

THE VIEW

JUNE 2001

MOBILE AREA CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

XXXIII, No. 6

Business Prospects Eye Outcome of School Tax

Within 24 hours after Mobile citizens approved a \$27.8 million funding package for the Mobile County Public Schools, the Chamber's economic development staff had follow-up meetings with four companies interested in bringing investments and jobs to Mobile.

"We're singing a new song about our schools," said Chamber Vice President **Jim Apple**. "I feel like we're open for business again."

During the month-long school campaign, business prospects were monitoring stories about the school dilemma, since it would impact their own company's decision. Economic Development Project Director **Green Suttles** explained that one company representative from California was flying to Mobile and, the morning of his trip, he turned on National Public Radio and heard about Mobile's school crisis. "You can bet all of our prospects knew what was going on down here," Suttles added.

"It's tough to say to a company representative, 'Sure, bring your money, your jobs and your families down here. We have a great

quality of life,' when we were funding our schools way below both the national and state averages," said Apple.

Since last December, Mobile has lost approximately 2,000 jobs from such company closures as International Paper, Lerio Corporation and Sappi Fine Papers.

"It's a problem around the country," Apple pointed out. "Charlotte, North Carolina lost 9,000 jobs in two weeks! But that means everyone is hungry for new jobs and competition is stiff. If you can't compete in the education arena, you're at a huge disadvantage going in."

Apple said that most companies are interested in the local student/teacher ratio and test scores. "And of course funding is an indication of a community's level of support," he added.

The Chamber wants to offer another round of thanks to the Mobile County legislative delegation. Local senators and house representatives worked to set aside their differences of opinion and passed legislation giving voters the opportunity to increase school funding from a choice of sources.



Celebrating success, Mobile Public School Superintendent, Harold Dodge, addresses the crowd.

An Investment in Character

◆ The Chamber Helps Win Federal Grant for Alabama

Last month, the U.S. Department of Education awarded Alabama \$894,883 to fund character education programs and activities throughout the State over a four-year period. The "Partnerships in Character Education" grant, was a collaborative effort of the Chamber and the Alabama Center for Law and Civics Education (ACLCE).

Mobile's share of the award will be \$160,000 and will be used to implement the national CHARACTER COUNTS! initiative in Mobile County's public secondary schools and alternative education programs such as The Phoenix Program.

The initiative brings value-based behavior and decision-making to the forefront through six "Pillars of Character:" trustworthiness, respect, responsibility, fairness, caring and citizenship.

"Character and values training that instills a sense of right and wrong, honesty and fairness, respect for themselves and others is a critical part of our children's learning experience. Unfortunately, so many of our youth do not receive this information or training at home or in church," said **Mayor Mike Dow** who has supported this program locally.

Funds will be used to train teachers, counselors, parents and community nonprofits, purchase curriculum materials and create Best Practice guides for middle and high schools. The new funding will also establish a process for putting the program into action and increase opportunities for parents, educators and the com-

munity to participate.

The University of South Alabama (USA) will evaluate the program by tracking the number of discipline incidents reported in each school over the life of the project. USA will also conduct pre- and post-implementation surveys, measuring

student attitudes and behaviors in regard to ethical issues.

Statewide, funds will be used to design a Character and Citizenship required course for the Department of Youth Services (DYS) School System, a "best practices" discipline system for DYS Schools and ACLCE's "Play By The Rules" program on law for 7th graders.

Best Practice guides for CHARACTER COUNTS! and other character-based programs created with the grant will be made available through the A+ Education Foundation's Best Practices Center.

The Chamber joined the Drug Education Council and several other organizations in launching the local initiative this spring. Now spearheaded by the Drug Education Council, the initiative is being driven by a Community Steering Committee of representatives from business, government, education and nonprofits, including Mobile County Public Schools, 100 Black

Men of Greater Mobile and the Chamber.

For additional information about the Partnerships in Education grant, contact **Michele Rumpf** at 431-8630. To get involved in Mobile's CHARACTER COUNTS! initiative, call the Drug Education Council at 433-5456.

Trustworthiness

Respect

Responsibility

Fairness

Caring and

Citizenship

Latest Cost of Living Stats Place Mobile Below National Average

Items in a grocery cart don't normally attract attention, but the cost of a T-bone steak and the price of shampoo mean a lot to ACCRA, the association of community and economic development professionals. By recording the costs of 59 items, from groceries to housing, the ACCRA Cost of Living Index compares the price of consumer goods and services in 303 metropolitan areas in the U.S. and Canada.

Fourth Quarter 2000 results received in May, rank Mobile at 96.4 percent, slightly below the national average of 100.

The report shows a hospital room costs less in Mobile than anywhere else in Alabama, however, overall the local cost of living ranks as the median for metro areas throughout the state.

Birmingham offers the lowest cost of living (94.7) and Tuscaloosa the highest (99.4), but the costs of living in Alabama are consistent, with the difference spanning only 5 percent.

Among the four Central Gulf Coast metro areas included in the report (Biloxi-Gulfport MSA was not recorded this time), Mobile has the lowest cost of living and Baton Rouge the highest at 105.8 percent.

Last year, Mobile ranked lowest in Alabama in housing costs at 86.2 percent but the most recent report shows housing costs jumped to 92.3 percent

of the national average. It is important to note, however, that ACCRA criteria compares only the cost of new housing construction and does not include comparisons of older homes.

When looking at the total picture, housing costs have not increased by such a significant amount in the last year. **Jeff Newman**, executive vice president of the Mobile Area Association of Realtors, explains,

"Mobile has had a stable 5 to 7 percent appreciation rate for the last 12 years. In the last six months, our market has actually slowed due to the national economy and recent layoffs in Mobile. More houses are on the market, which means a higher inventory and a larger choice for buyers. These factors are slowly driving the prices down causing the appreciation rate to slow down to closer to 2 percent, making housing more affordable than it was last year."

The full ACCRA report is based on 100,000 data points gathered by 400 members, including the

Mobile Area Chamber of Commerce. In addition to grocery items and housing, other categories include utilities, transportation, health care and miscellaneous goods and services.

For more information, call **Brent Ericson**, the Chamber's director of Research and Information at 431-8654 or visit www.accra.org.

ACCRA Cost of Living Index* 4th Quarter 2000 (National Average = 100)

| | |
|-------------------|-------------|
| Atlanta MSA | 103.2 |
| Baton Rouge MSA | 105.8 |
| Birmingham MSA | 94.7 |
| Huntsville MSA | 96.1 |
| Mobile MSA | 96.4 |
| Montgomery MSA | 97.5 |
| New Orleans MSA | 99.3 |
| Pensacola MSA | 97.8 |
| Tuscaloosa MSA | 99.4 |
| U.S. Average | 100 |

* Areas included in the survey are those where area chambers of commerce or similar organizations have volunteered to participate. Statistics for the Biloxi/Gulfport metropolitan area were not collected.

Work at the State Docks Begins With Amendment One Funds

Gov. Don Siegelman was in Mobile recently delivering the first installment of the \$100 million voters approved last November to improve the Port of Alabama.

"Today, we take the first step in making Mobile a premier port – in making Mobile the Port of the Americas," said Siegelman.

The \$20 million issued by the Amendment One Bond Commission will be matched with \$15 million in Alabama State Port Authority Revenue Bonds, \$5 million federal funds and \$4.9 million in Alabama State Port Authority Cash Reserves – adding up to \$45 million to begin phase one of the slated improvements.



Phase one will begin rebuilding and upgrading existing warehouses, equipment and railways, and initiate engineering work needed to develop the future container handling facilities at Choctaw Point (formally know as Monroe Park and Frascati Yard).

Moffatt and Nichol Engineers, nationally recognized port consultants from Long Beach, Calif., created a strategic development plan for the Port.

Study results prove Mobile has the necessary assets to be a "world class container port" and intermodal transfer location meaning it has the ability to move cargo between ships, railcars and trucks.

"As the container business grows, Mobile with its deep water port on the Gulf Rim intends to capture its share of the business traveling north and south across the Gulf of Mexico and the Caribbean," said Green Suttles, the Chamber's economic development project manager.

"As major ports like New Orleans and Houston get more and more crowded, shippers are going to look for options. In Mobile, they are going to see a strategically located facility ready to do business," added Suttles.

Mobile's long-standing advantages enhancing the Port's competitiveness include its location within 30 miles to open ocean waters, strong interstate access along I-65 and the I-10 corridor and four national railroads (one of which has quick service to Canada).

If Mobile seizes all opportunities identified in the Moffatt and Nichol report, such as additional warehousing and distribution operations, a total of \$240 million in capital investments could be injected into the 73-year old facility.

Gov. Don Siegelman announces \$45 million will fund phase one improvements at the Port.



Statewide representatives were on-hand for the announcement that upgrades and engineering work would begin at the Port.

Dwight Jennings, chairman of the Alabama State Port Authority attributed the success of Amendment One to Siegelman and recognized him for making the Port of Alabama independent of politics.

The Port Authority is expected to request funds every 15 months until all funds are invested in the facility by 2006.

Mobile's Air Quality Improves

Recently, Mobile's toxic emissions (pollution) have dropped dramatically, pushing the community down on the Federal toxic index chart to 39th in the nation. Not many years ago, the area was no. 5.

Plant closings and cutbacks at Accordis, International Paper Company, Sappi Fine Papers and Kimberly Clark, have contributed to these reductions and the numbers are expected to get even lower.

"When the 2001 numbers become available... Mobile County may not even rate a mention in the toxics release data," according to an April 29 story in the *Mobile Register*.

Despite the improved status, the Chamber will continue to partner with other community, government and business entities to conduct an air quality study of the County.

"There's been too much rhetoric and conclusions made on hunches about the air quality in this community," said Chamber Economic

Development Vice President Jim Apple. "We are interested in economic development strategies based on fact. We want our citizens to base their conclusions on facts as well, and so we are interested in pursuing this study," Apple added that the study will take about a year to year and a half to complete.

In the meantime, the community continues to monitor its situation related to Ozone, a substance not measured in the toxic emissions studies. Because of new, more stringent rules by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), the Mobile area is waiting, along with hundreds of other communities, to see if it will be designated non-attainment for Ozone. An official designation is not expected for many months as the EPA is working to defend its new regulations in a Supreme Court case.

"Overall, our air quality is much better in Mobile," Apple concluded, "and there are many communities that wish they could say the same."

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Innovative Water Treatment Facility First in State

The Mobile Area Water and Sewer System (MAWSS) and the Mobile County Public School System joined forces to install a new treatment facility that is the first of its kind in Alabama and in the U.S. owned by a public utility.

The Hutchens Decentralized Wastewater Treatment and Disposal Facility currently serves Nora Mae Hutchens Elementary School and several area homes in west Mobile County. In the near future 126 additional homes will be added to the system. According to MAWSS Director Malcom Steeves, this is the first of several facilities that will eliminate dependence on septic tanks in rural and non-urban areas.

The innovative treatment process, designed by Volkert & Associates Inc., collects, treats, reclaims and reuses wastewater for landscape irrigation. This alternate approach is considered an economical and environmentally-sound solution to wastewater management by effectively reusing water in the same general vicinity. Traditional processes rely on sewer systems to carry wastewater long distances where it is treated and released into rivers or other bodies of water.

The land for the new facility was donated by

the Mobile County School System and produces water that is being used to irrigate the System's sod-growing operations.

Septic tanks have been a growing environmental concern for Mobile and other cities throughout the nation. The Hutchens facility is eliminating septic tanks at the School and private residences. Expectations are that the number of homes served will increase to more than 1,000 within the next five years when the facility is upgraded to its full capacity.

The success of this project took cooperation and support from a number of organizations including the Mobile County Health Department that assisted with the permitting process, along with research information from the civil engineering faculty at the University of South Alabama, explains Kathryn Wilhelm, a mechanical engineer and the project manager with Volkert and Associates.

Earlier this year, the Mobile Area Council of Engineers recognized this effort the 2001 Mobile Area Engineering Project of the Year and presented awards to MAWSS, which owns and operates the facility, and to Volkert & Associates Inc., the project's designer.

MOBILE

In the Big Economic Picture

Good news travels fast and bad news travels faster. This is a trend witnessed first hand in the Mobile area over the past few months with the quake felt by layoffs, company closings and the public education crisis.

But Mobile is standing tough, playing a supporting role in the big economic picture with indications that the national, regional and local economy will experience an upsurge by the fall, according to **Rajeev Dhawan PhD**, director of the Economic Forecasting Center at Georgia State University. Dhawan expects regional and local economies to also begin recovering a few months later because they are driven by the rest of the U.S."

Mobile Isn't Alone

Although some people may feel Mobile is the only city enduring tough economic times, Dhawan says, "Manufacturing all over the U.S. has taken a hard hit."

Manufacturing employees account for approximately 15 percent of Alabama's total workforce and the percentage has been decreasing for the last year and a half.

Overall, the national Gross Domestic Product (GDP) is expected to slow down to 1.8 percent and the Southeast to 2.1 percent. States like Mississippi and West Virginia are expected to grow little, if at all. And, with the decline in coal mining and manufacturing, Tennessee is vulnerable because of its dependence on heavy mining. As for Alabama, Dhawan predicts the State will do as well as last year and will not slow any further.

the number of jobs are tallied Mobile has lost close to 2,000 jobs since December 2000.

Jim Apple, vice president of Economic Development for the Chamber, explains, "Mobile's business prospects are down this year compared to the last three years. It is difficult to judge when activity will pick up because so much is dependent on national economic issues that are out of Mobile's control. Our job is to do the best we can in any situation."

So What's Ahead for Mobile?

Although the recent economic storm has pounded Mobile, the area is seeing clearing skies.

"Because the area economy is much more diverse than it was even 10 years ago, we are able to weather the downturn in industries such as paper, steel and parts of the chemical sector," says Apple.

WHO'S HIRING NOW

| | |
|-------------------------------|--------------|
| Coflexip Stena | .20 |
| Bredero Price | .125 |
| New Era Cap | .60 |
| IPSCO Steel (just now hiring) | .450 |
| Mitsubishi Expansions | .187 |
| Austal Shipbuilding | .110 |
| Hertz | .500 |
| Other companies | .400 |
| TOTAL | 1,852 |

indicative of the mindset of the consumer," said **B.T. Roberts** of **Roberts Brothers**, and chairman of the Federal Reserve Bank of Atlanta in New Orleans. Roberts recently addressed the Chamber's board of advisors.

The Federal Reserve has continued to cut interest rates as many economic forecasters predicted, and consumption should continue to increase with more home and car purchases.

Boosting Mobile's Economy

With the passage of Amendment One and the recent \$45 million expansion announced (see story on page 2), the Port is poised to provide more jobs and growth for the area and across the state. While the manufacturing industry suffered a downturn because of decreased exports nationally, Mobile's port saw double-digit increases in almost every category over the past year in exports and imports.

"We need to hope for increased imports nationally," Dhawan says. "The growth factor from the ports could be a saving grace. If the ports are thriving, we will see many economic rewards."

Education: The Key to a Healthy Economy

Ask any economic developer and he or she will say, "The key to a good, strong economic community is a strong educational system." Economic experts and business leaders agree that the "YES" vote on May 15 for Mobile County's Public Schools is a step in the right direction.

"Now, we all need to turn our attention to lowering sales tax rates for faster development of our local economy," believes **Semoon Chang PhD**, professor of economics and director of the Center for Business and Economic Research at the University of South Alabama.

"A good educational district increases the attractiveness of the area for skilled workers, making it more attractive for firms to locate in the area. It also contributes to growing home values. A lot of people feel good when home values go up, and this happens when education in the area is good," Dhawan emphasizes.

NEW BUSINESS LICENSES ISSUED FOR CITY OF MOBILE

| | |
|------------------|-------|
| 1996 | 2,709 |
| 1997 | 2,910 |
| 1998 | 2,628 |
| 1999 | 2,814 |
| 2000 | 3,337 |
| 2001 (thru Apr.) | 1,237 |

"The Yes vote for schools is a major victory for Mobile and has significant implications for our community, not only for our local area and but also for Mobile to market itself on a national and international basis," Apple says.

Significant Job Announcements 1996-2000

| | JOBS | INVESTMENT |
|-----------------------------------|------|------------|
| Aaron Oil Company Inc. | .46 | \$.405M |
| Ace Hardware Warehouse | .300 | \$.35M |
| Alabama Power Company (McIntosh) | .12 | \$.50M |
| Alabama Power Company (Theodore) | .20 | \$.112M |
| Alabama Shipyard Inc. | .130 | \$.6M |
| Austal USA | .110 | \$.6M |
| Atlantic Marine Inc. | .200 | \$.8M |
| Bredero Price | .125 | \$.30M |
| Coflexip Stena Offshore Inc. | .20 | \$.10M |
| Degussa-Huls Corporation | .99 | \$.214M |
| Duke Energy | .19 | \$.88M |
| DuPont, E.I. Co. Inc. | .50 | \$.35M |
| Financial Collections Agency | .275 | n/a |
| Hertz Corporation | .500 | \$.10M |
| Inchcape Shipping Services | .20 | \$.6M |
| IPSCO Steel | .450 | \$.425M |
| Jeffreys Steel Co. Inc. | .10 | \$.1M |
| Kimberly Clark | .15 | \$.83.6M |
| McNeil Specialty Products | .150 | \$.170M |
| McPhillips Manufacturing Co. Inc. | .16 | \$.1.75M |
| Mitsubishi | .120 | \$.155M |
| Mobile Aerospace Engineering | .475 | \$.11.8M |
| Mobile Pulley and Machine Works | .7 | \$.1M |
| Modified Rubber Industries Inc. | .35 | \$.2.6M |
| New Era Cap Co. | .60 | \$.5M |
| NIE/Racer Computers | .35 | \$.4M |
| Olin/Geon | .40 | \$.100M |
| Peavy Electronics | .200 | \$.3M |
| Phenolchemie | .130 | \$.240M |
| Praxair Inc. | .15 | \$.12M |
| Seigling America Inc. | .6 | \$.330,000 |
| SkyGen | .18 | \$.100M |
| Spilltech | .40 | \$.2.2M |
| TESCO Inc. | .125 | n/a |
| Vulcan Aluminum | .20 | \$.2M |
| West Telemarketing | .750 | \$.4.5M |
| Williams Energy | .20 | \$.75M |
| Worthington Cylinders | .20 | \$.2M |
| Wuestec Medical Inc. | .24 | \$.34.8M |
| Zeneca | .13 | \$.50M |

*Figures represent selected companies that have reported new operations or expansions to the Chamber.

UNEMPLOYMENT RATES

| | 1996 | 1997 | 1998 | 1999 | 2000 | 2001 |
|------------------|------|------|------|------|------|--------------------|
| United States | 5.4% | 4.9% | 4.5% | 4.2% | 4.0% | 4.5% (as of April) |
| State of Alabama | 5.1% | 5.1% | 4.2% | 4.8% | 4.4% | 5.4% (as of March) |
| Mobile | 5.2% | 4.9% | 3.8% | 4.7% | 4.4% | 5.1% (as of March) |

Unemployment statistics continue to creep up all over the U.S. In October 2000, the national unemployment rate was 3.9 percent. As of April 2001, it climbed to 4.5 percent. Locally, the latest figures have the Mobile-Baldwin area at 5.1 percent, just below the state average of 5.4 percent.

JOBS LOST SINCE DECEMBER 2000

| | |
|-----------------------------|--------------|
| International Paper Company | .790 |
| Lerio | .100 |
| Kimberly Clark | .100 |
| Actel | .150 |
| Accordis | .324 |
| Sappi Paper Company | .500 |
| TOTAL | 1,964 |

Mobile's increased unemployment rate can be attributed to headline closures such as International Paper Company, the Lerio Corporation, Actel, Accordis and Sappi. When

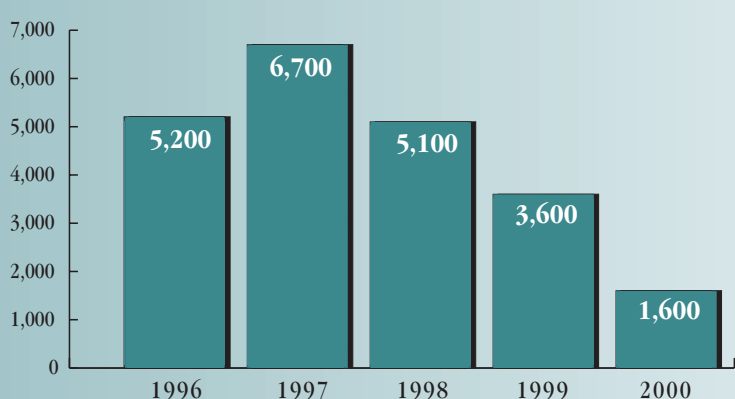
Newly announced and recent manufacturing-related job hirings total 1,850 and include Coflexip Stena, Bredero Price, New Era Cap Company, IPSCO Steel, Mitsubishi, Austal Shipbuilding, Hertz and several other companies. And, the Mobile area has experienced significant job growth and expansion over the last few years. (see sidebar with company and job listings.)

According to Apple, the Chamber will continue working with existing industries especially the technology cluster and will focus on recruiting distribution centers. The area's natural gas resources are a tremendous drawing card and could also be a source of future jobs.

Another indicator that the economy will flourish again is the number of new business licenses recorded with the City of Mobile. In 2000, city business licenses reached 3,337, an increase of more than 23 percent since 1996. In the first four months of this year, 1,237 licenses were granted.

Also, personal consumption is up despite the perceived economic slump. "We are still spending more than we make, which is

NET JOB GROWTH 1996-2000



Source: Alabama Department of Industrial Relations, 1996-1999 numbers revised, 2000 is preliminary.

Latest Statistics Prove Tourism A Viable Economic Sector

Tourism is a stabilizing force in tough economic times and keeps the tax bills low for local residents according to **Brenda Scott**, president of the Mobile Convention and Visitors Corp.

An economic impact study released last month by Auburn University's Center for Business and Economic Development places Mobile and Baldwin counties among the state's top travel destinations. Together, the two counties collected nearly a third of Alabama's lodging taxes in 2000.

"Tourism is very important to the economy. It's the third largest industry in Mobile," Scott said.

Leisure activity and conventions keep 12,265 Mobilians employed. Each traveler spends an average of \$172 per day while away from home, a figure Scott says is a conservative estimate.

Across Alabama, \$6.1 billion was spent on leisure and business travel last year, generating \$381 million in tax revenues.

Baldwin County led the state by collecting \$1.46 billion in travel-related spending, a 15 percent increase over 1999. Mobile achieved 9 percent growth and took in \$531 million in 2000.

The report attributed Baldwin's growth to aggressive marketing and the lure of the beaches during the summer. Interest in sporting events — the Delchamps Senior Bowl, GMAC Mobile Bowl

and Azalea Trail Run — as well as Mardi Gras and conventions brought more people to Mobile last year, the report said.

Semoon Chang PhD credited the Nicholas and Alexandra exhibit, Bellingrath Gardens' enhanced Christmas display and the new helicopter simulator at the Battleship U.S.S. Alabama with drawing more visitors to the area.

Chang, director of the Center for Business and Economic Research at the University of Alabama, said tourism is looking even better in 2001. "High gas prices haven't hurt our tourism yet."

Of the 2.5 million visitors to Mobile County last year, 58 percent stayed overnight in lodging facilities. While occupancy rates edged downward in 1999 and 2000, this year's first-quarter figures show an increase in lodging.

"We think it's going to grow as we aggressively promote leisure and convention travel. Also, the Tricentennial celebration will give Mobile national exposure," Scott said. Activities celebrating the city's 300th birthday begin December 31.

When it comes to attracting tourists, Scott said, "The downturn in the economy challenges us to keep up with the competition."

Fort Condé is a draw for tourists.



...and then the boss said to me

"I've got this great idea for our new business location, but it'll need to be in just the right town with just the right site, and it should have a unique design and little shops all around it — make it happen"...

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The Perfect Storm

◆ Declining economic cycle may be ending as individuals and companies adjust

by GayNell Palmisano

Remember the movie *The Perfect Storm*? The affects of many diverse elements collided to create what forecasters a "perfect situation for disaster."

A well-known and highly respected financial bell-ringer described the current economic cycle as a "perfect storm."

What economic winds are on a collision course? Throughout 2000 and the first part of 2001, many companies have responded to the fast-paced economic frenzy that propelled the country through the turn of the century. After Y2K fears vanished, companies faced inventory gluts, rising energy costs and slowdowns. Profit pressures forced cost cutting and a virtual freeze for capital needs.

Management announced future plans to eliminate large numbers of jobs, while maintaining existing hiring practices. In October 2000, the unemployment rate reported by the federal government reached its lowest in 30 years.

Even though the stock market had been on a six-month slide, consumer spending was robust because perception was that everyone who wanted a job had a job. Personal savings were almost non-existent.

For over 18 months during the tech frenzy, earnings had not been important to investors. But by the first quarter of 2001, the word "earnings" became the buzzword. However, the outlook for earnings progressively worsened.

Firms revised profit projections repeatedly. Employment fell in March as companies aggressively cut payrolls to increase the bottom line. Consumer confidence dropped. By April, layoffs were being announced in major areas of manufacturing, technology and services and continued into May.

Cuts in spending are evident with auto sales down more than 1 percent in March. Making up half of all consumer spending, retail sales continue to weaken, possibly hitting areas dependent on manufacturing jobs. Without some strong catalyst to offset the sales declines, firms will be forced to eliminate even more jobs. As U.S. productivity declines to levels unseen in six years, it looks like the storm is still active. Will rates be cut further?

The old adage "the market moves on a wall of worry" is being seen today. Is this a time to sell

investments and find harbor in a safe place?

History has taught us that the market usually is an indicator of the future not the present. Looking over market performance in the past year, the storm may have indeed already passed.

People caught up in the winds of this economic storm must now deal with their individual situation and make lifestyle changes. Severance choices can be confusing without individual advice. Penalties and taxes in transferring or managing ex-employer 401(k) plans will further erode financial stability. Debt reduction strategies should be explored.

As in any time of turbulence, it may well be time to assess damages, evaluate skills and seek opportunities. Plan a life strategy and plot a more rewarding and comfortable course to get to a planned final destination.

SECTOR PERFORMANCE

| | | | |
|------------------|--------|-----|-------|
| Automobile | 321.32 | (+) | 19.45 |
| Banks | 389.38 | (-) | 0.27 |
| Basic Resources | 166.79 | (+) | 7.41 |
| Chemicals | 167.09 | (-) | 0.70 |
| Construction | 178.69 | (-) | 0.33 |
| Cyclical Goods | 256.37 | (+) | 12.55 |
| Energy | 275.38 | (+) | 0.89 |
| Fin Svcs | 97.44 | (-) | 4.98 |
| Food & Bev | 202.38 | (-) | 13.03 |
| Health Care | 310.63 | (-) | 13.76 |
| Industrial Goods | 290.28 | (-) | 2.83 |
| Insurance | 374.52 | (-) | 10.95 |
| Media | 430.10 | (+) | 6.94 |
| Non-Cyclical Gds | 236.01 | (+) | 3.74 |
| Retail | 301.00 | (+) | 6.61 |
| Technology | 655.86 | (-) | 12.44 |
| Telecomm | 217.93 | (+) | 3.59 |
| Utilities | 166.76 | (-) | 6.21 |

Indexes based on 12/31/91 = 100 in U.S. Dollars.
Information from Dow Jones 5/7/2001.

GayNell Palmisano is a Certified Retirement Planning Consultant (CRPC) and president of Heritage Planning Group PC. She can be reached at 476-8011 or gaynell@heritageplanning.com

More Options for Mobile Travelers

Traveling to the East Coast and points north should become more convenient after July 8. That's when US Airways Express begins regional jet service between Mobile Regional Airport and Charlotte/Douglas International Airport in North Carolina.

Why Mobile? "The recent success of other carriers and their decision to invest resources in Mobile influenced US Airways. They wanted to capture some of that market share," said **Anderson Screws**, marketing associate for the Mobile Airport Authority.

Gaining non-stop service to Charlotte has been a top priority for the Airport Authority, Executive Director **Bay Haas** said. The hub links travelers to dozens of key markets in the Mid-Atlantic, Canada, Europe and the Caribbean. More than 230,000 people fly from Mobile to other U.S. and foreign destinations served by US Airways, Haas said.

"While the new service offers Mobile travelers substantially greater convenience to Charlotte, it also offers very good connections to cities such as Boston, Philadelphia, Pittsburgh and Detroit," Haas said.

Mesa Airlines, an affiliate of US Airways Express, will run three daily flights aboard a Canadair Regional Jet. Non-stop, round-trip flights will depart Mobile at 6:15 a.m., 12:05 p.m. and 3 p.m. and arrive in Charlotte at 8:50 a.m., 2:40 p.m. and 5:35 p.m. Return flights leave the East Coast at 10:50 a.m., 1:35 p.m. and 9:10 p.m., arriving in the Port City at 11:35 a.m., 2:20 p.m. and 9:55 p.m.



The 50-seat Canadair jet is equipped with reclining leather seats, large overhead storage bins, a restroom and standing headroom. Every seat is a window or aisle seat.

The additional service is another in a series of good-news announcements from the Mobile Airport. US Airways is the third airline to add service to Mobile in the past 18 months. Mobilians now have access to five new cities, eight daily flights and 15 jets since October of last year. The only all-jet airport on the Gulf Coast, Mobile has a total of 28 daily departures and non-stop service to 10 cities.

Last year the airport saw a 10 percent increase in passengers, accommodating more than 790,000 travelers. Year-to-date, airport traffic is up 5 percent, with one carrier, Northwest Airlinck, experiencing a gain of 110 percent. The Airport Authority credits lower fares and upgraded service as factors in the growth. The competition among airlines will increase when US Airways opens shop here, Haas said.

"We've been able to attract significant new air service to Mobile. It's particularly satisfying to see the community supporting it," Haas added.

The Computer Virus: Today's Electronic Plague

It can lie dormant and undetected in your system for weeks. It's an evil, loathsome little critter designed to wreak havoc in your life and wipe all the data off your computer. What is it? It's a "computer virus" — a phrase so familiar that it's become engrained in American nomenclature alongside "vandal" and "terrorist."

Anyone who has experienced a computer virus can tell war stories of how losing valuable, irretrievable data is disastrous. It only takes a few minutes for a virus to devastate a business. Computer viruses can, and have, cost companies millions of dollars annually in productivity loss and clean-up expenses. The best defense against a virus starts with understanding the "enemy."

Does My Computer Have a Virus?

Computer viruses take many forms and can be difficult to recognize. Sometimes it is simply irritating and renames files, sends messages to everyone in an E-mail address book or changes the default home page on the Web browser. Other times a virus will destroy a hard drive or delete files. A virus can act right away or it can lay dormant awhile — giving it time to spread.

If your computer has missing or corrupt files, software programs that are performing differently than usual, file names that have changed, or a system that doesn't boot properly, it may have a virus.

Every month, more than 10,000 viruses are identified and 200 new ones are created, according to the International Computer Security Association.

With numbers like these, it's safe to say that most organizations face the plague of virus outbreaks, and no one is immune.

Floppy disks are no longer the primary carrier of viruses. Today, the most frequent way to catch a virus is from downloading Internet files directly to the hard drive or through E-mail attachments.

Glenn Geiger, an independent computer consultant explains, "It's important to remember that text-only E-mail does not spread viruses, but attach-

Immunize and Protect

When a virus attacks a computer, it leaves what Geiger calls "data footprints" behind. Anti-virus software searches for the footprints left by known viruses and applies the fix needed to disable and rid the system of them.

Virus software is reactionary, according to Geiger. "It can fix a known virus as it finds it, but it can't protect you if a virus created today has invaded your computer."

Because of the constant stream of new viruses, anti-virus software is outdated the day you buy it. The good news is that regular updates are available over the Internet.

Geiger recommends installing regular software updates daily or at least weekly. "The best approach to protecting your computer from viruses is to update your virus software as often as possible, use it to scan your computers on a daily basis, and backup your system regularly."

Companies depending on computers to do business cannot afford to be without virus protection software. DailyAccess Concepts, an Internet-based financial services firm, uses a number of checks for viruses. "We use virus scan software on

all our servers and PCs," says Judy Godfrey, the company's systems manager. "A system cannot be on our network without current virus detection software."

She said DAC scans E-mail at the main mail server. They also update their virus scan software from every three days to two weeks.

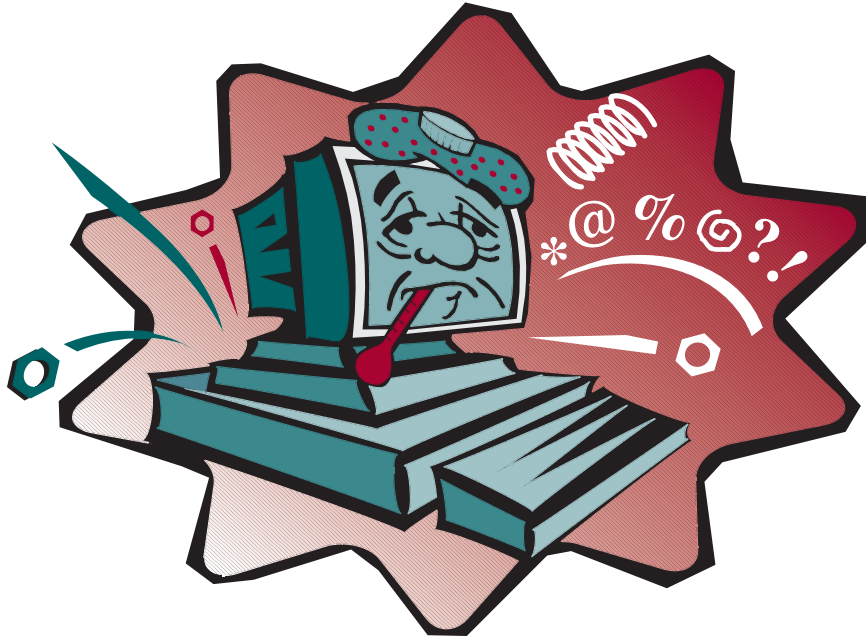
Another Mobile company that depends heavily on anti-virus software to protect its computer system is Volkert & Associates. "We work with all kinds of data: Word documents, spread sheets, databases, drawings, and photos," says Russ Jones, Volkert's computer manager. "So, we use both anti-virus

software and tape backups to protect our data."

Jones says protecting a company's data is not an expensive proposition when compared to the risk. "Without virus protection software, a two-man company could get infected and within a day or two lose everything it has."

Godfrey gives this advice to businesses that don't have a system in place. "Don't wait until you have lost data," she emphasized. "The money saved on not having the software will seem trivial at that

point. Get a known product and a subscription service that provides regular updates and keeps abreast of developments. Get a virus protection plan in place NOW!"



Every month, more than 10,000 viruses are identified and 200 new ones are created, according to the International Computer Security Association.

ments do. Whether it is a picture from a friend, a resume sent as a Microsoft Word document or a spreadsheet from your CPA, any attachment can carry a virus and anyone can send it to you."

Web Resources:

The top 4 Web sites to consult about viruses are:

- www.mcafee.com
- www.symantec.com
- www.virus.com and Trend Micro at
- www.antivirus.com.

Each site offers extensive up-to-the-minute information on viruses and has anti-virus software available to download. Many offer a fully-functional 30-day trial that will eradicate viruses from your system today!

Trend Micro also offers the first real-time World Virus Tracking Center that shows the regional distribution of viruses worldwide during the past 24 hours, past seven days and past 30 days. The World Virus Tracking Center can be accessed at <http://wtc.trendmicro.com/wtc>.

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Small Business of the Month

Pierce, Ledyard, Latta, Wasden and Bowron PC

Thirty years into a thriving career as a defense attorney, Don Pierce took a great leap. He left a large downtown law firm in 1991 and started his own firm with three other lawyers and four employees in West Mobile.

"We wanted to form a group that enjoyed being with each other and working together," Pierce said. "We brought together people who are like-minded about service to our clientele, quality of life and the practice of law."

Today, Pierce, Ledyard, Latta, Wasden & Bowron PC, employs 25 attorneys and a support staff of 32. They occupy the entire fourth floor of the Colonial Bank Centre at I-65 and Dauphin Street.

Customer service and teamwork are the threads that knit this group together and make it successful, Pierce said.

"When I started the firm, I would say to everyone that the practice of law is not an eight-to-five job; it's a way of life," Pierce said. "But I've also told young lawyers to go home and be with their families."

In addition to Pierce, the firm's named partners are Goodman Ledyard, Forrest Latta, Bill Wasden and Ed Bowron. Their practice extends from the Mississippi Coast to Northwest Florida and throughout Alabama. They handle civil litigation, maritime law, business transactions, product liability, employment law and other legal issues. Pierce, Ledyard also argues appeals — its own and other firms' cases — before state and federal appellate courts.



Pierce, Ledyard, Latta, Wasden and Bowron PC uses a team approach on many cases. Pictured from left to right are: Linda Sims, Berna Sellers, Perry Hall, Goodman Ledyard and Joy Jaye,

Pierce's "no-fail formula" for success in any field is to associate with successful people. Individually and as a group, Pierce, Ledyard attorneys exemplify that adage. Besides their track record in the courtroom, members are highly involved in professional, social, civic and political arenas. One member, David York, is a leading candidate for the U.S. Attorney's office. Wasden served as counsel to Gov. Guy Hunt during his administration, and currently serves on the committee to rewrite the state constitution. Ledyard is active in the downtown redevelopment effort.

The attorneys frequently appear as speakers and trainers in continuing legal education programs. As many firms do, they provide free legal assistance to the poor through the Legal Aid Society.

While some of the shine may have rubbed off the public's image of lawyers, Pierce said most lawyers are entitled to respect and friendship because of their diligence in advocating for their client. "They're people who can help you resolve the crises in your life."

To find out more about the firm, log on to their Web site at www.pllaw.com or call their offices at 344-5151.

Annual Gulf Coast Gathering Discusses the Impact of Free Trade

Is more free trade on the horizon for U.S. companies and what are the benefits? Yes, according to a number of experts who spoke at the Gulf Coast's Annual World Trade Conference held last month in Gulfport, Miss.

Conference topics ranged from current benefits reaped from the North America Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) since its controversial inception in 1994, to the proposed December 2005 implementation of NAFTA's spin-off, the Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA).

Discussion of the conference focused on the three countries encompassed by NAFTA- Mexico, Canada, and the United States — Canada being the number one trading partner while Mexico follows as a close second.

Russell Frisbie of the Bureau of Western Hemisphere Affairs, U.S.

Department of State, was one of the featured speakers. He outlined the Free Trade Area of the Americas as well as discussed hindrances of hemispheric free trade agreements.

The Free Trade Area of the Americas will call for low tariffs and duty free trading across the borders of 34 countries.

Several representatives gave insights into the Canadian market, including the political and commercial perspectives of NAFTA and free trade.

Jason Myers, senior vice president and chief economist of Canadian Manufacturers and

Exporters explained that in the last several years, support for Free Trade has nearly doubled in North America. In 1993, 40 percent of the people saw it as an opportunity. Last year, that number rose to 84 percent. Those who believed it was a threat dropped to 4 percent from 45 percent in 1993.

The increase support of free trade may be founded on the fact that over \$1.2 billion in goods flow between the U.S. and Canada a day, according to Myers.

Raul Urteaga, senior economic counselor of the Mexican Embassy in Washington DC, focused on the Mexican perspective of NAFTA and free trade.

Since the inception of NAFTA in 1994, political leaders throughout the hemisphere have been pushing for a larger free trade zone. The Free Trade Area of the Americas will stretch from Alaska to Tierra del Fuego, Argentina, encom-

passing 34 countries and 800 million people with a combined economical output of more than \$11 trillion.

When enacted, this agreement will be United States' third free trade agreement. The other two being NAFTA and a free trade agreement with Israel. The European Union has more than 140 free trade pacts, and the U.S. is losing competitive advantage in the global economy without additional open border agreements.

Benefits of Free Trade

- For every \$1 billion spent on trade, 20,000 jobs are created
- Companies that export add jobs 18 percent faster
- Exporting companies spend 13-27 percent more on worker training, building a higher skilled work force.
- U.S. exports support 12 million jobs in America
- Protectionism cost the world economy more than \$450 billion a year

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The Art of Hospitality

TAG Wins Awards for Interior Design

Dauphin Way Baptist Church, the Mobile Area Chamber of Commerce building, Arthur R. Outlaw Convention Center – landmarks giving Mobile a sense of identity.

The Architects Group (TAG) in Mobile began designing the buildings that would change the face of the Port City 30 years ago. Today, TAG finds itself winning acclaim not just for its design “exteriors,” but what the group is putting “under the hood.”

Alice Cutright, the company’s seasoned interior designer, recently earned another corporate interior design award for the Regions Bank Financial Center on Hillcrest Road from the American Society of Interior Designers.



Alice Cutright

What makes the award so unique, besides the fact it’s the third in a row for Cutright, is its indication of a growing trend in corporate construction. Companies used to just hire a fantastic architect and retain a builder to get the job finished on budget and on time.

ment companies. We wanted the new building to tell folks we’re much more than just a bank.”

Cutright worked with TAG’s Director of Design Dan Borcicky to incorporate elements of the Regions Financial Services building’s exterior with the lobby and work space. Traditional columns were repeated inside. The reception/customer service desk was custom-designed to include sculptural brackets similar to the exterior bracket detail. To connect the interiors with Mobile’s cultural talent, Cutright also commissioned Mobile artist Eugenia Foster to execute massive oil paintings that successfully tied together Regions’ history.

“We were delighted,” said Harbin. Complimenting Cutright’s talent in interior design, he was particularly impressed with how she stayed in control of the budget. “All of the projects we’ve done with her came in at or below budget.”

Many clients are now realizing that using an interior designer in full collaboration with the design architect adds more than aesthetics to a building.

“We know these new bank locations are more reflective of the community with these extra touches on the inside. That means they’re built to last,” says Harbin.

Cutright has been on board with TAG for five years and these days is involved in nearly 100 percent of TAG’s commercial projects.



Regions’ Bank new facility.

The interior finishes? Bring in a decorator, or better yet – get the client’s first cousin to make sure the carpet matches the walls.

Times have changed as businesses strive to create an atmosphere depicting an image and environment that will draw customers. “Interior design is no longer an afterthought but an integral part of the overall architectural process,” said Cutright.

“We have always strived to encourage our clients to understand that an interior designer is an essential team member in making the building work,” said TAG President Ed Faddis. “But honestly, for years, having a full-time designer on board just didn’t support itself. Now, we’re getting more and more companies asking whether we have an interior designer, but we still have to lead them to the water.”

The “water” in this case is Cutright’s impressive portfolio of award-winning projects for Regions Bank. Ironically, it was a Regions birthday that also led the bank to break out of the predictable design box. This month, the Bank is celebrating its centennial.

“We wanted our new location on Hillcrest Road to be anchored in tradition with a strong look to the future,” said Regions Senior Vice President for Sales & Marketing Terry Harbin. “In the last 25 years, banks have had to compete more and more with other entities such as brokerage firms and invest-



What’s next? Mobile’s new \$15 million dollar Museum of Art renovation at Langan Park; the implementation of Government Service Administration’s “First Impressions” interior imaging program on Federal buildings in Greenville, Oxford and Jackson, Miss.; a facelift for the primary buildings at Bellingrath Gardens; and the pediatric oncology unit at the University of South Alabama’s Children’s and Women’s Hospital.

“So often, an architect comes back to a project a little disappointed,” says Borcicky with TAG. “The decorator has been brought in after we’re gone to throw on some bright paint that matches the carpet – and maybe hang a few paintings. With Alice – we’re working in tandem. The building is really complete.”

Business Spotlight of the Month Gulf Link Wireless

With cell phones and pagers that can send Internet messages, there’s an almost manic passion for communicating anytime, anywhere. The technology age is upon us and the competition is fierce.

Enter this month’s Spotlight Business of the Month, Gulf Link Wireless, a local independent wireless provider. Christy Shields-Skipper, owner, created her small business in December 2000 with her husband’s encouragement, targeting wireless customers in South Mobile County.

Gulf Link Wireless provides clients with a variety of communications devices including cellular phones, pagers and two-way radios, and all the accessories to make them even more convenient like belt clips, ear pieces, telephone cradles that light up when the phone rings, and more.

Serving businesses and individuals, Shields-Skipper draws on her eight years experience in the profession, making her a veteran in a relatively new industry. Having started her career with BellSouth Mobility, she switched to Nextel and was given the opportunity to become an independent service provider for the Mobile area.

In addition to Nextel, she also represents ALL-TEL, Cellular South and Digiph. The advantage for any of these clients is Gulf Link Wireless can evaluate and update any company plan from a convenient location for those who live and work in South Mobile County.

Shields-Skipper started operations in Irvington on Bayou La Batre Hwy. to be close to home. She also knew it was a convenient location for a growing South Mobile County population and Gulf Link



Gulf Link Wireless has a new location at 6920 Airport Blvd.

could alleviate the drive for many to Tillman’s Corner or Mobile. Her initial success led to expanding the business with a second store in the Providence Place Shopping Center at 6920 Airport Blvd.

“This growth is a result of providing our clients with so many different products and services from different companies, including accessories, to make us a one-stop-shop for wireless needs,” says Shields-Skipper.

For more information about Gulf Link Wireless’s service and plans, call 340-0777.

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EARLY WARNING SIGNS

60% of all heart attack victims experience early symptoms such as:



A mild discomfort or nagging ache in the center of the chest



Recurrent discomfort; feels like indigestion



Discomfort may increase in intensity. More intense pain with exertion that goes away with rest

HEART ATTACK SIGNS



Pain in the chest, shoulders, neck or arms



Pressure



Fainting



Sweating



Shortness of Breath



Nausea

Don't ignore your heart.

Many times, the real symptoms of a heart attack aren't what you'd expect. But if you know the early warning signs, chances are you can walk in for help instead of roll in helpless when a cardiac emergency has already occurred.

More than 60% of all heart attacks begin with early warning signs, but many people ignore them. Early care is the key. Time is heart muscle.

That's where the Chest Pain Center at Providence Hospital comes in. The health care provider you have trusted for 147 years offers a full-spectrum emergency cardiac care program* to evaluate your situation before it gets worse. In many cases, we can even prevent a severe heart attack.

And if your heart checks out okay, you can leave in a matter of hours with peace of mind. That reduces days in the hospital, extra costs and time away from day-to-day activities.

So when the early signs of a heart attack appear, take a step into the Chest Pain Center. While it's still your choice.

CHEST PAIN CENTER
PROVIDENCE HOSPITAL

Emergency Entrance
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* American College of Emergency Physicians national guidelines

Hallett Selected to Serve Regional Partnership

Chamber President Win Hallett was selected to serve as Alabama Gov. Don Siegelman's representative to the Southern Global Strategies Council (GSC). The Council is a program of the Southern Growth Policies Board, a 13-state partnership devoted to strengthening the South's economy and creating the highest possible quality of life.

Specifically, the GSC is to provide expert policy advice on international issues affecting member states. Siegelman serves as its founding chairman. Topics addressed by the GSC include:

- giving the South a higher profile in the global arena;
- managing the impact of immigration;



Win Hallett

- increasing international skills among students and workers;
 - educating businesses and the public about the benefits of trade;
 - building relations with Latin America; and
 - speeding the globalization of key groups, such as high-tech start-ups and minority entrepreneurs.
- "International commerce and immigration are transforming the southern economy, yet globalization as a positive force for change remains under-appreciated," said GSC Director Carol Conway.

Hallett will participate in quarterly meetings of the GSC, including one this month in Hot Springs, Ark.

A Financial Liason

Budding entrepreneurs now have a liaison with the financial world in regards to funding options for their business.

The Small Business Administration (SBA), located in Birmingham, will be sending a representative from its Finance division to the Chamber once a month to meet with local business owners looking for options in financing their endeavors.

Advisors will analyze a company's need for capital assistance and then act as a liaison, connecting entrepreneurs to an SBA certified lender with a lending profile that matches the business' needs.

The program, called SBA Circuit Ride is part of an overall plan by the SBA to help Mobile's small business owners secure financial assistance, as well as offer advice and counseling.

During SBA's first trip to Mobile, representatives closed three loans after meeting with seven local entrepreneurs.

"The ability to match people up with lending

institutions is an important service the SBA can offer business owners," believes Jason Thrower, the Chamber's vice president of Small Business Development.

"Between the Chamber, SCORE (Service Corp of Retired Executives) and the University of South Alabama, we've done a good job in offering small business owners advice and counseling. Helping businesses that are prepared actually hook up with the right financial institution will have, I believe, a direct impact on how local businesses grow and succeed," says Thrower.

The Chamber, in conjunction with the University of South Alabama's Small Business Development Center, is teaming up with the Small Business Administration to make this service available.

For more information about financing a business log on to www.sba.gov/financing/. For an appointment with an SBA representative, call the Chamber's Small Business Department at 431-8607.

The Challenge Has Begun, Chamber Chase 2001 Survivor Edition

After months of preparation, volunteers mentally and physically ready for the challenge of Chamber Chase, Survivor Edition, officially launched their effort June 7.

In the spirit of the popular TV program, volunteers will be working together to reach a \$600,000 goal by recruiting members, and bringing in sponsorships, contributions and goods and services for Chamber programs.

"We are excited about this year's campaign," says Carolyn Golson, the Chamber's vice president of Membership.

The six-week campaign is being scaled back from the previous 14-week effort to give volunteers more time to deal with the responsibilities of their everyday business lives.

"This team of Survivors is definitely up to the challenge," adds Golson.

Local businesses sponsor tribes (teams of their employees) to assist in the effort, and have the opportunity to represent their companies at weekly reward sessions. Chamber members can get involved by donating door prizes to be given to tribe members at the weekly reward sessions.

"These reward sessions are a great way for us to build enthusiasm and serve as an opportunity for volunteers to network with others who actively support the area business community," says Jeff Weston Jr. of Cooper/T Smith Corporation. Weston is heading this year's campaign and says, "It's not too late to put together a team and help push this campaign past its goal."

Anyone interested in joining the effort or willing to donate a door prize should call Maria Bladorn at 431-8638.



Chamber Chase leadership commits to a successful campaign.

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| Cingular Wireless | Bill Withers | Rob Middleton |
| Colonial Bank | Edward O'Gwynn III | Greg Gontarski |
| Compass Bank | Mike Granger | David Turner |
| Degussa | Wolfgang Buder | Marshall Barfield |
| Diplomat #1 | Karyl Hanisch | |
| Diplomat #2 | Daniel Leonard | |
| Diplomat #3 | Chrissie Bowles | |
| First Community Bank | Glen Davis | Don Norris |
| MesaStaff | Brian Hall | Fred Lipscomb |
| Mobile Gas | John Davis | Jerry Campbell |
| Ogakor (Independent) | | Anne-Marie deVilliers |
| Regions Bank | Warren King | Matt Serda |
| Risk and Asset Management | Chris Bell | Chris Bell |
| SouthTrust Bank | Robert Wilbanks | Bridget Felder |
| Whitney National Bank | John Turner Jr. | Angela Grice |
| Xanté | Robert Ross | Nancy Konrad |



Comparative Economic Indicators

March '01 vs March '00

| | | |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------|--|-------------------------|
| Unemployment Rates <small>Mobile/Baldwin counties</small> | | 5.1% March '01 |
| | | 4.0% March '00 |
| Business Licenses <small>Mobile City</small> | | 316 March '01 |
| | | 297 March '00 |
| Homes Sold <small>Mobile County</small> | | 382 March '01 |
| | | 416 March '00 |
| Air Passengers From Mobile <small>Mobile Area</small> | | 33,552 March '01 |
| | | 35,894 March '00 |

More Education News

The Making of a Strong Workforce

What does a high school diploma mean? In Alabama it means that a graduating senior can solve this formula, or at the very least, many like it:

$$-2x - 7 = -x + 13 \text{ (Answer below)}$$

The graduating class of 2001 was the first to take the Third Edition of the Alabama High School Graduation Exam (AHSGE). Although students were only required to pass two sections, reading and language, they came through with impressive results. Ninety-seven percent passed the reading portion of the exam and 96 percent passed the language component.

"This year's test was tougher than last year's Basic Skills Exit Exam," explains **Stephen Pryor**, Mobile County Public Schools communications director. Students were tested at an 8th grade level in 2000 and this year's exam was given at an 11th grade level.

"It isn't an easy test, and I applaud the teachers, students and parents who really stepped up their efforts to prepare for this exam," says Pryor.

Students were informed of the new exam requirement as they entered the 9th grade in the fall of 1997. The class of 2002 will have to pass all four sections of the AHSGE, including reading, language, mathematics and science. In 2003, the final component, social studies, will be added.

Graduation exams are just one of the initiatives the State Board of Education has implemented to elevate Alabama's ranking in education quality and to create a strong workforce that will attract new businesses to the State.

"When minimum levels of education are high, employers take notice," says Pryor. "Alabama has the highest graduation requirements in the U.S."

Answer: -20

Local Educators Honored for Excellence

Five Mobile County Educators recently received awards for their compassion, dedication, commitment and achievement in setting and reaching high standards for education. Three administrators and a guidance counselor won statewide honors, while a local high school science teacher won National recognition for his efforts.

Susan McRae, principle of Baker Elementary School, was named Alabama's National Distinguished Elementary Principal for 2001. The program recognizes excellence among elementary and middle school principals. McRae began her career in Mobile County Schools in 1972 and has held numerous teaching and administrative positions.

Baker High School science teacher **Scott T. Nelson** received an alternate Fellow for the Christa McAuliffe Fellowship Program, a national award. Nelson earned a grant for \$9,260 for his efforts in researching, evaluating and developing a plan to better prepare students for the High School Graduation Exam.

Davidson High School Principal **Lewis Copeland** received the Outstanding Educator Award from the Alabama Music Educators Association. He was commended for consistently setting high standards, supporting the efforts of band directors under his tenure, and seeking parent involvement in the band program at Davidson High School for almost 20 years.

The Alabama Environmental Council honored **Lloyd Scott**, director of the Mobile County School System's Environmental Studies Center, as Alabama's Outstanding Nature Educator of the Year. Scott has served as director of the center since its beginning in 1976. During its 25-year history, the center has earned several national citations for its commitment to educating youth and adults.

The Alabama Counseling Association recognized Satsuma High School Guidance Counselor, **Carolyn Owens**, as the State of Alabama Secondary Counselor of the Year. She has more than 32 years experience in Mobile County Public Schools serving first as an English and Journalism teacher, and since 1974, as a guidance counselor with Satsuma High School. Owens was honored for her enthusiasm, compassion, professionalism and for her commitment to extracurricular projects.



Education Starts With the Basics

Recently a study from the State Board of Education has received attention with its new report titled, *Closing the Gap: How the Alabama Reading Initiative is Transforming Reading and Instruction for All Students*.

Published by A+ and the Alabama Best Practices Center, the report examines the gains made by 81 Alabama schools during the first two complete years of the Alabama Reading Initiative's (ARI) implementation. Some of the results are encouraging.

Before the program was launched at West Blocton Elementary School in Bibb County, 41 percent of students were reading below their grade level. Now only 10 percent are lagging, according to the report. Overall, 62.5 percent of struggling readers improved to reading at grade level or above in one year.

The goals of ARI include strengthening reading instruction in the early grades, continuously expanding all students' reading power and comprehension levels, and intervening effectively with struggling readers. "This unique initiative is not a program with instructions for schools and teachers, but a cooperative, research-driven process that demands participation from students and teachers alike," reads the report.

Through ARI, teachers learn how to recognize poor readers and how to incorporate reading strategies into every classroom, despite the subject. To order free copies of *Closing the Gap*, call 1-800-253-8865 or download it on the Web at www.aplusala.org.

For more information about how the State Board of Education plans to accomplish its goals for high academic standards, read the Goals and Initiatives document on the Web at www.alsde.edu/boe/Goals_n_init.pdf.

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Working Smart

◆ Let Employees Work From Home

By Judy Marston

Editor's note: This column is part two of How to Get and Keep the Best and Brightest. In April, one idea that Judy Marston felt needed additional attention was allowing employees to work from home.

Why is it that all of a sudden everyone wants to work from home? What ever happened to the good old 9 to 5 job where workers reported to the office, stood around the coffeepot for a while, then worked from their desks the rest of the day?

You can blame Generation X and Generation Y, or you can thank them, depending on how you feel about the turn work is taking as we move into the 21st Century. It's this under 35 workforce that is demanding the changes, but everyone will reap the benefits.

With laptop computers, cell phones, FAX machines and e-mail there really isn't a reason some jobs can't be done from a home office, den or even the guest room.

Allowing employees to have flexible schedules and time to work from home is a successful recruitment and retention tool. Employee loyalty is growing again, after taking a sharp decline this last decade, in modern-thinking companies because people are willing to stay longer in situations that allow them a balance between work and family.

Ask young workers where they work and you'll get an answer you didn't expect: "Work is not where you are, it's what you do," says Michael Young in the April issue of *Fast Company* magazine (one of the best resources for keeping up with current work-related issues).

Gone are the days of fighting your way up the company ladder to the corner office. Forget corner windows, expensive paneling, leather chairs and oriental rugs. Most up-and-coming professionals

would rather stay home and work from an empty bedroom.

From what people are saying, employees give more time to a project when working from home than in the office. Instead of spending time commuting, they are grabbing a cup of coffee and walking to the computer. They can work with fewer interruptions, making it easier to focus, think and check off tasks on their "to-do" list. Plus, the time they would spend chatting with co-workers and on lunch breaks could be spent taking care of the baby, running a load of laundry and getting dinner going while they check out the latest report from the main office on their laptop.

Granted, not every job can be done from home. Businesses still need the personal contact a receptionist provides, and managers that work closely with their executive assistants are often lost without them. But for those jobs that can be done from somewhere else, here are a few steps to consider:

- Set specific goals for each employee
- Evaluate results regularly;
- Establish days employees are required to work at the office. Schedule staff meetings and conferences on those days.
- Consider requiring work-at-home employees to buy their own equipment, then reimburse them after six months if the arrangement is mutually beneficial;
- Make working from home a privilege, not a right.

After all, what does it matter *where* people work, as long as they get the job done?

Judy Marston, Marston & Associates, is a business consultant and speaker. She can be reached at judy@marstoncomm.com.



Leadership Replacing Management

A significant shift is underway in the business environment. Workers no longer want to be managed. They demand leadership, which requires a whole different set of skills.

Over the past few years, there has been a lot of talk about the differences between leadership and management — and that is the problem. Workers have heard talk, but haven't seen action. They're looking for a change in the practices of their superiors, and they are not satisfied with the progress.

To workers, as well as theorists and business school professors, leadership means letting go. Leadership means giving workers more responsibility, more freedom, more power and more accountability. In the real world, executives, managers and supervisors are still managing . . . even as they call themselves leaders. Managing includes directing, organizing the work of others, close monitoring and discipline.

The techniques of management impede corporate growth, especially when desired growth requires original thinking, creativity, innovation and risk-taking. Such behaviors are very difficult in a traditional management environment. Yet, growth is essential in today's competitive, fast-moving world. Growth in products and services, technology, business relationships, market penetration and market share, and the capacity of the company and its workforce are vital just to keep up!

To survive-and thrive-in the fast-changing business environments of today and tomorrow, the practice of leadership can make a substantial dif-

ference. Without enough people available to do all the jobs, workers must be empowered to take whatever actions are necessary to accomplish work and serve customers.

With fewer people to accomplish the same-or more work, employers must find new ways of doing things. Leadership.

Problem: Most people in charge of companies, or sections of companies, are more comfortable



with management than they are with leadership. They must change. They must learn how to be leaders, while they are almost overwhelmed with the demands of work that must still be done everyday.

Solution: Employers need to re-train managers to be leaders. Example of new behaviors must come from the top of the organization. Employers who manage this transformation well will have a competitive advantage in the years ahead.

Source: "Trend Alert," by Roger and Joyce Herman, Strategic Business Futurists. (800) 227-3566 or www.berman.net.

One of the most enlightening programs at the Exploreum will never be seen by the public.

Although the Exploreum shows the world of science to thousands of Mobilians each year, they turned to an outside source to learn about the wonders of financial accounting software. As a Great Plains Partner, Wilkins Miller CPAs has helped the Exploreum open its doors and streamline daily operations. 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 assessment.

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SCORE

SCORE Can Help Evaluate Business Problems

Making decisions that affect your business is not an easy task. Will my customers buy this new product? How much inventory should be in the storeroom? Are there enough employees during peak times?

Business climates frequently change from one year to the next, even from season to season. "Owners need to predict with some certainty how a decision made today will affect the business one, two or three years down the road," says Bob Kirby, counselor and past chairman of the local Service Corp of Retired Executives.

A entrepreneur who recently visited SCORE was exploring ideas for his operation. After four years in business, he wasn't sure what direction the company should take. Much of his activities had been seizing opportunities and meeting deadlines. Unfortunately, he wasn't making a profit.

What he found at SCORE was someone who could listen, sympathize and then make a number of suggestions such as drawing up a business plan and cash flow projections. "In a sense, he needed to go back to the basics of knowing your business, something he hadn't time for previously," says Kirby.

When faced with these type of challenges, Kirby advises answering a few questions to help evaluate a problem. To start, determine the nature of the problem. "Sounds simple, but our client hadn't done it.

It's hard sometimes when you're so busy with clients to stop and take time for the long-term success of the business," says Kirby.

It may be a loss of sales, a drop in profit margins or aging account receivables. What may seem to be the obvious problem may only be a symptom of the real problem, cautions Kirby. The actual problem may not be the age of accounts receivable, but rather a lack of time to adequately review financial reports. If that's the case, quick action can prevent a cash flow crisis.

What are the causes of the problem? If sales are down, why? By examining the root of the problem, businesses can start to create viable solutions. What are all the possible solutions to the problem? Write down ideas and talk to others in the field about other possibilities. Good ideas, whether from brainstorming or other sources, should not be dismissed.

"There is no magic cure to the myriad of details and time constraints an entrepreneur faces," says Kirby. However, by taking control of major issues and addressing the elements that impact immediate survival, only then can businesses take the time to plan for a successful future.

Contact the local SCORE chapter, located on the Chamber's second floor at 451 Government St. The services are free and confidential. Appointments are available Monday through Friday, from 9 a.m. until

Noon.

"There is no magic cure to the myriad of details and time constraints an entrepreneur faces," says Kirby. However, by taking control of major issues and addressing the elements that impact immediate survival, only then can businesses take the time to plan for a successful future.

TRADE Bulletin Board

More and more companies worldwide are including the Internet as a tool in their global sales and marketing plan. The Chamber's Web site, www.mobilechamber.org, features a number of resources including foreign buyers and contacts, trade shows and international websites. Here are a few recent Internet trade leads:

A manufacturer of filter cloth typically used to filter sugar, cooking oil, soap, chemicals, lubricant/grease and cement is looking for new clients in the U.S. The company can supply the filter cloth in 100 percent cotton, 100 percent polyester and also in a 50/50 polyester/cotton mixed blend in any width.

Contact:
M.Yousuf Shamsi
Shamsi Pakistan (Pvt) Ltd.
F/582 S.I.T.E.
Karachi - Pakistan
Phone: 92-21-562757 & 92-21-2562758
Fax: 92-21-4545481
E-mail: shamsi.pk@cyber.net.pk

Technolitas JSC, a manufacturing company in Vilnius, Lithuania, is looking for companies interested in distributing or reselling its final or prefabricated furniture and metal products. Sample products include: office, hotel, residential and customer design furniture; metal shelving and storage units; metal stamps, press-forms, moulds; metal components and articles according to customer's design; plastic parts; and parts of bended plywood. The company also produces electronics and computers.

Contact:
Technolitas Olegas Dolgopolas
Commercial Director
Phone: +370-98 44557
Fax: +370- 2 727802
E-mail: technolitas@technolitas.lt
Web site: www.technolitas.lt

Digital Century (HK) Ltd., a multimedia information provider based in Hong Kong, is looking to develop its overseas market. The company produces CD-Roms and CD-Rs as well as the full range of design and production. It's main customers are companies in Hong Kong, with some Japanese and European clients.

Contact:
Benson Lam
Marketing Manager
Web site: www.dcenturyhk.com

A Kenya company is looking for businesses that are interested in importing African handicrafts. Sample products include hardwood animal carvings, soapstone figurines, African pottery, basketware, gifts and collectables.

Contact:
Edward K Ngure
E. K. Ngure and Company
P.O. Box 31123
Nairobi, Kenya
Phone: 254.2.811033
Fax: 254.2.330170
E-mail: Ngure@homestead.com

A Turkish company is offering to compose inexpensive Turkish high quality textiles with a European high service level. For some fabrics, the company can supply substantial quantities in three weeks.

The company can provide microfibre, nylon-cotton, nylon-microfibre, polyester-cotton fabrics for ready wear; 100 percent polyester jacquard fabrics for curtains, tablecloths and furnishing; and different finishing styles like waterproof, stainproof, flameproof, PVC coating, acrylic coating.

Contact:
Hasan Tümay
Mihenk Textile
Phone: +90 224 2202582
Fax: +90 224 2203012
E-mail: htumay@ihlas.net.tr or mihenk@e-kolay.net

Revitalizing Neighborhoods Part of Tricentennial

Mobile's getting ready for the celebration of a lifetime. The city's Tricentennial officially begins December 31, 2001, and events and activities are set through December 2002.

"So you might say we're working on sprucing up for the big event," says Ann Bedsole, Tricentennial president.

ReViveMobile, a non-profit corporation, was created by the Mobile Tricentennial Inc. to jump-start revitalization efforts in neighborhoods throughout the city - a primary goal of the Tricentennial committee.

The new organization has outlined two critical components for success. First, citizens must agree that the physical and environmental integrity of their neighborhood must be restored. Then second, they must establish governing mechanisms, develop strategies and recruit resources to implement and maintain changes in their communities.

"We believe this revive process will help residents better understand their roles, the role of government and how they complement each other," says ReViveMobile Chairman Merceria Ludgood. "The result we're hoping for is that neighborhoods will be more vibrant and people will feel more involved in the general community."

The organization will help communities convene and develop master plans for revitalizing neighborhoods. For example, citizens will evaluate safety,

the need for economic development and the lack of a faith-based organization. In addition to identifying the areas needing improvement, an action plan will be devised assigning responsibilities and identifying resources available within the community and from other sources.

The complete ReViveMobile master plan will be available for public input at a Citizens' Summit, planned for this Fall.

Lister Thomas, recently retired as director of the Neighborhood Housing Programs Division of the Mobile Housing Board, agreed to serve as executive director of ReViveMobile. He will be available to give technical assistance to community groups through leadership development, organizing, grant writing and other resource development.

For more information, contact the Tricentennial office at 342-4386.



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Alabama's Home on the Net

Diplomats of the Month

Editor's note: Due to a tie, there are two Diplomats of the Month for June.

Myrinda McCarron

Myrinda McCarron, owner of Remedy Intelligent Staffing, is one of this month's featured Diplomats. Involved in the Chamber's Diplomat program for four years, she has previously been Diplomat of the Month twice and in 1999 earned the Diplomat of the Year Award.

McCarron says her favorite functions to attend are the networking events like Business After-Hours, First Fridays and ribbon cuttings.

"Being a Chamber member is really beneficial," McCarron said. "But actively participating in the business community, through the Chamber, gives you the ability to tap into its resources and use them to attract new customers, clients and business opportunities."

Remedy Intelligent Staffing, a member of the Mobile Society for Human Resource Management, specializes in fitting their customers into the right job, as opposed to fitting them into the first job that comes along.



Rick Beirne



Rick Beirne is the second Chamber Diplomat featured this month. A veteran of the Chamber's Diplomat program, Beirne has been involved more than 12 years.

He is senior project manager with URS Corporation (formerly Walk Haydel), an environmental, industrial process and detail design engineering firm.

Previously Beirne has been recognized as Diplomat of the Month three times and served as the group's chairman in 1996. He is a regular volunteer at the monthly networking events, new member briefings, goodwill calls and other occasions that forge close relationships between the Chamber and local businesses.

"Getting involved in the community is very important," Beirne said. "These are exciting times for Mobile, and the Chamber gives me the opportunity to be a part of local growth and improvement."

Over the years, Beirne has served on several Chamber committees including Business and the Arts Task Force, Annual Meeting Task Force, and has been the Infrastructure Team Leader for Envision Mobile – Baldwin.

Other community and professional organizations that he dedicates his time to are Joe Jefferson Players, Mobile Kiwanis Club, the America Society of Civil Engineers, the Society of Military Engineers, Alabama Society of Professional Engineers and the Family Counseling Center.



French Invasion

In July, 33 French students will land in Mobile excited about practicing their English and the opportunity to experience American culture. The Educational Foundation for Children Abroad (EFCA), a nonprofit organization for cultural exchange, needs host families willing to spend part of their summer with a student, ages 15-17 or one of two adult chaperones who will accompany them.

"These students are well-prepared for their trip. They've had seven years of English, they come with their own spending money and only want to live like an American family," says Evelyn Gibson with Long's Human Resource Services who volunteers with EFCA.

The French entourage arrives on July 6 and departs on August 3. It's not necessary to speak French. Every family interested in being a part of this cultural exchange is encouraged to apply. Host families who have any summer vacation plans are encouraged to take the student with them.

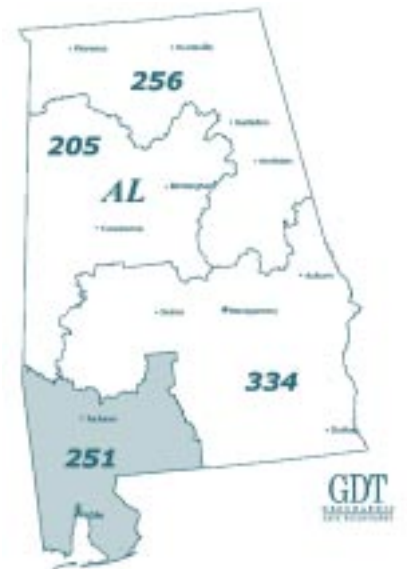
Those interested in helping a bright young French student learn more about America should call Gibson with Long's Human Resource Services at 476-4080 or 626-1882 (home).



It's Official – New Area Code

Starting June 18, the new area code can be used – 251. Mobile and Baldwin counties will be totally changed over by the end of the year. The 251 area code will cover south Alabama up through Jackson. Montgomery will keep the old 334 exchange.

Remember to change the area code when printing new business cards, stationery or brochures. A list of Chamber member printers can be found at www.mobilechamber.com.



If It Sounds Too Good to be True, It Probably Is

Recently, there have been several advertisements about the availability of grants to help individuals start a small business or for other personal purposes. The Chamber's Community Development and Small Business Development Departments want members to be aware that virtually all assistance to individuals starting new businesses comes in the form of loans. "Although it may sound like a terrific opportunity, it's unlikely that it will pan out as a true grant," says Michelle Rumpf, the Chamber's coordinator of community development. Grants, which are monetary awards given for specific purposes, are given to individuals primarily for scholarships, fellowships and research.

Vendors Wanted

The City of Birmingham is looking to build its vendor list for a wide variety of goods and services. Businesses interested in being added to Birmingham's more than 200 bid lists, should fax the company's name, address, point of contact for solicitations and a list of the goods and/or services the company can provide to Ron Nickel, purchasing agent at 205-254-2484. This information can also be mailed to City of Birmingham, Purchasing Division, P.O. Box 11295, Birmingham, Ala. 35202-1295.

The Alabama Advantage

With a more technology savvy group of soon-to-be retirees, Gov. Don Siegelman created a first-of-its-kind Web site for relocation and retirement information. The site promotes Alabama communities from the beautiful mountains of northern Alabama to the sugary shores of the Gulf Coast.

Those new to the state will also benefit from the information and links found on the site. Those interested in a particular community can click to instant profiles outlining the cost of housing, utilities, population statistics and more.

For more information, log on to www.alabamaadvantage.com.

Alabama Hits Two Top 10 Rankings

When it comes to capital investments during 1998-2000, Alabama earned the no. 6 spot in the nation. Per 1 million people, \$2.3 billion was invested. On the 2000 list of manufacturing plants, Alabama nailed the no. 9 position with 57 facilities.

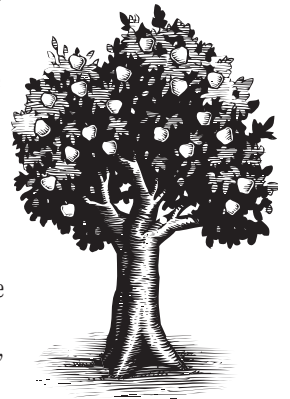
Four Alabama locations ranked among the Top 100 U.S. Small Towns for Corporate Facilities: Selma, 32; Cullman, 37; and Opelika and Scottsboro tied for 57.

Source: *Developments*, published by the Economic Development Partnership of Alabama.

Protecting South Alabama and Mississippi

Local Gulf Coast chapters of the Nature Conservancy announced a unique initiative to protect the Grand Bay region of southern Alabama and Mississippi. The Grand Bay Conservation Initiative will focus initially on a prescribed fire management plan. The majority of plants found in the area need natural or prescribed fire for their continued survival.

The cooperative approach includes Shell Oil, Williams, ExxonMobil and BP Amoco and will reduce threats of wildfires to these gas industry facilities, enhance safety of the local community, increase public understanding and restore the natural areas that once dominated Grand Bay.



Mobile's Living Legend

Maj. Gen. Gary Cooper was recently named a Living Legend. The ceremony was held in Washington D.C., and was sponsored by the University of the District of Columbia's (UDC) 2001 public relations class, the UDC Journalism Club, the Journalism Program, the Literacy Through Journalism Project and the United Bank Fund.

Cooper is currently chairman of the board and chief executive officer of Commonwealth National Bank. He has served in a number of military and political positions. Cooper was the first African-American appointed as the U.S. Ambassador to Jamaica, from 1994-1997. In Vietnam, he was the first African-American officer to lead an infantry company into combat in Marine Corps history and later commanded a Marine reserve unit. He was promoted to Major General in 1988.

He participated in planning Operation Desert Storm after being appointed Assistant Secretary of the Air Force for Manpower, Reserve Affairs, Installations and the Environment in 1989. Cooper also served as Commissioner of the Alabama State Department of Human Resources, beginning in 1978. Until his selection as Commissioner, he served in the Alabama State Legislature.

Cooper has been a member of the management team at David Volkert and Associates, from 1992-1994 as senior vice president, and from 1981-1989 as vice president.



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Deborah York Joins Chamber Team

Media relations, coordinating the Chamber's Annual Meeting, hosting seminars on communications and creating publications such as *Mobile's on the Grow* and the *Fast Facts* pocket guide to Mobile are just a few of the duties being performed by the Chamber's new Communications Director, Deborah York.

York joins the Chamber with nine years experience in communications. Most recently, she worked for an investor relations firm in New York City where she managed investor communications for a variety of clients in the high tech, healthcare and bio-technology fields.

Throughout her career, Deborah has worked in for-profit and non-profit organizations and has experience in marketing, advertising, strategic communications planning, media relations and crisis communications. Her writing has won awards from the International Association of Business Communicators and her articles have appeared in national publications, such as *Marketing Tools* published by American Demographics.

"We were looking for a top-notch communications professional and we found one in



Deborah," said Jodi Swiderek, the Chamber's vice president of communications. "We're anxious for Deborah to meet members of the media and local corporate public relations professionals over the next few months."

York can be reached by calling 431-8623 or via e-mail at deborah@mobilechamber.com.

Featured Profiles Advisors

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

Gigi Armbrecht is BellSouth's Regional Manager focusing on external affairs for the Mobile District. She is responsible for strategic relationships and external affairs activities, interdepartmental sales, service and customer satisfaction initiatives, and media relations in Mobile, Baldwin, Clarke, Conecuh, Escambia and Washington counties. Prior to her position at BellSouth, Armbrecht was executive director of Mobile United. A former member of the National Civic League Board of Directors, she was a three-time judge for the All America City Awards. She is a fellow with the W.K. Kellogg National Leadership Program and a graduate of Leadership Mobile. Armbrecht also serves on the Downtown Redevelopment Commission and the Mobile Area Education Foundation board of directors. She is a member of the Envision Mobile-Baldwin Steering Committee and the Building Authority for the Alabama School of Mathematics and Science. Armbrecht is a graduate of the University of Alabama and holds masters degrees from the University of South Alabama. She is married to Conrad Armbrecht and has two children, Stewart and Amanda.



Gigi Armbrecht

Mark R. Foley PhD is president of the University of Mobile, a position he has held since February 1998. Previously, he was executive vice president of New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary. Foley holds a bachelor's degree in business administration from Hardin-Simmons University, and a master of divinity and doctor of philosophy in psychology and counseling from New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary. He is an ordained minister, a former professional counselor and a graduate-level professor. Foley is a member of the Rotary Club of Mobile, and serves on the board of Volunteers of America, Southeast Inc. He is a former member of the American Association of Christian Counselors and served as president of the Fellowship of Christian Counselors and Therapists. He also served on the Racial Reconciliation Task Force of the Southern Baptist Convention Interagency Council. Foley is married to Marilyn, and has two children, Molly and Rob.



Mark R. Foley PhD

Shoei Yamana is president and chief executive officer of Minolta-QMS Inc. Yamana joined the company in September 1999 and is on the company's board of directors. Previously, he served Minolta Co. Ltd. for 22 years in various management positions in international business including: general manager of Corporate Strategy Division; general manager of Asia Business Development Division; general manager of China Business Development Division; and manager of the European Export Division. He received his degree from the University of Waseda in Global Marketing. He was born in Hyogo, Japan and is the father of two sons.



Shoei Yamana

Richard A. Braswell is vice president and general manager of BE&K Engineering, Mobile Division. He has more than 30 years experience in operations, design, procurement and construction of industrial facilities. He is a member of the University of South Alabama Industrial Advisory Board, the Mid-Gulf Business Roundtable, the American Institute of Chemical Engineers, the Society of American Military Engineers and the Associated Builders and Contractors. Braswell is married with two children.



Richard A. Braswell



Whether you're an employer looking for highly skilled workers or want to get involved with School-to-Work, the Center for Workforce Development's site at www.mobilechamber.com is right for you.

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CALENDAR VIEW

June 13 Afternoon Marketing Meeting

Time: 4 - 5 p.m.
Place: Chamber McGowin Room
Cost: \$6
Call: Maria Bladorn at 431-8638

June 26 Member Open House

Time: 5 - 7 p.m.
Place: Chamber McGowin Room
Cost: Free
Call: Maria Bladorn at 431-8638

June 28 Business After Hours

Time: 5:30 - 7 p.m.
Place: Ramada Plaza Hotel
 600 S. Beltline Highway
Cost: \$2 for members/\$5 for potential members

Member Open House

Members get the opportunity to network with fellow professionals and also learn how the different Chamber departments can help their business. Held on Tuesday, June 26 in the Chamber McGowin room from 5 until 7 p.m., the Member Open House is very informative and fun.

Attendees will receive a special commemorative gift and will be entered into a drawing for a Chamber gift pack. Hors d'oeuvres and refreshments will be served.

For reservations, call Maria Bladorn at 431-8638. Free admission.

COMING IN JULY

July 6 First Friday

Time: 7:45 - 8:45 a.m.
Place: Spring Hill College, Gautrelet Room
Cost: \$2 for members/\$5 for potential members

July 17 Morning Marketing Meeting

Time: 7:30 - 8:30 a.m.
Place: Chamber McGowin Room
Cost: \$6 and includes breakfast
Call: Maria Bladorn at 431-8638

July 26 Business After Hours

Time: 5:30 - 7 p.m.
Place: Camellia Bowling Lanes
 125 N. Schillinger Road
Cost: \$2 for members/\$5 for potential members

July's First Friday

On Friday, July 6, join the Chamber for First Friday in the Spring Hill College Gautrelet Room. Stop by between 7:45 and 8:45 a.m. and enjoy a continental breakfast while networking with fellow professionals.

The cost to attend is \$2 for members and \$5 for potential members.



June Afternoon Marketing Meeting

The Afternoon Marketing Meeting, sponsored by The Holliman Group, is scheduled for Wednesday, June 13 in the Chamber McGowin room from 4 - 5 p.m. This meeting gives participants the opportunity to give a two-minute presentation on their company's products or services. Brochures and flyers are welcome.

For reservations, call Maria Bladorn at 431-8638. The cost is \$6 to attend.

The Holliman Group

July Morning Marketing Meeting

The Morning Marketing Meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, July 17 in the Chamber McGowin room from 7:30 until 8:30 a.m. This meeting gives participants the opportunity to give a two-minute presentation on their company's products or services. Bring marketing materials to distribute to the audience.

For reservations, call Maria Bladorn at 431-8638. The cost to attend is \$6 and includes break-

June Business After Hours

This month's Business After Hours will be held on Thursday, June 28 from 5:30 until 7 p.m. at the Ramada Plaza Hotel. Stop by and view the newly remodeled atrium and network with area business professionals.

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

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Brewer Homes Inc.
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Employers Drug Program
Management Inc.
Esfeller Construction Company Inc.
Gardner, Middlebrooks, Fleming
Gibbons & Kittrell PC
Gulf Pallet Company
Holiday Inn Express
J. M. Miller Plumbing & Piping Inc.
John G. Walton Construction
Company Inc.
M & A Studio
Mobile Pipe & Welding Inc.
Safety Source Inc.
SecurityLink from Ameritech
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TeleVox Software Inc.
The Appraisal & Consultant Group
The Carter Group LLC
The New Coastal Ford
Zieman, Speegle, Jackson &
Hoffman LLC
Zoghby's Uniforms Unlimited

July Business After Hours

In July, Business After Hours will be held on Thursday, July 26 from 5:30 until 7 p.m. at the Camellia Bowling Lanes at 125 N. Schillinger Road.

Stop by to network with area business professionals and maybe bowl a few frames for fun!

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



Business Exhibition Set for August 23

It's become a tradition - the August version of Business After Hours turns into a Business After Hours Exhibition. This year, 125 companies will have the opportunity to showcase their business, more than double that of previous years.

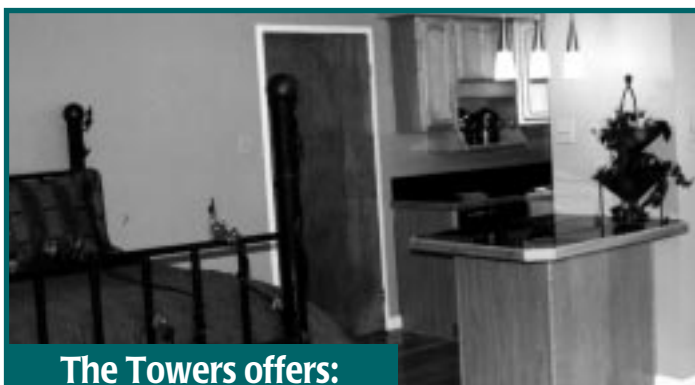
Having outgrown the Mobile Convention Center's Ball Room, the 2001 event will move to the Exhibit Hall. Scheduled from 4 - 7 p.m., Thursday, Aug. 23, this event consistently draws a crowd of 500 representatives from the business community.

The fee for a table-top display booth is \$100. In addition to being an optimal marketing opportunity, the Business After Hours Exhibition will be an evening filled with fun, food and door prizes.

For more information, contact Reeda Taylor, 431-8649 or Maria Bladorn at 431-8638.

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ATTENTION MEMBERS!

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?

Dauphin Realty announced several new realtor's joined its Fairhope office: **Rob Copeland, Sandy Martin, Susan Lee and Don Scroggins.**



Buxton

Lisa Buxton was named director of marketing for **Chapura**, a Mobile-based software development company. A graduate of the University of Virginia, her responsibilities will include expanding Chapura's customer base and launching new products targeted at specific markets. In her previous position with MetalSpectrum, an on-line resource center and marketplace for the metals industry in Atlanta, Buxton was advertising manager.

SouthTrust Bank recently announced **Gilbert F. Dukes III** joined its board of directors. Dukes practices law with Coale, Dukes, Kirkpatrick & Crowley PC in Mobile and received his juris doctor degree at the University of Alabama in 1988 and a masters of law degree from New York University.



Dukes

Leigh Perry Herndon was appointed public relations director at **Sullivan-St. Clair Advertising & Public Relations**. She most recently served as director of communications for the Mobile Area Chamber of Commerce. Her professional background includes experience in journalism, grant writing and education. A native of Mobile, Herndon is a graduate of the University of South Alabama.



Perry Herndon

The Alabama School of Mathematics and Science board of directors named **Milly Cowles PhD** its executive director for the institution. She was previously director of Alabama's distinguished Principals' Academy, which provides leadership and professional development training for principals in Southwest Alabama. Prior to that position, she was the dean of education at the University of Alabama-Birmingham where she was awarded a distinguished service professor, emerita.

The **Providence Hospital** Pastoral Care department announced the addition of two new staff members: **Patricia Kucharski**, as director of Pastoral Care, and **Reverend Terry Robinson** as the hospital's first Protestant and nighttime chaplain.

A native of Buffalo, N.Y., Kucharski received a master's degree in Pastoral Ministry through Christ the King Seminary in East Aurora, N. Y. She has worked in the fields of counseling, teaching and pastoral care for the past 20 years. Most recently, she was the Chaplain at the Mercy Medical Healthcare Center in Daphne.

Rev. Robinson attended the University of Mobile and received a bachelor's degree in Religion and Psychology, and a master's degree in Divinity from New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary. He continued his pastoral care studies at Southern Baptist Hospital in New Orleans and Mid-America Baptist Seminary in Memphis, Tenn. Robinson most recently worked as a counselor at the Methodist Psychiatric Pavilion in New Orleans.

Ritchie Hurt joined BE&K as business development manager. Previously, Hurt was the director of Research and Information with the Mobile Area Chamber of Commerce.

Shellie Covan joined the **Mobile Association for Retarded Citizens** as the public relations and development director. She previously was the special events coordinator at the Gulf Coast Exploreum Science Center. She also teaches part-time in the Communication Department at the University of South Alabama. Covan received a bachelor's degree in Psychology and a master's in Advertising and Public Relations from the University of Alabama.

MEMBER NEWS

A number of promotions were announced by **EnergySouth Inc.**, the holding company for Mobile Gas Service Corporation, Bay Gas Storage Company, EnergySouth Services Inc. and MGS Marketing Inc.

W.G. Coffeen III, was promoted to senior vice president of Operations and Marketing for Mobile Gas and EnergySouth. Coffeen joined Mobile Gas in 1986 and has more than 30 years experience in the energy field.



Coffeen

Charles P. Huffman was promoted to senior vice president and chief financial officer of Mobile Gas and EnergySouth. He joined Mobile Gas in 1980.



Huffman



Stringer



Keen

Susan Stringer was promoted to vice president and controller for Mobile Gas and EnergySouth. She joined Mobile Gas in 1991.

Gerald S. Keen was promoted to president and chief operating officer for Bay Gas Storage. He joined Mobile Gas in 1990 and has been involved in developing underground gas storage for 20 years.

Greg Welch is now the vice president and general manager of Bay Gas Storage. Welch joined Mobile Gas in 1995.



Welch



Fields

Ed Fields was promoted to vice president of Governmental Affairs. Fields joined Mobile Gas in 1963.

Gordon Royce is now vice president of Operations for Bay Storage. Royce started with Bay Gas in 1991.



Royce



Headrick

Bob Headrick is the new treasurer for EnergySouth and its companies. He was previously the director of internal audit for Mobile Gas.

AmStaff Human Resources Inc. hired **John Ford** as Safety and Loss Prevention specialist.

AmStaff's Safety and Claims Department helps clients maintain safe work environments and is available for onsite training and inspections. Previously, Ford worked with the Florida Division of Safety as a Safety & Health Consultant and was a Navy Division Safety Officer for 10 years. His advanced education includes postgraduate work in safety at the Navy Postgraduate School in Monterey, Calif. and completion of over 30 training courses in Occupational Safety and Health.



Ford

Kathy Peavy was elected president of the Friends of the **Mobile Museum of Art**. Peavy, an art teacher in the Mobile schools, regularly brings students to exhibits and special events. She has also served on the museum board as a president of the Art Patrons League, and is a long-standing supporter of the museum and the visual arts in Mobile.

Cardiology Associates announce the association of **Mary H. Honkanen MD**. She is specializing in the diagnosis and treatment of cholesterol and complex lipid disorders.

Janet Hayes was promoted to senior vice president and city manager for the Private Client office at **Compass Bank of Mobile**. She joined the bank in 1997.

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

BUSINESS ENDEAVORS

SouthTrust Mortgage recently acquired Atlanta-based **EquiBanc**, specializing in wholesale origination of non-conforming residential loans. SouthTrust Mortgage, which operates 48 retail branch offices in Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, Georgia and Florida, is a subsidiary of Birmingham-based **SouthTrust Corp.**

SouthTrust Corp. recently purchased **CENIT Bancorp Inc.** in Norfolk, Va. CENIT Bank currently operates 20 offices in the Hampton Roads area of Virginia. SouthTrust has managed lending institutions in Richmond and Northern Virginia for several years, and now has more than \$1.1 billion in assets in the state.

Home ChoiceHealth Services of Alabama Inc., purchased **Springhill Home Health Agency**, formerly a department of Springhill Memorial Hospital. All services will remain the same and **Claudette Ford RN, BS, MHSA**, will remain administrative director.

TeleVox Software Inc. unveiled **OrthoCharge** credit card processing services for orthodontic practices as part of its interactive patient Web services. The new service saves time by setting up monthly contracts for automatic credit card billing at the time of the patient's initial visit. Also, patients may pay their bills on-line by credit card on the practice's Web site, with an assigned user name and a five-digit personal identification number.

In other news, **TeleVox** announced a strategic marketing agreement with **Physician Informatics Corp.**, a leading provider of practice management software to physician practices throughout the United States and abroad.

The **Bellwether Group**, a new consultancy for strategic public and environmental affairs, announced the association of its staff: **Mary Mullins**, partner; **Kinnon Phillips**, partner; **Hank Burch**, associate and **J. Arendall**, associate. The company handles market planning, media research, special events planning and environmental communications. Located at 401 Church St., they can be reached at 433-3993.

Integrated Systems Management has become an authorized consultant for **Sage MAS 90** and **MAS 200** software programs. These programs provide information solutions for the construction, professional services, wholesale distribution and manufacturing industries. To learn more, call 342-0900.

Providence Open MRI, a venture of the Providence Health Care Services, is open and located within the Airport Family Physicians Office. MRI is invaluable for diagnosing a wide range of medical conditions. An open unit helps patients relax during what traditionally has been a claustrophobic and anxious experience.

Xanté Corporation recently announced the **New Colour Screenwriter**, the first and only color laser printer capable of producing quality film positives and with no extra processing. The **Colour Screenwriter** is designed specifically for screen printers in need of a quality, fast turn-around for film positives, heat transfers, label stock and color proofs. There are three different versions of this new printer, each allowing users to bypass many steps associated with traditional film printing by outputting directly to **Myriad film**. For more information about this product, call 473-6503.

WELL DONE!

Don Kennedy, president of **Gulf Coast Financial Associates** achieved the distinction of **Certified Agency Executive** through the **National Hospital Collectors Association**. This award is given to executives demonstrating superior management abilities in an entrepreneurial manner, and participate in both business and community organizations.

Roberts Brothers announced its Top Producer for 2000 was **Chris S. King**.

Tony Blackmon and **Van Pham** were elected "Rookie of the Year" by their fellow Sales Associates. **Margie Casey** received the "Premier Club of Relo" award for 100 percent sales of relocation referrals.



King



Blackmon



Pham



Casey

Sonja Fowler, ERA Marie McConnell agent, was recently awarded the **ERA Beyond Excellence** designation for the year 2000. The award is earned by individuals who achieve between \$3.5 million - \$5.9 million in closed sales production.

AllStates Technical Services, a Birmingham-based contract engineering and design staffing firm, announced the **National Technical Services Association (NTSA)** certification for four of its employees: **Rebecca Graves, Ed Kinzer** and **Marcus Fletcher** of



Graves



Knizer



Fletcher



Newman

the Birmingham office, and **Starr Newman** of the Mobile office. The **Technical Services Certification** professional designation was created to establish a technical services industry standard.

W. Don McCrory, president of **Kiker Corporation Roofing & Metal Contractors**, was recently appointed to senior vice president of the **National Roofing Contractors Assn. (NRCA)**. The NRCA is one of the construction industry's oldest trade associations and the voice of professional roofing contractors worldwide.

FOR YOUR CALENDAR

The Friends of **WHIL 91.3 FM** are hosting a **World Tour of Music** on June 28, 5:30 - 9 p.m., at the **Gulf Coast Exploreum Science Center**. The event will benefit South Alabama's fine arts and information public radio station. Tickets are \$35 each and include fine food with an international flavor, wine and beer, and great entertainment including **Tom Morley's Jazz Quartet**, **Celtic Silver**, **WHIL's own Fred Baldwin** playing classical music and Broadway, and **Scott Sarah Wright** with **WHIL's Joyce Sylvester** singing opera and 40's-era favorites. For more information or tickets, call 380-4685.

The **Mobile Museum of Art** is planning a second trip to **Jackson, Miss.** to see the "Majesty of Spain" exhibition on Friday, July 20. This will be a one-day trip, leaving at approximately 7:30 am and returning by 11 p.m. The cost per person is \$65 and includes round-trip motor coach transportation, exhibition ticket and refreshment service on the bus. For reservations, contact **June Harter** at 208-5200 or june.harter@ci.mobile.al.us.

It's not too late to register for the Summer session at **Spring Hill College**. Registrations are due June 19 and classes run from June 20- July 31. Courses are available in **Life Long Learning, Graduate Studies** and the **Summer College** for high school students. For a full listing of classes, scan the Web site, www.shc.edu/IIIGrad or call 380-3064.

Savage Photo Lab & Gallery is hosting "The Journey is the Destination," photography show and sale through July 11. The exhibit showcases work by **Kelly Kleinschrodt**, a senior at **St. Paul's Episcopal High School**. She will be attending the **Art Institute of Boston** in the fall and is showing images shot in and around London. For more information call 450-0007 or visit www.savagepictures.com/.