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Northwest Arkansas Executives to Judge Fundraising Pitch Competition

Lynne and Jim Walton to serve as honorary events chairs for virtual event

**LITTLE ROCK–**On Tuesday, March 16th virtual event attendees will have a chance to pitch a product idea in front of some our state’s top executives, but it won’t be just any idea; these products be conceptualized and prototyped in 10 minutes using very limited supplies announced at the start of the event. Attendees will then have to pitch their ideas in front of the state’s top executives. Honorary judges include John Furner (President and CEO of Wal-Mart, U.S.) and his wife Brandy, Shelley Simpson (Chief Commercial Officer, EVP of People & HR at JB Hunt), Todd Simmons (CEO & Co-Vice Chair of Simmons Foods), Megan Crozier (EVP and Chief Merchant of Sam’s Club), and Scott Spradley (Chief Technology Officer of Tyson) and his wife Annie. This event is chaired by long-time board member of Economics Arkansas, Jim Walton (Chairman and CEO of Arvest), and his wife Lynne.

This event mirrors one of the many engaging ways Economics Arkansas trains teachers to make economic education exciting in the classroom no matter what grade or what subject. Encouraging the entrepreneurial spirit is just one facet of this work. For 59 years, Economics Arkansas been a valuable resource for PreK-12 classrooms across the state. In 2020, more than 4,600 participants were trained to integrate economics, entrepreneurship, and financial education into the classroom – making 2020 a record year for the organization.

The *Think Inside the Box* fundraiser is similar to a lesson plan offered as part of the iNSPIRE curriculum, a set of middle and high school lesson plans built around the *This is Capitalism* series (presented by Stephens Inc.) featuring ordinary individuals that have accomplished extraordinary things. A lesson surrounding the story of Madame C.J. Walker gives students the opportunity to learn product development by building a product using limited materials. In the March 16th virtual event, attendees will be the students.

“When schools went virtual last March, Economics Arkansas immediately pivoted from in-person trainings to virtual learning opportunities,” says Kathleen Lawson, Executive Director. “We are excited to bring that experience to a virtual fundraising event where we can showcase our efforts to take the ‘eek’ out of economics.”

The virtual event will take place on March 16th at 6:00 p.m. Sponsorships start at $1,500. Seating is limited to 50 attendees. Sponsorship and ticket inquiries can be made with Kathleen Lawson at kathleen@economicsarkansas.org or by visiting [www.economicsarkansas.org](http://www.economicsarkansas.org)

**About Economics Arkansas:** Economics Arkansas (through the Arkansas Council on Economic Education) is a private, non-profit, non-partisan, educational organization founded in 1962 by Dr. Arch Ford and led by Dr. Bessie B. Moore to promote economic literacy in Arkansas. Its mission is to equip PreK-12 schools with standards-based resources and professional development to teach economics, personal finance and the free-enterprise system using practical, innovative and inspiring methods so that Arkansas students may master an understanding of economics and personal finance and apply that knowledge for success in the free-enterprise system.

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