

Mobile Area Chamber of Commerce

MARCH 2016

# the businessview

A man in a grey suit and blue tie stands on a balcony, leaning on a railing. In the background is a large, multi-story building with a sign that reads "Mobile Infirmary".

## Mark Nix

Named Chamber Chair

## Graduation

## Rates

## Climb

## in Mobile

## Alabama

## Votes March 1



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From the Publisher - Bill Sisson

## Traits of the Emerging Young Leader

What is a young leader? And what does it take to be one? Many people think that to be a leader means you have years of experience, expert knowledge and lots of connections to other influential people. Without question, all of that helps. My belief is that a true leader can be developed through created experiences and not length of time. Our emerging young leaders in Mobile are solid proof of this.

It is encouraging that many of the so-called "Millennials" here in Mobile and in other cities across this country want to give back to their communities by engaging in projects focused on immediate results. How's that for created experience? And in my experience in working with them at the Chamber, young leaders know how to compensate for their relative lack of experience by developing positive habits to help them execute their vision.

Here are a few of those habits I've observed: effective young leaders listen to



the advice of older team members and almost always have mentors. They appreciate age diversity, and realize that age differences in the workplace can make for a well-balanced and unique team. Since they are not weighed down by knowledge and established connections, they are willing to take risks – and those risks often pay out big in the end.

Most of all, they believe in their vision for what the community can be. Experience and failures make some of us who are more "seasoned" overly cautious. Young leaders have a tendency to dream big.

It's my firm belief that Mobile will be a better place because of our young emerging leadership. It's our challenge both at the Chamber and in the community as a whole to keep an eye out for the best young talent we can find and give them the tools to make Mobile an even better community for our future generations. The good news is that our future is in very capable hands.

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# Super Tuesday is March 1

## Will You Be Ready to Vote?

On March 1, Mobile and Baldwin county voters will help determine the next president of the United States. Known as "Super Tuesday" or the "SEC Primary," that's the day when 12 states caucus (or vote) to select candidates and delegates, who pledge to represent their preferred presidential candidate at the national political conventions.

In addition, depending on where voters live, they will be asked to choose between candidates running for:

- U.S. Senate
- U.S. House of Representatives
- State Supreme Court
- Public Service Commission
- State School Board
- Circuit Court Judge
- County Commission
- County School Board
- Constables

"Whether candidates are running for local, state or national positions, voting gives citizens a powerful voice," said **Ginny Russell**, the Mobile Area Chamber's vice president of community and governmental affairs. "And the Chamber encourages business owners and managers to give employees time to exercise their right to vote."

### 1. How will the Tuesday, March 1 primary work?

Any voter registered in Alabama can cast a vote, regardless of party affiliation. Voters may choose the party primary they want to participate in – Democrat or Republican – at their voting center.

All voters must also present an acceptable form of photo identification.

Polling places are open from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m.

### 2. How do I find my assigned polling place?

The Alabama Secretary of State's website, [www.alabamavotes.gov](http://www.alabamavotes.gov), provides sample ballots, voter registration instructions,

assigned polling places and a variety of other voting information, including the *2016 Alabama Voter's Guide*.

### 3. If I have questions about registering to vote or need to update my voter registration, who should I call?

For any questions about voter registration, contact your county's Board of Registrar's office. In Baldwin County call (251) 937-0305; and in Mobile (251) 574-8586 or (251) 574-8587.

For statewide elections and the voter fraud hotline, call (800) 274-VOTE (8683).

## Key 2016 Election Dates

<b>Voter registration deadline</b>	Monday, March 28 (April 12 runoff)
<b>Absentee ballot deadline</b>	Monday, April 11 (April 12 runoff)
<b>Primary runoff election (if needed)</b>	Tuesday, April 12
<b>Voter registration deadline</b>	Monday, Oct. 24 (Nov. 8 general election)
<b>Absentee ballot deadline</b>	Monday, Nov. 7 (Nov. 8 general election)
<b>General election</b>	Tuesday, Nov. 8

## The Chamber's Guarantee: No Risk, Just Results

The Mobile Area Chamber promises new members a return on membership investment. But if they don't see value, new members can ask for their money back.

"That's how strongly we feel about our mission to serve as a progressive advocate for business needs to promote the Mobile area's economic well-being," said **Carolyn Golson**, vice president of membership for the Chamber.

The refund is conditional only on a member's agreement to attend a Membership 101 orientation, read *The Business View* and take advantage of




member discounts. After an interview with Golson to help the Chamber improve its service to members, a refund will be issued.

"We stand behind our commitment that membership in the Mobile Area Chamber provides value, from networking

opportunities to advocacy work on pro-business issues to recruiting new jobs," said Golson.

Here are the details: The request for a refund must be in writing and received no later than 120 days after their join date. This guarantee applies to first-time, fair-share membership only. For additional details, contact Golson at **251-431-8622** or [cgolson@mobilechamber.com](mailto:cgolson@mobilechamber.com). 

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



# Technip Plans Expansion in Mobile

Looking to maintain competitiveness and prepare for an eventual resurgence in the oil and gas industry, Technip USA officials announced late in 2015, they will invest up to \$31 million in the company's Theodore facility.

The Paris-based company specializes in subsea infrastructure design, manufacturing and installation. The local operation serves the Gulf of Mexico and welds pipeline with a unique flexible joint design capable of transferring oil and gas from the ocean floor.

The company will upgrade facilities and equipment, including new welding technologies and a "pipe-in-pipe" capability, ultimately helping Technip meet more

stringent and rigorous industry requirements and prepare for future work on the books for 2017.

**“Technip USA's expansion shows commitment for future growth and development at its Theodore site. This investment will continue to foster high-paying jobs in our area.”**

David Rodgers  
Mobile Area Chamber Project Manager

“Technip USA's expansion shows commitment for future growth and development at its Theodore site. This investment will continue to foster high-paying jobs in our area,” said **David Rodgers**, project manager for the Mobile Area Chamber.

The local 15-year-old facility has 210 employees. Company officials teamed with local contractors including Thompson Engineering and G.A. West on the project.



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# Graduation Rate Up in Mobile County Continues to Track Upward

Mobile County Public Schools increased its graduation rate to 86 percent, according to the Alabama Department of Education. The data measures the four-year, on-time graduation rate, which means 86 percent of the freshmen who entered high school in 2011 earned a diploma on time in the spring of 2015.

The 2015 rate is an increase from 82 percent in 2014; 75 percent in 2013; and 70 percent in 2012. It keeps the district well ahead of a community-wide goal to raise the graduation rate to 80 percent by 2020, and it is higher than the national rate of 82 percent.

"The 86 percent reflects the sincere hard work of the schools and the students," said Mobile County Schools Superintendent **Martha Peek**. "Certainly this is another exciting benchmark. We want to keep at the forefront that our ultimate goal is to graduate 90 percent by 2017." Peek

announced that new goal last year.

Mobile County Public Schools met a significant goal this year as all 12 of its high schools have a graduation rate of more than 80 percent. Here is the school-by-school breakdown:

- Baker – 93 percent
- B.C. Rain – 91 percent
- Blount – 81 percent
- Bryant – 87 percent
- Citronelle – 91 percent
- Davidson – 90 percent
- LeFlore – 86 percent
- Mary G. Montgomery – 84 percent
- Murphy – 88 percent
- Theodore – 84 percent
- Vigor – 83 percent
- Williamson – 81 percent

"Business and industry remain encouraged with the news of climbing graduation rates," said **Troy Wayman**, vice president of economic development for the

Mobile Area Chamber. "The more education and training a high school student can receive in school the better prepared they are to enter our workforce."

Not only are more students graduating from high school, but they are also graduating college and career ready. According to the Alabama Department of Education, students are considered "college and career ready" if they meet at least one of these six criteria:

- Benchmark on the ACT
- Earn college credit through dual enrollment
- Enlist in the military
- Pass an Advanced Placement or International Baccalaureate exam
- Benchmark on the ACT WorkKeys
- Earn an industry-recognized career credential



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*Pictured, left to right: Ernest Smith, Melton Ott, Kim Davis, Tony Bartlett, April Greene, Edward Inge - general manager and Jacob Duncan.*

# Phoenix Helps People Rise from the Ashes of Tragedy

When tragedy strikes – and life as you know it vanishes in an instant – it helps to have someone on your side who's been there before.

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Phoenix Restoration Services Inc. has seen it all in its six years of operation, and each employee adds to the company's expertise.

"We don't do kitchen and bathroom remodels. We are only called after something's gone terribly wrong, and the biggest part of what we do is to put people back together after a tough loss," said **Edward Inge**, the firm's general manager.

Founded as a one-man shop in 2009, Phoenix provides 24-hour disaster solutions services to commercial and residential property owners in Mobile and Baldwin counties exclusively.

Today, the firm employs

eight, and operates as a licensed general contractor and homebuilder. Specifically, the company provides emergency cleanup and reconstruction services, including fire and water damage recovery, debris removal, environmental remediation and commercial restoration. Phoenix Restoration Services is the Chamber's Small Business of the Month.

Above all, Inge said the firm's business model stresses a team approach because "it takes a village to put things back together."

"When we get involved in these projects, they can be complex," he said. "There are a lot of different tasks that have to be handled, and if any one of those gets skipped or glossed over, the entire recovery process is jeopardized. Everybody here has their individual role, and

each role is equally important."

In addition to Inge, the company also employs an office manager, an estimator, a superintendent and four construction technicians. As a result, when tragedy strikes, the team bolts into action seamlessly.

Consider, for instance, the Christmas tornadoes that ripped through Midtown in 2012.

"As far as I'm concerned, Midtown is our neighborhood, and we could literally walk over to the damage after it hit," he said. "We responded to Mobile Infirmary the night it happened, and then it was five to six months of nonstop work, but it was so rewarding to be involved in helping put the neighborhood back together."

Inge said he anticipates the company will continue to add

one new employee per year until the payroll hits about 12. Financially, the firm has experienced "substantial year-over-year growth every year since we started," he said.

"I had to be crazy to start a construction company in 2009, but I think starting during the financial crisis – when the world seemed to be coming to an end – was one of the best things that could have happened to us because it taught us if we can survive then, we can survive anytime," Inge said.

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*at 251-431-8652 or*

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





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Contact: J. Burruss Riis, Esq. RSA Tower, Suite 30200, 11 North Water Street, Mobile, AL 36602.



# Travel to *Costa Rica* with the Chamber in November

With its lush forests and stunning waterfalls, rumbling volcanoes and endless coastlines, Costa Rica is a paradise teeming with exotic plants and incredible animals. It has become the world's most popular eco-destination.

Mobile Area Chamber members and guests have an opportunity to spend eight nights there in November for only \$2,599 per person (based on double occupancy), or \$3,049 (single-room rate) from now until May 3 (or until the trip sells out). The group will travel Nov. 3-11.

The price includes round-trip airfare, hotel accommodations, many meals, transfers, bus transportation, all tours and guides. There are three optional add-on side trips during this tour that include a canopy zip-line tour, a spa day and a catamaran sunset cruise. All other aspects of the tour are included in the price.

To learn more about this trip, or to complete a reservation, contact **Leigh Perry-Herndon** at [lhernndon@mobilechamber.com](mailto:lhernndon@mobilechamber.com) or call 251-431-8645.

## ITINERARY

### Nov. 3 San Jose, Costa Rica

The tour begins in the colorful capital city of San Jose. Upon arrival, relax and soak up the sights of your new surroundings.



### Nov. 4 San Jose - Doka Coffee Estate - Guanacaste

Journey through the lush countryside of the Central Valley to the fertile region world-renowned for its coffee. A tour of the Doka Coffee Estate highlights the history and cultivation of coffee and its importance to the Costa Rican economy. In the afternoon, arrive in the Guanacaste region, known for its breathtaking beauty and fine sandy beaches. Settle in for a relaxing two-night stay at the resort.

### Nov. 5 Guanacaste



Explore the nearby town and beaches, take an optional cruise or simply relax by the pool or beach and take advantage of the amenities offered at the resort.

### Nov. 6 Guanacaste – Monteverde

Travel into the secluded Monteverde Cloud Forest, where trees grow to heights of 100 feet. Upon arrival in Monteverde, take a nature walk through this spectacular ecosystem and encounter many incredible species of flora and fauna up close. This forest is the home of the world's largest population of the endangered quetzal bird, celebrated for its gorgeous jewel-toned plumage.



### Nov. 7 Monteverde



Begin the day at Selvatura Park, a cloud forest reserve in the heart of Monteverde. Explore one of the world's largest butterfly gardens with more than 30 species of tropical butterflies and visit a nearby gallery containing more than 100 beautiful hummingbirds. Embark on a guided walking tour above the forest floor on a leisurely paced "Hanging Bridges" tour. There's also an optional canopy zip-line tour.

### Nov. 8 Monteverde - Lake Arenal Cruise - Arenal



Visit a tree nursery and learn about Monteverde's reforestation efforts of indigenous trees. Traverse through the beautiful mountainous landscapes of Monteverde to Arenal, where visitors will see breathtaking views of the volcano. Be surrounded by tranquility on a delightful cruise on Lake Arenal, the largest and most important lake in Costa Rica. Later, check in for a two-night stay at a typical lodge overlooking the majestic Arenal Volcano, which has been generating lava for the past 30 years. Before dinner, enjoy a cooking demonstration and learn how

native, exotic vegetables and plants contribute to the unique flavors of Costa Rican cuisine.

### Nov. 9 Arenal - Cano Negro - Arenal

Of all Costa Rica's nature preserves, the remote 20,000 acres of Cano Negro are home to the largest viewable selection of indigenous wildlife. Take a Cano Negro guided river boat trip in a panga (covered canoe), stopping along the way to observe and photograph wildlife. The Arenal Volcano area is also known as the land of spas and hot springs. There's an optional visit to one of the finest spas in the region.

### Nov. 10 Arenal - Zarcero - Grecia - National Theatre - San Jose



Discover the charming town of Zarcero and visit its well-known whimsical topiary garden. Continue to the small, picturesque town of Grecia to see the unusual metal church constructed of brick-red metal panes; walk the beautifully landscaped central park; or shop at the traditional local market. Later, visit San Jose's colorful Plaza de Cultura and the National Theatre, a magnificent building of post-Baroque splendor. In the evening, enjoy a farewell dinner.

### Nov. 11 San Jose - Tour Ends

Depart for home.



# Face Time is Prime Time

It goes without saying that networking is a must for every small business owner. Building visibility for you and your business is critical and provides access to potential customers, increases referrals and begins the process for building a mutually beneficial relationship.

While approaching and meeting people comes naturally to some, others find it uncomfortable. Here are a few tips to help make your networking opportunities productive:

- **Have an “elevator speech.”** This is a brief (30-second) description of your business and what it is. This is not a sales pitch, but an

opportunity to introduce your company.

- **Have a goal.** Know why you are networking and what it is you want to accomplish.
- **Not everyone is your customer.** Identify key industries that your business serves and specifically seek out companies in those industries. Once you have determined who it is you want to meet, commit to meeting at least five new people.
- **Networking is not stalking.** It's about building quality relationships, not quantity.

## Now that you are prepared:

- **Be proactive.** Find your targeted company representatives and initiate a conversation. Act as host at the event, and you will gain confidence and feel more in control to drive the direction of the conversation.
- **Creating small talk is sometimes difficult.** Have an icebreaker ready to jumpstart a conversation and get others to open up and start talking.
- **Express interest.** Part of your job as a conversation-starter is to get the other person to talk. Listen to what the person is saying and ask relevant follow-up questions.

Take cues from them and make a mental list of questions you can ask to get them to elaborate.

- **Exit thoughtfully.** Many times you'll need to make contact with several people and move around a room. Find an appropriate point in the conversation to make an exit.
- **Most importantly, follow up.** If you say you're going to do something, do it. What's the point in investing time (and sometimes money) in networking events if you're not planning to do anything to build potential mutually beneficial relationships?

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Photo by Jeff Tesney

## Mark Nix with Infirmary Health Named 2016 Mobile Area Chamber Board Chairman

As president and CEO of Mobile's largest private employer (more than 5,000 workers), **Mark Nix** is always looking to tackle new opportunities. And just a couple months into his volunteer position as Mobile Area Chamber board chairman, the head of Infirmary Health System hit the ground running.

Nix outlined his goals as chairman during the Chamber's 179<sup>th</sup> annual meeting in January, having been preceded by 2015 Chairman **Frank Lott** with Heritage Homes.

"What stands out about what's taking place in 2016 involves (the Chamber) organization – our staff, our board and our members embracing change," he said. Successful membership organizations, he added, remain committed to change and evolution.

"Our membership is changing every day, and we walk a fine line between preserving some of the tried-and-true – such as this annual meeting – and introducing new ways to engage our business community that are vastly different than what we've done before," he said. "We must continue tapping into the talents of our young professionals."

Nix pointed to several areas where the Chamber is embracing change, including putting emphasis on younger professionals in volunteer leadership positions focusing on innovation, notably along the St. Louis Street corridor in downtown Mobile; and listening to members' views of the Chamber and ideas about how to engage more people.

"Over the last couple of years, I've become even more involved with the Chamber and met business owners, managers and employees of companies who I would have never come across otherwise, and I have been inspired," he said. "There is an incredible cross-section of businesses here – so much more than I'd ever thought – even though I'd always heard the Chamber talk about our diverse economy."

"I think Mark's true hallmark is his extensive community involvement," said Chamber President and CEO **Bill Sisson**. "He has always been very involved at the Chamber, but he also serves on many other boards in the arts, sports, education and charitable arenas." Sisson specifically noted Infirmary Health's big win of the national Medline Pink Glove Dance Video competition, and the money it raised for breast cancer research.

Nix joined Infirmary Health in the 1980s, starting as vice president of real estate and property management. He worked his way up with the healthcare system, and was named its president and CEO in 2009. Interestingly, Nix began his professional career as an accountant with a national firm before joining a real estate development and management company here in Mobile. He has a bachelor's degree in accounting from The University of Alabama and a CPA license.



*Daniel Dennis (left), president of Roberts Brothers, is pictured with several members of the company's management team. The company was recognized by the Junior League of Mobile and the Mobile Area Chamber for its community involvement. With Dennis, from left to right is Peggy Hayden, Anne Powell, Teresa Williamson, Ann Akridge and Erica Elia.*

## Roberts Brothers Inc.

With 172 agents and 23 support staff, Roberts Brothers Inc., real estate company promotes employee participation to impact the Mobile area community with time and resources – and they do just that.

For their efforts, Roberts Brothers received the 2015 Corporate Community Service Award recognizing companies for their commitment to the community. The award is presented by the Junior League of Mobile and the Mobile Area Chamber.

An estimated 90 percent of the company's real estate brokers and employees in Mobile and Baldwin counties participate in charitable work adopted by the company, outside through personal interests, or both.

In 2015, Roberts Brothers accepted a challenge from BBVA Compass Bank and established its own week of volunteerism. Each day was dedicated to a specific cause, from decorating pumpkins with children at St. Mary's Home to picking up litter with Keep Mobile Beautiful.

Among the many additional organizations receiving the group's time and resources are:

- American Cancer Society
- American Diabetes Association
- Big Brothers Big Sisters of South Alabama
- Child Advocacy Center
- Habitat For Humanity of Southwest Alabama
- McKemie Place
- Mobile Arc
- Mobile County Public Schools
- Penelope House
- Ronald McDonald House Charities of Mobile
- The Salvation Army of Coastal Alabama
- United Way of Southwest Alabama
- USA Children's and Women's Hospital





*Alabama Department of Transportation (ALDOT) makes a consensus effort to diversify its vendors. The department's Disadvantaged Business Enterprise Unit was recognized with the Mobile Area Chamber's Rev. Wesley A. James Minority Business Advocate Award in 2015. Pictured are ALDOT employees who help with assistance and training for potential vendors looking to do business with the department.*

## Alabama Department of Transportation Disadvantaged Business Enterprise Unit

The Alabama Department of Transportation (ALDOT) is a state agency awarding millions of dollars in government contracts annually. For its commitment to diversity, ALDOT's Disadvantaged Business Enterprise Unit received the Mobile Area Chamber's Rev. Wesley A. James Minority Business Advocate Award in October during the Chamber's minority business conference.

Through that unit, the agency provides one-on-one assistance and training to improve a prospective vendor's ability to compete without sacrificing a safe and well-maintained highway system. Qualifying businesses are 51 percent owned and controlled by an individual or individuals who are socially and economically disadvantaged.

According to federal guidelines, the U.S. Department of Transportation identifies the following groups as disadvantaged: women, Black Americans, Hispanic Americans, Native Americans, Asian-Pacific Americans, Subcontinent Asian-Pacific Americans and other minorities.

ALDOT encourages inclusion in every level of the contracting process by establishing goals and tracking results of the percentage of dollars spent with minority firms. These markers show the agency is committed to the success of small, minority and women-owned businesses.

In the latest statistics available, ALDOT spent more than \$63 million with disadvantaged business enterprises in 2014-15.



*Bonnie Tully, Evonik's vice president and Mobile site manager, is pictured with Evonik officials cutting the ribbon on the latest expansion at the Mobile facility last fall. The company was recognized for its continuous expansions and employee hiring as the Mobile Area Chamber's Manufacturer of the Year. With Tully from left to right is John Rolando, Evonik's president, North America; and Emmanuel Auer, head of the animal nutrition business line.*

## Evonik Industries

The Mobile Area Chamber's 2015 Manufacturer of the Year, Evonik Industries, earned the award for a decade of unprecedented growth.

Since 2005, Evonik has expanded 11 times, creating 114 jobs and investing approximately \$378 million in its Mobile facility. The latest is a co-location investment with Bayer CropScience, announced in July 2015.

**Bonnie Tully**, Evonik's vice president and Mobile site manager, says co-location investments have been "the largest growth segment that has allowed the Mobile site to offer its specialty chemicals production through competitive operational costs, internal support services and our highly skilled workforce."

The German-based specialty chemical company produces a number of products found in well-known brands in several sectors such as health, nutrition, paint and coatings, livestock feed, detergents and herbicides.

More than 40 years ago, the company, then known as Degussa, was the area's first direct foreign investment and the first German chemical manufacturer to locate in Alabama. The company has been instrumental in helping recruit additional foreign-based companies. In addition, Evonik has a long-standing commitment to the community, local schools and various charities.

Currently, Evonik Industries has more than 800 employees, as well as another 300 contractor employees supporting the site.





*Horizon Shipbuilding employees have embraced the company's new management software, and find that it is opening the lines of communication and helping the bottom line. Pictured with company President Travis Short (second from the right) is Todd Hughes (left), Dylan Davis, Larry Rolison, Lance Lemcool and Jason Hinkofer.*

## Horizon Shipbuilding

Before Horizon Shipbuilding developed its own specialized project management software, the Bayou La Batre-based company relied on conversations remembered, estimates and drawings. And the more the company expanded, the more difficult it became to keep projects on track.

Horizon designs, constructs, repairs and maintains vessels for commercial, private and government customers, and was named the Mobile Area Chamber's Innovator of the Year.

The idea for the software, called Gordhead, came when President **Travis Short** thought about how the project details he studied could be just as useful to managers and production team members.

Drawing on his personal sense of humor, Short named the software after a muffled conversation he overheard on the company's walkie-talkies, where one employee asked another, "Did you just call me a Gordhead?"

Now Gordhead symbolizes a clear line of communication logging accurate, concise and timely information, including material costs, labor hours and schedules.

With the software loaded on wireless tablets, managers can see the daily impact to the company's bottom line, resulting in shortened project timelines and a more efficient work schedule that saves labor costs.

But perhaps the greatest benefit, says Short, is an "increased degree of harmony among different levels of management. And when employees ask a question or expresses a concern, they know they will be heard."



Saty Putcha is pictured in front of his businesses in west Mobile.

# Saty Putcha

As a chemical engineer, **Saty Putcha** found that he was drawn to the business side of operations. So when he retired, he became an entrepreneur in a completely different field. In 2014, he purchased the local franchise of Murphy Business and Financial, a business brokerage firm with more than 140 offices in the United States and Canada.

A volunteer with the Chamber since 2009, he earned the Ambassador of the Month distinction three times and was named Ambassador of the Year in 2011.

Putcha was once again named the Mobile Area Chamber's Ambassador of the Year for 2015. He says he enjoys helping the Chamber and is thankful for the opportunity to meet other business owners through his volunteer service.

Ambassadors attend grand openings and ribbon cuttings, assist at Chamber networking events, visit members and participate in Chamber Chase to help the Chamber expand and maintain its membership base.

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<sup>1</sup>The grades used in the Leapfrog Hospital Safety Score<sup>SM</sup> program are derived from expert analysis of publicly available data using national evidence-based measures of patient safety. The Leapfrog Hospital Safety Score program grades hospitals on their overall performance in keeping patients safe from preventable harm and medical errors. For more information, visit [www.hospitalssafetyscore.org](http://www.hospitalssafetyscore.org).



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## Thank You to Our Sponsors

The Mobile Area Chamber of Commerce held its 179<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting on Tuesday, Jan. 19, at the Mobile Civic Center. The theme for the evening was Momentum Mobile, and attendees were shown how far we've come in the past year, what's propelling current and future success and how Mobile is moving forward with great momentum.

It was the Chamber's swan song annual meeting at the Mobile Civic Center. Watch for details on exciting changes for 2017.

Along with an economic development update by Chamber President and CEO **Bill Sisson** and a look back at 2015 by former Chairman **Frank J. Lott III** with Heritage Homes, the 2016 Chamber Chairman, **D. Mark Nix** with Infirmary Health, was introduced. Several videos highlighting Chamber initiatives were shown. They will run on the Chamber's Facebook page periodically throughout 2016, and can be seen at

[www.mobilechamber.com/in-the-news](http://www.mobilechamber.com/in-the-news). In addition, the event was broadcast live via Periscope.



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The BASF site lead team, taken in front of a photographic timeline of the industry, includes: first row, from left to right: Maurice Ware, environmental health and safety team leader; George Vann, vice president; Renee Whigham, site controller; and John Zimmerman, maintenance manager. Second row, from left to right: John Weaver, quality and logistics manager; Clint Jeffus, operations manager antioxidant production unit; Paula Clark, site development manager; Mike Juck, operations manager light stabilizers production unit; Durgesh Agarwal, regional technology manager; Mike Wilson, engineering manager; and LaShaunda Holly, manager, site communications. Not pictured: Lyna Schell, human resources business partner.

# BASF Corp.

## Company official:

**George Vann**, vice president, McIntosh plant

## Years in business:

The site has been in operation since 1952.

## Brief company description:

BASF is a 150-year-old company. The company's slogan is "We create chemistry for a sustainable future." Its broad portfolio ranges from chemicals, plastics, performance products and crop protection products to oil and gas, and the company has more than 113,000 employees worldwide. Locally, the McIntosh facility has more

than 500 employees and contractors on site.

## Why are you located in the region/Washington County?

"The site began in 1952 as Geigy Chemicals, and it has grown due to the close proximity of raw material suppliers, good transportation options and a business-friendly climate," said Vann.

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

"Both the Chamber and Partners for Growth are critical in the promotion of a business

climate in the Mobile area that is attractive for new business opportunities, as well as helping to sustain and grow existing businesses," said Vann.

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

"Alabama and specifically Mobile are very business-friendly and support companies in their growth initiatives," said Vann. "With a good infrastructure, proximity to multiple modes of transportation, excellent educational institutions and a supply of qualified talent in the area, Mobile has fantastic potential for future growth."

## Length of continuous Chamber membership:

Since 2000



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).



# Jason Burce

**Company:** Briggs Equipment Inc.

**Title:** Branch manager of Mobile/Dothan operations

**Hometown:** Athens, Tenn.

**Education:** Bachelor's degree in agriculture from Tennessee Technological University in Cookeville, Tenn.

**First job:** Farm/nursery laborer, doing everything from cutting/hauling hay and working cattle to digging and installing trees for the nursery.

**Previous experience:** During and after graduation from college, Burce served as a crew leader for a logging company focusing on pulp wood clear cuts. Later, he worked as a management trainee for Briggs Equipment in Atlanta, then transferred to the New Orleans branch to help implement the convention rental segment as a specialist. He opened the company's convention rental operations in Orlando, Fla., before becoming branch/sales manager for Briggs Equipment's operations in Mobile and Dothan.

**Accomplishments:** In 2012, Briggs Equipment acquired 15 Hyster locations in the Southeast. "One of the most rewarding parts of this acquisition was bringing the Briggs culture and values (family, fun, integrity, success) to the new employee owners," Burce said. "We also believe in giving back to the communities where we work and reside through after-hours volunteering and financial support of local charities."

**Secret to success:** "Some words or suggestions that have served me well are: Do not only embrace change, have fun with it; if something is worth doing, it's worth doing right; and if it is truly your dream or your goal, it is up to YOU to make it happen. Do not wait for someone else to do it for you."

**Brief company description:** Briggs Equipment is one of the oldest materials handling equipment providers in the country. The company provides short- and long-term rentals, sells parts as well as new and used equipment, services equipment and offers fleet management strategies to help reduce operating costs.



## Chamber Attends Dinner to Kick Off Legislative Session

Several members of the Chamber's community and governmental affairs team attended a Manufacture Alabama-sponsored dinner attended by legislators from across the state. Held in Montgomery on the opening night of the legislative session, the event provided an opportunity to push the Chamber's legislative priorities to a wider audience than the Mobile-Baldwin legislative delegation.

## Chamber Names New Ambassadors

Several Chamber members were named ambassadors. This group of professionals assists the staff with event registration, makes member visits and supports the overall Chamber mission. New ambassadors are: Sabino Andry, Joe Bullard Automotive Companies; Wayne Bishop, C Spire; Margret Ellison,

Stone Ridge Apartments at Somerby; Brandon Everhart, Victory Health Partners; Kathleen Moore, Billy Yates State Farm; Andrew Odom, Coastal Bank and Trust; and Kristyn Robinson, Sirius Technical Services. To learn more about this group, and how to join, contact **Dawn Rencher** at 251-431-8649 or [drencher@mobilechamber.com](mailto:drencher@mobilechamber.com).

## MobileConnect Finishes Third Series

MobileConnect, a program to introduce new-to-Mobile business leaders and spouses to Mobile's history, government and economy, and arts and culture, was attended by more than 50 people during 2015. The 2016 program will kick off this spring with updated marketing materials and a new class of participants. Sponsors of the 2015 program were: Alabama Power Co., Continental Motors, Global Resettlement Services, Gwin's Commercial Printing, Hand Arendall, Helmsing Leach Herlong Newman &

Rouse, Regions Bank, Roberts Brothers, Thames Batre Insurance and Willis of Alabama.

## Chamber Assists Members with Ribbon Cuttings and Grand Opening Ceremonies

The Chamber has been busy assisting members with a number of ribbon cuttings and grand openings recently. Participating companies include: Exchange 202, Uncle Maddio's Pizza Joint, iSAM North America, Mobile ARC, Southern Light, A Wireless – Verizon Premium Retailer, Ozanam Charitable Pharmacy, Love's Travel Stop, Wal-Mart Neighborhood Market – Government Blvd., Infirmary Health – Mothers' Milk Depot, Dauphin Way Assisted Living, Rural Sourcing Inc., BR Williams, Right at Home, The Admiral Hotel Mobile – Curio Collection by Hilton and Nationwide Skilled Trades. To learn more about how the

Chamber can assist your company, contact Dawn Rencher at 251-431-8649 or [drencher@mobilechamber.com](mailto:drencher@mobilechamber.com).

## LeMaris Alston Named One of Mobile's Top "40 Under 40"



Alston

LeMaris "L.A." Alston, the Chamber's technology specialist, was named one of *Mobile Bay* magazine's "40 Under 40."

In addition to working at the Chamber, Alston is co-owner of Gallery 450 in downtown Mobile and owner of L.A. Fotographee. The magazine's "40 Under 40" awards program recognized 40 of the top individuals younger than age 40 who demonstrate leadership, professional excellence and a commitment to the bay-area community.

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## AMBASSADOR of the month



Photo by Jeff Tesney

**Debbie Hunter**, who has worked in the multi-family housing industry for 26 years, is property manager at The Retreat at Schillinger Apartments, a 270-unit luxury apartment community in west Mobile. She is the Mobile Area Chamber's Ambassador of the Month. Of her role, Hunter says she loves meeting people and promoting the Chamber and its benefits. "My favorite Chamber event is the Business Expo," she said. "But on a more routine basis, I enjoy Networking at Noon."

*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).*



*The Mobile Area Chamber held its annual legislative lunch in January, presenting its 2016 Legislative Agenda to members of the Mobile-Baldwin Legislative Delegation. Also featured was a presentation on education reform by Community College System Chancellor Mark Heinrich and State Superintendent of Schools Tommy Bice. Pictured here are Mark Nix with Infirmary Health and Chamber board chairman; Liz Damson Freeman, Long's Human Resource Services; Bice; Bill Sisson, Mobile Area Chamber; Gigi Armbricht, AT&T; Heinrich; and Eric Smith, Hurricane Electronics. The event was sponsored by AT&T and Hurricane Electronics.*



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## New Chamber Board Orientation



Mark Nix with Infirmary Health and 2016 Mobile Area Chamber chairman led a training session for incoming Chamber board members. New members of this year's board are: Robert Bryant, Leaf & Petal Florist & Gift Shop; Kevin Carey, Trustmark National Bank; Guy Helmsing, Hancock Bank; Brad Israel, Eclan & Associates; Jennifer Jenkins, JJPR; Clarence Johnson Jr., Bama Pest Control; Jenny McCall, WESCO Gas & Welding Supply Co.; Henry Morrisette, Hand Arendall LLC; Mike Rogers, Rogers & Willard Inc.; Jeb Shell, Hargrove Engineers + Constructors; and Jill Stork, Alabama Power Co.

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**Glenn "Skip" W. Brown III** is a certified public accountant and managing partner for Russell Thompson Butler & Houston LLP, a local public accounting firm with offices in Mobile and Fairhope. He received a bachelor's degree in business administration with a concentration in accounting from the University of Georgia, and spent the first 10 years of his career with two regional accounting firms in Augusta, Ga. Brown's practice areas include financial accounting, business and individual income taxation and internal control consulting. Additionally, as a financial forensics analyst, he provides fraud deterrence and detection services along with litigation support. He is a member of national and local accounting and consulting associations and is the past treasurer for several local community and social organizations. Russell Thompson Butler & Houston LLP is a Partners for Growth Investor.



**W. Allen Carroll Jr.** is managing partner for Wilkins Miller LLC, with experience in litigation services and consulting services including business valuations, tax, audits of multiple-state wholesale distributors, multiple-state manufacturers with international operations, taxation of banks and financial institutions, real estate developers, and income and estate tax planning. He is a member of the American Institute of Certified Public Accountants, the Alabama Society of Certified Public Accountants and the National Association of Certified Valuation Analysts. His current and prior community involvement includes St. Luke's Episcopal School board of trustees, Distinguished Young Women board of directors, University of South Alabama (USA) accounting advisory board, Mobile and Baldwin counties Community of Concern advisory committee and Mobile Sunrise Rotary. Carroll earned a bachelor's degree in business with a major in accounting from USA. Wilkins Miller LLC is a Partners for Growth Investor.



**Allen E. "Teeto" Graham** is a partner in Phelps Dunbar LLP, representing parties in complex and/or commercial litigation in the federal and state courts throughout Mississippi and Alabama. He also handles appeals through the federal and state courts of appeal, and serves the firm as the practice coordinator of the litigation group in the Mobile office. Graham earned an engineering degree from The University of Alabama and a master's degree in admiralty and maritime law from Tulane University. He is a member of Manufacture Alabama, Defense Research Institute, Alabama Defense Lawyers Association, Council for Litigation Management, Southeastern Admiralty Law Institute and a proctor in the Maritime Law Association. Phelps Dunbar LLP 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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## MARCH 2016

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

## 3 WRITING A WINNING PROPOSAL

**When:** 9 a.m. to 2 p.m.

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

**Speaker:** Jerry Ellison, program manager, Alabama Procurement Technical Assistance Center (PTAC)

**Topic:** Learn the methods to organize and complete a contract or project proposal

**Cost:** \$20 per person for members and potential members (includes lunch)

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

Free parking.

## 7 GOVERNOR'S FORUM

Join us to hear Gov. Robert Bentley discuss what lies ahead for Alabama in 2016.

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

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

**Cost:** \$50 per person or \$500 for a table of 10

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

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## 10 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:** Chamber, 451 Government St.

**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.

## 10 NETWORKING@NOON

*\*Members Only; one representative per company*

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

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

**Where:** Mobile Public Library, West Regional Branch, 5555 Grelot Rd.

**Cost:** \$10 and must be paid with reservation

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

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# 15 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:** **Jeremy Wolff**, Mill Representative  
AM/NS Calvert, Asian Automotive OEMs

**Topic:** "Marketing & Data Analytics: A Primer for Business Owners"

**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:**



# 16 NONPROFIT ROUNDTABLE *\*Members Only*

A forum for Chamber-member nonprofit executives and managers.

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

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

**Speaker:** **Grant Zarzour**, co-founder and chairman  
of the board with Fuse Project

**Topic:** "If It's Not WOW, It's Not Worth Doing!"

**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.

# 17 BUSINESS AFTER HOURS

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

**Where:** Holiday Inn Mobile Airport,  
3630 Springhill Memorial Drive S.

**Cost:** \$5 for 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:**



# 29-30 AIDT TRAINING CLASS AIDT LEADERSHIP SKILLS I COURSE

Hosted by the Chamber, in partnership with AIDT, this leadership training program introduces team leaders, supervisors and managers to effective leadership, communication and motivation techniques.

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

**Where:** 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)

Reservations are required and class size is limited to 25 people.  
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**The Washington Post**

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**New York Times**



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## Who's New



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**Adams and Reese** welcomed **Anna Davis** and **John R. Davidson Jr.** as associates with the firm. Davis joined the special business services practice group. She earned a law degree from The University of Alabama School of Law and a bachelor's degree in psychology from Birmingham-Southern College.

Davidson joined the firm's transactions practice group. He holds a master's degree in taxation from Georgetown University Law Center, earned a law degree from Cumberland School of Law, a master's degree in Economics from The University

of Alabama, and a bachelor's degree in finance and economics from Auburn University.

\*



□□□□□

Mobile Mayor **Sandy Stimpson** appointed **Shayla Beaco** as the City of Mobile's senior director of

city planning. She will oversee planning and zoning, historical development, long-range planning and urban design. She previously served as senior director of community affairs.

\*



□□□□□□□□□□

**PangeaTwo**, an executive search, consulting and staffing firm, welcomed **Ann-Brooks**

**Morrisette** as the new recruiting manager for its Mobile office. Morrisette graduated from The University

of Alabama with a bachelor's and master's degrees in accounting. Morrisette is a certified public accountant and is a member of the Alabama Society of Certified Public Accountants.

\*



□□□□□□

**Morgan Cooper** is the new marketing coordinator for **Wilkins Miller**

accounting and advisory firm. Cooper holds a bachelor's degree in public relations from Auburn University.

\*

**Courtney and Pharr Insurance** hired **Charles Jackson** as an account executive.

Jackson graduated from the University



□□□□□□□□

of Mississippi with a bachelor's degree in risk management and insurance. He previously worked as an underwriter and broker in New Orleans.

\*

**Smith Dukes** accounting firm hired **Lott**

**H. Brigham CPA** as a senior tax accountant.

Brigham earned a master's degree in accounting from The

University of Alabama's Manderson Graduate School of Business.



□□□□□□□□

\*

**The Mobile Airport Authority** named **Brian Belcher** director of marketing and air service development. Belcher brings more than 20 years in the marketing industry. He previously served as director of marketing and air service development at Yeager Airport in Charleston, W.V.



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**Roberts Brothers Inc.**, a Berkshire Hathaway affiliate, hired **Sara Berthaume** as director of

marketing. She will oversee all marketing functions for the company's approximately 170 agents and staff in four offices.

\*

**Kristian Reeves of Wilkins Miller LLC** was promoted to senior accountant after completing and passing the uniform certified public accountant examination. Reeves graduated from Spring Hill College with a bachelor's degree in accounting, and earned a master's degree in accounting from the University of South Alabama.



□□□□□

## Business Endeavors

**Willis Group Holdings** and **Towers Watson** announced that the two companies have merged. The new venture is called **Willis Towers Watson**. The address and phone remain 11 N. Water St., Suite 19290, on the 19th floor of the **RSA Battle House Tower** in downtown Mobile.

\*

**Springhill Medical Center** completed upgrades and an expansion to its emergency department that more than doubled the space it previously had from 7,229 to 18,410 square feet. The facility sees approximately 50,000 patients a year.

\*

The **Fuse Project** announced that its annual **Dragon Boat Festival** will move to Mobile's **Battleship USS Alabama Memorial Park** on June 11 to accommodate the event's continued growth.

**NAI Mobile and Precision Engineering** announced Precision's recent purchase of 400 St. Louis St., a city block in downtown Mobile bordered by St. Louis Street, North Hamilton Street, St. Anthony Street and North Franklin Street. The company plans to renovate the property that includes three buildings to accommodate its growing workforce.

## Well Done

**Norton Lilly International Inc.** earned a **World at Work Work-Life 2016 Seal of Distinction** for demonstrating leadership in workplace strategies that help employees with personal work-life balance. The seal is awarded every year to companies across North America that support employees at work and at home.

\*

The **Gulf Coast Exploreum Science Center** board of trustees announced newly elected officers: President, **Bobby Frost**

of **Delaney Development Inc.**; vice president, **Dee Gambill**, a community volunteer formerly with **Regions Bank**; secretary, **Louise Bush**, a founding **Exploreum** board member; and treasurer, **Tim DeLong** of **Brabner & Hollon Inc.** The board also elected **Dan Gatewood** of **PNC Bank** as a new trustee.

\*

**Commonwealth National Bank** appointed

**Jacquita Powell-Green**, chair of the board of directors, to bank president.



□□□□□□□□□□

Green has served on the bank's board for 17 years, working on its audit, compliance and human resources committees. Green earned a bachelor's degree in business administration from **Alabama A&M University** and received a master's degree in business from **Spring Hill College**.

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**BIS Office Systems**, a total document solutions provider on the Gulf Coast, honored Navy veteran and lead technician **Shane Anderson** with the company's Diamond Service Award. Anderson holds two color specialist certifications including both the fiery professional certification and the fiery expert certification.

\*

The 2016 board of directors for **Ozanam Charitable Pharmacy** includes the following officers: **Wiley Christian**, president; **Cathy Whelton**, vice president; **Linda Grayson**, secretary; and **Susan Herring**, treasurer.

\*

The **Junior League of Mobile** (JLM) recognized **Shelbonnie Hall** as its Sustainer of the Year at its annual Sustainer Luncheon honoring members who have completed their active service to the organization. Hall, a full-time City of Mobile Municipal Court judge, has served in numerous roles as a member of

JLM, most notably as Youth Leadership Mobile chair, Wilmer Hall residential mentor, provisional small group leader and JLM's 80<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Committee.

\*

**Thompson Engineering's** work to dry-dock the IP Casino was named an *Engineering News Record* (ENR) Project of the Year. Thompson created a stable foundation and graving dock for the 32-million-pound IP Casino vessel, turning the floating building into a land-based structure without moving it. A first-of-its-kind design, the project received the top award out of more than 100 entries in the Texas/Louisiana/Mississippi region.

### Community News

**Kate Shepard Elementary** is the only school in Alabama to win \$10,000 of computer equipment from Code.org. One hundred percent of the school's students took part in

the Hour of Code, learning the basics of computer coding. This award will allow the school to provide students with greater access to technology.

\*

The **Historic Mobile Preservation Society** announced the National Endowment for the Humanities awarded the organization a \$6,000 Preservation Assistance Grant. The grant will fund a general conservation assessment of the society's collection of historical artifacts and documents housed at the Historic Oakleigh House Museum and the Minnie Mitchell Archives.

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).



The Mobile Area Chamber was awarded a five-star rating by the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, the highest designation given. Of the 6,936 chambers in the U.S., only 301 are accredited, and of those only 43 have achieved five-star distinction. The Mobile Area Chamber has been accredited by the U.S. Chamber since the designation's inception more than 40 years ago.



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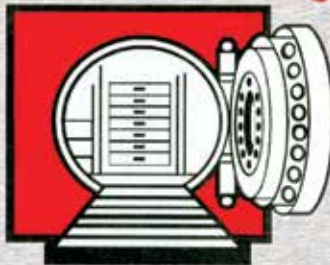
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Jet Services Inc.  
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### 15 years

100 Black Men of Greater  
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### 10 years

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### 5 years

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Omega Properties Inc.  
RD LOWES INC.  
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Marsh & McLennan Agency  
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Apartment Homes  
Trax Tires Inc.

### 1-4 years

Acquisition Logistics  
Engineering (ALE)  
Alabama Small Business  
Capital  
Collings Electric  
Cypress Employment  
Services LLC  
Dick Russell's Bar-B-Q  
Direct Auto Insurance  
Edward Jones-Lane Elmore  
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