

The Chamber Perspectives online

Upcoming Events

Mar 7
Excel Seminar - CLASS FULL

Mar 13
Chamber After Hour
Networking Event

Mar 19
Executive Committee

Mar 20 - Mar 22
Franklin Covey 3-day
Seminar

Mar 22
Board of Directors

(More Events)

Tuscaloosa Souvenirs



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Building A Creative, Livable Community



Many books, magazines and consulting groups rank the nation's best communities based on everything from climate and safety to cost of living and the quality of education. But what really is livability in today's changing, 21st century community.? Is it the physical appearance of a community, the level of technology, the economic

progress?

Well, it could be all of these factors and more according to many of the leading researchers and experts who study community dynamics and the new 'creative community'. One constant is that livability is the defining factor for any community looking to sustain itself in this constantly changing economy.

And it is a combination of a interrelated factors, including strong, innovative leadership, cooperation, lifelong learning, diversity of opportunities, design of place and space, cultural assets, economic vitality and other crucial investments in quality.

Today's world is increasingly complex as economies strive to form new relationships with the so-called quality of life of a place and all of the various amenities that contribute to that quality. It is apparent that the communities that have the insight and ability to define, seek out and apply these various amenities, coupled with the will to provide opportunities to all people, and a shared vision for the future, are the ones that will be competitive and prosperous in the new creative economy.

So, the question is how can we define livability and establish goals that our community should embrace to be even more viable, prosperous, livable and

creative ? How do we achieve the level of quality to be recognized as one of America's most livable communities? Are there some models that define the criteria for livability, and should we build a shared vision around these elements?

The good news is there is a recipe for building a 21st century livable, creative community. The Partners For Livable Communities tell us that livability is based on creativity and the ability to prepare for the new economy; and that creative places are defined as attractive places to live, work, play, visit, retire, raise a family, attend a university, grow a business, and enjoy diversity.

So, how are we as a community preparing and positioning for the new economy, which includes a focus on building an entrepreneurial environment, developing creative human capital, nurturing our cultural assets, and fostering world-class educational opportunities?

Are we as a community developing a regional gathering place, or as one writer put it, "is the community the regional living room?" Is the community taking advantage of regional collaboration? Are we a destination for retail shopping, the cultural arts, entertainment and recreation? Would the new generation of young professionals and their families seek to live in our community?

So, are we positioned and prepared for a new generation - for a new paradigm in a livable, creative, quality economy and community? Should the public, private and non-profit sectors come together to develop a shared vision, goals and strategies to cultivate and grow one of America's next recognized livable, creative communities.

To help facilitate the answers to some of these questions and explore new possibilities, The Chamber has created a new Task Force On Cultural Assets & Livability, which will be led by **Cynthia Almond** of Rosen Harwood and a member of the Tuscaloosa City Council.

In partnership with The University of Alabama, the City of Tuscaloosa, the City of Northport and other private and public sector entities, The Chamber has entered into an agreement with the Partners For Livable Communities, based in Washington, D.C., and their CEO Robert McNulty to initiate a planning and visioning process to leverage our area's rich cultural assets and resources for economic advantage and development.

It's going to be an exciting journey. Watch for more details coming soon!

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Adopt-A-School Week Highlights Activities of 48 Partnerships



The connection of 77 businesses and organizations to 48 public schools in Tuscaloosa County is making a real difference in the quality of education in our area. The Chamber's Adopt-A-School Program just completed observance of Adopt-A-School Week, which had two basic objectives: express appreciation to

the adopters involved in the program and inform the community about many programs and activities the partnerships collaborate on.

Highlight of the week was the University Mall display by most of the partnerships of what they're doing to improve the quality of education. "Community Connections: Making a Difference" was the theme.

But there were other activities during the week. One day, "Banner Day," businesses and schools saluted their partnership by hanging special banners. On another day, many schools planned special programs to honor their adopters. And, on March 2, schools and their business partners participated in "Read Across America", a national program that stresses the importance of reading.

Loo Whitfield and Carolyn Tubbs, who coordinate the Adopt-A-School Program for The Chamber, are always on the outlook for additional adopters and for businesses or organizations that might want to support the program financially. If you're interested, call Loo at 391-0563.

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The 'Second Tuesday' in March will be Celebrated at Nucor Steel

Chamber members, friends, employees, and prospects for membership are invited to come to a special site on the Black Warrior River in the Holt area on March 13.

The leadership and employees of Nucor Steel Tuscaloosa are hosting the third *Second Tuesday* networking event of 2007. The fun begins at 5 p.m. and runs until 7 p.m. Come learn more about one of the largest industries in Tuscaloosa County, a strong supporter of The Chamber, and an active corporate citizen.

The steelmaking process at Nucor is unique, and there will be displays that will show you that. Also, there will be food, giveaways, and some great gripping and grinning.

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The Networking Thing - Try Out Your Networking Skills!

One of the benefits of membership in The Chamber of Commerce of West Alabama is the exceptional networking opportunity available on the "Second Tuesday" each month. However, how do you make networking an effective tool that will benefit you? How do you take advantage of networking opportunities?

As you prepare to attend the next "Second Tuesday" networking event on March 13th at Nucor Steel, now is the time to prepare. You may already know some of the common tips about networking, such as, bring plenty of business cards, smile, offer a friendly handshake, be positive, and don't just talk with your friends.

However, there are other "not quite so common" tips that can also make a networking a positive experience. Try a few of these at "Second Tuesday".

Arrive early and stay late. These are actually the most productive time to converse and meet new people and potential new clients.



Come prepared, with a plan to achieve certain objectives. Know your purpose. Give some thought to what you want to accomplish, such as number of specific new people you want to meet, specific contacts you want to make, and other objectives.

Wear your nametag high. And wear it on your right side so it can be directly seen during a handshake.

Approach groups of two. Larger groups might feel you are interrupting and sometimes are not easy to join. Approaching a single individual could leave you trapped without a comfortable reason to move on. Sometimes in a group of two, if you are acquainted with one, you will find an easy introduction to a new contact.

Make notes on the back of the business cards you collect. Make a note of the date, the event, and a memory jogger of how you might approach future contacts with the person.

Follow up, follow up, follow up. Use letters, notes, email, calls, articles, leads and any other means you can find to build on the contact you made during the event.

Don't pass out your brochure. The phrase, "can I drop off some information and my brochure at your office tomorrow?" provides an excellent reason for a follow up contact.

Be selective about making your own referrals. Be sure the people you recommend can really help your associates.

Remember to always treat people as people, not as just a contact. Have a genuine desire to help make their lives easier and more productive through your business expertise and experience. Put forth a sincere interest in the person and your desire to be of service.

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Top Entrepreneurs To Be Honored - Nominations Encouraged

The area's top entrepreneurs will be honored at the 19th annual Entrepreneur of the Year awards luncheon on Tuesday, May 1st at a 11:30 AM luncheon, according to 2007 Chair of the awards committee, **Janet Moore** of Jamison, Money, Farmer & Company.

Nominations are encouraged and are now being accepted by the committee, with a deadline for submission of April 10th. For information and nomination forms, contact The Chamber at 391.0559 or 758.7588.

The annual awards program, sponsored and coordinated by The Chamber of Commerce of West Alabama, will honor small business owners and entrepreneurs in four categories. Awards will be presented to the Entrepreneurs of the Year, Innovator of the Year, Advocate of the Year; and the Rising Star award, presented to young, growing firms. In addition, a Lifetime Achievement Award is often presented to honor long-term business achievement.

"This is a prestigious recognition program," stated Moore, "for it highlights the essential role of small businesses and entrepreneurs in building our vibrant economy. Small business owners, managers and entrepreneurs take risks daily and are at the heart of job creation and economic growth. This annual program gives us an opportunity to focus on and underscore their vital roles."

"Our annual volunteer-led awards program plays an important role in

honoring and spotlighting local business leadership and impact," emphasized Johnnie Aycok, Chamber President. "The awards program provides a time to say thank you and see first-hand the spirit of private enterprise at work."

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A Number of Businesses Helped Make Chamber Conference Room 'Snazzy'

Several months ago, The Chamber leadership decided that the Morrow Conference Room, where the Board of Directors meets (as do dozens of committees, task forces, etc.), needed to be remodeled, the biggest question was: how do we pay for it?

Thanks to a number of members-businesses that contributed funds, expertise and labor, the remodeling has been completed, and the Morrow room can now be described as "snazzy."

Here are three of the businesses that helped make the remodeling a reality.

Russell S. Lee Flooring America

Kenny Lee stands on the steps of the family-owned business that his father began 57 years ago. Now it's called Russell S. Lee Flooring America and is located at 915 31st Avenue.



When The Chamber went to member-businesses for help in remodeling the Morrow Conference Room at The Chamber offices, Kenny and the rest of the family and employees at the flooring company responded positively, like they've been doing since 1950.

The company donated all carpet installation and the tile with its installation.

Russell S. Lee Flooring America specializes in plank and parquet woods, domestic and imported marble, granite, ceramic tile, vinyl and carpets. Flooring America is a unified group of floor covering dealers whose combined purchasing power allows Russell S. Lee to offer the best prices, selections, value and service to its customers.

Spiller Furniture

Since the first of the year,



committee and task force members who've held their meetings in The Chamber's newly remodeled Morrow Conference Room, have oohed and aahed over the furniture in the room.

They-and The Chamber-can thank Spiller Associated Furniture Stores, one of the several member-businesses that pitched in to help make the conference room more attractive and user-friendly.

Shane Spiller is on The Chamber's Board of Directors and is one of several dozen volunteers who go into 8th grade classrooms to present the CHOICES program to students.

The Chamber thanks Spiller Furniture for providing furniture at cost to help with the conference room remodeling. And we thank Shane individually for his volunteer work. Oh, yes, we also congratulate Shane and his wife, Liz; they're expecting a third child!

Wal Mart-Northport

Selena Gunnels, left, manages this group of employees and many more at the Wal Mart Store in Northport.



In addition to handling an extraordinary number of customers each and every day, Wal Mart and its employees believe in giving back to the community.

One of the recent contributions to the community Wal Mart in Northport made was to donate \$1,000 toward the costs of remodeling the Morrow Conference Room at The Chamber offices.

We're sure the dozens of volunteers who use the conference room weekly appreciate the support of Northport's Wal Mart store and its employees.

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Outlook® Can Save Your Company Time and Money; Learn How

The third and final Intermediate Office Breakfast Series seminar is scheduled for April 4, and it's one that can help you and your fellow employees to become more organized and productive.

Microsoft Outlook®, in a session led by Donna Gilliland of MOSTtraining, will begin at 7:30 a.m. and run until about 9:30 a.m. Peoples Bank & Trust Company is the site of the seminar.

Learn that the system is more about sending and receiving. It's about time-saving features that will increase your productivity and improve the organization of your work.

Things like e-mail tricks and tips, organizing your inbox quickly, follow-up reminders, folders, contacts and much more will be covered.

Cost for Chamber members is only \$20. Call The Chamber at 758-7588 to register.

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Businesses Continue to Step Forward to Grab Mantle of Chamber Champion

Again this year, many Chamber member-businesses are investing, over and above their annual dues, in support of The Chamber and its programs and activities. These are The Chamber Champions, and thus far in 2007, the following businesses are true champions of The Voice of Business:

DIAMOND LEVEL

Bank of Tuscaloosa
BellSouth/BellSouth Yellow Pages
Clear Channel Communications
DCH Health System
Mercedes Benz U.S. International
Nucor Steel of Tuscaloosa
Planet Weekly
Tanner & Guin, LLC
University of Alabama
WVUA TV

GOLD LEVEL

AFFLINK Corp.
Alabama Gas Corporation
Alabama Power Corp.
Blue Cross-Blue Shield

SILVER LEVEL

Advantage Realty
Bryant Bank
Compass Bank
Harrison Galleries
Jamison, Money, Farmer & Co.
Pritchett-Moore Inc.
Regions Bank
Shelton State Community College
Ward Scott Veron
Westervelt Company
Wycomp Technologies

BRONZE LEVEL

Cadence Bank
CTX Mortgage
db Technologies
Duckworth-Morris-Garrison Real Estate
First National Bank of Central Alabama
Hampton Inns of Tuscaloosa
McAbee Construction Co.
NHS Management
Peoples Bank & Trust Co.
Phelps, Jenkins, Gibson & Fowler, LLP
Premier Service Co.
Randall-Reilly Publishing Company
Spiller Associated Furniture

Townsend Ford, Inc.
ZF Industries

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Women In Business Event Set for March 29th

"Working Out Your Financial Future....Are You Financially Fit?" The Chamber's **Women in Business Council** invites you to a roundtable discussion on planning for your financial future at every stage of life. Guest speakers will be author Stewart Welch, Babs Hart and Cynthia Almond. This roundtable is scheduled for March 29th from 11:00 am until 1:00 pm at the University church of Christ. Call 391-0559 or e-mail stacey@tuscaloosachamber.com to make reservations. Tickets are \$20.00 for Chamber members and \$30.00 for non-members. Price includes lunch. You must register by March 26th and no refunds/invoice cancellations after the 26th.

Please bring any of the following as a donation to Caring Days :paper towels, toilet paper, watercolor sets, watercolor paper, straws, napkins, tri-fold towels, construction paper, latex gloves, postage stamps, and/or copy paper.

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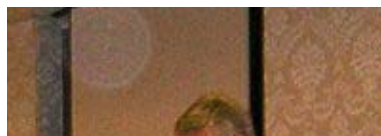
Chamber Continues Steady Membership Growth in 2007

The Chamber's roster of members continues to grow in 2007. We welcome the following companies and organizations that have invested in The Chamber since the beginning of the year:

- Taylor Electrical Contractors
- Stamp Your Feet
- Ashley Furniture HomeStore
- ITT Technical Institute
- Olive Garden
- Dr. Sarita Elizabeth Cox
- US LEC of Alabama
- Southeast Media &Mailing
- SAR Automation LP
- Any Length Construction
- Wide Screen Media Group LLC
- Dale Carnegie Training
- KCD Interactive
- Bama Belle
- City Supply Co., Inc.
- Insuresoft LLC
- Checkpoint Marketing Inc.
- RBC Centura Bank
- Howard Garrison
- Catfish One
- Skatepark of Tuscaloosa

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Second Annual "State of the Schools" Breakfast Meeting



When it comes to today's rapidly changing, always changing educational system, it's important for the business community to know and understand what's happening in

their local systems.

That's why The Chamber of Commerce, Ellis Architects and *The Tuscaloosa News* are co-sponsoring a "State of the Schools" breakfast meeting on April 4 at the Four Points Hotel. The meeting starts at 7:30, and there is no charge, however reservations are requested. A light continental style breakfast will be available.

Headliners for the report to the community will be the superintendents of Tuscaloosa County's two public school systems: Dr. Joyce Levey, Tuscaloosa City Schools, and Dr. Frank Costanzo, Tuscaloosa County Schools.

Each school leader will give a status report on their system and will take questions from the floor. "We hope, especially, that Chamber member businesses take advantage of this opportunity to get an update on the school systems that are preparing students for the workplace," Whitfield said.

Participants can register on The Chamber's website at www.tuscaloosachamber.com or call 758-7588.

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Lunsford Construction, Tuscaloosa News Host April After-Hours Event

Springtime along the Black Warrior River. Doesn't that sound great?

The Tuscaloosa News and Bill Lunsford Construction Company want you to put an exclamation point on your calendar on the *Second Tuesday* of April. April 10, to be specific.

That's the date of The Chamber's April major networking event, which The Chamber Ambassadors are coordinating with the hosts.

The times for the event haven't been announced yet, but it *is* an after-hours (after work) event, and it will be held along the river with the gazebo on Jack Warner Parkway being the focal point.

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Shelton State After-Hours Event Becomes 'Head for the Halls' Affair



The Shelton State Community College staff, faculty, and students had everything prepared nicely for The Chamber's second *Second Tuesday* after-hours event on February 13.

There were displays around the entire atrium at the campus's main building. There was food prepared by 22 vendors and displayed deliciously in the atrium. Many of the staff and faculty were on hand

to greet the expected large crowd of Chamber members and associates. Entertainment was finely tuned. The Chamber Ambassadors were ready to welcome visitors and sign them up for door prizes.

Then, the siren blew, signaling the approach of a possible tornado. So, all the

students from the second floor came down the stairs. And everyone joined them for a quick, but orderly trip to an interior hallway.

Where everyone stayed for 30 minutes.

Afterwards and until around 7 p.m., about 100 Chamber members and guests got to sample the delicious food, view the displays, discuss business, or talk about what might have been....

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Touting Itself as 'Tuscaloosa's Own', Bryant Bank Officially Opens

A large group of customers, friends, and, no doubt, a few competitors, braved threatening weather on March 1 to come to the grand opening of Bryant Bank at 1550 McFarland Blvd. North. Some estimates put the crowd at more than 500.



Susan O'Brian, branch manager, cut the traditional ribbon about 5:45 p.m., while Tuscaloosa Mayor Walt Maddox, Bank President Claude Edwards, Chamber Ambassador Candy Lowery, and Paul W. Bryant Jr., looked on. The grand opening event continued until 7:30 p.m.

The Chamber Ambassadors, led by Angie Askew of Morgan Keegan, worked with Candy to help with the event. Among those Ambassadors was Jason Ward of the Alabama Central Credit Union.

The Bryant Bank's slogan: "Unbeatable Service. Legendary Results."

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Cuppy's Opens



On March 5th, a new business open officially in Downtown Tuscaloosa at 815 Lurleen Wallace Boulevard South. Cuppy's Coffee, Smoothies & More adds even more variety to a growing renewed Downtown Tuscaloosa area. Grant Gordon and his staff invite you to drop by and try their delicious assortment of products. Along with Grant, Chamber Ambassadors and other supporters, Chamber Chairman Jim

Harrison, III, did the honors of cutting the ribbon to officially open Cuppy's. Congratulations!

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