Second installment of State of Our Communities set for April 27th

There’s only one place where you can hear updates about the area’s education, healthcare, government and more all in one day — and that’s at the Chamber’s “Chick-fil-A State of Our Communities.”

The Cullman Area Chamber of Commerce’s Governmental Affairs Committee would like to invite members and the public to attend this year’s all-day event on Friday, April 27 at the Cullman Civic Center.

Doors will open at 7 a.m. Major session topics include the State of Education, State of Healthcare, State of Local Government and a Legislative Forum. Representatives from agencies and organizations related to human services, utilities, tourism and recreation, economic development, and the Chamber will be set up in breakout rooms and provide information/demonstrations to visitors until the event concludes at 3 p.m.

One breakout room will also be reserved for the Young Entrepreneurs Academy (YEA!) Trade Show. This event will allow YEA! students from Cullman High School and Holly Pond High School to showcase the products and services they’ve been working hard on this academic year through booths and displays.

The “Chick-fil-A State of Our Communities” is free to the public. However, attendees do have the opportunity to purchase an All-Access Pass for $50, which includes priority seating, breakfast, lunch, hospitality room access and a swag bag. Breakfast ($15) and lunch ($20) can also be purchased separately.

The Chamber is currently seeking questions from members and the public for the State of Healthcare and Legislative Forum. To submit a question, visit surveymonky.com/r/2018-StateofourCommunities.

For more information or to purchase an All-Access Pass, contact the Chamber at 256-734-0454 or info@cullmanchamber.org.
Morning Blend moving to new Rumors Deli location for April, beyond

Rumor has it the Chamber’s Morning Blend is moving to a cool, new location.

The monthly event will finally return to Rumors Deli on Wednesday, April 18 — only this time, and beyond, at the local eatery’s new address at 601 4th St. SW near the corner of Main Avenue and U.S. Highway 278.

Royal Technologies Corporation’s Barry Carson will lead the discussion for April’s topic: The Modern Manufacturer. As always, coffee and breakfast snacks will be provided by our Presenting Sponsor, Karma’s Coffee House. This month’s sponsor is the Cullman County Center for the Developmentally Disabled, Inc.

The Chamber staff welcomes members and visitors to our free Morning Blend on the third Wednesday of each month. For more information, contact the Chamber at 256-734-0454 or info@cullmanchamber.org.

February Advocacy Trip to Montgomery

The Chamber’s Governmental Affairs Committee (GAC) made a special advocacy trip to the Capitol on February 21st, meeting with local and state representatives — including Governor Kay Ivey, Alabama Senator Paul Bussman and Alabama Representative Randall Shedd (all pictured) — about the completion of Highway 157, broadband expansion and other area concerns. See next month’s newsletter for a report from the Chamber’s annual Montgomery Drive-In.

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Vinemont’s T&S Perfect Chain Products hosts 1st Qtr Industry Tour

The Cullman Area Chamber of Commerce hosted its 2018 1st Quarter Industry Tour at T&S Perfection Chain Products in Vinemont on March 22. The Tour was sponsored by Inland Buildings.

1st Quarter Sponsor
Inland Buildings

Perfection Chain Products is the largest manufacturer of weldless chain products in North America, as well as a prime distributor of welded chain products and chain assemblies used throughout numerous industries. Their weldless chain lines include single jack chain — #12 single jack is their “bread and butter” and biggest seller — double and single loop chain, flat stamp sash and plumb-

er’s chain, decorative chain, s-hooks, swing set chain, fixture hangers, and custom wire forms. As Perfection Chain’s website states, they “have the capability to produce any chain to your required length or finish.”

Perfection Chain began operations in 1973, briefly setting up shop in the basement of one of their partner’s homes while waiting for the arrival of more machines and the construction of their initial facility. Today, the Vinemont plant spans 150,000 square feet — with future plans for even more expansion — and houses 50 employees.

Many of Perfection Chain’s machines are 60 years or older but appear no less worse for the wear all this time later. One particular piece of equipment celebrated its 100th birthday late last year, a milestone terrifically commemorated with a plaque securely hung by a pair of the company’s very own chains.

Thank you to Perfection Chain Products — especially superb guides Don Zimomra and Daniel Powell — for hosting this quarter’s Industry Tour and contributing to the vitality of the Cullman area. The date and location of our 2nd Quarter Industry Tour has yet to be determined, but keep an eye on the Chamber’s newsletter, e-blast and social media for details as they become available.

If interested in hosting or attending a future Industry Tour, please contact Brian Poole, the Chamber’s Director of Business Development & Investor Relations, at bpoole@cullmanchamber.org or 256-734-0454.
Chamber’s 1st wave of business roundtables already making local impact

A small business’s success hinges on satisfying its current customers and widening its circle of influence to attract new business. The Cullman Area Chamber of Commerce’s ongoing business roundtables are a way to accomplish this, fostering enhanced business communication and networking opportunities, as well as discussion of topics affecting many business operations. Some of the areas we’ve been covering:

• Customer Retention
• New Markets
• Social Media Marketing
• Profitability and Business Growth

What Is a Business Roundtable?
The roundtable environment allows for input from many experts with varying perspectives and produces new thinking that challenges best existing practices. After all, today’s best practices for digital publishing and marketing are very different than those of just five — or even one or two — years ago.

When you go into a roundtable, it’s not just about getting your questions answered. The point of a roundtable is to speak with moderators, who are often experts and consultants with broad knowledge, and to listen to what other attendees have to share.

There’s also a solid chance at least one person in the room has experienced the same problems you face, and has maybe already solved them. Perhaps some have found different solutions to your problems, which might be more or less appropriate for you. An additional highlight of moderating and attending roundtables is that you receive unexpected valuable information. You will likely hear about problems that you haven’t faced yet but could in the future. Although you may not be aware of the issue yet, hearing solutions from other professionals can help you plan accordingly.

Ultimately, what’s important to remember during a roundtable is that everyone in attendance is getting some level of consultation as they learn from both the moderators and the participants.

Previous roundtables:

• Fairview and Baileyton held on February 20th
• Good Hope, Dodge City and Colony held on March 1st
• Hanceville and Garden City held on March 2nd
• Vinemont and West Point held on March 29th

Upcoming roundtables:

• April 19th at 6 p.m. – Cullman City (1) at Chamber’s Walmart DC Room
• April 26th at 6 p.m. – Cullman City (2) at Chamber’s Walmart DC Room

Second quarter meetings already scheduled:

• May 23rd at 6 p.m. – Baileyton and Fairview at Baileyton Town Hall
• June 6th at 6 p.m. – Good Hope, Dodge City and Colony at Good Hope City Hall
• June 7th at 6 p.m. – Hanceville and Garden City at Hanceville Civic Center

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

O.F. Richter & Sons named March Small Business of the Month

The Cullman Area Chamber of Commerce & Visitor Center would like to congratulate O.F. Richter & Sons, Inc. as March’s Small Business of the Month, sponsored by AK Equipment Rental & Sales, Inc.

O.F. Richter & Sons has been a Cullman mainstay since opening its doors in 1947. The company is family-owned and operated, employs 31, and takes pride in working with customers to create their own personal and business spaces. They keep up with the latest trends in paint colors, flooring, and custom picture framing, and are constantly on the lookout for new and different products to bring to their customers.

“We love helping our customers preserve their family treasures and always hope that they feel like they are part of our family,” said O.F. Richter & Sons’ Maria Schultz, former Chair of the Chamber’s Retail Committee. O.F. Richter & Sons carries Benjamin Moore, an innovative and consumer-friendly paint, as well as quality flooring and sundries. The small business strives to meet all customers’ needs and help them with color and style selections that best fit their personalities.

O.F. Richter & Sons is greatly plugged in to the Chamber and community. They sponsor the Chamber’s Emma Marie Eddleman Citizenship Award, a monthly 2nd Fridays activity, and the State of Local Government section of the State of Our Communities program.

“We love supporting our city in their efforts to improve our town, either through the Chamber or our churches and many organizations in town,” Schultz said.

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.

Chamber Seminar series continuing with ‘Show Me the Money’ workshop

Are you associated with a new business needing financial assistance to get off the ground? Or maybe someone with an existing business looking for the funds to upgrade equipment or expand your staff?

Then the Cullman Area Chamber of Commerce’s upcoming “Show Me the Money” seminar is perfect for you!

This detailed workshop will be presented by Heather Wright on Tuesday, May 1 from 10-11 a.m. in the Chamber’s Walmart DC Room. Wright is a Small Business Advisor for the University of Alabama SBDC (Small Business Development Center) and advisor for the Chamber’s budding Business Resource Center (BRC).

Sponsored by Trident Marina, the “Show Me the Money” seminar is free to attend, but reservations are required. Contact the Chamber at 256-734-0454 or info@cullmanchamber.org to sign up today.
Nominations sought for 2018 Cullman Area Tourism Awards

The Cullman Area Chamber of Commerce & Visitor Center is now accepting nominations for the 2018 Tourism Awards, which are slated for June 14th at 8:00 a.m. In conjunction with the celebration of the Alabama Bicentennial, this year’s theme is “Cullman People,” highlighting the people and personalities who have helped make Cullman County a great tourism destination. The program will include breakfast and the announcement of the winners in the categories listed below. The event will take place 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.

**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 historical assets of the region.

**SPRIT 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.

**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.

**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.

**ROCKIN’ RETAILER**
Recognizes a retailer that provides an outstanding shopping experience for visitors.

**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 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 of innovation, inspiration and industry leadership.

To nominate your local favorites, go to surveymonkey.com/r/2018TourismAwards or stop by the Chamber to pick up a form in person. The deadline for nominations is Friday, May 11.

Table sponsorships start at $250 and include reserved seating for eight in a prime location with table signage. The presenting sponsor of the event is The Cullman Times. Gold, silver and bronze table sponsorships are available.

If you would like to reserve your tickets to the 2018 Cullman Area Tourism Awards, contact 256-734-0454 or info@cullmanchamber.org. Space is limited, and seats will be filled on a first-come, first-served basis.
2017-18 4th Quarter Intern Insight – Jade Bradford

Where did you attend school? What was your major and why?
I recently graduated from the University of Alabama with a communications degree and minor in art focusing in digital media. I was drawn to this field of study because of my analytical mind and keen eye for design/art. Having both assets together is key in communications for this generation.

What business skills have you acquired at the Chamber?
Working at the Chamber, I have acquired soft skills such as time management, scheduling and event planning, and have had the opportunity to fine tune my communication skills. Along with these skill sets, I have learned how important it is to adapt to an ever-changing work environment.

What have you learned about the Chamber and its position in the community?
Through my internship, I’ve learned just how important it is to have the Chamber in the community. The Chamber keeps Cullman businesses connected amongst each other and pushes the importance of supporting local business in the area for a better Cullman County. Through seminars, luncheons and other events, members and citizens are able to receive the benefits Cullman’s community has to offer.

How will this internship affect your future plans?
This internship has greatly affected my future plans, providing me the connections and skill sets to secure a position at Trident Marina, my first job in my degree field. Thanks, Cullman Chamber!

What can you take away from this internship and apply to your career of choice?
Working this internship has taught me valuable skills you do not acquire in school. It’s also shown me how to network and build relationships within the community.
Happy anniversary to us! The Cullman Area Chamber of Commerce celebrated a major milestone with nearly 550 of its members last month, proudly hosting the 75th Annual Meeting & Gala on Thursday, March 8th at Stone Bridge Farms. This year’s theme, Classic Cullman, was evident throughout the venue’s entire Brown Stone Centre, with a sepia color scheme and historic pictures quickly transporting sharply dressed guests straight into the past.

The evening opened with the Past Presidents Soiree, sponsored by Wallace State Community College, allowing former Chamber Presidents and Chairs to socialize, to receive an early look at the Hall of History (more on this later) and to be recognized with special gifts for their service to the Chamber and community.

Following a delectable 1940s-inspired meal, Chamber President & CEO Leah Bolin acknowledged the Chamber’s charter member businesses and past leadership in attendance before stepping aside for a commemorative video produced by Mass Local. The video, which explores the Chamber’s past, present and future, will officially be sealed in late June and opened during the Chamber’s 125th anniversary in 2068.

We’d like to extend a sincere thank you to all our sponsors for the 75th Annual Meeting & Gala — Presenting Sponsor, Peoples Bank of Alabama; Corporate Sponsors, EvaBank, Justin Dyar and Team of Lake Homes Realty, and Warren Averett, LLC; and Post Party Sponsor, James R. Smith Trucking.