

Chamber \_\_\_\_\_  
*Perspectives*

Third Quarter, 2002

**Tuscaloosa-  
Northport**



**All-America City**

**2002**

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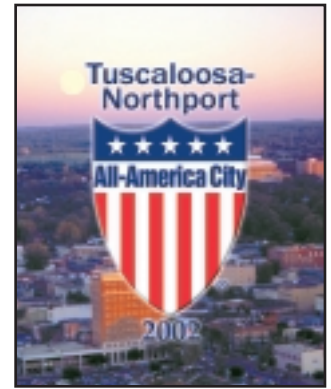


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# Chamber Perspectives

Third Quarter, 2002



2002 All-America City.

## Chamber Perspectives

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of West Alabama

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## Features

**Tuscaloosa-Northport  
Wins All American City . . . . . 2**

**Downtown Development  
Moving Forward . . . . . 5**

Task force visits and learns from Chattanooga model.

**Workforce Development  
Is A Complex Issue . . . . . 7**

Development of a workforce system involves many elements.

**“One Stop Permitting Center”  
Opens . . . . . 14**

Chamber leads an innovative approach for area business.

**Adopt-A-School  
Kickoffs New Year . . . . . 28**

Successful business-education partnership begins 18th year.

## Departments

Members In The News .....12    Chamber Briefs .....19  
New Members .....31    View Point .....32

## Mission of The Chamber of Commerce of West Alabama

The mission of The Chamber of Commerce of West Alabama is to provide the vision, leadership and catalyst for the advancement of the economic prosperity, business climate and quality of life for the total community.

# Tuscaloosa-Northport Wins All-America City Designation



The Greater Tuscaloosa-Northport community was named one of the All-America Cities for 2002 during the 53rd Annual All-America City Awards ceremony in Kansas City, Missouri. The 76-member community delegation was led by **Charles Nash**, the current Chairman of The Chamber of Commerce of West Alabama, and **Sammy Watson**, active community leader and former member of the Tuscaloosa City Council.

The All-America City Award, a 53-year-old program of the National Civic League recognizing civic excellence, annually honors 10 communities that best exemplify the spirit of grassroots citizen involvement and cross-sector collaborative problem solving. Since the program began in 1949, more than 4,000 communities have competed and nearly 500 communities have been named All-America Cities.

Delegations comprised of government officials, neighborhood activists, business leaders and volunteers from each of the 30 AAC Finalist communities traveled to Kansas City, Missouri to compete before the 10-member All-America City Jury. Following extraordinary presentations from each community, the 10 All-America Cities were announced at an awards ceremony at the Hyatt Regency Crown Center.

“The All-America City award symbolizes the backbone of our nation - the ability of citizens, government, businesses and nonprofit organizations to come together, effectively address their local issues, and produce tangible results,” said **Christopher T. Gates**, president of the National Civic League. “The accomplishment of Tuscaloosa-Northport as an All-America City serves as an inspiration to communities across the United States that are facing similar challenges.”

The National Civic League is a 108-year-old non-profit, non-partisan organization dedicated to strengthening citizen democracy by transforming democratic institutions. NCL accomplishes its mission through technical assistance, training, publishing, research, and the All-America City Award.

National Civic League judges cited Tuscaloosa-Northport’s dedication to people-oriented programs as the key to being selected. How a community addresses social and community issues through cooperation and innovative community programs is a focal point of the competition.

Greater Tuscaloosa-Northport was recognized in part for three projects that exemplify collaborative problem solving and serve as models for communities across the country: the **Rise Program**, the **Police Athletic League**, and **Tuscaloosa Family Resource Center**. Each in its own way addresses the diversity issues within the community, the value of youth initiatives, and the everyday needs of families.

The **Rise program** is an early childhood intervention program for children age birth to five with physical and mental disabilities. The program works with the children and their families to help them integrate into community life. Most of the graduates are able to enter kindergarten in their neighborhood schools. Part of the mission of the program is to change attitudes about disabled persons. Therefore, 40% of the children participating in the program do not have disabilities.

Another component of the program is to work with the graduates who are now adults. Some of the graduates



*Northport Mayor Harvey Fretwell, Tuscaloosa Mayor Al DuPont, and Chamber Director and CVB President Gene Poole display the plaque honoring the community as an All America City.*

## In Alabama, it's an economy car.



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are now employed by Rise. This aspect of Rise also demonstrates the value of the disabled to our society as well as to help change the attitudes in the community.

The **Tuscaloosa Family Resource Center** offers supportive, holistic services designed to improve a family's quality of life and prepare their children for success. Consumers are assisted and encouraged to achieve their goals. Our unique delivery model provides a comprehensive array of services in one location at no cost to the consumer and is unduplicated by other agencies in the community.

On-site services include but are not limited to case management services, child care, adult education services, senior assistance, jobs readiness classes, computer classes, parenting classes, summer camps, and Health Department, Social Security and Mental Health services. Because of the emphasis on families, targeted services such as after school programs, new mother visits, and parenting classes are offered at various locations throughout the county.

The **Police Athletic League (PAL)** is a juvenile crime prevention program designed to place police officers and at-risk youth together in a positive environment through structured programs such as athletics, educational activities and cultural trips. The PAL program provides children with the opportunity to participate in organized activities promoting self-esteem, drug awareness, and community clean up, and mentoring.

The program targets youth from 6 to 18 years of age who are at-risk of underage drinking, illegal drug use, smoking, gang involvement, and other delinquent behavior. Many of the children in the PAL programs cannot afford other youth programs. These are the children who need PAL the most. It is for this reason that participation in the PAL Program is at no cost to the families. Since its inception, many children have gained valuable experience from the positive role models they otherwise may not have had in their lives.

The other cities chosen for 2002 included: Elgin, Illinois; Huntington, New York; Roswell, New Mexico; Hampton, Virginia; Buffalo-Niagara, New York; Everett, Washington; Anchorage, Alaska; Fountain, Colorado; and Weslaco, Texas.

The All-America City honor puts our community in an elite group of communities from across the nation and reflects the hard work of many dedicated citizens who have worked long and hard for many years to build the quality of life that we enjoy today in Tuscaloosa-Northport.

Planning efforts are currently underway by a cross-section of community group, agencies and organizations to determine strategic actions that could be implemented to build upon this latest honor for the Tuscaloosa-Northport community. You are encouraged to get involved and help build an even better 21st century community.

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