

OUTLOOK

GREAT BEND
CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

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2021

Celebrating Barton County Educators: The 10th Annual Business Showcase

Connecting Businesses & Educators, Presented by Credit Union of America

For the past nine years, the Great Bend Chamber of Commerce has partnered with USD 428 to create a meaningful connection between the business community and local educators. This annual event has provided businesses with the opportunity to engage directly with school staff, offering resources, promotions, and appreciation for the educators shaping the next generation.

Now, in 2025, the 10th Annual Business Showcase is expanding in a major way. For the first time, the event will welcome every educator and support staff member in Barton County, including private schools and Barton Community College. This expansion means more connections, more engagement, and more opportunities for businesses to make a lasting impact.

Why Your Business Should Participate

The Business Showcase isn't just an event—it's an investment in the future of Barton County. Local businesses will have the chance to:

- Engage directly with educators, paraprofessionals, and school personnel
- Build brand awareness with a trusted, local audience
- Promote educator-focused specials, products, and services
- Show appreciation for the people shaping the next generation

With Premier Booths already sold out, businesses are eager to take advantage of the passport prize giveaway, ensuring maximum foot traffic and engagement.

Who's Invited?

- USD 428 (Great Bend)
- USD 431 (Hoisington)
- USD 355 (Ellinwood)
- USD 112 (Claflin & Wilson)
- Barton Community College
- Holy Family School
- St. Joseph Catholic School
- Central Kansas Christian Academy
- Golden Belt Home Educators

A Celebration of Collaboration

The Business Showcase is more than just an event—it's a testament to the power of collaboration between Barton County's business community and its educators. By fostering connections, sharing resources, and celebrating the people who shape the future, this showcase strengthens the foundation of economic growth and community success.

Booth space is limited. Businesses looking to maximize their visibility and impact should register today to secure their spot in one of the Chamber's most well-attended events.

Registration is Online Only Businesses interested in participating must register at greatbend.org.

Event Details

Date: Friday, August 8

Time: 9:00 – 11:00 AM

Location: Panther Activity Center
2450 19th St, GBK



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Featured Ambassador: Trina Smith

Ambassador Club members assist the Chamber with networking events, ribbon cuttings, groundbreaking, and membership recruitment and retention. This group of volunteers allows the Chamber to cultivate business relationships and network with the area's most successful people. If you would like to become an Ambassador and represent your company, contact a member of the Chamber staff.

Q What Brings You Here?

A "I have always lived in the Barton County Area. Started out in Elementary School in Ellinwood until 4th grade, then moved to Great Bend until I got married in 2014 to Jared who was also born and raised in this area. Both of our families are from here and we both have great jobs here. Our kids get to attend the same school my husband did as a CKCA warrior. We absolutely love the small town."

Q Your Day to Day Jobs

A "Farmers Union Midwest Agency is more than just a job to me. I get to work with other agents who run their own businesses but collaborate with each other. I am the owner/ agent. I provide advice in regard to Insurance. It can be any type of insurance for that matter. From Pet Insurance (yes, it's a real thing) to your everyday Car insurance."

Q Surprise us!

A "I love to go fast!! On the weekends in the summer, you will catch us at the drag-strip!!"

Q Your Inspiration

A "I love being able to help people! When I first started out, I didn't know what to expect in this industry or what the future was to hold. But being able to educate people in this role and provide them with knowledge outside of my office is a game changer!!"

Q Wild Card - What would you be terrible at?

A "I would be terrible at being an exterminator because I am terrified of spider!!"

Q Your Role as an Ambassador

A "I just started this year! But being able to see what the Chamber has to offer for businesses in our area makes me excited to provide that same information to other businesses I work closely with!"



Trina can be reached at 620-617-9977 or Tsmith@fumainsurance.com.

Juvenile Services Successfully Lead Collaborative Effort Across Barton County and Beyond to Strengthen Youth Support, Build Life Skills, and Inspire a Safer, Healthier Community

YOUTH LEADERSHIP & CIVIC EDUCATION

At the annual Youth Leaders in Kansas (YLink) state meeting in Wellington, nine local youth and their sponsors shared ideas and built civic skills. Brooklyn Cooley of Great Bend High School and Jaci Sandberg of Ellinwood High School presented a proposal for a community-service project to clean school buses, aiming to improve health and support local districts. The event also featured presentations on voting, a panel discussion with young professionals, and a keynote from Annette Lawless about her media career, offering inspiration and practical insights into civic engagement.

A highlight of the meeting was Tyler Morton, Juvenile Services prevention advocate, receiving the Sherill Carlson Award for Outstanding Sponsor of the Year. Morton credited the recognition to the dedication and leadership potential of the YLink youth team. He emphasized the value of this annual gathering for connecting with peers statewide, celebrating youth-led initiatives, and demonstrating appreciation to the Kansas Department for Aging and Disability Services for supporting youth advocacy and civic training.

STEPPING UP

Barton County has been selected as one of only seven Kansas counties to participate in the new Stepping Up for Youth Initiative, a pilot program designed to support young people at risk of entering or already involved in the juvenile justice system. This effort is the result of a strong collaboration among local leaders—including Juvenile Services, schools, law enforcement, and mental health providers—as well as state agencies like the Kansas Department for Aging and Disability Services, the Kansas Department for Children and Families, and the Kansas Department of Corrections. Building on Barton County's successful Stepping Up program for adults, the youth initiative aims to connect young people and their families with community-based services, early intervention, and prevention resources to divert them from detention whenever appropriate.

The program officially launched with a large kickoff event and training in Great Bend attended by nearly 100 professionals from across Kansas, including representatives from other pilot counties. Participants learned strategies for addressing

behavioral health needs and reducing juvenile justice involvement through research-based approaches. The Council of State Governments (CSG) Justice Center, which is leading the initiative, praised Barton County's history of innovation and collaboration, including its Jail Program that offers mental health services to incarcerated adults. Moving forward, Barton County's Stepping Up team will meet monthly to develop plans, broaden partnerships, and ensure that this coordinated, cross-sector approach continues to strengthen support for youth and families in the community.

KELLY'S GARDEN SENSE

Local Juvenile Services clients recently gained hands-on experience and life skills during a community-service project at Kelly's Garden Sense, where they learned about planting, teamwork, and the potential for gardening as a hobby or future career. Business owner Kelly Moeder emphasized that hosting the project not only allowed youth to explore positive interests but also introduced them to local job opportunities and the story of building a successful, sober business. Juvenile Services Director Marissa Woodmansee encouraged other businesses to get involved, noting that experiences like this help young people develop practical skills, build confidence, and connect with potential employers in the community.

FISHING

Youth in the Juvenile Services Life Skills program recently enjoyed a fishing day at Veterans Lake in Great Bend, where they learned how to catch, clean, and cook fish while building patience and problem-solving skills. The event, led by staff and Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks experts, offered a fun, low-cost way for 23 young participants to connect with nature, relieve stress, and make new friends. Life Skills classes also teach practical topics like financial literacy, auto maintenance, and emergency preparedness to help youth succeed in daily life.

YOUTH CREW END OF YEAR

The Barton County Youth Crew recently held its End-of-Year Celebration at Perkins in Great Bend to honor the group's many accomplishments over the past year. Members were recognized for their involvement in projects such as a float in the Hoisington Labor Day Parade, hosting a youth-led booth at the Family Crisis Center Fall Festival, participating in Mental Health Awareness Day and the Trail of Lights, and launching the Lei Off Tobacco event at Great Bend Middle School.

During the celebration, Branson Holinde received the Outstanding Achievement Award for his leadership and commitment, while Janey Weber was honored with the Next Generation Leadership Award for organizing the parade float. Looking ahead, the Youth Crew plans to increase youth-led projects, expand roles in planning and recruitment, and revive popular activities like the kickball event, with meetings now held on weekdays to encourage even greater participation.

BUDGET

Marissa Woodmansee, director of Juvenile Services (JS) for the 20th Judicial District, is warning that several community-based programs supporting local youth could face cuts by 2027 due to dwindling state funds originally set aside to reduce out-of-home placements. She emphasized that eliminating programs like Parent Project, Intensive Supervised Probation, and Case Management would harm community safety, increase caseloads, and reduce support for families. Woodmansee is working to raise awareness about the critical role of JS programs in preventing youth from deeper involvement in the justice system.



P & S Electric Honors Two Employees for 30 Years of Service

P & S Electric, Inc., Electrifying Kansas Since 1989, is honored to recognize two outstanding long-term employees for their remarkable dedication and service. Adam Sciacca, Master Electrician/Manager, and Kenny Bradshaw, Journeyman/Oilfield Electric Foreman, have each contributed 30 years of expertise, leadership, and commitment to the company's success. Their decades of hard work exemplify the professionalism and reliability that have made P & S Electric a trusted name across Kansas.



BCC Empowers Incarcerated Learners with Job Training and Degrees

Barton Community College and Larned State Correctional Facility (LSCF) honored the achievements of LSCF residents at their annual learning celebration on April 10.

Graduates were awarded their associate degree, high school diploma, or workforce training certificates in welding technology, occupational safety and health (OSHA), and business management and leadership. A total of 104 certificates, industry certifications, and diplomas were awarded this year.



Barton's Coordinator of Correctional Education Services Nicole Barr said Barton has provided training and educational services at LSCF since 2001 as part of its

Building Academic Skills in Correctional Settings (BASICS) program. More than 75 students are served annually through the program.

"One important thing to remember about why we are so passionate about our correctional education programs at Barton is that most residents are going to be released at some point and will be living and working alongside us all," she said. "So, we want to do everything we can to give them tools to ensure they can thrive and live happy and productive lives as well as enrich the lives of their friends, families, and people in their respective communities as best as they can."

Rosewood Services Champions Leadership & Inclusion at Record-Breaking Self-Advocacy Conference

For the second year in a row, a record 21 members of Rosewood Services attended the Self Advocate Coalition of Kansas (SACK) Conference in Wichita, underscoring Rosewood's dedication to building leadership, involvement, and community inclusion among people with developmental disabilities. Supported by staff and sponsors, participants engaged in workshops on advocacy, health, and self-care, while connecting with peers and experts to strengthen their self-advocacy skills.

Rosewood's growing attendance reflects the organization's commitment to

empowering individuals to take active roles in their communities, with the conference complementing the goals of the Rosewood Miracle Workers AKTION Club to inspire confidence, participation, and a sense of belonging.



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The Great Bend Chamber of Commerce hosted a Chamber Coffee and Ribbon Cutting on Thursday, June 5th to recognize the official rebrand of **Strategic Partners Financial Group (SPFG)**. Previously operating under the name Life Planning Solutions, the Great Bend office has been serving the community since 1999.

Following a 2020 merger, the office has now transitioned to the Strategic Partners Financial Group name as of mid-2024. Financial Advisor, Caleb Frye, welcomed attendees to the event and shared insights about the firm's evolution and continued commitment to client-focused service. Frye is one of three professionals based in the Great Bend office, which provides fiduciary-driven financial planning, investment management, and estate planning services.

Strategic Partners Financial Group works with individuals from diverse industries and financial backgrounds. The firm is especially equipped to assist self-employed individuals managing businesses with up to 25 employees, as well as those nearing retirement who need guidance in converting their savings and assets into reliable retirement income.

With clients in 20 states and a strong local presence, SPFG offers personalized, objective financial advice tailored to each client's long-term goals. The Great Bend office is located at 1618 Main Street and can be reached at (620) 793-9999, by email at caleb@spfgnow.com, or online at www.spfgnow.com.

RIBBON CUTTINGS



The Great Bend Chamber of Commerce hosted a Ribbon Cutting on Friday, June 13th to celebrate the opening of **Discount Bins**, a new bin store located at 1015 10th Street in Great Bend.

While bin stores have already gained popularity in the area, Discount Bins brings its own take on the treasure-hunt shopping experience. Headquartered in Arizona, the company now operates 10 stores across three states, with Great Bend being one of its newest locations. Each week, bins are filled with a fresh assortment of brand-name products, electronics, household goods, toys, tools, and more—all offered at drastically reduced prices.

The pricing structure is part of what makes the experience so engaging. On Fridays, when the bins are fully restocked, all items are \$15. Prices then drop daily—\$10 on Saturday, \$5 on Sunday, \$3 on Monday, \$2 on Tuesday, and just \$1 on Wednesday. The store is closed on Thursdays to allow for restocking and preparation for the week ahead.

The Great Bend community has embraced the new location with enthusiasm. Each Friday morning, lines have formed around the front and side of the building as shoppers wait eagerly to search through the newly stocked bins for unbeatable deals. The constantly changing inventory and steep discounts make each visit a fresh adventure, encouraging return visits and repeat customers.

Discount Bins offers a fast-paced, value-focused shopping environment that's already making its mark locally. For those who enjoy the thrill of bargain hunting, the new store is quickly becoming a popular destination in Great Bend.

Discount Bins - Great Bend can be found on Facebook for updates, sneak peeks, and weekly restock announcements.



USD 428 celebrates retirees, milestone educators

On Wednesday, April 30, USD 428 hosted its annual **Employee Recognition Banquet** at the District Education Center, honoring the dedication and service of staff members throughout the district. The event celebrated career milestones, including 25-year service awards and retirements.

“This group of dedicated teachers and staff has made a tremendous impact on education through their years of service,” said Khris Thexton, superintendent of USD 428. “This evening is always a meaningful chance to pause and celebrate the incredible accomplishments—and the countless lives they’ve touched—across our schools and community.”

The Class of 2025 retirees included teachers, coaches, and support staff who have shaped classrooms, inspired students, and strengthened the USD 428 community. This year’s retiring teachers included: Randy Beck and Dan Heath from GBHS; Lynn Stos and Belinda Jones from GBMS; Barb Thoren and Jeff Jones from Eisenhower Elementary; and Donna Bates, Patti Blackwell, and Judy Sneath from Barton County Special Services.

GBHS Teachers:

Randy Beck, Great Bend High School physical education teacher, has taught in USD 428 for a total of 30 years. Throughout his career, Beck coached football and baseball at GBHS, becoming the head baseball coach in 2009–2010 school year. “I’m grateful for all the great people I

had a chance to work with over the years,” said Beck. Also mentioning that coaching provided his best memories.

Over the course of 23 years at Great Bend High School, Dan Heath’s career has traversed several departments, always with a focus on the “live” experience. From teaching English and Speech, to Theatre, and most recently 21st Century Journalism and Video Production, Heath and his students created the Panther Media YouTube Channel, which boasts a large audience for live-streamed GBHS events. Reflecting on his time at GBHS and cultural changes of 23 years, Heath shared, “I truly believe that Great Bend High School is a model for how very different cultures can blend together without removing the flavor and joy that our differences provide. We are all different, but we are all GBHS Panthers.”

GBMS Teachers:

For 41 Years, 27 of which were spent as an 8th-grade English teacher at GBMS, Lynn Stos has equipped and encouraged hundreds of students to succeed in their futures. Working primarily in an elementary setting before coming to Great Bend, Stos expressed appreciation for her fellow educators and colleagues: “They guided me and helped me find my voice.”

Belinda Jones, a social studies teacher at Great Bend Middle School, is retiring after nine years of service in USD 428. Before joining the 7th-grade team, she spent several years teaching 6th grade at Jefferson Elementary, leaving a lasting impact on students and colleagues alike

Eisenhower Elementary:

As PE Teacher at Eisenhower Elementary, Jeff Jones inspired students to be active,



25 year Teachers - Misty Straub, Lincoln Elementary Principal; John Popp, Assistant Superintendent; Barb Thoren, Eisenhower Elementary; and Khris Thexton, Superintendent.



Kay Burns, District Office (pictured with Dustin Klassen, Assistant Principal at GBHS)



Barb Thoren, Eisenhower Elementary (pictured with Abby Jonas, Principal at Eisenhower)



Patti Blackwell, BCSS; Sandy Showate, former coworker; and Ashley Riley, director of BCSS



Randy Beck, GBHS (pictured with Dustin Klassen, Assistant Principal at GBHS)



Dan Heath, GBHS (pictured with Kip Wilson, Assistant Principal at GBHS)

develop teamwork and collaboration skills, and try new things. Jones celebrates 9 years with USD 428.

Over 21 years in USD 428, Barb Thoren has served Great Bend Middle School, Park Elementary, and Eisenhower Elementary. She's enjoyed adding laughter and silly antics to the buildings in which she's worked and building relationships with staff and students as she's watched them grow.

Jefferson Elementary:

Becky Demel retires after 29 years teaching in Great Bend, many of them teaching third-grade. She has undoubtedly nurtured several generations of young learners and is a beloved member of the Jets team.

Barton County Special Services (BCSS):

Patti Blackwell has spent 20 years providing physical therapy services to students in Great Bend, Ellinwood, and Hoisington as part of the BCSS team. When asked about a fond memory, Blackwell shared that she "loves seeing the change in self-confidence when kids can accomplish their goals and improve their skills."

Celebrating 15 years of service, Judy Sneath retires as the assistant director for BCSS. Throughout her career, Sneath played a vital role in recruiting and training paraprofessionals, ensuring students received the classroom support they needed. For the 2024-2025 school year, Sneath also supported the RISE Program at Washington Education Center as its on-site administrator.

Support Services:

USD 428 also celebrated an outstanding group of support service staff whose dedication has kept things running smoothly behind the scenes. Whether supporting students in the library, keeping systems in check, or managing the details that make a school day possible, these retirees leave big shoes to fill.

This year's staff retirees include Kay Burns, software support & former GBHS registrar (34 years); Kathy Roberts, payroll clerk (10 years); Pam Jenkinson, GBHS secretary (30 years); Al Ledesma, maintenance (23 years); Tammy Ensley, GBMS secretary (___ years); Tammy Bell, Jefferson teacher assistant (30 years); Connie Hatten, Park library aide (15 years); Marlene Beck, Jefferson library aide (10 years); and Donna Bates, Barton County Special Services (18 years).

The evening also spotlighted the 25-year educator milestone. Five incredible educators were honored for reaching this benchmark, a testament to their passion, perseverance, and impact on generations of students.

John Popp (District Education Center), Misty Straub (Lincoln Elementary), and Barb Thoren (Eisenhower Elementary) received certificates of recognition. Michelle Daniel (Riley Elementary) and Bill Maddy (Great Bend High School) were also recognized, though they could not attend the celebration in person.

For more information about recognition programs or careers in USD 428, please visit GreatBendSchools.net or contact the District Education Center at 620-793-1500.



Al Ledesma, GBHS Maintenance (pictured with Dirk Davis, Maintenance Director)



Pam Jenkinson, GBHS (pictured with John Popp, Assistant Superintendent)



Lynn Stos, GBMS (pictured with Myron Ellegood, Principal at GBMS)



Tammy Bell, Jefferson (pictured with Adam Neidens, Jefferson Principal)



Connie Hatten, Park (pictured with Kelsey Sciacca, Park Principal and Khriston Thexton, Superintendent)



Becky Demel
Jefferson Elementary



Belinda Jones
Great Bend Middle School



Jeff Jones
Eisenhower Elementary



Judy Sneath
BCSS Assistant Director

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Local Business Gives A Chance, Gains A Star Employee Through The Center's Program

Magna Dry in Great Bend recently hired Eric Hein, who lives with schizophrenia and anxiety, through The Center for Counseling & Consultation's employment program. After learning about Eric from The Center's employment specialists, owner Todd Clark saw an opportunity to give someone a chance—and has been impressed ever since.

"Eric is dependable, upbeat, and fits right in," Clark shared, adding that businesses shouldn't hesitate to consider applicants referred by The Center.

Eric, who had struggled in a full-time job previously, now thrives working a few hours a week doing cleaning and custodial tasks. The part-time role helps him stay productive and manage symptoms, something he says has improved his well-being.

The Center's employment program has connected dozens of people with meaningful work, aiming to reduce stigma around behavioral health and show that, with the right support, many are fully capable employees.



commitment among statewide and local partners to improve crisis intervention and build capacity for a 24/7 response in the future. Patzner noted that collective buy-in and teamwork are making it possible to expand services and address barriers like lack of transportation, demonstrating the power of community collaboration to meet urgent mental health needs.

Partnerships Drive Progress On Mental Health Access At Regional Meeting

The Center for Counseling & Consultation in Great Bend recently hosted a large gathering of local and state partners committed to improving community mental health care. The meeting brought together 35 stakeholders, including Kansas legislators, Barton County Commissioners, law enforcement, Juvenile Services, Central Kansas Community Corrections, hospital leadership, and The Center's board and staff.

Participants discussed the Certified Community Behavioral Health Clinic (CCBHC) model, which offers integrated care addressing mental health, substance use, housing, employment, and veteran services. Leaders

from the Association of Community Mental Health Centers of Kansas shared statewide survey results showing rising public awareness and support for investing in behavioral health services.

Representative Sherri Brantley underscored how collaboration among schools, legislators, and community providers can help families access needed care. Other attendees echoed appreciation for the shared commitment across agencies to reduce stigma, expand services, and improve outcomes.

The Center's Executive Director Wendy Lockwood praised the exceptional turnout and pledged to continue working with partners to build a stronger, more responsive mental health system for the region.

Interested in getting involved or learning more? Contact The Center for Counseling & Consultation at 620-792-2544.

Collaboration Key To Expanding Mobile Crisis Response In Central Kansas

The Center for Counseling & Consultation recently joined professionals from across Kansas at a statewide meeting in Great Bend to strengthen mobile crisis response (MCR) services. Six representatives from The Center participated in the event, organized by the Kansas Department for Aging and Disability Services, to exchange insights and learn from established programs.

Crisis case manager Laura Patzner emphasized that MCR is inherently a collaborative process, relying on close partnerships with local law enforcement, Juvenile Services, and area medical facilities. These agencies provide critical support to help individuals experiencing behavioral health crises access care outside of emergency rooms or jails.

The meeting underscored a shared



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Marketing Maven Consulting, a premier brand management and design firm based in Great Bend, Kansas, is excited to announce the newest addition to their creative team, Steven Shippy, as a Graphic Design and Digital Media Specialist. Steven joins the team with a wealth of experience in both graphic design and digital media, bringing a fresh and creative perspective to the company's diverse design projects.

"Steven is a fantastic addition to the team, and his passion for authentic storytelling shines through in his work," says Rachel Mawhirter, Founder & CEO of Marketing Maven. "His ability to create designs that are both beautiful and functional, coupled with his love for typography and letterforms, will be a huge asset to our clients. We are thrilled to have him on board!"

Steven is a native Kansan with a deep love for design and storytelling. Over the years, he has worked with brands of all sizes - from local businesses to global enterprises - helping them communicate their message through visually compelling design. His responsibilities at Marketing Maven include working on branding and logo projects, social media graphics, print materials, advertising, illustrations, and various other types of printed and digital marketing collateral. Learn more at www.hireamaven.com or follow Marketing Maven on social media.



When Dr. Njeri Penda was just five years old in East Africa, a memorable visit to the dentist inspired her lifelong passion for dentistry. Today, she serves as the new dentist at **Heart of Kansas Family Health Care**, where she treats patients of all ages but specializes in pediatric care. Dr. Penda strives to create a safe, supportive environment for children so they develop positive attitudes toward dental visits early on.

Her commitment goes beyond the dental chair; she actively engages in public health initiatives to promote prevention and improve quality of life. After relocating to the U.S., Dr. Penda earned a bachelor's degree in chemistry and psychology, an MBA, and a Doctor of Dental Surgery degree from the University of Missouri School of Dentistry.

Dr. Penda emphasizes that oral health is crucial for overall well-being, explaining that neglected dental care can lead to infections, gum disease, tooth loss, and even systemic health issues like heart disease, diabetes, and Alzheimer's.

At Heart of Kansas, she appreciates the patient-centered mission and the welcoming team dedicated to serving everyone, regardless of insurance status. A multilingual professional, Dr. Penda is passionate about rural communities and aims to build a culture of dental health awareness, especially among children.

Brett Middleton, the organization's CEO, praised Dr. Penda's extensive education, dedication to public health, and commitment to being both a trusted provider and community partner.

Sunflower Bank has announced the promotion of Kayla Lonnon to Community President for Western Kansas, a role that includes oversight of the Great Bend market. Lonnon, who began her career with Sunflower Bank in 2006 after graduating from Fort Hays State University, has been instrumental in the bank's growth across Kansas.

Her new position expands her leadership across key communities, including Great Bend, Ellinwood, Hays, Victoria, Osborne, Colby, Dodge City, and Liberal. Lonnon will continue managing longstanding client relationships while collaborating with commercial, personal banking, and wealth management teams to strengthen customer connections in the region.

Sunflower Bank, founded in Salina in 1892, now operates branches in seven states and remains committed to offering local decision-making alongside comprehensive banking solutions.

Lonnon has deep ties to Western Kansas through her professional achievements and community service, including volunteer work with Big Brothers Big Sisters and local schools, as well as serving as a Hays Chamber of Commerce Ambassador.

Kansas Region President Mark Stauffer praised Lonnon's dedication and experience, noting she is well positioned to make a meaningful impact in communities like Great Bend. Lonnon expressed excitement for her new role and gratitude for the opportunity to serve customers and communities with integrity.

Clara Barton Medical Center is proud to announce that Deborah "Debbie" Snyder, MSN, APRN, FNP-C, has transitioned into a new role within the organization as a Family Practice Advanced Practice Registered Nurse (APRN) at Clara Barton Medical Clinic. After providing compassionate, patient-centered care as a nurse for the past 16 years, Snyder is now expanding her impact as a provider, serving patients of all ages in the clinic setting.

A familiar and trusted face at Clara Barton, Snyder has been a part of the organization since 2009. Over the years, she has continually advanced her education and clinical expertise, earning her LPN in 2005, RN in 2014, BSN in 2021, and her Master of Science in Nursing with APRN certification in 2023, all while continuing to care for patients in the community she calls home.

Snyder is now seeing patients at Clara Barton Medical Clinic, where she will primarily offer same-day appointments for acute illnesses and minor injuries, as well as routine follow-up care. Her role helps ensure patients have timely access to care when they need it most—whether for sudden health concerns or ongoing management of existing conditions.

A Great Bend native, Snyder said her heart has always been in Central Kansas.

Outside of work, Snyder enjoys spending time with her husband, Russell, and their two children, Brayden and Brylee. Together, they enjoy camping, dirt road cruising, catching sunrises and sunsets, and traveling to new places.



People
on the
Move

Animal Care Hospital Announces Exciting Partnership with Animal Medical Center

Animal Care Hospital in Great Bend has announced a new partnership with Animal Medical Center, uniting two respected veterinary teams to expand and enhance services for pets and their owners. ACH will remain at its 10th Street location under the leadership of Dr. Jackie Corbett and her longtime staff, continuing their tradition

of compassionate care while gaining access to AMC's advanced diagnostics, specialized surgeries, and broader veterinary resources. Both clinics emphasized their shared commitment to high-quality service and expressed gratitude to the community for decades of trust and support.



ANIMAL MEDICAL CENTER
622 McKinley St. - Great Bend, KS
(620) 792-1265



ANIMAL CARE HOSPITAL
3400 10th St. - Great Bend, KS
(620) 792-7373

Local Manager Becomes Owner as Cornerstone Automotive Rebrands and Grows

Cornerstone Automotive has announced that Shop Manager Darin Hertel is now the new owner, marking a return to local ownership for the Great Bend business. Hertel, who has managed the shop for over three years, succeeds the previous out-of-state owner and plans to keep the existing team and operations in place. With this transition, the business will now operate under the updated name Cornerstone Automotive & Tire, LLC, complete with a new logo that highlights an expanded focus on tire services.

to introduce added conveniences for customers, including drive-up oil changes, faster tire services, and an online scheduling system to simplify routine maintenance. He emphasized his commitment to building on the shop's reputation for reliable,

high-quality service while making automotive care more accessible and efficient. The Cornerstone team expressed gratitude for the community's support and looks forward to continued growth as a trusted, locally owned business.



Looking ahead, Hertel plans

Exciting Changes at CKCA: New Staff, New Programs, and Enrollment Day Coming Soon

There are a lot of fun and exciting new things happening at Central Kansas Christian Academy (CKCA). We have hired 3 new teachers for this school year as well as have a new after school program starting 2025-26 school year. The program is called W.O.W. or Warriors Of the Word. W.O.W. is designed to support our students' growth in a fun and faith-filled environment. There will be play, crafts, healthy snacks, tutoring & homework help as well as bible study!

school teacher for 7th and 8th grades, offering guidance and support during this pivotal educational stage. Additionally, Miraya Starnes will take on the role of Art teacher, inspiring creativity and artistic expression among students.

Our Enrollment Day will take place on August 1st, 2025 9a-1p & 5-7p come and go. This is open to anyone in the community that is interested in our school!

Julie Martel will be joining as a 2nd-grade teacher, bringing enthusiasm and dedication to young learners. Sina Jackson will serve as a middle



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Kansas Department of Labor Update

Preliminary estimates reported by the Labor Market Information (LMI) division of the Kansas Department of Labor (KDOL) and the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) show a seasonally adjusted unemployment rate of 3.8% in May. This is unchanged from 3.8% in April and an increase from 3.5% in May 2024. The labor force participation rate for Kansas decreased to 67.0% in May.

Seasonally adjusted job estimates for Kansas indicate total nonfarm payroll employment increased by 1,800 from April.

WHY SIDES?

- Reduces UI overpayments by addressing incorrect job separation decisions
- Reduces paperwork
- Provides a nationally standardized format for separation responses

Kansas Department of Labor

Total nonfarm includes private sector and government employers. Private sector jobs increased by 1,900 over the month, while government decreased by 100. The largest job gains in the private sector were in manufacturing (+1,600 jobs). The largest decrease was in professional and business services (-700 jobs).

Since May 2024 Kansas' seasonally adjusted total nonfarm jobs have increased by 12,500. This change is due to an increase of 2,200 private sector jobs and an increase of 10,300 government jobs.

For more information and statistics visit the Kansas Labor Information Center at klic.dol.ks.gov.



One Big Beautiful Bill Delivers Wins For Main Street Kansas

Congress continues its work on the federal Reconciliation Legislation – otherwise known as the One Big Beautiful Bill. The legislation impacts families, communities and businesses and makes permanent many of the tax cuts created in 2017 by the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act.

There are several provisions in the legislation that directly impact Kansas Main Streets and a community's ability to develop new housing, offer affordable childcare and retain growing small businesses. Many Kansas businesses have already utilized these tax provisions and we have seen both the New Market Tax Credit and Federal Opportunity Zone bring new development to Kansas communities. The extension and expansion of these provisions will continue to provide benefits to the Kansas economy.

Pro-Business, Pro-Growth OBBB Provisions:

- The 199A pass-through business deduction
- 100% bonus depreciation for business owners
- Full and immediate expensing of domestic research and development expenses
- Extension of the paid family and medical leave tax credit for small businesses that offer paid leave
- Expansion of the low-income housing tax credit to increase the supply of housing so that businesses can attract workers
- Expansion of the New Markets Tax Credit
- Creation of the rural Opportunity Zones to drive investment in rural areas
- Enhanced employer-provided child care tax credit

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kansashealthsystem.com/greatbend



SCHEDULE

Every Thursday
Doors Open at 9am
Program at 9:30am

July 3rd
T & L FIREWORKS
159 N Hwy 281

T & L Fireworks, a family-owned business founded in 1970, is celebrating 55 years of offering unbeatable prices and a huge selection across their Kansas locations. Now run by multiple generations, they remain dedicated to quality products and community service.

July 10th
UNITED WAY OF CENTRAL KANSAS
4001 10th Street (First Kansas Bank)

United Way of Central Kansas is excited to announce the 2025 Pacesetter Awards, recognizing the top workplace campaigns for their extraordinary fundraising efforts and community leadership. This local tradition honors businesses that significantly drive donations to support vital health, education, and financial stability initiatives across Barton and Pawnee counties.

July 17th
INSURANCE PLANNING, INC.
1901 12th Street

Since 1968, Insurance Planning, Inc. has provided personalized personal, commercial, and financial insurance across central Kansas, backed by a highly credentialed team. As an independent agency, they offer customized coverage from top carriers and support their communities through active volunteerism.

July 24th
BARTON COMMUNITY COLLEGE FOUNDATION
2920 10th Street - Best Western Courtyard

Join us for the 46th Annual Big Benefit Auction on Saturday, August 23 at 5:30 PM at the Great Bend Events Center, with dinner, complimentary beer, and an exciting live auction supporting Barton student scholarships and programs.

July 31st
GREAT BEND ZOOLOGICAL SOCIETY
2123 Main Street

Many terrific things are happening at the Zoo, and the Great Bend Zoo Society wants YOU to be a part of it all. The purpose of the Society is to support the Zoo in its efforts to provide educational and public benefit to the community, and your financial support helps to develop and improve our Zoo.

August 7th
HAMMEKE ELECTRIC
167 N Hwy 281

Hammeke Electric is proudly celebrating 25 years of serving Great Bend and beyond, marking the milestone with Chamber-sponsored events including Coffee and After-Hours gatherings this summer. Over the past quarter-century, they've built a reputation for reliable electrical services and strong community ties.



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Saturday, July 26th

Club West Swimming Pool 7-9pm
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THE
DATE

AUGUST 9, 2025
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IN THE
PARK
GREAT BEND, KS



CHAMBER
After Hours

Save the Date

SEPTEMBER
4TH, 2025

25th
ANNIVERSARY

Hammeke
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THE
LEADER'S
LUNCHROOM

AUGUST
TOPIC

Take Control: Designing
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Tuesday, Aug 5th, 2025

12:00-1:00 PM

Great Bend Chamber Board Room
1125 Williams, GBK

Free to attend - BYOL

UNLOCK YOUR

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AUG 6

12-1p

Chamber Board Room
1125 Williams

Bring your lunch and join us for a hands-on session designed to elevate your business's visibility and make the most of your Chamber membership! ▶

10th
Anniversary

GREAT BEND CHAMBER

BUSINESS SHOWCASE

Friday, August 8th, 2025

Biggest Showcase Ever!

Help us celebrate 10
years of the Business
Showcase and
educators!

Register your
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Welcome to Friendly

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WITH

2025



Golden Belt

COMMUNITY FOUNDATION

Social 5PM
Dinner 5:45PM
Program 6PM

@ Dry Lake
Brewing
1305 Main St.
Great Bend, KS

Come enjoy a drink and dinner on us and
hear all about the Golden Belt Community
Foundation.