

The Chamber Perspectives online

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Entrepreneurs Honored



Entrepreneurial excellence was honored on Feb 26 during a 21st annual awards program presented by The Chamber, College Station Properties and the Alabama Entrepreneurship Institute at Hotel Capstone.

Our awards were presented in three categories: Pettus Randall Entrepreneur of the Year; the Rising Star Award, designed to recognize new, young organizations; and the Lifetime Achievement Award, given to honor long-term business leadership and service to Tuscaloosa County and West Alabama.

2009 Entrepreneur of the Year winners (pictured) are: **Mike Reilly** of Randall-Reilly Publishing; **Nancy Taylor** of Nancy Taylor Skin Therapy and Day Spa; **Jimmy Warren** of Warren Tire & Auto Center; **Rodger & Rich Anders** of Anders Hardware; and Ron Turner.

Lifetime Achievement Awards were given to **Beverly Phifer**, president and CEO of Phifer Inc., and restaurateur **Drew Henson**, owner of

Cypress Inn Restaurant.

Rising Star Awards were given to **Mark and Gina Simpson** of VeloCity Pro Cycle; **Sean Wise** of Two Men and a Truck; **Ester Scheeff and Chris Wiedmann** of Edelweiss German Bakery and Cafe.

The Alabama Entrepreneurship Institute at the University of Alabama also gave awards. It recognized: Mary Jolley, an emeritus faculty member at UA, who was named Social Entrepreneur of the Year; Brandon Pierce, a UA student who started his own publishing company, who was named Young Entrepreneur of the Year; Ann Thompson, who was named K-12 Entrepreneur Educator of the Year; and Youssouf Diabate of Tuskegee University, who was named Higher Education Entrepreneur of the Year.

UA's African American Graduate Student Association named the winners of its African-American Business Plan Competition Awards. They are: Sy Pryor, first place; Stephen Storey, second place; Pierre Samuel, third place.

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Great Season for Mixers



Our March "Chamber Connects" after hours mixer was held at Cypress Inn, where the restaurant celebrated its 25th anniversary! We enjoyed great weather, networking, music, signature dishes and new menu items, like Smoked Chicken Quesadillas. Attendees drove golf balls from the riverbank over the water, a Cypress Inn tradition, for gift certificates. Thanks for a fun time, Cypress Inn!

Our April mixer will be held on Tues, Apr 21 at the Tuscaloosa Galleria. The one hosted there last summer was very well-attended and we look forward to this one again! Please make plans now to attend and invite a friend--All employees of Chamber member businesses are invited as well as prospective members.

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Affordable Training Classes...Right Here

We've negotiated with top instructors to offer affordable classes designed to impact your business and bottom line. And they're held right here in town! We hope you'll take advantage of these benefits.

These are coming up soon:

Broaden Your Technology Savvy

Mar 18 from 7:30am to 9:30am

West Alabama Bank & Trust

\$20 for members (\$40 for non-members), includes breakfast

Trainer is Donna Gilliland of MOSTraining

Don't reinvent the wheel when it comes to your work--Learn to be more efficient!

How to Develop New Customers in a Down Economy

Apr 7 from 11am to 1pm

Cypress Inn

\$30 for members (\$50 for non-members), includes lunch

Trainer is Nancy Covert of Dale Carnegie Training

Learn how to deliver superior service to win and retain customers.

Excel 2007 Pivot Tables 101

April 16 from 8 to 10am OR 10:30am to 12:30pm OR 1:30-3:30pm

\$45 for members

Trainer is Donna Gilliland of MOSTraining

Each person will have the use of a laptop in learning about PivotTables.

Quickbooks-Session 1

Apr 22 from 7:30am to 9:30am

West Alabama Bank & Trust

\$20 for members (\$40 for non-members), includes breakfast

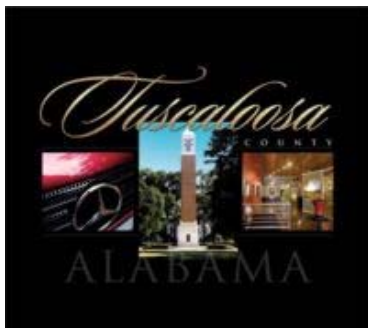
Trainer is Linda Forde CPA, Jamison, Money, Farmer & Co.

You've got the basics down; learn more about statements and reports.

A full schedule of spring classes is available online at www.tuscaloosachamber.com. (Click on the Business Survival Training icon there or in this article). Online registration is available or you may call The Chamber at 758.7588.

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Ad Sales Closing for Community Guide/Directory



Ad sales close next week for our 2009-10 Community Guide and Member Directory, which will be entitled *Experience Tuscaloosa*. Thousands of these are distributed each year to newcomers and others. Call Ginger Nunley right away at 850.691.2710 or email her at flmaplady@gmail.com about your ad. Don't be left out!

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"State of the Schools" Address is Apr 8

The annual "State of the Schools" address, presented this year by Publix Supermarkets and Ellis Architects, is set for Wed, Apr 8th at 7:30 am Hotel Capstone. There's no cost and you're encouraged to attend, as the business community needs to be well-represented. A continental breakfast will be provided, so please RSVP to Loo Whitfield at 391.0563 or loo@tuscaloosachamber.com.

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Sen Richard Shelby to Headline Next "Chamber in Session"

Senator Richard Shelby (R-Ala.) will soon speak to us as part of his annual visit to every county in Alabama. This "Chamber in Session" event is Fri, Apr 10 at 7:30am at Hotel Capstone.



Senator Shelby will address the legislative agenda for the 111th Congress as well as important issues facing the nation and the state of Alabama. Following his remarks, he'll open the floor to questions and comments from those in attendance.

Event is open to the public and there's no cost to attend, but advance reservations are required. A light breakfast will be served so please RSVP to 758.7588 or stacey@tuscaloosachamber.com.

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The NEW Venice

Adam McClellan, a Los Angeles native, fell in love with the south while living in Savannah and decided to stay. After that, being a creative businessman, he decided to open a restaurant.

During his review of several restaurants in Birmingham, a broker told him about Café Venice, an Italian restaurant in downtown Tuscaloosa. After evaluation of all the restaurant locations, Venice scored as one of the top three for purchase.

Cafe Venice was then purchased from its previous owner, who had moved away several years ago but had others here managing it for him.



After getting a facelift, the restaurant has reopened with a new name, Venice Italian Fusion, since the new chef infuses traditional

Italian recipes with regional elements. A local produce distributor acquires most of the vegetables from producers within a 150 miles radius. There's also an expanded wine list.

McClellan hired several chefs, including executive chef Jarrett McMahon, who has many years of experience at fine dining restaurants in Chapel Hill, North Carolina. He's originally from Tuscaloosa.

Sharp general manager Jessica Driver works the front of the house and helps the server staff with customer service, food knowledge and wine familiarity.

Venice Italian Fusion is located on University Blvd, across the street from the RBC Bank building and is open seven days a week. The bar opens at 4:30pm with dinner starting at 5pm, and lunch is served from 11am to 2:30 pm.

A lunch entrée with three sides is a great deal at \$6.95 and offers a taste of many beautiful and delicious things. The Caprese Salad is really a work of art on a plate. Meals are accompanied by house-made bread, flavored oil and sun-dried tomato butter. Everything is fresh.

Weekend Brunch includes frittatas (Italian omelets) and bruchettas (Italian toasts) served with home fries.

Smart special promotions are: Friday and Saturday nights-Live music by local artists; Martini Mondays-\$5 from 5 to 10pm; Wine Down Wednesdays-Half price wine & pizza; Sunday Family Night-Pasta and Salad Bowls for four.

Venice is a new Chamber member so please stop by and support them. For more info or to check out the menu, visit www.venicetuscaloosa.com.

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Book on State Economy Now Available

The 2009 Alabama Economic Outlook, a publication by the UA's Center for Business & Economic Research, is now available. It's a valuable source of info on US and Alabama economic conditions, trends, and forecasts. This book is the 30th in an annual series. Copies are \$30 each. For more info, call 348.6191 or visit <http://cber.cba.ua.edu>.

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UA Photo Book Now Half Price



As a member of The Chamber, you can now save 50% on copies of the book *Crimson*. This commemorative coffee table book is a celebration to

the Capstone through beautiful photography along with quotes from UA notables. Go to www.uacrimsonbook.com to see sample spreads of the book and to order copies. Be sure to enter THE CHAMBER as the promotion code to receive books at half price. Call (423) 544.7461 for reduced shipping rates when ordering 5 or more copies.

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Todd Murphy State Farm Opens



Todd Murphy, Tuscaloosa's latest State Farm agent, recently opened his office in Northport. He has over a decade of financial and real estate businesses under his belt and feels that State Farm is a perfect fit. Todd's team consists of Theo Brinton, former Zoe's of Tuscaloosa franchise owner, Elizabeth Hall, formerly of Merrill Lynch, and Tina Estes, who spent seven years with Nationwide Insurance. Todd's business slogan is, "Come home to Todd Murphy State Farm." The agency hosted a Ribbon Cutting ceremony on Feb 20. Address is 4705 McFarland Blvd., Ste 4 in Northport, near Wal-Mart. For more info, visit www.ToddMurphyAgency.com or call 339.8003.

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Steamers Transition to Wintzell's Complete



Wintzell's Oyster House (formally Steamers) celebrated its newest location with a grand opening and ribbon cutting on Mar 9. Check out the menu and more at www.wintzelloysterhouse.com. Restaurant address is #1 Bridge Ave in Northport. For more info, call Heath at 361.3719.

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Welcome, New Members!

The following joined from Feb 1 to date.

- Ambassador Inn & Suites
- Duet Art & Jewelry
- Venice Italian Fusion
- TALA Professional Service
- Tuscaloosa Flower Shoppe
- Masonry Solutions, LLC
- Armstrong & Desai, LLC

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