

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 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

Top Successful Programs in 2009

Great Bend ACER - A partnership between businesses, local government, The Great Bend Chamber of Commerce & Economic Development, state resources, and non-profit community action organizers was continued to grow this COMMUNITY RECRUITMENT PROGRAM. Elements of the program include:



- Hosted a community job fair for Great Bend Packing employees following their plant closure
- Cost-sharing an investment in retaining a dedicated Community Recruiter to promote employment opportunities and quality of life in Barton County
- Identifying non-traditional recruitment opportunities
- Leveraging online and local recruiting resources to identify qualified applicants
- Assisting employers in developing community based branding and marketing initiatives
- Launching and maintaining a regional jobs web site – Launched May 2009

Below is a list of items accomplished January through November 2009:

Job fairs attended: 14
Resumes/applications received: 371 + 180 applicants for prospective 2010 placements
Resumes received from college job fairs: 49
New potential applicants (contacts, no resume): 92
HR contacts listing (businesses receiving resumes): 155 businesses
Community meetings attended: 54

2nd Annual Big Bend Bike Rally – For the second year in a row, the volunteers on the Big Bend Bike Rally planning committee organized a hugely successful Big Bend Bike Rally. More entertainment, more advertising, and more word-of-mouth brought over 1,220 riders and spectators to the Great Bend Expo Complex in late September, compared to 1,004 in 2008. The over twenty percent growth in just one year is a great indicator of the potential this event holds for future years. **The 2009 Big Bend Bike Rally brought in a net profit of over \$10,000.**



Human Resources Roundtable – During 2009, the Human Resources Roundtable luncheon series grew exponentially. Utilizing the Great Bend ACER's HR contact list more than doubled the number of HR professionals being invited to the luncheons, and the diverse range of speakers and featured topics helped boost attendance at each meeting. Topics featured at the quarterly luncheons during 2009 include: Overcoming Communication Barriers in the Workplace, Tools and Resources from the Kansas Department of Commerce, and an Open Idea Sharing Luncheon featuring discussions on Workplace Security, Recruiting Trends, and Legal Developments in Human Resources.

NEW 2 Great Bend - The Great Bend Chamber of Commerce & Economic Development expanded this unique 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 177 newcomers are involved with this dynamic and growing program, up from 144 in 2008!**



Economic Development

Each year, the Great Bend Chamber of Commerce & Economic Development sets out a strategic plan for the race ahead of them with optimistic hopes for growth and prosperity. The 2009 year, however, was more of a hurdles race than the comfortable jog we've practiced in the past.

Perhaps the most significant hurdle, and the most recognizable statistic for 2009, was the increase in unemployment. In January, the Barton County economy reflected an unemployment rate of 4.8% and by December unemployment rose to 6.0%. The most significant cause for the increase was a result of the closing of Great Bend Packing in July of 2009.

- Built in 1932 the original Thies Packing Plant facility has changed and expanded over the years, but has always been an integral part of the community. At one time, the operation employed over 400 people. The closing of this plant cost the community approximately 175 jobs during a volatile and unpredictable year.
- Almost immediately, several companies showed an interest in purchasing the 68 acres of land and approximate 180,500 square feet of building space. One company quickly surfaced as the fore-runner to purchase the complex.
- *At this time, negotiations are still pending with Redbarn Pet Products, Inc. and Smithfield Foods. It is anticipated that should the sale of the complex be completed, Redbarn Pet Products will employ 175 – 200.*

Redbarn Pet Products was started by two friends who believed there was a better alternative to feeding their dogs dry food. They first developed a meat-based, natural dog food and then expanded to also produce an assortment of quality pet treats, bones, chews, and foods.

The single most important indicator of success in economic development during 2009 is the almost certain possibility of a new owner in just six short months! As stated during the negotiations with Red Barn, "this project brought out the very best in everyone!" The cooperation between the office of Governor Mark Parkinson, the Kansas Department of Commerce, Barton County, The City of Great Bend, and the Great Bend Chamber of Commerce & Economic Development was unprecedented and truly remarkable.

It is no wonder Kansas is ranked in the top 10 for "most business-friendly states in the nation" by Pollina Corporate Real Estate, one of America's leading corporate site-relocation experts. Pollina praised Kansas for "pro-business policies that result in job growth" and a "conducive business atmosphere." *Site Selection* magazine named Kansas one of the nation's most competitive states for capital investment and new facility development. *Area Development* magazine has consecutively awarded Kansas its "Silver Shovel" award in 2008, 2007 and 2006 for top job creation and investment projects. Kansas won in the "under three million population" category.

Now that the process and procedures for creating incentive packages for new businesses have been clarified, Great Bend has a solid foundation upon which we can expect future development. Infrastructure improvements on Tenth Street and numerous residential streets, as well as the opening of the Great Bend Regional Hospital are equipping our community for growth. Additional improvements to Great Bend's quality of life through the opening of the Great Bend Raptor Center and the Kansas Wetlands Education Center continue to highlight what makes this community unique.

Another obstacle, while no where near as impactful, was the decrease in commercial investment. In addition to the priority goal of filling the former Great Bend Packing facility, the Great Bend Chamber of Commerce & Economic Development also worked with numerous other businesses considering Great Bend as a potential venue for expanding their business operations. Despite the decline in commercial investment, \$3,326,544 was still invested through facility upgrades and expansions in the local area.

As we reflect upon the last twelve months, there are several key words that come to mind...determined, tenacious and resilient are just a few. For years to come, we will be able to look back on the 2009 calendar year as a reminder of the importance of community collaboration. This year and all the obstacles we've overcome in that short time prove that the only way we can stay competitive in today's ever-changing economic climate is to partner together to clear each hurdle as it is thrown in front of us, while always keeping our eyes on the prize.

Leadership Kansas - Leadership Kansas is one of the oldest and more prestigious statewide leadership programs in the country. Established by former Governor Robert Bennett and Gary Sherrer, and supported and administered by the Kansas Chamber, the program is entering its 30th year of educating and motivating Kansas leaders from all four corners of the state. The Leadership Kansas Program remains committed to its original mission to inspire persons to maintain involvement in the social, business and political fabric of Kansas' communities.

Each year close to 500 people are nominated to apply for the prestigious program. Upon the conclusion of a thorough and thoughtful application and selection process, Great Bend Chamber President/CEO **Jan Peters was one of only 40 individuals selected to participate in the 2009 Leadership Kansas program** based on leadership contributions in their professions and communities, and their willingness to contribute to Kansas' future progress. The benefits of participating in the Leadership Kansas program are as diverse as its participants. Graduates gain enhanced communication skills, creativity, exposure to future business trends, and expanding their thought processes. In addition, CEO Jan Peters was also selected by her fellow Leadership Kansas classmates to represent them in the Leadership Kansas Alumni Association.



World's Most Visible Leaders – Each year, Google Earth, the online software that allows users to explore the surface of the earth, mapped with high-quality satellite photography and accurate topographical data, features that year's Leadership Kansas Class at its default centering location of Chanute, KS. This location was set by a senior software engineer at Google, Dan Webb, who was born and raised in Chanute. Want to see it for yourself, visit the corner of Lincoln & Main in Chanute, KS the next time you visit Google Earth.

Leadership Kansas is a statewide program that was designed to enhance and motivate future leaders from various Kansas communities. Leadership Kansas is dedicated to ensuring geographic, racial, occupational, and gender diversity so that each class is truly representative of the state.

Leadership Kansas graduates have an inclusive network of colleagues and resources, a broad understanding of state and business issues, a better sense of personal leadership potential, and enhanced leadership skills. For local employers, this means that they are acquiring valued employees connected to a diverse network of dynamic Kansas leaders with the knowledge and capacity to engage a variety of issues at the state and community levels.

Additional partnerships, services, and programs:

- **Western Kansas Congressional Staff Reception**
- **6 speaking engagements** to service and social organizations & 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)
- Hosted Congressman Jerry Moran for a town hall meeting
- Hosted Rotary Exchange Team from Mexico
- Welcomed new teachers at USD 428
- Preparations for 2010 3i Show
- Grand Opening of Kansas Wetlands Education Center
- Barton County Broadband Committee – KDOC
- Served on Board of Directors for MyTown LLC
- Continued relationship with JanSport founder Skip Yowell

Memberships

- Prairie Enterprise Project
- Great Bend Board of Realtors
- CKDI
- Kansas Chamber
- Kansas Chamber of Commerce Executives
- Kansas Sampler Foundation
- US Chamber of Commerce
- Kansas BIO
- wKREDA
- American Chamber of Commerce Executives
- Kansas Economic Development Association
- Western Kansas Manufacturers Association

Chamber staff participation

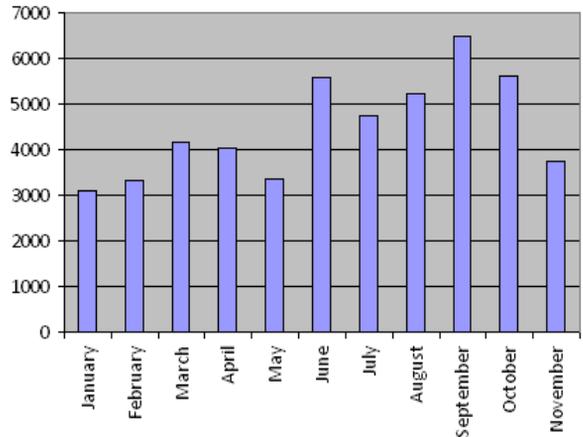
- JobFest 2009
- Golden Belt Leadership Program
- Annual Banquet
- Jack Kilby Monument Project
- State Spelling Bee Planning Committee
- Airport Master Plan Committee
- Big Bend Bike Rally
- Kansas Department of Transportation district meetings
- K-96 Advisory Committee
- Barton County Community College WorkForce Advisory Committee
- Kansas WorkForce Summit
- Leadership Kansas Class of 2009

Marketing - Promoting local businesses was once again the greatest focus for the Great Bend Chamber of Commerce & Economic Development in 2009. Through the Outlook Business Journal, Chamber Business Directory, weekly E-mail Updates and ever-expanding web site – activities and special features of numerous businesses were highlighted.

From January to December 2008, 127 **businesses** were highlighted in the Outlook Business Journal comprising 10,023 **inches of editorial space**. At the rate of \$7.00 per inch (a comparable advertising rate for the area), the **total value to these local businesses equates to \$70,164**. *A copy of this data available upon request.*

From January through November 2009, **49,383 emails** were distributed from the Great Bend Chamber of Commerce & Economic Development, as compared to 37,562 in all of 2008. On a monthly average, we circulated 4,489 emails per month in 2009, as compared to 3,130 per month in 2008.

Total Email Updates Sent Each Month



E-Community - 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.

Great Bend was chosen as an E - Community in this pilot program in 2008. 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, this money can be used by local 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.

8 Wonders of Great Bend - The Great Bend Convention & Visitors Bureau and the Great Bend Chamber of Commerce & Economic Development partnered in 2009 to host the first ever “8 Wonders of Great Bend” promotion. This special campaign was a spin-off of the Kansas Sampler Foundation’s “8 Wonders of Kansas.” However, this local version gave businesses, organizations, community servants, architectural landmarks, and cultural traditions the chance to be recognized for their significance in shaping the Great Bend community as we know it today. Nominations were accepted during the month of October, and then the general public chose the 8 winners by voting during the month of November. The winners were:

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| 1. ARCHITECTURE - Lustron Homes | 5. CUSTOMS - Great Bend Zoo & Raptor Center |
| 2. ART - Argonne Rebels Drum & Bugle Corps | 6. GEOGRAPHY - Cheyenne Bottoms |
| 3. COMMERCE - Barton Community College | 7. HISTORY - The Dominican Sisters |
| 4. CUISINE - 4 Legs Up BBQ | 8. PEOPLE - Jack Kilby |



Each of the winners in the 8 Wonders of Great Bend promotion will be posted on the web sites for the Great Bend Chamber of Commerce, the Great Bend Convention & Visitors Bureau, and the Kansas Sampler Foundation.

Chamber Member Services

- **Approximately 300 members were contacted by the Ambassadors through personal visits**
- **41 new members** joined the Chamber of Commerce in 2009
- Organized a successful **Gary Gore Annual Golf Tournament** – 20 teams and 27 hole sponsors
- **Winter storage of 56 boats, campers and cars** - compared to 59 units in 2008
- Distribution of approximately **1,500 maps and 2,000 phonebooks**
- Distribution of **relocation packets**
- 37 members of the **Plan Room** with 45 sets of plans opened for review in 2009

As outlined in the 2009 Plan of Work, the following lists highlight a few accomplishments in this year of great opportunity.

Advocacy for Business

- **3 Legislative Forums** addressing current legislative issues
- **49 Chamber Networking coffees**
- **7 Business After Hours Networking Events**
- **19 Ribbon Cuttings**

Community Marketing and Promotion

- Maintained a quality, 16-page 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.
- Co-sponsored and promoted an **8 Wonders of Great Bend** promotion.
- Sold over **\$100,000** worth of **gift certificates**.
- **Email UPDATE** - Weekly e-mail Updates 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
- Connected with over **75 new and existing businesses** for business expansion or relocation
- Participated in **College 2 Community Day – Barton Community College**
- Redesign of **centralkansasjobs.com** – a clearinghouse for job seekers and employers
- **Lobbying efforts** in conjunction with **Kansas Economic Development Association** to evaluate incentives offered by the State of Kansas.
- **Expo facilities** utilized 26 event days for 17 events and 16 SRCA Drag Race weekends, generating \$7,400.
- **Expo facilities utilized for Big Bend Bike Rally**

<u>Expo Complex Utilization</u>	<u>2007</u>	<u>2008</u>	<u>2009</u>
Total Units Stored	-	59	57
Winter Storage Revenue	\$6,150	\$8,200	\$8,700
Expo Rental Revenue	\$7,300	\$11,825	\$7,400
Gross Expo Income	\$13,450	\$20,025	\$16,128
Total Expo Expenses	-	\$12,917	\$9,144
Net Expo Income	-	\$7,108	\$6,984