



# BUSINESSVIEW

MOBILE AREA CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

OCTOBER 2021

## THE BUSINESS CASE FOR DIVERSITY, EQUITY AND INCLUSION

2021 EAGLE  
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# BUSINESSVIEW

MOBILE AREA CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

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*The business case for diversity, equity and inclusion in today's workforce is stronger than ever. Read more on pages 27-35 about its importance in today's workplace culture, changing mindsets, employee involvement in the process and more.*

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## ABOUT THE MAGAZINE

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## PUBLISHER'S NOTE:

# DIVERSITY BENEFITS EVERYONE IN BUSINESS

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

As a port city, Mobile has always been an international place, welcoming people and investment from all over the world. Not surprisingly, our workplaces tend to mirror the sociocultural dynamics at play, which in Mobile's case should translate to tremendous diversity in the workforce of our organizations.

This issue of the *Business View* highlights the importance of diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) and shows how purposeful work in DEI can unleash the true potential of the invaluable asset of diversity. Business has the power to change and contribute to a more open,

diverse and inclusive society – and we can accomplish this by starting from within our organizations. The moral argument for DEI is enough by itself, but the financial impact, proven by multiple studies, makes this a no-brainer.

One thing is for certain: DEI is not a one-time campaign or one-off initiative, and it's important to remember that every company's initiative will look different. It's a constant work in progress, and we should all strive to continue to grow our DEI efforts in conjunction with our economy, which is more wonderfully diverse every day.



*Pictured above are several of Mitsubishi's employees who were hired as the company began operations in the mid-1990s. They are from left to right, Ronnie Rivers, Jorge Salazar, Matt Wilson, Mike Keevan and Yuko Jordan.*

# MOBILE'S FIRST JAPANESE INVESTMENT CELEBRATES MILESTONE ANNIVERSARY

Twenty-five years ago, the Mobile Area Chamber and Mitsubishi Materials announced a major investment, marking the first financial venture by a Japanese company in the area.

At the time, the headline read "National Eyes on Mobile," and what became a Mobile-headquartered operation is also a wholly-owned subsidiary of Mitsubishi Materials. In 1996, it was one of only a handful of high-tech projects valued at more than \$100 million in the United States.

Celebrating a milestone anniversary, Mitsubishi Polysilicon continues to produce high-grade polycrystalline silicon (PolySi) used by the electronics industry in all things that have a computer chip.

"We measure purity to eleven-nines, measuring parts per trillion," explains **Matt Wilson**, president of Mitsubishi Polysilicon, referring to the local output as 99.9999999999 percent pure. To put that in perspective, one eyedrop of an Olympic sized swimming pool would not pass the company's purity test.

The company's customers, located domestically and internationally, make computer wafers that are turned into high-quality computer chips, which are the keys to faster processing using less energy.

Mitsubishi increased its capacity by 50 percent twice – once in 2001 and again in 2007. In the late 2000s, Wilson says the industry became overgrown and was depressed for several years but is beginning to recover.

Over the years, Mitsubishi's PolySi has been used in a number of popular and well-known products including gaming applications from Nintendo 64 and virtual reality headsets for the Wii; internet applications like Netflix, Google, Skype, Facebook, Spotify and contactless payments; cell phone technology and iPhones, Kindles and smartwatches; and other products including the Toyota Prius, 3D printers and ancestry DNA kits.

"We've all become dependent on these things to improve our lives," says Wilson. "Chipmakers are constantly retooling, and as the demand for technology increases, so does the need for a purer product like ours."

More modern-day examples of how its product is used include the Cloud, data centers and the Internet of Things – refrigerators, grills, air conditioners and anything else you can control with your cell phone.

One of the company's draws to the area was the opportunity to establish a co-product relationship with Evonik. Mitsubishi was established in the Theodore Industrial Park and today still has a strong relationship with Evonik, using one of the company's raw materials in its production and then selling back a byproduct from Mitsubishi's process.



According to Wilson, the Theodore facility is one of less than 10 in the world in this highly specialized industry and is responsible for approximately 5 percent of PolySi production worldwide. The company employs 150 people and is engineering-intensive, says Wilson.

"We love seeing a company like Mitsubishi Polysilicon celebrating such a monumental year in Mobile," says **Christina Stimpson**, the Mobile Area Chamber's director of economic development.

"One of our goals in economic development is to heighten international awareness that Mobile is a top venue for global commerce. Mitsubishi Polysilicon is a great example of that. Mitsubishi uses Mobile as an export platform, allowing for easy connectivity to international markets like Japan and Germany."



**"We love seeing a company like Mitsubishi Polysilicon celebrating such a monumental year in Mobile."**

**Christina Stimpson**  
director of economic development, Mobile Area Chamber of Commerce

*Mitsubishi staff make one final inspection before their product is shipped to clients who make computer wafers that are turned into high-quality computer chips.*



# MOBILE AIRPORT AUTHORITY OFFICIALLY STARTS THE CLOCK ON COMMERCIAL AVIATION TRANSITION

The Mobile Airport Authority (MAA) awarded the new terminal construction project to Hoar Program Management, starting the clock for the Mobile Downtown Airport.

“Selecting a project manager is a significant step in this project,” said **Chris Curry**, Mobile Airport Authority president. “We are following an aggressive three-year timeline to relocate all commercial air service to the Mobile Downtown Airport and expect the new terminal to open in the summer of 2024.”

According to the MAA release, in addition to constructing a new five-gate international terminal, the \$250 million project includes relocating some tenants and expanding runway aprons and infrastructure.

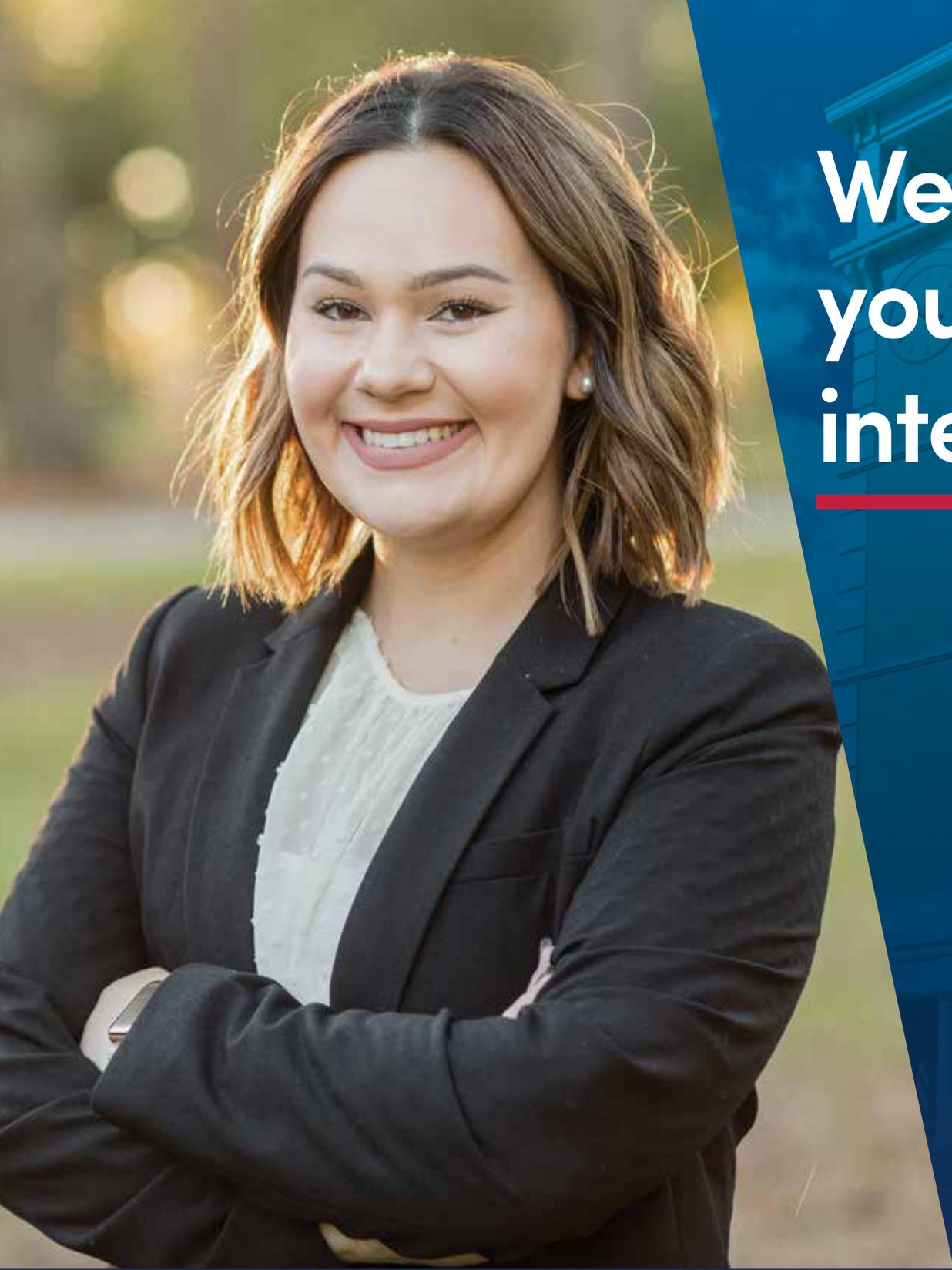
“Moving the commercial airport downtown is one of the most transformational opportunities we have for the City of Mobile,” said **Mobile Mayor Sandy Stimpson**. “For Mobilians, this means something we’ve talked about for years is no longer a dream and no longer theoretical.”

“The construction of this downtown terminal will bring lower fares, more direct flights, increased tourism, greater economic development opportunities and a more convenient air travel option for our entire region,” Stimpson said. “I want to congratulate the entire Mobile Airport Authority team for crossing this important milestone and continuing to push this significant project forward.”

While the terminal initially will be built to accommodate today’s needs, Curry said the plans could change. “As we move along through this 36-month process, if we get more airline interest for expansion for that new terminal facility, you may very well see us go from a five- to a six-gate scenario. As we go into this project, we remain flexible, because a lot can happen in the next three years.”

“As we move along through this 36-month process, if we get more airline interest for expansion for that new terminal facility, you may very well see us go from a five- to a six-gate scenario. As we go into this project, we remain flexible, because a lot can happen in the next three years.”

**Chris Curry**, president, Mobile Airport Authority



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# THE GROUNDS UNDERGOES RENOVATIONS



The Grounds is getting a facelift, one long overdue according to staff and volunteers.

“The renovations we are undertaking are part of a five-year strategic process we have been working through as an organization,” said **Josh Woods**, executive director.

Phase 1, valued at \$1.5 million, will update the facility and campus. Included in the project is the refurbishing of two buildings that haven’t been used before, adding 130,000 square feet of event space.

Aimed at increasing guest- and patron-friendly enhancements, the project kicked off with a groundbreaking in August. The anticipated completion date is in December.

The 158-acre entertainment and commercial venue in west Mobile hosts events year-round, with the largest being the Greater Gulf State Fair.

This year’s fair dates are Friday, Oct. 29, through Sunday, Nov. 7. Woods says they will be bringing music back to the Grandstand. Watch for details on the organization’s website, [thegroundsmobile.com](http://thegroundsmobile.com), and on its Facebook page.

**“The renovations we are undertaking are part of a five-year strategic process we have been working through as an organization.”**

*Josh Woods*, executive director, The Grounds



# NEW CONTRACTOR'S COLLEGE AT BISHOP STATE LEVELS THE PLAYING FIELD

Fifteen local small business owners and managers are benefiting from a new curriculum at Bishop State Community College. The Contractor's College: Project Management and Crew Leadership is the result of a new partnership between Bishop State and the City of Mobile.

Designed for contractors, managers or recently promoted crew leaders, the program covers basic leadership skills and styles, communications, delegating and problem-solving. Other topics include safety, issues and resolutions, construction documents, estimating and cost control, scheduling and quality control.

"The Contractor's College provides an in-depth, invaluable experience for small, minority business owners," said student **Tammy Williams** with Williams Recycling R Us. "With direct access to business owners who serve as mentors, supportive faculty and lively, instructor-led classes, the program levels the field for successful future contract bids in their respective trade."

When they complete the program, each graduate will be able to apply for National Center for Construction Education and Research certification.

That type of certification can go a long way when bidding on public contracts.

"With this training, businesses will learn the project management and crew leadership side of contracting so they

can successfully and confidently compete for, receive and manage public contracts," said **David Felton**, Bishop State's dean of workforce and economic development.

"There has never been more work happening in the city of Mobile, and we are committed to growing participation from Disadvantaged Business Enterprises to meet the demands of our engineering, architectural engineering and community housing developments," said **Mobile Mayor Sandy Stimpson**.

To learn more, visit [bishop.edu/programs/workforce-development/contractors-college](http://bishop.edu/programs/workforce-development/contractors-college).

**"With this training, businesses will learn the project management and crew leadership side of contracting so they can successfully and confidently compete for, receive and manage public contracts."**

**David Felton**, dean of workforce and economic development, Bishop State Community College

# BISHOP STATE COMMUNITY COLLEGE IS ***MOVING FORWARD!***

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# GOODWILL TEAMS WITH NATIONAL COMPANIES TO ENHANCE JOB TRAINING AND ACCESS



*Darrell Kirksey (pictured at right) benefited from training at Goodwill Gulf Coast and now is a job coach with the organization.*

Goodwill recently launched a national initiative to provide job seekers with the skills and support needed to land sustainable jobs. Rising Together is a first-of-its-kind coalition backed by a number of Fortune 50 companies and global philanthropic and business leaders, including the Anthem Foundation, Coursera, Google, Indeed.com and Lyft.

The coalition is designed to provide essential transportation and broadband access to training opportunities and job search skills.

Locally, Goodwill Gulf Coast helps more than 2,000 people annually become better prepared for employment with free classes that assist with computer training, job search, resume writing and interviewing skills. Additionally, career pathway programs include credentialed training, such as child development associate and forklift certifications and virtual courses in Quickbooks, Adobe, hospitality and others.

**Ginny Turner**, Goodwill's vice president of human resources, said the organization has partnered with Google since 2018.

"We began with 50 participants," she said. To date, 8,291 people have participated in the program, earning 4,753 credentials from basic computer skills to more advanced offerings such as Quickbooks and Certified Nursing Assistant training for in-demand industries and local jobs on the Gulf Coast.

One example is **Darrell Kirksey**, whose newly acquired digital skills helped him get a job with Goodwill.

"I needed these skills to better myself," he said, adding that after completing the course he is a lot more comfortable helping his supervisor. As an aside, he filed his own taxes this year for the first time in 50 years. Kirksey is a job coach.

President and CEO **Frank Harkins** is grateful for the opportunities this new coalition will offer clients in the Mobile area.

"We believe that everyone deserves the opportunity to thrive in life, but, today, too many people are left out of that opportunity," he said. "We must ensure that people can equip themselves with the skills they need to compete for jobs in a changing economy."



# SOUTH ALABAMA LOGISTICS PARK BREAKS GROUND

Just four months after announcing a master-planned industrial park for south Mobile County, Team Mobile and Burton Property Group broke ground on Phase 1 of the site.

The event signaled the start of construction of the 1,300-acre park's infrastructure needed to attract warehouse, distribution and manufacturing operations and is scheduled to be completed by next summer.

During the ceremony, **Philip Burton**, president of **Burton Property Group**, said interest is high, and he has been working a number of projects with the Mobile Area Chamber's economic development team.

"The interest we've seen in this new development certainly proves the need," he said. "We're working 15 active projects. If we are fortunate enough to land them all, we would completely lease out Phase 1 of the South Alabama Logistics Park."

**Bill Sisson**, the Mobile Area Chamber's president and CEO, emphasized the value this type of development adds to the organization's economic development efforts. "Having available sites is an important box to check on a list of key factors for site selectors and is critical to our success to add jobs and investment. We're excited to have this transformational park for our economic development efforts."

The Mobile County Commission and Mobile City Council each voted to spend \$3 million to develop roads and related infrastructure. The project is a three-year collaborative effort among the Alabama State Port Authority, Burton Property Group, City of Mobile, Mobile County and the Mobile Area Chamber.

The South Alabama Logistics Park is located at 6501 Theodore Dawes Rd., near the I-10 Theodore Dawes exit in south Mobile County.

**“Having available sites is an important box to check on a list of key factors for site selectors and is critical to our success to add jobs and investment. We're excited to have this transformational park for our economic development efforts.”**

**Bill Sisson**, president and CEO,  
Mobile Area Chamber

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Mobile Bay Firewood is expanding to provide air-cured oak to local customers and beyond. Pictured from left to right are Colleen Smith, Isaac Mcgaha, Nas Saybe, Seif Wahid, Todd Sigler and Jason Smith. Photo by LA Fotographe

# BUSINESS IS SMOKING HOT FOR MOBILE BAY FIREWOOD

Fire is all about respect. Lose it, and you're liable to sacrifice more than you bargained for. Be reverent, and it can literally make your fortune.

Such has been the lesson for **Jason** and **Colleen Smith**, owners of Mobile Bay Firewood, the Mobile Area Chamber's Small Business of the Month. For more than a decade, the Smiths sold firewood on the side, making a little extra from the deadfall and other resources found on 30 acres of rural land they owned. But in 2018, the two made a full-time go of it, and expansion has happened at a rapid pace.

What started off as a slate of weekend customers buying pickup loads of the Smiths' air-cured oak became something

much more significant as the couple deconstructed a simple concept. Although firewood is an inexpensive commodity, it's very heavy and costly to ship, as many commercial companies in the Mobile area discovered on a regular basis.

"It must be cheaper for local companies to buy firewood locally, right?" Colleen said. The answer was a resounding yes. And although she and Jason soon learned that, when it came to USDA regulations, insect life was more of a focus than the timber being transported, the core equation still worked in their favor. What didn't was labor.

Jason, who is also a firefighter with the Mobile Fire-Rescue Department, didn't need to fell, cut, cure and deliver the company's product. There was definitely a better way.

With a few full-time employees and using two massive kilns capable of curing six cords of wood at a time – each cord is a stack measuring 4 feet wide, 4 feet high and 8 feet long – Mobile Bay Firewood now serves residential clients on both sides of the bay, as well as commercial customers like Greer’s grocery stores and Moe’s Original BBQ, which runs all restaurant smokers on the company’s oak.

“It’s such a great, mutually beneficial relationship,” Colleen said of those types of clients. “Because we’re local, we’re able to beat competitors while still maintaining a good price point for us. So it’s a win-win across the board.”

And the bugs? They’re no match for the heat of a kiln, ensuring that all their customers get clean, quick and efficient-to-burn firewood without the carbon footprint inherent in interstate shipping.

This summer, Mobile Bay Firewood opened a new, 68,000-square-foot complex in Prichard, and its owners are eyeing more growth moving forward, possibly to national companies like Lowe’s, Home Depot and Publix.

“We’re really excited about all of that,” Colleen said.

Photo by LA Fotographe



**COMPANY NAME:** Mobile Bay Firewood

**OWNERS:** Jason and Colleen Smith

**WEBSITE:** mobilebayfirewood.com

*Want to be featured as a Mobile Area Chamber Small Business of the Month? Go to [mobilechamber.com](http://mobilechamber.com) to submit an application online, or contact Danette Richards at [drichards@mobilechamber.com](mailto:drichards@mobilechamber.com) or 251.431.8652 for questions and/or additional information.*

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# SPIRE INC. NAMED 2021 MINORITY BUSINESS ADVOCATE

**W**hen Spire Inc. bought Mobile Gas in 2016, the St. Louis-based company had a host of issues to resolve as it moved into a new market. Logistics and infrastructure were understandable priorities, but one aspect of the company's mission was also at the forefront: supporting supplier diversity through contracts with locally owned minority businesses.

For its work toward that since it became the Mobile Bay area's natural gas supplier, the Mobile Area Chamber named Spire the 2021 Rev. Wesley A. James Minority Business Advocate.

Prior to taking over the Mobile market, Spire's leadership needed to get a read on the current state of community support for minority businesses throughout the area, and how the company could best support and magnify those efforts.

"I was very happy to see that in Mobile, just as it is in the Southeast in general, there is a lot of support," said **Joshua McLeod**, Spire's director of supply chain innovation and supplier diversity.

Some of the biggest hurdles for minority businesses looking to work with large companies like Spire include acquiring the necessary certifications and even just getting a seat at the table from an access standpoint, McLeod said. And that's where advocacy groups like the Mobile Area Chamber can pave the way.

"Having that community and advocacy group support is a big enabler to diverse suppliers, and in that regard this area is doing really well," he said.

In Mobile, Spire contracts with minority suppliers for a host of goods and services, including office supplies and consumables, as well as commercial printing. To facilitate those relationships, it has customized its payment terms and methods to help the smaller companies with cash flow. Spire also holds pre-bid meetings in advance of complex bidding and has unveiled its digital prospective supplier portal, which streamlines how companies get into its system for contract work.

"Within the four walls of Spire, our supplier diversity program is a really big deal," McLeod said. "It's the way we do business, and also it's such an enhancer to us trying to solve some of the most complex problems facing our industry."

Diversity within its supplier base is one goal the company works to maintain, but it also allows Spire to benefit from what he calls "diversity of thought."

**“Within the four walls of Spire, our supplier diversity program is a really big deal. It's the way we do business, and also it's such an enhancer to us trying to solve some of the most complex problems facing our industry.”**

**Joshua McLeod**, director of supply chain innovation and supplier diversity, Spire Inc.

To support the culture of minority business in Mobile, Spire continues to sponsor the annual Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. (MLK) breakfast hosted by Blacks in Government, the Focus Women's Conference and the Downtown Mobile Alliance's Small Scale Development Workshop.

All these efforts eventually serve and support the relationship between Spire and its 85,000 customers in Mobile, according to McLeod.

"We're making a really big effort to make sure our supply base looks like the community we operate in," he said, "which hopefully encourages people to reach out and do business with Spire."



Photo by LA Fotographee

Green Magic Landscaping and Small's Mortuary and Cremation Services are this year's Eagle Award winners. Beginning in 1998, the Mobile Area Chamber annually recognizes business success and community contributions of minority-owned companies.

## GREEN MAGIC LANDSCAPING

**Owners:** Larry and Carita Koen

**Founded:** 2016

**Employees:** 5

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

"If your property is looking tragic, don't panic. Call Green Magic." This is the call to action by the husband-and-wife team of **Larry** and **Carita Koen**, owners of **Green Magic Landscaping**.

The company does more than lawn maintenance and landscaping. Services range from shrub and tree removal to land clearing to storm-related cleanup.

Serving residential and commercial customers in five south Alabama counties, the company also markets to real estate investors, and property and project managers. The Koens have won several contracts with the City of Mobile, helping alleviate blight and keeping parks pristine.

In this competitive environment, one challenge addressed recently is how to price projects quickly. To make it easier, potential customers can fill out an online form and upload video from their cell phone.

In addition to a savvy website, the company is growing its customer base through social media and community involvement.



Photo by LA Fotographe



**2021  
EAGLE AWARD  
RECIPIENT**

# SMALL'S MORTUARY AND CREMATION SERVICES

**President & CEO:** Caracher Small Jr.

**Founded:** 2002

**Employees:** 48

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

For nearly two decades, the team of caretakers at Small's Mortuary and Cremation Services has made it their mission to serve families with dignity and comfort.

"Knowing that we can help ease the burden of a grieving family is just one of the many reasons why we are so passionate about serving our community," said **Caracher Small Jr.**, president and CEO.

The company has two funeral homes in Mobile County and one in Baldwin County, and owns and operates a crematory for cremation options.

Small built his company's legacy on traditional funeral services and gives families a variety of choices to make their celebration of life personalized and available to friends and family, wherever they are, through livestreaming.

A few of these include video and photography services, a fleet of luxury Cadillac and Mercedes-Benz passenger vehicles, custom memorial blankets or a dove release.

Small's helps families before and after their time of need with pre-planning services and a grief support group.



Photo by LA Fotographe



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# THE IMPORTANCE OF DIVERSITY, EQUITY AND INCLUSION

Mobile Area Chamber President and CEO **Bill Sisson** shares his viewpoint on why diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) in the workforce are so important for businesses as well as the Chamber's DEI statement to serve as encouragement for creating your own organization's guiding statement.



During the last several years, our Mobile Area Chamber leadership has been committed to expanding our diversity and inclusion efforts to address equity.

To help define these terms, I am fond of another example shared with us through the Association of Chamber of Commerce Executives. "Diversity

means that everyone gets invited to the party. Equity means that everyone can contribute to the playlist. Inclusion means that everyone can dance."

In the following pages, you'll find the Chamber's updated diversity, equity and inclusion statement, consisting of nine points passed by our board of directors last summer, and how it has been woven into our current strategic plan. In his column, Darrell Randle, the Chamber's vice president of small business development, outlines our latest efforts, building on more than two decades of initiatives designed to reach out to our diverse areas of membership, including the Eagle Awards. We offer why this type of program matters and potential action items your organization can take.

Speaking for our organization, I can say this is an important mindset that we believe is not only the right thing to do, but also is good for business and good for our community.



## MOBILE AREA CHAMBER DIVERSITY, EQUITY AND INCLUSION STATEMENT

The Mobile Area Chamber's governing board of directors updated the organization's formal commitment to diversity and inclusion, adding equity in June 2020.

The Chamber is committed to being an inclusive organization. We strive to have an environment within our organization that fosters and encourages diversity, reflective of the makeup of our community. We believe diversity of thought enriches discussion, results in better judgment and enhances the growth and development of our organization and our community as well.

To accomplish this, the Chamber commits to:

- Annually review the makeup of our board of directors with a special emphasis on diversity.
- Encourage diversity on our committees and task forces.
- Recruit and nurture new leadership roles for our organization from among women and minorities.
- Work to attract more diversity in our membership.
- Ensure diversity is reflected in the makeup of our staff.
- Provide in-service training for staff on valuing diversity and sensitivity in the workplace.
- Ensure our purchasing procedures are open and available to all members.
- Encourage staff participation in minority affairs, events and activities.
- Support our members, customers and suppliers in their efforts to encourage diversity within their companies or organizations.

# CHAMBER TO LAUNCH NEW ONLINE DEI DIRECTORY

The Mobile Area Chamber is moving forward with plans to introduce an all new online diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) directory featuring local minority-owned businesses. This modern and comprehensive directory will be a one-stop shop for those looking to do business with minority business enterprises (MBEs). The DEI directory will feature business resources, training and contracting opportunities for local MBEs.

In order to accomplish this and to insure the DEI directory is done to the highest standard, the Chamber is partnering with Qwally, a software and technology development firm specializing in creating online platforms to help communities improve access to information, technology, program compliance and contracting opportunities.

“We first learned about Qwally through the City of Mobile’s Startups in Technology program,” said **Darrell Randle**, the

Chamber’s vice president for small business development. “The company impressed me with their attention to detail, passion for helping entrepreneurs and their willingness to listen and implement our suggestions. I felt sure they could also expand on the work they performed for the city and build a sustainable digital platform for our minority-owned businesses.”

The Chamber’s five major goals in developing the DEI directory are: it should be free; easy to use and maintain; list contracting opportunities; promote MBEs; and be a useful resource to MBE advocates.

The details on how to sign up for and maintain online listings will be available by December 2021 with the DEI directory going live in January 2022.

For additional information, contact Danette Richards at 251.431.8652 or drichards@mobilechamber.com.



# THE CHAMBER'S DIVERSITY, EQUITY AND INCLUSION PROGRAM LEADS THE WAY

by Darrell Randle, Vice President Small Business Development, Mobile Area Chamber

I have been with the Chamber for more than 17 years, and initiatives dedicated to diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) have always been a part of the Chamber's programming or DNA. As Chamber President and CEO Bill Sisson, says, "DEI has to be woven into every aspect of the Chamber."

But something changed last year. Local CEOs, corporate and business leaders wanted to know more about our initiatives, and many of them offered their assistance. It was an unsolicited promise to make our community better that re-energized my efforts to make Mobile's DEI programs a model for the rest of the nation. The pandemic slowed our timeline a bit, but slowing down the process gave us time to evaluate and improve our DEI programs.

In 2020, the Chamber enlisted key volunteers to form a Strategic Thought Team to develop a three-year strategic plan for the Mobile Bay area. They were asked to determine community priorities in their assigned areas of focus, establish measurable goals and find available resources. Next, they identified short-term and long-term goals for what programs and initiatives they would like to see established or enhanced in the next three years.

Priorities were ranked, with the top three added to the Chamber's plan of action. At the top of the list was "A Conversation Regarding Diversity, Equity and Inclusion," so we enlisted the Eddie Hill Consulting Group of Birmingham and Interise, a nationally known company that specializes in empowering communities of color, to facilitate those meetings.

In these meetings, the CEOs and corporate and business leaders were given the opportunity to do what they do best: solve problems and determine whether our community is inclusive and how we can work to make it better.

The DEI conversation was developed into a five-part virtual training/listening session with the CEOs and business leaders. Their task was to focus on creating jobs in the Mobile Bay region with an emphasis on DEI. In other words, they were to build a business case for supplier diversity so that all will prosper as the region grows.

## The five-session program overview:

- **Session 1:** Understanding the Patterns of Economic Exclusion
- **Session 2:** Applying Systems Thinking to Economic Inclusion
- **Session 3:** Leading Change and Action for Economic Inclusion in Your Organization – Part One
- **Session 4:** Adding the Perspective of MWBEs
- **Session 5:** Leading Change and Action for Economic Inclusion in your Organization – Part Two

## The Chamber's future DEI plans include:

- Providing business-to-business matchmaker events to introduce procurement agents from large companies to Minority Business Enterprise (MBE) owners.
- Developing an online minority business directory for the Mobile Bay region, giving large corporations the ability to quickly locate minority- and women-owned businesses.
- Advertising and promoting a minority-owned member company using the Chamber's social media channels every two weeks. Members are selected during a social media event to push traffic to the Chamber's social media sites.

I can honestly say that we lead the state in DEI programming. Our local business leaders have stepped up to be proactive and have a positive impact in communities of color. It reaffirms something we always knew: we are stronger together.

## ABOUT THE EXPERT

*Darrell Randle is the vice president of small business development for the Mobile Area Chamber. In this role, he oversees the Chamber's efforts in developing small and minority-owned businesses. In addition, the department serves as a starting point for business owners needing to start, manage or grow their business. Randle has worked in this position for 17 years – having previously been a small business owner himself.*

*To contact Randle, call 251.431.8615 or [drandle@mobilechamber.com](mailto:drandle@mobilechamber.com).*



# WHY DIVERSITY, EQUITY AND INCLUSION MATTER



The words “diversity, equity and inclusion” have almost become a part of our vernacular, but what do they really mean? Why equity and not equality?

To start, equity is fair treatment and equality is equal treatment. Giving someone equal treatment may not always be equitable.

**Michelle Bogan**, founder and CEO of Equity at Work, writes that if “you start from a place of disadvantage and are then treated equally as a person of advantage, you perpetuate and ultimately grow the gaps between the two. You need equitable measures first to close the gap and get everyone to a level playing field.”

The illustration shows the difference between equality and equity. When all children are given equal compensation, not all receive the proper benefit of being able to see over the fence. But when an equitable solution arises and different boxes are used, the children are given an equitable chance to all see over the fence.

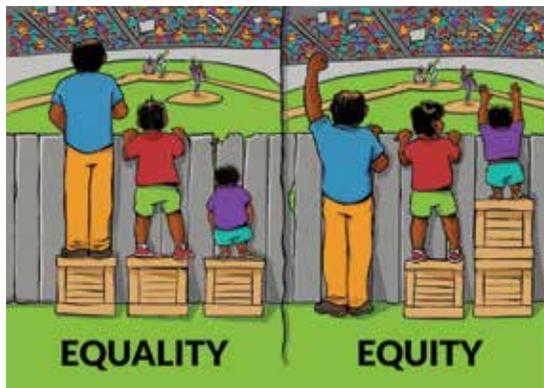
“Equity is necessary to change systemic and institutionalized disparities within organizations,” said **Naomi Mercer**, senior vice president of diversity, equity and inclusion with American Bankers Association.

Diversity is the presence and representation of difference related to identity in an organization or group. Whether visible or not, many identities add uniqueness to our perspectives and world experiences.

Diversity is about representation and identity factors. Some are inherent and we cannot change them, but others could be a result of a choice or something imposed upon us.

“Inclusion is the act of creating environments and cultures of belonging in which any individual or group with different identities

can feel welcome, respected, supported and valued to fully participate,” said Bogan. “Equity and inclusion are processes. When those processes are executed with intention, diversity is the outcome.”



“**Equity and inclusion are processes. When those processes are executed with intention, diversity is the outcome.**”

**Michelle Bogan**, founder and CEO, Equity at Work



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# UNCONSCIOUS BIAS IN THE WORKPLACE

People make decisions every day and, according to Forbes, the human brain can process 11 million pieces of information per second unconsciously. So, what do these unconscious decisions have to do with the workplace?

Unconscious bias is one form of unseen diversity in people. By definition, unconscious bias refers to the associations made between different qualities and social categories such as race, gender or disability and judgments made without conscious awareness.

According to an article by the Allegis Group, an international talent management firm, these stereotypes or “gut feeling” responses can be a major contributor to a lack of workplace diversity.

The article states that every time we unconsciously make a decision, our background, life experiences and cultural values will impact our reasoning. In the workplace this can have a negative impact on recruitment decisions, slow down employee development, impair diversity and drive up attrition.

Recognizing this bias is an important part of any company's DEI efforts, as it can affect organizations by introducing unintentional discrimination and result in poor decision-making. Such behavior can impact recruiting, mentorship and promotions.

So how does a company overcome unconscious bias? A good place to start is by identifying and naming the types of biases that can occur and bringing this type of behavior to a conscious level.

Built In, an online community for startups and tech companies, identified 16 unconscious biases to consider and to be aware of if you are making them.



## **AFFINITY BIAS**

Affinity bias, also known as similarity bias, is the tendency people have to connect with others who share similar interests, experiences and backgrounds.

## **CONFIRMATION BIAS**

Confirmation bias is the inclination to draw conclusions about a situation or person based on your personal desires, beliefs and prejudices rather than on unbiased merit.

## **ATTRIBUTION BIAS**

Attribution bias is a phenomenon where you try to make sense of or judge a person's behavior based on prior observations and interactions you've had with that individual that make up your perception of them.

## **CONFORMITY BIAS**

Conformity bias is the tendency people have to act similar to the people around them regardless of their own personal beliefs or idiosyncrasies — also known as peer pressure.

## **THE HALO EFFECT**

The halo effect is the tendency people have to place another person on a pedestal after learning something impressive about them.

## **THE HORNS EFFECT**

The horns effect is the tendency people have to view another person negatively after learning something unpleasant or negative about them.

## **THE CONTRAST EFFECT**

The contrast effect is when you compare two or more things that you have come into contact with — either simultaneously or one after another — causing you to exaggerate the performance of one in contrast to the other.

## **GENDER BIAS**

Gender bias is the tendency to prefer one gender over another gender.

## **AGEISM**

Ageism in the workplace is the tendency to have negative feelings about another person based on their age.

## **NAME BIAS**

Name bias is the tendency people have to judge and prefer people with certain types of names — typically names that are of Anglo origin.



*A way to combat unconscious bias in the workplace would be to include employees with projects that link the organization to the community and help create a positive image of certain groups.*

## BEAUTY BIAS

Beauty bias is a social behavior where people believe that attractive people are more successful, competent and qualified.

## HEIGHT BIAS

Height bias or heightism is the tendency to judge a person who is significantly shorter or taller than the socially-accepted human height.

## ANCHOR BIAS

Anchor bias or expectation anchor bias is when someone holds onto an initial, singular piece of information to make decisions.

## NONVERBAL BIAS

Nonverbal bias is analyzing nonverbal communication attributes such as body language and letting it affect a decision or opinion.

## AUTHORITY BIAS

Authority bias refers to when an idea or opinion is given more attention or thought to be more accurate because it was provided by an authority figure.

## OVERCONFIDENCE BIAS

Overconfidence bias refers to a person's tendency to be more confident in their capabilities than they should be.

Recognizing unconscious bias can be in our perception of people and how we perceive reality; our attitude towards certain people; how we act towards certain people and who we pay attention to and who we avoid; how much we listen to certain people; and how much or how little we comfort people in certain situations.

In addition to recognizing unconscious biases, employee training in a careful and open manner may be considered to acknowledge some of these biases exists, and create an environment where employees may discuss these biases without judgment or being ostracized.

To avoid potential discriminatory behavior, awareness of unconscious bias is important to show or have employees realize this type of thinking is unfair. These are thoughts we have the ability to control.



The DEI articles in this issue were written with input from Dr. Gia Wiggins, Ph.D., SPHR, SHRM-SCP

Wiggins is a career human resources professional. A native of Mobile, she received a bachelor's degree in psychology and sociology from

Grambling State University. After working as a human resources manager for 16 years, she completed a master's in business administration from California State University. She received a doctorate of business administration at the University of South Alabama with a concentration in management. She currently serves as an adjunct instructor with the University of South Alabama and the University of Mobile teaching human resources management, intro to business and business communications. She also holds (SPHR) Senior Professional Human Resources and (SHRM-SCP) Society of Human Resources Management – Senior Certified Professional certifications.

In 2015, Wiggins founded Morale Resource LLC, a human resources consulting firm that places special emphasis on developing employee engagement programs and activities.

# HOW TO PROMOTE DEI IN YOUR WORKPLACE

Creating a more diverse and inclusive workplace starts at the top but should include considerations and input from your employees. Whatever your company does to promote diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) in your workplace, make sure to take all considerations into account, especially those of each underrepresented group.

According to the U.S. Chamber Foundation, the U.S. Census predicts that millennials will make up 75 percent of the workplace by 2025. And more importantly, studies show that this generation of workers is willing to change jobs when organizations fail to make DEI a priority.

To get started, TalentLyft recently released a blog about workplace diversity and ways to make your company more inclusive.

## 1. Update your employee handbook.

By adding a statement about DEI in your employee handbook, you are showing your employees that DEI is one of your company values. Read the Chamber's DEI statement on page 27 as an example. But don't write one unless you are intentional on what steps you are willing to take within your organization. Initiatives toward DEI should come first, then the statement in the handbook.

## 2. Establish mentorships for underrepresented groups.

Mentorship programs have proved time and again to be an effective tool for small business owners and professionals. Becoming a mentor or promoting mentorships within your company can help boost underrepresented groups and help with their career progressions. Make sure all programs are open for everyone to join.

## 3. Issue a statement about DEI from the CEO.

When adding your DEI statement to your handbook, make sure to include the message from your CEO to your current staff. He or she sets the example for the company and should embrace workplace DEI first.

## 4. Use inclusive language.

According to Buffer's Guide to Inclusive Language for Startups and Tech, we should all try "to change deeply embedded habits. To consider the implications of words and phrases that



have long gone unchallenged. To dig deep into empathy and imagine an experience not our own."

Some recommended changes would be to put people first. Instead of saying "blind man" say "a man who is blind." Keeping the individual first shows we are much more than our descriptions. Other suggestions include avoiding idioms, jargons and acronyms and avoiding phrases that suggest victimhood.

## 5. Start or join a resource group.

Employee Resource Groups (ERGs) help bring people together to share different perspectives, ideas and experiences and are usually formed around a shared social identity. This identity could be gender, ethnicity or life stage, such as parenthood. Again, make sure all programs and groups are open for everyone to join.

## 6. Hire for diversity.

“Workplace diversity starts with hiring,” said **Anja Zojceska** with TalentLyft. Real change can come from hiring diverse candidates through implementing blind resume screenings and highlighting diversity and equal employment in your job ads. Be sure to pay attention to hiring for diversity of experience and making a positive action of finding a candidate of diversity.

## 7. Use social media to promote diversity.

Make sure to share all your company’s DEI content on social media through posts, videos and blogs. Be respectful in your posts and make sure to use a tone that promotes equity.

## 8. Celebrate diverse holidays.

Besides the usually celebrated holiday parties, why not think about different religious and non-religious holidays to celebrate. Remember to celebrate days that encourage diversity such as gay pride, international women’s day or International Day of People with Disabilities.

Other examples include, National Freedom Day in February, which celebrates the signing of the 13th Amendment that abolished slavery in 1865; and the Lantern Festival celebrates the first significant feast after the Chinese New Year. In April, World Autism Awareness Day to raise public awareness of autism; and in May, World Day for Cultural Diversity for Dialogue and Development, a day set aside by the United Nations as an opportunity to deepen our understanding of the values of cultural diversity and to learn to live together in harmony.

**Brenda Pak**, cofounder and CEO of BackPac, a multifaceted social activist platform, wrote how COVID-19 disproportionately impacted diverse groups and “highlighted the responsibilities needed to focus more intently on people and source diverse talent as the economy recovers.”

Pak concluded by stating “we cannot allow diversity and inclusion to be merely buzzwords around the corporate ecosystem. We need lasting change, and market leaders have the ability and resources to bring real results in diversity leadership and inclusion efforts.”

While there is no one solution or one-size-fits-all diverse workplace program, start with your employees and go from there. What do they want? What do they expect? This outlook will not only make your employees feel involved in your decision but also included and that can help your company’s bottom line.

## Make sure to recognize what your employees actually want.

When introducing DEI into your company, gather feedback from your employees to include them in your company’s DEI initiatives.

Boston Consulting Group conducted a study of 16,000 employees from across the world to find out what diversity initiatives they wanted. They found that different groups preferred different type sof workplace and initiatives.

**Female Employees** - wanted visible role models and flexible work programs for family leave.

**Employees of Color** - emphasized diverse recruiting with blind resume screenings and diverse interview panels.

**LGBTQ Employees** - wanted collaboration with LGBTQ-focused organizations and their company.



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A collage of images related to industrial and construction work. It includes a large industrial building with a glass roof, a construction site with workers and cranes, a close-up of a hand operating a surveying instrument, and a large industrial structure with a yellow crane.

  
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# HUB INTERNATIONAL GULF SOUTH



*Pictured above are members of the HUB Mobile team. From left to right are Bry Shields, Brian Munger, Allen Chapman, Jerrime Kitsos, Caroline Robertson and Mike Loncono.*

**Company officials:** Allen Chapman, executive vice president; Jerrime Kitsos, senior vice president; Mike Loncono, senior vice president; Bry Shields, vice president; Brian Munger, vice president; and Caroline Robertson, assistant vice president

**Address:** 1141 Montlimar Dr., Ste. 2500, Mobile

**Website:** hubinternational.com

**Number of employees:** 22 in Mobile; 10,000-plus globally

**Years in business:** 47

**Brief company description:** Chicago-based HUB International is the largest privately held insurance broker in the world, and HUB's Gulf South region spans across the Gulf Coast. HUB provides property, casualty, risk management, life and health, employee benefits, investment and wealth management products to small, middle-market and large companies across the United States and Canada.

**Why do you support the Mobile Area Chamber of Commerce's Partners for Growth Initiative?** "As Mobile has grown, so has HUB," said Allen Chapman, executive vice president. "With our real estate practice being the largest in the region, we have helped countless clients who are new to the region navigate coastal property insurance. In addition, because of our existing aviation practice on the West Coast, we have been blessed with continued growth in the aviation industry as Mobile becomes the future of aviation in our region. Without the support of the Chamber and the continued recruitment of booming industry, HUB Mobile would not

be what it is today. For that, we will continue to support the Chamber in every way possible, including Partners for Growth."

**How long have you been a continuous Mobile Area Chamber Member?** Since 1978

## About Partners For Growth:

Growing Global, Investing Local 2018-2022, Partners for Growth is a five-year, public-private initiative of



the Mobile Area Chamber to grow and diversify Mobile's economy. Its five pillars include: 1) new business recruitment and investment attraction; 2) existing industry support, innovation and entrepreneurship; 3) workforce attraction, retention and development; 4) diverse business development; and 5) business advocacy and quality of place.

Join the Chamber's economic development investors by contacting David Rodgers, vice president, economic development, at 251.431.8657 or [drodgers@mobilechamber.com](mailto:drodgers@mobilechamber.com).

## EXECUTIVE PROFILE

# GISELE FIGURES

## L&G INDUSTRIES LLC

**TITLE:** President

**HOMETOWN:** Mobile

**EDUCATION:** Bachelor's degree in healthcare management from Florida Agriculture and Mechanical University in Tallahassee, Fla.

**FIRST JOB:** West Telemarketing

**WHO/WHAT INSPIRES YOU?** My late grandmother, Lenora B. Bennett, inspires me every day.

**SECRET TO SUCCESS:** Always remain true to yourself and keep God first.

**WHAT IS YOUR FAVORITE FOOD?** Pasta

**WHAT IS ONE OF THE MOST USEFUL THINGS YOU OWN?** My Amazon Prime membership

**ASIDE FROM NECESSITIES, WHAT ONE THING COULD YOU NOT GO A DAY WITHOUT?** Prayer

**YOUR FAVORITE HOLIDAY?** Christmas

**WHAT IS YOUR PASSION?** Helping people

**THE LAST BOOK YOU READ?** *Becoming* by Michelle Obama

**WHAT DO YOU CONSIDER YOUR GREATEST ACHIEVEMENT? (OTHER THAN FAMILY)** Starting a business with my cousin, La'Toya Clark.

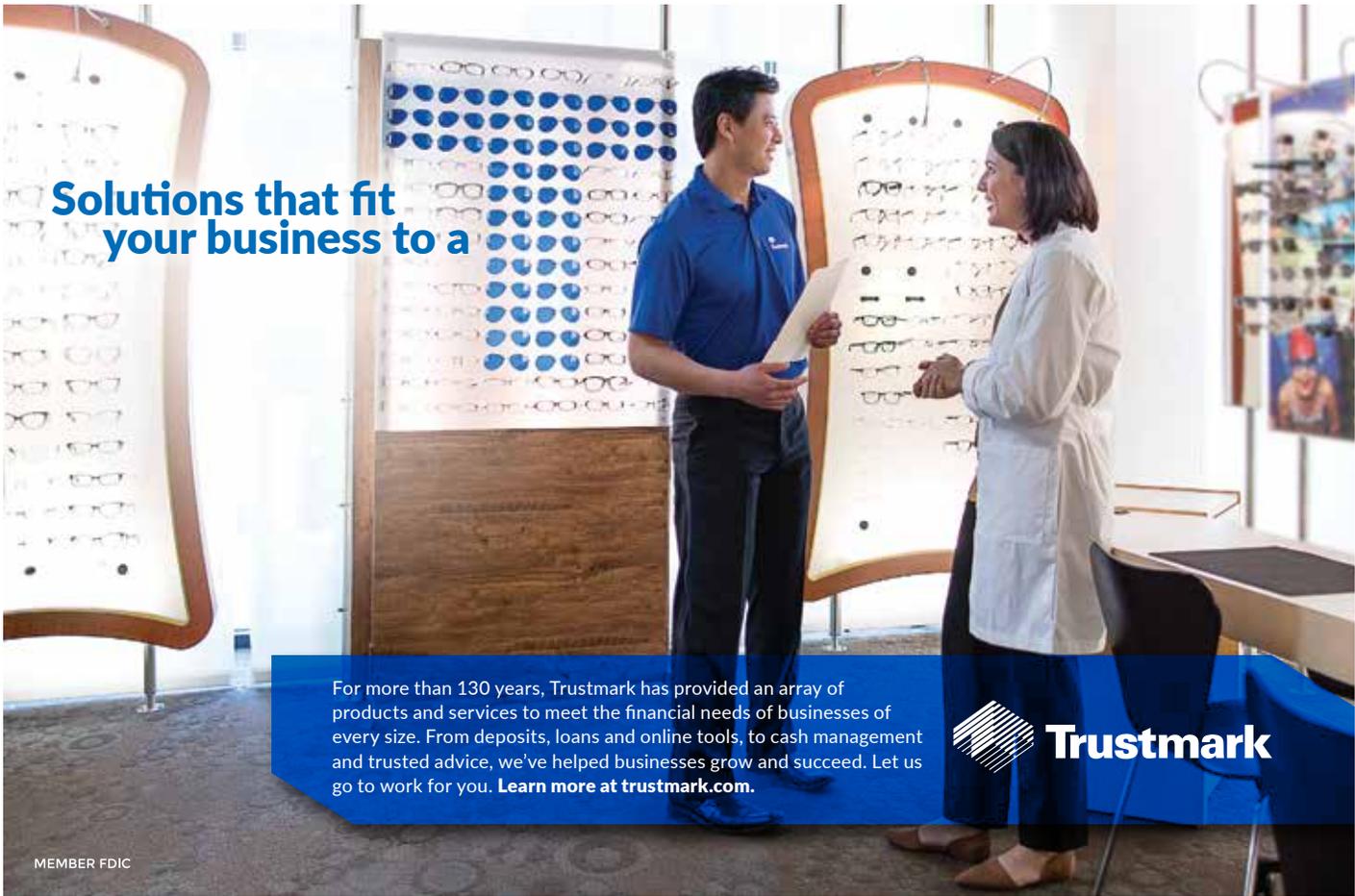
**WHAT QUALITY DO YOU MOST LIKE IN PEOPLE?** Compassion and creativity

**WHAT IS YOUR MOST MARKED CHARACTERISTIC?** Integrity

**BEST THING ABOUT YOUR JOB?** Meeting new people each day.

**BRIEF COMPANY DESCRIPTION:** L&G Industries LLC is a minority-owned, woman-owned business. The company is construction service-related, offering roll-off dumpsters in sizes from 15 to 25 yards; erosion control; and portable storage containers.





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## HUGULEY JOINS CHAMBER AS TALENT DEVELOPMENT AND ATTRACTION MANAGER

The Mobile Area Chamber hired **Abbey Huguley** as the talent development and attraction manager. She will be responsible for developing and implementing the Chamber’s talent and workforce development initiatives, including the creation of programming to attract, retain and develop talent to support the success of business and industry in Mobile.

Before joining the Chamber, Huguley worked as a human resources assistant for Starnes Davis Florie LLP in Birmingham. Her duties included recruitment efforts, training and onboarding new employees and overseeing orientation for new hires.

“From her recruitment experience, Abbey already knows the importance of building relationships that we know will be a great asset in this position,” said **David Rodgers**, the Chamber’s vice president of economic development.

Huguley earned a bachelor’s degree in communication with a concentration in public relations from Mississippi State University in Starkville, Miss.

“I am excited to step into this role,” said Huguley. “I’m new to Mobile, so I think I will bring a fresh perspective on how we can attract, retain and develop talent here. I look forward to building relationships with leaders of our community and learning how we, as a Chamber, can support their needs to further continue economic growth in Mobile.”

Huguley can be reached at 251.431.8616 or ahuguley@mobilechamber.com.

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## WILLIAM BRYANT JR.

### MOBILE AREA COUNCIL, BOY SCOUTS OF AMERICA

**Bryant** is the scout executive/CEO of the Mobile Area Council, Boy Scouts of America. He is the immediate past revenue and membership growth coach for the National Office of the Boy Scouts of America. Bryant holds a master's in business administration and nonprofit administration from Oglethorpe University and is a graduate of LEAD Atlanta, a leadership program of executives from across the state of Georgia. He has received the Atlanta Urban League's Rising Star Award, Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity Inc. Man of the Year Award, Distinguished Alumnus Award of Grambling State University and the National President's Award through the Boy Scouts.



## MELISSA CROSS

### MCALEER'S OFFICE FURNITURE

**Cross** is president of McAleer's Office Furniture. She earned a bachelor's degree in communications at The University of Alabama, after which she attended Pepperdine University School of Law in Malibu, Calif. She has participated in the Small Business Administration's Emerging Leaders program, Goldman Sachs 10,000 Small Businesses program, RAMP (Real Advice Mentoring Program developed at MIT) and the Focus Women's Conference. Cross is a board member for the University of South Alabama Melton Center for Entrepreneurship and Innovation.

## THOMAS "CHRIS" CURRY

### MOBILE AIRPORT AUTHORITY

**Curry** is president of the Mobile Airport Authority, responsible for managing the Mobile Downtown Airport, Mobile Regional Airport and the Mobile Aeroplex at Brookley. Curry brings 35-plus years of experience in the industry, serving as an air traffic controller in the U.S. Air Force and working as an airspace and procedure designer for Boeing/Jeppesen Corp. He held executive management positions at three previous airports, most recently Tallahassee International Airport in Florida, where he led the transition of the airport from a regional to an international facility. Curry holds a bachelor's degree in professional aeronautics from Embry Riddle University and an associate's degree from Community College of the Air Force. He is an Honorary Tuskegee Airman and serves on Airports Council International and the Airport Minority Advisory Council. The Florida Department of Transportation named Curry its 2016 Aviation Professional of the year. Mobile Airport Authority is a Partners for Growth investor.



# CHAMBER AT WORK



**1 BLACK BUSINESS MONTH** In August, representatives from the City of Mobile, Mobile City Council, Mobile Area Chamber and the Mobile Area Black Chamber celebrated Black Business Month. The effort was intended to encourage Mobilians to support black businesses in our community as well as their contribution to the city’s economy and culture. Representing the Mobile Area Chamber was Ruthie Johnson with Bama Pest Control, chair of the Chamber’s Growth Alliance Task Force; Rashawn Figures, Dortch Figures and Sons; and Ronald McCants, Gulf Coast Supply Chain leadership coach.

**2 REPRESENTING THE CHAMBER** Chamber staff represented the Mobile Area Chamber at a number of statewide events including BioAlabama, Business Council of Alabama annual conference, Chamber of Commerce Association of Alabama annual conference – Darrell Randle, the Chamber’s vice president of small business development, who serves on and is pictured with the Association’s board of directors, and the Economic Development Association of Alabama summer conference.

**3 & 4 RIBBON CUTTING** Mobile Area Chamber staff and ambassadors were on hand to celebrate the opening of Greer’s St. Louis Market downtown. For more information on how the Chamber can help your business with a similar event, contact Carolyn Golson at 251.431.8622.



**5**

**5 COST OF LIVING** The Mobile Area Chamber continues to collect and prepare data for the C2ER Cost of Living Index. The quarterly reports track the average costs of basic expenses including housing, food, healthcare and more. The cost of living index is used to make accurate and reliable comparisons between the Mobile area and other cities across the United States, allowing the Chamber to better recruit companies and talent to Mobile.

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# OCTOBER 2021

For more information on Chamber events, visit [mobilechamber.com](http://mobilechamber.com)

**COVID-19 Protocols:** *The Mobile Area Chamber is committed to maintaining a healthy atmosphere for all attendees at each of our events and continues to closely monitor the COVID Delta variant surge. Space for social distancing has been considered at each event venue, and we will encourage reasonable use of masks while indoors. Masks and hand sanitizer will be readily available at all events. Please refer to the Chamber's calendar of events or our social media pages for the latest updates.*

## 7 MEMBERSHIP 101

*\*Members only.*

**VIRTUAL:** Meet other members and Chamber staff to learn more ways to benefit from your membership.

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

**Cost:** Free

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

*Registration requested for ZOOM meeting code.*

## 8 DIVERSITY BUSINESS FORUM

*The Diversity Business Forum precedes the Eagle Awards Luncheon and will have a panel of small business experts discussing "Financing and Accessing Capital for Growth and Expansion."*

**When:** 8:30 to 11 a.m.

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

**Contact:** Brenda Rembert at 251.431.8607 or [brembert@mobilechamber.com](mailto:brembert@mobilechamber.com)  
*Reservations are required by Monday, Oct. 4.*

**Sponsor:** Trustmark

## 8 EAGLE AWARDS LUNCHEON

*The annual awards luncheon, featuring the prestigious Eagle Award, recognizes and celebrates the accomplishments of outstanding minority-owned businesses.*

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

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

**Speaker:** LisaRaye McCoy, actress, model, businesswoman and fashion designer

**Cost:** \$50 for members / \$60 for future members (price includes admission to Diversity Business Forum)

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

*Reservations are required by Monday, Oct. 4, and payment is due at time of registration.*

**Presenting Sponsor:** Mobile Area Water & Sewer System

**Gold Sponsors:** Alabama Power Co., Ball Healthcare Services Inc., Makeda Nichols State Farm Insurance, Spire, Trustmark

**Silver Sponsors:** AT&T, Bishop State Community College, Coastal Alabama Community College, Commonwealth National Bank, Keesler Federal Credit Union, Mobile Airport Authority, Mobile Area Association of Realtors, Williams

**Bronze Sponsors:** ASM Recycling, Blue Fish, Easy Heating & Cooling

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**CELEBRATE DIVERSITY**

*The Youth for Unity strategy aims to promote and celebrate diversity and combat and prevent prejudice, bigotry and discrimination. Youth for Unity features programming for kids, teens and parents; training and resources for Club professionals. Learn more at [bgcsouthal.org](http://bgcsouthal.org).*

**BOYS & GIRLS CLUBS OF SOUTH ALABAMA**

**YOUTH for UNITY**

# 26

## FORUM ALABAMA WITH GOV. KAY IVEY

**When:** 8 to 9 a.m./Doors open at 7:30 a.m.

**Where:** University of South Alabama MacQueen Alumni Center, 100 Alumni Dr.

**Cost:** \$30 per person for members/\$50 for future members. Payment must be made with reservation.

*Reservations required. Register online at [web.mobilechamber.com/events](http://web.mobilechamber.com/events)*

**Presenting Sponsor:** Alabama State Port Authority

**Series Sponsors:** Airbus, AT&T

**Host Sponsors:** University of South Alabama, USA Health

**Gold Sponsor:** Austal USA, Coastal Alabama Community College, Thompson Engineering

**Program Sponsor:** Bishop State Community College

**Supporting Sponsor:** Adams and Reese

# 18

## FORUM ALABAMA WITH SENATOR TOMMY TUBERVILLE

**When:** 7:30 a.m./Doors open at 7 a.m.

**Where:** TBD

**Cost:** \$30 per person for members/\$50 for future members. Payment must be made with reservation.

*Reservations required. Register online at [web.mobilechamber.com/events](http://web.mobilechamber.com/events)*

**Presenting Sponsor:** Austal USA

**Series Sponsors:** Airbus, AT&T, University of South Alabama, USA Health

**Gold Sponsors:** Alabama State Port Authority, Coastal Alabama Community College, Thompson Engineering

**Program Sponsor:** Bishop State Community College

**Supporting Sponsors:** Adams and Reese LLP, Meador Warehousing & Distribution Inc., Smith Industrial Service

# 19

## EXECUTIVE ROUNDTABLE

*\*Members only.*

**VIA ZOOM:** A monthly forum for Chamber-member small business owners and managers featuring speakers on important business topics.

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

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

**Topic:** "Risk Averse: Managing Cybersecurity Risk in the Post-Pandemic World"

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

*No charge. Registration requested for ZOOM meeting code.*

**Sponsor:** BancorpSouth

### RESCHEDULED EVENTS

Mobile Area Chamber leaders postponed and rescheduled several signature events, starting with Business Expo. The new date for Expo is Thursday, Nov. 18 as well as the announcement of the Small Business of the Year. The State of the City & County will be Wednesday, Dec. 1. Watch [mobilechamber.com](http://mobilechamber.com) and our social media channels for the latest updates.

## THANK YOU TO THE SPONSORS OF OUR OCTOBER EVENTS



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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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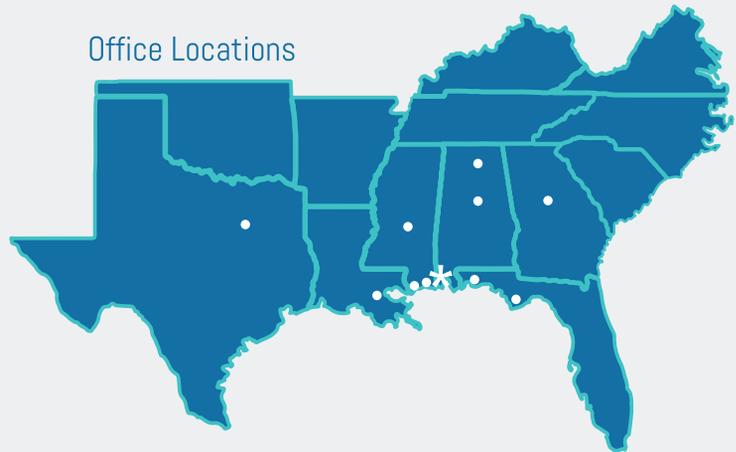
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## WHO'S NEW

## Hummingbird Ideas Hires Account Manager



Cooley

Local full-service marketing and design agency **Hummingbird Ideas** added **Jennifer Cooley** as an account manager. Cooley has a master's degree in communications from the University of South Alabama and a bachelor's degree in communication arts from Spring Hill College.

## Bellator Real Estate and Development Adds Staff



Finley



Gann



Phomsavanh



Womack



Rowland



Monroe



Kirby



Bowman

## Bellator Real Estate and Development

welcomed nine new agents: **Brookelynn Finley, Tracey Gann, Angela Phomsavanh, Milton Womack Jr., Pat Rowland, Denise Monroe, Tim Kirby, Amanda Bruns** and **Kathryn Bowman**.

## Mobile County Names Director of Public Affairs and Community Services



Broussard

**Sharee Broussard** was hired as **Mobile County's** director of public affairs and community services to oversee media relations, internal/external communication and events. She will also lead the Emergency Management Joint Information Center. Broussard holds a doctorate in advertising and public relations and a master's degree in public relations from the University of Southern Mississippi, as well as a bachelor's degree in public relations from the University of Louisiana at Lafayette.

## Hill Hill Carter Welcomes Attorney Daniel T. Seawell



Seawell

**Hill Hill Carter Franco Cole & Black PC** announces attorney **Daniel T. Seawell** joined the firm. His practice focuses on civil defense litigation. Licensed in both Alabama and Mississippi, Seawell received a law degree from the University of Mississippi School of Law after receiving his bachelor's from Auburn University.

## New VP at ServisFirst Bank Mobile



Gatewood

**Dan Gatewood** joined **ServisFirst Bank Mobile** as vice president of commercial banking with more than 15 years of banking experience in the Mobile community. He earned a bachelor's degree in finance from the University of West Alabama in Livingston.

## Vascular Surgeon Joins Infirmary Health

**Dr. Cullen McCarthy** joined **Infirmary Health's** Cardio-Thoracic and Vascular Surgical Associates team. The board-certified vascular surgeon earned a medical degree from the University of South Alabama and a bachelor's degree in genetics from the University of Georgia.

## Visit Mobile Coordinator Promoted



Felts

**Visit Mobile's** coordinator, **Andrew Felts**, was recently promoted to marketing and communications manager for the organization. Felts earned a degree in public relations, advertising and applied communications from the University of Mobile.

## BUSINESS ENDEAVORS

## Mobile County's Community Calendar Online

To increase the visibility of events, the **Mobile County Commission** launched a new community calendar, [mobilecountyal.gov/community\\_events/](http://mobilecountyal.gov/community_events/). Organizers can submit events for the calendar in multiple ways, including email, web or the Nspire U On Air app available through the Google Play or Apple App stores.

## Sports Performance Center Opens at University of Mobile

The new J.L. Bedsole Sports Performance Center on the **University of Mobile** campus is more than a state-of-the-art strength and conditioning facility for student athletes. Nearly 450 student athletes will use the 4,000-square-foot center, which includes iPads with TeamBuildr online strength and conditioning software. TeamBuildr allows athletes and coaches to program workouts and track progress.

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## Wright's Million Mile Drivers

**Wright Transportation** added 23 new trucks to its fleet in recognition of excellence in safety among its drivers. The new blue T680 Kenworth Next Generation trucks will stand out from the fleet of white trucks and will be given to the company's "Million Mile Drivers," a designation for those who have logged a million safe miles or more on the road. The new trucks are certified with the EPA SmartWay designation, earned based on aerodynamic features to reduce carbon emissions, and have upgraded technology and other features.

## Mobile Okays People First Plan

The **Mobile City Council** approved the People First Plan, as outlined in **Mayor Sandy Stimpson's** proposed uses for \$58 million allocated to the **City of Mobile** through the American Rescue Plan Act passed by Congress. The plan will direct much-needed funding to affordable housing initiatives, utility, rental and small business assistance, gun violence prevention, social services and premium pay for city employees who have served throughout the pandemic.

## Barton Academy Opens in Downtown Mobile

**Mobile County Public Schools'** Barton Academy for Advanced World Studies opened in August, welcoming students in grades 6 through 9. The

school's global focus includes subjects such as Spanish, French, German, music and art, and engages students in hands-on, project-based learning and entrepreneurship.

## WELL DONE

### University of Mobile's DNAP Class

**University of Mobile** welcomed its inaugural class of Alabama's first doctor of nurse anesthesia practice (DNAP) program. This is the first and only DNAP program in the four-state region of Alabama, Mississippi, Louisiana and Georgia. Graduates will be eligible to take the national certification examination required to become a certified registered nurse anesthetist.

### Mobile United Elects 2021-22 Board Members

**Mobile United** board members are **Shannon Shelley-Tremblay**, president; **Moshae Donald**, president-elect; **Sherrica Davis-Hunt**, secretary; **Michi Lunceford**, treasurer; and **Carol Hunter**, immediate past-president. **Emily Blejwas** and **Dr. Erik Goldschmidt** are advisors; **Glyn Agnew** is personnel chair; **Clinton Johnson Jr.** is finance committee chair; and **Kim Garrett** is chair of the leadership council. The board also selected two task force chairs: **Patrick Honan** for natural resources and **Dr. Monica Motley** as education chair.

## Local Companies Make 'Best' List

**Roberts Brothers Inc.** was named No. 2 on the list of the small- to medium-sized companies included in the "Best Companies to Work for in Alabama" by *Business Alabama* magazine. This is the third year in a row the company has been recognized.

Also, **Wilkins Miller** accounting and advisory firm earned third place on the list and is the only accounting firm recognized. This is Wilkins Miller's seventh consecutive time to be recognized, with all rankings placing in the top three.

**American Equity Underwriters Inc.** also made the list for the third consecutive year.

This annual program created by *Business Alabama* and *Best Companies Group* is in its 12<sup>th</sup> year.

## Bishop State Graduates its Third Group of Lineworkers

**Bishop State Community College** held its third Lineworker Training Program graduation earlier this year. Twenty-one lineworkers graduated from the program and will be interviewed to potentially land jobs with area utility companies and contractors.

The program is in partnership with **Alabama Power** and various utility companies as well as the **Southwest Alabama Partnership for Training and Employment (SWAPTE)** and the **Alabama Career Center**.

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## Austal USA Wins East Coast Maintenance Contract

Austal USA was awarded a repair, maintenance and modernization contract for all U.S. Navy littoral combat ships based in Mayport, Fla. The Mobile-based firm won a similar contract for ships based in San Diego earlier this year.

## COMMUNITY NEWS

### The Wharf, Buffalo Rock – Pepsi Help Feed Hungry Children in Alabama

As part of the *So. Much. Summer.* series, The Wharf and Buffalo Rock – Pepsi announced a \$10,000 donation to Alabama Credit Union's "Secret Meals for Hungry Children" program, which provides non-perishable meals to Alabama children on the weekends throughout the school year. Each food pack contains two breakfasts, lunches and snacks.

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)

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Trick-or-treating in the Gardens: 3 to 6 p.m.  
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## FEATURED PHOTOGRAPHER

L.A. ALSTON  
L.A. FOTOGRAFHEE

Lemaris “L.A.” Alston is a husband, dad and photographer who specializes in capturing happiness for clients on location and in his studio in Mobile. Since he began his photography business in 2011, Alston has completed more than 2,500 photo shoots and has photographed some of his clients’ most important life moments, from awards and graduations to engagements and weddings to newborns and families.

Alston says photography is his passion, job and creative outlet. He has a bachelor’s degree from Alabama State University; a master’s degree from the University of Phoenix in computer information systems and a doctorate from North Central University. He is a graduate of Leadership Mobile, Connect Mobile and was selected for 40 under 40 by Mobile Bay Magazine. In addition to being a full-time photographer, Alston is the executive director of Bounce Back Youth Leadership Foundation.

He and his wife, Jamelah, live with their three children in Mobile.

In this issue, Alston’s work can be seen in feature stories on the Eagle Award recipients, Rev. Wesley A. James Minority Business Advocate and the Small Business of the Month. To see more of his portfolio, visit [lafotografiee.com](http://lafotografiee.com).



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a. Total No. of Copies	9,205	7,224
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b. (2) Paid in county subscriptions	none	none
b. (3) Sales through dealers, carriers, street vendors, counter sales	none	none
b. (4) Other classes mailed	none	none
c. Total paid and/or requested circulation	none	none
d. (1) Free distribution by mail outside county	300	300
d. (2) Free distribution by mail in county	1,937	6,624
d. (3) Free distribution - other classes mailed by U.S.P.S.	5,917	0
d. (4) Free distribution - outside the mail	100	300
e. Free distribution	8,254	7,224
f. Total distribution	8,254	7,224
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(17) Signature and title of Editor, Publisher, Business Manager or Owner & Date:

*Ashley Horn* 7/15/2021

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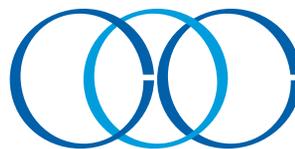
*As of Aug. 31, 2021*

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