Chamber, community leaders present targeted projects at Washington Fly-In

From Oct. 1-3, 25 business and community leaders from the Cullman area gathered in our nation’s capital to advocate for jobs, commerce and the region’s economy as part of the Chamber’s annual Washington Fly-In. Our time in Washington, D.C. gave us the opportunity to join together and present a unified voice as we met with our nation’s leaders so they can better understand the needs of our area and the importance of policy decisions that will allow our region to thrive.

We had three main objectives for our visit: (1) To increase our understanding of how the congressionally funded opportunity zones can benefit our community (2) To seek assistance with rural broadband connectivity and infrastructure, and (3) To encourage support of the BUILD Grant for completion of the widening of AL Highway 157. Our District Representative, Randall Shedd, served as our spokesperson during office visits with our federal delegation.

This year, we had the opportunity to meet with a couple of agency directors to communicate the needs of our community, as well as to inform them of our recent accomplishments. The first director we had an audience with was Mr. Tim Thomas who is serving as the 12th Federal Co-Chair of the Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC), a federal and state partnership. One of his main interests is supporting small business and entrepreneurs, as these are people who feel a sense of investment in their communities. Mr. Thomas has fostered deep partnerships with state and local officials, community leaders, and constituent groups to support economic and community development initiatives.

Our second agency visit was with Anne Hazlett, who serves as Assistant to the Secretary for Rural Development at the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA). She has worked on agriculture and rural issues for more than 15 years. At the USDA, Ms. Hazlett is leading the Rural Development program to create an environment for rural prosperity, from greater access to broadband connectivity and medical care to workforce training through distance learning.

We were very grateful for the opportunity to speak personally with Senator Doug Jones, Senator Richard Shelby and Congressman Robert B. Aderholt about our three targeted projects and how they impact Cullman County. We wanted to express our gratitude to our federal delegation for grants already received, as well as to let them know what we’ve accomplished by being good stewards of our resources.

The Chamber would like to extend appreciation to our Presenting Sponsor, Cullman-Jefferson Gas, as well as our Corporate Sponsors, the Cullman County Industrial Development Authority and City of Cullman Industrial Development Board. Our Hospitality Sponsor was Cullman Regional. The support of these sponsors helped ensure a successful event. Fly-In participants felt it was time well spent and look forward to returning next year.

Written and submitted by: Susan Copeland, Wallace State Community College 2018-19 Chamber Chair
Housing on deck for Part II of Chamber’s Community Needs Forum series

The Cullman Area Chamber of Commerce & Visitor Center is putting housing in the spotlight for the second of its three-part Community Needs Forum series.

Part II is slated for Thursday, Nov. 15 at 6 p.m. at the Cullman County Courthouse and will focus on the “live” aspect of the area’s “live, work, play” approach.

On the heels of August’s productive forum on workforce needs, the Chamber’s Housing Taskforce is taking the reins this time around. Among the questions they’ll be looking to have answered by the public and community stakeholders:

- How do you feel about Cullman County’s current housing situation?
- What is most important to you or your family when looking for housing?
- What do you consider the area’s most challenging housing issue?

All Cullman area citizens are encouraged to attend this forum. Once attendees participate in a brief survey, the floor will be opened for an open discussion to further obtain the community’s general perception of our housing inventory. From there, the Housing Taskforce will use all data and information to partner with JQUAD PLANNING GROUP, the Chamber’s housing consultant, to provide strategies and solutions to the Cullman area’s well-defined housing gap, which will be incorporated into our county-wide housing needs assessment.

In addition to positively impacting your community, there’s plenty of incentive to participate. All attendees will automatically be entered in drawings for a number of door prizes from around the area. To qualify for the drawings, you must like, comment, share and complete the housing survey on the Cullman Chamber Facebook page.

By attending the forum, attendees will receive another entry to win the grand prize — a Professional Christmas Décor Package, which includes holiday décor items and up to eight hours of professional Christmas decorating service provided by Cymbidium Studios. Winners will be announced on the Chamber’s various social media channels the afternoon of Tuesday, Nov. 20.

Registration for Christmas Window Display contest closing soon!

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 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@cullman chamber.org or 256-734-0454. Registration is also available at www.cullman chamber.org/christmaswindowdisplay.
Leaders of all ages are being molded at the Cullman Area Chamber of Commerce & Visitor Center.

The Chamber’s Leadership Cullman County and Youth Leadership classes both stayed spooktacularly busy in October, learning more about the area they call home through separate day-long sessions. This year’s Leadership class is sponsored by Tyson, while Youth Leadership is presented by R.E. Garrison Trucking, Inc.

October’s Leadership session, sponsored by TriGreen Equipment, was “Agriculture Day.” Participants met at the North Alabama Agriplex for breakfast, a presentation by Cullman County Extension Coordinator Tony Glover and a TED Talk on decision-making by poker champion Liv Boeree before departing for a beautiful tour of Riverwood Farms in Bremen given by Stan and Suzanne Wood.

Farms and Brickyard Meats, the former given by Jeremy and Julie Calvert — along with their newborn twins — and latter by owner Tamara Robinson.

Breakfast was sponsored by Cracker Barrel, and lunch was sponsored by Alabama Farm Credit.

October’s Youth Leadership session was “Tourism and Community Day.” Students spent the day exploring Cullman County, taking in tours of the Shrine of the Most Blessed Sacrament, Ave Maria Grotto, Clarkson Covered Bridge, Crooked Creek Civil War Museum and Cullman County Museum.

Breakfast was sponsored by Milo’s Hamburgers, while Domino’s served as lunch sponsor.

SAVE THESE DATES!

- Fishers of Men Southeast Region District 2 Championship @ Smith Lake Park – Nov. 6-10
- Christmas in Cullman Open House @ Cullman Warehouse District – Nov. 9-11
- Night Ride @ Stony Lonesome OHV Park — Nov. 10 and 24
- Christmas in Cullman Parade & Tree-Lighting @ Downtown Cullman & Depot Park – Nov. 30
- Holly Market Christmas Arts & Crafts Show @ Cullman Civic Center – Nov. 30-Dec. 1
TRC leadership, volunteers celebrate record-breaking campaign

The Cullman Area Chamber of Commerce & Visitor Center took a page out of Bob Barker’s playbook for the theme of this year’s annual membership and sponsorship drive — “The Chamber Life is Right.” From August 11 to October 5, volunteers reached out to the community to give businesses and individuals the opportunity to sponsor an event or program at cost, 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 … $259,959, a new Cullman Chamber high! A TRC Victory Party was held on October 16 at TP Country Club to celebrate everyone’s tireless efforts throughout the campaign.

The 2018-19 TRC leadership was made up of Chair Kay Shabel, Urban Grace; and Vice Chairs, Jimmy Hodges (Wallace State Community College), Wendy Crider (Cullman County Industrial Development Board) and Dusty Baker (Cullman County Commission on Aging). Team Captains were Ashley Lackey (Alabama Technology Network), Stefani Nelson (Shirley Quattlebaum – State Farm Insurance) and Kathy Taylor (Wallace State). Former record-holding TRC Chair Shirley Quattlebaum was on hand to hilariously “pass the torch” — her campaign’s theme was “Going for the Goal” — to Shabel, who also serves as Vice Chair of Membership & Marketing on the Chamber’s Executive Board of Directors.

“Thank you to all our leadership and volunteers, and especially to our businesses and individuals that generously invest in the Chamber and Cullman area,” said Chamber Director of Member Services Megan Bartlett. “This year’s record-breaking total is a true testament that our Chamber membership is strong and will continue to thrive.”

If you are interested in joining the Chamber or securing a remaining sponsorship, please contact Bartlett at mbartlett@cullmanchamber.org or 256-734-0454.

Thank you to all our leadership and volunteers, and especially to our businesses and individuals that generously invest in the Chamber and Cullman area.

2018-19 TRC VOLUNTEERS

The Cliffhangers
Ashley Lackey, Alabama Technology Network
Tabitha Miller, Cullman Regional
Jamie James, Cullman County Commission on Aging
Blinda Walker, Tyson, Inc.

Chasidy Lipsey, Peoples Bank of Alabama
Jade Bradford, Trident Marina
Maggie Warren, Village Furniture & Gifts
Hillary Taylor, Comfort Care Home Health & Hospice

The Switcheroos
Kathy Taylor, Wallace State
Lindsay Knox, Quality Staffing Solution

Joseph Franey, Patrick Drake Associates
Beverly Wilkerson, Pilot Club of Cullman
Jamie Blackmon, Wallace State
Kimberly Johnson, A-Plus Realty

The Showcase Winners
Stefani Nelson, Shirley Quattlebaum – State Farm
Kim Arndt, Cullman Electric Cooperative
Jana Shelton, Cullman County Revenue
Joyce Fuller, Fuller Rentals
Kim Self, White Willow
Sharon Townsend, Cullman County Public Library System

Chief Culpepper leading November Morning Blend discussion

November’s Morning Blend is moving up a week to avoid the Thanksgiving holiday! Come join the Cullman Area Chamber of Commerce & Visitor Center on Wednesday, Nov. 14 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, which features great discussion and delicious coffee and snacks.

Cullman Police Chief Kenny Culpepper will lead the discussion for November’s topic: Public Safety.

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

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www.billsmithbuickgmc.com
Where did you attend school? What was your major and why?

I graduated from Good Hope High School in 2014 and wasn’t entirely sure what career path I wanted to follow. After weighing my options and a whole lot of prayer, I decided to study business at Wallace State Community College. I chose to major in Business Administration because it presents unlimited possibilities and branches into many different fields.

What business skills have you acquired at the Chamber?

When I first heard about this internship at the Cullman Area Chamber of Commerce, I thought there’d be no way I should apply — being the quiet and reserved person I’m known to be. After a whole lot of prayer and watching a couple John Wayne movies, however, I mustered up enough nerve and decided to take the chance. I’m glad I did, because I have obtained so many skills from this internship, from communication and tech troubleshooting, to what it takes for businesses to start from nothing and grow here in the community.

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

In my opinion, the Chamber is the link that connects the community together. Being raised in Cullman County and seeing how far it has come is very special to me. We have such a great history — rich in hard work and commitment. Through those traits, we are always growing and improving. The Chamber brings the community together and gives opportunities to grow with fantastic events and seminars held throughout the year.

How will this internship affect your future plans?

Going through this internship has put me at ease with my decision to enter the business world. I’ve had the chance to glimpse how our great businesses keep progressing and thriving over the years. That helps me feel confident that with hard work and dedication, I can make it in this ever-changing, crazy world — no matter the path I take in my life.

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

This internship has been such a blessing, not only because of the skills I’ve obtained, but because of the people I’ve had the fortune to meet. The people here at the Chamber took me in and, with an abundant amount of patience, have shown me a taste of why Cullman County is such a fantastic area. What’s stuck with me the most throughout this internship is that if you do what’s best and take care of your community, it will, in turn, take care of you.
Knight-Free Insurance Agency named October Small Business of the Month

The Cullman Area Chamber of Commerce & Visitor Center would like to congratulate Knight-Free Insurance Agency as October’s Small Business of the Month, sponsored by EvaBank.

Knight-Free Insurance is a third-generation Cullman business currently celebrating its 75th anniversary. The tight-knit office of five publishes a quarterly newsletter called “The Magnet” that provides helpful insurance information, as well as current events and personal insight. Knight-Free also has a special office mascot named “DASH” that greets their customers in seasonally specific attire.

Knight-Free strives to do business like “DASH,” which stands for “Dependable, Available Service with Honesty” and doubles as a nod to the dash in the agency’s name. To put it simply, Knight-Free is a family, and anyone who does business with them is considered part of that family.

Knight-Free Insurance Agency
410 1st Ave. SE, Suite 100
Cullman, AL 35055
256-734-4060

had multiple representatives on the Chamber Board of Directors, including Elliott Free (President, 1979-80) and Wescoat Free (2016-17). Knight-Free is also plugged into the Cullman community, donating to several local charities throughout the year.

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.

'Tis the season for annual EPIC Christmas Sweater Party

This year’s EPIC Christmas Sweater Party is slated for 7:00 p.m. on Friday, Dec. 14 at All Steak Restaurant. The event will feature live music from Trick Zipper, gobs of awesome giveaways, party games, food, drinks and … Christmas sweaters, of course!

Registration is free for EPIC members and $30 for future members. For more information or to register, please contact the Chamber at 256-734-0454 or info@cullmanchamber.org. Pre-registration is highly encouraged to help determine food and attendee counts.

EPIC (Emerging Professionals Impacting Cullman) is presented by Drinkard Development. This year’s EPIC Christmas Sweater Party is brought to you by our 4th Quarter Sponsor, St. John & Associates.
Open For Business

Jimmy John’s | 107 Arnold St. NW, Cullman, AL 35055 | 256-737-3000

Ashley Mercantile | 105A 1st Ave. NE, Cullman, AL 35055 | 256-747-5508

The Carpenter’s Cabinet of Colony Food Pantry | 151 Byars Road, Hanceville, AL 35077 | 256-347-5446

Cullman Regional Home Health & Hospice | 1938 AL Highway 157, Suite 102, Cullman, AL 35058 | 256-737-2831

Lavish Boutique | 105 1st Ave. NE, Suite B, Cullman, AL 35055 | 256-615-1034

Greyhound Bus Stop | 5901 AL Highway 157, Cullman, AL 35055 | 800-231-2222

76 | 6001 AL Highway 157, Cullman, AL 35058 | 256-739-2234

Hometown Locksmith | 256-736-3017 | www.hometownlock.com
Annual Career Awareness Fair set to host 1,000 8th-graders

The 2018 Cullman Area Career Awareness Fair is only days away — and we’d love for you to join us as a volunteer or tour guide!

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 and Cullman County Economic Development, 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, Tyson; and Lunch Sponsors, Cullman Electric Cooperative and Kentucky Fried Chicken.

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