

# BUSINESSVIEW

MOBILE AREA CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

MARCH 2020

## SPOTLIGHT ON WOMEN BUSINESS LEADERS

## CHAMBER SETS LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES

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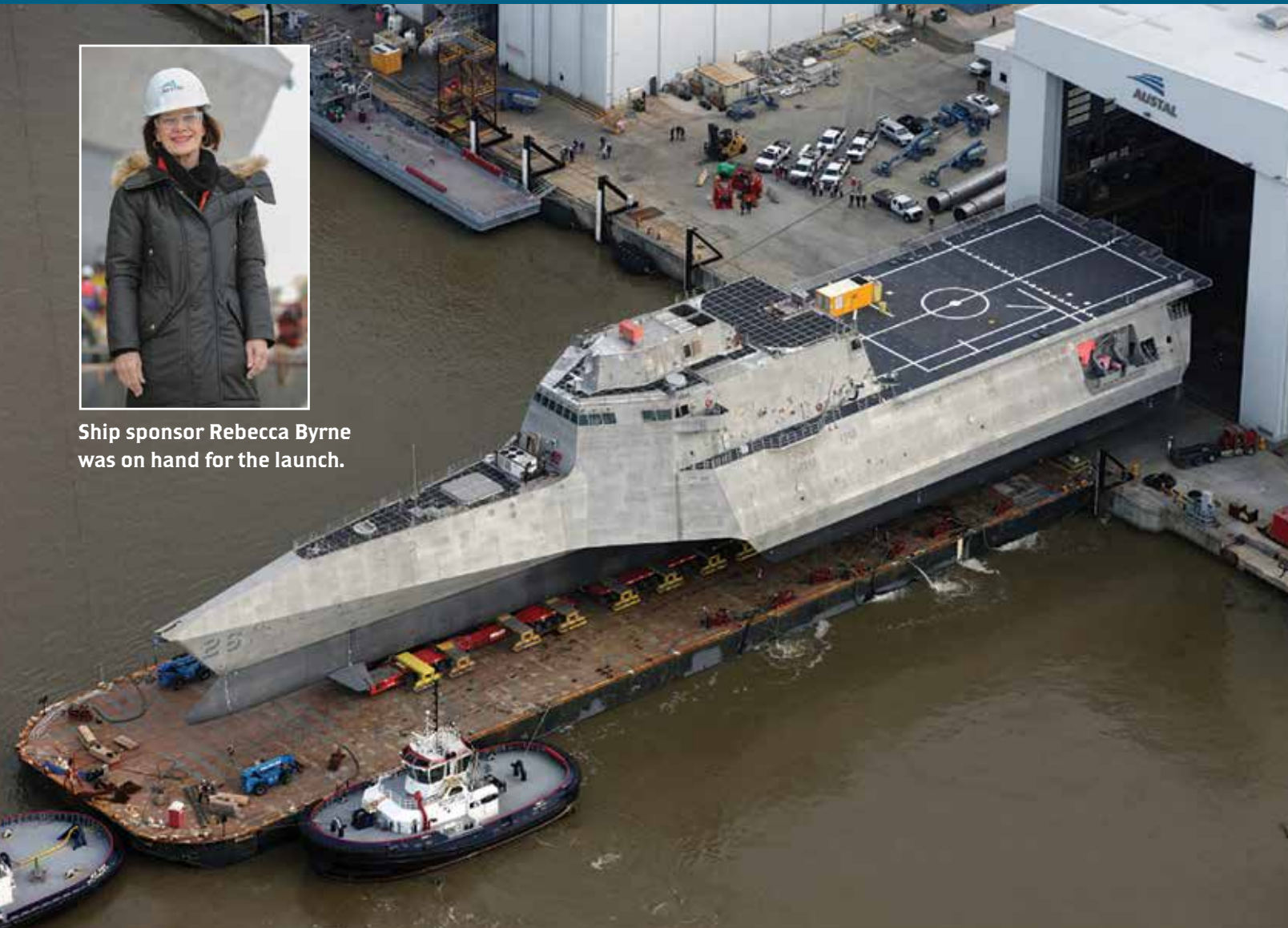


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# BUSINESSVIEW

MOBILE AREA CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

MARCH 2020



## 13 ON THE COVER:

*Women dominate this issue of the Business View. The professionals pictured on the cover: (front row) Alexis Atkins, Kristen DeLaney and Jill Stork; and (back row): Keshia Davis, Ivonne Furneaux and Shayla Jones Beaco share their secrets to successful careers, beginning on page 13. Cover photo by L.A. Fotographee.*



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## ABOUT THE MAGAZINE

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## PUBLISHER'S NOTE:

### SALUTING WOMEN IN BUSINESS

Bill Sisson, President & CEO, Mobile Area Chamber of Commerce



Across the globe,  
more and more  
women hold

leadership positions. In fact, there are more women running *Fortune* 500 businesses today than at any point in *Fortune* magazine's 60-year history of publishing the top 500 rankings.

In the United States, the number of women-owned businesses has increased 74 percent over the past 20 years. And the same is the case in the Mobile Bay region, where the number of women in C-suite positions and women-owned businesses continues to be on the rise.

In this issue, we celebrate all women in business. It wasn't long ago that women

won a hard-fought battle for the right to work. We recognize the value and importance of these business leaders – and rally to motivate, inspire and support them as they continue to be an integral part of our growing and thriving economy.

At the Mobile Area Chamber 80% of our staff are female professionals, including 35% of our executive team. They are an integral part of our team, and I am proud of our work. Join me as we salute women in business and the contributions they make to the Mobile Area Chamber and our community.

# SPILLTECH PLANS EXPANSION

A routine member visit turned into a win-win for Mobile-headquartered SpillTech Environmental and the Mobile Area Chamber's economic development efforts.

Last September, **Christopher Mayfield**, the Chamber's director of existing industry, met with SpillTech's Plant Manager **Eddie Reid** and learned about an expansion the company was considering. From that meeting, the Chamber worked with Reid on a \$4.8 million investment and announcement that the company would hire 15 additional employees.

"It's rewarding to see that our first project of 2020 is tied to a company that has invested in Mobile for more than 20 years," says **Shelby Glover Zaricor**, director of business development for the Chamber. "This is exactly how it is supposed to work – helping existing companies grow and expand."

Located at Mobile Aeroplex at Brookley since 1998, the company manufactures and distributes a variety of standard and custom-sized high-performance absorbent products, including containment booms used in hazmat responses such as the Deepwater Horizon oil spill in 2010. The company also sells storage products and kits to establish and maintain a clean and safe industrial workplace environment.

Through distribution channels including the Port of Mobile, SpillTech reaches a global customer base, with the majority found in the United States along with Canada, the Middle East, The Netherlands and the United Kingdom.

The company currently has 72 employees in Mobile and 106 overall.

Company officials said customer demand is driving the need for increased production, and in turn puts the 22-year operation on a "solid path for growth."

"It is important to SpillTech that we invest in the local economy here in Mobile," says **Caroline Reeves**, SpillTech controller. "Mobile is providing a vital, caring workforce, a community of support and a plan for our future in this city."



## INTERNATIONAL TRAVEL MADE ONE STEP EASIER

It used to be that your only options for finalizing Global Entry were New Orleans to the west, Huntsville to the north, Atlanta to the east. Now the trip is now a lot shorter.

A U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) Global Entry Enrollment Center opened in January at Mobile Regional Airport. The center, only the second to open in Alabama, will help address the growing demand for enrollment appointments.

"It is a welcome addition and is certainly needed, with the growing number of international businesses and customers who frequent



our region," said **Chris Curry**, president of the Mobile Airport Authority.

Regular hours are Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Fridays from 8 a.m. to 3 p.m., and are subject to change based on the number of applicants.

With approval, global entry members bypass the traditional CBP inspection lines and use an automated kiosk to complete admission upon return to the United States. As an added benefit, members are eligible to participate in TSA Pre✓™, the Transportation Security Administration's expedited security program. Learn more or start the process at <http://cbp.dhs.gov>.





## AIRBUS OPENS 2020 WITH MAJOR EXPANSION ANNOUNCEMENT

In January, Airbus continued to prove its impact on the Mobile community will be significant and long-lasting with the announcement it will step up production on the A320 aircraft family.

Currently, the company assembles four to five A320 planes a month. Company officials say that number will increase to seven by 2021. Airbus will also hire an additional 275 employees and make a \$40 million capital investment to construct an additional hangar.

Since 2015, the company's local investment adds up to more than \$1 billion and more than 1,250 local employees.

"Continued growth and expansion at Airbus is a tremendous benefit to the Mobile community," said **David Rodgers**, vice president of economic development for the Mobile Area Chamber. "Over the last five-plus years, we've seen the region's influence grow in the aerospace arena, drawing additional suppliers, and with today's announcement more than 1,250 high-paying jobs added to our community."

Since Airbus opened its final assembly line in 2015, more than 25 aerospace companies have followed and established operations in the region. With the company's original announcement came estimates the company would produce four jets per month at peak performance and employ 600 people. Airbus reached that goal in only two years.

The Airbus and Bombardier partnership inked on July 1, 2018, brought Mobile a second assembly line to reach the 100- to 150-seat market with a projected 6,000 new aircraft to be produced over the next 20 years and an additional 600 jobs.

With both the A320 and A220 lines, Airbus officials expect to produce 130 aircraft a year in Mobile by 2021.

## MOBILE OPERA ENTERS ITS 75<sup>TH</sup> SEASON

More than Expected. More than Imagined. More than Music.

Living by this motto, Mobile Opera enters its 75<sup>th</sup> season in 2020. As one of the oldest performing arts organizations in the country, the Mobile Opera Guild – as it was once known – was founded in 1945 by Madame Rose Palmi-Tenser, a European concert artist from Czechoslovakia. She led the organization for 26 years until her death in 1971.

Today, in addition to main-stage productions under General Director **Scott Wright**, the organization offers a series of programs of opera excerpts presented in schools and community venues throughout the region as part of its long-standing commitment to arts education in schools along the Gulf Coast.

"As Mobile Opera reaches a momentous milestone of 75 years, it's important to remember the arts not only add to our community's cultural richness, but they also have a tremendous economic impact by providing direct jobs and opportunities for many of our local businesses," said **Bill Sisson**, president & CEO of the Mobile Area Chamber.

Mobile Opera wraps up its 2019-20 season with Puccini's "La Rondine" on March 27 at 7:30 p.m. and March 29 at 2:30 p.m. at the Temple Downtown.



# 54 HOURS CAN CHANGE YOUR LIFE

Just as ideas continue to flow, so will Startup Weekend Mobile. For the fifth time, aspiring entrepreneurs will have the opportunity to test their spirit and explore a business concept.

The 2020 event is the ideal environment for building scalable companies to solve real-world problems in one weekend. In 54 hours, you and other participants will have the opportunity to take an idea, build a team, work with business leaders, experts and mentors to create a viable concept, develop a plan and create a prototype. This event has proven to be life-changing for those who have joined previous sessions.

**Jeff Zeiders**, CEO of CigarClub.com, attended Mobile's first Startup Weekend. "I didn't go into Startup Weekend with the idea that it would shape the next three years of my life, but it certainly has," he said. "The seed for CigarClub.com was planted during Startup Weekend 2016. Since then, that idea has evolved into a business that has truly changed my life."

**"The seed for CigarClub.com was planted during Startup Weekend 2016. Since then, that idea has evolved into a business that has truly changed my life."**

*Jeff Zeiders, CEO of CigarClub.com*

Zeiders's company has moved multiple times to keep up with the growing business, raised significant Mobile and regional startup capital, created jobs and established a leading national brand in the cigar and lifestyle space. "I've traveled internationally to connect with industry, spoken at conventions in the subscription space and gone through the corporate acquisition process in these short years," he said.

The Mobile Area Chamber brought the program to Mobile four years ago. "Startup Weekend is an opportunity to turn your wild idea for a company or product into a reality in one weekend," said **Corey James**, director of operations for Innovation PortAL, a project of the Chamber's foundation. "I have had the chance to witness hundreds of people gain exposure to the mindset of the entrepreneur. During the weekend, people frequently do more than they realized they were capable of, and that is powerful to me."

Startup Weekend kicks off Friday evening with concept-pitching and building teams of individuals with various skills and expertise. During the remainder of the weekend, the teams research, plan and strategize to build the beginning of an operating company. On Sunday, the teams present to a panel of judges for feedback and the opportunity to win in-kind awards.

Who should attend? Entrepreneurs and potential entrepreneurs, business startup enthusiasts, web and software developers, designers, engineers, marketing gurus, business development specialists and anyone interested in building a business.



## HOW CAN I PARTICIPATE?

**WHERE & WHEN:** April 3 - 5

**Friday:** 5 to 10 p.m. at The Container Yard, 853 Dauphin St., Ste. C

**Saturday:** 8 a.m. to 10 p.m. at The Container Yard

**Sunday:** 8 a.m. to 7 p.m. at The Steeple on St. Francis, 251 St. Francis St.

**COST:** \$75; limited scholarships may be available

**CONTACT:** Corey James at 251.333.0963 or Danette Richards at 251.431.8652

**TO REGISTER:** visit [web.mobilechamber.com/events](http://web.mobilechamber.com/events) for details and registration information.

*Techstars Startup Weekend is a partnership with Google for Startups, and locally a collaboration of the Mobile Area Chamber, Innovation PortAL and many community volunteers.*





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# \$60 MILLION AUTOMOBILE TERMINAL PLANNED FOR MOBILE

*Prepwork was nearing completion in February on Alabama State Port Authority property for the new AutoMOBILE International Terminal. This 57-acre facility with roll-on/roll-off capability will be complete in early 2021.*

In January, the Alabama State Port Authority (ASPA) and AutoMOBILE International Terminal (AIT) jointly announced a \$60 million finished automobile roll on/roll off terminal currently under construction at the Port of Mobile. When complete in early 2021, AutoMOBILE International Terminal will operate the facility.

"AIT's investment will create a new U.S. gateway for shipping finished automobiles for both U.S. and global manufacturing and consumer markets," said **Jimmy Lyons**, director and CEO for ASPA.

The new 57-acre terminal is located on the ASPA's main port multimodal complex, and when completed, will have an annual throughput of 150,000 units.

"This investment will continue to help our state and region in the automotive industry," said **David Rodgers**, vice president of economic development for the Mobile Area Chamber. "(It) will support local jobs as we work to ship the nearly 1 million automobiles produced every year in Alabama."

According to port officials, AIT is a joint venture between Terminal Zarate, S.A., a Grupo Murchison company, headquartered in Buenos Aires, Argentina, and Neltume Ports, headquartered in Santiago, Chile.

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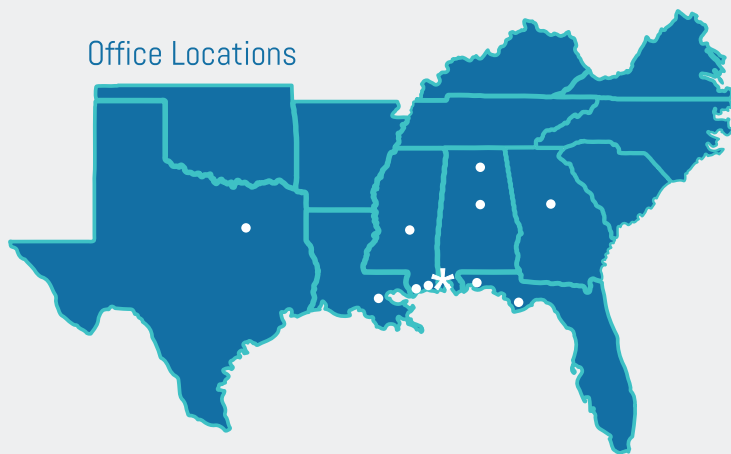
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# ANSWERED PRAYER LEADS TO CREATION OF CATERING BUSINESS

**I**n prayer one day, **Shani Tinsley** asked, “Lord, what’s my gift?” And she heard Him say, “It’s in your hands.” Though she didn’t know what that meant at the time, today she completely understands.

“Cooking is not something that I just do,” she says. “It’s my ministry of bringing people together.” Tinsley is CEO of iCater Weddings & Events LLC, the Mobile Area Chamber’s Small Business of the Month.

With more than 25 years of cooking experience for family and friends, Tinsley found herself looking for a new career after losing her job when the store where she worked closed. Culinary school was her next step, graduating with honors from Auguste Escoffier School of Culinary Arts.

“It was time to turn my passion for whipping up homemade meals and hosting stylish events into something more, so iCater was born,” she says.

In just three years, the company has made significant strides, focusing on Southern catering with a gourmet flair. From weddings to corporate events to baby showers, iCater’s menus range from hors d’oeuvres like pulled pork bruschetta, crab and cheddar wontons and party wings, to meatloaf, beef tips and baked ham for sit-down meals. All of her menus focus on locally sourced ingredients wherever possible and are seasonal.

**“It was time to turn my passion for whipping up homemade meals and hosting stylish events into something more, so iCater was born,” says Tinsley.**



"Most people make the incorrect assumption that Southern food means ordinary and boring," she says. "But inside our bustling kitchen, our talented team of creators specialize in exceeding our clients' expectations with our own unique flavor, style and taste, from melt-in-your-mouth prime rib to a mouth-watering leek and potato chilled soup."

And if that didn't keep her busy enough, she also provides cooking classes and offers personal chef services.

Tinsley says after joining the Chamber two years ago, she challenged herself to make business connections at various networking events, including the Growth Alliance Task Force – and it's worked. She's been able to add employees, achieve Better Business Bureau accreditation and become Tips Certified so she can serve alcohol at special events.

**COMPANY NAME:** iCater Weddings & Events LLC

**CHEF/OWNER:** Shani Tinsley

**PHONE:** 251.303.0165

**WEBSITE:** yesicater.com

**EMAIL:** icaterweddingsevents@gmail.com

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## Businesswomen Changing the Workforce

Women in the workplace have hit a new milestone. According to research published in July 2019 by the Pew Research Center, 2019 was the first year women made up the majority of the college-educated workforce. The study went on to state women now make up 50.2% of the college-educated workforce, up from 45.1% in 2000.

And the trend is not just tracking upwards with working women, but also with women filling executive-level positions – everything from start-up entrepreneurs to small businesses to Fortune 500 companies. At the local level, the Mobile Area Chamber reports 11% of its member businesses are women-owned, and nearly 25% of its board of directors are female executives.

Throughout the March 2020 issue of the *Business View*, the Chamber placed a spotlight on female executives in Mobile.

From various backgrounds and career paths, there seems to be some common themes running among them. These include:

- Each say they work for companies proactively establishing a culture where everyone feels valued.
- If people are willing to step out of their comfort zone they will have more opportunities presented.
- You should do whatever it takes to get the job done, and be willing to not only delegate, but also step in the shoes of team members to learn the day-to-day process.

On the following pages, you'll meet six women executives in the community, each on a different path and place in their careers. It's because of them the trends will continue with strong, successful women in the workplace for generations to come.



# Ivonne Furneaux

*Director, Communications and Community Relations*

**SSAB Americas**

**What are some strategies that can help women achieve a more prominent role in their organizations, especially in a male-dominated industry like yours?**

Women can achieve more prominent roles in their organizations by making themselves invaluable to their companies, particularly in unique, meaningful ways. I've often succeeded when I've carved a space for myself where one never existed before. That can mean creating a new role, taking on broader responsibilities or simply doing things differently (and better) than they've ever been done.

All of these tactics require confidence to push boundaries and wander outside of your assigned "lane." Combined with competence, confidence is the ultimate strategy.

**What advice do you have for women aiming for leadership positions?**

My advice for women aiming for leadership positions is to find the place where you can make the most impact, which may require being open to paths that may appear, on their surface, to be less "glamorous." In my field of communications in particular, it can be appealing to work for a trendy agency or a stylish company with a hot brand.

But at the end of the day, what matters is that you're doing meaningful work and making a difference, and sometimes that bold impact can be so much greater at a company or in an industry where it's least expected.

**What will be the biggest challenge for the next generation of women?**

The biggest challenge for the next generation of women behind me will be the same as it was for my generation and the generation before us – patience. Women today desire, deserve and expect progress, and in a world of instant gratification, we want it to happen overnight. But change – real, lasting, meaningful change – takes time. True progress requires steadfastness and resilience; young women will have to stay the course to forge the future path.



# Alexis Atkins

*Vice President*

**Budweiser-Busch Distributing Co.**

## **What are some strategies that can help women achieve a more prominent role in their organizations?**

For many years I worked in a very male-dominated industry. It was not considered appropriate for women to be in sales and marketing, but fortunately this has changed with the times. An acquired in-depth knowledge of your industry is extremely important for your advancement. Read and learn all that is available pertaining to your business.

Your leadership skills and knowledge will help you break those barriers in a male-dominated industry. However, I do not believe we, as women, have to lead in the same manner as men. Women have specific traits and attributes that can open the same door with totally different skills.

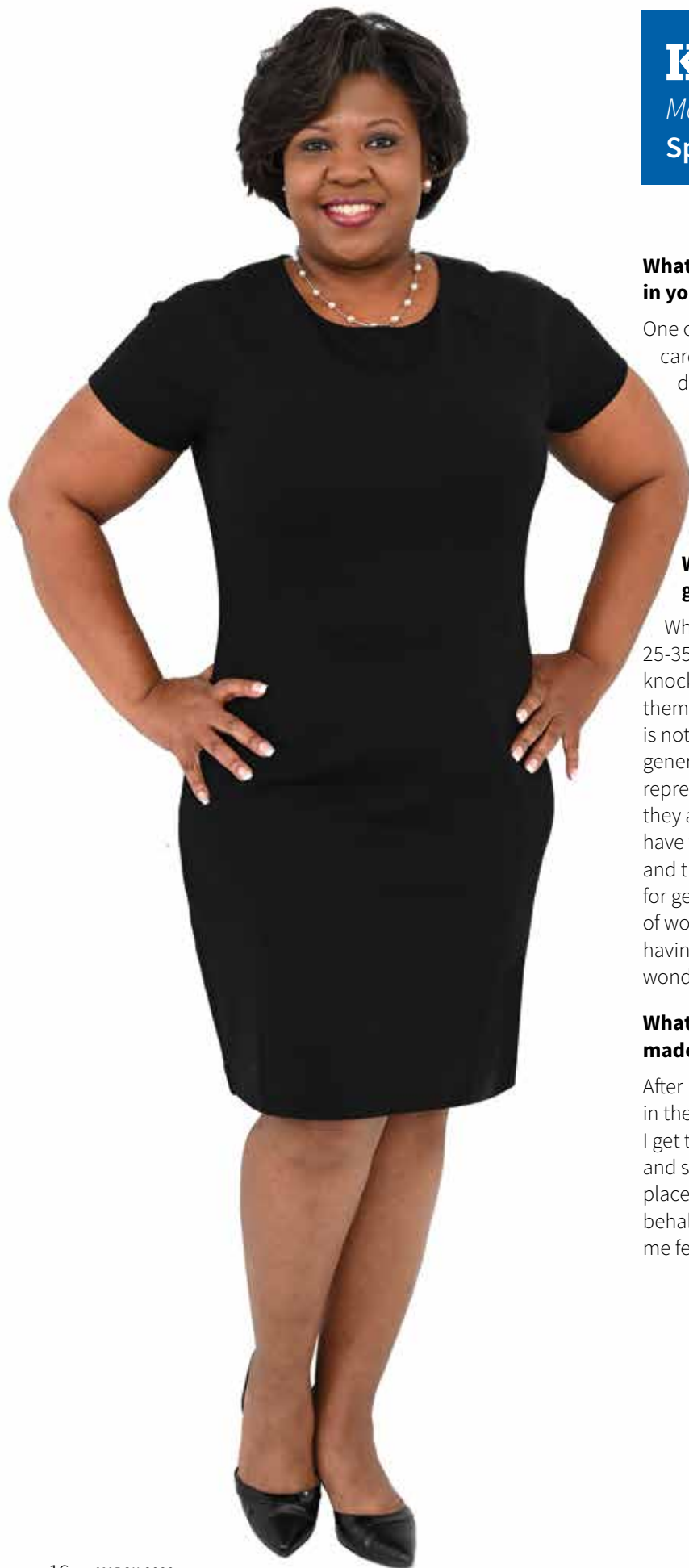
## **What's one key leadership lesson you've learned in your career?**

Never expect or ask your employees to do something you are not willing to do yourself. I believe it is extremely important to teach by example. This philosophy earns you the respect of those who report to you.

## **What will be the biggest challenge for the next generation of women?**

In today's world of instant gratification and the belief held by some young adults that they are due what the previous generation has worked to obtain, it is important to keep in mind the importance of professional diligence, persistence and hard work. I would encourage the next generation of young women to focus on this as they strive to achieve their goals.





## Kesshia Davis

*Manager, Governmental Affairs*

**Spire**

### **What's one key leadership lesson you've learned in your career?**

One of the key leadership lessons I have learned during my career is an unofficial golden rule of, "Don't ask someone to do something you're not willing to do yourself." I found that the leaders I respected the most were the ones who knew they could delegate work all day, but when they stepped into the shoes of their team to see how the day-to-day processes worked, the team respected and trusted them more.

### **What will be the biggest challenge for the next generation of women?**

When I sit at the table with women between the ages of 25-35, I discover that they're breaking down doors instead of knocking. They are creating their own space when others tell them there's not any room. When a company or organization is not being open to diversity or gender equality, this next generation of women is creating their own companies that represent and reflect their own values. From my perspective, they are designing their own path, on their terms. Women have found value in higher education and power in their voice and they are using both for the betterment of other women for generations after them. I don't think the future generation of women has many challenges; it's my generation that is having to deal with adapting and keeping up. Wow! Isn't that wonderful?

### **What is the best career decision you've ever made and why?**

After 14 years working in broadcast journalism, I came to work in the natural gas industry. In my role in governmental affairs, I get to witness first-hand that the people we elect into local and state offices truly have great intentions of creating a better place to live, work and play. I see the long hours they put in on behalf of their constituents (and our customers) and it makes me feel optimistic about the future of Mobile and Alabama.



# Kristen Beard DeLaney

*Vice President, Marketing*  
**Beard Equipment Co.**

## **What's one key leadership lesson you've learned in your career?**

Advice my mom gave me a long time ago: using your brain is important, of course, but don't forget about the heart. Beard Equipment Co. began with lots of heart, and it is still present today in our 50<sup>th</sup> year of business. Our family is committed to taking care of our employees and customers, and we believe that is the most important piece of our puzzle.

## **What advice do you have for women aiming for leadership positions?**

A majority of working women have high priorities outside of the office. Many women are devoted wives and/or mothers who give 110% at the office and at home. Beard Equipment is very fortunate to have many strong female leaders within our company working in sales, rental, parts, service and critical administrative roles.

By nature, women and men approach things differently. If you are in a male-dominated industry, there is even more opportunity for you to make an impact. Women are caring, devoted and emotionally intelligent by nature, which benefits companies from the top down. Never question yourself when you have different views from your male counterparts. A team always benefits from a female perspective.

## **What is the best career decision you've ever made and why?**

Going to work for my family business was the best career decision I have made. After graduating from Hollins University in communication studies, I planned to pursue a career in journalism. Thankfully, my plans changed, leading me to where I am today. Being completely honest, the idea of selling John Deere tractors as a young girl was not appealing. Today, I couldn't be prouder to carry on a 50-year tradition selling an iconic brand to a hard-working group of customers alongside an incredibly knowledgeable and loyal group of employees.



A portrait of Jill Stork, a woman with long brown hair, smiling and wearing a black dress, with her arms crossed. The portrait is positioned on the left side of the page, partially overlapping the text area.

# Jill Stork

*Area Manager*

**Alabama Power Co.**

## **What's one key leadership lesson you've learned in your career?**

One of the key leadership lessons that I learned early in my career came from Colin Powell. He said that leaders need to be prepared to make decisions when they have 40-70% of the information. My career started as a field engineer. For anyone that has worked with engineers, they know that we love to gather facts and data before making decisions. I was no different, but as a manager, my role changed. When major decisions needed to be made, I did not always have the convenience of time. I learned that if you don't make decisions in a timely manner then others will move on, or worse, you could lose credibility. Of course, I still prefer having the higher end of that 40-70%, but I learned that sometimes you have to trust your instincts.

## **What do you think is the most significant barrier for women leaders?**

I believe that the culture of a company sets the tone that either creates or eliminates barriers for women leaders. I received my degree in electrical engineering from The University of Alabama, and it was not uncommon at the time to be one of three to four females in a class. When I was hired in 1995, there were just as many females as males in a group of 12 engineers hired at that time. Professionally, I did not see any barriers to becoming a leader. Therefore, the first step in eliminating barriers is for a company to proactively establish a culture where everyone feels valued.

## **What is the best career decision you've ever made and why?**

Years ago, I was given advice to think about expanding my knowledge of other areas in the company. I knew the operating side of the business and how to handle most issues that came up. I had developed mutual trust and respect from those that I worked with so the thought of working in another department with people and procedures that I didn't know made me scared and excited at the same time. Turns out, it was the best career decision that I ever made. Not only have I learned more about the different departments of the company, but I have built relationships with many people that I would not have known if I had stayed in my comfort zone.



# Shayla Jones Beaco

*Executive Director, Build Mobile (Planning and Permitting Division)* **City of Mobile**

## **What advice do you have for women aiming for leadership positions?**

Women frequently overlook the very talents and gifts that have aided them in furthering their professional accomplishments. Their challenge, then, is to stay rooted in the foundation of success that they have worked so hard to build. Also, be willing to step outside your comfort zone. Women are sometimes hesitant to pursue professional growth opportunities for fear that they won't succeed. However, growth can only occur when we continue to challenge ourselves in ways that we never have before.

## **What will be the biggest challenge for the next generation of women?**

While society continues to struggle with gender equality issues and inclusion, I believe tremendous gains have been made toward the goal of women's empowerment. Women and young girls are appropriately being taught that they can be and do anything. Unfortunately, rising to the top can sometimes come at a cost. Because women are called upon to occupy multiple roles outside of their professional lives, their ability to prioritize their individual well-being becomes a complete afterthought. I believe that the biggest challenge for future generations of women professionals will be maintaining the balance of individual needs and priorities over the professional demands that a sometimes stressful career path can create.

## **What is the best career decision you've ever made and why?**

The best career decision that I have ever made was to pursue my passion. In a highly competitive environment focused on earning potential, competitive positioning and personal branding, my career goals were simple: Do what you love, while making a difference!



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# ADVOCATING FOR MOBILE







# MOBILE WOMEN SERVING IN ELECTED OFFICE

## **Adline Clarke**

Alabama State Legislature  
Representative  
2013-Present

## **Barbara Drummond**

Alabama State Legislature  
Representative  
2014-Present

## **Vivian Davis Figures**

Alabama State  
Legislature – Senator  
1997-Present  
Mobile City Council  
1993-1997

## **Gina Gregory**

Mobile City Council  
District 7  
2005-Present

## **Connie Hudson**

Mobile County Commission  
2010-Present  
Mobile City Council  
2001-2010

## **Merceria Ludgood**

Mobile County Commission  
2007-Present

## **Bess Rich**

Mobile City Council  
District 6  
1993-2001 and 2010-Present

## **Margie Wilcox**

Alabama State Legislature  
Representative  
2014-Present

*Pictured left to right: Bess Rich, Gina Gregory, Connie Hudson, Merceria Ludgood, Adline Clarke, Margie Wilcox, Vivian Davis Figures and Barbara Drummond.*

Photo by L.A. Fotographe

# CHAMBER SETS LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES FOR 2020

On a daily basis, decisions are made in Montgomery and Washington, D.C., impacting businesses in Mobile. To ensure member businesses and industries have a voice in local, state and federal government, the Mobile Area Chamber sets legislative priorities and works tirelessly to advocate for the local business community. For 2020, many of the Chamber's priorities are ones that have been long-standing, pressing issues for our community – all with a focus of creating new and growing existing jobs in the area.

“Infrastructure improvements like deepening and widening the Port of Mobile Ship Channel are essential to growth, and revenue is essential to infrastructure. Keeping the cyclical nature of funding, infrastructure and growth in mind, the Chamber is working to create a positive business environment that brings jobs to Mobile so the state can grow its tax base and invest in Alabama,” said **Nick Lawkis**, executive director of government relations, University of South Alabama and chair of the Chamber's Governmental Affairs Committee.

**“Getting connected with the Chamber's governmental affairs team is a great way to stay engaged in the policy-making process while staying focused on your business.”**

**Nick Lawkis**

Executive Director of Government Relations  
University of South Alabama and chair, Mobile Area  
Chamber's Governmental Affairs Committee

“In this environment, a strong public education system is critical to cultivating a thriving business community. The Chamber supports public education systems such as Mobile County Public Schools, community colleges and universities, and will continue to advocate to fully fund Alabama's education budget so they can deliver a college- and career-ready workforce to its industry partners.”

“Getting connected with the Chamber's governmental affairs team is a great way to stay engaged in the policy-making process while staying focused on your business,” said Lawkis. “They are sitting at the table for you and advocating on your behalf, and are a huge value add to your membership.”

In developing the agenda for 2020, the Chamber's community and governmental affairs staff met with key partners including the Alabama State Port Authority, Mobile Airport Authority, City of Mobile, Mobile County Commission, University of

South Alabama and private industry to discuss critical issues impacting local business and industry. From these meetings, a survey was developed and sent to the entire Chamber membership seeking guidance on prioritizing legislative issues. With assistance from the Governmental Affairs Committee, the draft agenda was developed, then presented to the Chamber's executive committee and approved by the board of directors in January.

## Key goals of the agenda include:

- Supporting Austal USA's bid to build the U.S. Navy's new frigate;
- Advocating for fair trade and reduced trade barriers;
- Fighting for good stewardship of Rebuild Alabama revenue;
- Ensuring the education budgets are adequately funded; and
- Promoting recompilation of Alabama's Constitution.

## 2020 ELECTION DATES

### PRIMARIES

#### Deadline to Return Completed Absentee Ballot:

Hand-Delivered by Monday, March 2

**Primary Election:** Tuesday, March 3

### RUNOFF

**Voter Registration Deadline:** Monday, March 16

#### Deadline to Request an Absentee Ballot:

Thursday, March 26

#### Deadline to Return Completed Absentee Ballot:

Hand-Delivered by Monday, March 30

**Primary Runoff Election:** Tuesday, March 31

### GENERAL

**Voter Registration Deadline:** Monday, Oct. 19

#### Deadline to Request an Absentee Ballot:

Thursday, Oct. 29

#### Deadline to Return Completed Absentee Ballot:

Hand Delivered by Monday, Nov. 2

**General Election:** Tuesday, Nov. 3





## FUNDAMENTAL FOUNDATIONS FOR ALABAMA

- Primarily through deepening and widening the ship channel into the Port of Mobile and building the I-10 bridge, the Mobile Area Chamber supports **increasing Alabama's investment in transportation infrastructure** to sustain and promote economic growth, job creation, quality of life and public safety. The Chamber recognizes there is a gap between current state resources and what is required to address the highway, bridge, and other road maintenance and capital needs in Alabama today and in the future, specifically for critical needs such as completing the four-laning of U.S. Hwy. 98.

- Advocate for **adequately funding Alabama's Education budget**, including Alabama's First-Class pre-kindergarten, career tech, dual enrollment and other innovative programs, in order to ensure a competitive increase in student scoring, higher graduation rates and competitive college- and career-ready graduates; maintain high academic standards and expectations for all Alabama students such as those found in the Alabama College and Career Ready Standards or Common Core.
- Seek a fiscal year 2021 state budget appropriation for the University of South Alabama that reflects the institution's positive impact on its students, community and the region, along with additional funding to support USA Health in recognition of its unique mission as the region's only healthcare provider with a Level One Trauma Center, Burn Unit and Neonatal Intensive Care facility.



**"In looking over my tenure as a state legislator, I take pride in creating jobs through the natural hair bill I sponsored; the Stringer/Drummond Vaping Act, which will save lives, and my work on the Ways and Means Education Committee, creating needed funds for our schools. The most gratifying aspect of my service is being able to impact and empower lives and conditions to make our city, county and state a better place. It is so rewarding to see progress in our community; and know you had a hand in the process."**

– Barbara Drummond



- **Support** a fiscal year 2021 state budget appropriation for the Dauphin Island Sea Lab that reflects the institution's increased state-wide student and faculty participation in its **nationally acclaimed** education and research programs and supports the needed modernization of infrastructure to meet future program growth.
- In order to ensure the consistent and bipartisan management of the planning, building and maintaining of the state's multimodal transportation system and the long-term management of state transportation planning and revenues, the Mobile Area Chamber supports legislation to allow for a **board-governance structure** and a non-political **board-appointed director of the Alabama Department of Transportation**.
- Advocate for a "yes" vote on November 2020 statewide amendment to recompile Alabama's state constitution, removing racist language and redundancy. Alabama legislators unanimously approved the amendment during the 2019 legislative session. The recompiling will be done by Alabama Legislative Services and must be approved by the legislators and the voters in 2022.

**"I have been leading an effort to ensure greater transparency and accountability with the Alabama Department of Transportation, and as a result will soon take over as chairwoman of the Legislature's Joint Transportation Committee. Over the years I have written and passed legislation providing for school bus safety, protecting local crawfish boils and boat decals."**

– Margie Wilcox

**"The public service accomplishment I'm most proud of is passage of Alabama's Equal Pay Act during the 2019 regular session of the Alabama Legislature, making our state the 49<sup>th</sup> state in the nation to pass such legislation."**

– Adline Clarke

## SUPPORTING AMERICA'S LARGEST EMPLOYER, SMALL BUSINESSES

- Preserve jobs and economic growth in all sectors through the **reduction of overly burdensome regulations** that increase the cost of doing business, create uncertainty and have the potential to stifle growth.
- Encourage the creation of a cabinet-level position in the executive branch to focus on the creation and growth of **small businesses and entrepreneurial development in Alabama**.
- Support the growth and development of Mobile's entrepreneurial community and **Innovation PortAL's mapping of entrepreneurial talent** to meet the growing technological needs of industry **with early state funding opportunities such as the State of Alabama Full Sail fund**. The Full Sail entrepreneurial fund will provide much-needed programming, skills training and funding for entrepreneurial clients, as well as enable the engagement of local industry to identify technological solutions to small business challenges.
- In order to avoid excessive and frivolous lawsuits and ensure fully-accessible public buildings and spaces, **close the loophole in Title III of the Americans with Disabilities Act**, by providing clearer rules for identifying and correcting ADA access violations and allowing business and property owners the opportunity to address and correct minor ADA infractions in a defined period of time, prior to an allowable civil law suit.
- Protect an **employer's right to provide a safe workplace** by opposing any legislation that would keep an employer or property owner from restricting firearm possession on company or private property.
- Support all efforts to **decrease workers' compensation medical costs** in Alabama by decreasing fraud in unemployment and workers' compensation claims with stronger statutes:
  - ▶ Maintain current Alabama laws that support an employer's right to choose the treating physician and second physician in workers' compensation claims.
  - ▶ Enact statutes that allow businesses to perform the Workman's Compensation claim checks prior to hire.

**"All of my work is guided by my desire to achieve equity, to be a voice for the most vulnerable among us and to seek long-term solutions for the most intractable problems facing our county. Wherever I have been able to do that would be included among my most significant accomplishments."**

– Merceria Ludgood



## KEEPING ALABAMA OPEN FOR BUSINESS

- Continued support to **fund the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Mobile District Civil Works** program in support of the **deepening and widening and the annual operations and maintenance dredging of the Mobile Ship Channel**; maintain necessary funding for the operation and maintenance of Alabama's commerce waterways, including the deepening of the Bayou la Batre and Coden ship channels.
- Support the funding and construction of the proposed I-10 Mobile River Bridge and partner with the Alabama Department of Transportation and the Federal Highway Administration to actively seek construction funding through Infrastructure For Rebuilding America (INFRA) Grants and other sources.



Photo courtesy of Austal USA

## MADE BY ALABAMA, FOR AMERICA AND THE WORLD

- Maintain **federal military contracts** with Mobile-area employers, particularly the construction of Austal USA's Littoral Combat Ships, Expeditionary Fast Transport vessels, autonomous vehicle development and post-delivery support to the U.S. Navy.
- Support Austal USA's bid to build the U.S. Navy's new frigate and increase employment in Mobile.
- Support fair trade and investment policy that **expands access to international markets**, reduce trade barriers, and increases foreign direct investment creating a level playing field to put Mobile area families, businesses, and workers first and improve the overall international competitiveness of Alabama exporters.

**"There are many things of which I'm proud to have accomplished while serving in the Alabama State Senate since 1997. Some of them include changing the dress code so that women could wear slacks on the Senate floor; enacting the Alabama Clean Indoor Air Act; and the Hiawayi Robinson Emergency Child Alert Law."**

– Vivian Davis Figures

**"I was driven to run for office after first getting involved when our neighborhood was dealing with planning and zoning issues that would have changed our community forever, and, not for the better. I understand how important and personal these issues are to our citizens. This is why I strive every day to empower the citizens I represent and ensure they and their needs are truly represented. A government that reflects its citizens and neighborhoods is a successful one."**

– Bess Rich



**“Working with community leaders has made it possible to bring innovation and real change to my district. I’m extremely proud of the success The Village of Spring Hill has achieved and the group’s willingness to share their knowledge and expertise with other organizations. The neighborhood of Sandtown, which is one of the oldest African-American neighborhoods still in existence in the city, has also made great strides especially with the creation of a new community action group.”**

– Gina Gregory

## A HEALTHY ALABAMA

- Support measures to **address the growing opioid crisis** in Alabama that has detrimental effects on the availability of a qualified workforce, workplace safety and overall community health.
- Support a provider-driven approach to **reforming Alabama’s current Medicaid program** to ensure access to care, control costs and maximize the return of Alabama’s tax dollars to the state.
- Seek a permanent funding source for Mobile’s **Programs for All-inclusive Care of the Elderly (PACE)** and the expansion of such programs across the state in order to draw down increased federal funds for the medical care of the state’s growing nursing home population at a cost savings to Medicaid.



Photo by Colette Boehm

## GOOD STEWARDSHIP OF ALABAMA’S NATURAL RESOURCES

- Support the continuation of federal payments to Alabama, specifically Mobile and Baldwin counties, from the 2006 Gulf of Mexico Energy Security Act (GOMESA) in 2020 federal budgets. Under GOMESA, Alabama, Mississippi, Louisiana and Texas receive a share of revenue from oil and gas drilling in federal waters, which helps address coastal restoration, hurricane protection and watershed management programs in coastal Alabama.

**“I am most proud of spearheading recreational and environmental projects that positively impact the well-being and quality of life of citizens within our community, such as senior centers, a drop-off recycling center, the soccer complex, and parks and campground initiatives.”**

– Connie Hudson

## TRAINING AND ADVANCING ALABAMA’S WORKFORCE

- Continue to identify needs and support demand-driven **strategic workforce training initiatives** in south Alabama’s key economic growth sectors, including aerospace, maritime and advanced manufacturing.
- As prison reform is addressed, advocate for re-entry and job skills training programs to meet the need for able-bodied workers in the region.

## NANCY HEWSTON NAMED VP OF COMMUNITY AND GOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS



The Mobile Area Chamber recently named **Nancy Hewston** vice president of community and governmental affairs. She oversees several committees including governmental affairs, energy, transportation, the Air Service Task Force and the Build the Bridge Coalition. She also sets the

Chamber's annual Legislative agenda and hosts Leaders' Exchange trips and several special events including the State of the City and County breakfast, Military Appreciation Day lunch, Pork and Politics in the Park and various forums on local, state and federal issues impacting the area's business community.

Before joining the Chamber, Hewston served as the official spokesperson for the Business Council of Alabama (BCA) in Montgomery, where she was senior vice president of communications and federal affairs. She represented BCA, its members and issues to members of Congress and their staff, key executive branch and federal agency officials, trade association and industry coalitions, among other duties.

Prior to her decade with BCA, Hewston worked in Washington D.C. as deputy press secretary for former Sen. Jeff Sessions and press secretary for former Rep. Jo Bonner. She also was projects director for a strategic planning and survey research firm, The Winston Group in Alexandria, Va.

"What drew us to Nancy was her experience working on state and federal legislative issues," said **Bill Sisson**, president and CEO of the Chamber. "We needed someone in the VP role with a strong working relationship with both our legislative delegation and our diverse business base."

"I am honored to have the opportunity to work on behalf of the members of the Chamber," Hewston said. "I look forward to building on the Chamber's strong legacy of advocating for business and protecting those interests through policy and legislation. The Chamber has been an integral component to the remarkable growth and success that Mobile has experienced, and I am excited to work with the members, volunteer leaders and staff to contribute to the economic growth of this great city."

Hewston earned bachelor's and master's degrees from The University of Alabama. She can be reached at [nhewston@mobilechamber.com](mailto:nhewston@mobilechamber.com) or 251.431.8618.

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# ANNUAL MEETING HIGHLIGHTS



**1** Daniel Dennis, left and Terry Harbin, right, go over last-minute details before the start of Annual Meeting.

**2** Several members of the Roberts Brothers Real Estate team were on hand to support Daniel Dennis as he wrapped up his year as board chair.

**3** Chamber President & CEO Bill Sisson honored recently deceased past board chairs Ollie Delchamps (1972-74) and Jack Edwards (1986) during annual meeting.

**4** Terry Harbin closed the program by challenging attendees to put their Chamber membership to work.

**5** Tricia Graham with Roberts Brothers and Cassaundra Burks with Renasant Bank enjoyed catching up at Annual Meeting.

**6-7** Guests had a great time at the networking reception featuring musical performers Yeah Probably.





# WILKINS MILLER RECEIVES CORPORATE COMMUNITY SERVICE AWARD

“They go above and beyond by rolling up their sleeves weekly,” writes **Aimee Risser** of Big Brothers Big Sisters of South Alabama.

“When a company makes a commitment to the community by reaching its young people, we all win,” writes **Colleen DeVoe** with Junior Achievement.

“We are fortunate we can depend on them to help care for our family,” writes **Mary Roney McAleer** with Ronald McDonald House Charities of Mobile.

The subject of all of these endorsements is Wilkins Miller, the Mobile Area Chamber’s Corporate Community Service Award winner for 2019. The award is presented in conjunction with the Junior League of Mobile to companies based on the community efforts of its employees and was given during the Chamber’s Annual Meeting in February.

Wilkins Miller’s leadership shows its commitment to employees by engaging them in selecting community projects to participate and invest in, inviting representatives from area nonprofits to speak at weekly team meetings and providing up to eight hours of paid time to be used for volunteering in the company’s policies and procedures manual.

Last year, the local accounting and advisory firm team provided in-kind accounting services to area nonprofits representing 2,684 hours. In addition, the company sponsored 25 community activities and employees contributed nearly 1,100 hours of their time.

Among the benefitting organizations were those listed above plus Spring Hill College, University of Mobile, University of South Alabama, Fuse Project, Mobile Baykeeper, the Chamber, Innovation PortAL and Distinguished Young Women.





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# HOW TO ASSESS CYBERSECURITY RISK

by Glenda Snodgrass

The terms “security assessment,” “vulnerability scan” and “penetration testing” are often used interchangeably, but are not at all the same. So what exactly is the difference?

**A security assessment is a process.** Typically a security assessment will involve a physical investigation of your computer network and the work environment overall, as well as your business policies and processes. Telecommunication systems, video/security systems, building automation systems and other “smart” devices would fall within the scope of review. Automated tools may be used to identify hardware and software on the network, and employee interviews can provide additional, valuable information. Documentation review would include any written security policies as well as asset lists, network diagrams and prior compliance audits.

Your current security posture will be evaluated based on a standard list of controls, such as the CIS 20 controls from the Center for Internet Security ([cisecurity.org/control](http://cisecurity.org/control)) and compared to any of your organization’s regulatory or other compliance requirements. Depending on the size and scope of your information system, a security assessment could require a few hours, days, weeks or even months to complete.

**A vulnerability scan is a tool.** This is used to identify assets and to report vulnerabilities that could be exploited to compromise your systems. The scans may be run internally or externally, lasting only a few seconds or a few minutes and can be performed automatically on a schedule. Vulnerability scans may be included in the security assessment process as part of a penetration testing program or on a standalone basis.

**Penetration testing is a task.** The CIS 20 controls are numbered 1-20 and grouped in numeric order as basic, foundational and organizational. Penetration testing (pentesting) is No. 20, the last of the controls, as it is designed to identify deficiencies in the implementation of the first 19 controls.

Pentesting will use automated tools to identify vulnerabilities, with manual verification and possibly attempted exploitation. Depending on the scope of the engagement, pentesting can include social engineering, physical security exploits and sample data exfiltration, and will typically last days or even weeks.

**Which one is right for your organization?** If you haven’t had a security assessment performed by an independent third party (i.e. an individual or entity not responsible for installing, configuring and/or maintaining your information system), that is the place to start. Vulnerability scans are less costly but may be of limited usefulness to the business owner. They typically deliver a lengthy and detailed report with specific technical information and may require interpretation by an expert in the field.

Penetration testing can be expensive and isn’t worth the money if your organization hasn’t already developed and implemented a strong security program. A basic security assessment will identify gaps in your security program and provide a roadmap for improvement.

## ABOUT THE EXPERT

*Glenda Snodgrass is the president, lead consultant and project manager with The Net Effect and a frequent presenter at Mobile Area Chamber workshops. She can be reached at [grs@theneteffect.com](mailto:grs@theneteffect.com).*



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*In business since the 1800s, Thames Batré has a long history of success. Pictured from left to right are Lewis Beville, Jay Ison, Allen Ladd, Taylor Beville, Ernest Ladd, Bo Mattei and Peyton Mattei.*

# THAMES BATRÉ INSURANCE

**About Partners For Growth:** Growing Global, Investing Local 2018-2022, Partners For Growth is a five-year, public-private

initiative of the Mobile Area Chamber, to grow and diversify Mobile's economy. Its five pillars include: 1) new business recruitment and investment attraction; 2) existing industry support, innovation and entrepreneurship; 3) workforce attraction, retention and development; 4) diverse business development; and 5) business advocacy and quality of place.

Join the Chamber's economic development investors by contacting **David Rodgers**, vice president, economic development, at **251.431.8657** or **drodgers@mobilechamber.com**.



**Company officials:** Bo Mattei, president; Lewis Beville, vice president and treasurer; Allen Ladd, partner; Ernest Ladd, partner; Jay Ison, partner; Peyton Mattei, partner; and Taylor Beville, partner

**Address:** 2065 Old Shell Rd.

**Website:** ThamesBatre.com

**Years in business:** 129

**Brief company description:** For over a century, Thames Batré has been helping businesses and individuals make smart choices about controlling their exposures and risks. As one of south Alabama's largest locally owned brokerage firms, Thames Batré creates value for its clients through its people, relationships and our ability to respond effectively to their everyday needs and complex problems.

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

"As one of the early members of the Mobile Area Chamber of Commerce, Thames Batré shares and values the deep roots both entities have in this community, which is a significant reason Thames Batré supports the Partners for Growth Initiative," said Allen Ladd.

**How long have you been a continuous Mobile Area Chamber Member?** Since 1891

# KAREN S. MILLER

## SHELL CHEMICAL LP

**TITLE:** General Manager, Mobile Refinery

**HOMETOWN:** Upland, Calif.

**EDUCATION:** Bachelor's degree in chemical engineering, Vanderbilt University, Nashville

**FIRST JOB:** "At 16, I worked as a cashier at EZ Out Burger, which was suspiciously similar to, but not as good as, In-N-Out Burger in California."

**PREVIOUS EXPERIENCE:** She previously was general manager for Shell in Ontario, Canada. Prior to that, she was production manager at the Shell Geismar, La., chemical plant and vice president/general manager of the Houston refinery for Valero Energy Corp.

**ACCOMPLISHMENTS:** Miller led the Valero Houston refinery through a \$500 million expansion.

**HIDDEN TALENT:** "I have a pretty good voice – in the shower, when no one is listening."

**WHAT WORD WOULD YOU USE TO DESCRIBE YOURSELF?** "Resilient."

**SECRET TO SUCCESS:** "I have always been driven to succeed. I am not sure where that drive comes from, but it motivates me to push through difficult challenges and keep moving forward. What guides my path is self-reflection. I use self-reflection to course-correct and keep myself grounded and rooted in reality."

**FAVORITE FOOD/RESTAURANT:** "Via Emilia in Mobile is awesome. Everything is hand-made, fresh and incredibly delicious."

**WHAT IS YOUR FAVORITE SEASON AND WHY?** "Spring. Everything turns green again and tulips (my favorite flower) bloom in the spring."

**OUTSIDE OF WORK, WHAT DO YOU DO TO RELAX?**

"I like to go on long runs to clear my head and dream up new ideas."

**BRIEF COMPANY DESCRIPTION:** Shell is an international energy company with expertise in the exploration, production, refining and marketing of oil and natural gas, and the manufacturing and marketing of chemicals. Headquartered in The Hague, The Netherlands, Shell operates in more than 70 cities with approximately 82,000 employees. Shell Chemical LP is a 90,000 barrels-per-day refinery that produces gasoline, jet fuel and diesel for the greater Mobile area. The facility also produces high-value olefin plant feedstocks for its world-scale olefin plant in Norco, La.







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## MEET MICHELLE PARVINROUH, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR FOR INNOVATION PORTAL

### Michelle Parvinrouh

is the new executive director for Innovation PortAL, an entrepreneurial center with the mission to accelerate startup growth in southwest Alabama and the central Gulf Coast. Innovation PortAL is a program of the Mobile Area Chamber's Foundation.

A native of Mobile, Parvinrouh spent the past 13 years in Colorado and brings with her extensive experience supporting entrepreneurs, building a startup ecosystem and managing nonprofits for positive impact. As a champion for economic vitality, she finds the mission of Innovation PortAL aligned with her personal mission to advance the economic health of her hometown.

She says she jumped at the opportunity to be a part of Innovation PortAL as it expands into its own building on St. Louis Street later this year and launches an enhanced suite of services and offerings for entrepreneurs in the region.

"Michelle brings so many experiences and resources to the table," said **Bill Sisson**, president and CEO of the Chamber. "She's the right person on the ground to grow PortAL's efforts."

Parvinrouh got her start supporting entrepreneurs while serving as the program director for the Bard Center for Entrepreneurship at the University of Colorado Denver. She later became the executive director of Peak Startup, a nonprofit focused on fostering a vibrant startup ecosystem in Colorado Springs, and worked as the program and operational specialist at Exponential Impact, a startup accelerator in Colorado Springs.

"I have been impressed with how business-forward the city is, largely due to the efforts of the Chamber," she said. "The Chamber demonstrates tremendous commitment to economic development through its advocacy, business-supporting activities and investment in the development of Innovation PortAL."

Parvinrouh earned a bachelor's degree in business administration from the University of South Alabama and a master's in business administration from the University of Colorado Denver.

Contact Parvinrouh at [michelle@innovation-portal.com](mailto:michelle@innovation-portal.com) or 251.333.0963





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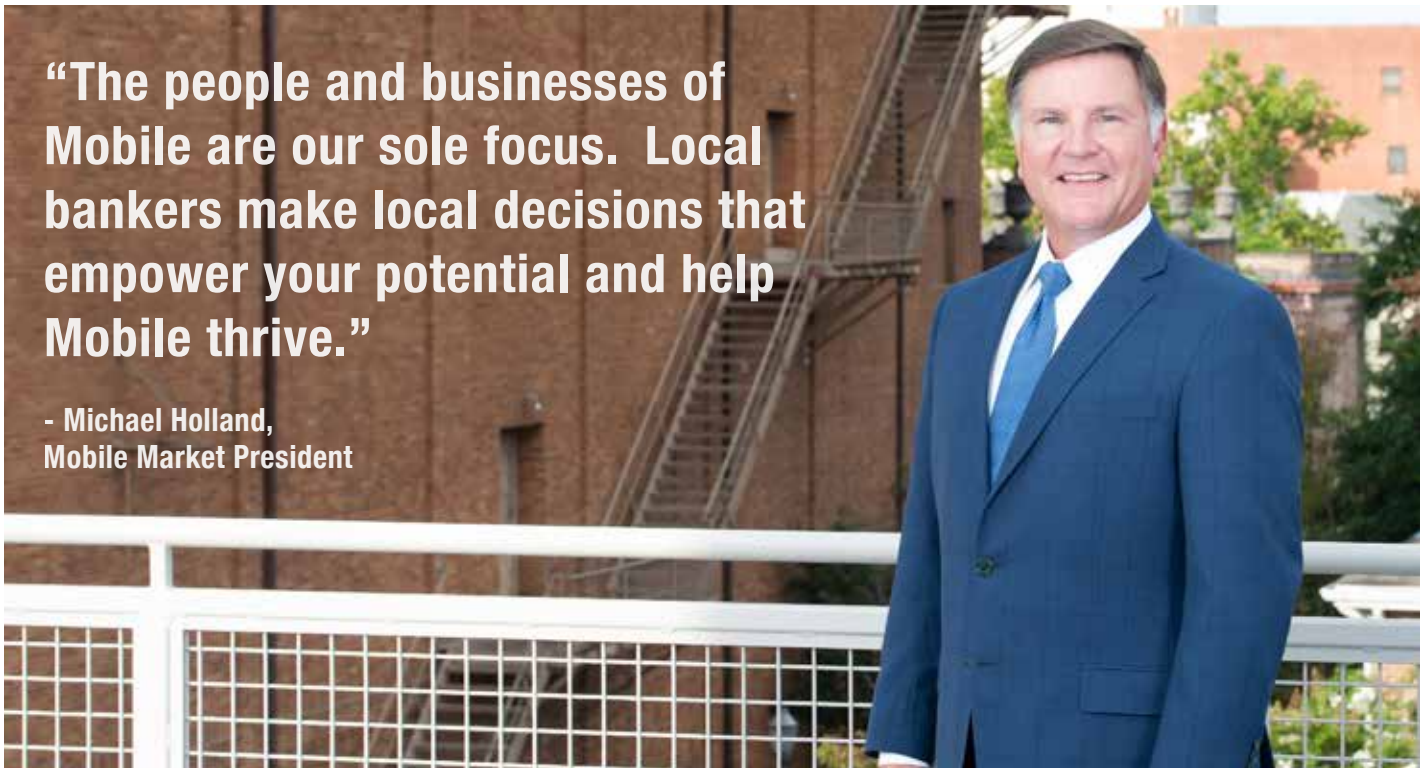
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## CELIA MANN BAEHR

### MOBILE SYMPHONY

**Celia Mann Baehr** is president and CEO of the Mobile Symphony. She has over 30 years of experience in financial services, is a certified financial planner practitioner and owns a small registered investment advisory business. Baehr holds a master's degree in business administration from the University of South Alabama (USA) and a bachelor's degree in geology from The University of Alabama. She is a graduate of Leadership Mobile and a member of the Rotary Club of Mobile as well as the Gulf States Financial Planning Association. Baehr recently received the Impact Award from USA's Mitchell College of Business as one of the 50 most influential graduates of the college.



## GIA WIGGINS

### MORALE RESOURCE LLC

**Gia Wiggins** is the founder of Morale Resource LLC. Her human resource management career has spanned 21 years. She earned a bachelor's degree in psychology and sociology from Grambling State University, a master's degree in business administration from California State University and a doctorate in business administration from the University of South Alabama with a concentration in management. Wiggins also holds human resources certifications. She has held executive human resource management roles in companies such as AT&T, Cintas, Target and BAE Systems Southeast Shipyards. In addition to serving her diverse client base, Wiggins also serves as an adjunct instructor with the University of South Alabama and the University of Mobile.

## JEANINE M. WARD

### WESTMINSTER VILLAGE

**Jeanine M. Ward** is the executive director of Westminster Village, an Acts Retirement-Life Community. Prior to her present position, she was the staff nurse of the Medical and Surgical Center at Baptist Hospital, the clinical supervisor for the Northwest Florida Home Health Agency and the resident and employee health nurse at Azalea Trace, an Acts Retirement-Life Community. Ward attained a bachelor's degree in nursing from the University of South Alabama and a master's degree in healthcare management from Troy University. She served as the LeadingAge Alabama board secretary and is a former vice president of Northwest Florida Infection Control Practitioners, an assisted living center consultant and a member of LeadingAge Florida.





# MARCH 2020

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

## 11 NETWORKING@NOON

*\*Members only; one representative per company*

*Make 40 business contacts in 90 minutes over lunch.*

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

**Where:** Bonefish Grill, 6955 Airport Blvd.

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

**Contact:** Dawn Rencher at 251-431-8649 or [drencher@mobilechamber.com](mailto:drencher@mobilechamber.com)

**Sponsor:** Bonefish Grill

## 12 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:** Carolyn Golson at 251.431.8622 or [cgolson@mobilechamber.com](mailto:cgolson@mobilechamber.com)

*No charge. Free parking.*

**Sponsors:** America's First Federal Credit Union, Premier Medical, Quality Valve, Quincy Compressor, Roberts Brothers, Saad Development Corp., Saddle Up Saloon, Springhill Medical Center

**Product Sponsors:** Buffalo Rock, Creative Catering, Mobile Popcorn & Party Rentals, The Tommy Morse Band

## 17 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:** Charlie McVea, BancorpSouth

**Topic:** "Risk Management and Commercial Insurance Diagnostics"

**Contact:** Brenda Rembert at 251.431.8607 or [brembert@mobilechamber.com](mailto:brembert@mobilechamber.com)

*No charge, but RSVP requested. Free parking.*

**Sponsor:** BancorpSouth

## 20 CHAMBER CLASSIC GOLF TOURNAMENT

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

**When:** 7:30 a.m. registration 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](mailto:drencher@mobilechamber.com)

*Reservations required.*

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**Breakfast by:** Dick Russell's Bar-B-Q

## THANK YOU TO THE SPONSORS OF OUR MARCH EVENTS





# A THANK YOU TO OUR MEMBERS

Join the Mobile Area Chamber's staff for the annual Member Appreciation Day on Thursday, March 12, from 4 to 6 p.m. on the Chamber lawn. It's the Chamber's way of saying thank you for your membership investment, volunteer support and help in improving Mobile.

This year's free and fun-filled event will include a fish fry by Creative Catering and live music by The Tommy Morse Band. Drop by for food, fun and networking, meet the staff, and learn how to get more involved.

**When:** Thursday, March 12, from 4 to 6 p.m.

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

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

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The Mobile Area Chamber was awarded the U.S. Chamber of Commerce's highest designation. Of the 6,936 chambers in the U.S., only 3 percent achieved five-star distinction.





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## WHO'S NEW

### Neel-Schaffer Promotes Nine Company Leaders



Cheatham

Ferlito

Twedt



Bryan

Cunningham

Ramsey



Reeves

Taylor

Wimberly

**Neel-Schaffer Inc.**, a multi-disciplined engineering, planning and construction management firm, announced the promotion of nine leaders. **Derek Cheatham**, **Nick Ferlito** and **Steve Twedt** are now senior vice presidents; and **Russ Bryan**, **John Cunningham**, **Saunders Ramsey**, **Dennis Reeves**, **Lance Taylor** and **Doug Wimberly** are now vice presidents.

### University of South Alabama Selects Dukes as General Counsel

The **University of South Alabama** named **Kristin Daniels Dukes** general counsel. She earned a bachelor's degree in accounting from Birmingham-Southern College and received a law degree from Vanderbilt University.



Dukes

### Certified Genetic Counselor Joins Mitchell Cancer Institute



Gurganus

**Cassie Gurganus** joined **USA Health Mitchell Cancer Institute** as a certified genetic counselor specializing in cancer. Gurganus earned a bachelor's degree in chemistry and a master's degree in genetic

counseling from the University of Alabama at Birmingham (UAB). She most recently worked as a genetic counselor in the UAB department of genetics.

### ACF Hires Thomason

**Toni Thomason** joined **Alabama Coastal Foundation** as the new coastal relations coordinator. Thomason has a bachelor's degree in biology from Auburn University and is finishing her master's degree in marine conservation and resource management at the University of South Alabama.

### Crow Shields Bailey Announces Promotions



Ernest

Crow

Roveda



Crowley

Parker

Quigley



Schottgen

Crow Shields Bailey full-service accounting and consulting firm announced the following promotions: **Teresa Ernest** to principal; **Kenny Crow III** to manager; **Abby Roveda** to supervisor; **Jay Crowley** to senior accountant; **Allie Parker** to senior accountant; **Madison Quigley** to senior accountant; and **Frank Schottgen IV** to senior accountant.

### Armbrecht Jackson Adds Three New Attorneys



Partridge

Smith

Trice

**Philip H. Partridge**, **Bryan D. Smith** and **David T. Trice** joined the law firm of **Armbrecht Jackson LLP**. Partridge received a bachelor's degree in economics from Birmingham-Southern College and a law degree from The University of Alabama's School of Law. Smith received a bachelor's degree in economics from The University of Alabama and a law degree from Faulkner University's Thomas Goode Jones School of Law. Trice earned a bachelor's degree in finance from the University of Georgia and a law degree from Samford University's Cumberland School of Law.

### Bellator Real Estate & Development Welcomes Seven New Agents



Clark

Gillespie

Ballard



Williams

Moore

Payne



Manning

**Bellator Real Estate & Development** added seven new Realtors: **Jordan Clark**, **Amber Gillespie**, **Jennifer Ballard**, **Bonnie Williams**, **Ellen Moore**, **Heidi Payne** and **Michael Manning**.

### Wilkins Miller Announces New Hires and Partners

**Wilkins Miller LLC** accounting and advisory firm hired **Katherine Bowen** and **Michaela Mueller**. Bowen is a staff accountant. She earned a bachelor's degree in accounting from Birmingham-Southern College. Mueller is an accounting specialist. She earned a bachelor's degree in accounting from Polytechnic University of the Philippines.



Morgan

Wheeler

In addition, **Brandi Morgan** and **Micah Wheeler** were named partners. Morgan earned a bachelor's degree in business administration from the University of South Alabama. Wheeler earned a bachelor's degree in accountancy from the University of South Alabama.

### Murphy Named Mobile Division Vice President



Murphy

**Patrick Murphy** was named vice president of **Alabama Power's Mobile Division**. In his new role, he will focus on Alabama Power's business operations in the southwest region of the state. Murphy earned a bachelor's degree in finance from Auburn University.



## Six Realtors Join Roberts Brothers



McGovern



Bailey



Duckworth



Fowler



Baxter



Mallory

Roberts Brothers added **Meg McGovern**, **Jessica Bailey**, **Mawiyah Duckworth**, **Stephanie Fowler**, **Amber Baxter** and **Paula Mallory** as agents.

## Adams and Reese Grows



B. Campbell



N. Campbell



Berson

Seasoned education law attorneys **Robert (Bob) C. Campbell III** and **R. Nash Campbell** joined the Adams and Reese LLP Mobile office. Bob is of counsel at the firm. He earned a bachelor's degree from Georgetown College and a law degree from Cumberland Law School at Samford University. Nash is special counsel, focused primarily on education law. He earned a bachelor's in political science and criminology from Auburn University and a law degree from Faulkner University Thomas Goode Jones School of Law.

In other news, **Michael A. Berson** is one of nine attorneys elected to partnership with Adams and Reese. Berson earned a bachelor's degree in finance from the University of Florida and a law degree from the Cumberland School of Law at Samford University.

## Local EXIT Realty Welcomes New Team Members

EXIT Realty added four new Realtors: **Terry Shelburne**, **Thosa London**, **Shonah Stallworth** and **Vickie Tillman**.

## Local Attorney Makes Partner

**Burr & Forman LLP** elected six attorneys to partnership, including **Robert Shreve**. He is a member of the firm's torts, trial and insurance group, where his practice is devoted to civil defense litigation.

## BBB Industries Appoints Chairman Emeritus

BBB Industries LLC appointed **Don Bigler** to chairman emeritus, recognizing his three decades of service to the company and his ongoing involvement as an advisor to the CEO. As one of BBB's three founders, under Bigler's leadership, the company grew from a small, regional remanufacturer of rotating electrical parts to an industry-leading remanufacturer of rotating electrical parts, hydraulic and air disc brake calipers, power steering products and turbochargers.

## RTBH Hires Senior Accountant



Snelling

The partners of **Russell Thompson Butler & Houston** announced the addition of **Allison Snelling** as a senior accountant. Snelling earned a bachelor's degree in finance and a master's degree in accounting from The University of Alabama. She is also a CPA.

## George and Moye Join Realty Executives Bay Group



Moye



George

Realty Executives Bay Group hired agents **Betty Moye** and **Lisa George**.

## Burr & Forman Expands In Southeast



Varner



Puryear

**Burr & Forman LLP** added **Roger Varner Jr.** and **Jordan Puryear**.

Varner earned

a bachelor's degree in communication studies, a master's degree in communication management from The University of Alabama at Birmingham and a law degree from the University of Alabama School of Law. He is licensed in Alabama and New York. Puryear earned a bachelor's degree in political science from Samford University and a law degree from Belmont University College of Law.

## Hill Hill Carter Names Shareholder

**Reed Morgan Coleman** was named a shareholder of the **Hill Hill Carter** firm. Coleman earned a bachelor's degree in marketing and history from Tulane University and a law degree from Loyola University of New Orleans College of Law.

## BUSINESS ENDEAVORS

### Downtown Mural Unveiled

The **Mobile Arts Council** unveiled its fifth public art project of the year, **Souls of Mobile**, a mural by artist **Ginger Woechan** on the Jackson Street wall of Hayley's Bar.

### Autism Family Navigator joins USA Regional Autism Network

There's a new resource in south Alabama for the families of children with a pediatric autism diagnosis. **Dana Handmacher**, an autism family navigator at the **University of South Alabama**, is now assisting parents and caregivers of children with autism with planning, problem-solving and other guidance, such as directing parents to educational opportunities and encouraging their self-advocacy skills. The USA Regional Autism Network serves residents in Baldwin, Clarke, Conecuh, Dallas, Escambia, Mobile, Monroe, Perry, Washington and Wilcox counties.

## WELL DONE

### USA's Johnson Named to SACS Board

**Dr. David Johnson**, provost and senior vice president for academic affairs at the University of South Alabama, was elected chair of the board of trustees for the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges. The Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges is the recognized regional accrediting body in the 11 Southern states.



Johnson

### Gassman Receives Award

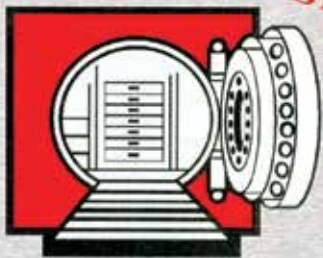
Mobile cancer researcher **Natalie R. Gassman PhD** received the 2019 Mayer Mitchell Award for Excellence in Cancer Research. The \$10,000 award is presented annually to a promising scientist at USA Health Mitchell Cancer Institute upon recommendation by a faculty committee.

### MCHD Gets High Marks

The **Mobile County Health Department (MCHD)** and Family Health – its primary care division – received high marks from the Health Resources & Services Administration (HRSA), a branch of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, for demonstrating proficient compliance with program requirements of its recent operational site visit.

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## AMADEUS

An all-Mozart concert including his epic *Requiem* and works featured in the 1984 hit movie *Amadeus*.

Saturday, April 4, 7:30 p.m.

Sunday, April 5, 2:30 p.m.

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Easter Egg Hunt &

Breakfast with the Easter Bunny: **April 4**

Easter Sunrise Service: **April 12**

Camellia Classic Open Car Show: **April 18**

Wiggle Waggle Rescue Run: **April 25**

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## Whiston Achieves CM&AP

**Bill Whiston** of **Transworld Business Advisors of Mobile** achieved the Certified Mergers and Acquisitions Professional designation.



Whiston

## USA College of Medicine Professional Development



Simmons

**Dr. Jon Simmons**, associate professor of surgery and pharmacology at the University of South Alabama College of Medicine, recently graduated from the Harvard Medical School Surgical Leadership Program. As

trauma medical director and chief of trauma and acute care surgery at USA Health, Simmons leads the team that makes USA the region's only level-one trauma center.

**Dr. Steve Cordina**, associate professor of neurology at the University of South Alabama College of Medicine and an interventional neurologist with USA Health, recently performed the first Comaneci adjustable remodeling mesh-assisted aneurysm repair in the state of Alabama. The Comaneci procedure allows for more patients to be treated in a minimally



Cordina

invasive manner. This improves recovery time since patients can go home the next day. Traditional open procedures that are more invasive require a longer recovery period.

## Payroll Vault Named a 2020 Best-in-Category

**Payroll Vault Franchising LLC** was recently named "Best-in-Category in Professional Services" sector in *Franchise Business Review's* list of the top franchises for 2020. This is the 15th annual ranking of the top 200 award-winning franchise opportunities.

## Alabama State Port Authority 'Most Improved'

The *Journal of Commerce* recognized the **Alabama State Port Authority** and its partner, **APM Terminals**, for productivity achievements. The Alabama State Port Authority received Most Improved Port Performance Overall in North America for the 2017-18 cycle. APM Terminals Mobile came in second overall for Most Improved Terminal in North America. Based on port productivity data, the Journal of Commerce annually recognizes productivity for the top three North American container ports, the top three North American container port terminals and the top three container ports overall and top three container berths during the past year.

## Byrd Earns CPA



Byrd

**Wilkins Miller LLC** accounting and advisory firm announced **Sallie Byrd** successfully completed and passed the Uniform Certified Public Accountant (CPA) examination. Byrd earned a bachelor's degree in business with a concentration in accounting from the University of South Alabama.

## MCPSS 2020 Teachers of the Year



Arensberg



Burch



Dai

Three **Mobile County Public Schools** teachers, **Carey Arensberg**, **Cheryl Burch** and **David Dai** were named Teachers of the Year. Arensberg is a fifth-grade teacher at George Hall Elementary. She graduated from the University of South Alabama with a bachelor's degree; and she is currently working on her master's degree in educational leadership from Concordia University.

Burch is a business education and social studies teacher at Phillips Preparatory School. Burch earned a bachelor's degree from Spring Hill College, a master's degree from the University of Mobile, and a master's degree in education from the University of South Alabama.

Dai is a math teacher at Bryant High School in Irvington. Dai earned a bachelor's degree in mathematics from The University of Alabama, and a master's degree in secondary education-math from The University of Alabama.

## Hargrove Becomes a Systems Integrator

HIMA, the world's leading independent provider of smart safety solutions for industrial applications, chose **Hargrove Controls + Automation** to be an approved solution partner.

This partnership allows Hargrove and HIMA to offer customized solutions that help increase safety and profitability of plants and factories in the digital age.

# CHAMBER GOLF CLASSIC

## Friday, March 20

### The Robert Trent Jones Golf Trail/Magnolia Grove

7:30 a.m. - Registration & Breakfast

8:30 a.m. - Shotgun Start

INDIVIDUAL TICKETS: \$150

HOLE SPONSORSHIPS: \$850

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**FEATURE PHOTOGRAPHER****L.A. ALSTON – L.A. FOTOGRAPEE**

Lemaris "L.A." Alston is a husband, dad and photographer who specializes in capturing happiness for clients on location and in his studio in Mobile. Since he began his photography business in 2011, Alston has completed more than 2,500 photo shoots and has photographed some of his client's most important life moments from awards and graduations to engagements and weddings to newborns and families. Alston says photography is a discovery and the archaeology of emotion. He has a bachelor's degree from Alabama State University and a master's degree from the University of Phoenix in computer information systems. He and his wife, Jamelah, live with their three children in Mobile. In this issue, Alston's work can be seen on the cover as well as feature stories on women in business, women elected officials and the Small Business of the Month. To see more of his portfolio, visit [lafotographee.com](http://lafotographee.com).





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