



Meet your new Chamber president

Edwards takes over prestigious position from Jones

Following an unprecedented two-year term as president by Judy O. Jones, Jess Edwards is the new president of the Kinston-Lenoir County Chamber of Commerce board of directors.

Edwards grew up in Kinston, attended Arendell Parrott Academy and graduated from N.C. State with a degree in economics. He returned to his hometown of Kinston to start his business career with Sanderson Farms, in their management training program.

After three years of gaining experience in the corporate world — and deciding he wanted to make Kinston his family's permanent home — Jess left Sanderson to found Eastern Outdoor Development Inc., a billboard and outdoor advertising company.

He earned his N.C. real estate brokers license in 2007 and in 2015 became the owner of Kinston Realty Group Inc. He enjoys managing Eastern Outdoor, leading the team at Kinston Realty Group and serving his clients in real estate brokerage and property management.

Edwards is actively involved in the community; in addition to serving as the chairman of the Kinston-Lenoir County Chamber of Commerce, he also serves on the Salvation Army Advisory Board, on the executive board of the Lenoir County Committee of 100 and chairman of the Kinston Planning Board.

He has previously served on



the St. Mary's Church Vestry, the Kinston Country Club board, the Kinston Noon Rotary Club Board of Directors and the Coastal Plains Board of Realtors Professional Standards Committee.

Edwards was named one of the 2016 Rising Stars by the N.C.

Association of Realtors and was a 20-Under-40 recipient in 2018 by The Free Press.

Edwards is married to Dacie and they have two beautiful daughters, Leah and Mary Helen. He enjoys spending his free time working on the farm, hunting and playing golf.



Spruill serves as Chamber VP

Jaimie Spruill is the Vice President of Membership Services for the Kinston-Lenoir County Chamber of Commerce. Spruill, a native of Williamston, began her professional career in Winston-Salem at State Employees Credit Union and later transferred to Greenville, where she worked collectively at the organization for seven years as a teller, loan officer and mortgage officer. She later transitioned to Greater Kinston Credit Union and now serves as the branch manager and CEO. She earned her Bachelor of Science in Entrepreneurship from UNC Greensboro in 2012 and earned her Master of Science in Non-profit Management and Leadership from Walden University in 2017. She also founded her own nonprofit organization, Future Leaders of Wall Street Inc., in 2018. She has one daughter, Nyjae.

Chamber continues to celebrate Black-owned businesses

The Kinston-Lenoir County Chamber of Commerce is celebrating February — Black History Month — by honoring several Black-owned businesses in the county.

Videos with the owners of the businesses have been recorded all month long and are being broadcast on the Chamber's Facebook page (facebook.com/kinstonchamber).

"We have enjoyed learning about these important Black-owned businesses all month long in these videos," Chamber Executive Director Craig Hill said. "Please be sure to visit our Facebook page to find out about them."

Some of the businesses that have been highlighted or will be highlighted by the Chamber include:

- Brown's Sweet Treats
- Gone Juice
- Jeano's Barber Shop
- Kinston Teens
- Manhattan Cigar
- Mills Funeral Home
- Perfecting Destiny Coaching Services
- R. Swinson Funeral Service
- Runway Boutique
- Sassy's Fitness

If you would like your Black-owned business to be featured — or if you would like to nominate a business for this feature — call Linda Whittington at 252-527-1131.



Lillie Williams, the owner/operator of Perfecting Destiny Coaching Services, is featured in a Facebook video presented by the Kinston-Lenoir County Chamber of Commerce. Photo by Linda Whittington / Special to The Free Press

PRESIDENT'S CLUB

These members choose to make a higher-level financial investment in the Chamber. The support of these businesses helps the Chamber realize its vision.

PLATINUM LEVEL MEMBER:

Crown
Spirit AeroSystems

GOLD LEVEL MEMBERS:

Down East Protection Systems
Duke Energy
Electrolux
The Free Press
UNC Lenoir Health Care

SILVER LEVEL MEMBERS:

City of Kinston
CopyPro, Inc.
ElectriCities of N.C., Inc.
First Citizens Bank & Trust Co.
GOECO
Harmony Hall Nursing & Rehabilitation Center
Harvey Fertilizer & Gas
Herald Office Solutions
Heritage Elite Estate
Judy O. Jones, State Farm Insurance
Lenoir Community College
Lions Industries for the Blind
Minges Bottling Group, Inc.
Perry Management
Principle Long Term Care
State Employees Credit Union
Union Bank
Wells Fargo
West Pharmaceuticals Services, Inc.