

# 2024 Annual Report



# KINGSPORT

## Chamber Small Business Programs



## A LETTER FROM THE CHAIR

---

Serving as the KOSBE chair for 2024 has been an incredible honor and privilege. My wife and I are proud to call the Kingsport region our home. Although my background wasn't initially in business, we started our insurance agency in downtown Kingsport, where we quickly built a network of fellow business owners and connected with your Kingsport Chamber. Our journey with KOSBE began when we were anonymously nominated for a KOSBE Award. Although we didn't win, the experience left a lasting positive impression on us. Over the years, KOSBE and your Kingsport Chamber have played a significant role in the growth of our business. I was later honored to join the Advisory Board where I served for several years.

When I was asked to chair KOSBE, I eagerly accepted the opportunity, knowing the impactful work KOSBE was doing in our city and region. In 2024, KOSBE reached and supported hundreds of businesses, from startups to those receiving continued support. As an advisory council, we challenged ourselves to find innovative ways to support and celebrate our small business community. In 2024, it was a huge accolade for KOSBE to be awarded a grant to create the Appalachian Highlands Women's Business Center. This is the only one in the State of Tennessee. We also enhanced the KOSBE Awards and dedicated countless hours to thinking of creative ways to show our business community how much they mean to us as a region. My favorite part of being involved with KOSBE is the emphasis on celebrating and supporting our small businesses through the KOSBE Awards, free training opportunities, collaborative luncheons and much more. I was fortunate to work alongside an incredible advisory council and KOSBE staff. The collaborative ideas and discussions we shared are exactly what our world needs more of. I am humbled and honored to have been a part of such an important and vital part of our community. KOSBE is doing great things, and if you ever have the chance to get involved, I wholeheartedly encourage you to do so!



2024 KOSBE Advisory Chair,

David Douthat

Douthat Insurance

## ADVISORY COUNCIL & STAFF



David Douthat  
2024 Chair  
Douthat Insurance



Paul Montgomery  
BMA Liasion



Jamie Jackson  
JamiEvents



Josh Shores  
AFI



Aaron Hammons  
Price & Ramey



Savanna McDavid  
The Salt Oasis



Roy Richmond  
Powell Valley  
National Bank



Cari Parker  
Retired, Eastman



Whit Whitehurst  
Eastman Credit Union



Adam Rosenbalm  
Good Batch Mama



Derika Vidale  
Eastman



Wes Argabrite  
Bank of Tennessee



Hugh Kincaid  
Retired, The Walt  
Disney Company



Bill Sumner  
Bell Helicopter  
Chair-Elect



Angela Braan  
Kingsport Academy  
of Hair Design

### STAFF



AUNDREA SALYER  
Chief Business  
Development Officer



BREA ROBERTS  
Director, Appalachian Highlands  
Women's Business Center



CAROLINE LUETHKE  
Communications &  
Events Coordinator



MADISON GREENE  
Communications &  
Events Manager

# IN THE MEDIA

## Media Partners:



Local.  
Trusted.  
Real.



## Social Media:



@kosbeconnection  
2024 Followers: 687  
2023 Followers: 630



@KOSBEconnection  
2024 Followers: 2,465  
2023 Followers: 2,391



@KOSBEConnection  
2024 Followers: 724  
2023 Followers: 737

## Earned Media:



### APPALACHIAN HIGHLANDS

Enterprise Featured

## Kingsport Chamber announces Appalachian Highlands Women's Business Center

By ALLISON WINTERS [awinters@sixriversmedia.com](mailto:awinters@sixriversmedia.com) Apr 9, 2024

The Kingsport Chamber announced its forthcoming Appalachian Highlands Women's Business Center at a press conference Tuesday morning.



### BUSINESS

Featured

## KOSBE to host webinar on Hurricane Helene recovery resources for small businesses

From staff reports Oct 10, 2024

Small business owners will be able to gather virtually for an informative update on disaster relief and recovery resources for small businesses impacted by Hurricane Helene.



### NEWS

Enterprise Featured

## Applications open for 2024 KOSBE Awards

From staff reports Jul 8, 2024

Small businesses from across Northeast Tennessee have until the end of August to apply for this year's KOSBE Awards.

# THE KOSBE AWARDS



GAZELLE AWARD



CUSTOMER SERVICE AWARD



ERNIE RUSMBY AWARD FOR VETERAN-OWNED BUSINESS EXCELLENCE



COMMUNITY IMPACT AWARD



INNOVATION AWARD



STAYING POWER AWARD



NEW BUSINESS EXCELLENCE





### FROM STYLIST TO ENTREPRENEUR Kingsport Academy of Hair Design

In January 2016, Angela Braan took a leap of faith and scheduled an appointment with senior business counselor Aundrea Salyer at KOSBE, the Tennessee Small Business Development Center's Kingsport affiliate office.

Braan was a stylist at a local salon but believed she had more potential. With support from KOSBE/TSBDC, she transitioned from employee to entrepreneur, opening Cassia's Salon and Spa just six months later.

In 2018, Braan's commitment to growth led her back to KOSBE/TSBDC, where she refined her business strategy using tools like GrowthWheel and explored ways to expand her enterprise. Through counseling services and continued work on her business plan, she successfully grew her business and explored succession planning options.

This proactive approach helped Braan scale her business and prepare for the future. As her business grew, changes in her personal life made working behind the salon chair more difficult, prompting her to explore new ways to continue her craft.

This exploration led Braan to become the owner of the Kingsport Academy of Hair Design. Located in Kingsport, Tennessee, the academy is a full-service salon designed to offer cosmetology students an environment to learn and hone their skills. This new venture reflects Braan's deep industry expertise and allows her to mentor aspiring cosmetologists, providing them a space to learn and practice under her seasoned guidance.

With more than 25 years of experience, Braan continues to shape the future of cosmetology while ensuring her legacy thrives.

Braan's journey is an inspiring example of perseverance, ambition and community support. Through the guidance of KOSBE/TSBDC, she was able to create a thriving and expanding business.





### SOMEBODY'S WATCHING YOU Digital Overwatch

When military veteran and IT security expert Jason Kocienski founded Digital Overwatch, he brought with him years of experience as a Navy Corpsman, Army Reservist in Special Operations, and private military consultant. His company provides cybersecurity and IT services, including Fractional CISO services, managed IT solutions and basic IT support to businesses in need of cloud-based security and mobile support for teams of fifteen or more employees. Despite his extensive technical expertise, Kocienski faced challenges in expanding his client base and implementing effective marketing strategies. Recognizing the need for guidance, he turned to the Tennessee Small Business Development Center (TSBDC) at ETSU for support in business development and growth.



TSBDC counselors worked closely with him to refine his marketing approach, helping him identify his ideal customer and explore various methods to reach them effectively. Through strategic discussions, they provided insights on leveraging direct outreach, digital marketing and networking opportunities to build brand recognition. They also introduced him to valuable resources such as business directories and industry-specific databases to aid in prospecting potential clients.

Additionally, TSBDC emphasized the importance of optimizing Digital Overwatch's online presence. They provided an evaluation of the company's website performance, suggested improvements for search engine visibility and shared tools to enhance digital marketing efforts. The team also encouraged participation in professional development opportunities, such as a LinkedIn Bootcamp, to strengthen networking and engagement with potential customers. To further support growth, TSBDC introduced Kocienski to co-working spaces and networking groups that could offer collaboration and client connections. They also discussed funding options, including SBA microloans, should he seek financial assistance for business expansion in the future.

With the guidance of TSBDC, Digital Overwatch has refined its marketing strategy and developed targeted outreach efforts. The company is now actively working on expanding its client base and strengthening relationships within the industry. Armed with a clearer vision and structured plan, Kocienski is well-positioned to establish Digital Overwatch as a trusted cybersecurity and IT services provider in the region. TSBDC at ETSU remains committed to supporting Digital Overwatch as it continues to grow and thrive in the ever-evolving world of cybersecurity.

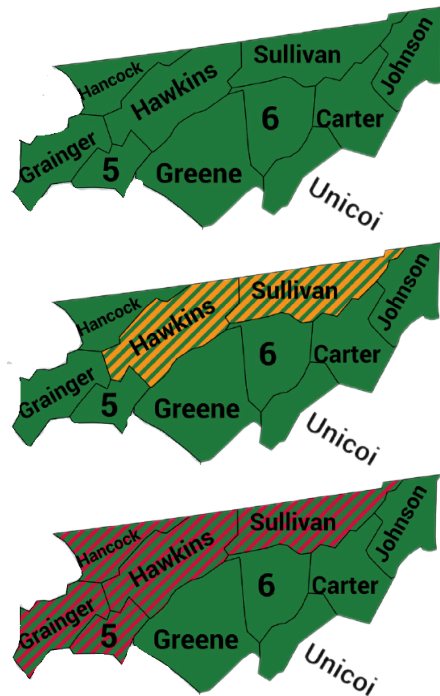


# CLIENTS & ATTRIBUTABLE IMPACT HISTORY


TOTAL CONSULTING HOURS	JOBS CREATED/RETAINED	CLIENTS	LOANS	CAPITAL FORMATION
<p><b>9,129.3</b></p> <p>Sessions - 10,407 Contact hours - 5,857.3 Research hours - 3,272</p>	<p><b>APPLY NOW</b></p> <p>Jobs created - 1,474 Jobs retained - 1,332</p>	<p></p> <p>Lifetime clients - 1,833</p>	<p><b>\$21,485,466</b></p> <p>Number of loans - 160</p>	<p></p> <p>Total capital - \$48,351,359 Other capital - \$16,410,293</p>

## Offerings & Events

- Counseling (in-person, by phone or via virtual service)
- Provide services & information
- Training opportunities
- KOSBE Awards, TSBDC Rising Star Award, AppH-WBC Woman-Owned Small Business Award
- Access to capital
- Lender's Marketplace Expo
- Annual procurement event
- Woman-owned networking events
- Woman-owned group learning cohort
- Woman-owned small business survey
- KOSBE Bucks Digital Gift Cards (shop local initiative)



## Kingsport Chamber Small Business Programs Counties

-  AppH-WBC
-  KOSBE / AppH-WBC
-  TSBDC Kingsport Affiliate Office / AppH-WBC



# APPALACHIAN HIGHLANDS WOMEN'S BUSINESS CENTER



BREA ROBERTS

Director, Appalachian Highlands  
Women's Business Center



CAROLINE LUETHKE

Communications &  
Events Coordinator



*The Appalachian Highlands Women's Business Center is the **only** WBC in Tennessee - one more economic development resource that puts Kingsport on the **map!***

The Appalachian Highlands Women's Business Center (AppH-WBC) became a program of your Kingsport Chamber in 2024, becoming one of 17 agencies across the country to receive a federal grant from the U.S. Small Business Administration Office of Women's Business Ownership. SBA Women's Business Centers (WBCs) are a part a national network of entrepreneurship centers throughout the United States and its territories, which are designed to assist women in starting and growing small businesses.

Headed by the Kingsport Office of Small Business Development and Entrepreneurship (KOSBE), the mission of the AppH-WBC is to serve women-owned small businesses and female entrepreneurs through one-on-one training and counseling, networking events and by connecting clients to the full array of SBA resources.

The vision of the AppH-WBC is to be the premier resource for women entrepreneurs and women-owned businesses in Northeast Tennessee by providing counseling and training services to equip women with access to capital and opportunities for government contracting. The AppH-WBC will serve the counties of Carter, Grainger, Greene, Hamblen, Hancock, Hawkins, Johnson, Sullivan, Unicoi and Washington.

Other locations that received the 2024 grant to open a WBC include: Pasadena, CA, Los Angeles, CA, Stamford, CT, Washington, D.C., North Miami, FL, Honolulu, HI, Chicago, IL, New Orleans, LA, Columbus, OH, Portland, OR, Barnwell, SC, Houston, TX, Norfolk, VA and Milwaukee, WI.

## 2024 AppH-WBC Highlights

- The AppH-WBC has established an Advisory Council.
- We obtained nearly 1,000 responses on the Women's Business Survey made in partnership with East Tennessee State University.
- The AppH-WBC has counseled 50 woman-owned businesses from our region.

## TSBDC TRAINING EVENTS

---

**02.22.2024** - Small Business Resources for Creatives: Turn Your Passion Into a Legitimate Business

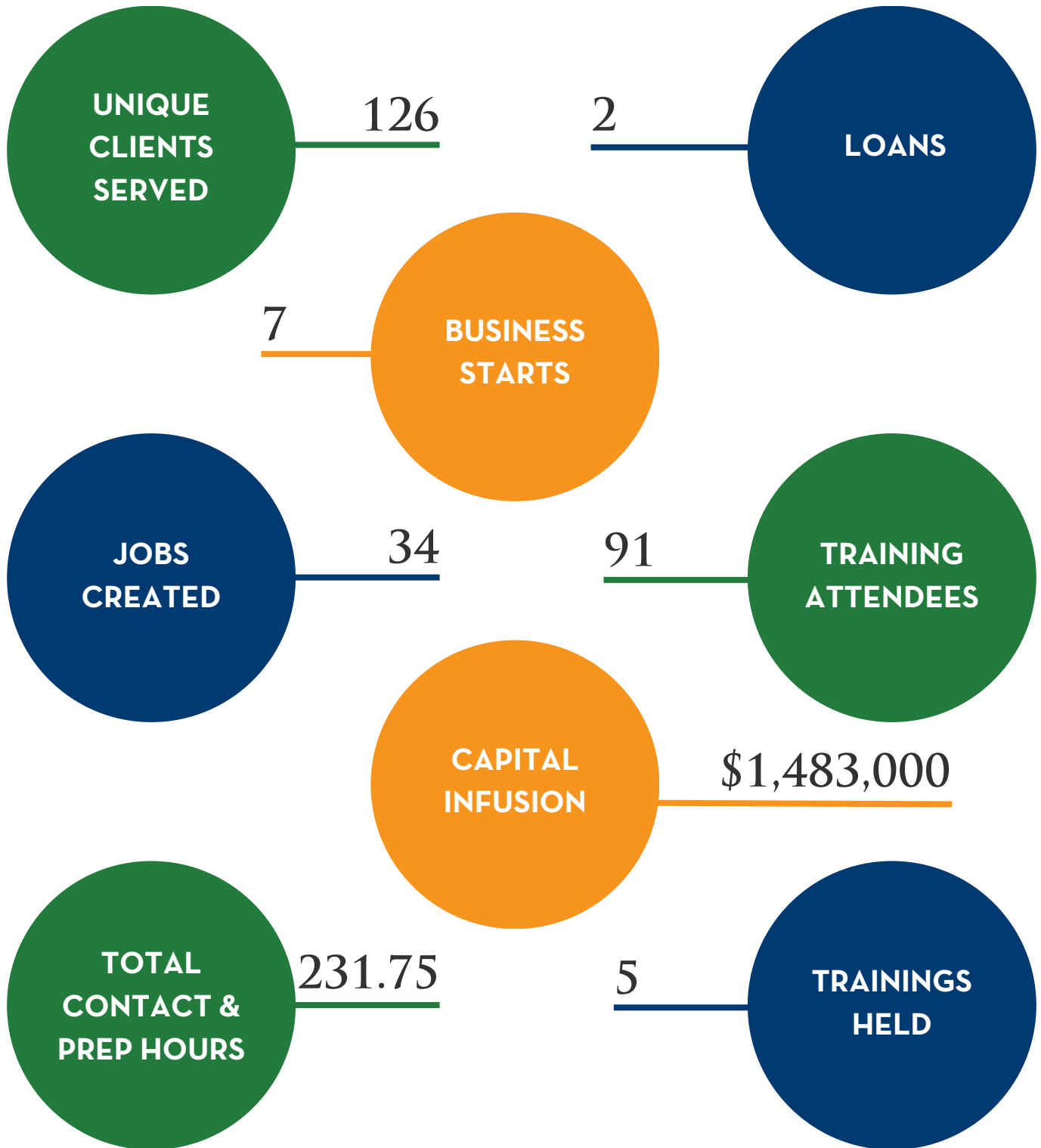
**04.18.2024** - Woman-Owned Small Business (WOSB) Workshop Presented by SBA

**09.24.2024** - MEDWeek | Breaking Barriers: How to Prepare for a Meeting with Your Bank

**10.15.2024** - Hurricane Helene Recovery: Relief for Small Businesses Affected

**11.06.2024** - Hear from Your Secretary of State's Office | Tennessee Businesses Against Trafficking (TBAT)





SPECIAL THANKS TO OUR PARTNERS & SPONSORS

