

Lee Borck

INNOVATIVE LIVESTOCK SERVICES, GREAT BEND

One of Lee Borck's favorite sayings: "There is a reason the rear-view mirror is so small and the windshield is so big." That gets at the heart of his own penchant for looking over the horizon. It's also what's taken him from feedlot operator in central Kansas to national prominence in the industry.



Borck is president of Innovative Livestock Services, based in Great Bend. Strategic acquisitions have made the company among the Top 15 cattle feeders in America. His views of the industry were formed in the feedlot, but his vision for it took him to the end-point of the sales chain: the meat case. Aligning interests of those who operate between those two points, in his view, would lead to more sales and more profit for producers and retailers alike. Thus was born the Beef Marketing Group, a cooperative that fosters the interests of more than a dozen other large-scale feeders. Borck serves as chairman of its board.

Borck, who earned a degree in agricultural economics from Kansas State in 1970, has returned the favor to his alma mater as donor and advisor, and in 2007 was honored with the university's highest honor, the KSU Medal of Excellence. He's also chairman and founding shareholder of American State Bank in Great Bend.

Charlie Chandler

INTRUST BANK, WICHITA

You won't find any homegrown banks that have been continuously operating longer than what is today Intrust Bank. And at the helm sits the fourth generation of the Chandler family to lead the institution—C.Q. Chandler, the IV. This being Kansas, though, and C.Q. being a native, the Roman numerals aren't trotted out often; he goes by Charlie.

The bank was founded in 1880, less than a decade after the ink had dried on Wichita's articles of incorporation. (Trivia break: Charles Q. Chandler also owned the first automobile sold in Wichita). Built largely on transactions in the signature industry at the time, cattle, the Chandler family built the bank and the community in tandem, helping finance Wichita's manufacturing sector and making it the Air Capital of the World.

Family ties notwithstanding, Charlie began his career not in an executive suite, but in the commercial-lending arm of the bank, back in 1976. Twenty years later, he was elected chairman of the board, president and CEO. Under his leadership today, the bank places a strong emphasis on building relationships in communities it serves, harkening back to his great-grandfather's core operating philosophy: "You do business with people, not companies."



Angela Bates

NICODEMUS HISTORICAL SOCIETY, NICODEMUS

Her former slave parents heard the siren's call to Kansas not long after the Civil War, and Lula Craig was born first-generation free in the Free State. She has moved on into history, but her great-cousin, Angela Bates, keeps alive the pioneering spirit in Nicodemus, the only all-black town in the U.S. west of the Mississippi River.

What makes Nicodemus special for its residents, she says, is that it "speaks volumes to those who dare dream and make that dream a reality—an all black town, a place to call home, a place to govern ourselves, a place of our own," says Bates.

Her parents left Nicodemus in the 1950s, but Bates returned to Kansas, graduated from Emporia State, and left again for a career that took her to the nation's capital and Denver. Then the pull of Nicodemus grabbed her in 1990, and she's been home since. Today, she's executive director of the Nicodemus Historical Society, speaks professionally, conducts tours of the town, sells real estate and teaches part-time, among other activities.

"Home is home and even if you go away for years or half your life, you always come back to home," Bates says.



John Federico

LEADERSHIP KANSAS, TOPEKA

When it comes to the infrastructure of executive leadership in Kansas, John Federico is a walking Rolodex. He heads up the Kansas Chamber of Commerce's annual Leadership Kansas program, he has worked with more than 1,100 movers and shakers, tying him to the social, business and political fabric of communities across the state. Almost every day, he says, "I am afforded the opportunity to interact with the best and brightest of Kansas"—CEOs of Fortune 100 companies, top teachers, U.S. senators and successful small business owners. Those connections have left an impression: "I am awed," he says, "by the leadership found at all levels, in all four corners of this state."

That has helped him define two key qualities of Kansans: Unparalleled work ethic, and a unique affinity for entrepreneurship, twin catalysts for the Kansas economy. "Time after time, businesses relocating to Kansas speak of the tremendous work ethic of the average Kansan as one of the primary reasons for their decision to move to Kansas," Federico says, linking the state's pioneer spirit to the disproportionately high numbers of entrepreneurs it has today.



Dan Lowe

RED DEVELOPMENT, OVERLAND PARK

"I was born into a family of entrepreneurs," says Dan Lowe. "My father, my grandfather my uncle—the adults I was surrounded by as a young man were all very entrepreneurial. ... It was bred into us that we would be the same." Lowe himself put that entrepreneurial influence into practice when he co-founded the commercial realty firm RED Development in 1995.

Since then, his fingerprints have been all over retail centers not just in the Kansas City region, but across the heart of the country. All told, more than 4.6 million square feet of shopping, dining and entertainment space including the development of The Legends at Village West in Wyandotte County. That's a lot of impact from a typically Kansan take on entrepreneurship.

"My brothers and my sister each own and operate their own companies," Lowe says. "It's the same entrepreneurial drive and spirit we grew up watching every day from my Dad, and, frankly, my Mom, who worked just as hard raising us."

"They had a work ethic like no other."



NEXT PAGE >>