THE VIEW

APRIL 2000 | MOBILE AREA CHAMBER OF COMMERCE | VOL. XXXII, No. 4

Special Assignment – Chamber Chase 2000

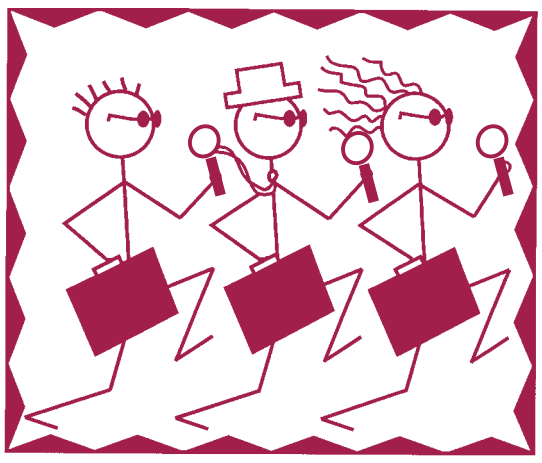
"Inspector" **C. McKinnon Phillips Jr.** of Lewis Communications has been given a special assignment for the year 2000 – find the clues necessary to raise $825,000 in cash, goods and services for this year's Chamber Chase campaign.

Chamber Chase is an annual 14-week total resource development effort run by the Chamber's membership department. More than 200 volunteers recruit new members and raise income needed to run Chamber programs and services through this event.

This year's campaign kicks off with a special breakfast, sponsored by Williams Energy, on April 27 beginning at 7:30 a.m. at the Mobile Convention Center.

Assisting Inspector Phillips with this year's campaign are five able 'Special Agents,' otherwise known as division chairs. They are 1999 Chamber Chase Chairman **Scotty Waters**, Financial Resources Inc.; **Eliska Roe**, Office of Sonny Callahan; **Grady Dunn**, Whitney Bank; **Jo Shannon**, Regions Bank; and **Ken McElhaney Jr.**, State Farm Insurance.

This year's goal is $75,000 more than the 1999 goal says **Carolyn Golson**, vice president of membership. But, she adds, it is an attainable one and she has complete confidence that the volunteers will meet and exceed the challenge.



CHAMBER CHASE '00

"While this is an aggressive goal, there's no doubt in my mind we can meet it," she added. "However, there's no way it can be done without the companies and individuals who are giving so much of their time and energy to this campaign."

According to Phillips, an equally important goal is to attract 400 new members through this year's efforts. "When the membership of the Chamber increases, the voice of the business community is strengthened. That's particularly important when it comes to influencing state and local officials. It also provides additional backing for the Chamber's many community projects."

In its fourth year, Chamber Chase is recognized not only as a campaign for the Chamber to recruit members and sponsorships, but as an extraordinary networking event for volunteers who meet at weekly reward sessions and make new contacts in the business community.

Volunteers are enjoying themselves so much, in fact, that as of publication, more than 20 teams have already signed up to participate in this year's Chamber Chase. Team captains, called 'Chief Operatives' are in training to learn how to sniff out clues and new Chamber members, sponsorships and donated services.

For more information on Chamber Chase 2000 or to register for the breakfast, call **Pratt Vereen** in the membership department at

Air Service Steadily Taking Off

Though Mobile continues to work to recruit additional air service, there are some very interesting facts about existing flights at the Mobile Regional Airport. According to **Marc Pelham**, director of marketing for the Mobile Airport Authority, the Port City has more direct jet flights to airline hubs than any other airport on the Gulf Coast. It also has more daily jet departures.

Over the past year, direct flights have been added to Houston, Washington DC, Chicago and Cincinnati, which have greatly benefited the area business community. The Airport Authority continues, however, to work on bringing in additional jet service by a major airline.

"Many people think we cannot attract other major airlines because our landing fees are too high," said Pelham. "That's not true at all." He added that, with the exception of Gulfport, which has a very small airport and low overhead, Mobile has the lowest landing fees. Here's the breakdown of fees to land a 727 jet:

Mobile - $285	New Orleans- $400
Gulfport - $75	Pensacola - $312

Pelham went on to explain that it is very difficult to attract major airlines to secondary markets like Mobile because they often can't make the profits big cities can bring. Two area exceptions are Pensacola, which is in the most popular state for airline service, and Gulfport where the casinos subsidize the airlines.

Though the odds are often against Mobile, it hasn't stopped the Airport Authority from aggressively pursuing new jet service. "We've established some very close relationships with some of these airlines," said Pelham. "They, however, must base their expansion decisions on profit potential. We have had a good string of successes recently and Mobilians have expressed strong support for some of the recent upgrades we've been able to secure in air service."

Pelham predicted that the year 2000 will close with all turbo prop service upgraded to jets in Mobile, a fact that will make Mobile much more competitive in the regional race for air service.

Another Feather in Our Cap

The Mobile Airport Authority recently announced Northwest Airlink is upgrading its service to Mobile. The two-phase process begins with the addition of a flight to the airline's hub in Memphis, Tenn., making a total of four daily non-stop flights to that city. Currently those flights are via turbo prop planes. Then, beginning July 1, Northwest will upgrade all four flights to jet service.

"This is a huge step in our efforts to offer a convenient schedule to travelers flying out of Mobile," said **Marc Pelham**, director of marketing for the Airport Authority. "We hope citizens will make a special effort to use these Northwest flights because the more successful they are, the more successful we will be in attracting similar service and upgrades to our city."

Aviation Center Receives $500,000 Grant From Bedsole Foundation

An article appearing in *The Wall Street Journal (WSJ)* helped earn the Wallace Community College's Aviation Center (formerly known as the Alabama Aviation Technology Center) a $500,000 grant from the Bedsole Foundation.

Dr. Stephen Dill, program director for the foundation said he wasn't aware of the college's partnership with a local industry and it's commitment to train local students for high-paying jobs available in the Mobile community until he'd read the WSJ article praising the partnership between Mobile Aerospace Engineering and the Aviation Center.

The Bedsole Foundation gave a $500,000 grant to the college to purchase equipment such as aircraft components and training aids.

The article appeared in the national newspaper in August 1999. The Chamber, in partnership with the Mobile Convention and Visitors Corporation visited Atlanta and pitched this story idea to the media. Reporter Karen Lundegaard noted this story was a unique partnership and is one of the few of its type throughout the country.

The Aviation Center and MAE partnership provides students, as young as high school-aged, with the opportunity for a great technical education, training and a life-long career in Mobile. Students in high school or technical school are recruited by MAE to attend the Aviation Center. MAE then pays for the students to attend the 21-month training program and provides them with a set of tools. Additionally, students are given jobs while in school and work with mentors. In return for a scholarship, students then agree to work for MAE after completing the program.

Dick Wellington, human resources manager for MAE believes in this important partnership and says the training the students receive is invaluable. "The Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) defines what a person needs to know to work as an aircraft mechanic. The center's instruction exceeds FAA standards, so their graduates are productive employees from day one."

"By preparing individuals for the world of work, the college serves as a catalyst for economic development," said Dill. "Job growth in our area will continue if the skilled technical workers are here. And income rises with education. You can't find a more direct link."

Skygen Breaks Ground on Facility Designed to Reduce Air Emissions at IP

Skygen Energy LLC broke ground on its state-of-the-art natural gas fueled co-generation facility at International Paper Company's pulp and paper mill last month. The facility is designed to help meet future power needs, greatly increase IP's competitiveness and significantly reduce air emissions.

The project drew national attention when the Mobile Industrial Development Board tied property tax abatements to the company's ability to reduce International Paper's emissions. When IP eliminates the use of coal by incorporating a less expensive steam system produced by Skygen, air pollutants are expected to decline by nearly 40 percent. To maximize the $3.5 million per year tax abatement offered, IP must stop using all coal at its Mobile mill as soon as the Skygen completes construction.

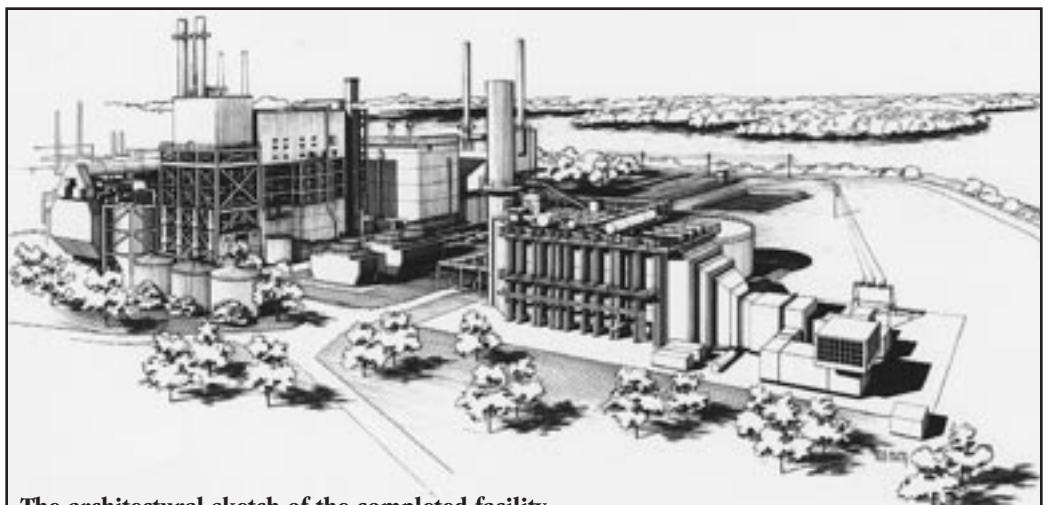
The Mobile operation will be named the Hog Bayou Energy Center and will be developed on 4.5 acres adjacent to IP's mill. Construction of the facility will not require clearing of any land or damage to any natural habitat.

This is the seventh facility developed in conjunction with International Paper. Other locations are in Arkansas, Wisconsin, Maine, South Carolina and Canada. "We are pleased to include the Mobile mill in our business relationship with International Paper. The project will provide significant operational and economic benefits for both the mill and local economy," said **Michael Polsky**, president of Skygen Energy. Company officials also considered Mobile a viable location because of its strong industrial base, skilled workforce and its growing and healthy economy.

"We are excited about this project for two reasons," said **Jim Apple**, the Chamber's vice president of economic development. "First, it is a sign of long-term commitment to Mobile by IP, and second, Mobile has had an opportunity to break new ground in initiatives and environmental stewardship creating a win-win situation for citizens, the companies and the community."

In addition to steam, Skygen will also produce electricity at its $100 million facility and plans to sell it in the wholesale market.

During construction, the facility will create as many as 200 new jobs, as well as 18-20 permanent jobs, along with business and tax revenues to the community once it is operational.



The architectural sketch of the completed facility.

The current site near IP.

Headquartered in Northbrook, Illinois, Skygen Energy specializes in highly efficient and low cost asset-based energy supply to large industrials and the wholesale electricity market.

In recent years, advances in natural gas-fired cogeneration technology, along with the discovery of ample supplies of natural gas, have made this technology the preferred method to meet new electrical demands. Natural gas-fired cogeneration plants now fuel more than 1,000 facilities in urban and rural settings throughout the country.

Company Chosen to Outline Air Quality Study RFP

The Chamber continues to be involved in efforts to conduct an air quality study for Mobile. The study, coordinated by government, business groups and community organizations, is expected to produce a scientific analysis of the local air quality and put an end to all the conjecture.

"It's vital for us to have concrete information and statistics on the quality of our air so that everyone can understand the true situation. Once that is established, then we can incorporate community expectations into a plan that will address any concerns we have," said **Steve Perry** with The Forum, a group of some of Mobile's major industries.

Recently the Air Quality Study Group selected ICF Consulting of Virginia to outline the technical aspects of a proposal that will be sent out to environmental companies to bid on conducting the study. It is anticipated that the proposal will be incorporated into a Request For Proposal (RFP) for the implementation phase in about two months.

Once a company is selected, it will conduct testing to determine the air quality. The chosen company, along with the Air Quality Study Group, will also develop a list of community-based expectations or air quality goals for which the community will strive.

"The results of this study, along with the community-based expectations, will create a road map for future actions," said Perry. "It will highlight the areas in which we need to focus to improve air quality and make recommendations for improvements by all sectors of the community – large industries, small businesses and mobile sources such as vehicles."

Once a company is selected, the study will take at least a year to complete. Funding will come from public and private sources as well as grants.

Mobile's Finest Men's Clothier

Professional Alterations

3704 Dauphin Street at I-65
342-6336
Monday - Saturday
9:30am-6:00pm

Burberrys
CANALI
GITMAN BROS
HART SCHAFFNER & MARX
JACK VICTOR MONTREAL
ROBERT TALBOTT
Zanella

METZGER'S

Callahan Expresses Support for Free Trade with China

U.S. Rep. Sonny Callahan and local businesses joined forces to unveil a study that quantifies the economic impact of China's admission into the World Trade Organization (WTO) and its affect on Alabama. China's entry into the WTO would set the stage for companies, farmers and communities throughout Alabama to increase exports to China, benefitting from trade relations with one of the world's largest markets. In addition, the admission will drastically reduce costs, barriers and restrictions that U.S. investors and exporters currently face.

At a recent Chamber forum, U.S. Rep. Sonny Callahan outlines the financial benefits of China's admission into the World Trade Organization.

Facts from the study that support a new status for China:

- China is the sixth largest market in the world for American agricultural products. The USDA projects China will account for more than one-third of the growth on the U.S. agricultural exports over the next decade.
- Alabama is already a significant exporter of farm, industrial and consumer goods to China.
- According to the World Bank, China will need to spend an estimated $750 billion in new infrastructure over the next decade. Alabama companies in the energy, gas, telecom, construction, engineering and other sectors are well-placed to participate in these projects.
- China represents a $90 billion market for chemicals and related products, and Alabama's strong chemical exports to China demonstrate that Alabama manufacturers are competitive in the Chinese market.
- Direct exports from Alabama to China totaled $91.4 million in 1998; adding indirect exports through Hong Kong brings total Alabama exports to China to $124.3 million.

Examples of how WTO status for China would lower tariffs:

- Average industrial tariffs would drop from 24.6 percent (1997) to 9.4 percent (2005);
- When other WTO members implement this initiative, tariffs would drop to zero;
- Tariffs on wood and paper would be reduced to 5-7 percent from 12-25 percent; Tariffs on cosmetics, pharmaceuticals, film and certain plastics will be cut; and
- Lower tariffs on beef, pork, poultry, tobacco, cheese, lactose and ice cream by 2004 and acceptance of USDA certification for meat safety of U.S. exports would be implemented.

Opposition of this move stems from labor unions and human rights activists – groups who say China's government abuses its own people. Callahan said he was concerned about human rights in China, but added free trade was the best way for Americans to promote freedom there.

"Once we've accomplished the trade issue, you're going to see a remarkable improvement in human rights," Callahan said.

Impact of China's WTO Accession on Alabama, is a report prepared by Global Trade Information Systems, an independent trade economics firm. The Chamber partnered with the Alabama World Trade Association to release the report in an effort to educate communities throughout the state on the importance of trade with China.

The most important step to giving U.S. companies easier and less-expensive access to China's market still remains. This spring, Congress will vote on whether the United States can establish permanent normal trade relations (PNTR) with China. **President Bill Clinton** has already joined with business leaders to persuade Congress to give China permanent access to the U.S. market. Without China PNTR, our foreign competitors and fellow members of the WTO will enjoy tremendous economic benefits of trade liberalization with China while U.S. companies will lose out. According to the study, "China will justifiably withhold those benefits from the U.S. until it grants China the PNTR status."

Charting Our Progress

How do you measure success? That's the question that citizens involved in the development of the area's long-range strategic plan, Envision Mobile-Baldwin, were asking in 1997 when they put the plan together.

Their answer: Take a series of topics and issues related to the Envision strategies and chart their progress so the community can see if the plan is working. Called *Progress Indicators for Coastal Alabama,* this report's second edition was released last month at the Envision Annual Meeting.

The report consists of more than 60 indicators measuring everything from student test scores to crime rates to State Docks cargo numbers. Each indicator is tied to a specific Envision strategy that could impact the measurement.

"It's still too early to determine if Envision has had a significant impact on these indicators because we're only starting year-three of a 10-year plan, but as future reports are completed, it will be pretty clear what is and is not being positively affected," said **John Davis** with Mobile Gas who serves as one of the Envision co-chairs.

Davis added that the current report is extremely helpful in highlighting the areas of greatest need or concern. "We will be placing particular focus on those topics where the numbers show we're lagging behind such as infant mortality rate and child poverty," Davis said.

The Good News

Several of the findings show substantial progress in improving the quality of life in Coastal Alabama. For example, the key benchmark of per capita income shows that over the last 12 years, the Mobile metropolitan area has increased, narrowing the gap between Southeastern comparison metros. In fact, the gap was cut in half. Job growth, another key benchmark, remains vigorous. Data indicates an average of 6,200 net, new jobs were created during the 1990s. If these patterns in income and job growth continue for the next decade, additional progress in a number of other indicators related to quality of life will be achieved.

Some progress has been measured in local public schools. According to the State Dept. of Education, the dropout rate in our region was nearly cut in half in four years. School discipline also appears to have improved, with the number of disciplinary actions and weapons violations much lower than seven years ago.

In addition, crime in the region declined in recent years – homicides and juvenile crime are on the decline, and citizens report they feel safer in their neighborhoods.

Areas Still Needing Attention

Results still validate concern for other measures. Public schools continue to be poorly funded – it is uncertain how they will be able to continue to improve without increasing resources. In addition, the public schools of Mobile County, like those of most other systems in the country, have become increasingly segregated by race. (Data for Baldwin County on this measure are not available.) This is due, in part, to the decision of the school board to emphasize development of neighborhood schools.

Poverty rates remain much higher than the nation's and children's health, as measured by infant mortality levels, remains poor.

Finally, many measures show while the local environment remains largely healthy, several threats must be taken seriously – ground level ozone and land urbanization are critical issues. Both Mobile and Baldwin counties are rapidly converting previously undeveloped lands to intensive human uses, including construction of businesses, residences, roads and utilities. This pattern of urban and suburban sprawl is occurring at a rate well beyond the growth in population size. Already there is evidence of a degradation of the environment, as with the recent problems seen in the Dog River watershed.

Report Conclusion

While substantial progress is being made, much remains to be done to protect and improve the Mobile and Baldwin communities.

The progress report reflects the work of more than 200 volunteers in Mobile and Baldwin Counties. **Dr. David Johnson** prepared the report with the assistance of **Jennifer Teason**, both with the University of South Alabama. The report is published in collaboration with Mobile United, Baldwin County United and the Chamber.

The following charts were pulled directly from the report. Copies of the report are available for $10 each and can be obtained by calling **Angela Erwin** at the Chamber at **431-8621**.

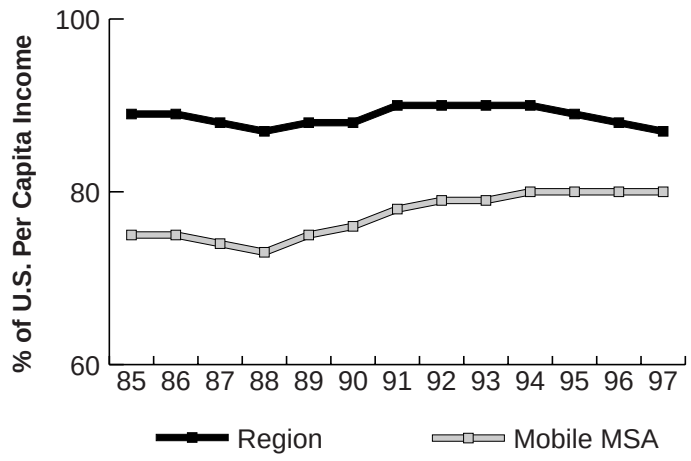
The following graphs are taken from the 2000 edition of *Progress Indicators for Coastal Alabama: Benchmarks for Envision Mobile-Baldwin*. Envision began in 1997 with the goal of focusing the community on a common vision of the future. This process led to the 1998 publication of the Envision plan, which identified numerous goals for our communities. Since then, 360 businesses and organizations along with hundreds of volunteers have provided support and donated time as Vision Partners, working toward meeting those goals.

The Progress Indicators project is the Envision component measuring the success of the plan, helping to keep volunteers focused on objectives as well as identifying strategies that need strengthening. Ultimately these findings will be used to help meet the overall goal of Envision – maintaining and improving the quality of life in Coastal Alabama.

Per Capita Income Growth, as Percent of U.S. Average, Mobile MSA & Comparison MSAs

Per capital income for the Mobile MSA increased overall from 1985 to 1997 in comparison to both the U.S. average and that of comparison metros in the Southeast.

Strategy: *Maintain well-funded and proactive regional economic development programs to create full-time, value-added jobs with benefits, balanced between expansion and retention of existing businesses, creation of new business enterprises and recruitment of new businesses from outside the area, consistent with our Quality of Life strategies.*

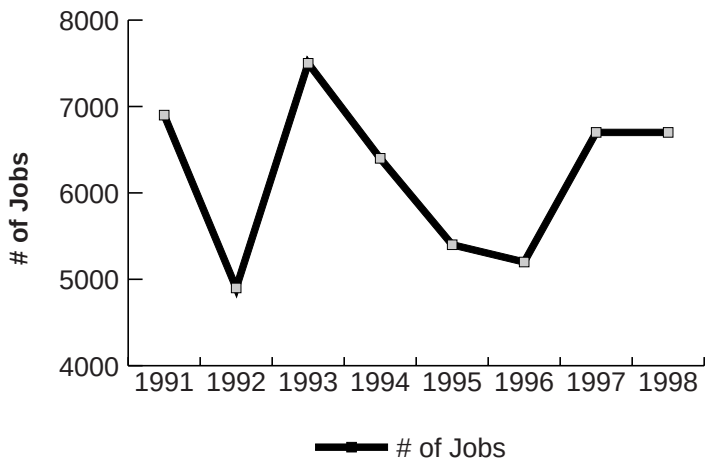


Source: Bureau of Economic Analysis, U.S. Dept. of Commerce, Regional Accounts Data (www.bea.doc.gov/bea/regional/reis/index.html).

Net Job Growth in the Mobile MSA

The number of net new jobs remained stable in the Mobile metropolitan area, averaging about 6,200 a year from 1991 to 1998. While falling just short of the Envision goal of 7,000, it nonetheless indicates a robust local economy.

Strategy: *Maintain well-funded and proactive regional economic development programs to create full-time, value-added jobs with benefits, balanced between expansion and retention of existing businesses, creation of new business enterprises and recruitment of new businesses from outside the area, consistent with our Quality of Life strategies.*

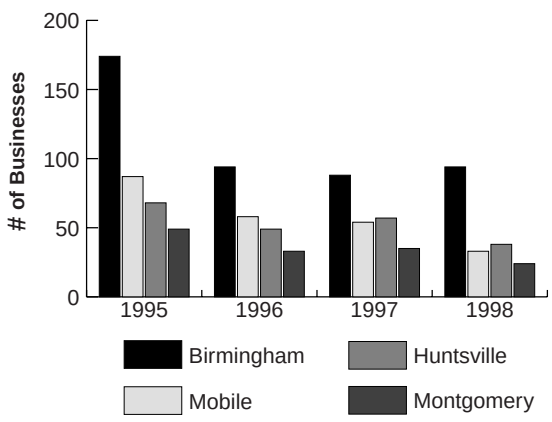


Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics, Dept. of Labor, Mobile Area Chamber of Commerce, Research and Information.

New and Expanding Manufacturing Business (Mobile and Other MSAs)

Substantial business growth occurred in 1995 in all major metropolitan areas in Alabama, including the Mobile MSA. The number of new and expanding businesses declined in 1996, and then fell still in 1998 in most Alabama metro areas, despite a booming economy. In 1998, only 540 companies announced they were making capital investments and/or creating jobs in Alabama. This is the lowest number in more than a quarter of a century.

Strategy: *Maintain well-funded and proactive regional economic development programs to create full-time, value-added jobs with benefits, balanced between expansion and retention of existing businesses, creation of new business enterprises and recruitment of new businesses from outside the area, consistent with our Quality of Life strategies.*

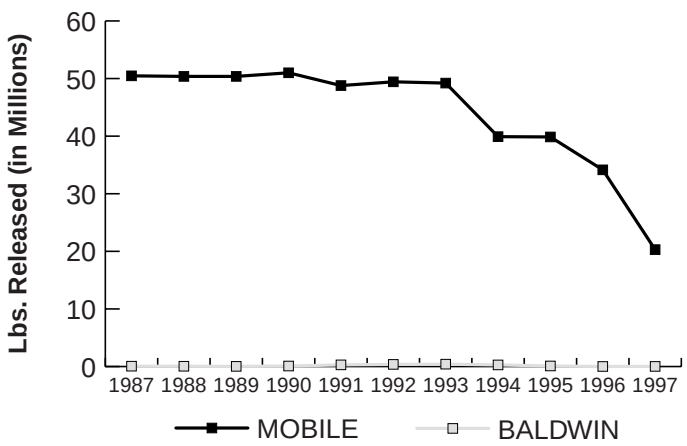


Source: Alabama Development Office, Montgomery.

Toxic Air Releases (Mobile and Baldwin Counties)

The amount of toxic air released in Mobile County declined substantially from 1987, with a high of about 50 million pounds, to the most recent level of about 20 million pounds. Even so, toxic release remains higher in Mobile County than in all but two other counties in the U.S. Relatively few heavy industries are located in Baldwin County, consequently, the amount of releases are considerable lower there than in Mobile County.

Strategy: *Recognize the importance of our natural environment to our quality of life and protect it.*



Source: EPA Web site, www.epa.gov/enviro/html/tris/.

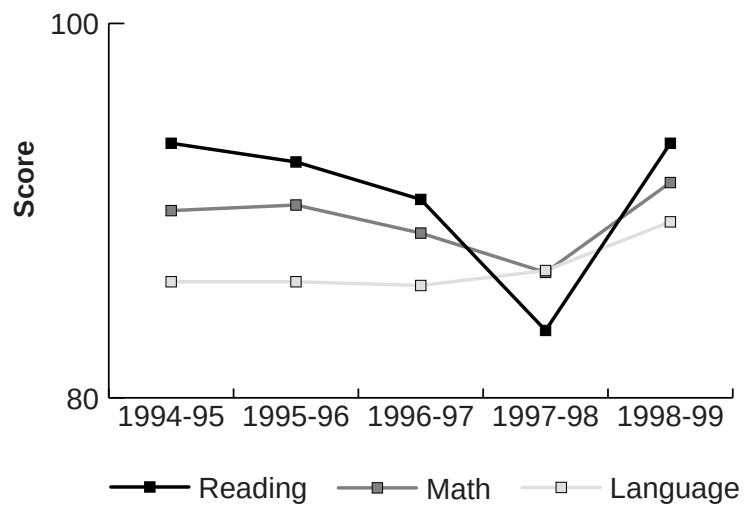
Charting Our Progress

ENVISION MOBILE - BALDWIN

Percent of Seniors Passing Exit Exam (All Attempts, Mobile County)

Last year, the percentage of Mobile County public school seniors passing the high school exit exam increased significantly in all three academic areas. Prior to this recent improvement, scores in reading and math had a downward trend.

Strategy: *Expect all students to graduate from high school ready to go to college, continue training at a two-year college or go immediately into the workforce.*

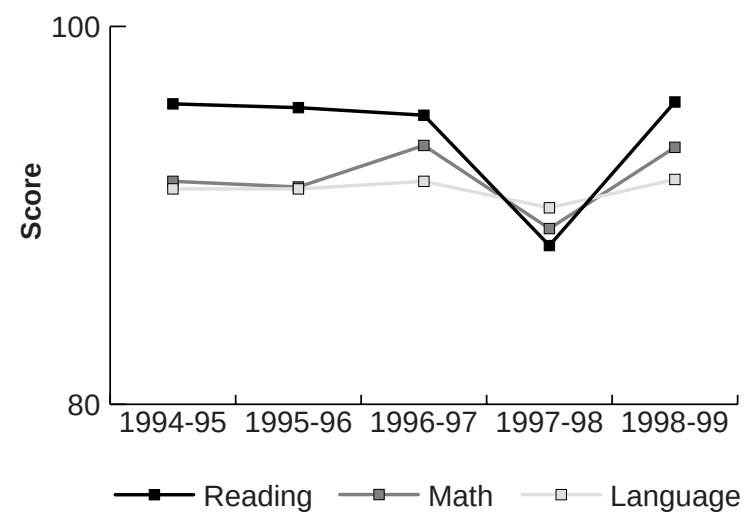


Source: Alabama State Superintendent's Report Card, Alabama State Dept. of Education

Percent of Seniors Passing Exit Exam (All Attempts, Baldwin County)

During the 1998-99 school year, the percentage of Baldwin County seniors passing the high school exit exam increased in all three academic areas, recovering from the prior year's drop.

Strategy: *Expect all students to graduate from high school ready to go to college, continue training at a two-year college or go immediately into the workforce.*



Source: Alabama State Superintendent's Report Card, Alabama State Dept. of Education

METHODOLOGY

The criteria for selection of indicators included the following:

- In most cases, the information must be collected by an existing organization in the community toreduce the need to collect large amounts of data;
- The data must be quantifiable;
- Data must be collected periodically, usually on an annual basis;
- They must be relevant to an important community goal, usually one identified in Envision;
- The data must be reasonably reliable and valid; data which were judged by the group to be misleading, or highly questionable, were to be rejected; and
- If available, data will be gathered for the previous five years, so recent trends would be evident.

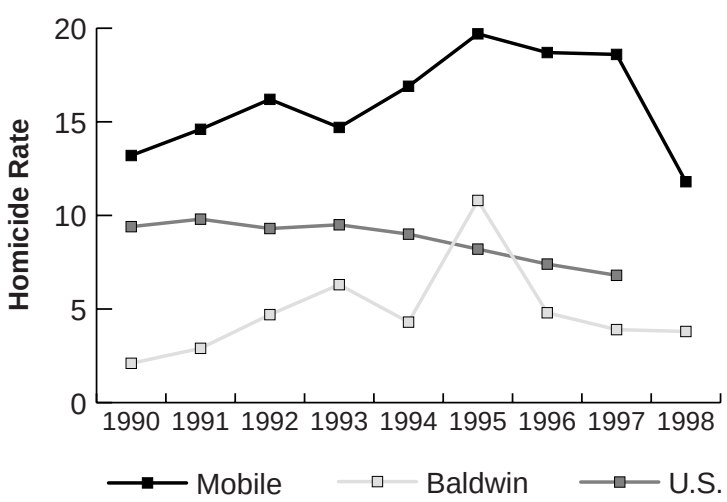
Whenever possible, local findings are compared to other populations. Sometimes a comparison is made to the national average. In others, comparisons are made to communities of similar size in the Southeast region.

The only original data collected for this report was gathered in telephone surveys of area residents, which were conducted by the University of South Alabama Polling Group in March of 1998 and October of 1999. The 1998 survey included only residents of Mobile County, while the 1999 survey included residents of both Mobile and Baldwin counties. The surveys used random digit dialing procedures, allowing for the possible inclusion of all households with telephones, even if numbers were unlisted.

Homicides per 100,00 Population (Mobile & Baldwin Counties)

A substantial decrease in homicide rates was recorded during the last three years in Mobile and Baldwin counties.

Strategy: *Develop a community attitude that expects and demands responsible behavior from each individual and a justice system that supports this attitude with swift and sure justice.*

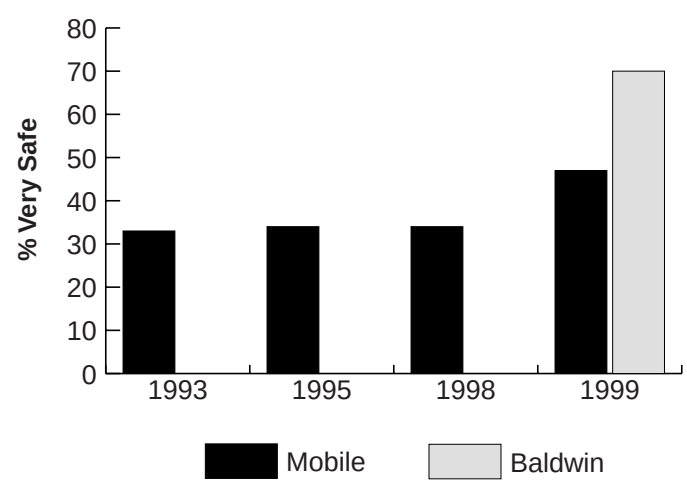


Source: Complied by the Center for Demographic and Cultural Research, Auburn University, Montgomery.

Perceived Personal Safety (% Very Safe) (Mobile and Baldwin Counties)

Consistent with recent declines in violent crime, perceived personal safety after dark increased substantially from 1998 to 1999 for residents of Mobile County. That percentage is even higher in Baldwin County, a result that is consistent with that county's lower crime rates. (Rates prior to 1999 are not available for Baldwin County.)

Strategy: *Ensure that all our citizens feel safe in all our neighborhoods.*

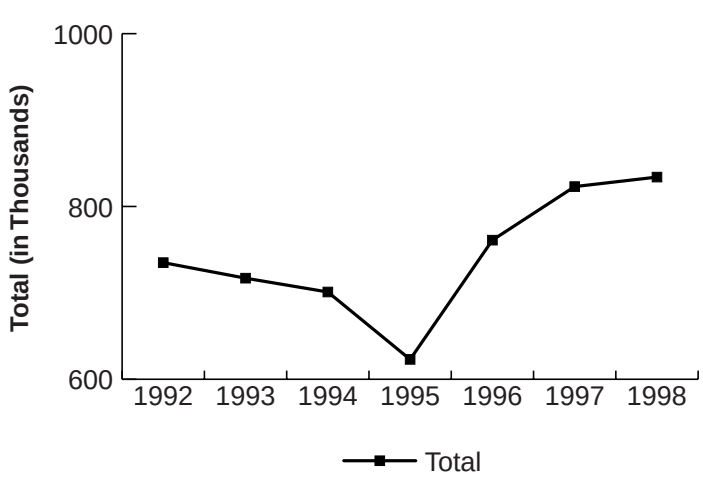


Source: University of South Alabama Polling Group, Capstone Poll.

Total Mobile Passengers (Enplanements at Mobile Regional Airport)

From 1992 to 1998, the total number of Mobile passengers at the Mobile Regional Airport increased by 13 percent.

Strategy: *Evaluate the feasibility of a Mobile-Baldwin-Pensacola Regional Airport.*

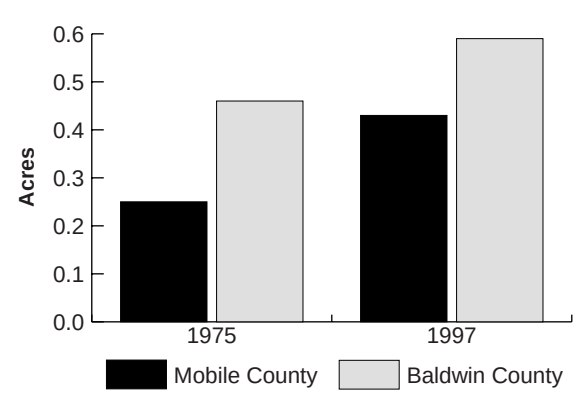


Source: Marc Pelham, Mobile Airport Authority.

Land Urbanization per Capita (Mobile & Baldwin Counties, 1975 and 1997)

The total size of urbanized lands increased from 1975 to 1997 for both Mobile and Baldwin counties, even after taking into account the increased population. The total amount of urbanized land per person is greater in Baldwin County, but the rate of increase in urbanization per capita, over the 22-year period, is greater in Mobile County. For every new person added to the population in Mobile County, 1.4 acres were urbanized. The comparable ratio for Baldwin County was .75 acres.

Strategy: *Recognize the importance of our natural environment to our quality of life and protect it. Develop and maintain green areas in our parks and throughout the community.*



Source: Socio-Economic Analysis of the Mobile/Baldwin 208 Area, South Alabama Regional Planning Commission, 1977; The Watersheds of Baldwin County, Locally Led Conservation/Watershed Assessment, Baldwin County Soil and Water Conservation District, 1998; Conservation/Watershed Assessment, Mobile County Soil and Water Conservation District, 1998; U.S. Census Bureau. Compiled by George Crozier, Dauphin Island Sea Lab.

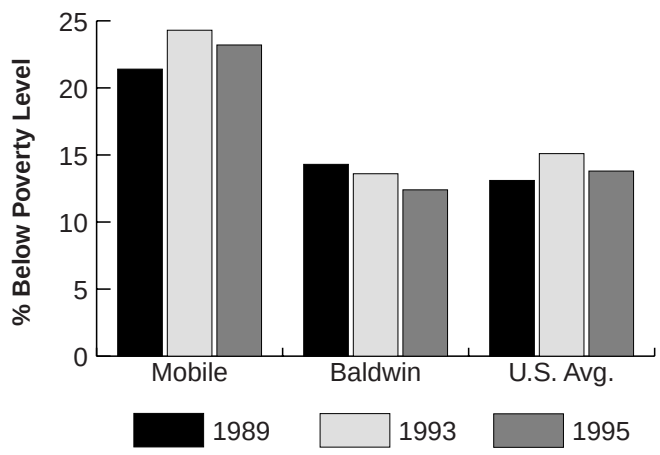
Charting Our Progress

ENVISION MOBILE - BALDWIN

Percent of Population Below Poverty Level (Mobile & Baldwin Counties)

Poverty rates increased from 1989 to 1993, nationally, including Mobile County. While Baldwin County saw a decline in 1993 and 1995, Mobile's rate remains substantially above the national average.

Strategy: *Encourage a strong work ethic where individuals understand their personal responsibilities in improving and sustaining productivity that will increase earnings and reduce poverty.*

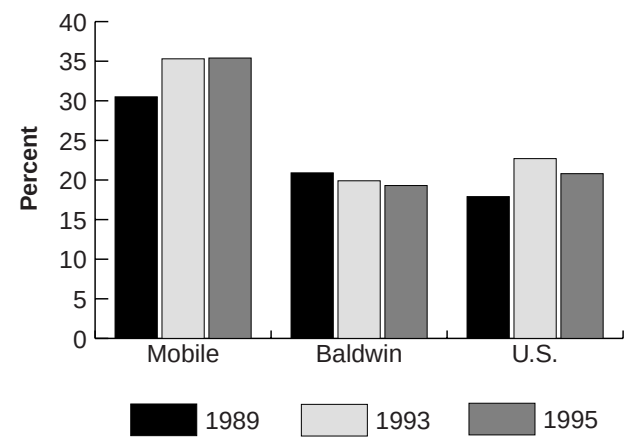


Source: U.S. Bureau of Census. Complied by the Center for Demographic and Cultural Research, Auburn University, Montgomery.

Percent of Children Below Poverty Level (Mobile & Baldwin Counties)

Poverty rates are higher Mobile County (more than 1 in 3) than in either Baldwin County (almost 1 in 5) or the nation (about 1 in 5). The child poverty rate in Mobile County increased from 1989 to 1995, while Baldwin County rates decreased slightly from 1993 to 1995.

Strategy: *Encourage parents to provide the support their children need to grow into successful citizens. Identify those children in distress, and if the parents are unable to provide this support, make training and counseling opportunities available to these parents. Provide community-based support from churches, synagogues, service clubs, employers, etc. so that each child has at least one adult role model or mentor.*

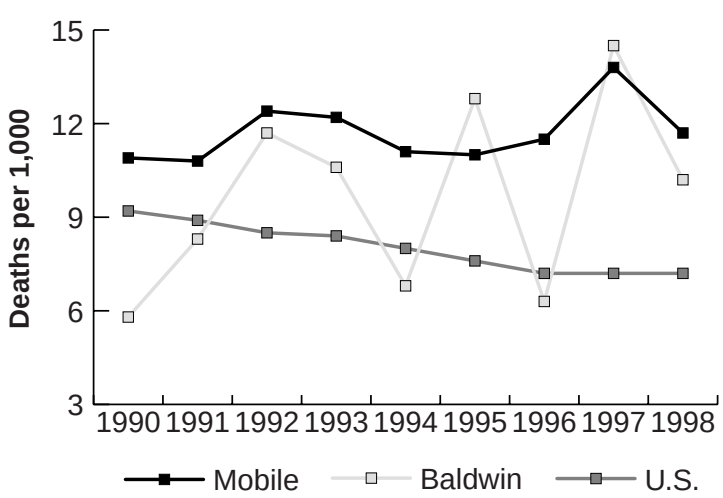


Source: U.S. Bureau of Census. Complied by the Center for Demographic and Cultural Research, Auburn University, Montgomery.

Infant Mortality Rates (Mobile & Baldwin Counties)

There was no substantial changes in either Baldwin or Mobile counties from 1990 to 1998. As a whole, the U.S. rate fell from 1990 to 1996, although national progress on reducing infant deaths has stalled over the last three years.

Strategy: *Ensure adequate health care for every child.*

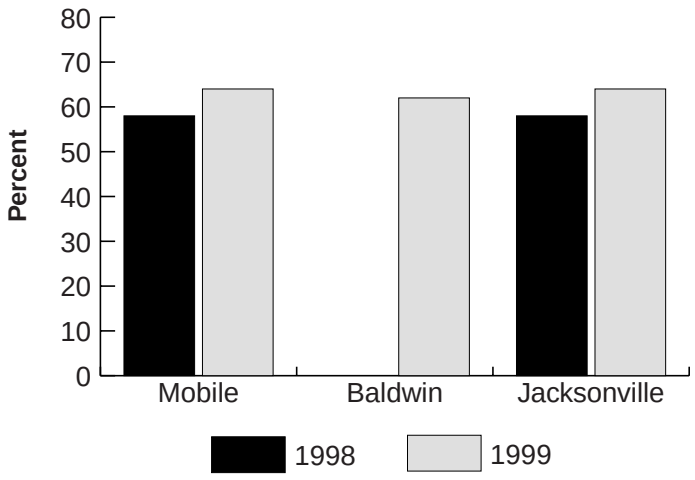


Source: Alabama Dept. of Public Health, Center for Heath Statistics, Montgomery, Ala. U.S. Dept of Heath and Human Services, National Center for Health Statistics. Compiled by the Center for Demographic and Cultural Research, Auburn University, Montgomery.

Percent Volunteering (Mobile & Baldwin Counties and Jacksonville, Fla.)

The percentage of people reporting volunteer activity was similar in the three communities, with nearly two-thirds of respondents volunteering their time. Those in Mobile County and Jacksonville reported a slight increase from 1998 to 1999. (Data for Baldwin County during 1998 is not available.)

Strategy: *Develop a strategic alliance that focuses philanthropic giving and volunteerism on solving our most critical short-term social problems.*

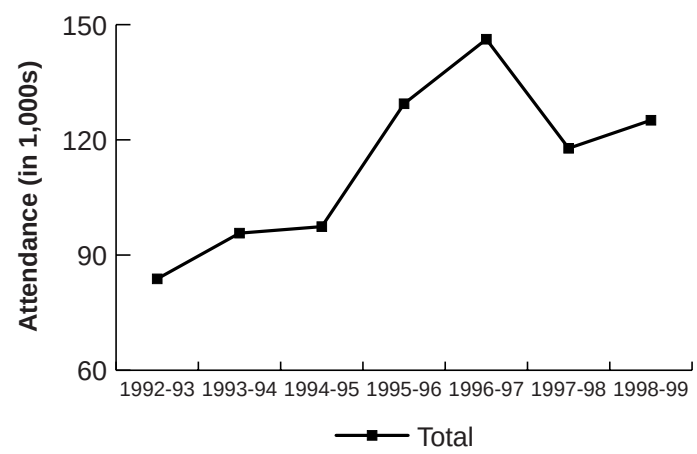


Source: Comparison information obtained from Jacksonville Community Council Inc., Jacksonville, Fla. Mobile/Baldwin data gathered by the University of South Alabama Polling Group.

Attendance at Performing Arts Programs (Mobile County)

Attendance at art performances in Mobile increased substantially from 1992-93 through the 1996-97 season. Attendance fell during 1997-98, but increased slightly in 1998-99.

Strategy: *Support the expansion of opportunities in the visual and performing arts and the activities of the area's museums and related cultural organizations. Increase the number of people participating in the arts, museum programs and cultural activities.*

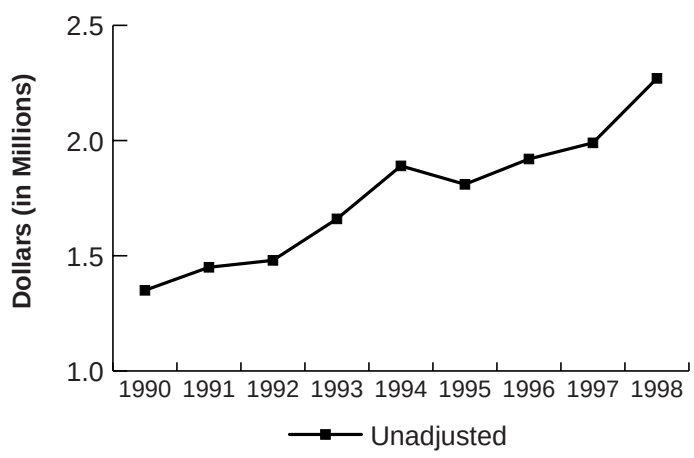


Source: Jean Galloway, Executive Director, Mobile Arts Council.

Room Tax Revenue, City of Mobile

Room tax revenue(in adjusted dollars) generated in the City of Mobile increased over 50 percent from 1990 to 1998.

Strategy: *Promote tourism vigorously as a means of providing tax funds, business profits, value-added jobs and an opportunity to expose our region to potential self-supporting retirees and business relocators. Provide the infrastructure development required for continuous tourism growth, and extend the tourist season and length of visits in the region.*



Source: Semoon Chang, as reported by the Center for Business and economic Research, College of Business and Management Studies, University of South Alabama.

Small Business of the Month

CRS Business and Communication Solutions

Pictured above, from left to right: Mark Kilborn, executive director; Carle Peterson, networking engineer; and Eric Boone, telecommunications specialist.

With April's Small Business of the Month, **CRS Business and Communication Solutions**, you no longer need a separate vendor for each of your business needs. CRS offers an integrated communications system complete with networking, cabling, computer hardware and software, and phone systems to its customers.

"We bring to the table a completely compatible system supported and serviced by a dedicated team of skilled professionals," said Executive Director **Mark Kilborn**.

The roots for CRS grew from Mobile Infirmary, where Kilborn was the manger for information systems and had worked for 21 years. In 1994, when faced with staggering increases in the company's computer maintenance contract, his boss asked him to start an internal department and take over the Infirmary's computer maintenance. "That's where it all started," said Kilborn. "A few months after we formed the new department I was looking for computer parts. We were mistaken for a wholesaler and that's when I realized we were paying 30 to 50 percent more."

That motivated Kilborn to find a way to turn the department into a business. A few months later the company was launched, then known as Computer Resource Services, at the corner of University and Old Shell.

"Within weeks we had people knocking on our door and asking for PCs, networks, cable and telephones. It seemed there was a definite void for quality service in our industry," said Kilborn.

"As customers made their requests, we kept adding a new service until we were a total business solutions provider," he said. They are currently moving to a 6,000 sq. ft. facility located at 108 S. Florida St.

CRS is now a multi million-dollar company serving a mix of small, medium and large businesses in the financial, professional services, education, maritime and health care industries. Currently with one location in Mobile, the company serves customers throughout Alabama, Mississippi, Louisiana, North Carolina, Tennessee and northwest Florida. It also has several international companies on its client list.

"The strength of our company is our customer-oriented staff. We have a total of 15 full-time employees including networking engineers, telecommunications specialists and support staff. We keep our customers informed and insure immediate problem resolution," Kilborn concluded.

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

Comparative Economic Indicators

January '00 vs January '99

Unemployment Rates	4.9%	January '00
	3.6%	January '99
Business Licenses	270	January '00
	244	January '99
Homes Sold	285	January '00
	266	January '99
Air Passengers From Mobile	25,493	January '00
	26,425	January '99

Census 2000 In Progress

During the last few months, there have been numerous stories and ads on Census 2000 in the media. From now until November, what happens in the Mobile area and throughout Alabama will have a direct impact on the amount of money received from the U.S. Government.

"The loss of one person in the census count could cost the community as much as $1,500 in funds allocated from the federal government," calculated **Ritchie Hurt**, the Chamber's director of information and research.

> "The loss of one person in the census count will cost the community $1,500."

Questionnaires were delivered on April 1. Haven't opened yours yet? About 83 percent of the questionnaires sent out can be completed in 10 minutes.

The short form asks for name, sex, age, relationship, race and housing tenure (whether the home is owned or rented). One out of six households received the longer form, covering about 35 subjects including education, ancestry and employment. It takes approximately 40 minutes to complete.

Census takers will visit housing units in rural and remote areas to drop off and pick up forms, as well as those households that did not return the forms through June.

By November 2000 all the field work will be completed, and on Dec. 31 the apportionment counts will be delivered to the President. Alabama, along with the other states, will receive its redistricting count on April 1, 2001.

A Momentous Opportunity will offer Businesses a Competitive Edge in an Era of Globalization

If you haven't signed up, don't miss the opportunity to attend the Annual World Trade Conference May 1-2, at the Marriott's Grand Hotel. This year's event boasts a full schedule of speakers with extensive knowledge and experience in exporting and trade related issues. Included on the agenda, are two of the Southeast's biggest advocates for trade development and globalization.

First, **U.S. Rep. Sonny Callahan**, chairman of the US Congressional subcommittee for Foreign Operations and Export Related Issues, will be featured as the luncheon keynote speaker on May 1. Callahan will highlight the steps taken at the federal level to help businesses in Middle America access emerging markets overseas in his testimony, "It's a Small World After All." He has been active in bringing the president of OPIC to Mobile to talk to area shipbuilders about legislation, now effective, that will inject additional funds to assist shipbuilders interested in establishing operations overseas. In addition, Callahan convinced a delegation of African Oil Ministers to visit the area to learn about trade opportunities, and is an advocate for China's admission to the World Trade Organization.

The keynote speaker on the second day of the conference is also a sought-after speaker. **Carol Conway**, director of the Southern Growth Policies Board's International Trade Council, will discuss her knowledge of "Why Trade Matters." She is the leading expert on trade in the Southeast, and has 20 years of experience working in the area of international trade. Among her many accomplishments, she helped design the Appalachia Regional Commission's Special Initiative on trade, resulting in several million dollars of new funding for local trade development in Appalachia. She is also a co-author of *The International State: Crafting a Statewide Trade Development System*. Conway's education includes a master's degree in Public and International Affairs from Princeton University.

According to Conway, "We are probably in the second decade of a 50 year era of globalization. In this era of growing economic connectedness, firms will go global in record numbers. Businesses and business organizations alike are faced with the challenge of redefining their core competencies, and finding the information they need to make strategic decisions." She also points out that even if you are not currently exporting your goods and services, "this event will offer a first hand view of the kind of support businesses will need to maintain their competitive advantage in a world that is becoming more global."

Don't miss this two-day conference to gain insights on competing in the 21st century. Call **Sara Graf** at **694-0702** or e-mail **sara@mobilechamber.org**. The registration fee is $175 and includes scheduled meals, an international reception, seminars and materials.

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Business Spotlight of the Month

ConnectSouth

From left to right: Bill Schmidt, Jason Smith, Dana Patillo and Tim Graham make up ConnectSouth's Alabama sales team.

This month's Business Spotlight of the Month, **ConnectSouth**, can help any company keep up with the fast-paced world of e-commerce through high speed Internet connections and the latest in Internet tools.

"ConnectSouth's mission is to provide a full-complement of 'e-enabling' services to small and medium-sized businesses in the Gulf Coast region," said **Jason Smith**, director of sales for the company.

Some of the Internet applications offered by ConnectSouth include: DSL (digital subscriber line) connectivity, web hosting, e-mail and e-commerce services.

"Our biggest strength is our local market knowledge and regional experience in serving our business customers. We don't know exactly where the Internet is going, but we do know that ConnectSouth will go where our customers want to go. Our company's growth – and future – is customer driven," Smith 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.

Environmentalists Pleased with Recent Wetland Mitigation for Second Phase of Mobile Commerce Park

Nestled in a campus-like setting surrounded by Mobile's fastest growing residential and commercial area is Mobile Commerce Park. The 300-acre facility, which is being developed in 100-acre tracts, is home to 12 light industry and distribution businesses and recently has undergone a progressive study to determine which land in the park will remain untouched when its second phase is developed.

Opened in the late 80s through a partnership between the City of Mobile and Mobile County, the park was designed as a well-landscaped setting complete with the necessary infrastructure such as roads and utilities to attract light industry, distribution centers and professional offices. In addition to the aesthetics of the park, buildings must also follow strict guidelines to be in code with the facility. Buildings in the park can not be metal or have outdoor storage facilities. This was mandated so the park would maintain or increase in its value.

In addition to the park board's commitment to have all companies investing in the park adhere to strict guidelines, they also chose to police themselves before developing the second phase of the industrial park. The board chose to do everything possible to protect the precious wetlands inside the park and complete "on-site" wetlands mitigation, rather than protecting areas outside of the park, city and even county, which could have enabled them to raze all of the land. Currently the law states that wetlands mitigation of land is only required within its watershed. This has enabled many companies to mitigate wetlands in another part of Mobile, or often Baldwin County no matter where their projects are located. **Jim Apple**, vice president of the Chamber believes the park board has set an example for future wetlands mitigation.

"The board felt it was important for the public sector to set an example for developing land in a sensitive environment," Apple stated. "We hope this project will set the tone for similar development in this region."

At a cost of over $10,000, the park board members partnered with representatives from the Dauphin Island Sea Lab and Mobile Bay Watch to determine what areas in the park would remain wetlands.

"Before considering developing phase two of the park, we knew there were wetlands no one wanted to see destroyed," explained **Ritchie Hurt**, director of research and information for the Chamber. "It was important that we brought a variety of people to the table to work on the wetlands mitigation. Having everyone on board and pleased with the results was a number one priority on this project."

And the results from the study will insure that as the park expands into phase two, over 66 acres of land, including a 23-acre pristine pitcher plant bog will never be touched by machines. Instead this land will be left alone to grow wild.

The park, located off Rangeline Road in the Theodore area, is rapidly becoming a mecca for industry and economic development. Hurt believes the park's close proximity to Interstate 10 and 65, as well as the neighboring process industries such as Degussa Corp. and Mitsubishi Polysilicon, have made a positive impact the park's success.

"With the growth on Rangeline Road we think the park is in an advantageous position to continue attracting various service industry to the area. Over the past three years, we have seen continued activity in this area," said Hurt.

Acting as the anchor tenant for the park's first phase was Ciba. A specialty warehouse and distribution center, the company built a 220,000 square foot warehouse on 16 acres. Following its move into the park in 1995, several other companies soon followed including Mac Papers, Allied Sales and Wuestec Medical. A real boon to the park, according to Hurt, was the City's decision to build a new fire station there. Serving south Mobile County, Tillman's Corner and the Rangeline Road area, the fire station went operational in 1998.

Currently, the park board, which oversees the property, is in the process of developing the second phase. While there are no tenants for the second phase yet, Hurt explained the goal is to develop it into only a couple tracts of land without building the roads. A company that chooses to locate in the park's second phase would be able to specify its own infrastructure needs.

For more information on Mobile Commerce Park, visit the Chamber's website at www.mobilechamber.org. or call **Hurt** at 431-8654.

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	Plan A	Plan B		Plan C	
Maximum Benefit Per Covered Person For:	$2,000	$10,000		$1,000,000	
	Any Provider	In-Network	Out-of-Network	In-Network	Out-of-Network
Individual Deductible (Per Person)		$250	$750	$250	$750
Family Deductible (Aggregate)		$500	$1,000	$500	$1,000
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:					
Home Health Care		40 visits		40 visits	
Inpatient Mental & Nervous		30 days		30 days	
Outpatient Mental & Nervous		20 visits		20 visits	
Inpatient Chemical Dependency		30 days		30 days	
Podiatry		12 visits		12 visits	
Extended Care Facility		60 days		60 days	
Prescription Drug Card Copay (30 day supply)					
Generic:	$5 copay	$5 copay		$5 copay	
Brand Name Birth Control	$15 copay	$15 copay		$15 copay	
All Other Brand Names	PCS Discount	PCS Discount		PCS Discount	
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
Family	$245.45	Family	$390.88		

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Two Counties Team Up to Provide Job-Focused Education

(From left to right) Barbara Estes, executive director of the Center for Workforce Development, presents Certificates of Appreciation to Charles Sellers, principal of T. L. Faulkner Career Technical School and Joseph Heyer, instructor of Graphic Arts and Printing Technology. Faulkner's Graphic Arts and Printing Technology class went above and beyond the call of duty by working through the weekend to make sure that information about local career opportunities were ready on time.

Mobile and Baldwin counties, which have been among the state's job growth leaders over the last several years, teamed up with the Envision Mobile-Baldwin Education Action Team to increase awareness of educational and career path opportunities available in the area.

The effort was part of Career and Technical Education Week, a national initiative designed to raise the awareness of students, parents, educators and community leaders about opportunities available through technical education.

A unique partnership for the campaign, coordinated through Envision, a citizen-based long-range strategic plan, included the Mobile County Public School System, Baldwin County Public School System, Bishop State Community College and Faulkner State Community College.

"Career and technical educators teach students how to connect the core academic and technical skills they are learning in school to career paths," said **Bradley Byrne**, District 1, state school board member and chairman of Envision Mobile-Baldwin Education Action Team.

"In addition, parents need to know what job opportunities are available for their children and how best to prepare them for occupational success," said **Ginny Russell**, the Chamber's director of community development and coordinator of Envision Mobile-Baldwin. "We have many educational opportunities in southwest Alabama that can lead to great careers."

As part of the week's activities both school systems mailed information highlighting the benefits of technical education to the parents of tenth grade students as they begin thinking about further education and career plans. T.L. Faulkner Career Technical School was instrumental in printing more than 40,000 marketing pieces for the information packets that went to the Mobile County Schools.

In addition, a series of three public service announcements (PSAs) were produced at LeFlore High School's in-house production studio managed by students. Local stations WKRG-TV 5, WALA – FOX 10 and WPMI-NBC15 ran the spots featuring **Andrew Saunders**, Saunders Engine; **Anna Pearson**, Associated Builders and Contractors; and **Owen Bailey**, Thomas Hospital, encouraging students to pursue career opportunities in their respective industries. Impressed by the quality of the PSAs, WKRG-TV5 has pledged to run them throughout the year.

Diplomat of the Month
Patsy Case

Patsy Case, owner of Professional Sales Recruiters Inc., has been selected for the second time as Diplomat of the Month. She earned this recognition by recruiting two new Chamber members in February.

Case enjoys the Diplomat program because she believes strongly in the benefits of Chamber membership. "By attending Business After Hours and Morning and Noon Marketing Meetings each month, I have established business contacts that have been invaluable to the growth of my company," she added.

Being the business owner of a full-time employment agency, Case said she's always looking for ways to promote her company. "My Chamber membership has been one of my best marketing tools," she concluded.

Deadline for Chamber Insurance Program is May 31

Open enrollment is now underway for the Chamber's discounted health, dental and disability insurance program, Chamber Advantage. The final day to sign up is May 31, with an effective date of June 1.

"While the program doesn't meet every need of every business, many of our members have saved their entire membership dues while others have found an affordable solution to insurance for their employees," said **Carolyn Golson**, the Chamber's vice president of membership. "I would encourage our members to at least look at the options and possible savings," she added.

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

SCORE Recruiting Seasoned Professionals

Anyone who is or has been in business knows that small business owners and managers sometimes need assistance. That's what SCORE, the Service Corps of Retired Executives, is all about – helping those in business as well as those considering starting their own company.

Men and women who have had successful careers as executives or owners of their own businesses offer counseling. They are willing to share their knowledge and experience on a volunteer basis at absolutely no charge.

Nationally, SCORE has helped thousands of small businesses iron out their problems and many owe their success to assistance received from volunteer counselors. Locally, the SCORE chapter, housed at the Chamber, has counseled hundreds of entrepreneurs annually.

SCORE is looking for volunteers with expertise in business planning, marketing, retailing, financing and other aspects of small business management. "If you're retired and miss the challenges of your business life, or you are looking for a way to help others, then SCORE has a seat open for you," says **Bob Kirby**, a SCORE Counselor and former chairman of the group. "We need people with the skills that can help a person establish or expand a business, as well as solve operational and management problems," he adds.

As a member of SCORE, you'll be part of a nationally recognized association responsible for helping nearly 300,000 people last year. Be a leader in the effort to provide "real world" assistance to small businesses by calling SCORE/Mobile at **431-8614**, or visit the office at the Chamber between 9 a.m – Noon, Monday through Friday.

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New Training Facility Addresses Growing Pool of Unskilled Workers

As Mobile's construction boom continues, new buildings and houses are going up all over town. But as buildings go up, so does the need for more competent and skilled workers in the construction field.

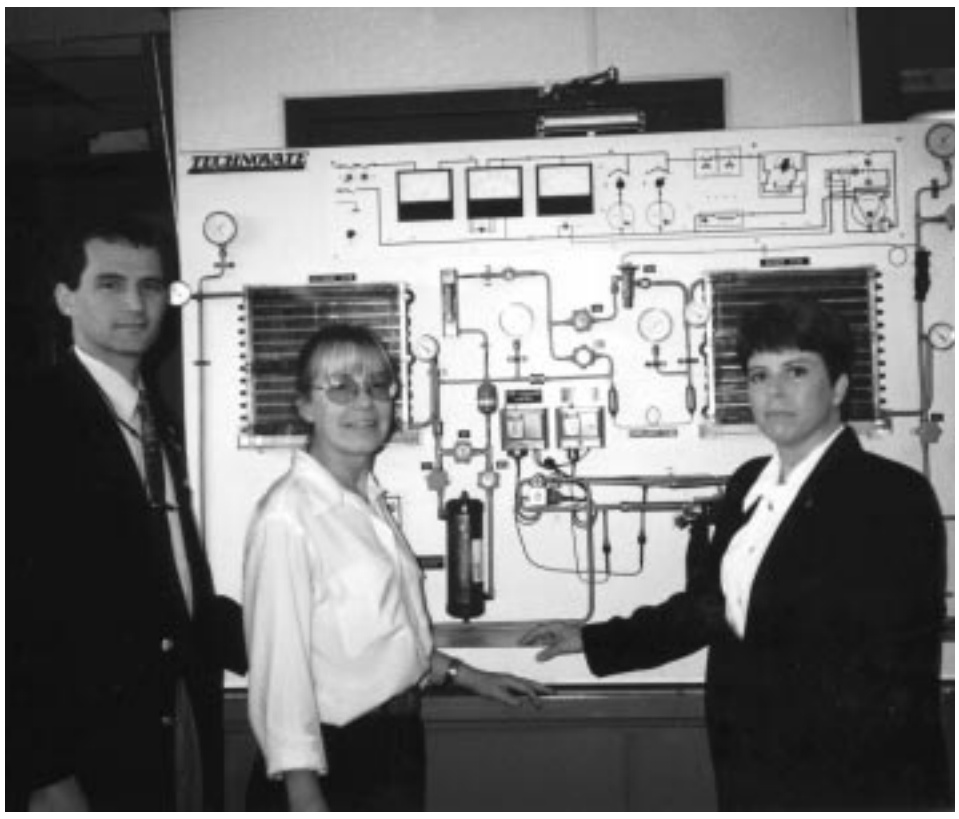
"The construction industry is experiencing a quarter of million short fall in skilled crafters. The positions are being filled, but with unskilled labor," says **Jane Minette**, education director of Associated Builders & Contractors (ABC).

ABC, a nonprofit association supporting the needs of the construction industry, opened a new training facility to address this critical shortfall of skilled workers. Training Solutions for Construction and Industry (TSCI) offers opportunities for career growth and certification in construction and industry through such programs as: industrial skill assessment, management and supervisory training series, upgrade and task training programs, and apprenticeship skill training programs. Courses also cross over into many skills needed in other industries such as: plumbing, electrical, carpentry, industrial maintenance and HVAC (Heating, Ventilation and Air Conditioning).

"We are looking at replacing the unskilled workforce with a skilled workforce," says Minette. These programs will enhance the skills of workers already in construction and industry and offer new opportunities for those looking at construction and industry as career options.

TSCI is accredited by the National Center for Construction Education & Research (NCCER). This industry-driven accreditation is based on stringent guidelines and gives added value for employers and trainees in the form of nationally recognized credentials.

Along with providing certified skilled workers who understand safety needs and regulations, TSCI also works closely with NCCER to develop, revise and publish "Wheels of Learning" – a competency-based, task-driven, modular craft training curriculum based on today's industry practices.



L to R: Associated Builders & Contractors President Ken Robinson (Engineered Textile Products), ABC Director of Education Jane Minette and ABC Executive Director Anna Pearson in front of a special HVAC Technovate Trainer.

The center is funded through ABC, students' tuition, community contributions and grants. In addition, ABC has a partnership with the Mobile County Public School System and the system's adult education program, to provide further specialized training.

Currently, there are 80 students enrolled at the 44,000-sq. ft. training center in various programs. Minette adds, "We are looking for partners from construction, industry, shipbuilding and other areas to help make use of the facility." According to Minette only 20,000-sq. ft. of the space is being used for classes now.

For more information on cross training opportunities, registration, course schedules and tuition fees, call **Minette** at 452-0738.

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.*

W. Howard Bronson Jr.

W. Howard Bronson Jr. is president, publisher and CEO of the Mobile Register, Alabama's oldest newspaper. He was born in Crowley, La., and received his degree from Georgia Tech. Bronson has served as a member of the Chamber's Board of Directors, and is a member of the Boards of the Mobile Area Education Foundation, the Gulf Coast Exploreum, Salvation Army and the YMCA of Metropolitan Mobile. He is also a member of the Board of Trustees of Spring Hill College and the Executive Board of the Mobile Area Council, Boy Scouts of America. He was a member of Leadership Alabama Class IV. Professionally, Bronson is a member of the Board of the Alabama Press Association and a member of the Southern Newspaper Publishers Association and the Newspaper Association of America.

John M.Turner Jr.

John M. Turner Jr. is the regional executive for Whitney National Bank. He is a Mobile native, and graduated from the University of Georgia with a bachelor of arts in Economics. He was employed by AmSouth Bank between 1985 and 1994, when he joined Whitney as its president. Turner is chairman-elect of the Mobile Area Chamber of Commerce Board of Directors, and is currently vice chairman of Finance and Operations for the Chamber. He is president of the Mobile Area Education Foundation, America's Junior Miss and a board member for Leadership Mobile.

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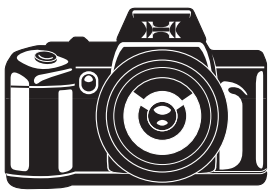
FYI

Smile! You're On Candid Camera

A crew from the CBS show "Candid Camera" was in the Port City earlier this year. Producers chose the Mobile Museum of Art for one of their famous pranks.

West Coast video and sound technicians arrived early one morning to set up a phony work area and posted it with "Under Construction" and "Pardon our Mess" signs. A video camera was hidden behind a two-way mirror, and microphones were hidden behind a particular painting. Museum guests were asked if they'd like to try out the museum's new "audio tour." A voice would then instruct the listener to "Raise your arms over your head" or "Place your right hand over your left eye" in order to "get a better sense of what the artist is trying to convey."

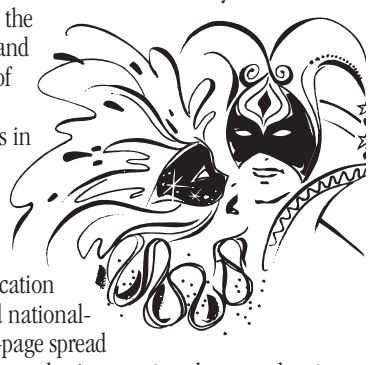


University of South Alabama art professors **Wanda Sullivan** and **Janice Gandy** played along, sending their students to the museum for a "special assignment." The crew spent two days at the museum taping more than a dozen individuals or couples. Once told, "Smile, you're on Candid Camera," the "victims" had the choice of signing or not signing a release form so their reactions could be used on the TV show.

"Candid Camera" airs on CBS on Saturdays at 7:30 p.m. (Central time). The producers said the Mobile segments will air Saturday, April 15.

Mobile Mardi Gras Delights National Readers

Former Mobilian **Ann McCarthy** highlights the food, fun and festivities of Mobile's Mardi Gras in the March issue of *Saveur,* a gourmet food publication distributed nationally. The 13-page spread features the author's memoirs, photos and recipes from her four-day visit last Spring. In between her accounts of parades, balls and histories of Mobile's mystic societies are delectable recipes from Wintzell's Oyster House, Martha Rutledge Catering, Ruth's Chris Steak House, Loretta's and 14 South.



Mi Amigo Earns Publicity for Mobile-based Production Company

An article in *Markee*, a magazine featuring film and video production, delves into *Mi Amigo* – an independent film produced by Mobile-based Azalea Films Corporation in Alabama. The movie is based on a country song written by **Milton Brown**, who has written award-winning songs for such country-music stars as Eddie Rabbitt, Kenny Rogers, Loretta Lynn and Merle Haggard.

The story is a "highly unusual mix of 'contemporary comedic cowboy and story-drive southern genre…' as two cowboy buddies, whose love for the same woman drives them to seek their separate fortunes beyond the small mythical Tex-Mex town of Cherub."

Filmed primarily in Peterman, near Monroeville, Ala., the movie includes scenes from Mobile and Baldwin counties and is scheduled for a summer release.

Special Events Mark Tourism Week May 7 - 13

In the fluster of deadlines and commitments, how many times has it been said, "I wish I had time to …." Truth is there is more to do in Mobile than ever before – the Gulf Coast Exploreum and IMAX theater host amazing exhibitions and shows, local museums are expanding, festivals and festivities are popping up consistently giving Mobilians a good reason to take a break as well as draw tourists to the area.

Reserve the week of May 7 – 13 for local events marking National Tourism Week. The Mobile Convention & Visitors Corporation invites the entire Gulf Coast to participate in a week of activities highlighting Mobile's tourism industry.

Tourism and meetings funnel $619 million into the Port City's economy last year. "It's an industry most people don't realize is hard at work providing jobs, enhancing the city's economy and quality of life," said **Lucy Arnold**, public relations director for the Mobile Convention & Visitors Corporation.

The week of events will include Family Fun Day at the Fort Condé Welcome Center, the National Tourism Week Awards Lunch at Fort Condé, and tourism night at the BayBears baseball game.

Sunday, May 7th

Family Fun Day at Fort Condé will be held from 2 – 5 p.m. Activities will include clowns, face painting, coloring contests, sidewalk art, Fort Condé soldier re-enactments and much more.

Wednesday, May 10th

The National Tourism Day Awards Luncheon at the Fort Condé Welcome Center will highlight winners of the Success Mobile Award and the Tourism Salute Awards. For luncheon reservations, please call 208-2000.

Friday, May 12th

Join Mobile's hospitality industry for an evening at the ballpark in the BayBears new Gaslight Park sponsored by Mobile Gas. MCVC will be celebrating National Tourism Week during the BayBears/Tennessee Smokies game which will feature "A Concert in the Sky" fireworks after the game.

MCVC and Chamber members, along with all employees of the City of Mobile, are invited to this special night at Hank Aaron Stadium. Tickets are $10 per person and include a box seat game ticket, hamburgers or hot dogs, chips and soft drinks. The before game party will be held in one of Gaslight Park's gazebo picnic areas. The area also features a 50-foot inflatable slide, a basketball half-court, volleyball court, moon walk, and speed pitch. For tickets, please contact Dan Zusman with the BayBears at 479-2327 and be sure to mention Tourism Night.

Sharing Best Ideas in Mobile

◆ Southern Chambers share successful ideas and programs.

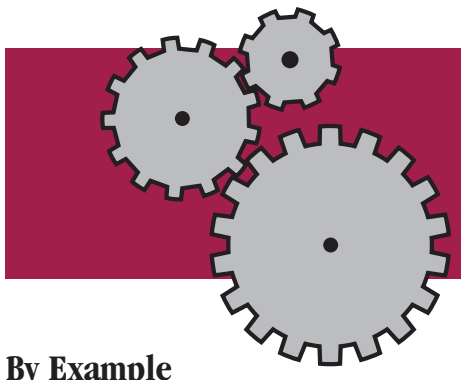
The Mobile Chamber hosted some of the largest chambers in the South at a meeting of the American Chamber of Commerce Executives Metro Cities Council. The group meets periodically to share information on best practices and problem solving.

Former Mississippi Gov. **William Winter** addressed the group about the basic elements of improving any community, touching on topics from education reform to race relations to family values. Other issues the group discussed included the Internet and its application to chambers, sustainable development (growth vs. environment), regionalism, workforce development and economic trends.

Chambers from Birmingham; Orlando, Fla.; Louisville, Ky.; New Orleans; Charleston, S.C.; Norfolk, Va.; St. Petersburg, Fla.; Raleigh, N.C. and Cincinnati as well as the Florida State Chamber and Business Council of Alabama attended the meeting which was held at Steelwood, a corporate conference center, lodge and recreation area in Loxley.

Sharing ideas, challenges and successes were the goals of a recent meeting of American Chamber of Commerce Executives.

The Chamber At Work For You



By Example

The Chamber was selected by the State to complete a national School-to-Work benchmarking survey. The Mobile School-to-Work Partnership will be a comparitive example for other similar ventures in Alabama, and was one of several sites selected throughout the country.

Expanding Internet Presence

An expanded and more interactive web page is in the works to assist members and visitors. The site is expected to be completed this Spring and will provide another avenue of communication. While the site is under construction, you can still access Chamber information at www.mobilechamber.org.

The Draw of Mardi Gras

More than 50 legislators and their wives attended the Chamber's second annual Mardi Gras reception. Beneath the frill of beads and Moonpies was the serious mission to make legislators more familiar with the Mobile area.

Mobile's on the Grow

Statistics, rankings, company expansions, new announcements – all the good news about what's been happening in Mobile can be found in the Chamber's Mobile's on the Grow publication. The updated version will be in the mail with the 1999 Annual Report. If you're interested in a copy, call 431-8623.

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Calendar View

April 20 — Net Gain: Solutions for Human Resource Management

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

April 20 — Morning Marketing Meeting

Time: 7:30 - 8:30 a.m.
Place: Chamber McGowin Room
Cost: $6
Call: Pratt Vereen at 431-8638

April 27 — Chamber Chase Kickoff Breakfast

Time: 7:30 - 8:30 a.m.
Place: Mobile Convention Center
Call: Pratt Vereen at 431-8638

COMING IN MAY

May 1&2 — World Trade Conference 2000 - The European Market

Time: All day sessions
Place: Marriott's Grand Hotel
Cost: $175
Call: Sara Graf at 694-0702

May 5 — First Friday

Time: 7:45 - 8:45 a.m.
Place: Salvation Army
1009 Dauphin St.
Cost: $2 members/$5 potential members

May 16 — Noon Marketing Meeting

Time: Noon - 1 p.m.
Place: Chamber McGowin Room
Cost: $6 and includes lunch
Call: Pratt Vereen at 431-8638

May 16 — Future 30 Awards Banquet

Time: 5:30 p.m.
Place: Mobile Convention Center
Cost: $35 per person/$300 for a table of 10
Call: Brenda Rembert at 431-8607
Sponsored by: BellSouth Small Business Services, CPS Staff Leasing, Coastal Builders, Compass Bank, G.A. West & Company, Xanté Corporation and SouthTrust Bank

Net Gain: Solutions for Human Resource Management

Human resource administration is a core issue in every type of business and when not handled properly, may result in the failure of a company. Employees and employers are encouraged to attend this informative seminar on Thursday, April 20 from 11 a.m. – 1 p.m. in the Chamber McGowin Room offered by PeopleWorks. The speaker will offer solutions to many potential problems with human resource management.

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

NET GAIN
SMALL BUSINESS NETWORK

Mobile Venture Capital Forum Luncheon Meeting

Tuesday, April 18, 2000
12:30 - 2:00 p.m.
Clarion Hotel
Registration begins at Noon

If you are interested in the venture capital process, where private investors fund start-up companies, you should attend the upcoming meeting of the Mobile Venture Capital Forum. **Neil Armentrout**, president of TeleVox Software Inc., a local fast growth company, will describe his difficult but successful 90-day effort to obtain Venture Capital. TeleVox is one of only several local companies to get funded, therefore, it is a role model for this activity. **Mike Ring**, an attorney from Atlanta, will assist with the presentation. Call **Brenda Rembert** at 431-8607 for more information.

Morning Marketing Meeting

Brush up on your marketing skills at this popular meeting on Thursday, April 20 from 7:30 – 8:30 a.m. in the Chamber McGowin Room sponsored by **Alabama Power Company**. Attendees have an opportunity to give a two-minute presentation to other Chamber members on their company's product or service. Feel free to bring brochures, flyers or other marketing materials to distribute during your presentation.

For reservations call **Pratt Vereen** at 431-8638. The cost to attend is $6 and includes a continental breakfast.

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Chamber Chase Kickoff Breakfast

It's time for Chamber Chase 2000, so join us for the kick-off breakfast on Thursday, April 27, sponsored by **Williams Energy**, that will launch the 14-week total resource development campaign. This exciting and competitive project is a volunteer-driven campaign organized to recruit new members, renew memberships, sell advertising, and obtain contributions and sponsorships for various Chamber programs. The Chamber is able to fund new ideas and initiatives through this annual event.

If you want to be part of this exciting campaign, call **Pratt Vereen** at 431-8638 for reservations today!

Williams

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40 Years

Acordis Cellulosic Fibers Inc.
Alabama State Docks
Biehl & Company Inc.
Brown Hudgens PC
Devan Inspection Company Inc.
Gottlieb, Barnett & Bridges
Holmes & Holmes Architects
HRH Insurance of Alabama
International Business Machines
Larson & McGowin Inc.
Lyon Properties
Augustine Meaher Jr.
Merrill Lynch
Mobile Memorial Gardens
Ophthalmology Associates PA
Winn-Dixie
WKRG-TV 5

35 Years

Artcraft Press Inc.
WALA-TV FOX 10

30 Years

Formwalt's Tree Service Inc.

20 Years

First Small Business Investment

15 Years

Southern Earth Sciences

10 Years

Port City Printing Company Inc.
Praxair Inc.

5 Years

A Bloom Landscape & Sprinkler
Auto Xtras Inc.
Baptist Book Store
Bartlett House Bar-B-Q & Catering
Brabner & Hollon Inc.
Cimarron Ridge Apartments
Dean McCrary Imports
Delta Premier Credit Union
Filters for Industry Inc.
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Hall-Baumhauer Architects
Helix Properties Inc.
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Dr. Tim Kaufman
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Mobile Area Education Foundation
The Museum of Mobile
Parawon Corporation
Pelican Group Inc.
Pierce Ledyard Latta & Wasden
Pinkerton's Inc.
Pioneer Arch Systems
Service Valve & Fitting
Simco Corporation
SM Transportation & Warehouse
Smith Services of Alabama Inc.
Termac Construction Inc.

ATTENTION MEMBERS!

If you know of a company interested in benefitting 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*

Member News

Who's New?

Karin D. Baisden was named regional vice president of BlueStar Communications Inc.

Her territory will include Jacksonville, Gainesville, Ocala, Panama City, Pensacola, and Tallahassee, Fla., Mobile, Biloxi and Gulfport, Miss. markets. Baisden has seven years experience serving North Florida as a senior sales manager with leading telecommunications providers.

❖

Long's announced that **Stuart Curenton** was hired as primary instructor and **Sherry Wright** as staffing coordinator. Both Curenton and Wright will be located at the Mobile office.

❖

William (Bill) F. Hines has joined the design team of TAG/The Architects Group. His responsibilities will include client contact, programming, design, preliminary cost estimating, interdisciplinary coordination, construction drawings and construction observation. Hines has more than 16-years of design experience and has worked in the Mobile and Montgomery areas.

❖

AmSouth Bank announced the following personnel changes: **Mark Eiland** joined the Trust Department as vice president and trust administrator; **Virginia S. Hunt** was promoted to assistant vice president in the Commercial Lending Department; **Kimberly H. Catlett** joined the Commercial Lending Department as officer and relationship

Eiland

Hunt

manager; and **Michael T. Ellenburg** joined the Commercial Lending Department as relationship representative.

❖

Kent F. Krause MBA, **Sandy Y. Lamb**, **Jamie Morris** and **Calvin C. Nettles** recently joined Financial Planning Associates as personal financial planners. They were formerly with Premier Financial Associates and bring with them several years of experience each in the financial planning and securities industry.

❖

Spence Monroe is the newest team member of Saad Realty Group. He will specialize in listing and selling industrial properties. New to the real estate field, his experience as an outside sales representative and regional manager in the water/wastewater treatment and electrical fields is an asset that will give him insights into the needs of his clients.

❖

Cardiology Associates announced the association of **Fabio M. Leonelli** MD, FACC, FRACP. He will practice cardiac electrophysiology, specializing in the detection and medical/surgical treatment of cardiac arrhythmias.

❖

Ernest F. Ladd IV was promoted to vice president commercial loan officer at Regions Bank. He joined the bank in 1990 and has worked in several areas of the Loan Division.

Sara M. Anderson was also promoted at Regions to Customer Service Officer. She joined the bank in 1973 working in the Bookkeeping and Central Files departments previous to her new assignment.

Need To Know

Thrifty Nickel Want Ads has moved to 855 Downtowner Blvd. Call them at **344-5454** or log on to www.thriftynickel.com.

Business Endeavors

A new top-level Internet domain will be marketed by **Clear Channel Communications** using the ".cc" suffix. Mobile's six radio stations WKSJ-94.9, WDWD-104.9, WMXC-99.9, WRKH-96.1 and WNTM-710 AM, and their corresponding websites, will be Mobile's exclusive marketing vehicles for the new domain according to a definitive agreement signed with SamsDirect Internet.

For more information on how to register a website with the ".cc" extension, contact **Nancy Davis** at **450-0100**.

❖

A new medical imaging system installed at **Springhill Memorial Hospital** gives doctors a more detailed image than ever before and is up to six times faster than previous technology. For more information, call **460-5385**.

❖

BellSouth Small Businesses Services has introduced BellSouth® Desktop Fax Service, allowing users to send and receive faxes from their PC more efficiently and securely than a stand-along fax machine. The new service can send faxes to large recipient lists, forward faxes electronically and send documents to a mix of fax devices and e-mail systems. It is located at www.bellsouthfax.com.

Users must have a PC with Windows® 95/98/NT, a connection to the Internet and standard e-mail capabilities. For more information, call **1-800-600-4272**.

❖

Crossroads Hospitality Company, a division of Interstate Hotels, assumed management of the **Ramada Plaza Hotel and Conference Center** in Mobile. The hotel will undergo major renovations, including an expansion of the conference and banquet facilities.

Roger Bennett is the general manager. Formerly of Augusta, Ga., he brings 20 years of experience to his new post.

Pamela Rieser is the hotel's new director of sales and marketing. Rieser also has extensive experience in the hotel industry and was most recently with a company resort in St. Thomas.

❖

The Cotton Blossom Riverboat officially opened its 2000 season last month. For information on tickets, cruises and a holiday Easter Brunch, call **438-3060**.

❖

PeopleWorks is the new name of CPS Staff Leasing. The company performs administrative services for its clients in the areas of payroll administration, human resources, workers' compensation and enhanced benefits.

The Mobile location remains at 4317 Downtowner Loop N. Call **344-4100** for more information.

❖

Compass Bank customers can now receive and pay bills through TransPoint ™, an online payment service. Compass was one of the first banks to go live with the e-bills service, and several additional financial institutions are expected to launch the service in upcoming months.

For more information visit the banks' Web site, www.compassweb.com.

❖

AMStaff Human Resources was awarded the Seal of Assurance for Professional Employer Organizations by the Institute for the Accreditation of Professional Employer Organizations. The company has met the industry's highest ethical, financial and operational standards established by the institute to distinguish it as fully accredited organization.

❖

JK Whatley Communications has partnered with Digidyne to launch an Internet division, Weave The Web, to house Web sites as well as provide Web site development, design and marketing. The two companies will develop and market Internet services throughout the country. Call **473-1881** for more information.

Community News

Chosen by her peers, **Mary Clair Francalancia**, executive administrative assistant for the Red Cross, received the Alabama Gulf Coast Chapter Tiffany Award. During this past year she was instrumental in working with the Baldwin County chapters to provide a smooth transition with the current restructure of three chapters that now make up the Alabama Gulf Coast Chapter. The award depicts caring, truth and fortitude.

Francalancia

❖

A new Web site, **www.fairhopearts.com**, will allow fans of the Fairhope Arts and Crafts Festival to shop with their favorite vendors year-round.

❖

Dolphins is the new feature film at the **Gulf Coast Exploreum's IMAX** theater. The film will take audiences beneath the sea to swim with these magical, playful creatures to learn more about their habits and incredible intelligence. *Dolphins* will run through the summer. For times and ticket prices, call **208-6870**.

Well Done!

Dr. Scott Douglass, University of South Alabama, was awarded a $22,000 grant from the U.S. Department of Commerce and the town of Dauphin Island to develop a beach management plan for the area. "Dauphin Island has experienced some of the most severe erosion of any inhabited island in the United States in the last 20 years," he said. Douglass and the University's civil engineering department will work on the project.

Vice President with House of Specialities, **Danny Sirmon** was elected president of the regional association council for the Promotional Products Association International while attending its annual meeting in Dallas. Previously Sirmon served as council treasurer.

❖

Alice H. Cutright ASID with TAG/The Architects Group was awarded First Place in the Corporate Category at the Annual ASID Design Projects Awards for the interiors of the Regions Bank in Bay Minette. This is the second award Cutright earned in this category. In 1998, she won for her interiors of the Regions Bank in Gulf Shores.

For Your Calendar

Laura Baugh, a LPGA Tour member, will be the guest speaker at the **Drug Education Council's** annual luncheon Wednesday, May 10 at the Adam's Mark Hotel. Baugh became the youngest winner of the U.S. Women's Amateur Championship, LPGA Rookie of the Year and a globe-trotting endorsement superstar. She writes about her struggle with alcohol in her 1999 autobiography, *Out of the Rough*.

Tickets are $50 or a table of 10 is $500. For information on tickets and sponsorships, call **433-5456**.

❖

Senior Citizens Services has several events slated for May. An art show and silent art action are scheduled for May 4. And on May 19 & 20, Mark Harmon returns to Hank Aaron Stadium for a benefit picnic and sports memorabilia auction. National Senior Health and Fitness Day is set for May 31 featuring a wellness fair, health screenings and many activities and prizes. Call **478-3311** for more information on these upcoming events.

❖

Marine paintings from the Butler Institute of American Art are on display through May 7 at the Mobile Museum of Art at Langan Park. The museum is open 7 days a week from 10 am to 5 p.m. Monday – Saturday, and Sunday from 1 – 5 p.m.

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