

Mobile Area Chamber of Commerce

MARCH 2018

the businessVIEW



Meet
**Brian
Willman**

with Regions Bank —
**2018
Chamber
Chair**

Spotlighting
Mobile's Economy

Mobile Container
Terminal Plans
\$50 Million Expansion



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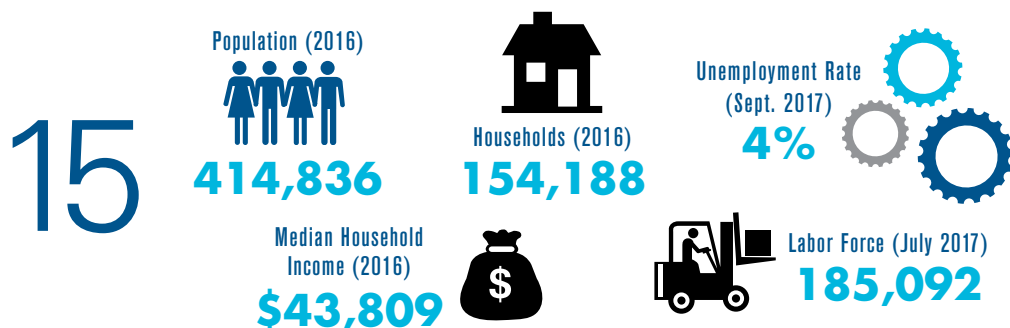
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and safety personnel



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journeyman plumbers & crane
operators/heavy equipment operators



ON THE COVER

Brian Willman, Regions Bank area president for South Alabama and the Florida panhandle, is chairing the Chamber's board of directors for 2018. See his story on page 23.

Photo by Jeff Tesney

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Newly located in Irvington, Little Custom Homes builds affordable Craftsman-style houses from 560-1,200 square feet with amenities including vaulted ceilings and crown molding, and places them on their customers' lots.

Little Custom Homes Expands to Mobile

Wilson, Ark.-based Little Custom Homes held its official ribbon-cutting in February, bringing its unique approach to small affordable homes ranging from 512 up to 1,200 square feet to Mobile.

Little Custom Homes differs from its competitors because each house is built inside, transported to its final destination in one piece and set on a permanent foundation, according to owner **Bill Joe Denton**. The indoor building process eliminates weather delays and in turn reduces labor costs, he said.

The company leased the former Vanity Fair building in Irvington at 12045 Padgett Switch Rd., with plans to hire 100 employees. Currently there are 28 employees.

Little Custom Homes began in 2015 as an effort to revitalize Arkansas communities using traditional building methods as opposed to modern manufacturing methods.

"We believed this business model could be replicated in other communities, and we believe Mobile is rich with opportunity for our company," Denton said.


"The attractiveness of this project was providing opportunities to put affordable homes in areas that need revitalization while maintaining Mobile's rich architectural style," said **David Rodgers**, the Mobile Area Chamber's senior economic development project manager.


With standard amenities in its one- to three-bedroom floor



plans including vaulted ceilings with exposed cedar beams, crown molding and Craftsman-style porches, the company's customers range from low- to moderate-income residents to those looking for a retirement or beach home.

"I knew from the start this was a project we wanted," said Mobile County Commissioner

Jerry Carl. "Little Custom Homes will offer quality homes throughout Mobile County for residents of all income levels, something our community needs, and is critical to the economic development process." 

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

Williams Expanding Local Facility


Williams Mobile Bay Producer Services announced it would expand its south Mobile County facility near Coden. The company is one of several under the Tulsa, Okla.-based Williams Cos. umbrella.

Williams is investing \$107.6 million, including machinery, equipment and additional land and buildings, to increase its natural gas processing abilities to meet the demands of heating homes, generating electricity and transportation.

"Williams is pleased to be proceeding with this project, as it not only enhances our plant but also reinforces our commitment to this community," said **Robert**

Hatley, Williams' vice president, communications and public relations.

A venture undertaken with Shell Oil, the company is preparing to bring in additional volumes of natural gas and clean critical byproducts that could benefit local manufacturers.

"This company has a large presence in the national interstate and intrastate pipeline system, providing critical natural gas infrastructure. The local investment will strengthen Mobile's oil and gas advantages," said **David Rodgers**, the Mobile Area Chamber's senior project manager. 



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Nearly \$50 Million Expansion Planned at Mobile's Container Terminal

The Alabama State Port Authority (ASPA) and APM Terminals Mobile announced a \$49.5 million expansion of the container facility at the Port of Mobile. This "Phase 3" expansion includes a dock extension and an additional 20 acres of improved yard to maintain capacity and accommodate new business opportunities. When completed, the project will accommodate an annual throughput capacity of 650,000 twenty-foot equivalent units (TEUs).

"The expansion enables us to stay well ahead of the growth pattern we've seen in the Port of Mobile, as well as add dock

space to support the growing vessel sizes that are coming to the terminal," said **Brian Harold**, managing director for APM Terminals.


This is the third phase of a five-phase long-term plan to grow the terminal's annual capacity to 1.5 million TEUs. Port Authority officials say the dock extension will take approximately 24 months to complete, while the yard will take 18 months to complete.

"Container intermodal growth continues to drive investment at the Port of Mobile," said **James K. Lyons**, chief executive of ASPA. Since 2005, the Port Authority and its

partners have invested \$535 million in shore-side and channel improvements to support the larger ships arriving at the Port of Mobile.

"The container terminal expansion continues to be a huge asset and tool for our economic development efforts, especially with distribution and logistics projects. With the phased expansions, we are able to continue to show the growth potential regarding containerized cargo in Mobile to major companies like Walmart and Amazon," said **David Rodgers**, senior project manager for the Mobile Area Chamber.

"These prior investments have competitively positioned the port and established Mobile as an alternate gateway for U.S. trade. This expansion and our planned harbor deepening and widening program will provide both shippers and carriers with a cost effective, customer service oriented option," said Lyons.

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers harbor modernization study is underway, with a record of decision expected by year-end 2019. 

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Executive Entrepreneurial Training Program Returns to Mobile

After a successful inaugural Emerging Leaders program in 2017, the U.S. Small Business Administration has again selected Mobile as one of only 60 cities nationwide to offer this intensive entrepreneurial education series for small businesses.

This program provides the framework for entrepreneurs to work on their business instead of in their business, providing even the most established companies the knowledge and skills necessary to avoid a plateau on revenues, employees and markets.

Participants will analyze all aspects of their businesses and

discover new, beneficial approaches to running them. In addition to completing relevant and challenging coursework, the class also features CEO breakout teams and expert speakers. Upon completing the course, participants will have a three-year growth action plan and a network of peers and industry experts.


"We are proud to secure this program again. In 2017, all 20 participants graduated from the program and are reporting new strengths in their strategic vision leading to sustainable growth," said **Danette Richards**, director of the Chamber's small business

development department.

The class is limited to 20 business owners or key executives. Criteria includes:

- Annual revenues between \$400,000 and \$10 million;
- In business for at least three years;
- At least one employee other than the owner; and
- A significant time commitment: approximately 100 hours of combined classroom, homework and peer-to-peer mentoring.

Participation is free. The only cost is your time and commitment to complete the curriculum over the course of seven months.

Applications are being accepted through March 23. The course runs every other Tuesday, April 10 to Oct. 23. For more information, contact **Brent McMahan** at brent.mcmahan@sba.gov or 251-544-7401 or **Danette Richards** at drichards@mobilechamber.com or 251-431-8652. 



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Jobs for Mobile's Youth



In March 2017, thousands of young people said they wanted an opportunity to work in the summer when they applied for the Summer Youth Employment Program. This summer, the city will again host this program, and more local companies are encouraged to sign on to hire local youth for a six-week program. To learn how your business can participate, contact Anitra Henderson at 251-208-7806 or anitra.henderson@cityofmobile.org. Pictured left to right are Rory Beaco, USA Career Services; Allen Merryman, Career and Technical Education, MCPSS; Kristi July, Workforce Development, MCPSS; Larry Mouton, Asst. Superintendent for Workforce Development, MCPSS; Lisa Austin, Hangout Hospitality Group; Mayor Sandy Stimpson, City of Mobile; Mayor Robert Craft, City of Gulf Shores; Shameka Brock, LuLu's Restaurant; Taylor Rider, BRATS; Tony Marzullo, Spectrum Resorts; Gwen Polk, Meyers Vacation Rental; Thomas Willis, Meyers Vacation Rental; Dr. Evelyn Green, Hospitality & Tourism Workforce Alliance, USA; and Blake Phelps, Economic Development, City of Gulf Shores.

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CertaPro serves clients on both sides of Mobile Bay. Pictured above are team members, front row, (L-R): Stacey Bryce; Jeff Cobb; Waylon Dinkins; Steve Carey, owner; Gary Sanders, Tommy Johnston and Arlene Morales. Back row (L-R): Yadir Gonzales; Richard Latady, office manager; Brent Ericson, general manager; and Bryce Logan.

CertaPro Makes Painting a Personal Experience

What does a U.S. Air Force officer do when it's time to retire? He looks for the next challenge.

After a military career that included flying combat missions in Desert Storm and commanding the College of Aerospace Doctrine, Research and Education and the Air Force Doctrine Center at the Air University at Maxwell AFB, **Col. Steve Carey (Ret.)** embarked on a new career.

In 2008, he formed Domani Inc., and opened a residential and commercial painting business: **CertaPro Painters of Mobile and Baldwin Counties.** The Daphne-based company has enjoyed rapid growth, doubling production in three years and establishing itself as a

premier painting company in southern Alabama and the Gulf Coast.

In 2009, it was recognized as CertaPro's Southeast Rookie Franchise of the Year, and in 2010 was the company's top development franchise in North America.

CertaPro Painters of Mobile and Baldwin Counties is the Mobile Area Chamber's Small Business of the Month.

Capable of handling a wide range of residential and commercial jobs, Carey's franchise has grown by delivering a high standard of service. CertaPro customizes its work schedule to a customer's daily routine or business hours and keeps a supervisor on-site during the project to keep

customers informed and address any concerns throughout the process to ensure satisfaction.

"My team works hard to make painting a personal experience for our homeowners and commercial clients," Carey said. "In 10 years, we have painted over 2,000 homes and commercial projects, totaling nearly \$9.5 million."

Carey is very involved in the community. He is a past chairman of the Chamber's Military Affairs Committee; currently serves on the Alabama Red Cross board of directors; is president of the South Alabama Air Force Association; and represents Mobile on Alabama's Aviation Hall of Fame board of directors.

In 2015, he was elected as president of the Mobile Area Veterans' Day Commission, which is responsible for all major Veterans' Day events in Mobile.

He is a recent graduate of the Chamber-hosted U.S. Small Business Administration's Emerging Leaders program and is chairman of the Daphne Industrial Development Board, which is responsible for the Daphne Innovation and Science Complex, a 75-acre professional and technological park project.

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to submit an application, or
contact Danette Richards
at 251-431-8652 or
drichards@mobilechamber.com.



How the New Tax Law Will Affect Businesses: A Summary

By Briley E. Shirah, Russell Thompson Butler & Houston LLP

Recently, President Donald Trump signed the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act into law. Given the magnitude of the act, the following are some of the most pertinent changes affecting businesses:

Corporate Taxes

- Permanently reduces the corporate tax rate to 21 percent.
- Repeals the alternative minimum tax on corporations.

Bonus Depreciation/Section 179 Expensing

- Temporarily increases the 50-percent "bonus depreciation" allowance to 100 percent. It also allows bonus depreciation on the purchase of used property.
- Sets the Code Sec. 179 limitation at \$1 million and

the investment limitation at \$2.5 million.

Deductions

Numerous changes were made to business tax deductions, including the following:

- Elimination of DPAD (manufacturing deduction).
- Elimination of non-real property like-kind exchanges, entertainment expenses and more.
- Business meals rules are revised.
- Caps the deduction for net interest expenses at 30 percent of adjusted taxable income, among other criteria. Exceptions exist for small businesses, including an exemption for businesses with average gross receipts of \$25 million or less.

Net Operating Losses (NOLs)

- Limits deduction of NOLs to 80 percent of taxable income for losses arising in tax years beginning after Dec. 31, 2017.
- Denies carryback for NOLs in most cases while providing for an indefinite carryforward, subject to the percentage limitation.

Pass-Through Business Income

- Temporary deduction allowed in an amount equal to 20 percent of qualified income from pass-through entities, subject to a number of limitations and qualifications.
- Creates rules that will prevent pass-through owners – particularly service providers such as accountants,

doctors, lawyers, etc. – from converting their compensation income taxed at higher rates into profits taxed at the lower rate.

These changes are generally effective for 2018 and will expire in 2025. As suggested above, the act contains many more changes than what is presented here.

Additionally, specific interpretation and necessary implementation guidance have yet to be provided – so there is much more to come on this topic.

Briley E. Shirah CPA is a partner at Russell Thompson Butler & Houston LLP, a local accounting and consulting firm with offices in Mobile and Fairhope. Contact him at 251-473-5550 or visit the firm's website, www.rtbh.com.



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What They Said at the Tax Forum

In January, the Mobile Area Chamber hosted a forum of bi-partisan panelists to discuss recently approved federal tax policy. With more than 100 people in attendance, Nick Johnston with Axios served as moderator. If you missed the presentation, the Chamber filmed it in its entirety and it is posted on the Chamber's Facebook page at facebook.com/MobileChamber. Below are some of the panelists' comments on the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act of 2017 and its anticipated impact on businesses.



"When the Congressional Budget Office will access the budget picture of spending over the next 10 years, it will tally everything that's been done to date – the tax

bill and all changes made to date, including the final decisions on the budget for the year. It will be a wakeup call, I have a feeling. I think what it's going to show is that even the positive growth effects from tax reform, it will show a deficit of nearly a trillion dollars a year for the next 10 years.

There are structural imbalances in our federal government related to demographic changes going on in our country, the aging of our country, rising healthcare costs and other factors. At some point we as a nation have to figure out how to deal with the structural imbalances."

Sandy Davis
Bipartisan Policy Center



"The biggest problem in our economy before this tax bill – in recent decades really – is that folks at the top are pulling further away and working middle class families are feeling

left behind. There's been good business growth in recent years, but it's not being spread fairly. I think this tax bill just puts the gas on this growing inequality. If you look in Alabama, the top 1 percent of taxpayers will see a 90 times bigger tax break than those in the bottom 80 percent."

Alex Rowell
Center for American Progress

"We have a tremendous amount of regulatory implementation (taking place at the end of the first quarter) and you are going to see states react and you're going to see foreign countries react and changes in foreign direct investment and economic behaviors. As we go down the road we're going to see changes in capital equipment and investment and long range strategies (of business owners). We've taken a tremendous first step but let's be patient, and let's wait for this to play out. Economic impacts are not going to take weeks. They are going to take months and years."

Caroline Harris
U.S. Chamber of Commerce



"As a full package, a year ago we had the highest corporate tax rate in the developed world. Businesses were not investing in the economy like they should. A federal

reserve report showed that investment per worker was about 8 percent below trend, meaning that businesses were not investing in their own business – expansions, in new factories, in new equipment. What this bill does – it reverses that.

"The growth that will come from this plan is where we should always return, when we start pointing out some of [the plan's] flaws."

Adam Michael
Heritage Foundation



"There are changes that will make it easier for companies to bring back the \$3 trillion that they've held overseas. We're already seeing some of that happen.

For the first time this bill introduces a difference between the tax rate on business income and tax rate on earnings. It is a very significant difference. It means somebody like me – if I can persuade my employer to let me be an independent contractor instead of an employee – my taxes go way down. Or if you are in a partnership or you are a small business, if you can get more of your compensation in the form of profit as opposed to earnings you will be able to lower your tax liability. This is going to lead to all sorts of complicated gains. I would say this is probably the most massive intervention of taxes in the economy because it gets at the very essence of how businesses organize themselves."

Eric Toder
Urban-Brookings Tax Policy Center

"The breadth of the change is far greater than you have read in the media, in part because it doesn't make a lot of interesting reading for someone to go through the 400 code changes within the 1,000-page joint committee report.

Before January [2018], if a city or a county or a state gave an economic development incentive to a corporation that corporation could have that not count as part of income. After January 1, for all new incentives, it does become part of income for that corporation."

Johnny Lyle
Adams & Reese



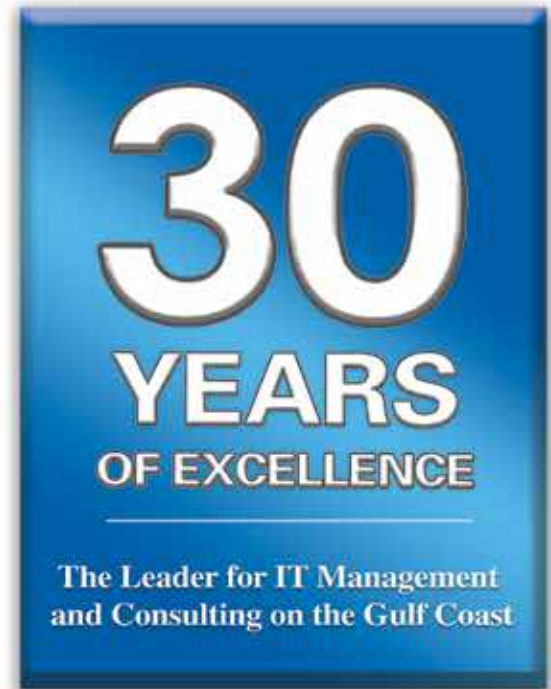
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STATE OF THE ECONOMY MOBILE

Last year, the Mobile Area Chamber hosted the State of the Economy event. The event spotlighted four major industries relevant to the Mobile area's economy – distribution, downtown development, shipbuilding and information technology.

On the following pages is information presented by panelists Brian Harold with APM Terminals, John Peebles with NAI Mobile, Craig Perciavalle with Austal and Jimmy Lyons with The SSI Group.



Economic Outlook Alabama Business Confidence Index (ABCI)

The Center for Business and Economic Research at The University of Alabama develops a quarterly business confidence index measuring economic expectations for the upcoming quarter. The information is gathered with assistance from the Mobile Area Chamber, from a broad group of business executives across the state. With six key indicators and a composite index, panelists are able to take the pulse of the state's economy as well as compare their own forecasts to those of their peers.

Mobile Metro Area Industry Performance Expectations Q4 - 2017

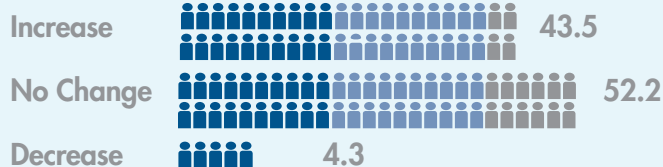
SALES



PROFITS



HIRING



CAPITAL EXPENDITURES



Source: Alabama Business Confidence Index, The University of Alabama Culverhouse College of Commerce

Mobile Overview

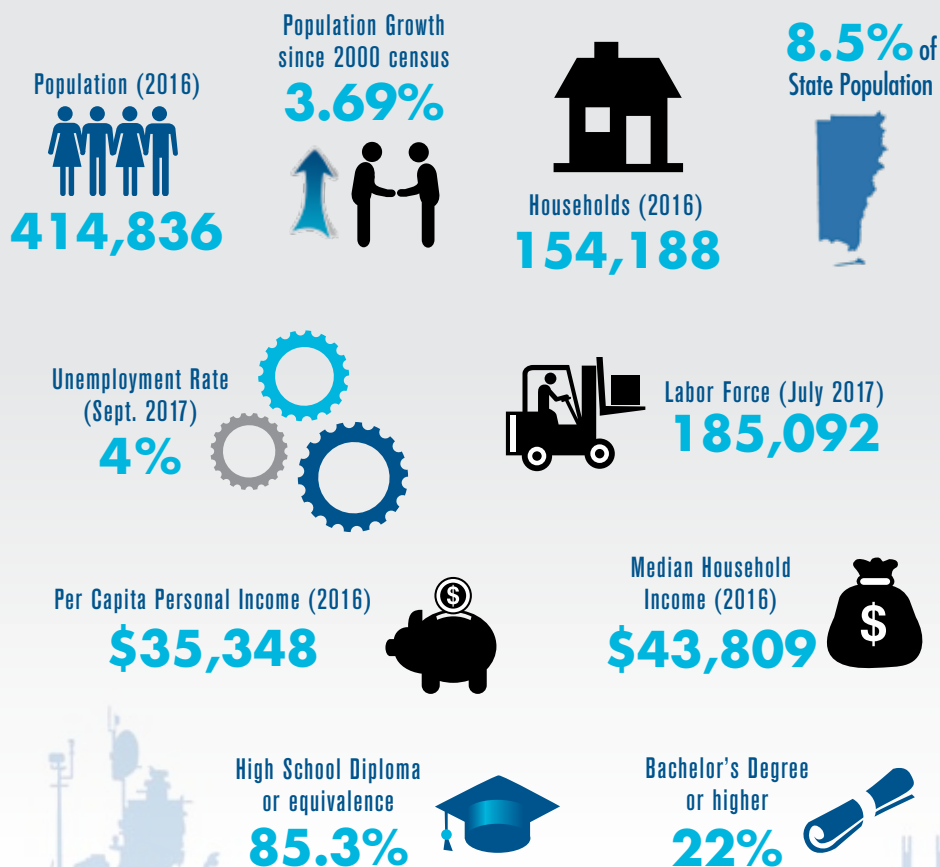
Covering 1,644 square miles, Mobile County comprises the Mobile Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA).

With a 2016 estimated population of 414,836, Mobile is Alabama's third-largest metro area, home to 8.5 percent of the state's population. Since 2000, the Mobile metro has grown by 3.69 percent.

Educational attainment levels in the Mobile metro area continue to improve with 85.3 percent of the population (adults 25-plus) earning a high school diploma, and 22 percent (adults 25-plus) earning a bachelor's degree or higher.

Founded in 1702, Mobile is one of the oldest cities in the United States. Our rich history is matched with a fast-growing modern community focused on the future.

Full of Southern charm and hospitality, Mobile gives rise to countless business opportunities. Over the last decade, Mobile's economic development efforts garnered \$8.47 billion in capital investment and 15,771 jobs at new and existing companies.



Source: StatsAmerica, U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, U.S. Census



Mobile's extensive transportation infrastructure keeps business on the move. Major rail, waterway and highway systems converge at the Port of Mobile to link businesses with the nation and the world.

Mobile-area companies benefit greatly from the multi-modal transportation infrastructure and the commitment by local and state authorities for ongoing investment.

Domestic and global leaders such as AM/NS Calvert, BASF, Kimberly Clark, Outokumpu and many other companies are shipping throughout the U.S. and world markets within days at costs lower than many other locations.

Recent Announcements in Distribution

Amazon - Distribution

Amazon announced its first investment in the state of Alabama will be a sortation center in Mobile.

APM Terminals - Container Terminal

Recent investment is expanding the container yard and includes two super-Post Panamax ship-to-shore cranes.

Walmart - Distribution

The company will build a 2.5 million-square-foot facility, direct-import distribution center in Mobile.



APM Terminals Mobile Destinations

Algeria	Haiti
Antigua	Italy
Argentina	Jamaica
Aruba	Japan
Barbados	Korea
Belgium	Lebanon
Belize	Martinique
Brazil	Mexico
Canary Islands	Morocco
Chile	Netherlands
China	Peru
Colombia	Poland
Curacao	Scotland
Dominica	South Africa
Dominican Republic	Spain
Ecuador	St. Kitts
Egypt	St. Lucia
England	St. Martin
France	St. Vincent
Germany	Tobago
Greece	Trinidad
Grenada	Turkey
Guadelupe	Venezuela

Source: Alabama State Port Authority

Source: Alabama Seaport Magazine

Distribution Facts:

- There are 1,086 jobs in distribution-related industries. The average salary is \$46,763 (2016).
- According to the *Journal of Commerce*, the Port of Mobile was the fastest growing container port in North America in 2016, with 19 percent growth.
- The total volume of containerized cargo at APM Terminals Mobile has more than doubled since 2010; 269,106 TEUs (twenty foot equivalent units) in fiscal year 2016.

Source: Alabama State Port Authority

Source: Alabama Seaport Magazine

What they said during the State of the Economy* Brian Harold, APM Terminals



Mobile's ship channel must be deepened. We need to get to 50 feet depth – now at 45 feet.

Walmart – Inquiries significantly increasing because of the distribution center. Walmart imports an estimated 350k containers annually.

Port of Mobile – fastest-growing in North America in 2016 and expected to be there again this year. Expected 20% growth.

*As captured by the Mobile Area Chamber of Commerce on its Twitter page – twitter.com/MobileChamber

More and more, people who work downtown, and even those who simply enjoy the city, are finding they want to live downtown. This new interest in urban living has created a shortage of residential options that is finally being addressed.

Over the past 12 months, six new multifamily housing developments have either broken ground, have been placed in service or have been announced. The

largest is Meridian at the Port, a \$51 million project that will offer 267 units on the west bank of the Mobile River. This game-changing project will create demand for new downtown services and provide a steady stream of customers to existing businesses.

The downtown Mobile office sub-market remained stable with 1.975 million square feet of office space in 28 buildings.

Overall occupancy increased from 76 percent to 78 percent from 2015 to 2016. Approximately 80,000 square feet was removed from the 2015 report as two properties were sold and are being redeveloped. The market absorbed over 49,000 square feet of office space and the average asking rent rose \$0.58 to \$18 per square foot.



\$420M

new investments downtown
completed and announced since 2013



1,619

Downtown Hotel Rooms

51

Downtown Restaurants

Source: Downtown Mobile Alliance



Downtown Residential Developments

Name	Address	Units	Phase	Investment
Meridian at the Port	300 N. Water St.	267	Pre-Construction	\$ 51.0M
Temple Lodge	558 St. Francis St.	12	Under Construction	\$ 2.7M
Gayfer's	165 Dauphin St.	60	In Design	\$11.9M
360 Dauphin Street	360 Dauphin St.	8	Leasing	\$1.5M
Russell School	304 S. Broad St.	26	Leasing/In Service	\$4.6M
Staples-Pake	100 N. Royal St.	20	Under Construction	\$6.0M
Marine Street Lofts	901 Government St.	48	Placed in Service	\$6.0M
Fort of Colonial Mobile	150 S. Royal St.	131	In Design	\$58.0M
Seaman's Bethel	350 St. Joseph St.	60	In Design	\$6.0M
Merchants Plaza	106 St. Francis St.	84	In Design	\$35.0M

716

\$182.75M

Source: Downtown Mobile Alliance

What they said during the State of the Economy* John Peebles, NAI Mobile



Rentals in downtown market have remained stable. Office spaces range from \$18 sq. ft. plus on high end Class A.

Food service in downtown – there are 51 restaurants in downtown Mobile – a “cosmic transformation.”

Mobile's office market downtown has absorbed a vast amount of new space in eight years. Much was renovation of existing space.

Food service economy 1,000 - 2,000 employees offering flexibility, entry level employment and enhanced downtown quality of life.

*As captured by the Mobile Area Chamber of Commerce on its Twitter page – twitter.com/MobileChamber



Mobile is home to 39 shipbuilding companies employing more than 5,700 workers. There are three major shipbuilding and/or repair facilities along Mobile's waterfront, including Austal, BAE Systems Southeast Shipyards and Signal Ship Repair. Many smaller maritime-related companies are located throughout the Mobile Bay region.

Austal is the fifth largest shipyard in the United States, the largest aluminum shipbuilder in the world, and one of the largest private employers in Alabama. The company successfully captured and is executing two Navy shipbuilding programs, the Independence-variant Littoral Combat Ship (LCS) and Expeditionary Fast Transport (EPF), both presently valued at more than \$6.4 billion.

Shipbuilding Facts:

- Between 2010 and 2015, shipbuilding employment in Mobile nearly doubled with an increase of 92 percent – an addition of 2,748 jobs.
- During the same time period, wages in Mobile's shipbuilding sector increased by 13 percent.
- Within the private sector, the shipbuilding industry in Mobile had an annual payroll of \$353.25 million in 2015 – second only to physician offices.
- Mobile ranks 3rd in the concentration of shipbuilding workers among U.S. metros.
- Nearly 70 percent of shipbuilding employees in Mobile are employed by Austal – the second largest manufacturer in the state of Alabama.



What they said during the State of the Economy* Craig Perciavalle, Austal USA

Austal USA is the 5th largest shipbuilder in the country.

Austal has grown from 800 employees in 2008 to 4800 in 2016. They have 768 U.S. suppliers, of which 214 are in Alabama cos. (30%)

Cost of an LCS is \$475M and EPF \$200M and 6 LCS and 8 EPF around the world. Ships in U.S., Bahrain, Japan, Singapore and Croatia.

**As captured by the Mobile Area Chamber of Commerce on its Twitter page – twitter.com/MobileChamber*

Economic Outlook

Information Technology

The Mobile Area Chamber is working to transform the area's economy to take advantage of strengths in four IT areas: software development, communications, IT manufacturing and services, and digital media.

Leading occupational job categories in the Mobile area include software and systems software developers, computer systems analysts, computer programmers and computer-user support specialists.



As the focal point for technology connections in south Alabama and the central Gulf Coast, the Mobile Area Chamber's Gulf Coast Technology Council (GCTC) is helping transform the area's economy to take advantage of strengths in three areas: healthcare IT, communications and IT services. GCTC administers a scholarship fund for local technology students, aiming to grow a highly-skilled technology workforce to serve local companies. Mobile offers distinct advantages over more established IT hotbeds around the country, including a lower cost of living, strong talent pool, high quality of life and outstanding healthcare. Mobile is cultivating a downtown entrepreneurial hub with amenities to support tech-savvy start-ups.

What they said during the State of the Economy* Jimmy Lyons, *The SSI Group*



Every two years advances in computer technology double.

Over the next five years, SSI will be moving into block chain solutions, and the Internet of things to support the healthcare industry.

SSI Group has 400 employees, of which 30 are engineers. They have five locations and have made five acquisitions in last five years.

**As captured by the Mobile Area Chamber of Commerce on its Twitter page – twitter.com/MobileChamber*



The Gulf Coast Technology Council announced the 2017 recipients of its scholarship fund. Pictured above are (seated from left to right) Broderick Morrisette, Chad Austin, Deashlon Knight, Lakendra Bruno, Brittany Eccles and Mason Mesler, all from the University of South Alabama and who received various scholarships totaling \$8,500.

Standing are the scholarship contributors from left to right: Alp Konakkuran, MCG Business Solutions; Marcio Dal Pont, MCG Business Solutions; Elizabeth Donald, MCG Business Solutions; Trey St. John, Logical Computer Solutions; Hunter Elmore, Star Service Inc.; Josh Trippi, Ship Architects, Inc.; Don Roy, TekLinks; GCTC Scholarship Chairman John Strobe, Dogwood Productions; and Todd Hassel, Prism Systems Inc.

Scholarship contributors not pictured: Pilot Catastrophe Services, Esfeller Construction, Remington College, Meador Warehousing & Distribution, ASM Recycling, Bay Steel Corp., Oil Recovery Co., Rural Sourcing Inc., Sirius Technical Services, Bayside Rubber & Products Inc., Gulf Electric Co. Mobile Ship Chandlery, MRC Global, Orion Engineering, Radcliff/Economy Marine Services, Smith Industrial Services, Williams Financial Group and Williams Foundation.

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More than 125 people attended the reception, including past Chamber chairs, board members, Annual Meeting sponsors and Partners for Growth investors.

Chairman's Reception

In January the Mobile Area Chamber held its chairman's reception in honor of its outgoing board chair, Liz Freeman with Long's Human Resource Services, and incoming chair Brian Willman with Regions Bank. The reception was hosted by presenting sponsor Trustmark Bank.



David Clark with Visit Mobile and Kevin Ball with Ball Healthcare Services were guests at the reception.



Freeman and Willman have spent the last year working together as chair and incoming chair of the Chamber. Willman was officially introduced to Chamber membership at the Annual Meeting held in February.

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Riding the Positive Momentum

Engagement, Communication Key to 2018

Brian Willman sees ample opportunity in 2018 to capitalize on the Port City's robust job growth while nurturing its ever-expanding entrepreneurial ecosystem.

And as incoming chairman of the Mobile Area Chamber's board of directors, the veteran banker says the wheel need not be reinvented to perpetuate recent successes so long as honesty, integrity and adaptability remain central to doing business.

"There are always new and innovative ways to tweak what we do, and it all boils down to enhancing the support our members receive," said Willman, Regions' area president for South Alabama and the Florida Panhandle. "That takes continuous evaluation and a commitment to communicating better to our members how policies affect business, but I certainly don't think things are broken by any stretch."

In turn, incorporating best practices at every turn while continuing to encourage public-private partnerships should position the Chamber to capitalize on shrinking unemployment rates and big-ticket economic development announcements without sacrificing support for the local economy's true backbone – small business.

"I'm excited about this (new role) because it's very important to me that all of our members receive the appropriate level of support to sustain their growth," he said. "There's no question these big (economic development) announcements are invigorating – and a testament to the solid work performed day-in and day-out by the Chamber – but we can't forget about the medium to small businesses that help our economy grow each and every day. My priority is to make certain every single member sees value in every dollar they invest with the Chamber and that we exist solely to help them grow their businesses."

Willman also noted that while sheer job numbers associated with recent announcements – be it the already-hiring Amazon sortation center, Walmart distribution center or long-term plan to add an additional Airbus assembly line at Mobile Aeroplex at Brookley – are encouraging, he takes particular pride in grassroots projects such as the Chamber's Innovation PortAL.

"The PortAL hits all the right notes for me because it brings together so many different networks and introduces entirely new business development avenues to the area, but mainly I'm encouraged by the support system it creates for entrepreneurs," he said of the tech-centered business incubator, which is part of a St. Louis Street revival in the heart of the city's business district.

In a stronger economy, however, people tend to "lose sight of what's really important," so Willman encouraged all following

the Chamber's progress in 2018 to remain focused on the primary objective.

"As a team, we want to see engaged members who realize value in every single dollar they spend, and that means getting everyone involved – whether it's the Chamber staff or board or me – and communicating clearly and concisely that we are happy to help them in any way we can to grow their businesses and continue to be part of the positive momentum in our area," he said.

“My priority is to make certain every single member – no matter how small – sees value in every dollar they invest with the Chamber and that we exist solely to help them grow their businesses.”

Brian Willman
*Mobile Area Chamber
2018 Board Chair*

Annual Meeting Presentations

Miss the stories told by the owners or managers of four Mobile Area Chamber members at our Annual Meeting? We've linked them to our YouTube account. Or watch our Facebook and Twitter feeds. They will run again. You'll also be able to view the presentations made during our meeting and photos from the big event.



Photo by Jeff Tesney

Help Us Find the Mobile Area Chamber's Next Small Business of the Year

One of the ways the Mobile Area Chamber shines a spotlight on our small business community is in recognizing three finalists and one winner of its Small Business of the Year award.

Applications for the 2018 award are due Friday, April 6.

Companies that exemplify business and civic leadership are encouraged to complete the application. Community involvement, growth in employment, number of years in business and overall financial performance are the primary criteria requested in the application process.

"We were honored to be named 2017 Small Business of the Year by the Mobile Area Chamber of Commerce. It's a testament to the Chamber's commitment to showcasing growing businesses in nontraditional industries and highlighting Mobile's burgeoning creative sector," said **Chad Kirtland**, vice president of production for 3 Echoes Productions.

Candidates may be nominated by individuals, customers or vendors, or they may self-nominate. The Chamber will contact nominees and provide instructions on the

application process. Applicants will complete and submit an application package for review by an independent volunteer committee. The committee will select three finalists that will be honored at the Chamber's Expo and Small Business Awards Breakfast on Thursday, Aug. 23, where the winner will be revealed. All finalists will be nominated to the U.S. Chamber of Commerce's Dream Big Small Business of the Year competition.

For additional details and qualifying criteria, visit www.mobilechamber.com/ small business or contact

Danette Richards at drichards@mobilechamber.com or 251-431-8652.

Dates to Remember

Applications Due: April 6

Awards Breakfast: Aug. 23



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The Mobile Area Chamber recognized Infirmary Health as its 2017 Corporate Community Service Award winner at its Annual Meeting in February. Pictured is the organization's iHelp: Giving Back to our Community committee.

Infirmary Health Recognized as Corporate Community Service Award Winner

With nearly 14,000 volunteer hours dedicated to 153 community causes, events and nonprofit organizations last year, Infirmary Health employees again demonstrated the power of giving to promote a healthy community.

Through education programs, support groups, health fairs, community screenings, corporate gifts, sponsorships and more, Infirmary employees walked for breast cancer awareness, rallied for heart health, focused on fitness and gave to hurricane relief, prepared holiday meals for the homeless and held blood drives.

The organization focuses on three standout programs:

- In partnership with Mobile County Public Schools, Infirmary employees mentor high school seniors with intellectual and developmental challenges to help them find gainful employment through Project Search, first launched in 2013. To date, 38 interns graduated and 29 of them have jobs, including five with Mobile Infirmary and affiliates.
- Throughout its 11-county coverage area, Infirmary Health strives to have cancer and heart health screenings in every county,

every year. And, since the health system began its drug education program, more than 100,000 students have participated.

- A somewhat new relationship with Reese's Senior Bowl took Infirmary's Big Brothers Big Sisters program into the end zone. Bigs and their littles made cards for the players, got their footballs signed and had a pizza lunch.

These volunteer efforts earned Infirmary Health the 2017 Corporate Community Service Award given by the Junior League of Mobile and the Mobile Area Chamber.



Community Bank's headquarters are located off the Beltline at I-65.

Community Bank

Company officials: Oliver Latil IV, president and regional CEO; and Roy Hudson, Alabama market president

Years in business:
Established 1907 in Forest, Miss.

Brief company description:

Community Bank was chartered more than 100 years ago in a small east Mississippi timber town. By employing a unique approach to one of America's most routine industries, today Community Bank has grown to a \$3 billion regional bank with 47 offices and 750 staff members serving communities in Alabama, Florida, Mississippi and Tennessee. Locally, Community Bank has four locations in the greater

Mobile area. Community Bank's success starts with its people. All staff members are owners and shareholders through the bank's Employee Stock Ownership Plan. Community Bank has been recognized both regionally and nationally as a "Best Places to Work."

Why are you located in Mobile?

"Community Bank's growth strategy targets communities that are economically diverse and growing," said Latil. "Mobile's combination of interstates, ports and rail make it a natural hub for commerce and industry. Plus, Mobile is a great place to live, work and raise a family. Community Bank's expansion in 2007 into Mobile and Baldwin County was a perfect fit."

Why do you support the Mobile Area Chamber of Commerce's Partners for Growth initiative? "Banks perform only as well as the local economy," said Latil. "Community Bank has invested significant capital resources in Mobile. We are committed to efforts that support and expand Mobile's economy. We are proud to join PFG (Partners for Growth) in promoting economic development and job creation for Mobile."

What do you see as Mobile's greatest potential? "Mobile's strength is its people," said Latil. "Mobile's most recent success in distribution and aeronautics demonstrates the capacities of our workforce. It is vital we

continue to improve workforce development to attract more business to Mobile. With the best people, in the best place, the sky is the limit for Mobile."

Length of continuous Chamber membership:
Since 2007



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

here's to those who inspire us and don't even know it...

Thank you

member appreciation day

thursday, march 22

4 to 6 p.m.

mobile area chamber of commerce, 451 government st.



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Join us March 22 on the Chamber Lawn

Join us for the eighth annual Member Appreciation Day on Thursday, March 22, and let the Mobile Area Chamber staff thank you for your membership investment, volunteer support and your desire to improve Mobile.

Members allow the Chamber to be a progressive advocate for business needs to promote the area's economic well-being.

This year's party will include a fish fry and live music by The Tommy Morse Band.

Drop by for food and fun on the lawn, and while there let Chamber staff talk with you about how to get more involved with the Chamber.

On hand will be staff from communications and marketing, economic development, community and governmental affairs, membership, small business, international trade, business retention and expansion and workforce development to talk with you on a variety of topics, including getting the most out of your membership, upcoming networking events, an overview of jobs/investment coming to Mobile and more.

It's a great way to spend an afternoon making new business contacts.

FAST FACTS

What: Member Appreciation Day

When: Thursday, March 22 from 4 to 6 p.m.

Where: Chamber Lawn and Atrium, 451 Government St.

For more information: Contact Farren Webb at 251-431-8617 or fwebb@mobilechamber.com

Why attend?

- Drop by to meet Chamber staff and allow us to thank you for your support.
- Fish fry catered by Creative Catering
- Live music provided by The Tommy Morse Band

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BOARD of advisors

Barbara Drummond is chair of the Mobile Area Water and Sewer System (MAWSS) board. She also serves as representative for Alabama House District 103. She is the former executive director of administrative services and community affairs for the City of Mobile, and former public affairs and community services director for the Mobile County Commission. Prior to government service, she was a reporter and columnist for the *Mobile Press-Register*. She holds a bachelor's degree in communications from the University of South Alabama. A graduate of Leadership Mobile and Leadership Alabama, she has served on numerous civic boards, receiving several national awards for her leadership. MAWSS is a Partners for Growth investor.



Duncan Gillis is CEO of BBB Industries, a privately held leading manufacturer of rotating electrical components, braking parts and steering systems for the automotive aftermarket industry. Previously, he was president and CEO of John Crane Group; president and CEO of Algeco Scotsman Group; and held several leadership positions with United Technologies Corp., including president of the Global Security Products Group and president of Carrier's Asia-Pacific region while based in Singapore. Gillis earned bachelor's and master's degrees from Cornell University, and served as an infantry officer (Airborne Ranger qualified) in the U.S. Army. He recently served as a board member of the National Association of Manufacturers.



Michael S. Williams is president of Outokumpu Americas, including a fully integrated stainless steel mill in Calvert; a stainless steel finishing plant in San Luis Potosi, Mexico; and a service center in Buenos Aires, Argentina. He also serves as a member of Outokumpu's leadership team. Williams joined Outokumpu from United States Steel Corp., where he served in a number of leadership roles, ultimately as senior vice president, strategic planning and business development. Previously, he was vice president of commercial products at Special Metals Corp. and chairman and CEO of Ormet Corp. He holds a bachelor's degree in information science with a minor in economics from the University of Pittsburgh. Outokumpu 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.

Jena Berson Named Director of Business Retention and Expansion

Jena Berson was recently named director of business retention and expansion in the Mobile Area Chamber's economic development department. She will oversee three integral member committees: business retention and expansion; Offshore Alabama.com, the oil and gas task force; and the Gulf Coast Technology Council.



Berson

Berson brings 20 years of experience in public and government affairs. She served on Capitol Hill in Washington D.C., in the offices of several U.S. senators, as well as in the government affairs offices at the General Aviation Manufacturers Association and Clear Channel Communications.

"Serving at the Chamber allows me to play an active role in ensuring Mobile's businesses continue to thrive and grow," said Berson.

She most recently served as director of community initiatives for The Community Foundation of South Alabama and as director of local affairs for the City of Mobile.

Berson holds a bachelor's degree in political communications from Louisiana State University. She is a member of the Mobile Area Education Foundation's Evidence 2 Success Community Board.

Berson can be reached at **251-431-8654** or **jberson@mobilechamber.com**.

AMBASSADOR of the month



Photo by Jeff Tesney

Phillip Moore, the Mobile Area Chamber's ambassador of the month, is a leasing agent/Realtor at **AHI Properties**, a full-service property management company for Mobile and Baldwin counties. Moore chaired the ambassadors last year, and joined the program eight years ago.

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

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Natalie Franklin Joins the Chamber's Economic Development Department

Natalie Franklin was recently named coordinator of administrative services in the Mobile Area Chamber's economic development department. She is responsible for the overall coordination of the economic development department activities and assists the vice president of the department with administrative duties.

Franklin graduated from the University of South Alabama, where she earned a bachelor's degree in communications. She was an editor for *The Vanguard*, the student-run newspaper, and



Franklin

the editor-in-chief of *Due South*, the student-run magazine.

"Natalie's talents and communication skills fit perfectly with our efforts to continuously market the Mobile region,"

said **David Rodgers**, senior project manager for the business development division.

"It's very impressive to see how the Chamber works to grow and improve the business climate of Mobile. I'm honored to be a part of this team," said Franklin.

Franklin can be reached at **251-431-8636** or **nfranklin@mobilechamber.com**.



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MARCH 2018

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

13-14 AIDT LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT TRAINING LSI

AIDT Leadership Development training programs introduce team leaders, supervisors and managers to effective leadership responsibilities, communication skills, teamwork 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 members/\$60 for nonmembers, includes course materials, lunch and snack

Contact: Kayley Edwards at 251-431-8629 or kedwards@mobilechamber.com

Reservations are required and no cancellations after March 6. Class size is limited to 25.

14 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: Taziki's Mediterranean Café, 9 Du Rhu Drive, Legacy Village

Cost: \$10, includes lunch and must be paid with reservation

Contact: Ferren Webb at 251-431-8617 or fwebb@mobilechamber.com

Sponsor:

20 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: Mike Lee, president and CEO, Page & Jones Inc.

Topic: "Build the I-10 Bridge Update"

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

No charge, but RSVP requested. Free parking.

Sponsor:

21 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: Dorothy Dorton, associate state director, AARP

Topic: "Resources and Collaboration Opportunities"

Contact: Carolyn Golson at 251-431-8622 or cgolson@mobilechamber.com

No charge, but seating is limited. RSVP requested.

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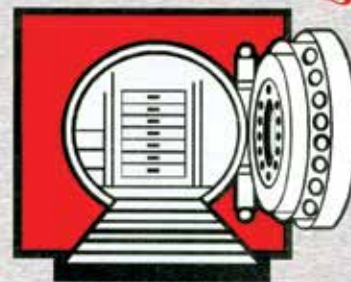
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22 MEMBER APPRECIATION DAY

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

When: 4 to 6 p.m.

Where: Mobile Area Chamber, 451 Government St.

Contact: Farren Webb at 251-431-8617 or fwebb@mobilechamber.com

No charge. Free parking.

Sponsors:



See page 27 for more information.

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with the Chamber >>



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Mobile Area Chamber

2018 SPRING EVENTS



Easter Egg Hunt
and Breakfast with the Easter Bunny
Saturday, March 24



Easter Sunrise Service
Sunday, April 1



Camellia Classic Car Show
Saturday, April 7



National Public Gardens Day
Friday, May 11

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Who's New



Welch
Berkshire Hathaway HomeServices Cooper & Co. Inc. Realtors welcomed new associates **Lauren Welch, Dana Findley and Ashley Miller.**



Findley



Miller



Adams and Reese LLP attorneys **Russell J. Rutherford** and **Brian K. Smithweck** were named partners. Rutherford graduated from the University of Mississippi with a bachelor's degree in English and economics. He earned a law degree from The University of Alabama School of Law.

Smithweck graduated from the University of South Alabama with a bachelor's degree in finance and master's degree in business administration. He earned a law degree from the Cumberland School of Law at Samford University and completed a master's degree in taxation from the University of Florida's Levin College of Law.



Waver



Bracy

Better Homes and Gardens Real Estate - Generations added two new agents, **Devlon Waver** and **Napoleon Bracy** to its Mobile office.



Kim Shrewsbury was named chief financial officer for **Providence Hospital** in Mobile and Sacred Heart Health System in Pensacola. Both hospitals are part of the Ascension nonprofit healthcare system. Shrewsbury earned a bachelor's degree in accounting from The University of Alabama at Birmingham and is currently pursuing a master's degree in business administration at the University of West Florida.



Perdue



Stimpson



Catranis



Reynolds



Kantola



Foster



Andrews



Dick

Roberts Brothers added new agents **Trevell Perdue, Abby Stimpson, Anna Catranis, Estra Reynolds, Heather Kantola, Ellis G. Foster, Mark Andrews, Marchel Dick and Toni Henry.**



Henry

Business Endeavors

The Container Port Group Inc. and ASF/Transportation Group announced a merging of the two enterprises. The combined companies will operate under the Container Port Group brand comprised of 25 terminals, 1,300-plus trucks and more than 400 professionals.



Threaded Fasteners completed the purchase of equipment, inventory and other select assets of Bolt & Nut of Tampa, Fla. The purchase will expand its presence there, and the company will add approximately 20 new employees.




FusionPoint Media, a multimedia company specializing in video, photography and web development, recently completed work on two full-service video/photography studios. For more information, call 251-473-6553.

Brothers **Matt Zarzour, Gaines Zarzour** and **Ryan Zarzour** announced the opening of **Zarzour Companies Commercial Real Estate Services**, a full-service commercial real estate firm offering transactional, development, management and advisory services. The firm's office is located in downtown Mobile at 118 N. Royal St., Ste. 708. The website is www.zarzour.com.



Hand Arendall LLC and **Harrison Sale McCloy Attorneys at Law** merged to become **Hand Arendall Harrison Sale LLC**. **Roger Bates**, Hand Arendall's managing lawyer, was named the managing lawyer of the new firm, and **Franklin Harrison**, a founding partner of Harrison Sale McCloy, will join the firm's executive committee and serve as the Florida office managing lawyer.



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Well Done

Southern Earth Sciences Inc. announced **Bennett E. Dulaney** passed the Alabama



professional engineer (PE) exam. Dulaney is a geotechnical project engineer in the company's Mobile office. He holds a bachelor's degree in civil engineering from the University of South Alabama and a bachelor's in applied mathematics from Valdosta State University in Valdosta, Ga.



The **Mobile County Health Department** was recently accredited by the American Association of Diabetes Educators, a nationally accredited organization certified by the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services.



Smith



Turn-Shamback



Locklier

Berkshire Hathaway HomeServices Cooper & Co. Inc., Realtors recognized annual award winners: sales

associates **Jason Smith** and **Amanda Turn-Shamback** were named the Rookies of the Year for 2017, and sales associate **Angela Locklier** received the Aden Jack Cooper Award for her positive leadership qualities, a competitive and winning attitude and a team player. In addition, 68 associates were recognized as million-dollar agents.

Wilkins Miller accounting and advisory firm was recently named to the first list of "Best Accounting Firms for Women" by Accounting Today. Wilkins Miller is the only Alabama firm to make the list and one of only 15 firms in the country to be recognized.



Hargrove Controls + Automation, a branch of **Hargrove Engineers + Constructors**, moved up in rank to No. 43 out of 100 in the annual list of System Integrator Giants, according to the 2018 Global System Integrator Report.

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.

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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Contact Emily Hatcher at ehatcher@mobilechamber.com or

251-431-8619 or Jackie Hecker at 251-431-8642 or

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