

For Immediate Release

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Three Cities To Be Designated an “Alabama Community of Excellence”

Three Alabama communities, Jasper, Oneonta and Spanish Fort will be designated as an “Alabama Community of Excellence” at the Opening Session of the Alabama League of Municipalities Annual Convention to be held in Birmingham, AL on May 20, 2017. The Mayor’s and ACE Local Coordinators of each community will be recognized and receive a plaque for their achievements. The communities have successfully completed the Alabama Communities of Excellence (ACE) comprehensive three-phase approach to economic and community development. ACE is a 501(c)(3) organization that provides technical assistance to select communities with populations ranging from 2,000 to 18,000 that helps to strengthen the communities’ long-term economic success.

Communities with eligible populations must complete a competitive application process in order to be considered for the ACE program. The two main criteria used in selecting ACE participants are 1) the level of local commitment to the ACE program, and 2) the community’s capacity to support the ACE program. In addition to celebrating Jasper, Oneonta and Spanish Forts’ graduation at the League’s Opening Session on May 20th, ACE will also announce the towns selected to participate in the 2017 incoming class. ACE strives to guarantee widespread geographic coverage across Alabama. The graduation of these three cities brings the total number of Alabama communities that have achieved designation as Alabama Communities of Excellence to 35. These communities include: Alexander City, Arab, Atmore, Brewton, Childersburg, Demopolis, Elba, Eufaula, Evergreen, Fairhope, Fayette, Foley, Graysville, Guin, Gulf Shores, Guntersville, Haleyville, Hartselle, Headland, Heflin, Helena, Jackson, Jacksonville, Jasper, Leeds, Livingston, Millbrook, Monroeville, Montevallo, Oneonta, Rainsville, Saraland, Spanish Fort, Thomasville, and Valley. Other communities are currently in the process of working through the program.

The ACE program would not be possible without the funding, hard work and participation of the 14 ACE Partner organizations. Throughout each of the three phases, ACE Partners use their collective expertise to work with the communities to assist them in positively achieving their unique goals. The partners range from state agencies and associations to banks, utilities, universities and others – to foster unique community development programs to assist smaller towns to plan, grow and prosper.

The ACE Partner organizations include: Alabama Department of Commerce; Alabama Department of Economic and Community Affairs; Alabama League of Municipalities; Alabama Mountain Lakes Tourist Association, Alabama Municipal Electric Authority; Alabama Power Company; Alabama Small Business Development Center Network; Auburn University – Government and Economic Development Institute; Goodwyn, Mills and Cawood, Inc.;

PowerSouth Energy Cooperative; Regions Bank; Southeast Alabama Gas District; The University of Alabama Center for Economic Development and The University of West Alabama.

ACE's three-phase approach to community development includes: Phase I - the assessment phase; Phase II - the Leadership Development and Strategic Planning phase; and Phase III – implementation of the Strategic Plan and Comprehensive Planning segment. ACE principles include the active involvement by community stakeholders across a broad demographic spectrum coupled with development of local leaders and leadership capacity and an emphasis on the importance of developing and implementing short- and long-term plans to further the realization of the municipality's vision.

Visit the ACE website: www.alabamacommunitiesofexcellence.org for additional information on the program.