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Cullman's Myths and Urban Legends

Having lived in Cullman, Alabama all of my life, I sometimes feel as if all the people who live here are my family. Sure, you have the proverbial black sheep here and there, but hey, we are family, you gotta love em', you aint gotta like em'! If you are native to the South, you have heard it said, "Mess with me, I can handle it. Mess with my family and I will bury you where no one can find you!" It seems that every time I am asked where I am from, there are a few things I know people are going to say. Some positive and some negative. The positives are exceptional, but when people start saying things I know to be untrue about my Cullman family - I get my feathers ruffled! If you are from here - you know what I am talking about. With that being said, the chamber decided to combat myths with truth in the form of a "MythBusters" style presentation. If you have never watched MythBusters, it is a science entertainment television program for the Discovery Channel. The show's hosts use elements of the scientific method to test the validity of rumors, myths, movie scenes,

adages, internet videos, and news stories. The chamber decided to put a few myths to the test to see if we could "disprove" a few well know statements about Cullman. Who are the MythBusters? Dale Greer, Cullman Economic Development Agency; Max Townson, City of Cullman; Kenneth Walker, Cullman County; and Leah Bolin and Derek Lane, Cullman Area Chamber of Commerce. Between the five "MythBusters," they have over 200 years of experience in the Cullman Area. They don't just tell the myths, they put them to the test.

Below are the myths presented at a recent community luncheon.

1. Cullman is too small to support economic growth.

Dale Greer, with the Cullman Economic Development Agency, presented on the misconception that Cullman is too small to support economic growth. With business booming throughout the Cullman area, this statement disproves itself with the abundance of retail and restaurants popping up all over downtown, as well as increased small business growth. Cullman County was voted #1 in New & Expanding



LEAH BOLIN
CHAMBER PRESIDENT

Industries and #2 in the Amount of New Industry Capital Investment, according to the Alabama Department of Commerce. Cullman County was also voted the #3 Micropolitan in the U.S., according to Site Selection Magazine.

2. Cullman does not embrace diversity.

Cullman Chamber Director of Small Business & Workforce Solutions Derek Lane spoke on the debated subject of diversity in Cullman County. This is one of those myths that is ever evolving. With increasing statistics of different ethnicities and races present in the Cullman community, we like to think of ourselves as a miniature "melting pot" where anyone and everyone is welcome, and we treat you like family! Cullman's small town charm and big city appeal have attracted people from all over into calling our fine city "home." *Though sta-

tistics show Cullman is predominantly white, Lane, who presented on the topic is African-American, and stated, "[He] has never felt more welcome anywhere in his life." In regards to the infamous sign that people think of in reference to the area's history of racism, Lane had the following to say: "Is the sign real? It doesn't make a difference. What I've experienced here is no more or less than the issues in any other area I've been in. As I prepare to make my exit, I'll be an unofficial ambassador for Cullman."

3. The City of Cullman and Cullman County do not work together.

Cullman City Mayor Max A. Townson and Cullman County Commissioner Kenneth Walker, these two embody their communities to the fullest. From the Duck River Dam project and the Cullman Regional Airport to the County Road 222 Interchange and other shared tax endeavors. The Cullman area has a unique tax structure - for every dollar spent, the state receives 4 percent, Cullman City receives 2.34 percent, and Cullman County receives 2.66 percent, totaling the 9 percent sales tax. It's like the saying goes, "What's good

for the city is good for the county, and what's good for the county is good for the city!" These two areas are a united front and we are grateful to have such a strong commitment and partnership between these areas.

4. There is nothing to do in Cullman.

Cullman Chamber President Leah Bolin talked about the outdated belief that there is nothing to do in Cullman. There are more things to do in Cullman now, than ever before. Between the multitude of festivals, fairs, 5Ks and fundraisers, Cullman is a busy, thriving community of non-profits, civic clubs, organizations and businesses who love to have fun and play an active role in our society. Did you know there is at least one major festival/event in Cullman every month?

As you can see by the facts, all four myths have been BUSTED! Cullman is a great place to live, work and play. Our little, big town is prospering and the people of Cullman County - my family - is what sets us apart from the rest.

Thank you to *The Cullman Times* for their evidentiary support in this article.

Cullman Area Chamber of Commerce

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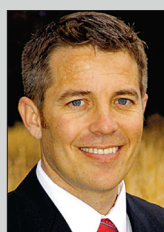
Harbison



Shedd



Bussman



Henry

January 2016 Community Luncheon

The Cullman Area Chamber of Commerce's Community Luncheons will be taking a hiatus during the months of November and December as we celebrate the holidays with our families. Stay tuned, though! We will resume our monthly sessions in January with our special guest speakers - our state legislature. Come out and hear what our representatives are up to when Senator Paul

Bussman and Representatives Ed Henry, Randall Shedd and Corey Harbison update us on the latest happenings from the capitol. Join us on January 22, 2016 for this special kick-off luncheon, which will be held at the All Steak Restaurant in the Banquet room from 11:30 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. Tickets are \$15 for Chamber Members and \$20 for future members. Call 256-734-0454 to reserve your seat.

Youth Leadership Cullman County Partners with Leadership Cullman County in Mentorship Program

The 2015-16 Youth Leadership Cullman County class kicked off their 9-month program in August and have covered monthly sessions including "Experiencing Leadership" Day, "Tourism & Community Day" and "Education & Etiquette" Day. The monthly sessions aim to educate the youth and increase awareness on issues of interest happening on a local, regional and national scale. The Youth Leadership Program is honored to partner with Leadership Cullman County, the adult version of the program. Through a newly implemented Mentorship Program, the youth were assigned a mentor in the Leadership Cullman County program at their first-ever Mentorship Social in September. The youth will partner with a selected mentor in the fall and in the spring to

job shadow and learn professional development skills. This innovative addition to the program will enable the youth to learn about a field of interest and gain first-hand experience. Thank you to our Youth Leadership Cullman County session sponsors to date for their investment in our future leaders: Presenting Sponsor Wallace State Community College Future Foundation, Social Sponsor Cullman Electric Cooperative,

Experiencing Leadership Day Sponsor EvaBank, Experiencing Leadership Day Breakfast Sponsor Pepsi Cola Distributing Company, Experiencing Leadership Day Lunch Sponsor Culpepper & Associates, LLC, Tourism & Community Day Lunch Sponsor Domino's, Education & Etiquette Day Sponsor Listerhill Credit Union, and Education & Etiquette Day Breakfast Sponsor State Farm Insurance - Bill Floyd.

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Paint the Town

"Paint the Town" is a wonderful opportunity for students to show off their talents and for businesses to support education. The program is in its second year and this annual contest is quickly becoming one of the more popular events among school-age people. This year the Cullman Area Chamber of Commerce Retail Committee expanded the competition to include all classrooms in any grade-level, public or private. Classes were encouraged to participate in the contest by drawing or painting a vertical poster no larger than 3' x 6' with a "fall festival" theme.

We received an exciting response with nearly 30 submissions this year. The competition was tough to

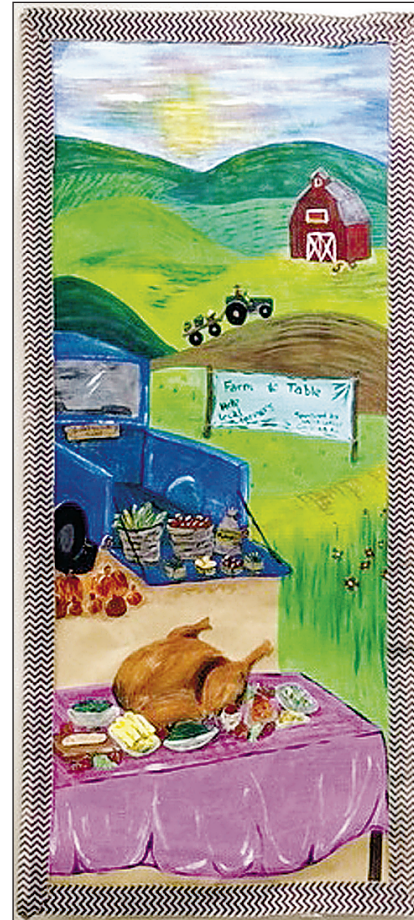
say the least. Four independent judges who have a background in art scored the posters based upon originality, visual effectiveness, consistency with the theme, and universal appeal. All of the entries were displayed at the Cullman Area Chamber of Commerce.

A winner and runner-up were selected from the following categories: K-3rd, 4-6th, and 7-12th grades. The winning classes received \$300 (1st place), \$100 (2nd place), and \$50 (3rd place) in each category. The overall grand prize teacher and classroom received an additional \$150 for a total of \$450 and lunch provided by Chick-fil-A. Webb Wheel was once again our proud sponsor for this event.

Congratulations to the winning classrooms!

Category 1 (K-3rd)
1st Place - Cold Springs
2nd Place - Vinemont
3rd Place - Cold Springs
Category 2 (4th-6th)
1st Place - Cold Springs
2nd Place - St. Paul's
3rd Place - Cold Springs
Category 3 (7th-12th)
1st Place - Hanceville H.S.
2nd Place - Cullman Middle
3rd Place - St. Bernard

We want to thank each class for participating and hope they will encourage others to enter next fall. This year's grand prize overall winner was Instructor Amy Chambers' Hanceville High School Class. Stay tuned as we plan to share more results from 2015 Paint the Town in next month's newsletter.



PRESENTING SPONSOR



ROYAL TECHNOLOGIES INDUSTRY TOUR

Industry tours are wonderful opportunities to learn more about the businesses and industries that exist in Cullman County and how they contribute to our economy and growth. Tours are scheduled on a quarterly basis and slots are limited. Our industry tour for the fourth quarter is with Royal Technologies Corporation, which will take place on November 12th at 10 a.m. There is no fee to participate but registration is required, space is limited. Register at www.cullmanchamber.org, or call 256-734-0454 to register. Thank you to REHAU for sponsoring our 4th Quarter Industry Tour.

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Public Forum to be held on the discussion of the Cullman County Commission

In early August of this year, State Representative Corey Harbison, along with Representative Randall Shedd introduced House Bill 26, a piece of legislation that would change the structure of the current Cullman County Commission from three to five members. The

Cullman Area Chamber of Commerce's Governmental Affairs Committee asked members of the Cullman community to give their opinion on the bill through a short five question survey with an option at the end for additional comments. Overall, the survey found

that members of the community felt positively toward the potential changes to the commission. The Governmental Affairs Committee will host a forum with Senator Paul Bussman on November 9th at 5:30 p.m. at the Chamber for citizens to discuss the issue.

MEMBERSHIP 101

Learn how to MAXIMIZE your membership investment in the Chamber by joining us for our last quarter Membership 101 event on Tuesday, November 10th from 8:30-10:00 a.m. This event will be beneficial for you whether you are a new member or a long-time member with some new employees. Come out and enjoy a delicious breakfast with us as we teach you the inner workings of your membership investment! This free event is on a first-come, first-serve basis. To sign up, call 256-734-0454 or email info@cullmanchamber.org. Thank you to our Folder Sponsors Eva Bank, Oden's Auto Glass and Uniform Place of Cullman.



NOVEMBER MORNING BLEND

Come join us in the morning on Wednesday, November 17th for delicious coffee and great discussion at our Morning Blend, held every second Wednesday of each month from 8:00-9:00 a.m. in the common room at the Chamber. Chamber staff will welcome members and visitors to the chamber building every month to discuss the hottest topics in business and share tips, ideas and viewpoints. The Chamber's Morning Blend is presented by Starbucks and is sponsored by Highland Technical Services, Inc. Thank you to our sponsors for their investment in the Cullman community!

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SMALL BUSINESS OF THE MONTH - OCTOBER 2015

The Cullman Area Chamber of Commerce and this month's sponsor, Eva Bank, would like to congratulate TP Country Club, formerly Terri Pines, for receiving the Small Business of the Month award for the month of October. Cherri Drake and her team at TP Country Club are active chamber members and a wonderful asset to our community. We appreciate their service and contribution to the economic and community well-being of the Cullman area. TP Country Club has long been known for its participation in the community by providing a venue for all one's recreational needs. In addition to their fantastic 18-hole golf range, tennis courts, and club pool, Terri Pines boasts a splendid dining and event hall that has the ability to host your largest program of the year. Visit www.tpcountryclub.com for more details!

Selection for the Small Business of the Month is made through an open nomination process. Each month, a sponsor-

ing 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.

In order to qualify as a Small Business of the Month winner, businesses must meet the following criteria;

* Must have fewer than 100 employees.

* A member in good standing with the Cullman Area Chamber of Commerce.

* Is active as a volunteer or frequently participates in Chamber functions.

* Maintains a creative, innovative, or unique approach to business.

* Provide superior customer service and/or products.

Monthly winners will be entered into nomination for the Small Business of the Year award which will be presented at the annual meeting of the Chamber. Congratulations once again!



Pictured, from left, are Maria Schultz, Chair, Retail Committee; Phillip Crumbley, President, Eva Bank; Cherri Drake, General Manager, Terri Pines; Bert McGriff, Terri Pines; Megan Harris, Event Coordinator, Terri Pines; Derek Lane, Dir. of Small Business/Workforce Solutions, Cullman Area Chamber of Commerce

NOVEMBER SMALL BUSINESS OF THE MONTH

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NEW CULLMAN AREA MAPS AVAILABLE

A new full color printed and online map of the Cullman area is now available. We have partnered with Chamber member NovoPrint USA, Inc. to produce the map, which has been printed in an updated format that reflects our growth and showcases our beautiful, progressive community. The map is a great tool to communicate information about your business to residents, other businesses and visitors. The Chamber distributes these maps daily in response to inquiries and to give directions to specific business or residential locations - in fact, it's one of the main printed publications that are included in each informational packet that we send out. Stop by the chamber today to pick up your new map! You can also contact the Chamber directly at 256-734-0454 or stop by the office at 301 2nd Ave SW in Cullman.

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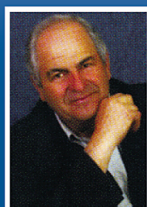
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Christmas in Cullman Open House

It's time to pack the skeletons, witches and jack-o-lanterns away, refresh your Pinterest page to reflect some Thanksgiving and Christmas DIY ideas and recipes, and dig into those few weeks before the holiday season to map out a true game plan for gift giving that will reward you with lots of savings and shopping deals.

The Christmas in Cullman Open House is scheduled for the second weekend in November per tradition and will take place on Saturday, November 14th and Sunday, November 15th. Check out all the participating businesses and

specials, discounts and giveaways at www.ChristmasInCullman.org.

A tradition as tried and true as they come, Cullman is known for its variety of fine retailers and quality merchants - as well as the smart deals and savvy discounts offered on this weekend.

The Cullman Area Chamber of Commerce & Visitor Center is prepared to host the North Pole again as our lobby will once again become a Christmas Winter Wonderland. Don't miss out on visiting with Buddy the Elf and his friend Jingles! We will have a live drama skit, a

free "Letters to Santa" station where the kiddos can write out their wish lists, and we will be offering *free gift wrapping on Saturday, November 14th from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. to Chamber Member Customers Only. We will also have goodies for the children, refreshments, free balloons and candy canes. You may also drop off your gift donations to needy children in the area. It's a holiday holiday! Don't miss out on this day of family fun! Call 256-734-0454 for more information.

*Limit 5 packages per customer. Chamber Member Customers Only.

Christmas Window Display Contest

Yes, it's that time of year again! Each year, the Cullman Area Chamber of Commerce promotes its Christmas in Cullman Window Display Contest. This year, it will be held on Friday, November 6, 2015. The contest is a wonderful way for our community to celebrate the holiday season and support local retailers. Winners are selected from three categories including: Restaurant, Retail, and Service-Related Businesses. Our 2014 winners included: Margo's Antiques and Gifts (Retail), Shimmer & Glo Tanning and Beauty Salon (Service); and Carlton's Italian Restaurant (Restaurant). Finder's Keepers and Bella Faire Day Spa & Salon placed in our runner-up category. Participants were asked to use lights and create a Christmas-themed display. We're challenging downtown businesses to get into the holiday spirit now and begin preparing for this great yearly event! Judges will score entries based upon visual impact, creativity, and artistic ability, and monetary gifts are given to the top Chamber Member winners... ho, ho, ho! Call the Chamber at 256-734-0454 for more information and to sign up!

Biscuits & Business at Westminster Assisted Living

Our 4th and final Quarter of Biscuits & Business is being held on December 1, 2015 from 8-9:00 a.m. at Westminster Assisted Living. Join us for a wonderful morning of biscuits, business, fellowship, and a delightful speaker. Thank you to our sponsor Westminster Assisted Living!

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Art After Hours - Calling All Artists

Our final Business After Hours event to conclude this quarterly held series will be on Tuesday, December 1, 2015 as we present our 4th annual Art After Hours Silent Auction/Chamber for Charities event to celebrate the end of a fantastic year! We are seeking local art and special pieces. As an artist, this is an opportunity to gain some exposure within our Chamber, as well as with community members. It affords artists a chance to give back to our local community and also to make a profit should they choose to do so. Fifty percent of proceeds go to the local Food Bank and 50 percent to the artists; however, the artist may also opt to donate 100 percent of the proceeds to our local area food bank.

The deadline to submit your artwork will be Friday, November 20, 2015. Any medium is accepted and subject to approval by the

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Chamber. You must be 18 years or older. Please provide any display or support needed for your pieces and let us know if you will need any special accommodations (ex: outlet). Limited space is available. We would like to thank all of our current members and invite future members to join us as we honor our local artists and celebrate the beautiful works of art that originate

from our talented community. Please email info@cullman-chamber.org to register or call 256-734-0454 and request your submission form or you may stop by the Chamber office. Thank you to our Presenting Sponsor, The Evelyn Burrow Museum at Wallace State Community College and Apel Steel Corporation, our Entertainment Sponsor.



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