



**For Immediate Release**

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**PRESS RELEASE**

**Arkansas Economic Developers & Chamber Executives  
Recognize Crystal Johnson, Steve Cox,  
Jim Petty and Michael Maulden  
with 2018 awards at their Annual Conference**

During the Awards Luncheon at their 2018 Annual Conference in Fayetteville, the Arkansas Economic Developers & Chamber Executives (AEDCE) on Monday, Aug. 27, recognized Crystal Johnson, PCED, IOM as the Outstanding Chamber Executive, Steve Cox as the Outstanding Economic Developer, Jim Petty as Volunteer of the Year and Michael L. Maulden with the Maria Haley Lifetime Leadership Award for Economic Development.

Johnson is CEO of the Batesville Area Chamber of Commerce, a 500-member organization dedicated to community and economic development. She celebrated her ninth year at the Chamber in July. Her job responsibilities include providing strategic leadership and vision for the chamber as well as facilitating the IMPACT Independence County, community and economic development strategic plan. Her most recent accomplishments include the development of a countywide strategic plan for Independence County, known as IMPACT. The grassroots initiative was developed with community input from more than 1,500 citizens and was released in 2016. IMPACT addresses four principal areas of community development including tourism, economic development, education and healthy living/wellbeing.

Cox is Senior Vice President of Economic Development for the Rogers-Lowell Area Chamber of Commerce. He began his chamber career in 2011 and has spent the past seven years working with businesses large and small to relocate and expand within Rogers, Lowell and Northwest Arkansas. He has directly worked on numerous projects that have resulted in more than \$300 million in capital investment and more than 4,000 new jobs created within his community. He also devotes a sizable portion of his time to local workforce development efforts.

Jim Petty is President and CEO of Strategic Realty companies and a 25-year real estate industry veteran. He worked as a certified public accountant in public practice, as well as a member of the executive leadership of a large, diversified regional real estate firm with multi-state activities prior to founding

Strategic Realty in 2007. His companies provide services in real estate development, redevelopment, management, construction, land development, financial feasibility analysis, financing and compliance.

Maulden is the former director of business and economic development for Entergy Arkansas, having served as the director from 1996 until his retirement in January 2018. Prior to that time, he held several positions within Entergy Arkansas after joining the company in 1984. As director of economic development, Maulden managed Entergy's Teamwork Arkansas program (later changed to Business & Economic Development), focused on community and business development initiatives in Arkansas. Under Maulden's leadership, *Site Selection* magazine recognized Entergy Arkansas as a "Top Ten Utility Economic Development Organization in North America" for 18 of the last 21 years.

[CLICK HERE for photos of the award recipients.](#)

The Arkansas Economic Developers & Chamber Executives 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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