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McPhaul to retire as CNHI's No 2 executive

NEWSPAPER: Matthew Gray, CNHI's general legal counsel, has been appointed successor.

CNHI News Service
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F. Steve McPhaul



F. Steve McPhaul has announced his plan to retire in mid-January as CNHI, LLC executive vice president and chief operating officer, completing two decades of leadership with the community newspaper company.

“It will be a new year, and with it comes the right time to spend more time with family and friends and get involved in my community,” said McPhaul. “Retirement will also allow me to complete those elusive items on my bucket list, including ample travel around the country and abroad.”

Donna Barrett, CNHI president and CEO, said McPhaul has been instrumental in growing CNHI into a stable community newspaper company, with newspapers, magazines and digital platforms in the Midwest, Southwest, Southeast and Northeast. She said she could “not imagine a better partner” to work closely with for two decades.

“We are in Steve’s debt for his industry expertise and leadership in helping guide CNHI through industry challenges and into the digital era,” said Barrett. “CNHI would not be the successful company it is today without Steve’s contributions.”

Barrett said Matthew Gray, CNHI’s general legal counsel, has been appointed to succeed McPhaul as executive vice president. Gray joined CNHI in 1999, shortly after graduation from the Boston College Law School.

CNHI’s revenue, digital and technology leaders will report to Gray in his expanded role, said Barrett. He will also continue to handle legal matters.

“Matt’s professional growth with the company has been outstanding,” said Barrett. “His well-earned promotion will serve to expand the scope of CNHI’s ambitions.” He currently serves on the board of directors of America’s Newspapers and on the Legal Affairs Committee of the News Media Alliance.

Gray said McPhaul was a dynamic executive that “I truly enjoyed working with. He had a key role in the success the company is enjoying today.”

Barrett also announced a reorganization plan that promotes 10 CNHI leaders to regional executive status. They will coordinate with local publishers of the company's 92 newspapers in 22 states, a responsibility currently handled by McPhaul.

The regional executives are John Celestino — who serves as the publisher of the Niagara Gazette and Lockport Union Sun & Journal — Fred Scheller, Sharon Sorg, Steve Jameson, Paul Heidbreder, Dale Brendel, Jake Mienk, Jack Robb, Robyn McCloskey and Beverly Joyce.

A former Army Ranger and triathlon athlete, McPhaul said he will live in retirement in Auburn, Alabama.

McPhaul came to CNHI in 2001 with an accomplished record at Thomson Newspapers and Media General newspapers. He served more than a decade as a publisher of the Opelika-Auburn News, the Kerrville (Texas) Daily Times and the Dothan (Alabama) Eagle.

“I’ve always been passionate about newspapers and their purpose in serving society and democracy,” said McPhaul. “My career has seen structural and technical changes over the years but staying true to newspaper values has remained a constant for me and CNHI.”

McPhaul added: “It has been a wonderful experience working alongside so many gifted people over the years. I depart knowing I gave my best and feeling good about the future of newspapers, in print and online, as the best source of credible information.”

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