

**LET'S
FLY**

New KCI airport terminal to open Feb. 28, Page 6A



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After 41 years, they found her

In Dallas last weekend, Bob Hopkins and Bob Whisnant finally met the baby they found abandoned in the snow in Kansas City.



'Hope you find her'
See the video of Bob Hopkins asking for help finding the baby left on a doorstep.

qr.getne.ws/20o4F7



On a mission
For years, Bob Hopkins has been trying to find the baby he'd discovered on a snowy day in Kansas City.

qr.getne.ws/53vylI

BOB BOOTH Special to The Star



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'Let me tell you a story'



BOB BOOTH Special to The Star

Shawntel Anderson and Bob Hopkins embrace Saturday in Dallas as Bob Whisnant looks on. Hopkins and Whisnant found Anderson abandoned in Kansas City in 1982 when she was about 8 months old.

For years, Bob Hopkins has told students about finding a baby abandoned in the snow. This year, it finally had the happy ending he'd been looking for.

BY JUDY L. THOMAS
jthomas@kstar.com

For more than four decades, Bob Hopkins hasn't been able to put the memory of that frigid Kansas City day to rest.

The day he and his partner arrived to plow the driveway of a Central Hyde Park house after a January 1982 snowstorm and found a baby girl bundled up and abandoned on the back steps.

Police named the child Baby Jane Doe, and she was placed in foster care while authorities tried to determine her identity.

Even after the men later moved to Dallas, they continued to wonder what happened to the snow baby. Hopkins started teaching communications classes at colleges in the Dallas area in 2008, and each semester would tell his students the story.

"I'm going to find the baby," he would say. Year after year, he made that pledge.

Last month, on the first day of classes for the spring semester, Hopkins — now 79 — recounted the story again.

"I said, 'This is a speech class. I want you all to be able to tell stories. So let me tell you a story.' I ended up by saying, 'And by the way, this semester, I'm going to find my baby.'"

Just after noon the next day, Hopkins got a call.

"And it was a name I didn't recognize — Javon, from Kansas City. And he said, 'I'm calling because you found a baby in the snow. I have your baby.' And I said, 'What are you talking about?' And he said, 'My sister.' I said, 'Where's the baby?'"

"And he said, 'She's right here. Let me get her.'"

A FRIGID DAY IN KANSAS CITY

On Jan. 4, 1982, Kansas City had just seen

SEE SNOW BABY, 4A



BOB BOOTH Special to The Star

Bob Hopkins shows a photo of Shawntel Anderson around age 1, which he said is the oldest photo Anderson remembers having of herself. Hopkins and his partner Bob Whisnant found Anderson when she was about 8 months old on the back porch of a home after a snowstorm in Kansas City in 1982. They met Saturday in Dallas.

“
AND HERE IS THIS BEAUTIFUL, WARM, LITTLE BLACK GIRL WITH GREAT BIG EYES JUST LOOKING AT ME. I REMEMBER HER LIKE IT HAPPENED YESTERDAY. THEY SAID THAT IN A COUPLE MORE HOURS, SHE WOULD HAVE BEEN FROZEN.”

Bob Hopkins



BOB BOOTH Special to The Star

Shawntel Anderson and Bob Hopkins meet Saturday in Dallas, more than 40 years after Hopkins found Anderson when she was about 8 months old and abandoned at a Kansas City house.

FROM PAGE 3A

SNOW BABY

the biggest snowfall of the season. The timing was perfect for Hopkins. He'd bought a new snowplow to go on the front of his red Jeep and planned to use it to make some extra money over the winter.

His first customers were James and Gloria Cooper, who lived in a stately brick house just outside Janssen Place, a neighborhood dotted with historic mansions. Around noon, as he and Bob Whisnant started pulling into the driveway behind the house at 3538 Cherry St., Whisnant told Hopkins to stop. Something was moving in what looked like a box on the back steps.

Hopkins got out of the Jeep, walked up to the box and pulled back a yellow blanket. "And here is this beautiful, warm, little Black girl with great big eyes just looking at me."

"I remember her like it happened yesterday," Hopkins told The Star last week. "They said that in a couple more hours, she would have been frozen."

Weather records show it was 19 degrees at noon that day, with a wind chill of 10 degrees. A few hours earlier, the wind chill was 2 below zero.

The infant had been stowed in a carrier, dressed in a green snowsuit and wrapped in a blanket, a pink ribbon wound through her dark hair. She had no identification — only a note attached to a ribbon placed loosely around her neck.

The note said that the child could no longer be cared for and that the person who wrote it had been looking for someone to take her in. There was no signature.

Kansas City police arrived and turned the baby over to the Missouri Division of Family Services. The Kansas City Times ran a story two days later with the headline, "Bundled infant abandoned on doorstep," saying police were searching for the baby's parents.

That wintry day was the last time Hopkins and Whisnant saw the baby, who was estimated to be eight months old. The men moved to Texas in the mid-'80s. But they never stopped thinking about Baby Jane Doe.

In 2018, The Star published a story about Hopkins' quest to locate her.

"I'd love to find her and to have a reunion," he said. "It would be a dream come true for me to know that she is alive and well."

AN ADOPTIVE FAMILY

For the little girl, who now goes by the name Shawntel Anderson, the details of her early life remained just as much a mystery as that snowy day.

She was about 9 years old when her mother told her she was adopted. She started living with the family when she was nearly a year old, she said, but the adoption wasn't finalized until she was about 2.

"Nobody knew my date of birth," she told The Star last week. "So at least for the first and second year I didn't get to celebrate my birthday, because they didn't have the information."

But at some point, she said, someone — they don't know who — called authorities and gave them her name and date of birth.

"They told them that the little girl whose parents you are looking for, this is her information," Anderson said. "My adoptive



Submitted

Shawntel Anderson as a little girl, known then as Tyra Ryan.

mom remembers having to take me to the police station to run fingerprints. And that's when they came back and said, 'Yeah, that's her.'" But Anderson said her family was never given her birth mother's name.

She said her adoptive parents "have always supported me with finding my biological parents."

"They've always been open," she said. "Any question I had, they always answered." And when she got older and started trying to learn more, she said, "My (adoptive) mom gave me all the paperwork that she ever had."

“
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Shawntel Anderson

That included a two-page document called "Child's Adoption Study." The report, dated May 24, 1982, was prepared by a social services worker for the Kansas City Division of Family Services office in preparation for the adoption. The baby had been given the name Tyra Ryan.

"On January 4, 1982, our agency received a hotline referral regarding an abandoned black female baby who was left on a doorstep at 3538 Cherry and was taken into protective custody..." the report said.

The baby was bundled in a snowsuit and sitting in a carrier, the report said. Inside her snowsuit was a note that said the person who left her "cannot take care of this sweet little girl."

"So I am doing this so that somebody could take care of her, take care of her, please,

SEE SNOW BABY, 5A

Bundled infant abandoned on doorstep

Police seeking parents of 8-month-old girl found by men clearing snow from driveway

By Liz Reardon

A Member of the Staff

She waited.

Bundled into a green snowsuit against temperatures in the teens and the winter's heaviest snowfall, she was tucked away on the back steps of a Kansas City house sometime before noon Monday . . . with little else but pink ribbons in her hair and a handwritten note squirreled away inside her clothes.

That's how two Kansas City men, clearing a driveway of snow at 3538 Cherry St. shortly after noon Monday, found the 8-month-old baby girl the police are now calling Baby Jane Doe.

The child — left in a baby carrier, according to Kansas City Police Detective Thomas Marquisis now being cared for by foster parents. The

only clue the police have to her parents' identity is the initialed note that was tucked inside the snowsuit. The note said the baby could no longer be cared for and that the writer had been looking for someone to take care of the child.

The note did not identify the child, Detective Marquisis said. Hence, she was dubbed Baby Jane Doe.

James C. Cooper, who lives at the house where the baby was abandoned, said he did not hear the child or see anyone near his back steps until men who had come to shovel his driveway came to his door.

Mr. Cooper said one of the men told him, "We found a little baby in your back yard."

"I thought they were kidding me," Mr. Cooper said. "And then the other man came with the baby

in his arms and I said, 'I guess you're not kidding.'"

Mr. Cooper and the two men, Bob Whisnant and Bob Hopkins, both of Kansas City, called the police, who turned the child over to officials of the Missouri Division of Family Services.

Mr. Cooper said he had never seen the child before and didn't know why his doorstep was chosen to leave the child.

The police said the baby weighs about 15 pounds and is about 2 feet tall.

Mr. Cooper said the little girl appeared to have been well cared for.

"She was so cute. I'm sure the mother took very good care of her," Mr. Cooper said. "But she must have become very desperate."

A story in the Kansas City Times on Jan. 6, 1982, told of a baby being found.

FROM PAGE 4A

SNOW BABY

signed ‘SOS,’” the report cited the note as saying.

Kansas City police tried to find out who had left the baby there, the report said. They interviewed the area postman, who said he hadn’t observed anything suspicious. They also conducted “residence checks” on surrounding dwellings, but came up empty.

“No person reporting to be Tyra’s parents or her relatives have come forward to claim her or to give any information about her,” the document said.

It described the child as having a “sunny disposition.”

“Tyra Ryan, better known as ‘Cocoa’ to her foster family, almost never cries,” the social worker wrote. “We have no information about her background. ...When she was abandoned, her developmental skills were of an eight-month-old baby.”

It said Tyra had “grown considerably” since going into foster care and “is a cute, plump, charming baby girl.”

When she was in her mid-to-late 20s, Anderson looked into obtaining her birth certificate.

“There’s a lady that works with the court system that helped try to get the original birth certificate open,” she said. “But at that time, I didn’t want to pay the three to five hundred dollars it would take, so I just kind of dropped it.”

Years later, when she was about 35, she said, she got a call from a friend who also had been adopted.

“And she said ‘Hey, they just opened the laws where you can now request your birth certificate,’” Anderson said. “I filled the form out, I got a money order. Then I lost the money order. And then I just kind of said, ‘Well, whatever.’”

But last fall, she said, “I finally decided, well, let’s just finish this.”

FAMILY REUNION

Anderson finally got her birth certificate in October.

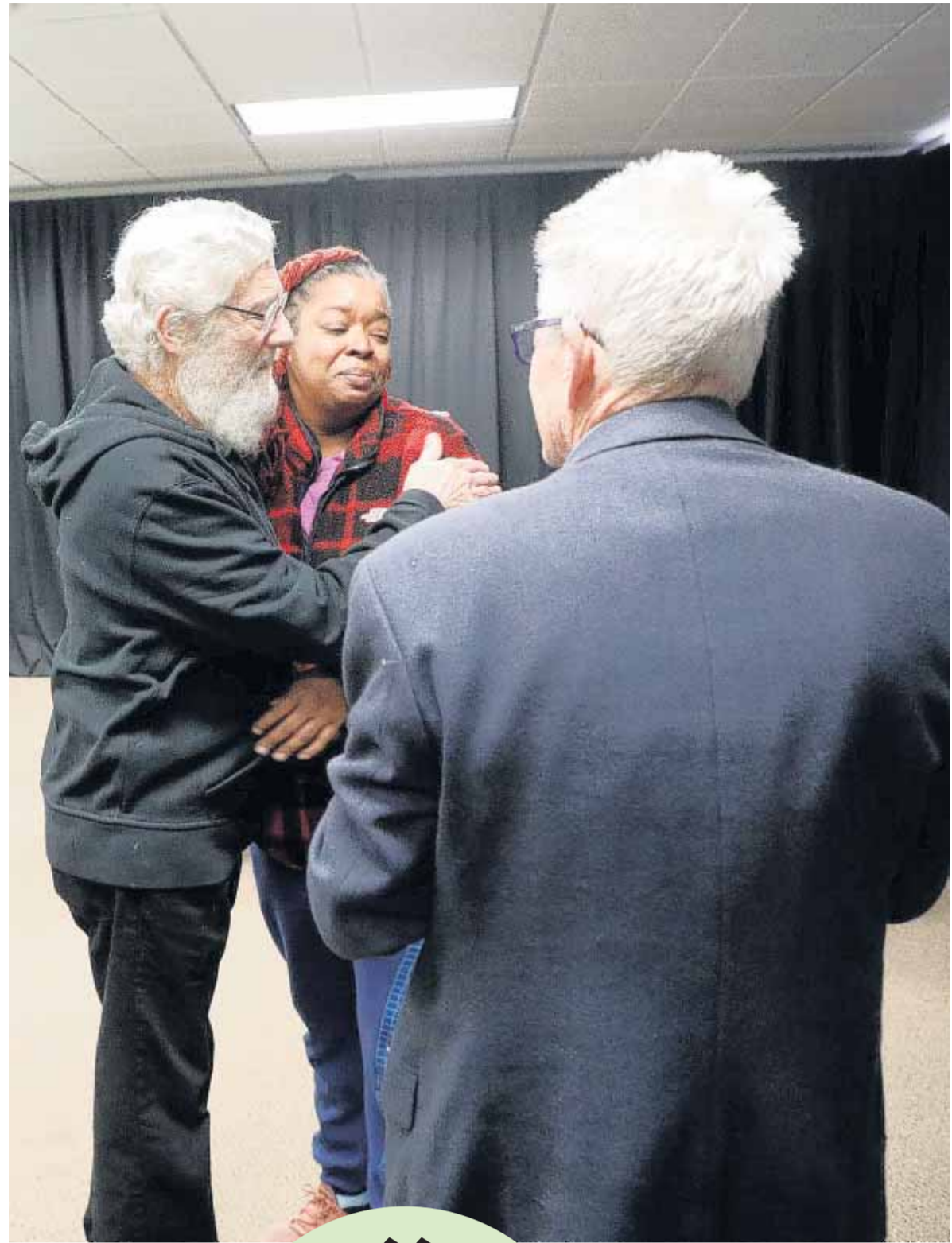
She used the information to track down her mother’s youngest sister on Facebook, “then she kind of branched me out to everybody else.”

That’s how she found out about her siblings — five brothers whom she’d known nothing about. But they knew about her. They’d been reunited with their mother in May of 2017, just two months before she died at 52. And they learned from her obituary that she also had a daughter.

“They tried to find me,” Anderson said, “but because my name was changed, it was way too difficult for them.”

She came to Kansas City in October to see her parents and meet the newly discovered brothers, and they got together again at Thanksgiving. What she’s learned so far is that her mother was 16 when she was born. She had given birth to a boy 11 months earlier, and years later had four more sons who are now in their 20s.

Their mother kept her first-born son, and he often lived with



BOB BOOTH Special to The Star

Bob Whisnant, left, Shawntel Anderson and Bob Hopkins meet Saturday in Dallas, more than 40 years after the men found Anderson abandoned on the back porch of a home in Kansas City.

“
I’D LOVE TO FIND HER
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Bob Hopkins

their grandmother and aunt, Anderson said. The other four sons were adopted, three of them by one family. All live in the Kansas City area.

Anderson was surprised to learn that she and her brothers had actually grown up near each other. She and her older brother had even attended the same elementary school.

But when she tries to find out why her mother abandoned her, she said, “this is where the story gets very interesting.”

“You talk to some people and they say, ‘Your momma wanted you. She looked for you, she just didn’t know how to find you.’ And some say, ‘We didn’t know your momma was pregnant with you.’”

Looking back, Anderson regrets not getting her mother’s birth certificate sooner.

“Had I continued my search when I originally started,” she said, “I could have met her. I could have gotten her side of the story.”

According to the obituary, her birth mother attended Northeast

High School and played on a girls’ basketball team through Della Lamb Community Services.

“She loved caring for others so she followed in her mother’s footsteps and earned her CNA certificate,” the obituary said. She also “loved the Lord,” it said, and “her humble, free spirit made her the life of any gathering.”

Learning about her past, Anderson said, “has been very overwhelming, but not necessarily in a negative way.”

“Yeah, I found out that my mama really did, you know, do what she did,” she said. “But nobody can convince me that a 16-year-old knew exactly what she was doing. I don’t blame her. She’s 16, she’s lost. How can she

make logical decisions at 16?”

Despite her bumpy start, Anderson said, she had a good upbringing.

“My parents were absolutely amazing,” she said. “Gave me everything I ever wanted. The guidance, they have been supportive in everything. I have lived a good life.”

She now works as a medical assistant in the Houston area and is engaged to be married. She has two children, Aerialle and Christian Jackson, and a 4-year-old grandson. Aerialle, 22, lives near her and Christian, 21, a high school football and basketball standout, attends a community college about an hour outside Dallas, where he will play football this fall.

“I honestly feel that had she not done what she did, my life probably wouldn’t be the way it

SEE SNOW BABY, 6A



BOB BOOTH Bob Booth

“I just feel like I’ve found my real-life heroes,” Shawntel Anderson said after she met Bob Whisnant, left, and Bob Hopkins in Dallas on Saturday.

FROM PAGE 5A

SNOW BABY

is,” Anderson said of her biological mother. “I probably would have struggled harder.”

FINDING THE ‘SNOW BABY’

When Anderson and her siblings met a few months ago, she told them the story about being abandoned on the snowy steps. They immediately began digging for more details.

Last month, brother Javon Jackson was searching online for the 1982 article in *The Kansas City Times*. That’s when he came across *The Star’s* 2018 story about Hopkins’ mission to find the “snow baby.” The article said Hopkins had posted information on Facebook about his efforts.

Jackson texted a screenshot of the story to his sister. She then tracked down Hopkins’ Facebook page and scrolled through it until she discovered his 2018 post.

“BABY FOUND IN THE SNOW,” it began. “If you hear of someone who may know anything more about the possible whereabouts of this baby, please call me.”

Hopkins had included his phone number. Anderson sent the information to her brother and planned to try to reach Hopkins on her lunch break. But Jackson was too excited to wait.

When Hopkins answered the call, he was in disbelief.

“I said, ‘What? Who are you? Where are you? What’s this about?’” he told *The Star* shortly afterward. “And then I said, ‘I can’t believe this. You have the baby?’”

Jackson said Hopkins was “astounded.”

“He said, ‘Is the baby, is the woman, around you?’ I said, ‘I can call her for you when she’s on break.’ And then she was calling me right when I said that.”

Jackson added Anderson to the



BOB BOOTH Special to The Star

Shawntel Anderson wipes away what she called “tears of joy” in Dallas on Saturday. She met with the men who found her on a back porch in Kansas City in 1982.

call.

“My sister cried,” he said. “Bob teared up in the background.”

Hopkins told them that he still has a laminated copy of the 1982 newspaper story.

“I pulled open the drawer of my desk while I was talking to her, and I said, ‘I’ve got the article right here,’” he said. “And I read it to her. She was crying. I was crying.”

“She said, ‘You have brought closure to something I have been concerned about all my life. Who I am, and where I came from.’”

Hopkins, a longtime philanthropist, said he was thankful he never gave up hope of someday reuniting with the infant he plucked from that snowy porch so long ago. He included her story in a 2019 book he wrote called “Philanthropy Misunderstood.”

“This shows the value of getting the information out there,” he said. “You just never know who’s going to see it. There’s just so much bad happening in the world, and there are so many bad stories. It’s nice to hear a good

one.”

Soon after she talked to Hopkins, Anderson told *The Star* that “there was a lot of emotion in that phone call.”

“I’ve always felt my whole life, because there’s been things that maybe I should not have made it through, I feel like maybe he was that little angel that’s kind of been guiding me through,” she said. “And the fact that he’s been looking for me for so long, that says so much. It was just a sigh of relief that somebody cared.”

“That man deserves a hug. I can’t believe we found him. This is definitely a happy ending to a very sad beginning.”

Hopkins went to class that afternoon, still euphoric over what had just transpired.

“I said, ‘Folks, I told you the story yesterday about this baby. And I said I was gonna find this baby this semester.’”

“Well, let me tell you — at 12:45 this afternoon, I got this call....”

MEETING IN DALLAS

The three were reunited in Dallas on Saturday — Hopkins, Whisnant and Anderson — 41 years after that random encounter one bitter Kansas City day.

“Is this my baby?” Hopkins asked, his voice breaking. Then came the hugs and tears.

Hopkins and Whisnant told Anderson about the day they found her, and Anderson shared what she’d learned about her past and the tedious search for her birth mother.

Hopkins said he’d always wondered what the moment would be like if they ever got to meet Anderson.

“I’ve played this over and over again in my mind,” he told her. “For 41 years, you’ve been a figment of our imaginations.”

Whisnant said there was a question he’d asked himself repeatedly over the years.

“Why were we there?” he said. “Why us? What led Bob and I there to be the ones that saved her?... I was an actor in a script I didn’t write.”

Hopkins said he was convinced that “this was just one of those things that are supposed to happen.”

“I think it’s a God thing,” he said. “And I think I was supposed to be there that day; this was supposed to be part of my plan.”

Finally getting to meet the men who rescued her, Anderson said, has brought her a kind of closure she wasn’t sure would ever be possible.

“I feel like I’ve finally completed a mission, after 40-plus years,” she said. “If they hadn’t been there, I don’t know where I’d be today...I don’t think I would have made it.”

“I just feel like I’ve found my real-life heroes.”

Now, she said, “I get to thank the people that saved my life.”

“Thank you. From the bottom of my heart.”

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Officials announce opening date for new KCI airport terminal

BY ROBERT A. CRONKLETON
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Kansas City International Airport will officially open the new \$1.5 billion single terminal the morning of Feb. 28, city officials announced Monday.

The grand opening comes nearly four years after the city first broke ground on the project.

“Kansas Citizens, Missourians, Kansans, anyone from around the world who’s flying through KCI will see not just a state of the art airport, but an airport that tells the story of Kansas City, through our arts, through our businesses, through our culture through the folks that work here,” Mayor Quinton Lucas said during a news conference in KCI’s massive ticketing hall.

Lucas said the terminal is being completed on time and on budget.

The final departing flights from the existing terminals will take off on Feb. 27.

Passengers aboard the Southwest Flight No. 3369 to Chicago at 10:25 p.m. on Feb. 27 will be the last travelers scheduled to depart from the existing terminals. The last passengers scheduled to arrive at the existing terminals will be on Delta Flight No. 1412 from Salt Lake City, which is expected at 12:38 a.m. Feb. 28.

The first scheduled departure from the new terminal is Southwest Flight No. 904 to Chicago on at 5 a.m. Feb. 28. The first scheduled arrival to the new terminal is Southwest Flight No. 1980 from Chicago, which is expected to pull up to the gate at 7:40 a.m.

The announcement comes as construction workers scramble to get the remaining projects completed for the open-



TAMMY LJUNGBLAD tjungblad@kcstar.com

Mayor Quinton Lucas, center, announced the much-anticipated opening day as Feb. 28 for the Kansas City International Airport’s new \$1.5 billion single terminal. The new single terminal will replace the three-terminal airport that opened in 1972.

ing.

Earlier this month, airport officials said the “building is built” and construction crews were just working on the finishing components, including the retail and restaurant areas.

The announcement of the Feb. 28 opening date is exciting, but it adds pressure because there’s a lot of work left to do so the terminal opens successfully, said Kansas City Aviation Director Patrick Klein.

However, Klein said he won’t be watching the first plane depart.

“I want to see the customers early in the morning when they start sort of coming through the building — just sort of watch the expression on their face,” he said.

Hiring for the new



Build KCI

A digital wall behind the ticketing counters at Kansas City International Airport’s new terminal uses LED technology for airline branding. City officials announced the new terminal will open Feb. 28.

terminal is underway as concession operators are looking to fill at least 800

retail, food and beverage jobs by the time the new terminal opens.

Two more job fairs will be held on Feb. 6 and 13 from 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. at

the Kansas City Aviation Department, 601 Brasilia Ave.

The city broke ground on the project in March 2019. At more than 1 million square feet, the terminal is the largest single infrastructure project in the city’s history.

It replaces the airport’s out-of-date horseshoe-like terminals, which opened in 1972 with a “drive to your gate” convenience. Airports had no metal detectors or security searching bags when KCI was designed. Less than a month after opening, the FAA announced major security changes nationwide because of a hijacking.

The three terminals weren’t deep enough to fit concessions and restrooms for passengers after they went through security.

The new terminal, built on the site of the former Terminal A, will usher in a new air travel experience in Kansas City, providing nearly 50 places to eat and shop. About 80% of the brands are local to the Kansas City region.

It will also feature the largest public art program in Kansas City’s history, with a \$5.6 million of newly commissioned art. Nineteen of the artists chosen live in the Kansas City area or have local ties.

Other amenities include information desks, moving walkways, Delta Sky Club, military USO, mediation room and all-glass passenger boarding bridges.

Up to 6,000 construction-related jobs were generated by the project, which was led by developer Edgemore Infrastructure & Real Estate and their design-build partner Clark | Weitz | Clarkson. More than 240 Kansas City-area firms worked on the project, with more than 130 of them being minority- and women-owned.

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