

CULTIVATING LEARNING: WILD ABOUT WELLNESS



Wild About Wellness Brings Nearly 500 Together for an Evening of Fun and Connection

Families from across our community gathered at Brit Spaugh Zoo on June 18 for our inaugural Wild About Wellness event, and what an incredible evening it was! Nearly 500 attendees joined us for a wellness safari adventure designed to make conversations about mental health engaging, interactive, and fun for children and families.

Guests explored nine hands-on wellness stations where they practiced coping skills through

activities like bubble breathing, animal yoga, sensory play, emotional regulation games, and creating sensory bottles. One of the evening's most popular attractions was the Safari Shake Station, where 95 children made their own sensory bottles to take home, while 78 participants completed the full wellness adventure by visiting every activity station.

"One of the things I loved most about the evening was watching families learn and practice wellness skills together without it feeling like a lesson," said Event Coordinator Sara Arnberger. "We wanted to create a space where wellness felt exciting, and I think our community embraced that wholeheartedly."

The evening was made even more special through the support of our community partners, sponsors, volunteers, and the incredible staff at Brit Spaugh Zoo, who created memorable animal encounters throughout the event. We also extend our heartfelt thanks to Brand 17 BBQ, Soda Bop, On Point Entertainment, Becky Wasson, Barton County Youth Crew, Heart of Kansas, The Family Crisis Center, Sunflower Early Education Center, the Great Bend Recreation Commission, and our generous event sponsors for helping bring this vision to life.

The overwhelming response from our community reinforced what we already know: when families have opportunities to learn, laugh, and grow together, everyone benefits. We're already looking forward to making Wild About Wellness an annual tradition as we continue cultivating help, hope, and healing throughout our communities.

SMASHING STIGMA: **HOPEFEST 2026**

HopeFest 2026 Is Coming—Join Us for a Day of Hope, Healing, and Community

Mark your calendars for **Saturday, September 19**, because HopeFest 2026 is shaping up to be a day unlike anything our community has experienced before!

This free, family-friendly event will begin with a Sunrise Remembrance

Ceremony, honoring loved ones lost to suicide and addiction while offering hope to those continuing their journey. From there, the day comes alive with morning fitness on the courthouse lawn, interactive activities,

community resource vendors, live entertainment, delicious food trucks, specialty drinks, desserts, and plenty of fall-themed fun for all ages.

Throughout downtown Great Bend, you'll also experience "Because Every Story Deserves to Be Seen," our pop-up community art gallery showcasing works inspired by mental health, healing, resilience, recovery, and hope. As you explore, you'll discover hands-on wellness activities, learn practical tools for positive mental and physical health, and connect

with a special evening performance by nationally recognized comedian Mark Lundholm, whose powerful blend of comedy, storytelling, and recovery inspiration has impacted audiences across the country. Tickets are on sale now and are just \$10. This is the only ticketed portion of HopeFest—all daytime activities are completely free to attend.

- Sponsors are still needed to help make HopeFest possible.
- Mark Lundholm tickets are on sale now.

New activities and announcements are being added regularly, so be sure to visit www.thecentergb.org/hopefest to stay up to date.

We can't wait to spend the day with you as we celebrate hope, remember loved ones, support recovery, and build a stronger, healthier community—together.



with resources focused on suicide prevention, recovery, and overall well-being—all while enjoying a fun fall day with family and friends.

The day concludes

There are plenty of ways to get involved:

- Artist submissions are being accepted now for the "Because Every Story Deserves to Be Seen" gallery



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