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Advanced Energy Groups Announce Leadership Change ()

Arkansas Advanced Energy Association // September 23, 2016

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Steve Patterson Announces Retirement, Katie Niebaum Appointed Executive Director

Steve Patterson will retire later this year as the founding Executive Director of the Arkansas Advanced Energy Association (AAEA) and its educational affiliate Arkansas Advanced Energy Foundation (AAEF). Little Rock-native Katie Laning Niebaum has been appointed by the Boards of Directors to succeed him, Board Chairs Gary McChesney (AAEA) and Dr. Elizabeth Hood (AAEF) announced this week.

Patterson helped form both organizations in 2011 and has served as Executive Director for the first five years of their development. Niebaum leaves her position as Vice President for Communications for the National Restaurant Association in Washington, D.C. to return home to Arkansas and take the helm at AAEA and AAEF. Niebaum begins effective October 3. Patterson will remain in a full-time capacity through October 31 before taking on a smaller advisory role through next year.

"We are grateful for Steve's leadership and commitment to the growth of advanced energy in Arkansas and we respect his decision to retire," Board Chairs McChesney and Hood said in a joint statement. "Katie brings a dynamic record of innovation and achievement and we look forward to working with her as both of our organizations enter into the next phase of development."

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Niebaum brings more than five years of experience at one of the nation's largest business trade associations, the last two of which she worked as Vice President, Communications and Media Relations. During her tenure representing the $780 billion restaurant and food service industry, she led communications and media relations strategies and helped advance policy and business goals for the industry.

Previously, Niebaum worked more than seven years in the office of U.S. Senator Blanche Lincoln where she rose to Communications Director in 2008. A graduate of the University of Virginia, Niebaum was born and raised in Little Rock where she graduated from Central High School.

"AAEA is the business voice for an exciting and innovative industry that is having a significant impact on Arkansas's economy," Niebaum said. "I look forward to advocating on behalf of our members -- advanced energy leaders across the state who are creating jobs and careers in their communities and providing cost-saving energy solutions for Arkansas consumers."

This will technically be Patterson's second retirement. He retired from government in 2006 after serving as Chief of Staff for Members of Congress, including U.S. Senator Blanche Lincoln, for 26 years. In 2007, he opened CDP Strategies, LLC, a strategic and event planning consulting company and in 2011 worked with Policy Director Ken Smith and others to form the Arkansas Advanced Energy Association and its educational affiliate, the Arkansas Advanced Energy Foundation.

Both organizations have grown in size and influence over their first five years with AAEA boasting a membership today of 90 member companies and several policy achievements, including PACE and the Arkansas Energy Performance Contracting Program. The Foundation has hosted numerous educational events, including Energy, Jobs & the Economy, a workshop for legislative candidates, and the Expert Speaker Series. AAEF has also commissioned key economic studies, such as the Advanced Energy jobs survey which found more than 25,000 Arkansans working in the AE industry in 2014.

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