

The

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Country Girl Flowers in Rural Haskell County Builds a Dream Come True Entrepreneur Nicole Nightengale of Country Girl Flowers creates atmosphere of warmth in Copeland



By Sheridan Wimmer,
Kansas Living

The first time you travel to Country Girl Flowers in Copeland, you might think, "Is my GPS wrong? Because I'm surrounded by gravel roads, fields looking for a drink of water and not-a-cloud-in-sight skies. There's no way there's a business up the road."

GPS was right; and there is a business up the road run by Nicole Nightengale, a suitable name for a place like the one she owns. Those fields abruptly end at Country Girl Flowers — an oasis tucked behind a windbreak of trees and sits just across the Gray County line in Haskell County.

As you enter the driveway, there's a gorgeous, barn-inspired building

on your left — a surprise after your initial thoughts about likely being lost. An old truck parked outside sets the scene for a rustic, timeless experience. There's a push and a pull of going inside the building but also staying outside among the Boston ferns hanging symmetrically on the rafters of the porch. The chair in the corner is begging for someone to sit and read a book.

The smell of coffee and freshly baked bread ultimately wins out, and inside the building, a Volkswagen Beetle steals your eye. It's decorated with an assortment of flowers and macrame, stacked jars of jams and jellies surrounding it and a trunk loaded with blankets to purchase.

Nicole wants that

feeling of belonging to permeate everyone who visits.

"When anyone walks in my door, I want them to feel the warmth and the feeling of rest," she says. "You can sit on my front porch, and you don't have to buy a thing — and a lot of people do that. It's so quiet out here; it's medicinal."

A little spot of soil Country Girl Flowers is a flower store, a coffee bar, a bakery and a catering business all run by Nicole. She's passionate and energetic — necessary qualities to have multiple business ventures. She was born and raised in the very location of Country Girl Flowers, making the effort she puts in even more meaningful.

"I grew up just a few feet to the south here," she says. "I was that little girl who liked to get dirty; my dresses were usually stained and had holes. My mom didn't garden but she had flowers, and it was where I wanted to be. Dad would give me a little spot of soil, and I'd dig and play and plant and have so much fun."

When Nicole was 16, she started working at a garden center in Montezuma and her passion for growing things blossomed.

"I had no idea at that time that it would be my lifelong passion," she says.

The greenhouse for sale that started it all

She grew her talents working at the garden center, where she went from being a waterer to the head florist. After 23 years, Nicole switched from the garden center and began selling her baked goods at the farmers market in Garden City and creating floral arrangements from her home.

Then a greenhouse came up for sale in Copeland in 2014, and

Nicole saw an opportunity.

"I wanted it, but it needed to be right here on this property," she says. "I ran over to my mom and dad's and told them my plan, and I'm very passionate. If something feels right, I'm going for it. My mom asked me where I was going to put it and dad said, 'How about in the pond?'"

Nicole explained the "pond" was originally used for an irrigation system, but it hadn't been used for years since pivot irrigation, so what was once filled with water for crops became a dry, weedy hole. It was the perfect spot for the greenhouse since the property had trees to help break the 80-mile-per-hour wind gusts the area can get. The Night-

engales did the necessary dirt work and built their haven.

"It'll blow right over the top of us," Nicole says of the wind. "We can't feel it down in here. It's just lovely."

In only four months, Nicole and her husband, Caleb, had the greenhouse built on the pond and opened in April. But Nicole wasn't quite done.

"We started to have events here, and many people came," she says. "That made me realize I needed a warm spot to serve my people. I was doing so many things, but I needed a place for guests to go. I told my husband I wanted a barn. His eyes lit up, thinking he was getting a Cabela's with deer antlers,

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UPCOMING
EVENTS



Editor's Note

Please call or e-mail with any news. Telephone number and e-mail address are listed above. Any non-urgent news can also be dropped off at Sublette City Hall.

Sublette Christian Church Food Pantry

106 W. Carson Ave Thursday 11:00 AM to Noon. Other times by appointment. The pantry includes a box of food and a \$35 voucher for Venture Foods for fresh produce and frozen items.

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