

Food Entrepreneurship Workshop Highlights Growth



By Laura Lombardi

Sumner County Economic Development, Network Kansas, K-State Research and Extension, and the Heartland Regional Food Business Center welcomed producers, farmers, and ranchers to the KanOkla Upstairs Downtown conference center in Caldwell for a day of informational sessions focused on food entrepreneurship, food incubators, commercial kitchens, financing options, and more.

Part of K-State's spring community visit series, the workshop explored what it takes to bring locally produced food to market. Sessions covered essential questions such as: What equipment is needed for a commercial kitchen? What's required for nutrition labeling?

K-State offers a wide range of services for producers interested in selling directly to customers, including support from the Kansas Value Added Foods Lab, which helps entrepreneurs create safe, market-ready products. Sumner County Economic Development Director Stacy Davis spoke at the event, highlighting the county's ongoing economic growth, driven by strategic infrastructure investments.

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Sumner County Economic Development Director Stacy Davis addressed producers, farmers, and ranchers at the Food Entrepreneurship Workshop. Photos submitted

Plaine and Caldwell have made major upgrades to their water systems—investments critical not just for quality of life today, but for attracting future businesses and ensuring sustainable growth tomorrow,” said Davis.

She also discussed the upcoming Every natural gas power plant, a major infrastructure project that will boost the local energy grid, support industrial development, and position Sumner County for long-term expansion.

In addition, broadband connectivity is rapidly improving. KanOkla Networks is expanding its fiber network in the southern part of the county, while Twin Valley is rolling out high-speed fiber in northern areas.

“These investments are closing the digital divide,”

Davis noted. “They’re delivering gigabit-speed internet to homes, farms, schools, and businesses. In today’s economy, high-speed internet is essential—from remote work and online learning to precision agriculture and telehealth.”

Davis emphasized that these improvements are laying the foundation for long-term economic competitiveness, entrepreneurship, and tourism. She also highlighted a growing number of local businesses and festivals that celebrate the area’s rich history and bring visitors to Sumner County.

Dr. Jen Kern, executive director of the Border Queen Harvest Hub, spoke about how the Hub supports local farmers and food entrepreneurs by connecting them directly with consumers, expanding market access, and keeping dollars circulating within the local economy.

K-State’s food systems entrepreneurial resource navigators, Quinlan Carttar and Jenny Doty, presented different models for creating incubator kitchens—from adapting existing buildings, as is happening in Caldwell, to building new facilities.

Throughout the day, attendees were introduced to tools, resources, and partnerships aimed at helping farmers, food entrepreneurs, and small businesses grow.

As Davis summed it up: “The key is connecting rural resources with rural innovation—and strengthening our economy from the ground up.”



What’s Growing On in Sumner County: Wheat Plot Tours

By Randy V Hein, CEA
Agriculture & Natural Resources Agent
K-State Research & Sumner Co. Extension Office



Area farmers, crop producers, and anyone interested in learning more about this year’s wheat crop are invited to attend the Sumner County Wheat Plot Tours. This is a valuable opportunity to explore the latest wheat varieties and gain insights from local experts.

Join agricultural research specialists, as well as soil and resource management professionals, to learn about the newest wheat varieties available and hear firsthand from farmers in the area about their experiences.

Here are the Sumner County Tour locations:

Monday, May 19th - Caldwell Plots
6pm - Plot Tour/Meal, Sponsored by Scoular, Farmers Grain, Turek Seed Wheat, Turek Seed Co. and Stock Exchange.

Location: Barry “Bones” Patton Research Farm, 34 South of Highway 81 & Sumner Road

Meal location is at Research Farm after tours.

Tuesday, May 20th- Belle Plaine Plots
6pm - Dinner, Sponsored by Hisken Ag Supply. Program will follow the meal at the plot.

Location: 1459 E. 60th Ave North, Southeast of Belle Plaine. Plots are located 1/2 mile East of 1459 E. 60th Ave North, NE Corner of Intersection.

Thursday, May 22nd - Conway Springs Plots

6pm - Plot Tour/Meal, Sponsored by Devlin Seed, LLC. Meal will follow the plot tour at 922 W 140th Ave N in Conway Springs.

Location: Plots are located 1/2 mile East of meal location, South of intersection, East side.

The 2025 Wheat Plot Tours are hosted by Impact Bank and K-State Research and Extension – Sumner County. Need more information? Contact us at 620-326-7477, or email: rvhein@ksu.edu

Cowley Commencement Ceremony

By WDN Staff

Cowley College will celebrate its 102nd Commencement Ceremony on Saturday, May 10, at 10am. inside the W.S. Scott Auditorium on the Arkansas City campus. Individuals requiring special seating are encouraged to arrive by 9:40am.

The ceremony will feature keynote speaker Avery Osen, a distinguished Cowley alumnus from the Class of 2015. Osen is the host of KSN’s lifestyle show Good Day Kansas and serves as an emcee for the Wichita



Wind Surge.

In addition to Osen, Joe Woodard—recipient of the 2025 Outstanding Tiger Alumni Award—will be recognized and offer remarks. Members of the Cowley College Student Senate will also share reflections during the ceremony.

Student Senate President Hadley O’Toole—92nd Queen Alalah and March Student of the Month—and Student Senate

Vice President Aleeyah Winegarner—Miss Cowley County 2024—will speak about their time at Cowley and the path ahead for the graduating class.

The 237 participants listed in the official Commencement program are candidates for Associate of Arts, Associate of Science, Associate of General Studies, Associate of Applied Science degrees, or College Certificates.

For more information about parking, seating, or to access the livestream, visit cowley.edu.

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Guests at the National Depression Glass Association Museum’s Annual Spring Tea were treated to a charming occasion filled with delicate teas served in vintage teacups, colorful cookies, and cheerful conversation. The festive setting was made even more inviting by the soft melodies of Jim Bales and Mark Green, whose live music added a warm and elegant backdrop to the event.

Sunni Bales, Deb Mansch, Museum Director, Beverly Anderson, and many others enjoyed the beautiful table settings, the company of neighbors, and a shared appreciation for history, hospitality, and community spirit.

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REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

City of Garnett, Kansas, Comprehensive Plan

The City of Garnett requests proposals from qualified consultants or firms to review city comprehensive plan and develop comprehensive plan for the City. The new, updated plan will provide vision, goals, objectives, and policies to guide the City’s development and redevelopment for the next 20 to 25 years. The plan will guide the City Commission, Planning and Zoning Commission, staff, developers, property owners, and residents on the appropriate growth and redevelopment for the City. The updated plan will integrate all aspects of urban development, including demographics, land use, public facilities and infrastructure, transportation, environmental, and economic growth recommendations. A critical component of the plan will be setting a vision for the City’s development and redevelopment, including areas in the City and possible annexation land. The vision component will need to analyze existing and future infrastructure needs and how technology will play a role in community outreach and City operations. The qualified consultant will need to take a creative and innovative approach to reviewing the needs of the community, while obtaining public input about the plan. The planning process shall develop a comprehensive vision for the City, business opportunities, amenities and programs, as well as complement the recently-completed parks plan.

SUBMITTAL DEADLINE

One (1) electronic copy in PDF format, in accordance with this RFP, will be accepted no later than 3:00 PM CST on May 30, 2025 and shall be submitted via the following email address: dwilson@garnettks.net

Full document and information are available at www.simplygarnett.com.