

The Chamber Business Journal

February 2022

Community ~ Growth ~ Leadership ~ Vision

306 N. Main, McPherson, Kansas 67460 • Phone: 620-241-3303 • www.mcphersonchamber.org • Visit us on Facebook

Exciting Itinerary for the 2022 Women's Chamber Trip

Contact your girlfriends and sign up to travel with us Thursday, September 15- Monday, September 19. Austin is filled with vibrant entertainment, art and culture, inspiring cuisines, and stunning outdoor experiences! Join us for the Chamber Women's Trip and a great opportunity to build community relations among travelers while learning what other cities have to offer.

Cost based on minimum of 30 travelers: \$1455 (dbl. occupancy)/ \$1180 (triple occupancy)/ \$1045 (quad occupancy). \$400 non-refundable deposit DUE FEB. 21 to reserve rooms. Non chamber members add \$50. Optional \$125 food tour fees must be paid at time of deposit to guarantee reservation.

Trip package includes:

- Luxury motorcoach transportation
- Dinner Cruise on Lady Bird Lake
- Private Weird Austin Tour
- Day trip through the Texas hill country to Fredericksburg
- Transportation to the Pecan Street Festival
- 4 nights at the Hyatt Regency Austin
- Unforgettable memories!

Thursday, September 15 -Depart McPherson and travel by luxury motorcoach to Austin. Check-in to the Hyatt Regency Hotel. The downtown hotel is nestled on the shores of Lady Bird Lake with close access to Sixth Street, and South Congress for entertainment, dining and shopping. Plus, it has beautiful views and several dining options.

Board the Dinner Cruise on Lady Bird Lake and enjoy the night skyline with a 2-hour cruise, a delicious fajita dinner and ice-cold margaritas.

Friday, September 16-We will begin the day with the Twisted Texas Keep Austin Weird Tour that departs from our hotel at 10:00 am and will return at 12:30. Tour includes "weird local lore, memorable residents and hidden secrets." Local musician onboard to add to the tour. Stops at graffiti street art places for great picture moments. See Sixth Street, Capital Building, South Congress, UT, live music venues etc. Short walking tour of Lady Bird Lake and photo op of Austin Skyline.

Optional Tours (Additional \$125 paid at time of trip deposit)

- The Brew Bus Tour 3-6:30 pm. Limited to first 32
- Austin Eats Happy Hour Tour (walking) 4-7 pm. Limited to 14

Saturday, September 17-Daytrip to Fredericksburg Immerse yourself in history at this authentic German town founded in 1846. After a short "Intro to Fredericksburg" you are off to explore the boutiques & shops, restaurants, historical sites (Pioneer Museum, National Museum of the Pacific War, Vereins Kirche Museum in the center of Marktplatz) and 10 downtown wineries!

Return to Austin and enjoy the evening to do as you want. The hotel has live music from local musicians at the Marker 10 restaurant at our hotel from 5-7 pm. This might also be the perfect time to take in the Ghost Walk Austin!

Sunday, September 18-It's Your Free Day! It is also the Pecan Street Festival! Twenty-four blocks of Sixth Street will feature artists, live music, and a wide variety of ethnic and regional food. Free admission to the festival. While you are in the Sixth Street area, check out the colorful and bustling array of bars, restaurants and entertainment venues, including the famous Iron Cactus or there are paddle boats, kayaks and an electric donut boat if you want to get out on the water. Relax by the hotel's pool or hot-tub, try out the hike & bike trail, or check out more restaurants and music venues.

Monday, September 19-Travel back to McPherson by luxury motorcoach while swapping stories of your adventures.

Say you will join us! **Sign up by February 21, 2022!** Questions contact: Debbie Hawkinson, McPherson Chamber, 620-241-3303 chamberdirector@mcphersonks.org or Chelsi Mannebach, Ask Your Travel, 620-241-6093 or chelsi@askyourtravelagent.com

Happy Retirement Reception

Join us Monday, February 28th from 9-11 am for a come-and-go reception to celebrate the retirement of Shirley Mackey. Shirley has been an amazing cheerleader for our community and the McPherson Chamber since joining our team in November of 2017. She has welcomed hundreds of new residents to McPherson as they stopped by the Chamber office to pick up their Welcome to McPherson Gift Bag. Shirley has been a resource to answer thousands of questions, and a smiling face that brightened everyone's day. She was meticulous with providing an accurate Community Calendar of Events and shared her writing skills with catchy Facebook captions to spotlight our Chamber Connection hosts. Most of all, if you've met Shirley, you know that she has a heart of gold!

Stop by to wish Shirley Mackey an amazing retirement or drop a card in the mail if you are unable to attend. We will have refreshments at the McPherson Chamber office, 306 N. Main on Monday, February 28th from 9-11am.

Kindness Starts with One

Did you know that February 14-20th is Random Acts of Kindness Week? I'm sure we would all agree that it should be every week, but I'm ready to celebrate! When I Googled RAK, I found out that there is actually a website with kindness ideas, quotes, kindness calendars and such. On the website it says "Kindness starts with one. One smile. One hug. One cup of coffee. One person..."

Absolutely! The concept of random acts of kindness could encompass thousands of everyday thoughtfulness. It reminded me of an activity during the Leadership McPherson class several years ago which included a big posterboard with the title Acts of Servant Leadership at the top. Everyone in the class was encouraged to write down acts of servant leadership that they had observed and display it on the posterboard. These post-it notes packed a powerful message. The examples of seemingly "little" things began to overflow the board. Many represented something simple like a compliment that lit up someone's face, or that a co-worker made coffee for the office. Other examples represented something rather grand like someone donating vacation time to a co-worker in need or organizing a blood drive. "Little" or "big", these gestures make a huge difference to

someone.

These Random Acts of Kindness spoke volumes about serving others. "Leadership is giving. Leadership is an ethic, a gift of oneself." -Lee Bolman.

So, what better way to recognize those who are spreading kindness than to share about their RAK for all to appreciate? During the week of February 14-19th we will be posting community shout-outs of Random Acts of Kindness on the entry wall of the Chamber office. We want to hear what you have observed or what you have been the recipient of. They can be as brief or detailed as you want. Signed or anonymous, and can mention a specific person, organization, or business, or they can be vague.

Call us at 241-3303, drop off your note about a RAK at 306 N. Main, email your message to chamber@mcphersonks.org or FB message us and we will add it to our RAK wall at the Chamber office. Help us fill the wall with Random Acts of Kindness stories to create an uplifting display of our considerate and caring community, and the positive impact that kindness creates.



Debbie Hawkinson
Executive Director,
McPherson Chamber
of Commerce.

McPherson Chamber Soon Offering Chamber Blue of Kansas

The McPherson Chamber is excited to announce that we will soon be offering our members the opportunity for health insurance coverage through BCBS. We are working together with 26 other Chamber of Commerce's in Kansas (CCEKS) to offer an Association Health Plan called Chamber Blue of Kansas.

What is an Association Health Plan? A type of group medical insurance for organizations that allow smaller companies to access the health insurance savings associated with large group medical coverage. Better insurance plans + competitive rates = more value

The McPherson Chamber recognizes that recruiting and retaining talent is vital for business and industry of all sizes, and health insurance benefits are a crucial piece to that success.

Blue Cross Blue Shield of KS has the largest provider network in Kansas with 99% of physicians in-network, and 100% of hospitals in-network.

What is the Timeline? Initial rates will be based on groups/businesses that have filled out the interest survey (available August 2022). Rates will be determined in September 2022, and plans will become effective January 1, 2023.

Does my company qualify?

- Must be a member in good standing with the McPherson Chamber of Commerce.
- Employer must have at least two (2) W2 employees to qualify.
- Members must participate in the interest survey, August 2022.
- Employer to pay at least 25% of the lowest cost option plan offered.
- Employer must have 70% of eligible employees enroll in group health plan (employees working 30 hours+ per week, less those who have group coverage elsewhere x 70%)
- If the business drops out of the program, they cannot re-enroll for 2 years.
- Limited liability companies (LLC's) could qualify based on tax classification- determined by BCBS KS.

If your business would be interested in Chamber Blue of Kansas through BCBS, please contact the McPherson Chamber of Commerce at 620-241-3303 or e-mail chamberdirector@mcphersonks.org to receive timely information.



JOHN DEERE

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2021-2022 Chamber Board of Directors

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Farm Forum Honored Dedicated Ag Leaders

The McPherson Chamber of Commerce Agriculture Committee hosted the 2022 Farm Forum Monday, February 7. The evening featured guest speaker Rick McNary of Shop Kansas Farms, honored the 2021 Farm Family of the Year, 2021 Friend of Ag, and the opportunity to share information about the AFA Scholarship and Ag in the Classroom program.

The Farm Forum speaker was Rick McNary, the creator of Shop Kansas Farms. McNary's journey in creating Shop Kansas Farms began about 20 years ago, when he was a minister and took a trip to Central America. On the trip he was approached by a little girl who crawled up in his arms and asked him to feed her. She was starving. McNary was so undone by this that he sat down and said, "I'm going to do what I can to feed hungry people the rest of my life." He began to work with international agencies to aid and help provide food for a lot of people. About a decade into the journey, he came to realize and appreciate just how important farmers were to this entire process.

Rick McNary said the inception of Shop Kansas Farms occurred exactly at 6:58 p.m. on April 28, 2020. COVID had its grip on the country and food insecurities were beginning to occur. He and his wife had just completed a wonderful dinner that included a great cut of beef, when his wife mentioned that the meat counter at the grocery had been empty that day. Rick wondered how can that be when we just had this fantastic meal? Rick took out his laptop and created a Facebook group, its focus, to connect people wanting to purchase food products directly from the farm and ranch families who produce the meat, dairy, vegetables, and fruit. In three hours, there were 400 members. By the next morning there 1,000. By that evening the Facebook group had 5,000 members! And that's how Shop Kansas Farms got its start!

The Chamber Ag Committee introduced the 2021 Farm Family of the Year – Dennis and Mabel Friesen. The Friesen's began farming in McPherson County in 1981, taking over for Mabel's retired father, Lewis Nelson. They have expanded the farm, transitioning through the years from a full-tillage operation to no-till, which they have practiced for about 15 years. Because of his work with alfalfa, Dennis received the first Kansas Grassland and Forage award. He was also a recipient of the 2004 Bankers Award for Soil Conservation selected by the McPherson County Conservation District.

In addition to farming full-time, the Friesen's have managed to stay very busy. Dennis worked part-time at McPherson College, managed 90 honeybee hives, is a past member of the McPherson County Extension Board, the Kansas Farm Management-SC Board of Directors, and the MKC Member Relations Committee. Both Dennis and Mabel were active as 4-H leaders for a time and are currently volunteers with the Community Thanksgiving and Christmas dinners, both in serving meals and serving on the board. Mabel has retired as the Director of Nursing at Showalter Villa in Hesston.

Dennis and Mabel Friesen, who received the 2021 Farm Family of the Year Award, are starting the transition process of turning the farming operation over to their son Matt, and his wife Daisy, which will make this a third-generation farming operation. Congratulations Dennis and Mabel on receiving the 2021 Farm Family of the Year Award and congratulations to Matt and Daisy as they embark on this adventure as the farm's third generation!

The 2021 Friend of Agriculture was awarded to Karl Esping. Karl has been involved as a member of the Kansas Sunflower Commission and the National Sunflower Association for nearly 15 years. He was the first Kansan to serve as president of the National Sunflower Association and continues to serve on its Board of Directors. He is the current vice chair of the Kansas Sunflower Commission after serving as the chairperson for over 10 years.

Karl Esping began growing sunflowers in 2007, due to an Easter freeze which killed most of his wheat crop. His son, Aaron planted that first sunflower crop as a double crop into wheat stubble and the results were good. And as Karl says, "The rest is history!" They use sunflowers as a rotation crop, planting 300-500 acres a year. Karl's dedication to sunflowers can be seen by the glorious sunflower necktie he wore for the occasion!

2021 Friend of Agriculture Karl Esping has a regular program on stations serving western Kansas and Eastern Colorado. He has spoken at state and national events promoting sunflowers and has visited Spain, Mexico and Canada speaking at conferences promoting the crop. Karl has been a volunteer for the McPherson Chamber AFA Scholarship selection committee, interviewing high school students who had applied for the scholarship. He has advocated for agriculture through serving several terms on the McPherson County Farm Bureau Board. Congratulations, 2021 Friend of Agriculture Karl Esping.

The McPherson Chamber of Commerce Agriculture Committee also organizes the Rural Appreciation Picnic, has organized various fund-raising events to support an annual Agriculture Future of America Scholarship, and has supported the Ag in the Classroom program. Contact the McPherson Chamber or visit www.mcphersonchamber.org to learn more. We would like to say THANK YOU to our 2022 Farm Forum sponsors! Seed Sponsors: Ag Seed | Coop Grain & Supply | Everhart Precision Ag. | Karl Esping | MKC | Nelson Ag Seeds | Nutrien Ag Solutions | Phillips Seed Farms. Additional Sponsors: Emprise Bank | First Bank Kansas | Home State Bank | Krehbiels Specialty Meats | Peoples Bank & Trust | PrairieLand Partners | S&S Farms.

Goodbye, Farewell, and Amen

I grew up in Hutchinson. My father was in the radio business and managed a radio station. I loved hanging out there when I was a kid. I got the radio bug and passed my license test to run the controls and be on the air when I was 17. Sadly, my father got a brain tumor the following year and passed away shortly after I left for college. But I did spend 16 years in the profession as a radio journalist and announcer.

In 1991, United Way found me. It was a career change I never envisioned. I was selected as the Executive Director of United Way of Reno County and served there for 14 years. I was interested in working for United Way Worldwide's headquarters in Alexandria, Virginia and in 2005 went to work as a liaison with small United Ways around the country. It was an amazing experience and we really enjoyed living back east. After 12 years, we got the itch to come home and be closer to family and we landed in McPherson. At the end of this month, I'll retire having done this work for 25 years.

I've often said that United Way is the greatest professional blessing I've ever known. Radio taught me a lot – it was a great education, but with United Way I've had a chance to help make a difference in people's lives. So much of the work is done by our partner agencies. As I said last month, they are on the front lines and I am in great admiration of the work they do every day. I've been blessed to work with some wonderful volunteers. Audrey Miller was our board chair when I was hired, and she and the succeeding chairs, Brad Miller, Marc Robertson, Chad Hitt, Anika Polzin and Lenny Favara have all been amazing.

In addition to Lenny, our current President, and Anika, our Past-President, thanks to our current board of Katie Anderson, Tina Anderson, Enrique Barreiro, Amy Beckman, Bret Christiansen, Kena Dacus, Cindy Goldsmith, Tami Gossett, Tina Lyne, Brad Miller, Josh Oliver, Dara Reese, Ray Reno, Christina Reynolds, Ronda Sjogren, Brandon Trost, Shiloh Vincent and Aly Weyand. We have appreciated all of our Allocations Committee volunteers who help decide where the money goes and our Triathlon Committee, led for years by Scott Barkley and now Brandon Trost.

I owe a great debt to a couple of women who proceeded me in this role, Anne Kirchner and Brenda Sales. They were so organized and moved our United Way forward. I'm very grateful to them.

Lara Vanderhoof, who teaches social work at Tabor College, has been our lead volunteer in getting us through the pandemic. Her guidance was instrumental in United



ROB MACKEY
Executive Director
United Way of McPherson County

Way of McPherson County providing more than \$67,000 in rent and utility assistance to 147 McPherson County families through the Community Response and Recovery Fund.

Thanks also to Denise O'Connor-Munsey, our inaugural donor for Dolly Parton's Imagination Library. The program is now mailing free age-appropriate books every month to over 800 McPherson County preschoolers to help them discover the joy of reading. It has been a great joy to be a part of bringing this program to our children.

Speaking of donors, I am grateful to all the businesses and individuals who have supported United Way financially through the years. Our annual campaign closed at the end of January and we passed our goal raising \$280,504.69! These funds enable us to help 17 non-profit programs serving local people in need. We are so blessed to have great people who run the United Way campaigns at their companies, like Courtney Swart and her team at Farmers Alliance Mutual Insurance & Anika Polzin and Shelly Clark at CHS, just to name a few. These and others are the lifeblood of the money we raise.

As United Way's sole employee in McPherson County, I've been fortunate to work with great people inside the Chamber of Commerce office: Ann Engel with McPherson Main Street, and Debbie Hawkinson, Michael McGowan, and Shirley Mackey with the McPherson Chamber. Shirley and I both stay very busy in our jobs, but it's been a real blessing to have Shirley a few steps away to get me through the day. We've been married 45 years and Shirley and I are doing a "retirement duet." I could not have done my job without Shirley's support all these years. Thanks also to my kids, Ryan and Lacey, and their spouses, Allison and Jeff for their encouragement.

The number one question I am asked is, "Are you staying here?" The answer is yes. Shirley and I love McPherson and we now have more time to enjoy books, (maybe I'll finish writing one of the books I started last century), travel, the grandkids, and each other. So saying "goodbye" or "farewell" aren't exactly accurate. We'll be around. Live United. Amen.

From Our Family ...To Yours

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