



THE CORNER

A PUBLICATION OF THE SOUTHWEST MOBILE COUNTY CHAMBER

"Stronger Business. Stronger Community."



01.26



President: *Leigh West*

STRONGER *BUSINESS* STRONGER *COMMUNITY*

Happy New Year, Chamber Partners!

As we step into 2026, I am truly honored and grateful to serve as President of the Southwest Mobile County Chamber of Commerce. A new year always brings fresh energy, new opportunities, and renewed momentum, and I couldn't be more excited about what lies ahead for our Chamber and our community.

My theme for the year, "Stronger Business. Stronger Community." reflects what I believe to be our greatest strength: when our local businesses thrive, our entire community thrives alongside them. Everything we do - our events, our advocacy, our partnerships, and our outreach - should always point back to that shared goal.

Looking back, our Chamber continues to grow in both members and impact. That growth is a direct result of you - our partners - showing up, supporting one another, sharing referrals, sponsoring events, and investing in this community. Your engagement is what makes this Chamber so special, and I am incredibly proud to be part of such a committed and collaborative group.

In the year ahead, my focus as President will be:

- Strengthening connections between our partners
- Encouraging involvement and visibility across our events and programs
- Supporting the long-term success of our businesses
- And continuing to serve our community in meaningful, impactful ways

We will also be placing an intentional emphasis on communication, making sure our board, our partners, and our community stay informed, connected, and engaged with what's happening at the Chamber.

Our first luncheon of the year is right around the corner, and I look forward to seeing many of you there as we kick off what I truly believe will be one of our strongest years yet.

Thank you for the trust you've placed in me, for the support you show this Chamber, and for the role each of you plays in making Southwest Mobile County such a great place to live, work, and do business. I'm excited to serve alongside you in 2026 as we continue building Stronger Business and a Stronger Community together!

Wishing you a successful, healthy, and prosperous New Year!

With gratitude,

Leigh West

Roto-Rooter Plumbing & Water Cleanup

Director, Growth & Brand Strategy

Cover Photo: Canva

January Events:

1

Happy New Year!

As we ring in the New Year, we would like to extend our heartfelt gratitude and best wishes to our valued partners, sponsors, volunteers, and the entire community. Your dedication, support, and belief in our mission make a meaningful impact and allow us to continue serving, advocating for, and strengthening our local business community.

5

January Luncheon Preregistration Deadline

The deadline to purchase an online ticket for the January Luncheon is January 5th at 5:00 pm.

No tickets will be sold at the door.

7

Monthly Business Luncheon

Time: 11:30 am - 1:00 pm

Location: John C. Williams Auditorium

Speaker: Councilman Ben Reynolds

Caterer: Georgia Roussos Catering

14

AI Community Training

Time: 8:00 am - 9:00 am

Location: John C. Williams Auditorium

Join us for a free class on AI Tools you can implement in your business going into 2026. Breakfast will be provided for attendees. In order to attend, please complete the free registration online.

19

CAP Meeting

Time: 4:30 pm to 5:30 pm

Location: John C. Williams Auditorium

SMIA hosts a Community Advisory Panel (CAP) Meeting each month. The objective is to provide citizens the opportunity for an open dialogue with industry to help citizens better understand industry, and to help local industry understand community concerns.

20

Coffee with the Chamber

Our monthly Coffee with the Chamber is a great opportunity to network with other business leaders and representatives. This event is open for both current SWMCC partners as well as prospective partners.

30

February Luncheon Preregistration Deadline

The deadline to purchase an online ticket for the February Luncheon is January 30th at 5:00 pm.

No tickets will be sold at the door.

1

TALL Applications Open

Applications for the SWMCC's TALL Scholarship Program will open on February 1st. Applications will be available online or in the Tillman's Corner Community Center.



Our annual invoicing is underway, and we appreciate your continued investment in the SouthWest Mobile County Chamber. Your partnership supports advocacy, networking opportunities, business promotion, and programs that strengthen our local business community.

Invoices can be paid by mailing a check using the mailed invoice, scanning the QR code on your invoice to pay online, or logging into GrowthZone through the Chamber website to access and submit payment. If you experience any issues with your invoice or do not see an invoice when paying online, please reach out to info@swmccchamber.com for assistance. Thank you for helping us continue to serve and support our partners.

January Luncheon:

Speaker:



Ben Reynolds is a life-long resident of Mobile, Alabama.

A graduate of Theodore High School, Ben, and his family have been a part of the Dog River Community for decades. They have been involved in its development in numerous capacities.

Ben attended Troy University where he pursued a career in risk management and insurance. After Hurricane Katrina struck the Gulf Coast in August of 2005 and Hurricane Wilma caused massive devastation in south Florida two months later, Ben left Troy to pursue a career as an independent insurance adjuster in South Florida. He spent the next few years in the insurance business before returning to his studies at Faulkner University where he obtained a bachelor's in Business Administration.

Ben has held property and casualty insurance licenses for over 15 years and has handled claims across the United States. Ben served as the Riviere Du Chien Property Owners president from 2019- 2021, was a member of the City of Mobile Golf Course Advisory Board, and an ambassador for the Mobile Area Water and Sewer System. He continues to volunteer his time to the Riviere Du Chien Property Owners Association.

Ben is the son of James Reynolds and the late Tammy Horton. He is married to Melanie Cain Reynolds. The couple has two daughters.

Councilman Ben Reynolds

Luncheon Sponsor:



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BUSINESS OF THE MONTH



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The Chamber is proud to recognize Century Bank as our Business of the Month, celebrating their dedication to excellent service and community support. Century Bank has built a strong reputation as a trusted financial partner for individuals and businesses throughout southwest Alabama and southeast Mississippi.

Century Bank lives by its motto "We take banking personally," offering a comprehensive range of financial services tailored to meet the needs of both personal and business customers. Their business banking solutions include business checking accounts, money market options, merchant services, treasury management, and business loans — all designed to help local businesses grow and thrive.

Committed to local engagement, Century Bank invests time, talent, and resources in the communities they serve. Directors, officers, and employees regularly participate in local events, sponsorships, and outreach efforts that strengthen community connections and support economic development throughout the region.

Whether helping a small business secure financing, providing convenient online and mobile banking, or simply offering personalized service at one of their many local branches, Century Bank exemplifies the community-first spirit that drives our local economy forward.

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*By contributing beyond
partnership, these partners help
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strengthen our community.*

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includes annual partnership

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today!*



Executive Director: Tina Poiroux

As we step into a new year, January brings both reflection and renewed purpose for the SouthWest Mobile County Chamber. It is a time to look ahead with intention, building on the progress we have made while setting clear goals for the future. This year, our focus is grounded in a simple but powerful message: Stronger Business. Stronger Community. That principle guides every initiative, partnership, and decision we make as an organization.

One of the most exciting areas of continued progress is the Tillman's Corner Gateway Initiative. This beautification and identity project represents our shared commitment to enhancing the heart of our community. Tillman's Corner serves as a major entry point and commercial hub for our area, and the way it looks and feels has a direct impact on residents, visitors, and businesses alike. Over the past year, we have moved from ideas and conversations to tangible progress through collaboration with local leaders, business owners, and community partners. Strategic planning, early improvements, and coordinated efforts have laid the foundation for a corridor that better reflects the pride, energy, and potential of Tillman's Corner.

Beautification is not simply about appearance; it is about economic vitality and community confidence. A clean, welcoming, and well-maintained area encourages customer traffic, supports existing businesses, and attracts future investment. The Gateway Initiative is designed to do just that—create an environment where businesses can flourish and the community feels proud of where they live and work. In the year ahead, we will continue advancing this project through thoughtful enhancements, long-term planning, and sustained partnerships to ensure lasting results.

Looking forward, the Chamber's goals for the year are centered on strengthening our businesses while reinforcing the fabric of our community. We will continue to provide valuable networking opportunities that foster meaningful connections, along with educational programs that help businesses adapt, grow, and succeed in an ever-changing landscape. Advocacy remains a priority as we work to ensure the voices of our partners are heard and represented on issues that impact the local business climate.

Equally important is our commitment to community engagement. A stronger business community cannot exist without a strong, connected community around it. This year, we will continue to support initiatives and events that bring people together, celebrate local success, and promote civic pride. By working collaboratively with our partners, sponsors, volunteers, and community, we can create opportunities that benefit the entire region.

As Executive Director, I am continually inspired by the dedication of our partners and the collective belief in what SouthWest Mobile County can achieve. The progress we make is the result of shared effort, shared vision, and shared commitment. As we move through this year, I am confident that by focusing on strengthening businesses, we will continue to build a stronger, more vibrant community for all.

Thank you for your continued support of the Chamber and for the role you play in shaping the future of our community. I look forward to the year ahead and the progress we will achieve together.

Tina Poiroux

Executive Director

SouthWest Mobile County Chamber of Commerce

Meet the Executive Team:



Leigh West



Brett Orrell



Apryl Crowder



Jo Lynn Jones

President

Vice President

Treasurer

Secretary



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Welcome Dr. Cameron Kilpatrick

Cameron Kilpatrick, MD, MPH, has joined the healthcare team at Accordia Health in Bayou La Batre. A board-certified family medicine physician, Dr. Kilpatrick provides comprehensive medical care for adults and children of all ages.

She earned a Bachelor of Science degree from the Georgia Institute of Technology before completing both her Doctor of Medicine and Master of Public Health degrees at Tulane University. Dr. Kilpatrick went on to complete her family medicine residency at the University of New Mexico–Santa Fe program.

As a National Health Service Corps Scholar, Dr. Kilpatrick is deeply committed to caring for patients in underserved communities within the Federally Qualified Health Center setting. Dr. Kilpatrick is currently accepting new patients.

Located in the heart of Bayou La Batre, Accordia Health offers private and confidential medical care for children, adolescents and adults regardless of ability to pay. We accept Medicaid, Medicare, ALL Kids, and most private insurance. Discounts are offered on services based on a Sliding Fee Discount Program.*



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Learning Leadership:

Star Student Program:

Each month, the SouthWest Mobile County Chamber of Commerce recognizes students from local elementary schools for their dedication to learning. This Program would not be possible without our Star Student Sponsors. Congratulations to the following students who were recognized on Wednesday, December 3rd, 2025:

- **Jackson O'Rourke** from Bright Academy sponsored by Payroll Vault
- **Iris Golden** from Cottage Hill Christian Academy sponsored by Brian Lancaster, State Farm
- **Kennedi Robinson** Hollinger's Island Elementary sponsored by Evonik Corporation
- **Natalia Umanzor Meraz** from Meadowlake Elementary sponsored by Pilot
- **Lakeyn Powell** from Nan Gray Davis Elementary sponsored by BLP Mobile Paint
- **Olivia Brantley** from Pearl Haskew Elementary sponsored by Roberts Brothers - The Sessions Team
- **Emri Johnson** from W.C. Griggs Elementary sponsored by Alabama Power



Hankins High Achiever:

We are excited to partner with The Grounds to celebrate and support excellence at Hankins Middle School. Their continued commitment to encouraging student achievement helps us shine a light on the bright young leaders in our community.

In December, we recognized Zamari Neal as our Hankins High Achiever! His math teacher shared: "Zamari is a true leader with great integrity. He radiates positivity, is dependable, and sets a strong example for his peers. He is well-liked by students and teachers alike and is an all-around model citizen."

T.A.L.L. Scholarship Program:

The Chamber's T.A.L.L. (Tillman's Corner Area Learning Leadership) Scholarship Program wrapped up December with a strong focus on service, learning, and community involvement. Throughout the month, T.A.L.L. students proudly represented the Chamber by serving at multiple Christmas events, helping bring holiday cheer to families and residents across our community. From assisting children with crafts at our VIP Pancakes & Pajamas with Santa to marching with the banner at our Christmas Parade, these students demonstrated leadership, responsibility, and a genuine heart for service during one of the busiest and most meaningful times of the year.

In addition to serving at holiday events, T.A.L.L. participants had the opportunity to tour Mostellar Medical Center, where they gained valuable insight into healthcare careers and the daily operations of a medical facility. The tour allowed students to ask questions, explore different departments, and better understand the importance of teamwork and patient care. Experiences like these help connect classroom learning to real-world opportunities and inspire students as they consider future career paths.

The Chamber would like to extend a sincere thank you to the organizations, partners, and volunteers who make the T.A.L.L. Scholarship Program possible. Their time, guidance, and commitment play a critical role in shaping the next generation of leaders in Tillman's Corner. Applications for the Chambers T.A.L.L. Scholarship Program will open in February, and we look forward to welcoming a new group of students ready to learn, serve, and lead within our community.



Annual Awards Gala:

The Chamber's Annual Awards Gala, set for Friday, March 27th, will be an unforgettable evening celebrating excellence, leadership, and community impact through an artistic lens. This year's theme, "Framing the Future, Honoring the Present," reflects the Chamber's commitment to recognizing today's leaders while looking ahead to the continued growth and success of our business community.

The gala will spotlight outstanding business owners, community representatives, and leaders who have made a meaningful difference over the past year. These honorees exemplify innovation, service, and dedication, helping shape a stronger future while making a lasting impact right now. Through thoughtful recognition and celebration, the Chamber will honor those who inspire progress and elevate our community.

Tickets for the Annual Awards Gala are available online now, and sponsorship opportunities are also open. Becoming a sponsor offers businesses premier visibility during one of the Chamber's most prestigious events while directly supporting the Chamber's mission and initiatives. Sponsors play a key role in making this evening possible and in investing in the future of our business community.

The Chamber invites partners, volunteers, local business representatives and guests to join us on March 27th for an evening of celebration, creativity, and recognition as we frame the future together while honoring the achievements of today.

Tickets:

VIP Tickets \$75.00

General Admission \$50.00



"Framing the Future, Honoring the Present"

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COMMUNITY INITIATIVES

Deputy of the Month:

The SouthWest Mobile County Chamber is proud to recognize Deputy of the Month, Jedidiah Thomas of the Mobile County Sheriff's Office. Deputy Thomas exemplifies professionalism, dedication, and a strong commitment to serving and protecting our community. His consistent efforts to keep our citizens safe and his willingness to go above and beyond in his role reflect the values that help make Mobile County a strong and secure place to live and do business.

Public safety is a cornerstone of a thriving business environment and a strong community. Deputy Thomas's service not only enhances safety but also builds trust and confidence throughout the area we serve. We are grateful for his partnership, leadership, and daily dedication.



Officer of the Month:

The SouthWest Mobile County Chamber is honored to recognize Officer of the Month, Michael Pickens of the Mobile Police Department. Officer Pickens is a dedicated public servant whose professionalism, integrity, and commitment to duty make a meaningful difference in our community. His efforts to protect and serve reflect the high standards of excellence upheld by the Mobile Police Department.

A safe community is fundamental to a strong local economy. Officer Pickens's work helps create the secure environment that allows businesses to operate confidently and residents to feel protected. We are grateful for his service and appreciate the positive impact he continues to have on SouthWest Mobile County.



Brought to You By:

The SWMCC would like to thank Century Bank for sponsoring these programs. We appreciate their willingness to recognize such outstanding members of our community.



THE REAL ESTATE CORNER:



In December the Alabama Port Authority began demolition and reconstruction of Pier B South, launching Phase I of its General Cargo Modernization Program. Built in the 1920s, the pier served Alabama industries for nearly a century, overseeing a wide range of breakbulk and general cargo shipments. The \$100 million federal project, championed by former U.S. Sen. Richard Shelby, will

add 1,500 linear feet of dock able to manage 1,500 pounds per square foot. It will accommodate mobile harbor cranes, connect to rail, provide shore power, and integrate with the port's general cargo complex. RJ Baggett Construction is overseeing the three-year effort, which officials say will enhance efficiency, capacity, and sustainability while helping maintain the port's competitiveness for decades.

Merrill P. Thomas Co. Inc. announced in December that the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) has leased a 1,200-square-foot office at University Square Shopping Center, 5821 Old Shell Road in West Mobile. The new space supplements the Mobile District's headquarters at 100 Canal Street downtown and provides added workspace to handle increasing operations. The Mobile District oversees engineering projects that support national security, strengthen the economy, and reduce risks from natural disasters across the region. Officials said the other office will help improve coordination among teams and ensure USACE continues its mission of protecting lives, property, and infrastructure throughout Alabama and beyond.

The South West Mobile County Chamber of Commerce and Chick-fil-A held a groundbreaking Dec. 8 for a new restaurant at 5344 U.S. Highway 90 in Tillman's Corner. The roughly 4,000-square-foot location is expected to employ 80 to 100 team members, including management, kitchen staff, and front-of-house employees. Officials said the restaurant will serve the growing customer base in West Mobile while creating new jobs. The new site will feature a modernized drive-thru, dine-in seating, and kitchen equipment designed to manage high-volume service efficiently.

USA Health has opened the Center for Comprehensive Weight Loss at 6304 USA Health Boulevard, Suite C, in West Mobile. It offers personalized care for sustainable weight loss. The center provides bariatric surgery, physician-guided nutrition and exercise programs, and ongoing support from registered dietitians. Combining medical ability with lifestyle coaching and behavioral therapy, it aims to help patients achieve long-term wellness and support healthy weight goals.

Dallas-based company, Buff City Soap, opened a new location in December at 7721 Airport Boulevard, Suite E170, at Westwood Plaza in WeMo. The 1,100-square-foot store will employ 10 people and offers handmade, plant-based soaps, bath bombs, laundry products, and customizable scents. Buff City Soap also hosts birthday parties and interactive events. The company runs 266 locations nationwide, including local stores in Daphne and Orange Beach.

For questions or news tips about local real estate, please email ron@hfleand.com or call/text 251-219-8914.

By: Ron Sivak

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CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

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VENDOR SOIREE 12:00 – 2:00 PM
(REFRESHMENTS & NETWORKING DURING VENDOR SET-UP)

Chamber and Community Center Staff

Executive Director

Tina Poiroux, AACE
tpoiroux@swmcchamber.com

Administrative Assistant

Hope Driskell
hdriskell@swmcchamber.com

Event Coordinator

Jillian Baxter
jbaxter@swmcchamber.com

Event Specialists

Calvin Dickerson and Catherine Hartsock

For Rental Information call the Tillman's Corner Community Center at (251) 666-2488.



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