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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

LaBorde Named Next Lexington SC Chamber Leader

Greenwood, April 15, 2020 – Angelle LaBorde, CCE, the first female executive of the Greenwood SC Chamber of Commerce, has announced her resignation in June after the conclusion of the SC Festival of Flowers. She has been named the President & CEO of the Lexington (S.C.) Chamber & Visitors Center.

LaBorde, 55, was one of more than a dozen potential candidates who were considered for the Lexington Chamber post. A nationally recognized certified chamber executive, Angelle has provided over a decade of dedicated service and leadership to the Greenwood business community, succeeding a list of male executives including Len Bornemann, Jackson C. Bundy, Alvin Parker, E.A. Baumel and Chauncey W. Lever.

“It has been an honor to serve this community over the last 14 years,” LaBorde said in making her announcement Wednesday. “When I first arrived, I was welcomed with open arms and was supported by those who deeply care for this community and the Chamber.” LaBorde said she was immediately struck by Greenwood’s rich history, its people and their perseverance, and their ability to always work as a team to advance the community. “Greenwood has a unique sense of place and its people have big dreams,” she said.

“Leaving Greenwood will be bittersweet. I have enjoyed the opportunity to work with hundreds of volunteers and community members including various board members, business leaders, and city and county officials,” she said.

“She credits the organization’s success to hiring talented staff who shared a vision of excellence and professionalism. I commend my former and current co-workers for their passion. The work of the Chamber has been challenging, but also extremely rewarding as we advanced a pro-business agenda and fostered economic prosperity since my arrival in 2006.” She began working for the Chamber on February 15th after arriving from the greater New Orleans area (after Hurricane Katrina struck). LaBorde succeeded Len Bornemann who retired in 2006, after nine years in the leadership position.

“During my tenure, I was able to celebrate two unique milestones in the history of the Greenwood SC Chamber,” she said. In 2014, the Chamber celebrated 100 years of operation and in 2017, the SC Festival of Flowers celebrated 50 years of offering a variety of entertainment for visitors and families, and showcasing Greenwood’s rich horticulture heritage. “I will always be proud of my involvement in commemorating the businesses and people who have left a legacy of civic and community leadership,” she said.



Leaving her mark on the organization to commemorate the Chamber's 100th anniversary were two significant achievements. First, she led the organization to accreditation by the Carolinas Association of Chamber Executives (CACCE). With board support, they also launched the 110% Givers program, whereby member companies provided an additional 10% voluntary contribution to fund scholarships for Greenwood County high school graduates at both Piedmont Technical College and Lander University. The fund, now endowed at the Greenwood County Community Foundation, continue today.

Chamber Board Chair Sara Sears of Self Regional Healthcare commented, "Angelle has been a tremendous asset to the Chamber and to the greater Greenwood community." She has been extremely visible in Greenwood and engaged in our community. "Whether she was supporting youth at the YMCA, promoting tourism development, leading the Rotary Club of Greenwood, or helping to convene Greenwood Women Care as one of its founding leaders, she has been an invaluable Greenwood advocate!" said Sears.

"Though we are saddened to learn of her resignation, the board supports her and this new career opportunity," said Sears. "The Greenwood Chamber is stronger because of her leadership and I am confident that the Chamber will continue to be a champion for business and an advocate for the community," she said.

Her leadership in advancing the economic climate in Greenwood is well noted. In recent years, the SC Festival of Flowers yielded more than \$4 million in economic impact for the Greenwood community and has received numerous awards from state, regional and international festival and event associations. As Lake Greenwood is an economic engine for the county, Connect Lake Greenwood was also initiated under her guidance, and the Chamber powered their "back-end" administrative needs by supporting the initiative to the lake community. A lake website was developed and the Chamber promoted successful events like the Lights on the Lake fireworks show, Life on the Lake Summit, and the Music on the Lake concert series.

Moreover, under her leadership, programming for members was expanded. Popular programs such as Leadership Greenwood grew at record levels and three new professional development conferences were created addressing member needs, including the Women's Leadership Upstate Conference, Greenwood Regional Management Conference, and the Connect Young Professionals' Next Level Summit, plus the SC Student Leadership Conference, a full-day event targeting high school youth.

Numerous successful Councils provided value-added services to business investors, including the Women's Leadership Council, Connect Young Professionals, NonProfit Council, and the Small Business Council.

Publications, such as the Greenwood Community Guide, The Greenwood Business Report, and The Spotlight on Small Business Guide, were also released. The organization's social media presence also expanded as visitors and locals alike became followers.

LaBorde also brought recognition to Greenwood small business owners via the state's Small Business Awards program. For seven consecutive years, several family owned businesses were recognized, and other individuals were honored for their efforts to advance the small business community. Local family owned businesses such as Mathis Plumbing Heating Air and Harley Funeral Home and Crematory were placed in the spotlight for their decades of service to Greenwood residents. Last year, the Chamber celebrated 30 years of identifying and honoring successful small business owners.

With a focus on advancing the community, the Chamber led the marketing effort for the passage of the Capital Project Sales Tax referendum, known as the Vote YES for Greenwood campaign. As one of the most fulfilling aspects of her professional career, the Chamber was recognized with a Communications Excellence Award by the Carolinas Association of Chamber Executives for their efforts. Several legislative initiatives were passed during her tenure including the repeal of the blue laws and Sunday alcohol sales. She made it a priority to convene local, state, and federal elected officials at various times of the year, offering members access to their officials. Whether it was the Hill Talk event with U.S. senators or representatives, Legislative Breakfast with state delegation members, State of the City/County gatherings with local officials, or candidate forums, LaBorde ensured that events were professional, well organized, and meaningful. Partnering with the Upstate Chamber Coalition, Greenwood businesses received representation in Columbia, thus promoting a pro-business climate.

Similar to other chamber organizations throughout the Carolinas, membership-based models fluctuate. LaBorde initiated the Total Resource Campaign in 2010 under the leadership of campaign chair Chip Stockman of Stockman Oil Company. New businesses and sponsors were recruited, and for seven years, it provided more than \$1 million in new revenue to the organization. On average, member retention surpassed 80%, but today's businesses have many choices to consider when investing in their business. Currently, the Chamber has plans to update its membership model to a tiered dues approach that provides packages with associated member benefits.

During her tenure, the Greenwood SC Chamber was named a Small Business Partner of the Year by the SC SBA District office in 2008 and an accredited chamber by the Carolinas Association of Chamber Executives (CACCE) in 2014. CACCE honored LaBorde in 2009 as their SC Executive of the Year. The SC Festival of Flowers partnered with Discover Greenwood in 2016, earning Greenwood the prestigious "Outstanding Achievement Award in Floral Displays" from the America In Bloom organization.

In addition to her new position, LaBorde will celebrate another career milestone. She has been in the chamber industry for a quarter century! She began working at The Chamber/New Orleans & the River Region in 1995 as an Area Council Manager and was later promoted to Membership Director. She then served as Chief Executive Officer for the Jefferson LA Chamber of Commerce for 7 ½ years before relocating to Greenwood. She has one son, Matthew, who will graduate from Greenwood High School in May.

LaBorde will be replacing Otis Rawls, who is retiring after 4 ½ years as head of the Lexington Chamber and Visitors Bureau. Rawls was also the former head of the South Carolina Chamber of Commerce.

“We appreciate Angelle’s enthusiasm and contributions to Greenwood and wish her well in her new position,” Sears said in a statement. “We are pleased that she will remain in the state to support and advance issues of mutual interest,” said Sears.

According to Sears the board of directors of the Chamber will name a Search Committee soon to identify candidates to replace LaBorde.

For more information about the Chamber, visit their website at GreenwoodSCchamber.org or contact them at (864) 223-8431.

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