State of Our Communities slated for April 26th

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

The Cullman Area Chamber of Commerce’s Governmental Affairs Committee invites members and the public to attend this year’s event on Friday, April 26 at the Cullman Civic Center.

Doors will open at 7:30 a.m. Major session topics include the State of Education, a Community Session and the State of Local Government.

Representatives from agencies and organizations related to human services, utilities, tourism and recreation, and the Chamber will be set up in breakout rooms and provide information/demonstrations to visitors until the event concludes at 1:30 p.m. Many of these breakout participants will have giveaways.

One breakout room will also be reserved for the Young Entrepreneurs Academy (YEA!) Trade Show, allowing the Cullman area’s YEA! students to showcase the products and services they’ve been working hard on this academic year.

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.

See below for an overview of each major session:

STATE OF EDUCATION
• Time: 8 a.m.
• Premier Sponsor: Wallace State Community College
• Corporate Sponsors: Cullman Electric Cooperative | Cullman-Jefferson Gas

During this session, we’ll hear from Cullman City Schools Superintendent Susan Patterson, Cullman County Schools Superintendent Shane Barnette and Wallace State Community College President Vicki Karolewics. The Student of the Year and Career Technical Student of the Year will also be announced. The Teachers of the Year for the city and county school systems are also recognized.

COMMUNITY SESSION
• Time: 10 a.m.
• Premier Sponsor: Cullman Health & Rehab Center
• Corporate Sponsors: CPI Technologies, Inc. | Cullman-Jefferson Gas

WBRC FOX6 Meteorologist Matt Daniel will speak on weather preparedness during this first-time session, which will include a weather radio giveaway.

STATE OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT
• Time: 11:30 a.m.
• Premier Sponsor: River Valley Ingredients
• Corporate Sponsors: Goodwyn, Mills & Cawood, Inc.

During this session, the Cullman County Commission and area mayors will provide general updates from their respective municipalities.

For more information or to purchase an All-Access Pass, contact the Chamber at 256-734-0454 or info@cullmanchamber.org.

Cullman Area Chamber of Commerce
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The look of the 76th Annual Meeting & Gala was one you just had to “sea” to believe.

In a Brown Stone Centre beautifully accented with bright-colored coral, jelly fish, floating pearls, an ice-sculpture dolphin, oceanic lighting and even sea turtles, the Cullman Area Chamber of Commerce & Visitor Center fully embraced its “Charting the Course” theme, welcoming more than 550 members and esteemed guests to Stone Bridge Farms on Thursday, March 7 for an elegant evening celebrating the past year’s accomplishments.

Presented by Peoples Bank of Alabama, the Gala kicked off with a Chairman’s Reception, followed by opening remarks and an exquisite meal consisting of creamy lobster bisque, prime rib, a baked potato, parmesan garlic green beans and chocolate lava cake. President & CEO Leah Bolin then presented the Chamber’s annual report for 2018-19, giving way to the customary passing of the gavel between outgoing Chamber Chair Susan Copeland, of Wallace State Community College, and Chair-Elect T.J. Franey, of Cullman County Schools. Before handing over the mic, Ms. Copeland recognized the contributions of nine community leaders rotating off the Chamber’s Board of Directors, the Chamber’s committee and taskforce chairs and members, and investors in the Chamber’s “Converging for Success” strategic plan.

Kay Shabel, of Urban Grace and the 2019-20 Chair-Elect, took the podium next, providing a report on the Chamber’s Total Resource Campaign (TRC) before passing the gavel to Vice Chair of Membership & Marketing Brian Lacy, of the Cullman Electric Cooperative. Mr. Lacy unveiled this year’s TRC theme, acknowledged the Chamber’s many volunteer Ambassadors, and opened the awards portion of the evening by announcing Jacqueline Schendel, of the Better Business Bureau, as Ambassador of the Year.

Other Chamber award winners were Goat Island Brewing as Small Business of the Year and Robin Cummings (Peoples Bank of Alabama CEO and 1988-89 Chamber Chair) as the recipient of the prestigious Emma Marie Eddleman Citizenship Award, sponsored by O.F. Richter & Sons. The Cullman County Mayor/Commissioner Association also presented Sammie Danford with the Lucille Galin Public Service Award.

The post party included a premier duel piano act by “Keys to Please,” the Smith Farms Wine Tasting Station, the High Seas (and Stakes) Casino Experience and the Deep Water Dance Floor. A gallery of group pictures taken by Lisa Jones Photography can be viewed at ljonesphotography.com/proofing/chamber-gala-2019.

We’d like to extend a titanic thanks to all our sponsors for the 76th Annual Meeting & Gala — Presenting Sponsor, Peoples Bank of Alabama; Corporate Sponsors, Comfort Care Home Health, EvaBank and Warren Averett; and Entertainment Sponsor, Smith Farms.
Montgomery Drive-In highlights Chamber’s trips to Capital City

The Cullman Area Chamber of Commerce & Visitor Center had a steady presence in the state capital this past month, sending three of its programs to Montgomery for annual visits and updates. The 2018-19 Youth Leadership Cullman County class made the two-hour trek south on March 14, while the 2018-19 Leadership Cullman County class and numerous Chamber members and community leaders followed suit for this year’s Montgomery Drive-In on March 20.

Both visits included photo opportunities on the Capitol steps with AL Governor Kay Ivey. Sponsored by the Cullman County Industrial Development Authority and City of Cullman Industrial Development Board, the Montgomery Drive-In featured lunch updates from the Cullman area’s legislative delegation — AL Representatives Randall Shedd, Corey Harbison and Scott Stadthagen, as well as AL Senator Garlan Gudger — and the Business Council of Alabama. The afternoon session consisted of updates from Alabama Board of Education State Superintendent Eric Mackey, Alabama Community College System Vice Chancellor of Workforce and Economic Development Jeff Lynn and AL House Speaker Mac McCutcheon.

Cullman-Jefferson Gas was the Montgomery Drive-In’s Corporate Sponsor, and River Valley Ingredients was Lunch Sponsor. The Better Business Bureau sponsored Leadership’s breakfast. This year’s Youth Leadership class opened “State Government Day” with a tour of the Alabama Department of Archives and History, followed by lunch and updates from the aforementioned area legislators. Before heading home, students spent the afternoon touring the State Capitol. McGriff Industries sponsored breakfast.

Leadership Cullman County, presented by River Valley Ingredients, enjoyed “Quality of Life Day” in February. Lunch was sponsored by Johnny’s Bar-B-Q.

Youth Leadership Cullman County, presented by R.E. Garisson Trucking, buzzed around the area for February’s “Business & Industry Day.” Royal Technologies served as Session Sponsor. McGriff Industries sponsored breakfast, and Culppeper Real Estate sponsored lunch.

Team-building taking spotlight at ‘Game Night at the Goat’

The Cullman Area Chamber of Commerce & Visitor Center is taking one of its most popular programs babaaaack to Cullman County’s only brewery, combining team-building with food and fun for “Game Night at the Goat” on Thursday, April 11. The Chamber’s first of two Business After Hours for 2019 will be from 5:00 to 8:00 PM in the back event space at Presenting Sponsor and host Goat Island Brewing.

“Game Night at the Goat” wouldn’t be anything without ... you guessed it, games. Team-building activities include:
• Pin the Tail on the Goat
• Cornhole
• Putting Challenge
• Football Throw
• Pictionary
• Wii Bowling
• Ladderball

All games will be played in teams of two. Businesses are more than welcome to send as many teams as they’d like, and individuals wanting to participate will be paired with other solo competitors. There will be a grand prize for the winning duo.

Registration is $15 for Chamber members and $20 for future members, which includes all activities, a sampling glass for one beverage and an assortment of delicious grub from our Food Sponsor, LawLers Barbecue.

For more information or to register, contact the Chamber at 256-734-0454 or info@cullmanchamber.org.
The Cullman Area Chamber of Commerce & Visitor Center hosted its 1st Quarter Industry Tour at Met-South on Wednesday, Jan. 30. The tour was sponsored by Inland Buildings.

Met-South is the newest addition to Cullman County’s industrial lineup, moving its home base from Birmingham to a 7,500-square-foot facility in Hanceville in 2018. The company is a precision machine manufacturer of tools, jigs and purpose-made production equipment used by automotive suppliers — including fellow Cullman area industries like REHAU, Topre and Yutaka.

The road to Hanceville has been a long one for owners Don and Cathy Jesse. The two opened Met-South in 2006 in Maplesville and soon made what they thought would be a temporary move from Michigan to oversee the struggling business. From there, they relocated to Clanton and later to Birmingham, battling to sustain a qualified workforce at every stop.

Those battles thankfully came to a screeching halt in July of 2014. “By divine intervention, we hired our first Wallace State graduate, Daniel Riggins,” said the Jesses in a letter for Industry Tour attendees telling Met-South’s story. “We saw qualities in Daniel that we had been searching eight years for. Wallace was now our survival plan, our ticket to finally developing a qualified workforce!”

The Jesses continued to strengthen their relationship with the Hanceville community college and eventually started a Registered Apprentice Program. By December 2018, the pair was able to move Met-South “as close as we could to Wallace State without being arrested!” — and have yet to regret it. On Jan. 10, Governor Kay Ivey presented the company with an award recognizing it as a leader in building the state’s workforce pipeline through work-based learning opportunities by providing Registered Apprenticeships.

Thank you to Don and Cathy for being such terrific Industry Tour hosts, and to Inland Buildings for contributing to the vitality of the Cullman area. The Chamber’s 2nd Quarter Industry Tour is scheduled for May 8 at Cullman Cabinet. Space is limited, so please contact us at 256-734-0454 or info@cullmanchamber.org to reserve your spot.
Nominations sought for 2019 Cullman Area Tourism Awards

The Cullman Area Chamber of Commerce & Visitor Center is now accepting nominations for the 2019 Tourism Awards, which are slated for June 25 at 8:00 a.m. In conjunction with the celebration of the Alabama Bicentennial, this year’s theme is “Cullman Stories.” The program will take place at Stone Bridge Farms and include breakfast and the announcement of the winners in the categories listed below.

**BUSINESS AWARDS**
These awards recognize businesses and events that differentiate themselves by providing exceptional service, anticipating customers’ needs and consistently exceeding visitors’ expectations.

**EXCEPTIONAL FESTIVAL OR EVENT AWARD**
Recognizes a festival or event that attracts visitors and locals, generates regional and/or state media attention, and positively promotes the Cullman area.

**BEST ATTRACTION AWARD**
Recognizes a regional attraction — including museums, performing arts, parks, amusement parks, etc. — that draws visitors and contributes to an outstanding tourism experience.

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

**EXTRAORDINARY EVERYDAY EATERY**
Recognizes a restaurant offering an outstanding atmosphere and experience for visitors.

**WHITE GLOVE AWARD**
Recognizes exceptional service from an individual hotel housekeeping staff member.

**SILVER SPOON AWARD**
Recognizes consistent superior service by a restaurant or food service employee.

**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 customers.

**SAVVY RETAIL SALES ASSOCIATE**
Recognizes excellent customer service from a retail sales associate who has first contact with the public.

**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/2019TourismAwards or stop by the Chamber to pick up a form in person. The deadline for nominations is Tuesday, May 21.

For more information or to reserve your tickets to the 2019 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.
Good Hope’s Owens, Shelby take top prize at YEA! Investor Panel

This year’s Cullman area Young Entrepreneurs Academy (YEA!) students stepped straight into the “Shark Tank” on Thursday, March 21, pitching their businesses to a pool of potential investors at the 2019 YEA! Investor Panel. The second-year event was held at Wallace State Community College’s Evelyn Burrow Museum and ended with several students receiving actual seed money.

The big winners at the end of the night were Sara Owens and Lona Shelby, of TeenLink, a social movement business specializing as a safe space and group to help teens with anxiety, depression, and other related hardships. As winners, the Good Hope High School duo will soon take their business to Rochester, New York for the YEA! Saunders Scholars Competition.

This year’s YEA! Investor Panel was made possible by the following judges and their sponsoring businesses:
- **Eddie Canaday**, Lazarus, LLC
- **Tom Dekle**, Milo’s Hamburgers
- **Suzanne Harbin**, Wallace State
- **Stephen McRae**, First Community Bank of Cullman
- **Gary Nunn**, Premier Bank of the South
- **Lance Self**, ZeroRPM
- **Leah Bolin**, Cullman Area Chamber of Commerce & Visitor Center
- **Stephen Skinner**, In-N-Out Self Storage
- **Blinda Walker**, River Valley Ingredients

The 2018-19 Cullman area YEA! class is presented by the Wallace State Community College Innovation Center. YEA! Corporate Sponsors are 412 Public House and Drinkard Development, and the YEA! Investor Panel was sponsored by Lazarus, LLC.

You can next catch the Cullman area’s students and their businesses at the YEA! Trade Show, which will be part of April 26’s 2019 State of Our Communities event at the Cullman Civic Center.
April Small Business of the Month

March Small Business of the Month

Year Opened: 1882
Number of Employees: 20
Chamber Participation: Chamber charter member (1943) | Cullman Area Career Fair vendor | 75th Anniversary Time Capsule | Regular attendee
Community Participation: Have active members in most local civic clubs and organizations | Annually support area schools with monetary donations to different organizations | Regularly offer free Medical Professional Seminars for Continuing Education Units

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Doubling Down: EPIC Dine-N-Dash returning with blackjack twist

New game, same great event. EPIC (Emerging Professionals Impacting Cullman) is going big for its first quarter social yet again, hosting the EPIC Dine-N-Dash Blackjack Run on Thursday, April 18 at 5:30 p.m. This young professionals event is taking a slight twist on last year’s social, switching from a poker run to a blackjack run. Not only will Dine-N-Dash attendees eat appetizers and enjoy drink specials at multiple downtown hotspots, but they’ll receive one playing card at each joint in hopes of building their best blackjack hand by the end of the night. Winners will receive some awesome prizes donated by local businesses.

Entry is $30 or free to EPIC members, so make sure to sign up for EPIC membership today! The Dine-N-Dash, sponsored by EvaBank, comes on the heels of February’s EPIC Membership Drive at Mae’s, where swarms of young professionals either signed up as EPIC members or renewed their EPIC memberships.

Keep an eye on EPIC’s and the Chamber’s Facebook pages for more details on the Dine-N-Dash route and prizes as they’re announced.

EPIC is presented by Drinkard Development.

If you’re interested in attending the EPIC Dine-N-Dash Blackjack Run or joining EPIC, contact the Chamber at 256-734-0454 or info@cullmanchamber.org.
Open For Business

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Brick Haven | 1889 US Highway 278, Cullman, AL 35057 | 256-595-5984

TriGreen Equipment | 3920 AL Highway 157, Cullman, AL 35058 | 256-739-5601

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