

# 10th annual Women in Business Celebration

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Starting from scratch is a nightmare. Building an infrastructure outside your business can be as vibrant and lucrative as the business itself. Having a network of business leaders is one of the best resources our Chamber provides. It's easy overlooking the small things, yet having the Chamber on speed dial has paid dividends when trying to figure out the economics of such a diverse economy as Decatur. In many cases, the Chamber has provided their services without even being asked to help; they just help get it done. We belong because I've always been able to count on the network which the Chamber has helped me build over the past few years and without it, we would be swimming upstream. The Chamber has worked diligently and professionally while helping small businesses to not only survive, but to thrive. They may be the best asset to make our city more lucrative for the small business owner.

#### **Tyler Jones**

Owner The RailYard, Wisk'd and Highpoint Market



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Nat Richardson President Decatur Morgan Hospital

I'm writing this now thanks entirely to the work of a teacher. Not the message, necessarily, though that's certainly the case as well, but the actual words, strung together in a sentence with nouns, verbs and adjectives to complete a thought from start to finish. And if you're able to read this, you owe the same debt to an educator who opened your eyes for the first time.

I get excited thinking about the more than 19,000 public school students in Morgan County along with the hundreds of private and home school students who are imagining a big, bright world and what's in store for them. Lifechanging transformations are happening just down the street.

Yet, in the midst of this excitement, our school systems are facing real challenges in our community. Specifically, the perception our systems are not up to par in our region. Comparing apples to apples, our test scores are competitive, our facilities are world class with award-winning technology integration in every classroom, we have a forward thinking early childhood/Pre-K expansion strategy, and more nationally named Blue Ribbons Schools than our local media can keep up with. And that list doesn't even dive into our county's deep commitment to skilled trade and career technical education.

I believe we are on a positive track, but as leaders in business and industry there is more we can do to support and influence the positive changes our educational leaders are working towards. We have three first-class system superintendents and several outstanding private school headmasters; what are we doing to support them? Can we do more?

The Business and Industry Partnership with Education task team's mission is direct and to the point: this team – as part of the Chamber's five-year initiative "The Partnership" – will provide the platform for our business and industry leaders to champion our schools to provide the highest quality education possible for all our area students.

What will this partnership look like? There are several ideas on the table, many of which expand the reach of already established Chamber programs like Partners in Education, Edge and Equip Student Leadership, as well as several long-time workforce training

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Decatur-Morgan County Chamber of Commerce

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**On the Cover:** Tami Reist, recipient of the ATHENA Leadership Award at the Chamber's 10th annual Women in Business Celebration

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Jessica Payne, Community Free Clinic of Decatur-Morgan County (President, Decatur Women's Chamber)

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Yvette Rice, LLVE, Inc.

Nathaniel Richardson, Jr., Decatur Morgan Hospital

Kelly Thomas, Courtyard by Marriott (President, Decatur Jaycees)

Terry White, Edward Jones

### **10th Annual Women in Business Celebration honors servant leadership, inspiration**



Nearly 350 people attended the Chamber's 10th annual Women in Business Celebration.

Tami Reist, president and chief executive officer of Alabama Mountain Lakes Tourist Association, as well as a long-time fixture in the State's tourism industry, was honored Oct. 2 with the ATHENA Leadership Award at the Chamber's 10th annual Women in Business Celebration at Doubletree by Hilton Decatur Riverfront.

Named for the Greek goddess of wisdom, as well as the champion of justice and law, the ATHENA award is presented across the world by chambers of commerce, women's organizations and universities. It is an international program and is promoted by local organizations.

"You will not find a more generous heart and community servant than Tami, and her willingness to put others before herself makes her an incredible leader among her peers," said Trudy Grisham, a member of the nominating committee and past ATHENA recipient. "She always seeks opportunities to partner with others, living by the Helen Keller quote 'alone we can do so little, together we can do so much.' Her mentorship of others and her deep dedication to our tourism industry has made a generational impact on our state."

As president and CEO of Alabama Mountain Lakes, Reist is responsible for the planning, implementing, directing, and evaluating all promotional programs as well as overall development of the tourism and travel industry within the 16 northernmost counties of the State of Alabama. The region currently generates more than \$2.5 billion in travel expenditures on an annual basis. Her responsibilities also include strengthening and expanding the membership base of AMLA, a not-for-profit organization that is supported by 500plus members consisting of Chambers of Commerce, Convention & Visitors Bureaus, attractions, campgrounds,

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### 10th Annual Women in Business continued



Tami Reist, president and CEO of Alabama Mountain Lakes Tourist Association, was recognized as the 2018 ATHENA International Leadership recipient.

festivals, communities, counties, golf courses, restaurants, tour operators, accommodations, vendors, financial institutions, and individuals. Counties included within the AMLA region are Blount, Cherokee, Colbert, Cullman, DeKalb, Etowah, Franklin, Jackson, Lauderdale, Lawrence, Limestone, Madison, Marion, Marshall, Morgan, and Winston. Under her leadership, Alabama Mountain Lakes received the 2015 Chairman of the Board Award from the Southeast Tourism Society, and in 2016, Reist was presented the Alabama Tourism Partnership Award of Excellence.

Reist is a board member for a number of tourism and travel-related and civic organizations including: governor appointee to the Scenic Byways Committee, Alabama Tourism Chair for the Appalachian Regional Commission, Southeast Tourism Society Legislative Council, the Alabama Bicentennial Commission, Alabama Travel Council, Alabama Council of Association Prior to serving as president and CEO of Alabama Mountain Lakes, ATHENA recipient Tami Reist was the president and CEO of the Decatur-Morgan County Convention and Visitors Bureau.

Executives, Alabama Association of Destination Marketing Organizations, and numerous other local and state travel related groups. She is also an instructor at the Southeast Tourism Society's Marketing College in Dahlonega, Ga., and is a past contributing presenter to the tourism and travel field of study at Mississippi State University in Starkville. Among her many recognitions are the Alabama Travel Council Partnership Award, the Southeast Tourism Society Dorothy Hardman Spirit Award, and This is Alabama and Birmingham magazine's 2018 "Women Who Shape the State" honoree.

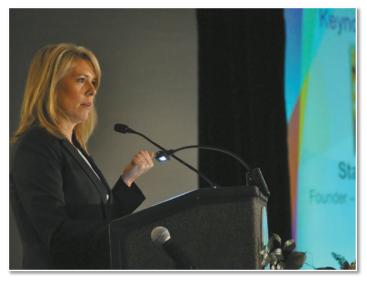
Before leading Alabama Mountain Lakes, Reist has served as the president and CEO of the Decatur-Morgan County Convention and Visitors Bureau. Under her management at the CVB, her team received the "Shining Example" award from the Southeast Tourism Society in 2009 and the 2008 "Tourism Organization



of the Year" award from the Alabama Tourism Department. She was also previously the project manager and general manager of the Courtyard by Marriott - Decatur, Ala.; regional manager for the Hampton Inn and Country Inn & Suites by Carlson - Decatur and Florence, Ala.; and as general manager and project coordinator of the Amberley Suite Hotel - Decatur, Ala.

Reist and her husband, Glenn, have four adult children and live in Moulton, Ala.

Following the ATHENA honor, Stacy Brown, founder of Chicken Salad Chick, shared her story of inspiration and drive for success as the keynote speaker for the event. Her fast casual concept has been featured in numerous publications including Nation's Restaurant News' "Breakout Brands," the fast casual industry report, and was named a top-10 finalist in Franchise Business Review's "Best of the Best" list for emerging



Stacy Brown, founder of Chicken Salad Chick, served as keynote speaker for the 10th annual Women in Business Celebration.



During her keynote talk, Chicken Salad Chick Founder Stacy Brown shared her story of selling chicken salad from her home kitchen in Auburn, Ala., all the way to her plans of opening her 100th store in late October.



Nearly 350 people attended the Chamber's 10th annual Women in Business Celebration.

franchises. Most recently, the concept ranked #37 on the Inc. 5000 "Fastest Growing Companies in America" list. Chicken Salad Chick has sold more than 150 franchises and is opening their 100th restaurant this month. Brown herself has earned spots on CNBC's "Power Lunch", CNN's Airport Network "Companies on the Move" segment, and FOX Business' "Fox & Friends." Among her honors, she won 2014 Restaurateur of the Year for the State of Alabama and 2016 Entrepreneur of the Year for Auburn University. Brown currently serves on the executive committee

of the Women's Philanthropy Board for the Advancement of Philanthropy and Nonprofit Studies, and is cofounder of the Chicken Salad Chick Foundation, a non-profit organization whose initiatives include feeding the hungry & fighting cancer.

The luncheon was presented by Nucor Steel Decatur, along with gold sponsors Dunagan, Yates, & Alison, Huntsville International Airport and Indorama Ventures.

#### **Presenting Sponsor**



#### **Gold Sponsors**







### Morningside, Reach256 connect the community

In August and September, the Chamber gave the business community an opportunity to come together first thing in the morning and connect. On Aug. 30, more than 40 Chamber members and guests visited **Morningside of Decatur** and enjoyed refreshments while connecting with other business leaders in the community, as well as learned about Morningside and their offerings for families. On Sept. 25, members and their guests stopped by the Princess Theater lobby in downtown Decatur for our monthly networking event, presented by **Reach256**. While enjoying refreshments and the theater environment, attendees had the chance to learn about the long list of marketing and web services available to businesses across the Tennessee Valley. We are thankful for everyone stopping by on their way to work, and look forward to seeing you at out next networking event!

**August Presenting Sponsor** 

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More than 40 people attended the August Coffee & Cards, presented by Morningside of Decatur.



The August networking event featured the largest number of attendees by an event hosted at Morningside.



The Chamber's monthly networking events are designed to gather community leaders from across Morgan County in an environment where they can connect and collaborate.



Presenting sponsor Reach256 treated attendees with coffee and refreshments in the lively environment of the Princess Theater in downtown Decatur.

### **Residential Development Task Team's goal: more rooftops, opportunities**

On Sept. 11, the Chamber's Residential Development Task Team - an initiative of the Chamber's "The Partnership" five-year campaign continued their work on addressing issues with the goal of improving our area's residential recruitment efforts. Developer David Slyman of Placemakers North America spoke to the group and facilitated a Q&A session on one of his area projects, the Village of Providence. He discussed the process of developing a mixed-use venture in the face of changing demographics and retail, and his "lessons learned" during the development. Later in the meeting, Emily Long, public information liaison for the City of Decatur, updated the group on the branding initiative the City has undertaken and the goals they hope to accomplish in communicating our area's high quality of life. The City has invited five regional branding and communication firms for on-site interviews with the plan to retain a firm and begin work this fall. The mission of the Residential Development Task Team is to develop an environment that will foster the demand for builders and developers to bring new quality residential inventory to Decatur-Morgan County and allow our area to capitalize on the imminent growth coming to our region. Chaired by Jack Fite of Fite Building Company, the team will continue to meet and search for ways to collaborate on the local and regional levels to attract new residents to our community.



Developer David Slyman of Placemakers North America spoke to the group and facilitated a Q&A session on one of his area projects, the Village of Providence.



The Residential Development Task Team is chaired by Jack Fite of Fite Building Company in Decatur.



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### **New Members**

We thank the following businesses and organizations who made new commitments to our area by their investment in the Chamber. We look forward to serving you!

ALFA Insurance - Luke Etheredge Collins Management, Inc. First Presbyterian Church, Decatur Glenn Shepard Seminars, Inc. ImmunoTek Bio Centers, LLC iWebVisit.com Kids to Love Foundation Orchestra Sul Ponticello of Decatur SCORE - North Alabama Turn Key Home Inspections, LLC

### **Ribbon Cuttings**



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### A Word from Your Chamber continued

initiatives like Endless Opportunities, the Career and Workforce Expo, and SWeETy Camp for high school girls to learn the basics in welding and electrical trades.

Beyond that, creating something new with this partnership between business, industry and education allows an opportunity to listen and adapt to the needs of both educators and those businesses looking to hire well-trained young people for their future workforce.

As a parent and a grandparent, I subscribe to that unwritten commandment we are to give better to our children than we had ourselves. It is in that giving we have hope in how the next generation will innovate our world in ways we can't yet imagine. We owe it to them to do everything we can as leaders to prepare them for what's next.

### **Renewing Members**

The Chamber would like to thank the following members who reinvested in Decatur and Morgan County by renewing their Chamber membership.

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### Chamber's three leadership programs kick off new year



Equip students, under the direction of Taylor Simmons of Horizon Point Consulting, discussed jobs they were interested in by using "career cards" to explore certain industries.



During the Equip kickoff, students got to know one another during icebreaker games and activities that introduced soft skill training to the group.



Equip Leadership was established to help expose eighth grade students to post-high school college and career opportunities in the skilled trades.



As part of their kickoff social, Edge students played several escape games at Trapped Decatur.

The Chamber's three leadership curriculums – Excellence, Edge and Equip – kicked off in August and September with a new school year and new participants in developing the next generation of community leaders.

Equip Leadership, a program for eighth grade students exposing them to post-high school college and career opportunities in the skilled trades, kicked off Sept. 20 with Taylor Simmons from Horizon Point Consulting working with the group on several subjects that will be discussed throughout the fall session. Students paired up with a neighbor to go through "career cards," a tool helping to give students ideas about all the different career paths within a designated field like healthcare, law enforcement, environmental or STEMrelated areas. Later in the day, they worked together to play the Values Challenge, where students each have two cards and have to decide which value they hold more dearly (ex: "working for myself on my own schedule" vs. "taking a family vacation"). The session ended with a conversation about soft skills like solid handshakes, eye contact, workplace expectations and working together as a team. The presenting sponsor of Equip is **Nucor Steel Decatur**.

The Chamber's leadership program for 10th and 11th graders – Edge Student Leadership – kicked off in late August with a social and dinner at the Chamber, followed by team building activities at Trapped in Decatur. The September group gathering was scheduled for the Decatur General West ropes course, but due to inclement weather will be rescheduled. The Edge program was created to expose students to leadership opportunities in a creative and challenging manner, providing the students with the tools necessary to develop individual leadership skills. The program also encourages students to be a positive influence in their schools and to serve in the community. **Nucor Steel Decatur** is the presenting sponsor for Edge.

Excellence in Leadership, the Chamber's curriculum for career professionals, kicked off Aug. 29 with a half-day session focusing on "get to know you" exercises, as well as an unpacking session of each class member's Emergenetics profile. Administered by Dr. Ed Nichols, Emergenetics is a personality and characteristics profile developed to distinctively measure how people think and behave. Using psychometric data provided by each participant through an online survey, Emergenetics accurately measures three behavioral attributes and four thinking attributes to help the user understand how they best communicate, engage with others, analyze information and react to changing conditions. Excellence is presented by **Nucor Steel Decatur**, along with Kickoff Day Sponsor **TVW Electrical Supplies, Inc.** 

In mid-September, Excellence visited the ropes course on the campus of Decatur Morgan West to learn about the value to team building in leadership environments. Working with the ropes course staff of Decatur Morgan Hospital, the 35 students were broken up into groups to conquer smaller challenges that required clear communication, strategy, recognizing obstacles and working together to evaluate strengths and weaknesses. Throughout the day, which was sponsored by Alabama Technology Network, the group also explored the process of creating a culture of trust, a safe environment, communication channels and how to rely on one another in challenging times. Excellence in Leadership is presented by Nucor Steel Decatur.



To develop teambuilding and strategy skills, students in Edge Leadership conducted several escape exercises during their kickoff event at Trapped Decatur.



Excellence class members kicked off the program with a debriefing of their Emergenetics profile with Dr. Ed Nichols.



This year's Excellence class features 39 members of the Morgan Co. business community, coming from diverse backgrounds and professions.

Presenting Sponsor for Excellence, Edge and Equip



continued on page 14

#### Leadership continued



Groups were tasked to support one another during the high ropes portion of the course.



Traversing tightropes using movement strategies and balance required members of the Excellence class to communicate and include each member of the group in the success plan.



Excellence participated in the Decatur Morgan West ropes course to help the class develop communication and teambuilding strategies.

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**Coffee & Cards** Tues., Oct. 23 7:30 - 9 a.m. Presented and hosted by The Terrace at Priceville

Breakfast, Lunch & Biz Tues. Oct. 30 8:30 a.m. - 3 p.m. The Magnolia Room Presented by Redstone Federal Credit Union

#### YP Leadership Luncheon

Wednesday, Oct. 31 12-1 p.m. CSFCO Board Room at The Chamber Presented by Ascend Performance Materials State of Morgan County Schools

Thursday, Nov. 1 7:30 a.m. First Baptist Church, Decatur Presented by the Morgan County Commission

#### Chamber Membership

**Campaign** Tuesday – Thursday, Nov. 6-8 Community Action Partnership of North Alabama

State of Decatur City Schools

Thursday, Nov. 15 7:30 a.m. Decatur Baptist Church Presented by BBVA Compass

#### Member Appreciation Luncheon

Friday, Nov. 30 11 a.m. – 1 p.m. CSFCO Board Room at The Chamber Presented by King Insurance Agency

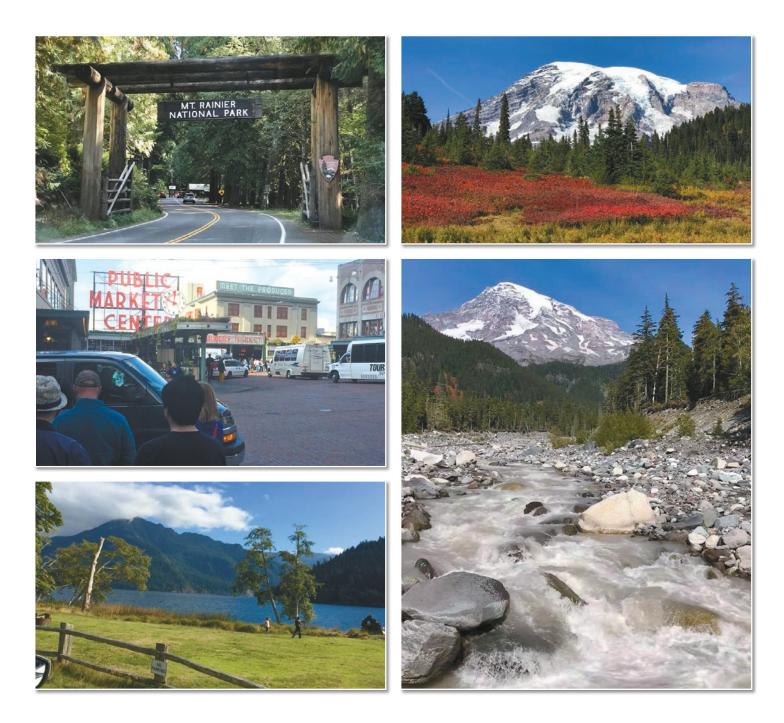


### **TRC Volunteers travel to the great northwest**

Several months after the Chamber's annual Total Resource Campaign (TRC) wraps up in March, several TRC volunteers who surpass a certain sponsorship dollar amount travel on a group trip as a reward for working on the Chamber program. The TRC is an organized nine week campaign during which Chamber members volunteer their time to help sell sponsorship opportunities and recruit new members. In September, 15 volunteers and spouses traveled to Seattle, Wash., and spent a week in the great northwest enjoying restaurants, the arts scene and the natural beauty found nearby. Past TRC trips have included New England, San Francisco, Mexico, Jackson Hole, Wyo, Anaheim, Calif., and many more.

For more information and how you can become a volunteer, please contact the Chamber at (256) 353-5312.

(all photos courtesy of Donna Puckett and Anne Hurt)



### The Partnership breakfast serves as update on campaign progress

On August 24, more than 40 early investors in the Chamber's five-year plan "The Partnership" gathered for breakfast and an update on the effort from Partnership Chairman Tim Lovelace. Also during the event. the four task team leader - Michelle Howell of 3M, Business and Industry-Driven Talent Development and Recruitment; Nat Richardson of Decatur Morgan Hospital, Business and Industry Partnership with

Education: Jack Fite of Fite Building Company, Residential Development; and George Kitchens of Joe Wheeler EMC, Community Image, Partnership and Development - also provided updates on their individual area. accomplishments and what work was on their horizon. The Partnership is a community and business development strategy where the Board of Directors and teams of business leaders will focus on making strides in four critical

areas: residential development: regional partnerships and community image; business and industry-driven talent development and recruitment; and business and industry partnerships with education. For more information about The Partnership, please visit the Chamber website at https://www.dcc. org/what-we-do/one-morgan-county/ the-partnership



Michelle Howell of 3M provided an update on the work of the Business and Industry-Driven Talent Development and Recruitment Task Team during The Partnership Update Breakfast.



Jack Fite of Fite Building Company provided an update on the work of the Residential Development Task Team during The Partnership Update Breakfast.

George Kitchens of Joe Wheeler EMC provided an update on the work of the Community Image, Partnership and Development Task Team during The Partnership Update Breakfast.





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More than 40 early investors in the Chamber's five-year plan "The Partnership" gathered for breakfast and an update on the effort from Partnership Chairman Tim Lovelace.



### Tactical time management hot topic for YP Leadership Luncheon

On Aug. 21, Larry Waye - director of business development and education for the Decatur-Morgan County Entrepreneurial Center - served as the keynote speaker for the Chamber's YP Leadership Luncheon. Presented by **Ascend Performance Materials**, the event was second of a two-part series focusing on time management and productivity. In this session, Waye discussed more tactical "how-to" strategies on understanding how to best spend time, how to prioritize tasks, delegate, and understanding "flex" and "non-flex" responsibilities. The YP Leadership Luncheon series meets every other month and provides an opportunity for networking, community engagement and professional development. We are also thankful for lunch sponsor **Red Sage Communications, Inc.**, and new member Mellow Mushroom for delivering our meal. Look for the next YP Leadership Luncheon event in late October! **Presenting Sponsor** 





More than 40 young professionals from across Morgan County attended the August edition of the YP Leadership Luncheon.



Larry Waye - director of business development and education for the Decatur-Morgan County Entrepreneurial Center - served as the keynote speaker for the Chamber's YP Leadership Luncheon focusing on time management and productivity.



The YP Leadership Luncheon serves as a professional development opportunity for the under-40 crowd in Morgan County.



Ascend Performance Materials of Decatur is the presenting sponsor of the YP Leadership Luncheon series, which meets every other month across Morgan County.



## The power to connect.









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