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National Best-selling Authors of *Our Towns* Set to Keynote 2019 Downtown Annual Meeting

(Hattiesburg, Miss) - National best-selling authors Deborah and James Fallows of *Our Towns* will be the keynote speakers at the Downtown Hattiesburg Annual Meeting set for February 20, 2019, at the Historic Train Depot from noon to 1:30 p.m.

Our Towns is the story of the Fallows' journey throughout many communities in "flyover country" in the heart of America. During their travels and interactions, the Fallows identified key components that lead to success in small and mid-sized towns and cities. The Fallows will share these signs of civic success during their remarks at the annual meeting, highlighting that local resilience and adaptability create strong economies regardless of divisive national politics.

Downtown Hattiesburg Association Executive Director Andrea Saffle says the Association's leadership has worked diligently to achieve several of their strategic goals in 2018. As part of their overall plan for 2019, the Association wanted to invite a nationally-recognized speaker to their annual meeting.

"I truly believe that Hattiesburg is on the brink of big things. It has all the component parts to become 'The Premier City of the Gulf South'. We have a diverse economy, two universities, a vast arts community, and, as the book encourages, we know our story. Where we have fallen short, until recent years, has been broad collaboration and a shared vision for Hattiesburg's future prosperity," Saffle said.

"In the Fallow's book, each town talks in some way about the importance of breaking down silos and working together. Very soon you start to see a pattern emerge of what

they call the '11 common signs a city will succeed'. My biggest hope is this visit and conversation spark more momentum for Hattiesburg," Saffle said.

David Ott is serving as the 2019 President of the Downtown Hattiesburg Association.

"After reading the Fallows' book, *Our Towns*, I am eager to hear what they have to say to us as a community, where they see us now, where we seem to be going, and share ideas of how to move the needle in a meaningful way. I am ready to learn from them and make it part of our plan for developing Downtown Hattiesburg," Ott said.

During the 2019 annual meeting, Downtown Hattiesburg will also share a 2018 economic report for the downtown area, along with 2019 goals and an awards presentation to several local standouts. Tickets are \$25 for association members and \$30 for non-members. Lunch is also included in ticket price.

Tickets are available for purchase on Eventbrite and Downtown Hattiesburg's Facebook page. Advance ticket purchases are encouraged. The Fallows book will also be available for purchase during a book signing following the event.

James Fallows, a national correspondent for *The Atlantic* for more than 35 years, is the author of 11 books. During his career, Fallows reported from numerous countries and throughout the United States. He won the prestigious National Book Award and National Magazine Award. Fallows was also chief speechwriter for President Jimmy Carter.

Deborah Fallows, Ph.D., is the author of two books and numerous articles highlighting women, work, education and travel. She has written for *The Atlantic*, *National Geographic*, *The New York Times*, and *The Washington Monthly*. A graduate of Harvard University, Fallows has also worked with Pew Research Center and Georgetown University.

Downtown Hattiesburg Association focuses on a mission of revitalization and historic preservation of the Downtown district, making it the vibrant and creative center of Hattiesburg. Since its founding in 1985, DHA, a Mississippi Main Street program, has spearheaded the revitalization of Hattiesburg's historic core through partnerships to focus its growth and development on the Main Street Four Point Approach of the National Main Street Center: Organization, Design, Promotion, and Economic Vitality. The Association promotes, markets and educates investors, developers, entrepreneurs, businesses, shoppers, visitors and residents that Downtown Hattiesburg is a destination – a place to live, work, and play.

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