



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Oct. 20, 2014

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Mobile Area Chamber of Commerce Brings Back Michael Baisden and Honors Minority-Owned Companies

This week the Mobile Area Chamber of Commerce will celebrate Mobile's diverse business community, aligning with National Minority Enterprise Development Week. The main events are scheduled for Thursday, Oct. 23, beginning with Business With Baisden, featuring radio talk show host, author, speaker and community advocate Michael Baisden at 9 a.m., and followed by the Minority Business Awards Luncheon, beginning at 11:30 a.m. Both events will be held at the Renaissance Mobile Riverview Plaza Hotel.

After giving the keynote address at last year's ceremony, Baisden returns to Mobile to participate in a special 90-minute session sharing his lessons learned in both business and life, and again serves as the awards luncheon keynote speaker. There are a few seats available. Tickets are \$60 and include both the morning session and luncheon. Reservations are required, and can be made by calling 251-431-8607.

The Mobile Area Chamber and the Minority Business Development Agency (MBDA) - Mobile, operated by the Chamber, will present six awards.

2014 Award Winners:

Eagle Awards: Given to minority-owned businesses that have demonstrated achievement in business areas including maintaining a solid financial base, revenue and/or employee growth, evidence of community service contribution or involvement.

Leaf and Petal Florist and Gift Shop provides flowers, plants and gifts for all occasions. The Mobile-based, family-owned company was founded in 1996.

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Ranger Industrial Services provides free training and job placement for skilled tradesmen, and offers safety training, project management and consulting to the maritime and construction industries. This Mobile-based company is also veteran-owned, and was founded in 2010.

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The Mobile Area Chamber will also recognize its **2014 Rev. Wesley A. James Minority Business Advocate Award**. The award was renamed this year to honor James' role in championing the Chamber's diversity efforts. He was pastor of Franklin Street Missionary Baptist Church, community leader, teacher, mentor and advocate for Mobile's minority-owned businesses. He died in November 2010.

This year's winner is **Austal USA** – This Mobile-based shipbuilder employs more than 4,100 people and has millions of dollars in military contracts. In addition to purchasing goods from minority-owned companies, Austal has a small business liaison who participates in procurement matching events, tradeshow and training sessions.

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Minority Enterprise Awards presented by the Mobile MBDA Business Center:
Texcel Inc. – Technology Firm of the Year, awarded to a minority firm with outstanding success in developing and utilizing new and innovative technology. This Cleveland, Ohio-based company provides information technology and on-demand solutions for a variety of industries. Texcel benefitted from its relationship with Mobile MBDA through statewide introductions, resulting in expansions in Georgia and Alabama.

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WALA FOX10 – Limelight Award, awarded to a media or social media outlet that has consistently provided significant support to minority business enterprises. For more than 17 years, this Mobile-based news station has supported the Chamber's and MBDA's efforts to honor outstanding minority-owned companies.

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Honda Manufacturing of Alabama – Director's Award, given to an individual, corporation, organization or government entity demonstrating outstanding, consistent support of the Mobile MBDA Business Center and the execution of its program objectives. Honda's Alabama operations first partnered with Mobile MBDA in 2010 and since then implemented a strategic and comprehensive supplier diversity program, increasing contracts to minority businesses to more than \$1 billion.

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The Mobile Area Chamber's role & local effort: MBDA – Mobile is a program of the U.S. Department of Commerce, and operated by the Mobile Area Chamber of Commerce. Serving Alabama, Mississippi, and northwest Florida, its primary function is to educate minority business owners on a variety of entrepreneurial functions and increase their access to opportunities and resources. However, the center can assist companies throughout the U.S. Since its inception in 2006, the center has assisted minority businesses in acquiring more than \$1 billion in federal and private procurement contracts.

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***Pictured:** Leaf and Petal Florist and Gift Shop, Robert Bryant, owner and CEO (left), Rosalyn Bryant and Justin Bryant*

***Pictured:** Ranger Industrial Services, president/CEO Tyson Lee (left), Gary Joubert and Jason Hunt*