



# EMPORIA

REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT ASSOC. of EAST CENTRAL KANSAS

# 25

CELEBRATING 25 YEARS OF SERVICE



A close-up photograph of a person's hand, wearing a purple and white striped sleeve, gently holding a young green plant seedling. The seedling has several heart-shaped leaves and is growing out of dark brown soil. The background is a soft-focus field of similar plants under warm, golden sunlight.

# At home everywhere.

Helping feed the world since 1818 by connecting people, markets, countries and cultures.

The Bunge logo, featuring the word "BUNGE" in a large, white, serif font. Above the letter "U" is a stylized graphic of a sun or a plant with three horizontal lines.

# BUNGE

701 E. 6TH AVE. | EMPORIA, KS | 620-342-7270 | [WWW.BUNGE.COM](http://WWW.BUNGE.COM)





FLINT HILLS  
TECHNICAL  
COLLEGE

fhtc.edu

We engage.  
We transform.

We are  
Wranglers.





**Fanestil Meats**  
FRESH LOCAL MARKET

4700

**Fanestil Meats**

**FRESH LOCAL  
MARKET**



**THE HOME OF  
PARTY TIME HAM.**

**SHOP LOCAL.  
BUY LOCAL.**  
**GIFT CERTIFICATES  
AVAILABLE**



4700 West Highway 50 | Emporia, KS | 620-342-6354 | 800-658-1652 | [www.fanestils.com](http://www.fanestils.com)



# SCHOOL OF *Endless Opportunities*

**200+**

undergraduate + graduate  
academic programs

**98%**

placement  
upon graduation

**5,800**

students

**750+**

faculty + staff

**15**

exciting NCAA  
Division II teams

**155**

years of history  
+ tradition

**EMPORIA STATE  
UNIVERSITY**

start discovering at [emporia.edu](http://emporia.edu)



# WELCOME

## to the Regional Development Association 25th Anniversary



From the founders in the mid-to-late 1800s, to the Committee of 50 in the 1950s, to the current structure of the Regional Development Association of East Central Kansas (Emporia RDA), Emporia has a long history of proactive success in economic development with an emphasis on job creation.

The Emporia RDA structure is working well. Emporia is quite competitive with its peer Kansas Micropolitan communities, those Kansas communities greater than 10,000 and less than 50,000 in population. In fact, a recent Kansas Micropolitan Area Economic Conditions Index — October 2018 report by Wichita State University Center for Economic Development and Business Research ranked Emporia third out of the 15 Kansas Micropolitan cities.

New companies were recruited to our region. Some of those are: Better Life Technologies, BLI, CAMSO, Dynamic Distribution, Hill's Pet Nutrition, Holman Distribution, the new Hostess Brands, Norfolk Iron & Metal, Pratt Industrial, Simmons Pet Food, Valu-Net Fiber and Westar Energy - Emporia Energy Center. Through our business retention, expansion and recruitment efforts, many of our existing employers, such as Birch Communications, Cargill Pet Food, Detroit Reman, EVCO, Fanestil, Glendo LLC, Hopkins Manufacturing, Tyson Foods, Thermal Ceramics and VEKTEK were able to grow organically and inorganically.

The Emporia RDA is the lead economic development organization with our partners — the City of Emporia, Lyon County, Emporia Area Chamber of Commerce & CVB, Emporia Enterprises, Emporia State University, Flint Hills Technical College and Emporia Main Street — represented on the Board of Directors.

The elements and form creating the successful economic development program are:

- Collaborative and cooperative leadership with the elected officials and volunteers.
- Business retention, recruitment and expansion, (BRE) programs.
- Available business/industrial sites with all utilities in place, ready for construction.
- Adequate funding to achieve the goals of job creation.
- Professional educational and experienced economic development staff.
- Supportive educational community — K-12, technical college and university — for workforce development and recruitment.
- Entrepreneurial philosophy which fosters new business start-ups and assisting existing businesses evolve in the ever-changing customer markets.

Ron Kitchens, Senior Partner for the Southwest Michigan First Regional Economic Development said, "The most powerful force for change is a job." Through hard work and determination, Emporia has been able to attract and grow jobs.

Since the inception, Ray Toso, Dale Davis, Mike Costello, Jeff Longbine, Jon Geitz and Rob Gilligan have served as the RDA Chair. The current RDA Board of Directors are Rob Gilligan, Jim Kessler, Dan Slater, Pat Wiederholt, Rick Tidwell, Jim Shepherd, Mel Scheller, Allison Garrett, Dean Hollenbeck, Jeanine McKenna, Marc Goodman, Christine Montgomery and Casey Woods. Robin Nelson assists the RDA on operations. Many individuals have served on the Board of Directors of the Emporia RDA and Emporia Enterprises. Those volunteers' efforts have had a positive effect on our success.

Emporia's continuous support for the RDA's industrial and economic development efforts have made all the difference. The community has overwhelmingly supported the four separate ballot issues in 1994, 2000, 2010 and 2017 for the half-cent City Sales Tax. On a recent marketing trip to the East Coast, business owners were totally amazed at the forward-looking community that would tax themselves for the goal of job creation and retention of jobs. The Emporia spirit of supporting worthwhile causes is the Emporia Comparative Advantage.

It's been an honor and a privilege to serve as the RDA President for almost the entirety of the RDA's existence.

Kent Heermann CEcD  
RDA President





**EMPORIA,  
WE**



**YOU.**





# TABLE OF CONTENTS



34



24



12



18

**9 WORKING TOGETHER**  
25 years of the RDA

**12 EMPORIA'S PET FOOD INDUSTRY**  
Constantly growing

**18 SWEET SUCCESS**  
The evolution of Hostess

**24 EXPANDING WORLDWIDE**  
Hopkins journey from local to global

**28 DYNAMIC DISCS**  
College hobby turns into worldwide enterprise

**34 EDUCATING THE FUTURE**  
Emporia State University and Flint Hills Technical College

CELEBRATING  
25 YEARS  
OF SERVICE



This economic development recognition project has been underwritten by ESB Financial. ESB Financial believes in and supports the important work of the Regional Development Association of East Central Kansas to expand and recruit businesses to Emporia and the region.



For more information:  
Regional Development  
Association of East Central  
Kansas

719 Commercial St.  
Emporia, KS 66801  
620-342-1600, ext. 16



Knowledge, experience  
and creative solutions for  
constructing your next facility.



**Commercial \* Retail \* Office \* Manufacturing  
Warehouse \* Banks \* Medical Clinics**

**620.342.6622 GRAHAM ST. EMPORIA, KS**  
f:620-342-6620 [www.evergreendesign-build.com](http://www.evergreendesign-build.com)



An aerial photograph of Emporia, Kansas, featuring a large, multi-lane highway interchange in the foreground. The surrounding area includes green fields, some industrial buildings, and a residential neighborhood. The sky is clear and blue. A thick, yellow, brush-stroke-like line runs horizontally across the top of the image, partially obscuring the sky.

# WORKING

CITY OF EMPORIA, 2010





# TOGETHER

WRITTEN BY ADAM BLAKE

Since its inception in July 1993, the Regional Development Association of East Central Kansas has strived to promote the economic growth of the region through industry recruitment, expansion and training enhancements.

The goal has manifested itself into a bevy of companies making Emporia and the greater Lyon County area their home, including: Better Life Technologies, BLI, CAMSO, Dynamic Distribution, Hill's Pet Nutrition, Holman Distribution, Hostess Brands, Norfolk Iron & Metal, Pratt Industrial, Simmons Pet Food, ValuNet FIBER, Westar Energy - Emporia Energy Center.

In addition to the many new arrivals, existing entities have been able to flourish as well. In the past two decades, Birch Communications, Cargill Pet Food, Detroit Reman, EVCO, Fanestil Meats, Glendo, Hopkins Manufacturing, Kansas Technology, Sauder Custom Fabrication, Tyson Foods, Thermal Ceramics and VEKTEK have all benefited from significant expansions to their facilities not only locally, but nationwide and even abroad.

In June 2018, Current RDA President Kent Heermann estimated the organization had seen the creation of more than 2,100 full-time jobs, representing almost 12.8 percent of the county's total employment. The influx of industry has also resulted in more than 2,616,668-square-feet in new building space with a total of approximately \$972,689,000 invested in new factories, warehouses, offices and equipment — a trend which has done little to suggest slowing down.

While looking at these accomplishments on paper could suggest a sustained period of smooth sailing and exponential growth, Heermann's firsthand experience points to a much more complicated story — one of a prime location, of dedication and hard work from like-minded individuals and periods of struggle and adaptation. »

PHOTO BY IM DESIGN



“Our success has come from a mixture of a lot of things, not just one event or a specific individual,” Heermann said. “We’re a fairly good-sized community — currently about the 15th or 16th largest in the state. We’ve got a good location along major highways and a very, very active railroad line that runs through here as well. We also have a reasonable labor base; the cost of labor in Emporia is relatively low compared to other areas of the state. We have both a technical college and a university in the city limits, and there’s not many communities in Kansas, or elsewhere, that can say that. It’s a major strength and, of course, we also still have plenty of available, developable land. If roads and utilities aren’t already there, we can fortunately put them in rather quickly.”

The unique advantages Emporia can provide to prospective businesses seems appealing, but it would mean little, Heermann said, if the RDA and larger community did not maintain a business-friendly and forward-thinking attitude.

“We’re always willing to provide companies with what we call ‘performance-based incentives,’” Heermann said. “They’re agreements that basically say, ‘Well, if the community put this kind of resources into your company, what’s going to be our return on investment?’ We’re not going to give away the farm, but we do want to make sure it’s a win-win situation for everyone here in the community.”

“Another great help is that the leadership in the community has had a very pro-business attitude. That allows us to get a positive reputation at the state level, where we have people in state leadership saying, ‘Hey, now that sounds like a project that could fit in Emporia.’ Part of maintaining that is always delivering what we say we’re going to deliver.”

Through periods of economic downturn — such as the months following the 9/11 attacks and the 2008 financial crisis — and significant employee layoffs and closures seen at Tyson in the late 2000s and Hostess in 2012, Heermann said the RDA has always been able to find a dependable ally within members of the community. Since 1994, Emporians have made it abundantly clear that they’re invested in seeing the town — and its employment opportunities — continue to grow in more ways than one.

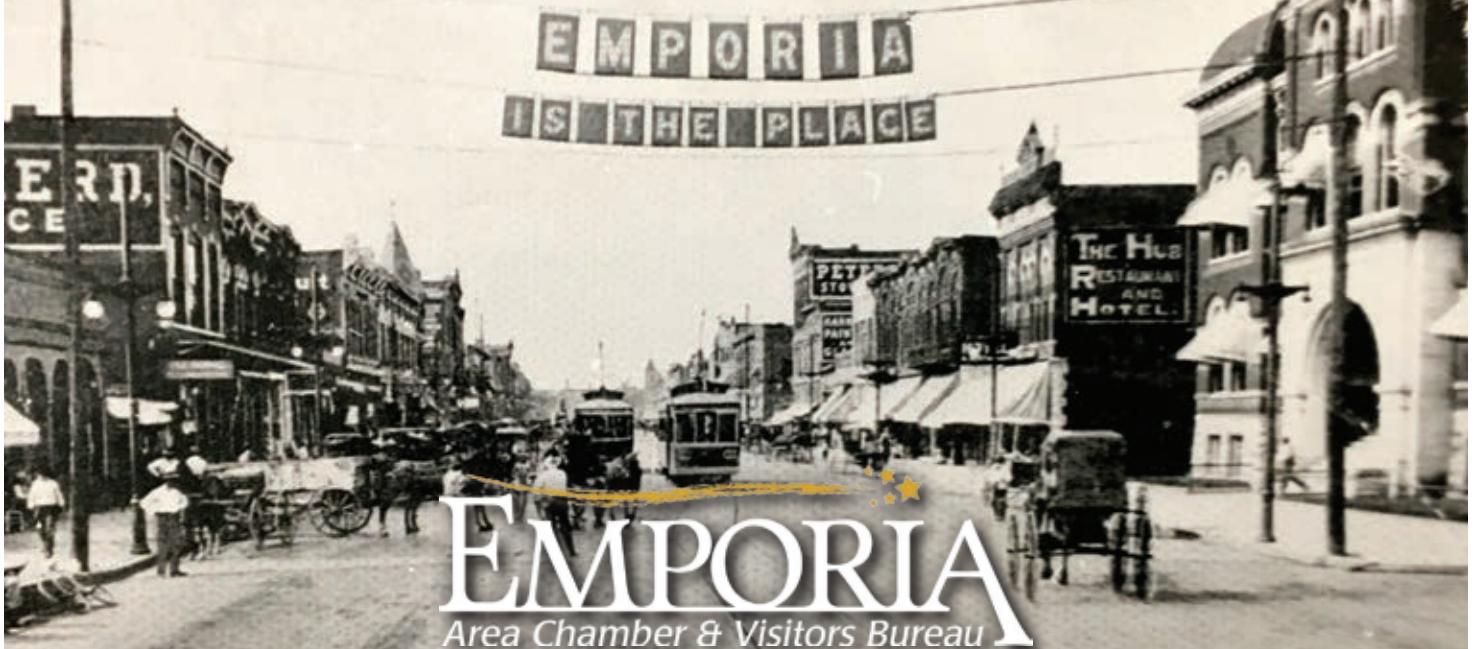
“We put a small, half-cent tax increase on the ballot in 2000, which we were able to actually turn in a significant investment toward [the Jones Aquatic Center] here in town,” Heermann said. “Another extension of that same tax increase passed in 2010 and then we just passed another extension in 2017. This current agreement runs until 2032, I believe, and I would expect it might be placed on the ballot again in 2027 or 2028. Having the community continue to agree on those increases and invest in the town has really allowed us a sense of confidence moving forward.”

“The community continually supports things that are going to make a positive difference, whether it’s growth, job creation, different events and all the various institutions. There’s not one that’s more important than the other — they’re all equally important. Emporians know that you have to work together to get things done. Entrepreneurism is important, as is job creation, and we want to keep all the great things we have in the community and help them continue to be competitive.” ■





We are proud to partner with the RDA over the last 25 years,  
and will continue to help Emporia grow and prosper.



719 Commercial | 620-342-1600 | [emporiakschamber.org](http://emporiakschamber.org)

Building Community Through Business.

SERVING EMPORIA INDUSTRIES SINCE 1981.

**THANK YOU** Regional Development  
Association of East Central Kansas  
for your continued support!

We proudly support and service  
Simmons Pet Food, Hills Pet Food,  
Hostess Corporation,  
Reser's Finer Food  
and Tyson.



2805 BELAIRE DR. | EMPORIA, KS | 800-747-8899 OR 620-343-1000 | [WWW.REDLINETRUCKING.COM](http://WWW.REDLINETRUCKING.COM)







# EMPORIA'S PET FOOD INDUSTRY

WRITTEN BY ADAM BLAKE

A wide range of industries have naturally come and gone from the Emporia area since the town's founding in 1857, but in the last couple decades, one field has offered a defined source of consistency and constant growth.

"The Emporia Pet Food Products plant that is now owned by Cargill came in 1978, Simmons (Pet Food) came in 1997 and was operational the next year and then Hill's (Pet Nutrition) announced in 2007 and was fully operational in 2010," said Kent Heermann, president of the Regional Development Association of East Central Kansas. "It seems like every 10 years or so we get another pet food plant."

According to a June 2017 report by the Kansas Department of Agriculture, the dog and cat food manufacturing sector has accounted for approximately \$781.2 million of Lyon »







County's economic output. Currently, more than 700 total employees work at the three locations, and that number is expected to rise by at least 100 when a planned flexible packaging facility expansion opens at Simmons in 2019.

"They've gone from 48 acres, 200,000 square feet and 100 employees to soon over 130 acres, 900,000 square feet and 700 employees," Heermann said. "There's been some bumps in the road with them — a major one in 2007 when a lot of pet food had to be recalled — but since the beginning, they've expanded about six or seven times. It's definitely been an area of constant growth."

Heermann said one of the reasons Emporia has been able to attract such companies is its unique geographic location with access to major highways, railroads and other companies with similar products and business models.

"Emporia sits in what we like to call a 'zone of indifference' running through the eastern third of Kansas, the southwest corner of Missouri and northeast part of Oklahoma where a pet food plant can be placed and expect to operate successfully," Heermann said. "These areas have easy access to all the different food resources they need, and their central location makes them a great place for shipping out product."

"The Kansas City Animal Health Corridor stretches along Interstate 70 from Manhattan to Columbia, Missouri, and is home to more than 300 animal health companies," added Hill's Emporia Plant Manager Darren Haverkamp. "As a result, this area is teeming with a skilled workforce, advanced technology and a truly outstanding passion for animal health."

Of course, location hasn't been the only factor in making Emporia a pet food town.







**“People will always have the need and want to feed their animals, so I’m excited for what the future will bring.”**


“All of this has allowed the Hill’s Emporia plant and its employees to become very successful,” Haverkamp said. “Since opening in 2010, it has received a Silver Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design Certification and an Energy Star Challenge for Industry Award. The plant has also been recognized by our parent company, Colgate-Palmolive, for our successful efforts to reduce waste and recycle or reuse everything we can. In addition to becoming more efficient and productive every year, we have also placed a strong emphasis on safety. Hill’s Emporia has received a Gold Level in the Colgate-Palmolive President’s Award for Safety for eight straight years.”

When the expansion to Simmons was announced in Nov. 2017, Vice President of Plant Operations Jason Beyer also cited his talented workers as the main reason for the decision.








“This is about the strength of 500 or so Simmons team members who are making a difference at our existing facilities by consistently delivering high-quality products that satisfy our customers,” Beyer said. “This is also a strong story about current performance building the foundation for future performance, and that’s a big part of why we are expanding our operations in Emporia.”


Looking forward, Heermann believes the nature of the pet food industry will cement its status as an important source of economic output in Emporia for years to come.

“When we have seen industries, factories and plants leave town, the vast majority of the time it is because their products and services have become obsolete,” Heermann said. “That’s not really something that’s going to happen with the pet food industry. People will always have the need and want to feed their animals, so I’m excited for what the future will bring.” ■



Delivering innovative products from Emporia to shelves around the world for more than 65 years!

 <p><b>TOWING SOLUTIONS</b></p>	 <p><b>WINTER TOOLS</b></p>
 <p><b>FLUID MANAGEMENT</b></p>	 <p><b>CAR CARE</b></p>
 <p><b>VEHICLE ACCESSORIES</b></p>	 <p><b>AIR FRESHENERS</b></p>
 <p><b>TIRE SAFETY &amp; REPAIR</b></p>	 <p><b>VEHICLE SAFETY</b></p>



**EXCEEDING EXPECTATIONS  
IN EVERYTHING WE DO**

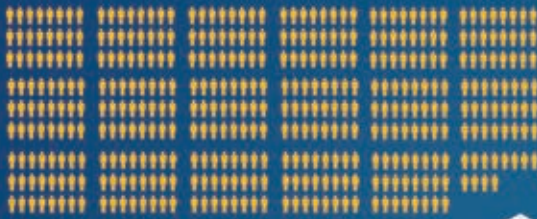
Hopkins Manufacturing Corporation | 428 Peyton St., Emporia, KS 66801 | 620.342.7320 | [www.HopkinsMfg.com](http://www.HopkinsMfg.com)



# Working for Emporia

## Return on Investment

**A** Job creation of over  
**2,100 full-time jobs**



↑ = 5 full-time jobs

**B** Represents 12.8%  
of the total employment  
in Lyon County, Kansas



↑ = 1 percent of employment in Lyon County, KS



**C** Over **2,616,668 sq. ft.**  
in new buildings

**The spirit of cooperation, consensus and collaboration has yielded over \$972.6 million in new buildings and equipment investment and over 2,100 direct jobs.**

New companies locating in the Emporia/Lyon County area are Better Life Technologies, BLI, CAMSO, Dynamic Distribution, Hill's Pet Nutrition, Holman Distribution, Hostess Brands, Norfolk Iron & Metal, Pratt Industrial, Simmons Pet Food, Valu-Net FIBER, Westar Energy – Emporia Energy Center.

Existing Company expansions are: Birch Communications, Cargill Pet Food, Detroit Reman, EVCO, Fanestil, Glendo, Hopkins Manufacturing, Kansa Technology, Tyson Foods, Thermal Ceramics and VEKTEK.

**D** **\$972,689,000**  
in new buildings  
and equipment

**EMPORIA**  
REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT ASSOC. of EAST CENTRAL KANSAS



# EMPORIA

## City of Emporia

**T**he City of Emporia would like to congratulate its longtime partner, the Regional Development Association of East Central Kansas, on its 25th Anniversary. That's 25 years of bringing new jobs and other economic development opportunities via business expansion to Lyon County.

With more than 2.5 million square feet of new buildings, which are valued at more than \$9.68 million, this is a difference you can see and in the community's collective wallets yielding a stronger and healthier community for each of us to live, play, work and enjoy!

We support the RDA Mission to proactively promote the economic growth of the East Central Kansas region through commercial and industry recruitment, expansion and training enhancements. We look forward to what happens to Emporia and Lyon County in the next 25 years and beyond.

*Congratulations on 25 Years!*



Making you feel at home with our award-winning services, facilities and amenities.







# SWEET Success

WRITTEN BY ADAM BLAKE

While now considered among Emporia's most well-known and influential businesses, the story of Hostess Brands, Inc. hasn't always been one of success.

Rather, the company stands as a prime example of what can happen when a community bands together to reach a common goal.

After nearly 50 years of business in Emporia, the plant closed in mid-November 2012 after Hostess announced it would be selling its assets and brand due to bankruptcy. More than 18,000 workers were laid off nationwide, resulting in hundreds finding themselves out of work locally.

"I would say the year 2012 was one of our low points for the community," RDA President Kent Heerman said. "When Hostess closed, there were more than 500 people out of work during the holidays because many were laid off in November. You would drive by the old Hostess plant and it would just be dark, no cars were parked there — it really looked pretty bleak."

Fortunately the period of bleakness was a relatively short one as it soon became apparent the Hostess brand would not be disappearing without a fight.

"When we got the news somebody was going to buy them and re-open, things started turning," Heermann said. "Between 2013 and right now, I would say there's between 900 and 1,000 jobs we've added to the local economy. The individuals who ended up buying Hostess — it was Dean Metropoulos, who also owns the Pabst Brewing Company and Leon Black from Apollo Global [Management] — they specialize in buying distressed companies. They recognized and saw the strength that remained within the brand. I don't know how many people recall this, but there were Twinkies selling on Ebay for \$50 a pop during that time. When they heard that, I believe that's when they »

**"...there were Twinkies selling on Ebay for \$50 a pop during that time. When they heard that, I believe that's when they knew they made a good investment."**





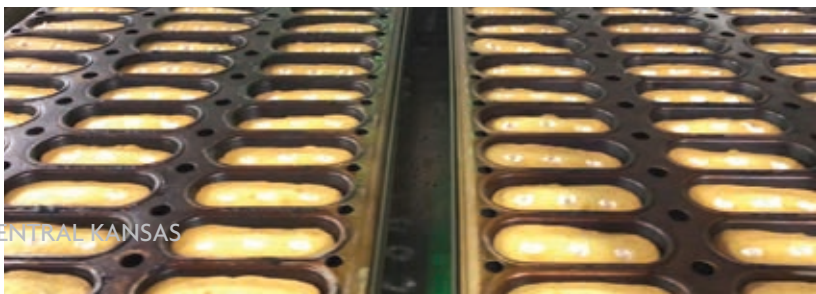
knew they made a good investment.”

“The brand is iconic, but one of the things that has made us successful is not only how aware the public is of the brand and how much they love the product, but also how we were able to go in and really redefine what our business was,” added Matt Hall, vice president of human resources at Hostess. “It was a much different structure than what we used in the past, so it gave us the opportunity to become a much more nimble organization and really capitalize not only on the great brand, but the folks we had working for us.”

By early June 2013, the plant had reopened its doors, welcoming more than 300 new and returning employees back to work. From the beginning, it was clear nobody — from members of the RDA to company leadership, department heads and line workers — was going to take the chance at a second opportunity lightly. Now, Hostess of Emporia is home to 545 employees and has invested a total of \$80 million in new equipment and state-of-the-art technology. The advances have allowed the facility to become the producer of approximately 60 percent of all Hostess products, including the most Twinkies, by far, of any other plant in the nation.

“The first year after re-opening, there were still a lot of workers on their high-throughput lines handling the product as it came out on the general assembly lines,” Heermann said. “Today, on all their high-throughput ovens they have what’s called ‘Autobake 1’ and ‘Autobake 2,’ with ‘1’ being their Twinkie line and ‘2’ being their other cupcake line. The Twinkie line is dedicated solely to the different »

**“When we got the news somebody was going to buy them and re-open, things started turning. Between 2013 and right now, I would say there’s between 900 and 1,000 jobs we’ve added to the local economy.”**





We proudly support the Emporia RDA  
in all they do to promote the Emporia  
area as a great place to work and live.

**Your success leads to our success!**

Sauder Custom Fabrication is a proud area employer since 1926 and recipient of:

- ★ Ad Astra Award, one of the highest honors a business can receive in the State of Kansas, exemplifying business and civic excellence within the state
- ★ Champion Level Employer Engagement Initiative from Flint Hills Technical College established through the Kansas Board of Regents and Kansas Department of Commerce
- ★ Small Business of the Year from the Emporia Area Chamber of Commerce
- ★ Major donor to the Flint Hills Technical College welding facility

saudercf.com • 620-342-2550 • 220 Weaver St, Emporia, Kansas



2018 CHEVY MALIBU



2018 BUICK ENCORE

**At Longbine Auto Plaza,  
CUSTOMER  
SATISFACTION  
IS OUR #1 PRIORITY!**

**From sales to service, we want everyone  
to have a world class experience.**

**Come in and feel like one of the family!  
We are your small town proud,  
neighborhood store!**



2018 CHEVY SILVERADO HC



2018 CHEVY EQUINOX

**longbineauto.com | 620.342.2744 | 3012 W. Hwy 50, Emporia**





# EMPORIA STATE FEDERAL CREDIT UNION

**Congratulations to the Emporia RDA on  
25 years of bringing new job opportunities  
to this community.**

**When we began to serve this community  
in 1937, our goal was to help those in our  
area to have a brighter financial future.  
Thanks to the RDA, our community has  
continued to grow and prosper giving us  
all a brighter future.**

**Here's to many more years of success!**

**esfcu.com 620.342.2336**



types of Twinkies, and can produce about 1,100 of them a minute. That's obviously a high-throughput, and when it comes to the end, robotic arms pick up the cakes, wrap them in cellophane and then another arm picks them up and packs them in boxes further down the line. That had to be done by hand years ago, but now all that labor has been able to shift to other parts of the plant. Hostess is taking advantage of modern technology, innovation and some forward-thinking to greatly increase their efficiency."

Heermann said the second, and perhaps most crucial, component of beginning to develop staying power for the brand came through decisions on what to do with the pastries after they left the bakery.

"There came a point where the people at Hostess realized they needed to change their business model, because it just wasn't profitable," Heermann said. "They went from a direct-to-store delivery model to delivering primarily to warehouses. The previous Hostess brand would bake the cakes and other pastries, load them onto semi-trucks, transport them to larger communities and roll them off the larger semi-trucks onto delivery trucks that would take them to smaller groceries stores, convenience stores and things like that. Now they deliver to the warehouses of major stores like Walmart. Instead of hitting each individual store, they'll just go to a major distribution center. That really increased their profitability model, and they were one of the first cake companies to embrace that way of thinking."

"Another great aspect about our changes to the distribution process is that we've been able to provide a lot of premade displays and shippers, so stores just have to take it out of a box, set it up quickly and they're ready to rock and roll," Hall added. "We no longer have to worry about when shipments get there on a route truck, and we don't have to worry about stock issues because the stores are handling that themselves throughout the normal course of their business decisions."

In looking back over the course of Hostess' history in Emporia, Hall said it wasn't so much about the brand's emergence as it was about the emergence of the community itself and the growing attitude of positivity that came along with it.

"The Emporia facility, because of its size and central location within the United States as well as its past reputation, made it a good choice for us to invest in," Hall said. "The community embraced us coming back, and the state of Kansas did as well by working with us. It made it just the perfect place to invest in. It's our flagship facility."

"The success the facility has been able to have is a testament to the people of Emporia. They persevered through the closure of their first facility and when it came back, without even a pause or hesitation, everybody stepped up to participate — the people, the city itself, the RDA, the Chamber of Commerce. The willingness of the community to embrace us coming back helped us make our decision to invest easier. They've been the key drivers behind that and behind the new facility's success." ■





PROUD TO BE A PART OF THE  
EMPORIA COMMUNITY SINCE 2001.

THANK YOU, REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT ASSOCIATION  
OF EAST CENTRAL KANSAS, FOR 25 YEARS OF SERVICE!

# NIM

NORFOLK IRON & METAL CO.

NORFOLKIRON.COM | 620-342-9202 | 1701 E SOUTH AVE. | EMPORIA, KS









# EXPANDING WORLDWIDE

WRITTEN BY ADAM BLAKE

From its humble beginnings as a small factory in 1953, Hopkins Manufacturing Corporation of Emporia has developed into a model of adaptation, expanding its brand and services across the globe.

In the early 1960s, company founders E. L. (Bud) and R. E. (Gene) Hopkins joined the growing plastics technology movement, which was still in its infancy at the time. The venture led the company down a new path, which allowed manufacturers to create household items such as ice scrapers with plastic, eventually entering Hopkins into the realm of consumer products in 1975.

Today, Hopkins Manufacturing has a hand in all manner of automotive products, including towing electrical and lighting products, winter snow and ice tools, automotive organizers and interior

accessories, oil and fluid change tools, vehicle cleaning products, electronic vehicle safety products, tire repair and safety products and air fresheners.

“When someone asks what kind of products we offer, I ask them how much time they have,” President and CEO Bradley Kraft said.

Of course, having a wide range of products to offer is only part of the goal at Hopkins. The main mission for each of the company’s employees is to “exceed customer expectations in everything that we do.” Judging by past and continuing successes, the words aren’t taken lightly.

“The people always make the business and I’ve always — from my own perspective — I’ve always thought that the folks at Hopkins are as much a family as we are a professional corporation,” said Chief Marketing Officer Mike Williams, who is fast approaching 14 years of employment with the company. “Just great, hardworking people who work together extremely well. »



# JW Trucking

a division of Waechter LLC

IS PROUD TO BE SERVING  
OUR LOCAL FARMERS  
& EMPORIA INDUSTRIES.



# NIM

NORFOLK IRON & METAL CO.

**DETROIT DIESEL**  
REMANUFACTURING CENTRAL



# JW Trucking

a division of Waechter LLC

1761 RD G | EMPORIA, KS  
620-342-1080  
WWW.JWWAECHTER.COM



"I think that if a company can consistently [stick to their mission], they can weather challenging times. Certainly, great times are always — they're good for everyone. I think the companies that weather the challenging times — the customers really stay with them."

"All of the employees have played a role in getting us to where we are today, those that came before us to set the stage, those here today and the future employees that will lead us to the next anniversaries and accomplishments," Kraft added. "We are thankful for the efforts of all and appreciate what a great group we have."

Having recently celebrated the 65th anniversary of its original facility in August, Hopkins now serves communities in Oklahoma, California, Arizona, Illinois, Canada, Mexico and even China.

"Now, we have a total of 10 locations," Kraft said. "We've been able to grow the company organically by simply increasing the categories of products we offer, but we've also been fortunate to acquire other companies and product lines as well. We, of course, also manufacture product in locations outside of Emporia all around North America. We actually utilize one of our employed teams in China to support our overseas shipping and logistics."

Kraft also pointed to consistency on the part of RDA members as one of the major reasons Hopkins has been able to shift its focus to a more global outlook. Added space at home has in turn meant space for more collaboration and cooperation with other entities.

"Both the City of Emporia and the RDA have always been supportive of the facility expansions we've required over time," Kraft said. "Our location on Peyton [Street] and [E. Sixth Avenue] started as a very small facility. It has now grown significantly to about 325,000 square feet under one roof with their assistance. It's really reinforcing for us to see the continued growth and all that we've been able to accomplish. We anticipate continuing to build and grow, largely because we're in a great community and great industry that provides those opportunities for us." ■



**Thank you for making Brown's  
your sole footwear provider.**

**We proudly support our  
communities workforce  
every step of the way.**



603 Commercial St. • 620-342-5871 • Mon. - Fri. 8-6, Thu. 8-7, Sat. 8-5:30



Your pet is special.  
We believe their food should be, too.



400 S. Weaver St.  
Emporia, KS 66801  
Phone: 620-340-6941  
Fax: 620-340-6650

[www.HillsPet.com](http://www.HillsPet.com)

Everyone at Modern Air appreciates the 25 years of dedication and determination of our Emporia RDA. When local industries contract with Modern Air it allows us to employ more than 20 Comfort Engineers and Specialists.



*“Along with our RDA,  
we support business and  
community growth. When  
Emporia grows, we all  
benefit. Many thanks!”*

Bob Burenheide  
President

**MODERN AIR**  
Engineering Comfort

## CONGRATULATIONS RDA!

**LYON COUNTY SUPPORTS  
SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT &  
RESPONSIBLE ECONOMIC GROWTH  
IN OUR COMMUNITY**

### OUR MISSION STATEMENT

THE MISSION OF LYON COUNTY GOVERNMENT  
IS TO CREATE AN ENVIRONMENT OF ECONOMIC  
GROWTH WITHIN A FRAMEWORK OF FISCAL  
RESPONSIBILITY AND TRANSPARENCY  
TO THE PEOPLE OF LYON COUNTY.

*Rollie Martin*  
ROLLIE MARTIN  
CHAIRMAN

*Dan Slater*  
DAN SLATER  
VICE CHAIR

*Scott Briggs*  
SCOTT BRIGGS  
MEMBER



VISIT US ONLINE  
[www.lyoncounty.org](http://www.lyoncounty.org)





# COLLEGE HOBBY WORLDWIDE

WRITTEN BY DAVE SPARKS

It's 2005, and you've just scraped together \$800 to buy merchandise and launch an eBay store that your girlfriend has named Dynamic Discs. You're selling plastic discs that people are hurling at elevated, chain-covered metal baskets in parks around the country.

So what happens? If you're a patient optimist like Jeremy Rusco, you wait.

Having used class time in an Emporia State University Business Law course to review pricing information for that first order, Rusco had no idea that what started out as a college hobby would one day evolve into his life's work.

"We sold one disc the first week, one the second week," he recalls, remembering his senior year at Emporia State

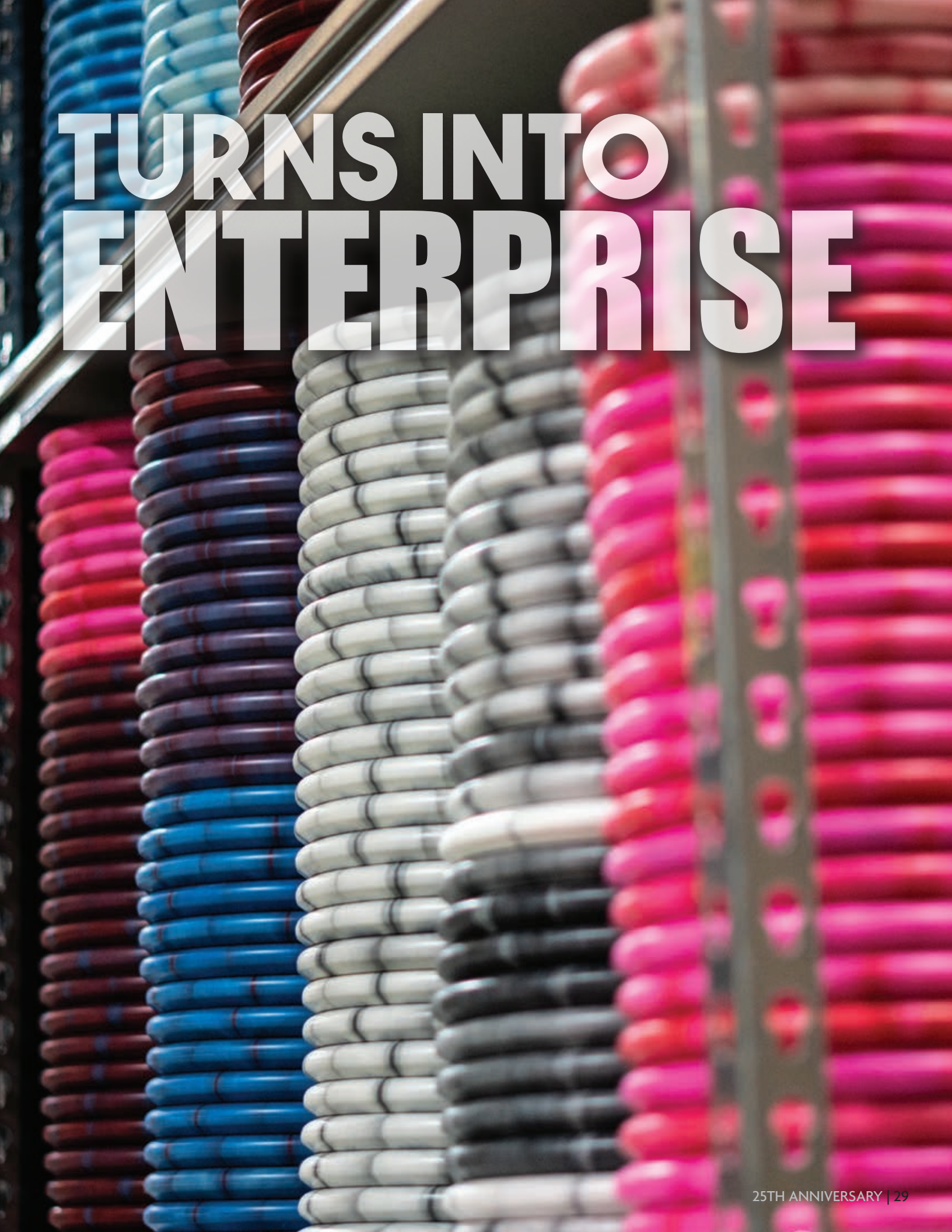
University, where he was to earn a Bachelor of Science in business administration degree the following spring.

Patience, moral support from friends, an innovative agreement with a Swedish manufacturer and backing from a visionary financial institution over the years has paid off. The company that got its start selling 100 discs to college buddies and eBay shoppers now ships upwards of 30,000 discs a week to a worldwide customer base.

And the girlfriend who named the company? She's now Rusco's wife, Wendy. The couple has seen their business grow from the basements of homes they rented in Emporia, while Jeremy »

**"Opening up a production facility that employs more people and provides opportunities for us here in Emporia is something that I want to make happen."**





# TURNS INTO ENTERPRISE





supplemented their income with substitute teaching assignments in the public school system.

"I gave that up after about a year because we'd gotten so busy with Dynamic Discs," Rusco said. The business outgrew the basement of the first house Jeremy and Wendy purchased in Emporia. Dynamic Discs moved under its own roof, 1,500 square feet of office space in west Emporia.

Even that wasn't enough room. A building on Commercial Street in downtown Emporia became available in 2010, and Dynamic Discs has called the space home for its storefront operations since then.

The building also set the stage for the company to take a giant leap in the disc golf world — partnering with Latitude 64, a company in Skellefteå, Sweden, to produce Dynamic Discs-branded golf discs.

"They (Latitude 64's products) were starting to become some of the more popular discs in the United States because of their quality and consistent playing characteristics, and we knew that in terms of finding a manufacturer to go with, they were the one," Rusco said.

Already familiar with the company's representatives when they would visit the United States for some of the more important disc golf events, Rusco was eager to tour Latitude 64's factory in Sweden. "I was blown away by

their production facility. The entire process is automated to ensure the product's quality."

And with a handshake, a deal was struck.

While one might expect this type of business arrangement crossing international boundaries would be a tightly woven web of contracts, signatures and legal bills, that's not the case.

"It's a pretty special thing with our partnership that they've never let us down, and we've treated them the same," Rusco said.

"It's pretty hard to find an arrangement like that in today's business climate."

Dynamic Discs launched four discs onto the market in December 2012 — a putter, a midrange disc, a fairway driver and a distance driver.

"We were pretty scared about that first order for 8,500 discs," Rusco said. But a couple of days after the discs went on the market, he was ordering more production from the company's new Swedish supplier.

"Now we have 33 different discs, with more introduced each year. They're often the most popular discs on the market," Rusco says, a note of pride escaping in his voice.

Popular equipment for a popular sport. Disc golf has been around since the 1970s, experiencing rapid growth during the past decade.

"I don't see the enthusiasm waning anytime soon," Rusco said, adding that two to four new disc courses are opened every day in the »

## Congratulations on your 25th Anniversary!



**"Let us treat your home, like it's our own."**

**RESIDENTIAL • REPAIRS • REMODELING  
NEW CONSTRUCTION AND COMMERCIAL**



**821 Commercial St. • Emporia, KS  
(620) 342-2122  
www.plumbingbyspellmank.com**

**"I see us staying here in Emporia. We're the number-two disc golf company in the world, in terms of volume. And I think we're number one in terms of the image we have and the positive things we're doing for the sport."**



Newman Regional Health would like congratulate the RDA on 25 years of growing our community. We are proud to have partnered with our community workforce to be delivering the highest level of healthcare.

## Expanding to fit the needs of our communities.



NEWMAN

REGIONAL HEALTH

- 18 exam rooms + specialty rooms (more than 2 times the current amount of rooms)
- 3 critical care rooms
- Enclosed ambulance entrance
- 4 times the size of the current waiting room
- More functional & efficient work space for physicians and nurses

**NEWMAN REGIONAL HEALTH | Quality Healthcare, Close to Home.**

1201 W. 12TH AVE. | EMPORIA, KS | 620-343-6800 | [NEWMANRH.ORG](http://NEWMANRH.ORG) |   @NRHEMPORIA

# Across many different markets and industries, we work everyday to help the world *thrive*.

*Thank you to the Regional Development Association for your continued support in expanding the local pet food industry. Congratulations on 25 years of success!*



841 Graphic Arts Road | Emporia, KS | 620-342-1650 | [www.cargill.com](http://www.cargill.com)





United States, currently home to 6,000 such courses. He projects 20,000 disc golf courses in the United States by 2040.

"It's a great sport," he added. "It's free, it's fun, it's for all walks of life."

Manufacturing and distributing disc golf merchandise is only part of the picture, though. Rusco's work promoting disc golf as a sport is the other key ingredient to his company's success, and events like Emporia's Glass Blown Open disc golf tournament have helped guarantee growth.

"Glass Blown Open is obviously something that we're really proud to be the machine behind," Rusco said. The event started with around 80 players in 2002. It's grown to become the largest disc golf event in the world the past three years. More than 1,600 competitors from all over the world spend an entire week in Emporia, scoring rounds on the city's disc golf courses, eating and drinking in its restaurants and watering holes, and contributing transient guest tax dollars to Emporia's tourism efforts each night they spend in a hotel.

"People refer to Emporia as the Disc Golf Capital of the World, and the Gravel Grinding Capital of the World," Rusco laughs, making mention of the city's famous Dirty Kanza annual bicycle race staged on the area's Flint Hills gravel roads.

The future for Dynamic Discs is just as clear and colorful as those pristine Flint Hills skies, too.

"I see us staying here in Emporia," Rusco said. "We're the number-two disc golf company in the world, in terms of volume. And I think we're number one in terms of the image we have and the positive things we're doing for the sport."

In addition to its Emporia store and online presence ([www.dynamicdiscs.com](http://www.dynamicdiscs.com)), Dynamic Discs operates three retail stores in Kansas City, Kan., Carrollton, Texas, and a recently opened location in Springdale, Ark. Add five recreational vehicles that tour the country promoting disc golf, and it's easy to see Rusco doesn't take lightly the importance of keeping the sport in front of recreation-seekers.

Bringing a portion of the manufacturing process to Emporia is also in Rusco's playbook.



"Opening up a production facility that employs more people and provides opportunities for us here in Emporia is something that I want to make happen," Rusco said.

"It's crazy to think about how much money it takes to operate, and we've been fortunate to have a bank (ESB Financial) that's been supportive of our vision." He added that Dynamic Discs operates privately, without outside investment.

"We've grown from essentially my college hobby to a company that has 50 employees now," Rusco notes, adding that 13 of those workers moved with their families to Emporia from out of state. The connection with Emporia stretches to its higher education opportunities, as well.

"More than half of our organization is either attending or has graduated from Emporia State University or Flint Hills Technical College," he said. "We try to hire college kids and keep them here after they graduate." ■

— This story was reprinted with permission from [KansasCentral.com](http://KansasCentral.com)

## THANK YOU AND CONGRATULATIONS

Regional Development Association of East Central Kansas!



BG Consultants would like to thank the Regional Development Association of East Central Kansas, the City of Emporia, Lyon County and the surrounding communities for the continued confidence they have placed in us to provide quality professional services for the improvement and industrial development they have spearheaded over the past 25 years.

Congratulations to the Regional Development Association of East Central Kansas on 25 years of excellence for improving and developing a successful forward thinking region full of growth and possibility for business and residents to enjoy and thrive in for generations to come.

We are proud to be involved in the growth and development that has been achieved and are excited for the future projects to continue the trend and success beneficial to the region.



[www.bgcons.com](http://www.bgcons.com)

[info@bgcons.com](mailto:info@bgcons.com)

(620)343-7842

2508 W 15th Avenue Emporia, KS 66801





# CAMSO LOVES EMPORIA

We're proud to be part  
of the community  
and we congratulate  
Emporia RDA on  
its 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary.

1 844 CAMSOAG  
1 317 671-7327  
Ag.ProductSupport@camso.co  
camso.co



Each one of us in the  
Emporia area benefit from the work  
of the RDA. The RDA continues to ensure  
industrial and commercial business  
growth that in turn creates opportunities  
for existing and new small businesses  
like ours. Thank you RDA!

**ValuNet  
FIBER**

**ValuNet  
FIBER**

**ALWAYS** Available  
Reliable  
Fast

2914 W Hwy 50 • Emporia, KS 66801  
myvalunet.com 620.208.5555

Twitter Facebook Instagram

Congratulations to Emporia's own  
Regional Development Association  
for 25 Years of development.





# Educating *the future*

WRITTEN BY ADAM BLAKE



FLINT HILLS  
TECHNICAL  
COLLEGE  
3301





The Regional Development Association of East Central Kansas' focus on bringing new businesses, factories, warehouses, plants and offices to town would be all for naught if there was not a steady supply of workers to fill them.

Thanks to the presence of Flint Hills Technical College and Emporia State University, companies are beginning to realize Emporia not only houses an opportunity for expansion, but an opportunity to thrive as well.

"The confidence that companies have had in our labor market here, not only with entry-level workers but with skilled technical and professional workers, has definitely been a plus," RDA President Kent Heermann said. "They have great relationships with Flint Hills Technical College on the manufacturing and production side of things, and I believe there are over 50 FHTC graduates now working at Simmons [Pet Food] alone. »

**"They have great relationships with Flint Hills Technical College on the manufacturing and production side of things, and I believe there are over 50 FHTC graduates now working at Simmons [Pet Food] alone."**







“Emporia State University also has several graduates who work in accounting, quality assurance and management positions at plants around town. There is good representation from our post-secondary institutions in Emporia, and I think that will continue to make a difference for companies looking to invest here in the future.”

Not only have recent FHTC and ESU graduates shown themselves to be ready and willing to fill open job positions locally, they’ve shown they can excel. According to ESU President Allison Garrett, a healthy relationship between the school and the RDA has reaped innumerable benefits for both sides.

“When you look into the relationship between Emporia State and the local business community, you’ll see that it has so many facets,” Garrett said. “We’re well known for our great teachers college, but we also have fantastic programs in our school of business and the college of liberal arts and sciences. Those colleges in particular have been able to place a large amount of students into internships or sometimes in permanent employment with local businesses.

“The RDA and Emporia’s businesses have been especially generous in providing internship opportunities for our students. About 70 percent of ESU students are able to work in some sort of internship while they’re on campus, which is an incredibly high percentage.”

In speaking on attracting businesses, Heermann said it was not uncommon for both pet product and food industries to value ESU’s close proximity. In recent years, collaboration with the university’s science departments has allowed such companies to test the safety of their products and ingredients well before they are shipped, reducing costs and the likelihood of reputation-damaging recalls. If what Garrett has seen from the school’s science programs during her tenure is any indication, local manufacturers can rest easy knowing they’re getting input from some of the state’s most talented researchers.

**“One of the things we  
[Flint Hills Technical  
College] take very  
seriously is making sure  
the kind of training we  
offer matches up with  
what our local businesses  
and industries need.”**

“There’s an event that occurs annually called the Kansas Academy of Sciences,” Garrett said. “Students from colleges and universities around the state present their research. Over the last decade, Emporia State students have won more awards than students from any other university in Kansas. A couple years ago, I could say our students had won twice as many awards as all others, but it’s just a tick below that now.”

Heermann is also appreciative of the strong bond developed between the RDA and Flint Hills Technical College. Over the course of the last few decades, FHTC’s programs have provided both a literal and figurative backbone for some of Emporia’s biggest industries.

“The Flint Hills Technical College has been around here since the early 60s,” Heermann said. “They have a variety of advisory boards for all their different programs, so they have their ear to the ground and are listening to what the businesses in our region need.

“They have multiple robust programs, but one of the ones that has impacted the community most has to be their industrial engineering. By knowing basic wiring skills, equipment programming and how to maintain HVAC and boiler systems, those workers become very valuable in the market.

The metalworking program also has a direct influence on local businesses like VEKTEK and Glendo by turning bar stock steel into the components they require. All of this is kind of aided by the robust power plant technology program as well, which supports our steam, nuclear, wind and hydro electrical industries.”

In addition to these specializations, complimentary graphic arts technology and multimedia design programs have served to provide publicity and recognition to the college and the numerous businesses and industries with which it works hand-and-hand.

“One of the things we take very seriously is making sure the kind of training we offer matches up with what our local businesses and industries need,” FHTC President Dean Hollenbeck said. “We try to »



# Congratulations on 25 YEARS

Regional Development Association of East Central Kansas.



## GEOTECH, INC.

Your land surveyors of the Emporia  
and Flint Hills area Since 1984

**Steven S. Brosemer, Owner**

620-342-7491 | 115 W. 5th Ave. | Emporia, KS  
geotech.emporia@gmail.com

LIVE

WORK

PLAY

WITH DOWNTOWN LOFT LIVING

**HAAG**  
MANAGEMENT, INC.

620-343-6633

1020 Commercial St.

Suite A, Emporia

www.emporiarentals.com



CHELSEA PLAZA & LOFTS



KELLOGG PLAZA & LOFTS



GRANADA PLAZA & LOFTS



COMING SPRING 2019  
ROOSEVELT PLAZA & LOFTS

## Gerald Schumann ELECTRIC INC.

Our family owned and operated business, has been providing clients throughout Emporia, KS with a full range of prompt and professional electrical services and repairs since 1975.

**Residential • Commercial • Industrial**  
601 West 6th Ave • Emporia • 620-342-2176

Get a quality car wash at



FEATURING  
Water Wizard  
touch-free washing

OTHER SERVICES  
OFFERED

- fast service
- drive through
- auto dryers
- self-service available

Congratulations on 25 years,  
Regional Development Association!

### THREE CONVINENT LOCATIONS

- 1901 W. 6th Avenue  
(across from Long John Silvers)
- 716 E. 12th Avenue  
(next to Do B's)
- 101 S. Commercial Street  
(across from Casey's)



You'll get a sparkling clean car with the delicacy your car needs!





**Congratulations  
on 25 years!**

**JOHN DEERE CONTINUES TO HELP  
FARMERS HARVEST CROPS FOR OUR  
LOCAL PET FOOD INDUSTRIES.**



**PRAIRIELAND**

**PARTNERS**

1744 COUNTY RD F | EMPORIA, KS | 620-342-5000 | [WWW.PRAIRIELANDPARTNERS.COM](http://WWW.PRAIRIELANDPARTNERS.COM)

have the same equipment and the same kind of programs. Our faculty always love it when our students are successful. Our placement rate currently sits at about 96 percent. Out of the 19 programs we offer, a very high percentage of those graduates are placed locally as well. They're earning jobs that are going to keep them working for the next 30 years while investing their skills and taxes into their home environment. That's huge."

During a late August document signing between ESU and FHCT that served to allow students the ability to transfer credits between each school's business programs, Hollenbeck spoke on the value of the institutions being able to invest in the local community.

"What we do at FHCT is really about the students," Hollenbeck said. "Being able to provide them opportunities not only on our campus, but in a partnership with ESU, is especially valuable to everyone in the community, I believe. Our students are able to — and importantly, willing to — find jobs and invest in a community that has invested in them. It's a real cherry on top for us to be able to see our students having such success and such a direct impact on the town." ■

**"The RDA and Emporia's businesses have been especially generous in providing internship opportunities for our students. About 70 percent of ESU students are able to work in some sort of internship while they're on campus, which is an incredibly high percentage."**



**Let's talk business.**

Commercial Loans  
SBA Financing  
Operating Lines of Credit  
Commercial Real Estate  
Leases  
IRBs



Carla Barnett, President  
NMLS #97568  
620-341-7400

620-341-7400  
620-341-7420  
[www.mybankcnb.com](http://www.mybankcnb.com)

Like us on   
701 Merchant  
1440 Industrial

*Thank you, Regional Development Association  
of East Central Kansas, for your 25 years of service and support!*



**Tyson**

2101 W. 6th Avenue | Emporia, KS 66801

*Proud to provide job opportunities to men & women in the Emporia area.*

For Job Opportunities visit: [www.KansasWorks.com](http://www.KansasWorks.com) | [www.TysonFoodsCareers.com](http://www.TysonFoodsCareers.com)

Tyson is an Equal Opportunity/Affirmative Action Employer. All qualified applicants will be considered without regard to race, gender, national origin, color, religion, age, genetics, sexual orientation, disability or veteran status.



**Sutherlands**  
Home Improvement • Building Materials



*Helping You Build It Better™*

## Emporia's Home Improvement Warehouse!

*We have what you need for every project!*

Flooring • Cabinets • Countertops • Lighting • Plumbing Fixtures  
Paint • Moulding • Lumber • Building Materials • Windows & Doors  
Decorations • Appliances • Heating & Venting • Lawn & Garden  
Hardware • AND MORE!

**EMPORIA**

1700 Industrial Rd. [www.Sutherlands.com](http://www.Sutherlands.com)  
(620) 343-6100



*Congratulations on 25 years!*



*Hidden Vista*

Lots are still available for your custom home! New homes starting in the \$260,000's with no specials. Enjoy the amenities of walking trails and a community pool. **Phase II coming soon.**

**COLDWELL  
BANKER**

**EMPORIA REAL ESTATE**

Contact a Coldwell Banker Emporia Real Estate Agent for additional information!  
[HiddenVistaHomes.com](http://HiddenVistaHomes.com) | [EmporiaRealEstate.com](http://EmporiaRealEstate.com) | 620-412-9850



# Proudly...



The Productivity Devices Company

...Innovating and manufacturing  
Power Clamping Devices used  
by production manufacturers  
worldwide from our hometown of...

# Emporia!

[www.vektek.com](http://www.vektek.com)





# ESB FINANCIAL

congratulates the Regional Development  
Association of East Central Kansas on  
***25 SUCCESSFUL YEARS!***



**Kent Heermann**  
President, Regional Development Association  
of East Central Kansas

**ESB**  
**FINANCIAL**  
BANKING • INVESTMENTS • TRUST • MORTGAGE  
our **BANK** is **BIG** on **YOU!**

8th & Merchant | 12th & Industrial | Emporia, KS | 620-342-3454 | [www.esbfinancial.com](http://www.esbfinancial.com)