



THE VIEW

MARCH 2000

MOBILE AREA CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

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Envision Annual Meeting Outlines Accomplishments

From education to government, infrastructure to quality of life, economic development to community leadership – Envision Mobile-Baldwin, the area's long-range strategic plan, is working on all of these fronts to improve our communities and focus our efforts.

More than 200 of the 350 Envision partner organizations attended the Annual Meeting last month to hear about progress made in 1999. A complete report was also carried as a special section in the February 27 issue of the *Mobile Register*. Below are some examples from that report. Also note stories in this issue of *The View* about Envision programs such as the Housing Fair (pg. 7), School To Work grant (pg. 2), Constitutional convention (pg. 4), ozone (pg. 6) and a proposed career technical high school (pg. 9).

Education

A first time collaboration among the business community and the educational institutions in the two counties took place when a press conference was held to focus on Career and Technical Education Week. Bishop State Community College, Faulkner State Community College, Mobile County Public Schools, Baldwin County Public Schools, Sullivan-St. Clair Advertising and area Chambers worked together to focus on careers.

The Education Action Team has been working to assist with Mobile's transition from a Private Industry Council to a Workforce Development Board by developing an action plan for Mobile and Baldwin

counties. The board is federally mandated and will oversee all education and training programs in the region.

Quality of Life

A Funders' Summit, co-hosted by United Way of Southwest Alabama, Community Foundation of South Alabama and the Mobile Area Chamber, was held last summer. This meeting brought together organizations funding area public/private projects. The summit's objective was to take a comprehensive look at critical short and long-term community needs.

Under Envision, Mobile Mayor Mike Dow commissioned an Air Quality Study Team to evaluate the existing air quality of Mobile County, and determine a community-based standard along with actions to achieve and maintain that standard.

Recycling efforts are well underway in both counties. In Mobile, Keep Mobile Beautiful opened a recycling center in July on Government Street. Within six months, the center has collected more than one million pounds of recyclable materials. Baldwin County Commissioners adopted a county-wide recycling program in 1999, offering nine drop-off sites for residents without access to recycling pickup.

Infrastructure

The Land Use Planning and Zoning-Infrastructure Action Team has completed an informational paper, "Resource Management in Mobile and Baldwin Counties." The paper included

background on current land use regulations and made an argument for improving land, air and water resource management.

A symposium was held in 1999 to develop a consensus of how the various water and sewer boards in the two counties might work together. Participants identified three areas of potential collaboration: emergency service assistance, common material purchasing and common design standards.

Economic Development

While the Mobile-Baldwin area's unemployment rate continued to drop, the number of new jobs exceeded both state and national increases. The latest statistics available show a decrease in the area's unemployment rate to 3.8 percent, and a 3.9 percent increase in new jobs. Recent announcements and expansions include Ace Hardware, Hertz Reservation Center, Cintas, SpillTech and Mitsubishi. Also new air service was announced to Chicago and Washington-Dulles on United Express, and to Cincinnati with Delta Airlines Comair.

The Alabama Gulf Coast Convention and Visitors Bureau and Mobile Convention and Visitor Corporation partnered to develop brochures marketing the area's civil war sites and ecotourism.

To further the Envision strategy of taking full advantage of natural gas reserves and activity, the Mobile Area Chamber restarted the Oil and Gas Task Force last year. The goal is to develop a better understanding of how to maximize the current and proposed gas development activity in the Gulf of Mexico.

Government

The Alabama State Legislature passed and Gov. Don Siegelman signed into law important tort reform legislation in 1999. The passage of this legislation was a top priority for the local business community during the 1990s.

Members of the 1999 Leadership Mobile class joined with the Envision Government Action Team to research aspects of home rule or self-governance. Together the groups continue to focus their efforts on identifying the most important issues that counties need self-governance authority.

Community Leadership

In partnership with Envision and Volunteer Mobile, the Mobile Area Chamber established the Corporate Community Service Award to recognize companies in Mobile County making a substantial commitment to volunteer service. A panel of judges selected the winning business for 1999, and the winner, Kellogg Brown & Root, was announced at the Chamber's Annual Meeting.

Last year, Envision and the University of South Alabama explored the development of a regional leadership initiative. A grant application was made to the community foundation. The goal of this initiative is to encourage more people in leadership positions to think and act regionally on issues of importance.

For a complete Envision Mobile-Baldwin Report, call Angela Erwin at 431-8645. Envision is coordinated through the Mobile Chamber.

The Johnson Center Offers Life-Skills Training and Entrepreneurial Assistance

Low income residents in Mobile who want to move into better, higher-paying jobs now have a first-class facility for training, small business loans and other resources. The Clinton L. Johnson Center for Economic Development opened at 1956 Eagle Dr. and provides a one-stop opportunity for a variety of services.

The 25,000 sq. ft. facility, which officially opened in January, houses a Dollar General retail store offering instruction in various retail skills, an administrative and training center and a child day care program. Round-trip transportation is provided to anyone wishing to make use of the center.

According to the center's Director, **Norman Hill**, the program has three parts or tiers. First, participants are offered adult basic education. Their existing skills are assessed and, based on their needs, G.E.D. programs and upgrades in reading, language and math skills are provided.

The second tier is called "Life Skills and Customer Service Training." Here participants learn how to write a resume, respond to complaints, dress appropriately, deliver good customer service and develop good questioning and listening skills. Instructors come from such respected companies as Dale Carnegie and Norell Temporary Services.



Photo by Willie Davis, Davis Photography

Two new programs being developed will provide some specific skills for clients. Computer training and certification in child care through the Gulf Regional Childcare Management Agency which operates the child care center will be offered sometime this year.

The final tier, according to Hill, is the most challenging. Those interested in starting their own business can take a 33-hour entrepreneurial course outlining the eight elements of owning a business. Clients can also apply for a revolving micro loan to help fund their business and a comprehensive small business resource library and incubator are available for further assistance.

The Center is a program of the Mobile Housing Board. Other funding partners include the Chamber and the City. For more information, call 470-1728.

Incentives for New SkyGen Plant Based on Reduced / Emissions

In what has been heralded as a first by the Mobile Industrial Development Board, a new local company has received preliminary approval for property tax abatements based on their commitment to lower another company's emissions.

SkyGen plans to build a \$100 million energy plant and provide International Paper Company with steam for its operations and then sell the electricity it generates on the wholesale market. The company, which is expected to be in operation by June 2001, will employ 20 people.

The Industrial Development Board (IDB) meets with prospective companies interested in locating in Mobile, weighing incentives on the number of jobs created, wages and capital investment. Incentive packages differ for each company. Types of incentives normally given are corporate tax breaks, designed for large and medium sized businesses, including some types of sales and use tax; ad valorem tax; foreign trade and/or enterprise zone designation; road and site access and job tax credit. Although there are a wide variety of state, city and county incentives, taxes that go directly to the Mobile County Public School System are never waived.

Jim Apple, vice president of economic development for the Chamber said SkyGen's request for incentives was originally turned down in December due in part to the company's commitment to locate a plant in Mobile with or without property tax abatements. In February, representatives from SkyGen and International Paper again met with the

IDB, appealing their earlier decision, and asked for abatements based on SkyGen's commitment to reduce International Paper's emissions more than originally stated.

After consideration of SkyGen's proposal, the IDB gave approval, based on further negotiations between the board and representatives from SkyGen. According to an article in the *Mobile Register*, if SkyGen reduces its emissions at International Paper to a specified level as soon as it begins operation in 2001, the tax waiver will amount to about \$3.5 million over 10 years. The longer it takes for SkyGen to reduce its emissions, however, the smaller the tax break.

"This is definitely an innovative approach to tying incentives to pollution reduction," said Apple. **Steve Perry**, executive director of The Forum agrees, and sees this as a positive move that recognizes the need for environmental improvements in the IDB's evaluation of projects. The Forum is an association of the major industries in Southwest Alabama whose mission is to focus on environmental issues and public information.

So what's next for SkyGen? Apple said representatives of the IDB will be working with their engineering staff, International Paper and Alabama Department of Environmental Management to create specific emission levels that will be directly tied to tax incentives. The IDB will meet later this month to present their specifications to SkyGen on how their reduction in emissions will be directly linked to property tax abatements.

Survey Polls Member Opinions and Business Needs

Every three years the Chamber sends out a membership survey to identify the specific business and community-related needs of its members. The feedback also helps improve the benefits and services offered by the Chamber so each member's investment dollar can go even further.

"Stephen Covey says – 'Seek first to understand.' It is vital that any dynamic business or organization seek out feedback from its customers to ensure that products or services offered are on target with customer needs and desires," says Win Hallett, Chamber president.

One group of statistics that may surprise both the community and those closely involved in the organization is the percentage breakdown of businesses by number of employees. Often there is a misconception that the Chamber is a big business organization. "While larger corporations are able to offer more volunteers and funding to the organization, the majority of our member companies small businesses," said Jodi Swiderek, vice president of Communications and Community Development. "Out of our 2,483 members, 90 percent have 50 or fewer employees."

The following data represents information from the 1999 Membership Survey mailed to a random sampling of members. It was also published in the Chamber's monthly newsletter, *The View*. Typically a direct mail survey draws a 1 to 3 percent response rate. However, with this survey, 20 percent of the questionnaires were returned. Here are a few results compiled from member responses.

Top 10 reasons for joining the Chamber

1. To support economic development
2. For networking opportunities
3. Civic duty
4. For business contacts
5. To have a voice in local government
6. For leads and information
7. To learn ways to improve my business
8. To enhance credibility
9. It's tradition
10. To have a professional affiliation

Top 10 important issues addressed by the Chamber

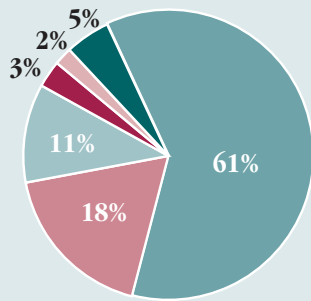
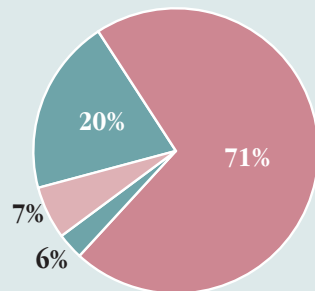
1. Bringing new companies and jobs to Mobile
2. Promoting a positive image for Mobile
3. Promoting workforce development within schools
4. Recognizing and supporting small business
5. Expanding local air service
6. Lobbying the legislature on behalf of industry and community-related issues
7. Helping existing businesses grow and expand
8. Expanding local international trade opportunities
9. Promoting regional cooperation between Mobile and Baldwin counties
10. Providing awareness of environmental issues

Top 10 seminars of interest

1. Time management
2. Marketing a business
3. Customer service
4. Finance
5. Stress management
6. Business planning
7. Employee recruitment
8. Advertising
9. Human resource management
10. Public speaking

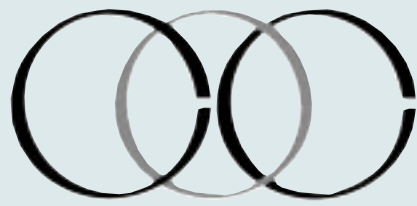
Expected Change in Employees Over the Next 2 Years

- No change at all (20%)
- We expect to add employees (71%)
- We expect to reduce the number of employees (3%)
- Not sure (6%)



Employee Base

- 1-10 employees (61%)
- 11-25 employees (18%)
- 26-50 employees (11%)
- 51-75 employees (3%)
- 76-100 employees (2%)
- Over 100 employees (5%)



MOBILE AREA
CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

Mobile Gets Share of Federal Grant

Late last year, the Chamber learned that \$410,000 would come to Mobile from the \$24 million federal School-to-Work grant secured by the state in 1998. The Chamber, on behalf of the Mobile School-to-Work Partnership, assisted the Alabama School-to-Work Career Office in winning the grant from the U.S. Department of Labor.

"Only 20 percent of the students graduating from Mobile County high schools go on to college, leaving many of the remaining 80 percent unemployed and confused about their future," said Barbara Estes, executive director of the Workforce Development Center at the Chamber. Monies secured for School-to-Work programs, will offer students the opportunity to gain valuable skills that will lead to better positions after completing high school or as a head-start in future career endeavors.

Better skilled workers are also a benefit for the

business community added Estes. "Many businesses need workers with solid skills, not necessarily a college education. Local programs are designed to fill specific needs of local businesses, creating a win-win for both students and employers."

Funds will be used for teacher internships, job shadowing programs, summer youth training programs, career/job fairs, communications and the expansion of six academy programs. Academies, located in several area high schools, use hands-on curriculum to better prepare students for the world of work and are available in the fields of health care, technology, public safety, ship fitting, aquaculture and construction trades.

The Mobile School-to-Work Partnership is a coalition of the Chamber, the Mobile County Public School System and Bishop State Community College.

Gulf of Mexico Conference Comes to Mobile

More than 250 presenters, seven concurrent program tracks and three days of nationally known speakers – what's drawing so much attention? The nation's largest multi-disciplinary gathering for those concerned about the health of the Gulf – the 4th Gulf of Mexico Symposium scheduled for April 9-12 at the Mobile Convention Center.

Conference attendees will have the rare opportunity to hear Dr. E.O. Wilson, the Pulitzer prize-winning author from Harvard and an Alabama native. Wilson, who also recently made *Time* magazine's list of America's 25 Most Influential People, will deliver the keynote address. Originally from Birmingham, he spent many of his boyhood summers in Orange Beach. Readers may associate his name with the popular book *Ants*, which won him his second Pulitzer prize.

New to the 2000 agenda are program tracks relating to environmental public relations; regulatory/



2000
GULF OF MEXICO
SYMPOSIUM

management training designed to create interaction between the state agencies regulating activities and the developers applying for permits; and local government geared toward elected officials and staff of city and county governments.

The symposium is expected to draw more than 1,000 people from Florida, Alabama, Mississippi, Louisiana and Texas. Thanks to sponsorships including funds from the Alabama Coastal

Foundation, Gulf of Mexico program, City of Mobile, The Southern Company and Ciba, registration is \$125 for all three days. Discounts are available for seniors, teachers and full-time students.

To learn about options for one-day attendance or to register, call 1-888-770-GULF or download the registration form from the Web site at www.gulfsym.com.

The Census Makes Sense for Business

Businesses need accurate information for sound financial analysis and strategic planning. As the 21st Century begins, Census 2000 will be the source for accurate, detailed data on population growth and decline, household income and family composition, changes in racial and ethnic distributions and labor force strength.

The upcoming census can benefit the business community by:

- providing a basis for analyzing business risks;
- identifying areas where services and products are needed;
- making sure direct mail and advertising campaigns reach the right communities;
- evaluating potential markets using data on income, occupation and education;
- analyzing labor markets;

- identifying population areas to locate new offices, malls, manufacturing centers and distribution points.

To achieve the most accurate and complete census possible, Census 2000 must have a "complete count." Every person missed could cost Mobile \$1,500 in federal funding over the next 10 years. Multiply that amount by 4,900, the number of people the last official Census missed, and that amount becomes a whopping \$7.35 million.

All information on individuals is strictly confidential. Encourage employees, friends and neighbors to return their census questionnaire that will arrive in mailboxes everywhere on April 1.

For temporary, part-time job opportunities or more information on Census 2000 call 1-888-325-7733 or visit www.census.gov/jobs2000.

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2000

IN SESSION:

February 1 - JUNE 1



The Chamber's Legislative Priorities for 2000

Chamber members identified remaining tort reform issues, education funding and tax reform as the top issues that are most important to their businesses in 2000. The process of developing the Chamber's annual Legislative Agenda is designed to include input from members, small business leaders, local industry representatives, and public and private sector leadership.

The following is the list of priorities adopted by the Mobile Area Chamber of Commerce's board of directors for the 2000 State Legislative Session and the 107th Congress:

LOCAL PRIORITIES

- ✔ Supports enactment of the strongest possible "home rule" legislation that provides for local decisions to be made by local officials in Mobile County rather than by the State Legislature in Montgomery.
- ✔ Supports state and local initiatives which are designed to lower ozone levels in Mobile County to the acceptable limits established by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the Alabama Department of Environmental Management (ADEM).
- ✔ Opposes the recruitment of any new industry or the expansion of any existing industry that does not first demonstrate a willingness to comply with the standards set by the EPA and ADEM.

STATE PRIORITIES

- ✔ Supports legislation that will complete the tort reform process in Alabama, including limits on mental anguish awards, product liability and civil fraud.
- ✔ Supports legislation mandating a certain percentage of state gasoline and diesel fuel taxes collected in each Alabama county be remitted back to the county in which they were collected.
- ✔ Supports increased funding of the Alabama Department of Environmental Management to enhance the agency's ability to monitor local air and water quality.
- ✔ Supports calling a constitutional convention to simplify and reform Alabama's constitution.
- ✔ Supports legislation to provide increased funding to the Alabama State Docks for infrastructure expansion and improvement.

- ✔ Supports legislation that will increase funding for continuing education of teachers, updated technology in the classrooms, School-to-Work programs for interested students and capital improvements of public school facilities.
- ✔ Supports a gradual increase in teacher salaries to those of the national average adjusted for local cost of living.
- ✔ Supports legislation that would require employees to report job-related accidents within 10 days if they expect to collect workers' compensation benefits.
- ✔ Supports legislation creating a fraud unit within the Alabama Department of Industrial Relations for the purpose of investigating workers' compensation fraud cases.
- ✔ Supports the State Board of Education's academic standards and accountability measures, specifically the implementation of the Alabama State High School Graduation Examination on the time line established by the Board on January 13, 2000.
- ✔ Supports the State Board of Education's budget request for K-12 education.

FEDERAL PRIORITIES

- ✔ Supports the "Fast Track" legislation that increases U.S. competitiveness and credibility in making foreign trade agreements.
- ✔ Supports federal income tax reform including legislation that will cut the capital gains tax, reduce estate taxes and replace the current tax code with a new system to include simplicity, stability and elimination of multiple taxation.
- ✔ Supports federal trade programs that help American companies to compete fairly with subsidized foreign competitors.
- ✔ Supports a managed care program based on the free market system without government interference and unnecessary intrusion and opposes all unnecessary mandated benefits proposed that increases the cost of health care insurance.
- ✔ Supports legislation to provide safeguards to the environment that are based on sound science which do not place unfair burdens or undue regulations on the private sector.

First Statewide Small Business Summit Identifies Top Issues

Small business owners and those representing small business concerns throughout Alabama gathered in Montgomery late last year to discuss their mutual concerns and recommend legislative action on issues impacting small businesses.

The first Small Business Legislative Summit drew more than 120 representatives including the Chamber's Director of Small Business Development **Walter Underwood**.

"This is the first time a consensus of legislative items has been assembled specifically addressing the concerns of small businesses. We're hoping that, with one voice, the message will have greater impact," Underwood said.

The Summit was sponsored by associations that represent small business owners including the Business Council of Alabama, Alabama Oilmen's Association, Alabama Association of Convenience Stores, Alabama Retail Association, Homebuilder's Association of Alabama, Montgomery Area Chamber of Commerce and the National Federation of Independent Businesses (NFIB).

Other Mobile representatives were **Margie Wilcox**, Mobile Bay Transportation, **Kathryn Cariglino**, Women's Business Assistance Center, **Reba Steele**, National Association of Women Business Owners and **Vernon Fowlkes**, retired from Automated Payroll Systems.

Following the summit, the priorities were presented by the NFIB to **Gov. Don Siegelman**, **Lt. Gov. Steve Windom**, **Speaker Seth Hammett** and all members of the legislature. The top issues were divided into legal, regulatory, tax and health reform categories and ranked by order of importance.

1. Eliminate the business personal property tax on equipment, machinery and furniture.
2. Enact comprehensive tax and budget reform, and eliminate earmarking.
3. Establish an unemployment benefits "probation" period, so new hires are ineligible to collect unemployment benefits until they have worked for a reasonable period of time (e.g., 90 days).
4. Eliminate government competition with small business by enforcing the constitutional requirement that prohibits state agencies and institutions from providing goods and services readily available in the private sector.
5. Abolish Alabama's standard of joint-and-several liability, so defendants only marginally "at fault" in civil cases cannot end up paying most or even all of damages awarded.
6. Adopt an "Employer Fair Reference" law so employers cannot be sued for providing accurate, good faith references for current or former employees.
7. Ease pressure for higher taxes, reduce costs and increase efficiency in state government.
8. Allow unincorporated business owners to deduct the full cost of their health insurance premiums for state income tax purposes.
9. Require all employers to provide workers' compensation insurance coverage for their employees, and assure compliance with the requirement.
10. Reject all proposed health-care mandates that would increase health insurance costs.
11. Adopt "collateral source" legislation that requires juries in civil cases to be informed of all injury-related compensation received by a plaintiff from other sources such as workers' compensation, health and disability insurance.
12. Oppose any other (non-mandated) legislative proposals that would also increase health costs.

On Top of the Issues

The Chamber is the voice of Mobile area businesses both in Montgomery and in Washington D.C. Through its Governmental Affairs Department, it monitors and evaluates local, state and federal government legislation, and supports or opposes actions that could impact small and large businesses.

The Chamber's Vice President of Governmental Affairs **Scott Posey** serves as a full-time lobbyist on behalf of Chamber members. Each year the Chamber polls its members along with local community leaders to help guide the Chamber's legislative direction by prioritizing a list of probable issues. In addition, the Chamber also works with other Chambers and businesses on issues of common interest.

The results of this year's survey, as well as feedback the Chamber received in numerous meetings with local officials and agencies, are reflected in the Chamber's 2000 Legislative Agenda outlined on the left.

Posey's key role during the legislative session is to communicate the Chamber's priorities. "You have to make your position known, taking every opportunity to explain who your constituents are

and why their positions are important."

When an issue's has an uncertain outcome, the Governmental Affairs team leads a grassroots effort to remind legislators of its position. Letters, phone calls and faxes can, and often do, influence the vote. (A list of legislators, their addresses and phone numbers are on page 5.)

Volunteers who serve on the Legislative Task Force and Chamber staff coordinate briefings to review priorities, maintaining an open dialog and regular communications with local, state and federal government representatives. By the time the 2000 legislative session begins, the Chamber will have met with nearly every elected official to present this year's agenda.

During the session, Posey monitors bills daily and makes weekly trips to Montgomery. If there is an issue or specific piece of legislation you are interested in following, the Chamber can print out the bills that are filed relating to that issue.

For more information on legislative issues contact **Shelly Mattingly**, 431-8612 or **Scott Posey**, 431-8640.

Join the Rally for a New State Constitution

The original Capitol grounds in Tuscaloosa will resound with speeches and music as citizens from around the state gather on April 7 to appeal for a new constitution for Alabama.

The rally, sponsored and organized by the Chamber of Commerce of West Alabama in Tuscaloosa, will be held at Capitol Park under a giant tent beginning at 10 a.m. and concluding at 2:15 p.m.

Organizers are expecting strong participation by grassroots, civic and leadership groups from throughout Alabama. Speakers and respondents will reflect Alabama's diversity and the passion for a new constitution that appears to be gaining momentum across the state.

While plans are not complete and speakers have not been confirmed, several prominent leaders have already joined the program. Former Gov. Albert Brewer will serve as moderator of the event; William Winter, a former governor of Mississippi, will give the keynote address at lunch; and Mobile County Commission President Sam



Jones, Barbara Larson, executive director of Leadership Alabama, Prof. Wayne Flynt of Auburn University and Dr. Bailey Thomson of the University of Alabama will present their visions.

In addition, the old-fashioned rally will include live music and dinner on the grounds for all participants.

"We want to make democracy and civic life fun again for Alabamians," said Thomson, who served on the planning committee. "But this rally also reflects a serious effort to move constitutional reform high on the public's agenda."

For Mobilians who are interested in participating in the event, busses from the Chamber parking lot will be leaving at 5:45 a.m. and returning that evening at 7 p.m.

"This is a great way for the Mobile community to participate in an event that could change our state's history," said Ginny Russell, director of community development for the Chamber.

The cost to attend the reform rally is \$30 which includes transportation, lunch and snacks. Call Angela Erwin at 431-8621 for reservations.

New Middle School Program Exposes Students to Real World of Work

On February 2 the groundhog wasn't the only one to see its shadow, so did employees in various businesses who sponsored students on Groundhog Job Shadow Day 2000. The program is a year-long national effort to enrich the lives of students by acquainting them with the world of work through on-the-job experiences and a carefully crafted school curriculum that ties academics to the workplace.

More than one million young people visited workplaces across the country. Locally, the Chamber helped place Mobile County middle school students who participated in the program.

Judge Herman Thomas, Mobile Circuit Court, Gigi Ambrecht, BellSouth, Jodi Brooks, WPMT NBC-15, and Barbara Estes, Mobile Area Chamber, were among the professionals who participated in the program engaging students in their day-to-day routines.

"Students need to be thinking about their careers much sooner than high school," said Estes who heads the Chamber's Workforce Development Center. "Job shadowing not only allows students to

observe workplace environments it opens up their eyes to the multitude of careers that are available to them.

The program also benefits the business community. Companies have the opportunity to interact with students and discover how challenges keep many youth from achieving their career goals. "When students lose interest in school, chances are they don't understand the career choices available," Estes explained, "and programs like this one are important in helping students plan their futures."

Groundhog Job Shadow Day is a joint effort of America's Promise - The Alliance for Youth, The National School-to-Work Office, Junior Achievement and the American Society of Association Executives. Monster.com, The Gap, Hospitality Business Alliance, American Hotel and Motel Association, National Restaurant Association and the Kauffman Foundation were national program sponsors. Mobile area sponsors included Junior Achievement of Mobile, Volunteer Mobile and the Mobile County Public School System.

MOBILE AREA STATE LEGISLATIVE DELEGATION

Sen. Albert Lipscomb, Dist. 32 State Capitol, Room 738 Montgomery, AL 36130 (334) 242-7897 (334) 242-7896 Fax	Sen. Vivian Figures, Dist. 33 State Capitol, Room 732 Montgomery, AL 36130 (334) 242-7851 (334) 242-8818 Fax	Sen. H.E. "Hap" Myers, Dist. 34 State Capitol, Room 735 Montgomery, AL 36130 (334) 242-7889 (334) 242-2528 Fax	Sen. George Callahan, Dist. 35 State Capitol, Room 737 Montgomery, AL 36130 (334) 242-7894 (334) 242-8818 Fax	Rep. Walter Penry, Dist. 94 State Capitol, Room 527-B Montgomery, AL 36130 (334) 242-7711 (334) 242-4759 Fax	Rep. Steve McMillan, Dist. 95 State Capitol, Room 532 Montgomery, AL 36130 (334) 242-7723 (334) 242-4759 Fax	Rep. Jeanette Greene, Dist. 96 State Capitol, Room 538-B Montgomery, AL 36130 (334) 242-7724 (334) 242-4759 Fax
Rep. Yvonne Kennedy, Dist. 97 State Capitol, Room 537-C Montgomery, AL 36130 (334) 242-7737 (334) 242-4759 Fax	Rep. William Clark, Dist. 98 State Capitol, Room 540-A Montgomery, AL 36130 (334) 242-7756 (334) 242-4759 Fax	Rep. James Buskey, Dist. 99 State Capitol, Room 540-C Montgomery, AL 36130 (334) 242-7757 (334) 242-4759 Fax	Rep. Victor Gaston, Dist. 100 State Capitol, Room 526-C Montgomery, AL 36130 (334) 242-7675 (334) 242-4759 Fax	Rep. Chris Pringle, Dist. 101 State Capitol, Room 537-B Montgomery, AL 36130 (334) 242-7685 (334) 242-4759 Fax	Rep. J.E. Turner, Dist. 102 State Capitol, Room 522-F Montgomery, AL 36130 (334) 242-7712 (334) 242-4759 Fax	Rep. Joseph Mitchell, Dist. 103 State Capitol, Room 517-A Montgomery, AL 36130 (334) 242-7735 (334) 242-4759 Fax
Rep. Mike Dean, Dist. 104 State Capitol, Room 630-A Montgomery, AL 36130 (334) 242-7765 (334) 242-4759 Fax	Rep. Phil Crigler Jr., Dist. 105 State Capitol, Room 524-E Montgomery, AL 36130 (334) 242-7700 (334) 242-4759 Fax	AREA CONGRESSIONAL DELEGATION		Sen. Jeff Sessions 495 Russell Senate Office Bldg. Washington, DC 20510 (202) 224-4124 (202) 224-3149 Fax	Sen. Richard Shelby 110 Hart Senate Office Bldg. Washington, DC 20510 (202) 224-5744 (202) 224-3416 Fax	Congressman Sonny Callahan 2418 Rayburn House Office Bldg. Washington, DC 20515 (202) 225-4931 (202) 225-0562 Fax

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"We sell through a network of distributors locally, but most of our business is national," said president **Bob Bickert**. "And we are the only promotional product manufacturers in the Mobile area."

Crown Products began in the late 1980s when **Frank Degruy** opened the manufacturing company with six employees. "I purchased Crown Products from Degruy in December of 1995 and we have currently expanded to 65 full-time employees," Bickert added.

The company has introduced more than 100 new products in the last three years. "We have developed a balanced product mix of what we call 'bread and butter' type promotional products such as pens, pencils, sport bottles, mouse pads, key chains and letter openers with some of our new products such as bubble pens, puzzle key chains, sports bottles, more than 35 differently shaped stress balls, and four new computer screen cleaners," Bickert said.

Crown Products employee assembles squeeze bottles, one of the many specialty items manufactured by the company.

Combining a diverse product line with fast service is the primary reason for the success of Crown Products. "Our motto is 'Whatever it takes' and we really do whatever it takes to satisfy our customers," concluded Bickert.

Guidelines for the Small Business of the Month selection:

- ◆ Current chamber member
- ◆ Fewer than 100 employees
- ◆ Apparent solid financial base
- ◆ Considered successful by peers
- ◆ Expanding number of employees
- ◆ Sales growth and/or profit growth
- ◆ Outstanding public service contribution
- ◆ In business a minimum of a year
- ◆ New product line

The Big Picture

◆ **PARCA Annual Meeting underscores the wealth of its metropolitan areas and the challenges its rural areas are facing.**

Rethinking how Alabama addresses economic development was one of the topics discussed at the Annual Meeting of the Public Affairs Research Council of Alabama (PARCA) in Birmingham last month. Discussion revolved around such things as the future of the Alabama Development Office (ADO), how the state handles incentives for new industry and what can be done to help the poor, rural areas of the state.

PARCA is a nonprofit, non-political organization that collects data and conducts research on state topics and issues. The Annual Meeting opened with a report from **Dr. Thomas Meredith**, chancellor for the University of Alabama who also chairs the strategic planning committee for Gov. **Don Siegelman's** Commerce Commission. The Commission is charged with developing a statewide strategic plan in such areas as tourism, trade, transportation and economic development.

"The biggest challenge in economic development is that there are two 'Alabamas' – rural and urban," said Meredith. "There was a net job growth in the state last year but only in the metropolitan areas. Sixty-six percent of Alabama counties have an unemployment rate above the national rate and seven peaked into double-digits. One third of the adults in this state do not have a high school education or the equivalent, and 25 percent are functionally illiterate.

"What do we do with those people?" he asked. "How do we attract the industry we want without an adequate workforce?"

Though he could not yet be specific about the Commission's conclusions, Meredith outlined a series of questions hinting at changes under consideration. These included how ADO was organized, whether there should be a "super commerce" person over the state and whether or not there



Gov. Don Siegelman was the keynote speaker at the PARCA Annual Meeting.

should be regional ADO offices. Since 77 percent of Alabama's new jobs come from existing companies, there was reference to a state initiative to help businesses expand. Other ideas included:

- a state training program in economic development for leaders and elected officials in areas where there is no formal economic development organization;
- matching grants from the state for infrastructure development;
- state-run child care programs for workers who can't afford private care;
- collaboration by the Port of Mobile and State Docks for a greater return to the state;
- a focus on containerized shipping at the State Docks;
- increased investment by the state in universities that conduct research to help the state advance economically;
- a look at attracting businesses suitable for an aging population; and
- a re-evaluation of foreign trade offices to be sure they're located in the best counties.

Incentives for new industry was another economic development-related topic. "Everyone offers them and to be competitive, a state must offer them. So, we ought to do it right," said **Ken Funderburk**, ADO Director. "For every dollar in incentives, the state gets a return for its citizens that is three and four times that amount."

As of the date of the PARCA Annual Meeting, the Commission had close to 120 recommendations for the Governor to consider. Meredith expected, however, the number would increase by the time the Commission completed its plan.

Open Enrollment Moves Up to April

◆ **Discounted Insurance Program Offers Savings**

In just a few weeks the opportunity to join the Chamber's discounted health, dental and disability insurance programs, **Chamber Advantage**, will be here. The open enrollment period begins April 1 and lasts until May 31, with an effective date of June 1.

Chamber Advantage is available to current Mobile Area Chamber of Commerce member businesses with 1-99 employees. For more information or a quote for your business, call **Vicky Hager** at 1-800-543-3153.

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GLORI Launching Public Awareness Campaign

◆ Ozone Season Begins March 1

Throughout the 1999 ground level ozone season, representatives of the Ground Level Ozone Reduction Initiative (GLORI) committed themselves to learning more about ozone, its health affects and how to run a successful community-wide ozone program. Additionally, GLORI members assisted the local media with making the public more aware of the ozone season, which officially runs from March 1 to October 31.

Ozone is often confusing to people because there are two types. There is one ozone layer high above the earth's surface which keeps harmful sunrays from burning. That is good ozone. The type being measured in Mobile, however, is ground level ozone. It is generally attributed to the levels of light, heat and humidity on specific types of pollution. Consequently, hot, dry, sunny days in the presence of increased levels of Nitrogen Oxides (NOx) and Volatile Oxygen Compounds (VOCs) create inflated levels of ozone. NOx is generally emitted from motor vehicles, power plants and other combustion engines. VOCs are emitted from a variety of sources including motor vehicles, industrial operations and even decaying vegetation. The Alabama Department of Environmental Management will begin forecasting for days with high levels of ground level ozone on March 1. The season will officially end on October 31.

During the 2000 ozone season, GLORI members will once again be out in full force – engaging the community in the topic and spreading the word about what people can do to help eliminate it.

On March 21, GLORI will officially kickoff its public awareness campaign with a joint meeting of all three committees – steering, communications and technical. On the agenda will be an update on the Gulf Coast Ozone Study (GCOS) being completed by the Alabama Department of Environmental Management, and similar agencies from Florida, Mississippi and Louisiana, assignments for the public awareness campaign and an overview of this year's goals.



In 1998, Mobile's official ground level ozone reading was .098 parts per million (ppm), higher than the Environmental Protection Agency's highest acceptable level of .085 ppm. The EPA standard requires communities to have an average of less than .085 ppm over a three-year period or a city will be designated non-attainment and run the risk of losing millions of dollars in new jobs, capital investment and federal transportation funds.

Last year, Mobile's official ozone reading was much lower than 1998 – .085 ppm – but not low enough to remove its designation as non-attainment.

To find out more about GLORI, or to get involved with this year's public awareness campaign, contact Leigh Perry Herndon at 431-8623 or leigh@mobilechamber.org.

WHAT: GLORI Kickoff Meeting
WHEN: Tuesday, March 21 – 11:30 a.m. to 1 p.m.
WHERE: Chamber McGowin Room
FOR MORE INFORMATION: 431-8623 or leigh@mobilechamber.org

Reservations Due for the World Trade Conference

The April 1 reservation deadline for the Eighth Annual World Trade Conference is fast approaching. The two-day event is set for May 1 - 2 at the Marriott's Grand Hotel, and will feature top-notch experts from four of Europe's most economically prominent countries – Germany, France, Italy and Spain.

A regional initiative among North Florida, Southern Alabama and Southern Mississippi, the conference is open to all Chamber members. "The one-on-one sessions with trade and exporting specialists will be the most beneficial part of the program, and especially helpful to small business owners who want to expand their knowledge about the international trade market," said Sara Graf, International Trade program manager for the Chamber.

"Our area only hosts this conference once every three years. This is a unique opportunity for local companies to get their products and services into the European market."

Kicking off the program will be Mayor Mike Dow, who was recently appointed by Gov. Don Siegelman as vice chairman of the Trade Subcommittee for the Alabama Commerce Commission. The keynote address will be given by Alabama Congressman Sonny Callahan, chairman of the U.S. Congressional Subcommittee for Foreign Operations and Export-Related Issues.

To register for the World Trade Conference call Sara Graf at 694-0702 or email sara@mobilechamber.org. The registration fee is \$175 and includes scheduled meals, an international reception, seminars and materials. The Marriott Grand Hotel has a special rate for attendees. Call 928-9201 or 1-800-544-9933 to make hotel reservations.

Diplomat of the Month Christie Amezquita

Diplomat of the Month, Christie Amezquita with Prudential Cooper, is a newcomer to Mobile and to the Chamber's Diplomat program.

"My husband and I moved to Mobile from Atlanta in May and I began working with Prudential Cooper as a commercial real estate agent in August. I attended a Tips Club meeting where I heard about the Diplomat program and I signed up in December," explained Amezquita.

In addition to her Chamber activities, Amezquita is also involved with the Board of Realtors and the New Mobilians.

"I have attended Business After Hours as well as the Annual Meeting, and I have enjoyed meeting new business contacts and learning more about Mobile's business community through the program," she concluded.



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Out-of-Pocket Expense Limit/Cal. Year: Individual		\$2,000		\$2,000	
Out-of-Pocket Expense Limit/Cal. Year: Family (Agg.)		\$5,000		\$5,000	
Office Visit	\$20 copay, then 100% to \$150 per encounter	100% after \$20 copay	100% after \$40 copay	100% after \$20 copay	100% after \$40 copay
Oral Exam and Cleaning	\$20 copay, limited to twice per year	\$20 copay, limited to twice per year		\$20 copay, limited to twice per year	
Dental Type 2 and Type 3 Procedures		50% after member has had the health plan for 1 year, after \$20 copay		50% after member has had the health plan for 1 year, after \$20 copay	
Inpatient Services	\$250 copay, then 100% to \$500 per encounter	80% after 250 copay	Not Covered	80% after \$250 copay	Not Covered
Outpatient Services	\$250 copay, then 100% to \$500 per encounter	100% after \$50 copay	Not Covered	100% after \$50 copay	Not Covered
Outpatient Surgery & Inpatient Hospital		80% after \$250 copay	50% after \$500 copay	80% after \$250 copay	50% after \$500 copay
Emergency Room Services	\$75 copay, then 100% to \$300 encounter	100% after \$75 copay	50% after \$150 copay	100% after \$75 copay	50% after \$150 copay
Physician, Occupational, Speech Therapy		100% after \$250 copay	50% after \$500 copay	100% after \$250 copay	50% after \$500 copay
Tubal Ligation, Vasectomy		100% after \$250 copay	No Coverage	100% after \$250 copay	No Coverage
Vision		100% after \$20 copay	100% after \$40 copay	100% after \$20 copay	100% after \$40 copay
Eyewear Allowance (per year):		\$80		\$80	
Maximum Benefit Per Covered Person/Cal. Year For:		40 visits		40 visits	
Home Health Care		30 days		30 days	
Inpatient Mental & Nervous		20 visits		20 visits	
Outpatient Mental & Nervous		30 days		30 days	
Inpatient Chemical Dependency		12 visits		12 visits	
Podiatry		60 days		60 days	
Extended Care Facility					
Prescription Drug Card Copay (30 day supply)	\$5 copay	\$5 copay		\$5 copay	
Generic:	\$15 copay	\$15 copay		\$15 copay	
Brand Name Birth Control	PCS Discount	PCS Discount		PCS Discount	
All Other Brand Names					
Employee	\$69.34	Employee	\$119.97	Employee	\$157.90
Employee + 1	\$134.47	Employee + 1	\$242.43	Employee + 1	\$321.23
Employee + 2	\$191.43	Employee + 2	\$332.41	Family	\$439.89
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Business Spotlight of the Month Mobile Open MRI



This month's Business Spotlight of the Month, **Mobile Open MRI**, was the first facility to offer open MRI (magnetic resonance imaging) in the area. Presently, there are two MRI scanners in the facility providing patient care in an office setting. "We base our center on service providing high quality state-of-the-art diagnostic tests in a personable and caring manner while focusing on our physicians' and patients' needs," said **Joan Taylor**, administrator for Mobile Open MRI. MRI imaging is a useful tool to physicians in diagnosing conditions and helping them select the appropriate course of treatment for their patients. The images are formed when signals are generated using a safe magnetic field along with radio wave frequencies. Radiation is not used for MRI procedures and the average scan time is 35 – 45 minutes. "The open MRI unit, which is open on all sides, has made it possible for patients to be scanned who may not fit comfortably into the traditional tunnel scanner or those patients who are claustrophobic.

The state-of-the-art equipment and friendly atmosphere are important to patients at Mobile Open MRI.

Parents are also allowed to sit along side their child during the procedure which helps to ease the fears of the parent and child," Taylor added. "We are very proud of our facility and the service we provide to the Mobile community and the surrounding areas. We hope that our patients find their experience with us to be painless and comfortable," Taylor concluded.

Business Spotlight of the Month is selected from a random drawing of business cards collected at the prior month's Business After Hours event.

Safety is Good for Business

◆ Annual OSHA Expo Set for March 28

Workplace safety benefits business owners, managers, employees, even customers. Designed to promote continuous improvement in occupational safety and health information and education, the 10th Annual Central Gulf Coast Safety and Health Seminar and Exposition, Expo 2000, is coming to the Mobile Convention Center on March 28. Hosted by the Mobile office of the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA), this year's event will feature 12 technical breakout sessions. Offered in three time slots, choices range from OSHA's new proposed ergonomics standard to fire safety to ambient air quality to OSHA record keeping. **Art Fetig**, a noted author and safety speaker with 50 years experience, will present the keynote

address. His opening presentation will motivate professionals trying to "Win the Safety Commitment" and his closing remarks will outline how to "Make it Happen." Expo 2000 continues to offer the unique opportunity to meet with government regulators, safety and health professionals and numerous exhibitors of safety and health-related products and services, along with customized safety and health training. The cost is \$80 per person and includes a continental breakfast and lunch. Discounts are available for groups of five or more. Registration, corporate sponsorship and exhibitor information is available by calling the Mobile OSHA office at 441-5483. (See ad below.)

2000 Housing Fair

Envision Mobile-Baldwin is sponsoring a Housing Fair for potential homeowners looking for ways to improve their credit and become eligible for a home loan. Institutions such as banks, credit unions and mortgage companies in Mobile will set up displays Saturday, April 8 from 9 a.m. – 1 p.m. at Government Plaza. "This is an opportunity for financial institutions to educate prospective home buyers in a more casual, comfortable setting than a bank lobby. This addresses the Envision strategy to provide affordable housing on a regional basis," says Event Chairman, **Michael Pierce**, MLK Redevelopment Corp. Representatives will provide participants valuable information on the steps necessary to purchase a home. Admission is free. For more information on the Housing Fair or to sponsor a booth, contact **Angela Erwin** at 431-8621.

Join Us For OSHA EXPO 2000

March 28 • Mobile Convention Center • 8 a.m. - 4 p.m.

Expo 2000 presented by

- Mobile Area Occupational Safety and Health Administration Office (OSHA)
- Mobile Bay Area Section of the American Industrial Hygiene Association (AIHA)
- Mobile Chapter of the American Society of Safety Engineers (ASSE)
- Mobile Occupational Health Nurses (MOHN)
- Gulf Coast Maritime Safety Association (GCMSA)
- Alabama Chapter National Safety Council

Features over 12 technical breakout sessions on topics such as:

- OSHA's New Forklift Standard
- Basic Ergonomics
- How to Implement an Effective Safety and Health Program

The cost of the Expo is \$80 per person. Lunch is provided. Registration form provided below. Further information is available by calling the Occupational Safety and Health Administration at 441-5483.

2000 Central Gulf Coast Safety and Health Seminar and Expo Registration

Mail to: EXPO 2000, 1301 Azalea Road, Mobile, AL 36693

Make checks payable to: AIHA/EXPO 2000

SORRY, NO CREDIT CARDS, PURCHASE ORDERS OR INVOICES. NOTE: Payment must be postmarked no later than March 14, thereafter the registration fee is \$100.00 and must be paid at the conference.

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Mission to Mexico Renders Promising Relationships for Mobile



A new sister city relationship with Veracruz could lead to increased traffic through the Port of Mobile. In January, Mayor Mike Dow and the Chamber led a group of 10 Mobile business leaders to further explore and develop commercial opportunities in Mexico's largest state, Veracruz, which is located in Central Mexico directly on the Gulf.

"Ground transportation can no longer efficiently accommodate the increased amount of goods between the U.S., Canada and Mexico created by NAFTA," explained Sara Graf, the Chamber's International Trade program manager. "We wanted to show off the Port of Mobile's capabilities and its economical access to the Eastern Coast and Central America."

Currently ocean-going cargo is primarily traveling South to Veracruz. In an effort to develop north-bound deliveries through Mobile, the group met with the new governor and officials at the state's three ports who could identify potential clients.

Over the past five years the Chamber has made several trips to Veracruz to develop a system of transportation. However with recent elections in Mexico, a whole new entourage of elected officials is on-board. The Mexican political system does not allow re-elections and terms are limited to three years. "That's one reason our relationship with Mexico needs to be carefully nurtured," said Graf. "A key component of doing business in Mexico is building relations with elected officials."

During the visit, the delegation formed a sister city relationship between the cities of Mobile and Veracruz in an effort to strengthen the commitment of both communities to promote cultural, political, social and economical ties between the two cities.

While addressing Veracruz constituents, Mayor Dow noted that almost a century ago Mobile, Veracruz and Havana, Cuba were known as a trade triangle, because of the high volume of commercial activity they shared. "It is my goal to support every effort to recreate that relationship. Our positions on

Mayor Dow and Mayor Francisco Avila Camberos of Veracruz shake hands after signing the sister city agreement between Mobile and Veracruz. Also on hand for the ceremony were Chamber President Win Hallett (seated left), Gene Lambert, City of Mobile (on the right) other delegates attending were: Mike Lee, Page and Jones; Luis Nieves, Gulf Coast Computer Services; Joe Rella, Alabama Shipyard; Hal Hudgins, Alabama State Docks; Tom Leatherbury, Stevedoring Services of America; and Bay Haas, Mobile Airport Authority.

the Gulf of Mexico make this trade relationship a natural fit and our newly formed relationship with Veracruz will help complete the steps toward recreating that triangle, as Mobile has enjoyed a sister city relationship with Havana for years," said Dow.

Veracruz continues to offer an abundance of opportunities for Mobile businesses that have an interest in accessing the Mexican market. The local delegation engaged in more than 20 business meetings with public and private-sector individuals and identified the possibility of developing a new transportation connection with the Port of Coatzacoalcos. Transportation arrangements have been established with the Port of Veracruz, and are underway with the Port of Tuxpan. "The challenge remains in keeping the lines of communication open," said Graf.

The Chamber is putting together a plan to capitalize on the contacts made during this most recent visit to Veracruz and are underway with the Port of Tuxpan. "The challenge remains in keeping the line open," said Graf. According to Win Hallett, Chamber president, "We were successful in laying the foundation to further develop commercial ties and the transportation infrastructure between our two respective areas. The success, however, lies ahead in our ability to foster the growth of this relationship." The Chamber is expecting to host a delegation from Veracruz this fall.



University of Alabama MBA Program Recognized by *Forbes*

The University of Alabama's Manderson Graduate School of Business is ranked 21st among regional schools for return on investment in a recent issue of *Forbes* magazine.

The Top 25 ranking places UA among some of the nation's most prestigious public universities. Three Southeastern Conference Schools — UA, the University of Georgia and the University of Florida are listed.



The ranking is the most recent recognition of UA's Culverhouse College of Commerce and Business Administration, which includes the Manderson Graduate School. The undergraduate business school is 45th nationally in the latest *U.S. News and World Report* rankings, and the Techno-MBA program has been ranked 4th nationally by *Computer World*.

To calculate the value of an MBA, the magazine compared the salary gains generated by the degree to the cost of obtaining it.

Reprinted with permission from the Jan. 31, 2000 issue of *Developments*, a publication of the Economic Development Partnership of Alabama.

Alabama Leads the Way

The Alabama State Docks has again maintained its position as the nation's no. 1 seaport for woodpulp tonnage, according to the state's Foreign Trade Relations Commission. In addition, it handles 50 percent or more of all forest products tonnage moving through the Gulf of Mexico.

Forest products are the top cargos moving through the State Docks and Alabama. Other leading cargos include coal and agricultural products.

In the first six months of 1999, forest products were valued in excess of \$510 million, and ranked second in value of cargoes exported from the state. Figures show transportation equipment, valued more than \$898 million, was the most valuable cargo exported from Alabama.

Trade Show Tips

Digest the results of a recent survey from Allen Konopacki, Incomm Center for Research & Sales Training in Chicago, and increase the return on your investment in trade show exhibits.

- ◆ 60 percent of those who visit your exhibit will share the information you give them with at least two other decision-makers in their organization. So ask them for those names.
- ◆ 58 percent of visitors won't wait longer than a minute to speak to a rep at your exhibit. Of the rest, 28 percent will hang on for three minutes, but only 14 percent will linger for five minutes.
- ◆ 33 percent of visitors will come to your booth because of your preshow mailing. So don't rely on a show sponsor to handle this for you.

Source: Communications Briefings, www.briefings.com; Alf Nucifora, Atlanta-based marketing consultant, writing in the *Philadelphia Business Journal*, 400 Market St., Philadelphia, Penn. 19106.

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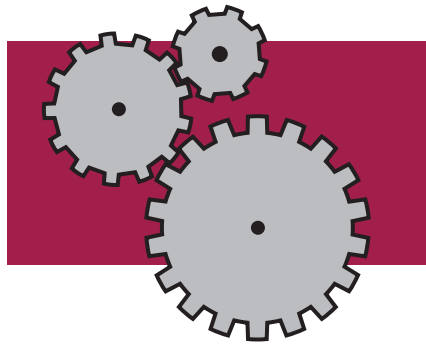
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The Chamber At Work For You



Neighbor to Neighbor

Chamber staff members are visiting companies based in the Mobile area. A new economic development initiative this year is to learn more about local companies and encourage additional investment.

Low Cost of Living

The Chamber completed the 1999 Fourth Quarter ACCRA Cost of Living Study. Recently last year's third quarter results were released showing Mobile rated below the national average. Watch for more details when the final 1999 statistics are released later this Spring.

Romanian Connections

Numerous companies interested in trade and investment information attended a meeting hosted by the Chamber for the U.S. Ambassador of Romania. While here, **Jim Rosapepe** discussed how a recent shift in the country's political structure opened up new opportunities for Mobile companies to do business and invest in Romania.

Building Relationships

In an effort to strengthen relationships between Mobile's small business resource agencies, the Chamber arranged meetings for the new SCORE Chairman Doug Holwadel to meet with Tommy Tucker, director of the Small Business Development Center at the University of South Alabama and Lynn Stacey, director of the Business Innovation Center. The Senior Corps of Retired Executives is housed at the Chamber and offers free assistance Monday-Friday, 9 a.m. to Noon.

Funding Education

Grants totaling \$30,000 were secured to plan a Career Technical Magnet High School. The Chamber, school system, and business and community leaders will be pursuing the development of a school that will give students a complete, high-level academic course schedule and technical training in one consolidated program.

Getting the Word Out

Often a resource for national and local media, the Chamber assisted national media with information on a new adoption program, Mardi Gras, Alabama State Docks, cruising industry and Bender Shipbuilding and Repair/Austal USA partnership.

The Chamber pitched stories to the local media on Chamber Chair Dianne Irby, Annual Meeting, Small Business of the Year, Manufacturer of the Year, Diplomat of the Year, Corporate Volunteer of the Year and Job Shadowing.

Ideas in Motion

The Chamber hosted a follow-up meeting to discuss new ideas being implemented as a result of last Fall's Leadership Trip to Charleston, S.C. Reports were given by those organizations that have taken action on items discussed during the trip. Among those reporting were: **Stephen Dill** and **Bestor Ward** of the Bedsole Foundation, **Sarah Teague** of the Alabama State Docks, Mobile Mayor **Mike Dow**, Rev. **Wesley James**, Franklin Street Baptist Church, **Brenda Scott**, Mobile Convention and Visitors Corp., and **George Ewert**, The Museum of Mobile.

These organizations are studying various projects such as a Civil War Trail through Mobile and Baldwin Counties, Workforce Development training and State Docks management and infrastructure.

Free Advice from SCORE

◆ As Chief Problem Solver Be Prepared for the Unexpected

In today's world of euphemisms, there is talk about challenges, but in the real world, there are problems – problems that need to be solved. As an entrepreneur, you are the chief problem solver. You have the vision, dedication and determination to make the business work. When there is an obstacle, you remove it. You see beyond the distractions, impediments and yes, the problems. To move forward, you solve problems. Solutions, after all, mean success and profits.

A number of potential problems can be avoided simply by creating a written business plan, outlining annual business and financial goals and mapping out how to achieve those goals. The plan should also focus on a few issues of concern and planned responses for what would otherwise be unexpected events.

"You can't address every business contingency, but you can identify your top 10 concerns or business issues, and that is where you focus your efforts," said SCORE Counselor **Bob Kirby**.

Be proactive and anticipate problems before they occur, he encouraged. "Recognizing a business challenge early is an important step to removing a roadblock to success."

Once problems have been identified, gather information about the potential issues. Determine all the elements, possible causes, effects and evaluate the significance of the issue. Then create solutions to match the level and complexity of the problem.

It helps to make a list of solutions, your own along with those of employees or trusted advisors, said Kirby. Once the list is complete, eliminate those that are not feasible and look for the most logical and effective answer for the situation.

If you would like to discuss problem solving, issue identification or business plan development, contact SCORE located at the Chamber from 9 a.m. - Noon, Monday through Friday, 431-8614.

Featured Profiles Advisors

Each month, the Chamber is proud to salute members of its Board of Advisors. These business leaders represent key businesses whose significant dues investment leads the way in funding the Chamber's programs and initiatives. For more information, please contact **Katrina McCrory** at 431-8611.

Paul E. Weaver is president and chairman of the board of Hosea O. Weaver and Sons Inc. He is a graduate of the University of Alabama with a bachelor's degree in business management. Hosea O. Weaver and Sons was originally established in 1952



Paul E. Weaver

to build fish ponds. The company currently performs all types of site and highway work, and operates four hot mix asphalt plants, one in Robertsdale, two in Mobile and one in Whatley, Ala. Weaver is the current vice president of the Alabama



Gary A. West

Roadbuilders Association, and a member of the Chamber's Board of Advisors.

Gary A. West is president and owner of G. A. West & Company Inc., a construction firm located in Saraland. The company was established in 1987, and specializes

in industrial construction, renovation and plant maintenance. West joined the Chamber's Board of Advisors in 1999.

Festival of Flowers 2000

"Everything You Wanted to Know about Roses, but were Afraid to Ask," "Butterfly Gardening," "Fertilizer: Fact and Fiction" and "A Southern Lady's Botanical Projects" – these are just a few of the seminars and broad array of lectures and demonstrations by garden gurus offered at this year's Festival of Flowers.

The annual event boasting more than 100,000 sq. ft. of flower and garden displays, is set for Thursday, March 23 – Sunday, March 26 on campus of Spring Hill College.

While adults are touring life-size landscaped gardens and bouquets for tables and special occasions, a weekend Children's Venue will host exhibits and activities by Keep Mobile Beautiful, the Dauphin Island Sea Lab and the Gulf Coast Exploreum.

Tickets go on sale February 28 at Providence Hospital, Regions Bank and Delchamps. Daily admission is \$8.50 at the gate or \$6.50 in advance. Children 7-12 are \$2; 6 and under are free. Special group rates are also available. For more information call the Providence Hospital Foundation at 639-2050 or log on to www.providencehospital.org.

Comparative Economic Indicators December '99 vs December '98

Unemployment Rates		4.0%	December '99
		3.0%	December '98
Business Licenses		163	December '99
		175	December '98
Homes Sold		306	December '99
		336	December '98
Air Passengers From Mobile		29,957	December '99
		30,000	December '98

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CALENDAR VIEW

March 14 Member Breakfast and Briefing

Time: 7:30 - 9 a.m.
Place: Chamber Atrium and McGowin Room
Cost: FREE
Call: Reeda Taylor at 431-8649

March 21 Noon Marketing Meeting

Time: Noon - 1 p.m.
Place: Chamber McGowin Room
Cost: \$6
Call: Reeda Taylor at 431-8649

March 22 Net Gain: Public Speaking

Time: 11 a.m. - 1 p.m.
Place: Chamber McGowin Room
Cost: \$15
Call: Brenda Rembert at 431-8607

March 23 Business After Hours

Time: 5:30 - 7 p.m.
Place: Cathedral Square Art Gallery
Cost: \$2 for members, \$5 for potential members

March 29 State of the City and County Luncheon

Time: Noon - 1:30 p.m.
Place: Mobile Convention Center
Cost: \$10
Call: Shelly Mattingly at 431-8612

March 31 Seventh Annual Spring Golf Tournament

Time: Shotgun Start at 8:30 a.m.
Place: TimberCreek Golf Course
Cost: \$150 per person/\$800 for hole sponsorships
Call: Carolyn Golson at 431-8622

COMING IN APRIL

April 7 First Friday

Time: 7:45 - 8:45 p.m.
Place: Long's Human Resource Services
 19 Midtown Park Drive West
Cost: \$2 for members, \$5 for potential members

April 8 2000 Housing Fair

Time: 9 a.m. - 2 p.m.
Place: Mobile Government Plaza
Cost: FREE Admission
Sponsored by: Envision Mobile-Baldwin

April 13 Regional Business After Hours

Time: 5 - 7 p.m.
Place: Aircraft Pavillion at Battleship Park
Cost: FREE
Sponsored by: AllTel Communications, Compass Bank, Gorrie Regan & Associates, Hackbarth Delivery Services, Joe Bullard Automotive, MesaStaff, Schlumberger/Global Tel-Link, South Alabama Bank of Mobile, USS ALABAMA Battleship Park
Call: Reeda Taylor at 431-8649

March's Business After Hours

Come view beautiful artwork at the Cathedral Square Art Gallery while sampling hors d'oeuvres at the March Business After Hours on Thursday, March 23 from 5:30 - 7 p.m. sponsored by the gallery and Picklefish. Take advantage of this great opportunity to make new business contacts. Bring your business cards to share among the crowd.

Reservations are not necessary. The cost for members is \$2 and \$5 for potential members.



Member Breakfast and Briefing

Come meet the Chamber staff and learn more about the different departments at the Member Breakfast and Briefing on Tuesday, March 14 from 7:30 - 9 a.m. in the Chamber Atrium and McGowin Room. Breakfast will be served from 7:30 - 7:45 a.m. and a briefing on Chamber activities will be held afterwards. This event is a great opportunity to market your company and see what the Chamber can do for you.

This is FREE to all members. Please call Reeda Taylor at 431-8649 for reservations.

Net Gain: Public Speaking

If the thought of speaking in front of a group of people is terrifying, then register now for the Net Gain: Public Speaking seminar on Wednesday, March 22 from 11 a.m. - 1 p.m. in the Chamber McGowin Room. Glyn Ed Newton, sponsor for the Dale Carnegie Training program, will discuss the basic elements of public speaking such as defining the process, examining the message structure and delivery. He will also provide tips on how to reduce anxiety before giving a speech.

The cost of this seminar is \$15 and includes lunch. For reservations, please call Brenda Rembert at 431-8607.



SMALL BUSINESS NETWORK

Noon Marketing Meeting

Brush up on your marketing skills at the Noon Marketing Meeting on Tuesday, March 21 from Noon - 1 p.m. in the Chamber McGowin Room sponsored by OEC Office Plus. Attendees have an opportunity to give a two-minute presentation on their company's product or service to other Chamber members. Feel free to bring brochures, flyers or other marketing materials to distribute during your presentation.

For reservations call Reeda Taylor at 431-8649. The cost to attend is \$6 and includes lunch.



7th Annual Spring Golf Tournament

Friday, March 31 8:30 a.m.



TimberCreek Golf Course
 Hole sponsorships \$800
 Individual tickets \$150

(includes green fees, cart fees, continental breakfast, rangeballs, tee favors, complimentary beverages and post-tournament reception)

Prizes include:
 1st, 2nd & 3rd place
 Closest to the pin
 Longest drive

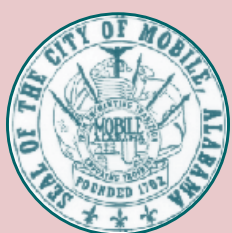


And great door prizes

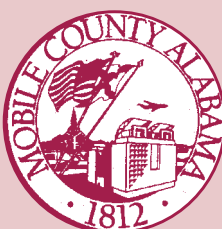
Awards Ceremony Sponsored by Cock of the Walk

For more information on sponsorships and tickets, call Carolyn Golson in the Chamber's Membership Department at 431-8622.

Sign up to play, this tournament sells out quickly!



State of the City and County Luncheon



Come hear Mayor Mike Dow and County Commission President Sam Jones as they give a report on current projects and predictions for the City and County during the year 2000 on Wednesday, March 29 from Noon - 1:30 p.m. at the Mobile Convention Center. This is an informative and exciting presentation, so call today for reservations.

Tickets are \$10 per person, or your company can purchase a table of 10 for \$100. This event sells out quickly, so call Shelly Mattingly at 431-8612.

ATTENTION MEMBERS!

If you know of a company interested in benefiting from Chamber membership, please contact our account executives:

- Julie Carter at 431-8647/pgr: 582-1899
- Tom Lewis at 431-8629/pgr: 582-2076
- Melody Lipscomb at 431-8627/pgr: 371-9634

WHO'S NEW?

Brenda Norris joined Whitney Bank as Schillinger branch manager. A Mobile native, she has 21 years experience in the financial industry and is also a graduate of the Alabama Banking School.



Norris

Volunteer Mobile hired Carmen Brown as project manager for the newly created Family Coaches Program. The program provides mentors for individuals and their families making the transition from welfare-to-work in Mobile County.

Brown, a Mobile radio and television veteran, will recruit, train, match and monitor coaches and work with players. The FCP office is at Volunteer Mobile, 1050 Government St. Suite 201.

Hand Arendall LLC announced that Brannon D. Anthony has become a member of the firm, and Ginger Gaddy, W. Craig Hamilton and Norman M. Stockman have joined the firm as associates.

James W. Hartman III CPA joined Crow, Shields & Bailey PC as business consulting manager.

The Museum of Mobile announced Jennifer Theeck joined the staff as curator of education. She will be responsible for all education activities at the history museum, which is expected to move to the old City Hall later this year. Theeck holds a bachelor's degree from Auburn University at Montgomery as well as a master of education.

BUSINESS ENDEAVORS

TownePlace Suites by Marriott held its grand opening last month. The hotel is located on Montlamar Avenue and can be reached at 304-0570.

Cecil Crow Jr. and Judy Callaway are proud to announce the opening of The Cronus Group LLC, an information technology consulting firm. The company services clients in Mobile and Baldwin counties as well as coastal Mississippi and Northwest Florida. Their offices are located at Dauphin and I-65 in Mobile. The Cronus Group LLC can be reached at 660-8875 or at www.cronusgroupplc.com.

Alabama Computer Forms and Printing Company added a warehouse to hold forms and publications for clients when they want to order large quantities but don't have the storage room.

Also to better serve its clients, the company recently hired design, layout and graphic expert, Teresa Senn. Call Tommy Tew for more information, 476-1058.

Spring Hill College is establishing a service to help students take responsibility for their own health. The Wellness Center is a consolidation of health and counseling resources available to students free of charge.

The center will be directed by Nurse Mary York BS, RN, C, who has provided health services to the college community for 33 years.

BLUESTAR Communications from Nashville has opened a new location in Mobile at 1110 Montlamar Dr. The company provides high speed data transmissions over existing copper wire.

Sheila Murphy has joined the company as sales manager. Previously employed by Hunter Security, she will now oversee all marketing for Mobile and in May, the Biloxi/Gulfport Office. Her new sales team consists of: Frances Frazier, formerly of BFI; Rick Carroll from Comcast sales force; Ryan Johnston, formerly with SMI Mortgage in Dallas; and Jim Moodie from Clear Channel.

More information is available on the company Web site at www.bluestar.net.

MEMBER NEWS

Mobile Infirmary announced it is the first and only area hospital to offer the latest technological equipment for sinus disease. The Insta Trak System, used as a navigational aid, can improve surgical accuracy and efficiency, particularly in the most difficult sinus operations.

For more information about the new technology, call the Infirmary Health Resource Center at 435-2508.

Cook Coastal Rental, a full-service industrial, construction and residential equipment rental store, opened its doors in Baldwin County on Hwy. 31 in Spanish Fort. Store hours are 7 a.m. - 5 p.m. Monday through Friday, 7 a.m. - 3 p.m. on Saturdays.

COMMUNITY NEWS

The Home Builders Association of Metro Mobile and Baldwin County Home Builders Association are sponsoring "Building Our House," a traveling exhibit at the Gulf Coast Exploreum on display through May 31. For hours and admission prices, call 208-6873.

Six \$1,000 scholarships are available to high school graduates wanting to enter the school of business in an Alabama college or university or an accredited business or vocational school.

Scholarships will be awarded by the Alabama Association of School Office Personnel, and based on scholastic record and financial need. To receive an application or for more information, contact Mary Delle Hudson at 690-8219.

Bishop State Community College 2000 Spring Semester full-time enrollment increased 16.3 percent over the 1999 Fall Semester full-time enrollment. Fall Semester usually boasts the highest number of students attending the College during an academic year. Bishop State's current enrollment totals 3,773.

WELL DONE!

The Mobile Museum of Art announced its new board officers: Jackie Greer Jr., chairman; Jerry Jordan, vice chairman; Sue Keen, secretary; Larry McMillian, treasurer; and Steve Abelman, ex-officio past chairman.

Region's Bank announced recent promotions. Ben T. Lanham III was promoted to executive vice president and trust executive officer. Since he joined the bank in 1970, he has worked in the Personal Trust area. Robert B. Doyle III was promoted to vice president personal trust manager. He transferred to the Mobile trust Division from Dothan in 1992. Deborah M. Carney was promoted to assistant vice president branch manager. She joined the Retail Division in 1994 with more than 13 years of retail banking experience. Brenda G. Powell was promoted to assistant vice president credit administration manager. She joined the bank's Credit Department in 1990. Lincoln L. (Lee) Hammons was promoted to private banking officer. He joined the bank in 1998 working in the Retail Division before his transfer to the Private Banking Department.

In addition, William L. (Bill) Heiter Jr. was promoted to senior vice president employee benefits trust officer. He joined the bank in 1974 as a management trainee working in several areas of the bank before his assignment to the Trust Department in 1976. Kathryn W. (Kathy) Lott was promoted to assistant vice president IRA coordinator. She has worked with the bank since 1984 and transferred to IRA Administration in 1991. Jonna P. Moses was promoted to student loan officer. She has been with the bank since 1980 and joined the Student Loan Department in 1993. Gail O'Kelley was also promoted student loan officer. Employed by the bank since 1977, she worked in the Credit Department before her transfer to the Student Loan Department in 1980.

Sandy Frost was named 1999 Top Producer of the Year for ERA Marie McConnell Realty recently.

In addition, Pam Miller earned the 1999 Rookie of the Year award.

Whitney Holding Corporation announced that Alabama State President John M. Turner Jr. will become eastern region executive, with responsibilities for the bank's operations in Florida, Alabama and Mississippi. G. Robert Baker Jr. will become



Turner



Baker

president of Whitney's Southern Alabama Region covering Mobile and Baldwin counties. He was previously responsible for consumer banking, business banking and support services in Mobile.

John C. Hope III, executive vice president of the Gulf Coast Division will lead the company's efforts to create a significant Whitney presence in the Houston market when the merger with the Bank of Houston is completed. He will continue to have responsibility for operations in Alabama, Florida, Mississippi and Texas.



Hope

The following individuals were appointed to the honorary board positions of director emeritus, in recognition of their years of service with the Better Business Bureau of South Alabama: Jeffrey P. Adams, Adams and Associates Inc.; Tom Bramlett, Office Equipment Company of Mobile Inc.; and Vernon Fowlkes, On-Line Payroll Services Inc.

New board officers are: Bruce McCrory, Kiker Corporation, chairman of the board; Wayne Keith, Keith Air Conditioning Inc., chairman-elect; Jerald Hagmaier, J.C. Penney, vice chairman; Donald Ponquinette, Hunte Pharmacy, treasurer; Sandra Dunaway, Consumer Credit Counseling Service of Mobile, secretary; Larry Wooley, Mobile Register Inc., immediate past chairman; and Xavier A. Hartmann III, Hartmann, Blackmon and Kilgore PC, board of directors representative.

Meyer Real Estate in Gulf Shores was named as a 1999 Alabama Quality Award recipient under the Small Business Sector.

Crow, Shields & Bailey PC announced Regina L. Russell has become a shareholder in the firm.

Other announcements include the promotion of Rachael B. Smith and Julie T. Stanley to senior accountant; and Charles R. (Trey) Mayhall III earned his designation as a Certified Financial Planner.

NEED TO KNOW

Federal disaster loans are now available from the U.S. Small Business Administration Disaster Assistance program for small non-farm agriculture-dependent businesses located in Choctaw, Colbert, Franklin, Lamar, Lauderdale, Marion, Mobile, Pickens, Sumter and Washington counties. These counties are eligible because they are contiguous to one or more primary Mississippi counties that suffered from drought conditions.

Economic injury applications are due August 30. Maximum loans are \$1.5 million dollars at 4 percent interest with terms of up to 30 years. SBA determines eligibility for the program based on the size and type of business and its financial resources. Call 1-800-359-2227 for loan applications and program information.

FOR YOUR CALENDAR

The International Association of Administrative Professionals is hosting Administrative Professionals Week/Day, formerly Professional Secretaries Week/Day. This year, the group will host a seminar and luncheon on April 26. For more details call Linda Hanson CPS at 443-2323.

The Mobile Museum of Art will hold its groundbreaking ceremony for its new \$15 million expansion on Thursday, March 30 at 10:30 am. The museum has reached \$11.475 million of its fundraising goal, and the ceremony will kick-off the final leg of the capital campaign.

The public is invited to attend the event at Langan Park. A reception in the museum will follow. Call 343-2667 to RSVP no later than March 24.

Member News features Chamber member announcements, such as grand openings and relocations, or employee news, such as promotions. All Member News is due by the 5th of the month to appear in the following month's issue. If you have a news item, please send your information to: Member News, The VIEW, MACC, P.O. Box 2187, Mobile, AL 36652-2187, fax to 431-8646 or E-mail to susan@mobilechamber.org

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