



MEET the Presenters

(In order of appearance)

Sherriene is the Kansas Chamber's Vice-President of Communications. She guides the strategy of the Chamber's internal and external communications, marketing, and media outreach.



Sherriene Jones-Sontag

Before joining the Chamber, she served as the Deputy Executive Director of the Kansas Lottery where she oversaw marketing, sales, public affairs, and research and led the agency's legislative efforts. She also served in communications and press secretary roles, including as Communications Director for former Kansas Governor Sam Brownback and previously worked more than ten years as a broadcast journalist. Jones-Sontag received her undergraduate degree from Ohio University.

President and C.E.O. of the Kansas Chamber, Alan has been involved in politics and public policy at the local, state and federal levels for more than 25 years. He directed his own public affairs consulting firm and worked in the private sector as well as managed statewide political and issue campaigns.



Alan Cobb

Alan also served on the staffs of U.S. Senators Bob Dole and Sheila Frahm and as a campaign advisor to the 2014 campaigns of Congressman Mike Pompeo and Senator Pat Roberts. He was a senior advisor and National Coalitions Director for the 2016 Trump for President Campaign and served on President Trump's transition team.



Dr. Greg Mosier

Dr. Greg Mosier is a tested and experienced leader, having served higher education in the community college and university settings for almost 30 years. Experienced working in complex state and university led systems and the independent community college setting, Dr. Mosier brings breadth and depth of experiences to the institutions and communities he serves. Previously serving as vice president of academic affairs at Oklahoma State University Institute of Technology, Greg returned to follow his passion of serving the comprehensive community college mission in 2015 as vice president of academic affairs and executive vice president, academic affairs at Rochester Community and Technical College (RCTC). In 2018, he became president of Kansas City Kansas Community College (KCKCC).



Dr. Ryan Ruda

Dr. Ryan Ruda was named President at Garden City Community College in February of 2019. He is active in our Southwest Kansas community, where he volunteers on the United School District 363 Holcomb school board and the Board of the Garden City Area Chamber of Commerce.

Dr. Ruda completed his Doctorate in Community College Leadership through the Rouche Graduate Center at National American University in 2018. He also earned a Master of Science in Counseling and a Bachelor of Science in Criminal Justice, both at Fort Hays State University.

As Region VII Administrator, Vercie Lark will oversee SBA programs, offices, and operations in the SBA's Great Plains region, serving Iowa, Kansas, Missouri, and Nebraska.

Mr. Lark is a small business venture capital and angel investor, former business executive, and entrepreneur, and published author dedicated to mentoring aspiring small business owners, helping to create sustainable change in local communities, and accelerating financial literacy, business, and job growth across the Midwest.



Vercie Lark

Prior to SBA, Mr. Lark served as Executive Vice President and Head of Financial Services Businesses for DST Systems of Kansas City, Missouri, where he led a billion-dollar line of business providing solutions to firms in finance, banking, brokerage, and retirement investment industries, and in various executive leadership roles for Fortune 1000 companies during his 35-year career. In addition, Mr. Lark has served on several boards, including Avila University, Wright State University's Engineering Council, Kansas City, Missouri's Emerging Technology Council, the Heartland Black Chamber of Commerce, Greater Kansas City Junior Achievement Foundation, George Butler Associates, and Stamus Networks. He is a graduate of Wright State University.



Rey Mesa

Kansas Chamber Director of Investor Relations Reynaldo Mesa was born and raised in Garden City, KS. and attended Buffalo Jones Elementary, Abe Hubert Jr. High, and graduated from Garden City High School. He also attended Garden City Community College, Wichita State University, and eventually earned his B.S. in Business Management from Friends University.

Reynaldo is married to Ellen Essl, and they have three children, Lauren Base, Dante Mesa, and Taylor Mesa. They also have two grandchildren, Evie and Bronson Base.

Throughout his working career, Reynaldo has been a successful entrepreneur, businessman, and public servant, serving as a city commissioner, mayor, and state legislator. He was elected to the Kansas House of Representatives, serving as the 123rd District Representative during 2010-2012.



Trent Maxwell

Trent Maxwell is the Neighborhood & Development Services Director for the City of Garden City. Trent joined the City full-time as the City's Chief Building Official in 2020 and worked for the City as a contracted commercial plan reviewer prior to that.



Bob Rodriguez

Bob Rodriguez grew up in Greeley, Colorado. He moved to Garden City the first time in 1981 and worked at the beef plant (IBP) in Holcomb, KS before moving back to Greeley to become a realtor. Although Bob successfully passed the Colorado real estate exam, he did not get his license. The local beef plant where he worked shutdown and the brokerage where he was going to work told him it was wrong time, wrong place.

Bob moved back to Garden City and while working again at the beef plant, took Kansas real estate classes. He became a licensed realtor in 1986, selling real estate during the day and working the graveyard shift at the beef plant. After seven years of building up his clientele, Bob quit his night job and began selling real estate fulltime.

In 2015, Bob and three colleagues opened their own company, Envision Real Estate. Today the agency has nine employees and sells homes and commercial properties as well as leases retail and industrial buildings.



Rachell Rowand

Rachell Rowand is a Program Manager with the Kansas Department of Commerce. Since 2013 she has dedicated her career to the prosperity of Kansas in rolls such as Human Resources, Minority and Women Business Development, Business and Community Development. She is now the State of Kansas' expert on Rural Opportunity Zones, Angel Investment Tax Credits, and Individual Development Accounts.

Karma Mason, and her husband started iSi Environmental 28 years ago and now employ more than 150 people in Wichita, Tulsa, OK, and Atlanta, GA. As president and COO, Karma oversees the day-to-day technical and administrative functions of the company, including consulting services, remediation services, aerospace services, sales and marketing, training, administration, human resources, and accounting departments.



Karma Mason

A licensed professional geologist, Karma earned her master's degree in Geology from Wichita State University. She is a Certified Hazardous Material Manager and a Registered Environmental Property Assessor. She provides technical expertise to local, state and federal governments and organizations as-needed for soil, groundwater, hydrological, geological data interpretation, and hazardous materials cleanup services.

Karma has served on numerous local and regional boards for the Wichita Regional Chamber of Commerce and the Kansas Chamber of Commerce and Industry. Since 2013, she has served on the Kansas Water Authority, representing the Kansas Chamber and its members. She is a member of the Leadership Wichita Board of Trustees.

Jon Rolph is President and CEO of Thrive Restaurant Group, which owns and operates over 100 restaurants including Applebee's, Carlos O'Kelly's, Home-Grown, and Peace, Love and Pie. The restaurants are in 12 states across the Midwest and Appalachia.



Jon Rolph

Jon was a two-time Student Body President at Baylor University, where he graduated Magna Cum Laude in 2001. After graduating, Jon worked with college student leaders as an intern for the National Student Leadership Forum in Washington, D.C. He returned to Kansas in 2002 to work in the family-owned businesses started by his father and his uncle, David, and Darrel Rolph.

Jon has held several key positions in the company, including restaurant-level operations, V.P. of Administration and Marketing, and as COO of Carlos O'Kelly's, eventually succeeding his father as President of Sasnak Management, which was rebranded in early 2019 to Thrive Restaurant Group.



Erin Mason

A Supply Chain Manager for Spirit Aerosystems with over 10 years of experience in Aviation Industry, Erin Mason's expertise covers a wide range of functions including foreign and domestic supply operations, purchasing, negotiation, production planning, and inventory management. Erin is a Wichita native and graduate of the University of Kansas, with a Global MBA with an emphasis in Supply Chain from Friends University.



Justin Donecker

Justin Donecker is the General Manager at Engineered Truss Systems, Inc., and is the President of the Southwest Kansas Builders Association.

Sheila Ellis-Glasper is dedicated to helping mission-driven businesses and organizations build and execute winning branding and social media strategies.

Born and raised in the sunflower state of Kansas, Sheila is a graduate of Kansas State University earning a degree in Journalism and Mass Communications. Sheila is a nationally published journalist featured in USA Today, Chicago Tribune, ESPN, and CNN. In her reporting career, she leveraged the importance of social media to build relationships and to stay ahead of the competition.



Sheila Ellis-Glasper

After starting her family, she embarked on her first entrepreneurial journey with the creation of inspirational jewelry and apparel business, Precious Heart Designs. She shipped her handcrafted products all over the world, with thousands of social media followers and celebrity endorsements through the power of social media.

She is the former social media manager at Kansas State University. In her role at Kansas State, she built the university's social media presence to be recognized as a top university on social media in the nation.

Sheila served as the social media consultant for the Kansas Small Business Development Center and founded SEG Media Collective LLC in 2016 to provide branding and social media consulting and management services to businesses worldwide. Over the past decade, Sheila and her team have crafted dozens of award-winning brands in the Midwest and across the United States. She is an advocate for underrepresented businesses, economic justice and is the founder and president of the Black Entrepreneurs of the Flint Hills, a non-profit organization, created to empower, equip and engage Black-owned businesses in the Flint Hills Region of Kansas. Sheila was awarded the 2021 Minority Business Advocate of the Year from the State of Kansas Department of Commerce.

Kim Randolph, CEO/President of Heartland Black Chamber of Commerce, Principal/CEO of INC U LLC, and JV Partner of KWAMEkc. is a natural born entrepreneur/mentor and has guided businesses into success! INC U LLC was originally a company designed to help those who want to become entrepreneurs. She worked to develop, launch, maintain, and grow businesses. She has worked with multi-million-dollar corporations in C-Level management creating business development solutions that increase profits and streamline operations.

Kim created INC-U because she believes, “everyone has the ability to succeed and lead using the gifts and talents God gave them.”

In the two years as CEO/President of Heartland Black Chamber of Commerce Kim has increase membership and sponsorship by 66% and has launched several successful programs: ENCORE a 1:1 business coaching program to assist in the recovery, re-opening, and stabilization of small local black businesses, and HYPE, the Heartland Young Professional Empowerment program, the leadership development program to prepare the next generation of leaders; and COLLIDE a monthly meeting between experienced business professionals and next generation professionals (wisdom meets innovation), just to name a few.



Kim Randolph

Kim is a proud UMKC Bloch School Alumni, 2015 graduate of UMKC’s E-Scholar program through the Regnier Institute for Entrepreneurship and Innovation. She very recently answered her ministerial calling to become a pastor in missions and outreach. As the daughter of a WWII, Korean, and Vietnam veteran she is a proud American and has always had the desire to work within her community. As the Chief Operations Officer in warehouse distribution, she obtained, negotiated, and maintained the companies GSA multi-awards schedule. As the Director of Operations, she has developed and spearheaded the startup of pilot offices across the US.

Kim co-facilitates LaunchU through the Kansas City Women’s Business Center, and currently serving on both AltCap’s Growth Loan evaluation committee and is a TA Coach for the COVID 19 Relief Loans. Kim is currently participating in Leadership Kansas Class LK2021 and Heartland Sparks Leadership. She is the 2017 HBCC recipient of the Business with a Heart award.

Kim is a native Kansas Citian. The proud mother of 2 children and 7 grandchildren.



Mayra Marquez

Mayra Marquez is an insurance agent for American Family Insurance through her company Mayra Marquez Agency LLC.

Raul De La Torre Jr. has over 17 years of experience in the residential/ commercial disaster restoration and cleaning industry and 10 years of construction experience.

After working for a ServiceMaster franchise in Topeka Kansas as a lead technician for 5 years, Raul relocated to southwest Kansas in 2008 to pursue his dreams of becoming a franchise owner. In 2010, Raul was recognized with the Rocky of the Year Award which is awarded to the highest revenue generating franchise starting from zero revenue nationwide. As a part of the ServiceMaster network his franchise has been recognized with multiple Achiever Awards for commitment to the market place and achieving outstanding revenue growth in service to his customers. Raul currently own 5 ServiceMaster small market licenses in southwest Kansas. And most recently EZ-Container Rentals & Disposal.. Raul and his team have traveled with other fellow franchises to assist in major national catastrophes such as Hurricane Harvey in 2017, Polar Vortex in 2014, Boulder Colorado floods in 2013 and few more regional flooding events. Raul outlooks the day to day operations of his franchises.

He is a member of the Cathedral of Our Lady of Guadalupe Church in Dodge City, KS and currently serves in the Dodge City Chamber of Commerce Board of Directors. Also serves in the Sacred Heart School Council. Raul carries various trade certifications through the IICRC such as ASD, WRT, FSRT, CCT, OCT, and NADCA ASCS.



Raul De La Torre Jr.



Dr. Tami Bartunek

Tami is the Vice President for Strategic Initiatives and Outreach at Kansas City Kansas Community College. Her focus is on building community engagement and supporting excellence in all KCKCC endeavors. Using skills honed in both the private and public sectors, coupled with an MBA and Ph.D. studies, she is an excellent listener with a keen ability to intuitively connect. She expects to complete a Ph.D. in Human Capital in January 2021, with a dissertation focus of healing organizations after trauma using servant leadership.



Goldie Powell

Cyber Creationz was established in November of 2017 by Goldie Powell. Initially Cyber Creationz was designed to assist entrepreneurs with advertising their business globally. Now Cyber Creationz has grown to become a technical consulting agency. Where we work with you to accommodate all technical ideas, questions and concerns After Goldie graduated with her computer science degree from Langston University, she went on to work for two top IT (Information Technology) companies. During her time working for others she discovered a passion to help women in IT grow in their field and also assisting all entrepreneurs with advertising and marketing their business and brand. Goldie decided to follow her dreams and implement her vision creating Cyber Creationz.

Over time Cyber Creationz has grown to not only create and design websites but also offering logo's, mobile apps and a host of other IT (Information Technology) needs.



**Nelson McConnell
& Adorian Lewis**

Nelson Lewis McConnell is the son of Adorian Lewis and Lonnie McConnell III and an 11-year-old entrepreneur. He is a student at Gloria Willis Middle School in Kansas City, KS and the face and owner of Nelson's Flavorades. Nelson's vision of being a business owner started when he was 8 years old and came to life at his church's flea market in 2018.

Nelson is a graduate and MVP of the 2020-2021 E-Ship Rising Cohort. He has gained national attention from KSHB 41 News interviews. Placed 2nd during the Kansas Virtual Youth Entrepreneurship Challenge hosted by Camp Destination Innovation in Wichita, Kansas, in the middle school division and took 1st place in the JuneteenthKC Pitch Competition. Along with being the youngest member of the Heartland Black Chamber of Commerce, awarded the 2021 Young Entrepreneur Excellence Award from Kansas City Community Church, Kansas Young Entrepreneur of the Year Award from the Kansas Department of Commerce, 2021 W. Hamilton Consulting Achievement Award recipient; in addition to being selected as an alternate for the Velocity Pitch Pub Crawl. Most recently, he partnered with Hy-Vee in Mission, KS as a store vendor.

When Nelson is not in school or conducting Nelson's Flavorades business, he loves spending time with family and friends, playing basketball, football, and video games.



Anna Bjerken

Anna was born in Leoti, Kansas and then called Alaska home for many years of her childhood and beginning of her post-collegiate career. In 2016, Anna, her husband Corey, and son Lincoln rooted their lives in Dodge City, Kansas surrounded by family and friends.

Anna is a graduate of Dodge City High School and Dodge City Community College. She obtained her Master Degree in Business Administration after completing her Bachelor Degree in Medical Diagnostic Imaging from Fort Hays State University. Following a clinical position at a hospital in Alaska, Anna went on to manage the largest privately-owned medical practice group in Wasilla. When her first child was born, the Bjerkens decided to relocate and establish a home in Dodge City. Anna worked in healthcare locally before joining the Chamber as president and chief executive officer in July of 2019.

When Anna and Corey are not at their day jobs, they enjoy spending their time on the golf course and with their son Lincoln and daughter Londyn. They also enjoy attending events within USD 443 as Corey works within the district. Anna is an avid coffee drinker, loves traveling, spending quality family time, and reading.



Amy Freouf

Amy Freouf is the Director of Human Resources at American Implement, Inc. She relocated to this area in February last year after having spent the previous 8 years working for a different John Deere dealership group based out of western Nebraska. Prior to that she worked another 8 years in Human Resources for a local Agricultural cooperative. She is certified as a Human Resources Professional through both the Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM) and the HR Certification Institute (HRCI).

Amy also serves as the current Director for SHRM of Southwest KS, a local chapter in which HR professionals and others performing HR roles in their companies can get together monthly for continuing education, networking, and peer support. She has been an active volunteer leader with SHRM for several years, serving in several different roles to support her local chapter and the greater community while living and working in NE. She is excited and honored to now be able to turn her attention towards western Kansas.

In addition to her work with SHRM, Amy is a Lifetime member of Girl Scouts and a long-time troop leader. She is passionate about helping to mold young women into future leaders by inspiring them to learn more about the world around them and to make that world a better place for all of us.



Jim Echols

Cultural Awareness Training CEO Jim Echols is passionate about building rapport with clients and cares deeply about meeting their professional needs. He was born in Memphis, Tennessee as the son and grandson of Baptist ministers. He completed high school in Spokane, Washington, before serving 25 years with the U.S. Army, Army National Guard, and Army Reserve. He served in Vietnam as a teenager and was awarded the Bronze Star while there.



Yeiry Carrillo

Yeiry (Yay-dee) Carrillo, originally from Jerez Zacatecas Mexico, moved to the US with my family at the age of 11. Residing in Guymon OK since 2006. Guymon is her home. The oldest out of 4, she has 2 younger sisters and a brother. First generation college graduate. She has a 14-year-old daughter who is her everything and 6 dogs.

Yeiry graduated from Oklahoma Panhandle State university in 2012. Started her career as a social worker for the State of Oklahoma in the child welfare department. Joined Seaboard Foods Talent Acquisition team 4 years ago. Changed her entire life for the best!

Loves to travel, cook, eat, spend time with family, workout, and practice Brazilian jiu jitsu.



Lona DuVall

Lona DuVall began work at Finney County Economic Development Corporation in 2010 as the Director of Business Retention and has been the President/ CEO since 2011. A native of Leoti, DuVall holds a degree in Public Administration and is committed to ensuring the economic strength and vitality of western Kansas into the future. DuVall has led FCEDC for the past decade and has been an integral part of the tremendous growth in Garden City/Finney County over that time.



Maria Dennison

Maria joined the Kansas Small Business Development Center (SBDC) in January of 2018 as the Regional Director and is responsible for implementing a region wide strategic business assistance program providing one-on-one business consulting, diverse business and training seminars, and advocacy on behalf of the small business sector in twenty-two southwest Kansas counties. Before joining the SBDC, Maria worked in Human Resources in the construction industry where she was responsible for benefits administration, risk and policy management, and IFTA/IRP audits. Prior to this, Maria was President/Publisher of Ashleigh Publishing Group, a journal and book publisher, and she previously held leading newspaper circulation and human resource roles with Media News Group, Knight-Ridder, and Mirage Resorts Inc.



Wayne Bell

Wayne Bell became the District Director for the Wichita Office of the U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA) October 27, 2008. His professional background includes extensive experience in both the public and private sectors, combined with a thorough understanding of the small business environment in Kansas. Prior to SBA, Mr. Bell served as Administrative Officer for the Transportation Security Administration (TSA) of the US Department of Homeland Security at Wichita Mid-Continent Airport. With TSA he managed human resources, customer service; stakeholder relations, purchasing, and IT contract services for Kansas. Before federal employment, Mr. Bell held leadership positions at Raytheon Aircraft Company, Boeing Commercial Airplane Group, and with private manufacturing firms in Hutchinson, Kansas. He also gained experience in small business as a partner in a Wichita-based service firm. A native of St. Louis, Missouri, Mr. Bell attended Wichita State University (WSU) and earned both an Executive MBA and Bachelor of Science in Industrial Technology. While an undergraduate, he participated in “Shocker Athletics” as a member of the WSU football team. His community service includes work with Consumer Credit Counseling Services, United Way of the Plains, and Real Men Real Heroes. Mr. Bell lives in Wichita with his wife, Jocelyn and family, they attend Saint Mark United Methodist Church.



Renee Harbin

Renee Harbin, Marketing Management Professor and Division Chair at GCCC, graduated from Emporia State University with her Master’s of Science in Business Education in 2003. Harbin has taught at Garden City Community College since 2000 and currently teaches Marketing, Management, Entrepreneurship, Business Ethics and a variety of other business courses at the college. Harbin holds Certiport Industry Certification along with certificates in Google Analytics.



Cayla Thomlinson

Cayla Thomlinson, Communication Instructor at GCCC, graduated from Rolla High School, attended Seward County Community College, and completed her Bachelor of Science and Master of Arts in Communication at Pittsburg State University. Thomlinson worked as a Media/Marketing Specialist for over six years in western Kansas and currently teaches Public Speaking, Interpersonal Communication, and media courses at the college. She is a photographer, designer, and creates websites and branding packages for small businesses and organizations.



Lachele Greathouse

Lachele Greathouse, Business & Technology Instructor at GCCC, has 30+ years of teaching experience at both the high school level and college level. She holds a MS in Business Education from Fort Hays State University and BS in Business Education from Kansas State University. She holds a Certiport Industry Certification as a Microsoft Office Specialist in Outlook, Word, Excel, Access and PowerPoint.



Dr. Susan Ortega

Dr. Susan Ortega, Accounting Instructor at GCCC, graduated from Garden City High School, attended Garden City Community College, and completed her Bachelor of Science in Accounting from University of Phoenix, Master of Business Administration in Forensic Accounting at Argosy University, and her Doctorate in Business Administration in Accounting from Walden University. Ortega has taught Accounting and business classes for 6 years at the college.