

Sign language course cut

BY LAURIE MATTSON
For the Index

Communication disorders professor Sheila Garlock, with support from the chair of the communication disorders department, decided to cut the sign language course from the program for next semester because of staff shortages.

Garlock, who usually teaches the sign language course every semester, said this is only temporary, and if all goes according to plan, the sign language course will start again for the summer semester.

Garlock said she is just as disappointed as the students about the unavailability of the course this spring. She said it was a difficult decision to make because she loves teaching the course, but being two faculty members short in the department, something had to be sacrificed.

"We're hoping to hire two new people," Garlock said. "There's a national shortage of [speech language pathologists] so we're doing everything we can to attract qualified individuals."

Garlock said she knows some senior students are upset about the decision because if they are graduating in May, they will not have another chance to take the course. She said, however, it was the only elective class they could cut because the other courses are required for communication disorders majors.

Senior Kassie McElvain, a communication disorders major, currently is taking the sign language class and said she likes what is being taught so far. She said what she is learning in the class can be applied to all areas of communication disorders and will be useful to her as a future audiologist.

"It's been great for my language learning," McElvain said. "I feel like language learning is a type of left brain activity and I think it helps you connect other things so it's been great to learn a language, especially one that's so manual."



Seniors Kaela Swarts, left, and Mandi McNamara, sign "I do not like green eggs and ham," from a Dr. Seuss book in Sheila Garlock's sign language class.

She said they learn about 40 signs a day and have many class projects, such as converting songs, children stories and poems into sign language. One of the main reasons this class has been so useful to her is because Garlock brings real-world experience to the course, McElvain said.

"She's really good," McElvain said. "She has actually had experience going down to the deaf school and speaking with students there so she can actually tell you, 'OK this is what the books says to do, but whenever I talk to students down at MSD [Missouri School for the Deaf] this is what they actually do.'"

Senior Emily Richmeyer, a communication disorders major, planned to take sign

language next spring, and was disappointed the department was not offering it because she will be graduating in May, and won't have another chance.

Richmeyer said she was looking forward to enrolling in the class for her last semester before graduating, especially because so many people in the major already have taken it and have enjoyed it.

McElvain also said it was a popular class, even among students who are not communication disorder major.

"You can't get in unless you're a senior or happen to catch it when someone else signs out of it," McElvain said. "There are a lot of [communication disorders] majors who nev-

er get to take it because it's in such high demand."

Richmeyer said taking the class could have helped her in her future profession. She said knowing sign language is something she could have added to what communication disorders majors call their "therapy tool bag" or skills they collect that they can use to help their clients better communicate.

Richmeyer said another benefit of knowing sign language is it looks impressive to future employers.

"Just like knowing Spanish, and how that looks good on an application, I think sign language will be even more important in this field," Richmeyer said.

Job creation director retires

After eight years, Tate said it's time for a fresh face at K-REDI

BY ANDI WATKINS DAVIS
Staff Reporter

Phil Tate, job creation director for Kirksville Regional Economic Development, Inc. is retiring after eight years in the position.

The board of directors is working to fill Tate's part-time job with a full-time director and hopes to make an offer by December.

Tate said that he is stepping down because he's at retirement age and thinks the organization needs news ideas.

K-REDI was created in 2003 to combat unemployment by bringing industrial jobs to Kirksville, according to its website.

Of K-REDI's \$165,000 budget, \$65,000 goes to the salary of the Job Creation director, said K-REDI Secretary Annette Sweet. The rest of the budget is used for marketing purposes, office space and taxes.

About two-thirds of the budget comes from Kirksville, which has a contract with K-REDI to perform economic development services to benefit the city, Sweet said. She said the rest of the budget is provided by members throughout Adair County including, Truman State University, A.T. Still University, Kirksville Chamber of Commerce and other individuals and businesses.

Currently Tate has the position as a part-time job, working three days a week in the office, but Sweet said the new director will be hired as a full-time office employee. The board has not made a decision about the salary of the new director.

The unemployment rate in Adair County is 6.8 percent with 866 people

unemployed in the county as of September 2011, according to the Kirksville Chamber of Commerce November newsletter.

This number has increased .2 percent from this time last year. Since August 2006, the unemployment rate has increased by 2.1 percent.

However, Tate said that since 2003, K-REDI has created about 555 new jobs in the Kirksville area through companies it attracted.

Many low-skilled manufacturing jobs have been exported offshore, Tate said. As a result, he said he thinks the new Job Creation director will have to focus more on health care and education.

Tate said the unavailability of empty buildings to market and the lack of a large workforce in the area are both challenges when trying to attract companies to Kirksville. He said the state of the national economy is a challenge as well.

Adair Foods has added about 80 jobs since 2003. During the same time period, Hollinger, Inc. has reduced its workforce by about 125 employees, and Ortech has had fluctuating employment rates from about 500 workers to the current 25 workers, he said. K-REDI focuses on industrial and manufacturing companies, Tate said, and does not work with the numbers of jobs lost or gained in retail or other markets.

The first project K-REDI undertook was to bring Reliant Hardwood to Kirksville in 2004, adding 15 new jobs to the area. K-REDI was successful in filling the former Standard Register building with Commercial Envelope in 2006, attracting the Envoy/Maritz Call Center in 2007 and expanding WireCo World Group, a company already in Kirksville, in 2008, Tate said.

K-REDI was also a member of the team that brought the new A.T. Still Dental School to Kirksville this year,

which is projected to bring 147 new jobs.

In a rural town like Kirksville, there is a different set of economic challenges separate from the national economy, Truman economics professor Rubana Mahjabeen said. The banking system, tax system, and level of labor in a town all can present challenges in attracting companies, she said.

K-REDI uses many methods to bring companies to Kirksville, Tate said. In some cases it works directly with the state and in others K-REDI writes proposals with incentives for companies moving to Kirksville. In cases such as the dental school, K-REDI is a member of a team working to bring in a new company.

Despite the increasing number of unemployed citizens, K-REDI has had several accomplishments during Tate's time with the company.

"If you look around Kirksville you don't see a single empty commercial building," Tate said.

There have been some big projects that did not go through. The most notable of these are Human Identification Technologies DNA facility and Wi-Fi Sensors, Tate said. Combined, these companies were expected to bring about 200 jobs to Kirksville. Both projects fell through because of reasons outside of K-REDI's control, he said.

"Those two projects and the failure of those two projects was not the responsibility nor can we blame K-REDI for those," Tate said. "However, I do understand that those two projects not going forward reflects on K-REDI."

Wi-Fi Sensors was supposed to employ 125, but fell behind on its taxes and loan payments in January of this year, according to the Jan. 12 issue of the Index.

To find out more information about K-REDI visit www.k-redi.com.

Apartment to house recovering addicts, disabled

BY ASHLEY JOST
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Twenty-five apartment units are in the works to house Kirksville citizens who are fighting substance abuse problems or have mental disabilities.

The Kirksville City Council approved a resolution in support of Preferred Family Healthcare's application for tax credits from the state that will help pay for the approximately \$4 million cost of the apartment complex that's to be built at the 1700 block of Osteopathy Street during the Nov. 7 meeting.

Ann Hutton, Preferred Family Healthcare's chief operating officer, said Callyn Heights, the new apartment complex, will be an independent housing system for the residents, but will also provide on-site service 24/7.

"This will be the only [apartment complex in Kirksville] to my knowledge that's specific for just the special needs population and to have services on-site," Hutton said.

She said there is a large number of homeless Kirksville residents, as well as a large number of residents living in substandard living, and this especially applies to people with special needs.

"The majority of the units will be single units, but there will be a few two or three bedroom units for single parents and [their] children," Hutton said.

Assistant City Manager Melanie Smith was involved in forming the resolution the Council passed.

"I think it will be a worthwhile facility to have close to home," Smith said. "Preferred Family is a valuable part of the community, and this opportunity will be to Kirksville's benefit."

Smith said Preferred Family Healthcare has been working toward building this complex for several years and after recent revisions of their plans, the development has come together.

"These are just local people that need some extra assistance," Hutton said.

Some of the services provided at the apartment complex will include case managers, job skill coaches, transportation assistance and medical appointments. Hutton said there will be group activities but all will be voluntary.

Tax credit information is expected from the State around this coming Spring, and Hutton said they're hoping to start construction shortly after that.

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