

# LAWRENCE BUSINESS MAGAZINE

2024 Q4



## IMPACT *of* VOLUNTEERING

Fueling Growth, Connection, and Shaping Our Community



“ We let a river shower its banks with a spirit that invades the people living there, and we protect that river, knowing that without its blessings the people have no source of soul. ”

Thomas Moore

A SOURCE OF PRIDE

DAVID

SAN

Friends of the Kaw

by Darin White, photo by Steven Hertzog



Volunteers with the Friends of the Kaw not only take care of the Kansas River but help keep the water safe for the nearly 1 million Kansans who utilize it.

David Sain paddled the rivers in his younger years growing up in north-central Arkansas. Little did he know that years later, he would end up as integral part of the Friends of the Kaw organization, which monitors and takes care of the Kansas River.

The Kaw, as the river is known, runs from Fort Riley, Kansas, just outside of Junction City, through or near various cities such as Ogden, splitting Manhattan and Fairmount, south of St. George, north of Wabaunsee, south of Wamego, by Belvue. It continues adjacent to St. Mary's and Rossville, by Willard, south of Silver Lake, before cutting to the north edge of Topeka, through Lawrence and past to Fall Leaf, Eudora, Linwood, DeSoto, Bonner Springs, Edwardsville, Shawnee Heights and Kansas City, Kansas, before emptying into the Missouri River at the state line.

It wasn't Sain's intention to get involved in an organization and dive in headfirst, not only volunteering his time and resources, but also gathering deep friendships along the way. Sain initially got involved in 2016 to channel his frustrations with the direction the country was going into a way to make a change "instead of complaining or throwing money at things," he says.

Friends of the Kaw longtime board member and his next-door neighbor Lisa Grossman had made him aware of the organization previously. The group seemed like a good fit being he likes to stay fit and be physical, as well as enjoys kayaking. Sain had already paddled the Kaw in college with a dorm-sponsored event that had University of Kansas versus Kansas State University canoe races from Manhattan to Lawrence.

In the back of his mind, he remembers his architecture professor telling him how water issues were going to cause the next worldwide war, and this thought stuck with him. "At the time, I thought that it was a good cause to get involved in—volunteer work that would make me feel better—but it became way more," Sain explains.

This group of friends has paddled all 173 miles of the Kaw River (a designated nationwide water trail) in eight days together, camping on the sandbars and navigating the changing waterways. In addition, they spend time together around town and paddle other rivers around the country, as well as hiking various challenging and unique trails across the United States. It's not all fun and adventure, but it is important work protecting the Kaw riverways.

Dawn Buehler, Kansas Riverkeeper and Friends of the Kaw executive director, says, "We have four full-time staff and over 300 volunteers. We are responsible for a 61,000-square-mile watershed and a 173-mile-long river. That is a lot of area to cover." She says the group does cleanups, provides education and advocacy, performs conservation work and development of the Kansas River Water Trail, and volunteers are the heart and soul of the organization.

"They spent countless hours removing trash, litter, dumped items that have been revealed by the river's path, such as boatloads of battery casings and thousands of tires, which were failed attempts at holding back the erosion," she explains. "The more people who get involved, the more they understand the importance and necessity of safeguarding and advocating for the cleanliness of the river."

Sain has used his architecture and construction background as a linchpin to help with fixing up a building that is rented by the Friends of the Kaw in DeSoto. This building has become a great storage and workspace, as well as his studio for his own company, Sain Works. As Sain Works, he has designed and built a number of different projects for Friends of the Kaw.

"One of my favorite things about David is his kindness and willingness to help anyone solve problems," Buehler says. "David has been so instrumental to our work for the Kansas River. [He] also built a new kayak trailer, upgraded our jon boat trailer, built a kayak and canoe storage locker, and he manages our boathouse, including routine maintenance. ... I find the funding, and David builds it."

She adds that it is a great partnership that will provide benefits to the Kansas River Water Trail for decades to come.

"Together—with our partners, volunteers and staff—we are making the Kansas River a healthier place for all of us. As a drinking water source for over 950,000 Kansans, the river is critical to our daily lives," Buehler says.

For more, visit [www.kansasriver.org](http://www.kansasriver.org) and find out about the Kaw River Guide Workshop, held every May. ▲



**10 YEARS**  
**PINE LANDSCAPE CENTER**

TURNING BACKYARD DREAMS INTO  
*Outdoor Accomplishments*

785.843.6949  
[pinelandscape.com](http://pinelandscape.com)  
 1783 E 1500 Rd Lawrence KS 66044

**RESIDENTIAL | COMMERCIAL**  
 RE-ROOFS | NEW CONSTRUCTION | REPAIRS



**AlphaRoofers.com**  
**785-841-ROOF**

**ALPHA ROOFING**



**Local Businesses and their Growth continue to be the  
Foundation of our Local Economy.  
The Lawrence Business Magazine Foundation Awards  
celebrate our local growing businesses adding jobs.**

## **THE FOUNDATION AWARDS**

Honor Businesses located in Douglas County that are  
locally owned or locally franchised,  
have been in business a minimum of three years,  
and shown growth in employment by 20% or 20 employees.

**&**

## **The Minority-Owned Business Foundation Impact Award and The Woman-Owned Business Foundation Impact Award**

Honor Minority Owned or Woman Owned businesses located in Douglas County that are  
locally owned or locally franchised and have been in business a minimum of three years and  
shown stability or growth in employment over the past three years as well as making

LAWRENCE BUSINESS MAGAZINE  
**FOUNDATION AWARDS**

*Presenting Sponsor*

 **INTRUST**  
Bank.

**Has your business grown? Are you adding jobs?  
Are you a Minority-Owned or Woman-Owned business  
making a positive impact and supporting the community?  
Then you should be a part of the Celebration!!  
Applications for the 2025 Awards online now.**

For more details, applications, and information about Sponsorships, Previous Honorees,  
and this years' Lawrence Business Magazine FOUNDATION AWARDS visit:

**LawrenceBusinessMagazine.com/Foundation**