

Promoting community and economic growth in our rural community.

Galen Manners

I grew up as a farm kid in rural Labette County. Looking back at my childhood, I loved every minute of it. If given the opportunity, I would not change a thing, but I didn't always see it this way. Growing up was a lot of hard work and long hours. My true passion growing up was not "farming". I found more enjoyment in the challenges of farming such as repairing equipment and building things to make farming easier and I enjoyed the lifestyle surrounding farming. The "farming" part, growing and harvesting crops, was what we did out of necessity to earn an income.

I enjoyed working in the shop fixing things more than being in the field. I had a pretty good self taught understanding of electricity but knew there was a lot left to learn. I was fortunate to be able to attend Labette County High School. I was able to take four years of Electronics at LCHS under one of the best instructors I have ever had, Marty Warren. I learned a wealth of information. I was also in SkillsUSA where I held offices and competed at Nationals. SkillsUSA helped provide a foundation for professionalism; a priceless trait in today's world. I see so many people struggling primarily because of a lack of self discipline and professionalism. The skills and values I learned at LCHS and SkillsUSA were life changing.

I went on to Kansas State University and obtained a Bachelor of Science degree in Electrical Engineering Technology. While at KSU, I worked for ICE Corporation part time. I went to full time at ICE after graduation. We did a wide variety of work at ICE. We designed and built electronic systems for agriculture products like automated milking systems and planter population monitors. We also had an avionics line where we built controls for commercial and military aircraft. I also got to work on a special project where we designed and built our own thick film hybrid circuits and custom ASICs.

ICE was a great experience but I had my heart set on California. After 2 years of full time I resigned from ICE as Senior Design Engineer to work for Pacific Sierra Research (PSR) in San Diego. At PSR we specialized in primarily one thing. We maintained Very Low Frequency (VLF) transmitters located around the world for the U.S. Navy. VLF transmitters are very large radio stations that communicate with submarines while submerged. The transmitters are 1 to 2 megawatt stations with huge antenna arrays. My time working with PSR was a wonderful experience. We would typically spend a month or two in the office designing and building modern electronic replacement components to replace aging and dated equipment at a site. We would then travel to the site to install the new equipment. I got to work with some of the finest engineers, travel the world, and play with "Top Secret" Navy toys.

While this was one of the greatest two years of my career, my wife and I were ready. Ready for what? We were ready to move back home and raise a family. We moved back to Parsons and I began working for Kansas Cellular. This was the gold rush of cellular. I started as a technician maintaining a few cell

sites. I was able to advance in the company to Operations Manager. I was in charge of daily operations managing the field technicians across the state. I was also in charge of all new construction. We were building 30 new towers and cell sites per year. What an awesome experience to be in a rapidly growing company, managing great people, and building the state's largest cellular network which is now owned by Verizon.

While working with Kansas Cellular, I started dabbling in wireless internet, primarily to get service to my house in the country so I could work from home. After a buyout, I was let go and decided to start building the wireless internet service. My goal was to deliver broadband internet service to rural Labette County. This was the birth of Wave Wireless. We began installing internet transmitters on silos and water towers to be able to offer wireless internet service to rural homes. It was a slow start but once things started to take off, we really gained momentum. Today, Wave Wireless has 7 employees, including my wife Sandy and myself. Sandy's expertise in finance along with my technical experience has taken our match made in heaven to also a match made for helping deliver broadband access to Labette County. Wave Wireless has over 20 transmitter locations and has also started doing fiber to the home. We have deployed fiber to the home internet service in Altamont Kansas. Altamont is the only town in Labette County to have fiber to the home internet service. Hopefully we can continue to grow and increase the quality of life and help improve economic growth in Southeast Kansas.

I have also been gracefully accepted back into the family farm. Farming has changed so drastically since my childhood. Today's farmer has to embrace technology. This makes being involved with farming a true joy to me. I can apply my technical expertise to our farming operation and help keep us up to date with the latest technologies in farming. I think I can wrap it up by saying the Prodigal Son is home and still feels like a child enjoying the farm lifestyle while being a geek.