



# perspectives



## A Look Back, A Look Ahead

After a busy and successful year in 2004, The Chamber, its leadership, its volunteers and its staff are already at work on a comprehensive plan of work for 2005. We wanted to share that plan with our investors, so it's printed in its entirety in this issue of Perspectives.

We urge you to read through the plan, and find a place where you can become involved. If you don't have time to actually volunteer for a committee or task force, please participate in those activities or programs that could benefit you and your business or organization.

See Pages 9-16

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# perspectives

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Jim Fleming, left, chaired The Chamber's Board of Directors during 2004. He reviews The Chamber's results of 2004 with Incoming Chairman Howard Garrison. Fleming is chairman of The Bank of Tuscaloosa. Garrison is a partner with Duckworth-Morris-Garrison Real Estate.

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## Outgoing Chairman Jim Fleming's Message



How many times have you heard someone say, "I like to be busy. It makes the time go by so much faster?" I can really relate to that response. The Chamber stayed busy in 2004. And the months flew by quickly. Elsewhere in this issue of Perspectives, you can read about some of the accomplishments by The

Chamber during the past year. I emphasize some, because covering all the efforts The Chamber made during 2004 would require a lot more words and photos. We've just talked about some of the key activities of the year. We've attracted a lot of new investment in The Chamber, and kept nearly 90% of our members on the Team. We've improved communications with our investors and reached out to provide them more opportunities to provide input into our operations and programming. We've made strides on a plan to boost the retail marketplace in Tuscaloosa.

We keep working to keep our air and our lake clean, to offer top-notch training to our members

on technology and other business issues, and we continued to provide strong support to education and to help develop more young leaders for our community.

Behind these efforts has been a supportive and helpful Board of Directors. Dozens of volunteers from all areas of the business and education communities have worked really hard on committees and task forces in all five of our divisions. And The Chamber staff, led by Johnnie Aycock, has done an outstanding job in supporting The Chamber leadership and in handling the day-to-day operations of the organization. I've been privileged to carry the title of "Chairman" this year, and the words "Immediate Past" will be added to my Chamber title in 2005. I plan to remain active, and I'm looking forward to being a part of 2005 Chairman Howard Garrison's Team. If you've been active in Chamber work this year, I want to thank you for your efforts. If you haven't been involved in some Chamber activity in 2004, I urge you to find a place of service in 2005. Have a prosperous New Year!

## Incoming Chairman Howard Garrison's Message



A growing economy, an ambitious business plan, and the involvement of many volunteers combine to paint a bright picture for The Chamber in 2005, according to Howard Garrison, 2005 Chairman.

"We have a bold agenda with some major areas of emphasis," said Garrison of Duckworth-Morris-Garrison Real Estate. "And there are many other programs and activities that we will offer to our investors. Each and every member can get a good return on their investment in The Chamber, if they take advantage of the opportunities our business plan presents."

"Elsewhere in this issue of Perspectives, there is a major article on our business plan. I would urge each investor to read, become familiar with that plan, and get involved

in carrying out that plan as a volunteer in some capacity," Garrison added. "We have a small and talented staff, but we depend heavily on dozens of volunteers from all walks of business."

Garrison said The Chamber will continue to show its investors that their dollars provide them and the entire community with a great rate of return. "We will work hard to add value to our members' investment, and we will be diligent trying to make this community an even better place in which to live and work."

Garrison takes over for Jim Flemming of the Bank of Tuscaloosa (see column elsewhere in Perspectives). "Jim and his team set the bar awfully high for the 2005 team," Garrison said. "But we're confident we're up to the challenges of the upcoming year."





## TrainingSchedule

# January Chamber Training Schedule

Although it's a tad tentative, The Chamber's training and educational schedule is taking shape for 2005.

If any of the following interests you, call The Chamber office at 758-7588 for more details. And check your calendar to make sure you and your business associates are able to take advantage of these seminars.

**Small Business Spring Breakfast Series**  
(7:30 AM to 9:30 AM) at the Tuscaloosa Public Library.  
Tickets \$20.00 or \$70.00 for the entire Breakfast Series

February 15th - Quickbooks and Your Business - Basic

March 15th - Microsoft Word and PowerPoint Basics

April 19th - Quickbooks and Your Business II  
- Intermediate

May 17th - Microsoft Excel and Access Basics

**Spring Lunch and Learn Series**  
(11:00 to 1:00 PM) at Four Points Sheriton.  
Tickets \$30.00

April 27th- Excellent Customer Service

Half Day Seminars

March 10th - Women In Business Seminar  
(12:00 - 5:00 PM) at the Four Points Sheriton.  
Ticket price \$59.99

April 13th - Employee Development and Retention  
(1:00 - 5:00 PM) at the Tuscaloosa Public Library.  
Ticket price \$49.99

**Entrepreneur Institute** (3:30 - 6:00 PM) at The Chamber of Commerce Morrow Room. Cost \$199.00 all three sessions or \$349.00 for two participants. Limited to 16 participants. Must meet a set of basic requirements to attend. Call 758-7588 for details.

Topic: 10 Steps to a Profitable Business

February 8 - Session I - 10 Steps to a Profitable Business

March 8 - Session II - 10 Steps to a Profitable Business

April 5 - Session III - 10 Steps to a Profitable Business



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# Eye Care Associates Rose Betz

By Crystal L. Lucas

Optometrist Rose Betz has been practicing for 23 years. Originally from New Jersey, she attended the University of Alabama and UAB and has resided in Alabama ever since.

Dr. Betz says that she has always known she wanted to be in the medical profession, because of her love for helping others.

The most fulfilling aspect of her profession is helping children to regain their sight, and watching patients grow with her over the years.

Dr. Betz believes the eye care profession has changed enormously during the 20th century.

"It has grown from people called 'spec peddlers' pushing carts of eyeglasses trying to sell them to people, into what it is today," says Betz.

"People should realize that unless you have your eyes examined by a professional, you don't know if your sight is normal, because good vision is more than just what you perceive it to be," says Betz.

Dr. Betz emphasizes the importance of the medical aspect of eye care. She is concerned with the overall health of the eyes rather than just the vision.

"Just because you believe that you have good vision does not mean that you should not have your eyes checked," says Betz. "There are many silent diseases that can take place and go unnoticed."



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## Member Profile

# Lady in Lace Your One Stop Wedding Shop

By Jodi Harrell

Nestled in the corner of the Downtown Plaza in Tuscaloosa, there's a neat little shop, owned and managed by two businesswomen who became related because of a marriage.

Faye Grow and Dottie Kirkland are sisters-in-law, and their bustling business is Lady In Lace, which specializes in a wide variety of clothing for weddings, honeymoons, and other special occasions.

But these product lines weren't the original plan the women had for their business.

More than 17 years ago, the two set out to open a party goods store. But, one day while riding around the city, Grow and Kirkland a large pink building that housed a company that sells party supplies. "Suddenly, we knew we weren't supposed to go into the party goods business," Kirkland said. "We had been praying about this business venture for a long time, and we both believe that the Lord led us by the pink building."

So, what to do? Soon the two women were on their way to Montgomery to look at a lingerie store. "The owner of that business was very helpful. She told us she thought a lingerie store would go over well in Tuscaloosa, and she started giving us tips and advice about the business."

In 1987, they opened their business in College Park, and soon afterwards added mastectomy products to their inventory to reach a market that includes women who've undergone surgery for breast cancer.

"It was a needed product," Grow said. "And we both feel really gratified that we added this line of business. We rejoice with the customers, cry with them, and are available if they simply want to talk."

After moving to a larger location in the Downtown Plaza, Grow and Kirkland talked to an old friend, Rochelle Barton about opening a bridal business in conjunction with their current venture. Barton has been their bridal consultant for 14 years now.

Specializing in personal service and offering advice in every aspect of weddings, Grow and Kirkland feel a bride's full needs aren't met in a discount, warehouse type of bridal

store.

"We have no hidden charges, and we try to do everything we can to make the bride and her parents worry free and comfortable," Grow said.



"And Tuscaloosa is such a great place for weddings. We have everything here from beautiful churches, to reception locations, creative florists, gourmet catering, and great photographers and musicians.

"There's just simply no reason for a bride to go outside Tuscaloosa County with her wedding dollars," Grow said.

Lady In Lace prides itself on offering products and services at different prices. "That helps the customer," Grow said. "The bride's wedding dress, for example, will average between \$700 and \$1,100."

Alterations for wedding dresses, mothers dresses and other clothing is priced affordably, Grow said. "Miz Betty" (Betty Pierce) has done all of alterations since we opened the business."

"With our longevity and experience, you learn how to deal with any kind of situation that comes along," she said.

"We have made many dear friends over the years. We love people, and that's why we put everything into each customer transaction.

"It's not unusual for some of the our brides to come back years after their wedding to show us their baby or babies. We love that."

