

The Chamber Perspectives online

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Chamber Offers Business Survival Training

In an effort to curtail the effects of the recession on area businesses, we've devised a series of training classes dubbed *Business Survival Training* to not only help businesses survive, but to thrive. This is just one of the many ways the Chamber is working to help the business community, now more than ever.



"At a time when every dollar counts, we've negotiated with top trainers in the region to offer quality training at low prices, said vice president Donny Jones. "Through training, like our monthly Technology Breakfast Series, Hands-On Tech Training, and Rising Above Tough Economic Times Lunch Series, members and others can learn ways to increase productivity and positively impact their bottom line."

All Lunch Series sessions will be held at the Cypress Inn Restaurant, set along the Black Warrior River in Tuscaloosa, and are only \$30 each for members. Spring 2009 sessions are: Love 'Em or Lose 'Em, February 25; Doing More With Less, March 10; How to Develop New Customers in a Down Economy, April 7; Developing New Leaders to Solve Old Problems, May 12; It's Your Business—Lead it to Success, June 10.

You may already have a Spring 2009 Series brochure, but a full schedule of classes (Technology Breakfast Series, Hands-On Technical Training and Rising Above Tough Economic Times Lunch Series) is posted at www.tuscaloosachamber.com. You can view that webpage

(and all details) directly by clicking on the logo in this article.

For more info or to take advantage of our member's only multiple training discount packages, please call 758.7588. Non-members are welcome. Fall sessions are being planned as well.

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Economic Summit a Success

An economic summit focused on West Alabama was held on Wed, Jan 28 at the Bryant Conference Center. About 400 people attended and the response has been positive and encouraging.



The free event, presented by UA's Culverhouse College of Commerce, the Industrial Development Authority of Tuscaloosa County and the Chamber, focused on West Alabama's business climate in light of national economic trends and forecasts.

Gov. Bob Riley and Tuscaloosa Mayor Walt Maddox addressed the group at lunch.

With a slate of top-notch state and regional speakers, and experts in business and economic policy, the summit looked at various segments of the area's economy, including banking, real estate, the auto industry and the retail sector.

"This summit took a candid look at area economic conditions, including short- and long-term challenges, and brought together key leaders in the public and private sectors," said Johnnie Aycock, Chamber president.

Speakers included Malcolm Portera, chancellor of the University of Alabama System, who discussed the present state of the area's economy; Sam Addy, director of UA's Center for Business and Economic Research, who presented the outlook for the area; Grayson Glaze, executive director of UA's Alabama Center for Real Estate; and Ron Davis, plant manager at ZF Lemforder. A segment on the Tuscaloosa-West Alabama retailing community was also presented.

The Summit will hopefully stimulate follow up action and cooperation throughout West Alabama. For more info, including access to the Powerpoint presentations, [click here](#) to view the webpage.

Kudos

Just after the Summit, we were honored to receive a letter from a member, Leslie Poss of Theatre Tuscaloosa and Shelton State, thanking us for keeping the community informed and equipped. We'd

like to share part of it:

"The West Alabama Chamber of Commerce continues to light paths of current, effective ways of thinking; ways of 'doing business.' And yet, it is willing to take risks, blaze new trails keeping Tuscaloosa City, County and West Alabama on the cutting edge of business and quality of life. Thank you to the staff and the Board of Directors for being an organization whose lead we can follow."

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Great "Chamber Connects" Mixers Planned

Our first "Chamber Connects" mixer of 2009 was held at Epiphany Café Feb 10. It was well-attended and we all enjoyed the atmosphere, networking and artisan bites by Chef Tres Jackson.



Our next mixer will be held at another great restaurant, Cypress Inn, on Tues evening, Mar 10 from 5 to 7 pm. The beloved institution will be celebrating its 25th anniversary! There will be a live band, cash bar, signature dishes and new menu items for tasting. Attendees will be challenged to drive golf balls from the riverbank over the water, a Cypress Inn tradition, for prizes (gift certificates). Don't miss it!

All employees of a Chamber member business are invited as well as prospective members. Mark your calendars now and tell a friend.

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Entrepreneurs of the Year Chosen; Event is Feb 26

Our 2009 Entrepreneur of the Year Event, presented by College Station Properties and the Alabama Entrepreneurship Institute (AEI), will be held on Thurs evening, Feb 26 at Hotel Capstone. We'll present the H. Pettus Randall Entrepreneur of the Year Awards to deserving

business owners and entrepreneurs in West Alabama. Reception starts at 5:45pm and program begins at 6:30 pm. Our guest speaker will be Dr. Allen Mallory, college professor, comedy circuit performer and entrepreneur.

Please plan to join us in the ceremony honoring these 2009 Entrepreneur of the Year Award Recipients, especially if you know them.

Rising Star Award Winners

VeloCity Pro Cycle, Mark and Gina Simpson
Two Men and a Truck , Sean Wise
Edelweiss, Ester Scheeff & Chris Wiedmann

Entrepreneur of the Year Winners

Randall-Reilly Publishing, Mike Reilly
Nancy Taylor Skin Therapy and Day Spa, Nancy Taylor
Warren Tire & Auto Center, Jimmy Warren
Anders Hardware, Rodger & Rich Anders
Ron Turner

Lifetime Achievement Winners

Beverly Phifer
Drew Henson

To purchase tickets, call 391.0559, email stacey@tuscaloosachamber.com or register online at www.tuscaloosachamber.com. Tickets are \$25 per person and must be purchased prior to (and cannot be refunded after) Tues, Feb 24. Reserved tables of 10 are available while they last.

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Women In Business Breakfast Roundtable is Mar 12

Our Women In Business Council will host a Roundtable on Mar 12 at 7:30am at the University Church of Christ. Angelia Knight will present "Networking Know How...Ways to Market Yourself and Your Business in this Economic Climate". Ms. Knight is the Career Services Coordinator for the MBA Program at the University of Alabama.

Registration is required and the cost to attend is \$20 for Chamber members and \$25 for non-members. A light, continental breakfast will be served. You can make your reservations online at www.tuscaloosachamber.com, by email at stacey@tuscaloosachamber.com or by calling 391.0559. Reservations must be made prior to (and cannot be refunded after) Mar 10.

The Women In Business Council always supports a local charity at its events so please bring 2 canned goods for the West Alabama Food Bank.

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Collins Says Northport Needs Long Range Plan

Northport City Administrator Scott Collins, who recently served on the Northport City Council for Dist 5, spoke on Feb 9 at the meeting of our Northport Advisory Council at Wintzell's Restaurant.

Collins said Northport needs a thoughtful, long-range plan and he intends to prepare a 4 year budget for the City Council. (Mayor Bobby Herndon and all members of the City Council attended the meeting.)

Collins said the city's empty lots and property near the airport (which may possibly expand) are ripe for progress. He also said the city needs to fund PARA projects such as Faucett Bros Park off Rose Blvd and long range planning will allow the City to find that funding.

He reported that the relationship between the public and City Hall will improve as the process of streamlining license applications and business permits is underway. Also, he said the sign ordinance should improve the look of the City and the City Hall sign will get a facelift very soon.


Lastly, Collins said he just met with Tuscaloosa Mayor Walt Maddox since he feels it's important to work with the City of Tuscaloosa and the County government to be a bigger partner in the community.

The next meeting of our Northport Advisory Council is April 13 at 6 pm at Wintzell's. Speaker and details TBA.

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UA Group Recruits & Shelton Trains Literacy Volunteers

The LITE (Literacy Is the Edge) student group at the UA recently created a very successful campaign to attract student volunteers to help the Literacy Council of West Alabama. 174 students have already volunteered to help in the spring 2009 semester to tutor, write stories, work on a blog or web site, speak, intern or help develop a literacy documentary or directory. TV ads feature UA football players and there are some clever print ads, one of which is posted here. LITE is led by Dr. Bruce Berger, professor at UA College of Communication. He may be reached at berger@apr.ua.edu or 348.7692.




WE NEED TWELVE MORE STADIUMS...

TO SHOW YOU HOW MANY PEOPLE IN ALABAMA STRUGGLE WITH FUNCTIONAL ILLITERACY.

Illiteracy is a serious problem in Alabama. In fact, if all illiterate Alabamians were to gather, they could easily fill 12 Bryant-Denny stadiums. LITE (Literacy is the Edge) is a student organization dedicated to reducing the negative impact of illiteracy on our state and communities. LITE, in partnership with the Literacy Initiative of West Alabama, is seeking student volunteers to join in its quest to eliminate functional illiteracy.

By participating in LITE's 30-60 Challenge, you can support this cause by committing either 30 or 60 hours of volunteer work.

For more information and to sign up to volunteer, email us at literacyistheedge@gmail.com or call 205-348-7692.



Also, the Shelton State Adult Education Program partnered with LITE to sponsor three volunteer tutor training sessions for the West Alabama Literacy Council. During the first week of Feb, 77 people came to Shelton and were trained as literacy volunteers. The participants included individuals from the Tuscaloosa community and students from the UA. Vickie Holt, the Literacy Specialist for the Tuscaloosa Co Schools, and Julia Chancy, the Project Literacy Program Coordinator for Shelton State, conducted the training sessions. Students from the LITE program did a fantastic job publicizing the sessions and also went through the training to serve as volunteer literacy tutors.

The volunteer tutors will be matched with a child from a local elementary school through the Chamber's Adopt A School program or with an adult through the PLUS program, coordinated by Shelton State. For more info about the West Alabama Literacy Council or becoming a volunteer literacy tutor, call The Chamber at 758.7588, visit www.tuscaloosachamber.com/literacy or contact Project Literacy Tuscaloosa at Julia.chancy@sheltonstate.edu or 391.2671.

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Economic Solutions: Quick Links to Key Info

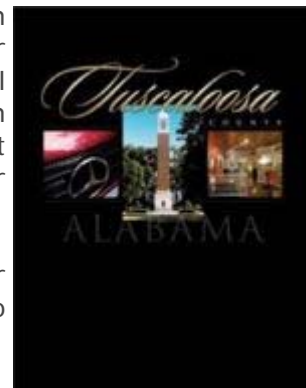
We reach out in service and encouragement to both employers and employees by offering quick links to key info to help situations. The idea is to simplify things as much as possible. Visit our homepage at www.tuscaloosachamber.com and click on the appropriate logo to get that info and help. Questions? Call 758.8588.

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New Incentives for Advertising in Our Guide

There are new incentives for advertising in our upcoming Community Guide/Chamber Directory. When purchasing an ad, you'll receive added benefits: free ad design & ad on cd, generous prepay discounts, and internet benefits all designed to drive traffic to your website.

Contact Ginger Nunley at 850.866.3385 or flmaplady@gmail.com to set a brief appt to discuss your ad. Deadline for inclusion is March 4.



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I.O. Metro Opens



I.O. Metro is a fabulous new furniture store in Midtown Village. It hosted a ribbon cutting on Feb 6. This "different kind of furniture store" sells import furniture, accessories, art, lighting, and more. There are 12 other stores, mainly in the Midwest, all owned by a young entrepreneur with great taste. Local manager is Lauren Colley. For more info, call 343.0145 or visit www.io-metro.com.

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Robertson Bank Makes it Official



Robertson Bank hosted a ribbon cutting ceremony on Feb 11 for its new Tuscaloosa location at 1400 Greensboro Ave. Hours of operation are Mon-Thurs from 8:30am-4:30pm and Fri 8:30am-5pm (closed Sat). Phone is 469.3680. City President here is Tim Henderson.

The Bank has three locations in Demopolis, one in Linden and one in Thomaston. Founded in 1870, Robertson Banking has been synonymous with safety and service for over 135 years. It's the oldest and largest bank in Marengo county. For more info, visit www.robertsonbanking.com.

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Value Place Celebrates Opening



Value Place Extended Stay Hotels hosted an Open House and Ribbon cutting on Feb 12 at its new property. Address is 4600 Doris Pate Dr. in Tuscaloosa, near Cracker Barrel. Event included tours, a catered meal, a drawing for a \$100 gift card and sweepstakes entry.

Value Place is an extended stay hotel that meets a need for affordable, clean and secure, temporary lodging with low weekly rates,

rigorous cleanliness standards, total commitment to comfort, privacy and peace of mind, and simplicity. For more info, visit www.valueplace.com.

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Welcome, New Members!

The following joined from Jan 1 to date.

Light'n Up
Todd Murphy Agency
Love My Voice
I.O. Metro
Hardee's of Tuscaloosa
Law Office of Benjamin Jay Stuck
LynCar Event Rentals & Designs
Carol G. Adams LCSW
Human Resource Compliance, Inc.
Ambassador Inn & Suites
Duet Art & Jewelry

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Members in Motion/Upcoming Events

***They Came to Play* Premieres Tonight at the Bama**

The Arts and Humanities Council of Tuscaloosa Co will present the screening of the film *They Came to Play* on Feb 19 at 7:30pm at the Bama Theatre. The presentation of this award-winning documentary will be the Alabama premiere. Film contains footage of the International Piano Competition for Outstanding Amateurs from the summer of 2007, which united 75 of the world's best amateur pianists. Drew Mays, B'ham ophthalmologist and former student of UA piano professor Amanda Penick, was the winner. In attendance tonight will be Dr. Mays and the director of the film. Admission will be \$7 general, \$6 students and seniors, and \$5 Arts Council members. For more info, call 758.51905 or visit <http://foundationpost.com/TCTP>.

Experience Africa at the Tuscaloosa Public Libraries

In observance of Black History Month, the Tuscaloosa Public Library System will feature Augustine Opoku at all three locations. Opoku will discuss the "African" experience. Discover the culture of African art, clothing, jewelry, music and enjoy stories, activities and demos. Opoku is a wonderful source for everything African. Presentations are Thurs, Feb 19 at 3:30pm at Brown Library (300 Bobby Miller Pkwy in Tuscaloosa, 391.9989); Fri, Feb 20 at 3:30pm Weaver-Bolden Library (2937 18th Street in Tuscaloosa, 758.8291); and Sat, Feb 21 at 3pm at Main Library (1801 Jack Warner Pkwy, 345.5820).

State Farm, Todd Murphy Agency Ribbon Cutting is Tomorrow

Todd Murphy, Tuscaloosa's latest State Farm agent, recently opened

his office in Northport. He has over a decade of financial and real estate businesses under his belt and now feels that State Farm is a perfect fit. Todd's team consists of Theo Brinton, former Zoe's of Tuscaloosa franchise owner, Elizabeth Hall, formerly of Merrill Lynch, and Tina Estes, who spent seven years with Nationwide Insurance. Todd's business slogan is, "Come home to Todd Murphy State Farm." The agency will host a Ribbon Cutting ceremony on Feb 20 at 1:30 pm. Address is 4705 McFarland Blvd., Ste 4 in Northport, near Wal-Mart. For more info, visit www.ToddMurphyAgency.com or call 339.8003.

Theatre Tuscaloosa Presents *Doubt*

Tickets are now on sale for Theatre Tuscaloosa's Feb 20-Mar 1 production of the Tony award and Pulitzer Prize winning play *Doubt: A Parable*. Director Tina Fitch promises "you will talk about this play long after the production is over." See it at the Bean-Brown Theatre on Shelton State's Martin Campus. Tickets, \$17-adult; \$14-senior adult; \$10- student; and \$5- Shelton students, are available at www.theatretusc.com or you can call the ticket office at 391.2277.

Kiwanis Club of Tuscaloosa's Pancake Day

The Kiwanis Club of Tuscaloosa will hold its annual Pancake Day Sat, Feb 21 from 6am-1pm in the Central High School Cafeteria. Breakfast will include pancakes, syrup and sausage with coffee and other drinks. Tickets are \$4 in advance and \$5 at the door. Advance tickets can be purchased from Kiwanis Club members or by calling 454.5590. Special guests and entertainment will include Deontay Wilder (Olympic medal winner and professional boxer); "Mayberry Folks" (impersonators of the Andy Griffin TV show); Big Al; Tuscaloosa and Northport Mayors and other elected officials. Proceeds will go to fund Kiwanis Sponsored Youth Programs.

Christian Fiction Author at Weaver-Bolden

African-American Christian fiction author Vanessa Davis Griggs will be appearing on Wed, Feb 25 at 5:30pm at the Weaver-Bolden Branch of the Tuscaloosa Public Library, located at 2937 18th Street in Tuscaloosa. Griggs will be discussing her new book, *Practicing What You Preach*, life as a writer, and role of motivational speaker. She'll be available to sign books after the program.

Griggs writes a weekly column, *May I have a "Word" With You?*, for *The Birmingham Times*. *Blessed Trinity*, *If Memory Serves*, and *Wings of Grace* are some of her other book titles. For more info, sit her website at www.vanessadavisgriggs.com or call 758.291.

Westervelt Wildlife Services Hosts Pheasant Shoot for Charity

Westervelt Wildlife Services will host a European driven-style pheasant tower shoot at Westervelt Lodge on Feb 26, with all profits benefiting Alabama's Hunters Helping the Hungry Program. (These programs provide ground venison at no charge to food banks across the state. Hunters provide the harvested deer, and processors are paid \$1 per pound to process the venison.) Shoot times are 8:30am-11:30am (20 guns) and 1:30 pm-4:30 pm (20 guns). All-inclusive cost is \$325 per gun and lunch and refreshments will be served throughout the

day. Lodge address is 69 Westervelt Circle in Aliceville. For more info, contact Dave Edwards at 562.5443 or dedwards@westervelt.com.

TSO Season Continues

The Tuscaloosa Symphony Orchestra will continue its 2008–2009 season with a performance on Sat, Feb 28 at 6pm at UA's Moody Music Bldg. "Symphony of Wild Animals" is the first concert in the orchestra's "Family Discovery Series." Prokofiev's Peter and the Wolf and Saint-Saëns Carnival of the Animals will be included on the program plus more fun, classical music appropriate for all ages. Featured soloists will be Pam Gordon and Pam Penick, pianos, and Doff Procter, narrator. Shinik Hahm will conduct the orchestra.

Lobby entertainment will be provided by the Tuscaloosa Strings in Schools Program. Children will have the opportunity to explore the instruments of the orchestra with the Tuscaloosa Symphony Guild Petting Zoo from 4:30pm-5:45pm.

Individual ticket prices are \$5 to \$40 for adults and \$5 for students/children. Both are available at www.tsoonline.org or by calling 752.5515. Tickets will also be available at the box office the evening of the performance.

2009 Tuscaloosa Regional Air Show Tickets Now Available

The City of Tuscaloosa, City of Northport and Tuscaloosa County are proud to host the first-ever air show on April 4th and 5th featuring the US Navy Blue Angels and Army Golden Knights. Event will be free to the public and will feature numerous aircrafts and aerobatics. Reserved seating options are now available and can be purchased by check or cash at the City of Tuscaloosa Water & Sewer Business Office located at 2230 6th Street or online by debit/credit card at www.tuscaloosa.com. Reserved Seating (assigned seats at the front of the crowd line) is \$20 per seat per day and Grandstand Seating (bleachers) is \$10 per seat per day. For more info, call 311 or TDOT at 349.0240.

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