

# Homecoming

## Walker coming to Jazz Festival

BY SUSAN THACKER

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A professional musician from Canada with roots in central Kansas will be the headliner next month at the 16th Annual Great Bend Jazz Festival. Debi Sander Walker, jazz vocalist and big band leader from Toronto, is coming home to Great Bend for the March 13 festival.

Jazz Festival board member Joe Boley noted Walker is a 1969 graduate of Great Bend High School and she earned an Associate Music Degree from Barton Community College in 1971. She attended Wichita State University, and graduated from Metropolitan State College in Denver with a degree in vocal performance and minor in child psychology. She sang professionally in the Denver area for a number of years and moved to Canada in 1982 to establish her

own production company.

"Debi is a multi-talented performer encompassing a variety of styles including classical, country-western, light rock, jazz standards and dance music, as well as a variety of character sketches," Boley said. Touring the United States and Canada, she has played the title characters in "A Closer Walk With Patsy Cline" and the "Tribute to Rosemary Clooney."

Walker is the only female big band jazz leader in Canada, managing an 11-piece band. She is also a successful composer, Boley noted. The song "A Mother's Cry," from the album "Cry out Loud" reached No. 26 on the Top 40 charts in Canada.

She has earned many awards in Canada over the years and in 2001 was named "Musician of the Year" and nominated for Women of Distinction - Pinnacle Award. She has

received the Board of Trade's Chairman Award and the Sam McCallion Community Involvement Award for her participation in several charity events.

Joining Walker on stage will be the Great Bend All Star Combo and Prairie Winds Community Big Band, performing familiar jazz standards of today and pop tunes of the '30s and '40s big band era set to modern stylings.

The show will be the evening of March 13 at the Crest Theater, 1905 Lakin Ave. Doors will open at 6:30 p.m. with opening show music by the Great Bend All Star Combo.

Ticket prices are \$10 for adults and \$5 for students. Tickets are available at the door, or can be purchased now at the Barton County Arts Center, 1401 Main, and the Robert Feldt Law Office, 1314 Kansas.



COURTESY PHOTO

Debi Sander Walker, pictured here, will perform at the Great Bend Jazz Festival in March.