ADVANTAGE

Dealership moves forward with new site's construction. See Page 3.

SNOW SPRING?

Seasons' change appears delayed by winter weather. See Page 12.

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THURSDAY EDITION

POSSIBLE HIT AND RUN

Police probing reported wreck with motorcycle

By DOUG CARDER
Herald Senior Writer

Ottawa police officers are investigating a late-Wednesday morning possible hit-and-run incident at the intersection of West Sixth and South Willow streets that left a 31-year-old Ottawa man injured.

John Bishop was riding a 2002 Suzuki motorcycle east on West Sixth Street about 11:15 a.m. when an unidentified mini van traveling south on Willow Street "possibly collided with the motorcycle," Capt. Adam Weingartner, with the Ottawa Police Department, said in an email late Wednesday afternoon. The van left the scene and continued south on Willow Street, according to witnesses.

Ottawa police were stopping short of calling the incident a hit-and-run Wednesday. Instead, the incident was being described as an "injury accident."

Bishop, who was not wearing a helmet, suffered undisclosed injuries when he was ejected from the motorcycle, according to a police report.

See **WRECK**, Page 5

More local news

- Documents note changes ahead of sheriff's ouster hearing today. See Page 3.
- Woman hurt in overnight wreck along I-35 detour. See Page 3.
- Ottawan recovering after wreck that killed wife. See Page 3.

OTTAWA

Study's $30K pricetag divides city officials on compensation vote

By DOUG CARDER
Herald Senior Writer

The City of Ottawa is moving forward with a comprehensive look at how its compensation packages stack up against other municipalities and private-sector employers in the region.

Ottawa city commissioners voted 3-2 Monday to approve a compensation and classification study of city personnel positions, to be conducted by St. Louis-based CBIZ Human Capital Services for $30,250.

The study will take a look at workers' salaries and benefits to see if they are competitive in the current marketplace, Melissa Fairbanks, the city's human resources director, said.

See **VOTE**, Page 5

Photos by Matt Bristow/The Ottawa Herald

ABOVE: Grace Swan, 11, attempts to knock over all the pins Wednesday while playing human bowling, an activity at "Ottawa Olympics" at Ottawa Middle School, 1230 S. Ash St., Ottawa. The event was one of several scheduled activities for this year's Spring Fling, a week-long series of events for students on spring break. For a complete list of events, go to http://www.fccc4kids.org/springfling.html. Spring Fling is organized by the Franklin County Children's Coalition.

LEFT: Bruce Hanson, retired Ottawa Police Department detective, talks with children Tuesday about gun safety during a Spring Fling firearm safety course at The Gun Guys, 412 S. Main St., Ottawa. The kids — students on spring break from school — watched a video, featuring McGruff the Crime Dog, and received booklets on gun safety.

BELOW: Adalynn Wilson, 4, Ottawa, feeds a baby Lamancha-Alpine goat named Tinkerbell, held Wednesday by William Mayo, 9, Williamsburg, during a petting zoo event at the Franklin County Fairgrounds, 17th and Elms streets, Ottawa. The animal interaction was part of Spring Fling, with the animals supplied by Franklin County 4-Hers.

RIGHT: Tristin Brown, 3, Ottawa, pretends to drive a front-end loader Monday during "Tractors, Trucks & More," part of Spring Fling 2013 at Orlis Cox Sports Complex at the intersection of Beech Street and West K-68 in Ottawa. The event included a tractor-trailer, fire truck, heavy machinery and more.

ULTRA-RUNNER EVENT THIS WEEKEND

100-mile, 'hardcore' race set for Prairie Spirit Trail

By BOBBY BURCH
Herald Staff Writer

Hallucinations, hypothermia, baseball-sized blisters and bloody, chafed nipples are only a few of the recreational hazards more than 130 athletes might encounter this weekend in Franklin County.

And they wouldn't have it any other way, Eric Steele said of those runners competing in his company's inaugural Prairie Spirit 100-mile and 50-mile ultra runs. Seeking increasingly challenging events, ultra runners — those willing to surpass measly 26-mile marathons — are indeed a distinct variety of athlete, Steele, an avid runner himself, said.

But why would one voluntarily run a distance that many would find irksome to travel by car?

See **RACE**, Page 5

Photo courtesy of Eric Steele

The Prairie Spirit Trail is shown in October 2012. A former railway line, the trail this weekend will act as a track for nearly 140 ultra runners, as the athletes dip through Princeton, Richmond, Garnett and Iola.

VOTE: City overdue on studying appropriateness of employee compensation

(Continued from Page 1)

"CBIZ will be looking at the whole compensation package," she said, adding that the city had not conducted a comprehensive study in a decade. "The [industry] recommendation is that you complete this study every five years."

In addition to a review of compensation, CBIZ will analyze job descriptions to ensure they are in line with the duties being performed and are in compliance with such federal guidelines as the Americans With Disabilities Act, she said.

Fairbanks also reminded commissioners that as part of the contract, CBIZ would provide compensation updates for five years beyond the initial study.

"So this will cover the next six years," she said.

Citing the introductions of new employees and recognition of staff accomplishments that took place at Monday's meeting prior to her presentation, Fairbanks said the study would help ensure the city continues to hire and retain a quality workforce.

The city's current human resources department, which consists of two employees, would not be able to undertake a study of this magnitude in-house, Fairbanks said.

Commissioners Gene Ramsey and Sara Caylor, who both voted against authorizing the study, said their decisions came down to the bottom line.

"The $30,000 would be the equivalent of about a full year's salary for one employee," Caylor said.

Ramsey said he had nothing against CBIZ or the city's staff, but he would like to see that $30,000 spent for sidewalks, streets or playgrounds.

"I'd like to see the money spent in a different way," he said.

Commissioners Jeff Richards and Linda Reed voted to approve the study.

Richards called the study an investment in the city's staff.

"We've lost a few employees, not many, to other employers in the area," Richards said, adding that better wages was a factor in some of those cases.

Citing the five years of compensation updates at no additional cost to the city, Richards said, "This would cover the next six years, so I look at it as it's only costing us $5,000 a year."

Initially opposed to the study, Reed said, she changed her mind after receiving more information and watching a presentation from CBIZ. She also cited the time lapse since the last study.

"It's been more than 10 years," she said.

Mayor Blake Jorgensen broke the tie when he voted to approve the study.

CBIZ representatives said at a recent study session it would take about four months to complete the study.

Fairbanks thanked commissioners for their due diligence regarding the study, referring to previous discussions and a presentation by CBIZ at recent city commission study sessions.

"I realize this is an investment," she said.

Doug Carder is senior writer for The Herald. Email him at dcarder@ottawaherald.com

RACE: 'You've got to focus on just one step at a time,' ultra runner says

(Continued from Page 1)

"You mean, what makes ultra runners a special breed of crazy?" Steele, founder of Epic Ultras, a company that organizes ultra runs throughout Kansas, said. "Our sport is more than just running. If you're a seasoned ultra runner, you know it's all about the way ultra running makes you feel — how it takes you, in a sense, from one reality into another."

Steele

A Wichita native, Steele said the Prairie Spirit 100-mile race is a first for northeast Kansas and will span the entire length of the Prairie Spirit Trail — twice. Starting in Ottawa, the former railway line dips through Princeton, Richmond, Garnett and Iola and weaves through three counties. The 100-mile runners, who will return to Ottawa after reaching Iola, must complete the trail within 31 hours to be considered finishers. The 50-mile runners will have 29 hours to run south from Garnett toward Iola before heading north to the finish line in Ottawa. Both races' finish line is located at the Don Woodward Community Center, 517 E. Third St., Ottawa. Steele said he plans to donate about $500 of the proceeds to the Kansas Chapter of Leukemia and Lymphoma Society, in addition to $250 to the Friends of the Prairie Spirit Trail.

After hearing the Prairie Spirit Trail would be extended to Iola, Steele began eyeing the locale for a race, he said, realizing it could lend itself to an ideal ultra running path. Made largely of crushed limestone, Steele said, the trail's surface and relative flatness is a joy for runners. Although a daunting distance, he said, plenty of runners this weekend are hoping to break personal records for the 50- and 100-mile races.

"The trail is a dream — a nice, wide path and generally a pretty forgiving surface," Steele said, noting that it's also typical for ultra runners to implement a walk-run strategy to complete the trail. "And that's the whole thing about this course that really appeals to the veterans. It should be great for the runners."

Photos courtesy of Eric Steele

Eric Steele celebrates his fourth-place finish time of 11:49:39 hours in June at the Angel Fire 50-mile race at Angel Fire, N.M. Steele, founder of Epic Ultras, a company that organizes ultra runs throughout Kansas, now is gearing up for the Prairie Spirit 100- and 50-mile races that begin this weekend and finish in Ottawa.

While attracting plenty of veteran ultra runners, Steele said, many of those hoping to best the 100-mile track are either new to the distance or previously failed to complete it. Despite the inexperienced group, and a forecast calling for freezing temperatures with a chance of snow, Steele said he expects a good turnout for the race.

"Of the 69 [people] that I've got entered in the 100-miler, about half never completed a 100-mile race before," Steele said. "But I'm anticipating a low drop rate. It's usually around 5 to 8 percent of entries."

The races have lured 139 competitors from all corners of the continental U.S., including Maryland, California, Georgia and Washington, Steele said. And among those runners include a few who boast a remarkable combination of speed and endurance. Two of the athletes participating in the weekend's race have run 100 miles in less than 19 hours, Steele said, averaging about 5.3 miles per hour.

While some athletes might be capable of completing a 100-mile race, Steele said, runners face a variety of challenges. Foremost of those, he said, are managing hydration, nourishment and chafing. After several hours of running, an energy bar no longer is up to snuff, Steele said. As such, the races' aid stations, which are found about every five miles along the trail, provide runners with meals, including tacos, meatball subs, potatoes and other calorically dense foods.

"One of the biggest things is being able to manage your fueling, hydration and chafing," Steele said. "As soon as you go over a marathon, and especially during a 100-mile event, you've got to manage your caloric intake in terms of what your stomach can handle. And then there's the chafing issue. Believe it or not, bloody nipples at later stages of a race have put people out of a race. Physically, they're trained and capable of finishing, but their feet are just so blistered — or they're chafed raw — that they drop [from the race]."

In addition to physical demands, Steele said, athletes also face mental hurdles to accomplish an ultra run. Maintaining concentration can often become difficult, he said, but it's vital to those hoping to succeed.

"It's really critical to focus," Steele said. "You've got to focus on just one step at a time."

An 18-year ultra runner, Steele is the first Kansan to complete the 135-mile Badwater Ultramarathon from Death Valley to Mount Whitney in California. Regarded as America's toughest foot race, the event was the most difficult of the 50 ultra runs he's completed. Most recently, Steele, who also founded the Kansas Ultra Runners Society in 1995, finished the Angel Fire 50-mile race in Angel Fire, N.M., with a time of 11 hours and 49 minutes, earning him fourth place.

After several years of ultra running, Steele said the sport's allure is beyond competition for him. The people he encounters on the trail, Steele added, are why he chose to start a company that now aims to offer ultra runners a variety of quality events.

"Trail runners and ultra runners just tend to be more laid back and a lot cooler in general," Steele said. "I fell in love with the sport not only because of these hard-core races, but because the people are just so cool. They're a different breed."

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The Way We Worked Kansas Tour is sponsored by the Kansas Humanities Council in partnership with the Smithsonian Institution's Museum on Main Street program. Support for The Way We Worked Kansas Tour has been provided by the Ross and Marianna Beach Foundation and the Douglas County Community Foundation. Support for Museum on Main Street has been provided by the United States Congress.

WRECK: Mini van sought

(Continued from Page 1)

Bishop was transported to Overland Park Regional Medical Center. A condition report from the hospital was not available Wednesday night.

Witnesses described the mini van as possibly maroon or gray in color, the report said, and was being driven by a white woman with dark hair. The van might have orange paint transfer from the impact with the motorcycle, the police report said.

It is possible the van hit the rear fender of the motorcycle and might not have significant damage, Weingartner said.

"Officers investigating the accident want to speak with the driver of the other vehicle or anyone else with information," Weingartner said. "Anyone with information is asked to call the Ottawa Police Department or Franklin County Crime Stoppers."

The Franklin County Accident Investigation Team is assisting with the investigation, Weingartner said.

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