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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CROSS CHAMBER DEVELOPS LEADERSHIP PROGRAM

First session set Sept. 26 at EACC

WYNNE – The application process for a new leadership program that will give Cross County residents the opportunity to learn a little more about themselves and their communities is now underway.

Cross County Visionaries, a 9-month leadership program developed by the Cross County Chamber of Commerce, will feature a total of eight class sessions held from September 2008 through April 2009, with a graduation ceremony slated for next May. The first session, set for Sept. 26, will take place at East Arkansas Community College's Adventure Training Center in Forrest City.

Participants in the program will receive training in areas of leadership to better serve the communities where they live and work. A curriculum combining leadership techniques presented by the University of Arkansas' Cooperative Extension Service and informational tours of local facilities will provide participants with a balanced experience.

“Creating the leadership program was one of the major goals of the Cross County Chamber this year,” said Chamber President Joy Shepherd. “I’m really excited about our inaugural Cross County Visionaries class and the future positive impact participants will have on our county.”

The class is open to anyone who lives or works in Cross County. A tuition fee of \$250, which can be covered by an employer, sponsoring organization or the individual, will

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help pay the various costs associated with facilitating the program. A total of 15 individuals will be chosen by the chamber's "education and leadership" committee to participate in the course after interested parties have completed their applications.

Applications for the program will be available in Wynne at the Cross County Chamber of Commerce's office, located inside the Bill Thomas Building. They will also be available at the city halls of Cherry Valley, Parkin and Hickory Ridge or online at www.crosscountychamber.com.

"We certainly want participation from all parts of Cross County," said Keri House, chairperson of the chamber's education and leadership committee.

In addition to including participants from all across the county, the course's curriculum will feature visits to all four Cross County incorporated towns. Class members will also visit the state capitol in Little Rock.

"This program will give the participants a chance to learn not only about our county, but a little about our state government and our state's history," said Aaron Stewart, executive director of the chamber and Cross County Economic Development Corp. "It is crucial to have pride and an understanding of our past if we are to succeed in the future."

Brian Thompson, director of external affairs for the chamber, said his participation in a similar program in Newport was a memorable experience.

"I participated in the fourth class of the New Vision Newport leadership program," said Thompson. "Through that class, I learned valuable information about Newport and Jackson County. I also learned more about myself and made crucial friendships and contacts. Ironically, I just visited Newport last week to attend a reunion session of the first five classes of the program.

"A leadership program in Cross County will be vital as we build toward a bright future," he added. "Having a leadership program will not only benefit our community internally. It will also speak volumes to the rest of the state and is an important part of our on-going and future economic development efforts."

The deadline for program application is Friday, Aug. 29 at 4 p.m. The chamber's education and leadership committee will then select program participants the following week.

For more information on the program, contact the Cross County Chamber at (870) 238-2601 or visit www.crosscountychamber.com.

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