MEDIA CONTACT: Catherine Kelly, catherinekelly@cjkinc.com, 816-695-6347

Rebecca Gubbels Named President and CEO of ECJC

Veteran lender and entrepreneur advisor will lead the Johnson County nonprofit's next chapter, succeeding Jeff Shackelford

OVERLAND PARK, Kan. — November 12, 2026 — The Enterprise Center in Johnson County (ECJC) has named Rebecca Gubbels its next President and CEO, effective January 1, 2027. She succeeds Jeff Shackelford, who will retire as President and CEO at year end, and will also take on the responsibilities previously held by Sherry Turner, Vice President of Operations, who retired earlier this year. Together, Shackelford and Turner helped shape ECJC's work supporting entrepreneurs through expertise, mentorship and access to capital in Johnson County and across the Kansas City region.

"Jeff and Sherry helped make ECJC what it is today. Rebecca has the experience and vision to bring our many strengths together and take us into the future. She understands entrepreneurs, she understands capital, and she knows how to turn strategy into action," said John Brandmeyer, ECJC Board Chair.

"The last several years of my career have been the most rewarding. Our mission at the Enterprise Center has always been helping our region develop new entrepreneurs, launch new businesses and strengthen existing ones. Helping other people realize their business dreams has been incredibly rewarding for me. I'm thrilled the work will continue and grow. I've known Rebecca for years and know the drive, attention to detail and ability to connect that she brings. I'm proud to see her take the lead and excited for what's next," shared Jeff Shackelford, ECJC's outgoing President and CEO.

Built by entrepreneurs, for entrepreneurs

Gubbels, who has served as ECJC's Chief Operating Officer since July 1, 2026, brings more than two decades of experience in entrepreneurship, banking, business advising and program leadership. Her career has included SBA and commercial lending, more than a decade counseling entrepreneurs through the Missouri SBDC, leadership of ECJC's Growth Mentoring Service, and work with technology startups through Digital Sandbox KC. She is the architect of ECJC's Kauffman-funded Loan Readiness Initiative and has been honored for her work with entrepreneurs and entrepreneurship education by the Associated Industries of Missouri, the Association of Small Business Development Centers and the Ewing Marion Kauffman Foundation.

"I've spent my career on every side of the desk, as a lender, a business owner and an advisor helping entrepreneurs figure out what to do next. I'm pretty direct, I ask a lot of questions and I'm willing to challenge the status quo. But I also believe this work should be human and, whenever possible, fun. Entrepreneurs are doing incredibly hard things. ECJC should be the place they know they can come for straight answers, real expertise and people who will roll up their sleeves and help," said Gubbels.

As CEO, Gubbels will lead a management team focused on helping entrepreneurs secure funding, launch businesses and drive growth. The team includes Delia Marin, Director of the Kansas City Women's Business Center, and Joel Barrett, Director of Mentorship and Engagement. All three leaders have firsthand business ownership experience, and together they bring expertise in executive leadership, lending, business development and mentoring.

Women's Business Center: helping women build businesses at every stage

Founded in 2000, the Kansas City Women's Business Center (WBC), a program of ECJC, supports women-owned businesses in Kansas and Missouri, from LaunchU and business planning for new ventures to WBE certification and growth support for established companies competing for larger contracts. Its Child Care Initiative strengthens child care businesses and expands the care that working families across the region depend on. WBC has helped more than 1,200 companies grow since 2024.

Under Marin's leadership, WBC will expand its programming, strategic collaborations and access to education, capital and business guidance, while continuing to serve entrepreneurs of all backgrounds. Its work will emphasize helping owners understand financing options, build business resilience and form relationships that support their goals.

Marin is a business owner, executive and community leader with decades of experience across the corporate, nonprofit and professional sports sectors, where she has led organizational growth, business development and community engagement. As an entrepreneur herself, she brings an owner's perspective to everyone the WBC serves.

Growth Mentoring Service: a team of seasoned mentors behind every founder

The Growth Mentoring Service (GMS), inspired by MIT's Venture Mentoring Service, matches founders with teams of seasoned executives and entrepreneurs who meet monthly. Each engagement carries an estimated $17,000 consulting value, and GMS offers engagements to established growth companies and early-stage software ventures. Companies mentored by GMS volunteers have generated more than $200 million in revenues since program inception in 2016.

Under Barrett's leadership, GMS will expand its reach and create new ways for ECJC's volunteer mentors to share their expertise, giving clients practical guidance to make better decisions and build stronger businesses.

A serial entrepreneur, business coach, consultant and facilitator, Barrett has spent decades helping owners turn tough decisions into growth. His work has been recognized by the Ewing Marion Kauffman Foundation, the Missouri Chamber of Commerce and the Missouri Small Business Development Center network.

Connect with ECJC

- **Follow ECJC:** Join the conversation on LinkedIn.
- **Request ECJC's WBC support:** www.kansascitywbc.com
- **Apply for ECJC's GMS mentoring:** Applications are open to growth-stage owners and early-stage software founders at www.growthmentoringservice.com.
- **Become an ECJC mentor or partner:** www.ecjc.com

About ECJC

The Enterprise Center in Johnson County (ECJC) is a nonprofit organization helping entrepreneurs fund, start and grow their businesses through education, business coaching, mentoring and connections to capital resources. Its programs include the Kansas City Women's Business Center, which serves entrepreneurs of all backgrounds with specialized support for women business owners; the Growth Mentoring Service, which connects entrepreneurs with experienced volunteer mentor teams; and the Loan Readiness Initiative, which equips the region's business advisors with the knowledge and tools to help entrepreneurs successfully navigate debt financing. ECJC tailors its services to Johnson County business owners but makes help available to all in the Kansas City metropolitan area.

###