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By: Phillip Ramati

Macon-Bibb CVB hires Monica Smith as new president, CEO

The Macon-Bibb County Convention & Visitors Bureau has found the tourism group's next president and CEO — a Florida native currently working in California.

The CVB announced Tuesday that Monica R. Smith, 36, who currently works as director of sales and client services for the Pasadena, Calif., CVB, will assume her duties in Macon by July 1.

Janice Marshall, the Macon-Bibb CVB's longtime CEO, announced her retirement late last year and left the post earlier this month.

Ann Smith, chairwoman of the CVB's board of directors, said Monica Smith (who is not related to Ann Smith) is a great choice for the post, given her level of experience. "One of the things we were looking for is someone with really good sales experience," Ann Smith said. "When we interviewed our constituents, they wanted the CVB to sell Macon. She's got the whole package — sales experience, management experience and I think even an accounting background. It's unusual to have someone who embodies all those qualities and skills."

Ann Smith said a search firm was hired to seek out candidates. She didn't know Tuesday how many applications the firm received for the position.

Monica Smith said Tuesday that Macon has a host of cultural and geographical assets that can be used to attract individual tourists and tour groups.

“I’ve got quite a lot of ideas running through my head,” she said. “We’re looking to attract more conventions and group-related business. I want to get oriented with my staff and identify more opportunities for new media marketing, and define what markets to focus on.”

Monica Smith has previously worked as the vice president of sales for the Newport Beach, Calif., CVB and as an account executive with the CVB of Greater Cleveland, Ohio.

She’s a graduate of Cornell University and a member of Meeting Professionals International. She’s also a member of Destination Marketing Association International and several other organizations.

Monica Smith is originally from Jacksonville, Fla. She is married to Andre Smith, and the couple has three children. Steve Jukes, chairman of the board for the Cherry Blossom Festival and incoming CVB board chairman, said he met Monica Smith and her husband when they visited Macon.

“They swept us off our feet,” Jukes said. “Her credentials are remarkable. She comes from a community that hosts the most legendary event in the U.S., the Tournament of Roses Parade. ... We talked to a lot of talented people, but she was absolutely the best of the best.”

Ann Smith said she looks forward to locals meeting Monica Smith.

“She’s going to be a great asset to our community,” Ann Smith said.