



For Immediate Release

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PRESS RELEASE

Governor Asa Hutchinson to join Arkansas Economic Developers & Chamber Executives in honoring community, economic development, and chamber leaders

During the awards luncheon at their 2019 Annual Conference in Fort Smith, the Arkansas Economic Developers & Chamber Executives (AEDCE) on Monday, August 26, will recognize Kristi Barr as the Outstanding Economic Developer, William Graham Cobb III, IOM as the Outstanding Chamber Executive, Jason Green as Volunteer of the Year, and Sue McGowan with the Maria Haley Lifetime Leadership Award for Economic Development.

AEDCE awards recognize volunteer and professional economic developers and chamber executives for outstanding achievement demonstrated by significant achievements in his/her community, region, and state over the course of his/her career to include professionalism, experience, training and education, service to AEDCE and the profession.

"Congratulations to each and every one of the award recipients," said Tim Allen, President of Arkansas Economic Developers and Chambers Executives. "The award process is very thorough starting with a nomination and culminating with a committee making the selection. The award recipients have distinguished themselves over time and have made a lasting impact all across our state."

The awards luncheon features a keynote address by Governor Asa Hutchinson, whose economic development policies and leadership has resulted in 90,000 more people working in Arkansas than when he took office in 2015. "These four winners represent the best in leadership for economic development. They are boots on the ground, engaging their communities with great ideas," said Governor Hutchinson. "Their energy and vision inspire the others around them. We are stronger for their leadership and for their love of Arkansas."

About the recipients:

Barr serves as the Director of Workforce Development and Education for the Little Rock Regional Chamber where she leads the chamber's work to support the advancement of public schools, monitor and increase the talent pipeline for employers and increase the labor force participation rate in Little Rock and Central Arkansas. She has helped to spearhead initiatives to align current curriculum offerings in both K-12 and post-secondary to industry demand, facilitated hiring events for new and expanding companies to meet their hiring needs and partnered with local business and education leaders in the creation of a career-themed "center of excellence" at North Little

Rock High School and the Little Rock School District Excel Program. Over the past year, Barr has built a coalition among all four school districts in Pulaski County to explore systemic high school redesign through Ford Next Generation Learning (NGL). Previously, Barr worked as the Director of Business Retention and Expansion at the chamber managing company expansion projects representing more than 3,700 new jobs, \$146 million in new payroll and \$708 million in capital investment at the local and county level.

Cobb is President & CEO of the Greater Bentonville Area Chamber of Commerce where he gratefully serves the community that is home to the world's greatest Adventurepreneur, Sam Walton. A native Arkansan, Cobb is a proven leader with 20 years of experience in product development, audience/customer/member engagement, people management, brand advancement, and culture construction. Prior to joining the Bentonville Chamber, he served as the Chief Operating Officer of the Little Rock Regional Chamber of Commerce. He also worked within multiple divisions of Arkansas Business Publishing Group and opened three locations of a successful local pizza chain, designing new product and pivoting the concept to fit a new market. Cobb relishes Bentonville's *Widescreen Livin'* - A 360 degree human experience revealing a past, present and future that connects us to nature, to the world, and to each other by organically weaving arts and culture, the outdoors, culinary excellence, and the power of human relationships into people's everyday lives.

Green serves as Vice President – Human Resources at ABB in Fort Smith. Prior to joining ABB in 2007, he worked for Hallmark Cards, Inc. in Kansas City, Missouri for 15 years in a variety of Human Resources positions. Jason is a native of Fort Smith, attended Fort Smith Public Schools and earned a bachelor's degree in Human Resource Management from the University of Arkansas and an MBA from Washburn University. Jason is active on a number of community boards including First National Bank, Baptist Health Fort Smith, Fort Smith Public Schools Foundation, Fort Smith Regional Chamber of Commerce, Future School of Fort Smith, University of Arkansas Fort Smith Foundation and the Westark Area Council – Boy Scouts of America. He also volunteers with several non-profit organizations.

McGowan is Director of Economic Development/CEO of the Paragould Regional Chamber of Commerce. She has held this position since 2003. Prior to joining the Paragould Chamber, she was involved in real estate and banking. Sue has been involved in the Paragould community for many years and serves on numerous boards. She has been named Citizen of the Year by the Paragould Rotary Club and Paragould Kiwanis Club and is a past board member of Williams Baptist University. McGowan is past president of Arkansas Economic Developers & Chamber Executives.

[Click here for photos of award recipients.](#)

About AEDCE: Arkansas Economic Developers & Chamber Executives (AEDCE) is the state's premier association representing professional and volunteer economic developers and chamber executives in Arkansas. AEDCE's objective is to advance, through educational and professional efforts, the business climate and quality of life in Arkansas by the development of employment opportunities through economic growth and community development.

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