

SPRINGFIELD NEWS-SUN



Chamber picks local man to head development

Springfield Foundation development officer Horton Hobbs selected.

By Everdeen Mason, Staff Writer

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SPRINGFIELD — The Greater Springfield Chamber of Commerce recouped quickly after losing its vice president of economic development, a key figure in bringing new business and jobs to the city, in September.

The chamber has chosen Horton Hobbs, current development officer for the Springfield Foundation to replace David Zak as VP after Zak took a job the state department of development. Hobbs, who starts at his new post in January, will also handle the day-to-day operations for the county Community Improvement Corporation.

"We have such tremendous momentum in this community," Hobbs said. "And to be able to be part of a team effort with the city, county and chamber working to bring jobs and more importantly, retain jobs that we have, is great."

In the third quarter of 2011, the chamber reported that more than \$70 million was invested in the community for new or expansion projects and more than 700 new jobs were added to the labor force. The chamber's latest success is helping plastic food packaging company Tech II secure a state loan in exchange for bringing 22 new jobs at Tech II. The loan will assist with an expansion that will retain 315 jobs.

"We have to take care of what we have and if we do that well it will help in our efforts to attract new business to this community, Hobbs said. "There's a light shining on this community."

Hobbs' knowledge of the community will assist him in his new position. The 36-year-old has lived in Springfield all his life, and graduated from Shawnee High School and Wittenberg University. Before his work at the Springfield Foundation, he was executive director of the Center City Association and planning director for New Carlisle.

His local ties were one of the major selling points for the chamber, said Mike McDorman, president and CEO. He said that normally, it takes about three years for someone to truly assimilate into a community.

"He knows the community, knows the people and community leaders in the city and county, and usually it takes approximately three years to overcome that," McDorman said. "We're going to take that three-year education and wipe it away day one and get right to economic development."

Hobbs previous work in the community makes him familiar with some of the aspects of

development planning as well as with area leaders.

"I've worked with (Hobbs) through out his various positions," said Tom Franzen, vice president of economic development. "He has always been a team player and has a sound understanding of the community and economic development and he'll be able to hit the ground running."

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