

THE VIEW

MAY 2000

MOBILE AREA CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

XXXII, No. 5

Region Shows Collective Influence in Washington D.C.

A group of 42 business representatives from Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama and Florida flew to Washington D.C. to carry a message to legislators last month – “We’ve started thinking like a region and we want our congressmen and senators to start working together and thinking that way too.”

“Their reaction was positive and enthusiastic,” said **Scott Posey**, the Chamber’s vice president of governmental affairs. “But the real success of the trip is that we did it.”

It was two years ago when the Chambers and business communities of Baton Rouge, New Orleans, the Mississippi Gulf Coast, Mobile and Pensacola started crossing state lines and began meeting to identify common issues.

At first glance, what these Gulf Coast neighbors have in common is their world-renowned reputation for hospitality, beaches, good food and fun times. However, underlying this veneer is a strong, diversified economic base of shipbuilding, manufacturing, import/export centers, oil and gas

exploration and refining, military operations and other supporting industries that position the region from Pensacola to Baton Rouge as a center for world commerce in the competitive global marketplace.

Covering more than 20,000 square miles, the region is comprised of five major Southern metropolitan areas bordering the Gulf of Mexico in four states with a combined population of 3.4 million.

The group identified several regional issues in areas such as transportation, environment, economic development and legislative affairs to eight legislators: U.S. Rep. **Sonny Callahan** and U.S. Sen. **Jeff Sessions** – Alabama; U.S. Rep. **Bill Jefferson**, U.S. Sen. **Mary Landrieu**, U.S. Rep. **Billy Tauzin** and U.S. Rep. **David Vitter** – Louisiana; U.S. Sen. **Thad Cochran** and U.S. Sen.

Trent Lott – Mississippi.

“Our group has met several times, so we’re two years ahead of our legislators. This was just an introduction. It will take more than one trip. A lot

of people said we couldn’t pull it off, but we did,” Posey said.

Each legislator was given a briefing book outlining the issues of greatest concern to the region, plus regional statistics depicting the scope of who this group represents.

“This is the first such mission where business executives from a variety of industries in different states teamed up and flew to Washington for this type of meeting – that we know of,” added Posey.

It was an impressive group that included top executives from Dupont, Entergy, Peoples Bank, Degussa, Alabama Power, Texaco, Mississippi Power and BellSouth, to name a few.

“Individually each of your states has two votes in the Senate, but as a region you have eight which makes you a powerful area,” explained **Lonnie Taylor**, U.S. Chamber senior vice president of congressional and public affairs.

The group itself was so excited with the trip that there is already talk about doing it again with the ultimate goal of getting more attention and funding for the region.

Bob Gayle (left), New Orleans Chamber president; **Doug Kinsinger**, Pensacola Chamber president; and **Win Hallett**, Mobile Area Chamber president.



U.S. Rep. **Sonny Callahan** with **Richard Davis**, Mobile Airport Authority Chairman



Mobile Shows Its Support for A New Constitution



An impressive delegation from Mobile attended the state Constitution Reform Rally in Tuscaloosa including Mayor Mike Dow and County Commission President Sam Jones. Jones was a speaker at the rally on the topic of Home Rule allowing citizens to decide on local issues without having to go through the legislature.

Cheers, speeches, bands and lunch on the first capital grounds were all part of the festive atmosphere in Tuscaloosa last month during an old fashioned rally promoting reform of the Alabama state constitution. The event was hosted by the Chamber of Commerce of West Alabama.

Constitution reform has been a long-time priority issue of the Mobile Area Chamber and it is a key strategy in the Envision Mobile-Baldwin long-range strategic plan developed by area citizens. In support of the rally, the Chamber encouraged local citizens, business representatives and Envision Partners to attend.

During the event, speeches were given by some of Alabama’s greatest leaders including former governor **Albert Brewer**, **Dr. Wayne Flynt** of Auburn University, **Dr. Bailey Thomson** with the University of Alabama and Mobile’s own **County Commission**

President Sam Jones.

As part of the strategy to make constitution reform an on-going priority, a foundation was established with **Dr. Thomas Cortts**, president of Samford University serving as its first chairman.

“The foundation is designed to help sustain a grassroots initiative to reform and rewrite Alabama’s antiquated constitution,” said **West Alabama Chamber President Johnny Aycock**. “It will be a statewide, public foundation, separate and apart from any organization, that will maintain a focused effort to achieve a new constitution for a new century.”

Since the rally, four bills were introduced in several Alabama Legislative Committees, none of which have been passed out of committees. The reform foundation will continue to press for the issue, as will the Mobile Area Chamber.

Mobile’s Cost of Living Maintains Competitive Ranking

People moving to or living in Mobile are getting a pretty good deal according to the ACCRA Cost of Living Index. In fact, for a number of years, Mobile has ranked significantly below the national average cost of living index that is set at 100. Latest figures, fourth quarter, 1999, place Mobile at 93.4 on the scale, making it the lowest of any major city in the state.

“Some cities go off the charts when they measure their cost of living,” said **Ritchie Hurt**, director of research at the Chamber. “For example, New York’s index is 240.1.”

Not only does the report provide an overall index for each participating community, but it breaks the number down into categories such as grocery items, housing, utilities, transportation, health care and miscellaneous goods and services. Of these groups, Mobile ranks lowest in housing at 85.1 and health care at 83.0.

“Compare that with the housing index in New York which is 486.3,” Hurt observed.

“The first thing a person should do when they get a new job in another city is to look at its cost of living,” Hurt added. “Someone could get a raise of \$10,000 or \$15,000 and still come out in the hole in some of the larger cities because housing and other essentials are so high. Imagine moving out of your 1,800 sq. ft. home which you sold in Mobile for \$110,000 and having to pay \$250,000 or more for the same size house in a place like Newark or San Francisco.”

Located in Alexandria, Va., ACCRA was founded in 1961 as the American Chamber of Commerce Researchers Association and is comprised of research staffs of chambers of commerce, economic development organizations and related agencies throughout the U.S. and Canada.

Hurt said anyone can obtain cost of living information through the Chamber’s research department by calling **Ginny Morris** at 431-8656. The latest report included results from 311 cities or urban areas throughout the country.

ACCRA Index 4th Quarter, 1999

Below is a list of other Alabama and Southern cities that Mobile often competes with:

Atlanta	104.3
Baton Rouge	102.9
Birmingham	97.7
Charleston	103.0
Charlotte	100.6
Chattanooga	99.3
Huntsville	96.0
Jackson, Miss.	92.0
MOBILE	93.4
Montgomery	96.7
New Orleans	102.4
Pensacola	96.9
Richmond	104.8
U.S. Average	100

Chamber's State of the City and County Event Provides Critical Forum

Before a capacity crowd Mobile Mayor Mike Dow and County Commission President Sam Jones each outlined major initiatives at the Chamber's State of the City and County luncheon recently.

Dow rekindled discussions on annexation needed to ensure continued growth. "Our city's growth is now beyond our city limits. Continued annexation is one of the most critical answers to the City of Mobile remaining strong, progressive and able to provide more countywide and regional solutions and partnerships into the future," said Dow.

Jones announced and outlined a proposal that would give the school system a \$75 million dollar bond issue for its Capital Building Program. If passed, monies would come from the Special Highway Tax Fund, a new lodging tax, and from the removal of a current exemption on gasoline going to oil companies, Jones explained.

The Chamber's event has grown in stature and significance over the last three years. "The gather-

ing has evolved into a key forum for the discussion of city and county issues," said an editorial published in the *Mobile Register* on April 2.

"It has become the largest public forum in Mobile that gives our county and city leadership a chance to speak directly to the community on important issues such as education, economic development and infrastructure improvement," said Scott Posey, vice president of governmental affairs for the Chamber.

Prior to 1998 few people attended the State of the City address, and the county had no forum of their own. "So many great things were happening that people needed to hear about it, thus the Chamber initiated the first ever State of the City and County luncheon," Posey added.

Currently opposition has risen on both annexation and the County's plan to fund school building projects. Dow and Jones are working to educate citizens about the benefits of their proposals in order to build much needed support.

Insurance Sign Up Ends May 31

The last few weeks to enroll in Chamber Advantage, the discounted health, dental and Long Term Care insurance program designed for member companies with 1-99 employees, are approaching. Open enrollment is now through May 31, with an effective date of June 1.

For more information, or a quote for your business, call Vicky Hager at 1-800-543-3153.

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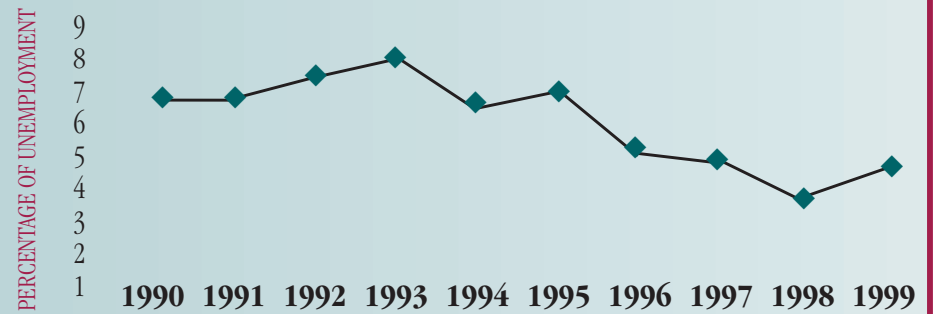
Area Unemployment Up But Still Remains Low

The Mobile area's annual unemployment average climbed up to 4.7 percent in 1999, up over a point higher than 1998's average of 3.6 percent. But not to worry says Dr. Semoon Chang, local economist and director of the Center of Business and Economic Research at the University of South Alabama.

"These are usual fluctuations. There's nothing terrible about 4.7 percent," he adds. "Any time the unemployment rate is at or below 5 percent, the labor market is considered very good for job seekers."

Baldwin County registered a 3.4 percent rate of unemployment while the state average was 4.8 percent. The U.S. average was 4.2 percent.

EVALUATION OF UNEMPLOYMENT RATES



New Standards Gain Recognition

Alabama Makes the Honor Roll

Alabama earned a B-minus for academic standards from the Thomas B. Fordham Foundation, a private foundation supporting research, publications and action projects for elementary/secondary education reform at the national level.

The fifth highest grade of any state, Alabama was noted for revising standards in English, history and geography. No revisions for math or science were submitted.

Only five states made the Honor Roll which are those that include both solid academic standards and strong accountability: California was first on the list with an A-minus; no. 2 was Arizona, B-plus; no. 3 was S. Carolina, B; no. 4 was Texas, B; and no. 5 was Alabama.

The grades of Gulf Coast neighbors might be surprising to some: Louisiana tied with Delaware and Kansas for the no. 14 spot with a C-plus; and Florida tied with Georgia and Mississippi in the no. 21 spot with a C-minus.

The first time the Fordham Foundation

reviewed U.S. academic standards was in 1998, and the average grade was a D-plus. This year's overall grade improved to a C-minus nationally. Encouraging trends in the last two years show that standards

are more measurable, specific knowledge has been required and states are less dependent on professional standards.

"States have become more serious about their responsibility to identify essential knowledge and skills that today's students must master in order to be contributing citizens and workers in the new millennium," wrote Chester Finn Jr. and Michael Petrilli in "State of State Standards in 2000."

The authors continue, "But before we uncork the champagne, let's take a closer look at some rude facts. Despite the progress that's been made, only eight states and the District of Columbia currently boast strong standards across the subjects. Which means that 42 states still hold mediocre to miserable expectations for their students."

The entire report can be viewed on the Web at www.edexcellence.net/library/soos2000/2000soos.html.

Alabama Report Card		
	1998	2000
English	D	A
History	C	B
Geography	C	B
Math	B	B
Science	D	D
Cum. GPA	1.80	2.80
Overall Grade	C-	B-

Readers Rank Alabama in Top 10

Plants, Site and Parks readers ranked Alabama no. 9 when asked where are they likely to locate their business in the near future. New to the "Reader's Choice" list, several projects throughout the state were sited in the magazine including IPSCO Steel's \$395 million steel plate manufacturing facility in Mobile, the Honda plant near Birmingham, a Wal-Mart distribution center in Opelika and a West TeleServices call center in Dothan.

Readers' Choice – Where to Locate a Project

- 1 - Texas
- 2 - California
- 3 - Georgia
- 4 - Florida
- 5 - Ohio
- 6 - Tennessee
- 7 - New York
- 8 - N. Carolina
- 9 - ALABAMA
- 10 - Pennsylvania



To answer the question of where businesses are locating right now, *Plants, Sites and Parks* surveyed states for the most business projects from July 1998 through June 1999. To qualify, projects had to be announced, built or opened during that timeframe, create 20 or more jobs, and include a facility with 20,000 sq. ft. or a capital investment of \$1 million or more.

Topping that list was California, followed by Michigan and Ohio. In fourth place was Tennessee. Then came Texas, Illinois and Florida. No. 8 was Kentucky. Georgia and New York were in the no. 9 spot, and rounding out this Top 10 list was Pennsylvania.

The Hidden Workforce

◆ Many area people have jobs below their abilities.

The Mobile area has a significant workforce to accommodate almost any type of operation of almost any size, according to **Joe White**, president of The Pathfinders. Last year, the organization was hired to do a study that would determine the number of people underemployed in the area, as well as document the cost, skills, experience and education levels of what is known as the hidden workforce.

According to the report, the Mobile area has a civilian labor force of approximately 300,000 including Mobile, Baldwin, Washington and Clarke counties, as well as parts of adjoining counties in Mississippi.

Of that 300,000, about 55,000 are labeled underemployed. "That doesn't necessarily mean that they are underpaid, it simply means 55,000 employees of area businesses have the skills, training and education to be paid more, and if they were offered a better job — they'd take it," explained **Ritchie Hurt**, director of research and information at the Chamber. "Thirteen thousand of those would do so for \$9.99 or less, while about half would take jobs for less than \$12.99 per hour," the report reads.

"If this workforce assessment was conducted for a corporate client considering the Mobile, Alabama area among other locations, Pathfinders would assure the client that a pool of labor exists which is balanced in overall skills and experience, and, is competitively priced," said White.

...Pathfinders would assure the client that a pool of labor exists (in the Mobile area) which is balanced in overall skills and experience, and, is competitively priced," said White.

Specifically, White said, Mobile is right for any type of assembly, manufacturing, distribution or typical industrial operations because the area workforce has both the skills and experience needed.

The Pathfinders report is also an important tool for current area businesses.

"This report will give employers an idea how their wage structure compares to what employees expect. And for those who are having a tough time finding employ-

ees, it could be that a 25 or 50 cent increase could open up a whole new pool of candidates, said **Linda Swann**, Economic Development Partnership of Alabama's director of business information.

Typically, the type of quality employer the Chamber is seeking to attract to the area does not like to rely on unemployed individuals to staff its new operation. "They want to hire skilled workers with a proven employment record. This report says we have those kind of employees," explained Hurt.

The Mobile area was one of 12 Alabama regions surveyed. Swann said of the 2.3 million workers in the state, 440,000 qualify as underemployed. "That's a significant number of people working below their skill level," she added.

"Even though generally companies don't want to hire strictly from the unemployment pool, it has been hard to convince some potential employers that Alabama has the workforce they need. Now we can say that with confidence," added Swann.

The study was a joint effort by Mobile, Clarke and Washington counties. Baldwin County previously

conducted a similar study and results were incorporated to the latest Pathfinders report. The Economic Development Partnership of Alabama (EDPA) oversaw the entire assessment on a statewide level and helped fund the various studies.

"Alabama was the first state to complete a statewide assessment, now everyone is trying to get the same type of information," added Swann.

Last year, Baldwin County economic developers used the results of their study to convince ACE Hardware that the area had the employees it needed for the new distribution center. Hurt believes this recent report will also be an asset in recruiting additional businesses to the Mobile area.

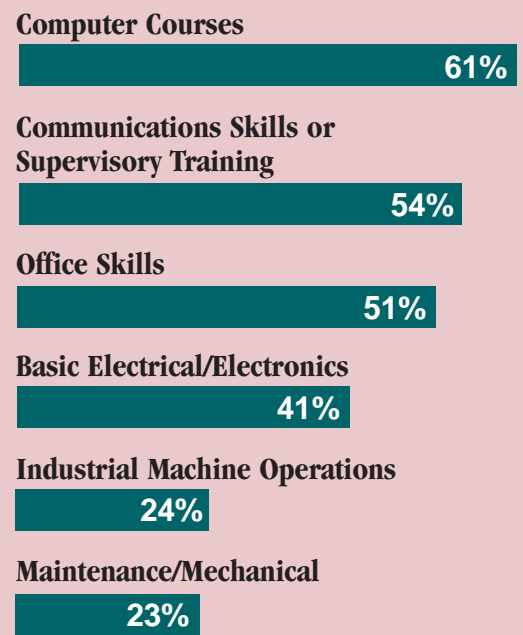
The Pathfinders surveyed individuals by telephone in Mobile, Baldwin, Washington and Clarke counties plus parts of Mississippi. Participants were males and females, between the ages of 19-49 years of age with household incomes up to \$100,000 who expressed an interest in changing jobs at a given pay rate.



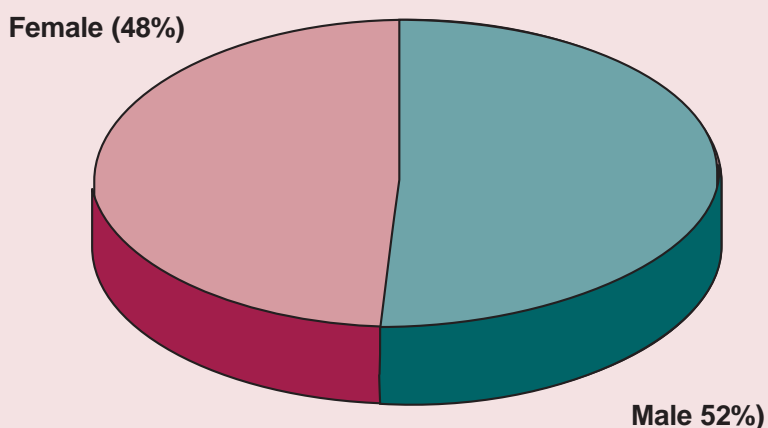
Desired Wage Rate Mobile Alabama Labor Shed



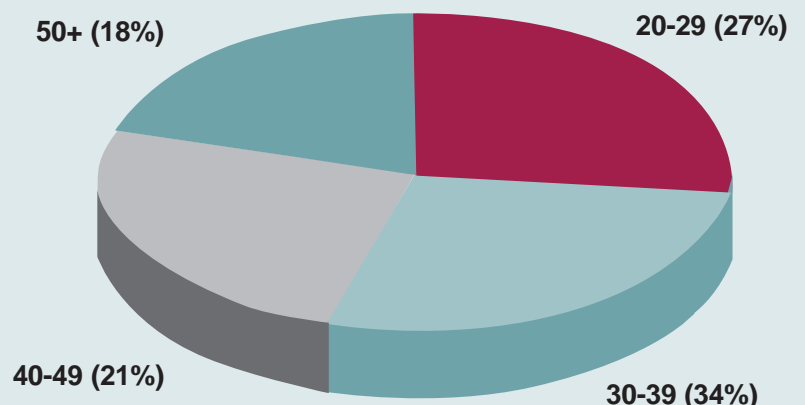
Percent Expressing Training Interests In:



Female/Male Underemployed Workers



Age Underemployed Workers



Pork and Politics

◆ Annual Political Mixer Set for May 17

June primaries along with the weather are really heating up and what better way to cool off and relax than by attending the Chamber's Annual Pork and Politics in the Park. It's a great way to meet the candidates vying for a spot during this year's election in a casual atmosphere while eating delicious bar-b-que.

This annual political mixer, sponsored

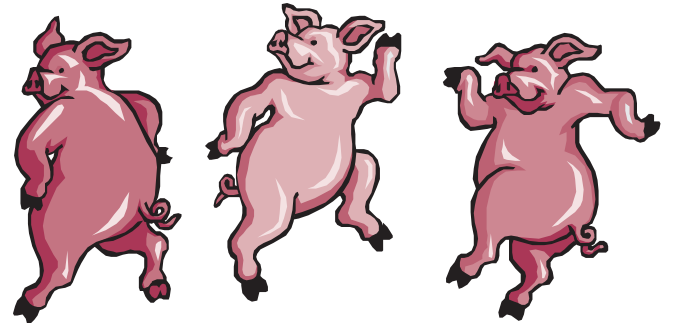


by The Mitchell Company, is set for May 17 from 5:30 to 8 p.m. in Spanish Plaza on Government Street, next to the Chamber. Scott Posey, vice president of governmental affairs, promises a fun-filled evening with lots of opportunity to get to know the candidates.

"This is one of the few events that brings the business community together with our public officials in an informal setting," said Posey. "We have a

number of local elections in 2000, and I'm sure everyone will want to turn out to talk with the candidates."

Candidates running for school board, public service commission president, county commission, Supreme Court and circuit and district judges are on the docket for the June 6 primary.



Tickets to this year's Pork and Politics in the Park are \$15. For more information or reservations, contact Shelly Mattingly at 431-8612 or shelly@mobilechamber.org.

Pork & Politics in the Park – May 17 • June Primary – June 6 • General Election – November 7

New Website Features Area Strategic Efforts

Envision Goes Live!

A Web site outlining current and historical information about Envision Mobile-Baldwin, the community's strategic effort focusing on the future, went live last month.

Developed by citizens in Mobile and Baldwin counties in 1997, Envision is the area's long-range strategic plan. There are more than 150 strategies connected with the plan related to education, quality of life, infrastructure (transportation, housing, utilities, etc.), economic development, government and community leadership. Companies and government, church and civic organizations that have signed on to become Vision Partners are addressing the strategies. Together, partners are working on everything from expanding bus service out into the county to environmental issues to updating Alabama's outdated Constitution.

The primary reason for creating this new Web address was to give citizens immediate access to information about this community-wide initiative explained Jodi Swiderek, the Chamber's vice president of communications and community development. "In addition, based on the number of inquiries the Chamber receives from other communities about the success of the Mobile-Baldwin plan, the site will help those interested in launching their own initiatives to study the elements and progress of our plan," she added.

Visitors to the Envision site located at www.envisionmobilebaldwin.org, can view the entire plan, the Envision newsletter and annual report or a list of current partners. Groups interested in joining the process

can even sign up to be Vision Partners online.

"Soon we hope to have a complete copy of our *Progress Indicators for Coastal Alabama* online," said Ginny Russell, director of the Chamber's Community Development Department and coordinator of the Envision process. Russell explained that the Progress Indicators report is a collection of statistics charting the area's progress in more than 60 areas such as crime, education, the arts, environment, economic development and much more. Each chart in the report is connected to an Envision strategy so that the impact of the Envision process can be measured each year.

"It's a fascinating report," said Russell. "Those who don't want to wait until the report is on the website can purchase a copy through the Chamber for \$10 by calling Angela Erwin at 431-8621."



Chamber Chase Kicks off With Phillips In Charge

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We're going to chase all your blues away*

*Join the Chamber
Come on get happy
The best investment for your business today*

*Join the Chamber
Come on get happy
No hesitating, just say ok*

*Join the Chamber
Come on get happy
You reap great benefits for all that you pay*

*So join the Chamber
Come on get happy
We guarantee it, you'll shout booray*

*Join the Chamber
Come on get happy
The best investment for your business today
Yeahhh!*

The tune on the left is one that Chamber Chase Chairman Kinnon Phillips, Lewis Communications, his division chairs and nearly 200 volunteers will be singing for the next several weeks. Chamber Chase 2000, an annual resource development campaign recruiting members, sponsorships, contributions, goods and services for Chamber programs kicked off last month at the Mobile Convention Center.

Local businesses are sponsoring teams to assist in this year's effort, which has a goal of \$825,000. Last year's campaign exceeded its \$750,000 goal by 5 percent and added 257 new members to the Chamber's roster of member businesses.

Weekly reward sessions are scheduled to motivate volunteers and campaign leadership providing the clues they need to reach the overall goal. "This year's Sherlock Holmes theme should make these sessions very interesting as volunteers hunt for clues that will help their team succeed," said Carolyn Golson, the Chamber's vice president of membership.

"It's not too late to put together a team," she added. "Also, if area businesses would be willing to help in other ways, we still need door prizes to make the weekly reward sessions more fun to attend.

Call Pratt Vereen if you would like to participate in this year's Chamber Chase campaign at 431-8638.

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Teri Jones
Dee Moore
Greg Gontarski
David Turner
Joe Bulger
Bill Nassar
Karyl Darley
Daniel Leonard
Christie Amezquita/Chrissie Bowles
Rochelle Risk
Bill Goodloe
Ellen Wingard
Shawn Wood
Jerry Campbell
Scott Patterson
Ray Palmer
Lesley West
Angie Travis
John Seibt
Verne Royster

Small Business of the Month Instant Photo Corp. of America

Owner and president of IPCA Mark Allen sits with the Easter Bunny (aka Martha Aycock). Standing are Louise Johnson, vice president of operations and Carson Breland, chief financial officer for the company.



Ironically, as a kid the president of Instant Photo Corp., Mark Allen, never carried a camera and never went to see Santa or the Easter Bunny. But as a young man looking for an entrepreneurial opportunity, the idea of instant photography "looked like fun and had a variety that attracted me to the business," Allen says.

It was 1986 when Allen first launched his business of promotional photography shooting corporate outings, golf tournaments, child identification programs and, of course, the thousands of children who visit the Easter Bunny and Santa. Two years later, the franchise the company was associated with went defunct. But with the initial success Instant Photo Corp of America (IPCA) was experiencing in the Mobile area, Allen decided to continue his efforts and expand operations.

Today, IPCA employs 30 managers and 200 part-time employees and has contracts with 90 percent of the malls in seven states including Texas, Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama, Florida, Georgia and Tennessee. In this high tech environment, instant photography has evolved from Polaroid shots to digital prints, offering customers photographs with a longer life comparable to portrait quality.

According to Allen the success of IPCA starts with the annual training for employees. All the managers and part-time workers come to Mobile for an intensive training seminar covering customer relations, friendliness, sales and operational training.

"Since the majority of our promotion is word of mouth, the experience of every child and parent is

critical. We have to have the friendliest Easter Bunnies and Santas, and we do!" Allen says.

IPCA is one of few locally-owned instant promotional photography companies in the industry. He believes his company's local service is what makes him unique among the slew of national competitors. "We've turned down contracts that are too far away for us to manage," he says. "We take pride in the quality of our operations and we want to maintain that in every market we serve."

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

A Few Secrets on How to Keep Employees

After 36 years in business and as the recipient of several awards including Alabama Remodeler of the Year, the National Remodeler of the Month and Remodeler of the Year, we asked Noland Construction Company to talk to us about their success. President George K. "Chip" Noland Jr. has been able to keep most of his construction workers for the past five, six and even seven years — which is almost unheard of in that industry because of the number of opportunities for workers.

Here's what they said:

- Health insurance and other benefits are very important to employees. Though the cost can be significant to provide these benefits, the cost of finding and training new employees can be very high as well
- Continuous training for employees is essential. Seminars and up to date information keeps employees on the cutting edge of the latest techniques and it keeps them interested in their jobs.
- Participate in local events for exposure. Noland Construction had a booth in the last Home and Garden Show sponsored by the Home Builders Association of Metro Mobile and was able to obtain great leads through the show.
- Go after awards. They provide great third-party testimonials to the quality of the company's work. (The Chamber presents a number of awards such as the Future 30 to fast growth small businesses, Eagle Awards for minority companies, Small Business of the Year, Manufacturer of the Year and the Corporate Community Service Award).
- Keep and share notes and letters from satisfied customers. They can attest to the personal attention a company offers.

Noland Construction remodels larger homes, commercial offices and historic structures.

How Times Have Changed

◆ Almeda Owens Recognized for 50 Years of Service with Roberts Brothers



Instead of the traditional gold watch, Almeda Owens with Roberts Brothers was given a laptop computer recognizing her 50 years of service with the company. She began working with the late David and

John Roberts Sr. while she was still in high school at the company's first office on Williams Street.

The office didn't have air conditioning but it did have a big fan across the top of the room, and the furniture and typewriters were WWII surplus items from Brookley.

She has seen many changes in the real estate industry since the 1950s. Mainly she says, "The simplicity of the industry has changed. Mr. John used to say that the best contract was one you could write on the rear end of a car."

Owens said she never planned a career at Roberts Brothers, but "they ended up being such nice people and such a nice place to work" that she stayed 50 years.

Working in nearly every department of the organization, Owens plans to continue working part-time for the company helping register the company's real estate agents.

mesa: me sa: 'mA-sa: *noun:* Spanish
: a plateau with a flat top and steep sides, found in the southwestern United States and Mexico.

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Local Businesses Should Start Planing to Compete in Cuba

While international experts may not agree on exactly when the U.S. embargo on the Cuban market will end, many believe that the death of Cuban President Fidel Castro is the only thing that will influence U.S. leaders to repeal the 40-year-old sanctions.

The opportunities for U.S. businesses, the experts project, will be spectacular. But the time to develop a marketing plan is now. "If you don't have some kind of plan, you're going to have a hard time catching up to everyone else," said Teo Babun, CEO of Cuba-Caribbean Development Co. and author of *Business Guide to Cuba*, in an interview with *Hispanic Businesses*.

Babun identified tourism, transportation/infrastructure, professional services, telecommunications and agriculture as the top five industries that will benefit when the Cuban market opens.

Currently, any trade that would benefit the Cuban government is limited. However, U.S. companies providing air charter services, artwork, entertainment, exhibitions, farm supplies, medical instruments, pharmaceuticals and telecommunications can already conduct business there. In fact, the estimated value of permitted business activity exceeded \$750 million from October 1994 through December 1999.

For companies planning to jump into the Cuban

Cuba At A Glance:

Population: 11 million

Literacy: 95.7 percent of citizens over 15 years of age

Age: 69 percent of the population is between 15 - 64; 22 percent falls between 0-14

Exports: In 1998, commodities such as sugar, nickel, tobacco, shellfish, medical products, citrus and coffee totaled \$1.4 billion with leading partners Russia (27 percent), Canada (18 percent) and Spain (8 percent)

Imports: Petroleum, food, machinery, chemicals were valued at an estimated \$3 billion in 1998 from Spain (17 percent), France (9 percent) and Canada (9 percent).

Unemployment: 6.8 percent

Per Capita Purchasing Power: \$1,580, less than 5 percent of the U.S. average of \$31,500

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market, Babun recommends an in-depth review including demographics, the identification of potential business partners, logistics, distribution, marketing and legal questions.

Although Cubans are very familiar with U.S.

products and companies, American companies should not assume that they are guaranteed success when the embargo is lifted. They will be working to carve out a portion of sales held by foreign competitors with years of experience.

Also printed in *Hispanic Business*, Max Castro, a research associate at the University of Miami's North-South Center said, "I don't think the turf is going to be all gone. A lot of companies there now may have a good position but they may be banking on selling out to U.S. interests. I think there will be plenty of opportunities for American companies because they excel in so many things."



Cuba's National Assembly building is in Havana where the chief seat of government is located. Mobilians were suprised at the lack security for the building.



Pictured are most of the 18 representatives that traveled to Cuba recently.

Mobile Delegation Gets Different View of Cuba

By Greg Jones

Editor's Note: Greg Jones is a partner in Hand Arendall law firm, and is one of 18 delegates from Mobile who went to Cuba to re-establish our sister city relationship with Havana. Many of the people who participated in the trip had never been to Cuba. While it was mostly an educational venture, if and when the U.S. embargo is lifted, Mobile city and business leaders hope to renew previous trading ties.

team as part of the planned year-long celebration in Mobile.

Havana and Mobile share a long history of dependence and trade. Mayor Dow reminded the delegation's Cuban hosts that the citizens of Havana provided much needed food and supplies to a struggling French community in the early 18th century, thereby ensuring the survival of the new colony on a tenuous edge of a mysterious new continent. He described the spirit of the delegation was a sincere desire to return Havana's and de Iberville's favor by pursuing friendships and exploring the need for humanitarian aide for the people of Havana.

Havana is now a city of more than two million citizens with an almost small town feel. Many of the classical, Victorian and Italian designed buildings in Havana appear to have endured very little, if any, upkeep or renovations since the country's

revolution which ended in 1959, but still grace the city and beautiful city waterfront. Havana is also an antique car buff's dream with a multitude of Chevys, Studebakers, Hudsons and other models from the 30s, 40s and 50s.

It's difficult to visit Havana these days without formulating an opinion regarding young Elain's fate and the future of the U.S. trade embargo. With regard to the latter thorny issue, the embargo seems to be failed policy — an anachronistic by-product of the Cold War. Following the fall of the former Soviet Union, the Cuban people seem to have suffered through remarkable shortages of medical supplies while maintaining a fair degree of optimism. The



Following almost 300 years later in the footsteps of Mobile's founder, Pierre le Moyné, Sieur de Iberville (photograph on right), a delegation of Mobile area community leaders traveled to Havana, Cuba, in late March as part of a cultural, humanitarian and educational trip authorized by the U.S. Treasury Department.

Organized by the Mobile Area Chamber of Commerce and led by Mobile Mayor Mike Dow, 18 members of Society Mobile - La Habana visited city governmental leaders, health care facilities, schools, port facilities and their professional peers in Havana, Mobile's sister city. The trip was scheduled and travel authorizations granted by both countries against an increasingly tense political climate resulting from the plight of young Elian Gonzalez and the expulsion of a Cuban diplomat from the United States. The delegates were greeted, however, with traditional Cuban hospitality.

One objective of the delegation was to explore the possibility of inviting a group of Cuban physicians to visit Mobile and exchange ideas regarding health care initiatives. Four physicians accepted invitations to Mobile and are expected to arrive this month as guests of the Society.

The possibility of some participation by Havana in Mobile's tricentennial celebration in 2002 was also explored and a challenge was laid down for Havana's baseball team to play a U.S. collegiate

people seem to be looking to the future while ignoring the past.

By the end of the week-long visit, the delegation generally concluded there was little justification to continue the embargo, especially considering the current warming of U.S. relations with the other two key Cold War enemies — the Peoples Republic of China and its application for entry into the WTO and the U.S.'s increasingly cordial relationship with former Soviet Union's republics. Current events simply suggest the time to lift the embargo has come.

The Society Mobile-La Habana plans at least two additional trips to Cuba in May and November, 2000, in hope of fostering an already warm sister city relationship. Anyone desiring membership in the Society and interested in joining one of the upcoming trips to Havana, should contact Bob Donnelly, editor of the Society Mobile - La Habana at 431-6100.

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Which Industries Will Thrive?

◆ Tourism, service, infrastructure and food sectors look forward to explosive growth in Cuba.

Future opportunities in Cuba will occur in virtually every industry. Consultant Teo Babun, author of *Business Guide to Cuba*, has identified these top prospects.



Tourism: Cuba optimism in the potential of the tourism industry can be gauged by the widely quoted forecast of 2 million visitors this year, an annual surge of 21 percent. When U.S. companies and tourists can visit Cuba, the market will explode says Babun.



Transportation: Roads need building and fixing. So does infrastructure for ports, airports, warehousing and rail transport.



Professional services: Accountants, architects, bankers, investment bankers, consultants and engineers will be in high demand. Lawyers will also figure prominently.



Telecommunications: Currently, Cuba has an antiquated system of only 320,000 phone lines in operation (official estimates range as high as 600,000). The island has a severe shortage of international circuits. Installation and repair services lack quality.



Agriculture: Cuba offers unique opportunities to agribusiness investors, owing to fertile soil, the largest agricultural production area of any Caribbean island, and geographic proximity to the U.S. market. The domestic Cuban market possesses an educated and underemployed work force, a pent-up demand for better quality and diversity in food choices, and a growing tourist industry that requires high-end consumer goods.

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Ozone Forecasting Changes – EPA Enacts New Warnings

Air Quality Guide for Ozone Levels in Mobile		
Air Quality	Parts per billion of air	Recommended actions
Good (Green)	0 - 0.064	No health impacts are expected when ozone levels are in this range.
Moderate (Yellow)	0.065 - 0.084	Unusually sensitive people should consider limiting prolonged outdoor exertion.
Unhealthy Sensitive Groups (Orange)	0.085 - 0.104	Active children and adults and for people with respiratory disease, such as asthma, should limit prolonged outdoor exertion.
Unhealthy (Red)	0.105 - 0.124	Active children and adults, and people with respiratory disease, such as asthma, should avoid prolonged outdoor exertion and everyone else, especially children should limit prolonged outdoor exertion.
Very Unhealthy Purple	0.125 +	Active children and adults, and people with respiratory disease, such as asthma, should avoid outdoor exertion and everyone else, especially children should limit outdoor exertion.



A new EPA forecasting system designed to provide a better understanding of ground level ozone was initiated last month. During the 1999 ozone season, the Environmental Protection Agency and Alabama Department of Environmental Management divided days during the ozone season into three categories – good, ozone watch and ozone alert. This year, however the EPA will divide days into five categories (see graphic), and each range is associated with a color.

Green days symbolize good days. Yellow days are considered moderate when people prone to breathing problems or respiratory disease should consider limiting outdoor exertion. The new system further breaks down what was formerly a red ozone alert day, when ozone reaches .85 parts per million, into three categories – orange, red and purple.

Daily ozone forecasts from ADEM can be found on their Web site, www.adem.state.al.us, along with tips on how individuals can help keep the air cleaner.

In March, members of the Ground Level Ozone Reduction Initiative (GLORI) began preparing their public awareness campaign for 2000. Its goals for this season are to:

- Report on what businesses and industries are doing to educate and encourage employees to reduce emissions on high ozone days and what the company is doing itself to help reduce emissions.

- Encourage representatives in both Mobile and Baldwin County school systems to get involved with GLORI and implement ozone awareness curricula in targeted schools.
- Create a strong partnership with the Mobile Transit Authority to address the needs of mass transit in our area and find ways to solve some of the area's transportation problems.
- Continue the public awareness campaign about ground level ozone.

To accomplish its plan of action, several committees have been formed including an industry task force, communications committee, awards and recognition task force, research committee and education committee.

For more information on GLORI, or to join one of these task force groups, contact Leigh Perry Herndon at 431-8623 or via e-mail at leigh@mobilechamber.org.

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Toast from the Coast

◆ Mobile and Baldwin Counties Host State Legislators

Boiled crawfish, raw oysters, steamed and fried crab claws, fried fish, boiled and fried shrimp, West Indies Salad . . . ahh, Gulf Coast seafood. Those of us who live here probably don't appreciate it enough.

Folks in Montgomery surely appreciate it – especially the more than 600 attendees at the second "Toast from the Coast" who enjoyed that mouth-watering menu compliments of the Chambers in Mobile and Baldwin counties.

The event is a casual networking session held in Montgomery so area business representatives can mingle with the state's legislators and staff.

"For years people didn't think that Mobile got the attention it deserved from the state. Maybe it was because most legislators weren't familiar with our area. So what better way than to bring South Alabama's food and hospitality to the decision makers," said Scott Posey, the Chamber's vice president of governmental affairs.



Cheryl Thompson with Alabama Power pictured with Ed Fields with Mobile Gas.

Mobile County Commissioners Sam Jones (back left) and Gary Tanner (front right).



Rep. Lucy Baker (left), Rep. Jeanette Green, Don Green and Cheryl Thompson with Alabama Power.



Bayou La Batre Mayor Warren Seaman and Rep. Chris Pringle

Business Spotlight of the Month Pressed 4 Time



It's 4:50 p.m. on Monday afternoon, and you're absolutely exhausted after a long day of work. Visions of a comfy couch, tee-shirt and gym shorts and that pint of ice cream in the freezer are all you can think about – that is until you realize that you never picked up the shoes being re-soled, a week's worth of dry cleaning and your favorite handbag from the alterations store last Friday afternoon. What was once 15 minutes to paradise is now at least another hour or more away.

Does this situation sound familiar? Not if you work for one of the more than 300 businesses in the Mobile area that uses Pressed 4 Time, a full-service dry cleaner and alterations operation that picks up and delivers to offices from West Mobile to the downtown area.

Pressed 4 Time has only been open for eight months, but already it has passed expectations says Manager Mark Weigel. "This community obviously was ready and welcomed our delivery service."

Weigel assumes that most people using Pressed 4 Time are looking for alternative ways to save time, but are still very concerned with quality. He believes Pressed 4 Time has been able to sell itself by word of mouth because he is giving his

Today's busy schedules of the Mobile workforce offered a new opportunity for Manager Mark Weigel and Pressed 4 Time.

customers what they really want. Almost no money has been spent advertising the business. Instead Weigel said the company relies on its customers talking about the service to friends who work at different places.

More than dry cleaning, Pressed 4 Time also does minor alterations such as zipper and shoe repairs, shoe shining and re-soleing. "The customers know they can count on us for fast turn around time and quality service, and they're really taking advantage of all we have to offer them," Weigel explained.

As the company continues to grow, so will the number of delivery vans on the road. For more information on having Pressed 4 Time come to your business or residence, call 342-6677.

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

Mobile Housing Fair



Owning a home doesn't have to be a scary ordeal as visitors to the Envision Mobile-Baldwin Housing Fair found out last month. Twenty vendors including banks, housing agencies, Alabama Power and Mobile Gas, participated in the event which helped citizens learn about their credit ratings and the steps to obtaining a home-owners loan. The event was part of an Envision strategy focused on improving quality of life for local citizens.

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Diplomat of the Month Angela Hays

A Diplomat for the past three years, Angela Hays of Paulk's Moving and Storage is the Chamber's Diplomat of the Month. Hays, the relocation specialist for Paulk's, assists both companies and families, whether they're moving across the country, or just across town.

Hays became involved in the program shortly after moving to the area. Fellow Diplomat, Terry Downs, brought Hays into the group of professionals, where she's been an active member since joining.

"This program has really offered me a unique opportunity to learn more about the Mobile area and network for Paulk's at the same time," Hays explained. "As a Diplomat, I have access to new companies in the area, small business owners, corporate CEOs and some of the area's most interesting people. It has been a wonderful experience."

Although this is Hays' first time selected as Diplomat of the Month, she is a familiar face at various Chamber functions such as Business After Hours, First Friday and the Annual Meeting. She's also served as a volunteer during Chamber Chase, the total resource campaign held annually to recruit new members, sponsorships and contributions to support Chamber programs.

In her spare time, the Daphne resident can often be spotted bird watching, gardening and spending time at the beach.



Use the Power of Positive Thinking to Propel Your Business

Small business is about success – the success of the American dream in the eyes of an entrepreneur who believes he or she can make a new business idea a thriving reality.

Whether a solo entrepreneur or a small business owner with a staff of 50, attitude does affect business success. The moment you become a business owner, you represent yourself, the business and expectations for success. Your attitude and manner convey your confidence and commitment.

So many entrepreneurs have said they get a charge from the challenge, that the adrenaline rush keeps them going. The inner desire to succeed combined with a commitment to hard work makes all the difference. As an entrepreneur, never underestimate the competition and never underestimate your ability to rise to the occasion.

"Small business is dynamic and your energy level both real and perceived by others, influences how successful you will be in the marketplace. In the small business world of modest profit margins, fierce competition and time constraints – don't be guilty of the four cardinal "can't do it" ways of thinking," warns Bob Kirby, a SCORE (Senior Corp of Retired Executives) counselor and former chairman of the group.

- I can't. I have no time – I'm busy handling what I have now.
- I can't. There is just not enough money to do everything.

- I can't. My competitors are making the market too tough.
- I can't. Technology will only complicate my business.

Successful people know where their businesses are going. They have a plan they are willing to follow in order to achieve their goals. Mentally prepare for success by developing the "can do" outlook. Be the motivator, the dreamer and the real world implementer. Commit yourself to the balancing act of the world of possibilities and the business realities.

You set the tone for your business. Customers, colleagues, employees and lenders all look to you to gauge the value and strength of your business. Your positive attitude and energy signal the vitality of this small business.

Every entrepreneur should have a sounding board outside their business — be it a colleague, friend or business counselor. Contact SCORE and request free and confidential small business counseling. SCORE is a nonprofit organization with volunteer, business counselors who donate their time and talent to help entrepreneurs. Their counselors help entrepreneurs develop business strategies, prepare business plans and brainstorm on new ideas. Call SCORE/Mobile at 431-8614 for an appointment.

Mobile Museum of Art Gets Ready for Temporary Move



With plans to open its doors in time for Mobile's tricentennial celebration in 2002, the Museum of Art broke ground on its \$15 million expansion recently. The new 95,000 sq. ft. building will envelope the current facility, giving the museum the room it needs to include an education wing and a state-of-the-art hands on gallery for adults and children.

Museum employees are in the process of packing artwork and offices for their temporary stay at the Mobile Civic Center's Expo Hall during construction. Exhibits, classes, and programming will continue as usual at Expo Hall from Summer 2000 to Summer

Pictured above is one of three groups that broke ground on the Museum's expansion project set to open in 2002.

2002. Hours will be Monday – Saturday, 10 a.m. – 5 p.m., and Sundays, 1 – 5 p.m.

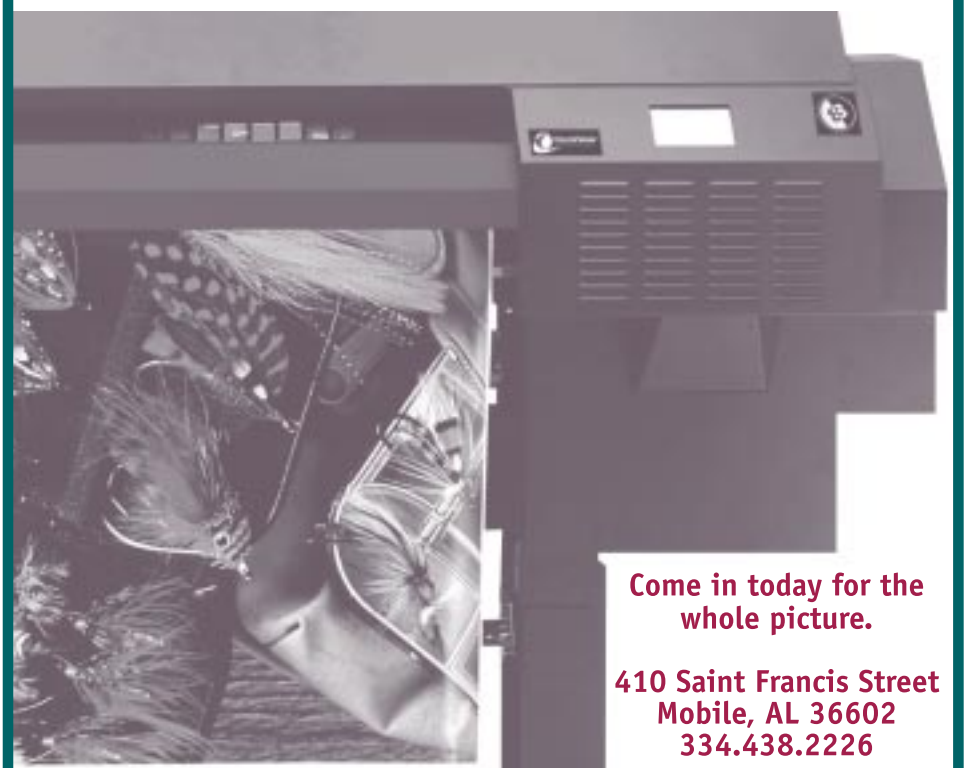
Of the \$15 million goal for the museum's capital campaign, \$11.54 million has been raised to date. For more information on the capital campaign, exhibits and summer classes, call 343-2667.

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Chamber Board of Advisors and Board of Directors Meet

At a recent joint meeting of the Chamber's Board of Advisors and Board of Directors, Elmer Harris, president of Alabama Power, explained options for the power company's future. Pictured with Board of Directors Chairman, Dianne Irby, Harris said he welcomed deregulation of the utility industry and noted some of the challenges e-commerce will have on the way everyone does business in the near future.



For more information on joining the Chamber's Board of Advisors program, contact Katrina McCrory in administration at 431-8611 or katrina@mobilechamber.org.

Also during the April 5 meeting Mayer Mitchell (right) was recognized for his financial contributions and many efforts to ensure the future success of Mobile, notably at the University of South Alabama. Immediate past chair of the Chamber's Board of Directors, John Davis, recognized Mitchell for all he and wife Arlene, as well as brother Abe, have done to support the University. Davis and University President Gordon Moulton specifically acknowledged the Mitchells' contributions for the Mitchell Center, the University's new 10,000-seat basketball and entertainment arena on campus, and the Mitchell College of Business.

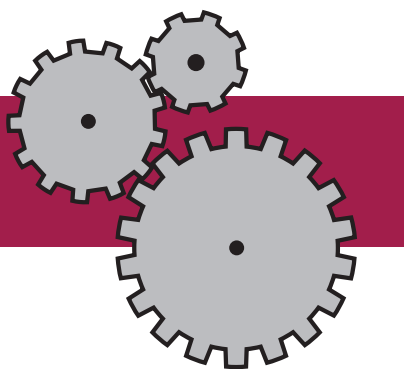
Chamber Offers Publication Detailing Area Attributes

Looking for a publication to hand out to clients or visitors that's not only informative but attractively describes area attributes? The Chamber has the perfect piece and chances are you've already seen it. *Mobile Highlights* is the front section of the 2000 Membership Directory and Buyer's Guide.

Each year, the Chamber prints extras of the full-color piece, complete with information about the area's housing market, business climate, health care industry and education system, to be used as a great marketing tool about the Mobile area. Additionally, the publication contains a detailed calendar of events for the year 2000, and general information about Mobile including the population, economic outlook and average temperatures.

Copies of *Mobile Highlights* are available at a cost of \$1 each, but large quantities of the publication can be purchased at deeply discounted rates depending on the amount needed. For more information on *Mobile Highlights* or to order quantities of the publication, contact Leigh Perry Herndon at 431-8623.

The Chamber At Work For You



Ports and Waterways

The Chamber organized the kick-off meeting of the Port and Waterways Task Force. The primary mission of this group is to identify and work to address areas of concern to the maritime industry and waterfront community.

New Jobs Influence the Economy

A much used Economic Impact Study measuring how new jobs inject additional monies into the local economy will soon be updated. The Chamber is working with Dr. Semoon Chang, local economist and director of the Center of Business and Economic Research at the University of South Alabama.

Small Business Experts

Chamber staff conducted an initial meeting with a new member that wants the benefit of the organization's small business development expertise in launching their company in the Mobile market.

Self Sufficient

Students in the six high school academy programs in addition to creating products and materials, will be able to sell them and re-invest monies in their programs if a \$50,000 grant proposal to the Coleman Foundation is awarded. The Chamber's Center for Workforce Development made the request to launch this School-Based Enterprise project.

Between Two Counties

Representatives from the Envision Mobile-Baldwin Transportation Action Team/Public Transit Coalition group met with Sen. Richard Shelby and his staff recently. The group presented him with a draft proposal to fund expanded transit service hours and routes in Mobile County and to link with existing Baldwin County service.



Spring Golf Tournament A Success

While many Northern cities were blasted with Winter's last hold over Spring, 160 area golfers were enjoying a round of golf at TimberCreek on a beautiful 70 degree day on March 31.

The Chamber's Membership Department extends a sincere thank you to the sponsors that made the Spring 2000 Golf Tournament a great success:

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Comparative Economic Indicators

February '00 vs February '99



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CALENDAR VIEW

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 17 **Net Gain: Looking Out for #1 - Your Customer**

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

May 17 **Pork and Politics in the Park**

Time: 5:30 - 8 p.m.
Place: Spanish Plaza Park
Cost: \$15
Call: Shelly Mattingly at 431-8612
See story on page 4.

May 18 **Armed Forces Day Luncheon**

Time: Noon
Place: U.S.A. Brookley Officers' Club
Cost: \$15 each, Tables of 8 are \$120
Call: Shelly Mattingly at 431-8612

May 23 **Future 30 Awards Banquet**

Time: 5:30 - 8 p.m.
Place: Mobile Convention Center
Cost: \$35 per person/\$300 for a table of 10
Call: Brenda Rembert at 431-8607

May 25 **Business After Hours**

Time: 5:30 - 7 p.m.
Place: BellSouth-Real Yellow Pages
 2970 Cottage Hill Road
Cost: \$2 for members, \$5 for potential members

COMING IN JUNE

June 2 **First Friday Presents Business at Breakfast**

Time: 7:45 - 8:45 a.m.
Place: Bienville Club
Cost: \$10 includes a breakfast buffet
Call: Pratt Vereen at 431-8638

June 22 **Business After Hours**

Time: 5:30 - 7 p.m.
Place: Drayton Place
Cost: \$2 for members, \$5 for potential members

Net Gain: Looking Out for #1 - Your Customer

How do you find a great customer, keep that customer and grow the relationship to improve your quality service for that #1 customer? Come on May 17 to this month's Net Gain seminar, "Looking Out for #1 - Your Customer," from 11 a.m. - 1 p.m. in the Chamber McGowin Room. Evelyn Gibson, corporate marketing manager of Long's Human Resource Services, will teach participants user-friendly techniques needed to develop and sustain relationships with customers.

The cost of the 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 this popular meeting sponsored by BellSouth. Set for May 16 in the Chamber McGowin Room, attendees will have an opportunity to give a two-minute presentation on their company's product or service. 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 lunch.



Annual Armed Forces Day Lunch

The Armed Forces Day Luncheon, the main event of Mobile's celebration of Armed Forces Week, is sponsored by the Military Affairs Committee of the Mobile Area Chamber of Commerce. Outstanding ROTC, JROTC, and NJROTC students, plus Guard, Reserve and active duty personnel, all of whom are our honored guests, will be presented well-deserved awards. This year Major General Willy Alexander, Alabama National Guard, and the Adjunct General for the State of Alabama, will present the awards, and will be the principal speaker. Ladies are encouraged to attend!

The event starts at Noon on Thursday, May 18, at the U.S.A. Brookley Field Officers' Club. Tables of 8 are \$120 per table, individual tickets are \$15.

Business After Hours

"Let your fingers do the talking" at this month's Business After Hours, sponsored by BellSouth, The Real Yellow Pages, 2970 Cottage Hill Rd. Be sure to mark your calendar for this popular event - May 25 from 5:30 - 7 p.m.

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



First Friday Presents Business at Breakfast

On June 2, the Chamber's First Friday networking event will host Brenda Scott, president of the Mobile Convention and Visitors Corp. Sponsored by the Bienville Club, attendees will hear about recent developments and accomplishments in Mobile's tourism industry.

Cost for the event is \$10 and includes a buffet breakfast. Call Pratt Vereen at 431-8638 for reservations.



Future 30 Awards Banquet

On Tuesday, May 23 the Mobile Area Chamber will Recognize the Area's 30 Fastest Growing Companies

Join us at 5:30 for a Reception with the 2000 Future 30 Winners and from 6:30 - 8 p.m. for the Dinner and Award Ceremony at the Mobile Convention Center

Tickets: \$35 each or \$300 for a table of 10
 For reservations or information call: 431-8607
 Sponsored By:



ATTENTION MEMBERS!

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

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

WHO'S NEW?

Aimee Beyle was named regional marketing manager for **BlueStar Communications**. Her territory will include Jacksonville, Gainesville, Ocala, Pensacola and Tallahassee, Fla.; Mobile; and Biloxi and Gulfport, Miss. Formerly, she was director of on-air product with ABC-25, WJXX-TV in Jacksonville, and assistant promotions manager with WECT-TV in Wilmington, NC.

Leonard J. (Bo) Marks joined **Whitney National Bank** as assistant vice president in commercial lending. He has more than eight years banking experience, primarily in the retail and commercial areas. Marks is a graduate of Wake Forest University in N.C.

Marks

Adams Homes announces site specialists for Baldwin County residential communities: **Matt Demers** is the new site specialist for Oak Hollow and Oak Village featuring homes from 1,400 – 1,800 sq. ft. located off County Rd. 24 in Foley. He can be reached at 971-3491. **Dee Gibson** is now representing Whisper Woods. Located on Hwy. 31 in Spanish Fort, this new community offers homes from 1,500 – 2,000 sq. ft. Gibson can be reached at 625-0271. **Ginny Johnson** is the contact for the new Camellia Woods with floor plans ranging from 1,700 – 2,000 sq. ft., located on County Road 49. Johnson can be reached at 945-1761.

BUSINESS ENDEAVORS

A new agreement will keep the AFLAC Champions golf tournament in Mobile for the next two years. Raycom Sports, parent company of AFLAC, signed a two-year agreement with the City of Mobile and **Robert Trent Jones Golf Trail's Magnolia Grove** golf facility after a very successful 1999 event.

Manpower successfully deployed a new client/server software, Jacada for Java, recently. The new technology will provide a more efficient e-business infrastructure to process orders and employee assignments, track and process time sheets and match Manpower employees to job positions at customer locations.

Infirmity Health System developed a new partnership with a workers' compensation service company, Providers' Assurance Corp., to reduce costs for employers in Mobile, Baldwin, Washington and Clarke counties. Under the agreement, Infirmity Health System will offer preferred pricing on services and deliver occupational care through its hospital and clinics. For more information, call 431-5801.

In other news, the Infirmity also developed a new follow-up clinic to help amputee patients deal with their losses. **Dr. Charles Hall Jr.** with Mobile Bay Physical Medicine founded the program. Call 435-6410, for times and dates or more information.

Don Pablo's Mexican Kitchen opened last month on Airport Boulevard near I-65. Mobile is the first city to sample the company's new "MexLevel" dishes that include steak, seafood and pasta, in addition to its traditional recipes, before rolled out in other restaurants across the country.

ERA Marie McConnell Realty published a new Mobile Area Relocation Guide featuring the artwork of local artist **Blanche Sumrall**. The magazine-style book gives newcomers to the area a look at the community, local services and activities.

MEMBER NEWS

COMMUNITY NEWS

(recruiting volunteers, grants, campaign updates)

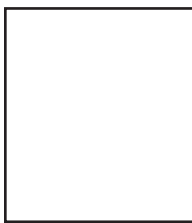
Providence Hospital Auxiliary celebrated its 50th anniversary with several events last month. Over the years, the Auxiliary funded fetal monitors, a CAT scanner, the Providence Campus Chapel and televisions for patient rooms. Recent contributions include new surgical lights for the operating room, an orthopedic traction table and a nuclear medicine computer system.

If you have a medical artifact, photograph or history of a medical milestone, Trinity Press would like to hear from you. The company is publishing a book celebrating Mobile's three centuries of medicine. Call 928-9656 or 479-6944.

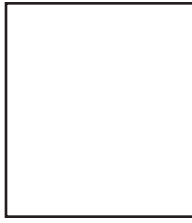
WELL DONE!

(promotions, awards, designations, professional training, accreditations, area board officers)

Sam Digiambattista, vice president and regional investment services manager at **AmSouth Bank** was promoted to senior vice president. Also, **Robert J. Sanders**, vice president and regional mortgage manager was promoted to senior vice president.



Digiambattista



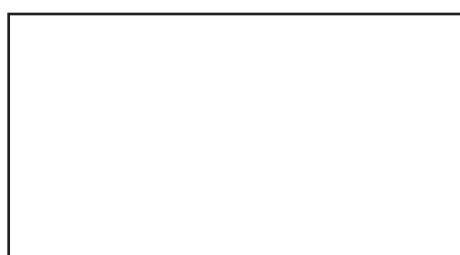
Sanders

Greg Davis was promoted from field operations manager to regional operations director of **BlueStar Communications**. In addition to Mobile, his territory will include Jacksonville, Gainesville, Ocala, Pensacola and Tallahassee, Fla.; and Biloxi and Gulfport, Miss. He has more than 16 years experience in the telecommunications and computer industries.

Previously an account executive with BlueStar, **Ryan Johnston** was promoted to indirect channel manager in the Mobile and Pensacola markets. Before joining the company he was with Mercedes-Benz Credit Corp. (Cut if you need to)

Mobile's **JCPenny** store was recognized for its "five-star" service. The company named 10 winners in five groups determined by store size and sales volume out of a total of 1,150 stores. Customer-service stores were based on the results of an annual survey of thousands of JCPenny's best customers.

In addition, **Gerald Hagmaier**, manager of the JCPenny department store at Bel Air Mall was honored with the Chairman's Award for his store's performance in 1999. The acknowledgment is the company's highest designation for managerial excellence and is based on sales and profit improvement.



Five young women have been selected to represent **USS ALABAMA Battleship Memorial Park** as its 2000-2001 Crewmates. **Leah Cooke**, University of South Alabama, is Miss USS ALABAMA and will receive a \$2,000 scholarship; and **Tara Greene**, University of Mobile, is Miss USS DRUM and will receive a \$1,500 scholarship.

Other Crewmates selected, each receiving a \$1,000 scholarship, are: **Sara Porter**, University of South Alabama; **Kerra Smith**, University of Mobile; and **Rachael Armitt**, University of Mobile.

Region's Bank announced recent staff promotions. **Renae W. Batson** was promoted to vice president senior accountant. She joined the bank in 1973. Batson attended the University of South Alabama, and is a graduate of the Alabama Banking School at University of South Alabama.

Irma B. Bru was promoted to vice president IRA product manager. She joined the bank in 1962. She also attended the University of South Alabama, and is a graduate of the Alabama Banking School at University of South Alabama.

Janice L. Platt was promoted to assistant vice president. Previously, she was branch manager of the Citronnelle office. Since she began with the bank in 1972, she has served in all areas of the office's Retail Division. Platt has completed numerous American Institute of Banking courses as well as internal bank-related courses.

Three **University of Mobile** employees received special recognition for their contributions to their professions. **Dr. Judith McPeak**, dean of the Department of Communication and professor of communications, received the William A. Megginson Teaching Award for excellence in classroom teaching, scholarly activity, and her contributions to campus and community life.

The Emma Frances Megginson Service Award presented to a full-time employee exhibiting excellence in promoting the philosophy of the university, performing responsibilities and contributing to campus and community life went to **Jane Nall**, assistant professor of biology.

Dr. Sergio Castello, assistant professor of global business and economics, received the Metford Ray Megginson Research Award for excellence in research performed during the past two years.

Hutch Radcliff with **The Robinson-Humphrey Company** recently completed training earning him the distinction of becoming a retirement plan consultant by Saloman Smith Barney's Corporate Retirement Services Division. Radcliff excelled in meeting the retirement plan needs of corporations in the 401(K) marketplace and demonstrated considerable experience, knowledge and success in this business.

Radcliff

Gov. Don Siegelman appointed **N. William (Bill) Layfield**, the **Drug Education Council's** director of the prevention services in Baldwin County, to the Alabama Mental Health and Mental Retardation Board of Trustees for a three-year term.

The Press Club of Mobile board of directors recently elected new officers: **Paula Dicks**, Bayview Professional Associates, president; **Carol Hunter**, WALA-TV10, vice president; **Kathy Dean**, University of Mobile, secretary; and **Mary Ellen Keller**, Business Innovation Center, treasurer.

New officers elected for the **Museum of Mobile's** board of directors are: **Sidney Schell**, chairman; **Susan Miller**, vice chairman; **Paul Klotz**, treasurer; **Ruth M. Quackenbush**, corresponding secretary; and **Alma Foster**, recording secretary.

Mike Fitzhugh is the new chair of **Mercy Medical's** board of trustees. Other officers include: **Dr. Carol Harrison**, vice chair; **James Lenaghan**, secretary; and **Joe Dan Dunning**, treasurer.

Ann Doss, infection control coordinator at **Providence Hospital**, is the recipient of the Sigma Theta Tau award. The organization honors contributions in nursing.

FOR YOUR CALENDAR

(event dates)

Hank Aaron is the honorary guest at a fundraising dinner on Thursday, June 22. Benefiting the programs and services of the **Salvation Army** in Mobile and Baldwin counties, tickets are \$100 each. Call 438-3478 for more information.

A professional development seminar focusing on innovative ideas for managing crisis situations and building a rock solid reputation is set for June 22 from 8 a.m. – 1 p.m. at the Mobile Convention Center. Sponsored by the Public Relations Council of Alabama, the event's keynote speaker, **Terrie Williams**, CEO and founder of the Terrie Williams Agency in New York, will present "How to Succeed and Network in Public Relations and Business." Sally Jessy Raphael, Janet Jackson, Jackie Joyner Kersee and Eddie Murphy are among her client list.

The \$65 fee includes a reception on June 21 and lunch the day of the workshop. Vendor booths are also available for \$75. For more information, contact **Joy Washington** at 460-6638.

NEED TO KNOW

(new hours, new addresses)

The **Three Sisters Gift & Coffee Shop** held its grand opening and ribbon cutting last month. Located at the Loop, 2155 Airport Blvd. Shop hours are 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. Monday - Saturday. Stop by or call 470-0350.

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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