

Wabaunsee County Economic Scoop

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Are you a local?

What does it mean to be “a local”? It seems local can mean a variety of things. Local can mean a person was born and raised in a place, perhaps they have family history in a place or they just live there and consider themselves local.

You see, we all have our own stories whether we’ve lived here our whole lives or moved here. Regardless of your story being local is a matter of action.

People, including each of you and myself are proud to be from Rural America, but why? Quality of life, values, friendly, slower paced life, good schools, and the list goes on and on. Although I will argue that so many times we do not truly act as advocates for Rural America. If we really are proud and passionate about this place we call home; we should be doing all that we can to assure that it is here for years to come. A very important part of Rural America advocacy should be buying and believing local.

Every time \$1 is spent locally it is returned to that

community or county time after time. When a dollar is spent outside of the community it leaves the community and rarely returns. Dollars spent in a community affect schools, infrastructure, taxes and business viability.

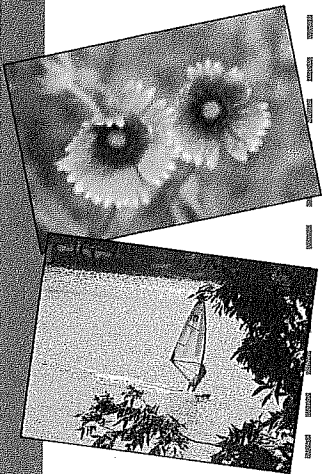
Small business does not imply that they can offer everything the big chain stores do or compete with them. But don't you think that is the beauty of small business? They aren't the “big guys” and they don't have everything, but they do have things that sure can't be found at the chain stores. For example, customer service is typically top notch at small businesses, you can get special deliveries, they'll special order, they know you and you trust them. A personal relationship with the business and community seems priceless.

Communities, businesses, schools and government are interrelated; one needs the other. Without one another— none will survive. Rural communities across this state and nation are withering away, but the good news is that can be counteracted! All

it takes is a commitment; a commitment to be “a local.” Like I said before, being “a local” is a matter of action. No person can say they do everything locally and ‘shame on those who don't’ because frankly that's impossible in a rural area. But I do think we could all be more conscious of what we do or don't do locally. If nothing else at least consider the consequences of our choices. Is the 3 cents saved on a gallon of gas really worth the 30 mile trip? Can we get that sheet of plywood at the local lumberyard, where they'll carry it out for you and appreciate your business, rather than the big box store? Just consider what a small change in our behavior could do for the local economy and community's future. My point is that being local and actually being a part of a community is not just living there.

I believe the future of Rural America is worth caring about and that's why I come to work each day and live my life as “a local”.

~Katie



Business Profile— Soden Photography

The dream of settling in small-town Kansas and opening a photography studio has brought Jason & Stephanie Soden of Soden Photography to Wabaunsee County. They are a great example of what can be done when young entrepreneurs pursue a life-long ambition.

Last year, Soden's were searching for a place to establish their photography business and instead got more than they bargained for. Jason and Stephanie came upon the opportunity to restore a historic, Victorian-style home in Alma for their home and also open a studio on the lower level! April 2007 marks the Soden's one year anniversary of purchasing their residence/studio. In just one year they have been able to get the 'Stuwe House', as it is referred to, on the National List of Historic Places, which is quite an accomplishment! As well as do some beautiful restoration to the property.

Soden Photography approaches photography as an art, not just a profession. Their work consists of photographing high school seniors, families/children, maternity, and now weddings. They don't like the "smile and say cheese" method that is so common! To Soden's, portraiture is about grabbing a hold of a personality, capturing it and putting it into an artistic print! Each person has a distinct personality, so why should you have a portrait like everyone else! Jason also enjoys photographing the Landscapes of Kansas, and his fine-art prints, published in KANSAS! Magazine, are also for sale as limited edition prints. Several of the landscape images can be found on custom-made greeting cards at Settler's Farm Artisans in Wamego.

Jason and Stephanie have an impressive portfolio for young professionals. Jason has several award-winning landscape images, as well an ever-expanding portfolio of high school seniors and families. He has also been recognized for his outstanding work by the Topeka Art Guild, KANSAS! Magazine, regional competitions and other organizations. Stephanie has an emphasis in children, infants and maternity photography; focusing on togetherness and intimacy. She also does the majority of graphic design on greeting cards and marketing materials.

Soden Photography was established two years ago. They began to move towards becoming a business in 2004, selling landscapes, and then in 2005 they began portraiture by photographing families and friends. After receiving a really good response, and by referrals, they began to expand their portraiture business to include a studio, and have

been expanding ever since. They have approached the point where they're ready to begin marketing Soden Photography as a label.

Small towns are nothing new to the Soden's; both grew up in small towns, (Jason in Mayetta and Stephanie in St. Mary's) and dreamed of having their business in a small town. One of the advantages Soden's see in being a business in Wabaunsee County is the network of business owners, not found in larger cities. "We have found lots of support from the business environment of Wabaunsee County, as well as the community. Our business is growing and will continue with support and marketing," says Soden's. Jason and Stephanie are artists and their business draws several new faces to Wabaunsee County and Soden's pride themselves in referring their clients to explore the community and county. It's important to them that they offer support to their fellow business people and allow their clients to explore the uniqueness of Wabaunsee County.

In the next year Soden's hope to expand their portraiture work and get established in wedding photography. In particular, Soden's would like to have the privilege to photograph high school seniors from the surrounding high schools. Stephanie says, "We would love to expand even beyond this area for our portraiture. We are very excited with the response we've received so far and look forward to growth and prosperity in the area!" The future is bright for these young entrepreneurs/artists and Wabaunsee County is fortunate to be home to their business!

Soden Photography
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Flint Hills Tourism Coalition

Where does nature, economic development, entertainment and tradition meet? Well at the Flint Hills Tourism Coalition (FHTC). Wabaunsee County is part of a coalition of 22 counties that are working together to market the incredible asset that we possess, which is the Kansas Flint Hills. It's important to understand that this is not the "typical" kind of tourism. This tourism is about the natural, cultural and historical elements and sharing those with people that may never have the opportunity to live or be a part of the Flint Hills like each of us do!

It's about fun, education and appreciation! It is also about folks discovering the rural communities throughout the Flint Hills region. And creating more economic activity through their spending, as well as opportunities for the future!

The mission of the Flint Hills Tourism Coalition is to increase the economic base of the region and the state through the promotion and marketing of the Kansas Flint Hills.

Please take a look at www.kansasflinthills.travel to learn more!

Kansas Sampler Festival

Lee Richardson Zoo— Garden City, KS

May 5 & 6, 2007

Come and discover what Kansas is all about! Learn, shop and be entertained by Kansas Communities!

Visit www.kansassampler.org for more info!

Symphony in the Flint Hills Update

The tremendous opportunity to host approximately 6000 people in our county to experience the history, culture and nature of the Kansas Flint Hills is so exciting, but very busy too!

Since last fall we have been working with the Symphony

event coordinator and board to do our "part" in offering a fantastic experience to folks!

Each community has wonderful offerings and have planned special activities in many cases to offer those visiting our county that weekend.

My department is researching the ways we can

measure economic impact from this event. After all travel and tourism is economic development!

Check out:

www.wabaunsee.com for



more information on the "Weekend in Wabaunsee" activities! It will be a great time for everyone!

Washburn SBDC



Planning on starting a business or looking for opportunities to grow your small company? Well those things and much more can all be found through the Small Business Development Center (SBDC) at Washburn University! The SBDC is a fantastic resource to everyone, especially business owners and managers. Everything from business plans to business seminars!

The Washburn SBDC services Shawnee, Brown, Jackson, Nemaha, Marshall, Riley, Geary, Pottawatomie and Wabaunsee Counties and is a partnership with the Small Business Administration. The center's mission is to provide entrepreneurs and small business owners with knowledge, tools and resources to enable their success.

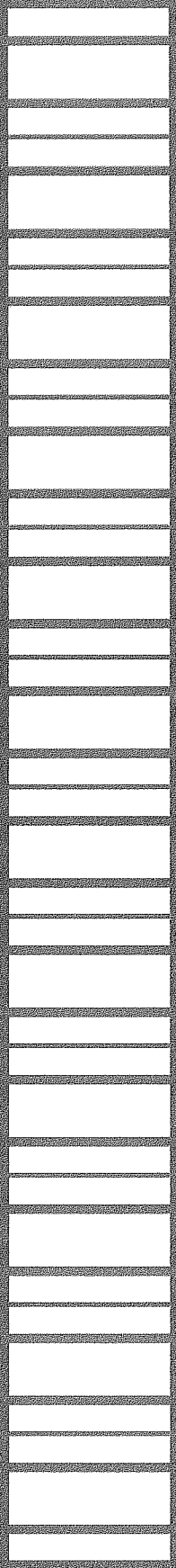
For more information you may contact them at 785-234-3235 or sbdc@washburn.edu or the Katie at the WCED office!

Every day I get up and look through the Forbes list of the richest people in America. If I'm not there, I go to work.
Robert Orben

Marketing to Put Your Business Ahead

Great marketing takes time and work, but it can pay off tremendously! There are four key elements that must be mastered to put your business in front of the pack. Those four things are *Originality, Improvisation, Change* and *Values*. *Originality*: Each business must have a point of differentiation. What can customers get at your business that they can't anywhere else? *Improvisation*: The ability to learn from customers and let your products and services evolve into things that will really work for you and your business. *Change*: Keep the core message of your brand constant, but realize that the marketplace is ever-changing. Do you know what you should always hold onto and what can be open to changing with the times? *Values*: It takes backbone to create marketing that truly reflects your business' values and vision and will carry you through. Show customers what you believe in and stand for; you will have customers that share those same values and consequently become loyal customers.

'Ahead of the Curve' - Entrepreneur.com



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We're on the Web!
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Wabaunsee County....."Small Towns,
Big Opportunities"

Wabaunsee County Economic Development (WCED) is a department of the county and acts in a variety of areas benefiting the communities and residents of Wabaunsee County. It is the goals of WCED to enable success in the communities of Wabaunsee County and all things associated with creating an economy that is viable for years to come.

Rural America is facing great challenges in keeping its economies alive and the values and identity that make Rural America such a special place!

If you are interested in learning more, please contact Katie at the WCED Office! We are open 8:00am—5:00pm, Monday-Friday!

Get this Newsletter at Your Home!

Well, this is only the second newsletter for WCED so we are looking for feedback. What are things you like....or don't like? Are there subjects or articles you would like to see in the next addition of the *Wabaunsee County Economic Scoop*? Please tell us!

You can receive the *Wabaunsee County Economic Scoop* right in the comfort of your own home— via postal mail or email! We're also on the web— www.wabaunsee.com!

If you would like to receive the newsletter electronically or by mail please contact Katie Carlgren at 785-765-4655 or wcedc@earthlink.net

Commissioner District 1:

Bud Hund, Ken Smith

Commissioner District 2:

Velda Hodges, Gary Dixon

Commissioner District 3:

Claude Blevins, Larry Holz

Alma: Don Frank

Alta Vista: Carissa McKenzie

Eskridge: *Vacant*

Harveyville: Jo Leta Weems

USD 329: Mill Creek Valley

Maple Hill: Linda Raine

USD 330: Mission Valley

McFarland: Lori Senne

Extension Council: *Vacant*

Paxico: Judy Meinhardt

Advisor: Matt Pfeifer

Lake Wabaunsee: Cindy Manz

Director: Katie Carlgren