

Clarksdale\Coahoma groups rebrand to Crossroads Economic Partnership

By BECKY GILLETTE Jun 1, 2021 Comments

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In October 2017, Jon Levingson started as the executive director of three agencies: the Clarksdale/Coahoma County Chamber of Commerce, the Industrial Development Foundation and the Economic Development Authority of Coahoma County. Since those agencies share the same building, the same executive director and similar goals, Levingson thought it would be a good idea to share a common name.

“I noted that other counties or regional development organizations had accomplished this task admirably,” Levingson said. “For example, the agency which serves the Columbus, Starkville, and West Point area of the state is known as The Link. I thought it would be easier for other people to identify us with one single name, whether they referred to our chamber division or our economic development division.”

Late in 2020, the organizations rebranded to the Crossroads Economic Partnership. The word crossroads refers to the Mississippi Delta Blues mythos that Robert Johnson sold his soul to the devil at the crossroads of Highways 49 and 61 to be able to better play the guitar. The name resonates with the area’s famous musical heritage.

“But the word also refers to the fact that if one is considering relocating one’s industry to another location or, expanding it in another part of the country, then that company is at some sort of crossroads,” Levingson said. “They know they want to move or expand. But where? They are at a crossroads. We want them to choose Clarksdale and Coahoma County.”

The word economic was an easy choice. The word partnership was chosen because everything they do depends on partnerships to be successful.

“We have had five economic development project announcements in three years and we are about to announce our sixth,” Levingson said. “These projects would not have evolved or received funding from the state or federal agencies without carefully built and intentional partnerships.”

To accomplish their primary goal of bringing new employment opportunities to the area, they needed to stand out and create a can-do image. They wanted to inform and reassure those looking to relocate or expand that the community is capable and willing to meet their needs.

On February 28, 2020, they had a formal announcement that their tech recruit, PeopleShores, would collaborate with global software giant Automation Anywhere to create the first Robotic Process Automation software development and training program in the state at the PeopleShores center in Clarksdale.

“We hosted about 75 people from California, New York, and Texas, and about 275 people from around Mississippi for the announcement and ribbon cutting,” Levingson said. “Following the announcement, I was scheduled to travel to Great Britain and India on a recruiting mission. Much of our work planned for the 2020 calendar year was focused on additional recruiting trips and follow up work with representatives of the companies we visited. Those plans ended abruptly only two weeks later when the pandemic shut down all our travel and recruitment plans.”



Crossroads Economic Partnership works on a television spot.

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