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www.cullmanchamber.org

From intern to employee, Smith entering final month at Chamber



Smith

When Ben Smith first started at the Cullman Area Chamber of Commerce, he thought he was in for a three-month internship and nothing more. Nearly three years later — with a brief detour in between — Ben is leaving the Chamber with more experience and positive memories than he could've ever imagined.

Ben will soon relinquish his duties as Director of Entrepreneurship & Education in anticipation of his upcoming wedding to his fiancée, Kaitlyn Parks, and their subsequent move to Asheville, North Carolina. Before settling in, the newlyweds will spend their honeymoon on an epic, month-and-a-half road trip across the country.

Ben's last day at the Chamber will be August 31. His replacement has been selected and will be announced by Chamber President Leah Bolin in

the coming days.

Ben knew early on — first during his internship in late 2014 and

again when he returned after a short stint at Anniston-based Sarrell Dental — that the Chamber was truly where he wanted to be.

"As an intern with the Chamber, you're given a variety of opportunities to participate and engage with the community that most Cullman citizens don't get to experience," he said. "When you then take a full-time job, those experiences are only amplified. From connecting with eighth-grade students at the Chamber's annual Career Awareness Fair, interviewing Student of the Year candidates, helping high school students discover their passions through the Young Entrepreneurs Academy, partnering and facilitating work-



force through Industry Appreciation and related Cullman Area Workforce Solutions programs, counseling startups as they're preparing to open their doors, meeting with Small Business of the Month recipients, or networking and sipping coffee at Morning Blend, the opportunities to connect with the Cullman community have been endless. I feel invaluable blessed to have been provided this opportunity."

Ben is a St. Bernard Prep School and University of Alabama graduate

with deep roots in the Cullman area. He isn't the first in his family to have Chamber ties, following in the footsteps of his late grandfather, former board chair, Austin Dean.

"I don't know if I ever knew a more genuine person," Ben said. "He was a lot like Big Doc (Tom Williamson) — community-minded, oriented towards helping people, and he did it just because he cared about people and cared about this place. I think that's why I wanted to do a good job to start out with. The more time

I've spent here, though, the more I've realized I have my own reasons for wanting to make this community better."

Ben has indeed made an impact on the Cullman community through his work at the Chamber. Some of his personal highlights include his contributions to 2nd Fridays, the launch of the Young Entrepreneurs Academy (YEA!) at Cullman and Holly Pond high schools, and the installation of a Business Resource Center (BRC) geared toward helping small businesses get off the ground by providing financial and logistical resources.

As excited as he is for the YEA! program to debut locally this school year, Ben did admit his departure has made for some bittersweet emotions.

"I really wish I could be around to see how YEA! evolves in the next year or two, and where these kids go," he said.

While a year or two might be too soon to expect a return to his hometown, Ben hinted there could be a Cullman reunion somewhere down the road.

"Who knows?" he pondered. "We might be back. You never know what the future holds."

Chamber President Leah Bolin, for one, would welcome Ben back to the area with open arms. She's known Ben long before his days at the Chamber and has been proud to witness his progression from wide-eyed intern to exceptional employee.

"It has been my privilege to work with Ben," she said. "He has added so much to this team and to this Chamber. Service to others is not always an easy path, but he met the challenge and we are all better for it. I wish him happiness and success, but mostly, I want to see him back in Cullman County one day enjoying the fruits of his labor."

Cullman Area Chamber of Commerce

PO Box 1104, Cullman, AL 35056-1104 | 256-734-0454 | F: 256-737-7443 | info@cullmanchamber.org

www.cullmanchamber.org | www.visitcullman.org

2nd Fridays gearing up for strong second half push

It's hard to believe, but this year's 2nd Fridays programming is already halfway complete. Don't let that get you down, though, because the last two Downtown Cullman shindigs of 2017 are set to be the best yet! Help us kick off the second half of 2nd Fridays, sponsored by Cullman Chrysler Dodge Jeep Ram, on August 11, when there will again be TWO stages and the same great opportunities for eating local and shopping late you can't get any other time of year.

But wait. There's more. A lot more. This summer's third of four monthly events, proudly presented by the Cullman Area Chamber of Commerce & Visitor Center and Cullman Parks & Recreation, will also feature:

- * Round 2 on the Cullman Dairy Queen Grill & Chill Restaurant Stage
- * Sam Edwards & Mike Smith on the Shirley Quattlebaum State Farm Insurance Stage
- * TriGreen Equipment Farm Y'all inside the Festhalle Farmers Market
- * Streets upon streets of classic and antique cars for your viewing pleasure at the Branham Accessories – Line-X Cruise-In
- * A lively Artist Alley, nestled between Clark Street and 1st Street NE, with artists, pop-up shops, beer sampling, music and kids activities
- * A bounce house and other fun activities in the Buffalo Wild Wings Kids Zone
- * A tomato-themed food demonstration sponsored by American Proteins

* R.E. Garrison Trucking Show Lot with RVs from Johnston RV Center and Millican RV America

* Horse Shoe Tossin' sponsored by AK Equipment Rental and Sales

* And much, much more!

Admission to 2nd Fridays is FREE, but don't forget your pocketbook to support area eateries, merchants, vendors, artists and farmers! Mark your calendars now to join us September 8 for our 2017 2nd Fridays finale.

The Show Lot will open up to motorcycles in September. Mechanical bull riding will be the final 2nd Fridays activity.

For updates, check out the event Facebook page: 2nd Fridays Cullman. For more information, visit www.cullmanchamber.org/Cullman-2ndFridays or contact the Chamber at 256-734-0454 or info@cullmanchamber.org.



Bicentennial, Smith Lake among hot tourism topics this summer

JESSE NEWSOM
Director of Tourism



Things are heating up here in Cullman County. While summer is drawing down, travelers are still coming to our neck of the woods. The state’s Bicentennial celebration is in full effect in Cullman County, and if you haven’t made it to the lake yet this summer, then I implore you to make a conscious effort sometime soon. The Cullman County Bicentennial Committee, led by the Cullman County Museum’s Drew Green, played host in July to one of Alabama’s regional Bicentennial Workshops at the Benedictine Retreat Center at the Sacred Heart Mon-

astery here in Cullman. This all-day workshop allowed for Tourism agencies in North Alabama a place to gather and share ideas for the three-year celebration. Speakers included Tami Reist, President & CEO of the Alabama Mountain Lakes Tourist Association — which represents 16 North Alabama counties — Hannah Garmon from the Alabama Historical Commission, Connor Lowry from the Alabama Bicentennial Commission, and yours truly. Discussions ranged from traveling tourism exhibits to general event



SMITHLAKEAL.COM

planning. With the great community support we have here in Cullman, a lot of surrounding areas are in awe of what we can accomplish. With Drew Green and the Cullman County Bicentennial Committee leading the charge, I can assure you our celebration efforts

are in great hands. Speaking of celebrations, on any given weekend this summer, families have been celebrating their vacations right here on the water. If you’ve been paying attention, you’ve probably noticed a few new things. The Smith Lake group

— a volunteer group of Tourism entities around Lewis Smith Lake — had a meeting to discuss improvement for Tourism on and around the lake. As a first point of business, we determined that information on Smith Lake was, for lack of a better word ... well, lacking.

Water recreation is rising in our area, and we are making a conscious effort in marketing our natural resource. With that said, focus on a website (www.smithlakeal.com), road signage and roadway cleanup, and more centralized marketing has helped with traffic to the area — and even more is to come. A hard push to recruit on Smith Lake will help in attracting more of an audience. So far, we are in negotiations with two highly sought-after fishing events that will increase the area’s economic impact by half a million dollars alone. These events would benefit not only Smith Lake, but ALL of Cullman County — and that’d be a win in my book.

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Youth Leadership Cullman County kicks off 2017-18 class

Each year, the Chamber's Youth Leadership Cullman County steering committee interviews and selects a limited number of incoming 11th grade students from each of the county's and city's high schools to participate in the program.

This year, 24 students officially kicked off their Youth Leadership experience with a social on August 3 at the Cullman Area



Chamber of Commerce! For one day each month, students will experience

a specific portion of the Cullman community by attending event days specific to Leadership, Education & Etiquette, Tourism & Community, Quality of Life, Public Safety, Local Government, Business & Industry, Agriculture, and State Government.

Students selected to participate in this year's program include:

Cold Springs High School
Sydney Newton
Matthew Blair

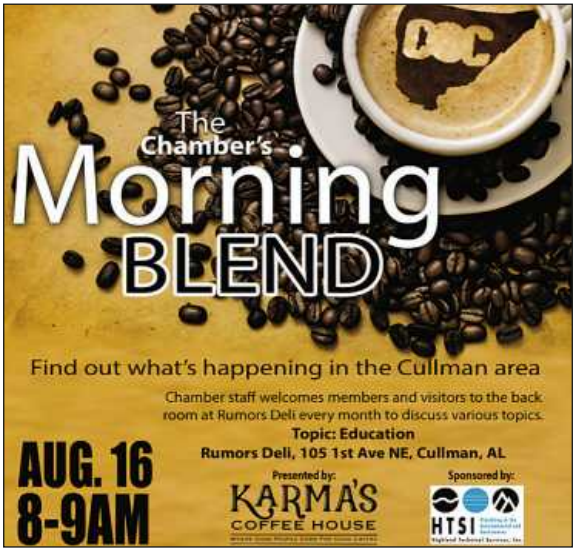
Cullman High School
Mary Kate Stanford
Cullman Christian
Klowy Barrett
Iva Burdette
Nolan Warner
Fairview High School
Kristen Hays
Landon "Riley" Carrol
Olivia "Paige" Rodriguez
Good Hope High School
Lindsey Couch
James McWhorter
Hanceville High School
Chandler Lane
Tess Mirella Brown

Holly Pond High School
Kara Hollis
Hailey Crumbley
Korey Butler
Seth Self
Home School
Paige Tackett
Shiloh Walker
St. Bernard Prep School
Elliot Deep
Emma Pierce
Vinemont High School
Trey Boland
Christy Perales
West Point High School
Sadie Junkins

WSCC's Harbin to lead education discussion

Come join the Cullman Area Chamber of Commerce the morning of Wednesday, August 16 for delicious coffee and great discussion at our Morning Blend, held every third Wednesday of each month from 8 to 9 a.m. at Rumors Deli in the Warehouse District.

The Chamber staff welcomes members and visitors to attend this free event. Wallace State's Suzanne Harbin will lead the discussion for August's topic: Education. Coffee will be provided by Presenting Sponsor Karma's Coffee House.



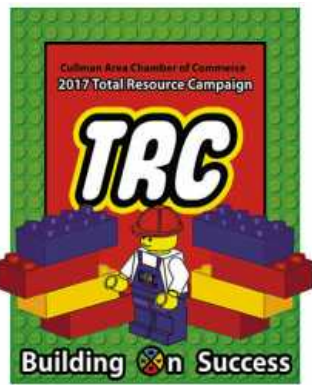
Presenting Sponsor
Karma's Coffee House
Monthly Sponsor
Highland Technical Services, Inc.

August's sponsor is Highland Technical Services, Inc. For more information, contact the Chamber at 256-734-0454 or info@cullmanchamber.org.

New Total Resource Campaign starts August 10

After the SUCCESS of last year's Total Resource Campaign (TRC), our volunteers are already hard at it for the 2017 TRC season! Sponsorship renewals wrapped up on July 28, with the new season beginning on August 10. The Total Resource Campaign is a membership and sponsorship drive. This provides opportunities for Chamber Members to market at cost. We offer a variety of programs and events for every area of business no matter your budget! This year's theme is "Building on Success," with a fun Lego twist. This year's leadership consists of Chair: Kay Shabel (MoMoSHE 103); and Vice-Chairs: Cheryl

Bailey, Jimmy Hodges (Wallace State Community College), and Wendy Crider (Cullman County Industrial Development Board). If you would like to sponsor a Chamber program or event, please contact Magan Bartlett at 256-734-0454 or by email at mbartlett@cullmanchamber.org for a list of volunteers.



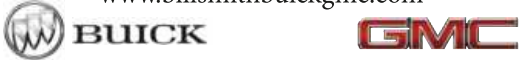
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Chamber hires Wesley Smith as Director of Entrepreneurship & Education

The Cullman Area Chamber of Commerce & Visitor Center is pleased to announce the appointment of Wesley Smith as Director of Entrepreneurship & Education.

Wesley returns to his hometown after spending the last 15 years in Birmingham. He was born and raised in Cullman, went through the Cullman City Schools system and graduated from Cullman High in 1997. He then attended Wallace State Community College and later Auburn University, where he studied Pub-

lic Relations. While at Wallace State, he was on full scholarship, served as Student Government Association President, and was on the Cullman Outlook 21 Community Planning Council.

After college, Wesley accepted a marketing job with Red Bull North America and eventually moved to sales in order to help introduce Red Bull to North Alabama. In addition to his sales and marketing experience, Wesley spent many years as Site Manager for the City Stages Music Festival and dually served on the Junior Board of Directors. He also served



LISA JONES PHOTOGRAPHY

on the Board of Directors for the Birmingham Arts and Music Festival. For the last six years, Wesley has been a Sales Repre-

sentative for United-Johnson Brothers of Alabama (UJBAL).

In his spare time, Wesley enjoys listening to

live music, disc golfing, collecting vinyl records and giving back to his community. He's spent the past few years serv-

ing on the Junior Board of Directors for Firehouse Ministries, which benefits the Firehouse Shelter, Birmingham's largest shelter for homeless men.

"I have had the opportunity to work with Wesley on a number of projects," said Chamber President & CEO Leah Bolin. "His experience, his understand of our community and his passion for entrepreneurship are attributes that make him an exceptional team member."

Please join us in welcoming Wesley to the Chamber team and back to our community!



SAVE THESE DATES!

- Trident Marina Summer Concert Series – every Saturday
- Night Ride @ Stony Lonesome OHV Park – Aug. 19, 2017
- Concerts in the Park @ Heritage Park – every Thursday in September
- Bernard Blues and BBQ @ St. Bernard – Sept. 9-10, 2017
- Sweet Tater Festival @ Smith Lake Park – Sept. 16, 2017
- Cullman County Fair Parade – Sept. 16, 2017
- Cullman County Fair – Sept. 21-30, 2017

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August Small Business of the Month

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Trident Marina named July Small Business of the Month

The Cullman Area Chamber of Commerce would like to congratulate Trident Marina as July's Small Business of the Month, sponsored by East Side Barber Shop.

First opening their doors in 2015, Trident's owner, Jeff Tolbert, and his team have quickly added to the Smith Lake community. Located just before Big Bridge on County Road 222, their marina and grille welcome guests by land and water. Featuring some of the best po' boys and salads in the entire county, The Grille at Trident Marina is the place to grab lunch, dinner, or a Goat Island craft beer! Trident currently employs more 25 throughout their marina and grille. Trident knows their clients are best served if they can arrive at Smith Lake and enjoy a day without any stress, hassle, or worry. Their team works tremendously hard to ensure each customer and their boats receive the highest level of care. Boats are well maintained and ready for a day of fun and relaxation. Trident also



Supporter East Side Barber Shop

offers rental packages for a variety of boating options for any customer's needs. Jeff's wife, Donna, mentioned that her husband's mandate for Trident has been to help guests experience a care-free summer of fun and relaxation on a boat that will best provide those benefits. He wants

to help people "make memories that will last a lifetime," said Donna. Trident is also involved in the Chamber, attending last year's Annual Meeting and Gala at Stone Bridge Farms. In addition to being actively engaged in Chamber events, Trident promotes community through a va-

Trident Marina
21680 County Road 222
Crane Hill, AL 35053
(256) 841-5936

riety of endeavors, such as supporting clean water projects, hosting the Marine Police for Water Safety Testing, supporting local fishing teams, and hosting community meetings in their dry deck storage buildings. 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 Ben Smith at bsmith@cullmanchamber.org. Monthly winners will

be automatically nominated for the annual Small Business of the Year award, which is presented at the Chamber's Annual Meeting & Gala.

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August Community Luncheon focusing on branding, marketing

Branding and marketing will still be the topic at the Cullman Area Chamber of Commerce’s Community Luncheon on August 18. The speaker, however, will be different than originally announced. Rachel Layton will now be the guest of honor at the All Steak Restaurant

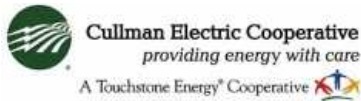


Layton

from 11:30 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. Layton is the Director of Marketing for A. Marshall Family Foods, which operates several successful restaurants, including Puckett’s, in Nashville and the state of Tennessee. Just this



Presenting Sponsor
Shirley Quattlebaum – State Farm



August’s Sponsor
Cullman Electric Cooperative

month, Layton received a Nashville Emerging Leader Award from the Nashville Chamber of Commerce. Tickets for the

Luncheon 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 Presenting Sponsor, Shirley Quattlebaum – State Farm, as well as to August’s Sponsor, Cullman Electric Cooperative.

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West Point Fire Station & Community Storm Shelter | 11168 Alabama Highway 157, Cullman, AL 35057 | 256-734-2711

American Proteins hosts 2nd Quarter Industry Tour

On July 6, the Cullman Area Chamber of Commerce hosted its 2nd Quarter Industry Tour at American Proteins, sponsored by HH Technologies.

American Proteins is the nation’s largest non-edible poultry rendering and recycling company servicing chicken farmers. Rendering is the safest method of processing poultry non-edibles available, and American Proteins is subsequently able to manufacture an incredibly wide variety of items that range from pet feed ingredients, bio-fuels, organic fertilizer, paints, make-up, and lubricants. American Proteins was founded in 1949 by Leland Bagwell and then named the North Georgia Rendering Company. Today, the com-

Host
American Proteins
Sponsor
HH Technologies, Inc.

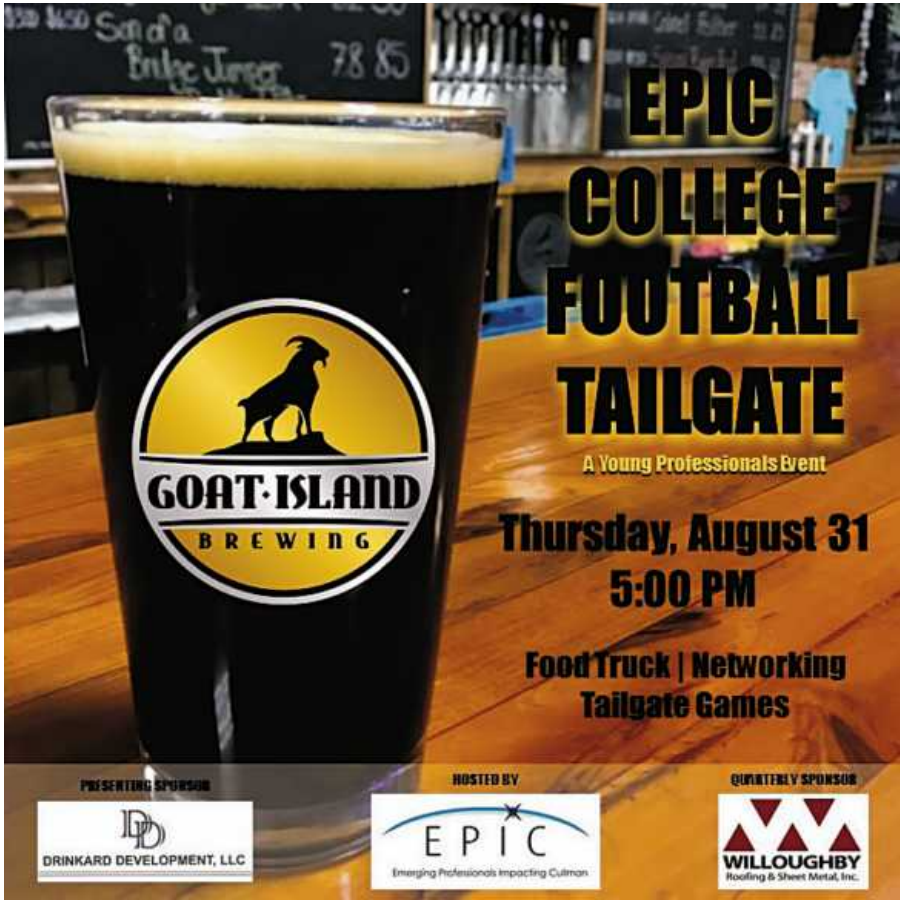
pany is privately owned by Tommy Bagwell, and the local Hanceville Division is operated by Jason Spann. Mr. Spann also serves on the Cullman Chamber’s Executive Committee as the 2017-18 Chamber Chairman. American Proteins produces three basic products – Poultry Protein Meal, Stabilized Poultry Fat, and Feather Meal. With more than 150,000 pounds of non-edibles processed every 15 minutes and around 5 billion pounds (2 billion at Hanceville’s division alone) processed annually, it’s no wonder the company, now consisting of four major divisions, has seen growth over the past several decades.



American Proteins essentially “cooks” the product to render and refine the material. These refined proteins, meals, and fats all require extreme temperatures and procedures to achieve purification and marketability. The cooking process starts when the raw material enters into large, continuous cookers and all in all, takes about 45 minutes. These

cookers are filled with approximately 900 gallons of fat prior to the introduction of the raw material. Mr. Spann equates this process to the Fry Daddy sitting on your countertop at home. The primary objective of this cooker is to drive out moisture as the raw material is more than 65 percent water waste. From here, the product goes through various other

rendering processes, such as the Solids Press, Fat Harvest, Solids Grinding, Hammer Mill Grinding, Rotex Screening, and finally Preservative Application before being placed in its final storage facility. American Proteins Hanceville Division is an active member of the Cullman community. It participates in the Chamber’s Converging for Success as a Strategic Partner and is involved in the Wallace State Future Foundation, United Way of Cullman, Hanceville Kids Night Out, Water Festival, 2+2 Scholarship program with Wallace State, and Rotary, as well as several other boards, associations, and Charities! Thank you to American Proteins for being a part of the Cullman community and hosting our 2nd Quarter Tour!



EPIC welcoming back college football with 3rd Qtr tailgate at Goat Island

College football is nearly upon us once again, and EPIC (Emerging Professionals Impacting Cullman) is ready to welcome it back in style with a 3rd Quarter tailgate event at Goat Island Brewing! Join the area’s premier group of young professionals after work on Thursday, August 31 for a fun evening full of food and drinks (there will be a food truck on-site), an assortment of tailgate games, fellowship

To view EPIC’s membership guidelines or to fill out an application, visit cullmanchamber.org/epic.

and networking, and, of course, college football! EPIC members will be admitted at no charge. Cost for future members is \$20. Thanks to our EPIC Presenting Sponsor, Drinkard Development, as well as our 3rd Quarter Sponsor, Willoughby Roofing & Sheet Metal. For more information or to pre-register, which is highly encouraged,

contact the Chamber at 256-734-0454 or info@cullmanchamber.org.

United Way

United Way of Cullman County

304 1st Ave N.E. Cullman, AL 35056

uwaycc.org / 256-739-2948

SB-322 explained

SB-322 has been a hot topic in the Cullman County and Smith Lake communities since it passed through the Alabama Legislature in late May.

And understandably so.

Truly understanding the ins and outs of this bill, however, requires a slightly more thorough look. Here’s the overview: SB-322 establishes commercial areas around Smith Lake in three counties (Cullman, Walker and Winston) as community development districts, allowing approved marinas with restaurants to serve alcohol on-site.

In order to be approved, marinas must have at least 30 boat slips and a restaurant under the same ownership with at least 50 inside seats and 100 total seats. Marinas are subject to the area’s 60/40 food-to-alcohol sales rules, as well as other regulations by the Alabama Alcoholic Beverage Control (ABC)

Board and local governing bodies.

Alcohol is served at each marina under the restaurant’s alcohol license and is prohibited from being sold in package form. Unlike the cities of Cullman, Hanceville and Good Hope, there are no restrictions on Sunday sales. To clear up the biggest misconception of the bill, alcohol must be served and remain on the marina premises, meaning it is still illegal to possess alcohol or drink and operate a watercraft while on the lake.

Trident Marina and its accompanying restaurant, The Grille at Trident Marina, became the first local marina to sell an alcoholic beverage under the new law on June 23. Jeff Tolbert, Jr., one of the marina’s three co-owners, sees the passing of SB-322 as a positive not only for Trident, but for the Cullman County and Smith Lake communities.

“It’s not just about be-

ing able to serve a glass of wine or a high-end cocktail to someone,” he told The Cullman Times. “It’s very important to us; it’s something we’ve worked to try and get for the past two years. A lot of local business leaders in this community, and all three county commissions ... I think they see the economic impact of having this legislation and what it’s going to mean: increased tax dollars from enhanced property taxes; increased sales tax dollars; increased development on the lake as well.”

The distribution of sales tax is decided county by county. Cullman County’s sales tax distribution is as follows:

State: 4.00%
City: 2.34%
County: 2.66%
TOTAL: 9.00%

To read SB-322 in its entirety, visit <https://legiscan.com/AL/text/SB322/2017>.

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