

## **APPENDIX B**

### **SOUTHEAST ARKANSAS CORNERSTONE COALITION, Inc.**

The Southeast Arkansas Cornerstone Coalition, Inc., a 501(c)3 organization, is made up of the following six counties in Southeast Arkansas: Ashley, Bradley, Chicot, Desha, Drew, and Lincoln. These six counties formed the Coalition to build a stronger Southeast Arkansas through partnership. The six-county Coalition represents approximately 100,000 people, and our state and federal lawmakers hear these 100,000 voices speak loudly with one voice on a number of common issues.

The Cornerstone Coalition is governed by 31 Board Members and two Ex-Officio Board Members. Five Board Members are elected from each of the six counties, and Dr. Jack Lassiter sits on the Board as the Chancellor of the University of Arkansas at Monticello. UAM provides office space for the Cornerstone Coalition, as well as benefits to our Executive Director. The Coalition is funded by each county at \$.50 per capita based on the 2000 census figures.

The Coalition focuses efforts on six broad categories: Business Development, Education, Governmental Affairs, Human Capital, Infrastructure, and Quality of Life. An action team has been assigned to each category. The action teams are responsible for building a network throughout the Cornerstone region to address issues affecting the Coalition's Mission.

Each action team has had success, but for the sake of brevity only the Governmental Affairs Action Team will be covered. The Governmental Affairs team worked tirelessly during the 2007 Arkansas Legislative session. The Southeast Arkansas Legislative Delegation is one of the most cohesive delegations in the state. The Cornerstone Coalition plays a major part in their cohesion by advocating for many issues and representing such a large number of people. This gives our delegation clout, because the Cornerstone Coalition has become such a well-organized and respected organization around our state.

The Governmental Affairs Action Team worked closely with our delegation, our Foundation, and our local industry to help reduce the amount of state taxes paid on the energy used in the manufacturing process. The tax was reduced from 6% to 4.5% and will be further reduced to 3%. The State Legislature will examine the impact this reduction will have on the State budget and then decide whether to further reduce the tax to zero. This is a major achievement for our part of the state, as our local industry pays some of the highest energy bills in the state. By lowering their cost of doing business, we are doing our part to keep their business healthy and raise our chances of seeing their company expand in our community.

The Cornerstone Coalition also helps support our local grant writing efforts. An example is on the following page. As our schools work to expand programs to prepare our students for work, we work with the schools to write grants for classroom equipment. On the following page is a letter of support written by the Cornerstone Coalition Executive Director supporting one such effort.

These are just a few examples of how the Cornerstone Coalition is making a difference in Southeast Arkansas, more specifically in Crossett.

**Strong Roots for Growing Business**