

Plans For Center For Workforce Development Underway

Through a partnership between Shelton State Community College, The Chamber of Commerce of West Alabama and area business and industry leaders, plans are underway to establish the Center For Workforce Development of West Alabama at Shelton State.

While details are being completed, efforts are already underway to seek, recruit and employ a professional director along with recruitment of the corporate board of directors that will have policy, oversight, management and accountability responsibilities for the new regional comprehensive workforce system.

The mission of the Center will be to promote the economic prosperity of the Tuscaloosa/ West Alabama region through the provision of well-managed, coordinated, quality support services for area employers as well as job seekers. “The purpose of the Center,” emphasized Chamber President **Johnnie Aycock**, “is to establish and implement a comprehensive, seamless system for workforce development that will support our expanding economic base.”

Plans call for a central point to facilitate all of the essential connecting elements for the region’s workforce development efforts including assessment, training, recruitment, placement, employer relations, linkages to service providers, communications and strategic planning as well as assure linkages to key state agencies such as Alabama Industrial Development Training (AIDT) and the community college system.

“It is essential that we put a system in place that is business-led and customer-driven,” said Aycock, “and we believe through the leadership and partnership of Shelton State and area business and industry leaders, that the management component will be implemented to connect all of

the essential elements of an effective workforce development process.”

Initial strategies being reviewed will be designed to meet capacity and identified skill development needs in Tuscaloosa County and West Alabama to include at least:

1. Individuals currently not in the labor force and without or with only minimal skills
2. Individuals in the transitional workforce that could include dislocated workers, unemployed, recent high school graduates, and others with some skills.
3. Emerging workforce that would include recent high school graduates, technical school and community college graduates and part-time workers.
4. Current workforce, which would include employed, under-employed, employed but needing training to be competitive and/or to move to higher paying, higher-skilled jobs, and those currently outside the region.

“The Center For Workforce Development is an exciting opportunity for Shelton State”, emphasized Shelton State President, **Dr. Rick Rogers**. “The concept, business plan and basic objectives of the Center mirrors Shelton’s mission and vision for the future. “

“We are delighted to be working in partnership with the business and industrial community, The Chamber and the various educational and service providers throughout Tuscaloosa County and West Alabama to help deliver a comprehensive, integrated system of workforce development for our region”, said Rogers. “This initiative will directly impact the economic vitality and quality of our region for many years to come.”



Shelton State Community College will be the home of the new Center for Workforce Development of West Alabama.

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Northport Citizen of the Year



Northport Mayor Harvey Fretwell congratulates Northport Citizen of the Year, Jean Carlson.

Mrs. Jean Carlson was honored as the 2002 Northport Citizen of the Year during the annual awards ceremony on Tuesday night, October 15th at the Northport Civic Center.

Sponsored by The Chamber of Commerce of West Alabama, the annual award is presented to an exceptional Northport citizen who has made significant contributions to the progress and betterment of Northport. The award was announced and presented by the 2001 recipient and Chairman of the 2002 Citizen of the Year Committee, **Eddie Jackson**.

In addition to the Citizen of the Year, other 2002 honorees included: **Charles Allen Gerdau**, Northport Heritage Pioneer Award; **Nancy Perry**, Principal of Echols Middle School, Northport Educator of the Year; **Joe Barger**, owner of City Cafe, Business Leader of the Year; Reverend **George H. Shaddix**, Pastor of Northwood Hills Baptist Church, Religious Leader of the Year; and Officer **Gerald Burton**, Northport Law Enforcement Officer of the Year.

“Many men and women have made enormous contributions to Northport over the years and have

provided exceptional leadership for our community,” stated Eddie Jackson. These efforts have played a vital role in making the Northport community such a special place to live, work, and enjoy life. Our 2002 honoree, Jean Carlson, certainly reflects this type of unselfish, dedicated community service.”

Ms. Carlson was honored for her lifelong commitment and voluntary efforts in Northport, and as one nominator emphasized, “for always showing concern for Northport and our citizens in her everyday life through the way she lives.”

Ms. Carlson has been active in a diverse number of volunteer, church, educational and community initiatives including: St. Mark United Methodist Church; United Methodist Women;

Ladies of the Northport Lions Club; Meals On Wheels; PTA; Suburban Women’s Club; the Northport Parks Board, prior to it becoming part of PARA; and a host of other volunteer efforts that includes service at area nursing homes and the local hospital.

Ms. Carlson attended Huntington College and is a graduate of The University of Alabama. She is married to **Dr. Norman Carlson**, a Northport dentist, and former recipient of the Northport Citizen of the Year himself.

A sell-out crowd was on hand for the presentations at the Northport Civic Center and to hear former University of Alabama coach, **Jack Rutledge**, deliver an inspiring presentation.

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Burchfield Branch Park Opens



Representing the Burchfield family, Walter Burchfield along with Wynne Fuller, Chief of the Operations Division for the Mobile District of the Corps of Engineers, cut the ribbon to officially open the new Burchfield Branch Park.

The U. S. Army Corps of Engineers, Mobile District, and The Chamber joined together to open the beautiful new Burchfield Branch Park and Campground on Saturday, November 2nd. The newly renovated park is located on the scenic upper portion of Holt Lake on the Black Warrior River near the Tuscaloosa/Jefferson county line about 35 miles from Tuscaloosa.

The park now offers a wealth of recreational opportunities for both overnight campers and daytime users. Included are 36 beautifully designed campsites with water and electrical hook-ups designed to accommodate both tents and recreational vehicles; a new showerhouse with coin-operated laundry; playground area; fishing piers near the previously developed beach and picnic area; and other amenities. The park's entrance has been redesigned with new parking, fencing and landscaping.

Designs for the new park began in 1998 by Corps of Engineers Regional Landscape architect, **Henry Pope**; and construction began in 2000 and was completed this summer. The project cost was approximately \$2.5 million.

The major portion of the park contains 28 campsites and is developed along a tumbling creek within a small

box canyon flanked by sheer stone cliffs. A woodland of mixed hardwoods cover the canyon floor while pines and other evergreens grow from the surrounding cliffs. Colors and finishes for all of the bridges, fences, retaining walls and other areas are drawn from the browns, grays and greens found in the natural stones and foliage of the park.

“This is a unique, beautiful new addition to Tuscaloosa County’s rich and diverse menu of recreational opportunities,” stated Chamber President **Johnnie Aycock**. “The park was designed with an eye to the natural beauty of the area and enhances the natural environment. Citizens from across our community as well as visitors will truly enjoy the Burchfield Branch Park.”

The park is named in honor of the Burchfield family that lived at and around the site for several generations.

To access the Burchfield Branch Park from Tuscaloosa, take Highway 216 from Tuscaloosa to Brookwood, or I-59/20 to Exit 86 to Brookwood; and then take County Road 59 to Lock 17 road and follow the signs to Bankhead Lock and Dam and Burchfield Park Branch.

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Membership Resource Guide Available

The Chamber's new Resource Guide is available. This beautiful and informative guide includes a full-color section on the Tuscaloosa County area, an alphabetical membership directory, and a product and service classification section. The color section is available as a separate piece and is designed to assist with business and professional recruitment for Chamber-member firms; while the directory sections are designed to stimulate doing business with Chamber-member firms and promoting local buying of goods and services.

The professionally developed Resource Guide is a result of the support of many Chamber-member firms that invested in the publication through advertising and the partnership between The Chamber and **The Tuscaloosa News**, who produced the new guide.

Current Chamber-member firms have been mailed a copy or you can pick up a copy at The Chamber office or you can call 758.7588. Watch for your copy in the mail soon.



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Auburn Comes Calling on T-Town



The annual community exchange prior to “Iron Bowl” between the City of Auburn and the City of Tuscaloosa was held on Wednesday, November 13th as the Auburn delegation, led by **Mayor Bill Ham**, visited T-Town. The annual

The 2002 Auburn delegation, hosted by The Chamber, included: Auburn’s **Mayor Bill Ham**; **Dr. Doug Watson**, Auburn City Manager; **Mr. Dennis Veronese**, Chief Financial Officer of Auburn City Schools; and several lead-

ers of the Auburn Chamber of Commerce provides an opportunity for civic and Chamber leaders of both communities to meet together, tour the community, and build positive working relationships.

ers of the Auburn Chamber of Commerce including: **Ms. Karen Turner**, Chairman of the Board; **Mr. Mike Machen**, Past Chairman; **Ms. Lolly Steiner**, President; **Mr. David Roberts**, Treasurer; **Ms. Robyn Bridges**, Board member; **Ms. Jennifer Gibson**, Communications Directors; and **Ms. Jan McGuire**, Director of Membership Development.

Local governmental, Chamber and University of Alabama officials greeted and hosted the Auburn delegation during their community tour and visit to various Tuscaloosa sites including: Bryant-Denny Stadium, Bryant Museum, the new Municipal Court Building, College of Communications and WVUA/Channel 7, and the President’s Mansion.



First Phase of Tuscaloosa Warrior RiverWalk Opens

Phase 1 of the Tuscaloosa Warrior RiverWalk officially opened on November 21. The 3,200 foot phase, beautifully landscaped, is the initial stage for what will become a RiverWalk along the Black Warrior River stretching from Downtown Tuscaloosa and Capitol Park to and even pass McFarland Boulevard. The RiverWalk can be accessed at the RiverWalk Park at the end of Greensboro Avenue, behind Tuscaloosa Chevrolet.

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2003 Dates To Remember

Mark the following events on your 2003 calendar.
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Thursday, January 16th

The Chamber's 102nd Annual Meeting
11:30 AM • Four Points Hotel

Thursday, March 6th

Chamber In Session Featuring nationally-known guest speaker, **Mr. Knight Kiplinger**, Publisher of **The Kiplinger Letter** and **Kiplinger Magazine**
7:30 AM • Four Points Sheraton Hotel.

Wednesday, April 2nd

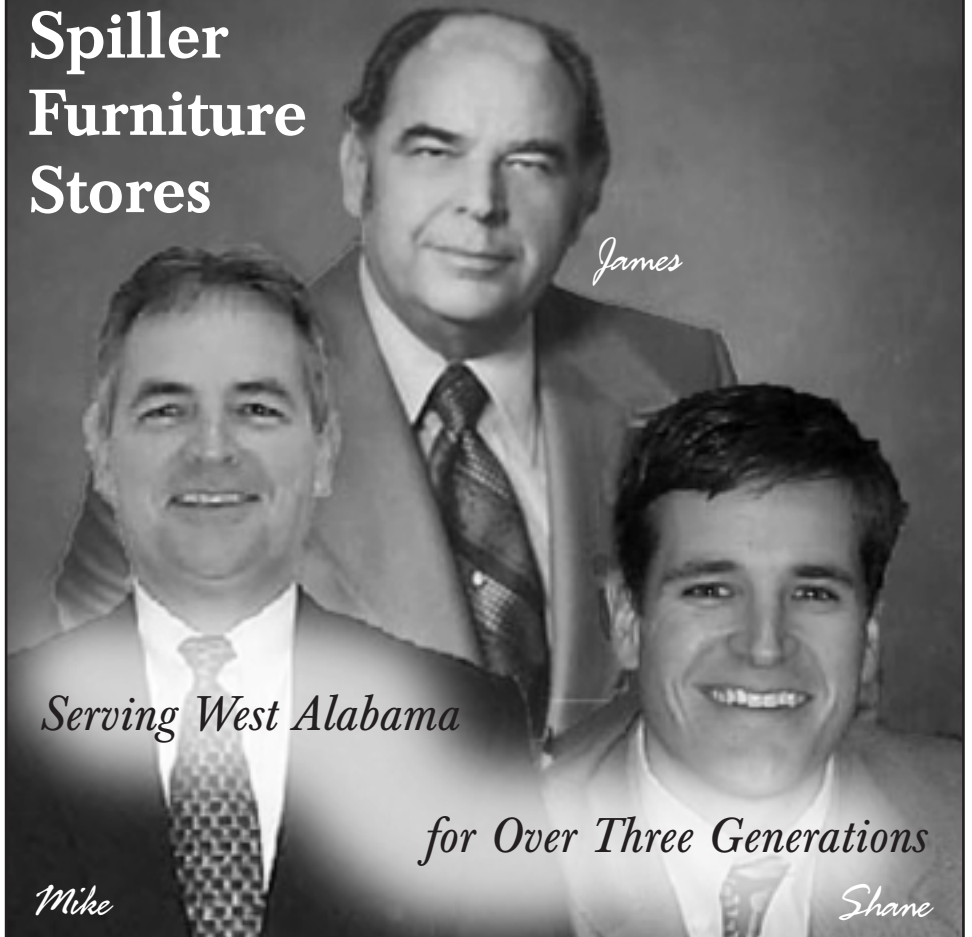
5th Annual West Alabama Leadership Prayer Breakfast - Guest Speaker: **Mr. Jack Faris**, President & CEO of the National Federation of Independent Businesses (NFIB), the nation's largest business organization
7:30 AM • Bryant Conference Center.

Tuesday, April 29th

3rd Annual Tuscaloosa County Civic Hall of Fame Ceremony
7:00 PM • Bryant Conference Center

For a complete schedule of events and programs, check out The Chamber's web site located at: www.tuscaloosachamber.com.

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School-to-Career Gives 8th Graders A CHOICE



Horace Allen with Indian Rivers Mental Health Center enjoys CHOICES interaction with eighth grade students at Tuscaloosa Middle School.

CHOICES presentations were one of many activities during School-to-Career week. Beginning September 16 and continuing throughout September, the CHOICES program was presented to eighth grade students in Tuscaloosa County and City schools. Thirty-seven volunteers from business/industry made the two-day presentations in 80 classrooms.

CHOICES was originally developed in 1983 for use by one company to deliver to students in the company's Adopt-A-School program. Since then, it has been presented to more than five million students in the U.S. and Canada. In Tuscaloosa, in the first year, Spring 2000, 25 classes received the CHOICES presentation.

Last academic year, there were 80 classroom presentations. This fall 2002, there were 36 volunteers who made presentations to 1,250 students in all ten middle schools in the city and county school systems. These presentations covered 57 classes involving 18 social studies and Future Quest teachers. Approximately 25 more Future Quest classes in the county school system will receive CHOICES early spring semester.

CHOICES is an interactive classroom seminar that gives eighth grade students a chance to see into the

future and recognize the importance of the personal and academic decisions they make today. Please visit CHOICES on the web at: www.choicedsgroup.org.

For many students, the opportunity to spend time with a person from the business community in a relaxed, friendly, but structured manner will be a first-time experience that will broaden their perception of what to anticipate after graduation.

CHOICES students gain a clearer understanding that their personal and academic choices build on each other. By making wise choices now, staying in school and committing themselves to their education, they'll give themselves more options later for choosing a fulfilling career and leading the life they want.

Brittina Moore, teacher at **Westlawn Middle School** says, "I feel that the CHOICES program provides supplemental material dealing with life's choices that the regular school curriculum lacks. I have participated in the program for the last two years and I have really appreciated the content and the way the program has been presented. I and my students have been very fortunate to have such well spoken and interesting students."

Katherine Wilson of **Bank of Tuscaloosa** remarked about her presentation. "CHOICES is a great program. And the students like it. After

my presentation, a student came up to me and told me she really hadn't thought a lot about the future. 'Now, I'm going to,' she said. I think CHOICES is a real eye-opener for most of the students. The demonstrations have a real impact on their concepts of time and money, in particular."

Stan McCracken of the **City of Tuscaloosa** reports, "My feeling...turned to excitement after day two as I saw the light go on in the student's eyes. I felt like I had really reached some of them with the message of the CHOICES program. My two 'class clowns' walked me to my car after day two and thanked me for coming to their class. They even begged me to come to their football game that night. I wasn't able to go to that game, but I promised to try to attend one of their games this year."

Constance Adger with the **U.S. Army** states, "I really enjoyed my class at Eastwood Middle School. The teacher and the students were excellent. The students really got into it and participated."

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School-to-Career Announces Mini-Grants

Nine teachers in the Tuscaloosa County School System and one at a local parochial school recently received mini-grant awards from the School-to-Career initiative. The total of the awards was \$9500. There were no applications submitted by teachers in the Tuscaloosa City School System.

“The mini-grant program helps us reward teachers who develop unique and innovative ways to teach job skills in the classroom,” said **Dick Johnson**, Director of the School-to-Career program. “This is the second year we’ve given grants, and the ingenuity of our teachers continues to be impressive.”

Individual mini-grant projects or proposals are specific to academic application of business principles, project-based or problem-based learning, teamwork, skill attainment, work-based learning experience, career education, career technical/academic coursework integration, outside the classroom learning, or any approach that links education with the real world of work.

The following teachers/counselors/principals received mini-grants for their creative proposals:

• **Mary Burke, Holy Spirit High School**, \$1,000, for a project that would help middle school math students see the connection between the skills learned in the classroom and the skills needed in the work world.

• **DeAnn Meggs, Holt High School**, \$1,000, for equipment to facilitate the integration of academic applications of business principles/skill development through hands-on activities with the traditional mathematics curriculum.

• **Shelly Cleckler, Northside High School**, \$1,000, to complete construction of a full-sized greenhouse where students will participate in hands-on activities like growing and selling plants as well as making and selling birdhouses and stepping stones.

• **Earnestine Giles, Hillcrest High School**, \$1,000, for a program specifically aimed at improving transition to work for special needs students. The program will include a career technical/academic coursework component along with career exploration.

• **Stephanie Hickman, Hillcrest High School**, \$1,000, for the equipment necessary to conduct resume writing workshops with students in English classes and electives. Includes the development of an interactive power point presentation on resume building, job searching, letters of application and career planning.

• **Marion Powell, Hillcrest High School**, \$1,000, for a demonstration/equipment area for the “company” classroom setting. This would enhance the learning of skills needed in the work force.

• **Robin Ragland, Hillcrest High School**, \$1,000, for equipment to be used by students to help prepare themselves for the work force. Elements include career videos, practice interview sessions, and other exercises that teach students the qualities of an effective employee.

• **Jody Sexton, Hillcrest High School**, \$500, for video equipment for use in a two-fold project. The first project involves career research along with resumes, cover letters, and interviewing. The second project involves researching events in a specific decade, and putting findings in newspaper format and in an oral presentation format for news broadcast.

• **Miriam Aycock, Hillcrest High School**, \$1,000, for a program that certifies students as competent in the maintenance of computer hardware and software.

• **Tracie Swann, Holt High School**, \$1,000, for a project that offers students a comprehensive overview of how the First Amendment should cover freedom of the press and journalistic ethics, basic journalism skills, desktop publishing, photography, printing specifications, graphics and design. Business partners help with workshops, articulation, surveys, and training and as guest speakers.

A second round of mini-grants was available in November. For this last round of the year School-to-Career will have a total of \$5,000 to award in grants.

