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Chamber Briefs

The Chamber of Commerce of West Alabama is involved in a diverse and extensive menu of business and community activities and issues, providing opportunities for member participation in a wide array of projects. The following is an overview of just some of the current activities. Find a place of service, volunteer, and get involved! For more information, contact The Chamber office at 758-7588 or the listed committee chair.

Downtown Development Task Force

The task force is actively pursuing a new developmental agenda and focused on how to expand and enhance the economic base of the central business district. The adopted mission of the task force is to initiate and facilitate development in the metro area, and the task force is currently assessing barriers to investment along with new opportunities for growth.



Marketing and recruitment strategies, parking, incentives for investment and planning are all on the agenda. The task force is also looking at other community models and visited Chattanooga recently to see first-hand the success of their downtown development activities. **Bill Lunsford** of Bill Lunsford Construction Company is the Chairman of the task force.

Legislative Council

The Chamber's primary committee responsible for legislative affairs and public policy issues is the Legislative Council. One of the most active volunteer committees, the Council is involved in a wide-range of issues and programs throughout the year.

The council worked on a variety of issues contained in The Chamber's adopted 2002 Legislative Agenda during the recent regular session of the Alabama Legislature and stayed in touch with members of Tuscaloosa County's Legislative Delegation. The Council is also conducting a series of interviews with each candidate for Governor.

In addition, the council has conducted one "Chamber In Session" this year, which featured United States Senator **Richard Shelby**. And as the year moves forward, attention will be turned to new issues as well as the various campaigns of interest during this 2002 election year. **Owen**



Skinner of People's Bank & Trust Company serves as Chairman of the Legislative Council.

Manufacturers' Council

The Manufacturers' Council is made up of plant managers and CEO's of the area's existing industries in Tuscaloosa County with the purpose of providing a forum for manufacturing leaders to address needs and issues that impact the economic climate of the community.

The Councils' primary focus currently is on workforce development and school-to-career programs, with the objective of contributing to a workable support system to ensure a growing, qualified workforce for to meet future needs of area employers. **John Matson** of Hunt Refining serves as Chairman of the council.

Retail Council

With the objective of expanding communications and involvement of retail firms in the metro area, The Chamber has formed a new Retail Council. The purpose of the council is to define ways that The Chamber can

(See "Briefs" next page)

("Briefs" continued from previous page)

support a growing, prosperous retail market as well as contribute to and assist individual retail firms with enhancing their competitiveness, growth and customer service. This new forum is open to any Chamber retail member. **Shane Spiller** of Spiller Associated Furniture Stores is the Chairman.

Northport Advisory Council

The Council is designed to provide a forum for Northport-based members of The Chamber on a regular basis. Meeting bimonthly, the council reviews and exchanges ideas and concerns related to Northport's economic and community development; and provides an excellent opportunity for business and elected leaders to meet in an informal atmosphere to identify opportunities to improve the community, as well as address issues such as commercial development, infrastructure, transportation, planning and a host of other topics. **Charles Stewart** of Northport Hospital-DCH serves as the 2002 Chairman.

2002-2003 Membership Directory

Plans are underway for the publication of The Chamber's annual membership directory and buyer's guide. Published in partnership with The Tuscaloosa News, The Chamber's annual business guide has become one of the area's most important sources of business products and services as well as business referrals. Only current members of The Chamber of Commerce of West Alabama are included in the directory.

The annual directory, including the overrun of the front editorial portion, which includes data, information and full-color photos of the Tuscaloosa County area, is distributed throughout the year to newcomers, visitors, business prospects and area citizens and businesses. This is one of The Chamber's most valuable publications. For more details, contact The Chamber office at 758.7588.

New Tuscaloosa County Map Project To Be Implemented

The Chamber publishes the official area map on a regular basis, which includes complete and current street maps of Tuscaloosa and Northport as well as maps for Tuscaloosa County and The University of Alabama campus. For almost 20 years, The Chamber's map has been developed and produced by Trading Enterprises. The owners of our map firm have recently retired, requiring The Chamber to select a new vendor.

The Board of Directors recently approved entering into an agreement with **Village Profile**, which will now become The Chamber's official map publication company. The new advertising supported map project is expected to begin in the late summer or early fall of this year. Watch for more details coming soon including opportunities to be involved as an advertiser.

For more details about the activities and programs of The Chamber of Commerce of West Alabama, log into our extensive web site at www.tuscolosachamber.com.



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Character Coalition Selects Executive Director



Jerry Lake is new Director of the Character Coalition.

Jerry Lake, a retired insurance company executive and active church leader, has been named Executive Director of the Character Coalition of Tuscaloosa, according to **Doug McElvy**,

Chairman of the Coalition. His appointment was effective April 1st.

“We are extremely excited about having a person of Jerry’s experience, energy and enthusiasm to coordinate our efforts to make our entire county a community of character”, said McElvy. “The City of Tuscaloosa, under the leadership of **Mayor Al DuPont** and the Tuscaloosa City Council, resolved two years ago to make Tuscaloosa a city of character; and this is an important step in the process.”

“Over the past two years, our all-volunteer committee has done its best to coordinate a number of efforts to emphasize good character traits in our schools, our businesses, and in our local governments,” McElvy emphasized. “However, we recognized that we needed an expanded effort and someone who could spend more focused time on the effort, and we’ve found just the person for the job.”

Jerry Lake, who still teaches new insurance agents around the state for the Insurance

(See “Director” next page)



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("Director" continued from previous page)

Systems of Alabama, was District Manager for Liberty National Life Insurance in Tuscaloosa for over 33 years. He held several statewide insurance industry positions and, in 1999, was named Life Underwriter of the Year for Alabama.

A graduate of The University of Alabama, Lake was an Eagle Scout, has served as a Deacon at First Baptist Church since 1991 and is currently a Trustee of the church. He serves as Sunday School Superintendent and Director of the Men's Ministries. Lake is also an active member of Gideons International.

"When I first heard about the Character Coalition and what it is trying to do, I recognized what an impact the program can have on our entire community," said Lake. "We're anxious to get to work with businesses, schools, governments, and the faith-based community on all kinds of initiatives aimed at building good character traits in all of us."

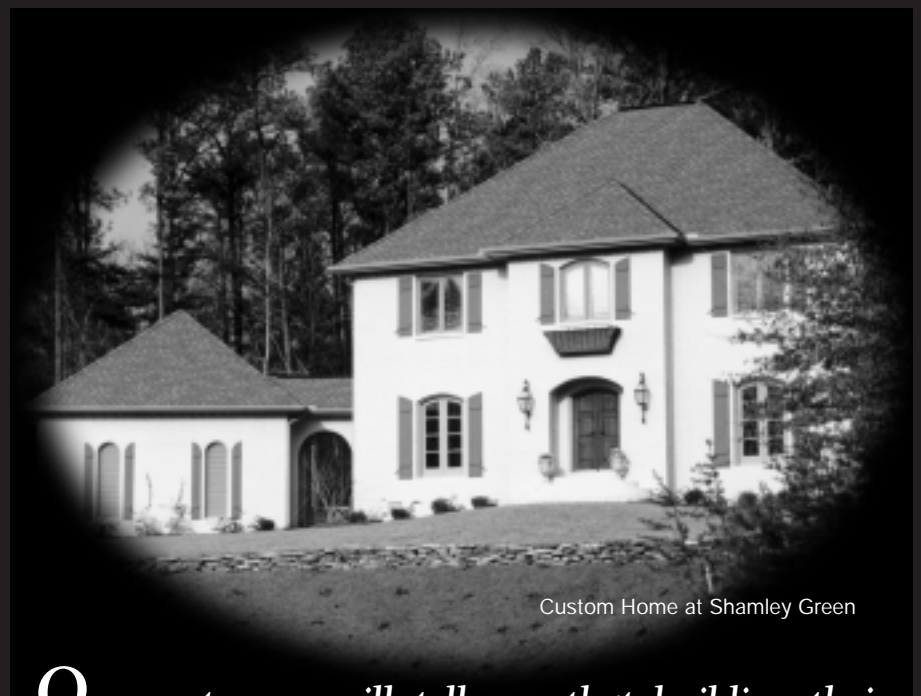
The Character Coalition formally introduced Lake to the Mayor and Tuscaloosa City Council on April 4th. The Character Coalition office will be located in donated space housed at Randall Publishing on Rice Mine Road. The office phone number is 248-1230.

The Chamber of Commerce of West Alabama was a founding member of the coalition and has been an active supporter from the beginning. Among those Chamber members that are serving on the Coalition's Board of Directors include: **Doug McElvy**; Chairman, McElvy & Ford; **Verta Barr Meherg**, Quality Mazda/Volkswagen; **Bryan**

Kindred, DCH Health System; **Jimmy Warren**, Totalcom; **Sheriff Tex Sexton**; **Mack Ogren**, Randall Publishing; **Charles Storey**, Charles Storey Real Estate; and **Dick Johnson** and **Johnnie Aycock** of The Chamber of Commerce of West Alabama.



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Chamber Awarded \$310,000 School-To-Career Grant to Expand Regional System

Governor Don Siegelman has approved and announced a \$310,000.00 grant, through the Alabama Department of Economic and Community Affairs, for The Chamber of Commerce of West Alabama to continue and expand The Chamber's school-to-career system to serve Tuscaloosa, Bibb and Pickens counties.

"We are very grateful for the continuing support and confidence that ADECA and the Governor's office continues to place in our Chamber for implementation of this critical element in workforce development efforts for Tuscaloosa County and West Alabama," stated Chamber President **Johnnie Aycock**. "An effective school-to-career system can make a positive impact on preparing today's young people for the workplace, and this seed funding will help sustain this important initiative."

The school-to-career system has expanded to include Bibb and Pickens counties, in addition

to Tuscaloosa County, and new coordinators have been employed to direct the program. In Bibb County, **Mary Kinard** is the new school-to-career coordinator and will be working out of the Bibb County Chamber of Commerce; and in Pickens County, **Connie Gibson** has assumed the coordinator's duties and will be housed at the Aliceville Chamber of Commerce.

Efforts will continue to be implemented in a variety of programs to foster workforce development and prepare students for the workplace. Among the programs underway are job shadowing, teacher mini-grants, marketing and communications, pre-apprenticeship initiatives, professional development, career education and other work-based and school based programs. At the heart of the school-to-career system are the various school design teams in each school in the county designed to help foster and

facilitate communications among teachers, students, parents and employers.

Dick Johnson, School-To-Career Coordinator, pointed out, "employers are looking for employees that have the basics and are grounded in math, science and reading combined with the ability to work with others, solve problems and communicate. The school-to-career system is being designed to help meet these needs and prepare our young people to be competent and successful employees in their chosen career fields."

Mike Porter, Division Director of Human Resources for Alabama Power Company, serves as Chairman of the School-To-Career Steering Committee.

For more information about school-to-career or to get involved in this important effort, call **Dick Johnson** at **391-0561**.

Adopt-A-School Dates to Remember

◆ **Wednesday, July 31** ◆

Adopt-A-School Breakfast & Seminar
7:30 - 11:30 a.m. at University Church of Christ

◆ **Thursday, October 17** ◆

Adopt-A-School Golf and Tennis Tournament
at The Country Club of Tuscaloosa

Adopt-A-School Sustainers Provide Fiscal Support for Partnership

The Chamber of Commerce of West Alabama believes that it is important to prepare our students to face the many challenges of an ever-changing work environment. One way of accomplishing this goal is through the Adopt-A-School program, a business-education partnership program now completing its seventeenth year of success in our community. Obviously, this program does not happen without a great deal of support from the corporate community and a lot of coordination from the Adopt-A-School staff.

Adopters and Sustainers are the lifeblood of our program. Adopters give support through donated time, expertise, and financial commitments. Sustainers provide the financial support necessary for the coordination and administrative function of the program, allowing us to:

- Provide coordinator workshops teaching our partners how to get the most out of their partnerships;
- Maintain quality training manuals and other educational materials to support both corporate and educational partners;
- Provide Adopt-A-School quarterly newsletters — a vital link between partnerships to share those great ideas!
- Provide administrative support to the Adopt-A-School program through recruitment and training of new business partners for schools.

The annual Sustainer Drive for the 2002-03 school year is currently underway. We thank those businesses that have provided the financial support in the past to help secure the growth and success of the Adopt-A-School Program. If you have not become a part of Adopt-A-School in the past, consider adding your name to the list of 46 businesses in our community who were Sustainer contributors during the 2001-02 school year. Contact Deloris McMullen at 391-0563 or deloris@tuscaloosachamber.com.



YES, I want to be an Adopt-A-School Sustainer for 2002-03!

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(as you wish your contribution to be listed)

Representative's Name _____

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\$_____ in the month of _____ (June-January).

Please make checks payable to The West Alabama Chamber Foundation. The Foundation is a 501 (c) (3) approved corporation under the Internal Revenue Service Regulations. Contributions may be tax deductible as allowed by law. Please mail your contribution to: Adopt-A-School, P.O. Box 020410, Tuscaloosa, AL 35402 or fax your commitment to 391-0565. THANKS!