

'Poppins' practically perfect

By RICK DANLEY The Iola Register

If Wednesday's dress rehearsal is any indication, the Iola Community Theatre is prepared to deliver one of the finest productions in years.

ICT's staging of "Mary Poppins" benefits not only from a rich cast of actors, dancers, and singers, but from professional-grade stagecraft, including a rigging system that hoists the umbrella-gripping nanny up into the rafters when stage direction requires her to take flight.

"Mary Poppins" debuts Friday night at the Bowlus Fine Arts Center. Tickets are on sale at Sophisticated Rose or at the Center's doors before performances.

The familiar musical tells the story of an enchanting nanny who enters the stiff Edwardian-era household of Mr. and Mrs. Banks and their two children after the sudden departure of the family's previous governess.

Sabra Aguirre brings her impeccable voice to the title role, and is flawless as the unflappable nanny. Jim Stukey, with his mobile face and pitch-perfect Cockney drawl, casts a comic charm across the two-act show in his role as Bert, the bighearted part-time chimney sweep. It's worth the cost of a ticket (\$15 for adults, \$8 for kids) for their performances alone.



Above, Jim Stukey and Sabra Aguirre rehearse a scene in advance of the lola Community Theatre production of "Mary Poppins," which runs Friday and Saturday evenings and Sunday afternoon at the Bowlus Fine Arts Center. Also in the photo are child actors Everett Glaze and Cali Riley. At right, Bryan Johnson sings a tune. In back is Jim Gilpin. REGISTER/RICK DANLEY



voice is one of the highlights of the show. Susan Raines is memorable



And Everett Glaze and Cali Riley, who are on the stage a majority of the night, are unfairly good as the two Banks children, Jane and Michael.

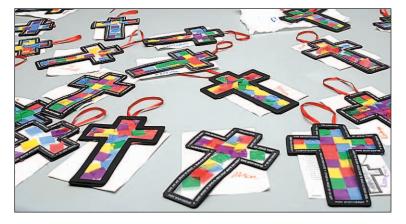
The emotional arc of the musical depends on Mr. Banks' transformation from a humorless, distant, careerminded head of household into — after Poppins knocks the scales from his eyes — a tender and loving father.

Jim Gilpin, a sunny bank president in real life, plays the dour banker in "Mary Poppins." Gilpin manages Friday-Sunday Bowlus Fine Arts Center

Mr. Banks' awakening with ease, accumulating a couple of moving solos along the way. Mrs. Banks is played by Kristina Palmer, whose crystalline as the terrifying replacement nanny — the anti-Poppins, Miss Andrew. Andrew ladles cod liver oil down the gullets of her charges, where earlier in the show Poppins, famously, provided a spoonful of something nicer. Raines stalks the stage, snapping orders at the kids, flashing her teeth and casting wild-eyed stares at anyone who crosses her path.

The musical face-off between the two nannies, the infernal Miss Andrew and the

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Joint church service Sunday

Iola's three United Methodist Churches will have a joint community service Sunday.

Members of Wesley, Calvary and Trinity United Methodist Churches will meet at 10 a.m. Sunday at Iola's Riverside Park for "Keeping It Real: Jesus in Me, Jesus in Family, Jesus in the Community." "This is a great opportu-

nity for members and non-

members to get together and

meet our new pastors," said Mary LaCrone, one of the event's organizers. "We want to make this a huge event."

Among the service's topics will be how to turn to Jesus in times of struggle, particularly for those dealing with poverty, unemployment or those unable to find suitable housing. They'll also speak

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Senator may consider Medicaid expansion

TOPEKA, Kan. (AP) - AKansas Senate leader has indicated Republicans may consider looking at a form of Medicaid expansion under the Affordable Care Act amid the looming closure of a hospital in southeast Kansas.

Mercy Hospital in Independence announced last week that it was closing its doors Oct. 10, and cited several factors in its decision, including declining reimbursement rates from Medicare, the program that provides health care for older residents.

"I've never been amenable to just an expansion of the Affordable Care Act," Senate Vice President Jeff King, who is from Independence, said Tuesday. "But as we look at states like Indiana that take a real state-centric As we look at states like Indiana that take a real state-centric approach to addressing the health care needs of their poor, I think that's something that Kansas needs to strongly consider.

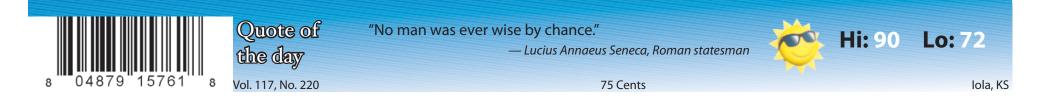


- Sen. Jeff King, R-Independence

approach to addressing the health care needs of their poor, I think that's something that Kansas needs to strongly consider."

At least 30 states have implemented some kind of Medicaid expansion plan. But other states, including Kansas, have chosen not to expand Medicaid, causing many hospitals to suffer. The only Medicaid expansion bills introduced in the Kansas Legislature have been in the House, which has refused to allow debates or votes, the Lawrence Journal-World reported.

Lower reimbursement rates were one of the key financing provisions of the See SENATOR | Page A5



Report: Poverty persists, but more have health care

By DON LEY **Tribune News Service**

WASHINGTON (TNS) A steadily growing job market and higher minimum-wage laws in pockets of the country failed to reduce the nation's poverty rate last year or reverse the longrunning trend of stagnating incomes for most American households.

The Census Bureau's annual figures on income and poverty, released Wednesday, came as a disappointing surprise to experts.

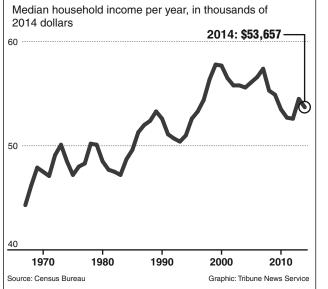
Many analysts had expected that the improving economy would reduce the poverty level for a second straight year. But the share of people in the U.S. living in poverty was 14.8 percent last year, essentially unchanged from 2013.

Most Americans, meanwhile, did not make up incomes lost during the Great Recession, despite an acceleration of job growth last year. The median income — or the point at which half the households make more and half less — was \$53,700 last year, not statistically different from the previous year and down 6.5 percent from 2007 on an inflation-adjusted basis.

More encouraging, however, was a related report from the bureau on another indicator of economic well-being: The number of Americans without health insurance fell sharply last year.

Thanks mostly to the first full-year effect of the Affordable Care Act, also known as Obamacare, the percentage of

Median income



people without medical coverage fell to 10.4 percent from 13.3 percent the previous year. That represents a drop of 8.8 million, to 33 million people who were uninsured for part or all of last year.

pected. Earlier surveys suggested a big increase in health plan enrollment as states expanded Medicaid and millions of Americans signed up for private insurance through new marketplaces created by Obamacare. Every state, racial group and age of individuals saw a decline in the uninsured rate, the Census Bureau said.

Proponents held up the new report as proof of the health program's success, despite the bungled launch of the marketplaces and persistent opposition to Obamacare from Republican lawmakers.

The decrease in the uninsured was "historic," said Ron Pollack, executive director of the consumer group

Churches: Service

Families USA.

A decline was ex-

"The numbers show that the greatest gains were among moderate income families, communities of color and young people — the precise groups that most needed help in gaining health insurance," Pollack said.

Uninsured rates were considerably higher in Texas, Florida and some

other states in the South a three-decade high of that have resisted Medicaid expansions. California's uninsured percentage remains higher than the national rate, attributed in part to its large immigrant population, including undocumented immigrants.

Still, analysts expect the nation's overall share of the uninsured to drop further as more people become familiar with the mandate and the federal and state marketplaces.

"The numbers in 2015 will be better than in 2014, and better still in 2016," said Henry Aaron, a senior fellow at the Brookings Institution.

The Census Bureau's tally of the poor showed that 46.7 million people, a record high, were living in poverty last year. The poverty line was \$24,008 for a household of two adults and two children, and it was \$12,316 for a person under 65 living alone.

The overall 14.8 percent level was close to

15.1 percent. The 30-year low was 11.3 percent in the year 2000.

The relatively high poverty rate reflects the way companies have turned more to part-time and other arrangements that have reduced labor's share of the economic fruits, said Sheldon Danziger, president of the Russell Sage Foundation, which supports research on poverty and other social issues.

"There are a lot of practices that have come in — some aided by technologies — that have allowed employers to cut back on their wage costs," Danziger said.

Poverty levels held steady for most groups, but one exception was the better-educated. The poverty rate for those with at least a college degree rose to 5 percent last year from 4.4 percent in 2013, an increase that analysts speculated could stem partly from the employment struggles of recent graduates entering a tough job market.

The Census Bureau's supplemental measure of poverty, which includes noncash income such as food stamps and income tax credits, showed a 0.5 percentage point decline in the poverty rate from 2013 to 2014.

During the slow recovery of recent years, more young adults moved back in or stayed longer than usual in their parents' house. "Maybe they're popping out of their parents' basement," said William Frey, a Brookings demographer, offering a possible explanation of the growth in the nontraditional household.

So far this year, there's been little indication of an acceleration in wages for the average worker, though economists expect employers to raise workers' pay as they find it harder to fill openings with the lower unemployment rate. which fell to 5.1 percent in August.

'Poppins': A fun show for the family

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cool Mary Poppins is another highlight.

Raines, as the Bird Lady, also performs an affecting version of "Feed the Birds."

Even the night's one malfunction seemed suffused with the charm that characterized the rest of the show: During a number near the end, while a line of chimney sweeps pranced at the front of the stage, the flying wires, meant to lift Bert into the air. snagged, winching the chimney sweep about four feet off the stage and tipping the actor upside down. Stukey dangled this way for a few long seconds — whimpering, still in a Cock-



Jim Stukey, Burlington, is Bert in the Iola Community Theatre production of "Mary Poppins," which runs Friday through Sunday at the Bowlus Fine Arts Center. **REGISTER/RICK DANLEY**

of worry, sidled over to the helpless Stukey as he struggled to untangle his trousers from around his shins. Still in song, Poppins opened her umbrella, using it as a screen, so that the chimney sweep, with the aid of a couple of stagehands who rushed in from the wings, could wriggle back into his clothes and stick the song's final chorus.

The show's musical director is Jan Knewtson, its choreographer is Chelsea Lea, and its director — who, in ICT's 50th anniversary year, has pulled off a coup with this production is Richard Spencer. The show will run at 7:30 p.m. on Friday and Saturday and at 2 p.m. on Sunday.

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family bonding in today's fast-paced society.

The churches are asking all attendees to bring a non-perishable food item, which in turn will be donated to the Iola Community Pantry.

Items such as macaroni and cheese, peanut butter and Hamburger Helper are in particularly short supply, added Saundra Upshaw.

The Revs. Jocelyn Tupper and Ed Flener. who pastor at the three churches, will lead the service.

In addition, a combined choir of all three

churches will perform, as will a praise band.

Attendees also are asked to bring lawn chairs.

A meal will follow the service, in which participants are encouraged to introduce themselves and visit with the new pastors, LaCrone said.

About the only uncertainty is the weather.

"If it's raining, we may have to move everything to Wesley," LaCrone said. "Rain is a four-letter word that day. We're going to pray for clear skies. We'll still be at the park, however, if it's not raining, even

if the ground is wet."

ney accent if that's possible, "Ooh, ooh. Uh-oh" — before sliding out of his pants and onto the

stage floor.

The moment, though, belonged to Aguirre, who, without a tremor

King: Possible Medicaid expansion

Continued from A1

Affordable Care Act and were supposed to be offset by the expansion of Medicaid, which helps low-income people, seniors and disabled individuals.

The closure of Mercy Hospital's facility in Independence likely will be the first of several in Tom Bell, president and CEO of the Kansas Hospital Association.

"Every hospital in every community right now is having a discussion about the future: 'What's our facility going to look like going forward?' and plugging in the additional reve-

the state, according to nue (from Medicaid expansion) is part of the process," Bell said.

An expansion of Medicare would've meant an additional \$1.5 million annually for Mercy Hospital, he said.

Kansas' Medicaid program, KanCare, covers about 424,000 residents.

Rep. Tom Sloan, a Republican from Lawrence, said the Senate may have to act before the House would consider a bill.

"Senate leadership is important because they are perceived as being more closely tied to the governor," he said.



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