

Mobile Area Chamber of Commerce

MARCH 2017

the **business**view

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Chamber Chair
Liz Freeman

Small Business
and Innovation
Conference
March 28-30

Small Business of the Year
Finalists Announced



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From the Publisher - Bill Sisson

Entrepreneurial 'Ecosystem' Continues to Grow and Expand in Mobile

The whole idea of developing Mobile's entrepreneurial ecosystem is centered on making it as easy as possible to create, grow and sustain new businesses. The good news is our start-up scene continues to bloom.

It's hard to believe just two short years ago, there was little activity on St. Louis Street in downtown Mobile. But today, it has come to life, buzzing with entrepreneurial activity.

Innovation PortAL is only one of the players involved. The University of South Alabama, Exchange 202, Container Yard, The Grind, 1702, the Chamber's Gulf Coast Technology Council, U.S. Small Business Association and many others are heavily involved in providing services to our budding businesses.

We're excited to gear up for our community's second Startup Weekend, taking place March 31-April 2 at The Steeple



on St. Francis. (See page 12 for details.) The Chamber and Innovation PortAL look forward to once again supporting the weekend's activities, including participants pitching their business concepts to the collective group.

Throughout the weekend, teams receive constant feedback and expert advice

from mentors and coaches, learning firsthand what goes into starting a business.

The weekend culminates with all new business ideas pitched to a panel of judges, and the winning teams receive prizes such as professional services, office space and other necessities for a new venture.

Last year, I was overwhelmed by the number of entrepreneurs who came out to the event, and this year promises to be even more dynamic. Make plans to attend Startup Weekend. You will not be disappointed.

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ON THE COVER

Liz Freeman, president of Long's Human Resource Services, is chairing the Chamber's board of directors for 2017. See her story on page 8. *Photo by Toni Riales.*

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Ingalls Shipbuilding Awarded \$1.46 Billion Contract



In December, Ingalls Shipbuilding announced it was awarded a \$1.46 billion, fixed-price incentive contract for the detail design and construction of the amphibious transport dock Fort Lauderdale (LPD 28).

Ingalls has built and delivered 10 ships in the San Antonio class of amphibious warships. The 11th, Portland (LPD 27), which launched last year, is scheduled for sea trials in mid-2017.

"This contract demonstrates the confidence the Navy has in our shipbuilders' performance in this program," said Ingalls Shipbuilding President **Brian Cuccias**. "Building LPD 28 allows the entire LPD industrial

base to maintain a hot production line so that our sailors and Marines receive quality amphibious warships as efficiently and affordably as possible."

Legislative Lunch

In January, the Mobile Area Chamber's Governmental Affairs Committee presented its 2017 legislative agenda to members of the Mobile-Baldwin legislative delegation, Mobile City Council and Mobile County Commission. The agenda is a comprehensive overview of pro-business legislation for which the Chamber is seeking the delegation's support during the session. Pictured here at the lunch are from left to right: Terry Harbin, BancorpSouth; Mobile County Commission President Merceria Ludgood; Liz Freeman, board chair of the Chamber with Long's Human Resource Services; former Rep. Jo Bonner with The University of Alabama System; Britton Bonner, Adams & Reese; Bill Sisson, Mobile Area Chamber; and Mobile Mayor Sandy Stimpson. The event was sponsored by Adams & Reese and AM/NS Calvert.



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City Creates Greenway Management Plan

Following Mobile Mayor **Sandy Stimpson's** announcement in 2016 of a plan to build a 12-mile greenway stretching from University of South Alabama to Mobile Bay, the city is creating a Three Mile Creek Greenway Trail Management Plan to serve as the framework for this effort.

The plan will identify next steps, cost estimates, community benefits, easement needs and logical project section priorities.

The Mobile City Council approved a \$46,530 professional services contract with Moffatt & Nichol that included a \$20,000 grant from The Community Foundation of South Alabama.

"This is a monumental step to restoring Three Mile Creek to its historic significance," said Stimpson. "Three Mile Creek was Mobile's drinking water source before World War II, and now it can once again connect communities throughout Mobile. This new trail will encourage fitness, beautify a vital waterway and educate citizens."

Crepe Myrtle Ride Set for April 1

Hosted by Mobile United, the Crepe Myrtle Trail Ride is a family-friendly, 12-mile bike ride beginning at Arlington Park, crossing the runway at Brookley Field and riding along the western shore of Mobile Bay. This year's ride will take place Saturday, April 1, and will cost \$10 per rider.

Along the way, riders will hear some fun and educational talks about the trail and natural areas that make Mobile Bay such a beautiful place.

Features of the trail include:

- Connecting four city parks: Arlington Park, Doyle Park, McNally Park and Helen Wood Park;
- Creating safe bicycle access to downtown from Dauphin Island Parkway neighborhoods;
- Providing access to undeveloped areas of the western coast of Mobile Bay; and
- Promoting activity in heavily populated areas with few safe bicycle routes.

Registration details can be found at www.facebook.com/events/1208920302495436.



First-Class Service Comes to Mobile

In January, Mobile Regional Airport representatives announced American Airlines scheduled a major upgrade to its service provided in Mobile with added capacity and business class seats to both Charlotte, N.C., and Dallas.

This month all three daily Dallas flights will be served with a CRJ-900 aircraft, featuring nine first-class seats and 76 total

seats. In April, two of the four daily departures to Charlotte will be flown with CRJ-700 aircraft, with nine first-class seats and 65 total seats.

This addition represents an increase of more than 40,000 departing seats annually, and more than 80,000 extra seats to the Mobile market, according to Mobile Airport Authority director **Roger Wehner**.



1702 Graduation

In late 2016, the class of 1702 held its graduation. 1702 offers specialized networking and training for area business professionals in areas such as product strategy, marketing and aligning a management team.

Pictured right, Laura Burton with Agency Verge, center, was a 1702 graduate. She is pictured here with 1702 graduation speaker Lending Tree CEO Doug Lebda and class coordinator Dean Parker.





Liz Freeman Named Chamber Chair for 2017

A simple mantra guides **Liz Freeman's** professional life, and she hopes it will serve her well as board chair of the Mobile Area Chamber.

"You've got to show up," said Freeman, president of Long's Human Resource Services. "You have to be there – physically and mentally present – and you have to be consistent."

Her call to action is equally simple.

"Whatever you do, get people engaged, because it has to be a community effort. The more voices we have at the table, the clearer picture we have of the true needs in the community and who at the table can help solve those issues," she said.

Freeman, a Mobile native, earned a bachelor's degree in human and organizational development from Vanderbilt University in 1998, after which she oversaw all operational aspects for both the Mobile and Baldwin branches of the family-held and operated company until taking the helm in 2014.

She has served on the executive committee, the board of directors and board of advisors for the Chamber; as an advisory board member for Hancock Bank; as an advisory council chair for USA Children's and Women's Hospital; and as a board member for both the United Way of Southwest Alabama and UMS-Wright Preparatory School.

She looks forward to serving the community she knows so well as the Chamber chair. "I feel like Mobile really has a formula for success," she said. "We're a port city, which is key in attracting and retaining business. That also makes us a cultural melting pot and a truly international city."

Freeman said she is particularly encouraged by the city's ongoing infrastructure investments, revitalization of St. Louis Street into a high-tech corridor and the proactive steps being taken to capitalize on the advanced manufacturing trends that lure high-tech, high-paying employment to the area.

"All of those pieces make Mobile exciting and create a really diverse community where anybody can feel a part of it," she said. "We've seen these global businesses come in and feel at home. That's what we want. It really speaks to that Southern hospitality

piece, but it's bigger than that. It's about working together to strengthen what we've built while working every day to expand that reach and those partnerships."

In turn, she said, her nearly 20 years of experience in employment services offers perspective that can benefit not only the Chamber and its membership, but the broader economic base.

"We (at Long's) live and breathe labor force and workforce development and have a finger on the pulse of what's happening in terms of employment: the good, the bad and the ugly. The bottom line is people – well-trained, capable people – are the lifeline of industry around here, and if you don't have the workers you can't produce the work," she said.

Advanced manufacturing in particular presents myriad opportunities for Mobile to cultivate the next-generation workforce, spanning key industries from specialty shipbuilding to specialty chemicals. But workforce development is crucial to prepare for expected growth in those fields, she said.

"We're pointed in the right direction. It just takes time. Skilled trades are the areas where we desperately need people, and so much of that is because the manufacturing landscape has changed so much compared to general labor.

"We combat that through engagement. Our local area businesses are doing a good job of engaging with the school system to show young people what their career paths can look like because four-year college and post-graduate work is not for everybody, and there is significant money to be made (in other fields). It becomes a question of how to engage kids, how to entice them and show them what's out there. Our businesses are doing that, and we need more of it."

As a small business owner, Freeman is hopeful she can use her Chamber role to further empower the very backbone of the local economy.

"It's vital we all get involved and that we have a voice. In that regard, the Chamber is an extension of us in terms of helping us grow our businesses," she said.

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Celebrating Small Businesses

Like many small businesses, Walks & Wags has needs that often include business planning, access to capital, and legal and accounting services, not to mention professional development training to keep employees abreast of the latest trends, says **Cindie Carter**, owner of the full-service dog care company. She's always looking for local opportunities for professional development training. And she's not alone.

To help fill in the gaps in what Mobile Area Chamber member businesses need, the small business department is hosting its annual week long celebration and training geared toward small business owners, managers and employees from March 28-30.

New in 2017 will be Google's "Put Your Business on the Map," followed by the always popular "Where's the Money?" session to identify traditional and non-traditional capital funding opportunities for local businesses.

"The two most pressing challenges we hear from our small business owners are that they need more customers and they are looking for capital infusion for growth or expansion," said **Danette Richards**, director of small business development for the Chamber. "This conference addresses both of these issues."

Events will culminate with an award ceremony and reception on Thursday,

March 30, where the three finalists for Small Business of the Year will be honored, and the winner named. The award for Outstanding Entrepreneur will also be presented.

The conference will be followed by Startup Weekend Mobile and presented by the Chamber, Innovation PortAL and the University of South Alabama on March 31-April 2.

2017 Small Business and Innovation Conference

Tuesday, March 28

Put Your Business on the Map with Google

When: 8:30 a.m. to Noon

Where: Mobile Area Chamber,
451 Government St.

Program: You have a website. That's all you need, right? No, you need to "Get Your Business Online" (GYBO) and verified with Google. GYBO takes your existing website and gives your business a public identity and greater presence on Google to present accurate, up-to-date information, pictures, customer reviews and even a 360-degree virtual tour of your business. GYBO makes it easy to tell your story and let customers find you.

Bring a laptop or tablet to access your company's website and get verified on the spot. Learn how to navigate Google analytics and online marketing best practices to use right away.

Cost: No cost, but seating is limited to 20 people, and registration is required by Wednesday, March 22.

Contact: Brenda Rembert at 251-431-8607 or brembert@mobilechamber.com

Presented by: Zeekee

Wednesday, March 29

Where's the Money? Matching Businesses and Lenders

When: 8:30 a.m. to Noon

Where: Mobile Area Chamber,
451 Government St.

Program: One of the most pressing challenges to managing and expanding a business is having or finding sufficient capital resources and the Mobile Area Chamber knows funding is not a "one-size-fits-all" scenario.

At "Where's the Money?" you will learn how to prepare for appointments with potential lenders and talk with experts in traditional and non-traditional lending, equity investment, venture capital and other resource providers who can help you improve cash flow and bottom line.

Cost: \$15 members/\$20 potential members

Contact: Brenda Rembert at 251-431-8607 or brembert@mobilechamber.com

Facilitated by: Alabama Small Business Development Center

Payment is due at registration and is required by March 22. Check the Chamber's website under Calendar of Events for a comprehensive and up-to-date list of program participants.

Thursday, March 30

Mobile Area Small Business Awards Ceremony & Reception

When: 6 to 8 p.m.

Where: Renaissance Riverview Plaza Hotel,
64 S. Water St.

Program: The Chamber's Small Business Awards Ceremony will recognize and celebrate entrepreneurship and small business. During the event, the 2017 Outstanding Entrepreneur will be honored and the Small Business of the Year finalists highlighted and the winner revealed. Following the awards program, celebrate the successes of local small businesses at a festive reception.

Cost: \$25 Chamber members/\$30 potential members/\$200 for a table of 10

Contact: Brenda Rembert at 251-431-8607 or brembert@mobilechamber.com

Reservations are required by March 24, and payment is due at time of registration. No refunds after that date.

Startup Weekend Mobile Returns


After a successful inaugural event leading to one business launch, Startup Weekend Mobile returns to Mobile starting Friday, March 31. The weekend kicks off with the participants pitching their business concepts to the collective group.


Part educational session, part pitch competition, the event brings together aspiring entrepreneurs and others with a passion for business to spend a weekend developing concepts, with a goal of ending with a viable venture.

Last year's event sold out, and interest is already strong for this year's competition. During this exciting and intense, hands-on weekend, attendees meet the very best coaches and mentors, investors and sponsors and



create real businesses. Some will even win prizes such as professional services, office space and other necessities for a new venture.

So who should attend? Entrepreneurs and potential entrepreneurs with a business idea. Also business start-up enthusiasts, web and software developers, designers, marketing gurus, business development specialists and anyone interested in building a business. 

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

Fast Facts

What: Startup Weekend Mobile, a program of Techstars and powered by Google for Entrepreneurs, is a collaboration of the Mobile Area Chamber, University of South Alabama's Office of Research and Economic Development and Innovation PortAL.

When: Friday, March 31 - 6 p.m. until midnight
Saturday, April 1 - 8 a.m. until midnight
Sunday, April 2 - 8 a.m. until 9 p.m.

Where: The Steeple on St. Francis, 251 St. Francis St.

Cost: \$75

Contact: Elyse Goonan, elyse.goonan@gmail.com
or 336-251-4332

To register: <http://bit.ly/2j2mqTT>

From Sensational Idea to Sensational Sales



Just prior to the door closing on 2016, Innovation PortAL had its first client business launch – and it was time to break out the cigars. The launch was, in fact, an online monthly subscription service called CigarClub.com.

The business stands out from the competition because orders are customized to fit each

customer's unique taste. Company CEO **Jeff Zeiders** says the Mobile following is strong and the business already has customers in 11 states.

Zeiders and co-founder **Chris Yokely** met at Mobile's first Startup Weekend last August, when Zeiders pitched an initial concept for the business. The event is a

program of Techstars and powered by Google for Entrepreneurs and was sponsored in part by the Mobile Area Chamber, Innovation PortAL and University of South Alabama.

Both Zeiders and Yokely continued working on the idea after Startup Weekend Mobile, and they were approached to join Innovation PortAL's inaugural class of entrepreneurs, designed to connect them with the tools, equipment and resources they needed to be successful. CigarClub.com became one of five clients, and was the first to launch.

Zeiders credited the Innovation PortAL program with the full development of the concept and ability to launch quickly. "Sometimes it takes extra help to really develop a business," he said.

"At Innovation PortAL, we got weekly feedback and a broad perspective on our customers' needs."

"We could have done this ourselves, but it would have taken a lot longer, and it would have been a lot more difficult," he added.

"For anyone considering Innovation PortAL – go for it," said Yokely. "They make you think about things you might not have considered and give you the tools you need to be successful."

The co-founders both have other business endeavors. Zeiders works at Southern Light and Yokely owns the software company Altegra.

At press time CigarClub.com was selected as one of nine businesses for the Alabama Launchpad start-up competition. A program of the Economic Development Partnership of Alabama, companies will compete for funding for the first time in Mobile on April 27. The Mobile Area Chamber mentors local competitors. 

Meet the Small Business of the Year Finalists

Altaworx's mission is simple: To provide world-class business communications products for its customers and indirect selling partners.

The internet communications protocol provider develops custom machine-to-machine apps, based on the customer's needs, and then bundles the software with other associated hardware and bandwidth.

The 15-year-old Eastern Shore company has grown from two employees to a dozen full-time workers. With data centers in Atlanta and Dallas to host its servers and equipment, Altaworx currently works with more than 300 clients, ranging from small businesses to municipalities and universities.

Founded in 2001 to take advantage of the emerging demand for Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP) business telephone systems, Altaworx has shifted its focus with emerging technologies and now has a focus on IoT, the Internet of Things, becoming the first member of the AT&T Partner Exchange program to add AT&T Machine to Machine connectivity solutions to their offerings.

Among the company's innovations is a wireless failover solution that integrates with a customer's network to provide a



Altaworx

seamless transition from wired Internet to LTE Internet in the event of a failure.

New solutions like these have allowed Altaworx to improve the strength of its

brand. Altaworx currently uses a network of more than 125 indirect sellers to market its products and is working toward growing direct sales to keep business booming.



3 Echoes Productions

If you've seen *Today's Homeowner* with local contractor and national home improvement expert Danny Lipford, then you've seen the work of 3 Echoes Productions.

Founded in 1997 by Lipford to produce his syndicated television series, the company

helps him offer tips and guidance for maintaining and/or remodeling your home. Since then, 3 Echoes has grown into a full-service operation specializing in the creation of visually compelling messages for a number of clients, from local businesses to

top-performing national brands.

The 3 Echoes creative team and staff of video professionals specialize in project development, image acquisition, editing, sound design and project distribution, earning a daytime Emmy and several Telly awards for their work.

The company also sets itself apart by managing every aspect of the production process from start to finish, offering clients a one-stop shop for their video needs. With writers, on-camera talent, videographers, lighting experts, producers, editors and graphic designers on staff, 3 Echoes provides a complete and cohesive client experience from concept to production to the finished product.

The company has grown, adding new clients and actively marketing new services, and recently made major studio and equipment upgrades to take in more work and do more of that work locally. With expanding creative options, including web series, video for social channels, still photography and drone and time-lapse footage, 3 Echoes Productions has made itself the go-to source for national home improvement companies and local businesses alike.



Waite's Cleaners

Taylor Waite founded Waite's Cleaners in Mobile in 1952 after getting his start dry-cleaning in the U.S. Army. Since then, the company has been passed down to his son, Leland, and grandson, Clifford, who have continued to build it into one of the area's leaders in the field, focusing on quality work and customer service.

Waite's provides dry cleaning, stain removal, wash-dry-fold, sheets, tablecloths and napkins, household items, leather and fur cleaning by Ram Leather, wedding dress cleaning and preservation, hanger recycling and alterations and repairs by Ida's Alterations.

Waite's believes the way to keep customers happy from the time they walk in the door until they put on their freshly cleaned and pressed clothes at home is to invest in its

employees. The company has focused on employee retention and has seen a corresponding rise in customer retention.

But what really sets Waite's apart is its free pickup and delivery, which Clifford Waite credits as being the primary reason for sustained growth each year since he took over the company in 2010.

"Coming to your home or office so that you no longer have to go to the cleaners has been revolutionary for our existing and new customers," he said, adding he hopes to continue expanding routes until the company reaches everyone in the Mobile city limits.

"Taking care of your customers as you would like to be taken care of is a recipe for success."

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Chamber's Outstanding Entrepreneur Credits Strong Company Culture for Southern Light's Staying Power

Southern Light LLC's extraordinary growth did not happen by chance but rather by adhering to a simple management principle that President and CEO **Andy Newton** said has served him well.

"Hire self-driven, intelligent people. If you hire the right people, you spend a lot more time working on executing your business plan and not on managing people," said Newton, who will receive the Mobile Area Chamber's Outstanding Entrepreneur on March 30. (See pg. 11 for event details.)

And considering the Mobile-based provider of broadband infrastructure solutions now employs about 270, compared with the three who launched the start-up from a business plan scribbled on a steak house napkin, it's difficult to argue with Newton's approach.

In fact, the company ranked 52nd nationally among "medium-sized" businesses in 2016 on *Fortune* magazine's annual "Great Places to Work" listing, which Newton said he considers the company's most outstanding accomplishment for the past year.

"I think spending some time every day working on your company culture is absolutely critical, and our company culture has been a huge part of our success," he said. "You want your people to know they make a difference in what's happening at the company, and then you need to make sure you show appreciation for their efforts. If you do that, they'll be excited to come to work."



Founded in 1998, Southern Light designs, constructs and operates 6,100 route miles of fiber optic networks in the Southeast. The company currently serves 1,591 cell towers and has 4,790 on-net locations in five states. **Liz Freeman**, president of Long's Human Resource Services and chair of the Chamber, said Newton's selection as Outstanding Entrepreneur selection was unanimous because

he "truly embodies that entrepreneurial spirit that we hope our young people will embrace in order to grow and prosper and then be in a position to give back to the community."

"Andy really has come full circle, and we couldn't be more proud," Freeman added. "He's homegrown. He and his partners kick-started this tech company with nothing more

than an idea, and now they're growing by leaps and bounds. But even beyond that, he's so giving of his time with other young entrepreneurs who are standing where he was not that long ago. It really says a lot about him as a person and as a businessperson."

Newton said Southern Light's steady growth continues with a "low double-digit" percentage growth increase recorded in 2016. He is encouraged by the steps being taken to nurture a true entrepreneurial ecosystem.

"We've got a city and a Chamber who support start-ups. We have great co-working spaces, and there are so many resources available to help aspiring entrepreneurs build the businesses they want. Soon, we'll have the Innovation PortAL, which I think will be great for Mobile, so everywhere you look, we're investing in new businesses, and I'm certain those investments will pay off," he said.

Newton said he anticipates Southern Light becoming heavily involved with Innovation PortAL because "it's going to take all of Mobile to support it," and he welcomes the opportunity to do his part.

"Of course we want to provide the connectivity that allows (Innovation PortAL) to not have any bandwidth issues for companies starting up, but Southern Light also hopes to be involved on both a mentoring and a funding level," he said.

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Bellator Real Estate agents cover both Mobile and Baldwin counties. In 2013 the company expanded to Mobile and has 26 agents working here. Pictured above are independent agents from both counties.

Bellator Builds on Faith, Effort and Gratitude

The recession of 2008 turned out to be a time of opportunity for Bellator Real Estate & Development.

Nathan Cox founded the company that year in Spanish Fort as a result of a \$60 million investment project to buy distressed properties along the Gulf Coast during the economic downturn. Since then, the company has continued to grow, with Cox and **Troy Wilson** of ERA Platinum Properties merging their companies in 2011, and later opening a west Mobile office in 2013.

Today, Wilson manages Bellator's eight residential real estate offices and commercial division as its president, and **Don Jones** manages the west Mobile office, which has grown from five to 26 agents and closed more than \$65 million in sales in 2016.

Bellator Real Estate & Development is the Mobile Area Chamber's Small Business of the Month.

Marketing Director **Casey Patterson** said the company's secret to success is that it sees its clients as more than a sale.

"We recognize real estate investments can play a crucial role in the long-term plan of a person's life, but that people are made up of much more than transactions and numbers," Patterson said. "Because of their core values of faith, effort and gratitude, Bellator agents are creating a culture of relationships and commitment to impacting lives instead of just the bottom line."

Those core values extend outside the office, as well, as Bellator's agents are challenged to improve their communities and get involved with at least one charitable organization throughout the year. Some of those organizations have included Under His Wings girls' home, Veterans' Angel Tree, Prodissee Pantry in Spanish Fort, Wilmer Hall and the American Cancer Society. The company has also held listing competitions to benefit several charities, "month of service" projects and a fundraiser for Jon Mason Lim, a local child with a brain tumor who was in need of financial assistance.

"Bellator believes so fully in this mission that the company has built community service into its daily culture, even providing an online forum for agents across different markets to communicate service projects and prayer requests with one another at any time," Patterson said.

Since opening the west Mobile office in 2013, Bellator has opened new locations in north Mobile and Midtown and is actively recruiting new team members as it continues to expand its client base.

Want to be featured here? Go to mobilechamber.com to submit an application, or contact Danette Richards at 251-431-8652 or drichards@mobilechamber.com.

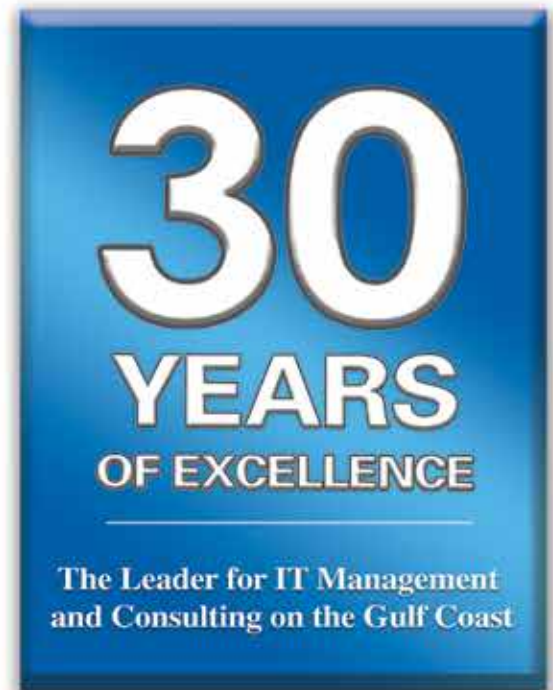
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Starting A Business in Mobile

A Resource Guide



Photo by Tad Denson, MyShotz.com

When operating a business in the Mobile area, city and county business licenses and certain privilege licenses are necessary for business operation and should be researched by contacting the appropriate agencies. Business owners must also consider taxes and licensing fees. These include city,

county, and state sales tax, federal and state payroll taxes and social security withholdings, federal and state income taxes, and unemployment compensation taxes.

The information included on the following pages is intended to be an informational resource for small and

start-up businesses in Mobile.

Contact the Mobile Area Chamber's Small Business Development Department at 251-431-8607 or visit www.mobilechamber.com/small-business/ if you need additional assistance.

Mobile Business Center

The Mobile Business Center in the city's revenue department is a one-stop to obtain assistance for licenses, and other assistance for doing business in Mobile.

For more information:

**City of Mobile -
Mobile Business Center**
251-208-7462
www.cityofmobile.org



Business License

A business license is required to operate each separate business activity within the city of Mobile.

An annual license fee is due Jan. 1 and is based on the type of business and gross revenues generated. The first-year license deposit and issuance fee is \$130. A business starting after July 1 will be charged 50 percent of the first year's rate.

For more information:

**Mobile County - License
Commissioner**
251-574-4800
www.mobilecountyal.gov



Urban Development Department

The City's urban development department is responsible for the health, safety and general welfare of the citizens of Mobile before, during and after development/construction by regulating and enforcing the vast number of codes, laws, acts, regulations and ordinances related to development and construction within the city of Mobile. Urban development sections include: planning, code administration, zoning, urban forestry and safety.

Businesses must be properly zoned and depending on the company's business category and the location, businesses receive B-1, B-2 or B-3 certification. Other municipalities within Mobile County should be contacted directly for specific information.

Urban Development Department
251-208-7091
www.urban.cityofmobile.org

**City of Mobile Police Records
Department**
251-208-7211
www.mobilepd.org

Mobile County Health Department
251-690-8158
www.mobilecountyhealth.org



Sales Tax

In general, the total sales tax for businesses located in the city of Mobile is 10 percent. The breakdown is as follows: City of Mobile – 5 percent, Mobile County – 1 percent and the state – 4 percent. City and county taxes may be filed electronically through eMobile, the city's online tax filing system.

**City of Mobile
Revenue Department**
251-208-7462

**Mobile County
Revenue Commission**
251-574-8530



Personal Property Tax

Business owners are required to pay taxes on inventory of personal property (i.e. office equipment, office supplies, furniture, etc.). For more information on the personal property tax, contact:

**Mobile County Personal
Property Department**
251-574-4714

Another option for businesses filing in multiple taxing jurisdictions is the state of Alabama's free online portal "ONE SPOT" (Optional Network Election for Single Point Online Transactions). Through ONE SPOT Alabama businesses can file tax returns and pay city, county and state sales, lease and use taxes at one electronic location rather than submitting multiple tax reports. To sign up for the ONE SPOT system, businesses can go to a state website: <https://myalabama.taxes.alabama.gov>.

**Alabama Department
of Revenue**
251-344-4737
www.ador.alabama.gov/salestax



Federal Taxes

An Employer Identification Number (EIN) is used to identify a business entity and is needed to pay federal withholding tax. A sole proprietor may use his or her social security number as the EIN, unless the proprietorship has employees or is required to file any business tax forms. A partnership or corporation must have an EIN whether or not it has employees. Apply for an EIN at www.irs.gov/businesses/small.

**Internal Revenue Service –
Mobile Office**

1110 Montlimar Dr., Suite 300
Mobile, AL 36609
251-341-5937
www.irs.gov

Employers are required to withhold federal income tax (FIT), Social Security and Medicare taxes (FICA) from the wages paid to employees.

If self-employed, contributions are made through the self-employment tax reported on the Employer's Quarterly Federal Tax Return.

FICA taxes are paid by both the business and the employee. All employees must have a social security number.

Social Security Administration

550 Government St., Suite 100
Mobile, AL 36602
1-866-593-1922
www.ssa.gov

**Alabama Income Taxes**

Any business that hires employees and pays wages needs an Alabama income tax withholding number to hold and remit the taxes to the Alabama Department of Revenue.

Proprietors, partners, corporate shareholders and others must report estimated earnings and pay income tax quarterly.

Alabama Department of Labor
www.labor.alabama.gov

Mobile Taxpayer Service Center
955 Downtowner Blvd.
Mobile, AL 36609
215-344-4737
www.revenue.alabama.gov

State Withholding
334-242-1300

Business Privilege Tax Division
334-353-7923

Corporate Tax Division
334-242-1200



If you have employees you may be required to provide unemployment or worker's compensation insurance.

Companies with five or more employees, part-time or full-time, are required to have worker's compensation insurance. Obtain this insurance through local insurance agencies.

Generally, businesses employing one or more employees are liable for federal and state unemployment taxes.

To learn more:

Commissioner of Insurance

State of Alabama
334-269-3550
www.aldoi.gov

**Unemployment Compensation
Insurance**

334-242-8055

Worker's Compensation Division

334-353-0515
www.labor.alabama.gov

COMPLIANCE**Patient Protection
and Affordable Care
Act (PPACA)**

In 2010, the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (PPACA) healthcare reform bill, was signed into law making sweeping changes to the U.S. healthcare system. Whether a business is considered small or large, there are numerous communications, reporting and documentation requirements.

Changes to the law continue to occur and you should seek expert advice from your attorney, accountant, insurance agent and other professionals to determine what the requirements are for your particular situation.

**E-Verify**

U.S. law requires all employers to verify the legal presence of their employees. Alabama employers may use the federal E-Verify website or businesses with 25 or fewer employees may elect to use the Alabama E-Verify Employer Agent Service.

To learn more:

Federal E-Verify

www.uscis.gov/e-verify

Alabama E-Verify

855-837-4396
www.immigration.alabama.gov



Occupational Safety & Health Administration (OSHA)

All businesses with employees are required to comply with state and federal regulations regarding the safety and protection of employees.

To learn more:

Occupational Safety & Health Administration (OSHA)

1141 Montlimar Drive, Suite 1006
Mobile, AL 36609
251-441-6131
www.osha.gov



Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)

The Americans with Disabilities Act prohibits discrimination in employment on the basis of disability including handicap accessibility.

To learn more:

Americans with Disabilities Act

800-669-3362
www.ada.gov



Equal Employment Opportunities Commission (EEOC)

Employers must be aware of equal employment opportunity regulations. It is illegal to discriminate against a job applicant or an employee because of the person's race, color, religion, sex (including pregnancy), national origin, age (40 or older), disability or genetic information among other issues.

To learn more:

U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission

63 S. Water Street, Suite 504
Mobile, AL 36602
251-690-2177
www.eeoc.gov



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Mobile's Small Business Resources

Numerous free or low-cost resources, materials, workshops and seminars are available for area small businesses.

Alabama Department of Commerce Office of Small Business Advocacy

401 Adams Ave.
Montgomery, AL 36130
(800) 248-0033
www.alabamausa.org

Provides resources for small business development including regulatory or financial assistance.

Community Planning and Development Department - City of Mobile

205 Government St.
Mobile, AL 36602
251-208-6292
www.cityofmobile.org

Provides loans utilizing Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funds for entrepreneurs and start-up companies within the CDBG target areas.

Downtown Mobile Alliance

261 Dauphin St.
Mobile, AL 36601
251-434-8498
www.downtownmobile.org

Operates a retail incubator for new or expanding retailers in downtown Mobile and offers training from loss prevention to inventory control.

Internal Revenue Service – Stakeholder Liaison

1110 Montlimar Dr., Suite 300
Mobile, AL 36609
251-341-5937
www.irs.gov

Provides information and assistance about IRS policies, practices and procedures to business owners and tax practitioners to ensure compliance with tax laws.

Mobile Area Chamber of Commerce Small Business Development Dept.

451 Government St.
Mobile, AL 36602
251-431-8607
www.mobilechamber.com

Assists local entrepreneurs starting, managing and growing their businesses by providing small business training seminars, workshops, educational materials, one-on-one consulting as well as referrals to local resource providers and other business experts.

South Alabama Regional Planning Commission

110 Beauregard St.
Mobile, AL 36602
251-433-6541
www.sarpc.org/rlf.asp

Manages a Revolving Loan Fund used to finance small business start-up and expansion projects to create permanent jobs.

South Alabama SCORE

327 Fairhope Ave.
Fairhope, AL 36532
251-928-6387
www.southalabamascor.org

Provides small business counseling, training and mentoring for existing and potential business owners.

Innovation PortAL

451 Government St.
Mobile, AL 36602
251-431-8628
www.innovation-portal.com

Provides local entrepreneurs and businesses with access to state-of-the-art facilities, extensive professional networks and mentorship.

U.S. Small Business Administration Southern Alabama Office

1141 Montlimar Dr., Suite 1007
Mobile, AL 36609
251-544-7401
www.sba.gov

Provides financial assistance programs for small businesses specifically designed to meet key financing needs, including debt financing, surety bonds and equity financing. The SBA does not make direct loans, but provides loan guarantees to lenders to reduce risk.

Alabama Small Business Development Center

600 Clinic Dr., Suite 326/328
Mobile, AL 36688
251-460-6004
www.southalabama.edu/sbdc

Provides small business counseling, loan packaging assistance, international trade and procurement technical assistance for businesses wanting to do business with the government.

Women's Business Center of South Alabama

413 Azalea Rd., Suite F
Mobile, AL 36609
251-660-2725
www.wbcsa.com

Provides assistance and training in business planning and development, marketing, market research, access to capital, lending preparation and networking for seasoned and start-up businesses.



Trustmark

The RSA Trustmark Building, located at the corner of Royal and St. Francis Street, serves as the bank's regional headquarters.

Photo by Deep South Focus Photography

Company officials: Michael Fitzhugh, regional president; and Kevin Carey, Mobile market president

Years in business: 127

Brief company description:

Trustmark is a diversified financial services company providing banking, wealth management and insurance solutions in a five-state area – Alabama, Florida, Mississippi, Tennessee and Texas through its subsidiaries, Trustmark National Bank, Trustmark Investment Advisors and Fisher Brown Bottrell Insurance Inc.

Mobile serves as the regional headquarters for the Alabama and Mississippi Gulf Coast markets.

Why are you located in Mobile?

"Trustmark entered the Mobile market in 2013 through the acquisition of BancTrust Financial Group Inc., which allowed Trustmark to expand our product and service offerings into dynamic and attractive Alabama markets," said Carey.

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

"We believe that supporting the Chamber is an important way to support the community," said Carey. "We also know that in order to have a strong community, there has to be a strong public/private partnership that is focused on a

common goal: enhancing the quality of life for all within the community through continued investment and growth. Ultimately, this translates into economic stability and viability for the community. In Mobile, the initiative is a conduit to help accomplish this to ensure a more prosperous future."

What do you see as Mobile's greatest potential?

"There are so many wonderful opportunities in Mobile right now," said Carey. "The business climate is improving, and we are optimistic the upward momentum will continue and will further enhance the quality of life that so many people in this area enjoy. Additionally, the

investment in developing a skilled workforce has been tremendous."

Length of continuous Chamber membership:
Since 1986



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.



Congratulations to the Mobile Team of Willis Towers Watson, winners of the Corporate Community Service Award. Sixty-seven organizations benefited from the generosity of the company and its employees.

Willis Towers Watson Earns the Corporate Community Service Award

Tireless efforts. Committed. Passionately engaged. Highly effective. Instrumental. These are just a few phrases used by the organizations who benefited from the time, talent and resources given by Willis Towers Watson and the company's 44 Mobile employees, winners of the Corporate Community Service Award.

The group logged 1,800 volunteer hours between Oct. 1, 2015, and Sept. 30, 2016, with nearly 300 of them given by the company's senior managers.

"More businesses than not are quiet givers and doers in the community," said **Patty Howell**, the Mobile Area Chamber's director of community and governmental affairs.

"This award shines a light on those who are actively engaged in community life and encourage their employees to do the same. The Chamber believes this recognition leads and encourages other companies to create and grow that same kind of caring environment as Willis Towers Watson has done."

Some of the company's most impressive efforts are reported by Big Brothers Big Sisters of South Alabama – a partnership that began four years ago with students attending Ella Grant Elementary School in Prichard: 94 percent improved academically, 96 percent have better peer relationships and 94 percent are more confident they will graduate from high school.

Among the additional 66 organizations benefiting from both corporate and employee generosity are the Alabama Kidney Foundation, Goodwill Easter Seals of the Gulf Coast, Victory Health Partners, Volunteers of America Southeast and the YMCA of South Alabama.

The Corporate Community Service Award recognizes companies – both large and small – for dedication to the community. It is presented annually by the Junior League of Mobile and the Mobile Area Chamber.



CHAMBER GOLF CLASSIC

Friday, March 17

The Robert Trent Jones Golf Trail
/Magnolia Grove

7:30 a.m. - Registration & Breakfast
8:30 a.m. - Shotgun Start

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Register online at www.mobilechamber.com
or call 251-431-8649.

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Breakfast Sponsor - Dick Russell's Bar-B-Que

BOARD of advisors

Mike Cowart is owner and principal of Cowart Hospitality Services, including Hilton Garden Inn and Candlewood Suites in downtown Mobile. He founded Cowart Hospitality, a hotel consulting and development firm, in 1994. Cowart is a certified general real property appraiser licensed in Alabama, Florida, Louisiana, Tennessee and Texas, and a qualified expert witness in the U.S. Bankruptcy Court districts of Colorado, Arizona, Oklahoma and circuit courts of Dekalb County, Ga., and Escambia County, Fla.



Austin C. Key is vice president of BugMaster Exterminators Inc. With 23 years in the pest control industry, Key joined BugMaster in 1995, working his way up from technician to his current position. He served as president of the South Alabama Pest Control Association, and currently serves on the boards of Alabama Pest Control Association and the Child Advocacy Center of Mobile, and on various nonprofit fundraising committees. A native Mobilian, Key attended Faulkner State Community College (now Coastal Alabama Community College).



Dr. James Laier is the Mobile Area Water & Sewer System (MAWSS) board chair. Laier is the founder and former CEO of Southern Earth Sciences Inc. He is a fellow in the American Society of Civil Engineers and associate professor in the College of Engineering at the University of South Alabama. He is serving his second term on the MAWSS board and his second term as chair, having previously served as chair in 2012. MAWSS is a Partners for Growth investor.



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

AMBASSADOR of the month



Photo by Jeff Tesney

Championing the local business community has become a passion for licensed insurance agent **Sara Polansky**. A personal and commercial insurance producer for Thomas, Harrison & Associates Insurance Agency, Polansky is committed to protecting her clients' assets and serving their insurance needs. She is the Chamber's Ambassador of the Month. "I am honored to serve as an ambassador for the Chamber," said Polansky, who has participated in the program for three years. "It's such a vibrant group of people. I also appreciate the opportunity to visit with local business owners and to learn about their businesses."

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.

MACC 2017 BOARD OF DIRECTORS



Damian Bell
Rock Bridge Wealth Management Inc.

Bell is the president of Rock Bridge Wealth Management Inc. He received a bachelor's degree from Tulane University in New Orleans. He began his career as a financial counselor in 1993 with Prudential Securities, and earned a Certified Financial Planning designation in 1998. He is a member of the Corpus Christi Church Men of St. Joseph Group and is Mobile Chapter President for AFEA (American Financial Education Alliance) and serves as a personal financial coach and retirement planning instructor for educational classes sponsored by AFEA.

The Business View inadvertently left Damian Bell off a list of its 2017 board of directors that ran in the December/January issue of the magazine. We apologize for this oversight.

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Kellie Hope Named Vice President of Community and Governmental Affairs

The Mobile Area Chamber named **Kellie Hope** vice president of community and governmental affairs. She most recently worked as external affairs manager for Southern Light, developing local government relations in communities Southern Light serves. She was responsible for legislative and regulatory issues impacting the fiber company in Alabama, Florida, Louisiana and Mississippi.

"The good name and reputation of the Mobile Area Chamber stretches far and wide, and I am honored and excited to be chosen to be a part of this team," Hope said. "The



Hope

Chamber's efforts in attracting new business, sustaining existing business and protecting their interests through policy and legislation is notable."

Outside of her work at Southern Light, Hope has 10-plus years' experience in the

healthcare sector, ranging from director of community services and communications for Tulane University Hospital; administrator and mental health coordinator for Cooper Green Mercy Hospital in Birmingham; and owner of the Louisiana Health and Wellness Group in Houma, La., providing a partial hospitalization program for mentally ill adults.

"We are thrilled to have someone of Kellie's caliber and work experience coming into the role," said **Bill Sisson**, president & CEO of the Mobile Area Chamber. "Her vision for building on the Chamber's incredibly strong advocacy program and moving it forward are an exciting and important part of the Chamber's evolution."

Hope has a bachelor's degree in accounting and a master's in social work, both from Tulane University. A graduate of Leadership Mobile in 2015, she is a member of the 2017 Leadership Alabama class, Junior League of Mobile and Mobile Museum of Art.

Hope replaced **Ginny Russell**, who retired Feb. 1 after 31 years working for the Chamber.

"Ginny leaves a wonderful legacy and road map for success. I look forward to continuing the great work at hand and moving forward with my colleagues and our members," Hope said.

The Chamber's community and governmental affairs department oversees several committees, including the Governmental Affairs Committee, Military Affairs Committee, Air Service Task Force, Build the Bridge Coalition, Energy Committee and Transportation Committee, in addition to setting the Chamber's annual Legislative Agenda, hosting Leaders Exchange, State of the City/County Luncheon and several other special events.

Hope can be reached at khope@mobilechamber.com or 251-431-8618.



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BancorpSouth.com/Business



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MARCH 2017

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

8 NETWORKING@NOON

**Members Only; one representative per company*

Make 30-plus business contacts in 90 minutes over lunch.

When: Noon to 1:30 p.m.

Where: Zea Rotisserie and Grill, 4670 Airport Blvd.

Cost: \$10 and must be paid with reservation

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

Sponsor:

14-15 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: Mobile Area Chamber, 451 Government St.

Cost: \$50 per person for Chamber members,
\$60 per person for non-Chamber members, includes
course materials, lunch and snacks

Contact: Emily McGrath at 251-431-8651 or
emcgrath@mobilechamber.com

*Reservations are required and class size is limited to 25 people.
Free parking.*

15 NONPROFIT ROUNDTABLE **Members Only*

A forum for Chamber-member nonprofit executives and managers.

When: 8 to 9 a.m.

Where: Mobile Area Chamber, 451 Government St.

Speakers: Vicki Studstill, vice president of relationship building, Hargrove Engineers + Constructors; and Lauren Giddens, director of marketing, community relations and customer service, Infirmary Health

Topic: "Collaboration Between For-profits and Nonprofits"

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

No charge, but seating is limited. RSVP requested.

Sponsor:



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Attorneys at Law

251-343-1111

No representation is made that the quality of legal services to be performed is greater than the quality of legal services performed by other lawyers

17 CHAMBER GOLF CLASSIC

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

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

Where: The Robert Trent Jones Golf Trail/Magnolia Grove

Cost: \$150 for individual players or \$850 for Hole Sponsors (teams of four)

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

Reservations are required.

Major Sponsors:



21 EXECUTIVE ROUNDTABLE **Members Only*

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

When: 8 to 9 a.m.

Where: Mobile Area Chamber, 451 Government St.

Speaker: Shayla Jones Beaco, executive director, Build Mobile

Topic: "The Changing Landscape in Mobile's Community Development"

Contact: Brenda Rembert at 251-431-8607 or brembert@mobilechamber.com

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

Sponsor:



23 BUSINESS AFTER HOURS

When: 5:30 to 7 p.m.

Where: Newk's Eatery – Westgate Pavilion, 7440 Airport Blvd.

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

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

Reservations are not needed.

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Also March

SMALL BUSINESS AND INNOVATION CONFERENCE

28 PUT YOUR BUSINESS ON THE MAP WITH GOOGLE (3 HOUR WORKSHOP)

29 WHERE'S THE MONEY? MATCHING BUSINESSES WITH LENDERS (3 HOUR WORKSHOP)

30 SMALL BUSINESS AWARDS & RECEPTION

Plus March 31- April 2 STARTUP WEEKEND MOBILE

See stories on pgs. 11-12 for details.

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Who's New



Corliss



McCaghren

University of Mobile named **Carolyn Corliss** dean of the school of education. Corliss graduated from Troy University with a bachelor's degree in health, physical education, recreation and dance. She earned a master's degree in exercise science from Auburn University at Montgomery and a doctorate in foundations, leadership and technology and adult education, also from Auburn University.

The university also selected **Lauren McCaghren** as senior director for alumni programs and annual giving. McCaghren graduated from Samford University with a bachelor's

degree in journalism/mass communication. She earned a master's degree in higher education administration from The University of Alabama.



Fuse Project selected **Stephen Jones** as its new executive assistant. Jones is currently pursuing a degree in public relations at the University of South Alabama.



Maynard Cooper & Gale announced **Guy Oswalt**, a corporate lawyer in the firm's Mobile office, was named a shareholder of the firm. Oswalt received a law degree from Charleston School of Law.



Trustmark promoted **Ashley Mabry** to assistant vice president at its Mobile main office, where she serves as community development specialist. Mabry earned a bachelor's degree in finance from the University of South Alabama.



Thurman



Anthony



Walker



Moser

Berkshire Hathaway HomeServices Cooper & Co. Inc. Realtors welcomed new associates **Dave Thurman, Rosalyn Anthony, Meri Walker, Pamela Moser** and **Brandi Wilkinson**.



Wilkinson

Business Endeavors

The **Hiller Companies** purchased Standard Fire Equipment on Dec. 1. Mobile-based Hiller has 10 branch offices from Houston to Boston.



Newk's Eatery relocated from its original Mobile location on Azalea Road to Westgate Pavilion in west Mobile. In addition to Westgate, Newk's has locations at McGowin Park Shopping Centre and Eastern Shore Centre in Spanish Fort. The McGowin Park restaurant offers a "grab and go" section as well as a full restaurant.



BIS Designs, a web design and digital marketing firm, launched a new website-hosting package to assist clients with website edits, giving customers the option to receive unlimited website support and maintenance or smaller selections of six or 12 hours of website edits annually.

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Dunn Building Co., a design-build general contractor with a Mobile presence, recently purchased the assets of Keith Mosley Construction to assist in handling continued growth with current and new clients' building needs.

The **City of Mobile, History Museum of Mobile** and **Visit Mobile** announced the city's Visitors Center moved to the history museum in the Old City Hall building at 11 S. Royal St. It is staffed and managed by Visit Mobile in its new location.

Well Done

Gary A. Piazza PhD, professor of pharmacology and oncologic sciences at USA Mitchell Cancer Institute, was named an NAI Fellow by the National Academy of Inventors. Piazza is one of 175 members of the 2016 class and the first ever from the University of South Alabama.

NAI Fellow status is the highest professional distinction accorded solely to academic inventors and is based upon a nominee's patent portfolio.

Regions

Bank announced Contina Woods earned the Certified Treasury Professional (CTP) designation from the Association for Financial Professionals (AFP).



Woods

Original Oyster House named **Roderick Marks** and **Matthew Simmons** its 2016 Employees of the Year for exemplifying the company's mission and core values. In addition, the restaurant was awarded the 2016 TripAdvisor Certificate of Excellence; and **Allen Hastings** was named Restaurant Manager of the Year by the Alabama Restaurant and Hospitality Alliance.

Spectrum Collision was officially certified by Assured Performance, a nonprofit consumer advocacy organization for maintaining the right tools, equipment, training and facility necessary to repair participating automaker brand vehicles according to the manufacturer's specifications.

Sharon Wright of White-Spinner Realty was selected to serve as the 2017 president of the Gulf Coast District Certified Commercial Investment Members' (CCIM) Alabama Chapter.

Hieronymus CPAs announced **Forrest Hieronymus** passed the certified public accountant exam and is now working alongside his father. Hieronymus is the third generation to work in the family-owned business.

The Alabama Governor's Committee on Employment of People with Disabilities presented **Mobile Works** with

honors for its collaborative efforts with Alabama Department of Rehab Services, Goodwill Easter Seals and Mississippi State University to provide jobs.

Stirling Properties senior sales and leasing executive **Jill Meeks** was appointed

president of the Mobile Commercial Investment Real Estate Club, a networking group for industry professionals.



Meeks

Marie Dickinson with **Berkshire Hathaway HomeServices Cooper & Co. Inc. Realtors** earned the Seniors Real Estate Specialist designation from the Seniors Real Estate Specialist Council of the National Association of Realtors.



Dickinson

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Gov. Robert Bentley appointed **Alexis Atkins**, vice president of human resources/principal in co-ownership of Budweiser Busch Distributing Inc., of Mobile, to the University of South Alabama board of trustees. Atkins graduated from the University of South Alabama with a bachelor's degree in human resources.



Atkins



The board of directors of **Ozanam Charitable Pharmacy** recently awarded the Gardberg Community Leadership Award to The Hargrove Foundation, which supports charities in Hargrove Engineering + Constructors communities. The award is presented to a local individual or organization embodying the charitable spirit of Frederic Ozanam, the founder of the St. Vincent de Paul Society and the namesake of Ozanam Charitable Pharmacy.

Greer Enterprises LLC, specializing in waste management, recycling and compliance services, announced staff scientist **Maria Thistlethwaite** is now a Certified Hazardous Materials Manager. Thistlethwaite holds a microbiology degree from Universidad de Los Andes, Bogota, Colombia, and Environmental Toxicology studies from the University of South Alabama.

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

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Mobile Area Chamber

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 203 are accredited, and of those only 103 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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Know a company interested in benefiting from Chamber membership? Contact Jackie Livingston at 251-431-8642 or jlivingston@mobilechamber.com or Emily Hatcher at 251-431-8619 or ehatcher@mobilechamber.com. Also, you'll find a complete membership list at www.mobilechamber.com.

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