



## BEAUFORT, SC

REGIONAL CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

# ANNUAL REPORT 2015

**Amy Bowman, Amy Bowman State Farm Agency**

"Being a member of the Chamber helps leverage our business and keeps us informed on what's going on in our community."

**Edward Dukes, Lowcountry Real Estate**

"The Chamber is all about business, all about connecting local companies to each other and bringing in tourists and what we need to grow. I would recommend Chamber membership highly."

**Kendall Erickson, Robinson Grant & Co**

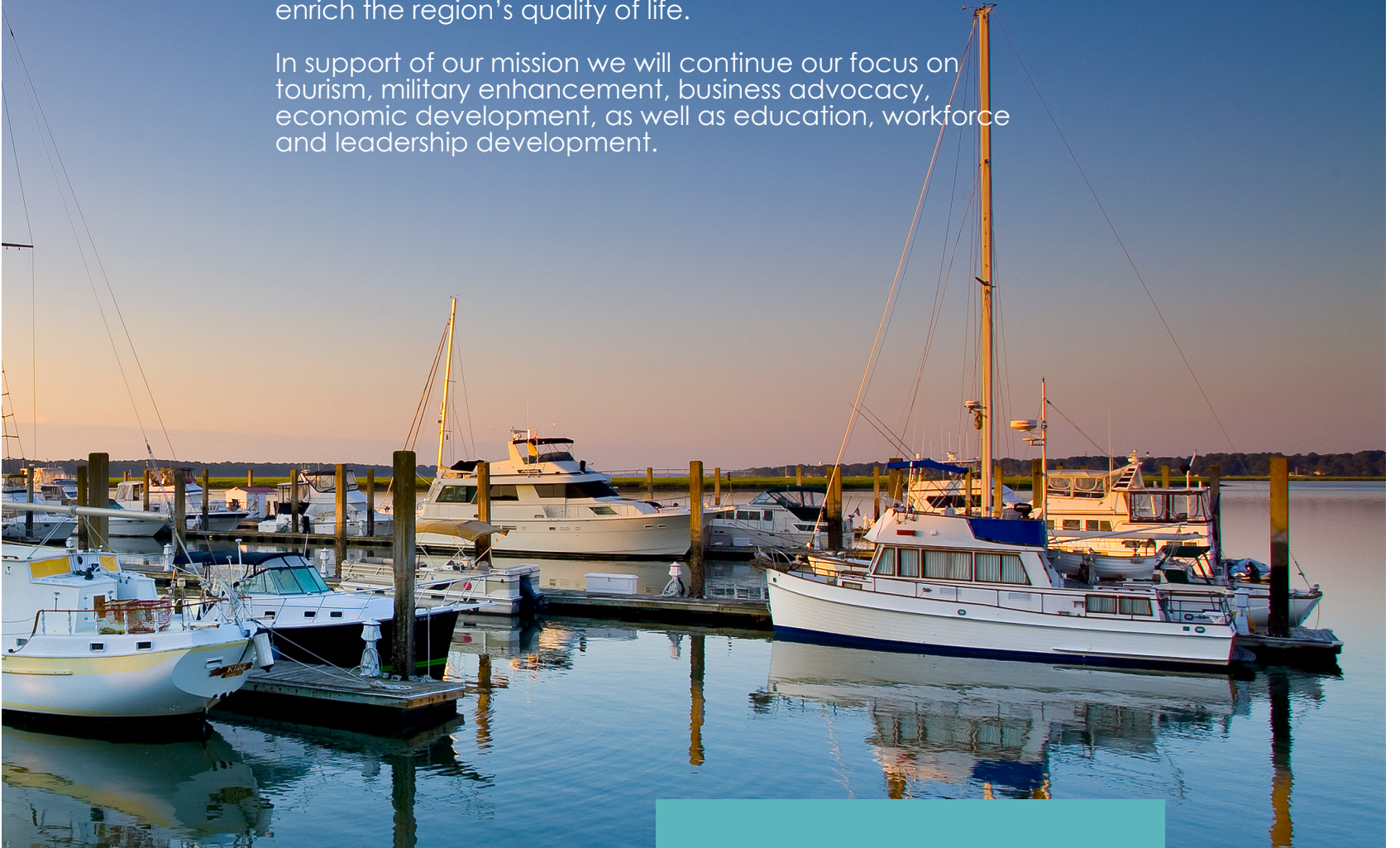
"To me, our Chamber membership boils down to the networking opportunities and the advocacy they provide. When I started with Robinson Grant in 1990, I largely built my portion of the businesses through relationships I developed through the Chamber of Commerce."

# The Role of the Beaufort Regional Chamber of Commerce

The Beaufort Regional Chamber of Commerce stands as the unified voice of the business community. Every day since 1892, we have been promoting, protecting and improving business.

Our mission is to manage and build capacity for continual community growth by advocating for a pro-business environment and building quality workforce in order to enrich the region's quality of life.

In support of our mission we will continue our focus on tourism, military enhancement, business advocacy, economic development, as well as education, workforce and leadership development.



**The Beaufort Regional Chamber of Commerce**  
**Vision:** "To be the most influential organization in the region creating the preferred community to invest, prosper and enjoy."



**BEAUFORT, SC**

REGIONAL CHAMBER OF COMMERCE



**M E C**

MILITARY ENHANCEMENT COMMITTEE



**BEAUFORT, SC**

HISTORIC DOWNTOWN WATERFRONT  
PORT ROYAL & SEA ISLANDS



## LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT

**Blakely T. Williams**  
**Chamber President & CEO**

Your Beaufort Regional Chamber of Commerce is committed to creating the preferred community to invest, prosper and enjoy. With your support we are moving forward, advancing the opportunities in our region for economic development successes, which in turn rises the tide for all of us. We are continuing to build upon the momentum from the past several years, and look forward to wonderful achievements in 2015 and beyond.

After years of hard work by many, Marine Corps Air Station Beaufort welcomed the first F-35B Joint Strike Fighters as part of VMFAT-501. This training squadron, the Marine Corps' only training center for the F-35B, is already working with American and British pilots.

This year your Chamber:

- Advocated for free parking in downtown Beaufort and a task force to study long-term parking options for the core commercial district
- Authored a Business Start Up Guide 101, a business process road map designed to help entrepreneurs starting a business save time and open faster
- Helped attain funding for the day dock project at our Downtown Marina
- Encouraged the deepening of Charleston Harbor
- Worked to promote the sale of the Port of Port Royal
- Urges state leaders for road and infrastructure investments
- Hosted Procurement Workshops to teach local businesses how to do business with the government
- Collaborated with Beaufort County School District, Beaufort County, and the City of Beaufort to get the Bailey Bill passed

We have great news and accolades to celebrate from our Tourism Division. This past year, Beaufort was named to Southern Living's list of "Small Towns We Love" – Beaufort was one of five small towns featured and was the cover of the May 2015 issue. TripAdvisor also named Hunting Island one of the "Top Beaches in America."

The Beaufort Regional Chamber of Commerce exists to support our local business community. Through our combined efforts, our voice is stronger and we are able to make a difference. I look forward to the opportunities ahead in 2015-2016, and assure you we will continue working hard every day to help our members and this region prosper.

**Thank you for your investment in the  
Chamber and your support of our community.**



**55,172**  
FACEBOOK  
LIKES ON  
VISIT BEAUFORT

# BEAUFORT, SC

## REGIONAL CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

**15**  
Grand openings and  
Ribbon  
Cuttings!

**4**  
Candidate  
Forums/Meet  
& Greets  
\*\*\*\*\*  
**40**  
People  
Attending  
New Member  
Receptions

**3** Awards of  
Excellence  
from the  
Association  
of Chamber  
of Commerce  
Executives

**125** Average Attendance  
Business After Hours  

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**3,000**  
people attended  
Chamber networking

  
**600** people  
attending  
**12** Coffee with  
Colleagues and  
Lunch & Learn  
events

Offshore Energy  
information session  
→ **250** ←  
in attendance

**42** Travel Writers  
pitched for  
Beaufort-Area  
Coverage

# CHAMBER STATISTICS

**SIX**  
BEAUFORT  
NETWORKING EVENTS

BEAUFORT  
**RESTAURANT**  
W E F K  
**3,500**  
plates served  
during  
Resturant Week  
  
**\$87,500**  
value of plates  
served during  
Resturant Week  
BEAUFORT  
**RESTAURANT**  
W E F K

**250**  
local, state  
chambers of  
commerce joined  
to urge Congress  
to fund the  
federal highway  
trust fund

**398**  
Tourism  
motorcoaches  
visiting Beaufort



**15,249**  
motorcoach  
passengers touring  
Beaufort

# Snapshot of Our Achievements and Good News 2014-2015

**\$4,214,785**  
ESTIMATED  
VALUE OF MEDIA  
COVERAGE

**144,989,731**  
ESTIMATED MEDIA  
IMPRESSIONS

**50 %**  
PERCENTAGE OF  
BEAUFORT  
AREA TOURISTS  
WITH MILITARY  
CONNECTION

**HUNTING ISLAND**  
TRIP ADVISOR'S  
"TOP BEACHES IN  
AMERICA"

**\$7.1 MILLION**  
MINIMUM ESTIMATE  
OF  
WATER FESTIVAL  
ANNUAL  
ECONOMIC  
IMPACT



## MILITARY

**12,826**  
Local  
military-related jobs

**15,820**  
Recruits trained in 2014  
at Marine Corps Recruit  
Depot Parris Island

**10** U.S. Congressmen  
and Senators met with in  
Washington, DC

**4** Advocacy  
Trips to Columbia, SC

**\$1.498 Billion**  
Annual economic  
impact of MCAS,  
Parris Island,  
Beaufort Naval  
Hospital



**100 years**  
Parris Island boot  
camp celebrates  
its centennial in  
2015

**F-35B –**  
Beaufort is the  
**ONLY** Marine  
Corps JSF  
training center



**\$704 Million**  
Local labor  
income for  
three bases

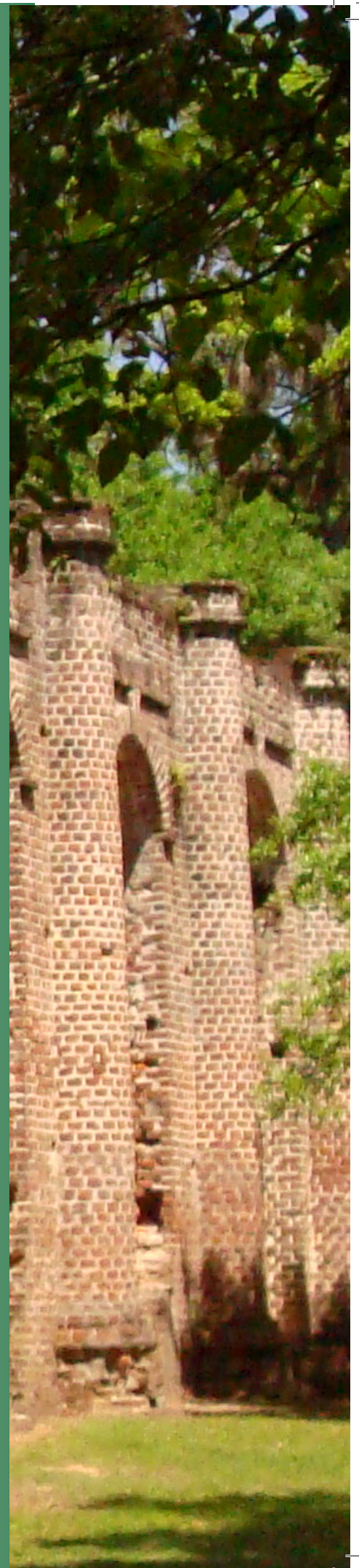


# 2014-2015 Board of Directors

Will Achurch	Wells Fargo	Chairman
Jim Wegmann	Weidner, Wegmann & Harper	Chair Elect
Jan Malinowski	Palmetto State Bank	Treasurer
Leigh Copeland	Technical College of the Lowcountry	Director At Large
Mike Bostwick	YMCA of Beaufort County	
Frankie Denmark	Hargray	
Mahesh Desai	Beaufort Holiday Inn Hotel & Suites	
John Dickerson	Sleep In History!	
Ben Duncan	CenturyLink	
Derek Gilbert	Gilbert Law Firm	
Malcolm Goodridge	Investor	
Terrance Green	Coldwell Banker Realty	
Louise Hodges	Greenbug All Natural Pest Control	
David Homyk	Beaufort Memorial Hospital	
Jack Kiessling	Parker Hannifin Racor Division	
John Marshall	Old Bull Tavern	
Holly McKown	Grayco, Inc.	
Jon Rembold	Beaufort County Airports	
Susan Sauer	Discover Tours	
Jay Taylor	Kinghorn Insurance Agency of Beaufort	

# 2015-2016 Board of Directors

Jim Wegmann	Weidner, Wegmann & Harper	Chairman
Will Achurch	Wells Fargo	Past Chairman
Leigh Copeland	Technical College of the Lowcountry	Chair Elect
Whitney McDaniel	Wells Fargo Advisors	Treasurer
Cliff Mrkvicka	Lockheed Martin	Director At Large
John Dickerson	Sleep In History!	
Edward Dukes	Lowcountry Real Estate	
Kevin Dukes	Harvey & Battey, PA	
Ben Duncan	CenturyLink	
Tina Gentry	United Way of the Lowcountry	
Karen Gilbert	Beaufort County School District	
Terrance Green	Coldwell Banker Realty	
Malcolm Goodridge	Investor	
David Homyk	Beaufort Memorial Hospital	
Christian Kata	Ameris Bank	
Jack Kiessling	Parker Hannifin Racor Division	
Frank Lesesne	Anchorage 1770 Inn	
John Marshall	Old Bull Tavern	
Holly McKown	Grayco, Inc.	
Susan Sauer	Discover Tours	
Jay Taylor	Kinghorn Insurance Agency of Beaufort	





## LETTER FROM THE CHAIRMAN

**William Achurch**  
**Chairman**

This has been a tremendous year at the Beaufort Regional Chamber of Commerce. Serving as your Chairman has been not only a privilege, but an honor.

We are proud of our organization's accomplishments over the last year, and they would have never come to fruition without the collaborative efforts of our members, our ambassadors, our staff, our community partners and our committee members. We all worked together to advocate for a pro-business environment, help protect our military assets, develop a strong workforce, and attract an increasing number of tourists to our market.

A white, stylized handwritten signature of William Achurch, consisting of several loops and a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

We were honored to host the homecoming celebration of the VMFAT-501 Squadron, the first of five F-35 squadrons that will call MCAS Beaufort home. We also surveyed our members and found the need to inform the public around the national and local debate of Offshore Drilling, so we put together a panel of experts that gave hundreds of citizens the chance to hear both sides of the issue and have their questions answered.

In the last year we have considered more than a dozen state and national bills, plus local tax and spending programs that would have an impact on commerce. We have stood by the Town of Port Royal and state lawmakers in their fight to force the State Ports Authority to sell the port property, our region's most under-utilized asset.

Our greatest work as a region is still ahead. We need to diversify our economy. We need jobs that will give our students the opportunity to work for a good wage right here at home. What we need is a holistic approach to economic development. We need a data driven plan that measures risk and return on investment. Now is the time for all of our local governments and stakeholders to work in a cohesive way that will show that we're serious. We ask that you please work with us to create the preferred community to invest, prosper and enjoy.

**Again, thank you for the opportunity to  
serve as your Chairman.**

# Business Advocacy, Legislative Agenda and Economic Development



## Greta Maddox, Seaside Getaways

"The Beaufort Regional Chamber has been very helpful for me and my business through getting to know people in the community and finding courses I can take to learn ways to help my business grow. I'm very appreciative of the team at the Chamber for helping to meet my goals and help my business grow and become better."

### How we help our Chamber members...

- Conducted a procurement workshop on how to do business with the government
- Successfully held Beaufort Restaurant Week in January and planning to follow-up with a second week in August
- Held State of the Schools breakfast featuring updates from Beaufort County School District, Technical College of the Lowcountry and University of South Carolina Beaufort
- Hosted State of the Bases breakfast allowing our members and the community to receive important updates from our three local military installations. The Military Affairs Committee honored a Military Family of the Quarter
- Encouraged Beaufort County Council to give the citizens the right to vote on the Capital Penny by placing it on the ballot in November 2014. While this initiative did not pass, the Chamber will advocate for a penny on the ballot in 2016
- Hosted the U.S. Small Business Administration to share information to help businesses start, strengthen and expand
- Conducted our first ever Speed Networking event to introduce members and their services
- Added employee benefit solution partnership with Colonial Life
- Hosted Founders Night Fireworks in the Henry C. Chambers Waterfront Park on New Year's Eve





# Your Chamber's Top Legislative Priorities 2015

- Support renourishing the beach at Hunting Island State Park and the completion of the Spanish Moss Trail
- Support the critically important widening projects to South Carolina's interstates, fixing load-restricted and deficient bridges and resurfacing existing roadways
- Support for aerospace and related industries to complement the F-35 Training Center at MCAS-Beaufort to boost and diversify our Lowcountry economy
- Improve the Beaufort Regional economic business climate to create a competitive environment
- Supports job creation and job retention initiatives for economic development
- Streamline the processes to start, maintain and grow businesses in the Beaufort Region



Our FOUR guiding principles when creating  
our Legislative Agenda:

- 1 Maintain and grow opportunities for Beaufort County businesses
- 2 Reduce the cost of doing business
- 3 Manage growth and support infrastructure so that the marketability of the area isn't threatened
- 4 Increase the qualified workforce

# Education Workforce Development

Developing a highly-skilled and well-educated workforce is integral to increased job opportunities and security with dynamic companies doing business in the Beaufort region.

Our Manufacturer's Alliance works quickly and efficiently to respond to the demands of the business community. This year, SC Department of Employment and Workforce's Executive Director Cheryl Stanton facilitated a conversation on working to match job seekers with employers quickly, efficiently and effectively.

The Chamber's Education/Workforce Committee is partnering with Goodwill Industries Job Link Center to kick off a Dressed to Impress initiative, where we collect professional clothing to help provide job seekers with the attire they need.

Top legislative priorities for Education/Workforce Development:

- Modify the allocation formula for public education funding using criteria other than a school system's ability to raise revenue through property tax to a system where all students receive equitable funding
- Continue efforts to maintain Beaufort County as a Work Ready Community
- Encourage and support programs for transitioning military personnel to the local workforce
- Seek increased funding for higher education including technical colleges and parity funding for the University of South Carolina Beaufort

Our mission: To bridge the gap between education and business, ensuring a more qualified, ready-to-work employee base. The Beaufort Regional Chamber of Commerce recognizes the need to provide a quality workforce for our business community and to help recruit new and viable businesses.





**During 2014-2015, the MEC worked tirelessly to support and promote our vibrant military community. Highlights include:**

- “Homecoming” celebration for VMFAT-501 and the F-35B training center with the new Joint Strike Fighters. This marked the return of the Warlords squadron to MCAS Beaufort – flying the nation's newest and state-of-the-art fighter-attack jet
- Continued work with the Department of Defense, federal agencies and Congress to seek an outlying landing field to supplement runways at MCAS Beaufort
- Release of a new South Carolina study indicating our three military installations contribute \$1.498 billion annually to our local economy
- Traveled to Washington, DC to meet with Congressional and DoD leaders about Beaufort's bases and in April we hosted U.S. Sen. Lindsey Graham

## **Military Enhancement Committee Members:**

**Jim Wegmann, Chair**  
appointed by SC Military Base Task Force

**Frankie Denmark, Vice Chair**  
appointed by the Beaufort Regional Chamber of Commerce

**James W. Boozer, Treasurer**  
appointed by the Town of Port Royal

**Lt. Col. W.R. “Skeet” Von Harten USMC (Retired)**  
appointed by Beaufort County

**Teri Maude**  
appointed by the City of Beaufort

**Merritt Patterson**  
appointed by the Beaufort Regional Chamber of Commerce

**Ed Saxon**  
appointed by Beaufort County

# And the award goes to...

- Named to Southern Living's list of "Small Towns We Love" - Beaufort was one of five small towns featured and was the front cover and lead story
- Hunting Island named to TripAdvisor's list of "Top Beaches in America"
- The 60th annual Beaufort Water Festival #BeaufortH20Fest was named a "Top 20 Event" in the Southeast for 2015 by the Southeast Tourism Society
- Country Living named Beaufort, S.C. one of the "Top 18 Most Charming Towns in America"
- Sail Magazine and Doziers Waterway Magazine showcased Beaufort as one of the best locations along the Intracoastal Waterway
- Featured among Travel Channel's "Top Retirement Getaways" and Market Watch named Beaufort to its top places to retire (ranked #5)
- Coastal Living named Beaufort as one of their "20 Great Warm-Weather Getaways for 2015"

## Mark Stokes Bay Street Jewelers

"One of the most endearing parts of our business is building those relationships with our clients through the Chamber of Commerce. It's been an integral part of our business. It's how we bond with our community both professionally and socially."



ENRICH  
YOUR **ADVENTUROUS**

**BEAUFORT, SC  
STAY LEFT**

**SPIRIT  
HERE**

## Larry Mark, FWDC

"I see the Chamber as the Beaufort business advocate. I believe it's important to have a unified voice. Most of us business owners are way too busy to attend meetings but if government entities don't hear from us they think we don't mind some of the things they propose. The Chamber speaks on our behalf. I enjoy the peer to peer contact the chamber offers through events. Those things, networking and advocacy, help businesses in the long run."

- AARP named Beaufort second on its list of "America's Best Small Towns"
- \$7.1 million to \$7.67 million – estimated local economic impact of the summertime classic Beaufort Water Festival, based on USCB/ Clemson calculations
- Market Watch Magazine puts Beaufort among its "10 Best Places to Retire in the U.S."
- In New York City, we met with 29 national and regional media members including MORE magazine, The Weather Channel, Parent's Magazine, AAA Car & Travel, and Conde Nast Traveler
- We traveled to Birmingham to meet with the editorial team for Southern Living and Coastal Living magazines



# 60<sup>TH</sup> ANNUAL WATER FESTIVAL



MAKES THE TOP 20 SOUTHEASTERN TOURISM SOCIETY'S LIST OF EVENTS!

## Levon Byrd Sr.

"The Chamber helps me connect my business and services to others across the Lowcountry, especially the schools, technical schools and universities. It is a blessing to be able to network and do business with so many fine people and organizations, to see them grow and create jobs for their families. The Chamber provides me with great resources for my independent LegalShield business."

# Looking Ahead

## LETTER FROM THE CHAIRMAN

**Jim Wegmann**  
**Board Chairman**

I am honored and privileged to serve as the 2015-2016 Board Chairman, but as the saying goes, "it takes a village." The chamber staff, the board, and I will need your assistance, your input, and your support to keep our momentum focused on positive growth.

As a board, we need to continue to provide our fine staff and ambassadors with the proper tools and support they require to effectively execute and accomplish the mission. They are the "backbone" of the organization and they deserve our continued commitment to chart an achievable course for the betterment of our member businesses.

Each year we strive to build a more vibrant and resilient business community through economic development, member development and growth, and general business advocacy. Tourism and the military continue to be our local economic mainstays, and although we need to be ever vigilant in solidifying, growing and protecting them, we need to also encourage economic diversification. With assistance from our local governments and our partner organizations, we need to continue to strive for a well-balanced and growth centered economy.

Our Lowcountry lifestyle and vast amenities make us the perfect location to grow our existing business and to encourage new businesses to discover why collectively we have chosen to live, work, and play in Beaufort, Port Royal and the Sea Islands.

Finally, I want to personally thank you for your continued support and for all that each of you have done to enhance and grow our business community.

**I very much value your membership and want to encourage you to stay involved.**



A white, handwritten signature of Jim Wegmann, written in a cursive style. The signature is positioned to the right of the main text block and above the footer area.

**Elite Partner**



**Premier Partners**



**Beaufort Memorial  
HOSPITAL**



**Supporting Partner**

Parker Hannifin Racor Division

**Patron Partners**

CenturyLink  
First Citizens Bank & Trust Co. of SC  
Internet Services of the Lowcountry  
Lockheed Martin  
Marine Federal Credit Union  
Palmetto State Bank  
Regions Bank  
SCE&G  
SERVPRO of Beaufort County



**TOP INVESTORS**

Beaufort County  
Beaufort Jasper Water & Sewer Authority  
Beaufort Memorial Hospital  
Carolina Realty of the Lowcountry, LLC  
CenturyLink  
City of Beaufort  
Dataw Island Club  
Fripp Island Resort  
Hargray  
Lockheed Martin  
Lowcountry Real Estate  
Parker Hannifin Racor Division  
Pinckney Retreat  
SCE&G  
South Carolina Department of  
Parks Recreation & Tourism  
University of Phoenix  
University of South Carolina Beaufort  
Wells Fargo

**REGIONAL LEADERS**

Beaufort County  
Branch Banking & Trust Co. of SC (BB&T)  
Beaufort Hilton Garden Inn  
CBC National Bank  
CPM Federal Credit Union  
Flint Group North America  
South State Bank  
Technical College of the Lowcountry  
University of South Carolina Beaufort  
Walgreens #11252



# BEAUFORT, SC

## REGIONAL CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

Beaufort Regional Chamber of Commerce  
843-525-8500  
chamber@beaufortsc.org  
www.beaufortchamber.org

Chamber Administrative Offices  
701 Craven Street Carnegie Building

Tourism Marketing Offices and Visitor Center  
713 Craven Street, Historic Arsenal  
Mailing Address: P.O. Box 910, Beaufort, SC 29901-0910



2015 Annual Report created and produced by Williams Group PR

Photographs courtesy Captured Moments Photography and Wollwerth Imagery



**Blakely Williams**, President & CEO  
**Valerie Althoff**, Member Services Manager  
**Ida Bodiker**, Office Assistant  
**Joan Byrnes**, Visitor Services  
**Myrna Cruz**, Accounting Manager  
**Jaime Dailey-Vergara**, Communications Manager  
**Sarah Heinz**, Account Executive  
**Jason Ruhf**, Business Development Manager  
**Robb Wells**, Vice President, Tourism

Visitor Services  
**Jannie Allen**  
**Trudy Stevens**

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