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CHAMBERS

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There are three chambers in Clark County: The Arkadelphia Area Chamber of Commerce, the Gurdon Chamber of Commerce and the Amity Chamber of Commerce, which started as a result of the birth of the Alliance.

The largest in the county is the Arkadelphia chamber, whose executive director is Connie Nelson.

The Arkadelphia Area Chamber of Commerce was housed in Town Hall until early January, when it moved into a suite at Twin Oaks Plaza on Pine Street. The Alliance also operates out of that suite.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

What's a Chamber of Commerce?

An advocate for the private sector of a community's business

The following is the fourth of a series of articles informing the public on how the county's economic development effort is set up.

By Joe Phelps
Siftings Herald

Under Clark County's "umbrella" structure of economic development, the Arkadelphia Regional Economic Development Alliance is an organization which uses public and private funding to represent businesses and industries in the county and to consult with potential companies looking for a location to be-

gin business.

In 2007 Clark County citizens passed a 1/2-cent sales tax to fund an organization that would seek prospects and use the tax money as incentives for industries. Thus the Economic Development Corp. of Clark County was formed, which operates on a projected budget of \$1.25 million annually.

Not long after the EDC-CC's voting board members began holding monthly public meetings, Paul Harvel was hired as chief executive officer of the organization. Harvel, who was known throughout the state as a Chamber of Commerce guru, introduced his con-

cept of how the county's economic development effort should be set up -- by unifying each of the county's existing economic development organizations, whether they be funded by public or private funds.

This unification became known as AREDA, or the Alliance. Under the Alliance is the EDCCC, the Clark County Industrial Council and each chamber.

The EDCCC, funded by the 1/2-cent sales tax, acts as the county's representative to prospective industries. It has the purchasing power and budget to finance the hiring of an executive director and consultants to

steer any and all of the county's economic development efforts. The EDCCC sends 30 percent of the tax revenue to the Alliance to spend on all operating costs, salaries and all other administrative costs like marketing, furniture and fixtures etc. The chambers are funded by payments they make to the Alliance as well as private contributions from the city and others. No tax dollars go to fund the Chamber or any other chamber.

The Clark County Industrial Council is a quasi-governmental agency that holds the title to all industrial lands in the county, and also is capable of providing

the Alliance with an extensive history and knowledge of past economic development in the county.

Finally, the county's chambers of commerce fit in the puzzle by representing and networking businesses. By itself, a chamber's general goal is to further the interests of businesses. Local businesses or individuals are members and pay private dues, and they elect a board of directors or an executive council to set the chamber's policy. The board in turn hires an executive director and staff to run the organization.

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