

Liz Sosa – part 1

This is Kansas Profile. I'm Ron Wilson, director of the Huck Boyd National Institute for Rural Development at Kansas State University.

The radio station van drives down the street, looking like a moving billboard. The van has a large, attractive design covering it and boldly displaying its call letters. This van is displaying a vinyl wrap which was designed, produced and installed by a creative business in western Kansas. It's today's Kansas Profile.

Liz Sosa is manager of Inkt Graphics, a custom graphic design and vinyl application company. Inkt Graphics is a division of Western Motor Company in Garden City.

Liz grew up at the rural community of Hugoton, population 3,643 people. Now, that's rural.

She graduated from Garden City Community College and Fort Hays State University virtual college. She then served as director of the Learning Center at Garden City Community College and as Garden City's assessment coordinator for four years. She also taught non-credit college classes, as she continues doing today through Garden City's Business and Technical Institute. Then she had an opportunity to get closer to business.

"I've always been business-oriented," Liz said. In 2010, she was working for Finney County Economic Development when she was approached about becoming manager of a small business called Inkt Graphics. Ultimately, she took the job.

Inkt Graphics is a company that creates and produces designs to imprint or cover everything from autos to apparel. (Wow, that would be one big t-shirt!) No, those are two different things: apparel for people, and wraps for cars.

The apparel might include team shirts or t-shirts with custom art designs, for example. These are dyed using a process called sublimation in which the ink is embedded into the fabric.

The auto wraps are essentially sheets of specialized vinyl which can have custom designs imprinted on them and then adhered to a vehicle. "It's like a giant sticker but it uses a more aggressive form of adhesive," Liz said. "The vinyl adheres to the clear coat of the car but doesn't damage it so that the wraps can ultimately be removed without residue."

These wraps are like a moving billboard, constantly on display. It's a great way to advertise. "Unlike an occasional radio or tv commercial, these wraps are on display 24-7, 365 days a year," Liz said.

The process begins with creation of a custom design to suit the customer. "We can take people's ideas to fruition," Liz said. As the company motto says, "You think it, we ink it."

"We do our own design, printing and installation," Liz said. "We do it all in-house."

Liz's job is to provide overall management of the business. "We have lots of talented artists here," Liz said. "I'm not one of them!" she added with a smile. But the owner recognized that the business consisted of young, artistic people, so Liz would be a good fit to manage them.

The business continues to grow. Teams and businesses especially like to purchase the t-shirt apparel, and there is growing interest in wraps. Companies like to use them for display on their business fleets. One agribusiness had wraps installed onto the tailgates of the company's trucks. A heating and air conditioning company wanted the wraps so they could advertise while going to customers or while parked.

Because these are not permanent, they can be changed and updated. "A local credit union has them changed annually as their promotions change," Liz said. "One year they might be promoting a special interest rate and the next they might be promoting car loans."

For more information, go to www.inktgraphics.com.

The radio station van drives down the street, looking like a moving billboard. The van has a vinyl wrap developed by Inkt Graphics which prominently displays the station's call letters. "The logos are big enough that you can see it and tune in," Liz said. We salute Liz Sosa and the people of Inkt Graphics for making a difference with this innovative form of design and promotion. With that, it's a wrap.

But there's more. Liz Sosa wears several other hats. She is giving leadership to one of the longest standing, most traditional leadership development organizations in Kansas – but also to an innovative group of young rural leaders. We'll learn about that next week.

For the Huck Boyd National Institute for Rural Development, this is Ron Wilson with Kansas Profile.