

Bane & Bone: Making Office Furniture An **ART**

By Anna Thibodeaux

Valarie Bane and Nancy Bone don't just sell office furniture. They see every sale as an opportunity to use their design skills to please another client.

"I was born with a love for art. When I was as young as 4 or 5, I asked Santa for art supplies," said Bane. "In school, I was always the one to paint signs and banners or backdrops for the drama club. I wanted to use my artistic ability in my profession."

Bone said she has always been intrigued by design and her love for it grew as she studied it more.

"Design is a very personal field," she said. "Each project is special. I find it rewarding because it allows me to bring a part of myself into my work. Space planning is my favorite part of the process. It allows me to discover a client's needs and arrange an area to suit them. It is very satisfying to see the finished results and know that a client is happy and their work place is customized just for them."

Bane and Bone offer services for businesses ranging from a single office update

to reconfiguring existing furniture to furnishing an entire business. TOPS principal Tommy Brown personally oversees and works every furniture installation. TOPS principal Gwenda Jones heads a professional



Designers Valarie Bane and Nancy Bone

Bane and Bone worked on projects together as they earned their Interior Design degrees at the University of Alabama in the mid-1980s. They've worked together professionally for the past four years.

Bane said most office space is limited so furniture and areas that provide multiple uses are important now. This approach can include using filing and storage as dividers in open areas, using hutches on desks as dividers or doubling white marker boards or tack boards as privacy screens.

To ensure the best layout with furniture, the two say they assess work patterns and provide computer-generated plans in 2-D and 3-D views to help with making the best choice. They also advise on task efficiencies and ergonomics while also factoring in the company's desired image and budget.

According to Bone, "I consider our situation extremely innovative because we combine our creativity from our degrees in design with the sale of furniture, and because of that, each job is unique and becomes a personal work of art."

company that provides support for Bane and Bone.

TOPS, officially known as Tuscaloosa Office Products and Supply, has 24 years experience in the industry.

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Complying With Today's Complex Web of Immigration Laws

By Carol A. Entelisano



Recent headlines are sprinkled with reports of federal Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) officers raiding and prosecuting employers for violating immigration

laws. In 2003, ICE entered 61 Wal-Marts in 21 states (including one in Chambers County, Ala.) and arrested more than 250 illegal immigrant workers. The arrests were "part of an ongoing investigation into the illegal employment of unauthorized workers in this country."

Wal-Mart maintains it did not violate the law because the workers were hired by independent contractors. Investigators claim the violations occurred with Wal-Mart's

direct knowledge. The case is pending before a Pennsylvania federal grand jury.

Under the Immigration Reform and Control Act, hiring and employing anyone unauthorized to work in the U.S. is illegal. All U.S. employers must complete and retain Form I-9 for each individual hired regardless of citizenship. There are significant penalties for violating immigration laws. Civil penalties range from \$275 to \$11,000 for each offense of employing an unauthorized alien. Additional penalties may be assessed for failure to fill out and maintain I-9s correctly.

In addition to the instructions provided with Form I-9, employers should consider these key tips:

- NEVER have an *applicant* complete the form.
- Complete the form within three days of hire, and conduct this step at the same point of employment process for ALL employees.
- Review **original** document(s) establish-

ing employee's identity and employment eligibility and NEVER accept copies.

• Attach your copy of the employee's documents to the form.

• DO NOT specify which documents to present—a request for particular documents **may subject you to civil penalties and claims of discrimination.**

• **Sign and date the form.**

• Institute an I-9 retention policy. Forms must be maintained for three years from hire date OR one year following termination date, **whichever is longer.**

• Maintain I-9s separately from personnel files. Keep forms for terminated and current employees separate.

• Conduct a practice I-9 audit.

Contact Carol A. Entelisano at centelisano@tannerguin.com or 633-0268 for a complimentary copy of "*I-9s, IDs, and Immigration Law in General*" or for legal assistance with your immigration compliance issues.



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Publix Opens Three Stores In Northport-Tuscaloosa Area



By Anna Thibodeaux

As the public gets acquainted with three new Publix stores in the Northport-Tuscaloosa area, store spokeswoman Brenda Reid said she welcomes hearing customers talking about the supermarket chain's emphatic devotion to customer satisfaction.

Brenda Reid

"Community service is our signature. If we don't have what you want we'll get it for you even if it means going to a competitor," Reid recently told the Northport Advisory Council. Publix adapts each of its stores to each community's preferences, which she said takes about 12 months to achieve after the store opens.

"Hopefully, you've met your new store manager. They want to meet customers and hear what they have to say," she said. "We're very serious about what we do."

As the nation's largest employee-owned grocery chain, Reid said Publix is equally devoted to its more than 120,000 associates, which translates "to how we feel in the store."

Publix Super Markets has consistently ranked in FORTUNE magazine as one of the country's best places to work. Ranking is based on employee input. Reid said the company's management "intentionally over communicates" to ensure everyone is informed about their company.

Publix is additionally committed to community projects such as "Success by 6," which helps ensure children can read by age 6.

Publix At A Glance

Company: More than 800 stores in Florida, Georgia, South Carolina, Alabama and Tennessee.

History: Founded by the late George W. Jenkins in 1930 in Winter Haven, Fla. Publix remains the largest employee-owned supermarket chain in the U.S.

Sales/2003: \$16.8 billion.

Coolest Innovation: Customers can now check Publix's weekly ads on the Web by visiting: www.publix.com/ads. Enter your zip code or city to find ads specific for your store. You can view entire ad pages or search for specific types of products. The only thing missing is the coupons, but they're still in the local newspaper.

"We're working very hard at Publix to support education," Reid said. This support also extends to the arts, feeding the needy and youth sports.

Asked about Publix's future in this area, Reid said they are always looking at additional sites. Population, growth potential and customer convenience are factors in choosing new locations.

While Wal-Mart has significantly impacted the industry as the world's largest purchaser of groceries, Reid said, "We just want to be your supermarket; we don't want to be your everything."

Reilly Named AmSouth Director of the Year



F. Michael Reilly, president and chief executive officer of Randall Publishing Co., has been named 2003 Director of the Year for Tuscaloosa advisory board of directors of AmSouth Bank. In sharing the results of AmSouth's annual recognition, Dan Carmichael, president of AmSouth in Tuscaloosa, said, "Mike Reilly and Randall Publishing are great business partners. This distinction recognizes board members who have gone the extra mile in their commitment to help the bank understand and meet financial needs in the West Alabama community, and Mike's contributions during 2003 were supportive of AmSouth's success."

Aycock Attends State Chamber Meeting

MONTGOMERY – Chamber President Johnnie Aycock participated in the Chamber of Commerce Association of Alabama (CCA) making history when it recently met in the office of the state's chief elected official – Gov. Bob Riley – for the first time in its 67-year history.

Main topics included cost of health insurance for small business owners and existing industries' support to Alabama's economy.

"We've got to have the structure and framework to help grow and expand Alabama industries," Riley told the group. Board members asked the governor to make his Commission on Existing Industries' recommendations a high priority in his administration.

In October, the Business Council of Alabama and the CCA formed a grassroots partnership, representing member businesses' more than 1 million employees.

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Tuscaloosa-Northport Welcome New Businesses

Main Avenue Antique Mall



The Antique Mall in the historic "Gingerbread House," a Victorian house in downtown Northport, opened in Nov. Ronald and Alice McGuffey are center, accompanied by Mayor Harvey Fretwell. The antique mall specializes in collectibles and antiques, and is located at 315 Main Ave. and is open Monday through Saturday from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Jackson Hewitt



and drop off tax forms and stop by to sign them when they are completed.

Jackson Hewitt Tax Services opened its sixth and largest branch in the Tusc.-Northport area in early December. (L-R) are: Lynn Robertson, Charles West, Linda Sexton, Mayor Al DuPont, Liz Brasfield, and Rosa Boyd. The branch, owned and operated by Linda Sexton and Charles West, is on Greensboro Ave. The branch is open year round. The location has a drive through.

Customers can pull through

Truck Supply & Outfitters



The Chamber held a ribbon cutting ceremony for Truck Supply and Outfitters in Nov. The ceremony was attended by (L-R) Eric Kirkland, Tuscaloosa Mayor Al DuPont, and Todd Kirkland and Chamber representatives. The truck accessories store, located across from the new Woods and Water store, is owned and operated by brothers Eric and Todd Kirkland.

Tuscaloosa Teachers Credit Union



Valoree Watkins; and Kelly McDaniel of Gulf States Paper and a Chamber Ambassador. Founded in 1953, TTCU has grown to more than 8,000 members. Brown said membership is available to anyone "who lives, works, worships or attends school in Bibb, Fayette, Greene, Hale, Pickens or Tuscaloosa Counties." This is the Credit Union's third office in Tuscaloosa County with the main office in downtown Tuscaloosa and a branch in Northport.

The Tuscaloosa Teachers Credit Union (TTCU) recently opened a new Taylorville office. Present at the ceremony were (L-R): Carla Bailey of the Child's Hands-On Museum and a Chamber Ambassador; Leon Brown, TTCU president; Jeff Cole, Taylorville branch manager; Tusc. Mayor Al DuPont; Rusty Tate, TTCU executive VP; Dr. Steve Lamon, board member; employees Kim Johnson and

Entrepreneur of the Year To Be Named May 13

Nominations have been received and the luncheon scheduled May 13 to announce this year's Entrepreneur of the Year. Sponsored by The Chamber of Commerce of West Alabama, the annual awards program honors small business owners and entrepreneurs in four categories: Entrepreneur of the Year, Innovator of The Year, Business Advocate of the Year and a Rising Star Award will be presented to a young, growing firm. The Chamber also will present a Life Time Achievement award.

The luncheon will be held 11:30 a.m. at the Four Points Hotel. For more information, contact Committee Chairman John Stack, 861-1040, or Chamber President Johnnie Aycock, 391-0559.

Maxwell Earns CRS Designation

Alice Maxwell, a Realtor with Advantage Realty, has been awarded the prestigious Certified Residential Specialist (CRS) designation by the Council of Residential Specialists, an arm of the National Association of Realtors. To receive this designation, the recipient must complete advanced courses in the field and demonstrate professional expertise in residential real estate. She is among 35,000 Realtors nationwide to receive this honor.

"My goal is to provide my clients with honesty, dependability, and excellence," Maxwell said. "Whether I'm dealing with new home construction or existing homes and properties, it's important to me to provide solutions for my sellers and buyers. That way they can have a positive, enjoyable and profitable experience."

Maxwell has been in the real estate business for 11 years.

Prime Lifestyle Wins Media Award

Prime Lifestyle Magazine recently received the Alabama Gerontological Society Public Print Media Award.

"Your commitment to improving the life quality of older Alabamians is commendable," said Gayle Boswell, chairwoman of the society's award committee.

Mark Collins is publisher and owner of the Tuscaloosa-based magazine.

Ryan Completes Courses

Jack Ryan, a certified residential specialist with Advantage Realty, recently completed two specialized real estate courses. The first course, entitled "Creating Wealth through Residential Real

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Member News

Estate Investments, covered fundamental and advanced approaches to investment in real estate, taxes affecting real estate, and investment strategies to create wealth. The second course dealt with technology, focusing on developing skills with hand-held computers, digital cameras, management information systems and multi-media presentations. It also outlined marketing real estate via the Internet, Realtor personal websites and e-mail.

OTC Celebrates 10th Year With Name Change

Northport-based OTC Publishing Corp., in commemorating its 10th anniversary of publishing *Old Tuscaloosa Magazine*, announced it has changed the magazine's name to *Old Southern Times Magazine and Mercantile Advertiser*. Publisher Herb Neu said the name change is in response to the magazine's expanded editorial focus and distribution to east Mississippi and the counties bordering Tuscaloosa. Future plans include expanding across the Southeast.

Neu also announced new staff, including account executive Annette Estes and Editor James A Crawford II. The magazine also has a new website: www.oldsoutherntimes.com. For more information, contact Neu or Crawford at 344-4070.

AMH Installs ATM



Alabama Mental Health Credit Union recently installed its first ATM machine at its Tuscaloosa office on Jack Warner Parkway, providing 24/7 service. ATM transactions are free for members and \$1.50 per transaction for non-members. The machine allows for withdrawals up to \$300. For more information, visit www.amhcu.org.

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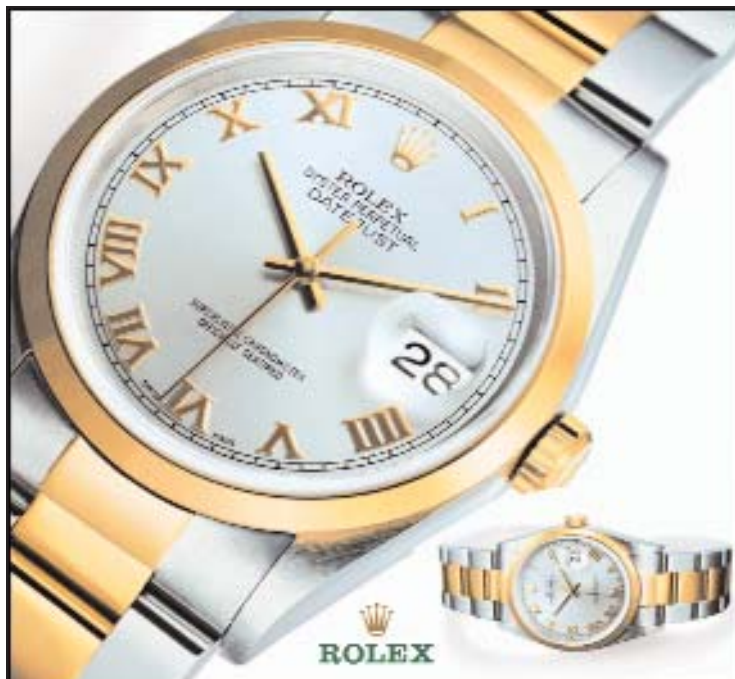
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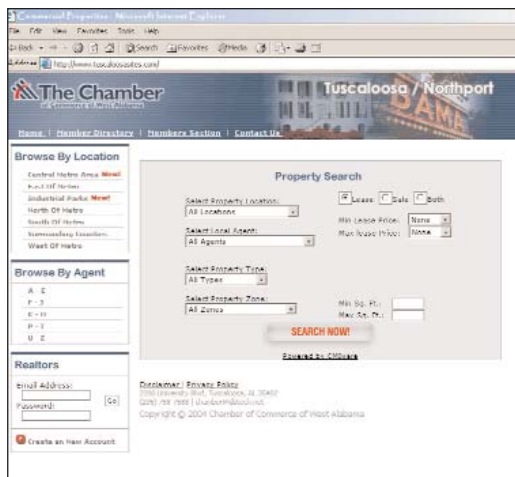
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New Commercial Real Estate Website



The Chamber's new commercial real estate website

Continuing its strong push to boost commercial and economic development in Tuscaloosa County, The Chamber in April activated its new on-line real estate website.

"Commercial and retail recruitment is one of the key factors in the continued growth and vitality of the business community," said Jim Harrison III, vice chairman of Business Development. "This new website

will help developers and retail consultants who are considering Tuscaloosa County as a possible new location. And it will help our local businesses more easily find available property for development and/or expansion."

The new site lets developers view, on an interactive basis, available commercial and industrial sites. Users can search listings by category, price, square footage, location and realtor. The site will also give users a picture gallery of each location, a full description of the property, and a demographic analysis.

Chamber members can post their own listings through

the "Members Only" link.

"Not only will this new website feature help economic development," said Donny Jones, vice president, Operations and Technology, "but it will also add great value to the members' investment in The Chamber."

The site was developed through a partnership between

The Chamber and CMI Consultants, a local software development firm.

To visit the website, users need to log on at www.tuscaloosachamber.com and click on the economic development icon of the left side of the screen. Or they can go directly to www.tuscaloosites.com.

Chamber Orientation

Chamber VP Donny Jones demonstrates the benefits of the Chamber's newly redesigned website as part of a recent member orientation.



Future orientations, which encourage Chamber to member interaction, are scheduled June 3, Sept. 9 and Nov. 4 at The Chamber office. Pictured with Jones are (L-R): Leandra Selaya of Bradford Health Services and Whitnee Sandlin of Wycomp Technologies.

Continued from Page 6

"real world" job experience.

Marketing student Alyson McFee is on a mission.

"I want to learn everything I possibly can while working at the Chamber," McFee said. She is working closely with Jones to help develop the Chamber's small business website:

www.youronestopcenter.com.

After she graduates in May, McFee plans to work in pharmaceutical sales or public relations.

According to spring semester intern Jordan Sharpe, "It's both interesting and necessary to see how a real business operates."

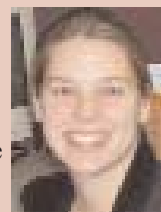
Jones said every intern has a special project to complete in a semester, as well as assisting with Chamber general operations.

Jordan Sharpe, a 21-year-old Alaskan, has been writing articles on Chamber members and developing a media plan for this year's membership campaign. Sharpe is seeking a double major in political science and public relations and is interested in lobbying or corporate public relations.

Julia Gruhn, 22, a management student, found herself at The Chamber through "family influence." As a business owner, her father referring to the chamber made her curious. The Nashville, Tenn., native said it wasn't just UA's beautiful campus and prestigious business school that lured her, but putting "that state line between me and my folks."



Jordan Sharpe and Alyson McFee



Julia Gruhn

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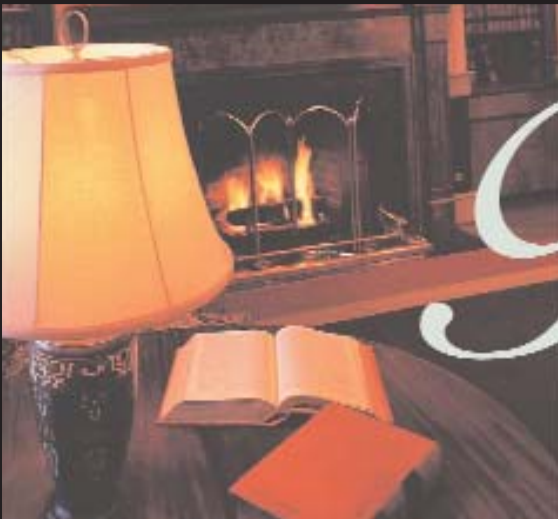
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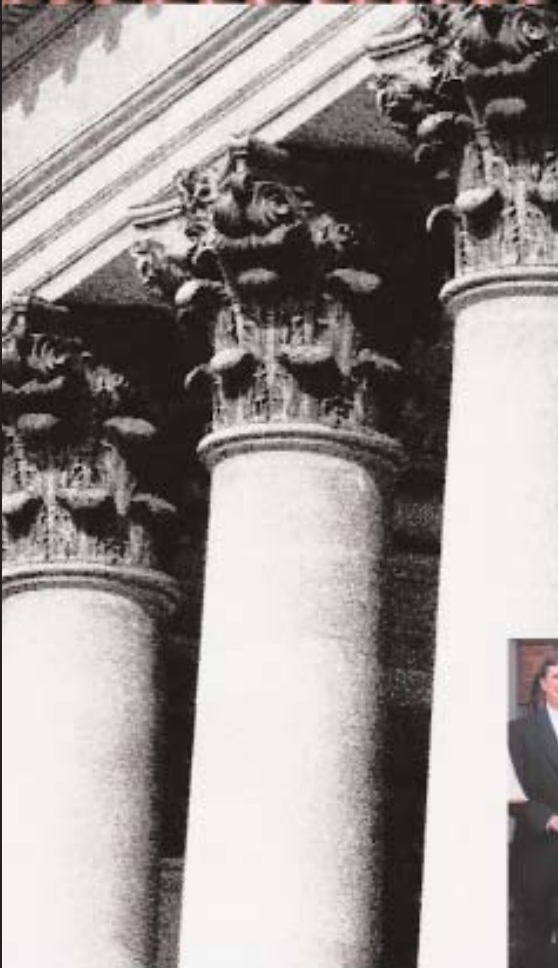
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