

For Immediate Release

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**ACE Designates Three Communities as an “Alabama Community of Excellence”
and Announces the 2017 Incoming Class**

**JASPER, ONEONTA, SPANISH FORT, BAY MINETTE, BOAZ, CENTER POINT, CHELSEA,
HANCEVILLE AND TALLASSEE**

Three Alabama communities, Jasper, Oneonta and Spanish Fort earned the designation of an “Alabama Community of Excellence” Saturday, May 20, 2017 at the Opening Session of the Alabama League of Municipalities Annual Convention, held in Birmingham, AL. Mayors and community representatives were recognized and received a plaque and a sign to be displayed in a prominent location within their respective communities. The three communities successfully completed the Alabama Communities of Excellence (ACE) comprehensive three-phase approach to economic and community development.

In addition to celebrating Jasper, Oneonta and Spanish Fort in earning the prestigious ACE designation, ACE announced that the following six communities were selected to participate in the 2017 incoming class: **Bay Minette, Boaz, Center Point, Chelsea, Hanceville, and Tallassee**. These communities will begin the ACE process this summer. Community leaders are provided with training and workshops to develop vision and mission statements, implementation strategies and a sustainable leadership development program. ACE will assign each community with a team of experts from the ACE Associates Council that will guide them with an implementation strategy as they work through the program.

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. This year marks 15 years of ACE providing the resources and knowledge for small communities across the state to focus on the importance of planning, leadership development and broad-based community engagement.

Communities with eligible populations 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. 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 currently in the process of working through the ACE program include: **Abbeville, Bay Minette, Boaz, Center Point, Chelsea, Geneva, Hanceville, Red Bay, and Tallassee**.

The ACE program would not be possible without the funding, hard work, and participation of its many valued ACE Partner and Associate organizations. Throughout each of the three phases, these supporting organizations use their collective expertise to work with the communities to assist them in positively achieving their unique goals. These partnerships 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 providing funding in 2017 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 Gas; The University of Alabama Center for Economic Development and The University of West Alabama.** ACE also is receiving grant funding from the **Appalachian Regional Commission.**

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.

Join ACE on July 14 as we bring all of our ACE communities and members together for the third annual ACE Community Reunion held in Clanton, AL at the Alabama Power Clanton Conference Center.

Visit the ACE website: www.alabamacommunitiesofexcellence.org for additional information on the program and registration for the 2017 ACE Community Reunion.



Jasper Mayor David O'Mary; Sidney Hoover, ACE Executive Director; Oneonta Mayor Ross Norris and Spanish Fort Mayor Mike McMillan



2017 Incoming Class: Bay Minette Mayor Bob Wills; Sidney Hoover - ACE Executive Director; Tallassee Mayor John Hammock; Boaz Mayor David Dyar; Center Point Mayor Thomas Henderson; Chelsea Mayor Tony Picklesimer - Not Pictured: Hanceville Mayor Kenneth Nail