

Chamber  
*Perspectives*

First Quarter, 2003



**2002 Annual Report Issue  
2003 Leadership Team  
Moving Forward**

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# Chamber Perspectives

First Quarter, 2003



2003 Chamber Chairman,  
Bryan Kindred

## Chamber Perspectives

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The Chamber of Commerce  
of West Alabama

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## Mission of The Chamber of Commerce of West Alabama

The mission of The Chamber of Commerce of West Alabama is to provide the vision, leadership and catalyst for the advancement of the economic prosperity, business climate and quality of life for the total community.

# 2002 - A Year of Progress and Impact for the Chamber

2002 presented a year of challenge for The Chamber of Commerce of West Alabama and even in the midst of continuing uncertainties in the national economy and international markets, locally The Chamber moved forward.

With involvement by hundreds of dedicated Chamber volunteers, excellent progress was made in carrying out The Chamber's mission and the 2002 Business Plan, which provides a blueprint to sustain and grow a healthy economy, positive climate for business, and higher quality of life.

"I am very proud of the achievements of our Chamber, not only during 2002, but over a long period of time, stated outgoing Chairman, **Dr. Charles Nash**. "Our officers, directors, committee chairs, professional staff, and dozens of volunteers worked together to meet our goals and contribute to an All America community. It was a very good year!"



*Outstanding Division Vice Chairmen led in implementing The Chamber's 2002 Business Plan, including (left to right): Dennis Stanard; Ford Williams; Farley Poellnitz; Eddie Jackson; and Dave Rodgers.*

The following provides an overview of a year of progress for The Chamber. While not all inclusive, this will provide a taste of the broad, diverse efforts achieved during 2002.

## Organizational Development *Dennis Stanard, Division Vice Chairman*



*The 2002 Ambassadors, led by Jan Brazeal and Wendy Albers, were active and involved.*

The Chamber's Ambassadors provided excellent leadership during 2002. With 30 active volunteers, the Ambassadors hosted various membership functions throughout the year, including # highly successful "Commerce Street" membership events, drawing hundreds of Chamber members together for networking and business contacts. Serving as Co-Chairs of the 2002 Ambassadors were **Jan Brazeal** and **Wendy Albers**.

The President's Club, which is a new sustained membership development initiative, was established during 2002 in two stages. The first phase, led by **Tim Thompson** and **Jessica Garrison**, initiated an early year membership campaign.

The second phase, led by **Phil Maughan**, who was the year's top membership recruiter, and **Brian Finison**, established a more permanent, ongoing membership development process that will continue into and through 2003. A total of 156 new members joined The Chamber during 2002, and the retention rate for the year was a high 87%.



*Phil Maughan was The Chamber's top membership recruiter in 2002.*

The Chamber's membership benefits program continued to grow during 2002 as more and more members discovered and took advantage of a diverse menu of "member only", value-added products and services. And The Chamber's referral system grew to over **67,860** referrals during 2002, making it the largest, most effective business referral system in West Alabama.

The Chamber's web site "[www.tuscaloosachamber.com](http://www.tuscaloosachamber.com)" - continued to be enhanced and has expanded into the community's most effective information portal, with total hits for the year reaching over **1 million**. Among the features are:

An interactive calendar of events allowing members and visitors to search for and find information on a wide range of events, request information, and even receive automated reminders - an updated Business Resource Center Online with a variety of training modules - a member-to-member discount section, allowing members to exchange online discounts among themselves for various goods and services - an online Visitors' Information Center, with the most comprehensive source of community information in Tuscaloosa County - and the innovative new, online "One Stop Permitting Center" .

The Chamber's popular quarterly magazine, "**Perspectives**", continued to be published along with a beautiful new Business Resource Guide, published in partnership with **The Tuscaloosa News**. Other regular information and announcements were also provided during the year through group FAX and group email services, keeping members well informed about opportunities for involvement.

*(See "Progress" page 4)*

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The **Chamber Champions** resource program was also implemented successfully during 2002, providing over \$125,000 in non-dues program funds that impacted a variety of initiatives and supported successful efforts in the areas of communications and public relations, work-force development, technology development, Chambers In Session, and a variety of other vital functions.

A new public relations campaign, designed to promote the community's All America designation and spirit as well as The Chamber's image, was implemented during the latter quarter of 2002, through the partnership of *The Tuscaloosa News* and *Clear Channel Radio*. The *"Imagine The Possibilities"* campaign was well received and provides a foundation for an expanded effort in 2003.

Responding to hundreds of phone, email and walk-in requests during the year, The Chamber continued to effectively serve as the **"front door"** to Tuscaloosa County and West Alabama, providing a variety of informational services on behalf of the community as well as meet diverse needs and requests by our members.

Finally, with an eye on internal improvements and expanded service opportunities, The Chamber initiated an assessment of needed resources for implementation of a long-range strategic plan and expanded programming. The *"Cornerstone Initiative"* was designed with ongoing assessment expected to

continue into 2003. In addition, an assessment of The Chamber's dues structure was initiated with the objective of ensuring a fair, equitable system that meets the organization's short and long term financial needs.

### **Business Development** *Ford Williams, Division Vice Chairman*

With the objective to promote, market and sustain area business development activities that contribute to an expanded economy, job creation and a positive environment for business, The Chamber continued to be the primary private-sector based economic development organization in Tuscaloosa County and West Alabama. And 2002 was a success!



*The Chamber successfully implemented and opened the technology-driven Business Resource & "One Stop" Center during 2002.*

The Chamber's Business Resource Center expanded services and capabilities during the year, serving over 200 clients in 2002 through a variety of resources including business planning, technology applications, one-on-one business training, site selection, and problem solving. The Chamber continued to be an effective tool and support system for business development, especially small firms, as Chamber members took advantage of a wide range of services, including training modules on The Chamber's web site.

And with the implementation of the innovative and highly applauded **"One Stop Permitting Center"**, The Chamber moved to a new level of service and business assistance. The *"One Stop"* Center was developed and primary phases implemented during 2002 in partnership with the City of Tuscaloosa, City of Northport, Tuscaloosa County, Alabama Department of Revenue, and a



*Over 300 businesses were involved in The Chamber's highly successful business and technology development forums during the past year.*

variety of other business development agencies.

The Technology Council continued to provide important training functions during the past year and the forum for business and technology solutions for area firms. Over 300 businesses participated in 2002 in a series of 8 training seminars related to application of technology, customer service and other practical training designed to create more competitive and prosperous businesses. **Law Drummond** served as Chairman of the Technology Council in 2002.

The Manufacturer's Council was implemented in early 2002, and later merged with the CEO Forum, to focus on primarily the key issue of workforce development in Tuscaloosa County. Through a series of forums and ongoing dialogue, The Chamber contributed to a cohesive and comprehensive initiative to address creation of a managed, work-force development system for the West Alabama region. **John Matson** served as Chairman of the Manufacturers' Council and **Bryan Kindred** chaired the CEO Forum.

During 2002, The Chamber continued to be a leading advocate for and partner in efforts to enhance the community's riverfront and redevelopment of the central business district.

With ongoing collaborative support in several areas, The Chamber successfully supported development of a riverfront master plan, real estate assessment, promotion of cooperative efforts with the U. S. Army Corps of Engineers

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*(See "Progress" next page)*