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Florida SBDC Network Announces Appointments, Reappointments to Statewide Advisory Board

Florida SBDC Network Headquarters (Pensacola, Fla.) – The Florida SBDC Network, the state’s principal provider of business assistance, announced recent appointments and reappointments to its statewide advisory board. Kevin Carr, Rick Rodriguez Piña, Nathan Sparks, Harry Timmons, and Cathlee Tomkow were appointed, and Beth Cicchetti, Jason Clement, and Michelle Dennard were reappointed.

The board is responsible for advising, counseling, and conferring with the CEO of the Florida SBDC Network to ensure the interests of small businesses are represented in the Network’s coordinated efforts and investments in small business development and entrepreneurial support services. The 19 member board is made up of appointments from the Governor, the Florida Senate President, the Florida Speaker of the House, the President of the University of West Florida, and the Florida SBDC Network CEO. The Chief Financial Officer, Enterprise Florida, Florida Chamber of Commerce, the National Federation of Independent Businesses, the Florida United Businesses Association, and the Small Business Administration are also represented on the board.

Appointments:

Kevin Carr

Kevin Carr is CEO of FloridaMakes. Carr has dedicated most of his career to enhancing the nation’s manufacturing sector with a focus on improving the competitiveness and profitability of small and medium-size manufacturers. Prior to joining FloridaMakes, Carr led the National Institute of Standards and Technology’s Hollings Manufacturing Extension Partnership. Carr studied Electronics Engineering at Widener University and Technology Management at the University of Maryland.

Rick Rodriguez Piña

With more than 30 years of expertise, Rick Rodriguez Piña is a seasoned professional with vast knowledge of the political process at the national, state, and local levels. Piña's primary business focus is on education policies and procurement within the K-12 arena. He is the former Policy Director for the Florida Department of Commerce and has had many years of service with leading local and state economic development entities. In 1995 Piña started Rodriguez Piña & Associates, a successful public affairs and governmental consulting company that has provided services to a wide array of national and international clientele, including professional sports franchises, health care & insurance, technology, and national financial institutions, among others.

Nathan Sparks

A 23 year veteran of the economic development industry, Sparks has served as Executive Director of One Okaloosa EDC, a non-profit private-public partnership dedicated to supporting the economic vitality of Okaloosa County and its municipalities since 2013. While at the EDC, Sparks' efforts to champion new outreach initiatives, economic incentive programs, and industrial site inventory have resulted in strong stakeholder engagement while positioning Okaloosa County for a new era of success. He holds a B.A. in International Studies and Economics from Oglethorpe University. He is a graduate of the University of Oklahoma's Economic Development Institute and is a Certified Economic Developer (CEcD).

Harry Timmons

Harry is a lifelong resident of Brooksville, Florida. He graduated from Hernando High School in 1985 and went on to earn a bachelor's degree in Economics from Florida State University. Before starting his career in real estate, Timmons worked for a short time with Farm Bureau Insurance. His family has been involved in the real estate business for over 40 years and he has been a member of the Hernando County Board of Realtors for over 25 years.

Cathlee Tomkow

Cathlee Tomkow is a licensed real estate sales associate in Dade City, Florida with 18 years of experience in the industry. She is the owner and manager of Sunny Acres Lodge, a 1,299-acre event and wedding venue, located in the heart of Central Florida. Tomkow and her husband also currently operate a cattle ranch in Polk City, Florida, and she has been in the gift-retail industry since the mid-80s.

Reappointments:**Beth Cicchetti**

Beth Cicchetti is the founder and principal of Beth Kirkland Consulting, LLC, an economic and business development consulting and management services firm. She serves as the economic development professional for the Gadsden County Development Council in North Florida and as the Executive Director of the Florida Economic Development Council. Additionally, she maintains a consulting affiliation with BRPH Architects-Engineers, Inc., supporting commercial and industrial business and project development primarily in the aviation/aerospace and defense sectors.

Jason Clement

Jason Clement is a Founding Partner and the CEO of Sports Facilities Management (SFM), and a Managing Partner of Sports Facilities Advisory (SFA). Under his leadership, SFM and SFA have

developed into globally recognized leaders of sport and entertainment development by focusing on transforming the health and economic vitality of communities. His strategic direction and oversight have resulted in SFM producing the most successful private and public sports developments in the country. He is also an experienced advisor having provided strategic, financial, and operational expertise to new and existing venues throughout the U.S., Caribbean, Europe, Middle East, Canada, Asia, Africa, and Central America.

Michelle Dennard

Michelle Dennard is president and CEO of CareerSource Florida, Inc., the nonprofit, public-private policy and investment board of business and government leaders charged with guiding workforce development for the state of Florida. An attorney and member of the Florida Bar, Dennard has more than 10 years of experience in workforce and economic development. Prior to joining CareerSource Florida, she served as the Director for the Division of Strategic Business Development at the Florida Department of Economic Opportunity.

To learn more, please visit <https://floridasbdc.org/about-us/state-advisory-board/>.

About the Florida SBDC Network:

The Florida SBDC Network, the state's principal provider of business assistance [Fl. Stat. 288.001], has nourished a statewide partnership between higher education and economic development to provide existing and emerging small and medium-sized business owners with management and knowledge resources that enable overall growth, increased profitability, and economic prosperity for Florida's economy. In 2020, the Florida SBDC Network delivered more than 162,500 hours of consulting to more than 24,000 small businesses, resulting in 38,797 jobs impacted, \$7.4 billion in sales generated, \$553.5 million in capital accessed, and \$488.1 million in government contracts acquired. According to an economic impact study conducted for the Florida SBDC, it was estimated that for every \$1 invested in the Florida SBDC \$60 is returned to the state in tax revenue, and our services resulted in a \$3.9 billion impact on Florida's economy. With over 40 offices statewide, the Florida SBDC is funded in part by the U.S. Small Business Administration, Defense Logistics Agency, State of Florida, and other private and public partners. The Florida SBDC Network, headquartered at the University of West Florida, is nationally accredited by the Association of SBDCs and is a recipient of the President's E Award for Export Service. Florida SBDC services are extended to the public on a nondiscriminatory basis. Language assistance services are available for individuals with limited English proficiency. For more information, please visit www.FloridaSBDC.org.

www.FloridaSBDC.org

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State Designated as Florida's Principal Provider of Business Assistance [§ 288.001, Fla. Stat.]