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Lansing 5:01 Ushers in a Bold New Era with Appointment of Samantha Harkins as President & CEO

Lansing non-profit celebrates nearly a decade of impact while setting sights on a transformative future of regional talent attraction and population growth

LANSING, MI — Lansing 5:01, the region's premier talent attraction and retention nonprofit, proudly announces a transformational new chapter in its history with the appointment of Samantha Harkins as its first full-time President & CEO, effective July 2025. A respected leader in civic innovation, local government, and statewide advocacy, Harkins brings a deep well of experience from her role as Deputy Mayor of the City of Lansing and a career devoted to community building and economic development across Michigan.

"Lansing 5:01 has changed the talent attraction landscape in our region," said Samantha Harkins, incoming President & CEO. "This organization has made a meaningful impact for the people who live in and love Lansing. It's not just about recruiting or retaining talent; it's about cultivating a sense of place and purpose. I'm honored to lead this next chapter."

As part of this evolution, Lansing 5:01 has officially established a new 501(c)(3) nonprofit entity and convened a Board of Directors composed of top regional leaders and executives. The inaugural board will be chaired by **April Clobes**, President & CEO of Michigan State University Federal Credit Union (MSUFCU), whose leadership underscores the growing institutional commitment to the organization's mission.

"As a large regional employer, MSUFCU has been proud to support Lansing 5:01 since its inception," said April Clobes, President & CEO of MSUFCU. "Attracting and retaining top talent is essential to our region's continued growth, and organizations like Lansing 5:01 play a critical role in that effort. We are looking forward to the next chapter with Samantha as our new President and CEO as she builds on an already strong foundation. I'm honored to serve alongside the fellow board members who believe in the potential of this region, its talent and the future of Lansing 5:01."

Board Members Include:

- **Kwafo Adarkwa**, Lobbyist, Kelley Cawthorne
- **Bill Beekman**, VP of Strategic Initiatives, Michigan State University
- **Samantha Le**, Senior Associate, Martin Commercial Properties
- **Lolo Robison**, Chief Marketing & Public Information Officer, CATA
- **Rachel Michaud**, President & COO, Gillespie Group
- **Sherry Pfaff-Doody**, Director of Talent Acquisition, University of Michigan Health–Sparrow
- **Michelle Reynaert**, Chief Operating Officer, Michigan Farm Bureau
- **Jeff Smith**, Director, Research Parks, MSU Research Foundation

Lansing 5:01 exists to attract and retain top talent by spotlighting regional employers and connecting professionals to the vibrant culture and community that make Lansing a unique and desirable place to call home. In 2023, the organization launched Lansing: Be Our Neighbor, a bold campaign designed to boost regional vitality by converting out-of-state alumni and young professionals into permanent residents. Backed by strong employer support, the campaign includes an overhaul of Lansing 5:01's digital platform to better serve as a tool for talent recruitment.

Lansing 5:01 also plays an active role in statewide talent attraction efforts, including through its membership in the Back to Michigan Coalition, a network of like-minded organizations working to grow Michigan's population and deepen connections to communities.

"Growing Michigan's population is a group project and I'm grateful to have Samantha and the entire Lansing 5:01 team as partners in the Lansing area working to retain and attract a talented workforce," said Michigan's Chief Growth Officer Hilary Doe. "Our local communities are the front door to experiencing Michigan's great places, great opportunities, and welcoming communities. We will continue linking arms with partners across the state to ensure that all Michiganders have what they need to build bright futures and shared prosperity here in our state."

Founded in 2015 by Chris Sell, Lansing 5:01 began as a grassroots effort to help college interns and emerging professionals see Lansing as a viable place to start their careers. Over nearly a

decade, the organization has welcomed over 40,000 young professionals through 75+ high-impact events across the tri-county area.

Today, the brand is a pillar in the region's economic development strategy. From signature events like Lansing Restaurant Week, Grand River Connection, Rooftop Hop, Rosé All Day, and the Dam Jam Music Festival, Lansing 5:01 has become synonymous with culture-forward talent programming.

Chris Sell will transition from his role as Executive Director to serve as an advisor to the organization while focusing on his full-time role with Michigan State University's Burgess Institute for Entrepreneurship & Innovation.

"This is a full-circle moment," said Sell. "We planted a seed nearly a decade ago, and today we see the roots taking hold across the community. With new leadership, a dynamic board, and a reinvigorated mission, the best is truly yet to come."

To learn more, get involved, or explore upcoming events, visit:

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