

Oshkosh Northwestern

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COURT MAY SEE NEW LIFE

The old Green Lake courthouse could become a facility for arts and education. **Page A3**



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COVER STORY: MISS OSHKOSH



The 2012 reigning Miss Oshkosh Samantha Philip, right, sings harmony with Rebecca Simpson Friday while Lindsay Floyd plays the bass guitar. A graduate of Valley Christian High School, Philip often visits the worship class. PHOTOS BY JOE SIENKIEWICZ/OF THE NORTHWESTERN

INSIDE



THE SPARTANS FALL TO THE GENERALS

The Oshkosh North boys fall short of a win in a state tournament game against Milwaukee King Friday night, 59-40. >>PAGE B1

Hotel owners to run center

Will assume food, beverage services

By Jeff Bollier of The Northwestern

The new owners of the former City Center Hotel will take over management and operation of the Oshkosh Convention Center on May 14.

The Oshkosh Convention and Visitors Bureau board voted Wednesday morning to notify the city of its plans to terminate the management contract for the convention center in 60 days, at which time the group led by Rich Batley, John Pfefferle and the University of Wisconsin-Oshkosh Foundation will take over. The group will also assume food and beverage service responsibilities at that time, ending the Supple Restaurant Group's three-plus year tenure in the convention center.

Batley said he expected to have key staff members in place to begin marketing and selling the convention center by mid-May. He said the early assumption of convention center operations would help the partners slowly ramp up operations at the hotel complex.

"It helps provide a smoother transition," Batley said. "We hope to have our (sales, catering and event management) people all in place so they can hit the

CENTER, Page A8

Showing support

Hopes to aid those going through adoption process

By Samantha Strong of The Northwestern

Oshkosh is a home away from home for Samantha Philip, winner of the 2012 Miss Oshkosh scholarship competition.

Philip, 19, competed against 11 other women on March 3 at Alberta Kimball Auditorium. The contestants were scored by five judges from throughout the state in lifestyle and fitness, poise and elegance, personal interview and talent categories. Philip was the winner of the title, crown and scholarship of almost \$3,000.

"There were girls who have had experience with pageants before, so to actually win and be like, 'This is my first time,' was kind of weird, but it was awesome," Philip said.

George Philip, Samantha's dad, said this was his first pageant experience as well, and went into it not

ONLINE

Find more photos and video footage of Miss Oshkosh at www.thenorthwestern.com.

knowing what it would be like.

"When her name was announced, I was more excited than I expected I would be," George said. "It had a big impact and it is quite an achievement for her."

Philip's platform is adoption awareness and education, which is an issue near and dear to her heart. Although Philip has lived in Oshkosh for the majority of her life, she was not born in the United States. She was born in India, but moved here when she was adopted as a baby by

PHILIP, Page A8



Miss Oshkosh Samantha Philip says she has always loved being in front of a crowd, especially with the worship team at Valley Christian High School.

Vandals leave destruction at Calvary

By Patricia Wolff of The Northwestern

Vandals made destructive forays into Calvary Cemetery on Algoma Boulevard twice in the past two weeks, where they knocked down grave markers, threw wreaths around and smashed statues and permanent planters.

"They entered at the northeast section and moved west, it looks like," said Randy Wertz, in

charge of cemetery maintenance for Oshkosh Catholic Cemeteries.

ONLINE

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Thousands of dollars in damage was done, according to Oshkosh Crime Prevention Officer Joe Nichols.

Anyone with information is asked to contact Oshkosh police at (920) 236-5700 or Crime Stoppers at (920) 231-8477.

It is difficult to estimate the dollar amount damage, said Tom Donovan, administrator

DAMAGE, Page A8



Vandals struck Calvary Cemetery on Algoma Boulevard two times in the past two weeks, where they caused thousands of dollars in damage by smashing statues and knocking over grave markers. SUBMITTED PHOTO



50¢ Retail For home delivery pricing, A2

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Philip

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her parents, George and Mary Philip, who are also from India.

"It doesn't bother me at all that I'm adopted," Philip said. "It's actually only since I've been asked questions about it that I'm even thinking about it."

Philip said she travels to India quite frequently, almost every other year, to see her extended adopted family. She hopes to travel back some day and work with orphanages in India.

"Right from the beginning, we've visited every other year," George said. "We thought it was important for her to grow up knowing where she came

from and meet her cousins, grandma and other family. We wanted her to see where she was from and what India is actually like and the conditions there."

Philip said she had never met her biological family, but it is not out of the realm of possibility.

"My situation is a little unique, though, because they will be in India most likely and probably won't speak English, so it'll be a little different, but it's something I do want to look into," Philip said.

Philip said it was crucial for anyone who may be looking for their biological parents to have good timing, and to have other family to fall back on in case something doesn't go as expected.

Philip is a junior at the University of Wisconsin-Oshkosh with an undeclared major.

She does, however, have musical aspirations. She said she hoped to use the scholarship money from the pageant to go toward training that would help her get accepted into a performing arts school.

"When it comes to things like fine arts competitions, I always jump at opportunities," Philip said. "It's what I really love and it's what I'm passionate about."

Philip said she had always loved being in front of a crowd, especially with the worship team at her high school, Valley Christian School. She attributes her confidence and poise on stage and in the Miss

AT A GLANCE

SAMANTHA PHILIP:

- » **Name, age:** Samantha Philip, 19
- » **Birthdate:** March 24
- » **Platform:** Adoption awareness and education
- » **Talent:** Singing "How Great Thou Art"
- » **Pets:** Cat named Jack
- » **School:** Attended Valley Christian High School. Sophomore at UW-O, undeclared major but looking into music, psychology with hopes of being a counselor or criminal justice with hopes of being a lawyer.
- » **Favorite food:** Potatoes in any form
- » **Hobbies:** singing, playing piano, acting, playing volleyball and tennis.
- » **Interesting facts:** Someone told her she was too short to win the pageant. She has a love for cars and hates feet. She works at Bath & Body Works in the Outlet Shoppes.

Oshkosh scholarship competition to those past opportunities. For the talent portion of the competition, Philips sang Carrie Under-

wood's arrangement of "How Great Thou Art."

"I've always wanted to sing, but once you get into high school, people start

telling you that's not very realistic, you can't get a good job in that, so I kind of backed away from it, but I do still have those aspirations," she said.

As Miss Oshkosh, Philip said she's most excited about being able to support those who may have had rough experiences dealing with their adoption, and adults who don't know much about adoption.

"If I could tell people one thing, it would be that I want people to know I'm passionate about my platform," Philip said. "I have something I really want to tell you and I really want you to know about, so I'm going to do all I can to spread the message I have."

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Center

Continued from Page A1

ground running."

Batley said the new operators would honor all existing contracts for use of the convention center. Oshkosh CVB Executive Director Wendy Hielsberg said the bureau would pass along deposits for those events to the new operators when they take over.

The city's tourism marketing and promotional organization took on convention center operations for the city in 2009 at a time when the convention center was under renovation and the City Center Hotel was owned by a bank, as a result of the previous owner's bankruptcy. At the

time, the CVB's board pledged to operate the center for up to two years, with the expectation that its operation of the center would end with the sale of the hotel to new owners.

However, the agreement was extended because Nashco Hospitality Group, which bought City Center from the bank, showed little interest in operating the convention center.

Oshkosh CVB Executive Director Wendy Hielsberg said the bureau would work to facilitate a smooth transition between her organization and the hotel's new owners.

The board also resolved two outstanding issues surrounding its investment in the center, following a \$3 million renovation funded by the city and Oshkosh

Area Community Foundation in 2008 and 2009.

The CVB invested more than \$70,000 in marketing, software, equipment and operations at the convention center after it took over management responsibilities in February 2009. Hielsberg said convention center operations have allowed the CVB to recoup all but \$13,000 of its initial investment. She said the CVB would reimburse itself the remaining \$13,000 from the convention center's surplus operating funds before the transition occurs.

The board also agreed to make a donation of the \$22,000 it spent on dishes, glassware and silverware in February 2009.

"We're foregoing repayment on that money,"

Hielsberg said. "The city paid for the tables, chairs and other equipment, so we're going to donate the dishes to the city, too."

Hielsberg said the convention center always turned a profit, though it was not as much as she expected. She said a final accounting of the convention center operation's financial performance would not be completed until after the transition to Batley and the new owners takes place.

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Damage

Continued from Page A1

for Oshkosh Catholic Cemeteries, and even more difficult to determine who should pay for repairs. Gravestones are considered private property and are generally covered by homeowners insurance.

"If family members are dead or have moved out of the area, it is difficult. We will repair out of our budget. We won't just leave it," Donovan said.

Six gravestones were tipped over in the first vandalism incident and twice that many the second time, Nichols said.

Wertz pointed out the extent of damage on a short tour of the grounds Wednesday. He had raked a small pile of statue shards to the end of one row of gravestones. All that remained intact of an angel was the head, a wan smile on its beatific face. She could not be fixed, he said.

Luckily, much of the damage in the two incidents reported to police Tuesday and the last weekend in February could be fixed, Wertz said.

He pieced the angels, cherubs and Blessed Mother figures back together and painted them with epoxy paint, he said.


G. Reinke & Co., donated its expertise to repair the stones that were knocked over.

Cemetery workers used a plat map to return markers of veterans' graves back to their proper places.

Wertz, who has been working at Calvary and the Catholic cemetery in Riverside Cemetery for more than a year, said the vandalism is disheartening.

"It's frustrating the lack of respect a small portion of our youth has for our property. If someone comes to pay their respects and comes across vandalism, they leave with an empty feeling," Wertz said.

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Outside of the office I enjoy playing tennis, spending time with my family, traveling and scuba diving.

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