

Randy Robinson, Regional Director for the Kansas SBDC at Pittsburg State University, has been selected by his peers as the America's SBDC Kansas State Star. His contributions to the Kansas small business community have had both regional and state-wide impact. The PSU Kansas SBDC region includes 11 counties in southeast Kansas.

When the Kansas SBDC lead center put out a request for proposals in early 2020 for handling the state's SBDC marketing efforts, Randy responded with some very creative ideas. These included development of a statewide marketing center, a statewide call center, and later, using CARES Act funds, a rural kiosk program. The PSU center is now responsible for the state's SBDC website, all PR, social media and print marketing efforts for the state, plus a statewide call center that handles basic questions and referrals to appropriate Regional Centers for local, in-depth advising. Social media marketing efforts have produced more than half a million impressions and over 100,000 followers since its inception in 2020. The call center launched in late 2020 and has been instrumental to the Kansas SBDC's efforts to meet the needs of Kansas small businesses struggling with pandemic-related issues. It offers extended hours, not typical of the Kansas SBDC system and access via phone and chat. The call center assisted more than 250 clients in its first quarter of operation. In recent months, the call center has added Spanish-speaking operators to better meet the needs of the changing demographics in Kansas. Finally, Randy's kiosk initiative placed kiosks in chambers of commerce and economic development centers in rural areas that have traditionally had few clients. Call center employees made early on-site visits to help people get acclimated to using the kiosks and the call center. Additionally, each launch location held a drawing for people seeking services to win free website design. Utilization of the kiosks has helped chamber and economic development staff develop a better understanding of SBDC services through close interaction with SBDC and call center staff. Collectively, Randy's initiatives have enabled the PSU center to expand its staff and offer student employment/engagement in the regional SBDC program.

Randy's importance to the Kansas SBDC is reflected in this comment by Regional Assistant State Director Dacia Clark. "He is not interested in just keeping status quo. He is always trying to find a way to make things easier and better for the center. Randy has taught me so much. I wouldn't be where I am today without him."

Randy holds undergraduate degrees in economics and finance and an MBA from his host institution. Prior to joining the SBDC, he worked in operations positions with Missouri Enterprise, Sprint, and United Missouri Bank. "It's Randy's unique combination of education, experience and enthusiasm which makes him such an asset to the Kansas small business community," says Associate State Director Susie Pryor. "He epitomizes the heart of our organization."