



The Paducah Sun

THURSDAY, November 20, 2014

www.paducahsun.com

Vol. 118 No. 324

State gas tax to dip by 4.3 cents a gallon

BY LAUREN P. DUNCAN
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Kentucky's gas tax is set to drop by 4.3 cents on Jan. 1 — good news for drivers but bad news for local and state road funds.

Under Kentucky law, a portion of the state's gas tax known as the excise tax is revised every quarter based on the average wholesale price of motor fuels. Because gasoline prices fell in October when a survey was taken to establish the gas tax rate for January through March, the tax on gasoline, diesel and ethanol fuels will be 4.3 cents a gallon lower on New Year's Day.

Chuck Wolfe, spokesman with the Kentucky Transportation Cabinet, said it will be the largest single decrease since the Legislature made the excise tax adjustable in 1980.

"It's never gone down this much," he said. "This is a big one."

The Transportation Cabinet estimates the decline will result in a \$129 million loss to the Kentucky Road Fund if fuel consumption does not change. Kentucky Transportation Secretary Mike Hancock called the loss of revenue "crippling."

With the other portions of the gas tax added to the excise tax, the current combined state rate for buyers this quarter is 31.9 cents. Beginning Jan. 1, the rate will be 27.6 cents.

Wolfe said the state won't know how seriously transportation projects, which are primarily funded by the gas tax, will be affected until revenues from the lower rate begin coming in.

"We'd like for the public to be aware that there is another side of the coin. Falling fuel prices are going to result in a corresponding loss in revenue that goes toward the construction and upkeep of the road system that they drive on," Wolfe said.

If wholesale gas prices continue to drop in January, the tax rate could decline again in April. The excise tax, which can increase to as much as 10 percent of the average wholesale price, has dropped four times in the past five quarters.

State Sen. Bob Leeper, co-chairman

Please see **GAS** | 10A



ELLEN O'NAN | The Sun

Ester Peters, a nursing student at West Kentucky Community and Technical College, plays with her dog, Gaston, on the school's campus on Wednesday afternoon. After being diagnosed with Type 2 diabetes, Peters trained Gaston to detect her glucose levels. Peters shared her training experiences during a free seminar in Waller Hall at WKCTC on Wednesday morning.

Woman trains her dog as personal glucose meter

BY GENEVIEVE POSTLETHWAIT

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Esther Peters' right-handman, Gaston the dog, is exceptionally well behaved.

Always at Peters' side, the 6-year-old standard poodle is calm, careful, gentle and obeys Peters' every command. The only aberration in Gaston's cool and collected demeanor is his most impressive trick of all, his "blood sugar dance."

"He's supposed to signal when my blood sugar drops by tapping me with his paw, but instead he does what I call the 'blood sugar dance,'" Peters told a packed lecture hall full of West Kentucky Community and Technical College students Wednesday.

Peters, a long-time dog trainer, mother of five and nursing student at WKCTC with Type 2 diabetes, has trained Gaston to be her personal glucose meter. Wherever Peters goes — to class, to the grocery, to the mall — Gaston goes, too. As she spoke to WKCTC students Wednesday he laid at her feet, dressed in his blue vest and perfectly content.

Peters wasn't diagnosed with diabetes until later in life. She developed gestational diabetes while preg-

nant, a condition that usually dissipates once the child is born. Peters had her child, but the diabetes stayed. She was told she would likely have to take insulin shots three times a day and prick her fingers. She wasn't ready to accept a life full of needles, which she hates.

"He gets really excited and antsy and runs all over the place. He won't leave me alone until I eat something and my blood sugar goes back up."

"I asked my doctor if there was anything I could do to change it," Peters said. "He told me I could go on a diet. He was really blunt about it. At the time, I was 80 pounds heavier than what I am now. I lost that 80 pounds. I changed my diet, completely changed my eating habits and was wondering if there was anything else I could do,

tion, he said.

"I know that people (working at other locations) can do better because I see it here at this casino," he said. "It's like family here."

Brad Hirsch, senior vice president and general manager at Harrah's Metropolis, stands in front of the brand new casino at Harrah's Metropolis Casino & Hotel on Wednesday evening. Wednesday was the start of the grand opening that will continue on through the weekend.

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Raney, 64, has been making the trek from Nashville, Tennessee, to Harrah's Metropolis Casino & Hotel about twice a month for the past eight years. When he visits other Harrah's properties, he always compares them to the Metropolis location, he said.

"Based on the volume we have seen on the floor, we're really pleased with the opening we've had tonight and expect even bigger crowds this weekend," he said.

The renovation, which did away with the riverboat and moved gaming operations to the shore, was intended in part to provide a better experience for people interested in more than a night of gambling, Hirsch said.

Please see **HARRAH'S** | 5A

Feds have \$360 million for 2015 plant cleanup

BY DAVID ZOELLER
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The U.S. Department of Energy will have about \$360 million in cleanup funds to spend in 2015 at the Paducah Gaseous Diffusion Plant, members of the Paducah Area Community Reuse Organization were told Wednesday.

PACRO Director Charlie Martin updated the board on several issues relating to the site, which returned to the DOE's control Oct. 21. Fluor Federal Services, the contractor selected by DOE for deactivation and decommissioning of the facilities, has been managing the site since then. Fluor was awarded a three-year contract in July.

Martin said local officials have asked Bill Murphy, the DOE site manager in Lexington, for a plan on how the government is going to spend its money in 2015 and how many jobs are going to be created using those funds.

"As you may remember, in 2014 we got a significant increase in funding," Martin said. "And, last week we found out that there is about \$89 million that wasn't spent in 2014 that's going to be rolled forward into 2015."

Right now the DOE is spending, just on the appropriation level, approximately \$270 million a year for Paducah, according to Martin.

"So, if you add the \$89 million and the \$270 million, you get real close to \$360 million that Fluor and the government

Please see **CLEANUP** | 10A

Obama to announce immigration action

BY JIM KUHNHEIN AND ERICA WERNER

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — In a broad test of his executive powers, President Barack Obama declared Wednesday he will sidestep Congress and order his own federal action on immigration — in measures that could spare from deportation as many as 5 million people illegally in the U.S. and set up one of the most pitched partisan confrontations of his presidency.

Obama declared that Washington has allowed America's immigration problem "to fester for too long."

The president will use an 8 p.m. EST address Thursday to announce his measures and will sign the executive actions during a rally in Las Vegas on Friday. In doing so, Obama will be taking an aggressive stand that he had once insisted was beyond his presidential power.

As many as 5 million people in the country illegally are likely to be protected from deportation and made eligible for work permits under the plan. They would not have a path to citizenship, however, and the actions could be reversed by a new president in two years. Officials said the eligible immigrants would not be entitled to federal benefits — including health care tax credits — under Obama's plan.

The 5 million estimate includes extending deportation protections to parents and spouses of U.S. citizens and permanent residents who have been in the country for five years. The president also is likely to expand his 2-year-old program that protects young immigrants from deportation. The administration had con-

Please see **OBAMA** | 10A

Harrah's Metropolis renovations hit the jackpot

BY LAUREL BLACK

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The updated Harrah's Metropolis Casino & Hotel wowed even its most seasoned customers during its first night of operation Wednesday.

Live music flowed from the entertainment stage and across the gambling floor, where visitors took their pick from 800 slots and 23 gaming tables. The more than \$8 million project revamped former convention space to include three new bars, a poker room and a new restaurant — all of which were teeming just an hour after the casino opened its doors to the public at 7 p.m.

"The new facility's better than I expected it to be. It's outstanding. It's fresh. It's fun. It smells good," said Steve Raney, a longtime Harrah's customer. "I'm looking forward to some really good times here."



ELLEN O'NAN | The Sun

Brad Hirsch, senior vice president and general manager at Harrah's Metropolis, stands in front of the brand new casino at Harrah's Metropolis Casino & Hotel on Wednesday evening. Wednesday was the start of the grand opening that will continue on through the weekend.

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tion, he said.

"I know that people (working at other locations) can do better because I see it here at this casino," he said. "It's like family here."

Brad Hirsch, senior vice president and general manager at Harrah's Metropolis, said Wednesday's turnout bodes well for the casino.

"Based on the volume we have seen on the floor, we're really pleased with the opening we've had tonight and expect even bigger crowds this weekend," he said.

The renovation, which did away with the riverboat and moved gaming operations to the shore, was intended in part to provide a better experience for people interested in more than a night of gambling, Hirsch said.

Please see **HARRAH'S** | 5A

LOCAL FACE PAINTING

People get their faces painted at Murray State University's International Bazaar on Wednesday. The event is part of MSU's International Education Week.

2A



WORLD FOUR TALIBAN MILITANTS KILLED

Four Taliban militants who attacked a compound housing foreign workers in the Afghan capital were killed Wednesday night in a failed assault there.

5A

Forecast

Today

41°

Mostly sunny

10A

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4 Taliban militants killed in failed Afghan attack

Associated Press

KABUL, Afghanistan — Four Taliban militants who attacked a compound housing foreign workers in the Afghan capital were killed Wednesday night in a failed assault there, police said, the latest violence targeting foreigners in the country.

One attacker died when he detonated a vehicle packed with explosives near the gate of the Green Village compound in eastern Kabul, police chief Gen. Mohammad

Zahir said. Police officers killed the other three attackers in a shootout, Zahir said.

“There were no civilian or military casualties,” Zahir said.

The Taliban claimed responsibility for the attack on Twitter accounts that previously carried messages from the group. The explosion that started the attack, which struck about at 9 p.m., could be heard throughout Kabul.

The heavily fortified Green Village has come under at-

tack previously. The last assault targeting the compound took place on Oct. 13, 2013, when a suicide car bomber killed two passers-by. Another attack there in 2012 killed seven guards and civilians.

This is the second attack on a foreign compound in the Afghan capital in recent days. On Monday, the Taliban claimed responsibility for a suicide attack on a compound operated by Hart, a security services company.

DOG

CONTINUED FROM 1A

besides needles, to keep my blood levels in check.”

She began researching her options. The concept of diabetic alert dogs piqued her interest, but the cost was disheartening. A lab-trained diabetic alert dog costs about \$15,000 on average, Peters said, and is rarely covered by insurance providers. With her dog-training background, however, she thought she might try training an alert dog on her own. Peters, now 35, has been training and showing dogs since she was 10.

Though today Gaston seems as if he was born to be an alert dog, Peters said that’s only because of how far he’s come.

Before the idea of training an alert dog crossed her mind, Peters took in Gaston merely as a foster dog when he was 5 months old. He had been badly neglected. He wasn’t housebroken, his hair was matted, and he had to be put under anesthesia just to clean his ears for the first time. She never intended to keep him, but only to take him in, rehabilitate him and find him a good home.

But she couldn’t let him go.

Peters explained to WKCTC students that research shows diabetic alert dogs don’t need to be of any certain size, gender or breed. The most important qualification is that they’re scent-driven.

Peters brought along a large doggie mind-puzzle to pass around the lecture hall. She said that when she was first determining if Gaston was scent-driven, she would hide a treat in the puzzle and watch Gaston move the pieces around with fierce determination until he found it. Many dogs, even other standard poodles, would give up before finding it. Not Gaston.

At the most basic level, a diabetic alert dog must be able to recognize a scent, locate the scent, and perform a trained behavior to



ELLEN O’NAN | The Sun

Ester Peters, a nursing student at West Kentucky Community and Technical College, walks with her dog, Gaston, on the school’s campus on Wednesday afternoon. After being diagnosed with Type 2 diabetes, Peters trained Gaston to detect her glucose levels.

indicate the scent, much like search-and-rescue or bomb and drug sniffing dogs. With patience and self-discipline, she said, anyone could train a dog like she’s trained Gaston.

It only took about three months to train Gaston as her personal glucose meter. She sampled her saliva when her glucose level was at 70 (70 and below is considered low and possibly dangerous), let Gaston take in the scent, clicked a clicker, then gave him a treat. Smell, click, treat. Much like Ivan Pavlov’s dog, Gaston would get excited in anticipation of a treat whenever he sensed Peters’ blood sugar was near or below 70.

“He’s cheap, too,” Peters said. “Some have to have steak or chicken as a treat. Not Gaston. He likes string cheese and hot dogs.”

Training Gaston to associate changes in Peters’ glucose levels with treats was the easy part. Training him to behave in public took years.

“It took me probably two years to get him to stay, and walk, and do exactly what I tell him to do,” Peters said. “I haven’t learned how to do that with my children yet, but I have hope.”

Gaston has saved Peters from going into diabetic shock or worse countless times. He’s woken her up in the dead of night twice after sensing her sugar was

dropping, even though Gaston doesn’t sleep in the same room. He’s most in-tune with Peters, though he’s done his “blood sugar dance” for a few others.

“I hate to just go up to people and say, can I take your blood sugar?” Peters said. “I mean, if you’re willing, I’d like to!”

After earning her nursing degree, Peters plans to go on to earn her doctorate and continue researching and training diabetic alert dogs as well as the possibility of cancer alert dogs. Her hope is that she can use what she knows and what she learns to help others cope with diabetes, especially children. She knows that having the added protection of a dog like Gaston would offer solace and peace of mind to parents.

After Peters’ presentation, a fellow nursing student and mother of three asked the obvious question: How difficult was it to train Gaston while juggling five kids? How did she manage it, all while going to school, too?

“Well, it’s kind of like my therapy,” Peters told her. “It only takes about 10 minutes a day for any dog. And I enjoy it. It’s definitely my therapy.”

Contact Genevieve Postlethwait, a Paducah Sun staff writer, at 270-575-8651 or at gpostlethwait@paducah-sun.com.

Buffalo area hit with epic snow

Associated Press

BUFFALO, N.Y. — Homeowners opened their front doors to find themselves sealed in by sheer walls of white. Shovelers turned walkways into head-high canyons. A woman gave birth in a firehouse after the snow prevented her from reaching the hospital.

Even for Buffalo, a place that typically shrugs at snow, this was an epic snowfall, the kind of onslaught folks will be telling their grandchildren about.

The Buffalo area found itself buried under as much as 5 1/2 feet of snow Wednesday, with another lake-effect storm expected to bring 2 to 3 more feet by late tonight.

“This is an historic event. When all is said and done, this snowstorm will break all sorts of records, and that’s saying something in Buffalo,” Gov. Andrew Cuomo said during a visit to the city.

The storm came in so fast and furious over Lake Erie early Tuesday it trapped more than 100 vehicles along a 132-mile stretch of the New York State Thruway, which remained closed Wednesday.

People were marooned at homes, on highways and at work. Residents who can handle 6 inches of snow as if it were a light



Associated Press

Trucks are parked at Jim’s Truck Stop in Cheektowaga, N.Y., on Wednesday. The Buffalo area found itself buried under as much as 5 feet of snow Wednesday, with another lake-effect storm expected to bring 2 to 3 more feet by late tonight.

dusting were forced to improvise.

Tom Wilson, of West Seneca, split a Salisbury steak frozen dinner with co-workers and tried his best to get some rest when he was stuck 36 hours at his warehouse job.

“I slept on a pallet. Then I slept on some office chairs, and then I went back to the pallet,” he said. “Then I found some sponges to lay on. I found one pack of sponges unopened. That looks like a pillow to me.”

“We tried to make popcorn with a two-by-four, two empty pop kegs, some charcoal and a dust pan,” he added. “It didn’t work.”

Trapped on a team bus on the Thruway for nearly

30 hours, the Niagara University women’s basketball team melted snow for water, posed with long faces for pictures that were posted online and generally tried to keep each other’s spirits up.

“I’m sure when it’s all done we’ll look back at it and remember how great a bonding experience it was. For now, I think everyone just wants to get home and sleep in their own beds,” said coach Kendra Faustin.

How snowy was it? The National Weather Service said it was so bad that some of the spotters it relies on to update accumulation totals couldn’t get out of their houses to take measurements.

HARRAH’S

CONTINUED FROM 1A

“New players that maybe were looking for something beyond gambling, new customers who just want to hear live music or enjoy a great meal in a restaurant ... can now do all those things. Before,

we weren’t necessarily the customer’s first choice for that,” he said, adding that Harrah’s sees about 600,000 visitors a year.

But there’s still plenty for patrons such as Raney, who calls slots his first love. Craps, he said, is his

second. “J-A-C-K-P-O-T-S,” he said. “I love jackpots.”

Contact Laurel Black, a Paducah Sun staff writer, at 270-575-8641, or follow @LaurelFBlack on Twitter.

This advertisement ran on November 9, 1931.

Times may have changed, but some things remain the same.

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