

Madison County Business League & Foundation 2022-23 Board Nominees



Chris Champion
Vice President – Government Relations
C Spire - Pillar Investor

Chris Champion, a native of Greenwood, Mississippi, serves as Vice President of Government Relations for C Spire, a diversified telecommunications company headquartered in Ridgeland, MS. In that role Chris has oversight of both federal and multi-state policy issues for the company. In addition, Chris manages the company's political engagement activities.

Prior to joining C Spire, Chris was vice president in the Cornerstone Government Affairs Jackson, MS office where he represented a variety of clients in the agriculture, energy, corrections, and nonprofit sector.

Chris's public service includes serving as special assistant to United State Senator Roger Wicker in Washington, D.C., until he returned to his home state where he held the position of policy director for Governor Phil Bryant. Chris was the Governor's designee to the Tennessee Valley Authority Regional Energy Resource Council, Delta Regional Authority, Appalachian Regional Commission, and the Southern States Energy Board.

A proud graduate of Ole Miss, he has been recognized as a Top 50 Under 40 businesspersons by the Mississippi Business Journal and is a previous member of the Mississippi Economic Council's Leadership Mississippi Class. He was appointed to the Connect Mississippi Committee by the Mississippi Public Service Commission and serves on the Board of Directors for Incompas, as well as the PAC Boards for the Mississippi Manufacturers Association and Competitive Carriers Association.

Chris is a past president of the Washington, D.C. Ole Miss Alumni Association, member of Century Club Charities, and volunteers his time with local youth sports leagues.



Brian Johnson
Executive Vice President
Fisher Brown Bottrell Insurance - Gold Investor

Brian Johnson began his career with Trustmark National Bank as a management trainee in Jackson, MS in 2006. Subsequently, he joined Fisher Brown Bottrell Insurance, a subsidiary of Trustmark National Bank as an insurance broker in 2007. Brian currently serves as Executive Vice President of Fisher Brown Bottrell, the 44th largest property and casualty insurance agency in America with locations in Alabama, Florida, Mississippi, Tennessee and Texas. Brian serves as a Risk and Insurance Advisor specializing in but not limited to public entities, non-profits, educational risks, manufacturers and surety support for contractors. He manages a dynamic team of individuals who service clients in various roles from account executives, claims administration, marketing and value-added client initiatives.

Brian is a native and has lived in Madison, MS for over 30 years. He is a product of the Madison County Public School District being a graduate of Rosa Scott and Madison Central High School. A graduate of Alcorn State University with a Bachelor of Science degree in Business Administration, he also received a Master of Business Administration degree from Jackson State University. Brian is a graduate of Leadership Mississippi (Class of 2010), Leadership Jackson (Class of 2011), One Voice Mississippi Black Leadership Institute (Class of 2018) and the National Alliance for Institute Education and Research. He was named a Top 50 under 40 Leading Business Leader by the Mississippi Business Journal in 2018 and was recently named as Insurance Business Magazine's Top 100 Insurance Advisors in America for 2017, 2019, 2020 and 2022.

Brian has a personal passion for community involvement and serves the community extensively through his philanthropy and membership in many various organizations. He is currently an Institutions of Higher Learning Advisory Committee Member for Alcorn State University, a member of the St. Dominic's Health Services Foundation Board of Directors, USA International Ballet Competition Board of Directors, Mississippi Early Childhood Investment Council Board of Directors, Mississippi Museum of Art Board of Directors, Madison County Business League & Foundation Diversity & Inclusion Committee member, a Rotary Club of Jackson member, Vice Chairman and Chairman-Elect of the Jackson State University Foundation, member of the 100 Black Men of Jackson, lifetime member of Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity, Inc., and member of the Beta Gamma member Boule' of Sigma Pi Phi Fraternity. Brian is also a lifetime member of the NAACP, member of the FBI Citizens Academy Alumni Association, Mississippi Minority Contractors Association, National Association of Surety Bond Producers, Mississippi Roadbuilders Association, the Juvenile Diabetes Research Foundation (Advisory Board Member) and the Mississippi Minority Business Alliance (Former Board Member).

Brian, his wife Christina, daughter Nova and son Bronx reside in Madison and are members of Redeemer Presbyterian Church.



Sam Kelly
Member
Brunini - Platinum Investor

Samuel C. (Sam) Kelly is a member of the Brunini law firm in Jackson, Mississippi, where he has practiced since 2003 and currently serves as managing partner.

Sam received his undergraduate (1983) and law (1988, *magna cum laude*) degrees from the University of Mississippi. Since the beginning of his career, and over the course of the last thirty years, Sam has been very active in the Mississippi Bar holding various leadership positions and serving on numerous committees. Sam also is a Member of the Mississippi Bar Foundation and has served on the Board of Trustees for the Foundation since 2018.

In addition to the Mississippi Bar, Sam is an active member in other Bar-related organizations. Sam is a member of the Capital Area Bar Association, having previously served as a Director. Sam was awarded the Professionalism Award for 2022 from the Capital Area Bar Association. He is a Benchler in the Charles Clark Inn of Court where he serves on the Executive Committee and is also a member of the American Board of Trial Advocates.

In his daily law practice, Sam is an active member of and serves as general counsel to the Mississippi Associated Builders and Contractors and the Mississippi Road Builders Association. His practice focuses on the construction industry. Sam has been recognized by *Best Lawyers in America* (2006-2022), *Chambers USA: America's Leading Lawyers* (2009-19), and *Mid-South Super Lawyers* (2007-19). Sam was named Lawyer of the Year by *Super Lawyers* in 2012, 2015 and 2018 for construction law and litigation. In 2013, Sam was recognized by MABC as the Construction Industry Person of the Year.

Sam has been active in his community for over twenty years having served as past president of the PTOs for Madison Avenue Elementary, Madison Middle, and Rosa Scott schools. He is also past president of the Madison Central Booster Club which serves 22 athletic programs. In 2013, he was elected to the Madison County School Board and continues to serve in that role today. Sam is an active member of the Madison County Business League and Foundation and served as its Chairman in 2016-17.

Sam is a member of Broadmoor Baptist Church where he teaches a Life Group. He also conducts a weekly Bible study for high school boys. Sam and his wife Kim are the proud parents of two daughters, Maggie Kate Bobo (Lane) and Anna Claire Wallace (Tanner), and their late son, Sam Clayton and grandparents to Anna Lee and Sam Bobo.



Chris Roberts
City President – Canton
BankPlus - Pillar Investor

Chris Roberts has been in the banking industry for over 17 years. He started his career with M&F Bank (now Renasant Bank) on the square in Canton, MS, and was with them for 10 years. He has been with BankPlus since 2014. In his current role he serves as the City President of Canton focusing on production of commercial and small business loans and business development. Chris is a native of Benton, MS, holds a Bachelor's in Business Administration from Mississippi State University, and is a graduate of The Graduate School of Banking at Louisiana State University.

Active in his community, Chris is currently serving on the finance committee at Chapel of The Cross Episcopal Church, raising funds and awareness for the American Cancer Society through the Real Men Wear Pink Campaign, and serves as a committee chair of the Madison County Youth Leadership Program. He has been an active member of the Madison County Young Professionals steering committee since inception in 2017.

Past leadership roles include the Executive Council as Council At-Large for the Mississippi Young Bankers (2019 - 2022) and the inaugural President of Madison County Young Professionals (2017). He is a graduate of Leadership Greater Jackson (2014) and Leadership Madison County (2015). In 2017, he was awarded Mississippi Business Journal Top 50 under 40, Madison City Chamber Top 10 under 40, Madison County Business League and Foundation Young Professional of the Year, and Mississippi Young Bankers County Chairman of the Year. He has been a member of Rotary since 2006, and served as the President of Canton Rotary Club in 2011 – 2012.

Chris is active in the cycling community and is a member Jackson Metro Cyclist, YAY Gravel, and the Tri County Mountain Bike Association (TCMBA). Additionally, he enjoys yoga, reading, and golf. He and his family are members of Chapel of the Cross in Madison County. Chris and his wife, Lisa Roberts, reside at the Lake Lorman in Madison County with their three children Lucy (8) and Hugh (6), and Oliver (2).



Candie Simmons
Director of Principal Gifts and Strategic Planning
UMMC – Govt./School Member

Candie L. Simmons, a native of Ocean Springs, Mississippi, received a Bachelor of Business Administration degree in marketing and Master of Business Administration from the University of Mississippi. As longtime supporter of the University, she became a member of the Ole Miss Women’s Council for Philanthropy in 2018, and serves on the council’s executive committee. The director of principal gifts and strategic planning for the University of Mississippi Medical Center in Jackson, Mississippi, now lives in Madison, Mississippi. Candie manages the major gift officers and strategic plan for the Office of Development, in addition to her primary responsibility of securing funds for adult medicine.

She was selected by the Mississippi Business Journal as a 2009 Top 40 Under 40 and 2013 Top 50 Leading Business Woman, where she placed in the top 10. Candie was selected as the 2017 Outstanding Young Alumna of the Year for Ole Miss and as a 2017 Woman Making a Difference in Madison County by the Delta Sigma Theta Sorority Madison County Alumnae Chapter. She was also honored as a Woman of Excellence for the Diabetes Foundation of Mississippi. Candie is active with the Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority Inc.’s Beta Delta Omega Chapter, where she is the president, and represents the South Eastern Region on an International level for the Educational Advancement Foundation.

Candie has completed three, three-year terms on the national board of the Ole Miss Alumni Association and organization’s executive committee. She is an active board member for First Commercial Bank, 2nd Chance Mississippi and the Great City MS Foundation. Candie also serves on the advisory councils for the Junior League of Jackson and Ole Miss Fraternity and Sorority Life. In addition, she is a Gallup Certified StrengthsFinder Coach. She resides in the city of Madison.



Dr. Ronnie McGehee, PhD
Executive Director
MS Association of Secondary School Principals - Silver Member

A Natchez Mississippi native, Dr. Ronnie McGehee graduated from the University of Southern Mississippi in 1977 with a B.S. degree in Education. He received his M.S. degree in Administration from Mississippi College in 1990, and his Doctorate in Educational Leadership from Mississippi State University in 2008.

With over 41 years of experience as a teacher, coach, athletic director, transportation director, assistant principal, principal, and deputy superintendent, Dr. McGehee was named Interim Superintendent of the Madison County School District in October 2011, prior to being elected Superintendent in November 2011, and again in November of 2015. Only one year into his first four-year term as Superintendent, he led the fifth largest school district in the state of Mississippi to achieve an “A” accountability rating in 2013. Madison County is one of the first county school districts to achieve this rating on the statewide accountability model. Beginning with the 2014-15 school year, his 1:M Digital Initiative placed an Apple MacBook in the hands of every student in grades 9 – 12; and in the 2015-16 school year, every middle school student received a Chromebook. In addition, he initiated a student BYOD (Bring Your Own Device) program in the district, established Wi-Fi connections at all 23 school locations, implemented block scheduling in the middle schools, began ICT/STEM course offerings in 6th grade, led an intensive national leadership training (NISL) for district administrators, instituted the first administration of the ACT test at no charge to all 11th graders at the district’s high schools, began a credit recovery program to establish a safety net for seniors, established an employee REBATE program, created an employee wellness coordinator position, reorganized the district’s maintenance procurement process, funded fifteen Literacy Specialists and hired a team of Math Specialists, and began a Dual Enrollment/Dual Credit program in conjunction with the local community college. His focus on “Motivate, Educate and Graduate” resulted in over 89% of the 2015 senior class graduating on time.

Ronnie founded McGehee LLC, An Educational Focused Problem-Solving Effort in 2017. Prior to his retirement from Madison County Schools in 2018, he was named Executive Director of Mississippi Association of Secondary School Principals. Upon retirement as Superintendent, he assumed duties as the Executive Director of Mississippi Association of School Administrators. He continues to serve in both these positions. In December of 2020, Ronnie was appointed to the State Board of Education. Ronnie is a graduate of the Harvard Principals’ Institute and actively involved on the board of the local Millsaps Principals’ Institute. He is past president of the Mississippi Association of School Administrators, a member of the National Association of Secondary School Principals, Executive Director of the Mississippi Association of Secondary School Principals. He serves on the boards of Holmes Community College, Jackson State Institute of Government and has served on the board of the Madison County Chamber of Commerce as the Youth Leadership Coordinator and of March of Dimes. He served as Honorary Chairman of the 2012 March of Dimes March for Babies Campaign. He was selected as the Basketball Coach of the Year (1978, 1981), and is Madison County’s 2006 Administrator of the Year. He is in demand as a presenter at various community events, state and national conventions.

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Prior to becoming Superintendent, he served as the District's Deputy Superintendent. In this position, he successfully managed two school bond referendums and over \$175 million in new school construction, resulting in 12 new schools opening in the ten years. In addition, he has extensive involvement in the areas of elementary and secondary curriculum, technology, and transportation; evaluation of district personnel; formulation of student population data; and projections of future facility needs.

From January through June 2000, Ronnie served dual roles as district Deputy Superintendent and Principal of Madison Central High School, one of the largest high schools in the state. As principal, he was responsible for the day-to-day operations' of 1900 students, 120 certified staff members and 20 support staff. During this time, he implemented block scheduling, the "School within School" program and PSAT, ACT prep classes which increased the average ACT score to 22.1.

Ronnie is a member of Madison United Methodist Church where he serves on the Building Committee Board and Staff Pastor/Parish Relations Committee. He is married to the former Jodi Poole, and they have one daughter, Jessica. Their family resides in Madison County.