



2024

ANNUAL REPORT

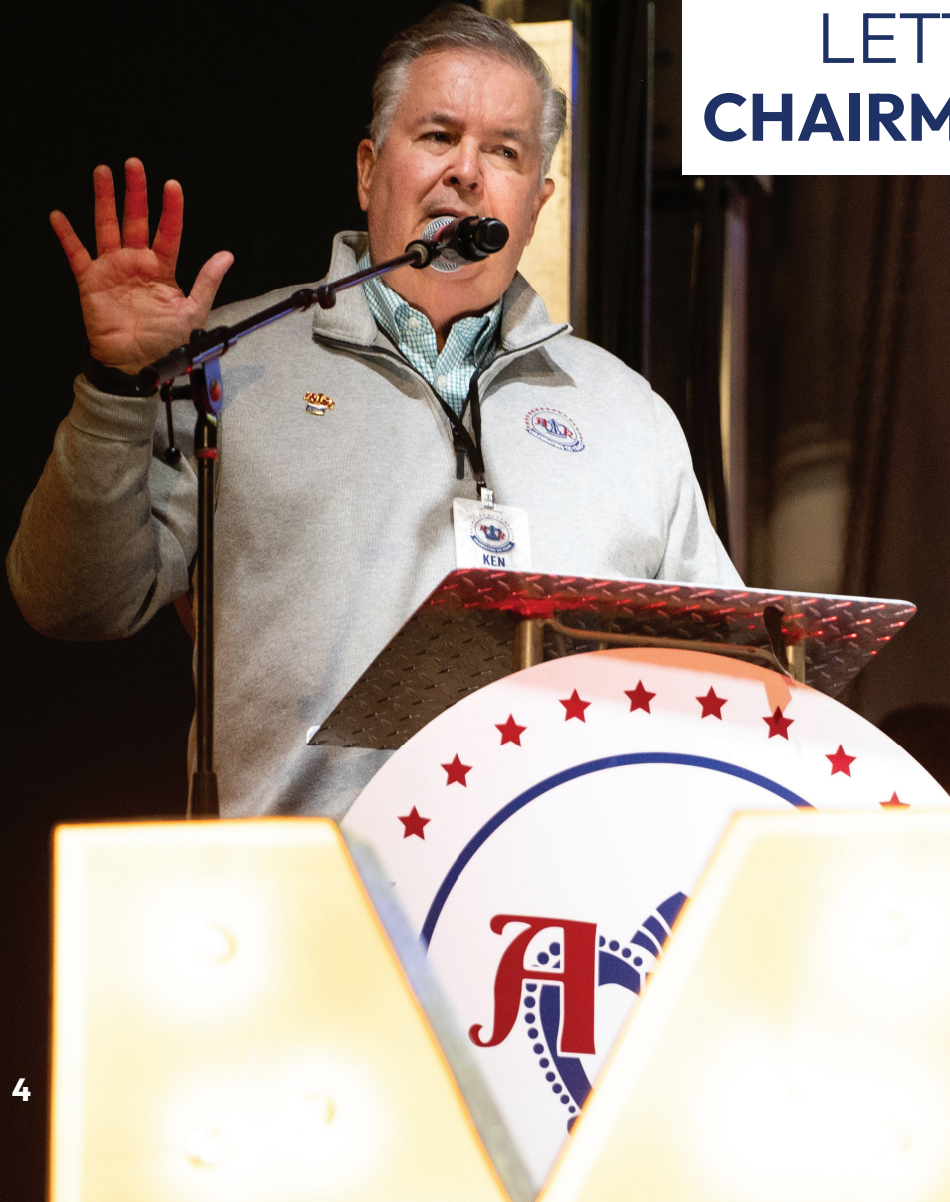




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LETTER FROM THE CHAIRMAN OF THE BOARD



As we reflect on 2024, it's clear this year was one for the history books. Celebrating the American Royal's 125th anniversary was not just about looking back on our legacy - it was also about embracing our future and demonstrating our commitment to agriculture, education, and the Kansas City community.

Since 1899, the American Royal has brought people together to connect, compete, and celebrate the industry that feeds the world. This year, we honored that rich history while introducing innovative experiences to engage a broader audience. Through new events, expanded programming, and meaningful partnerships, we made 2024 a true milestone.

Throughout the year, we paid tribute to the traditions that shaped us. The 75th anniversary of the American Royal ProRodeo was a highlight, as was a record-breaking number of junior market animals during the livestock show.

We also introduced new ways to tell our story: partnering with **Sporting KC** for a special game day showcasing Kansas City BBQ, collaborating with **The Coterie Theatre** to bring Horse Power: Tom Bass' American Story to the stage, and working with the **Kansas City Museum** to highlight the legacy of equestrian icon Loula Long Combs.

Beyond our events, we deepened our connection with the Kansas City community. Limited-edition collaborations with **Hyer Boots, Mike Savage, Sierra Winter, Boulevard Beer, J. Rieger & Co. Whiskey, and Charlie Hustle** gave supporters a chance to take home a piece of Royal history. Our story was featured in podcasts, print media, and news coverage, ensuring our impact extended beyond our events and into the fabric of Kansas City.

Through all these efforts, one thing remained constant: our mission to champion food and agriculture. While 2024 was a year of celebration, it was also a year of momentum, ensuring the American Royal remains a vital institution for future generations.

Thank you to everyone who played a role in making this year so special. Your support, dedication, and passion make the American Royal what it is today and will carry us into the next 125 years.



Ken Wagner
Chairman of the Board

The show officially adopted the name “American Royal” after Iowa State College of Agriculture Dean C.F. Curtiss, drew parallels between this American event and the prestigious British Royal Agricultural Fair.

1902

The Kansas City Stockyards erected a permanent structure to house the American Royal, setting the stage for decades of growth and evolution.

1908

The American Royal hosted the first national congress for vocational agriculture students. In 1928, during the Royal, state delegates adopted a constitution, officially founding the Future Farmers of America (FFA).

1926

A devastating flood occurred in July, damaging the Kansas City Stockyards and the American Royal. Flood water inside the building exceeded 15 feet.

1951

The current American Royal Complex, including the museum and visitors center, opened in the West Bottoms.

1992

The American Royal is celebrating 125 years of leading the Nation for food and agriculture education, events and engagement.

2024

CELEBRATING 125 YEARS

1899

The American Royal began as the National Hereford Show. This event marked the first nationwide show for the exhibition and sale of purebred cattle.

1905

The first official American Royal Horse Show took place, thanks to the assistance of prominent horse trainer Tom Bass.

1925

The first American Royal Parade was held in downtown Kansas City. It honored the city’s cow-town roots and kicked off the start of the American Royal season.

1949

The first American Royal rodeo was held, alongside the dairy show during the spring season. The rodeo moved to the fall season in 1976.

1980

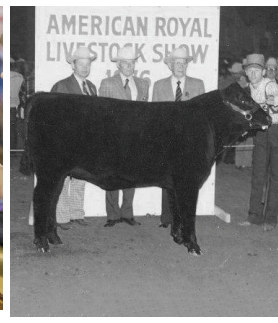
The American Royal introduced its first barbecue contest, which quickly gained popularity. It officially became the “World Series of Barbecue” in 1998.

2016

The American Royal announced its plans to move to a new event center in Wyandotte, Kansas. This state-of-the-art agricultural showcase promises to provide even larger facilities and opportunities for the future.



S OF THE AMERICAN ROYAL





HONORING OUR TRADITION.

As we reflect on the celebration of our 125th Anniversary, we take pride in a year filled with impactful collaborations, memorable experiences, and innovative new events.

CREATIVE CONNECTIONS

To mark the occasion, we partnered with Kansas City institutions to create special memorabilia. Hyer Boots crafted custom cowboy boots, Charlie Hustle designed a commemorative t-shirt, and Boulevard Brewing Company toasted us with a limited-release comeback of their 80-Acre beer. J. Rieger & Co. released limited-edition rye and bourbon whiskey, while BBQ Spot developed a signature barbecue rub. Sierra Winter Jewelry created silver and gold anniversary necklaces, and artist Mike Savage designed a custom piece, each celebrating our legacy.

UNFORGETTABLE CELEBRATIONS

One of the most touching moments was fulfilling six-year-old Lane's Make-A-Wish dream of owning a buckskin horse, which was presented

at the ProRodeo. We also hosted a Red Friday champion celebration at the ProRodeo, honoring the 2023 Super Bowl Champion Kansas City Chiefs coaching staff in the arena alongside world champion bareback rider Jess Pope.

FUTURE-FOCUSED EVENTS

This year, we introduced a dynamic AgSTEM Camp for middle school students, providing hands-on learning experiences connected to agricultural careers. We also expanded our educational programs and clinics, including a farm equipment career development event, livestock judging clinic, ranch riding clinic, hippology contest, and various livestock educational contests. In addition to our educational initiatives, we also launched a spring livestock show, ranch rodeo, and golf tournament.

THANK YOU TO OUR PARTNERS



WE EXIST TO **CHAMPION** **FOOD AND AGRICULTURE.**

Since 1899, we have been dedicated to leading food and agriculture education, events, and engagement as a 501(c)(3) nonprofit. We host nationally competitive livestock shows, the world's largest barbecue competition, equine events, rodeos, and educational outreach, impacting nearly half a million people each year. With the support of our partners, members, and volunteers, we strive to create a future where food and agriculture are celebrated for generations to come.

OUR **PURPOSE**

We exist to champion food and agriculture.

OUR **MISSION**

To be the Nation's leader for food and agriculture education, events and engagement.

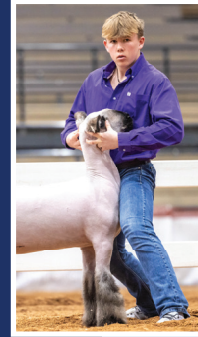
OUR **VISION**

A world where food and agriculture are celebrated, and all generations are committed to its future.

2024 MAJOR MILESTONES



The Junior Premium Livestock Auction shattered records, grossing an astounding **\$881,700** and setting a new benchmark for success.



The Junior Market week of the Livestock Show made history with a **record-breaking 2,684 animals**, the largest showcase to date.



We launched our first-ever Spring Youth Livestock Show, bringing together an impressive **451 exhibitors** from **28 states**.



We **celebrated 125 years** of rich, Kansas City heritage with exciting events and experiences, and dynamic new partnerships.

A NEW HOME FOR FOOD AND AGRICULTURE.

We're undergoing an exciting revitalization in Kansas City, Kansas, with a new state-of-the-art complex taking shape in Wyandotte County, northwest of the Kansas Speedway. This premier destination will span more than one million square feet, purposefully designed for food and agriculture events and education. With the ability to deliver programming year-round, we will be the **Epicenter of Food and Agriculture** and the place to create unique experiences, educate students and consumers, convene the agriculture community, and drive significant economic growth.

Following a barn raising ceremony in November 2023, construction has progressed steadily through 2024. We've built a 390,000 square foot exhibition hall under five barn gables, are preparing to build three arenas, and are at work designing the 80,000 square foot Learning and Engagement Center. Immersive educational displays and interactive exhibits will foster educational experiences for the intentional and unintentional learners. We will also be the anchor for a food and agriculture innovation and entertainment district under private development to our north.





Our five barn gables now stand fully enclosed with roofs and doors. The climate-controlled, flexible space is the equivalent of nearly seven football fields, and will be appropriate for stalling, trade shows, warm-up arenas, and much more.



Featuring 80,000 square feet of dedicated education space, the Learning & Engagement Center will include a multi-purpose 750-seat auditorium, classrooms, demonstration kitchen, viewing decks into arenas, and engaging displays and exhibits.



Connected to the barns by walkways will be three arenas, each having the capability to be as large as 150'x270' with seating ranging from 3,500 to 8,000. The arena set-up is flexible for hosting various events like rodeos, equine shows, concerts or conferences.



Sitting on 127 acres, the first phase of our new complex will allow additional outdoor learning space, including gardens, native landscape and walking paths. To further enhance the guest experience, there will be a permanent outdoor bar, increased space for food trucks as well as space to relax.

INSPIRING THE NEXT GENERATION OF LEADERS.



CAREER-BUILDING INTERNSHIPS

Our internships provide real-world experience for students interested in livestock and media. Livestock show interns gain hands-on experience with the full spectrum of operations that make a national livestock show run smoothly. Media interns immerse themselves in the world of event coverage, including photography, design and social media. Both provide opportunities to develop essential skills, build their portfolios, and foster professional connections in the industry.



UNIQUE SCHOLARSHIP EXPERIENCE

Each year, we select ten undergraduate college students to participate in the Royal Scholars program. Students are provided the opportunity to network with industry professionals, tour leading food and agricultural businesses, and serve as mission-focused advocates at American Royal events. In recognition of their achievements and contribution to our mission, each student in the program is awarded a \$3,000 scholarship.



AGRICULTURAL DISCOVERY

We offer three specialized program days for high school agriculture and animal science students across the Kansas City metro. These immersive experiences are designed to connect students with professionals in the animal sciences industry. Through interactive sessions, demonstrations, and networking opportunities, students leave with a deeper understanding of the skills, education, and passion needed to succeed in agriculture and animal science.



REAL-WORLD EVALUATION

In 2024, we hosted **130 judging teams** across five contests, including 4-H/FFA and collegiate livestock judging, crops judging, and meats judging. These competitions challenge students to evaluate their subject while developing critical thinking, decision-making, and communication skills as they defend their placements. By analyzing real-world scenarios and justifying their choices, participants gain valuable experience that prepares them for their future careers.



GROWTH THROUGH COMPETITION

We expanded our competitive educational events, which give participants the opportunity to showcase their talents while building valuable life skills. Held across livestock, equine, and rodeo events, these competitions allow exhibitors to compete against their peers in categories such as agricultural sales, interview, photography, and marketing. Students build self-confidence as they develop and apply their skills in a competitive setting.



RODEO TALENT SHOWCASE

New in 2024, we introduced the Youth Rodeo Contract Act Showcase, giving talented young rodeo contestants a platform to perform and develop their skills. Participants showcased their abilities in announcer, comedy, and specialty act categories, highlighting the next generation of rodeo entertainers. This event was created to encourage and support future rodeo talent, providing them with valuable experience and exposure in the industry.

OUR YEAR AT A GLANCE.



ATTENDEE DAYS

Attendee days are the total number of attendees at our events. Through **280** event days, **415,242 in-person** and **628,554 virtual** attendees were impacted.

1,043,796

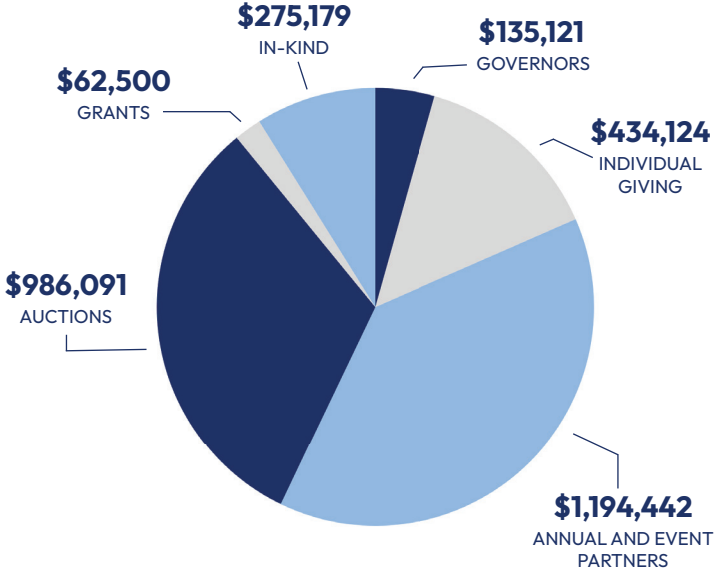
TOTAL ATTENDEES

66%

INCREASE FROM 2023

PROGRAMMATIC PHILANTHROPIC IMPACT

\$3,087,457



EVENT PARTICIPANTS

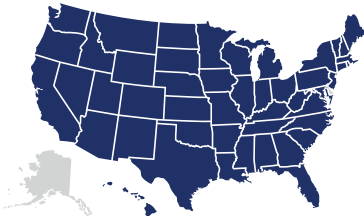
We attract participants from across the globe to compete in high-quality agricultural events and experiences.

48

STATES

15

COUNTRIES



57%

EVENTS WITH STATES IN ADDITION TO MO AND KS REPRESENTED

ECONOMIC IMPACT

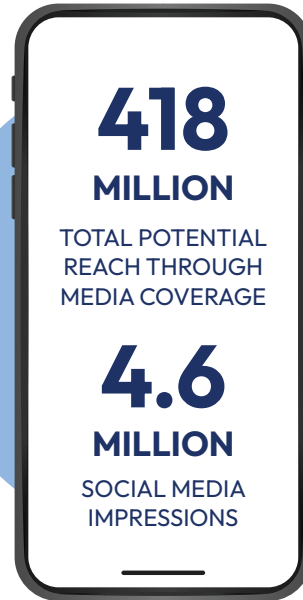


Our events are a significant driver in the local economy.

OVER
\$86 MILLION

ESTIMATED ECONOMIC
IMPACT IN 2024

MEDIA STATISTICS



6,340

Event Volunteer
Hours



410

Unique Event
Volunteers



214

Governors

17

AWARDED IN SCHOLARSHIPS

We offer nearly 100 scholarships for outstanding leadership and academic excellence. Scholarships are awarded through applications or in the show arena.

\$690,150



CROWNING THE BEST OF BARBECUE.

The **American Royal World Series of Barbecue®** is the largest barbecue contest in the world, with more teams and a bigger purse than any other.

This year, competitors faced a wild weather weekend at the Kansas Speedway, battling 3.5 inches of rain, a tornado watch, and fierce wind gusts up to 47 mph. But the storms couldn't shake the competition. We pushed through the chaos to crown new champions in both the Invitational and Open contests - proving that nothing can stop the best in barbecue.



The American Royal World Series of Barbecue is a special event with far more importance than many of the contests throughout the year. The large number of contestants is spectacular. It's THE contest.

- 2024 World Series of Barbecue® Competitor



444
TEAMS



40
STATES



8
COUNTRIES



698
JUDGES



80
KIDS QUE
CONTESTANTS



THE EVENT THAT **STARTED IT ALL.**

The 125th **American Royal Livestock Show** honored the tradition that started our organization with an unforgettable year. The show saw a record number of junior market animals, showcasing the hard work and dedication of exhibitors from across the country. With entries from across the nation, the competition was fierce, and the quality across all species was second to none. Interest surged beyond the ring with record-breaking webcast views, bringing the excitement to a larger

audience than ever before. To commemorate our anniversary, we introduced a **Spring Show**, which drew **451 exhibitors** from **28 states** and saw **1,232 entries** in its first year. As we look ahead, we remain committed to expanding opportunities for livestock exhibitors and strengthening the legacy that began 125 years ago.



7,931

FALL SHOW ENTRIES



2,422

FALL SHOW EXHIBITORS

44

STATES REPRESENTED

2,684

JUNIOR MARKET ANIMALS

409,500

WEBCAST VIEWS

AND THEY CALL THE THING RODEO.

The 75th **American Royal ProRodeo** was a thrilling celebration of tradition and competition. Fans enjoyed the Tailgate Beer Garden and a special Red Friday event with Jess Pope, Andy Reid, and the Kansas City Chiefs coaching staff. With support from our new presenting sponsor, Reed Automotive Group, we delivered three incredible nights of rodeo action.

The **Youth Rodeo** showcased top young competitors, while the new Youth Rodeo Contract Act Showcase gave aspiring announcers and performers a chance to shine. We also introduced a **Ranch Rodeo**, where teams competed in events based on real ranch work.

441

YOUTH RODEO ENTRIES

9

STATES REPRESENTED

489

PRORODEO ENTRIES

\$113,236

PRORODEO PAYOUT

6,617

SPECTATORS

11

RANCH RODEO TEAMS







SPRING BARBECUE EVENTS

Each spring, we bring together barbecue enthusiasts for a series of exciting competitions in the West Bottoms. The **Backyard Barbecue and Steak Contest** gives amateur teams a fun and accessible way to step into competition barbecue. **Thirty-five teams** from **five states** competed in 2024.

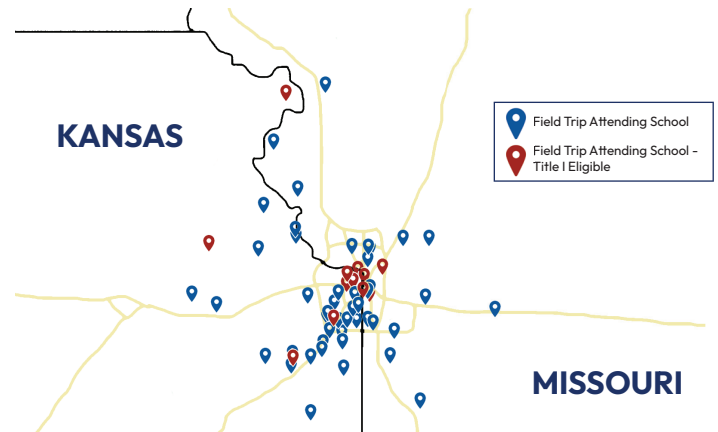
The **American Royal World Series of Barbecue Sauce and Rub Contests** - the largest of their kind - continue to draw unique, flavor-packed entries from around the world. This year, the Rub Contest featured **304 entries** from **23 states** and **nine countries**, while the Sauce Contest saw **364 entries** from **33 states** and **nine countries**.

FARM TO TABLE DINNERS

This year, we hosted two **Farm to Table** dinners, featuring chefs Scott Umscheid of Scott's Kitchen and Georgi Pahon of Saddle & Sirloin. More than **150 guests** enjoyed a four-course meal while connecting with the producers behind the ingredients, celebrating fresh, locally sourced food in a shared dining experience.

FIELD TRIPS

The **American Royal Field Trip** is our largest education event, designed to immerse elementary students in the science of agriculture and connect them to food, animals, and plants. As fewer children grow up with direct ties to farming, this experience helps bridge the gap, introducing them to the farmers and ranchers who produce our food. In 2024, the Field Trip welcomed **3,213 students** from across the Kansas City metro in spring and fall sessions, including **1,181 eligible for free and reduced-lunch** from **15 Title I schools**. By engaging with agriculture firsthand, students gain a deeper understanding of where their food comes from and the vital role of production agriculture.





KOOKERS KARE

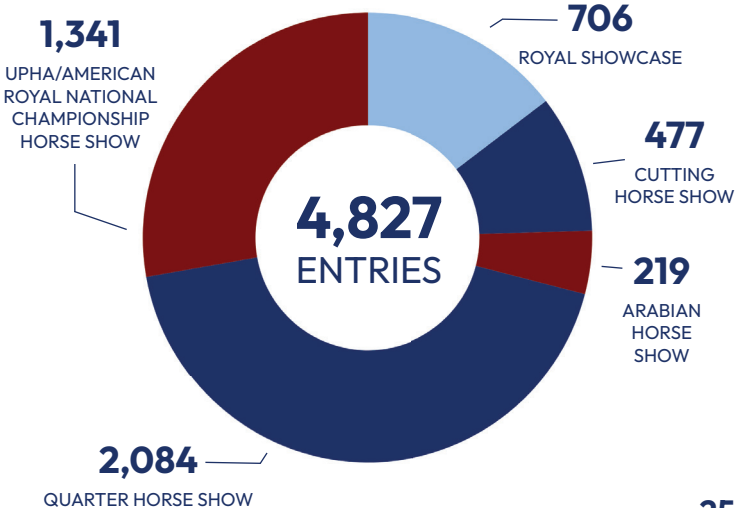
We are proud to partner with Kookers Kare Inc. and Harvesters Food Network to help those in need in our community. Through this collaboration, barbecue teams have the opportunity to donate leftover competition food to these organizations to distribute to feeding stations and food pantries across the Kansas City metro. This year, Kookers Kare and Harvesters collected an impressive **3,618 pounds** of world-class barbecue to help our community.

SPORTING CLAYS

This year, we hosted two **Sporting Clays** events, bringing together **30 teams** and **120 shooters** to test their skills in a dynamic, field-style course. Held at Saddle & Sirloin and Powder Creek Shooting Park, each competition featured unique stations where teams earned scores toward their final tally. The events drew great participation and **grossed nearly \$30,000**, supporting our mission while delivering an exciting experience for all involved.

EQUINE SHOWS

In 2024, we hosted five diverse equine shows, showcasing a variety of breeds and disciplines. These included the **Royal Showcase**, a youth and open horse show; the **Cutting Horse Show**; the **Arabian Horse Show**; the **Quarter Horse Show**; and the prestigious **UPHA/American Royal National Championship Horse Show**. Each event brought together top competitors, highlighting the skill, dedication, and versatility of both riders and horses.



ADVOCATES FOR FOOD AND AGRICULTURE.

We thrive because of the dedication and support of our members and affiliate groups, each playing a vital role in advancing our mission.

The **Governors Program**, which is our annual membership for individuals and organizations passionate about agriculture, grew to **214 members** in 2024, including 26 Royal Crown Governors, 56 Duo Governors, and 132 Individual Governors. Their support strengthens our foundation and ensures a bright future for our programs and events.



For 75 years, **BOTAR (Belles of the American Royal)** has upheld a proud tradition of service. To celebrate this milestone, they hosted an extravagant ball and released a commemorative book featuring 75 years of beautiful gowns. Additionally, BOTAR members volunteer at events, serve on committees, and support youth exhibitors by purchasing animals at JPLA (Junior Premium Livestock Auction).



The **Saddle & Sirloin Club** continued to expand its partnership with us, hosting a spring sporting clays event and a farm-to-table dinner while also playing a key role in planning the Ranch Rodeo. Like BOTAR, they support youth exhibitors through JPLA.

Our **Chairman's Club**, a growing young professionals' group, welcomed new members eager to make an impact. A key highlight was co-hosting the VIP Party at the World Series of Barbecue with BOTAR, bringing together supporters for a night of celebration.

Under the leadership of our **Board of Directors**, these groups help preserve our legacy while ensuring the continued success of agriculture education, events, and engagement. Together, we honor our past, celebrate our present, and look ahead to a strong future.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS.

Chairman | Ken Wagner, Retired, Heritage Tractor
Vice Chairman | Lindsey Smith, Excolo, LLC
Secretary & Chair Elect | Walt George, G3 Consulting, LLC
Treasurer | Brad Bendle, Next-Level Growth Strategies
Bret Borota, Amazon Web Services
Megan Bubb, Reece Nichols
Carol Carlson, Community Volunteer
Tim Congrove, Shook, Hardy & Bacon
Andrew Fahey, JM Fahey Construction
John Fuchs, Edward Jones
Jim Gamble, Keller Williams
Richard Green, U.S. Engineering
Alden Harris, Bartlett, a Savage Company
Kevin Heikes, Intent
Angela Hudson, Oracle
Carl Ice, BNSF
Mark Kolkhorst, Retired, ADM
Ann Konecny, Foley Equipment
John Lagemann, Retired, John Deere
Gordon Lansford, JE Dunn
Missy Love, BioStar Renewables
Alex Lowe, Go Chicken Go
Pat Macy, Oracle

LIFETIME DIRECTORS

Malcolm Aslin, Entrepreneur
Bryan Beaver, Flat Tail Ranch
Harry Cleberg, Retired
John Dillingham, Dillingham Enterprises
David Fowler, Retired
Mary Hunkeler, Community Volunteer
Mariner Kemper, UMB Bank
Brant Laue, Laue Ranch

Russ Meinhardt, Acumen
John Moncke, Kansas City Power & Light District
David Morris, University of Kansas School of Business
Blake Nelson, American Maine-Anjou Association
Ben Nichols, Compass Minerals
Molly Olson, Eli Lilly and Company
Amy Polen, UMB Bank
Jeanette Prenger, ECCO Select
Joe Rebein, Saddle and Sirloin Representative
Randy Reinhardt, Zephyr Products
Tony Rohr, Multistudio
Mike Roos, KPMG
Jara Settles, Livestock Marketing Association
Mark Stewart, Agriculture Future of America
David Stofer, Mariner Wealth Advisors
Sarah Tate, Sanofi
Charlie Tetrick, Walz Tetrick
Mark Thomas, Link Logistics
Trae Venerable, Kansas City National Security Campus
Jack Ward, American Hereford Association
Nancy Wilkerson, BOTAR Representative
Ryan Wilkerson, Haas & Wilkerson
Jeff Yowell, Getter Farms, LLC

Pete Lemke, EFL Associates
Fred Lyons, Five Creek Ranch
Greg Maday, SpecChem
John Mitchell, Jr., Mission Drive Capital
Robert Petersen, Peterson Consulting
Cynthia Savage, Raphael Hotel Group
Angie Stanland, TIFEC



American Royal Association

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