

The Chamber Perspectives online

The Best Community Calendar

The best online community calendar just got better...

Check out our new calendar program at www.tuscaloosachamber.com.

You can subscribe to get a daily email/RSS feed & add items to your own calendar! You can also get a reminder email or text.

The "Submit your own event" option is at the bottom and top.

We now offer groups an online event registration service for a nominal fee.

Also, a group may put our calendar on its website and may even purchase a sublicense to customize it.

Call 758.7588 for more info.



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More Great Mixers Planned

Our next "Chamber Connects" mixer is Tues, Oct 13 from 5-7pm at Eye Care Associates of Northport, a state-of-the-art eye care facility. Come visit Dr. Rose M. Betz and her staff and see some of the newest styles in frames presented by the staff and vendors. Contact lens and pharmaceutical representatives will be on hand to answer questions about the newest technologies and product offerings. For each complete eyeglass order purchased this evening, a \$100 discount will be given! For those unable to attend on this evening, several frame representatives will be available in the early afternoon. There will be many great door prizes and food by local restaurants. All employees of Chamber member businesses are invited as well as prospective members.



Bank of Tuscaloosa, Rosen Harwood and Jamison, Money & Farmer hosted our Sept networking mixer and we were able to check out the beautiful new building on the riverfront. Thanks for a good and productive time!

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State of the Community Breakfast Coming Soon

The 2009 State of the Community Breakfast will be presented by Capstone Bank and The Prince-Glover Law Group on Tues, Sept 29 from 7:30-8:30am at Hotel Capstone. Hear from Mayor Walt Maddox, Mayor Bobby Herndon, and Probate Judge Hardy McCollum. There's no cost to attend, but reservations are required. Call 391.0559 or email stacey@tuscaloosachamber.com.

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Boost Your Business with Professional Training

Our great fall line-up of professional training classes was developed based on input from members like you. Visit www.tuscaloosachamber.com and click the "Business Survival Training" icon to see the list with details and registration info or call 758.7588.



Coming soon:

Excel 2003 Intermediate Part III Webinar

Sept 28 from 9-11am with Donna Gilliland of MOSTraining. Price for all three webinars is \$125/person; price for two webinars is \$90/person; one webinar is \$65/per person.

Outlook Calendar Webinar

Sept 28 from 1-3:30pm with Donna Gilliland of MOSTraining. Price is \$55/person. Prerequisite: Basic understanding of creating appts.

***NEW* The Basics of Social Media for Business**

Oct 6 from 7:30-9:30am at West Alabama Bank with Donna Gilliland of MOSTraining, Inc. Price is \$20/person. This two-hour session will teach you the basics of the three major business social networking venues--Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn.

Access Beginner Part I Hands-On

Oct 6 from 12:30-4:30pm at The Chamber with Donna Gilliland of MOSTraining. Price is \$89/person. Learn to navigate the Access 2003 interface. Create basic databases, queries, and reports.

Lunch N Learn: Leading Through Tough Times

Oct 13 from 11am-1pm at Cypress Inn with Tim Lewis of TALA Professional Services & Johnnie Aycok of The Chamber. Price is \$30/person. Learn effective practices to take your organization to the next level with key principles of effective leadership to ensure stability.

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E-Cycling Day is Next Week

The 3rd Annual E-Cycling Day (FREE electronics recycling) will be held Sept 29-30 in the back parking lot of University Mall. The first day is a pre-event for Chamber members only. Drop off times are 9am-5:30pm both days.



The last event was a huge success with over 880 participants and over 70 volunteers! E-Cycling Day is sponsored by The Chamber and the Cities of Tuscaloosa and Northport. Visit our homepage at www.tuscaloosachamber.com and click on that icon for more details, including approved items.

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Nucor Steel Tuscaloosa AAS Tennis Tournament is Oct 6



On Oct 6, area tennis players will compete in a doubles tournament (2.5, 3.0, 3.5, and 4.0+ divisions) at Indian Hills Country Club and proceeds will benefit the Adopt-A-School Program. Cost is \$45/player and all schools with players representing them are eligible to win cash prizes. Registration and sponsorship forms are available

at www.tuscaloosachamber.com/aas.

(Registration forms are also available at the Club.) For more info, call 391.0563 or email loo@tuscaloosachamber.com.

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Northport Citizen of the Year Banquet is Oct 6

Traditionally held at the Northport Civic Center, this program will be Oct 6 at 7pm. Guest speaker is Neal Wade, State of Alabama Economic Development Director. Cost is \$25/person or \$275 for Table Hosts. Call 758.7588 or email tracy@tuscaloosachamber.com to register.

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Women's Division of The Chamber Plans Fall Luncheon

The Women's Division of The Chamber of Commerce of West Alabama will host its annual Fall Luncheon on Oct 7 at Indian Hills Country Club. Guest Speaker is Rushan Smyth, founder and owner of Peniel Pillows. Social time will begin at 11am with a cash bar and lunch will be 11:30am. There will be many great door prizes; tickets for those will be \$5/ea or 5 /\$20. Cost is \$25 and you do not have to be a member to attend. Please mail fee to Women's Division of The

Chamber, PO Box 20534, Tusc AL 35402 or contact Shana Milligan at 348.2240 or smilligan@ches.ua.edu.

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Building a Livable Community

By Johnnie R. Aycok, President
The Chamber of Commerce of West Alabama

Many books, magazines and consulting groups rank the nation's best communities based on everything from climate and safety to cost of living and the quality of education. But what really is livability in today's changing, 21st century community? Does it mean the physical appearance of a community, the level of technology, the economic progress?

Well, it could be all of these factors and more, according to many of the leading researchers and experts who study community dynamics and the new 'creative community' that is fueling so many American cities. One constant is that livability is the defining factor for any community looking to sustain itself in this constantly changing economy. And it is a combination of interrelated factors, including strong, innovative leadership, cooperation, economic vitality, diverse opportunities, pleasing and functional urban design, lifelong learning, cultural assets and other crucial investments in quality.



Today's world is increasingly complex, as communities strive to form new relationships to improve the so-called quality of life of a place, as well as enhance the various amenities that contribute to that quality. It is apparent that those communities that have the insight and ability to define, identify and develop these various amenities, coupled with the will to provide opportunities to all people and a shared vision for the future, are the ones that will be competitive and prosperous in the new economy.

Livability is something of a vague, changing and moving target in some respects. We each define it according to our own personal interests, desires and perceptions. Over the years, the focus of livability has changed, as well. In the 1960s and 1970s, the criteria may have centered on the physical aspects of a community and conservation of its natural resources, but during the 1990s, the concept of regionalism crept in and the focus shifted. Today, there is emphasis on 'knowledge-based economies,' the application of technology and human capital.

So, how can we define livability and establish goals that our community would embrace to be even more viable, prosperous, livable

and creative than it is already? How do we achieve the quality of life it takes to be recognized as one of America's most livable communities? Are there any models that define the criteria for livability, and should we build a shared vision around these elements?



The good news is there is a recipe for building a livable, creative, 21st century community. The Partners For Livable Communities tell us that livability is based on creativity and the ability to adapt to the new economy. The organization defines creative communities are those that are attractive places to

live, work, play, visit, raise a family, retire, attend a university, grow a business and enjoy diversity.

So, how are we as a community preparing and positioning for the new economy? Are we doing enough to build an entrepreneurial environment, develop creative human capital, nurture our cultural assets and foster world-class educational opportunities?

Are we, as a community, developing a regional gathering place — or, as one writer put it, “Is the community the regional living room?” Is the community embracing the opportunities offered through regional collaboration? Are we a destination for retail shopping, the cultural arts, entertainment and recreation? Would a new generation of young professionals and their families seek to live in our community?

There are indeed a variety of essential social, cultural and economic amenities needed to cultivate a creative, livable community. The creative economy is different from previous economies because of its reliance on human knowledge and capabilities and less on tangible goods. It's an economy that is more place-oriented. In other words, place has taken on a new role as the provider of lifestyle as the primary motivation, not just the location of a job. In other words, place has become synonymous with lifestyle; people and companies choose it — it's not just the location of a job.

So, are we positioned and prepared for a new generation — for a new paradigm in a livable, creative, quality economy and community? Should the public, private and non-profit sectors come together to develop a shared vision, goals and strategies to cultivate and grow one of America's next recognized livable, creative communities?

It's certainly something to think about and act on — creatively!

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Chamber's Washington Fly In Makes Impact



Our annual Washington

Fly In, held September 15-16, was again poised to make an impact, presenting a number of issues, projects and needs to the members of Alabama's congressional delegation.

The 23-member team, led by 2009 Chamber Chairman Randy Skagen, promoted an agenda that included: funding for the McWrights Ferry Road and Martin Luther King Blvd/Jack Warner Parkway extensions; Northport's Downtown East-West Corridor and Mitt Lary Road expansion and other transportation projects; funding for enhancements at the Tuscaloosa Regional Airport; a regional education and workforce development initiative; other community projects; and a number of legislative policy positions, including The Chamber's health care reform policy and energy policy.

The delegation included Dr. Frank Costanzo, Superintendent of the Tuscaloosa County Schools; Dr. Joyce Levey, Superintendent of the Tuscaloosa City Schools; Dr. Mark Heinrich, President, Shelton State Community College; Tuscaloosa City Councilman Bob Lundell; Northport City Councilmen Bart Harper and William Tunnell; Northport City Administrator Scott Collins; Chamber President Johnnie Aycock; members of The Chamber's Board of Directors and Public Affairs Council; and other local business and civic leaders.

The group had extensive discussions with each member of Alabama's Congressional delegation and professional staffs.

Chamber President Johnnie Aycock emphasized that "our Fly In to Washington has been very effective over the years, advocating key business positions on legislative issues, building positive relations with our elected leaders in Washington, and providing support for vital community and economic development projects for our area."

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2009 International Literacy Day Events Held Locally

In recognition of the annual International Literacy Day, The Literacy Council of West Alabama and The Chamber hosted the following events, all featuring Dr. Margaret Doughty, President and CEO of Literacy Powerline, one of the nation's foremost authorities on literacy.

A "strategic thinking" forum was held on Sept 8 at Hilton Garden Inn for literacy service providers, educational agencies and employers to learn how to strategically infuse literacy into planning and programs.

A literacy grant workshop was held on Sept 9 at Hotel Capstone from 9-11am to assist in identifying and securing grant dollars for literacy programs.



And the 2nd Annual International Literacy Day Luncheon & 1st Annual Awards program took place on Sept 9 at Hotel Capstone. Awards were given to involved students, tutors, organizations and leaders including Outstanding Student of the Year, Diana Whitt (pictured right), and Tutor of the Year, Frances Hodgins (pictured left).

Doughty produced a formal Declaration of Literacy and asked attendees to sign it after the program.

The United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) declared September as International Literacy Month and Sept 8 International Literacy Day. This offers an opportunity for literacy organizations to raise awareness about the issue of adult literacy in our own communities by connecting local events with national and international ones.

Here in West Alabama, adults lack the literacy skills they need to get better jobs, help their children with homework, or participate fully in our community. The Literacy Council of West Alabama brings together and promotes the existing literacy resources in the area. To learn more visit www.tuscaloosachamber.com/literacy.

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Event Celebrates Wireless Internet Project on Strip

Free wireless internet service for visitors (just in time for football season) and patrons of the Strip area merchants is now available as a result of a partnership between The University of Alabama, the West Alabama Chamber of Commerce, Strip businesses, the City of Tuscaloosa and AT&T.



A ribbon cutting ceremony was held on Thurs, Sept 24 at 11am on the Alabama Bookstore end.

The "Tide-Fi" initiative was started as a means to promote economic development of the Strip area and provide alternative learning environments for students. The initiative is at the beginning of a 2 year UA-MIS and Chamber of Commerce demonstration project showcasing:

Private-Public partnerships facilitated by the University that can augment commerce and improve the quality of life for students and the general public.

Retrofitting existing urban environments with supportive mobile infrastructure.

Student behavior and attitude using alternative learning environments.

Student-driven innovation and deployment of sustainable business model that leverages information technology.

Network performance dependency variation due to exogenous factors such as weather and load.

Early outcomes of the project:

Positive reception from Strip merchants regarding University partnerships. Several businesses have actively asked to host wireless access points at their location and share their Internet bandwidth.

Some previously non-engaged Strip Merchants re-engaging with the West Alabama Chamber of Commerce.

AT&T \$5,000 donation of bandwidth for two years in form of DSL modem service packages.

MIS student applying in the field what they learned in the classroom. They are leveraging Information Technology to improve business revenue by increasing traffic and duration of visits.

MIS students are learning to sustain what they designed, configured and installed and to take these lesson with them as they start their careers.

Strip patrons' awareness and feedback of the network. Parameters such as speed and time limits will be adjusted to accommodate patron feedback. For example, users are limited to two hours per day.

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City's Intermodal Facility Opens



The City of Tuscaloosa held a grand opening for its Intermodal Facility located south of City Hall at the intersection of 6th St and 23rd Ave on Sept 23.

Architect for the project is Rex Veron and contractor is Tim Harrison. Total budget for the project is \$12.5 million. The federal government provided 80% of the funds and the City provided 20%.

There are 449 parking spaces on four floors. A portion of the first floor is the administrative offices of the Tuscaloosa Parking and Transit Authority. Public parking is located on the second, third and fourth floors and is free to the public. A covered walkway from the 4th floor of the deck will take pedestrians to the 3rd floor of City Hall.

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CDC's Flu Season Guidance for Businesses

STEPS TO TAKE NOW

People who are sick or become sick with flu-like symptoms

-People with flu-like symptoms should be separated from other employees and sent home promptly. They should stay home until at least 24 hours after they are free of fever (100 degrees F or 38 degrees C) or signs of a fever (chills, feel very warm, flushed appearance, sweating), without the use of fever-reducing medicines.

-Review sick-leave policies and consider making them flexible and consistent with public health recommendations. Make sure employees are well-aware of these policies.

-Try to provide flexible workplace and leave policies for workers who may need to stay home to care for sick family members or care for children if schools are dismissed.

Hygiene/respiratory etiquette

-Employees should wash their hands often with soap and water, especially after coughing or sneezing; alcohol-based hand cleaners can be used if soap and water are not available.

-Employees should cover coughs and sneezes with a tissue, if possible, or do so into their arm or sleeve.

-Employers should provide tissues and no-touch disposal receptacles for employees.

Routine cleaning

-Frequently clean all commonly touched surfaces in the workplace, such as workstations, countertops, and doorknobs.

Take measures to protect people at higher risk of flu complications

-Employees at higher risk of complications from flu should check with their healthcare provider for advice or if they become sick; early treatment with antiviral medicines can prevent hospitalizations and deaths. People at higher risk include pregnant women; children under 5 years of age; adults and children with chronic medical conditions (such as asthma, heart disease, or diabetes), and people 65 years of age or older.

Vaccination

-When seasonal flu vaccine is available, consider offering it to all employees who want to reduce the risk for becoming sick with flu. If possible, offer seasonal flu vaccination opportunities at the worksite. Employees at higher risk for 2009 H1N1 flu complications should be encouraged to receive the 2009 H1N1 flu vaccine when it becomes available.

Plan how to maintain business operations with a reduced staff

-Plan to maintain business operations if a large number of employees are home sick or are staying home to care for sick family members or children dismissed from school.

-Make contingency plans for when a lot of employees will need to stay home from work; this could include cross-training employees and hiring temporary workers.

ADDITIONAL STEPS TO TAKE WHEN FLU CONDITIONS ARE MORE SEVERE

Check with employees who report to work

-At the beginning of the workday or with each new shift, ask employees if they have flu symptoms such as fever or chills *and* cough or sore throat during the last 24 hours. Other possible symptoms are runny nose, body aches, headache, tiredness, diarrhea, or vomiting. Workers with flu-like symptoms should be asked to go home.

-If flu conditions in your area become more severe, ask sick workers to stay at home for at least 7 days, even if their symptoms go away sooner. If they're still sick after 7 days, they should stay home at least 24 hours after symptoms have gone away.

Social distancing to reduce the spread of the disease

-Consider letting employees who are at higher risk for flu complications work from home or stay home; if these options are not feasible, re-assign job duties so they have less contact with clients, customers, and other employees.

-If the outbreak is severe, employers should consider using some of these steps, if possible: cancel non-essential face-to-face meetings; cancel non-essential travel; space employees farther apart in the workplace or assign them to telework; and stagger shifts to allow fewer workers to be in the workplace at the same time.

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Eye Mart Express Opens



A ribbon cutting was held for Eye Mart Express in MidtownVillage on Sept 21. They provide something for everyone with thousands of brand name and private label frames with complete pairs from only \$38.74. Every frame comes with a free one year breakage warranty — the best in the industry. Store includes a full-service lab equipped to deliver prescriptions in about an hour. Learn more at www.eyemartexpress.com or call 345.5119.

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Welcome, New Members!

The following joined from Aug 1 to date.

Woodland Forrest Country Club
United American Assurance
Ramos Maintenance Service, Inc.
Kuk's Dog Days
Tuscaloosa Elementary Magnet School
Tuscaloosa Middle Magnet School
Charter Business
The Salon @ North River
The Therapeutic Professional Group
D and H Food Group
University General Dentistry
Salon 1201
DeWitt, LLC
DC-Scientific Pest Control
(RE) Design, LLC

Oyster Bay Seafood and Steak
Spirits, Inc.
Eye Mart Express
Randy Rogers Companies
Sinclair Clinic of Chiropractic
Joe Stephens-Principal Financial

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Diamond Level Sponsors



Mercedes-Benz

