

OUTLOOK

GREAT BEND
CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

business journal **ONLINE**

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1921



2021

BEYOND THE HORIZON

The evening will celebrate accomplishments of 2022 and announce the chamber's annual award winners. Among the awards to be given include the NexGen Leader of the Year, Citizen of the Year, Business of the Year, and Legacy Award. We hope businesses will consider extending the opportunity to attend to their staff. This event is truly special and is meant celebrate the accomplishments of the entire business community." The annual chamber banquet draws in about 400 chamber

members and dignitaries every year.

Introduced in 2022, the now coveted "Chamby" awards will return to showcase the high energy of a few select Chamber Ambassadors. There are 30 men and women serving as Chamber Ambassadors and their hard work and efforts do not go unnoticed.

New this year, for the entire crowd, will be the "Best Dressed" award making its debut. Attendees are invited to have fun with their cocktail attire and come dressed

to impress. All those in attendance will be eligible to win and voted on by the crowd via an anonymous online voting program.

Three local caterers will be featured serving up a meal to compliment a perfect evening. Attendees will enjoy smoked pork loin from A & G Catering, scalloped potatoes, green beans and homemade break from Great Bend Coffee, and delicious desserts, salads, and charcuterie boards from RePerks.

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COFFEE SCHEDULE



FEATURED AMBASSADOR



CALENDAR



NEW MEMBERS



Click to jump to the story or link

William J. “Bill” Miller 1959-2023

The Chamber would like to express our deepest sympathy to the friends and family of Bill Miller. Miller with Miller's of Claflin has been a Chamber member since 1985. Our prayers are also with the Miller's of Claflin family during the coming days and weeks.



Nex-Tech 2022 Football Donation Campaign Supports Area High Schools

Nex-Tech, a leader in broadband and technology, is an avid supporter of the community, education, and athletics, and is giving back to area high schools through a cumulative donation of \$5,960 amongst 30 schools. For the 2022 season, schools that signed up received \$10 for each home game touchdown.

The football campaign, which began in 2005, builds on Nex-Tech's commitment to the community by supporting athletic programs in the area. It also supports another of our basic beliefs, which is that having fun is important since high school football is just simply enjoyable for us!

Director of Customer Engagement Dustin Schlaefli says, “Here at Nex-Tech, our passion is to make life better for our friends, neighbors, and our customers. Getting more involved in the communities we serve while being able to provide some booster support at the same time means a lot to us as a company. It's significant when a coach comments to us, ‘what a fantastic program! Thank you very much for including us. The funds are extremely beneficial to small schools.’ To all the local high school coaches, instructors, and students, thank you for allowing Nex-Tech to be a part of your 2021 football season.”

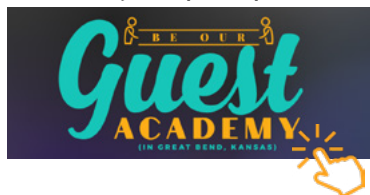
About Nex-Tech

Nex-Tech connects thousands of people and businesses through a robust broadband network and cutting-edge technology. Nex-Tech's powerful fiber-to-the-premise technology delivers the highest quality Internet, with speeds up to 1 Gig, streaming TV, home security, and local and long-distance phone service. Nex-Tech also provides an array of enterprise solutions including cloud services, cloud phone, network security, managed IT, physical security and surveillance, advertising solutions, and network operations monitoring to business clients nationwide. Nex-Tech focuses on providing the best technology and support with the best people. With stores in more than 20 locations, a full-service Help Desk and 24-hour Network Operations Center, Nex-Tech customers are ensured unsurpassed technology and support. Headquartered in Lenora, Kansas, Nex-Tech has been delivering exceptional service for more than 70 years.



Be our Guest Academy

What is there to do in Great Bend? Great Bend Convention and Visitors Bureau Director Christina Hayes is hoping to arm as many people as possible with plenty of answers to that question. With the help of Barton Community College, the CVB is rolling out the Be Our Guest Academy at the end of the month. Hoping to enhance the city with premier customer service, Hayes hopes to provide free online training on Great Bend's attractions to businesses and their employees. Hayes refers to employees at gas stations, hotels, stores and restaurants as “frontline workers.” These are the men and women that are often welcoming and interacting with visitors from out of town. Hayes said the training takes three hours to complete and businesses and their staff have three



months to complete the online session once beginning. “We’re hoping by the first year we’ll have 500 people take this front lines training,” said Hayes. “After we see how year one goes, we’ll kind of grow it and make it a bigger training.” Any individual, or business with staff dealing with the public, can sign up for the training at beourguestingbks.com.

Courtesy: Great Bend Post

Barton Community College Receives Reaffirmation of Accreditation from the Higher Learning Commission

At its meeting on Jan. 10, the Institutional Actions Council of the Higher Learning Commission (HLC) approved continuing the accreditation of Barton Community College without concern.

This approval comes following a site visit from a peer review team this past October. A team of five reviewers from as many states visited the Barton County campus to review Barton operations and met with members of the Barton administration, staff, faculty and students.

"Barton Community College continues to excel as an institution," the review team stated in its final report. "The College's mission is embodied in numerous learning opportunities provided for its students and community members."

Barton Chief Accreditation Officer Myrna Perkins led Barton's preparations for this institution-wide initiative.

"The Barton family's engagement in this visit brought the

Barton story to life," she said. "We put 'community' in community college, and they thought that was top-notch."

Perkins said that Barton's reaffirmation is critical because it allows participation in federal financial aid programs and helps ensure courses meet the accreditations standards of quality, which allows students to transfer earned credits to other institutions more easily.

The final step in the reaffirmation process requires Barton to report its choice of accreditation pathway to HLC for the next reaffirmation, which will be held during the 2032-2033 academic year. The college's accreditation committee will submit a recommendation for approval by the Board of

Trustees at the Jan. 24 meeting.

For more information, contact Chief Accreditation Officer Myrna Perkins at perkinsm@bartonccc.edu or (620) 792-9201



Showing Up Matters for R.E.A.L

GREAT BEND, KS – Attending school regularly is essential to students gaining the academic, social and emotional skills they need to thrive. Chronic absence, no matter its cause, has real life consequences for students, families and communities as a whole. Research shows starting as early as preschool and kindergarten, chronic absence—missing 10% of the academic year (two days per month, or 17 days per school year)—can leave third graders unable to read proficiently, sixth graders struggling with coursework, and high school students off track for graduation.* As schools emerge from the pandemic, chronic absence has increased significantly across the nation. Attendance data from Great Bend Schools found an average of 20.98% of students were chronically absent in 2019. In 2022, Great Bend's chronically absent rate was just below the state average at 25.06%. The difference in this data is an increase of 100 students missing 10% or more of the academic school year.

Why attendance matters:

[AttendanceWorks.org](https://www.attendanceworks.org) identifies three primary challenges absenteeism creates for local businesses.

- **The workforce challenge:** Absenteeism contributes to high school dropout rates, leaving students without the academic credentials and skills needed to compete in a 21st century workforce.
- **The soft skills challenge:** Regular attendance is the precursor to the "soft skills" businesses will continue to expect and require. Students who don't develop the habits associated with good attendance in the early years will find it difficult to develop them as adults.
- **The productivity challenge:** Children who are sick miss school. And their parents miss work. How businesses can help nurture a culture of attendance:
- **Work with a local school to provide incentives for good or improved attendance, such as gift certificates, books, healthy snacks or backpacks.**
- **Educate your employees about the importance of good school attendance.**
- **Display an "Attend Today, Achieve Tomorrow" badge to promote good attendance to your customers or clients in your store or office window – click here to print or request a copy from USD 428 by emailing media@usd428.net.**
- **Support public service organizations that provide resources and support for students and families.**

In the weeks ahead, USD 428 will share a series of public service announcements addressing the importance of attending school with the community. We invite you to follow our social media pages to learn more about the compelling reasons to attend #schooleveryday.

Showing up matters for R.E.A.L. It's an opportunity to:

- **Build Routines**
- **Increase Engagement**
- **Access Resources**
- **Support Learning**

For more information, please contact the USD 428 District Education Center at 620-793-1500 or media@usd428.net.



People on the Move

Tyler Brown Promoted to Laboratory Director at Clara Barton Medical Center

Clara Barton Medical Center is pleased to announce that Tyler Brown, MLT has been promoted to the position of Laboratory Director. Brown has been an employee at Clara Barton since 2017, and a practicing Medical Lab Technician since 2018. Brown was born and raised in Great Bend, KS. After high school, she attended Barton Community College, receiving her Associate of Science and Associate of Medical Laboratory Technology, and went on to become ASCP (American Society for Clinical Pathology) Certified as a Medical Laboratory Technician. Starting as an entry-level Phlebotomist/Laboratory Aide 6 years ago, she was then promoted to Medical Lab Technician after receiving her ASCP certification. In May of 2022, Brown was selected to succeed long-time Laboratory Director, Myrtle Whitmore, after her retirement and has now assumed full director responsibilities. "It is an honor to be selected as Myrtle's successor," said Brown. "I love being part of the Clara Barton family and am excited to lead my lab team to continue creating great patient experiences, one lab test at a time." In addition to her recent promotion at Clara Barton, Brown also recently completed the Kansas Hospital Association Leadership Institute and was selected as a recipient of the Great Bend Tribune's 20 under 40 Award. She is an adjunct instructor for the MLT program and volunteers on the Board of Laboratory Directors at BCC. "We are happy to announce Tyler's promotion and are confident in her capabilities, having been mentored by Myrtle and our exceptional lab technicians. Her compassion and positivity align perfectly with the culture of great employees our community has grown to depend on. We truly look forward to witnessing Tyler's growth as she carries the torch forward, passed on by our great leaders of the past," said Jim Blackwell, Clara Barton Medical Center President/CEO.



Burger Joins Team at Pawnee Valley Medical Associates in Larned

Courtney Burger is relying on her extensive nursing background as she takes on her new position at Pawnee Valley Medical Associates (PVMA), 713 W. 11th. As the new clinic nurse manager, Burger's responsibilities include "helping the clinic run smoothly, while supporting a great team of medical professionals. One priority is to encourage open communications with nurses and physicians so that we can better serve our patients." Even though Burger has been on the job only a short time, she is already impressed with the personnel and services at PVMA, which is part of Pawnee Valley Community Hospital, 923 Carroll. "Pawnee Valley Medical Associates is a trusted medical clinic that I highly recommend," Burger commented. "The healthcare providers and staff members here are truly knowledgeable, and care for and treat their patients like family. "I have enjoyed getting to know each of them, and appreciate the opportunity to expand my nursing skills in this management position." Burger is originally from Haviland and graduated from high school there in 2005. She then graduated from Barton Community College with an associate's degree in nursing in 2009. In May of this year, Burger earned her bachelor's degree in nursing from Rasmussen University in Florida. Previous employment included approximately nine years in a clinic setting. For the past 17 years, Burger worked at the hospital in Great Bend. "Most recently, I was the House Supervisor and Emergency Department nurse," she said. "Throughout my tenure there, I cared for patients in Med-Surg, Special Nursing, the Intensive-Care Unit, Pre-op/Post-Anesthesia Care Unit and Pediatrics. "I will use this varied background to serve our patients and their families. I am so glad to be part of the PVMA clinic." Burger now lives in Larned with her husband, Travis, and son, Kenden. She also has two adult stepsons and one adult stepdaughter. Jewel Davis, PVMA clinic manager, said she and her colleagues "are fortunate to have Courtney join our team. Her nursing skills and caring personality are valuable assets to our clinic."



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FEATURED AMBASSADOR

Amanda Staab
Barton Community College

What brought you to Great Bend? What keeps you here?

Great Bend has always been my rock, my home. Even when I left for a few years, I couldn't stay away for long. The community and everything it offers kept calling me back home, it truly is a special place. They say it takes a village to raise kids and I'm blessed to have an incredible family support system that keeps me here, and in fact, I'm now raising my kids in my childhood home after my parents decided to downsize. I'm excited to start home renovations soon!

Where do you work and what do you do there (describe your role)?

Barton Community College, Communications Strategist As the Communications Strategist I keep track of advertising placement and creative development deadlines, place ad buys and secure media contracts for Barton on various media channels: radio, television, internet, newspaper, and magazine advertisements. I also create Facebook and Google campaigns and I'm always searching for new tools and opportunities to better promote Barton Community College.

What's one thing about you that would surprise people?

I have three kids, Dylan (22), Hattie (10) and Ryan (4), so my title over the years has evolved from Mama to Mommy to Mom to Bruh.

What energizes you and brings you excitement?

Admiral William H. McRaven's famous commencement speech resonates with me and inspires me every day. His ten lessons: 1. Make your bed. If you accomplish the first task of the day well, then the rest of the day has a better chance of going well. Do the little things right! 2. Paddle as a team. 3. Measure a person by the size of their heart and their commitment. 4. You will never be perfect. Keep moving forward. 5. Life's not fair and you will fail often. Don't be afraid to fail. 6. Sometimes you have to go for it; take risks. 7. Face and confront your fears head on. 8. It is in your darkest moments that you will need to be your best. 9. Hope. One person can change the world by giving hope. 10. Never quit.

At what job, would you be terrible?

Hands down I'd make a terrible Phlebotomist. The room suddenly becomes a tilt-a-whirl when I see blood. However, if it would be a good fit for you, we offer a fantastic Phlebotomy program at Barton Community College!



How long have you been a Chamber Ambassador and what do you like most about it

This is my fourth year serving as a Chamber Ambassador. Each and every week I'm still learning something new about our community and I enjoy sharing and promoting local businesses.

About the Ambassadors:

The Great Bend Chamber of Commerce Ambassador Club is made up of 30 men and women from the Great Bend business community who represent the Chamber in a number of ways. They host the weekly Chamber Coffees, attend Business After Hours and Ribbon Cuttings, serve on Chamber committees, and assist with member recruitment and retention efforts.

Learn more: www.greatbend.org/ambassadors



Giving Tree Shares Warmth

Thank you to everyone who joined Stueder Contractor's crew in sharing the gift of warmth with others this Holiday season and into the New Year!! Loads of warm items and donations of \$100+ to help purchase needed items were delivered to USD 428 and the Central KS Dream Center Inc thanks to your contributions. Here's to a

cozy 2023!

Courtesy Photos: Terry Stueder with Alana Blessing, family and student advocate at Park School. Meliesa and Terry Stueder with Elizabeth Pearson, program manager, and Christy Maneth, residential manager of the Dream Center.



Spectrum's Operation Christmas Child

Every year, we at Spectrum CPA Partners, LLC, collect items and monetary donations for Operation Christmas Child. This year, with the help of several donations, we were able to assemble 75 boxes to be sent to underserved children worldwide. We are so grateful for our clients, and even strangers, that donated items in our drop box year round! If you would like to donate to Samaritan's Purse Operation Christmas Child, please feel free to drop of any new toys, clothing or hygiene items (that can fit in a shoebox) to our office at 1400 Polk Street. If you do not know what to buy, you can donate money and let us do the shopping for you. We look forward to even more success in 2023!



You Can Make A Difference

alzheimer's association®

Are you passionate about putting an end to Alzheimer's disease? Do you want to get more involved with the Alzheimer's Association and the Walk to End Alzheimer's? Then we need you! Join your local Great Bend Walk to End Alzheimer's Committee and help grow the movement to end Alzheimer's from the ground up. Committee members play a key role in the success of each Walk to End Alzheimer's event, from getting local companies involved to planning the logistics of event-day. To learn more please, contact Missy Zimmer at mpzimmer@alz.org or call (316) 267-7333 ext. 1188

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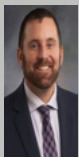
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Barton County Youth Entrepreneurship Challenge Encourages Middle & High School Students to think BIG!

Barton County's third annual Youth Entrepreneurship Challenge is live and looking for more contestants and business mentors. Students in 7th grade through 12th grade in Barton County can submit a business idea or concept by February 22nd in the hopes of taking home cash. This competition, brought to Great Bend by Great Bend Economic Development and the Great Bend Chamber of Commerce, was created to challenge our youth, encourage our business community to partner with and mentor our younger generations, and foster an entrepreneurial spirit, and is a partnership with NetWork Kansas. NetWork Kansas holds regional and state Youth Entrepreneurship Challenges as part of its mission in developing entrepreneurship ecosystems throughout Kansas. The partnership with NetWork Kansas allows YEC contestants the use of VentureDash, the contestant portal. Great Bend Economic Development and the Great Bend Chamber partner on this competition as both organizations are tasked

with strengthening the area's workforce for the business community, and in this case, that means nurturing the next generation's entrepreneurs.

This competition and live trade show will take place at the Great Bend Events Center on March 8th. All participants will share with the public. Students will also present their formal 4-minute presentation to the judges. The judging panel is made up of a wide array of business professionals. The public is invited and encouraged to attend this event to cheer on our student competitors and show their support for the next generation of business ideas. Students learn about writing an executive statement and what is important to share in their 4-minute presentation, but they are also learning some of the soft skills that will help them navigate life in the workforce. A great side effect of this competition is the student competitors gain experience with professional networking with judges, mentors, and the community, as well as building social capital.

After the trade-show portion of the event, the winners will be announced. There is \$2500 in prize money to be divided among the top competitors. Third place will receive \$500, second place will receive \$750, and first place will receive \$1000 and the opportunity to continue onto the state level competition. Audience members will have a chance to vote for their favorite and award one competitor \$250.

BARTON COUNTY YOUTH ENTREPRENEURSHIP CHALLENGE



How students can participate

The competition finale is about three months away, so participants are encouraged to get started on their business plans. Students wanting to join the competition can go to the Great Bend Economic Development, Inc. web page for more information on YEC at www.gbenedinc.com/yec. This page holds sample business plans, links to resources on giving presentations, as well as a few of 2022's contestant interviews. Also, students can join the competition with a link to the VentureDash contestant portal. After a student joins the competition, they will be paired with a business mentor to help them iron-out details, ask them questions, and fine-tune the student's business plan and presentation.

How the community can participate

The community can help in a few ways, such as a sponsor of the live event or a business mentor for a student. Depending on the sponsorship level, sponsors can speak to the contestants and community before we announce the winners at our live event and/or have their logo on all marketing materials. As a business mentor, you are matched with a student, to help them with their business plans and 4-minute presentation. If you/your business would like more information about sponsoring the live event or becoming a business mentor, please reach out to GBED staff at marketing@gbenedinc.com or by calling 620-796-2407.

Great Bend Economic Development's IGNITE Rural Business Entrepreneurship Competition Grows Contestant Pool & Awareness Across Kansas



IGNITE Rural Business awareness campaign has begun! Commercials are airing on TV, streaming, and digitally, along with our organic social media campaigns. Have you seen one yet? We are targeting all Kansans in the hopes of driving more business to Barton County. This competition aims to empower, support, and nurture entrepreneurs in Barton County, promoting creativity and innovation as part of our mission to have a positive impact. Entrepreneurs are encouraged to begin their journey in the competition soon.

Contestants have already started to join the competition over the last few weeks. A few of the contestants are startups and the others are in the concept phase of their businesses. This has been exciting for GBED staff to see the diverse group of entrepreneurs joining this new competition in the hope of taking their business to the next level. While some of the contestants are locals, a few of them are from outside Barton County, and willing to relocate to start their businesses here.

As we get closer to the live event, we will release businesses/names. But for those interested in throwing their hat in the ring, the time is now.



Continued on Page 9

Awards & Accolades

Nine Rosewood Employees Awarded for Combined 90 Years of Service

Longtime employees are essential to the success of every business. At the end of 2022, Rosewood Services recognized nine employees who celebrated milestone anniversaries with the organization. They represent a total of 90 years of service and experience at Rosewood.

Rosewood Services Ranch Manager Eric Hammond achieved 20 years of service. Celebrating anniversaries in Day Services Department were Melissa Andrulis and Teresa Wilson (15 years), along with Autumn Shepherd (10 years) and Amanda Immediato (5 years). Residential Department employees celebrating five-year anniversaries were Carol Arnel, Mary Hunter, and Susan Bowers. Aimee Bailey with Administration Department, was recognized for 10 years of service with Rosewood.

"Employee retention speaks to the health and success of our organization at Rosewood Services," said Rosewood Services Executive Director Tammy Hammond. "Each one of these employees provides purpose-driven care and expertise that provides daily benefits to people with disabilities. Each of them represents years of quality service and dedication to their craft. We are proud and fortunate to have them as members of our team."



MyLawn! Recognizes 2022 Award Winning Team Members

Help us in celebrating, recognizing and acknowledging the hard work and dedication of some very special team members here at myLawn! Turf & Tree! Here are our 2022 Award Winners!

CODY ALLISON - Associate Of The Year -

Cody is one of our longest tenured team members here and it shown in 2022! His ability to stay calm, create plans, train others, and maintain high standards regardless of the obstacles thrown his way was extremely evident throughout his time here, but especially so in 2022! Cody is a mold of what we hope all team members to be. Great job Cody and congratulations!

CASEY SHINLIVER - Newcomer Of The Year -

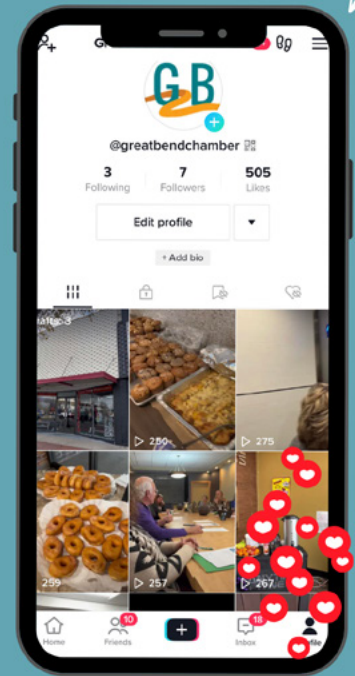
Casey came on board in June with an amazing arsenal of book keeping and office skills that we knew we needed. What we didn't know was how quickly and clearly she would make an impact on our company in such a short period of time and the other talents and gifts that she brought with her. Our future success will be greatly influenced by her gifts! Thank you Casey, congratulations!

CHRISTOPHER MANNING - Gamechanger Of The Year -

Christopher joined us later in the year, completely changing careers to pursue something different. From the moment he came aboard, we realized that we had some holes in the company that needed to be filled. He has challenged and helped reignite what it takes to be a successful company, and for that we are truly grateful and can't wait to see how we grow as a result! Congratulations Christopher!



Check out our Tiktok!



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Continued from Page 7

The more time contestants have to work on your business plan and pitch, the better off they are. The deadline for submitting all materials is June 30th, however, we want those competing to get the support they need. GBED and the IGNITE committee can connect contestants to the Small Business Development Center and Business Mentors from local successful companies to help tighten up the business plan. To those thinking they would like to participate in IGNITE, serious prize money is on the line! \$95,000 in total prize money will be given out at the October 5th live event, with \$50,000 going to the first-place winner. Those interested in competing will not only have the opportunity for exposure of their business, but also assistance from local business professionals. With a major infusion of capital and a year of support, we hope prospective contestants see the real value of joining IGNITE Rural Business. We want to #GrowBartonCounty. With the help of our IGNITE committee as well as NetWork Kansas and the Small Business Development Center, we hope to assist businesses in getting connected to the resources they need to succeed. Also, a big thank you to NetWork Kansas and the use of Venture Dash as the contestant portal. Venture Dash allows contestants to submit materials and track their progress.

How to participate

For details on how to join the IGNITE competition, please go to www.GBEDinc.com/IGNITE for a full list of information, deadlines, and requirements. However, if you would like to get your business involved as a mentor or sponsor the live event, please reach out to GBED President, Sara Arnberger at director@gbedinc.com.



Kansasworks Hosts Virtual Statewide Job Fair

KANSASWORKS will host the next Virtual Statewide Job Fair Wednesday, Feb. 22, 2023 beginning at 8am and ending at 5pm. Employers can register for this upcoming event at <https://app.premiervirtual.com/events/0922d29a-0adb-4183-ac1c-5f9212539b3c/kansasworks-virtual-statewide-job-fair-february-22,-2023> by selecting "Organization" and it will take you to the registration page. If this is your first time on the virtual platform, a set-up wizard will assist you with setting up your booth. The Virtual Statewide job fair will be split up into five workforce areas and eleven sub-categories to make it easier for job seekers to navigate the virtual platform. When you register, PLEASE select ONLY the areas that your company/business has jobs in. There is no charge to participate.

Organization(Employer) Training (set-up & registration) Video-<https://youtu.be/OHFB0cy19hY> Additional trainings with new enhancements are available within your booth.

VIRTUAL STATEWIDE JOB FAIR

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Register Here: bit.ly/3k7r7vR



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Ribbon Cuttings!



Great Bend Housing Authority's New Look

Great Bend Housing Authority had their ribbon cutting on January 19th, to recognize the completion of their new renovations! They would like to thank everyone that came out to celebrate with them! They are currently accepting applications for tenants, you can learn more by visiting their website at: www.gbhaks.com. Want to check out the renovations? Click [here](#) to watch the tiktok!



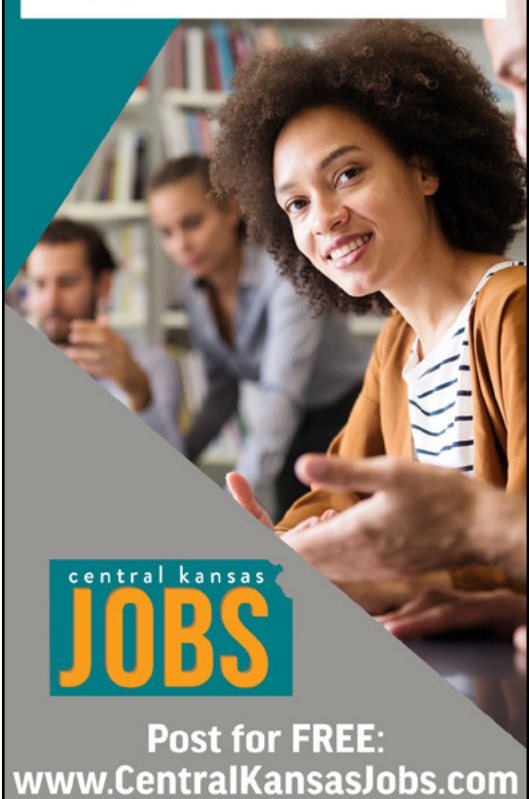
Governor Appoints Hogg to Kansas Volunteer Commission

Kansas Gov. Laura Kelly announced Dec. 6 she had appointed Volunteers in Action of Central Kansas Director Linn Hogg as a Kansas Volunteer Commission commissioner with a term expiring March 25, 2026. The agency prepares a national service plan for the state; ensures outreach to community-based agencies; administration of certain grant programs. "I am excited and honored to be a part of this organization," Hogg said. "My relationship with the Kansas Volunteer Commission has enabled me to grow in my skills as a volunteer manager and gain access to grants that have helped to build the capacity of Volunteers in Action of Central Kansas." Some of those accomplishments include certification as a volunteer administrator and her organization's accreditation as a Service Enterprise Volunteer Center. "Through these steps, Volunteers in Action has continued to broaden our reach and connectivity to the community," Hogg said. "Just recently, we launched a new Volunteer Opportunity software called Get Connected that will be a game changer for volunteers and organizations that utilize volunteers."

The Kansas Volunteer Commission works to expand the opportunities, initiate collaborations, and create opportunities to build resources and strengthen service, mentoring and volunteerism in Kansas, she said. Since 1993, it has been promoting community service by administering grants to the AmeriCorps and Volunteer Generation Fund programs in Kansas, strengthening volunteer centers, and encouraging volunteerism and mentoring. The Kansas Volunteer Commission is a program of the Kansas Department of Education. As for VIA, "our mission is to connect volunteers to unmet needs in the community," Hogg said. Some of the programs sponsored through the agency include Meals on Wheels, Medical Transportation, Medicare counseling, AARP Tax Aid Prep, Senior Food Box distributions, grocery shopping for seniors, American Red Cross blood drives and days of service projects. They also help area non-profit agencies recruit and manage volunteers for their programs.



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www.greatbend.org

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1921



YEARS

2021

Great Bend Dillons Employee Celebrates 30 Years...with a Laugh

Customers at Dillons on 10th Street in Great Bend know pretty fast if Donald Robinson is working. For the past three decades, his boisterous laugh has been part of the grocery-shopping experience locally. Last week, he officially celebrated 30 years with the store...and of sharing laughs with customers. "If I actually think about it, when I was a lot younger, I wanted to be a comedian like Richard Pryor," he said. "Now since I think about it, it's like the customers are my audience. That was the closest I could get to that dream, I guess."



A Great Bend native, Robinson began working at Dillons as part of a work program for high school students. He was one of eight kids in the program, and the only one that lasted. "Of course, out of the eight of us, I was the only one that kept my job," he said. "That is funny because I was the laziest kid but still kept my job." Robinson carried out groceries when he first started. A previous store manager tried to get him to check, but Robinson was not interested. For nearly two decades now, Robinson has helped run the U-Scan self-checkout lanes.

But his biggest asset to the company may be the laugh. Customers far and wide know the laugh, and many do what they can to get a chuckle out of the 47-year-old. For Robinson, the laugh is nothing new. "The laugh started when I was in elementary," he said. "It was just something I got in trouble for a lot, boy, especially with Homer Kruckenberg. He didn't like my laugh when it was test time in class."

For one of his favorite store memories, Robinson goes all the way back to his starting days when a customer routinely came in and told the employees how to go about their jobs. "I still, to this day, don't know his name," Robinson said. "He came into the store, and he also came into the little one. I called him the 'Dillons Monitor,' because he solely came in there, not to shop, but to tell you how to do your job. The first couple of weeks, I thought he was a corporate person." In his downtime, Robinson enjoys playing video games, and he's up to speed on current TV shows. For his 30 years, Dillons celebrated with a cake, complete with Robinson's likeness on top. He also had the opportunity to shop from a gift catalog, going with an iGrill Bluetooth meat thermometer.

Courtesy: Great Bend Post

Shop Talk in 60 Recap:



On January 17, 2023, business owners, directors, and employees all alike came together for the second Shop Talk in 60 meeting. This open-agenda format allowed for idea sharing & problem solving for our area businesses. Meeting topics included:

- Employee Incentives
- Innovative Wage Structures
- Social Media Marketing
- Peer Business Referrals
- Mural Tours
- Community signage
- Business & Education Tours



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Drawing to be held March 30, 2023
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Join Us **CHAMBER COFFEE THURSDAY** **CHAMBER COFFEE SCHEDULE**

Every Thursday! Doors open at 9am, program at 9:30am

Can't make it in person? Watch on the Chamber's Facebook Page or YouTube Channel

February 2nd, 2023

MATTRESS SOLUTIONS W/ RIBBON CUTTING
3511 10th St.

Millers of Claflin is a 5th generation, family owned business that has served Kansans since 1903. They have the largest selection in home furnishing from Kansas City to Denver and now they are expanding again. Mattress Solutions, the most complete selection of mattresses, adjustable bases, and massage chairs is now open in Great Bend.

February 9th, 2023

AMBASSADOR COFFEE
1321 Main St. (Equity Bank)

Ambassador Club members assist the Chamber with networking events, ribbon cuttings, ground breakings, 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.

February 16th, 2023

LEGACY FINANCIAL SOLUTIONS W/ RIBBON CUTTING
2001 Broadway Ave.

Legacy Financial Solutions formally, Hiss Sherman Wealth Management, believe their clients can rely on them for progressive knowledge, strategic innovation, and most importantly integrity while helping to preserve your wealth.

February 23rd, 2023

BARTON COUNTY COMMISSIONERS
1400 Main St. Rm. 106 (Commissioner's Chambers - Courthouse)

The Barton County Board of Commissioners is a five-person elected body that has overall responsibility for county governments, setting policy and performing executive and legislative functions. Commissioners serve four-year terms, with two of the five commissioners being elected in the same year, and the other three commissioners elected two years later. Commission terms begin the second Monday in January after the election. The Board of County Commissioners is the only locally elected body that represents all citizens of Barton County regardless of their residence inside or outside of city boundaries.

March 2nd, 2023

PILOT CLUB
2920 10th St.

Great Bend Pilot Club is a member of Pilot International (PI) which is a community - based volunteer service organization founded in 1921 in Macon, Georgia, on the principles of "Friendship and Service". With more than 7,500 members in 375 Pilot Clubs, Pilots are located in the U.S., the Bahamas, Japan and South Africa. Pilots provide financial and hands-on support for national and local initiatives.



3307 10th Street • Great Bend, KS 67530

McDonald's

is providing coffee for Chamber of Commerce coffees.

HIGHLIGHTED FEBRUARY EVENTS IN GREAT BEND

- 1-21...I Love Great Bend 2023 Valentine Giveaway, Meet at participating stores during store hours, visit exploregreatbend.com for more information.
- 2...Chamber Coffee & Ribbon Cutting: Mattress Solutions, 3511 10th St. Doors open at 9am, program at 9:30am. Can't make it? Watch online on the Chamber's Facebook Page or Youtube Channel.**
- 2...Dancing with the Cougars Fundraiser, Studio 34 (245 NE 30 Rd.) 6:30pm
- 4...Golden Belt Humane Society/Adoption event & fundraiser, Bomgaars, 10am-2pm
- 4...Heart of Kansas Heart Walk 2023, Activity Center (2715 18th St.) 9am-11am
- 4...String Masterclass and Concert: Jopara Ensemble, BCC (245 NE 30 Rd.) 4pm
- 9...Chamber Coffee: Ambassador Coffee, 1321 Main St. (Equity Bank). Doors open at 9am, program at 9:30am. Can't make it? Watch online on the Chamber's Facebook Page or Youtube Channel.**
- 10...VFW Post 3111 Karaoke Night!, 504 Washington St., 9pm-1am
- 11...CASA Chocolate Auction, Events Center,
- 12...Fairytale Creative Camp for Kids, BCC (245 NE 30 Rd.), 2pm-5pm
- 14...United Way Box of Love, Great Bend Chamber of Commerce (1125 Williams St.), 8am-5pm
- 16...Chamber Coffee & Ribbon Cutting: Legacy Financial Solutions, 2001 Broadway Ave. Doors open at 9am, program at 9:30am. Can't make it? Watch online on the Chamber's Facebook Page or Youtube Channel.**
- 16...Great Bend Evening Lions Club 12th Annual Ham & Bean Dinner, Knights of Columbus (723 South Main St.), 4:30pm-7pm
- 19...VFW Brunch, 504 Washington St., 9:30am-12:30am
- 23...Chamber Coffee: Barton County Commissioners, 1400 Main St. Rm.106 (Commissioners Chambers), Doors open at 9am, program at 9:30am. Can't make it? Watch online on the Chamber's Facebook Page or Youtube Channel.**
- 24...Barton Cougar Dance Day, BCC (245 NE 30 Rd.), 9:30am-4pm
- 24...Military & First Responders Night Out, 916 Williams St., 6pm-8pm
- 25...101st Annual Chamber Awards Night, Great Bend Events Center (3111 10th St.), 6pm-9pm**
- 26...Golden Belt Community Concert, The Patsy Cline Project, Great Bend Municipal Auditorium, 7:30pm-9:30pm

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GREAT BEND
CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

Recurring Events:

Great Bend City Council Meetings, 1st & 3rd Mondays, 1209 Williams St., 6:30pm

Barton County Commission Meetings, Every Wednesday, Barton County Courthouse, 1400 Main St, Rm 106, 9am

Can't make it to the Weekly Chamber Coffee, watch online: [The Chamber's Facebook Page](#) or [Youtube Channel](#)

Visit greatbend.org/events/calendar for a full list of great events taking place throughout the month!