

APRIL 2024



# mission

*Kansas*



## OVATION DANCE

MISSION DANCE ACADEMY WELCOMES  
ALL SKILL LEVELS TO THEIR CLASSES

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## LIL' DUDES

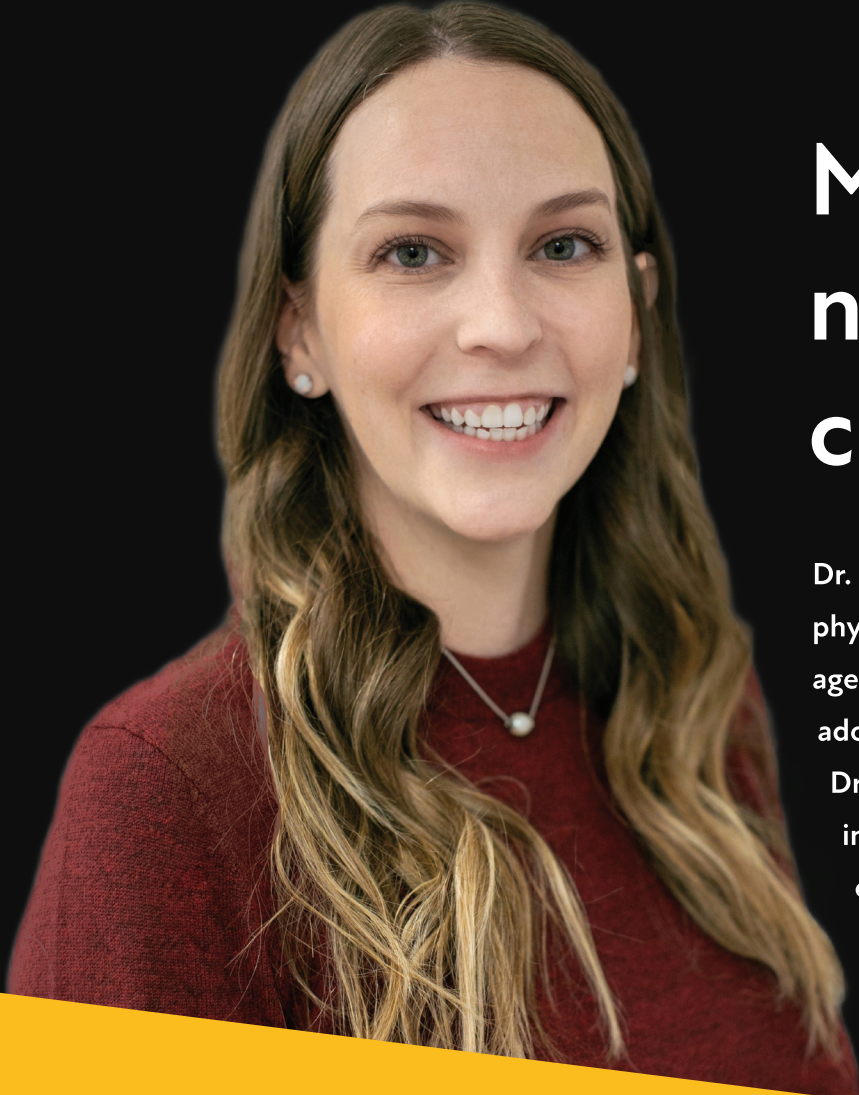
LIL' DUDES OFFERS BIG CHOICES  
FOR BOYS' CLOTHES

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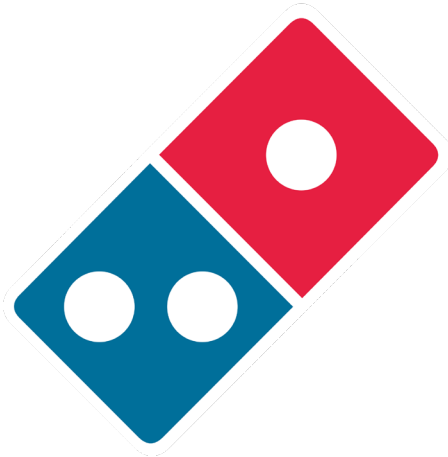
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I am a locally owned Franchisee in KC with 41 years of experience in pizza and delivery. We purchased the Mission, Overland Park, Olathe, and Shawnee stores. I have worked in many different markets and believe we will be a hit in Kansas City Soon! I started with Domino's in high school as a delivery driver and managed my first store as a senior in high school. As a GM in stores I learned change happens and you need to roll with it. I managed stores with Domino's all over the Texas market and Supervised in Houston. Became a Franchisee in 1999 in Sweetwater TX and grew to 3 stores in just 4 months. I now have 11 stores and am working on reopening stores in KC as well as a few new stores in Texas. I say this not to boast about myself but if you are looking for a career

then you can do the same as myself with hard work and a well to learn.

I have brought Peter Toal in as a partner in KC, and he will be living in your market and taking full ownership within the next few years. Peter has many years of experience as well and I have great trust in him to help move the market in the right direction.

For those of you that have had bad service over the past we are very sorry and would like a new chance. I believe we need to hire and hire the right people. With that being said we offer a great job but we have to have great people. As you can see below, we are offering a great deal and great benefits.

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## GREETINGS FROM MISSION!

2024 is off to a great start for Mission, and we are excited to bring you the first issue of the Mission Magazine for this year with a focus on kids and youth. I'm confident you'll be encouraged and inspired by what you read in the pages that follow.

Our cover story features Alex Hess and her dance studio Ovation Dance Academy (ODA). Dancing since she was four, Alex's passion has come full circle as she now teaches and inspires a new generation of young performers. Ovation has enjoyed a home in the Mission Mart shopping center for many years, and continues to grow and expand, now offering lessons to more than six hundred students. Alex has been involved in some of our city conversations relating to continuing to improve our engagement with our local businesses, and I've been impressed with her dedication both to the students she serves and the Mission community.

The magazine also features two new businesses along the Johnson Drive corridor. Lil' Dudes, on the west end of downtown, helps fashion-forward parents outfit their boys just as stylishly as their girls. With a strong and diverse line-up of vendors, you'll be sure to find something you love at this boutique (word on the street is that they even have some celebrity fans in town – go in and ask them about it)! And once you have fashion in the bag, why not head down to Bricks & Minifigs in the Mission Mart shopping center? This LEGO®-themed shop offers sets and figures from the 1970s through today. With something for everyone - kids and collectors alike - it's a fun addition to our Mission business line-up.

Creativity comes in many forms... clothes, LEGO®, and filmmaking. I think you'll really enjoy reading the story of local



middle-schooler Henry Lowe who turned his love of horror films into an award-winning production! Henry and his friends dedicated themselves to writing, filming, acting and editing *Boxed*, which secured a "Skully Award" last summer at the Terror on the Plains Horror Film Festival. I got to hang out with Henry when he previously won a "Lunch with the Mayor" auction item and let me tell you he's going places!

This issue's "Where are they Now" story features race car driver Mandy Chick. We did a story on Mandy's racing in 2019 when she was still in high school. She's now preparing to graduate from college with multiple majors on her way to a master's degree, preparing for a career in engineering alongside racing stock cars in NASCAR's ARCA series. It's a great reminder that with hard work and dedication dreams really can come true and I look forward to continuing to follow Mandy and the Chick Engineering racing team.

Finally, we feature a couple of Mission's Summer Camp counselors, Rosie Keaton-Ferren and Phoenix Fisk, who quite literally "grew up" in our program. After spending years as campers, these two young women could hardly wait for the chance to turn their experiences into summer jobs. Their desire to give back to a program that helped to shape them is a testament to the importance of fostering support and relationships for youth in our community.

I hope you find this issue a bright spot after some bitterly cold winter weather. With Spring making an early appearance, I've enjoyed seeing residents out in our parks, shopping along Johnson Drive, or enjoying time with friends at our local restaurants and breweries. It's a great time to be in Mission, and we look forward to continuing to share the amazing stories of our community with you throughout the year.

-Sollie Flora, Mayor



APRIL 2024

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**On the cover:**  
Students of all ages represent Ovation Dance Academy at recitals across the metro area.

Photo provided by Ovation Dance

Additional copies of the Mission Magazine are available at participating advertisers. You can also view it on the City's website, [www.missionks.org](http://www.missionks.org). To advertise in Mission Magazine, contact Angie Riffel at 913.951.8446 or [ariffel@metromediapublishers.com](mailto:ariffel@metromediapublishers.com). If you have a story idea, contact Laura Smith at 913.676.8352 or [lsmith@missionks.org](mailto:lsmith@missionks.org).

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# Three cheers for Ovation



Classes at Ovation Dance Academy are offered for all skill sets and range from ages two through adult.

# Mission Dance Academy welcomes all skill levels to their classes

By Kris Baker • Photos provided by Ovation Dance Academy

When creating a dance performance you start by developing a character.

The dancer becomes someone the audience relates to and enjoys following along in their journey as they use movement to express emotions, thoughts and a perspective on life.

Alex Hess has been a dancer since she first put on a pink tutu at four years old. As she jéted and pirouetted through her performances, a deep love of dance began to take hold. She became passionate about all forms of dance. She was no stranger to the stage as she leapt at every opportunity to perform. By the time she was in high school, she was honing her craft and soon began accepting roles as teacher and instructor. She was captain of the Shawnee Mission South Varsity and Junior Varsity dance teams. In college she led Baker University to their first NAIA national dance championship. After receiving her degree in Exercise Science from Baker University, Hess began teaching, choreographing, and coaching in the Kansas City area. She has been the head coach of both the Shawnee Mission South Pacesetters and the Blue Valley Southwest Glitter Girls. Her choreography has been seen on stage at local and national dance competitions and musicals.

Hess's life as a dancer has come full circle as she now teaches and inspires a new generation of young performers at Ovation Dance Academy (ODA). Dancing has shaped who Hess is today, and she has always wanted to share that with others.

"Dance has always been my joy and safe place," Hess said. "I tried many sports as a child. When I found dance and performing, I found something that felt natural. I love helping my students find that same feeling."

## THE FIRST STEPS OF A GROWING BUSINESS

Ovation Dance Academy offers classes for dancers and tumblers ages two through adult. Their company and squad



Alex Hess' life as a dancer led her to opening Ovation Dance Academy in Mission. Hess is here with her dog Tilly, 'Chief Happiness Officer.'

dancers participate in competitive dance, and the tumbling team participates in competitive tumbling. The academy offers non-competitive programs through four academy programs: preschool academy (preschool dance and tumbling), lower academy (K-second grade dance), upper academy (third-12 grade dance), tumbling academy (K-12 grade tumbling) and adult dance and fitness classes.

The class offerings include everything from bitty ballet to combo tap and ballet to tap and jazz classes, tumbling, musical theatre dance, modern, lyrical, hip hop, clogging and more. Ovation's students have been recognized for their hard work in all of these disciplines.

"Our ODA company and squad dancers are regularly recognized and awarded at regional and national dance competitions," Hess said. "We just expanded our tumbling program to include a competitive tumbling team and have begun participating in local tumbling meets."

Ovation opened in November 2016 with less than 10 students enrolled. By January 2017 they had 50 students participating in classes. This school year they will have nearly 650 students participating in 108 classes each week. Students may take anywhere from one to ten classes a week based on their program, interests and desired time commitment.

"We really strive to find a place for everyone at Ovation," Hess said. "The growth has been tremendous since we opened."

ODA added a second location in the Mission Mart shopping center in the fall of 2019. The original location was 2,400 square feet with two dance studios and a small lobby on the front side of the center. The 2019 expansion, located on the back side of the shopping center, gave Hess another 3,400 square feet to dance within. At the beginning of 2023, it became apparent they needed even more room to stretch their legs.

"I knew I wanted to stay in Mission, and would love to stay in the Mission Mart

shopping center," Hess said. "We were fortunate to acquire the space next door to our original location, and I am very proud of our facilities."

ODA was able to add about 4,400 square feet- a large lobby, a break room for the dancers, two more dance studios, a large staff office, and space for a future dance boutique. Hess explains all of the studios are equipped with professionally sprung Marley flooring, considered the best for the safety of dancers and tumblers. During COVID they also added a Synexis air and surface purification system in the HVAC in the studios.

As a business owner she learned how important the right location is to their

success. When Hess was looking to open her studio, she didn't have a particular location in mind. She was really looking for the city and community that felt like the right fit. Growing up in Overland Park and attending the Shawnee Mission School District, Hess' search brought her to Mission. Easily accessed from many areas of the Kansas City and Johnson County area, the city seemed wonderfully supportive of small businesses and there were lots of young and growing families.

"I have enjoyed becoming part of the small business community through the Northeast Johnson County Chamber. I also feel that my mission of creating an inclusive and welcoming dance studio that embraces all of our students lines up with the values of many of the families in this area. It ended up being a perfect fit," Hess shared.

## THE NEXT STEPS

Individual goals are set for each student at Ovation. Hess has also set personal goals for herself. Recognizing that everyone brings a unique rhythm to how they dance, she wants to continue to foster that in young people and grow their self confidence. She knows how exciting a rousing round of applause can be, but she also believes the best ovation a person can receive is from oneself.

"I would love to see ODA continue to grow and thrive," Hess said. "I love finding more ways for students to get involved and developing programs that fit our students' needs and desired level of commitment." Hess hopes her students will continue to find their community and a place they belong at Ovation, whether they are taking one class or ten classes.

Hess is proud of their upcoming recital in June for all of ODA's students. The recitals are held in professional theatres and this year's event will take place at Johnson County Community College's Yardley Hall.

"Most importantly though, I am proud of the community we have built at ODA," Hess said. "We are consistently recognized by parents and students as a welcoming environment and safe space for their child."

Aspiring dancers can visit Ovation Dance Academy at 5325 Johnson Drive or 5300 Martway Street in the Mission Mart Shopping Center. For more information visit their website at [ovationdancekc.com](http://ovationdancekc.com).



Alex Hess and her adult tap class pose after the class competed at an event called Masquerade.



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As the parents of two sons, Kelly and Jeff Dehnert opened Lil' Dudes to fill a need they saw in the market.



# LIL' DUDES offers BIG choices for boys' clothes

By Kris Baker

"Where would I find boys' jeans?"  
 "They are on the one rack at the back of the store."

"What about all the racks in front?"  
 "That's for the girls' clothes."

According to Kelly Dehnert conversations similar to this were taking place for parents all over the metro area.

Row after row, at store after store, Kelly and her husband Jeff saw the same thing. Pretty dresses, sparkly bows, flowery shoes; fun and fashionable clothes for little girls were everywhere. What about the little dudes?

Clothes shopping for the Dehnerts' two sons highlighted a need for more options for boys' clothes. As their sons aged the Dehnerts found new challenges in outfitting them. Selections were so limited that sometimes the only choices were what fit. The Dehnerts decided they could fill this niche by creating a destination boutique with a primary focus on clothes for boys ages newborn to middle school.

"All the really cute, unique items were for girls," Kelly said. "All the boys' stuff was mass produced and boring. We thought boys should get some of the love too."

"Little dudes want to be bigger dudes," Jeff continued. "A lot of times boys don't want something that looks too kiddie. They want clothes that seem more grownup."

Kelly describes their apparel as "cool, not cutesy. Perhaps not edgy, but definitely a store with a little more

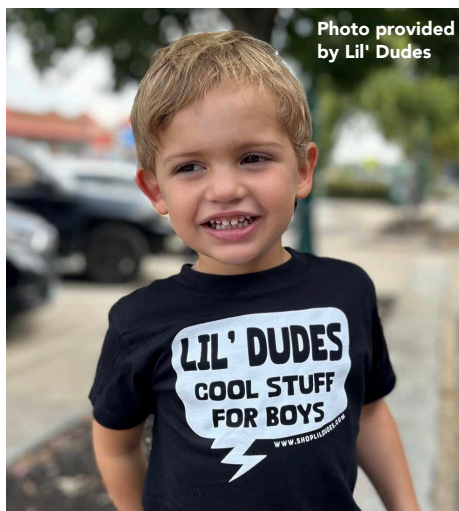


Photo provided by Lil' Dudes

trendy vibe both in looks and durability. Lil' Dudes has clothes that can survive outdoor play from even the rowdiest of young boys."

To help parents showcase their little guys, Jeff and Kelly found a location in downtown Mission to open Lil' Dudes, the store with "Cool stuff for boys." Their vision became a full-fledged business; now the work of nurturing that vision continues. Since it opened last September, Jeff and Kelly are excited by how business has taken off.

"I used to be in a different line of work, but it was always a dream of mine to own a store like this," Jeff said. "It feels great whenever we have parents come in and say, 'Finally, this is the store I have been looking for.' When we see the looks on young people's faces when they find something they love, it makes me feel like a kid again."

The clothes make the man, and the Lil' Dude as well. Unique designs, exclusive to Lil' Dudes, fill their shelves. The Dehnerts have accomplished this by building a strong, diverse supplier group. From military inspired bomber jackets to vintage graphic tees to high quality toys there are items that can be passed down through the years. The Dehnerts have found others from around the country specializing in original designs, including faith-based items and toddler clothes.

Jeff admits their most popular items



Photo provided by Lil' Dudes

right now feature the back-to-back Super Bowl Champion Kansas City Chiefs. Lil' Dudes unique designs are so popular, they were one of 5 vendors selected to participate at the Union Station Pre-Super Bowl celebration week, and the only children's clothier to attend. The items are so popular fathers have been overheard saying they wish they could wear what their sons were buying.

"We added a Big Dudes section," Jeff said. "Dads can pick up shirts and hats too. It's not surprising to see dads and sons coming out in matching outfits."

Girls are not left out at Lil' Dudes. A certain pop music sensation also is represented right next to the Chiefs gear.

"Taylor Swift items are not the only thing we have that girls like," Kelly said. "About 60% of our clothing is gender neutral and we have been excited to see them come in and shop."

Kelly says traffic to the store has been driven primarily by word of mouth.

"We are meeting more and more people, and the support has been overwhelming," Kelly said. "I can't imagine running the store anywhere else now. There is a small town feel here, while at the same time everything feels alive. The response we have gotten has helped to make our dream a reality."

Lil' Dudes is located at 6124 Johnson Dr. in Mission. To see more of what they offer visit [shoplildudes.com](http://shoplildudes.com).

## DUDE OF THE MONTH



Every month Lil' Dudes has a Dude of the Month Winner. Moms and Dads can enter their dudes and the winner will receive a \$25 gift card and some featured items. They also get to pick a prize from the Lil' Dudes treasure box.

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# STUDENT FILMMAKER SCARES UP AWARD AT FILM FESTIVAL

By Kris Baker

All over town there are stories of the very youngest Mission residents having some of the biggest dreams. Hocker Grove Middle School seventh grader Henry Lowe's dream was to follow in the footsteps of his cinema heroes like Kubrick, Carpenter and Craven, and direct his own movie. One dark night last September, at the Boulevard Drive-In Theatre, Lowe saw his dream become a reality on the big screen. It was a dream he hoped might give a few nightmares to people in the audience. It was the night that terror descended on the plains.

"I started out making simple videos during the pandemic," Lowe said. "I was really enjoying it, so I began to plan my films with storyboards/ideas in my mind."

To be exact, it was the Terror on the Plains Horror Film Festival. The Terror on the Plains has been scaring people since 2012, showcasing short horror films by Kansas City filmmakers. When he found out he had a chance to enter, Lowe jumped (in excitement, not fear) at the chance.

"A while back I asked my mom to keep an eye out for film competitions I could enter," Lowe said. "She found Terror on the Plains Film Festival and asked if I wanted to make a short horror film for it."

Lowe's origin story goes back to a real life terror that engulfed the planet.

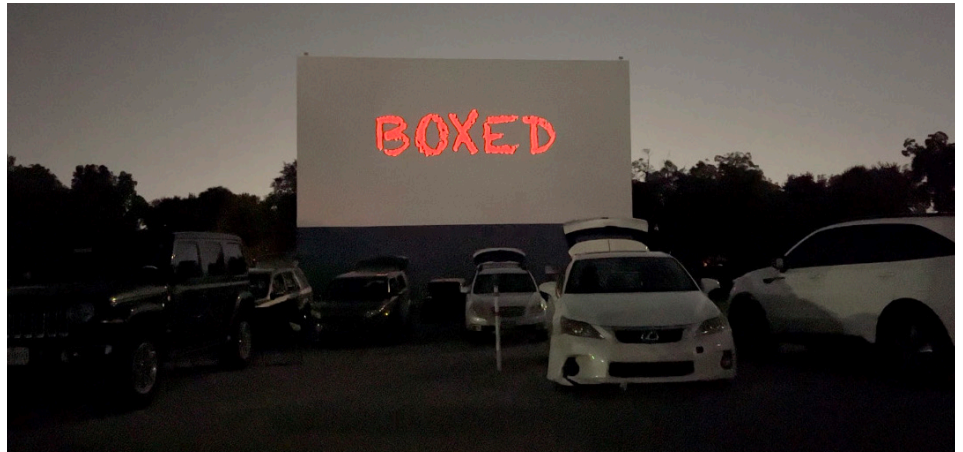
"I started out making simple videos during the pandemic," Lowe said. "I was really enjoying it, so I began to plan my films with storyboards/ideas in my mind."

A horror film festival seemed perfect to Lowe as it was a place he could celebrate his love of cinema, as well as the macabre.

"I enjoy creepy and off putting things, especially when it comes to movies," Lowe said. "Some of my favorite films are The Shining, Train to Busan, and Shaun of the Dead."

Lowe grabbed a couple of his friends and fellow students, Forest VonOntjes and Quinten Miti, to star in his film, and together they created the short film *Boxed*.

"They did everything themselves, all the



When a mysterious box arrives at Mark Cory's house he and his friend attempt to unravel the secret of the void inside. Soon they are pulled into a dangerous world in Henry Lowe's film *Boxed* which played last year at the Terror on the Plains Film Festival.

Henry Lowe, Quinten Miti and Forest VonOntjes attend the Terror on The Plains horror film festival and receive the audience favorite award.

writing, filming, acting; they worked very hard to put this great film together," Lowe's mother Lauren Macomber said. "It was great to see Henry have so much passion for this project."

Entering the big leagues of competitive filmmaking did offer a few challenges. Filming and directing were things Lowe was familiar with, however there were some more technical aspects that were harder

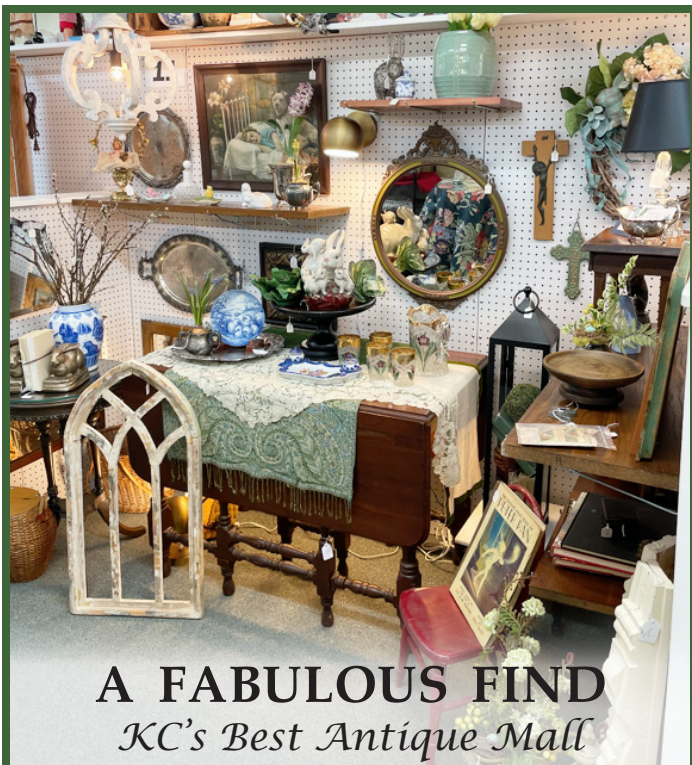
"Honestly, it was the editing and formatting for the submission," Lowe said when asked what were the biggest challenges with making the movie.

Their work paid off; *Boxed* won the audience favorite award at Terror on the Plains. Lowe and his friends attended the festival to receive the coveted "Skully

Award" in person. The festival turned out to be a fun event where Lowe got to interact with other aspiring film auteurs. They also got to watch horror classics, *The Thing* and *A Nightmare on Elm Street*, on the drive-in screen. Lowe said the experience has been a rewarding one. One he intends to build on. Every good scary movie deserves a sequel. If not a sequel to *Boxed*, Lowe does see several more lights and frights in his future.

"Of course," Lowe said. "It's one of my passions, and I hope to create more."

The 2024 Terror of the Plains Horror Film Festival takes place Sept. 27-28 and you can learn more about the festival by visiting [terrorontheplains.com](http://terrorontheplains.com).



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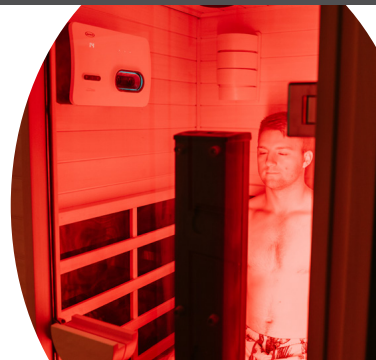
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**L to R:** Debbie Kring (Ward III), Hillary Parker-Thomas (Ward I), Mayor Sollie Flora, Brian Schmid (Ward III), Trent Boultinghouse (Ward I), Lea Loudon (Ward II), Ben ChocieJ (Ward IV), Cheryl Carpenter-Davis (Ward IV), and Mary Ryherd (Ward II)

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Fairway, Mission and Prairie Village will be participating in the Super Pool Pass this year. Super Pool Pass memberships can be purchased at the Powell Community Center. Non-residents must be in the 2nd consecutive year of a Mission pool membership to be eligible for a Super Pass Membership through Mission. A sticker will be added to your regular MFAC pass for the 2024 season to show that you are a passholder for the season.



Pricing has been changed to an individual model, where residents will pay \$20 per person for a Super Pool Pass. Get a jump on summer and purchase yours today!

## Water Works Park Groundbreaking

In 2019, Mission contracted with Confluence to begin master planning improvements for each of the City's major parks. Improvements to Water Works Park were a focus and priority of the Parks, Recreation + Tree Commission. Through the conceptual planning process, improvements totaling just over \$1.5 million were identified and approved. Based on the size of the property and its proximity to Rushton Elementary, stakeholders, neighbors, PRT members and the City Council agreed and planned to complete the entire conceptual design as one project coinciding with the rebuild of Rushton Elementary School. The goal was to

have the park improvements installed when students returned to Rushton Elementary in August of 2024. Those plans began to come to fruition in January of 2024 with a groundbreaking ceremony at the site that



welcomed elected officials, members of the Parks, Recreation + Tree Commission, City staff, neighbors, and students from Rushton Elementary School.

Project improvements include: a shelter and restrooms to support and enhance the current programming, new 10-foot-wide concrete trails connecting the park to Rushton Elementary School and providing alternative routes along the park, water fountain, solar lighting along one central route, an All-Abilities playground with poured in place rubber surfacing and shade sails, trash and recycling receptacles, benches, bike racks, native plantings, a solar picnic table/charging station and additional site furnishings. Demolition of the existing parking lot and construction of a new off-street parking lot along 53rd Street will increase the number of existing parking spaces and keep child pick-up/drop-off farther away from traffic.

You can follow the progress on Water Works Park and others City projects on the City's website at [www.missionks.org](http://www.missionks.org)



## New Councilmembers Join Mission City Council

In December 2023, Councilmember Trent Boultinghouse (Ward I) and Mary Ryherd (Ward II) were re-elected to the City Council, and new Councilmembers Brian Schmid (Ward III) and Cheryl Carpenter-Davis (Ward IV) were sworn in to serve four-year terms on the Mission City Council.

Councilmember Brian Schmid is focused on collaborating with residents to identify areas most in need of improvement, and to quickly implement remediation projects with a well-established record of success. He hopes to bring humanscale development, with a heavy emphasis on walkability and economic resiliency, to the city. As a Mission resident since 2008, he previously served on both the Parks, Recreation, + Tree Commission and the Planning Commission.

In his personal life, you can find Brian and his wife, Lauren (and sometimes their Westie, Kristofferson), out and about in Mission. Please stop and say hi if you see them.



Councilmember Cheryl Carpenter-Davis was elected to the Mission City Council in November of 2023 and currently serves as a committee member on the Mission Family Adoption Program. Her previous involvement in community service includes representing the City of Mission on the Johnson County Drug and Alcohol Council, board of directors for Family Conservancy, and the board of directors for the Independence Chamber of Commerce.

In her spare time, she enjoys gardening, traveling, and bird-watching with her husband.

## Citywide Clean Up Event

The City of Mission will honor Earth Day with its annual Citywide Clean Up event on Saturday, April 20 (rainout date April 27) at Beverly Park, 5935 Beverly. Registration for both groups and individuals is open through April 10, 2024 on our website at [www.missionks.org](http://www.missionks.org)

All registered attendees will get a 2024 t-shirt and will be able to take pride in knowing they've worked to make Mission a better place. The day will begin with a kick-off breakfast at Beverly Park beginning at 9:00 a.m. After a group photo at 9:25 a.m., groups will be invited to head to their assigned cleanup locations for the rest of the morning. This event is the perfect way to connect with your neighbors, make new friends, and show your pride in Mission!





## Championship Tree Award

Congratulations to Mission resident Barry Oppenheimer for having his stunning maple tree selected as the 2023 Championship Tree! The tree delights neighbors and brings beauty, shade and lovely color to the entire neighborhood. If you know a tree worthy of recognition, you can find a nomination form and more information on the City's website at [www.missionks.org/city-services/sustainable-mission/tree-programs/](http://www.missionks.org/city-services/sustainable-mission/tree-programs/)

## Don't Let High Weeds and Grass Take Over

As spring approaches, please be reminded that all property owners must keep weeds and grass shorter than eight inches in height. Sweeping or blowing lawn and yard debris into the street is prohibited. Untended or uncontrolled brush and woody vines are classified as nuisance weeds and should be removed. This is a common problem along fence lines and around established trees and bushes.



## Door to Door Solicitations



As temperatures start to warm up, residents may notice an increase in door-to-door sales and soliciting. Here are a few reminders from the City Clerk about what is allowed in Mission.

- Door to door solicitation is allowed in Mission ONLY with a valid permit which should be displayed immediately upon request.
- Any type of "No Soliciting" sign displayed on or near your door should stop a solicitor from knocking. (This does not apply to political candidates or those sharing religious information.)
- No door-to-door sales should occur before 8 a.m. or after 8 p.m.
- If you have a solicitor who violates any of these rules, please call the Mission Police Department's non-emergency number at 913.676.8300 to make a report.
- "No Soliciting" signs are available to all Mission residents, free of cost, at City Hall.

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# Mission Community Food Pantry

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## COMMUNITY REBATE PROGRAM



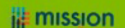
### Income Requirements

Household Size	Maximum Total Household Income <b>NOT</b> Adjusted Gross Income
1	\$46,600
2	\$53,300
3	\$59,950
4	\$66,600
5	\$71,950
6	\$77,250
7	\$82,600
8+	\$87,900

Mission's Community Rebate Program is rolling out for 2024. This program allows income-eligible residents to apply to receive up to 100% rebate for City telephone, electricity, or gas franchise fees for the year, up to 100% rebate of City property taxes (excluding special assessments), and up to 50% of the Mission solid waste and storm water utility fees. To qualify, residents must meet the income guidelines and submit an application. To learn more or to apply, please contact the Community Development Department at (913) 676-8358 or visit our website at [www.missionks.org](http://www.missionks.org).

## MISSION'S ANNUAL CITYWIDE GARAGE SALE

May 2-4, 2024



Citywide garage sales will be held Thursday, May 2 through Saturday, May 4. Please register online to have your sale listed in our interactive and printed maps. Registration information can be found on our website at <https://www.missionks.org/news/citywide-garage-sale-2/>



Dive into fun!



## Mission Family Aquatic Center Opens Memorial Day Weekend!

### Hours:

Monday-Saturday, 12-7 p.m. and  
Sunday, 12-6 p.m. (subject to change)

Season Passes are available now - sold  
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For daily fees and more membership  
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 mission  
Kansas



## Bulky Item Pick-up 2024

Contact GFL to report missed pick-ups:  
[kccustomer@glfl.com](mailto:kccustomer@glfl.com) | 816.380.5595

January 22 - 26	July 22 - 26
February 26 - Mar. 1	August 26 - 30
March 25 - 29	September 23 - 27
April 22 - 26	October 28 - Nov. 1
May 27 - 31	November 25 - 29
June 24 - 28	December 23 - 27



[missionks.org](http://missionks.org)

### GFL holidays observed:

- New Year's Day
  - Independence Day
  - Thanksgiving Day
  - Christmas Day
- \* Check website for how holidays impact collection dates.

Swing by City Hall for your free  
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# KANSAS ONLINE VOTER REGISTRATION

Are you ready to vote in the 2024 election? Online voter registration is available from the State of Kansas at <https://www.kdor.ks.gov/apps/voterreg/>. To register to vote online:

1. Verify your voting eligibility.
2. Verify that you have a valid driver's license or non-driver's identification card.
3. Enter your personal information.
4. Review and submit your information.

If you have questions, please call 1-800-262-VOTE(8683)

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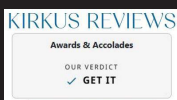


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Author, Holy Terror



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Thomas Myers, Will VanAlstine and Lucas Capistrant teamed up to bring a Bricks & Minifigs store to the Kansas City area.

# A COLLECTOR'S DREAM

New and old LEGO® fans will find what they need at Bricks & Minifigs

By Kris Baker • Photos by Kathy DeLorenzo

Will VanAlstine was a LEGO® kid. "My entire childhood I was into collectibles, and LEGO® really fed into that," VanAlstine said. "It's the best toy ever created."

When VanAlstine and his best friend, Lucas Capistrant, were playing with their LEGO® sets as kids little did they know they were building a foundation which would one day turn into an up-and-coming business. As adults they are still playing (and working) with LEGO®, operating Bricks & Minifigs in the Mission Mart shopping center.

VanAlstine traveled a few other paths before he reached this current destination.

"In college I was obsessed with sneakers," VanAlstine said. "I was fascinated by the aftermarket and how after the sneakers were discontinued their prices would increase." Selling sneakers was his first business.

The pieces began to fall into place when VanAlstine then took his entrepreneurial spirit and linked up with the Bricks & Minifigs company, agreeing to open a franchise. There was a gap in the aftermarket LEGO® world, and VanAlstine knew the Kansas City area would be a perfect fit. Bricks & Minifigs is a franchise specializing in selling aftermarket LEGO®

sets and figures. Typical LEGO® sets are available in stores for around a year; after that they can be incredibly hard to find for collectors. Bricks & Minifigs has LEGO® sets and figures from the 1970s to today. They also have a party room available to rent for birthdays and other events.

"We wanted to be in Kansas City, but we weren't sure where. Then we kind of stumbled upon Mission, just driving down Johnson Drive," VanAlstine said. "We knew this was the place."

Now VanAlstine just needed to assemble his team.

"The first person I called was Lucas,"

VanAlstine said. Capistrant came aboard as the general manager and Will attributes much of the success of their launch to Lucas' hard work.

Next VanAlstine knew he needed to build an online presence. He noticed a local content creator who was a LEGO® and Star Wars enthusiast who went by Obi-Wan Kenobricks. Will reached out to arrange a meeting and soon Thomas Myers was using his Jedi powers as their new social media manager.

"Social media is so important to keep the public's eyes on your business," Myers said. "We post a lot of fun videos to keep our followers engaged."

Bricks & Minifigs just reached 3,000 followers on Instagram. Keeping a consistent connection to their community is crucial to a business like this one. They made a couple of initial investments in classic sets before they opened, but now VanAlstine relies on people to bring in their old LEGO® items, where the Bricks & Minifigs team buys them for money or store credit. They then take the used sets, break them down, ensure they are complete, reseal and then resell them.

The rarest, most expensive item at Bricks & Minifigs is a pirate set from 1992 valued at \$2,200. Used pieces like this can mean big payouts for those who bring them in. Those dusty old sets in your attic may be your buried treasure.

"Our business has literally been built by the community," VanAlstine said. "So we try to give back whenever we can."

## ADVENTURES WITH LEGO®

There are a few different terms used at Bricks & Minifigs. One is AFOL - Adult



Fan of LEGO®, collectors who often like to compete in building events. Another is MOC - My Own Creation, where a creator builds something unique out of LEGO® that is not a set. The front of their store features some of these unique models built by Mission residents of all ages. Kids and collectors are all welcome to come play in this little corner of the LEGO® universe. Since opening last Fall, the store has hosted a number of events.

"There are as many different kinds of LEGO®, and LEGO® fans, as there are kinds

of people," Myers said.

Over the holidays Bricks & Minifigs held an ornament making event. Over 100 kids attended and got to make their own LEGO® ornaments and take them home. Inspired by the success of this event, VanAlstine said they plan to make this a yearly event.

The team has seen some surprising connections thanks to a love for LEGO®.

"My dad bought my mom a LEGO® set of the London skyline for Valentine's Day," Myers said. "I didn't even know he liked LEGO®."

The biggest LEGO® project Myers ever attempted was putting together a bust of Star Wars villain Darth Maul. He spent almost a year gathering the thousands of mostly black pieces. He got the last few hundred blocks from VanAlstine's store the day before their grand opening. Myers worked from 3 p.m. to the early morning hours putting the fearsome character together. The bust now looks out the store's window, ready to greet each new visitor.

"We want people to come in and have fun," VanAlstine said. "We have one collector who drives all the way from Topeka a couple of times a week." Typically, people spend a couple of hours in the store looking for a new set, or maybe just that one block they still need. VanAlstine notes, "The more people come in, the more we can grow. We have been very lucky."

Bricks & Minifigs is located at 5327 Johnson Dr., in the Mission Mart shopping center.

To discover more or to find all of their online platforms visit [bricksandminifigs.com/mission-ks](http://bricksandminifigs.com/mission-ks).



Used LEGO sets at Bricks & Minifigs are certified by the team that all of the pieces are included.



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816-216-6485
- BAR WEST SHAWNEE**  
7174 Renner Rd., Shawnee, KS 66217  
913-248-9378
- THE BAR OLATHE**  
14871 151st Street, Olathe, KS 66062  
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2023 Counselors gather to kick off the summer camp season (Rosie Keaton-Ferren pictured second from right in green shirt, Jenny Smith pictured far left).

# MISSION SUMMER CAMP

## From camper to counselor

The ever-popular Mission Summer Camp, which has spanned nearly two decades, has made its mark on the hearts of countless Mission residents. Many of those are children who once scampered the halls as campers and are returning as counselors.

Camp counselors like Rosie Keaton-Ferren and Phoenix Fisk didn't give up on the idea of summer camp after aging out as campers. Their fond memories of a summer well spent were a major draw for each of them when it came time to find a summer job.

Rosie Keaton-Ferren began her Mission Summer Camp journey as a kindergartener and loved spending summers with what she calls her "camp family."

A lifelong Mission resident and current freshman at St. Mary's University, Rosie remembers the Powell Community Center as an integral part of her childhood. "(My sister Katie and I) were always up there. It feels like we grew up in the community center." Rosie reached out to apply for

a counselor's position as soon as she was eligible. "I was just turning 16 as the summer started, which meant I could be hired, and I couldn't wait!"

Remembering the close relationships formed with her counselors and fellow campers, Rosie hopes to bring that family feel to the program each summer. "It was like a home away from home, and now as a counselor, I just want to be that for the little kids I have each year."

Rosie can't help but notice some major changes over the many years she's been involved with the camp. "The growth that the community center and pool have had is huge. It's grown leaps and bounds, in a good way, from what it was when I was a kid."

For current University of Kansas freshman Phoenix Fisk, the Mission Summer Camp was the perfect place to enjoy time with friends when the school year wound down. Summers spent in the program came to define what summer should be—full of swimming, friends, activities, and day trips.

"As a camper, I really enjoyed the field trips. I don't have any siblings, so getting to hang out with a lot of kids was such a fun experience for me."

Phoenix enjoyed several years as a camper in both the original Mission Summer Camp and the Teen and Tween program. When the time came to find summer employment, she too wasn't quite willing to let go of all that summer fun just yet.

"I knew (from my experience at camp) that working here would be a fun job, and it actually doesn't even feel like a job because we're having such a good time!" says Phoenix. From small things like finally getting access to the counselor's closet where all the goodies are stored, to the relationships formed between counselors and campers, both Phoenix and Rosie continue to enjoy every minute of the Mission Summer Camp ride.

Having former campers jump at the chance to return as counselors



is no surprise to Recreation Program Supervisor Jenny Smith, who is approaching her tenth year with the City of Mission and the Mission Summer Camp. "What we do here has such an impact on them as children that they want to come back as adults." Jenny was thrilled to see both Phoenix and Rosie come back as counselors as she remembered each of them as campers.

"In the interviews I have (with former campers), it is so validating to hear them say 'I loved coming here, I loved my time here, I loved the other campers, and I loved my counselors, and I want to be that for someone else!'" said Jenny.

**"It's a family here," Rosie said. "Nothing compares to this environment. It's a great environment to work in and it was a great environment to grow up in."**

While there are many things that set the Mission Summer Camp apart, Smith notes that one important area of focus is the training and support provided to counselors. "With that training and the buy-in we get from our counselors, it's special. They are dedicated and are able

to form amazing relationships."

Another thing that brings happiness to campers and counselors alike? Staying busy. Campers are always on the move in one way or another, and counselors play a large role in choosing and directing activity. "We go swimming four days a week, we do field trips, we have different add-on programs according to the interest of the campers: tennis, basketball, swimming, pickleball, chess, arts and crafts and Legos, just to name a few. The sheer variety that we can offer and the consistent engagement of the campers is amazing," Smith says, noting that the popularity of the program reflects the efforts put forth to make summer camp much more than just babysitting. "We keep our objectives and goals clear," Jenny says. "We are here to provide an experience every day."

As Rosie winds up her freshman year of college she looks forward to returning to Mission Summer camp for a fourth season as a counselor. "It's a family here," Rosie said. "Nothing compares to this environment. It's a great environment to work in and it was a great environment to grow up in."



Rosie and a camper enjoying a "theme" day at Winter Break Camp.



Phoenix Fisk will soon be wrapping up her freshman year at the University of Kansas.





Mandy Chick is taking to the track and carving out her name as a driver on the ARCA racing series.

# Where Is She Now?

## Mandy Chick on track for a bright future

Story by Kate Deacon • Photos by the Chick family

**K**eeping up with Mandy Chick is not for the faint of heart. As a driver on the ARCA racing series, Mandy can be found at speeds of up to 180 miles per hour, but she's also aiming for the finish line at Rose-Hulman Institute of Technology, where she'll graduate with multiple majors and will be well on her way to a master's degree by Thanksgiving.

The daughter of Fire Chief Steve Chick, Jr. of Consolidated Fire Department #2, which proudly serves Mission KS, was featured in these pages in 2019 as she prepared to finish high school. Five years later, she's moving faster than ever!

Not only is Mandy the driver and co-owner of the Chick Engineering racing team (along with dad Steve, Mom Jennifer and Grandpa Steve Chick, Sr.), she is a full-time student at Rose-Hulman Institute of Technology, a private engineering school in Indiana.

"It's pretty wild," Mandy said. "I'm getting my bachelor's degree in mechanical engineering and my master's in engineering management at the same time."

Throw in minors in economics and entrepreneurial studies and you begin to see—Mandy thrives while juggling many things at once. "It's chaos in some ways, but I'm such an engineering personality type that I have spreadsheets that keep me on track."

In 2022, the Chick family sold their late model racing team and took advantage of an opportunity to purchase a team in the ARCA Menards Series. Categorized as a professional league of racing under the NASCAR umbrella, the ARCA series tours the country and hosts races at iconic venues. Mandy's debut in the ARCA series was at the Indianapolis Raceway Park in July of 2022.

From there, Mandy says the focus was on slowly building the team, one race at a time.

"We hit it big with Daytona the next year, with a top five finish in our first Super Speedway race ever," Mandy says. "Daytona is absolutely amazing. It's such a cool place with so much history."

As partial owner of the racing team



**Chick Engineering Team is one of the only family-owned racing teams on their circuit.**

Chick Engineering, Mandy is involved in every facet of team operations. From developing relationships with marketing partners, to contemplating merchandise and car wrap designs, to the intense physical training that is integral to the sport, Mandy enjoys each aspect of the racing team experience.

"One of the biggest misconceptions about race car drivers is most people think we just get behind the wheel, turn left, and that's it. But there's so much more that goes into it!"

On top of managing the team as a business, there's the physical racing preparation. Weekly training ranges from fitness workouts, mental preparation, learning the intricacies of each track, and even undergoing heat training to endure the high temperatures involved in racing.

Focused hydration and a cooling suit help, but most people don't realize how hot it can get inside the race car. Mandy remembers, "One time we measured my leg temperature at 170 degrees, and my shoes were melting in the floorboard of the car."

Looking ahead to the 2024 season, Mandy is enthusiastic about the team's prospects overall. "We're one of the only family-owned teams in our series, [operating on] a smaller budget than what most teams run on. And we're having much success." Kicking off the 2024 season with a return to Daytona, Chick Engineering hopes to run 6-8 races this year.

After Daytona (and a few final exams)

comes Talladega, then it's home to the Kansas Speedway in May. The racing lineup continues through the summer and fall, when Mandy will finish up her master's degree and hopes to secure an engineering position at General Motors.

"Racing is always number one, but I have such passions in the engineering world as well that I don't think I could completely get out of engineering...I love my position with General Motors," Mandy said. She is looking forward to a summer internship which will lead to a full-time position with GM beginning in January of 2025.

And if all that wasn't enough.....why not throw a wedding into the mix? Mandy plans to marry Chick Engineering team member Dalton Gregory in December 2024, then it's off to the races again—she's already got her eye on the 2025 season!

Mandy is quick to brag on her team. "Our team is all volunteer crew members; most of them are either retired or active firefighters and they work really hard," she said. "They're very dedicated. The fact that we're a small, family-owned team from a little town in Kansas and we're having these kinds of successes. I'm just really proud to be where we are!"

Plan to cheer on Mandy and the Chick Engineering Team as the ARCA Menards Series returns to the Kansas Speedway on May 4, 2024. To keep pace with Mandy and her racing visit [www.mandychick.com](http://www.mandychick.com) or on Facebook @MandyChick.



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## Upcoming Events

### OK Kid's Day

Sat. May 4 | 10AM | Streamway Park

### Yoga on Deck

Fri. June 7 | 7:30PM | MFAC  
Fri. Aug. 23 | 7:30PM | MFAC

### Movies in the Park

Fri. June 14 | Dusk | Mohawk Park (Migration)  
Fri. Aug. 9 | Dusk | Andersen Park (Kung Fu Panda 4)

### Backyard Campout

Fri. June 21 | 6PM | Andersen Park

### Adult Moonlight Swim

Sat. June 29 | 7PM | MFAC

### Mission Summer Family Picnic

Sat. July 13 | 6PM | Broadmoor Park

### Under the Sea Pool Party

Sat. July 27 | 6PM | MFAC

### Concert in the Park

Fri. Aug. 30 | 6PM | Broadmoor Park

## MFAC

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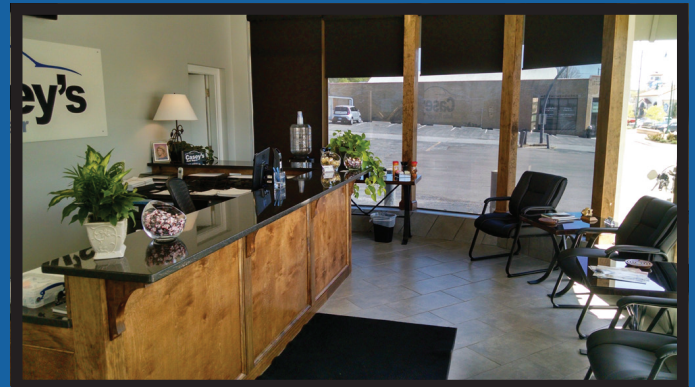
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