

NewsLetter

Business and Economy

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CO.STARTERS Core begins March 5th

CORE is a business launching program that helps you turn any idea into a sustainable business in just 10 weeks.



Grow Workforce Business & Career Expo set for April 16

Offering a dynamic platform for recruitment, networking, and showcasing products and services.



YEC is back, March 5th

Calling all young entrepreneurs! Barton County students in grades 7-12 to showcase their creativity, innovation, and business savvy.



From Oklahoma City to Great Bend—How One Entrepreneur is Bringing Reliable Plumbing Services and Community Spirit to Barton County

LLB Plumbing

Caleb Baxter

(620)797-7465

LLBdraincleaning@gmail.com

Hours:

Monday - Friday 8 am - 5 pm

24/7 for Emergencies

LLB Plumbing

Building Trust, One Pipe at a Time: The Story of LLB Plumbing

Tell us about yourself and your business.

I was born and raised in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma. With a knack for understanding the intricacies of plumbing, I decided to open my first business, LLB Plumbing and Drain Cleaning, in Oklahoma City in 2021 shortly after my son was born. My son was the inspiration for the name LLB Plumbing. I moved to Great Bend in 2024 and started my company over. Now, being a part of a smaller community, I've come to appreciate the significance of local businesses in nurturing the community spirit. LLB Plumbing handles anything from drain cleanings to sewer line replacements and repairs to bathroom remodels and



water leaks and more. But this venture is not just about pipes and repairs; it's about building a relationship with my clients and ensuring that their homes are safe and comfortable. I take great pride in offering reliable, prompt service, and I strive to instill trust in my customers through transparency and accountability. Each job, whether it is a minor leak or a major installation, is approached with the same level of professionalism and attention to detail, setting a standard in my community that I aim to uphold. While I navigate entrepreneurship in the Barton County area, I remain committed to continuous learning and improvement. While my journey in Barton County is just beginning, I hope to build a legacy that not only supports my family but also uplifts my community, proving that even in a small town, a new business such as mine can flourish. To ensure every customer is satisfied with our work we offer a warranty on parts and labor for each completed job.

Childcare

Bright Beginnings by ABCC Accepting DCF Subsidies & New Students

Bright Beginnings by ABCC continues to accept new students. The preschool program is DCF subsidy certified. This means eligible families can receive financial assistance to help cover the cost of enrollment, making quality early childhood education more accessible.

At Bright Beginnings, we provide a safe and engaging environment where children can learn and grow. Our curriculum supports cognitive, social, and emotional development through hands-on activities that prepare preschoolers for the next

step in their education.

Enrollment is now open. For more information or to enroll, call 620-796-2392, email admin@abccinc.org, or visit

www.abccinc.org.

We welcome families to tour our facility and learn more about our program. Contact us today to get started!



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.



CO.STARTERS Core begins March 5th



Great Bend Economic Development, Inc. (GBED) announces the upcoming session of the CO.STARTERS Core program, a ten-week, cohort-based initiative designed to equip entrepreneurs with the insights, relationships, and tools needed to transform their business ideas into action. The next program will run from March 5th through May 14th.

Drawing from the experience of successful entrepreneurs and startup veterans worldwide, CO.STARTERS helps creative small business owners utilize lean, effective business modeling methods in an intuitive way while connecting them to a supportive community of peers and mentors. Participants focus on building and testing small models first rather than crafting detailed business plans. Through this process, they gain real-time customer feedback, adapt their models to meet customer needs, and avoid creating businesses based on incorrect assumptions.

The CO.STARTERS program is a global initiative, serving more than 200

communities across the United States, New Zealand, and Australia.

In Barton County, CO.STARTERS is led by GBED, which offers a comprehensive pathway to guide entrepreneurs through every stage of their business journey. This ten-week program will kick off on March 5th and meet weekly on Wednesday evenings from 6 pm to 9 pm. Valued at over \$2,500, the program's costs have been subsidized through sponsorships, allowing participants to enroll for just \$300. GBED also offers a rebate: participants attending at least eight of the ten sessions will receive a \$100 rebate. Class size is limited, so early application is encouraged.

The sessions will be facilitated by Regan Reif and Jeremy Elliott, both of whom bring extensive expertise and dedication to fostering entrepreneurship in the community. Their guidance will be instrumental in helping participants succeed.

Lee Ann June, Communications Director for GBED, expressed her enthusiasm: "CO.STARTERS Core is

the heavy-hitting piece in our suite of resources for entrepreneurs. It helps 'starters' gain the tools they need to ensure their businesses are sustainable. The program's focus on simplicity, community, and individual growth speaks directly to the creatives, dreamers, and makers in central Kansas. It fits seamlessly with our other initiatives, like creating entrepreneurial mindsets through ICE House and preparing for the IGNITE competition, where they can win grant funds."

Through programs like IGNITE Rural Business—Barton County's shark tank-style competition—GBED has identified a strong local base of entrepreneurs. These entrepreneurs need support, education, and resources to sustain growth and contribute to the local economy. CO.STARTERS aims to fill that gap.

For more information on CO.STARTERS, visit costarters.co. To learn more about the Barton County program or to apply, visit www.gbetedinc.com/costarters.

Workforce

Grow Workforce Business & Career Expo April 16th



GROW WORKFORCE
PRESENTS
Business &
Career Expo

4:00 - 6:30pm | April 16, 2025

Great Bend Events Center
3111 10th Street, GBK

Reserve Your Booth Today!
gbedinc.com/workforce

BARTON
COMMUNITY COLLEGE

GREAT BEND
CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

Great Bend
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

KANSASWORKS

Listening to feedback from last year's Grow Workforce Summit, the Grow Workforce partnership is making a major change—splitting the event into two separate experiences to better serve businesses, job seekers, and workforce professionals. In 2025, attendees will have the opportunity to participate in both a Business & Career Expo in the spring and a Grow Workforce Educational Conference in the fall, each designed to maximize impact and engagement.

Business & Career Expo – April 16, 2025

The first event, the Business & Career Expo, will take place on April 16th and is designed to directly connect local businesses with job seekers. Companies will have the opportunity to showcase their products, services, and job openings while meeting potential employees in person. This event is a great chance for businesses to recruit top talent and for job seekers to explore career opportunities in a variety of industries. Whether you're looking to grow your workforce or take the next step in your career, the expo is the place to be.

The expo is more than just a hiring event—it's an opportunity to engage with the community, build your brand, and connect with potential employees at all experience levels. Even if you're not actively hiring, this is a great chance to highlight what makes your company unique and inspire future

applicants.

The Business & Career Expo is a must-attend event for anyone looking to grow their workforce, find a new career path, or explore the incredible job opportunities available in Great Bend and the surrounding areas.

Grow Workforce Summit – November 12, 2025

Later in the year, the Grow Workforce Summit will take place in November. This event will focus on education and professional development, providing valuable learning sessions, workshops, and resources tailored for employers, HR professionals, and workforce development specialists. Topics will include best practices for hiring and retaining employees, strategies for workforce growth, and insights into emerging industry trends.

By separating these events, the Grow Workforce partnership aims to provide a more tailored experience for all participants, ensuring businesses, employees, and workforce professionals get the most out of each opportunity.

We're excited about this new direction and look forward to seeing you at both events as we continue working to strengthen Barton County's workforce. Stay tuned for more details on registration, sponsorship opportunities, and event programming in the coming months!

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.centralkansasjobs.com to leverage these new features and make Central Kansas Jobs your strategic partner in building successful teams.



ARE YOU HIRING?

- FREE JOB POSTINGS
- CREATE A COMPANY PROFILE
- LOOK THROUGH RESUMES
- ADVERTISING AVAILABLE

centralkansasjobs.com

central kansas
JOBS

Focus Areas

Follow along on our journey

We are elated with the momentum gained and plan to continue to capitalize on the current progress and continue pushing forward on many ground breaking projects.

If you are interested in *investing* in GBED projects, we would be happy to keep you updated on any specific categories of interest. The upcoming project categories that we will be seeking funding for are as follows:

- * Housing
- * Childcare
- * Entrepreneurship
- * Apprenticeships

Anything you want to see in these newsletters that was not included? Please reach out to marketing@gbedinc.com with your feedback.



Support Local Growth

Sponsorship Opportunities with Great Bend Economic Development

With several key programs and events on the horizon, now is the perfect time to explore how your business can support economic development and community initiatives. Our sponsorship guide outlines opportunities to get involved, from workforce development programs to signature events that bring people together in downtown Great Bend.

Businesses can sponsor events like Fridays on Forest, a monthly downtown gathering that features live entertainment, food, and local vendors, or the Parade Through Time, an annual celebration showcasing Great Bend's rich history. Additional sponsorships are available for other Great Bend Alive events designed to strengthen community engagement and downtown revitalization.

By partnering with Great Bend Economic Development and Great Bend Alive, your business can help drive local growth while gaining visibility and community recognition. Whether you're looking to support entrepreneurship, workforce development, or cultural events, there's a sponsorship level that fits your goals.

Check out the sponsorship guide to learn more about how you can make an impact. For a full-color guide, stop by our office or click the image to the right to download one today!



Click the image above to see the full sponsorship guide.

Join the Great Bend Alive Volunteer Team

Do you love seeing downtown Great Bend come alive with exciting events and vibrant community spirit? You can be part of the magic by joining the Great Bend Alive volunteer team! Whether you're a seasoned volunteer or new to helping out, we'd love to have you on board for the 2025 season.

Volunteer Opportunities Include:

Event Support: Help set up and tear down for popular events like Fridays on Forest.

Gatekeeping: Be the friendly face welcoming attendees and keeping things running smoothly (ages 18+ for this role).

Activity Assistance: Pitch in with activities, promotions, or special projects throughout the year.

Researching Local History: Dive into Great Bend's rich history to support tours, events, and community storytelling.

Fundraising: Help secure resources to ensure the success of our programs and events.

Tech Help: Assist with adding new tours to our app and keeping it updated for the community.

Perks of Volunteering

Build new friendships and connections with fellow community members.

Learn new skills and gain valuable event experience.

Be part of the team bringing downtown Great Bend to life.

Make a meaningful impact in your community!



Sign Up Today

Getting involved is easy! Simply fill out our volunteer sign-up form at <https://forms.monday.com/forms/b67996317e7b4d8cf08c48ca18d63836?r=use1> to let us know how you'd like to help.

Save the Date

We're hosting a Welcome/Welcome Back Volunteer Event in March to kick off the season and energize our amazing team for a great year ahead! Stay tuned for more details.

Join us and help make 2025 the best year yet for Great Bend Alive. Let's bring people together, celebrate our community, and create unforgettable moments in downtown Great Bend!

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



Entrepreneurship

Empowering Entrepreneurs

GBED's Comprehensive Journey of Success in Barton County

In the heart of Barton County, Kansas, Great Bend Economic Development (GBED) offers a robust and comprehensive path to guide entrepreneurs or 'starters' through every stage of their business journey. From the initial spark of an idea to the sustainable growth of established businesses, GBED's strategic programs, dedicated partnerships, and accessible funding opportunities are shaping the entrepreneurial landscape in Barton County.

A Path for Every Starter

Connection & Awareness

GBED recognizes that the journey begins with fostering a sense of belonging and support. Through innovative programs like the Entrepreneurial Mindset Classes, the organization provides a platform for creative minds to come together. Celebrations during Global Entrepreneurship Week amplify this ethos, creating an environment where ideas can flourish without fear of judgment. GBED celebrates the diversity of thought, welcoming the dreamers, makers, and visionaries who bring unique perspectives to the community.

Action & Structure

Ideas, no matter how groundbreaking, need a path to realization. GBED propels entrepreneurs from ideation to action by introducing programs like CO.STARTERS Core. These facilitated, cohort-based programs walk entrepreneurs through business

fundamentals, emphasizing the importance of starting small and embracing the concept of failing fast. GBED ensures that every venture has a robust foundation, offering structure, accountability, and community support.

Support & Transfer

As businesses begin to take shape, GBED identifies the need for sustained support. Leveraging partnerships with organizations like the Small Business Development Center (SBDC), NetWork Kansas, Great

Bend Chamber of Commerce, Central Kansas Development, Inc. (CKDI), and Great Plains Development, Inc. (GPDI), GBED connects entrepreneurs with specialized resources. Whether it's business counseling, grants, or low-interest funding, GBED ensures that promising initiatives have the support needed to become sustainable. Recognizing the importance of long-term success, GBED also facilitates knowledge transfer, connecting business owners with the SBDC to navigate succession planning.

Continued on page 12



**JULY 1ST
DEADLINE**

TO COMPETE FOR
\$50,000
IN BUSINESS FUNDING

IGNITEKS.COM

Programs, Partners, and Funding Opportunities

GBED's arsenal of programs is designed to equip entrepreneurs with the knowledge and resources necessary for success. The Entrepreneurial Mindset Classes challenge participants to 'think like an entrepreneur,' while the CO.STARTERS programs provide a structured journey through business fundamentals. The IGNITE Rural Business Competition empowers entrepreneurs and contributes to the economic growth of Barton County while businesses compete for \$95,000 in total prize money. The 2023 winners, including The Greystone, 10-39 Café, and Hatchet Axtion, exemplify the transformative impact of this competition on diverse business ventures.

Strategic partnerships with SBDC, NetWork Kansas, CKDI, and GPDI enhance GBED's reach, providing entrepreneurs with a network of support and resources. These partnerships offer everything from business counseling and grants to low-interest funding, ensuring that entrepreneurs have access to a comprehensive suite of resources.

IGNITE the Night and Business Features

GBED's approach extends to community engagement through IGNITE the Night events, set to be a dynamic platform for businesses to showcase their offerings following the IGNITE Competition. IGNITE the Night also acts as a bridge, bringing together stakeholders from the IGNITE Competition, including judges and sponsors.

The monthly business features in Great Bend Economic Development's newsletter spotlight both new and established businesses. These features serve as a dynamic tool for promoting local businesses through various channels, including social media. The newsletter is a testament to GBED's commitment to showcasing the diversity and resilience of the entrepreneurial spirit in Barton County.

In conclusion, GBED's multifaceted approach to supporting entrepreneurs in Barton County demonstrates a genuine commitment to cultivating a thriving and resilient local economy. By offering a well-structured path, engaging the community, and providing invaluable resources, GBED is truly championing creativity, innovation, and sustainable growth in Barton County, Kansas. The organization's impact extends far beyond business development; it is actively shaping the narrative of success for every entrepreneur who embarks on this transformative journey.

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.

Entrepreneurship

Youth Entrepreneurship Challenge Returns March 5, 2025

Calling all aspiring young entrepreneurs! The Youth Entrepreneurship Challenge (YEC) is back and better than ever, taking place on March 5, 2025. This exciting event invites Barton County students in grades 7-12 to showcase their creativity, innovation, and business savvy.

YEC is designed to inspire and empower the next generation of entrepreneurs. Participants will have the opportunity to develop a business concept, create a pitch, and present their ideas to a panel of judges. It's a unique chance to gain hands-on experience, sharpen public speaking skills, and compete for cash prizes.

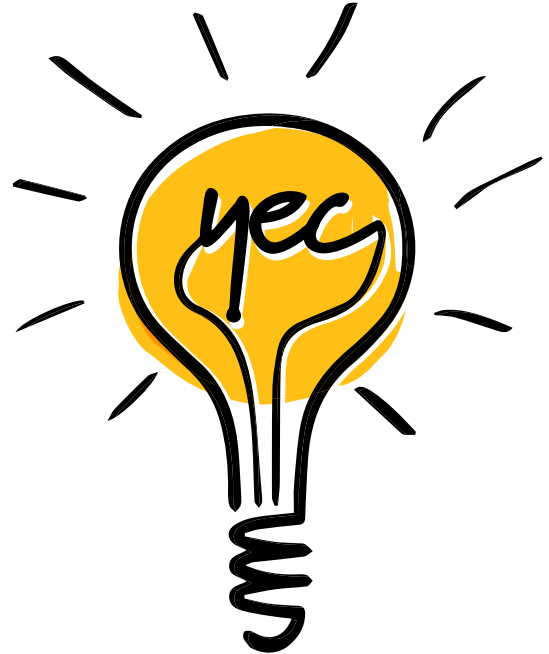
To help students succeed, a wealth of resources—including samples, templates, and videos from past events—are available online at www.gbедinc.com/yec.

For those looking to get involved beyond competing, Great Bend Economic Development (GBED) is seeking mentors to guide students through the process and judges to evaluate their creative ideas.

Reach out to the GBED staff for more information about the event, how to support Barton County's young entrepreneurs, or to sign up as a mentor or judge. Let's work together to empower the future of business in Barton County!

For updates and resources, visit www.gbедinc.com/yec.

BARTON COUNTY YOUTH ENTREPRENEURSHIP CHALLENGE



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@gbедinc.com if you feel like you might qualify.



Upcoming Events and Business Education

11
FEB

Essentials of Effective Supervision

(12 week program)
Tuesday, February 11th- Tuesday, May 6th
6-9 pm \$1299.00
405 N Jefferson Avenue. Springfield, MO
sba.gov/event/62441

24
FEB

Women's Leadership Group: Using A.I. for Social Media

Monday, February 24th
12-1 pm
3003 Frederick Ave. Saint Joseph, MO - An in-person event. No Cost to attend.
sba.gov/event/61710

18
FEB

Introduction to QuickBooks Online

(In-Person Training)
Tuesday, February 18th
6-9 pm \$49.00
3201 W. 16th st. Sedalia, MO
sba.gov/event/58003

26
FEB

Deadline to Enter the Youth Entrepreneurship Challenge (3-5-2025)

Learn more and enter through a link at www.gbenedinc.com/yec

Education

SBDC & SBA Classes



Reading and understanding financial statements

Tuesday, February 4th
4-7 pm \$ 79
sba.gov/event/61707

Sustainability 101: Practical Steps for Small Businesses

Tuesday, February 4th
10-11 am
sba.gov/event/60695

Email Marketing Strategies to Boost your Business Growth

Tuesday, February 4th
12-1 pm
sba.gov/event/63001

Mastering Business Finance: Credit, Lending and Resiliency essentials

Tuesday, February 4th
12-1 pm
sba.gov/event/63000

Simple Steps for Starting your Business-basics

Tuesday, February 4th
6-8 pm
sba.gov/event/62999

Hiring your First Employee

Tuesday, February 4th
12-1 pm
sba.gov/event/60693

Simple Steps for Starting your business-Basics

Tuesday, February 4th
6-8 pm
sba.gov/event/60213

Obtaining Business Credit

Wednesday, February 5th
12-1 pm
sba.gov/event/62998

Zero Cost Social Media: Leveraging Free Platforms for Small Business

Thursday, February 6th
9-11 am
sba.gov/event/60214

Zero Cost Social Media: Leveraging Free Platforms for Small Business

Thursday, February 6th
9am-11am
sba.gov/event/62997

Strategies and Tips for Outsourcing for Small Business Owners

Thursday, February 6th
12-1 pm
sba.gov/event/62996

Early-stage business boot camp

February 10th
5:30-8pm
sba.gov/event/62641

Cyber Security 101

Monday, February 10th
12-1pm
sba.gov/event/62995

Startup and Start Right

Tuesday, February 11th
12-1 pm
sba.gov/event/60696

Demystifying Financial Foundations: Income, Assets and Cash Flow

Wed, February 12th
6-7:30 pm
sba.gov/event/60215

Contracting with the Government

Wed, February 12th
12-1 pm
sba.gov/event/62994

Demystifying Financial Foundations: Income, assets and cash flow

Wed, February 12th
6-7:30 pm
sba.gov/event/62993

Funding your Dream: Exploring loans, Equity, Crowdfunding and more

Thursday, February 13th
6-7:30 pm
sba.gov/event/60216

Creating Realistic Financial Projections for your small business

Thursday, February 13th
7:45-9pm
sba.gov/event/60217

Email Marketing

Thursday, February 13th
9-11 am
sba.gov/event/62992

An Intro to Building your brand Story- Kansas SBDC at WSU

Thursday, February 13th
12-1 pm
sba.gov/event/62656

Bookkeeping Basics for Small Business Owners

Thursday, February 13th
12-1 pm
sba.gov/event/62991

The Ultimate Guide to Business Insurance: Part 1

Friday, February 14th
9:30-10:30 am
sba.gov/event/62988

2025 Midwest Match-maker

Tuesday, February 18th
9am-5pm
sba.gov/event/61880

Assets: Understanding Trademarks, Copyrights and Patents

Tuesday, February 18th
9-10 am
sba.gov/event/61247

Navigating Legal Structures: Business Entity & Contract Basics

Tuesday, February 18th
10:15- 11:15 am
sba.gov/event/61244

Employment Law Essentials: Contractor or Employee?

Tuesday, February 18th
11:30am-12:30pm
sba.gov/event/61243

Business Credit

Thursday, February 20th
6-7:30 pm
sba.gov/event/60218

Weighing your options: The Pros and Cons of Franchise Ownership- Kansas SBDC at WSU

Thursday, February 20th
11am-12pm
sba.gov/event/62655

The Ultimate Guide to Business Insurance: Part 2

Friday, February 21st
9:30-10:30 am
sba.gov/event/62983

QuickBooks Online for Beginners

Tuesday, February 25th
9am-12pm \$199.00
sba.gov/event/60698

Visualize your success: Strategic Planning Tools

Thursday, February 27th
9am-12pm
sba.gov/event/60219

QuickBooks Online for Intermediate Users

Thursday, February 27th
9am-12pm \$199.00
sba.gov/event/60700

The Power of Pinterest

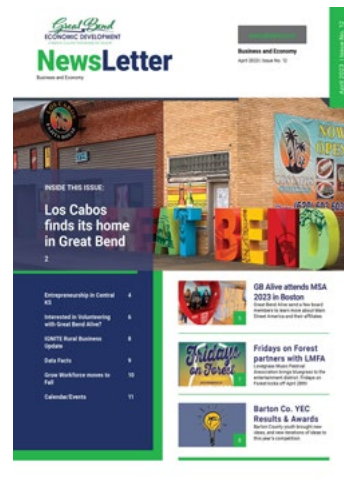
Thursday, February 27th
1-2 pm
sba.gov/event/60699

Please note that online registration will close at noon the day before each event.

“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
- CO.STARTERS Entrepreneurship Class Update
- 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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Great Bend, Kansas 67530

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marketing@gbedinc.com
www.gbedinc.com

Facebook



Instagram



LinkedIn



TikTok



Website

