Photo by Robin Cooper

Chamber staff members Tony van Aken, left, and Bridgette Clarke, right, are presented a trade award from Gov. Bob Riley.

Gov. Bob Riley awarded Mobile business N-TRON with the trade excellence award. Pictured from left to right are: Warren Nicholson, Riley and Bill Rowan.

Mobile Area Chamber and N-TRON to Receive State Trade Excellence Award

Hailed as an outstanding example of an Alabama business driving extraordinary results in international sales and contributing to the state's increased ability to compete in the global market place, the Mobile Area Chamber was one of eight Alabama organizations honored by **Gov. Bob Riley** with Trade Excellence Awards at the state capitol in March.

"We hear from trade mission participants and company representatives we assist that they value and appreciate the Chamber's trade program," said **Win Hallett**, Chamber president. "But state-level recognition gives additional credibility to our efforts. It is a testament to the dedication of our team and the many volunteers and partner organizations who help make our trade program a success."

The awards are given annually to Alabama companies in recognition of outstanding contributions to the state's economy through exports, and includes large, medium and small businesses as well as new-to-export companies from different parts of the state.

These recognitions are part of the "Export Alabama" initiative, created under Riley's administration to increase Alabama's exports, expand existing business and create new growth opportunities for state firms.

The Mobile Area Chamber's trade division was created in 1997 to increase trade promotion and job opportunities in the region. The program crosses county and state lines and focuses on:

- Educating companies on the exportation process and the importance of trade;
- Assisting companies in promoting their products and services in the world marketplace through trade missions and trade shows;
- Providing support to the Alabama State Port Authority and the Mobile Airport Authority, key infrastructure to the area; and
- Fostering cooperation with local, state and regional trade entities to ensure a healthy climate for trade.

Exports continue to play an integral role in Alabama's growth and prosperity. In 2008, state exports reached an all-time high of $15.845 billion, an increase of $1.439 billion (or nearly 10 percent) from 2007. The global demand for Alabama products supports more than 300,000 jobs. Between 2004 and 2008, Alabama's exports increased nearly 75 percent, while the national export growth rate was 59 percent for the same period. Some of the top sectors include automotive, chemicals, forestry, minerals and ores, and primary metal manufacturers.

"The continued establishment of overseas business and educational alliances by Alabama will be critical for the state to remain competitive in this global economy," said Riley. "The consistent annual increases in exports show there is great demand for Alabama products in other countries, as well as potential for further growth."

N-TRON Corp., a Chamber member, also received the trade award.

"The Mobile Area Chamber and Gov. Riley's export initiative have been very helpful to N-TRON's export business into more than 30 countries over the past four years," said **Bill Rowan**, the company's marketing and business development vice president.

The corporation was founded in 1999 in Mobile. Recognized as the "Industrial Network Company" in North America, N-TRON develops, manufactures and markets industrial network products for industrial, marine, utility, rail, traffic control and military applications. N-TRON products are distributed worldwide through a network of highly trained distributors. In addition to its domestic operation, N-TRON has sales offices in Shanghai and Beijing, China; Mumbai, India; Cheshire in the United Kingdom; and a sales and distribution center in Zug, Switzerland. The company exports to more than 72 countries, and its export business experienced a average growth rate of more than 200 percent annually during the past five years, according to Rowan.

Other recipients of the 2009 Governor's Trade Excellence Award include: Atrion Medical Products Inc. (Arab), Moreson Conferencing (Birmingham), Nidek Medical Products Inc. (Birmingham), PlayCore (Fort Payne), PPG Industries Inc. (Huntsville) and Rescue ONE Connector Boats (Huntsville).

(See related export story on page 23)

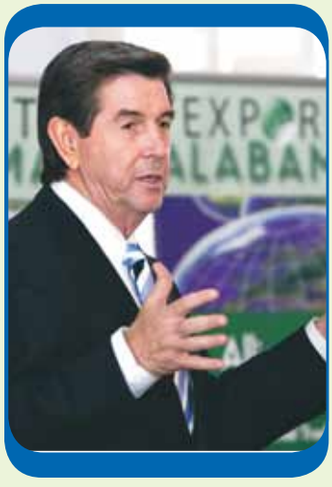

Photo by Robin Cooper

Gov. Riley Recognized

Recently, the U.S. Chamber of Commerce honored Riley with its highly distinguished TradeRoots International Leadership Award for his inspired advocacy for Alabama's exporters. He was acknowledged for the state's 75 percent in exports between 2002 and 2007 and the additional 10 percent increase in 2008.

Referring to the state's Export Alabama Initiative, **Leslie Schweitzer**, the U.S. Chamber's senior trade advisor, said, "It is the most successful governor-led trade education program in the country, and we are proud to be a part of it."