

Developments

The Newsletter of The Simpson County Development Foundation

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Donnie Caughman
Executive Director

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Office Manager

From the Executive Director

The SCDF Mission Statement

The Simpson County Development Foundation stimulates economic growth through the resources of its members and partners leading to an improved economic well-being and quality of life for all citizens of Simpson County.

Persons ranging from British science historian James Burke to America poet Maya Angelou have said, to know where you're going, you must know where you've been. We're calling this issue of *Developments* our special "Getting Back to Business" edition.

It goes without saying, that the past year and a half has been a

most unusual and trying time. As we move past this hiatus enforced on us by the pandemic, and as we look to future as the pandemic abates, we feel it would be a good time to review "who we are and what we do" as we plan and implement "getting back to business."

While we have continued to meet the basic demands of our mission, we have had to defer or curtail many of our activities. Now is a good time to reexamine those activities as we plan for this coming fiscal/program year and beyond.




= Action Item for FY 2022

The Simpson County Economic Development District (SCEDD) is responsible for the management and maintenance of the Industrial Property that is owned by Simpson County.

Each year the SCEDD and the SCDF enter into a Service Agreement, whereby the District contracts with the Foundation for operational services. Under the Service Agreement, the Foundation is responsible for providing the services necessary to marketing Simpson County to prospective industries, giving priority to properties owned by the SCEDD. The annual service fee paid to SCDF is \$88,500.

Properties: The two major pieces of SCEDD-owned property are the Highway 28 Business Park (Magee) and the Hwy 43 Industrial Park (Mendenhall Commerce Park). The District owns several other parcels of smaller acreage. The SCEDD has entrusted management of its properties to the SCDF.

 The SCEDD Trustees have recently decided to dispose of the Hwy 43 property as required by statute—declaring it surplus and offering it for sale.

Projects: SCDF has been instrumental in the development and/or expansion of such major business in the county as Pioneer, Polk's Meat Products, and RealPure Bottled Water.

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We have worked with the University of Southern Mississippi to produce *Simpson County Target Industry Analysis* (July 2016) and *Simpson County Strategic Plan for Economic Development 2019-2024*.

Marketing: We have an active relationship with the Mississippi Development Authority, and they refer industries to us who have the potential to locate in Simpson County. We prepare responses to RFIs (requests for information), which involves coordination with MDA, CMPDD for various data, involved utilities, the county Tax Assessor (for tax-related data), and property owners when property other than SCEDD-owned property is involved.

In marketing, we partner with the following agencies and entities:

- Mississippi Development Authority (MDA)
- Central Mississippi Planning and Development District (CMPDD)
- Cooperative Energy
- Southern Pine Electric
- Entergy

Online Marketing: Our primary online marketing tool is our website: www.simpsoncounty.biz. Since October 2020, we have contracted with CMPDD to host and maintain our website at a cost of \$50.00 per month. In addition, our properties are also listed on their sites by MDA and the major utilities serving the area.

✔ We will shortly be setting up a **Facebook** page as well, and we will be asking our directors with expertise in that area to help with its development.

✔ *Discover Simpson County* – www.discovermississippi.com – is a “tourist site” set up in the past under the aegis of SCDF. It is out-of-date and currently we are paying CSpire \$21.40 a month to host the site. We are considering taking down this site and working with CMPDD to replace it or incorporate relevant content into the SCDF website.

Business and Marketing Memberships: We maintain membership in the following organizations: Mississippi Economic Development Council; Mississippi Economic Council; Mississippi Manufacturers Association; Mississippi Retail & Grocers Association; Mississippi Soil and Water Conservation District; Magee Chamber of Commerce*; Mendenhall Area Chamber of Commerce*. *The Chambers and SCDF provide each other reciprocal memberships.

Retail Development: While not as directly involved in retail development as in industrial development, SCDF, as noted above, maintains membership in major retail organizations. Moreover, we provide advisory and referral information to anyone contacting us about establishing a retail business. We maintain and offer at no cost a start-up package which includes a business plan guide and referral guide.

Print Advertizing and Publicity: During FY 2021, we have spent some \$2,550 in print advertizing and publicity, advertizing in such publications as *The Phone Book*, the annual *Source Magazine*, the annual *Profile*, the yearly baseball and football calendars, and the Mendenhall Police Calendar.

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

Quality of Life, Education, and Health Care are all important components of Economic Development and we are active in those areas.

We have specific budget line items for Simpson Leaders, Simpson Youth Leadership, Keep Simpson County Beautiful, and Mississippi Scholars-Simpson County. We make a major annual contribution to Simpson Youth Leadership in the amount of \$4,000, and we fund an annual \$500 Mississippi Scholars/Tech Masters scholarship through Mississippi Scholars-Simpson County. In addition, we contribute annually to the Summer Reading Programs of Magee, Mendenhall, and Harrisville Libraries, as well as to other community programs upon request. SCDF is a member of the Simpson County Country Club and the Mendenhall Community Club.

- ✓ In the 2019, SCDF initiated **ASPIRE**, a program whereby high school seniors in the county enhanced their educational experience in business and entrepreneurship through shadowing and interning opportunities with Simpson County business owners and professionals. Over 30 students participated in the program, and three participants were awarded a \$500 scholarship to the college of their choice. Plans to continue the program in the 2020 had to be deferred due to the pandemic. It is our intention to continue this as an ongoing program.

SCDF partnered with Copiah-Lincoln Community College to attain **ACT Work Ready Community** Status for Simpson County as of February 2019, and we continue to maintain that status. The program includes ACT Work Keys assessment for high school students in the county as well as for adults in workforce.

- ✓ **Simpson Leaders** is our adult leadership development program conducted in cooperation with Co-Lin Community College Workforce Development. While we were not able to have a class in FY2021, we will restart the program in FY2022.

In the area of health care, SCDF partnered with CMPDD to produce **Living Well in Simpson County: Simpson County Health Care Zone Master Plan**. Two target sites were identified, one centering on Simpson General Hospital, the other on Magee General Hospital. Through proper planning and development of incentives, additional health care related business may locate within these areas. The program is defined under Mississippi statute.

STAKEHOLDER DEVELOPMENT

- ✓ Needless to say, during the past year the pandemic has precluded having any gatherings. Nevertheless, we do have an ongoing members' event – **Lunch and Learn** – which we certainly intend to continue. We recruit presenters on relevant topics and combine their presentation with a catered lunch. These are usually held on the Co-Lin Simpson Center campus. Past events have included: *Doing Business in the Digital Age: Start and Grow Your Business Online* (2015); *Workforce Development Seminar: Available Resources* (2017); *Workforce Ready Employees: Using the ACT WorkKeys Assessment* (2018); *Co-Lin Workforce Development: Assistance, Including Funding for Training Programs* (2019).

- ✓ **After Hours**, which began as *Mix-n-Mingle*, events are after-work, informal events, including food and drinks. All members are encouraged to attend and to bring a friend to meet local business owners and community leaders, to see how the Simpson County Development Foundation can assist our business community, and to learn about some of the great things going on in Simpson County. Past events have been held at the Simpson County Country Club and at the Vault Restaurant in Magee. The most recent event, in late 2019, was held at the Magee Airport, where plans for developing the Magee Municipal Airport were shared. We expect these events to begin again, now that the pandemic is abating somewhat.

Of course, our major stakeholder event is the **Annual Membership Meeting**, at which we have a guest speaker and present the fiscal year's *Annual Report*.

GOVERNMENT RELATIONS

- ✓ **The Council of Governments** is sponsored quarterly by SCDF. All elected officials within the county, including legislators, are invited to a breakfast and an informative presentation. Again, these meetings were precluded by the pandemic and will be restarted as the pandemic abates. Past guest speakers—with their offices at the time—have included Congressman Gregg Harper; Lt. Governor Tate Reeves; State Senator Chris Caughman and State Representatives Price Wallace, Tom Weathersby, and Noah Sandford; Senator Cindy Hyde-Smith and her Chief-of-Staff Brad White.

On Thursday, April 22, 2021, the Forty-second Annual Membership Meeting of the Simpson County Development Foundation convened at 11:30 a.m. on the campus of Copiah-Lincoln Community College Simpson Center. Luncheon was catered by Smokey Mountain Grille and Rib Shack and served buffet-style.

President Malory Yelverton extended a welcome to the annual meeting. She recognized meeting sponsors Co-Lin and Southern Pine, and she acknowledged and thanked the Simpson County Supervisors and the Trustees of the Economic Development District. She noted: "[The difficulties of economic development] can be disheartening and discouraging for everyone involved. But again, that's why I want to start this meeting by acknowledging and thanking those that continuously give us the support we need to move forward."



Donnie Caughman, Executive Director, introduced the Featured Speaker, Dr. Bill Ashley, Director of Business Research & Workforce Development, Mississippi Development Authority. Dr. Ashley offered an interesting and informative presentation on the

current employment and workforce conditions and characteristics.

Josh Pierce, Vice President for Economic Development, announced and presented the business of the year award to Mylex International. Co-owners Lance and Melissa Hamilton accepted the award.

The report of the nominating committee was presented by Carley Hansbrough, and, there being no nominations from the floor, was accepted by acclamation on motion by Dennis Ammann, seconded by Robert Barnes. The election results are as follows:

Executive Committee 2021-2022

President.....Christian Carrico
President-elect.....Josh Pierce
Secretary-Treasurer.....Lacye Evans
VP-Government Relations.....Mayor Dale Berry
VP-Government Relations.....Mayor Todd Booth
VP-Economic Development.....Eric Adkins
VP-Community Development.....Pat Brown
VP-Community Development.....Dylan Sanford

VP-Stakeholder Development.....Carley Hansbrough
Past President.....Malory Yelverton

Board of Directors

Class of 2022	Class of 2023	Class of 2024
Amanda Blakeney	Josh Allen	Tiffany Kinslow
Tristan Peavey	Jake Brown	Missy Orders
Allison Shivers	Amarylis Carter	Chris Purdum
Darrell Temple	Chris Craft	Chris Williams

Past President Yelverton passed the gavel to President-Elect Josh Pierce, accepting on behalf of Incoming President Christian Carrico. President-elect Pierce made closing remarks and, there being no further business, adjourned the meeting.

Followed the meeting, several members enjoyed a tour of the new Career Technical Building at Simpson Center, conducted by Dr. McMillan and staff.



MYLEX INTERNATIONAL INC., founded by the current owner's father, has expanded from just reconditioning nozzles to remanufacturing electronic injectors and most of the costly internal parts of diesel fuel systems. Mylex maintains an average workforce of some 40 individuals and has annual revenue in excess of \$2,000,000 with an international customer base and reputation, remanufacturing diesel fuel injection pumps, injectors, and turbo chargers.

The primary officers are Lance Hamilton, son of the founder Doug Hamilton, and his wife Melissa.

