

# BUSINESSVIEW

MOBILE AREA CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

AUGUST 2020

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# BUSINESSVIEW

MOBILE AREA CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

AUGUST 2020



## 28 ON THE COVER:

Partners John Edward McGee and Demetrius James recently opened Guncles Gluten-Free Bakery in midtown Mobile. Offering cakes, cookies and more, the specialty bakery is the first of its kind in the Mobile area. Learn more about their story on pg. 28.  
Photo by: L.A. Fotographee

## ABOUT THE MAGAZINE

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## PUBLISHER'S NOTE:

## A COMMITMENT TO DIVERSITY, EQUITY AND INCLUSION

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

What is Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI)? Why is it important, and why does our chamber work to have it permeate everything our organization does? Sheree Anne Kelly, president and CEO of the Association of Chamber of Commerce Executives, explains the nuances best by providing distinctions among diversity, equity and inclusion. "Diversity means that everyone gets invited to the party. Equity means that everyone can contribute to the playlist. Inclusion means that everyone can dance."

It's important to always be working toward more than just diversity in our organizations, because it alone means nothing if they cannot participate. We have to work toward empowering the whole team.

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# STARTUP INCOA MOVES AHEAD WITH PLANS FOR NEW FACILITY

Incoa Performance Minerals is another step closer to opening its specialty minerals manufacturing and processing facility in Theodore. The company made its location decision in 2019 and recently secured funding to move the project forward.

Incoa is investing \$110.85 million and will hire 74 employees over the next five years to sell calcium carbonate to U.S. markets. High-quality calcium carbonate is used as a filler in a variety of products.

Backed by private equity firm Peterson Partners of Salt Lake City, Utah, Incoa is a startup company locating its processing operations at Millard Maritime, the owner and operator of a port facility on 300 acres.

“The value proposition is its central location on the Gulf Coast with good rail, barge and relative distance from a major interstate,” said **Tyson Creamer**, Incoa’s chief operating officer.

“Mobile and the Gulf region continue to experience strong growth in logistics and transportation,” said **Brad Hall**, president of Millard Maritime. “Our partnership with Incoa is another important step in expanding that growth.”

“We will provide performance-based minerals that go into the products we use every day – paper, plastic, paints, glass, film wrappers, etc.,” said Creamer.

“It’s great when we can connect an economic development project to an existing company with logistical assets in place like at Millard Maritime,” said **Shelby Glover Zaricor**, the Chamber’s director of business development. “Millard’s infrastructure and involvement were key.”

Incoa will be making a high-demand product that is currently not being manufactured in our region, she added.

**“We will provide performance-based minerals that go into the products we use every day – paper, plastic, paints, glass, film wrappers, etc.”**

# CITY AND COUNTY SMALL BUSINESS GRANTS MAKE AN IMPACT

Many local businesses reeling from the COVID-19 pandemic in Mobile County were given several options to apply for grants in the spring and early summer, thanks to small business grant programs offered by the City of Mobile and Mobile County.

Ignite Mobile – the city’s funding program – was created in the spring to support local small businesses deemed “higher risk” by the State of Alabama’s safe at home order and were not eligible for federal Paycheck Protection Program loans.

Mobile County’s Small Business Relief Fund Program was developed in partnership with the Mobile Area Chamber to support

companies experiencing extreme hardships as a result of COVID-19.

“Small, local businesses are the lifeblood of any community, and this crisis has left many of them in dire need of assistance. By making this relief program available, we hope to stimulate our local economy while promoting and retaining small businesses,” said Mobile County Commissioner **Connie Hudson**.

On the following pages are local companies who received grants from either Ignite Mobile or the Mobile County Small Business Relief Fund Program. See how these two programs are impacting their local businesses.



“ This (Mobile County Small Business Relief Fund) will allow Fitkits to build on what we have already started – developing a system and a process to eventually start to franchise. John C. Maxwell said, ‘Discover your uniqueness then discipline yourself to develop it.’ The county grant will help us during the developmental process.”



**Lorenzo Ferguson**

Your Way Fitkits  
yourwayfitkits.com

“ The grant from the City of Mobile was extremely helpful for our business. The tourism sector has been hit harder than any and will likely continue to suffer well beyond 2020. The grant we received will help sustain us through the summer months, until travel and pleasure can hopefully begin to increase.

We have also decided to give a portion back to our tour guides who have stayed with us throughout. They’re great ambassadors for our city, and we’re thankful to have them on our team.”

**Chris Andrews**

Bienville Bites Food Tour  
bienvillebitesfoodtour.com



“ We are very fortunate to have received this small business grant. We actually utilized the funds we received towards installing systems built into our HVAC units at the studio to sterilize the air of viruses, mold and bacteria. Additionally, the system sanitizes all surfaces in the studio on a

continuous basis to help keep it clean and healthy. We felt this was an important measure to add to our studio to help keep our dancers and faculty/staff as safe as possible. This was truly appreciated and very helpful at this time.”

**Michelle Meeker**

Broadway South Dance Studio  
broadwaysouthdance.com



“When the city called to let us know we were approved for the Ignite grant, we took a big sigh of relief. The grant helped ease the financial burden from the adaptations we had to make to keep our members and staff safe and healthy.

“But aside from the financial benefit, this grant meant even more from a morale standpoint. It was a show of support, solidarity and love from the City of Mobile to our humble business. To us, these dollars said, ‘We see you. We hear you. And when things get tough, we have your back.’ We are so incredibly grateful to Mayor Sandy Stimpson and his administration for this unexpected but very much appreciated gift. Mission Fitness is honored to call the City of Mobile our home.”

**Alison Jones**  
Mission Fitness  
missionfitness.rock

“The impact from receiving the small business grant has allowed us to remain in business. Many businesses were forced to close, which was a concern having been in business 30 years. I have never experienced a pandemic like this before. My business has been crippled by a major decline in revenue/income. Often, when you think you’re at the end of something, you’re at the beginning of something else. I’m giving thanks to Ignite Mobile for being my saving grace.”

**Paula Jones**  
Paula’s Hair Unlimited



“When we closed March 18, we had no idea when we could or would reopen. I donated all of our inventory at risk of spoiling to local hospitals, food industry workers and my employees. We held our breath hoping for the best. We applied for the PPP loan in March. We received some funding from that program toward the end of April. We planned for reopening April 20.

What we didn’t plan for was now having to compete with unemployment wages. Ninety percent of our staff did not return. We rehired new staff and reworked our menu. All of the staff had to be trained, which increased my payroll costs by 30 percent. I’ll use this to offset the training costs associated with new staff, processes and inventory.”

**Kristi Barber**  
The Cheese Cottage  
thecheesecottagellc.com



“This grant could not have come at a better time. With the PPP funds ending and the safety measure reducing capacity, we all still need a little help to get through this. We are proud to be a part of the community here in Mobile. This grant will allow us to continue to serve (our) community.

**Wille Jones**  
Captain, Perdido Queen  
perdidoqueen.com

# MOBILE'S ENTREPRENEUR LANDSCAPE

**E**ntrepreneurial resources are at an all-time high in Mobile, setting new records for access, engagement and fulfillment of mission every day. Developed and maintained by a core group of experts with decades of experience in entrepreneurship, the resources serve individuals at every stage of the business lifecycle, providing everything from mentoring and programming to new, non-traditional funding sources.

The path to success for business owners is a winding one, based on how they overcome challenges and capitalize on opportunities. Many entrepreneurs are destined to fail an average of three times before finding the business idea they can scale, grow and, eventually, exit. Only a few decades ago, enterprisers were often on their own in terms of support as they began their journey into business ownership, but those days are thankfully long gone.

“We’ve made enormous progress,” said Mobile Area Chamber Board Chairman **Terry Harbin**, market president of BancorpSouth. Himself an entrepreneur who has started and invested in software, real estate and other private ventures, and at one time handled marketing for the landmark technology firm QMS in the 1980s and ’90s. Harbin said the current ecosystem of support is second to none.

“Every one of these programs we’re putting in place, or have in place, are all about bringing folks into an ecosystem that’s friendly to business development and has resources for creating jobs and growing corporate headquarters here,” said Harbin. “All these resources are a capital multiplier.”

As business capital and community reinvestment blooms, so does the area economy, he said. The result is a diverse, growing and sustainable economic system that, in turn, perpetuates more and more successful businesses.

## From Idea to Action

No entrepreneur sets out to fail, and objective evaluation is key to lasting success. And where better than the business community to get the perspective and advice needed to hone your ideas into lasting, viable products and services?

Step for step with the Small Business Administration (SBA) and the University of South Alabama (USA), the Chamber has a myriad of initiatives focused on those wishing to create and foster a business. Workshops and online resources are available through each organization to help prospective entrepreneurs vet their initial ideas, develop their business plans, and identify and secure funding.

Organizations such as USA’s Melton Center and the Chamber’s newest resource hub, Innovation Portal (see page 12 for more on this facility), are structured to not only offer advice and assistance to companies in the start-up phase, but to also graduate them into sustainable programs.

The Melton Center holds two competitions each year geared toward budding entrepreneurs. The Coastal Pitch Competition helps contenders hone two-minute “elevator pitches” to clarify and distill their company’s goals into their most inspiring incarnations. It puts the dedicated entrepreneurs in front of a panel of possible investors who challenge even the most minute details in order to give contestants the best chance of finding funding.

Those able to survive such challenges learn the two most important aspects of business survival, according to Melton Center Executive Director **Don Mosley**.

“Commitment and perseverance make the difference,” he said.

Opening this month in a 30,000-square-foot historic space in downtown Mobile’s technology corridor, Innovation Portal is a one-stop shop for entrepreneurs.



**“Every one of these programs we’re putting in place, or have in place, are all about bringing folks into an ecosystem that’s friendly to business development and has resources for creating jobs and growing corporate headquarters here.”**

**Terry Harbin**, Market President of BancorpSouth and Mobile Area Chamber Board Chairman



**“There are so many resources and so many people willing to take advantage of them, I’m really impressed where Mobile is.”**

**Michelle Parvinrouh**, Executive Director, Innovation Portal

As Harbin puts it, “Innovation Portal is such a remarkable concept and space.” Meant to retain, support and accelerate the central Gulf Coast’s highest-performing startups, the Portal will also be a place where new businesses can take root and flourish.

“This is a place where innovators can hang out and feed off of each other and the buzz of activity,” Harbin said. “Here’s everything that’s available and how everything works, broken down by size and stage of business.”

In addition to customized mentorship, Portal hosts Techstars’ Startup Weekend, a 54-hour entrepreneurial competition geared to fast-tracking viable businesses, with feedback from representatives of top tech companies such as national investment firms and successful entrepreneurs.

## Sustainability and Evolution

The network of entrepreneurial resources in Mobile is optimized to transition new businesses, in the first few years of operation, into sustainable and growing pillars of the community.

Innovation Portal Executive Director **Michelle Parvinrouh** says her most important role is building and sustaining bridges between those resources, such as those at USA and the Chamber initiatives, like those connected with its economic development program of work, Partners for Growth.

Having spent more than a decade fostering entrepreneurship in Alabama and Colorado, Parvinrouh said she’s “never been in a more supportive community than this.”

“Right now, it’s more about how we foster a culture of innovation,” she said. “There are so many resources and so many people willing to take advantage of them, I’m really impressed where Mobile is.”

Once businesses have made it through the initial gauntlet of viability, there are many programs at the disposal of entrepreneurs to foster sustainability and eventual evolution and growth. Financing and investment are available through initiatives such as Alabama Launchpad and the Angel Investment Management Group, based in Auburn.

One of the pillars of the Melton Center is the Minority Business Accelerator, an eight-week program meant to infuse homegrown, minority-owned companies with funding and help them better understand their customers’ needs and react accordingly. Also

geared toward minority-owned businesses, the Chamber’s Growth Alliance Task Force advocates for small business owners and provides access to programs such as its entrepreneur training boot camps, and Step One Program – an assessment of the readiness of small businesses to be viable.

In addition to the Melton Center, USA is also home to the CREATE Center and the Alabama Small Business Development Center, both providing numerous resources to businesses of every level and age.

A monumental cost to many entrepreneurs is office space, even if their companies have only a handful of employees. Enter the coworking spaces, such as Exchange 202, Mighty Creative Lab, Container Yard, Mid-Towne Works and Innovation Portal. There, for a nominal monthly fee, small business owners can handle their affairs in collaborative spaces designed to stimulate networking and problem-solving among like-minded individuals.

As companies grow, so do the entrepreneurs at the helm, which prepares them for Chamber-sponsored programs such as the 1702 premier peer network for CEOs and business leaders, and Emerging Leaders — an SBA program hosted by the Chamber. A prime business accelerator, Emerging Leaders is a seven-month program supporting company maturation and the evolution of proprietors into true leaders, ready to help the next generation of entrepreneurs.

## Maturity and Mentorship

As the arc of individual businesses moves from innovation and sustainability to maturity and eventual exit via sale or retirement, many entrepreneurs experience their own journeys into philanthropy. This goal is shared by many business owners, and it’s an evolution also fostered by vast community resources.

An example is USA’s Real Advice Mentoring Program, known as RAMP. Made possible by the Massachusetts Institute of Technology’s renowned Venture Mentoring Service, the program has more than 160 mentors who have mentored 1,500 ventures.

“The support network in Mobile is second to none,” said Harbin. “Having people dedicated to giving back is what makes Mobile such a strong area for businesses trying to grow and expand.”

# HOME SWEET PORTAL

**Nonprofit  
Incubator and  
Innovation  
Hub Opens**

It's been 18 months since a crowd of community, business and education leaders decked out in hardhats and armed with sledgehammers rallied at Innovation Portal's groundbreaking. This month, many of those same participants return to celebrate the grand opening of the organization's permanent home at 358 St. Louis St., the cornerstone of Mobile's burgeoning technology corridor.

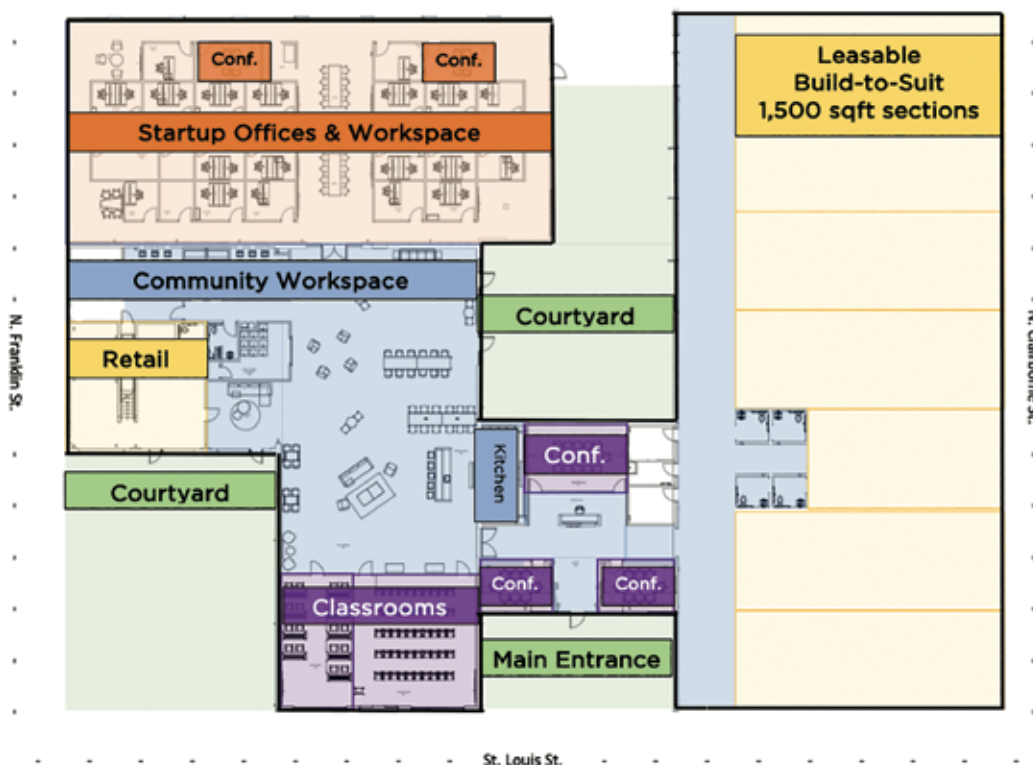
"The most progressive cities in the country have made a commitment to supporting entrepreneurs and innovation. As we visited these cities with the Mobile Area Chamber, it became readily apparent that a program with a brick and mortar home like Innovation Portal was a piece of the puzzle we needed in Mobile," says **Frank Lott III** with Heritage Homes, who serves as both Innovation Portal's board chair and the Mobile Area Chamber Foundation chair.

"I am proud to be part of the team, and we now have the premier program housed in the finest facility in the Southeast."

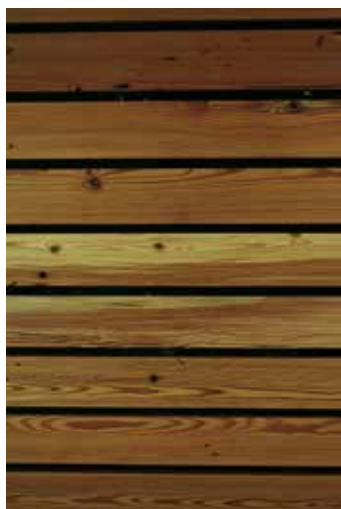
The 30,000-square-foot building's renovation and new construction by Rogers & Willard features 4,500 square feet of community workspace, 20 startup offices, five conference rooms, two classrooms and two outdoor courtyards. In addition, 10,000 square feet is dedicated to long-term lease tenants with the option to customize.

The nonprofit incubator and innovation hub is offering day passes and monthly memberships. Amenities include fiber internet, a break area stocked with coffee and snacks, a printer and supplies, along with special events, targeted programming and consultation sessions.

"The Innovation Portal team is beyond excited that our new headquarters is completed and welcoming members," says **Michelle Parvinrouh**, Portal's executive director. "We have been devoting our efforts over the past several months to creating a welcoming, supportive and dynamic space for local innovators, entrepreneurs and the greater community to engage, connect and grow."



A floor plan of the Innovation Portal space at 358 St. Louis St. is shown above, and below are some of the natural elements being used in the building's design.



Designed to be the center of entrepreneurial activity in the region, encouraging collaboration and innovation between startup founders and the community, the program is also taking another huge step.

Innovation Portal is taking applications for its inaugural Portal Fund, a 501(c)3 investment fund for early-stage, high-growth Mobile-based ventures. The application period is open through September.

“Innovation Portal is a success story proving that the most effective projects are partnerships between the city, county, Chamber, business community and local foundations,” adds Lott, crediting the many partners in the project.

“Entrepreneurship is an integral part of any community’s economic development,” says **Bill Sisson**, president and CEO of the Mobile Area Chamber and Innovation Portal board member. “It is the ‘gardening’ approach to creating jobs by creating and growing businesses locally. With Innovation Portal, business startups have an epicenter for testing ideas and getting the support needed to take them from concept to reality. We’ve seen proof of this already with many local startup success stories, and this new building will only enhance that.”

Funding for the development of the Portal Fund and construction of the building is provided in part by grants from U.S. Department of Commerce, Economic Development Administration and numerous other public and private partners.

Learn more about the program, memberships and the venture fund at [innovation-portal.com](http://innovation-portal.com).

## About Innovation Portal



Innovation Portal is a nonprofit incubator and innovation hub accelerating startup growth in southwest Alabama and the central Gulf Coast.

The program provides a growth-focused space and community for entrepreneurs, innovators and creatives to connect. In addition to the workspace, the Portal team provides targeted programming to encourage successful launch, development and scaling of local ventures.

## Membership

Memberships are available with varying levels of programming and support. Want a tour? Go to [innovation-portal.com/membership](http://innovation-portal.com/membership).

## Get Started

Innovation Portal’s new tagline, Get Started, applies to every stage of a startup’s development – helping an entrepreneur get started with developing an idea, the next growth milestone, funding, etc.

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# THREE AREA BUSINESSES NAMED FINALISTS FOR THE MOBILE AREA CHAMBER 2020 SMALL BUSINESS OF THE YEAR AWARD

In the middle of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Mobile Area Chamber asked small business members to reflect on 2019 and nominate successful local companies for Small Business of the Year. From the nominations and applications, a volunteer panel experienced in management, finance and business development evaluated entries on a handful of criteria in the categories of:

- Business Operations and Impact
- Financial Position
- Innovation and Entrepreneurship
- Customer Service
- Market Strategy; and
- Community Involvement

At its June Board of Directors meeting, the Mobile Area Chamber recognized Calagaz Printing, JJPR and WaveFly Powered by JMF Solutions as finalists for its 2020 Small Business of the Year award. The winner will be announced on Thursday, Aug. 20.

The Chamber defines a small business as one with 100 employees or less, and this year's finalists have 18, 10 and 42 employees respectively.

Meet our finalists on the following pages.

*Photo by L.A. Fotographee*



# 2020 SMALL BUSINESS OF THE YEAR FINALIST



## CALAGAZ PRINTING

**President:** Joe Calagaz

**Founded:** 1991

**Number of employees:** 18

**Address:** 3001 Mill St., Mobile

**Website:** calagazprinting.com

When Joe Calagaz joined the family business in 1991, he was asked what his contribution to the company would be. To make his mark, he started a printing division that was quickly established as its own operation.

Calagaz Printing is a full-service commercial print shop providing materials, signage, apparel and more to local businesses and the national restaurant market.

“Our largest customer segment is restaurant support materials, and a lot of their needs are related to ups and downs of the economy, social trends and government changes in regulations, and our sales reflect that volatility,” says Calagaz.

Earlier this year, when the company’s print production dropped to zero because of the coronavirus pandemic, Calagaz Printing pivoted to produce more than 180,000 face shields as a way to keep the current staff, maintain some revenue and serve the community.

Photo by L.A. Fotographeer

# 2020 SMALL BUSINESS OF THE YEAR FINALIST





## JJPR

**Founder and president:** Jennifer Jenkins

**Founded:** 2010

**Number of employees:** 10

**Address:** 25895A Friendship Rd., Ste. C, Daphne

**Website:** [jjpragency.com](http://jjpragency.com)

In May 2010, Jennifer Jenkins made the bold move to leave the big agency world to create a life and career she loved. JJPR has grown from an upstart with one account to a boutique public relations, marketing and events firm.

The agency is dedicated to helping organizations, from nonprofits to small- and mid-sized companies to large businesses, tell their stories through every available communications platform. In addition to its core services, the JJPR team has expertise in research, advertising, branding, social media, email marketing and web development services.

“We believe just knowing the current trends isn’t enough – you have to anticipate what will happen next,” says Jenkins. “And the key to that is customized solutions using the right strategies to trigger influence of the brand from every angle and to every audience.”

# 2020 SMALL BUSINESS OF THE YEAR FINALIST



## WAVEFLY POWERED BY JMF SOLUTIONS

**Chairman & CEO:** Mike Francis

**Founded:** 2005

**Number of employees:** 42

**Address:** 1008 Randall Ave., Daphne

**Website:** wavefly.com

Mike Francis, chairman and CEO, founded JMF Solutions in 2005 to meet the demand for a regional, reliable telecommunications firm. The company operates its own network helping ensure customers stay connected to business class broadband and receive award-winning customer service.

With multiple data centers and offices throughout the United States, WaveFly provides residential communities, healthcare, banking, industrial and other service providers with managed network services, Fiber, Cloud, VoIP and IPTV (streaming television).

The company earned a spot on the *Inc.* 5000 list the past four years and stands at No. 12 on *CRN's* Fast Growth 150 list.

"We flip the leadership pyramid upside down. We really take care of our employees, who in turn take care of our clients and look for ways to give back to the community," says Francis.

Photo by L.A. Fotographe

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Source: The *Barron's* "Top 1,200 Financial Advisors" list, March 13, 2020. The *Barron's* "Top 1,200 Financial Advisors" ranking considered advisors with a minimum of seven years financial services experience and have been employed at their current firm for at least one year. This is a list of the top advisors in each state, with the number of ranking spots determined by each state's population and wealth. Other quantitative and qualitative measures include assets under management, revenues generated by advisors for their firms, and the quality of the advisors' practices, regulatory records, internal company documents, and 100-plus points of data provided by the advisors themselves. Rankings and recognition from *Barron's* are no guarantee of future investment success and do not ensure that a current or prospective client will experience a higher level of performance results, and such rankings should not be construed as an endorsement of the advisor. *Barron's* is a trademark of Dow Jones & Company, Inc. All rights reserved.

Source: The *Forbes* "Best-in-State Wealth Advisors" list, January 16, 2020. Data provided by SHOOK™ Research, LLC. Data as of June 30, 2019. The *Forbes* "Best-in-State Wealth Advisors" ranking was developed by SHOOK Research and is based on in-person and telephone due diligence meetings to evaluate each advisor qualitatively, a major component of a ranking algorithm that includes: client retention, industry experience, review of compliance records, firm nominations; and quantitative criteria, including: assets under management and revenue generated for their firms. Investment performance is not a criterion because client objectives and risk tolerances vary, and advisors rarely have audited performance reports. Rankings are based on the opinions of SHOOK Research, LLC and not indicative of future performance or representative of any one client's experience. Rankings and recognition from *Forbes* are no guarantee of future investment success and do not ensure that a current or prospective client will experience a higher level of performance results, and such rankings should not be construed as an endorsement of the advisor. Neither *Forbes* nor SHOOK Research receives compensation in exchange for placement on the ranking. *Forbes* is a trademark of Forbes Media LLC. All rights reserved. For more information: [www.SHOOKresearch.com](http://www.SHOOKresearch.com).

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Rick Miller's Pro356 works with entrepreneurs across the region. Pictured here from left to right are clients, Alodia Arnold, Fairhope Life Magazine; Dale Speetjens, Shipshape Urban Farms; Miller; David Andersen, Bizooza; and Jeff Parker, Shipshape Urban Farms. Photo by JJPR

# PRO356 CONSULTING HELPS CLIENTS MAKE LASTING CHANGE

After nearly 30 years of experience in numerous markets from New York City to San Francisco, **Rick Miller**, CEO/owner of Pro356 Consulting, decided it was time to return to his roots in Mobile. "You don't really appreciate the quality of life that you have in lower Alabama until you go and see the rest of the world," he says.

Pro356 Consulting is the Mobile Area Chamber's Small Business of the Month.

When Miller developed Pro356, he wanted to bring his financial knowledge and experience to small businesses by offering a people-oriented solution with a focus on balance and observant leadership rather than speed. Through Pro356, he provides individual and team coaching to introduce positive behavioral change that lasts, and provides financial results.

With nearly 10 years of involvement with the Chamber, Miller facilitates Emerging Leaders, the SBA-sponsored small

business growth program hosted by the Chamber. Through Emerging Leaders, Miller works with 20-plus companies over a seven-month period to help them develop a three-year growth plan. "The Mobile Chamber is the gold standard of what it takes to serve the business community," Miller says.

He also runs the Hatch Entrepreneurial Development Center in Fairhope, a tech-focused incubator – a smaller version of Innovation Portal, which develops plans and scenarios to find investors. And he is looking to open a second operation in Atlanta for Pro356 Consulting.

**"You don't really appreciate the quality of life you have in lower Alabama until you go and see the rest of the world."**

Giving back to his community is a big part of Miller's life. He teaches Sunday school at Fairhope United Methodist Church and is actively involved with Men's Outback. Miller is a Tiny Habits Certified Coach who is dedicated to helping his clients and community make lasting change.

He also runs a Facebook page called Fellowship of Gratitude, an effort to share small moments of gratitude. "The true success in life is keeping your work, family and your recreation in balance," he says.

**"The true success in life is keeping your work, family and your recreation in balance."**

**COMPANY NAME:** Pro356 Consulting

**OWNERS:** Rick Miller

**PHONE:** 251.472.5629

**WEBSITE:** pro356consulting.com



Photo by JJPR



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# GUNCLES IS GLUTEN-FREE LOVE AT FIRST BITE

**E**ggs, flour, sugar – these are a few of the standard ingredients in the baked goods **John Edward McGee's** mom used to make when he was growing up. But when he found out the gluten in flour was making him sick, McGee became determined to figure out how to re-create some of his favorites.

The result is Guncles Gluten-Free Bakery in midtown Mobile, offering cakes, cookies, friands (tea cakes popular in Australia and New Zealand) and much more.

Years ago, while living in San Francisco, McGee was diagnosed with wheat-dependent exercise-induced anaphylaxis, a rare, life-threatening disease tied to gluten and wheat. McGee had always loved sweets, and he mourned the fact that he couldn't eat them anymore. Or could he?

He and his partner, **Demetrius James**, started playing around with ingredients to see if they could make some gluten-free desserts. The very first recipe McGee modified was his mom's signature spice cake topped with praline pecans. Next was her chocolate ganache cake.



**“Our goal was to make an exquisite product that everyone would enjoy that happens to be gluten-free.”**

Demetrius James, Co-owner, Guncles



Photos by L.A. Fotographe

“Our home became our test kitchen, and gluten-free bakeries became tourist destinations,” says McGee. Soon he and James dedicated their vacations to visiting such bakeries.

One of their friends, Toffer Delaney, owned Gluten-free Grocery where McGee met a mother with a 4-year-old daughter who had never tasted a birthday cake because of her gluten allergy.

*Continued on pg. 30*



Photos by L.A. Fotographe

With that in mind, along with the store owner's persistent encouragement, they traded in their real estate careers to start their own gluten-free bakery. "It was time to take it from a hobby to a bakery," says James.

The process included moving from California home to Mobile to be closer to their families. They named the bakery – the first of its kind in Mobile or Baldwin County – Guncles Gluten-Free, a play on words combining their gluten-free focus with their status as uncles.

In 2018, they leased their first commercial kitchen in Spanish Fort, selling their delicacies to locations on both sides of the bay and growing demand through customers at popular local restaurants, The Noble South, The Cheese Cottage, Red or White Wine & Gourmet Center and Reney's Honey Butter.

Their initial success drove them to look for a permanent home for the bakery. Last year, on the way to an international artisan bakery expo in Las Vegas, they found the perfect spot at 1252 Government St., close to their residence in Midtown. "We knew that was it and called the Realtor from the airport," says James.

They now have four employees helping in the bakery. McGee and James each have distinct roles in the business. While McGee perfects the recipes, James focuses on the finishing touches, from icing cakes to doing photography and marketing.

## ON A ROLL

In addition to being a local favorite, the bakery has a following from Atlanta to New Orleans to Seattle. Guncles recently started shipping their most popular items, excluding large cakes; and signed on with several delivery services.



Over the summer, the product line expanded to include cinnamon rolls, oatmeal raisin cream pies, baguettes, sandwich bread and buttermilk biscuits.

Unfortunately, the coronavirus pandemic put their plans to start serving lunch on hold. But as soon as they decide it's safe to do so, James says to look for a menu that includes soups, gumbo, salad and tartines (open-faced sandwiches).

Guncles uses only the highest quality, freshest ingredients that are always gluten-free and non-GMO (genetically modified organisms). Even the extras sold to complement their products, like coffees and teas, are organic and sourced from small, family-owned farms.

"Our goal was to make an exquisite product that everyone would enjoy that happens to be gluten-free," says James.

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# STARTING A BUSINESS IN MOBILE

# A RESOURCE GUIDE

**Editors Note:** This resource guide is updated and maintained by the Mobile Area Chamber's small business development department. This guide is intended to be an informational resource for businesses wishing to locate or start in the region. To learn more about how the Chamber's small business development department can help you, call 251.431.8607 or visit [mobilechamber.com/small-business/](http://mobilechamber.com/small-business/).

## City of Mobile

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

The City of Mobile's online portal, Citizen Self Service (CSS), is a one-stop shop for doing business in the city limits. A business license is required to operate each separate business activity within the city, including acquiring a business license and filing and paying taxes.

If you are a developer, the city online portal, Build Mobile, lets you track, manage and view plans, permits, inspections and code enforcement cases throughout the building process, as well as pay invoices and request an inspection on active permits. [buildmobile.org](http://buildmobile.org)

## Mobile County

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

A privilege (business) license is required for all businesses doing business in Mobile County. On the county site, you can acquire a business license and file and pay county sales taxes online. Business owners are required to pay taxes on inventory of personal property (i.e. office equipment, office supplies, furniture, etc.) [mobilecountylc.com](http://mobilecountylc.com)

The county's inspection services department regulates the construction, demolition, alteration and repair of structures in unincorporated Mobile County. This includes plan review, permitting and inspection of all work that is subject to the adopted building codes and flood damage prevention.

## State of Alabama

[myalabamataxes.alabama.gov](http://myalabamataxes.alabama.gov)

Any business that hires employees and pays wages in Alabama needs an Alabama income tax withholding number to hold and remit the taxes to the Alabama Department of Revenue. My Alabama Taxes (MAT) is the state's electronic filing and remittance system for the filing of state, city and county sales, use, rental and lodging taxes. Proprietors, partners, corporate shareholders and others must report estimated earnings and pay income tax each quarter.

## Insurance

[labor.alabama.gov](http://labor.alabama.gov)

Business owners with employees may be required to provide worker's compensation insurance. Companies with five or more employees, part-time or full-time, are required to have worker's compensation insurance, obtained through a local insurance agency.

## Federal

[irs.gov](http://irs.gov)

An Employer Identification Number (EIN) issued by the IRS is used to identify a business entity and is needed to pay federal withholding tax. A sole proprietor may use his or her Social Security number as the EIN, unless the proprietorship has employees or is required to file any business tax forms. A partnership or corporation must have an EIN whether or not it has employees.

Employers are required to withhold federal income tax (FIT), Social Security and Medicare taxes (FICA) from the wages paid to employees. FICA taxes are paid by both the business and the employee. All employees must have a Social Security number. If self-employed, contributions are made through the self-employment tax reported on the employer's quarterly tax return.

## Occupational Safety & Health Administration (OSHA)

[osha.gov](http://osha.gov)

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

## Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)

[ada.gov](http://ada.gov)

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

## Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC)

[eeoc.gov](http://eeoc.gov)

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

## E-Verify

[e-verify.gov](http://e-verify.gov)

U.S. law requires all employers to verify the legal presence of their employees. Form I-9 is required to verify the identity and employment authorization of individuals to work in the United States, and all U.S. employers must complete Form I-9 for each individual they hire. This includes citizens and noncitizens.

E-Verify is a web-based system that allows employers to verify the identity and employment eligibility of newly hired employees by electronically matching information provided by employees on the Form I-9.

Alabama employers may use the federal E-Verify website or businesses with 25 or fewer employees may elect to use the Alabama E-Verify Employer Agent Service at [verify.alabama.gov](http://verify.alabama.gov).

## WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE SOMEONE STARTING A SMALL BUSINESS?



Photo by L.A. Fotographee

## CALAGAZ PRINTING

Joe Calagaz, *president*  
[calagazprinting.com](http://calagazprinting.com)

**“For anyone working on a business plan, I’d suggest they have a group of trusted advisors, and present that plan to them and ask for honest and open feedback on what will work, and what would not work.”**

## WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE SOMEONE STARTING A SMALL BUSINESS?



Photo by L.A. Fotographee

## WAVEFLY POWERED BY JMF SOLUTIONS

**Mike Francis**, *chairman & CEO*  
[wavefly.com](http://wavefly.com)

**“If you’re an entrepreneur or starting a business, it is important to**

- (1) be an expert and**
- (2) don’t ever quit.”**

## SMALL BUSINESS RESOURCES

### **Alabama Department of Commerce Office of Small Business Advocacy**

401 Adams Ave.  
Montgomery, AL 36130  
800.248.0033  
[madeinalabama.com](http://madeinalabama.com)

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

### **Alabama SBDC at the University of South Alabama**

600 Clinic Dr., Room 328  
Mobile, AL 36688  
251.460.6004  
[southalabama.edu/sbdc](http://southalabama.edu/sbdc)

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

### **Better Business Bureau of Central and South Alabama (BBB)**

150 Government St., Ste. 1004  
Mobile, AL 36602  
251.300.3388  
[bbb.org/us/al/mobile](http://bbb.org/us/al/mobile)

BBB offers dispute resolution services to the public by assisting in resolving consumer complaints through conciliation, it also provides arbitration and mediation services and referral services and information.

### **Downtown Mobile Alliance**

261 Dauphin St.  
Mobile, AL 36601  
251.434.8498  
[downtownmobile.org](http://downtownmobile.org)

Supports the redevelopment of downtown Mobile through marketing, advocacy and management of BID services. It also operates Urban Emporium, a retail incubator for new or expanding retailers in downtown Mobile and offers training, from loss prevention to inventory control.

### **Hatch Entrepreneurial Development Center**

36 N. Section St.  
Fairhope, AL 36632  
251.270.2670  
[hatchfairhope.com](http://hatchfairhope.com)

A business resource hub and incubator for startups and technology-based entrepreneurs in Baldwin County. It fosters entrepreneurial culture by developing a resource ecosystem.

### **Innovation Portal**

358 St. Louis St.  
Mobile, AL 36602  
251.202-7165  
[innovation-portal.com](http://innovation-portal.com)

Provides a growth-focused space for entrepreneurs to connect with each other and gain access to targeted programming, expertise, resources and funding to encourage successful launch, development and scaling of their ventures.

### **Internal Revenue Service (IRS) – Stakeholder Liaison**

820 S. University Blvd.  
Bldg. 3, Ste. 3C  
Mobile, AL 36609  
251.341.5937  
[irs.gov](http://irs.gov)

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

## **WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE SOMEONE STARTING A SMALL BUSINESS?**



Photo by L.A. Fotographee

## **JJPR**

**Jennifer Jenkins**, *founder and president*  
[jjpragency.com](http://jjpragency.com)

**“Completely immerse yourself in your community to network and get to know people. The connections you make and the people you meet will help take your business so far.”**

# SMALL BUSINESS RESOURCES

## **Mobile Area Chamber of Commerce Small Business Development Department**

451 Government St.

Mobile, AL 36602

251.431.8607

[mobilechamber.com/small-business/](http://mobilechamber.com/small-business/)

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

## **Southwest Alabama Partnership for Training and Employment (SWAPTE)**

515 Springhill Plaza Ct.

Mobile, AL 36608

251.432.0909

[swapte.org](http://swapte.org)

Works with local businesses to leverage their training investment through the On-The-Job Training Program and the Incumbent Worker Training Program. These initiatives provide wage reimbursement for companies hiring and training eligible new hires and a portion of training costs for existing staff.

## **South Alabama Regional Planning Commission (SARPC)**

110 Beauregard St.

Mobile, AL 36602

251.433.6541

[sarpc.org/rlf.asp](http://sarpc.org/rlf.asp)

Manages a revolving loan fund used to finance small business start-up and expansion projects to create permanent jobs.

## **U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA)**

1141 Montlimar Dr., Ste. 1007

Mobile, AL 36609

251.544.7401

[sba.gov](http://sba.gov)

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

## **South Alabama SCORE**

327 Fairhope Ave.

Fairhope, AL 36532

251.928.6387

[southalabama.score.org](http://southalabama.score.org)

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

## **University of South Alabama (USA) Melton Center for Entrepreneurship and Innovation**

5811 USA Drive S., MCOB Room 123

Mobile, AL 36688

251.460.6730

[southalabama.edu/colleges/mcob/mcei/](http://southalabama.edu/colleges/mcob/mcei/)

Provides consulting and training services to start-up, mid- and late-stage companies, as well as nonprofit organizations.



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**Company official:** Mike Payne, president

**Address:** 957 Springhill Ave., Mobile

**Number of Employees:** 22

**Website:** gwins.cc

**Years in business:** 107

**Brief company description:** H.P. Gwin established Gwin's as an engraving company in 1913 in Mobile and, according to Payne, it was the only engraving company in Mobile for several decades. In 1973, the Payne family started Copy Graphics on Royal Street as a copy shop that evolved into a printing company. The family purchased Gwin's in 1986 and then acquired Southern Lithograph in 2002 to expand the company's printing options. In 2006, they moved to their current location at 957 Springhill Ave. The 30,000-square-foot building near Broad Street houses a full-service production facility. Gwin's printing services include business stationery, marketing materials, direct mail and specialty processes like foil stamping, letterpress and embossing. In addition to commercial printing, Gwin's owns a retail stationery shop located in the Village of Spring Hill specializing in social stationery, event invitations and wedding invitations.

**Why do you support the Mobile Area Chamber of Commerce's Partners for Growth Initiative?** "I support Partners for Growth because I want to be a part of the positive force helping to improve our little corner of the world," said Payne.

**How long have you been a continuous Mobile Area Chamber Member?** Since 1991

*Located at 957 Springhill Avenue, the team at Gwin's touts itself as the most technologically advanced commercial printer on the Gulf Coast offering customized solutions for its clients' most demanding projects.*

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



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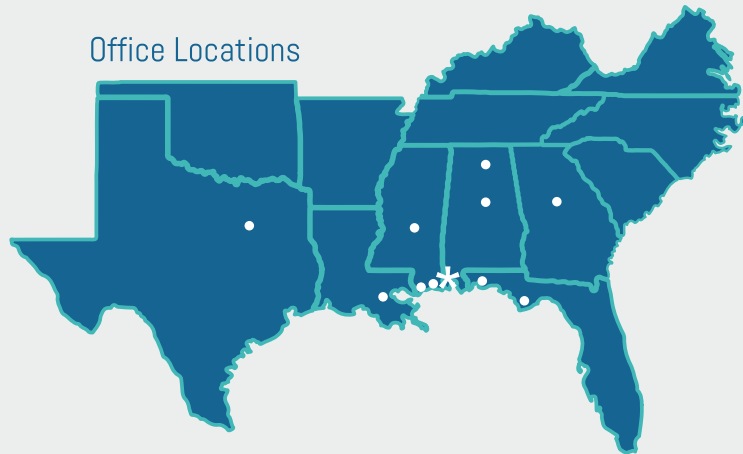
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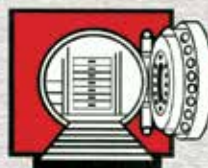
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## THOMAS HAND

### VOLKERT INC.

**Thomas Hand** is the chief marketing officer (CMO) for Volkert Inc. He joined the management team in 2003 and was named the firm's CMO in 2017, after serving in similar roles for Volkert Global, Volkert's Gulf Regions and its Central Region. In these roles, he facilitated Volkert's teaming in major alternative delivery projects, such as the Inner Harbor Navigation Channel MR-GO Surge Barrier and the Biloxi Bay Bridge. Hand began his Volkert career as a resident engineer for multiple Alabama Department of Transportation (ALDOT) and Florida Department of Transportation projects. Prior to joining Volkert, he participated in the ALDOT Professional Civil Engineering Trainee Program and served on a survey crew for Perry Hand and Associates. He received a bachelor's degree from Auburn University in 1995. Volkert Inc. is a Partners for Growth investor.



## MAXEY J. ROBERTS

### UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH ALABAMA FOUNDATION

**Maxey J. Roberts** is managing director of the University of South Alabama (USA) Foundation. She served as general counsel to the USA Foundation from 1998 until 2003, when she was appointed managing director. She is a USA graduate and received a juris doctorate from the University of Mississippi. Roberts is active at Dauphin Way United Methodist Church and is secretary to the Chapter of the U.S. Priory of the Order of St. John. USA Foundation is a Partners for Growth investor.



## TOMMY FAUST

### TRUSTMARK BANK

**Tommy Faust** is president of the Mobile and Baldwin County market with Trustmark Bank. He previously served as market president of Baldwin County. Faust joined Trustmark in 2013 and has more than 29 years of banking experience. He is a graduate of the University of South Alabama, where he obtained a bachelor's degree in business. He is also a graduate of the Community Banking School of Alabama at Samford University. Faust serves as a board member of the Fairhope Rotary Youth Club and Fairhope Rotary Club, and is past chairman of the Baldwin County Education Coalition. Trustmark Bank is a Partners for Growth investor.



## AUGUST 2020

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

**Note:** Watch the Mobile Area Chamber's website, [mobilechamber.com/events](http://mobilechamber.com/events), and our social media channels for updates as we balance in-person and virtual events.

## 11 VIRTUAL MEMBERSHIP 101

*\*Members only; one representative per company*

**VIA ZOOM:** Whether you are new to the Chamber or have been a member for years, make sure you are getting the most from your membership by participating in Membership 101. Meet other members and Chamber staff virtually to learn more ways to benefit from your membership.

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

**Cost:** There is no charge to participate, but space is limited.

**Contact:** Carolyn Golson at 251-431-8622 or [cgolson@mobilechamber.com](mailto:cgolson@mobilechamber.com)

RSVP requested for ZOOM meeting code.

## 12 COFFEE WITH THE CHAMBER

*Start your day with the Chamber and network with other business attendees.*

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

**Where:** Hampton Inn & Suites Providence Park/Airport, 525 Providence Pk. Dr.

**Contact:** Carolyn Golson at 251-431-8622 or [cgolson@mobilechamber.com](mailto:cgolson@mobilechamber.com)

**Sponsor:** Hampton Inn & Suites

## 18 VIRTUAL EXECUTIVE ROUNDTABLE

**VIA ZOOM:** A monthly forum exclusively for Chamber-member small business owners and managers.

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

**Speaker:** Charlie McVea, consultant/broker, BXS Insurance, A Division of BancorpSouth

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

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

RSVP requested for ZOOM meeting code.

**Sponsor:** BancorpSouth

## 28 CHAMBER CLASSIC GOLF TOURNAMENT

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

**When:** 7 a.m. registration / 7:30 a.m. putting and chipping contests / 8 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 are required.*

**Major Sponsors:** Arkema Inc., Austal USA, Hargrove Engineers + Constructors, Southern Earth Sciences, The Stewart Lodges, Ward International Trucks

**Contest Sponsors:** Century Bank, Gulf South Pipeline, Ingalls Shipbuilding, Palmer's Toyota Superstore

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

**Lunch by:** iCater Weddings & Events

**Beverages by:** Buffalo Rock Pepsi and Gulf Distributing Holdings LLC

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# SAVE THE DATE

## UPCOMING CHAMBER EVENTS

The Mobile Area Chamber has scheduled the following events from September through the end of the year. Mark your calendars and remember events are subject to change depending on the Coronavirus pandemic. Please refer to upcoming issues of the *Business View*, the weekly e-news, the Chamber's website and our social media channels for updates.

### September 2020

**State of the City and County Luncheon** (Sept. 3)

**Networking @ Noon** (Sept. 9)

**Executive Roundtable** (Sept. 15)

### October 2020

**Membership 101** (Oct. 8)

**Eagle Awards Ceremony** (Oct. 16)

**Executive Roundtable** (Oct. 20)

**Business After Hours** (Oct. 22)

### November 2020

**Coffee with the Chamber** (Nov. 4)

**Business Expo** (Nov. 5)

**Veterans Day Luncheon** (Nov. 11)

**Executive Roundtable** (Nov. 17)

**Networking @ Noon** (Nov. 18)

### December 2020

**Membership 101** (Dec. 3)

**Executive Roundtable** (Dec. 15)

**State of the Economy** (Dec. 16)

### February 2021

**Annual Meeting** (Feb. 3)

## STATEMENT REGARDING CHAMBER EVENTS AND YOUR SAFETY

The Mobile Area Chamber plans to cautiously move forward with events. Below are the precautions we plan to take to keep our members and guests feeling safe and staying healthy. In addition to in-person meetings, we will offer a virtual option where applicable.

**No food self-service.** At events where food is being served, note there will be no self-service. As a precaution, professional servers in masks and gloves will serve food and drinks, and all doors and restrooms will be monitored to limit the number of occupants.

**Increased ventilation.** Whether indoor or outdoor, locations of our events will have increased ventilation and air conditioning. Seating will be available inside and possibly outside main rooms. Each table will have limited capacity.

**Social distancing.** To comply with social distancing recommendations, our events will be open to 25 percent capacity depending on the space and event. A limited

number of tickets will be available and required for entry into the event. We regret we will not be able to accommodate day-of-event ticket sales. We will also encourage our attendees to converse at a safe distance.

**Increased sanitation.** Both before and throughout events, staff and support staff will routinely disinfect all commonly touched surfaces. Hand sanitizer will also be available throughout the venue.

**Smart guests.** Ultimately, we will ask any guest who has felt unwell or been around anyone who has felt unwell in the past 15 days leading up to the event to stay home.

By taking the above precautions, the Chamber believes that we will be able to hold an event that is both safe and enjoyable for everyone.

If you have any questions regarding our events and precautions, contact Brooke McIngvale, the Chamber's events manager, at 251.433.6951 or [bmcingvale@mobilechamber.com](mailto:bmcingvale@mobilechamber.com).

## WHO'S NEW

## Mark Crowell Joins Infirmary



Crowell

**Infirmary Medical Clinics** announces the addition of **Dr. Mark Crowell** to the clinic's pain management services. Crowell has a bachelor's degree from Vanderbilt University, completed medical school at the University of Tennessee Health Science Center and completed a residency in anesthesiology at Vanderbilt University. He is board certified by the American Board of Anesthesiology – Pain Management and the American Board of Anesthesiology – Anesthesiology.

## UM Announces Faculty and Staff Transitions



Chancey



Miller



Downs

The **University of Mobile (UM)** announced the following faculty and staff changes:

**Dr. Debra Chancey** was named dean of the school of education. Chancey received a bachelor's degree in elementary education, English and business administration and a master's degree in elementary education from UM. She earned an educational leadership and supervision certification for preschool through 12th grade and a doctorate in educational leadership from the University of South Alabama.

**Dr. Pamela Buchanan Miller** was selected assistant vice president for academic administration. She has a bachelor's degree in journalism and a master's degree in English from Southwest Texas State University. She also earned a doctorate in instructional development and design from the University of South Alabama.

**Dr. Matthew Downs** was named dean of the College of Arts and Sciences. He also holds the rank of professor of history. Downs graduated from Birmingham-Southern College with a bachelor's degree in history. He earned advanced degrees from The University of Alabama.

## McFadden Engineering Names New Partner



Newton

**McFadden Engineering** recently announced **Brad Newton** as a new partner at the firm. Newton has worked for McFadden for more than 20 years and is a certified professional engineer.

## UWSWA Names Stewart Manager of Regional Development, County Relations



Stewart

**United Way of Southwest Alabama (UWSWA)** named **Emily Stewart** the new manager of regional development, county relations. She attended The University of Alabama, where she received a bachelor's degree in public relations with minors in both philosophy and global and cultural perspectives.

## Roberts Brothers Welcomes New Agent



Lee

**Roberts Brothers Inc.** hired agent **Ryann Lee** at The Real Estate Center.

## EXIT Adds New Agent

**EXIT Realty Lyon** announced **Samantha Gable** joined its team of real estate sales professionals.

## Pierce Named OB-GYN Residency Program Director at USA Health



Pierce

**Dr. Jennifer Young Pierce**, professor of interdisciplinary clinical oncology at the **University of South Alabama** College of Medicine, and leader of cancer control and prevention

at **USA Health Mitchell Cancer Institute**, was named program director for USA Health's obstetrics and gynecology residency program. With a degree in medicine from the Medical University of South Carolina and degrees in engineering and public health from the University of Virginia, Pierce became the first female gynecologic oncologist in South Carolina in 2009.

## White-Spinner Realty Hires Clint Graben



Graben

**White-Spinner Realty** announced that **Clint Graben** joined the firm as controller. He earned a bachelor's degree in accounting from the University of Alabama at Birmingham. He served from 2012 to 2018 in the Alabama Army National Guard's 1/167th Infantry Battalion as an infantry unit logistics and supply specialist based in Talladega. He is also a member of Shriners International, a fraternity that supports Shriners Hospitals for Children.

## Burton Joins Premier Medical



Burton

Otolaryngologist **Dr. Kent L. Burton** is now practicing at **Premier Medical**. He earned a bachelor's degree in biological science from The University of Alabama and a medical degree from the UAB School of Medicine in Birmingham.

## Austal Hires MCPSS Graduates

**Austal USA** hired 15 **Mobile County Public Schools** graduates as full-time fabrication trade assistants. The 15 members of the Class of 2020 are walking straight off the graduation stage into jobs at Mobile's largest manufacturing employer, where they will build ships for the U.S. Navy: **Tre'mon Tompkins** and **Gunner Veillon** of Baker High School; **Octavious Hubbard** of Blount High School; **Justin Gambrell** and **Michael Wyatt** of Alma Bryant; **Matthew Gafford**, **Farhan Mansur** and **Christina Sashington** of Davidson High School; **Steven Binkley** and **Jeremy Doherty** of Mary G. Montgomery; **Tyler Mitchell** of Murphy High School; **William Flannagan** of Theodore High School; **Dontravious Holley** and **Niya Walters** of Vigor High School; and **Felix White** of Williamson High School.

## BUSINESS ENDEAVORS

## Rogers &amp; Willard Celebrates 30 Years, Transitions Ownership



Rogers

As **Rogers & Willard Inc.** celebrates 30 years in business, the company is also experiencing another significant moment: a transition of ownership. **Mike Rogers**, who formed the company in 1990, along with Pat and Guy McAleer, has officially become the majority owner.

## Hargrove Partners with Aspen Tech

**Hargrove**, a full-service engineering, procurement and construction, automation, life sciences and technical services firm, is partnering with **Aspen Technology Inc.**, an asset optimization software company, to deliver engineering services for a "digital twin" to better manage the operations and maintenance phase of a plant's life cycle.

## Continental's Latest Designed Engine Ready for Installation

Mobile-based **Continental Aerospace Technologies'** CD-170 engine, the newest design and highest horsepower engine in the CD-100 series, will be installed in Tecnam's new P2010 TDI aircraft.

## USA Starts Cord Blood Donation Program

**USA Health Children's & Women's Hospital** will implement the upper Gulf Coast's first cord blood donation program that could help treat diseases in patients. According to LifeSouth, a cord blood bank and USA Health's partner in the program, the umbilical cord is rich in blood-forming cells that could treat more than 80 diseases, such as leukemia and lymphoma. To participate, patients should contact their obstetrician-gynecologist. There is no cost to patients who donate.

## Spire Launches New Website

**Spire** developed a new website to bring local chefs and restaurants into homes across the area. Local chefs are invited to film themselves in their own homes/outdoor kitchens while sharing cooking tips and easy-to-prepare recipes. Videos will be shared across social media, various digital platforms and on the soon-to-launch website. For more information, visit [connectedthroughcooking.com](http://connectedthroughcooking.com).

## Spring Hill College Creates New Division

**Spring Hill College** announced its Center for Online Learning, a new division developed to provide on-demand certificate programs as well as degree completions for online adult learners. Content will be delivered through a variety of methods including video, interactive exercises, learning assessments and simulation technology to ensure learning and retention.

## BrewHounds Opens

Mobile's first brew pub and dog park, **BrewHounds**, is open at 806 Monroe St. The membership-based club offers daily, monthly or annual membership plans. Dog owners can spend quality time with their furry friends in an 8,000-square-foot off-leash play area. For humans, there's a 1,000-square-foot viewing deck and an indoor gaming area. For more information, visit [brewhoundsmobile.com](http://brewhoundsmobile.com).

## Virtual Family Learning Offered at USA Health Children's & Women's Hospital

**USA Health Children's & Women's Hospital** is offering virtual family learning classes to help patients during the COVID-19 pandemic. Classes include "Preparing for Childbirth," "Childbirth in a Nutshell" and "Understanding Breastfeeding." Call 251.415.1289 to sign up.

## BBB Industries Acquires Metalcaucho

Daphne-based **BBB Industries**, a remanufacturing industry leader in the automotive aftermarket, announced it acquired equity interests of Grupo Metalcaucho, a Spain-based aftermarket supplier in the rubber and metal product segment, with a catalog including over 22,000 SKUs and sales in more than 64 countries.

## Mobile County Opens Campground

**Mobile County** completed and opened the first phase of Escatawpa Hollow Park and Campground, located at 1551 Moffett Rd. in Wilmer. The park is open from 7 a.m. to 5 p.m. for limited daytime use, seven days a week. This park has public access to the beach and picnic areas and includes renovated restrooms, pavilions, picnic tables and grills. Construction work is slated to begin on the next phase of park improvements.

## WELL DONE

### Lee Receives AAST Research Scholarship



Lee

**Dr. Larry Lee**, assistant professor of surgery at the **University of South Alabama College of Medicine**, was recently awarded an American Association for the Surgery of Trauma Research and

Education Fund Trauma Critical Care Scholarship for the 2020-21 academic year. Lee is one of three physicians across the United States to receive the scholarship.

### Wood Named 2020 Dean of the Year



Wood

**Dr. Bob G. Wood**, dean of the Mitchell College of Business at the **University of South Alabama**, was named 2020 Dean of the Year by Beta Gamma Sigma, the international business

honor society. The national award recognizes an outstanding dean who made significant contributions to the success of his or her chapter throughout the course of the academic year.

### Rieske Wins American College of Surgeons Competition



Rieske

**Dr. Richard Rieske**, a surgery resident and postdoctoral research fellow in the **University of South Alabama** department of surgery, recently won the American College of Surgeons regional

resident paper competition for Region 4. Rieske's research examined the blood of trauma patients. USA has won the regional competition four times in the past six years.

## UM School of Nursing Granted Full Accreditation

The **University of Mobile's** Doctor of Nursing Practice (DNP) and the post-graduate Advanced Practice Registered Nurse certificate programs are now fully accredited by the Commission on Collegiate Nursing Education Board of Commissioners. The DNP is offered as an online program with three on-campus intensives.

## USA Health Accredited as Level Four Epilepsy Center

**USA Health** Comprehensive Epilepsy Program is now accredited as a level four epilepsy center by the National Association of Epilepsy Centers (NAEC) for 2020 and 2021. USA Health is one of two level four centers in Alabama. Level four is the highest level of accreditation awarded by the NAEC.

## University of South Alabama Earns ABA Scholarship

The **University of South Alabama** received the 2020 Alabama Broadcasters Association (ABA) endowed scholarship of \$25,000. The ABA chose USA from the eight Alabama universities offering TV, radio and broadcast journalism programs, and will be matched by the Mitchell-Moulton Scholarship Initiative, creating a \$50,000 endowed scholarship.

## Spring Hill Receives \$3.2 Million Grant for Nursing Scholarships

**Spring Hill College** will be awarded a \$3.2 million U.S. Health Resources and Services Administration Scholarships for Disadvantaged Students (SDS) grant, a program through Health and Human Services. This will provide scholarship support for up to 45 nursing majors per year for five years, beginning in July 2020, and allows Spring Hill College to help build a diverse workforce while educating professionals to provide healthcare in medically underserved areas.

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 first and last name, and must be 300 dpi at full size and saved in an eps, tiff or jpg format. Send your information to [news@mobilechamber.com](mailto:news@mobilechamber.com)

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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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As of 6/30/2020

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

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 clients' most important life moments, from awards and graduations to engagements and weddings to newborns and families. Alston says photography is his passion, job and creative outlet. 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 the Small Business of the Year finalists, Innovation Portal and Guncles. To see more of his portfolio, visit.lafotographee.com.



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