



# INDEPENDENT ELLSWORTH COUNTY REPORTER

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Cowtown Day!  
See Pages B10 - B12.



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## RHYTHM AND REELS



**ABOVE:** Bailey Rae takes the stage at Preisker Park Aug. 2 during Rhythm and Reels. This year's lineup included three musical acts, up one from last year.  
**RIGHT:** Youth enjoy a water inflatable Aug. 1 prior to the showing of "Moana 2" at Preisker Park.  
*Courtesy photos*



# Wilson discusses relationship with GEC

BY ALAN RUSCH  
*Ellsworth County I-R*

WILSON — An brief presentation on what the Grow Ellsworth County organization has done for Wilson in the past year highlighted Monday's meeting of the Wilson City Council.

That brief was given by Kevin Colle, the new executive director of GEC, along with Grow Ellsworth board member Craig Freeman of Wilson Communications and Jim Kirkbride of the Ellsworth County Medical Center.

"I started here in late June and I'm just making connections and going around and meeting everyone," Colle said.

Colle said one of the main things GEC does is support local businesses, mostly through entrepreneur support.

"We're really passionate about helping start-ups wherever they may be in the county," he said.

Colle said that help might be in the form of helping develop a

business plan, connecting with the right financing in order to have the capital to help open a business, connecting to different statewide groups and some technical support.

He said GEC has been helping Kansas Originals Market and Gallery to find the right funding options.

Colle noted the big highlight for GEC in 2024 was the Big Kansas Road Trip.

"It brought a lot of tourism in and was a successful event," he added.

Colle said GEC is the county organization for tourism, for promoting businesses who want to relocate to Ellsworth County and acts as a "community cheerleader."

"In general we try to advocate for our businesses and support them however we can," he said.

"We're thankful of your continued support of Grow Ellsworth County and look forward to working with you in the future."

Freeman said he would like the community to develop a deeper relationship with GEC.

"My objective when Kevin started was to get him over here in Wilson maybe more than we have in the past," he said.

Freeman said one of those opportunities was a meet-and-greet with local business owners at Made From Scratch in Wilson.

Freeman said Colle was a frequent visitor to the Czech Capitol of Kansas as a child.

"So introducing him to Wilson was easy to do," Freeman added. "I was encouraged by that."

Kirkbride said the hospital partners with GEC.

"Wilson is one of those communities that we actually use what you do well as part of our recruitment for nurses and doctors and others to come to this area," Kirkbride said. "The Czech background is a huge draw to some of our physicians."

Kirkbride said Wilson also offers other things such as great housing, restaurants and other things like that as well.

"I live just four miles east on

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# ECMC works on multiple projects

BY ALAN RUSCH  
*Ellsworth County I-R*

Ellsworth County Medical Center Chief Executive Officer Jim Kirkbride gave a brief update to the public July 25 on upcoming projects and the latest expansion during a "Chat With the CEO" in the administration building's meeting room.

"We have some exciting things going on at ECMC and this is the start of what we hope is quite a few things we roll out," Kirkbride said.

During the recent Ellsworth County 4-H Fair, the hospital introduced a new branding promotion for farmers and ranchers called "Field Ready."

The hospital staff put together a unique first aid kit for farmers and ranchers consisting of items designed to treat minor injuries which often occur on the farm or ranch. The kits included a tourniquet, bandages, eye wash and cards containing information on how to treat snake bites, poisoning and sunstroke, all inside a rugged Army green metal ammo can.

"The idea is that the farmer/rancher would have a field-ready first aid kit they could throw in their tractor which could take a beating," Kirkbride said.

In addition, he said the hospital is working on introducing some mental and behavioral health programs in September and October, specifically designed to help the farming/ranching community.

"We're very proud to get to a point to where we can physically construct something and roll out more programs," he said.

In addition to new flooring, signage, furniture and a common paint scheme at the hospital and its four rural health clinics, Kirkbride said the hospital has a new upgraded MRI system for mammography inside the hospital, which is the newest fixed unit in this area. The MRI is less intimidating, quieter and can offer the advanced imaging necessary not only for mammography, but for cardiac, vascular and prostate diagnostics as well.

Kirkbride said ECMC is also starting to encourage the public to use its patient portal. He noted that very soon, telemedicine will be available through the patient portal.

Kirkbride then focused on the featured item of the "Chat With the CEO" program — the transformation of the hospital's administration building into a new rehabilitation

department.

"When I got here, I kind of knew where I wanted to be four, five and six years from now, and it was four years last Friday — that was my anniversary," he said.

Kirkbride said the administration building is a gem.

"In my career, I've never gone to a hospital that had enough space," he said. "We've got a boatload of space. We have more space that we know what to do it, so we have an opportunity."

That opportunity, according to Kirkbride, starts by taking a look at all of the lower-end programs the hospital offers and move some of those into the administration building, which will free up space for higher-end specialty services to be introduced to ECMC.

"I think we would benefit from having surgery here at the hospital," Kirkbride said, stressing no definite decision on that service has been made yet.

"I still don't know if we can do it or should do it," he added.

Kirkbride said the hospital had a company examine all data relevant to ECMC — its providers, the services they now provide and where their patients are being sent now for their surgical needs.

"We also know what surgeries we would do here," he said.

After examining everything, that company came back and said financially, ECMC can support surgery.

Kirkbride then turned back to his discussion of the transformation of the hospital's administration building into the new Health and Wellness Center.

Where the employee entrance to the administration building is now, that will be the new entrance into the new Health and Wellness Center.

"We're going to relocate some personnel and services to this building to support the health and wellness division," he said.

The new rehabilitation department will be located in the Health and Wellness Center.

A central hallway will lead patients not only to the rehab department, but to other, yet-to-be-determined services as well.

Kirkbride described it as a great space with great expandability.

"Right now, we've got a lot of building space that is fairly cheap to get into," he said.

Kirkbride said four services at ECMC have exploded over the last

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Ross Janssen's  
Weather  
August 6 - August 12  
WEDNESDAY 96/67  
Sunny

THURSDAY 99/69  
Sunny  
FRIDAY 100/71  
Mostly sunny  
SATURDAY 97/72  
Partly cloudy

SUNDAY 92/68  
Chance of storms  
MONDAY 87/66  
Partly cloudy  
TUESDAY 88/67  
Chance of storms

OPINION	A4	CHURCH	A9
NEWS	A3, A5, A6, B9	KID SCOOP	A10
COURTHOUSE	A7	CLASSIFIED	B7
PASSAGES	A8	LEGALS	B8, B9