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**CHAMBER OF COMMERCE  
& VISITOR CENTER**

*Official Newsletter*

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## Community Luncheon series opening with annual State of the State

**J**anuary's Community Luncheon theme will be the same as usual, but this year's State of the State panel will feature a fresh, new look.

On Friday, January 18 at All Steak Restaurant, returning Representatives Randall Shedd and Corey Harbison will take the podium alongside local legislative newcomers Garlan Gudger (Senate) and Scott Stadthagen (House) to deliver updates from the state capitol. The Cullman Area Chamber of Commerce & Visitor Center's annual Community Luncheon kickoff is slated for 11:30 a.m.-1:00 p.m. in the banquet room.

Tickets are \$15 for Chamber members and \$20 for future members. Contact the Chamber at 256-734-0454 or [info@cullmanchamber.org](mailto:info@cullmanchamber.org) to reserve your seat. Thank you to our Presenting Sponsor, Shirley Quattlebaum – State

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**seat.**

Farm Insurance, and to our January Sponsor, Weichert Realtors – Carter & Company.

For the third year in a row, Community Luncheons will be held on the third Friday of the month in January, February, March, May, August, September and October. The lunch session at the Chamber's State of Our Communities will take the Luncheon's place on the fourth Friday in April.

## COMMUNITY LUNCHEON

### State of the State



All Steak Restaurant

Program Begins 11:30 AM | January 18, 2019  
Chamber Members \$15 | Future Members \$20  
Call 256-734-0454 to reserve your seat!

Presenting Sponsor:



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# Adult, Youth Leadership classes team up for public safety sessions

The Cullman Area Chamber of Commerce & Visitor Center's adult and youth leadership classes are entering the New Year with a full head of steam after closing 2019 with an assortment of day-long sessions introducing them to various aspects of the community. The 2018-19 Leadership class is sponsored by River Valley Ingredients (Tyson), while Youth Leadership is presented by R.E. Garrison Trucking, Inc.

November's Leadership session, sponsored by Cullman Spine Institute, was "Healthcare Day." Classmates met at Cullman Regional and spent the session hearing from Good Samaritan Health Clinic Director Jolanda Hutson, Hospice of Cullman County's Kim Pace, Cullman County Health Department Clinic Supervisor Anita Batemon, Air Evac Lifeteam's Julie Ward, Cullman Regional CEO & President James Clements, Cullman Regional Vice President of Marketing & Public Relations Lindsey Dossey and WellStone Behavioral Health Executive Director Chris Van Dyke. The group was treated to a tour of Cullman Regional and wellness and health screenings between speakers, and ended the day with a trip to



Morningside of Cullman hosted by Director Dee Dee Cleghorn.

Breakfast was sponsored by Waldrop Chiropractic Clinic, and lunch was sponsored by Cullman Regional.

December's Leadership session was "Criminal Justice Day." Participants gathered at Rumors Deli for the Chamber's monthly Morning Blend — led by Assistant District Attorney Jeremy Cline — a TED Talk and a white elephant gift exchange. Holiday festivities gave way to a tour of the Cullman

County Detention Center and visit with Cullman County Sheriff Matt Gentry, followed by lunch and a trip to the City Police Department to meet with Chief Kenny Culpepper and to take in self-defense training, a taser demonstration, a tactical team presentation and a helicopter fly-in.

Breakfast was sponsored by Ed Holcombe Discount Pharmacy.

December's Youth Leadership session, sponsored by the Cullman County Sheriff's Office, was "Public Safety Day." Be-

fore enjoying the majority of the day with their Leadership counterparts, Youth Leadership students opened the session at Cullman Fire Station #3, where they met Chief Brian Bradberry and participated in an interactive fire safety demonstration including fire extinguisher training. The joint session allowed Leadership and Youth Leadership participants to introduce themselves and to determine mentorship pairings.

Lunch was sponsored by J & R Feed Service.

## BISCUITS & BUSINESS

FEBRUARY 26TH  
8:00 A.M. - 9:00 A.M.

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## Mark your calendars for 2019 debut of Biscuits & Business!

It's time to start getting back in a Biscuits & Business state of mind for the New Year! The twice-yearly event is set to make its 2019 debut on Tuesday, Feb. 26 at 8:00 a.m. Peoples Bank of Alabama will serve as host and sponsor at its main branch on Cherokee Avenue.

Biscuits & Business includes breakfast — not to mention great discussion, networking and fellowship — and is free to attend, but reservations are required. For more information or to register, contact the Chamber at 256-734-0454 or [info@cullmanchamber.org](mailto:info@cullmanchamber.org). Keep an eye on the Chamber's Facebook page for guest speaker information and other updates.

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# Religious tourism major part of Chamber's future plans

The Cullman area is blessed with a variety of events that entice a wide range of tourists every year.

For example, the success of Rock the South, Oktoberfest, Bloomin' Festival and other events have generated a great deal of interest and excitement well beyond the boundaries of Cullman County for several years — and the future looks bright for continued growth.

Looking to create and expand tourism beyond the recent success of events and festivals, the staff at the Cullman Area Chamber of Commerce & Visitor Center is currently developing a strategic plan that takes advantage of resources that are already here.

For instance, Cullman County is blessed with several religious attractions, such as the Shrine of the Most Blessed Sacrament in Hanceville and Ave Maria Grotto in Cullman.

These facilities represent what most locals think of when discussing religious tourism. However, the Cullman area has so much more to offer.

Whether it's the unique architecture of St. Paul's Lutheran Church, the history represented by St. John's Evangelical Protestant Church, or the iconic and highly visible steeples at Sacred



SHRINE OF THE MOST BLESSED SACRAMENT

Heart Catholic Church, Cullman County has a unique diversity of religious attractions that few communities can claim in the South or the nation.

Taking this diversity into account, the Chamber is creating itineraries encompassing all our religious community has to offer in order to expand the base of potential visitors

to include people of all faiths — or even those with no religious affiliation at all.

By creating an environment where everyone, regardless of their faith, feels welcome in our communities, the Cullman area can expect to see further economic growth beyond the impact brought by events like Rock the South.

Recently, the Chamber worked closely with

the pilgrimage staff at the Shrine in Hanceville to promote its first Christmas Open House, held on Saturday, Dec. 22. The plan was to create an atmosphere where people of all faiths would feel welcome to celebrate together the spirit of the Christmas season.

According to Shrine officials, the event was a complete success.

"We've had close to 1,000 people here already today," said pilgrimage assistant Lizzie Baumbach relatively early in the evening. "Several have told me they have never been here before and absolutely loved it. We actually ran out of food!"

"We had to increase

the number of wagon rides we offered for the day due to the turnout," said pilgrimage manager Luke Johansen. "We wanted the community to experience the beauty and peace of our grounds, and we feel this event helped spread the word."

Moving forward, the Chamber staff plans to build on this momentum and make the Cullman area a regional and national destination for religious travelers regardless of their faith background.

Whether you're Catholic, Protestant, any affiliation or no affiliation, you're welcome to shop, eat and find peace of mind right here in Cullman County.

*Shrine of the Most Blessed Sacrament*  
Come and See  
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3224 County Rd. 548 Hanceville, AL 35077  
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# Learn the ins and outs of membership at Chamber 201 class

Becoming a member at the Cullman Area Chamber of Commerce & Visitor Center is just the first step. Learn how to take the next at our upcoming Chamber 201 class on Tuesday, Jan. 29!

The workshop lasts from 11 a.m.-1 p.m. in the Chamber's Walmart DC Room, includes free lunch from LawLers Barbecue 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 your member benefits, includes a wealth of how-to and step-by-step instruction, and educates new and old members alike on how to get the most out of their membership.

#### Topics include:

- Navigating the Member Information Center
- Member Services
- Communications & Marketing
- Events

- 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](mailto:info@cullmanchamber.org) to save your spot today.



If you're reading this, you're already a Chamber member. Now, learn how to take the next step at our upcoming Chamber 201 workshop!

Tuesday, Jan. 29<sup>th</sup> | 11:00 AM – 1:00 PM  
Cullman Chamber | Walmart DC Room

Call 256-734-0454 to reserve your spot!

## Goff, Giving Local on docket for January Morning Blend

If becoming more of a morning person is one of your New Year's resolutions, the Cullman Area Chamber of Commerce & Visitor Center has an event to help.

Come join the Chamber staff Wednesday, Jan. 16 for delicious coffee and great discussion at our Morning Blend, held every third Wednesday of each month from 8:00 to 9:00 at Rumors Deli near the corner of Main Avenue and U.S. Highway 278. Members and visitors alike are welcome to attend this free event.

United Way of Cullman County Director Becky Goff will lead the discussion for January's topic: Giving Local. The theme is in conjunction

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Karma's Coffee House  
**Monthly Sponsor -**  
Anytime Fitness

with the #GiveLocalFirst aspect of the Chamber's overarching #ThinkLocalFirst campaign.

Coffee and snacks will be provided by Presenting Sponsor Karma's Coffee House. January's sponsor is Anytime Fitness. For more information, contact the Chamber at 256-734-0454 or [info@cullmanchamber.org](mailto:info@cullmanchamber.org).

## Hanceville's Met-South to host 1st Quarter Industry Tour

The Cullman Area Chamber of Commerce's first Industry Tour of 2019 will be held at Met-South in Hanceville on Wednesday, Jan. 30. The 1st Quarter event is sponsored by Inland Buildings and will start at 10 a.m., though participants are encouraged to arrive around 9:45 a.m.

Because of the nature of these tours, open-toed shoes, loose jewelry and loose clothing are prohibited.

Met-South is located at 100 Hyde St. NE off of AL Highway 91 in east Hanceville. A precision machine manufacturer of tools, jigs and purpose-made production equipment

**1st Qtr Sponsor -**  
Inland Buildings

used by automotive suppliers, Met-South is the most recent addition to the area's industry landscape, officially moving its base from Birmingham to a 7,500-square-foot facility in Cullman County in late June.

Industry Tours are free to attend. Space

**For more information or to register, contact the Chamber at 256-734-0454 or [info@cullmanchamber.org](mailto:info@cullmanchamber.org).**

is extremely limited, so registration is required. For more information or to register, contact the Chamber at 256-734-0454 or [info@cullmanchamber.org](mailto:info@cullmanchamber.org).



# Chamber investors, past Presidents gather for annual update

The Cullman Area Chamber of Commerce & Visitor Center celebrated a successful second year of its “Converging for Success” strategic plan on December 4 at All Steak Restaurant, welcoming a number of esteemed guests for the 2018 Investors & Past Presidents Annual Update. The event was sponsored by Wallace State Community College.

“Converging for Success” Strategic Advisor Peggy Smith delivered the report following lunch and a viewing of the Chamber’s commemorative 75th anniversary video, highlighting the past year’s accomplishments — as well as plans for 2019 — concerning each of the strategic plan’s four key initiatives: Community Development, Existing Business Growth & Professional Business Sector Recruitment, Entrepreneurship & Education, and Business & Community Advocacy.

Those highlights included, but certainly weren’t limited to:

## COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

- Closed first year of national marketing/multimedia campaign with production of first “Livability Cullman Area” magazine (print/digital)
- Formed Housing



Taskforce and completed Housing Needs Assessment

- Formed Arts & Entertainment Taskforce and procured an organizational match grant from the Alabama State Council on the Arts

## EXISTING BUSINESS GROWTH & PROFESSIONAL SECTOR RECRUITMENT

- Conducted six county-

wide business roundtables with 135 total participating businesses/individuals from throughout the Cullman area

- Formed Talent Recruitment Taskforce, held Community Needs Forum related to workforce needs and received valuable information from a widely distributed — and completed — community survey

- Generated local marketing awareness for the newly created “Think Local First Cullman” campaign and introduced the “Think Local First Cullman” mobile app as a new member benefit and service for Cullman area citizens

## ENTREPRENEURSHIP & EDUCATION

- Expanded Young

Entrepreneurs Academy (YEA!) to all Cullman area schools

- Continued to see staggering results for new and existing area businesses in second year of Business Resource Center (BRC)

Hosted 1,000 local eighth-graders at annual Cullman Area Career Awareness Fair

## BUSINESS & COMMUNITY ADVOCACY

- Organized special legislative trip to Montgomery to advocate for the completion of AL Highway 157 and

broadband expansion in Cullman County

- Coordinated Washington Fly-In for community leaders to meet with federal delegation and agency representatives about three main objectives: Opportunity zones, rural broadband and support for AL Highway 157 BUILD Grant

For more information on the Chamber’s 5-year strategic plan, visit [www.cullmanchamber.org/converging-for-success](http://www.cullmanchamber.org/converging-for-success) or stop by the Chamber to pick up a “Converging for Success” case statement.

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## January Small Business of the Month

Winner -  
Cullman  
Florist



Supporter -  
Jeb Williamson,  
CPA, LLC

**JEB WILLIAMSON, CPA, LLC**

# Carlton's Italian Restaurant named December Small Business of the Month

The Cullman Area Chamber of Commerce & Visitor Center would like to congratulate Carlton's Italian Restaurant as December's Small Business of the Month, sponsored by College Tire.

Carlton's Italian

**Carlton's Italian Restaurant**  
208 3rd Ave. SE  
Cullman, AL 35055  
256-739-9050

Restaurant is a long-time local dining staple purchased in 2009 by Dr. Harry and Leslie Blaylock. From the owners, to managers Lucy Gable and Abby Blaylock, to its entire 20-person staff, the small business considers every employee as part of its close-knit family. Through superior customer service and a family atmosphere, Carlton's strives daily to provide true Southern hospitality and a dining experience to remember.

Carlton's Italian Restaurant is actively engaged with the Chamber, serving as a Board of Directors Lunch Sponsor and participating in Samplers in the Breezeway, the EPIC Dine-N-Dash, the Christmas Window Dis-



play Contest, and other programs and events. Additionally, the eatery constantly encourages anyone and everyone to #DineLocalFirst — one of the six specific themes

making up the Chamber's all-encompassing #ThinkLocalFirst campaign.

Carlton's is also heavily involved in the community, donating gift certifi-

icates and food to area businesses, schools and Christian ministries. The restaurant strives to give back whenever possible, especially to local first responders and children



Supporter - College Tire

throughout Cullman County.

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.



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# Open For Business



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**Southern Eats Cafe | 110 1st Ave. NE, Cullman, AL 35055 (inside Mae's Food Hall) | 256-727-4282**



**Holly's Nails & Spa | 114 2nd St. SE, Cullman, AL 35055 | 256-735-4718**



**dale's - West Point | 275 County Road 1242, Vinemont, AL 35179 | 256-735-4440**

# EPIC Christmas Sweater Party Snapshots





# Cullman area's 1st issue of Livability print, digital magazine now available

The Cullman Area Chamber of Commerce & Visitor Center recently unveiled the 2019 edition of "Livability Cullman Area," its primary quality of life marketing program for talent attraction.

The program includes a print magazine, digital magazine and significant exposure on Livability.com, a national website with information about more than 15,000 of America's best places to live and visit. All of Livability Media's high-quality, easy-to-share content promotes our community's favorable business climate, attractions and other enviable amenities in order to encourage business investment, talent recruitment and relocation. Targeted print and global digital distribution aims to reach entrepreneurs, site selectors, corporate executives, and other talented individuals and families attracted to the Cullman area's impeccable quality of life.

The Chamber's partnership with Livability is in conjunction with the Community Development objective of our "Converging for Success" 5-year strategic plan.

The program includes several tools for community members and business people to learn

about and share our area's many success stories with others:

- Go to [www.livability.com/al/cullman](http://www.livability.com/al/cullman)

- Click through and share articles to read about business success stories, school programming, must-dos around the community and more. Each article

includes sharing options for quick posts to social media.

- To read and share the digital version of the magazine, click on the magazine cover image. You can flip through it online or download the issue in PDF format. You can also use sharing tools to quickly send a

link by email or post by social media.

- To pick up a print magazine, stop by the Visitor Center in the Chamber lobby

For more information on "Livability Cullman Area," contact the Chamber at 256-734-0454 or [info@cullmanchamber.org](mailto:info@cullmanchamber.org).

LIVABILITY CULLMAN AREA ALABAMA

2019 EDITION • [livability.com/al/cullman](http://livability.com/al/cullman)

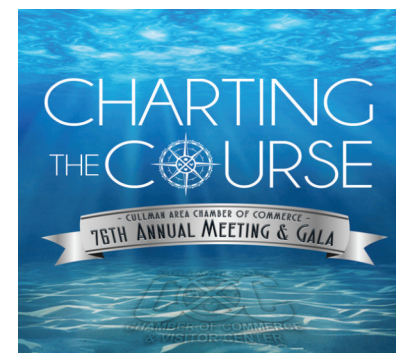
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## Date, theme set for 76th Annual Meeting & Gala

It's the Save the Date you've been waiting all year to receive!

The Cullman Area Chamber of Commerce & Visitor Center is ecstatic to announce the 76th Annual Meeting & Gala is set for Thursday, March 7th at Stone Bridge Farms. The theme for this year's event, again presented by Peoples Bank of Alabama, is ... drum roll, please ... Charting the Course! This selection will see the Brown Stone Centre transform into an oceanic wonderland and is meant to let our members and the community know they can be confident we are staying the course as we approach Year 3 of our 5-year "Converging for Success" strategic plan.

Attire for the Annual Meeting is black tie. All guests will be treated to an exquisite meal, the Chamber's annual report and awards presentations, and theme-centric post-party entertainment. A limited number of tickets are available. Please contact the Chamber at 256-734-0454 or [info@cullmanchamber.org](mailto:info@cullmanchamber.org) to check availability — this event sells out each year. Keep an eye out for more details as they become available.

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