

Mobile Area Chamber of Commerce

APRIL 2015

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From the Publisher - Bill Sisson

## Thank You to Our Members

On April 7, we will be celebrating my favorite event of the year, Member Appreciation Day. Although our Chamber members are appreciated every day of the year, this special event gives us an opportunity to pause and properly thank you for making our Chamber truly outstanding. Our status as the oldest and largest Chamber in the state of Alabama and our U.S. Chamber five-star accreditation would not be possible without your active participation and support.

Your company's continued involvement makes it possible for us to be the voice of business for the Mobile region, representing small, medium and large business. And of course, your membership provides direct benefits to your company, such as the ability to capitalize on new investments, new jobs



and additional spending in the region brought about through the Chamber's business attraction efforts and community leadership role.

More importantly, belonging to the region's largest business organization opens doors through advocacy programs providing access to lawmakers and civic leaders

who influence public policy issues important to your business.

We are dedicated to building lasting relationships with each of our members through value-added benefits to help enhance business, expand our market and grow our community.

Thank you for your ongoing commitment to making the Chamber a thriving organization.

### ON THE COVER

Mayor Sandy Stimpson and Mobile County Commission President Connie Hudson presented their annual State of the City/County remarks in March. See story on pages 18-19. *Photo by LeMaris Alston*

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# Blastech Expands

## Adds 70+ New Jobs Over Next Two Years

In February, Blastech Mobile LLC announced plans to build a new 21,000-square-foot facility on its existing site, and by the end of year two of the expansion project will add more than 75 employees. Capital investment on the project is projected at \$4.5 million.

Currently employing 57 workers, the company is co-located at the SSAB steel mill off Highway 43 in Axis.

Blastech provides its customers with customized cut, rolled and painted steel plates. The expansion will enable them to be a, "One-stop shop for the tank industry," according to **Andy Walter**, general manager of Blastech.

The company is a partnership of SSAB, headquartered in Stockholm, Sweden, and Warren Group Inc., based in Ontario, Canada. Walter expects that as

soon as the fabrication shop is built, the company will be able to process more than 65,000 steel plates per year. Currently some of the plates are being processed in California and Texas. The expansion will enable more work to be done locally.

Primarily Blastech serves customers fabricating storage tanks for the oil and gas industry.

"Anytime we have an opportunity to work with an

existing industry and help them become even more invested in Mobile is a win," said **Troy Wayman**, vice president of economic development for the Mobile Area Chamber. "With the backing of two strong international companies who are heavily invested in the steel industry, it's great to see them forecasting additional growth in the steel market." 

## Young Entrepreneurs Academy Offers Competition for High School Students

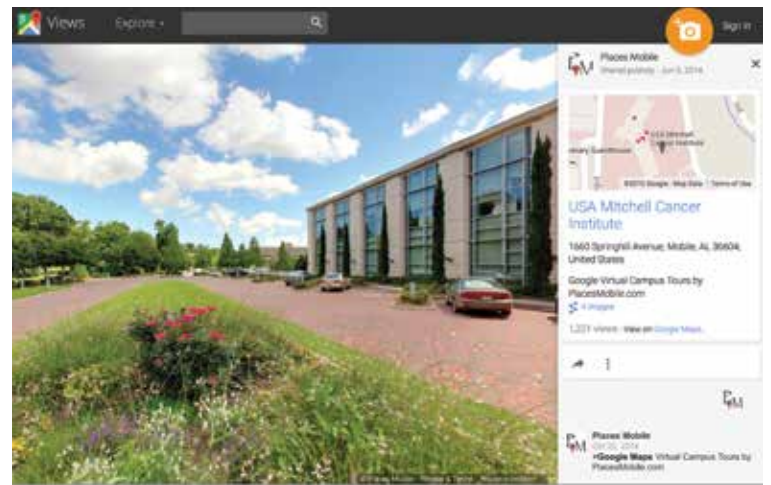
The Mobile Area Chamber's Young Entrepreneurs Academy is inspired by the popular showdown format on ABC's "Shark Tank."

The Mobile Area Chamber is partnering with the Alabama School of Math and Science and University of South Alabama to develop a pilot business competition program based on a U.S. Chamber of Commerce program.

The Young Entrepreneurs Academy will consist of 30 weeks of instruction for high school students. Those entering the program will develop a business plan, logo and website

and compete in front of a panel of judges. One entrepreneur is selected as a finalist to compete regionally, and then the top three go to nationals. The reward is a scholarship.

"There have been many conversations and planning sessions during the last year centered on developing and encouraging Mobile's entrepreneurs. This new program plants and nurtures the seeds of what could be Mobile's next big business," says **Bill Sisson**, president & CEO of the Mobile Area Chamber. 



## Chamber Partners with Google

### Google Streets Gives Members Edge

The Mobile Area Chamber has partnered with Google Street View Indoors to incorporate all Chamber members into a customized Google map. All Chamber member businesses will be located on the GPS location-based map, and members have an opportunity to work with a local photographer/videographer selected by Google to develop online office virtual tours, e-brochures and videos.

To learn more about this program, or work with a Google Street View Indoors representative, visit <http://bit.ly/1v6YBo2> and register for an appointment.



# Save Local Now —

## A New Tool for Chamber Members to Market Themselves

The Mobile Area Chamber launched a new, free digital marketing platform to assist its members. Save Local Now (SLN) is a website ([www.savelocal.com](http://www.savelocal.com)) and iPhone and Android app that gives people access to exclusive offers from their favorite businesses.

Locals and visitors to Mobile can use SLN to access deals, events and savings where they shop, eat and play from any browser on any device. Chamber members can use SLN to create, manage and analyze their digital marketing campaigns. Save Local Now includes live business listings,




deal and event publishing, email marketing, iPhone and Android apps, social media management, SEO (search engine optimization) and analytics, bundled together on


a single integrated platform.

"With only one training session, our members will have access to offer discounts, coupons and special deals, and launch new products and services at no cost," said **Leigh Perry-Herndon**, the Chamber's vice president of communications and marketing. "And better yet, our members will be able to get all of this out to customers on a variety of the platforms they already use, including e-mail, Facebook, Pinterest, Instagram and Twitter."

Chamber members are eligible to create unlimited digital marketing campaigns

at no cost by using the platform. Regular training sessions will be held to help member companies learn the program, and work to integrate it into their own marketing plans.

To learn more about this program visit [www.mobilechamber.com](http://www.mobilechamber.com) and click on the SLN button. 

You'll see this symbol  with stories featuring Chamber initiatives.



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# Meet the Small Business of the Year Finalists

Adding a little more anticipation to 2015 Small Business Week activities, the Mobile Area Chamber expanded its recognition, naming three finalists among those vying for the Small Business of the Year award.

On Thursday, May 7, the winner will be revealed along with this year's Outstanding Entrepreneur during the Chamber's Small Business Week luncheon.

"With 89 percent of our members employing 50 employees or less, it made sense to broaden the net and highlight the successful efforts of a few more of our members," says **Darrell Randle**, the Chamber's vice president of small business development.

On this page and the following pages, readers will see this year's three finalists for the Small Business of the Year and information on the week's specially selected workshops and networking events.

Small Business of the Year applications were judged by a panel of individuals with different expertise such as management, finance and business development.



## American WeatherStar

Growing from a small space in the family residence, to a 5,000-square-foot warehouse in only 12 years, American WeatherStar offers its nationwide contractor customers a variety of roofing materials. President **Brian O'Donnell** says the company's unique services include a business development center offering leads to American WeatherStar clients. The company, with 12 employees, also provides specialized, hands-on training sessions.

A 36-year-old family business, McAleer's Office Furniture has carved a unique niche as an office furniture store. Staying on top of industry trends and expanding services such as interior design and customer service have helped the company remain innovative and relevant, said President **Melissa Cross**. McAleer's has 21 employees.



## McAleer's Office Furniture





## Wilson-Dismukes Inc.

From its beginnings in 1944, when the company sold fish and groceries, today Wilson-Dismukes is a nationally-recognized retailer of outdoor power equipment and small engine parts. The key to business success, says President **Edward Dismukes Jr.**, is streamlining the product offerings and a generous inventory. Dismukes will open a west Mobile location later this year. The company has 12 employees.

# Mobile's Small Business Conference

The Mobile Area Chamber is offering three days of networking and professional development seminars designed to provide business owners and leaders with the knowledge, tools and strategies to grow during this year's Small Business Week conference. During these sessions, you will meet experts who can provide business advice and consulting, address your legal issues, business development and growth strategies, and lenders to help you with your financing needs.

### Early Bird Conference Rate by April 17

Members - \$45; potential members - \$60

### Rate After April 17

Members - \$60; potential members - \$75

Parking for all events is free. Register at <http://events.mobilechamber.com> or contact **Brenda Rembert** at [brembert@mobilechamber.com](mailto:brembert@mobilechamber.com) or 431-8607 for more information.

## Monday, May 4

### Mobile's Best Resources for Small Business Assistance

**When & Where:** 1:30 to 4 p.m. - West Mobile Regional Library, 5555 Grelot Rd.

**Program:** In a business expo-type format, Mobile's business resource organizations will be on hand to answer your questions and offer advice. Areas of expertise include financial analysis, business planning, marketing, research, financing and more. Find the list of participating organizations on the Chamber's calendar of events.

## Tuesday, May 5

### Tried and True Ways to Grow Your Business

**When & Where:** 8:30 to 11:30 a.m. - Mobile Area Chamber, 451 Government St.

**Program:** **Kenny Crow** of Crow Shields Bailey PC helps businesses hone the starting point for growth in four fundamental ways. Participants will leave with tried and true methods for business growth that can be implemented immediately.





# Awards Luncheon is Highlight of Small Business Week

During the Mobile Area Small Business Week, May 4-8, the Mobile Area Chamber and its small business partners join together to offer a variety of tools and strategies for small business growth.

The highlight of the week comes as the Chamber recognizes and celebrates entrepreneurship and small businesses during a luncheon on Thursday, May 7.

The keynote speaker is local entrepreneur **Dean Parker**.

Parker started a pager business in Mobile in 1999, then founded Callis, a cloud-based telecommunications company in 2005. The company sold to CSpire in 2014.

Parker will tell a personal story that illustrates how chance



and innovation create great opportunities. Sometimes, he says, a business develops out of two ideas that seem to have nothing in common.

Under Parker's leadership, Callis was recognized

on *Inc.* magazine's "Inc. 5,000" list for six consecutive years and named one of "America's Fastest-Growing Private Companies." The Alabama Chamber of Commerce awarded Callis Business of the Year for South Alabama, and the company was recognized as the Mobile Area Chamber's 2011 Small Business of the Year.

Parker was also named the 2012 Ernst & Young Entrepreneur of the Year for the Southern region.

## Fast Facts

### Small Business Week Luncheon – May 7

**When & Where:** 11:30 a.m. to 1 p.m. - Battle House Hotel

**Cost:** \$40 Chamber & MBDA Business Center members/ \$50 potential members. Members may purchase a table of 10 for \$400.

**Contact:** Brenda Rembert at 251-431-8607 or [brembert@mobilechamber.com](mailto:brembert@mobilechamber.com)

*Payment and reservations are required by Friday, May 1. No refunds after that date.*

**Program:** Small Business of the Year finalists and winner will be recognized along with this year's Outstanding Entrepreneur. Keynote speaker Dean Parker will share lessons learned in growing and selling a company.

## Tuesday, May 5

### Legal Issues Impacting Small Businesses

**When & Where:** 1 to 4:30 p.m. - Mobile Area Chamber, 451 Government St.

**Program:** Facilitated by **David Hannan** of Maynard Cooper & Gale PC, a panel of local attorneys will address critical issues that impact business success. Business owners, key management, human resource managers and supervisors will have access to information and advice that normally could cost hundreds of dollars.

## Wednesday, May 6

### Where's the Money?

**When & Where:** 1 to 5 p.m. - American Red Cross, 35 N. Sage Ave.

**Program:** Presented by the University of South Alabama Melton Center for Entrepreneurship and Innovation. Representatives of more than 10 financing organizations that provide businesses with \$500 to more than \$2 million will participate in breakout sessions focused on debt, equity and alternative funding sources. This workshop is for companies that need working capital or a line of credit as well as first- or second-stage investors.



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# Georgia Roussos Catering

## *New Legacy Capitalizes on a Family Name*

*Pictured from left to right are Mary Myers, Emanuel Theris and Georgia Roussos.*

The Roussos family has been a Mobile dining institution since 1974, when it opened its first restaurant on the Causeway. After its destruction during Hurricane Frederic, new locations at Fort Conde and in Baldwin County and; finally, the rigors of an economic recession, Georgia Roussos' mother Zenia convinced her to take the family business in another direction – catering.

"We had always catered during our restaurant years, but having just a catering business allows us to be more creative," Roussos said. "Each event is a new opportunity to showcase our culinary skills."

In the years since, Georgia Roussos Catering has won awards such as Best Independent Restaurant at the 2011 Taste of

Mobile and Best Gumbo at the 2013 Taste of Mobile, and it's built a customer base that includes some of the Mobile area's top corporate clients. The business is honored here as the Mobile Area Chamber of Commerce's Small Business of the Month.

"We have a steady year-round business, especially with our corporate clients," Roussos said. "Certainly we see an increase during Christmas, and for the GoDaddy (Bowl) and Senior Bowl, First Light Marathon and definitely for Mardi Gras. For these events her staff of 12 grows with added part-time employees.

"Preparing for a Mardi Gras ball is almost like a military operation with the planning and logistics involved," she added. "But that's our role, to do the work behind the scenes so that

our clients and their guests have a wonderful experience."

Long known for specializing in fresh Gulf seafood, Georgia Roussos Catering is gaining more recognition for the range of menu options it offers and events it can service, from boxed lunches to black-tie events. But its specialty remains seafood cooked on-site.

"It makes such an important difference to bread and fry the seafood on-site," she said. "That means setting up a portable kitchen with prep tables and large fryers. It's a lot of work, but the quality of the food is worth the effort."

The business takes an active part in community and charitable events like the Taste of Mobile, which this year will benefit the culinary program at

Murphy High School; Celebrate Hope at the University of South Alabama Mitchell Cancer Center; the American Cancer Society's Kick-Off Walk for Making Strides; and the Junior League Christmas Jubilee Preview Party.

Maintaining consistent quality and service while dealing with rising food costs is a challenge, but Roussos is bullish on the future.

"We're proud to see expansion and growth for some of our corporate clients like Austal, Evonik, Continental and Airbus. As they grow, we grow," she said.

*Want to be featured here?*

*Go to [mobilechamber.com](http://mobilechamber.com) to submit an application, or contact Danette Richards*

*at 251-431-8652 or [drichards@mobilechamber.com](mailto:drichards@mobilechamber.com).*



# What is This Thing Called Crowdfunding?

When President Obama's JOBS (Jumpstart Our Business Startup) Act was passed in 2012, crowdfunding came out of the shadows and into the mainstream.

Crowdfunding is a new and innovative way for small- and mid-size companies to raise capital from state-specific individual investors without the burden of navigating through the Federal Securities laws and filings with the U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission.

While the federal government continues to iron out the federal regulations, the state of Alabama is one of the first states to enact state legislation authorizing crowdfunding.

So what is it? It's the practice of funding a project or venture by raising small

amounts of money from a large number of people, typically from local investors and via the Internet. In simple terms, because crowdfunding uses the Internet, you are able to tap into a community of friends, family, customers and potentially hundreds of investors you may not even know, but who see an opportunity for potential future value in your company.

Sen. Arthur Orr proposed the Alabama legislation, and Gov. Robert Bentley signed it into law last year. According to Orr, the intrastate crowdfunding exemption allows Alabama entrepreneurs to raise up to \$1 million from Alabama investors in a streamlined and cost-effective process.

Investments of up to \$5,000 may be accepted from any Alabama investor and investments in excess of \$5,000 may be accepted from Alabama investors who qualify as accredited investors (as defined by federal law).

Crowdfunding to raise capital creates exposure for your company and your product with the potential to gain new investors. But to properly present a potential investment opportunity to the public, the entrepreneur

is required to examine all areas of the business and provide a comprehensive, yet easy to understand, profile and accurate disclosure of the company or business.

"This new crowdfunding mechanism provides a significant opportunity for Alabama entrepreneurs who wish to raise capital to start small businesses, as more traditional financing in the current economic climate have been limited," said Alabama Securities Commission Director Joseph Borg. "Now small businesses can pursue an economical way to raise funds through localized securities offerings. While investment in startup businesses has significant risk, the potential rewards in promoting new businesses and job formation in our local communities are invaluable."

**It's the practice of funding a project or venture by raising small amounts of money from a large number of people...**

See pg. 30 for information on a crowdsourcing seminar.

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## Thank You to Our Members Mobile Area Chamber Annual Member Appreciation Day is Set

Join the Mobile Area Chamber for its seventh annual Member Appreciation Day on Tuesday, April 7, from 4 to 6 p.m. Enjoy a fun afternoon of networking, a fish fry, beverages and live music on the Chamber's lawn, 451 Government St.

With your support, the Chamber is more than 2,100 members strong, of which 93 percent are small businesses.

On Member Appreciation Day, Chamber staff members will be

on hand to thank you for your investment in this pro-business organization established more than 178 years ago. The Chamber recruits jobs and advocates for business-friendly legislation on local, state and federal levels.

Are you aware of the extra benefits available to Chamber members that could help your bottom line? Information is available at [www.mobilechamber.com/membership/member-discounts](http://www.mobilechamber.com/membership/member-discounts).

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The Mobile Area Chamber of Commerce presents its annual

# Member Appreciation Day

Let us say "Thank You" for your support and for being a Mobile Area Chamber member with an afternoon of fish, fun and refreshments.

## Fish Fry

Tuesday, April 7  
4 to 6 p.m.  
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When we're talking about members, there are two core strategies that stand out – value and excellence. The Mobile Area Chamber prides itself in offering a variety of business programs and networking events to meet the needs of its members. And our goal is to bring excellence to everything we do. Hear what a few of our members have to say about the value of their membership.

## VALUE



**Mike Dorsett**, president and owner of Dorsett Productions Unlimited, talked about why he joined the Chamber. "My main reason for joining the Chamber was to get more involved with the community and other businesses, and to have face-to-face interaction to help improve our business and our goals."



**Tommy Lee**, owner of Music 4 U, The Tommy Morse Band, encouraged members to do more than just join. "It's important to be seen at the different Chamber events. It's important to get involved. And if you don't get involved, you're really selling yourself short."

## EXCELLENCE



**Sam Winter** president of Sam Winter and Co. Real Estate, said, "After going to each seminar, I kept going back because there is always one thing you can get from the seminar. It may be a 30-minute or hour seminar, but there will be one thing you can take away and implement into your business."



**Kelly Picard**, chief executive officer of Hackbarth Delivery Service, compared the Chamber to its counterparts, saying, "I feel like Mobile has one of the strongest Chambers in all the markets we operate in, and we're in 24 different locations. The Mobile Area Chamber has been instrumental in helping us grow and also in helping Mobile grow."





**Mike Payne**, president of Gwin's Commercial Printing, said, "I really can't say enough good things about the Chamber of Commerce. I've really enjoyed being involved. I've met a lot of good people who care about Mobile. They care about what's happening, and they care about making this a better place."



**Grant Zarzour**, who along with his wife, **Brie**, started The Fuse Project, a nonprofit organization to raise funds for children's programs, said, "I think it's very difficult, on your own, to figure out how to make your business the most successful it can be. To be able to join the Chamber... to be able to bounce ideas off people who've been where you want to go, it's priceless."



**Gray Englebert** of Jubilee Specialties added, "I think the Chamber lends credibility just by virtue of being associated with the Chamber – there's a certain credibility factor."



Terry Smith, Travis & Courtney Everett  
The Everett Agency, Mobile, AL

The most important keys aren't to the family car, they're to the family business.

When First Community Bank customer Terry Smith wanted to retire, her kids wanted to take over the family Allstate agency. They turned to us at First Community Bank to help daughter Courtney and son-in-law Travis buy the agency, leaving Terry to begin her retirement.

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# State of the City of Mobile

Mayor Sandy Stimpson, City of Mobile

Let's start with a number: \$4.3 million.

That's the deficit we faced in the City of Mobile's general fund balance when we took office in late 2013.

Getting our fiscal house in order has been a top priority and we have made tremendous progress.

At the start of the current fiscal year, we reported a positive general fund balance of \$15.4 million. That's a \$20 million swing that helped us avoid financial catastrophe and build a reserve.

Our destination is clear: We want to become the safest, most business and family friendly city in America by 2020.

It will take more tough

decisions to get us there, but there is a great team of leaders dedicated to the mission.

Our professional approach to managing government is based on financial stewardship and a focus on improving efficiency and basic services for the citizens we serve.

Every dollar we save is another dollar we can use to repair a sidewalk, pave a street or improve a park.

That's important because we have neglected our basic infrastructure. We have a backlog of more than \$250 million in capital projects that need addressing.

We are committed to implementing a comprehensive, long range plan that encompasses all of Mobile - from downtown and Dauphin Island Parkway to west Mobile and Africatown. It will help us identify our core critical needs

and transform Mobile.

It isn't just about roads and storm drains. It's also about transforming our internal processes to make sure we are helping businesses thrive and families feel safe and secure.

One of our top priorities is revamping our permitting process to encourage growth of new and existing business. Delays caused by red tape are one of the biggest impediments we have to economic development in Mobile.

The progress we've made with our budget has allowed us to invest in our employees, providing them better pay and better tools and resources to do their jobs.

We're putting new police cars on the streets, renovating fire stations and purchasing new computer systems. All will be an incredible improvement to the outdated, inefficient

equipment we have now.

It all translates to a higher quality of service and a better quality of life for our citizens.

If we can accomplish that in city government, and improve our neighborhoods and promote economic growth, then we can transform our city in ways that few of us can even imagine.

I never expected we'd receive recognition like we've received in December from Bloomberg Philanthropies, which selected Mobile as one of 12 U.S. cities to participate in their prestigious Innovation Team program.

As much as anything, the Bloomberg award is a validation that we're on the right track.

Mobile's momentum is building. Our story is gaining notice around the country and the world. The state of our city is strong, and getting stronger every day.



[www.cityofmobile.org](http://www.cityofmobile.org)

**On the City of Mobile website, visitors can:**

- Download maps
- Pay your taxes
- Become a business
- Celebrate Mardi Gras
- Stay informed



# State of Mobile County

## Mobile County Commission President Connie Hudson



It is my privilege as president of the Mobile County Commission to offer the 2015 State of the County address. As we continue forward in 2015, the county's economic indicators present a picture of economic recovery and increased productivity. The jobs picture is much improved with a 6.4% unemployment rate which continues to decline. Sales tax, license tag, and fuel consumption revenues are all trending upward. The county's housing inventory is moving faster with decreasing numbers of home foreclosures as well.

Mobile County has made significant strides toward putting our financial house in order. In recognition of the county's best practices initiative, Standard and Poor's rating agency upgraded the county's credit rating from Double "A" Minus to Double "A" with a

Stable Outlook. The rating report acknowledged the county's "very strong management conditions, very strong budgetary flexibility, strong budgetary performance, and very strong liquidity."

Our future in manufacturing is also brighter today because the Southwest region of Alabama received designation by the U.S. Department of Commerce as one of twelve "Manufacturing Communities" across the U.S. Our designation, a competitive application process initiated by Mobile County, gives priority status to designees in acquiring up to \$1.2 billion in manufacturing-related grants.

We are busy paving our way to further prosperity with our 2014 Pay-As-You-Go Road Improvement Program valued at \$66 million. The funds will build and improve 94 miles of roads in Mobile County including

all eleven municipalities, without new taxes or borrowing.

Attracting new industries and expanding existing businesses is an economic development priority for Mobile County. In the last decade alone, we can identify a return on county business investments that have yielded 9,400 new jobs at an average salary of \$55,000 a year.

The county continues to prioritize and fund public safety through support of law enforcement, medical rescue, and emergency management. This year we constructed a county-funded fire training tower to provide certification training for firefighters to aid in reducing response times and lowering homeowner insurance costs.

In other county news: We have opened the new Mobile

County Recycling Center off Hitt Road in west Mobile, expanded and upgraded our regional parks in the Mobile-Tensaw Delta, purchased and managed sensitive acreage around Big Creek Lake for protection of our main source of drinking water, and funded technology infrastructure and job programs for our public schools.

In summary, the Mobile County Commission endeavors to be proactive in meeting challenges, and prioritizing needs for public safety, infrastructure and quality of life.

[www.mobilecountyal.gov](http://www.mobilecountyal.gov)

**On the Mobile County website, visitors can get information about:**

- Bids & Contracts
- Road & Bridge Projects
- Permits & Licenses
- Commission Meeting Minutes
- County Parks & Recreation





## World Trade Conference Focuses on Lucrative African Markets

Trade experts tout a number of statistics that make South Africa an intriguing market for companies looking to expand their international footprint.

For example, Africa is home to seven of the world's fastest-growing economies, and its middle class growth makes it "time to establish a foothold" through exports and investing, according to a U.S. Census Bureau report.

If this piqued your interest, mark your calendar for April 21-22 for the Gulf Coast Trade Alliance World Trade Conference in Point Clear.

The Mobile Area Chamber is coordinating this year's effort and dedicating sessions to how Gulf Coast companies can tap into South Africa and Sub-Saharan African markets.

"While Africa's sheer size demands attention, it's the market growth opportunities that you should be considering,"

says **Christina Stimpson**, the Chamber's director of international trade. According to the U.S. Department of Commerce, since 2000, sub-Saharan Africa has experienced consumer spending growth of four percent per year, and is expected to reach \$1 trillion in 2020.

In 2013-14, sub-Saharan Africa accounted for the largest number of business regulatory reforms aimed at making it easier to do business there: 75 of the 230 regulatory reforms worldwide, according to the World Bank.

But many companies don't know how to go about entering this market and are scared to embrace the high-risk but high-reward environment.

The conference's sessions and keynotes will address topics covering market-entry strategies, risk mitigation, emerging market opportunities and separating fact from fiction.

Companies from across the Gulf Coast will share their stories, touching on questions such as their initial approach; the legal considerations they faced; the media used to reach out and connect with customers; and the challenges they overcame.

In addition, participants will have the opportunity to sit down, one-on-one, with a market specialist to determine actionable steps they can take to enter into Africa.

The Gulf Coast Trade Alliance World Trade Conference is a product of a four-state alliance between government and nonprofit business organizations from Alabama, Northwest Florida, Louisiana and Mississippi.

## Fast Facts

**World Trade Conference  
Presented by the Gulf  
Coast Trade Alliance**

**When:** April 21-22


**Where:** Grand Hotel  
Marriott Resort, Golf Club  
& Spa, Point Clear

**Cost:** \$225

**Register:** <http://bit.ly/1FpAuHo> or call **Christina Stimpson** at 251-431-8648

**Program:** Sessions depict economic opportunities for Gulf Coast companies in South Africa and Sub-Saharan Africa. Attendees will hear company perspectives on entering the African market through interactive panel sessions. One-on-one appointments with market specialists will also be available.





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Cheryl Levy | Chief Human Resources Officer

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Watch a short video of Cheryl Levy at [opportunity.ua.edu/bba](http://opportunity.ua.edu/bba)

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# Students Learn About Health Occupations at Career Fair

In February, the Mobile Area Chamber's Bay Area Healthcare Coalition hosted its annual Health Occupations Career Fair at the Mobile Civic Center. More than 660 high school students from 25 high schools in Mobile and Baldwin counties participated in the interactive event highlighting 15 different career options. New occupations represented this year included mental health, veterinary technician and medical, dental and physician assistants. Pictured here are a group of students from Bryant High School in Irvington working with EMTs from Faulkner State Community College to learn CPR techniques. The fair was sponsored by AltaPointe Health Systems, Faulkner State Community College, Fortis College, Infirmary Health, Mobile County Public Schools, Providence Hospital, Remington College, Springhill Medical Center, USA Children's and Women's Hospital and USA Medical Center.



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# Budweiser-Busch Distributing Co. Inc.

*Celebrating 50 years as a family-owned and operated local distributor of fine beverages, Budweiser-Busch Distributing Co. Inc. serves four counties in lower Alabama. Pictured at the Mobile facility (from left to right) are Lisa Williams, Kathryn Bradley, Mike Shambo, Kenny Talbot, Rebecca Helton and Kyle Oliver.*

**Company officials:** Jim Fuchs, president; Alexis Atkins, vice president; Mark Hughes, vice president; Chris Fuchs, general manager

**Years in business:** 50 years

**Brief company description:** "Established April 1, 1965, we serve Mobile, Baldwin, Conecuh and Escambia counties and currently sell Anheuser-Busch beer brands, various craft beers including those from top Alabama brewers such as Fairhope Brewing Co., Yellowhammer and Back Forty Brewing Co., and several non-alcoholic beverages," said Chris Fuchs.

"Locally, Budweiser employs approximately 160 employees in Mobile and Loxley," added Rebecca Helton, branch manager.

**Why are you located in Mobile?**

"Mobile is poised for growth, and we, as a local business, want to grow along with the city," said Kyle Oliver, operations manager.

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

"This is a great program to further enhance Mobile's

growth and leadership in the state for commercial and industrial diversity," said Oliver. "We understand the need for diversity on all levels and support it wherever possible."

**What do you see as Mobile's greatest potential?**

"Its people," said Oliver. "With an educated and well-trained population, businesses will want to come to Mobile."

**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 [kdewrell@mobilechamber.com](mailto:kdewrell@mobilechamber.com).



## Chamber Participates in Member Grand Openings and Ribbon Cuttings

Chamber staff and ambassadors helped cut ribbons and celebrate grand openings at Army Aviation Center Federal Credit Union, B&B Pet Stop, Greer's Market – Bayou La Batre, Friends of the Mobile Animal Shelter, Homecare Companions, Joe Bullard Jaguar Land Rover Gulf Coast, The Krystal Co. and Walmart Neighborhood Market #4210. If your business is a member and you would like assistance with planning a grand opening or ribbon-cutting event, contact **Dawn Rencher** at 431-8649 or [drencher@mobilechamber.com](mailto:drencher@mobilechamber.com).

## Chamber Names New Board of Advisors

New members of the board of advisors are Dreamscapes Inc., HUB International Gulf South, Hieronymus CPAs LLC and McFadden Engineering. The group has 262 members. To learn more about this program and how your company can benefit, contact **Katrina Dewrell** at 251-431-8611 or [kdewrell@mobilechamber.com](mailto:kdewrell@mobilechamber.com).

## Chamber Names New Ambassadors

**Sara Polansky**, Commercial & Marine LLC; **Liz Brewer**, Bank of the Ozarks; **Heath McClure**, Chicken Salad Chick; **Nathan Novotny**, Morgan Stanley; and **Kayla Quint**, Cimarron Ridge Apartments are the Chamber's newest ambassadors. Ambassadors are volunteer members who assist the Chamber with a variety of projects, including event registration, member visits and ribbon-cuttings. To learn more about this group, contact **Dawn Rencher** at 251-431-8649 or [drencher@mobilechamber.com](mailto:drencher@mobilechamber.com).

## AMBASSADOR of the month



Photo by Jeff Tesney

"Being an ambassador is a way I keep my finger on the pulse of what is going on in the city," said **Mary Dean Wilbur**, the Chamber's Ambassador of the Month. Wilbur, an account executive for Lamar Advertising Co. of Mobile, an outdoor advertising billboard company, sells billboards nationwide. The Mobile native has been in the ambassador program for four years.

*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](mailto:drencher@mobilechamber.com).*

## Meet your new neighbors.



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## Unger Takes Full-Time Position in Membership Department

For the past two years, **Alison Unger** has worked in the Mobile Area Chamber's membership department as the member services representative, helping Chamber members update their profiles in the membership database, renew their memberships and address benefit inquiries.

In her new role as the administrative assistant for membership, Unger will work with many Chamber volunteers, including Chamber Chase participants and ambassadors. She will assist with events such as Business After Hours, Networking@Noon and Speed Networking.

"Alison already has a relationship with the members



and volunteers, and expanding her role with us is perfect for the Chamber and our members," said **Carolyn Golson**, vice president of membership.

Unger relocated to Mobile 12 years ago.

Before her move, she worked in the administrative department for undergraduate programs at Rutgers University in New Jersey, where she also earned a bachelor's degree in history.

Unger has always wanted to be involved with the Chamber, she said. "I believe in the Chamber's mission of growing the community," she said. "And I think this staff is fabulous."

Unger can be reached at 251-431-8617 or [aunger@mobilechamber.com](mailto:aunger@mobilechamber.com).



*Complete DKI is a restoration contractor based in Pensacola, Fla. With a team of more than 5,500 technicians throughout the U.S., the company serves commercial, insurance and residential clients. Services include emergency response, construction services, catastrophe response, contents restoration and environmental services. The company also offers repairs following fire, smoke and water damage. The Mobile office is located at 3350 Halls Mill Rd., Suite A. For more information, visit [www.completedki.com](http://www.completedki.com) or call 251-225-5354. Pictured above is Samantha Stanley, marketing representative for the Mobile location.*



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## BOARD of advisors



**Marty Pittman** is district director for LifeSouth Community Blood Centers. A Pascagoula, Miss., native, she graduated from the University of Mobile with a bachelor's degree and received a master's degree from Southwestern Theological Seminary. Pittman's career has been spent entirely in the nonprofit sector and she considers her current role at LifeSouth to be the most important. The Coastal Alabama district includes all of Mobile and Baldwin counties, and LifeSouth donors supply nearly all of the blood components to patients in eight hospitals.



**Archibald (Archie) T. Reeves IV** is a member of the firm McDowell Knight Roedder & Sledge LLC. He is a member of the Mobile and Alabama Bar Associations, and is a member of the International Association of Defense Counsel (IADC). He has served IADC as continuing legal education planning chair, chair of the drug, device and biotechnology committee and as faculty member for 2009 IADC trial academy at Stanford Law School. He has been published in *For the Defense* and *Alabama Law Review*, and he authored *Drug and Device Litigation for the Alabama Bar Institute for Continuing Legal Education*. McDowell Knight Roedder & Sledge is a Partners for Growth Investor.



**Chris Richards** is president of AM/NS Calvert, also serving on the joint venture's managing board. He served previously as president of I/N Tek and I/N Kote, an ArcelorMittal and Nippon Steel & Sumitomo Metal Corp. steel processing joint venture in New Carlisle, Ind., and 17 years with Bethlehem Steel's Lackawanna, N.Y., facility. Richards earned a bachelor's degree in metallurgical engineering from the University of Idaho and a master's in business administration from St. Bonaventure University in Bonaventure, N.Y. AM/NS Calvert 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](mailto:kdewrell@mobilechamber.com).



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# APRIL 2015

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

## 7 MEMBER APPRECIATION DAY

Let the Chamber staff show its appreciation to those who support this organization and make possible the work we do to improve our region. Enjoy a fish fry and live music.

**When :** 4-6 p.m.

**Where:** Mobile Area Chamber, 451 Government St.

**Contact:** Alison Unger at 251-431-8617 or [aunger@mobilechamber.com](mailto:aunger@mobilechamber.com)

No charge. Free parking.

**Sponsors:**



## 8 COFFEE WITH THE CHAMBER

Start your day with the Chamber and network with other business professionals.

**When:** 7:30 to 8:30 a.m.

**Where:** Courtyard Mobile/Daphne Eastern Shore Marriott

**Contact:** Alison Unger at 251-431-8617 or [aunger@mobilechamber.com](mailto:aunger@mobilechamber.com)

No charge, but seating limited.

## 8 GCTC LUNCH

A bimonthly lunch hosted by the Gulf Coast Technology Council.

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

**Where:** 5 Rivers Delta Resource Center, Delta Hall

**Speaker:** Gary Osland, business development manager with Cisco

**Topic:** Cybersecurity

**Cost:** \$20 for Chamber members and \$25 for potential members and includes lunch

**Contact:** Emily McGrath at 251-431-8651 or [emcgrath@mobilechamber.com](mailto:emcgrath@mobilechamber.com)

Reservations required. Cancellations after April 3 not reimbursed to cover lunch cost.

**Sponsor:**

ITT Technical Institute **ITT**

## 10 CROWDFUNDING

Learn how to take advantage of Alabama's new crowdfunding legislation to raise capital for your business.

**When:** 1 to 2:15 p.m.

**Where:** Mobile Area Chamber, 451 Government St.

**Speaker:** Sen. Arthur Orr

**Contact:** Brenda Rembert at 251-431-8607 or [brembert@mobilechamber.com](mailto:brembert@mobilechamber.com)

No charge, but seating is limited.

**Sponsored by:**



## 15 WOMEN'S ROUNDTABLE *\*Members Only*

A bimonthly forum exclusively for Chamber-member women business owners and managers.

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

**Where:** Mobile Area Chamber, 451 Government St.

**Speaker:** Paris Love, President of Paris Love Productivity Institute LLC

**Topic:** "How to Maximize 24 Hours and Get More Done Effortlessly"

**Contact:** Alison Unger at 251-431-8617 or [aunger@mobilechamber.com](mailto:aunger@mobilechamber.com)

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

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# Military Appreciation Luncheon

## Wednesday, April 22, 2015

### Noon to 1:30 p.m.

### USS ALABAMA Battleship Memorial Park

### Aircraft Pavilion

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**Venue Sponsor:** USS ALABAMA Battleship Memorial Park

**\$25 per ticket or \$200 for table of 8**  
 Reservations are required.

Register online at [events.mobilechamber.com](http://events.mobilechamber.com) or contact Carolyn Hunt at 251-431-8621 with credit card information.



## 16 BUSINESS AFTER HOURS

Join fellow Chamber members and young professionals for Schmoozapalooza with the Mobile BayBears. Enjoy networking and free entry into the game.

**When:** 5:30 to 7 p.m.

**Where:** Hank Aaron Stadium, 755 Bolling Brothers Blvd.

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

**Contact:** Alison Unger at 251-431-8617 or [aunger@mobilechamber.com](mailto:aunger@mobilechamber.com)

Reservations are not needed.

**Sponsor:**



## 21-22 WORLD TRADE CONFERENCE

The World Trade Conference is a product of a four-state alliance between Alabama, Florida, Louisiana and Mississippi. This year's conference will focus on international business opportunities in South Africa and the Sub-Saharan region of Africa for Gulf Coast companies.

**Where:** Marriott Grand Hotel in Point Clear

**Cost:** \$225 per person

**Contact:** Christina Stimpson at 251-431-8648 or [cstimpson@mobilechamber.com](mailto:cstimpson@mobilechamber.com)

More information at <http://bit.ly/1FpAuHo>

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Pensacola Chamber CEDA

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## 21 EXECUTIVE ROUNDTABLE *\*Members Only*

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

**When:** 7:30 to 8:30 a.m. (Note earlier time.)

**Where:** Mobile Area Chamber, 451 Government St.

**Speaker:** City of Mobile Mayor Sandy Stimpson will provide an update on the city.

**Contact:** Brenda Rembert at 251-431-8607 or [brembert@mobilechamber.com](mailto:brembert@mobilechamber.com)

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

**Sponsor:**



## 22 MILITARY APPRECIATION LUNCHEON

The event includes awards presented by the Navy League, Air Force Association, ESGR, USCG and National Guard & Reserve and recognition of distinguished JROTC & ROTC Cadets.

**When:** Noon to 1:30 p.m.

**Where:** USS ALABAMA Battleship Memorial Park, Aircraft Pavilion

**Cost:** \$25 per person or \$200 for table of eight

**Contact:** Carolyn Hunt at 251-431-8621 or [chunt@mobilechamber.com](mailto:chunt@mobilechamber.com)

Reservations required by April 17 and payment due at time of reservation.

**Sponsors:**



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## 28-29 AIDT LEADERSHIP SKILLS CLASS

AIDT Leadership Development training programs introduce team leaders, supervisors and managers to effective leadership responsibilities, communication skills, teamwork and motivation techniques. This two-day course will focus on skills all leaders need to be effective.

**When:** 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. (both days)

**Where:** Mobile Area Chamber, 451 Government St.

**Cost:** \$50 per person, includes course materials, lunch and snacks

**Contact:** Emily McGrath at 251-431-8651 or [emcgrath@mobilechamber.com](mailto:emcgrath@mobilechamber.com)

Space is limited to 25 people.

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## Who's New

IBERIABANK hired **Julie L. Penn** as assistant vice president and branch manager for its Fairhope location. Penn received a bachelor's degree in business administration with a concentration in finance from the University of South Alabama.



Archibald



Killion



Susman



Wishon

**Smith Dukes** announced **Melissa D. Archibald CPA** returned to the firm as an assurance senior. In addition, **Kathy Killion CPA** joined Smith Dukes as a manager in its tax department and **Peter Susman** also joined as an assurance manager.



Wolf



**Harry Brislin** was named real estate manager of the **University of South Alabama Technology & Research Park**. Brislin earned a bachelor's degree in communication from the University of South Alabama.

In other news, the firm promoted **James Wishon III CPA** to tax supervisor and **Zack Wolf CPA** to assurance supervisor.

**The SSI Group Inc. (SSI)** named **Jay Colfer** executive vice president of sales. Colfer has more than 25 years of healthcare information technology experience.



Eastburn



Brown

**Harbor Financial Services LLC** hired **Wendy Eastburn** and **Ross Brown** as branch managers in Mobile and Florida. Eastburn received a bachelor's degree in political science from the University of South Alabama. Brown received a bachelor's degree in finance from Strayer University in Herndon, Va., and earned the

certified financial planner designation in 1998.

**Haleigh Vance** joined **Mobile Lumber & Millwork Coast Design Kitchen & Bath** division as a residential and commercial designer. Vance graduated with a degree in interior design from the University of Southern Mississippi.



Vance

**Burr & Forman LLP** welcomed **Robert C. Matthews** as counsel in the firm's Mobile office as a member of the banking and real estate practice group. Matthews earned a law degree from The University of Alabama School of Law.

**Historic Mobile Preservation Society (HMPS)** welcomed **Brigitte Mallett** as the new volunteer and site coordinator.



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She will also serve as gift shop manager for Historic Oakleigh House Museum. She most recently served as HMPS public relations intern.

In other news, **Peyton Williams** also joined the staff as lead docent. She will conduct tours and direct sales in the gift shop.

## Business Endeavors

**Austal USA** christened its fifth Joint High Speed Vessel (JHSV), the USNS Trenton (JHSV 5). The 338-foot catamaran was named by Secretary of the Navy Ray Mabus, after the capital of the state of New Jersey and the site of George Washington's first military victory during the American Revolutionary War.

**Historic Oakleigh House Museum** announced the first phase of a multi-year improvement project is complete, and the museum is reopened. The museum's new hours are Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, Friday and Saturday from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. It is closed Sundays and Wednesdays. For more information, call 251-432-1281.

The **Mobile County Commission** partnered with the City of Semmes to open a fire training tower and public safety complex. In addition to firefighter training, the multi-use classrooms will be used for additional training and instruction.

The **City of Mobile** launched its new urban development department website to provide a more user-friendly platform for customers. The new site includes applications, codes and forms available for download to the public. It also shares current staff contacts and updated information regarding code, permitting, planning and property maintenance.

In other news, the city modified its Mobile 311 schedule. Hours of operation are 7 a.m. to 7 p.m., Monday through Saturday. After-hours requests can still be submitted through the website, [www.cityofmobile.org](http://www.cityofmobile.org).

**The Battle House Renaissance Mobile Hotel & Spa** was named one of the top hotels in the world in the January 2015 issue of *Travel + Leisure* magazine. Downtown Mobile's historic hotel was the only facility in Alabama and Mississippi to make this year's ranking.

**Zevac and Lindsey LLC** has officially changed its name to **Lindsey and Waldo LLC**. The name change reflects the addition of partner **Paula Waldo**.

## Well Done

**James Dale Smith** is one of 15 attorneys at **Armbrecht Jackson LLP** named to the 2015 edition of Best Lawyers and Attorneys listed in *2015 Best Lawyers in America*.

**Wilkins Miller LLC** accounting and advisory firm announced **Jack Johnson** earned the Uniform



**Johnson** Certified Public Accountant certification. Johnson holds a master's degree in accounting from the University of South Alabama.

Four **Mobile County Public Schools** were recognized as outstanding educational models for other Alabama schools. They are **Robbins Elementary**, **Council Traditional School**, **B.C. Rain High School** and **Davidson High School**. The state has a total of 15 with the designation of Council for Leaders in Alabama Schools for 2014.

**Meador Warehousing & Distribution Inc.** was recognized for environmental stewardship by Cam-Air LLC and Orion Energy Systems. The Mobile-based warehousing, logistics and management service company partnered recently with Cam-Air, also of Mobile, and Wisconsin-based Orion to retrofit the operation's lighting system.

The **University of Mobile** School of Nursing was ranked in the 30 Best Value RN-to-BSN degree programs in the South based on quality and affordability by the online resource guide Best Value Schools. UMobile was ranked 12<sup>th</sup> in quality and 27<sup>th</sup> in affordability.

The **SSI Group Inc. (SSI)**, a medical billing software company, was selected the KLAS Category Leader in the "2014 Best in KLAS Awards: Software & Services" report.

**Victory Health Partners**, a faith-based nonprofit clinic, announced the medication dispensary provided \$10.3 million worth of prescription medication to patients for free in 2014.

**Crown Products**, a veteran supplier of promotional products, won four awards at the Promotional Products Association International Expo in Las Vegas.



Haas



Rouse

**Berkshire Hathaway HomeServices Cooper & Co. Inc. REALTORS** recognized the following special award winners at its annual awards luncheon. Sales associate **Kelsea Haas** was named the Rookie of the Year for 2014 for top sales and the highest closed sales volume for her first 12 months in business. Sales associate **Dana Rouse** received the Aden Jack Cooper Award, named after the company's founder, Jack Cooper. In addition, 56 associates were recognized as Million Dollar Agents.

**Jones Walker** elected partners **R. Christian Johnsen** and **Aileen S. Thomas** to the firm's board of directors.

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**Russell Thompson Butler & Houston LLP** was accepted into CPAmerica International, an exclusive accounting association of independent CPA firms that provides shared best practices, networking opportunities and access to expert resources for its member firms.



The **Community Foundation of South Alabama** presented its inaugural Beacon Award to Hargrove Engineers + Constructors. The award recognizes a group that embodies the spirit of philanthropy, inspiring growth and progress in the community.

## Community News

Point Clear Charities recently presented \$150,000 from the proceeds of the 2014 Polo at the Point and Fairhope Fete to 19 local nonprofit organizations. **The Thomas Hospital Foundation** and the **USA Mitchell Cancer Institute**

(MCI) were named primary beneficiaries, with each receiving a total of \$58,000.



**Mobile County Public School System** officials named this year's countywide Teachers of the Year. The elementary school teacher of the year is **Laniese Howard** of Kate Shepard Elementary, and the secondary school teacher of the year is **Don Jones** of B.C. Rain High School. Both teachers will be nominated for Alabama Teacher of the Year.



A \$3 million gift to **The University of Alabama** positions the Culverhouse College of Commerce to become the first business school in the nation offering a value investing specialization at both the undergraduate and graduate level. Culverhouse alumnus C.T. Fitzpatrick and his wife, Kelley, donated \$3 million to the college to create the Vulcan Value Partners Research Library and Trading Room that will

offer students a curriculum providing real-world experience with investing.



The **University of Mobile** received a \$140,000 grant from the Lettie Pate Whitehead Foundation Inc. to provide scholarships for women attending the Christian university during the 2015-16 academic year.

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](mailto:news@mobilechamber.com).

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