



**2008 Annual Report
December 2008**

Mission Statement

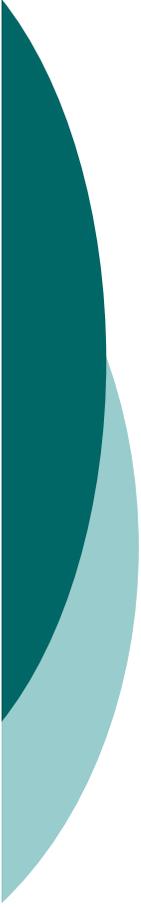
The Great Bend Chamber of Commerce and Economic Development will promote and improve the business climate in the city of Great Bend through its services and partnerships that encourage growth and assist existing and new businesses in reaching their business goals.

Goals

- Partner with organizations to position Great Bend community for growth
- Maintain fiscal accountability and responsibility
- Provide quality services and programs for members
- Increase revenues to provide for future longevity

Areas of focus

- Advocacy for business
- Investment in the future
- Community Marketing and Promotion
- Chamber member services



FRESH FEEDBACK – Positive Results from Member Marketing Survey

In September of 2008 The Great Bend Chamber of Commerce & Economic Development Board of Directors collected and reviewed a large pool of responses to the Chamber/ED's member feedback survey. Member responses were not only positive and encouraging, but were very insightful as to how the Great Bend Chamber of Commerce & Economic Development can better serve local businesses.

"I was pleased to learn that so many of our members provided their feedback on our current member services and on the direction our Board of Directors has taken," Chamber/ED Chairman Mark Mingenback said. "In addition, our members gratefully acknowledged the hard work and dedication of our professional staff whose efforts continue to grow our organization."

The brief but comprehensive survey was an attempt by the Chamber of Commerce & Economic Development Board of Directors to garner feedback as to what programs are most important to the members. Currently, the Great Bend Chamber of Commerce & Economic Development offers countless services to its members and the community in an effort to promote and improve the business climate in Great Bend.

Out of all the services offered by The Chamber & Economic Development, members were asked to vote on the six they felt were the most important to their business. The following highlights the programs most highly rated by members.

1. **Networking opportunities** such as Chamber Coffees and Business After Hours
2. **Economic Development** and business recruitment and retention
3. **Chamber-related events** such as the Annual Banquet, the Big Bend Bike Rally, the Gary Gore Memorial Golf Tournament, Kids Ag Day, and the 3i Show
4. **Traditional marketing** - Outlook Business Journal
5. **E-marketing** through weekly e-mail Updates
6. **Chamber/ED web site**
7. **Chamber membership directory** that is available in a printed format and also on the Chamber's web site, www.greatbend.org

Comments from the Survey

- "It takes all of us to "be" the chamber ... the staff does an excellent job ... we must remember we are one of the first stops for new folks into our community and businesses and our "first" impression should knock their socks off".
- "Continue to go strong on economic development"
- "THE CHAMBER MEMBERSHIP HAS CREATED AWARENESS OF WHAT OUR BUSINESS BRINGS TO GREAT BEND AND BARTON COUNTY."
- "As a fairly non-active member I can say that I am truly impressed with the thought and work that goes into the functions put on by the Chamber. The variety of social and professional functions that are put on speak of an incredible thought process and effort that few chambers that I've seen would go to the trouble. I feel very fortunate to be a member and hope that some day success will allow me to become more active. Keep up the good work and thanks again for all the effort."
- "I feel the work done by the Chamber and Economic are extremely intangible things to measure but extremely important to have in place. Your efforts are appreciated. Thanks."
- "Several customers found us through the chamber."
- "More help with the employment situation."

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

In 2008 The City of Great Bend invested significantly in economic development efforts and partnered with The Great Bend Chamber of Commerce & Economic Development to

- Meet the new employee needs of local employers
- Retain local businesses
- Follow up on new business leads
- Promote Great Bend's assets

Several programs were implemented to meet these goals throughout the year.

Retail recruitment – a team of four people attended the International Conference of Shopping Centers to meet with retailers and developers. Follow-up with all contacts made at the conference are on-going through emails, phone conversations, and personal contacts.

Great Bend ACER - The greatest challenge facing businesses in the area is the shortage of workers. A partnership between businesses, local government, The Great Bend Chamber of Commerce and Economic Development, state resources, and non-profit community action organizers was established to develop a plan for a COMMUNITY RECRUITMENT PROGRAM. Elements of the program include:

- Cost-share an investment in retaining a dedicated Community Recruiter to promote employment opportunities and quality of life in Barton County
- Develop an incentive package designed to encourage relocation
- Host a JobFair
- Identify non-traditional recruitment opportunities
- Leverage online and local recruiting resources to identify qualified applicants
- Assist employers in developing community based branding and marketing initiatives

The new Great Bend Area Community Employee Recruiter, Renee Richmeier, officially assumed her role on October 6, 2008. Below is a list of items already accomplished in the few months she has been employed.

Job fairs attended: 5

Resumes/applications received: 27

New potential applicants (contacts, no resume): 17

HR contacts listing (businesses receiving resumes): 110 businesses

Community meetings attended: 16

Business meetings: 17

New Businesses – New Employees

11 New Businesses

37 - Full time employees 24 - Part time employees

Aaron's Rent & Sales	6 full time	
Comfort Inn	6 full time	7 part time
D&S Casing, LLC	9 full time	2 part time
Anytime Fitness	1 full time	2 part time
Prodigal Ministries	0 full time	0 part time (<i>all volunteer</i>)
Gambino's Pizza	2 full time	1 part time
My Town LP	8 full time	11 part time
KSN	1 full time	0 part time
Shelter Insurance, Seth Rolfs	1 full time	1 part time
Farm Bureau Insurance, Mike Carlson	2 full time	0 part time
Bauer Computers	1 full time	0 part time

Business Expansions

Aaron Rentals Building and Plan Review
Anytime Fitness
Bob Olivier Storage Building
City of GB Storage
Days Inn Remodel
Dove Buick
Expo 3
Gary Pletcher Remodel
Great Bend Coop Building and Canopy
Keenan Law Storage
Kwik Shop Remodel
Moses Properties day care remodel
Petroleum Electric Addition
Rube's Repair
Superior Self Storage Units
USD 428 - Riley School
Western Ag Enterprises, Inc.

American State Bank Remodel
Baker Petrolite Addition
Central Kansas Medical Center Lab and Doctor's Office
Clarke Well Addition
Delgado's
Dressler Copland
Foley Tractor Shop Addition and Wash Bay
Grace Church Furnace & AC
GB Surgical & Diagnostic Center Patient Rooms
Kitco Metal Buildings
Love's Country Store remodel
MyTown, LP
Raptor House – Great Bend Zoo
Sunflower Electric Warehouse
Town & Country Racquet Club
Wade Morris Restaurant – Diane's Diner

Barton Community College – Learning Resource Center and Technical Building

Total Investment **\$ 20,134,978. - Business**
 \$ 6,100,000. - Barton Community College

Building Relationships

Skip Yowell – Founder of JanSport

In 1967, Skip Yowell, his cousin Murray Pletz, and Murray's wife Jan founded JanSport, the world's leading manufacturer of backpacks and collegiate apparel with nothing more than a sewing machine and a fierce determination to make the best and most dependable product on the market. Forty years later, Skip Yowell tells the story of the adventures, the expeditions, and the people that made JanSport a beloved brand all over the world in his new book, *The Hippie Guide to Climbing the Corporate Ladder and Other Mountains*.

As the keynote speaker for the 2008 Chamber Annual Banquet, Skip shared with the audience a special perspective as he talked about his early days growing up in Great Bend. A 1964 graduate of Great Bend High School, much of Skip's values and inspiration were acquired in Great Bend. His desire to "give back" is his top goal these days and he shared his insights on starting and sustaining a business in a seminar during his visit back to Great Bend. Skip was instrumental in securing JanSport products to be sold in The Outlet Store as part of The My Town, LP project. Because of his reconnection to Great Bend and Great Bend High School, Skip will be inducted into the GBHS Hall of Fame in February 2009.

NEW 2 Great Bend



The Great Bend Chamber of Commerce & Economic Development incorporated a program geared towards Great Bend's newcomers - people who have moved to the area within the last 2 years. This program is designed to help network newcomers with long-time community residents, possible employers, and people with similar business interests. Also, the program helps inform Great Bend newcomers of how much the Chamber of Commerce & Economic Development is working for them. **Currently 142 newcomers are involved with this dynamic and growing program!**

Welcome to all newcomers – we are glad you have made GREAT Bend your home.

Downtown ... our town ... OUR FUTURE

Great Bend, Ks.



With seven new stores Downtown Great Bend is on a roll. A plan to make downtown matter--make it a place people want to linger by returning downtown to its retail roots has been developed.

The goal is to create a **regional shopping destination and create a synergy** by controlling the operations of several ventures. One of the primary advantages is the **economies of scale** offered by controlling several different retail venues in the central business district.

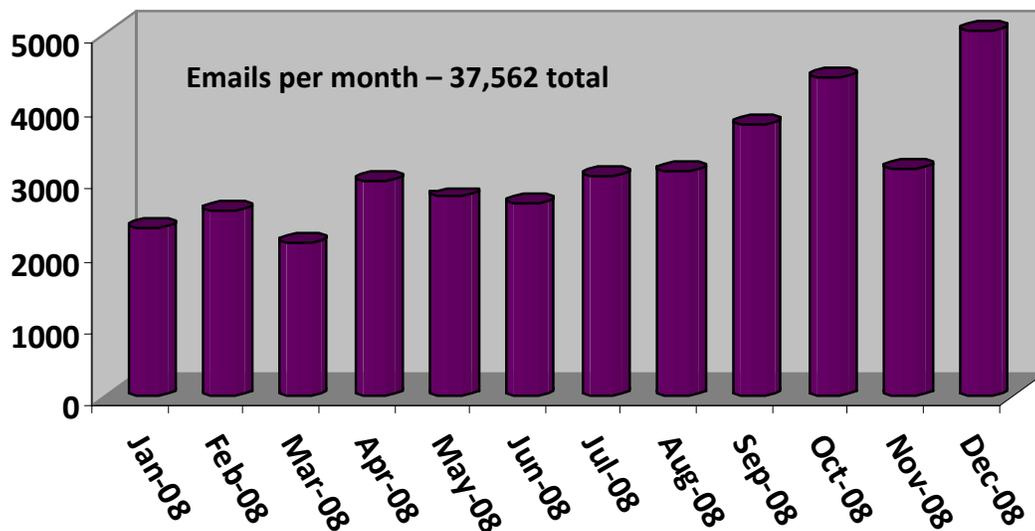
Staff from the Great Bend Chamber of Commerce & Economic Development have worked in concert with a leadership team to implement the plan for the project. *See insert for retail stores locations and information.*

Marketing

Promoting local business was perhaps the greatest focus for 2008. Through the newly designed Outlook Business Journal, Chamber Business Directory, weekly E-mail blast and newly created web site – activities and special features of numerous businesses were highlighted.

From January through December 2008, **37,562 emails were distributed** from The Great Bend Chamber and Economic Development compared to 24,264 in 2007.

From January to December 2008, 127 **businesses** were highlighted in the Outlook Business Journal comprising 12,448 **inches of editorial space compared to 6,604 column inches in 2007**. At the rate of \$7.00 per inch (a comparable advertising rate for the area), the **total value to these local businesses equates to \$87,136. (2007 - \$46,225.)** Quite impressive. *A copy of data available upon request.*



E - Community Designation



NetWork Kansas was established as a component of the Kansas Economic Growth Act of 2004 to further entrepreneurship and small business growth as a priority for economic and community development in the State of Kansas.

Backed by more than 400 partners statewide, the NetWork Kansas service promotes an entrepreneurial environment by establishing a central portal that connects entrepreneurs and small business owners with the expertise, education, and economic resources they need in order to succeed.

Great Bend was chosen as an E - Community in this pilot program. Communities chosen to become E-Communities will partner with NetWork Kansas to achieve the following:

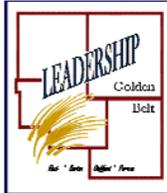
- 1) Establish a fund for entrepreneurs and small business owners that is administered by each E-Community
- 2) Map all local, regional and state assets available to assist entrepreneurs and businesses in each E-Community
- 3) Develop a long-term tracking and accountability system to measure business and economic growth
- 4) Form long-term partnerships with more than 400 partners statewide that assist entrepreneurs and small businesses in order to provide a positive impact on the Kansas economy.

With \$300,000 available for entrepreneurs in the forms of loans or grants, this money can be used for start up businesses to assist in reaching their business objectives. Twenty Great Bend businesses or organizations contributed over \$600,000 to The Network Kansas program receiving tax credits for their contribution.

2008 RESULTS

**My Town, LP awarded a \$45,000.00 grant
2 additional projects pending decisions by the committee**

Golden Belt Leadership Program



The Great Bend Chamber of Commerce & Economic Development helped create the new Golden Belt Leadership program in conjunction with the Golden Belt Community Foundation and other area organizations. Leadership Golden Belt focuses on training local leaders through the combination of a skills-based curriculum and purpose oriented site visits. The inaugural class for Leadership Golden Belt began in January 2008. The class is open to interested individuals in Stafford, Rush, Pawnee, and Barton counties. Each class consists of participants who are selected by the Advisory Board from applications received. The class members will have access to the skills, training, and relationships needed to become more effective citizens. Class members will be trained in 21st Century Leadership skills such as community visioning, group facilitation, learning styles, collaboration, consensus-building, and advocacy. The Leadership Golden Belt program and the relationships the participants develop will provide the skills needed to work with others to address current problems and find opportunities for the future. A \$23,890. grant was received from the Kansas Health Foundation for this newly designed regional program.

2008 Results

**First Class of graduates with new structure/programming
Additional \$ 100,000 investment from Kansas Health Foundation**

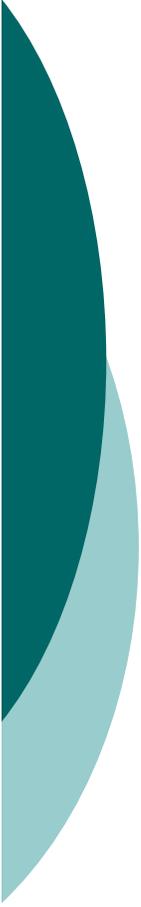
Events – THANK YOU TO ALL VOLUNTEERS



For the first time, area motorcycle enthusiasts organized a motorcycle rally that drew over 1,000 people to Great Bend in late September. The 2008 Big Bend Bike Rally was an exciting kick-off to what will become an annual event under the direction of Robin Fabricius and Jennie Gordy.

The 3i SHOW, which is held in May each year, is a salute to **Industry, Implements and Irrigation**. Organized and managed by Western Kansas Manufacturers Association, the show provides an opportunity for exhibitors from all over the world to showcase their agri-business products.





As outlined in the 2008 Plan of Work the following list highlights just a few accomplishments in this year of great opportunity.

Advocacy for Business

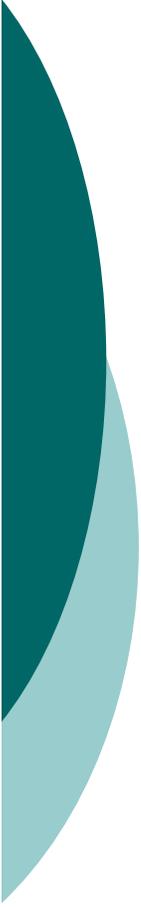
- 3 **Legislative Forums** addressing current legislative issues
- 49 Chamber Networking **coffees**
- **10 Business After Hours Networking Events**
- **17 Ribbon Cuttings**
- **10 Business After Hours**
- The coordination of **Human Resource** professionals meeting monthly to share best practices in their respective field.

Community Marketing and Promotion

- Created and maintained a 16-page quality business **newsletter – THE OUTLOOK BUSINESS JOURNAL** - that allows The Great Bend Chamber of Commerce & Economic Development to effectively promote member businesses and well as keeping all members informed of business happenings. Strong content and a new design made for “the best Chamber newsletter in my territory” as stated by Richard Shank, AT&T.
- Selling over **\$140,000** worth of **gift certificates**
- The redesign of the Chamber’s **web site**, featuring Economic Development facts and information went live in February 2008.
- Redesign of the **Chamber Directory** to give it a more professional look and more functionality with three sections for cross referencing.
- **UPDATE - E-Blast** Weekly e-mail blasts serve as a vehicle that allows the Chamber to reach members in a timely manner with information about committee work and special projects

Investment in the Future

- The Agribusiness Committee created yet another very successful **Kids Ag Day** for Barton County 4th graders
- Meeting of the **Barton County Young Professionals** to hear presentation on Financial Planning
- Connected with over **140 new and existing businesses** for business expansion or relocation
- Participated in **College 2 Community Day – Barton Community College**
- Continuation of **centralkansasjobs.com** – a clearinghouse for job seekers and employers
- **Expo facilities** utilized 60 event days for 19 events and 16 weekends for SRCA Drag Races Generating \$20,025 an increase of \$6,500 from 2007.
- **Expo facilities utilized for annual 3i show and Big Bend Bike Rally – the perfect location for both events.**
- The implementation of a strategic plan for retail development – **The Buxton Study**, in conjunction with The City of Great Bend.
- Implementation of strategies for the downtown revitalization - **My Town, LP**
- The **Beautification Committee** continues to wrap up the improvements to the island on Broadway Avenue and honor a business for its efforts in the improvement of their business.
- **Presentation by Joe Glassman – Chairman, KS Postsecondary Technical Education Authority** The Authority, which operates under the Kansas Board of Regents, will oversee technical education in the state; aiming to standardize costs, credits, programs and certifications.
- **Lobbying efforts** in conjunction with **Kansas Economic Development Association** to evaluate incentives offered by the State of Kansas



Chamber Member Services

- **180 members contacted by the Ambassadors through personal visits**
- 38 **new members** joined the Chamber of Commerce in 2008 – staff called on 95
- Organized a successful **Gary Gore Annual Golf Tournament** – 19 teams and 25 hole sponsors
- **Winter storage** of 59 boats, campers and cars - compared to 40 units in 2007
- Distribution of approximately **2,000 maps and 4,500 phonebooks**
- Distribution of **relocation packets**
- 33 members of the **Plan Room** with 46 sets of plans opened for review in 2008.

Additional partnerships, services, and programs:

- Memberships
 - Prairie Enterprise Project
 - Great Bend Board of Realtors
 - SCORE
 - CKDI
 - Kansas Chamber
 - US Chamber of Commerce
 - Kansas BIO
 - wKREDA
 - International Conference on Shopping Centers
 - American Chamber of Commerce Executives
- Chamber staff participation
 - JobFest 2008
 - Golden Belt Leadership Program
 - Annual Banquet
 - Jack Kilby Monument Project
 - State Spelling Bee Planning Committee
 - 3i Show
 - Big Bend Bike Rally
 - WorkForce Development project - Community Recruiter position
 - Kansas Department of Transportation district meetings
 - K-96 Advisory Committee
 - Barton County Community College WorkForce Advisory Committee
 - Kansas WorkForce Summit
 - DISC Staff Training
- Hosted **Midwest Venture Alliance Investor Group**
- Partnered with the Kansas Chamber to host **Energy Summit 2008** to develop a comprehensive Energy Policy for the State of Kansas
- Organized **Western Kansas Congressional Staff Reception** – Washington, DC
- **10 speaking engagements** to service and social organizations and high school business classes
- Monthly updates presented to **Barton County Commissioners**
- Monthly updates to **Great Bend City Council on Economic Development** efforts
- Weekly meetings with **Economic Development Team** (City Administrator and Mayor)



New Downtown Businesses Now Open

Great Bend has been bustling with activity in preparation for the new MyTown businesses. Seven businesses announce that they are now up and running just in time for holiday shopping and socializing!

Retail Store Hours:

Monday - Saturday 10:00 am - 7:00 pm Sunday 1:00 pm - 5:00 pm

Perks Coffee Shoppe Hours:

Monday - Saturday 6:30 am to 6:00 pm Sunday 1:00 pm - 5:00 pm

MyTown Outlet Store

1210 Main Street

Offering *Jan Sport*, *Coleman*, and *Magnus products*, the MyTown Outlet store has something for every nature lover. The Outlet store also has a complete line of *Fuller Brush* cleaning and household products.

Book Signing Party with Skip Yowell: Skip Yowell, co-founder of JanSport Outdoor Products, will be signing books in the MyTown Outlet Store on Friday, Dec. 12 from 11:30 a.m. to 2 p.m.

Heart of Kansas Mercantile

1212 Main Street

The Heart of Kansas Mercantile offers home-made and home-grown products on consignment, with everything from edible goodies to arts and crafts.

Mali Jewelry & Accessories

1214 Main Street

Mali Jewelry offers upscale and fashionable jewelry at affordable prices. With a wide variety of styles and colors, their pieces are of the highest quality.

Perks Coffee Shoppe

1216 Main Street

Step in out of the cold and enjoy a freshly roasted and freshly ground cup of coffee. Perks Coffee Shoppe has a wide variety of coffees and gourmet drinks, and is now offering fresh pastries daily.

Renue Salon & Spa

1419 Main Street

Ahhhh... Relax and unwind in this spacious and quiet upscale atmosphere. Pamper yourself with one of Renue's many personal services, including hair styling, massages, pedicures and manicures. Hair, body, mind and soul.

Renue Retail

1419 Main Street

Face, hair, bath and body products are the main focuses inside Renue Retail. They also offer a wide variety of wigs and accessories, with something for every age.

Mainstream Boutique

1419 Main Street

Specializing in women's clothing, the Mainstream Boutique carries a wide variety of colorful, comfortable, and affordable ensembles. For individuals of all ages, all sizes, and always on the lookout for something out of the ordinary, the Mainstream Boutique has something for you.