

# EMPORIA GAZETTE WEEKEND

FRIDAY, JUNE 13, 2025

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PULITZER PRIZE-WINNING



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## A legacy on exhibit: the story of Rod Foster

*My trip into Rod Foster's home decked in music memorabilia revealed deep stories  
and a touching centerpiece to his journey in music.*

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The home of Rod Foster resembles a museum more than a place to live.

Walls, doorways, and floors are decked out with various music memorabilia. Some come directly from Rod himself: some of his drum sets, a collection of CDs and DVDs from his performances, and pictures of him and some of his very famous friends in the music industry. Some of the items are gifts, or things that Foster has brought back from his journeys around the world.

Foster has been drumming since 1968, transcending genres, locations, and band members. He's been nominated for a Grammy and received numerous awards. Throughout that entire journey, he has collected those pieces of memorabilia.

Through these items, you can see the linear story of Foster's life, his influences, his comrades, and his experiences.

### The snare drum of Hugo Chambers

Hugo Chambers, much like Foster himself, is a legendary name in the world of western swing music. Chambers was the primary drummer for Hank Thompson and His Brazos Valley Boys, churning out



AUSTIN HOAGLAND/GAZETTE

multiple wildly successful hits on the country music charts.

Chambers and Foster had a complicated relationship that dates all the way back to their time in Texas, where Foster got a lucky break filling in for Chambers one night for Bob Wills' Texas Playboys before being hired.

"They hired me, so Hugo didn't like me at all, and his wife de-

spised me. I didn't. I wasn't trying to take his job," said Foster.

It all culminated at the night of Foster's induction into the national chapter of the Western Swing Hall of Fame. Foster was asked to play with the all star band on that night, and not to bring his snare drum.

It turns out the snare that was set up was actually Chamber's snare, something that was practi-

cally sacred.

"No one plays his snare drum. No one's ever touched it," said Foster.

Chambers flatly refused Foster's request to play his drum. That didn't stop Foster from recognizing their friendship in his speech.

Please see **Foster**, Page 12

## THE 22ND ANNUAL EMPORIA GAZETTE'S READERS' CHOICE AWARDS ARE BACK ON FOR THE SUMMER



ARIEN ROMAN-ROJAS  
The Emporia Gazette

Starting now until June 30, readers are able to vote for their favorite businesses to show their love and support for the community.

Readers may vote once a day, until polls close, for all your local darlings from food and drink, to shopping to health and fitness.

Vote for businesses like your favorite antique shop, burger joint or even your favorite hair stylist. Help the Gazette showcase the businesses that make Emporia, Emporia.

Votes can be submitted at [bestofemporia.com](http://bestofemporia.com).

"We are so excited to bring the awards back this year," said Emporia Gazette publisher Chris Walker. "We know people enjoy them and it's a great way to support local businesses."

Those needing assistance can call the office at 620-342-4800.

Winners will be announced in a special, pullout section in The Emporia Gazette.

## CALIFORNIAN LEWIS AND CLARK MAKE THEIR WAY THROUGH KANSAS ON THEIR COAST-TO-COAST JOURNEY

BY ARIEN ROMAN ROJAS  
The Emporia Gazette

In the middle of Hays, Kansas, after walking more than 1,835 miles, two 20-year-olds from San Mateo, California, still have four months left of their journey of walking across the U.S.

Drew Diaz and Phillip Grele, two lifelong best friends who make up The LIVIN Project, are not ones to shy away from an adventure. Wanting to become the youngest duo to walk across America unassisted, they embarked on a seven-month journey of self-discovery and discipline three months ago.

"Since sixth grade we've been getting in trouble every single day. That led up all the way into college, almost every single day doing something together," Diaz said. "We were like 'you know what? Let's use this energy for something good.'"



COURTESY OF THE LIVIN PROJECT

**Drew Diaz and Phillip Grele, two best friends, are on a journey to walk across America.**

In an effort to raise \$50,000 for Convoy Of Hope, a humanitarian, faith-based organization which provides disaster relief and children's feeding initiatives among other other things, Diaz and Grele have been walking across America since March 1.

They flew from California to Delaware, where they started their journey, and have traveled across Maryland, West Virginia, Ohio, Indiana, Illinois and Missouri.

Please see **Walk**, Page 11

## Good Evening

Don't forget to cast  
your vote in the  
Readers' Choice  
Awards

## BOYS AND GIRLS CLUB OF SOUTH CENTRAL KANSAS GIVES USD 253 60 DAY NOTICE OF EMPORIA PROGRAM CLOSURE



AMANDA DAVIS/GAZETTE

BY AMANDA DAVIS  
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The Boys and Girls Club of South Central Kansas (BGCCK) announced Wednesday that they were permanently dropping Emporia after school programs for all USD 253 elementary students. The USD 253 Board of Education acknowledged the 60 day notice of closure during its regular school board meeting and contemplated the decision.

Dr. Allison Anderson-Harder, USD 253 Superintendent, described the pullout as a complete shock. BGCCK had discussed decreasing site numbers in March, but did not notify the school district of its program closure until late Tuesday afternoon.

"It takes months to plan for af-

ter school care," Anderson-Harder said. "We have six elementary schools. We have to get the staff. We have to get the leaders. There's lots of regulations we have to follow. It was a complete shock. We were really counting on the Boys and Girls Club and now we're very disappointed in them."

In a press release sent Wednesday night, Junnae Campbell, BGCCK CEO, claimed that the Emporia program was leaving due to a lack of funding and local community support. Campbell stated that due to changes in the funding, the projected community financial support would not have covered a third of the program costs - more than \$800,000 a year in total.

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