

# Help desk acts as student resource

BY DAN MIKA  
Staff Reporter

The Center for Academic Excellence has opened the Peer Advising Quick Desk in the Kirk Building to students to answer general questions and to offer academic support to all students in ways the academic advisors cannot.

The Center created this desk because it found that students listen differently to academic advice from their peers than from actual advisors and it wanted to give all students the opportunity to benefit from that type of advice, said Center for Academic Excellence Director Jack Holcomb.

The desk, which is staffed entirely by students, answers students' questions without requiring an appointment with their academic advisor, sophomore peer advisor Nep Orshiso said. The desk is located in Kirk 107 and is open from 9:30 a.m. to 4 p.m. every weekday.

The 10 staffers, known as peer advisors, can answer a range of questions about scheduling, completing Liberal Studies Program requirements and can help new students adapt to the rigor of college classes.

"We can help when issues arise for freshmen, like coping with a larger classroom than high school, study habits and time management," Orshiso said.

The academic advisors made it a priority to hire students who had dealt with their own academic strife, said Ted Frushour, an Academic Advisor and Director of the service desk.

"Someone who got straight A's from the first day that they started isn't going to be the best advisor for someone struggling," Frushour said. "They may not be able to empathize with those struggles."

The desk officially opened last semester after midterm break, but it was only made available to incoming students, Frushour said. The Center for Academic Excellence opted not to heavily advertise the desk because they still were figuring out how it could best help students, Holcomb said.

"What I discovered in running our tutoring services is that students listen to peers very differently than they listen to old, fat, white, bearded, balding men like me," Holcomb said.

Peer advisors also meet individually with incoming students referred to them by their advisors, Holcomb said. Most of these students are part of an "academic watch list" and are placed there if they are identified to possibly be at risk for academic probation Holcomb said.

Students are placed on this list by a formula designed by former Center for Academic Excellence Director Marty



Sophomores Sara McVety and Nep Orshiso work at the Peer Advising Quick Desk. The Quick Desk advisors were individually selected by academic advisors to answer questions freshmen students might have about scheduling and requirements.

Eisenberg, which calculates certain factors from applications and assesses if they might struggle with grades, Holcomb said. However, the formula is not an exact predictor of academic performance and 90 percent of the students on the watch list do not end up on academic probation because they did not struggle with maintaining grades, Holcomb said.

One of the goals for the desk is to fig-

ure out how to combine the perspective students can offer each other with the professional advising the academic advisors give already, Frushour said.

"The peer advisors have the advantage of having a more recent experience of being students and being 'on the ground,' so to speak," Frushour said. "I can tell a student to do this and that and this, but they will see me as an authority

figure instead of an equal."

There currently are no plans to expand the desk's hours or hire more advisors, but that could change if more students start taking advantage of the service, Frushour said.

"[Students] should feel free to stop by and visit with the peer advisors," Frushour said. "They would love to have some traffic."

Dan Mika/Index

## Kirksville starts phase two of city sidewalk project

BY DANIELLE WALDRON  
Assistant News Editor  
index.newseditor@gmail.com

The City of Kirksville is preparing for the second phase of the Downtown Sidewalk Project throughout the next few weeks.

This phase will include infrastructure changes and improvements to sidewalks and ramps.

Assistant City Manager Melanie Smith said the second phase of the project will include a relocation of power lines and new sidewalks. She said the Downtown Sidewalk Project will make sidewalks safer and could be completed before the end of 2013.

The second phase of the project potentially could include a pedestrian median through Truman State's campus, according to the Kirksville Connection, the City's newsletter.

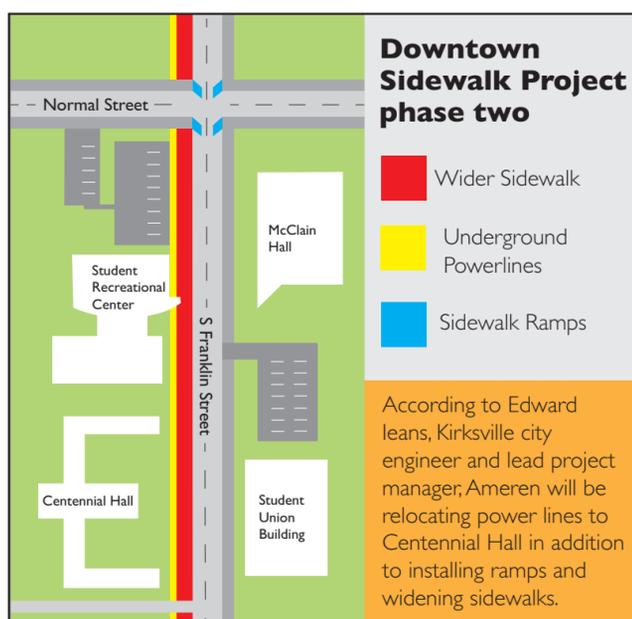
During October, City Council reached an agreement with Mihalevich Concrete to contract the second phase of the project that included creating new sidewalks and installing street lights along Franklin Street. The initial cost of the project was more than \$400,000.

Frank Mihalevich, Mihalevich Concrete Construction Co. owner, said phase two will focus on improvements to Franklin Street between Normal and Patterson streets and will affect Truman's campus.

Monies from the Tax Increment Finance Plan are distributed by the City to fund infrastructure projects, according to Kirksville Connection. The release said current infrastructure projects like the Downtown Sidewalk Project help boost sales and property tax dollars that will be collected in the future.

In addition to having a new surface, the new sidewalks will be wider, smoother and now all intersections will have ramps that comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act, Mihalevich said. He said some intersections are currently without ramps. He said the new sidewalks are being installed to be safer and more functional for pedestrians.

Smith said plans for the Downtown Sidewalk Project have been established since 1998, were put into effect during 1999 and have remained a part of the TIF Plan ever



since.

The TIF Plan is funding both phases of the project, Smith said. She said the City has received grants and enhancement funds from state agencies, including the Missouri Department of Transportation, for the projects.

Mihalevich said the selection process to become project contractor was based on competitive bids and Mihalevich Concrete Construction Co. was the lowest bidder. He said once the company received the bid agreements between the City and the TIF plan, a contract could be established.

Mihalevich said the agreements between the concrete company, the TIF Plan and the City included the project cost and a project timeline. He said the Downtown Sidewalk Project is ahead of schedule and he does not foresee many problems for the remainder of the project.

"The second part [of the project] will be more directly connected with the college," Mihalevich said. "They are going to have a boulevard-type street with a beautification project to enhance that whole area."

Edward leans, Kirksville city engineer and lead project man-

er, said he must coordinate with other parties such as Ameren to move power lines and Truman to install medians through campus. He said phase two could start as early as June.

Phase one of the Downtown Sidewalk project should be completed during May, leans said. He said though the logistics of the campus pedestrian median still are being discussed with the University, the power lines will be placed on the front west side of Centennial Hall.

Although the sidewalk for one block of phase one is complete, Mihalevich said the asphalt placement and paint striping cannot be done until the spring.

Smith said one of the main goals of phase one was to make the west side of Franklin Street to match the east side of Franklin Street, which was completed several years ago.

"I think this is a really great addition to our community as a whole," Smith said. "Franklin [street] serves as the gateway to the downtown area for Truman students and A.T. Still students. This is a valuable project that will improve the look and feel of the downtown area."

## KDIC adds new member fees

BY PAIGE YUNGERMANN  
Assistant News Editor  
index.newseditor@gmail.com

The Kirksville Downtown Improvement Committee is adding membership fees for individuals and businesses in the downtown area.

KDIC Board President Justin Tallman said the annual fees would be \$10 for individual property owners, \$25 for small businesses with less than 100 employees and \$500 for large businesses with more than 100 employees. Tallman said it has not yet been determined when the fees will go into effect.

Tallman said the reason for the substantial difference between the small business fee and the large business fee is because the \$25 fee is designed for businesses with a couple of employees, while the \$500 fee is designed for businesses with over 100 employees and a large budget.

Tallman said there are two reasons the Board is considering instating the fees. The first is to raise money for downtown events. Tallman said the goal would be for downtown events to be self-sustaining, but money is needed for start-up costs. While no events have been planned, Tallman said possible events include a car show and a basketball tournament.

The second reason is because the membership guidelines are unclear about what constitutes membership for the KDIC. Tallman said there currently is some confusion as to who actually is a member of the KDIC. If the membership fees are passed, members will be those who pay the fees, and those are the people who can vote at KDIC meetings.

"I think its important to have clear membership guidelines . . . [so] people can understand why they

can or can't vote," Tallman said.

Tallman said there are currently approximately 180 business and property owners in the downtown area that are part of the KDIC; however, without the membership fees, it is hard to determine who is a member and who is not. The membership fees will allow the KDIC to determine exactly how many members there are.

Sherry Stacey, Hidden Treasures owner and former KDIC president, said she would be willing to pay the membership fees for her business. She said it is important to have events downtown, and the fee would have no effect on her business financially.

"There's got to be revenue for KDIC, or there wouldn't be any events, and if that's our source of revenue then so be it," Stacey said.

Not all downtown businesses would be required to pay the membership fees — only those that want to be members of KDIC.

Pagliai's Pizza manager Nikki Hamlin said Pagliai's will most likely not pay the membership fees. She said a sales tax increase is being considered for downtown businesses, and Pagliai's sees no incentive to joining the KDIC if it means paying another fee.

Tallman said the KDIC had membership fees until 1999, and he is unsure as to why the fees ended. He said the KDIC administrative director tried to reinstate membership fees several years ago, but there was not enough member support at the time.

Now that membership fees are reinstated, Tallman said he hopes the funds will help KDIC grow and acquire more membership and member involvement.

"The ball's starting off small, but hopefully we'll get going and find some new members," Tallman said.