



Young engineer

The Mid America Train and Toy Show was held Sunday at the KCI Expo Center, where 4-year-old Huntley Harken got to play engineer at the KC Northern Railroad push-button train layout. The setup allowed kids to control the trains as well as horns and crossing signals.

SUSAN PFANNMULLER | SPECIAL TO THE STAR

Local

THORNY ISSUES OF MEDICAL RESEARCH

ALAN BAVLEY



HEALTH

As drugs and procedures proliferate, comparative effectiveness research has become an essential tool for figuring out which medical treatments work best.

This research pits accepted treatment options against each other — one drug versus another, for example, or drugs versus surgery — to see which is safer and more effective.

But two prominent Kansas City physicians say the government could be jeopardizing this valuable research.

It all started with a controversial study that divided the nation's medical community. The study in question tried to gauge how much supplemental oxygen a premature infant should receive.

It was long-known that given too little, a baby could die; too much and it could go blind. There was an established range of acceptable levels, but researchers wanted to know if outcomes were better at the higher or lower ends of the range. So preemies at major hospitals were randomly chosen to receive different amounts of oxygen. Ultimately, the study found that babies who got higher amounts were more likely to suffer eye damage, but also were less likely to die.

The study ignited a furor last year, with many ethicists and physicians and the Health and Human Services Office of Human Research Protections saying researchers broke the rules by not advising parents of reasonably foreseeable risks to their babies. An equally large group of experts said the study was within bounds because all the babies received an accepted level of care.

In October, HHS responded with proposed new guidelines for disclosing potential risks to patients in comparative effectiveness studies. Basically, it said patients should be advised of the risks of all the treatments under study. That's because even though the risks wouldn't be any different than they would be outside of the study, study patients may not get the same treatments as they would have outside the study.

To Children's Mercy Hospital ethicist John Lantos and St. Luke's Hospital heart researcher John Spertus, that is a radical shift in HHS policy. In a recent *New England Journal of Medicine* article they argue that the proposed guidelines would misinform patients into thinking that their personal doctor's preferred treatment is always the safest and most effective.

"The net result," they wrote, will "make research seem riskier than it truly is and make existing practices seem safer than they truly are...People will probably refuse to participate in research out of the false belief that, by refusing, they are avoiding risk."

In other words, people will choose feeling safer over the chance to be safer.

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PHOTOS BY SUSAN PFANNMULLER | SPECIAL TO THE STAR

Elphie the 10-year-old shih tzu did an Elvis-style sneer as she posed Sunday with Santa (volunteer Alan Hood of Overland Park) at an annual Humane Society of Greater Kansas City fundraiser, the Santa Paws photo event. Elphie belongs to Angie Arnold of Kansas City. The photos will be taken Saturdays and Sundays from noon to 4 p.m. through Dec. 21 at 47th and Wyandotte streets.

SMILE, DOGGY! SMILE!

How do you get pets and people to look at the camera at the same time?

By DUGAN ARNETT
The Kansas City Star

Debbie Fleetwood is still new to the world of pet photography, having spent most of her career doing human portraiture and architecture and landscape work.

But it didn't take the Kansas City-based photographer long to arrive at one realization regarding her newest endeavor.

"The pets," she said, "usually are the easy ones."

As a volunteer for Santa Paws, the annual fundraiser for the Humane Society of Greater Kansas City in which families can bring in their pets for a holiday-themed photo shoot, Fleetwood faces the unenviable task of wrangling everyone involved — cats and dogs, babies and toddlers, fren-



Truman the golden doodle posed Sunday with Santa (Alan Hood) at the Santa Paws photo event on the Country Club Plaza. Truman belongs to Jacob Pratt of Platte City (right).

zied adults — long enough to snap a nice, suitable photograph.

There are the pets, who — planted in an unfamiliar terrain — can become curious and hyper. And then there are the

owners, who can become so wrapped up in trying to control the pets that they themselves become difficult to corral.

Of course, in this case, it's all for a good cause — with the enti-

rety of the \$10 to \$15 photo donation going to the Humane Society.

Though a drop in temperatures limited Plaza foot traffic Sunday, the season is off to a quick start for the group, according to Gina Levra, volunteer and education coordinator for the local Humane Society.

More picture-taking will also take place from noon to 4 p.m. on Saturdays and Sundays through Dec. 21 at that Plaza location, 200 W. 47th St.

Levra estimated that about 25 to 30 groups had stopped in on Saturday, when temperatures climbed above 60, and an additional 25 or so came on Black Friday.

For her part, Fleetwood — who owns Exposed Art Photography in Kansas City — is learning quickly, having already developed a few tricks of the trade.

SEE PETS | A6

Helping KC's homeless

Construction to begin on new townhomes at Troost Avenue and Admiral Boulevard.

By LYNN HORSLEY
The Kansas City Star

Kansas City's reStart shelter downtown has focused intently in recent years on finding permanent housing for its homeless clients.

Until now, that has often been in older homes or apartments scattered throughout the city.

But construction is expected to begin early next year on new townhomes for the homeless at Troost Avenue and Admiral Boulevard, just two blocks from reStart. And while it's affordable housing for people who have suffered major life setbacks, it's being designed to resemble the high-quality, market-rate housing in Quality Hill.

"We want to make it look like good downtown housing and permanent housing where people would be proud to live there," said Brian Collins of Dromara Development, a partner with reStart and the Kansas City Housing Authority on the project.

The Kansas City Council recently enthusiastically approved the rezoning and development plan for the project, praising the addition of high-quality housing to the Paseo West neighborhood. Weather permitting, construction should begin in February or March and be concluded by the end of next year.

The development will be called Rose Hill Townhomes because Rose Hill was the historic name for that area of town.

It is filling a definite need, says Evie Craig, executive director of reStart, which will place

the residents at Rose Hill and offer them case management, social services and financial and employment counseling at reStart's own facility, 918 E. Ninth St.

"Housing for families was critical," Craig said, noting that many adults with children struggle to find homes where they can pay the utilities, let alone the rent. The Rose Hill townhomes will provide 33 affordable units in two three-story buildings on the southeast corner of Admiral and Troost. The units are designed for adult couples or at least one adult with a child or children.

Collins has expertise in financing affordable housing projects and had previously forged a partnership with an affiliate of the Kansas City Housing Au-

SEE HOMELESS | A5

SHORT TAKE

FERGUSON, Mo. | Two are arrested at protest

Two protesters faced charges Sunday after being arrested during a nighttime protest outside police headquarters in Ferguson.

St. Louis County police say both men were arrested Saturday night. A 44-year-old man from Kansas City was charged with interfering with an officer. A 33-year-old man from the St. Louis suburb of St. John was accused of first-degree tampering, resisting arrest and interfering with an officer.

More than 100 protesters were part of the demonstration Saturday night.

Meanwhile Sunday, Ferguson Mayor James Knowles said that Officer Darren Wilson, who resigned over the weekend, won't receive any further pay or benefits. Wilson, who is white, had been on administrative leave since he killed black teen Michael Brown on Aug. 9.

| The Associated Press