


Local

# Shake appointed new GRADD executive director

 By Jacob Mulliken Messenger-Inquirer

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Joanna Shake, Green River Area Development District's associate director of Community and Economic Development, will take over the reins as GRADD executive director beginning May 1.

At a regular GRADD Board of Directors meeting on Wednesday, the board voted unanimously to promote Shake to the position held by current Executive Director Jiten Shah. Shah has been in the position for 32 years.

Shake has been with the development district for 25 years and began her career in 1994 as a community economic development intern. She credits Shah for instilling in her all of the knowledge she needs to take over the executive role, she said.

"I am excited to see what awaits," she said. "I have had the privilege of working with the best area development director in the state. I am indebted to Jiten for being my mentor and for showing me the ropes. I am confident in my skills because I have learned everything from him. I am excited about continuing the tradition of excellence, public service and improving the quality of life for our member counties."

Shah announced in December his intent to retire on April 30, prompting Ohio County Judge-Executive and GRADD Board Chair David Johnston to form an executive search committee with Henderson County Judge-Executive and GRADD Vice Chairman Brad Schneider at its helm. Aside from Schneider, the committee consists of Daviess County Judge-Executive and GRADD Board Secretary Al Mattingly, Webster County Judge-Executive and GRADD Board Treasurer Steve Henry, Union County Judge-Executive Adam O'Nan, Henderson Mayor Steve Austin and Beaver Dam Mayor Paul Sandefur.

"We are very confident in Joanna," Johnston said. "It was unanimous and the committee was unanimous when they brought it to me and she stood tall above some very qualified people. ... We have every confidence that she will do a great job."

Ultimately, after going through the prerequisite application requirements, the decision was "easy," Schneider said.

"It was not difficult, we were blessed," he said. "We wanted to make sure that we followed the process and if there was another applicant that really rose head and shoulders above everybody else that we would have the chance to consider that person as well. In the end, Joanna Shake was by far the most qualified and gave us the confidence that she could continue in the legacy of good management that Jiten has established. GRADD is held as a model and knowing we have Joanna made the choice easy. It is a long way of saying, 'Yeah, it was easy.'"

From dealing with government officials on the local, state and federal level to coordinating grant funding and social services, the GRADD executive director has many hats, all of which Shake can wear, Shah said.

“She will be excellent as the director,” he said. “The culture we build together strengthens us especially in the paths that we take. She is very experienced and she knows the folks locally, in Frankfort and Washington (D.C.). Having someone known is important, and I truly believe she will carry on the things that we have all built together.”

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