



LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT

Leadership is Important

This year's annual meeting speaker focused on the importance of leadership. Few things are more important to human activity than leadership. Effective leadership helps our nation through times of peril. It makes a business organization successful. It enables a not-for-profit organization to fulfill its mission. The effective leadership of parents enables children to grow strong and healthy and become productive adults.

Each of us recognizes the importance of leadership when we vote for our political leaders. We realize that it matters who is in office, so we participate in an election to choose the best candidate. Investors recognize the importance of business leadership when they say that a good leader can make a success of a weak business plan, but that a poor leader can ruin even the best plan.

Do you want to be a leader? Or, if you're already a leader, do you want to improve your leadership? Do you want to affect what other people do – to help them accomplish important goals? Do you want to point the way in your organization? Do you want to climb the promotion ladder to positions of higher authority and greater pay? Leadership can make these



LEAH BOLIN
CHAMBER PRESIDENT

things possible.

The Cullman Area Chamber of Commerce and Chick-fil-A of Cullman have partnered together to host Leadercast Cullman. Leadercast is the world's largest one-day leadership conference, broadcast LIVE from Atlanta and simulcast to hundreds of locations around the world on May 6, 2016. This year marks the 16th year of the annual leadership conference and the first annual Leadercast Cullman event!

The theme of this year's conference is, "Architects of Tomorrow," focusing on visionary leaders who imagine and build a future that is rich in innovation, collaboration and full of hope. A future where problems are solved, questions are answered, and confusion gives way to clarity.

The conference will equip attendees to create their own visionary



simulcast locations in more than 20 countries. Among the keynote speakers are:

Kat Cole – Group President, FOCUS Brands, Inc. (including Cinnabon®, Moe's Southwest Grill®, Auntie Anne's®, and more)

Steve Wozniak – Co-founder of Apple, Inc.,

Henry Cloud – Acclaimed Leadership Expert, Clinical Psychologist, and Best-Selling Author

Nick Saban – Head Football Coach, The University of Alabama

Andy Stanley – Leadership Author and Communicator

James Brown – Network Broadcaster, CBS Sports and News

Rorke Denver – Navy SEAL Commander and Author

Chris Barez-Brown – Author and Creativity Guru

Tripp Crosby – Host of Leadercast, Comedian and Director

The Chamber and Chick-fil-A invite you and your organization to attend Leadercast Cullman on May 6, 2016 at the campus of Daystar Church in Good Hope. For more information and to purchase tickets, please visit <http://event.leadercast.com/location/cullman>.

Cullman Area Chamber of Commerce

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www.cullmanchamber.org | www.visitcullman.org

Leadership Cullman County Holds February Session

By Shane Barnette
Principal, West Point
Intermediate School

February's Leadership Cullman County consisted of many exciting visits. Having been born and raised in Cullman County all of my life, I am amazed each month when we meet for our Leadership Cullman County meetings, and I learn something new about Cullman County.

Our February meeting began at Karma's Coffee House with Sammie Danford, executive director of the United Way of Cullman County, sharing with the group about the exciting things United Way is doing for our community. Cullman EMA Director Phyllis Little followed this presentation by

explaining the operations and various components of the Emergency Management Agency.

After a short bus ride, the group was treated to a tour of Cullman's Water Treatment Plant. I personally have passed by the treatment plant hundreds of times over the past 42 years and have never been in it. Many times I have looked at their tower and thought I would like to tour it but have never taken the time to do so. We all learned about how the water comes to the plant, is cleaned and prepared for use, and then pumped out to the different communities. The workers at the treatment plant consistently make sure we all have clean water to use.

After the water treatment center, we traveled to the Cullman County

Commission on Aging. After a brief tour of their facility, we had the opportunity to play bingo with some of the fine people that meet there routinely. While there, we met several caring people that are passionate about the job they do providing assistance to the aging population of Cullman County. It was exciting to see behind the scenes and also to spend some time with the senior citizens at the center.

Our next stop was at the TP Country Club where we were treated to a wonderful lunch, second to none. We learned about the history of the facility and the important role the club plays when welcoming new business opportunities to Cullman. There have been many business negotiations made over

the 18 holes at TP.

From the golf course, we then went to the gym! We next visited the Cullman Wellness & Aquatic Center (CWAC). Nathan Anderson, executive director of Cullman City Parks & Rec, explained to us the innovative new changes that are being made to the Wellness & Aquatic Center. They continue to infuse new technologies into the procedures and programs at the center. He is passionate about leading CWAC to become the finest center in the southeast.

Shane Barnette, Principal –
West Point Intermediate School /
Leadership Cullman County Class
2015-16

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SMALL BUSINESS OF THE MONTH – MARCH 2016

On behalf of the Cullman Area Chamber of Commerce, the Retail Committee would like to congratulate MR. HICKS Mens Wear as February's Small Business of the Month, sponsored by All Steak Restaurant. MR. HICKS Mens Wear is owned and operated by Phillip Hicks at 217 Compass Way SW in Cullman. Phillip served on the Board of Directors of the Cullman Area Chamber of Commerce from 2001 to 2004. MR. HICKS Mens Wear has participated with Christmas Open House over the years. "As a member of the retail community I feel it is important to support community efforts to promote the opportunities Cullman offers as often as we can."

MR. HICKS Mens Wear was formerly known as MURPHREE's Mens Wear at the original location in Creel Plaza. Jean and Thurman Murphree had operated there for 20 years before deciding to retire. Phillip and Charlotte bought MURPHREE's in 1994 and operated under the name MURPHREE's for four years before changing the name. The store's phone number 256-739-1007 has not changed for the last 42 years. You can view their merchandise by visiting www.suitsformen.com.

In 2002, MR. HICKS Mens Wear moved to the current location beside Doug Doggett Jewelers on Compass Way. The store continues to focus on quality suits and accessories sales

for all sizes from small through big or tall sizes. Over the years, MRH has expanded the formal wear and suits rental offered for weddings, proms, Mardis Gras and other special events. "We offer the newest styles each year along with the traditional looks in formal wear for men."

MR. HICKS Mens Wear feels the best way for small businesses to get separation from chain stores is through providing superior customer service. "This would apply to most retail businesses in Cullman. We look at it here as providing service that comes with a suit or tuxedo rental. Cullman has a strong support system for small businesses through the local banks. Premier Bank has been like a partner with us since 1994. The economic downturns over the last 22 years forced us to focus more on what we do best. Focusing on service was something we could do that kept us going. For example, we provide alteration service for items purchased from the chain stores."

"We appreciate the support the people of Cullman and the surrounding counties have shown us over the past 22 years. We enjoy working with local schools with special needs and the Chamber on events like the Annual Meeting. The network of churches, small businesses, schools and civic organizations make Cullman a great place to live."

MARCH WINNER - JACK'S WESTERN WEAR



MARCH MONTHLY SPONSOR - COOK'S PEST CONTROL



FEBRUARY WINNER - MR. HICKS MENS WEAR



AMP UP YOUR CONNECTIONS WITH SPEED NETWORKING

Our 1st Quarter Business After Hours program will be held on March 31st from 5:00-7:30 p.m. at The Byre at St. Bernard Abbey. Please join us for a night of fun, food and contacts in a favorite setting. This is a chance for you to network with other businesses in the area. Light hors d'oeuvres and drinks will be served. Contacts, business partnerships, and colleagues can be made at this event. Business attire is suggested to be worn. You'll need to prepare a short 30-60 second "elevator speech" that explains what your business is about. This will give everyone an opportunity to get to know a little about yourself and what you do. Bring some personal business cards to share with others and get ready to gain some quick connections! Thank you to our Presenting Sponsor ERA Waldrop Real Estate and to our Food Sponsor St. Bernard – Abbey Byre. Prices are \$15 for members and \$20 for future members. Don't miss out on an awesome night of delicious snacks, great networking prospects, and a fun night. Call 256-734-0454 to reserve your tickets or email info@cullmanchamber.org.

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New Young Professionals Group to Meet on St. Patrick's Day

The Cullman Area Chamber of Commerce Young Professionals Group (YP Cullman) is a professional development program that encourages YPs to take ownership in the community and provides opportunities to grow so these young individuals are inspired to lead with enthusiasm, determination and passion. YP Cullman is an outlet for the next generation of leaders to channel their energy and enhance their leadership potential. This new program is designed for young



Cullman Area Chamber of Commerce
**YOUNG PROFESSIONALS
CULLMAN**

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professionals, ages 22-39. Over time, we envision YP Cullman members to take strides in several facets of the Cullman area, including

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but not limited to: community awareness and concern, committee involvement, entrepreneurial roundtables, and eventually leadership

roles. We will begin with quarterly socials, with our kick-off session taking place on St. Patrick's Day, March 17th, at Karma's Coffee House in the Warehouse District, with doors opening at 6:00 p.m. Come out for a great night of fun and networking as we get to know one another and discuss the future of the Cullman area. For more information, please call the Chamber at 256-734-0454 or email info@cullman-chamber.org.

Governmental Affairs Committee's Legislative Update

The regular session of the Alabama Legislature began on February 23, 2016 without much fanfare or attention. As has been the case over the last several years, the main issue facing the legislature is the general fund budget. Alabama is one of the few states that divides the state budget into two separate budgets – one for education and the other to fund all other state departments, which is the general fund budget. One key difference in the two budgets is the way that they are funded. The education budget is funded primarily

by taxes that increase during good economic times (income taxes, sales taxes, etc.), and the general fund budget is funded by taxes that are more stable, but also less likely to increase during good economic times (insurance premium taxes, property taxes, oil and gas production taxes, interest on state trust funds, etc.). As a result of the different types of taxes which fund the different budgets in good economic times, the education budget does well, and in bad economic times results in proration of the education budget.

Although the source

of funding for the general fund is more stable, the costs for funding state departments are increasing much faster than tax revenue, particularly in Medicaid costs. The general fund provides money for prisons, mental health, state law enforcement, child protection, the court system, the state park system and Medicaid health care costs, among other state agencies. Because of the increased costs and stable revenue, there is a continual short fall in the general fund budget. This year it is expected to be at least \$100 million. It

is unclear where any additional revenues or spending cuts will come from. Several different lottery and other gambling bills have been filed, but the legislature has not shown a willingness to sign off on any form of gambling to provide more revenue.

The education budget, however, will be fully funded. Legislative leaders and the governor have indicated that teachers may get a pay raise for the first time in several years. As usual, several unusual bills have been filed. One bill filed by Sen. Trip Pittman would abolish

the state senate and create a unicameral legislature in Alabama with only the House of Representatives acting as the legislative branch. His bill is not expected to pass. On a more serious note, Rep. Lynn Greer has

filed a bill to make pensions subject to state income tax. Needless to say, that bill is controversial and subject to objection from a variety of corners. Stay tuned, you never know what is going to happen in Montgomery.

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The 2016 Cullman Area Tourism & Community Improvement Awards

The Cullman Area Chamber of Commerce & Visitor Center is now accepting nominations for the 2016 Tourism Awards. Winners will be announced on Thursday, May 12 at 8:00 a.m. Doors will open at 7:30 a.m. and breakfast will be served at this time. Awards will be presented from 8:30 – 10:00 a.m. The event will take place at the Brown Stone Centre at Stone Bridge Farms located at 281 Co. Rd. 717 in Cullman.

Here are this year's categories:

The Business Awards

These awards recognize businesses and events that differentiate themselves by providing exceptional service, anticipating customers' needs and consistently exceeding visitors' expectations.

Exceptional Festival or Event Award

Recognizes a festival or event that attracts visitors as well as locals, generates regional and/or state media attention and positively promotes the Cullman area.

Best Attraction Award

Recognizes a regional attraction (including museums, performing arts, parks, amusement parks, etc.) which attracts visitors and contributes to an outstanding tourism experience.

Near Nature.

Near Perfect Award

Recognizes a business, organization, community or outdoor recreation area that has developed a tourism product/service that best demonstrates the ecological, cultural or his-

toric assets of the region.

Spirit of Cullman Award

Recognizes an outstanding tourism or hospitality related business or organization that provides excellent service, exemplifies innovation and causes our region to shine.

Rockin' Retailer

Recognizes a retailer that provides an outstanding shopping experience for visitors.

Extraordinary Everyday Eatery

Recognizes a restaurant offering an atmosphere that provides an outstanding experience for visitors.

The Individual Service Awards

These awards recognize hospitality and frontline individuals who consistently deliver warm, friendly and helpful service, exceed visitors' expectations, anticipate customers' needs and have received written or verbal feedback about their exceptional service

from their colleagues, supervisors or their customers.

The White Glove Award

Recognizes exceptional service from an individual hotel housekeeping staff member.

The Silver Spoon Award

Recognizes consistent superior service by a restaurant or food service employee.

Superior Service Award

Recognizes excellent customer service by an individual who has first contact with the public. Front desk personnel, concierges and all other guest service employees qualify.

Savvy Retail Sales Associate

Recognizes excellent customer service from a retail sales associate who has first contact with the public.

Heart of the House Award

Honors an outstanding individual who works behind the scenes to keep

their institution, organization or business operating smoothly, creating a superior experience for the public.

Hospitality Volunteer of the Year

Recognizes any hospitality industry volunteer (i.e. entertainment venues, museums, and festival and event volunteers) who has made an outstanding contribution.

Rising Star Award

Recognizes an up and coming leader for their exceptional efforts to serve and enhance the experience of the public. Those individuals who have been in the tourism industry for five years or less qualify.

Tourism Professional of the Year Award

Recognizes a person who has made a significant contribution to the tourism industry through more than five years or more of innovation, inspiration and industry leadership.

To nominate your

local favorites, go to <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/tourismawards2016> to nominate or stop by the Cullman Chamber to pick up a nomination form in person. The deadline for nominations is Friday, April 15.

The Community Improvement Yearly Awards will also be presented at this program as a part of the event. These awards are given on a quarterly basis with one overall annual award winner in each category including: Best Landscaping (small), Best Landscaping (large), Best Curb Appeal, Best Restoration, Best New Construction, and "Building a Sense of Community." The Community Improvement Committee hopes to inspire others to take action to preserve, protect and promote community improvement in the Cullman area.

The guest speaker will be Sean Miller. Miller is a Certified Personal Trainer, Co-founder of MOTIVATE - Redefining Workforce Health, Owner of Miller Fitness in Decatur, AL, and provides athlete preparation for Olympic Development

Programs. The theme will be "Improving Overall Performance" - Maximizing Your Potential.

Single tickets are priced at \$20 for chamber members and \$25 for future members. Table sponsorships start at \$200 and include reserved seating for eight in a prime location with table signage. The presenting sponsor for the event is The Community Shopper's Guide. Corporate sponsors include The Cullman Times and The Smith Lake Book. The program sponsor is Johnny's Bar-B-Q. There are gold, silver and bronze table sponsorships available for this event.

If you would like to reserve your tickets to the 2016 Cullman Area Tourism and Community Improvement Awards, email info@cullman-chamber.org or call 256-734-0454. There are a limited number of seats available and tickets are on a first come, first serve basis.





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March Community Luncheon

Join us on the fourth Friday of the month, March 25th, for our Community Luncheon, which will be held at the All Steak Restaurant in the Banquet room from 11:30 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. Our guest speaker will be Ron Starner, executive vice president of Conway Inc. and Site Selection magazine, an international corporate



Starner

real estate publication based in Atlanta. Ron will be giving an important update on trending factors in regards to workforce, economic development, industry and site selection. Tickets are \$15 for Chamber Members and \$20 for future members. Call 256-734-0454 or email info@cullmanchamber.org to reserve your seat. Thank you to our 2016 Presenting Sponsor Shirley Quattlebaum – State Farm and to our Monthly Sponsor ADS Security.

PRESENTING SPONSOR SHIRLEY QUATTLEBAUM – STATE FARM



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State of the Schools/Student-Teacher of the Year Awards Banquet

The Cullman area's leading students and teachers will be recognized at the Chamber's 12th annual Student-Teacher of the Year awards, presented by Chick-Fil-A, on April 7th from 6-8 p.m. in the School of Nursing and Center for Science building at Wallace State.

Each Cullman area high school submits a student of the year application on behalf of their school. This year's nominees include: Fairview High School, St. Bernard Prep School, Good Hope High School, Hanceville High School, Cullman High School, Cold Springs High School, Vinemont High School, Holly Pond High School and West Point High School.

Three career technical student nominees are also selected to compete for Career Technical Student of the Year. The three nominees are: Cullman High School, Cold Springs High School and West Point High School.

The category winners will receive a \$250 scholarship. All students are evaluated on

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the following criteria: GPA, extra-curricular activities and awards, a written essay on their proposed college course of study and occupation, letters of recommendation and an interview with an inde-

pendent panel of judges.

City and County Schools Teacher of the Year selections will also be acknowledged at this event.

Tickets for this year's event are open to the public at \$20/

person. To reserve your seats online, visit www.cullmanchamber.org. Tickets are limited. Reservations must be made with the Chamber office by March 25th. For more information, contact Ben Smith at 256-734-0454 or bsmith@cullmanchamber.org.

The Cullman Area Chamber of Commerce would also like to thank Cullman Electric Cooperative, Wallace State Community College, and Cullman Jefferson-Gas for their corporate sponsorships of this event.



Youth Leadership Cullman County Holds February Session

The 2015-16 Youth Leadership Cullman County class had their seventh session on Wednesday, February 17th. The session was "Business & Industry Day." The class learned about the different industries offered in Cullman and spoke with business personnel about careers in these respective fields. The youth group's day kicked off at the chamber with a presentation by the knowledgeable staff at Cullman Economic Development Agency. Peggy Smith and Susan Eller provided great insight to the young lead-

ers about how imperative it is for those local officials to be constantly working toward economic development and advancement, and how fruitful it is to have such a great showing of industries present in Cullman. Following this, the group traveled around the Cullman area, taking an Industrial Park tour, with Kevin Jackson narrating the different companies and what part they play in Cullman's vast canvas of industries. The group then toured REHAU. They marveled at what this industry does behind closed doors. They were

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impressed and shocked at the several different departments, the superior levels of product expectation and production, and the teamwork that went along in such a large-scale endeavor. After lunch, the crew toured Duck River, Cullman's alter-

nate supply of drinking water. Learning that the river nearly filled up to its required water levels due to Christmas Day floods surprised almost everyone. After this, the group took an informative tour of Peoples Bank and learned about the banking industry, as well

as the several different types of departments and loans available. The day concluded with a visit to Folsom Field, Cullman Regional Airport, with Ben Harrison. Ben explained the history and evolution of the aviation field and the group was able to watch a few of the planes land on the runway. The group gained an impressive awareness and appreciation for what our local industries do every day, and a greater understanding of the job growth and economic impact that is a result of these industries being a part of our communi-

ty. Thank you to the following sponsors for their support and investment in our youth: Presenting Sponsor: Wallace State Community College - Future Foundation; Session Sponsor - Royal Technologies Corporation; Breakfast Sponsor - McGriff Industries; and Lunch Sponsor - Richard Electric Co. Inc. These monthly sessions aim to educate the youth class and increase awareness on issues of interest happening on a local, regional and national scale.

March Morning Blend

Come join us in the morning on Wednesday, March 16th for delicious coffee and great discussion at our Morning Blend, held every third Wednesday of each month from 8-9:00 a.m. at Karma's Coffee House in the Warehouse District. Chamber staff welcome members and visitors every month to attend this free event and discuss the hottest topics in business and share tips, ideas and viewpoints. Thank you to our Presenting Sponsor Karma's Coffee House and to our Monthly Sponsor Ponder Wrecker Service.

For more Information, visit our website at: www.cullmandentist.com

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2ND ANNUAL PRESIDENT'S PRAYER BREAKFAST

Please join the Cullman Area Chamber of Commerce and its members for the second annual President's Prayer Breakfast. It will be a time of remembering and sharing as we reflect on the past and pray for the future of our community. Doors open at 7:30 a.m. with the program beginning at 8:00 a.m. at Loft 212 on April 27, 2016. Our guest speaker is Andy Marshall. Registration is required. There is a 48-hour cancellation policy. Prices are \$25 for chamber and future members. Call 256-734-0454 to register. Thank you to our Presenting Sponsor Seventh Street Baptist Church, Entertainment Sponsor WKUL-FM, Program Sponsor St. Paul's Lutheran Church, and our table and corporate sponsors for this event.

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PRESIDENT'S PRAYER BREAKFAST

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Keynote Speaker:
Andy Marshall
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April 27, 2016 | 8:00 A.M.

Tickets: \$25.00

Location: LOFT 212
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