

2022 Coolest Thing Made In Kansas – Coolest Innovation Judges

Lafe Bailey | Sr. Vice President | Wenger Extrusion Group



Lafe has served in the senior leadership position of Wenger Manufacturing (Sabetha, KS) for more than 30 years, a company his grandfather founded in 1935. During his career, Lafe had the privilege of directly leading the teams that grew revenues at 7% CAGR, launched dozens of innovations, and made Wenger the preeminent global partner within the industry they serve.

Family business success brings additional challenges, and upon the stockholder vote to sell the company, Lafe became pivotal in the process of finding a suitable steward for the business, employees, and communities where Wenger calls home. At the time of transaction, Wenger employed 500 worldwide, generating \$200 million in revenues. Acquired by Marel (marel.com), the transaction multiple at closing was 14x EV.

Today, Lafe is Senior Vice President of the Wenger Extrusion Group, responsible for planning, business development and acquisitions. Feeling that Sabetha-living is far too cosmopolitan, Lafe and Debra still reside in the country, well outside of Sabetha, where they raise their family on healthy doses of horses, cattle, and the outdoor sports.

Brian Barger | Sr. Manager II, U.S. Sourcing | Walmart



Brian is a Senior Manager of U.S. manufacturing and sourcing and has been with Walmart for more than 32 years. Over his retail career with Walmart, he has held many positions including store manager, food merchandiser, and senior buyer. In his current role, sourcing for U.S. Manufacturing, he is part of the team leading the company's U.S. Manufacturing initiative to source an additional \$350 billion on items made, grown, or assembled in the U.S. by 2031. He currently supports a number of departments including Hardlines, Entertainment, Toys, and Seasonal businesses. Brian has met with hundreds of U.S. suppliers and has been an integral part in helping them get items in stores.

Brian is an experienced retail professional with over 30 years of knowledge in merchandising, operations and U.S. Manufacturing leading teams, stores and markets. He has traveled the world visiting factories, meeting with suppliers, and developing items across the retail landscape. He has a passion for retail and for the customer. He strives to build assortments that meet the needs of customers around the world. In 2014 he was named Buyer of the Year for the Home Division for his work in bringing newness and innovation to the beach towel and seasonal blanket areas.

Brian is a native of Illinois and currently resides in Bentonville, Arkansas with his wife and 4 children.

Cynthia Enright | Partner | iValuation



Cynthia is an operational strategist who helps leaders plan and implement value-creating change.

After more than 16 years of foundational experience in various general management and staff roles in the telecommunications, retail, and health care industries, Cynthia founded iValuation to help clients close the gap that occurs frequently between visions outlined in strategic plans and the realities of managing daily operational priorities.

Cynthia's mix of experience in strategy, business development, operations, and finance, combined with her ability to generate results by aligning organizations around a select number of high-priority and interrelated goals, has made her a valuable advisor and temporary executive. She has worked with leaders and boards of Fortune 100 companies, innovative universities, rapidly-growing small businesses, government agencies and non-profits to increase revenues and funding, identify and capitalize on new investments, assess and realign teams, and develop and launch strategic initiatives involving multiple departments and organizations.

Jeremy Patterson
Dean | WSU College of Innovation & Design
Executive Director | WSU Office of Innovation & New Ventures



Jeremy is Dean for the College of Innovation and Design and Executive Director for the Office of Innovation and New Ventures at Wichita State University.

Additionally, Dr. Patterson is an Endowed Professor in the Department of Human Performance Studies and Director of the Human Performance Laboratory where his team focuses on developing and testing biosensing instruments and assessing human limitations.

He is an expert in vascular physiology, holds several patents in this area, and has helped start more than 40 companies.

Tiffany Stovall | CEO | Kansas Manufacturing Solutions



As CEO of Kansas Manufacturing Solutions (KMS), Tiffany leads a team of trusted advisors in their continued achievement of KMS's mission of creating measurable growth for Kansas manufacturers. Tiffany also works to ensure that KMS is focusing on the evolving needs of the Kansas manufacturing industry with additional concentration on workforce development, cybersecurity, and continuous improvement to enhance domestic and global competitiveness.

Tiffany is a vocal advocate for Kansas manufacturers. She has developed partnership relationships with key local, state, and federal organizations with the goal of ensuring that manufacturers' issues are heard at the level where decisions to support the industry can be made. She believes that Kansas manufacturers have a tremendous opportunity for growth.

Joining the KMS team in 2010 as an energy management project manager, she helped companies drive growth through energy efficiency and sustainability. In her role as VP of Partnership Operations, Tiffany developed and strengthened partnerships with organizations across the state that have a shared interest in helping grow Kansas manufacturing and the ecosystem that supports these companies.

She is currently the Secretary of the Executive Committee of the Wyandotte Economic Development Board, Treasurer of the executive board of the American Small Manufacturers Coalition, an alumna of the Leadership Kansas program, and has been recognized as one of Ingram's Magazine's 50 Kansans You Should Know in 2022.

A proud graduate of the University of Missouri, Tiffany still happily cheers for Kansas Colleges and Universities.

Jennifer Wold | Partner | FORVIS



Jennifer is a member of BKD's National Energy & Natural Resources and Commercial Services Groups providing audit services to mid-size and large privately held businesses.

Her 29 years of audit and accounting experience includes assisting companies with financing alternatives. She also assists with issues related to mergers and acquisitions, including purchase accounting and related valuations, fair value accounting and impairment issues. In addition, Jennifer has experience with forecasting, preparation of financial statements, internal control assessments, operational reviews and review of accounting systems. She routinely meets with management, boards and audit committees to discuss technical accounting issues and the effects of financial accounting decisions.

Jennifer is a member of the American Institute of CPAs and Kansas Society of CPAs. She serves on the Finance Committee of United Methodist Open Door and serves as a board director of EmberHope Youthville.

She is magna cum laude graduate of Wichita State University, Kansas, with a B.B.A. degree in accounting.