



Contact: Dinah Motley  
Phone: 334.745.4861  
Email: [dmotley@opelikachamber.com](mailto:dmotley@opelikachamber.com)  
Website: [www.opelikachamber.com](http://www.opelikachamber.com)

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

### **Opelika Chamber Honors First Responders**

**OPELIKA, AL, September 29, 2017** - The last Friday in September is the day the Opelika Chamber sets aside every year to honor those heroes called our First Responders for their courage and sacrifice in saving lives and making us safe. Coach Sonny Smith, the guest speaker, motivated and entertained these brave men and women at the EAMC Education Health Resource Center.

First Responders are the backbone of our communities and have one of the hardest jobs, physically and emotionally. We post their names and numbers on our refrigerators because we rely on them to help us in an emergency. They are our champions in times of crisis.

Originally from Roan, Tennessee, Sonny Smith amused the crowd with humorous stories and jokes about his upbringing and coaching days. He served as head coach for 22 seasons and is credited with turning around losing programs at East Tennessee State University and Auburn University. He is probably best remembered for his coaching years at Auburn, where he was named Southeastern Conference Coach of the Year in 1984 and 1989. During his stint at Auburn, he coached the Tigers to their first SEC Tournament Championship in school history. In 1984 to 1988, he guided Auburn to 5 consecutive NCAA tournament appearances, including a Sweet 16 berth in 1985 and a Final Eight berth in 1986. To date, he is the only coach in Auburn men's basketball history to have three consecutive 20-win seasons.

In 2007, Smith was inducted into the Alabama Sports Hall of Fame. After retiring from coaching, he joined his friend and former University of Alabama Coach Wimp Sanderson on a sports talk radio show, "The Sonny and Wimp Show." He also works as an analyst calling Atlantic sun games on Friday nights for CSS.

