**IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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# *BOWLING GREEN AREA CHAMBER OF COMMERCE HOLDS 91ST ANNUAL CELEBRATION, HONORING ANOTHER YEAR OF PROGRESS AND COMMUNITY IMPACT*

*Presented by Graves Gilbert Clinic*

**BOWLING GREEN, KY., January 22, 2026** – Tonight, the Bowling Green Area Chamber of Commerce hosted its 91st Annual Celebration at the Sloan Convention Center, bringing together local business leaders, elected officials, regional partners, economic development investors, and community stakeholders for an evening of reflection, recognition, and celebration.

Founded in 1935, the Bowling Green Area Chamber of Commerce marked 91 years of service to the community during this traditional January gathering, which brings together the region's business and civic leadership to reflect on the past year, recognize outstanding volunteers, and look ahead to the opportunities shaping Bowling Green's future. The Annual Celebration serves as a cornerstone event to

kick off the year, reinforcing the Chamber's mission to support business growth, economic vitality, and a strong, connected community.

The evening's program featured recognitions, volunteer awards, and highlights from another impactful year for the Chamber and its partners. The Master of Ceremonies, Autumn Sheffield, a student of Alvaton Elementary School, guided attendees through a celebration of leadership, collaboration, and shared success across the region.

"This past year once again demonstrated what is possible when a community works together with purpose," said **Meredith Wilson**, Interim President & CEO of the Bowling Green Area Chamber of Commerce. "As we look ahead to 2026, we are stronger than ever and deeply committed to supporting our business community, advancing economic opportunity, strengthening workforce and talent development, and continuing the collaborative work that drives Bowling Green forward."

"In 2025, the Chamber announced 13 projects, 431 new quality jobs and $351.4M in Capital Investment, making another memorable year. Achievements like these are only possible because of the incredible community we have,"said **Andy Barker,** 2025 Chamber Chairman.

A special part of the celebration is dedicated to volunteers who contribute in various ways: from mentoring new partners, attending partner ribbon cuttings, participating in events, serving on committees, and being part of the Board of Directors, Ambassadors, and Young Professionals group. Nearly 500 volunteers donate ~4,000 hours annually to the Chamber and our community.

Andy Barker, 2025 Chamber Chairman, presented the 2025 Chamber Volunteer Awards to four very deserving individuals for their outstanding service.

- Ambassador of the Year – **Derek Olive**, Continuing and Professional Development at Western Kentucky University
- Board Volunteer of the Year – **Chris Higgins**, Scotty's Contracting + Stone, LLC
- Chamber Volunteer of the Year – **Justin Gearlds**, RENEW by Optimum Rejuvenation
- Young Professional of the Year – **Brittany Bennet**, Tristar Greenview Regional Hospital

The Chamber's Gavel-Passing Ceremony is a long-standing tradition ending with the new 2026 Chairman of the Board of Directors, **Roddy Grimes** with Stewart Richey Construction Group, taking the stage to give his 2026 Forecast remarks: "It is truly an honor to step into the role of Chairman of the Bowling Green Area

Chamber of Commerce," said Roddy Grimes. "Our strength as an organization comes from the people who give their time, leadership, and energy to this community. I am deeply grateful to our dedicated volunteers, Chamber Ambassadors, Board members, and staff whose commitment makes our work possible. As we move forward, we will continue building on the strong foundation already in place—working together to support our partners, invest in our workforce, and help move Bowling Green confidently into the future."

The Chamber extends a special thanks to Graves Gilbert Clinic for its generous title sponsorship.

Additional sponsorships included:

- SIGNATURE Sponsor: Houchens Insurance Group
- PREMIERE Sponsor: Scotty's Contracting + Stone
- LEAD Sponsor: The Murphy Construction Group

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Community Sponsors – Atmos Energy, Banterra Bank, Bowling Green Municipal Utilities, Tennessee Valley Authority, Western Kentucky University, Pan-Oston, Gerald Printing, TAZ Trucking, Service One Credit Union, US Bank.

## About the Bowling Green Area Chamber of Commerce:

The Bowling Green Area Chamber of Commerce is a 5-star Accredited Chamber by the U.S. Chamber of Commerce. As the fourth largest chamber in Kentucky, the Chamber serves as the driving force for South Central Kentucky's business community providing valuable services and resources to over 1,300 partners, cultivating a positive business environment, and stimulating economic development for the area. With leadership programs, governmental relations projects, educational initiatives, and involvement opportunities, the Chamber aims to support the community by enhancing the business climate and continuing to grow the region. To learn more about the Bowling Green Area Chamber of Commerce, visit www.bgchamber.com.

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