

# Meet Kathleen Lawson, New Executive Director of Economics Arkansas

by Claudia Utley  
Economics Arkansas

Economics Arkansas has a new executive director.

Kathleen Lawson took the helm of the organization in early October. That makes her only the fifth chief executive in the almost 56-year-long history of this non-profit organization committed to raising the economic and personal finance literacy education of Arkansas students in grades PreK-12.

Kathleen says she feels “honored and privileged” to have been chosen for the post. That’s true, but a polite understatement. EA staff, partners and donors who have gotten to know her over the past several months have discovered her passionate, almost exuberant sense of excitement about growing the organization’s impact on Arkansans.

Prepare to be inspired.

And so she is on a whirlwind tour through the state to introduce herself to the extended Economics Arkansas family, including teachers, superintendents and principals, as well as its supporters such as bankers, foundation officers, and private and corporate philanthropists.



Bankers have traditionally been among Economics Arkansas’s strongest supporters ever since the legendary first executive director, Bessie B. Moore, in 1962 convened two dozen Arkansas businessmen and bankers in a conference room of the former Marion Hotel in Little Rock, locked the doors and explained her dire need for funding to send 52 teachers to economics workshops. The necessary sum was pledged within the hour.

Kathleen is just as direct, but much more diplomatic. In fact, she would like to start every face-to-face meeting with each Arkansas banker with this question: “In five years from now, what do you hope we will have accomplished with Economics Arkansas?”

Please welcome her with open doors and open minds and discuss how bankers, businesses and educators can all work together to raise economically and financially savvy citizens for the betterment of us all.

Born and raised in Greenbrier, Kathleen is the fourth of eight children. Growing up in a large, lively family meant plenty of opportunities to experience “scarcity”—mainly of peace and quiet—the necessity of budgeting and an early appreciation for the relationship between choices and consequences. Although she didn’t know the vernacular at the time,



**Economics Arkansas presented this fall at the Council on Economic Education annual conference about Arkansas Reads One Book, a statewide family financial literacy project. Left to Right, Marsha Masters, Economics Arkansas; Mike Poore, Little Rock School District; Kathleen Lawson; and Gary Anderson, Read to Them.**





Kathleen with husband Brian, daughter Madelyn (6) and son Hudson (4).

Kathleen said her childhood prepared her well for the economic way of thinking.

At UA-Little Rock, she earned a bachelor of science degree in social work and a masters of public administration. Over the last 15 years, her professional career has focused almost exclusively on the non-profit sector, with positions at the Alzheimer's Association, Pulaski County Youth Services and, most recently, at the Museum of Discovery where she led the Arkansas Discovery Network.

Kathleen is a member of the Arkansas State Chamber Leadership Arkansas Class XI (2016-17), the Arkansas STEM Coalition, the Junior League of Little Rock and various boards, as well as the founder and editor of the Between the Rock and a Fun Place website.

She and her husband, Brian, live in North Little Rock with their children Madelyn, 6, and Hudson, 4. The family are ardent travelers and hope to visit all 50 states by 2021. In addition, Kathleen's love for the ocean will probably take her on a life-long quest to find the perfect beach. In the meantime, she hopes to make the landlocked state of Arkansas a national leader in economic and personal finance education in schools.

Please join her and the Economics Arkansas staff in making that goal a reality.

Kathleen welcomes your input anytime by phone at 501-682-4349 and email at [kathleen@economicsarkansas.org](mailto:kathleen@economicsarkansas.org).



When they aren't checking off states across the continental U.S., Kathleen and her family like to island hop with Mickey and friends via Disney Cruise Line. This picture was taken in February aboard the Disney Fantasy.

## How Can Economics Arkansas Help Your Bank?

Partnerships benefit all parties involved. Consider how Economics Arkansas can enhance your effectiveness as Arkansas bankers in the economic development and prosperity of your local community:

- **Connect with the younger generations/Millennials.** Through our frequent interaction with teachers and their students, we know what motivates and concerns our youngest residents. We can facilitate relevant, hands-on economics, entrepreneurship and personal finance projects that involve all members of the community.
- **Nurture the next generation of bankers.** Our engaging personal finance projects and programs such as the Stock Market Game have inspired many a student to consider a career in banking or business. Bankers can reinforce that notion with classroom presentations, loan consultations for classroom markets, bank tours and similar.
- **Develop educational resources for consumers.** Banks can adapt and customize our teacher resources and lesson plans for relevant family guides, student games and activities, phone apps, tip sheets and more.
- **Expand personal finance education beyond the PreK-12 classroom.** We can collaborate with local bankers and businesses to develop personal finance education targeted at audiences outside the traditional elementary and secondary school environment.

**Do you have other ideas and suggestions?** At Economics Arkansas, we welcome your call at 501-682-4230.