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Bridge Advocate & Entrepreneur Advocate Recognized at the Mobile Area Chamber's Annual Meeting

Last night, the Mobile Area Chamber of Commerce honored two key volunteers during its annual meeting held at the Mobile Civic Center before a group of approximately 1,000 area business representatives and community leaders.

Alfred F. Delchamps Jr. Award



Mike Lee

Michael Chambers with Swift Biotechnology and the Mobile Area Chamber's 2014 board chairman, delivered these comments as he named Mike Lee, the 2014 Alfred F. Delchamps Jr. Award recipient.

"I could not be more honored than to present tonight's award to a former Chamber board chair, who than rather riding off in the sunset, has remained an active volunteer, relentless in his quest to secure public support of, and funding for a new bridge across the Mobile River."

Lee, president and chief executive officer of Page & Jones, was recognized for his service to Chamber initiatives, including his most recent role as co-chair of the Build the Bride Coalition and his leadership as Chamber board chairman in 2002.

When asked to describe what it is like working with Lee, a common theme rose to the top – his dedication.

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“It’s this dedication to the Chamber’s mission statement, to Mobile’s economy, to the local tourism industry and to a bridge that sets him apart from the rest of us,” Chambers said.

Carolyn Golson, the Chamber’s vice president of membership, remembers a meeting held right after Hurricane Katrina with Lee saying that we – as the business community – needed to open our doors to help destroyed businesses along the Gulf Coast. And he did. He offered Page & Jones’ services to a direct competitor in New Orleans, and transferred those customers right back to the competition after they were able to reopen.

Another example came from **Ginny Russell**, the Chamber’s vice president of community and governmental affairs, who said that from day one, Lee championed the bridge project – and rarely misses an opportunity to speak with civic groups and elected officials on the need for a bridge and bayway expansion.

Outside of his current and past Chamber roles, Lee is also chairman of the Alabama District Export Council, the University of Alabama International Business advisory board, Regions Bank South Area board of directors, the Alabama French American Chamber of Commerce and the Rand Corporation’s Gulf States Policy Council. His previous roles include president and chairman of the Alabama World Trade Association, Propeller Club of Mobile, Mobile Forwarders and Brokers Association, Mobile Traffic and Transportation Club and the Mobile Bay Convention and Visitors Bureau.

The award was established in 1990 to honor individuals who carry on the vision and principles of Delchamps, who had a passion for investing in Mobile and raising up a community focused on giving back.

In addition to Lee, the eleventh recipient, previous honorees include: Abe and Arlene Mitchell, 2014; Ernest W. Todd Jr., 2010; Dr. Stephen Dill, 2008; Michael C. Dow, 2006; Joseph N. Langan (posthumously), 2005; Robert J. Williams, 2004; Ann Bedsole, 2003; William J. Hearin, 1999; Jack Edwards, 1998; and Bobby Guthans, 1991.

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Catalyst Award



Lynne Chronister

Created in 2015, Lynne Chronister, vice president of research and economic development at the University of South Alabama, is the first recipient of the Chamber's Catalyst Award.

“Catalyst is defined as ‘an agent that provokes or speeds significant change or action.’ Simply put, without this catalyst, this person... a lot of things might not have happened this past year. But

this person stepped up, to lead, to manage, to make things happen,” said Chambers.

In 2014, Chronister organized the team that included the Chamber, workforce and high-education institutions, supply chain providers, key infrastructure and manufacturing representatives, to apply for the manufacturing community designation. And now Mobile, with 11 other communities, has preference to \$1.3 billion in federal funding.

Following the Chamber's Leaders Exchange held in St. Louis last June, she was one of several volunteers who stepped up to lead a new initiative known as Innovate Mobile, an effort to help revitalize the downtown area by encouraging entrepreneurship and the quality of life initiatives throughout Mobile. Chronister worked with Kim Littlefield, also with USA, to identify and facilitate applications for another \$1.5 million in funding for a planned science and technology center downtown, and to finance the programming for the Chamber's new 1702 entrepreneurship program.

“Lynne was a catalyst. Without her, and the team she assembled in these efforts, we may have simply had a few good ideas. She was, in short, an agent of change for our city.”

The Catalyst Award is given at the discretion of the Chamber's board chairman as is designed to honor an individual for their “game changing role.”

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