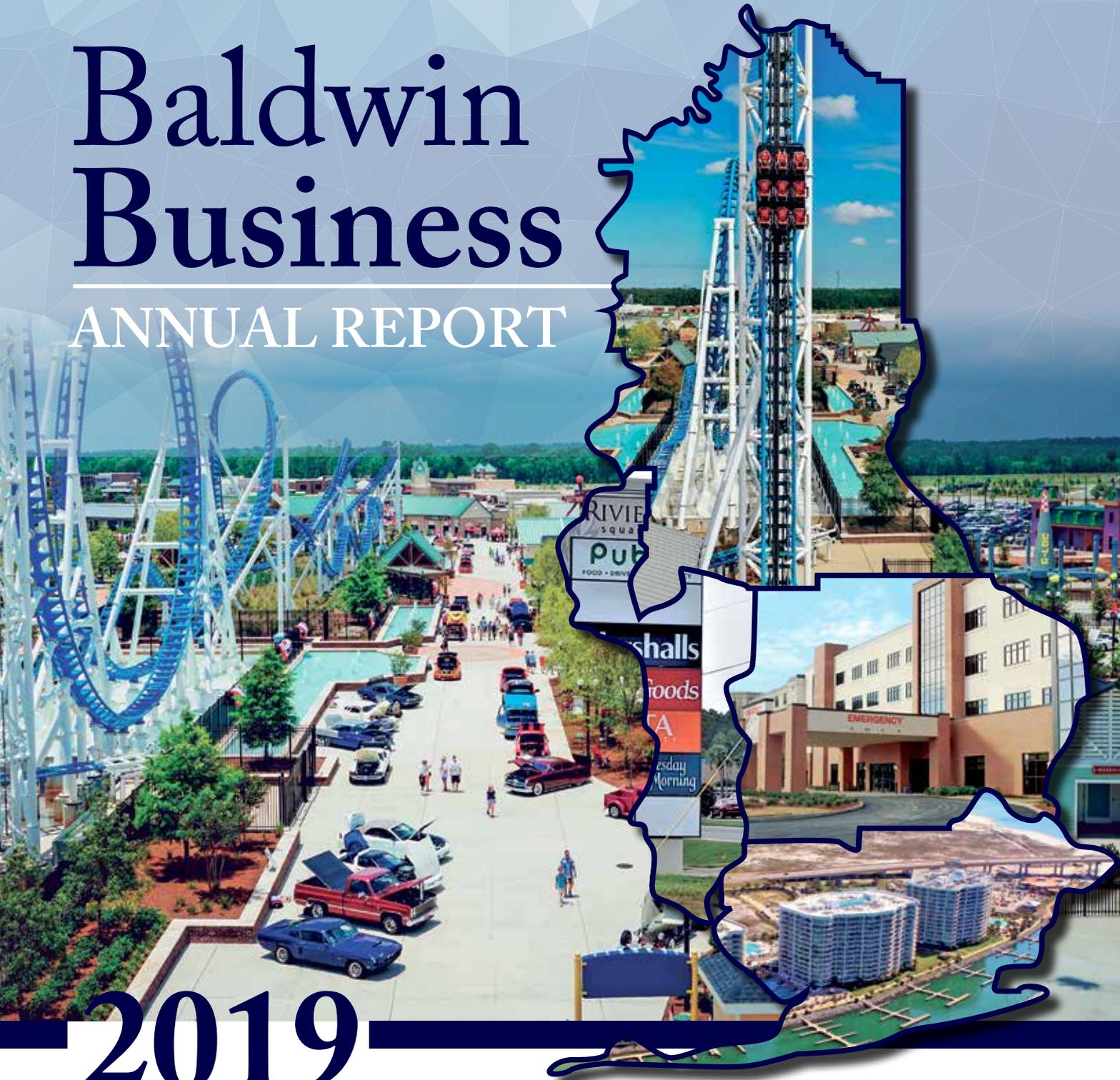


Baldwin Business

ANNUAL REPORT



2019



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Economic Development

Numbers show diversity in Baldwin business

By **JOHN UNDERWOOD**
john@gulfcoastmedia.com

ROBERTSDALE — Baldwin County has long been touted for its diversity and, for the first time, says Lee Lawson, president and CEO of the Baldwin County Economic Development Alliance, growth numbers for the business community in Baldwin County are showing that diversity.

“We obviously still support tourism in Baldwin County and tourism is still our biggest industry,” Lawson said, “but for the first time, in 2019, there are four industries that showed five-year job growth at or equal to that of the tourism industry.”

Those industries include retail food, boosted by growth in places like Foley’s OWA, distribution logistics, with companies like Ace, located near Interstate 10 in Central Baldwin, and the Healthcare industry, with major expansions from Baldwin’s major health systems, including Infirmiry Health and South Baldwin Regional Medical Center; and construction, which boasted a 30 percent job growth rate over the last five years.

“The growth in these areas shows a diversity that can only continue to get better,” Lawson said, “and continued growth comes with improvement in all areas, education, infrastructure, manufacturing and industry.”

According to the 2019 Year in Review Report, produced by EDA, the Alliance celebrated its 25th anniversary in 2019 of developing, supporting and growing the Baldwin County economy.

“While it is nice to look back on the past 25 years and see the fruits of our community’s collaborative development of our local economy, it is even better that we can look at our work in 2019 and say that our community and our organization continue to thrive,” Lawson said. “Baldwin County’s time as Alabama’s leader for population and economic growth has no end in sight, and I am proud that our county, our municipalities and our business community allow us to play our part in keeping Baldwin County on top.”

One of the biggest success stories in 2019, Lawson said, was the continued progress at the South Alabama Mega Site, with the Alliance securing \$7 million in funds from partnerships with Alabama Power and CSX Transportation to be used for site preparation and infrastructure development at the site.

“Thanks to the new Growing Alabama tax credit program managed by the Alabama Department of Commerce, funds invested are able to be exchanged for a dollar-for-dollar tax credit,” Lawson said. “The site enhancement should be completed by the end of 2020, saving prospective companies



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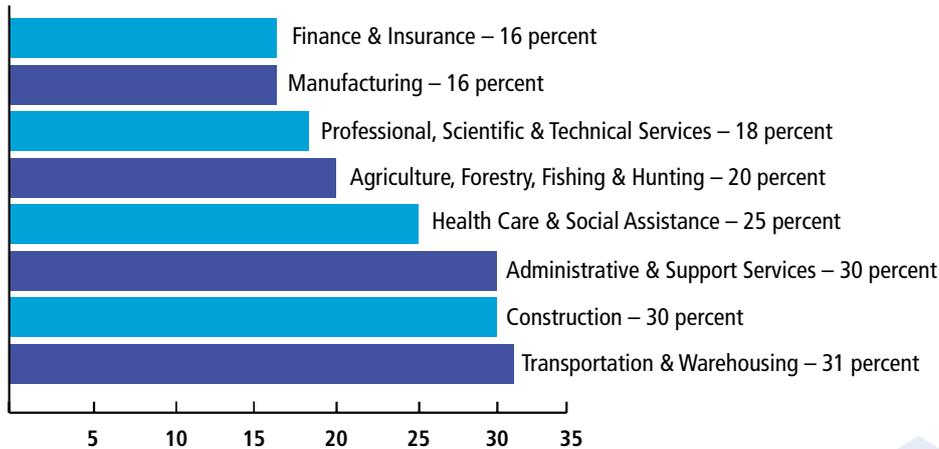
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Cover photos courtesy of Baldwin County EDA, Infirmiry Health, OWA and the South Baldwin Chamber.

Economic Development

5-year Baldwin County Job Growth

2014-2019



NUMBERS

CONTINUED FROM 3

time and resources and further increasing the site's competitiveness."

In addition to EDA's focus on the county's future at the mega site, the Alliance also assisted several of Baldwin County's existing industrial employers in choosing to expand their local footprint.

In Loxley, Ecovery made another significant investment in their facility, which will allow them to continue their streak of success. Bay Minette's Gulf Packaging also announced a major expansion with a new manufacturing facility in 2019, Lawson said.

Also in Loxley, the Chinese-based Kaishan Compressor USA opened its new U.S. corporate headquarters in 2019. The new facility is set to bring 62 new jobs and more than \$11 million in capital investment to the Loxley area.

In Foley, Ascend Performance Materials announced a major investment in new equipment that will increase capabilities in their Baldwin County facility. Segars Aero Corp in Fairhope also announced a significant investment in building and equipment.

"As new business and industry consider our county for their next investment, there is no better testimony for Baldwin County than the decision of our existing businesses choosing to grow and thrive right here in Baldwin County," Lawson said. "The importance of these Baldwin County success stories continues to drive our work at Hatch Fairhope, where we saw great success in 2019 assisting 18 local companies and signing direct partnership agreements with nine of those companies."

Founded in 1994 by Baldwin County private and public sector leaders at the recommendation of the Alabama



JOHN UNDERWOOD / STAFF PHOTOS

Kaishan ribbon cutting



Department of Commerce, the Baldwin County Economic Development Alliance is a 501 (c) (6) private nonprofit dedicated to growing and diversifying the county's economy and providing opportunities for businesses to succeed.

As a partnership of local public and private professionals, leaders and officials, the Alliance is funded and supported by the county government, 14 municipalities, five Chambers of Commerce, eight Industrial Development Boards and more than 100 privately-owned businesses.

The Alliance is governed by a 19-member board of directors, consisting of 15 private sector leaders appointed by the five Baldwin County Chambers of Commerce, two chamber presidents and two ex-officio members, including a rotating mayor and county commissioner each year.

2019 Project Activity

- More than 12,000 new job opportunities
- More than \$6 billion in new capital expenditure opportunities from 2019 projects
- Multiple project opportunities for each region of Baldwin County
- Four major expansion announcements by existing Baldwin County manufacturers
- Nine project opportunities in the aerospace sector in 2019
- 72 percent of project opportunities developed in-house by the Alliance

“As we move into a new decade, we fully expect that 2020 will be an even bigger and better year for the Alliance and Baldwin County,” Lawson said. “With strong local support from our elected officials and business leaders, Baldwin County is set to continue on our hot streak, and I can promise you that the Alliance will continue to do its part in maintaining and increasing that momentum.”



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South Alabama Megasite

Accolades

- The U.S. Census Bureau continues to rank Baldwin County as Alabama’s fastest growing county by population growth.
- Baldwin County continues to lead Alabama in incoming migration with over 100 people moving to the county each week.
- For the fourth straight year, SmartAsset ranked Baldwin County No. 1 in the state of Alabama for incoming investment.
- Brookings named Baldwin County as Alabama’s leader for economic complexity in 2019.
- Milken institute ranked Baldwin County among America’s leaders for creating and retaining jobs.
- For the third straight year, Baldwin County was named Alabama’s leader for workforce talent attraction by Emsi.
- Baldwin County ranked fifth on USA Today’s list of “Affordable cities where everyone wants to live right now.”
- In 2018, Baldwin County’s exports grew 55 percent, ranked second in Alabama for total exports.
- Since 2013, Baldwin County has led the state of Alabama in job growth, with almost 14 percent growth according to HowMuch.
- Five Baldwin County companies earned a spot on the 2019 Inc. 5,000 List.
- Baldwin County Public Schools improved their overall score on the Alabama state Report Card to 86 in 2019.
- In 2019, Baldwin County became a certified ACT Work Ready Community.

Tourism

OWA 2019: big reveals and future announcements

By **JESSICA VAUGHN**
jessica@gulfcoastmedia.com

OWA’s first tenants and Park opened in 2017, and the destination hasn’t slowed down since. Last year saw a number of new dining, shopping, and entertainment options come to both The Park and Downtown OWA, with permanent and seasonal activities being announced at every turn. While previous years saw a large number of restaurants and shops opening, last year saw a different type of venue reign supreme.

“The biggest thing I would say for 2019 is OWA has really focused on trying to expand its entertainment offerings for guests,” said OWA’s Director of Marketing/PR Kristin Hellmich. “Our goal was to add some dynamic entertainment options for our guests, and we really expanded on our events. We want to create OWA as a true entertainment venue.”

These new entertainment options include Legends in Concert, Las Vegas’ longest running tribute artist show which premiered in June. Also opening in June 2019 was The Park’s first interactive dark ride, Mystic Mansion, which quickly became one of the most beloved attractions.



JESSICA VAUGHN / STAFF PHOTOS

Construction within Paula Deen’s Family Kitchen, 2019.

Clash eSports opened during summer, offering a unique gaming experience with state-of-the-art equipment. Seasonal entertainment included the Krewe du Cirque Mardi Gras Parade, GLOWA dance party, OWA’s first ever Fall Festival, and the holiday Tree Lighting Ceremony.

SEE **OWA**, PAGE **6**

Tourism



Mystic Mansion premiered as the first new ride since The Park opened.



Legends in Concert opened in June, 2019.

OWA

CONTINUED FROM 5

The dining and shopping options that opened their doors during 2019 offered a lot of entertainment as well, such as Sweet Tooth at OWA and the long-awaited opening of Paula Deen's Family Kitchen.

Some famous faces made appearances out at OWA during 2019, and those lucky enough to be there at the right time were able to shake hands and meet with stars including Paula Deen, Paul Wahlberg, and Twitch star Clintus McGintus.

And OWA is only getting warmed up, with tons of announcements already made for 2020 and beyond.

"We're continuing to look to expand entertainment offerings at OWA, and there's a lot of great announcements that will be happening this year," Hellmich said. "We're starting construction on the waterpark, RV park, and new hotel, with an estimated opening for the RV park in fall of 2020 and the other two estimated opening in late spring of 2021."

Ground for the new waterpark has already been broken, and the beginning of 2020 has already seen the first new businesses open their doors, with many more planned in the future. OWA is ever expanding, and plans to become a household name for family destinations.

"For anyone that may have thought about visiting and hasn't yet, or who has visited once and hasn't been in a while, we encourage them to come out and experience it again, because it's ever evolving and changing and growing," said Hellmich. "We're always adding new entertainment elements for the entire family to enjoy."

To learn more about everything OWA has to offer, visit <https://visitowa.com>.

Medicine

North Baldwin Infirmary

Submitted

BAY MINETTE — North Baldwin Infirmary (NBI) celebrates its 50th anniversary on March 16, 2020, and with this milestone comes continued growth. In 2019, the hospital added a Cardiac Rehabilitation program under the medical direction of Meghan Courtney, M.D., a cardiologist with Diagnostic and Medical Clinic in Bay Minette. NBI also expanded its Senior Behavioral Health unit, an inpatient program for seniors 55 and older who are experiencing behavioral or mental changes, to 23 beds.

Outpatients in need of lab work or imaging services can now take advantage of a new outpatient diagnostic clinic, with dedicated parking and registration, located at the rear of the hospital. The new Diabetes Resource Center, accredited by the American Diabetes Association, offers group classes and one-on-one consultations. Pre and post checks for UAB's transplant clinic are now conducted via telemedicine at NBI, and an oncology infusion center was opened in late 2019.



In 2020, NBI will continue to meet the demand for cancer services in the area with the addition of board-certified hematologist and oncologist Dr. Jose Galeas. With the addition of the infusion center and Dr. Galeas, patients who previously traveled to Mobile or Fairhope can now receive their infusion treatments in Bay Minette. In addition to these endeavors, the hospital plans to open a new inpatient dialysis unit.

North Baldwin Infirmary, an affiliate of Infirmary Health, is the only Baby-Friendly hospital in both Mobile and Baldwin Counties and was named a Better Bama Babies Hospital in 2019. The hospital earned an 'A' Leapfrog Safety Grade for fall 2018, spring 2019 and fall 2019, and in 2020, the hospital received the Women's Choice Award for safety.

SPECIALTY MEATS



The unique taste and tenderness of highly marbled Wagyu beef makes for an unrivalled eating experience. That is why Wagyu beef is finding its way into the repertoires of Gourmet cooks and fine restaurants across the U.S.

Wagyu is also higher in a type of fatty acid called conjugated linoleic acid (CLA). Wagyu beef contains the highest amount of CLA per gram of any foodstuff – about thirty percent more than other beef breeds – due to higher linoleic acid levels. Foods that are naturally high in CLA have fewer negative health effects.

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South Baldwin Regional Medical Center

With the continued growth of our community, South Baldwin Regional Medical Center is committed to providing the best patient care by implementing the highest quality and safety practices along with excellent patient experience. The U.S. Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) recently released updated Medicare overall hospital quality star ratings on its Hospital Compare website. South Baldwin Regional Medical Center was the only area hospital to receive a 5-star rating, the highest a facility can receive.

In 2018, South Baldwin Regional Medical Center became the first teaching hospital in Baldwin County with the launch of a Family Medicine Residency Program. Now in its second year, the family medicine residency program, approved by the Accreditation Council for Graduate Medical Education (ACGME), is a three-year program with anticipation to fill its full complement of 24 resident physician slots in the summer of 2020. “With the ever-increasing need for primary care across the country, we are privileged to help shape the next generation of family physicians,” stated program director Timothy Mott, MD, FAAFP.

South Baldwin Regional Medical Center continues to expand its healthcare services within the facility as well as with their clinic network footprint throughout southern Baldwin County. The Alabama State Health Planning & Development Agency has approved South Baldwin Regional Medical Center’s application to build a freestanding emergency department in Gulf Shores. The freestanding emergency department will be located adjacent to Jack Edwards Airport, with Highway 59 frontage. The freestanding emergency department is intended to increase access to quality, emergency care services close to home for residents and tourists along the Alabama Gulf Coast. The hospital expects to begin construction on the facility Summer 2020 with projected opening Fall 2021.

The clinic network, South Baldwin Medical Group has experienced continued growth with the addition of four primary care and specialty clinics which includes recruitment of ten providers. South Baldwin Medical Group Specialists now include Obstetrics & Gynecology and Pulmonology practices in Foley and two primary care locations were established in Gulf Shores and Lillian. The medical group also offers convenient online scheduling and a single phone number for all primary care provider appointments. The clinic network now encompasses eight primary care clinics, five specialty clinics and the areas only 24/7 urgent care to serve the residents and visitors of our community.

South Baldwin Regional Medical Center is the only area hospital with The Joint Commission’s Gold Seal of Approval® for Advanced Certification for Primary Stroke Centers. “Stroke certification recognizes SBRMC as a leader in stroke care, providing a higher standard of service for stroke patients of Baldwin County,” said Daniel McKinney, chief executive officer for SBRMC. “Earning a stroke center certification at our community hospital reinforces our commitment to providing life-saving care to patients — close to home.”

South Baldwin Regional Medical Center has added a sec-



JESSICA VAUGHN / STAFF PHOTO

South Baldwin Regional Medical Center Ribbon Cutting



SUBMITTED PHOTOS

ond breast tomosynthesis, commonly called 3D mammography, for breast cancer screening at South Baldwin Medical Group Urgent Care & Imaging Center in Gulf Shores. The breast tomosynthesis scan produces a high-definition, three-dimensional view of the breast tissue that helps detect breast cancer in its earliest stages, while it is easier to treat and more curable. Residents now have the convenience of scheduling their 3D mammogram at either The Women’s Imaging Center in Foley or the Imaging Center in Gulf Shores.

South Baldwin Regional Medical Center has expanded their orthopaedic unit with the addition of a Center for Fracture Care. The center will offer patients with fractures a streamlined process from emergency department admission to discharge. The fracture center coordinator follows this patient step by step from when the patient first arrives at the hospital through surgery, rehabilitation and discharge. The focused and standardized process encourages quicker recovery and improved outcomes.

“Overall, our focus going forward is really to continue to achieve excellence,” McKinney said. “We believe in winning patients over one at a time, through experiences that they have here. We realize that the market is very competitive, that there’s a lot of great organizations from Pensacola to Mobile, but we really believe that if patients have the opportunity to experience the care that we give here, and experience the physicians that we have here, then they’ll want to come back again.”

Thomas Hospital

Submitted

FAIRHOPE – Thomas Hospital continues to provide additional services to meet the growth of Baldwin County. In 2019, the hospital added neonatologists and pediatric hospitalists to care for newborns and children. With the addition of neonatologists, Thomas Hospital is able to provide special care to newborns who need extra medical care, as well as pregnant women who are considered high risk. Keeping newborns and mothers who require extra care provides comfort for families who would otherwise have to travel across the bay.

The hospital's pediatric hospitalists are available 24 hours a day, seven days a week to care for hospitalized children up to 18 years old. The service was developed in response to a growing need in Baldwin County, as more pediatricians are focusing exclusively on their clinical services. Patient admission is arranged through local pediatricians or through the emergency department.

Thomas Hospital also added an interventional radiology lab in 2019. The lab is equipped with an advanced digital X-ray imaging system that gives physicians the ability to see extremely detailed, real-time images of patient anatomy during procedures that require exacting precision. The lab performs delicate procedures, such as placing a tiny wire mesh stent in a patient's artery to sustain or recover blood flow, deliver therapeutic material to tumors during oncology procedures or guide needle procedures such as biopsies.

Thomas Hospital is the only Commission on Cancer Accredited Hospital in Baldwin County, and in 2019, Infirmiry Cancer Care welcomed Dr. Jose Galeas, a board-certified oncologist and hematologist. Thomas Hospital also grew to

include Infirmiry Surgical Specialists, a group formed by Surgical Specialists of the Eastern Shore, Baldwin Surgery, Southeastern Surgical Associates and Cancer Surgery of Mobile. In addition, Dr. Caroline McGugin, who specializes in breast surgery, joined the clinic, helping to form one of the largest general surgery groups in the region.

In 2020, The Breast Center at Thomas Hospital will gain a 3D whole breast ultrasound that helps detect breast cancer in women who have dense breasts, which equates to 71 percent of the female population. With the aid of whole breast ultrasounds, breast cancer detection is improved over mammography alone by 37.5 percent.

Patient room renovation began on the second floor of Thomas Hospital's east tower in January 2020. After that renovation is complete, construction will begin on a portion of the third floor of the hospital's east tower to enlarge Colony Rehabilitation Hospital from 12 to 25 patient rooms. Colony Rehabilitation Hospital is the only comprehensive acute rehabilitation facility for patients with physical and neurological disorders in Baldwin County.

In 2019, Thomas Hospital, an affiliate of Infirmiry Health, received numerous awards including Blue Distinctions from Blue Cross Blue Shield for orthopedics and cardiac care, the Leapfrog Safety Grade "A" for patient safety in both the fall and spring. Thomas Hospital's birth center was also one of only eight birth centers in the nation to receive the Beacon Award for Excellence. In January 2020, the hospital received the Women's Choice Award for America's Best Hospitals for Outpatient Experience.



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1 Prospective Investor / Member Meeting

2 Gateway Introduction + Needs Assessment

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Baldwin County Chamber Coalition
Legislative Agenda

Technical Education Committee + Workforce Council Presence

Wage + Benefit Survey Administration + Analysis

Facilitating Collaboration between Peer Business Leaders

Defining Education + Training Opportunities



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Through partnership between Baldwin County chambers of commerce, employers, educators, local government, and other key allies, the Gateway Initiative continues to make an impact in the business community by executing business-driven programs of work to address the most critical needs in the region: **workforce development and recruitment, pro-business advocacy, and business acceleration and engagement.**

This collaboration has and will continue to allow for an increase in human resource bandwidth – through combined investment dollars and manpower – in order to make an impact on our regional business acceleration effort, together!

Every Gateway investor or client has the option to participate in and receive an *introductory needs assessment*, after which the Gateway team will offer applicable solutions or recommend referrals to other partner organizations. Check out our offerings!!

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Housing

Baldwin REALTORS® sees continued growth in the housing market and makes plans for the future

By KAYLA SANDERS
kayla@baldwinrealtors.com

ROBERTSDALE — With less inventory on the market in 2019, Baldwin County still managed to top last year's sales volume, sales price and properties sold, compared to 2018. Properties also spent less time on the market. Baldwin REALTORS® Multiple Listing Service (MLS) reports the total amount of residential active inventory in 2019 was 2,824 properties.

A total of 7,992 properties were sold last year, which is an increase of 3.4 percent from 2018 (7,729). Additionally, properties moved even faster with an average of 83 days spent on the market, compared to 89 days in 2018.

Last year's total sales volume increased 9.5 percent, totaling \$2,464,232,991, compared to \$2,250,398,706, in 2018. The average sales prices of residential properties sold in Baldwin County increased 1.7 percent to \$308,337. The average sales price was \$292,162, in 2018.

With the continuous growth of our county's population, Baldwin REALTORS® launched a campaign early in 2019 to promote its members as the most important asset for real estate market growth in the area. The campaign was based around the phrasing, "REAL Experts. REAL Advisors. REAL Advocates," signifying the layers of benefits that come when entrusting your housing ventures to a local REALTOR®.

"There's nothing as satisfying as the sense of pride that comes with owning or selling a home," said Sheila Dodson, Baldwin REALTORS® Chief Executive Officer. "Our overall mission as an organization is to share the message that our people are the experts and advocates that serve as the 'boots on the ground' to assist members of our community with one of the biggest decisions they'll make."

Based on the different areas and property types found within Baldwin County, certain markets saw more growth than others. "The 'Resort/Island-based' areas of Gulf

BALDWIN REALTORS®

2019 Year-Over-Year Report



Shores, Orange Beach, etc. are still the largest market, while the Eastern Shore is a close second. However, we are still seeing a continuous and quickening growth in the more rural parts of Central and North Baldwin," Dodson said.

With such obvious distinctions between the areas of Baldwin County, Baldwin REALTORS® uses this to motivate their efforts in the new decade.

"We are excited to begin a new certification program for members of our association," said Stephen Roberts, president of the Board of Directors for Baldwin REALTORS®. "This program will allow agents to specialize in either Resort, Eastern Shore, or Rural areas of Baldwin County. REALTORS® with a minimum of two consecutive years of membership at the association and 12 transactions within their area of specialty will have to take five full days of classes to receive their certification. Beginning in April of this year, we are offering these classes quarterly to 50 agents at a time."

"If this sounds like a lot of requirements to participate in the certification program, it's because it is," said Dodson. "To further build upon our campaign started in 2019, this year Baldwin REALTORS® will begin endorsing those agents that complete the program as a Baldwin REALTOR® Certified Specialist in either Resort, Rural, or Eastern Shore areas of our county. This will indicate even further benefits to the community, as these are REALTORS® that have taken time to learn all of the ins and outs specific to cities within our large county — the largest in the state."

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Baldwin County Home Builders Association

Submitted

The Baldwin County Home Builders Association is a trade association that serves its members by promoting the home building and construction trade industry, monitoring legislative/ regulatory issues and providing educational and networking opportunities.

BCHBA's goal is to provide and expand the opportunity for all consumers to have safe, decent and affordable housing. Chartered in 1973, the association is currently 775 members strong with over 5,000-member employees. The membership is comprised of 175 builder companies and 600 associate companies. Builders must be licensed by the Alabama Home Builders Licensure Board. Builders are the heart and soul of our association, from small volume builders and remodelers, to light commercial, multifamily and production builders. Associates are comprised of any person, firm or corporation in the building industry as a supplier of products or services and the many craftsmen. From selling lumber to financing mortgages, associates are a vital part of our association.

Members receive numerous money-saving benefits through local, state and national business discounts on products, services and even insurance. Other benefits include opportunities to participate in monthly events

such as the annual Home & Product Show, Spring Tour of Homes, Parade of Homes, golf and fishing tournaments and projects benefiting local charities as well as numerous net-working events.

The association has a Charitable Foundation to support its educational and charitable activities. It was founded to support and engage in charitable activities dedicated to the improvement of community housing and the residential housing community. It provides scholarships for students pursuing a career in the building industry as well as other educational programs. Scholarship applications can be found online at www.BCHBA.com. The deadline is March 15.

The association is reaching out to students to encourage them to consider a career in the building industry. Whether it be as a builder, architect, HVAC, plumber, carpenter, electrician, welder, landscaper, there is a dire need for skilled individuals. Membership provides a unique opportunity for individuals to help shape the future of their business and the home building industry. Membership begins at the local level and automatically includes membership in the state and national associations.

To find out more about the association, visit online at www.BCHBA.com and on Facebook.

NORTH BALDWIN
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SAVE THE DATE

<p>APRIL 24, 2020 <i>Annual Crawfish Cook-Off</i> BAY MINETTE, AL</p>	<p>SEPTEMBER 26, 2020 <i>Delta Dash Live Oak Challenge</i> STOCKTON, AL</p>	<p>DECEMBER 12, 2020 <i>38th Annual Christmas Festival</i> BAY MINETTE, AL</p>
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2019 Year in Review

The Baldwin County Chamber Coalition, One Voice for Business in Baldwin County

The Baldwin County Chamber Coalition, comprised of all five chambers in Baldwin County, was established in 2019, representing 3,500 members and 74,000 employees.

In 2019 the Coalition partnered to host a candidate forum for U.S. Congressional Seat District 1, Google Workshop for Small Business, a Career Technical Education Professional Development Day and more plans are in the works for 2020 and beyond.

Infrastructure

As members for the Alliance for Alabama's infrastructure, the Baldwin County Chamber Coalition supports continued advocacy for improvements, development and funding for Baldwin County's roads and bridges and supports efforts to ensure reliable broadband connectivity for business, industry and residents.

Workforce and Education

The Baldwin County Chamber Coalition supports legislation that will support the Governor's Success Plus Plan to increase skilled workers in the state with programs like registered apprenticeships, support development and availability of housing to fit workforce needs, support increased funding for workforce councils and increase capacity of available childcare for working

parents/guardians.

Economic Development

The Baldwin County Chamber Coalition supports legislation that will support reauthorization, improvement and extension of proven economic development incentives and tax credits, ensure a healthy and thriving economy and support legislation to ensure that the state portion of GOMESA funding is dedicated to Coastal Alabama.

Health Care, Environment and Quality of Life

The Baldwin County Chamber Coalition supports legislation that will establish and promote sustainable and responsible interactions with natural resources, encourage environmentally friendly business practices, support programs that allow increased access to quality health care and mental wellness programs for employees and service providers, and monitor legislative discussion to protect employees rights regarding the legalization of medical marijuana.

For more information, find the Baldwin County Chamber Coalition on Facebook or reach out to any five Baldwin County Chambers of Commerce.



North Baldwin Chamber

Submitted by NB Chamber Staff

The North Baldwin Chamber of Commerce has been serving Bay Minette and the surrounding communities since 1945, celebrating 75 years of service in 2020. Representing more than 300 members and 5,000 employees, the North Baldwin Chamber of Commerce is a business focused, member supported organization that works with the community to develop sustainable economic growth and to enhance the quality of life for all residents, business owners and employees. We work to represent the interests of our members and the wider community, and by doing so we are a united voice for progress in our area.

In 2019 the North Baldwin Chamber represented more than 300 members, saw a 91 percent retention rate and delivered a 311 percent return on investment as the average dues paid per member was \$232 while the organizational cost per member in programming and services provided was \$723. The Chamber introduced a health benefits program that made health, dental and vision insurance available to members; hosted 24 member-focused events and 5 community events; and joined forces with



SUBMITTED PHOTO

2020 Board

the Baldwin County Chambers of Commerce to form the Baldwin County Chamber Coalition to create a united voice for business in Baldwin County.

The North Baldwin Chamber continued efforts in workforce development and education hosting more than 600 eighth grade students at the 2019 Career Horizons Expo in partnership with the Eastern Shore Chamber to give students the opportunity to explore career pathways

SEE **NORTH**, PAGE 15

Eastern Shore Chamber

By GUY BUSBY

guy@gulfcoastmedia.com

FAIRHOPE — Expanding workforce development efforts, increasing political awareness during an election year and continuing the growth of programs to promote local businesses have been some of the main achievements of the Eastern Shore Chamber of Commerce in the last year and will continue to be goals of the organization for the upcoming year, Casey Williams, chamber president, said.

“It’s really been a great year for us,” she said. “Our workforce initiative has really taken off. With this being an election year, we’ve been in the thick of things, working with the Chamber Coalition to make people informed.”

The chamber welcomed 117 new members in 2019 to reach a total membership of 1,040.

The Eastern Shore Chamber was one of 30 organizations to take part in a workforce development program put on by the United States Chamber of Commerce last year. Christina Hellmich, Eastern Shore Chamber director of workforce development, represented the group at the event.

The organization’s Youth Leadership program, which teaches young people leadership skills, social awareness and other assets, continues to grow, Williams said. The program graduated 35 students in 2019 and 42 in 2020.

The chamber took part in the annual Baldwin County Jobs and Career Fair on March 10, 2020 as part of its effort to promote business development and employment in the area.

Last year, the chamber also formed the Member Values Committee. Williams said the chamber includes members from many different areas of the community including businesses, non-profit agencies and government. The committee allows members to meet and discuss issues that affect the community and their organizations.

Participation in ongoing programs such as the Eggs and Issues information meetings, Business After Hours and Morning Marketing meetings has continued to grow.



GUY BUSBY / STAFF PHOTO

Ryan Hankins, executive director of the Public Affairs Research Council of Alabama, addresses Eastern Shore Chamber of Commerce members during the organization’s January “Eggs and Issues” meeting.

This year, the Jubilee Festival of Arts also continued to expand its reach. The event drew a record crowd in 2019 and the festival’s website was checked by 65,000 people interested in the popular fall celebration.

“The Jubilee Festival of Arts continues to grow and evolve into a really special event,” Williams said. “With the addition of the culinary aspect, it’s continuing to develop to represent the Eastern Shore and what makes it special.”

The chamber began a tourism website to promote visitors to the Eastern Shore and led 30 Explore Eastern Shore Tourism Society graduates through local tourism education program.

Williams said the chamber continues to build community relationships. The organization worked with other Baldwin chambers to sponsor a forum for congressional candidates and develop a countywide legislative agenda.

The chamber has also developed programs such as the New Member Meetings in which businesses that have joined the chamber in the last six months can meet and discuss growing their operations, benefits of the chamber and other issues.

Williams said promoting the region and local businesses remains a core goal of the chamber.

“I believe that at the end of the day, people want to do business with people that they know,” she said.

NORTH

CONTINUED FROM 14

that begin with technical education. More than \$10,000 in scholarships were awarded to local students through the Junior Ambassador Program and the Young Professionals Scholarship Program. The Baldwin County Chamber Coalition also joined forces to host the Career Technical Educators Professional Development day for Baldwin County Public Schools.

From Business Development to Community Events, from Workforce Development to Tourism, and from Economic Development to Governmental Affairs the North Baldwin Chamber of Commerce has a pulse on Business and the Communities in North Baldwin. 2020 will see

more change and growth for the organization as they hire a third, full time employee dedicated to Membership Development, taking care of our existing members while welcoming new businesses to the area. With a strong program of work, the Chamber will continue to move forward to foster relationships, strengthen partnerships and grow existing programs, all for the betterment of the communities they serve. As an Alabama Accredited Chamber of Commerce through the Chamber of Commerce Association of Alabama, your North Baldwin Chamber strives to continue to be a good steward of members investment, ensuring that our membership is at the forefront of all that we do.

The North Baldwin Chamber is celebrating 75 years of service in 2020, and are looking forward to the next 75 years!

2019 Year in Review

Central Baldwin Chamber

Put down another successful year in the books for the Central Baldwin Chamber of Commerce, and what a year it was.

At 389 members strong and with 44 years of business leadership, the Central Baldwin Chamber's strong advocacy efforts experienced a myriad of successes in 2019. We're proud of our 97 percent membership retention rate. Of course, the Chamber provides networking, advocacy and educational opportunities, but our members benefit in many other ways. In 2019, we started a program to offer health, dental and vision benefits to Chamber members. Members can take advantage of other offers, such as commercial insurance discounts and member-to-member discounts.

Our 10 committees are managed by a diverse group of community citizens. Each year, we hold board nominations and a retreat to help solidify a capable, energetic group to provide outstanding leadership.

We represent hundreds of small businesses and non-profits, and four municipalities: The City of Robertsdale and the towns of Loxley, Silverhill and Summerdale. We're grateful for the strong continued partnership with our mayors, who continue to work across sectors to guide our area through economic growth while improving our business environment and enhancing our communities to ensure quality of life for residents.

We also enjoy an ongoing collaboration with our Baldwin County Commissioners that recognize the Chamber plays a critical role in supporting the needs of the business community and is essential to the county's continued economic growth and advancement.

We're proud to have awarded \$5,000 in scholarships through our Junior Executive Youth Leadership Program. We take our Junior Executives to Montgomery each year for Government Day at which they visit with the Baldwin and Mobile delegations during lunch, tour the Capitol building, and sit in on a portion of the House of Representatives and a Senate session. We also began offering Dave Ramsey training for our Junior Executives in 2019.

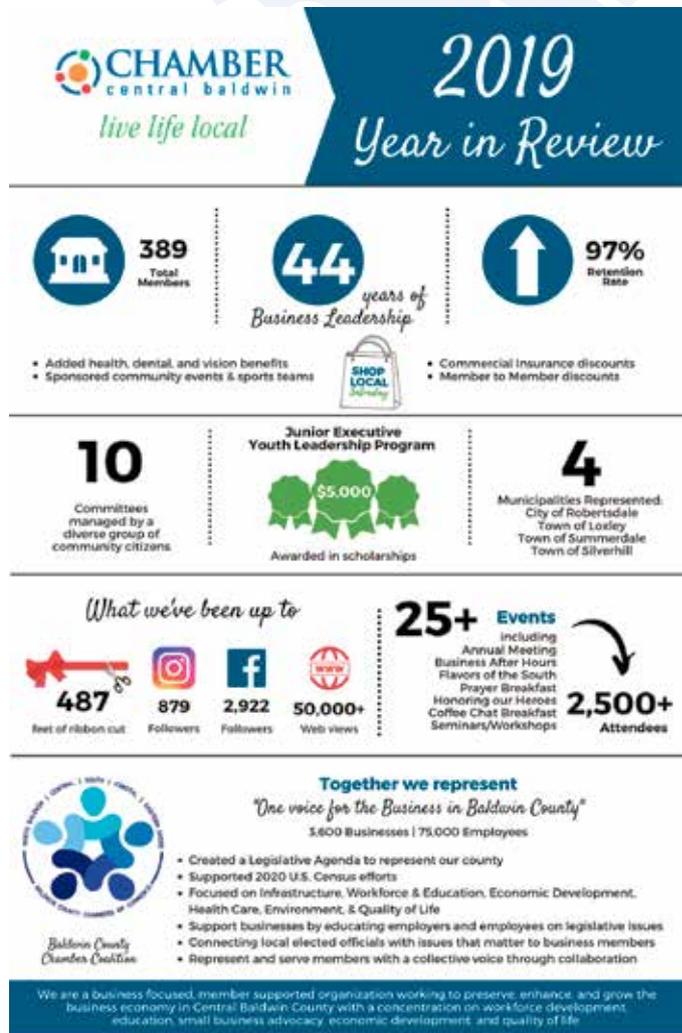
Throughout the year, we helped businesses connect, share information and tout essential happenings in the community. We accomplish that by hosting more than 25 events with 2,500 plus attendees, including the Chamber Annual Meeting and Business After Hours, an opportunity for networking and small business advocacy.

Our Flavors of the South, Food & Wine Festival serves as a small business expo, as well as a networking opportunity and a fundraiser.

Events in 2019 included our Annual Prayer Breakfast, Honoring our Heroes celebration for all first responders, Flavors of the South Food and Wine Festival, Chamber Leadership Breakfasts and an array of small business seminars and workshops to help businesses thrive.

In fact, the variety of ways we get involved in the community is as diverse as our membership.

We advocate for our small businesses through the Shop Local Saturday campaign. We host an annual community



blood drive. In addition to Chamber events, we support community events like wonderful Christmas parades and festivals that celebrate our culture and heritage.

We proudly sponsor community events and youth sports teams. We provide tourist information, and we're a go-to for business referrals.

We recognize dedicated volunteers each month and honor local businesses with awards at our Annual Meeting and with the Chamber of Commerce Association of Alabama and the Business Council of Alabama.

The Central Baldwin Chamber of Commerce works to preserve and build the business economy in this region. Membership gives businesses instant visibility so that they stand out as an active member of the business community. The Chamber is a proud member of the Baldwin County Chamber Coalition formed in 2019 by all five Chambers in the county. Through advocacy, we provide a unified voice for the business community in advocating for infrastructure, workforce and economic development. Through our collaboration, we strive to inform, educate and create a stronger voice.

South Baldwin Chamber

By JESSICA VAUGHN

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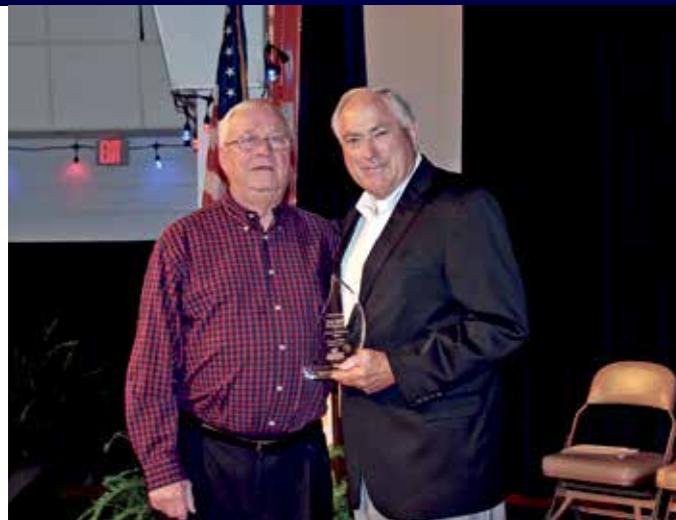
The South Baldwin Chamber of Commerce had many focuses during 2019 as it continued forward with its five-year capital project, the Gateway Initiative. Two key efforts of the chamber staff were to further strengthen and advocate for the business community and work with local schools to give students a bright future filled with opportunities.

The chamber grew the Gateway Initiative when it joined forces with the Coastal Alabama Business Chamber to create a collaborative capital project between the two organizations. This was done to spread the reach of the Gateway Initiative to the tri-city area. Previously the Coastal Alabama Business Chamber had its own capital project, Advantage Coastal Alabama, before collaborating with South Baldwin Chamber.

“We began asking why are we doing this separately when we could do it together, it just makes so much sense,” South Baldwin Chamber President/CEO Donna Watts said. “We want to help the tri-city area and the South Baldwin region, we want to help all the businesses we can, so why should we put a burden on the businesses to invest in two different plans that may be doing very similar things when we could combine our efforts and resources and do more.”

The initiative, which kicked off in 2018, was created to help the community’s workforce, education, and local businesses, and to forge strong bonds and partnerships between other chambers and municipalities. It met a major success last year when the initiative saw Tourism and Hospitality careers added to the list of recognized apprenticeships by The Southwest Alabama Development Council (SAWDC), which operates on a cluster model, or through industry partnerships. Prior to the inclusion of the new apprenticeships, there were partnerships between SAWDC for manufacturing, aviation, maritime, and healthcare in our region.

“Our region has 40+% of the state’s hospitality jobs,” said SAWDC Executive Director Josh Duplantis. “When I met Ed Bushaw [South Baldwin Chamber’s Director of Talent Development and Recruitment] he was very quick to show me the local wage survey, and not only does this rep-



JESSICA VAUGHN / STAFF PHOTOS

2018 Walter M. Vines Person of the Year Denson Freeman presents 2019’s award to Perry Hand.

resent high demand, but this industry also represents high wage jobs for our residents that we need to drive into these jobs, just like we do with all the others.”

The Gateway Initiative works closely with local schools and universities to help students find the right path for them, whether that be attending a four-year college or signing up for an apprenticeship. The South Baldwin Chamber Foundation works with the local feeder pattern to support students both while in school and once they graduate. During 2019, 41 Foley High School seniors were honored during the Annual Academic Banquet, which pays respect to the top achieving students.

The Chamber has plenty of other functions throughout the year. Big events such as The Gulf Coast Hot Air Balloon Festival, BBQ & Blues, the Chicago Street Supper Club, and the Magnolia Run draw large crowds to our area. Events such as Business After Hours, AM Connections, the Leadership Series, the Free Enterprise Person of the Year, and ribbon cuttings keep the business community connected and informed.

To learn more about the South Baldwin Chamber of Commerce, visit their website at www.southbaldwinchamber.com.



Gateway Initiative recognized by SAWDC.

2019 Year in Review

Coastal Alabama Business Chamber welcomes new Chairman and CEO

Chad Leonard – Chairman of the Board

A serving board member since 2018, Chad Leonard was recently passed the gavel to serve as the Chairman of the Board for the Coastal Alabama Business Chamber in 2020.

Leonard's work experience in Coastal Alabama dates all the way back to 2007 when he began work for the Honours Golf Company. He currently serves as the general manager for three HGC courses in the area, Rock Creek, Peninsula, & Craft Farms; a dream role for someone who spent his collegiate days as a member of The Citadel's men's golf team.

After 20-plus years in the golfing industry, Leonard has honed skills that come in handy when working in a vacation heavy town like Gulf Shores.

In the early 2000s he was impactful in the opening of River-Towne Country Club in Mt. Pleasant, South Carolina. Tasked with the challenge to build and manage a staff of 100 that was not only adequately trained but motivated in the art of exceeding guest expectations.

Starting from ground zero was difficult but worthwhile as one year after opening the club earned the South Carolina Golf Course of the Year Award from the National Golf Course Owners Association.

Leonard is also no stranger to driving up a membership



Leonard

base, having helped in a yearlong campaign that raised the River-Towne numbers from 150 to 320 members. With a well-rounded group behind him, Leonard is excited to bring his skills in a leadership role with the Chamber.

Greg Alexander – President/CEO

Greg Alexander is celebrating 11 years in the Chamber world, having first served as the Laurens County Chamber of Commerce President & CEO in his native South Carolina. The leap into the role came after serving in the finance industry for nine years.

While certainly a change of pace from what he was used to, the art of being a leader is in Alexander's heart and soul. After graduating from Presbyterian College in 1992, he joined the U.S. Army, rising to the rank of captain.

His service led him to Germany to assist in Operation Joint Endeavor in the former Yugoslavia where he was directly responsible for 215 soldiers.

Alexander's work with the Laurens County and Hilton-Head Bluffton Chambers continued all the way to the summer of 2018, when a new opportunity came on the horizon.

Tragedy struck the Coastal Alabama Business Chamber in January of 2018 when beloved President Ed Rodriguez passed away suddenly. In the wake of this news the Chamber board of directors had to work meticulously for nearly six months to form an adequate interview process to find a worthy successor.

Nearly 100 candidates applied for the role which was then narrowed down to just a handful to bring in for interviews, Alexander was one of the few who received the call.

Upon traveling down and seeing the area, Alexander and his family knew they wanted to call Coastal Alabama their new home.

After a nearly two-hour interview with members of the selection committee (consisting of past chairmen, board members and business owners), Alexander returned home. From there more candidate interviews continued and finally on July 24, 2018 it was officially announced that Chamber had found a new President & CEO, Greg Alexander.

Since beginning in the office, Alexander has helped lead the charge in bringing positive change to the Chamber through enhancing member benefits and strengthening already in place programs.

A major steppingstone included forming a partnership with the neighboring South Baldwin Chamber, leading to the Coastal Alabama Business Chamber recently becoming a part of the workforce development program, the Gateway Initiative.

In mid-2020 the Chamber will experience an expansion as a second office is to be opened in Orange Beach.

For the past year Alexander has been working closely with the Orange Beach local government to make this expansion possible. As this new opportunity arises, Alexander and his team are excited about the addition of the second office and better serving the Coastal Alabama community.



Alexander

beachin'
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WHERE WE TREAT YOUR PET LIKE FAMILY

PARKER KENNELS BOARDING AND GROOMING



“The customers are pleased with our work, and we keep our prices down.” — Ronnie Parker

Parker Kennels started twenty-one years ago in 1998, brought to life by a family with a plan.

“My son worked for one of the vets here in town, and they were always full,” said owner Ronnie Parker. “He said to me one day, ‘Dad, we need to build a kennel.’ So I told him we would go and look to see what we could find out about doing just that. We did that and picked out what we liked, and then we designed it ourselves.”

The Parker family built about 80 percent of the original building themselves, taking on the majority of the work. It was a family effort with their daughter, son and grandchildren. For the first four years of business, Ronnie ran the business with his wife, the only two employees onsite.

“You can’t just jump in and hire people, not until you get your clientele,” Parker said. “So we just built it up together, then finally we hired one employee, then two, and now we’re up to seven employees plus two professional groomers.”

During the off-season, the kennels are often half-full. Once the summer starts, they will become filled quickly. To offset the demand, a new facility was completed Oct. 22, 2019. The new building has 56 new kennels, adding to the existing building’s 44 runs, for a total of 100. It makes Parker Kennels one of the largest, if not the largest, boarding facilities in the county. Parker credits the kennel’s success to the employees and the community’s support.

“I’ve got good employees, the girls work hard,” said Parker. “They’re dedicated, and they love animals. I grew up on a farm myself, so I’ve always been around animals, and it’s an enjoyable job. It’s nice to see the different dogs, each with their own personality, and most of the time they love seeing you too. I just enjoy doing this, it’s a lot of fun.”

The vets in the area send any overflow to Parker Kennels, especially during holidays. Along with the typical boarding, Parker Kennels employs two professional groomers who are onsite Monday through Friday. This, along with the staff’s love of animals and the low prices, keeps customers coming back.

“The customers are pleased with our work, and we keep our prices down. We’re one of the cheapest places in town,”

Parker said. “I’ve always figured it was quantity versus price, because you can price yourself out of business very easily. We’ve only raised our rates here one time in all of the

21 years we’ve been in business. Even though our business has almost tripled our pricing remains the same.”

The kennels opened at \$12 per night, and now are only \$15 per night. For anyone who brings multiple pets to be boarded together, \$5 will be discounted from their total. Tourists who are staying in hotels that do not allow pets can leave them at Parker Kennels at night and pick them up during the day to take them along to the beach or to the park, and bring them back to the kennel before 5 p.m. Parker Kennels also offers \$8 daycare for pets, so owners don’t have to leave dogs in crates throughout the day while they work.

“We try here, we try really hard, and the good Lord has blessed us,” Parker said. “If it wasn’t for Him we wouldn’t be where we’re at. It’s good, and we love what we do.”

Parker Kennels is located at 12606 County Road 65 in Foley. You can reach them by calling 251-970-3647, visiting their website at ParkerKennels.com, or check them out on Facebook. New customers are welcome daily.



Ronnie Parker, owner **PARKER KENNELS BOARDING & GROOMING**

12606 Co. Rd. 65, Foley, AL.
Phone: (251) 970-DOGS (3647)
parkerkennel@yahoo.com

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