



Athens Area Community Foundation Selects Sarah H. McKinney as President/CEO

(February 2017) The Athens Area Community Foundation (AACF) Board of Directors has selected Sarah H. McKinney as the new president and chief executive officer of the philanthropic community organization. AACF partnered with The Chason Group, Inc. to conduct the search.

“Sarah brings a great philanthropic and passionate mindset to the foundation,” according to Bill Douglas, chair of the community foundation’s board and CEO/President of Athens First Bank & Trust. “Her background in community groups and development will provide her with the necessary skill sets to move us to a new level of service in the six counties we serve.”



Sarah H. McKinney

McKinney currently serves as Director of Development for the Georgia 4-H Foundation based at the University of Georgia in Athens, a leadership position she has held since 2015. Prior to her move to Georgia 4-H, she was the Director of Development and Volunteer Services for the Athens Community Council on Aging. Sarah is only the second professional to fill the seat since the foundation’s inception in 2008.

“Building successful and lasting relationships has been the foundation of my career,” says McKinney. “I understand what it means to leverage connections and collaborate to fulfill mission and vision. The opportunity to lead the foundation will further my passion to work with stakeholders, community leaders, and nonprofit organizations to address the critical needs of our area while at the same time build relationships with donors interested in a leaving a lasting legacy of philanthropy.”

McKinney graduated from the University of Georgia with a Bachelor of Social Work degree. She continued her education with a Certificate of Gerontology from Kennesaw State University, a Certificate of Leadership from the University of Dayton, and Certificates of Basic and Advanced Nonprofit Financial Management from Duquesne University’s Nonprofit Leadership Institute.

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The AACF Search Committee received interest from 63 professionals. Candidates were chosen for interviews based on their previous positions and skills sets. Leadership, business acumen and development were identified early by the committee as the top three attributes needed by candidates in order move forward in the process. Extensive interviews and background checks were held with finalists for the seat.

“AACF is preparing to move into a critical phase of development,” according to Douglas. “Sarah will have an opportunity to build upon the solid structure Delene Porter, the board and the J.W. Fanning Institute for Leadership Development have put in place during our early years. The board’s vision is to expand our

footprint in the six counties served through additional donors and support of programs that make a difference in the lives of citizens in this area.”

Reflecting on the past two years in her Georgia 4-H Foundation position, McKinney says, “It has been a joy to work collectively to strategically set and accomplish priorities and generate new dollars for the state’s largest youth development organization.”

McKinney and her husband John have two children. Nathan, 14, and Anna, 11, are enrolled in the Jackson County School System.

The AACF helps passionate donors leave permanent legacies, serves as a well-informed grant maker, and shapes effective responses to community needs through collaboration. As a public grant making community foundation, the organization partners with donors, nonprofits, and community institutions to build, distribute and preserve philanthropic assets that will enhance quality of life in the area for generations to come. Counties served by the community foundation include Athens-Clarke, Barrow, Jackson, Madison, Oconee and Oglethorpe.

The search committee for the president, in addition to Douglas, included Pat Allen, retired, UGA; Phil Bettendorf, Athens First Bank & Trust; Webster Hewitt, Hewitt Lane Independent Financial Counsel; Kelly Holloway, Epps, Holloway, Deloach and Hoipkemier, LLC; Helen Mills, retired, UGA; and Alex Patterson, Esquire, retired, Alston & Bird, LLP.

Other members of the board include: Buddy Allen, B. Allen and Company; Ricky Chastain, Chastain & Associates Insurance; Bill Cowsert, Cowsert & Avery, LLP and State Senator; Bertis Downs, Esquire; Dexter Fisher, Director of Facilities Management, UGA; Dr. Jennifer Frum, UGA; Tim Johnson, Family Connection Partnership/ Communities in Schools; Judge Steve C. Jones, US District Court, Northern District of Georgia; Kathy Kirbo, Reefball Foundation; Cynthia Lester, Synovus Trust Company, N.A.; Pat Mercardante, WHM Group at Morgan Stanley Wealth Management; Scot Morrissey, Athens Banner Herald; Jinx Patel, Athens Research and Technology, Inc.; Ed Perkins, retired, Johnson & Johnson; Lewis Shropshire, retired, Motel Enterprises; Judge Lawton Stephens, Superior Court, Western Judicial Circuit; and Ovita Thornton, Clarke County School Board & Georgia Clients Council.