

# NewsLetter

Business and Economy



INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

## Sarge's Saloon Marches toward 2nd Anniversary

2

Entrepreneurship in Central KS	3
ABCC is hiring!	7
Sponsorship Guide	8
Fridays on Forest Sponsorship	9
Join GBA and volunteer!	10
Staff	12
IGNITE	13
Marketable Statistics	15
Calendar	16



### ICE House closes with 7 graduates

The Entrepreneurial Mindset class closes with 7 graduates, optimism, and next steps for startups in central Kansas.



### 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.



### YEC open to the public March 5th at noon, GB Events Center

Come see these Barton County students (grades 7-12) showcase their creativity, innovation, and business savvy.



Pictured are the owners: Will Thayer, and Kym & Lloyd Lewis.

*Enjoy a cold beverage, snacks,  
bands, billiards, darts &  
karaoke.  
March on down for a drink!*

### **Sarge's Saloon**

Lloyd & Kym Lewis, Owners

2801 Main Street

Great Bend, KS

620-639-7373

sargessaloon@gmail.com

**[Find them on Facebook](#)**

#### **Hours:**

Monday - Thursday: 2 pm - Midnight

Friday & Saturday: 2 pm - 2 am

Sunday: noon - Midnight

# Sarge's Saloon

*A Dream, a Saloon, and a Community:  
Meet the Owners of Sarge's Lloyd & Kym  
Lewis*

#### **Tell us about yourselves and your business.**

Lloyd is a retired Sheriff's deputy whose lifelong dream was to own a bar. In 2023, that dream became a reality when he and his wife, Kym, opened Sarge's Saloon. Lloyd is an avid pool player and a lover of classic muscle cars, while Kym has worked for Coldwell Banker Sell Real Estate since 2001, obtaining her real estate license in 2020.

Beyond business, we have been foster parents for 10 years and are proud parents to two sons, grandparents to





Sarge's hosts theme-nights, events, bands, and food trucks. Be sure to follow them on [Facebook](#) to find out what's happening next!

four, and one great-grandchild.

**How did you come up with the idea for Sarge's Saloon?**

Lloyd has always dreamed of owning a bar. Over the last decade, we've collected bar equipment, even purchasing the entire contents of three closing businesses in preparation for our future venture. In August 2023, we acquired the former Pour House and transformed it into Sarge's Saloon.

Sarge's is a cozy, welcoming saloon with big plans for expansion, including additional space for more pool tables, a dance floor, and extra room for our patrons. We host live bands, DJs, karaoke, music bingo, rock-paper-scissors tournaments, pool and dart leagues, ladies' nights, and food trucks. Our kitchen offers a small food menu, but we also welcome guests to bring in their own food.

We're open Monday-Thursday from 2 PM to Midnight, Friday and Saturday from 2 PM to 2 AM, and Sundays during football season or for special events. March on down for a shot!

**Why did you choose Barton County for your business?**

We've both lived in Barton County for over 40 years, and the support and generosity of this community made it the perfect place for our dream to come to life.

**Why do you enjoy doing business in Barton County?**

The small-town charm and close-knit relationships make Barton County feel like home. We wouldn't want to do this anywhere else!

**What inspired you to start your business?**

For Lloyd, this has always been a dream. The opportunity finally came, and we knew it was time to make it happen.

**What did your startup plan and timeline look like?**

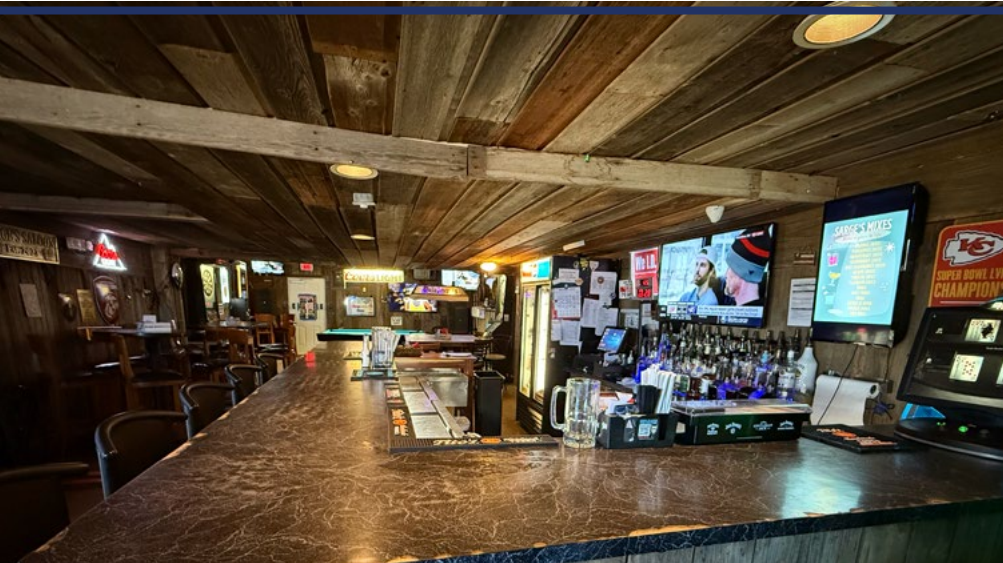
It all depended on whether we built from the ground up or found an existing bar. Luckily, we found a turn-key location, which allowed us to get started right away.

## 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.

### What advice would you give to businesses considering Barton County?

Great Bend is an exceptional small town with a supportive and welcoming community. If you're looking for a place to start a business, you won't find a better one.

### Do you have any advice for entrepreneurs just starting out?

Do your homework, plan, plan, and plan some more. And most importantly—never give up on your dreams!

A year and a half into this journey, we wouldn't change a thing. We love what we do and are excited for the future.





Think Like An Entrepreneur



**ENTREPRENEURIAL MINDSET CLASSES**



The latest graduates from the ICE House Program. Back row (left to right): Melinda Harter, Matthew Gerritzen, Toby Elliott, Brad Fanshier. Front row: Carmen Martinez, Melody Clements, Janice Perez, Kimberly Becker (co-facilitator). Not pictured: Jim Correll, co-facilitator (joined via Zoom for the final class due to weather conditions)

# Entrepreneurial Mindset Class Wraps Up, Paving the Way for Future and Current Business Owners

The latest session of the Entrepreneurial Mindset class, based on the book *Who Owns the Ice House?*, has successfully concluded, leaving participants with valuable insights and a renewed perspective on business and problem-solving.

Out of the 11 individuals who enrolled, eight received a 50% refund on their class fees for attending five or more of the six sessions. Participants ranged from current business owners and startups to professionals seeking to apply entrepreneurial thinking in their existing careers.

One of the key components of the class was weekly interviews with local entrepreneurs, where participants had the opportunity to learn firsthand from those who have navigated the challenges of starting and growing a business. These real-life insights helped students connect theory to practice, gaining valuable lessons from business owners who have successfully built their

enterprises.

The final class of 2025 was joined by co-facilitator Jim Correll and Kimberly Becker, both of whom have guided participants through the program's engaging curriculum. Their expertise has helped foster a mindset of innovation, resourcefulness, and resilience among attendees.

For many participants, the class provided not only knowledge but also the motivation to take the next step in

## Next Class is:

their entrepreneurial journey. As Melinda Harter, one of the newest graduates of the ICE House program, put it: "If you want to get the ball rolling on making your dreams a reality... the Ice House class is a great place to start!"

For those eager to continue their entrepreneurial journey, Great Bend Economic Development (GBED) is offering the next step—CO.STARTERS Core, a 10-week program designed to help entrepreneurs refine and launch their business ideas. The next cohort begins March 5, 2025.

### What is CO.STARTERS Core?

Entrepreneurship is an exciting journey, but the path isn't always clear. CO.STARTERS Core provides a structured, proven process that helps participants get unstuck and move forward with confidence.

Trusted by over 24,000 entrepreneurs nationwide, this program is ideal for:

**Continue on page 6**

## Continued from page 5

Individuals with a business idea but no clear starting point

- Creatives who want to turn a hobby into a business
- Side-hustlers looking to transition into full-time entrepreneurship
- Small business owners seeking to scale or diversify revenue streams

Throughout the course, a small cohort of 6-12 participants

will work through the program in a collaborative setting, led by CO.STARTERS certified facilitators Regan Rief and Jeremy Elliott. Each session includes hands-on learning, valuable peer feedback, and expert guidance. Class fees cover all materials and dinner at each session. For more information or to register for CO.STARTERS Core, visit [www.gbedinc.com/costarters](http://www.gbedinc.com/costarters).

## Workforce

# Grow Workforce Partnership Announces the 2025 Grow Workforce Business & Career Expo

The Grow Workforce Partnership is excited to introduce the 2025 Grow Workforce Business & Career Expo, set for April 16 at the Great Bend Events Center. This event is designed to connect businesses with job seekers throughout Great Bend and the surrounding areas, providing a valuable opportunity for companies to showcase what makes them unique, engage with potential hires, and invest in the future of the local workforce.

This year, the Grow Workforce Summit has been expanded into two distinct events. The April 16 Business & Career Expo will focus on direct engagement between businesses and job seekers, helping companies find talent for full-time, part-time, and internship positions. Later in the year, the Grow Workforce Summit on November 12 will provide a day of education, inspiration, and networking for employers and managers.

Businesses participating in the Grow Workforce Business & Career Expo are encouraged to be set up by 3:30 PM to welcome early arrivals. Employers can use this opportunity to highlight career opportunities, build connections, and share open positions. To further attract job seekers, businesses can submit a list of current job openings for additional promotion. Those who are fully staffed can still take advantage of the event to increase brand awareness and educate attendees about their company's role in the community. Additionally, businesses are invited to



Great Bend Events Center  
3111 10th Street, GBK

Reserve Your Booth Today!  
[gbedinc.com/workforce](http://gbedinc.com/workforce)



contribute a door prize valued at \$10 or more to encourage more engagement at their booth.

The Grow Workforce Partnership is committed to strengthening the regional workforce by providing resources and networking opportunities that benefit both businesses and job seekers. Booth registration is now open, and businesses interested in participating can register for a \$50 booth fee. To reserve your business' spot, sign up at

[www.gbedinc.com/growworkforce](http://www.gbedinc.com/growworkforce).

About the Workforce Partnership

The Workforce Partnership is a collaborative initiative bringing together Great Bend Economic Development, the Great Bend Chamber of Commerce, KansasWorks, Barton Community College, and human resource professionals from local businesses. Together, they are committed to strengthening the local workforce by connecting businesses,



## 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](mailto:admin@abccinc.org), or visit [www.abccinc.org](http://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!

A graphic for Bright Beginnings hiring. The background is a close-up of colorful alphabet blocks. At the top, a yellow banner says "BRIGHT BEGINNINGS" and a blue banner says "IS HIRING". Below that, text lists "ASSISTANT TEACHER POSITION" and "LEAD TEACHER POSITION" with horizontal lines. Underneath is "JOIN OUR TEAM!". A white box says "APPLY NOW". At the bottom, it says "WWW.ABCCINC.ORG" and "ADMIN@ABCCINC.ORG". On the right is the ABCC logo with the text "ADVANCING BARTON COUNTY CHILDCARE".

## 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](mailto:director@gbedinc.com) if you feel like you might qualify.



**Employers,  
are you  
hiring?** 

Create a company profile at:  
[www.centrankasjobs.com](http://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](http://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**





# Sponsorships still available for Fridays on Forest 2025

The 2024 Fridays on Forest series brought downtown Great Bend to life with music, food, and community fun. With themes like the Parade Through Time, Bat Cats Night, and Homecoming, each event delivered unique experiences for attendees of all ages.

### Attendance Highlights:

This year's series saw tremendous community support, with an estimated 6,142 attendees across seven events. The most popular night, in August, drew a record-breaking 1,717 attendees, showcasing the growing excitement for these vibrant evenings.

### New and Improved:

This year, we are extending event hours to run from 5 pm to 10 pm in response to community surveys. The longer hours provided more time for families to enjoy live entertainment, shop local vendors, and savor delicious food truck offerings.

### Looking Ahead: Join the Crew!

As we gear up for the 2025 season, we're calling on local organizations to join our Fridays on Forest Crew for the May, June, and July events. We need 10-15 volunteers for setup and teardown, which involves unloading equipment, setting up tables and

chairs, and ensuring everything runs smoothly. Setup happens between 3:30 and 5 pm, and teardown wraps up by 10:30 pm. It's a fun, team-building way to support this beloved community event!

### Sponsorship Opportunities for 2025

Sponsorships for the 2025 Fridays on Forest series are now available. Sole sponsorship for an event is \$3,000, which can also be shared between up to three businesses. Sponsorship includes valuable deliverables to showcase your business while supporting one of Great Bend's most celebrated traditions.

Don't miss your chance to be part of the magic! Contact us to learn more about sponsorship opportunities or to sign up as a volunteer for next season. Let's make 2025 even more unforgettable!

Sponsorships are now available, to learn more, please reach out to Lee Ann June at [marketing@gbedinc.com](mailto:marketing@gbedinc.com).

Click the image to check out the entire SPONSORSHIP GUIDE 2025

Page : 8 - Sponsorship Guide 2025

## FRIDAYS ON FOREST

Since its inception, Fridays on Forest has become a signature event in downtown Great Bend, bringing the community together for unforgettable evenings of live music, good food, and vibrant energy. As we gear up for the 2025 season—our 5th year of Fridays on Forest—we're inviting YOU to join the excitement as a sponsor of this cherished new tradition.

**2025 DATES:**

- April 25 Sponsored
- May 30 Sponsored
- June 27 Sponsored
- July 25
- Aug 29 1/3 Sponsored
- Sept 26
- Oct 17

**LARGEST IN 2025**  
1600 ATTENDEES  
Whether it was class reunions, regular attendees, or first-time visitors, we loved watching folks catch up with old friends and make new ones in downtown GBK.

**SMALLEST IN 2025**  
450 ATTENDEES  
Each season is full of excitement, community connections, and memories made.

### SPONSORSHIP OPTIONS

Sponsorship opportunities are flexible to fit your goals and budget! You can choose to:

- **Sole Sponsor** for \$3,000
- **Co-Sponsor with One Other Partner** for \$1,500 each
- **One-Third Sponsorship** for \$1,000 each

### SPONSORSHIP INCLUDES:

- Your name/logo featured on our website, banners, and promotional materials.
- Recognition in radio shout-outs and social media promotions leading up to the event.
- Logo placement on table tents at the event, complete with a QR code linking to the evening's menu.

# 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 at Fridays on Forest 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 downtown.

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

**Design/Merch:** Help design the next set of merch for GB Alive!

## 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. (Or click on the image above to find the form)

## Save the Date

We're hosting a Welcome/Welcome Back Volunteer Event on March 26th from 4 - 6 pm at Dry Lake Brewing, 1305 Main Street, to kick off the season and energize our amazing team for a great year ahead!

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





## Organization

# 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](mailto: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](mailto: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](mailto: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 (YEC) Welcomes the Public on March 5, 2025

Great Bend Economic Development and the Great Bend Chamber of Commerce announce the return of the Youth Entrepreneurship Challenge (YEC) for Barton County students in grades 7-12. This unique competition empowers students to develop and pitch business ideas while competing for \$2,500 in cash prizes. YEC will occur on March 5, 2025, at the Great Bend Events Center. The trade show and competition are open to the public at noon. Prizes are announced immediately following the judging at about 1:30 pm.

This year, Network Kansas and K-State Research and Extension have joined as partners, providing additional resources for student success. Student participants developed business plans (3-page maximum for state level), created a tradeshow display, and present their ideas to judges. The tradeshow also allows students to interact with the public for the People's Choice award.

Learn more go online: [www.gbedinc.com/yec](http://www.gbedinc.com/yec), or contact Lee Ann June at [marketing@gbedinc.com](mailto:marketing@gbedinc.com) to sponsor!

## BARTON COUNTY YOUTH ENTREPRENEURSHIP CHALLENGE



## Entrepreneurship

# IGNITE Rural Business 2025

The IGNITE competition is back, offering Barton County entrepreneurs a chance to compete for a share of \$95,000 in prize money! Contestants can sign up now and begin accessing business planning resources right away—no need to wait until the July 1st deadline. Plus, participating in IGNITE gives you the chance



*Click the image above for the IGNITE overview video*

to gain valuable exposure for your business as you refine your ideas and connect with the community. From expert mentorship to business development support, IGNITE is designed to help turn big ideas into thriving businesses. Ready to take your business to the next level? Learn more and apply at

[igniteks.com](http://igniteks.com).

***Not planning to compete in IGNITE? GBED is here to support you, too! Whether you're launching a new venture or expanding an existing business, GBED offers mentorship, resources, and connections to help you succeed. Reach out today and let's build something great together!***  
[director@gbedinc.com](mailto:director@gbedinc.com)

# Did You Know?



## Marketable Statistics

How about some spending pattern facts?!

Our area spends \$1.6 million on Frozen Prepared Foods annually!

That's \$158 a year per household!

Walmart Sitewise Online STI: Spending Patterns Food: Other Food at Home (Annual)															
STI: Spending Patterns	Walmart				Walmart				Walmart						
Frozen prepared foods	\$	629,957	10%	\$ 151.86	81	\$	1,090,704	10%	\$ 158.63	84	\$	1,599,562	10%	\$ 157.75	84
Frozen meals	\$	295,573	4%	\$ 71.25	82	\$	511,687	4%	\$ 74.42	86	\$	748,531	4%	\$ 73.82	85
Other frozen prepared foods	\$	334,391	5%	\$ 80.61	79	\$	579,033	5%	\$ 84.21	83	\$	851,052	5%	\$ 83.93	83

# Explore Great Bend with Our Walking Tours!

Discover the stories behind downtown Great Bend with the Great Bend Tours app! Take the Historic Walking Tour to explore iconic landmarks, learn about the city's rich past, and hear audio clips from local historians. Or dive into the Art Tour, where you'll uncover the vibrant murals and sculptures that bring our downtown to life, featuring insights from the artists themselves. Download the app today and start exploring! [www.gbedinc.com/tours](http://www.gbedinc.com/tours)

## Great Bend Alive Tours

.....

Explore Downtown GBK with Great Bend Alive Tours!

.....

Available online or on Apple and Google Play stores. Scan this QR Code or go to [gbedinc.com/tours](http://gbedinc.com/tours) to check out free tours of downtown!



# Upcoming Events and Business Education

**4**  
MAR

## Building your brand story: workshop

Tuesday, March 4th, 2025  
9am- 12pm \$25.00  
5015 E. 29th St. N Wichita KS  
[www.sba.gov/event/62927](http://www.sba.gov/event/62927)

**6**  
MAR

## Pitching to Investors

Thursday, March 6th  
4:30-7pm \$79.00  
4747 Troost Ave. Kansas City, MO  
[www.sba.gov/event/65451](http://www.sba.gov/event/65451)

**4**  
MAR

## Building a brand identity & marketing plan

Tuesday, March 4th, 2025  
9am-12pm \$79.00  
4747 Troost Ave. Kansas City, MO  
[www.sba.gov/event/65450](http://www.sba.gov/event/65450)

**11**  
MAR

## Social media strategies

Tuesday, March 11th  
9am-12pm \$79.00  
4747 Troost Ave. Kansas City, MO  
[www.sba.gov/event/65452](http://www.sba.gov/event/65452)

**5**  
MAR

## YOUTH ENTREPRENEURSHIP CHALLENGE

Wednesday, March 5, 2025  
Noon - 1:30 PM  
3111 10th Street (Tradeshow is open to the public)  
<https://www.gbедinc.com/yec>

**13**  
MAR

## Emotional Intelligence: The ingredient for effective leaders

Thursday, March 13th  
9am-4pm \$279.00  
405 N Jefferson Ave. Springfield, MO  
[www.sba.gov/event/63170](http://www.sba.gov/event/63170)

**5**  
MAR

## CO.STARTERS Core

Wednesday, March 5, 2025  
6:00 - 9:00 PM (Dinner arrives at 5:45)  
Great Bend Economic Development offices, 3111 10th Street  
Last-minute registration by March 3rd!  
<https://www.gbедinc.com/costarters>

**13**  
MAR

## State sales tax for retailers

Thursday, March 27th  
9am-12pm  
5015 E. 29th St N Wichita KS  
[www.sba.gov/event/62557](http://www.sba.gov/event/62557)

**Check out: [www.gbедinc.com](http://www.gbедinc.com) for more classes!**

## Education

# SBDC & SBA Classes



Introduction to QuickBooks online (in-person training)  
Tuesday, March 4th  
6-9pm \$49.00  
[www.sba.gov/event/59927](http://www.sba.gov/event/59927)

Learn the SEO basics and boost your website traffic  
Tuesday, March 4th  
12-1 pm  
[www.sba.gov/event/65196](http://www.sba.gov/event/65196)

Social media & online marketing: content assets creating strategies  
Thursday, March 6th  
9-10:30 am  
[www.sba.gov/event/65212](http://www.sba.gov/event/65212)

The SEO implementation blueprint: tools, tactics & techniques  
Thursday, March 6th  
12-1pm  
[www.sba.gov/event/65195](http://www.sba.gov/event/65195)

Branding for small business  
Friday, March 7th  
9-10am  
[www.sba.gov/event/65211](http://www.sba.gov/event/65211)

How to value the business you're buying (or selling)  
Monday, March 10th  
12-1:30pm  
[www.sba.gov/event/65209](http://www.sba.gov/event/65209)

How to use productivity tools in your business to get things done  
Tuesday, March 11th  
12-1 pm  
[www.sba.gov/event/65194](http://www.sba.gov/event/65194)

Simple steps for starting your business- basics  
Tuesday, March 11th  
6-8pm  
[www.sba.gov/event/61220](http://www.sba.gov/event/61220)

Strategic planning for small nonprofits  
Wednesday, March 12th  
9-10:30 am  
[www.sba.gov/event/65207](http://www.sba.gov/event/65207)

GIANT people-driven leadership series  
March 12th - April 23rd  
8:30am-12:30pm \$1200.00  
405 N Jefferson Springfield, MO  
[www.sba.gov/event/62455](http://www.sba.gov/event/62455)

Future-proof your business: succession planning simplified  
Thursday, March 13th  
1-1:40pm \$49.00  
[www.sba.gov/event/63428](http://www.sba.gov/event/63428)

Manage your own social media  
Thursday, March 13th  
12-1pm  
[www.sba.gov/event/62562](http://www.sba.gov/event/62562)

How to use AI to grow your business  
Thursday, March 13th  
12-1pm  
[www.sba.gov/event/65192](http://www.sba.gov/event/65192)

Market your business with video  
Monday, March 17th  
1-2:30pm  
[www.sba.gov/event/65205](http://www.sba.gov/event/65205)

Demystifying financial foundations: income, assets & cash flow  
Wednesday, March 19th  
6-7:45pm  
[www.sba.gov/event/65204](http://www.sba.gov/event/65204)

Funding your dreams exploring loans, equity, crowdfunding & more  
Thursday, March 20th  
6-7:30pm  
[www.sba.gov/event/65202](http://www.sba.gov/event/65202)

Your publishing roadmap to success  
Thursday, March 20th  
11:30am-12:30pm  
[www.sba.gov/event/65191](http://www.sba.gov/event/65191)

Developing your online presence  
Thursday, March 20th  
9-11am  
[www.sba.gov/event/61239](http://www.sba.gov/event/61239)

Creating realistic financial projections for your small business  
Thursday, March 20th  
7:45-9pm  
[www.sba.gov/event/65201](http://www.sba.gov/event/65201)

Build your brand on social media  
Thursday, March 20th  
12-1 pm \$10.00  
[www.sba.gov/event/62561](http://www.sba.gov/event/62561)

Choose your sub-contractor well  
Thursday, March 20th  
6-7:30pm  
[www.sba.gov/event/65203](http://www.sba.gov/event/65203)

Startup and start right  
Tuesday, March 25th  
12-1pm  
[www.sba.gov/event/62559](http://www.sba.gov/event/62559)

Marketing Strategy  
Tuesday, March 25th  
6-7:15pm  
[www.sba.gov/event/65198](http://www.sba.gov/event/65198)

Social Media Marketing  
Tuesday, March 25th  
7:30-9pm  
[www.sba.gov/event/65197](http://www.sba.gov/event/65197)

Managing cash flow for your business  
Wednesday, March 26th  
6:30-8pm  
[www.sba.gov/event/65190](http://www.sba.gov/event/65190)

Dynamic communication skills & strategies  
Thursday, March 27th  
9am-4pm \$279.00  
[www.sba.gov/event/63160](http://www.sba.gov/event/63160)

*“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**

Great Bend Economic  
Development, Inc.  
3111 10th Street  
Great Bend, Kansas 67530

620-796-2407  
[marketing@gbedinc.com](mailto:marketing@gbedinc.com)  
[www.gbedinc.com](http://www.gbedinc.com)

Facebook Instagram LinkedIn TikTok Website

A row of five social media icons: Facebook (f), Instagram (camera), LinkedIn (in), TikTok (musical note), and Website (globe).