



## Historic Leadership Coastal Alabama Class to Uncover Regional Strengths



Linda Garrett (left), assistant director of University of South Alabama – Baldwin County, and Katherine Phillips, administrator of Leadership Mobile, meet on the causeway that connects the two counties.

By May 2004, Linda Garrett of Leadership Baldwin and Katherine Phillips of Leadership Mobile hope to have a long list of regional strengths labeled “Only in Coastal Alabama.”

Inspired by the success of last year’s joint meeting of Leadership Mobile and Leadership Baldwin, the sponsoring organizations’ leaders created a historic one-time program to build on the mounting collaborative energy in the two counties. Leadership Coastal Alabama is a joint project of Envision Coastal Alabama, Leadership Baldwin, Leadership Mobile and the University of South Alabama-Baldwin County.

Appropriately, Gigi Armbricht with BellSouth and Envision chairman has been named dean of the upcoming Leadership Coastal Alabama class. She sees the joint two-county program as an opportunity to “focus on what we bring to the table as a region, to recognize the strengths of the two counties and how we are united as a region.”

In a recent *Mobile Register* article, Armbricht said, “This is a great opportunity for local leaders to examine Alabama’s two coastal counties and find opportunities for regional collaboration. By

the end of the program we will have 40-plus leaders who know each other in the 22 communities in Mobile and Baldwin counties, and that is a great start.”

Mobile and Baldwin counties will be equally represented in the class with a goal to have at least one person from each municipality.

The course will run from October 2003 to May 2004. On the agenda is an opening retreat at Beckwith Lodge and seminars on various regional issues including the four Envision compass points of economics, equity, environment and education. Envision co-chairs will be involved in seminar planning and will have a great deal of input in the curriculum. At the end of the course, class participants are expected to continue their community stewardship through volunteer and leadership roles.

Nominations were taken in May and interviews will begin in August. Class members will be announced in October.

For more information, contact Leadership Mobile at 432-1638 or Leadership Baldwin at 928-8133.

## A New Angle on School Ownership

Local citizens, community, business and education leaders are constantly searching for solutions to the problems that plague the public education system. Education expert and author David Mathews PhD recently offered inspiration to citizens who attended his lectures on both sides of the bay.

Mathews addressed the important links between communities and their schools and offered an alternative to the traditional way of viewing school ownership. Volunteer Mobile Director Penny Dendy attended the Mobile sessions and explained Mathews’ ideas.

“Instead of talking about communities supporting schools, we need to see schools as supporting communities. They provide our community members. This broadens the participation and ties it closer to everyone in the community, not just who is filling the desks in the schools at the moment. This makes us all stakeholders in the success of our schools.”

In his book *Why Public Schools? Whose Public Schools?* Mathews says, “Communities built the first schools and, in turn, the common work of establishing them ‘built’ the communities. Yet we seldom take that history into account these days when we try to improve our schools.”

Mathews continues, “The relationship between a school and a community is more than a commercial relationship – it is one that is fundamental to a democratic way of life.”

Mathews shared similar ideas with a crowd of more than 60 at the University of South Alabama - Baldwin County campus. He encouraged citizens to

ask themselves “What do we want from our schools?” and in turn to build community ownership of the schools as the key to improving public education.

Mathews is a former president of the University of Alabama and was U.S. Secretary of Health, Education and Welfare in the Ford Administration. He is currently president/CEO of The Kettering Foundation, a nonprofit research organization that studies how to make democracy work as it should.

Mathews’ books *Is There a Public for Public Schools*, *Why Public Schools? Whose Public Schools?* and *For Communities to Work* are available at Volunteer Mobile. Call 433-4456 for more information.

### Yes We Can Community Agreement On-Line

Mobile County citizens can make a difference in area public schools by joining forces with Yes We Can. The Yes We Can Community Agreement is posted on the Mobile Area Education Foundation Web site at [www.maef.net](http://www.maef.net). The agreement outlines the organization’s ideas on how to “reconnect our community and public schools. These ideas are grounded in the notion that public schools play a vital role in our community and that the community must play a role in public schools.” Visit the Web site for more information or to get involved with Yes We Can.



During a visit to coastal Alabama, David Mathews, president/CEO of The Kettering Foundation and author of *For Communities To Work*, *Is There a Public for Public Schools?* and *Why Public Schools? Whose Public Schools?* spoke at several gatherings in both Mobile and Baldwin counties on topics of education and community leadership.

## Baldwin County Transit Coalition Continues its Mission to Develop Public Transit System

As Baldwin County continues to grow, the Baldwin County Public Transit Coalition (PTC) continues its mission to develop a countywide public transportation system. The Baldwin Rural Area Transportation Services (BRATS) agency offers excellent dial-a-ride service for county residents, however, PTC and BRATS advocates agree the next

step must be development of a basic commuter bus route.

Last year’s release of the South Alabama Regional Planning Commission study on Baldwin County transit revealed 27 percent of county residents need public transit, but funding continues to be a problem. The crucial funding issues are closely

linked with constitutional reform, since the current Alabama constitution requires that state transportation funds be used only for road construction and maintenance. Until Alabama revises its constitution, funding for public transit systems must come from grants, private partnerships and local government.

Visit [www.orangebeachlibrary.org](http://www.orangebeachlibrary.org) and click on Public Transit Coalition for more information on the Baldwin County Public Transit Coalition and how to get involved.

# Haz-Mat Day A Success

The Mobile County Commission recently teamed up with Alabama Coastal Foundation and Clean Harbors Environmental Services to collect more than 88,000 pounds of hazardous household waste at the Greater Gulf State Fairgrounds.

At the Annual Household Hazardous Waste Collection Day, in March, Mobile County residents brought materials ranging from paint, fertilizers and motor oil to pool chemicals, household cleaners and batteries. Over 100 volunteers worked the event that was funded primarily by a federal grant awarded to the County Commission from the Coastal Impact Assistance Program.

According to the Environmental Protection Agency, the average U.S. household generates approximately 20 pounds of hazardous household waste each year. The event offered a safe way to dispose of this waste, which should never be left out for



Volunteers handle waste items at the Household Hazardous Waste Collection Day on March 8.

household garbage pick-up. The sponsoring agencies hope to host future waste collection days, as grant money becomes available. The agencies encourage residents to store hazardous materials until the next scheduled collection event.

# Smart Growth Paves the Way for Development Alternatives

Smart Growth development is an emerging trend for U.S. cities searching for solutions to problems caused by development practices of the past 50 years. Cities across the nation are turning to Smart Growth development alternatives as a way to make their communities more functional and livable. Mobile joined this quest in 2002 when Mayor Mike Dow appointed the Smart Growth for Mobile Steering Committee and challenged them to create a Smart Growth planning initiative.

The resulting document explains, "Like most American cities, Mobile's prevailing development practices have greatly contributed to inefficient land use practices, increased traffic congestion, consumptive development of environmentally sensitive areas and wasteful use of city infrastructure and resources. . . the Smart Growth Steering Committee was formed to establish a Smart Growth Policy to guide Mobile's development process and to offer alternatives to existing development standards."

In January, the steering committee unanimously adopted the proposed policy document and the Mobile Planning Commission approved it in April. The document outlines development alternatives for Mobile in four categories: design alternatives; strengthen the existing community; preservation of critical environmental areas and open space; and investment in multi-modal transportation options.

The steering committee includes more than 30 individuals representing a diverse cross-section of Mobile's business, civic and environmental communities. Margaret Pappas of the City of Mobile's Urban Development Department explained, "Just by the nature of their businesses, the steering committee members could easily have been at odds with one another, but the fact that the policy document was supported unanimously shows the committee's commitment to make Smart Growth work for Mobile."

The committee has spent the last year researching the concept to develop policies specifically suited for Mobile. "Smart Growth has many visions and definitions that are tailored to each community. Many areas have Smart Growth programs, but each element of our policy document is unique and special to Mobile," Pappas said.

Smart Growth policies offer alternatives, not mandates for future development projects. The policy document includes design initiatives that would establish neighborhood character, encourage

mixed-use development, revise codes and ordinances, and provide walkable, enjoyable green space.

The steering committee formed subcommittees to research and develop implementation initiatives, while awaiting city council approval of the policy document. "Subcommittees were formed prior to council approval to keep the momentum going. Following approval the steering committee will make any necessary changes before moving ahead with the implementation phase," said Pappas.

For a complete copy of the Smart Growth for Mobile Policy Document, visit the city's Web site at [www.cityofmobile.org](http://www.cityofmobile.org) and select "Urban Development." The Smart Growth Policy Document is listed under "Choose a topic" and can be downloaded as a pdf file. For more information on Smart Growth, visit the Smart Growth Network Web site at [www.smartgrowth.org](http://www.smartgrowth.org).

## Baldwin County Trailblazers Host Smart Growth Pioneer

Baldwin County residents recently packed Centennial Hall at Faulkner State Community College's Fairhope campus to hear noted architect Jeff Speck speak on the merits of Smart Growth.

Speck is director of town planning at the Miami-based architectural firm of Duany, Plater-Zyberk & Co. and is best known for designing the communities of Seaside, Fla., and Kentlands, Md. The Baldwin County Trailblazers sponsored the event.

A leader in the New Urbanism movement, Speck has designed pedestrian-friendly communities throughout the U.S. The Smart Growth and New Urbanism movements promote the development of communities with mixed-income housing, schools and businesses built within walking distance of each other. Speck co-wrote *Suburban Nation: The Rise of Sprawl and Decline of the American Dream* with fellow New Urbanism architects Andres Duany and Elizabeth Plater-Zyberk.

For more information about the Baldwin County Trailblazers, call 928-2282.

## Did You Know?

### Mobile-Baldwin Chambers Seek Common Ground with Legislative Agendas

Key volunteers in Mobile and Baldwin counties met recently to discuss the community and legislative agendas created by the Mobile Area, Eastern Shore, North Baldwin, South Baldwin and Alabama Gulf Coast Chambers of Commerce.

In addition to Chamber representatives and volunteers, the mayors of Foley and Spanish Fort and the city manager of Bay Minette participated in the group discussion to create a part-

nership on key legislative issues.

The group agreed to cooperate on several regional economic development efforts – the fulfillment of Amendment One funding for the Alabama State Docks, the University of South Alabama Cancer Research Institute and the Greater Gulf State Park renovation. They also chose to seek a greater return of gasoline tax dollars to the two-county region for roads and bridges.

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