

# THE VIEW

MARCH 2001

MOBILE AREA CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

XXXIII, No. 3

## New Rail Car Services Links Mobile to Mexico

Instead of cargo rolling down the track to the U.S.-Mexican border at Larado, Texas, companies can roll their products to the Port of Alabama in Mobile and shorten the trip considerably.

A new railcar ferry service sailing through the Gulf of Mexico can reduce a typical 60-day trip by land to three days.

CG Railway, a division of the New Orleans-based International Shipholding Corp., recently began its twice-a-week rail ferry service between Mobile and Coatzacoalcos, Mexico.

The company operates two 585-foot ships with 30-foot high sidewalls to protect the cargo from water, each with a 60-car capacity. CG Railway officials say the new service will be congestion free, provide shippers and receivers with a faster transit time, and assist railroads in optimizing equipment use.

The new service partnered with Ferrosur, a major railroad in Mexico.

"These are the only two ships of this kind on the Gulf Rim," said Mike Lee, president of Page & Jones and the ships' agent.

"And the service could expand to Latin America."

"CG Railway is in the process of completing

interline agreements with railroads mainly operating east of the Mississippi River including Canadian National/Illinois Central, Norfolk Southern, CSX and Burlington Northern/Santa Fe," according to company officials.

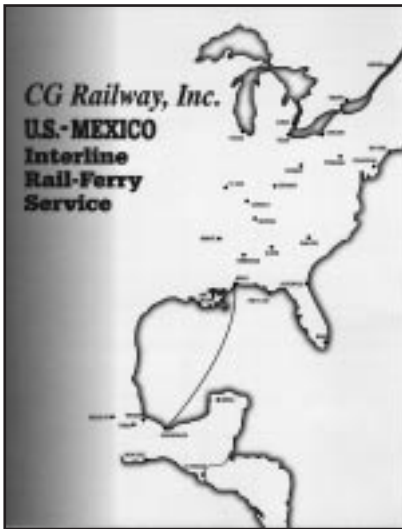
"This is an asset to the railroad industry, increasing its delivery time while taking advantage of the economies of rail transport," said Lee.

The Port of Alabama constructed a special rail-ferry dock for the new venture, which will increase port calls nearly 10 percent. In addition, Mobile will benefit as the homeport of this operation.

"We are seeking opportunities for companies with smaller volumes who want to take advantage of this new, faster service," said Jim Apple, the Chamber's vice president of economic development.

The Chamber, the City of Mobile and Page and Jones worked with the Port of Alabama and CG Railway to bring the operations to Mobile.

The ships will carry paper products, chemicals, automobiles and forest products. Also, the ships have refrigerated cars that will carry meat, poultry, beer and fresh produce.



Port of Alabama, CG Railway and City officials launch new railcar ferry service from Mobile to Mexico.

"Because of the rapid service and Mobile's strategic location, shippers from Mexico can reach over 172 million people in three days transit time from the Port," said Tony van Aken, the Chamber's

director of trade and technology.

For more information on the service contact Lee at 432-1646 or visit the Web site at [www.cgrailway.com](http://www.cgrailway.com).

## Austal USA Launches Operations

"It seems we often hear – what Mobile needs is more high-tech industry. That's exactly what Austal USA brings to Mobile," said Tom Bender, president of Bender Shipbuilding and Repair.

Last January Bender Shipbuilding and Repair and Australian-based Austal Limited announced its partnership to build passenger ferries with a

According to Consul General David Crook, who is also Australia's senior trade commissioner, Austal Limited is Australia's leading exporter. In 10 years, the company grew to \$200 million in export income and 1,700 employees.

"Our expectations are high," said Bob McKinnon, managing director of Austal Limited, at the company's grand opening celebration held last month.

Already, Austal USA has its first customer. Otto Candies LLC of Des Allemands, La., contracted the construction of two 150-ft. crew supply vessels to operate in the Gulf of Mexico.

The Chamber, with the financial backing of The Millennium Fund investors, along with the Alabama Industrial Development Training, the Alabama Development Office, the City and the County, assisted Bender with bringing this project to the area.

Aluminum high-speed ferries have become a popular mode of transportation in Europe and on the Pacific Rim. Spurring the expansion of the Australian company was a federal law prohibiting foreign-built vessels from operating on domestic routes.



Bender Shipbuilding and Repair, Austal USA and Otto Candies executives are onhand for the company's grand opening.

technology not available in the U.S. The new facility, located on 10 acres on Blakely Island, directly across Mobile River from the foot of Government Street, measures 360-ft. long, 90-ft. tall and 113-ft. wide.

## Working Together For Change

New partnerships, new initiatives, new projects – there are more than 70 accomplishments detailed in the 2000 Annual Report of Envision Mobile-Baldwin, the area's citizen-driven, long-range strategic plan.

A number of these achievements are high profile like Amendment One, the local Constitutional reform rally, the drop in violent crime, new job announcements and the job fair for International Paper and Corus workers.

But behind the scenes were hundreds of volunteers working on issues such as technology, character development, the arts, youth mentoring, environment, health care, regional marketing and early childhood development.

"There are no borders between Mobile and Baldwin counties when it comes to the success of this area. We all agree that we are better together," said Ginny Russell, the Chamber's director of community development.

"Bay Minette, Loxley, Elberta, Summerdale, Silverhill, Daphne, Foley, Spanish Fort, Gulf Shores,

Orange Beach, Fairhope, Prichard, Saraland, Citronelle, Bayou LaBatre, Satsuma, Mt. Vernon and Mobile – all are cities where volunteers are impacting their quality of life," Russell added.

Envision Chairman John Davis with Mobile Gas challenged the steering committee to focus on initiatives that would "move the needle on key benchmarks: reducing poverty, improving income, adding jobs, and improving the output of the education system."

Envision was developed in 1997. Today, more than 350 businesses and community organizations have signed up as Vision Partners to help carry out the plan. More than 150 strategies address Envision's six broad areas of focus: education, quality of life, economic development, community leadership, infrastructure and government.

Published Friday, Feb. 23, in the *Mobile Register*, copies of the annual report are still available by calling 431-8621 or log on to [www.mobilechamber.com](http://www.mobilechamber.com).



## IPSCO Pours Liquid Steel in Mobile for the First Time

In January, IPSCO Steel successfully produced its first batch of liquid steel at the new \$425 million facility in Axis. Initial efforts are centered on melting scrap and casting the liquid steel into large slabs to be rolled out later. The new steel will be used in a variety of applications such as building and construction, bridges, barges, railcars, storage tanks, machinery and equipment, agricultural implements and pipemaking.

Construction began in April 1999 and company officials expect the plant to be fully operational this spring. Currently, there are more than 250 personnel on-site being trained.

The local facility is expected to produce 1.25 million tons a year bringing IPSCO's annual steel making capacity to 3.5 million tons.

For more information on IPSCO, please visit the company's Web site at [www.ipsco.com](http://www.ipsco.com).

# Peace and Prosperity

## ◆ The U.S. role in international affairs is good business

International security is to economic interest as oxygen is to the body, according to Walt Slocombe.

Slocombe, a former U.S. undersecretary of defense for policy, has led the Department of Defense's international security engagement for more than six years. Since the early 1970s, the Rhodes scholar and Harvard Law School summa cum laude graduate has served in national security and senior defense positions.

The policy expert recently shared his views on the role American service members play in safeguarding U.S. economic, political, cultural and strategic interests in an address at the U.S. Chamber of Commerce in Washington DC. He pointed out that today's armed forces are vitally involved in "more cooperative military activities, exercises and exchanges — with more countries, in more corners of the world — than ever before."

A recent Dow Jones News Service story published in the *Mobile Register* reinforced Slocombe's analogy. The article reported an "increasing trend in cross Atlantic merger-and-acquisition activity." Also included were foreign investment statistics in American companies. Last year, investments were 20 percent higher than in 1999, representing 453 U.S. companies with deals valued at more than \$356 billion. It's projected that U.S. companies this year will be investing in the booming European markets.

This story is evidence that "we have to be the peace-keepers in the world," said Herb Lockett, Alabama State Ambassador and National

Committee of Employee Support for the Guard and Reserve.

"Engagement in international affairs is not a favor we do the rest of the world," he stressed. "It is a matter of cold-blooded protection of our own interests."

Slocombe spoke of the Military Quality of Life Summit, the first of proposed annual meetings of senior military and business leaders aimed at strengthening military and corporate partnerships.

"In an increasingly interdependent world, our concern with other nations cannot be limited to securing our borders or even to protecting our trade," he said. "Without security and stability on a broader scale, neither our safety nor our prosperity can be assured."

"Today's security challenges are very different from those of the past," Slocombe said. The end of the Cold War lifted the specter of global nuclear war, but there are still "real security problems, ranging from seemingly isolated conflicts, often bred of ethnic or religious hatred,

that threaten to spread to the growing danger of weapons of mass destruction and terrorism."

Industry plans a valued role in supporting the military, he added, by helping to ensure U.S. forces maintain technological superiority and that potential adversaries do not have access to technologies and capabilities that can be used against them.

*Source: Excerpts were taken from an article by Linda D. Kozaryn that appeared in the November 2000 issue of The Officer.*

This story is evidence that "we have to be the peace-keepers in the world."  
Herb Lockett

# Protecting Your Business

All the talk about a possible recession may lead employers to adopt strategies that could be disastrous long-term. Short-term thinkers may consider laying off workers in an effort to control costs, placing themselves in an extremely vulnerable position.

Employers currently face serious challenges in attracting and retaining qualified workers. Top talent is scarce and in high demand. Labor shortages plague every industry in an employment condition that is clearly a sellers' market.

If employers panic at the thought of a recessionary downturn and begin selective layoffs, their other workers may leave, as well, fearing for their job security. Workers already have a lot of choices of employers, and many are already being courted by recruiters.

It won't take much effort on the part of nervous employers to motivate a significant number of their people to accept other employment. The first employers to take steps to tighten their payrolls will be at-risk for dangerous uncontrolled departures.

The vulnerability is two-fold. First is the immediate exposure. Without enough employees to serve customers, companies will lose business to their

competitors. Too much defection by fickle customers will impact cash flow, productivity, profits and investor confidence.

The second vulnerability is more long-term. Economists suggest the slow-down that some call a recession is just a temporary slowing of growth. The growth curve is not dropping; it's just moderating. "Reduced growth" is not a sharp economic downturn, just a reduction in the rate of growth. The underlying economy is strong and will pick up again soon. Employers who reduce staffing levels will find it difficult to recruit replacements for the depart-

ed workers. Recruiting costs will be unexpectedly high, threatening the companies' profit potential. Recovery for these employers will be slow, or even impossible.

Employers who retain their people during the slower times that may be ahead will have an advantage, particularly if they invest this slack time in retraining.

*Source: Trend Alerts are written by Roger and Joyce Herman, strategic business futurists, (800) 227-3566 or [www.berman.net](http://www.berman.net). To receive the free weekly publication log on to [www.berman.net/trend\\_alert\\_signup.html](http://www.berman.net/trend_alert_signup.html).*

"The growth curve is not dropping; it's just moderating."  
Roger and Joyce Herman

## State Docks' Tonnage Approaches 18 Million

Tonnage at the Alabama State Docks increased last year by 2 million tons to a total of 17,820,823, a new high.

Director James K. Lyons attributed the majority of the increase to coal and iron ore at the McDuffie Island Bulk Terminal. "During Fiscal Year 2000, we handled about the same amount of import coal as we did export coal — a bit more than 5 million tons each. This is a switch for a port that has been known in the past for its exports."

In recent years, tonnage had dropped but because of a new partnership with Drummond Coal Company, Lyons anticipates improvements to continue. Drummond will bring a second ship unloader crane to McDuffie this fall.

Other divisions held at about the same ratio. General cargo tonnage for the year was 3.3 million tons, a slight drop from the 3.5 million tons of 1999. Forest products remained the strong commodity, followed by iron and steel, and aluminum.

Surprisingly, what's got everyone at Leroy Hill Coffee Company buzzing doesn't come in a cup.

When Leroy Hill Coffee Company saw it was time to give their productivity a jolt, they turned not to their own special blends, but to new financial accounting software. As a Great Plains Partner, Wilkins Miller CPAs helped upgrade Leroy Hill Coffee Company's outdated software and position them for future growth, offering customer support throughout the process. If you would like to learn more about the financial solutions Wilkins Miller can offer your business, call us at 476-5500 for a no-obligation assesment.

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# Are Children Really Our Highest Priority in Mobile?

## State School Board Member Outlines Mobile's Education Funding

When State School Board Representative Bradley Byrne presented a candid look at Mobile County's education funding to the Chamber's Board of Directors last month, everyone took special notice. In an instant, rumors of Mobile County Public School Systems' (MCPSS) long-time mis-handling of funds were quelled and the hard truth of what was about to happen to this system without adequate funding was made apparent.

The reality is that the Mobile County Public School System receives more state funding than most school systems in the state. In fact, Mobile receives 65 percent of its annual budget from the state, with 21 percent coming from local sources; 12 percent from the federal government; and only two percent from other sources. This means that the current threat of proration announced by Gov. Don Sigelman last month, will affect Mobile much more seriously than if the system received a greater percentage of local funding.

Mobile County Public School System Superintendent Harold Dodge believes that if the had the Mobile system were at the state average for local funding – approximately 26 percent – they would be able to absorb the cuts due to proration.

"The most critical funding need for our school system today is local funds to match state monies," explained Dodge.

Until that time, however, local and state leaders have been left scrambling to figure out a way to trim about \$15 million out of the system's already strapped budget without cutting teaching positions. Teachers, administrators and other salaried positions make up 85 percent of the system's budget annually. The cuts, which have targeted programs such as sports, arts, language and music, were announced at a meeting in late February.

According to Byrne, for years, the public has wrongly accused Barton Academy – the system's central office – for wasting money on salaries of non-essential employees. "These accusations are unfounded." He stated in his presentation to the Chamber that only about 3.4 percent of the system's budget is spent on administrators at its central office – the lowest of any large school system in the state, including Birmingham City, Dothan City, Huntsville City, Montgomery County and Jefferson County.

It's misinformation about spending that has driven Dodge to appeal to the business community to support Mobile's schools, and encourage local elected officials to help find alternatives to cutting valuable programs in the system. Serious cutbacks in programs will not only have a negative affect on existing companies, but also hamper the Chamber's economic development efforts.

"I believe that the business community needs to exert pressure for local funding and needs to realize our businesses will not survive without an adequate work force," said Dodge. "I also believe companies will not relocate to Mobile unless there is an excellent school system. The availability of water, sewer and rail is important to the business community. However, the ability of the school system to send to businesses a well-educated work force is equally as critical."

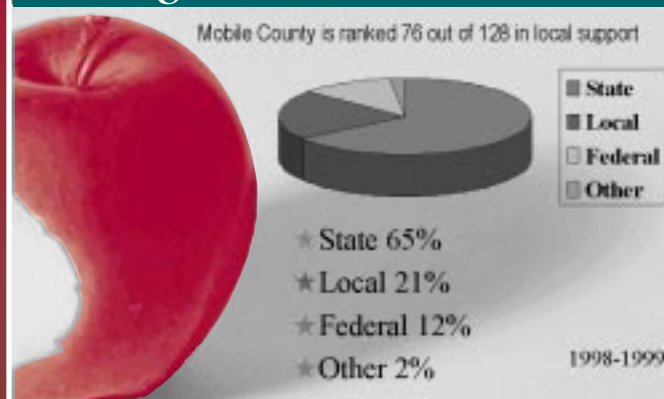
*Editor's note: Bradley Byrne has been a State School Board representative since 1994 and is a long-time advocate for public education.*



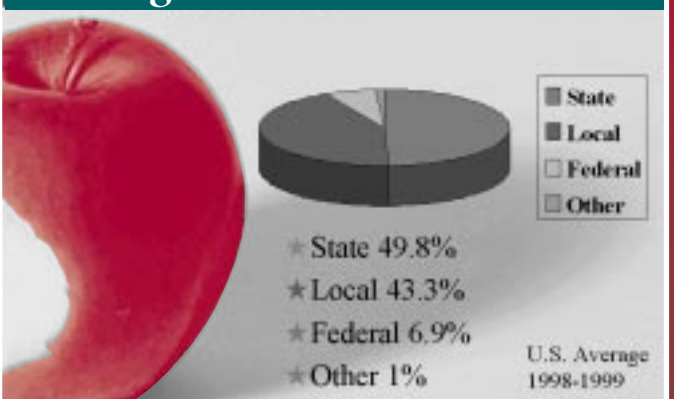
**"However, the ability of the school system to send to businesses a well-educated work force is equally as critical."**

**Harold Dodge, superintendent of Mobile County Public School System.**

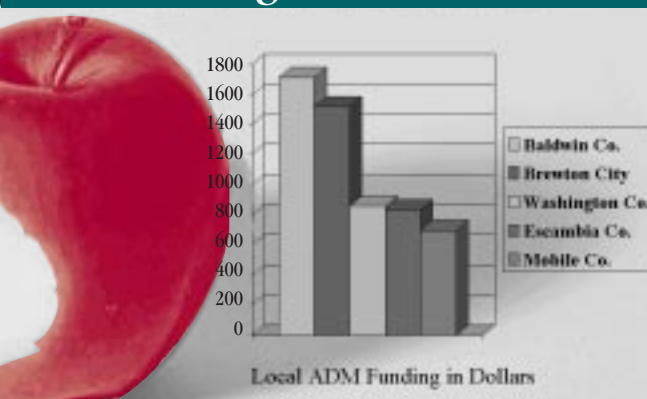
### Mobile County Schools Funding Sources



### United States Public School Funding Sources



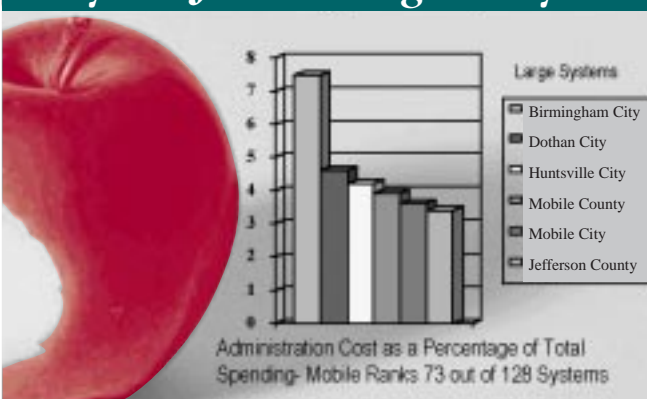
### South Alabama School Systems Local Funding Per Student



### Local Support And Academic Performance

Rank	City/County	Local Support %	Standard avg.
1.	Homewood City	59%	79
2.	Muscle Shoals City	56%	71
3.	Vestavia City	48%	81
4.	Decatur City	45%	60
5.	Mountain Brook	43%	87
	Baldwin County	39%	58
	Washington County	23%	50
	Mobile County	21%	51

### "The Problem Is Barton! They Are Just Wasting Money!"



### If Mobile County's Local Support Was At the State Average

- An Additional \$19 Million**  
*or*
- ★ 316 Additional Teachers *or*
  - ★ 2 New Elementary Schools *or*
  - ★ 400 New School Buses *or*
  - ★ 9,500 New Computers *or*
  - ★ 760 New Teachers Aides

# ON TOP OF THE ISSUES

FEBRUARY 6 - MAY 21



## The Chamber's 2001 Legislative Agenda

Education funding, tax reform, the environment, home rule – these are just a few of the issues the Chamber will work to influence during the 2001 Alabama legislative session and the 107th Congress.

The Chamber serves as the voice of Mobile area businesses both in Montgomery and Washington DC. Through the Governmental Affairs Department, it monitors and evaluates local, state and federal government legislation, and supports or opposes actions that could impact the business community. In addition, the Chamber works with other Chambers and businesses on issues of common interest.

Each year the Chamber's platform is created from the results of a legislative survey along with input from Chamber committees, local officials, small business representatives and local industry.

Issues are divided into eight categories with broad explanations of the Chamber's position. "We want to identify what issues are critical to Mobile's business community, but we don't want to limit ourselves in how they are accomplished," said Chamber President **Win Hallett**. "By broadly defining our position we aren't limiting ourselves to any specific piece of legislation."

"Take education for example, while Chamber leadership have an opinion on what would be the most dependable source of income for public schools, we still have the flexibility to support or oppose a particular bill," Hallett explained.

During the session, bills are monitored daily. If there is an issue or specific piece of legislation members are interested in following, the Chamber can print out the latest bills filed relating to that issue.

For more information on legislative issues, contact Shelly Mattingly at 431-8612.

The following is the list of priorities adopted by the Mobile Area Chamber of Commerce's board of directors:

### EDUCATION

Support legislation that will provide increased funding to public education and maintain the fiscal health and integrity of local governments.

Support increases in state funding for the Alabama Reading Initiative, a program that improves the reading skills of elementary-aged children.

Support workforce development programs and the efforts of the local Workforce Investment Board.

### TAXATION

Support efforts to reform the federal income tax to include simplicity, stability and elimination of multiple taxation.

Support efforts to reform local taxation to include simplicity in the collection of taxes and create a competitive business environment for local companies.

Support the repeal of the Federal Estate Tax and cutting the capital gains tax.

### ENVIRONMENT

Support state and local initiatives designed to lower ozone levels in Mobile County to the acceptable limits established by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the Alabama Department of Environmental Management (ADEM).

Support efforts providing safeguards to the environment based on sound science that do not place unfair burdens and undue regulations on the private sector.

Support increased funding for ADEM to enhance the agency's ability to monitor air and water quality.

Oppose the recruitment of any new industry or the expansion of any existing industry not demonstrating a willingness to comply with the standards set by the EPA and the ADEM.

### WORKERS' COMPENSATION

Support efforts to reduce the number of days employees have to report workers' compensation injuries.

Support efforts to promote drug and alcohol free work places.

### INTERNATIONAL TRADE

Support federal trade programs that help U.S. companies compete fairly with subsidized foreign competitors.

Support efforts to enact federal "fast track" legislation that will increase U.S. competitiveness and credibility in making foreign trade agreements.

Support and encourage state and local trade initiatives with countries in the Southern Hemisphere.

### GOVERNMENT REFORM

Support efforts to enact "home rule," which would give local governments the ability to make decisions at the local level without legislation.

Support calling a constitutional convention to simplify and reform the Alabama State Constitution.

### HEALTH CARE

Support managed care programs based on the free market place without government interference.

Support efforts to contain the cost of health care, including the cost of prescription drugs.

Oppose efforts to mandate employee benefits.

### TORT REFORM

Support legislation that will complete the tort reform process in the State of Alabama, including limits on mental anguish and product liability awards.

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## Continuing the Fight to Rewrite Alabama's Constitution

Discontent for Alabama's outdated and voluminous Constitution will be demonstrated by citizens from around the state when they gather in Montgomery on Wednesday, April 4 for a special rally organized by Citizens for Constitutional Reform (ACCR).

"Our 1901 Constitution is almost 40 times as long as the U.S. Constitution and 12 times as long as the average state constitution," said Steele Holman, chairman of the Government Group for Envision Mobile-Baldwin. Envision is the area's citizen-driven long-range strategic plan. Among its more than 150 strategies is a call to rewrite the Alabama Constitution.

According to ACCR, a statewide advocacy group, the current state Constitution has 712 amendments (47 of which were approved this past November). The U.S. Constitution has only 27 amendments.

In addition to a more concise document, advocates want home rule, a fairer tax structure and to eliminate ridiculous amendments and racial elements.

"If we want our state to operate in the 21st Century, we have to convince our Governor and

legislators to update our Constitution," said Ginny Russell the Chamber's director of community development who coordinates Envision. "We're so hamstrung that it takes a vote of the entire state in order for local governments to make simple changes like setting voting hours or passing weed ordinances. While we're spending our time on petty, local issues, other states are focused on bigger, more important topics."

The Chamber is chartering a bus for the rally in Montgomery and all interested area citizens are invited to attend. The bus will leave from Battleship Memorial Park at 7:30 a.m. and return at 4:30 p.m. Cost is \$20 per person, which includes the bus trip and refreshments. The group will stop for lunch before leaving Montgomery.

For more information or to make a reservation, contact Shelly Mattingly at 431-8612.



## Recover Bad Checks... Help Fight Crime with District Attorney's New Web Site

Businesses can get relief from bad checks and join the battle against other crimes in Mobile County through a new Web site, [www.mobile-da.org](http://www.mobile-da.org).

Recently launched by the District Attorney's Office, this new resource provides access to the forms and guidelines needed to solicit the DA's support from any computer. There are also sample letters for business managers to send to the person who wrote the bad check advising them that the DA has been contacted.

Last year, the District Attorney's office collected more than \$1.7 million from people who wrote bad checks, a free service for businesses.

This is all part of an overall effort to expand the "Working Together" program, a six-year initiative that collected ideas from employees in the District Attorney's Office. Ideas that have paid off with faster, more effective prosecutions, more help to victims and witnesses and safer schools, according to District Attorney John Tyson Jr.

"The concept is to use technology to allow every citizen to contribute their experience to the battle against crime," said Tyson. "It's a new tool that will make Mobile County a very inhospitable place for law breakers."

In addition, the new site asks the public to make suggestions and evaluate the services of the District Attorney's Office as well as other Mobile County law enforcement agencies.

To receive a monthly newsletter, *Working Together Progress*, or a copy of the Web site's news portion call 574-8400. E-mail updates by subscription are available through the Web site's news section.

### "Working Together" to Help Mobile Businesses

The "Working Together" home page, [www.mobile-da.org](http://www.mobile-da.org), publicizes statistics that track progress in the fight against crime in Mobile County.

- **Join the District Attorney Team** – outlines the District Attorney's objectives, progress and allows citizens to make suggestions and comments.
- **Tip Us Off** – citizens can prevent and fight crime with anonymous information.
- **Statistics From the Battlefield** – measurements used to monitor progress in fighting crime.
- **District Attorney Volunteers in the Community** – reviews volunteer efforts helping to discourage young people from unlawful activities.
- **Help Us Intervene to Stop Juvenile Crime** – join District Attorney employees to stop juvenile crime before it is out of control.
- **Tell Us How We Are Doing** – evaluate services of the District Attorney's Office and other Mobile County law enforcement offices.
- **News on Stopping Crime for Parents, Teachers and Other Crime Fighters** – examples of how government agency employees and citizens are working together.
- **Get Help Steering Kids Away from Crime** – offers juvenile crime fighting tools to parents, teachers and students.
- **Stop Bad Checks** – helps businesses recover their money and identify bad check writers.
- **Ask for Help** – community resources for abused spouses and children, drug treatment, counseling and other services.
- **Help for New Mothers in Crisis** – information about the Secret Safe Place Program that protects mothers in crisis and their newborns.
- **Calendar of Classes for Victims and Witnesses** – classes helping victims and witnesses feel more comfortable with court appearances.

## Small Business of the Month Banana Docks Café

Isn't it great to find a restaurant that's got a great atmosphere, great local history and great food? Look no further than the Chamber's Small Business of the Month – Banana Docks Café, celebrating their 10th anniversary this month.

The restaurant's name came from the historic banana docks of Mobile. "We first opened the restaurant in the Riverview Plaza (today called the Adam's Mark Hotel) where the old banana docks were," explains co-owner Susan Raley.

Since the beginning, the business has been owned and operated by Chris and Susan Raley, and her parents Captain Jack and Susan Pollack. When they started the business, it was a small catering company. The catering business grew to the point where they needed an industrial-sized kitchen. And Banana Docks Café was born.

Susan Pollock helped from the beginning with setting up the restaurant and kitchen. Captain Jack, Chris and Susan Raley run the day-to-day operations.

We've been in business for 10 years. We started with almost nothing and it has turned into this wonderful place. We are proud of it," says Susan Raley. Chris adds, "We get lots of new visitors every day because people find out about us and they realize we are a family restaurant with great atmosphere and delicious food."

While their menu offers fresh seafood, steaks, salads and recipes unique to Banana Docks, the menu is rich with traditional items that have been updated and specialized to the restaurant. "Our shrimp creole is a 1920s recipe and we added our own blends of spices to make it our own," says Chris. "We make everything by hand and we use nothing pre-packaged. Nothing is pre-cooked. We start to cook as soon as the food is ordered. We are very proud of our (made from) scratch kitchen."



The Banana Docks Team (L-R): Cornell Gooden, Chris Raley, Caroline Raley, Susan Raley, Chris Bansback, Mireo Caulton and Jeremy Waltman.

Banana Docks constantly strives to keep its menu full of new and exciting items. When we get a new recipe, we go straight to our customers and regulars and ask their opinion," says Chris. Such listening has paid off for Chris, whose chili and gumbo recipes are award-winning.

The restaurant features local artwork and historic photographs in their décor, and they believe in giving back to the community that has given them success. "We participate in activities with The Salvation Army, American Cancer Society, American Heart Association and donate extra food to local shelters," says Chris.

Banana Docks Café is open for business seven days a week for lunch and dinner, and they continue to cater events such as Bellingrath Gardens' dinner cruises, the Alabama Cruises.

Visit the Banana Docks Café at 36 Hillcrest Rd., go to their Web site at [www.mtmc/bananadocks](http://www.mtmc/bananadocks) or call 342-2775.



Gulf Coast Technology Council

# Gulf Coast Technology Symposium

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Wednesday, April 4 - 8:30 a.m. - 6 p.m.

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The Gulf Coast Technology Council is an initiative of the Mobile Area Chamber of Commerce.

# Kenny Rogers Roasters Expands Menu

Wood fire rotisserie chicken, honey bourbon barbecue ribs, fresh vegetable platters . . . fish, chips, hamburgers and hot dogs? Where in Mobile serves such a variety of menu items in one place? Kenny Rogers Roasters.

That's right. Kenny Rogers Roasters recently became a member of a team called United Taste of America, which includes, Roasters, Nathan's Famous Hot Dogs, Arthur Treacher's Fish and Chips and Miami Subs Grill.

Being a part of this group has brought about some welcome additions to the Mobile restaurant at 6161 Airport Blvd. Now when customers enter Roasters, they have even more choices. That's because Nathan's Famous Hot Dogs and Arthur Treacher's all share the Roasters' building.

"People will see all three signs out by the road and ride around Plaza de Malaga looking for Treacher's or Nathan's and not realize that they are all housed inside this 3,200-sq. ft. building," says Roasters General Manager Terry Trotter.

"These new additions have given us the opportunity to expand our menu items and give the customers a vast variety of foods to choose from," explains Trotter. "The response has been tremendous."

Michael Carter, owner of Roasters adds, "People now have the option to mix the different menu items. For example, if someone ordered a hot dog, they could have garlic potatoes as their side instead of the usual French fries."

Since opening its doors in Mobile in 1993, Roasters' popularity quickly grew from a great place to grab a hot, quick lunch or dinner to an expanding catering company focusing on business' needs. The response to the original Roasters concept has been overwhelming. Along with their wood fire rotisserie chicken, the store serves rotisserie turkey breasts, ribs and vegetable platters.

As for the newest menu additions, Nathan's Famous Hot Dogs started in 1916 in Coney Island, N.Y., and features 100 percent beef hot dogs, hamburgers and fries.

Arthur Treacher's has added a seafood variety to the mix of menu items, including, what else, fish and chips. Says Trotter, "Nathan's is the oldest fast-food chain in the United States and they have been very successful all over the world. As for Treacher's, we're so happy to bring it back to Mobile, since they closed their doors 20 years ago. The response to its return has also been phenomenal."



Terry Trotter and Michael Carter stand in front of their monumental sign of three restaurants in one location.

"We're the third restaurant in this (North American) market to include three separate food concepts into one restaurant. We've opened ourselves up to all new customers while also opening up for more of a lunch crowd, instead of simply being someplace for a family to eat dinner," Carter adds.

The last member of the United Taste of America team, Miami Subs Grill, will go next store in the Godfather's Pizza, also owned by Carter, within the next few years.

With the addition of the new menus to the restaurant, Carter and Trotter have helped eliminate the age-old question of what's for supper. Now everyone's answer is found in one place.

Visit the Kenny Rogers Roasters, Nathan's Famous Hot Dogs or Arthur Treacher's and enjoy their expanded menu. Call 380-2222 for information on catering or visit them on the Internet at [www.krogersofmobile.com](http://www.krogersofmobile.com).

# Seminars Helped Explain Gross Receipts Tax

A series of recent Chamber seminars may end up saving participants money. When the City of Mobile announced it was reinstating a 2 percent gross receipts tax for all sales outside the county and state, the Chamber began planning a series of seminars lead by City Revenue Director Leroy Pritchett.

What attendees discovered was most interesting. According to Alabama law no one can be taxed twice within the state, said Pritchett. He explained if a business sells its product to someone in Alabama, but outside of Mobile County, they are paying the 2 percent gross receipts tax to Mobile. Therefore, the business owes nothing to the city that the product is being delivered to. "You don't even owe them a tax form," he said. "It's the law. You owe them nothing."

This is because the City of Mobile levies a gross receipts privilege license tax instead of a sales tax. A gross receipts tax is vendor-levied, though many pass it on to their customers, whereas a sales tax is consumer levied.

Amazed participants admitted they were paying sales taxes in the cities where their products were sold as well as gross receipts tax in Mobile. But Pritchett clarified that the "point of sale" is always considered by the location of the business. If the

business is in the limits of the City of Mobile or its police jurisdiction, then taxes are paid locally and no others are due within the state.

Pritchett went on to discuss sales outside Alabama. He said in most states if a local tax is required (such as Mobile's gross receipts tax), then that amount may be deducted from the tax owed to that state.

For example, if the sales tax in Pensacola is 7.5 percent and a product is sold there from a business in the City of Mobile, the business would pay 2 percent gross receipts tax to Mobile and 5.5 percent to Pensacola.

Other scenarios were outlined:

A Mobile company sells to someone in Bay Minette and pays a total of 7 percent tax. They owe nothing to Bay Minette.

A Mobile company sells to someone in Mississippi. Because they are paying 2 percent gross receipts tax to Mobile, they owe Mississippi tax, minus 2 percent.

Sales tax inside the city and county limits for a City of Mobile business is 9 percent. "So, in most cases, it's not really a 2 percent increase because you can deduct it," Pritchett concluded.

For more information on paying city taxes, contact Pritchett at 208-7111.

# Working Smart

by Judy Marston

Working Smart. What does it mean?

It means knowing your business, being confident in what you do, managing your time well and taking care of your customers. Combine all four and you come up with success – for a business, for a product, for you.

**Know your business** – In addition to knowing how to do your work, everyone in the organization should know:

- The company's correct name, and they should be calling it by the same name
- What the business does and be able to say it in two sentences or less
- Its main products and services
- What makes it different from competitors
- The number of branches or locations
- Who are the officers and board of directors
- How to describe their job in two sentences or less.
- If you don't know the answers, ask someone who does. If you're a business owner or manager, be sure all of your employees are informed. Every one of them is a walking, talking advertisement for your organization. Be sure they advertise it right.

**Be confident** – Knowing your job well is the first step to being confident in your work. You're sure of your abilities and you make good decisions. Because of that, you receive positive feedback, which in turn increases your confidence. One builds upon the other. Then, project that confidence to your customers and clients. People want to do business with people who know what they're doing. They don't want to do business with someone who looks hesitant, unsure and fearful.

**Managing your time well** – Working smart means getting the most important things done first and eliminating wasted time. It means people can depend on you to meet deadlines. It means most of the time you can finish your work

without having to come in on weekends or stay late at night. Working longer doesn't necessarily mean you're a good worker. It could mean you waste time and are a bad planner.

Some simple ways to manage your time:

- Make a list of what has to be done the next day before you leave work
- Number the list in order of importance
- Start with #1, then continue in order. We all have a tendency to jump down the list to projects that are easy and take less time. Do what's most important first, no matter how long it takes.
- Turn your desk around so people can't make eye contact with you and stop to chat as they walk by. Or even better close your office door! Some people even set aside specific hours of the day when they close their door so co-workers will get used to it and not take it personally.
- Be aware for one full day of the time you've wasted and make the changes you need to make to get your work done.

**Take care of the customer** – Business trends come and go but one characteristic that remains an important part of working smart is customer service – taking good care of the people who do business with you. Treat them well and they'll come back, again and again. Treat them with indifference and they'll leave, never to be seen again. A community has only so many customers that it can run through your organization then you've run out of people. Getting them in is the first step, keeping them makes for success.



Judy Marston, Marston & Associates, is a business consultant and speaker. She can be reached at [judy@marstoncomm.com](mailto:judy@marstoncomm.com).



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# Working on MesaTime

## ◆ New time-keeping system integrates hardware and software

The days of employees clocking in and out and submitting timesheets are long gone. Thanks to MesaTime, a time and attendance solutions company, headaches caused by a flood of timesheets have a new cure.

What makes MesaTime's product unique is that it is one, a Web-based ASP (application service provider), and two, it's the first program to unite hardware and software. An ASP refers to companies that provide services via the Internet without the need to buy, install or upgrade software. Among the program's features are time management, record keeping, job casting and tracking. It can also host payroll policies, benefit accruals, messaging and management reports.

different locations, can punch in through the Internet with their computer, cell phone, Palm Pilot or hardware devices such as a biometric hand clocks and card swipe machines. Each employee has his own personal page and can leave messages like, "I'm at lunch," "I'm headed to the next service call" and "I'm checking out for today," explained **Brian Hall**, MesaTime's founder and president.

Hall adds, "Our program is a RTOS system (Real Time Operating System) that can be accessed anytime, anywhere, and the user does not have to be a specialty IT (information technology) employee." RTOS refers to a system that responds to input instantly, so, as soon as the employee hits a refresh key, anyone can see it.

**Kathleen Morgan**, vice president of sales for MesaTime, outlines the program's attributes. "Our product offers the versatility and variety of different programs and data collecting devices. It's user-friendly and easy to customize."

Morgan says users of this program can process payroll up to 80 percent faster because the data is already keyed into the system, virtually eliminating all human error that comes with manual data entry.

MesaTime is secure and accessible 24

hours a day and seven days a week. It can support one to 10,000 employees and generate up to 60 different reports.

Hall came up with the MesaTime concept in January 2000 and, with the help of a group of programmers, the product went live by mid-October

just in time for a trade show in Las Vegas. The company already has two established international customers — one in Paris, France and another, whom they never even talked to, in Stockholm, Sweden.

Within its first three months, the company already began making a profit — an unusual time-frame according to financial experts on Wall Street. Hall believes that "the Internet is where strong company's will be in the future, and because this new business markets to other businesses, it is less vulnerable to economic fluctuations."

Hall projects his product is at least a year, or maybe two, ahead of others. And both Hall and Morgan say people are surprised when they tell them the business is based in Mobile. "We have the opportunity to sell Mobile and help change the overall image of the South with this high tech product," Morgan adds.

### GLOSSARY OF TERMS:

**ASP** - (application service provider) third-party entities that manage and distribute software-based services and solutions to customers across a wide area network from a central data center

**RTOS** - (real time operating system) a system that responds to input instantly

**IT** - (information technology) pronounced as two separate letters, the subject is concerned with all aspects of managing and processing information, especially within a large organization or company.

**PDA** - (personal digital assistant) a handheld device that combines computing, telephone/fax, and networking features such as a Palm Pilot

*Source: all definitions provided by webopedia.internet.com*



Cutline

All services are accessible through an Internet connection and can be retrieved from anywhere in the world.

Basically the program works like this: instead of having to go to headquarters to clock in, employees, whether they are at their desks, on the road or at

## Diplomat of the Month

### Joe McDonald



Joe McDonald is being honored as the Chamber's Diplomat of the month. McDonald, a realtor with Roberts Brothers, has been a Diplomat for two years. He enjoys Business after Hours and First Fridays and says that he likes to help whenever and wherever he can.

Reeda Taylor, director of customer service for the Chamber, agrees. "Joe was a huge help for the annual meeting. He was making phone calls and doing whatever he could to assist."

McDonald says being a Chamber Diplomat allows him to represent Roberts Brothers in the community, and has given him a feeling of ownership in Mobile.

"The Chamber is a wonderful source of information and a wealth of contacts. Being a Diplomat gives me an opportunity to work with people who have a vision for Mobile," McDonald adds.

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# Annual Festival of Flowers Begins March 22

Spring 2001 will kickoff with a garden odyssey at this year's Festival of Flowers set for March 22-25 on the campus of Spring Hill College. Presented by the Providence Hospital Foundation and sponsored by Regions Bank, Festival of Flowers was recently named as one of the Top 100 Events in North America for 2001 by the American Bus Association.

The four-day explosion of flowers from around the world such as pansies, tulips, ferns and lilies is housed under 100,000 square feet of tents underneath canopies of Oak trees on the legendary Avenue of the Oaks. On display this year will be a ReBloom Mobile exhibit, life-sized landscaped gardens by regional designers, a spectacular Floral Showcase of art and flowers, the debut of new varieties of Encore Azaleas and the world flower exhibit of blossoms from around the globe.

Special activities during the Festival of Flowers will include gardening workshops, including a seminar by *Southern Living's* Editor John Alex

Floyd Jr., a Galleria of shops for gardeners and outdoor enthusiasts and a café.

New to the 2001 Festival, "Make and Take" workshops will offer hands-on experience in creating bonsai, hanging basket gardens and topiaries. These activities are by reservation only and carry an additional fee to cover the cost of the materials.

Special educational and entertaining children activities will be coordinated by Keep Mobile Beautiful on Saturday and Sunday and will salute Mobile's rich heritage of beautiful trees.

Tickets for this year's Festival of Flowers are \$6.50 in advance and \$8.50 at the gate, and are on sale now at Providence

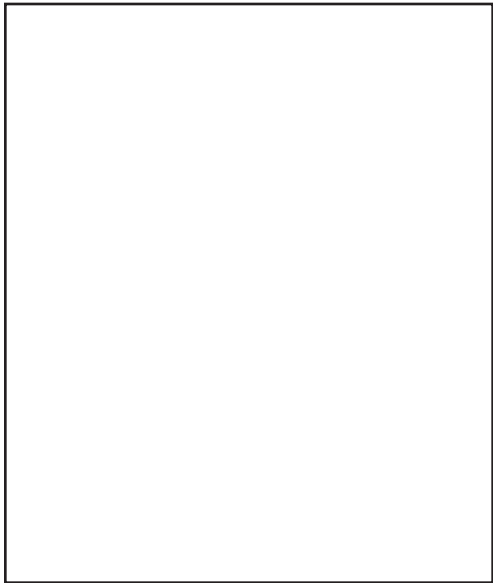
Hospital, Regions Bank, Bruno's and on-line at [www.festivalofflowers.org](http://www.festivalofflowers.org). Proceeds will benefit the Providence Hospital Heart Center. Gates are open Thursday through Saturday from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. and Sunday from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. For more information or to register for the "Make and Take" workshops, call the foundation office at 639-2050.

missions in the Bosnian War. He is a member of North Mobile Baptist Church and a T-Ball coach at Mims Park. MesaStaff's corporate office is located in Mobile, and is currently serving customers nationwide in all 50 states and Puerto Rico. Hall is married to Diane and has two sons, Matthew and Benson.

Stephen G. Crawford is the managing lawyer for the firm of Hand Arendall LLC, with a specialty in corporate and general business law. He is a graduate of Duke University and Duke Law School. Crawford serves on the boards of South Alabama Bank, South Alabama Trust Company and South Alabama Bancorporation. He is a trustee for the Bellingrath-Morse Foundation, former president of Greater Mobile Concerts Inc., former director of the Salvation Army Advisory Board, former trustee of the Julius T. Wright School for Girls, the Senior Warden of St. Paul's Episcopal Church and a director of the Playhouse in the Park.



Stephen G. Crawford



## Business Spotlight of the Month Lassere's Catering & Cajun Seafood Shop



Although Lassere's Catering & Cajun Seafood Shop is unassuming on the outside, once inside all your senses kick into high gear. Located on Schillinger Road, Lassere's was selected as the Chamber's Spotlight Business of the Month.

"Lots of people say they pass by our shop everyday," says Sandy Lassere. "They should stop by and see what we've got cooking."

Lassere's Catering began as a "leap of faith" by John and Sandy Lassere. John was working for the Radisson hotel when friends convinced him he should start his own business. On their advice, Lassere's Catering began in 1989.

Although John is a Louisiana native, and the company's name may imply Cajun is all they do, Lassere's can provide clients with a variety of selections. From shrimp creole, étouffée, gumbo, red beans & sausage, to veal to rock lobster tail, the caterer has a number of specialties.

Themed parties are a favorite for this husband and wife team. "We can cook oriental food or any food that fits the theme of an event," says John. The extensive 16-page menu is quite impressive.

"We have a lot of pride, quality and consistency in our work and that keeps us going," says Sandy.

(L to R) John Lassere III, John Lassere II, Sandy Lassere, Mark Hoffman, Bobby Rolan and Tamie Hearn.

Lassere's can handle any type of event including corporate functions, weddings and on-site shrimp, crawfish, crab and lobster boils.

A familiar trademark of the company is its fantastic carvings. The couple's son, John, grew up in the business. From apple swans to watermelon wells to sparkling ice displays, his father boasts, "John has always been surrounded by food and was quick to pick up on the business and use his artistic imagination."

Customer loyalty and a dedicated staff have attributed to Lassere's success. Most of the staff has been with the catering company from the beginning and the customers return time and again. John says, "We love our customers and appreciate their loyalty. We believe in taking care of our staff and they have certainly taken care of us. They're great."

For more information on Lassere's Catering, or to book a caterer, call 660-8087 or visit their shop at 4508 Schillinger Rd. S.

## 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 lead the way in funding the Chamber's programs and initiatives. For more information, contact Katrina Dewrell at 431-8611.

Brian Hall is founder and president of MesaStaff, a national PEO and staffing company; and MesaTime, a web-based time and labor management company. He is a 1987 graduate of Valdosta State University, and a Major in the United States Air Force Reserves. Hall is a C-130 pilot for the famous "Hurricane Hunters" and flew combat



Brian Hall

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# Chamber Takes Active Role in Mentoring Area High School Students

Groundhogs weren't the only ones looking for their shadows on Friday, Feb. 2. So were employees of various businesses participating in Junior Achievement's annual Groundhog Job Shadow Day program.

More than 1,000 students visited 57 companies learning about day-to-day operations and getting an inside look at a wide-variety of career paths. Among the participating businesses were Regions Bank, Minolta-QMS, Mobile Infirmiry Medical Center, Coca-Cola, Shell, Mobile Pulley and Machine Works and the Chamber.

Twenty-five high school juniors and seniors from Alma Bryant and Mary G. Montgomery high schools came to the Chamber. The group toured the facility, which featured lively debates on school funding, taxes and wages, and then broke off into small groups for several hours to take an in-depth look at the Chamber's different departments. While some of the students surveyed Chamber staff on what type of tax should be used to raise funds for the school system, others researched potential Chamber members on the Internet.

Shena Cox, a senior at Mary G. Montgomery High School shadowed the Communications Department. She believes the Groundhog Day program gives students a great opportunity to learn more about the City of Mobile and the Chamber. "If I had another opportunity to come back (to the Chamber) I would. It's a great place to be."

Fellow student, Brandon Yokley agreed that learning more about different careers at the Chamber would come in handy in the future. "It helps students who are planning to join the workforce look for things that they will come in contact with while work-

ing for a business," he said. "(This day) shows students some of the responsibilities they will take on in their careers."

Helping students anticipate the skills they will one day need is one reason the Chamber participates in mentoring programs such as Groundhog Day. "Generally we find that when students lose interest in school, it's because they can't see how their education can help them determine their future," said Aleida Hill, coordinator of the Chamber's Center for Workforce Development.

The program is part of a year-long national effort to enrich students' education by giving them on-the-job experiences and helping them visualize how academics translate into the workplace. Locally the program is sponsored by Junior Achievement of Mobile, Volunteer Mobile, Mobile County Public School System and the Alabama Cooperative Extension System.



Crystal Clampet, a sophomore at Alma Bryant High School searches the Web under Carolyn Golson's watchful eye.

# Tricentennial Celebration Committee Looking for Volunteers

As Mobile heads into its 300-year birthday in 2002, plans are well underway for making it an event for Mobilians and the nation alike to remember. From a city-wide birthday party to music and film festivals to a culinary salute to tall ships docking in the Port of Mobile, it will take thousands of dedicated and hard-working volunteers to make the year-long celebration a success.

The Mobile Tricentennial Commission recently published a detailed listing of all committees working on special events for 2002. All committees are open to the public. To join the effort, call the Tricentennial office at 342-4386 or send a e-mail to [mobiletricentenn@aol.com](mailto:mobiletricentenn@aol.com).

Here is a partial listing of committees that are looking for volunteers:

- Africatown** – A celebration is being planned that will recognize the historical significance of Mobile and the African-American community.
- Arts** – This committee will encourage local arts groups to adopt a Tricentennial theme and work with them on their special projects.
- Education** – A comprehensive curriculum is being developed for the public, parochial and private schools as well as numerous trans-generational activities that examine the past and anticipate the future of the City of Mobile.
- Faith Service** – This committee will plan an ecumenical service that brings together people of all religions to celebrate diversity and commonality.
- Finance/Fund Raising** – The backbone of the Tricentennial, this committee seeks donations, sponsors and supporters of the celebration.
- Music Mobile and All That Jazz** – A celebration of jazz music is being planned for Spring 2002 in Bienville Square. This committee will seek noted musicians to help celebrate Mobile's long and rich jazz tradition.
- Outreach** – This committee was established to work with all local organizations to be more inclusive and encourage participation in Tricentennial activities throughout 2002.
- Reunions** – Tasked with the responsibility of encouraging and assisting all reunions, this committee will work with area churches, neighborhood associations, families and schools.
- Young Mobile Celebrates** – This week-long celebration will feature activities centered on young children. Encouraging family activities, this committee will work to line up unique events and performances to link Mobile's past with its future.



## New Members *continued from back cover.*

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| <p><b>Ladies First</b><br/>Bobbie G. Reese<br/>P.O. Box 1182<br/>Daphne, AL 36526-1182<br/>(334) 626-8232<br/><i>Newspapers</i></p>                                  | <p><b>Otis Elevator Company</b><br/>Danny Bobo<br/>2476 Commercial Park Dr.<br/>Mobile, AL 36606-2001<br/>(334) 476-4751<br/><i>Elevators-Sales &amp; Service</i></p>                  | <p><b>Charles R. Walton DMD PC</b><br/>Maureen Pridgen<br/>6410 Grelot Rd.<br/>Mobile, AL 36695-2625<br/>(334) 639-0624<br/><i>Dentists</i></p>   |

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## Chamber Hosts Sen. Shelby



Sen. Richard Shelby (center), speaking to members of the Chamber at a Forum Alabama luncheon, outlined the issues he feels are key at this time. They included: quality education for every child in America; world dangers and the need to keep the U.S. military strong; economic opportunities for everyone in the country; preserving Social Security and Medicare, improving Alabama – mainly through its public schools; and privacy concerns raised because of Internet and high tech capabilities. Pictured with Sen. Shelby are Chamber Board of Directors Chairman John Turner with Whitney Bank (left) and Frank Rainer with Fannie Mae Foundation.

## March Forward... With an Orderly Office

by Sissy Louise Moore

The office is a reflection of who we are. Many in business try to get clients or potential customers to come to their office because they feel they will be more convincing on their own territory.

So, you want your turf or office to be impressive. Your clients and customers are judging that office, just like they are judging you. Consider the following office environment tips:

- A neat desk and office gives the impression you are competent, efficient and organized. If your desk is messy, it looks like you are inefficient.
- Keep confidential phone numbers or papers where they can remain private.
- If you need lots of papers when you work, consider having a front office, which is always kept neat and where you see visitors. Or, if your office is a small space, or only a desk, consider having a "dump drawer" where you can quickly stash clutter when someone visits you. Screens are also an attractive way to conceal clutter.
- Make sure plants have the sun and water they need, so they provide the warmth and home-like atmosphere you intended.
- Consider your office, whatever the size, as your home away from home. Use art, accessories, plants, lighting and furniture that reflect the image you want your clients to have of your business.
- Don't let clients see you eat lunch at your desk (and be sure to clean up afterwards). Also, use ceramic or plastic glasses for a more professional image than a "take-out" cup.
- If you have visitors in your office frequently, it might be worth investing in glasses and a set of cups and saucers. Remember that a coffeemaker and cold drinks in the refrigerator show goodwill to the client, as does a range of recent magazines near the chairs where clients would be waiting.
- Avoid using a speakerphone as much as possible. The sound quality of most speakerphones is not flattering to either party. People tend to shout into a speakerphone, which is intrusive to those working around you, not to mention that those within earshot can overhear the conversation. In order to carry the etiquette maxim – be discrete – you need an office that offers privacy.

Clutter is one of the worst offenders of sensibilities in an office. It can hinder work efficiency or your corporate image. It can also make visitors and co-workers feel as if the clutter is out of control, and who wants to do business with a company that appears out of control?

To win new business and impress clients, make sure your office reflects a business image. May the March winds blow orderliness across your desk!

*Sissy Louise Moore is trained and certified by The Protocol School of Washington and owner of Protocol First in Fairhope.*



### SCORE

#### Free Confidential Advice on Starting a Business

If you're thinking about being your own boss, running your own company and earning your own way, you are not alone. More than 23 million Americans own small businesses with another 800,000 companies opening each year.

Small businesses account for 35 percent of all private sector innovations, according to Bob Kirby of the Mobile Chapter of SCORE, Service Corps of Retired Executives. "But successful entrepreneurs don't start a business without planning and forethought. They move forward because opportunities exist for the dedicated, innovative and the motivated."

Entrepreneurs are often considered dreamers who see the possibilities. Successful dreamers translate those bright ideas into plans for profitable realities. "Can you make money with your idea? If you are considering starting a business, gather information and obtain advice to help you know, do not assume that answer is 'yes,'" challenges Kirby.

SCORE offers confidential counseling free of charge. Clients will receive the small business-planning workbook, How to Really Start Your Own Business.

SCORE is offices are on the second floor of the Chamber building. Counselors are available Monday – Friday, from 9 a.m. to Noon. Call 431-8614 to set an appointment.

## 8th Annual Spring Golf Tournament

Friday, March 23



Shot Gun Start 8:30 a.m.

TimberCreek Golf Course  
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# Chamber Hires International Trade Program Manager

Bridgette Lewis is the newest addition to the Chamber's Trade and Technology Department. She joined the team in January as international trade program manager, replacing Deborah Dorta who recently moved to Phoenix, Arz.



these markets will greatly benefit our members."

Before coming to the Chamber, Lewis was the manager of a finance company. She studied international business at Troy State and is excited about the opportunity to work with companies exploring the international marketplace.

"The Port of Alabama offers area businesses key access to foreign markets. I am interested in all aspects of international trade and the benefit that trade opportunities offer area companies," Lewis said.

Lewis, a native of Citronelle, graduated from Troy State University with a degree in Business Administration concentrating in International Business. She spent time studying Spanish at the University of Guadalajara and is currently completing her MBA at the University of South Alabama.

Contact Lewis at 694-0702 or by e-mail at [bridgette@mobilechamber.com](mailto:bridgette@mobilechamber.com).

As program manager, she will work to educate companies on the importance of international trade, train companies to promote their products and services, support the Port of Alabama and the Mobile Airport Authority, and foster cooperative efforts with local, state and regional trade entities.

Tony van Aken, director of trade and technology at the Chamber, said, "Bridgette will have the ability to interact with many companies dealing with international trade and technology. Many recent trade missions have explored business opportunities in Central, South and Latin America, and her education and concentrated studies of

# Business Blood Drives are Critical for American Red Cross

Recently, a young man passed out in the parking lot of a Mobile-area hospital following a motorcycle accident. Emergency medical personnel were able to save his life after discovering he had a torn aorta. During emergency surgery, he went through 27 pints of blood. Since the average person's body contains about 10 pints, imagine how critical it was that blood was on hand, ready for transfusion, tested and cleaned for use in an instant.

Sadly, an 11-year-old boy in Mobile recently lost his battle with leukemia after years of treatments that depended on vast quantities of blood and platelets. Every week, friends, family members and people who never even knew the young boy came to the Red Cross donor center to help provide the vital fluids that kept him alive.

Each tragedy strains the already dangerously low blood supply for the region. The Red Cross Gulf Coast region fights a daily battle to supply the needs of the 53 hospitals in western Florida, southern Mississippi, and southern and central Alabama. Currently, there is less than a one-day reserve of

blood on hand. There are scant supplies of O positive, O negative, A negative and B negative bloods. Hospital orders continue to increase as the medical community finds ways to use blood to improve and preserve life.









This past summer, hospitals in several major cities across the nation were forced to cancel or delay surgeries due to the critical blood shortage. In the Gulf Coast region, the Red Cross aggressively recruited donors to avoid this maintaining enough blood to barely get by.

However, the tragedies of this winter have strained the Red Cross' blood supply to the crisis point. Only 5 percent of Americans give blood, though 50 percent are in good health and could donate. Even more surprising is that 76 percent of men and women expect the blood to be there when they need it.

Business leaders are being asked to host a blood drive. With only a small commitment of time, employees can give the most precious gift of all – life. To set up a blood drive, call the Red Cross at 1-800-GIVE LIFE (1-800-443-5433).

**Only 5 percent of Americans give blood, though 50 percent are in good health and could donate.**

## Comparative Economic Indicators December '00 vs December '99

<b>Unemployment Rates</b> <small>Mobile/Baldwin counties</small>		<b>3.8%</b> December '00
		<b>4.0%</b> December '99
<b>Business Licenses</b> <small>Mobile County</small>		<b>213</b> December '00
		<b>163</b> December '99
<b>Homes Sold</b> <small>Mobile County</small>		<b>268</b> December '00
		<b>306</b> December '99
<b>Air Passengers From Mobile</b> <small>Mobile Area</small>		<b>30,321</b> December '00
		<b>29,921</b> December '99

## In Their Boots

### ◆ Employers get first hand look at reserve training

With the suspension of the military draft in 1972, America revived the Colonial concept of the Minuteman through the National Guard/Reserves. Today the 54 percent of Army, Navy, Air Force and Marine personnel are volunteers, according to Herbert Lockett, Alabama State Ombudsman, National Committee of Employer Support for the Guard and Reserve.

On June 6-8, employers with employees serving in the Guard and Reserve will have a unique opportunity to tour the U.S. Army Armor Center at Ft. Knox, KY. Operation "Bosslift" will transport 30 employers from around the state to the fort to experience the quality of training and leadership offered at this active duty post.

The agenda includes meals with students and other personnel, tours, briefings, hands-on demonstrations and a visit to the Patton Museum. Due to military budget reductions, each participant is asked to pay \$150 for the three-day trip to cover the costs of air and ground transportation, meals, accommodations and activities.

Those interested in the trip should contact Lockett at 304-0338.

## We've performed a Bureaucratomy on health care.



Too many managed care companies put profit above the health of the patient. What started as a good idea – to capture best practices and find the most affordable way to deliver them – is now about finding the cheapest way to offer minimal care. Accountants seem to make the decisions that should only be made by doctors. Insane.

The Oath is a return to the fundamental values of health care. The patient comes first. Doctors' integrity is respected. Benefits are fully disclosed and questions are answered promptly and accurately. Physicians and their patients are not put in the middle of the quest for profit. Costs are managed and health is not compromised. This is our promise to Alabama. This is our Oath. Stay Tuned.



For More Information Ask Your Employer or Call 1-800-888-7647.  
[www.theoathofalabama.com](http://www.theoathofalabama.com)

# When On-line Training is on the Mark

Given a tight budget and the right topic, Web-based instruction makes sense. Though, originally the province of large companies, on-line training is proving to be a quite viable option for smaller companies.

"If you're a small-business owner, an important benefit of on-line training is that you have access to types of training usually available only to large corporations," says **Jania Fox**, director of marketing at the Los Angeles-based on-line-training portal, eMind.com Inc. "In today's knowledge economy where talented people are scarce, it's important that businesses provide access to training."

Benefits of on-line training include reduction of travel expenses, round-the-clock access and the ability to be trained almost anywhere — in your home or office or a plane — and at a pace and skill level determined by the student, not the trainer.

When factoring in all costs, including travel expenses and lost productivity, on-line training costs about 30 percent less than classroom training.

**Peter Mellen**, CEO of Headlight.com, San Francisco, which offers a range of on-line courses, claims that a course is typically delivered 50 percent faster than in a classroom. And, he says, "the retention rate is equal to or better than instructor-led training."

Not everything about on-line training is superior to the conventional kind. Obviously, there is no instructor standing in front of the student to provide feedback and to answer questions.

There is also a question about the very nature of learning. "It's hard to keep your attention when doing it yourself on a computer. Most people are social learners," says **Diane Gayeski**, a principal at Omnicom Associates, training consultants in Ithaca, N.Y.

Observers generally agree that most computer topics work well on-line, especially for compliance skills like sexual harassment, safety, leadership and negotiation skills.

But experts believe that skills requiring hands-on

practice and "soft skills," such as team building or change management, are tough to get across using the Internet.

The Internet isn't called the "World Wide Wait" for nothing. It can be slow, and if an on-line training course is too pokey, students are likely to quickly lose interest.

**Adam Ray**, vice president of development at Virtual Learn, says many courses can be adequately accommodated with connection speeds as low as 28.8 or 56.6. But broadband is better, especially if the course contains lots of graphics, which are slow to fly through cyberspace.

Any computer bought in the past two or three years is probably powerful enough to handle any courseware, though if a course has sound or 3D, the computer must be able to handle these if the course is to be fully utilized.

Costs for on-line training vary widely, as do classroom training fees. **Gayeski** says commercially available courses are available for prices ranging from \$20 to \$1,000.

Anyone considering adoption of on-line training should weigh several factors.

If sending employees off-site for training is deemed too expensive — and if the training isn't available nearby — the on-line option indeed may be the way to go.

Training topics also should be considered. Again, technology, compliance and basic skills are often effectively learned on-line. Learning more advanced topics is often easier with a live instructor.

Finally, how savvy are the employees? If they have little experience with computers, on-line training probably isn't viable. But if they use computers regularly and seem to like them, they may be good candidates for this type of learning.

*This article written by Alan S. Horowitz, a free-lance business and technology writer in Salt Lake City, Utah, comes from Onvia which can be reached through the Chamber's Web site. For other small business tips log on to Onvia by going to [www.mobilechamber.com](http://www.mobilechamber.com).*

**People are buying houses, meeting spouses, selling their attic junk and finding jobs on-line. It should be no surprise that they are now getting training on-line too.**

## The Economics of Diversity

### ◆ Chamber schedules Annual Cultural Diversity Seminar

On April 26, the Chamber will host "Best Business Practices for a Diverse World," an interactive full-day seminar focusing on reasons why businesses benefit from a diverse group of employees. Participants will come away with a wealth of knowledge about better business practices and some tangible tools for managing their most valuable resource — people.

The seminar will include explanations and discussions on diversity, the impact of changing demographics and other pertinent diversity-related topics.

Participants will receive a "tool kit" that will include a sample performance appraisal, employee/customer satisfaction surveys, guide to protections provided under federal law, such as the

Americans with Disabilities Act, and other helpful resources. The event will be held at the newly-remodeled Ramada Plaza Hotel and Conference Center in Mobile.

**Dione Heusel**, Heusel & Associates, a full-range human resources consulting firm in New Orleans, will be the seminar's facilitator. She is former director Human Resources and EEO/Diversity for corporations including Sydran Services LLC and Ruby Tuesday Inc.

Sponsors of the seminar are EAP Lifestyle Management, MesaStaff and Franklin Primary Health Center. The cost to attend the event is \$40 per person. Reservations can be made on-line through the Chamber's Web site, [www.mobilechamber.com](http://www.mobilechamber.com) or by calling 431-8621.

## Get Web Wise

Stop searching for local information to help you do business. Chances are, it's just a mouse click away. On Thursday, April 5, the Chamber and City of Mobile will present "Web Wise: Doing Business Better Using Local Web Sites."

"Most people don't have a clue how much help they can get on the City's Web site," said **John Strope**, vice president of Dogwood Productions, the company that designed the site. "You can get your initial form for a business license on-line, as well as a zoning application or land use zoning certification. If you're interested in renovating an old building downtown, you can get a facade grant application or a sign permit on-line. You can even pay your parking ticket!"

The Chamber's Web site has similar advantages. Users can get area statistical information, photographs or economic development information such as available commercial properties. Its site also lists contacts for Mobile's newest industries.

"This seminar will be well worth people's time," said Strope. "They'll learn enough time-saving tips to do business faster and more efficiently."

The workshop, held in the Chamber McGowin Room, will be from 10:30 a.m. to Noon and is free. To reserve a space, call **Ashley Collins** at 431-8606 or register at [www.mobilechamber.com](http://www.mobilechamber.com).

## Television Media Seminar Set April 10

Ever wonder how businesses and community groups are able to get their stories on television? Or, what steps are involved in booking a one-on-one interview on the morning television shows? Find out all this and more on Tuesday, April 10 from 8:15 to 10:30 a.m. when the Chamber will sponsor a seminar on "Getting Your Story on TV."

Representatives from the three major networks in Mobile will participate in a panel discussion. Included on the panel will be **Nancy Pierce**, morning anchor on FOX-10; **Rosie Seaman**, assignment editor with WKRQ; and **Darwin Singleton**, feature reporter for WPML-NBC/15. Each will provide participants with detailed information on how to go about contacting reporters, pitching story ideas, and booking morning show interviews and feature segments.

The seminar will be held in the Chamber McGowin Room. The cost to attend this informative and beneficial seminar is \$20 and includes a continental breakfast. Space is limited. Contact **Ashley Collins** at 431-8606 for reservations or register on-line at [www.mobilechamber.com](http://www.mobilechamber.com).

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...and then the boss said to me

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Sam St. John, President

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# CALENDAR VIEW

## March 13 Noon Marketing Meeting

**Time:** Noon -1 p.m.  
**Place:** Chamber McGowin Room  
**Cost:** \$6 and includes lunch  
**Call:** Maria Bladorn at 431-8638

## March 15 Net Gain Managing Your Information Systems

**Time:** 11 a.m. -1 p.m.  
**Place:** Chamber McGowin Room  
**Cost:** \$20 and includes lunch  
**Call:** Brenda Rembert at 431-8607

## March 19 State of the City & County Luncheon

**Time:** Noon - 1:30 p.m.  
**Place:** Arthur R. Outlaw Mobile Convention Center  
**Cost:** \$10 per person/\$100 for table of 10  
**Call:** Shelly Mattingly at 431-8612

## March 20 Net Gain Give Your Sales a Jump Start

**Time:** 11 a.m. -1 p.m.  
**Place:** Chamber McGowin Room  
**Cost:** \$20 and includes lunch  
**Call:** Brenda Rembert at 431-8607

## March 22 Business After Hours

**Time:** 5:30 - 7 p.m.  
**Place:** Bellingrath Gardens & Home, 12401 Bellingrath Gardens Rd.  
**Cost:** \$2 for members/\$5 for potential members  
**Call:** Maria Bladorn at 431-8638

## March 29 Drug Free Workplace Seminar

**Time:** Noon -1 p.m.  
**Place:** Chamber McGowin Room  
**Cost:** \$150  
**Call:** Angela Erwin at 431-8621

## Business After Hours

Come enjoy a relaxing evening on Thursday, March 22 for Business After Hours at the beautiful Bellingrath Gardens & Home at 12401 Bellingrath Gardens Rd. from 5:30 - 7 p.m. Enjoy complimentary hors d'oeuvres and a cash bar and take advantage of this great opportunity to make new business contacts while strolling through the lush gardens.

No reservations are necessary. The cost to attend is \$2 for members and \$5 for potential members.



## April 2-5 Tech Essentials for the New Economy

**Time:** April 3 - 10 a.m. - 5 p.m.  
 April 4 - 8:30 - 6 p.m.  
 April 5 - 9 a.m. - 2 p.m.  
**Place:** Arthur R. Outlaw Mobile Convention Center  
**Cost:** \$89/after 3/16 - \$119  
**Call:** 431-8659 or www.gulfcoasttechnology.com (See ad page 5)

## April 4 State Constitutional Reform Rally

**Time:** 7:30 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.  
**Place:** Montgomery (leave from Battleship Park)  
**Cost:** \$20  
**Call:** Shelly Mattingly at 431-8612 (See story on page 4)

## April 5 Web Wise — Doing Business Better Using Local Web Sites

**Time:** 10:30 a.m. - Noon  
**Place:** Chamber McGowin Room  
**Cost:** Free  
**Call:** Ashley Collins at 431-8606 (See story on page 12)

## April 6 First Friday

**Time:** 7:45 - 8:45 a.m.  
**Place:** Nou'veau Salon & Spa, 3625 Springhill Memorial Dr., S.  
**Cost:** \$2 for members/\$5 for potential members

## April 10 Getting Your Story on TV

**Time:** 8:30 - 10:30 a.m.  
**Place:** Chamber McGowin Room  
**Cost:** \$20 and includes breakfast  
**Call:** Ashley Collins at 431-8606 (See story on page 12)

## April 12 Regional Business After Hours

**Time:** 5 - 7 p.m.  
**Place:** Aircraft Pavillion at Battleship Park  
**Cost:** Free admission

## Net Gain: Managing Your Information Systems

This informative seminar, Managing Your Information Systems, is geared towards the non-IT (Information Technology) personnel who need assistance in managing their companies' computer systems. Held in the Chamber's McGowin room from 11 a.m. - 1 p.m. on Thursday, March 15, Chris Gibbons, president of Integrated Systems Management, will discuss communication, costs of equipment, e-mail and Internet policies and system's infrastructure.

The cost to attend is \$20 and includes lunch. For reservations, call Brenda Rembert at 431-8607.

## Net Gain: Give Your Sales a Jump Start

Dale Carnegie Training will deliver this Net Gain seminar, Give Your Sales a Jump Start, to help sales people increase their customer base and regain focus. Speaker Brian Phillips will be discussing sales processes, asking the right questions, presenting compelling solutions and gaining commitment. The seminar will be held in the Chamber McGowin Room on Tuesday, March 20 from 11 a.m. - 1 p.m.

For reservations, call Brenda Rembert at 431-8607. The cost to attend is \$20 and includes lunch.

## State of the City and County Luncheon

Join Mayor Mike Dow and Commission President Sam Jones as they give a report on current projects and predictions for the city and county for 2001 at the Annual State of the City and County Luncheon. The event is set for Monday, March 19 from Noon - 1:30 p.m. at the Arthur R. Outlaw Mobile Convention Center. This is an exciting and informative presentation, and always a sell out.

For reservations, call Shelly Mattingly at 431-8612. The cost to attend is \$10 per person or \$100 for a table of 10.



## Noon Marketing Meeting

The Noon Marketing Meeting will be from Noon - 1 p.m. on Tuesday, March 13 in the Chamber McGowin room. Sponsored by Alabama Power, participants will be given the chance to give a two-minute presentation on their company's products or services as well as distribute brochures and flyers.

For reservations, call Maria Bladorn at 431-8638. Cost to attend is \$6 and includes lunch.



## First Friday

On April 6 from 7:45 - 8:45 a.m., come to Nou'veau Salon & Spa at 3625 Springhill Memorial Dr. S. for the First Friday breakfast. Enjoy a view of the facilities while networking with fellow members.

No reservations are necessary. The cost to attend is \$2 for members/\$5 for potential members.



## Drug Free Workplace Seminar

Drug Free Workplaces, the Northwest Florida provider of services and grants, offers benefits to small businesses that elect to become a Drug Free Workplace. Organizations interested in establishing a drug free workplace can receive a \$250 voucher to kickoff their program at this upcoming seminar. Mark your calendar for Thursday, March 29 from 8 a.m. - 1 p.m., to be held in the Chamber McGowin Room.

For reservations and more information about the benefits and workshop agenda, call Angela Erwin at 431-8621. The cost to attend is \$150 and includes all course materials, videos and discounts.

## Regional Business After Hours

Join the Chamber for this special Regional Business After Hours on Thursday, April 12 from 5 - 7 p.m. at the Aircraft Pavilion at Battleship Park. The event will feature eight restaurants and caterers from Mobile and Baldwin counties and a cash bar.

There is no charge for admission. For more information, contact Maria Bladorn at 431-8638.

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If you know of a company interested in benefiting from Chamber membership, please contact our account executives:  
 • Melody Lipscomb at 431-8627/pgr: 371-9634  
 • Nancy Hughes at 431-8647/pgr: 582-1999  
 • Tom Lewis at 431-8629/pgr: 582-2076

**WHO'S NEW?**

The Armbrrecht Jackson law firm announced Edward B. McDermott, retired Circuit judge of Mobile County, became of Counsel with the firm. After serving 18 years on the bench, he will now concentrate his practice in the areas of mediation, complex civil litigation, white-collar crime and divorce litigation.



**McDermott**

New South Communications Corp., a broadband Integrated Communications Provider, made the following additions to its team: Kay Lopez, district sales manager; Kathy Kallett, director of systems sales support; Wayne Hendrix, sales engineer; Rob Moreland, sales engineer; Lynn Dykes, system account executive; Janelle Jones, account executive; Kenny Powell, systems account executive; Sarah Pugh, customer relations specialist.



**Lopez**



**Kallett**



**Hendrix**



**Moreland**



**Dykes**



**Jones**



**Powell**



**Pugh**

ERA Marie McConnell Realty welcomed new agents John Phillips and Jeanetta Williams to its professional sales team, and welcomed back Adriana Riels. The company also recently promoted Mike Perkins to sales manager and director.

Long's Human Resource Services announced the following additions to its staff: Jennifer O'Farrell, staff coordinator-clerical; Jennifer Parker, assistant to the director of Personnel, Risk and Safety and Kristie Synder, staff coordinator-Clerical.

To its Computer Learning Center team, Long's added: Ayshia Hatcher, placement coordinator and Eric Trawick, instructor.

Clear Channel Radio station Classic Country 104 (WDWG), welcomed a new duo for its morning show. Rick Burgess and Bill "Bubba" Bussey, both 15-year radio veterans, air live starting at six a.m. The pair was heard previously on a local AM station but now cover the entire Alabama and Mississippi Gulf Coast.

Prudential Cooper & Co. Inc. Realtors added new associates to its team: Allen Middleton, Trey Hunsucker, Karen Kelso, and Michael LaBoe joined the Cottage Hill office. Bree McCorkle, Ashley Kretzer, Lori Metzger, Rose Clark, Michael Hughes, Amy Davis, Peggy McDaniel and Misty Maples will be working out of the Azalea Road office. Carol Beebout, Becky and Greg Wilson and Jason Stowe joined the Gulf Shores office.

Douglas W. Fink, Brooks P. Milling and E. Lockett Robinson II joined Hand Arenall LLC as members in the firm's Mobile office.

Darrell G. West CPA and Sharon Crabtree McMahan joined the accounting firm of Wilkins Miller PC.

**MEMBER NEWS**

South Trust Bank-Mobile announced Marietta Urquhart joined the Board of Directors. She also serves on a number of other boards including Leadership Mobile, UMS-Wright Preparatory School, Salvation Army and Mobile Tricentennial. Urquhart graduated from the University of Alabama with a bachelor's degree in English and Mass Communications.



**Urquhart**

Mobile County has a new telephone prefix -574 - for all county offices. The new prefix replaces all old prefixes including 690, 694, 405, 450, 639, 866, 653, 452, 456, 457 and 675.

The Mobile Optimist Club donated \$5,000 to the Mobile County Public School System to assist in the current financial crisis. Club President Maria Payne challenged other civic clubs, foundations, corporations and individuals to follow suit.

**BUSINESS ENDEAVORS**

Hang the Moon Gallery and Frame Studio is new to the Mobile area. Located at 1132 Hillcrest Rd., the gallery offers gifts, fine art and framing services. Owner John Bruton is a certified picture framer with seven years experience. The gallery also offers gifts such as soy milk body products, Tifton Charles fragrances and natural and contemporary home elements reflecting high design. For more information call 639-0995.

Infirmiry Health System opened The E.A. Roberts Alzheimer's Center, the only center in South Alabama designed specifically for individuals with Alzheimer's disease and other forms of dementia. It is based on a medical model of care that addresses participant's medical, psychological and social needs.

The center offers respite to caregivers, an alternative to institutional placement, and delays the need for nursing home placement. In addition, the center provides families and caregivers with information and support services. For more information, call Laura Harrington RN at 435-6920.

Manpower Inc., achieved Ariba®Ready™ status, making it easier for companies to fill staffing positions via the Internet. Manpower is the first, global, full-service staffing firm to successfully develop, test and validate an effective job order that is integrated to the Ariba Commerce Services Network™. This year, the Mobile office was ranked in the company's top U.S. operations in terms of customer satisfaction and overall performance.

TeleVox Software Inc., an interactive software communications solutions provider, released its new USB (Universal Serial Bus) telephony voice boards. The voice board is Windows 95/98/2000 and NT compliant, and can be used with PCs and laptop computers. For more information 800-644-4266 or visit www.televox.com.

Alabama Shipyard signed a contract to build an articulated tug and barge vessel for Allied Transportation Company of Norfolk, Va. The barge was designed by the Shipyard in compliance with the Oil Pollution Act of 1990 that requires vessels to have a "double-hull" to provide greater safeguards to the marine environment. The tug is able to push a loaded barge at 11 knots, up to 35 percent faster than traditionally towed barges.

**COMMUNITY NEWS**

The American Red Cross Alabama Gulf Coast Chapter will receive a 5 percent donation from on-line Land's End purchases. At no extra cost to the consumer, orders placed through a link from the Chapter's Web site (www.siteone.com/redcross) earns funds for community programs and services. For more information about the new partnership, visit the Web site or call 436-7906.

The University of South Alabama announced a new scholarship program benefiting students in the USA Mitchell College of Business. "Partners for Academic Excellence" began with a \$10,000 donation from BellSouth and offers scholarships for outstanding students, internships with leading businesses and instructional resources/technology development for computer and technology support. The first scholarships will be awarded at the beginning of the 2001 fall semester. For more information, contact the USA Mitchell College of Business at 460-6902.

**WELL DONE!**

Karlene Faulkner was among the volunteers recognized recently for 10 plus years of service by the Mary Abbie Berg Senior Center. Other award recipients were named in last month's issue of *The View*.

Edward C. Collum CPA was promoted to a member of the accounting firm Nicholas & Lee CPA PC. He has been with the firm since 1990 and received a bachelor's degree in Business & Management from Mississippi State University and a master's degree in Accounting from the University of South Alabama.

In addition the company changed its name to reflect its newest member to Nicholas Lee Collum CPAs PC.

The 2000 America's Junior Miss program won a Silver World Medal for Lighting Design at the New York Festivals' annual awards program. Since 1957, the Festival has honored excellence in communications media and is the most prestigious film and video festival in the world.

The Commission on Cancer of the American College of Surgeons granted approval to Springhill Memorial Hospital's cancer program. The hospital underwent a rigorous evaluation process and review of its performance. To maintain approval, the program will have on-site reviews every three years.

Dina Blankenship, Michi Lunceford and Corrine March of Wilkins Miller PC passed the two-day Certified Public Accounting exam.

In other news, Stephanie Sullivan became a Certified Marketing Executive for the company's new business partner Great Plains Software.

TAG/The Architects Group Inc., a Mobile-based architectural and interior design firm, was presented with the "Architect of the Year" award at the 2nd Annual Build Alabama Awards dinner in Birmingham. On the firm's behalf, TAG president Edward L. Faddis accepted the award given by the Alabama Branch of Associated General Contractors of America Inc.

National Research Corporation recognized Providence Hospital among the ranks of the nation's top 122 hospitals published in *Modern Healthcare* magazine. Winners are determined by consumer perceptions on multiple quality and image ratings collected in the company's annual Healthcare Market Guide Study. The 2000 Healthcare Market Guide is the nation's largest and most comprehensive study of its kind. This is the fifth year NRC has handed out the award and Providence has been selected every year the survey has been conducted in Mobile.

Dauphin Realty of Mobile and Baldwin counties honored its top sales associates for 2000: Nichole Patrick, "Team Spirit Award" for the Mobile office; Dot Yeager, "Team Spirit Award" for the Fairhope office; Pam Middleton, Top Salesperson of the Year and Top-listing agent for the Mobile office; Mary Cane was the Top Salesperson of the Year for the Fairhope office; and Becky Miller, Top Selling Agent for the month of January for the Mobile office.

Other top producers recognized for their sales achievement were: Mary Cane, Norman Scott, Anna Hankins, Dot Yeager, Nichole Patrick, Anne Irvine, Margaret Platt, Ruth Rye and Debbie Bullen.

David P. Constantine, administrator for the law firm of Lyons, Pipes & Cook was selected by the Association of Legal Administrators (ALA) to serve as Region II Projects Officer. The ALA is an international organization providing support to professionals involved in the management of law firms and corporate & government law departments.

Aaron Oil Company was recognized recently as one of 225 charter members in the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency National Environmental Achievement Track program. The program recognizes businesses that have superior environmental management practices and works to recycle waste and reduce air and water pollution beyond legal requirements.

ERA Marie McConnell Realty announced its 2000 Award winners: Sandy Frost was named Sales and Listing Agent of the Year, her sixth year to earn this distinction; Janette Ellis was named Rookie of the Year; and Vicki Baker-Sims won the Crown Award, given to the agent who best represents ERA team spirit, ethics and positive attitude.

**FOR YOUR CALENDAR**

To promote its lifelong learning and graduate programs, Spring Hill College will hold an informational session at the Chamber, Tuesday, March 27 at Noon in the McGowin Room. A light lunch will be served. Call 380-3065 to make a reservation. Additional sessions are set for Wednesday, March 28 in the Gautrelet Room, 6 p.m. on the Spring Hill College campus and Saturday, April 7, at 10 a.m. at the Daphne Public Library.

For 20 years Mobile County Special Olympics has helped mentally handicapped school age children compete in sporting events. This year's annual Track and Field Competition for school aged kids is Friday, March 30th at St. Paul's Episcopal School. Sponsors, financial aid and volunteers are needed. Contact committee chair, Debra Garlo at 209-4949 to help.

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

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