

# K.U. launches program for businesses

The University of Kansas School of Business has launched a new program designed to keep rural businesses open for business.

The Redefining Retirement program - nicknamed RedTire - will match qualified graduates who want to own a business with business owners who are looking to retire. The program is aimed at preventing rural businesses from closing because an owner can't find a successor or buyer.

"Every day in rural communities, businesses close forever because an owner retires and can't find someone to take over the business," said Neeli Bendapudi, dean of the University of Kansas School of Business. "This is crucial to rural Kansas communities that depend on the services, jobs and tax revenue that these businesses provide. RedTire will address this issue by

matching graduates with current business owners and facilitating a succession plan to keep the business running."

In effect, RedTire is a match-making service. Program staff will screen prospective replacement managers and candidate businesses, then identify good matches for purchase opportunities. From there, the program will help negotiate the purchase and transition of ownership terms, help establish a business purchase loan, and monitor and help the new owners successfully run and grow their new business.

The program will be supervised by two separate boards - a board of advisors and a board of governors - which include a number of highly regarded Kansas entrepreneurs and business leaders.

"Nearly 13,000 businesses in Kansas have owners who plan to

retire in five years but do not have succession plans in place," said Wally Meyer, a RedTire director and the director of entrepreneurship programs for the School of Business. "So there's certainly a need for this type of program in rural Kansas. This is another example of how KU entrepreneurship is working for Kansas."

RedTire will assemble teams of graduates to provide the multidisciplinary capabilities that successfully managed companies require. For example, RedTire would team a pharmacy student and an MBA student to work together on purchasing a pharmacy, rather than have either individual do so alone. Ownership teams will be built across the core industries of business, pharmacy, medicine and agriculture.

"By screening participants and learning about their personal and

professional goals, we can match the right graduates with the right businesses in the right community to ensure long-term success," Meyer said. "We want these businesses to thrive and drive economic development in rural communities into the next generation."

RedTire is available to all graduates of a Kansas Regents institution and to current Kansas business owners. Services are free.

For details or to apply for services, visit [www.redtire.org](http://www.redtire.org).

Meyer first developed the idea for RedTire a few years ago when he was visiting with an economic developer from Goodland.

"The economic developer told me, 'We have no one to succeed our small business owners when they retire,'" Meyer said. "And subsequent research proved that this need is nationwide, and likely to increase due

to the growing number of expectant retirees who are part of the baby boomer population now reaching retirement age. RedTire can help fill this successor void with Kansas Regents institutions' educated labor pool, as well as alumni looking to return to the heartland."

The RedTire program has been in the planning stages since 2009. Since then, countless presentations about RedTire have been given to economic development officials, business owners, bankers and others statewide.

The RedTire idea won best business concept in June 2009 at the U.S. Department of Commerce-sponsored University Center Showcase and in various annual showcases since then.

RedTire is an initiative of the KU Center for Entrepreneurship, housed within the KU School of

Business. The program will be financed through existing KU business school funding streams.

In addition to helping recent graduates, the RedTire program could be especially useful to alumni of Kansas universities who have left Kansas but are looking to move back.

In that regard, RedTire dovetails perfectly with a number of other state programs, including the Rural Opportunity Zone program.

"We're pleased that Governor Sam Brownback and many other business leaders, some of who are helping us implement the RedTire program from their positions on the RedTire Board of Advisors, are such enthusiastic supporters of this initiative," Bendapudi said.

# Wallace County deputy graduates from center

Corey David is among 43 men and women recently congratulated by Acting State Fire Marshal Terry Maple during their Kansas Law Enforcement Training Center graduation ceremonies Friday, June 15.

The new officers were members of the 218th basic training class at the center. Located one mile west and one mile south of Yoder, near Hutchinson, the center is a division of University of Kansas Continuing Education.

Corey David is a deputy for the Wallace County Sheriff's Department in Sharon Springs.

David and the other graduates, who began their training Tuesday, March 12, represented 34 municipal, county and state law

enforcement agencies from across Kansas.

Graduates receive certificates of course completion from KLETC and Kansas law enforcement certification from the Kansas Commission on Peace Officers' Standards and Training, the state's law enforcement licensing authority. The training course fulfills the state requirement for law enforcement training. Classroom lectures and hands-on applications help train officers to solve the increasingly complex problems they face in the line of duty.

Established by the Kansas Legislature in 1968, the center trains the majority of municipal, county and state law enforcement officers

in Kansas and oversees the training of the remaining officers at seven authorized and certified academy programs operated by local law enforcement agencies and the Kansas Highway Patrol.

About 300 officers enroll annually in the 14-week basic training program. In 2010, the center offered continuing education and specialized training to more than 5,600 Kansas officers. Funding for the training center is generated from court docket fees from municipal and state courts. No funds from the state's general revenue are used to operate the center.

# Rural Kansas family operates large fireworks operation

By Ron Wilson,

Director

Huck Boyd National Institute for Rural Development at Kansas State University South Bimini Island. It's New Year's Eve. A beautiful fireworks display is underway to celebrate the New Year in the Bahamas. But who is putting on this fireworks display? Would you believe, a family from the middle of Kansas? Today we'll learn about a rural Kansas family that operates a leading fireworks business.

Steve and Peggy Showalter are the founders and owners of Showalter Fireworks near Inman. They live on Steve's family farm near Inman. Steve served in the Army and attended K-State before coming back to Inman.

Steve has always loved fireworks. Each year the Showalters would invite family members over for a big Fourth of July celebration. Steve would set off the biggest fireworks assortment he could find.

The Showalter home is located near the McPherson-Reno County line. McPherson County would allow fireworks to be set off while Reno County did not. One day in 1987, a guy from Reno County asked if he could set up a fireworks stand in one corner of their alfalfa field and then asked if his customers could set off some fireworks. When Steve saw the huge crowd that showed up, he realized this was a real opportunity.

So the next year, Steve decided to put up his own fireworks stand for

the public. He built a 20- by 20-foot lean-to shed with a dirt floor and bought \$1,000 worth of fireworks. It was a big success. "The idea grew exponentially," Steve said. "By the mid-1990s, the building had tripled in size. "We would have 1,000 cars full of people coming out to buy fireworks and then shoot the fireworks right here. They would shoot from dark till one or two in the morning."

In 1995, the Showalters had wanted to put on a special fireworks show as a thank you to their customers and neighbors, so they approached an older man who sold display fireworks. Again, it went really well. "If you ever want to retire, let us know," the couple told him. Within a year, that call came. The Showalters bought his business and expanded it through the years.

Today they have two companies: Showalter Fireworks, which sells fireworks to consumers, and Rainbow Fireworks which sells display fireworks. Those require special licenses to purchase and operate.

Rainbow Fireworks is a major source of fireworks supplies and shows. From the period of June 30 to July 5, they will be involved in 208 fireworks events in five states.

About a third of Rainbow Fireworks' business is the direct sale of fireworks. Another third is from providing the fireworks equipment to someone else to operate and the final third consists of the turnkey shows where the Rainbow Fireworks crew operates the equipment themselves.

Town festivals are a popular venue for fireworks displays.

"What fireworks will do for a small town festival is hold everybody in town until dark," Steve said. "That's good for the vendors and helps these towns keep a crowd."

What is the key to success in the fireworks business? "We grow the business through service," Steve said. He believes in the personal touch. "I give out my cell phone number to customers," he said. "We don't keep business hours. My cell phone is always open."

Such service has generated customers as far away as Bimini Island. Each year Steve sends a crew to the Bahamas to do a fireworks show on the Fourth of July and again on the tenth of July to celebrate the Bahamian Independence Day. Then in late December, he and Peggy make the trip to the Bahamas to put on a New Year's Eve show. Not bad for a fireworks company from the rural community of Inman, population 1,139 people. Now, that's rural.

For more information, go to [www.showalterfireworks.com](http://www.showalterfireworks.com).

It's time to leave the Bahamas, where Steve Showalter is making a difference by sharing these fireworks displays with others. For him, this business has been a blast.

And there's more. Fireworks aren't just for the Fourth of July any more. Next week we'll learn about another side of the Showalters' fireworks business.

# Performing in Burlington



Joseph Eli and his daughter Nicole will be part of the entertainment at 10 a.m. on Saturday at the Celebration of Summer Car Show in Burlington at the park by the carousel. Joseph Eli is a self taught guitarist and composer and has performed in Goodland's Got Talent and the Flatlander Fall Festival talent show.

Photo by Pat Schiefen/The Goodland Star-News

The Goodland Star-News  
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## correction

A photo caption on Page 1 of the Tuesday, June 26, edition of *The Goodland Star-News* incorrectly identified one of the people in the photo. The two men were former Denver Bronco Larry Brunson and former Kansas City Chief Walter White. This was a reporting error.

*The Goodland Star-News* will correct any mistake or misunderstanding in a news story. Please call (785) 899-2338 to report errors. We believe that news should be fair and factual. We want to keep an accurate record and appreciate you calling to our attention any failure to live up to this standard.

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# Celebrate a SAFE & HAPPY JULY 4TH!

Sherman County Emergency Management wishes you a safe and fun 4th of July!

Check with your local law enforcement as many counties in the Tri-State area are under burn bans and firework restrictions.