The holidays are almost here, so ‘tis the season to celebrate and spread cheer.

The Cullman Area Chamber of Commerce’s young professionals group, EPIC (Emerging Professionals Impacting Cullman), is ready to do just that.

Sponsored by Drinkard Development, EPIC is gearing up for a big finish to 2017. The group is always accepting new members between the ages of 21-39. Regardless of your line of work, EPIC is a great way for young professionals to network and have a good time in the Cullman area.

There has been a lot of interest in EPIC since membership guidelines were formed earlier this year, and the goal is to add as many members as possible before saying so long to 2017.

One of the perks of being an EPIC member is having the opportunity to attend some extremely cool events. Occasionally, EPIC holds what we call a “Takeover” at a local venue in town. This month, we’re taking over the hottest new joint in town, Mae’s Food Hall.

On Thursday, November 16th, we will start up at 5:00 PM and go until 7:30 PM (or probably longer).

If you are not a member, that’s OK. You’re more than welcome to sign up while enjoying food, drinks and the company of other young professionals.

Takeovers are always fun, but don’t forget about EPIC’s four big quarterly events. With Christmas around the corner, that means it’s time for the EPIC Christmas Sweater Party, sponsored by St. John & Associates. Anyone who has ever attended this all-ages (that’s right, EVERY-ONE is invited) event will tell you it’s not one to be missed.

There will be music, awesome giveaways, food, drinks and, of course, a Christmas sweater contest with a prize for who has the best taste in holiday apparel.

We’re still nailing down details for this event, but mark your calendars for Friday, December 1st. Stay tuned to EPIC’s Facebook page as more information is announced.

For any questions regarding EPIC or any of its events, please contact Wesley Smith, the Chamber’s Director of Entrepreneurship & Education, at wsmith@cullmanchamber.org.

Takeover, Christmas Sweater Party on the horizon for EPIC this holiday season
Chamber laying out 5-year strategic plan at November Morning Blend

Come join the Cullman Area Chamber of Commerce the morning of Wednesday, November 15 for delicious coffee and great discussion at our Morning Blend, held every third Wednesday of each month from 8:00 to 9:00 a.m. at Rumors Deli in the Warehouse District.

The Chamber staff welcomes members and visitors to attend this free event. Chamber President & CEO Leah Bolin will lead the discussion for November’s topic: ‘Converging for Success,’ the Chamber’s 5-year strategic plan.

Coffee will be provided by Presenting Sponsor Karma’s Coffee House. This month’s sponsor is Highland Technical Services, Inc.

For more information, contact the Chamber at 256-734-0454 or info@cullmanchamber.org.

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STAFF: Poole, Jones join Chamber staff; Steele named interim Tourism Director

FROM PAGE 1

than a decade in sales, marketing and public relations for small to multimillion dollar brands, as well as startups, Brian knows what truly drives business and business conversions.

He believes in connecting and hearing the hearts of the people he helps in order to best design, create, and communicate unique and innovative strategies that move business forward.

Brian’s business footprint can be found around the world, including Nepal, Costa Rica, Belgium and Africa. He’s helped more than 40 international business startups and been essential to the expansion of more than 30 others.

In addition to his extensive business experience, Brian is a trained business coach and has taught and facilitated hundreds of basic entrepreneur training courses across the globe.

Brian is originally from Panama City, Florida, and has also lived in Dothan and Decatur. He’s married to Tina Poole, who works locally at Nearen Construction. Brian and Tina are members of Eastside Baptist Church and have two sons, Bryce and Beau.

Bryce lives in Cullman after serving four years in the U.S. Navy. Beau lives in Norfolk, Virginia and is currently serving in the U.S. Navy.

Brian’s position was newly created to help tackle many of the ambitious initiatives laid out in the Chamber’s five-year strategic plan.

“We are thrilled to add this new position at the Chamber,” said Chamber President & CEO Leah Bolin. “In a recent poll, 20 percent of all millennials said Google is their ideal employer. Concentrating on the kinds of work that will attract the next generation of workforce to our area is one of our top priorities. Brian has the resume and skill set we need to begin this program of work.”

JONES HIRED AS EXECUTIVE ASSISTANT TO THE PRESIDENT

Laurie was born and raised in Cullman County and graduated from Fairview High School in 1997. She then studied Business Administration/Public Relations at Wallace State Community College and served as the secretary and president of Host and Hostesses for a year apiece. After college, Laurie worked in telecommunications for 11 years in Marshall County before returning to Cullman and working for a local OB/GYN’s office.

Laurie enjoys spending her free time with her three children, Kaytlin, Raegan and Colton, who all attend Fairview School.

“Laurie has already made herself indispensable at the Chamber,” Bolin said. “She is the gatekeeper to the front door of our community, and I couldn’t be more pleased for her to be part of our team.”

STEELE NAMED INTERIM TOURISM DIRECTOR

The Cullman Area Chamber of Commerce & Visitor Center recently underwent a transition at Director of Tourism. Jesse Newsom vacated the post in late October to take a position at Cullman Parks & Recreation, leading the Chamber to name Roger Steele interim Tourism Director.

Roger is a Cullman native and sales and marketing professional.

“We wish Jesse the best,” Bolin said. “This only strengthens our partnership with Cullman Parks & Recreation as both parties strive to make the Cullman area a prime tourism destination, as well as the ideal community to live, work and play.”
This year’s Total Resource Campaign (TRC), the Cullman Area Chamber of Commerce & Visitor Center’s membership/sponsorship drive for 2017-18, definitely lived up to its theme — Building on Success.

The campaign, which included plenty of fun Lego activities along the way, ran from August 10 to October 3, 2017.

During this time, volunteers reached out to the community to give businesses and individuals the opportunity to sponsor an event or program, or to join the Chamber (which can be done at any time of the year).

The grand total raised by volunteers and team captains for this year’s TRC was ... $218,856!

A TRC Victory Party was held on October 10, 2017 at TP Country Club to celebrate everyone’s hard work throughout the campaign.

The 2017-18 TRC “Building on Success” leadership was made up of Chair Kay Shabel, MoMoSHE 103; Vice-Chair Cheryl Bailey; Vice-Chair Jimmy Hodges, Wallace State Community College; and Vice-Chair Wendy Crider, Cullman County Industrial Development Board.

Team Captains were Ashley Lackey, Alabama Technology Network; Stefani Nelson, Shirley Quattlebaum – State Farm Insurance; and Kathy Taylor, Wallace State.

“Thank you to all our leadership and volunteers, and especially to our businesses and individuals that have generously invested in the Chamber and Cullman community,” said Chamber Director of Member Services Magan Bartlett. “We could not have accomplished this without our dedicated volunteers.”

If you are interested in joining the Chamber, please contact Magan at mbartlett@cullmanchamber.org or 256-734-0454.
Cullman Chrysler Dodge Jeep Ram named October Small Business of the Month

The Cullman Area Chamber of Commerce & Visitor Center would like to congratulate Cullman Chrysler Dodge Jeep Ram as November’s Small Business of the Month, sponsored by EvaBank.

Cullman Chrysler Dodge Jeep Ram opened in 1994 and moved to its present location in January 2014. There, Owner Terry Spitzer, General Manager and brother Scott Spitzer, and Business Manager Billy Williams — among others — have created a kid- and pet-friendly environment allowing customers to relax and enjoy their experience at the dealership. With factory-certified professionals in every department, Cullman Chrysler Dodge Jeep Ram aims to not only meet, but exceed, the expectations of its customers.

The dealership’s state-of-the-art facility is equipped with the latest technology to handle marketplace changes for many years to come. To adapt to said changes, Cullman Chrysler Dodge Jeep Ram has introduced web-based, mobile app and Ram Augmented Reality products to provide consumers with the tools to communicate, research, build and locate vehicles meeting their personal and business needs.

Cullman Chrysler Dodge Jeep Ram is extremely active in the Chamber and the community. In addition to investing in the Chamber’s “Converging for Success” 5-year strategic plan, the dealership proudly serves as Presenting Sponsor of 2nd Fridays each summer and is a table sponsor at the Chamber’s Annual Meeting & Gala. Cullman Chrysler Dodge Jeep Ram is a major sponsor in area grassroots events like the West Point Band Boosters Stars and Stripes Rodeo, the Smith Lake Park Cruze Fest, Lowe’s Pro Services Customer Appreciation Day, and St. Bernard Prep School’s Bernard Blues and BBQ.

The dealership also annually donates a large portion of its car giveaway at St. Bernard’s Bloomin’ Festival.

Cullman Chrysler Dodge Jeep Ram values the community where it lives, works and plays. Most of its 33 employees are from the Cullman area, where they continue to raise their families.

Each month, a sponsoring business helps celebrate and acknowledge the Small Business of the Month winner. If you have a local business you would like to nominate for their outstanding service, please contact Brian Poole at bpoole@cullmanchamber.org.

Member Appreciation Day slated for Thanksgiving week

There’s no need to wait until Thanksgiving for a savory feast this holiday season.

The Cullman Area Chamber of Commerce & Visitor Center will have you covered a day early with its annual Member Appreciation Day on Wednesday, November 22nd in the breezeway beside the Chamber.

As a token of gratitude for their investment in the Chamber and Cullman area, current member businesses and individuals will be treated to Thanksgiving lunch from Stone Bridge Farms from 11:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.

Please send your company’s head count — each business is limited to five attendees — to Director of Member Services Magan Bartlett at mbartlett@cullmanchamber.org by Thursday, November 16th. There is no cost to attend.

Thank you to our Presenting Sponsor, Stone Bridge Farms; our Corporate Sponsor, Cellular Sales/ Premium Verizon Retailer; and our Beverage Sponsor, Pepsi Cola Distributing Company.
Adult, Youth Leadership classes in full swing

The Cullman Area Chamber of Commerce’s Adult and Youth Leadership classes have already been hard at work this fall! The two recently came together for a joint leadership social, where members of the Adult class introduced themselves in order to be paired off as mentors for their younger counterparts.

Sponsored by American Proteins, Inc., Leadership Cullman County kicked off its 2017-18 programming with a retreat at Stone Bridge Farms. Throughout the two-day retreat sponsored by Community Action Partnership of North Alabama, the class took part in team-building activities, ropes and obstacle courses at Hulaco Youth and Family Camp, and group sessions.

October’s Leadership session, sponsored by Tri-Green Equipment, was Agriculture Day. The class met at Cullman Electric Cooperative and heard from the Cullman County Extension Office’s Tony Glover before making stops at Kress Farms, the Alabama Agricultural Experiment Station, West Elementary School’s Outdoor Classroom, the North Alabama Agriplex, Steele Orchard, and Brickyard Meat Processing.

Sponsored by R.E. Garrison Trucking, Inc., Youth Leadership Cullman County continued its programming in September with Education & Etiquette Day. Students spent the morning learning from Ms. Mona Hopper before heading to Session Sponsor Wallace State Community College for an etiquette luncheon and tour. Breakfast was sponsored by Hampton Inn Cullman. Lunch was sponsored by Domino’s Pizza.

October’s Youth Leadership session, sponsored by Wallace State, was Tourism & Community Day, taking the students to the Shrine of the Most Blessed Sacrament, the Ave Maria Grotto, Smith Lake Park and Hurricane Creek Park. Breakfast was sponsored by Bill Floyd – State Farm Insurance.

The North Alabama Agriplex’s Rachel Dawsey gives the Adult Leadership class a tour of West Elementary School’s Outdoor Classroom.

Ms. Mona Hooper draws a laugh from this year’s Youth Leadership class while teaching etiquette.
2017 3rd Quarter Intern Insight – Brittany Noe

Where are you attending school? What is your major and why?

I am currently attending Wallace State Community College and finishing up my degree in Engineering Technology with a focus in architecture. My dad owns a construction company, and ever since I was a little girl I have loved watching the houses come together as if they are giant puzzles. I would definitely say that is the reason I have chosen architecture as my career path.

What business skills have you acquired at the Chamber?

While working at the Chamber, I have learned just how important scheduling, preparation and communication are in the world of business. I have been able to develop my skills further and learn that when everything doesn’t go as planned we must quickly adapt in order to keep things rolling smoothly.

What have you learned about the Chamber and its position in the community?

I never knew how big a role the Chamber plays in the community until I began my internship. I think the biggest thing I have learned about the Chamber’s role is how much they care for the Cullman community. From welcoming new people to planning events for all residents to attend, to helping the businesses of Cullman thrive by making necessary connections, the Chamber does a lot more than is seen.

How will this internship affect your future plans?

The skills I have developed and the connections I have made while working at the Chamber will help me in my everyday life, as well as in finding a job in the future. I have always enjoyed Cullman, but working with the Chamber has only made my love for Cullman grow more. I hope to work and live in Cullman in the future and be a part of this wonderful, growing community.

What can you take away from this internship and apply to your career of choice?

While working at the Chamber, I have had many experiences and opportunities that have taught me valuable lessons and vital skills for business. The internship has also helped me make relationships with many businesses that will aid me in my future career. I have learned just how important it is to network with other businesses in the community, and I know that I will be able to use the skills and connections I have made going forward.

Deadline to enter Christmas Window Display Contest quickly approaching

There’s only one place in Cullman County where you can earn cash for your Christmas spirit — and that’s the Cullman Area Chamber of Commerce & Visitor Center!

This year’s Christmas in Cullman Window Display Contest is set for Friday, November 10th and will end with top Chamber member participants taking home a sweet check for their creative holiday efforts.

Winners will be selected from three categories: Restaurant, Retail, and Service-Related Businesses.

Last year’s winners were Rumors Deli (Restaurant), The Added Touch Too (Retail) and Classy to Sassy Salon (Service).

Runners-up were Karma’s Coffee House, Margo’s Antiques & Gifts, and Cuts Salon and Barbershop.

Entries will be scored based on visual impact, creativity and artistic ability.

The only requirements are that participants are current Chamber members and that displays are Christmas-themed and incorporate lights. The deadline to register is Wednesday, November 8th.

For more information or to sign up, contact Brian Poole, the Chamber’s Director of Business Development & Investor Relations, at bpoole@cullmanchamber.org or 256-734-0454.

Registration is also available at www.cullmanchamber.org/christmas-windowdisplay.
The 2017 Cullman Area Career Awareness Fair is only days away! Organized by the Cullman Area Chamber of Commerce & Visitor Center, hosted and sponsored by Wallace State Community College, and in partnership with the Cullman Economic Development Agency, the annual fall event will be Tuesday, November 7th and again introduce nearly 1,000 area 8th-graders to an endless number of career opportunities.

Several local businesses, agencies, industries and individuals will be represented across 11 career clusters.

Throughout the day, students will explore entertaining and informative booths related to:

* Agriculture
* Construction, Trades & Architecture
* Business, Finance & Marketing
* Safety & Law Enforcement
* Transportation & Logistics
* Engineering & Design
* Arts, Audio/Video Technology, Communications, Tourism & Hospitality
* Manufacturing
* Health
* Government & Human Services
* Safety & Life Logistics

If you are interested in impacting the lives of our future workforce by serving as a tour guide or volunteer, please contact the Chamber at 256-734-0454 or info@cullmanchamber.org.

Thank you to our Presenting Sponsor, Wallace State Community College; partner, Cullman Economic Development Agency; Hospitality Sponsor, American Proteins, Inc.; and Lunch Sponsors, Cullman Electric Cooperative and Topre America Corporation.
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Mae’s Food Hall | 110 1st Ave. NE, Cullman, AL 35055 | www.maesfoodhall.com