

Jon Levingston

A creative approach

By Charlotte Buchanan

Photograph By Jay Adkins

Jon Levingston has lived in Clarksdale since 1983, but was born and raised in Cleveland. His family has long been associated with the arts and civic organizations in the Delta.

Levingston was a 1975 honor graduate of Darlington School in Rome, Georgia. He received his Bachelor of Fine Arts degree cum laude from the University of Georgia, where he was a student in the Honors College. After post graduate study at Virginia Commonwealth University and Hunter College in New York, his father requested that he return to the Delta to join the family business.

In 1985, Gov. Bill Allain appointed him to the Mississippi Arts Commission where he served as chairman. Levingston helped create the Governor's Awards for Excellence in the Arts which continues to be awarded annually. In 1988, at age 30, he became the youngest chairman of a state arts agency in the nation. He represented Mississippi on the Atlanta-based Southern Arts Federation board.

Levingston was appointed by Gov. Ray Mabus to the Mississippi Development Bank Board in 1989 which he chaired for two years. He was appointed in 1991 to a five-year term on the State Personnel Board.

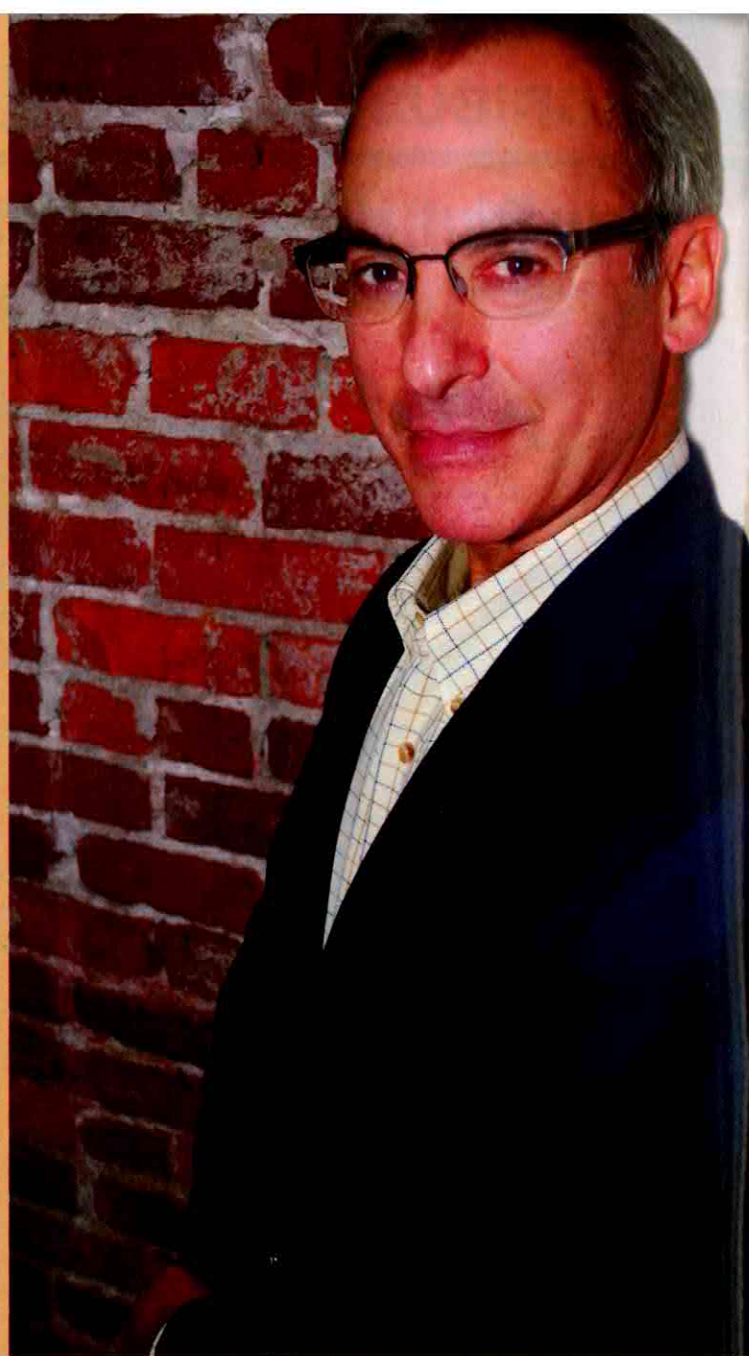
In 1991, Levingston was chosen to be a delegate to the American Council on Germany's Young Leaders program.

The Levingston family association with Delta State University has long been noteworthy. His father served on the Foundation Board. Upon his death, Jon filled his unexpired term and then continued his service for two additional terms.

In the late 1980s, Levingston and his brother, renowned concert pianist, Bruce, created a fund to support the humanities at the university. In 1995, he was appointed by the president of the university, Kent Wyatt, to the first Advisory Board of the Bologna Performing Arts Center. He began the Corporate Sponsorship program for the Center. In 1998, he received, along with Caroline Gaines and Jim Tims, the first President's Award for his service to the Performing Arts Center. His support and devotion to Delta State University garnered him a Gladys Castle Friend of Delta State Service Award, the highest honor accorded a non-alumnus.

When asked about his dedication to the university, Levingston says, "Delta State is one of the most important educational and economic engines in our region. It impacts our people and our economy in a myriad of positive ways. It is essential to the well-being of the Delta."

He received his Eagle Scout badge as a member of Troop 23 in Cleveland and has continued his service to scouting as an adult. He served on the board of the Delta Area Council Boy Scouts for many years and was the president the year of the merger with the Chickasaw Council. He received Scouting's Whitney M. Young Service Award. He has served on the boards of the Coahoma County Chamber of Commerce, the Coahoma County Industrial



Authority and the Clarksdale Rotary Club.

Levingston has a positive outlook for the Delta. "It is my fondest wish that our area may continue to examine the delivery of education to our children as well as to the nontraditional student. Education is an ocean that lifts all boats. I hope that we will continue to challenge ourselves in this field," he says.

About the region, Levingston says, "The Delta is such a special, unique place with a history and a future tied to the rich, fertile soil. While the Delta's economic history has been cyclical, its backbone has always been the agricultural industry. Health care and education have played an increasing role in the economy in recent times and their presence and influence will grow. Tourism is an industry that has tremendous growth potential and I think it is only in its nascent form in the Delta. I hope that all our communities will pool their resources together to help our region realize a Delta-wide tourism industry, the success of which relies on our communities and citizens working together to create a dynamic, sustainable and profitable industry. I have great optimism that we can eventually achieve that goal." **DBJ**