A Letter from the Chairman

2015 was a very successful year for growing business and building community in the Rogers-Lowell area. Positive new business growth and expansions resulted in significant job creation helping to create opportunities for Chamber members to sell their goods and services to new businesses and residents. Businesses in Rogers-Lowell created 1,470 new jobs last year! The unemployment rate in Rogers also dropped from 5.4 to 3.2 percent at the end of the year.

Over $50 million in private capital investments were started or completed in Rogers and Lowell during 2015. The Chamber staff also worked closely with the Arkansas Economic Development Commission (AEDC) and the Rogers City Council to allow four (4) expanding businesses to receive business incentives in 2015 which will help generate over 200 additional jobs in the city and over $2 million more in new capital investment. J.B. Hunt announced a $30 million expansion late in the year that will result in over 1,000 jobs over the next five years.

New retail/restaurant development continued at a brisk pace and highlights from 2015 included a new shopping center at Pleasant Grove Rd., a new retail site on Pauline Whitaker Dr. and a new strip center on Promenade Blvd. New construction at Pleasant Crossing brought the opening of Burlington Coat Factory and Whataburger. Parkside Public, The Grove, Moe’s Southwest Grill, Foster’s Pint & Plate, Gusano’s Chicago-Style Pizzeria, Uncle Maddio’s Pizza, Simple Simon’s Pizza, Hammontree’s Grilled Cheese, Pattaya, Deluxe Burger, and Pei Wei were other restaurants opened during the year in Rogers.

In August, the Chamber announced at the Rogers City Council meeting the formation of Downtown Rogers Inc. (DRI), a new organization focused on driving real estate developments and economic development in and around the Downtown Rogers area. DRI will initially fall under the Chamber’s umbrella and seek both public and private partnerships to implement the Downtown Master Plan that is incorporated into the overall Community Strategic Plan. These strategic and master plans were collaboratively developed by the Chamber, City of Rogers and the community during 2014 and revealed to the public in 2015.

The Chamber’s Government Affairs division worked hard in 2015 advancing issues key to the continued prosperity of Northwest Arkansas. The division hosted public forums and educated members on critical issues that have an impact on the local, state and national levels. Staff served as liaison for the Third Congressional District Caucus and worked to educate legislators on our areas of greatest need. During the 2015 legislative session, staff also worked with the Arkansas State Chamber of Commerce, the Governor’s Office, state agencies, and other entities in the state, to draft and guide SJR16, a proposed constitutional amendment, through the legislative and committee process. This amendment will be on the ballot in November and help bolster economic development in Arkansas.

The tourism industry continued to positively impact the Rogers economy in 2015. Last year, our community hosted major conferences and events like the Great Plains Leadership Training for Christ Convention, the Walmart FLW Tour fishing tournament on Beaver Lake, The Poultry Festival, the Walmart NW Arkansas Championship presented by P&G at Pinnacle Country Club and the Daisy National BB Gun Championship Match providing great exposure and revenue for area businesses.

Your Chamber is ready to build on these successes in 2016 and continue to “grow business and build community,” enhancing the quality of life in Northwest Arkansas for years to come. Working within a regional context, the Chamber will further advance strong economic development, minority business development, government affairs, community development and business-building initiatives and programs. You’ll learn more specifics about these programs and goals in our 2016 Business Plan to be published in the March issue of the Chamber Voice.

On behalf of the entire Chamber, thank you for your membership and involvement. Our members fuel the ideas, goals, manpower, drive and financial ability that enable us to work together in creating the ideal environment for businesses of all sizes to prosper.

In this Annual Report, we’ve outlined 2015 accomplishments and highlights of the Chamber’s leadership in our region. We hope you will be inspired by our achievements of the past year and join us this year as we continue to make the Rogers-Lowell area a great place to live, work and play.
CHAMBER STAFF

Raymond Burns, CCE
President/CEO
rburns@rogerslowell.com

J.R. Shaw
Executive Director/Senior Vice President | Visit Rogers
jr@rogerslowell.com

Shelle Summers, IOM
Senior Vice President of Membership Services
ssummers@rogerslowell.com

Vickie Grotts
Vice President of Accounting & Finance
vickie@rogerslowell.com

Brad Phillips
Vice President of Marketing Communications
brad@rogerslowell.com

Steve Cox
Senior Vice President of Economic Development
steve@rogerslowell.com

Jon Moran
Vice President of Government Affairs
jon@rogerslowell.com

Judy Diffee
Finance Manager
judy@rogerslowell.com

Nick Smith
Creative Services Manager
nick@rogerslowell.com

Brooklynn Wiley
Director of Special Events
brooklynn@rogerslowell.com

Amy Gober
Director of Community Development
amy@rogerslowell.com

Jacque Eakins
Account Executive
jacque@rogerslowell.com

Marni Rogers
Member Relations Manager
marni@rogerslowell.com

Erin Jernigan
Convention Sales Manager | Visit Rogers
erin@rogerslowell.com

Kelly Parker
Sports & Tourism Marketing Manager | Visit Rogers
kelly@rogerslowell.com

Katie Wright
Assistant to the President
katie@rogerslowell.com

Ashley Matsumura
Information Specialist
ashley@rogerslowell.com

Amanda Mills
Information Specialist
amanda@rogerslowell.com

WHAT WE BELIEVE

MISSION
To be the voice of business, to promote and initiate responsible economic growth, and to address community challenges in the Rogers-Lowell Area and the region.

VISION
Quality
Growth
Opportunity

VALUES
We act ethically in all we do.
We honor and serve all business and our community.
We work together.
We believe in the Rogers-Lowell Area and NWA.
We advocate a positive business environment.
We continuously improve the business climate.
We believe in and promote free enterprise.
We know that it is up to us to make a difference.
We promote quality, growth and opportunity.
We identify, develop and involve leaders.
We believe in preserving, promoting and enhancing the quality of life in the Rogers-Lowell Area.
We listen and respond to our membership.
We have fun.
We strive to cultivate a cohesive community.
EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE
Chairman of the Board – Mike Watts, FM Corporation
Chairman-Elect – Nick Hobbs, JB Hunt
Treasurer – David Faulkner, Pinnacle Hills Promenade
Past Chairman – Ric Clifford, Clifford Consulting Group
President/CEO – Raymond Burns
RIDC President – Jerry Vest, Regions Bank

2015 Directors
Lori Brown, Kimberly Clark
Dewayne Burns, eSCO Processing & Recycling
Guy Cable, Grand Savings Bank
Clay Conly, First Western
Jeff Geurian, CEI Engineering
Erin Kiefer, Assembled Products

2016 Directors
Greg Fogle, Nabholz Construction
David Hale, Digital Printing Solutions
Rick McWhir, Bekaert Corporation
Jeff Ratcliff, Big Heart Pet Brands
Cameron Smith, Cameron Smith & Associates
Angie Tucker-Ridley, Tucker Furniture & Appliance

2017 Directors
Tabi Lipscomb, Arvest Benton County
Jeff Wood, Tyson Foods
Kristen Boozman, Portfolio Real Estate
Mauricio Herrera, Legal Center of NWA
Erik Pianalto, Mercy NWA
Frank Bailey, Bailey & Oliver Law Firm

EX-OFFICIO DIRECTORS
Jeremy Barclay, Northwest Health System
Jerry Carmichael, TY North America, LLC
Mike Clawson, Del Monte Foods, Inc.
Bob Clinard, Benton County Judge
Dr. Janie Darr, Rogers Public Schools
Rich Davis, SourceGas Arkansas Inc.
Mike Dodge, Carroll Electric Coop. Corp.
Sandy Edwards, Crystal Bridges Museum
Spencer Fox, NWA Emerging Leaders; Simmons Bank
Dan Hendrix, World Trade Center Arkansas
Greg Hines, Mayor, City of Rogers
Chris Johnson, Cabela’s
Brad Jones, New Creature
Dr. Evelyn Jorgenson, NWACC
Peter Lane, Walton Arts Center
David Lang, Embassy Suites NWA
Eldon Long, Mayor, City of Lowell
Jeff Milford, AEP/SWEPCO
Charles Nevin, Advantage Sales & Marketing
Dawn Spragg, Central United Methodist Church
Thom Stathakis, Everett Buick GMC
Chris Sultemeier, Walmart
Dick Trammel, Arkansas Highway Commission
Vicki Vasser-Jenkins, Wright, Lindsey, & Jennings, LLP

DIVISION CHAIRS
Community Development – Erin Kiefer
Membership Services – Vicki Vasser-Jenkins
Economic Development – Jeff Milford
Government Affairs – Jerry Carmichael
Convention & Visitors Bureau – David Lang

January 7:
The inaugural seminar for the brand new Chamber University educational program - Sunrise Seminar Series was held. These new monthly seminars take place from 8:00 a.m. - 9:30 a.m. and offer high quality business education from local subject matter experts.

January 12-13:
Arkansas’s 90th General Assembly convened at noon on January 12. The House of Representatives and the Senate met in a joint session January 13 in the House Chamber to declare election results, to administer the oath of office to elected constitutional officers, and to hear an address by the Honorable Asa Hutchinson, who was sworn in as 46th Governor of the State of Arkansas.

January 24:
The Rogers-Lowell Area and Bentonville/Bella Vista Chambers of Commerce co-hosted the first of a series of state legislative forums during the 90th General Assembly. Legislators interacted with members and discussed legislative and policy issues.
February 1:
The Rogers-Lowell Area Chamber of Commerce released the 2014 Annual Report, highlighting chamber and community achievements.

February 10 & 17:
Members and the public joined the Chamber and community leaders for receptions at Rogers City Hall (10th) and Lowell City Hall (17th) for Chamber Night. Mayor Greg Hines (Rogers) and Mayor Eldon Long (Lowell) provided State of the City addresses after their respective receptions.

February 17:
The NorthWest Arkansas Chambers of Commerce hosted an exciting Legislative Day which included a Legislative Luncheon and Northwest Arkansas Night Out Legislative Reception in Little Rock.

February 27:
The 93rd Annual Banquet celebrated 2014 accomplishments and featured University of Arkansas Vice Chancellor and Director of Athletics Jeff Long as keynote speaker.
The Economic Development Division proactively provides innovative programs, assistance and technology to aid, support and increase business opportunities for new and existing business and industry, and expands the retail and service business available in our community to increase the local tax base. New job creation and business expansion impacts businesses by creating meaningful opportunities for Chamber members to sell their goods and services to those new businesses and residents. The Economic Development Division will work with industries both large and small in our community to increase job growth and business expansion as well as with individuals to increase our growing small business community.

Economic Development Division Highlights

- Over 1,470 new jobs were created in Rogers-Lowell in 2015. Creating new jobs not only decreases unemployment, but allows Rogers-Lowell to be known as an area of the country for talent to relocate to find jobs.
- As part of the contract services provided by the Chamber of Commerce, in 2015, Chamber staff responded to 13 Requests for Information sent from site consultants and industries on projects. A total of nine (9) had criteria that we could not accommodate or we were not selected. Two (2) projects are still in consideration and another is being delayed for a year. The final project, EcoVet, moved into a facility on 13th St. and will create over 75 new jobs in the next two (2) years.
- In 2015, over $50 million in private capital investment projects were started or completed in Rogers and Lowell.
- J.B. Hunt announced a major expansion in 2015 that will result in over 1,000 jobs created in the next five years.
- Chamber staff worked with AEDC and the Rogers City Council to allow four (4) local businesses, who are expanding, to get business incentives in 2015. The four (4) expansions will result in over 200 new jobs in the city and over $2 million in new capital investment.
- Chamber staff worked with existing industry in 2015 to discover any needs that they may have and ask for input by conducting 2015 Business Retention Surveys. Of these, 52 were conducted with minority owned businesses.

1,470 NEW JOBS CREATED in Rogers-Lowell in 2015

Recruit and Retain a High Quality Workforce

- In 2015, 127 jobs were posted on the Chamber’s online job bank.
- Four (4) feature articles promoting the online job bank and an article featuring the revamped NationJob program appeared in the Chamber Voice throughout the year.
- In 2015, 43 resumes were posted on the Chamber’s website.
- The 2015 NWA Spring Job Fair sold out and took place on May 11 at the Double Tree Suites in Bentonville. Close to 500 people attended the event and the 48 employers were very satisfied with the turnout. The 2015 NWA Fall Job Fair had 50 employers and over 700 attendees.
- Through 2015, Chamber staff members mailed or distributed over 150 relocation packets containing information about the quality of life and amenities available in the community.
- Chamber staff put on two K2J (Kindergarten to Job) events in 2015. The first took place in April at Preformed Line Products and had 18 educators from 10 different school districts and four (4) industry partners. The second took place in November at FM Corp with 12 educators from seven (7) different school districts. The event brings in area educators, principals, and guidance counselors, to meet with area manufacturers and tour the facility. There is a facilitated discussion between the educators and employers about workforce needs and what the school system can do to better prepare young people for the modern manufacturing environment.
- A third K2J Connect Event was held in May that brought parents of current middle school students together to talk with industries and hear a presentation about workforce needs in the community. This was brought about thanks to a new partnership with the Career and Technical Education (CTE) teachers in the Rogers Public School System.
- A roundtable discussion between 12 industries and a workforce development consultant took place in November.

Engage in Small Business Outreach

- In 2015, over 300 individuals seeking information on starting a business received assistance from staff and were referred to the Small Business Resource Center at the Chamber and partner organizations for further advice.
- For 2015, 12 local businesses were named as a recipient of the Small Business of the Month award.
- In 2015, the Chamber published its 2015 Business Plan providing members specific programs and goals for the year. In 2015, the Chamber celebrated 93 years as the premiere advocacy organization for business in the Rogers-Lowell area.
- A roundtable discussion between 12 industries and a workforce development consultant took place in November.
- The 2015 NWA Spring Job Fair sold out and took place on May 11 at the Double Tree Suites in Bentonville. Close to 500 people attended the event and the 48 employers were very satisfied with the turnout. The 2015 NWA Fall Job Fair had 50 employers and over 700 attendees.
- Through 2015, Chamber staff members mailed or distributed over 150 relocation packets containing information about the quality of life and amenities available in the community.
- Chamber staff put on two K2J (Kindergarten to Job) events in 2015. The first took place in April at Preformed Line Products and had 18 educators from 10 different school districts and four (4) industry partners. The second took place in November at FM Corp with 12 educators from seven (7) different school districts. The event brings in area educators, principals, and guidance counselors, to meet with area manufacturers and tour the facility. There is a facilitated discussion between the educators and employers about workforce needs and what the school system can do to better prepare young people for the modern manufacturing environment.
- A third K2J Connect Event was held in May that brought parents of current middle school students together to talk with industries and hear a presentation about workforce needs in the community. This was brought about thanks to a new partnership with the Career and Technical Education (CTE) teachers in the Rogers Public School System.
- A roundtable discussion between 12 industries and a workforce development consultant took place in November.
award. Shirley’s Flowers & Gifts, Inc. was the winner of the 2014 Small Business of the Year.

• The Chamber conducted 89 ribbon cuttings during 2015.

• In 2015, members taught members at 24 Chamber University educational seminars.

• The 2015 NWA Business Expo took place in August at the John Q Hammons Center. The new event layout allowed for more booth space and featured the Gone in 60 Seconds Contest inside the main expo hall. John James and Amy Calahan were guest judges and also participated in a panel discussion.

• In 2015, over 200 businesses received education services through the Chamber University programs which included Chamber University, Sunrise Seminar Series, and the Spanish Seminar Series.

• The Small Business Toolkit on RogersLowell.com continued to be a success in 2015 as a resource for area businesses seeking information for issues such as HR, financing options, and taxes.

**Encourage Business Recruitment and Expansion**

- In 2015, Chamber staff worked with AEDC and the Rogers City Council to allow four (4) local businesses, who are expanding, to get business incentives in 2015. The four (4) expansions will result in over 200 new jobs in the city and over $2 million in new capital investment.

- In 2015, Chamber staff members assisted over 300 inquiries regarding new business start-ups, franchisees and existing businesses, offering information, advice and resources on setting up a small business, networking opportunities, marketing options, planning and zoning.

- Three (3) new retail centers are currently under construction or have opened around Rogers. Plans are being made for even more development along Pauline Whitaker Parkway and Pleasant Crossing.

- Parkside Public, Foster’s Pint and Plate, Roma Italian Grille, Deluxe Burger, Gisannno’s Deep Dish Pizza, Whataburger, Pei Wei, Hammon-tree’s, and Moe’s Southwest Grill were some of the restaurants that opened in 2015.

- Staff conducted 204 Business Retention and Expansion (BREs) surveys with area businesses in 2015. Of these, over 52 were conducted with minority owned businesses.

- Staff continued to use and maintain current databases and software to track BRE survey results in an effort to proactively help meet the needs of large industries in the area.

- The Downtown Master Plan was revealed in 2015.

- Several downtown buildings have been purchased and are being renovated for new commercial tenants.

**TIMELINE: April 2015**

**April 13:** New data released by the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics put Northwest Arkansas in the 30 top job-growth regions among the nation’s 381 largest metropolitan areas.

**April 21:** Thanks to a new partnership between the Rogers-Lowell Area Chamber of Commerce and the Northwest Arkansas Human Resources Association (NOARK), attendees began receiving continuing education credit hours by attending Chamber University seminars. The first seminar to offer credits was the April 21 “Are You Ready to Export?”.

**April 23:** The Rogers-Lowell Area Chamber of Commerce hosted a K2J Connect event with the purpose of bringing together area educators and industries to talk about workforce needs and development.

**April 23-26:** The Walmart FLW Tour returned to Beaver Lake with an estimated economic impact to the local economy of a half a million dollars. FLW is, without question, the purveyor of America’s largest and most prestigious fishing tournaments.
MINORITY BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT

The minority Business Development Division supports small minority owned businesses and entrepreneurs with programs, assistance and resources to start, grow or expand their businesses through education, networking, community involvement and outreach. The Division strives to make Rogers-Lowell a place with great opportunities for all in a diverse economic climate.

Minority Business Development Highlights

- In 2015, a total of 58 minority businesses joined the Chamber, representing 28 percent of total new businesses joined in 2015.
- A total of 268 minorities participated in the Chamber’s networking events in 2015 helping them to become more comfortable in growing their business through networking.
- At the end of 2015, the division had six (6) participants in the Minority Business Mentorship Program; these entrepreneurs received professional advice from experienced mentors.
- The Spanish Seminar Series had excellent participation in 2015. The first Spanish Language seminar was March 18 with 34 in attendance.
- How to Obtain Government Certifications for Women, Disabled Veterans and Minority-Owned Businesses (taught in partnership with the ASBTDC) program was held on June 18 with 30 attending.
- The Minority Task Force worked hard in 2015 to provide mentors and role models to the Rogers Public Schools.
- In 2015, a total of 56 people were provided assistance through available Chamber resources or by referring them to strategic partners for advice on how to start or grow their business.
- A total of 132 minority business owners and entrepreneurs seeking assistance were helped in 2015 with resources and information on starting and running a successful business in Northwest Arkansas.

Minority Community Outreach

Rogers Police Department (RPD) – In 2015, Open forum meetings continued between the Minority Community and the Rogers Police Department (RPD). The first meeting of the year was held on April 23. It was decided to host one (1) every quarter. Staff also facilitated private meetings between the RPD and small business owners in Rogers.

The division helped the new EngageNWA initiative launch in 2015. Activity included conducting five (5) community forums with EngageNWA partners and leaders in the community and five (5) forums with the community at large. These forums helped to understand the needs of the community and areas of interest for EngageNWA. Created four (4) subcommittees: Communications, Education & Leadership Training, Welcoming & Orientation, and Policy Advocacy. A visioning process started with members of each subcommittee to develop objectives and strategic action plans for each work group.

In 2015

268 MINORITIES Participated in the Chamber’s 2015 NETWORKING EVENTS

May 29:
The annual Chamber Picnic was a huge success as Chamber members, volunteers, committee members, board members and special friends gathered in Lowell for the Chamber to show its gratitude to them.

May 2:
Residents of Northwest Arkansas celebrated alongside federal, state and local officials as the ribbon was cut shortly after noon to mark the official opening of the Razorback Greenway, a 36-mile paved multi-use trail extending from Bella Vista to the south side of Fayetteville.

May 2:
Hundreds of anglers participated in the 2015 Rogers-Lowell Area Chamber of Commerce’s 24th Annual Bradford Marine & ATV Buddy Bass Tournament on Beaver Lake. The winning team from Everett Chevrolet had a total catch weight of 17.93 pounds.
COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

The Community Development Division creates and supports innovative leadership and educational programs that impact and enhance the quality of life in Rogers, Lowell and the region by improving lifestyles and amenities enjoyed by residents as well as newcomers and visitors.

Develop Dynamic Future Leaders

Leadership Benton County (LBC) | Leadership Benton County is a regional leadership program coordinated by the Rogers-Lowell Area Chamber of Commerce, Bentonville/Bella Vista Chamber of Commerce and the Siloam Springs Chamber of Commerce. The program promotes and develops dynamic leaders for Benton County. LBC unites a diverse group of people, exposes and educates them while promoting a regional view of the area. It provides opportunities to learn, enhance and apply leadership skills. LBC is also a forum to offer solutions and alternatives to community needs and concerns.

A total of 35 class members were provided with leadership skills training and an introduction to the community through the Leadership Benton County program in 2015 - LBC Class 13.

The 2015/16 LBC Class 14 was announced in the fall of 2015. There are 40 participants. Through December 2015, six sessions were held including orientation, opening retreat, human services, education, healthcare and the leadership workshop.

Arvest First Leadership | Staff and volunteers also coordinate leadership development activities for high school students within the Rogers School District as part of the Arvest First Leadership program. Students graduate from the program each year and become more active and knowledgeable about their community. The 2014/15 Arvest First Leadership class held the State Government/Little Rock exploration tour in February. Students were able to learn about the legislative process, meet with elected officials, tour the Clinton Library and tour Central High School. The March session focused on personal finance and responsibility. On April 1 graduation was held with 17 students graduating.

The 2015/16 Arvest First Leadership class was selected in August. Twenty students accepted and it kicked off with an Orientation Session (parents and students) September 9. The Opening Retreat was held September 24 and 26. Students reviewed their DiSC profiles, and enjoyed team building activities. In October students explored the non-profit and social services community, and in November the students were taken on a tour of three (3) Arkansas colleges.

Support Education

- For 39 years, the Rogers-Lowell Area Chamber of Commerce Education Committee has honored outstanding high school students during its annual Academics Awards Ceremonies. The Academic Awards program is intended to improve the level of preparation for high school graduates entering the workforce or higher education. A total of 840 high school students at Rogers Heritage High School, Rogers High School, and Rogers New Technology High School received a 2015 Academic Award for maintaining a 3.5 GPA. The number of students receiving Academic Awards increased by over five (5) percent from 2014 to 2015.

- The Rogers-Lowell Area Chamber of Commerce Education Committee has been honoring Rogers Public School Educators for their excellence in education for over 30 years. Educators are nominated from each school for their skills and dedication to improving education in the community. Three standout teachers are selected Educator of the Year.

- The 2014-15 Educators of the Year ceremony was attended by family, friends, co-workers and students to congratulate them on a job well done in April and May. Natalie Olivieri, Rogers High School, was named High School Educator of the Year. Cheri Gideon, Elmwood Middle School, was named Middle School Educator of the Year. Mandi King, Bonnie Grimes Elementary School, was named Elementary Educator of the Year. This year, the Committee introduced a new award to honor Virginia Mocivnik. The award was presented on May 21 to celebrate an educator exhibiting outstanding community service outside of the classroom. Dawna Rice from Northside Elementary School won the award.

- The Community-based Scholarship Program, awards 15 percent of Rogers Public Schools graduates with scholarships to further their education. The scholarship program awarded 188 students in the amount of $362,950. This is with the support of 73 donors.

- A total of 75 Chamber businesses helped welcome between 1,000 local educators back to school at the Annual Teacher Appreciation Breakfast and Education Fair in August.

- Hosted the tenth annual Chamber Night Reception for the Rogers Board of Education in October with over 75 guests in attendance.

June 1:
In a report released in April by the Bureau of Labor Statistics, Benton County topped all other counties in the nation for average wage growth over a one year period.

June 18:
The Walton College Arkansas Small Business and Technology Development Center along with event co-sponsors presented “How to Obtain Government Certifications for Women, Disabled Veteran and Minority-Owned Businesses”

June 19-21:
The Poultry Festival annual conference was held in Rogers and attracted over 5,000 attendees from all over the nation to Northwest Arkansas.

June 22-28:
The Walmart NW Arkansas Championship presented by P&G returned to Pinnacle Country Club bringing the world's best LPGA golfers to Rogers.

TIMELINE: June 2015
The Membership Services Division attracts new members while providing existing members with the programs, information and services needed to enhance their competitive edge in the marketplace. Membership Services staff will provide over-the-top customer service for the membership of the Rogers-Lowell Area Chamber of Commerce by providing valuable services and programming which yields a return on their investment. We will impact our members by offering business building events and educational opportunities to support local businesses.

**Attract New Members and Event Sponsors**
- During 2015, the entire Chamber staff supported the profitability of the Chamber by selling $613,000 in sponsorships and advertising for 125 events and programs.
- Chamber staff sold 257 new memberships, valued at $56,226, by aggressively marketing the value of Chamber membership to the business community. The Chamber ended 2015 with 2,112 member businesses.

**Promote the Value of Chamber Membership**
- Coordinated business events for members and the community.

---

**HOSTED 89 RIBBON CUTTING CEREMONIES IN 2015**

- The historic Lane Hotel in Downtown Rogers was purchased by the Walton family doing business as KLS Leasing. The new owners reportedly paid $1.6 million for the multi-story brick building located on the corner of East Poplar St. and 2nd St. in Downtown Rogers.
- The 50th Annual Daisy National BB Gun Championship Match was held in Rogers at the John Q. Hammons Convention Center. More than 1,000 attendees were on hand to participate and watch the 5-meter BB gun match.
- The Rogers-Lowell Area Chamber of Commerce hosted a business community forum to help member businesses learn more about the open carry of firearms issue in Benton County.

---

**TIMELINE: July 2015**

July 3:
- The NWA Business Expo was held Tuesday, August 11, 2015. This was a great event for the Chamber and the community with over 600 in attendance for the Expo and 130 vendors exhibiting.
- The Chamber welcomed close to 1,000 local educators back to school at the Annual Teacher Appreciation Breakfast and Education Fair at Heritage High School in August.
- The Chamber entertained almost 250 players at the spring and fall golf tournaments, which provided golfers a relaxed environment for business networking.

July 3-6:
- The 24th Annual Bradford Marine & ATV Buddy Bass Tournament Kick Off Dinner was held on Friday, May 1 at Bradford Marine & ATV in Springdale with over 200 people in attendance. The 24th Annual Bradford Marine Buddy Bass Tournament was held at Beaver Lake on Saturday, May 2. The Youth Fishing Tournament had 50 kids in attendance. The Buddy Bass tournament had over 600 fishermen.
- The Rogers-Lowell Area Chamber of Commerce hosted a business community forum to help member businesses learn more about the open carry of firearms issue in Benton County.
TIMELINE: August 2015

**Snapshot**

In 2015, the **Top 3 Reasons** to Join the Chamber:

1) Community Involvement + Increasing Visibility
2) Networking + New Business Contacts
3) Members Only Benefits + Special Offers & Services

**Meet and Exceed Member Needs and Expectations**

This results in increasing member retention rates, which will help the Chamber to meet its overall mission to “grow business, build community” in the Rogers-Lowell area and region.

- In 2014 the division contacted 1,612 members to verify profile information and thank them for their support. A total of 45 percent of the members contacted for retention needed contact information updated.
- Contacted 113 Member Orientation attendees to answer questions about their membership. Members appreciate this follow up and assistance with their questions.
- Sent 421 reminders to members to log on to the Members Only section of the website and verify their profile information and referral report. There has been a steady increase in members logging in to the Members Only section and viewing referral reports.
  - Member Relations Manager visited 87 members to show appreciation for their membership and encourage their involvement. Members appreciate this over-the-top customer service.
  - Added 13,350 keywords and common misspelled words to member profile listings for better search results and to increase referral opportunities.

**NEW MEMBERS BY CITY**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>City</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rogers</td>
<td>42%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bentonville</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fayetteville</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lowell</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Springdale</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In 2015, the **Top 3 Reasons** to Join the Chamber: 1) Community Involvement + Increasing Visibility 2) Networking + New Business Contacts 3) Members Only Benefits + Special Offers & Services

A total of **48 PERCENT** of the businesses who joined January 1 through December 31, 2015 are located in Rogers and Lowell. A total of **70 PERCENT** of these new member businesses are located in Benton County.

**NEW MEMBERS SOLD DURING 2015**

- **2,112** Members which includes **250** New Memberships

**TOP 3 REASONS TO JOIN THE CHAMBER**

1) Community Involvement + Increasing Visibility
2) Networking + New Business Contacts
3) Members Only Benefits + Special Offers & Services

**AUGUST 1-2:** The Northwest Arkansas Emerging Leaders kicked off the inaugural Rogers Cycling Festival in Rogers featuring an expanded menu of six cycling events. There were opportunities for all skill levels and events for road cyclists and mountain bike enthusiasts.

**AUGUST 3:** Arkansas is one of the friendliest places on Earth and is known as the “Natural State” due to the vast abundance of natural beauty, gorgeous lakes and streams, and interesting wildlife. HomeSnacks.net ranked their 10 best places to live in Arkansas based on factors like education, low crime rates, and high incomes. Rogers ranked #2.

**AUGUST 14:** The education committee of the Rogers-Lowell Area Chamber of Commerce hosted its annual Teacher Education Fair and Appreciation Breakfast at Rogers Heritage High School. Chamber member businesses helped to welcome over 1,000 educators back to school.
GOVERNMENT AFFAIRS

The Government Affairs Division serves as the link between Chamber members and local, state and federal government. In this role, the Chamber advocates for pro-business and quality-of-life issues of importance to Northwest Arkansas. The Division also provides outreach by keeping its members informed on legislation and public policy that might have an impact on business.

Enhancing the Chamber’s Capacity to Effectively Influence Local, State and Federal Legislation

- Division Staff worked with 3rd District Caucus members on issues as they came up in 2015 and with the Chairman of the 3rd District Caucus to schedule program speakers for breakfasts held in the Capitol during the Legislative Session.
- Staff played an instrumental role in initial meetings on SJR16 with the Governor’s Office, AEDC, and the State Chamber. Staff worked with Friday Firm lawyers on the drafting of SJR16 and played a strategic role guiding the measure through the legislative and constitutional amendment committee process in 2015. Staff continues to monitor events affecting SJR16 and work with the State Chamber and others as the 2016 General Election approaches.
- Staff worked with legislators from Benton County on their needs as the primary election approaches, supplying incumbents with district maps, notification of upcoming Chamber events, and advising on issues when consulted by legislators.
- Staff attended legislative committee meetings in Little Rock and around the state.
- Staff attended events sponsored for the Governor and the Speaker of the House which were held in both Little Rock and Northwest Arkansas.
- Senator David Sanders, Chair of the Administrative Rules and Regulations Sub-committee, addressed the October 16 Government Affairs committee.
- During 2015, staff attended meetings in Little Rock of the General Assembly, Arkansas Legislative Council, the Administrative Rules and Regulations Sub-committee, the Health Task Force and other committees as needed.
- Staff also attended interim Legislative Committee meetings that were scheduled across the state throughout the year.

Establishing Regionalism to Leverage Economic Development for Coordinated Marketing, Messaging and Advocacy Efforts

- Staff worked with other chambers in Northwest Arkansas, the leadership of the State Chamber, the Arkansas Economic Developers Association, and chambers across the state to promote the passage of SJR16.
- Staff attended several meetings throughout 2015 in Little Rock with the State Chamber on a host of issues.
- Staff addressed a meeting of the Metropolitan Economic Developers in Little Rock providing legislative status of SJR16.
- Staff attended and addressed the meeting of the Arkansas Economic Developers in Fayetteville and spoke about the importance of SJR16 passage.
- Staff attended all weekly State Chamber lunches held during the legislative session.
- Staff met with the Directors and staff of the Arkansas Department of Heritage, the Department of Parks and Tourism, and the Governor’s Staff to identify funding options for revitalization of the War Eagle Bridge.
- Staff began preliminary meetings with the Northwest Arkansas Council in 2015 to discuss legislative priorities for 2016.
- Staff identified a couple of areas that need to be included in the Council’s legislative package for the 2017 regular legislative session.

Advocating for Pro-business Public Policy and Issues

- Staff attended relevant legislative committee meetings held in Little Rock and around the state during 2015.
- Staff had a greater than 75 percent attendance rate during the legislative session.
- Staff started work in 2015 with the Northwest Arkansas Council to begin the process for the next Fiscal Session and the upcoming Primary and General Elections.
- Staff advocated and continues to do so for the passage of SJR16 on the state level.
- Staff advocated with the delegation for passage of new federal highway funding that would be part of an overall Federal Transportation Bill.
- Presentations on the proposed rules on classifications for overtime compensation by the Department of Labor were conducted for the Government Affairs Committee in August. The meeting encouraged and provided membership with information on the issue so that they could provide comments to the Federal Register.
- Staff attended State Chamber’s Congressional Reception in Little Rock.
- Staff maintained regular contact with congressional staff through personal relationships and planned events throughout 2015.
- Staff also worked to help secure the appearance of Senator John Boozman and other members of the congressional delegation at an announcement in Lowell for Central Research.
- Staff worked with the delegation staff to attend the recent expansion announcement for J.B. Hunt in Lowell.
- Staff attended the Regional Government Affairs Conference sponsored by the U.S. Chamber of Commerce where information and ideas on how to maximize the effectiveness of a Government Affairs website were discussed.
- Staff started work on plans to update website for the 2016 Primary Election season.

Pursuing Transportation Infrastructure Funding

- Staff provided support to the Regional Mobility Authority as needed during 2015.
- Staff secured the Director of the Highway Depart-

September 11: The RoArk Group (pictured) won First Place at the Rogers-Lowell Area Chamber of Commerce 2015 Fall Golf Tournament held September 11 at the Lost Springs Golf & Athletic Club.

September 14: Northwest Arkansas apartment vacancy rate hits 11-year low. The semi-annual Skyline Report, funded by Arvest Bank, was released showing that vacancy rates across Northwest Arkansas overall fell to 2.3 percent in the first half of 2015.

September 24: The Rogers-Lowell Area Chamber of Commerce celebrated Hispanic Heritage month at the Community Diversity Celebration hosted by Arvest Bank at Taqueria Vega in Rogers.

September 29: The U.S. Department of Education announced that St. Vincent de Paul Catholic School (SWIP) of Rogers received the highest honor a K-12 school can receive in education—the U.S. Department of Education Blue Ribbon Award as an Exemplary High-Performing School.

TIMELINE: September 2015
ment for an address to the Government Affairs Committee in February, 2016.
- Staff explored the possibilities of a Washington trip for a minimum of 10 chamber members in June 2016 to coincide with the U.S. Chamber of Commerce’s Small Business Summit.

Helping Chamber Members Understand and Navigate the Governmental Process
- The division researched social media platforms for opportunities to enhance content and grow followers in 2016.
- Staff posted to existing social media platforms monthly during 2015.
- Staff started work with the Marketing Communications division to develop new branding, multimedia content partnerships, a new social media presence, and a micro-site to increase reach and Government Affairs presence in 2016.
- The Government Affairs meetings in 2015 hosted legislators, state agency directors, the Director of the State Chamber, and the Regional Director of the U.S. Chamber.
- Staff started work with the NWA Emerging Leaders Political and Government Affairs Team to explore possible voter registration drive for the minority community that will take place in time for voting in the 2016 General Election.
- Staff assisted membership with questions about specific issues and helped facilitate contact with newly elected legislators throughout 2015.
- 2015 Chamber Night receptions held in Lowell and Rogers, the Northwest Arkansas Chambers Luncheon and Night Out events in Little Rock for the legislature were all a success. Staff started work with the mayors and city councils for planning 2016 Chamber Night events.

2015 Accomplishments
Generate overnight visitors that will produce room nights for Rogers hotels and business for our attractions, restaurants, and retailers; and focus sales efforts on new and repeat multi-hotel business that utilizes convention center space.
- Visit Rogers generated a total of 57 groups meeting in Rogers in 2015 resulting in 18,470 room nights and 56,545 attendees.
- The Rogers two (2) percent hotel tax was up 12 percent in 2015 versus a goal of four (4) percent.

In 2015, Visit Rogers Generated
57 GROUPS MEETING
in Rogers which resulted in
18,470 ROOM NIGHTS
&
56,545 ATTENDEES

Visit Rogers’ mission is to positively impact the Rogers economy through the promotion of the area as a retail, business and convention destination.

The Rogers Advertising & Promotion Commission collects a two (2) percent hotel tax on rooms sold in the city limits of Rogers. This tax funds Visit Rogers, which promotes Rogers as a destination to the leisure, meetings and conventions, sports, and group tour markets.

Market Rogers and Northwest Arkansas as a premiere destination for meetings, conventions and sporting events.
- In 2015, $203,325 was spent on marketing programs including online, print and broadcast ads in various media, website ads, directory listings, e-newsletters and destination videos promoting Rogers as a meetings, sports and leisure destination.
- Visit Rogers utilized social media outlets during 2015 which resulted in Facebook “Likes” being up five (5) percent, Twitter “followers” up 52 percent, Pinterest “followers” up 27 percent, and Instagram “followers” up 154 percent. Twenty postings were made to the blog in 2015.
- Staff attended numerous trade shows during the year to promote Rogers as a convention and sports destination.

The Rogers 2% Hotel Tax was up 12 PERCENT versus a goal of 4%

Meet and exceed visitor needs and expectations with the result of enhancing visitor experience; and encourage repeat visits to Rogers and Northwest Arkansas by offering exclusive services such as on-line housing and registration, welcome banners and posters, and incentive funding.
- Visit Rogers provided services for 33 groups, making an impression on 48,945 individuals attending conferences, meetings, events and tournaments in Rogers.
- The Rogers Advertising & Promotion Commission awarded $133,740 of incentive funding to groups in 2015, resulting in approximately 9,344 room nights for Rogers hotels.

October 7:
The 2015 Northwest Arkansas Fall Job Fair was presented by WorkSource NTS and Glad Manufacturing and hosted by the Rogers-Lowell Area Chamber of Commerce at the Frisco Station Mall in Rogers.

October 13:
Ten top executives from a variety of industries were chosen by the Northwest Arkansas Business Journal to receive recognition through its inaugural C-Suite Awards at a luncheon in downtown Bentonville. Raymond Burns, President/CEO of the Chamber was one of the honorees.

October 15:
Highlights from the Annual Board Planning Retreat included a Northwest Arkansas Regional Update and Regional Strategic Plan presentation from the Northwest Arkansas Council and reviews of VISION 2025 and VISION 2030 Community Strategic Plans from the Chamber.

October 20:
The 9th annual Chamber Night reception was held during the Rogers School Board of Education meeting. Chamber members had the opportunity to learn more about our schools and confirm our business community’s support for elected and school officials.
**NWA EMERGING LEADERS**

**Mission:** Northwest Arkansas Emerging Leaders (NWAEL) exists to engage and connect Northwest Arkansas young professionals through personal and professional development experiences.

The Northwest Arkansas Emerging Leaders (NWAEL) is an initiative of the Rogers-Lowell Area Chamber of Commerce. It consists of informative programs and teams formed to collectively address issues and projects of relevance to Northwest Arkansas.

During 2015, NWAEL membership increased over 22 percent as the total number of members topped 667. NWAEL continues to connect individuals with networking, service projects and professional development opportunities that strengthen employee retention in Northwest Arkansas.

- **Four NWAEL Member Orientations** were held with a total of 82 attendees. The orientation allows members to network and hear about the various workgroups.
- **NWAEL | Connect** is an informal event providing members and potential members the opportunity to connect with others, connect with the organization and connect with Northwest Arkansas in between the quarterly Member Orientation events. The first event of 2015 was a happy hour on February 11 with 40 people attending. On March 9, NWAEL hosted a Trivia Night and Mixer with 50 participants. A March Happy Hour was held at The Grove with 35 attending. The May event was a Wine Pairing Social at Sassafras Vineyard and had 119 people in attendance. The June event was a Social Beer Run with 106 people in attendance. The July event was a Healthy Happy Hour held on July 14 with 15 people in attendance. The August event was held in Fayetteville at Powerhouse in partnership with the Tyson Young Professionals and 55 people attended. The September event was held at Core Brewery in Springdale and benefitted the NWA Food Bank. A total of 29 attended this event. October brought craft beer and trivia to Bike Rack Brewing Co. in Bentonville with 36 attending. In November, a happy hour was held at Levi’s Gastrolounge in Rogers with 28 people attending. The December social was held at Black Apple Crossing in Springdale.
- **NWAEL continues to nurture strategic partnerships with the Walmart and Sam’s Club Professional Advisory Council (The Network), Crystal Bridges ArtInFusion and Tyson Young Professionals to enhance programming and grow the membership base. A newly formed partner in 2015 was the J.B. Hunt Grow.**
- **Kicking Hunger** is a kickball tournament organized in partnership with Tyson Young Professionals, the Walmart and Sam’s Club Professional Advisory Council (The Network), and J.B. Hunt Grow. It benefits the NWA Food Bank. The tournament was held June 20 at the Rogers Regional Sports Park with 10 teams participating. This event was developed to raise awareness and money for hunger in NWA while connecting area young professionals. The tournament raised $2,500 for the NWA Food Bank.
- In an effort to grow membership and make a deeper impact in Northwest Arkansas, the NWAEL board has developed a sponsorship program to build partners within the community.

**INCREASED OVER 22% TOPPING 667 MEMBERS**

**NWAEL members make an impact in the following workgroups:**

- **Sustainability Workgroup** – This workgroup is focused on increasing sustainability in Northwest Arkansas and diverting recyclable material out of the landfill.
- **Legacy Workgroup** – This workgroup develops a leadership pool and links ready, willing and able emerging talent to organizations, public and private boards and commissions and areas of leadership needed to benefit the community.
- **Greenways and Trails Workgroup** – This workgroup links parks, trails and people; to provide, protect, develop and maintain parks, greenways and trails throughout the community; and to promote public awareness of the benefits of green space.
- **Community Enrichment Team** – Provides avenues for dialogue and education about community issues as well as opportunities to become engaged in projects that will enrich the region. The workgroup offers an avenue for members with project ideas that do not fit within existing workgroups an opportunity to use Community Enrichment as a platform for any project or program that could benefit the community.
- **Political and Government Affairs Team** – Non-partisan program intended to assess current political issues and opportunities; educate on political and government processes; and engage and encourage participation in local, state and federal government.
2015 Highlights
- Lunch with a Leader provides NWAEL members access to the region’s top leadership and facilitates a casual, informal discussion. The first program in 2015 was February 20 and featured Sam Sirard, President and CEO of First Bank Corp. The 2nd Quarter program was held May 29 and featured Dr. John James, Founder of Accumen Brands. The December 4 event featured Amy Callahan. All events sold out.
- NWAEL held two Board Service Certification seminars in 2015 with a total of 74 participants.
- This program has a great history and reputation, and focuses on four (4) key areas of board service: commitments and expectations; legal and ethical considerations; and, finance and fundraising.
- Programs provide members the opportunity to receive personal or professional development experiences and are planned by the workgroups. The first program was held March 19 and hosted by the Greenways and Trails Workgroup. It featured Misty Murphy, NWA Trails Coordinator, and had 22 members in attendance. The second program, hosted by the Sustainability Team, was a collaborative effort with the student sustainability club at the University of Arkansas September 17. The third program on October 30 featured Mike Malone, President/CEO of the Northwest Arkansas Council.
- The Community Enrichment Team organizes opportunities for members at large to work together in the community through volunteering for various service projects. The first service project of the year was held March 24 in partnership with The Jones Center. Volunteers were responsible for the kids area over an eight (8) hour period. Twelve members participated in this Spring Service Project. The Summer Service Project had eight (8) members participate and was held June 6 in conjunction with the NWA International Festival hosted by the Northwest Arkansas Community College this year. Planning for future projects is underway.
- On May 1 the Sustainability Workgroup partnered with the Bentonville First Friday event on the square to reduce the amount of waste the event produced. A total of 25 volunteers worked during the nine hour event to sort garbage on the spot and spread the word about the importance of recycling with festival goers. Four large bags of compost and a trailer full of recyclables were collected and diverted from the landfill. The Sustainability Team also solicited volunteers for their annual event, the Boys and Girls Club of Benton County Golf Tournament. Through approximately 30 volunteers, the Sustainability Team works each year to make the golf tournament a near-zero waste event. The tournament had to be cancelled due to weather.
- An ad hoc committee of the Greenways and Trails Team worked hard to develop the inaugural Rogers Cycling Festival. This festival was held August 1-2 in Downtown Rogers to promote access to cycling and support the Community Bike Program. Through many sponsorships and a generous grant from the Walton Family Foundation, the committee raised approximately $13,000 that will go to benefit two cycling clubs, the Rogers Community Bike Program and Pedal It Forward NWA. The festival utilized 40 volunteers over the two-day event and had 297 individuals participating in 360 event registrations.
- Ready to Run | A Political Candidate Training series was coordinated by the Political and Government Affairs Team. The series was free to attend and open to anyone interested in running for a political office. 2015 dates were June 24, July 22, August 26, and September 23. Topics included Running 101, Finance and Ethics, Media and Marketing, and Ready to Run, respectively. Morrill Harris, former Chief of Staff for Governor Mike Beebe (and 16 years of service in the Arkansas Senate) was the June 24 speaker. Twenty-five attended. The July 22 event featured Representative Jana Della Rosa and Mica Strother with 26 people in attendance. Rex Nelson, Director of Corporate Communications for Simmons Bank was the guest at the August 26 session. Sixteen attended. The final session was held September 23 and featured David Matthews.
- On August 1, 2015 the Community Enrichment Team hosted the first #popUPnwa event. This event was developed through a partnership with the Northwest Arkansas Chapter of the American Institute of Architects to demonstrate the potential of Downtown Rogers. The living demonstration worked to activate an underutilized space in the Downtown area through new lighting, interactive displays, food trucks, a community garden and temporary landscaping.
- On November 14, the 2015 Greenways and Trails team partnered with Pedal It Forward NWA to give bicycles to 37 students at Mathias Elementary School in Rogers. Bell donated helmets and Two Men and a Truck donated transportation.