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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

KNOXVILLE, Tenn. – Michael Edwards, who has served as president and CEO of the Knoxville Chamber for the past 16 years, announced today his intention to retire in January 2019.

“During my tenure here, I have had the good fortune to work with outstanding business leaders, elected officials, volunteers and staff members who are committed to making Knoxville a stronger community,” Edwards stated. “Although I will miss the people and mission of this organization, I believe it is a good time for a new leader. In 2019, the Chamber will celebrate its 150th anniversary. As we look back to celebrate the past, we will also look forward to what comes next.”

Terry Turner, the chairman of the Knoxville Chamber and president of All Occasions Party Rentals, said Edwards will leave an organization that is financially sound, with membership as large as the bigger Tennessee cities of Memphis and Nashville, and a track record of economic development successes.

“Mike can be proud of what the organization has accomplished,” Turner said. “The Chamber’s volunteer leaders understand that naming a successor who will build upon these achievements is important for the business climate of the greater Knoxville area to continue to prosper.”

Under Edwards’ leadership, the Knoxville Chamber was named the 2011 Chamber of the Year by the American Chamber of Commerce Executives and holds Five-Star Accreditation from the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, a distinction held by only 200 chambers of the approximately 7,000 chambers in the United States that recognizes outstanding contributions toward positive change in their communities.

Edwards, 67, has championed public education in Tennessee, particularly as an advocate for more rigorous standards for kindergarten through 12th grade students to meet employers’ needs for a qualified workforce and to increase opportunity for all citizens. Tennessee first committed to raising its education standards in 2007 after receiving an “F” from the U.S. Chamber of Commerce for low academic expectations and for truth in advertising on K-12 education.

(more)

Page two

Gov. Bill Haslam in 2011 appointed Edwards to the Tennessee Board of Education to represent the state's 2nd Congressional District. He was reappointed in 2016 to serve a term that ends in 2021.

Edwards is also a founding member of the Board of Trustees of the Great Schools Partnership, an organization that supports innovation and excellence in Knox County Schools. He is a Ford Fellow focusing on regional education partnerships and sustainability.

In addition, he serves on the board of the U.S. Chamber of Commerce Foundation, the UT-Battelle Development Corp., the managing contractor for Oak Ridge National Laboratory, and The Development Corp. of Knox County. He is immediate past chairman and on the board of directors of the YMCA of East Tennessee and serves on the UT Graduate School of Medicine Board of Visitors.

The Knoxville Chamber drives regional economic prosperity through programming that educates, connects and engages the business community to make Knoxville the premier location for businesses to locate, operate and expand. The organization also manages Knoxville-Oak Ridge Innovation Valley, the region's economic development partnership, and serves as the economic development agency for the city of Knoxville and Knox County under contracts for services. In addition, the Knoxville Chamber provides management services to the Knoxville Entrepreneur Center and the Central Business Improvement District.

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