CULLMAN AREA CHAMBER OF COMMERCE & VISITOR CENTER
Official Newsletter of the
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2017 Annual Meeting and Gala March 9

LEAH BOLIN
Chamber President

The Cullman Area Chamber of Commerce's 74th Annual Meeting & Gala is right around the corner, and it's sure to be an elegant evening full of mystery, intrigue and fantasy! This year's theme is "Unmasking the Future: A Venetian Masquerade Ball." That means masks are highly encouraged with every outfit, but definitely try to think more Victorian/Renaissance than Mardi Gras when picking out the perfect one. This year's event is set for Thursday, March 9, 2017 at the Brown Stone Centre at Stone Bridge Farms. Doors will open at 5:00 p.m. and the program will start at 6:30 p.m., with an after party from 8:00 to 10:00 p.m.*

The Annual Meeting & Gala allows us to celebrate the past year's achievements under Sammie Danford, Director of United Way of Cullman County, who will pass the gavel to incoming chair Jason Spann, General Manager at American Proteins, Inc. in Hanceville.

General admission tickets are still available for $50. For more information or to purchase a ticket, please contact the Chamber at 256-734-0454 or info@cullmanchamber.org.

Winners of the Small Business of the Year, Ambassador of the Year Award, Emma Marie Eddleman Award and the Lucille Galin Award presented by the Mayor's Association will also be recognized. The Presenting Sponsor is Peoples Bank of Alabama. Byars-Wright Insurance and Warren Averett, LLC are Corporate Sponsors. Cullman Chrysler Dodge Jeep Ram is the Entertainment Sponsor, and James R. Smith Trucking is the Post Party Sponsor.

General admission tickets are still available for $50. For more information or to purchase a ticket, please contact the Chamber at 256-734-0454 or info@cullmanchamber.org. Also, keep an eye on the Cullman Chamber Facebook page for tips on attire and other general updates for the Annual Meeting & Gala.

*Exact times are subject to change

'Cost of Doing Nothing'

Jim Page will be the February Community Luncheon guest speaker

Page

The Cullman Area Chamber of Commerce will welcome the President and CEO of one of its southwestern counterparts for February's Community Luncheon. Join us on the third Friday of the month, February 17, as Jim Page of the Chamber of Commerce of West Alabama speaks on the "Cost of Doing Nothing." Per usual, the Luncheon will be held at the All Steak Restaurant in the banquet room from 11:30 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. Tickets are $15 for Chamber Members and $20 for future members. Call 256-734-0454 to reserve your seat. Thank you to our Presenting Sponsor Shirley Quattlebaum – State Farm and to February's Sponsor, Payroll Services, LLC.

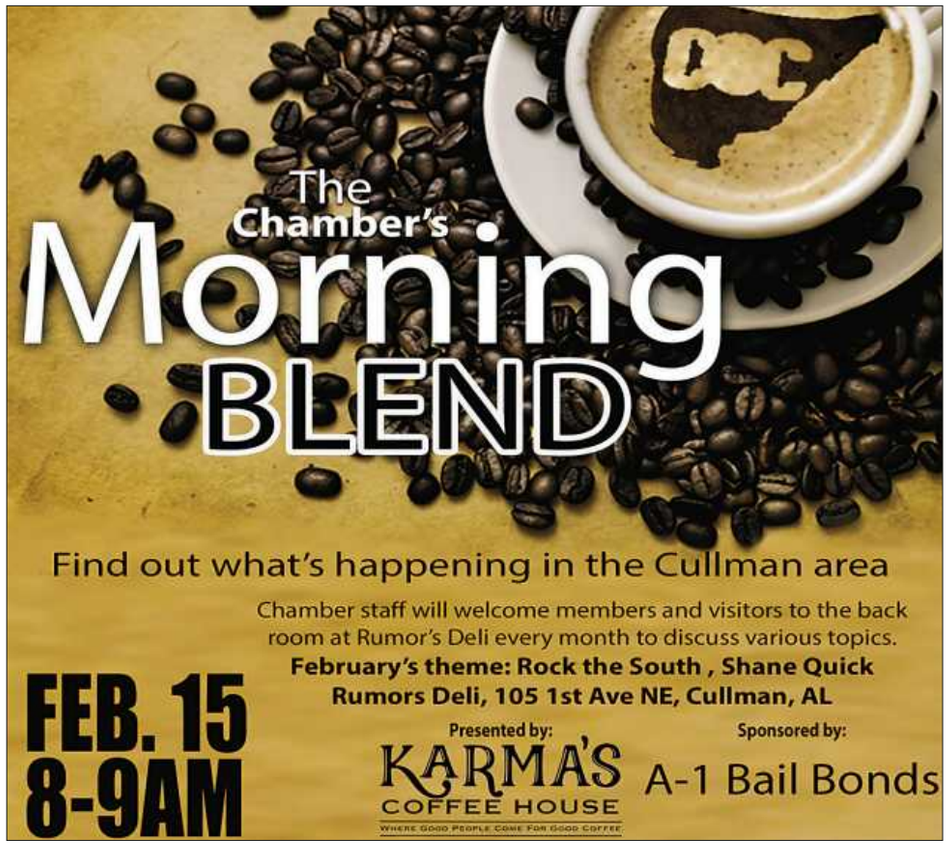
Call 256-734-0454 to reserve your seat. Tickets are $15 for Chamber Members and $20 for future members.

Presenting Sponsor
Shirley Quattlebaum – State Farm

February's Sponsor
Payroll Services, LLC.

Morning Blend returns Feb. 15

Come join the Cullman Area Chamber of Commerce the morning of Wednesday, February 15 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. Shane Quick will lead the discussion for February's topic: Rock the South. Coffee will be provided by Presenting Sponsor Karma's Coffee House. February's sponsor is A-1 Bail Bonds. For more information, contact the Chamber at 256-734-0454 or info@cullmanchamber.org.



Biscuits & Business

Biscuits & Business is set to make its 2017 debut! Come out and enjoy a delicious breakfast, great discussion and fellowship from 8:00 to 9:00 a.m. on February 9, 2017. Peoples Bank of Alabama will sponsor and host the event at its main branch on Cherokee Avenue. Kevin Kilpatrick will serve as guest speaker for this quarter's topic: business loans. Kilpatrick, a University of Alabama at Birmingham graduate, is the Senior Vice President of GCap Financing, a division of Peoples Bank of Alabama. He frequently speaks about successful lending strategies to various professional, civic and industry groups throughout the Southeast. Biscuits & Business is free to attend, but reservations are required. Please contact 256-734-0454 or info@cullmanchamber.org to register.

Birmingham Boat Show Features Smith Lake

On Saturday, January 21st on the Seminar Stage at the Birmingham Jefferson Convention Complex, the Birmingham Boat Show presented 'A Salute to Smith Lake' – sponsored by the Cullman Area Chamber of Commerce & Visitor Center and Smith Lake businesses. A great crowd attended this special presentation wanting to know about Smith Lake and what can be expected on its waters.

A presentation was given by Jesse Newsom, Tourism Director of the Cullman Area Chamber of Commerce. Speakers included Allison Westlake from the Alabama Power Shoreline Management, who discussed the progress of Smith Lake and the new app the company created for visitors on the water.

Special guest speakers were Ethan Flack and Caiden Sinclair, both members of the University of Alabama Fishing Team, the 2016 Cabela's School of the Year.

The event highlighted the destination getaways on and around Smith Lake, and featured Smith Lake businesses and exciting giveaways. Over $2,000 in giveaways were handed out to crowd attendees, including a three-night stay at a Smith Lake house rental sponsored by Smith Lake Rentals & Sales owners Jeff and Maura Thomas.

A thank you to our businesses who helped create a great event:

Van's Sporting Goods
Russell Marine
Stoney Lonesome OHV Park / Cullman County Parks & Rec
Cullman Electric Cooperative
Smith Lake Living Magazine
Joseph Carter Realty
Alabama Power Shoreline Management
Johnny's Bar-B-Q

And a special thank you to Sandy Harris at Smith Lake RV Resort for her time spent putting this event together.

A thank you to our businesses who helped create a great event:

Van's Sporting Goods
Russell Marine
Stoney Lonesome OHV Park/Cullman County Parks & Rec
Cullman Electric Cooperative
Smith Lake Living Magazine
Joseph Carter Realty
Alabama Power
Shoreline Management
Johnny's Bar-B-Q

EPIC Wine & Cheese Night

The Emerging Professionals Impacting Cullman (EPIC) will hold its first quarterly social of 2017 with an EPIC Wine & Cheese Night on Thursday, February 23 at Smith Farms. Cost to attend is $10 at the door and includes a $25 wine sampling card, as well as heavy hors d'oeuvres of cheese, meats and other snacks.

For more information or to register, contact the Chamber at 256-734-0454 or info@cullman-chamber.org.

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Leadership Cullman County

Sponsored by The Final Touch

The Leadership Cullman County class met on January 10, 2017 to learn more about Cullman's local government. The morning started off with a breakfast sponsored by Listerhill Credit Union. The class had a Q & A session with County Commission Chairman Kenneth Walker and Associate Commissioner Kerry Watson. Revenue Commissioner Barry Willingham spoke to the class about improvements his office has made to software, as well the steps that have been taken to cut down on the wait time to make payments. Cherrie Haney, Director of Cullman County Economic Development, spoke on how CCED helps the community with grants and provides support for Cullman County's 11 municipalities. Following lunch provided by KFC, the class visited Cullman City Hall, where they heard from Mayor Woody Jacobs and City Clerk Wes Moore. The class answered questions that relate to issues the City of Cullman is currently facing. Up, Up, and Away – the class visited Cullman Regional Airport - Folsom Field, where Airport Manager Ben Harrison spoke on the airport's five-year plan and about the partnerships it has with Wallace State Community College and Air-Evac. Thanks to The Final Touch for sponsoring the 2016-17 Leadership Cullman County Class!

Youth Leadership class talk government

Presented by R.E. Garrison Trucking

The January session of the Chamber's 2016-17 Youth Leadership Class gave members a view of local government.

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

The day began with breakfast sponsored by Alabama Archives and a trip to the Water Treatment Plan. The group then traveled to Cullman City Hall, where they were given a presentation of local government and how it works. Lunch was provided by Jackson & Williams Attorneys.

After lunch, the group traveled to the Cullman County Courthouse, where they participated in a Q & A with the Cullman County Commission.

Industry Appreciation Reception

The Chamber's Agriculture, Business, and Industry Committee hosted the annual Industry Appreciation Reception at TP Country Club on January 24th to honor and thank area businesses for their investments and commitments to Cullman. The St. Bernard Preparatory Jazz Band provided musical entertainment. Updates were provided on behalf of both the City and County Economic Development Agencies, Wallace State Community College, and the Chamber.

Co-Presenting Sponsors

Cullman City Industrial Development Board

Cullman County Industrial Development Authority

Premier Sponsors

Cullman-Jefferson Gas

Wallace State Community College

Entertainment Sponsor

Reliance Wordwide Corporation

Hessaire President Jerry Fan smiles during the Industry Appreciation Reception as he walks to accept Hessaire's plaque for hosting a 2016 Industry Tour.

Corporate Sponsors

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BBVA Compass
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Cullman Electric Cooperative
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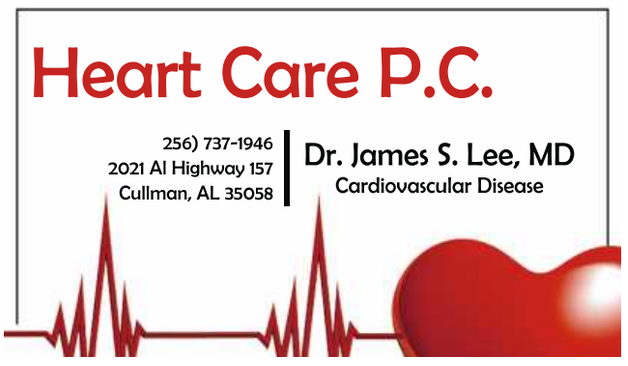

January Small Business of the Month

The Chamber's Retail Committee would like to congratulate Ed White Jewelers as January's Small Business of the Month, sponsored by Liberty National – Jamie Speakman.

Originally opened in 1960 by Ed White, this small business has long been recognized as a staple in the fine jewelry and retail landscape of Cullman. Owner Richard White and wife Silvia are the 2nd generation to run the family business, having joined Richard's father, Ed, in 1977. Taking full ownership in 1981, they relocated to their current location in 1995. Their son, Matt, currently works alongside both, carrying the legacy of the family business into the next generation.

Ed White Jewelers provides full-time jobs to seven employees. As a professional in the diamond industry, Richard has served as the District Vice-President for Jewelers of America. He's also been supportive in promoting the Jewelers for Children organization, which supports a variety of non-profits, including St. Jude's Hospital. Richard is a longtime member of the Cullman's Lions Club and actively supports The Foundry and their farm outreach. Silvia serves on the Cullman Regional Foundation Board and is a past member of Cullman Regional's Guild. She said finding opportunities to service their customers and make each guest happy has always been a point of emphasis for their business. They take the Golden Rule to heart and treat everyone who comes into their store with the same respect they hope to receive.

ED WHITE Jewelers

1704 2nd Avenue NW
Cullman, AL 35055
(256) 734-3661

Richard White currently serves on the Chamber's Board of Directors and has been involved in several Chamber events and programs throughout the past year, including sponsorship of Chamber's Visit Cullman App, attending the April and August Community Luncheons at the All Steak, and providing November's sponsorship of the Board of Directors monthly meeting.

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.

2016 Small Business of the Year Nominees

Congratulations to each Small Business of the Month recipient from 2016! It is through the hard work of each owner and employee that we can each appreciate this wonderful community. Monthly winners are automatically nominated for the annual Small Business of the Year award, which will be presented at the Chamber's Annual Meeting & Gala on March 9th at Stone Bridge Farms.

JANUARY
The Red Door Café

FEBRUARY
MR. HICKS' Mens Wear

MARCH
Jack's Western & Outdoor Wear

APRIL
Jennifer's Treasures

MAY
Stone Bridge Farms Southern Event Venue

JUNE
Katherine Morgan State Farm Insurance & Financial Services

JULY
Rumors Deli Inc.

AUGUST
TriGreen Equipment, LLC

SEPTEMBER
Nearen Construction Company, Inc

OCTOBER
Awards Palace, LLC

NOVEMBER
Pepsi Cola Distributing of Cullman

DECEMBER
278 Auto Wash & Detail

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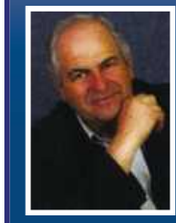

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February Small Business of the Month

Winner - Better Than Before

Better Than Before
Consignments & Upscale Resale
739-3550

Supporter - All Steak Restaurant

The All Steak RESTAURANT

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Chamber for Charities Presents Pair of Checks to Local Organizations

The Cullman Area Chamber of Commerce was pleased to present a pair of impactful local organizations with checks in January as part of our "Chamber for Charities" program. The "2016 Parade of Trees" helped raise $3,371 to give to Brooks' Place - Childcare Advocacy Center of Cullman, while the "EPIC Ugly Christmas Sweater Party" made it possible for $1,000 to be donated to Javon Daniel and Nancy Bryant from Cullman Caring for Kids.

The Parade of Trees is a display of Christmas trees in downtown Cullman promoting community, local companies, nonprofits, churches and schools. The Chamber's partner for the event is Brooks' Place, which provides a neutral, home-like setting where child victims of sexual and physical abuse may receive a wide range of services.

The Chamber's Emerging Professionals Impacting Cullman (EPIC) program held its inaugural Ugly Christmas Sweater Party to create excitement and interest for "under-40" professionals in the Cullman area and give back to the community. Proceeds from the event went to Cullman Caring for Kids, an agency of United Way of Cullman County that strives to end child abuse, child hunger and child neglect.

We would like to thank all our current members, future members and everyone involved in making the Parade of Trees and EPIC Ugly Christmas Sweater Party such successful events. Of course, we'd also like to thank Brooks' Place and Cullman Caring Kids for their commitment to the community. The work done by both each year is important and tireless, and it certainly hasn't gone unnoticed!

'Converging for Success' campaign update

The Cullman Area Chamber of Commerce's "Converging for Success" campaign is officially in full swing. Announced in December 2016, the five-year strategic plan was launched as a means to guide the growth and development of the Cullman area in a number of new and exciting ways.

The campaign is led by Co-Chairs Dr. Jeremy Stidham of Cullman Internal Medicine and Jason Grimmett of Drinkard Development, and focuses on four key initiatives:

Community Development

Existing Business Growth and Professional Business Sector Recruitment

Entrepreneurship and Education

Business and Community Advocacy

CONVERGING FOR SUCCESS

Chairs for the initiatives, in order of initiative, are Bill St. John of St. John and Associates and Austin Hall of Nearen Construction; Rob Werner of Werner's Trading Company and Ken Sanchez of Reliance Worldwide Corporation; Shawn Crider of Zero RPM and Randy Earnest of Chick-fil-A of Cullman; and Brian Lacy of Cullman Electric Cooperative and Nesha Donaldson of Cullman Regional.

The Chamber and its partners have teamed up with nationally renowned and Texas-based consulting firm Funding Solutions for the campaign. Peggy Smith has also agreed to take personal time away from her position as Cullman City Economic Development Agency Director to serve as campaign advisor.

Both the people involved and his longstanding pride and commitment to the Cullman area factored heavily into Richard White's decision to be one of the campaign's first investors. White is the President of Ed White Jewelers and serves on the Chamber's Executive Board.

"I've got full faith in the initiatives that are outlined in the 'Converging for Success' campaign," he said. "With the support of local businesses and volunteers, I'm confident the current team — the Chamber Board of Directors and the staff — will be able to carry out each of the objectives."

Those interested in learning more about the "Converging for Success: Together we can do everything" campaign can pick up a case statement at the Chamber. The booklet will also eventually be available for viewing in digital format on the Chamber website.

The Chamber would like to extend our sincerest thanks to Lisa Jones Photography, Alabama Web Press, Hampton Inn and Stone Bridge Farms for their contributions before and in the early stages of the campaign.

Congressman Aderholt stops by Chamber

The following is a direct synopsis of Congressman Robert Aderholt's presentation.

The Trump Administration is now just a few weeks old, but the change he promised is already resonating across Washington and the country. We have begun the process of repealing and replacing the Affordable Care Act that has hamstrung businesses and hurt consumers with fewer choices and increased costs. Congress is also working with the President on repealing and rolling back burdensome regulations. For instance, the way the Obama EPA hurt local farmers with regulations that seemed to have been written by someone who had never set foot on a farm.

I was also very pleased with President Trump's choice for the Supreme Court of the United States. Judge Neil Gorsuch appears to be an excellent choice to serve on our nation's highest court. The most important duty of a Supreme Court Justice is solely to interpret the United States Constitution as it is written. The court does not need activist judges who ignore our founding document and simply write new laws. Many are confident that Judge Gorsuch has the judicial temperament to let the letter of the law govern his decisions. Based on Gorsuch's record, I believe he will follow the example of the late Justice Antonin Scalia and examine the law through the lens of the constitution.

The United States Senate has also been working to approve President Trump's cabinet appointees. As you know, Trump picked Alabama Senator Jeff Sessions to be our new Attorney General. Sessions did a fantastic job in front of the Senate Judiciary Committee during his hearing. His knowledge of the law, his commitment to upholding the law, and his desire for justice was on full display. He demonstrated what the people of Alabama already know, that he will make a great United States Attorney General.

The fourth Sunday in January is known as Sanctify of Life Sunday, which coincides with the anniversary of Roe Vs. Wade. I was asked to pen an article about why I am Pro-life. I thought I would share it with you here:

Our beliefs, our ideals, and our very way of being are almost entirely rooted in the way we were raised. The values that are instilled in us by our parents as children, are in most cases the values we carry forth with us in our lives as adults. So if someone asks me why I'm Pro-Life, you can look squarely to those lessons I learned early in life.

It was at an early age that I learned about the sanctity of life. From the Sunday School songs that echoed themes like, "we are all precious in his sight," or "little ones to him belong. They are weak, but he is strong." Life was the original gift given to all of us by our creator. And it was only God who could take it away.

Let me say that I am not naïve enough to believe that everyone holds my same strong connection between religious belief and the sanctity of life. Yet, no matter what someone believes or doesn't believe, everyone understands that life is precious and it is a gift. That's why it's hard for me to understand how someone could think that abortion is simply a choice or a matter of privacy.

You could argue dozens of points about why abortion should be legal, but they are trumped by one simple, indisputable fact: abortion stops an innocent human heart beat.

It's estimated that since the Roe vs. Wade decision that approximately 55 million babies have been aborted in the United States. That's 55,000,000! It's an astonishing figure that some in our country actually celebrate. How do you celebrate the loss of life, the loss of possibilities, the loss of so much innocence?

Many of us on the Pro-Life side of this issue are painted as backwards, uninformed or sexist for not supporting a woman's right to choose. But of those 55 million aborted babies, half, 27 million, were girls. Abortion is not an issue that is pro-woman.

Being Pro-Life also comes with responsibilities. It's not enough to say that you are Pro-Life and then walk away. Women who find themselves with an unplanned pregnancy need support. They need assistance. And sometimes a loving shoulder to cry on.

This is why I'm a great supporter of centers that are there to help women find alternatives to abortion. An example in my district is First Source for Women in Cullman, Alabama. They provide prenatal care, counseling, baby supplies and even a father mentoring program for those dads who want to be involved in their child's life. There are many other similar centers across the 4th District.

For those women who don't feel they can keep their child, there is always adoption. I have been and continue to be a supporter of foster care programs and programs that seek to find forever families for children. Last year, I nominated the Kids to Love foundation in Huntsville, Alabama for the national Angels in Adoption award. They have provided care for thousands of foster children in my district and helped them find loving, caring families.

We are a country that has won two world wars. We have put 12 men on the surface of the moon. We have advanced and improved life for others unlike any other country in the world. How can such a civilized, advanced society support policies that kill the innocent?

I have said a lot to sum up something that is actually very simple. Why am I Pro-Life? I am Pro-Life because it is the right thing to do.