

# The Chamber Perspectives online

## Upcoming Events

Aug 13  
Executive Committee

Aug 14  
Chamber After Hours  
Networking Event

Aug 16  
Public Affairs Council

Aug 23  
Board of Directors

Sep 11  
Chamber After Hours  
Networking Event

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## 'Culture Builds' Initiative Moving Forward

Following an enthusiastic kick-off at the Bama Theatre on July 16<sup>th</sup>, The Chamber's newest development initiative, "Culture Builds" will now move into a more in-depth strategic planning process over the next four months.



Approximately 300 citizens from all walks of life participated in the "Culture Builds" kickoff event, which was followed the next morning with the first strategic planning session that included 55 stakeholders representing a cross-section of the Tuscaloosa County community. Robert McNulty, CEO and President of Partners for Livable Communities, who has been engaged as The Chamber's consultant for the "Culture Builds" initiative, facilitated the planning session. Former Secretary of State of Florida and Chair of Partners for Livable Communities, Glenda Hood, provided the keynote address.

The 'Culture Builds' strategic planning and implementation process, scheduled to be completed by early 2008, will involve several key aspects

of the community's cultural fabric. It is being designed to help define and leverage the area's diverse cultural assets and resources to expand cultural, entertainment, recreational and educational assets to transform Tuscaloosa County into a "cultural destination" center in Alabama and the Southeast. We'll learn how to leverage and integrate cultural assets to directly stimulate economic development and the area's competitiveness and determine ways to identify, foster and implement new cultural and entertainment venues, facilities, programs and events.

"To tap our potential and translate our cultural assets and opportunities into a sustainable, viable economic advantage, the 'Culture Builds' initiative is essential and valuable," emphasized Cynthia Lee Almond, member of the Tuscaloosa City Council and Chair of The Chamber's Task Force on Cultural Assets & Livability. "This is a unique time and opportunity and innovative approach to raise the level of quality and livability in our community; and together, with the involvement of our citizens, 'Culture Builds' can make a significant difference."

"We want citizens from all walks of life involved," stated Almond. "This is a stimulating process that can be a catalyst for enhancing the quality of life of our entire region."

"The idea behind 'Culture Builds' is to tap our community's creativity and cultural assets in order to stimulate economic progress and build one of America's most livable communities," according to Chamber President, Johnnie Aycock. "To do this, however, it will take the involvement of citizens from all walks of life. The more input and active participation from citizens, the more enriched our community will be."

"Working together, we can expand access and involvement in our cultural life and leveraging our cultural assets for economic growth," said Aycock.

Beginning in September, Culture Builds will hold a series of focus groups and public forums along with implementation of community surveys to help define opportunities, assets and issues in the Tuscaloosa County community. Among the key areas that 'Culture Builds' will be assessing to define priorities and the relationship to our cultural assets will be: youth development, 'town-gown', impact on neighborhoods, physical image and development of the community, wellness, expanded cultural venues and facilities, regional cooperation and the marketing and branding of the community.

Culture Builds is an initiative co-sponsored by The Chamber, City of Tuscaloosa, City of Northport, Tuscaloosa County and The University of Alabama.

For more details, go to The Chamber's website at [www.tuscaloosachamber.com](http://www.tuscaloosachamber.com) and click on the 'Culture Builds' logo.

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## 2007 Adopt A School Breakfast Kicks Off New School Year



The 21<sup>st</sup> annual Adopt A School Breakfast was held at the University Church of Christ on August 3<sup>rd</sup>. This begins the 23<sup>rd</sup> year of the highly successful AAS program. The room was festive with a variety of artful centerpieces by Bryant, Northridge and Tuscaloosa County High students and paper placemats adorned with crayon drawings were compliments of Verner and Cottondale. Bama Dining provided a grand Southern breakfast buffet and C & A coffees brightened the morning.

Johnnie Aycock commented on behalf of The Chamber saying that AAS plays an essential role in workforce development and is a great model for other programs like it in the country. He praised the program director, Loo Whitfield, who continues to build on a great foundation. The purpose of AAS, he pointed out, is to enrich the lives of kids inside the classroom and get them ready for the world around them so they may lead a good life. He then thanked the business leaders for support received in Tuscaloosa and encouraged everyone to include cultural enrichment in their planning process.

Loo Whitfield announced a few changes for the year: Sustainer levels (financial support) have been renamed; a new electronic newsletter has been developed in an effort to increase the audience; and a new AAS website has been created, which is very user-friendly and has links to all forms needed as well as program information.

Loo saluted all 80 adopters to our 48 city and county schools and voiced her appreciation for the school boards' support and encouragement to grow. The AAS Steering Committee was also commended for being the backbone of program and the assistant program director, Carolyn Tubbs, was thanked for her dedication.

Five new adopters were added this year: University Medical Center and School of Medicine (TMS); Spiller Furniture (Crestmont); Capitol Real Estate (MLK), Realty South (Davis Emerson), and Tuscaloosa Bypass (Myrtlewood). Also RBC Bank will continue to carry Woodland Forrest, as AmSouth had done for many years.



Twenty Years of Excellence Awards were given to Alabama Gas Corporation (University Place); Cadence Bank (Northington); Regions Bank (Collins-Riverside); Southland International Trucks, Inc. (Vance); Tuscaloosa Chapter of Credit Unions (Lloyd Wood).



Decade of Excellence Awards were given to Junior League of Tuscaloosa (Holt Elem); Merrill Lynch (Rock Quarry); Nucor Steel Tuscaloosa, Inc. (Holt High); P.E. Lamoreaux & Associates (Rock Quarry) and The Radiology Clinic (TMS).

A complete list of adopters may be accessed by [clicking here](#).

Retired educator Dr. David Thompson was the keynote speaker. Relative to his favorite movie, Forrest Gump, he said he believes we don't float on the breeze like a feather but rather all have a destiny to fulfill. He said, "Nothing is more prestigious than holding out hope to someone...That's what your destiny is and that's why you're here." He also said the best way to get into a pool is to jump right in, making ripples. His message was, essentially, to live a life that matters and make some ripples!

The group then broke out into workshops including a panel discussion on "ideas that work" and a class for new coordinators (also a refresher). Time was also allotted this year for individual partnership planning. We

look forward to a great year!

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### **Artur Davis Speaks at Chamber in Session**

Congressman Artur Davis addressed a group of about 150 Chamber and Rotary Club members at the Indian Hills Country Club on August 7<sup>th</sup>. During the joint meeting, Chamber President Johnnie Aycock presented Davis with his third Spirit of Enterprise Award, given by the US Chamber of Commerce annually to legislators who show extraordinary commitment to free enterprise and economic issues. Davis has won the award for three consecutive years and has held his office since 2002.



Chamber Chairman Jim Harrison III said, "He has been a very responsive leader and partner with The Chamber and with the business community here."

Davis represents the 7<sup>th</sup> Congressional District, which includes the Black Belt and part of Tuscaloosa County. It's one of the most diverse in the country. Aycock said, "It takes a remarkable individual to serve that constituency with balance, sensitivity and responsiveness."

The congressman spoke about finding a middle ground in American politics and of shared obligation. "People are responding to this idea that what we have in common is so much more powerful than what divides us," he said.

The Chamber will continue to sponsor Chamber in Session governmental presentations throughout the year.

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### **Chamber Leadership Hosts New Chancellor of Alabama's Post-Secondary System**

Chamber leaders gathered on the evening of July 31<sup>st</sup> to honor and host Bradley Byrne, the new Chancellor of Alabama's Post-Secondary System, which includes Shelton State and all of the state's community and technical colleges. During the informal dinner event, Chancellor Byrne discussed his vision and some of the challenges for Alabama's community college system, workforce development, and the important role that Shelton State plays in West Alabama and across the state.

Chamber President Johnnie Aycock emphasized the importance of forging an effective working partnership with the new Chancellor. "Shelton State Community College is an important partner for The Chamber and the business community in Tuscaloosa County and West Alabama, especially in workforce development, business and industry training, and expanding our economic development opportunities. Working together with the new Chancellor, we can build an even more effective workforce system and expand educational opportunities for our region."

Among community leaders attending were (pictured left to right): Chamber Chairman, Jim Harrison, III; Sandra Ray, Member, State Board of Education; Chancellor Bradley Byrne; Joanne Jordan, Interim President, Shelton State Community College; and Terry Waters of Alabama Power Company and Chamber Division Vice Chair of Education & Workforce Development.



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### **Transportation Task Force Addresses Study on Alabama's Infrastructure**



In addition to reviewing current highway projects and needs for Tuscaloosa County, The Chamber's Transportation Task Force is currently assessing the recently released Report of the Alabama Commission on Infrastructure.

The formation of the Alabama Commission was initiated as one of 35 recommendations of the Alabama Legislative Commission on Manufacturing through a Joint House Resolution sponsored by House Speaker, Seth Hammett, in 2003 and announced the creation of the Commission on Infrastructure in November, 2005. Forty-five members were appointed to the commission that included business and industry leaders, legislators, state agency officials, economic development officials and academic infrastructure experts.

The five working committees formed to develop recommendations included: freight shipments and logistical needs; non-freight movement & transportation needs; maintenance of infrastructure assets; economic development; and research & technical analysis.

With a concern that the Tuscaloosa County /West Alabama region needs to be better represented and have infrastructure needs addressed, The Chamber's Transportation Task Force is currently reviewing the report and recommendations, which are expected to be translated a possible legislation in the 2008 Regular Session of the Alabama Legislature.

The task force has held one session and received an excellent overview and background on the research that provided the basis for the development of recommendations. The next session of the task force, which will be held on Wednesday morning, August 22<sup>nd</sup> at 7:30 AM at The Chamber, will focus on some of the more practical and political issues associated with the report. The presenter at this session will be George Clark, Executive Director of Manufacturing Alabama.

Norman Crow of D. T. & Freight Company and Brock Corder of The Builders Group of West Alabama, serve as co-chairs of the Transportation Task Force. For more information or to get involved, contact Johnnie Aycock at 391.0559.

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### **State of the Community Breakfast to Be Held**

The Chamber and The Tuscaloosa News have announced plans for the 5<sup>th</sup> annual "State of the Community" breakfast on Thursday, September 20<sup>th</sup> at 7:30 AM at the Four Points Sheraton.

Sponsored jointly by The Chamber and The Tuscaloosa News, the breakfast is open to the public at no cost, however, reservations are required and encouraged.

"It is beneficial to have an annual report on the progress of our area and status of our local governments," emphasized Chamber President, Johnnie Aycock. "Last year's program, in partnership with The Tuscaloosa News, was well received, informative and beneficial."

Scheduled to participate in the annual breakfast are Probate Judge Hardy McCollum, Chairman of the Tuscaloosa County Commission; Mayor Walt Maddox of the City of Tuscaloosa; and Mayor Harvey Fretwell of the City of Northport.

For more details or to make reservations, call The Chamber at 758.7588 or [click here](#).

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## **Pam Smith Named Leadership Tuscaloosa Chair**



Pam Smith, Accounting and Business Manager of Ellis Architects, has been named Chair of the 2007-2008 Leadership Tuscaloosa Steering Committee, which oversees the program development, implementation of the nine-month leadership course, and selection of class members. She is a graduate of the 2006 Leadership Tuscaloosa program.

Entering its 25th year, applications for the 2007-2008 "silver anniversary" class of Leadership Tuscaloosa have been received and interviews are currently underway. Sponsored by The Chamber of Commerce of West Alabama and the College of Continuing Studies at The University of Alabama, Leadership Tuscaloosa is one of Alabama's model community leadership programs.

The 2007-2008 Leadership Tuscaloosa program will consist of one and two-day sessions over a nine month period, beginning with a 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration on September 18<sup>th</sup> - "The Bash At The Zone". Monthly sessions on a variety of personal leadership and community topics and issues are designed for interactive participation in a variety of community areas of interest, including economic development, education, the political process, social needs, public safety, and visioning.

Over 815 citizens have participated and graduated from Leadership Tuscaloosa since the program's inception in 1983. "Leadership Tuscaloosa has proven to be a unique, meaningful experience for our participants," said Pam Smith, "and the ultimate beneficiary is our community. I'm so pleased to be part of the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary class team."

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## **Training That Makes a Difference**

You should receive a brochure in the mail soon detailing The Chamber's upcoming training classes. Titles include Intermediate Microsoft Fast Track (September 11<sup>th</sup>); What Every Business Should Know (technology-related, September 20<sup>th</sup>); Customer Service (September 25<sup>th</sup>); Paperless Office (October 16<sup>th</sup>); Beginning Microsoft Excel (October 24<sup>th</sup>); Action Oriented Leadership: Making Good Things Happen Quickly (October 26<sup>th</sup>); Getting In, Getting out and Making Money in Between: Basics for Every Stage of Business (October 30<sup>th</sup>);

Organize Your World: Microsoft Outlook (November 14<sup>th</sup>). For more information, please email Tracy Crumpton at [tracy@tuscaloosachamber.com](mailto:tracy@tuscaloosachamber.com).

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## **Hilton Garden Inn Celebrates Opening**



The Hilton Garden Inn hosted a grand opening with ribbon cutting on July 12th. Community leaders and business people enjoyed tours of the fine facility and the hospitality extended by hotel staff members.

The hotel's Great American Grill provided fabulous hot and cold hors d'oeuvres that included miniature Beef Wellingtons and a fresh fruit display and the Pavilion Lounge served up nice complimentary wines and other beverages.

The Hilton Garden Inn boasts 122 guest rooms featuring comfy beds with plush white duvets and bathrooms with granite vanities. The 32" flat screen in each room is a very popular amenity and each oversized desk is paired with an ergonomic "Mirra" chair by Herman Miller, which is a very nice and unexpected touch. Room rates vary and depend on availability and suites are available, too. There's also an indoor pool, fitness center and 24-hr business center.



The Grill does a breakfast buffet for guests and also prepares items ordered from a café-style menu for breakfast and dinner. Evening room service is available from 5 PM to 9 PM and the Pavilion Pantry offers snacks, beverages and frozen meals anytime (each room has a fridge, microwave and coffee maker).

Meeting space is available for up to 75 people, set up lecture-style, and

long and round table set ups are options for smaller groups. There's a nice board room-type space, too, with projectors, sound system, flip charts, etc. The Grill prepares great snacks for a crowd or a few. For more information, please contact Tracy Channel at 722.0360. The Hilton Garden Inn is located at 800 Hollywood Drive, next to the Hollywood Cobb Movie Theatres, in Tuscaloosa.

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### **Epiphany Café Reopens**

Epiphany Café reopened last week with a remodeled dining room and revamped menu. Renovations are due to a fire that broke out early on the morning of July 2<sup>nd</sup>. The fire was contained to the bar area, where it seems to have been started by a cooler. Owner Tres Jackson said there was extensive smoke damage and the restaurant's ceiling, floor, furniture and food and liquor stocks had to be replaced. Jackson used the month of downtime to create some fabulous new dishes for the restaurant's menu.



You'll find sophisticated Southern fare here, such as their corn bread salad with country ham, baby greens, onions and white cheddar dressing. Main courses feature Kobe beef, duck and Gulf grouper, among other things, and there's a lovely mac and cheese with Vidalia onion and thyme. Dinner service begins at 5 PM Monday through Saturday. The early bird menu is available from 5 PM to 6:30 PM Monday through Thursday, which is three courses for \$27 per person. There's a tapas (small plates) menu as well. The restaurant isn't open for lunch although private parties may be accommodated. Epiphany Café is located at 519 Greensboro Ave., in downtown Tuscaloosa. You must try their refreshing gazpacho before summer ends!

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### **The Connecting Point Editorial**

**By Johnnie R. Aycock,  
President  
The Chamber of Commerce  
of West Alabama**



The Chamber of Commerce of

West Alabama has been representing Tuscaloosa County's most outstanding businesses and employers for over 107 years and has become the "connecting point" for many of the region's firms in terms of economic and community development, business advocacy, and business leadership.

Over the years, because of active and progressive volunteer leadership and a broad, diverse base of business partners, The Chamber has grown into an effective force in building a positive environment for economic growth and a quality, livable community. By encouraging our members and the business community to unite their human and financial resources and collaborate toward a common vision, The Chamber connects many of the ingredients that create a vibrant economy.

Working daily through hundreds of dedicated volunteers, The Chamber strives to identify and help overcome barriers to future economic expansion, always with an eye on building an even healthier environment for business prosperity, which leads to the region's ability to expand and sustain quality employment opportunities and a higher standard of living.

Over the years, The Chamber's efforts to connect our region's rich human, natural, cultural and technological resources have helped create a competitive advantage for Tuscaloosa County. As a growing number of firms and employers discover the unique benefits of doing business in Tuscaloosa County, and as many locally-based, home-grown business continue to grow and thrive, it becomes even more important for the business community to work together to maintain our competitive edge.

The Chamber, as a catalyst for economic vitality and quality, utilizes the vast talents of Tuscaloosa County's business, education and professional communities to carry out our mission of economic and community development and to implement an ambitious yet practical business plan. Through five divisions - organization development, business development, education and workforce development, governmental affairs, and community development - The Chamber identifies needs and opportunities and implements the strategies and actions to make good things happen.

The Chamber, through our hundreds of volunteers, carries out our mission through a variety of initiatives, programs, services and value-added benefits. We strive to be a leader in the use of creative technology-driven services as well as acting daily as the "front door to the community" and the unified "voice of business."

Over the years, The Chamber's volunteer-led initiatives have contributed to a wide array of successful ventures and today, through our "Future Directions" strategic blueprint, The Chamber continues to work on a menu of important ingredients for economic success.

From retail development to urban renewal, from transportation to small business development and support for existing industries, from workforce development and education to cultural arts enhancement, from technology to leadership development, The Chamber continues to connect the talents and energies of the business community to economic progress.

There are unique, value-added benefits that come with a connection to The Chamber. As one of our leading small business owners told us recently, "from family-owned firms to international industries, from manufacturing to retail, from professionals to health care, construction, financial services and everything in between, Tuscaloosa County's business community is diverse and vibrant and The Chamber reflects and supports that diversity and vitality."

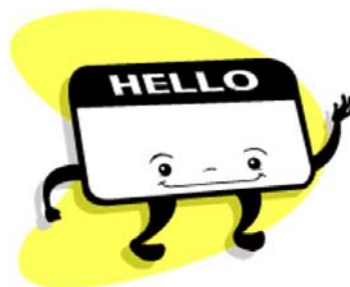
The Chamber is a forum to connect all of our diverse interests, businesses, private and public sector organizations to achieve economic progress and enrichment for the future. We invite you to connect with us and become part of the competitive advantage, for together, we win!

For more details on the advantages of Chamber membership, go to [www.tuscaloosachamber.com](http://www.tuscaloosachamber.com).

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### **'Second Tuesday' Networking to Resume in August**

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The next "Second Tuesday mixer" will be hosted on August 14th, from 5 PM to 7PM, by VerizonWireless at Snow Hinton Park. See you there!

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### **People Skills**

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You can make more friends in two months by becoming really interested in other people, than you can in two years by trying to get other people interested in you. Which is just another way of saying that the way to make a friend is to be one. ~ *How to Make Friends and Influence People* by Dale Carnegie

Improving your interpersonal skills is something that cannot happen overnight. The only way to improve is to practice and actually do it. Many of the skills may take time for you to adopt, however there are also some quick little techniques that can start to make things easier almost immediately.

1) **Stay professional.** Remember no matter whom you're talking to make sure you are at your best. The way you act reflects on your character. Learn to deal with situations in an appropriate way.

2) **Establish credibility.** Be sincere, if you are truthful and up-front with people it will go a long way to gaining other's respect and trust.

3) **Understand others' point of view.** Remember to reflect on what others tell you, even if you disagree take the time to learn and understand where they are coming from.

4) **Learn about others.** Take time talk with employees or clients. Conversations do not need to be work-related, rather simple conversations that help you learn about the person and build rapport.

5) **Be confident.** Keep eye contact and your body relaxed. Be sure to speak clearly and at a moderate pace.

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### Don't Forget to Share & Pass Us On to your Colleagues

Remember that all employees and associates of Chamber-member firms are members, too. So, forward this issue of Perspectives on to all team members in your business/organization. Thanks!

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