

# Annual Report

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**2017-18** CELEBRATING 110 YEARS  
OF BUSINESS ADVOCACY



[www.abilenechamber.com](http://www.abilenechamber.com)



A man in a blue button-down shirt and jeans is lifting a woman in a light green sweater and dark jeans into the air. They are both laughing and smiling. In the background is a two-story house with a stone chimney and a gabled roof. The left side of the image has a red vertical bar.

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# ABOUT US

Founded in 1908, the Abilene Chamber was formed by community leaders who believed strongly that businesses must have a strong role in not only driving our local economy, but also in shaping the quality of the community in which they live.

As a private association of businesses and as a partner to the City of Abilene and the Development Corporation of Abilene, the Chamber's work impacts its growing membership of nearly 1,400 local companies and every man, woman and child in our area. While its work is wide and varied, the Chamber's leadership believes today, just as it did more than a century ago, that Abilene won't be good enough for any of us until it's good enough for all of us.

## FOCUS.

That word can be a noun or a verb. While this document is intended to bring focus, (n.) visual clarity, it is our intent to focus, (v.) the work of your Chamber, around a set of specific actions. Regardless of how you view the word, the Chamber has it.

Many folks perceive the Chamber as being the area's primary business networking organization - which is very true. However, some overlook our core purpose which is to create and sustain the very best environment for businesses to thrive, grow, add jobs and drive our economy.

ADVANTAGE ABILENE has been the Chamber's three-year strategy (2016-19), providing measurable focus in three distinct areas: economic development, community development and service to our members.

WITHIN THESE PAGES YOU WILL FIND OUR PROGRESS, two-years in. The plan was written by our board and is being implemented by both staff and volunteers. Together, we have a distinct advantage as we focus on the primary issues and the tactics to advance Abilene. Your support in continuing to move this needle in the critical final year of this three-year plan is paramount to our ultimate success. We welcome you to the effort, and thank you for your engagement.





## MESSAGE FROM THE *Chair*

For 110 years, the Abilene Chamber has been in the center of driving community progress. I am proud to serve as the Board Chair this year in support of the Chamber's efforts to develop and promote the economy and quality of life in the Abilene area.

This Annual Report will highlight the many successes the Abilene Chamber has accomplished throughout the year. Notable are the Dyess Air Force Base Memorial Park expansion, the inaugural Abilene Young Professional Leadership Summit, initiation of the RISE program, and continued strides towards downtown renovation and redevelopment, including a new proposed downtown hotel.

I value the many efforts the Chamber makes in assisting Abilene businesses with growth and networking, while connecting professionals through committees and programs. Like you, I am proud that my family calls Abilene "home!"

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Scott F. Hibbs".

Scott F. Hibbs  
President of Enprotec / Hibbs & Todd, Inc.  
(eHT)

**SCOTT HIBBS**  
**BOARD CHAIR**

# MISSION&VISION



Artist: Calina Mishay Art

## MISSION

Developing and promoting the economy and quality of life in the Abilene area.

## VISION

The Abilene Chamber aspires to be THE source for regional business interests and, through our leadership, we see a future characterized by unprecedented achievements in both public policy & economic vitality.



# GOLD STAR INVESTORS

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AEP Texas  
Abilene Banking Center - Coleman County State Bank  
Abilene Christian University  
City of Abilene  
Abilene Diagnostic Clinic, PLLC  
Abilene Independent School District  
Abilene Regional Medical Center  
Abilene Reporter-News  
Abilene Teachers Federal Credit Union  
Arrow Ford Mitsubishi, Inc.  
Atmos Energy  
BBVA Compass Bank  
Blue Cross Blue Shield of Texas  
The Boeing Company  
BRIERCROFT FIRE & WATER RESTORATION  
Coca-Cola Southwest Beverages  
Condley and Company, LLP  
Dodge Jones Foundation  
Eagle Aviation Services, Inc.  
Eide Bailly LLP  
Exceptional Brands, LLC  
First Bank Texas  
First Financial Bank  
Funeral Directors Life Insurance Company

Garver  
GeneCo Technologies, LLC  
General Electric Renewable Energy  
H. E. Butt Grocery Company  
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Hardin-Simmons University  
Hendrick Health System  
Honda of Abilene  
Imperial Construction, Inc.  
KTAB-TV/ KRBC-TV/ Telemundo  
KTXS/ KTXE/ This TV Abilene/ CW Abilene  
Lithia Toyota Abilene  
Lockheed Martin  
Lowe's Home Improvement Center  
Mall of Abilene  
Mansefeldt Investment Corporation  
Market Street  
McMahon Surovik Suttle, P. C.  
McMurry University  
Northrop Grumman Aerospace Systems  
Philpott Florist & Greenhouses  
Prosperity Bank  
Reed Beverage- Abilene  
Rentech Boiler Systems

Senter, REALTORS  
Skinny's LLC/ 7 Eleven  
Star Dodge Hyundai, Inc.  
Starks Construction Co.  
Suddenlink Communications  
Taylor Electric Cooperative, Inc.  
Tejon Exploration  
Texas Oncology  
Texas State Technical College West Texas Abilene  
Underhill Investment Management LLC  
United Supermarkets, LLC  
David Waldrop Interiors, Inc.  
West Texas Rehabilitation Center  
Whitten, Hacker, Hagin, Anderson, Allen & Self, P. C

The Abilene Chamber thanks its  
**GOLD STAR INVESTORS** who voluntarily  
show extraordinary support of Chamber  
programs and activities.

**ADVANTAGE ABILENE,** the Chamber's *strategic plan*, is a three-year initiative to promote our strengths, expand our existing businesses and business opportunities, and significantly improve the economic future for all who call Abilene home.

Our priorities have been laser-focused **on the following:**





## ENABLE ECONOMIC GROWTH

Grow and sustain economic health and vitality in the Abilene area.



## FOSTER COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Develop a "sense of place", ownership, and enhance the quality of life in the Abilene area.



## DELIVER VALUE TO MEMBERS

Provide opportunities that give our members added value and a competitive edge.



# Priority Area 1: **ENABLE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**

## **A Skilled Workforce for Abilene Businesses**

Campus Connect: an Abilene Young Professionals program pairing local college students with young professionals to help retain students in Abilene.

Though the Abilene Industrial Foundation (AIF), the NEXT University program placed 27 students in Career Technical Education jobs with local employers.

Through the AIF, career pathways were created for in-demand jobs including electrical, plumbing, HVAC and maintenance that connected local education resources with their respective income potential.

AbileneWorks.com: provides a one-stop website for jobs, exclusively in the Abilene area. Much of the focus is on military spouses and personnel exiting the military.

## **Career Mobility for Abilene Residents**

Expanded the AIF's Business Retention/Expansion Program to include more local businesses that employ approximately 8,200 people.

Organized and launched Team Workforce, bringing together hundreds of community business and education leaders with the laser focus of enhancing our workforce challenges. Through strategic partnerships and a collective impact approach, the Chamber is helping our members to train, retain and attract the workers they need to compete in an increasingly challenging global economy.

## **Downtown is Central to Employment, Experience, Investment**

Passage of HB2445: allowing the state's portion of the hotel occupancy taxes generated by new downtown hotel to stay in Abilene for 10 years.

Establishment of privately funded Downtown Initiative office.

Identified new trade show and advertising opportunities through the Abilene Convention & Visitors Bureau to promote a downtown convention hotel and identified 100+ meetings that would utilize a convention hotel.

Hosted 351 conventions and events bringing \$25.6 million to the Abilene economy.

## **An Innovative Ecosystem for Organic Growth**

Through the AIF, led the development and organization of the BE in Abilene (Building Entrepreneurs in Abilene) initiative that connected the resources of the economic development program with Abilene Christian University's (ACU) Springboard competition and America's Small Business Development Center at Texas Tech University (SBDC). Awarded \$200K to two local entrepreneurs.

In early 2016, the Chamber pledged to engage in the pursuit of the community's economic development strategy, which calls for focus on 10 specific points. These points will ensure an economically viable and vibrant city that attracts and retains jobs, capital investment and assets that will serve to enhance the quality of place for residents, visitors and newcomers alike.



# Priority Area 1: FOSTER COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

## A Positive Identity for Abilene

Annual Membership Meeting and Awards Celebration recognizing Chamber member accomplishments and celebrating our collective assets.

Established messaging and imagery highlighting Abilene's assets resulting in 22,535 visitor requests to the Abilene Convention and Visitors Bureau (ACVB).

Collaboration between the ACVB and the Taylor County EXPO Center to secure events and create a marketing plan to promote the expansion of the EXPO Center.

Facilitating a higher level of customer service by providing hospitality destination training through the ACVB.

Continuing to build the Storybook Capital brand through the annual Children's Art & Literacy Festival which boasted 125+ local sponsors and partner organizations.

## Community Connections & Lifetime Experiences

Supported and promoted the Abilene Freedom Festival and WestEx Connect Fireworks Extravaganza.

More than 200 Military Affairs Committee (MAC) members served almost 4,000 military personnel and family members at the 53rd Annual World's Largest Barbecue.

Our MAC successes were recognized by winning the first Barksdale Trophy, honoring the city which provides the greatest support to a Globe Strike Command base.

Celebrated the decision that the B-21 would be based at Dyess. The MAC has advocated for it for half a decade. Now MAC is advocating for Dyess to be the training base for the new-generation bomber.

Partnered with Buffalo Gap to establish a Chamber of Commerce presence in that community.

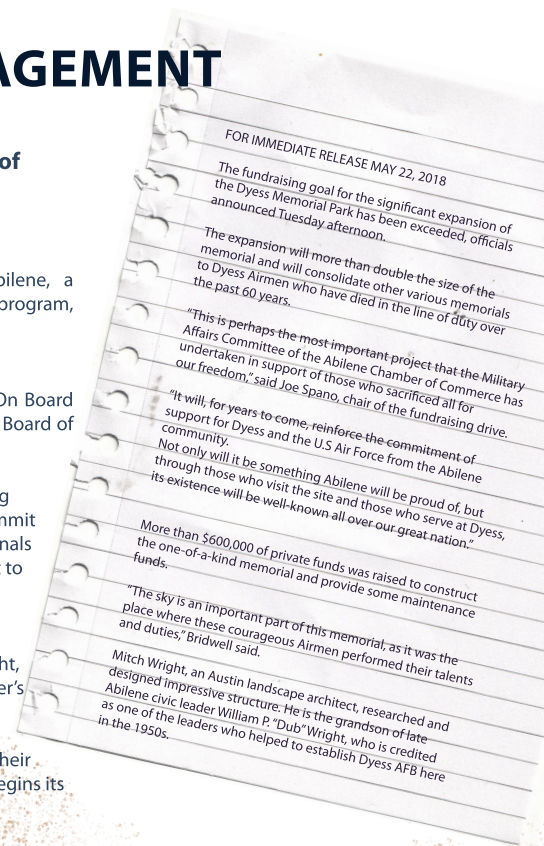
## The Next Generation of Abilene Leaders

Launched Young Leadership Abilene, a mirror of Leadership Abilene program, available to 10th and 11th graders across the region.

Abilene Young Professionals Get On Board Program placing young leaders in Board of Directors positions.

Hosted the first-ever Abilene Young Professionals (AYP) Leadership Summit that had over 200 young professionals from around the Big Country meet to enhance their leadership skills and knowledge of the community.

Launched RISE (Relationship, Insight, Service, Engagement), the Chamber's "next-level" leadership program. Tailored to those looking to develop executive leaders within their organization, this program soon begins its second year.



## *Priority Area 3:* **DELIVER VALUE TO MEMBERS**

### **Serve the Diverse Needs of the Business Community**

Over 1,600 different businesses served through the Chamber's seven annual signature events. All events were sold out, reaching a combined total of over 16,000 visitors and attendees.

Monthly networking events: AYP After Five, Wake Up Wednesdays, Business After Hours, Hispanic Business Council (HBC) Luncheons, MAC Luncheons. Over 3,000 members took advantage of these in the past year to grow their businesses and expand their networks.

Increased sponsorship and advertising opportunities are putting the names of our members front and center, online and in person.

Launched Tools For Business: a FREE online toolbox for the community with videos, trainings, webinars accessible 24hrs to those looking for business ideas and solutions.

### **Increase the "Bottom Line" for our Members**

The Abilene Chamber works every day to increase traffic-flow to your business. Here are some of the ways:

60 Seconds Strictly Business: Free radio spots available to all Chamber members.

Hospitality member listings in ACVB publications: 120k visitor guides distributed every year.

ACVB Coupon Books: Opportunity for Chamber members to reach 90k visitors to Abilene annually.

Entrepreneurship Series: A Wake Up Wednesday speaker series where Chamber member entrepreneurs share their stories and answer your questions.

### **Advocate for our Members' Issues**

MAC: working with state and federal commissions to advocate on behalf of Dyess Air Force Base, protecting the mission, the airmen and their families and a \$428 million annual economic impact.

Abilene Cultural Affairs Council (ACAC): working with associations, legislators and lobbyists across Texas to protect and increase arts funding.

ACVB: Member of several Travel Associations and Political Action Committees across the state, working to protect hotel interests.

State Supported Living Center (SSLC): Engaged in advocacy at the state and local levels, in the interest of preserving quality of life for the SSLC's residents and preserving jobs for 1,100 employees.

Legislative Collective: Two-day event bringing local, state and federal elected officials to Abilene to discuss the needs that are important to West Texans.



*"Volunteering* is the ultimate exercise in democracy. You vote in elections once a year, but when you volunteer, you vote every day about the kind of *community* you want to live in." -Anonymous

## OFFICERS

**Chair:** Scott Hibbs, Enprotec/Hibbs & Todd, Inc.

**Past Chair:** Yvonne Batts, Batts Communications, LP

**Chair Elect:** Seaton Higginbotham, Arrow Ford

**Secretary/Treasurer:** Darrin Black, Black Plumbing

## 2017-18 Board of Directors

Jessica Adams, Vagabond Pizza  
Robert Atwood, CenterPointe Financial Group  
Linda Barfield, Communities of Abilene Federal Credit Union  
Mitch Barnett, Barnett & Hill Real Estate  
Wes Bennett, EdwardJones Investments  
Gray Bridwell, Lydick-Hooks Roofing, Co.  
Jaime Correa, AbiMar Foods, Inc.  
Brad Crisp, ACU School of Business  
Barbara Dahl, Hendrick Home for Children  
Jamie Dalzell, Dalzell REALTORS  
Brett Emmett, Hendrick Medical Center  
Patty Fuentes, First Financial Bank  
Beverly Guthrie, Community Volunteer

Russell Guthrie, Eide Bailly  
Albert Gutierrez, KTAB/KRBC  
Tracy Howle, First Bank Texas  
Betty Hukill, Community Volunteer  
Ryan Kana, DATROO Technologies  
Lynn Lawhon, Brookhollow Animal Clinic  
Jon Loudermilk, Loudermilk Enterprises  
Kyle McVey, First Financial Bank  
Marshall Morris, First Financial Bank  
Michael Murphy, Abilene Regional Medical Center  
Mindi Nagy, Abilene Country Club  
Bill Noonan, Parkhill Smith & Cooper  
Inger Nordby, The TORO Company

Kaye Price-Hawkins, Community Volunteer  
Joe Rocco, JR By Request  
Steve Rodriguez, Happy State Bank  
Kenny Shuler, Blue Cross Blue Shield of Texas  
Zach Sitzes, Sitzes Self Storage  
Kim Snyder, Snyder Ranch  
Adam Thompson, Virbac Animal Health  
Trey Todd, Condley and Company. LLP

### EX-OFFICIO

Downing Bolls, Taylor County Judge  
Eric Bruntmyer, Hardin-Simmons University  
Carol Dupree, Cisco College  
Billy Enriquez, President ~ Hispanic Leadership Council  
Robert Hanna, City Manager  
Sandra Harper, McMurry University  
Linda Hinshaw, Abilene State Supported Living Center  
Stan Lambert, State Representative ~ District 71  
Joey Light, Wylie Independent School District  
Forrest McMillan, Texas State Technical College  
Jeffery Menasco, 317th Airlift Wing – Dyess AFB  
Dee Moore, Black Chamber of Commerce  
Brandon Parker, 7th Bomb Wing – Dyess AFB  
Doug Peters, Abilene Chamber of Commerce  
Mary Ross, Workforce Solutions  
Phil Schubert, Abilene Christian University  
Judy Wilhelm, Small Business Development Center  
David Young, Abilene Independent School District



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**“WORKING TOGETHER, ORDINARY PEOPLE CAN PERFORM EXTRAORDINARY FEATS.  
THEY CAN PUSH THINGS THAT COME INTO THEIR HANDS A LITTLE HIGHER UP,  
A LITTLE FURTHER ON TOWARDS THE HEIGHTS OF EXCELLENCE.” -Anonymous**



**Frost!**

TO ANOTHER

**110 YEARS**  
OF CHAMBER MEMBERSHIP



