

CRS BOARD OF DIRECTORS Board Nominees, 2015



Van Perry took the helm at International Expeditions in November 2011 as president of this global nature travel company located in Helena Alabama. He has more than 20 years of experience in building global brands and strategic marketing. In addition to 10 years as global marketing manager at The Moorings & Sunsail Sailing Vacations, Perry spearheaded the U.S. Olympic Team and Olympic Games sponsorship marketing initiatives for NationsBank where he worked for 15 years and directed global brand strategy and led the Olympic and Sports Marketing team. Perry also worked as CFO in a division of the bank that focused on neighborhood revitalization programs throughout the South. An avid cyclist and outdoorsman, Van enjoys sailing, hiking, skiing, kayaking and triathlons. One of his favorite summer internships was working as an assistant park ranger at Mt. Mitchell State Park in North Carolina. He is married with two girls and lives in Mountain Brook.

"I am very interested in leveraging my 20 years of marketing and international nature travel experience for the Society's benefit at this exciting time in the organizations history. I am a very enthusiastic supporter of the Cahaba Blueway project and hope to focus on that and build upon the great foundation the team has already provided. I believe this has the potential to make a significant contribution to our quality of life in the state, the watershed and for tourism in the surrounding region. I would be honored to be able to volunteer and support this effort."



Laura Kate Whitney serves as chief connector at Dogtrot Studio, a Birmingham-based branding house specializing in small business strategy, design and communications. Fueled by her love for the Birmingham community, Laura Kate is passionate about bringing people together to impact change.

Laura Kate has been featured in Birmingham Magazine, skirt! Magazine, SoullnStereo.com, NPR, and Birmingham Home & Garden. Her work has been published by B-Metro, WELD for Birmingham, and BirminghamMommy.com. She was a 2014 TEDx Birmingham speaker.

Laura Kate Whitney arrived in Birmingham as a transplant in 2009 and immediately fell in love with the city and its landscape. Laura Kate worked with CRS staff and board in 2010 on the launch of the annual Fry-Down event. She spends her free time exploring and discovering with her two young sons, Grey and Dean. Laura Kate is looking forward to supporting the organization's future growth and is counting down the days until she can once again paddle down the Cahaba in search of those brilliant lilies.



Robert Pless, Senior Vice President, ServisFirst Bank, is a proud native of Alabama with deep roots in both the business community and the outdoors. An avid hunter, fisherman and ultra-trailrunner, he grew up playing in Shades Creek and has never lost his passion for the natural world. Robert has competed in the Cahaba River Society's Cahaba Ramble race for several years and has helped CRS build a partnership with the urban educational initiatives of Independent Presbyterian Church. Robert brings experience in the financial management of non-profits and is committed to development and sharing his love of the Cahaba River basin.

Nominated for Election to 2nd Term, for 3 years:



Dr. Rob Angus is a retired Professor Emeritus of Biology at the University of Alabama at Birmingham. He also serves on the Board of the Alabama Rivers Alliance, the Advisory Board of the Black Warrior Riverkeeper and the Board of the Valley Lake Association. Rob, his colleagues, and his students have engaged in considerable research evaluating the effects of urban development on fish and invertebrate populations in the Cahaba and other Rivers in the Birmingham vicinity. Rob is a fisherman and musician who enjoys playing the banjo and hammered dulcimer.



Dr. Betsy Dobbins is the Paul N. Propst Professor of Natural Sciences in the Department of Biological and Environmental Sciences at Samford University, and is also the co-director of Clark Scholars Program in Computational Biology. She is fascinated by complex pattern formation and teaches courses in Neuroscience, Embryology, and Bioinformatics while doing research in a wide variety of areas.. A longtime advocate of environmental education, Betsy is a member of the Board of the Friends of Shades Creek and the coordinator of Earth Day activities at Samford University. She and her husband, Allan, a fellow scientist, and sons, William and James, enjoy hiking, travel, and being on the water.



Arlan Lewis is a member of Bradley Arant Boult Cummings LLP Construction and Procurement and Government Contracts Practice Groups. An architect by education, Arlan's strong interest in the construction industry is evident in his representation of contractors, subcontractors, owners, design professionals, and suppliers on a variety of issues arising out of complex commercial construction projects in the private and public sectors. Arlan regularly represents construction industry clients in all aspects of litigation in state and federal courts in several jurisdictions around the country, and on occasion, internationally.

Arlan is a member of the Guiding Light Church in Birmingham, Alabama and currently serves on the Board of Directors for the Birmingham Urban League.



Lea Ann Macknally is a licensed Landscape Architect and President of Macknally Land Design. She has over a decade of experience in the profession of landscape architecture with a strong focus on the design of public spaces and integrated sustainable design. Lea Ann took over as President of the firm in 2007 and continues to lead the firm on exciting projects such as Birmingham's Railroad Park, Benjamin Russell Children's Hospital Campus and Alabama National Cemetery.

Lea Ann's experience and passion for her work has led to opportunities in promoting native landscape design and restoration, innovative stormwater management, and the importance of civic spaces. She has led the firm's focus in the philosophy of creating innovative and collaborative design concepts with a strong practical foundation



Angela Pewitt was raised in Massachusetts, eventually settling in Birmingham, where she has lived for the last 20-plus years. Angela served as a volunteer for the Bell Center for 7 years, a member of the Junior Women’s Committee of 100 for the Emmett O’Neal Library and , for the last 5 years as a member on the Board of the Birmingham Children’s Theatre. An avid trail runner, road runner, triathlete, and duathlete, she launched her own line of running shorts for women in 2011. (www.alektrarunwear.com.) One of her favorite runs is the Society’s Cahaba River Ramble. Angela has been an active supporter of the Ramble. When she isn’t working on her running shorts, Angela sells advertising for Birmingham-based Flower magazine. She and her husband Jim have two teenage sons.

Nominated for Election to 3rd Term, for 1 year:



Jim Proctor is the Senior Vice President and General Counsel for McWane, Inc. He received his BA from The University of Virginia and his JD from the University of Alabama. He serves on the Board of Advisors for several organizations, including the Green Building Council – Alabama Chapter and Birmingham Southern College. He is a member of the American Bar Association, the Alabama State Bar Association; Leadership Birmingham; Canterbury United Methodist Church; and the United Way of Central Alabama Allocation Team. He is married to Laura Proctor and has three children.



Merrill H. Stewart, Jr. is the President and Founder of the Stewart Perry Company, Inc., a regional construction company founded in 1984. Over the last 25 years, Stewart Perry has been actively involved in commercial construction throughout the Southeast and Mid-Atlantic States. Born in Miami, Mr. Stewart grew up in Atlanta prior to moving to Birmingham, and is a graduate of Auburn University. He has served on numerous boards, including the Associated Builders and Contractors, The Highlands School Board and Chair of Trustees, The Executive Board of The Boy Scouts of America, The Birmingham Southern College Presidents Advisory Council and The University of the South (Sewanee) Parents Council and Visiting College Committee.

Returning Board

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Friends of Shades Creek
Marketing Specialist
America's First Federal Credit
Union*

Frazier Christy

*Manager
The E & LS Group, LLC*

Neil Davis

*President
Davis Architects*

John English

*Partner
Patty Melt, LLC*

Rev. Bobbie Epting

*Associate Pastor
Independent Presbyterian Church*

Will Goodwyn

*Vice Chairman and Secretary
Coca-Cola Bottling Co. United*

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*Associate Professor
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Matt Leavell

*Project Director
Alabama Innovation Engine*

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Cheryl Morgan, FAIA

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**deceased*