

SKED PRESS RELEASE
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Contact: Cheryl Meadows
Communications Director
(606) 677-6101

Blakeman Selected New SKED Board Director in 2013

SOMERSET, Ky. Lincoln County resident and SAIC Program Manager David Blakeman is the newest addition to the Southeast Kentucky Economic Development Corporation (SKED) Board of Directors.

Blakeman and Rodney Hitch, East Kentucky Power Cooperative (EKPC) economic development manager, were elected to serve on the SKED Board of Directors in December and joined the board in January.

It's Blakeman's 11 years of expertise in the systems engineering, analysis and program management field that made him an appealing candidate for the board. He brings valuable information on how to attract technology-based companies to the region and will be a resource when working with future and existing government contractors. In the past, he's worked with SKED, the Center for Rural Development and the National Institute for Hometown Security by hosting a number of regional training, exercise, and technology initiatives for the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and other government agencies.

Blakeman grew up in Burgin, Kentucky on Herrington Lake. There, he learned the importance of financial management and entrepreneurship from his mother and worked with his father on boat docks, odd jobs and their small farm raising cattle. Like many young men, farming wasn't his dream, so he spent his free time working on mechanical projects, building, and working with his hands. That love led him to pursue a degree in physics/mathematics. He graduated with a bachelor of science degree from University of the Cumberlands (then Cumberland College) in Williamsburg in 2001.

His degree took him away from Kentucky for a period of time during which he worked for Lockheed Martin Space Systems Company designing weapon systems for the military. In 2004, Blakeman returned to Kentucky where he began working as a systems engineer for SAIC in the Valley Oak Technology Complex. He has worked his way up to chief engineer, deputy program manager and ultimately assistant vice president and program manager for the Fortune 500 Company.

But sitting behind a desk 40 hours a week made him yearn to return to his farming roots. Today, evenings and weekends he spends time working his small family farm in nearby Crab Orchard. He is not alone in his farm work as he and his family work together. He is assisted by

his wife, Bridgett and four children: Cole, age 10, Caroline, 8, Reese, 7, and Jonas, age 3. Whether it's farming, homeschooling, or church activities they approach life together supporting and encouraging one another.

"It's on a very small scale now (approximately 30 acres) and I'm learning every day. I've had a lot of help from my wife's family and some of my closest friends who farm every day. They have taken me under their wings and been so generous with their years of knowledge and time," Blakeman said. "I'm starting my third year of crops and look forward to getting out on the farm every chance I get. I'm sure part of the appeal is that farming is different from the kind of work I do from 8-5 every day, but I also think there is a certain aspect to it that brings joy and closeness to our Creator."

Now, once a month, he'll take time from his busy schedule to join 11 other business and professional men and women at meetings where the decisions that shape SKED's mission and future are made.

"SKED is a tremendously capable organization that has fueled economic growth in the region. I have seen firsthand how they work with companies to offer cost-efficient and viable solutions for enabling high-tech companies to operate in rural areas," Blakeman said. "They also provide a direct connection to community leaders and civic organizations to invite partnerships and the opportunity for companies to 'give back' to their local community through service."

"SKED is excited to have David's valuable input as a director on the SKED Board," said SKED Executive Director Greg Jones. "David has a wealth of knowledge in the technology, government contracting and small farm business to draw from. We look forward to working with him."

Other members of the SKED Board of Directors include: Tim Barnes, Hometown Bank president and CEO; Shirley Gifford, Somerset CPA; Ben Sams, Windstream Communications account executive; Darryl McGaha, Lake Cumberland ADD workforce development director; Charlene Harris, president and CEO of First National Bank of Russell Springs; Michael Hayes, director of the Kentucky Highlands Empowerment Zone and special projects manager for Kentucky Highlands Investment Corp.;

Dr. Jo Marshall, president of Somerset Community College, Virginia Flanagan, special assistant to the President of Campbellsville University, Daryl Smith, economic development executive with Kentucky Utilities in Lexington; Corey Craig, president and CEO of Citizen's Bank of Mount Vernon and East Kentucky Power Economic Development Manager Rodney Hitch.

SKED is a nonprofit economic development organization formed by Congressman Hal Rogers in 1986 to create jobs in a 45-county service area in Southern and Eastern Kentucky. In cooperation with other economic development groups and the state of Kentucky, SKED has assisted more than 100 companies to expand or establish new operations within the region. These businesses have created more than 10,000 jobs. For more information, visit www.southeastkentucky.com.

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