

SEEDS OF GROWTH

A Newsletter from the Crossett
Economic Development Foundation

From the Director's Desk

An Update from Mike Smith

The Crossett Economic Development Foundation extends our thoughts and prayers to all those affected by the recent GP announcements. Georgia Pacific's decision will have far reaching effects in South Arkansas and North Louisiana. Many in our community will be affected on personal as well as professional levels. The Board Members of Economic Development are dedicated to the success of our community and guaranteeing its continued sustainability.

While we did not expect to be facing this dilemma, we are all in this together. All great challenges are also great opportunities. This is Crossett's opportunity to diversify its workforce and reshape the image of our community. Recovery and progress will take time, but know we are committed to Crossett and committed to our neighbors.

Crossett is our home, and we all need to come together as a community in a spirit of support and unity to uplift those affected the most by GP's decision. Crossett is where we live, work, and raise our families, and we will all work to protect it. Now is the time to actively market our community to friends and contacts outside Crossett.

Working for our future,



Crossett Honored by State Recognition

Arkansas Economic Development Commission (AEDC) recently announced Crossett has completed the Competitive Communities Initiative (CCI) evaluation that aims to ensure the city's preparedness to successfully compete for jobs and investments. It is the first city in south Arkansas to receive the designation – and the smallest to date.

Gov. Asa Hutchinson said, "Our goal is not just to compete – our goal is to win," when the program launched last year.

"The great thing about our Competitive Communities Initiative is that all communities can benefit, regardless of location or size," said AEDC Executive Director Mike Preston.

"Crossett may be small compared to our other certified communities, but this process has shown that by focusing on its strengths, Crossett is ready to compete for jobs and projects. With the recent announcement of layoffs at Georgia Pacific, they have an unparalleled ready workforce."

The program is designed to identify ways a community can be more competitive with regard to their economic development organizational structure, their economic development funding, their workforce, and their product readiness.

"We are thrilled to have the opportunity to be a part of the Competitive Community Initiative," said Mike Smith, executive director of the Crossett Economic Development Foundation. "Like every other community, Crossett has its challenges. But this process has helped our community leaders better identify and understand those challenges so that we can address them and turn them into opportunities. Crossett is a great place to live and work, and now we are more competitive than ever for better jobs and investment."

Best practices in the field of economic development were used to determine the



standards for the Competitive Communities Initiative. A structured and funded economic development organization is imperative, whether it's focused on a particular town or a whole county, with a strong chamber of commerce partnership. Additionally, there must be a skilled workforce ready to fill jobs and a pipeline of ready workers in the future. Finally, sites should have appropriate infrastructure fit-for-purpose, according to the size of the community and targeted industries, or a plan to provide utilities to the site.

The evaluation for a particular community begins with a commitment to complete an initial questionnaire detailing existing workforce, available and shovel-ready sites, funding sources and information from the community's economic development organization.

A team of evaluators from AEDC and its partners uses the information to help communities better understand any gaps or weaknesses that could negatively affect economic growth. With assistance from all stakeholders, communities can begin creating an action plan to improve areas that are lacking in their economic development efforts. Once the four pillars are up to standard, a community will be designated through the program as a Competitive Community.

As part of the initiative, Competitive Communities will be featured throughout AEDC marketing efforts. Crossett makes the sixth to be designated as such, joining Paragould, Newport, Russellville, Jonesboro and Little Rock. Competitive Communities in Arkansas must undergo a re-evaluation every two years to maintain their designation.



Crossett Economic Development Foundation had the opportunity to showcase Crossett to state leaders by hosting the Arkansas Economic Development Commissioners monthly meeting in June. For more information about the Arkansas Economic Development Commission, check our their website at www.arkansasedc.com



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ACMC Welcomes New Surgeon

Ashley County Medical Center welcomes Dr. Sarahrose Webster to their team. A native of Seattle, Washington, Webster received her medical degree from the University of Iowa Carver College of Medicine. Her residency training in General Surgery was completed at the University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences in Little Rock. Dr. Webster is certified by the American Board of Surgery. She is ATLS, ACLS, and PALS certified. Dr. Webster has been a practicing surgeon at Jefferson Regional Medical Center and served as a surgical instructor for UAMS-South Central Family Practice Residency Program.

As a General Surgeon, Dr. Webster offers a wide variety of surgical services including lap and open cholecystectomies (gallbladder), lap and open appendectomies, open and hand assisted laparoscopic colon surgeries, placement of central lines, breast surgery- both benign and malignant, lower extremity amputations up to above the knee, amputation as needed for nonhealing wounds or infections from vascular disease or diabetes, repair of hernias, port placements, endoscopies, removal of skin lesions and cancers, drainage of abscesses, and more. She specializes in general surgery and digestive care (G. I. Services).

Ashley County Medical Center's Chief Executive Officer, Phillip Gilmore, says "Having board certified general surgeon, Dr. Sarahrose Webster, join our ACMC team is a tremendous asset not only to Ashley County Medical Center, but to our region. Dr. Webster joining our community will enable families to continue to have their surgical care close to home."

"I want to be a town general surgeon who gets to do a little bit of everything and take care of the whole patient, and their family in the best way possible!" says Dr. Sarahrose Webster.

When Dr. Webster isn't caring for her patients, she enjoys time outdoors with her children. Please help us welcome Dr. Sarahrose Webster to our community as she joins ACMC on July 29.



**Ashley Specialty
General Surgery is
located on the campus
of Ashley County
Medical Center, 1015
Unity Road, Crossett,
AR 71635. Dr. Webster
will begin seeing
patients in August. Call
870-364-0514, for more
information.**

Crossett Swim Again

From the Grants Desk

As many of you know, the Crossett City Pool was closed a few years ago due largely to a failing filtration and return system. A group of citizens banded together and formed the Crossett Swim Again Committee, as a project specific committee under the Crossett Recreation Commission. These individuals contacted contractors and architects to determine exactly what problems existed with the current pool. From there, they held public meetings and gathered input to determine what the best options for Crossett's citizens and budget would be. The conclusion of the committee was that repairing the pool was more economically feasible than building a completely new facility at another location and fixing the property on Main to be both safe and attractive. Our Foundation has worked closely with the Swim Again committee throughout this process. We have assisted with securing an Arkansas Outdoor Recreation 50/50 Match Grant in the amount of \$250,000. The committee has worked hard over the past couple of years to secure match funds for this grant. Many local businesses and individuals have stepped up to the plate to donate to this project and help with fundraisers. The Foundation also helped the City obtain an Arkansas Blue & You Foundation Grant in the amount of \$100,000 that will be applied to the match.

Construction on phase 1 of the Pool Renovation is almost complete and the City pool will be open for a short season this summer. Full operations should begin again in late spring 2020. This phase of renovation includes a new filtration and return system, new liner to the pool, new diving board and new decking. New additions to the pool will include a zero-depth entry running horizontally along the east end of the pool and a concrete bulkhead that will create 25-foot lanes in the deep end to allow the City to host swim meets and a new slide. Future construction phases include a new pool house, the addition of a splash pad, work on the parking lot, and repairs to the tennis courts. This project is far from complete; however, the completion of this first construction phase is a huge accomplishment for the community. Tax-deductible donations for future renovations can still be made to CREST, P.O. Box 568, Crossett, AR 71635. Future construction and fundraising updates will be available soon.

"The way to change the world is through individual responsibility and taking local action in your own community"--Jeff Bridges



REVAMP CROSSETT

Recent Projects



Looking to spruce up your business? We want to help!
Check out our Revamp Crossett Grant Applications today!

www.cityofcrossett.net/revamp-crossett