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| A picture containing logo  Description automatically generated **A black background with a black square  Description automatically generated** | **Media Contact:**Ryan Poe901-268-5074rpoe@memphischamber.com |

**Memphis Chamber chooses France for Memphis in May salute**
*Chamber to lead activities to strengthen economic ties between Memphis, France*

* The Greater Memphis Chamber today announced its selection of France as the honored country for the 2024 Memphis in May International Festival.
* France was chosen because of its historic, ongoing, and potential future contributions to the Greater Memphis economy, including through economic development and trade.
* The Chamber is creating a year-long schedule of engagement opportunities between Memphis and France to strengthen their economic and diplomatic relationship.
* Chamber, ARTSmemphis have partnered to commission a fine arts poster for the festival.

**MEMPHIS, Tenn. (Wednesday, Aug. 30, 2023) –** Less than a week after announcing it would lead the international, economic development, and diplomatic activities for the Memphis in May International Festival, the Greater Memphis Chamber today unveiled France as the festival’s 2024 honored country.

The Chamber chose France, which was last saluted by the festival in 1990, because of its historic, ongoing, and potential future contributions to the Greater Memphis economy.

“France is a global economic powerhouse with deep ties to Memphis, making the country the perfect fit to receive this prestigious, year-long Memphis in May International Festival salute in 2024,” said Ted Townsend, president and CEO of the Greater Memphis Chamber. “Memphis is a global logistics leader, a national leader in workforce diversity, and one of the fastest-growing manufacturing hubs in the U.S. We see France as a key economic development partner and look forward to strengthening our ties.”

France-based companies have already made significant investments in Memphis. According to data compiled by the Chamber’s Greater Memphis Economic Development Research Group, there are 69 France-based companies that employ 10,452 people in Tennessee, including 16 companies employing nearly 2,000 people in Greater Memphis. Among those 16 companies are globally recognized brands like Vantiva (formerly Technicolor), manufacturer Pandrol, and global auto logistics leader Ceva Logistics.

France is also a crucial trade partner to Memphis and Tennessee: Tennessee imports more than $1 billion in products from France each year (up 83% from 2017-2022), the state exports nearly $500M per year to France (up 17.5% from 2017-2022).

“Thank you to the Greater Memphis Chamber for choosing France as the 2024 Memphis in May International Festival’s honored country,” said Anne-Laure Desjonquères, Consul General of France in Atlanta. “France is the U.S.’ third largest trading partner in Europe, and the U.S. remains the No. 1 investor in France. I am excited about this opportunity to showcase our mutually beneficial trade and investment relationships and to further strengthen business ties between local companies and France.”

The Chamber is currently building out a schedule of events that will take place throughout 2024, including economic development-focused delegation visits to and from the country. The goal of the events will be to strengthen the economic bonds between Memphis and France.

In partnership with ARTSmemphis, the Chamber also plans to commission a fine arts poster to commemorate France, continuing a longstanding tradition of the Memphis in May International Festival.

“We are thrilled to partner with the Greater Memphis Chamber to bring the art of Memphis to the world,” said Elizabeth Rouse, president & CEO of ARTSmemphis. “People don’t usually think of art in economic development terms, but Memphis artists are world-renowned for their work, which bridges cultures and connects people. Art can open doors for economic development.”

The Chamber and Memphis in May announced their partnership last week after the Memphis in May Board of Directors unanimously voted to allow the Chamber to lead its international activities. Memphis in May, which was founded with help from Chamber, has saluted a foreign country each year since its first year in 1977, often working closely with the Chamber on events related to international business.

 “We are excited to partner with the Greater Memphis Chamber to salute France, which was last honored more than three decades ago,” said James L. Holt, president and CEO of Memphis in May International Festival. “France has historically been a close economic ally of Memphis, and we look forward to joining the Chamber in celebrating and deepening that relationship in the months ahead.”

***About the Greater Memphis Chamber:*** *One of Memphis’ oldest institutions, dating back to 1838, the Greater Memphis Chamber is a privately funded nonprofit that serves as the region’s lead economic development organization and the “Voice of Memphis Business” on local, state, and national issues. The Chamber’s mission is to relentlessly pursue prosperity for all — through economic and workforce development, pro-growth advocacy, and by providing support and resources to its investors, which include many of the region’s largest employers. For more information about the Chamber, visit* [*memphischamber.com*](file:///C%3A%5CUsers%5Crpoe%5CDesktop%5Cwww.memphischamber.com) *and* [*memphismoves.com*](https://memphismoves.com/)*. Also, follow the Chamber on* [*Twitter*](https://twitter.com/memphischamber)*,* [*Facebook*](https://www.facebook.com/memphischamber)*,* [*LinkedIn*](https://www.linkedin.com/company/83560) *and* [*Instagram*](https://www.instagram.com/memphischamber/)*, and sign up for its weekly newsletter,* [*Memphis Fourword*](https://lp.constantcontactpages.com/su/uQL7BSu?source_id=d1b09dc9-c5c6-468a-803d-9f8f7d3b08eb&source_type=em&c=poGe9f2ekl9acrR-Omg8jezlGh8BmWaoebgrgca2jedp5npJcs4FKQ==)*.*

***About Memphis in May:*** *Memphis in May is a 501(c)3 nonprofit community-based organization whose mission is to promote and celebrate Memphis’ culture, foster economic growth, and enhance international awareness through education. Founded by racially diverse Memphians in 1977, racial equity and parity are embedded in the fiber and culture of Memphis in May, the official festival of the City of Memphis. Recipient of 240 prestigious Pinnacle Awards from the International Festival and Events Association, Memphis in May International Festival was named to Travel+Leisure’s international list of Festivals Worth Traveling For, and in 2018, Memphis topped CNN Travel’s list of international destinations to visit in May because of Memphis in May events. Condé Nast Traveler named Memphis as one of the “23 Best Places to go in 2023” in part because of Memphis in May’s return to the riverfront downtown.**For additional information, please visit* [*www.memphisinmay.org*](www.memphisinmay.org)*.*