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Official Newsletter

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PROGRESS

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& VISITOR CENTER**

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Chamber unveiling 'Think Local' campaign at March Community Luncheon

This month's Community Luncheon will be centered around a topic near and dear to the Cullman Area Chamber of Commerce: Thinking local.

Guest speaker Melissa Warnke with the Alabama Retail Association will emphasize that very mindset when she stops by the All Steak Restaurant on Friday, March 16 from 11:30 a.m.-1 p.m. Per usual, the Luncheon will be held in the banquet room and feature a delectable meal and ample networking opportunities.

Contact the Chamber at 256-734-0454 or info@cullmanchamber.org to reserve a ticket.

Community Luncheon

March 16 | 11:30 AM
All Steak Restaurant

Speaker: Melissa Warnke
Alabama Retail Association

Topic: "Thinking Local"



Presenting Sponsor:



**Presenting Sponsor
State Farm Insurance –
Shirley Quattlebaum**

Premier Sponsor:



**March Sponsor
Anytime Fitness**

This month, it'll also include a special presentation. Keeping with the event's theme, the Chamber will unveil its "Think Local" campaign, a carefully thought-out marketing strategy encouraging area businesses and citizens to think local in everything they do — shopping, dining, living, giving and job creation. Seven logos representing these aspects and others

have been designed and will soon be distributed as eye-catching window clings so Chamber members and the public can easily show their support for the "Think Local" movement.

Ms. Warnke is a Cullman native and 2009 Auburn University graduate with a degree in mass communications. She joined the Alabama Retail Association after spending nearly

eight years in a number of roles at WSFA 12 News in Montgomery, including Today in Alabama reporter and noon anchor. Melissa and her husband, Adam, who also hails from Cullman, are the proud parents of two children.

Tickets for the Luncheon are \$15 for Chamber members and \$20 for future members. Seats have been filling up quickly this year, so contact the Chamber at 256-734-0454 or info@cullmanchamber.org to reserve yours today.

Thank you to our Presenting Sponsor, Shirley Quattlebaum – State Farm Insurance, and to our March Sponsor, Anytime Fitness.

Please note April's Community Luncheon will not be at the All Steak. It will instead be at the Cullman Civic Center as the lunchtime session of the Chamber's all-day State of Our Communities event on Friday, April 27.

Chamber hires Brittney Hudson as Director of Community Development

The Cullman Area Chamber of Commerce & Visitor Center is pleased to announce the appointment of Brittney Hudson as Director of Community Development.

This newly created position is vital to the growth of Cullman County and to the success of the Chamber's 5-year strategic plan. Key objectives Brittney will immediately begin tackling include: Addressing the area's housing shortage, fostering downtown connectivity and revitalization in Cullman and Hanceville, and developing a plan to recruit people by promoting all of Cullman County as a "live, work, play" community.

The area's housing shortage will take early priority, with Brittney set to lead the Chamber's new Housing Taskforce. She will organize a housing assessment study to better identify Cullman County's housing needs. Once these gaps are known, Brittney will



Brittney Hudson

SEE HUDSON, P8

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

Chamber's 75th Annual Meeting & Gala only days away!

The Cullman Area Chamber of Commerce & Visitor Center has waited 75 years for the 2018 Annual Meeting & Gala.

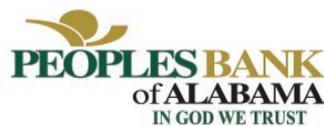
Now, it's only days away.

This year's milestone event, presented by Peoples Bank of Alabama, will take place Thursday, March 8 at Stone Bridge Farms. Doors open at 5:30 p.m., and the program starts at 6 p.m., with a festive after party to follow.

In conjunction with its theme, "Classic Cullman," the Chamber is planning a night full of memories, history and celebration honoring its past, present and future.

Highlights of the evening include:

- The Chad Fisher Band, featuring members of St. Paul & The Broken Bones



Presenting Sponsor
Peoples Bank of Alabama

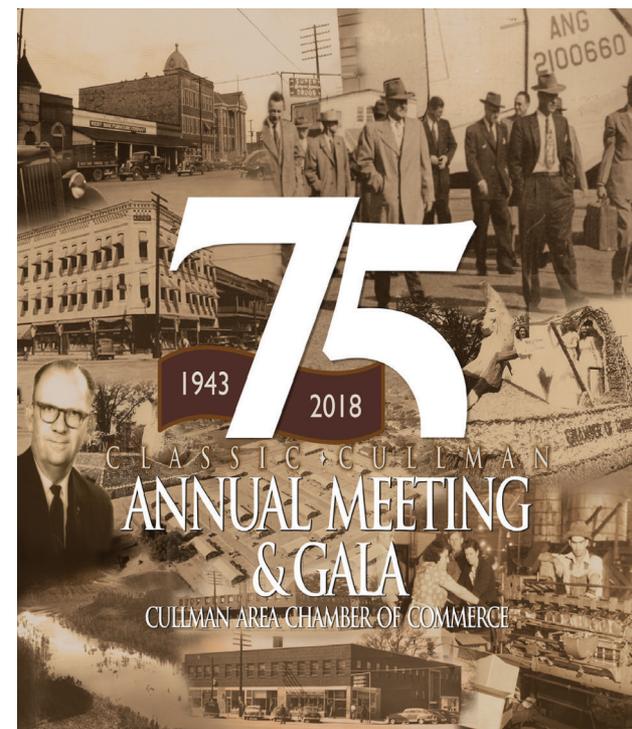
- The Hall of History, with decade-by-decade displays highlighting the Chamber's and community's past 75 years
- An impeccable 1940s-inspired meal
- A 75th Anniversary commemorative video
- A time capsule
- And more!

The Annual Meeting & Gala allows the Chamber to reflect on the past year's achievements under Chair Jason Spann, of American Proteins, Inc., who will pass the gavel to Chair-Elect

Susan Copeland, of Wallace State Community College. Winners of the Emma Marie Eddleman Citizenship Award, Small Business of the Year, Ambassador of the Year, and the Mayor's Association's Lucille Galin Award will also be recognized.

All tables and general admission tickets have been sold. For more information or to be put on the waitlist, contact the Chamber at 256-734-0454 or info@cullman-chamber.org.

The 75th Annual Meeting & Gala is presented by Peoples Bank of Alabama. EvaBank, Justin Dyar and Team of Lake Homes Realty, and Warren Averett, LLC are Corporate Sponsors, and James R. Smith Trucking is Post Party Sponsor.



Shane Quick returning to Morning Blend to talk Rock the South

Shane Quick has grown accustomed to booking the headliner ... not actually being one.

For the second straight year, however, the local entrepreneur is flipping the script, returning to the Cullman Area Chamber of Commerce's Morning Blend to talk all things Rock the South and, more specifically, the two-day country music festival's far-reaching impact on the community.

Presented by Karma's Coffee House and sponsored by the Pilot Club of Cullman, this month's Morning Blend will be Wednesday, March 21 at 8:00 a.m. After a

Presenting Sponsor
Karma's Coffee House
Monthly Sponsor
Pilot Club of Cullman

one-month hiatus, the event is heading back to Rumors Deli — though please note it will be at the local eatery's brand new location at 601 4th St. SW near the corner of Main Avenue and U.S. Highway 278.

The Chamber staff welcomes members and visitors to enjoy delicious coffee and great discussion at our free Morning Blend on the third Wednesday of each month. For more information, contact the Chamber at 256-734-0454 or info@cullmanchamber.org.

Location Change

The Chamber's
Morning BLEND

Find out what's happening in the Cullman area

Chamber staff welcomes members and visitors to the back room at Rumors Deli every month to discuss various topics.

Topic: Rock the South
Rumors Deli, 601 4th St. SW, Cullman, AL

Presented by: **KARMA'S COFFEE HOUSE**
WHERE GOOD PEOPLE COME FOR GOOD COFFEE

Sponsored by: **Pilot Club of Cullman, Inc.**
P.O. Box 1420 Cullman, AL 35055-1420

March 21
8-9AM

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Young professionals gearing up for EPIC 1st Quarter event

A lot of folks still ask, "What is this EPIC group?" Well, it's a ton of different things. EPIC can be a welcome wagon for a young professional that just moved to Cullman County. It can be an

Presenting Sponsor
Drinkard Development
Monthly Sponsor
AGCOR Steel

easy way to meet and network with other young professionals. It can be a way to learn something you maybe didn't know. It can be a way to unwind and have a little fun.

It can be whatever you make it.

Emerging Professionals Impacting Cullman came out of the gate hot in 2018. We held our EPIC Mardi Gras Membership Drive at Mae's Food Hall on Tuesday, February 13. We had a bunch of fun signing up young professionals for yearly memberships. If you aren't aware, an annual membership is the way to go. That assures you get in to all of EPIC's premium events. If you missed the Membership Drive, it's not too late to become a member. We accept member-

A YOUNG PROFESSIONALS EVENT



**EPIC
DINE-N-DASH
POKER RUN**



**MARCH 29TH | 5:30 PM
DOWNTOWN CULLMAN**
5 LOCAL JOINTS, 1 EVENT
\$30 ENTRY OR FREE TO MEMBERS

HOSTED BY: EPIC
PRESENTED BY: DRINKARD DEVELOPMENT, LLC
SPONSORED BY: AGCOR STEEL

CONTACT 256-734-0454 OR INFO@CULLMANCHAMBER.ORG TO REGISTER.

ship applications, which can be found on the Chamber website, all year round.

EPIC is finalizing plans for a big first quarter social on Thursday, March 29. This event will be unlike any other we've ever done. We're calling it the EPIC Dine-N-Dash Poker Run. We'll eat appetizers at five different downtown hotspots (specific sites to be announced). You'll receive one poker playing card at each joint, and everyone will play their hand when we end the night at Mae's Food Hall. Five card stud poker rules. Winners will receive some awesome prizes donated from local businesses.

If you're interest-

ed in attending this event or joining EPIC, please contact the Cullman Area Chamber of Commerce at 256-734-0454 or info@cullmanchamber.org. Thanks to our quarterly sponsor, AGCOR Steel, and to our EPIC Presenting Sponsor, Drinkard Development.

Perfection Chain Products to host quarterly Industry Tour

The Cullman Area Chamber of Commerce's upcoming Industry Tour is going to be off the chain ... literally.

That's because Vinemont's T&S Perfection Chain Products is slated to host this quarter's tour on Thursday, March 22. The event is sponsored by Inland Buildings and will start at 10:00 a.m., though participants are encouraged to arrive by 9:45 a.m.

Because of the nature of these tours, jewelry and open-toe shoes are likely prohibited.

Perfection Chain is located at 301 Goodwin Road, which turns west from U.S. Highway 31 North about two miles north of Alabama Highway 157.

Industry Tours are free to attend. Space is limited, so registration is required. For more information or to register, contact the Chamber at 256-734-0454 or info@cullmanchamber.org.

INDUSTRY TOUR



301 Goodwin Road | Cullman, AL 35058

March 22, 2018
Meet at T&S | 9:45 AM
FREE | Registration Required

LIMITED SPACE!!

No jewelry or open-toe shoes

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March Small Business of the Month

Winner -
O.F. Richter &
Sons, Inc.



Supporter -
AK Equipment
Rental & Sales



Anytime Fitness named February Small Business of the Month

The Cullman Area Chamber of Commerce & Visitor Center would like to congratulate Anytime Fitness as February's Small Business of the Month, sponsored by All Steak Restaurant.

Anytime Fitness, which opened its Cullman location in 2015, strives to meet and surpass the expectations of

Anytime Fitness
1845 Patriot Way SW
Cullman, AL 35055
256-841-6500

everyone who walks through its doors. The facility operates 24/7/365 and provides members access to more than 3,000 clubs worldwide. Anytime is equipped with state-of-the-art cardio and strength machines, as well as free weights, and also has a virtual class system available.

Anytime Cullman's uniquely qualified staff of five aims to assist all members, no matter their background or fitness level. Some of the ways they do this are through free fitness consultations, training sessions and Saturday boot camps held at least once a month and every weekend in May.

"At Anytime Fitness, we get to know our members on a personal and first-name basis," said local Anytime owner Stephen Gannon. "As one of our earliest members



Supporter -
All Steak Restaurant

remarked just recently, 'It's a family, not a gym.'

"One of the greatest satisfactions we receive is recognizing the tremendous success stories of our members. The

privilege of celebrating these victories is the most rewarding aspect of our business."

Anytime Fitness is highly involved in the Chamber and the community. Gannon and Co. regularly attend the Chamber's Community Luncheon, Morning Blend, and Biscuit & Business events. Additionally, the small business has sponsored the Chamber's Leadership class, Chamber 201 and Morning Blend, and

is set to sponsor March's Community Luncheon. As for the area, Anytime sponsors sports programs at each local high school and consistently provides donations — both monetary and merchandise — to a number of local charities. The fitness club also gives to local food pantries, hosts blood drives, and sponsors CPR classes to educate its staff, members and the public.

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 Brian Poole at bpoole@cullmanchamber.org. Monthly winners will be automatically nominated for Small Business of the Year, which is presented at the Chamber's Annual Meeting & Gala.

Chamber's Youth, Adult Leadership classes keeping busy in 2018

The Cullman Area Chamber of Commerce's Youth and Adult Leadership classes have been busier than ever so far in 2018, each enjoying a couple of sessions around the community in January and February. Youth Leadership Cullman County's 2017-18 Presenting Sponsor is R.E. Garrison Trucking, while Leadership Cullman County's is American Proteins, Inc.

Youth Leadership's January session was Local Government Day. The students started the morning with a trip to the Water Treatment Plant, where they met Plant Superintendent David Freeman and toured the facility. From there, they headed to the Cullman County Courthouse for question-and-answer sessions with Cullman County Commission Chairman Kenneth Walker and Cullman County Probate Judge Tammy Brown, as well as a mock trial with Cullman County Circuit Judge Greg Nicholas. The class then traveled to City Hall for a Q&A with Cullman Mayor Woody Jacobs before closing with a presentation from Cullman City Clerk Wesley Moore. Breakfast was sponsored by Alabama Archives, Inc., and lunch was sponsored by Jackson & Williams, Attorneys At Law.



CULLMAN AREA CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

The Chamber's 2017-18 Youth Leadership class takes a second for a group picture while touring Duck River during February's Business & Industry Day.

February's Youth Leadership session was Business & Industry Day, sponsored by Royal Technologies Corporation. Students spent the morning soaking in a presentation from the Cullman Economic Development Agency's Susan Eller and Jamie Troutman before traveling to Walmart Distribution Center #6006 for a tour from Mike Montgomery and Jim Yoho. The class later walked off lunch at Mae's Food Hall — where they heard from Premier Production's Noah Carpenter — with a beautiful tour of Duck River Dam from Tim Scott and Susan Eller. The last stop of the day was Cullman Regional Airport, managed by Ben Harrison. Lunch was sponsored by the City of Cullman In-

dustrial Development Board.

Leadership's January session was Local Government Day. The class kicked off the morning at the Cullman County Economic Development (CCED) office, where they heard from Cullman County Revenue Commissioner Barry Willingham, Cullman County EMA Director Phyllis Little, CCED Project Coordinator Ashley Graves, and Cullman County

Mayors Jerry Bartlett (Good Hope) and Bill Oliver (Holly Pond). Up next was City Hall, where Cullman City Clerk Wesley Moore took the spotlight. Following a tour of Cullman Electric Cooperative, the class jetted to explore Cullman Regional Airport with Ben Harrison. Breakfast was sponsored by Citizens Bank & Trust, and lunch was sponsored by HomTex.

February's Leader-

ship Session was Quality of Life Day. Directors Sammie Danford (United Way of Cullman County), Dawn Owens (The Link of Cullman County) and Dusty Baker (Cullman County Commission on Aging) all spoke at the Chamber before the class left for a tour of the Cullman Wellness & Aquatic Center with Cullman Parks

& Recreation Director Nathan Anderson. After a lunch presentation from the Cullman Association of Realtors' Cindy Dyer and Beverly Hinkle, participants visited new Fire Chief Brian Bradberry at the Cullman Fire Station and then received a tour of Our Lady of Sorrows at the Shrine of the Most Blessed Sacrament in Hanceville.

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BUICK





WORKPLACE HARASSMENT Chamber Seminar

Tuesday, March 27
8:00 AM - 9:00 AM

Chamber's Walmart DC Room
FREE | Reservations Required



256-734-0454
info@cullmanchamber.org

Upcoming Chamber seminar to shine light on workplace harassment

There's hardly been a more relevant time to discuss workplace harassment, and the Cullman Area Chamber of Commerce wants to help you be more informed on the topic. HR managers and employees alike will be able to do just that at a seminar on Tuesday, March 27 from 8:00-9:00 a.m. in the Chamber's Walmart DC Room.

Registration required due to limited seating. Contact the Chamber at 256-734-0454 or info@cullmanchamber.org to reserve your spot today.

The seminar will be presented by Gaynor St. John and teach attendees how to spot, investigate, respond to, report, and prevent workplace harassment of all types. While only 70 percent of employees who experienced harassment talked to their supervisor in 2016, the average number of visits to the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission website has more than doubled in the last four months.

If your answer to any of the following questions is no, it might be worth your while to see what this seminar is all about.

- Do you have effective, far and concise policies on harassment triggers, such as social media and technology in the workplace, religious and ethnic stereotypes, gender expression and political speech, as well as sexual harassment?
- Are your supervisors trained to spot potential problems and promote civility in your workplace?
- Are your employees prepared to report harassment?
- Is your company ready for the cultural change to a more open and aggressive approach to harassment?

Gaynor St. John has been a partner at St. John & St. John, LLC for more than 25 years and is a frequent lecturer on employment law issues.

The seminar is free to attend, but registration is required due to limited seating. Contact the Chamber at 256-734-0454 or info@cullmanchamber.org to reserve your spot today.

Seats filling up fast for quickly approaching Chamber 201 class

Becoming a member at the Cullman Area Chamber of Commerce is just the first step. Learning how to maximize that membership is the next — and the most beneficial!

Local business representatives and individuals will be able to do just that at our upcoming Chamber 201 class on Wednesday,

Chamber 201 is free, but reservations are first-come, first-served. Space is limited, so contact the Chamber at 256-734-0454 or info@cullmanchamber.org to save your spot.

March 28. The event lasts from 11 a.m.-1 p.m. in the Chamber's Walmart DC Room, includes free lunch from Sweet Peppers Deli and covers a vast variety of information.

Chamber 201 is facilitated by Director of Member Services Magan Bartlett with help from the entire Chamber staff. The class serves as a basic introduction to what the Chamber does and educates new and old members alike on how to get the most out of their membership.

Topics include:

- Member Services
- Events
- Leadership Opportunities
- Communications & Marketing



If you're reading this, you're already a Chamber member. Now, learn how to **MAXIMIZE** your membership at our **Chamber 201 workshop!**

Wednesday, March 28th | 11:00 AM – 1:00 PM
Wal-Mart Distribution Center Room @ Chamber

Call 256-734-0454 to reserve your spot!

- Community Development
- Entrepreneurship & Education
- Business Development & Investor Relations
- Business & Community Advocacy
- Tourism

- Finance & Administration
- Chamber 201 is free to attend, but reservations are on a first-come, first-served basis. Space is limited, so contact the Chamber at 256-734-0454 or info@cullmanchamber.org to save your spot.



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Nominations sought for 2018 Cullman Area Tourism Awards

The Cullman Area Chamber of Commerce & Visitor Center is now accepting nominations for the 2018 Tourism Awards, which are slated for June 14th at 8:00 a.m. In conjunction with the celebration of the Alabama Bicentennial, this year's theme is "Cullman People," highlighting the people and personalities who have helped make Cullman County a great tourism destination. The program will include breakfast and the announcement of the winners in the categories listed below. The event will take place at Stone Bridge Farms located at 281 Co. Rd. 717 in Cullman.

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 retail-



To nominate your local favorites, go to survey-monkey.com/r/2018TourismAwards or stop by the Chamber to pick up a form in person. The deadline for nominations is Friday, May 11.

er 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 house-keeping 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.

To nominate your local favorites, go to surveymonkey.com/r/2018TourismAwards or stop by the Chamber to pick up a nomination form in person. The deadline for nominations is Friday, May 11.

Table sponsorships start at \$250 and include reserved seating for eight in a prime location with table signage. The presenting sponsor of the event is The Community Shopper's Guide. The Corporate Sponsor is *The Cullman Times*. Gold, silver and bronze table sponsorships are available.

If you would like to reserve your tickets to the 2018 Cullman Area Tourism Awards, contact 256-734-0454 or info@cullmanchamber.org. Space is limited, and seats will be filled on a first-come, first-served basis.



IT'S TIME TO RENEW YOUR CHAMBER MEMBERSHIP!

Chamber names Roger Steele permanent Director of Tourism

The Cullman Area Chamber of Commerce & Visitor Center has lifted “interim” from Roger Steele’s title and made him the permanent Director of Tourism. The move was recently approved by the Chamber’s Executive Board and reaffirmed by the Chamber’s tourism board.

Roger has been hard at work since joining the Chamber staff in late October. Over the last



Roger Steele

four months, he’s been responsible for forming a Smith Lake Advisory Committee to develop a new website promoting the lake, vastly increasing exposure of the Visit Cullman Facebook page, assisting in the development of a more user-friendly Visit Cullman AL mobile app, and locking down Smith Lake as the site

of the 2018 Fishers of Men Southeast Region 2 Championship to be held in November.

Currently, Roger’s top priority is establishing a strategic plan for tourism focusing on four key areas — Smith Lake, sports marketing, religious tours and agritourism.

“Roger comes to us with almost 20 years of sales and marketing experience,” said Chamber President & CEO Leah Bolin. “He has a passion for Cullman and has

proven himself to be a valuable asset to our team and for tourism in Cullman County.”

Roger is a Cullman High School graduate and received his bachelor’s and master’s degrees from UAB. An accomplished writer, he’s won multiple awards from the Alabama Press Association and had academic work published in The Alabama Review. Roger and his wife, Karen, have two children, Amelia and Nathan.

HUDSON: New hire ready to dive in on Community Development initiatives

FROM PAGE 1

then advocate with builders and developers to help populate our market.

“The hiring of a Community Development Director is the last piece of the ‘Converging for Success’ puzzle,” said Chamber President & CEO Leah Bolin. “Brittney is uniquely qualified for this position. She earned her bachelor’s degree from Auburn University, as well as her master’s degree in Community Development and Planning. I am confident that Brittney’s knowl-

edge, skill set and ‘can-do attitude’ will make 2018 a productive year for our community.”

While on the Plains, **“The hiring of a Community Development Director is the last piece of the ‘Converging for Success’ puzzle.”**

Leah Bolin
Chamber President & CEO

Brittney served as a Graduate School Senator and member of the National Political Science Honor Society. She’s also worked as

a Graduate Research Assistant, providing extensive real estate and community development analysis within the University’s Community Planning program. Her focus on floor area ratio analyzed the effects of land use regulations on property values and the rate of development.

Brittney has made Cullman County home with her husband, Courtney, and their two daughters, Carleigh (3) and Cicily (1).

Please join us in welcoming Brittney and her family to the Chamber and to the community!

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