

The Chamber Perspectives online

Upcoming Events

Apr 16
Executive Committee

Apr 19
Mastering Excel Formulas

Apr 24
West Alabama Leadership
Prayer Breakfast

Apr 26
Civic Hall of Fame

Inside this issue

- [Civic Hall of Fame Announces 2007 Honorees](#)
- [Recent Chamber in Session Stars Governor Riley](#)
- [Second Annual "State of the Schools" Breakfast A Success](#)
- [Culture to Build Tuscaloosa: More on Creating a Livable Community](#)
- [U of A President Addresses Northport Advisory Council on Expansion](#)
- [Chamber Public Affairs Council Focused on 2007 Priorities](#)
- [New Communications Director](#)
- [Help Keep Captain Mike's Dream Alive](#)
- [Women in Business Council Holds Financial Planning Seminar](#)
- [Handbook Basics for Your Workplace](#)
- [Thanks, Premier Service Company](#)
- [A Chamber Story](#)

[Tuscaloosa Souvenirs](#)



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Civic Hall of Fame Announces 2007 Honorees

Six exceptional citizens have been selected as the 2007 honorees for the Tuscaloosa County Civic Hall of Fame, sponsored and coordinated by The Chamber. This will be the seventh annual induction for the Civic Hall of Fame, which is designed to honor exceptional citizens who have made significant, long-term contributions to the overall development of Tuscaloosa County.

The Civic Hall of Fame was born during The Chamber's 100th anniversary year in 2000, and since its inception, 47 citizens have been honored to date. "The basic purpose of the Civic Hall of Fame," according to Jerry Belk, Chairman of the Civic Hall of Fame Committee, "is to honor 'civic giants', men and women who have made broad, lasting contributions to the overall progress and quality of our community. Our 2007 inductees certainly meet this high standard and reflect the rich history and civic life of Tuscaloosa County."

The Civic Hall of Fame program will begin at 12 Noon and will include formal presentations about the 2007 honorees. Tickets are on sale at The Chamber for \$25 per person. For details and tickets, call 391.0559 or 758.7588.

2007 Tuscaloosa County Civic Hall of Fame Honorees



Bessie Ford Booth (1893 - 1994). One of Northport's most prominent and beloved citizens, Bessie Booth devoted her entire life to teaching and education, volunteer service, her faith and church, and as a devoted wife and mother. "Miss Bessie" touched the lives of people through her long-term teaching and counseling career, through her volunteer work along side her husband's medical career and through the West Alabama General Hospital in Northport, and through here church related work. She was honored as Northport's Citizen of the Year at the age of 84, selected as Alabama's Senior Citizen Queen at the age of 73, and named Volunteer of the Year at the age of 85 by the West Alabama General Hospital.

George Hutcheson Denny (1870 - 1955). Leading The University of Alabama to new heights of academic achievement, growth and physical expansion, Dr. George Denny left a significant and lasting impact that changed the course of Tuscaloosa as well as The University. During his tenure, there was unprecedented growth in student enrollment from 500 to over 5,000; expanded academic offerings; growth of the physical facilities from nine major buildings to twenty-three; and led The University to national prominence through the football program. His legendary leadership was recognized statewide and nationally, earning him various accolades from professional, civic and community-based agencies and organizations, including membership in the Alabama Hall of Fame.



William Ryan deGraffenried, Jr. (1950 - 2006). One of Tuscaloosa's and Alabama's most effective legislators and political leaders, Ryan deGraffenried left a significant legacy and impact on the growth and development of the Tuscaloosa County community during his all-too short life. Known for his professionalism, expertise and understanding of the legislative process, and civic leadership, Ryan had a lasting impact on The University of Alabama, Shelton State Community College, the Department of Mental Health, economic development, and a host of other key initiatives that contributed to the area's growth and prosperity.

Rev. Elijah James, Jr. (1928 - Present). Serving as Pastor of the New Zion Baptist Church for over 40 years, Dr. E. J. James' involvement and impact expand far beyond his duties as a pastor and across a wide spectrum of community life and all people. A pivotal figure in the civil rights movement in the 1960's, he made significant contributions to understanding and bringing people together, as he still does today. An active community leader, Reverend James has made lasting contributions through the Tuscaloosa Ministerial Association, YMCA, Stillman College, Temporary Emergency Services, Northport Civil Service Board, Northport Housing Authority and a host of other agencies and organizations.



Claud A. Morrison (1925- 1999). With a lifetime marked by public service and civic responsibility, Claud Morrison made a significant and lasting impact on education, recreation, business development, and positive community relations. A practicing and respected Certified Public Accountant and business leader, Claud Morrison was active in many important and diverse leadership roles, including being one of the first members of the Tuscaloosa Park and Recreation Board, a member of the Tuscaloosa City Board of Education, and active leadership in a variety of other civic and community organizations, including the Tuscaloosa Chamber of Commerce, United Way, Alabama Society of Certified Public Accountants, Alberta Baptist Church, FOCUS on Senior Citizens, Civitan Club and many others.

H. Pettus Randall, III (1945 - 2002). One of Tuscaloosa's and Alabama's best-known entrepreneurs and innovative business leaders, Pettus Randall, III left a lasting impact on the area's economic, business and civic development. Building Randall Publishing into one of America's most successful publishing firms, Pettus Randall



also insisted on building his beloved community into a prosperous and vibrant business center. Active across a wide and diverse spectrum of civic and community organizations, he provided significant leadership through the Chamber of Commerce of West Alabama, Tuscaloosa Kiwanis Club, Christ Episcopal Church, United Way, Tuscaloosa Association of Retarded Citizens, March of Dimes, the American Village in Montevallo, Alabama and a myriad of other community causes.

[Top](#)

Recent Chamber in Session Stars Governor Riley



Alabama Governor Bob Riley addressed a sold out ballroom at Indian Hills Country Club on April 9. Chamber President Johnnie Aycock began the program by introducing Dr. Walter Jackson of Calvary Baptist Church, who led the group in prayer. Following this was a lovely, moving rendition of "God Bless America" sang by a local young lady, eleven year old Cassie Bailey, daughter of local portrait photographer, Tim Bailey. Chamber Chairman Jim Harrison III introduced Riley to the group then the Governor took the stand.

First, he stressed the importance of making an education model that will rival others in the country--This year the state plans to spend more on education than ever before. "If we make the right decisions, our young people will never have to leave Alabama," he

said. Also, he stated that the "No Child Left Behind" program is a foundation on which to build.

Riley then promised that Alabama's economic development is going to continue. He explained that small businesses account for the state's employment rate more than anything else and those owners need and will get help to offer benefit packages to their employees. Riley said ours is the "greatest country in the world because of entrepreneurs."

Chamber President Johnnie Aycock closed the program by saying that "We are definitely on a roll and the Governor is leading the way."

[Top](#)

Second Annual "State of the Schools" Breakfast A Success

More than 100 business and government leaders, school officials and community representatives gathered at the Four Points Sheraton Hotel on April 4 to hear status reports from the city and county school leaders. The breakfast, sponsored by Ellis Architects, *The Tuscaloosa News* and The Chamber featured Dr. Joyce Levey, superintendent of the Tuscaloosa City School System and Dr. Frank Costanzo of the Tuscaloosa County School System.

Both school superintendents reported on topics ranging from student achievement and enrollment to Pre-K programs and academic progress. Attendees then had an opportunity to ask questions about their concerns. School safety, discipline, dropout rates and retaining teachers were issues on the minds of some business leaders.

The State of the Schools Breakfast provides an opportunity for business leaders to hear information from the superintendents concerning the status of our public schools. The relationship between the business and education is

essential to the strength and growth of our community and The Chamber plans to continue to host this annual event.

[Top](#)

Culture to Build Tuscaloosa: More on Creating a Livable Community

The visionary Task Force on Cultural Assets and Livability, led by Chair Cynthia Almond of Rosen Harwood P.A, held their first meeting at The Chamber on April 4. Chamber President Johnnie Aycock presented an initial work plan entitled "Culture Builds Tuscaloosa." The idea is to make our community more liveable, one that attracts investments and jobs, retains and supports its population and empowers its residents to take pride and ownership in where they live.



Partners for Livable Communities, a group contracted by us using funds from both public and private sectors, devised the plan and will work with the Task Force to define issues and anticipated outcomes. Partners believes that the process will require an almost holistic approach and encourages the application of arts and cultural assets to a broad spectrum of elements that together help define our region.

Aycock asked Task Force members, who will remain at the core of this effort, to think of other stakeholders in the community that should be involved in the program on some level. Should you want to become involved in this exciting journey, please call us at 758-7588 or email johnnie@tuscaloosachamber.com.

Pictured are Task Force members Jimmy Harrison III, our current Chamber Chairman, of Harrison Galleries; Cynthia Almond, Task Force Chair, of Rosen Harwood; Dr. Hank Lazer of the University of Alabama; and Dr. Pam Penick of the Arts Council of Tuscaloosa.

[Top](#)

U of A President Addresses Northport Advisory Council on Expansion



Members of the Northport Advisory Council met on Apr 2 to mingle, have dinner and mainly hear University of Alabama President Dr. Robert Witt talk about the growth of the college and how that will impact the Northport area. Once again, Northport DCH graciously hosted the group that clearly appreciates the venue and great food.

"The University of Alabama is moving forward at a tremendous rate," said Dr Witt. The goal is to be one of the leading public Universities around. New buildings go up all the time, mostly resident halls to house a growing number of students. A new marketing department is in place and the new Honors College recruits, with a personal touch, the best and brightest students in the nation, those that score in the top 2% on the ACT Test. The college is also trying to shape the environment in which education takes place and make it as positive and supportive as possible. Witt said that, when the college

reaches its full growth potential in the expansion plan, the economic impact on the surrounding areas will be in line with the impact made here by Mercedes.

And, of course, home football games in the fall should generate even more money than before-- millions of dollars--for the local economy, including Northport.

[Top](#)

Chamber Public Affairs Council Focused on 2007 Priorities

At the heart of The Chamber's business advocacy and representation of our members' interest is the Public Affairs Council, a key component of the Governmental Affairs Division.

Randy Skagen, General Manager of Nucor Steel, serves as The Chamber's 2007 Vice Chairman of the Governmental Affairs Division; Bruce Henderson, Attorney with Phelps, Jenkins, Gibson & Fowler, serves as Chairman of the Public Affairs Council; and Sammy Watson of DCH Health System serves as the Vice Chairman.

The Chamber's public policy agenda is extensive and covers a wide range of issues and areas of interest to business and our members, however, annually, the Public Affairs Council and Board of Directors adopt a more focused list of priority issues and projects to actively pursue. The 2007 priority issues include:

- An active transportation and infrastructure task force to more aggressively support and advocate completion of current highway and bridge projects, including Highways 43 North, 82 West, and I-59/20; and encourage funding and timely expansion of Buttermilk Road and development of North-South corridor via West Alabama.

The task force plans to provide active leadership and coordination in cooperation with local governing bodies to enhance more effective, productive partnerships with the Alabama Department of Transportation to achieve area highway development priorities.

Norman Crow of D.T. & Freight Co. and Brock Corder of The Builders Group, are serving as Co-Chairs of The Chamber's Transportation Task Force.

- Establish and implement a special task force to assess "business friendly" environment of all local governments for conducting business with and through local governments; and develop recommendations to enhance, improve and/or streamline permitting, planning and other essential governmental processes for business development purposes.

Wilson Moore of Pritchett-Moore, Inc., will be chairing this new initiative which is expected to get underway soon.

- In the area of tax, license and fiscal policy issues, The Chamber has consistently been involved for many years in a variety of local and state issues and initiatives. The task force, on behalf of the business community and members of The Chamber, monitor, communicate and manage tax and fiscal policy issues that impact business and that have potential to impact the business climate of the area.

Blake Madison of Tanner & Guin serves as Chairman, and Janet Moore of Jamison, Money, Farmer & Company is the Vice Chair.

- In addition, The Chamber attempts to maintain regular meetings and

communications with elected officials at all levels to build and sustain productive relationships and to sustain advocacy on behalf of business. Among regular functions include Chamber In Session, meetings with various elected and appointed governmental leaders, and communications in Montgomery and Washington on behalf of Chamber interests.

- The Public Affairs Council is also aggressively pursuing passage of legislation that would give the citizens of Tuscaloosa the right to vote on legalization of Sunday sales of alcohol within the City of Tuscaloosa.

To learn more about The Chamber's public affairs programming and activities, or to get involved, contact us at 758.7588 or email: johnnie@tuscaloosachamber.com. We invite your participation.

[Top](#)

New Communications Director

Robin Jenkins has been named Communications Director of The Chamber, according to a recent announcement by Chamber President, Johnnie Aycock.



A graduate of the University of Alabama, Jenkins served as Assistant to the Education Director of The Chamber from 1997 until 2000. She moved on to California serving as a Public Relations Representative for Hunter Public Relations in Napa Valley and then as Special Projects Manager and Photo Editor of Wine County Living Magazine in Sonoma.

She and her husband, Jeff, and their son, Luca, now live in Northport. Please welcome her back home to The Chamber!

[Top](#)

Help Keep Captain Mike's Dream Alive



When Captain Mike Medeiros, owner and captain of the Bama Belle riverboat, lost his life in a tragic accident in December, 2005, there was concern throughout the community about the future of the Bama Belle.

Would Alabama's only operational and authentic paddlewheel boat continue to move up and down the Black Warrior River, bringing pleasure to hundreds of people every week? The Bama Belle had

become the symbol of Tuscaloosa's riverfront development.

Thanks to the grit and determination of Nikki Medeiros, Captain Mike's widow, the answer has been a resounding "yes."

Recently, Nikki and her crew replaced the huge chains and sprockets that turn the large paddle wheels at the rear of the boat. But a lot more repair and maintenance issues still need to be addressed.

To help fund this work, Nikki has established the Bama Belle Riverboat Club to receive support and donations. In return for a donation of \$300, members

receive a membership card, a 2007 season pass for scenic cruises, a Bama Belle T-shirt, a Bama Belle decal, priority reservations, email updates on special events and news, two tickets to a reception honoring club members, and a Captain Mike Memorial Link from the original chain that propelled the boat.

Most of all, Bama Belle Riverboat Club members help keep Captain Mike's dream alive and help maintain the symbol of Tuscaloosa's developing riverfront.

To become a member, there's a simple form to complete. Log onto the Bama Belle website at www.bamabelle.com or you can call 339.1108 for more information.

[Top](#)

Women in Business Council Holds Financial Planning Seminar

Tips for working out a financial future were given at a recent Women in Business Council roundtable held March 29 at University Church of Christ. An expert panel provided insight on matters that should be handled at certain stages of life. Presenters were Carol Armstrong of Tanner & Guin, LLC and Council Chair; Cynthia Almond of Rosen Harwood P.A.; and Babs Hart of The Hart Group. Hart covered insurances such as long term care, disability and life. Armstrong discussed legal documents that women should have such as power of attorney, a will, and an advance health care directive among others. Other topics addressed included estate planning and estate taxes. Author Stewart Welch was a special guest. His books *The Idiot's Guide to Getting Rich*, *10 Minute Guide to Personal Finances for Newlyweds* and others were available for purchase. Welch signed books and encouraged the women to set goals, write them down and take action to reach them. Over 50 women attended the event.

[Top](#)

Handbook Basics for Your Workplace

Most employers appreciate the fact that an employee handbook can be a valuable tool for communicating what an employer expects of its employees. A handbook also provides an efficient method for notifying new and existing employees about things that are important to them, such as when they get paid and what their benefits include. Your handbook can also set out your company's objectives and core values and explain the employees' role in achieving those goals. Drafting a handbook requires an employer to assess the particular goals and expectations of its business. What employers may *not* recognize is that a well-planned and carefully drafted employee handbook can also act as a shield to protect its business in employment litigation. A written employee handbook places employees on notice of important company policies and acceptable or unacceptable workplace conduct. Federal and state workplace laws require certain policies to be in writing and distributed to employees, either in an employee handbook or in a stand-alone employment policy.

On the other hand, a poorly drafted handbook can be used as a sword against your company in an employment-related lawsuit. For example, an employee might attempt to argue that an employer's failure to comply with disciplinary and termination procedures set out in a handbook was a breach of contract with the employee. Sure, employees of Alabama private companies are typically "at will" employees, and either the company or the employee may terminate employment at any time. If your business sets out prescribed disciplinary or termination procedures in your handbook, however, and your handbook does not include an appropriate disclaimer that advises your employees that the handbook is *not* an employment contract, your handbook could be deemed a contract of employment with your employees.

In addition to the disclaimer, you should also include a statement in your employee handbooks that you reserve the right to review and amend the policies contained in the handbook.

Keep in mind, though, *even if* you have a perfectly drafted handbook, you must implement and apply your policies in a consistent and uniform manner. A failure to do so could form the basis for discrimination claims.

Below are some other important points to keep in mind regarding handbooks:

- Be sure you document your employees' receipt of employee handbooks and employment policies, and file a copy of the acknowledgment of receipt in your employees' permanent files. That way, there will not be any question later of whether an employee knew about the handbook or policy. That signed acknowledgement can be a powerful instrument to place in front of a jury if an employee denies that he or she knew about certain company policies.
- In order to ensure your employees understand the company's policies, take the time to go over your employee handbook with your employees. Arrange for your company's legal counsel to provide training for your employees on an annual basis regarding your company's key policies, such as harassment policies, drug and alcohol policies, and e-mail policies.
- Finally, review your handbook and employment policies with your company's lawyer on a regular basis to ensure that the policies are up to date and in compliance with applicable state and federal employment laws.

Carol Armstrong practices law with the Tanner & Guin firm in downtown Tuscaloosa. She can be reached at 205-633-0200 or carmstrong@tannerguin.com.

This article is intended for general information purposes only, does not purport to offer legal advice in any form, and is not a comprehensive legal assessment. A reader's particular legal position is dependent upon the facts of its situation. Readers should contact an attorney for application of the law and regulations to specific fact situation.

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[Top](#)

Thanks, Premier Service Company



Bill Rice, left, and Gary Phillips lead Premier Service Company, which has been providing electrical, heating, cooling, and alarm services for residential, commercial and industrial customers in our area since 1992.

The company's team of 130 employees and its fleet of 50 service vehicles give prompt and reliable service to customer needs.

Premier Service generously helped us with the recent remodeling of the Morrow Conference Room at The Chamber. They donated the electrical work, including new plugs and wiring for the lights. Thanks, guys! Your effort is appreciated by many.

Premier Service is located at 1201 15th St. in Tuscaloosa.

[Top](#)

A Chamber Story

Chris Rue of Black Warrior Technology started his computer consulting business and joined The Chamber last October. In the very first month, his membership paid for itself many times over when he gained several clients through a networking event.



He's also gotten suggestions and helpful insights from some that have become almost mentors to him. He says, "It's nice to meet folks in the area that have been in business for a while and are eager to give back."

To date, about 75% of Rue's clients were gained through or referred by The Chamber. In Rue's own words, "Nobody has the pull of The Chamber. Nobody."

Together we share a vision.
 Together we are strong.
 Together we are The Chamber.

[Top](#)

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