

# 2019 EXISTING BUSINESS OF THE YEAR



## Wolcott Foods

<b>Owner</b>	Ron Tilman
<b>Nature of Business</b>	Foodservice—Catering
<b>City, County</b>	Kansas City, Wyandotte
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.wolcottfoods.com">www.wolcottfoods.com</a>
<b>Email</b>	<a href="mailto:tilmanstf@aol.com">tilmanstf@aol.com</a>
<b>Structure</b>	LLC
<b>Began</b>	2004
<b>Employees</b>	14



Ron Tilman believes everyone should be able to eat homemade, fresh meals in their homes on any given day. Most of us take that for granted, but there are many among us who don't have the ability to prepare our own meals. Each week, Wolcott Foods delivers fresh and fully prepared meals to customers who don't have other options. While other companies meet the Medicaid-mandated nutritional requirements with processed foods such as applesauce, Wolcott Foods fills this need with fresh fruits and vegetables. They are always introducing new recipes to provide a variety of nutritional meal options.

When Ron first reached out for assistance from the Kansas SBDC at Johnson County Community College, his business operated out of a small, 600-square-foot kitchen adjacent to his home on the farm. There was little room to move around with the kitchen equipment taking up most of the available space. He needed to build a bigger kitchen if he wanted to grow the business, but Ron didn't have a lot of experience with financial planning and financing. With the help of his SBDC business advisor, Jack Harwell, Ron was able to project the financials of his business with the added debt and lease payments. This enabled him to determine that expansion could be done profitably. He secured a loan for additional equipment and moved into a well-equipped, 3,000-square-foot commercial kitchen.

Now that they have the extra breathing room, the Wolcott Foods employees are much happier and more productive. Ron has wasted no time in planning how he can utilize the added capacity to expand his business. He immediately started developing a marketing strategy and hiring someone to execute his social media marketing campaign. He has hired a full-time chef and dietitian and has developed a line of heart-healthy and diabetic menus to leverage his current footprint and expand beyond the Medicaid market. He is also planning geographic expansion as a way of continuing to build his business.

Ron has taken advantage of other programs that the Kansas SBDC offers, including the GAME series and other training programs targeting small businesses. He is a strategic thinker, always thinking ahead and identifying how to get to the next level. He has brought his son Ronnie into the business as General Manager to manage the day-to-day operations and complement the management team.

"A great deal of the credit for our successes goes to the Kansas SBDC," Ron says, but it takes a vision and hard work to create the kind of success that Wolcott Foods has seen.

Secret to Success: "It's easy to provide quality products and services when you treat your employees and clients like family."

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