



# BUSINESSVIEW

MOBILE AREA CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

OCTOBER 2020

## SPOTLIGHT ON EDUCATION IN MOBILE

**TWO LOCAL EXPANSIONS  
\$575M INVESTMENT**

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**PRIVATE PIPE WELDING  
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# BUSINESSVIEW

MOBILE AREA CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

OCTOBER 2020

## IN THE ISSUE



### 23 ON THE COVER:

*Ryan Teder, a junior instructor at Alabama Pipe Welding Academy, works on a project at the school. To learn more about two private pipe welding schools in Mobile, see pg. 23. Photo by Mike Dumas.*



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## ABOUT THE MAGAZINE

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## PUBLISHER'S NOTE:

### CAREER ACADEMIES SERVE A KEY ROLE IN ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Bill Sisson, President & CEO, Mobile Area Chamber of Commerce

A well-educated and skilled workforce is the foundation for business growth and innovation in any community, setting individuals and communities on the path to self-sufficiency.

One of the most exciting developments I have seen during my almost two decades living and working in Mobile has been the formation of career academies within Mobile County Public Schools.

Career academies are essentially schools bringing together a team of teachers and students around a strong career and college-prep theme. The academies introduce students early on to careers that are readily available in the local business community and show them the academic pathway to jobs being created right here at home.

In a relatively short amount of time, our school system has a proven track record of focusing curricula on relevant career themes in our region, engaging business and industry leaders in the education process and, as a result, driving increased student achievement.

Quickly and quietly, academies have become one of our fastest-growing school choice options, helping students reach the goal of graduating from high school and, at the same time, getting them into the workforce faster. This is good for the students, good for the business community and a true competitive advantage in the region's economic development.

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# \$500M EXPANSION ANNOUNCED AT AM/NS CALVERT MILL

**S**teel producer ArcelorMittal announced in August an approximately \$500 million expansion at the **AM/NS Calvert** mill located in north Mobile County.

The project is expected to create nearly 300 new jobs, as the mill adds an electric arc furnace. Currently slabs of steel are brought in via ships from Brazil. With this expansion, slabs will be produced on site. It is expected to take 24 months to complete, with more than 500 on-site construction jobs added, according to company officials.

Team Mobile has worked on this project for nearly two years, according to Mobile Area Chamber Vice President of Economic Development **David Rodgers**. “Having this type of expansion in our community continues to set Mobile apart in advanced manufacturing.”

“One of Governor Kay Ivey’s top priorities is helping companies grow and create jobs in the state, so we fully support the decision by AM/NS Calvert to significantly expand its steel-making operations in Mobile County,” said **Greg Canfield**, secretary of the Alabama Department of Commerce. “This investment will enhance AM/NS Calvert’s competitive position and expand its capabilities while also delivering a massive economic impact on Alabama.”

Mobile County Commissioner **Merceria Ludgood** represents District 1 of Mobile County, where AM/NS Calvert is located. “We are excited about the announcement,” she said. “This means good jobs and a significant investment in our county.”

Alabama Power was involved in the recruiting process. “We have been pleased to work alongside ArcelorMittal since 2013,” said CEO **Mark Crosswhite**.

## AT-A-GLANCE

### ARCELORMITTAL EXPANSION AT AM/NS CALVERT

**INVESTMENT:** \$500+ Million

**JOBS:** 300

**CONSTRUCTION JOBS:** 500

**ESTIMATED TIMELINE:** 24 months



# LOCAL BERG PIPE FACILITY EXPANDS PRODUCTION CAPABILITIES

**A**nother economic development project led by the Mobile Area Chamber straddled 2019 and 2020. **Berg Pipe** announced a \$15 million expansion that will also create new jobs.

“Mobile checks all the boxes,” says **Ingo Riemer**, Berg’s president and CEO, referring to the region’s logistics including class 1 railways, the deepwater port and I-10. “The mill is very successful, and we needed more space to increase capacity.”

The company manufactures large-diameter steel pipe used to transport natural gas and oil, primarily in North America.

“This is our fourth expansion project announcement in 2020,” says **David Rodgers**, the Chamber’s vice president of economic development. “And the confidence these companies have in Mobile speaks volumes to others looking to locate or expand.”

As industry standards are updated, companies are replacing old pipe with newer technology, Riemer explains, thus creating the demand.

This is the first major expansion since the company began operations at the former International Paper site in 2009, just north of the Port of Mobile.

When the Chamber announced the initial \$75 million investment, Berg committed to hiring 100 people. Approximately 200 permanent positions and 100 contract workers are currently employed at the site. The expansion will add capacity, increase research and development and preserve current jobs, according to Riemer.

In other news, the Mobile facility will produce pipe for the Keystone XL pipeline under construction – a huge project win for Berg. Once complete, the pipeline will carry 830,000 barrels of crude oil daily from Alberta, Canada, to Steel City, Neb.

## AT-A-GLANCE

### BERG PIPE EXPANSION

**INVESTMENT:** \$15 Million

**PROJECT OVERVIEW:** increase research and development





# MIGHTY CREATIVE LAB OFFERS INCUBATION SPACE

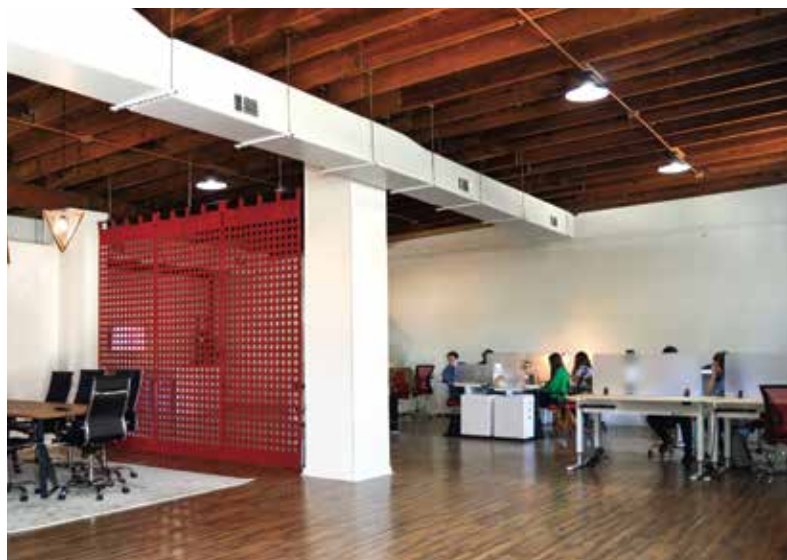
Mighty, a Mobile-based branding and creative agency, launched Mighty Creative Lab, an incubation space designed specifically for creative professionals and entrepreneurs.

Located in Midtown at 1751 Old Shell Rd., Ste. C, the 3,000-square-foot open-office floor plan has a limited number of workstations, each equipped with sit-to-stand desks and frosted partitions.

“At Mighty, our core mission has always been to help businesses and individuals grow,” says **Jarrett McCraw**, co-founder and CEO of Mighty. “We continue to focus our efforts on developing offerings that create tremendous value to the professional community, and the Mighty Creative Lab is one more way we can help local professionals and entrepreneurs succeed.”

“One insight we have had over the years is that many of our clients have asked if their marketing team members can work remotely from our office in order to get new ideas and fresh perspectives,” says **Stephean Grimes**, co-founder and chief creative officer of Mighty. “Mighty Creative Lab now makes it possible for any local company to get the benefit of inspiration, training and professional guidance from the area’s top creative talent.”

Memberships are available on a month-to-month basis. Members have access to unique co-working resources including mentorship from the Mighty team as well as a photography studio, lighting and camera equipment, meeting space, bundled services and parking. Learn more at [mightycreativelab.com](http://mightycreativelab.com) or call 251.391.9557.





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## SMALL BUSINESS OF THE YEAR

### WINNER



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# MOSQUITO JOE TARGETS PESTS IN OUTSIDE SPACES



*Photos by Brian Jordan, FusionPoint Media*

**Gail Yongue**, a former hospice nurse, had a lifelong dream of owning her own business. That dream became a reality when she opened **Mosquito Joe of Gulf Coast Alabama** in 2015.

"I want people to be able to enjoy their outdoor spaces they have invested their hard-earned money to create, without getting eaten alive by mosquitoes," she says.

The company is the Mobile Area Chamber's Small Business of the Month.

Mosquito Joe provides outdoor pest control services. Its most popular treatment is mosquito repellent that protects yards for up to three weeks at a time. Options within this type of service include a barrier spray to kill existing mosquitoes and deter new ones from entering a yard, and a natural treatment ranging from all-natural garlic to botanicals derived from natural plant oils.

Additional services include flea and tick control and fire ant protection as well as a misting system for protecting outdoor spaces like decks, pools and patios.

Based in Daphne, the company serves commercial properties and residences in both Baldwin and Mobile counties and does one-time outdoor treatments for clients hosting special events like outdoor weddings, holiday barbecues or parties.

Mosquito Joe employs eight people. "We pride ourselves on delivering an excellent customer experience," says Yongue.

**"I want people to be able to enjoy their outdoor spaces they have invested their hard-earned money to create, without getting eaten alive by mosquitoes."**



Aside from her membership in the Mobile Area Chamber, she was a graduate of the 2018 class of Emerging Leaders, is an ambassador for the Eastern Shore Chamber and serves on the Baldwin County Bicycle Pedestrian Advisor Committee. She believes the Emerging Leaders training lectures helped develop the business.

“The networking opportunities offered by the Chamber have allowed for an increase of business contacts and advice that has contributed to (our) overall success,” she says.

Giving back is a priority for Yongue and her husband, Jim. They have sponsored and promoted several blood drives in coastal Alabama. And they participate in the Nothing But Nets initiative, which donates insecticide-treated nets to families in Africa.

**COMPANY NAME:** Mosquito Joe of Gulf Coast Alabama

**OWNERS:** Gail and Jim Yongue

**PHONE:** 251.272.4950

**WEBSITE:** [gulfcoastalabama.mosquitojoe.com](http://gulfcoastalabama.mosquitojoe.com)



Photo by Brian Jordan, FusionPoint Media



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Mobile Area Chamber of Commerce  
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For more than two decades, recognizing minority business owners has been a priority for the Mobile Area Chamber. This diversity and inclusion initiative has honored more than 100 companies and has given more than 120 awards. In the pages to follow, meet this year's class of Eagle Award recipients:

## Blue Fish

**Owner:** Marcus Neto

**Founded:** 2008

**Employees:** 10

**Address:** 920 Dauphin St.

**Website:** bluefishds.com

**Certified:** Minority Business Enterprise

Five years ago, **Marcus Neto** changed his business approach to incorporate local strategies. At the same time, he turned his web design business into a full-service ad agency determined to serve Mobile area small business owners like himself.

Neto says his goal is to find those willing “to make the necessary investment and changes that it takes to grow.”

While he still believes a robust website is an organization's foundation, his expanded services now include branding, social media management, graphic design, and both traditional and digital media buys.

The company recently purchased and renovated its new digs on Dauphin Street, and is looking to hire. One way Blue Fish finds qualified individuals is through its 90-day training boot camp designed to turn job candidates into productive and confident employees.

Photo by Brian Jordan, FusionPoint Media







# Easy Heating and Cooling

**President/Owner:** Enoch Smith

**Founded:** 2005

**Employees:** 7

**Address:** 11 N. Water St.

**Website:** [easyheatingcooling.com](http://easyheatingcooling.com)

**Certified:** Disadvantaged Business Enterprise

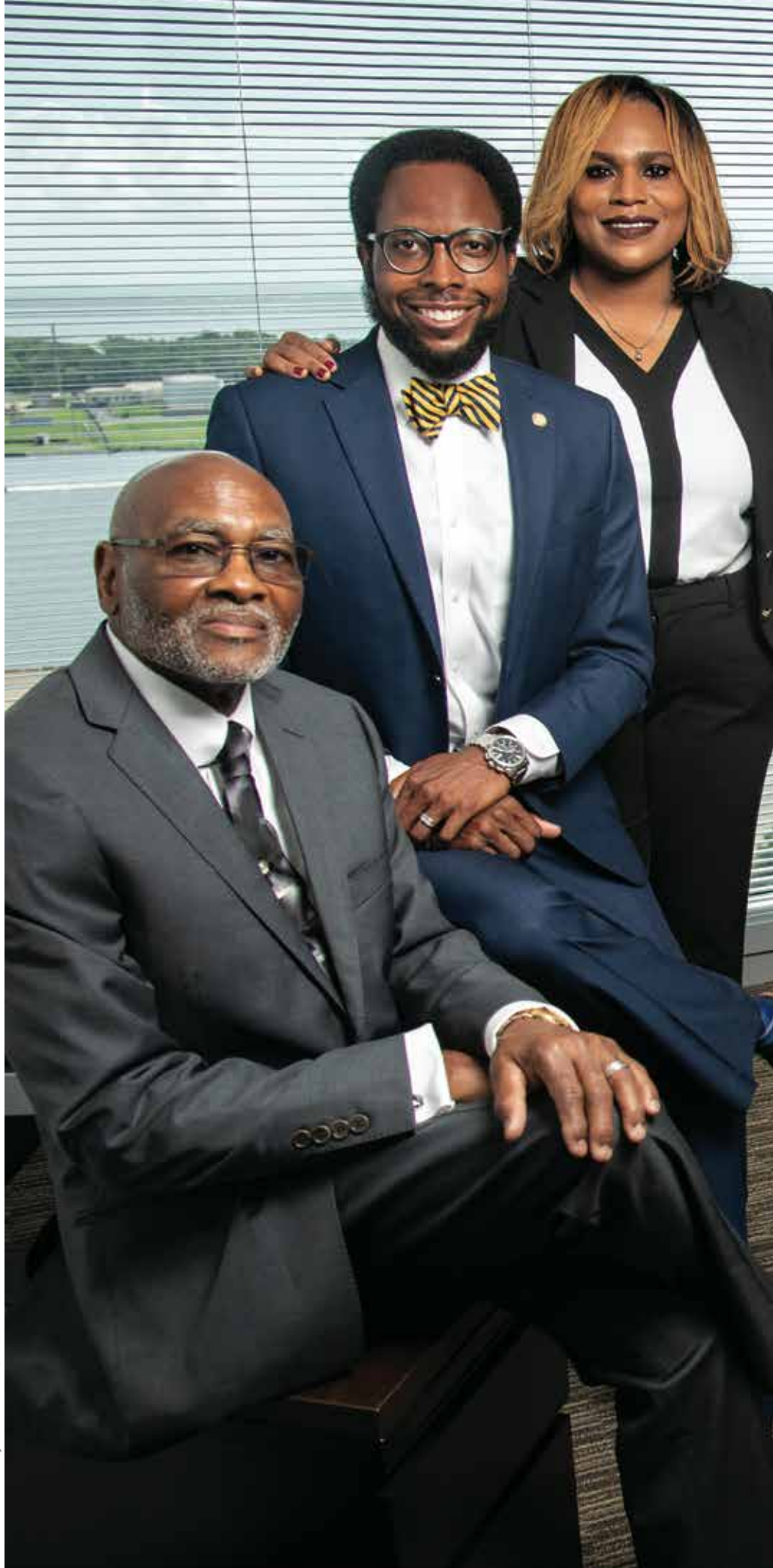
Starting as a “one-man band,” **Enoch Smith** created a symphony of services that provide comfort to his heating, ventilation and air conditioning (HVAC) customers.

Easy Heating and Cooling serves residential and commercial customers throughout the area who depend on the expertise needed to repair, maintain and install equipment 24 hours a day, seven days per week.

The company’s recent Disadvantaged Business Enterprise (DBE) certification and Smith’s obtaining his general contractor’s license are two developments that allow the company to bid on larger contracts. In addition, a new software program that synchronizes activities from scheduling field services to invoicing has led to a more agile, productive and efficient operation, says Smith.

Sustaining rapid growth depends on finding the right employees who have become known by the company’s customers as “comfort air heroes.”

Photo by Brian Jordan, FusionPoint Media







**2020  
EAGLE AWARD  
RECIPIENT**



# Paula's Hair Unlimited

**Owner:** Paula Jones

**Founded:** 1989

**Employees:** 4

**Address:** 729 Lakeside Dr. W.

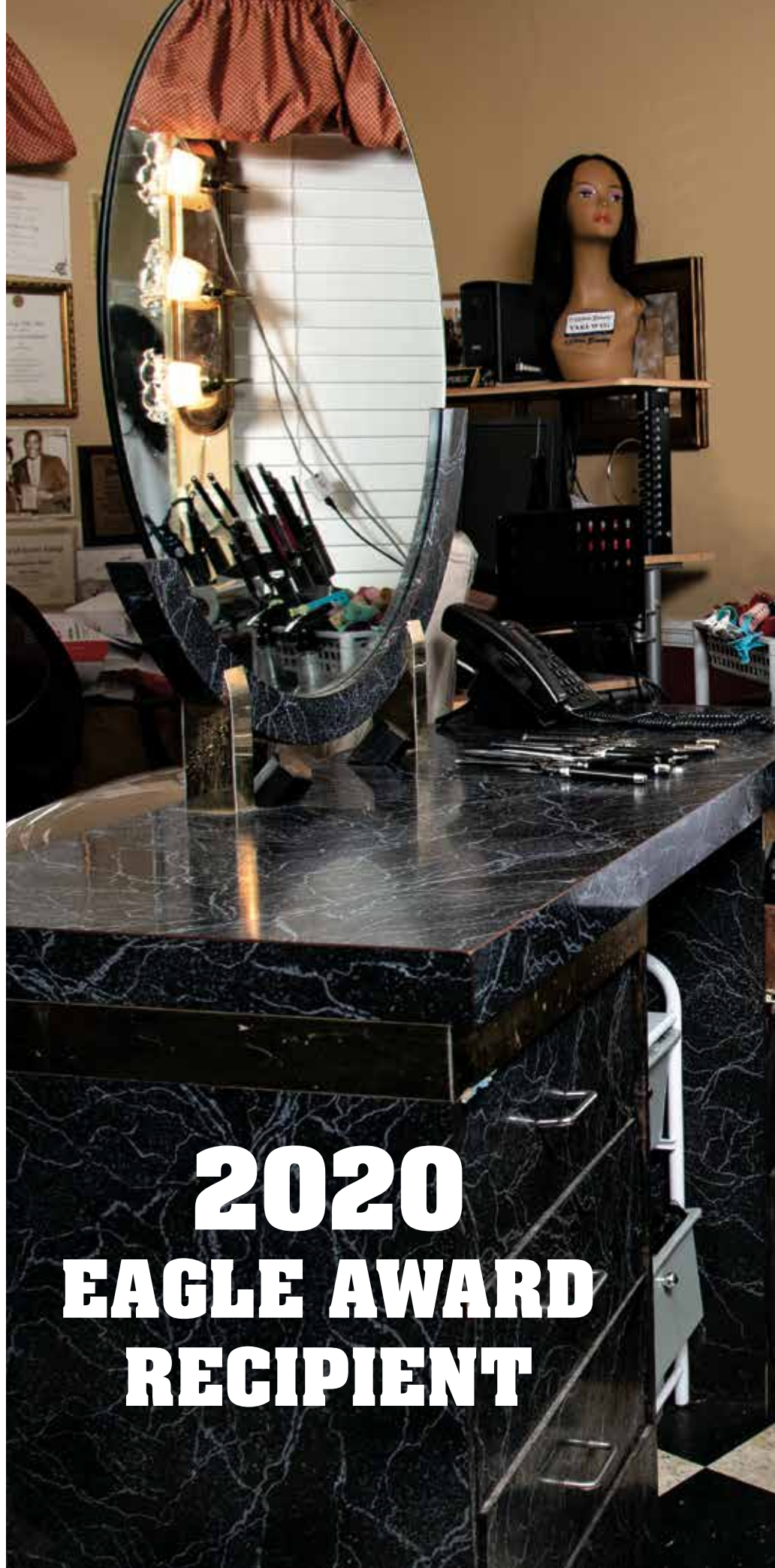
**Paula Jones** says she specializes in the “science of making people beautiful.”

Paula's Hair Unlimited is a full-service hair salon offering cuts, color, weaves, perms and eyebrow waxing. She was also recently certified to provide non-surgical hair replacement.

A master cosmetologist, Jones has big plans for her 31-year-old company once the COVID-19 pandemic passes. Her business strategies include hiring a nail technician and esthetician to round out the salon's services.

An active member in the community, Jones is often invited to speak at local high schools. “My goal is to instill in young adults that hard work and dedication pay off,” she says. “It's not a job to me, it's my passion.”

Paula's Hair Unlimited is a two-time Eagle Award winner, first recognized in 2007.



## 2020 EAGLE AWARD RECIPIENT

*Photo by Brian Jordan, FusionPoint Media*









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# Pipe Welders are at the ‘Top of the Ladder’

Photos by Mike Dumas

**T**he Mobile Bay area is a hotbed for jobs in the manufacturing and chemical industries. The vast majority of those jobs don't require a college degree, just the skills and experience to do great work. And as far as trades go, pipe welding is one of the most sought-after, and highest-paying, skill sets to master.

There are two ways most pipe welders earn their stripes, and salaries upwards of \$100,000 a year in some cases. The traditional path is one of apprenticeship, starting with work relying more on mop water than electric arcs. But the fast-tracking trend is trade school, and two in Mobile are dedicated to training pipe welders: **Alabama Pipe Welders Academy (APWA)** and **ArcPro Pipe Welding School**.

“Pipe welders are the most important craft hands out there,” said **Trey Byrum**, owner of APWA. “They’re at the top of the ladder, and when they go into a plant, they get paid the most.”

**“Pipe welders are the most important craft hands out there.”**

**Trey Byrum**, owner, Alabama Pipe Welders Academy





## Training as a combination welder gives them the highest chance of success.

Since the school opened in 2016, Byrum and his instructors have graduated around 200 pipe welders, including many four-year college graduates who changed professions after learning their degrees weren't guarantees of employment. In south Alabama, as well as around the world, pipe welding jobs are plentiful, Byrum said. APWA has a direct relationship with Ingalls Shipbuilding in Pascagoula, which leads to graduates often being hired within weeks of receiving their certification.

Like APWA, ArcPro offers a variety of training curricula in the two major types of welding — SMAW, or stick welding, and GTAW, or TIG welding. Students at both schools can choose to be trained in either of those disciplines, although both Byrum and ArcPro co-owner **Alex Kraft** believe training as a combination welder gives them the highest chance of success.

"That's the ideal position we'd like our students to be in," said Kraft, who opened ArcPro in 2008. "It's more versatile for the jobs they get."







**“Unlike structural welding – meant to last indefinitely – pipe welds are finite, due to the nature of their uses.”**

Alex Kraft, co-owner, ArcPro

Both schools feature entirely hands-on training, with little to no classroom time over the several months of course work. Students begin instruction immediately in a variety of staged work environments constructed to mirror on-the-job situations. Courses range from eight weeks to four months, depending on the level of training being sought. Once hired, pipe welders average around \$25 to \$30 per hour, or more if the welder is available to travel.

Unlike structural welding — meant to last indefinitely — pipe welds are finite, due to the nature of their uses, Kraft said.

“Every pipe has fluid moving through it, and almost all of that fluid is corrosive and wears out over time,” he said. “And you have to have welders to fix it. It all has to get replaced.”

That level of job security keeps the instructors at APWA and ArcPro Pipe Welding School busy. Although costs for combination welding courses are between \$12,000 and \$13,000, the return on investment is significant and immediate — and Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act grants are available through area career centers.

For more information, visit [alabamapipewelders.com](http://alabamapipewelders.com) or [arcpromobile.com](http://arcpromobile.com).

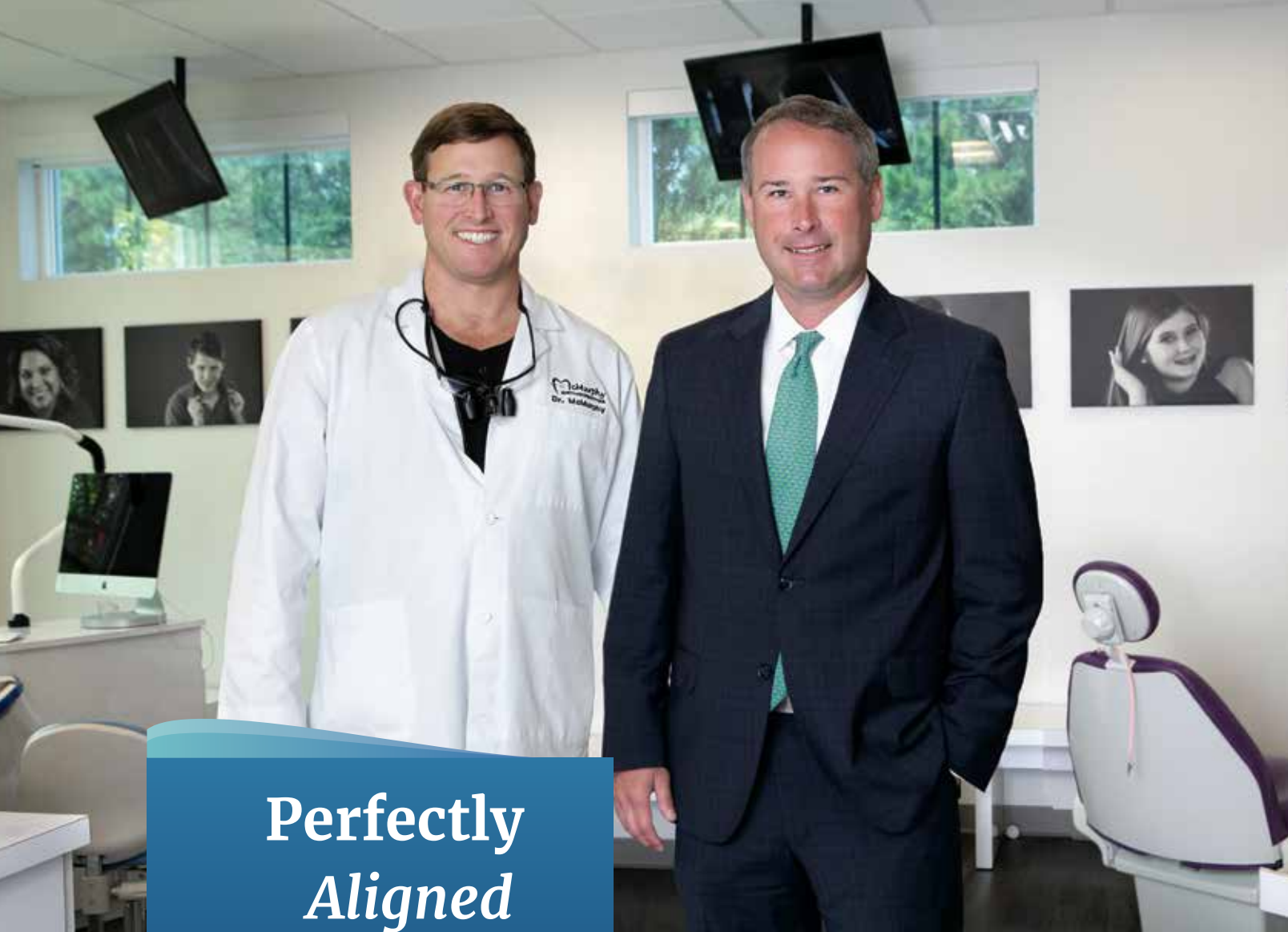
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*LeFlore High School's Signature Academy of Health Science*

# HOW SIGNATURE ACADEMIES HELP KEEP MOBILE'S WORKFORCE STRONG

Deep-rooted partnerships between an area's schools and industry are crucial to the growth and sustainability of businesses. A skilled, homegrown workforce not only helps companies avoid the costs of widespread recruitment, but also gives them valuable input into the preparations and training students receive prior to entering the job market.

That preparedness leads to empowerment, a hallmark of the expansive opportunities offered through Mobile County Public Schools' (MCPSS) Signature Academies. Developed in 2013, academies are hardwired into the curriculum at each of the system's 12 high schools and structured to foster college- and career-readiness. Each year, thousands of freshmen are presented a host of pathways supporting their future endeavors, even if those ambitions haven't yet crystallized.

The goal of career-preparedness courses isn't to limit the new high schoolers, but to funnel them into frameworks for success. That way, prospects often headed toward toil in uninspiring jobs can become opportunities for fulfilling careers, whether the student is destined for college or an expedited route into the myriad trades that require skill and confidence.

"We want to make sure they have a good, strong foundation so they can make any decision they want," said **Larry Mouton**, assistant superintendent of workforce development, career and technical education for MCPSS.

The school system is the state's largest, with more than 53,000 students. And each of its roughly 10,000 high school students are enrolled in one of the various academies offered at their respective schools. While each high school has a Signature Academy, the system also established multiple ancillary academies at each location focused on additional job skills.



Input into the development of those academies came from those within each school community, including industry leaders, educational and workforce coalitions, as well as the students and parents directly affected by the investment of time and resources. That level of buy-in not only keeps companies motivated to hire from within their area code, it also helps graduates view their hometowns as viable options when it's time to put down roots as adults.

"We have such great opportunities for people here in Mobile," said **Lauren Rodgers**, coordinator of **Murphy High School's** University Center, located in midtown Mobile. "There is no reason for them to leave this area to look for something when there is opportunity at their back door."

Murphy's University Center Signature Academy offers two pathways: International Baccalaureate (IB) and Early College. The IB program is structured to develop students' intellectual, emotional, personal and social skills, while students in the Early College program can earn substantial college credit while still attending high school. To foster career-readiness, Murphy High School also features an Academy of Culinary Arts, Academy of Military Leadership, Academy of Fine Arts and access to the Faulkner Career Technical Center, one of MCPSS's two career technical centers.

West Mobile's **Baker High School** also features a Signature Academy focused on college success. The Advanced Placement Capstone Academy develops students' skills in research, analysis, evidence-based arguments, collaboration, writing and presenting, and can earn them AP Capstone awards that are valuable to colleges across the country. The largest high school in Mobile County, Baker is also home to the academies of Business Information Technology; Engineering, Manufacturing and Industrial Technology; Fine Arts, Media and Entertainment; Health Sciences and Human Services; Marine and Zoological, Environmental Sciences; Transportation and Public Services; as well as access to the Bryant Career Tech Center.

Located in the north Mobile County community of Eight Mile, **Blount High School** is home to the Signature Academy of Allied Health, preparing students for pre-med, sports medicine and jobs such as certified nursing assistant and emergency medical responder, among others. Blount also has the academies of Business, Human Services and Industrial Manufacturing, as well as access to the Faulkner Career Tech Center.

Eight miles away, **LeFlore High School's** Signature Academy of Health Science focuses on therapeutic services, while the Signature Academy of Fine Arts concentrates on dance and band. LeFlore also houses the Signature Academy of Law and Public Safety and features access to the Faulkner Career Technical Center.



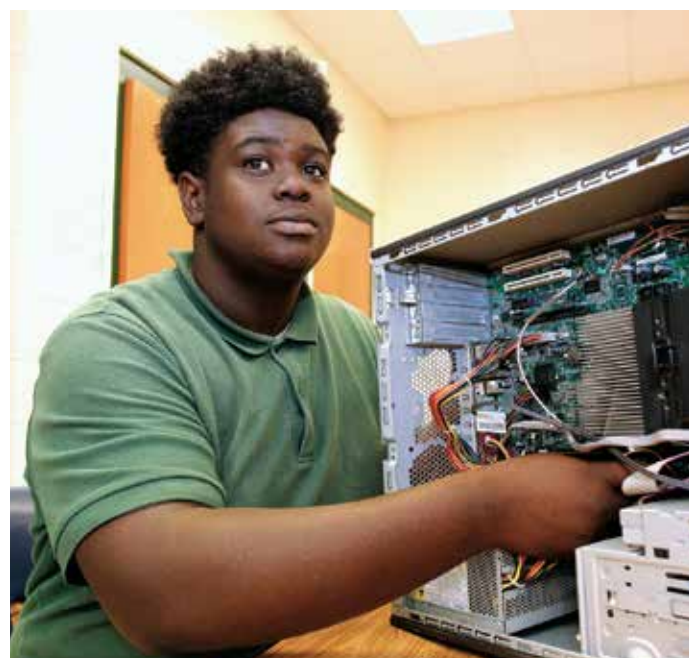
*Murphy High School's University Center*

Infirmary Health, the state's largest not-for-profit, non-governmental healthcare system, employs many graduates of LeFlore and Blount's Signature Academies. In fact, about half of Infirmary Health's 6,000 employees are Mobile County public school graduates, according to Workforce Development Coordinator **Carol Statter**.

Statter said her ability to communicate Infirmary Health's needs to administrators within MCPSS has helped raise the preparedness of prospective employees – especially those looking for work as certified nursing assistants, which are the majority of academy graduates who apply. And she said the most important thing the academies give the students, above and beyond training and certification, is relevance: why the information they're learning is relevant to the jobs they are applying for.

"They have a better expectation of what the real world is like," she said. "And they do a great job of getting these kids into internships, at the nursing home or the hospital."

The southernmost high school in Mobile County, **Bryant High School's** Signature Academy is focused on coastal studies, including pathways for agriscience, coastal environmental science, fisheries management and aquaculture, maritime and industrial technologies, and recreation, travel and tourism. Bryant



*Vigor High School's Signature Academy of Advanced Information Technology*



*Mary G. Montgomery High School's Signature Academy of Biomedical Sciences*

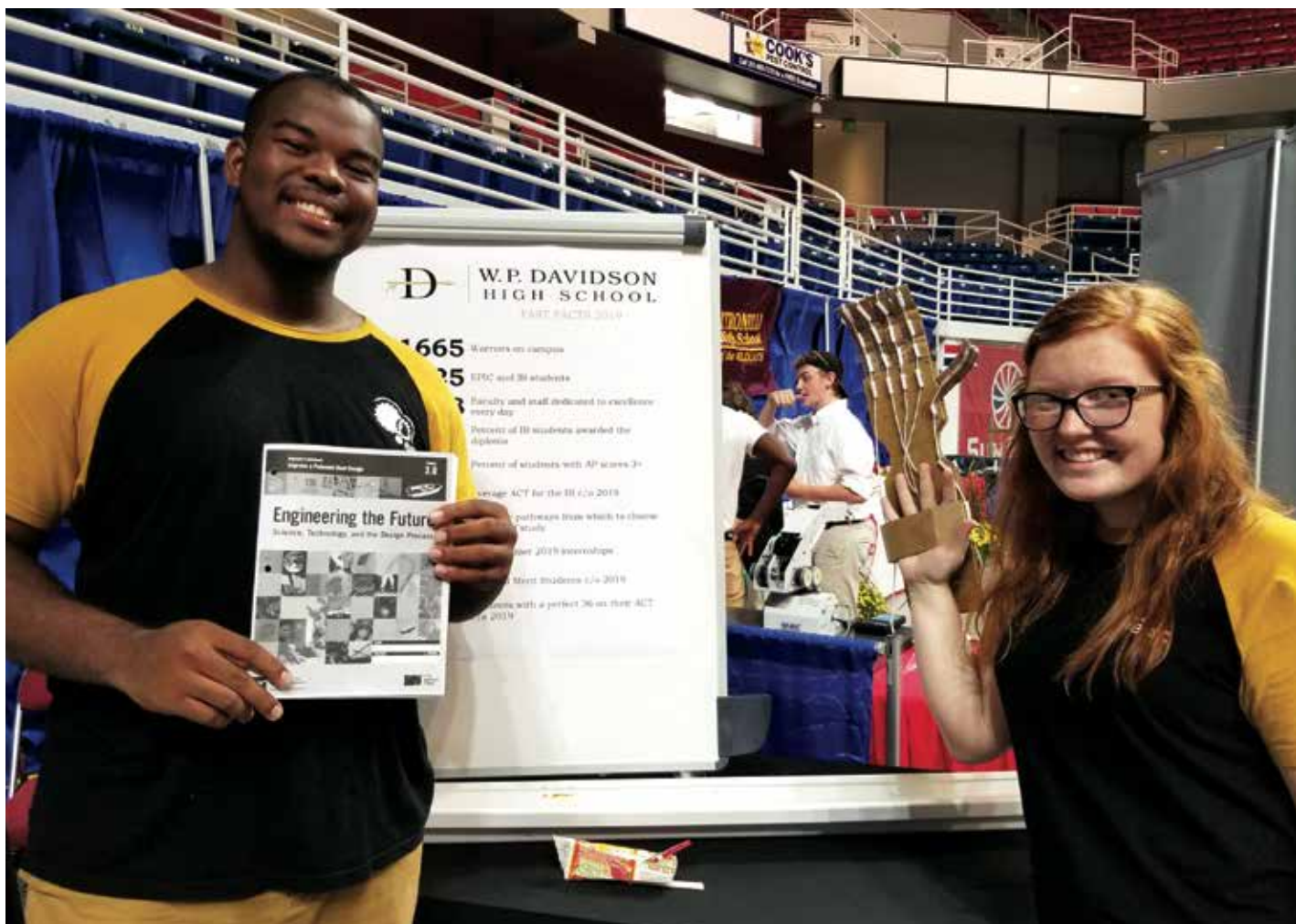
also offers the academies of business management and leadership and humanities. Students can also go to the nearby Bryant Career Tech Center.

Mobile County's highest-ranked college-readiness high school according to *U.S. News and World Report*, **Davidson High School**, is located in west Mobile and features academies based in STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) curriculum. The three academies serve STEM's academic goals of the Engineering Pathway of Integrated Curriculum (EPIC), international baccalaureate and multiple academic pathways to success. Davidson also features access to the Bryant Career Tech Center.

**Theodore High School**, in southwest Mobile County, offers the Signature Academy of Industry and Engineering, made up of pre-engineering and drafting courses on campus, as well as the 13 programs making up the industrial pathway and held at the Bryant Career Tech Center. Theodore also has the academies of arts and humanities, health care and dental assisting and marketing, business and leadership.

Located in northwest Mobile County, **Mary G. Montgomery High School's** Signature Academy of Biomedical Sciences features two pathways: biomedical sciences and sports medicine. The school also includes the academies of agricultural and mechanical science, business leadership, engineering sciences, and liberal and fine arts, as well as access to MCPSS's Faulkner Career Tech Center.





*Davidson High School's Signature Academy Engineering Pathway of integrated Curriculum*

Prichard is home to **Vigor High School** and its Signature Academy of Advanced Information Technology, complete with four pathways: computer programming and software development, network systems, multimedia/Interactive media and virtual reality. Vigor also features the academies of public services, broadcasting and culinary arts, as well as access to the Faulkner Career Tech Center.

The Signature Academies at Williamson, Citronelle and B.C. Rain high schools are prime examples of the positive influence major industrial partners can have at area schools. Shipbuilder Austal USA, the county's largest manufacturing employer, works with Williamson's Signature Academies of Maritime, Engineering and Entrepreneurship. Classes are also taught through the Faulkner Career Tech Center.

**Citronelle High School**, the northernmost in Mobile County, has industrial partnerships that include the steelmaker Outokumpu, located in the U.S. Highway 43 Industrial Corridor. Citronelle is home to the Signature Academy of Manufacturing, and has had at least 40 graduates hired by manufacturers along the Highway 43 Corridor in recent years. The school also features the academies of Leadership, Health Science, Technology, Business Management and Agriculture. Next door is the newly established Citronelle Center for Advanced Technology.

Partnered with aircraft manufacturer Airbus and its suppliers, **B. C. Rain High School** is home of the Signature Academy of Aviation and Aerospace, with an operational hangar as one of its classrooms. Academy students recently completed a two-year project where they built an aircraft to be sold to fund future academy endeavors. Rain is also home to the academies of Business Information Technology, Communication and Arts Technology, and Leadership. Classes are also taught through the Bryant Career Tech Center.

The partnerships between industrial leaders, educators and workforce developers rely on communication to not only survive, but to thrive, according to **Cheryl Nicholls**, the Mobile Area Chamber's manager of talent attraction. She said the cooperation and investment occurring among all three are finally working in harmony, after years strengthening those lines of understanding and communication.

This has a two-fold effect on recruitment, she said, both in bringing companies to the area, and in delivering a well-trained local workforce once they're here.

"Communication is key when you're talking about workforce development," she said. "And when you have all partners at the table, it's invaluable."



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# Eleven Things You Need to Know About Education in Mobile

1



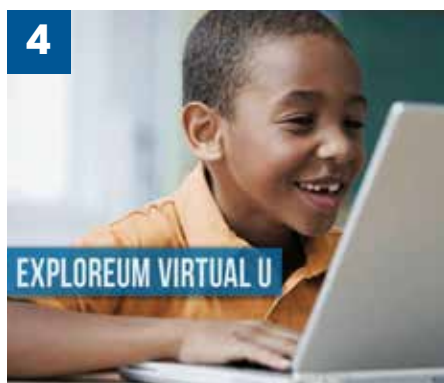
2



3



4



5



6



7



8



9



10



11



# 1

# FOUR SCHOOL DISTRICTS EDUCATE MOBILE COUNTY STUDENTS

In Alabama, there are 138 school districts. Since 2012, Mobile County has had four public school systems. Mobile County Public Schools (MCPSS) remains the largest in the county (and the state), with more than 53,000 students in K-12

education, and public education is supported by three additional city systems.

Here are some details about all four school systems in Mobile County.

## Chickasaw City Schools

[chickasawschools.com](http://chickasawschools.com)



Chickasaw City Schools established its own school system in 2010, creating a board of education and separating from MCPSS in 2012.

Chickasaw City Schools (CCS) consists of four schools: Alabama Destinations Career Academy of Chickasaw City Schools, Chickasaw Early Learning Center, Chickasaw Elementary School and Chickasaw Middle/High School. Its current student enrollment is 1,154.

**David Wofford** is the superintendent of Chickasaw City Schools.

According to Alabama State Department of Education (ASDE), CCS earned a C on its overall report card for the 2018-19 school year and has an 83.12 percent graduation rate.

## Saraland City Schools (SCS)

[saralandboe.org](http://saralandboe.org)



*Expect More. Achieve More.*

Saraland City Schools (SCS) opened its doors to students in 2008. The system currently has 3,231 students in its four schools: Saraland Early Education Center; Saraland Elementary School; Saraland Middle School; and Saraland High School.

**Dr. Aaron Milner** serves as the system's superintendent.

In 2018, SCS was one of 15 school systems to receive an "A" grade on the state report card. It received an "A" again in 2019 and ranked as one of the top five districts in the state. In 2017, Saraland Elementary was named a National Blue Ribbon School.

According to ASDE, SCS earned an A on its overall report card for the 2018-19 school year and has a 95.17 percent graduation rate.

## Mobile County Public Schools

[mcpss.com](http://mcpss.com)



*Learning Today. Leading Tomorrow.* Mobile County PUBLIC SCHOOLS

**Chresal Threadgill**, superintendent for Mobile County Public Schools (MCPSS), has been in this position since 2018 and is in charge of the largest school system in Alabama, consisting of 50 elementary schools, seven magnet schools, 10 special schools, two K-8 schools, 16 middle schools, 12 high schools and 12 signature academies. School enrollment is more than 53,000.

Threadgill was recently named the District 1 Superintendent of the Year by the School Superintendents of Alabama by his peers in the southwest part of the state.

According to MCPSS, its facilities division manages 9.9 million square feet of buildings, a central office, maintenance, transportation and other buildings, as well as its 88 schools.

MCPSS has 14 National Blue Ribbon Schools as recognized by the Department of Education for achieving superior ASDE standards of academic excellence.

According to the ASDE, MCPSS earned a B on its overall report card for the 2018-19 school year and has an 85.9 percent graduation rate.

## Satsuma City Schools

[satsumaschools.com](http://satsumaschools.com)



Satsuma City Schools was established in 2012 and consists of two schools: Robert E. Lee Elementary and Satsuma High. Student enrollment is 1,550.

Satsuma City Schools is governed by a five-member board of education responsible for formulating policies that govern the system.

**Dr. Bart Reeves** is the system's superintendent.

According to ASDE, SCSS earned an A on its overall report card for the 2018-19 school year and has a 96.3 percent graduation rate.





2

**Bishop State Community College** broke ground this summer on an Advanced Manufacturing Center. The \$21 million facility will house industry-approved equipment to train students, current employees and career-change candidates with the knowledge and technical skills to meet Mobile area employers' needs.

The community college also partnered with **SSAB Americas** and **Outokumpu Americas** to create the first electromechanical technician registered apprenticeship program in Alabama. In addition to hands-on training, apprentices will earn an associate degree in process and maintenance technology.



3

**Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University** announced it is opening a new campus in **Flight Works Alabama**, a nonprofit organization designed to build the aerospace industry's workforce. The new campus will offer associate, bachelor's and master's degree programs, specialized training and continuing education credits.



Flight Works is a public-private partnership spearheaded by Airbus and the state of Alabama that opened this summer. The 15,000-square-foot exhibition and education center houses 40 hands-on exhibits, a classroom, workshop, fabrication room, drone aviary and more.



4

As Mobile County Public Schools started this school year virtually, the **Gulf Coast Exploreum Science Center** opened its doors to Mobile and Baldwin County students for Virtual U, a limited virtual learning space.

Certified educators don't teach the classes but are on hand to help facilitate students' online learning. Highlights of the program included support for students in grades 1-6; STEM-certified facilitators; STEM enrichment activities; and classes limited to 12 students or fewer.

Students are responsible for bringing their own devices and supplies during the school day from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m., with WiFi in all classrooms.

5

Fifteen members of **Mobile County Public Schools'** Class of 2020 walked from the graduation stage to jobs at Mobile's largest manufacturing employer. The students represent Baker, Blount, Alma Bryant, Davidson, Mary G. Montgomery, Murphy, Vigor and Williamson high schools. These students were part of a Youth Apprenticeship Program at **Austal** that began in February. Though it was shortened by the onset of COVID-19, over half of the MCPSS students in the program were offered full-time positions with the shipbuilder.





6



**AM/NS Calvert** and **Coastal Alabama Community College** initiated a new apprenticeship program, combining classroom and on-site training to develop students' skills and knowledge in the industry as they complete the

required 2,000 OJT (on-the-job training) hours. At the end of the program, they will be eligible to receive a nationally recognized apprenticeship certification and graduate with an associate of applied sciences degree.

7



The **University of South Alabama** earlier this year completed renovations and moved its **Alabama Power USA Coastal Weather Research Center** out of the Mitchell Center's basement and to the science laboratory building.

The location allows the staff to develop an emergency alert center that will include a video wall for displaying maps and models, as well as an area to hold briefings.



**ACCEL Day and Evening Academy** Alabama's first tuition-free public charter school, developed by the **Mobile Area Education Foundation**, was one of four in the state chosen to receive a three-year grant of

\$1.5 million. The funds will help ACCEL expand to serve students in grades 6-12, establishing the ACCEL Day and Evening Academy Middle School set to open next fall.

8



9



In Mobile, **Alabama Industrial Development Training (AIDT)** operates two centers, one focusing on the maritime industry and the other serving as a training center for Airbus. The Maritime Training Center offers classes for the in demand careers in the maritime industry in South Alabama

and uses a globally recognized curriculum transferable around the world. The Alabama Aviation Training Center (AATC) located at Brookley Field serves as the hub of training activities for Airbus. AATC features training specifically designed for Airbus employees.



10



**A&O Health Career Center** was established in 2017 in Mobile as a private institution training nursing assistants certified through the Alabama Department of Public Health. Since then, the center has added other programs and has certified more than 100 students throughout Alabama, Florida and Mississippi. Today A&O Health Career Center provides a variety of professional allied health courses, including medical

assistant training, nursing assistant, phlebotomy workshop and newly added pharmacy technician training. The programs offer a fast-track, affordable learning experience for students to gain entry-level positions in the healthcare industry. The Center's main campus is located at 4373 Downtowner Loop S. For more information visit [info@healthcareer.org](mailto:info@healthcareer.org).



11

**Alabama Broadband Connectivity (ABC)** for students provides vouchers for families of students currently eligible for free and reduced-price school meals, or other income criteria for equipment and internet service, through Dec. 31.

The program is expanding internet access, wireless hot spots, satellite, fixed wireless, DSL and cellular-on-wheels. Gov. Kay Ivey allocated \$100 million from the Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security (CARES) Act for the initiative.

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# CHAMBER AT WORK



## TWICE WEEKLY FEATURES OF MEMBERS CONTINUES

The Chamber's events manager continued a twice-weekly social media feature of members. The videos, averaging more than 500 views, include a brief "show and tell" from the member business. The most recent videos included a showroom tour of office furniture trends at McAleer's Office Furniture, a shrimp and grits cooking demonstration at SOCU and a spa tour at the Battle House Hotel.

**SMALL BUSINESS COUNCIL MEETS** The Chamber's small business development team hosted a quarterly meeting of the Small Business Council via Zoom. The group discussed existing lending /grant programs now available for small businesses and a possible online resource fair. Sixteen people participated in the council meeting.

**GETTING TO KNOW MOBILE** The Chamber's manager of talent attraction hosted the inaugural "Get to Know Mobile" virtual event in late July. Twenty-three employers participated in the event, designed to bring local college students face-to-face with employers looking to grow their workforce. Results from this event were positive and will be used as a cornerstone for future networking and matchmaking events.

**MEETING WITH FRENCH-AMERICAN CHAMBER OF COMMERCE** The international business division at the Chamber recently met with the new executive director of the French-American Chamber of Commerce, located in New Orleans, to discuss potential partnerships and areas of collaboration.

**WHAT'S MOBILE'S COST OF LIVING?** Quarterly, the Chamber's marketing and research manager checks pricing of services and goods in local stores. This data is collected and prepared for the C2ER Cost of Living Index, which shows communities how their respective "cost of living" compares with other cities across the United States. This report for the third quarter of 2020 will be released on Oct. 31.

## NEW BOARD OF ADVISORS ANNOUNCED

The Chamber announced Dortch Figures and Sons; Merrill, a Bank of America Company; Lane Advisors; and TC Boiler have joined the board of advisors, bringing the number to 264. To learn more about this group of influential members, contact Shelly Mattingly at 251.431.8655 or smattingly@mobilechamber.com.

**EXECUTIVE ROUNDTABLE** The Chamber's Executive Roundtable – a forum for business owners and managers – has met monthly via Zoom post-COVID-19. The July session included a panel discussion on the topic "Nonprofit Executives Discuss the Sustainability of Nonprofit Companies in the Aftermath of COVID-19." Panelists were Cindy Baggett, Feeding the Gulf Coast; William Bryant, Mobile Area Council Boy Scouts of America; Jill Chenoweth, United Way of South Alabama; Lucy Gafford, Mobile Arts Council; and Tim Wills, Boys and Girls Club of South Alabama Inc. There were 35 participants in the meeting.

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## WES COOKE

### PERSONS SERVICES CORP.

**Wes Cooke** is senior project manager for Persons Services Corp. and has more than 20 years' experience in the construction industry throughout the Southeast. He received a bachelor's degree from Auburn University. Cooke has managed projects over \$200 million in all types of construction including healthcare, educational/institutional, retail, restaurant, automotive, warehouse/industrial, office space, mixed use/commercial development and churches. He has completed projects for clients such as Penske, Federal Express, Mobile County Public Schools, Ascension Providence Hospital, Rich's Car Wash, AutoNation, PETCO, Hutchinson Aerospace & Industry, the cities of Mobile, Daphne and Orange Beach, and Coast Electric Power Association, along with many other commercial clients.



## HELENE HASSELL

### DAUPHIN ISLAND SEA LAB FOUNDATION

**Helene Hassell** is executive director of the Dauphin Island Sea Lab Foundation and director of the development department for the Dauphin Island Sea Lab. Her background includes more than 30 years in community volunteerism. She has served as president of the Junior League of Mobile, Mobile Medical Alliance and The Salvation Army of Coastal Alabama. Hassell currently serves on the board of the Providence Hospital Foundation as secretary and is a member of Rotary Club of Mobile, Alabama Association of Nonprofits and The Salvation Army advisory board. She is a graduate of Millsaps College and holds a master's degree in health services administration from the University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences.

## JOHN HOYLE

### ALABAMA SCHOOL OF MATHEMATICS AND SCIENCE

**John Hoyle** is president of the Alabama School of Mathematics and Science (ASMS), Alabama's only fully residential and public high school for highly motivated students seeking advanced studies in math, science and humanities. Hoyle earned a bachelor's degree in mass communication and political science from Principia College, a master's degree in education leadership from Holy Cross University and a doctorate in instructional design and development from the University of South Alabama. He began working at ASMS in 2005 after moving to Mobile from New Orleans in the wake of Hurricane Katrina. At ASMS, he has served as assistant director of communications, director of admissions and outreach, vice president and now president.





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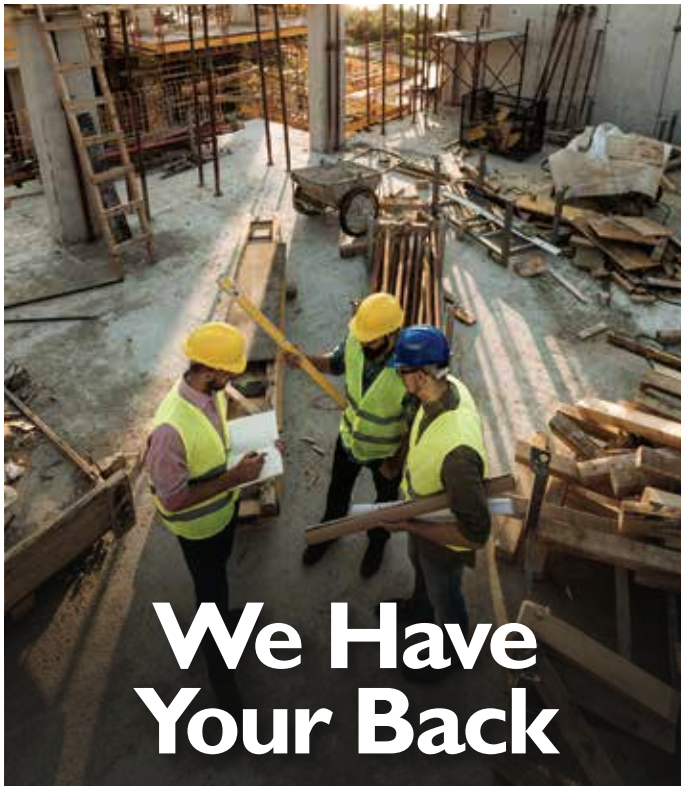
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**Note: Watch the Mobile Area Chamber's website, [mobilechamber.com/events](http://mobilechamber.com/events), and our social media channels for updates as we balance in-person and virtual events.**

## 8

### VIRTUAL MEMBERSHIP 101

**VIA ZOOM:** Whether you are new to the Chamber or have been a member for years, make sure you are getting the most from your membership by participating in Membership 101. Meet other members and Chamber staff virtually to learn more ways to benefit from your membership.

**When:** 8 to 9 a.m.

**Cost:** There is no charge to participate, but space is limited.

**Contact:** Carolyn Golson at 251.431.8622 or [cgolson@mobilechamber.com](mailto:cgolson@mobilechamber.com)

*RSVP required for ZOOM meeting code.*

## 16

### DIVERSITY BUSINESS FORUM

*\*Members only; one representative per company*

*Preceding the Eagle Awards is the Diversity Business Forum. COVID-19 has taught an old lesson in a very new way: access to cash is a lifeline for all businesses. A panel of financial experts will present on the many options available for that lifeline.*

**When:** 9 to 11 a.m.

**Where:** The Battle House Renaissance Mobile Hotel and Spa

**Topic:** "Financing and Accessing Capital for Growth and Expansion"

**Cost:** Included with purchase of Eagle Awards Luncheon in-person or virtual ticket, but limited to only 20 people in-person.

**Contact:** Brenda Rembert at 251.431.8607 or [brembert@mobilechamber.com](mailto:brembert@mobilechamber.com)

*RSVP requested.*

**Sponsor:** Trustmark

## 16

### EAGLE AWARDS LUNCH AND DIVERSITY BUSINESS FORUM

*Minority-owned business successes are celebrated during the Chamber's annual Eagle Awards ceremony. For more than two decades, the Chamber has honored more than 100 outstanding companies. The City of Mobile will receive The Rev. Wesley A. James Minority Business Advocate award for its support and advocacy of minority-owned businesses to gain access to procurement opportunities available with the city. (See Eagle Award winner profiles on pgs. 16-21.)*

**When:** 11:30 a.m. to 1 p.m.

**Where:** The Battle House Renaissance Mobile Hotel and Spa

**Speaker:** John Hope Bryant, founder, chairman and CEO of Operation HOPE

**In Person Cost:** \$50 members/ \$60 nonmembers (Includes Diversity Business Forum and Eagle Awards.)

**Virtual Cost:** \$20 members/ \$25 non-members

**Contact:** Brenda Rembert at 251.431.8607 or [brembert@mobilechamber.com](mailto:brembert@mobilechamber.com)

*RSVP requested.*

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## 20

### VIRTUAL EXECUTIVE ROUNDTABLE

**VIA ZOOM:** A monthly forum exclusively for Chamber-member small business owners and managers..

**When:** 8 to 9 a.m.

**Speaker:** Glenda Snodgrass, president, the Net Effect

**Topic:** "The Ways We Leak Data"

**Contact:** Brenda Rembert at 251.431.8607 or [brembert@mobilechamber.com](mailto:brembert@mobilechamber.com)

*RSVP required for ZOOM meeting code.*

**Sponsor:** BancorpSouth

## 28

### FORUM ALABAMA WITH LT. GOV. WILL AINSWORTH

**VIRTUAL EVENT:** The Forum Alabama series is a six-part virtual series providing a platform for Mobile's business community to hear directly from federal and state elected officials.

**When:** 10 a.m.

**Cost:** \$15 members/\$30 nonmembers

**Contact:** Mallory Tyson at 251.431.8621 or [mtyson@mobilechamber.com](mailto:mtyson@mobilechamber.com)

*RSVP required for live stream code, which will be provided the morning of the event.*

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## WHO'S NEW

## USA Health Names Director of Health System Pharmacy



Broome

**Allen Broome** was named director of health system pharmacy for **USA Health**. Broome earned a bachelor's degree in chemistry from the University of Tennessee at Chattanooga. He went on to complete a doctorate of pharmacy from the University of Tennessee Health Science Center.

## Pediatric Epilepsy Specialist Joins USA Health

**USA Health** expanded its epilepsy treatment capabilities with the addition of **Dr. Asri Yuliati**, a neurologist specializing in pediatric epilepsy. She will also serve as an assistant professor of neurology at the University of South Alabama College of Medicine. Yuliati received a medical degree from Sun Yat Sen University in China. She completed a pediatric residency at Flushing Hospital Medical Center in New York, followed by a child neurology residency at Wayne State University in Michigan and an epilepsy fellowship at the UCLA Medical Center in California.

## Lung Cancer Specialist Joins USA Health



Persing

**USA Health** added **Dr. Brian E. Persing**, a board-certified medical oncologist and hematologist, to its cancer care team. Persing, an assistant professor of interdisciplinary clinical oncology, will specialize in the treatment of lung cancer. He earned a medical degree from the University of South Dakota School of Medicine and completed an internship and residency in internal medicine and a fellowship in hematology/oncology at the University of Mississippi Medical Center in Jackson, Mississippi.

## USA Health Welcomes Pediatric Urologist to South Alabama

**USA Health** hired pediatric urologist **Paul Noh**. Noh is the only urologist in the southern half of Alabama who specializes in treating urologic conditions in children. He earned a medical degree from Jefferson Medical College in Philadelphia.

## EXIT Realty Lyon Welcomes New Agent

**Chelsey Jones-Davis** joined the staff of **EXIT Realty Lyon**.

## Oyster Shell Strategy Expands Team



Layton



Fulton

**Oyster Shell Strategy** hired **Megan Layton** as marketing and events coordinator.

Layton has a bachelor's degree in communications with a concentration in strategic communications from the University of South Alabama.

The company also hired **Lane Fulton** as executive assistant. Fulton has a bachelor's degree in business administration from the University of South Alabama. She is also a graduate of Leadership Mobile.

## Russell Thompson Butler &amp; Houston Announces Staff Moves



McDaniel



Justinialno

**Russell Thompson Butler & Houston LLP** announced the promotion

of **Morgan McDaniel CPA** to senior accountant. McDaniel is a graduate of the University of South Alabama with a bachelor's degree in business administration with a concentration in accounting.

**Andrea Justinialno** was named an accounting technician. Justinialno holds a bachelor's degree in business administration with a concentration in finance and a master's in business administration from University of South Alabama.

## Infirmary Cancer Care Adds Physician



Thanikachalam

**Dr. Kannan Thanikachalam** joined **Infirmary Cancer Care and Diagnostic and Medical Clinic** following the completion of a fellowship in hematology/oncology at Henry Ford Hospital in Detroit. He earned a bachelor's degree in medicine and surgery from Stanley Medical College in Chennai, India.

## Bellingrath Gardens Hires New Executive Director



Lasseigne

**Bellingrath Gardens and Home** hired horticulturist **F. Todd Lasseigne** as executive director.

A native of Thibodaux, La., Lasseigne holds a bachelor's degree in horticulture from the University of Louisiana at Lafayette, a master's degree in horticulture from the University of Georgia and a doctorate in horticulture from North Carolina State University.



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## Children's Medical Group Names New Administrator



Huggins

**Daniel Huggins** is the new chief operating officer for **Children's Medical Group**. Huggins has a bachelor's degree in psychology from William Carey University and a master's degree in healthcare administration from University of Alabama at Birmingham.

## Landscape Architect Joins Goodwyn, Mills and Cawood



Martin

**Goodwyn, Mills and Cawood Inc.** added landscape architect **Adam Martin** to its team. Martin graduated from Mississippi State with bachelor's degrees in landscape contracting and management and landscape architecture and earned a master's degree in urban design at the University of North Carolina-Charlotte and has served as a U.S. Army Ranger.

## Feeding the Gulf Coast Announces New President & CEO



Ledger

**Feeding the Gulf Coast** welcomed **Michael Ledger** as its new president and CEO. Ledger served for four years in the U.S. Navy as an electronics technician, then earned a bachelor's degree in management from the University of Illinois. He has more than 30 years of experience with business development and operational strategy.

## New Hires at the Health Department



Porter



Roberts



Chavers

**Family Health**, the primary care division of the **Mobile County Health Department (MCHD)**, announced new staff members:

**Dr. Kathy Porter** joined as a full-time provider at the Women's Center. She earned a bachelor's degree from Western Kentucky University and a medical degree from the University of Louisville, as well as a master's degree in business administration from Auburn University.

**Dr. Faye Roberts** joined Family Health as a part-time pediatrician. She earned a bachelor's degree from The University of Alabama and a medical degree from the University of Alabama at Birmingham School of Medicine.

**Dr. L. Scott Chavers** returned to Mobile as an epidemiologist with MCHD. He has a bachelor's

degree in biomedical sciences from the University of South Alabama, a master's degree in public health and a doctorate of epidemiology from the University of Alabama at Birmingham.

## Bellator Real Estate & Development Hires New Agents



Boykin



Davis



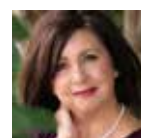
Kessler



Lake



Madison



Prince



Thorne



Williams

Eight new agents joined **Bellator Real Estate & Development**: **James Boykin**, **Mary Ellen Davis**, **Kurtis Kessler**, **Mason Lake**, **Jackie Madison**, **Janet Prince**, **Christy Thorne** and **Sherell Williams**.

## JJPR Hires New Production Director

**JJPR** hired **Sara Miles Agee** as the agency's production director. She is a graduate of Loyola University in New Orleans, where she received a bachelor's degree in journalism. Agee brings more than 10 years of experience in broadcast, video and web production.

## United Way Names Manager of Regional Development, County Relations



Stewart

The **United Way of Southwest Alabama** hired **Emily Stewart** as the new manager of regional development, county relations. She attended The University of Alabama, where she received a bachelor's degree in public relations.

## Chaisson and McRee Join Cardiology Associates of Mobile



Chaisson



McRee

**Dr. Jordan Chaisson**, a specialist in the field of electrophysiology, treating heart rhythm disorders or arrhythmias, and **Dr. Chad McRee**, who is trained in treating structural heart disease, joined **Cardiology Associates of Mobile**.

## BUSINESS ENDEAVORS

### USA Health Opens Gastroenterology Endoscopy Lab

**USA Health University Hospital** recently opened a new gastroenterology endoscopy lab that will reduce wait times, expedite patient care and utilize leading-edge technology. The new 8,000-square-foot space includes five procedure rooms. The clinic also instituted an open-access endoscopy clinic for patients in need of colon cancer screening.

### IMMIX Strategic Launches DXP

Located at 853 Dauphin St., Ste. C. (in the Container Yard), **IMMIX Strategic** launched as a full-service digital experience platform (DXP) marketing firm. Using DXP technology, IMMIX will implement fully automated and intelligent marketing services personalized based on data and analytics. Learn more about the company at [immixstrategic.com](http://immixstrategic.com)

### Shoe Station Hires Red Square Agency

**Red Square Agency** is the agency of record for Shoe Station. It will oversee strategy, creative and media for the 36-year-old brand. The move comes as Shoe Station evolves to serve customers across the Southeast region through new and innovative business practices, including growing e-commerce opportunities and curbside pickup.

### KEDPlasma USA Opens New Location

**KEDPlasma USA's** newest location is open at 3060 Moffett Rd. Call 251.318.2000 to learn more about plasma donations or schedule an appointment.

## WELL DONE

### USA Health University Hospital Earns Three AHA Awards

**USA Health University Hospital** earned three of the American Heart Association (AHA)/American Stroke Association awards for excellence in stroke care.

### Hargrove Continues to Rise In Sourcebook's Ranking By Industry

The 2020 Engineering News Record (ENR) Sourcebook ranking shows **Hargrove Engineers + Constructors** holding on to the No. 1 spot in the chemicals sector for the second year in a row. Hargrove moved up in many ranked sectors, including industrial process, pulp and paper and refining.

## Wilkins Miller Named One of the 'Best Accounting Firms to Work For'

**Wilkins Miller** accounting and advisory firm was named one of the 2020 "Best Accounting Firms to Work for" by *Accounting Today* for the sixth year in a row. The annual survey and awards program, conducted in partnership with Best Companies Group, is designed to identify, recognize and honor the best employers in the accounting profession.

## Four Members Appointed to Alabama State Port Authority Board



Cochran



Sims



Jemison



Hope

Gov. Kay Ivey appointed **Tony Cochran**, **Patricia Sims** and **Carl Jemison** to the Alabama State Port Authority board. **Alvin Hope** was reappointed to his second term representing the southern region.

## Continental Aerospace Technologies Receives Type Certificate for CD-170 Engine

**Continental** received the European Union Aviation Safety Agency Type Certificate validation for the Jet-A CD-170 engine, a part of Continental's CD-100 series of engines that have accumulated over 7.1 million flight hours worldwide since its inception.

## Grand Hotel Selected Among Best Historic Hotels in the Country

*USA TODAY* named the **Grand Hotel Golf Resort & Spa** one of the top three historic hotels in the country, as voted on by its readers in an online poll.

## Mobile Area Lodging Association, Visit Mobile Receive Awards

The **Mobile Area Lodging Association (MALA)** and **Visit Mobile** were awarded the Tourism Partnership of the Year award from the Alabama Department of Tourism. The award was given in recognition of MALA and Visit Mobile on their seven-year collaboration to form the Mobile Tourism Improvement District.

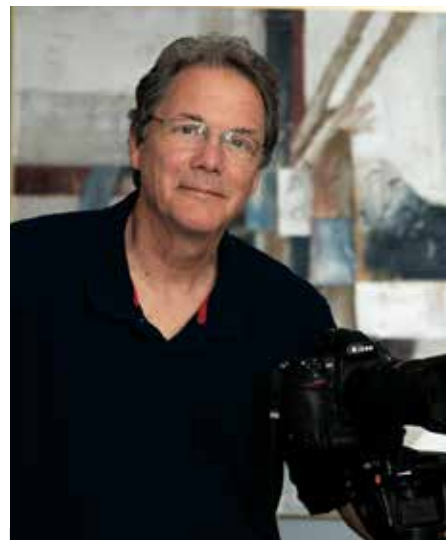
## Carpenter Makes 2020 Forbes 'Top Next-Generation Wealth Advisors' List

Merrill Lynch wealth management advisor **S. Wesley Carpenter** was recognized on the 2020 Forbes "Top Next Generation Wealth Advisors" list published in July 2020.

## Spring Hill College Receives Grant

**Spring Hill College** was awarded more than \$185,000 from the National Endowment for the Humanities. The award supports the preservation of historic collections, humanities exhibitions and documentaries, scholarly research and educational opportunities for teachers.

Submission deadline for Member News is two months prior to publication. News releases should be one or two brief paragraphs. Photos must be professional headshots labeled with the person's first and last name, and must be 300 dpi at full size and saved in an eps, tiff or jpg format. Send your information to [news@mobilechamber.com](mailto:news@mobilechamber.com).



## FEATURE PHOTOGRAPHER

### BRIAN D. JORDAN

Brian D. Jordan, a photography and videography professional with FusionPoint Media, has been capturing moments his entire life. Shortly after college graduation, Jordan started his own company to provide video and photo services to Mobile-area businesses. This began an almost 40-year career behind the lens.

In 1999, Jordan started FusionPoint Media, a creative services firm known for providing comprehensive marketing support solutions backed with a personal touch. In this role, he has truly gotten to showcase a wide range of expertise as he supports clients both locally and across the country.

With this longevity in the business, Jordan has had the opportunity to get to know Mobile, its businesses and people in depth. His skills include proficiency in staged, candid and action photography; in-studio and on-location production; and photography and videography for a broad range of mediums.

In this issue, Jordan's work can be seen on the cover, as well as featured stories on education, the pipe welders academies and Small Business of the Month. To see more of his portfolio, visit [fusionpointmedia.com/services](http://fusionpointmedia.com/services).



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The Mobile Area Chamber was awarded the U.S. Chamber of Commerce's highest designation. Of the 6,936 chambers in the U.S., only 3 percent achieved five-star distinction.

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