

# Construction company wins award

By Ron Wilson

Director

Huck Boyd National Institute for Rural Development at Kansas State University

Omaha, Neb. It's time for the announcement of the National Dealer of the Year Award by Lester Buildings. And the winner is... not some big construction company in Denver or New York, but an entrepreneur and his family from rural Kansas.

Joe Kormanik is co-owner of K-Construction, a family construction business in Alta Vista. Joe was raised at El Dorado. While in high school, he met his wife-to-be, Carla. His future father-in-law became a construction superintendent in Iowa and Joe worked for him there.

In 1974, Joe began his career in

the post-frame building industry as a crew member. He worked his way up over time to be a crew foreman, salesman, and then regional manager with different companies. As he advanced through the ranks, Joe and Carla lived and worked in Kansas, Oklahoma and Arkansas.

In 1985, they moved back to Carla's home area at Alta Vista. Joe continued to erect buildings, and in 1991 their son Jason suggested they go into business for themselves. The business became known as K-Construction (with the letter K, as in Kormanik).

"I work for my wife," Joe said with a smile. "The money goes to her." Carla is the bookkeeper and their son helped manage the crew.

In 2002, Joe was approached by the Lester Building company to

serve as a dealer. He gladly took this on. "Lester is one of the top manufacturers of post-frame buildings in the nation," Joe said. They continued to grow the business.

In 2004, tragedy struck when their son Jason was killed in a car accident. Their other son Ben stepped in and filled Jason's role and kept the company operating.

Today the business has grown to include Joe, Carla and their son Ben plus eleven employees and a sub crew. Joe has a working relationship with several other subcontractors as well. The business includes construction of commercial, agricultural and residential type structures.

"Back in the '90s, most of our business was farm," Joe said. "Nowadays we do houses and larger buildings and commercial projects too."

Recent projects include what might be called a mancave, with a shop connected to living quarters. One recent example was valued at more than a third-of-a-million dollars. Another they finished to look almost like a condominium inside. One recent project in Lawrence included a 26-foot-tall observation tower and a spiral staircase.

"(When I got started,) I thought the problem would be: I don't have enough business," Joe said. "But instead, it's that I can't find enough qualified workers."

"We will do a turnkey project with a firm price," Joe said. "We try to incorporate everything so the customer has no surprises."

Joe and his family have built the business volume to about \$2.5 million in 2011. "I believe in a high

degree of reliability and attention to detail," Joe said.

"A lot of our employees have been with us a long time, and we're fortunate to have them," he said. Many of the company's projects have earned the Award of Excellence, and in 2007 K-Construction was named by Lester Buildings as its National Dealer of the Year.

Not bad for a company from the rural community of Alta Vista, population 434 people. Now, that's rural.

In fact, when a city councilman in Alta Vista stepped down, Joe was recruited to fill out the unexpired term. Joe didn't run for re-election but was written in again and elected to the City Council. He is also active in his church, serving on the Board of Deacons.

"We enjoy what we're doing and we hope to continue to expand," Joe said. "We currently have a draftsman, we've hired a mechanic and we'd like to add another salesman."

For more information about this company, go to [www.k-constructioninc.com](http://www.k-constructioninc.com).

It's time to leave Omaha, Neb., where we find the National Dealer of the Year Award has been presented to Joe Kormanik. We commend Joe and Carla, their son Ben and all those involved with K-Construction for making a difference with hard work and entrepreneurship. It's good to see that, in rural Kansas, business is building.

## Trail conference happens in October

The sixth Annual Smoky Hill Trail Conference will be held Friday to Sunday, Oct. 19-21 at the Eisenhower Presidential Library and Museum at Abilene. The theme is "Abilene, Cowboys, Cattle Country and the Smokey Hill Trail."

Registration is from 6:30 until 11 a.m. (Mountain Time) on Saturday, Oct. 20, in the Eisenhower Library and Museum. Registration reopens from 6:30 to 10:30 a.m. (Mountain Time) on Sunday, Oct. 21.

Smoky Hill Trail Association President Mike Braughn said the conference is filled with educational information and entertainment that is completed with a silent auction of items collected from cities along the trail. Attendees are offered the choice of a full conference fee for \$40 or a daily fee of \$20 and the public is invited.

Friday evening, Oct. 19, a welcome gathering features "Prairie Larkspur." This music group performs music of the 1899's using many instruments pioneers used while traveling west. This event will take place at the historic Union Pacific Depot in Abilene.

At 7 a.m. on Saturday, Oct. 20, Jim Gray of Ellsworth will present "Kansas Cattle Towns." He is a sixth generation Kansan, author and tour guide. Jeff Sheets, Director of the Dickinson County Historical Society, will enlighten the group with "Abilene: The Wildest and Wooliest Town in the West." Retired teacher and librarian Sandra Wiechert, Lawrence, will give a talk on "Captured: Kansas Pioneer Women Held in Indian Captivity." She is a Kansas Humanities Council leader for Talk about Literature in Kansas.

Other Saturday activities include the Fort Riley Commanding General's Mounted Color Guard Demonstration Team at the Dickinson County Historical Museum; a bus tour of the Smoky Hill Trail stage station sites near Abilene and the Abilene trolley tours. At 6:30 p.m. (Mountain Time) there will be a banquet in the Indoor Courtyard of the Eisenhower Library and Museum. Featured speaker Marla Matkin will give a program entitled "Cattle Towns and Soiled Doves." She is a living historian and independent scholar.

The conference concludes on Sunday with a ride on the Smoky Valley Excursion train following a presentation entitled "Purveyor of the Past" by Joe Basso. He is a retired history teacher who has researched living history topics from the Middle Ages to World War II. He is currently a biographical researcher for the 62nd New York State volunteer Infantry regiment of Civil War re-enactors based in Australia.

The association is a non-profit organization established in 1997 to preserve the historical legacy of the Smoky Hill Trail. They promote its designation as a National Historic Trail and interpret the events, remnants and locations that represent the historic trail, Butterfield's Overland Dispatch, successor freight and stage lines and the railway and highways that replaced this overland trail.

For information contact Jody Zeman at (785) 259-0725 or [jodyzeman@rural.net](mailto:jodyzeman@rural.net) or on the web at [www.smokyhilltrail.com](http://www.smokyhilltrail.com).

## Girl Scout conference to be held in Salina

As the Women of Achievement program nears its 20th year, Girl Scouts of Kansas Heartland will celebrate the significant program by capitalizing on the vast knowledge and experience of past honorees. On Saturday, Sept. 29, Girl Scouts will offer its first Women of Achievement mentoring conference for girls.

The conference, "It's a Girl's Life - Lead It," will take place on the Kansas Wesleyan Campus in Salina from 8 a.m. until 1 p.m. (Mountain Time) and will feature several interactive sessions with Women of Achievement honorees and a closing keynote message from 2011 honoree Betsy Wearing of the Greater Salina Community Foundation. All girls in grades six through 12 are invited to attend

and Girl Scouts encourages girls to register early, as the event is sure to sell out.

The day will interactively involve girls in a variety of topics including: Financial Literacy with Phyllis Pickel of Sunflower Bank, Healthy Choices with Joyce Volk of Farmer's Insurance Group, Leadership Essentials with Juanelle Garretson of Southeast Saline High, Personal Storytelling with Barbara Marshall of Kansas Wesleyan University, Diversity with Joyce Thomas of Central Kansas Mental Health and Performance Arts with Vickee Spicer of Rolling Hills Wildlife Adventure.

For more information or to register, contact Sara Nettleingham at [snettleingham@gskh.org](mailto:snettleingham@gskh.org) or (785) 827 3679.

## State fair



A view of the crowd and one of the exhibit buildings at the opening weekend of the Kansas State Fair at Hutchinson from a sky lift ride. The fair continued through this weekend. Grand Champion winners from the Northwest Kansas District Free Fair showed

their exhibits and competed for ribbons. Opening weekend had most of the animal competitions.

Photo by Pat Schiefen/The Goodland Star-News

### corrections

The story titled "Third mini-easel painting unveiled" in the Tuesday, Sept. 11, edition of the *Goodland Star-News* omitted the fact that the painting is funded by the Max Alderman Endowment Fund, administered by the Carnegie Art Sales Board. This was a reporting error.

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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.

## Reader Recipes

### Squash Souffle

#### Ingredients

- 1 1/2 pts. cooked yellow squash (drained, mashed)
- 3/4 cup sugar
- 3T flour
- dash of salt
- 1 1/2 t. vanilla
- 3 eggs, separated
- 3T butter, melted
- 1/2 cup evaporated milk
- 1/4 cup flaked coconut (optional)

Combine squash, sugar, flour, salt and vanilla with beaten egg yolks, butter and milk. Fold in beaten egg whites. Place in buttered 2 quart casserole dish, top with coconut. Bake at 350 degrees for 30-35 minutes.

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The City of Goodland Electric Department would like to invite the public to an open house celebration for 75 years of continued service at the City Power Plant. The open house will be held on Sunday, September 23rd from 1-4 p.m.. Come down and take a tour of the facility and meet the staff.




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