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Two new board members join Golden Belt Community Foundation

Kim Guesnier, Great Bend, and Laura Luft, La Crosse, recently joined the Golden Belt Community Foundation (GBCF) Board of Directors as a way to be directly involved in serving the central Kansas community.

Christy Tustin, GBCF executive director, said both women will be assets to the board and the four counties it serves – Barton, Pawnee, Rush and Stafford.

"We welcome Kim and Laura who will bring educational, financial and personal experiences to our board while representing all four counties," Tustin said. "Donors and non-profit agencies will benefit from their contributions.

"Board members help shape local philanthropy today and far into the future," Tustin added. "While each county is unique, they share similarities with their neighbors. Board members will build on each county's strengths."

A board committee nominates members who serve a three-year term, with the option of renewing once for a second term.

Kim Guesnier

Guesnier learned about the GBCF and its contributions to the community from her parents, Merlin and Nelva Grimes.

"This Foundation was near and dear to them," Guesnier said. "When I was asked to serve on the board, my mother encouraged me to do so. I didn't hesitate."

Guesnier's mother lives in Great Bend; her father passed away last November. They spent their 62 years of marriage in Great Bend.

"In addition to my mother's encouragement, I want to serve on the Foundation board because I am aware of all the good it does in the community," Guesnier commented. "I love central Kansas. It is a good place to live and raise a family."

She and her husband, Bernie, have four grown children and five grandchildren.



Guesnier earned an associate's degree from Barton Community College, and bachelor's and master's degrees from Fort Hays State University. She was a special education teacher for 35 years – four years at Hays and the rest at Barton County Special Services.

"I still miss my students but enjoy seeing many of them living and working in the community," Guesnier said. "I want to demonstrate to others that living and working in central Kansas is fulfilling.

"I hope my background in education will benefit the Foundation board. I want to help my hometown and surrounding communities grow and prosper.

Laura Luft

Since one of the bigger challenges facing central Kansas is securing the funding to meet local needs, Luft wants to help meet this challenge.

"The Foundation has created a vehicle to help put great ideas into motion," Luft explained. "At the same time, it is building a solid financial base for many years to come. As a board member, I want to do my part to increase awareness and participation in the Foundation throughout central Kansas."

Luft and her husband, Richard, are "small-town Kansas kids and incredibly thankful for this background."

Richard was raised in Rush County, along with his parents and grandparents. He graduated from Otis-Bison High School and operates the family farm at Bison.

"Even though we lived and worked in the Dallas area for nearly 24 years, our hearts were always home in Kansas," the new board member said. "When we decided to move back here in 2011, we did so with a strong personal commitment to be more than just residents.

"We want to be active in helping our community thrive for the next generations. The Foundation is an exciting opportunity to do that."

Luft graduated from Southeast of Saline High School at Gypsum and Bethany College in Lindsborg. Her professional career started in the Dallas area where she was a personal financial planner with Waddell & Reed. She held several corporate business finance positions during the past 28 years.

Currently, Luft is a finance director with DXC Technology, which is based in Washington, D.C.



"The key skills in my professional life center on financial planning, leadership and driving projects to completion," she noted. "These all carry over in helping the Foundation be successful. In addition, a board member's most important trait is a passion for our communities. I see this in every member of this great board."

At \$22.5 million in total assets and more than 180 funds under management, the Golden Belt Community Foundation has been connecting people who care to causes that matter since 1996. Golden Belt Community Foundation exists to provide non-profit organizations in central Kansas with a permanent source of support and to serve as a vehicle for charitable giving for donors. GBCF serves the counties of Barton, Pawnee, Rush, and Stafford. For more information about Golden Belt Community Foundation, call (620) 792-3000 or visit their website at www.goldenbeltcf.org.