



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

COUNTY LEADERS GRADUATE FROM THE GEORGIA ACADEMY FOR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

May 10, 2017

The Board of the Georgia Academy for Economic Development announces Ben Hill County graduates from the 2017 Region 11 Multi-Day Training Program. Class participants represented a number of professional and non-professional economic development fields, including elected officials, public servants, business leaders, educators, and social service providers from 18 counties in Southern Georgia. The Academy provided each of the graduates an opportunity to gain a unique understanding of the complexities of economic and community development on the local, regional, and state levels.

Ben Hill County graduates at the May 9th ceremony included: Brandy Elrod, Shawn Haralson, Hope Harmon, Holley Lee, Derinda Lewis, and Gary Smith.

Created in 1993, the Academy assembles a cross section of economic development professionals and resources to provide this training in all twelve service delivery regions in Georgia. The Board of Directors of the Academy represent public and private economic development organizations and agencies from across Georgia. Since its organization, the Academy has provided training for thousands of professional and non-professional economic developers around the state, and since 1998 the Academy has been offered annually in all twelve regions of the state. Georgia EMC and Georgia Power provide facilitators for the program, and the Georgia Department of Community Affairs provides staff support to this important program.

Georgia EMC's Vice President, Community and Economic Development (CED), Pat B. Merritt, CEcD says, "Our Community Development team is proud to partner with and provide facilitation and presentation services on behalf of Georgia's electric membership cooperatives. Involved since its inception, the team's work with the Academy graduates has enhanced levels of leadership capacity and community development preparedness for continued economic development progress throughout the Region." In Region 11, CED cooperative members are Colquitt EMC, Irwin EMC, Okefenokee EMC, Satilla EMC and Slash Pine EMC."

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“Georgia Power has historically played a major role in the State’s economic development. The Academy has formalized the opportunity to bring together stakeholders to share best practices, leverage expertise, and build relationships among our communities with the same goal in mind: ensuring economic growth and prosperity for our state. We are proud of the strong partnership that delivers this program in each of our regions every year,” says Georgia Power Company Community Development Manager Johnna Robinson, chair of the Georgia Academy board.

“One of the goals for the multi-day regional Academies is to encourage multi-county cooperation,” says Corinne Thornton, Director of the Georgia Academy for Economic Development. “Many times the participants discover the issues facing their community are the same as those facing other communities in their region, and can then combine limited resources to address the issue.”

The Academy’s multi-day program, taught one day a month over a four-month period, includes training in the basics of economic and community development, plus specialized segments on business recruitment and retention, tourism product development, downtown development, planning, and other essentials for community success. In addition, the curriculum features specific leadership skills such as consensus building, ethics in public service, collaborative leadership and other segments needed for effective community leadership in economic development. Local elected officials may receive certification training credits through the Association County Commissioners of Georgia and the Georgia Municipal Association for completion of this program.

The next Region 11 Georgia Academy for Economic Development will begin in February 2018. For more information on this, please contact Kelly Lane by email at kelly.lane@dca.ga.gov.

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