



Celebrity Waiter

S O I R É E

Famous Faces, Fulfilling Futures

OCTOBER

4

YOUR FAVORITE LOCAL
KANSAS CELEBRITIES
IN A ONE-OF-A-KIND
FUND-RAISER!

Benefits Child Care Aware® of Eastern Kansas.

Welcome to the 2025 Celebrity Waiter Soirée!

Tonight, the aprons are star-studded and the fun is just getting started! We're thrilled you're here to laugh, cheer, and maybe even compete a little, all while making a difference for children and families across Eastern Kansas.

At Child Care Aware® of Eastern Kansas, our mission is simple yet powerful: give every child the best start in life. We help families find child care that fits their needs, support providers with coaching and training to boost quality, and work with communities to grow strong local solutions. Your presence here tonight fuels this work and helps build brighter futures for kids, families, and our whole region.



A special thank you to our celebrity waiters and hosts. These brave souls traded in their usual day jobs to deliver a little drama to your table. Remember: they're competing for your tips (the generous kind, of course!) and every dollar raised supports our mission. So, cheer them on, fill their tip aprons, and don't be afraid to make them earn it!

A huge thank you also goes out to our sponsors, donors, and supporters. You've helped set the stage for tonight's soirée, and your generosity ensures that children in our community have the strong foundation they deserve.

And while we're having fun, let's not forget why we're here: by the time a child turns five, their brain is already 90% developed. The early years matter, and investing in them benefits everyone. Tonight, as you laugh, eat, tip big, and celebrate, you're helping create brighter futures for children and stronger communities for all of us.

Now sit back, raise a glass, cheer on your waiter, and let the soirée magic unfold. Together, we're proving that making a difference can be as fun as it is meaningful!

Tip big. Change lives.

With sincere thanks and gratitude,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Sarah E. Elsen".

Sarah Elsen, Executive Director

Table of Contents

Welcome.....	2
Production Information	3
Corporate Sponsors.....	4
Event Schedule.....	5
Signature Sponsors	6
Board Members & Staff	7
Celebrity Host.....	8
Celebrity Waiter Bios	9
Bid & Donate	19

Production Information

EDITORS

Julie Scott – Child Care Aware® of Eastern Kansas
Lindsey Munson – Peterson Media Group

COVER CREATION

MB Piland
Julie Scott – Child Care Aware® of Eastern Kansas

DESIGN & LAYOUT

Becky Arensdorf – Peterson Media Group

PRINTING

Quik Print Topeka

MEDIA PRODUCTION

Julie Scott – Child Care Aware® of Eastern Kansas
MB Piland
WIBW TV



helping brands win
FROM WITHIN™



Thank You to our Corporate Sponsors

BLOCKBUSTER EVENT SPONSOR

Lakeshore®

RED CARPET EXCLUSIVE SPONSORS



NATIONAL PREMIER SPONSORS



DIRECTOR'S CUT SPONSORS

Azura Credit Union | Envista Credit Union

FHLBank Topeka | Flint Hills Community Accelerator

Golden Rule Design & Build | Greater Topeka Partnership

Kaw Valley Bank | Jamie Lou Hornbaker State Farm

Midwest Concrete Materials, Inc. | Nebraska Furniture Mart

MARQUEE NIGHT SPONSORS

BT&Co., P.A. | Magellan Financial | Stifel Investments

The Foundry | Hilton Kansas City Country Club Plaza

C Double H Photography | Total Wine & More

Sunflower Sports Association | Townsite

5:30 PM	Cocktail Hour
6:30 PM	Dinner & Entertainment
8:30 PM	Silent Auction Closes Live Auction Begins
9:00 PM	Celebrity Waiter Tipping Closes 50/50 Game Silver Spoon Award
9:15 PM	Live Performance by Roger Ortega
9:30 PM	Closing Remarks Event Check Out

Congratulations from the Signature Supporters

*Amanda Abbott
Ruth Akins
Cindi Bassett
Dawn Bicknell-Reiser
Paul Bossert
Linda Burrell Gallaway
H. Hurst Coffman
Judith G. Conklin
Grace Cott
Carolyn Cusnutt
Catherine Deters
Sarah Elsen
Gwendolyn Elliott
Pam & Dean Ferrell
Michelle Gilbert
Jane & Russell Greene
Nancy L. Griffin
Kathleen Heaney
Mary Ann Hill
Jeanne Hoferer
Karen Huntley
Jeanette Johnson*

*Robert E. Keeshan
Erin Lewis
Jacqueline & Torey Lightcap
Kathy Maag
Ann and Larry Mah
Patti Mellard
Leigh & Terry Miller
Lori A. Moser
Melissa Mosher
Mary Murphy
Carolyn Orozco
Connie Pitman
Karen Robinson
Nancy Rohr
Cherie Sage
Christina Schmitt
Jeanie Schuler
Julie & Jared Scott
Catherine M. Shafer
Jamie Stafford
Paula Wakes
Lisa Walker
Marlow Wegener
Reva Wywradis*

2025 BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Executive Board

Erin Lewis – President, Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Kansas
Catherine Deters – President-Elect, Midwest Concrete Materials
Lisa Walker – Secretary, Kansas Department of Health and Environment
Christina Schmitt – Treasurer, Envista Credit Union
Lisa Walker – Treasurer-Elect, Azura Credit Union
Dawn Bicknell-Reiser – Immediate Past President, Kaw Valley Bank
Nicole Lange – Member at Large, Security Benefit

Board of Directors

Joe Beasley – BOK Financial
Connie Fulton – Blue Cross Blue Shield of Kansas
Linda Kehres – Emporia Community Foundation
Derek Krogh – Lakeshore Learning
Jordan McKnight – Boys and Girls Club of Manhattan
Marisol Marcelo – Brennan-Mathena Funeral Home
Kelly Trussell – City of Topeka
Casey Vigus – Jamie Lou Hornbaker – State Farm Agent

2025 CCAEKS STAFF

Sarah Elsen, *Executive Director*
Diana Ingram-Cantrell, *Accountant*
Julie Scott, *Marketing & Communications Coordinator*
Melissa Mosher, *Project Coordinator*
Rhianna Nelson, *Community Outreach & Engagement Coordinator*
Nancy Rohr, *Family Services Manager*
Lori Boos (Team Leader), Sonya Eckhoff, Blanca Saenz-Avila, *Resource Specialists*
Jane Redger (Team Leader), Ashley Buss, Jennie Heim, *Successful Connections Parent Resource Specialists*
Michelle Gilbert, Talia Juiliano-Myers, *Provider Services Managers*
Stephanie Prue, *Library Resource Specialist*

Holly Wehner, *Data Specialist*
Grace Cott (Co-Team Leader), Debbie Hildebrandt (Co-Team Leader), Karin Richmond, Marie Treichel, Deana Turner, *Early Care & Education Specialists*
Deb Danielson, Kristina Griffiee, *Regional Community Consultants*
Dawn Brown, Kari Cronister, Mary Murphy, *Professional Development Specialists*

Celebrity Host

Celebrity Host — John Koop

He's sassy, he's classy, and a tad bit trashy. He's your Emcee for tonight's festivities!! John has performed at the White House. Been on stage with the likes of Sharon Stone, Rosie O'Donnell, Pointer Sisters, Chaka Khan, and the list goes on and on. John Koop is the VP of Experience and Engagement at The Greater Topeka Partnership. John has been in Topeka for a bit over two years and has now been residing here for the past five months. In that short time, if you haven't interacted with him, hold on to your seats. He is a powerhouse of energy and doesn't know the word NO. John has over thirty years of



experience in event planning and fundraising in the Kansas City area. John wants you to open your hearts, your credit cards, wallets, purses, AAA, Sears, Home Depot, steal from your table mates, whatever it takes to make tonight a night to remember!! He wishes to thank all the waiters tonight for their donated time and efforts. They, along with your generous donations, are the true HEROES!!



Scan here
to tip your favorite
Celebrity Waiter!

Katie Beach

Katie Beach is the Community Relationship Manager at Azura Credit Union, where she leads community and economic development initiatives and builds partnerships with schools, agencies, and organizations across Topeka. She manages Azura's Community Impact Cards, Employee Foundation, and financial wellness programs, and also serves as Chair of the Cornerstone Foundation's Financial Wellness Task Force. A Washburn University graduate, Katie is actively involved in the community through volunteer work with local boards and committees, and has been recognized as a YWCA Women of Excellence honoree and a Leadership Greater Topeka graduate. She lives in Topeka with her husband and two sons and is passionate about strengthening her community.



Jared Broyles

Jared Broyles is the co-anchor of 13 News This Morning on WIBW. A southeast Oklahoma native, he began his career at the CBS affiliate in Fort Smith, Arkansas, where he spent nine years as a producer, reporter, and weekend anchor, covering a range of major stories, from tornadoes to powerful human-interest pieces. After moving to Topeka, Jared anchored evenings before launching Foster the Cause, a ministry supporting foster and adoptive families. He returned to WIBW in 2020, first as digital news content manager and now as morning co-anchor. Jared lives in Topeka with his two daughters and is passionate about serving northeast Kansas viewers each morning.



Celebrity Waiters

John Cantrell

John Cantrell is a man of faith, a professional boxer, and an entrepreneur whose life is a testament to resilience and redemption. Once caught in addiction and prison, he turned his life around through faith and now serves the Lord in all he does. Inspired by his son's fight for life at birth, John pursued seminary school while continuing his undefeated pro boxing career under coach Damon Reed, showing that perseverance can overcome any challenge. He is passionate about children's charities, sports, mental health awareness, substance abuse recovery, and prison reform, and serves on several nonprofit boards in Topeka. Above all, John uses his platform to motivate others, spread the Gospel, and honor his greatest inspirations: his wife, Taylor, and son, Cooper.



Jennifer Cross

Jennifer Cross is a Captain with the Topeka Police Department, where she has served since 2004. A Topeka native and graduate of Highland Park High School, she went on to attend Highland Community College and Baker University, playing softball while earning her degree. Over her career with TPD, she has served in patrol, as a School Resource Officer, and as a Community Policing Officer before moving into leadership roles, advancing to Detective in 2009, Sergeant in 2012, Lieutenant in 2015, and Captain in 2023. Jennifer is a graduate of Leadership Greater Topeka and has served as President of the FOP Foundation. Outside of work, she enjoys camping, football, theater, and staying active with her husband, also a TPD Captain, and their three children.



Emersen Freeman

Emersen Freeman, MPH has a strong commitment to community advocacy and policy development. Educationally, Emerson holds an MPH from the University of South Carolina (Columbia, SC), concentrating on Health Services, Policy, and Management while her BA in Political Science is from Claflin University (Orangeburg, SC). Currently serving as the Director of Health Equity and Policy at Stormont Vail Health in Topeka, KS, Emerson has taken the lead in implementing data-driven initiatives to promote equitable health outcomes for patient populations and fostering collaboration with state and federal policymakers. Emerson has contributed to various critical aspects of healthcare, including patient safety, population health, accreditation standards, and policy development.



Emersen is married to Zachary Freeman who hails from Aiken, SC and is the daughter of Carl and Linessa Frazier who both reside in Topeka, KS.



Scan here
to tip your favorite
Celebrity Waiter!

Celebrity Waiters

Natasha Gunn

Natasha Gunn is a driven and purposeful leader whose passion for Topeka is reflected in both her professional career and community involvement. As a Sales Support Specialist with Security Benefit, she advances corporate strategy by strengthening client relationships. Natasha also serves on the board of Forge Young Talent and as Chair of Club Blue, a board supporting the Boys & Girls Clubs of Topeka. A proud graduate of Leadership Greater Topeka, she enjoys volunteering and engaging in local events that celebrate and strengthen her community.



Dane Kroll

Dane Kroll is an author, Creative Producer, and morning news host who writes what he loves: giant monsters, horror, and adventure. Bringing the classic 70's and 80's vibes of slasher horror movies to life, his books are fast-paced and action-packed, including *Black Friday*, *Psalm Springs*, and the fantasy epic *Eluan Falls*. His ongoing *Realm of Goryo* series unleashes a world on the brink of annihilation, teeming with monsters, aliens, and cosmic dangers. At KSNT TV, Dane brings that same energy and creativity to covering arts, entertainment, and major events. He is also a devoted husband and proud father to a one-year-old son.



Eric Kirsch

Eric Kirsch is the Sheriff of Wabaunsee County, Kansas. He served in the United States Marine Corps from 2004 to 2012, leading Marines in combat in Iraq and Afghanistan, before being honorably discharged as a Captain. Following his military service, Eric worked with the Defense Intelligence Agency, the Naval Criminal Investigative Service, and as a civilian contractor for the State Department in Iraqi Kurdistan during the ISIS invasion.



A graduate of The Citadel with honors, Eric went on to advanced training in counterintelligence operations with the Defense Intelligence Agency's Joint Counterintelligence Training Academy. Over the course of his career, he completed three active duty combat deployments as a Marine and two tours in Iraqi Kurdistan as a civilian contractor.

Since 2017, Eric has served with the Wabaunsee County Sheriff's Office in various capacities, including Detective, Undersheriff, and currently as Sheriff. He is recognized for his "Peace Officer" philosophy, which emphasizes authenticity, bravery, and building public trust through truth and service. Eric also runs the popular Facebook page for the Sheriff's Office and once helped catch a serial killer during his service in the Marine Corps.

At home, Eric enjoys life with his wife, a former Army Blackhawk pilot turned attorney, who convinced him to settle in Kansas. He is honored to support the Celebrity Waiter Soirée, noting that there is no higher purpose than protecting children. As Frederick Douglass said, "It is easier to build strong children than to repair broken men."



Scan here
to tip your favorite
Celebrity Waiter!

Celebrity Waiters

David Oliver

David Oliver started his broadcasting career as an anchor & reporter with WIBW in 1996 and stayed through 2000. After Topeka, David reported and anchored local news in Boise Idaho and Springfield Missouri. David very happily returned home to Kansas and WIBW in 2022. David is from Wichita and attended both the University of Kansas and Wichita State University.

David's journalism work has been honored by state press and broadcast associations in Kansas, Idaho & Missouri.

David also received a regional EMMY award for 'Team Coverage' reporting. A major broadcast project that David co-produced and co-hosted in Missouri was recognized with a prestigious Edward R. Murrow Award.

David is the very proud father of two children, Britney and Dawson. When David isn't in the field or on the anchor desk, he enjoys visiting his family in the Wichita area, traveling to new destinations, and trying his hand at new recipes in the kitchen.



Scan here
to tip your favorite
Celebrity Waiter!

Roger Ortega

Roger Ortega (aka RO, RnBPoPWrytr) is an independent R&B/Pop singer-songwriter, a verified Spotify artist, and a voting member of the National Recording Academy (GRAMMYs®). Known for blending heartfelt songwriting with polished pop-R&B production, he has built a respected career in the independent music scene.

His debut *RnBPoPWrytr* (2012) and follow-up *The Lottery* (2016) both charted on iTunes, with *The Lottery* reaching #8. His most recent album, *Midwest Charm*, celebrated the regions that shaped his life—New York, New Jersey, and Kansas.

Over the years, Ortega has shared stages with Jay-Z, Color Me Badd, Aaron Carter, O-Town, and freestyle legends like Judy Torres, George Lamond, and TKA. He headlined sold-out shows in New York, Miami, New Jersey & Kansas, co-created the fan-favorite RO Cruise, and twice topped festival bills in Kansas.



Celebrity Waiters

Robert Perez

Robert Perez is the City Manager of Topeka, bringing more than 20 years of municipal government experience from his leadership roles in Dallas and San Antonio. Most recently serving as Assistant City Manager of Infrastructure in Dallas, he has overseen a wide range of city operations and projects while working to improve government services and community outcomes. Perez was unanimously approved by the Topeka City Council in 2024 and has emphasized collaboration, economic prosperity, and addressing critical issues such as housing and homelessness. He works in partnership with city leaders, staff, and the community to shape a stronger future for Topeka.



Michelle Cuevas Stubblefield

Michelle Cuevas Stubblefield is a longtime marketing and advertising professional with more than 28 years of experience and a passion for leadership development, equity, and community storytelling. She serves on the Executive Leadership Team of the Greater Topeka Partnership, where she directs Leadership Greater Topeka, oversees the community-wide plan MOMENTUM 2027, and leads the Resource Development team in supporting both business and nonprofit growth. Michelle has founded and chaired numerous organizations, including MANA de Topeka, the Parks for All Foundation, and the Latino Leadership Collaborative, and recently helped honor her grandmother, Teresa Cuevas, with a bronze statue on Kansas Avenue. Above all, Michelle values family and is proud to share her life with her husband, Chris, and their two grown children.



Marlou Wegener

Marlou Wegener is the Director of Community Relations at Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Kansas and Chief Operating Officer of the Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Kansas Foundation. Throughout her 35-year career with the company, she has dedicated herself to giving back to communities across the state, helping to establish the foundation in 2005 and guiding its statewide impact. Marlou also pioneered SAVE (Shield Against Violent Environments), an initiative supporting employees affected by domestic violence, which has become a hallmark of her legacy. Beyond her professional work, she supports organizations like Jana's Campaign, which educates young people about healthy relationships. A proud grandmother of seven, Marlou enjoys time with her family, cheering on the Royals at Kauffman Stadium, and attending shows at the Topeka Civic Theatre.



Scan here 
to tip your favorite
Celebrity Waiter!

Celebrity Waiters

John Wilson

John Wilson is the president and CEO of Kansas Action for Children, a nonprofit advocacy organization working to make Kansas a place where every child has the opportunity to grow up healthy and thrive. KAC works across the political spectrum to improve the lives of Kansas children through bipartisan advocacy, partnership, and information-sharing on key issues, including early learning and education, health, and economic security for families. Prior to joining KAC, John was a member of the Kansas House of Representatives where he served as the ranking member on both the Health & Human Services and Children and Seniors Committees. John is passionate about helping Kansans understand and participate in the legislative process and believes that better policy is possible when more perspectives are at the table. Outside of work you may find John running, enjoying cocktails with friends, singing karaoke, or traveling with his wife and their two boys.



Christen Woods

Christen Woods is the Investor Relations Manager at the Greater Topeka Partnership, where she connects businesses with resources, fosters strategic partnerships, and drives community growth. With a strong background in business development and relationship-building, she is dedicated to helping organizations thrive while strengthening Topeka's economic landscape.





SILENT AUCTION

Scan here
to bid on items in
the **Silent Auction!**



Scan here
to preview **Live
Auction** items!



LIVE AUCTION



TIPS



Scan here
to tip your favorite
Celebrity Waiter!



CALHOUN'S jewelers

*One-of-a-Kind Jewelry
Made Just for You*



1801 SW Gage Blvd.

 calhounsjewelers.com

 785-267-4450

We're spreading good energy in our community.

Evergy is proud to sponsor the **Celebrity Waiter Soirée**,
benefiting Child Care Aware® of Eastern Kansas.



Proud Supporter of People (especially kids)

Child Care Aware of Eastern Kansas inspires us by who they are and what they do. Helping families by providing important resources is something we should all get behind.

Because together, we can make
a difference.



INVESTING IN OUR FUTURE

As the first business in Topeka to offer its own early education center, Security Benefit understands the impact that access to high-quality care has on companies and communities.

We appreciate the efforts of Child Care Aware of Eastern Kansas to help families find care and to equip providers with the resources they need to offer optimal environments for learning and exploration. Our collective investment will further the agency's mission to produce healthy, productive citizens for our state.



SB-10070-33 | 2025/08/05



NEED CHILD CARE?

Call us today!
(877) 678-2548



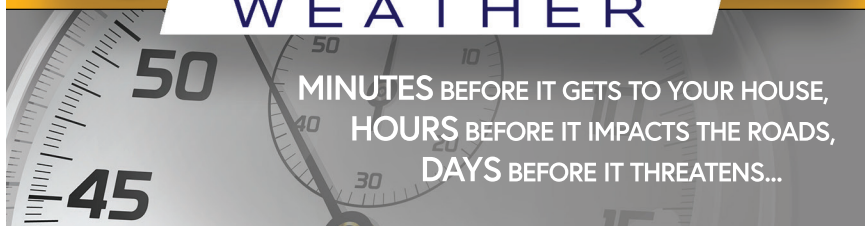
east.ks.childcareaware.org



AT WIBW, ALERTING YOU FIRST TO SEVERE WEATHER IS OUR
FIRST ALERT PROMISE



13 FIRST ALERT **WEATHER**



MINUTES BEFORE IT GETS TO YOUR HOUSE,
HOURS BEFORE IT IMPACTS THE ROADS,
DAYS BEFORE IT THREATENS...

WE LET YOU KNOW WHAT TO EXPECT.

WHEN IT COMES TO COVERING N.E. KANSAS WEATHER,
OUR TEAM IS THE MOST TRUSTED.

THIS IS WHY *WIBW* IS YOUR FIRST ALERT STATION.

GET ALERTED FIRST - WHEREVER YOU ARE
GET THE FREE WIBW WEATHER APP

WIBW-TV is a proud supporter of
Child Care Aware® of Eastern Kansas



Lakeshore®



Everything You Need to Support School Readiness

To learn more, contact
Derek Krogh, Regional Manager
(417) 209-2197
dkrogh@lakeshorelearning.com

