The Cullman Times | Sunday, April 3, 2016

Micial Newsletter

CHAMBER OF COMMERCE & VISITOR CENTER

CULLMAN AREA

126-1

## LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT

# **Praying for You**

Prior to 2011, I was one of those people who welcomed spring. But like many Cullmanites, spring reminds me of more than blooming flowers and sunshine. It means changing the batteries in my weather radio, cleaning out my storm shelter, and reflecting on all I have to be thankful for. The year of 2011 marked a new beginning for many of us.

How many times have you been asked, "Where were you when the tornadoes hit Cullman?" I won't bore you with the details of my experience (although it was an incredible story), but I will tell you the end of my story. One hour after the second round of tornadoes hit Cullman, I found myself trudging through rubble. My church was destroyed, downtown Cullman lav in shambles, and all I could do at that moment was weep. It all seemed so surreal. Things like this only happened in the movies or to other people. Of course I did what every other Cullmanite was doing - I began to work. Moving trees and cleaning up debris became my world for the next few days. As the hours turned into days, the needs became more and more obvious. Several of my coworkers were compelled to take action. People needed help and people wanted to help. How could we connect those two entities together? We took out a full page ad in The Cullman Times that



CHAMBER PRESIDENT

simply said: Need Help? Want to Help? Need Information? Have Information? We are here to match needs with wants. If you have a question, call us. If you have something you want to contribute, call us. Want to volunteer, call us. The outpouring of love and generosity overwhelmed my spirit. Immediately, calls and emails poured in. Volunteers came to our office by the hundreds, most of which were churches. Episcopalians, Baptists, Catholics, Methodists, Presbyterians, Nazarenes, Church of Christ, Church of God, literally every denomination was there to lend a hand. Nonprofits joined as one. Business men and women forgot they were competitors and worked side by side. Neighbor helping neighbor. Honestly, the next few days and weeks were a blur, but one thing is as clear to me today as it was back in 2011. There was no division amongst us. We were all united in one spirit to take care of and love one another – just as Christ commanded. It is with that spirit of unity that God placed a seed in my heart.

Serving the Community Since 1943

Why did it take a natural disaster to bring everyone together? I had preconceived ideas about every one of those doctrines - none of which mattered. How powerful and awesome would it be to bring together the church and the business community along with our elected officials, to pray - as one - for our community? Pretty awesome I would say! So let's do it! I am extending a personal invitation to all of you on Wednesday, April 27, 2016 at 7:30 a.m. at Loft 212 for the 2nd Annual President's Prayer Breakfast, but it is really a community prayer breakfast. It will be our time to come back together, just as we did on April 27, 2011, as one people, to pray for one another and with one another. There will be special music by "Almost Brothers", sponsored by WKUL-FM, and a testimony by Andy Marshall, a successful businessman from Tennessee, and a very dear friend of mine. It will be a glorious celebration. Praving for all of you and hoping to see you there. Thanks to our Presenting Sponsor Seventh Street Baptist Church, and our Corporate Sponsors Edward Jones - Ron Mann, Grace Episcopal Church and St. John's Evangelical Protestant Church.

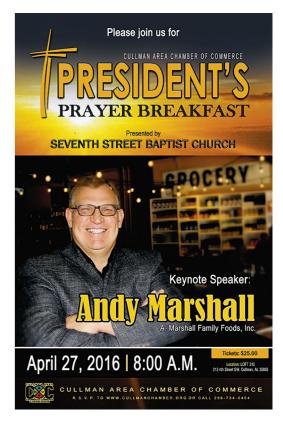
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## The 2016 Cullman Area Tourism & Community Improvement Awards

The Area Chamber of Commerce & Visitor Center is now accepting nominations for 2016 Tourism the Awards. The theme for the 2016 awards will be "Cullman Makers". starting at 9:00 a.m. on May 12th, Cullman Maker vendors will have their products on display and available for purchase. The program which will start at 10:00 a.m., will include brunch and the announcement of the winners of the categories listed below. The event will take place at the Brown Stone Centre at Stone Bridge Farms located at 281 Co. Rd. 717 in Cullman.

## categories:

#### **The Business Awards**

These awards recognize businesses and events that differentiate themselves by providing exceptional service, anticipating customers' needs and consistently exceeding visitors' expectations. **Exceptional Festival** 

## or Event Award

Recognizes a festival or event that attracts visitors as well as locals, generates regional and/or state media attention and positively promotes the Cullman area.

### **Best Attraction Award**

Recognizes regional attraction (including museums,

Cullman amusement etc.) which attracts visitors and contributes to an outstanding tourism experience. Near Nature. Near

## **Perfect Award**

Recognizes a business, organization, community or outdoor recreation area that has developed a tourism product/service that best demonstrates the ecological, cultural or historic assets of the region.

### **Spirit of Cullman** Award

Recognizes an outstanding tourism or hospitality related business or organization that provides excellent service, exemplifies innovation and causes our Here are this year's region to shine.

#### **Rockin' Retailer**

Recognizes a retailer that provides an outstanding shopping experience for visitors.

#### Extraordinary **Everyday Eatery**

Recognizes а restaurant offering an atmosphere that provides an outstanding experience for visitors.

#### The Individual Service Awards

These awards recognize hospitality and frontline individuals who consistently deliver warm, friendly and helpful a service, exceed visiexpectations, tors' anticipate customperforming arts, parks, ers' needs and have

verbal feedback about their exceptional service from their colleagues, supervisors or their customers.

#### The White Glove Award

Recognizes exceptional service from an individual hotel housekeeping staff member.

#### The Silver Spoon Award

Recognizes consistent superior service by a restaurant or food service employee.

#### **Superior Service** Award

Recognizes excellent customer service by an individual who has first contact with the public. Front desk personnel, concierges and all other guest employees service qualify.

#### **Savvy Retail Sales** Associate

Recognizes excellent customer service from a retail sales associate who has first contact with the public.

#### Heart of the House Award

Honors an outstanding individual who works behind the scenes to keep their institution, organization or business operating smoothly, creating a superior experience for the public.

**Hospitality** Volunteer of the Year Recognizes

volunteer (i.e. entertainment venues. museums, and festival and event volunteers) who has made an outstanding contribution.

#### **Rising Star Award**

Recognizes an up and coming leader for their exceptional efforts to serve and enhance the experience of the public. Those individuals who have been in the tourism industry for five years or less qualify.

#### Tourism Professional of the Year Award

Recognizes a person who has made a significant contribution to the tourism industry through more than five years or more of innovation, inspiration and industry leadership.

To nominate your local favorites, go to https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/ tourismawards2016 to nominate or stop bv the Cullman Chamber to pick up a nomination form in person. The deadline for nominations is Friday, April 15.

The Community Improvement Yearly Awards will also be presented at this program as a part of the event. These awards are given on a quarterly basis with one overall annual award any winner in each cate-

parks, received written or hospitality industry gory including: Best chamber members Landscaping (small), Landscaping Best (large), Best Curb Appeal, Best Restoration, Best New Construction, and "Building a Sense of Community." The Community Improvement Committee hopes to inspire others to take action to preserve, protect and promote community improvement in the Cullman area.

> The guest speaker will be Sean Miller. Miller is a Certified Personal Trainer. Cofounder of MOTIVATE **Redefining Workforce** Health, Owner of Miller Fitness in Decatur, AL, and provides athlete preparation for Olympic Development Programs. The theme will be "Improving Overall Performance" - Maximizing Your Potential.

priced at \$20 for

and \$25 for future members. Table sponsorships start at \$200 and include reserved seating for eight in a prime location with table signage. The presenting sponsor for the event is The **Community Shopper's** Corporate Guide. sponsors include The Cullman Times, **Cullman County Parks** & Recreation and The Smith Lake Book. The program sponsor is Johnny's Bar-B-Q. There are gold, silver and bronze table sponsorships available for this event.

If you would like to reserve your tickets to the 2016 Cullman Area Tourism Community and Improvement Awards, email info@cullmanchamber.org or call 256-734-0454. There are a limited number of seats available and tickets are on a Single tickets are first come, first serve basis.



## SMALL BUSINESS OF THE MONTH – MARCH 2016

On behalf of the Cullman Area Chamber of Commerce, the Retail Committee would like to congratulate Jack's Western & Outdoor Wear as the March Small Business of the Month, sponsored by Cook's Pest Control. As long time staples of the Cullman retail community, they are currently celebrating their 40th year of being in business. Throughout their rich history, they transformed and evolved from just being a western store, to carrying merchandise that fits each customer's lifestyle. They currently provide jobs to 14 full and part time employees.

In November of 2013, they opened a new 20,000 square foot store where they are able to offer over 20,000 pairs of shoes and boots, as well as clothing and accessories for the whole family. They now carry a large selection of work boots and apparel, Columbia Sportswear and Footwear. If trendier merchandise is what you're after, they've added that too; Frye, Johnston & Murphy, BedStu, Sebago, Alegria, Timberland, Naughty Monkey and more! In addition to offering great brands, Jack's Western & Outdoor always strives to keep competitive prices.

They are annual sponsors of the Cullman Sheriff's Rodeo, the Morgan County Sheriff's Rodeo, Bull Bash and the West Point Band Boosters Rodeo, support both City and





County athletic departments, and actively participate in the Cullman Christmas Open House. Throughout the year, they stay active in donations and support to local charities, while over Christmas, they'll provide help to DHR with clothing and footwear needs for the children. They also sponsor children from the Angel Tree at First United Methodist Church each year.

Their store is open seven

APRIL WINNER -JENNIFER'S TREASURES BOUTIQUE Jennifer's Treasures Boutique 322 1st Ave. SE Cullman, AL 35055 256-734-2517 APRIL MONTHLY SPONSOR -



days a week; Monday – Saturday 7AM – 9PM and Sunday 1PM – 6PM. Make sure to check out their Facebook, where frequent updates show new merchandise, special events and sales.

Each month, a sponsoring business helps celebrate and acknowledge the small business winner. If you have a local business you would like to nominate for their outstanding service, please contact Ben Smith at bsmith@cullmanchamber.org. Monthly winners will be entered into nomination for the Small Business of the Year award, which will be presented at the Chamber's Annual Meeting & Gala. Once again, congratulations!

## WORKFORCE SEMINAR

Learn about your rights as employers regarding recruiting, hiring, firing, compensation and establishing a workplace culture that reflects your philosophies and principles. The discussion will emphasize what you can do and the full range of options available to you regarding employment related matters. Each participant will receive a comprehensive, practical handout, including sample policies covering social media, harassment, discrimination and retaliation.

Richard I. Lehr is a founding member of the labor, employment and benefits firm of Lehr Middlebrooks Vreeland & Thompson, P.C., based in Birmingham. Richard and his firm have received the highest accolades possible from attorney rating services, including Super Lawyers (Top Ten), US News & World Report, Best Lawyers and The Chambers Guide to USA's Leading Lawyers for Business.

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Sunday, April 3, 2016

# **1st Quarter Industry Tour – Rehau**

Submitted & written by: ABI Committee's Industry Tour Liaison – Lisa Dickinson, Alabama Career Center System

On March 17, 2016 the Agriculture, Business and Industry (ABI) Committee of the Cullman Area Chamber of Commerce hosted its 1st Ouarter Industry Tour at REHAU, sponsored by Inland Buildings. REHAU, is the leader in "Unlimited Polymer Solutions," and is the worldwide brand for polymer-based innovations and systems in construction, automotive and industry. The Cullman manufacturing plant is an automotive supplier plant that produces automotive parts such as bumpers, spoilers, and body side moldings for manufacturers including Mercedes, BMW. Nissan and others.

REHAU's Plant Manager Albert von Pelser and Training Supervisor Albert Twitty spoke to tour participants about the history of REHAU, what the Cullman facility and other facilities produce, and then led the group on a very insightful and educational tour of the facility. The tour participants learned REHAU was founded in 1948 in the Bavarian town of Rehau, Germany by three employees. This privately held company, has approximately 20,000 employees world-wide at more than 170 locations. REHAU's Cullman facility has approximately 1,100 employees.

REHAU built their ers in conjunction with manufacturing facility in its professional train-Cullman in the late 1990s, ing department, REHAU and since that time have Academy. REHAU has expanded their facility partnered with local twice, more than doubling educators to offer paid



their square footage and adding advanced technology and equipment to ensure more efficiency and productivity. In 2014, REHAU also completed another expansion, a state of the art \$3 million, 12,000 square foot Automotive Technical Center adjacent to their manufacturing facility. It is REHAU Automotive group's first technical center to be located in North America and represents a major investment in Cullman.

The Automotive Technical Center enables REHAU to bundle production, engineering and development capacities together in one location. REHAU also uses the Automotive Technical Center as a training venue for technical center employees and customers in conjunction with its professional training department, REHAU Academy. REHAU has partnered with local apprenticeships through the Cullman School System's Fast Track for Industry program and Wallace State Community College.

During the tour, Albert von Pelser, shared with the group that in recent years' bumpers have changed drastically. He said "now bumpers house electronics, sensors, and high-tech safety equipment and these electronics are combined in our bumper systems. With the installation of the latest technology such as parking and back-up sensors, lane change assistant, and even short-range radar, meets the highest technical demands and safety standards and contribute to reducing the risk of accidents on the road."

The tour participants learned that REHAU develops and produces these complex bumper systems and supplies the finished products ready for installation. They produce components in over 500,000 color options and features.

Albert also shared with the group that through the expansions, Cullman's production capabilities have been upgraded and expanded with new injection molding equipment and fabrication devices as well as conversion of the existing paint line to an environmentally friendly water-borne paint system.

Tour participants also learned about REHAU's Just in Sequence technology. Albert von Pelser said "it is fairly easy to use a Just in Time technology because that is delivering materials by a specific time, but Just in Sequence is much more difficult." An example of how the Just in Sequence works is a bumper that is produced in the Cullman plant that morning, is transported to the Mercedes plant in Vance, Alabama in the exact sequence needed for that particular bumper to be installed on the correct automobile in the

or two where the Just in Sequence wasn't met.

REHAU's Cullman location also produces underfloor heating systems and gasket seals through their Industry division but the majority of their production is for the automobile manufacturers.

Thank you REHAU for a great educational session and industry tour! Thank you also for being a part of the Cullman community and providing excellent employment opportunities to over a thousand employees in our area.

The 2nd Quarter Industry tour will be held at Goat Island Brewing on June 9th and is being sponsored by HH Technologies.

If your Industry would like to take part in one of these quarterly tours, or if your company would like to sponsor a tour, please contact Ben Smith, Director of Small Business & Workforce Solutions at the Cullman Area Chamber of Commerce at 256-734-0454 or Lisa Dickinson, our ABI Committee's Tour Liaison at 256-734-5580.



exact sequence needed

for it to be installed on the

automobile on the assem-

bly line at the Vance plant

that afternoon. There is a

huge incentive for REHAU

to get it done right.

REHAU is fined \$100,000

by Mercedes if they do

not meet their Just in

Sequence timing and the

production at the Vance

plant has to be delayed.

Albert said he would like

to say they have never had

to pay the fine, but there

has been an occasion

Sunday, April 3, 2016

# **Annual Meeting and Gala - review**

Annual Meeting & Gala took place on Thursday, March 3rd where a crowd approximately 600 of attended and enjoyed a "Downton Abbey" themed program, where guest speaker Peter Good delivered an inspiring message centered around the idea of "Great Leaders Serve." In keeping with the theme of the era, the dinner, décor and attendees' attire were reflective of the 1920s. The passing of the gavel

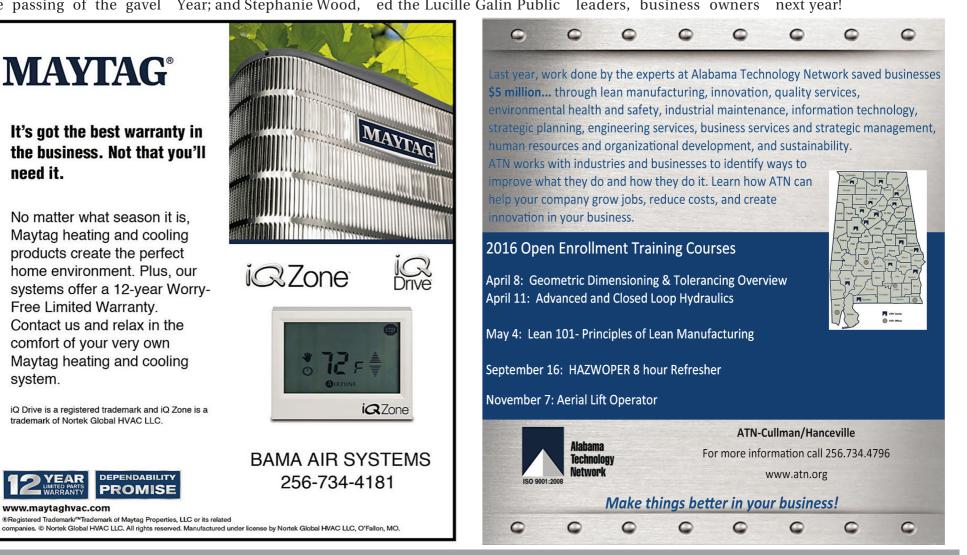
The Chamber's 73rd from outgoing chair, Jason Grimmett of Drinkard Development, to the 2016-17 Chamber Chair, Sammie Danford of United Way of Cullman County, kicked off the night, followed by an Annual Report of the previous vear's accomplishments under Grimmett's leadership. The Chamber also presented several awards. Of 12 nominees, Cullman Eve Specialists was awarded Small Business of the Year; and Stephanie Wood,

that represented United Way of Cullman County, was bestowed the honor of the first ever Ambassador of the Year Award. The Emma Marie Eddleman Citizenship Award was given to the Honorable Judge Kim Chaney of the Cullman County District Court system, who has devoted his life to public service and the betterment of our community. The Cullman Mayors Association also presented the Lucille Galin Public

Service Award, which was given to Peggy Smith, Director of the Cullman Economic Development Agency. Everyone had a great time and enjoyed the opportunity to come out and support the Cullman community and to celebrate the leadership of those whose efforts continuously help to put Cullman on the map. Thank you to the Chamber's Board of Directors, members, and volunteers, community leaders, business owners

and elected officials for your continued investment and support of the Chamber. Also, to a thanks is given to our sponsors of the Annual Meeting: Presenting Sponsor: People's Bank of Alabama, Corporate **Sponsors:** Warren Averett CPAs & Advisors, and Alatex; Entertainment Sponsor, Cullman Chrysler Dodge Jeep Ram. Hope to see you next year!

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## April Community Luncheon

Join us on the fourth Friday of the month, April 22, for our Community Luncheon, which

will be held at the All Steak Restaurant in the Banquet room from 11:30 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. Our guest speaker will be Sean Michael.



Michael

Director at Walkabout Production Group, LLC based out of Birmingham, Alabama. He has traveled to 30 different ety of unique experiences. He helped start one of the world's first Internet content companies and has been named a "Small Business Innovator of the Year". Tickets are \$15 for Chamber Members and \$20 for future members. Call 256-734-0454 or email info@cullmanchamber. org to reserve your seat. Thank you to our 2016 Presenting Sponsor Shirley Quattlebaum -State Farm and to our Monthly Sponsor Katherine Morgan -State Farm & Financial Services.

countries and pursued a vari-

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# **MINIMUM WAGE IS A TRAINING WAGE**

The of Commerce's Governmental Affairs Committee recently polled our membership for opinions about raising the minimum wage. The non-partisan survey was sent to gather our member's opinions and fulfill the GAC's function to educate our community about issues that affect us. While the questions were developed under less than stellar research principles, we had an overwhelming response from 265 people. Eighty five respondents felt this was so important that they took the time to give thoughtful opinions, replies and suggestions. Most of the respondents' opinions could be grouped into three areas and are worth sharing. Minimum wage is a

training wage and was never meant to be a long

term sustained pay rate.

Cullman's local busi-

nesses use minimum wage as a tool for entry transitioning into the job market. The goal is not to raise a family on a minimum wage salary. Many of the respondents shared specific details of how they hire and progress good employees through initial training and give progressive raises to retain good employees. The initial minimum wage period is seen as a "dating" period to assure the employee is dependable and teachable.

Chamber level employees who are Performance plan versus a "mandatory minimum wage hand-out". The most common recommendation throughout the survey was about paying for performance. Several business owners use aggressive pay increases or bonuses every three to six months to encourage their employees to learn new skills and see the results of their hard work in their paycheck. Our local businesses and employees Develop a Pay for answered that they are

concerned that increasing the minimum wage without having to earn it through hard work and dedication will crumble the American work ethic. Give a hand up not a hand out!

Increasing the minimum wage will cause all wages to increase and only compound the problem. If you have 200 employees and 10 are at minimum wage then you will have to raise 10 employee's wages. Eventually you will also have to raise the other

190 employee's wages to avoid employee dissatisfaction and wage compression. With raised wages for all employees, the cost of producing the product will raise and inflation will occur. The vicious cycle will continue. Many respondents encouraged the use of our free market enterprise which focuses on supply and demand.

Discussion of minimum wage changes is a hotly debated topic. Many local businesses already progress their good, dependable employees through an initial employment period and offer raises that compete with the proposed new mandatory rates. The one bonus is that new hires have to earn this rate and not receive it as a hand out!

Submitted & written by: Governmental Affairs Committee Member – Dr. Lori McGrath, Cullman Regional Medical Center



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## YPCullman – New Young Professionals Group to Meet on Cinco de Mayo

The Cullman Area Chamber of Commerce Young Professionals Group (YP Cullman) is a professional development program that encourages YPs to take ownership in the community and provides opportunities to grow so these young individuals are inspired to lead with enthusiasm, determination and passion. YPCullman is an outlet for the next generation of leaders to channel their energy and enhance their This new program is designed for young professionals, ages 22-39. Over time, we envision



YP Cullman members Coffee House in the to take strides in several facets of the Cullman area, including but not limited to: community awareness and concern, committee involvement, entrepreneurial roundtables, and eventually leadership roles.

The Chamber recentleadership potential. ly kicked off their first quarterly program for YPCullman, which was held on St. Patrick's Day Karma's at



Warehouse District. Attendees enjoyed a relaxed environment, fun icebreakers, beverages and hors d'oeuvres, and the chance to network and mingle with other like-minded young professionals. The Chamber's second YPCullman event will take place on another fun holiday – Cinco de Mayo (May 5th) - at the newly opened local brewery, Goat Island

Brewing Company. This time, we will still network and have some fun, but attendees will also get to enjoy a tour of Goat Island, hear a little bit of history about its founding, and see what they have to offer. Come out for a great night of fun and networking as we get to know one another and discuss the future of the Cullman area. For more information, please call the Chamber at 256-734-0454 or email info@cullmanchamber. org. Thank you to our Presenting Sponsor Zeb Little Law and to our Quarterly Sponsor Homtex, Inc.

PRESENTING SPONSOR - KARMA'S COFFEE HOUSE

## **April Morning Blend**

Come join us in the morning on Wednesday, March 16th for delicious coffee and great discussion at our Morning Blend, held every third Wednesday of each month from 8-9:00 a.m. at Karma's Coffee House in the Warehouse District. Chamber staff welcome members and visitors every month to attend this free event and discuss the hottest topics in business and share tips, ideas and viewpoints. Thank you to our Presenting Sponsor Karma's Coffee House and to our Monthly Sponsor Cullman County Center for the Developmentally Disabled.





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## **Estate Planning for Regular People**

## Free Seminar April 11

5:30 PM at the Cullman Chamber of Commerce

Seating is limited. Reservations are required.

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(256) 734-0026

## Youth Leadership Cullman County Holds March Session

The 2015-16 Youth Leadership Cullman County class had their eighth session on Wednesday, March 9th. The session was "State Government Day", and the youth traveled to Montgomery with Leadership Cullman County to meet with our state representatives and witness the legislation in action. On the two-hour drive from Cullman to Montgomery, the youth

received the opportunity to have some one-onone time with their adult Leadership mentor, asking in-depth questions about the realities of working in their field of choice. This candid interview process allowed each student an honest observation and perspective about the career path he or she may take. Once at the Capitol, the combined group enjoyed a historical tour

and luncheon where a legislative update was delivered by Senator Paul Bussman (District 4) and **Representatives Corey** Harbison (District 12), Randall Shedd (District 11), and Ed Henry (District 9). Following this, the student leaders enjoyed a tour of the State House Chamber led by Clay Redden, where they conducted a mock session and learned how a bill becomes a law.

Thereafter, they took a tour of the State House Senate where Senator Paul Bussman took time out of his busy schedule to further discuss several facets of legislature and explain what actually takes place in the Senate. After this, the youth were happy to meet with their mentors once again and compare legislative adventures on the drive back home to Cullman. This month,

the Youth Leadership Cullman County class of 2015-16 will graduate on Tuesday, April 19th at Belle Vue Hall at Stone Bridge Farms. Thank you to Presenting Sponsor Wallace State Community College -Future Foundation, and to our Breakfast Sponsor McGriff Industries, for your support and investment in our youth.

## Leadercast Cullman Broadcasting Friday, May 6, 2016



Cullman innovation, collabora-The Area Chamber of Commerce and Chickfil-A of Cullman have partnered together to host Leadercast Cullman. Leadercast is the world's largest one-day leadership conference, broadcast LIVE from Atlanta and simulcast to hundreds of locations around the world on May 6, 2016. This year marks the 16th year of the annual leadership conference and the first annual Leadercast Cullman event! The theme of this

vear's conference "Architects of is, Tomorrow," focusing on visionary leaders who imagine and build a future that is rich in

tion and full of hope. A future where problems are solved, questions are answered, and confusion gives way to clarity. The conference will equip attendees to create their own visionary path. Key speakers – visionaries in their own fields – will inspire the more than 400 people who attend locally, and the more than 100,000 people who will attend the event live in Atlanta, or at hundreds of other simulcast locations in more than 20 countries. Some of the keynote speakers include: Kat Cole - Group President. FOCUS Brands, Inc. (including Cinnabon®, Moe's

Southwest Grill<sup>®</sup>. Auntie Anne's®, and more), Steve Wozniak - Co-founder of Apple, Inc., Henry Cloud -Acclaimed Leadership Expert. Clinical Psychologist, and Best-Selling Author, Nick Saban - Head Football Coach, The University of Alabama and several more!

The Chamber and Chick-fil-A invite you and your organization to attend Leadercast Cullman on May 6, 2016 at the campus of Daystar Church in Good Hope. For more information and to purchase tickets, please visit http:// event.leadercast.com/ location/cullman.

