

A MONTHLY PUBLICATION OF THE
GREAT BEND CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

business journal

1921



YEARS 2021

2020 Award Winners Recognized during Awards Night CHAMBER

Mind Sculpt Games Named Business of the Year

For their impressive growth and adaptation despite economic uncertainty, Mind Sculpt Games has been named the 2020 Business of the Year from the Great Bend Chamber of Commerce. Owners Darcy and Daniel Leech accepted the award during a surprise presentation in mid-February, with the public announcement being made during the Chamber's

virtual Awards Night ceremony on Saturday, February 20, 2021.

Mind Sculpt Games was founded in 2017, selling primarily online in the very beginning. Darcy grew up trading sports cards with her father, Randy Bartz, and selling collectors' items on eBay. Her dream as a young woman was to someday open her very own trading card store. Over the years, Darcy's interests

expanded into other types of cards and games, and she even met her husband, Daniel, playing face-to-face games at an event in Salina. As the couple shared their passion for face-to-face games, they soon shared the dream of opening their own store together.

Both built successful careers in education, teaching in the public

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Randy and Sandy Smith named Citizens of the Year

Randy and Sandy Smith were recognized as the 2020 Citizens of the Year by the Great Bend Chamber of Commerce for their lifetime of joy, caring, and good deeds brought to Great Bend. Sandy was posthumously recognized while Randy tearfully accepted the award surrounded by his friends, colleagues and late son, David Smith's wife, Heather Davis, and their children. Smith accepted

the award during a surprise presentation in mid-February, with the public announcement being made during the Chamber's virtual Awards Night on Saturday, February 20, 2021.

If you don't immediately recognize the names, it may be because many have known them as simply Santa and Mrs. Claus. Quite literally, Randy has been the Santa to Sandy's Mrs. Claus over the years.

As husband and wife for more than 50 years, the Smiths portrayed the jolly ole' elf and his splendid, better half, for 35 of those years. Randy and Sandy Smith visited homes, businesses, and community events each holiday season until the wee hours of Christmas Eve.

The Smiths brought smiles to hundreds of people, young

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Andrea Bauer named NextGen Leader of the Year

For consistently and selflessly working to improve the Great Bend community, Andrea Bauer was awarded the 2020 NextGen Leader of the Year award from the Great Bend Chamber of Commerce. Surrounded by her family, Bauer received the award during a surprise presentation in mid-February, with the public announcement being made during the Chamber's virtual

Awards Night on Saturday, February 20, 2021.

Andrea didn't wait until adulthood to start leading and advocating for her community. Even as a child, she was already stepping up to do her part and represent her hometown. As a member of 4H, she was active in youth leadership at a district level. She and her twin sister, Ashlea, were talented vocalists and performed all

over the Midwest. They even starred in a television commercial for Delp's Christmas Tree farm, helping draw visitors to the area.

After graduating from GBHS in 2002, she attended Barton Community College for a year before departing for Oklahoma City University where she earned

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NextGen Continued from Page 1



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her Bachelors of Science in Entertainment Business. It was during her time at OCU that she began to excel in public relations, event planning, and fundraising. In addition to classroom learning, college experiences would take her to England for a summer study abroad program, to Taipei Taiwan where she managed over 300 costumes for 25 dancers during an international performing tour, and to the Oklahoma State Capitol where she gained civic leadership insight through Oklahoma Intercollegiate Legislature. Twice she was recognized with the University's Cobalt Award as the Top Sophomore and the Top Senior in her degree program.

After completing her college education, Andrea put her passion for her alma mater to work as the University Advancement and Event Specialist for OCU, where she produced a wide variety of events and fundraising initiatives. Her reputation as a talented and visionary event planner opened doors for her next role as an Event Producer for EPIC Entertainment at Starlight Theatre in Kansas City. Over a span of about five years, Andrea handled contracts for big-name organizations such as Bill Self's Assists Foundation, Bayer Animal Health, Symphony in the Flint Hills, and many others.

Andrea married her high school sweetheart, Rob, in 2009 and the couple remained in the Kansas City area for several years while they built their careers and their resumes. "Andrea has always impressed me, because she can handle so much and she makes it look so easy," Rob says. "Just one example was an annual fundraising luncheon she helped establish - 'Women Who Change the Heart of the City' benefitting City Union Mission, a non-profit homeless shelter in downtown Kansas City. That event continued for 10 years, generating tremendous support for the organization from notable donors - Helzberg Diamonds and the Hunt family just to name a couple."

Managing six-figure budgets and coordinating several hundred people to execute an event contract was a challenging task that many would shy away from, but Andrea's natural talent for communication, her detailed focus on timeline management, and her ability to catalyze change created a lot of success for her professionally.

In 2012, Rob and Andrea decided to move home to Great Bend to put down roots and start a family. Andrea brought her many talents to the Great Bend Chamber of Commerce, where she was hired as the Director of Sales & Member Events. Not only did Andrea help grow the Chamber membership numbers, she also developed many of the sponsorship programs and networking events that are still in place today. She was pivotal in the success of the Chamber's fundraising initiatives, such as the Annual Meeting & Banquet, the Farm

& Ranch Expo, and the Big Bend Bike Rally and Hahn Brothers Supercross Shootout that drew thousands of spectators to Great Bend each year. During her time at the Chamber, she also played a critical role in the growth of the Barton County Young Professionals program. In 2018, Bauer left the Chamber to serve as the Public Information Director for USD 428, and also serves on the Education Foundation Board as a part of her role for the school district.

"Andrea has such an impressive professional resume, but that's not why she's being recognized with this award," says Megan Barfield, President of the Great Bend Chamber of Commerce. "Outside of work, Andrea has done so much to advocate for the improvement of our community, some of which people probably don't even realize. She doesn't do it for the recognition, but she deserves it all the same."

Andrea is an active member of the Barton County Young Professionals group, the Prairie Godmothers, and First United Methodist Church. She was instrumental in the launch and growth of the evening MOPS group here in Great Bend, a group for mothers of small children to grow in their faith and connect with other parents. She also serves on the Great Bend Rec Commission Board and serves as an Ambassador for the Great Bend Chamber of Commerce. Because she is passionate about education and civic engagement, she volunteered on the Committee for Safe Schools in 2019. Her newest volunteer project is just getting off the ground now, where she is serving as co-chair for the Barton Arts Movement (BAM), an initiative to create community pride through public art and murals throughout Barton County.

"I am honored and humbled to receive this award, especially when I feel that the work I do in the community is just part of being an engaged citizen and part of creating a better future," Bauer says. "It was really special receiving the surprise news with my oldest son there to see it. And then getting to talk to him about why it's important that we all do our part."

When asked about what inspires Andrea to give so much of her time and talents as a volunteer, Bauer says, "Something I try not just to say, but to actually do, is use my voice to be a positive advocate for Great Bend. Yes, there will be things that aren't perfect, but if we all can be a cheerleader for the things we love about our community, we can put our hearts and our hands to work to make things better for the next generation."

Andrea and her husband, Rob, live in Great Bend with their three sons - Brock (7), Wesley (4), and Mason (2). In her limited free time, Andrea enjoys crafting, spending time with family, and traveling.

Citizen of the Year Continued from Page 1

and old alike, with a tireless energy knowing people counted on them year after year. As a Christmas City, the Great Bend couple responded happily, never asking for money. Any appearance donations the Smiths received was given to local organizations or to families in need.

Appearances included many years of attending the Home for the Holidays Festival and Parade while riding downtown in a horse-drawn carriage, helping the Mayor light the official Christmas Tree in Jack Kilby Square. In 2017, the couple was recognized as Grand Marshals during Great Bend's annual holiday parade for their commitment in serving as Santa and Mrs. Claus.

Sandy spent a lifetime helping those with developmental disabilities, serving as guardian to her sister, Kandis. Sandy was an original employee of Rosewood Services, starting with the agency when it opened in May 1998. She became the first manager of Rosewood Furniture Gallery when it opened in November 2001, helping workers with disabilities for a dozen years before she retired in February 2013.

Sandy was named an "Outstanding Service Individual" in 2010 for her work in helping people with developmental disabilities. She attended the Governor's Excellence Awards Ceremony in Topeka to receive her award from Kansas Gov. Mark Parkinson.

Even in retirement, she continued to help those with disabilities, serving as board chairman for the Rosewood Roots & Wings Foundation. Sandy also found time to serve on boards for League of Women Voters and the Great Bend Recreation Commission.

Rosewood Services founder, Tammy Hammond shares, "They viewed their service as a

contribution to their community, a contribution of the most valuable kind, the contribution of their time."

"I had the pleasure of working closely with this couple for many, many years. Sandy became one of my first employees when I opened Rosewood," Hammond continued. "Unfortunately, Sandy passed away this summer (2020), but her smile and cheer will continue to echo in our hearts long into the future."

Randy has served the community in law enforcement for the past 52 years with the Barton County Sheriff's Office and Kansas Bureau of Investigation. Even in retirement, he currently serves part-time for the Barton County Sheriff's Office. His influence in local law enforcement is ever present today, having taught and mentored the next generation of law enforcement professionals while he served as coordinator and instructor of Barton Community College's Criminal Justice program for nearly a decade.

In addition to his service with the Barton County Sheriff's Office and playing Santa Claus, Randy can also be found playing the rodeo clown during the annual Rosewood Rodeo. Just this last December, with Sandy, his Mrs. Claus, close in his heart, Randy donned his red robe and white beard to make a surprise holiday visit for those onboard Great Bend's new Dolly Trolley Company during her inaugural Holiday Light Tour.

Normally a man of many words, according to friends, Randy Smith was at a loss with the honored recognition and award in hand, "Thank you all. It has been a pleasure doing it all [serving the community]. I've got an outstanding family that's helped put this together and has held us together."

Deck the lawns with Cards on Yards

Amanda Jolley, Cards on Yards owner, wants Great Bend to know the upcoming months contain many opportunities to create unique memories for your loved ones. With Birthdays, Mother's Day and graduations upon us, Cards on Yards is ready to deck out your yard with custom messages - plus, the set up and tear down are all done for you! All you have to do is enjoy the smiles and moments created to accent your festivities. Mention this story for 10% off your first yard card. Follow us on Facebook at Facebook.com/cardsonyardsgreatbend or call to schedule your Cards on Yards at 316-213-9043.



Outlook Business Journal

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Golden Belt receives National recognition



LOCAL ORGANIZATION ACCREDITED WITH RIGOROUS PHILANTHROPIC STANDARDS

Golden Belt Community Foundation recently received re-accreditation with the nation's highest standard for philanthropic excellence. National Standards for U.S. Community Foundations® establish legal, ethical, effective practices for community foundations everywhere.

"Meeting the National Standards benchmarks is a rigorous, comprehensive process," said Randy Royster, board member of the Council on Foundations. "This accreditation is a significant accomplishment that indicates Golden Belt Community Foundation demonstrates a commitment to transparency, quality, integrity and accountability as it carries out its mission."

The National Standards for U.S. Community Foundations® program requires community foundations to document their policies for donor services, investments, grantmaking and administration. With over 500 community foundations already accredited nationwide, the program is

designed to provide quality assurance to donors, as well as to their legal and financial advisors.

"This is important to our donors," said Christy Tustin,

Executive Director. "When people make a charitable bequest or establish a fund, they are putting their trust in us. They are counting on us to manage the investment wisely and honor their charitable wishes."

Golden Belt Community Foundation offers a range of charitable funds, allowing donors to advance a cause, support an individual organization or provide flexible support for community needs. In addition to affirming the organization's philanthropic services, the accreditation validates Golden Belt Community Foundation's grantmaking practices for the nonprofit community.

National Standards for U.S. Community Foundations is the first program of its kind for charitable foundations in the United States. The Community Foundations National Standards Board is a supporting organization of the Council on Foundations and is responsible for the quality, value, and integrity of compliance with National Standards. For more information on the National Standards Board, visit its website at www.cfstandards.org.

#ZeroReasonsWhy campaign at the Center, sign up by March 12

#ZeroReasonsWhy (#ZRW) is a teen-led storytelling and community mobilization campaign to drive peer-to-peer conversations, remove the stigma surrounding mental health struggles, and expand suicide prevention efforts.

There are #ZeroReasonsWhy a teen should struggle alone. When you ask teens, they say that by removing the stigma, more teens are likely to ask for help and participate in programs offered at their schools and community mental health centers. We are excited to share the #ZeroReasonsWhy Campaign at The Center. They are accepting sign-ups online: <https://thecentergb.org/zero-reasons-why/>
JOIN THE #ZRW CAMPAIGN AT THE CENTER!

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Questions? Email Julie Kramp at JulieK@TheCenterGB.org about how you can get involved.



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HIGHLIGHTED EVENTS IN MARCH

- 4...Barton County Youth Entrepreneur Challenge from 11:30am-1pm at Great Bend Events Center, 3111 10th Street in Great Bend
- 4...Chamber Coffee: TCI Answering Service, 5810 Anchor Way in Great Bend, Program @9:30am on the Chamber's Facebook Page or You Tube Channel
- 4...Ribbon Cutting, 1st Annual Barton County Youth Entrepreneur Challenge, Great Bend Events Center, 3111 10th Street in Great Bend @11:30 am
- 11...Virtual Chamber Coffee: Pilot Club, Program @9:30am on the Chamber's Facebook Page or You Tube Channel
- 11...Ladies Night Out, St. Patty's Day
- 12...USD 428-No School, Teacher Grading/Collaboration
- 12...Speed Networking KS-Barton County from 9-10:30am
- 13...Great Bend Virtual Legislative Coffee @10am via Zoom
- 13...Vets Elite Disc Golf Tournament, Veteran's Memorial Park
- 14...Daylight Savings Time Starts
- 15-19...USD 428-No School, Spring Break
- 16...Central Kansas Partnership Meeting, Barton County Courthouse @11am
- 17...St. Patrick's Day
- 18...Virtual Chamber Coffee: Animal Medical Center, 622 McKinley Street in Great Bend, Program @9:30am on the Chamber's Facebook Page or You Tube Channel
- 18...Ribbon Cutting: Essential Elements LLC, 3108 10th Street in Great Bend, @10:30am
- 20...Eagle Radio's Home and Garden Expo, Great Bend Events Center, 3111 10th Street in Great Bend
- 20...Dilly & Doc Spring Pop Up Market, 1119 Main St. in Great Bend from 10am-4pm
- 22...Chamber Chat: What's Up Great Bend!, Virtually @2pm on the Chamber's Facebook Page or You Tube Channel
- 23-25...KANSASWORKS Virtual Job Fair
- 24-26...Wings & Wetlands Virtual Festival 2021 via Zoom
- 25... Virtual Chamber Coffee: Great Bend Coffee LLC, Program @9:30am on the Chamber's Facebook Page or You Tube Channel
- 25...Ribbon Cutting: Aflac-Heather Nicolet, 2205 Washington Avenue in Great Bend, @10:30am
- 26...Family Crisis Center's Bunco Night
- 27...Pawesome Easter Egg Hunt, Great Bend Dog Park, Veteran's Memorial Park @1pm

Recurring Events:

Great Bend City Council Meetings, 1st & 3rd Mondays, Great Bend Event Center, 6:30pm
Barton County Commission Meetings, Every Monday, Barton County Courthouse, 1400 Main St, Rm 106, 9am
Visit greatbend.org/events/calendar for a full list of great events taking place throughout the month!

Virtual Chamber Events (Chamber Chat & Virtual Coffees) can be found: via Facebook (www.facebook.com/gbcoc) or YouTube (tinyurl.com/ybepgrt6)

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Ribbon Cuttings!



The Chamber Staff and Ambassador's Club welcomed DAT Fitness to the Chamber and the business community with a ribbon cutting. Dave Tudor is the owner and trainer of DAT Fitness, with 8 years of experience as an ISSA-Certified Personal Trainer. His passion is helping clients achieve their fitness goals and making sure they enjoy their journey along the way. He offers professional training, as well as supplements and nutrition counseling. Open 6 days a week (Monday - Thursday 5:00 a.m. - 8:00 p.m., Friday 5:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m., Saturday 8:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.). For more information on DAT Fitness find them on Facebook, call: 620-617-0159, or 926 Main Street.

2021 Virtual Festival

The 2020 Wings & Wetlands Festival is going virtual! Scheduled for March 24-26, 2021, registrants will have access to a series of live zoom classes, as well as, live socials and on-demand web resources. Registration is \$20 at <http://www.wingsandwetlands.com>.



"We are excited to continue the Wings & Wetlands tradition this year, even without gathering in person at our awesome wetlands. From health and humor to bird identification and diversity, the line-up of speakers and resources is sure to speak to anyone interested in birds, Kansas wetlands, and conservation, and will get everyone excited for the upcoming migration season," said Curtis Wolf, director of the Kansas Wetlands Education Center.

Live Zoom programs will be offered each evening. Kenn Kaufman, renowned field guide author, naturalist, and artist, will headline the evening presentations with a program titled Kansas Wetlands: Crossroads of the Bird World. Alvaro Jaramillo, biologist, conservationist and guide, will present on the psychological benefits of birding. Sharon "The Bird Chick" Stiteler, will provide a comical presentation titled Today's Office. Other presenters and topics include Bob Gress with The Diversity of Birds on Kansas Wetlands, Gene Young with Shorebird Identification, Jason Wagner with Past and Future Management of Cheyenne Bottoms Wildlife Area, Mike Oldham with Overview of Quivira NWR, Chuck Otte with Be a Better Birder: Techniques and Tricks for the Beginning Birder, Pat Silovsky with Masters of the Sky: Raptors, and Sharon Stiteler with SmartPhone Birding.

Beyond the scheduled presentations, there will also be interactive Zoom socials each evening to allow participants time to interact with fellow bird enthusiasts. Various on-demand web links will also provide registrants with added birding skills, local birding information, and advice for planning your next trip to the central Kansas wetlands.

Numerous organizations help organize the event, including the Kansas Wetlands Education Center, the Great Bend Convention and Visitors Bureau, Kansas Department of Wildlife, Parks, and Tourism, The Nature Conservancy, and Kansas Birding Festival, Inc. For more information, full schedule of events, and registration, visit <http://www.wingsandwetlands.com> or contact the KWEC at 1-877-243-9268.



Left to right: Yvonne Clawson (with the company for 23 years), Taylor Wright, Charles Bortz, Matt Kurtz, Mayra Kurtz, Devon King (with the company 6 years), and Cathy Vonfeldt (with the company for 15 years).

Second Generation Continues Family-owned Business

When his parents decided to retire, Matt Kurtz stepped up to the engraving plate to ensure that Identifications would continue to serve long-time clients and welcome all newcomers. Matt and his wife, Mayra, assumed ownership of the downtown Great Bend business in November 2019. Identifications, 1411-1413 Main, offers engraving, screen printing, embroidery, advertising and promotional products, and award and recognition items.

When Jenny and Larry Kurtz opened Identifications in 1995 “there were several other small businesses that were doing the same things we are doing now,” Matt said. “But they were not under one roof. “So, my parents educated themselves and bought all the necessary equipment to build an amazing business. And we continue to build on their success every day.”

The original home of the local family business was Lakin and Kansas. It remained there for a few years before moving a couple of blocks to a new location where it remains today. Customers include individuals, schools, colleges, hospitals and sports teams. Identifications also accommodates family reunions with specialized t-shirts, signs and other mementos.

“School sports programs and online sales are huge parts of our business,” Matt commented. “If anything, COVID-19 has boosted our online sales. However, we want everyone to know they can visit us in person too. Customers are always welcome.”

While the company mainly accommodates a local and area clientele, Identifications has quite a few out-of-state customers, including one in Costa Rica.

“We truly appreciate the support we receive in Great Bend and all the surrounding communities, as well as our out-of-area customers,” Matt said.



“We pride ourselves on keeping our customers happy – whether they are regular visitors or those stopping in for the first time.

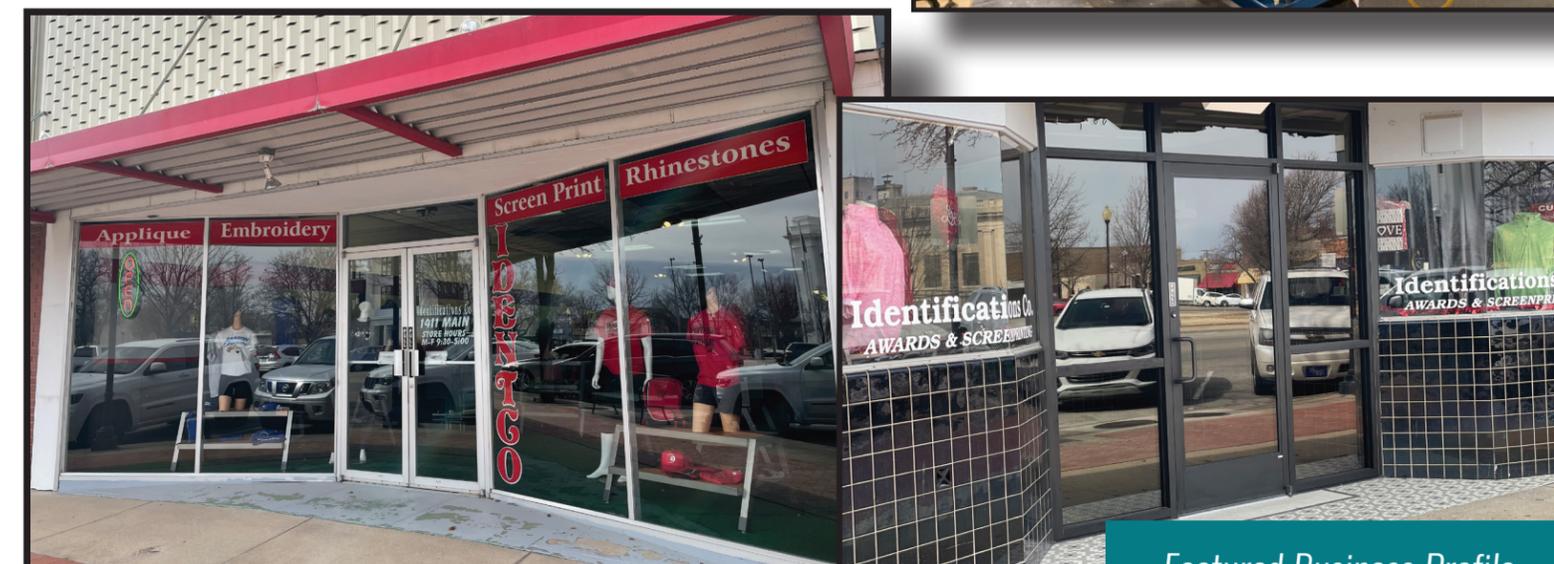
“We especially appreciate everyone working with us during 2020, which was a difficult year for all of us,” he added. “Those who shop locally have our gratitude.”

The Kurtz family is proud of its continued success but Matt said he and Mayra are well aware of the vital role their employees play every day.

“Mayra and I realize that our staff is the most important part of our company,” Matt said. “They are the reason we are so successful and thriving. It is gratifying to know we all share the same vision. We want to grow the company to the next level.”

Matt and Mayra employ five other people. Some staff members are bilingual.

Matt also emphasized that Great Bend has been a good place to do business over the years. “This continues today. We wouldn’t want to be anyplace else.”





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Staff commits over \$100,000 to hospital project

The Ellinwood Hospital Foundation celebrated the staff at Ellinwood Hospital and Clinic with a superhero parade through the hospital after the staff pledged \$103,168 to an upcoming build project at the hospital and clinic in Ellinwood, skyrocketing over their goal of \$60,000. The theme of the week was “Be Your Own Hero.”

“The generosity of our staff has been inspirational for years through the Employee Support Campaign of the Foundation,” reports Kile Magner, CEO of the hospital and clinic. He explains the annual campaign as a fundraising effort each year to work on a small project that the employees choose each year. “This year, with the prospect of a new facility on the horizon, they have answered the call and they’ve shown their overwhelming support of the project. They took it to an entirely new level this time.”

The employees were asked to pledge donations to the capital campaign effort of the Foundation, donating in small amounts through payroll deduction over the length of five years.

Lindsey Bogner, executive director of the Ellinwood Hospital Foundation, explained that by making it easier to give, they hoped to see more involvement and more funds raised. “We have employees throughout the facility doing what they can to provide for the community. The staff here have always provided kind and compassionate care to patients, but they are looking at the well-being and comfort of patients and the economic impact of the



Pam Kaspar and Cynthia Vander Meer, Ellinwood Clinic receptionists, celebrate the fundraising efforts with the parade float and cookies.

hospital and clinic to lay the groundwork of this project that will impact Ellinwood and Barton County for generations to come.”

The Foundation is raising funds through a capital campaign called “Building a Healthy Tomorrow” and is putting together the leadership council and information necessary for the effort in response to the work being done by hospital administration and the Ellinwood Hospital District board. Over the last two years, the administration and board members have been working through extensive research, financial studies, preliminary design,

and other due diligence to develop a plan and take steps to the consideration of a new hospital and clinic facility to be built on the existing hospital campus. The final pieces of the development of the immensely complicated project are coming together this winter/spring.

Education will be an important part of the project and the hospital team understands the community will want to ask questions and be informed. “There are so many moving parts to a project of this size; it’s been important to make sure we had the answers before we asked for the questions the community will have,” said Magner. “The plans are being finalized, the funding mechanisms are being organized, and the timeline is coming together. Now, we can start moving forward with the community education pieces. We ask for grace as we work around the crazy challenges that COVID-19 sometimes gives us.”

Wheatland Electric Provides \$5K to Complete Affordable Housing Study

Wheatland Electric Cooperative Inc., is providing \$5,000 to Great Bend Economic Development to assist with a local housing study.

As a member-owned cooperative, Wheatland Electric is guided by several cooperative principles, including concern for community. This principle encourages us to work toward the sustainable development of the communities we serve.

The housing assessment, which will be completed by RDG Planning & Design, a national firm, is designed to encourage affordable, safe housing in the Great Bend community.

The study, which will cost approximately \$10,000 total, will take at least 60–90 days to complete, according to Sara Hayden, president of Great Bend Economic Development.

The City of Great Bend is covering the remaining \$5,000 cost of the housing assessment, which is set to begin in late February or early March.



Regan Reif, member services and key accounts manager (right), presents a \$5,000 check to Sara Hayden, president of Great Bend Economic Development. The funds will help cover the cost of a housing assessment planned by GBED and the City of Great Bend.



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Promotions & New Hires:

MPIRE Realty Group's Jessica Milsap completes requirements to become Associate Broker

MPIRE Realty Group is excited to announce that Jessica Milsap has completed the requirements to become an Associate Broker. "This is a large accomplishment in the real estate profession," says Aaron Andrews, Owner of MPIRE Realty, "Jessica has proven to show great leadership and knowledge in her career over the past several years. Her dedication to real estate is exemplified with this new achievement."

Jessica has been with MPIRE since 2017, prior to joining MPIRE she was with Coldwell Banker. She is currently serving in the community as a Great Bend Chamber Ambassador



Jessica Milsap



and an active member of noon Lions Club. She has previously served as a Great Bend city councilman and president of Great Bend Economic Development. "Over the past years I have worked hard to provide first time homebuyers, homeowners, and investors with a number of services that would better help them navigate all their real estate needs. I am excited to journey into the next level of real estate. If you know me, you know that I am dedicated to being active in my profession and always striving to provide excellent service to all my customers."

Keller Real Estate, Inc. welcomes Lisa Neeland

Lisa is a native of Great Bend, graduating from Great Bend High School. She continued her education at Fort Hays State University and graduated with a Bachelor of Science and Master of Science degrees in elementary education and early childhood education. Upon graduation, she moved back to the Great Bend area and began teaching. Shortly after that, she married her husband, Steve. Together, they have two grown children, Tanner and Allison.

Lisa is passionate about education for the young and old, which is reflective in the many classes she has taken. In 2020, during the pandemic, she decided to learn more about real estate. She has

always been interested in this field, and as she says, "always looking to see what is available." She is familiar with the Great Bend area and the schools within the community.



Lisa Neeland

"We are very pleased to have Lisa join our group. She will be a true professional explaining and guiding her customers through the real estate process", Kevin Keller, Broker at Keller Real Estate, Inc. Along with beginning her career in real estate, she continues to teach elementary school at Holy Family School in Great Bend. She is excited about real estate and is certain that she can help you find the perfect home within your budget. To contact Lisa call 620-793-0200 or email lisa@kelleragency.com.

Randy Cobb retires from Sunflower Diversified Services board

Randy Cobb had been familiar with Sunflower Diversified Services for a while and decided he wanted to advocate for the non-profit agency that supports children and adults with disabilities and delays.

Therefore, he sought a position on the board of directors and served for a total of 17 years during two terms. Cobb, Lyons, recently retired from the board.

He also shared two pieces of advice for anyone who becomes a board member.

"First, a board member must do everything possible to ensure Sunflower continues to help clients achieve as much independence in their daily lives as possible," Cobb said. "This includes employment and community involvement."

"Second, a board member should always, always, always keep a watchful eye on the financial health of the organization."

Cobb's first stint on the board began in 1997. He has watched the number of clients grow and supported expansions into enhanced services.

"For example, Sunflower has its roots in the 1960s when it began offering children's services and today our Early Education Center and Incredible Years Preschool honor those beginnings," Cobb commented. "They offer many programs for children and families and recently enhanced our local autism services. This is a wonderful addition to our area."

"Randy has a deep understanding of Sunflower's roots and its reason for existing - to help individuals with delays and disabilities succeed," Prescott said. "I am glad he is a phone call away."

Jim Johnson, former executive director, said "Randy truly believes in Sunflower's mission. He has supported expanded services for infants and toddlers and been a strong proponent of independent living for adults. He will be missed on the board."

Sunflower serves infants, toddlers and adults in Barton, Pawnee, Rice, Rush and Stafford counties. It is in its 55th year.



Randy Cobb, center, is recognized for his 17 years of serving on the Sunflower Diversified Services Board of Directors. Sunflower Chief Executive Officer Jon Prescott, left, and Board President Scott Donovan present Cobb with a plaque and lifetime pass to the non-profit agency's Charity Gala.

Congratulations!

PAWESOME EASTER EGG HUNT

WHERE: Veteran's Memorial Park
Event will be held near the Dog Park
WHAT: Easter Egg Hunt for your pups
WHEN: March 27, 2021
FEE: \$5 per dog
TIME: 1:00 PM (Registration Opens)
1:15 PM - Small Dog Hunt
2:00 PM - Large Dog Hunt

Pet friendly treats in all eggs.
Photo Booth
All dogs **MUST** be on a leash throughout the event.
Proceeds will go to the Dog Park.
Pre-Register online at www.greatbendrec.com



GREAT BEND

CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

FEATURED AMBASSADOR

Jeremy Elliott

**myLawn! Turf & Tree/Have
It Maid Cleaning Service**



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

I was actually born in Great Bend and outside of the years that we were stationed in Ft. Lewis, WA, when I was in the Army, my wife and I have been in the Great Bend area most of our lives. So with growing up here and raising our children in Great Bend, we have come to truly love Great Bend and our community. We couldn't see ourselves anywhere else! Actually, now that our children are older, we are starting to focus more on seeking out new opportunities to make an impact for Great Bend and the community anyway that we can!

Where do you work and what do you do there?

My wife and I own myLawn! Turf & Tree as well as Have It Maid Cleaning Service here in Great Bend. My primary role with our companies is to basically oversee the operations of the businesses and do my best to eliminate any obstacles that would prevent our team from doing their job. We have been absolutely blessed with amazing leadership and team members in both companies, so I am rarely out in the field doing the actual work any more. I stay extremely busy keeping up with the inner workings of the businesses and remaining focused on the changes that are needed to make our clients experiences and our team members quality of life the best we possibly can! As many already know, it can be challenging operating a business, but I am truly, truly grateful to be in the position that I am in and even more grateful for the people that I am surrounded with every single day.

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

I don't know if it would surprise everyone, but some seem to be surprised when they learn that I grew up in the foster care system. I obviously don't say this to bring any attention to myself, but to hopefully inspire or bring hope to anyone who may have had a tough upbringing or is currently going through a difficult time. Regardless of what we may have encountered in the past, today is always full of opportunity.

What energizes you and brings you excitement?

Outside of sitting back and watching our children continuing to thrive, very little is more exciting to me than seeing others succeed or overcoming obstacles that they never imagined that they could. When you witness others achieve their goals, especially when they've had to overcome substantial challenges placed in front of them, it not only energizes me, but it's just a great reminder of how truly remarkable people really are. So, anytime I get to see that or get to be a little part of another's journey, it always motivates me to be better and to do better.

At what job, would you be terrible?

So, I'm a pretty confident guy and all, and I feel like I could do most anything I put my mind to. But I know for an absolute fact that I would be a terrible CNA/Nurse. Those that are in that profession, are without a doubt remarkable people! I don't want to paint this picture too vividly here, but it takes an AMAZING human being to know that at any given minute, you could be wearing somebody else's bodily fluids, knowing that your hands are going to have to be in places that many thought was never even possible, AND while doing it, probably getting screamed at by the patient or their family. Yea, I will stick to being outside in the nice grass and the beautiful trees. I give much credit to those in the health care field. My stomach is upside down right now even thinking about it what they have to encounter!

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

I have only been a Chamber Ambassador for a year now, but I feel as though I am just beginning as I have not been able to pour into it nearly what the position deserves. I look forward to being much more involved in 2021. But what I do know and what I like the most about it, is witnessing how selfless and caring our Chamber and Ambassador team is. They do so much for Great Bend businesses and the community, and watching them do what they do makes me realize how much room I have to grow!

GREAT BEND

CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

WELCOME
to Our **NEWEST**
Chamber Members

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Bradley Becker, Owner
beckerbrad3@gmail.com
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Great Bend, KS 67530
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(620) 792-5336

Accountants - Certified Public

MOVE YOUR MOUNTAIN COACHING & CONSULTING

Kimberly Becker, Owner
moveyourmountain19@gmail.com
Great Bend, KS 67530
(620) 282-8970
**Leadership &
Team Coaching/ Consulting**

Business of the Year Continued from Page 1

education system in Salina as they started their family. The pair relocated with their son, Eli, and their daughter, Hannah, to Barton County in 2015 to take teaching jobs for USD 428; a decision that was partially influenced by the knowledge that their pipe dream of owning a card store could work well in a community like Great Bend. And in June of 2017, the couple expanded their part-time, online business by opening a brick-and-mortar storefront.

“Our first location on Main Street was only 1,000 square feet and allowed us to open up shop with \$10,000 of inventory,” Darcy Leech says. “Opening over the summer was no accident - it gave us a few months to build a following and increase sales before the school year resumed in August.”

Their inventory of board games, role play games, educational toys, and Pokémon cards quickly grew to include puzzles, miniatures, party games, chess sets, dice, and much more. In the beginning, Mind Sculpt Games was primarily open after school and on weekends, with the couple splitting the evening and weekend hours with Darcy's father, Randy. Then they expanded hiring, giving them the ability to open at noon while they continued to teach full time.

From there, things grew quickly, necessitating a move to their second location at 2521 10th Street, with more than double the square footage of their first location. And a little more than a year later in December 2019, they purchased their current location at 4908 10th Street, which doubled their square footage again to over 5,000 square feet.

“None of our moves were impulse decisions. We had worked with the FHSU Small Business Administration office to create a startup plan and a five-year growth plan,” Darcy says. “While the plan changed quite a bit as we saw what was working and as new opportunities came up, we still knew how to watch for certain success indicators and plan for the next phase of growth.”

Because of the Leech's background in education and her proclivity for technology, Darcy and Daniel have always relied on the data to drive the business decisions for Mind Sculpt Games. They monitored their sales in different product lines, they carefully leverage every available square foot of their store, and as the pandemic started, they



Great Bend Chamber of Commerce President, Megan Barfield, presents the Business of the Year award to Darcy Leech, owner of Mind Sculpt Games.

quickly pivoted to focus on the safe and viable parts of their business.

“COVID definitely impacted our plans for the store quite a bit. We used to have a large portion of our revenue coming in from in-person events and that quickly had to shift,” Leech says. “So we've gotten creative to focus on gifts and on making a unique shopping experience where just coming into the store is an experience worth the drive.”

But the secret sauce that really set Mind Sculpt Games apart has a couple key ingredients - vulnerability and relationship building. From the very beginning, Darcy and Daniel have put a lot of energy into their social media and a few different types of videos that have garnered them a lot of attention online. A popular ‘Boom or Bust’ video series allowed Darcy to share insights into the decisions they were contemplating or reflect on their experiments and report back on what had worked and what they were going to adjust. Not only did this allow them to get the word out about a new product launch or an event coming up, but their vulnerable transparency also created a lot of buy-in from their customers.

“We are also having a lot of fun with parody videos, doing covers of well-known songs with alternate lyrics related to our business - like Gifts, Gifts, Baby to the familiar tune of Ice, Ice, Baby,” Leech explains. “Luckily, our community liked watching these videos, and came to visit us afterward. This has helped us continue to grow in a year that has negatively impacted a lot of other

consumer markets and hurt some of the things we used to do in our store. Ultimately, it's all about building relationships with our customers and creating opportunities for them to connect with other people. This community has been wonderful in supporting Mind Sculpt Games and helping us grow.”

Mind Sculpt Games has done such a standout job of building a following that attracts people from all over the region to shop in Great Bend, that even the Small Business Administration recognized them as the “Kansas Emerging Business of the Year” in March 2020. “We are really grateful we've been able to serve this community, and it's because of their continued

support,” Leech says. “When people shop local and enjoy a fun shopping experience with us, it helps us continue to grow and improve what we can offer. We wouldn't be where we are without the loyalty of our customers and this community.”

Since opening the doors at their current location on west 10th Street, Mind Sculpt Games has expanded to product lines such as Lego, educational books, science kits, comic books, and most recently, even video games. They've also continued to increase their inventory of puzzles, board games, and role-playing games, cards, and accessories.

Mind Sculpt Games has one full time employee outside of the Leech family and thirteen additional part time employees who either work in the store weekly, or just come in to assist with special events. Family friend and game leader Lindsey Bogner, who helps with kids' and ladies night role playing games, realizes how significant the impact being made by Mind Sculpt Games really is. “This store is a destination business for people from all over the state. There are stores in big cities that don't have it together like these two do - not just impressive inventory, helpful staff, and dedicated play space, but community buy-in and new things coming out all the time as well!” Bogner remarks. “These guys are continually improving. They haven't just survived. They've truly become an attraction for our community, and no one could deserve this award more than they do.”



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CHAMBER COFFEE SCHEDULE

Every Thursday | Program at 9:30 am

Tune in on Facebook or YouTube for Virtual Coffees

IN-PERSON March 4, 2021
TCI ANSWERING SERVICE

58101 Anchor Way in Great Bend

TCI is a 24/7/365 Answering Service that provides customer service to commercial accounts all over the United States. TCI specializes in answering phone calls and live chats for contractors, funeral homes, oilfield accounts, medical offices, veterinarians, roadside assistance companies and more. Never miss a call with TCI on your team!

VIRTUAL March 11, 2021
PILOT CLUB

For 97 years, Pilot International has been a service organization that makes a positive difference in their communities. Volunteers conduct programs, projects and fundraisers at the local level with a focus on brain safety, brain research, education, prevention and awareness. Pilot Club of Great Bend meetings are held on the first and third Tuesday of the month.

March 18, 2021

TBD

Check greatbend.org, or facebook.com/gbcoc for updates!

VIRTUAL March 25, 2021
GREAT BEND COFFEE LLC

We have some wonderful coffee espresso drinks, soda's, and smoothies. We also offer around 64 sandwich's, pizza's wraps and salads. Our sandwiches are brick oven baked and served on our homemade breads with chips and a pickle. For breakfast, we have lots of amazing fresh baked goods along with breakfast burritos' and biscuits and gravy. Wine is available by the glass or bottle along with a complete offering of mixed drinks and bottled beers.

IN-PERSON April 1, 2021
TRIPLE CREEK OUTFITTERS

1350 NE Tenth Ave., St. John

You won't find a harder working team than ours to make sure you have the best possible experience. From the lodging, to the meals, to the opportunity to hunt some of the best ground in Kansas, you can't beat TCO. Put all that together with a team of people that will become like family, this is the place you want to come.



3307 10th Street • Great Bend, KS 67530

McDonald's

is providing coffee for Chamber of Commerce coffees.



CHECK OUT THE LATEST NEWS FROM THE GREAT BEND CHAMBER BUSINESS COMMUNITY!

OUTLOOK

GREAT BEND
CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

A MONTHLY PUBLICATION OF THE
GREAT BEND CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

business journal

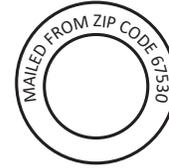
1921



2021

Great Bend Chamber of Commerce
1125 Williams Street
Great Bend, KS 67530

- RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED -



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PERMIT NO. 4

SAVE THE DATES!



MARCH 13 @ 10AM

Virtual Legislative Hour



This 1-hour zoom format will be open to the public. After hearing a brief update from each legislator present, the audience will have an opportunity to ask questions about hot topic issues, such as health care, education, budget concerns, etc. *Submit your questions ahead of time to mbarfield@greatbend.org.*

Invited Legislators:

- State Senator for District 33 - Alicia Straub
- State Representative for District 109 - Troy Waymaster
- State Representative for District 112 - Tory Arnberger
- State Representative for District 113 - Brett Fairchild

For more information: <https://members.greatbend.org/events/calendar>

FARM EXPO SET TO GO LIVE

Annual farm show planned for April 7-9

Credit to Dale Hogg - GB Tribune

After being forced to go virtual last year due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the 2021 Great Bend Farm, Ranch and Hemp Expo is scheduled to be in-person and is set for Wednesday, April 7, through Friday, April 9, said Tana Dale with Star Expos, the Bird City owner and promoter of the show.

"Plans are in place to host a live event this year," Dale said. "We have had pretty good response from the vendors so far. Hopefully, the world will start opening up more and more."

The 10th-annual expo is being dubbed as the

largest farm event in the United States dedicated to promoting agricultural technology. And organizers are excited about adding hemp components.

In addition, many of the old standby exhibits and performers will return, Darren said. JD Wing, who is the head horse trainer for the Tee Cross Ranches will be back, as will Dr. Tom Noffsinger's cattle handling demonstrations and presentation.

Vendors can choose to upgrade and have their booth virtually as well. Also, anything on the stage will be online.

The virtual shows will be from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. April 7, 9 a.m. to 7 p.m. April 8, and 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.



APRIL 7, 8, 9

April 9.

For more information, contact the Great Bend Farm and Ranch Expo office by calling 866-685-0989, cell 785-426-2092, or by email at dales@greatbendfarmandranchexpo.net.

CITY OF GREAT BEND 2021 FIREWORK DISPLAY SPONSORSHIP LEVELS

SPARKLER LEVEL = \$100

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FIRECRACKER LEVEL = \$300

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- RECOGNITION OF YOUR GENEROSITY DURING THE FOURTH OF JULY ANNOUNCEMENTS PRECEDING THE DISPLAY

SATURN MISSILE LEVEL = \$500

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- YOUR NAME/LOGO IN A THANK YOU AD IN THE GREAT BEND TRIBUNE
- RECOGNITION OF YOUR GENEROSITY DURING THE FOURTH OF JULY ANNOUNCEMENTS PRECEDING THE DISPLAY

SKY ROCKET LEVEL = \$1000

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CLEARLY CIRCLE YOUR DEDICATED LEVEL OF SPONSORSHIP & PLEASE WRITE CHECKS TO:

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***PLEASE PUT FIREWORK DISPLAY IN YOUR CHECK MEMO!!!**

NAME: _____ **PHONE:** _____

EMAIL CONTACT: _____

LEVEL OF SPONSORSHIP: _____ **AMOUNT:** _____

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