

NewsLetter

Business and Economy



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YEC brings young entrepreneurs to GBK

March 5th brought student entrepreneurs to GBK from all over Barton County to share ideas and win cash prizes in the competition's 5th year.



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Grow Workforce Business & Career Expo set for April 16

A valuable opportunity to showcase what makes you unique, engage with potential hires, and invest in the future of the local workforce.



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Big Bend Bash, GBK's new festival set for June 7th!

Through a partnership between the City of Great Bend and Great Bend Alive, the Big Bend Bash, will kickoff summer in a 'big' way!



*Finding Purpose in Design:
The Story of ReDirect
Interiors.*

ReDirect Interiors

Jan Johnson, owner
1008 Roosevelt Street
Great Bend, KS
(217)821-1765
redirectin24@gmail.com

Hours:

Monday - Friday: 10:30 am - 5 pm

Saturday: 10:30 am - 3 pm

Sunday & Monday: Closed

A warm welcome awaits at ReDirect Interiors, where every piece tells a story.

ReDirect Interiors

*A Journey of Faith, Family, and Home
Decor in Great Bend*

Tell us about yourself and your business.

I was born and raised in Great Bend. I met the man of my dreams here in Great Bend in the 80's. Brett moved from Watson, IL to GB for the big oil boom back then to work on the rigs. We married in 1988, had 2 boys, and decided to move to his hometown in 1993. Years later, we had a daughter. Life was good. I enjoy being a wife, and mother and through the years, we became grandparents. Then I lost my husband suddenly in June 2018. The Good Lord directed me back to my hometown in August 2023 to be near family. The move has been a healing journey. As I



ReDirect Interiors—where faith, family, and style come together.

reacquaint myself with GB, not only do I get to reminisce about my childhood, but also the first five years of my 30-year marriage to Brett which was right here. I'm so very thankful that God has been with me every step of the way and continues to be my guide.

How did you come up with the idea for ReDirect Interiors?

I've always enjoyed decorating. Through the years, I have helped many family members and friends redirect and refresh their homes. Back in the spring of 2018, I came up with a portfolio of services/costs. Months later, my dream went on hold due to my traumatic loss of Brett. After my move back to GB, I caught on to how the community was trying to revive Main Street businesses. Not only did God stir my heart to start a business, He led me to the right people who would open the doors for me to do so. I started the home decor/gift store, ReDirect Interiors in the Zarah Mall. Due to construction and the revitalization of the mall, God led me to the address where I am located now! I've been known to tell people to look for the purple sign. The color is very significant place in my life. It's the color I buried my beloved in, which represents wealth in family, character, and love. The color for my logo was chosen unbeknownst by a marketing manager at a former workplace. I believe it to be a perfect fit! To me, it meant my husband was in on this, and he's going to get my dream going because he knew my dream before he passed.

Redirect Interiors is open Tuesday through Friday, 10:30 am to 5 pm, and Saturday, from 10:30 am to 3 pm. It's a home decor store carrying a variety of new items for any room of your home. From light furniture pieces to wall hangings, lamps, greeneries/florals, throw pillows, and more! ReDirect Interiors is also becoming known as a gift store as well! Whether it's a baby shower or a birthday, you'll find it here! For the month of April, if you spend \$20 or more on each visit, you can sign up for a \$25 gift certificate to be given away at the end of the month.

Why did you choose Great Bend for your business?

I now live here and I see that it was a part of God's great plan for me.



Entrepreneurship Resources with Great Bend Economic Development

Entrepreneurs are the key to success in rural communities. If you have interest in creating a business, reach out to us today for help with business planning, financial analysis and access to start up loan funding. Great Bend Economic Development partners with many experts in the entrepreneurship field to bring you all the resources you need to get started successfully.





Whether you're stopping by for a drink, a game of pool, or a night of music, Sarge's Saloon is ready to serve up a great time.

Why do you enjoy doing business in Barton County?

It's a great opportunity to get to know the community again, and Barton County can always use more shopping experiences.

What inspired you to start your business?

In God's perfect timing, I started to sense that I needed to get back to work. The question arose in my spirit, do you want to work for someone else or for yourself? So I started looking for a building to rent.

What did your startup plan and timeline look like?

Truthfully, it was all in God's timing. I just knew that I was going to shop for a living and be able to help others make their homes more organized, beautiful, and comfortable by doing so!

What advice would you give to businesses considering Barton County?

Get involved in supporting other small and large businesses in the community. I also have found that becoming a member of our local Chamber of Commerce has been a blessing of its own! The

Thursday coffee meetings are for members' benefit to get to know each other and stay updated on events in the community and beyond.

Do you have any advice for entrepreneurs just starting out?

Pray. God cares about every detail of your journey. Though there may be obstacles along the way, the outlook should always be that those obstacles were there for growth in knowledge and character, and you'll meet great people along the way!

I'm a people person and I'm so blessed to be able to serve in this community. Meeting and conversing with my customers is the highlight of my days!

What obstacles have you faced and how did you overcome them?

Just moving from one building (Zarah Mall) to my now shop on 1008 Roosevelt. Praying about everything and giving thanks to God has kept my mind at peace especially through the unknown. He has never failed. I've met great people on both ends of this town.





ReDirect Services

Owning ReDirect Interiors decor and gift store is a fun way for me to meet new people and opens a huge door of opportunity to help others see the potential in their own homes.

When I was young, I would race home after school so I could make sure our house was in tact. Friends would be coming over soon! With the busyness of my mom's days, it was a great time to help her out. Unbeknownst to me, my do good attitude as a child, would start a passion within me as I grew into an adult. With my creative eye, I have helped friends and family see the potential in what they already have. It's very rewarding seeing the looks on their faces when I finish redirecting a space in their home, or organizing their pantry or just rearranging their wall hangings.

Helping people refresh and ReDirect their homes gives me a chance also to know them personally. I respect anyone who can open their home and allow me to come in. We stifle ourselves from moving forward when we think we need to tear down walls or buy all new items. It can be intimidating to some thinking where to start and/or embarrassing at times allowing another in our home. There is no judgment on my part, but only pure excitement to get my juices flowing in what I enjoy doing! It's as simple as taking what we have and seeing it in a new light. It all comes down to affordability. Most of us don't have the time or money to start all over in our homes. Redirecting furniture and other items in a room and adding a refreshment of throw pillows, throws, a lamp or perhaps greenery can add so much warmth and comfortability. My store is the perfect place to find those new, refreshing items! Its a simple and affordable way to beautify your home. And I have found that asking questions as to what a client wants out of a room helps tremendously. What do you want to use this room for? Do you want a consistent color scheme or style throughout your home? I do make suggestions regarding what they have to start with. I don't go in creating a space that I want but what they want and never knew they needed.

I'm working on a portfolio for consultation to build clients outside of my store to ReDirect a room(s) in their home. So, come on in, and find out for yourself how ReDirect Interiors is a simple and affordable way to beautify your home.

Childcare

Bright Beginnings Explores the Future at Innovation

The preschool students at Bright Beginnings recently got a firsthand look at the future of Great Bend during an exciting field trip to the Innovation Center construction site. Big equipment was gathered down the street from their preschool, the budding builders donned toy hard hats and safety vests as they explored the equipment, learning about the machines that are creating a new community space.

Guided by the construction team from Brentwood Builders, Seaton Construction, and Eakin Enterprises, the children were introduced to different equipment being used on the project, from the towering escalators and plows to the smaller bobcats. They also had the chance get in the drivers' seat and imagine themselves as future engineers, architects, or builders.

The Innovation Center, once completed, will serve as a hub for business growth, education, and collaboration. Who knows—maybe one of these little learners will be designing their own projects here one day!

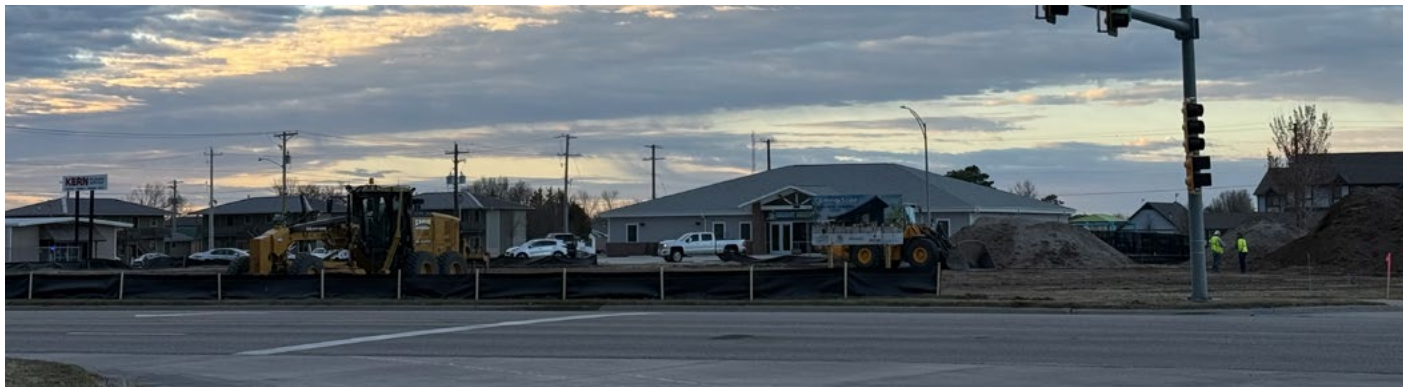


Future builders in the making! Students got to explore the big equipment they have been seeing across the street at the Innovation Center, one student exclaimed “that was amazing” as they walked back to the preschool.



Organization

Breaking Ground: Innovation Center Construction Begins



Construction is officially underway at the Innovation Center! Before 8 a.m., crews were already hard at work moving dirt and mapping out the site for this exciting new development.

Excitement is in the air as construction officially begins on the Innovation Center! Before the sun was fully up, crews were already hard at work, moving dirt and mapping out the site for what will become a hub of growth and opportunity for our community.

The Innovation Center is designed to be a game-changer for local entrepreneurs, businesses, and workforce development. Once completed, it will serve as a collaborative space for innovation, training, and economic expansion. This project has been years in the

making, and seeing the first signs of construction is a major milestone for everyone involved.

Stay tuned for updates as construction progresses. The Innovation Center is on its way to becoming a reality!

Childcare

Bright Beginnings Continues to Grow – Now Hiring!

At Bright Beginnings by ABCC, we are committed to providing high-quality early childhood education, and our DCF subsidy certification allows more families to access financial support for preschool enrollment. This certification helps us further our mission of creating a nurturing and engaging learning environment for all children.

Our curriculum is designed to spark curiosity, creativity, and a love for learning, with activities that support cognitive, social, and emotional development. In a safe and stimulating space, our dedicated educators ensure that each preschooler receives the attention and resources they need to thrive.

Enrollment is Open!

Families looking for a strong educational foundation for their children can enroll now. For more information, contact us at 620-796-2392, email admin@abccinc.org, or visit www.abccinc.org.

Join Our Team!

Bright Beginnings is also hiring Lead and Assistant Teachers! We're looking for passionate individuals who want to make a meaningful impact in early childhood education. If you or someone you know is interested in joining our team, we'd love to connect.

We appreciate the continued support from our community and look forward to welcoming more families and educators to Bright Beginnings. For questions or to schedule a tour, reach out today!



Curious about open positions at Bright Beginnings? Come talk to the Site Director, Kelsy Baxter, at the Business & Career Expo on April 16th.

Entrepreneurship

Youth Entrepreneurship Challenge awards student entrepreneurs cash prizes

Barton County's fifth annual Youth Entrepreneurship Challenge (YEC) continues to grow, showcasing the talents of young entrepreneurs and fostering an innovative business spirit among local students. On March 5, 2025, Barton County's YEC Tradeshow was held at the Great Bend Event Center, where 7th to 12th-grade students competed for cash prizes and the opportunity to advance to the State Level.

This year, Network Kansas partnered with K-State Research and Extension to further enhance the program and provide additional resources to participants. The top winners from regional competitions like Barton County's YEC move on to the Kansas Entrepreneurship Challenge (KEC). KEC is sponsored by Network Kansas, Kansas State University Research & Extension, and Kansas State University Center for the Advancement of Entrepreneurship and is held in April.

The 2025 competitors included:

- Crafts by Mady Co: Mady Hammeke, 10th grader from Ellinwood High School



Pictured left to right: Nikolus Patterson, Jason Murray, Amelia Baskerville, Benn Maddox, Callie Umphres, Bennett Jacobs, Zoey Bogner, Paxton Rein, Mady Hammeke, Lee Ann Seiler, David Morgan and Tucker

- Dave's Paracord Provisions: David Morgan, Great Bend Home School Coop
- Ice on Wheels: Callie Umphres, 9th grader from Great Bend High School & Bennett Jacobs, 10th grader from Ellinwood
- Loesch Mfg: Tucker Loesch, 12th grader from Hoisington High School
- Nik's Lawn Care: Nikolus Patterson, 7th grader from Great Bend Middle School
- The Kansas Voice: Zoey Bogner, 8th grader from Central Plains High School
- Sparrow's Commissions: Amelia Baskerville, 7th grader from Great Bend Middle School

A distinguished panel of judges evaluated the business plans, tradeshow presentations, and overall pitches. Judges included Barton County Fuel Member and entrepreneur Paxton Rein, Lea Ann Seiler from Network Kansas, Jason Murray, Executive Director of Golden Belt Community Foundation, and Benn Maddox,

Consumer & Small Business Lender from Equity Bank. Before the tradeshow, Great Bend Economic Development (GBED) hosted an ice-breaker lunch and networking session for judges and students to foster community between generations before the judging began.

After a competitive tradeshow, the winners were announced:

- First Place: The Kansas Voice – \$1,000 Prize
- Second Place: Ice on Wheels – \$750 Prize
- Third Place: Loesch Mfg. – \$500 Prize
- People's Choice Award: Loesch Mfg. – \$250 Prize

This competition, brought to Great Bend by Great Bend Economic Development and the Great Bend Chamber of Commerce, aims to challenge youth, encourage mentorship from the business community, and cultivate an entrepreneurial mindset.

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The event was made possible through a partnership with Kansas State University Research & Extension and Network Kansas and sponsorships from Network Kansas and Nex-Tech Wireless.

Encouraging youth entrepreneurship is essential for developing a dynamic and innovative economy. By fostering critical thinking, problem-solving, and creativity, the YEC program helps young people build lifelong skills while contributing to economic

growth. Youth entrepreneurs bring fresh perspectives and technological innovation, driving forward new business ideas and solutions. To learn more about YEC or watch videos of the contestants, visit www.gbedinc.com/yec.

Workforce

Deadline to Register: April 11 – Secure Your Spot Today!

The Grow Workforce Partnership is excited to introduce the 2025 Grow Workforce Business & Career Expo, happening April 16 at the Great Bend Events Center! This premier event connects businesses with job seekers from Great Bend and beyond, offering a valuable opportunity to showcase career opportunities, engage with potential hires, and invest in the future workforce.

This year, the Grow Workforce Summit has expanded into two distinct events:

April 16 – Business & Career Expo: A direct hiring and networking opportunity for businesses and job seekers.

November 12 – Grow Workforce Summit: A full day of education, inspiration, and networking for employers and managers.

Businesses registering for the Expo should

be set up by 3:30 PM to engage with early arrivals. Employers can use this time to fill full-time, part-time, and internship positions or increase brand awareness within the community. Businesses are also encouraged to submit a list of open positions for additional promotion and contribute a \$10+ door prize to drive booth engagement.

Booth registration is open now – the deadline to register is April 11! The cost is \$50 per booth. Secure your spot today at www.gbedinc.com/growworkforce.

For more details, reach out to the Grow Workforce Partnership, a collaboration between Great Bend Economic Development, the Great Bend Chamber of Commerce, KansasWorks, Barton Community College, and local HR professionals working together to strengthen the regional workforce.



This is an opportunity to showcase your business, connect with potential hires, and highlight what makes your company unique.

3111 10th St., Great Bend, KS
gbedinc.com/growworkforce

Reserve Your Booth Today!

BARTON
COMMUNITY COLLEGE

GREAT BEND
CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

Great Bend
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

KANSASWORKS

Can't Attend or Unable to Get a Booth? No Problem!

You can still promote your company's open positions by submitting a flyer to the Great Bend Chamber of Commerce. Email a .pdf file to: marketing@greatbend.org by April 11th!

**Employers,
are you
hiring?**

Create a company profile at:
www.centrankasjobs.com

- Advertise available job openings
- Look through resumes
- Find your next employee

central kansas
JOBS

Workforce

CK Jobs, an Enhanced Platform for Employers

Central Kansas Jobs has undergone a significant website overhaul, emphasizing our commitment to connecting talent with career opportunities. Our upgraded platform is designed to empower employers and streamline the hiring process, featuring new enhancements for a better user experience.

Users can now create profiles and establish distinct company profiles, fostering seamless collaboration within organizations. A notable addition is the "Featured Company Highlight," allowing companies to showcase their profiles in a scheduled display for \$50 per month, providing heightened visibility to potential candidates.

While we introduce premium features, posting jobs and viewing resumes remain free for employers and job seekers, ensuring an inclusive and accessible platform. Explore the revamped website at www.centrankasjobs.com to leverage these new features and make Central Kansas Jobs your strategic partner in building successful teams.

Organization

Invest in Great Bend's Future with GBED

Great Bend Economic Development (GBED) is dedicated to driving growth, creating opportunities, and building a brighter future for our community. As an organization focused on economic progress in Great Bend and Barton County, we work to empower local businesses, attract new industries, and foster an environment where residents can thrive.

Under GBED's leadership, we proudly manage two key programs: Great Bend Alive and Advancing Barton County Childcare, both of which address critical needs while strengthening the fabric of our community.

Great Bend Alive breathes life into downtown Great Bend through events and initiatives that enhance community engagement and support local businesses. From hosting popular events like Fridays on Forest to promoting preservation with the Downtown Walking Tours app (Great Bend Alive Tours), Great Bend Alive showcases the unique charm of our community and boosts local commerce.

Advancing Barton County Childcare tackles a critical challenge for families and businesses: access to affordable, quality childcare. By supporting childcare solutions, this initiative ensures that parents can participate in the workforce while children benefit from a strong foundation for future success.

Economic development is essential in rural areas like Barton County, where local businesses are the backbone of the economy. GBED programs and initiatives pave the way for long-term growth by attracting new businesses, retaining talent, and creating a sense of pride in our community.

Local business sponsorships enable GBED to continue innovating and expanding its impact. By investing in these programs, you/your business becomes part of the solution, helping to build a stronger, more connected community for generations to come. We invite you to partner with us as we work together to create a prosperous future for Barton County and beyond.



Click the image to check out the entire SPONSORSHIP GUIDE 2025

Big Bend Bash: A New Downtown Festival Coming to Great Bend on June 7

Great Bend Alive, the downtown arm of Great Bend Economic Development (GBED), is partnering with the City of Great Bend to introduce a brand-new festival, Big Bend Bash, set for Saturday, June 7, 2025. Designed to celebrate local culture and bring fresh energy to downtown, the event will combine long-time community favorites with new experiences for both residents and visitors to enjoy.

Big Bend Bash marks a new chapter for downtown Great Bend, introducing a revitalized festival experience that builds on the past traditions of the June Jaunt event, while bringing fresh energy, expanded entertainment, and a stronger focus on the future of downtown.

This year's event will also serve as a fundraiser for Great Bend Alive's upcoming multi-million dollar streetscape project, a major downtown renovation aimed at creating a more walkable and inviting environment. The need for this project became even more evident after the July 2023 storm, which destroyed more than 20 trees in the downtown area. With such a large price tag, fundraising efforts are beginning now, with the goal of beginning construction

in 2026. Attendees will have the opportunity to view renderings of the design at the event and learn more about how the improvements will enhance the downtown experience, and provide feedback used to help guide the project.

The festival will kick off with the Red, White & Blue Parade, a patriotic celebration that builds on the success of last year's "Great Bend Alive Parade Through Time" with exciting new elements.

Nominations for the parade's Grand Marshal are open on the Great Bend Alive Facebook page, where the community can vote for their favorite until April 6. Throughout the day, Jack Kilby Square will be transformed into a lively Kid Zone, featuring inflatables, face painting, food and retail vendors, and live entertainment. East of Main Street, festival goers will find even more music, food trucks, and vendors, along with the popular Shifters Car Show, which has moved to Lakin Avenue between Main and Williams Street.

The 10th Annual Brew Fest, hosted by Bike Brew Q will also join the new downtown event. This year, the festival's consumption district will be expanded to include the entire parking lot east of Main Street between Forest and



Lakin, along with Lakin Street between Main Street and Williams Street, where guests can enjoy additional live music and food trucks. To maintain the festival atmosphere, no outside alcohol or food will be allowed within the designated area, and no alcohol may leave the common consumption area.

The City of Great Bend is playing a key role in bringing Big Bend Bash to life, providing logistical support, entertainment, funding, and volunteers to ensure a successful event. Several community partners, including Bike

Brew Q, Shifters Car Club, Volunteers in Action, and more to join to make this festival a vibrant and memorable experience.

"We're thrilled to partner with the City of Great Bend to launch this exciting new event for our community! We envision it growing and evolving each year, keeping the community engaged, inspired, and looking forward to what's next!" from Sara Arnberger, Executive Director of Great Bend Alive

"We're beyond thrilled to partner with Great Bend Alive on this exciting new festival! This collaboration

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brings together our shared passion for creativity and community, and we can't wait to showcase something truly special for the community.” from Amanda Gaddis, Visitors Service Representative for the City of Great Bend.

The parade, car show, and vendor fair will begin at 10 a.m., with activities running until 6 p.m. The Brew Fest will take place from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m.,

while live entertainment and other festivities will continue throughout the day and wrap up at 6 p.m.

For those interested in becoming a vendor, applications are available now at www.gbedinc.com/bigbendbash or by emailing director@gbedinc.com. More details will be posted as the event approaches at www.gbedinc.com/bigbendbash. Additionally, proceeds

from the 10th Annual Bike Brew Q will benefit the Cystic Fibrosis Foundation, and more information about their events can be found at www.bikebrewq.com.

Big Bend Bash is set to bring a new wave of excitement to downtown Great Bend, blending community traditions with fresh attractions in a festival that not only celebrates the city but also helps shape its future.

Get Involved: Volunteer with Great Bend Alive!

Great Bend Alive is dedicated to making our downtown a vibrant, thriving place to gather, shop, and celebrate. From exciting events like Fridays on Forest to the upcoming streetscapes project that will enhance our historic downtown, our efforts wouldn't be possible without the help of dedicated volunteers. If you're looking for a way to give back to your community, meet new people, and make a real impact, we invite you to join us!

Why Volunteer?

Volunteering with Great Bend Alive is more than just giving your time—it's about being part of something bigger. Whether you have an hour to spare or want to take on a leadership role, your efforts contribute to:

Creating Unforgettable Events – Help set up, manage, or clean up after events like Fridays on Forest, our holiday celebrations, and other downtown

happenings.

Enhancing Downtown – Get involved in beautification efforts, from maintaining planters and public spaces to supporting creative projects like window displays and murals.

Building Community Connections – Meet fellow residents, local business owners, and visitors who share your passion for a thriving downtown.

How to Get Involved

There are many ways to volunteer, whether you're interested in behind-the-scenes planning or hands-on event support. We welcome individuals, families, and groups to sign up for opportunities that fit their schedule and interests.

If you're ready to make a difference, sign up to volunteer by contacting us at [insert contact info] or visiting our



Curious new members visited with returning and original members of Great Bend Alive on the Volunteer Info Night at the end of March.

website at here. We can't wait to work alongside you to make Great Bend even more alive!

Together, we can continue to create a downtown that is welcoming, exciting, and full of life. Join us today!

Let's make 2025 the best year yet for Great Bend Alive!



Support Fridays on Forest – Become a Sponsor!

Click the image to learn more
SPONSORSHIP GUIDE 2025

Fridays on Forest has quickly become a favorite community event in downtown Great Bend, bringing people together for live music, great food, and local shopping. But did you know that these events are only possible with sponsor support?

Thanks to generous businesses and individuals, we've been able to create unforgettable evenings filled with entertainment and connection. However, without sponsorships, these events simply can't happen.

This year, we're excited

to extend event hours to 5 PM – 10 PM, giving everyone more time to enjoy the festivities. But to make it a reality, we need partners who believe in the power of community and downtown revitalization. Sponsoring Fridays on Forest is more than just an investment in an event—it's a commitment to keeping Great Bend vibrant, welcoming, and full of life.

How You Can Help

Become a sponsor and showcase your business to a highly engaged local audience.

Help fund live music, food trucks, vendors, and activities that make Fridays on Forest special.

Keep these events free and accessible for the entire community.

Don't miss this opportunity to be part of something amazing! Contact us today to learn more about sponsorship opportunities.

Interested? Visit [Click here](#) or stop by 3111 10th Street, Great Bend to pick up a sponsorship guide.

Together, let's keep the

music playing and the good times rolling!



What is a Kansas Main Street?

Kansas Main Street Organizations are a self-help, technical assistance program that targets revitalization and preservation of downtown districts through the development of a comprehensive strategy.

Main Street America™ leads a movement committed to strengthening communities through preservation-based economic development in older and historic downtowns and neighborhood commercial districts.



For the latest updates follow Great Bend Alive on:

Facebook



Instagram



TikTok



GBEDinc.com/[mainstreet](#)



Explore Our Walking Tours

Great Bend's rich history and vibrant arts scene are now at your fingertips! The new Great Bend Alive Walking Tour App offers an immersive way to explore downtown, whether you're a longtime resident or a first-time visitor.

Discover Local Stories and Hidden Gems

The app features two engaging self-guided tours:

Historic Tour – Step back in time and learn about the iconic buildings, landmarks, and events that shaped Great Bend's past.

Art & Mural Tour – Stroll through downtown and experience the creativity of local artists with detailed insights into murals, sculptures, and public art displays.

Each stop on the tour includes photos, videos, audio narration, and artist interviews, bringing the history and culture of Great Bend to life. With GPS integration, the app makes it easy to navigate from one point of interest to the next at your own pace.

How to Access the App

The Great Bend Alive Walking Tour App is available for free on the Google Play Store, Apple Store, and online. Simply download the app or visit the landing page at www.gbedinc.com/tours to start your journey!

A Growing Experience

This is just the beginning! Plans are underway to expand the app with additional tours, events, and special features that will make exploring Great Bend even more exciting.

Download the app today and take a walk through history, art, and the heart of our community!



MEET OUR PRESIDENT

director@gbedinc.com



Sara Arnberger is a native of Great Bend, Kansas and located back to the area to pursue the opportunities with economic development. Sara comes to Great Bend Economic Development with a bachelors degree from Friends University and close to 10 years of experience in management and customer service. Her experience combined with her passion for the area is sure to spur new growth.

COMMS DIRECTOR

marketing@gbedinc.com



Communications Director, Lee Ann June, is a longtime local with a love for community. She is excited to join forces with GBED to promote and grow Barton County. Bringing a comprehensive set of skills that are valuable to the organization, she is delighted to contribute her talents to GBED's efforts. Mother of two, former business owner/instructor, and creative; she brings a unique perspective to this position. Motivated by the momentum, Lee Ann is invested in seeing the Great Bend area thrive.

MARKETING & EVENTS INTERN

intern.team@gbedinc.com



Hi! I'm Charley Sander, the newest addition to the team at Great Bend Economic Development. Born and raised in Great Bend, I am continuing my academic career at Barton Community College with a focus on marketing. I hope to further my skills in marketing while I learn alongside my new team! I'm excited to be a part of something so big and have the opportunity to give back to my hometown.

Organization

GBED Board Welcomes New Board Members to Drive Community Growth

Great Bend Economic Development (GBED) is pleased to announce the appointment of two new board members, AJ Chrest and Matt Hiss, who bring a wealth of experience and passion for community development. Their leadership will help further GBED's mission of sustaining long-term economic health through business retention, expansion, and attraction.

AJ Chrest, a business professional with a background in Business Management, is dedicated to fostering economic growth and sustainability in Great Bend. She brings expertise in risk assessment, strategic growth, and working with diverse stakeholders. Chrest believes in taking a balanced, long-term approach to economic development, ensuring that projects are both practical

and sustainable for current and future businesses and residents.

Matt Hiss, whose educational background is in Finance and Management, has extensive experience serving on non-profit boards and foundations. He specializes in financial analytics, problem-solving, and leveraging political capital to execute economic strategies. Hiss sees opportunities in downtown development and rural community lifestyle growth, as well as challenges in construction costs and workforce recruitment.

"We're excited to welcome Matt and AJ to our economic development team," said Sara Arnberger, President of Great Bend Economic Development. "With many important projects underway, their expertise and enthusiasm

AJ Chrest



Matt Hiss



will be key to our success and the growth of our region."

Chrest and Hiss join a dedicated board led by Chairman Paul Snapp and Vice-Chair Ryan Fairchild, along with members John Worden, Dennis Neeland, and MelEesa Stueder, all committed to driving Great Bend's economic growth. As the newest board

members, Chrest and Hiss will play an integral role in helping Great Bend continue its forward momentum, supporting entrepreneurs, and strengthening the local economy.

GBED would also like to extend its sincere gratitude to Dr. Kevyn Soupiset and Shawn Hutchinson for their dedicated service on the board.

Development

Attention Manufacturers!

Did you know there are funds available to assist in your expansion projects? Get in touch with us today to find out how to take advantage of the State's incentive programs for manufacturing. Whether you're expanding machinery, building space, capital improvements in general, hiring new employees or

re-training existing ones, there are programs that are in place to help you and we're here to help make it happen!

Check out the list of all Kansas Business Incentives here and get in contact with us at director@gbedinc.com if you feel like you might qualify.



Did You Know?



Housing Marketable Statistics

How about some spending pattern facts?!

Most rentals in Great Bend fall in the \$500-\$1,500 range, with a median rent of \$778

How does your rent compare?

1022 Grant St, Great Bend, KS 67530 Sitetwise Online Current Year Estimated Rent Paid By Unit Type												
Current Year Estimated Rent Paid By Unit Type	1022 Grant St, Great Bend, KS 67530 0 - 3 mi		1022 Grant St, Great Bend, KS 67530 0 - 5 mi		1022 Grant St, Great Bend, KS 67530 0 - 10 mi		1022 Grant St, Great Bend, KS 67530 0-5 min		1022 Grant St, Great Bend, KS 67530 0-10 min		1022 Grant St, Great Bend, KS 67530 0-15 min	
		%		%		%		%		%		%
Total Cash Rents	2,214		2,267		2,330		1,725		2,277		2,349	
Under \$300	111	5%	132	6%	137	6%	102	6%	133	6%	138	6%
\$300 to \$500	309	14%	325	14%	341	15%	246	14%	327	14%	343	15%
\$500 to \$750	618	28%	627	28%	643	28%	470	27%	629	28%	648	28%
\$750 to \$1,000	602	27%	609	27%	625	27%	480	28%	612	27%	630	27%
\$1,000 to \$1,500	515	23%	515	23%	525	23%	379	22%	517	23%	530	23%
\$1,500 to \$2,000	43	2%	43	2%	45	2%	33	2%	43	2%	45	2%
\$2,000 to \$2,500	1	0%	1	0%	1	0%	1	0%	1	0%	1	0%
\$2,500 to \$3,000	13	1%	13	1%	13	1%	12	1%	13	1%	13	1%
\$3,000 to \$3,500	1	0%	1	0%	1	0%	1	0%	1	0%	1	0%
\$3,500 plus	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
Median Cash Rent	\$ 778		\$ 770		\$ 768		\$ 773		\$ 770		\$ 768	
Average Cash Rent	\$ 819		\$ 810		\$ 807		\$ 811		\$ 810		\$ 808	
Non-Cash Rent	106	5%	121	5%	152	7%	79	5%	125	5%	158	7%

Entrepreneurship

IGNITE Competition: Applications Open!

The IGNITE competition is back, offering Barton County entrepreneurs the chance to compete for a share of \$95,000 in prize money! The deadline to apply is July 1st, but if you're interested in participating, don't wait—reach out now to start accessing business planning resources and expert mentorship.

By joining IGNITE, you'll gain valuable

exposure, refine your business ideas, and connect with a network of local entrepreneurs and industry professionals. This is more than just a pitch competition—it's an opportunity to build and grow your business with real support.

Don't miss your chance to turn your vision into reality. Learn more and apply today at igniteks.com.



Click the image above for the IGNITE overview video

Upcoming Events and Business Education

2
APRIL

Keeping your LLC in "good standing"- compliance and reporting requirements

Wednesday, April 2nd
6-7:30pm
Washburn School of Law Room 150, Topeka, KS 66621

www.sba.gov/event/65632

14
APRIL

Early-Stage Business Boot camp-AVA- (4 week/8 week session program)

Monday, April 14th-Thursday, May 8th
5:30-8pm
305 E Washington Avenue, Ava, MO 65608

www.sba.gov/event/66075

3
APRIL

Successful Project Management (2 day program)

Thursday, April 3- Friday, April 4th
9am-4pm \$499.00
405 N Jefferson Avenue, Springfield, MO 65806

www.sba.gov/event/62469

16
APRIL

Grow Workforce Business & Career Expo

Wednesday, April 16
4-6:30pm \$50.00 booth - Job seekers attend for free!
3111 10th Street, Great Bend Events Center

www.gbedinc.com/growworkforce

8
APRIL

The power of positive teams

Tuesday, April 8th
9am-4pm \$279.00
405 N Jefferson Avenue, Springfield, Mo 65806

www.sba.gov/event/62472

13
APRIL

Kansas Exporter Roundtable- Dodge City

Wednesday, April 16th
11:30 am - 1pm
101 E Wyatt Earp Blvd, Dodge City, KS 67801

www.sba.gov/event/56521

14
APRIL

Supervision Boot camp: Frontline Series (4- day program)

Monday, April 14th- Thursday, April 17th
9am-4pm \$999.00
405 N Jefferson Avenue, Springfield, MO 65806

www.sba.gov/event/62471

25
APRIL

Fridays on Forest - Season 5 Kick off!

Thursday, April 25
5 pm - 10 pm
Forest Ave between Main and Williams St.

www.gbedinc.com/downtownevents

Check out: www.gbedinc.com for more classes!

Education

SBDC & SBA Classes



DIBBS Training
April 2nd 9-11 am
www.sba.gov/event/65639

Upgrade your website for better
business results
April 3rd 9-10 am
www.sba.gov/event/67169

Networking with confidence
April 3rd 1-2:30 pm
www.sba.gov/event/67173

Credit Basics
April 4th 12-1:30pm
www.sba.gov/event/67254

How to start and manage your
own business
April 5th 9:30-11am
www.sba.gov/event/67255

Business Financial Literacy
April 7th 11:30am-1pm
www.sba.gov/event/67259

Empowering your Business
with AI
April 10th 10-11 am
www.sba.gov/event/66014

Accounting for non-accountants
April 10th 12-1 pm
www.sba.gov/event/66015

Fundamentals for Effective
Business Networking
April 10th 12-1:30 pm
www.sba.gov/event/67260

VetBiz Activate: Cohort VII
April 10th-May 8th 6-8 pm
www.sba.gov/event/63332

The Ultimate Guide to Business
Insurance: Part 1
April 11th 9:30-11am
www.sba.gov/event/67261

Learn the basics of google Ads
April 16th 12-1:30pm
www.sba.gov/event/67264

Starting a 501(C)(3) nonprofit:
governance, boards and best
practices
April 17th 6-7:30 pm
Washburn School of Law Room
151 A&B, Topeka
www.sba.gov/event/65633

Marketing workshop with AI
April 17th 10-11am \$10.00
www.sba.gov/event/66013

The ultimate guide to business
insurance: Part 2
April 18th 9:30-11am
www.sba.gov/event/67263

Small Business Success: Mas-
tering the Essentials
April 19 9:30-11am
www.sba.gov/event/67262

Virtual Reboot
April 22nd 8am-1pm
www.sba.gov/event/62570

QuickBooks online -Beginners
April 22nd 9am-12pm \$199
www.sba.gov/event/66016

Trademark Basics: building a
strong and protectable brand
April 22nd 6-7:30pm
Washburn School of Law Room
151 A&B, Topeka
www.sba.gov/event/65634

Strengthen your property with
SBA mitigation assistance-virtu-
al webinar
April 22 6-7pm
www.sba.gov/event/68443

Kansas APEX Accelerators guide
to successful proposal writing
April 23rd 9-11am
www.sba.gov/event/65641

AI simplified: practical Tools for
Business productivity
April 23rd 2-5pm
\$129.00
405 N Jefferson Avenue
Springfield, MO 65806
www.sba.gov/event/63329

QuickBooks online for interme-
diate users
April 24th 9am-12pm \$199.00
www.sba.gov/event/66017

Score High on LinkedIn for
Business and sales
April 24th 12-1:30pm
www.sba.gov/event/67258

Scaling your reach: your guide
to social media advertising
April 24th 1-2pm \$10.00
www.sba.gov/event/67573

Kansas Exporter Roundtable-
Hays
April 25th 12-1:30pm
www.sba.gov/event/56522

AI Marketing Techniques using
ChatGPT
April 28th 12-1pm
www.sba.gov/event/67257

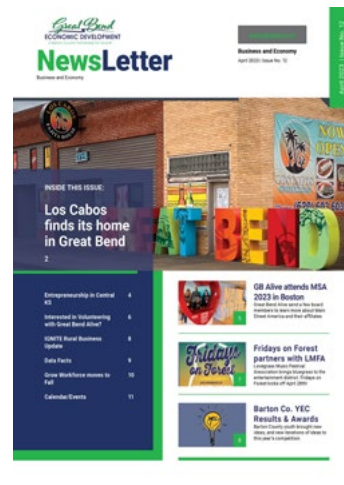
Startup and Start right
April 29th 12-1pm
www.sba.gov/event/66018

Fundraising for nonprofits-ba-
sics
April 30th 9-10:30am
www.sba.gov/event/67256

“Economic development is not a science, but an art, and a combination of forces and factors that must come together in the right way at the right time.” - James E. West

2023-2024 Annual Report

In the next issue



- Featured Business
- BIG BEND BASH
- Update on Childcare Center in Barton County
- GB Alive, Fridays on Forest, and More!



Watch our 2024 Year in Review

Let's keep in touch

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