

Hospice, cont'd. from pg. 5

Bess Miller, responsible for community awareness and coordination of the volunteer support, says, "We rely on the support of our volunteers. They provide so much for the patients and their families here." Caring for a terminally ill family member can become unbearable at times. "Many times the spouse of a patient will not leave their side, so it's nice to have a volunteer show up at their house to run errands for them," Miller said.

Hospice provides four levels of care including routine home, general inpatient, inpatient respite and continuous care. Hospice provides all medication, medical equipment and supplies, physician services, laboratory services, and medically necessary transportation services.

Hospice relies on funding from Medicare, Medicaid, private insurers and personal and community contributions. At the end of the summer, Hospice also holds a major

Johnnie Aycock, President of The Chamber of Commerce of West Alabama, emphasized, "Hospice of West Alabama is a very special and meaningful service to people in our region and requires a sensitive heart, caring spirit and personal touch. These qualities are reflected in Julie Sittason's leadership as well as in the hundreds of volunteers that support this very special health care service. Our community is blessed to have this unique support system to serve people during a difficult time in life."

fundraising event, "Fairways & Cabarets."

The Hospice staff is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week and provides palliative and supportive care to terminally ill patients in their homes or at the Hospice facility. There are even two nurses from Hale County that remain on-call for their area, so that someone from Tuscaloosa does not have to drive an hour to meet the needs of a patient during the weekend.

Now, in its 23rd year of operation, Hospice of West Alabama

has grown into a true health care provider in the West Alabama region. With an annual budget of over \$4 million, a staff of seventy employees, HOWA serves nearly 500 patients and their families every year in the seven county region. Hospice has built a reputation and legacy of caring, professional and effective service.

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MERCEDES-BENZ U. S. INTERNATIONAL

A WORLD LEADER IN QUALITY



from the ADAC, which is the German Automobile Club. ADAC rated the M-Class in first place for its reliability during the past six years.

Speaking on behalf of The Chamber's leadership team, Johnnie Aycock extended appreciation and congratulations to the exceptional MBUSI team. "The Chamber is very proud that Tuscaloosa County is the home of one of the world's leading automotive companies and is a shining star in quality, productivity and corporate citizenship. This latest honor once again is

real world proof that the people of our region have high standards and produce and compete at a world quality level."

Mercedes-Benz U. S. International, headquartered here in Tuscaloosa County, has been recognized with the top Quality Award from DaimlerChrysler AG for best plant performance in the past year by a Mercedes-Benz plant anywhere in the world. The award was presented to MBUSI team members during the company's new plant opening celebration on May third by Hans-Heinrich Weingarten, Head of Worldwide Production for the Mercedes Car Group.

"This award reflects the extraordinary efforts of the team in Tuscaloosa in making its quality targets as reflected by both internal and external indicators," said Weingarten. "MBUSI team members have shown the world that a Mercedes-Benz can – and is being – built in Alabama. This is a tremendous accomplishment, and it is the kind of achievement that showed DaimlerChrysler that Tuscaloosa was the right place to build the new M-Class and the future R-Class."

Some of the external indicators used to determine the award include a plant's JD Power score and Q-Sensor Rating, which is the equivalent of JD Power in Europe. In 2004, MBUSI's JD Power score was 96, placing it second in the luxury SUV segment. This score also ranked MBUSI as the top plant anywhere in the world building Mercedes-Benz passenger vehicles.

"I am most proud of the team we have here in Tuscaloosa," said MBUSI President & CEO, Bill Taylor. "I've personally seen them grow and achieve things they thought they could never achieve. I don't think I have seen a more dedicated group of individuals, and this award is a reflection on their hard work and dedication."

In addition to this top quality award for Mercedes-Benz plants, the M-Class recently received a top reliability award

A Snapshot Of Key Facts About Mercedes-Benz U. S. International

Original M-Class Facts & Figures

*Plant production exceeded original expectations of 60,000 vehicles
In 2002, record-breaking 88,000 vehicles built
73,500 vehicles produced in 2004
Total of 571,003 vehicles built from 1997-2004
Products sold in 135 countries
More than 40 awards
Last original M-Class build December 9, 2004
Top plant quality award – 2004*

Current Status

*Both plants are in "start up"
Job 1 for new M-Class was completed in December, 2004
Job 1 for new R-Class was completed in June, 2005
New generation of the M-Class went on sale in April, 2005
R-Class goes on sale October, 2005
A third new vehicle to be launched in 2006
Approximately 4,000 team members currently working, which includes 2,000 hired for expansion and 300 Germans for support
35 Tier 1 and Tier 2 suppliers have located in Alabama, which represents approximately 6,000 new additional jobs
Museum will re-open and plant tours will resume by mid-year, 2006*

Economic Impact

*Annual payroll of more than \$220 million
More than \$10 million has been given to local charities over the past decade
MBUSI pays more than \$2 million annually in education taxes
MBUSI is responsible for approximately 10,000 jobs and an annual economic impact of \$1.5 billion
MBUSI is Alabama's largest exporter of more than \$1 billion annually
More than \$1 billion in Alabama purchases*

DUPREE PAINTING



Josh Dupree and his wife, Louzert

“Quality First,” is what Josh Dupree, owner of Dupree Painting, says his company lives by. “If we take on a job, you can rest assured that we are going to do it right,” says Dupree. “I have a passion for my work and I want it to be seen in the quality of the job and how hard we work to complete the job.”

Dupree, who began his business in 2000, has his handiwork in many buildings, both residential and commercial, throughout the city. One particular building is the West Alabama Chamber of Commerce building that Dupree was sub-contracted to paint. And while his business is doing better now, Dupree says that it hasn’t been easy keeping the ball rolling.

“The hardest part of the business, for me, is to find and keep good help,” says Dupree. “Everyone will tell you that they can paint, but most of them aren’t as good as they say or don’t want to put in the time to do the job right.” Dupree says that when he looks for someone to join his crew he looks for someone who is always going to give 110 percent and who can deal with the public well. “I don’t want someone who can’t work or can’t communicate...That’s just bad for business,” says Dupree.

But despite those hardships, Dupree says that he has been blessed to do business with Trick Construction. “It’s like God led them to me. They’ve been with me from when I first started and have really helped my business grow,” says Dupree.

Dupree says that another group that has helped his business is The Chamber of Commerce. Dupree says that The Chamber has helped him by offering business workshops and seminars that fueled his competitive fire and also helped him run his business better.

“The Chamber of Commerce of West Alabama has helped many businesses like mine do better, but they also do a lot of good work in the community that benefits everyone,” says Dupree.

TUSCALOOSA OPTICAL



David Anders of Tuscaloosa Optical

Anders Tuscaloosa Optical Dispensary, Inc., has been serving the Tuscaloosa area since first opening its doors in 1949. Tuscaloosa Optical was originally founded by Troy Anders and was located behind the Bama Theatre. Shortly after opening, G.M. (Bill) Anders joined his brother to help run the business. Today, Tuscaloosa Optical is located at 2324 6th Street in downtown Tuscaloosa. The Anders family has been running the business since the first day it opened and takes pride continuing to run a family owned and operated business. Tuscaloosa Optical is owned by W.D. (David) Anders and his son, Will, is an optician with 20 years experience.

“We’ll always be a family run business, and that’s what has kept us around so long,” says David Anders.

Another reason for Tuscaloosa Optical’s longevity is the high quality of their product. Tuscaloosa Optical has the only full-service laboratory in the area, which means that they are able to offer higher quality eyewear at prices that won’t break someone’s pocketbook. Their full-service laboratory also allows them to offer one-day service.

Tuscaloosa Optical offers a one-year warranty on most of its frames, and they also have a repair service for broken glasses and on-site delivery and repair service, for a small fee.

Tuscaloosa Optical also offers a wide selection of specialty glasses for any outdoor activity. They have many different styles and sizes of polarized lenses that are perfect for golf, tennis, or just relaxing at the pool.

With three nationally and state certified opticians, a large selection of eyewear, and a commitment to their customers, the Anders family feels very confident that Tuscaloosa Optical will be around for another 56 years.

“Everyone in the community knows we’re honest and that they’ll get quality service and a quality product when they do business with us,” Anders said.

YEAGER AND CHRISTIAN IS PROACTIVE FIRM



John Yeager, seated, A. D. Christian, standing left, and Don Wood.

Yeager and Christian, certified public accountants, have been providing the Tuscaloosa area with quality service since their partnership began over thirty years ago. "Our mission is to provide high-quality accounting and tax services to our clients and to help them resolve their financial and accounting needs," say A.D. Christian.

The firm offers personalized service that they feel can only be found in a smaller firm. "We view every client relationship like a partnership and believe that our success is a result of the client's success," says John Yeager.

Yeager and Christian has also made several technological improvements such as starting to develop a paperless system that allows all files to be stored electronically, allowing for faster and more accurate service. The firm has shown to be proactive and responsive to their clients' needs. They take this up-beat attitude when it comes to the changing business environment.

While dealing with the government's new tax laws and regulations is not something that their clients enjoy, Yeager and Christian take great pride in staying up to date on every change in the accounting world. "We're in business to improve the quality of life for our clients," says Christian.

But even with all the work that goes into their firm, Yeager and Christian feels that being involved in the community can be just as rewarding. Christian served on the Northport City Council for eight years, is a member of the Board of Directors for The Phoenix House and Genesis House, and was once elected Northport Citizen of the Year.

Another organization that Christian has been involved with is the West Alabama Chamber of Commerce. Christian is a former vice chairman and treasurer of the Chamber. Christian says he feels The Chamber is a quality organization that provides a place for local businesses to come together and become active in their community.



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VAUGHN LEADS LEADERSHIP TUSCALOOSA



Audrey Vaughn of Alabama Power Company doesn't think there is a lack of qualified leaders in Tuscaloosa County. She feels that a lot of capable people just don't know how to get started in serving their community.

"I think there are many highly skilled, capable and concerned citizens in this community who would like to make a difference by get-

ting involved," Vaughn said, "but they need to know where to start, and they need support and encouragement to take that initial step forward to offer themselves for service."

Because she has this perspective, The Chamber is fortunate that Vaughn, division manager for Alabama Power with responsibilities that take in most of West Alabama, will be chairing the Leadership Tuscaloosa Steering Committee for the 2005-2006 year.

She's served on the Steering Committee before and is a 2003-2004 graduate of the leadership program.

Although she's only lived in Tuscaloosa for a couple of years (moving from Trussville), Vaughn says she's been "impressed with the depth and breadth of talent and wealth of the economic, educational, and recreational opportunities in Tuscaloosa and the surrounding area."

When her family first moved to Tuscaloosa, she said, they were apprehensive about the prospect of a long-term stay here. "But we have become very comfortable with our decision to make Tuscaloosa County our home. A tremendous part of the decision-making process was the Leadership Tuscaloosa experience—the people I met, the abundance of resources I found available, and the care and concern of the people."

The leadership program also allowed her to make some valuable friendships and some community and business networks that continue to grow, she added.

Vaughn's also involved with Challenge 21, the Tuscaloosa City Schools Foundation, Junior Achievement, the West Alabama Hunting and Fishing Trail, the West Alabama Regional Alliance and Bailey Tabernacle CME Church.

A graduate of the University of Alabama in Birmingham with degrees in Management and Marketing, she has a Master's degree from Samford University.

Vaughn has a son and a daughter, and enjoys reading, poetry, drama, music and writing.

"Leadership development is a natural fit and logical effort for The Chamber because strong leaders make strong communities and an enhanced quality of life for all citizens," Vaughn said.

"I'm looking forward to the upcoming Leadership Tuscaloosa program and keeping up the strong tradition of the program in producing outstanding leaders for the Tuscaloosa-Northport area."

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