Simmons Bank to Sponsor Conference on Future of the Delta

The conference, titled “The Arkansas Delta: Why It Still Matters,” is designed to help community leaders network with each other and discuss how towns can be managed in the face of a declining population base.

The conference will begin at 9 a.m. and conclude at 4 p.m. A catered lunch will be served at noon. There’s no registration fee, but those planning to attend are required to register in advance.

“For years, many parts of east Arkansas have been losing population due to the mechanization of agriculture and other factors,” said George Makris Jr., the chairman and chief executive officer of Simmons First National Corp. “Unfortunately, that trend has accelerated in portions of the Delta since the turn of the century. It’s time for those who craft public policy in our state to come up with a comprehensive plan for dealing with the problems associated with outmigration from the Delta.

“Simmons Bank has been proud to call Pine Bluff home since 1903. And we’re proud to sponsor this public policy conference in Pine Bluff that hopefully will spur efforts to come up with a coordinated approach to addressing the issues we face.”

The co-chairmen for the conference are Rex Nelson of Simmons Bank, Judge Raymond Abramson of the Arkansas Court of Appeals and Ritter Arnold of E. Ritter & Co.

Speakers will include:

- Dr. John Kirk, the director of the University of Arkansas at Little Rock’s Institute on Race and Ethnicity and the school’s Donaghey Distinguished Professor of History. Kirk will speak on the complicated history of race relations in the Arkansas Delta.
- Mike Preston, the executive director of the Arkansas Economic Development Commission, who will speak on economic development in the Delta.
- Greg Hamilton, a senior research economist, demographer and director of research at the Institute for Economic Advancement at UALR. Hamilton will speak on outmigration in the Delta.

The conference also will feature panels on health care, education, agriculture and economic development.

About Simmons First National Corporation

Simmons First National Corp. is a financial holding company headquartered in Pine Bluff, Ark., with total assets of almost $7.6 billion. The company conducts financial operations in Arkansas, Kansas, Missouri and Tennessee. The company’s wholly owned subsidiary, Simmons First National Bank, offers comprehensive financial solutions delivered with a client-centric approach. The company’s common stock trades on the NASDAQ Global Select Market under the symbol “SFNC.”

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