

VOLUME 14 ISSUE 2 JUNE 2026

GRKCOW **BUSINESS**

KC CHAMBER DIGITAL MAGAZINE



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Café Corazón

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2026's Outstanding Small Businesses

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Café Corazón

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On the cover: Dulcinea Herrera, CEO of Café Corazón, the KC Chamber's Small Business of the Year. Photo by Roger Ridpath, Ridpath Creative Partners.

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PRESIDENT & CEO'S POINT OF VIEW

Every year, the KC Chamber's Small Business Celebration reminds us of something powerful: small businesses are not small in impact.

They are the heartbeat of Kansas City's neighborhoods and communities. They create jobs, spark innovation, mentor future leaders, support causes they care about, and build the relationships that make this region special. They are risk-takers and problem-solvers, often balancing the hopes of families, employees, and entire communities alongside the realities of running a business.

This year's Awards Luncheon was especially inspiring as we celebrated our 2026 Top 10 Small Businesses and recognized an extraordinary group of award recipients. From Café Corazón being named the Mr. K Small Business of the Year to honoring companies like encompas, MADE MOBB, Gray Ram Tactical, Fifth & Emery, and IT-RA ICONS, the stories shared reflected the very best of Kansas City entrepreneurship.

What stood out most was not simply the success of these businesses but the purpose behind them and the diversity of leaders shaping our region's future. Among this year's Top 10 and award recipients, eight are women-owned businesses, six are diverse-owned, and four are immigrant-owned companies. Together, they reflect the welcoming nature of Kansas City's business community and the vibrant ecosystem we continue to build – one that fosters opportunity, innovation, and belonging.

These companies are building more than strong businesses. They are creating cultures of belonging, investing in employees, mentoring entrepreneurs, supporting artists and nonprofits, and strengthening Kansas City through their work. They represent the entrepreneurial spirit Ewing Kauffman believed could transform communities. That is why this celebration resonates so deeply year

after year: it reminds us that business leadership and community leadership are inseparable.

This year also carries a unique sense of momentum as Kansas City welcomes the world for FIFA World Cup 26™. Hundreds of thousands of visitors are now experiencing our region, many for the first time. Long after the matches end, what guests will remember most are the businesses, people, and experiences that define Kansas City's culture and hospitality.

That is why the KC Chamber has worked intentionally to help small businesses across the region benefit from this unprecedented opportunity. Through KC Game Plan and regional partnerships, businesses have gained access to training in digital marketing, hospitality, cybersecurity, cultural preparedness, AI tools, and operational readiness. We have also created opportunities for businesses to strengthen their visibility and share their stories with new audiences from around the globe.

Because this moment should not belong only to large corporations or downtown destinations. It should belong to the coffee shops, creative studios, restaurants, retailers, contractors, service providers, and entrepreneurs in every corner of our region. The Small Business Celebration reflects exactly who we want Kansas City to be as the world arrives: welcoming, entrepreneurial, collaborative, creative, and deeply connected to community.

To every entrepreneur we celebrated this year, thank you. Your work inspires all of us. And to the many small businesses still building, growing, and dreaming across our region, know this: Kansas City is stronger because of you, and your story matters to the future we are creating together. 📌

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BREWING COMMUNITY:

CAFÉ CORAZÓN

NAMED 2026 MR. K
SMALL BUSINESS OF THE YEAR

What began as a vision for Kansas City's first Latin and Indigenous coffee shop has grown into one of the region's most inspiring small business success stories.

Café Corazón has been named the 2026 Mr. K Small Business of the Year, the highest honor awarded through the KC Chamber's Small Business Celebration. Named for entrepreneur and philanthropist Ewing Kauffman, the award recognizes businesses demonstrating growth, strong employee relations, community impact, and inclusive leadership.

For the Herrera family, the recognition reflects years of building a company rooted in culture, creativity, and belonging.

"We've always wanted Café Corazón to feel like home for people," said Curtis Herrera. "To receive an award connected to Mr. Kauffman's legacy and entrepreneurship in Kansas City is incredibly humbling. It tells us that leading with community and authenticity matters."

Since opening, Café Corazón has evolved into a gathering space where coffee, art, music, and entrepreneurship intersect. Through events, partnerships, artist collaborations, and mentorship opportunities, the business has created spaces where people feel welcomed and connected.

Its atmosphere blends heritage and hospitality through locally sourced artwork, cultural programming, multilingual service, and community-centered events designed to celebrate identity and connection.

"Our culture is everything," said Miel Herrera. "We wanted to create a business where people could bring their full selves through the door and feel celebrated. Seeing the community embrace that vision has been the most rewarding part of this journey."

The company's multilingual staff speaks English, Spanish, Portuguese, and American Sign Language, helping customers and employees from diverse backgrounds feel welcome. Café Corazón also invests in Kansas City through nonprofit partnerships, free community events, support for local creatives, and opportunities for emerging entrepreneurs and artists.

That commitment to inclusion has helped Café Corazón stand apart within Kansas City's entrepreneurial landscape, becoming a hub for collaboration and cultural celebration.

The company's impact was previously recognized through the KC Chamber's Spirit of Inclusion Award, while this year's Mr. K honor high-



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lights Café Corazón's broader entrepreneurial success and regional influence. Judges cited the company's growth, distinctive brand identity, authenticity, innovation, and commitment to strengthening community through business leadership.

For the Herrera family, entrepreneurship has always been about creating opportunities for others and reflecting the richness and diversity of Kansas City.

"We've never viewed this as just serving coffee," said Dulcinea Herrera. "It's about

creating connection, opening doors, and building something that reflects the beauty and diversity of Kansas City. This recognition belongs to our entire community."

As Kansas City welcomes the world during FIFA World Cup 26™, businesses like Café Corazón help tell the story of a creative, entrepreneurial, and culturally connected city. For the KC Chamber, honoring Café Corazón as the 2026 Mr. K Small Business of the Year reflects the enduring power of small businesses to shape the region's economy and future.



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2026 TOP 10 SMALL BUSINESS



SHERRY LUMPKINS, BLUE SYMPHONY

➤ BLUE SYMPHONY: BUILDING IMPACT THROUGH TECHNOLOGY, MARKETING & PURPOSE

Blue Symphony has earned a reputation in Kansas City as a company that helps organizations turn ideas into action. As a returning Top 10 Small Business, the firm stands out for its ability to integrate technology, marketing, communications, and consulting into a single, cohesive approach that helps clients bring their vision to life.

Founded in 2002 by Sherry Lumpkins as an independent information technology consultancy, Blue Symphony began with a focus on delivering reliable technology solutions. As the company grew, Lumpkins recognized that clients often needed more than technical expertise. They also needed help communicating their mission, telling their story, and connecting with the audiences they hoped to reach. That realization shaped the company's evolution into the full-service agency it is today.

"We've always believed trust is the foundation of every successful partnership," said Lumpkins. "Technology changes constantly, but people still want honesty, responsiveness, and a team that genuinely cares about helping them succeed."

Today, Blue Symphony serves organizations across industries, including healthcare, education, real estate, local government, tourism, and nonprofit services. By bringing together expertise in technology, branding, marketing, communications, and strategic consulting, the company helps clients solve complex challenges with solutions that are both technically sound and easy to understand.

That ability to connect the dots has fueled Blue Symphony's growth while fostering long-term client relationships built on collaboration and trust. Rather than operating in silos, the company approaches each engagement holistically, ensuring technology, messaging, and business goals work together.

Blue Symphony's success is also rooted in its culture. Lumpkins has intentionally built a workplace that values flexibility, continuous learning, and professional development. "We want people to feel empowered here," Lumpkins said. "When employees feel supported and valued, they bring their best ideas and energy to the work. That benefits our clients, our culture, and the community around us."

As a Black-owned and woman-owned business operating in industries where representation remains limited, Blue Symphony has also become an example of what leadership and innovation can look like. The company actively invests in mentoring emerging talent and creating opportunities for future innovators from diverse backgrounds.

"Kansas City has supported our growth in so many ways," Lumpkins shared. "We feel a responsibility to give back and help create opportunities for other businesses and entrepreneurs."



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2026 TOP 10 SMALL BUSINESS



MICHELE MARKHAM, EAG ADVERTISING & MARKETING

➔ EAG ADVERTISING & MARKETING: BUILDING BRANDS, BUILDING TRUST

Creativity, strategy, and storytelling have fueled the success of EAG Advertising & Marketing as the company continues to make its mark within Kansas City's business community. Recognized as one of the KC Chamber's 2026 Top 10 Small Businesses, EAG has built a reputation for helping organizations communicate with clarity and authenticity.

Founded in 2003 by Michele Markham, EAG was created to provide growth-minded businesses with strategic marketing leadership and hands-on execution under one accountable team. Over the last two decades, the agency has evolved alongside the marketing industry while remaining grounded in long-term relationships and trust.

Today, EAG works with businesses, nonprofits, and organizations across Kansas City and beyond, offering services including branding, digital strategy, communications, research, advertising, and performance marketing. Its approach combines senior-level strategy with execution designed to support measurable business outcomes.

"At the end of the day, we're in the business of relationships and trust," said Markham. "Great marketing starts with understanding people and telling stories that genuinely resonate."

That people-first philosophy extends into the company's internal culture. EAG has built a workplace centered on collaboration, transparency, accountability, and professional growth. The agency's employee and client tenure are both more than double the industry average, reflecting a culture focused on stability, partnership, and investment in people.

The company has also embraced innovation thoughtfully as artificial intelligence and emerging technologies reshape the marketing landscape. Rather than replacing creativity or human insight, EAG uses new tools to strengthen strategy and efficiency while preserving the relationships at the center of its work.

"We've always believed marketing should support real business goals," Markham said. "Technology changes. Platforms evolve. But strong relationships, thoughtful strategy, and accountability will always matter."

Beyond business operations, EAG remains deeply engaged in Kansas City through nonprofit partnerships, board service, mentorship, and pro bono work. In 2025 alone, the agency supported more than two dozen nonprofit organizations through marketing services, volunteerism, and community engagement efforts.

"Kansas City has an incredibly collaborative business community," Markham shared. "There's a real willingness here to support one another, and that has been an important part of our journey."

EAG Advertising & Marketing continues to reflect the collaborative spirit, creativity, and entrepreneurial leadership that define Kansas City's small business community.



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2026 TOP 10 SMALL BUSINESS



ENCOMPAS, JULIE SAYERS, AMY WRIGHT,
MELISSA MORLEY, AND SUSAN KIDD

ENCOMPAS: DESIGNING A LASTING IMPACT ON KANSAS CITY

For nearly two decades, encompass has helped shape the spaces where Kansas Citians work, learn, collaborate, and serve their communities. Named both a 2026 Top 10 Small Business and the recipient of the Legacy of Kansas City Award, the women-owned company has built a reputation for excellence through design expertise, project management, and an unwavering commitment to relationships.

Founded in 2006 through the merger of two contract furniture dealerships, encompass was built on a simple idea: clients deserve more than just a furniture vendor. They deserve a trusted partner who understands design, construction, and the complexities of creating spaces that support people and organizations.

Today, encompass serves clients nationwide while maintaining its headquarters in downtown Kansas City. The company specializes in workplace, higher education, and government environments, providing design consultation, project planning, procurement, installation, and ongoing support. Its client roster includes many of the region's most recognizable organizations, nonprofits, and community-serving institutions.

In 2023, leadership transitioned to four owners and principals: Melissa Morley, Julie Sayers, Amy Wright, and Susan Kidd. Under their stewardship, encompass has continued to grow while remaining true to the values that have guided the company since its founding. In 2025, the company achieved the highest sales volume in its history.

"We've always believed our work is about much more than furniture," said Melissa Morley, owner, president, and principal of encompass. "Being recognized with the Legacy of Kansas City Award is especially meaningful because it reflects the impact our team has had on this region over the last 20 years."

In celebration of its 20th anniversary, the company launched a "20 for 20" initiative focused on completing more than 20 service projects throughout the year.

The company's culture is equally intentional. Through a collaborative work environment, professional development opportunities, and employee-centered leadership, encompass has created a workplace where people are empowered to grow and contribute.

"Our success has always come back to relationships," said Julie Sayers, owner and principal. "We are fortunate to work alongside incredible clients, design partners, contractors, and community organizations."

The company continues to invest in its people, clients, and community. The Legacy of Kansas City Award recognizes not only what the company has accomplished, but also the lasting influence it continues to have on the places and people that make Kansas City thrive.



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2026 TOP 10 SMALL BUSINESS



CHRIS AND EMILY FREEMAN, KANSAS CITY CATERING

➔ KANSAS CITY CATERING: SERVING MORE THAN MEALS

For Kansas City Catering, food has always been about more than meals. It is about bringing people together, creating memorable experiences, and celebrating life's meaningful moments.

Recognized as a 2026 Top 10 Small Business, Kansas City Catering has built a reputation for quality, hospitality, and exceptional service. The company has become a trusted partner for events across the region, serving clients with professionalism and attention to detail.

Founded in 1983 by Harold "Brownie" Simpson, Kansas City Catering began with one van and a vision of delivering outstanding culinary experiences. More than four decades later, the family-owned business continues to thrive under the leadership of Emily and Chris Freeman alongside a dedicated team of culinary and event professionals.

"Hospitality is really about making people feel cared for," said Emily Freeman, majority owner of Kansas City Catering. "We want every client and every guest to feel welcomed, valued, and confident that we'll deliver an outstanding experience."

The company's success has been built on consistency, adaptability, and strong relationships. Whether serving corporate events, nonprofit galas, weddings, conventions, or community celebrations, Kansas City Catering continues to grow by prioritizing service. The company serves groups ranging from 25 to 6,000 guests and offers everything from boxed lunches and buffets to plated meals and interactive stations.

That adaptability proved especially important during the COVID-19 pandemic. As the hospitality industry faced widespread shutdowns, Kansas

City Catering quickly redesigned menus into individually packaged meals, adjusted staffing models, and found creative ways to continue serving clients safely. The company emerged stronger while maintaining its commitment to quality and customer care.

Kansas City Catering also emphasizes teamwork and employee support, creating an environment where staff members feel respected and invested in the company's success. Many employees who began in seasonal or part-time roles have built careers with the organization.

Beyond business operations, the company remains deeply engaged in the community through charitable giving, nonprofit partnerships, and employee-led service initiatives. Kansas City Catering donates leftover food to City Union Mission and regularly supports local nonprofits throughout the region.

"Kansas City is a community that values connection," Freeman shared. "We're proud to play a role in bringing people together and helping create experiences they'll remember."

For more than 40 years, Kansas City Catering has helped mark some of the region's most important moments. Its continued growth reflects the hospitality, resilience, and community spirit that define Kansas City's small business community.



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2026 TOP 10 SMALL BUSINESS



MADE MOBB, JESSE PHOUANGPHET, MARK LAUNIU
AND VU RADLEY

MADE MOBB: BUILDING COMMUNITY THROUGH CULTURE, CREATIVITY & INCLUSION

What began as a grassroots streetwear brand has evolved into something much larger than apparel. Named both a 2026 Top 10 Small Business and recipient of the Spirit of Inclusion Award, MADE MOBB has spent more than a decade building a business that celebrates Kansas City while creating opportunities for the people and communities that make the region unique.

Founded in 2012 by Jesse Phouangphet, Vu Radley, and Mark Launiu, MADE MOBB was built on collaboration, creativity, and an unwavering commitment to community. Today, the company is a multi-million-dollar business with a loyal following and a growing influence that extends well beyond retail.

“From the beginning, our goal was never just to sell clothing,” said Jesse Phouangphet, co-owner. “We wanted to create something that represented Kansas City and brought people together.”

That philosophy has led to collaborations with organizations and brands ranging from the Kansas City Chiefs, KC Current, and Kansas City Zoo & Aquarium to Café Cà Phê, and Operation Breakthrough. Through these partnerships, MADE MOBB has become a cultural storyteller, creating products and experiences that foster civic pride while amplifying diverse voices.

The company’s impact extends far beyond its storefront. MADE MOBB regularly hosts First Friday events and community activations that provide more than 30 local vendors, artists, and small businesses with opportunities to showcase their work, build visibility, and generate revenue. The company also invests heavily in

entrepreneurship education, mentoring young creatives and aspiring business owners through workshops, panels, and hands-on learning experiences focused on branding, product development, marketing, and business ownership.

“Community has always been our operating model,” said co-owner Vu Radley. “We were built through the support of Kansas City, and we feel a responsibility to create pathways for others. If we can open a door, share knowledge, or provide a platform for someone else to succeed, that’s a win for all of us.”

MADE MOBB has cultivated a mentorship-driven culture where employees are encouraged to lead projects, develop new skills, and contribute creatively regardless of title or tenure. The company prioritizes personal growth, mental wellness, and open communication, creating an environment where individuals feel valued and empowered.

As MADE MOBB continues to grow, its mission remains unchanged: use creativity, culture, and collaboration to strengthen Kansas City. The Spirit of Inclusion Award recognizes not only the company’s business success but also its lasting commitment to creating opportunities, celebrating diverse voices, and building a stronger community for everyone.



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2026 TOP 10 SMALL BUSINESS



ANDREW BRISTOW, PANTHEON MOVING

➤ PANTHEON MOVING: MOVING MORE THAN POSSESSIONS

Pantheon Moving has built its business around one simple idea: moving people's lives requires more than logistics. It requires trust, care, and reliability.

As one of the 2026 Top 10 Small Businesses, Pantheon Moving has earned recognition for its customer-first approach, operational excellence, and rapid growth within a highly competitive industry.

From residential moves to commercial relocations, the company has become known for professionalism, responsiveness, and a commitment to reducing stress during major life transitions. Pantheon Moving also specializes in "white-glove" delivery services and the transport of high-value specialty items, including pianos, safes, hot tubs, and fitness equipment, requiring a high level of technical skill and customer trust.

"Moving can be one of the most stressful experiences people go through," said Andrew Bristow, owner of Pantheon Moving. "Our goal is to bring professionalism, empathy, and peace of mind to every customer interaction."

Founded in 2022, the company has experienced rapid growth by combining strategic investment with a relationship-driven approach to service. Pantheon Moving has intentionally reinvested profits into marketing, brand visibility, and customer acquisition to position itself as a premier provider in both residential moving and specialty last-mile delivery throughout the Kansas City region.

Pantheon Moving's success has also been driven by intentional culture-building and investment in employees. Leadership prioritizes training, accountability, and creating a team-oriented environment where employees feel supported and empowered to succeed. The company offers flexible scheduling, mentorship, generous sick leave, and retirement matching benefits uncommon within the industry.

The company has remained active in the community through charitable initiatives, partnerships, and efforts to support families and organizations throughout the region. Pantheon Moving regularly partners with local shelters and nonprofits to assist families in crisis through donated moving services and furniture transportation.

"We believe strong businesses should contribute to strong communities," Bristow said. "Kansas City has given us tremendous opportunities, and we're committed to giving back whenever we can."

As the region continues to grow and evolve, Pantheon Moving represents the entrepreneurial determination, resilience, and customer-centered leadership that define Kansas City's small business community.



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2026 TOP 10 SMALL BUSINESS



REDA IBRAHIM, RK CONTRACTORS

RK CONTRACTORS: CONSTRUCTING SUCCESS THROUGH SERVICE

RK Contractors has built a strong reputation in Kansas City through craftsmanship, reliability, and a commitment to doing business the right way. Named one of the 2026 Top 10 Small Businesses, the company has grown through technical expertise, relationship-building, and a strong focus on quality service.

Founded in 2018 by Reda Ibrahim, RK Contractors is a certified MBE, DBE, and SLBE general contractor focused on community-centered construction throughout Kansas City. The company specializes in residential and commercial roofing, restoration, and renovation projects while intentionally creating opportunities for immigrants, refugees, and second-chance workers within the construction industry.

The construction industry demands adaptability, precision, and trust, and RK Contractors has consistently demonstrated all three. Through commercial projects and client partnerships across the region, the company has become known for delivering high-quality work while maintaining strong relationships with clients and partners.

“Our reputation means everything to us,” said Reda Ibrahim, founder and CEO of RK Contractors. “We’ve built this company by focusing on integrity, communication, and following through on our commitments.”

RK Contractors also stands out for its people-centered approach to workforce development. The company has intentionally created pathways for employees from underrepresented backgrounds to gain technical skills, mentorship, and leadership opportunities. From on-

boarding forward, RK Contractors integrates hands-on trade training, financial literacy education, and individualized support to help employees build long-term stability professionally and personally.

Since 2023, the company has more than doubled its workforce while maintaining a strong commitment to immigrant, refugee, and second-chance employment.

Beyond its construction work, RK Contractors remains deeply connected to the Kansas City community through nonprofit partnerships, reduced-cost community projects, and civic engagement. The company has completed mission-driven projects for organizations including Mattie Rhodes Community Center, Guadalupe Center, Reconciliation Services, and Habitat for Humanity partners throughout the region.

“Kansas City is built by people who care deeply about this community,” Ibrahim shared. “We’re proud to contribute to the region’s growth and future through the work we do every day.”

As Kansas City continues to evolve, RK Contractors stands as a strong example of entrepreneurial leadership, resilience, and long-term commitment to excellence – not only in the projects they build, but in the people and neighborhoods they help strengthen.



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2026 TOP 10 SMALL BUSINESS



JENNY MUNTZEL, SHE HAULED IT

➤ SHE HAULED IT: CHANGING THE FACE OF WASTE & RECYCLING

She Hauled It is redefining expectations within the transportation and logistics industry while building a business rooted in resilience, determination, and service.

Recognized as one of our 2026 Top 10 Small Businesses, the company has distinguished itself through operational excellence, entrepreneurial grit, and a commitment to breaking barriers within a traditionally male-dominated field.

Founded in 2022 by Jenny Muntzel, She Hauled It was created to challenge outdated industry norms and provide a more transparent, customer-focused approach to waste and recycling services. After spending 16 years working within the industry, Muntzel saw firsthand the inefficiencies and lack of accountability that frustrated customers and limited meaningful sustainability efforts.

From its beginning, She Hauled It has focused on delivering dependable service while building a culture centered on accountability, professionalism, and opportunity.

“We’ve worked hard to show that leadership and success come in many forms,” said Jenny Muntzel, owner of She Hauled It. “Our goal has always been to build a business that creates opportunities while delivering outstanding service.”

The company’s growth reflects both strong operational strategy and a willingness to innovate and adapt in a rapidly evolving industry. Leadership has remained focused on building lasting customer relationships while investing in employees and organizational culture. Since launching, nearly all of the company’s new

business has come through referrals and word-of-mouth, a reflection of the trust it has built throughout the region.

She Hauled It also prioritizes workplace flexibility and employee support. Every member of the company’s team is a parent, and the organization intentionally operates with a culture built around trust, family balance, and mutual respect. Employees are encouraged to prioritize both professional success and personal wellbeing without rigid policies or traditional workplace limitations.

Beyond business operations, She Hauled It remains committed to supporting the broader community through mentorship, advocacy, and philanthropy. Over the past two years, the company has donated more than \$40,000 to local schools, nonprofits, and organizations supporting children and families throughout Kansas City.

“Representation matters,” Muntzel shared. “If our story helps inspire someone else to pursue entrepreneurship or enter this industry, that’s something we’re incredibly proud of.”

As Kansas City continues to strengthen its entrepreneurial ecosystem, She Hauled It represents the bold leadership, innovation, and determination that define the region’s small business community.



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2026 TOP 10 SMALL BUSINESS



SEAN AND AMY SLATTERY,
SLATTERY DESIGN + ARCHITECTURE

SLATTERY DESIGN + ARCHITECTURE: DESIGNING SPACES, STRENGTHENING COMMUNITIES

SLATTERY Design + Architecture has helped shape spaces throughout Kansas City through thoughtful design, creativity, and a deep understanding of how environments influence people and communities. Named a 2026 Top 10 Small Business, the firm is recognized for combining architectural excellence with a collaborative, client-centered approach.

Founded in 2015 by Amy and Sean Slattery, the vision-driven architecture and interior design practice was built on the belief that design excellence and client service should never be separate priorities. Instead, the firm blends creativity, stewardship, and advocacy into every project it undertakes.

The company's projects balance functionality, aesthetics, and long-term impact while contributing to the evolving identity of the Kansas City region. Its portfolio includes community-centered and adaptive reuse projects such as the Historic Luzier Restoration, Kansas City PBS renovations, Ronald McDonald House, The Children's Place, and the Northeast Community Center.

"Great design is ultimately about people," said Amy Slattery, co-owner and principal of SLATTERY Design + Architecture. "We want to create spaces that inspire connection, support communities, and improve the way people experience their environments."

The firm's growth has been fueled by strong relationships, creative problem-solving, and a commitment to excellence across every client interaction. Since 2023, SLATTERY has grown from eight employees to 12 while increasing

revenue and remaining focused on sustainable, intentional expansion.

Internally, leadership prioritizes mentorship, professional development, and a culture where creativity and collaboration thrive. The company refers to its learning-focused environment as a "Practice Academy," encouraging employees to grow across design, technical excellence, project management, and leadership.

SLATTERY also remains deeply engaged in the community through civic leadership, nonprofit partnerships, and advocacy within the architecture and design profession. The firm has partnered with more than 40 nonprofit organizations and earned more than 75 local, regional, national, and international design awards. Leadership is actively involved in organizations, including AIA Kansas City, CREW, NOMA, Urban Land Institute, and Women in Design Kansas City.

"Kansas City is a place filled with creativity and momentum," said Sean Slattery, co-owner and principal. "We're honored to help contribute to the region's growth and the spaces where people live, work, and connect."

As Kansas City continues to evolve, SLATTERY Design + Architecture represents the creativity, collaboration, and community-centered leadership shaping the region's future.



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BEYOND THE TOP 10: MEET THE 2026 SPECIALTY AWARD WINNERS

Fifth & Emery Frozen Yogurt & Chocolate | 2026 Emerging Small Business of the Year

In just a short time, Fifth & Emery Frozen Yogurt & Chocolate has become a standout example of how creativity, customer experience, and entrepreneurial passion can quickly build momentum in Kansas City's small business community.

Named the KC Chamber's 2026 Emerging Small Business of the Year, Fifth & Emery has distinguished itself through thoughtful branding, strong customer loyalty, and an energetic approach to growth. The company has created a welcoming destination centered on handcrafted treats, community connection, and memorable experiences for customers of all ages.

The Emerging Small Business Award recognizes companies demonstrating exceptional promise, innovation, and early-stage success, and Fifth & Emery exemplifies all three. Through strategic growth, operational excellence, and a clear vision for the future, the company continues to expand its impact while remaining rooted in customer relationships and local engagement.



BEYOND THE TOP 10: MEET THE 2026 SPECIALTY AWARD WINNERS

encompas | 2026 Legacy of Kansas City Award Recipient

For two decades, encompas has demonstrated what it means to build a business that grows alongside its community. Named the KC Chamber's 2026 Legacy of Kansas City Award recipient, the women-owned company is recognized for its lasting impact on the region through leadership, innovation, and service.

The Legacy of Kansas City Award honors a business whose influence extends beyond its industry, and encompas exemplifies that distinction. Since 2006, the company has helped shape the spaces where Kansas Citians work, learn, collaborate, and serve their communities, while building a culture rooted in relationships, integrity, and excellence.

Beyond its business success, encompas remains deeply committed to Kansas City through mentorship, philanthropy, community partnerships, and civic engagement. Its people-first approach has strengthened both the organizations it serves and the region it calls home. This recognition celebrates a legacy built not only through exceptional work but through an enduring commitment to helping Kansas City thrive.



MADE MOBB | 2026 Spirit of Inclusion Small Business Award Recipient

MADE MOBB has built more than a brand – it has built a movement centered on culture, representation, and community pride. As the KC Chamber's 2026 Spirit of Inclusion Small Business Award recipient, MADE MOBB has become a powerful voice in Kansas City through fashion, design, and creative entrepreneurship that intentionally amplifies diverse perspectives and authentic storytelling.

The company consistently creates opportunities for connection and collaboration through apparel, partnerships, events, and community-driven initiatives. Its work reflects both the culture of Kansas City and the importance of creating spaces where people feel seen and represented.

The Spirit of Inclusion Award recognizes businesses that foster belonging, equity, and opportunity within their workplace and community. MADE MOBB embodies those values through its mission, leadership, and ongoing investment in local artists, entrepreneurs, nonprofits, and creative initiatives.

Beyond retail, MADE MOBB continues to shape conversations around culture and inclusion while demonstrating how small businesses can create lasting social and community impact alongside entrepreneurial success.



Gray Ram Tactical, LLC | 2026 Paul Weida International Small Business of the Year

Gray Ram Tactical, LLC has shown how Kansas City innovation can compete successfully on a global stage. Named the KC Chamber's 2026 Paul Weida International Small Business of the Year, the company has expanded its international presence through strategic growth, operational excellence, and a commitment to customer service.

The Weida International Small Business Award recognizes companies achieving success in global business development and trade. Gray Ram Tactical illustrates that achievement through specialized expertise, innovative solutions, and the ability to build strong partnerships in highly competitive markets.

Its continued growth reflects both entrepreneurial vision and the increasing influence of Kansas City-area businesses within the global economy. Even while expanding internationally, the company has remained agile, mission-focused, and committed to delivering high-quality solutions.

Gray Ram Tactical's success highlights the important role small businesses play in driving international commerce and regional economic growth. As Kansas City strengthens its global connections, the company stands as a powerful example of local entrepreneurship succeeding worldwide.



IT-RA ICONS | 2026 Luminary Arts & Creative Small Business Award Recipient

Creativity is central to Kansas City's identity, and IT-RA ICONS has helped bring that spirit to life across the region. Recipient of the KC Chamber's 2026 Luminary Arts & Creative Small Business Award, IT-RA ICONS is the collaborative studio of muralists Isaac Tapia and Rodrigo "Rico" Alvarez. Since 2017, the duo has created more than 60 large-scale murals throughout Kansas City, transforming public spaces with vibrant artwork rooted in culture, identity, and community pride.

Their murals appear across the metro, including installations at the new Kansas City International Airport, and often reflect themes of belonging, resilience, and opportunity. Both artists immigrated to the United States as children, bringing personal perspective and authenticity to their work.

IT-RA ICONS has partnered with organizations including Guadalupe Centers, Mattie Rhodes Center, Latinx Education Collaborative, and InterUrban ArtHouse. Through bold storytelling and public art, they continue to strengthen community connections and showcase the creativity and diversity that define Kansas City.



2026 VISIONARY PARTNERS

 **Alliant**

KCATA

multistudio

 **BioNexus | KC**



 **Netsmart**


BlueScope


K&STATE
Kansas State University

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 **ECCO**
select


KISSICK
CONSTRUCTION

Starlight


EY
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working world

 **KVC**
Health Systems

 **sunlighten™**
empowering wellness™


FAIRWAVE
SPECIALTY COFFEE COLLECTIVE


LAMP
RYNEARSON


millergroup

FOULSTON
ATTORNEYS AT LAW

 **MarksNelson**
Move Forward


TREKK
DESIGN GROUP, LLC


IMA

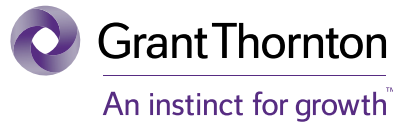

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the **YNCA**

2026 PINNACLE PARTNERS



NEW MEMBERS

Welcome to these members who recently joined the KC Chamber.

ALS Association

Morgan Miller
(816) 485-5799
www.als.org

Astara Studio

Callum Vierthaler
www.astarastudio.com

Bonita Cafe & Co.

Marbhely Gonzalez
(816) 726-2591
www.Bonitacafe.com

Controlled Environment Products

Courtney Sullivan
(816) 648-4334
www.netcep.com

C-Rex Electric

Charles Allen
(816) 730-6957
www.crexelectric.com

Eden Aesthetics & Wellness LLC

Ralph Testerman
(816) 728-9886
www.edenwellnesskc.com

E-Z Lettering Service

Erika Onofre
(949) 400-4485
www.ezlettering.com

Homefield

Sara Noorbakhsh
(913) 320-4404
www.homefieldkc.com

It IS Personal

Holly Hoffman
(407) 340-3300
www.it-IS-Personal.com

JS Transportation

Prataap Bassi
www.jstransk.com

KC Property Connection

Nicholas Stoddard
(816) 582-5365
www.kcpropertyconnection.com

Kendall Bank

Devin Wratchford
(816) 200-8538
www.kendallbank.com

Kind Care Transportation

Abhinav Ala
(818) 648-7186
www.kindcaretransport.com

LEADER Worldwide Chauffeured Services

Elizabeth Sapp
(816) 820-6979
www.leaderlimo.com

Outreach International

Charlotte Belshe-Powell
(816) 768-8631
www.outreach-international.org

Powell CWM, Inc.

Bethany Powell
(816) 642-2438
www.powellcwm.com

Quigg Co LLC

Jon Quigg
(864) 378-4181
www.thequiggs.co

Shed Lifestyles LLC

Jarvis Rhone
www.ukeys.com

Solar Shield Blinds

Monica Hoover
(816) 269-1791
www.kcmoblinds.com

Team Smile

Kaitlin O'Malley
(816) 695-7961
www.teamsmile.org

The Barrymore Senior Living

Quintin Schneider
(660) 853-2202
www.barrymoreseniorliving.com

Town & Country Strategies LLC

Jacqueline Clark

Towner Communications, LLC

Shauna Lea
(913) 780-3166
www.townerkc.com

TrueCuts

Jarrod Drury
(816) 825-6990
www.truecutsfoods.com

Uplift Organization

Ross Dessert
(816) 241-0060
www.uplift.org

Velociti LLC

Joe Craig
(913) 551-0121
www.velociti.com

Vietti Marketing

Cody Davis
(417) 553-9105
www.viettimarketing.com

VMD Corp

Gabe Murphy
(816) 294-1615
www.vmdcorp.com/mci/

2026 FAN FAVORITES

SELECTED AT THE SMALL BUSINESS CELEBRATION CANDIDATES' SHOWCASE

Each year, attendees at the Small Business Celebration Candidates' Showcase can help recognize outstanding businesses through the Fan Favorite competition, sponsored by the Kansas City National Security Campus (KCNSC), managed by Honeywell Federal Manufacturing & Technologies, LLC. Selected by public vote, the 2026 Fan Favorite winners were HMC Performance Coatings and 360PicKC. Their engaging showcase displays, enthusiastic teams, and strong community support helped them stand out among this year's field of exceptional candidates. The Fan Favorite honor highlights the energy, creativity, and customer connections that make Kansas City's small business community so vibrant.



PRESIDENT'S CIRCLE & LEADERSHIP CIRCLE

The following companies recently joined or renewed their commitment to the KC Chamber's Leadership Circle.

Emprise Bank	Knapheide Truck Equipment Center Kansas City	Solar Shield Blinds
Ford Motor Company	Midwest Transplant Network	Terracon
Global Prairie	Monarch Build	U.S. Engineering
Hunt Midwest	Ogletree Deakins Nash Smoak & Stewart, P.C.	United Way of Greater Kansas City, Inc.
JD Bishop Construction	Plexpod	VMD Corp
Kansas City Aviation Department	Purpose Technology Group	

The following companies recently joined or renewed their commitment to the KC Chamber's President's Circle.

Allo Business	Kansas Speedway	NKC Health
BNSF Railway Co.	KidsTLC	TeraCrunch
GOOGLE LLC	Marion and Henry Bloch Family Foundation and The H&R Block Foundation	
JLL		

MILESTONES

The following companies recently celebrated membership milestones.

5 years

C2FO
Cyphr
Messenger Coffee - 47th Street
Messenger Coffee - Jefferson St.
Monarch Build
Parrish & Sons Construction
Senorita Margarita
The Next Paige Agency
Viagio Technologies

10 years

Accenture
AlphaGraphics Kansas City
GeereD Up Films, LLC
Mo Kan 20-20 Vision Inc dba 20/20 Leadership
Reconciliation Services
Sporting Kansas City
Wellner Architects, Inc.

15 years

AREA Real Estate Advisors
Phoenix Family

20 years

CIBC Bank USA
University of Missouri

25 years

emfluence, llc

30 years

Community Blood Center
Martin Pringle - Kansas
ProPrint Digital

35 years

Argus Health Systems, Inc.
BBN Architects
Ewing Marion Kauffman Foundation

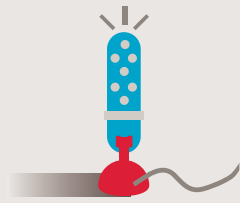
40 years

All Star Awards & Ad Specialties, Inc.

50+ years

Visit KC (53)
Kansas City Chapter, Associated General
Contractors (53)
PGAV Architects (55)
Kansas City Royals Baseball Corporation (58)
Bernstein-Rein (62)
H&R Block, Inc. (66)
Research Medical Center - Brookside Campus (69)
American Royal Association (74)
PricewaterhouseCoopers LLP (74)
Deloitte LLP (75)
Starlight Theatre Association of Kansas City, Inc. (84)
U.S. Engineering (84)
Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Kansas City (84)
Sosland Publishing (86)
KCTV / KSMO (90)
Massman Construction Co. (94)
Federal Reserve Bank of Kansas City (100)
John A. Marshall Company (104)

GOOD NEWS



People

Anthony Durone, president of the **Lyric Opera of Kansas City** Board of Trustees, announced that Deborah Sandler Kemper, the company's General Director and Chief Executive Officer since 2012, will be retiring after 15 years of leadership. Kemper Sandler is the first woman to serve as general director and CEO of the Lyric Opera of Kansas City, founded in 1958, and the third general director in the company's history.

The **Agricultural Business Council of Kansas City** has selected veteran agricultural educators Jason Larison of Holton, Kansas, and Keith Dietzschold of Boonville, Missouri, as recipients of its 2026 Distinguished Service Award.

The Board of Directors of **Harvesters—The Community Food Network** has selected Debbie Espinosa as the organization's new President and CEO.

Espinosa becomes the sixth person to lead Harvesters and will assume her new role officially at the end of August. Espinosa joins Harvesters from FIND Regional Food Bank, a fellow Feeding America network food bank serving California's Greater Palm Springs desert region. There she has served as President and CEO since 2018.

Miscellaneous

Holmes Murphy has announced the launch of Holmes Base, a revolutionary, proprietary platform built on Salesforce Financial Services Cloud, purpose engineered to modernize the way the company serves its Property Casualty clients. With the introduction of Holmes Base, Holmes Murphy becomes one of the first major insurance brokerages in the industry to centralize the full policy lifecycle, marking a significant shift away from the legacy systems that have long dominated the insurance industry.

LIBERTY LEVEL 2026 INVESTORS



GOOD NEWS

Continued...

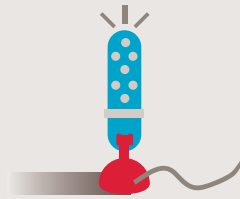
Research College of Nursing, the most tenured nursing teaching institution in the region, and **HCA Midwest Health**, the area's leading healthcare provider, hosted a ribbon cutting ceremony to celebrate the opening of a new facility designed to advance nursing education and clinical training in Kansas City. Located on the campus of Research Medical Center, the new 78,000-square-foot building is the result of a \$36.5 million investment from HCA Healthcare and the facility brings together Research College of Nursing and the HCA Healthcare Center for Clinical Advancement in a single, integrated environment designed to support nurses at every stage of their careers.

Comcast is connecting more than 4,200 new homes and businesses in Adrian, Archie and Butler, Missouri to multi-gigabit, symmetrical Internet. Xfinity brings Internet, mobile, entertainment, and smart home ser-

vices into one seamless solution. These three Missouri cities now join nearly 65 million homes and businesses nationwide with access to a network that fuels innovation, productivity, and everyday connection.

NKC Health earned Silver Milestone Recognition from the Intersocietal Accreditation Commission (IAC) for maintaining the echocardiography accreditation for 25 years, demonstrating a long-term commitment to continuously improving patient outcomes and safety. Every three years, accredited facilities undergo a rigorous reaccreditation assessment, conducted by a panel of medical experts.

Khanect the Dots LLC announced it has been named the winner of a Bronze Stevie® Award in the Women in AI Leadership category in the 24th Annual American Business Awards®. Founder and CEO



BRONZE LEVEL 2026 INVESTORS



GOOD NEWS

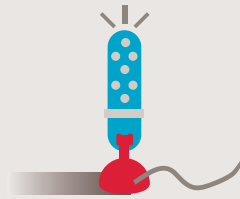
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Maliha Khan was recognized for her leadership in helping businesses and professionals adopt artificial intelligence in practical, human-centered ways. Khan was the only honoree from Missouri recognized in the Women in AI Leadership category this year.

Great Jobs KC is proud to announce the 2026 awarding class of its flagship KC Scholars 11th-Grade Scholarship Program. In its 10th anniversary year, 778 high school juniors across the six-county Kansas City region have been selected to receive scholarships of up to \$50,000 each, representing a staggering total community investment of \$38.9 million. The Mayor of Kansas City officially proclaimed May 5th, 2026 as KC Scholars Day in Kansas City, a testament to the program's decade-long impact on the region's students, families, and workforce.

Leavitt Group announced it has acquired RPS Benefits by Design, an employee benefits agency based in Kansas, which will rebrand as Leavitt Strategic Benefits. RPS Benefits by Design is headquartered in Kansas and serves clients across multiple states, with five offices in four states. With this addition, Leavitt Group expands into a new state and reaches a milestone with a presence in 30 states.

Zhou B Art Center KC invites the community to gather for Placemaking the 2026 Resident Artist Exhibition. On view June 12-August 29, 2026, the exhibition brings together the resident artists of the Zhou B Art Center KC to explore the evolving and deeply personal idea of home. For some, home is rooted in geography and ancestry. For others, it exists in relationships, ritual, memory or language. Placemaking is an exhibition that explores how we carry home within



SILVER LEVEL 2026 INVESTORS



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UNCOMMONLY INDEPENDENT



GOOD NEWS

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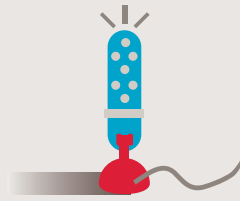
ourselves and how we choose to share it with others.

AdventHealth South Overland Park earned an “A” hospital safety grade for the second consecutive grading round from The Leapfrog Group, an independent national nonprofit watchdog focused on patient safety. Leapfrog assigns an A-F letter grade to general hospitals across the country using evidence-based measures of patient safety focused exclusively on errors, accidents, injuries and infections.

Cleveland University-Kansas City announced that its Annual Conference and Expo will continue under a new name, Cleveland Conferences, beginning in 2026, with the event moving to a new venue. The event will be held Oct. 8-10, 2026, at the Marriott Kansas City Overland Park Hotel in Overland Park, Kansas. Attendees will have the opportunity to explore topics

including pain management, compliance, sports chiropractic, pregnancy, and pediatric and women’s health.

This summer, the **Kansas City Public Library; Mid-Continent Public Library; Johnson County Library**; Kansas City, Kansas Public Library; Lawrence Public Library; Cass County Public Library; North Kansas City Public Library; and Olathe Public Library are running toward the same goal: getting as many people signed up for Summer Reading as possible. This year’s theme is Read, Score, Roar!, tying together the metro-wide soccer festivities and everyone’s perennial favorites, dinosaurs. Each library system has unique dates, reading goals, and prizes. Visit KCSummerReads.org to learn more about each library’s program and to sign up for free.



GOLD LEVEL 2026 INVESTORS



GOOD NEWS

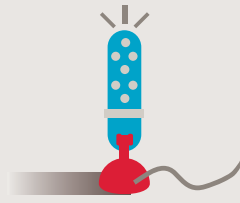
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The **Kansas City Chiefs** are expanding their global entertainment strategy with the debut of “El Offseason,” the club’s first-ever scripted comedy series, created entirely in Spanish and built for a new generation of social-first fans. The nine-episode micro-novela premiered June 12 and rolls out twice weekly across Instagram, TikTok, and Facebook internationally, and on YouTube in the United States.

An initiative of **KC Studio**, the magazine Beyond the Match is being provided to international, national, and regional visitors, as well as residents, free of charge. The magazine includes valuable information on local museum exhibits, a comprehensive calendar of events, top attractions for people to experience, information on First Fridays, regional attractions within a four-hour drive radius and much more. A digital version can be found on [KC Studio’s website](#) here.

The **Linda Hall: Science Library and Arboretum** is pleased to announce its 2026-2027 research fellowships. During the coming academic year, the Linda Hall will support 29 scholars, including both residential and virtual fellows. The 2026-2027 cohort includes researchers based in the United States, Brazil, Colombia, France, Indonesia, Italy, Switzerland, and the United Kingdom. These doctoral students, postdoctoral scholars, and independent researchers will use the Library’s holdings to investigate the history of science, technology, and engineering.

Mid-Continent Public Library’s Square One Small Business Center is accepting applications for another “Shark Tank-style” pitch competition, giving local entrepreneurs the chance to secure funding in support of their unique and innovative business ideas. Six finalists out of the applicants will be selected to make their final pitch at the 2026 Pitch Competition & Small Business Showcase on September 24 .



TITANIUM LEVEL 2026 INVESTORS



PLATINUM LEVEL 2026 INVESTORS



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