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Congratulations, Douglas Lindsay!

The Aaron's Company congratulates CEO Douglas Lindsay on being named to the Georgia 500 for the second year in a row! Thank you for your leadership, dedication, and impact to the Aaron's family and to our local community.



The Aaron's Company, Inc.

AN EYE ON THE FUTURE

Georgia Trend is proud to present the third annual Georgia 500, a list of the most influential leaders in our state. This mammoth undertaking involves combing the state for leaders who are investing their time, money and other resources into moving our state forward as a national leader for growth and business.

As we approach our 40th anniversary, *Georgia Trend* is humbled to play a role in determining the leaders of our state, poring through the year's nominations, announcements and developments as well as anticipating who will hold the reigns leading into 2025.

It's enough of an effort picking 500 leaders to spotlight in this breakout issue without replicating the leaders featured in our other superlative lists, such as the 100 Most Influential Georgians, the Legal Elite and the 40 Under 40. To avoid overlap with the 100, we have excluded elected officials from this list.

It's been a wild year and a wild ride for Georgia with numerous superlative accolades like being named the No. 1 state to do business in the U.S. for 11 consecutive years, according to *Area Development*, a national magazine promoting industrial and economic activity. Cities as big as New York are watching Atlanta's progress creating affordable workforce housing, and states as large as Texas are swiping ideas and homegrown efforts to compete with us for jobs and population growth. Even California has its eye on Georgia and the rise of our film and entertainment industry.

What have we learned in 10 years as the best place to do business? Cooperation between our Governor Brian Kemp and the mayor of our largest city, Atlanta's Andre Dickens, as well as the mayors of our other cities and 159 county leaders, have been instrumental to Georgia's success.

And that success is not limited to Metro Atlanta. In fact, 83% of the expansions and new locations announced in fiscal year 2023 were in communities outside the 10-county Metro Atlanta region. That equals some \$12.5 billion in investment.

Georgia has put its fiscal fortitude into action, pouring surplus revenues into investments ranging from extending broadband to rural workforce housing. Innovative measures have helped enhance transportation and infrastructure investments throughout the state. A renewed focus on mental health services is addressing needed solutions from inner cities to rural Georgia.

Strategic targeting and recruitment on the part of the Georgia Department of Economic Development team have sent enormous investments into struggling communities. These communities in turn have coordinated their resources and services to meet the demand of new growth.

All this takes seamless communication and a willingness to put aside differences for the greater good of the community, and this is ultimately the secret sauce that keeps Georgia going. Call it southern hospitality or a tendency to avoid what my grandmother would have called "ugly" conversation. It works, and it works well for attracting business to the state.

I can't say all this without giving *Georgia Trend* credit for maintaining good relations in such a diverse state, both demographically and geographically. We're not a one-size-fits-all

Cities as big as New York are watching Atlanta's progress creating affordable workforce housing, and states as large as Texas are swiping ideas and homegrown efforts to compete with us for jobs and population growth. Even California has its eye on Georgia and the rise of our film and entertainment industry.

solution state – what works on the coast may not work in the mountains or in the middle cities. But we find common ground, in part due to the quality reporting *Georgia Trend* provides on our many cities and counties, and their varying takes on economic development and recruitment.

Compiling 500 names, updating information, gathering photography and more takes a lot of work on the part of the many writers, editors, marketing and administrative staff of *Georgia Trend*, and it's a yearlong process.

We try to keep this annual publication fresh from year to year, and your nominations are a big

part of the process. We encourage you to keep us in mind when you notice leaders in your communities who haven't made the list and tell us who they are at georgiatrend.com. The 2026 *Georgia 500* nomination period is open through January 31, 2025.

Furthermore, consider the qualifications of these featured leaders as you gauge your own leadership. Perhaps you lead a successful company pouring investments into your community, but are you or your company as engaged as these leaders? There is a tendency among business leaders to put the company first, then philanthropy comes later. Consider incorporating your legacy into your vision early on, and inspiring your employees and associates to do the same.

Congratulations to all the leaders featured in this issue, as well as the companies and communities they represent. Because after all, we're all in the same boat, and we all have to row together to get where we're going – a brighter, better future for Georgia and America.

Thanks for reading and enjoy the *Georgia Trend 2025 Georgia 500!*

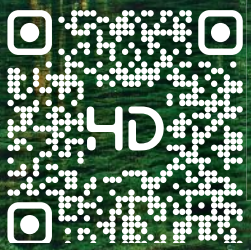


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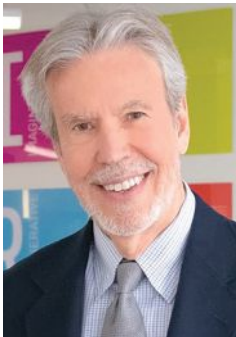
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Living Legends

ANTONIN “TONY” AECK

Senior Principal, Lord Aeck Sargent, Atlanta



A second-generation architect, Tony Aeck is senior principal in the firm with genetic ties linking it to one started by his parents in 1943. The firm was one of the first in the U.S. to use computers in the design process, and it continues leveraging technology today in its six offices in the Eastern states. He’s highly interested in the possibilities for conceptualization and design presented by AI.

In its 80+ years, the firm has completed projects in 35 states and seven countries, including commissions from about 150 colleges and universities. Notable local projects include the Kendeda Building at Georgia Tech, the

historic rehab of Georgia’s present and previous state capitol buildings and the Woodruff Art Center expansion.

Prior to returning to Atlanta to join the firm, Aeck worked in Paris at the atelier of French-Swiss architect and designer Le Corbusier on commissions unfinished at his death. A fellow of the American Institute of Architects since 2001, Aeck studied at University of Pennsylvania and received two degrees from Rice University.

He’s served several professional and community organizations, including the Trust for Public Land, The Georgia Trust for Historic Preservation, Big Brothers Big Sisters and The Atlanta Speech School.

DANIEL P. “DAN” AMOS

Chairman & CEO, Aflac, Columbus



In 1990, when Dan Amos became CEO, Aflac’s split-adjusted stock price was 95 cents per share. That stock is currently valued at more than \$80 per share, with a market cap near \$50 billion. Aflac is the top provider of supplemental health insurance

products in the U.S. and the leading provider of medical and cancer insurance in Japan.

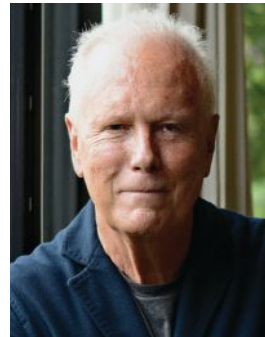
Besides the famous Aflac Duck, Amos and Aflac are known for helping families of children diagnosed with cancer. The company and its independent sales associates have contributed more than \$182 million to help, including funding for the Aflac Cancer and Blood Disorders Center of Children’s Healthcare of Atlanta.

Under his leadership, Aflac became a signatory of the Principles for Responsible Investment (PRI) and was included in the Bloomberg Gender-Equality Index for the fourth consecutive year and in the Dow Jones Sustainability North America Index for the 10th time.

In 2023, Amos was named a Georgia Trustee, the state’s highest honor. He is a former member of the board of Children’s Healthcare of Atlanta, chairman emeritus of the board of the Japan-America Society of Georgia and chairman emeritus of the University of Georgia Foundation.

BOB AMICK

Owner/Founder, Concentrics Restaurants, Atlanta



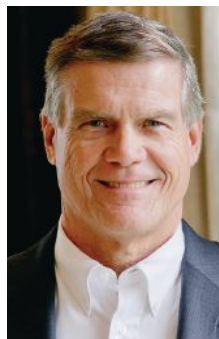
After establishing himself in the industry while working for other restaurant groups, Bob Amick launched Concentrics Restaurants in 2001, resulting in One Midtown Kitchen, followed by Two Urban Licks, Trois, The Brasserie and Neighborhood Café at Parish and, more recently, Bully Boy, with many others in between. He’s since expanded the company to include design and development consulting as well as a third-party management service, both of which took his name and concepts nationwide.

After more than a half-century in the industry, Amick no longer embarks on projects of his own, though he’ll continue to work on projects launched by his son, Justin. But he won’t commit to retirement, either. “Sometimes somebody dangles the right thing in front of you,” says Amick, who believes Atlanta’s food scene is finally getting the recognition it deserves.

“I think it’s all coming together for Atlanta, with the quality of the chefs we have, the quality of the restaurants we have, the diversity and Atlanta being a big enough town to support those things,” he says, noting the importance of regional fare. “I think regionally the world responds in different places to different things, and you can’t always force it; you have to know your market.”

VANCE D. BELL

Chairman, Shaw Industries Inc., Dalton



As chairman of a wholly owned subsidiary of Berkshire Hathaway and a leader in flooring and other surface solutions designed for residential housing, commercial spaces and outdoor environments, Vance Bell advises management on acquisitions, major

capital projects and corporate strategy.

He began his career with Shaw in 1975 and served as CEO for 15 years before taking on the role of board chair in 2021. Prior to becoming CEO in 2006, he held leadership positions in sales, marketing, international business and operations.

Under his leadership, the company strengthened its people-first culture. Bell’s belief in the company’s success being linked to the vitality of its communities is reflected in its philanthropic investments. From support of United Way and St. Jude Children’s Research Hospital to associate volunteer programs and future workforce development initiatives, Shaw is deeply rooted in its communities.

Personally, Bell has been heavily involved in industry, civic and community leadership roles, including with The Carpet and Rug Institute and the Scheller College of Business at Georgia Tech. In 2019, he was named to the World Floor Covering Association Hall of Fame.

ARTHUR M. BLANK

Owner & Chairman, Blank Family of Businesses, Atlanta



Perhaps best known as cofounder of The Home Depot, Arthur Blank is now widely recognized for his diverse businesses. Named by ESPN as the 2021 Sports Philanthropist of the Year, Blank is a tireless advocate of using purpose and profit hand-in-hand to

benefit the communities around him. Blank has been distinguished by *Forbes* as one of the World’s 100 Greatest Living Business Minds (2017), *Sports Business Journal’s* Executive of the Year (2018) and one of its 50 Most Influential People in Sports three years in a row.

In addition to the Blank Family Foundation, the Blank Family of Businesses includes the Atlanta Falcons and Atlanta United; the PGA TOUR Superstore; Mountain Sky Guest Ranch, West Creek Ranch and Paradise Valley Ranch; and Mercedes-Benz Stadium. Since 1995, the Arthur M. Blank Family Foundation has granted more than \$1 billion to help transform lives and communities by uniting people across differences to find a common cause. The foundation also leads giving programs for each of the for-profit businesses in Blank’s portfolio.

BILL BOLLING

Founder, Chair & Senior Advisor, Food Well Alliance, Atlanta



Bill Bolling cofounded the nonprofit Food Well Alliance in 2015 to create a network of local leaders working together to build community gardens and urban farms across Metro Atlanta. The organization provides resources and support for more than 300 community gardens, urban farms and orchards.

Prior to Food Well Alliance, Bolling founded the Atlanta Community Food Bank in 1979, serving as its executive director for 36 years. Under his leadership, the Food Bank distributed more than half a billion pounds of food. He was

also instrumental in starting the Georgia Food Bank Association, through which he helped establish eight food banks serving more than 2,600 hunger relief organizations in every Georgia county.

Bolling serves on the boards of the Arthur M. Blank Family Foundation, the Inspire Brands Foundation and the Andrew Young School of Policy Studies at Georgia State University. He has facilitated the Atlanta Regional Housing Forum since founding it in 1984.

Most recently, he cofounded and serves as chair of the Atlanta Civic Circle, a new organization addressing civic journalism. In 2022, Bolling was honored by the Atlanta chapter of the Urban Land Institute with the Dan and Tally Sweat Community Leadership Award.

SAXBY CHAMBLISS

Former U.S. Senator and U.S. Representative; Partner, DLA Piper, Atlanta



Saxby Chambliss has been a partner with the law firm of DLA Piper since January 2015, where he is a member of the firm's government relations and cybersecurity teams. Prior to that, he served two terms as a U.S. senator from 2003 to 2015 and four terms as a U.S. representative from 1995 to 2003, representing Georgia's 8th District as a Republican.

During his tenure in the Senate, he served as a member of the Senate Armed Services Committee, the Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition and Forestry and the Senate Rules Committee. His leadership and experience on homeland security and intelligence matters earned him an appointment to the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence, where he

served as vice chairman from 2011 to 2014, advocating for dramatically improved information sharing and human intelligence-gathering capabilities. His previous role as chairman of the House Intelligence Subcommittee on Terrorism and Homeland Security made him one of the leading congressional experts on those issues.

Throughout his legislative career, he has been recognized numerous times for his work on agriculture, defense, budget and national security issues.

ROBERT L. BROWN JR.

President, RL Brown & Associates Inc., Decatur



Robert Brown founded the architectural firm RL Brown & Associates in 1984. The firm has designed projects throughout DeKalb County, Atlanta, the state of Georgia and the Southeast.

A graduate of Tuskegee University, Brown guided the designs for The Ray Charles Performing Arts Center at Morehouse College, historic Tompkins Hall at Tuskegee University, the Centennial Olympic Games Tennis Center at Stone Mountain Park and the World of Coca-Cola Museum.

Brown's dedication to civic leadership exemplifies his firm's culture. He serves on the board of Citizens Trust

Bank and is a former Metro Atlanta Chamber board member, a Georgia Chamber of Commerce past chair and a member of the board of the Georgia Partnership for Excellence in Education. He has also helped set the direction of the Georgia Department of Transportation for more than 10 years, serving terms as board chair in 2016-17 and 2023-24.

Brown's accomplishments have earned him the American Institute of Architects' highest honor by being named to its College of Fellows in 1999. In 2020, he was named a Georgia Trustee, the highest honor the state confers.

FAY GOLD

Founder, Fay Gold Gallery, Atlanta



Fay Gold's name is synonymous with contemporary art in Atlanta and across the South, having established the Fay Gold Gallery over four decades ago. A native of South Carolina, the art trailblazer grew up in New York City and relocated to Georgia in 1966, creating and teaching oil painting and drawing in her Buckhead home studio for 15 years. She became the go-to for contemporary art collectors in Atlanta and is known for hosting groundbreaking exhibits for art giants such as Robert Mapplethorpe, Jean-Michel Basquiat and Robert Rauschenberg.

An art expert recognized around the country, Gold has fostered successful careers for a

long list of artists and helped build contemporary art collections for both private and corporate clients. Art auctions she chaired with Elton John in Atlanta raised \$750,000 for his AIDS Foundation. Today, she continues to serve as an art advisor.

Gold is a recipient of the Brain Injury Association of Georgia's Big Thinker Award and has been honored for her pioneering vision and dedication to the contemporary art scene in Atlanta. She captured her journey by writing *Basquiat's Cat*, her memoirs, for which a play is being written.

BOB HOPE

Chairman & Cofounder, Hope Beckham Espinosa Inc., Atlanta



Bob Hope joined the Atlanta Braves staff while a Georgia State student. By graduation, he was assistant PR director and at age 24 became the team's head of public relations and promotions. He ran the Major League Baseball All-Star game when Atlanta

hosted in 1972 and went on the road with Hank Aaron to handle media while the famed player chased homeruns and broke boundaries.

When Ted Turner bought the baseball team, he asked Hope to be his publicist and promoter and sent him to "run the Hawks," the basketball team he also owned, making Hope vice president of the Braves, the Hawks and Turner Broadcasting. He followed that up with a stint at Coca-Cola before purchasing a small public relations agency, through which he continued to work for Turner and Coke.

Burson Marsteller purchased the firm and moved Hope to New York, where he served as executive vice president. Five years later, he returned to the South and launched PR and communications agency Hope Beckham, which merged with GPR Global in 2021. Projects have included the launch of the Colorado Silver Bullets women's baseball team for Coors and the coordination of the Olympics in the U.S. for Coca-Cola, among others.

BERNIE MARCUS

Chairman, The Marcus Foundation, Atlanta



A son of poor Russian immigrants, Bernie Marcus is a dedicated entrepreneur and philanthropist who has given more than \$2 billion to causes aimed at saving and changing lives for people worldwide.

His entrepreneurial vision gave birth to Georgia-based The Home Depot, which has not only created over 450,000 jobs but also generates over \$150 billion in annual revenue, solidifying Georgia's reputation as a premier business destination and home to a major Fortune 50 company.

The Georgia Aquarium, his thank you to Georgia citizens, has generated nearly \$7 billion in investment and has attracted more than 43 million visitors from

around the globe since opening in 2005.

Many medical and military veteran services, hospitals and research facilities bear the Marcus name. Medical research is one of The Marcus Foundation's key areas of interest. Grady Hospital, Piedmont Heart Institute, Emory, Children's Healthcare of Atlanta (CHOA) and the Shepherd Center are among the Atlanta beneficiaries of that interest, as well as medical research studies throughout the country.

A proud Jewish man, Marcus supports groups that fight antisemitism and promotes Jewish identity, including the creation of RootOne, which provides financial, organizational and educational support to help thousands of Jewish teens travel to Israel each summer.

ROBERT S. JEPSON JR.

Chairman, Jepson Associates Inc., Savannah



Robert Jepson and his wife, Alice Andrews Jepson, are active philanthropists. During the past 35 years, much of their philanthropy has been focused in Savannah, including the Jepson Center for the Arts at The Telfair Museums,

the Savannah College of Art and Design and the Georgia Historical Society. Much of their giving focuses on the arts and higher education.

He is a cofounder of the Savannah Educational Alliance, which provides full scholarships to Savannah State University for graduates of the local public school system. He also supports the University of Richmond's Jepson School of Leadership Studies and established the Jepson Oxford Scholars Foundation, which sends graduate students to the University of Oxford in England to study for a master's degree in the field of their choice.

Jepson has received numerous honorary degrees and awards, including the United Way Spirit of Community Award and the J.W. Fanning Award from Leadership Georgia and the Georgia Chamber. This past February, the Southeast Georgia Leadership Forum honored him with the Legacy Leader Award.

He currently serves on the Georgia Research Alliance Board and is a trustee of the Endowment Trust of the Georgia Historical Society.

KENNY LEON

Broadway & Television Director, Atlanta



Kenny Leon gained prominence in 1990 when he became one of the few Black Americans to head a notable nonprofit regional theater company as the artistic director of Atlanta's Alliance Theatre. During his tenure, the company staged premieres of Pearl Cleage's *Blues for an Alabama Sky* and Elton John and Tim Rice's musical *Aida*, which moved to Broadway. The theater's endowment rose from \$1 million to \$5 million during his leadership.

He is the cofounder and artistic director of Atlanta-based True Colors Theatre Company, which aims to amplify Black voices by increasing the reach of established Black artists nationally while also commissioning new works from emerging local artists.

Leon has won several Tony Awards for his work on Broadway, including for *A Raisin in the Sun* and August Wilson's *Fences*. His memoir, *Take You Wherever You Go*, was released in 2018 and is based on advice he received from his grandmother.

EGBERT L.J. PERRY

Chairman & CEO, The Integral Group, Atlanta



Integral, which Egbert Perry cofounded in 1993, specializes in large-scale, mixed-use development projects and a wide variety of housing and housing-anchored developments across the U.S. Perry has always focused on responsible community development and real estate, with projects that not only are successful but build equity and access for the people who live and work there. That mission was made evident in 1996 with Centennial Place, which re-envisioned the existing public housing into the nation's first mixed-use, economically integrated community. The U.S. Department of Housing & Urban Development designated this holistic revitalization approach to community development as the national model. It's now widely used in the housing industry and has been replicated more than 250 times nationwide.

Perry recently created the Integral Collaborative, a mentoring partnership between The Integral Group and other Black-owned real estate enterprises. In addition, he sits on the boards for the National Center for Civil and Human Rights, the Atlanta Business League and The Carter Center and is a past chair for Fannie Mae and Central Atlanta Progress.

BOB SHAW

Founder & CEO, Engineered Floors, Dalton



Bob Shaw, with his brother, Bud, cofounded Shaw Industries in 1967, creating one of the largest comprehensive flooring providers in the world. In 2001, they sold Shaw Industries to Berkshire Hathaway, followed by Shaw's retirement in 2006.

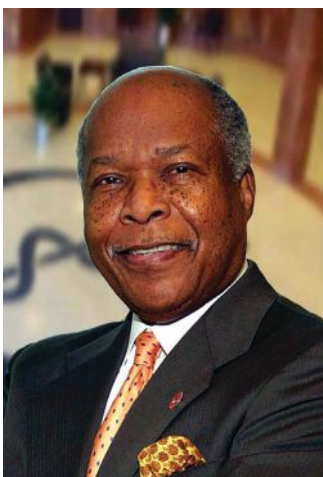
Fast forward to 2009, when Shaw founded and became CEO of Engineered Floors (EF), manufacturing carpet in the first of three state-of-the-art plants in the Dalton area. In 2016, EF purchased J+J Flooring Group, a 60-year-old, privately owned company in Dalton, known for its commercial broadloom and carpet tile.

In 2017, EF acquired the assets of Beaulieu of America. This strategic move made Engineered Floors the third-largest residential flooring provider in the industry.

Shaw actively supports many local organizations in North Georgia. He was inducted into the Junior Achievement of Northwest Georgia Business Hall of Fame in 2018. The Anna Shaw Children's Institute in Dalton is named in memory of his late wife and focuses on supporting children with developmental delays.

LOUIS W. SULLIVAN

Chairman, National Museum of Health & Medicine, Atlanta



Atlanta native Louis W. Sullivan chairs the Washington, D.C.-based Sullivan Alliance to Transform the Health Professions, now merged with the Association of American Medical Colleges. In 1975, he became founding dean and director of what would become Morehouse School of Medicine, where he served nearly two decades as president.

Dr. Sullivan accepted an appointment in 1989 by former Pres. George H.W. Bush to serve as Secretary of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), where he established what has become the National Institute on Minority Health and Health Disparities, among other major

accomplishments during his tenure.

Dr. Sullivan was an instructor of medicine at Harvard Medical School, assistant professor of medicine at Seton Hall College of Medicine, co-director of hematology at Boston University Medical Center and founder of the Boston University Hematology Service at Boston City Hospital. The founding president of the Association of Minority Health Professions Schools, he cofounded the Medical Education for South African Blacks, raising scholarship funds for more than 10,000 Black health professions students. He is the author of several award-winning books, including his autobiography.

ALANA SHEPHERD

Cofounder & Chair, Shepherd Center, Atlanta



Alana Shepherd, her husband, Harold, their son, James, and David Apple, MD, founded Shepherd Center after James sustained a spinal cord injury in 1973. Through her leadership and tenacity, Shepherd Center has become a world-renowned facility that treats and helps thousands of patients begin again.

She is a constant presence at Shepherd Center, where she offers encouragement to patients and families. An advocate for removing barriers for people with disabilities, she championed bringing the International Paralympic Games to Atlanta in 1996. Her efforts changed Olympic/Paralympic history by leading the International Olympic Committee to decree that cities seeking to host the Olympic Games must include the Paralympics.

Shepherd was the first woman elected to the Buckhead Coalition and to serve as its chair, as well as the first woman to serve on the boards of Genuine Parts and Wachovia. Shepherd Center will be celebrating 50 years in 2025 with the completion of two new buildings on its Atlanta campus, part of its \$350-million Pursuing Possible campaign: the Arthur M. Blank Family Residences, a tower that will provide additional housing to families, and the Marcus Center for Advanced Rehabilitation, which will house innovation initiatives.

CLYDE C. TUGGLE

Cofounder & Partner, Pine Island Capital Partners, Atlanta



Clyde Tuggle is a cofounder of Pine Island Capital Partners, a private equity investment firm focused on middle-market aerospace and defense investments. He is currently CEO of Pine Island's portfolio company, InVeris Training Solutions, a technology company that develops virtual training solutions for the military and law enforcement worldwide.

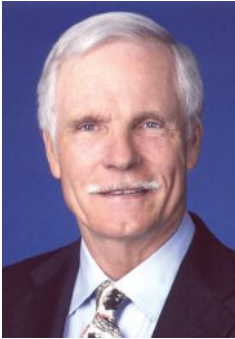
Prior to cofounding Pine Island in 2017, Tuggle spent 30 years at The Coca-Cola Company. In 2005, he was named president of

the Moscow-based Russia, Ukraine and Belarus Division before returning to Atlanta in 2008 as senior vice president and chief global public affairs and communications officer before retiring in 2018.

Tuggle serves on the boards of directors of Georgia Power Company, Oxford Industries Inc. and InVeris Training Solutions, and currently serves as treasurer of the Georgia Historical Society. He is a past board chair of Agnes Scott College and the Georgia Research Alliance and past president of the Atlanta Rotary Club.

TED TURNER

Philanthropist, Environmentalist & Conservationist, Atlanta



Ted Turner is an entrepreneurial visionary who transformed television news by creating CNN. He became an Atlanta icon through his ownership of two professional sports teams, the Atlanta Braves and the Atlanta Hawks. Turner then leveraged his wealth and prestige to become one of America's most recognized philanthropists.

His environmental and conservation passions have been an inspiration to many. He is the founder of the Turner Foundation, which protects and restores the Earth's natural systems; cofounder of the Captain Planet Foundation, creating innovative programs that

empower youth to solve local environmental issues; founder of the Turner Endangered Species Fund, which helps to conserve biological diversity; and founder of Ted Turner Reserves, an initiative in which the public can visit and explore four unique, Turner-owned properties in New Mexico. Most recently, he founded the Turner Institute of Ecoagriculture, which conducts agricultural research related to ranching and conservation activities.

Widely known as a staunch advocate for global stability, he founded the United Nations Foundation to promote global health and peace; cofounded the Nuclear Threat Initiative (with former U.S. Sen. Sam Nunn) to reduce global threats from nuclear and biological weapons; and founded Turner Renewable Energy, which promotes the use of clean energy.

ANDREW J. YOUNG

Former United Nations Ambassador; Congressman; Atlanta Mayor; and Civil Rights Leader, Atlanta



As a leader on the front lines of the Civil Rights movement, Andrew Young helped change the course of history. Since then, his life of service has included elected and appointed offices, social entrepreneurship in Africa and creative philanthropy intended to feed the world.

An adviser to several presidents, he leads the Andrew J. Young Foundation, which develops and supports global approaches to economic development, poverty and hunger. In May 2024, the foundation broke ground on an innovative aquaponics facility that can be a model for global food sustainability and that Young hopes will be his legacy.

As executive director of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, he worked with Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. to teach non-violent strategies and lead protests that resulted in the landmark Civil Rights Act of 1964 and Voting Rights Act of 1965. He served in Congress and as U.S. ambassador to the U.N., then was twice elected mayor of Atlanta, bringing millions in foreign investment and playing a major role in hosting the 1996 Centennial Olympic Games. Young is recipient of the Presidential Medal of Freedom and the French Legion d'Honneur, and has received honorary degrees from more than 100 colleges and universities.

The InVeris Training Solutions family congratulates our CEO Clyde Tuggle on being recognized among Georgia's Most Influential Leaders.



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ED BASTIAN

CEO, Delta Air Lines, Atlanta



Since being named CEO of Delta Air Lines in 2016, Ed Bastian has expanded Delta's leading position as the world's most reliable airline while growing its global footprint in the air and on the ground. He is a 25-year Delta veteran.

"I consider my role as Delta's CEO to be the highest calling of my life, and the most important part of my job is taking care of Delta's people," he says. "We've been a people-focused company since our founding nearly a century ago. If we take care of our people, they'll take care of our customers, whose business and loyalty will, in turn, reward our investors and other stakeholders."

Under his leadership, Delta has become the world's most-awarded airline, according to J.D. Power and *The Wall Street Journal*. It is also the top-ranking airline in *Fortune's* World's Most Admired Companies.

In 2018, *Fortune* named Bastian among The World's 50 Greatest Leaders. In 2019 he was elected to the membership of the Council on Foreign Relations. In 2023, he was named *Chief Executive* magazine's Chief Executive of the Year and, in 2024, the Georgian of the Year by *Georgia Trend*.

MARK BURNS

President, Gulfstream Aerospace Corp., Savannah



With more than 40 years of experience at Gulfstream Aerospace, Mark Burns knows what it takes to deliver the world's finest aviation experience.

"Each Gulfstream employee is essential to consistently delivering the highest quality and safest experience for our customers and operators, no matter the role," he says.

Burns started out at Gulfstream as a computer-aided design operator, later becoming involved in engineering for the GIV flight-test program before being named president of customer support in 2008. He was named president of Gulfstream in 2015. He is also vice president of parent company General Dynamics.

In 2018, he was recognized by the National Aeronautic Association for his significant contribution to aeronautics. In January 2024, Burns received the Lifetime Aviation Industry Leader Award from the Living Legends of Aviation, produced by Kiddie Hawk Air Academy.

"For more than 60 years, Gulfstream has prided itself on designing and delivering high-quality aircraft and customer-centric services," he says. "This mindset is woven into our fabric, and we know it's what makes a good company great. Now, more than ever, our customers are counting on us. The collective efforts and relentless focus on quality from our more than 20,000 employees worldwide has allowed us to design and deliver the most advanced fleet of aircraft. We've set the bar high, and we keep climbing."

Burns sits on several boards, including the General Aviation Manufacturers Association, Georgia Power and the National Air and Space Museum.

RODERICK MCLEAN

Vice President, Air Mobility & Maritime Missions, and General Manager, Lockheed Martin Aeronautics, Marietta

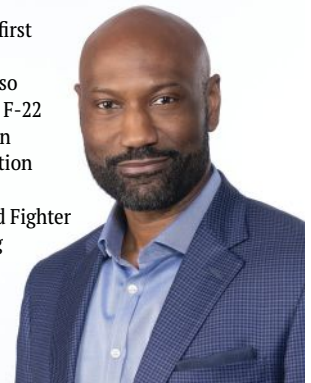
Recently named an Honorary Tuskegee Airman by the Atlanta Chapter of Tuskegee Airmen, Roderick McLean oversees Lockheed Martin's Marietta manufacturing facility, the global home of the C-130J Super Hercules.

This year, the C-130 Hercules program celebrates 70 years since its first flight.

The Marietta site's more than 5,600 highly skilled team members also produce center wing assemblies for the F-35 Lightning II and supports F-22 Raptor sustainment. Lockheed Martin is one of the largest employers in Marietta, and the facility is one of the company's main aircraft production facilities in the U.S.

Before coming to Marietta, McLean led Lockheed Martin's Integrated Fighter Group line-of-business as Vice President/General Manager, overseeing the F-22 Raptor and F-16 Fighting Falcon programs. He began his career at Lockheed Martin in 1994 as a radar systems engineer.

McLean is an active member of the Metro Atlanta Chamber's board of directors and sits on both the North Carolina A&T State University and Georgia Institute of Technology Engineering Advisory boards.



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Agribusiness



WILL BENTLEY

President, Georgia Agribusiness Council, Commerce



At the helm of the Georgia Agribusiness Council since 2018, Will Bentley leads an organization vital to advocating for the state's largest industry in both Atlanta and Washington, D.C.

With membership from every sector of the ag industry, the issues are complex.

“Labor, foreign competition, trade

and the skyrocketing price of inputs are some of the biggest challenges facing Georgia agriculture. We've advocated for updates to the Farm Bill on the federal level and numerous issues at the state level that we believe will help address these challenges for our industry in the future” he says. “Agribusinesses are vital to the economic story in Georgia. We are blessed with reliable water sources, good soils, access to markets, strong infrastructure that includes a major port, world-class research and education resources, and a diversity of agriculture commodities that make our state a great place to operate an agribusiness. For a majority of Georgia's rural counties, there is no economy without a successful ag industry.”

Prior to joining the Georgia Agribusiness Council, Bentley served as executive vice president of the Georgia Cattlemen's Association. Continuing a tradition that dates back to 1824, he and his family still farm in Upson County.

JIM HANNAN

President & COO, Koch Industries Inc., Atlanta



Jim Hannan's career with Koch began over 25 years ago when he served as chief financial officer for Koch Mineral Services. Since then, he's led several of Koch's companies, including Infor, Molex, Koch Engineered Solutions, Koch Investment Group and Georgia-Pacific, one of the world's leading

manufacturers and marketers of tissue, packaging, pulp, paper, cellulose, nonwovens, building products and related chemicals.

Koch Industries is one of the largest private companies in America, with annual revenues that exceed \$125 billion. It owns a diverse group of companies ranging from manufacturing to renewable energy to global commodities trading. Since 2003, Koch companies have invested nearly \$150 billion in growth and improvements. With a presence in about 60 countries, Koch companies employ 120,000 people worldwide, with about 60,000 of those in the U.S.

Hannan is involved in numerous community organizations in the Atlanta area. He has worked closely with the Atlanta Police Foundation and actively serves on the Atlanta Committee for Progress. Hannan is also currently on the boards of the Georgia Research Alliance and The Commerce Club.

JUSTIN CORBETT & JARED CORBETT

Owners, Corbett Brothers Farms, Lake Park

Justin and Jared Corbett are third-generation farmers who operate Corbett Brothers Farms, one of the top vegetable-growing operations on the East Coast. Based in Lake Park, the brothers farm more than 3,000 acres across five counties in Georgia and Florida.

Green bell peppers are their primary crop, but they also grow several other varieties of peppers plus squash, eggplant, cucumber, cabbage, citrus, sweet corn and watermelons. They have the distinction of being one of the leading growers and packers of Satsuma oranges, with a brand of the citrus they call Besties.

They are committed to sustainable farming practices, implementing crop rotation and advanced drip irrigation, and work to preserve natural habitats.

To help bring the new crops to market, they increased their packing and cooling facility to 200,000 square feet. The brothers divide the responsibilities of managing the farms, with Justin



Justin Corbett, left, and Jared Corbett

focusing on growing and managing the crops while Jared oversees harvesting and packaging. Their combination of skills has allowed them to distinguish themselves in their industry and community. In 2022, they were named Lowndes County's first Large Farm of the Year. In addition, Justin serves on the board of directors of the Georgia Fruit and Vegetables Growers Association.

ERIC HANSOTIA

Chairman & CEO, AGCO, Duluth



Eric Hansotia leads one of the largest agricultural equipment companies in the world. AGCO employs some 27,900 people across five continents and sells products in 140 countries through a network of 3,100 independent dealers and distributors. The company is coming off a record year with net sales of \$14.4 billion in 2023.

In 2024, AGCO will continue to execute its Farmer-First strategy, focusing on three growth levers: globalizing a full line of Fendt-branded

products, expanding its precision ag portfolio and growing the global parts and service business.

AGCO is focused on fully integrating its newest joint venture with Trimble, PTx Trimble, within its precision ag portfolio to accelerate the development and adoption of innovative technologies and better serve customers.

“PTx Trimble enables us to accelerate AGCO's technology transformation for more farmers around the world, no matter what brands of tractors and implements they use,” Hansotia says.

The company is also rolling out FarmerCore, a transformative distribution model that goes straight to the farm – where farmers want to do business – through digital tools, service trucks, local parts access and more in partnership with AGCO dealers.

DON KOEHLER

Executive Director, Georgia Peanut Commission, Tifton



Don Koehler has served as executive director of the Georgia Peanut Commission since 1986. He's also currently serving his seventh term as a member of the Agricultural Technical Advisory Committee (ATAC), which advises USDA and the U.S. Trade

Representative on trade policy issues.

Koehler says the biggest issue facing our farmers is high production cost and decreased market prices, which is eating into farm equity.

"We must have the vision of Dr. George Washington Carver, who helped farmers grow more for less and found creative uses for those peanuts. We are seeking new uses from livestock feed to plastics and medical uses," he says.

He is an eternal optimist. "I work with an amazing team of professionals advocating for farmers," he adds. "And our university researchers comprise the premier peanut research team anywhere on the face of the earth."

Georgia has great infrastructure supporting agriculture, Koehler says. "We continue building partnerships with government and the business community. In a business where lifestyle cannot be ignored, Georgia is still ideally positioned. My goal is not for the glory, it is to lead our team to a better way of life for our farmers and all Georgians."

TOM McCALL

President, Georgia Farm Bureau, Macon



Having been a Georgia farmer for nearly half a century, Tom McCall has seen a lot. As president of Georgia Farm Bureau, he meets with Georgia farmers of all backgrounds, learning about current issues impacting the industry and how the organization can help. Georgia Farm Bureau advocates for agriculture on both the state and national level, influencing policies that protect our state's economy and our access to locally grown food.

McCall served in the Georgia House of Representatives for 26 years, continuing a family tradition of legislative service that goes back 75 years. In recognition of that service, he received numerous achievement and distinguished service awards and was recently inducted into the Georgia Agriculture Hall of Fame. His extensive background in Georgia politics makes him uniquely positioned to make a difference in the lives of the organization's more than 30,000 farmer members.

He believes that a strong agriculture industry will enhance the lives of Georgians. "Georgia is the breadbasket of the South, especially in regard to the variety of commodities we produce," he says. "Couple these resources with some of the best farmers in the world, and that's a recipe for success."

CHUCK LEAVELL

Owner, Charlane Woodlands & Preserve, Macon



When he's not busy touring with The Rolling Stones as their keyboardist, Chuck Leavell can usually be found on his tree farm in Twiggs County. Leavell's interest in forestry was first piqued in the mid-1980s, and he studied forestry by correspondence while riding on a tour bus with The Fabulous Thunderbirds.

Leavell and his wife, Rose Lane, soon turned her family's farmland into what has become a textbook tree farm. Their work has been recognized by numerous conservation organizations, and Leavell is the only two-time recipient of the Georgia Tree Farmer of the Year award. Leavell has written four books on forestry, and his award-winning documentary, *Chuck Leavell: The Tree Man*, is revered as one of the best documentaries on a musician ever made.

After touring the globe with the Stones, Leavell is happy to return home, where he trades in his rock 'n roll outfits for jeans and boots and pursues his other main passion as a conservationist. In fact, Leavell says his three main passions in life are "my family, my trees and my music."

TIM LOWRIMORE

President & CEO, Georgia Forestry Association and Foundation, Forsyth



In August, Tim Lowrimore was named to his new post with the Georgia Forestry Association and its Foundation, a role he assumed on October 1. He joins the GFA from the Georgia Forestry Commission, for which he was appointed as director by Gov. Brian Kemp in 2021.

Lowrimore says Georgia has a strong track record and reputation of supporting forestry and agribusinesses.

Lowrimore believes that the future for forestry in Georgia is as bright as he's ever seen. "Georgia is the No. 1 forestry state in the nation today and is home to several leading global forest products companies," he says. "Our state possesses advantages over other states, like its proximity to major population centers, business-friendly climate, infrastructure (including ports) and abundant forest resources."

Georgia's forest sector and policy leaders remain focused on innovation. "This will ensure that our forests can continue to support societal demands for sustainable solutions in the areas of packaging, building, aviation fuels and next-generation batteries for electric vehicles," says Lowrimore.

JOHNNY SABO

Director & State Forester, Georgia Forestry Commission, Macon



Johnny Sabo is relatively new to Georgia, but he has spent more than two decades focused on the forestry industry, first with the Florida Forest Service before joining the Georgia Forestry Commission (GFC) as deputy director in April 2023.

Georgia is the No. 1 forestry state in the nation – forest land covers approximately 67% of the state – and the GFC helps protect and conserve our more than 24 million acres of forests through leadership, services and education resources. The GFC also issues

burn permits, offers fire detection services, forest management help and growing and selling quality tree seedlings for planting. With more than 20 programs centered around forest management and conservation, fire prevention and suppression, and urban and community forestry.

Sabo serves on the Georgia Forestry Foundation Board of Trustees and the Georgia Sentinel Landscape Executive Committee.

A photograph of a stage with blue lighting and spotlights. The stage is dark, and the lighting is primarily blue, with several spotlights illuminating the floor. The background is a deep blue, and there are some faint lights visible in the distance. The overall atmosphere is dramatic and professional.

Arts, Entertainment & Sports

KENNY BLANK

Executive & Artistic Director, Atlanta Jewish Film Festival, Atlanta



For 20 of its 25 years, Kenny Blank has led the charge at the Atlanta Jewish Film Festival, the largest film festival in Georgia and one of the largest of its kind in the world. An opportunity for cultural dialogue and education in Atlanta, the organization attracts a diverse audience and is able to elevate social and cultural understanding through the power of film. This year it launched an education committee to enhance its educational outreach, which includes classroom streaming, field trips and Q&A opportunities with filmmakers.

Prior to AJFF, Blank was an award-winning executive

producer for NBC affiliate stations in Atlanta and Savannah. A communications specialist, he served for Atlanta Mayors Maynard Jackson and Bill Campbell, handling various high-profile citywide communications initiatives. He attended New York University, where he earned a BFA in film and television from the Tisch School of the Arts and a bachelor's in journalism and mass communication.

A recipient of the IMAGE Film Award and the Nexus Award from Atlanta Contemporary, he currently sits on the boards of Alliance Theatre and Woodward Academy and serves as an advisory board member for The Atlanta Opera, Emory Center for Ethics, Islamic Speakers Bureau of Atlanta and WABE.

GRETCHEN CORBIN

President & CEO, Georgia Lottery, Atlanta



Under Gretchen Corbin's leadership, the Georgia Lottery, which celebrated 30 years in 2023, generates more than \$1.5 billion a year for the state's HOPE Scholarship and Pre-K programs. Corbin credits the sustained growth in part to 2022's \$2.04-billion Powerball jackpot run and last year's \$1.4-billion Powerball. Since the Lottery's inception, it has returned \$28 billion to the state for education.

Prior to Gretchen Corbin's appointment to the Georgia Lottery in 2018, she served as the commissioner of the Technical College System of Georgia, overseeing more

than 22 schools in that role. She is also the former commissioner of the Georgia Department of Community Affairs.

Over her career, she's helped lead the growth of the state's largest businesses, such as Porsche, Caterpillar, Gulfstream and Mohawk. She serves as a member of the Georgia Tech Manufacturing Institute External Advisory Board, the University of Georgia's Board of Visitors and is a Georgia Chamber of Commerce board member. Last year, she was named Georgian of the Year by the Georgia Association of Broadcasters.

ANNETTE CONE-SKELTON

Cofounder, President, CEO & Founding Director, Museum of Contemporary Art of Georgia, Atlanta



Annette Cone-Skelton has received numerous honors and awards during a career spanning more than 50 years as an exhibiting artist, arts educator, curator, editor and owner of a fine arts advisory firm.

In 2002, she cofounded The Museum of Contemporary Art of Georgia (MOCA GA), a visual arts museum home to more than 1,600 works by Georgia artists.

Her honors include being named 2012 Museum

Educator of the Year by the Georgia Arts Education Association and receiving the 2012 Governor's Awards for the Arts & Humanities. The Governor's Awards pay tribute to the most distinguished citizens and organizations that have demonstrated a lifetime commitment to work in these fields.

As a visual artist, Cone-Skelton's artwork is held in prestigious museums, including the National Museum of Women in the Arts in Washington, D.C.; the High Museum of Art, the Michael C. Carlos Museum at Emory University and MOCA GA, all in Atlanta; and the Herbert F. Johnson Museum at Cornell University.

She is a member of the International Women's Forum in Georgia and served as president from 2013 to 2014. In addition, she is a member of the Emory University board of visitors.

DAN CORSO

President, Atlanta Sports Council, Atlanta



Dan Corso oversees the Atlanta Sports Council (ASC), a division of the Metro Atlanta Chamber that brings major sports events to Atlanta. The council's latest success was winning a bidding competition for Atlanta to be one of 16 host cities in the U.S., Mexico and Canada for the 2026 FIFA World Cup.

Held every four years, the World Cup is the world's most popular sports event, which Corso says is even bigger than the Olympics Atlanta hosted in

1996. Corso serves as the head of the host committee for the cup. Atlanta was also recently chosen to host the 2025 College Football Playoff National Championship and NCAA Men's Division I Basketball Regional next year.

Corso joined the ASC in 1999

after serving as vice chair of the Festival Division for the 1998 Chick-fil-A Peach Bowl. The ASC has been named Sports Commission of the Year four times by the National Association of Sports Commissions (2000, 2004, 2006 and 2015).

Corso served as board chairman of the Atlanta Basketball Host Committee for the 2020 NCAA Men's Final Four, chairman of the Atlanta Super Bowl Host Committee in 2019 and board president of the Atlanta Football Host Committee for the 2018 CFP National Championship.

JENNIFER DORIAN

President & CEO, WABE, Atlanta



Jennifer Dorian joined WABE, Atlanta's local public media radio and television station, in 2021 after serving in various capacities at Turner Broadcasting and Warner Media over the previous 20 years. Most recently, she served as general manager of Turner Classic Movies and previously worked as vice president of branding for TNT, TBS, TruTV and TCM. Before Turner, Dorian was an executive at The Coca-Cola Company and Pizza Hut.

Celebrating 75 years in 2023, WABE continues to

amplify Atlanta's stories through news and talk shows – as well as constantly innovating its storytelling methods through podcasts, streaming and digital content. It was one of the earliest stations to become a member station of National Public Radio, and the organization holds not only a Pulitzer Prize but two Peabodys and dozens of other industry awards. Today, 84% of WABE's funding comes from community donations, a vital component of the station's sustainability going forward.

Dorian has served on several Atlanta nonprofit board of directors, including the Atlanta BeltLine Partnership, the PATH Foundation and the Atlanta Music Project.

DINAH GRETSCH

Executive Vice President & CFO, The Gretsch Company, Savannah



She's known as the "First Lady" of the world-famous Gretsch Company, producers of drums and guitars used by legendary names in the music industry – names like George Harrison, Bono and Charlie Watts, just to name a few.

But it's not her famous friends that Dinah Gretsch likes to talk about; she's more interested in sharing her passion for helping to enrich lives through music. In 2010 Gretsch established Mrs. G's Music Foundation to promote music education in Savannah-area schools, and she is a

longtime board member of the Georgia Music Foundation, which has granted more than \$575,000 in the past six years to support programs that preserve the state's music history, give opportunities to students for music education and promote Georgia's music communities.

In 2021, she and her husband, Fred, pledged \$3 million plus their Gretsch Collection of drums, guitars and company archives to Georgia Southern University. "The gift to GSU is a great way to leave our legacy," Dinah says. In return, the university established the Fred and Dinah Gretsch School of Music. This year, both Gretschs received honorary doctoral degrees from the university, marking the first husband and wife duo to have received the honor in the state.

STEVE ECONOMOS

CEO, Eagle Rock Studios Atlanta, Norcross



Steve Economos leads Eagle Rock Studios Atlanta, the largest stage complex under one roof in the U.S., with 465,000 square feet of space. Before assuming the role of CEO, he served as president of Eagle Rock and held various other leadership positions in the company.

"Georgia has deservedly earned its nickname of 'Hollywood of the South' because the infrastructure here allows a company to create content in an array of state-of-art facilities," he says. "Owning a studio in Georgia means you're able to provide the factory for companies to create their content and also indirectly provide jobs to hundreds of

Georgians with careers in film and television."

According to Economos, major changes occurring in the Hollywood entertainment industry have led to a lack of studio occupancy. "These include the move to streaming platforms and the decline in traditional TV viewership and cinema attendance, which are being replaced by other forms of entertainment such as YouTube and TikTok," he says.

"We need to make sure the decision makers in Hollywood know that Georgia is here for the long run, with stability and the strength of our infrastructure, talented crews and dedicated vendors."

KEITARO HARADA

Music & Artistic Director, Savannah Philharmonic, Savannah



As the Music and Artistic Director of the Savannah Philharmonic since the 2020-2021 season, Keitaro Harada has transformed the orchestra and energized its audiences with his imaginative programs and charismatic presence. With his eclectic musical scope, he consistently provides riveting concerts not only in Savannah but across the world.

In 2024, he was also named a Permanent Conductor of the Tokyo Symphony Orchestra and became Principal Guest Conductor and Artistic Partner for the Aichi Chamber Orchestra.

Harada is a six-time recipient of The Solti Foundation U.S. Career Assistance Award and has released eight albums with various orchestras. Harada studied with Lorin Maazel at Castleton Festival and Fabio Luisi at the Pacific Music Festival, where he served on the festival's faculty in 2016, 2018 and 2021.

"We have had a tremendous 2023-2024 season celebrating the Savannah Philharmonic's 15th Anniversary," says Harada. "One of the highlights was our annual Phil the Park event in Forsyth Park, where we welcomed over 22,000 people this year. This is Savannah's largest outdoor cultural event and beloved by locals and visitors every year."

Almost every Savannah Philharmonic concert was sold out this season. "We had lengthy waitlists for every performance, and it was a wonderful experience to have a packed theater filled with excitement," says Harada.

JOEL HARBER

CEO, Athena Studios, Athens



Recognizing the absence of studio space in the Athens area, Joel Harber set out to remedy that issue with Athena Studios. Harber's background includes over 20 years in commercial real estate development and brokerage.

Wanting to ensure he was creating a space that would serve the industry for both large and small productions, Harber reached out to Hollywood experts for assistance with designing a studio that would meet all the specific needs. The studio was faced with a challenge early on, opening in the midst of the 2023 Writers Guild of America strike, but it did give them additional time to prepare for production.

Today, Athena Studios features over 200,000 square feet of space for the production of film and television projects, including 84,000 square feet of stages. Still growing, the studio recently added new purpose-built sound stages and an expansive parking area. In addition, another 150,000 square feet of production space is planned for the future.

In a partnership with the University of Georgia and the Georgia Film Academy, Athena Studios serves as a film production learning environment, providing students with a hands-on opportunity to gain experience and knowledge in the industry. The partnership also contributes to workforce development for Georgia's burgeoning film industry.

JEFFREY P. JONES

Executive Director, George Foster Peabody Awards, Athens



The late venerable television writer and film and television producer Norman Lear once called the Peabody "The Tiffany" of awards. That's because you can't campaign or lobby for a Peabody. "It's for, as we say, stories that matter," says Executive Director Jeffrey P. Jones. "So it's for the story and its power to affect citizens."

The Peabodys were founded in 1940 at the Grady College of Journalism and Mass Communication at the University of Georgia and are still based in Athens today. Respected for its integrity and revered for its standards of excellence, each year awards are given in categories including entertainment, documentary, public service and multimedia programming.

Peabody Awards honor stories that "powerfully reflect the pressing social issues and the vibrant emerging voices of our day," which is thoughtfully contained in this year's recipients, including themes on women's health in *Dead Ringers* and the wars in Gaza and Ukraine in *20 Days in Mariupol*, *It's Bisan from Gaza* and *I'm Still Alive*. This year, the Peabodys also announced *Star Trek* as the recipient of the Institutional Award, which recognizes a program that has had profound impact on generations.

JEFF HILIMIRE

Cofounder & CEO, Purpose Group, Atlanta



A lifelong entrepreneur, Jeff Hilimire's latest venture is Purpose Group, which he describes as a purpose-driven holding company created to build more businesses in the world that are a force for good. The Purpose Group acquires and breathes new life into small businesses, using Hilimire's trademarked Purpose Playbook methodology to build stronger employee teams.

Hilimire has spent his entire career building companies and nonprofit organizations while contributing to his community in whatever way possible, intent on having a positive impact on the world around him. He is also founder and executive board chair for Dragon Army, a digital engagement company designed to help businesses connect and build relationships with customers. Dragon Army provides services such as branding, marketing, social media strategy and problem-solving to big-name clients such as Delta Air Lines, The Coca-Cola Company and The Home Depot. Other companies he founded include 48in48, The A Pledge and Ripples Media.

The author of four books on leadership, Hilimire is all about doing good things in the world around him. He is a graduate of the 2013 Leadership Atlanta class and one of the 2012 Atlanta 40 Under 40, and he serves on the board of The Carter Center.

STEVE KOONIN

CEO, Atlanta Hawks & State Farm Arena, Atlanta



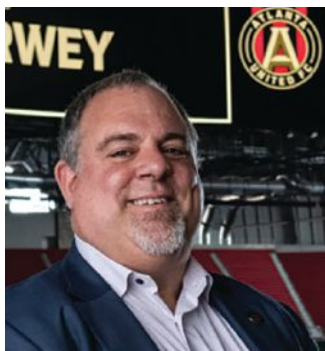
Since assuming his role as CEO of the Atlanta Hawks and State Farm Arena in 2014, Steve Koonin has led rebranding strategies for the NBA team and improved the live-attendance experience as well as expanded the Hawks' civic and philanthropic efforts in Metro Atlanta.

In 2021, he was awarded the Lifetime Achievement Award by the Atlanta Sports Council, and this year he was given the same award by the American Marketers Association. Koonin has led several community service efforts through the arena and basketball team, including last year's Million Meal Pack event where members of the NBA team and volunteers packed more than one million meals to distribute to families across the Metro Atlanta area.

Koonin spent 14 years with Turner Entertainment Networks. Prior to that, he was a marketing executive with The Coca-Cola Company's international division. Koonin serves on the boards of the Georgia Aquarium, Fox Theatre and Rubicon, and is an executive committee member of the Metro Atlanta Chamber.

GARTH LAGERWEY

President & CEO, Atlanta United, Atlanta



A former Duke University and MLS soccer player-turned-attorney, Garth Lagerwey has landed in the perfect position as president and CEO of Atlanta United (AU) FC, the city's Major League Soccer (MLS) club.

Lagerwey says Atlanta United has been a catalyst for big soccer-related things happening in the city. "We like to think that we're helping make Atlanta the soul of soccer. We facilitated and contributed financially to U.S. Soccer [Federation], both the men's and women's teams, relocating

to Atlanta and building a new headquarters," he says.

"Next year we have something called the Club World Cup that might be coming, and then, of course, in '26, the World Cup itself," he says of the games that last 30-35 days, reminiscent of the celebration of sports and culture when Atlanta hosted the '96 Olympic Games. "We think it will be transformative in terms of the footprint that soccer occupies, not just in Atlanta but in the United States in general."

AU's philanthropy includes Georgia 100, a long-term program with a goal of building 100 soccer fields in underprivileged communities. "Building the fields is really rewarding for us," he says, "because you're helping kids, and you get to see the joy that you bring them."

TERRY MCGUIRK

Chairman & CEO, Braves Holdings LLC, Atlanta



In the spring of 1976, Terry McGuirk was a young executive at Turner Broadcasting System (TBS) when he traded in his suit and tie for a different kind of uniform. Ted Turner had acquired the Atlanta Braves at the end of 1975, and he wanted to learn more about the game of baseball.

McGuirk began his 35-year career at TBS in 1972 as an account executive with WTCC, which later became TBS Superstation. By 1991, McGuirk had risen up the ranks to become second in command as executive vice president, and in 1996, he succeeded Turner as chairman and CEO of TBS Inc. He took

over the baseball team in 2003.

Fast-forward to 2021, and McGuirk oversaw organizational efforts that culminated in the Braves' fourth World Series title, the team's first championship since 1995. McGuirk works closely with the teams at Truist Park and The Battery to increase game attendance, where the team now touts the third-highest fan attendance in the league. Last year, the Braves became the only publicly traded Major League Baseball franchise following a new ownership structure. Next year, the Braves will host the All-Star Game in part thanks to McGuirk's efforts.



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Allan Vella
President + CEO, Fox Theatre



RICH MCKAY

CEO, Atlanta Falcons; CEO, AMB Sports and Entertainment, Atlanta



Rich McKay has been a fixture in the National Football League for more than 30 years, serving as the longest-standing member of the NFL Competition Committee. He has led the Atlanta Falcons as president and CEO since 2011.

Last year, he was named CEO of parent company AMB Sports

and Entertainment while also retaining the title of CEO for the Atlanta Falcons. He was also awarded the Lifetime Achievement Award by the Atlanta Sports Council in 2023.

Under McKay's leadership, the Falcons have entered the playoffs seven times and participated in three NFC Championship games and Super Bowl LI in 2017. Prior to joining the Atlanta Falcons as general manager in 2003, McKay served as general manager of the Tampa Bay Buccaneers for nearly 10 years.

As the youngest son of the Buccaneers' first head coach, John McKay, his connection to Tampa was obvious. His experience coordinating the build of the Buccaneers' Raymond James Stadium in the late 1990s served McKay well as he secured approval and funding to build the \$1.2-billion Mercedes-Benz Stadium in Atlanta in 2017.

KELSEY MOORE

Executive Director, Georgia Screen Entertainment Coalition, Atlanta



Kelsey Moore has led the Georgia Screen Entertainment Coalition since 2018. Serving as the voice of Georgia's booming film, television and digital entertainment industry, the coalition counts every major studio in Georgia among its members. "Our role is advocating and working on policy that will help Georgia continue to be a global leader for film production," says Moore, adding that Georgia's three million square feet

of soundstage space now exceeds that in New York.

Moore credits the state's intentional growth for the industry's success, listing a skilled crew base, easy-to-use tax incentives and the presence of Georgia Film Academy – a unit of the University System of Georgia that partners with 29 colleges across the state – as key.

"And we have world-class infrastructure. That's been Georgia's secret sauce, and that's how we've built this \$9-billion industry," she says, noting the Georgia Film Office celebrated 50 years in 2023.

"I spent a number of years traveling across the state, working with communities on economic development and coalition-building efforts," says Moore, regarding a previous position. "But to be a part of this industry that's growing so quick and with such intentionality is an exciting opportunity for our state and for the people of our state."

HALA MODDELMOG

President & CEO, Woodruff Arts Center, Atlanta



Hala Moddelmog joined the Woodruff Arts Center in 2020 as president and CEO after more than a decade of dedicated volunteer work at the arts center. Under Moddelmog's leadership, the arts center launched a \$67-million campaign this year to expand educational programs. In August, it broke ground on a new youth and families stage and playspace that will be free for public use.

Prior to joining Woodruff, which houses the Alliance Theatre, the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra and the High Museum of Art, Moddelmog became the first female president and CEO of the Metro Atlanta Chamber in 2014. She was the president and CEO of Susan G. Komen for the Cure as a breast cancer survivor herself, and she has decades of experience in the food industry as the former president of Arby's Restaurant Group and Church's Chicken. She broke glass ceilings there, too, as she was the first female president of an international restaurant company in 1995.

Moddelmog is currently serving as the director on the boards of FleetCor Technologies and Lamb Weston as well as serving in local nonprofits including Children's Healthcare of Atlanta and the Midtown Alliance.

CHRIS MOSES & TINASHE KAJESE-BOLDEN

Co-Artistic Directors, Alliance Theatre, Atlanta



Chris Moses, left, and Tinashe Kajese-Bolden

After working together at the Alliance Theatre for years, Tinashe Kajese-Bolden and Chris Moses were named co-artistic directors last year. Their first season in those roles wrapped up in June, surpassing all goals, especially the Kajese-Bolden directed performance of *The Preacher's Wife*, "the highest-selling show in the history of the Alliance Theatre," says former actor Kajese-Bolden. "We share a vision of art in service of a larger vision of social change and evolution, and that was really reflected in this past season."

Performances that serve every age group are what Moses gets excited about. To better serve their younger patrons, the Alliance is renovating a space in the Woodruff Arts Center as a full-time youth and family stage for shows year-round, he says. Outside theater walls, the Alliance has dedicated years to developing public school curriculum focused on the use of storytelling to improve literacy rates across the state.

"I think Atlanta is poised right now to be the new creative capital of our country. There's so much happening and storytelling is at the crux of it, and that is the business that we are in," says Moses. The Alliance routinely sends shows to Broadway, adding to the cannon of American theater.

GANNON MURPHY

General Manager, Cinelease Studios, Covington



Cinelease Studios is a facility rental company that offers spaces for filmmakers to utilize equipment and studio space in a dozen cities across the country, including Covington. Gannon Murphy oversees all operations of the facilities. The company has studios across six states, totaling 1.7 million total square feet.

Gannon has seen explosive growth in the film industry since Georgia's 2008 tax incentive. The ability to develop infrastructure and further connections continues to make the state appealing.

Last year, under Murphy's leadership, the studios opened their phase two expansion of their Covington studios called Three Ring

Studio, which includes 14 purpose-built sound stages and 100,000 square feet of office space, as well as opening a studio in Conyers, which includes four sound stages.

Murphy was the 2023 board chair of the Georgia Screen Entertainment Coalition and a member of the leadership team for the Safety for Sarah Film Foundation, for which the studios host an annual event promoting safety on set. He also serves on the board of directors for the Georgia chapter of the Alzheimer's Association, raising more than \$55,000 for the organization last year.

FRANK PATTERSON

President & CEO, Trilith Studios, Fayetteville



Frank Patterson took over the reins of Trilith Studios in Fayette County, formerly known as Pinewood Studios, in 2016. Since then, Patterson has led one of the world's biggest production facilities through massive transitions – from divesting from the Pinewood Group to a global pandemic.

Despite COVID-19 setbacks experienced by the entire film industry, Trilith is still one of the largest film studios in the U.S. and continues to expand. The studios sit on a 1,000-acre property, and nearby there's Town at Trilith, an entire community built for creatives

developed and managed by Trilith where more than 500 people currently live. Patterson plans to make Trilith a one-stop-shop for filmmakers – from pre- to post-production.

The company recently announced its latest expansion, Trilith LIVE, a seven-acre venue for live shows and music festivals. When completed by 2025, it will include a 1,800-seat auditorium, two live-audience television stages, a luxury cinema, an indoor atrium, an outdoor plaza and 120,000 square feet of creative office space, food court and retail shops. Its latest addition includes two new sound stages, each able to host a live studio audience of 750.

WILL PACKER

Producer, Will Packer Studios/Will Packer Media, Atlanta



A prolific producer for film and television grossing over \$1.4 billion at the box office, Will Packer is a mover and a shaker in overdrive. In 2023 he expanded into the talent management arena, launching Collective Edge with business partner Shayla Cowan. Also last year, Packer produced his

first movie for a streaming service, partnering with Peacock on *Praise This*. That was followed by the true crime limited series *Fight Night: The Million Dollar Heist*, which is based on the acclaimed Packer-produced podcast of the same name. In 2024 he announced he is partnering with Kinetic Content to develop author Tia Williams' *Seven Days in June* as a series for Prime Video.

Among his top titles are *Ride Along*, *Stomp the Yard* and *Think Like a Man*. Packer also served as an executive producer on *Straight Outta Compton*, which has grossed more than \$202 million to date worldwide. Will Packer Media, a digital and branded-content company, also produces content for brand clients as well as numerous series for television and digital platforms, including BET+, Discovery, Nickelodeon and OWN. And in May, he stepped into a new arena – literally – when he became a limited partner in the ownership of the NFL's Atlanta Falcons.

A long-time supporter of HBCU initiatives, Packer is a member of the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences and was selected as the producer of the 2022 Academy Awards 94th Oscars Ceremony.

ANN-CAROL PENCE

Cofounder/Producing Artistic Director, Aurora Theatre, Lawrenceville



A piano player by trade, Ann-Carol Pence says her great love of musicals is the whole reason she cofounded Aurora Theatre in 1999 with business and life partner Anthony Rodriguez, since growing the theater from 120 season subscribers to over 5,000. Noting the devastation COVID-19 brought to the arts and culture sector, Pence says being able to create partnerships to sustain the organization was "miraculous."

"The city council made us the jewel of their downtown, and then we were able to open a \$35-million campus expansion in 2021," says

Pence, noting Aurora now operates in four spaces in Lawrenceville. Aurora manages the Lawrenceville Arts Center as well.

Among its unique practices is the employment of a full-time director of community impact to make sure the theater is serving events, concerts, plays and cultural celebrations to the highest possible number of different cultures.

Under her leadership, Aurora Theatre won the first ever Pinnacle Award for Large Non-Profit, the first ever Moxie Award for a woman-led business and the Governor's Award for Outstanding Arts Organization. A graduate of the Atlanta Regional Commission's 2016 Regional Leadership Institute and Glance Gwinnett, she is the recipient of five Suzi Bass Awards for her music direction in stage performances.

TYLER PERRY

Actor, Producer, Director & Screenwriter, Tyler Perry Studios, Atlanta



Tyler Perry is a man known by many titles, but perhaps his most important title is pioneer. Perry led the push to develop filmmaking facilities in the state of Georgia, and he continues to lead the state's industry forward. Perry is the first Black person to own film studios in Georgia, operating his studios first in Inman Park. In 2015, the studios moved to its current location at the former Fort McPherson. One of the biggest studios in the country, the complex offers 12 soundstages, 220 acres of greenspace and 40 historic buildings.

And the studios are continuing to expand. Last year he purchased 37 acres at Fort McPherson in addition to the 132 acres purchased in 2021 to develop a living community, entertainment district and an additional backlot. To account for these expansions, Perry pledged in early 2023 to donate \$2.75 million to elderly residents surrounding the studios to ensure they can keep their homes.

This year, Perry announced an eight-picture deal with Netflix, which will include a TV series *Beauty in Black* and a number of faith-based films. BET followed suit, sealing a multi-year deal that will renew eight of Perry's shows. Perry's studios are also partnering with Asylum Entertainment Group to produce unscripted content.

KIRBY SMART

Head Coach, Georgia Bulldogs, Athens



Kirby Smart started his football career in silver britches, and today, he leads that very team in their most successful seasons in Georgia Football history. In 2021 and 2022, Smart led the Bulldogs to back-to-back national championship wins, breaking a 40-year drought for the team.

Smart played as a defensive back at the University of Georgia all four years of college before graduating in 1998.

He worked as a defensive coach at Georgia, Louisiana State University and Valdosta State University before joining the coaching ranks as a defensive coordinator at the University of Alabama in 2007.

There, he helped Head Coach Nick Saban secure several national titles for the Crimson Tide. Smart was hired as the Georgia head coach in December 2015, and since then, the Bulldogs have won two SEC Championships, five division titles, a 2018 CFP appearance and both the 2021 and 2022 national championships. Last year, he led the team through their third consecutive undefeated regular season.

In addition to leading the winning football team, Smart oversees the Kirby Smart Foundation with his wife, Mary Beth, that offers support to underserved families across the state. The foundation provides hundreds of thousands of dollars in support to families and organizations each year, such as Extra Special People and Children's Healthcare of Atlanta.

DAN ROSENFELT & MICHAEL HAHN

Cofounders, Electric Owl Studios, Atlanta



Dan Rosenfelt, left, and Michael Hahn

Dan Rosenfelt and Michael Hahn cofounded Electric Owl Studios in June 2023, right in the middle of the writers' strike. Facing an industry-wide shut down, Electric Owl was fortunate to get a Lego Masters show project that didn't fall under the contested contracts. They have since completed several major television and feature film projects.

With over 25 years in the film and television industry and a dozen managing studios, Rosenfelt was intrigued by a green, or sustainable, studio concept. "It's historically kind of a dirty and wasteful business, where things just ended up in dumpsters immediately after [a production] was done," says Rosenfelt, noting Electric Owl is the world's first purpose-built LEED Gold certified film and television studio. "We thought it was a wonderful concept that could really give us a great story to tell and, in the process, lower the carbon footprint of this industry."

From the use of solar power to enlisting bees to pollinate the 18,000 acres around the studio, producing 90 pounds of honey a year to present to production clients, Electric Owl Studios's focus on sustainability is woven into everything it does. The studio was set to open a New York location over the summer, also with the intent to seek LEED certification.

NATHALIE STUTZMANN

Music Director, Atlanta Symphony Orchestra, Atlanta



Nathalie Stutzmann is the fifth music director of the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra. She is the first woman to serve as the ASO's music director and only the second woman to lead a major American orchestra.

Stutzmann began with the 27-time Grammy-winning orchestra in the 2021-2022 season as a guest conductor before being named Music Director in 2022. She won this year's Best Conductor of the Year award at the Oper! Awards, and she closed this past season with Stravinsky's

ballet *The Firebird* in what was called a "lustrous dazzler."

Stutzmann also wrapped up a guest conducting tenure at the Philadelphia Orchestra this year and is the Chief Conductor of Norway's Kristiansand Symphony Orchestra. She has also been a guest conductor with the Swedish Radio Symphony Orchestra and Teatro Regio Torino. She has studied under premier instructors for piano, bassoon, cello, conducting and voice.

The ASO regularly welcomes other artists to perform with them, including in 2024 John Legend, Kristin Chenoweth and Idina Menzel.

RANDALL SUFFOLK

Director, High Museum of Art, Atlanta



As director, Randall Suffolk oversees the more than 18,000 art pieces housed at the High Museum of Art as well as overall community engagement. When Suffolk joined the High in 2015, his primary goals circulated around accessibility, inclusivity and collaboration. To that end, Suffolk has reduced museum entrance fees, partnered with more than 30 organizations in the Atlanta area and introduced a variety of programming targeted at reaching underserved audiences.

Today, he is still continuing that mission. Under Suffolk's leadership, the museum has added more than 3,300 objects to the collection, and

Suffolk has continued to develop his commitment to engaging the next few generations of museum goers by doubling down on family programs and exhibits that engage and inspire youth. This year, the museum hosted its 32nd annual Atlanta Wine Auction, which raised more than \$2.7 million for the museum's special exhibitions and educational programs.

Before the High Museum, Suffolk served as director of the Philbrook Museum of Art in Tulsa, Oklahoma, and of The Hyde Collection in Glen Falls, New York.

TROY TAYLOR

Founding Partner, ZuCot Gallery, Atlanta



Troy Taylor's interest in art began during his sophomore year in college while he was studying Aerospace Engineering at Penn State University. As his career in corporate America – which included working with NASA on the Manned Space Station program – grew, so did his passion for collecting art. This led him to found ZuCot Gallery in 2008, which is now the largest Black-owned fine art gallery in the Southeast.

Most of the gallery's collection stems from the relationships Taylor has developed with artists and galleries throughout the world. The striking, high-tech design and amenities of the gallery combine his dual interests in art and engineering. "Like science, art is not random," says Taylor.

"There is an order to each discipline, rules of composition and technique that create a beautiful, balanced product."

Taylor believes that Georgia is an extraordinary state for operating an arts business due to its rich history, vibrant culture and strong legacy. "Atlanta stands out as a cultural hub," he says. "Our gallery mission of telling stories through a fine art lens aligns perfectly with the dynamic environment of Castleberry Hill, a historic district renowned for its concentration of Black-owned businesses and artistic vibrancy."

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GeorgiaTrend

ALEX URBAN

Executive Director, TOUR Championship, PGA Tour, Atlanta



Alex Urban is the TOUR Championship's latest executive director, having been named to the position in 2022 – a role he has called a dream come true. He notes that very few people in the world get to actually do their dream job – one rooted in a love of sports he's had since he was a kid.

Urban came to the role from serving as general manager and executive director of the Sentry Tournament of Champions in Hawaii.

He's been a TOUR employee since 2013, having held roles in the corporate partnerships and communications departments before heading over to Hawaii in 2018.

The TOUR Championship is the culminating event of the PGA TOUR Playoffs for the FedEx Cup, where 30 top players compete for the title at the East Lake Golf Club east of downtown Atlanta. Last year, the championship had a record-breaking year for donations – a total of \$6.9 million was raised for Atlanta nonprofits. In all, since 1998, the tournament has generated more than \$42 million in donations to groups like the East Lake Foundation, the First Tee of Metro Atlanta and Purpose Built Communities.

JON VIGUE

Vice President & General Manager, Wild Adventures Theme Park, Valdosta



With a lifelong passion for theme parks, Jon Vigue has worked in senior and executive roles in the industry for most of his 26-year career. As vice president and general manager of Wild Adventures Theme Park in Valdosta, Vigue has a unique, 360-degree understanding of how the different business disciplines of a theme park come together to work most efficiently, which he has found leads to all-around growth.

Georgia's overall economic health and steady population increase in Wild Adventures' core markets are helping drive growth for the theme park.

"However, being geographically positioned outside the Atlanta metro area, it can sometimes be hard for tourism to rise to the top or be seen as an opportunity that gets investment," he says.

Keeping up with ever-changing consumer demands is another ongoing challenge for Wild Adventures. "We place a lot of focus on our strategic planning to continue to remain relevant and serve our customers the way they want to be served," says Vigue.

Vigue is active in the Valdosta-Lowndes community, serving on the One Valdosta-Lowndes Taskforce and as vice chair of the Visit Valdosta and Valdosta-Lowndes Tourism Authority.

ALLAN C. VELLA

President & CEO, Fox Theatre, Atlanta



Allan Vella has been the president and CEO of Atlanta's Fox Theatre since 2006, overseeing all theatre operations and programming. The Fox Theatre hosts more than 150 performances – or nearly one every other day or night – and 500,000 guests every year for events ranging from rock concerts and Broadway shows to comedy shows and movies.

Vella has worked in the facility management field since 1986 managing theaters, arenas, amphitheaters and exhibition facilities. During his career, Vella has worked on a wide range of events including NCAA basketball tournaments, concerts, Broadway shows, Major League Baseball and National Hockey League games and Presidential visits.

Not surprisingly, Vella believes that economic uncertainty is the biggest challenge currently facing entertainment venues like the Fox Theatre. "Inflation and the perception of a poor economy can be a significant challenge for live entertainment venues," he says. "When people are concerned about rising costs, layoffs, etc., they tend to pull back on their discretionary spending."

The 4,665-seat theater was originally built in 1928. Through its Fox Gives program, it supports other historic theaters and communities across the southeast through a blend of financial support, restoration expertise and operational mentoring. Since it was created in 2008, the program has provided more than \$3.2 million to more than 70 theaters.

C. SCOTT VOTAW

Executive Director, Georgia Film Academy; Assistant Vice Chancellor, University System of Georgia, Atlanta



C. Scott Votaw is an entertainment arts and academic industries global expert who leads the Georgia Film Academy. With more than 25 years of experience working for production companies including Saban, Fox, Lucasfilm Ltd. and others, he has extensive knowledge of film production, 2D/3D animation, special FX, motion capture and post-production.

"Georgia is an exceptional locale for film studio operations due to its rich culture and diverse population, which provide an ideal backdrop for storytelling," says Votaw.

Since it began operations in 2015, the Georgia Film Academy has been widely recognized by entities such as the Motion Picture Association of America as the gold standard in film and television production workforce training. In addition, the GFA offers industry certifications in film and television production, post-production, digital entertainment, esports and game development. It also assists other educational institutions in developing curriculum and training that gets people qualified for the industry's high-demand careers.

"Staying in touch with the needs of the industry and adapting to changing workforce dynamics are crucial challenges facing our industry today," says Votaw. "It's imperative to be nimble in how we train the next generation of Georgians interested in working in the industry."



Automotive

MARK ALLEGOOD

CEO, Beall Tire Wholesale, Pelham



Mark Allegood spent 21 years in the Regular Army as an Army Aviation Officer before retiring in 2010 to work at Beall Tire Co., a family-owned wholesale tire business in south Georgia. After he was named president of Beall Tire in 2015, sales tripled and the company was sold in 2022 to a private equity group.

Allegood remained onboard as the CEO of the newly named Beall Tire Wholesale with a five-year employment contract. His primary role is to operate and further expand its footprint and integrate the new company into

the new parent's organization and business model.

One of the biggest current challenges facing the company is wage competition with larger national and regional competitors. "Another challenge is federal overstep and the mindset that governmental requirements have the same effect on small businesses as they do on larger national or regional businesses," says Allegood.

Allegood says that state and local governmental entities have been very helpful in supporting the company's growth. This includes local grants from county and city developmental authorities and employee tax credits for increasing their workforce.

HAI EOK CHOI

President & CEO, Kumho Tire USA, Atlanta



Hai Eok Choi leads Kumho Tire USA, which serves as the U.S. sales, marketing and distribution arm of Kumho Tire Co. Inc. As one of the world's leading tire manufacturers, the company distributes

tires in 160 countries around the world.

Founded in 1960, Kumho Tire has more than a half-century of history steeped in innovation, technical development and environmental awareness.

The company opened its first Georgia facility

in 2016 in Macon, a \$450-million investment that brought 365 jobs to the area. That was followed in 2021 with a \$21.8-million expansion to the existing facility, giving it the capacity to produce an additional 500,000 tires a year.

Early in 2024, Kumho Tire made its first foray into the ultra-high performance tire series when it became an official tire of Formula DRIFT and major sponsor of the Formula DRIFT PRO Championship. The Formula DRIFT Atlanta race is held in mid-May each year.

BRIAN ARNOLD

President, Kubota Manufacturing of America Corp., Gainesville



Brian Arnold is not just president of KMA in Gainesville. He also serves as vice president of Kubota North America Corp. and in January 2024 was appointed an executive officer for Kubota Corp., the parent company with headquarters in Osaka, Japan.

In these roles, he is responsible for Kubota's manufacturing operations in Georgia as well as the development and deployment of regional strategies across all North American manufacturing operations, including Georgia, Kansas and California. Kubota manufacturing operations now employ

more than 3,600 team members in Georgia.

Arnold joined Kubota as an engineer in 1995 after graduating from Southern Polytechnic Institute with a bachelor's degree in mechanical engineering. Over the past 28 years, he steadily rose through the ranks to his current leadership role and has participated in and led many initiatives that have helped the company grow to be among the most important and trusted Kubota manufacturing facilities in the world.

KIM CHUNGYOUN

President, Seoyon E-Hwa, LaGrange



Kim ChungYoun is the president of Seoyon E-Hwa, a global auto parts supplier that manufactures interior and exterior automobile components for Hyundai Motor Group, Kia, Mercedes-Benz, Ford, Volkswagen and other automobile manufacturers. These parts include door and tailgate trim, headlining, seats, C/PAD, bumpers and other parts.

In 2023, Seoyon E-Hwa and Savannah Technical College announced plans for a training partnership at the college's Savannah campus. The college noted the importance of working closely with advanced manufacturing partners like Seoyon E-Hwa to ensure that they are the place manufacturers come to for the skilled employees needed in today's economy.

Seoyon E-Hwa is building a new \$96-million manufacturing facility at the Savannah Chatham Manufacturing Center, a Georgia Ready for Accelerated Development (GRAD) Certified site. The facility will create 740 new jobs (direct and indirect).

STUART COUNTESS

President & CEO, Kia Georgia, West Point



Stuart Countess is responsible for the 3,200 team members at Kia Georgia's manufacturing facility in West Point and the four-model assembly plant's annual production capacity of 350,000 vehicles.

At the beginning of 2024, the EV9, the first electric vehicle made in Georgia, rolled off the production line. It's the result of a \$200-million expansion that added 200 more jobs to the facility.

Countess joined Kia Georgia in 2008 as senior manager in General Assembly, where he helped develop and implement The Kia Way and Georgia Production System as core practices of the facility's operating system. Kia supports its surrounding community a number of ways, including donating cars to local law enforcement and emergency agencies for training and funding STEM education in schools.

"As we move into a new era of EVs and the mobility solutions of tomorrow, people will continue to be the heart and soul of Kia Georgia and our plant's greatest resources," says Countess.

Countess sits on leadership boards for the Georgia Association of Manufacturers and The Carter Center. Additionally, he is chair of the Georgia State Workforce Development Board and Georgia Chamber Foundation Board. Countess was previously chair of a key committee in Georgia's Electric Mobility and Innovation Alliance.



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Stuart Countess



Movement that inspires

PHIL HORLOCK

CEO, Blue Bird Corp., Macon



When Phil Horlock was appointed CEO in July 2023, it wasn't his first time leading Blue Bird, the only U.S.-owned and -operated school bus manufacturer in the country. He also spent 10 years as its president and CEO from 2011 to 2021. Before joining Blue Bird, Horlock spent more than 30 years with Ford Motor Co.

Founded in 1927 in Fort Valley, Blue Bird is the leader in electric and low-emission school buses and has an exclusive collaboration with Ford Component Sales and ROUSH CleanTech. Blue Bird is now the only school bus

manufacturer in the U.S. to offer propane- and gasoline-powered school buses that will meet more stringent emission standards taking effect in 2027.

In 2023, Blue Bird celebrated the grand opening of its 40,000-square-foot Electric Vehicle (EV) Build-up Center, ramping production capacity from 4 EV buses to 20 a day and eventually 5,000 a year. That's to keep up with rising demand from both U.S. and Canadian school districts, which are increasingly transitioning their bus fleets to electric, zero-emission vehicles. The facility will be busy in the years to come: the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency anticipates that by 2032, 45% of all new school buses manufactured will be electric-powered.

DIMITRIS PSILLAKIS

President & CEO, Mercedes-Benz USA, Sandy Springs



Dimitris Psillakis commits himself each day to making Mercedes-Benz the most desired luxury brand in the U.S. Under his leadership, the brand is navigating one of the largest changes in the automotive landscape since the beginning of

the industry itself.

Mercedes-Benz is no stranger to pushing the limits to reach success amidst headwinds. With a lineup of traditional combustion engine vehicles mixed with hybrids and now six fully electric models, customers can get the feeling of Mercedes no matter their specific needs.

"Mercedes-Benz has a history of standing out with iconic products, leading technology and superior talent in our employees and dealers," says Psillakis. "We couldn't succeed without our valued people, and it's an honor to work each day with these individuals as we challenge ourselves to provide our customers with the perfect Mercedes for every wish."

Psillakis has worked for Mercedes-Benz for more than 30 years, starting with Mercedes-Benz Hellas in his native Greece. He subsequently held leadership positions for Mercedes-Benz Brazil, Korea and Canada before coming to the U.S. in 2020.

BRANDON LOFTUS

Director, ZF Gainesville, Gainesville



Brandon Loftus leads two facilities with 650 employees and \$475 million in sales across three ZF divisions covering automotive, industrial and commercial vehicle product lines. From its Gainesville facilities, ZF serves the world's major original equipment manufacturers, including General Motors, John Deere and Volvo.

"We balance the continued demand for current technology while staying at the forefront of future technologies focused on safety, sustainability and electrification," says Loftus. "Customers are only one part

of the equation. Investing in the education of the growing community at every level will help ZF Gainesville maintain, develop and grow a workforce able to manage this transformation."

ZF is a nearly 110-year-old German global technology company. It offers product and software solutions for both established vehicle manufacturers and newly emerging transport and mobility service providers in the technology of vehicle motion control, integrated safety, automated driving and electric mobility. ZF started operations in Gainesville in 1987, its first manufacturing site in the U.S.

TIMO RESCH

President & CEO, Porsche Cars North America, Atlanta



Timo Resch oversees the supply and distribution of Porsche vehicles to the retail operations of U.S. dealers through five U.S. ports of entry. He also oversees sales support, marketing, parts distribution, training and Porsche Classic

Factory Restoration Atlanta.

Resch started his career in 1995 as a student with Porsche in Zuffenhausen, Germany. After taking on various roles at Porsche AG, he moved to Porsche Cars North America (PCNA), where he led the Product Planning and Market Research unit for the North American subsidiary.

"We offer customers greater choice than ever before to personalize their car to reflect their personality and tastes, right down to the smallest detail," says Resch. These choices extend beyond just the color to how vehicles are powered, whether fully electric, hybrid or conventional gas powered.

"We're proud to have been based in Georgia for 26 years," says Resch, noting that the Porsche Experience Center in Atlanta will welcome its half-millionth customer this year. "It truly is a special place where enthusiasts and customers can experience and learn about Porsche cars of all kinds on our track."

CHRIS SMITH

Chief Project and Implementation Officer/General Counsel, Hyundai Motor Group Metaplant America (HMGMA), Savannah



Chris Smith was part of the site selection and incentive negotiations teams that chose the Bryan County Megasite as the location for the \$7.59-billion Hyundai Motor Group Metaplant. He has been working on this project since December 2021 and

is currently responsible for ensuring internal and external coordination between all the stakeholders in the project.

Before joining Hyundai as an inhouse attorney, Smith practiced labor and employment law at both boutique and national law firms. In addition, he is a certified compliance and ethics professional.

Smith believes that the transition to electric vehicles (EVs) will be the biggest change to the automotive industry in a century. "This change will present both tremendous opportunities and challenges for all stakeholders in the automotive industry," he says.

"Georgia is a great state to operate an automotive assembly plant due to its excellent workforce, solid infrastructure and public officials who want to help businesses become successful," Smith adds. "Those factors have helped Hyundai successfully construct the plant and move up the anticipated start of vehicle production to later this year."

Banking, Finance & Insurance



Banking, Finance & Insurance

KEVIN BLAIR

President & CEO, Synovus, Columbus



Under Kevin Blair's leadership, Synovus is building upon a 135-year heritage of relationship banking through new capabilities and solutions, emphasizing proactive, value-added advice. The purpose-driven company is the largest bank headquartered in Georgia.

Named president and CEO in 2021 then appointed board chair in 2023, Blair's broad experience in corporate strategy, business line management, strategic finance and credit risk management, combined with his strong leadership abilities, have positively impacted the \$60-billion asset company.

This year, Synovus launched Accelerate Pay, which offers commercial banking clients more options for how they want to get paid while minimizing the use of checks.

In 2023, Synovus was ranked No. 1 for customer satisfaction and trust in the Southeast according to J.D. Power. It was recognized in 2024 with 25 awards from Coalition Greenwich for its exceptional service for small business and middle-market clients.

Blair sits on the boards of the Columbus and Metro Atlanta Chambers of Commerce, Georgia Historical Society and Georgia Research Alliance.

CAMERON BREADY

President & CEO, Global Payments Inc., Atlanta



Cameron Bready was named president and CEO of Global Payments, one of the leading payments technology companies in the world, in 2023. Over the course of his three-decade career, he's been recognized as one of America's Best

CFOs by *Institutional Investor*, as CFO of the Year by *Crain's Detroit Business* and as CFO of the Year by the *Atlanta Business Chronicle*.

"The pace of technological change in the payments industry is rapid and continues to accelerate, necessitating companies like ours to aggressively innovate to remain ahead of the market and meet the evolving expectations of our clients, partners and customers," Bready says.

Georgia has a long history of supporting financial technology businesses, which has made it a global hub for the industry, he adds, noting that innovations that drive the industry forward often originate here. "Additionally, our excellent educational institutions and highly skilled workforce make Georgia an attractive place to operate a business like ours."

Bready serves on several boards, including Oglethorpe University, the Metro Atlanta Chamber and the Electronic Transactions Association, the leading trade association for the payments industry.

RAPHAEL BOSTIC

President & CEO, Federal Reserve Bank of Atlanta, Atlanta



Raphael Bostic is responsible for all the activities of the Federal Reserve Bank of Atlanta, which covers the Sixth Federal Reserve District, including Alabama, Florida, Georgia and parts of Louisiana, Mississippi and Tennessee. He also serves on the Federal Open Market Committee, the monetary policymaking body of the Federal Reserve System.

One of Bostic's priorities at the Atlanta Fed is to make the economy work for everyone. The Federal Reserve's dual mandate is to pursue price stability and maximum employment. "I like to think of it as maximum sustainable

employment, a state in which all Americans can maximize their human capital and find work that puts their skills to their highest and best use," Bostic says. "The Atlanta Fed is shining a light on barriers that limit the economic prospects of too many of our neighbors, which in turn limits prospects for the macroeconomy."

Bostic serves on many boards and advisory committees in Georgia and around the country. Before joining the Atlanta Fed, Bostic was with the University of Southern California, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development and the Federal Reserve Board of Governors.

CYNTHIA N. DAY

President & CEO, Citizens Trust Bank, Atlanta



President and CEO since 2012, Cynthia Day plays a pivotal role in ensuring the century-old Citizens Trust Bank continues to be one of the top-performing community banks in the country as recognized by S&P Global.

The bank first opened its doors in

1921 on Auburn Avenue to serve the Black citizens of Atlanta. Its mission was threefold: to promote financial stability and business development, to stress the principles of thrift and to make home ownership possible to a larger number of people.

Today it continues that mission through programs like financial wellness and independence training and a down-payment program to help potential homebuyers overcome that barrier when purchasing a home.

"In a rapidly changing and interconnected world, the ability to form and nurture partnerships is more important than ever," says Day. "By fostering collaboration and embracing the idea that we are interconnected, we can build a stronger, more resilient future for all."

Day serves on several boards, including holding company Citizens Bancshares Corp., The Federal Reserve Bank of Atlanta, The National Bankers Association and the Atlanta Area Council of Boy Scouts of America.

MIKE DONNELLY

Executive Vice President, Regional Branch Network Executive, Wells Fargo, Atlanta



In his 28 years with Wells Fargo, Mike Donnelly has led markets from the Greater Washington, D.C., area to his current location in Atlanta, where he oversees the Metro Atlanta North Georgia region.

As the "Bank of Doing," Wells Fargo, which serves more than three million small business customers, works to put people and communities first. From making financial education more accessible to empowering diverse small businesses and helping make communities more sustainable, doing makes communities stronger.

"Doing goes far beyond the investments we make," he says. "It is the sum of the impact we have when we work together to tackle societal challenges."

Donnelly is a member of the Buckhead Coalition, the Metro Atlanta Chamber board of directors and an emeritus member of the University of Georgia Board of Visitors. He is the past chair of the Georgia Partnership for Excellence in Education and Leadership Atlanta.

WILLIAM FRANK EASTERLIN III

President & CEO, Queensborough National Bank & Trust Co.,
Louisville



QNBT was founded in 1902 as First National Bank in Louisville, Ga., the historic town that once served as the state's capital. Today, the bank boasts more than 30 locations across a geographic footprint that stretches from Augusta to Savannah.

The bank was founded by Bill Easterlin's great-grandfather and named "Queensborough" in a nod to an 18th-century Scottish township that once occupied portions of Jefferson and Burke counties.

A true community bank, QNBT isn't just a financing or banking partner. "We want to be

a real part of the local community," Easterlin says. "Our bankers have the ability to make decisions on a local level, which is really what sets Queensborough apart."

QNBT was named a Great Place to Work in 2022 and 2023, Best of Georgia 2022 and Best Small Bank in Georgia for 2021 by *Newsweek*. In 2023, Easterlin received the James Collier Award, the highest recognition from the Georgia Bar Foundation, the charitable arm of the Supreme Court of Georgia. He also serves as a trustee for the Young Harris College board.

ROB GARCIA

Regional President, Pinnacle Financial
Partners, Atlanta



Since Rob Garcia joined Pinnacle Financial Partners in 2019 as regional president for Atlanta, the company's Atlanta market has experienced significant growth and success. Under Garcia's leadership, Pinnacle's presence in the Atlanta market has expanded to more than 100

associates across four offices.

In 2022, Pinnacle was named the No. 1 workplace in Atlanta in the medium company category by the *Atlanta Business Chronicle*. The award is a recognition of the vision of Pinnacle's founders to be the best financial services firm and the best place to work. "The enormous growth our Atlanta team has seen is a true testament to how Pinnacle's way of doing business draws top talent," says Garcia.

"At Pinnacle, we offer a unique personalized approach to banking that stands out from the conventional services typically found in Atlanta. We prioritize building strong relationships with our clients by providing tailored financial solutions that cater to their individual needs and goals," he adds. "The response to our presence in the market has been humbling, and we're grateful for Atlanta's continued support."

Based in Nashville, Pinnacle has operations in North Carolina, South Carolina, Virginia, Alabama, Kentucky and Florida in addition to Tennessee and Georgia.

CHANEL FRAZIER

Managing Director, Blackrock Inc., Atlanta



As the head of BlackRock Atlanta, Chanel Frazier drives innovation for the more than 800-employee investment management and financial services company. Responsible for the oversight of about 30% of the firm's global assets under management, she has expanded commercial opportunities by establishing new client relationships while building an inclusive culture that attracts and retains top talent.

"I am proud to have the opportunity to lead our business in a state with such an incredible breadth of backgrounds and experiences," she says. "The majority of

our employees are from Georgia, which has brought first-rate talent to BlackRock to help us manage money for the firm and for the world."

Previously, Frazier served as the global head of business strategy for the Portfolio Management Group (PMG). As a key architect of PMG, she executed strategic initiatives for one of the firm's largest investment teams.

Frazier is a member of the Woodruff Arts Center Board of Directors, the Agnes Scott College Board of Visitors and the Metro Atlanta Chamber Board of Directors Executive Committee.

HANK HALTER

CEO, Delta Community Credit Union, Atlanta



Appointed CEO in 2013 after retiring from Delta Air Lines as CFO, Hank Halter leads Georgia's largest credit union and not-for-profit financial institution. With more than 500,000 members and nearly 1,400 employees, Delta Community has

more than \$8.5 billion in assets and operates 32 branch offices in four states, with 29 branches located in the metro Atlanta area.

He finds fulfillment in advancing the credit union mission by championing its member-centric structure.

"It is extremely rewarding to lead an organization deeply committed to supporting members on their financial journeys," says Halter. "It is an exciting time in the financial sector as it innovates new technologies, products and services."

Delta Community's dedication to its members' financial well-being goes beyond its products and services. Last year, Delta Community reached more than 9,000 individuals through free financial education workshops that focused on various topics such as budgeting, car buying, first-time homebuying, investing and retirement services.

Halter served on Delta Community's board of directors for six years. He is the immediate past chair of the League of Southeastern Credit Unions & Affiliates' Board of Directors, the trade association that advocates for the betterment of more than 300 credit unions in Georgia, Florida and Alabama.

GINGER HERRING

President & CEO, 1st Franklin Financial
Corp., Toccoa



Ginger Herring is the third-generation leader of the family-owned 1st Franklin Financial, which was founded in 1941 by her grandfather, Ben F. Cheek Jr. Herring leads a team of more than 1,500 employees working in branch locations across the Southeast, with many

locations serving rural communities.

"My grandfather saw an unmet need in our community and a way to earn a respectable living and support his family," says Herring. "Those needs have only grown over time. Today our company has grown to 377 offices serving our customers' needs in nine states."

Herring says that financial institutions face multiple challenges today, including higher funding costs due to a higher interest rate environment.

"We have had to adjust to a new norm that requires us to evaluate all aspects of our business to ensure we continue to maintain a responsible return on investment," she says, "while still providing the same services and values to our customers that make our company unique."

Herring has served on a number of community boards, including Leadership Toccoa-Stephens County and Camp Fire USA of Georgia, and is the former chair of the American Financial Services Association and vice chair of its Women's Leadership Council.

Banking, Finance & Insurance

ROBERT EARL JAMES

President & CEO, Carver State Bank, Savannah



Serving as president for more than 50 years with Carver State Bank, Robert Earl James is Georgia's longest-tenured bank president and the longest tenure as a Black president of any bank in the country.

Carver State Bank was founded in 1927 and is one of just 20 Black-owned banks in the U.S.

Awarded the Distinguished Service Award by the National Bankers Association, James has his biography recorded in the Library of Congress as part of The HistoryMakers archival collection, just one of many civic and professional

accomplishments throughout his career. The son of

a mother who wanted her children to learn an instrument, James has mastered several, including the saxophone.

James has long been active with Step Up Savannah, an initiative to reduce poverty. He's also served as board chair of the Savannah Economic Development Authority and St. Joseph's/Candler Health System.

A Morris Brown College alum, James earned his MBA from Harvard University, one of the first African Americans accepted to Harvard Business School. He has also been awarded two honorary doctoral degrees.

RANDY KOPORC

Regional President, Fifth Third Bank, Atlanta



Randy Koporc joined the Fifth Third Bank team 14 years ago and today is responsible for the strategic alignment of the bank's commercial, wealth, asset management and consumer businesses in Georgia as well as new markets, such as one recently established in Alabama.

To meet the demand for in-person financial services, Fifth Third continues to expand locations of its NextGen financial centers – modern, open-environment branches equipped with the latest technology. "We're expanding not only our banking centers, but we're also expanding our commercial and wealth and asset management teams," says Koporc.

Fifth Third supports the Atlanta community on many levels, including its recently renewed naming rights for Kennesaw State's stadium. In 2021, Fifth Third Bank invested \$20 million in Atlanta's Grove Park community. "It's a big priority for us as we continue to help them evolve the neighborhood around housing accessibility, small business expansion and things like that," he says. Koporc serves on a number of boards, including the Wellstar Foundation and Urban League of Greater Atlanta.

KEVIN KELLY

Atlanta Office Managing Partner, PwC, Atlanta



Kevin Kelly has more than 30 years of professional services industry experience, including 20 years at PwC, which offers assurance, tax and advisory services to companies around the world. In fact, in 2023, PwC provided services to 87% of the Global Fortune 500 companies.

Kelly has specialized throughout his career in the consumer and industrial products industries and also has experience in areas like real estate, aerospace and defense, upstream oil and gas, and higher education. He's known for his collaborative, hands-on working style that is responsive to and appreciated by clients.

Overall, the firm has made significant investments in its AI capabilities and sustainability efforts, something Kelly agrees is imperative. "Technology has enabled faster, more flexible service delivery of professional services, and client expectations are evolving rapidly," he says. The company was also the headline partner for Climate Week NYC 2024, which discussed how businesses can address the most pressing sustainability challenges.

He currently sits on the Metro Atlanta Chamber and The Woodruff Arts Center boards.

DAVID LEITER

Midsouth Hub Managing Partner, KPMG, Atlanta



David Leiter joined KPMG's Atlanta office in 2002 and currently serves as managing partner of the company's midsouth hub. Overseeing approximately 2,000 partners and professionals, he's responsible for the strategic

direction and growth of KPMG's Atlanta offices.

Today, he's most excited about the delivery of high-quality client service and the execution of business development strategies coming out of KPMG Ignition in Midtown, an innovation hub housing about 400 technology employees. Atlanta was the second location of this KPMG concept when it opened eight years ago. Now they are located throughout the country, bringing in clients to workshop with them to help solve some of their most complex business challenges as well as harvesting opportunities using generative AI.

Through an expanded partnership with Microsoft, KPMG will invest \$2 billion in the global alliance to automate aspects of its tax, audit and consulting services. The automation will enable employees to speed up analysis, increase time spent providing strategic advice and help clients integrate AI into their operations as seamlessly as possible.

Leiter serves on the governing board of the Woodruff Arts Center and the board and finance committee of the Howard School, dedicated to the education of children with learning differences.

JOHN MCNAIR

President & CEO, Community Bankers Association of Georgia, Marietta



John McNair oversees one of the strongest community banking associations in the country, with more than 140 member banks and 200 vendor partners. In fact, there are more community banks headquartered in Georgia than any

other state in the Southeast, and many have been around for more than 100 years.

During the past year, these local banks have demonstrated resilience but also seized transformative opportunities while facing challenges from economic shifts and regulatory demands.

"The surge in digital banking, driven by remote needs, expanded accessibility for customers," says McNair. In addition, he adds, "Cybersecurity measures were intensified to safeguard customer data, and banks embraced innovation by utilizing AI and machine learning for efficiency and personalized services."

Throughout the challenges and changes, McNair emphasizes, banks' focus has remained on community service, supporting small businesses and individuals and fostering unity and trust. Community banks, for example, originate 60% of small business loans and about 80% of agriculture loans in Georgia, says McNair.

Because it has experienced many different economic cycles during which it became adept at managing through good times and bad, McNair believes the sector is poised to continue to lead through continuing innovation and a commitment to community values.

DONTE MILLER

Founder & President, Village Microfund, Atlanta



People are taking notice of Donte Miller and the Village Micro Fund, a social impact fund that aims to build inclusive cooperative investing models that connect local Black and Brown entrepreneurs with investors to make positive changes in their neighborhoods nationwide.

Echoing Green, which uses an 18-month fellowship program to support transformational leaders who challenge the status quo, named him a 2022 Global Fellow. Also in 2022, *Forbes* named him to its 30 under 30 list. Other honors include being a Good Trouble honoree and a 2021 Rubinger Fellow.

Village Micro Fund taps into what it calls genius in Black and Brown communities and fills entrepreneurial information and network gaps in those communities. As a result, Village Micro Fund creates community residents who are both customers and investors by offering cooperative alternatives to traditional financial institutions, leveraging technology to remove as many obstacles as possible for under-resourced neighborhoods and developing an international market for investing in these small businesses.

Miller is passionate about the intersection of entrepreneurship, community and technology, which he uses to inform the Village's strategy and direction. Previously, among other places, he worked at Goldman Sachs, Google and the San Francisco Federal Reserve Bank.

BARTOW MORGAN JR.

CEO, Georgia Banking Company, Atlanta



Bartow Morgan is a fifth-generation banker who has been an executive and board member at Georgia Banking Bank and Brand Group Holdings Inc. and its subsidiary, Brandbank, in Lawrenceville. In 2018, BrandBank merged with Renasant Bank.

Morgan believes that the pro-business environment in Georgia fosters collaboration and growth.

"Georgia boasts a diverse and dynamic economy that encompasses a wide range of industries," he says. "From technology and logistics to manufacturing and healthcare, the state offers fertile ground for banks and financial services businesses to engage with a broad spectrum of clients."

He believes that the rapid surge in interest rates is one of the foremost challenges facing banks today. "This will undoubtedly impact all of our customers as we move forward," says Morgan.

Morgan serves as a founding trustee and chairman of the board of trustees of Georgia Gwinnett College, is a board member of Hampden-Sydney College and is a member of the Buckhead Coalition and the local chapter of the Young Presidents Organization (YPO Southern 7).

Making Georgia a Fifth Third Better[®]

Congratulations to Randy Koporc,
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and dedication help make our
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FIFTH THIRD

Fifth Third Bank, National Association. Member FDIC.



Randy Koporc
Regional President

DAVID NICHOLAS

President & Founder, Nicholas Wealth Management, Marietta



In addition to running his wealth management firm Nicholas Wealth Management, David Nicholas is also a media personality. He serves as a weekly guest on *Fox Business with Stuart Varney and Charles Payne*. In addition, he also hosts the *Retire Ready* radio

show on 95.5 FM WSB and *Retire Ready* TV show on Fox and CBS. David's commentaries have been featured regularly on Fox Business, Fox News, CNBC and CNN.

"Georgia is a wonderful state for retirees," says Nicholas. "Many people may not realize that Georgia actually has a 0% income tax exclusion, up to a limit based on age, on retirement income from pensions, Social Security and retirement accounts."

However, Nicholas believes that Georgia is at a tax disadvantage compared to neighboring states. "Georgia has so much to offer, but we're sandwiched between two states, Tennessee and Florida, that have a 0% state income tax," he says. "This is causing Georgia to lose significant business and investment."

Federal tax cuts expiring in 2025 will have a significant impact on individuals and high net worth families this year, says Nicholas. "Not knowing where taxes are headed can be a big obstacle for growth," he says.

PALMER PROCTOR

CEO, Ameris Bank & Ameris Bancorp, Atlanta



Palmer Proctor leads the largest bank headquartered in Atlanta – Ameris Bank. He joined Fidelity Bank in 1990 and became CEO in 2017. When Fidelity merged with Ameris in 2019, he remained CEO. He guides the strategic direction of the bank, which serves businesses and consumers through full-service financial centers across the Southeast and nationwide through online and mobile banking.

"My personal job satisfaction is deeply rooted in our company's purpose, which is to bring financial peace of mind to our

communities, one person at a time," says Proctor. "Across America, financial concerns are often cited as the No. 1 cause of stress. It's rewarding to cultivate relationships with clients and make a positive difference in their lives."

Proctor has sat on many boards in the community and is a past chair of the Georgia Bankers Association. He serves as emeritus director and past president of Callanwolde Fine Arts Center and is a former trustee of Fernbank Museum of Natural History. He is cofounder and a member of the executive committee of the Night of Hope Gala, a benefit for ALS research.

THEODORE "TEDDY" PARRISH

Founder & Chief Investment Officer, Parrish Capital, Kennesaw



Teddy Parrish has nearly three decades of experience with independent wealth management firms. During this time, he has managed assets on behalf of high-net-worth individuals and institutional clients such as pension funds, educational

institutions and charitable foundations.

Throughout his career, Parrish has built a reputation for his leadership directing investments, research and educating the masses on financial literacy and investment strategy. As a nationally recognized expert, Parrish has been interviewed by numerous media outlets including *The Wall Street Journal*, *Investment News* and *Financial Times*. Parrish is the Chairman of the Kennesaw State University Foundation.

Parrish believes that the biggest challenges facing financial services businesses today are cybersecurity threats, continuous regulatory pressures and the proliferation of artificial intelligence. "The competitive landscape for financial services has been intensified by AI and fintech in general," he says. "Consumers may benefit from easier access or cheaper services, but this challenge can mean restructuring workforces and the way financial services firms do business."

From a regulatory perspective, Parrish says Georgia is one of the most business-friendly states in the nation. "Georgia is a great place to live, with a robust public and private school system that works to benefit employee retention," he says.

DAVID PRETER

President & CEO, Georgia's Own Credit Union, Atlanta



Since joining Georgia's Own Credit Union in 2008 and becoming president and CEO in 2010, David Preter has led company growth that has more than tripled during his tenure. With assets of more than \$4.2 billion, it's now the third-largest credit union in the state.

"Georgia's Own has always been about finding ways to help our members thrive financially, whether through smart saving goals, better borrowing options or investing in the future," he says. "It's equally important to pour into the causes and organizations that mean the most to our members. In conjunction with the Georgia's Own Foundation, we've been proud to give back to our community through scholarship opportunities, grants for local non-profits, funds raised, volunteerism and corporate partnership."

Recent mergers have allowed Georgia's Own to expand its footprint throughout the state, deepening the institution's impact through additional branch locations, service options and community outreach. Preter says that it's especially rewarding to be able to offer real relief in the form of better interest rates and lower fees in comparison to the competition. He points out that the credit union has been named a top workplace for three years in a row.

December marks Georgia's Own Credit Union's 90th anniversary.

KATIE SAEZ

Executive Vice President & Georgia Regional President, Truist Financial Corp., Atlanta



Katie Saez has spent her entire 24-year career with Truist. She was hired just after graduating from the University of Florida in 1999 and spent 14 years in commercial banking, including a stint in Savannah, before returning to Atlanta in 2013 to join the bank's treasury and payment group. In 2022, she was promoted to her current role, serving as the senior leader in the Georgia region.

"I get to innovate and drive growth in unexpected ways. Delivering against our purpose fuels me and reinforces the value of being forward-thinking in today's dynamic

business landscape," she says. "We raise the bar in this industry by championing innovation and by fostering a culture of inclusion and corporate citizenship."

"I want to make a difference. I want to be remembered as a leader who cared about the impact we make, and as a banker who helped build my community and as a colleague who made a positive difference in people's lives."

Saez is an executive board member of the Metro Atlanta Chamber and is a member of Leadership Atlanta's class of 2024.

JACK SAWYER

Partner & Managing Director, Cresset, Atlanta



Jack Sawyer has a long career in wealth management. A fiduciary attorney who founded Georgia's first private fiduciary corporation, The Arden Group, in 1990, he later served as head of the Georgia Region of Mellon Wealth Management and then the Southeast Region President for Wilmington Trust before joining Cresset in 2020.

Cresset focuses on unique needs of people like ultra-high-net-worth families, CEO founders, entrepreneurs and family business owners, with more than \$50 billion worth of assets under management.

Sawyer believes that Georgia is a great

place to operate a financial services business due to the pipeline of young talent in the state. "Georgia has become an extremely desirable destination for the best and the brightest coming out of colleges and universities across the country, especially in financial services," he says.

The amount of wealth being created in Georgia is also stunning, Sawyer adds. "These highly successful people are determined to seek out and employ the finest wealth management teams for their families."

Beyond his professional achievements, Sawyer is also a committed philanthropist. He serves on multiple boards including the Atlanta Jewish Foundation, the High Museum and the Georgia Museum of Art.

ANDREW SCHLOSSBERG

President & CEO, Invesco, Atlanta



After spending more than 20 years in various roles at Invesco, Andrew Schlossberg was tapped to helm the global asset management firm in 2023. Invesco is made up of over 8,400 team members located in more than 26 countries and has over \$1.5 trillion in assets under its management.

Schlossberg has 27 years in the asset-management business and has served in multiple senior leadership positions on his path to president and CEO, including serving as a senior managing

director and leading Invesco's Americas and Europe, the Middle East and Africa (EMEA) regions.

He is active within the financial services industry, currently serving on the Board of Governors and on the executive committee of the Investment Company Institute. He's also committed to making a difference locally, serving on the executive committees of the Atlanta Committee for Progress, the Metro Atlanta Chamber and on the Woodruff Arts Center board.



Leader in banking. Leader in Georgia.

Katie is an outstanding client advocate at Truist and a caring community member. We're proud that her efforts have been recognized, making her one of the Georgia 500.

Thank you, to Katie, and this esteemed group of Georgians, for all that you do to make our state a great place to work and live.

Katie Saez
Georgia Regional President

TRUIST 

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Banking, Finance & Insurance

DAVID SEAMAN

Executive Managing Director & President, Domain Capital Group, Atlanta



As the executive managing director and president of Domain Capital Group, David Seaman is responsible for spearheading various strategic initiatives with the goal of advancing the company's continued growth in its core investment verticals and assets under

management while securing top industry talent. Domain Capital Group is the parent company of two registered investment subsidiaries: Domain Capital Advisors and Domain Timber Advisors.

Seaman brings more than three decades of real estate and private equity experience to his position. He has wide-ranging knowledge of acquisition and valuation in asset and loan transactions and portfolio and operating company acquisition analysis and structuring.

Before joining Domain Capital Group, Seaman was a partner at PricewaterhouseCoopers LLP in New York, where he was recognized as one of the nation's leading experts in real estate private equity fund formation.

Seaman also worked with equity capital providers, private equity firms, real estate operating companies and real estate funds to develop strategic alternatives for troubled or underperforming assets.

JEFFREY SPRECHER

Founder, Chairman & CEO, Intercontinental Exchange Inc., Atlanta



Jeffrey Sprecher is considered a pioneer of digital networks and the electrification of trading and marketplaces. Sprecher has grown Intercontinental Exchange Inc. (ICE) from a startup in 2000 that was purely focused on making energy trading

transparent into a diversified, subscription-driven Fortune 500 company with nearly 14,000 employees.

It all began with a dream and \$1,000 – what Sprecher paid to buy the struggling Continental Power exchange in 1997.

Today, with more than \$8 billion in annual revenue and a market capitalization of more than \$70 billion, ICE operates exchanges and clearinghouses globally, including the New York Stock Exchange.

ICE also operates two other business areas – ICE Fixed Income and Data Services, and ICE Mortgage Technology, in the mortgage space, the result of acquisitions of companies including Ellie Mae in 2020 and Black Knight in 2023.

WENDY STEWART

President, Global Commercial Banking, Bank of America, Atlanta

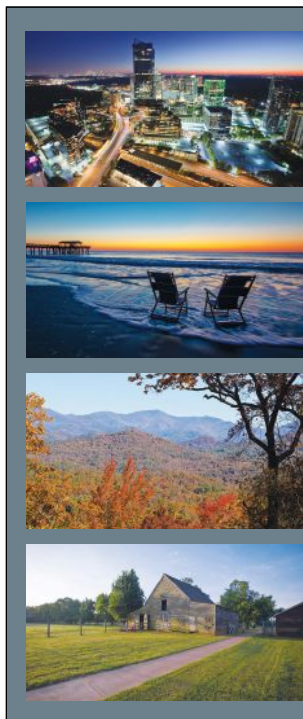


Wendy Stewart joined Bank of America's predecessor, NationsBank, in 1996. In her current role as the head of Global Commercial Banking, she oversees the delivery of integrated financial solutions to public and

private companies with annual revenues of \$50 million to over \$2 billion across middle market banking, real estate, healthcare, education, not-for-profits and dealer financial services.

Before becoming the co-head and then president of Global Commercial Banking, Stewart served as the chief of wholesale credit strategy for the bank. She also serves as vice chair of Bank of America's Global Diversity and Inclusion Council and leads women's initiatives for the company.

Stewart serves on the board for the Metro Atlanta Chamber, Paradigm and Parity. She is a director of the Buckhead Coalition and is leading the workforce development efforts for the Atlanta Committee for Progress, among other civic endeavors. She was recently ranked No. 1 in *FinTech Magazine's* Top 100 Women in FinTech.



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Communications & Media



JENNIFER BABBIT BODNER

CEO, Babbit Bodner, Atlanta



Jennifer Babbit Bodner leads Babbit Bodner, a communications consultancy that focuses on helping high-growth companies in the space between emerging and exit. Bodner started the firm in 2015 after spending nearly 15 years in public relations, including serving as deputy general manager at Edelman Atlanta.

“Being an Atlanta native descended from generations of Atlantans is relevant to what we bring to the table,” says Bodner. “Nobody

knows the market better. We love to work with companies that are key to the city and state culture and what’s happening here – the Chick-fil-A Peach Bowl and Georgia-Pacific are two prime examples – as well as companies that are expanding, such as introducing Tiff’s Treats to Georgia.”

With Bodner at the helm, the female-led business has nearly an all-female staff. “Supporting women in leadership roles is one of our core values,” she says. “As a mother of three daughters, I’m a fierce advocate for women. I do it for my girls and for female leaders around the city.”

Bodner serves on the boards of Ian’s Friends Foundation and the Marcus Jewish Community Center of Atlanta.

GINA ESPINOSA-MELTZER

CEO, Hope Beckham Espinosa, Atlanta



Longtime Atlanta journalist and public relations professional Gina Espinosa-Meltzer is making the most of her influential platform to raise awareness of the contributions of Latinos to Atlanta and Georgia. In 2021, Espinosa-Meltzer merged her public relations agency GPR Global, which provided Hispanic and non-Hispanic companies communication tools to thrive in a multicultural world, into Hope Beckham Espinosa.

Espinosa-Meltzer is well-known in Atlanta’s international community for initiatives to reach out to the Hispanic market for numerous organizations in Atlanta and Mexico, including the High Museum of Art, the Center for Civil and Human Rights, the Rialto Center for the Arts at Georgia State University, Grand Velas Resorts from Mexico, the Mexican State of Yucatan Tourism Board and the Mexico Tourism Board, among others.

“I’ve lived in Georgia 20-plus years, and I’m so glad to see the growing recognition of Latinos as an important part of the diverse fabric of Georgia,” says Espinosa-Meltzer, named one of the 50 Most Influential Hispanics in Georgia by the Georgia Hispanic Chamber. “I am so grateful to those who paved the way and so excited to see the opportunities and the impact the latest generation of Latinos will have.”

LEROY CHAPMAN JR.

Editor-in-Chief, *The Atlanta Journal-Constitution*, Atlanta



Leroy Chapman Jr. is the first Black journalist to hold the newsroom’s top job of editor-in-chief in the 155-year history of *The Atlanta Journal-Constitution*.

“Leading this newsroom is the honor of a lifetime,” says Chapman, who was named to the position in 2023. “Transforming a storied daily newspaper into a modern media company is the challenge of a lifetime.”

Chapman’s goal is to lead an investment in digital storytelling, podcasting and documentary film. “We are evolving,” he says. “Yet *The Atlanta Journal-Constitution* remains steadfastly committed to its mission of serving our local communities, Georgia and our nation.”

Prior to this promotion, Chapman was managing editor, where he directed the newspaper’s daily print and digital news gathering. Reporting teams that cover local, state and federal government, politics, education, crime and public safety, the economy, sports and breaking news reported to him in that role. Under his leadership, *AJC* reporting teams have won local, regional and national journalism awards for local news, business, education and political coverage.

Since his arrival in 2011, Chapman has put the *AJC* on the frontlines of some of the biggest breaking news nationally and has built reporting teams to deliver around-the-clock breaking news and timely enterprise on emerging topics and hyperlocal news.

S. TAYLOR GLOVER

Co-Chairman, Turner Enterprises Inc., Atlanta



Turner Enterprises oversees the business interests, landholdings and financial investments of the company, including the oversight of two million acres and 45,000 bison. Taylor Glover also serves as board advisor to Turner’s philanthropic and charitable organizations, including the United Nations Foundation, Nuclear Threat Initiative and Turner Foundation.

“Turner Enterprises is committed to best practices such as renewable energy, regenerative agriculture, land conservation, wildlife

preservation and regenerative tourism,” says Glover. “In addition to serving as a blueprint to mitigate the effects of climate change, these efforts can potentially boost soil health, reduce water use, sequester more carbon and bolster biodiversity. When we work together, we can truly aim to *Save Everything*, which is our founder Ted Turner’s mantra. The fate of our planet’s health is dependent on the choices we make.”

Prior to joining Turner Enterprises in 2002, Glover was senior vice president of the Private Client Group at Merrill Lynch.

VENESSA HARRISON

President, AT&T Southeast Coastal States, Atlanta



Venessa Harrison leads AT&T's public policy, economic development and philanthropic activities across Georgia, South Carolina and North Carolina. Harrison works closely with policymakers and community leaders to foster an environment that welcomes investment and innovation.

AT&T invested nearly \$14.9 billion in its wireline and wireless network infrastructure in Georgia from 2019 to 2023. With more than 6.7 million fiber strand miles in Georgia, AT&T Fiber is now available to more than 1.67 million customer locations in more than 130 Georgia communities.

AT&T also collaborates with local community organizations to provide digital resources and programming to connect more Georgians.

"AT&T has been connecting Georgia communities for 145 years, and we're focused on investing in our fiber and 5G infrastructure to drive innovation, support economic growth and help close the digital divide," says Harrison. "Having internet access can be life-changing for some, and it's a reminder of why we do what we do. We're proud to provide the connectivity that empowers communities and creates a more connected future for all Georgians."

Harrison serves on many boards, including the Metro Atlanta Chamber, Georgia Historical Society, Georgia Research Alliance, Georgia Chamber of Commerce, Atlanta Committee for Progress and the Atlanta Police Foundation.

BERT WESLEY HUFFMAN

President & CEO, Georgia Public Broadcasting, Atlanta



Those who've seen and heard Bert Wesley Huffman speak in his official role have come to know him as simply the "the GPB guy." It's a title earned out of respect for Huffman's many accomplishments and his commitment to GPB's mission of public service across the state.

That commitment has strong roots in Georgia. Huffman is a native of Blue Ridge, where he was deeply impacted by public media during his youth.

Huffman joined GPB in 2014 as the first vice president for development and marketing after stints with The Atlanta Opera and Emory University. In the 10 years since, he has earned the Public Radio Association of Development Officers Development Professional of the Year Award and GPB won the PBS Development Special Achievement Award.

"We are Georgia's storyteller, connecting communities with series like *View Finders* and *A Fork in the Road*, our coverage of high school sports, informing citizens with trusted news and delivering educational content that bolsters classroom achievement," says Huffman.

GPB is the nine-station PBS network serving all of Georgia, boasts a 20-station radio network delivering NPR and local news and has an education division that provides free content to teachers and Pre-K-12th grade students.

HILTON HOWELL

Chairman & CEO, Gray Television Inc., Atlanta



Nationwide, Atlanta-based Gray Television is known as the country's largest owner of top-rated local television stations that collectively reach approximately 36% of U.S. television households in 114 television markets. In its home state, it is known for a special distinction – Gray owns a television station in every Georgia market – Atlanta (WANF), Albany (WALB), Augusta (WRDW), Columbus (WTVM), Savannah (WTOG) and Macon (the MeTV affiliate).

Its biggest physical presence in Georgia, though, is at the site of the former General Motors assembly plant in Doraville, which it acquired in 2021. It is building soundstages, offices, warehouses, mill spaces, parking and related facilities in the Assembly Studios real estate complex. In the fourth quarter of 2023, NBCUniversal began leasing and operating studio space at the site.

The driving force behind Gray TV is Hilton Howell, who has been at the helm for 30-plus years while serving as chairman of the board, president and CEO of insurance holding company Atlantic American Corp. He previously served as a member of the boards of the Woodruff Arts Center, Skyland Trail, Zoo Atlanta and Camp Sunshine. Howell is on the board of directors of the Broadcasting Foundation of America.

BEM JOINER

Cofounder, Atlanta Influences Everything, Atlanta



In 2015, Nike rejected a pitch from Bem Joiner, two partners and their marketing agency at the time for Atlanta to become ground zero in marketing commemorative 1996 Olympic shoes Nike was creating. The reason for Nike's rejection: Atlanta lacked an identifiable brand.

Not so! said Joiner, adding that Atlanta influences everything. That became an Aha! moment and a rallying cry. And it led the partners to start a new creative consultancy company to better communicate Atlanta's national influence on what Joiner calls three Cs:

civic, corporate and cultural. The aim is to harness the influence of Atlanta culture to do good and connect communities.

They also want to draw attention to the city's income inequality and help change those statistics. Atlanta has a 4% upward mobility rate, which Joiner says means that people born poor in Atlanta have a 96% chance they'll die poor. "We want to change that narrative."

Atlanta Influences Everything is a way for Joiner to pay forward a passion for the city that has earned him a reputation as a pioneer in cultural activation and celebration. On Jan. 31, Central Atlanta Progress and the Atlanta Downtown Improvement District honored him for that passion with the 2024 Warner Bros. Discovery Community Leadership Award for his grassroots initiative.

TOM O'BRIEN

President, Weather Group, Atlanta



Tom O'Brien is an experienced television and digital business executive with a strong track record of driving innovation and growth. Under his leadership at Weather Group, the parent company of The Weather Channel television network and streaming service, Local Now, the company has experienced significant growth and success in launching innovative products, including the launch of The Weather Channel en Español, the nation's first 24/7 Spanish-language weather network.

O'Brien also oversaw the

launch of the Weather Channel television streaming app, the network's upgraded connected TV (CTV) app that offers a direct-to-consumer subscription. The WG team has been a leader in the development of immersive, mixed-reality graphics that dynamically changed the presentation of weather in the industry.

During his tenure, Weather Group has received more than 35 awards and other accolades across its brands The Weather Channel, Local Now, Pattnr and The Weather Channel en Español. Previously, O'Brien was a corporate officer at Nexstar Media Group, where he led the company's digital and revenue growth efforts. Prior to Nexstar, he spent 14 years at NBCUniversal as president and GM of NBC's flagship station, WNBC, and executive vice president and chief revenue officer for CNBC.

MARIA SAPORTA

Founder & Executive Director, *SaportaReport*; President & Founder, Atlanta Way 2.0, Atlanta



Longtime journalist Maria Saporta and a group of likeminded leaders in Atlanta recently launched a nonprofit – Atlanta Way 2.0 – with a goal to strengthen the civic fabric of the Atlanta region. The modern-day movement encourages people and organizations to connect, collaborate and convene.

The term Atlanta Way comes from a time decades ago when Atlanta stood out as a city that could resolve conflicts. Back then, a dozen or so men made all the decisions. The spirit of

Atlanta Way 2.0, Saporta notes, is capturing the best of what was and adapting and applying it to the city we are today. It's a diverse and inclusive movement that educates, equips and engages partners – she calls them activators – to create a compassionate and just community.

Saporta, an Atlanta business, civic and urban affairs journalist, launched the online *SaportaReport* in 2009. The publication seeks to be Atlanta's authoritative civic website. Prior to that, Saporta spent 27 years with *The Atlanta Journal-Constitution* (17 as the lead business columnist) and nearly 12 years at the *Atlanta Business Chronicle*.

MONICA PEARSON

Veteran Broadcaster, Atlanta



Monica Pearson is an iconic figure in Georgia broadcasting who has been a guiding force in shaping Atlanta's media landscape for more than four decades. Pearson started her journalism career in 1969 as a reporter for *The Louisville Times*. In 1975, she became the first Black female evening news anchor in Atlanta on Channel 2 Action News, where she worked for 37 years before retiring in 2012.

In 2023, Pearson joined *The Atlanta Journal-Constitution* as host of *The Monica Pearson Show*, a video and podcast program in which she interviews newsmakers, groundbreakers, innovators and

influencers. In addition, she writes a regular lifestyle newsletter and column for the *AJC* and hosts *AJC Live* events.

Throughout her career Pearson has garnered numerous Southern Regional and local Emmy Awards. She has been inducted into several esteemed halls of fame including the Georgia Association of Broadcasters and the National Association of Black Journalists.

Pearson is also a celebrated emcee, motivational speaker and educator, sharing her wisdom and experiences and inspiring audiences with her dynamic presence. She is involved in several philanthropic organizations including Meals on Wheels Atlanta and Go Red for Women, the American Heart Association's national movement to end heart disease and stroke in women.

DAVID TANN

Founder & CEO, Tantrum Agency, Atlanta



David Tann is an award-winning designer, founder and CEO of Tantrum Agency, a brand-first creative agency launched in Atlanta in 2018. In his 20-year career prior to launching Tantrum, Tann worked with some of the world's, and Atlanta's, most recognizable brands – Bath & Body Works, OshKosh B'gosh, Abercrombie & Fitch, Carter's and the Atlanta Hawks.

As impressive as his resume is, though, what makes him one of Atlanta's most respected servant leaders is a commitment to pay forward what he has learned and achieved. That commitment is based on a deep personal desire to help, among others, underrepresented groups.

When Tann's not in the studio, he's empowering the next generation of creatives. He's a frequent guest speaker at Morehouse College's Innovation and Entrepreneurship Center; an adjunct professor at The Miami Ad School; on the advisory boards of Atlanta Public Schools and North Atlanta High School; and on the board of Furman University's Strategic Design Master's program. In 2020, Tann partnered with Southwest Atlanta's Tuskegee Airmen Global Academy.

Tann's commitment to education is also evident in an initiative resulting in the development of a digital marketing and sports marketing curriculum for Charlotte Mecklenburg Public Schools in North Carolina.

ALEX TAYLOR

Chairman & CEO, Cox Enterprises, Atlanta



In March, the Captain Planet Foundation presented Cox Enterprises with its Corporate Superhero for the Earth Award, which recognizes Cox for its commitment to sustainability. The private, family-owned company has invested \$2 billion in sustainable businesses and technologies.

While its core businesses Cox Communications and Cox Automotive are leaders in the communications and automotive industries, the company is also a leading investment platform with strategic positions in emerging technologies driving the future of

agriculture, renewable energy, healthtech and public sector software.

“Protecting our environment is the most important thing we can do for our business, our community and our children,” says Alex Taylor, who is leading Cox Enterprises through some of the most transformative times in its history. “We have a special culture here at Cox, and we’re helping build a better future for the next generation – one we can all be proud of.”

Taylor is the great-grandson of the founder and former Ohio Gov. James M. Cox and the fourth generation to lead the 126-year-old company. He began his career in 2000 with Cox as a reporter for the *Grand Junction Daily Sentinel* in Colorado, before moving into different leadership roles around the company.

CHRISTINE WHITAKER

President, Central Division, Comcast, Atlanta



A 30-year cable industry veteran, Christine Whitaker oversees Comcast’s largest division, which includes 14,000-plus employees with more than 21 million combined video, high-speed internet, voice, home security and mobile customers across 12 states ranging from Florida to Detroit and Illinois.

“Throughout my career, I’ve found joy in challenging the status quo with bold thinking and by creating a winning, inclusive culture that engages our teammates in delivering true impact for our customers and communities,” says Whitaker. “Over the past several years,

Comcast has been intentional in supporting Georgians with technology and network enhancements to provide faster, more secure and reliable high-speed internet for our customers. Our investment of more than \$1 billion includes support for community organizations, WiFi-Connected Lift Zones and grants for small businesses to help make digital equity a reality throughout the state.”

Whitaker is a trustee on the Woodruff Arts Center board, a Metro Atlanta Chamber board member, and a WICT Network and NAMIC member. She has been named one of the Most Power Women in Cable by *CableFax* magazine, a Women of Influence by the *Atlanta Business Chronicle* and recognized as a Wonder Woman by Multichannel News.

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Economic Development



SAMIR ABDULLAHI

Director, Select Fulton; Director of Economic Development, Fulton County, Atlanta



Samir Abdullahi is the director for Select Fulton and manages both the economic development projects team in addition to the Workforce Development division of Fulton County.

“We’ve recently added a new division called Fulton Films to Select Fulton that promotes over 150 county-owned locations for filming, including our Executive Airport,” he says.

Abdullahi collaborates with the department’s 15 cities as well as regional and state partners, recruiting new jobs and capital investment to the county and directing Fulton County’s \$3.2-million Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act funding.

This year, *Site Selection* ranked Fulton County No. 4 in its Top 20 Best Counties in America, a huge leap from the prior year’s No. 11 ranking. The list features counties that excel in attracting major corporate facility investments, new recruitment and job creation.

This success, he says, is built on the trust and faith their partners have in them to share their story and to help recruit new investments.

Over his career, Abdullahi has successfully spearheaded efforts resulting in the creation of thousands of jobs in Georgia – and hundreds of millions of dollars in new investment – through high-profile corporate relocations and expansions.

LEONA BARR-DAVENPORT

President & CEO, Atlanta Business League, Atlanta



Leona Barr-Davenport has spent more than 25 years fostering the growth, creation and development of successful Black-owned businesses in Metro Atlanta. She’s known as the face of an organization that holds often sold-out, annual in-person events dedicated to identifying members of Atlanta’s business community for accomplishments of success and inclusiveness.

The Atlanta Business League (ABL) also offers programs that help its members grow and scale their companies,

like its Business Power Forum and Business Enrichment Seminar Series, and that encourage a new generation to consider entrepreneurship and careers in business, such as its Student-Business Shadow Project.

Barr-Davenport holds board positions with the Atlanta Convention & Visitors Bureau and the International Women’s Forum Georgia and has had past board seats with the several impactful groups like the Georgia Chamber of Commerce and the Economic Development Corporation of Fulton County. She is a graduate of the 1999 Leadership Georgia and 2002 Leadership Atlanta and is a current member of the Atlanta Rotary Club.

Established in 1933, ABL is the last, thriving, continuously operating chapter of the National Business League founded by Booker T. Washington in 1900.

ALLAN ADAMS

State Director, UGA Small Business Development Center, Athens



Allan Adams has served with the UGA Small Business Development Center (SBDC) in several capacities, including roles with the Multicultural Business Division, International Trade Division and Rural

Economic Development Program. He was also associate state director.

The SBDC provides support, resources and educational services for both small business owners and aspiring entrepreneurs with 18 locations throughout Georgia. The center is part of the Public Service and Outreach Extension of UGA and is funded in part by the U.S. Small Business Administration.

Over the past five years, the SBDC has helped clients access over \$1 billion in debt and equity capital. “Our most recent economic impact data indicates that SBDC clients experienced a 23.9% growth in sales, versus 10% growth by the average Georgia business,” Adams says. “SBDC clients experienced a 21% growth in employment versus 4.4% growth by the average Georgia business.”

Adams was an associate director at the Carl Vinson Institute of Government and a staff member in both the U.S. Senate and U.S. House of Representatives. He is a member of the Georgia Economic Developers Association and the National Association of Small Business Development Centers.

STEPHEN ADAMS

Executive Director, Macon Bibb Industrial Development Authority, Macon



Stephen Adams serves as the primary point of contact for new industry recruitment and existing industry expansions in Macon-Bibb County. Under his leadership, the Macon Bibb Industrial Development Authority (MBCIA)

has played a crucial role in the region’s economic development, earning recognition as an Accredited Economic Development Organization.

Since 2017, the MBCIA has attracted over \$1.8 billion in new private investment and facilitated the creation of more than 3,400 new jobs, including with new companies like BrightFarms and Agile Cold Storage, as well as significant expansions for Coca-Cola Bottling Co. UNITED, Nichiha and YKK AP.

Adams started his career as an intern at the Macon Economic Development Commission. In 2009, he joined the Macon-Bibb County Industrial Authority as a project manager, rising to the role of executive director by 2018.

He actively participates in professional organizations such as the International Economic Developers Council, Southern Economic Development Council and the Georgia Economic Developers Association. He also serves on the W.S. Hutchings College & Career Academy Governance Board and Middle Georgia State University’s Board of Trustees.

KALI BOATRIGHT

President & CEO, Greater North Fulton Chamber of Commerce, Alpharetta



In her first five years at the Greater North Fulton Chamber of Commerce, Kali Boatright and her team achieved 5-Star Accreditation by the U.S. Chamber, moved to exciting new offices within Alpharetta’s thriving mixed-use development Avalon, adopted a new strategic plan and celebrated the chamber’s 50-year anniversary.

The chamber has also seen a tremendous increase in member engagement of programs and events that has led to record growth in membership, she says. As a collaborative leader,

Boatright works with numerous public and private stakeholders across the six cities of North Fulton and advocates on behalf of more than 1,300 members.

The chamber is working with partners to launch a regional branding initiative for economic and talent development and roll-out of a new tiered dues membership approach.

“This year, I am celebrating 35 years in nonprofit leadership, and the most important part of my career remains the team members who I had the opportunity to hire, work with and develop and who are now friends and peers out leading their own chambers as CEOs,” she says.

Boatright is a Georgia Certified Chamber Executive as well as a Georgia Association of Chamber of Commerce Executives Legacy Award winner.

Economic Development

GRANT CAGLE

President & CEO, Georgia Economic Developers Association, Atlanta



The Georgia Economic Developers Association is a nonprofit association made up of professionals and volunteers involved with the economic development of Georgia's cities and counties.

Prior to being named president and CEO of the association in 2022, Grant Cagle had served Electric Cities of Georgia as a manager of statewide industrial project management. Prior to that he worked in marketing and communications for the Georgia Department of Community Affairs, beginning in 2015.

He has been involved in various statewide and local initiatives and nonprofits throughout his career and has a deep passion for seeing Georgia

prosper through economic development. He leads the GEDA in its three core functions of professional development, networking and public policy.

Cagle serves on the boards of the Georgia Department of Economic Development, the Georgia Association of Chamber of Commerce Executives, the Georgia Academy for Economic Development and Be Pro Be Proud Georgia.

JACK CEBE

Stitch Development Manager, Atlanta
Downtown Improvement District, Atlanta



Not many landscape architects or engineers get the opportunity to create – out of thin air – a 14-acre park in the middle of an urban area atop a busy interstate.

Jack Cebe was named Stitch

Development Manager at the Atlanta Downtown Improvement District in 2022. Since then, he has led advancement of the plans, partnerships and fundraising needed to implement this transformative project. The Stitch is an ambitious plan to put greenspace above the Downtown Connector while re-joining divided neighborhoods and catalyzing affordable housing opportunities and an estimated 14 million square feet of development in Downtown Atlanta.

In March 2023, The Stitch celebrated an award of \$157 million in federal funding, the largest federal discretionary grant award in the Atlanta region's history, funding the construction of Phase 1.

Cebe earned his bachelor's degree in landscape architecture from Clemson, then, from Georgia Tech, master's degrees in civil engineering and business administration. Over the course of his career as an engineer and landscape architect, he has led a wide range of complex projects that have given him a deep understanding of the coalition-building and collaborative problem solving required to ensure The Stitch's success.

CARL CAMPBELL

Executive Director, Dalton-Whitfield Joint Development Authority & Murray County Industrial Development Authority, Dalton



Carl Campbell fosters economic growth in his region by working with existing industries and recruiting new companies seeking expansion. Collaborating across a two-county area, Campbell believes in the importance of regional efforts, recognizing that the prosperity of one community impacts the other. With a focus on recruiting companies that elevate community standards through better jobs, pay and opportunities, he prioritizes quality over quantity in his endeavors.

As the newest company, Essentia Protein Solutions, prepares to establish its presence in Dalton, he anticipates further growth for Whitfield and Murray counties.

Campbell has made housing a primary focus over the past decade. This is an important piece of the puzzle for a company's success, so he says he is working hard to help tackle housing challenges in the communities he serves.

With a background in economic development spanning over a 15-county area in Northwest Georgia, Campbell's passion for his hometown drives his commitment to facilitating job opportunities and contributing to local prosperity.

Prior to joining the Dalton-Whitfield County Joint Development Authority, he served as the regional project manager in the Northwest Georgia Region for the Georgia Department of Economic Development from 2011 to 2015.

SCOTT CENTER

President, National Office Systems; Board
President, World Trade Center, Savannah



Savannah native Scott Center is a director of the World Trade Centers Association, serving on the executive committee, chairing the nomination and compensation committee and chairing the public

relations committee. Center also hosts the organization's monthly video, *The Centerpiece*.

The WTCA, headquartered in New York, has licensees in more than 90 countries and 300 cities. First elected in 2017, he has also been on the WTC Savannah Board since its inception in 2012.

Center has presented the virtues of doing business in Savannah at WTC Metz, WTC Twente, the WTC General Assembly in Accra, the Global Business Forum in Bengaluru and the North Capital Forum in Mexico City.

For 39 years, he has been president of National Office Systems, which represents MillerKnoll, DIRT and more than 200 other manufacturers. He is an accredited LEED Professional.

A past president of Leadership Savannah, Center is also a graduate of Leadership Georgia. He is on the board of directors of the Savannah Economic Development Authority, Catalyst Development and Savannah Technical College Foundation (past chair) and has served on a number of other boards. The Savannah Chamber named him Small Business Person of the Year in 1995.

ANNA CHAFIN

President & CEO of RISE, Savannah
Economic Development Authority, Savannah



Anna Chafin joined the Savannah Economic Development Authority (SEDA) in 2024 ready to lead its new regional workforce development initiative, RISE, which stands for

Regional Industry Support Enterprise.

It recently hosted an alignment summit with 12 existing industry representatives from the Savannah Harbor I-16 Corridor Joint Development Authority region, which covers Bryan, Bulloch, Chatham and Effingham counties, as well as the development authorities and school superintendents from those counties.

"During the summit, the discussion centered around better aligning K-12 public education with the career opportunities offered by industries within these communities," she says.

Chafin wants RISE to be known as a convener and connector. "We want to serve as a bridge between various organizations that are already doing work related to the topics our team will focus on, which will include education, military, underrepresented, housing, transportation and marketing, and the industries we will serve throughout the region," she says.

Prior to joining RISE, Anna served as the CEO of the Development Authority of Bryan County for 10 years.

CHRIS CLARK

President & CEO, Georgia Chamber of Commerce, Atlanta



Chris Clark believes that the strongest organizations are the ones that serve from the heart. The Georgia Chamber serves over 50,000 members, which employ two-thirds of Georgia's workforce in 159 counties, and works with 161 local and

bi-national chambers every day. After a century of service, the chamber is the premier future-focused think tank and the largest, most influential business advocacy group in the state.

This year, the chamber's HUB group represented military communities to support improvements to the state's occupational licensing procedures with the passage of a new state law. It will reduce wait times for active-duty spouses to get occupational licenses transferred.

The Georgia Chamber operates the SMART insurance plan for small businesses, providing coverage for more than 50,000 employees and an innovative 401(k) program for companies across the state.

A Georgia native, Clark has served as president and CEO of the Chamber since 2010. He previously served as commissioner of the Georgia Department of Natural Resources, executive director of the Georgia Environmental Finance Authority and as deputy commissioner for the Department of Economic Development. This year, he received the Legacy Award, the most prestigious prize from the Georgia Association of Chamber of Commerce Executives, for his efforts. He published his first book, *The CEO Imperative*, in 2023.

BRIAN DILL

President & CEO, Carrollton Tomorrow, Carroll County Chamber of Commerce, Carrollton



Just nine months after being named president and CEO of Carroll Tomorrow and the Carroll County Chamber of Commerce in June 2023, Brian Dill was able to announce that Fastenal will build its southeast U.S. distribution and supply chain center in the community, a \$90-million investment that will add 250 jobs.

Dill came to the top position in the chamber and its economic arm, Carroll Tomorrow, with almost two decades of experience in economic development. His experience included chambers

in Rome and Cumming, and he had been with Carroll Tomorrow previously, from 2011 to 2015, as senior vice president of global commerce, when he left to take the position of chief operating officer of the Georgia Department of Community Affairs.

Carroll Tomorrow is a public/private entity, serving as staff for the area's four industrial development authorities and the economic development one-stop shop for the county's seven municipalities.

He chairs the Georgia Public Telecommunications Commission and serves on the Board of Governors for the Georgia Chamber of Commerce.

ALEJANDRO COSS

President & CEO, Latin American Chamber of Commerce, Atlanta



Alejandro Coss leads one of the largest Latino organizations in the state.

"The LACC has been around for 26 years providing connections, educational programs and representation to Latino-owned

businesses in Georgia," he says. "We have expanded our educational programs and business accelerators outside of Metro Atlanta to meet the needs of Latino businesses where they are."

To meet those needs, Coss says, LACC launched a micro-loans program – between \$10,000 to \$25,000 – to minority-owned companies that participate in a business accelerator program or receive technical assistance. The first round funded \$250,000, and the second round in June funded \$150,000, he says.

The nonprofit organization also offers financial coaching, a business accelerator, ServSafe certification in Spanish and more to help its members succeed.

In 2023, Coss received the Ohtli Award, one of the highest honors bestowed by the Mexican government to an individual living outside of that country, for his role in helping grow Latino-owned businesses in Georgia.

Coss is vice-chair of the board of directors of The Institute of Mexican Culture, co-chair of the American Mexican Association Southeast Council, a member of the Hispanic Scholarship Fund's Atlanta Advisory Council and a former board member of Ser Familia.

DORIAN DEBARR

President, Decide DeKalb Development Authority, Decatur



Since becoming president of Decide DeKalb in 2021, Dorian DeBarr has seen many initiatives impact the Metro Atlanta county's economic landscape.

Three recent accomplishments

include the formation of State Opportunity Zones situated within portions of Candler Road and Memorial Drive and the redevelopment of North DeKalb Mall into Lulah Hills, he says. The 73-acre mixed-use destination will feature residential units, retail spaces, a hotel and a trail connection to Emory University.

The third is the Southwest DeKalb Tax Allocation District, which he says is an extraordinary opportunity to bring infrastructure enhancements, new commercial and residential developments and increase the quality of life for residents in the area.

"Decide DeKalb is unwavering in its commitment to fostering an inclusive economic environment where both large corporations and small businesses can thrive," he says.

DeBarr is a DeKalb native. "My dedication to DeKalb County runs deep, both professionally and personally," he says. "Growing up here has given me a unique perspective and an inherent understanding of the community's strengths, challenges and potential."

Decide DeKalb finished 2023 with \$1.6 billion in investments, almost 8,000 new or retained jobs, over 150 business retention visits and the creation of a \$2.5-million small business loan fund.

JIM DURRETT

Executive Director, Buckhead CID; President & CEO, The Buckhead Coalition, Atlanta



For Jim Durrett, 2024 is the year for infrastructure improvements, with ground being broken for projects on Lenox, Wieuca and Piedmont roads.

"We also are raising private support for the Sam Massell Gateway as part of the Lenox Road transformation at Georgia 400. Multiple irons are also in the fire to further advance the HUB 404 park project," he says. The Buckhead CID collaborates with others, including Atlanta Mayor Andre Dickens and his administration, to ensure residents, businesses and visitors in Buckhead enjoy a high quality of life.

Buckhead CID is 25 years old and is "lean and mean," Durrett says. The CID has spent or obligated for spending over \$279 million on projects and programs for the benefit of the community. "We have spent only 5.6% of all funds received from taxes and other sources of funding on administration of our CID," he says.

Durrett also serves as the president and CEO of The Buckhead Coalition, which was created in 1988 to encourage a good quality of life in Buckhead and to continually improve the community as part of the City of Atlanta.

Durrett was the founding executive director of both the Urban Land Institute's Atlanta District Council and the Livable Communities Coalition.

Economic Development

JANA DYKE

President & CEO, Albany-Dougherty Economic Development Commission, Albany



Since Jana Dyke became president and CEO of the Albany-Dougherty Economic Development Commission in 2020, she's helped the community see more than \$560 million in capital investment and over 750 new jobs.

Dyke and the Commission recently announced it is working with the Georgia Department of Agriculture and the Georgia Grown Innovation Center to launch a center in Albany, underscoring a joint commitment to nurturing agricultural innovation and spurring economic growth in the region.

She also serves as the first vice chair for the Southern Economic Development Council, which is a 17-state economic development professional organization; is treasurer of the Georgia Wildlife Federation; a board member of the Commodores College and Career Academy and Flint River Fresh; and community council member for Dougherty County's Communities in Schools program.

Dyke is a Georgia Certified Economic Developer who graduated from the Master Economic Development Program in 2023 and is a graduate of Leadership Georgia.

Originally from Leesburg, Dyke previously served as president and CEO of the Waycross-Ware County Development Authority.

ROBBY FOUNTAIN

Board Chair, Macon-Bibb County Industrial Authority, Macon



Born and raised in Macon, Robby Fountain serves as chairman of the board of the Macon-Bibb County Industrial Authority (MBCIA). He's been involved with the organization since he joined the board in 2006 before first being elected chair in 2008, then again in 2017 after serving as vice chair for seven years.

Fountain has led the MBCIA during a period of unprecedented growth and economic development in Macon. In addition, he was instrumental in developing and implementing the PILOT program, a tax incentive solution that assists companies

considering relocating to Macon-Bibb or expanding their existing facilities.

Under his guidance, the MBCIA became an Accredited Economic Development Organization, one of fewer than 100 in the U.S. The accreditation is overseen by the International Economic Development Council and is illustrative of the credibility and accountability of the organization to its stakeholders.

Outside of his duties as chair, Fountain owns and manages a real estate development and property management company. He also sits on the board of the Greater Macon Chamber of Commerce and the Macon Economic Development Commission.

TIM J. EVANS

Senior Vice President of Economic Development, Greater Hall Chamber of Commerce, Gainesville



Tim Evans is senior vice president of economic development for the Greater Hall Chamber of Commerce and executive director of the Gainesville-Hall Economic Development Council. Since 2005,

he's managed business recruitment, expansions and retention efforts by marketing and representing Gainesville-Hall County to key business decision makers in the U.S. and internationally.

Evans has helped develop numerous commercial and industrial sites and served as the Gainesville and Hall County Development Authority's project manager for several business park developments. He actively engages with community retail and downtown developments with the support of business leaders, real estate professionals and elected officials. "We're achieving new heights in the redevelopment of our downtowns in Hall County," he says.

Evans worked with the Georgia Department of Economic Development for 11 years. He is a Certified Economic Developer from the International Economic Development Council. In 2021, he was recognized by his peers in Georgia economic development with the Rip Wiley Award for Professional Excellence.

JOSH FENN

Executive Director, Henry County Development Authority, McDonough



Josh Fenn says it's been another record-setting year in investment attraction for the HCDA. "We have achieved that in three of the past four years," he says.

Fenn has led the HCDA since late 2019. Henry County is one of the leading communities for

commerce in the Metro Atlanta region along the I-75 corridor. In his tenure, HCDA has located 7,564 jobs and over \$2 billion in investments through 49 new or expansion projects.

"We are the most effective economic development organization in Metro South," Fenn says. Noting they are one of the smallest metro county teams, he says, their performance numbers show their effectiveness.

"I believe more in productivity than popularity. To some that is not ideal nor the easy way, but at the end of the game the most productive team only needs to point at the scoreboard and smile," he says.

Fenn was recognized by Consultant Connect as one of America's Top 50 Economic Developers in 2021. He is active in many professional organizations including the Southern Economic Development Council and received the Chairman's Award in 2015. At presstime, Fenn announced he has joined data center company STACK Americas in Atlanta as director of public affairs.

KEVIN GREEN

President & CEO, Midtown Alliance, Atlanta



"We are more than 50 creative professionals who wake up every day to create an exceptional urban experience in Midtown in every dimension," says Kevin Green, who joined the Midtown Alliance in 2011.

Green has been an Atlanta resident for more than 30 years and has been working for much of that time to advance livability and economic opportunity in the region. He was previously executive director of The Clean Air Campaign and vice president of environmental affairs with the Metro Atlanta Chamber.

With almost \$9 billion of new real estate development projects delivered since 2018 in

just 1.2 square miles, Midtown Atlanta is among the fastest-growing urban districts in the country. Midtown Alliance works to ensure the area's success through comprehensive urban planning, delivering more than \$20 million in public improvement projects in 2024 and coordinating more than 100 public events annually. This adds up to walkable streets and accessible transportation options, encouraging a vibrant mix of street-level activities, public spaces, retail and restaurants.

"You can summarize our entire workplan in four words: 'Happy People on Foot,'" says Green. "If we get that critical piece right, the rest follows."



RENEW THE DISTRICT

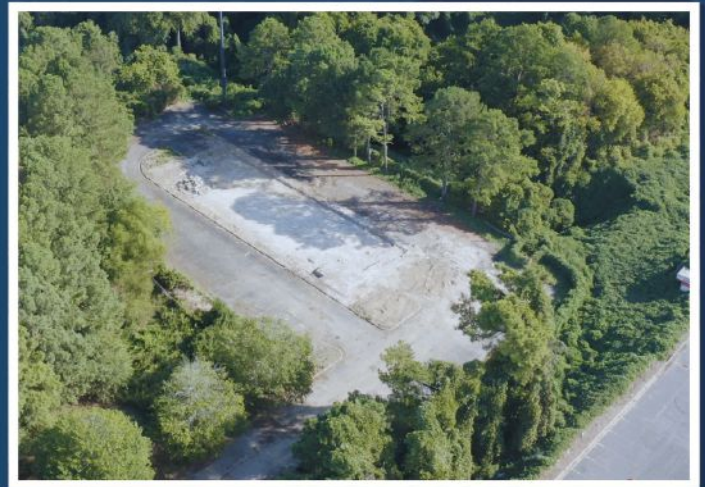
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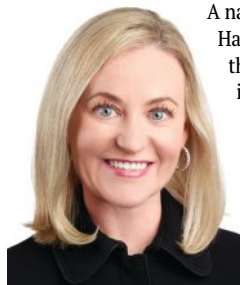
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Economic Development

ANN HANLON

Executive Director, Perimeter CIDs, Dunwoody



A native of Waycross, Ann Hanlon has spent more than 20 years in the CID industry in Metro Atlanta. She has earned a reputation for her steady hand in managing multi-million-dollar projects in the largest business district in the state.

The CIDs are tasked with shepherding needed transportation and infrastructure projects within the district by implementing a small additional property tax on commercial space. Hanlon collaborates with Fulton and DeKalb counties, the cities of Brookhaven, Dunwoody and Sandy Springs and with Fortune 500 corporations like UPS, State Farm, Cox Enterprises and IHG to keep the market competitive and ensure that it continues to be an economic engine for Fulton and DeKalb counties.

The CIDs have an annual operating budget of more than \$10 million. “Our founders in 1999 had the same mission as we do today, and our goal is crystal clear – for our market to be the safest, cleanest, most easily accessible business district in the Southeastern U.S.,” Hanlon says.

Hanlon serves on the board of directors for the Georgia Regional Transportation Authority, Decide DeKalb Development Authority, the Greater North Fulton Chamber of Commerce, Discover Dunwoody and the National Charity League.

JOSEPH HENNING

President & CEO, Henry County Chamber of Commerce, McDonough



Since 2019, Joseph Henning has served as president and CEO of the Henry County Chamber of Commerce, which received the Association of Chamber of Commerce Executives’ National Chamber of the Year award in 2022. The recognition reflects the Chamber’s emphasis on collaboration.

“We are grateful for the many partners we have to be able to support our county’s economic development,” he says. “We served more than 350 businesses in 2023 with our partners, and we are on target to exceed that number this year.”

Last year, the Chamber launched its Business Resource Center for training and entrepreneur support. Since it opened, it’s already provided more than 600 hours of professional development and growth support. Other initiatives include a Women’s EmPOWERment Summit, an Artist Consortium, an Emerging Business Leaders program and its inaugural DEI Summit.

Henning moved to Georgia from Illinois, where he served as president and CEO of the Aurora Regional Chamber of Commerce for 14 years.

“I truly feel at home in Henry County,” he says. “I appreciate the opportunities we all have available in Georgia.”

Henning supports and serves on the boards of several organizations that impact equity, inclusion and mental health, among others.

LARRY HANSON

Executive Director & CEO, Georgia Municipal Association, Atlanta



Founded in 1933, the Georgia Municipal Association (GMA) provides legislative advocacy, education and training, retirement and insurance programs and technical consulting services to its members – all 536 cities in Georgia –

that help municipal governments become more innovative, effective and responsive. The association is a member-driven organization focused on meeting the needs of cities and city officials.

GMA provides programs and services aimed at helping cities reach their full potential. For example, GMA’s non-profit Georgia Cities Foundation has provided low-interest loans for more than 200 downtown development projects totaling more than \$33 million. These loans have resulted in more than \$210 million in private investment in downtowns all across the state.

Larry Hanson is passionate about discussing the value of cities to the state’s economy. “Cities make up only 9% of the state’s land area, yet 69% of the state’s jobs and 66% of commercial property is located in cities and 44% of the state’s population lives in cities,” he says. “Cities are economic engines that combine access to jobs, education and services with parks, public gathering facilities, vibrant downtowns and other amenities that create a sense of place and a high quality of life.”

DEBBIE HARPER

President, Newton County Chamber, Covington



Debbie Harper started with the Newton Chamber in 2013 as the membership director and became president in 2020. Under her leadership, the Chamber’s membership has grown by 35%.

Before joining the Chamber, Debbie had a successful 20-year career as a

real estate agent, which prepared her well for her current role. She now plays a key part in welcoming companies and individuals to Covington/Newton County.

The Newton Chamber recently developed a strategic plan to position itself as a catalyst, champion, advocate and influencer for one of the fastest-growing communities east of Atlanta.

In addition to her Chamber duties, Debbie is involved in numerous community organizations. She serves on the Newton County Industrial Development Authority, Newton County Tomorrow as chairman, Leadership Newton County Committee, Newton College & Career Academy Advisory Board, Newton Education Foundation and the Newton County Drug Free Community Coalition.

CONNIE HENSLER

President & CEO, LaGrange-Troup County Chamber of Commerce, LaGrange



Connie Hensler joined the LaGrange-Troup County Chamber of Commerce as president and CEO in 2020. Since 1911, the LaGrange-Troup County Chamber has been an integral part of the community. The Chamber has been very intentional in continuing to serve as a voice, a resource and a connector for its members.

“Over the past few years, we have been deliberate in evaluating our programs and events to elevate our members’ experiences,” says Hensler. “As our membership continues to flourish, it is important to celebrate their successes and recognize their many contributions to our community. To that end, we rebranded our Annual Meeting to a Chairman’s Gala and launched a Valor Awards Dinner for our first responders. Both events have exceeded our expectations.”

Hensler says the Chamber continues to provide educational opportunities for personal and professional growth and development through programs such as Leadership Troup and the Minority Business Accelerator Program. “We believe that by fostering an engaged and connected Chamber community, we can continue to deliver value to all members, both small and large,” she says.

Hensler is also a member of the Rotary Club of LaGrange, where she currently serves as its president.

MICHAEL HIGHTOWER

Founder & Managing Partner, The Collaborative Firm, Atlanta



The Collaborative Firm has been providing planning, program management, community engagement and development services to both the public and private sectors since 2001. Its more than 200 clients include well-known entities like MARTA, the Georgia Department of Transportation, the city of College Park and the Atlanta BeltLine.

“One of the most rewarding aspects of the work is contributing to the continued growth of Metro Atlanta and now in Savannah,” says Michael Hightower. The Firm has had an office there for over a year.

Hightower’s goal is to continue to add strong professionals within his company’s three main areas: transit planning, land-use planning and community engagement.

In 2003, the Firm founded the South Metro Development Outlook Conference, an annual event that brings together industry leaders, stakeholders and visionaries to explore the latest trends and opportunities in the south Metro Atlanta region. This year, more than 600 people attended.

Hightower previously was the first Black city council member for College Park and served more than 14 years as a Fulton County Commissioner. He is a former president of the National Association of Counties, which consists of over 3,000 counties throughout the nation. It concentrated on welfare reform, affordable housing and sustainable communities.

MATHEW HILL

Executive Director, Brunswick Downtown Development Authority, Brunswick



Mathew Hill sees good things on the horizon for Brunswick. Residential construction is up, and more businesses are opening downtown.

The Brunswick DDA is tasked with promoting economic growth and community activities to bring people downtown and to preserve and enhance the character of this port city of 15,000 people.

“It’s rewarding for someone to come in and talk about their dream business and then help make it a success,” says Hill. “I want to secure downtown as it continues to thrive and look forward to working on new sections of town that we are renovating.”

That includes revitalizing the Norwich Street district along Old Highway 17 just north of the historic downtown. Based on a 2018 Congress for the New Urbanism Legacy Project study and public input, plans are in the works for streetscape improvements, more residences and new businesses opening along the two miles of the city’s historic commercial corridor. “It’s coming back,” he says. “We are making sure it becomes what it wants to be.”

Hill has served on the Georgia Downton Association Board of Directors since his election in 2017, serving as president in 2021. He’s been executive director of the Brunswick DDA since 2006.

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Economic Development

BÁRBARA RIVERA HOLMES

President & CEO, Albany Area Chamber of Commerce, Albany



The Albany Area Chamber of Commerce invests in programs that build and support a prosperous economy, develop talent and connect businesses with each other throughout the region. Bárbara

Rivera Holmes has led the chamber since 2015 and is also CEO of the Albany Area Chamber Foundation, which leads economic initiatives that extend beyond the business community's normal reach.

"The work that we do I find extremely rewarding," she says. "We design a path for the business community and build for the future."

The Chamber's multi-year strategy includes the region's first business-led focus to leverage the area's diversity as a strength. In 2023, the Chamber's foundation released the Albany-Dougherty County Works! Talent Strategy 2.0 aimed at building a modern, adaptive workforce.

"The Foundation leads the community's comprehensive workforce strategy, implementing youth talent development initiatives, entrepreneurial programs and adult workforce programs that upskill, reskill and leverage opportunity populations," she says.

Holmes is a 2023 graduate of the U.S. Chamber Foundation's Institute for Organizational Management and is one of the Georgia Hispanic Chamber's 2022 Most Influential Latinos.

ERIC JOHNSON

Project Director, Savannah Harbor-Interstate 16 Corridor JDA, Savannah



As project director for the Savannah Harbor-Interstate 16 Corridor Joint Development Authority (Savannah JDA), Eric Johnson serves as the project director of the new Hyundai Motor Group Metaplant America in Bryan County. He works on-site for the Savannah JDA, representing the efforts of Bryan, Bulloch, Chatham and Effingham counties and Georgia.

The Savannah JDA had one purpose – to recruit an original equipment manufacturer to the Megasite, he says. "Four counties and

various state agencies created a remarkable relationship led by an amazing group of leaders to make it happen," he says. "Our biggest accomplishment was delivering the plant's site ahead of schedule. This allowed the Hyundai team to accelerate their production by three months."

Johnson practiced architecture in Savannah for over 40 years. He also served 17 years in the Georgia legislature, where he rose to be President Pro Tem of the State Senate.

"My architectural, engineering and political careers all came together for this capstone of my life," he says. "I can't wait for the first car to roll off the line."

Johnson serves on the Board of Directors for the Georgia Department of Economic Development and the Effingham County Industrial Development Authority.

SHANNON W. JAMES SR.

President & CEO, Aerotropolis Atlanta Alliance, Atlanta



In 2018, AeroATL leadership unanimously elected Shannon James as chair of the board of directors and later to his current role. He leads the nonprofit mission to serve as a catalyst for regional economic competitiveness for the area

surrounding Hartsfield-Jackson Atlanta International Airport.

Under James' leadership, the organization has created the Aerotropolis Foundation and the Aerotropolis Committee for a Stronger Region, which passed the first regional M.O.S.T. Referendum in Georgia history for Aero cities

College Park, East Point and Hapeville in 2022. It's also working to make the AeroATL Greenway a reality, and its AeroATL Community Development Collective convenes local community development directors, city planners and others in the South Fulton and Clayton County communities to collaborate on inclusive regional planning for transportation, housing and creative placemaking.

James currently serves as secretary for the Airport West Community Improvement District (CID) and is an advisory board member for Clayton State University along with serving on the Fulton County Schools Education Foundation board. In 2022, James was recognized as the Harley Langdale College of Business Most Distinguished Alumna by Valdosta State University.

TOMMY JENNINGS

President & CEO, Barrow County Chamber of Commerce, Winder



"The Barrow Chamber will only succeed when its member-businesses succeed," says Tommy Jennings, who has served as head of the Barrow County Chamber since 2006. "Whatever the Chamber can do to create prosperity only

grows that prosperity throughout the area." The Barrow Chamber recently completed a total rebranding process, including word and color research, logo design, taglines, updated website and coordination with local governments.

"I am here to encourage, support and lift others up," Jennings says of his role. "It's a responsibility I take seriously."

He has served as chair of the Georgia Association of Chamber of Commerce Executives, treasurer of the Lanier Technical College Foundation, chair of the Board of Trustees of Barrow Regional Medical Center, Northeast Georgia Regional Commission, and past chair of the Barrow Community Foundation.

The Winder native was formerly president and CEO of Barrow Manufacturing Company, a family-owned apparel manufacturing company in business for 75 years.

Jennings has completed the U.S. Chamber's Institute of Organization Management and the Georgia Tech Development Course. He is also a Certified Georgia Chamber of Commerce Executive.

STACEY KEY

President & CEO, Georgia Minority Supplier Development Council, Atlanta



With Stacey Key at the helm, the Georgia Minority Supplier Development Council has become a top-performing organization within the National Minority Supplier Development Council. GMSDC has received community awards for its efforts to create jobs and drive economic growth.

"We are focused on empowering small and minority businesses to compete and excel in corporate supply chains," Key says. The GMSDC serves over 1,200 Minority Business Enterprises and over 400 corporate members.

"As we approach our 50th-year anniversary, we're committed to maintaining and fostering this growth for years to come," Key says.

Key has over 25 years of experience driving sales, marketing, operations and customer service at global brands like IBM, AT&T, Schlumberger and Samsung Telecommunications, plus over 15 years leading a successful family business.

"I am a strong advocate for mentorship and effective leadership. I often say that 'leadership matters,' especially in small businesses," Key says. "Great leadership is the foundation for strong and sustainable companies. Through mentorship, I believe businesses can unlock their full potential and achieve lasting success."

She serves on numerous boards of directors, including the Atlanta Convention and Visitors Bureau, Georgia Department of Transportation, Georgia Chamber of Commerce and Midtown Alliance.

KATIE KIRKPATRICK

President & CEO, Metro Atlanta Chamber, Atlanta



Katie Kirkpatrick leads the 165-year-old Metro Atlanta Chamber (MAC), which represents businesses, colleges, universities and nonprofits across the 29-county Metro Atlanta regions – the nation’s eighth-largest market. MAC works to attract and retain business, ensure a business-friendly climate through public policy efforts and market the region as a place to live, work and play.

“Partnering with Metro Atlanta’s business leadership to unleash Atlanta’s ambition is most rewarding,” she says. “Every day, I get to witness the impact of MAC’s catalytic initiatives across our

region, initiatives like ATL Action for Racial Equity, our multi-year, multi-step effort leveraging the power of the region’s business community to advance racial equity through collective impact.”

MAC launched a new campaign, Atlanta – Where You Belong, this past spring to build on the city’s momentum as a global center for innovation and opportunity while attracting top-tier talent to the city.

Kirkpatrick currently serves on the GRACE Commission to end human trafficking in the State of Georgia, is a former vice-chair for the Metropolitan North Georgia Water Planning District and a past board chair for the Institute for Georgia Environmental Leadership. She is a registered professional engineer in several states and an alumna of Leadership Atlanta.

ELOISA KLEMENTICH

President & CEO, Invest Atlanta, Atlanta



Eloisa Klementich leads Atlanta’s official economic development authority, which aims to strengthen the city’s economy and global competitiveness through strategic initiatives to increase equity and prosperity for all Atlantans. Its programs focus on development and fostering public/private partnerships to create jobs, grow the economy, revitalize neighborhoods, attract investment, spur innovation and encourage entrepreneurship. That’s a tall order, but one that Klementich relishes.

“You have to love the work because it is not easy,” says Klementich. “It is most rewarding to get thank you notes from people who we have helped, such as small businesses that have been able to get loans from us. It’s an honor to serve individuals and make a difference rather than just passing paper from one to another.”

During her tenure, Invest Atlanta has facilitated the creation of 7,824 affordable housing units, 47,803 new full-time jobs, supported \$7.1 million in small-business funding and \$8 million in new capital investment. These and other results have made a \$14.3-billion impact on the city.

Klementich has received numerous recognitions, including the Atlanta Business League’s 2021 Catalyst Award for her efforts to enhance opportunities for minority-owned businesses. She was named one of North America’s Top 50 Economic Developers of 2024 by Consultant Connect and one of the 50 Most Influential Latinos in Georgia by the Georgia Hispanic Chamber in 2022.



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Economic Development

ROZ LEWIS

President & CEO, Greater Women's Business Council, Atlanta



Roz Lewis says it's an exciting time as the Greater Women's Business Council opens its first co-working space in the Bank of America Plaza. The Atlanta location is 4,400 square feet "of collaboration, networking and matchmaking with

corporate and government entities and women businesses who share some of the same growth challenges," she says.

The membership fee-based environment provides hotdesking, conference rooms, "Brain Date" room for ideation and a day rental office, she says.

The Greater Women's Business Council is a nonprofit dedicated to women-owned businesses and is home to a national certification from the Women's Business Enterprise National Council. "We provide education, resources and innovative networking opportunities to accelerate business," Lewis says. "We believe the future is building a stronger community of female founders."

She leads GWBC's region of more than 1,200 certified women businesses in the states of Georgia, North Carolina and South Carolina.

"As I look back over my career experiences, these moments in time shaped my thinking and give me a chance every day to achieve the goal of becoming a better person and leader," Lewis says.

MISTI MARTIN

President & CEO, Cherokee Office of Economic Development, Woodstock



Misti Martin's visionary leadership has been instrumental in securing land for development that includes mixed-use, office spaces, advance manufacturing, data centers and film studios. She is a staunch advocate of supporting businesses and industries in the community, and she goes above and beyond to ensure their success.

"Our whole team enjoys what we do, as we see that it has lasting impact," Martin says.

She gives an example of what happens when you recruit a company to the county. It's not just about the good, high-paying jobs. It's a ripple effect - when people don't have to leave the county for those jobs, they can then reduce their long commutes and spend more time with their loved ones. "To help make a genuine impact like that is very fulfilling."

Its Cherokee By Choice 2.0 strategic plan, launched in 2022, continues to focus on talent attraction and retention, support entrepreneurs and startups, and catalyzing critically needed product, infrastructure and quality of place amenities.

The Cherokee County School District recognized Martin with its 2023 Superintendent's Game Changer Award for Instructional Advocacy, a testament to the office's dedication in creating impactful opportunities and resources for educational growth and success. She began her career at age 17 with a job with the Cherokee County Chamber of Commerce.

VERÓNICA MALDONADO-TORRES

President & CEO, Georgia Hispanic Chamber of Commerce, Atlanta



Verónica Maldonado-Torres joined the GHCC in 2021, and since that time has worked within the Georgia business community to ensure a prominent role in Georgia's success narrative.

Since then, the Chamber has expanded to serve more businesses throughout the state, including a grant announced in early 2023 that awards \$5,000 to small businesses with less than five full-time employees, administered in partnership with the U.S. Hispanic Chamber of Commerce. Last summer, the organization was awarded \$500,000 in federal funds to expand the support services of its Hispanic Business Center to areas in distress in both rural cities and the coastal region.

Maldonado-Torres has more than 10 years of experience as an advocate for both small business and supplier diversity. Before joining the Chamber, she directed the expansion of over 150 companies across a variety of industries with revenues from \$1 million to \$100 million as the program director for the Georgia Mentor Protégé Connection.

She is a board member for the American Heart Association and is a 2016 graduate of Leadership DeKalb.

SANTIAGO MARQUEZ

CEO, Latin American Association, Atlanta



Last year, the Latin American Association (LAA) unveiled a new strategic plan that stands on three pillars: family and household stability, workforce development, and women's entrepreneurship, with an aim to create self-sufficiency and

generational economic mobility.

The organization is conducting a feasibility study to help launch a new growth campaign in an effort to determine "what LAA will be in the future," says Santiago Marquez, who was named its CEO in 2020. "We are very focused on how LAA will meet the needs in this growing Latino community, which is about 11% of the Metro Atlanta population. It's expected to grow to about 21% in the next 20-25 years. We're particularly focused on workforce concerns."

LAA has a second outreach center at the Mack Gaston Community Center in Dalton. The partnership led to the creation of the Dalton/Whitfield Latino Leadership Institute in collaboration with UGA's J.W. Fanning Institute for Leadership Development, he says.

Marquez received the Titan 100 C-Level award as a leader in non-profits this year and was honored with the Nathaniel Mosby Humanitarian Award during DeKalb County's Martin Luther King, Jr. Day Celebration in 2023. He came to the U.S. with his family from Cuba when he was just one year old.

NICK MASINO

President & CEO, Gwinnett Chamber of Commerce, Duluth



Nick Masino is taking his reputation for strong leadership and making an impact in both Gwinnett communities and county economic redevelopment to the state level. In 2023, Gov. Brian Kemp swore him in to serve on the Georgia Board of Economic Development, where he is the 7th Congressional District representative.

In his role as president and CEO of the Gwinnett Chamber and as Partnership Gwinnett's former chief economic

development officer, Masino executes the county's economic development strategy. During his tenure, there have been approximately 380 company expansions or relocations, translating to more than 32,000 new jobs and \$5.2 billion in private capital investment.

He has also helped shepherd in the most diverse board of directors in Gwinnett Chamber history, reinvigorated the organization's public policy focus, implemented a new strategic plan and is currently overseeing a massive renovation to Georgia's largest chamber facility. He also helped the Chamber secure its first-ever five-star accreditation rating from the U.S. Chamber of Commerce in 2022.

Masino also serves on the Council for Quality Growth Board, the Regional Business Coalition of Metro Atlanta, the Georgia Chamber and The Water Tower global innovation hub.

SHARON MASON

President & CEO, Cobb Chamber, Marietta



SelectCobb, a Cobb Chamber initiative that attracts top-tier enterprises and talent, is marking the 12th anniversary of its launch with impressive numbers: the addition of 46,000-plus high-quality jobs and \$6.3 billion in new private investment.

The county is also driving existing industry expansion and workforce through Cobb Workforce Partnership.

“In partnership with Cobb County government, we administered \$4.5 million to 200 daycares in Cobb County and supported WorkSource Cobb’s workforce and entrepreneurship center launch in Mableton,” says Sharon Mason as an example of the impact of that group.

Economic growth is robust elsewhere in the county. The Battery Atlanta complex and Truist Park, home of the Atlanta Braves, drove more than 10.3 million visitors and \$17 million to the state’s tax revenue in 2023.

“We are also seeing significant advocacy priorities come to fruition, such as the delivery of the C130Js Super Hercules from Lockheed to the Georgia National Guard,” adds Mason.

Mason has 22-plus years of chamber and non-profit leadership experience and became Chamber president and CEO in 2018. She serves on many boards, including GRTA, the Council for Quality Growth and the Regional Business Coalition.

GERALD MCDOWELL

Executive Director, ATL Airport CIDs, Atlanta



Gerald McDowell is overseeing a seven-year collaboration between MARTA and the ATL Airport Community Improvement Districts to launch a groundbreaking program called Automated Transit Network (ATN) in and around Hartsfield-Jackson Atlanta International Airport. ATN will provide supplemental transportation services for the airport area for airport workers and others employed throughout the CIDs. It is launching with two mobility service pilot projects – Microtransit this fall and Personal Rapid Transit (PRT) in fall 2025.

Microtransit will allow overnight shift workers to access transit options after MARTA’s operating hours, and PRT will operate single small vehicles serving up to six passengers. “We’re exploring emerging mobility solutions to identify alternative mobility solutions for the airport area,” says McDowell.

The project epitomizes McDowell’s “embrace-the-impossible” mindset he says fuels his success and drives his mission to craft resilient, secure and dynamic communities in South Metro Atlanta.

McDowell manages a budget exceeding \$3.7 million. Under his stewardship, the AACIDs have won more than \$100 million in grants, project funding and accolades, a testament to McDowell’s unwavering commitment to progress and prosperity. The ATL Airport Community Improvement Districts include the former Airport West CID and the Airport South CID.

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Economic Development

SCOTT MCMURRAY

Deputy Commissioner, Georgia Quick Start, Atlanta



In the past year, Georgia Quick Start brought online five new training facilities dedicated to supporting Georgia's booming "clean tech" industries, including solar modules, lithium-ion batteries

and electric vehicle manufacturing. To meet the unprecedented challenges of Georgia's largest-ever economic development project – Hyundai's EV plant in Bryan County and nearly a dozen suppliers and affiliates – Quick Start has begun construction on two new training facilities in the greater Savannah area to help prepare workers for the projected 10,000-plus jobs.

A division of the Technical College System of Georgia, Quick Start offers customized training at no cost for qualified companies creating jobs in Georgia. It has won numerous awards and accolades, including being named the No. 1 workforce training program in the U.S. for 14 years straight, according to *Area Development* magazine. It's often cited as one of the "deciding factors" in company decisions to choose Georgia for their operations, including companies such as Kia Georgia, King's Hawaiian, Starbucks, Hyundai Motor Group and more.

Scott McMurray spent 17 years with the Georgia Department of Economic Development before being named deputy commissioner in 2022. He serves on the board of directors of the Georgia Foreign Trade Zone and the Japan-America Society of Georgia.

JERALD MITCHELL

President & CEO, Greater Columbus Chamber of Commerce, Columbus



Jerald Mitchell's passion for redevelopment is paying huge dividends for Georgia's second largest city. Late last year, Pratt & Whitney broke ground on an 81,000-square-foot addition to its Columbus Engine Center that will create nearly 400 new jobs and bring \$206 million in investment to Muscogee County. This year, the city is finalizing plans to welcome the Braves AA affiliate to South Columbus in 2025, a move that will bring the Braves' only out-of-state minor league

affiliate back to Georgia and attract housing, investment and tourism.

Mitchell's expertise in economic development, placemaking, infrastructure, technology and business development provide the foundation for his successful initiatives and service to various organizations, not just in Columbus but statewide. He currently serves, for example, as chairman of Leadership Georgia. In 2023, Gov. Brian Kemp also appointed him to the Board of Community Affairs.

Mitchell has worked in various economic development roles for more than 18 years, notably as the former vice president of economic development at the Atlanta BeltLine, one of the country's largest infrastructure projects.

KIM MENEFFEE

Executive Director, Cumberland CID and One Cumberland, Atlanta



Kim Menefee serves as the executive director for the Cumberland Community Improvement District (CID) and the newly established 501(c)(3), One Cumberland. She chartered the development of One

Cumberland to bolster the work of the CID by broadening its reach, funding and impact.

Menefee, who joined the state's first CID in 2019, leads efforts to partner with commercial property owners, government officials and stakeholders to advance key transportation and infrastructure projects that enhance the Cumberland community.

She is pioneering the CID's newest and most innovative project, the Cumberland Sweep. The Sweep will feature a three-mile multimodal corridor with dedicated walking and biking lanes and an autonomous (AV) shuttle system, making travel around the district more efficient and effective. Menefee championed one of the first AV shuttle pilot programs in Georgia, the Cumberland Hopper, a successful initiative that captivated thousands of riders and has positioned the CID as a leader in shared autonomous mobility.

As Atlanta's fifth-largest employment center and Cobb County's premier business district, the CID has a \$26.6-billion annual economic impact on Georgia's economy. Cumberland continues to evolve into a bustling community and entertainment district and will host millions for the 2025 MLB All-Star Game.

MAGGIE MILNER

President & CEO, Eatonton-Putnam Chamber of Commerce, Eatonton



Maggie Milner says the Eatonton-Putnam Chamber of Commerce is very adaptable. "We have gone through a full transformation over the past few years and serve a growing and diverse

community, which gives us the opportunity to think creatively and work with so many incredibly talented people," she says.

A tourism marketing piece for Visit Eatonton, *Timeless 1969*, was a final nominee for the 2024 Southeast EMMY awards. "This is a collaborative effort with a local production studio and the community to showcase the enduring connection between the past and present, highlighting the value that 'Love is Timeless' and so is our community," she says.

Milner is a certified nonprofit professional with the Nonprofit Leadership Alliance.

"I come from a profoundly matriarchal family and have had many phenomenal women as mentors in my life," Milner says. "All have taught through action and words the importance of humbleness, carrying yourself with grace and learning to adapt in an ever-changing world."

Before she joined the chamber in 2021, Milner was development director for The Plaza Arts Center. While there, she became involved with the Eatonton-Putnam Chamber and the community.

RYAN MOORE

President & CEO, Golden Isles Development Authority, Brunswick



Ryan Moore is at the heart of the thriving Georgia Coast, both geographically and figuratively. With investments from the Georgia Ports Authority and local real estate development, the Golden Isles are experiencing unprecedented growth. Industrial park expansions and investments at community interstate interchanges are on the rise. In fiscal year 2023, the region welcomed 43 new projects with a potential value of \$22 billion in new, direct capital investment and more than 20,000 jobs.

Under Moore's leadership and in collaboration with county officials, the Glynn County Industrial Development Authority (GIDA) acquired the 1,400-acre Georgia Breakbulk Logistics Park site, a rail-served park just seven miles from the Georgia Ports Authority's Colonel's Island facility. And in January, a new Buc-ee's travel center broke ground in Glynn County with an anticipated opening June 2025. It'll employ more than 200 people and serve some 15,000 cars a day.

Before assuming his role at GIDA, Moore led the Athens-Clarke County Economic Development Department and served as a project manager for the Effingham County Industrial Development Authority.

ALEX MORRISON

Executive Director, Macon-Bibb County Urban Development Authority, Macon



Alex Morrison is a dedicated leader in urban development, serving as the executive director of the Urban Development Authority (UDA) in Macon-Bibb County since May 2011. He oversees significant economic development projects, including the Macon Action Plan and the Mill Hill East Macon Arts Village.

“It has been a phenomenal year in Macon, from opening the world’s largest pickleball facility and Georgia’s newest music attraction to ushering in a new era with a national park. The key to all of these projects has been a commitment to planning and

focusing on our people,” he says. “We are already planning for the next phase with a new XL version of the Macon Action Plan and work on the gateway to Ocmulgee. 2024 is the year we take Macon to the next level.”

Since July 2022, he has also served as the director of planning and public spaces, leading strategic initiatives such as the Atrium Health Amphitheater and the Macon Mall redevelopment.

Morrison began his career as a business and economic development specialist and Main Street Program manager for the City of Macon. There, he established the Main Street Program, Opportunity Zones and the Mulberry Street Farmer’s Market.

He is involved with numerous organizations, serving as chair or a member for groups like the Ocmulgee National Park Review and Preserve Initiative, Main Street Macon, Bragg Jam, Bike Walk Macon and the Connections Art Festival.

DAVID NUCKOLLS

Executive Director, Georgia Center of Innovation, Atlanta



Since 2020, David Nuckolls has overseen six statewide industry teams as head of the Georgia Center of Innovation, part of the Georgia Department of Economic Development, driving business growth through expert advice and resource navigation.

Under his leadership, the Center added AgTech and expanded the IT team to include Creative Technology, consolidating the former Centers of Innovation to broaden support for diverse businesses.

In June of 2023, he played a pivotal role in hosting the second annual Georgia AgTech Summit at the Robert F. Hatcher Sr. Conference Center on the campus of Middle Georgia State University. The summit brought together over 150 attendees, including leaders from industry, academia and government, to explore advancements in integrated precision agriculture, controlled environment agriculture and food processing technology.

Nuckolls is involved with Georgia Southern University’s Corporate Advisory Council and the Georgia Tech K-12 InVenture Challenge Advisory Committee. In 2023, he was appointed to the Board of Directors for the Georgia Foundation for Public Education and advises the Georgia FLEX entrepreneurship program. He is a 2014 graduate of the Georgia Academy for Economic Development and a 2019 Graduate of the Zell Miller Leadership Institute.

Business is booming along the Georgia coast! In Brunswick and the Golden Isles, ~\$180 million in capital investments were solidified over the last year. Thank you to the Georgia 500 recipients from our Golden Isles community for helping us drive unprecedented growth in our area.

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Mathew Hill
Executive Director
Brunswick Downtown Development Authority



Ryan Moore
President & CEO
Golden Isles Development Authority



Ralph C. Staffins, III
President & CEO
Brunswick Golden Isles Chamber of Commerce



Lonnie Roberts
President
Coastal Pines Technical College

Economic Development

MARIA “MAYTE” PECK

President, SheLends Consulting, Atlanta



Mayte Peck has dedicated the last 15 years of her career to supporting wealth-building through entrepreneurship. As a longtime consultant and business owner, she understands the needs and

barriers of underserved and underrepresented communities when starting and growing businesses. She believes it is her responsibility to provide the tools necessary to ensure that minority businesses realize their full economic potential.

Peck impacts her field through her company, SheLends Consulting, by empowering economic development organizations with capacity-building and tailored consulting services. Her list of clients includes Emory University’s Start:ME program, the University of Georgia Small Business Development Center’s SSBCI program, the National Association for Latino Asset Builders in Texas and Centro Community Partners in Oakland, California.

Peck volunteers her time and expertise by serving as vice chair of Prospera Regional Board, as a board member of the Decatur and Avondale Children’s Choir and as a co-chair of the Leadership Development Work Group of the Latinx Alliance. She is a former chair of the Latino Community Fund of Georgia.

In 2018, she was a contributor to the first-ever 2018 Georgia Latino Entrepreneurship Study.

GILDA “GIGI” PEDRAZA

Founder & Executive Director, Latino Community Fund, Decatur



The Latino Community Fund Georgia (LCF Georgia) is dedicated to advancing democracy, protecting Latinx and immigrant communities and expanding economic opportunities in

Georgia. Under Gigi Pedraza’s leadership, LCF Georgia has reinvested \$12 million into programs and grants for its 40 member organizations.

This year, LCF Georgia held its second Civic Participation Fellowship Program, which equipped 21 fellows with the essential skills and knowledge in community organizing, civic leadership and voter engagement to empower them to be community-driven leaders dedicated to fostering positive change.

As a prominent voice for Latinos and immigrants in the region, Pedraza frequently speaks at conferences on democracy, diversity and the evolving demographics of the South.

She has also received numerous awards, including the 2023 Caminar Latino Journey Award, the 2022 MLK Community Service Award from Emory University, and recognition from the Georgia Hispanic Construction Association and the Latin American Chamber of Commerce. Additionally, she has been named in the Atlanta 500 Most Powerful Leaders and inducted into the Hall of Fame for influential Latino leaders in Georgia.

GIL PRADO

Executive Director, Fulton Industrial Boulevard CID, Atlanta



Since 2012, Gil Prado has managed the Fulton Industrial CID and led the redevelopment of the 12-mile-long Fulton Industrial District, the largest industrial corridor in the eastern U.S.

In 2022, Prado was named Economic Developer

of the Year at the South Metro Development Outlook Conference.

His recent accomplishments include the 2022 completion of the Fulton Industrial freight cluster plan and securing \$3.56 million in federal funds from the Atlanta Regional Commission for the Donald Lee Hollowell Parkway and Fulton Industrial Boulevard intersection-improvement project.

“The Fulton Industrial District is experiencing a renaissance fueled by unprecedented demand for industrial real estate to meet consumer and industry needs for last-mile storage, delivery and production,” Prado says. “This success is the result of 12 years of coordinated efforts focusing on public safety, beautification, transportation infrastructure and economic development.”

He notes that with more transportation infrastructure funding and Fulton County’s \$100-million Renew the District investment plan, “we anticipate continued growth and record investments.”

CHRIS PUMPHREY

President, Elevate Douglas Economic Partnership, Douglasville



Chris Pumphrey understands the importance of building community. As the president of Elevate Douglas Economic Partnership, his mission is to enhance the competitive landscape for both new and existing businesses and to market Douglas County as a prime location for business growth, consumer spending and community enjoyment. The organization works to promote job creation and investment in Douglas County.

Under his leadership, the county embarked on its first Community and Economic

Development Strategic Plan in nearly two decades. Pumphrey has successfully recruited companies such as Switch, Microsoft, Lionsgate Studios and ResMed, along with facilitating expansions by Google and Southwire, resulting in nearly \$5 billion in capital investment and over 4,000 new jobs.

Before joining Elevate Douglas, Pumphrey led numerous business recruitment efforts for the Georgia Department of Economic Development, advising communities across Georgia on improving their competitive positions.

Pumphrey serves on the Atlanta Regional Commission’s Community Resources Committee and the boards of directors for the Georgia Economic Developers Association, the Regional Business Coalition, The Atlanta Neighborhood Partnership and The Wellstar Foundation.

ANNA ROACH

President & CEO, Atlanta Regional Commission, Atlanta



In October of last year, about 1,500 metro Atlanta leaders gathered to address regional challenges at the Atlanta Regional Commission’s 2023 State of the Region event. ARC executive director and CEO Anna Roach emphasized collaboration in her address, unveiling the agency’s new vision, “One Great Region.”

“We can only make a difference if we all act, if we all take steps to foster change,” Roach said. “If we work collectively to address our region’s greatest challenges, there is no limit to what our region can accomplish.”

Roach became ARC’s executive director and CEO in 2022. The organization is tasked with ensuring the future success of metro Atlanta, which has nearly 5.1 million residents.

She is dedicated to improving the region’s quality of life as it evolves. The ARC focuses on developing healthy, livable communities, managing water resources, cultivating leaders and engaging the public on key regional issues.

The agency’s new Climate Change & Resilience program aims to secure federal grants to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, support a lower-carbon economy and enhance resilience to extreme weather. In her role, Roach oversees nearly \$3 billion in annual investments across Metro Atlanta, addressing regional plans for aging, workforce development, transportation, natural resources and urban area security.

A.J. ROBINSON

President, Central Atlanta Progress & Atlanta Downtown Improvement District, Atlanta



A.J. Robinson has seen a lot of changes in downtown Atlanta at the helm of both Central Atlanta Progress (CAP) and the Atlanta Downtown Improvement District (Atlanta DID). The two groups work in harmony to create a livable environment in downtown Atlanta, working behind the scenes to integrate ideas, build partnerships and coordinate various improvement efforts.

Now the city center is seeing more residents calling the area home, and the group is studying the potential to convert office buildings in the area into residential

buildings to keep bolstering available housing to meet demand.

Other recent efforts to keep downtown vibrant have included restoring the urban canopy as part of its Downtown Urban Tree Planting Plan and orchestrating more than 100 activations downtown, including a biweekly craft market, weekly lunchtime musical performances and Downtown Windows, which transforms vacant storefronts into vibrant art installations.

Robinson has guided CAP in founding influential organizations like Trees Atlanta and the National Center for Civil and Human Rights. He has been consistently recognized as one of Georgia's and Atlanta's most influential leaders. Active in the community, Robinson serves on various boards and has published articles in major publications.

TERRETA RODGERS

Head of Community Affairs, Atlanta Region, Amazon, Atlanta



Terreta Rodgers is head of Community Affairs for Amazon's Atlanta region. She's a member of the public policy team and external affairs strategies in support of Amazon's efforts to be the world's most trusted business and community partner.

She has more than 20 years of experience in corporate relations, brand and cause marketing, community engagement and government affairs. Rodgers' career has been working with stakeholders and elected officials to support economic growth in Georgia. Her career began in politics, working in the Atlanta mayor's office and

later serving as a press secretary for Vice President Al Gore.

She is a member of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc., and is chartering president of the Northwest Georgia Section of the NCNW. She serves on the board of directors for the Georgia Chamber of Commerce and the ATL Airport Chamber.

She has received numerous awards and recognitions, including *Women Looking Ahead* magazine's Most Powerful and Influential Woman Award, a Certificate of Special Congressional Recognition and the Atlanta City Council Commendation for Community Service. She was also named an Atlanta Business League Woman of Influence. Rodgers serves on several boards, including the Hands On Atlanta Board of Directors and on the boards for Georgia Piedmont Technical College and the Corporate Volunteer Council of Atlanta.

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Economic Development

ANDREA SCHRUIJER

Executive Director, Valdosta-Lowndes County Development Authority, Valdosta



Andrea Schruijer leads the Valdosta-Lowndes County Development Authority, driving significant economic growth in the region. The recent opening of the GAF manufacturing

facility and Walmart's announcement to build a milk processing plant, creating over 390 jobs, highlight Lowndes County's thriving status in the manufacturing and food processing industries.

Reflecting on a successful 2023, Schruijer credits years of effort for Valdosta's economic surge. From 2020 to 2023, Lowndes County saw the establishment of companies like Arglass, Bimbo QSR and Prinsco, along with 28 industry expansions. This period brought over \$740 million in capital investments and more than 1,100 new jobs to the region.

"Our existing manufacturing companies are expanding rapidly, adding to the region's prosperity," Schruijer notes. "Arglass recently announced a \$230-million expansion to build a second furnace. This is an exciting time for Valdosta. With the right mix of infrastructure, workforce and community leadership, we are poised for continued success."

Schruijer holds leadership positions with the Georgia Economic Developers Association and Locate South Georgia. Consultant Connect has repeatedly named her one of North America's Top 50 Economic Developers for her strategic vision and expertise.

TRACY STYF

Executive Director, Town Center CID, Kennesaw



The Town Center Community is comprised of the 6.25-square-mile Community Improvement District (CID) and its nonprofit partner, the Town Center Community Alliance. Through infrastructure investments, community engagement and collaborative partnerships, the Town Center Community plays a crucial role in the economic vitality of the district as well as the Metro Atlanta region.

As executive director, Tracy Styf works with decision-makers, elected officials, business leaders, investors and government agencies to steward more than \$3.5 million annually into the most impactful improvements.

"While only 1.8% of Cobb County's land area, Town Center Community accounts for more than \$750 million in assessed property values," says Styf. "Our commercial property owners invest in the district, and we leverage those investments into carefully planned infrastructure and placemaking projects that drive an increase in commercial property values and improve quality of life."

Recent initiatives include investing in smarter roads, bridges, sidewalks and bike lanes and placemaking projects like art, greenspace, bike-share and trails. Thanks to a project partnership with ARC, GDOT, SRTA and Cobb County, construction on the district's largest infrastructure project is underway. When complete, the South Barrett Reliever will connect the district in new ways and provide a much-needed alternative to Barrett Parkway.

JIM SHAW

President & CEO, Jackson County Area Chamber of Commerce, Jefferson



Jim Shaw has spent his career focused on community. After a career in banking and 15 years serving the Jackson County Industrial Development Authority, he joined the Jackson County Area Chamber of

Commerce as president and CEO in 2016. Before that, he served the chamber in numerous roles over the course of 30 years, including as board member, committee chair and board chair in 2000.

Shaw has been involved in a long list of projects that have increased opportunities and raised the average income for Jackson County citizens over the years. The largest was the SK Battery America plant in Commerce that included a \$2.7-billion investment and over 3,000 new jobs.

Jackson County is the fastest-growing county in Georgia, according to a recent U.S. Census Bureau release, Shaw says, and the fourth fastest-growing county in the nation.

"That rate of growth comes with challenges that can only be solved with abundant collaboration," he says. "It's been quite satisfying to be part of that collaboration. The chamber has been a champion for education for Jackson County. Connecting business and industry with public education is part of our mission."

The chamber helped established the Empower College and Career Center in 2021.

RALPH STAFFINS III

President & CEO, Brunswick-Golden Isles Chamber of Commerce, Brunswick



With more than 15 years of experience in economic development and advocacy, Ralph Staffins brings a unique set of skills and expertise to his role on the coast.

Since he joined the Brunswick-Golden Isles Chamber in 2019, he's been instrumental in implementing initiatives that

support the future of the local workforce, including advocating for the funding of the crucial expansions of Coastal Pines Technical College Golden Isles campus and the College of Coastal Georgia campus.

One of those recent chamber initiatives is the Reading Rover, an innovative literacy program that will boost summer engagement for children in Brunswick. The Reading Rover will roam the streets of the Golden Isles, offering books provided by the local business community for children to enjoy during the summer months. In addition to his commitment to educational betterment, Staffins oversees several other programs designed to nurture leadership skills and bridge the gap between education and industry.

"I am motivated to continue to pave the way for growth and engagement in the Brunswick-Golden Isles that will leave a mark on both the present and future workforce," says Staffins.

MELINDA C. SYLVESTER

President & CEO, Greater Georgia Black Chamber of Commerce/ Melinda Bridge Builder, Fayetteville



As the founder of the Greater Georgia Black Chamber of Commerce, Melinda Sylvester is most proud of the Chamber's bridge-building work. "GGBCC continues to assist businesses in sharing their story and owning their story," Sylvester says. This includes its The History of Black Businesses event during Black History Month.

Founded in 2004, GGBCC offers education, resources and networking opportunities to its members, with the intent to increase the economic vitality of the business community as a whole.

Sylvester says working together leads to more opportunities and successful businesses. Chamber members teach cultural sensitivity and leadership, which leads to building great relationships, she says. For instance, the building bridges initiative led to developing a solid partnership with the Fayette Chamber.

She has more than 20 years of experience working in chamber spaces including leading the Greater Southwest Louisiana Black Chamber of Commerce, which won National Black Chamber of the Year under Sylvester's leadership. She is also the owner of Tel-Mel Media, publisher of *Faith and Soul Magazine* and a book author and publisher.

LEE THOMAS

Deputy Commissioner, Georgia Film Office, Georgia Department of Economic Development, Atlanta



Lee Thomas heads up Georgia's Film Office, housed under the Georgia Department of Economic Development. It's a role she's had since 2010. The office is charged with marketing the state to the more than 4,850 film and TV production-related businesses through location scouting and coordinating with other state agencies, local governments and residents to help meet filming needs. It also works to develop the industry's infrastructure and workforce, certifies projects under the Georgia Entertainment Industry Investment Act and oversees the Camera Ready community program.

With more than 4 million square feet, Georgia is now second for stage space in the U.S. and is the top filming location in the world. During the last two fiscal years, more than 800 productions have been staged in Georgia, with at least \$8.5 billion in direct spending across the state. Recent productions include movies like *Captain America: Brave New World* and *The Idea of You* as well as TV series like *A Man in Full*.

Thomas has encouraged more infrastructure to meet demand, especially virtual studios and visual effects companies. The plan is for Georgia to become a one-stop shop for film and television.

HUGH "TRIP" TOLLISON

President & CEO, Savannah Economic Development Authority, Savannah



Trip Tollison oversees all aspects of SEDA, including business attraction, retention and expansion, along with heading up the World Trade Center Savannah and the Savannah Regional Film Commission.

In 2022, Hyundai Motor Group announced it would be opening a state-of-the-art U.S. smart factory at the nearby Bryan County Megasite, investing \$7.6 billion and creating 8,500 new jobs. Since that time, 17 Hyundai Motor Group Metaplant America (HMGMA) suppliers have announced locating in the region, which will bring an additional 6,946 jobs and \$2.5 billion in capital investment. In 2023, three of those

suppliers – Seoyon E-HWA, PHA and Daechang Seat Savannah Corp. – announced they would be locating at the Savannah Chatham Manufacturing Center, creating 1,765 new jobs and \$250 million in capital investment.

"When Hyundai Motor Group announced in 2022, we knew suppliers would be a part of the job creation and investment. We just didn't realize the sheer number of suppliers and how quickly they would be locating, which has created tremendous workforce opportunities for our region," says Tollison. "In 2023, along with the three HMGMA suppliers, existing industry growth and the attraction of several other companies to Chatham County, 3,731 new job opportunities were created along with \$2.6 billion in capital investment."

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Economic Development

JESSICA WALDEN

President & CEO, Greater Macon Chamber of Commerce, Macon



Since assuming her role as president of the Greater Macon Chamber of Commerce in 2022, Jessica Walden has collaborated with the city's economic partners to ensure "all of us are singing from the same songbook," she says.

Walden has worked closely with chamber members to roll out new initiatives in supplier diversity, talent recruitment and retention, and legislative advocacy. Its

Forward Macon Plan, in partnership with numerous local organizations and investors, aims to build a strong workforce, attract and retain talent and revitalize neighborhoods. By 2025 it expects to play a role in creating up to 3,100 jobs that will bring some \$56 million in consumer expenditures to the region.

As a result, the Macon COC has experienced a sharp rise in program revenue and chamber investment.

Walden's last name is a familiar one to most Georgians. She's the cofounder of Rock Candy Tours, a music history tour company that grew out of her family's connection to the Macon music legacy, including her uncle, Phil Walden, founder of Capricorn Records; and her father, Alan Walden, who discovered and managed Lynyrd Skynyrd. (Both co-managed Otis Redding.)

Walden serves on the board of the Georgia Association of Chamber Executives and the HUB Chamber Council, an advocacy group that supports regional job hubs outside of Metro Atlanta.

"Macon vibrates with opportunity – from our national park initiative to a thriving downtown to an incredible new outdoor amphitheater," she says. "We are combining deep history, illuminated by music talent, with a dynamic business environment and diversified industry base."

DAVE WILLS

Executive Director, ACCG, Atlanta



ACCG serves as the consensus-building, training and legislative organization for all 159 county governments in the state – nearly 830 county commissioners; 400 appointed county clerks, managers, administrators and attorneys; and more than 80,000 full- and part-time employees. Dave Wills has been its executive director since 2017.

In 2024, ACCG lobbied for additional funding for mental health services, getting every county to adopt its support. ACCG and the Georgia Municipal Association gained significant changes to Georgia's Service

Delivery Strategy law and achieved pushback against bills that would have adversely impacted counties' ability to provide services. At the request of the Georgia Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Disabilities, ACCG coordinated and conducted elections to fill seats on regional advisory councils and the Georgia Opioid State Advisory Council.

Wills served as a county commissioner for 14 years in Webster County before joining the staff of ACCG. He is now serving in his 16th year with the association.

KATHY N. WALLER

Executive Director, Atlanta Committee for Progress, Atlanta



Atlanta native Kathy Waller has led initiatives to help Atlanta for many years including her current position as executive director for the Atlanta Committee for Progress.

She has over 35 years of financial and operational leadership experience within the consumer and retail sectors. She retired from The Coca-Cola Company, where she was chief financial officer and president of enabling services in 2019 after 32 years before being named the executive director for the Atlanta Committee for Progress in 2022.

She has built strong relationships, driven transformations and developed a strong financial performance throughout her career. Her finance experience includes financial planning, investor

relations, M&A, accounting, treasury and tax.

Founded in 2003, the ACP is a partnership between the city's top business, civic and academic leaders, and Mayor Andre Dickens. The committee includes more than 40 CEOs, university presidents and civic leaders who offer expertise on key issues important to economic growth and inclusion for all Atlanta residents.

Waller serves on many boards, including Delta Air Lines, Spelman College, The Woodruff Arts Center, The Atlanta Symphony Orchestra and The Girl Scouts of Greater Atlanta. Waller was also the founding chair of The Coca-Cola Company's Women's Leadership Council.

PAT WILSON

Commissioner, Georgia Department of Economic Development, Atlanta



Pat Wilson was appointed to lead the GDEd in 2016. The state's main sales and marketing agency is charged with creating jobs and investment through business recruitment and expansion, growing small business, international trade and tourism, plus the arts and film industries. In 2023, Georgia marked an entire decade as the No. 1 state to do business, according to *Area Development* magazine.

GDEd aims to support vibrant communities that keep current residents happy while attracting tourists and new community members. Wilson celebrates rural growth that allows families to stay near relatives and find good jobs where

they grew up. "We've had significant growth over the last five years in counties with less than 50,000 people," he says. "Thanks to our local partners and state focus on these communities, we're welcoming new jobs in literally every corner of the state."

Georgia's international connections and partnership approach have been delivering record investment, trade and tourism numbers statewide. While Georgia continues to attract diverse industries, the e-mobility ecosystem is paving new lanes. Since 2018, Georgia has attracted more than 32,200 new jobs and over \$27.3 billion in investments in the e-mobility, clean energy and battery-related supply chains, including the \$7.6 billion Hyundai Motor Group Metaplant America facility ramping up production in Bryan County.

MARGARET WOODARD

Executive Director, Downtown Development Authority of Augusta, Augusta



Margaret Woodard's vision for revitalizing downtown Augusta is rooted in her background in building science. Her early years working at a construction company taught her to consider a wide range of perspectives and factors when making decisions, a skill that comes in handy in her role with the DDA.

"My goal is to empower and inspire small businesses and to partner with them in helping them achieve their aspirations," she says. "Investing locally is a win-win for

Augusta's economy, and the DDA is unwavering in its commitment to providing support. There's nothing that brings me more joy than celebrating the accomplishments and successes of our local businesses."

Through Woodard's active involvement, downtown Augusta is set to welcome over 2,000 new housing units in the next two years. Additionally, the opening of Accelerate Augusta will provide a comprehensive microenterprise resource center, offering local entrepreneurs the resources and guidance needed to turn their ideas into successful small business ventures. Her next initiative is to develop a downtown property owner registry and establish a revolving loan program to address chronic vacancies in downtown Augusta.

Woodard serves on the board of directors for the Ronald McDonald House Charities Augusta and The Augusta Metro Chamber of Commerce.

CAL WRAY

President, Augusta Economic Development Authority, Augusta



Cal Wray began serving as president of the AEDA in 2018. Before this, he served as the executive director of the Clarksville-Montgomery County Economic Development Council and the Aspire Clarksville Foundation in Tennessee. Since his arrival, the Augusta EDA has announced 57 new or expanding projects totaling more than \$5 billion in new investment and 5,275 new jobs.

Development of the Augusta Corporate Park (ACP) continues at a rapid pace, with Aurubis Richmond, GF Casting Solutions, Purecycle Technologies, Denkai America and Nexira all making progress on their locations. The projects represent a

combined \$1.9 billion in new capital investment in the initial phases and will create more than 1,000 jobs. These join Starbucks Solubles, which has invested more than \$330 million and has more than 300 employees in the ACP.

"Due to the success that Augusta has seen," says Wray, "our biggest challenges are developing new and innovative training programs for workforce development and bringing on new inventory for industrial sites and buildings."



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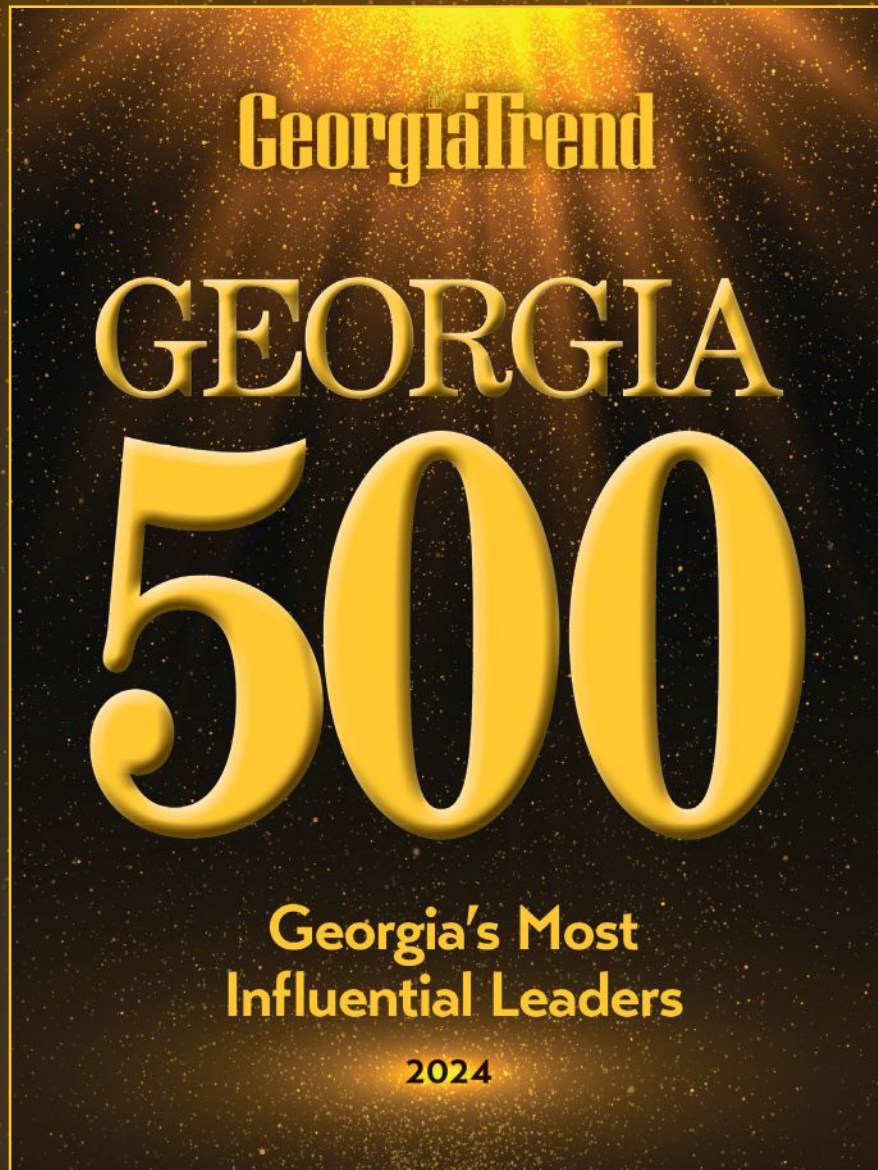
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A low-angle photograph capturing the celebratory moment of a graduation ceremony. Numerous black mortarboard caps are seen flying through a clear, bright blue sky. In the foreground, the dark silhouettes of graduates are visible, with several arms raised in the air, some holding their caps. The overall atmosphere is one of joy and achievement.

Education

IVAN H. ALLEN

President, Central Georgia Technical College, Warner Robins



In just one year, Central Georgia Technical College (CGTC) enrolled an additional 1,000 in Fall 2023, pushing enrollment to 10,700 students – momentum that continued into the spring semester, says President Ivan Allen.

“Our growth and record enrollment is really the great accomplishment since last year,” he says. “We’re penetrating our market at a good level, preparing and sustaining a workforce pipeline for the next decade.”

Allen says the college’s welding, healthcare, aviation and truck driving programs are fueling CGTC’s growth, supported by “dedicated faculty who are outstanding professionals.”

To help meet the critical demand for healthcare workers, in the spring, CGTC added a Licensed Practical Nurse (LPN) to Registered Nurse (RN) bridge program, offering an accelerated pathway for LPNs and paramedics to become registered nurses through the Associate of Science in Nursing program.

In January, Allen was awarded one of the Georgia Hospital Association’s highest honors, the Distinguished Service Award, for CGTC’s addition of on-campus student health clinics – the first at any Georgia technical college. Health services, including counseling, are offered in-person at CGTC’s Macon, Milledgeville and Warner Robins campuses, as well as virtually.

Allen has served as president of CGTC since 2005.

M. BRIAN BLAKE

President, Georgia State University, Atlanta



Georgia State University (GSU) is reimagining its downtown campus. Modeled after the Atlanta BeltLine, the GSU Blue Line will create a perimeter and walking path around the university’s downtown campuses to create a greater sense of place for

students, President Brian Blake says.

“In the next couple of years, for the first time students will be able to identify being on campus in any space downtown,” he says.

New lighting, landscaping, painting and artwork will be part of the initiative, Blake says. In addition, the university has asked the city to close Gilmer Street between Courtland Street and Peachtree Center Avenue to facilitate expansion of the Panther Quad with a plaza just south of Hurt Park.

Anchoring the plaza will be the 17-floor, 353,000-square-foot building at 100 Edgewood Avenue, which the university purchased in December. Blake says plans call for the first three floors of the building to be used for dining and student meeting space, with the additional floors housing “high-demand academic programs” like art, health professions and computing, as well as “College-to-Careers” innovation spaces.

In May, GSU was given the greenlight to build a 1,000-seat baseball stadium in Summerhill.

CHRISTOPHER R.L. BLAKE

President, Middle Georgia State University, Macon



Middle Georgia State University (MGA) is about to take another two steps forward in its evolution toward offering students a more traditional college experience. Offering two doctoral programs (one in information technology, the other in public safety), the state’s only public four-year aviation school is transitioning from the National Association of Intercollegiate Athletics (NAIA) to the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) Division II. MGA is also strengthening its undergraduate housing program, says President Christopher Blake.

“We’ll be members of the Peach Belt Conference, and because we are Georgia-based this allows us to compete with other institutions in Georgia and neighboring states at a higher level,” Blake says. “That brings us into what I would call the gold standard of athletics.”

The move into NCAA Division II also helps the university to continue building its profile as well as student pride in the institution, Blake says. Three of the university’s five campuses, Macon, Cochran and Eastman, now offer student housing.

“We’re seeing much more student activity and engagement,” he says. “Students are really enjoying living in a traditional collegiate environment.”

MGA serves nearly 8,000 students on five campuses in central Georgia and across the globe via its online campus.

MEAGHAN BLIGHT

President, Wesleyan College, Macon



Wesleyan College President Meaghan Blight has a superpower: finding great talent, sometimes in unlikely places, and using that talent to build high-performance teams. When she took the helm at the women’s liberal college two

years ago, Blight hit the ground running raising more than \$2 million for scholarships.

“I wanted to raise \$1 million in the first 100 days of my presidency,” she recalls. “We raised \$2.2 million in 70 days to support the Working Warriors Scholarship fund, which helps women continue their educational journey or restart their journey if they had to stop because of COVID or other reasons.”

Blight came to Wesleyan from Huron University College in London, Ontario, where she served as Huron’s vice president of university growth and chief of staff. Under her leadership there, domestic enrollment was up 110% and international enrollment was up 300%, giving the small liberal arts college the distinction of leading all Canadian academic institutions in enrollment growth.

Since Blight arrived on campus, the college has raised \$16 million, increased the number of international students, established a presence in downtown Macon and launched the Creating Equal Opportunities (CEO) Leadership Institute.

STEVE BRIGGS

President, Berry College, Rome



In less than a year, Berry College will open Morgan-Bailey Hall, its new 55,000-square-foot health sciences building. According to President Steve Briggs, the three-story building will include simulation suites, skills labs, a

physical assessment lab and classrooms on the first and second levels. Expected to open next summer, the second floor will also boast additional classroom space, a mock operating room and exam rooms similar to typical medical practices. The third floor will be residential hall space.

“It’s a \$33.4-million project,” Briggs says. “We’ve raised over \$31 million, so we’re almost done with the fundraising. The building will be the home for our nursing, kinesiology and new physician associate (PA) students.”

Briggs says the college expects to enroll 28 PA students in the fall, with a goal of graduating 40 PA students within a few years. The new facility will also give the college the capacity to double its nursing grads from 40 to 80 annually.

During Briggs’ 18-year tenure, Berry has opened or renovated a dozen buildings, transitioned to NCAA Division III, added six new varsity sports, upgraded its athletic facilities and become a founding member of the Southern Athletic Association.

FRANK BROWN

CEO, Communities in Schools of Atlanta, Atlanta



Proving the adage, “It takes a village to raise a child,” Communities in Schools (CIS) of Atlanta helps at-risk kids stay in school and graduate. The nonprofit organization serves 73 schools across six school districts, according to CEO Frank Brown.

“We surround kids with a community of support empowering them to stay in school and achieve in life,” Brown says. “We reach 49,000 students every day.”

Of those 49,000, the most challenged students (about 3,700) also receive intensive case management services, including emergency financial assistance. As of June 30, CIS of Atlanta provided \$469,000 in emergency assistance to students and their families in 2024, Brown says, noting the money paid for necessities like housing, utilities, transportation and food.

“We do everything schools are not equipped to do, and those wrap-around supports are very important,” he says. “Ninety-nine percent of the kids we serve are black or brown, and most attend a Title I school.”

CIS of Atlanta was founded in the basement of a Grant Park home in 1972. Today, Communities in Schools is the nation’s largest student dropout prevention network serving 1.8 million students a year in 3,270 schools across 26 states and the District of Columbia.

WILLIAM B. CALDWELL IV

President, Georgia Military College, Milledgeville



Lt. Gen. (Retired) William B. Caldwell IV has served as the 21st president of Georgia Military College (GMC) since 2013. Under his leadership, the college’s footprint has grown beyond its main campus in Milledgeville to include eight satellite campuses and a Global Online Leadership College.

GMC offers 29 two-year degree programs, as well as seven four-year Bachelor of Applied Science degrees. The college is one of only four premier Military Junior Colleges in the U.S. developing second lieutenants for the U.S. Army through its Army ROTC program.

Additionally, GMC’s Corps of Cadets also serves as a certified preparatory school for the U.S. Military Academy, U.S. Coast Guard Academy, the U.S. Naval Academy and the U.S. Air Force Academy.

Caldwell served as a General Officer for nearly 13 years, most notably as Commanding General of the 82nd Airborne Division, Commanding General of the NATO Training Mission-Afghanistan during Operation Enduring Freedom, Commanding General of the U.S. Army Combined Arms Center and Fort Leavenworth and Commander of U.S. Army North. His combat deployments include Operations Desert Shield and Desert Storm, Operation Just Cause in Panama and Operation Uphold Democracy in Haiti.

TRACY BRUNDAGE

President, Abraham Baldwin Agricultural College, Tifton



It’s official. Abraham Baldwin Agricultural College (ABAC) has joined the ranks of the National Association of Intercollegiate Athletics, and this fall, its men’s and women’s basketball teams returned to the court after the programs were

discontinued in 2008. The move to four-year athletics and bringing back basketball have been key priorities for President Tracy Brundage since she took the helm in 2022.

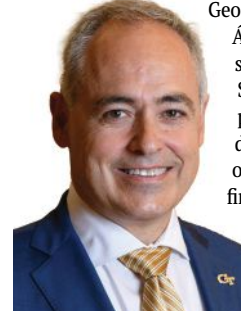
Participation in the Southern States Athletic Conference better matches the college’s academic structure and allows student-athletes to continue their education at ABAC. While the transition is viewed as important for enrollment, it’s also part of the college’s efforts to serve its students well.

In May, those efforts were further enhanced when ABAC became the only state college in Georgia to offer a tuition payment plan. Students can defer a portion of their tuition for a semester or their account balances, whichever is less, up to 60 days after the semester begins.

While the college is known as a premier destination for agricultural studies, it also offers degrees in business, nursing and the arts and sciences.

ÁNGEL CABRERA

President, Georgia Institute of Technology, Atlanta



Georgia Tech President Ángel Cabrera was all smiles on May 2, when Science Square, a pioneering mixed-use development, officially opened. Science Square’s first phase of

development includes Science Square Labs, a 13-story tower dedicated to

biological sciences and medical research and the technology to advance those fields.

The complex’s first phase also includes retail space and The Grace Residences, a 280-unit multifamily tower. Science Square provides Atlanta with its first biomedical research district, which has the potential to create 3,000 jobs.

Meanwhile, students and researchers continue making headlines under Cabrera’s leadership. For the third year in a row, Georgia Tech took first place in the Codebreaker Challenge, a competition sponsored by the National Security Agency, and researchers are developing sustainable ocean shipping solutions to meet global emissions targets.

The first native of Spain to serve as president of an American university, Cabrera has been named a Young Global Leader by the World Economic Forum, a Star of Europe by *Bloomberg Businessweek*, Henry Crown Fellow by the Aspen Institute and Great Immigrant by the Carnegie Corp. of New York. He is cofounder of the University Global Coalition, a global network of universities that works with the United Nations in support of its sustainability programs.

D. GLEN CANNON

President, Gwinnett Technical College, Lawrenceville



As students and parents alike wrestle with the costs of a four-year degree, enrollment at schools like Gwinnett Technical College (GTC) is soaring.

“The big news has been our growth,” says President Glen Cannon. “We enrolled more than 10,000 students for the first time during spring semester. I think students are starting to realize, ‘I can always go from here.’”

Whether that’s on to a great career in a high-demand field like manufacturing, computer science or healthcare or pursuing a higher degree, Cannon says GTC students have options.

“We have the largest cybersecurity program in the state,” he says. “A lot of that enrollment has to do with demand, plus we just opened [in 2023] a \$42-million building around emerging technology, including cybersecurity and gaming.”

GTC is Georgia’s second-largest technical college. The school serves more than 22,000 students annually across credit courses, adult education and continuing education. For the first time this fall, GTC is offering its Registered Nurse program (RN) on its Alpharetta campus and a Licensed Practical Nurse (LPN) option on its Gwinnett campus.

In May, Cannon received the Community Service Award from the North Fulton Chamber as part of its 2024 North Fulton Regional Awards.

RICHARD CARVAJAL

President, Valdosta State University, Valdosta



Richard Carvajal often asks, “Who else gets to go to work every day knowing that their mission that day is to change someone’s life?”

Growing up in poverty and having to overcome many obstacles to one day take the top job at Valdosta State University (VSU), Carvajal himself is living proof of the transformative power of higher education.

Carvajal credits a commitment to never quit and the influence of caring mentors as keys to his success – attributes that can also be found in VSU students, faculty and staff.

“At VSU, enrollment is up, we have a new VSU2030 Strategic Plan and there’s an energy on campus that is unmistakable,” he says. “We won the inaugural University System of Georgia (USG) Regents Cup Debate Challenge and additional championships in football, basketball and tennis. Simply put, we had what can only be described as a historic year, and I could not be prouder of our students, faculty, staff and supporters.”

In 2021, the USG Board of Regents authorized VSU to launch an in-state alternative to national online bachelor’s degree completion institutions serving large numbers of adult learners. In just three years, enrollment is more than triple VSU’s initial four-year projection, and *Newsweek* included VSU on its list of America’s Top Online Colleges.

GREG DOZIER

Commissioner, Technical College System of Georgia, Atlanta



As the sixth commissioner of the Technical College System of Georgia (TCSG), Greg Dozier oversees the state’s 22 technical colleges, adult literacy programs and a plethora of economic and workforce development programs.

In January, the state’s Foreign Labor Certification Program shifted from the Georgia Department of Labor to TCSG’s WorkSource Georgia division. The program supports employers navigating the temporary foreign labor H-2A and H-2B processes, which permit U.S. employers to hire foreign workers to fill jobs deemed essential to the U.S. economy.

The mission of the TCSG is to create a strong pipeline of employees for the thousands of businesses that call Georgia home. It’s a tall order, but one it’s accomplishing through a number of initiatives and community partnerships, including the High Demand Apprenticeship Program, efforts to increase the number of healthcare professionals in rural Georgia, and, in a first, a statewide transfer agreement between TCSG and the University System of Georgia to strengthen the state’s cybersecurity workforce. This year it also launched Georgia Match, a direct college admissions initiative in partnership with the Governor’s Office and other state entities.

CATHY COX

President, Georgia College & State University, Milledgeville



As the state’s designated “Liberal Arts University,” classes at Georgia College & State University (GCSU) are uniquely small and discussion-based to give students the opportunity to “really sink their teeth into a subject,” says President Cathy Cox. It’s an experience so sought after, in each of the last two years applications were up 40%.

“We’re unlike any other university in the USG [University System of Georgia] by design,” Cox says. “This year we received over 8,200 applications, but we really can’t go beyond our enrollment of 1,800 students because of the number of bed spaces we have on campus.”

GCSU requires freshmen to live on campus.

But even if enrollment wasn’t capped, Cox says the university doesn’t want to stretch its model and lose what makes it so unique.

For the second year in a row, a GCSU student was chosen as Georgia’s Truman Scholar, a scholarship award given to “exceptional college juniors who demonstrate outstanding leadership potential, a commitment to public service and academic excellence.”

Cox is the incoming chair of the Peach Belt Athletic Conference and the new chair of the Board of Directors for NCAA Division II athletics.

LORI DURDEN

President, Ogeechee Technical College, Statesboro



Good things come in small packages. Ogeechee Technical College (OTC) may be one of the smallest colleges in the Technical College System of Georgia, but it is arguably one of the mightiest.

That’s in part due to partnerships with industry giants such as Hyundai Motor Group

Metaplant America and Amazon. In January, OTC launched an Electric Vehicle Professional Technical Certificate of Credit as part of its partnership with Hyundai.

In May of 2021, OTC became one of only five colleges in the country to be selected as a training provider for Amazon’s Mechatronics and Robotics Apprenticeship Program. This program provides training and the technical knowledge necessary to fulfill a technical maintenance role with Amazon.

“I love my job,” says Lori Durden, who has served as OTC’s president for eight years.

“I think what is so easy is to get behind the mission – the concept of teaching someone a skill that they can turn into a meaningful career and a good job. What a great thing!”

She previously served on the University System of Georgia’s Board of Trustees and is a Leadership Georgia Class of 2009 alumnus.

JAY FELDSTEIN

President & CEO, PCOM Georgia, Suwanee



PCOM Georgia, formerly known as Georgia Campus – Philadelphia College of Osteopathic Medicine, was established in 2005 in response to the acute need for more doctors and healthcare professionals in Georgia and surrounding states.

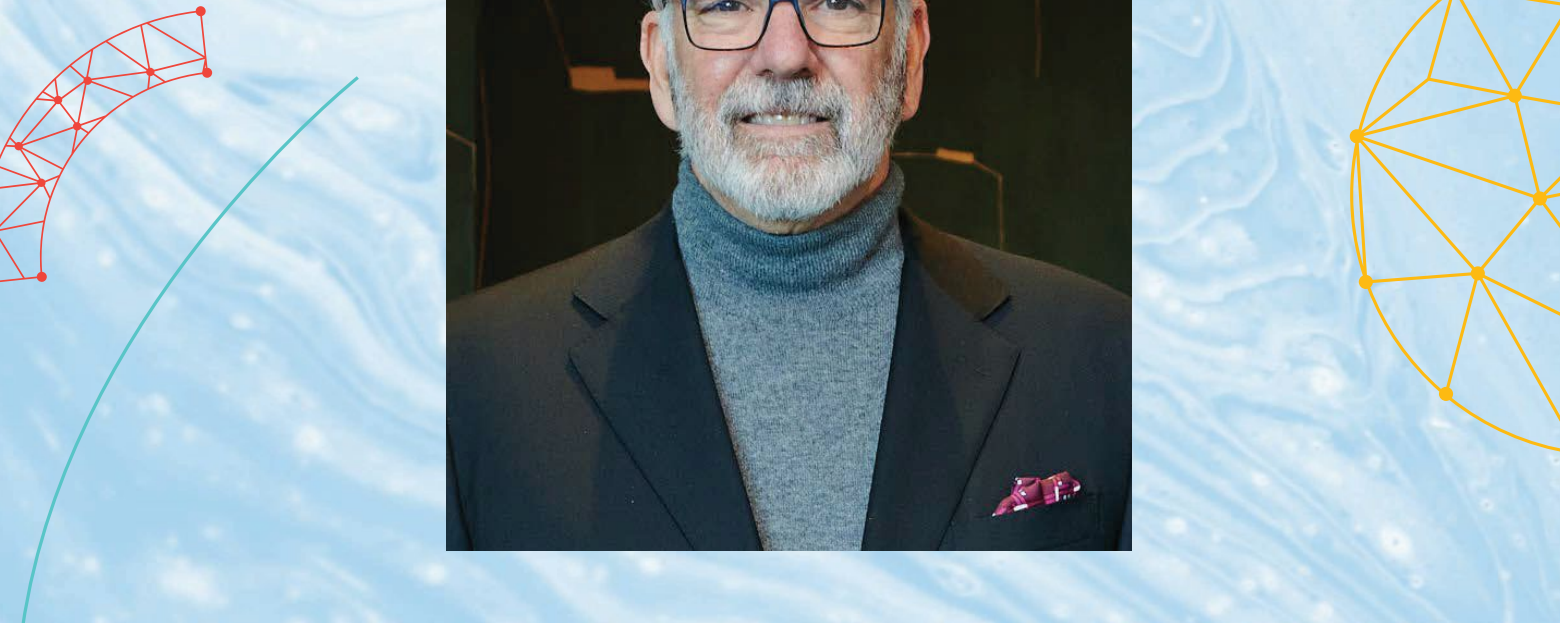
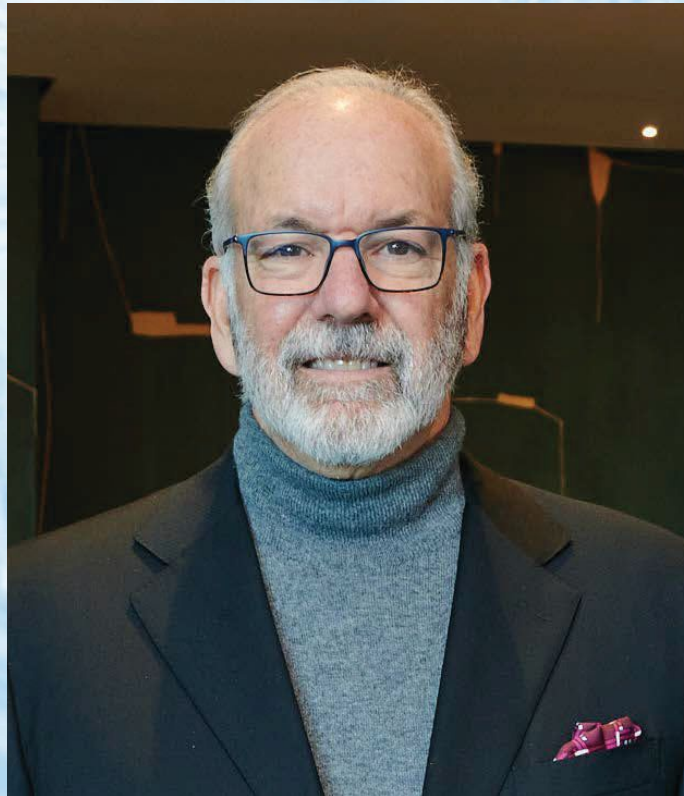
“What we’re trying to do in the state of Georgia is increase the number of primary care physicians throughout the state, especially in rural Georgia, and specifically, in Southwest Georgia, which is why we opened a campus in Moultrie five years ago,” says President and CEO Jay Feldstein. “We want to train physicians who want to serve where the need is greatest – inner cities and rural areas with severe physician shortages.”

In 2024, PCOM Georgia and PCOM South Georgia had 100% residency and clinical research placement with 55% of graduates and 45% of graduates, respectively, placed into the primary care specialties of family medicine, pediatrics, internal medicine and OB/GYN, according to Feldstein.

PCOM Georgia enrolls more than 1,000 students, while PCOM South Georgia has an enrollment of 250 students. The number of PCOM Georgia alumni is more than 3,000, and the number of PCOM alumni in the state of Georgia is nearly 2,000, a testament to its successful vision. To date, there have been 125 graduates from PCOM South Georgia.



PCOM CONGRATULATES
JAY S. FELDSTEIN, DO
PRESIDENT AND CEO



**AND ALL OF THIS YEAR'S HONOREES
FOR BEING RECOGNIZED AS GEORGIA'S
MOST INFLUENTIAL LEADERS.**



PCOM
125thTM

For over 125 years, Philadelphia College of Osteopathic Medicine has trained highly competent, caring physicians, health practitioners and behavioral scientists who practice a whole-person approach—treating people, not just symptoms. Recognizing the need for physicians and other health professionals throughout Georgia, PCOM Georgia and PCOM South Georgia were established to better meet the healthcare needs of local populations. PCOM aims to educate future healthcare champions that will improve community health and provide access to care for underserved communities throughout the state.

 pcom.edu

GREGORY L. FENVES

President, Emory University, Atlanta



Emory University reached a historic milestone in Fiscal Year 2023, securing more than \$1 billion in sponsored research awards.

“It is a reflection of the tremendous impact of our faculty, researchers and students who shape

the world through their scholarship across fields and specialties,” says President Gregory Fenves.

According to Fenves, the Advanced Research Projects Agency for Health, a new federal agency within the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, selected Emory as the inaugural recipient of funding to support transformative breakthroughs in health research. The \$24.8-million award will help Emory scientists drive groundbreaking new approaches to treat – and potentially cure – diseases such as cancer, autoimmune disorders and infectious diseases.

To reduce student loan debt, Emory eliminated need-based loans for domestic undergraduate students beginning in the 2022-2023 academic year, replacing them with institutional grants and scholarships. Emory undergraduate students borrowed 50% less in 2022-23 than they did in 2021-22, Fenves says.

In 2022, he was named a Fellow of the American Association for the Advancement of Science, and he also sits on numerous boards in the higher education and Atlanta community, including the Georgia Research Alliance, the Metro Atlanta Chamber, the Atlanta Committee for Progress and The Carter Center.

EMMETT GRISWOLD

President, Albany Technical College, Albany



Albany Tech has been busy since Emmett Griswold took the reins in 2022.

Once a month, ATC’s mock campus courtroom is used by the city’s municipal court judge to hear cases. Griswold says ATC personnel are on-hand during the hearings to assist those who appear before the court to meet the conditions of their sentencing. For example, if someone is instructed to get their GED, ATC can help. “It gives us an opportunity to engage with the community,” he says.

To address the critical shortage of

nurses in the community, ATC partnered with Phoebe Putney Memorial Hospital to create a living/learning community on the hospital campus where the college’s nursing school and all nursing-related programs are now housed.

This year the college also launched a pioneering new Critical Care Paramedic program, the first of its kind within TCSG. The program is designed to advance the skills of experienced paramedics to prepare them for roles such as helicopter emergency medical services, fixed-wing critical care transport and intensive care units.

HELENE D. GAYLE

President, Spelman College, Atlanta



Helene D. Gayle has served as the 11th president of Spelman College since 2022. A pediatrician and public health physician with expertise in economic development, humanitarian and health issues, she previously worked in leadership roles at the Centers for

Disease Control and Prevention, the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation and was the president and CEO of the international humanitarian organization CARE.

This year, Spelman marked 100 years since its official naming in 1924. It also received some significant support, including a historic \$100-million gift, the largest single donation ever to an HBCU, and \$1 million from Google’s Cybersecurity Clinics Fund to establish Spelman SPEAR. The initiative will provide students with hands-on cybersecurity and AI skills while also helping protect vulnerable organizations and critical infrastructure like local small businesses, hospitals, schools and energy grids.

Gayle has received 18 honorary degrees and is a member of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, National Academy of Medicine and Council on Foreign Relations among others. She serves on many public companies and nonprofit boards, including The Coca-Cola Company, The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation and the Brookings Institution. In 2023, she was named an inaugural member of the President’s Advisory Council on African Diaspora Engagement in the U.S. by President Joe Biden.

LAURA GIBSON-LAMOTHE

Executive Director, Georgia Fintech Academy, Atlanta



Home to 210 financial technology (fintech) companies, 70% of all credit, debit and gift card swipes are processed through a Georgia company. Laura Gibson-Lamothe’s job is to help the industry fill an estimated need of 2,000 fintech-ready professionals annually.

“I have 20 years of experience in the industry,” she says. “I transitioned into academia to lead this program.”

The Georgia Fintech Academy, a collaboration between the state’s fintech industry and the University System of Georgia (USG), is a diversity talent development initiative that enables any USG student to take fintech-related courses online and earn a degree or certificate.

Since its inception in 2019, the academy has served more than 8,300 students and successfully placed more than 2,100 students in fintech positions.

“There is nothing else like this in the system,” she says. “My focus is on scaling the program by amplifying and growing the relationships we have across the USG.”

Gibson-Lamothe took the helm at the academy two years ago. Her experience in fintech and financial services includes significant roles at major financial institutions, including Bank of America, Wells Fargo and Ally Bank. She is an active board member of PayTech Women and the community-based organization LaAmistad.

MICHAEL HODGE

Executive Director, Atlanta University Center Consortium, Atlanta



Michael Hodge oversees the Atlanta University Center Consortium’s efforts to advance the missions and strategic goals of its four member institutions – Clark Atlanta University, Morehouse College, Morehouse School of Medicine and Spelman College.

The nonprofit accomplishes this by fostering collaboration, managing center-wide initiatives, offering services that benefit students and community, and leveraging

shared resources. Located in Clark Atlanta University, it’s the world’s oldest and largest consortium of historically Black colleges and universities.

As a sociologist, Hodge’s areas of interest focus on racial and ethnic inequality, including health disparities as well as socioeconomic inequities. He has taught at the University of Georgia, University of Tennessee and Georgia State University.

Hodge is the immediate past provost and senior vice president for academic affairs at Morehouse College, and he has also held the position of associate provost for research, scholarship and creative production at Morehouse. He has a master’s in psychology and a Ph.D. in sociology from the University of Florida. He is a past-president of the Georgia Sociological Association and a lifetime member of the Association of Black Sociologists.

MICHELLE R. JOHNSTON

President, Georgia Southwestern State University, Americus



Named president of Georgia Southwestern State University (GSW) in May, Michelle Johnston took the helm of GSW on June 1. She previously served as president of the College of Coastal Georgia (CCGA), a position she'd held since July 2018.

During her time at CCGA, Johnston is credited with expanding community partnerships and increasing student success in everything from teacher education to nursing, making sure graduates had the skills needed to impact critical workforce areas in Georgia. Also on

her watch, in Fall 2022, CCGA saw a more than 30% increase in freshman enrollment, and for the first time in the college's history, more than half of the freshman class came from outside the area.

Prior to joining Coastal Georgia, Johnston had more than 20 years of experience in higher education, including as president of the University of Rio Grande and Rio Grande Community College in Ohio. In 2021, the Institute for Executive Women established the Michelle R. Johnston Award for Servant Leadership in recognition of Johnston's commitment to education. Additional accolades include her appointment by the U.S. Secretary of Defense to the Marine Corps University Board in 2014, where she served as the chair.

PAUL JONES

President, Fort Valley State University, Fort Valley



Last fall, Fort Valley State University (FVSU) experienced its largest freshman class in a decade, according to President Paul Jones. Enrollment was up 6% last fall and 7% spring semester.

"Frankly, we could have grown even more, but we had to close admissions early because we no longer had housing available for incoming freshman," Jones says. "It was just a great year."

Jones says FVSU is on pace for strong enrollment growth again for academic year 2024-2025, fueled in part by a "border waiver surge" from states like Florida. Students living in bordering

states can attend FVSU at in-state tuition rates.

FVSU is the first brick-and-mortar Chevron Fab Lab in the University System of Georgia and the first HBCU to house one of the more than 2,900 Fab Labs around the world. The digital design and fabrication lab is open to FVSU students, K-12 students and educators, the public and Fort Valley's Air Force community. The lab includes machines such as CNC Routers, laser cutters and 3D printers, and a textiles suite.

Jones is a recipient of the Georgia Hospital Association's Distinguished Service Award and a 2024 Diamond Award for excellence in higher education leadership from the Not Alone Foundation.



CONGRATULATIONS TO PRESIDENT CATHY COX!

98%

OF OUR CLASSES HAVE 50 STUDENTS OR LESS

IMPACT ON OUR LOCAL ECONOMY



\$308 MILLION

100% MEDICAL SCHOOL ACCEPTANCE RATE 15 YEARS IN A ROW



HOME TO GEORGIA'S 2023 & 2024 TRUMAN SCHOLARS

RECIPIENT OF AACU'S 2023 EXCELLENCE & INNOVATION AWARD FOR GC JOURNEYS

TOP THREE IN GRADUATION AND RETENTION WITH UGA AND GEORGIA TECH



#1 STUDENT ATHLETE GRADUATION RATE AMONG ALL NCAA DIVISION II PUBLIC UNIVERSITIES

JANN L. JOSEPH

President, Georgia Gwinnett College, Lawrenceville



Georgia Gwinnett College (GGC) has received six-figure funding from the National Science Foundation (NSF), reaffirmation from the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC) and record summer enrollment, just a few of the recent highlights happening under President Jann Joseph's leadership.

As GGC embarked on the 20th year of its young history in June, the college earned its 10-year reaffirmation from SACSCOC. The reaffirmation process includes rigorous internal and external peer review process, which ensures that GGC adheres to

standards, including academic excellence, policy and fiscal responsibility.

In other news, in less than a year, GGC received three grants totaling \$700,000 from the NSF to help address need in the information technology field and summer enrollment hit a record high with a 10% increase over last summer. Additionally, the Georgia Board of Regents, which oversees the University System of Georgia's 26 higher education institutions, presented GGC with the Regents Momentum Award for Excellence in Advising and Student Success.

A native of Trinidad, West Indies, Joseph was named president of GGC in 2019.

RUSSELL T. KEEN

President, Augusta University, Augusta



Russell Keen assumed the presidency of Augusta University (AU), on July 1. A Georgia native, Keen previously served as executive vice president for administration and chief of staff to the president at AU, where he held an executive leadership role since July 2015.

Keen's executive leadership duties included managing and allocating the university's more than \$1-billion budget, managing and coordinating its executive vice presidents and serving as head administrator in the president's absence. He has more than 22 years of experience working within the University System of Georgia.

Prior to joining AU, Keen worked at Georgia Southern University (GSU), advancing from director of annual giving to vice president for external affairs. His resume also includes a stint as the major gifts officer for the Franklin College of Arts and Sciences at the University of Georgia (UGA).

Keen is a first-generation college student. He holds a bachelor's degree in business administration, a master's degree in higher education administration from GSU and an EdD in higher education management from UGA. He serves on several boards, including the Georgia Chamber of Commerce, Conservative Policy Leadership Institute and the Government Affairs Council of the Association of Public and Land Grant Universities.

KYLE MARRERO

President, Georgia Southern University, Statesboro



Georgia Southern University is seeing record-breaking numbers in private fundraising, faculty research awards and expenditures, graduation rates, degrees conferred and annual economic impact to its region. And now it's soaring toward Carnegie R1

status by 2028, says President Kyle Marrero. "It's a focus specifically on public impact research from an agenda standpoint," he says. "We're really focusing on five areas where we have research activity: Logistic/Supply Chain Technology Solutions, Advanced Manufacturing, Holistic Wellness and Fitness Coastal Resilience/Sustainability and Community Vibrancy.

Marrero leads GSU's more than 26,100 students and 3,000 faculty and staff across three campuses in Statesboro, Savannah and Hinesville. GSU also operates instructional sites in Wexford, Ireland, and at the Fort Stewart/Hunter Army Education Center.

As part of its commitment to produce career-ready graduates, GSU is supporting four incubators/accelerators in Savannah (Savannah Logistics Innovation Center), Metter (agribusiness), Hinesville (small business incubator) and Statesboro (the Business Innovation Group - BIG).

In October 2023, the university launched its first-ever comprehensive fundraising initiative to raise \$125 million by 2026.

TIM MCDONALD

President, Lanier Technical College, Gainesville



If there was a theme for the last few years at Lanier Technical College (LTC), it was enrollment growth, according to President Tim McDonald. Last fall, LTC set a record when it enrolled 6,144 students, followed by a record-setting graduating

class of more than 1,450 graduates.

"We're extremely excited about that; however, there are some programs that have been identified as high-demand areas such as nursing and allied health, manufacturing, transportation and cybersecurity, and we've experienced a 17% growth in enrollment in these areas," he says.

McDonald says value plays a key role in the college's success - the value it provides students and the value it places in students. The commitment of LTC's more than 600 employees is also key to its role in contributing to Georgia's robust economy.

"As Lanier Technical College's eighth president, I have the tremendous honor and privilege to work with a fantastic group of passionate people fully committed to our mission of workforce development," he says.

McDonald served as the college's executive vice president for six years before taking the top post in April 2021. He serves as chairman of the Hall County Economic Development Council.

VALERIE MONTGOMERY RICE

President & CEO, Morehouse School of Medicine, Atlanta



Under the leadership of President Valerie Montgomery Rice, Morehouse School of Medicine (MSM) was recently awarded a \$25-million grant to address cancer disparities, becoming the first historically Black medical school and the first

school in Georgia to receive the award.

In March, Cancer Research UK and the National Cancer Institute awarded the grant to Team SAMBAI (Societal, Ancestry, Molecular and Biological Analyses of Inequalities), a global team, to help address cancer disparities in populations of African ancestry.

Montgomery Rice is the sixth president of MSM and the first woman to lead the freestanding medical institution. She is a renowned infertility specialist and researcher, most recently serving as dean and executive vice president of MSM, where she has served since 2011.

Dedicated to the creation and advancement of health equity, Montgomery Rice held faculty positions and leadership roles at various health centers, including academic health centers, prior to joining MSM. She was the founding director of the Center for Women's Health Research at Meharry Medical College, one of the nation's first research centers devoted to studying diseases that disproportionately impact women of color.

JERE W. MOREHEAD

President, University of Georgia, Athens



The University of Georgia has secured a host of achievements under the leadership of its 22nd president, Jere Morehead, from record enrollment and degree completion rates to all-time high research and development expenditures.

UGA's annual economic impact on the state of Georgia has grown to \$8.1 billion, and its public service and outreach earned the Association of Public and Land-grant Universities' highest national award. This year, UGA established a School of Medicine that will significantly expand the number of physicians in Georgia and increase the amount of life-saving medical research conducted in the state.

"Guided by our land- and sea-grant mission, the University of Georgia consistently pushes the boundaries of what is possible to better serve the needs of Georgia and improve the lives of its citizens," Morehead says. "I am continuously impressed by the efforts of our university community and all they do to serve our great state."

Morehead chairs the NCAA Division I Board of Directors and is past president of the Southeastern Conference. He also serves on the NCAA Board of Governors and the National Football Foundation Board of Trustees, as well as the boards of the Georgia Chamber of Commerce, Metro Atlanta Chamber and the Georgia Research Alliance.

JULIE POST

President, West Georgia Technical College, Carrollton



In May, West Georgia Technical College (WGTC) held a groundbreaking ceremony to kick-off construction of its new 45,000-square-foot Murphy Industrial Technology Building, which will introduce trade and tech programs to WGTC's Murphy campus in Haralson County for the first time, says President Julie Post.

The \$8.7-million facility will house WGTC's commercial truck driving, welding and lineworker programs.

"Haralson County is a manufacturing community," Post says. "We develop our programs so our students will be the best product for our customers, which are business and industry."

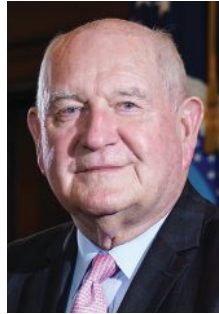
Post says she's proud enrollment is up - 9.5% in fall 2023 and 6% in the spring. For the academic year 2023, the college had about 2,000 grads and conferred about 3,000 awards to students ranging in age from 17 to 70.

"It's really a rich environment where you can be successful before graduating from high school or you can come back and retool as adults," she says. "That's what I think makes a technical college education great."

Recently, WGTC was one of two colleges to receive Workforce Accelerator for Manufacturing funding from the state. The \$6.5 million will help support the renovation of its 30,000-square-foot Electrification and Transportation Center on its LaGrange campus.

SONNY PERDUE

Chancellor, University System of Georgia, Atlanta



The University System of Georgia (USG) recently became the first university system in the nation to work with an Atlanta-based data analytics company to implement a new career planning tool for students systemwide.

Under the leadership of

Chancellor Sonny Perdue, the Career Resource Planning Platform gives students in the system's 26 public colleges and universities additional career counseling services and connects them to information about graduates and alumni in their chosen field. The platform can help students with specific job services and career guidance, including potential degrees to pursue, job opportunities and salary ranges based on a student's interests.

Perdue became the USG's 14th chancellor in 2022. As chancellor, Perdue is responsible for overseeing the state's public colleges and universities, an \$11.5 billion budget, more than 48,000 faculty and staff and more than 344,000 students. The Georgia Public Library Service and the Georgia Archives are also part of USG.

The chancellor's office is Perdue's latest stop in a long career of public service. He was a member of the Georgia Senate for 10 years, he is a two-term Georgia governor and he served as Secretary of Agriculture during the Trump administration.

HEIDI POPHAM

President, Georgia Northwestern Technical College, Rome



For Heidi Popham, there are two keys to fulfilling Georgia Northwestern Technical College's mission of meeting the region's workforce development needs - communication and partnerships. So, when Atrium Health

Floyd asked for the college's help to remedy a shortage of area healthcare professionals, GNTC responded with a commitment to boost enrollment in three of its programs and increase the number of respiratory therapists, radiologic technologists and certified nursing assistants it produces.

Atrium Health Floyd committed more than \$1 million over the next five years to help support the faculty, equipment and additional classroom space needed to increase enrollment in the three healthcare programs at GNTC's Floyd County campus in Rome. "I think this partnership goes to really highlight our ability to work one-on-one with our industries here in Northwest Georgia to meet their workforce needs," Popham says. "This was very specific to the high-demand workforce needs that Atrium Floyd has."

According to Popham, fall and spring enrollment were each up by 9%, and for the 2023 academic year GNTC served 12,241 students, including credit, adult education and economic development training and continuing education programs, across its nine campuses.

STUART RAYFIELD

President, Columbus State University, Columbus



Stuart Rayfield has served as president of Columbus State since July 2023, but she's worked with the school far longer than that. She originally joined the college of more than 7,000 students in 2006 as an assistant professor, later directing the school's Servant Leadership Program, co-developing the Master of Science in Organizational Leadership program's servant leadership track and being named interim associate provost for undergraduate education in 2015.

After several stints as interim president at other colleges in the state, she served as the vice chancellor for leadership and institutional development and interim executive vice chancellor for academic affairs for the University System of Georgia before returning to Columbus State to lead.

The college, which had a \$297.5-million economic impact on the region last year, recently launched a new five-year strategic plan to continue its commitment to empowering the surrounding Chattahoochee Valley region, drive innovation through academics and outreach, and create opportunities for its students and alumni.

DANA RICKMAN

President, Georgia Partnership for Excellence in Education, Atlanta



The Georgia Partnership for Excellence in Education (GPEE) provides accessible research to education, government, civic and business leaders to help shape statewide, systemic education reform efforts. Under the direction of President Dana Rickman, the

partnership produces relevant, independent research on issues affecting public education. Publications include the *Economics of Education* and *The Top Ten Issues to Watch*.

The *Economics of Education* report promotes the power of high-quality education as an economic development strategy. First developed in cooperation with the Georgia Chamber of Commerce in 2003, the popular report is continuously updated and provides specific dollar-and-cents evidence that ties a community's prosperity to education.

The *Top Ten Issues to Watch* chronicles Georgia's biggest challenges to ensuring all children have the same equitable access to a high-quality education. The annual publication seeks to equip state leaders with the information needed to come up with solutions to improve life outcomes for public school students across the state.

Rickman joined GPEE in July 2011 and took the helm as its fourth president in 2021. She previously served as the nonprofit, nonpartisan research group's vice president and research and policy director.

KATHY "KAT" SCHWAIG

President, Kennesaw State University, Kennesaw



Kat Schwaig became Kennesaw State University's (KSU) sixth president in 2022, the culmination of a lifelong love of learning and a career dedicated to higher education.

Under Schwaig's leadership, KSU has embarked on a comprehensive student success initiative, established new graduate degrees for in-demand fields, formalized a targeted strategy for enrollment growth and realized a more than \$2-billion economic impact on the State of Georgia in FY22. During her tenure, KSU has also invested in the university's research infrastructure and successfully achieved Carnegie-designated

doctoral research institution (R2) status.

Schwaig is a longtime member of the KSU community. She joined the faculty in 2002 and then served in several faculty and leadership roles, including dean of the Michael J. Coles College of Business, and provost and senior vice president for academic affairs. She is chair of SelectCobb and serves on the executive committee for the board of directors of the Cobb Chamber of Commerce and on the board of directors for the Metro Atlanta Chamber of Commerce.

LONNIE ROBERTS

President, Coastal Pines Technical College, Waycross



With enrollment up more than 10% this spring, Coastal Pines Technical College (CPTC) President Lonnie Roberts says the college is laser focused on increasing the number of student apprenticeships. To that end, Roberts says CPTC hired a

full-time apprenticeship coordinator in January of 2023, the only position of its kind in the Technical College System of Georgia. The initiative has been so successful, a second full-time coordinator was hired in the spring.

"We see apprenticeships for our students as an opportunity to get the experiences that are vital for success in today's workforce," he says. "It also gives businesses and industry a pipeline of talented, educated individuals to help drive growth and innovation for the companies. It's a great example of the transformative power of partnerships between academia and industry."

The drive to provide apprenticeships began with four students last spring, and by the end of the 2023 academic year in July, the college expected to have 50 apprentices at 23 different companies.

In addition, CPTC has a long-standing Naval Maintenance apprenticeship program with Naval Submarine Base Kings Bay. In the last 10 years, the college has had more than 400 graduates in that apprenticeship program.

MARK A. ROBERTS

President, Reinhardt University, Waleska



In an effort to meet the needs of industry, Reinhardt University recently revised its undergraduate cybersecurity program. The program has 44 students enrolled and the university minted seven new graduates in May, according to President Mark Roberts.

"We saw a need to update the curriculum; it's a much stronger curriculum and it really serves the students and industry," Roberts says. "We started the program in 2017, and we are one of the few universities in the Southeast to have a full bachelor's in cybersecurity."

Graduates of the program include an alum who landed a job at the U.S. Army Cyber Command Headquarters in Augusta and another who works with the Cherokee County School District in information technology, Roberts says.

Other notable programs at the university include health sciences. Cauble School of Nursing and Health Science graduates boast a 100% pass rate on the national exam to become a nurse, Roberts says.

In June, Reinhardt won the President's Volunteer Service Bronze Award, which recognizes outstanding volunteers and the impact they make. The award, presented in Washington, D.C., was in recognition of the more than 1,500 hours of community service performed by students at the Junior Achievement Discovery Center.

ROB SCOTT

President, Life University, Marietta



Since Rob Scott's appointment as the fifth president of Life University in 2017, the university has added new online academic programs and added the first accredited degree program within a Georgia correctional center for incarcerated students.

Other accomplishments during Scott's tenure include the opening of a 362-bed student living community and eatery, The Commons and Commons Dining Hall, and construction of a 14,000-square-foot, multi-use athletic facility. Opened in October 2022, the Running Eagles Performance Center is home to the men's and women's national champion wrestling teams.

In an effort to cultivate a diverse student body, Scott initiated a campus-wide cultural climate initiative that resulted in the establishment of the Office of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion in 2020.

Scott joined Life University in 2005 as dean of the College of Chiropractic before being elevated to the post of vice provost. He also served in executive leadership roles in academic affairs.

Scott holds the distinction of being the only college president in the chiropractic profession who is a member of the Diplomates of Chiropractic Philosophical Standards.

VICTORIA SEALS

President, Atlanta Technical College, Atlanta



In May, Atlanta Technical College (ATC) President Victoria Seals unveiled a transformative employee development program in partnership with the Atlanta Department of Waste Management (DWM). The program provides a dedicated curriculum for continuing education and certifications for DWM employees. Its aim is to increase workforce retention and elevate employee morale.

In 2024, the college also signed an agreement with nearby Clayton State University to streamline the transfer process and create a seamless pathway for

students looking to further their education in six high-demand fields, including cybersecurity and bioscience technology.

For more than 50 years, ATC has been growing the city of Atlanta's workforce, as well as Fulton and Clayton counties, through more than 150 academic programs, business and industry partnerships and diverse continuing educational offerings. ATC is home to the Center for Workforce Innovation, a partnership with the city of Atlanta and the Atlanta Committee for Progress, which seeks to ensure ATC programs align to fill workforce gaps and upskill to meet workforce needs.

Seals was named the president of ATC in 2016.

MARTHA ANN TODD

President, Columbus Technical College, Columbus



"Making sure our students have opportunities to transform their tomorrows today." That's the commitment Columbus Technical College makes to its students, according to President Martha Ann Todd. Columbus Tech is also equally

committed to the six-county region it serves.

"Our promise to the community is workforce development, and we do that by making sure students get the education and training they need to get a job, build a career, support their families and give back to the community where they live," Todd says.

One key workforce development initiative is meeting a critical need for more early childcare workers in the area. To that end, Columbus Tech received two grants totaling almost \$850,000 to provide early childhood care training (pre-kindergarten and below), remove student barriers to accessing the training and create a workforce pipeline that will support more childcare options like nights and weekends, which is especially critical for supporting the region's healthcare and manufacturing industries, Todd says.

Todd has more than 40 years of experience in education, serving in a wide range of teacher positions and leadership roles in public and private schools, pre-K through postsecondary.

DAVID A. THOMAS

President, Morehouse College, Atlanta



Working closely with the computer science and chemistry departments and the Office of Institutional Advancement, Google opened the Google Annex on the campus of Morehouse College in May. The space is equipped with smartboards, HD projectors, computers and other technology helpful for instruction and collaboration.

Founded in 1867, Morehouse College is a private historically Black, men's liberal arts college. Since 2018, the college has been led by President David Thomas, an internationally recognized expert in organizational management and higher education leadership. Thomas is also an award-winning author and business

consultant for 100 of the Fortune 500 companies.

He previously served as dean of Georgetown University's McDonough School of Business and on the business school faculty for both Harvard and University of Pennsylvania. Thomas announced that he will be retiring in June 2025.

In February 2022, the college launched its \$500-million "Making Men of Consequence" comprehensive capital campaign to fund scholarships for top students nationally, support faculty research, expand academic programs and access to global learning experiences, and to construct learning and living facilities on the college's 66-acre campus. Thomas' fundraising leadership has resulted in approximately \$190 million raised to date – a growing total higher than any other presidential tenure in the college's history.

WILLIAM D. "BILL" UNDERWOOD

President, Mercer University, Macon



Under the leadership of President Bill Underwood, good things are happening at Mercer University. Last fall, the university experienced record-setting enrollment with more than 1,100 undergraduates joining the ranks of the Bears.

"The average high school GPA of those students was 4.0," he says.

"We're continuing to attract really talented young people, and we're proud of that."

Another proud moment was the September 2023 opening of the medical school's sixth rural healthcare clinic on Jekyll Island. Mercer Medicine Jekyll Island is the primary care practice and faculty practice of Mercer University School of Medicine (MUSM). MUSM also operates rural health clinics in Peach, Clay, Putnam, Harris and Taylor counties and Plains.

"The mission of our school of medicine is to solve the rural medical crisis that exists in this state by providing healthcare to residents regardless of their zip code," Underwood says. According to Underwood, MUSM's goal is to have half of its graduates practice in rural communities with 50,000 residents or less.

Prior to becoming the 18th president of Mercer in 2006, Underwood served as interim president at Baylor University where he held the prestigious Leon Jaworski Chair at the Baylor School of Law.

DREW VAN HORN

President, Young Harris College, Young Harris



According to Young Harris College (YHC) President Drew Van Horn, the college exists not just for the benefit of its students, but for the betterment of its community as well.

"One of the things I've tried to

do is focus on the impact Young Harris College has on the community," he says. "We exist to benefit the community, not just the college."

To that end, Young Harris is donating a four-and-a-half-acre tract of land across the street from the college where a local developer is building affordable housing for young professionals, Van Horn says. Construction is expected to be completed next summer.

"Housing costs are expensive in the mountains because of the retirees," he says. "These townhomes, condos and apartments are designed to be priced where a young professional, like a nurse, a teacher or a first responder, can afford to lease a home. That way, we will be able to attract and retain talent."

Van Horn brought more than 30 years of experience in higher education to YHC when he began his tenure as president in 2017, including nine years as president of Brevard College in North Carolina, another private, residential liberal arts college affiliated with The United Methodist Church.

PAULA WALLACE

President and Founder, Savannah College of Art and Design, Savannah



This year, Savannah College of Art and Design (SCAD) is celebrating its sapphire anniversary. In recognition of the “dreams fulfilled, careers launched and lives transformed,” the college’s anniversary theme is 45 Years of Star Power, says President Paula Wallace, “an apt metaphor for the

74,000 alumni and students who shine brightly across the world, launching their own brands and leading at the world’s top companies, from Meta to Microsoft and Delta to Deloitte.”

SCAD has marked many firsts this year, including the launch of a new master of business innovation and the MA and MFA in sneaker design – each the first and only of its kind in the U.S.; the dramatic debut of the 11-acre Savannah Film Studios Backlot; and the opening of FORTY FIVE, SCAD’s new five-star resort complex with a rooftop pool, maker spaces, student residences, SCADshow theater and skyline views of Midtown.

Wallace founded SCAD in 1978 and is one of the longest-serving women presidents in the history of U.S. higher education. “With a record 17,600 plus students at three campuses on two continents and a \$1.3-billion-dollar economic impact in Georgia, we have so much to celebrate this and every year,” she says.

COMER YATES

Executive Director, Atlanta Speech School, Atlanta



With its mission “to help each person develop their full potential through language and literacy,” Atlanta Speech School Executive Director Comer Yates believes he has the greatest job in the world.

Founded in 1958 as a free clinic for children who were deaf or hard of hearing, today the school consists of four schools, four clinics and a professional development program, making it the nation’s most comprehensive language and literacy center. Yates became the school’s executive director in 1998.

During his tenure, the school has achieved many milestones, including securing the passage of Jack’s Law, which mandates insurance coverage of hearing aids and assistive devices in Georgia; being recognized by the Chan Zuckerberg Initiative as an “Exemplar School;” and opening The Rollins Center for Language and Literacy, which provides professional development for teachers of children from birth to age 8. The center was founded to break the cycle of illiteracy for children who have experienced a generational lack of access to educational opportunity.

With a gift from the James M. Cox Foundation, the Rollins Center developed the Cox Campus, a free, universally accessible interactive online community designed to provide a platform for translating its highly successful live model to an equally successful online format.

JOHN WATFORD

President, South Georgia Technical College, Americus



South Georgia Technical College (SGTC) President John Watford joined the college’s computer information systems faculty in January of 1990. Fast forward to 2024, and Watford is beginning his ninth year as president.

“I’ve been at the college for 34 years,” he says. “I just fell in love with the college. This is a great place to work, and as much as it is a great place to work and great people to work with, the mission we accomplish, which is workforce education, that’s what makes it special and what keeps us coming back to work every day. We see people’s lives get changed at South Georgia Tech.”

SGTC serves about 3,000 students a year across credit programs, according to Watson, and another 1,500 to 2,000 students annually as part of its economic development programs, including high school equivalency classes and industry partnerships. SGTC serves as the sole provider of technical training for Caterpillar and John Deere in the Southeast.

“That makes diesel training our area of excellence,” he says.

The second-oldest technical college in Georgia, SGTC offers more than 200 associate degree, diploma and technical certificates of credit.

JERMAINE WHIRL

President, Augusta Technical College, Augusta



Augusta Technical College (ATC) President Jermaine Whirl has bold aspirations. As home to Augusta National Golf Club and the Master’s Tournament, Augusta is already known as the mecca of golf. Now Whirl wants the city to assume a second

mantle – as the mecca of golf education.

On Jan. 1, ATC will take ownership of the city’s municipal golf course, known as “The Patch.” Plans call for ATC to relocate its golf course management and workforce development programs to The Patch, where new greens will be created, the clubhouse will be renovated and an educational facility will be built, says Whirl. ATC students will receive training and hands-on experience in course management, golf shop operations, culinary arts and hospitality.

“If you live in Nebraska, you love golf and watch the Master’s Tournament every year, and you’re wondering where to go to get the education you need to work at a golf course. We want them to say, ‘Augusta, Georgia,’” he says. “This is what I’m considering the only corridor of golf education in the country.”

That corridor includes ATC, Augusta University and First Tee of Augusta, a local non-profit where students ages 7-18 receive life skills and golf instruction.

LEOCADIA I. ZAK

President, Agnes Scott College, Decatur



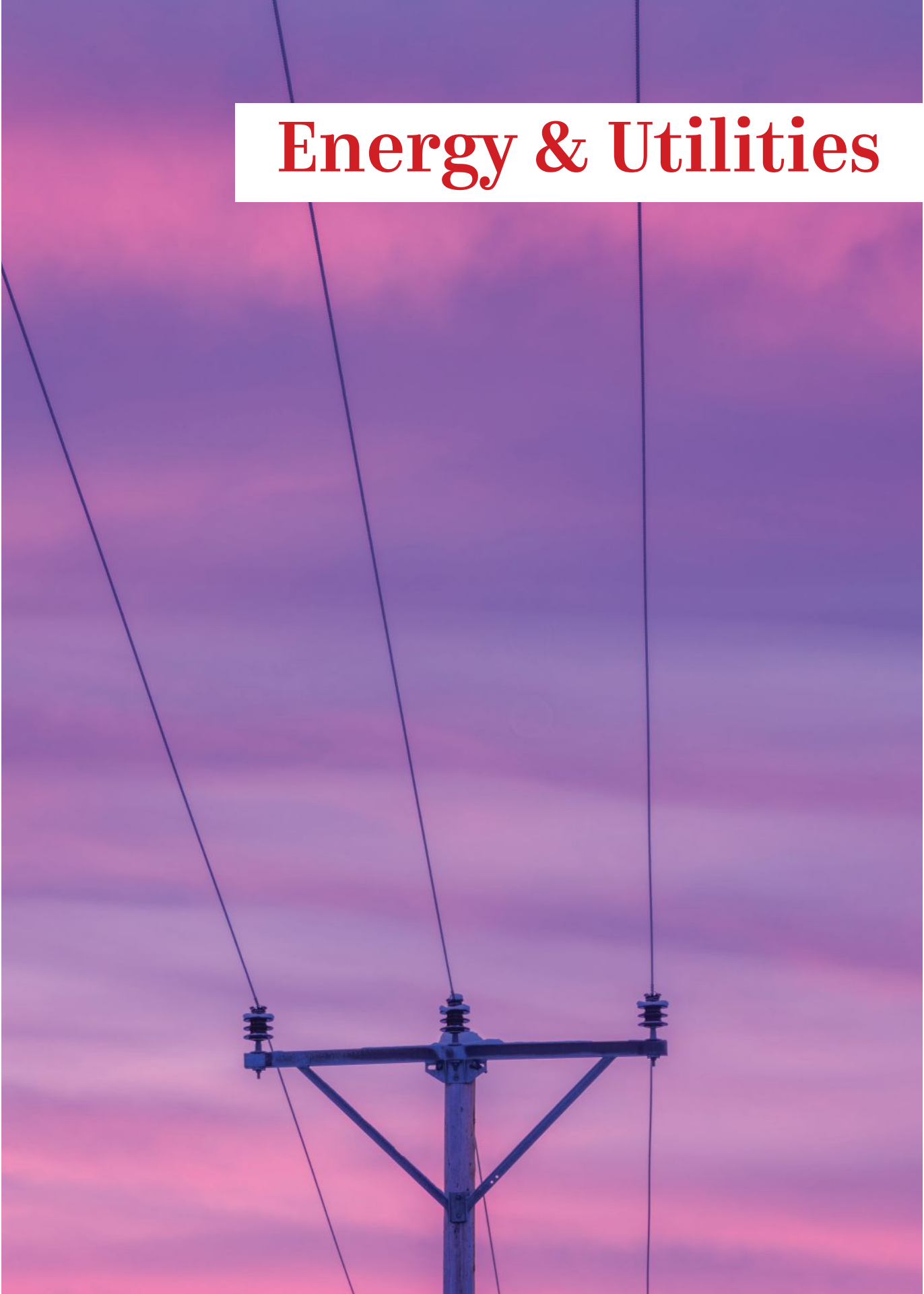
Leocadia I. Zak became Agnes Scott’s ninth president in 2018. Since she took the helm at the women’s liberal arts college in Decatur, Agnes Scott has achieved record enrollment and fundraising, launched new graduate programs and been recognized by *U.S. News & World Report* for innovation, teaching, first-year experiences and social mobility.

Under Zak’s leadership, Agnes Scott is developing a significant presence in Atlanta with the launch of SCALE (Sophomore Class Atlanta Leadership Experience) in which every sophomore participates in a weeklong externship with local corporate and nonprofit partners. Earlier this year, Agnes Scott was awarded \$1 million to train physician assistants and clinical mental health counselors in maternal and pediatric care as a part of the 2024 federal omnibus appropriations bill. New health-focused graduate programs address community and workforce needs while providing pathways for meaningful careers in healthcare.

She serves on numerous boards, including the American Council on Education, the International Women’s Forum and the Atlanta Rotary Club. She is board chair of the Georgia Independent College Association, a trustee of the international nonprofit Global Communities: Partners for Good and serves on the Metro Atlanta Chamber Innovation and Entrepreneurship Advisory Board.

Zak has an extensive background in international economic development and international project finance.

Energy & Utilities



TULLY BLALOCK

CEO, SolAmerica Energy, Atlanta



In 2017, Tully Blalock left one of Atlanta's largest law firms to become General Counsel for SolAmerica Energy, an Atlanta-based solar developer, builder and owner of community-scale solar projects. He was appointed CEO of

the company in 2023 and is steering the business through its next phase of growth.

SolAmerica Energy is currently developing solar projects in 22 states and continues to have a strong commitment to its home state of Georgia. Blalock is also policy chair of the Georgia Solar Energy Industries Association and an advocate for solar energy in Georgia and elsewhere.

"Georgia's rapid economic expansion has resulted in a historic increase in energy demand throughout the state," says Blalock. "Solar energy is a large part of the solution to serving that demand, as it is currently the lowest-cost form of new electric generation available in the state.

"Businesses moving to Georgia increasingly demand renewable energy," says Blalock. "We're here to work with these companies and the state's utilities to serve those needs."

GREG FORD

President & CEO, Georgia System Operations Corp., Tucker



Greg Ford has led GSOC through a changing electric utility industry since his tenure began in 2007. Adapting to those changes has been key, including working in tandem with Oglethorpe Power, Georgia Transmission and Green Power EMC to

serve Georgia's electric membership corporations.

"Electrical demand continues to rise. Electric vehicles, efficient and effective heat pumps, and industrial data centers all add to the load," says Ford. "Balancing the sunset of coal-powered generation and the rise of solar and other renewables with the growing system load demand requires adjustments and innovation. GSOC will continue setting the tone for today and developing a road map for tomorrow."

Ford is a current member and past chair of the North American Electric Reliability Corporation (NERC) Member Representatives Committee. He is a member of the United States Homeland Security's Electric Subsector Coordination Council and the Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers. Outside the industry, Ford served on the board of the Atlanta Chapter of the American Red Cross for about 10 years and is a member of its LifeBoard committee, where he is serving his second term as chair.

DENNIS CHASTAIN

President & CEO, Georgia Electric Membership Corp., Tucker



Georgia EMC is the statewide trade association representing Georgia's 41 not-for-profit EMCs that provide electric power and related services to approximately 4.4 million Georgians. Dennis Chastain has headed up the Georgia EMC since 2016. He currently serves as secretary-treasurer of the board of directors of the Georgia Department of Economic Development, the board of governors of the Georgia Chamber of Commerce and the board of directors of the Georgia Corporation for Economic Development.

"Georgia EMC is a proud partner of the Georgia Department of Economic Development and other allies to market our state to new business and industry," he says. "We are proud to be a part of the team that supports our state's community and economic development efforts, contributing to Georgia being named the No. 1 State for Business for a record 10 years in a row."

Originally from Toccoa, Chastain is a graduate of the Economic Development Institute at the University of Oklahoma and the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association Management Internship Program at the University of Wisconsin and Leadership Georgia.



PEDRO CHERRY

President & CEO, Atlanta Gas Light and Chattanooga Gas, Atlanta

Pedro Cherry oversees all aspects of operations for Atlanta Gas Light and Chattanooga Gas, which serve 1.8 million customers in two states.

He holds leadership positions on a number of boards, including Grady Memorial Hospital, 100 Black Men of Atlanta, Metro Atlanta Chamber of Commerce, the Boys and Girls Club of America – Southeast Region and The Carter Center. He is also a member of the board of directors for Synovus. Cherry currently serves as the 2024 Chairman of the Georgia Chamber.

Under his leadership, Atlanta Gas Light is focused on sustainability and giving back to the community, focusing support on energy assistance, education, environmental stewardship and community enrichment. Its 9th Annual Charity Golf Tournament raised \$250,000 in support of youth development and healthcare initiatives, part of nearly \$2 million the event has raised over the past decade.

Cherry is most proud of the team having a safety-first mindset and putting mental well-being

as a top priority for employees, resulting in Atlanta Gas Light being named one of Atlanta's Best Places to Work and Healthiest Employers. He is also proud of the work the team is doing to elevate the communities where they live, work and serve.

JAMES E. "JIM" FULLER

President & CEO, MEAG Power, Atlanta



Created in 1975, MEAG Power provides its 49 participant communities around the state with some of the most reliable, cost-effective and cleanest energy in the Southeast. Its diverse portfolio – delivering, on average, 66% emissions-free power since 2016 – now includes 500 MW of clean energy from the new Plant Vogtle nuclear Units 3 and 4, which are expected to operate for the next 60–80 years.

"We continually look to optimize our resource portfolio to meet anticipated capacity and energy requirements of our participant communities," says Fuller, "including a projected increase in our emissions-free energy delivered to nearly 90% by 2048."

Fuller has more than 40 years of utility experience and has been with MEAG Power since 1997. He serves on the boards of the American Public Power Association and the Large Public Power Council. He also serves on the Georgia Chamber's Board of Governors.

POWER UP

MEAG Power helps companies power up by generating wholesale energy that is some of the most reliable, cost-effective and cleanest in the South – 66% emissions-free on average! And this ideal power is delivered locally by 49 Georgia communities.

These public power communities are appealing hometowns for a company's present facility or future site. And because these communities own and manage their electric utilities, they have the flexibility to adjust rates to attract your business. Moreover, revenue from the electric utility is retained and reinvested locally so these already great places to live just keep getting better.

For companies looking for a place that offers ultra-clean, highly reliable, low-cost power, locate your enterprise in one of these MEAG Power communities. **They mean business.**



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| Acworth | Griffin |
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| Blakely | LaGrange |
| Brinson | Lawrenceville |
| Buford | Mansfield |
| Cairo | Marietta |
| Calhoun | Monroe |
| Camilla | Monticello |
| Cartersville | Moultrie |
| College Park | Newnan |
| Commerce | Norcross |
| Covington | Oxford |
| Crisp County | Palmetto |
| Doerun | Quitman |
| Douglas | Sandersville |
| East Point | Sylvania |
| Elberton | Sylvester |
| Ellaville | Thomaston |
| Fairburn | Thomasville |
| Fitzgerald | Washington |
| Forsyth | West Point |
| Fort Valley | Whigham |
| Grantville | |



www.meagpower.org

KIM GREENE

Chairman, President & CEO, Georgia Power, Atlanta



Kim Greene leads Georgia Power in serving its 2.7 million customers across the state. The company is the largest subsidiary of Southern Company, one of the nation's leading energy providers. Greene is a strong voice in the energy sector, especially on issues related to safety, emerging technologies, innovation and STEM-related education. She is a respected thought leader and advocate for the future of energy – from national energy policy to the overall customer experience.

Prior to her current position, Greene served for five years as chairman, president and CEO of Southern Company Gas. In this role, she ensured the delivery of clean, safe, reliable

and affordable natural gas to more than 4.3 million utility customers in Georgia, Illinois, Tennessee and Virginia, and over 600,000 retail gas customers served by SouthStar Energy Services in 10 states.

Greene serves on the board of directors for the Atlanta Committee for Progress, the Metro Atlanta Chamber, Nuclear Electric Insurance Limited, Valero Energy Corp., the Georgia Research Alliance and the Rowen Foundation. She serves on the board of trustees for Children's Healthcare of Atlanta and the Woodruff Arts Center, and on the board of governors for the Georgia Historical Society. Greene is also a member of The Atlanta Rotary Club.

KEVIN GREINER

President & CEO, Gas South, Atlanta



For more than 18 years, Kevin Greiner has served as president and CEO of Gas South, the Southeast's largest retail natural gas marketer. Gas South provides natural gas to nearly 500,000 residential, commercial and industrial customers throughout the Southeast, Mid-Atlantic and Midwest. Gas South also engages in wholesale energy trading; supplies natural gas to municipal gas systems, power plants and LNG terminals; and manages natural gas storage and transportation assets.

Greiner leads over 425 employees to Be A Fuel for Good® by caring for its customers and employees and elevating the industry and communities it serves. In addition, Greiner is particularly proud that Gas South gives back 5% of its profits to help children in need and has invested over \$60 million in solar projects benefiting the community.

Greiner's community work includes serving on the board of directors of organizations including YMCA of Metro Atlanta, Georgia Partnership for Excellence in Education, Select Cobb, Georgia Chamber of Commerce, Learn4Life, the Atlanta Opera and the Metro Atlanta Chamber. Before joining Gas South in 2006, Greiner held roles at Southern Company and Enron.

BARBARA HAMPTON

President & CEO, Georgia Transmission Corp., Tucker



Barbara Hampton leads Georgia Transmission, a not-for-profit cooperative owned by 38 electric membership corporations that serves more than 4.5 million in the state. Georgia Transmission owns more than 5,000 miles of high-voltage transmission lines and more than 780 substations. Its structure is based on a reliability and resilience strategy that includes adequate capacity, quick response times and implementing everyday innovations.

"Electric cooperatives have a unique seat in helping deliver innovative solutions to rural areas," Hampton says. "It was electric cooperatives that first brought light to rural farms, it is electric cooperatives helping to

bridge the digital divide through rural broadband initiatives – and it is electric cooperatives that are helping guide the energy transition, while at the same time focusing on reliability and resiliency."

Hampton has more than 35 years of experience in finance, strategic planning, procurement, information technology, risk management and rate design.

RAY GRINBERG

CEO, Tri-County EMC, Eatonton



Ray Grinberg became CEO of Tri-County EMC in 2016 after holding a variety of management and staff positions for both consumer and investor-owned utilities. In addition, he also serves as the CEO of Tri-County EMC's broadband affiliate Tri-CoGo.

According to Grinberg, reliability and affordability are critical to Georgia EMCs. "As not-for-profit entities, we're judicious in our spending and decisions," he says. "We are member-owned and carefully consider our expenditures in order to maximize the life of our investments in our future energy supply."

Grinberg believes Georgia has been smart in looking at its energy needs and investing in advanced nuclear technology to provide a low-carbon result that reduces greenhouse gas emissions. "Electricity generation needs to be available 24/7 so that we don't find ourselves in the situation that many parts of the country saw in December 2022," he says, referring to when Winter Storm Elliott wreaked havoc on Texas and other states.

The demand for power is increasing due to many different factors. "We need to stay ahead of this demand so we can welcome new businesses and the jobs that come with them," he says. "The cost of building new resources is going up and will challenge our ability to keep rates low."

JIM KERR

Chairman, President & CEO, Southern Company Gas, Atlanta



"My role is to ensure the delivery of clean, safe, reliable and affordable natural gas to 4.4 million utility customers across Georgia, Illinois, Tennessee and Virginia, as well as to 600,000 retail customers in 10 states," says Jim Kerr of Southern Company Gas, a subsidiary of Southern Company. "The energy we provide is foundational to supporting a thriving economy and achieving a clean energy future."

Kerr has been with Southern Company since 2014, where he helped direct the merger with AGL Resources. A respected voice in the energy industry, Kerr has testified on energy and

regulatory issues before Congress, the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission and state legislatures. He serves on the boards of the American Gas Association, Georgia Aquarium, Metro Atlanta Chamber, Rotary Club of Atlanta and mental health treatment organization Skyland Trail.

Kerr also serves as a principal member of the Bipartisan Policy Center's Future of Natural Gas Policy Initiative and on the Finance Committee of the National Petroleum Council, a federally chartered advisory committee appointed by the U.S. Secretary of Energy.

GEORGIA'S EMCs

Lighting the Way



Georgia's electric cooperative leaders are honored to be recognized among the most influential in the state. The state's member-owned, not-for-profit electric membership cooperatives (EMCs) operate the largest energy distribution network in Georgia and proudly deliver safe, reliable, and affordable electricity to the homes and businesses of nearly half the state's residents — approximately 4.5 million Georgians across 73% of the state's land area in 157 of 159 counties.

Of the 41 EMCs who call Georgia home, 38 are members of Oglethorpe Power, Green Power EMC, Georgia Transmission and Georgia System Operations. Together these corporations generate and procure power, transmit and distribute electricity across Georgia's electric grid, and monitor and manage the operation of the system.

Georgia EMC serves as the statewide trade association representing these companies and all 41 EMCs.



opc.com



gatransmission.com



gasoc.com



greenpoweremc.com



georgiaemc.com

JAMES MARLOW

President, Southface Institute, Atlanta



James Marlow is an innovator, technology marketer and digital transformation leader. As president of Atlanta-based Southface Institute, he works to scale sustainable, cost-effective building and development

solutions to environmental challenges.

Marlow also founded two energy startups and served as the CEO and cofounder of Radiance Solar and CEO of Clean Energy Advisors. In addition, he led software and digital technologies at Computerland, Yahoo!, Lotus Development and IBM. Throughout his career, Marlow has worked directly in the development, engineering, design and construction of more than 350 solar photovoltaic (PV) and energy storage projects.

Southface Institute had 511 active projects in 2023 that increased the sustainability, resilience and health of homes, businesses, nonprofits and more. “We’re on track to have an even bigger impact this year,” he says. “Our GoodUse program, which makes energy- and cost-saving improvements to nonprofit facilities, has now completed more than 575 projects across 31 states.

“Sustainability done correctly yields long-term savings, but economic myths and a status quo that prioritizes first cost over lifetime value are barriers to progress,” says Marlow. “We need to work with financial decisionmakers to establish a better understanding of the true economic value and benefits of building sustainability.”

GARY MILLER

President & CEO, GreyStone Power Corp., Hiram



“We have the opportunity to make a real difference in people’s lives by bringing high-speed, reliable internet to the unserved and underserved in our communities,” Gary Miller said when he introduced GreyStone Connect, its new fiber subsidiary, in May 2023. “We want to make GreyStone Connect synonymous with the same level of local customer service and quality our members know with GreyStone Power.”

GreyStone Connect announced the connection of its first customer to gigabit-speed internet in February of this year. “Connecting our inaugural customer is a testament to our commitment to serving the unserved and underserved communities in our territory with top-tier broadband services,” he says. “We are dedicated to empowering individuals and fostering connectivity that transforms lives.”

Miller has led member-owned cooperative GreyStone Power since 1999, which provides power to more than 129,000 members in portions of Paulding, Douglas, Fulton, Cobb, Carroll, Bartow, Fayette and Coweta counties. He serves on numerous industry-related state and national boards. He has been a trustee for Wellstar Health System since 2001. He serves on the Hospital Authority of Douglas County and the Development Authority of Douglas County, and is also the chair of Elevate Douglas, a public-private economic development organization.

MICHAEL MCMILLAN

President & CEO, Southern Rivers Energy, Barnesville



Michael McMillan oversees 68 full-time employees and manages more than \$180 million in assets for Southern Rivers Energy. Under his direction, the co-op recently completed the construction of a fiber network that will enable smart grid capabilities for its electric system. Southern Rivers Energy is also providing access to fiber-to-the-home high-speed internet service through its partner and internet service provider, Conexon and Conexon Connect.

Originally chartered as Lamar Electric Membership Corp. in 1938 by local farmers wanting to bring power to their community, today the co-op serves 16,000 members in nine counties in middle Georgia.

“The sudden increase in demand from energy-intensive businesses, coupled with a lack of transmission infrastructure and the lengthy timeline associated with building new transmission, are some of the other challenges facing energy and utility businesses right now,” McMillan says.

However, McMillan believes that Georgia is a great state for energy and utility businesses due to a lower-than-average cost of living, reasonable income tax rates, a skilled workforce and the lowest energy rates in the nation. “The integrated transmission system is something else that sets Georgia apart,” he says. “The ITS is jointly planned and operated by all the major utilities in the state, which helps keep costs low and the electric grid operating efficiently.”

JOHN MIDDLETON

General Manager, Okefenoke Rural Electric Membership Corp., Nahunta



John Middleton has served as the general manager of Okefenoke Rural Electric Membership Corp. (OREMC) since 2001. OREMC serves more than 41,000 consumer-members in Brantley, Camden, Charlton, Glynn, Ware and Wayne counties, as well as Baker and Nassau counties in Northeast Florida.

In addition, Middleton serves on the Oglethorpe Power Corp. Member Advisory Board, the Georgia Electric Membership Corp. Board and the Florida Electric Cooperative Association Board.

“Our biggest challenges as energy providers today are maintaining reliability and affordability as regulatory initiatives driven by climate concerns are radically reshaping our industry,” says Middleton, a military veteran who served in the Georgia Army National Guard. “Operating as an energy and utilities business in Georgia is great because the state offers an attractive environment with political and business leaders who are focused on creating opportunities for growth, coupled with low energy costs.”

JEREMY NELMS

President & CEO, Flint EMC, Reynolds



Since serving as the executive vice president and general manager of Blue Ridge Mountain EMC, Jeremy Nelms has been highly engaged in efforts to roll out fiber broadband technology to rural areas. Or as he puts it, “to pave the digital dirt roads of rural America.”

In his current role as the president & CEO of Flint EMC, Nelms provides technical and operational guidance in all aspects of electric utility management, process development and strategic planning. Flint EMC encompasses a 7,000-mile electric distribution system covering portions of 17 counties in middle Georgia, from Columbus to Warner Robbins. In addition, Flint EMC operates the electric distribution network of the U.S. Army’s Fort Moore military installation.

“The biggest energy challenge that keeps me up at night is threading the needle between meeting the increasing energy demands of Georgia’s growing economy and managing the threat of overreaching federal environmental regulations,” says Nelms, who is a licensed Professional Engineer (PE) in Georgia and Florida. “These regulations could actively make it harder to meet the growing demand for power, and quite possibly the existing needs for power as well.”

JEFF PRATT

President, Green Power EMC, Tucker



As the president of Green Power EMC, Jeff Pratt is responsible for the day-to-day management of the renewable energy portfolio that provides energy to 38 Georgia electric cooperatives. He also leads the effort to source, evaluate and contract for new renewable energy projects. In addition, Jeff serves as the vice president of emerging technologies for Oglethorpe Power Corp., leading efforts to explore, engage and implement emerging technologies that are changing the energy landscape.

“We are seeing consistent growth in Georgia’s electricity demand,” says Pratt. “To continue fueling the state’s economic

success and reliably meet consumers’ electricity needs, we need more energy from a variety of resources. Green Power EMC, on behalf of its member electric cooperatives, is working to help meet that demand with renewable energy resources like utility-scale solar.”

Having a secure, reliable, safe and clean energy source is critical to fostering successful economic development. “Georgia has ample potential for generating solar power,” says Pratt. “Together, our electric cooperatives have helped Georgia remain the No. 1 state in which to do business through their significant investment in market-driven solar energy – all without mandates from the state or federal government.”

MICHAEL L. “MIKE” SMITH

President & CEO, Oglethorpe Power Corp., Tucker



With a diverse portfolio of nuclear, natural gas, hydro and coal resources, Oglethorpe Power provides wholesale energy to 38 electric cooperatives across Georgia, serving 4.5 million people.

“In an era where electricity fuels everything from artificial intelligence to electric vehicles, ensuring a reliable and affordable power supply is crucial,” says Mike Smith, who has been president and CEO of Oglethorpe Power since November 2013. “To meet Georgia’s rising electricity demands, Oglethorpe Power continues to reshape and grow our generation portfolio in a way that enhances system reliability and reduces carbon emissions, while

keeping the costs down and the power on for the millions of Georgians our members serve.”

Before his role at Oglethorpe Power, Smith was an executive with Georgia Transmission and the Committee of Chief Risk Officers, a trade association created to compile best practices for the energy industry.

Making Life Better

You’ll find the business support you need with GreyStone Power’s economic development team. They help energize economic development in eight west-metro Atlanta counties.

Jeff Noles, commercial marketing and economic development manager, is your connection to making your business (*and life*) even better.



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WALTER WEST

President & CEO, Electric Cities of Georgia, Atlanta



Walter West has served as a distinguished leader in public power organizations for 27 years. As the President and CEO of Electric Cities of Georgia (ECG), a non-profit organization that provides strategic and technical services to public power communities with utility operations, West has been instrumental in creating ECG's strategic and fiduciary plan.

Since joining ECG in 2009, West has spearheaded innovative services and business opportunities that have significantly contributed to the

organization's development and well-being.

West's extensive background in engineering, analytical and business relationships has played a pivotal role in ECG's development. His leadership has led to several new services and business opportunities, facilitating substantial revenue and benefit opportunities for ECG members.

"The state of Georgia has fostered a pro-business environment that extends beyond a mere slogan," says West. "This enviable reputation is a testament to the efforts of Georgia's past and present leadership at the state capital. The state's business-friendly and competitive advantages make it an attractive destination for businesses seeking to thrive in today's dynamic economic climate."

CHRIS WOMACK

Chairman, President & CEO, Southern Company, Atlanta



Chris Womack leads one of the nation's premier energy providers, Southern Company, which serves 9 million customers across the country through its family of subsidiary companies. With more than three decades of experience marked by significant achievements and a reputation for inspiring excellence, Womack became chairman, president and CEO in 2023. His journey with the company has spanned various critical areas of the business, including operations, human resources, external affairs and communications.

Womack's commitment extends beyond corporate leadership into community engagement. He chairs the Metro Atlanta Chamber of Commerce, co-chairs the Edison Electric Institute's Customer Solutions Policy Committee and serves on the boards of The First Tee, EPRI, Invesco Ltd. and the Georgia Ports Authority.

Southern Company is recognized as an industry leader, ranking No. 1 among electric and gas utilities in *Fortune* magazine's 2024 World's Most Admired Companies list. This recognition reflects the company's commitment to service, innovation and community growth.

"It is an important time in our industry, as the energy landscape continues to rapidly evolve and customers' needs continue to change, and Southern Company is at the forefront of that evolution," says Womack. "Every day, we're building the future of energy. It is an honor to lead our teams working in states across the country that are wholeheartedly dedicated to innovating and delivering both world-class customer service and reliability to our customers."

Leading us to a bright future



Pedro Cherry

Atlanta Gas Light and Chattanooga Gas
President & CEO



Kim Greene

Georgia Power
Chairman, President & CEO



Jim Kerr

Southern Company Gas
Chairman, President & CEO



Chris Womack

Southern Company
Chairman, President & CEO

Our leadership is instrumental in ensuring the delivery of resilient energy solutions that connect communities, businesses and future generations to opportunity.

Congratulations to our leaders on being named to **Georgia Trend's 2024 Georgia 500 list.**



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January

RESERVE BY NOVEMBER 25
MATERIALS BY NOVEMBER 29

- Georgian of the Year
- 100 Most Influential Georgians
- Georgia Trend Hall of Fame
- Energy – EV Charging

Our State

- Cobb County
- Madison-Morgan County
- Fayette County



February

RESERVE BY DECEMBER 20
MATERIALS BY DECEMBER 30

- Legislative Guide
- Georgia Trustees 2025
- Georgia Municipal Association – Visionary Cities
- Healthcare – Heart Health
- University Report – Augusta University

Our State

- Cherokee County
- Valdosta



March

RESERVE BY JANUARY 24
MATERIALS BY JANUARY 30

- Women Leaders
- Best Places To Work
- Technology – FinTech
- CIDs – North Fulton
- Georgia Education Guide (sponsored content)
- Coastal Tourism

Our State

- Macon-Bibb County
- South Metro Atlanta



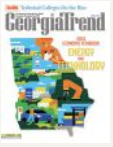
April

RESERVE BY FEBRUARY 24
MATERIALS BY FEBRUARY 28

- Economic Yearbook
- Shepherd Center
- Technical Colleges
- Manufacturing: Georgia Made

Our State

- Savannah-Chatham County
- Paulding County



May

RESERVE BY MARCH 24
MATERIALS BY MARCH 31

- Small Business Focus
- Health Leadership Insights (sponsored)
- MBA Programs

Our State

- Perimeter Area
- Forsyth County
- Murray County



June

RESERVE BY APRIL 24
MATERIALS BY APRIL 29

- Most Respected Leader
- ACCG – Counties of Excellence
- Healthcare – Cancer Treatment
- Affordable Housing
- Sustainability

Our State

- Columbus
- Brunswick-Golden Isles



July

RESERVE BY MAY 23
MATERIALS BY MAY 30

- Agribusiness
- Ga CVBs Travel Blazers Awards
- Wealth Management
- South Metro CIDs
- Atlanta Beltline

Our State

- Newton County



August

RESERVE BY JUNE 23
MATERIALS BY JUNE 30

- Main Street Cities
- Healthcare: Stroke
- Business of Sports – Soccer
- Global Trade
- Corporate Innovation Centers

Our State

- Augusta-Richmond County
- Albany-Dougherty County



September

RESERVE BY JULY 24
MATERIALS BY JULY 31

- **40th Anniversary Issue**
- College & University Directory
- Latino Community – Q&A
- Hartsfield-Jackson Atlanta International Airport
- Cobb CIDs

Our State

- Gwinnett County



October

RESERVE BY AUGUST 22
MATERIALS BY AUGUST 29

- 40 Under 40
- Georgia Workforce Needs
- Cancer Awareness (sponsored content)

Our State

- Gainesville-Hall County
- North Fulton



November

RESERVE BY SEPTEMBER 22
MATERIALS BY SEPTEMBER 29

- Transportation
- UGA Public Service & Outreach
- Georgia Ports
- Education

Our State

- Downtown Atlanta
- Dalton-Whitfield County
- DeKalb County



December

RESERVE BY OCTOBER 24
MATERIALS BY OCTOBER 31

- The Legal Elite
- Hospital Feature
- Healthcare – Georgia's Top Hospitals
- Research at Georgia's Universities/Georgia Bio

Our State

- Southwest Georgia
- Rockdale County



Business Georgia

RESERVE BY AUGUST 29 · PUBLISHING FALL 2025
Georgia's Economic Development Publication



Georgia 500

RESERVE BY AUGUST 15 · PUBLISHING FALL 2025
500 Leaders Who Impact Our State

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Engineering & Construction



G. HOLMES BELL IV

Chairman & CEO, Hussey Gay Bell, Savannah



Holmes Bell joined ENR Top 500 Design Firm Hussey Gay Bell in 1994 and became chairman and CEO in 2013. Since then, he has expanded the firm's presence to 160 engineers, architects and surveyors in eight office locations across Georgia, South Carolina and Tennessee. The firm represents numerous governmental and private clients throughout the Southeast and is working on a multitude of signature projects in the region, including a host of Tier 1 supplier projects related to Hyundai Motor Group's

\$5.5-billion investment project in Bryan County, which is slated to bring 8,100 jobs to the region.

Bell is optimistic about the future of business in Georgia. "With our business-friendly climate and workforce and industry acquisition strategies deployed by our incredible leadership across the state, Georgia will continue to serve as the region's economic engine now and well into the future," he says.

Bell currently serves as a Board Trustee for Mercer University and on boards for the Georgia Chamber of Commerce and the Savannah Chamber of Commerce.

DOUG DAVIDSON

Founder & Chairman, New South Construction Co., Atlanta



After working with a large commercial construction company for eight years, Doug Davidson, in 1990, founded New South Construction Co. with a basic philosophy of doing what they said they would do. That has enabled New South to continue working with many of its original clients such as Delta Air Lines, Coca-Cola, Emory University, the Atlanta Braves and others.

Davidson served on the boards of ACG Georgia, ACG America and the Construction Education Foundation of Georgia, now known as Construction Ready. He is a

past president of AGC Georgia and CEEGA. He currently serves on the Auburn University Construction Advisory Board and the Clemson University Student Affairs Executive Council.

Approaching its 35th anniversary, New South has grown to a \$600-million company. Davidson is currently transitioning ownership of the company. He will stay involved with its legacy clients and mentor the next generation of leaders at New South.

"Over the past 40 years, I have been blessed with many great mentors," he says. "It is important for these future leaders to continue the company core values that have made us so successful for our first 35 years."

JIM CROFT

Founder & CEO, CROFT & Associates, Kennesaw



In 2004, Jim Croft founded CROFT & Associates in Kennesaw. The firm has evolved from a two-person startup to a thriving 100-person full-service architecture and engineering firm with additional offices in Lawrenceville, Denver, Charlotte and Myrtle Beach. Under his leadership, CROFT's portfolio spans more than 40 states and serves clients both nationally and internationally.

Croft is committed to nurturing the next generation of leaders, fostering a culture of mentorship and professional growth within CROFT. The firm was Cobb Chamber's Small Business of the Year, on both *Atlanta Business Chronicle's* Best Places to Work and Top 25 Largest Architectural Firms, *Zweig's* Hot Firms List and *ENR Southeast's* Top 100 Design Firms. Recently, Croft was named as one of the *Atlanta Business Chronicle's* 2023 Most Admired CEOs.

A graduate of Leadership Paulding, he has served on numerous boards, including the Paulding County Chamber of Commerce, Paulding Economic Development Organization, Cobb County Public Library, Kennesaw State University and the Southern Airways 242 Memorial Foundation. He is currently involved with the Doulos Partners Board of Directors, the Cobb Chamber, as well as the Cobb Chamber's CEO Roundtable.

ALBERT G. EDWARDS

Founder & CEO, Corporate Environmental Risk Management, Atlanta



Since it was co-founded by Albert Edwards in 1995, Corporate Environmental Risk Management (CERM) has grown to become one of the largest minority-owned engineering firms in the Southeast. Edwards has long been a champion for corporate accountability, youth education and workforce development.

In addition to enacting the vision and strategy for CERM, Edwards also serves

on the boards of various business and community organizations, including the Metropolitan North Georgia Water Planning District Governing Board by appointment of Gov. Kemp, the Atlanta Business League, the Georgia Chamber of Commerce and the Council for Quality Growth.

"I am excited about the level of advocacy and integrity that exists with engineering and construction firms today," Edwards says. "Going forward, I'm hopeful that more leaders from the engineering and construction industry will take on leadership roles in community development and equity issues that impact the quality of life in our region and across the state."

While Edwards believes there is considerable room for diversity improvement in his industry, he remains optimistic. "I'm encouraged by many of CERM's partnerships that have become reciprocal and heartfelt friendships amongst firm leaders," he says.

DAN KAUFMAN

East Region President, JE Dunn Construction, Atlanta



As a LEED Accredited Professional, Dan Kaufman is always aware of the sustainability and environmental impact of construction projects. As president of the east region for JE Dunn Construction, that dedication impacts projects around the southeast.

While earning his bachelor's degree in architectural design from the University of Florida, and then his master's degree in construction management, Kaufman also amassed

nine years of experience as a plumber and interned at Abrams Construction.

He joined JE Dunn (formerly R.J. Griffin) in 1997 as a project engineer, moving up to assistant project manager by 1998. He became senior project manager in 2002, then division manager in 2007. Under his leadership, the Atlanta South Division of R.J. Griffin completed construction projects worth over \$523 million, playing a pivotal role in expanding the company's presence and navigating through the challenges posed by the global economic downturn of 2008.

In 2010, Kaufman was chosen by the JE Dunn Board of Directors to lead the East Region, which encompasses offices in Atlanta, Savannah, Tampa, Charlotte, Raleigh, Charleston and Nashville.

He is on the board of Feeding the Homeless Project and has been a board member of the Associated General Contractors of Georgia.

SAM MCCACHERN

President & CEO, Thomas & Hutton, Savannah



As president and CEO of Thomas & Hutton, a regional engineering and consulting firm, Sam McCachern is in a prime position to witness what he calls remarkable growth across Georgia and the Southeast, which he says is positively impacting the design industry.

"The transformation in our communities creates opportunities at many levels," he says. The company is engaged in those transformations with numerous significant projects across the state.

"Serving the communities where we work is a big part of Thomas & Hutton's culture," says McCachern,

who gives back to communities by volunteering his time to improve education opportunities at all stages, from early childhood development to technical schools and universities. "Education leads to better individual outcomes and a robust workforce for companies investing in Georgia."

Raised in North Carolina, McCachern has called Georgia home for nearly 40 years. In 2023, McCachern was named a laureate in Junior Achievement's Savannah Business Hall of Fame and was inducted into NC State's Civil, Construction and Environmental Engineering Alumni Hall of Fame.



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100 YEARS

DAVID MOELLERING

President & CEO, Georgia Highway Contractors Association, Alpharetta



As president and CEO of the Georgia Highway Contractors Association, David Moellering represents Georgia's road and bridge building community on all industry issues. He is a past chairman of the board of the Georgia Transportation Alliance and still serves on the executive committee, the Georgia Chamber of Commerce Board of Governors, the Georgia Department of Natural Resources Foundation Board, American Road Transportation Builders Association CSE Board and multiple philanthropic boards.

He has more than 40 years' experience in roadway and bridge infrastructure planning, construction, maintenance and policy implementation. Moellering has been recognized for years as one of Georgia's Top Lobbyists by *James Magazine*, and GHCA was recognized as the 2023 Top Trade & Business Association.

Under his leadership, GHCA developed a heavy equipment operator program – the first of its kind in the U.S. – that is taught in Georgia's high schools, furthering GHCA's workforce development efforts to introduce young people to the construction industry.

C. DAVID MOODY JR.

President & CEO, C.D. Moody Construction Co., Lithonia



Founded in a bedroom by David Moody in 1988, C.D. Moody Construction today is an award-winning general contracting and construction management firm that has built and delivered more than 200 commercial projects over the last 30 years, valued at over \$2 billion. Specializing in aviation, collegiate, commercial, K-12, municipal, nonprofit and retail facilities, as well as historic renovations, the company has built some of Atlanta's most notable structures, including the Maynard H. Jackson International Concourse, Olympic Stadium, Morehouse College Leadership Center and the Federal Reserve Bank of Atlanta as well as all of the major sports structures, from Mercedes-Benz Stadium to State Farm Arena to Turner Field.

Well recognized in the industry, he's a recipient of the Maynard Holbrook Jackson Jr. Contractor Award, the Morehouse College Outstanding Alumnus Entrepreneur Award and the Atlanta Chamber of Commerce Small Business Person of the Year. He's generous with his time, mentoring the next generation of Atlanta business leaders and speaking publicly about surviving childhood sexual abuse. He shares his journey of healing as an author as well as on his website *Moody Speaks*, a platform he created to share stories of survival. He is a graduate of both Morehouse College and Howard University.

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JOY ROHADFOX

President & CEO, Rohadfox Construction Control Services Corp., Atlanta



Rohadfox Construction Control Services has expanded into new areas and regions through Joy Rohadfox's business strategies, the building and maintaining of strong client relationships and delivering projects that exceed expectations. She has formed partnerships with some of the largest engineering firms in the world, resulting in high-profile contracts with state, municipal and federal agencies in the transportation, transit, water/wastewater and aviation industries.

For more than two decades, Rohadfox has led the company her late father, Dr. Ronald Rohadfox, founded in 1976. Under her guidance, it has become one of the most successful minority-owned businesses in the country.

Rohadfox's reputation for calculated risk-taking and innovative thinking has earned her various awards, including the "Woman of Influence" title by the *Atlanta Business Chronicle* and the Conference of Minority Transportation Officials as well as induction into the Atlanta Business League Hall of Fame. *Engineering Georgia Magazine* has named her one of the top 100 influential women in Georgia for three consecutive years. In addition to her work, she is an active member of several community service organizations, including the National Kidney Foundation Southern Region's board chair, the Atlanta Rotary, the Buckhead Coalition board and The Carter Center board of councilors.

MICHAEL "SULLY" SULLIVAN

President & CEO, American Council of Engineering Companies of Georgia, Atlanta



As president and CEO of the American Council of Engineering Companies of Georgia (ACEC), Sully Sullivan is focused on solving some of the biggest challenges facing engineering, architecture and construction firms today. "The biggest challenge by far is the STEM workforce pipeline," he says. "We simply aren't generating enough new engineering industry professionals to meet the demand."

To address that problem, ACEC is working with the University System of Georgia, the Technical College System of Georgia and K-12 schools around the state to get more

students into career tracks working in the built environment.

"If we want to remain the 'No. 1 State for Business,' we need to generate the professionals who are needed to design the facilities for those businesses as well as transportation, water, power and other types of infrastructure that are needed to support them," he says.

Before joining ACEC in 2012, Sullivan was an attorney and equity partner at Andersen, Tate & Carr, one of Metro Atlanta's largest full-service law firms.

H. JEROME RUSSELL

Co-owner & President, H.J. Russell & Co., Atlanta



Jerome Russell may have started out in his family's business working on the beer distribution side, but his real passion and expertise has always been in real estate. "I like real estate because it's so creative," he says. "You can pick up all of the disciplines in business, from marketing and finance to banking and insurance."

The company's projects dot the Atlanta skyline, but one piece of the business he holds near and dear is the creation of the Russell Innovation Center for Entrepreneurs (RICE). Located in H.J. Russell & Company's former Fair Street headquarters building, it was founded in 2016, just a few years

after his father, Herman J. Russell Sr., who founded the company in 1952, passed away. It has since become an economic mobility engine for the community, investing in Black entrepreneurs, strengthening businesses and creating community.

"We are on the cusp of something that is different and unique," he says, "and the blueprint is needed across the United States."

GREGORY D. TEAGUE

CEO, Croy Engineering, Marietta

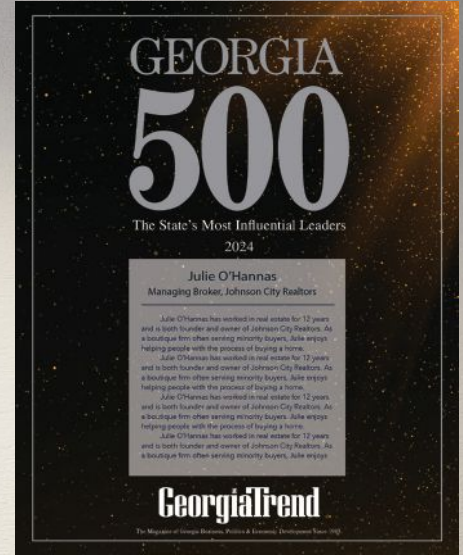


In his role as CEO of Croy Engineering, Greg Teague consults with local governments throughout the Southeast, working on numerous public and private projects, including airports, roads, transit facilities, commercial developments, parks, greenways, stormwater infrastructure, municipal water systems and wastewater systems.

The biggest challenge for engineering firms in Georgia, he notes, continues to be the recruitment and retention of talent. "However, this has created an opportunity for the increased use of technology to make our existing

workforce more efficient. Drones, robots and 3D software have all grown in importance to our industry and are helping to bridge the talent gap in employment," he says. "These technologies will never replace our engineers and surveyors, but they have allowed our firm to keep pace with the need to continue improving our nation's infrastructure."

Croy is an award-winning, full-service consulting engineering firm with locations in Alabama, Georgia and Tennessee. With experience on projects across the Southeast, Croy offers a range of services to local and national clients. Since 2020, Croy has been recognized as a Top 100 Design Firm by *ENR Southeast*, and in 2024 it was named a recipient of the Best Firms to Work For Award by the Zweig Group for the fifth consecutive year.



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Government

CAPT. CHRISTOPHER G. BOHNER

Commanding Officer, Naval Submarine Base, Kings Bay



Captain Christopher Bohner has served as the commanding officer at the Naval Submarine Base in Kings Bay since 2021. Capt. Bohner enlisted in the U.S. Navy as a nuclear electricians mate. Since then he has held a number of positions including

navigator/operations officer, engineer officer, executive officer, senior deputy for training readiness and director of strategic forces, nuclear weapons and force protection.

Capt. Bohner attended North Carolina State University through the Nuclear Enlisted Commissioning Program, where he earned a bachelor of science degree in electrical engineering. He also earned masters degrees in ocean engineering from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and Woods Hole Oceanographic Institute. In addition, he earned a master of strategic studies degree from the U.S. Air War College.

Capt. Bohner has served aboard attack and ballistic missile submarines including the USS Hartford, USS Albuquerque, USS Jacksonville, USS Alaska and USS Tennessee. He has received the Defense Superior Service Medal, Legion of Merit, Meritorious Service Medal and the Navy and Marine Corps Commendation and Achievement Medals, as well as various unit and campaign level awards.

CHRISTOPHER NUNN

Commissioner, Georgia Department of Community Affairs, Atlanta



The mission of the Department of Community Affairs (DCA), says Commissioner Christopher Nunn, "is to help local communities build strong, vibrant economies that work for everyone."

Of all state government agencies in Georgia, perhaps none has a more varied set of responsibilities. Under its broad umbrella, the agency's reach extends to everything from assistance to local governments and financing for housing development to support for small businesses.

Nunn has led DCA since 2017, when he was appointed by then-Gov. Nathan Deal while Nunn was serving briefly as commissioner of the Department of Administrative Services. At DCA, Nunn oversees programs vital to the state's success. In particular, the OneGeorgia Authority has enabled economic development across rural Georgia. It now administers the Rural Workforce Housing Initiative, which is an additional tool for DCA's housing development efforts. Along with the State Housing Tax Credit, the agency can finance workforce housing across the state.

Nunn serves on several boards, including the boards of advisors for the Robert T. Jones Jr. Scholarship Trust at Emory University and the Center for Family Business at Kennesaw State University.

TOM CLARK

Executive Director, Central Savannah River Area Alliance for Fort Eisenhower, Augusta



The Air Force Association has twice awarded the CSRA Alliance for Fort Eisenhower (formerly Fort Gordon) the CyberPatriot Center of Excellence of the Year award. The most recent award recognized the team for their exceptional level

of involvement across all areas of CyberPatriot, a national program to encourage students toward careers in cybersecurity.

The alliance is an economic development and support group that promotes regional economic development through partnerships capitalizing on Fort Eisenhower's cyber, information technology, communications and medical expertise. That includes efforts to advance the development of the Fort Eisenhower Cyber District, which will provide a rich cyber research and innovation ecosystem. Tom Clark has helped develop programs promoting cyber education from kindergarten through high school to help address critical cyber workforce shortages.

As part of his role in heading the group since 2016, Clark sits on the governor's Joint Defense Committee.

His 32 years in the military include serving as the Army's Signal Regimental and Fort Gordon Command Sergeant Major. His accolades include the Outstanding Georgia Citizen Award, the Columbia County Lifetime Achievement Award, a Distinguished Member of the Signal Regiment inductee, the Distinguished Service Medal, the Legion of Merit, two Bronze Stars and the combat action badge.

JEFF COWN

Director, Environmental Protection Division, Atlanta



Jeff Cown has faced two major environmental issues since the Board of the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) voted unanimously to approve him as director of the Environmental

Protection Division (EPD) last August.

One is a plan by Alabama-based Twin Pines Minerals to mine titanium oxide at a site near the Okefenokee Swamp, an environmentally fragile blackwater swamp that is the largest of its kind in North America. The other is how the state will regulate coal ash stored in ponds adjacent to coal-burning power plants. Both face opposition from environmental groups and others. Cown has promised to review both issues from a scientific perspective and publicly reveal his findings in a way that builds trust in the agency.

Cown has been with DNR for three-plus decades. Previously, he was director of the State Parks and Historic Sites Division, where he oversaw management of 70 properties that preserve the state's environment and history. Prior to that, he spent over 28 years with the EPD, leading the Land Protection Branch. He earned a bachelor of science degree in agricultural engineering from the University of Georgia and is a graduate of the Institute of Georgia Environmental Leadership (IGEL), Georgia's environmental leadership program.

JESSIE OWENSBY

Community & Economic Development Director, City of Cornelia, Cornelia



As the community and economic director for Cornelia, Jessie Owensby has a unique perspective on the challenges faced by small, rural communities today. One of the biggest is affordable housing. "Growth is happening faster than we can plan for it, and we do not have the housing capacity needed," she says.

"We're trying to find the balance of welcoming growth to diversify our tax base, add conveniences for residents and strengthen the vitality of our

historic downtown while preserving the small-town, safe and serene quality of life that makes our area such a wonderful place to live," says Owensby.

Under Owensby's tenure, Cornelia has received a number of recognitions and awards including Georgia Downtown of the Year, Georgia Certified City of Ethics and Georgia Visionary City. Downtown Cornelia has been recognized by the National Register of Historic Places as a Historic District.

Owensby is also the founder and principal consultant for Civic Engagement Strategies, which works with municipalities and community groups to develop strategic planning initiatives and leadership strategies.

"You can't beat Georgia," says Owensby. "We have small, vibrant downtowns as well as one of the largest cities in the country, along with the industry and quality of life. Why would you live anywhere else?"

MG PAUL T. STANTON

Commanding General, U.S. Army Cyber Center of Excellence and Fort Eisenhower, Augusta



Major General Paul T. Stanton graduated from the U.S. Military Academy at West Point in 1995 and commissioned into the Infantry. In 2015 he transitioned into the U.S. Army Cyber Branch, assuming duties as the commanding general for the U.S. Army Cyber Center of Excellence and Fort Eisenhower in 2021.

During his career, MG Stanton has served in a number of command, staff and joint positions. He has completed two operational assignments: Instructor, Combined Security Transition Command-Afghanistan in Operation Enduring Freedom; and

Commander, B Company, 1-502nd Infantry, 101st Airborne Division in Operation Iraqi Freedom.

MG Stanton has earned three degrees in computer science: a bachelor's degree from the U.S. Military Academy at West Point, a master's degree from the University of Illinois and a doctorate (PhD) from Johns Hopkins University. His military education includes the Infantry Officer Basic and Advanced Courses, the U.S. Army Command and General Staff College and a Senior Service College Fellowship.

REBECCA SULLIVAN

Commissioner, Department of Administrative Services, Atlanta



Rebecca Sullivan was appointed the 14th commissioner of the Department of Administrative Services (DOAS) in 2022. She previously served as assistant commissioner and general counsel of DOAS since 2014. Sullivan has more than 20 years of experience as an attorney in government and private practice.

"I like to say the Georgia Department of Administrative Services serves as the backbone for state government," says Sullivan. "Our goal is to streamline and create efficiencies in state business processes while promoting policy

compliance and responsible stewardship of state resources across the enterprise of state government."

Sullivan says that state agencies, including DOAS, continue to face major challenges in recruiting, hiring and retaining quality talent. "In response, the DOAS Human Resources Administration launched a Workforce Strategy Initiative in January 2022," she says. "Along with a retention study, the state is also implementing a new enterprise resource planning system to improve onboarding and decrease hiring time."

DOAS is playing a supporting role in making Georgia the best-managed state through the NextGen project, which will replace the state's enterprise resource platform. "This will transform and streamline state government business processes," she says, "by leveraging technology to modernize the way we do business and provide better data to policymakers for more informed decisions."



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Healthcare

JASON BEARDEN

Georgia Market President, CareSource, Atlanta



Jason Bearden has positioned CareSource as a healthcare market leader in Georgia by creating a high-quality, member-focused health plan that addresses social conditions that impact health, health equity, prevention and access to care statewide. CareSource is a nationally recognized nonprofit managed care organization that offers a variety of health insurance plans, including Medicaid, Medicare and Health Insurance Marketplace products, to more than 2 million members in a growing number of states.

Bearden's success at CareSource stems from his passion and experience in working with individuals with varying healthcare needs. That passion and experience is rooted both in his state government tenure, where he worked for former Governor Sonny Perdue in the Office of Planning and Budget as the director of Health and Human Services, and as the CEO for Highland Rivers Health, Georgia's largest community mental health center.

Bearden is a member of the boards of the Decatur Family YMCA, Partners for HOME and the Georgia Quality Healthcare Association and sits on the Georgia Chamber of Commerce board of governors.

ROBERT BUNCH

President, Anthem Blue Cross Blue Shield of Georgia, Atlanta



Robert Bunch directs the strategic growth and performance of Anthem's commercial business in the state, partnering with healthcare providers to enhance the lives of Georgians.

Under Bunch's leadership, Anthem Blue Cross Blue Shield of Georgia has launched initiatives to expand telehealth services, improve mental healthcare access, and increase community health outreach programs. His efforts focus on reducing healthcare disparities and improving health outcomes for underserved populations.

Bunch has held various leadership roles at Anthem, including sales, account management, product development, government and regulatory compliance, systems integration and business migration activities. He has also overseen systems and application programming teams, demonstrating his versatility and comprehensive understanding of the healthcare industry.

With a degree in healthcare administration, Bunch is actively involved in professional associations and frequently speaks at industry conferences. His leadership continues to position Anthem Blue Cross Blue Shield of Georgia as a trusted partner in the health and well-being of Georgians.

KEVIN BROWN

CEO, Piedmont Healthcare, Atlanta



Kevin Brown leads Georgia's largest health system, serving more than 4 million unique patients annually. With more than \$7.5 billion in revenue and employing over 40,000 people, Piedmont has quadrupled in size since Brown took the helm in 2013. It now has over 1,700 locations, including 24 hospitals, reaching more than 85% of the state's population. Recent expansions include an urgent care center in McDonough, a new patient tower at Piedmont Newnan Hospital, additional inpatient beds in Cartersville and new ICU rooms at Piedmont Mountainside in Jasper.

"We continue to grow to serve the healthcare needs in communities across Georgia," Brown says. "While Georgians associate Piedmont with a hospital, much of our growth and investment in access has been in our clinic and ambulatory network. Our goal is to bring high-quality, patient-centered care close to home."

Brown says he is also proud of the breadth of care the system now offers, everything from basic primary care to heart, liver, kidney and pancreas transplants. Piedmont has grown from one hospital serving Atlanta to a statewide health system that now serves patients from all 50 states and beyond.

MATTHEW CASEMAN

CEO, Georgia Nurses Association, Atlanta



Matthew Caseman, a resourceful nursing executive with 25 years of experience, currently serves as the CEO of the Georgia Nurses Association (GNA). In his role, he provides strategic leadership collaborating with boards to set and achieve long-term

goals for improving the nursing profession.

Under his direction, the organization has enhanced its financial transparency and operational efficiency. The organization also has a philanthropic arm, the Georgia Nurses Foundation (GNF), which supports the GNA and funds programs including the Honor a Nurse Program, the GNF Scholarship Program and the GNA Peer Assistance Program.

Previously, Caseman led the Blue Ridge Area Health Education Center in Rome, where he oversaw operations, financial management and community relationships, and worked with various stakeholders to address regional needs. He also served as the Director of Government Relations for the Georgia Hospital Association, advocating for the Georgia hospital industry and enhancing the nonprofit's role in the healthcare community.

As Executive Director of the Georgia Rural Health Association, Caseman managed public policy and strategic planning, significantly increasing membership and positioning GRHA as a leader in rural healthcare. Caseman is a member of the Georgia Society of Association Executives.

NKEM CHUKWUMERIJE

President & Executive Medical Director, The Southeast Permanente Medical Group, Atlanta



The Southeast Permanente Medical Group is one of Georgia's largest multispecialty medical groups with over 800 clinicians caring for more than 325,000 Kaiser Permanente members. Nkem Chukwumerije, MD, also serves as executive sponsor

and national physician lead for Equity, Inclusion and Diversity for the Permanente Medical Groups under The Permanente Federation.

Prior to his role in Georgia, Dr. Chukwumerije served as regional physician director for Utilization Management and physician leader for Care Without Delay in Kaiser Permanente's Southern California region.

Dr. Chukwumerije is active in the medical community. He previously served as president and chair of the board of directors of the Association of Nigerian Physicians in the Americas, where he continues to serve. He also served as president of the University of Nigeria College of Medicine Alumni Association, North America.

Dr. Chukwumerije is deeply committed to addressing the medical needs of his native country through his continued service to Faith Alive USA and the Isuochi Progressive Union. These organizations are devoted to providing medical care and support to underserved areas of Nigeria.

JORGE CORTES

Director, Georgia Cancer Center, Augusta



Jorge Cortes, MD, has dedicated his professional career to advancing cancer care. As the director of the Georgia Cancer Center, he is leading the Center's mission of achieving National Cancer Institute

designation and reducing the burden of cancer for citizens in Georgia.

He is a distinguished medical professional and earned his degree from Universidad Nacional Autonoma de Mexico in Mexico City. In 2019, he was named the Director of the Georgia Cancer Center at Augusta University after a 27-year tenure at The University of Texas MD Anderson Cancer Center.

In his current role at the Georgia Cancer Center, Dr. Cortes has led over 230 grants, facilitated the approval of four leukemia drugs and authored more than 1,000 research papers.

Recognized with numerous awards, including Castle Connolly America's Top Doctor, Dr. Cortes is a member of the National Academy of Medicine in Mexico. He serves on various boards and committees, including the Augusta Symphony and Greater Augusta Arts Council, and is active in leadership roles within the medical community.

LYNN DURHAM

President & CEO, Georgia Center for Oncology Research and Education, Atlanta



The Georgia Center for Oncology Research and Education (Georgia CORE) is a statewide non-profit organization dedicated to bridging the gap between research, educational outreach and advocacy to improve cancer care in Georgia.

That means working to both increase and promote more clinical trials and focus on research that helps make significant improvements in cancer care, particularly to minority, rural and underserved populations in Georgia. It also partners with oncologists, nurses, community organizations and others to increase prevention and screening services, education and awareness.

The mission of CORE is personal and professional. As a cancer survivor, Lynn Durham began her involvement with Georgia CORE as a member of the Survivorship Advisory Board and served on the board of directors from 2018 until her appointment as president and CEO in 2021.

"It is a joy each day to lead efforts to improve cancer care in Georgia by removing barriers to access, increasing the number of cancer clinical trials, and convening and inspiring the state's cancer providers and healthcare leaders to be an innovative and collaborative force for more cancer research and better cancer treatments," she says.

CARLOS DEL RIO

Executive Associate Dean, Emory University School of Medicine and Grady Health System, Atlanta



Carlos del Rio, MD, wears many hats at Emory University. He's the Executive Associate Dean of the School of Medicine and Grady Health System, a Distinguished Professor in the infectious diseases division, co-director of the Emory Center for AIDS Research,

and co-PI for both the Emory-CDC HIV Clinical Trials Unit and the Emory Vaccine and Treatment Evaluation Unit.

Hailing from Mexico, Dr. del Rio's journey with Emory began after he completed his medical school in Mexico and moved to Atlanta for his internal medicine and infectious diseases residencies. He briefly returned to Mexico to lead the national response to AIDS before coming back to Emory in 1996.

His work isn't just limited to Atlanta; Dr. del Rio's teaching and research span the globe, with collaborations in countries like Ethiopia, Vietnam, Kenya and Thailand. He has co-authored 30 book chapters and over 350 scientific papers.

Elected to the National Academy of Medicine in 2013 and named its foreign secretary in 2020, Dr. del Rio is renowned for his dedicated efforts to prevent HIV infection and improve treatment outcomes for hard-to-reach populations.

CHRIS DORMAN

President & CEO, Southwell Inc., Tipton



Chris Dorman is a big advocate of mentorship. This Tifton native started a computer company that focused on building physician portals when he was 13. At age 15, a local CEO took him under his wing and guided him further into the rural healthcare

arena. By age 16, he was managing a physician's office. He became the youngest member of the Rotary Club in the world.

He continued to manage physician's practices through college, then moved to Richmond, Va., where he met another incredible mentor who "taught me how to be a CEO," says Dorman.

Dorman joined Southwell, a leading healthcare provider in South Central Georgia, in 2013 as COO and was appointed president and CEO in 2017. "We're bucking the notion of rural hospitals closing," says Dorman. "Our organization is committed to our community and their families – from the physicians who provide services not available elsewhere in rural communities to an amazing and well-organized medical support staff."

Recently, Dorman spearheaded a program that helps community-based students afford medical school. "We have 50 med students, residents and fellows in the program," he says. "And we've got commitments through 2033. We want to bring in every service that's reasonable to keep our families close to home for their healthcare."

DELVECCHIO S. FINLEY

President & CEO, Atrium Health Navicent, Macon



Atrium Health Navicent (AHN) is part of the Atrium Health enterprise, one of the largest non-profit and leading academic health systems in the U.S. As a key executive, Delvecchio Finley provides leadership and strategic direction to ensure AHN's growth and success, overseeing integration efforts and implementing new technology platforms to adapt to market changes.

Atrium Health Navicent gave back more than \$248 million in community benefit in 2023 and reinvested more than \$385.8 million in services – averaging \$1 million a day – across its service area, which stretches across Georgia and Alabama.

A Georgia native with more than 20 years of healthcare leadership experience, Finley joined AHN in 2021 following Navicent's strategic combination with Atrium Health. He is a fellow of the American College of Healthcare Executives and currently serves as immediate past chair.

He has also served on the boards of the American Hospital Association, Georgia Hospital Association, Georgia Alliance of Community Hospitals, Georgia Chamber of Commerce and more. Recognized for his leadership, Finley has received numerous accolades, including *Modern Healthcare's* Top 25 Diversity Leaders in Healthcare for 2021 and 2023.

DOUGLAS K. GRAHAM

Children's Healthcare of Atlanta; Emory University School of Medicine, Atlanta



Douglas Graham, MD, is the Williams G. Woods MD Chair and Chief of CHA's Aflic Cancer and Blood Disorders Center. Dr. Graham is also Professor of Pediatrics and Division Chief of Emory's Pediatric Hematology/Oncology/BMT department, with clinical expertise in the treatment of children with leukemia. He is a National Institutes of Health-funded investigator with an active laboratory focusing on developing novel therapeutics for pediatric cancer.

"We take care of two-thirds of the children in Georgia who have a blood disease," says Dr. Graham. "I've spent my career working on specialized unique

programs in precision medicine, cell therapy, high-risk leukemias and bone marrow transplants, where, in Georgia, we've transplanted more children with sickle cell than anywhere else in the country."

He is a member of numerous medical committees and organizations, including the NIH Molecular and Cellular Hematology Study Section, the American Society for Cancer Research and the Society for Pediatric Research, and was the 2023-23 president of the American Society of Pediatric Hematology/Oncology.

JOHN HAUPERT

President & CEO, Grady Health System, Atlanta



At a time when healthcare access is critically important, John Hauptert's leadership at Grady Health System and his contributions to the broader healthcare community have made him a respected figure in the industry, underscored by his recent accolades and ongoing commitment

to public health. His work has been recognized nationally, such as with the 2023 Gold Medal Award by the American College of Healthcare Executives

Its flagship 953-bed Grady Memorial Hospital is a cornerstone of urban healthcare. It serves as a safety net for the poor and uninsured, operates one of the busiest Level I trauma centers in the country and provides specialized care through its burn center and AIDS clinic.

In 2024, Grady announced it is building a 20,000-square-foot emergency department in Union City as part of its effort to meet the growing need for emergency services for communities south of I-20 in metro Atlanta, along with an outpatient center in the West End community. Currently, South Fulton residents must travel 40 minutes for emergency care.

Hauptert chairs the Board of Trustees for the American Hospital Association and serves as vice chair of the Georgia Board of Public Health, to which he was appointed in 2015.

ANDRE GREENWOOD

Market Leader & Interim CEO, Aetna Better Health of Georgia, Atlanta



Andre Greenwood is a leader of Aetna Medicaid's work in Georgia, supporting the health and wellness of under-resourced populations. The company helps individuals and families achieve their best health through access to expert care, support and the right benefits.

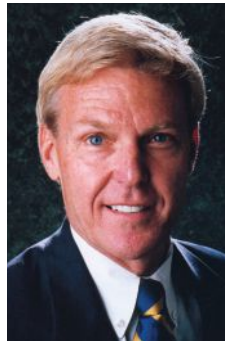
Aetna Better Health of Georgia regularly supports the state's nonprofit groups working to improve the lives of Georgians, such as in 2023, when it provided \$380,000 to 23 community-based organizations across the state that help to improve the health and well-being of mothers and infants and that provide resources and opportunities for under-resourced populations.

"Volunteering and supporting local organizations are the foundation of healthy communities," says Greenwood. "By supporting solutions that address essential needs, such as food security, health literacy, housing and workforce development, we can build a strong future for communities across Georgia."

A longtime Atlanta resident, Andre serves on several boards, including as chairman at the Andrew and Walter Young Family YMCA.

PAUL P. HINCHEY

President & CEO, St. Joseph's/Candler Health System, Savannah



Since 1997, following the joint operating agreement between St. Joseph's Hospital and Candler Hospital, Paul Hincey has led the health system that serves 33 counties in Southeast Georgia and three in South Carolina across the state line.

That includes its two main hospitals,

St. Joseph's Hospital and Candler Hospital, two new campuses in Pooler and Bluffton, along with 15 primary care and nine urgent care locations. Its comprehensive network also includes centers of excellence for oncology, cardiovascular, neurosciences, orthopaedics, pulmonary medicine and other disease specialties.

This past year, St. Joseph's/Candler partnered with Augusta University's Medical College of Georgia in its effort to open a new four-year campus at the Georgia Southern University Armstrong campus in Savannah.

Hincey's previous roles include president and CEO of St. Joseph's Hospital in Port Charlotte, Florida, and COO positions at Holy Cross Health System in Maryland and Holy Cross Hospital in Utah.

Hincey's accolades include the Golden Heart Award from Union Mission, the Freedom Award from the Savannah NAACP, the Georgia Alliance Hospital of the Year Award and the National Nova Award from the American Hospital Association.

LOY HOWARD

President & CEO, Tanner Health System, Carrollton



Loy Howard is only the fifth person to hold the role of president and CEO since Tanner Health System was founded in 1949. He came on board in 1994 after serving as CEO and CFO at Union Hospital District in Union, South Carolina.

The nonprofit

health system operates five hospitals and numerous care centers in communities across west Georgia and east Alabama, as well as Tanner Medical Group, one of metro Atlanta's largest multi-specialty physician groups.

In 2024, it opened a 5,200-square-foot Tanner Urgent Care for Kids facility and began construction on a new three-story patient tower at Tanner Medical Center in Carrollton that will add 50 beds to the hospital. The 97,000-square-foot project is the most significant expansion to the hospital since 2013.

Since joining Tanner, Howard's community and healthcare contributions have garnered him numerous awards, including the Georgia Hospital Association's Chairman Award in 2014, the Carroll County Chamber of Commerce's Citizen of the Year award in 2008, the Chamber's Horizon Award in 2002 and the Visionary Award from the Follow Me Foundation in 2000. He is a past chair of the Carroll County Chamber of Commerce.

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DONNA W. HYLAND

President & CEO, Children's Healthcare of Atlanta, Atlanta



Donna Hyland has been a champion for pediatric healthcare in Georgia for over three decades. As president and CEO, she has steered Children's Healthcare of Atlanta (CHOA) into one of the nation's leading pediatric care providers, with over 12,700 employees managing around 1.2 million patient visits annually.

Throughout her career, Hyland has been instrumental in expanding CHOA, including merging Egleston and Scottish Rite hospitals, adding Hughes Spalding Hospital and Marcus Autism Center, and advancing a research partnership between Emory and Children's Healthcare of Atlanta. Next up is the \$2.2-billion North

Druid Hills campus, which includes the 19-story, 2-million-square-foot Arthur M. Blank Hospital that opened in Fall 2024.

Under her leadership, CHOA consistently ranks among the top children's hospitals by *U.S. News & World Report*. Both Egleston and Scottish Rite hospitals have earned Magnet recognition for nursing excellence.

Hyland serves on several local and corporate boards, including the Atlanta Committee for Progress, Cousins Properties, Genuine Parts Company and Truist.

KIM H. JONES

Executive Director, NAMI Georgia, Atlanta



Kim Jones is a passionate advocate for mental health, inspired by her own experience as a mother of a child with a mental health condition. The National Alliance for Mental Illness (NAMI), the largest grassroots advocacy organization for

mental health, benefits from Jones's visionary leadership and commitment to serving Georgia's communities. She is dedicated to challenging stigma and promoting innovative solutions to revolutionize mental healthcare in the state.

Appointed to the Behavioral Health Reform and Innovation Committee by the late Speaker David Ralston, Jones expertise plays a crucial role in statewide policy reform. As a cofounder of the Georgia Mental Health Policy Partnership, she collaborates with stakeholders to create a unified voice for mental health. Her strategic leadership was instrumental in the passage of the landmark Mental Health Parity Act.

Her work at NAMI Georgia is driven by a steadfast commitment to the best interests of those they serve. Her leadership reflects her dedication to creating a more compassionate and equitable mental health landscape in Georgia, ensuring that everyone affected by mental health conditions receives the care and support they need.

SHANE JACKSON

President, Jackson Healthcare, Alpharetta



Shane Jackson believes in and lives the mission of improving patient care and enhancing lives. Since becoming president of healthcare staffing firm Jackson Healthcare in 2014, the organization has seen significant growth, landing it on *Forbes'* list of "America's Largest Private Companies."

Jackson is a strong advocate for business leaders making a positive impact on their communities. He frequently speaks at conferences and writes about nurturing a values-based culture, and his first book, *Fostering Culture: A Leader's Guide to Purposely Shaping Culture*, was published in 2018.

He has been recognized on Staffing Industry Analysts' Staffing 100 list of top North American industry leaders and has been named to the Georgia Titan 100 list. He has also received the Jerry Noyce Executive Health Champion Award from HERO and the inaugural *Atlanta Business Chronicle* Corporate Citizenship Award.

At Jackson Healthcare, Jackson champions the LoveLifts community impact platform, focusing on improving healthcare access and youth well-being. In 2016, he launched Connecting Kids With Care, a nonprofit that provides free healthcare to global orphans through volunteer doctors and nurses.

Jackson sits on several boards including the Foundation for Government Accountability and is the founding vice chair of goBeyondProfit, an organization that encourages businesses to invest within the communities they serve.

JOON LEE

CEO, Emory Healthcare, Atlanta



Joon Lee's leadership at Emory Healthcare is marked by a commitment to innovation, equity and excellence in patient care, making significant strides in enhancing the health system's impact on the community. That includes the recent \$22-million renovation of Emory

Decatur Hospital's behavioral health services unit.

Dr. Lee joined Emory Healthcare in July 2023 after a distinguished 27-year career at the University of Pittsburgh Medical Center (UPMC). There, his research focused on stem cell therapy for heart disease, rapid treatment of cardiac emergencies and catheter-based treatments for valvular heart disease, including Transcatheter Aortic Valve Replacement (TAVR). He was the chief of the Division of Cardiology and the founding executive director of the UPMC Heart and Vascular Institute.

Dr. Lee is dedicated to leveraging technology and data to enhance patient and provider experiences, ensuring equitable care for all, and fostering a collaborative work environment that advances patient care.

Emory Healthcare, a leading academic health system in Atlanta, includes 11 hospitals, nearly 500 provider locations, and more than 24,000 staff and physicians.

RANDOLPH LEGG

President and Head of Commercial Business, Boehringer Ingelheim Animal Health USA, Duluth



A 29-year veteran of Boehringer Ingelheim's human and veterinary pharmaceutical divisions, Randolph Legg has been president of the world's second-largest animal

health company since 2021. Legg started with Boehringer Ingelheim in 1995 as a senior specialty sales account manager and climbed the corporate ladder to become head of the U.S. Animal Health Commercial Business in 2020, a position he continues to hold.

Boehringer Ingelheim recently announced a partnership with the Atlanta Braves and the Atlanta Braves Foundation as the Official Animal Health Company partner. Legg says he is thrilled to join forces with the Atlanta Braves because the team shares his organization's commitment to community and excellence. He goes on to say the partnership represents a unique opportunity to connect with our local community in a meaningful way.

Among the company's animal health products are the Recombitek and Purevax lines of vaccines, parasiticides such as NexGard and Frontline and the Aservo EquiHaler for asthmatic horses.



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JIMMY LEWIS

Founder & CEO, HomeTown Health, Cumming



Jimmy Lewis has had several careers, including co-owning a farm equipment manufacturing company. Working with rural folks inspired him to step into the healthcare arena in 1999, when he founded HomeTown Health, a rural hospital support company that provides legislation, online training and more in the areas of reimbursement, operations and technology.

Lewis has been instrumental in passing key rural legislation and regulations for hospital-based nursing homes, state merit, PPS and critical access hospitals.

Under his leadership, HomeTown

Health has grown to a virtual company with 60+ hospital members and 60 business partners across the Southeast and throughout the U.S.

Lewis serves on the Rural Hospital Stabilization Committee, Georgia Department of Community Health (DCH) Continuous Program Improvement (CPI) Committee and Georgia DCH CPI Healthcare Access Committee. He is on the board of the Georgia Partnership for Telehealth, a not-for-profit telemedicine network with over 300 providers using state-of-the-art remote diagnostic and monitoring technology.

“I’m a serial entrepreneur working for the benefit of others,” says Lewis. “Our initiatives are key to the survival of rural hospitals and rural healthcare in Georgia.”

JEFF MYERS

President & CEO, Hamilton Health Care System, Dalton



Jeff Myers has been president and CEO of the nonprofit Hamilton Health Care System in Dalton since 2009. During his tenure, Hamilton has enlarged its footprint in the Dalton, Chatsworth, Ringgold and Calhoun areas with new construction projects for expanding healthcare services.

Most recently, this includes Hamilton Health–Calhoun in 2024 and The Lofts at Hamilton in 2023. During his tenure, the healthcare system also expanded its comprehensive cardiovascular and open-heart surgery services and opened the Peoples Cancer Institute, Anna Shaw Children’s Institute, Hamilton Health–Catoosa Campus and the Hamilton Physician Group–Murray Campus.

Additionally, Hamilton Medical Center completed an 11-year

renovation project in 2022. The health system currently operates the Hamilton Cardiovascular Institute in Chattanooga and an outpost in Cleveland. Plans are in the works to expand even more with the recent agreement to purchase the 351-bed Tennova Healthcare in Cleveland, Tennessee.

Myers’ early career includes more than four years at Sherman Oaks Hospital in Sherman Oaks, California, followed by eight years at what was then Memorial Medical Center in Savannah. From there, he segued to executive positions with health plans, a career turn that placed him in Dalton, where he remained until taking up his duties at Hamilton.

ERIC MININBERG

President, Piedmont Cancer Institute, Atlanta



As a leader in his field, Eric Mininberg, MD, diagnoses and treats patients with all cancer types at Piedmont Cancer Institute, which provides comprehensive, patient-centered care through diagnosis, treatment and support services for patients and families. Dr. Mininberg joined Piedmont Cancer Institute in 2003 and remains actively involved in clinical research trials.

He says that healthcare systems are stretched to the limit due to clinician shortages caused by burnout and retirement. The shortage

is especially acute in medical oncology, where there’s a 20% anticipated physician shortfall by 2025.

“Cancer diagnoses are on the rise, and demand for medical oncologists is expected to increase by 48%,” he says. “In this environment, we must work smarter with the newest technologies at point of care, adopt the latest advances in new therapies, expand recruitment and have systems in place for retention.”

Dr. Mininberg has spent his entire practicing medical career in Georgia and the Metro Atlanta region. “Piedmont Cancer Institute has been a phenomenal place to work based on the high quality of our physicians and staff,” he says. “Outstanding colleagues and partners in care have allowed me to be extremely successful in taking care of my patients.”

CAYLEE NOGGLE

President & CEO, Georgia Hospital Association, Atlanta



Founded in 1929, the Georgia Hospital Association (GHA) is the state’s largest nonprofit trade association that serves 145 hospitals throughout Georgia. An allied member of the American Hospital Association, it aims to promote the health and welfare of the public through the development of better hospital care.

Since Caylee Noggle joined the GHA in 2023, she has been focused on educating stakeholders and communities about its priorities, including expanding healthcare access for all Georgians, growing the healthcare workforce and supporting quality and patient safety initiatives.

Additionally, GHA is prioritizing access to behavioral health services, tort relief, and health plan literacy and payer accountability.

Prior to her role with the GHA, Noggle held multiple positions within Gov. Brian Kemp’s office and served for nearly 20 years in state government. She most recently served as commissioner of the Georgia Department of Community Health and previously as president of the Georgia Student Finance Commission. She continues to serve on the board of directors of the Georgia Lottery Corp.

JENNIFER RUTLEGE PETTIE

Founding Principal & CEO, Health Equilibrium Group, Atlanta



Jennifer Rutledge Pettie is a legal epidemiologist who is dedicated to revolutionizing healthcare and improving health outcomes. At Health Equilibrium Group, she leads the charge in shaping policy agendas, conducting groundbreaking research and creating innovative healthcare solutions.

Pettie is also executive director of the Birthright Collaborative, a community engagement consulting firm dedicated to improving maternal health outcomes in Georgia.

“Healthcare businesses in Georgia are confronted with a pivotal mission: achieving health equity,” says Pettie. “Amidst the

backdrop of persistent disparities and evolving healthcare landscapes, the call to action is clear. We stand at the forefront of a movement that demands not only innovation and adaptability, but also compassion and unwavering commitment to every individual’s right to quality care.”

Pettie believes that Georgia’s diverse population, robust healthcare infrastructure and supportive business environment contribute to its appeal as a promising location for healthcare businesses to operate and thrive.

“Georgia boasts great and motivated stakeholders” she says, “including policymakers, healthcare providers, community organizations and advocacy groups who are dedicated to collaborating and implementing solutions to improve health equity and outcomes across the state.”

NEIL L. PRUITT JR.

Chairman & CEO, PruittHealth, Norcross



Neil Pruitt has led the company his father founded in 1969 for more than 20 years. The family-owned business has grown from its first nursing home in Toccoa to a fully integrated healthcare company with 180 provider locations in six states.

PruittHealth offers skilled nursing and rehabilitation services, independent and assisted living, veterans care, home health and hospice, as well as pharmacy, medical supplies and care management across Georgia, South Carolina,

North Carolina, Florida, Tennessee and Maryland.

Pruitt has served as chair of the Board of Governors of the American Health Care Association and the Georgia Health Care Association, and on the University System of Georgia Board of Regents since 2011, where he is currently one of five at-large members of the 19-member panel.

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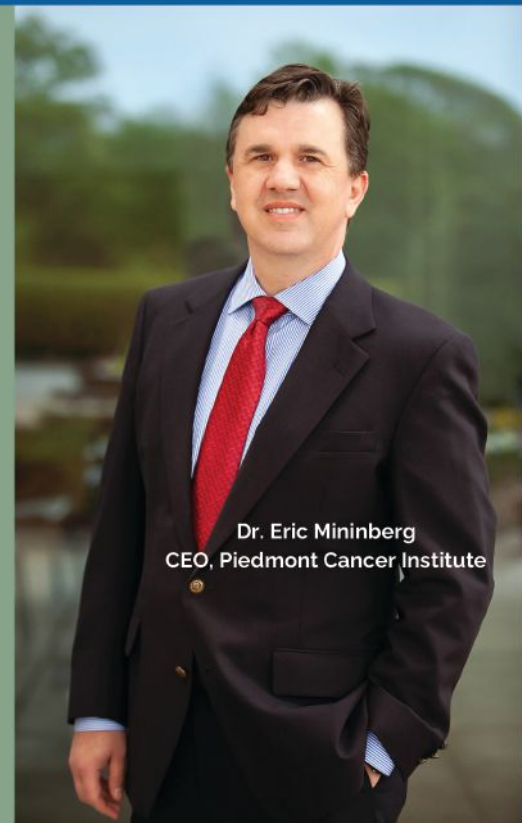
Piedmont Cancer Institute congratulates Dr. Eric Mininberg for being recognized for his contribution as one of the most impactful leaders in Georgia.

His unwavering commitment, passion, and focus on patient care in Oncology and Hematology set a remarkable example in the industry.

Dr. Mininberg remains a symbol of hope and excellence within the healthcare industry and within PCI.



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Dr. Eric Mininberg
CEO, Piedmont Cancer Institute

ROBERT “BOB” QUATTROCCHI

President & CEO, Northside Hospital Health System, Sandy Springs



Northside Hospital Health System posts some impressive numbers: 30,000 employees, 3,700 providers, 5.3 million patients a year and five hospitals spread throughout 25 counties in Georgia.

All across that swath of extended metro Atlanta, the health system is and has been building:

opening new medical office buildings in Lawrenceville, Snellville and Buford; constructing a 15-story patient tower in Gwinnett County; expanding surgical care across the system, as well as neonatal intensive care unit services in Cherokee and Forsyth counties – and that’s not even a complete list.

Bob Quattrocchi has worked at Northside for 37 years, taking over the lead as president and CEO in 2004 after previously serving as the healthcare system’s COO and CFO. He is also a member of the board of the Georgia Alliance of Community Hospitals.

SURESH S. RAMALINGAM

Executive Director, Winship Cancer Institute of Emory University, Atlanta



Winship Cancer Institute is the only National Cancer Institute-designated Comprehensive Cancer Center in Georgia and one of only 57 in the country. So it stands to reason that an internationally renowned researcher would be in charge.

Suresh Ramalingam, M.D., is a thoracic oncologist and physician scientist whose many titles include holding the Roberto C. Goizueta Distinguished Chair for Cancer Research at Emory University’s School of Medicine and associate vice president for cancer at Emory’s Woodruff Health Services Center. His research focuses on the treatment of small cell and non-small cell lung cancer with molecularly targeted agents.

In May 2023, the \$440-million Winship Cancer Institute at Emory Midtown opened its doors to patients. The 450,000-square-foot, full-service center expands Winship’s oncology services and unites them in one building, from diagnostics and doctors’ appointments to infusions and support services.

Dr. Ramalingam is a board member for Georgia CORE, a fellow of the American Society of Clinical Oncology and a Georgia Cancer Coalition Distinguished Cancer Scholar. He was named Winship’s executive director in 2021.

SCOTT RAYNES

President & CEO, Southeast Georgia Health System, Brunswick



Scott Raynes joined Southeast Georgia Health System (SGHS) in January 2022 after having served as president of Baptist Hospitals Inc. and executive vice president of Baptist Healthcare Corp. in Pensacola, Florida.

Some of his initiatives have been attracting new

graduates and second-career nurses to the health system’s nursing programs, while also continuing to invest in existing nurses and enhancing the quality of the service SGHS provides to the community it has served since 1888.

Raynes was appointed to an at-large post on the Georgia Hospital Association Board of Trustees in November 2022, just shy of a full year after joining SGHS.

Prior to his position at Baptist, Raynes held leadership roles at NorthCrest Health System in Springfield, Tennessee, as well as Preston Memorial Hospital in Kingwood, HealthSouth Corp. Mid-Atlantic Regional, Montgomery General Health System Inc. and West Virginia University Health System, all in West Virginia.

Raynes is a past president of the Tennessee Hospital Association and a fellow of the American College of Healthcare Executives.

CANDICE L. SAUNDERS

President & CEO, Wellstar Health System, Marietta



Candice Saunders’ success story is an example of a frontline clinician rising to the health system boardroom. She began her career as a critical care nurse but now oversees one of the most comprehensive nonprofit community healthcare systems in Georgia, with more than 30,000 team members serving at 11 hospitals, more than 325 medical office locations, 91 rehabilitation centers and 18 urgent care units, along with an array of cancer centers and other specialty facilities.

With her leadership, Wellstar thoughtfully invests 100% of every dollar it makes into initiatives that create healthier communities. In 2023, Wellstar and Augusta University

Health System (AUHS) became a unified system, Wellstar MCG Health.

Her first job at Wellstar was president of Kennestone Hospital in 2007. She became the executive vice president and chief operating officer of Wellstar Health System in 2013. She was named president and CEO in 2015.

Among multiple honors, she has been named to *Modern Healthcare*’s Top 25 Women Leaders and received the W. Daniel Baker Leadership Award from the Georgia Hospital Association. Under Saunders’ leadership, Wellstar has been recognized as a leader in safety and quality measures, and as a great place to work.

PAMELA SHIPLEY

Senior Vice President, Kaiser Foundation Health Plan Inc.; Regional President, Kaiser Foundation Health Plan of Georgia Inc., Atlanta



Pamela Shipley joined Kaiser Permanente in early 2022 as regional president for the Georgia market, overseeing care delivery and health plan operations for more than 330,000 plan members at the 27 medical offices and related facilities across the state.

In 2024, Shipley was promoted to senior vice president of National Health Plan Performance and Services. In her new role as senior vice president at Kaiser Permanente, she is responsible for the development and execution of network strategies and alignment of resources to support Kaiser Permanente’s integrated care and coverage model in all Kaiser Permanente markets.

Prior to Kaiser Permanente, she served as COO for Atlanta-based Sharecare Inc., a virtual health solutions company where she had oversight of delivery of its comprehensive virtual health platform to its customers. Before Sharecare, Shipley spent 12 years at Centene Corp., a managed-care company based in Missouri, where she served as CEO in three different Centene markets, including Georgia.

Shipley also spent five years with UnitedHealthcare and served as interim CIO at Health Partners Plans in Pennsylvania.

In her civic life, she is an executive sponsor for the American Heart Association.

SCOTT STEINER

President & CEO, Phoebe Putney Health System, Albany



Under Scott Steiner's leadership, Albany-based Phoebe Putney Health System has become an innovator and national leader in healthcare workforce development.

In August, the Phoebe Living & Learning Community opened on the health system's main campus. The Phoebe-funded project will be the new home of Albany Technical College's nursing program, and Phoebe's investments will allow Albany Tech to expand from 40 students to more than 200 students a year. The facility's first floor will include high-tech classrooms and labs, while the top two floors will include 80 apartments so students can live where they learn and train.

Steiner's guidance helped Phoebe's flagship hospital earn state designation as a Level 2 Trauma Center. By the end of 2024, a new 136,000-square-foot tower will open that will house Phoebe's Emergency and Trauma Center, Neonatal Intensive Care Unit and a new adult Intensive Care Unit.

Steiner is the 2024 chair-elect of the Georgia Hospital Association board and serves on the Georgia Chamber of Commerce Executive Committee. In 2022, he was appointed to the Governor's Healthcare Workforce Commission and was named CEO of the Year by the Georgia Alliance of Community Hospitals.

KURT STUENKEL

President, Atrium Health Floyd, Rome



Kurt Stuenkel has headed Floyd Medical Center since 1996. As president of Atrium Health Floyd, he is responsible for Atrium Health's three hospitals in Rome, Cedartown and Centre, Alabama; a freestanding 53-bed behavioral health facility in Rome; and multiple medical practices and urgent care centers, as well as 3,500 teammates who provide care in more than 40 specialties at those facilities. In addition, he is the executive sponsor for advancing rural health in the Atrium Health Southeast Region.

In 2024, Atrium Health Floyd combined with Rome-based Harbin Clinic, Georgia's largest physician-led, multi-specialty medical clinic with more than 250 providers and 1,400 employees.

Stuenkel is active in civic life, having served as a past chair of the United Way of Rome and Floyd County, and the American Red Cross Northwest Georgia. Previously, he served on the board for the Greater Rome Chamber of Commerce, VHA Georgia, Phoenix Healthcare and as board chair for the Georgia Alliance of Community Hospitals. He has also chaired the Georgia Hospital Association and served as a member of the Georgia Trauma Care Network Commission. He is a fellow in the American College of Healthcare Executives.

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KEVIN TANNER

Commissioner, Georgia Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Disabilities, Atlanta



Appointed by Gov. Brian Kemp to be commissioner of the Georgia Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Disabilities (DBHDD) in 2022, Kevin Tanner is no stranger to both elected and appointed office. He served a total of four terms in the Georgia House of Representatives, not to mention two

years as Forsyth County Manager – the post he left to accept the commissioner’s job – and five years as Dawson County Manager. Previously, he was a sheriff’s deputy in Dawson County. He has also operated a small business for almost 30 years in his hometown of Dawsonville.

Mental health and substance abuse treatment are major missions for the agency. But the DBHDD’s responsibilities are wide-ranging and cover things as diverse as administering the state’s five regional mental health in-patient hospitals, providing the court system the expertise to determine if a defendant is mentally competent to stand trial, and implementing the national 988 telephone hotline for suicide prevention.

JONATHAN E. WATKINS

President, City of Hope Cancer Center Atlanta, Newnan



As the president of City of Hope Cancer Center Atlanta, Jonathan Watkins provides strategic guidance and serves as a unifying spirit to help make sure everyone at the facility works together to provide compassionate patient care. Before joining City of Hope Cancer Center, Watkins served as the CEO at Broward Health Imperial Point in Broward County, Florida, and as COO at Kaiser Foundation Hospital and Health Plan in California’s Central Valley.

“Rising costs are arguably the biggest challenge facing the healthcare industry now,” says Watkins. “Nearly every

aspect of healthcare is increasing in costs, including supplies, medications and staffing, while reimbursement is declining. This pressure is placing even greater emphasis on the need for all of us in the healthcare industry to innovate and develop less expensive interventions.”

Watkins believes that Georgia’s outstanding educational institutions make this a great state for healthcare organizations. “Our talent pool is not only larger than what’s available in other parts of the country, but also highly experienced and successful,” he says. “Many of these talented students elect to remain in Georgia, making this an ideal location to operate a healthcare business.”

KATHLEEN E. TOOMEY

Commissioner, Georgia Department of Public Health, Atlanta



Kathleen Toomey, MD, was appointed Georgia’s top public health official in March 2019, and exactly one year later, she found herself navigating the COVID-19 pandemic. During that time, she called on her professional expertise as an epidemiologist and a family practitioner

as well as her diplomacy and political navigation skills to steer Georgia through the crisis.

But the Department of Public Health and its 6,000 employees do much more than handle health crises. Its day-to-day mission is to prevent disease, promote better health and ensure families across the state have the resources they need to prepare for and respond to health emergencies caused by natural disasters like flooding, hurricanes and tornadoes. The department is also responsible for restaurant health inspections, making sure hotels and motels are sanitary and safe, testing newborns for life-threatening conditions and making sure swimming pools across the state are safe to swim in.

Dr. Toomey has previously worked as a country director in Botswana for the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and as director of the Fulton County Department of Health and Wellness.

MONTY VEAZEY

President & CEO, Georgia Alliance of Community Hospitals, Tifton



Many veterans of the Georgia General Assembly go on to work as lobbyists once their days at the Gold Dome end.

Such is the case of Monty Veazey, who still holds the record as the youngest person to be elected to the Georgia House. He was just 22 years old when he was elected

to represent Tift, Berrien and Cook counties in 1977 and went on to serve three terms. He’s been leading the Georgia Alliance for Community Hospitals since 1984.

The alliance represents approximately 90 nonprofit hospitals, ranging from solo hospitals in Jesup to the various hospitals that make up the sprawling health systems of Northside, Piedmont and Wellstar. This organization represents only nonprofit hospitals, while the larger Georgia Hospital Association is open to all hospitals, both for-profit and nonprofit.

GACH supports efforts to increase the supply of qualified healthcare providers in Georgia, ensure access to quality care for patients and preserving a tax and regulatory environment in which its not-for-profit hospitals can thrive. It also is a staunch supporter of Certificate of Need (CON) requirements.

JOSEPH F. WOODY

CEO, Avanos Medical, Alpharetta



Joseph Woody brings more than two decades of healthcare leadership experience to his role as the CEO of Avanos Medical, a medical technology company focused on delivering medical device solutions for pain management, respiratory, digestive care and more. His proven success in both the private and public company settings includes expertise in driving revenue and earnings growth, spearheading portfolio transformations and M&A.

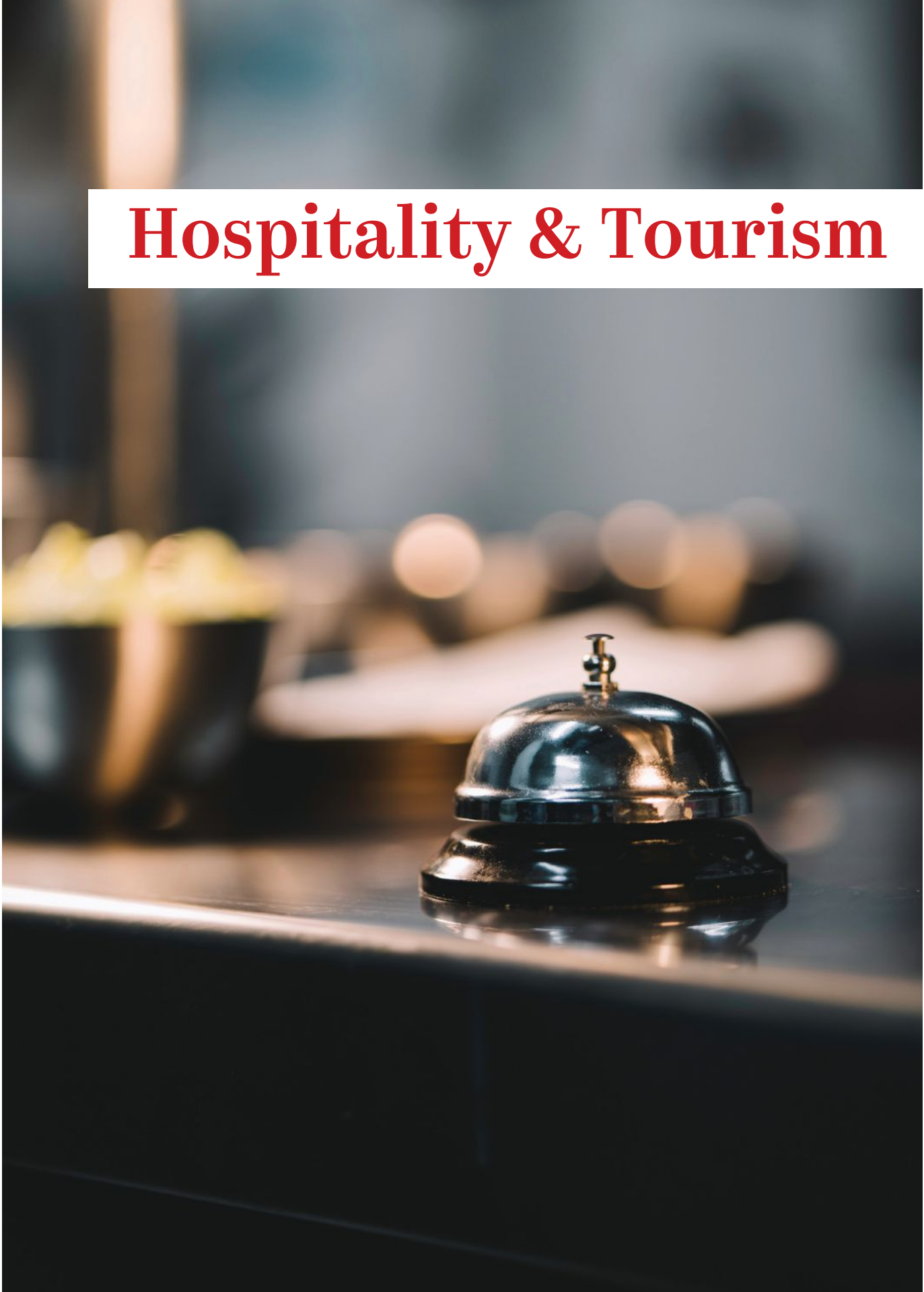
Before joining Avanos Medical in 2017, Woody served as CEO and president of Acelyty, where he was responsible for overseeing the development and commercialization of its innovative wound care and regenerative medicine business. He also

served as global president, vascular therapies, for Covidien, creating its vascular division and leading the company’s acquisition and integration of ev3.

“The challenges facing medical technology companies in Georgia mirror those being experienced throughout the U.S.: supply chain resilience, inflationary and pricing pressure, cybersecurity and competition for skilled talent,” says Woody.

Woody believes that Georgia’s strategic location and infrastructure have made it an excellent place for its headquarters. “The state’s expanding med-tech industry and a skilled workforce supported by top-tier educational institutions like Georgia Tech, Emory University and the University of Georgia create a thriving business ecosystem,” he says.

Hospitality & Tourism



LISA ANDERS

COO, Explore Gwinnett, Duluth



Appointed director of Explore Gwinnett in 2011, Lisa Anders has directed the organization through dynamic growth in tourism and economic development. Explore Gwinnett is the destination marketing organization for Gwinnett County,

Georgia's second-largest county comprising of 16 cities. It also includes oversight of the Gwinnett Film Office and Gwinnett Creativity Fund, Gwinnett County's only arts/cultural grant fund.

In 2024, Explore Gwinnett awarded more than \$175,000 in funding for project grants through the Gwinnett Creativity Fund. The organization serves as the Camera Ready Film Office for Gwinnett County, assisting film and TV location managers, scouts and production companies seeking to shoot there. In the same year, Explore Gwinnett was honored with the Gold Award at the 32nd Annual North American Travel Journalists Awards for its *Explore Gwinnett* magazine.

Under Ander's leadership, Explore Gwinnett received the Gwinnett Chamber of Commerce's 2022 Moxie Award for Outstanding Organization, specifically for a women-owned or women-led business. Anders also received a Greater Good Moxie Award for her film and arts community initiatives.

She is a graduate of Leadership Gwinnett and Glance Gwinnett, serves on the Leadership Gwinnett Foundation board and is a past board member of the Georgia Association of Convention and Visitors Bureau.

PAUL BROWN

Cofounder & CEO, Inspire Brands, Atlanta



Inspire Brands is a global multi-brand restaurant company whose portfolio includes more than 32,600 Arby's, Baskin-Robbins, Buffalo Wild Wings, Dunkin', Jimmy John's and SONIC restaurants. In 2023, its brands achieved more than \$32.5 billion in global system sales supported by more than 675,000 company and franchise team members.

This year, Inspire became a founding partner of the International Franchise Association's Franchise Ascension Initiative, a six-month accelerator program to connect qualified people from underrepresented communities with the

resources, guidance and opportunities needed to be a successful franchisee.

It also celebrated its first year as a corporate campus partner of Bee Downtown, which installs and maintains beehives on corporate campuses and provides employee engagement and leadership development programming. Its three hives produced 113 pounds of honey in 2023.

Before Inspire, Paul Brown served as president of brands and commercial services of Hilton Worldwide. He is chairman of the board of directors of Neiman Marcus Group and is active in the community, serving on the boards of Children's Healthcare of Atlanta, the Georgia Tech Foundation, the Metro Atlanta Chamber of Commerce Executive Committee and several other community organizations. He is a Fellow of the Culinary Institute of America.

PETER BOWDEN

President & CEO, VisitColumbusGA, Columbus



Georgia's second-biggest city has a lot going on, and it's Peter Bowden's job to make sure people know what Columbus has to offer. He continues to promote and reposition Columbus as a meeting convention destination that offers ample

meeting and lodging space, a thriving food scene and world-class whitewater rafting.

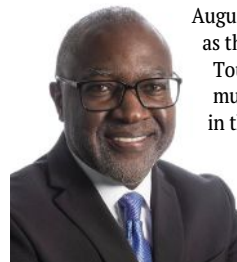
Bowden challenged his team to dissect data from recent Gray Research Solutions destination research to hone its marketing, sales and strategic planning. Both the leisure and convention meeting markets evolve with travel trends, the economy and destination appeal. Tracking analytics is key to success, and teams have to adjust to meet those key performance indicators.

"I'm fortunate to have a team that continues to work toward its stretch goals to maximize the economic impact of marketing the city," says Bowden, who announced at presstime he will be retiring at the end of 2024.

Bowden originally joined VisitColumbusGA to help develop non-sport activities around the city during the 1996 Olympics, when Columbus played host to fast pitch women's softball. He was named president in 2003. He has served on several boards, including the Columbus Cultural Arts Alliance, Presidential Pathways Travel Association and Georgia Association of Convention & Visitors Bureaus.

BENNISH BROWN

President & CEO, Destination Augusta, Augusta



Augusta may be best known as the home of the Masters Tournament, but there is much more to see and do in this city of 200,000 people. In 2024, a highlight for Bennish Brown and his team was the design, construction and operation of an

urban Outdoor Adventure Center.

"This urban Outdoor Adventure Center is a priority from the City of Augusta's Tourism Product Development plan called Destination Blueprint," Brown says. "This project demonstrates the power of collaboration in our city with the Augusta Metro Chamber of Commerce, Downtown Development Authority and the City of Augusta helping in this visitor-generating economic development effort that will also enhance the quality of life for residents."

This year, the Augusta Coffee Trail was launched. The free mobile passport encourages pass-holders to visit 11 coffee houses offering rewards. At least two more themed trails will be created this year. Finally, Bennish and his team will celebrate the fifth anniversary of Augusta & Co., the destination's award-winning innovative visitor experience center located in the heart of Downtown.

Taking him from coast to coast, Brown has spent 24 years in destination marketing. Before getting into the hospitality arena, Brown worked in corporate and governmental public affairs and media relations.

FEDERICO "FRED" CASTELLUCCI

President & CEO, Castellucci Hospitality Group, Atlanta



Overseeing his family-owned and -operated collection of restaurants in the greater Atlanta area, Fred Castellucci continues a legacy started by his parents in Rhode Island. He's joined in the operation by his wife, brother and sister. His role as CEO is on the concept creation side, imagining up new restaurants and putting together teams of chefs and managers that "ultimately execute the vision and building."

"One of the things that attracted me to the industry is how hard it is. It challenged me on every level - physically, mentally, emotionally,

financially," he says, adding that to be successful you must be good at customer service, human resources, marketing and accounting. "And do it every day."

His first original concept was The Iberian Pig, which now has three locations including one in Nashville, Tenn., the company's first venture outside of Georgia. The group also operates the Neapolitan pizza concept Double Zero, Sugo and the James Beard Award-nominated Cooks & Soldiers, a semi-finalist in 2024 for Outstanding Hospitality. Then there's Mujō, an ultra-fine dining, Omakase-style restaurant in partnership with sushi chef J. Trent Harris. It was one of only five restaurants in the entire city to earn a Michelin star last year for the famous guide's inaugural Atlanta edition.

ANDREW TRUETT CATHY

CEO, Chick-fil-A Inc., Atlanta



In 2021, Andrew Cathy became the third CEO in Chick-fil-A's 56-year history, succeeding his father, Dan T. Cathy, and his late grandfather and founder, S. Truett Cathy. He began his career at Chick-fil-A in 2005, serving as operator of a Florida restaurant, then joined the support center staff in 2007. He assumed the positions of chief people officer in 2016 and executive vice president of operations in 2021.

"While Chick-fil-A is focused on our more than 3,000 restaurants across North America, we're excited to begin serving guests in Europe and

Asia in the future," says Cathy. "International expansions present an exciting opportunity for the business. At Chick-fil-A, it's also a way to leverage the opportunities we have to make a difference in the lives of team members, guests and the communities we serve."

In the summer of 2024, Chick-fil-A launched a new seasonal entrée – the Maple Pepper Bacon Sandwich. Known for its company culture and customer service, 2022 saw Chick-fil-A named a Best Employer in America by *Forbes* and a top company for career opportunities for Black employees by Glassdoor. In 2024, \$26.44 million was awarded in team member scholarships. *QSR Magazine* named Chick-fil-A Drive-Thru Restaurant of the Year in 2021.

PAUL CRAMER

President & CEO, The Classic Center, Athens



Since 1995, The Classic Center has served Athens as a convention center, event venue and theater, welcoming some 350,000 attendees to more than 550 events yearly – an estimated \$60-million economic impact to the Athens-Clarke County community. Paul Cramer has served as president and CEO since it opened in 1995.

Over the past year, as people have continued to return to plays, concerts and other outings, the center saw soaring revenues. "Our clients and season ticket holders came back and brought others with them," he says.

The facility rebranded itself in 2023, and Cramer is overseeing the construction of The Classic Center Arena. Slated to open at the end of 2024,

the 8,500-person facility will create 600 jobs with an economic impact of \$30 million. "My mission is to serve our community with a civic, cultural and social center that maximizes economic impact," he says.

Cramer's community involvement includes conceiving a workforce development program for careers in hospitality. He developed The Classic Center Cultural Foundation, which provides hospitality education and performing arts and visual arts scholarships to the community. Cramer serves on the Georgia Department of Tourism Foundation board, Athens Technical College Foundation board, Paciolan Client Advisory Committee and the International Association of Venue Managers (IAVM) Executive Forum.

DAVID "DAVE" DISALVO

President & CEO, Visit Valdosta, Valdosta



As president and CEO of Visit Valdosta (shorthand for the Valdosta-Lowndes County Conference Center & Tourism Authority), Pittsburgh native Dave DiSalvo is an unabashed cheerleader for his community.

"Valdosta is the capital of South Georgia. We are a

great destination with amazing golf courses and family-friendly activities. And our community is the best group of ambassadors you could ever imagine," says DiSalvo. "We're so much more than a stop on the way to Florida. We want people to find their 'Ahh' in Valdosta."

DiSalvo is also responsible for managing the city's Rainwater Conference Center, which has just completed a million-dollar renovation with most of the work being done by locals. "Our board has an amazing vision and a propensity for getting things done," he says.

DiSalvo serves on the boards of the Valdosta Chamber of Commerce, the Valdosta-Lowndes Azalea Festival and the Lowndes County Historical Society and Museum.

AMANDA DYSON-THORNTON

Executive Director, Georgia Association for Convention and Visitors Bureaus, Atlanta



Amanda Dyson-Thornton has long been a familiar – and powerhouse – face in Georgia's exploding tourism business, having spent 20 years in various leadership roles at the Atlanta Convention & Visitors Bureau. So, in 2024, when she

was named executive director to lead the GACVB, the statewide trade association and non-profit organization representing Georgia's tourism bureaus and their industry partners in travel-driven economic development, this industry veteran was greeted with open arms.

Known for her creativity and infectious positivity, Dyson-Thornton works to unite Georgia's community of visitor bureaus, impacting legislation that affects the state's multi-layered visitor economy. Through advocacy and continuing education, she also works with travel sector partners to promote and protect Georgia's tourism economy.

Dyson-Thornton is an Atlanta native and a graduate of Valdosta State University. She has a Travel Marketing Professional (TMP) designation from the Southeast Tourism Society.

MEREDITH EVANS

Director, Jimmy Carter Presidential Library & Museum, Atlanta



Meredith Evans was appointed director of the Jimmy Carter Presidential Library and Museum in 2015 and is the first Black woman to direct a presidential library. As director, she focuses on civic engagement, the role of the

presidency and public policy, and making accessible the records of President Carter, his cabinet and the White House administration.

Evans is a successful fundraiser, manager and partner. She led her team in the creation of the 2019 exhibit "Georgia on My Screen: Jimmy Carter and the Rise of the Film Industry." Beginning with then-Governor Jimmy Carter's creation of the first state film office, the exhibition traces the development and impact of a multibillion-dollar industry in the state.

Evans has written on the role and value of museums, libraries and archives and has presented at various international and national conferences. She was formerly an association university librarian at Washington University and the University of North Carolina at Charlotte.

STEPHANIE FISCHER

President & CEO, Georgia Restaurant Association, Atlanta



Stephanie Fischer just completed her first year as president of the Georgia Restaurant Association (GRA), calling it her “year of transition. ... This is my time to really dig in and see what the GRA is all about, but also for me to establish relationships I think are going to be key this year during session,” says Fischer, who spent six years on the GRA board before taking the helm in early 2024.

The association serves as the unified voice for nearly 23,000 foodservice and drinking establishments, providing

advocacy, education and awareness. “When we talk about advocacy, we advocate for every restaurant in the state of Georgia, whether you’re a member or not,” she says, noting the industry is the second-largest private sector employer behind agriculture, employing nearly a half million. Last year the industry reported sales of \$24.9 million.

Fischer brings more than 25 years of experience in the hospitality industry to her role, including at Dunkin’ Brands, Walt Disney World Co., and most recently at Paradies Lagardère Travel Retail Dining Division, where she led strategic planning and support for more than 80 brands across 170 locations in 43 airports. She is a member of Les Dames d’Escoffier International’s Atlanta Chapter and in 2020 was recognized as a Woman of Influence in the Food Industry by *The Griffon Report*.

RAYMOND KING

President & CEO, Zoo Atlanta, Atlanta



Since 2010 Ray King has led Zoo Atlanta through sizeable growth and changes, increasing annual attendance from 675,000 to over one million. It recently completed a new \$20-million animal health center, taking the current vet facility from 1,600 square feet to over 16,000. The center includes a CT scanner, research lab, pharmacy and dedicated areas for a

surgical suite and quarantine space. They’ve recently renovated the rhino habitat and are currently redoing the lion habitat.

“Since coming out of COVID, we’ve aggressively been playing offense and it’s been nice to be able to do all this construction,” says King. “We’re now about two-thirds done building out what I call a new zoo.”

King reports a record first quarter with high attendance that could be due in part to the baby animals the zoo welcomed this year, including a rhino and a gorilla. “We adopted an orangutan from the Sacramento Zoo whose mom was not taking care of him. We have a rockstar surrogate mom who’s never had her own offspring but is now raising her fifth.”

King serves on the boards of Furman University, the Metro Chamber of Commerce and Central Atlanta Progress and is the recipient of multiple awards for community leadership.

MARK JARONSKI

Chief Marketing Officer, Georgia Department of Economic Development, Atlanta



Longtime Disney executive Mark Jaronski brought his background and talents to lead the Georgia Department of Economic Development’s tourism office, Explore Georgia, during the height of the pandemic in 2020. Under Jaronski’s guidance, the tourism team leveraged Georgia’s numerous assets delivering year-over-year tourism growth during and post-pandemic.

In 2022, Georgia welcomed the largest number of visitors in state history, an increase of more than 20,000 jobs supported by travel demand between 2021 and 2022. Preliminary 2023 data indicates Georgia will outperform its 2022 stats, including an

11.7% increase in air travel at Hartsfield-Jackson Atlanta International Airport and a 2.0% increase in total visitor volume.

Speaking to the needs of travelers and partnering with public and private Georgia travel industry partners, communities across the state have benefited from being engaged in Georgia’s domestic and international tourism marketing. Since then, Jaronski has transitioned to oversee marketing and branding initiatives for the entire department during a time of record trade and business growth and expansion across the state.

Jaronski sits on a number of boards, including the U.S. Travel Association, Travel South USA, U.S. Civil Rights Trail Marketing Alliance, Atlanta Convention & Visitors Bureau and Georgia’s Hotel Motel Tax Performance Review Board.

JOE MARINELLI

President, Visit Savannah and Visit Tybee, Savannah



With over 35 years experience in the hospitality and tourism industry, Joseph Marinelli’s leadership has been instrumental in shaping Savannah and Tybee Island’s reputations as premier destinations for both leisure travelers and convention attendees. Prior to assuming his current role in 2007, he served as senior vice president at Experience Columbus. In his role of president of Visit Savannah, Marinelli is responsible for the strategic marketing direction, which is focused on driving economic growth and enhancing the visitor experience in the region.

In 2024, Visit Savannah received a Platinum Hermes Creative Award in the Interactive Brand Experience category for its mobile tour marketing campaign “Surprisingly Savannah,” which positions the city as an exciting getaway destination. Tybee Island earned a Gold Hermes Creative Award in the Electronic Media/Website category for its website relaunch.

The City of Savannah will host Every Women’s Marathon race in November 2024. It’s anticipated to attract 5,000 participants. *Association Conventions & Facilities Magazine* named Savannah a 2022 Top Meeting and Convention Destination. Marinelli serves as the public policy chair for the Georgia Association of Convention and Visitors Bureau and is involved in the American Society of Association Executives, Professional Convention Management Association and Meeting Professionals International.

SCOTT MCQUADE

President & CEO, Golden Isles Convention & Visitors Bureau, Brunswick



During Scott McQuade's 13-year tenure with the Golden Isles CVB, the organization's focus and mission has been to become one of the top-performing destinations in the state and the country. Under McQuade's leadership, the CVB has increased tourism in the region by over 210% and attracted nearly a billion dollars of additional investments and improvements in the region's tourism product.

His team has achieved some of the most recognized accolades in the travel industry, taking the Golden Isles from a little-known place to visit to a world-recognized resort destination. This year, they celebrated the honor as the No. 1 World's Best Islands in the U.S. again as lauded by *Travel + Leisure*

magazine. This is the second year in a row the Golden Isles has ranked No. 1 and the third time in four years they received this coveted award. The destination has now ranked in the top 10 island destinations in the U.S. for the last decade.

The Golden Isles CVB promotes St. Simons, Sea Island, Jekyll and Little St. Simons Islands and the historic port city of Brunswick, all within Glynn County, better known collectively as the Golden Isles.

WILLIAM PATE

President & CEO, Atlanta Convention & Visitors Bureau, Atlanta



An Atlanta native, William Pate is respected locally for his leadership and marketing expertise. He's been head of Atlanta Convention & Visitors Bureau since 2009 and is charged with maintaining tourism as one of the city's top economic drivers. Under his leadership, Atlanta has gained global recognition, including the famed *MICHELIN Guide* recognizing 45 of the city's restaurants in 2023.

Atlanta is set to host several major events that will welcome more people while also broadening awareness of what the city has to offer. In 2024, Atlanta welcomes CONMEBOL

Copa América while also preparing for the College Football Playoff National Championship, NCAA men's basketball South Regional and MLB All-Star Game in 2025. In 2026, Atlanta will host eight matches during FIFA World Cup, which will once again put Atlanta in the global spotlight.

Pate is a Chick-fil-A Peach Bowl Hall of Fame inductee and member of the prestigious Leadership Atlanta 2024 class. He is an appointed member of the Georgia Tourism Foundation, which aims to increase the state's position as a destination for travel. Pate sits on the boards of Central Atlanta Progress, Metro Atlanta Chamber and Woodruff Arts Center and is on the board of councilors for The Carter Center.

MERCEDES MILLER

President, ATL Airport District Convention & Visitors Bureau, College Park



A seasoned hospitality professional and community leader, Mercedes Miller spent 13 years with the Gateway Center Campus in College Park, serving as executive director since 2021, before being named the new president of the ATL Airport CVB in August. The organization serves as the destination marketing organization for the cities of College Park, Hapeville and Union City. The district is also home to Hartsfield-Jackson Atlanta International Airport, the world's busiest.

During her leadership of the GICC, it saw tremendous growth in facilities, programs and services, including the

construction of the Gateway Center Arena that opened in 2019.

Miller has been honored by Who's Who in Black Atlanta, and in 2021 the Atlanta Convention & Visitor's Bureau named her one of Atlanta's Most Influential Women.

Miller strives to advocate for Black women and girls, as she believes representation and mentorship are essential to the greater community. She was recently inducted into the Metropolitan Atlanta Chapter of the National Coalition of 100 Black Women.

ANNE QUATRANO

Chef-Owner, Atlanta



Award-winning chef, restaurateur and author Chef Anne Quatrano has significantly shaped Atlanta's dining landscape with her innovative, culinary approach. Her mission, evident from the inception of her first Atlanta restaurant in 1998, Floataway Café, introduced diners to the concept of fresh, locally sourced food served with a focus on simple ingredients and quality.

Her portfolio includes Atlanta-based restaurants Bacchanalia and W.H. Stiles Fish Camp, plus market/bakery Star Provisions Market + Café and her family farm Summerland.

In a landmark achievement, Bacchanalia received recognition from the *MICHELIN Guide* in 2023 earning both the coveted one-star and green-star ratings, solidifying its status as one of Atlanta's premier dining destinations.

Recipient of the prestigious James Beard Award for Best Chef: Southeast in 2003, Quatrano's commitment to showcasing regional ingredients with precision and artistry has earned her widespread acclaim. Her influence extends beyond her restaurants. She is engaged in culinary nonprofits and advocates for women chefs and sustainable practices in the industry.

As a founding member of Southern Restaurants for Racial Justice, she champions diversity and equity in the culinary world. In 2018, she served as chair of the James Beard Awards Committee.

HOLLY QUINLAN

President & CEO, Cobb Travel & Tourism, Atlanta



Cobb County native Holly Quinlan has been president and CEO of Cobb Travel & Tourism since 2010. She and her team are responsible for marketing Cobb County as a destination, promoting and generating tourism, conventions, trade shows and sports development activities. In 2023, visitors to Cobb County generated more than \$3.15 billion in economic impact, sustaining more than 43,500 jobs.

“Cobb is on a national and international stage,” says Quinlan. “We’re looking to grow that presence and further beyond. I work with an

incredible team that cares about our county. They care about hospitality and tourism. They do everything they can to make sure everyone is successful and to make sure our community is collaborative, cohesive and connected.”

Very active in the community, Quinlan co-chaired the Leadership Cobb 2023 class and the selection committee for the Tribute to Women by LiveSafe Resources. She is a member of Kennesaw State University’s Coles College of Business Advisory Board, the One Cumberland Board of Directors and the Marietta Kiwanis Club. She is a graduate of the Regional Leadership Institute, Leadership Cobb and Honorary Commanders.

GARY WHEAT

President & CEO, Visit Macon, Macon



With a mission of marketing Macon and the area of Bibb County as a superior destination for leisure travel and business meetings, Gary Wheat has a lot going in his favor these days.

Named by *Travel + Leisure* magazine as one of the “Best Places to Visit in 2024” and AARP’s “Affordable Destinations for 2024,” Macon again registered a record year for hotel-motel tax collections in 2023.

Wheat and Visit Macon partnered with Zaxby’s on a nation-first “Milkshake Tourism” campaign to reintroduce Zaxby’s milkshakes only in Macon. Through the first quarter 2024, Macon’s Rhythm and Rally pickleball facility has hosted six tournaments generating over \$2 million in economic impact and visitor spending, while visitors to the new Atrium Health Amphitheatre have spent \$7.4 million through six shows.

With over 20 years in destination marketing leadership, Wheat is results-focused and understands the tourism/business travel industry. He is one of three chairs of One Macon and serves as treasurer on the Ocmulgee National Park and Preserve initiative.

STEVEN SCHUMACHER

President, Cartersville-Bartow County Convention and Visitors Bureau, Cartersville



Steven Schumacher’s background in hospitality, hotel sales management and destination marketing, along with his previous positions at Discover Dunwoody, positioned him to assume the complexities of the role of president at the Cartersville-Bartow County Convention and Visitor’s Bureau in 2022.

A strategic shift occurred in 2023 when, under Schumacher’s guidance, the bureau rebranded as “Only in Cartersville Bartow,” aligning more closely with Bartow County.

Schumacher is orchestrating initiatives driving Cartersville-Bartow County as a premier destination. Collaborating closely with his team, they developed the innovative Visitor Center at Lake Point Sports Complex. A

partnership with Drowned Valley Brewing Company resulted in a successful campaign featuring The Museum City Honeysuckle Blonde, a limited edition beer celebrating the Smithsonian-affiliated Booth Western Art Museum and Tellus Science Museum, along with the Savoy Automobile Museum. In early 2024, the bureau hosted the Georgia Association of Convention & Visitors Bureaus (GACVB) Annual Conference.

Schumacher’s leadership emphasizes inclusivity, valuing individual perspectives while steering the organization toward a unified vision, “It’s important to make sure people are heard,” he says.

Schumacher serves on industry and community boards including Cartersville-Bartow County Chamber of Commerce Ambassador, GACVB Board of Directors, Art in Bartow Board of Directors and the Georgia Society of Association Executives Board of Directors.

MARK WILLIAMS

Executive Director, Jekyll Island Authority, Jekyll Island



Mark Williams has a deep connection to Jekyll Island, even before he became executive director of the JIA in 2023, thanks to childhood summers spent there with his family.

Established by the governor and the Georgia state legislature, the JIA operates as a self-supporting state entity, committed to maintaining the delicate balance between nature and humankind. As executive director, Williams oversees the stewardship, conservation and overall management of the Golden Isles. The Authority ensures the island remains an

inviting destination for guests and residents while safeguarding its ecosystem.

Prior to his current role, Williams served as commissioner of the Georgia Department of Natural Resources, where he managed Georgia’s outdoors, including fish, wildlife and state parks. His governmental career began in the Georgia House of Representatives, representing the 178th District from 2006 to 2010. In this capacity, he chaired key environmental committees and contributed to significant conservation councils and task forces.

Williams is also a director at Prime South Bank and a past president of the Wayne County Chamber of Commerce as well as the recipient of its 2011 Distinguished Service Award. His career reflects a dedication to both environmental stewardship and community leadership, underscoring his commitment to sustainability and growth.



Manufacturing

NEIL ASHE

Chairman, President & CEO, Acuity Brands Inc., Atlanta



Since joining Acuity Brands in February 2020, Neil Ashe has successfully positioned the company at the intersection of sustainability and technology and – for the first time in the company’s history – exceeded \$4 billion in annual net sales in 2022. Based in Atlanta with operations across North America, Europe and Asia, Acuity Brands is a market-leading industrial technology

company, powered by more than 12,000 associates.

Its lighting division offers sustainable lighting products for all kinds of industry sectors, while its intelligent spaces group delivers cloud solutions to make buildings smarter, safer and greener.

“We are very intentional about being a values-driven organization. Curiosity. Integrity. Community. Customer obsession. Those sorts of values come together to form the tapestry of what we’re trying to build here,” Ashe says. “There’s a lot of intentionality around how we develop people, and how we are creating an environment where they can succeed on a continual basis. We want to be the place where the best people come to do their best work.”

Ashe serves on the executive committee of the Metro Atlanta Chamber of Commerce. Before joining Acuity Brands, he held president and CEO positions at Faster Horses LLC, Walmart, CBS Interactive and CNET Networks.

CLINTON BEELAND

President & CEO, CJB Industries, Valdosta



In 1997, Clinton Beeland founded manufacturing company CJB Industries, which today produces 8% of the country’s crop protection products for the agricultural market. Beeland has since added two more companies, employed 200 people and invested over \$20 million in capital expansions the past couple of years.

CJB Applied Technologies filled a need for contract development and contract pilot planning for venture capital companies that need to develop a product but

don’t have their own facilities. “We make the product work versus just making the material or the underlying chemistry,” says the current chair of One Valdosta.

The newest, Salvus, enables customers to detect toxic “forever chemicals” with their portable Salvus Detection Platform technology incubated at the Georgia Tech Research Institute. The handheld equipment rapidly identifies and quantifies chemical and biological substances so users can take timely action. The ability is important given the safe drinking water standards set down by the EPA this spring, says Beeland.

“We believe in one thing: to improve today for a better world tomorrow,” says the Georgia Tech graduate. “Stewardship is a huge part of our life, to give back what’s been given to us.”

TIMOTHY L. BAUCOM

President & CEO, Shaw Industries Inc., Dalton



Shaw Industries, a wholly owned subsidiary of Berkshire Hathaway, is a leader in flooring and other surface solutions designed for residential housing, commercial spaces and outdoor environments, taking a people-centric and growth-oriented approach to meet diverse market needs.

Placing customers at the center of decisions, Shaw consistently strives to understand and address their needs. President and CEO Tim Baucom contends that a healthy company fosters strong communities, delighted

customers and fulfilled associates, cultivating a cycle where everyone succeeds together. This culture, which has been a cornerstone of Shaw’s success and a driving force in Baucom’s leadership, is something he upholds with passion and commitment.

The company is also committed to a sustainable future, investing in renewable wind energy and installing a half-acre solar installation at its manufacturing and recycling facility in Adairsville, all in support of the company’s 2030 net zero operational goal. Since 2010, Shaw has reduced its operational greenhouse gas emissions by 57%.

Joining Shaw in 1992, Baucom boasts a 40-year career in the flooring industry, marked by innovation and leadership across sales, marketing and strategic planning. He is deeply involved in the United Way of Northwest Georgia, where he recently served as board chair.

BOB BROWN

Vice President of Finance & Operations, Yamaha Motor Manufacturing Corporation of America, Newnan



Bob Brown appreciates the commitment to community that Yamaha Motor Manufacturing has established in Newnan through the years. He leads some 2,000 employees as they develop, test, fabricate and assemble a range of products. Brown operates under Yamaha’s management principals, including nurturing a healthy corporate culture and fulfilling social responsibilities around the world.

Yamaha’s manufacturing in Newnan began in 1988, initially producing only golf cars. Today, the company’s 280-acre campus

houses six manufacturing plants, so far producing more than four million WaveRunners, golf cars, ATVs and side-by-side recreational offroad vehicles. The company recently invested in a seventh facility on campus, a SMART (Sequenced Material and Reduced Transportation) distribution facility.

Yamaha’s commitment to environmental health and safety hasn’t gone unnoticed as it is a recipient of the Georgia State Natural Leadership Award – Continual Environmental Improvement, and the Coweta Water Authority Plant of the Year. In 2022, Yamaha accelerated its 2050 Environmental Plan, vowing to make its manufacturing locations carbon neutral for scope 1 and 2 emissions by 2035 and for scope 3 emissions by 2050. Other efforts include diverting 80% of their waste from the landfill by recycling or converting it to energy.

PAUL DONAHUE

Executive Chairman, Genuine Parts Co., Atlanta



In June, Paul Donahue was named executive chairman of Genuine Parts Company (GPC), a Fortune 200 global distributor of automotive and industrial parts. Previously he was only the fifth CEO in GPC’s 96-year history, serving in that capacity from 2016 to June 2024. Donahue has more than 20 years of experience holding key leadership positions at GPC.

Under his leadership, GPC transformed from a four-segment company to a more streamlined and agile business

focused on two core segments: automotive and industrial. This strategic move positioned GPC for long-term sustainable growth while building upon its legacy of success.

GPC operates a vast network, with approximately 60,000 employees in more than 10,000 locations worldwide. The company employs 2,500 in Metro Atlanta.

In addition to his professional achievements, Donahue has a strong commitment to community service. Notably, he served as the 2023 Metro Atlanta Chamber chair and held board positions at Truist Bank and the Shepherd Center Foundation. He currently serves on the Carlyle Fraser Heart Center Advisory Committee at Emory University Hospital, is on the board of trustees at The Woodruff Arts Center and serves on The Carter Center board of councilors.

MIKE FINELLI

Chief Technology & Innovation Officer and Chief North America Officer, Syensqo, Alpharetta



In his more than 30-year career at Belgian-owned Syensqo, Mike Finelli has done everything from the mailroom to sales to marketing. For the past 15 years, he’s led the North American operations of 2,000 professionals, scientists, explorers and change-makers in his group’s key strategic platforms: battery materials, green hydrogen, thermoplastic composites, and renewable materials and biotechnology. Syensqo is one of the largest composite makers in the U.S. “If it

flies, we’re on it. If it drives, we’re in it,” says Finelli.

He has lived in Georgia twice, initially to work in the group’s hemodialysis division in 2012. In 2018, he moved to Milan as president of Solvay Polymers and returned to Georgia in 2021 to lead Syensqo’s North American operations. “Georgia has been very good to us – and me,” he says. “I’ve moved eight times; Georgia is my favorite.”

Finelli is a board member of the American Chemistry Council, SynOrb and the Future of Stem Scholars Initiative (FOSSI) Advisory Board. “FOSSI is an initiative for students pursuing STEM degrees at Historically Black Colleges and Universities,” he says. “Our goal is eliminating financial barriers for STEM Scholars from a diverse group. We’re currently at 600 students with a 98% retention rate.”

INVESTING IN A BETTER FUTURE



Vance Bell, Chairman of the Board
Shaw Industries



Tim Baucom, President & CEO
Shaw Industries

At Shaw, our vision is creating a better future. By focusing on healthy communities, happy customers, and engaged associates, we foster shared success. We’re proud to have our leaders recognized by the Georgia Trend Georgia 500 for their contributions to economic development and local investment.



shawinc.com

CHRISTIAN FISCHER

President & CEO, Georgia-Pacific, Atlanta



In February, paper industry publication *PaperAge* named Christian Fischer its 37th annual Executive Papermaker of the Year. The publication chose Fischer because under his leadership

Georgia-Pacific continues to significantly invest in its business – \$2 billion reinvested in 2023 across its operations, which include 150-plus facilities – its employees and the communities where it operates. In 2023, Georgia-Pacific was also awarded the American Forest and Paper Association Leadership in Sustainability Award – Safety.

Georgia-Pacific and its subsidiaries are among the world's leading manufacturers of bath tissue, paper towels and napkins, tableware, paper-based packaging, cellulose, specialty fibers and building products. Before assuming his current role in 2017, Christian Fischer was executive vice president of the packaging and cellulose segment, responsible for the kraft paper and containerboard, corrugated packaging, bleached board and cellulose (pulp) businesses for seven years.

Fischer was born and educated in Germany and began his career with Georgia-Pacific in Europe in 1989 as a market pulp sales manager. He relocated to Atlanta in 1992. As a leader in the forest products industry, he serves on the boards of the American Forest & Paper Association and the Metro Atlanta Chamber as well as on The Carter Center board of councilors.

SARA IRVANI

Board Member, Okabashi Brands, Buford



Okabashi, a vertically integrated shoe company in Gwinnett County, has been undergoing an evolution since 2016. Under the direction of Sara Irvani, who moved from CEO to the board of directors in 2023, the company has fought and won battles against severe overseas competition and dumping, in addition to Covid, as it continues to design and manufacture shoes and develop innovative materials. Irvani is the third generation of her family to be involved in shoe manufacturing and distribution.

The company's mission is to prove that sustainable American manufacturing can flourish at scale. Irvani is proud that Okabashi produces much of the just 1% of global footwear bearing a "Made in the USA" label, with a capacity of more than five million pairs a year.

The company is known for its commitment to its core values of sustainability, innovation and quality. It has pioneered closed-loop manufacturing and post-consumer recycling processes for a holistic circular approach.

Pepper Harward, who had been a CEO in the tech space and is known for his passion for sustainability, joined the company as the new CEO in 2023. Irvani continues to support the company in its strategic goals as a recognized leader in the footwear industry.

JAMES G. HILLENBRAND

President & CEO, W.C. Bradley Co., Columbus



James Hillenbrand has been highly instrumental in the 21st century growth and development of W.C. Bradley Co., a privately held, family-owned, global, multi-brand provider of consumer

goods and services focused primarily on outdoor cooking, living and recreation markets and developer of real estate properties.

Last June, W.C. Bradley acquired Dansons US LLC, a global consumer goods corporation based in Scottsdale, Ariz., and its subsidiaries. The agreement brings together two organizations with iconic brands including Char-Broil, TIKI, Pit Boss, Oklahoma Joe's and Louisiana Grills.

Hillenbrand joined W.C. Bradley in 2001 and has served as executive vice president, chief operating officer and chief financial officer. An active servant leader, Hillenbrand has served or currently serves on several boards and committees, including the Georgia Research Alliance, the National Infantry Museum, United Way, the Historic Columbus Foundation, Columbus 2025 and the Georgia Chamber of Commerce.

LAUREL HURD

President & CEO, Interface Inc., Atlanta



Laurel Hurd leads the strategic vision of Interface Inc. – the global flooring solutions company and leader in sustainability that celebrated its 50th anniversary last year – and drives the company's

growth priorities and climate commitment progress. Hurd is focused on identifying new opportunities to expand and promote growth across key markets and industry segments and advance the company's multiyear strategy to increase value for stakeholders, support growth ambitions and leverage the business globally.

In a Tech Talks Business session at Georgia Tech in March, she discussed the importance of achieving these goals while maintaining the legacy of founder Ray C. Anderson, showing others that a company can be profitable while doing good for the world. Interface, for example, created the first-ever carbon negative carpet tile and has a goal to be carbon negative by 2040. The flooring industry, she pointed out, has followed Interface's lead and is environmentally leaps and bounds from where it used to be.

Hurd, who has more than 30 years of sales management, product development and brand management experience, mostly at Newell Brands, is currently a member of the board of directors for THOR Industries, the world's largest manufacturer of recreational vehicles.

JAMES E. LOVE III

Chair & CEO, Printpak, Atlanta



Leading the way today at the family-owned company started by his father, J. Erskine Love Jr., in 1956, James Love oversees operations of the flexible and specialty rigid packaging designer and manufacturer. Translating market trends and consumer response into packing formats, concepts and innovations for many of the world's leading brands, Printpak primarily works with food market clients to identify package solutions that will help brands

improve retail visibility, heighten brand awareness and capture market share. The manufacturer also designs and produces sterilizable packaging for medical use.

The elder Love started the business in rented basement space in Sandy Springs as the only employee and with a single piece of equipment, a cellophane bag machine. Today Printpak is one of the largest packaging converters in the world. The company employs over 3,700 at facilities worldwide and reports sales of over \$1 billion annually.

The Love Family Foundation Award established an endowment in 1986 through Georgia Tech. The scholarship remains one of the highest annual awards given to a Georgia Tech student.

ALEJANDRO MARTINEZ

President, Mimecric USA, Thomasville



Alejandro Martinez joined the team at Mimecric in Northern Spain 30 years ago. This year the company began production in its first U.S. plant, located in Thomasville. Manufacturer of small steel and alloy parts, such as locks and small tools, for industries including defense, health, automotive and aerospace, Mimecric's Georgia location is producing primarily for the weapons industry. They use a combination of injection molding and sintering technologies to create the high-density components needed by its clients.

"Many of our customers required us to have a plant in the U.S.," says Martinez of the new

venture. He cited the use of the Atlanta airport and Savannah port to move its product to customers in the U.S. and in South America as the reason for choosing Thomasville.

Navigating the system in a foreign country to establish the new facility took longer than expected, but the plant opened in May 2024, says Martinez. Mimecric USA is part of Ecrimesa Group, a large European metal parts manufacturer serving 27 countries. Company-wide its has the processing capacity of more than 250 tons of feedstock per year and can produce more than 1.2 million pieces every month.

JASON MOSS

CEO, Georgia Manufacturing Alliance, Athens



Jason Moss is a key influencer in Georgia's manufacturing community through his role as founder and CEO of Georgia Manufacturing Alliance (GMA). GMA helps support and grow manufacturing throughout the state and provides valuable connections for industry leaders through GMA events Moss hosts.

Moss is widely respected for his understanding of the importance of sharing best practices and strengthening relationships between manufacturing leaders, with GMA offering year-round factory tours, educational sessions and networking events.

GMA takes a non-political stance that allows Moss and GMA members to communicate freely without specific agendas.

"If it's good for manufacturing and good for Georgia, we're in. We don't spend time on anything beyond that," says Moss.

To make an even more significant impact for top leaders and influencers, in 2021 Moss launched the Manufacturing Mastermind, netting significant results for members. This hand-selected group of key manufacturing leaders works together to solve the challenges of growing personally and professionally.

Georgia governors Brian Kemp and Nathan Deal have recognized Moss for his tireless work in supporting the manufacturing community. Moss and his team plan to re-launch the Georgia Manufacturing Summit in the next 18 months.

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CHRIS PETERSON

President & CEO, Newell Brands, Atlanta



An accomplished leader with an extensive background in corporate strategy, financial planning, operations and management, Chris Peterson has a deep understanding of the consumer goods industry. Rising quickly through the ranks, Peterson joined Newell Brands in 2018 as CFO, eventually assuming the position of president and CEO in 2023.

Since joining Newell, Peterson has played an integral role in the company's turnaround by strengthening financial performance, building operational excellence and a

culture of productivity, reducing complexity and transforming Newell's supply chain capabilities.

The global consumer goods company, known for such well-known brands as Sharpie, Elmer's, Coleman and Rubbermaid, also prioritizes giving back. As part of its Let's Get Creative campaign, in January it announced a three-year, \$1-million partnership with the Boys & Girls Clubs of America to enhance its arts programming and provide essential school supplies to help students thrive. Newell Brands was also named to *Newsweek's* 2024 list of America's Greatest Workplaces.

Before Newell, he led the global supply chain, finance and IT functions as COO of operations at Revlon Inc. He also spent four years in executive positions at Ralph Lauren and 20 years at Procter & Gamble.

Peterson is a member of the board of directors of Newell Brands, a board member of BJ's Wholesale Club and chair of its Audit Committee.

JIM REED

President, YKK Corp. of America, Atlanta



For 15 years, Jim Reed has headed the world's largest zipper manufacturer YKK, which produces a variety of fasteners across 19 companies in 11 countries. With headquarters in Atlanta, the company is vertically integrated, smelting its own brass wire and making its own fabric tape for zippers, for example.

Close to home, YKK's Macon location is the largest manufacturing center in the Americas, covering some 2.5 million square feet, and this year

celebrating a half century of operation. The location manufactures industrial fasteners, including products used in the interior of automobiles, says Reed.

Mindful of the impact of manufacturing on the environment, YKK formulated its Sustainability Vision 2050. "The shorthand is the obligation to cut our CO2 emissions by 50% from our 2018 levels by 2030 and then go carbon neutral by 2050," says Reed, noting the company has also vowed to reduce water and chemical usage.

Reed sits on the board of counselors for The Carter Center, the board of Atlanta Rotary Club and serves as chairman of the board of the World Affairs Council of Atlanta.

JEREMY RAINWATER

CEO Americas, TK Elevator, Atlanta



Jeremy Rainwater leads the development and implementation of TK Elevator's overall strategy and operations in the company's \$4-billion North and South American businesses, with over 16,000 employees in 17 countries and across multiple lines of business, including manufacturing and new installation, modernization, and service and repair. He also serves on the company's global senior leadership team.

Since joining TK Elevator in 2022, Rainwater has transformed the organizational structure, launched new products and delivered top- and bottom-line growth.

Prior to joining TK Elevator, Rainwater most recently served as COO of Building Solutions North America at Johnson Controls International, responsible for leading a \$10-billion business of almost 30,000 employees. Before this role, Jeremy was vice president and general manager of HVAC controls for the U.S. and Canada, and spent 20 years working in the elevator industry for Schindler.

Rainwater serves as the vice president of the National Elevator Industry Inc. board of directors and is on the Metro Atlanta Chamber board of directors executive committee.

RICH STINSON

President & CEO, Southwire Co. LLC, Carrollton



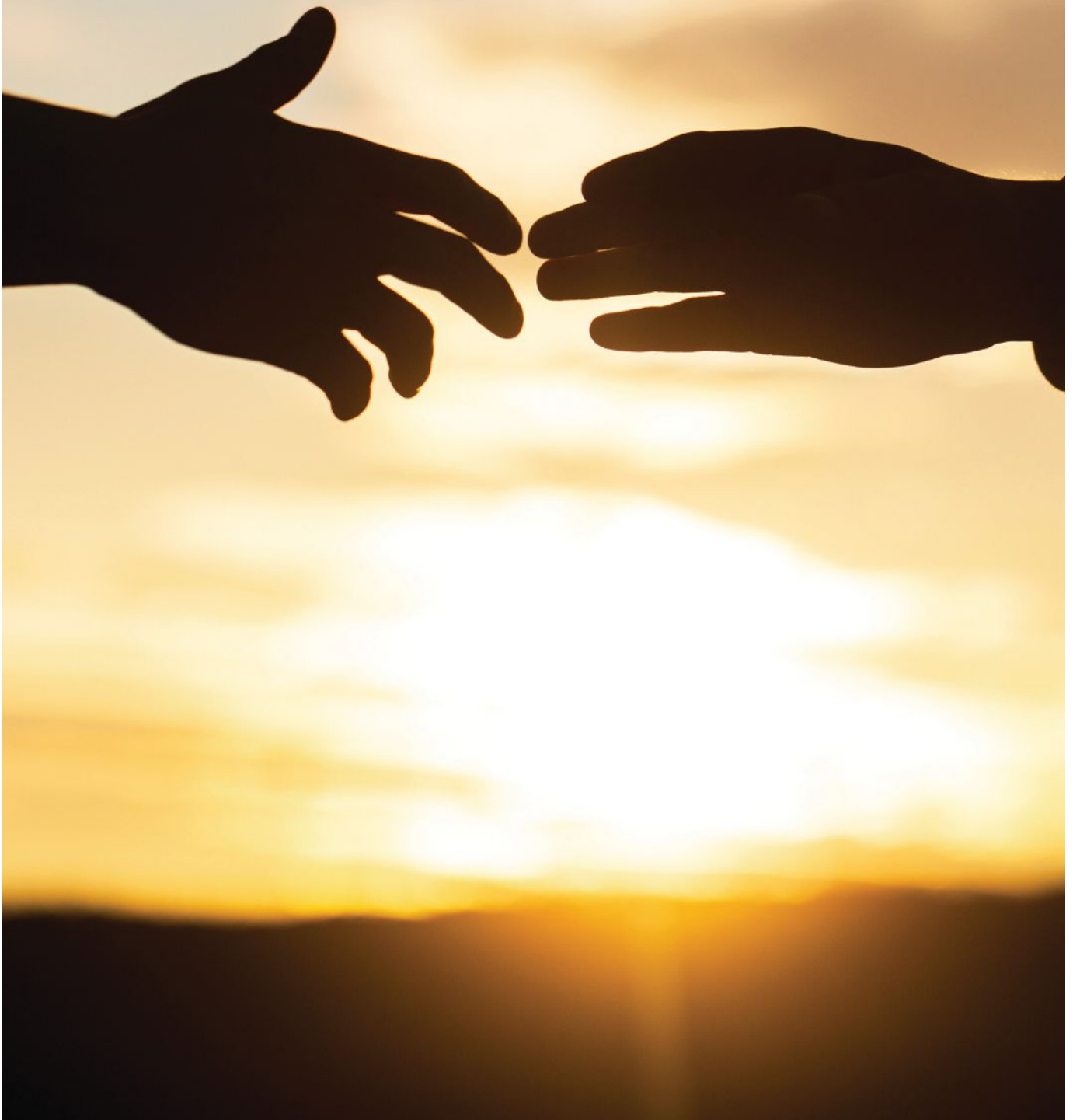
As president and CEO of Southwire, North America's leading wire and cable manufacturer, Rich Stinson has successfully led the \$8-billion organization and its 9,000 worldwide team members through organic growth as well as expansion via acquisition. He has played a key role in achieving the best safety metrics in the company's history and improving Southwire's overall financial position.

Stinson has inspired and continues to emphasize the importance of a company culture built on empowerment, trust, consistency and inclusion. Under his leadership, Southwire has earned many accolades, including being recognized as a Best Managed Company by Deloitte for five consecutive

years, one of the World's Most Ethical Companies by Ethisphere and one of America's Greatest Workplaces for Diversity by *Newsweek*. The publication also named Southwire one of America's Greatest Workplaces in 2024.

Stinson is a member of the National Electrical Manufacturers Association, where he is chair of the board of executives. He was also the former vice chair of the International Cable Federation and serves on the executive boards of the National Association of Manufacturers and the Copper Development Association.

Nonprofits



JOHN AHMANN

President & CEO, Westside Future Fund, Atlanta



Westside Future Fund (WFF) was launched nearly 10 years ago to help foster long-term, transformational change in Atlanta's historic Westside communities. Since then, the organization has worked to equitably revitalize

and restore the neighborhoods of English Avenue, Vine City, the Atlanta University Center and Ashview Heights into a vibrant community.

WFF's signature program, Home on the Westside, exemplifies this work through developing high-quality affordable housing for residents with "live, work and learn" connections to the historic Westside.

"Our flagship project, Home on the Westside, ensures high-quality, affordable housing for families that have historic roots or connection to the community," says John Ahmann. Since joining WFF in 2016, Ahmann has deployed various measures to prevent families from being taxed out of their homes, including the launch of its Anti-Displacement Tax Fund.

WFF's work is made possible through its philanthropic partners and accelerated by its Impact Fund in which 10 Atlanta corporations invested funding to support WFF's work with the promise of a return on their capital. The Impact Fund has allowed the organization to acquire all the land needed to complete its housing targets and meaningfully contribute to a thriving, mixed-income community for the future of Atlanta's Westside.

EVE ANTHONY

President & CEO, Athens Area Community Council on Aging, Athens



While Eve Anthony oversees a nonprofit that provides foundational aging support to community members in 69 of Georgia's 159 counties, this year her focus is shifting closer to home. The Athens Community Council on Aging (ACCA) launched a Dementia Resource Center that offers education, support, enrichment and care to those living with dementia and their care partners. This unique initiative partners ACCA with the University of Georgia's CARE Center,

local hospitals and others to ensure that Athens-Clarke County and surrounding community members have access to dementia support programming.

In 2023, ACCA served more than 16,000 community members across 15 programs, delivered more than 57,000 meals through Meals on Wheels, provided nearly 7,000 days of care in Adult Day Health and completed more than 15,000 trips to doctors, grocery stores and the pharmacy through the nonprofit's transportation program.

Anthony is an appointed member of the Georgia Council on Aging, a past president of the Georgia Gerontology Society, past chair of the Meals on Wheels Association of Georgia and chair of the Athens Chamber of Commerce LEAD Athens Steering Committee.

She was named Outstanding Community Partner to Service Learning in Higher Education by Gulf South Summit in 2021.

MASON AILSTOCK

President & CEO, Rowen Foundation, Lawrenceville



Rowen Foundation, which is focused on research and development, innovation and clean manufacturing, is considered a gamechanger for Georgia. The state's largest knowledge community, it will

deliver 100,000 new jobs within its 2,000 acres, drive an annual economic output of \$8 billion for Georgia's economy and contain 22-plus million square feet at full buildout.

Mason Ailstock, a veteran of leading such specialty communities, heads up the Rowen Foundation to see the public/private project through. The development has forged alliances with a wide swath of colleges and universities, including the Georgia Institute of Technology, University of Georgia, Emory University, Spelman College and Georgia Gwinnett College, as well as the Technical College System of Georgia.

Rowen will also be known as a place where Fortune 1000 companies will sit among labs, offices and amenities connecting entrepreneurs, inventors, researchers and students, in addition to nature trails, towering forests and acres of open space.

Ailstock is a veteran with 20 years of experience working with higher education, governments and industry in the formation of research parks and innovation districts. Prior to this post, he was vice president of operations at The University Financing Foundation.

PAIGE ALEXANDER

CEO, The Carter Center, Atlanta



Paige Alexander was reared in Georgia before leaving to travel the world to try to make it a better place. That included two Senate-confirmed roles in bureaus of the U.S. Agency for International Development.

Now, she's back in her home state at the helm of The

Carter Center, founded by former President Jimmy Carter and his late wife, Rosalynn, in collaboration with Emory University and charged with the mission to improve lives and alleviate suffering across the globe.

Alexander was named CEO of the center in 2020. The nongovernmental center's marching orders cover a wide swath of needs, including resolving conflicts; advancing democracy, human rights and economic opportunity; improving mental health care; preventing diseases; and teaching farmers to increase crop production.

"We're working in more than 80 countries. Our history is 40 years in the making, and in the last few years, we have taken an active role in U.S. democracy work because it is hard to do that in other countries when you aren't doing it here," says Alexander. "The resilience of the health workers and the peace builders in the countries that we deal with is amazing."

ALLISON ASHE

President & CEO, Wellroot Family Services, Tucker



As an executive in the Georgia not-for-profit space for more than two decades, Allison Ashe brings a wealth of experience to her role as the President & CEO of Wellroot Family Services (formerly United Methodist Children's Home). She served as the executive director of Covenant House Georgia for nine years, where she led initiatives to support youth experiencing homelessness and human trafficking. Ashe is also a member of the Governor's Safe Harbor for Sexually Exploited Children Fund Commission.

"While there is so much enthusiasm and promise in the state of Georgia, there are many who continue to struggle on a day-to-day basis, including our state's children," says Ashe. "We continue to see substantial, long-term effects on children's mental health resulting from COVID-era isolation.

"At a time when the need is great, we significantly lack mental health providers in our communities," says Ashe. "At Wellroot, we are taking a dual approach to meeting this growing need. We're actively working to recruit and train a pipeline of therapists, but we're also training professionals who interface with youth to identify and meet the needs of children in schools and the community at large."

JAMES M. “JAY” BAILEY

President & CEO, H.J. Russell Innovation Center for Entrepreneurs, Atlanta



As president and CEO of the H.J. Russell Innovation Center for Entrepreneurs, Jay Bailey leads the world’s largest entrepreneurial hub dedicated to empowering Black businesses.

Under his leadership, the center supports more than 360 entrepreneurs full time, generating \$117 million in annual revenues, sustaining 1,600 jobs in the community and sparking \$470 million of new economic impact in metro Atlanta.

The Atlanta native is also a devoted member of the Atlanta Rotary Club, dedicated to the motto “Service Above Self,” and he serves on the Georgia Chamber of Commerce and Metro Atlanta Chamber board of directors. Additionally, Bailey is board director for the Fulton County Sheriff’s Office and Invest Atlanta Foundation, as well as founding chairman of the Citizens Trust Bank’s Next Generation Advisory Board.

Focused on education, Bailey serves on the University of Georgia Board of Visitors, as an Agnes Scott College trustee, a board director for the Atlanta Speech School and the executive board of the Veritas School of Social Sciences. He is also a nationally recognized landowner and serves as a trustee for the Georgia Forestry Foundation and is launching the Black Land Institute this fall.

PETER BERG

Senior Rabbi, The Temple, Atlanta



“This has been one of the worst years for antisemitism on record — we have been busy meeting with heads of school and families impacted,” says Rabbi Peter Berg, senior rabbi at The Temple, referencing numerous antisemitic incidents that continued across Metro Atlanta in 2024. The Anti-Defamation League also reported a 63% increase in incidents across Georgia from 2021 to 2022.

The Temple is Georgia’s largest and one of the nation’s oldest Jewish congregations. The congregation has a long track record of social justice activism, and it paid the price with the bombing of its building early in the Civil Rights Movement in 1958.

Most recently, Rabbi Berg delivered the invocation in the U.S. Senate, the first rabbinic guest chaplain in many years to serve in this role. He has also been selected as a recipient of the Phoenix Award, the highest award the mayor distributes on behalf of the City of

Atlanta, and the Distinguished Advocate Award, presented by the American Jewish Committee.

In 2008, Rabbi Berg became the fifth senior rabbi of The Temple since 1895.

AMY BREITMANN

President & CEO, Golden Harvest Food Bank, Augusta



Amy Breitmann leads a team charged with distributing 12 million meals through 350 partner agencies across 25 counties in Georgia and South Carolina as part of the Feeding America Network. Under her leadership, Golden Harvest Food Bank has significantly expanded its operations to include a Produce Rescue Center and a new Volunteer Center, enhancing community engagement and improving service to food-insecure neighbors.

“In 2024, nonprofits like food banks are navigating a landscape of economic uncertainty, rising demand and supply chain challenges,” says Breitmann. “The election year brings policy unpredictability, making advocacy more critical than ever. We’re also seeing donor fatigue and increased competition for funding, pushing us to diversify our strategies.”

To tackle these issues, Breitmann believes nonprofits must strengthen partnerships, innovate in fundraising, build capacity and stay engaged in advocacy efforts. “It’s a complex environment, but with resilience and creativity, we can continue to effectively serve our communities and support those in need,” she says.

Breitmann co-authored the book *A God of All Seasons* and has been featured in national publications such as *Chicken Soup for the Soul* and *Guideposts* magazine. She is a dedicated advocate for the food insecure.

KIM BEDNAREK

Executive Director, Okefenokee Swamp Park, Waycross



Named executive director of the Okefenokee Swamp Park (OSP) in 2020, Kim Bednarek broadened the 77-year-old nonprofit’s role focused on education, research, conservation and economic development for rural south Georgia.

The OSP partnered with the Okefenokee National Wildlife Refuge on its journey to be named a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Already a National Natural Landmark, a RAMSAR Wetland of International Importance and one of the “Seven Natural

Wonders” of Georgia, the UNESCO designation would emphasize the importance of preserving this 407,000-acre wetland.

Under her leadership, the OSP embarked on the Okefenokee Experience campaign to create a nature center, research stations and educational complexes at swamp entrances in Folkston, Waycross and Fargo. Together, these projects will celebrate the swamp’s natural wonder, attract more tourism and economic development and build on the success of the OSP’s preservation, education and economic development mission.

Bednarek came to the OSP having served as head of school for the Discovery School in Jacksonville Beach, Florida. She is board chair of the St. Marys Riverkeeper and on the board of directors for the Georgia Chamber of Commerce.

RODNEY D. BULLARD

Founder & CEO, The Same House, Atlanta



Rodney Bullard leads The Same House, a movement that aims to bridge divides, practice compassion and collectively tackle the communities’ challenges and needs — particularly around economic opportunity and

social connection. It is rooted in the values and aims of the Beloved Community and the late Congressman John Lewis’ famous words, “We all live in the same house.”

The Same House recently started Youth Lead Georgia in partnership with the University of Georgia. Through the Beloved Benefit, Youth Lead Georgia supports organizations like the Westside Future Fund, Russell Innovation Center for Entrepreneurs and the Boys & Girls Clubs of Metro Atlanta.

Bullard has been recognized by the Georgia Secretary of State as an Outstanding Georgian and previously served as vice president of global corporate social responsibility at Chick-fil-A and as executive director of the Chick-fil-A Foundation, where he started the company’s corporate social responsibility, community engagement and philanthropic functions.

He also led Chick-fil-A’s efforts to revitalize the westside of Atlanta, and he sits on the board of directors of Ameris Bank, U.S. Air Force Academy Athletic Corp., Westside Future Fund, National Defense Industry Association and the Georgia Hispanic Chamber of Commerce.

EVE H. BYRD

Director, The Carter Center Mental Health Program, Atlanta



Eve H. Byrd has served as the director of The Carter Center Mental Health Program since 2017. Throughout her career, she has held leadership positions in work aimed at eliminating stigma, informing public policy and

improving access to care for persons with mental health and substance use disorders.

“These are interesting and exciting times for The Carter Center,” says Byrd. “While we are saddened at the loss of our cherished leader Rosalynn Carter last year, we are heartened by the accomplishments and momentum of its mental health work in Georgia as well as national and global programs. This was all started by the pioneering work and vision of Mrs. Carter.”

The Carter Center Mental Health Program implemented the first Georgia Mental Health Parity awareness campaign last year in Albany and Savannah. “We look forward to recreating that campaign’s success in other parts of the state,” says Byrd.

“We’re also focused on improving access to school-based mental healthcare,” she says, “including health promotion and substance use prevention and treatment to address the urgent need of the youth mental health crisis.”

JASMINE CROWE-HOUSTON

Founder & CEO, Goodr, Atlanta



When Jasmine Crowe-Houston moved to Atlanta, she decided to help feed the hungry out of her own kitchen. Her work brought her to a frustrating awareness of how much usable food was going to waste – some 40 million Americans go hungry while 80 billion pounds of food end up in landfills – and she decided to harness that resource. That’s how Goodr was born.

“We work with large-scale businesses that have a lot of surplus food that they would otherwise be throwing away,” she says. That

includes Hartsfield-Jackson Atlanta International Airport, which partners with Goodr to reduce food waste from many of its restaurants.

Today Goodr is in more than 20 markets and offers programs like a mobile grocery truck for families experiencing food insecurity. It also launched a new Community Market at iVillage in partnership with Invest Atlanta in 2024 that will provide 600 families a month with free groceries for the next two years.

It also just expanded into a new 10,000-square-foot warehouse by the airport so it can expand its disaster relief services, and this year Crowe-Houston was named the official ambassador of Mercedes-Benz Vans USA’s new electric Sprinter, with the first refrigerated version in North America helping Goodr fulfill its mission.

LIZ COYLE

Executive Director, Georgia Watch, Atlanta



Liz Coyle leads a team of nonprofit advocates at Georgia Watch who serve as a powerful statewide voice for Georgia’s consumers. She has more than 25 years of experience as a nonprofit manager, communications

professional and grassroots advocate.

“Each of us believes passionately in our mission to protect consumers from those who profit from harming others,” says Coyle. “Through the Georgia Watch consumer helpline, we hear from people practically every day reminding us of the unlevel playing field across the marketplace that leaves them trapped in a cycle of debt, with credit scores ruined and unable to meet basic living expenses.”

In response to Wellstar’s closing Atlanta Medical Center, Georgia Watch developed and advocated for a broad policy framework to hold hospitals and health systems accountable to keep providers where they are needed and prevent destabilizing closures across the state. “Some of our recommendations were included in bills that were enacted in 2024,” says Coyle.

Georgia Watch also reached an agreement with Georgia Power and the Public Service Commission last year to lower the Plant Vogtle costs Georgia Power could charge customers by nearly \$3 billion and expand access to the income-qualified discount program to 96,000 more Georgians.

DANAH C. CRAFT

Executive Director, Feeding Georgia, Atlanta



“I am a relentless optimist and avid hiker,” says Danah Craft, executive director at Feeding Georgia. “Even when things are tough, you have to keep moving forward.”

And she should know. Together, with its seven regional food bank members, Feeding Georgia has taken

on the challenge of ending hunger in Georgia. In recent years, demand for emergency food assistance has remained stubbornly high as COVID-19-era assistance supplements ended and inflation has driven up food prices at grocery stores.

Collectively, Feeding Georgia’s seven food bank members distribute more than 173 million meals each year through a network of more than 2,000 nonprofits and churches with pantries and other food programs.

Craft’s mission also includes raising public awareness of hunger in Georgia (where, she notes, 1 in 8 people, including 1 in 5 children, are food insecure), creating partnerships that bring more food and funds to the food banks and lobbying for state and federal public policies that affect hunger.

ALICIA DOHERTY

CEO, Red Cross of Georgia, Atlanta



What began as a simple act of volunteering during a college blood drive for the Red Cross of Georgia led to the cornerstone of Alicia Doherty’s career path.

“I fell in love with the mission and realized I wanted to be part of the organization,” says Doherty. “I wanted to give back and have not looked back.”

Now, 18 years later, as the regional executive for Georgia, Doherty’s dedication to the Red Cross’s cause has deepened. Her primary focus is ensuring the organization’s capacity to deliver its mission is met across all 159 counties in Georgia. During fiscal

year 2023, crucial assistance was provided to over 13,700 individuals following more than 2,800 local disasters.

Central to the Red Cross of Georgia’s operations are its 3,000 plus volunteers, whom Doherty describes as “special people.” From disaster response to community outreach, their selflessness embodies the organization’s spirit of compassion and dedication to providing aid in times of greatest need.

Doherty’s leadership philosophy is firmly rooted in mission-driven principles, emphasizing the alignment of goals with purpose-driven actions. She serves on the board of directors for the Douglas County Chamber of Commerce and is an alumni of the Douglas County Chamber of Commerce Leadership Class of 2010.

GEORGE DUSENBURY

Vice President Southern Region & Georgia State Director, Trust for Public Land, Atlanta



The great outdoors is still great — but every year, it seems there's less of it.

George Dusenbury, whose previous positions include commissioner of the Atlanta Parks and Recreation Department, is working to make sure it remains great and that people have access to it, including more access to the Chattahoochee River and increasing the number of residents who have a public park within a 10-minute walk of where they live.

This year, the organization purchased 8.6 acres along the Chattahoochee River to serve as a

regional trailhead park for Chattahoochee RiverLands, a planned 100-mile linear park through the heart of metro Atlanta.

The Trust for Public Land team is also working to protect and restore the Prince Hall Masonic Lodge within the Martin Luther King Jr. National Historical Park, an important part of the Civil Rights Movement where Dr. King's Southern Christian Leadership Conference was housed for four decades, as part of its Black History and Culture Initiative.

FRANK FERNANDEZ

President & CEO, Community Foundation for Greater Atlanta, Atlanta



In 2020, Frank Fernandez joined the Community Foundation for Greater Atlanta, where he leads one of America's top 20 largest community foundations. The united power of his prior experience and the anchor of the institution's 70-plus years of regional leadership combine as a force for good, championing equity and shared prosperity for all who call the Atlanta region home.

Fernandez builds upon the foundation's exceptional resources, leveraging a full range of assets — human, reputational and financial — to pursue equity of opportunity through servant leadership and sustainable change-making in systems and place-based work, as well as through inspired giving that ultimately fulfills the group's mission to lead the region toward equity and shared prosperity for all. During the COVID-19 pandemic, and in partnership with the United Way of Greater Atlanta, he also led programming to raise and deploy \$30 million in grants to nonprofit front lines.

Prior to joining the foundation, Fernandez served for six years as senior vice president of the Arthur M. Blank Family Foundation, where he led transformational revitalization of Atlanta's westside, while also directing Blank's community development, global giving, health access and social justice initiatives.

GEORGIA GOAL
SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM, INC.

The Board of Directors
of the Georgia GOAL
Scholarship Program
congratulates Lisa Kelly
on being named one of
Georgia's 500 Most
Influential Leaders.



Thank you for your passion and
dedication to providing Georgia
students with greater opportunities
for access to learning!



GRACE FRICKS

President & CEO, Access to Capital for Entrepreneurs, Cleveland



The award-winning Access to Capital for Entrepreneurs (ACE) is a Community Development Financial institution that helps under-resourced business owners grow their businesses through capital, coaching and connections. ACE has now

provided more than \$200 million in loans, assisted more than 2,600 small businesses and impacted over 21,000 jobs for Georgians.

ACE has widespread support, such as a recent \$10 million donation from philanthropist MacKenzie Scott and a \$500,000 investment from Synovus for its Recovery and Resilience Program, which supports efforts to provide diverse and flexible capital solutions and educational resources to Black, Indigenous and people of color (BIPOC) women and low-income-owned businesses in Georgia. The nonprofit also recently partnered with the Morehouse Innovation and Entrepreneurship Center and the Airport Minority Advisory Council to launch the Airport Concessioner Accelerator Program to support diverse entrepreneurs.

Grace Fricks has been honored with numerous awards and serves on several boards, including for Atlanta Emerging Markets, the Veteran Loan Fund and The Carter Center Board of Councilors.

After 24 years at the helm, Fricks announced she will be retiring at the end of 2024.

W. TODD GROCE

President & CEO, Georgia Historical Society, Savannah



If something happened in Georgia's past, it's likely the Georgia Historical Society (GHS) has documented it. Tasked with collecting, examining and teaching the state's history – and administering the state's historical marker program – the organization houses the oldest collection of materials related exclusively to Georgia history in the nation.

Todd Groce has spent 30 years at the helm of GHS, first as executive director in 1994 before being named president in 2006. Under his leadership, GHS's revenue grew from \$500,000 to over \$5 million. He also led the privatization

of its library and archives, significantly enhancing access to Georgia's historical documents.

Under his leadership, GHS has developed more than a dozen public educational programs, the Civil War 150 Historical Marker Project, the Georgia Civil Rights Trail, the Georgia History Festival and, in partnership with the Office of the Governor, the Georgia Trustees, the highest honor from the state of Georgia.

This past year, GHS achieved its fundraising goal for its Next Century Initiative, which raised \$15 million to renovate and expand the GHS Research Center and bring the organization's endowment up to \$20 million.

JERRY GONZALEZ

CEO, GALEO and GALEO Impact Fund, Norcross



The growing economic power and political clout of Georgia's Latino community puts Jerry Gonzalez and GALEO in a good position.

Latinos make up 10% of the state's population, per the 2020 U.S. Census, and

Gonzalez says they are avid voters.

"GALEO promotes civic engagement and leadership development of the Latinx community in Georgia to build a state where our communities are valued," he says. "Our Latinx electorate is a force to be respected as it now is well over 385,000 strong and over-performs the national Latino voter participation rate."

A Texas native, Gonzalez has been CEO of the non-partisan organization since it was founded in 2003. The nonprofit focuses on increasing civic participation of the Latino community and developing prominent leaders throughout Georgia. He is also CEO of the GALEO Latino Community Development Fund and the GALEO Impact Fund, which was founded in 2019.

He has repeatedly been named one of the Georgia Hispanic Chamber of Commerce's 50 Most Influential Latinos and was named a Voice for Brighter Futures in Community Engagement by the 4 Brighter Futures Foundation in 2021.

JEFF GRAHAM

Executive Director, Georgia Equality, Atlanta



With a lifelong commitment to advocating for LGBTQ+ rights and health issues, Jeff Graham continues to strive for impactful change and foster a more inclusive and equitable Georgia.

Graham is the longtime leader of Georgia Equality, an organization dedicated to advancing fairness, safety and opportunities for the LGBTQ+ community in Georgia.

His advocacy journey began in the mid-1980s as a college student passionate about LGBTQ+ and AIDS-related issues, and he has remained a steadfast advocate ever since.

Graham is also a founding board member of ProGeorgia and America Votes Georgia, both organizations that promote strategic civic engagement and coordinated policy and electoral efforts. His leadership and dedication have earned him spots on several most influential lists, and he has also had the honor of serving as a Grand Marshal of the Atlanta Pride Parade.

Throughout his career, Graham has received numerous accolades for his advocacy and nonprofit work. His awards include recognition from the National Center for Human Rights Education, the Community Foundation for Greater Atlanta, Atlanta City Council, GLAAD, the ACLU of Georgia and several local publications and LGBTQ+ and HIV organizations.

F. SHEFFIELD HALE

President & CEO, Atlanta History Center, Atlanta



Originally founded as the Atlanta Historical Society in 1926, today the Atlanta History Center encompasses 33 acres of curated Goizueta Gardens, four historic houses, the Kenan Research Center, a range of programming like author talks and summer camps, and exhibitions housed at the Atlanta History Museum. It is also home to the Cyclorama, a 10,000-pound, 49-foot-tall circular painting stretching 371 feet long that was painted in 1886 and depicts the 1864 Battle of Atlanta.

Sheffield Hale has led the institution since 2012.

Under his leadership, the center has focused on addressing issues of history and memory that can divide a community and country and aims to approach history in a way that cultivates broader, communitywide perspectives. As part of that, the Atlanta History Center is a member of the International Coalition of Sites of Conscience, a network of organizations that connects past struggles to today's movements for human rights.

Hale is heavily involved in the city's civic world, serving as a trustee of the Atlanta Convention and Visitors Bureau, the Buckhead Coalition, Midtown Alliance and The Westminster Schools. He also serves as the advisory board chair for the Museum of Early Southern Decorative Arts. In 2021, Hale was a recipient of the Georgia Governor's Award for Arts & Humanities.

P. RUSSELL “RUSS” HARDIN

President, Robert W. Woodruff Foundation, Atlanta



Russ Hardin relishes the projects he funds through the Robert W. Woodruff Foundation, where he's been on staff for 36 years. “We get to play a role in some of Atlanta’s most significant civic projects ... the BeltLine, the resurrection of Grady Hospital, the establishment of Centennial Olympic Park, for example,” he says. “We also get to meet and work with dedicated nonprofit leaders who are passionate about the work they do to make our city and state a better place to live.”

The Woodruff Foundation is an independent private foundation established by Robert W. Woodruff, longtime leader of The Coca-Cola Company, with the other foundations by members of the family of Joseph Whitehead, one of the original Coca-Cola bottlers. The quartet of foundations supports a range of charitable causes in Atlanta, including health, education, environment, human services and the arts. “We agree with our mayor that Atlanta should be the best place in the country to raise a child,” he says. “We continue to prioritize investments in early childhood education and in college access to provide opportunity to all of our children.”

In 2023, the Woodruff Foundation alone provided 28 grants totaling more than \$189 million.

JEN HIDINGER-KENDRICK

Founder, Giving Kitchen, Atlanta



At the heart of the nonprofit Giving Kitchen is the deeply held belief that every foodservice worker deserves respect and dignity, especially in a personal crisis. Established in 2013, Giving Kitchen provides emergency assistance for foodservice workers in the restaurant and hospitality industry through financial support and a network of resources.

“My No. 1 passion is driving this mission and sharing not only a personal telling of our origin but more so about the teams of thousands of individuals who have come to us courageously asking for help,” says founder Jen Hiding-Kendrick.

Since its inception, the organization has created community while serving more than 19,000 individuals and awarded over \$12.5 million in financial assistance. Expanding from a focus on Georgia, Giving Kitchen’s vision now is to support any qualified foodservice worker in the U.S. Its far-reaching goal is to annually serve 100,000 people by 2030.

“I want Giving Kitchen to be the first thing people think of when they think of a foodservice worker needing help,” says Hiding-Kendrick.

Notable recognitions include the 2021 Claes Nobel World Betterment Award, the James Beard Foundation’s 2019 Humanitarian of the Year award and being recognized in 2022 as one of *Fast Company*’s Brands That Matter. Hiding-Kendrick is a 2024 Leadership Atlanta alumni.

GEORGIA HEART
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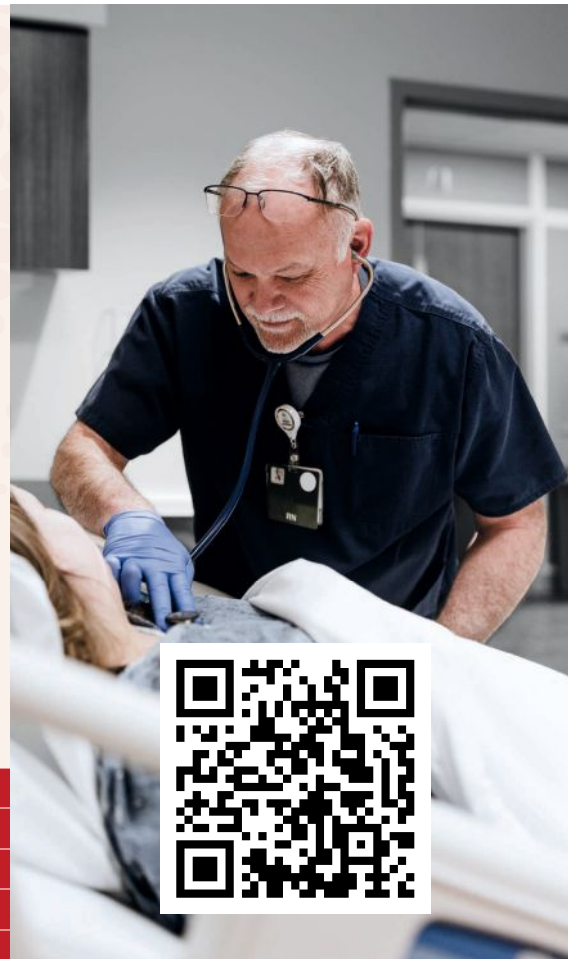
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CLYDE HIGGS

President & CEO, Atlanta BeltLine Inc., Atlanta



Clyde Higgs has project oversight of the Atlanta BeltLine, working with private and public partners to create a seamless connection for the more than two million people a year who already use the completed

stretches. “As we build this 22-mile path, plus 11 miles of connector trails, it’s our mission to build a more equitable and inclusive Atlanta,” says Higgs. “To do that, we’re also focused on creating affordable housing, economic development opportunities, greenspace, and incubating small businesses and the arts.”

Last year a \$25-million infrastructure grant from the U.S. Department of Transportation ensured completion of a 2.2-mile segment in northeast Atlanta, which will create the BeltLine’s first direct connection to a MARTA station.

“I call the Atlanta BeltLine ‘the people’s project’ ... championed by people across the city as we connect 45 neighborhoods to parks, schools and business districts, giving people more of an option to lead a car-free life,” says Higgs, adding the Southside Trail will be completed before Atlanta hosts the World Cup in 2026.

The project is at 66% of the goal to create or preserve 5,600 units of affordable housing by 2030, says Higgs, adding they are on track to complete trail construction by 2030.

LISA KELLY

Senior Advisor, Georgia GOAL Scholarship Program; Senior Advisor, Georgia HEART Hospital Program, Peachtree Corners



The Georgia GOAL Scholarship Program and the Georgia HEART Hospital Program are flagship tax credit organizations that elevate education and healthcare in Georgia. GOAL has enabled tens of thousands of Georgia students to access a private K-12 education, and HEART is enhancing the financial stability of rural hospitals and improving health outcomes throughout the state. Kelly was executive director of both organizations from their inception until earlier this year, at which time she was named senior advisor.

She has 25 years of public accounting and business experience, including working for EY in the consulting sector and for PwC in the audit arena. “I consider the opportunity to use my business experience and accounting skills to elevate education and healthcare for Georgians to be both a high calling and a blessing,” says Kelly, a rural Georgia native and lifelong Georgian.

Her efforts at Georgia GOAL have helped build and grow the nonprofit into what has been called, “the best organization of its kind in the country.” She has also been credited with developing Georgia HEART into a trusted service organization with which every eligible Georgia rural hospital is partnered in order to implement the rural hospital tax credit program.

RAPHAEL HOLLOWAY

CEO, Gateway Center, Atlanta



Since 2005, the Gateway Center has worked to provide housing and services to people who are in a homeless situation, including mental health counseling, job skills training or placement, addiction recovery and health evaluations.

Raphael Holloway joined the organization in 2016 as CEO, bringing with him 30 years’ experience in nonprofits and social services, in particular, his experience with behavioral health, homelessness, re-entry and public health.

In 2020, he was recognized as one of the Heroes Who Inspire Atlanta’s Top Doctors in *Atlanta Magazine*. Holloway was recognized in 2021 with the TechBridge Bill Bolling Non-Profit Leadership Award and has been recognized four years running by *Atlanta Magazine* as one of Atlanta’s 500 Most Powerful Leaders. In addition, he was recognized among the most accomplished leaders in the state by being named to the TITAN 100 spotlight in both 2023 and 2024.

He sits on the boards of the Atlanta Kiwanis Club, Open Doors, Atlanta Fire and Rescue Foundation and the Community Advisory Board for Agape Youth & Family Center.

JAY KAIMAN

President, The Marcus Foundation, Atlanta



As president of The Marcus Foundation, Jay Kaiman’s work focuses on fulfilling the vision of Bernie Marcus, chairman of the foundation and cofounder of The Home Depot. Kaiman joined the organization in 2002 with experience in both the for-profit and non-profit

sectors. His work focuses on creating impact in the promotion of the free-enterprise system, medical research and care, the Jewish community and children’s issues. A primary objective has also been on helping veterans in their challenges with post traumatic growth and traumatic brain injuries through the Avalon Network.

“We approach philanthropy in the same way Bernie approached the creation of The Home Depot,” Kaiman says. “He understands the power of people and culture in having impact. This has translated into understanding entrepreneurial philanthropy, and the State of Georgia has been a key place to often do demonstration projects that in many cases grow into national impact.”

Kaiman began his career with the United Way of Escambia County, moving into the for-profit arena by joining a family business started by his grandfather in Pensacola, Fla. He moved to Atlanta in 1996 and served as the regional director of the Anti-Defamation League before joining the foundation.

BERNICE A. KING

CEO, The Martin Luther King Jr. Center for Nonviolent Social Change, Atlanta



Bernice King is a global thought leader, strategist, solutionist, orator, peace advocate and CEO of The Martin Luther King Jr. Center for Nonviolent Social Change (The King Center). She continues to advance her parents’ legacy of nonviolent social change through policy, advocacy and research, as well as education and training through the Kingian philosophy of nonviolence, which she re-branded Nonviolence365™ (NV365).

Through her work at The King Center, she educates youth and adults worldwide about the nonviolent principles and strategies modeled by her parents. Under her leadership, the center has implemented numerous initiatives reaching over 500,000 people around the world.

King is the recipient of two Phoenix Awards from the Congressional Black Caucus Foundation and several honorary doctorates. She is a member of the State Bar of Georgia, admitted since 1992; a registered mediator through the Georgia Office of Dispute Resolution; a member of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority Inc., the Rotary Club of Atlanta, the International Women’s Forum and the National Council of Negro Women, among others. She has authored two books.

GAURAV KUMAR

President, Andrew J. Young Foundation, Atlanta



It was Ambassador Andrew Young's 80th birthday on which Gaurav Kumar had a serendipitous meeting with him. His vision for the world gave Kumar the purpose of his life. He joined the Andrew J. Young Foundation in 2014 as the Director of Social Innovation, where he spearheaded research, design and engineering of commercial-scale food production systems. In his current role since 2020, Kumar is leading the foundation to incubate new ideas and technologies that can help the Foundation realize its mission to feed the hungry, heal the sick, clothe and house the poor and set at liberty those who are oppressed.

"We need to figure out a way to feed 8.5 billion projected by 2030," he says. "We need to grow more food on less land, using less water and less energy in an environmentally sustainable way."

In May, the foundation broke ground on a commercial-scale aquaponics farm in Clayton County that will produce 2,000 pounds of fresh and organic greens every day and one ton of fish every week. The Forever Young Aquaponics facility will have a 48% smaller carbon footprint and use 92% less water compared to traditional farming and will offer produce to nine major cities throughout the Southeast.

TYESE LAWYER

President & CEO, Our House, Atlanta



"Invest in children, families, people and the future," is Tyese Lawyer's personal motto. She has been the leader of Our House since 2004, an organization with a mission of providing transformative care to end the cycle of homelessness. Our House was founded in 1987, opening its doors March 1988 to provide free, reliable childcare to families who find themselves unhoused.

Under Lawyer's leadership, Our House has expanded into a multi-service organization, providing more help for those in need. It merged in 2014 with Genesis Shelter, which had been formed in 1994 to combat homelessness – specifically for newborns and their mothers. In 2022, the organization was joined by Community Advanced Practice Nurses, which had been formed in 1998 by nurse practitioners to provide healthcare for unhoused women and children.

Lawyer has worked with at-risk groups for more than three decades. She holds a master's degree in psychology from John Jay College. She currently serves as chair of the DeKalb County Continuum of Care board of directors and is on the board of the Adaptive Learning Center.



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MILTON J. LITTLE JR.

President & CEO, United Way of Greater Atlanta, Atlanta



The United Ways that scatter across the country are the trailblazers of the nonprofit world, with the first one established in 1887. Using the convenience of payroll deduction at participating

workplaces, these groups give everyday people the power to support local charities. And Atlanta has the biggest of them all.

Milton Little has led the United Way of Greater Atlanta since 2007. He has a strong legacy of fostering partnerships across for-profit, nonprofit, philanthropic and government sectors with a goal to improve education, healthcare and economic mobility in metro Atlanta communities.

Under his leadership, United Way of Greater Atlanta has tackled numerous challenges, from natural disasters to economic crises. That includes the 2010 launch of the Georgia Fresh Start Initiative, the Child Well-Being Movement in 2017 and, more recently, the Greater Atlanta COVID-19 Response and Recovery Fund, which raised and distributed more than \$28 million to 480 nonprofits to address urgent needs related to the pandemic, and the United for Racial Equity and Healing Fund in 2021.

Little serves on numerous boards, including the National Advisory Council for United Way Worldwide and the Roundtable on Population Health Improvement for the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering and Medicine.

JOHN O'CALLAGHAN

President & CEO, Atlanta Neighborhood Development Partnership, Atlanta



John O'Callaghan is a veteran of government, whether in elected or employment modes, and today he puts that experience toward more equitable housing in Metro Atlanta – a place where affordable housing is in short supply. His work also helps neighborhoods that are facing the prospect of decline.

The Atlanta Neighborhood Development Partnership says there's a 30% gap in homeownership between Black and white households, and it identifies that gap as a root

cause of racial wealth differences. By next year, under O'Callaghan's leadership, the ANDP plans to create and preserve 2,000 affordable housing units to reduce the homeownership, affordability and wealth gap.

O'Callaghan served as director of intergovernmental affairs for Atlanta during the Maynard Jackson administration and has also been a member of the Fulton County Commission and the Atlanta City Council.

Continuing the housing theme of his career, he logged 11 years as a regional public affairs director at Fannie Mae. He sits on the boards of Truist Bank, Regions Bank, IBERIABANK, Housing Partnership Network, National Housing Conference, Framework and the Atlanta Metropolitan College Foundation.

KATHERINE MOORE

President, Georgia Conservancy, Atlanta



A 2015 Institute for Georgia Environmental Leadership grad, Katherine Moore has worked in the community development and natural resources fields for over 25 years, including the past 15 years at Georgia

Conservancy. She was named president in 2020.

Before joining the Georgia Conservancy, Moore worked in the private industry side of conservation. Her experience spans regulatory work to public engagement to legislative advocacy and a spectrum of landscapes: rural, suburban and urban.

A statewide conservation organization promoting sustainability in the built and natural environments, Georgia Conservancy for 57 years has sought and achieved advancement of land conservation, land stewardship and sustainable land use across the state. Georgia Now and Forever is Georgia Conservancy's most recent initiative. A statewide vision intended to secure a healthy environment and long-term quality of life for Georgians, the initiative is central to the nonprofit's strategic planning.

Data from the initiative revealed 2.5 million acres of Georgia farmland have been lost to development and the future of Georgia's salt marsh is challenged, driving the conservancy's role in establishing the Georgia Farmland Protection program and instituting fresh, multi-state action on salt marsh restoration and conservation.

CAROL NAUGHTON

CEO, Purpose Built Communities, Atlanta



Carol Naughton leads this philanthropy-funded organization she's worked with since it was established in 2009. She was named CEO in 2020. Purpose Built Communities (PBC) helps people around

the country strengthen neighborhoods so they become places that improve people's lives by creating better upward economic mobility, better health outcomes and greater racial equity.

"We know that prosperity starts with place, and your neighborhood matters. All the research shows us this, so we wanted to strengthen neighborhoods so that people had a real shot at the American dream," she says.

Once invited into a community, PBC works with local leaders to implement that a model based on four key pillars: creating high-quality mixed-income housing, a cradle-through-college education pipeline, improving health and wellness, and economic vitality. The secret sauce? What PBC calls a "community quarterback organization," a nonprofit basically in the strategy business. Three currently exist in the Atlanta area – East Lake, Grove Park and historic South Atlanta.

Naughton has served on numerous local and national organization boards, advocating for advancing racial equity and developing healthy communities across the country. She currently serves on the board for the Low Income Investment Fund and is a global trustee for the Urban Land Institute.

CARLOS PAGOAGA

Vice President Global Community Affairs, The Coca-Cola Company; President, The Coca-Cola Foundation, Atlanta



Carlos Pagoaga, a 34-year veteran of The Coca-Cola Company, in June became president of The Coca-Cola Foundation. At the same time, he also assumed the duties of vice president of global community affairs for The Coca-Cola Company.

Previously Pagoaga served as the Foundation's senior director of circular economy, where he was responsible for directing global recycling initiatives. In his expanded Foundation role, Pagoaga will manage all operations, including grant making, financial requirements and regulatory compliance for domestic and international philanthropy.

He joined the Foundation in 2007 and has been responsible for a wide variety of duties, including directing multiple large grants, such as those for the Replenish Africa Initiative, Project Last Mile and the Atlanta BeltLine. The Coca-Cola Foundation has awarded grants of more than \$1.6 billion to strengthen communities worldwide since the foundation's inception in 1984.

Pagoaga was born in Havana, Cuba, and raised in Atlanta. He joined The Coca-Cola Company in 1990 in Corporate Latin Affairs, where he managed relationships with Latino organizations and elected officials across the U.S.. He later moved to the company's North America unit, where he managed multi-cultural communications.

KEITH T. PARKER

President & CEO, Goodwill of North Georgia, Decatur



Keith Parker came to the executive office of Goodwill in 2017 from a starkly different arena, that of urban mass transit. He's a former CEO of MARTA, and he held equivalent posts in San Antonio and Charlotte.

But the career shift doesn't appear to have broken his stride. Since joining the largest nonprofit in metro Atlanta, Parker has grown the organization to become the largest workforce development organization in the state with more than 120,000 Georgians employed in the last five years.

Parker was appointed in 2016 by President Barack Obama to the

National Infrastructure Advisory Council, where he remains active. He maintains his connection to the transportation industry by serving on boards of the ENO Center for Transportation and the American Public Transportation Foundation. He also serves with the Georgia Chamber of Commerce, the Rotary Club of Atlanta, the Metro Atlanta Chamber and the Greater North Fulton Chamber of Commerce.

KARLA REDDING-ANDREWS

Vice President & Executive Director, Otis Redding Foundation, Macon



Karla Redding-Andrews has a passion for education paired with music and the arts. In downtown Macon, the Otis Redding Museum attracts fans from around the globe. Visitors can experience his iconic music and

get to know the family man and entrepreneur that he was. His legacy remains a huge part of the Macon-Bibb community as do the programs under the Otis Redding Foundation umbrella.

Since 2007, the Foundation has provided music and arts education in the region. Redding-Andrews' most recent project is the creation of the 9,000-square-foot Otis Redding Center for the Arts, which will serve youth ages 5-18. It is slated to open this year.

Redding-Andrews is a member of the Leadership Macon Class of 2015 and the Macon Rotary Club. She is on the board of visitors of the Robert McDuffie Center for Strings at Mercer University and serves on the boards of the Community Foundation of Central Georgia, Central Georgia Technical College, the Georgia Intellectual Property Association, the International Cherry Blossom Festival and the public relations advisory board of Georgia Southern University.

RENA ANN PECK

Executive Director, Georgia River Network, Atlanta



Georgia is rife with rivers. According to Rena Ann Peck, the ecologist whose organization is charged with protecting them, the St. Marys River, which originates in the Okefenokee Swamp, is "fundamental to who we are and what Georgia is as a state." Peck describes the last year as "surprising and head-spinning" when it comes to advocating for the protection of the Okefenokee.

Drought already can close down the shallow swamp's canoe trails, and a further drop in water levels would endanger not only the wildlife, but the outdoor recreation economy dependent on hunting, fishing and paddling ecotourism of the Okefenokee and the river trails, she says.

So, Peck and the GRN spent this year advocating to declare the protection of the swamp a priority for the next legislative session, and making more rivers open to public use. Recreation keeps rivers clean and protected from development, Peck says. "As more people use rivers paddling, they get cleaner because people have a connection to them."

The veteran conservationist previously worked with The Nature Conservancy, where she ran preserves and programs in Florida, Arizona, Oklahoma and Louisiana. She returned to Atlanta in 2000 to serve as director of science for the Georgia-Alabama Land Trust.

DWIGHT "IKE" REIGHARD

President & CEO, MUST Ministries, Marietta



Ike Reighard is a multifaceted individual – a senior pastor, nonprofit CEO, author and motivational speaker. Topping that off, he comes from a banking background. But since 2011, his daily job is at the helm of MUST Ministries, a faith-based charity

active in Cobb, Cherokee and other counties.

The group assists some 70,000 people annually with programs for employment help, housing and food assistance, among other programs. Last year, Reighard worked with Notre Dame University and Kennesaw State University to develop and implement a nine-month Aspiring Community Entrepreneurs Program, which provides people living in poverty with courses in entrepreneurship. The MUST Hope House shelter in Marietta also completed its second year of operation this year, helping more than 4,000 unhoused people.

In addition to his duties at MUST, Reighard has been senior pastor of Piedmont Church since 2007. In 2023, he was presented the Citizen of the Year Award by the Cobb County Chamber of Commerce. He received his bachelor's degree in religion from Mercer University and went on to earn his master's and doctorate degrees in ministry from Luther Rice College and Seminary, a Southern Baptist Conference-affiliated college and seminary in Lithonia.

JILL SAVITT

President & CEO, National Center for Civil and Human Rights, Atlanta



Jill Savitt is a human rights advocate with expertise in genocide and atrocity prevention who has headed up the National Center for Civil and Human Rights since 2019. She was previously the

acting director of the Simon-Skjoldt Center for the Prevention of Genocide at the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, D.C.

In 2025, the Center will be closing for nine months to undergo a \$56-million expansion that will add two new wings totaling some 24,000 square feet with room for classrooms, exhibit and event spaces while also refreshing the museum's current offerings.

But that doesn't mean the Center itself will stop its mission. Instead, it will spread out across the city with community events held at local coffee shops, restaurants and event and performance venues, including its Truth programs, which will bring history to life while addressing contemporary rights issues. It will also continue its ongoing programs including K-12 education, its LGBTQ+ Institute, DEI training experiences, human rights training for law enforcement and the Truth & Transformation Initiative.

Savitt is a member of the Council on Foreign Relations.

NATHANIEL SMITH

Founder & Chief Equity Officer, Partnership for Southern Equity, Atlanta



Nathaniel Smith and his team at the Partnership for Southern Equity (PSE) lobby aggressively for racial equity and shared prosperity, and teach the communities they serve to do the same. Smith points to a long list of wins, including the group's role in the Atlanta BeltLine, passage of a 2014 transit referendum to expand MARTA and the creation of planning and development tools to measure and illustrate equity in land-use planning – including a grant PSE received last year to plant 15,000 trees in three Southern cities over the next five years.

PSE has been busy this year. It launched the Just Communities initiative to support the next generation of urban and community development professionals. This summer, PSE hosted the 2025 Just Youth Circle Tour, a series of youth-based community listening sessions designed to address and improve racial equity and shared prosperity for all. It was also selected to be the local anchor for the Atlanta Urbanite Mobility Challenge, an 18-month program where entrepreneurs, local resident leaders, organizations and small businesses are challenged to submit innovative solutions to address the city's unique transit and economic mobility needs.

Smith is also co-chair of the Drawdown Georgia Leadership Council, which addresses climate change in Georgia.

FAY TWERSKY

President & Director, The Arthur M. Blank Family Foundation, Atlanta



Fay Twersky's career as an executive for philanthropic foundations has taken her around the world. She joined The Arthur M. Blank Family Foundation in 2021, coming from a post as vice president of the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation. She also spent a year in Jerusalem as a senior advisor to the managing director of Yad Hanadiv (The Rothschild Family Foundation).

Before that, she was a director and leadership team member at the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation. In other words, she has helped shepherd the philanthropic legacy of The Home Depot, Hewlett-Packard,

the Rothschild banking dynasty and Microsoft.

Twersky is a trustee of the Van Leer Foundation based in The Hague and chairs the board of the Van Leer Jerusalem Institute. She serves on the Executive Committee for the Metro Atlanta Chamber, and she's a member of both the Atlanta Committee for Progress and the International Women's Forum of Georgia. Fay was named to the 2023 NonProfit Times' Power and Influence list.

MONICA THORNTON

Georgia Executive Director, The Nature Conservancy, Atlanta



Red-cockaded woodpeckers, Cherokee darters and gopher tortoises. Tennessee yellow-eyed grass and monkey face orchids. You'd expect to find The Nature Conservancy working to protect endangered or threatened plants and animals like this in the state of Georgia. But the organization also packs a punch in a larger arena: biodiversity restoration.

"I am very proud that, in the short time since I joined The Nature Conservancy, we have kicked off one of the most significant expansions of our work in Georgia in 50 years," Monica Thornton says. "Alongside our conservation partners, we are constructing two new regional headquarters in the Chattahoochee Fall Line near Columbus and in the Dugdown Corridor in North Georgia."

These new facilities will support the conservation of hundreds of thousands of acres, which includes countless plant and animal environments. Not only will these two new HQs protect and restore the state's most critical landscapes, they will also play a part in the continuing education of the unique link between biodiversity and economic progress.

Before the Nature Conservancy, Thornton previously worked with the non-profit sector at the Georgia Municipal Association. She also served as a senior advancement officer at the Centers for Disease Control's CDC Foundation and has held leadership positions at three Atlanta TV stations as well as Georgia Public Broadcasting.

BELISA URBINA

Cofounder, Ser Familia, Kennesaw



Belisa Urbina and her husband cofounded Ser Familia 23 years ago after they became concerned about the lack of family resources available to Latino families in Georgia.

"We married very young as teenagers," she says, adding that they found an organization while living in Puerto Rico that could help them with skills like good communication. "We moved here and could not find one, so we started a program at our church on how couples can communicate better."

They founded Ser Familia 23 years ago, and it's now one of the largest Latino social service organizations in the state, offering parenting education,

domestic-violence prevention, youth programs and mental health services. It offers these services from five locations across the metro Atlanta area, including its \$10-million headquarters in Kennesaw, which it moved into earlier this year.

"It's rewarding to see families transformed, to go from crisis to thriving again," Urbina says.

The Urbinas were inducted into the Georgia Latinos' Hall of Fame. She was honored with the NFL Hispanic Heritage Leadership Award by the Atlanta Falcons. She and her husband received a Congressional Commendation in 2023, and she was appointed by the Governor to the Commission on Equal Opportunity.

She is also on the Prevent Child Abuse Georgia Advisory Board and Georgia's Child Protective Services Advisory Council.

DEPRIEST WADDY

President & CEO, Community Foundation for Northeast Georgia, Duluth



When DePriest Waddy became president and CEO of the Community Foundation for Northeast Georgia (CFNG) in 2022, he soon found himself with a unique assignment, one involving a global audience. A major stakeholder for the foundation had found a passion project in the World Peace Revival and wanted Waddy to chair it – culminating in 2023 with the unveiling of a statue of Nobel Peace Prize winner Martin Luther King Jr. in an Atlanta park.

CFNG serves as an umbrella organization that helps other nonprofits and family foundations manage the business side of their philanthropy. It has expanded beyond its

original roots in the Gwinnett and North Fulton areas, providing more than \$100 million in grants since the foundation was established. In the last year, DePriest facilitated approximately \$17 million to support nonprofits throughout Georgia, which includes professional development and leadership training to more than 500 nonprofit leaders.

Before joining CFNG, Waddy was CEO of Families First and also worked in executive positions with United Way of Greater Atlanta and Year Up, Big Brothers Big Sisters and Atlanta Public Schools' Project GRAD.

RYAN WILSON

Cofounder & CEO, The Gathering Spot, Atlanta



Ryan Wilson and his business partner reacquired The Gathering Spot at the end of last year, after partnering with a fintech company in 2022. "The original team is back and focused on our original strategy," says Wilson.

"We are a private membership club with over 5,000 members in Atlanta, from the mayor to small business owners," he adds. Membership is very diverse, from attorneys and venture capitalists to entrepreneurs and film makers. "It's one of the more influential communities in Atlanta, from 21-year-olds to former Mayor Andrew Young, who is 92."

Each location or club – there are two more in Los Angeles and Washington, D.C., with one in Houston on the way – has a full restaurant and bar, co-working space and event space. But the non-profit's driving force is creating community to help each other succeed.

Wilson is a sought-after speaker and moderator and has been featured in numerous publications. He also serves on several boards, including for The Community Foundation for Greater Atlanta, Usher's New Look, The Woodruff Arts Center, The Atlanta Business League and the Metro Atlanta Chamber. He is a member of the Atlanta Chapter of the 100 Black Men and the Atlanta Rotary Club.

KYLE WAIDE

President & CEO, Atlanta Community Food Bank, Atlanta



Kyle Waide oversees the annual distribution of approximately 100 million pounds of food and grocery products through 700 community-based non-profit organizations that feed those in need across 29 Georgia counties. This year, under Waide's leadership, the food bank opened its latest community food center in Jonesboro, which is an area with high levels of need.

Prior to being named CEO in June 2015, he served as the ACFB's vice president of partner operations, leading the organization to record-breaking years of food distribution to the hungry. Before joining the food bank, Waide held several management roles at The Home Depot in

disaster relief, corporate responsibility, community affairs and store operations.

He also had served as part of the team that created Charity Navigator, the nation's premier charity evaluation service. Waide currently serves as the vice chair of the National Council for Feeding America. He also serves on the boards of the Southeast Regional Cooperative, Feeding Georgia, the Metro Atlanta Chamber and Goodwill of North Georgia. He is a member of the Leadership Atlanta Class of 2015, the Rotary Club of Atlanta, the Community Advisory Board for The Junior League of Atlanta and the Committee for A Better Atlanta.

MIKE WORLEY

President & CEO, Georgia Wildlife Federation, Covington



Since 2015, Mike Worley has led the Georgia Wildlife Federation (GWF) in championing the rights of hunters, anglers and other outdoor buffs statewide.

The organization was founded in 1936, driven by concerns over unregulated hunting and fishing and their impact on wildlife. Among its missions, the group operates Mill Creek Nature Center, Alcovy Conservation Center and Camp Charlie. Through its Private Lands Stewardship Program, GWF has also joined the effort to reestablish the longleaf pine in Georgia.

"I am proud that the Federation has always been recognized as a leader in conservation in Georgia," he says. "We have a legacy and foundation to keep that momentum going forward. We are touching the future. I have had lots of predecessors and hope to have lots of successors."

Worley was recognized in 2023 by the National Wildlife Federation for his work in fostering partnerships among organizations and mentoring future leaders in conservation with its highest award.

ANDREA YOUNG

Executive Director, American Civil Liberties Union of Georgia, Atlanta



A nationally recognized, life-long advocate for civil and human rights, Andrea Young leads the 22,000-member American Civil Liberties Union of Georgia, working to combat voter suppression and protect freedom of speech, immigrants'

rights and women's rights.

"I grew up in the Civil Rights Movement, so this is really a continuation of that work for multicultural democracy," says Young, whose background includes producing documentaries on civil and human rights, conducting global missions and advocacy for United Church of Christ and serving as chief of staff for Cynthia McKinney, Georgia's first female congresswoman.

The ACLU continues to focus on ensuring a free and fair election, she says. "The people who hold our elections are us, right? So we work with county volunteers, with boards of elections, with the people who volunteer to work the polls. It's a community effort. And there's no 'they'; there's only 'us,'" says the proud graduate of the Atlanta Public School System.

Young graduated from Swarthmore College and Georgetown University School of Law. She's a founding board member of the National Center for Civil Human Rights in Atlanta and the author of *Life Lessons My Mother Taught Me*.

LUCY AIKEN-JOHNSON

Founding Partner, ai3, Atlanta



ai3, an award-winning studio that practices architecture, interior design, graphics and branding across a wide spectrum of geographies and industries, celebrated its 20th anniversary this summer. The firm's latest award was a 2023 Best of the Best honor from the International Interior Design Association Georgia Chapter for the studio's Microsoft Atlanta Campus Amenities project. ai3 was a part of a team designing Microsoft's new east coast campus at Atlantic Yards to support their mission to attract talent from local HBCUs and

build a connected community within Atlanta.

A practicing interior designer since 1994, Lucy Aiken-Johnson left a large Atlanta firm in 2004 to co-found her own firm. Since then, she has led ai3 to 50-plus design awards. Those honors include the American Society of Interior Designers Georgia Chapter's Design Achievement Award, being named one of *Atlanta* magazine's 500 Most Powerful Atlanta Leaders and winning the Atlanta Decorative Arts Center's Southeast Contract Designer of the Year award. ai3's clients include hotels, restaurants, private clubs and those in the residential space.

"I'm incredibly proud of our success," says Aiken Johnson, "particularly in being part of very meaningful projects in this city."

ROY E. BARNES

Partner, The Barnes Law Group LLC, Marietta



From the Governor's mansion to cattle farmer, former Gov. Roy Barnes is enjoying life after politics.

"I'm just having a good time since I left the Governor's mansion," he says. "It was a great honor to serve as governor, but as bitter and divided as politics has become, I don't miss it at all."

After leaving public office, Barnes established The Barnes Law Group in Marietta, where his practice has concentrated primarily on civil litigation. Barnes has been recognized by the American College of Trial Lawyers as one of the top trial attorneys in the nation.

When he's not in the courtroom, Barnes can be found on one of his two farms in Cobb and Polk counties, where he raises Hereford cattle.

In 2003, Barnes was honored with the John F. Kennedy Library Foundation Profile in Courage Award for his efforts to change the Georgia flag.

THURBERT BAKER

Co-lead, U.S. State Attorney General Practice, Denton's, Atlanta



Thurbert Baker's journey from a small farm in Rocky Mount, North Carolina, to becoming Georgia's first Black attorney general is inspiring.

Baker began his legal career as a public defender before moving to private practice, where he became a senior partner at Baker and Shivers law firm. Elected to the Georgia House of Representatives in 1989, he served as assistant floor leader and floor leader for Governor Zell Miller.

In 1997, Baker made history as Georgia's attorney general, championing legislation to increase penalties for domestic abuse. He served on the

executive committee of the National Association of Attorneys General and chaired the Conference on Violence Against Women.

Today he co-leads Denton's U.S. State Attorney General practice and serves as Denton's global vice chair. His practice focuses on corporate compliance and investigations, public policy and regulatory affairs among other matters.

Baker's community service includes board positions with the DeKalb County Library, Emory University and the DeKalb College Foundation. A former fencing champion, he was honored by the ACC in 2002.

CHLOE BARZEY

Office Managing Director, Accenture, Atlanta



As office managing director, Chloe Barzey leads the vision and operations across Georgia, Tennessee and Alabama for Accenture, a leading global professional services company. Barzey, who has more than 30 years consulting and industry experience, including 25 years with Accenture, works with clients on end-to-end transformation leveraging technology, from strategy through implementation. Since 2008, clients served

have realized more \$5 billion in net bottom line savings while building capabilities and fueling growth and innovation.

"At Accenture in Atlanta, we are very intentional about our strategy," says Barzey. "We dare to dream, we collaborate to innovate and unite with our clients, our people, our partners and our community to make a positive sustainable impact. By working together, we can be the change we want to see, and I love that I get to live this every day."

Barzey is the executive sponsor for several women's and diversity programs within Accenture and serves in high-profile local and national roles. Some of her board roles include serving with The Atlanta Rotary, Leadership Atlanta, the Atlanta History Center, the Metro Atlanta Chamber, the International Women's Forum and C200.

Professional Services

IVY N. CADLE

Managing Shareholder, Baker Donelson; President, State Bar of Georgia, Atlanta



In February, Ivy Cadle was named managing shareholder of the Atlanta office of Baker Donelson and in June he was installed as the 62nd president of the State Bar of Georgia.

Cadle represents clients across a broad range of industries in complex business litigation. His practice focuses on complex real property litigation across all areas touching real estate, including zoning, land use, eminent domain and

conservation easements, among others. He is also a certified public accountant and a mediator who is registered neutral with the Georgia Commission on Dispute Resolution.

Cadle has served the Bar on its executive committee and board of governors. He has earned numerous recognitions for his bar service, including the State Bar of Georgia Young Lawyers Division (YLD) Award of Achievement for Outstanding Service to the YLD, Award of Achievement for Outstanding Service to the Bar – Leadership Academy and the Eighth Annual Ethics & Professionalism Award.

“I believe in the work of the State Bar of Georgia,” Cadle says, “because I find it to be engaging and rewarding to serve lawyers whose practices, clients and life experiences are as varied as the 450 miles that run from Chickamauga to Cumberland Island.”

AMY B. CHENG

Partner, Nelson Mullins, Atlanta



Amy Cheng is an Atlanta-based litigator who prides herself in helping companies stay compliant with ever-changing state and federal statutes that impact them and employee morale. For her, being a lawyer and a steward of the judicial system is an honor and a privilege, but it is about much more than winning cases and earning recognition.

Being a lawyer, she says, “Gives me a platform to give back and to make a difference in the community. That’s something that is very important to me.”

To her, community includes domestic violence survivors (she is a Georgia Coalition Against Domestic Violence

board member); the arts (she and her husband sit on the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra advisory council, and she sits on the Georgia Lawyer for the Arts board); advocating for Asian American, Native Hawaiian Pacific Islander (AANHPI) ethnicities in the legal arena (she is the Atlanta Bar Association’s first AANHPI president and one of its youngest) and elsewhere; and acting as a champion for people who can’t advocate for themselves.

“Giving back and recognizing, honoring and celebrating the various different pockets of our community that make Atlanta and Georgia great,” she says, “that’s what I enjoy outside of work.”

JEFF CALL

Managing Partner, Bennett Thrasher, Atlanta



As managing partner of Bennett Thrasher, Jeff Call specializes in wealth transfer/estate planning, investment, tax and financial planning for high-net-worth individuals, entrepreneurs, family business owners and executives. He has significant experience providing financial counsel on income tax, estate and gift tax, investment, insurance, charitable and retirement planning matters. Additionally, Call has experience in individual, partnership, S corporation and fiduciary taxation.

The firm embraces an entrepreneurial spirit, outperforming industry growth in 2023. As robust growth continued this year, the firm launched several new service lines, including an executive search and fund administration. These value-added solutions exemplify Bennett Thrasher’s commitment to making its CPAs trusted advisors and its focus on boosting employee satisfaction, strengthening client relationships and ultimately enhancing the bottom line.

Call is proud of how Bennett Thrasher meets employee needs by offering them milestone retention bonuses. “As employees progress, they receive milestone bonuses at various promotion levels, reinforcing a people-first culture that prioritizes benefits, work environment and collaboration,” says Call. “The firm finds that by taking great care of employees they take great care of its clients.”

LISA GUADALUPE CLARKE

Founder & CEO, ATL Search Group LLC, Atlanta



Lisa Clarke embarked on her journey as an entrepreneur in 2017, driven by her passion for helping others and her commitment to charitable causes.

Reflecting on her own experiences, Clarke recalls the challenges she faced as the only Latina in various workplaces, often finding herself in the role of translator for her colleagues. Determined to be a voice for those who lacked polished resumes or interview skills, in 2017 Clarke founded ATL Search Group, a 100% woman-owned, Latina staffing firm boasting more

than 35 years of experience in staffing and human resource management.

Clarke also launched Latinas Rise in 2023, a nonprofit that empowers Latina-established businesses by providing them with access to educational programs, mentorship, networking opportunities and resources to scale their enterprises. By equipping Latina entrepreneurs with the necessary tools and support, Latinas Rise not only enhances the success of these businesses but also benefits Fortune 500 companies. Through collaboration with educated and empowered Latina entrepreneurs, large corporations can foster more efficient and mutually beneficial vendor relationships.

Through Clarke’s endeavors, she helps transform lives and creates a ripple effect of empowerment and opportunity in the community.

JAKE EVANS

Shareholder, Greenberg Traurig LLP, Atlanta



Jake Evans is a first-chair litigator and Shareholder at Greenberg Traurig, LLP, an international law firm with more than 2,700 lawyers in 47 offices worldwide. He represents clients in complex, high-stakes cases across practice areas in federal and state courts throughout the U.S.

Evans has earned a reputation for showing dedication to enhancing his profession, knowledge and community that has been apparent in numerous roles. He is the youngest person ever elected chairman of Georgia's

State Ethics Commission, a position in which he served for three years. He also served on Georgia's Advisory Commission to the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, the Professionalism Committee of the Georgia Bar, the Atlanta Ballet's Advisory Council and the Big Brothers Big Sisters of Metro Atlanta's Young Leaders Council.

Evans also has received numerous awards for his work, including Super Lawyers "Rising Star" and The Best Lawyers in America.

Evans is a member of Leadership Atlanta's 2025 class and has participated in numerous international delegations, including ones to North Macedonia, Germany and the Republic of China (Taiwan). He graduated in the top of his class from UGA's School of Law.

T. MILLS FLEMING

Partner, HunterMaclean, Savannah



Mills Fleming is a longtime partner at HunterMaclean, primarily focusing on healthcare and immigration law. He is a past president of the Georgia Academy of Healthcare Attorneys, a member of the American Health Lawyers Association, the Health Law Section of the State Bar of Georgia and the American Immigration Lawyers Association.

Mills' immigration law practice focuses on temporary and permanent visa cases, J-1 waivers and hospital-physician visa issues as well as advice regarding compliance with the I-9, discrimination and document

abuse provisions of the Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986.

In 2021, Governor Kemp appointed Mills to serve on the Judicial Nominating Commission and on the Bona Fide Coin Operated Amusement Machine Operator advisory board, which provides regulatory oversight to COAM businesses and prevents unauthorized cash payout. The board's oversight helps protect the state's fiscal stability, supports educating Georgia's children through the HOPE scholarship and pre-kindergarten funding and improves public welfare.

A longtime champion of the arts, from 1996 to 2001 Fleming was chairman of the Lucas Theatre board of directors and helped raise more than \$10 million to restore this historic theater in Savannah built by his great-grandfather, Arthur Lucas, in 1921.

HENRY D. "HANK" FELLOWS JR.

Founding Partner, Fellows LaBriola LLP, Atlanta



It was a clerkship with U.S. District Court Judge Charles A. Moye Jr. that brought Hank Fellows to Atlanta in 1978. During his two-year clerkship, Fellows recalls working on commercial litigation cases, which would ultimately lead him to a 44-year career representing businesses, corporations, partnerships and individuals in commercial contract disputes.

In 1980, Fellows joined the 10th-largest law firm in Atlanta at that time, Hurt, Richardson, Garner, Todd and Cadenhead. After the firm dissolved in December 1992, Fellows became one of the founding partners of Fellows LaBriola in 1993, and the firm celebrated its 31st anniversary earlier this year.

Fellows is an AV-rated trial lawyer and a fellow of the American College of Trial Lawyers, which is limited to 1% of attorneys in each state. Other honors include being listed in The Best Lawyers in America in *Chambers USA* for the practice of commercial litigation. He is also a member of The Carter Center Board of Councilors.

"We enjoy trying to help clients resolve business disputes in as cost-efficient a manner as possible, and we do that either through trials or alternative dispute resolution methods," Fellows says. "It's a feeling of exhilaration to advocate for a client before a judge and a jury."

ERNEST L. GREER

Co-president, Greenberg Traurig LLP, Atlanta



Ernest Greer is an impactful business and civic leader, a decorated attorney who is committed to a life of significance on behalf of clients, the legal profession and the larger Atlanta community.

"As a lawyer, it is my responsibility to create opportunities and inspire others to excellence, setting an example by serving and supporting those organizations doing the heavy lifting, using their success as a starting point, not the goal," says Greer.

Greer graduated from Harvard University and the Northwestern University Pritzker School of Law. Today, he is one of the highest-level

Black law firm leaders in the world as co-president of Greenberg Traurig, a global law firm of more than 2,750 attorneys in 47 locations worldwide, where he plays a key role in the strategic direction of the firm. Greer also serves as chairman of Greenberg Traurig's Washington, D.C., office.

He serves on several boards, including Children's Healthcare of Atlanta, the Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights Under Law and Equal Justice Works. Greer also serves as director of the Buckhead Coalition and is a member of the Rotary Club of Atlanta and the Atlanta Chapter of the National Association of Guardsman Inc.

Professional Services

SMITH HANES

Founder & Owner, Smith Hanes Studio, Atlanta



Smith Hanes founded the studio of interior designers, architects and industrial designers that bears his name, Smith Hanes Studio, in 2004. A second location in New York City opened in 2020.

He is regarded as an expert in adaptive re-use of space and is respected for having a scrupulous eye for smart interior architectural details, whether it's for a restaurant, hotel, retail, workspace or personal residence.

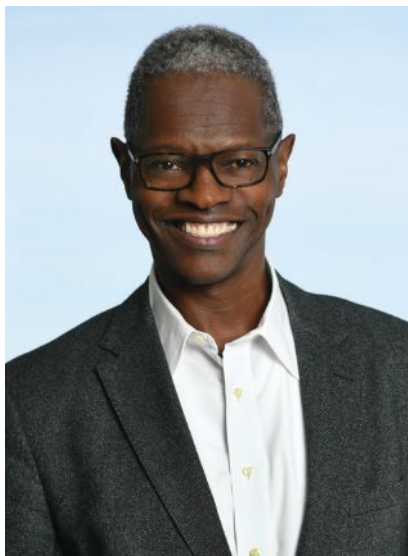
The studio's hallmark is a longstanding commitment to custom furniture and lighting details local artisans

find or make. "We are committed to commissioning local artists and artisans to make and build our spaces," says Hanes.

He has created spaces for some of the hospitality world's most-recognized names, not just in Georgia but across the country: Steve Nygren of Serenbe; Ford Fry, the restaurateur behind Superica and The Optimist; Sam Fox of The Global Ambassador hotel; James Goodnight and Seabird chef Dean Neff; and Sandy Beall and his team behind Windham Ski Mountain and Blackberry Farm.

CHRISTOPHER "CHRIS" HEARD

Managing Principal, Hendrick Inc., Atlanta



With more than three decades of design experience, Chris Heard became a managing principal and owner of Hendrick in 2008. An architecture and interior design firm that specializes in people-centered design, Hendrick is celebrating 50 years in 2024 – having been founded by Bill Hendrick in 1974.

Heard works from the philosophy that every client and project is unique. He was honored at the International Interior Design Association Georgia Chapter 2023 Leadership Breakfast and is a recipient of the 2024

Black Alumni Award from the Auburn Alumni Association.

He grew up in the small community of Smith's Station, Alabama, and graduated from Auburn University with a Bachelor of Architecture. He is a member of the Georgia Minority Supplier Diversity Council, a regional member of the National Minority Supplier Diversity Council, a member of the American Society of Interior Designers and the American Institute of Architects.

EDWARD J. "JACK" HARDIN

Partner, Smith Gambrell & Russell LLP, Atlanta



Jack Hardin began his 54-year legal career in Atlanta at the law firm of Powell, Goldstein, Frazer & Murphy, which he joined from Milbank Tweed in New York. Four years later, he became a founding partner of Rogers & Hardin, where he practiced corporate law for 46 years. "I prefer corporate law's focus on the future and building value to litigation that focuses on the past," he says.

In 2022, Rogers & Hardin combined with another well-established Atlanta law firm, Smith Gambrell & Russell (SGR), which traces its history to 1893. Hardin is now a partner

in its corporate practice. Unlike most law firm mergers, every Rogers & Hardin employee had the opportunity to keep their jobs, and its roughly 25 employees joined SGR's complement of now over 350 lawyers.

Hardin, who is chairman of the Fulton County Board of Health and serves on the board of Grady Health System and several other non-profits, is also founder and board chair emeritus of the Gateway Center, the downtown institution that provides emergency shelter and critical services to the unhoused, including meals, showers, health checks and employment aid. The Gateway Center serves between 6,000 and 10,000 people a year. "My civic endeavors energize me as much or more than the things I do for a living," Hardin says.

SHAWN KACHMAR

Managing Partner, HunterMaclean, Savannah



In April, the partners of HunterMaclean elected Shawn Kachmar to be the firm's managing partner. In this role, Kachmar, a highly regarded employment law, arbitration and litigation attorney, leads HunterMaclean's management committee, which guides firm strategy, sets long-term vision and directs firm operations.

In 2024, Chambers USA, the world's leading legal data and analytics provider once again ranked Kachmar as one of the nation's best employment law attorneys. He has earned the ranking annually since 2012. Best Lawyers also named Kachmar "Lawyer of the Year: Employment Law" in 2023.

Kachmar is a frequent speaker at employment law and human resources seminars. He successfully represents public entities and private employers facing claims under federal and state civil rights laws and litigates a wide variety of business disputes, including breach of contract and intellectual property claims. Employers regularly seek his counsel on employment agreements, executive compensation and Employee Retirement Income Security Act matters, alternative dispute resolution and restrictive covenants.

Kachmar is serving his fifth term on the Savannah Chatham County Public School Board.

JOSH KAMIN

Atlanta Office Managing Partner, King & Spalding, Atlanta



Josh Kamin leads King & Spalding's Atlanta office, the largest in the AmLaw Global 25 firm, where he has established a reputation as a leader laser-focused on the growth of the firm, its clients and its people. An Emory and Penn Law graduate, he began working at King & Spalding in Atlanta in 1995.

"Our K&S culture has never changed – high performance, collegiality and collaboration run deep," he says. "This echoes Atlanta's culture and results in K&S's standing as a destination of choice for businesses large and small."

By trade, Kamin is a private equity attorney who specializes in the real estate industry. His clients include equity investors

who invest in real estate and real estate companies, and sponsors who own, develop and invest in real estate. During his career, he's assisted Georgia State University with acquiring Turner Field, Jamestown develop Ponce City Market and *The Walking Dead* TV show establish its presence in Georgia.

"From the beginning, I've wanted to make a difference for folks in my communities," Kamin says. "I've been fortunate to be a part of opportunities that have impacted our city positively and significantly, and that's been fun and rewarding."

RICHARD KOPELMAN

CEO & Managing Partner, Aprio, Atlanta



Based in Atlanta, the business advisory and accounting firm Aprio has more than 2,100 team members across 25 offices across the U.S. Since Richard Kopelman lead the company through a rebranding seven years ago, it has grown from about \$70 million in revenue to \$420 million today.

"In any normal business that is a feat," Kopelman says, "but in the professional services business, I think it's even more challenging to accomplish."

Aprio means head and heart, and Kopelman says employees practice "The Aprio Way" with each other and their clients. That

means honoring commitments, acting with integrity, valuing differences and embracing change, among other fundamentals.

"Leading Aprio through this exhilarating growth journey has been incredibly rewarding," says Kopelman, who has more than 25 years of experience in public accounting. "I am proud of the progress we are making for our firm, profession and communities. We've certainly defied norms, expanded boldly, and fostered unity and excellence across our markets."



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Professional Services

STEPHEN “STEVE” LEWIS

Partner & Immediate Past Chair, Troutman Pepper, Atlanta



Steve Lewis is the immediate past chair of Troutman Pepper and an accomplished corporate practitioner. Lewis has been a partner in the firm’s corporate law practice group since 1999 and has served as the initial chair and CEO of Troutman Pepper. He specializes in mergers and acquisitions, joint ventures and general corporate practice.

He is actively involved in the community, serving on the Executive

Committee of the Board of Directors of the Metro Atlanta Chamber of Commerce and the Board of Directors of the UNC School of Law Alumni Association. He has held leadership positions with Junior Achievement of Georgia, Leadership Atlanta, the Metropolitan Atlanta YMCA and Glenn Memorial United Methodist Church.

“Throughout my career, I have been fortunate to know many great leaders and mentors. They taught me legal concepts, the business side of practicing law and the importance of always putting the client first,” he says. “I am pleased to be able to share these lessons with a new generation of lawyers to help them develop successful careers, to build and strengthen relationships with our clients and to keep Troutman Pepper strong.”

SAM S. OLENS

Partner, Public Policy Practice, Dentons, Atlanta



Sam Olens never set out to be a politician, but from his first election in 1998 as a district commissioner on the Cobb County Board of Commissioners to his two-time election as the attorney general of Georgia in 2010 and 2014, he has become one of the state’s most recognizable public servants.

As attorney general, Olens worked to protect victims of sex trafficking, stem the epidemic of prescription drug abuse and strengthen Georgia’s sunshine laws. During his time as chairman of the Cobb Board of Commissioners, Olens also chaired the Atlanta Regional Commission, where he helped build consensus among local leaders around issues like

transportation and transit improvements.

As a partner in Denton’s Public Policy practice and a member of its State Attorneys General Group, Olens can combine his government experience to assist companies looking to do business here and overseas. Recently, he worked on newly enacted laws that strengthen the penalties for swatting and squatting.

Olens was recently honored to join the Anti-Defamation League’s National Commission and to receive the 24th Annual Justice Robert Benham Award for Community Service from the Chief Justice’s Commission on Professionalism.

VIRGIL MILLER

President, Aflac U.S., Columbus



Virgil Miller serves as the strategic leader and manages the performance of Aflac’s multiple U.S. business segments. Known as a champion for driving growth, Miller says he is most passionate about providing products and services that help consumers close the gap that health insurance doesn’t cover.

A proud U.S. Marine and veteran of Operation Desert

Storm, he infuses many of the lessons he learned while serving his country into his overall perspectives in leading a multi-billion-dollar business. He joined Aflac in 2004.

In 2020, Miller was awarded Insurance Executive of the Year by the BIG Innovation Awards, the Business Intelligence Group’s Excellence in Customer Service Award NFBPA and made *Savoy*’s list of Most Influential Black Executives in Corporate America. Miller was named 2023’s Executive of the Year by the National Forum for Black Public Administrators.

He serves on the board of trustees for PlanSource via Vista Equity Partners, America’s Health Insurance Plans, Metro Atlanta Chamber, Georgia Chamber of Commerce Board of Governors and Directors, the Institute of Medicine & Public Health and Claflin University’s Board of Trustees.

JONATHAN “JON” PANNELL

Partner, Gray Pannell & Woodward, Savannah



Jon Pannell is an attorney in Savannah who works primarily in the areas of municipal finance, local government law and public authorities. Acting as bond counsel, his law firm structures financings for cities, counties, school districts and development authorities, and issues the tax-exempt opinion at closing. Pannell is also general counsel for the Savannah Economic

Development Authority and the Savannah Harbor I-16 Corridor Joint Development Authority.

“Savannah and southeast Georgia are booming right now thanks to the growth of the Georgia Ports Authority and the Hyundai plant that is scheduled to open by the end of 2024,” says Pannell. “With all the new jobs coming to this part of the state, there will be continued demand for new public infrastructure, including roads, water and sewer, and schools. It is exciting to be in our area of law practice to assist local governments and developers with all the new economic development.”

Pannell is a past chair of the Savannah Area Chamber of Commerce. He is a 2012 graduate of Leadership Georgia and a 2009 graduate of Leadership Savannah.

LERON E. ROGERS

Partner, Fox Rothschild LLP, Atlanta



Leron Rogers remembers his passion for law started while attending summer camp when he was just 12 years old. When he later decided to become a sports agent, he learned that to be successful in that profession, a law degree was incredibly important.

While in law school he convinced a sports agent to work with him, and by his third year he was already representing athletes. He later moved to a boutique firm in Atlanta, where Rogers also learned about representing entertainers, mostly musicians.

"I get a lot of joy in helping entertainers and athletes really protect themselves and monetize their brand," he says. "We

strategize about things they are interested in, businesses that may be a good fit for them and try to take a long-term approach to creating wealth outside of selling music or being an athlete ... that affects the local community and economy."

Some of his clients include Def Jam, Oscar-winning actress Mo'Nique, Migos and the Miami Marlins. He's been named Billboard's Top Music Lawyers list for five consecutive years and in 2024 was recognized by Black Music Moguls with the Powerhouse Award for his contribution to the world of music.

He also serves as Chairman of the Black Entertainment and Sports Lawyers Association and is Co-Chair of the Music Industry Relations Collective for the National Museum of African American Music.

KIM ROUSSEAU

Principal & Workplace Practice Leader, Perkins & Will, Atlanta



With a portfolio spanning 25 years in architecture and design, Kim Rousseau has a keen understanding of her clients' needs, the human experience and the relevance of setting and place. Rousseau has led successful projects at a range of scales in a variety of sectors and nurtured longstanding relationships with clients such as Newell and Sutherland. The firm recently secured the No. 3 spot in *Interior Design Magazine's* Top 100 for 2024.

Among her award-winning projects to date are Clemson University's Watt Family Innovation Center, for which she artfully paired the novel with the timeless,

designing a modern building located along the edge of one of the campus's traditional quads. Closer to home, Atlanta Dairies is also part of her portfolio. The art deco structure, once a defunct dairy factory, now a popular mixed-use community, is listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

As the Workplace Practice Leader, Rousseau is a champion of discovery-driven design and prioritizing people in the spaces her teams create. As workplaces evolve into new models with a central office and hybrid or fully remote employees, Rousseau and her team have expanded the firm's definition of sustainability to include environmental and social impacts of their buildings.

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Professional Services

JANET SIMPSON

President & CEO, TVS Design, Atlanta



When Janet Simpson took her leadership role at TVS Design in 2017, she was only the third president and CEO to ever serve the firm, which was also about to celebrate its 50th anniversary. So she looked at it as an opportunity for what she calls a “refounding” of

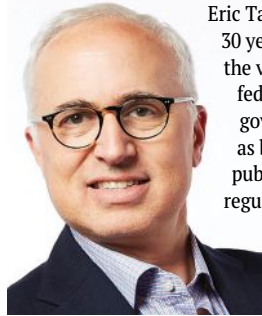
the business. “It was really a transition for the whole firm and for the next generation of leaders,” she says.

Some of the architecture, design and planning firm’s more well-known projects in Georgia include Atlanta’s Mercedes-Benz Stadium and the Chick-fil-A College Football Hall of Fame, the Atrium Health Amphitheater in Macon-Bibb County and the Savannah Convention Center Expansion, but you can find its work throughout the world, from Chicago and New York City to Dubai, Vietnam and Montenegro.

Last year, the firm became the first organization ever to achieve both LEED and WELL Platinum certification with its own headquarters building in Atlanta. The recognition reflects its belief that long-term gains in human health and a sustainable world rely not just on high-performance design but policies that drive thoughtful day-to-day strategies to support the health and well-being of people who use the space.

ERIC J. TANENBLATT

Global Chair, Public Policy and Regulation, Dentons, Atlanta



Eric Tanenblatt leverages 30 years of experience at the very highest levels of federal and state governments in his role as both global chair of public policy and regulation and head of

Denton’s U.S. public policy practice. He has served in the administrations

of three U.S. presidents, as a senior adviser to the late U.S. Sen. Paul Coverdell and as chief of staff to former Gov. Sonny Perdue, Georgia’s first Republican governor in more than 150 years.

Tanenblatt served in the administration of former Pres. George H.W. Bush in legislative affairs roles at the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and the Peace Corps. He is a prominent advocate for civic engagement. He was nominated by President Bush and confirmed by the U.S. Senate to serve on the board of directors of the Corporation for National and Community Service (AmeriCorps) from 2008–2013.

He currently serves on the board of directors of Points of Light, the Metro Atlanta Chamber and the Georgia Chamber. Tanenblatt in his second year of a two-year term as chair of the Buckhead Coalition, a civic organization focused on improving the quality of life for businesses, residents and visitors of the Buckhead community in Atlanta.

J. HENRY WALKER IV

Chair & CEO, Kilpatrick, Atlanta



As a young lawyer, Henry Walker concluded that he wanted to contribute to the betterment of those who associated with him. That empathetic style of management

ultimately led him to adopt a servant leadership model as the head of Atlanta’s longest

continuously operating law firm.

Kilpatrick Townsend & Stockton, founded in 1860, today employs more than 670 lawyers and 1,300 employees across 22 offices. Walker, who has spent almost 35 years litigating complex cases focusing on technology and telecommunications, served as chief litigation counsel to BellSouth Corp. and was one of the lead in-house counsels in numerous major antitrust matters, including two successful landmark U.S. Supreme Court cases.

Walker is annually listed among the nation’s leading lawyers in several publications and, in 2017 and 2023, he was named Atlanta Lawyer of the Year in the area of Technology Law by The Best Lawyers in America. He serves on the boards for both the Georgia Chamber and Metro Atlanta Chamber of Commerce.

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Real Estate



NEAL ARONSON

Founder & Managing Partner, Roark Capital, Atlanta



Neal Aronson founded Roark in 2001 and has since witnessed the explosion of growth in the private equity firm, leading to the \$38 billion in assets currently under management. Roark invests in consumer and business service companies, specializing in franchise models, with food and restaurants being its largest sector.

Roark brands annually generate approximately \$94 billion from 107,500 locations located in 50 states and 118 countries. One of the firm's most recent acquisitions is sandwich giant Subway and its nearly 37,000 shops.

Roark's portfolio also includes companies focused on consumer and business services, health, wellness and fitness, and education and youth activities. Day to day Aronson also focuses on a handful of Roark's investments, including Inspire Brands, Driven Brands, GoTo Foods and Primrose Schools.

Prior to founding Roark, Aronson was cofounder and CFO for U.S. Franchise Systems Inc. (USFS), the 10th largest hotel company in the country. Under his leadership, USFS grew from one brand with 22 hotels in nine states to three brands with more than 500 hotels in 50 states and five countries.

LEONTE BENTON

President, T. Dallas Smith & Company, Atlanta



In 2022, Leonte Benton stepped into the role of president of the largest Black-owned pure tenant rep commercial real estate firm in the country. He has been with the firm since it was founded in 2007, serving as an intern for T. Dallas Smith while studying at Morehouse College.

"I know what it's like to have a dream and a desire to participate in my future because I was once that kid who benefited from having great mentors

to pave the way for me," says Benton. "Every day, it's going to be my priority to move this firm forward and to bring more young people into this business that makes more millionaires than many of the major league sports combined."

Benton's commercial real estate transactions portfolio includes a number of well-known names, including AT&T, The Coca-Cola Company and FedEx.

An Atlanta native, Benton serves on several boards, including the Atlanta Police Foundation, the Georgia Department of Education and the Georgia Chamber of Commerce.

MATT BRONFMAN

Principal & CEO, Jamestown, Atlanta



With a strong track record of purchasing older buildings and renovating and relaunching them as both mixed-use and retail-only properties, such as Ponce City Market, Matt Bronfman finds it rewarding to be able to work with teams to make real estate more engaging.

Jamestown is a real estate investment and management company with its corporate headquarters in Atlanta and Cologne, Germany. It has offices in major cities on both coasts of the U.S. and in Europe and South America.

"We remain focused on community-centered innovation hubs," Bronfman says. "It's rewarding to create these centers with restaurants and offices and other interesting tenants where people want to be." In August, Jamestown announced the purchase of North American Properties, owner of Atlanta's Colony Square, with the sale expected to close by the end of 2024.

A lawyer, Bronfman was hired by Jamestown in 1998 as General Counsel. Four years later, he became managing director and COO. He was promoted to his current position in 2012. He is president of the board of directors for the Jamestown Charitable Foundation.

AMBRISH BAISIWALA

Chairman & CEO, Portman Holdings, Atlanta



Founded in 1957, Portman Holdings has been an innovator in the design and development of transformational hotel and office properties. Its rich history includes downtown Atlanta's first integrated hotel, the 7-million-square-foot AmericasMart and other retail, residential, hotel and office space around the world, including the New York Marriott Marquis Times Square, San Francisco's Embarcadero Center and Shanghai Centre. Other recent projects include the master-

planned Dallas Gateway, a mixed-use development in the Dallas Arts District, slated to open in Fall 2025; and Magnolia, a master-planned destination in Charleston, S.C., scheduled to open in 2026.

Ambrish Baisiwala has nearly 30 years of international real estate experience and participates on several boards, including Central Atlanta Progress, Midtown Alliance, the Atlanta BeltLine Partnership and the Metro Atlanta Chamber.

RICHARD "DICK" BOWERS

President, Richard Bowers & Co., Atlanta



Most men at 78 would have hung up their careers years ago – but not Dick Bowers. This icon of Atlanta's commercial real estate industry has no plans to step away from his namesake business or his other passion, which is playing senior tennis at the highest level.

Richard Bowers & Co. is the largest independently owned commercial real estate firm in Metro Atlanta. It was founded in 1980 and has consistently thrived with currently 110 team members, including 50 licensed real estate professionals.

Bower's energy, resume and generosity is a bit head-spinning. He is a major contributor to both of his alma maters: the U.S. Military Academy at West Point and Georgia State University. He also donates to the United Way, the American Cancer Society and Habitat for Humanity. In 2021, he was bestowed with the Bruce B. Wilson Diamond Phoenix Award for his 45-year commercial real estate career by the Atlanta Commercial Board of Realtors. He was inducted into the Georgia Tennis Hall of Fame in 2015.

JONATHAN COLLINS

President & Cofounder, Capstone Property Group, Gainesville



When he launched his banking career with BB&T right out college, Jonathan Collins never dreamed he'd completely change courses later in life. After BB&T and a brief stint as chief financial officer of a privately held company while also providing consulting services for numerous businesses, he and his business partner formed the real estate development company Capstone in 2016.

"We have done everything from industrial and retail, to multi-family and a lot of medical offices," he says, noting last year marked completion of their signature project to date, Courtyard Marriott on the square in Gainesville and a six-story, 154-unit multifamily development next to it.

"Every day in the real estate development business is a new adventure. For me, it's looking at a piece of property and figuring out what to do with it," he says. "Seeing it come to reality is really rewarding. Then you move to the next project and get to do it all over again."

Collins has served on numerous boards, including those of University of North Georgia, Warren Featherbone Business Innovation Center, John Jarrard Foundation, Gainesville-Hall County Chamber of Commerce and United Way of Hall County, among many others.

COLIN CONNOLLY

President & CEO, Cousins Properties, Atlanta



Cousins, a real estate investment firm trust (REIT) with headquarters in Atlanta, has a commitment to excellence in service, diversity and empowerment for its teammates. Colin Connolly embodies those traits through his leadership philosophy and commitment to service.

“My job is to create a best-in-class team that’s empowered to operate the business and to communicate our strategy and business philosophy to all stakeholders, including investors, customers and all team members,” he says. “We pride ourselves on our impact on the skyline as well as positive impact in

the communities in which we operate.”

Connolly joined Cousins in 2011 as a senior vice president, eventually being named president and CEO in 2019.

He serves on the board of directors or as a committee member for numerous local organizations dedicated to improving the metro Atlanta community, including the Buckhead Coalition, The Carter Center, Westside Future Fund and the Woodruff Arts Center. In 2023 he served as board chair for the Atlanta Committee for Progress.

“I grew up in Atlanta. Cousins is a longstanding member of the business community,” he says. “It’s a real honor to represent all the good it stands for.”

BILL DE ST. AUBIN

CEO, Sizemore Group, Atlanta



Bill de St. Aubin leads a full-service design company founded in Atlanta in 1974. Its mission is to give every project a spirit of community and a sense of shared values.

“We offer sustainable architecture that looks ahead while rooted by our rich history and experiences with people and places,” he says.

Over the past 40 years, the company has focused on large-scale development and experiential planning projects that create interactive and memorable experiences, such as the Smyrna Town Center and portions of

Centennial Olympic Park. It specializes in every phase of the place-making process, from community-supported planning to project management and public engagement.

Since de St. Aubin became CEO in 2015, Sizemore Group has doubled in size.

“I really enjoy collaborating with people at all levels of a project, from the CEO to the carpenters, listening and seeing where people are and getting the majority to move in the same direction,” he says.

In addition, he is passionate about developing the next generation of leaders at his firm.

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TIM PERRY

True North 400 Chairman

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CLARK DEAN

Executive Managing Director, Transwestern Real Estate, Atlanta



It might seem unusual for a biomedical engineer to be embedded in the real estate industry, but after receiving an offer he couldn't refuse, Clark Dean now leads the transaction sciences group for

Transwestern Real Estate. Transaction sciences is about building businesses, growing nonprofits and enriching communities by using science both as a metaphor for managing businesses better and as a specific tool for helping companies develop solutions, says Dean.

By providing a combination of management, consulting, corporate finance and real estate services, Dean's team helps people think about how building a more effective business relates directly to space strategies by showing them how to manage as a neural network. For instance, consider the neuroscience of place when you walk into a building, whether it's an office building, a medical building or an industrial building.

"How your sympathetic and parasympathetic nervous system respond to your environment can ultimately impact how productive you are and how productive teams are," he says.

Dean's team tackles projects around the world and cuts across a lot of the traditional silos in real estate. "Using science to solve problems is such a powerful concept," he says. "It's becoming more popular now, but we've been doing it for a long time."

BRIAN MCGOWAN

President, Centennial Yards Co., Atlanta



Brian McGowan's career is one tied to the investment in and future vision for Atlanta, having previously served as both CEO of Invest Atlanta and of the Atlanta BeltLine. After spending three years in Seattle, he returned to the city in 2021 to lead Centennial Yards and the development of The Gulch, which is located across from Mercedes-Benz Stadium and State Farm Arena in downtown Atlanta.

The Gulch redevelopment is a \$5-billion project consisting of 8 million square feet on 50 acres. It's a mixed-use development of

apartments, offices, hotels, restaurants, bars, entertainment and a fan zone, he says. "It's one of the largest real estate investments in the United States," he says.

"The Gulch is going to transform how the world perceives the region," he adds. "This project will change the global perception of Atlanta, and that's very rewarding."

McGowan has more than 20 years of economic-development experience. He served as deputy assistant secretary of commerce under Pres. Barack Obama and was deputy secretary of commerce under Cal. Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger.

McGowan is a board member for the Atlanta Convention & Visitor's Bureau, Central Atlanta Progress and the Fulton County Sheriff's Foundation.

PACE M. HALTER

President & COO, W.C. Bradley Real Estate, Columbus



Pace Halter grew up around the real estate business in Atlanta with much of his family, in various ways, still connected to the industry.

"If planned, developed and managed correctly, real estate

will drive superior returns and wealth creation in the long term," he says, "At W.C. Bradley, we tend to invest with a generational horizon, so while real estate certainly has a cyclical flow to its markets, it also provides the ability to diversify both geographically and by asset class. This helps to flatten out market cycles, and we use both to our advantage in structuring our real estate portfolio."

Halter, who joined the firm in 2017, says that though he does not have one favorite real estate asset, the Riverfront Place development in Columbus is very special. It's the largest investment in the company's real estate history and helped further the progress of Upton Columbus with almost 500 new apartments, a Hotel Indigo and Synovus Bank's new headquarters. The company won a 2023 Lease of the Year CoStar Impact Award for the headquarters, along with a second award for the redevelopment of the historic YMCA building.

"My favorite part of the development process is the envisioning and planning," says Halter. "We plan, draw and re-plan until we get it right."

The firm has a diverse portfolio of real estate in Georgia that include office, retail, multifamily, industrial, hospitality and land.

SHANEEL LALANI

CEO, Lalani Ventures, Atlanta



Investing in real estate, development, gaming and startups, Lalani Ventures continues to diversify under the leadership of CEO Shaneel Lalani, who has developed, owned and leased retail stores, gas stations and medical offices across

the state. After high school, he purchased his family's gas station business and today boasts over two million square feet of real estate investments throughout the country, having completed more than 150 transactions estimated at \$750 million.

Lalani Ventures owns some of Atlanta's most recognizable addresses, from the 30-story office tower at 34 Peachtree Street to Underground Atlanta, which he purchased in 2020. He's planning to renovate the 400,000-square-foot former shopping, dining and entertainment venue that closed in 2016.

For one of its latest projects, the firm is part of a joint venture named Two Peachtree Partners. The group was recently announced as the chosen redevelopers for 2 Peachtree Street, reimaging the iconic downtown building for residential, retail and office space.

Working in his family's stores from a young age, Lalani was well acquainted with coin operated amusement machines (COAM). Today he's focused on that sector of Lalani Ventures - Lucky Fortune - more than ever, supplying machines that are licensed and governed by the Georgia Lottery Corp. to customers across the state since 2017.

CHERIE ONG

Cofounder & Principal, Good Places Properties, Alpharetta



A native of Australia, Cheri Ong cofounded the mission-driven Good Places Properties real estate company in 2017. A real estate developer and business consultant, she works to create equitable values-driven, mission-aligned good places for local communities.

With more than two decades in strategy and management consulting experience in the private and non-profit sectors, Ong thrives in finding effective solutions to create innovative, sustainable and transformational outcomes to advance the marginalized. To that end, she partners with

affordable housing advocates, planners, academic institutions, city administrators, developers, nonprofits, faith-based and neighborhood organizations focused on affordable housing and commercial spaces.

Ong previously managed a private real estate foreign investment fund of more than \$40 million. Today she's solely focused on catalytic efforts to drive social impact in historically underserved neighborhoods. Projects have included developing Atlanta's first 100% affordable micro-housing apartments and converting a historic department store into an incubator for creative and socially conscious small minority enterprises.

Recognition for her work includes The Wells Fargo Growing Diverse Housing Developers program award, the LISC Michael Rubinger Community Fellowship award, and the ULI Atlanta Women's Leadership Initiative and The Leaders Award.

TIM PERRY

Managing Partner, North American Properties, Atlanta



Based in Cincinnati, North American Properties develops, manages and invests in a variety of real estate, from mixed use, retail and shopping centers to hotels, office, industrial condominium

development and even student housing across 15 states. It invests its own money in each project before bringing on institutional partners.

Since Tim Perry has led the Atlanta office, it has tripled its footprint in commercial real estate, spanning 5.3 million square feet with a portfolio of over \$2.5 billion. He prioritized creating a gender-balanced leadership team of six men and six women.

Perry's community service includes serving as a board member for Rehabilitation Dreams, an anti-recidivism group that provides pre-trial diversion and restorative justice for the incarcerated.

North American Properties' Atlanta office has been recognized as a Best Place to Work by the *Atlanta Business Chronicle*, and *The Atlanta Journal-Constitution* named it a Top Workplace for 2024.

MIT SHAH

CEO, Noble Investment Group, Atlanta



For real estate investor Mit Shah, success began with family, his parents having immigrated from India in the 1960s seeking education and the American dream. Shah was 10 years old when his parents bought the Winkler Motor Inn in Winston Salem, North

Carolina, in 1979, and he spent every weekend until college working the front desk, doing laundry and cleaning rooms. "That experience gave me the opportunity to be hired at 21 by an investment firm in Atlanta doing some of the first round of investing in hotels," says Shah. Thirty years after launching, Noble has created tens of thousands of jobs and invested over \$6 billion in 121 properties, including Shah's first, the Hampton Inn in Peachtree City, he says.

"If you're flying into Georgia, the first place you go is the hotel, so we like to think of ourselves as the living room of the community," says Shah, who co-established the Bharat Shah Speaker Series, named for his father, under Georgia State's Cecil B. Day School of Hospitality.

T. DALLAS SMITH

Founder & CEO, T. Dallas Smith & Co., Atlanta



Dallas Smith is considered an innovator and thought leader in the commercial real estate community. He's spent four decades of his career in the Atlanta area, launching T. Dallas Smith & Co. in 2006.

The company is the largest Black-owned pure tenant rep commercial

real estate firm in the country.

"Georgia's climate is and has always been about commerce, which makes this the ideal state to open and operate a business," says Smith.

He serves on the University System of Georgia Board of Regents, the Metro Atlanta Chamber board and the National Association of Realtors. He served as the 2023 chair of the Atlanta Commercial Board of Realtors and was appointed this year as the chair of the Westside Future Fund, which fosters long-term transformational change in Atlanta's five historic Westside neighborhoods. The organization is in the midst of a \$55-million capital campaign, and as chair Smith plays a crucial role in guiding strategic initiatives and building partnerships to advance the nonprofit's mission.

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Retail & Wholesale

MICHAEL D. CASEY

Chairman & CEO, Carter's Inc., Atlanta



Michael Casey heads the largest branded marketer of baby and children's clothing in the U.S. With a history dating back to 1865, these include two of the most recognized and enduring names in the nation: Carter's and OshKosh B'gosh. Other brands include Child of Mine, Just One You and Genuine Kids.

Carter's and OshKosh B'gosh clothing and accessories are sold at more than 600 company-owned retail stores, as well as

in national department stores and some of the country's largest retailers like Belk, JCPenney, Kohl's and Macy's.

As part of its Raise the Future initiative, Carter's is adding sustainability information to its labeling and tags and expanding its most organic and sustainable brand – Little Planet. The company is also offering a clothing-recycling program. It is committed to employees volunteering more than 200,000 hours in their local communities and investing \$50 million toward early childhood education by 2030.

Casey was hired by Carter's in 1993 as vice president of finance. He was promoted to senior vice president of finance in 1997, then to senior vice president and chief financial officer in 1998. He has been CEO since 2008.

DOUG HERTZ

Chairman & CEO, United Distributors Inc., Smyrna



Doug Hertz, chairman and CEO of United Distributors since 1984, is the third generation to lead the business that his family cofounded. During his stewardship, the beverage-distribution company has risen to the list of top 25 private companies in Georgia.

"It's rewarding, after 45 years, to mentor young people in their professional as well as personal lives," he says. "At this stage, I am trying to give back to the community that has given so much to me and my family and make the quality of life better where our families live."

Perhaps the best testament to Hertz's dedication to service is his

founding of Camp Twin Lakes. Since 1993, 10,000 children with special needs visit annually to experience intentionally designed camp programs – more than 153,000 over the past 30 years. The goal is to help them overcome obstacles and acquire new skills to aid them in managing challenges.

Hertz was recipient of the of the Four Pillar Award in 2021 and was the Volunteer of the Year by the Georgia Association of Philanthropy.

An Atlanta native, Hertz serves on several boards including Camp Twin Lakes, SouthState Bank, The Marcus Foundation, the Georgia Ports Authority, the Georgia Research Alliance and Morehouse College.

TED DECKER

Chair, President & CEO, The Home Depot, Atlanta



After 22 years with the company, Ted Decker became president and CEO of The Home Depot in 2022, responsible for 465,000 employees and more than 2,330 stores. Five months later, he added the title of chairman of the board.

Decker first began working for The Home Depot in 2000, serving in all kinds of leadership positions throughout the past 20 years including overseeing global operations, global-sourcing operations, global-supply chain, real estate, outside sales and service, merchandising, marketing and online strategy. He was president and COO before stepping into his current role.

This year, The Home Depot completed the \$18.25 billion acquisition of SRS Distribution Inc., a leading residential specialty trade distribution company that

serves the professional roofer, landscaper and pool contractor. It also opened four new distribution centers for its pro customers in Detroit, Los Angeles, San Antonio and Toronto in 2024.

Prior to joining the company, Decker worked in business development at Kimberly-Clark Corp. and Scott Paper Co. in addition to serving in corporate finance at PNC Bank. He has lived and worked in England and Australia. Decker sits on the board of the Atlanta Committee for Progress.

DOUGLAS LINDSAY

CEO, The Aaron's Co. Inc., Atlanta



Douglas Lindsey has been CEO of the lease-to-own company Aaron's since 2020. He has led the company in upping its game to include growth in e-commerce, digitizing its customer service and launching a new store design.

"My main goal for The Aaron's Co. is to continue to improve the lives of our customers by offering a wide variety of products at affordable prices," he says.

"We are also focused on making it easy for customers to get access to what they need and allowing them to transact how they

want – either online or in-store. I am proud to lead an organization of over 8,000 team members across the country."

The Aaron's Co. is committed to community service and annually returns 1% of pre-tax profits to non-profit charities. Through The Aaron Foundation and its Aaron's Gives initiative, the company supports numerous organizations including the American Red Cross and the Boys & Girls Club of America, to which it's donated more than \$11 million since 2015.

Lindsay is a member of the board of trustees for the Boys & Girls Clubs of America Southeast Region. He is also a member of the Executive Committee of the Metro Atlanta Chamber and of the Rotary Club of Atlanta.

JENNIFER MANN

EVP and President, North America Operating Unit, The Coca-Cola Company, Atlanta



Jennifer Mann is a proven operator with more than 25 years of experience at The Coca-Cola Company. Her growth mindset and people-first style has fueled her success leading high-performing teams across many areas of the Coca-Cola business.

Before Mann was named to her current position in 2022, she served as president of Global Ventures and was responsible for globally scaling acquisitions and brands, including Costa Coffee and Coca-Cola's investment in Monster Beverage Corp. Prior to Global Ventures, Mann was chief people officer

and chief of staff for Coca-Cola Chairman and CEO James Quincey, driving culture and evolution and engagement.

From 2012 to 2015, as vice president and general manager for Coca-Cola Freestyle, Mann accelerated its global expansion across the Coca-Cola system. She also held additional roles of increased responsibility spanning operations and customer leadership.

Mann serves on several boards including Morehouse College, Ronald McDonald House Charities, Boys & Girls Clubs of America and the American Beverage Association.

NATALIE MORHOUS

CEO, RaceTrac, Atlanta



After serving as president since 2019, Natalie Morhous was named CEO of RaceTrac at the beginning of 2024. She has worked for the company since 2012 and is the third generation to lead this family-owned business.

Natalie strongly embraces the RaceTrac Way, the company's internal set of principles that includes putting people first, a culture of strong performance, a warrior's passion, a humble attitude and living for fun every day.

Operating since 1934, RaceTrac is the 22nd largest privately held

company in the U.S. Its more than 550 convenience stores throughout Georgia, Florida, Louisiana, Tennessee and Texas provide guests with affordable fuel in addition to food and beverages like freshly brewed coffee. It employs more than 10,500 team members in RaceTrac, RaceWay and Metroplex Energy and Energy Dispatch, which are affiliated companies. The company has been named a top workplace in four of the states in which it operates and was named Chain of the Year by *Convenience Store Decisions* in 2014.

ROBERT J. "BOB" MARICICH

Executive Chairman, ANDMORE, Atlanta



"The most rewarding part of the work is the people. I work with teammates and customers, tenants and buyers, who are largely long term. They are great people," says Bob Maricich, who formed International Market Center in 2011. In 2017, IMC bought AmericasMart, and in 2023 the company rebranded as ANDMORE, an omnichannel wholesale marketmaker.

The transformation was the result of a year-long initiative to redefine the company's vision, align all channels under a single brand experience and offer more ways to seamlessly connect wholesale buyers through physical

platforms and digital platforms in the gift, home décor, furniture and apparel industries. ANDMORE serves over 350,000 wholesale buyers globally.

Maricich's goals are to expand the company into additional industries and to grow categories within apparel.

Maricich was awarded the Anti-Defamation League American Heritage Distinguished Service Award in 2015 and was inducted into the American Home Furnishings Hall of Fame in 2021.

GREG PARKER

Founder & CEO, Parker's Kitchen, Savannah



Parker's Kitchen is a nationally acclaimed convenience store and foodservice company with 80 locations across Georgia and South Carolina. A member of the Convenience Store Hall of Fame, Greg Parker opened his first convenience store in Midway in 1976 and never looked back.

In 2025 Parker will transition from CEO to executive chairman. Under his leadership, Parker's Kitchen has experienced explosive growth, logging \$1 billion in annual sales and conducting more than 134,000 transactions daily. The company has been honored as the Convenience Store Chain of the Year and voted the

third best gas station brand in the U.S. by USA Today readers.

Giving back is a core value of the company. Its Parker's Community Fund focuses primarily on supporting education, reducing childhood hunger, expanding access to healthcare and celebrating heroes, and the company has donated more than \$30 million to support these causes.

Parker has also made contributions to organizations like the Parker College of Business at Georgia Southern University, the Parker's Emergency and Trauma Center at Memorial Hospital and Parker's House for Women, Savannah's first shelter for unhoused women. He serves on the Savannah Economic Development Authority.

JAMES QUINCEY

Chairman & CEO, The Coca-Cola Company, Atlanta



James Quincey has held several leadership roles in his years at The Coca-Cola Company before becoming CEO in 2017 and chairman of the board in 2019. He has led Coca-Cola in its continuing evolution as a total beverage company, ranging from internal innovations

to expanding the product portfolio to acquisitions of Costa Coffee in 2019 and BODYARMOR in 2021. He has accelerated the environmental, social and governance agenda, in line with the company's purpose to refresh the world and make a difference.

Founded in Atlanta in 1886, The Coca-Cola Company is a longstanding supporter of Atlanta and Georgia, as well as communities around the world. Its products are sold in more than 200 countries and territories worldwide.

Quincey is director of Pfizer Inc., a board member of The Consumer Goods Forum and a founding member of the New York Stock Exchange Board Advisory Council.

CLARENCE H. SMITH

Chairman & CEO, Havertys Furniture Co., Atlanta



Since starting as a management trainee in 1973, Clarence Smith has risen through the ranks at Havertys Furniture Co., a 139-year-old full-service home furnishing retailer with 123 showrooms in 16 states. He became COO in 2000 and served as president and CEO

from 2003 to 2021, adding chairman in 2012.

Under his leadership, the company initiated a recycling program at the company's distribution and delivery centers, resulting in tens of millions of pounds of waste diverted from landfills, including 3.9 million pounds of Styrofoam, 68.1 million pounds of cardboard and 9.7 million pounds of plastic.

He is a member of the executive committee of Marist School and a former chair of the Board of Trustees of the school. He is the emeritus director of the Catholic Foundation of North Georgia and sits on the board of the Atlanta History Center and Children's Healthcare of Atlanta.

WILLIAM "BILL" YOUNG JR.

Partner, General Wholesale Co., Atlanta



Bill Young helps lead General Wholesale Co., an award-winning beverage distributor founded in 1942. Today the company, one of the largest private businesses in Atlanta, distributes NA, beer, wine and spirits across the Southeastern U.S.

Young is a past chairman and current member of the board of the Wine and Spirit Wholesalers of America. He is a past chairman of the Invest Georgia Board and was appointed to both the State of Georgia Personnel Oversight Committee and the Governor's Advisory Board for the 1996 Olympic Games.

He is a member of the UGA Real Estate Foundation, past member of the Terry College Dean's List Advisory Board and an emeritus member of the Terry Dean's Advisory Council. He is a member of the UGA Athletic Board and a past chairman and emeritus trustee of The UGA Foundation.

In 2016, Young received the Terry College of Business Distinguished Alumni Award and was named UGA's Alumni of the Year.

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Technology & Research

MARY CAROL ALEXANDER

Vice President, South Region, Microsoft, Atlanta



Since Mary Carol Alexander joined Microsoft's South Region in Atlanta nine years ago, the company's presence in Georgia has continued to grow, including the addition of its Atlantic Yards campus in 2022. With deep subject matter expertise and exemplary leadership, Alexander delivers multi-million-dollar revenue growth, operational excellence and cloud-centric forward thinking.

Microsoft works hand in hand with local organizations and community groups in Atlanta to ensure that Microsoft and the city thrive. This includes initiatives such as setting aside 25% of its expansion site for

facilities that benefit the community and creating programs that aim to close opportunity gaps.

Before joining Microsoft, Alexander honed her leadership and sales skills at various technology companies including AT&T, CSC, Salesforce and Sun Microsystems. She currently serves on the boards of directors of the Atlanta Chamber of Commerce and the Atlanta chapter of Women in Technology, and she has also served on the board of TechBridge, a technology nonprofit serving the Atlanta community.

JOHN AVERY

Director, Advanced Technology Development Center, Atlanta



John Avery was born in Georgia and has served as the director of the Advanced Technology Development Center (ATDC), Georgia's technology startup incubator, since 2018.

Established in 1980 by the

Georgia General Assembly, ATDC aids entrepreneurs in launching, scaling and succeeding in the tech industry. Over 200 companies have graduated from the center, with 90% thriving after five years and generating over \$12 billion in revenue. ATDC supports startups across Georgia with staff in Alpharetta, Athens, Augusta, Forsyth County, Peachtree Corners and Savannah.

Avery also cofounded Convergence Corp., a software company acquired by Amazon in 1999, leading to the creation of Amazon's first mobile app. He was also an early employee of Mobliss, which provided mobile voting for *American Idol*.

Avery, who holds seven patents, previously led the Panasonic Innovation Center at Georgia Tech, where he is also an alum, working on advanced automotive systems including infotainment, bio-sensing, machine vision, deep learning and heads-up displays.

JEFF ARNOLD

Cofounder & Executive Chairman, Sharecare, Atlanta



Jeff Arnold is a digital health pioneer who has founded numerous companies. That includes Sharecare, a digital health company that helps people manage all their health in one place. Sharecare's platform connects users to personalized information, evidence-based programs, benefits, community resources and health services to improve their lives.

In 1998, he founded WebMD, the first healthcare company to provide trustworthy medical information online. Before

WebMD, he founded Quality Diagnostic

Services, a pioneer in telemedicine for cardiac arrhythmia monitoring.

Arnold has received numerous accolades, including being named Entrepreneur of the Year in the Southeast twice by EY, for WebMD (1999) and Sharecare (2019). He was inducted into the American Academy of Achievement and named a Global Leader of Tomorrow by the World Economic Forum. Johns Hopkins University honored him with the Blumenthal Award for bridging business and technology, and he was inducted into the Honor Society of Nursing, Sigma Theta Tau International, as an honorary member.

Arnold is celebrated as a Georgia Technology Hall of Fame inductee and Phoenix Award recipient. He also serves as chairman of Forbes Travel Guide and sits on the board of Endeavor Atlanta.

MARK BEGOR

CEO, Equifax, Atlanta



Under Mark Begor's leadership, Equifax has undergone a significant transformation, investing over \$1.5 billion in a massive cloud transformation initiative. This effort has made Equifax an industry leader

in security and AI innovation, positioning it as the only cloud-native data, analytics and technology company in its sector.

Since Begor took the helm, Equifax's revenue has grown from \$3.4 billion in 2018 to a record \$5.3 billion in 2023, a compound growth rate of about 9.1%. This financial strength has enabled the company to make 14 strategic acquisitions totaling nearly \$4 billion since 2021, expanding its capabilities beyond traditional credit reporting.

Before joining Equifax, Begor was a managing director at Warburg Pincus, a \$40-billion private equity firm. He also served on the Board of Directors at FICO and spent 35 years at General Electric, where he held various leadership roles, including president and CEO of GE's Energy Management and GE Capital Real Estate.

Begor currently serves on the board of directors of NCR Atleos. He is also a trustee at Dartmouth-Hitchcock Medical Center and the U.S. Ski and Snowboard Foundation.

MARK BUFFINGTON

Managing Partner, Founder, BIP Capital; Managing Partner, BIP Ventures, Atlanta



Since founding BIP Capital in 2006, Mark Buffington has led the venture capital firm to its position as one of the most active and recognized brands outside of Silicon Valley and has earned a position as a recognized authority in private capital. Today, BIP Capital is a private market

platform for BIP Ventures and a growing array of private equity and private credit offerings.

He has led investment rounds in more than 80 companies in numerous industries including healthcare, digital media, edtech, enterprises SaaS, fintech and advanced computing.

"I believe, and have come to know, that things go right far more often than they go wrong, especially in the innovation economy," he says. "Over the past two decades, that theory has proven itself time and again. The tail is fatter on the right side. The probability of great, outsized returns is bigger and the upside is not capped. BIP Capital is an almost two-decade testament to that theory."

Buffington serves on the board of directors of numerous companies and nonprofits, including the Buckhead Coalition and the Georgia Tech College of Computing.

FABIOLA CHARLES STOKES

Head of Global Sites Strategy, North America, Google, Smyrna



Fabiola Charles Stokes joined Google nine years ago as the head of Community and Government Affairs. In this role, she directed social impact and government relations strategy execution across business integration, community investments and employee engagement.

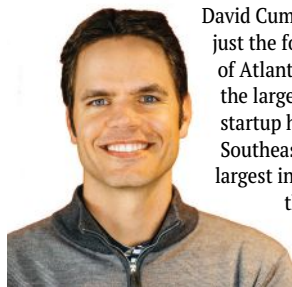
She assumed her current role as Google's head of Global Sites Strategy in 2020, leading the North American team in site development. Google has had a presence in Georgia for more than 20 years and was an early influencer in cementing Atlanta as an East Coast tech hub.

Charles Stokes is passionate about equitable access to technology and empowering the next generation of technology leaders. "I think that part of my role allows me to stay acutely aware of the hyper-local community engagement opportunities available in cities where Google has a presence," she says. "I'm really just trying to make connections there as well and leveraging my nonprofit background in that area."

Before joining Google, Charles Stokes served in leadership roles with the Make-A-Wish Foundation, American Red Cross and Points of Light. She currently serves on the boards of directors of the Children's Museum of Atlanta and the Metro Atlanta Chamber.

DAVID CUMMINGS

Founder and Partner, Atlanta Ventures;
CEO, Atlanta Tech Village, Atlanta



David Cummings is not just the founder and CEO of Atlanta Tech Village, the largest technology startup hub in the Southeast and fourth largest incubator in the country, he is a tech entrepreneur who has founded 10

companies employing thousands of people, including Pardot, Salesloft and Intown Golf Club, while also financially backing more than 25 startups.

Since it was founded in 2012, Atlanta Tech Village has grown, today supporting more than 300 startups and fostering a collaborative environment that promotes innovation, networking, mentorship and access to capital.

Now Cummings can add a new title to his roster, that of real estate investor. At the end of 2023, under a new venture, SoDo Atlanta, he and business partner Jon Birdsong rescued the South Downtown Atlanta area that German real estate company Newport Group had struggled to redefine for years. Now, they are reimagining 56 buildings and 6 acres of parking lots smack in the middle of historic downtown Atlanta into a vibrant neighborhood full of restaurants, retail, housing – and a second location for Atlanta Tech Village.

Cummings is a member of and sits on a number of boards, including YPO Southern 7, the Atlanta Rotary, the Metro Atlanta Chamber and the Buckhead Coalition.

DALLAS CLEMENT

President & CFO, Cox Enterprises, Atlanta



Dallas Clement has been a leader at Cox for over three decades and is responsible for guiding the company's strategy and evolution. The global company with 50,000 employees is a leader in the communications and automotive industries, with brands including Kelly Bluebook and Autotrader.

He has been instrumental during pivotal times, including when Cox Communications went public and made massive upgrades to its broadband network and during the formation of Cox Automotive. Clement oversees Cox's investments,

which include more than \$2 billion in sustainable businesses and technologies, and launched its cleantech business, which tackles sustainability challenges.

Recent announcements in this space include the launch of Cox Farms, which brings together Cox's controlled environment agriculture businesses, BrightFarms and Mucci Farms, into one company. The company also announced successfully reaching its ambitious goal to send zero waste to landfills by 2024. Cox is the first U.S.-based, enterprise-wide service company to be verified by GreenCircle Certified as achieving a 92% waste diversion rate.

In addition to his work with Cox Enterprises, Dallas serves on numerous boards, including the Georgia Research Alliance, the Atlanta BeltLine Partnership, the Atlanta History Center and the Metro Atlanta Chamber of Commerce.

STEVE DAMON

CEO, Micron Biomedical, Atlanta



As CEO of Atlanta-based Micron Biomedical, Steven Damon leads a team of scientists and innovators to accelerate access to life-saving vaccines and therapeutics globally. Micron has developed technology that allows traditionally injected pharmaceuticals to be administered without

needles, overcoming barriers related to refrigeration, clinician involvement and needle phobia.

Under his leadership, Micron Biomedical has brought measles and rubella vaccines to adults and children as young as nine months old. Damon is building on Micron's success to bring needle-free versions of traditionally injected pharmaceuticals to the U.S. and other highly developed nations. The company has been recognized by the World Economic Forum, the World Health Organization and others.

Prior to Micron, Damon held several executive positions among industry-leading biopharmaceutical companies where he attained investor relationships that led to more than \$100 million in financing. Throughout his career, Damon has established strategic partnerships in product development, commercialization and investments with organizations including Altea Therapeutics, AstraZeneca, Durect, Femasys, Pain Therapeutics, Map Pharmaceuticals, Kimberly-Clark and Halyard Health. He serves as chairman of the board of directors for Georgia Bio and as director for Temple Therapeutics.

TIM DENNING

President & CEO, Georgia Research Alliance, Atlanta



As president and CEO of the Georgia Research Alliance, Tim Denning leads a unique effort to drive greater impact from university research and entrepreneurship in Georgia. This effort – a collaboration of state government, business and universities – grows

the state's economy, helps prepare a high-tech workforce and brings more inventions to benefit Georgia's people and companies.

Denning's career began in scientific research and evolved into leadership roles that have brought growth to enterprises. He arrived in Georgia in 2004 from the La Jolla Institute in California to work in the acclaimed Emory Vaccine Center, led by GRA Eminent Scholar Rafi Ahmed. After several years at Emory, he moved to Georgia State University's Institute of Biomedical Sciences, working alongside another GRA Eminent Scholar, Jian-Dong Li.

Just two years after joining Georgia State, Denning was named associate director of the institute, and in 2020 he was elevated to vice president of research and development at the university. His tenure brought record growth in R&D expenditures.

Denning's own research focused on the body's immune defense against inflammatory bowel disease.

ALLYSON EMAN

CEO, Venture Atlanta, Atlanta



Entrepreneurs with innovative ideas need to meet venture capitalists, so together, the idea can grow into a business. That's where Venture Atlanta comes in, by not only holding an annual conference where those people can connect but serving as a community of resources.

CEO Allyson Eman, who has been with Venture Atlanta since it began in 2007, has more than 32 years of experience in marketing, communications, sales leadership and business development. Under her leadership, the Venture Atlanta conference has connected more than 850 startups with funding in excess of \$7.7 billion.

"It has been my honor to lead Venture Atlanta for the last 17 years," Eman says. "I am proud to have played a role in building the technology ecosystem in Georgia."

Since the first conference in 2007, when just a few hundred people and 20 venture funds attended, the conference now welcomes more than 1,500 annual attendees and more than 350 investment funds making it one of the largest venture capital conferences in the Southeast.

BILLAL HAMMOUD

President & CFO, Honeywell Building Automation, Atlanta



Having served in different business leadership roles in different Honeywell divisions for the past decade, Billal Hammoud was named to his current role in 2023. The company creates products, software and technologies found in more than 10 million buildings worldwide – from airports and data centers to facilities for the military and the government, healthcare, education and hospitality sectors – that help keep those facilities safe, energy efficient, sustainable and productive.

Its Building Automation unit

provides solutions to manage carbon footprints, improve incidence responses, improve workforce productivity and simplifying day-to-day operations. It also provides products to help improve energy resilience, optimize EV charging loads and manage plug use and loads.

Hammoud has held several business, sales, program management and engineering leadership roles, most recently serving as president for ESAB Americas and Global Fabrication Solutions at Colfax. He currently sits on the board for the Metro Atlanta Chamber.

JUSTIN FERRERO

President & CFO, Sharecare, Atlanta



Justin Ferrero has served as president and CFO of Sharecare, a leading digital healthcare company, since its founding by serial entrepreneur Jeff Arnold in 2010.

Ferrero, an Atlanta native, has worked with Arnold, Sharecare's

executive chair, since 2000, overseeing all matters related to finance and corporate development for Arnold's businesses.

During this time, Ferrero has raised approximately \$2 billion and has bought, built and integrated more than 30 companies.

Ferrero is also responsible for Sharecare's technology, finance, corporate development and strategic partnerships, Ferrero plays a key role in driving the company's long-term growth strategy.

Ferrero is also responsible for managing the company's relationships with the financial community and is the principal interface with Sharecare's board of directors on financial matters.

Before joining Sharecare, Ferrero was executive vice president and CFO for HowStuffWorks, where he managed operations, finance and corporate development. At HowStuffWorks, Ferrero secured more than \$150 million in financing, executed all strategic partnerships and helped orchestrate the sale of the business to Discovery Communications.

MICHAEL J. GRAHAM

President & CEO, PCI GlobalCom, Alpharetta



Starting in the wireless communications business as an electrician's assistant in 1994, Michael Graham advanced in the industry to being named director of field operations for the tower and wireless infrastructure division of a

Washington, D.C., area company. In 2013, he purchased that division, founding Pyrgos Communications Inc.

Based in Alpharetta, Pyrgos thrived under Graham's leadership, successfully completing government contracts and commercial work, expanding across the U.S. and into international markets. It has initiated a severe weather response program to help restore wireless communications during disasters and brought other innovative technology to the industry. In 2021, Pyrgos was re-branded as PCI GlobalCom to better illustrate the scope of the company, which builds and modernizes telecommunications infrastructure for commercial, specialty, military and federal clients including the Department of Defense.

Graham was awarded the 2023 Outstanding Heights Award by NATE: the Communications Infrastructure Contractor's Association, honoring his 30 years in the industry.

TODD HARRIS

CEO, Skillshot Media; Co-owner & CEO, Ghost Gaming, Atlanta



Combining a love for and understanding of online gaming with his entrepreneurial skills, Todd Harris has spent 18 years in the video game and esports business. He founded and serves as CEO of Skillshot Media, an esports production company. It provides clients, among them The Coca-Cola Company, McDonald's, Lenovo and Piedmont, with visibility before a vast audience of gamers through custom gaming events, live-stream productions, gaming influencers or its event venue and gaming campus.

He is also co-owner and CEO of Ghost Gaming, a professional gaming organization with a fan base of more than 20 million.

Harris chairs the Network of Scholastic and Academic Esports Federations, the U.S. Esports Federation and the Atlanta Esports Alliance.

He is passionate about preparing students for the next generation of work. In August 2023, Skillshot Media and Ghost Gaming announced a partnership with the Georgia Foundation for Public Education.

Harris was a cofounder of Hi-Rez Studios, which has more than 150 million players of online games. He serves on Georgia's Film, Music, & Digital Entertainment Commission and the board of Make-A-Wish Georgia. Prior to gaming, Harris worked in fintech, helping to build Radiant Systems and BlueCube Software.

JP JAMES

Chairman & CEO, Hive Financial Assets, Atlanta



Hive Financial Assets is a micro-finance consumer-lending focused fund cofounded by JP James in 2017. Since that time, it's helped raise more than \$100 million in assets under management with an aim to help its customers survive recessions and high-volatility markets.

JP James was a cofounder of the fund and aided in scaling it. He started at Hive in 2017 and by this year assisted in raising over \$100 million in assets. It yields consistently over 12% to its investors since 2017.

Prior to founding his company, James was chairman of Libreum International LLC

where he scaled it into a multi-national consulting firm with more than 150 clients across 15 industries such as fintech, financial services, medical devices, manufacturing, logistics, restaurants and apparel. He is also a former partner and shareholder for Lending Science DM.

He is a frequent lecturer and is a co-author of several patents. He is a board member for several groups including the Buckhead Club, the Himalayan Children's Charity, the Association for the Recovery of Children and TiE Atlanta.

ANANT MADABHUSHI

Executive Director, Emory Empathic AI for Health Institute, Atlanta



To say that Anant Madabhushi is dedicated to using technology to improve healthcare is an understatement. In addition to his role as an Emory University and Georgia Tech professor primarily focused on biomedical engineering, he is the inaugural executive director of Emory Empathetic AI (Artificial Intelligence) for Health Institute.

Dr. Madabhushi is also a member of the cancer immunology research program at the Winship Cancer Institute and has authored more than 475 peer-reviewed publications. He also holds more

than 200 patents issued or pending in the areas of AI, radiomics, computational pathology, medical image analysis and computer vision.

Launched in late 2023, the Institute is part of AI Humanity, a Emory University-wide initiative dedicated to harnessing AI to better human health, generate economic value and promote social justice. Its goal is to transform how healthcare systems prevent, diagnose, treat and cure diseases by innovating, deploying and scaling up accessible, cost-effective and equitable artificial intelligence tools into the healthcare environment.

"Over the last 20 years, I have dedicated myself to machine learning in the context of health and medicine," he says. "This is a huge opportunity to improve."

Madabhushi is a Fellow of the American Institute of Medical and Biological Engineering, the Institute for Electrical and Electronic Engineers and the National Academy of Inventors.

PAUL JUDGE

Chairman & Managing Partner, Open Opportunity Fund, Atlanta



Paul Judge is a technology entrepreneur, inventor and investor. He's launched several companies, serving as the cofounder and partner of TechSquare Labs and cofounder and executive chairman of Pindrop, which protects some of the world's largest banks, insurers and retailers. In all, he's invested in more than 100 technology startups to date and has created some 30 patented and patent-pending computer security technologies inventions.

Open Opportunity Fund, where Judge serves as chairman and managing partner, launched in 2020 as part of SoftBank. It offers venture

capital to minorities who are marginalized and often overlooked in the venture capital world.

"Thirty percent of the country's population is Black and Latino, but they receive only two percent of venture capital. Our mission is to close that gap," he says. "This is an opportunity for significant gains and returns as a big section of the population is being overlooked. There is no compromise in showing returns and also backing diversity."

Judge has received many awards for his efforts, including being named one of the top 100 innovators under 35 by MIT's *Technology Review Magazine*, one of *Fortune's* 40 Under 40 in 2016 and one of *Black Enterprise's* 50 Most Powerful Players Under 40. He has spearheaded multiple research initiatives, including founding the Internet Research Task Force's Anti-Spam Research Group and is a member of the Aspen Global Leadership Network at Aspen Institute.

PAT MCHUGH

CEO, Scientific Games, Alpharetta



Pat McHugh leads Scientific Games and its global lottery business, from scratch-off games to digital play experiences, for clients in more than 50 countries across six continents. He oversees global strategy and growth in game content, systems technologies, digital lottery and sports betting.

In 2022, McHugh led the \$6-billion sale of Scientific Games Lottery to Brookfield Business Partners, aiming to modernize and grow the company. McHugh joined

Scientific Games in 2004, previously serving as senior vice president global lottery systems, where he spearheaded innovations like expanded distribution channels, cashless payments, sports betting and digital lottery platforms.

"This recognition reflects our mission to support lotteries globally, generating billions for good causes, exemplified by the Georgia Lottery Corporation's success with the HOPE Scholarship and Pre-K programs," McHugh says.

Before joining Scientific Games, he worked on large-scale systems for government agencies, including IGT Online Entertainment Systems.

DAVID PANTON

Chairman, Panton Equity Partners, Atlanta



David Pantan wears a number of hats. Not only is he chairman of Pantan Equity Partners, a family business he founded in 2012, he is also cofounder and managing partner of Navigation Capital

Partners, a private equity firm focused on investments in lower-middle-market operating companies and special purpose investment companies (SPACs). He also serves as a professor of finance at Emory University's Goizueta Business School, where he has taught a course on Entrepreneurial Private Equity for more than a decade.

Panton's team is dedicated to finding investments that are capable of yielding strong returns for its partners. They take the long view with their investment strategy and are dedicated to supporting the companies in which they invest to help them grow and prosper.

Panton has been a board member of more than 20 publicly traded or privately held companies and has been a leader in investment growth for many years. He sits on the advisory board for The CEA Group, is a member of the Georgia Chapter of Young President's Organization and was a founding member of the Atlanta chapter of TIGER 21, a global community of entrepreneurs and investors.

SCOTT C. SCHEIDT

Chief Security Officer, Seimitsu, Savannah



Scott Scheidt is chief security officer for Seimitsu, an IT management company based in Savannah. As the leader of the Seimitsu TrueSecure Fusion Team, Scheidt oversees and directs positive security, behaviors and work practices in risk management and mitigation, physical security and cybersecurity. Founded about 40 years ago, Seimitsu offers managed IT services from tech support to cloud computing.

A Bryan County native,

Scheidt retired from the military as a lieutenant colonel after serving 27 years. He has certifications in cybersecurity operations, incident response, network-forensics analysis, and disaster response and recovery.

Scheidt is also an adjunct professor who teaches cyberwarfare-related courses that include network defense, countermeasures, computer forensics, ethical hacking, and penetration testing.

HEATHER ROCKER

President & CEO, Women in Technology, Atlanta



The nonprofit Women in Technology (WIT) is committed to encouraging girls and women to study and then pursue careers in Science, Technology, Engineering, the Arts and Math (STEAM), fields that have traditionally seen far fewer

women than men in their ranks.

The organization has several different professional, networking, mentorship and educational programs, beginning at middle and high school, then supporting women from college to career leadership roles. WIT also has a certificate program geared toward single mothers to provide a foundation in IT fundamentals and cybersecurity.

The nonprofit was started 32 years ago by a group of Metro Atlanta women with a goal to make Georgia the state with the highest percentage of women in the STEAM workforce.

"Our biggest goal is to scale and take our program across the state, especially to serve middle-school and high-school girls," she says.

Heather Rocker has been in her current role since October of last year and has over 20 years of experience in business and technology. She served as the organization's first executive director. After leaving, she stayed connected to the STEAM community and served as CEO of Girls, Inc. of Greater Atlanta. She is a graduate of the 2019 Leadership Atlanta Class.

JANINE SEEBECK

CEO, BeyondTrust, Atlanta



Janine Seebeck is CEO of BeyondTrust, a global cybersecurity company focused on identity security to prevent breaches and limit the blast radius of attacks. It serves some 20,000 customers, including 75 of the Fortune 100.

"It is rewarding to be part of working for BeyondTrust in fighting alongside my incredible colleagues to solve some of our customers' most significant challenges related to securing identities and protecting all paths to privilege," she says. "It's inspiring to see our team continue to grow and rise to these challenges. I also love that we are constantly learning and innovating together – no day is the same."

Seebeck started working for BeyondTrust in 2016 as CFO, later becoming COO and then to her current role. She directs the company's culture, which is focused on full transparency as well as integrity, respect and innovation.

Before joining the company, Seebeck was CFO, senior vice president and treasurer of hospitality-software company Agilyse.

JEWEL BURKS SOLOMON

Managing Partner, Collab Capital, Atlanta



Jewel Burks Solomon is managing partner at Collab Capital, an early-stage venture capital fund she launched to close the funding gap for Black entrepreneurs. Prior to leading Collab Capital, she was head of Google for Startups U.S., where she created initiatives that have deployed over \$50 million in non-dilutive capital to more than 500 Black and Latino-led businesses since 2020.

Solomon's passion for leveling the playing field for Black founders was born from her own experience. She was the founder and CEO of Partpic, a startup acquired by Amazon in 2016 that streamlined the

purchase of maintenance and repair parts using computer vision technology.

Solomon is a member of the 2019 Class of Henry Crown Fellows within the Aspen Global Leadership Network at the Aspen Institute. She serves on the boards of the Community Foundation for Greater Atlanta, Endeavor Atlanta and the Center for American Entrepreneurship. Solomon has been named as one of *Forbes* 30 Under 30, one of *Ebony* magazine's Power 100 and one of *Atlanta Magazine*'s 100 Most Influential People.

MICHAEL E. TABB

Director of Corporate Real Estate, Google, Atlanta



At Google, Michael Tabb spends his days developing Google's real estate strategies and executing all transactions for the company's real estate portfolio in the Americas. That includes the Google data center in Douglas County and its two Midtown Atlanta offices, which together employ more than 1,000 people full time.

Before joining Google, Tabb founded and led commercial real estate firm Red Rock Global and served as a manager at LaSalle Partners (JLL) and director of real estate asset services for The Coca-Cola Company, where he was

responsible for its real estate activities worldwide. He also spent 13 years of active and reserve service in the U.S. Navy and was deployed to the Mediterranean twice, supporting Operation Desert Storm and serving as an assault boat group commander. He's received the Navy Commendation Metal and five Navy Achievement medals for his efforts.

Tabb is a member of the Atlanta Commercial Board of Realtors and the Navy League. He is also a Lieutenant Commander in the U.S. Naval Inactive Reserves. He is a founding member of the Real Estate Executive Council and chairman of the Global Diversity Summit in Commercial Real Estate.

ERIC TOLER

Executive Director, Georgia Cyber Innovation & Training Center, Augusta



Colonel (Retired) Eric Toler became the executive director of the Georgia Cyber Innovation and Training Center (Georgia Cyber Center) in 2018. The public/private collaboration between academia, government and the private sector aims to address

cybersecurity challenges through education, training, research and practical applications. It also fosters an air of innovation and entrepreneurship, serving as a hub for technology startups.

With over 27 years in the U.S. Army as a military intelligence officer, Toler has extensive leadership and national security experience, including seven combat tours in Afghanistan, Iraq and the Balkans.

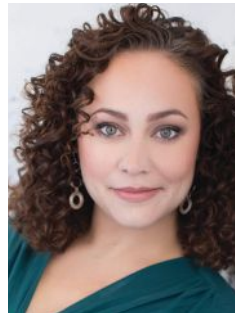
He played a pivotal role in developing cyberspace operations for the Army and Department of Defense, holding key positions in Army Cyber Command, U.S. Cyber Command and the National Security Agency.

"This recognition is a direct reflection on the incredible team we have at the Georgia Cyber Innovation and Training Center and our dedication to developing a capable and sustainable cyber workforce and helping protect the great citizens of Georgia from cyber threats," says Toler.

Toler serves on several boards, including the Governor's Cybersecurity Advisory Board and the Department of Administrative Services IT/Cybersecurity Workforce Board.

MARIA THACKER-GOETHE

President & CEO, Georgia Bio, Atlanta



Since Maria Thacker-Goethe was named head of Georgia Bio in 2019, she has elevated the organization into one of the top state bioscience and medtech associations in the U.S. Georgia Bio supports companies of all sizes, from early-stage innovators and startups to established industry leaders in the fields of biotechnology, pharmaceuticals and medical technology.

"Life sciences have never been better than they are right now," Thacker-Goethe says. "Collaboration across the industry ranging from agri-tech to public health to digital health will lead to better ways to heal and feed the world."

Georgia Bio works to shape public policy, improve access to breakthrough technologies and strengthen the workforce pipeline. It also aims to advance equity by championing innovative solutions for some of the world's most pressing challenges.

Thacker-Goethe serves on boards like the Southeast Life Sciences Association, KSU Research Foundation and the Greater Atlanta Red Cross. She is a past chair for the Council of State Bioscience Associations and in 2022 was appointed to the industry seat for the Georgia General Assembly's Rare Disease Advisory Council (RDAC).

ROBERT VISINTAINER

President & COO, Eclipse Gaming Systems, Duluth



Robert Visintainer became part of Eclipse Gaming Systems in 2019. He has over 25 years of experience as a leader in global operations, supply chain management and manufacturing.

Eclipse Gaming Systems supplies casino gaming for Native American tribal gaming and selected commercial gaming markets. The company prides itself on developing top-performing games and creative problem solving that engage the players.

Before joining Eclipse, Rob was vice president of global manufacturing operations quality and new product introductions at NCR Corp., where he was accountable for all of NCR's products worldwide. Prior to joining NCR, Visintainer held various manufacturing and operations positions in over 20 years working for Motorola. He also was the leader in the global manufacturing role of Sprint's Nextel's Push-to-Talk handheld products. He was general manager of the firm's \$1.8-billion Nogales Operation.

DEVON WIJESINGHE

President & Chief Commercial Officer, Evident, Atlanta



Third-party insurance verification company Evident is all about making sure vendors and suppliers are in compliance and meet Certificate of Insurance requirements without compromising

their data privacy. Some of the world's largest organizations rely on the company's technology to help them make fast and informed decisions about their business partnerships with new vendors, suppliers and franchisees.

Devon Wijesinghe has been with Evident since early 2023, and he is working to broaden commercial adoption of the solution it provides.

Before being hired by Evident, Wijesinghe was the president of CORL Technologies, another third-party, risk-management firm, and CEO of data company Insightpool, which merged with Trendkite and was later acquired by Cision (NYSE: CISN) for \$225 million. He also cofounded e-VERIFILE, which eventually became one of the largest, privately held data software companies in the U.S. Yucaipa Equity acquired e-VERIFILE, and this led to one of the most lucrative exits ever for investors in a U.S. company based in the Southeast.

DAVID WILKINSON

CEO, NCR Voyix, Atlanta



If you've shopped in a store, bought groceries or dined in a restaurant, chances are you've encountered NCR Voyix's software and solutions. It's considered the No. 1 provider of point-of-sale (POS) software for retail and restaurants and held the No. 1 position in self-checkout for 20 years. It counts big names like Target, Walmart and Starbucks as customers while also supporting smaller businesses around the world. In all, it sees nearly \$4 billion in total revenue.

While NCR has been in operation for more than 130 years, at the end of 2023 it saw some big changes, splitting into two separate companies: NCR Atleos for its ATM business, and NCR Voyix for its digital commerce business. The term "Voyix" references the concept of a voyage, which it says is how its customers describe their journeys with NCR.

As CEO of NCR Voyix, David Wilkinson focuses on providing technology solutions to the global retail and hospitality sectors, including more than 30,000 restaurants and more than 100,000 stores.

He spent 12 years at NCR before being named CEO, most recently leading the global retail team. Wilkinson sits on the board for several organizations, including the Junior Achievement of Georgia and the National Retail Federation.

LARRY K. WILLIAMS

President and CEO, Technology Association of Georgia, Atlanta



The Technology Association of Georgia (TAG) is celebrating its 25th anniversary this year under the leadership of its longtime President and CEO Larry Williams, who has been at the helm for nearly a decade.

With 30,000 members, TAG is one of the foremost technology organizations in the U.S. Under Williams' leadership, along with TAG's robust foundation and the TAG Education Collaborative (TAG-Ed), the organization is well-positioned to tackle workforce readiness and professional development to prepare the next generation of technology leaders.

"Georgia continues to be recognized as one of the best states for business, with technology driving our growth," Williams says. "We are projected to create another 100,000 tech jobs by 2033, reaching nearly 450,000 full-time tech employees in the state."

Strengthening the tech ecosystem involves staying ahead of industry trends, developing a skilled workforce and fostering professional networks among industry leaders. It also requires addressing regulations, including cybersecurity and data privacy, to advance policy.

"Innovation is my greatest passion," Williams says. "We've witnessed the profound impact that collaboration between the technology and business communities can have in driving positive change."

JOEY WOMACK

Founder & CEO, Goodie Nation, Atlanta



Joey Womack is different from most people – but in a very good way. An entrepreneur deep in his soul, he is committed to overcoming economic inequities across the planet. His goal is to help one billion people by the year 2039.

Goodie Nation is a social impact pre-accelerator focusing on supporting people of color and women that puts people and relationships at the center of innovation. The nonprofit leverages its extensive network of mentors, business professionals and community advocates for entrepreneurs to draw on for advice, customers, funding, talent and professional growth to help them succeed in accomplishing their dreams and goals.

Today Goodie Nation supports entrepreneurs and company founders who are facing challenges finding pre-seed, seed stage and Series A stage investments. In 2023 alone, it supported \$1.7 million in total social capital available to founders.

JASON W. YOUNG

Managing Partner, Totally Human, Atlanta



Totally Human is an organization comprised of world-renowned designers, investors, entrepreneurs and researchers who all share a common goal: to make the field of technology more diverse and inclusive.

The foundation of the company is the belief that rather than perpetuate inequity, inclusive innovators have the power to create a more equitable world, and Totally Human works to find partners committed to creating that vision.

As a tech entrepreneur, Jason Young brings nearly 20 years of experience starting and launching products and creating systemic social and economic equity.

He founded and serves as board chair of the Hidden Genius Project, a nonprofit that empowers young Black men in the areas of technology innovation, entrepreneurship and leadership to support them in their efforts to transform their lives and communities.

Young also serves on the board of the National Endowment for Financial Education and is a past member of President Obama's Advisory Council on Financial Capability for Young Americans.

MICHAEL ZETO

Chief Commercial Officer, Boingo Wireless, Atlanta



As chief commercial officer for Boingo Wireless, a distributed antenna system (DAS), Wi-Fi and private network provider, Michael Zeto is dedicated to bringing the value of 5G and digital transformation worldwide for a very diverse set of customers. These

include airports, stadiums, commercial real estate, manufacturing, military and government, and smart-city partners.

"It's rewarding to drive innovation and drive connectivity on a large scale and create positive outcomes for citizens across the U.S.," he says. "My goal is to continue to lead the community in solving complex connectivity challenges for both private enterprises and the public sector."

Before joining Boingo in 2020, Zeto served as vice president for IoT Solutions and founded and was general manager for AT&T's smart cities and emerging IoT solutions. He started his own company in 2010, Proximus Mobility.

Dedicated to the Atlanta community, Zeto has served on the Board of Directors of the Metro Atlanta Chamber and helps both national and local organizations including the Boys and Girls Clubs of America and St. Jude Children's Research Hospital.

Transportation & Logistics



JESSICA DODSON

Group Director, Ryder Transportation Solutions, Alpharetta



Jessica Dodson has been in the warehousing and logistics sector since 2007, driving results through business education and core values of dedication and follow through. She joined Ryder System in 2011 to focus on logistics in oil and gas, managing various operations departments in Houston, Texas.

Dodson moved to Atlanta in 2017 to work as a quality manager with Ryder, supporting initial technology deployment of a customer load visibility platform. She

soon transitioned to the role of group logistics manager of the central operations hub in Alpharetta. Her teams focus on the development of people, process and technology to transform the central organization structure and deliver high-performance results in the areas of driver trip management, payroll and customer invoicing.

In 2022, Dodson became group director for Ryder Transportation Solutions, adding multiple operations support teams to her responsibility. In this role, she focuses on exceeding expectations through standardization, digitalization and continuous improvement solutions to foster leverage and market share growth for Ryder Transportation Solutions.

COLLIE GREENWOOD

General Manager & CEO, MARTA, Atlanta



A respected leader in the international transit community, Collie Greenwood brings over 35 years of expertise to his role as GM and CEO at the Metropolitan Atlanta Rapid Transit Authority (MARTA). He began his transit career as a bus operator in Canada and progressed to chief service officer of the Toronto Transit Commission, which is North America's third-largest transit system.

Greenwood's current responsibilities include directing MARTA's largest and most ambitious expansion and modernization program since it was founded in 1971. His strategic vision emphasizes collaboration and continuous improvement.

The professional motto for MARTA has evolved from "Taking People Where They Want to Go" to "People Taking People Where They Want to Go."

"It's the evidence of progress that I find the most fulfilling," Greenwood says. "This is whether hiring and training the right people, to improvement on projects, cleaning or strengthening our police force."

MARTA received the GFOA Certificate of Achievement for Excellence in Financial Reporting for the Fiscal Year 2022 Annual Comprehensive Financial Report. Greenwood serves as the vice chair of the Standards Development Oversight Council of American Public Transportation Association (APTA). He is a founding Board Member of Georgia's Fulton Technology and Energy Enhancement Authority (FTEEA).

CLAUDE E. "ED" ELKINS

EV&P & Chief Marketing Officer, Norfolk Southern Corp. Atlanta



Norfolk Southern serves the industries that drive America's economy, delivering more than 7 million carloads annually. It's been moving goods and materials by rail across the U.S. since 1827, and today its network connects to more than 54 inland, lake, river and sea ports. The company has more than 5,400 employees that live and work in Georgia.

Ed Elkins serves as Executive Vice President and Chief Marketing Officer and has been with the company since 1988, when he was hired as a road brakeman after serving in the U.S. Marine Corp. He's had many roles with the company, including as a conductor,

a locomotive engineer and a relief yardmaster before spending two decades in the company's intermodal marketing department.

Elkins currently serves as vice chair of the Georgia Chamber of Commerce and sits on the boards of directors for the East Lake Foundation, the National Association of Manufacturers and railcar provider TTX Co. He also serves on the Georgia State University Marketing RoundTable and is a member of The Conference Board Inc. on the Council for CMOs, a peer-to-peer hub for C-suite marketing leaders.

GRIFF LYNCH

President & CEO, Georgia Ports Authority, Savannah



With over three decades of experience in the marine sector, Griff Lynch brings critical operational and commercial expertise to his role in overseeing the deep-water ports of Savannah and Brunswick, as well as inland terminal activities.

Lynch directs the nation's third-busiest gateway for containerized trade in Savannah and second-busiest auto port complex in Brunswick that facilitate important trade and economic growth. Georgia's ports and inland terminals contribute to Georgia's economy in a

big way, including \$33 billion in income, \$140 billion in revenue and \$3.8 billion in state and local taxes.

Lynch is leading GPA in an expansion to enhance port infrastructure and capacity to meet the evolving demands of global trade. With more than \$4.5 billion in planned infrastructure investments over the next decade, he is building initiatives to expand berth space, yard capacity, trucking gate fluidity and intermodal connectivity. That includes the renovation of Ocean Terminal, which will start coming online in 2027, with two big ship berths and the future Savannah Container Terminal on Hutchison Island, now in the permitting phase.

In 2023, Lynch was inducted into the International Maritime Hall of Fame.

Transportation & Logistics

RUSSELL R. MCMURRY

Commissioner, Georgia Department of Transportation, Atlanta



In 1990, Russell McMurry began his career at the Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT) as an engineering trainee. Fifteen years later he was unanimously appointed by the State Transportation Board to lead the GDOT.

In this role, McMurry oversees the development, maintenance, enhancement and operation of Georgia's extensive transportation network, vital for the state's economic competitiveness and residents' quality of life. "I am a civil engineer, and the essence of it is helping make improvements for society," he says. "I am really proud to serve Georgia and

proud of the men and women in the Georgia DOT who make it better every day."

Under his leadership, the GDOT undertook the massive I-285/SR 400 interchange improvements, the last of which were concluding in 2024. Then there was the reconstruction of the I-85 bridge following its collapse in 2017. It was operational a month ahead of schedule, earning him acclaim and the Inaugural Engineering Influence Award from ACEC Georgia.

McMurray has been recognized by numerous publications and organizations, and former Governor Nathan Deal also honored him with the Bill Hardman Sr. Tourism Champion in Government Award. McMurry's commitment extends nationally, serving in key roles within various transportation organizations including Treasurer of the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO).

JANNINE MILLER

Director of Planning, Georgia Department of Transportation, Atlanta



In 2020, Governor Brian Kemp appointed Jannine Miller Director of Planning for the Georgia Department of Transportation. She brings extensive transportation experience to this role, including serving as deputy assistant secretary and senior advisor to Sec. Elaine Chao at the U.S. Department of Transportation, working directly with federal transportation operating and financing offices. In addition, she was senior advisor to U.S. Agriculture Sec. Sonny Perdue, responsible for programs and policies related

to rural infrastructure development and financing.

In her current role, Miller directs an executive team responsible for the allocation of funds that support Georgia's strategic transportation investments. This includes implementing plans for the \$120-million statewide infrastructure for charging electric vehicles. She is also the executive director of the State Road and Tollway Authority, Georgia Regional Transportation Authority and Atlanta Region Transit Authority.

Miller believes a safe, high-quality transportation network is a main reason why Georgia is a good place to live. "It's a deliberate investment of public funds, including state, motor fuel and federal, that are dedicated to state roads and bridges, which most states don't have," she says. "Georgia's sales tax goes right back to the roads."

GEORGIA 500 CONGRATS, STEVE SYFAN



Syfan Logistics Executive Vice President Steve Syfan is honored to serve the state of Georgia. As a longtime former member of the Board of Directors

for the Georgia Dept. of Economic Development, and current Chairman of the Lake Lanier Islands Development Authority, Steve has always pushed to move Georgia forward into the future. Join us in congratulating Steve on being named to the GEORGIA 500 list!

MOVING GEORGIA FORWARD



GEORGIA
500

NICK PORTER

President, Airports & Parcel Solutions, North America, Vanderlande Industries, Marietta



Nick Porter has been the president of Vanderlande Industries' Airports and Parcel Solutions, North America (APS NA) in Marietta since 2016. Prior to this, he was director and general manager for Vanderlande Industries, leading the U.K. baggage handling system business. Vanderlande Industries is a market-leading global partner for future-proof logistic process automation in the warehousing, airports and parcel sectors.

Cobb County has been the North American headquarters for Vanderlande Industries APS NA for a quarter century. A new 150,000-square-foot headquarters facility recently opened in the heart of the 27-acre Marietta campus. Nearly 1,000 employees work at the centerpiece facility that was designed to further the company's sustainability goals.

The facility is Leed Gold certified and includes a large solar panel array capable of offsetting more than 25% of energy usage, rainwater capture systems for irrigation and graywater plumbing, technologically advanced and efficient heating and cooling systems and onsite charging stations for electric vehicles. It was constructed using locally sourced materials to reduce carbon emissions.

Vanderlande Industries collaborates closely with Georgia Tech, the University of Georgia and Kennesaw State University to recruit and hire the employees they need to operate in the highly technical logistic process automation industry.

BILL RICHARDSON

Vice President, Orgill Southeast Distribution, Tifton



As vice president of Orgill Southeast Distribution, Bill Richardson has been successfully managing the hardware distribution company's Tifton center since 2020. Under his leadership, the Tifton facility has seen significant operational improvements and growth. Bill is deeply committed to his team and believes in placing employees at the heart of the company's celebrations and successes, an approach that has fostered a positive and productive work environment.

Among the biggest current challenges for Orgill are political tensions and economic changes. "These have disrupted our supply chains, resulting in delays and higher costs," says Richardson. "We're also introducing advanced technologies such as robots and artificial intelligence. These help us work faster and more efficiently, but they also come with their own set of challenges, like high initial costs and the need for employee training."

Richardson says Georgia's business-friendly environment and state support programs make it an attractive place for logistics businesses. Also, Tifton's strategic location at the intersection of I-75 and U.S. 82 increases efficiency by providing easy access to key markets in the Southeast, including Florida and Alabama. "This prime location significantly enhances our international shipping capabilities," he says, "while these advantages help us deliver Orgill products quickly and efficiently to our customers."

Advancing Middle Georgia's Economic Growth

For over 125 years, Sandersville Railroad has connected industries in Middle Georgia through excellent service and reliable freight solutions. Our shortline freight railroad has become a trusted partner in supporting local businesses and fostering job growth, and we look forward to building a stronger future for Hancock and Washington Counties.

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Transportation & Logistics

ANTHONY RODRIGUEZ

Executive Director, HUB404 Conservancy, Atlanta



Anthony Rodriguez is the first executive director of the HUB404 Conservancy, having been hired in 2022 to spearhead the vision for this transformative greenspace. HUB404 is a 9-acre, half-mile greenspace that will soar above Georgia 400 in Buckhead, creating an innovative “cap park” atop the highway with a direct connection to MARTA’s Buckhead rail station.

“It’s a huge arts project on a scale we haven’t seen in

Atlanta,” Rodriguez says of the interconnected node that will link the PATH400 Greenway Trail, the Atlanta BeltLine, MARTA and neighboring streets, parks and attractions.

The Sam Massell Gateway, which represents the northern anchor of the park, is due to break ground in late 2025, with the completion of HUB404 estimated in 2029 or 2030.

“It’s fulfilling to engage and educate the community on why this project is important,” he says. “We are bringing people together in a natural environment where none previously existed. People want to bring this to fruition.”

Rodriguez serves on the University of Georgia’s Latino Alumni Council. He is chair of the board of the Aurora Theatre, which he cofounded in 1996. He was named one of the Georgia Hispanic Chamber of Commerce’s 50 Most Influential Latinos several times and was included in its Hall of Fame in 2022.

TYLER SCRIVEN

Cofounder & CEO, Saltbox, Atlanta



Saltbox is a co-warehousing logistics and fulfillment company that was cofounded in 2019 by Tyler Scriven. The company combines warehousing and co-working with modern, unique spaces created for small businesses to ship, work, store and create their products. There are 12 Saltbox locations and more than 750 members nationwide, most of whom are e-commerce companies that sell physical goods directly to consumers.

According to Scriven, Saltbox makes the hardest parts of running an ecommerce business simple with workspaces that

transform into a company’s modern and flexible headquarters. This includes warehouse suites, on-demand labor, fulfillment and everything else needed to grow a business to the next level.

In addition to his role at Saltbox, Scriven is a senior advisor at Fifth Down Capital, chairman at True Glory Brands, board member at Serenbe and endeavor entrepreneur at Endeavor. Before founding Saltbox, Scriven was managing director at Techstars, chief of staff at Palantir Technologies in Palo Alto, Calif., and an investment associate and investment banking analyst.

STUART SANDLIN

President, Hapag-Lloyd North America, Atlanta



As the president of Hapag-Lloyd North America and a member of the company’s executive team, Stuart Sandlin is focused on leading the shipping company to be a customer-centric organization working to be No. 1 in the world for high-quality liner shipping. Sandlin holds degrees in international economics and supply chain management and has worked at Hapag-Lloyd offices in Atlanta as well as Houston, Texas; Piscataway, N.J.; and Hamburg, Germany.

Sandlin says transportation and logistics companies are navigating some tough challenges. “Supply chain disruptions remain a big issue, and geopolitical tensions and the lingering effects of COVID-19 are causing problems such as port congestion and labor shortages,” he says. “Also, the terrorist attacks on commercial shipping vessels in the Red Sea are forcing much longer routes around Africa.”

There are a number of reasons why Hapag-Lloyd chose to locate its North American headquarters in Atlanta. “The Georgia Ports Authority has already demonstrated, along with the Georgia Department of Economic Development, that Georgia is open for logistics with one of the fastest-growing distribution center environments in the county,” he says. “We enjoy access to a skilled workforce in Georgia, backed by strong educational programs in logistics and supply chain management and state initiatives focused on workforce development.”

STEVE SYFAN

Executive Vice President, Syfan Logistics, Gainesville



With 40 years in the transportation industry, Steve Syfan still exudes enthusiasm for his life’s work. “My dad, brother and I started the business in a 30-year-old, single-wide trailer that we were so proud of,” he says. “We have had tough years and good years.”

They initially founded Turbo Transport in 1984, later Turbo Logistics, a truck brokerage. It grew to employ 150 people over the next 20 years; it was sold in 2006. Five years later, they started Syfan Logistics, which now has over 400 employees. In 2023, Syfan Logistics launched Triology Solutions (a factoring company) to enhance relationships with carriers/customers.

The decision was made from the outset to focus on food. “Back in 1984, my dad said when things are tough, people eat, and when things are good, people eat,” says Syfan. So, what does he like the most about his job? “The people. We are very much family-driven, whether your name is Syfan or not. The second would be being able to accomplish what someone else in the industry can’t.”

Syfan is a past board member of the Georgia Department of Economic Development. Governor Brian Kemp appointed him as chairman of the Lake Lanier Island Development Authority in April 2024.

BEN J. TARBUTTON III

President, Sandersville Railroad, Sandersville



Since 1893, the Sandersville Railroad has been serving the rail needs of customers in Middle Georgia. The company has a diverse customer base, including kaolin, forest products, agriculture, and chemical shippers and receivers.

“In the past year, we have constructed a new terminal for Veal Farms and Revive Milling to support their growing agricultural business,” Ben Tarbutton says, “and we have added new railcars to our fleet to support our woodchip and kaolin customers.”

Kaolin is an alumina silicate prevalent throughout Middle Georgia and goes into a vast array of products like consumer packaging, fiberglass, sanitaryware, paint and coated paper.

“As we look to the future, we are excited to support our existing customer base while growing our presence in the region with the Hanson Spur, which will be a new 5-mile spur in Hancock County serving multiple customers,” Tarbutton says. “The Sandersville Railroad serves as the fingers of the North American freight rail network, and we are proud to provide our top-flight customer service to our customers, both large and small.”

Tarbutton is a board member of the Georgia Ports Authority. He is also vice president of the southern region for the American Shortline and Regional Railroad Association.

CAROL B. TOMÉ

CEO, UPS, Atlanta



Carol B. Tomé, just the 12th CEO in the 117-year history of UPS, brings a background in banking and packaging retail and manufacturing to the world’s largest package delivery company.

“I came to UPS because I love to develop people,” she says. “We have more than a half million employees around the world, and it is incredibly rewarding to lead a company and culture that is deeply committed to offering training, investment, benefits and opportunities that help our people reach their highest potential and achieve their dreams.”

In 2023, under Tomé’s leadership, the company acquired MNX Global Logistics and Happy Returns from PayPal. Most recently, UPS expanded its partnership with the U.S. Postal Service to become its primary air cargo provider. “Together UPS and USPS have developed an innovative solution that is mutually beneficial and complements our unique, reliable and efficient integrated network,” she says.

Tomé is a board member for Verizon Communications Inc. and a board trustee for both the Atlanta Botanical Garden and Grady Memorial Hospital Corp. She is also on the board of councilors for The Carter Center.

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At Norfolk Southern, our people are our strength. Their hands, hearts, and minds move the world — from right here in Georgia.

We take pride in helping shape the future of our home state. From serving over 1,200 unique customers to investing \$195 million annually in roadway and infrastructure improvements to keeping more than 930,400 metric tons of CO2 out of the supply chain, our work today is already creating a better tomorrow.

We’ve been building our legacy in Georgia for nearly 200 years, and we’re proud to continue advancing the future of rail — and the state we call home.

[NorfolkSouthern.com](https://www.NorfolkSouthern.com)

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