools/equipment should students purchase to prepare for living off campus?

**Benson:** I think that it would probably be good to



Laura Tyler/Index

Senior Matt Berger is moving to a different house. He was unhappy with his current location due to needed repairs going unnoticed by his landlord.

have your own shovel and your own bag of ice melt. Some landlords expect lawn care to be taken care of by the tenant. In some cases you'd maybe need a lawn mower and that sort of thing.

**Index:** What are some of the benefits and disadvantages to renting or leasing off campus?

**Benson:** I would assume the benefit of staying

on campus would be the convenience and the close proximity and the amenities that campus offers.

The benefit to living off campus would be the savings as well as the social aspect and the independence of being able to have your own place and to have more privacy.

**Index:** Is there anything else we should know about renting?

**Benson:** Whether you rent from me or someone else, know the questions to ask and find out about their maintenance program and find out about utilities and do a little research about who you're renting from. It's a college town and there's a lot of different landlords out there.

Look at page 8 for the Q & A with a lawyer, to address legal concerns about renting.

## Resident launches local magazine

A new publication highlights current events in Kirksville

BY ALEX CARLSON  
Staff Reporter

On a student's crowded desk-top sits a crooked stack of books. A physics manual, an art history compilation or some novels await to be read in between the studying and exams of Truman State University. But one other literary piece might soon wait anxiously to be read as much as the others, a piece that some students have yet to even consider.

The student pushes the textbooks and novels aside, instead choosing one of the lonely local publications. It's a magazine, a literary journal, a Kirksville-born collection of stories and happenings.

The Kirksville area's new magazine, KV Square Community

Magazine, is a collection of original writing that aims to build attention to community events and occurrences.

KV Square has been gathering public and advertising support, even though it still is in the works as a monthly publication.

"This is one of those projects that I think will be beneficial for the community," KV Square founder John Suchland said. "But the hardest part is getting it off the ground and gathering awareness. Still, it's just another way to connect with the community."

The magazine will be free for the public.

Suchland said KV Square can promote local events, tourism and commerce for the Kirksville area.

"We have such a diverse collection of things going on in Kirksville that impact the surrounding area," Suchland said. "There's just a lot that comes out of Kirksville that affects the world that people aren't aware of. The reason that we need to get the word out is that people can see that Kirksville is a place of great opportunity. It could bring updates on current things

"This is one of those projects that I think will be beneficial for the community. But the hardest part is getting it off the ground."

John Suchland  
founder of KV Square Community Magazine

that we're working on."

Communication professor James Cianciola contributed one of KV Square's first articles online.

"John showed me the product of what he did in another community, and it looked great," Cianciola said. "And I think that there's a real need for that. I think it's going to develop kind of organically, since it's supposed to be a community magazine."

Alongside new, growing publications, an older publication — Green Hills Literary Lantern, a literary journal published by a Truman professor — has been adapting to new technology and audiences.

Created as a print journal in 1990, the Green Hills Literary Lantern is an annual national publication for writers to submit poetry, fiction and essays. English professor Joe Benevento is the poetry editor for the Green Hills Literary Lantern.

"Most of the poets, especially the new-and-coming poets who want to get a credential, find Green Hills Literary Lantern to be a good place to publish," Benevento said.

Changing technology has forced the Green Hills Literary Lantern to switch from print to online format. Benevento said he hasn't let the changing medium stop the publication from reaching new heights.

"I was initially disappointed because I'm more fond of print journals," Benevento said. "More and more journals are going online. As people are accepting it, it's getting to be just as prestigious as print journals. Now there are a lot of online journals that are more prestigious than some print journals. As online journals are getting more of the norm and more acceptable, it's become easier to work in that way."

Advertise  
with  
the

INDEX

660-785-4319

tsu.indexads@gmail.com