

ARMSTRONG

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If you were to ask her what her position entails, she would say everything that isn't technical or design. From developing business relations, responding to requests for proposals, producing social media and website content or implementing a marketing strategy, Armstrong can do it all.

"It's (my role) really just building relationships at its core, which ties back into all of the other things I'm involved with," said Armstrong. But just getting to know people, making sure that business owners know about

us, are comfortable with us, and when they need architectural services for whatever type of scope they're looking at, that they are comfortable with us and willing to walk in our office or give me a phone call."

When it comes to advice on other young professionals tackling a one-man communications department, Armstrong says relationships within the industry are key to thriving.

"Find those organizations that align with the role that you're doing," said Armstrong. "Get that buy-in from your ownership group to have them support you in those events or memberships, however that structure looks like. And then just go. You have to

show up. I didn't have it all figured out."

In addition to recognizing industry professionals, NextGen Under 30 Kansas honors individuals who also make meaningful connections and contributions to their communities. This can include volunteerism or participation on organizational boards and a mix of both. Armstrong has demonstrated strong leadership in her years in the El Dorado community, both volunteering and serving as a board member to multiple nonprofits.

She's served on the El Dorado Chamber of Commerce Board of Directors and Flinthills Services Board of Directors since 2023 and named the President of Flinthills Services board for 2025. She's also mentored a young girl in the Big Brother Big Sisters organization in Sedgwick County for two years, fostering a meaningful and impactful relationship.

Her role with these organizations has allowed her to be a champion of community service while honoring Gravity Work's values of community involvement.

"We don't really display

our core values on our door here, but a core value of the owners here is to give back to your community, be involved in your community," said Armstrong. "It's been a really great way to not only find out more about those organizations. But then just having a little bit more agency and stake in that organization, you feel an obligation to show up and be a champion for those types of events."

During her experience with NextGen Under 30 Kansas, Armstrong was invited to a "Day at the Capitol" to meet and network with other honorees for 2024, meet the Kansas governor, and attend a dinner and award ceremony where she was recognized with her peers.

Armstrong resides in Wichita with her husband and two children.

In 2023, El Dorado resident Andrew Tipton was an honoree for NextGen Under 30 in the Finance & Bank industry for his role at W Investments.

The NextGen Under 30 Kansas 2025 nomination and application period has closed. To learn more about NextGen Under 30, visit their website at nextgenunder30ks.com.

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Little Miss El Dorado, Kennedy Bables, gets her face painted during the community celebration at East Park.

Photo by Deanna Bonn.

visit with other community members, and to have a good night as a community," said Sgt. Thompson.

"There are also different businesses here giving out items and information," he added.

Juanita Newberry, a Family Support Worker with Child Start, hosted an activity at her organization's table.

"We're painting rocks, which is kind of a cool thing," said Newberry. "The kids can take them home or add them to our

little rock garden outside of the center."

"We're grateful for all the donations we received to make this happen," said Sgt. Thompson.

Scan the QR Code to watch the video report!



McLaren Armstrong was 1 of 258 honored by NextGen Under 30 Kansas in 2024.

Local Happenings

BCC offers Welding Classes at Rose Hill High School

Students, Early College Academy set to benefit from added welding labs and new location

Butler Community College

El Dorado – Butler Community College now offers Welding Technology classes at Rose Hill High School taught by Butler Welding alumni and industry-professional Jake Duerksen. Classes begin in August at the new state-of-the-art welding lab. Seats are limited and open to all students, including the Early College Academy (ECA).

Duerksen has collaborated

with both Butler's Facilities Management team and Rose Hill High School USD 394 to address the industry standards students must meet as working welding professionals. The curriculum at this new location is the same applied learning taught in El Dorado. Butler's Welding labs offer ten booths at the Rose Hill location and 15 in El Dorado.

"I am excited to join Butler's CTE Division as Lead Welding Instructor at

Butler's Rose Hill Welding lab, teaching new welders as well as sharing my knowledge and love of welding," Duerksen said. "I hope my experience in welding and manufacturing will help grow the Rose Hill program, developing new welders to prepare them for the workforce when they graduate."

Duerksen comes to Butler as a new full-time instructor with years of industry experience, most recently at Koch Industries. His accomplishments as a professional welder and his time in Butler's Welding program as a student helped him contribute to this new location launch.

"We are excited about Jake joining the College's team of dedicated faculty and our partnership with USD 394," Dean of Career and Technical Education Peter Linden said. "Both Welding labs will also benefit from the input of our Welding program's Industry Advisory Committee, which always welcomes new members."

This new location stems from a successful partnership



Photo: Butler Community College adds ten welding booths with launching the Rose Hill High School Welding location.

between Butler and Rose Hill established more than ten years ago with the first cohort of Early College Academy students, with only seven high school students.

According to Dean of Online, High School and Community Learning Heather Rinkenbaugh, this location allows high school students who cannot attend

El Dorado campus classes to still receive welding instruction. "The start of Welding came from conversations with high school partners who indicated that other programs in the area were full, including Butler's program on the El Dorado campus. Rose Hill is a proven location that attracts high school students in the

southern part of our service area," Rinkenbaugh said.

Butler Welding courses are consistent with the American Welding Society (AWS) standards.

A ribbon cutting for the new facility with Butler's new president, Dr. Tamara Daniel, is being planned as part of the new program launch.

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