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KANSAS CITY AREA

Travel purchase

Short's Travel of Overland Park has acquired a North Kansas City travel agency, **Executive Travel**. Executive's 20 full-time employees all have been offered positions with Short's Travel.



FILE PHOTO

The terms of the deal were not disclosed, other than that the sale was for all of Executive Travel's assets, including property, equipment, contracts and leases.

AmerenUE is asking the Missouri Public Service Commission for an overall average electric rate increase of 17.7 percent, which would be effective in June 2007.

Short's Travel is one of the biggest travel agencies in the country, with offices and branches in Kansas, Missouri, Iowa and Illinois. The firm originated in Waterloo, Iowa, and established its local presence with the 2001 purchase of **Passport Travel**.

Blue bound

Lew Ebert, chief executive officer of the **Kansas Chamber of Commerce**, is leaving to accept the top post at North Carolina's business association. His last day at the Kansas chamber in Topeka will be Aug. 11. He begins Aug. 21 as president and CEO of the **North Carolina Citizens for Business and Industry**.

During his tenure of three-plus years at the Kansas chamber, Ebert boosted statewide membership to 10,000 employers and doubled the association's income. Bill Thornton, a vice president at **MGP Ingredients** and chairman of the Kansas chamber, said the organization would launch a nationwide search for a new CEO.

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Rate request

AmerenUE on Friday asked the **Missouri Public Service Commission** to approve increases in rates for both electricity and natural gas. The utility has 1.2 million electric customers and 125,000 natural gas customers in eastern Missouri.

Under the proposals, residents would pay up to 10 percent more for electricity. Customers would pay 18.3 percent more for delivery of natural gas. Because delivery costs are only part of a customer's natural gas bill, the average overall residential natural gas bill would increase 7.6 percent.

Call center reopens

A fast-growing Internet phone company, **SunRocket**, is reopening a Springfield call center closed by another phone company in April. It plans to hire 500 workers by year's end, more jobs than were lost when the center was shuttered, officials said.

SunRocket, based in Virginia, said it would open its first U.S. customer call center in the former **MCI** building in August. MCI, acquired by **Verizon** this year, said in April that it would close the Springfield call center, costing 400 jobs.

| *Randolph Heaster, rheaster@kcstar.com | Randolph Heaster, rheaster@kcstar.com | The Associated Press | The Star*



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