

Clinton's Main Street brings home MMSA awards

By Katherine R. Dougan

Since its inception in 2007, Main Street Clinton has been recognized with awards from The Mississippi Main Street Association. The tradition continued at a luncheon in downtown Jackson last month, when Main Street Clinton's Red Brick Roads Festival and "Main Street Hero" George Ewing III were celebrated and honored with awards at the annual event.

This is the 30th year for the awards luncheon, which honors Main Street directors, board members and volunteers and recognizes the most outstanding downtown development projects from Main Street communities in Mississippi.

Main Street Clinton's Red Brick Roads, a two-day, two-stage music festival and artist showcase, was presented an award in the category of Promotion/Premier Partner. The Premier Partner category recognizes creative joint ventures between the Main Street organization and another local, community entity or entities, public or private. Fran Nixon of Clinton accepted the award.

A joint project of Main Street Clinton, the Chamber of Commerce and the city of Clinton, the third annual event took place on the historic brick streets of Olde Towne last fall, featuring local singer-songwriters and regional bands, as well as filmmakers, artists, an onsite mural, a homebrew competition and more. The fourth annual Red Brick Roads is set for August 23 and 24.

The event represents a shared project with a common goal; and, with organizations working together, the Red Brick Roads Festival surpassed prior festivals in volunteerism, attendance and revenue, raising \$20,000 over three years. The Festival generates traffic to the city, which benefits local businesses and results in one of the biggest sales weekends of the year.

"Main Street Clinton continues to provide creative and innovative programs to make Clinton a great place to live and work," said Clinton Mayor Phil Fisher. "I am proud of Tara Lytal and her army of volunteers for all of the dedication they put forth to enhance the livability of Clinton."

A long-time volunteer with Main Street, George Ewing III, was rec-



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Fran Nixon of Clinton (right) accepts the Mississippi Main Street Association (MMSA) Premier Partner award for Main Street Clinton's Red Brick Roads event, which will be held for the fourth time this August. With Nixon is MMSA Board President Kevin Stafford.



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Pictured at left is Mississippi Main Street Association Board President Kevin Stafford presenting the Main Street Hero Award to Clinton's George Ewing, III, who has been a Main Street Clinton volunteer since the program's inception in 2007.

ognized in the category of Special Awards/Main Street Heroes, which is an award that recognizes one outstanding community leader or public figure who has displayed an involved commitment to downtown and his or her Main Street program.

Main Street leaders say the award description perfectly fits George Ewing, because just like the murals, artwork, bicycles and brick streets of Olde Towne, Ewing is a permanent fixture of Main Street and Clinton.

"When I think of the title 'Main Street Hero,' George naturally comes to mind. Never ceasing to amaze me with his boundless energy and can-do attitude, he has always answered my call for help," Main Street Director Tara Lytal said. "He is equally comfortable washing dishes or running a meeting, trimming trees or pulling the annual Caterpillar Queen on the float which he made. All is done with equal commitment and zeal."

Ewing's service to Main Street Clinton began in 2007, when he was asked to be one of the original board members to start the organization.

"He has been with us ever since. It was a privilege to nominate George for the state award and to see his contributions recognized," said Lytal.

In her nomination of Ewing for the Main Street Hero award, Lytal stated, "George Lamar Ewing, III is the definition of a Main Street hero. George has been with Main Street Clinton since the program began in 2007,

making him the longest serving board member. He has served as Promotions Committee Chairperson, Design Committee Chairperson, and in 2012 as President of the Board. A certified Landscape Architect, George gives generously of his talents and expertise to his hometown."

"George has spearheaded numerous beautification projects for Main Street Clinton," Lytal continues. "He has overseen the replacement of the Jefferson Street landscaping and been involved in the public art projects, creating one of the Bikes of Olde Towne. George was also instrumental in recruiting Cups Espresso Cafe to Olde Towne Clinton in 2008, one of Main Street Clinton's earliest success stories. While serving as the Promotions Committee Chairperson, George, along with Toni Wall and Debbie Tillman, came up with the idea for the now iconic Caterpillar Parade."

Fisher echoed Lytal's praise for Ewing, saying: "In particular, George Ewing is well deserving of this award and personifies the giving spirit of Main Street volunteers. From emptying trash cans to pulling the Caterpillar Queen in the parade, George never hesitates to assist Main Street with their events and programs. Clinton is blessed to have George Ewing serving Main Street."

Ewing, however, looks at his volunteerism to Main Street as what he is destined and honored to do.

"I have always had great love for

Clinton, especially Olde Towne, as have many others," Ewing said. "The Main Street program brought to Clinton a proven method of how to revitalize and enhance our Olde Towne and Boulevard Business Districts through Economic Restructuring, Design, Promotions and Organization.

"Main Street Clinton gives opportunities to people like me, with certain strengths and abilities, to work with people of different ages, races, abilities and backgrounds to create a cohesive program that benefits the Main Street Districts through enhancing their appearance, and opportunities for residential and business growth, which benefits us all!"

"The MMSA is honored to celebrate Mississippi's downtown communities," stated Kevin Stafford, Mississippi Main Street Association (MMSA) Board President. "Our local leaders, partners and investors are to be admired and commended for their vision and drive to reinvent, rehabilitate, grow and diversify the downtown experience, all while preserving its historical legacy."

"I am inspired by their entrepreneurial spirit and impressed by the economic opportunities provided to our communities," Stafford said.

MMSA currently has fifty-three active Main Street programs that include forty-seven Main Street communities and six downtown network members.

For more information about Main Street Clinton, call 601-924-5472.

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