Metro Guide Look inside for our handy guide to the Omaha community.

Sunday World-Herald

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ALYSSA SCHUKAR/THE WORLD-HERALD

The wild horse race is always guaranteed to kick up some dust at Nebraska's Big Rodeo, which has been around since 1921. A board of volunteers works on the event just about year-round, said Lee Jeffres, board president.

Burwell always rises to the occasion

Months of planning and a crew of dedicated volunteers help the town pull off Nebraska's Big Rodeo each year

BY JOE DUGGAN WORLD-HERALD STAFF WRITER

BURWELL, Neb. — The sun sets over the Sand Hills as a cowboy slips off his horse and onto the horns of a runaway steer, raising dust in the arena and applause in the stands.

Gerald Burns, one of several thousand fans who have made their way to Burwell for Nebraska's Big Rodeo, watches the action from under the brim of a cowboy hat. It's a view the retired school administrator from Atkinson has experienced for nearly all of his 70 summers.

His grandparents first brought him to the Burwell rodeo long before he could hook a boot into a stirrup. On this recent night, he and his wife, Sally, have brought a pair of grandchildren along.

For Burns and many others like him, the Burwell rodeo is as much about family tradition as riding, roping and rhinestones. There's never a discussion about whether they're going to attend.

"I can't remember when I missed it," he said.

In Nebraska, rodeos are as commonplace as sweet corn stands. They take place in small corrals where youngsters hone their skills as well as in urban arenas with all the glitz and volume of a Toby Keith concert.

In Burwell, putting on the rodeo requires months of planning and help from dozens of volunteers. The July 24-27 event drew about 10,000 spectators and 425 competitors to the

See Rodeo: Page 10

Rodeo board member Mike Burnham shares a saddle with Jessa Reinwald, 3, during a Grand Entry at this year's Big Rodeo. Burwell residents work tirelessly to ensure that their annual event goes off without a hitch. It's a communal point of pride, handed down from generation to generation.

MORE ON OMAHA.COM

» Photographer Alyssa Schukar shares more photos and video from Nebraska's Big Rodeo, five years after her first assignment there. **Omaha.com/viewfinder**

» What's it like to ride in the wild horse race? Burwell native Dallas McCarville straps on a camera to show us how it's done.

Born poor, Omahan made it big, but things didn't end there

MATTHEW HANSEN

COLUMNIST

If having it all means owning a zebra from Africa, a herd of rare deer from New Zealand and a camel named Bumpy, then John Lee Hoich had it all.

Hoich walked into his accountant's office on the day after Halloween 2009 knowing he reigned as one of Omaha's richest men.

He had come from nothing — from something worse than nothing — and, from the shards of a broken childhood, had built two successful companies and a west Omaha commercial real estate empire.

To grasp the odds of this, understand that according to a groundbreaking new study, only 8.6 percent of Omahans born and raised in the bottom fifth of income will climb into the top fifth of earners.

That's actually better than the U.S. average, and ahead of cities as varied as Houston (8.4 percent), Buffalo (7.3), Kansas City (6.9) and Chicago (6.1) — but it's way behind European countries like Denmark, where nearly 20 percent of children born in the bottom fifth will move to the top fifth of that country's earners.

Put another way, only one in a dozen poor Omahans will ever become rich. One in a dozen poor Omahans will actually pull off the sexiest part of the American Dream.

John Hoich had done that and much, much more.

He and his family lived in the biggest home in their southwest Omaha neighborhood, a 10,000-square-foot behemoth that

See Hansen: Page 2

INSIDE

Who's the biggest trash talker or eater on NU team? Players tell all

Our Fall Camp Preview has the positions and storylines to watch this season — with a special word from the players. **Sports**

Congress' to-do list is certainly not getting any shorter

As senators and representatives begin their August recess, we review the work that remains incomplete. **Page 13A**

Omaha weather

Today's forecast

High: 79

Low: 67

Full report: 8B

Index

Celebrations..... **6E**
Jobs listings.....**5-9D**
Obituaries..... **5B**
Opinion .....**6&7B**
Puzzles..... **5E**
TV **8E**

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ONLY IN THE WORLD-HERALD

Kansas budget busting a lesson to tax cutters

The Sunflower State "just left a hole" by failing to offset lost revenue when it embraced tax-cut plan.

By Paul Hammel
WORLD-HERALD BUREAU

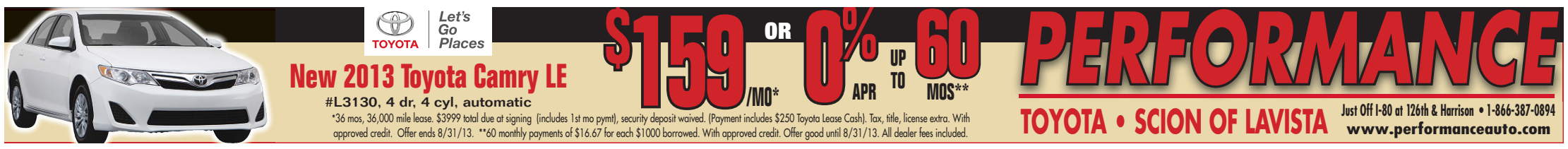
LINCOLN — A conservative Republican governor pushes an ambitious plan to eliminate state income taxes and join the states, such as Texas and Alaska, that don't levy that tax.

His argument is that it would put more dollars in the hands of business owners, who, in turn, would increase investment and create jobs. Everyone wins.

Sound familiar?

That scenario could describe Nebraska's Dave Heineman, but it also describes Kansas Gov. Sam Brownback, who a year ago won passage of an aggressive and controversial tax cut plan.

But the Kansas "experiment," as some call it, should provide a warning to tax reformers in the Cornhusker State, according to some lawmakers and tax authorities.

In Kansas, lawmakers left

See Taxes: Page 4