It’s often said you should never mix business with pleasure, but don’t count the Cullman Area Chamber of Commerce & Visitor Center as big believers in the theory. We want you to have your cake (and whatever other local foods you can think of) and eat it, too, at our premier Business After Hours event — Samplers in the Breezeway, sponsored by HH Technologies, Inc.

This year’s fan-favorite networking opportunity will be Thursday, Nov. 1. It’ll start around 5:30 p.m., last until 7:00 p.m. and take place in the breezeway next to the Chamber building.

Samplers in the Breezeway is shifting from the heat of the summer to the fall for the second straight year but is otherwise going mostly unchanged, still featuring a showcase of the delectable local flavors the Cullman area has to offer, as well as live music.

And don’t forget about the business aspect of the evening, either. Be sure to come with a full stack of business cards, because you’re bound to make some serious contacts.

As if all that weren’t quite enough, attendees will also have the chance to win a PolarCool fan — valued at more than $1,000 — from our Presenting Sponsor.

The cost is $15 for Chamber members and $20 for future members, which includes samples from all participating eateries. As with all paid Chamber events, there is a 48-hour cancellation policy. Reservations are required, and tickets are limited.

For more information, to register or for Chamber member eateries interested in participating, contact the Chamber at 256-734-0454 or info@cullmanchamber.org.
Becoming a member at the Cullman Area Chamber of Commerce & Visitor Center is just the first step. Learning how to maximize that membership is the next — and the most beneficial! Local business representatives and individuals will be able to do just that at our upcoming Chamber 201 class on Thursday, Oct. 11. The event lasts from 11 a.m.-1 p.m. in the Chamber’s Walmart DC Room, includes free lunch from Sweet Peppers Deli and covers a vast variety of information.

Chamber 201 is facilitated by Director of Member Services Magan Bartlett with help from the entire Chamber staff. The class serves as a basic introduction to what the Chamber does and educates new and old members alike on how to get the most out of their membership. Topics include:

• Member Services
• Events
• Leadership Opportunities
• Communications & Marketing
• Community Development
• Entrepreneurship & Education
• Business Development & Investor Relations
• Business & Community Advocacy
• Tourism
• Finance & Administration

Chamber 201 is free to attend, but reservations are on a first-come, first-served basis. Space is limited, so contact the Chamber at 256-734-0454 or info@cullmanchamber.org to reserve your spot.

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HomTex shows off new facility at 3rd Qtr Industry Tour

The Cullman Area Chamber of Commerce & Visitor Center hosted its 3rd Quarter Industry Tour at HomTex on Thursday, Sept. 27. The tour was sponsored by AGCO | GSI.

HomTex has developed a global reputation as a leading innovator in the textiles industry. The premium sheet manufacturer and distributor was founded with humble beginnings by Jerry Wootten in 1987 in Vinemont. Today, the company touts facilities in Cullman County, Tennessee, North and South Carolina, as well as fully staffed offices in China and India. HomTex dabbles very little in direct consumer sales, instead producing sheets and other textiles for popular retailers like Sleep Number, Tempur-Pedic and Mattress Firm.

HomTex originally set up shop in a small 1,200 square foot building in Vinemont but now boasts upwards of 1 million square feet between its numerous facilities. The company acquired its latest location — the old Nicholson File building, a 287,500 square foot plant — in 2015 and expects it to be 100 percent operational by the end of 2018 after years of major repairs and remodeling.

The way sheets are produced at HomTex is a unique process you won’t find anywhere else in North America. The manufacturer’s ETON material-handling system is a state-of-the-art setup designed to eliminate manual transportation, which in turn reduces injuries and fatigue. It also helps foster efficient product organization and flow within the facility. Increased efficiency couples well with the company’s primary concern of product quality — no matter the 1,000+ unique products it offers.

HomTex is home to roughly 300 total employees, with nearly half right here in the Cullman location. The local facility, which runs on a two-shift schedule, was indeed a project when first purchased in 2015 but has since been overhauled to meet safety and environmental standards.

Thank you to Jerry Wootten, Jeremy Wootten and HomTex for hosting this Industry Tour and contributing to the economic vitality of the Cullman area. The Chamber final Industry Tour of 2018 is scheduled for Thursday, Nov. 15 at WestRock. Space is limited, so contact the Chamber at 256-734-0454 or info@cullmanchamber.org to reserve your spot.

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Chamber announces upcoming launch of Think Local First Cullman app

Think Local First Cullman will soon be available in the Apple app store and Google Play.

“It’s important for local business owners to have a platform to not only reach the local community but reach visitors to our area as well. The Think Local First Cullman app is a solution for our businesses to engage their customers and grow their bottom line for free,” said Chamber President and CEO Leah Bolin. “Member businesses can choose one location ‘Member Freemium’ as a no-cost benefit and have the option to increase their campaign capabilities by accessing a monthly subscription plan with no redemption fees or holdback.”

Think Local First Cullman is a brand and platform helping strengthen business-to-consumer relationships while building customer loyalty in the Cullman area. DEALPOINT has created a custom local brand and user experience perfectly combining their technology, marketing expertise and passion to enable members access to a merchant-focused advanced marketing platform.

“The Think Local First Cullman app, your business is in control. You decide how to present it to the market,” said Bolin. “I recommend our members take advantage of this additional benefit to see how the Think Local First Cullman app can increase customer loyalty and business-to-customer engagement.”

The Think Local First Cullman app easily integrates with popular email databases such as Constant Contact and MailChimp, as well as popular point-of-sale systems to incorporate and actively update customer data allowing businesses to actively speak to customers when they meet the predetermined campaign requirements decided by members. This allows businesses to create and build loyalty through continued local interactions.

“Our goal is to drive increased membership to the Cullman Chamber and to provide Chamber members access to advanced advertising solutions to promote local business interactions,” said DEALPOINT founder Christopher Warren.

Warren was recently onsite at the Chamber for a Think Local First Cullman app kickoff breakfast, where he met with members and explained how their businesses or organizations can take advantage of this new, free benefit.

For more information on the app or how to use it, contact Chamber Director of Business Development & Investor Relations Brian Poole at 256-734-0454 or bpoole@cullmanchamber.org.

Chamber seeking mentors, business leaders for Year 2 of YEA! program

While in YEA!, students will receive all the necessary tools to launch their own real, legal businesses. This includes access to knowledgeable experts like attorneys, accountants, business mentors and graphic designers, among others. YEA! students also have the chance to receive real start-up cash and scholarships. Following our local YEA! Investor Panel event — think Shark Tank — one lucky student or pairing will earn an all-expenses paid trip to New York to compete against other YEA! students from across the nation.

The Chamber is currently seeking local business leaders to serve as guest speakers or business mentors for participating students. This is a great way to promote your business while also making a difference in a young entrepreneur’s life. YEA! is a young program in the Cullman area, and it needs your help to stay on a successful track for Year 2!

For more information or if interested in being a guest speaker or mentor, contact Chamber Director of Entrepreneurship & Education Wes Smith at 256-734-0454 or wsmith@cullmanchamber.org.
Leadership Cullman County kicks off 2018-19 class

Leadership Cullman County, sponsored by Tyson, is officially underway for 2018-19! This year’s program officially kicked off with a late September retreat featuring team-building activities, ropes and obstacle courses, and group sessions. The retreat was sponsored by Community Action Partnership of North Alabama and hosted at Stone Bridge Farms.

Beginning in October, the class will meet for eight monthly sessions. Each daylong session will examine a different area impacting the community and its leaders, including education, local government, state government, healthcare, economic development, human services, criminal justice, agriculture, and quality of life.

This distinguished program has more than 300 graduates and is designed to identify and build upon leadership resources within Cullman County by bringing leaders together to discuss the present and future direction of our area. It also prepares participants for greater involvement through volunteer roles in the community.

October Morning Blend focusing on local Veterans Day activities

Come join the Cullman Area Chamber of Commerce & Visitor Center the morning of Wednesday, Oct. 17 for delicious coffee and great discussion at our monthly event. October’s Morning Blend is presented and sponsored by Karma’s Coffee House and Brickyard Meats.

The Chamber staff welcomes members and visitors to attend this free event. October’s Morning Blend will be held every third Wednesday of each month from 8:00 to 9:00 a.m. at Rumors Deli near the corner of Main Avenue and U.S. Highway 278. The Chamber staff welcomes members and visitors to attend this free event.

Patrick James will lead the discussion for October’s Morning Blend: Local Veterans Day Activities. James is with the Cullman Elks Lodge and works for Boeing in Huntsville. He’s also on the committee for the annual Cullman Veterans Day Celebration, which is coming up Saturday, Nov. 3 at Cullman Regional Airport.

Coffee and snacks will be provided by Presenting Sponsor Karma’s Coffee House. October’s Morning Blend is sponsored by Brickyard Meats. For more information, contact the Chamber at 256-734-0454 or info@cullmanchamber.org.

Leadership Co-Chairs
T.J. Franey, Cullman County Schools
Brian Lacy, Cullman Electric Cooperative

Leadership Staff
Leah Bolin, Cullman Chamber President & CEO
Brian Poole, Cullman Chamber Director of Business Development & Investor Relations

2018-19 LEADERSHIP CLASS

- Brandi Chaffin, First Community Bank
- Phillip Clemmons, Jelco
- Tonya Cupp, Good Hope Primary School
- Knox Elder, Cullman Regional
- Jeremy Ferreri, YELTEK
- Brian Gable, Servpro of Cullman/Blount Counties
- Kevin Gardner, Cullman Electric Cooperative
- Cliff Harris, C H Harris, Inc.
- Adam Harrison, Cullman Internal Medicine
- Jimmy Hodges, Wallace State Community College
- Brittney Hudson, Cullman Area Chamber of Commerce & Visitor Center
- Tammy Lackey, Listerhill Credit Union
- Garry Marchman, Cullman County Commission
- Joey Orr, Cullman City Schools
- Jennifer Parker, Payroll Services
- Mycah Posey, Chick-fil-A of Cullman
- Tomeesa Shedd, Cullman County Soil & Water Conservation District
- Megan Smith, EvaBank
- Ryan Smith, Wallace State Community College

Presenting Sponsor - Karma’s Coffee House
Monthly Sponsor - Brickyard Meats
Volunteers sought for 2018 Career Awareness Fair

The 2018 Cullman Area Career Awareness Fair will be here before you know it — and we are looking for volunteers and tour guides!

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 Thursday, Nov. 8th 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 10 career clusters. Throughout the day, students will explore informative and entertaining booths related to:
- Agriculture
- Construction/Architecture
- Business/Tourism
- Safety/Law Enforcement
- Transportation/Logistics
- Arts/Design
- Manufacturing/Engineering
- Health
- Government/Human Services
- Interactive Zone

In an effort to further increase the Career Fair’s educational value, teachers will be supplied with curriculum to use in the classroom following the event.

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 Kentucky Fried Chicken.

Registration open for Christmas Window Display contest

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! Sponsored by Jimmie Hale Mission, this year’s Christmas in Cullman Window Display Contest will be Friday, Nov. 9th and end with top Chamber member participants taking home sweet checks for their creative holiday efforts.

Winners will be selected from three categories: Retail, Restaurant and Service-Related Businesses. Last year’s winners were White Willow (Retail), Karma’s Coffee House (Restaurant) and Cullman County Youth Advocate Programs, Inc. (Service).

This year’s contest will be judged by representatives from a neighboring Chamber of Commerce. 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 7th. 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 cullmanchamber.org/christmas-windowdisplay.
October Small Business of the Month

Cullman Quick Copy Named September Small Business of the Month

The Cullman Area Chamber of Commerce & Visitor Center would like to congratulate Cullman Quick Copy as September’s Small Business of the Month, sponsored by Hallmark Dentistry.

Cullman Quick Copy recently celebrated its 30th anniversary and welcomed its third generation of Fountains to the family business. First came Pete and then later Cliff, who’s now joined in the shop by his daughter, Shanna.

By keeping and maintaining the best and newest technology, Cullman Quick Copy sets itself apart in the printing landscape. The small business prides itself on providing customers the best, most professional and fastest (and in Cliff’s case, friendliest) service in the industry.

Cullman Quick Copy is a valued member of the Cullman Area Chamber of Commerce and annually attends all Business After Hours events. It also sponsors the Chamber’s New Member Folder, proudly supporting the Chamber’s #WoofLocal movement, and assists several area charitable organizations and community fundraisers by providing low cost or free printing services.

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. Monthly winners will be automatically nominated for Small Business of the Year, which is presented at the Chamber’s Annual Meeting & Gala.

Absolutely Alabama’s Hunter headlining last Community Luncheon of year

The last Community Luncheon of 2018 is sure to be absolutely awesome. That’s because Absolutely Alabama’s Fred Hunter is going to be our special guest! Join us Friday, Oct. 19 at All Steak Restaurant as the popular WBRC personality shares a little bit about the history of Absolutely Alabama and a few examples of unique Cullman places and people he’s highlighted on the weekly TV show.

Per usual, the monthly Cullman Area Chamber of Commerce & Visitor Center event will be from 11:30 a.m.-1:00 p.m. in the banquet room. Tickets are $15 for Chamber members and $20 for future members. As with all paid Chamber events, there is a 48-hour cancellation policy. Contact the Chamber at 256-734-0454 or info@cullmanchamber.org to reserve your seat.

This year’s Community Luncheon programming has been presented by Shirley Quattlebaum – State Farm Insurance. Alabama Farm Credit is October’s sponsor.

Plans for 2019’s Luncheons are already in the works. Please contact the above email or phone number if you know anyone who would make a great guest speaker.
The Cullman Area Chamber of Commerce’s three-part series titled “Who’s Looking Out For Main Street America?” is slated to continue later this month. The series is presented by Dex Media’s Matthew Gourgeot, an award-winning business advisor and marketing consultant working with small business owners. Gourgeot is a North Alabama native and graduate of the University of North Alabama who majored in public relations and marketing.

See below for details on Part II of the series, which will be hosted in the Chamber’s Walmart DC Room.

Part II of Gourgeot’s marketing seminar set for Oct. 23

Part II. The next frontier of small business website

- Tuesday, Oct. 23 | 2:00 PM
Is your business as visible online as it can be? Find out what you’re doing right and what you could be doing better to improve your online presence and attract more customers. Today, opportunity doesn’t knock. It clicks. Learn how to make your online presence work for you, not against you.

Registration is free for Chamber members or $20 a session for future members. For more information or to register, contact the Chamber at 256-734-0454 or info@cullmanchamber.org.

SAVE THESE DATES!

- Cullman County Fair @ Fairgrounds – Through Oct. 13
- Night Ride @ Stony Lonesome OHV Park – Oct. 13
- Alabama Gourd Festival @ Cullman Civic Center – Oct. 19-20
- Peinhardt Living History Farm Day – Oct. 20
- Mud Creek Arts & Crafts Festival @ Downtown Hanceville – Oct. 20
- Stony Lonesome Fall Festival – Oct. 25-28
- Daniel Moore Exhibit @ Wallace State’s Evelyn Burrow Museum – Through Nov. 2
- 4D Farm – Open through Nov. 3
The 2018-19 Youth Leadership Cullman County class, sponsored by R.E. Garrison Trucking, is off to a flying start. Literally.

“Experiencing Leadership Day” was the first session up for this year’s students, taking them to Hulaco Youth and Family Camp to tackle obstacle and ropes courses, as well as various team-building activities. The ropes course stands 30 feet off the ground and culminates with a 300-foot zip line to the end.

EvaBank served as August’s session sponsor. Pepsi Cola Distributing Company sponsored breakfast, and State Farm – Bill Floyd sponsored lunch.

October’s breakfast was sponsored by State Farm – Bill Floyd.

October’s session, sponsored by the Wallace State Community College Alumni Association, was “Education & Etiquette Day.” The day began with a tour of Wallace State from Recruiting Coordinator Alecia White and continued with interview, dress code, etiquette, and public speaking lessons from Ms. Mona Hopper. Wallace State Success Coach Coordinator Christine Wiggins closed the session with a presentation on “True Colors.”

It’s time to get techy with Candor, the Cullman Area Chamber of Commerce & Visitor Center’s partner in offering members an exclusive group healthcare opportunity.

The Candor crew is returning to Cullman County on Thursday, Oct. 25, this time for a tech event on how to take a mobile app from concept to creation. The seminar is sponsored by Wallace State Community College and will take place at 10 a.m. in the Chamber’s Walmart DC Room.

If anyone knows anything about apps, it’s Candor. Theirs is the focal point of their company, conveniently allowing users to browse their healthcare coverage marketplace, compare plans and even model future life events that might affect overall health expenses.

For more information or to register, contact the Chamber at 256-734-0454 or info@cullmanchamber.org. Registration is free for Chamber members or $20 for future members.