



Fall Sports Roundup
See B Section

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—BRIEFS—

Fan Appreciation
Hamburger Feed Friday

The Sterling Booster Club will host a Fan Appreciation Hamburger Feed Friday night at Smisor Stadium beginning at 5:30 p.m.

Sponsored by Bank of the Plains, First Bank, Kansas Ethanol and the Sterling Booster Club, 250 free meals will be provided prior to the first home football game Friday night against Sedgwick.

The game is set to kick off at 7 p.m.

Bear Wear and sponsorship forms will be available.

Patriot Day Ceremony
Sept. 11

The Arden H. McKee, American Legion Post No. 128, Sterling will present its Annual Patriot Day Ceremony, National Day of Service and Remembrance on Thursday, Sept. 11 at 8:30 a.m. at the Sterling Veterans Memorial at Sterling Lake.

Patriot Day is an annual observance to remember those who were injured or died during the terrorist attacks in the United States on Sept. 11, 2001.

City board approves \$10.1M budget

By Janie Perico

Sterling Commissioners held public hearings on the Revenue Neutral Rate (RNR) and for the Fiscal Year 2026 budget.

After the public hearings were closed, the commissioners approved the resolution to exceed the RNR and approved the 2026 budget with a spending authority of \$10,091,922.

The RNR represents the property tax rate that would generate the same revenue as the previous year using the current assessed valuation, and each taxing subdivision must decide every year whether to meet or exceed it when setting its mill levy.

On June 17, the City of Sterling received its new assessed valuation of \$17,758,883 as well as the RNR for developing the 2026 budget from the Rice County Clerk, with one mill equaling \$17,759, a 2.5% increase from the previous year. On July 7, the City Commission approved sending a notice of intent to exceed the RNR to the County Clerk. This action granted the City flexibility to exceed it if deemed necessary, but did not guarantee anything.

Further, the required notice of public hearing was published in the Sterling Bulletin on Aug. 21 and on the city’s website on Aug. 22.

The city initially considered a 45.643 mill levy, which was a 5,000 increase over 2025, but reduced the proposal to 42.643 mills, which was only a 2,000 increase, which was used in developing the 2026 budget. This proposed levy is 2.983 mills, or \$52,975, above the RNR and is projected to generate \$757,299 in ad valorem property tax revenue in 2026.

For homeowners, the tax liability under the proposed levy on a \$150,000 residential property would be approximately \$736, compared to \$701 in 2025, while under the RNR rate of 39.660 mills, the same property would owe \$684.

The hearings provided residents the opportunity to comment. In addition, 20 members of Sterling High School’s government class were in attendance to observe Tuesday’s meeting.

In other business, commissioners:

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Studio 96 to host evening
of art and wine tonight

Studio 96 will host an evening of art and wine tonight from 5:30 to 7 p.m.

The evening will feature the artwork of Sterling native T. Marion Heter alongside a tasting of Kansas wine from Inland Ocean Vineyards and a selection of charcuterie.

Heter is celebrated for his watercolors, capturing the Arkansas River and the vast landscapes of Central Kansas. His works, honored at national, state and local levels, reflect both place and memory in their most genuine form.

Inland Ocean Vineyards is located near Hutchinson where the 2-acre vineyard was planted in April of 2018. All of the wine made and sold at Inland Ocean Vineyards is from the grapes grown on the property.

SC announces theatre
season for 2025-26

Sterling College Theatre has unveiled its 2025-26 season, a dynamic lineup of musicals, plays and student showcases that highlight the power of performance to bring meaning, hope, joy and entertainment in turbulent times.

“Our 2025–2026 mainstage season features works born out of turbulent eras or directly focused on profound human struggle, plus they all offer great entertainment as well as being thought-provoking,” said Lesa Brown, Artistic Director of Sterling College Theatre. “In times shadowed by fear and uncertainty, when words so often fail us, artists step in—not to escape the darkness, but to illuminate it. Through metaphor, story, beauty and performance, these plays draw our attention away from the brink and toward resilience and even joy.”

The season begins in October with the classic musical “Bye Bye Birdie” (Oct. 17–19), directed by Brown with music direction by Marisa Callan. This Tony Award-winning favorite, written in 1958, follows an Elvis-like rock star drafted into the Army who travels to a small Ohio town for one last televised kiss with his biggest fan.

In November, Sterling College Theatre presents the Pulitzer Prize-winning drama “Rabbit Hole” (Nov. 20–22), directed by Technical Theatre faculty member Stephen English. The poignant play by David Lindsay-Abaire explores the aftermath of a devastating loss as a young couple struggles to find healing and a way back into the light.

January brings a special production: Senior Showcase (Jan. 23–24). This performance will spotlight graduating seniors Noah Svaty, Mary Little and Morgan Pellegrino who will be joined by fellow SC Theatre performers for an evening of musical theatre selections and scenes.

Thornton Wilder’s beloved classic “Our Town” is next Feb. 26–28. It will be directed by Brown. Written in the shadow of World War II, the play invites audiences to rediscover meaning in the small details of life and the beauty of human connection.

April’s production is the charming romantic musical “She Loves Me” (April 17–19), directed by Musical Theatre faculty member Callan. Set in 1930s Budapest and revived multiple times on Broadway, the show is a heartwarming story about authentic communication and love found in unexpected ways.

The season concludes with the Evening of One-Acts and Dance (May 2), a showcase of student-directed plays and original choreography, highlighting the creativity and talent of Sterling College’s student artists.

All productions will be held in Culbertson Auditorium on the Sterling College campus. All performances begin at 7:30 p.m. except for Sundays which are at 2 p.m. Tickets will be available online three weeks before each production as well as at the door before each performance.

Sterling College Theatre is dedicated to entertaining, educating and enriching the community through high-quality theatrical productions. Rooted in a Christian liberal arts tradition, the program fosters creativity, critical thinking and collaboration in an environment that inspires artistic and personal growth.

—WELLMAN ON STAGE—



ELLA WELLMAN, a 20-year-old singer-songwriter, and Sterling High School graduate, will be performing at the Kansas State Fair Monday. Wellman will present two free performances at the Lowen Corporation Stage at Lake Talbott at 2 and 4 p.m. She will also be performing the National Anthem on Friday, Sept. 12 at 7:30 p.m., right before Ludacris hits the grandstand stage.

—PREPPING FOR THE SEASON—



COACH LORI SMITH instructs her players before Friday night’s preview. Sports coverage for SHS begins this week with team previews on Page 6 and the Fall Sports Roundup in the B section.

SC to host Spiritual Emphasis Week, Sept. 8-12

Sterling College will host its annual Spiritual Emphasis Week Sept. 8-12, with a focus on “The Power of Your Story.” Throughout the week, students, faculty, and staff will participate in a series of gatherings designed to encourage spiritual reflection, community connection, and testimony sharing.

“As Christ-followers, we have experienced the transforming power of His grace that redeems us into new life in Christ. Every person who has come to saving faith in Christ carries a powerful testimony. We were once dead in our trespasses, but now we are

made new because of Christ. We each have stories and experiences of what God has done in our lives, and sharing your story can have a profound impact on the lives of others,” said Jose Carrillo, campus pastor.

The week will feature a chapel message on Wednesday from David Landis, a 1988 graduate of SC and superintendent of schools at Central Christian Academy in Wichita.

The college will also host two featured noon gatherings in the Cornerstone Room of the Student Union, each offering an opportunity to hear personal faith jour-

neys from various members of the campus community.

On Tuesday, attendees will hear testimonies from Dr. Shebuel Varghese, assistant professor of theology and ministry and others. Then on Thursday, the college will welcome testimony speakers Laurel Watney, director of Mabee Library, and others.

Sterling College encourages students, faculty, and staff to attend these sessions and engage with the theme of Spiritual Emphasis Week by reflecting on their own personal testimonies and the impact of their faith journey.

Sterling College hires new head cheer coach

Sterling College Vice President of Athletics Justin Morris has announced the appointment of Whitney Nightingale as the new head cheer coach. Nightingale will officially begin her role on Sept. 8.

“We are excited to welcome Coach Whitney Nightingale to Sterling College as our new Head Cheer Coach,” Morris said. “Her passion for campus spirit, her dedication to building a dynamic cheer culture and her commitment to competitive excellence make her an exceptional addition to our coaching staff. Whitney’s leadership will be pivotal in



NIGHTINGALE

shaping the future of Sterling Cheer, and we look forward to the energy and vision she’ll bring to our campus community.”

Prior to joining Sterling College, Nightingale served as the Graduate Assistant Coach of Cheer and Dance at York University, where she also completed

her master’s degree in sports administration in 2025. Her academic journey began at Bethany College, where she earned a Bachelor of Arts in Exercise Science with a minor in coaching, graduating in 2023. During her time at Bethany College, Nightingale demonstrated her

leadership skills as the cheer captain for two years. In addition to her collegiate experience, she has been a cheer instructor for the Universal Cheer Association.

Nightingale expressed her enthusiasm for her new role at Sterling College and is committed to developing the skill of each athlete along with supporting their faith journey.

“This season I am excited to build upon the existing positive culture and atmosphere that the cheer team has. I am excited to bring a new life and energy to game day and bring more crowd and student involvement throughout football and basketball season,” Nightingale said. “A main goal of mine for this season is to not only build the skills of each member on the team, but also to assist

them as they grow in their faith.”

Looking ahead, Nightingale is eager to explore opportunities for community involvement and enhance the game day spirit.

“I am excited to get started and see what possibilities are out there for community involvement. Increasing the involvement and spirit on game day is one of my goals as I step into this position,” she said.

Nightingale also extended her gratitude for support during the transition, noting, “I would also like to thank Jessica Siaz for her energy and assistance that she has given me as I step into this position. She has helped as I transition into the Head Coach position and will be an encouraging mentor as the year progresses.”

Seasons are changing. Service your system NOW!



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