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State of Our Communities

What was once multiple events is now being rolled into one.

The Cullman Area Chamber of Commerce's Governmental Affairs Committee would like to encourage you to attend the newly titled "Chick-fil-A State of Our Communities," an all-day event featuring guest speakers, panel discussions and breakout rooms, on Friday, April 21 at the Cullman Civic Center.

Doors will open at 7:30 a.m. Major session topics include the State of Education, State of Healthcare, State of Local Government and State of Public Safety. There will also be a "Meet Your Local Mayors" session at 1 p.m. Representatives from agencies and organizations related to human services, utilities, tourism and recreation, and the Chamber will be set up in the breakout rooms and provide information/demonstrations to visitors until the event concludes at 3:30 p.m.

The "Chick-fil-A State of Our

To submit a question for the State of Healthcare and State of Public Safety sessions, www.surveymonkey.com/r/2017COCStateofourCommunities. Submitting a question does not guarantee it will be asked.

Communities" is free to the public. However, attendees do have the opportunity to purchase an All-Access Pass for \$50, which includes priority seating, breakfast, lunch, hospitality room access and a swag bag. Breakfast (\$15) and lunch (\$20) can also be purchased separately.

Here is an overview of each major session:

STATE OF EDUCATION

Time: 8 a.m.
Premier Sponsor: Wallace State Community College
Corporate Sponsors: Cullman-Jefferson Gas | Cullman Electric Cooperative
During this session, we'll hear from Cullman City Schools Superintendent Susan Patterson, Cullman County Schools Superintendent Shane Barnette and Wallace State Community College President Vicki Karole-

wics. The Student of the Year and Career Technical Student of the Year will also be announced.

STATE OF HEALTHCARE

Time: 10 a.m.
Premier Sponsor: Katherine Morgan - State Farm Insurance & Financial Services
Corporate Sponsors: Cullman Electric Cooperative | Bradford Health Services
This panel discussion will feature Cullman County Commission on Aging Health Promotion Coordinator Lori Lee, Cullman Regional CEO James Clements and Mental Healthcare of Cullman Executive Director Chris Van Dyke. The Healthcare Professional of the Year will also be announced.

STATE OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Time: 11:45 a.m.
Premier Sponsor: Willow Bend Mortgage



SHARE ASK CONNECT

STATE OF OUR COMMUNITIES
 CULLMAN COUNTY 2017

ALL-DAY EVENT

8AM: STATE OF EDUCATION

10AM: STATE OF HEALTHCARE

11:45AM: STATE OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT

2:30PM: STATE OF PUBLIC SAFETY

Event Sponsor


What you need to know:

Where: Cullman Civic Center, 510 5th St SW, Cullman, AL 35055
When: April 21, 2017 | 7:30 AM - 3:30 PM

For more information, contact the Chamber at 256-734-0454 or info@cullmanchamber.org



Corporate Sponsors: Goodwyn, Mills & Cawood, Inc. | Alabama Senator Paul Bussman
During this session, Cullman County Commission Chairman Kenneth Walker and Cullman City Mayor Woody Jacobs will provide general updates on their respective areas.

STATE OF PUBLIC SAFETY

Time: 2:30 p.m.
Corporate Sponsors: Cull-

man-Jefferson Gas | Publix
Law Enforcement Officials
 Cullman Police Chief Kenny Culpepper, Cullman County Sheriff Matt Gentry and Hanceville Police Chief Bob Long will be on hand to lead this panel discussion.

For more information or if interested in purchasing an All-Access Pass, please call the Chamber at 256-734-0454.

Cullman Area Chamber of Commerce

PO Box 1104, Cullman, AL 35056-1104 | 256-734-0454 | F: 256-737-7443 | info@cullmanchamber.org
www.cullmanchamber.org | www.visitcullman.org

Smith joining Chamber as campaign consultant

The Cullman Area Chamber of Commerce is pleased to announce the addition of Peggy Smith as the official campaign consultant for the Converging for Success five-year strategic plan.

Smith is slated to join the Chamber in a few weeks and is currently in the process of filing her retirement papers as Director of the Cullman Economic Development Agency (CEDA). She will maintain an office at the Chamber and also continue to assist the CEDA as needed.

The announcement was



Smith

made Thursday, March 9 at the Chamber's 74th Annual Meeting & Gala.

Chamber President & CEO Leah Bolin sees Smith, who comes to the Chamber as a highly decorated recruiter of industry to the area, as the perfect person to lead The Plan.

"In an ever-changing global economy, we feel very fortunate to have someone with Peggy's experience and knowledge leading the charge," Bolin said.

If you would like to schedule a personal visit with Leah or Peggy, please email dmatthews@cullmanchamber.org

Converging for Success is a five-year plan developed to focus on four key initiatives:

**Community Development
Existing Business Growth
& Professional Business
Sector Recruitment
Entrepreneurship &
Innovation
Business & Community
Advocacy.**

With the help of Smith, Bolin, and an extraordinary team of volunteer leaders,

The Plan already has a solid foundation for success. Over 30 early adopters have already committed to invest in the campaign, and the Chamber looks to add over 30 more.

"The Chamber Board of Directors is very excited to have someone of Peggy's caliber on board," said newly minted Chamber Chair Jason Spann, General Manager of American Proteins, Inc. in Hanceville. "She has a proven track record of success, and we're confident that trend will

continue and carry over to the campaign."

If you would like to schedule a personal visit with Leah or Peggy, please email dmatthews@cullmanchamber.org.

To see the campaign case statement or other news on the strategic plan, visit <http://www.cullmanchamber.org/pages/converging-for-success>.

For more on Smith's addition from *The Cullman Times*, see http://www.cullmantimes.com/news/smith-heading-to-chamber-to-spearhead-strategic-plan/article_52799512-0535-11e7-9976-eba0ee6f8389.html.

Compromise is not weakness

THE FOLLOWING is an editorial by a member of the Chamber's Governmental Affairs Committee.

The recent failure of Congress to repeal and replace Obamacare is another example of a bigger problem in government. We don't seem to know how to compromise anymore. And it is not just Washington. The Legislature in Montgomery seems unable to solve or address multiple problems facing our state. Our political system extends beyond Republicans and Democrats failing to work together.

Within the parties and among our leadership, there is a lack of respect and room for building a consensus and coming together.

One reason we can't seem to compromise is that most people think compromise is weakness. In order to compromise, you have to give something up. You have to do something you don't want to do. Who wants to do that? "Why should I have to give something up? I am right." But in a society like ours, where there are many viewpoints and we have the freedom to disagree with our government and our neighbors, we have to take other

people's views into account if we are going to effectively govern, and we have to make deals to win their support and build a consensus. Americans forget

Americans forget that compromise is in our DNA. Our country's basic form of government was founded on compromises.

that compromise is in our DNA. Our country's basic form of government was founded on compromises. The House of Representatives and the Senate were created as a com-

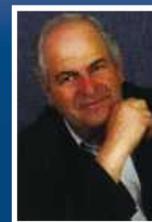
promise between the big states and the small states. Our system of checks and balances, the three branches of government and the constitutional guarantees of our rights were all part of very delicate compromises between people who had different ideas on how our country should be formed and governed. But those compromises have worked for almost 250 years because there was a broad consensus on the goals of a free society and there were people willing to make deals to achieve those goals.

Sacred principles and beliefs should not be compromised, but

not everything in life or in governing is a sacred principle. Every successful marriage, friendship, business partnership, and family relationship is built on give and take. In dealing with other people, we all determine

what is really worth fighting over and what can be compromised. We need for our leaders in Washington and Montgomery to start talking with each other and start making some deals — it is their job.

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Five-year strategic plan

For those interested in learning more about the Cullman Area Chamber of Commerce's five-year strategic plan,

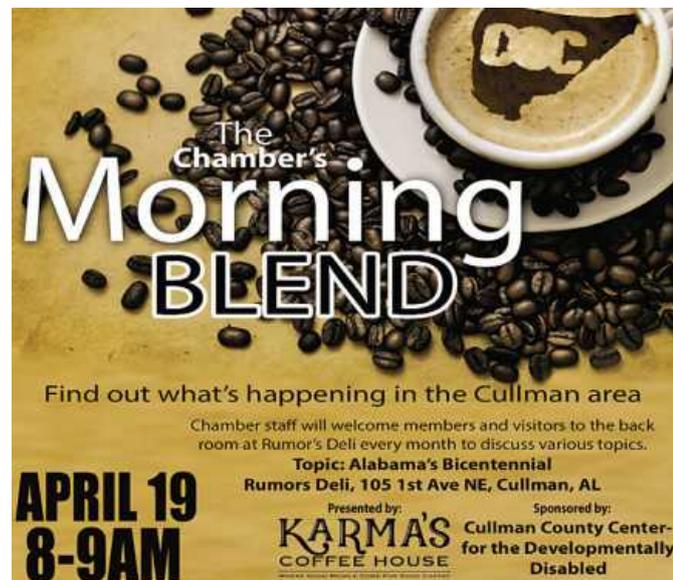
view the campaign case statement and see updates at www.cullmanchamber.org/pages/converging-for-success.



APRIL MORNING BLEND

Come join the Cullman Area Chamber of Commerce the morning of Wednesday, April 19 for delicious coffee and great discussion at our Morning Blend, held every third Wednesday of each month from 8:00 to 9:00 a.m. at Rumors Deli in the Warehouse District. The Chamber staff

welcomes members and visitors to attend this free event. Drew Green, of the Cullman County Museum, will lead the discussion for April's topic — the Alabama Bicentennial. Coffee will be provided by Presenting Sponsor Karma's Coffee House. April's sponsor is Cullman County Center for the Developmentally Disabled, Inc. For more information, contact the Chamber at 256-734-0454 or info@cullmanchamber.org.



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74th Annual Meeting & Gala

Stilt walkers and aerialists and fire eaters, oh my! And a murder mystery, too!

Nearly 600 guests were treated to all of the above — not to mention a program highlighting the past year's Chamber achievements — at the Cullman Area Chamber of Commerce's 74th Annual Meeting & Gala on Thursday, March 9 inside the beautiful Brown Stone Centre at Stone Bridge Farms.

Dinner, décor and attire were all in line with the evening's theme: "Unmasking the Future: A Venetian Masquerade Ball." Almost every attendee took advantage of the occasion by donning their finest and most festive mask — the perfect complement to the gowns and suits sported by the majority of guests.

Chamber President and CEO Leah Bolin kicked off the program by providing her Annual Report. She started by touching on the previous year's accomplishments under outgoing Chamber Chair Sammie Danford, Director of United Way of Cullman County, and outgoing Total Resource Campaign (TRC) Chair Shirley Quattlebaum, of State Farm Insurance, before closing with a few announcements regarding the Chamber's "Converging for Success" campaign.



SMITH SQUARED PHOTOGRAPHY

Tom "Big Doc" Williamson, right, of Cullman Veterinary Hospital, receives the Lucille Galin Public Service Award from City of Good Hope Mayor Jerry Bartlett. The award was presented by the Cullman County Mayor/Commissioner Association.



SMITH SQUARED PHOTOGRAPHY

Beverly Wilkerson, left, of the Pilot Club of Cullman, receives the Ambassador of the Year Award from Wallace State Community College's Susan Copeland, the Chamber's Vice Chair of Membership & Marketing.



CULLMAN AREA CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

Outgoing Chamber Chair Sammie Danford, right, Director of United Way of Cullman County, passes the gavel to incoming Chamber Chair Jason Spann, General Manager of American Proteins in Hanceville.



SMITH SQUARED PHOTOGRAPHY

Bert McGriff, of McGriff Industries and TP Country Club, acknowledges the crowd after receiving the prestigious Emma Marie Eddleman Citizen of the Year Award at the Chamber's 74th Annual Meeting & Gala.



SMITH SQUARED PHOTOGRAPHY

Rumors Deli owners Annette, middle, and Ralph Harris, right, receive the Small Business of the Year Award from Ed White Jeweler's Richard White, the Chamber's Vice Chair of Business Development.



SMITH SQUARED PHOTOGRAPHY

Outgoing Total Resource Campaign (TRC) Chair Shirley Quattlebaum, right, of State Farm Insurance, passes the gavel to incoming TRC Chair Kay Shabel, of MoMo She 103.

Bolin then stepped aside for the customary passing of the gavels, first between Danford and incoming Chamber Chair Jason Spann, General Manager of American Proteins, Inc. in Hanceville, and secondly between Quattlebaum and incoming TRC Chair Kay Shabel, of MoMoShe 103.

The awards portion of the program followed,

with the Chamber naming Beverly Wilkerson (Pilot Club of Cullman) the Ambassador of the Year, Rumors Deli, Inc. the Small Business of the Year and Bert McGriff (McGriff Industries/TP Country Club) the prestigious Emma Marie Eddleman Citizen of the Year. The Cullman County Mayor/Commissioner Association also presented Tom

"Big Doc" Williamson with the Lucille Galin Public Service Award.

The post party included performances by an aerialist and fire eater, as well as the conclusion of the murder mystery. After an entertainingly thorough investigation, the killer turned out to be ... GASP ... Ella Vadder, aka Deborah "Pepper" Hoover of Wallace State Community Col-

lege. Thanks to everyone who played along.

The Gala officially closed with an unmasking, finally revealing the identities of those party-goers still enjoying the festivities.

Much thanks to our sponsors for the Annual Meeting & Gala — Presenting Sponsor: Peoples Bank of Alabama; Corporate Sponsors: Byars-Wright Insurance and

Warren Averett, LLC; Entertainment Sponsor: Cullman Chrysler Dodge Jeep Ram; and Post Party Sponsor: James R. Smith Trucking.

We can't wait to see everyone again next year for the 75th Annual Meeting & Gala! Make sure to keep an eye out for the announcement of our theme. It's sure to be a classic.

2016-17 Youth Leadership Cullman County



The March session of the Chamber's 2016-17 Youth Leadership Cullman County class was Ag Day. "Agriculture is such an important part of Cullman's history and impacts our community daily," said Jackie Moore, the Cham-

ber's Director of Finance & Administration. "We feel it is important to teach our students about this industry."

This year's class is presented by R.E. Garrison Trucking.

The day began with breakfast sponsored by

Compton's Veterinary Hospital. The group then departed the Chamber for visits to the North Alabama Horticultural Research Center, Gold Vine Farms and Cullman Stockyard. After lunch sponsored by Kentucky Fried Chicken and enjoyed with the Rotary

Club, the class gave a presentation on their activities throughout the year. Next, the class traveled to the North Alabama Agriplex to learn about their numerous programs.

Thanks to Cullman Farmer's Co-op for sponsoring March's session.

2016-17 Leadership Class

The 2016-17 Leadership Cullman County Class, sponsored by The Final Touch, held its monthly session the first week of March, focusing on education.

The class met for breakfast at Karma's Coffee House and proceeded to the Cullman Area Technology Academy for a campus tour hosted by Billy Troutman, principal of the Cullman Area Career Center, and Shane Barnette, Superintendent of Cullman County Schools.

"I didn't realize the career center provided so many different paths for people to take," said class member Brad Smith with Ready Mix USA. "I think this is a great resource for our community, and I hope that everyone that needs this program is aware that it is available."

The next stop was

Cullman High School, where CHS Principal Kim Hall and Cullman City Schools Superintendent Susan Patterson hosted the group for a tour of the recently renovated campus.

"Cullman High School has a state-of-the-art facility," said Jay Page, Principal at West Elementary School. "They have every academic and extracurricular program that can be offered in addition to the ability to attend the Career Center or Fast Track program at Wallace."

After visiting the Red Door Café for lunch, the class traveled to Hanceville to visit Wallace State Community College. WSCC President Dr. Vicki Karolewics and Melinda Edwards, Dean of Institutional Outreach, led the class on visits to the performing arts program, a welding



simulation and a nursing simulation.

"I had no idea the Fine and Performing Arts Program at Wallace State is at the level we witnessed," said class member Pat Weissend from Cullman Electric Cooperative. "A short drive to the Burrow Museum offers a nice Saturday evening play that will rival Huntsville or Birmingham offerings."

Class member Jennifer Butler-Taylor, Director of Congressman Robert Aderholt's office in Cullman, was impressed with the partnership between WSCC and Cullman County Schools for the

fine and performing arts.

"It was an interesting take on how to provide this type of education for students in our county school system since their home schools cannot provide this type education," she said. "The performance that the WSCC group put on of Our Town was very good."

Several class members walked away with a greater appreciation for the job opportunities available to Wallace State graduates.

"When I heard that a recent graduate from their electronics and robotics program has a job at an automobile manufacturing plant making \$82,000 a year, it opened my eyes to the possibilities for my students," said Page.

Class member Raul Dominguez, associate pastor at Cullman First United Methodist

Church, had a similar response after visiting the nursing program at WSCC.

"I think it's a first-class program that has a lot of potential to embrace students into real-life situations," he said. "I am very confident that whoever goes into this profession through this school will be a great asset and add value to any hospital."

February's meeting marked the sixth out of eight meetings for the 2016-17 Leader-

ship Class. Monthly meetings have covered Agriculture (October), Health Care (November), Criminal Justice (December), Local Government (January), Quality of Life (February) and Education. Remaining sessions for this year's class are State Government (April) and Economic Development (May).

Thank you to March's breakfast sponsor, Mc-Leroy Law Firm, LLC and to March's lunch sponsor, Cullman Electric Cooperative.

Ask for Blake Davis



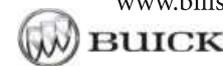
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March Small Business of the Month



April Small Business of the Month

Winner - Cullpepper Real Estate



Supporter - Cullman Auto Mall



SAVE THESE DATES!

- Bloomin' Festival – April 22, 2017
- Strawberry Festival – May 5-6, 2017
- 1A-3A AHSAA State Track & Field Meet – May 5-6, 2017

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customer service. Having the interpersonal skills necessary to relate to customer needs while actively problem-solving an issue is a requirement at this technology support company. Recent growth has mandated hiring additional personnel. Acquiring team members who possess elevated levels of character and integrity is critical to Heath, referencing the old adage to “hire for character, train for skill.”

YELTEK actively participates in a variety of Chamber functions, such as EPIC (Emerging Professionals Impact Cullman)

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events and the Annual Meeting & Gala. They are an investor in the Chamber’s Converging for Success campaign, sponsor the Chamber’s New Business License Report and serve as an exhibitor at the Career Awareness Fair for area 8th graders. In addition to actively participating in the Chamber, Heath realizes the importance of giving back, supporting service organizations such as Cullman Caring for Kids and the North Alabama Substance Abuse Council.

Each month, a sponsoring business helps celebrate and acknowledge the Small Business of the Month winner. If you have a local business you would like to nominate for their outstanding service, please contact Ben Smith at bsmith@cullmanchamber.org. Monthly winners will be automatically nominated for the annual Small Business of the Year award, which is presented at the Chamber’s Annual Meeting & Gala.

The Cullman Area Chamber of Commerce would like to congratulate YELTEK as March’s Small Business of the Month, sponsored by AK Equipment Rental & Sales, Inc. YELTEK’s owner, Heath Williams, started H&A Technologies in April of 2006 and soon thereafter rebranded the name of the company to YELTEK. Over the past several years, YELTEK has continued to grow rapidly. Heath points to YELTEK’s line of software support systems, such as their advanced ticketing programs and remote access tools, as key influencers in their ability to provide the best service to YELTEK clients. These programs create efficiency in response time and task prioritization; all the while increasing quality and affordability for each customer.

In addition to YELTEK’s superior technical toolkit, Heath sees his company’s team as a driving factor in sustaining elevated cus-

The 2017 Cullman Area Tourism & Community Improvement Awards



To nominate your local favorites, go to www.surveymonkey.com/r/2017TourismAwards or stop by the Cullman Chamber to pick up a nomination form in person. The deadline for nominations is Friday, April 14.

The Cullman Area Chamber of Commerce & Visitor Center is now accepting nominations for the 2017 Tourism Awards, which are set for May 23rd at 10:00 a.m. In conjunction with the celebration of the Alabama Bicentennial, this year's theme is "Cullman Places," highlighting the area's attractions and businesses that help make Cullman a tourism destination.

The program will include brunch and the announcement of the winners of the categories listed below. The event will take place at the Brown Stone Centre at Stone Bridge Farms located at 281 Co. Rd. 717 in Cullman.

To nominate your local favorites, go to www.surveymonkey.com/r/2017TourismAwards or stop by the Cullman Chamber to pick up a nomination form in person. The deadline for nominations is Friday, April 14.

Here are this year's categories:

THE BUSINESS AWARDS

These awards recognize businesses and events that differentiate themselves by providing exceptional service, anticipating customers' needs and consistently exceeding visitors' expectations.

EXCEPTIONAL FESTIVAL OR EVENT AWARD

Recognizes a festival or event that attracts visitors as well as locals, generates regional and/or state media attention and positively promotes the Cullman area.

BEST ATTRACTION AWARD

Recognizes a regional attraction (including museums, performing arts, parks, amusement parks, etc.) which attracts visitors and contributes to an outstanding tourism experience.

NEAR NATURE. NEAR PERFECT AWARD

Recognizes a business, organization, community or outdoor recreation area that has developed a tourism product/service that best demonstrates the ecological, cultural or historical assets of the region.

SPIRIT OF CULLMAN AWARD

Recognizes an outstanding tourism- or hospitality-related business or organization that provides excellent service, exemplifies innovation and causes our region to shine.

ROCKIN' RETAILER

Recognizes a retailer that provides an outstanding shopping experience for visitors.

EXTRAORDINARY EVERYDAY EATERY

Recognizes a restaurant offering an atmosphere that provides an outstanding experience for visitors.

THE INDIVIDUAL SERVICE AWARDS

These awards recognize hospitality and frontline individuals who consistently deliver warm, friendly and helpful service, exceed visitors' expectations, anticipate customers' needs, and have received written or verbal feedback about their exceptional service from their colleagues, supervisors or their customers.

THE WHITE GLOVE AWARD

Recognizes exceptional service from an individual hotel housekeeping staff member.

THE SILVER SPOON AWARD

Recognizes consistent superior service by a restaurant or food service employee.

SUPERIOR SERVICE AWARD

Recognizes excellent customer service by an individual who has first contact with the public. Front desk personnel, concierges and all other guest service employees qualify.

SAVVY RETAIL SALES ASSOCIATE

Recognizes excellent customer service from a retail sales associate who has first contact with the public.

HEART OF THE HOUSE AWARD

Honors an outstanding individual who works behind the scenes to keep their institution, organization or business operating smoothly, creating a superior experience for the public.

HOSPITALITY VOLUNTEER OF THE YEAR

Recognizes any hospitality industry volunteer (i.e. entertainment venues, museums, and festival and event volunteers) who has made an outstanding contribution.

RISING STAR AWARD

Recognizes an up-and-coming leader for their exceptional efforts to serve and enhance the experience of the public. Those who have been in the tourism industry for five years or less qualify.

TOURISM PROFESSIONAL OF THE YEAR AWARD

Recognizes a person who has made a significant contribution to the tourism industry through more than five years of innovation, inspiration and industry leadership.

The Community Improvement Yearly Awards will also be presented at this program as part of the event. These awards are given on a quarterly basis with one overall annual award winner in each category including: Best Landscaping (small), Best Landscaping (large), Best Curb Appeal, Best Restoration, Best New Construction and "Building a Sense of Community." The Community Improvement Committee hopes to inspire others to act and preserve, and protect and promote community improvement in the Cullman area.

Single tickets are \$20 for Chamber members and \$25 for future members. Table sponsorships start at \$200 and include reserved seating for eight in a prime location with table signage. The presenting sponsor for the event is The Community Shopper's Guide. Corporate sponsors are The Cullman Times and Cullman County Parks & Recreation. The program sponsor is Johnny's Bar-B-Q. Gold, silver and bronze table sponsorships are available for this event.

If you would like to reserve your tickets to the 2017 Cullman Area Tourism and Community Improvement Awards, email info@cullmanchamber.org or call 256-734-0454. There are a limited number of seats available, and tickets are on a first-come, first-served basis.

1st Quarter Industry Tour – Royal Technologies

On March 16th, 2017, the Cullman Area Chamber of Commerce hosted its 1st Quarter Industry Tour at Royal Technologies, sponsored by Inland Building Systems.

Royal Technologies is an advanced engineering and manufacturing company servicing automotive, furniture, and consumer products industries. By utilizing advanced molding, value-added assembly, and advanced fabrication techniques, Royal Tech is able to manufacture an incredibly wide variety of items that range from polyurethane foams for seat cushioning to side paneling seen on the interior of your vehicle.

Royal structures itself as an Employee Stock Ownership Plan (ESOP) company. As such, their employees share a tremendous sense of pride and ownership in their everyday work. Over the past three months, they've boasted zero percent turnover ratio, attributing their success to the



buy-in each employee feels with the company. Teamwork is an integral part of their corporate philosophy, as each member rotates daily through a variety of positions and tasks to reduce physical strain and prevent work from becoming mundane. Royal Technologies' goal is

to perform better than they did the day before and adopt a mission to deliver a perfect product on time and under cost control without compromising the environment.

Royal Tech's philosophy of conserving natural resources and protection of the envi-

ronment is demonstrated by their commitment through continuous improvements in areas such as prevention of pollution, compliance to all applicable regulations, health and safety, and Quality Management Systems.

Royal Tech currently pro-

vides jobs to approximately 120 full-time employees, with a 176,000-square-foot expansion scheduled in the coming months. Thank you to Royal for being a part of the Cullman community and providing excellent employment opportunities to the area.

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