

Mobile Area Chamber of Commerce

MARCH 2015

the **business**VIEW

Frank Lott

Named Chamber Chair

Chamber
Award
Winners
Announced

Graduation
Rates Up
in Mobile County

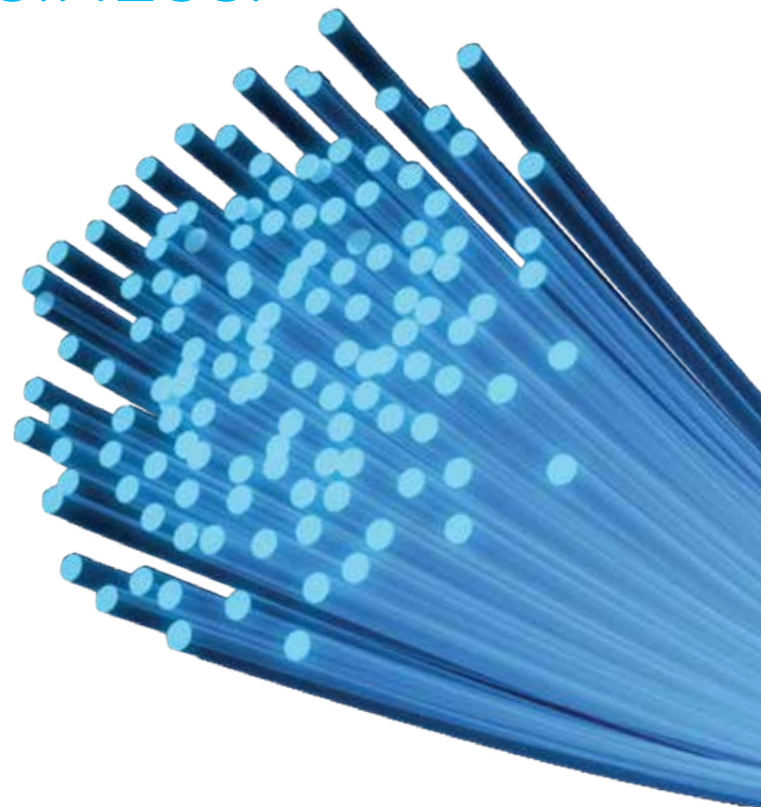
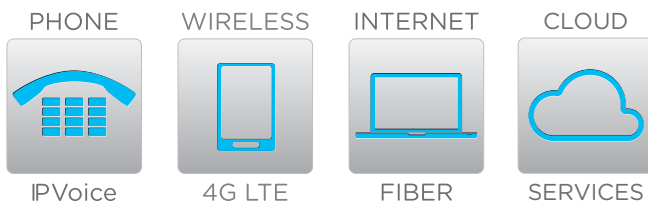


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From the Publisher - Bill Sisson

Time for a Progress Report on 2015 Goals

As you read this issue of *The Business View*, I suspect that many of you are reflecting on the passing of the first two months of 2015 and setting about charting a course for the months ahead. The end of the first quarter is a good time to think about how much progress is being made on the goals you and your business are firmly committed to in the new year.

At the Mobile Area Chamber, we recently shared with you the productive visioning and strategic planning process that went into our Plan of Action for 2015. That process determines the course and priorities for our organization. Our goals revolve around capitalizing on our community's traditional growth sectors such as maritime, chemicals, logistics/distribution, healthcare, energy and advanced manufacturing, as well as new



burgeoning ones like aviation/aerospace and IT/high-tech. And we will continue to focus on small and minority business development and maintain our strong position as the voice of business in the Mobile region.

As in the past, we have benefited from the engagement, leadership and insight provided by our members to help

determine our direction. Likewise, there is an abundance of talent on our staff and within our committees, councils, task forces and on our board of directors and board of advisors. I invite you to grab one of us after one of the many Chamber events, or sit down with us over a cup of coffee and let us know how the Chamber can help your company be successful. Great things will happen if we continue to rally around our common goals.



ON THE COVER

Frank Lott, president of Heritage Homes, was named Chamber Chairman for 2015. See story on page 11. *Photo by Jeff Tesney*

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Mobile County Public School System Increases Graduation Rate

Increasing results by 75 percent in one year is an impressive accomplishment for any business. But when that statistic represents the progress of Mobile County's high school graduation rate, it is progress the entire business community recognizes.

Mobile County Public Schools announced during its annual meeting with local legislators in January that the four-year, on-time graduation rate improved to 82 percent, putting the school system six years ahead of a community-wide goal to increase the graduation rate to 80 percent by 2020.

This measurement is based on freshmen who entered high school in 2010 and graduated in the spring of 2014. The 82 percent figure does not include an additional 6 percent of students who either graduated in December 2014 or who are still enrolled in school working toward graduation.

While Mobile County Public Schools Superintendent **Martha Peek** praised high school principals for their work, she said the school system is not stopping here. "This is one leg of the journey," Peek said. "By 2017, our goal is to be at 90 percent."

How Did They Do It?

Here are a few examples of what the Mobile County Public School System is doing to increase the graduation rate:

- Offering a growing number of pre-kindergarten classes and innovative K-5 programs
- At-risk students for dropping out are identified as early as elementary school so early intervention techniques may be applied
- Career guidance and planning starts in middle school
- Middle and high school counselors work together to conduct high school planning sessions with all eighth-graders and their parents to develop an individual High School Plan of Study
- Multiple Pathways to Graduation include nearly a dozen career-based academies of study and the opportunity to earn college credits
- MCPSS implemented the rigorous Alabama College and Career Ready Standards, which are challenging students to achieve more and compete nationally and globally
- Struggling students have access to a variety of alternative school programs including evening study

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City of Mobile Mayor Sandy Stimpson used the Mobile Area Chamber as the backdrop to announce he was creating a chief procurement officer position to implement the city's supplier diversity program. The individual chosen will report directly to the mayor and be accountable for establishing a modern, efficient and accessible procurement process based on best practices found across government and the private business sector.

Stimpson commented with the number of capital improvements coming, he felt it was critical for contractors to reflect the city's diverse make-up.

Stimpson chose the Chamber to make the announcement because he views the Chamber as an important stakeholder in the program, particularly in the effort to identify and assist local minority, women and disadvantaged business enterprises.


Larry Dorsey of Dorsey & Dorsey Engineering spoke at the news conference. Dorsey, the Chamber's first vice chair of minority business development, credited the Chamber's assistance and the value of services his company provides.


MSN Money Includes Mobile on Hot List

MSN Money named Mobile among its "hottest" cities in America for 2015, based on "job and population growth, affordability, livability and the health and well-being of the residents." It also took into account how "innovative and cool the city is."

The story leads with the Mobile Area Chamber's "E" Award earned in 2014, the highest designation given for enhancing trade opportunities, and predicts that "Mobile will become the Southern trading hub of the U.S."

MSN highlights Mobile's thriving port, expanding international trade and prime location on the Gulf Coast as additional reasons for making the list.

The list features 16 cities, and appears on the media outlets website in alphabetical order, starting with Atlanta and followed by Austin, Texas; Burlington, Vt.; Cambridge, Mass.; Denver; Detroit; Houston; Madison, Wis.; Mobile; Nashville, Tenn.; Oakland, Calif.; Pittsburgh; Queens, N.Y.; Venice, Calif.; and Washington, D.C. 

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Chamber Members Named *Mobile Bay* '40 Under 40'

Twenty-seven of this year's *Mobile Bay* magazine "40 Under 40" are members of the Mobile Area Chamber. Since 2009, the magazine has honored young leaders who demonstrate leadership, professional excellence and a commitment to the bay area community.

According to *Mobile Bay* Assistant Publisher **Stephen Potts**, while most of the winners are chosen from the business and professional community, some were selected from other areas, including the arts, medicine, education, community involvement and more. **Christina Stimpson**, the Chamber's director of international trade, was chosen for this year's class.

Mobile Area Chamber members selected were:

Racheal B. Banks
University of South Alabama

Joey Bass
Thompson Engineering & Watermark Design

Matthew Baugh S.J.
Spring Hill College

Walter J. Brand Jr.
ServisFirst Bank

Christopher Conken
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*Paul and Mellanie
Hildesheim stand in
their kitchen showroom.*

Gallery Homes LLC

Paul and Mellanie Hildesheim have built scores of homes for their clients at Gallery Homes over the past 10 years. The first one they built, however, was their own.

"Having been in commercial and industrial construction for many years, I developed a love of residential building when my wife and I decided to build our own home," Paul said. "Learning a great deal throughout that process, we started helping other people build their own dream homes."

Gallery Homes, the Chamber's Small Business of the Month, started with "a couple of remodeling and new construction jobs per year." Now the Hildesheims complete 15 to 20 projects annually. A true custom home builder, Gallery

walks its clients through each step of the process, essentially allowing them to design their own home room by room.

"I am focused on providing our clients with the most structurally sound home available in today's market and Mellanie is gifted with that eye for detail and design," Paul said. "Once the plans are complete, we build to their specifications and work with them to choose everything from paint color to fixtures."

Gallery Homes, members of the national and Mobile Home Builders Associations is committed to building efficient homes, as well, as it is a certified Energy Star Builder, Green Professional, Graduate Builder, and Earth Cents Builder. By meeting the more than 150

construction details necessary to earn the Energy Star designation, Gallery Homes can save homeowners up to 50 percent on their heating and cooling costs. Its designation as a Fortified Builder can help clients save up to 40 percent on homeowners' insurance.

The company's small size – it has only five full-time employees – helped it weather the recession, as the Hildesheims did much of the work themselves during the lean years, focusing on income-generating projects and relying on word of mouth to build their client base.

Now that the housing market is recovering, Hildesheim is bullish on the future of Gallery Homes and the Mobile market in general.

"Mobile is growing," he said. "With the state docks

expansions, Airbus and Austal, along with so many other new businesses, the need for new homes is growing. Our customer base tends to want features and designs that are unique to their needs. That being said, clients who purchase an existing home are asking for extensive remodeling to make it their own, and some want it to be their unique vision from the ground up. Either way, business looks good for Gallery Homes and we are excited to be doing what we love every day."

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Frank Lott Named Mobile Area Chamber Chairman for 2015

As a second-generation small business owner, Frank Lott's involvement in the Mobile Area Chamber began nearly a decade ago, when a statewide legislative issue piqued his interest and he wanted to know more about the Chamber's position on it.

"We had been a member forever, but I had never been involved," said Lott, president of Heritage Homes. "I went to a few state governmental affairs committee meetings, and found out how much the Chamber has to offer. Most importantly, over the years, I have come to learn there is a place for everyone at the Chamber."

Lott was introduced as chairman during the Chamber's 178th annual meeting held in late January. During his remarks, he turned his attention to a couple of key issues for the coming year. These include supporting small and minority businesses in Mobile, including increasing opportunities to successfully compete and win contracts with larger industry; ensuring companies who invest here are sensitive to their footprint and will leave a legacy; and involving more members in committees and task forces.

On industry recruiting, he told attendees, "This is a critical year for the Chamber's economic development team, as we close in on the Airbus assembly line's opening. All eyes are on us these days, and we're in a good position. Our team – including the city, the county, the port, the airport, private industry and our K-12 and higher education systems – are working together to



Photo by Jeff Tesney

recruit the types of industries we believe will be a net-positive in Mobile long-term, while being sensitive to their long-term impact on the environment."

"This Chamber is committed to increasing the number of jobs for our citizens, fighting for pro-business legislation, providing value with our programs – and doing it all with a focus on excellence," he said.

And as a final call to action, Lott said he wants anyone who is a Chamber member to find an area of interest and get involved with the Chamber. To see a listing of the Chamber's committees and task forces, go to <http://mobilechamber.com/membership/committees>.

2014

Delchamps Award



Mike Lee Presented Highest Chamber Honor – Delchamps Award

Photo by Jeff Tesney



A quarter of a century ago, Dr. Sam Eichold and the Mobile Area Chamber created an award in honor of former board chairman **Alfred F. Delchamps** who had a passion for investing in Mobile, and raising up a community focused on giving back. The Delchamps Award was presented to **Mike Lee**, a former chairman of the Chamber's board of directors and president and CEO of Page & Jones.

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

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

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

Carolyn Golson, the Chamber's vice president of membership, remembers a meeting held right after Hurricane Katrina during which Lee said

that we, as the business community, needed to open our doors to help destroyed businesses along the Gulf Coast. And he did. He offered Page & Jones services to a direct competitor in New Orleans, and transferred those customers right back to the competition after they were able to reopen.

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

Outside of the Chamber, Lee has served as president and chairman of the Alabama World Trade Association, the Propeller Club of Mobile, the Mobile Freight Forwarders and Brokers Association, the Mobile Traffic and Transportation Club and the Mobile Bay Convention and Visitors Bureau. He is currently chairman of the Alabama District Export Council, the University of Alabama International Business advisory board, Regions Bank South Area board of directors, the Alabama French American Chamber of Commerce and the Rand Corporation's Gulf States Policy Council.



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2014

Minority Business Advocate of the Year



Austal USA

With millions of dollars in military contracts and more than 4,100 employees, Austal USA's commitment to working with minority companies is evident by the purchasing goals the company sets each year.

Austal USA was selected to receive the 2014 Rev. Wesley A. James Minority Business Advocate Award. The annual award was renamed to honor James for his role in advancing minority-owned companies.

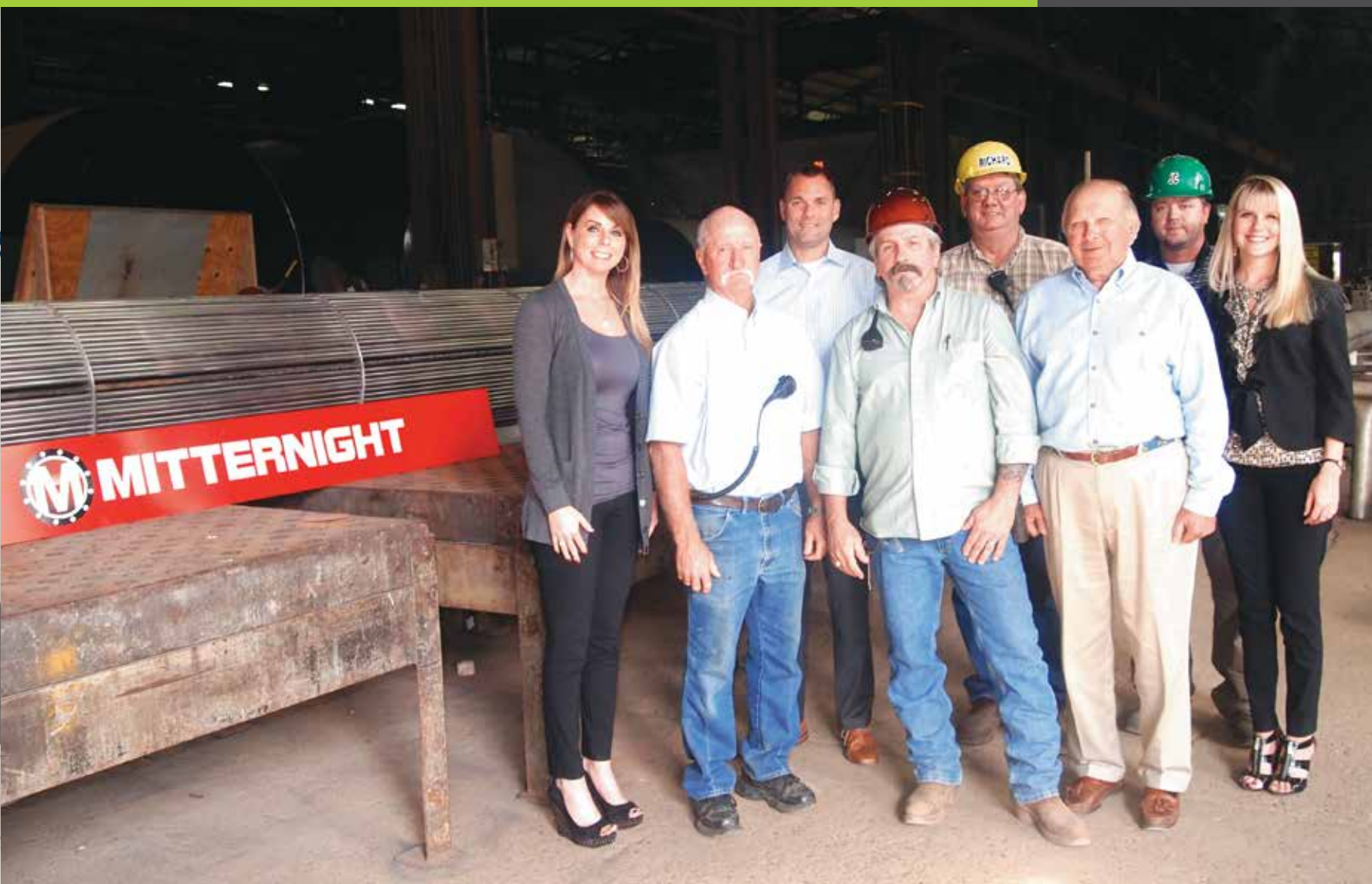
Austal has a small business liaison who participates in procurement matching events, trade shows and training sessions, reaching out

to small, disadvantaged, women-owned, Native American, Veteran and service-disabled-owned local businesses. One example is Mobile-based Rubber Hose and Gasket. With Austal's orders, the company's volume increased more than 30 percent, additional employees were hired and an on-site facility was set up at the Austal yard.

The company was presented the award in October at the Chamber's Minority Business Awards luncheon. At the event, the Chamber also honored Leaf and Petal Florist & Gift Shop and Ranger Industrial Services with the Eagle Award.

Manufacturer of the Year

2014



Mitternight Inc.

Growing sales coupled with investments in technology and operational processes helped Mitternight Inc. earn the Mobile Area Chamber's Manufacturer of the Year award.

The company was presented the award at the Chamber's joint board of advisors and board of directors meeting in November 2014.

From its simple beginnings in 1927 as a boiler repair shop to its present status as a recognized manufacturer of vessels for the chemical, petroleum and other sectors for Fortune 500

customers, the company is also an industry leader in design, engineering and welding.

The Satsuma-based business employs 75 people, and recently achieved the international designation ISO 14001 for its focus on environmental management.

In addition, the company has invested more than \$250,000 in its facility and worked with AIDT and Mobile Works to recruit and train employees.



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Innovator
of the Year

2014



Coastal Innovation Hub at the University of South Alabama

The University of South Alabama believes entrepreneurs are the key to job creation and economic diversity, and its commitment is clear with the newly opened Coastal Innovation Hub.

The Hub was recognized as the Innovator of the Year at the Mobile Area Chamber's joint board of advisors and board of directors meeting in November 2014.

The 10,000-square-foot facility, the only high-tech incubator between New Orleans and

Jacksonville, Fla., can house up to 25 start-up companies. In addition to faculty-driven companies, non-university-developed technologies account for half of the activity in its first year of existence.

Tenants have the benefit of on-site consulting, professional networks, office space, laboratories and conference rooms, along with access to university libraries and student interns, on their journey to commercialization.

2014

Corporate Community Service Award



State Farm Makeda Nichols Agency

State Farm Makeda Nichols Agency may be a small business, but it's committed to using its resources to make a big impact. The agency and its employees were presented the Corporate Community Service Award at the Mobile Area Chamber's joint board of advisors and board of directors meeting in November 2014.

It was the first time a small business earned the distinction. The staff of eight's volunteer efforts this past year included:

- Organizing the Purse with Purpose fundraiser, started by Makeda Nichols a decade ago;
- Helping revive the Skyline and U.S. Hwy. 90 area;
- Joining in walks to support breast cancer and diabetes;
- Participating in Bellingrath Gardens' Balloon Glow; and
- Rolling up their sleeves to help a storm-damaged church.

This award recognizes companies – both large and small – for their dedication to the community and is presented by The Junior League of Mobile and the Chamber.



Ambassador of the Year

2014



Kathy Williams

Attending Mobile Area Chamber events inspired Kathy Williams, a professional recruiter with the locally owned staffing firm J.W. Legacy, to join the Chamber's ambassador program.

In her first year as a volunteer, Williams earned the Ambassador of the Month award twice for her participation. In 2014, she assisted with ribbon cuttings at member companies, helped with Chamber networking events and visited new members. She also actively participated in the annual total resource development campaign Chamber Chase.

Williams received the Ambassador of the Year award during the Chamber's joint board of advisors and board of directors meeting in November 2014.

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2014

Annual Meeting

Comments from Members

At this year's Annual Meeting, the annual report video included remarks from some Mobile Area Chamber members.

Broken into four segments to parallel each core area of the Chamber's program of work (jobs, advocacy, value and excellence),

JOBS



When asked why RSI (Rural Sourcing Inc.) chose Mobile, **Ingrid Miller**, the company's vice president of client services, answered, "I would say the people. When we are looking at cities, there's metrics, there's numbers, there's cyber salaries. But what it comes down to is the talent – the people we want to add to the RSI family. And so, in looking at all the cities, we realized we could pull not just from Mobile but from the surrounding area, and it was just a great culture."



Ramona Hill, the Chamber's special project director charged with directing Southwest Alabama manufacturing community efforts, spoke of Mobile's unique advantage. "One of the reasons our proposal won was that we are a community that collaborates. We know how to bring partners together to make significant change."

the video can be found in its entirety on the Chamber's website at www.mobilechamber.com/in-the-news and on www.youtube.com/MobileChamber.

Here's a sampling of what our members had to say:



Travis Short, president of Horizon Shipbuilding, boasted about the Chamber's dedication to small business development. "Whether it is the minority business group or small business group, they're advocates for you. They are going to take charge of your needs and take charge of what you're trying to get done. And they'll get you there."

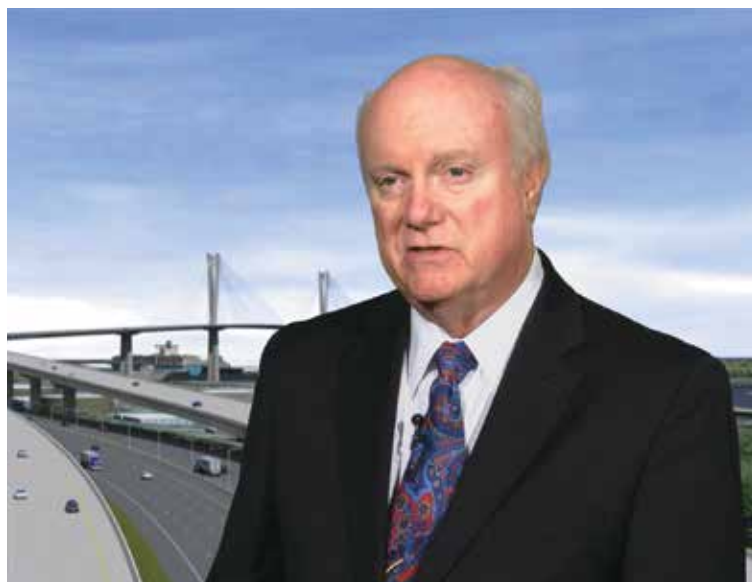


Bonnie Tully, vice president and site manager with Evonik Industries, touted the Chamber's efforts in helping the Mobile operation expand. "The Chamber has really partnered with us to bring business opportunities to Evonik. When we announced we wanted to be a chemical park, they actively looked for partners and brought them to us. We're still developing the business right now, but we hope we have some announcements in the future."

ADVOCACY



"We're very thankful to see the Chamber involved personally with us, helping us work on an issue that is really paramount to our company," said **Rob Hackbarth**, owner of Hackbarth Delivery Service.



Mike Lee, president and CEO of Page & Jones and co-chair of the Chamber's Build the I-10 Bridge coalition, talked about the importance of the Chamber's role in the bridge issue.

"The Chamber filled a real void in getting in and bringing the business community together with our elected officials and created a mechanism for comment from stakeholders of all kinds on both sides of the bay."

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Annual Meeting Sponsors

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The Mobile Area Chamber held its 178th annual meeting on Jan. 27.

Past Board Chairman **Michael Chambers** of Swift Biotechnology highlighted the year's accomplishments, and Chamber President and CEO **Bill Sisson** gave the 2014 Partners for Growth economic development progress report.

During the event, Chambers turned over the meeting to 2015 Board Chairman **Frank Lott III** of Heritage Homes. Lott presented the organization's 2015 program of work.

The event was supported by a number of sponsors, as well as 15 local restaurants and caterers.

To watch the annual report video, visit www.mobilechamber.com/in-the-news.

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Trustmark is a Partners for Growth investor with the Mobile Area Chamber, and its president, Mike Fitzhugh, served as Chamber board chairman in 1998.

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5 Business Practices That Make You Look Small

By Barbara Weltman, guest columnist

Even though you're a small business, you don't want to act small. If you want the public to view you as one of the big boys, act like it by avoiding poor business practices. Here are five business practices to avoid.

1. Not replying to correspondence.

Whether customers, clients, vendors and other business associates try to contact you by phone, email or text, not replying promptly is a bad business practice. It's rude and unprofessional. Don't let your lack of time or an incomplete answer prevent you from responding promptly. You can always follow up later with more information. Just let the sender know you've received the communication and that you're attending to matters.

2. Whining about your personal problems.

Your personal problems – health, marital discord, bad weather or the loss of key personnel – can make it difficult to keep up with your business. You may be distracted and fall behind on a job or need to delay payment to your suppliers or vendors. Recognize that everyone has a sob story, but most people don't want to hear yours. For example, don't let the fact that you've been stiffed by a customer prevent you from paying your bills on time. Find a way.

3. Relying solely on experts.

You have to turn to experts – accountants, attorneys, insurance agents, IT pros and the like – to help you run your business effectively. But you can't choose to remain ignorant of your obligations. Know when to seek help and what to ask for. The cost of these experts will save money by helping you avoid penalties and other costly mistakes.

4. Putting all your eggs in one basket.

Your time and resources may be limited, but don't focus your activities primarily on one client or customer – no matter how lucrative this may be. If that client or customer leaves you (because of its own business downturn, a better supplier or service provider comes along or for any other reason), you'll be left scrambling to replace lost revenue. Continually market your business so there are prospects in the pipeline.

5. Making promises you can't keep.

You want to do your best, but don't promise more than you can or will deliver. Don't say you'll return a phone call if you won't. Don't promise completion of a job by a certain date if you can't make good on your word.

Conclusion

Recognize that being a small business is no excuse for acting like someone running a hobby. Be professional and watch your business grow.

Barbara Weltman is publisher of *Big Ideas for Small Business*. Contact her through www.barbaraweltman.com, or call (772) 492-9594.



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Jim Barnes Enterprises Inc. d/b/a McDonald's Restaurants

Jim Barnes Enterprises has served Mobilians since 1993 with numerous McDonald's locations across the area. Pictured from left to right are members of his team, including Marsha Caine, Sierra Ward, Jerry D'Acquisto, Dustin Stewart, Jim Barnes, Ashley McFarland, Paige Wade, Valerie Green, Ashley Bozeman and Pam Farmer.

Company official: Jim Barnes, owner/operator and president; Kriselyn Barnes Swalley, owner/operator; Ashley Barnes McFarland, office manager; and William Barnes, owner/operator.

Years in business: Barnes began his career in 1983 in Jennings, La., where he owned and operated one restaurant. He then grew to own three restaurants in Louisiana before moving to Mobile and purchasing the Mobile restaurants in 1993. Over the years, the company has grown to 19 locations, with all of Barnes' children joining him along the way. Currently, they employ more than 1,000 people.

Brief company description: McDonald's is one of the world's leading food service retailers in more than 100 countries, with more than 35,000 restaurants serving nearly 70 million people every day.

Why are you located in Mobile?

"The opportunity arose to move to Mobile by purchasing Jack Smith's McDonald's stores," said Barnes. "It was a simple decision for the family. The city had great growth potential, besides its many other attributes – location, great climate, good schools and the overall positive, 'can do' attitude of the citizens."

Why do you support the Mobile Area Chamber of Commerce's Partners for Growth initiative?

"It's a no-brainer," said Barnes. "It is a great return on investment for not only my company, but the city as a whole and, of course, my grandchildren's future."

What do you see as Mobile's greatest potential?

"The potential is within the city itself – location, port of entry, air and the eager workforce that is right here," said Barnes. "This is just the beginning of what Mobile has. The opportunities for our city are endless."

Length of continuous Chamber membership: Since 1960



Partners for Growth (PFG) is the Mobile Area Chamber's long-term economic and community development program. For more information, contact **Katrina Dewrell**, the Chamber's investor relations coordinator, at **251-431-8611** or kdwrell@mobilechamber.com.

Legislative Lunch



Gov. Robert Bentley spoke with Rep. Napoleon Bracy before the Mobile Area Chamber's annual luncheon. The event is held each year so the Chamber can overview its legislative agenda to members of the Mobile/Baldwin legislative delegation.



The Mobile Area Chamber's annual legislative lunch was sponsored by AT&T and Hurricane Electronics. Pictured here from left to right are: Dirk Young with Hurricane Electronics Inc., Rep. Margie Wilcox; Rep. Jack Williams; Fred McCallum and Gigi Ambrecht with AT&T; and Sen. Greg Albritton.

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David Rodgers Joins the Chamber's Economic Development Department

Mobile native **David Rodgers** was recently named as a project manager for the Mobile Area Chamber's economic development department. In this position, he will staff various committees, represent projects to the City of Mobile Industrial Development Board and the Mobile County Industrial Development Authority and actively work business and industrial prospects.

He previously worked as a purchasing manager for Safety Source Inc., managing an inventory valued at more than \$1.2 million. Prior to that, he worked in outside sales for C.H. Robinson.



"David brings fresh energy to work with our business leaders on projects and encourage prospects to follow through," said **Troy Wayman**, vice president of economic development for

the Chamber.

"I like the way everyone at the Chamber has a niche to give Mobile a small-town feel with a large-town presence," said Rodgers.

He earned a bachelor's degree in business administration and marketing from the University of Southern Mississippi.

Ramona Hill Named Special Projects Manufacturing Community Coordinator

The Mobile Area Chamber and University of South Alabama (USA) selected **Ramona Hill** to serve as a manufacturing community coordinator. She will work in the Chamber administration division on special projects.

Bill Sisson, the Chamber's president and CEO said, "Having someone with Ramona's combined manufacturing and consulting background helping to give the partnership strategic direction will be invaluable to this community."

Hill will work with USA to implement the Chamber's and USA's goals of developing a manufacturing community.



The economic benefits will help Mobile attract and expand investment in the manufacturing industry and increase international trade and exports, Hill said.

"Receiving the manufacturing community

designation has been a catalyst for thinking about opportunities that make our community strong," Hill said. "We have been able to start conversations about efforts that could enhance our manufacturing base."

Hill is also a certified master trainer and facilitator and CEO of Workshops Etc! Inc., a professional training and development organization. Hill can be reached at 251-431-8647.



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New Investors in Washington County

The Washington County Economic Development Initiative, staffed by the Chamber's **Austin Monk**, added two new investors, Washington County Business Park and Long Leaf Land & Timber Co. These companies and other investors are increasing marketing and site development opportunities for Washington County.

Export Alabama Reviews 2014

The Chamber's trade division participated in an Export Alabama Alliance meeting in Birmingham to review Alabama's trade events for 2014, and set goals and preview 2015. Sixteen alliance members attended.

Town Hall Meeting Held in Mobile

A Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP) town hall meeting was held in January to educate the local business community on the current trade deal being negotiated between the United States and the European Union. This trade deal will have a significant impact on Alabama, specifically the Mobile region. The Chamber's trade division hosted this meeting with more than 50 participants.

Aviation Forum in Germany

Troy Wayman, the Chamber's vice president of economic development, and **Jana Stupavsky**, a senior project manager, participated in the Hamburg Aviation Forum in Hamburg, Germany, in December. They attended the event to showcase Mobile's logistical assets and recruit additional investment here.

Growth Alliance Task Force Meets

The Chamber held its December Growth Alliance task force, where **Linda Spadaro**, chief of small and disadvantaged business for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, gave a presentation on how to do business with the Corps of Engineers. Twenty member businesses participated. This task force focuses on growing and sustaining minority business in the Mobile area and meets monthly. To learn more about it, contact **Brenda Rembert** at 251-431-8607.

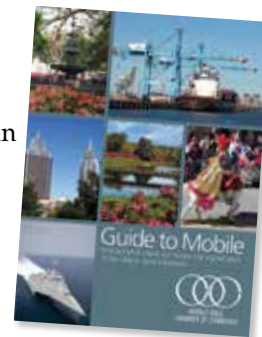
Implementing the Affordable Care Act

In late 2014, the Chamber, in partnership with S.S. Nesbitt, hosted its first Innovations in Healthcare Summit, attended by more than 70 Chamber member businesses. The training was customized for small to mid-sized companies, as well as large industry. Among the

topics were telemedicine, private exchanges, on-site clinics and the healthcare landscape.

Guide to Mobile Produced for 2015

The Chamber recently published its annual *Guide to Mobile*, featuring an overview of Mobile's economy, quality of life assets and relocation information. Anyone looking to move to Mobile, or open a business here can use this piece to their advantage. It's housed on the Chamber's website at <http://mobilechamber.com/economic-development/resources/>.



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BOARD of advisors



Chris Acosta is assistant district manager and cultural ambassador for Rouses Supermarkets. He earned both bachelor's and master's degrees in business administration from Nicholls State University in his hometown of Thibodaux, La. He has worked for Rouses his entire career, recently assisting in the company's expansion into Alabama. Founded in 1960, Rouses is one of the largest independent grocers in the United States, with 43 stores in Louisiana, Alabama and Mississippi. The family-owned business employs more than 7,000 team members.



Christopher Ashcraft is owner and chief executive officer of Express Employment Professionals. The company has operated in Mobile for eight years, and during 2013 a franchise was added in Summerdale. Ashcraft earned an accounting degree from Louisiana Tech University. Previously, Ashcraft spent 20 years in the paper manufacturing industry in various management positions. He is a member of the board of trustees for St. Luke's Episcopal School.



Brian D. Freeman is president of Gulf Electric Co. Inc. of Mobile. He is a graduate of the National Joint Apprenticeship and Training Committee apprenticeship course as journeyman inside wireman with the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers (IBEW), and is licensed with the city of Mobile as a journeyman electrician. He has worked at Gulf Electric Co. since 1997, beginning as an apprentice electrician and working up to his current position as president. Gulf Electric Co. is a Partners for Growth Investor.



Marc Geis is general manager for C Spire's SunCoast Area, serving the Alabama and Florida Gulf Coast. He is responsible for the company's enterprise and consumer lines of business within the territory. Prior to joining C Spire, Geis served in numerous leadership roles within the communications sector including wireless, wireline, cable and advanced technologies. He earned a bachelor's degree in finance and a master's degree in business administration from the University of Florida's Warrington College of Business. C Spire is a Partners for Growth Investor.

For more information about the Chamber's board of advisors, contact Katrina Dewrell at 251-431-8611 or kdewrell@mobilechamber.com.

AMBASSADOR of the month



Photo by Tad Denson

After a 19-year career running a welcoming business for newcomers, and later a business-link company, Tennessee-native Millie Sue Hawk enjoys volunteering in her retirement. She is the Chamber's Ambassador of the Month. In the past 11 years, she has dedicated herself to the program and was named Ambassador of the Year in 2009 and 2013.

Ambassadors are volunteers who support the Mobile Area Chamber by visiting members, assisting with events and ribbon-cuttings. To learn more, contact Dawn Rencher at 251-431-8649 or drencher@mobilechamber.com.



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MARCH 2015

For information on Chamber events, visit events.mobilechamber.com.

6

CHAMBER CLASSIC GOLF TOURNAMENT

Make plans to bring your customers out for a day of fun and networking on the golf course.

When: 7:30 a.m. registration/8:30 a.m. shotgun start

Where: Timber Creek Golf Course, 9650 Timber Creek Blvd.

Cost: \$150 for individual players or \$850 for hole sponsors (team of four)

Contact: Dawn Rencher at 251-431-8649 or drencher@mobilechamber.com

Reservations are required.

Sponsors:



11

NETWORKING@NOON **Members Only*

Make 40-plus business contacts in 90 minutes over lunch.

When: Noon to 1:30 p.m.

Where: Hank Aaron Stadium, 755 Bolling Brothers Dr.

Cost: \$10 and must be paid with reservation

Contact: Alison Unger at 251-431-8617 or aunger@mobilechamber.com

Sponsors:



16

FORUM ALABAMA

U.S. Sen. Richard Shelby will update attendees on the latest news out of Washington, D.C., and how it impacts the Mobile region.

When: 7:30 - 9 a.m.

Where: Battle House Hotel

Cost: \$30

Contact: Carolyn Hunt at 251-431-8621 or chunt@mobilechamber.com

Reservations are required and payment must be received at the time of reservation.

Sponsor:



17

EXECUTIVE ROUNDTABLE **Members Only*

A monthly forum exclusively for Chamber-member small business owners and managers.

When: 8 to 9 a.m.

Where: Chamber, 451 Government St.

Speaker: Cartledge W. Blackwell III, assistant director and architectural historian, Mobile Historic Development Commission

Topic: "One Eye Forward and One Eye Backward: Preservation Progress in Mobile"

Contact: Alison Unger at 251-431-8617 or aunger@mobilechamber.com

No charge, but seating is limited. RSVP requested. Free parking.

Sponsor:



18

NONPROFIT ROUNDTABLE **Members Only*

A bimonthly forum for Chambermember nonprofit executives and managers.

When: 8:30 to 9:30 a.m.

Where: Chamber, 451 Government St.

Speaker: Mark Bunting, vice president/general manager of WKRG

Topic: "Contacting Local Media"

Contact: Alison Unger at 251-431-8617 or aunger@mobilechamber.com

No charge, but seating is limited. RSVP requested.

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18 STATE OF THE CITY AND COUNTY LUNCH

City of Mobile Mayor Sandy Stimpson and Mobile County Commission President Connie Hudson discuss the state of the city and county over lunch. A don't-miss event that sells out quickly.

When: Noon to 1:30 p.m.

Where: Arthur R. Outlaw Mobile Convention Center

Cost: \$25 per person or \$250 for a table of 10 (members) and \$35 for potential members

Contact: Carolyn Hunt at 251-431-8621 or chunt@mobilechamber.com

Reservations required. Cancellations after March 12 not reimbursed to cover lunch cost.

Sponsors: Aker Solutions Inc.; Alabama Power Co.; AM/NS Calvert; Arkema Inc.; Austal USA, Robert J. Baggett Inc.; BBVA Compass; Burton Property Group; C-Spire, Continental Motors Inc.; Hargrove Engineers + Constructors; Infirmary Health; Ingalls Shipbuilding; International Shipholding Corp.; Mitsubishi Polysilicon; Mobile Gas, a Semptra Co.; and PNC Bank

19 MEMBERSHIP 101

Come meet other members and Chamber staff to learn the many ways to benefit from your membership.

When: 8 to 9 a.m.

Where: Mobile Area Chamber, 451 Government St.

Contact: Alison Unger at 251-431-8617 or aunger@mobilechamber.com

No charge, but seating is limited. RSVP requested.

26 GULF COAST COMMERCIAL REAL ESTATE SUMMIT VIII AND MARKET REVIEW

The USA Center for Real Estate & Economic Development will present national, regional and local experts on the Coastal Alabama real estate market and the latest economic analysis.

When: 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. (registration at 8 a.m.)

Where: Renaissance Mobile Riverview Plaza Hotel

Cost: \$150 per person, \$175 after March 20.

No refunds after March 6.

Contact: Cesny Soffronoff at 251-431-8636 or csoffronoff@mobilechamber.com

26 BUSINESS AFTER HOURS

When: 5:30 to 7 p.m.

Where: Kitchen on George, 351-A George St.

Cost: \$5 for members and \$10 for potential members

Contact: Alison Unger at 251-431-8617 or aunger@mobilechamber.com

Reservations are not needed.

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18th Annual

State of the City & County Lunch

Wednesday, March 18

Noon to 1:30 p.m. - Arthur R. Outlaw
Mobile Convention Center

Join City of Mobile Mayor Sandy Stimpson and Mobile County Commission President Connie Hudson and as they discuss the state of our local government at this annual Chamber luncheon.



Tickets are \$25 per person or \$250 for a table of 10 (Chamber members only) or \$35 per person for nonmembers.





Reservations and advanced payment are required.
Call 251-431-8621 or email chunt@mobilechamber.com

Who's New



Regions Bank named **Scott Pate** senior vice president and sales manager for the South

Pate Alabama private wealth management team. Pate earned his master's and bachelor's degrees in business administration from Southern Illinois University.



Roberts Brothers Inc., appointed **Erica Elia** vice president of operations. She will oversee

Elia brokerage operations for the company's approximately 200 agents and staff in three offices.

The **Women's Business Alliance (WBA)** hired **Karen Edmonds Moore** as its new executive director. Moore earned a bachelor's degree in early childhood education from the University of Southern Mississippi.



Jordan Smith joined **Business Information Solutions** as a help desk technician. Smith previously worked in the computer repair industry.



Rodgers



Mills

Berkshire Hathaway HomeServices Cooper & Co. Inc. REALTORS welcomed new associates **Vanessa Rodgers** and **Jimmy Mills**.



Reid



Newman

McDowell Knight Roedder & Sledge LLC hired attorneys **S. Fraser Reid III** and **J. Blair Newman** as members of the firm. Reid earned a law degree from the University of Virginia School of Law, and practices in South Carolina, Georgia and Alabama. Newman earned a law degree from the University of Alabama School of Law, with licenses to practice in Alabama and New York.



Local neurologists **Dr. Christopher Eckstein**, **Dr. Charles Markle**, **Dr. Timothy Hecker** and **Dr. Ozgur Oztas** joined **Coastal Neurological Institute**. The doctors specialize in neurological issues.

Michael Bucher is the new development director for **Stirling Properties**. Bucher previously worked as a development associate and a development financial analyst in Boston.



Hudson



Pinochet

Wilkins Miller LLC accounting and advisory firm hired **Mary-Katherine Hudson** and **Michelle Pinochet** as accountants with a concentration in audit and tax. Hudson graduated from the University of South Alabama with a master's degree in accounting, and earned her bachelor's degree in accounting from Mississippi State University. Pinochet graduated from the University of South Alabama with a bachelor's degree in accounting.

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Scott

Rusyniak and William (Chip) Scott to its campus.

Business Endeavors

The **Alabama State Port Authority** released its financial and tonnage results for fiscal year 2014 ending Sept. 30. The Port Authority earned record revenues of \$162.3 million and handled a record 29.1 million tons of cargo through the public terminals.

The **ARCA Racing Series** announced it is returning to **Mobile International Speedway** this month. Race organizers estimate in its first three years, the race drew nearly 22,000 attendees and had a local impact of \$5.7 million.

Horizon Shipbuilding Inc. recently delivered two vessels to its client **Florida Marine Transporters**. The towboats are the 120-foot **GIANNA HULL** and the 80-foot **JOHN COX**.

Well Done

Lyndsey Dixon CPA, a manager with **Wilkins Miller**, earned her designation of Certified Valuation Analyst (CVA) through the National Association of Certified Valuation Analysts.



Dixon



Backes

Hargrove Engineers + Constructors, as its 2015 chairman of the board.

Alvin K. Hope II and **John Williams** were appointed to the **Mobile Sports Authority** board of trustees. Hope is an attorney with **Maynard Cooper & Gale PC**. Williams, the business manager for **Mobile Premier Pediatric Dentistry**, currently represents District 4 on the **Mobile City Council**.

The readers of *Conde Nast Traveler* once again named the **Grand Hotel Marriott Resort, Golf Club & Spa** one of the "Best Resorts in the South" in the 2014 Readers' Choice Awards for its exceptional service and world-class amenities.

Burr & Forman LLP announced managing partner **Warren C. Matthews** was appointed chairman of the **Alabama Board of Bar Examiners**, which serves as the governing body for the admission process of the **Alabama State Bar**.



Matthews

Berkshire Hathaway HomeServices Cooper & Co. Inc., REALTORS recognized **Marie Dickinson**



with the **David D. Roberts Award** for more than 20 years of service and dedication.

Goodwyn, Mills and Cawood Inc. was selected to lead **Coastal Alabama Partnership** in developing a transformational regional strategic plan.





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Greg Bowen CFA CFP, director of Wealth Management for **Wilkins Miller LLC**, successfully



completed the certification process with the Chartered Financial Analyst Institute to earn his designation of Chartered Financial Analyst (CFA).

✱

PSMJ Resources Inc. recently honored **Brasfield & Gorrie** as a winner of the 5th Annual Premier Award for Client Satisfaction. Brasfield & Gorrie was the only general contractor to receive this recognition.

✱

Mobile Bay, a lifestyle magazine for Mobile and Baldwin counties, announced the **Original Oyster House's** fire-grilled oysters as the winner of the Inaugural Best Bites Challenge. The event featured 32 local restaurants.

The **University of Mobile** was selected as one of "America's 100 Best College Buys" for the sixth consecutive year. The university is one of only four colleges in Alabama to receive the designation and the only private university in the state. Results are decided by an annual survey administered by Institutional Research & Evaluation Inc.

In other news, **Steve Lee**, University of Mobile's vice president for business affairs and chief financial officer, was awarded the Meritorious Service Award by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on College.



The association also reaffirmed accreditation for the **University of Mobile** for the next decade.

The Southern Economic Development Council announced **Wiley Blankenship**, president and chief executive officer of the **Coastal Alabama Partnership** in Mobile, as the state director of Alabama on its board of directors. He will serve a two-year term.



The **Dauphin Island Sea Lab/Marine Environmental Sciences Consortium** was one of 12 organizations selected to conduct scientific studies of the impacts of oil, dispersed oil and dispersant on the Gulf of Mexico ecosystem and public health. It was awarded \$6.5 million by the Gulf of Mexico Research Initiative (GOMRI) to complete the task.

Community News

The city of Mobile recognized the first recipients of a new "Pay it Forward" bonus program. The new initiative rewards employees who find creative ways to help the city save money. Inaugural recipients are **Larry Harris, James Gardner, Jamaal Hawthorn, Lee Bush, Tyrone Holley, Clarence Mack and George Wells**.

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 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.

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Mobile Area Chamber



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It's tough running a business, but it's easier when the Mobile Area Chamber of Commerce has your back. Most of our more than 2,200 members are small businesses working to make a living and make a difference. The Chamber does more than build a strong economy – we offer prime networking venues to develop new contacts and solid resources to help you start, manage and grow your company. Believe in a strong future for Mobile. Belong to the Chamber – because it's good for business and good for Mobile.

