



Jefferson County LEADER

'Once a week but never weakly'



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County Eagle Scout builds display case for USS Arizona artifact

By Dylan White
For the Leader

A Jefferson County Eagle Scout has completed a project that will provide a lasting reminder of the people who lost their lives at Pearl Harbor during World War II.

Chase Hatch, 14, of Boy Scout Troop 419 in Arnold constructed a cabinet to display a piece of the USS Arizona, a battleship that sank during the Pearl Harbor attack on Dec. 7, 1941.

The cabinet will be installed in the POW/MIA Museum under development at Jefferson Barracks.

Chase, who lives in Arnold, said the primary reason he took on the project was to honor World War II veterans, especially those who served

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Sherree Faries Fite photos

Chase Hatch, right, completed an Eagle Scout project, a wood and Plexiglas cabinet, to house a piece of the USS Arizona.

County man lobbies MoDOT for another stoplight on Hwy. A

By Kevin Carbery
For the Leader

Jefferson County resident Austin Martin says he wants to see Hwy. A in southern Jefferson County made safer for all those who travel it.

That's why he developed an online petition to try to persuade the Missouri Department of Transportation to install a stoplight at the intersection of Hwy. A and Pioneer Road/Highland Baptist Church Road east of Hillsboro.

Pioneer Road is on the south side of the intersection and Highland Baptist Church Road is on the north side.

The petition drive follows a May 15 head-on collision near the intersection, where two people were killed and three children were seriously injured.

Martin, 28, who lives near the intersection, said he posted his petition on the change.org website on May 16, and in a short time it garnered nearly 1,000 signatures.

He forwarded the petition to MoDOT two days later.

His petition and related information may be found at change.org/Hillsborotrafficsignal.

Martin said people may still sign it. The petition also offers space for opinions.

"People have commented on (the site) talking about the fatalities," he said.

A MoDOT spokeswoman said the agency has received the petition and will

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State gas tax hike with rebates passes

By Steve Taylor
For the Leader

When the dust cleared after the Missouri House of Representatives' regular session ended on May 14, only 40 of the 1,559 bills that had been proposed were passed.

The legislation state Rep. Becky Ruth (R-Festus) proposed to phase in a gas tax increase, but with the chance to file for a rebate of the additional taxes paid, wasn't one of the bills that passed, but another one that put forth a similar idea was approved by both the House and Senate and is now on Gov. Mike Parson's desk awaiting a signature to become law.

"I would expect Gov. Parson to sign it, but you never know," Ruth said.

Her proposed bill for a gas tax increase was integrated into legislation sponsored by Dave Schatz (R-Sullivan), the Senate president pro tem, and his was the version that passed.

If Parson signs the bill into law, the first increase of 2.5 cents will take effect in October with additional 2.5-cent hikes each year for the next four years, for a total of 12.5 cents.

Missouri's gas tax of 17 cents per gallon is the second-lowest in the country (behind Alaska) and hasn't been raised since 1996.

Ruth shepherded Schatz's version through the House.

According to Schatz's bill, Missouri residents may file for a rebate with the Missouri Department of Revenue to

recover the additional gas taxes paid each year.

Ruth said because many residents would not file for the rebate, the new tax could generate as much as \$600 million a year — money that would be used to repair the state's road and bridge system.

"Also, 15 percent of the money will go to counties and another 15 percent to cities, so it will help everyone," Ruth said. "This will not just help urban areas. Jefferson County has a lot of rural roads, some of which are crumbling. This money will help to fix that."

"This is also a jobs bill," she said. "There will be probably a \$1.8 billion economic benefit to the state as a result

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Sherree Faries Fite photos

A relic of the USS Arizona, a battleship that sank during the Pearl Harbor attack on Dec. 7, 1941, will be displayed at the POW/MIA Museum under development at Jefferson Barracks. The display case was made by Eagle Scout Chase Hatch.



The Marine Corps League awards Chase Hatch the Good Citizenship Award, presented by Ed Biermann.

Eagle Scout: Piece of history to be displayed at POW/MIA Museum

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at Pearl Harbor.

"A big, important message I think this project entailed is that it's meant to recognize all of those men and women who died at Pearl Harbor."

Mike Hatch, Chase's father, said it was an honor to help his son with the project.

"It's been an incredible experience for my wife (Marie) and me, along with Chase. It was amazing; everyone was so easy to work with," Mike said. "It really was great for him because he worked with so many different people."

Chase was recognized at a Court of Honor ceremony on May 1 at Immaculate Conception Catholic Church in Arnold for earning the Eagle Scout rank, exactly three years after he moved up from Cub Scout to Scout.

To obtain the rank of Eagle Scout, the seventh and highest Boy Scout rank, a Scout must earn at least 21 merit badges, hold a position of leadership for at least six months and complete a community service project.

Chase said it took approximately two months to construct the cabinet, with help from other troop members. It measures 18 inches deep, 39 inches long and 24 inches tall, and it is made of mahogany and hickory with Plexiglas on four sides.

In addition to the nearly 80-year-old artifact from the battleship wreckage, the display case will house a professional model of the ship, a flag that once flew over the USS Arizona Memorial at Pearl Harbor and a sample of the oil and water mixture from the site, said Paul Dillon, president of the POW/MIA museum.

The relic will be exhibited in the USS Arizona room on the west side of the museum, in what used to be a living room in a building that once was an officer's quarters duplex.

No official opening date has been set for the museum, but it is tentatively set for early 2022, Dillon said.

The museum obtained the piece of the ship from an advisory board member with connections to the USS Arizona



Behind Ed Politte, master of ceremonies, are Petty Officer 1st Class Wayne Scott, left, who previously was stationed at Pearl Harbor, and Petty Officer 3rd Class Marissa Hunter. Scott and Hunter are Navy guards for the USS Arizona relic.

Association and the U.S. Navy, which were giving museums artifacts from the site, Dillon said.

Chase said he got the idea to build the display case from Jack Poitras of Barnhart, a POW/MIA museum board member, around Memorial Day in 2020.

Poitras was a longtime friend of Chase's late grandfather, Sgt. 1st Class Gary Adams Sr., who is buried in the National Cemetery at Jefferson Barracks.

"He (Poitras) was receiving this relic from the USS Arizona in Hawaii, so he asked if I would be interested in doing that for an Eagle Scout project."

Poitras, 73, who also was a member of Troop 419 and earned his Eagle Scout rank in 1963, said having Adams' grandson build the case for the museum was a natural choice.

"I don't think I could have picked a better person to do an Eagle Scout project because Chase, I've noticed, when I ask him to do some research and ask him questions about the USS Arizona ... it was amazing the way he follows up on things," said Poitras, who donated all the materials for the cabinet.

Chase's scoutmaster, Dave Dacus, who was stationed at Pearl Harbor from

1991-1993 on the USS Reuben James, said he is proud of Chase's project.

"I'm touched and honored, and I certainly feel the respect for this artifact," he said. "For Chase to be able to get this and to have my son (Andrew) help Chase build the case that's going to hold the artifact, it does have a special meaning to me and our family."

Poitras said the project also has special significance to him because he and Chase's grandfather used to take part in POW/MIA ceremonies together.

"I used to play the trumpet and bugle when (Chase's grandfather) would actually bring a Bible up and he'd bring things up to set on the table, and he'd talk about what everything was," Poitras said. "While he was carrying the Bible, I'd play 'Amazing Grace' and different things. Sometimes I'd do the national anthem, and at the very end of it I'd end playing taps."

Dillon said Chase's project has helped the museum with its goal to reach out to youth.

"I think it was a little bit of divine intervention, but it certainly gave the museum a shot in the arm as far as continuing the effort to reach out to the younger

folks," Dillon said.

The exhibit and the case will allow people to view an important piece of history without having to travel across the country, Dillon added.

"Having an actual piece of the USS Arizona here in Missouri, it would afford people here in the Midwest who may not have the opportunity to go to Hawaii to view the USS Arizona Memorial, but at least there would be a piece of that great battleship here, and they can view it and pay their respects that way," he said.

Chase said the only difficulty he had during the project was the coronavirus pandemic.

"COVID was definitely a snag. At one of the sessions where we were building part of it, one of the volunteers tested positive for COVID," Chase said. "He got the call when he was there, so we all had to leave and quarantine."

Chase is an eighth-grader at Seckman Middle School but will attend St. Louis University High School in the fall.

He also is his Scout troop's senior patrol leader, the highest youth position elected by the majority of the troop. He has earned 109 of the possible 137 Boy Scout badges and said he intends to earn all of them.

Mike, 53, said it is a lofty goal and shows his son's determination.

"It's funny because some of the ones in his troop are 17 or so and trying to get it (the Eagle rank) under the wire, and he just jumped right on it to get to this rank as soon as he could with as many badges as he could," Mike said. "He's still working on those; he really wants to get all of them. That's a tough goal but a good goal for him."

Chase said he, too, is proud of his Eagle Scout project, which he will be able to show his family in the future.

"It's really cool because if I have children, I could bring them over to the museum and say, 'This is what I did for my Eagle project,' and it would still be there," he said. "If you build a wood bench, wood's going to deteriorate over time if it's not kept inside, but this will be in a museum."