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April 2019

Directions

A PUBLICATION OF THE DECATUR-MORGAN COUNTY CHAMBER OF COMMERCE



Annual Meeting 2019

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As the community environment has become more challenging over the years, the Chamber's role in community development could not be greater! The Decatur-Morgan County Chamber has a well-established operational team and Board that continues to reinvent its primary purpose of trade in supporting the interest of business. Our community is very fortunate to have such a highly trained and professional Chamber staff ready to assist its members in assuring their success and providing high value service to our area! All those reasons – and so many more – are why we belong.

Nathaniel Richardson

President
Decatur Morgan Hospital



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Willie LaFavor
Contractor Service & Fabrication, Inc.
Chairman of the Board

(Editor's note: This post is a portion of Board of Directors Chairman Willie LaFavor's comments during the Chamber's 2019 Annual Meeting.)

The 2018-2019 year definitely offered its challenges as we enlisted and secured volunteers, raised funds, and ultimately, accomplished our goal as the Chamber's "One Vision" capital campaign closed out.

As outgoing Chair Tim Lovelace told you earlier, we met our goal and pledges. Chamber CFO Leissa Chittam tells me that we are going to exceed our original goal. What an accomplishment! Some of you might rightfully say, our work is finally complete, so let's sit back and coast after all that fundraising work. We all know the reality is the real work is just beginning.

Let's go back to "The Partnership." As you will recall, as part of this five-year strategic plan, we would all form this partnership that would include four areas of emphasis: residential housing options, dedication to results-driven workforce development, recruiting quality educational opportunities for our children, and ultimately progressive name recognition for our community within our state, our nation, and globally.

W^A Word from your chamber

It is time for us to make good on our promises to you. As a group, we will soon be sharing a progress report of accomplishments in the four areas. Under Tim's leadership, our team has done a great job setting up the next steps by raising the necessary funding. Now it's time to transitions to the next phase of our plan.

My personal objective is simple. I will assist the Board of Directors, the staff of the Chamber, all of its affiliates and volunteers as together we begin to measure and accomplish the goals which has been set forth by our leadership.

As I mentioned earlier, we may feel like we have crossed the finish line. Please let me tell you, we have only been begun. In the coming year, we will ask more of you. What we will ask of you will be your time, expertise, and leadership in accomplishing the goals we have set. Raising the funds is a great part of getting started. Now we have to move forward with getting it done.

These teams have already begun the work by forming subcommittees which have areas of specific focus. They have been busy evaluating and creating a

continued on page 7

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On the Cover: Outgoing Chamber board chairman Tim Lovelace, right, passes the gavel to the new chairman, Willie LaFavor, during the Decatur-Morgan County Chamber of Commerce's annual meeting.

The Chamber Board

Executive Committee

Chairman of the Board

Willie LaFavor, Contractor Service & Fabrication, Inc.

Chairman of the Board-Elect

Michelle Howell, 3M

Past Chairman of the Board

Tim Lovelace, Renasant Bank

Vice Chairman, Leadership & Networking

Joseph Hill, Progress Bank

Vice Chairman, Development

Jamie Reeves, Remax Platinum

Vice Chairman, Talent Development & Education

Tommy Davis, Decatur City Schools

Vice Chairman, Community Building

Lori Hardy Ho-Tung, Renasant Bank

Treasurer

Jeff Brown, Harris, Caddell & Shanks

Board of Directors

Daniel Beggs, The Boeing Co.

Cronan Connell, Valley Rubber

Darius Crayton, Bridge Builders Church International

Lindsey Faulkner, Old River Antiques & Interiors

Leif Founds, Corporate Billing, LLC

Ray Hardin, Decatur Utilities

George Kitchens, Joe Wheeler Electric Membership Corporation

Brendan McCormick, Turner

Carlton McMasters, J & M Signs

Cindy Nafus, United Launch Alliance

Arthur Orr, Alabama State Senate (Chairman of MCEDA)

Dr. Amanda Parker, Animal Tracks Veterinary Hospital

Raul Piers, Synovus Bank

Kyle Pike, Dry Creek Marine (President of Decatur Jaycees)

Dr. Yvette Rice, LLVE, LLC

Lorriane Curtis-Sparkman (President of Decatur Women's Chamber)

Russ Wilson, Indorama Ventures

INVESTORS

The Chamber would like to recognize and thank our investors in The Partnership. Their long-term commitment to the Chamber and the business community allows us to work towards improving the quality of life in Decatur-Morgan County for the next generation.

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Cintas Corp.
Fite Construction Company, Inc.
Hubbard & Drake General-Mechanical Contractors, Inc.

Lakeland Industries, Inc.
Magnolia River Services, Inc.
Progress Bank
White Oak Transportation

SILVER

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CB&S Bank
Corporate Billing, LLC
ENERSOLV Corp.
Engie - Alabama Decatur Energy, LLC
Peoples Bank of Alabama

Turner Industries Group, LLC
TVW Electrical Supplies, Inc.
Wear, Howell, Strickland, Quinn & Law, LLC, CPA's

BRONZE

Byrd, Smalley & Adams, PC
Decatur Mall
Edward Jones - Terry White
Harris, Caddell & Shanks, PC

M&D Mechanical Contractors
Valley Rubber, LLC

Annual Meeting marks transition, success in the Chamber year

On April 9, the Chamber welcomed more than 250 members of the business community to The Annual Meeting - a gathering to celebrate the past year of successes in our community while looking ahead with the transition of our new Board of Directors. During the event, which was presented by **Indorama Ventures**, Jim Odom was recognized as the Chamber's Miss Athelyne C. Banks Citizen of the Year honoree for his faithful commitment to the community and his service to our county. The honor is given to a community leader who reflects the dedication, service

and faithfulness to Decatur modeled in the life of Miss Banks, who devoted 42 years of her life to education. Also during the lunch, Raul Piers of Synovus Bank was recognized as the Chamber's 2019 Rosie Hennessy Commodore of the Year honoree, voted on by the Commodores and recognizing an outstanding member of the Chamber's ambassador corps. Piers is a long-time Chamber volunteer and a member of the Board of Directors. Outgoing Chairman Tim Lovelace shared his thoughts on the success of the last 12 months of the Chamber, which included a

capital campaign that exceeded the \$2.5 million five-year pledge goal. Following the "passing of the gavel," incoming Chairman Willie LaFavor looked ahead to the next phase of the Chamber's five-year program, which will engage the business community in four specific areas: Residential Development, Regional Partnerships and Community Image, Business and Industry-Driven Talent Development and Recruitment, and Business and Industry Partnerships with Education. We are thankful for everyone who attended, our investors and advocates in the community.



More than 250 business and community leaders attended the Chamber's 2019 Annual Meeting.



Raul Piers of Synovus Bank was awarded the 2019 Rosie Hennessy Commodore of the Year Award during the Chamber's Annual Meeting.



Business and community leaders from across north Alabama gathered at the Doubletree by Hilton Decatur Riverfront for the Chamber's Annual Meeting.



Tim Lovelace, the Chamber's outgoing board chairman, shared his thoughts on the success of the last 12 months of the Chamber, which included a capital campaign that exceeded the \$2.5 million five-year pledge goal.



During the Chamber's Annual Meeting, incoming Chairman Willie LaFavor presented outgoing Chairman Tim Lovelace with a gift for his leadership and service to the Chamber. Prior to his term as chairman, Lovelace served as the board treasurer for several years.



During the Chamber's Annual Meeting, incoming Board Chairman Willie LaFavor looked ahead to the next phase of the Chamber's five-year program, which will engage the business community in four specific areas: Residential Development, Regional Partnerships and Community Image, Business and Industry-Driven Talent Development and Recruitment, and Business and Industry Partnerships with Education.

Presenting Sponsor



A Word from Your Chamber continued

plan of quick action. I expect we'll be hearing from them soon.

My personal commitment to you is that we will measure and communicate our progress regularly using emails, the Chamber blog, and social media. You can also check the Chamber's website. Be looking for this information! If you don't see it, you won't know it.

We will accomplish these goals and objectives. And if we need to make adjustments, rest assured, we will

do so. The coming year is an exciting time in our community and we will have many opportunities to consider. It will take everyone in this room, as well as others within our community to succeed in these goals and objectives. I ask for your patience, leadership, and support.

In closing, let me express how humbled I am to serve as your Chairman. I am excited to get the year started! The time has come to close the 2018-2019 Annual Meeting and the past year will be in the books. This gavel

strike also marks the kick-off of 2019-2020. Thank you, good luck, and I pray God will bless all you do.

Ribbon Cuttings



Alabama FAME (Federation for Advanced Manufacturing Education) Advanced Manufacturing Technician (AMT) program Robotics Technology Park, Decatur

6505 U.S. Highway 31, Decatur • (256) 642-2600
calhoun.edu/student-services/career-services/fame-amt



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Jim Odom honored with Chamber's Citizen of the Year award



Past honoree C. Wallace Terry introduced Jim Odom during the 2019 Annual Meeting to present him with the Miss Athelyne C. Banks Citizen of the Year award.



At the Chamber's Annual Meeting, Jim Odom of Decatur was presented the organization's Miss Athelyne C. Banks Citizen of the Year award for his contributions to and volunteerism in the community.

At the Chamber's Annual Meeting, Jim Odom of Decatur was presented the organization's Miss Athelyne C. Banks Citizen of the Year award for his contributions to and volunteerism in the community.

The award, presented each year at the Chamber's Annual Meeting, is named after the longtime Decatur educator and honors those whose life reflects the dedication, service and faithfulness to Decatur modeled in the example of Ms. Banks.

"Jim is a tremendous example of what servant leadership looks like for our community and the nation," said John Seymour, president and CEO of the Chamber. "His passion for lifting up all corners of our area has left a generational impact on Decatur and Morgan, and each day he's looking for more opportunities to serve others."

A native of McKenzie, Ala., a town with a population of a little more than 500, Odom graduated from McKenzie High School, and later received his bachelor of science degree in mechanical engineering from Auburn University. He

moved to Decatur with his wife, June, in 1955.

"Jim always looks to serve in places where his gifts can be best utilized, and sometimes that's in the front and sometimes that's behind the scenes," said Trudy Grisham, a past winner of the award and who nominated Odom. "But never once does he want recognition for his work. He simply does what needs to be done."

In his professional life, Odom joined the Army Ballistic Missile Defense Agency at Redstone Arsenal in 1956. Three years later, in 1959, he transferred to what was to be established the following year as NASA's Marshall Space Flight Center. At the Marshall Center, Odom held various engineering and technical management positions. He was actively involved in the development of earth satellites and unmanned space probes prior to his assignment as chief of the Engineering and Test Operations Branch for the second stage of the Saturn V launch vehicle. In 1972, he was appointed manager of the External Tank Project in the Shuttle Projects Office, and in

1982 became deputy manager for production and logistics in the Shuttle Projects Office. In 1983, Odom was asked to take over the Hubble Space Telescope Project, which at the time was behind schedule and over budget. His task was to get the mission back on track, lead it through its final design, assembly and testing phases and have the telescope ready to launch in the fall of 1986. Delayed four years due to the January 1986 Space Shuttle Challenger tragedy, the Hubble Space Telescope was put in orbit in 1990 and called by NASA the "most significant advance in astronomy since Galileo's telescope."

For the two years following the Hubble success, Odom served as director of the Science and Engineering Directorate at the Marshall Center, leading a group of more than 2,500 people. Then, in 1988, he was relocated to NASA headquarters in Washington, D.C., to develop and direct the \$24 billion International Space Station (ISS) Freedom Program, which is the largest space station program in history. Odom retired from NASA in 1990 and was appointed

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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!

Downtown Dawgs	Nicole Jones Development
Edward Jones - Haavik, Tore	Right at Home
Kevin R. Kusta	Staples Store #1158
Lightwire Solutions, LLC	Stephen F. Brown
Lost Treasures, Inc.	TeamLogic IT
MacLellan HVAC & Mechanical Services	Travel Bug Vacations
Morgan County Sheriff Office	Your CBD Store of Decatur
National League of Junior Cotillions	

Citizen of the Year continued

president and CEO of Huntsville engineering firm Applied Research Inc. In 1994, he began working as a consultant to Science Application International Corporation (SAIC), a position he still holds today.

Among his many awards and recognitions during his time in government service, twice Odom received the Presidential Rank of Meritorious Executive. The first time, in 1981, he was recognized for his technical and managerial accomplishments for the shuttle's external tank by President Ronald Reagan. In 1990, he was honored by President George H. W. Bush for the Hubble project's significant advances made under his leadership.

In his community life, Odom has a long history of service to committees and organization in Decatur and the State of Alabama. Jim is a Rotary Club of Decatur Paul Harris Fellow, a board member of the Decatur Cemetery Legacy Society, a chair of the Frazier Park fundraising committee, a Camp Bluebird and Power of Pink volunteer, past deacon at First Baptist Church of Decatur, a member of the Auburn University Engineering

Council, and serves as a mentor for the Best and Brightest Initiative – an effort to recruit young professionals to Decatur and match them up with mentors in similar fields. In 2011, he was recognized by the Decatur Morgan Hospital Foundation as the John A. Caddell honoree.

Jim and June Odom have been married 65 years and have two children, four grandchildren and one great grandchild. Their daughter, Melanie, lives in Decatur; their son, James B. Odom, Jr., and his wife and children live in Texas. Mrs. Odom was the 2017 recipient of the Miss Athelyne C. Banks Citizen of the Year award.

Ms. Banks – for whom the award is named – devoted 42 years of her life to education, serving 29 of them with Decatur City Schools. She was a public school teacher, the first woman principal at Carver Elementary School and a public school administrator. The award honors a member of our community whose life reflects the dedication, service and faithfulness to Decatur modeled in the example of Miss Banks. Chamber members submitted nominations for the award,

and applications were judged by a committee of past recipients.



Ms. Banks – for whom the award is named – devoted 42 years of her life to education, serving 29 of them with Decatur City Schools. Mrs. Odom was the 2017 recipient of the same award.

Renewing Members

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

1st Impression Cleaning Services	Domino's Pizza	Open MRI of Decatur
Alabama Farmers Cooperative	DoubleTree by Hilton Hotel Decatur Riverfront	Peck - Glasgow Agency, Inc.
Alabama Smile Builders - Paul Bishop, DMD	DSI Real Estate Partners, LLC	Pettey Machine Works, Inc.
Alabama Technology Network	Early Services, Inc.	Pill Box Pharmacy
Alton Consulting Technologies	EFY LLC	Price-Denton Endodontics, LLC
Alzheimer's Association - Alabama Chapter	Feralloy	Publix Store #1609
American Midstream, LLC	Fite Building Company, Inc.	Real Estate Showcase/ Publications Press
American Red Cross Morgan-Lawrence Co. Chapter	FSI - Fleet Services, Inc.	River City Equipment Rental & Sales, Inc.
Anderson Office Interiors, LLC	Funding Solutions, Inc.	Riverside Senior Living
Ascend Performance Materials	GBW Architects	Rogers Group, Inc.
AT&T Alabama	Glee Interiors	Sam's Sports Grill
Bailey Harris Construction	Hampton Inn	Second Read Books
Beltline Electric Motor Repair	Hardwick Law Firm, LLC	Southern Staffing
Burnett Roofing & Construction	Hardy Chiropractic	St. Ann School
Calvary Assembly	Hinson Wealth Management Group	State Farm Insurance - Jason Palmer Agency
Ceva Media Group	Home Pest Control	Steelcase
Champion Windows & Home Exteriors	Housing Authority of Decatur	Stovall Marks Insurance, Inc.
Charles B. Langham	Integrity Electric, Inc.	Strategic Systems, Inc.
Community Free Clinic of Decatur-Morgan County	ITW Sexton	Superior Scaffolding & Insulation, Inc.
Container Recycling, Inc.	King Insurance Agency	Systems, Security & Network Solutions, Inc.
Contractor Service & Fabrication, Inc.	Kiwanis Club of Decatur, Alabama	T.P.I.S. Industrial Services, LLC
Cook's Pest Control - Commercial	Lawlers Barbecue #11	Talley, Mauldin, & Peete, PC
Country Cottage	Lee Company	The Perry Company, Inc.
Courtyard by Marriott	Lendmark Financial Services	The Sherwin-Williams Company
Cricket By The Creek	Liberty Learning Foundation	Topgolf
Curry's on Johnston Street	Majestic Construction	UAH System
Decatur Decorating Center	Marketing Works	Valley Feed Landscaping Supply
Decatur Dermatology, PC	MarMac Real Estate	Wal-Mart Discount City
Decatur Downtown Redevelopment Authority	McBride Richardson, PC.	WHNT-TV
Decatur Shopping Center	McComm Group, Inc.	Your Transmission Man, Inc.
Decatur-Morgan County Minority Development Association	Microtel Inn & Suites by Wyndham	
	Mitchell Computer Services, Inc.	
	Morgan County Association of Realtors	
	Nephrology of North AL, PC	
	Next Move Real Estate	
	Olive Garden	

Chairman Long says Morgan County healthy, strong

On Feb. 21, the Chamber was honored to welcome Chairman Ray Long as he provided an update and a look ahead during our annual State of Morgan County Address. Presented by **Huntsville International Airport**, the event provided the Chairman an opportunity to share with the nearly 200 business and community leaders in attendance the accomplishments of the Commission and his directors over the last 12 months to improve the quality of life for residents all across

Morgan County. In the second part of the Chairman's address, he discussed his plan to move ahead on a parking deck proposal in late 2019 in downtown to alleviate parking issues around the courthouse and downtown areas. With the June opening of the Cook Museum of Natural Science, increased retail investment in the city center and more events at the Princess Theater, the Alabama Center for the Arts and River Clay Fine Arts Festival, the Commission is working to mitigate

the current challenge and plan for the future. The Chamber is thankful for our relationship with the Chairman and the Commission and look forward to our work together in the future.

Presenting Sponsor



**HUNTSVILLE
INTERNATIONAL
AIRPORT**



Nearly 200 business and community leaders attended the Chamber's annual State of Morgan County Address.



Chairman Ray Long shared with the nearly 200 in attendance his plan to pursue a parking deck project in downtown Decatur to help manage the potential strain on the current parking inventory in the city center.



Elected officials from across the area gathered to focus on the future during the Chamber's annual State of the County Address.



Chairman Ray Long visited with the joint A.P. Brewer High School and Priceville High School Jr. ROTC unit prior to the State of Morgan County Address.

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Small Business Awards Celebration

Tuesday, May 14, 11:30 a.m.

Doubletree by Hilton Decatur Riverfront

The Chamber will present the three annual small business awards, while also recognizing the graduates of the 2018-2019 Excellence in Leadership program. The event is made possible by Gold Sponsors **Building Construction Associates** and **Redstone Federal Credit Union**.

Tickets are \$35 for members, \$55 for non-members, and can be purchased on the Chamber's calendar of events at www.dcc.org.



Save the Date!

YP Leadership Luncheon

Tuesday, April 30, 12 p.m.
Boys & Girls Club – 3rd Street
Presented by Ascend Performance Materials

Public Policy Trip to Washington D.C.

Sunday – Tuesday, May 5-7

Small Business Awards

Tuesday, May 14, 11:30 a.m.
The Doubletree by Hilton Decatur Riverfront

Clay Shoot Classic

Friday, June 21
Limestone Hunting Preserve

State of the County continued



Chance Brown and Ellie Blackwood - grandchildren of Chairman Ray Long - led the Pledge of Allegiance at the State of Morgan County Address.



Nearly 200 business and community leaders attended the Chamber's annual State of Morgan County Address.

Chamber welcomes upbeat message from mayor at State of the City Address

On March 28, the Chamber welcomed Mayor Tab Bowling of Decatur to the annual State of the City Address for an opportunity to share with the Decatur-Morgan County business community highlights of the last 12 months and what's ahead for the River City. Presented by **Huntsville International Airport** and held at Ingalls Harbor Pavilion, Mayor Bowling discussed the importance of collaboration and partnership in community success, as well as positive revenue numbers that will go toward quality of life services for our city. More than 200 in attendance - including elected officials from neighboring communities - heard Bowling talk about long-range planning for

industry locating in our area supporting the soon-to-arrive Mazda-Toyota facility in Limestone County, the continued efforts of downtown development, residential recruitment, community development and the work between the City and our school system. The Chamber's public policy initiatives are a critical part of the work we do to improve our business community and quality of life. We are thankful for our relationship with the mayor's office, the City Council and the entire City of Decatur team.

Presenting Sponsor



**HUNTSVILLE
INTERNATIONAL
AIRPORT**



The Decatur Police Department Honor Guard presented the colors at the State of the City Address.



More than 200 community and business leaders attended the State of the City Address, made possible by Presenting Sponsor Huntsville International Airport.



More than 200 community and business leaders attended the State of the City Address, hosted at Ingalls Harbor Pavilion.



Mayor Tab Bowling served as the keynote presenter at the Chamber's State of the City Address.



Spelman College student and Austin High School graduate Zoe Watkins shared the stage with Mayor Bowling and presented a portion of the talk at the Chamber's State of the City Address.

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Leadership programs continue developing next generation of servant leaders



During the session focusing on economic development, Excellence class members heard from a panel of community leaders representing the Chamber, EDA, the City, Downtown Redevelopment and the E-Center.



The group played several rounds of the EDA game, where class members are given a simulated society to select certain qualities they wanted in their community, then competed against one another to recruit businesses to their area.

The Chamber's three leadership programs – Excellence in Leadership for business professionals, Edge Student Leadership for high school sophomores and juniors, and Equip Leadership for eighth graders – continued in February and March to connect with other leaders in the community to help develop their own leadership narrative.

The Chamber's Excellence in Leadership program spent their February session discussing the role economic development has on our community. The day began at the Chamber and featured a panel discussion of community leaders discussing their organization's role in economic development, as well as fielding questions from the group. Jeremy Nails, president and CEO of Morgan County Economic Development Association; Rick Paler, executive director of the Downtown Decatur Redevelopment Authority; John Seymour, president and CEO of the Decatur-Morgan Chamber; Wally Terry, director of development for the City of Decatur; and

John Joseph, executive director of the Decatur-Morgan County Entrepreneurial Center. They each shared their expertise in their area and how projects are recruited and sustained here in Morgan County. Following several rounds of the Economic Development game - where class members are given a simulated society to select certain qualities they wanted in their community, then competed against one another to recruit businesses to their area – the group toured the GE Appliances, a Haier Company facility, which is the largest employer in Morgan County and produces more than a million refrigerators annually. The group gathered for a working lunch at the E-Center and heard from Joseph again about the work of the center and its impact on Decatur and Morgan County's economy. After lunch, Dr. Ed Nichols of ERI Services and a subject matter expert on Emergenetics, conducted a workshop with the group on goal setting in their personal and professional lives. The day ended back at the Chamber with a work session for the group's community project part-

ner, The Boys and Girls Club of North Alabama. Excellence in Leadership is presented by **Nucor Steel Decatur**, along with Day Sponsor **GE**. The March session of Excellence was comprised of the Montgomery public policy trip.

On Feb. 14, the Chamber kicked off Session Two of Equip Student Leadership, a program for 8th grade students from across Morgan County exposing them to post-high school college and career opportunities in the skilled trades as well as degree programs that require less than a four-year degree. On day one, class members gathered at the Chamber for an "icebreakers" and teambuilding session with Taylor Simmons of Horizon Point Consulting. Among many of their lessons, Simmons paired up students and asked them to address a series of "either/or" value statements. For example, students were asked to select between "I want to feel fulfilled in my job" or "I want to make a comfortable living." Once they selected one, they were presented with a similar statement and

then asked to select between those two. After approximately 25 choices and arriving at their final statement, students went around the room and shared how they came to that conclusion. After other group activities, students enjoyed lunch in the Chamber board room while discussing the day and providing evaluation feedback to Chamber staff. Equip in February was made possible by Day Sponsor **Decatur Heritage Christian Academy**.

On March 1, Equip explored several parts of Calhoun Community College and learned about opportunities available following their graduation. After

starting the day with breakfast at the Chamber, the group received a campus tour from Ashley Robison, recruitment coordinator for Calhoun, of several programs on the Decatur campus. Stops included the machining laboratory, the welding and advanced technology classrooms, as well as the health science facilities. Calhoun – the largest community college in the State of Alabama – features one of the most competitive nursing programs in the state and clinical classrooms featuring some of the most state-of-the-art educational equipment available to students. After returning to the Chamber for lunch, Lewis Nall – an automo-

tive instructor in the Automotive Technologies Department at Calhoun – shared with students his education path to becoming a Calhoun instructor, including his work in private industry. Nall shared stories about teachers who had helped motivate and encourage him while showing him the value of hard work.

Later in March, Equip discussed infrastructure and financial literacy for their half-day program. After starting the morning at the Chamber, the more than 20 students traveled to Decatur Utilities' Water Management Facility off Church Street to learn about the role

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Excellence participants toured the GE Appliances, a Haier Company facility, which is the largest employer in Morgan County and produces more than a million refrigerators annually.



Equip students played "either/or," which required participants to select between value statements to arrive at the end of what they believe is the most important in a situation.



The Equip group received a campus tour from Ashley Robison, recruitment coordinator for Calhoun, of several programs on the Decatur campus.



Among the many stops on their Calhoun tour, Equip students learned about the wide range of opportunities in the health sciences field.

Leadership continued



In late March, Equip students learned about water management and the critical importance of a safe drinking water infrastructure.



Equip students, as part of the program, take part in a session focusing on financial literacy, understanding personal budgeting and how interest on loans and credit cards operates.

DU plays in water safety, water testing and how their critical work impacts the quality of life for each and every resident in the DU service area. After lunch in the CSFCO Board Room at the Chamber, Redstone Federal Credit Union team member Jonathan Fowler of Huntsville spoke briefly with the class about the basics of financial literacy and managing money. To better expose the students to choices they may have to make as adults, the class played a game where they were given different incomes and expenses and

asked to successfully navigate real-life scenarios. Participants also discussed checking and savings accounts, how credit card interest works, and auto loan negotiating. Equip is presented by **Nucor Steel Decatur.**

The March session of Edge Student Leadership comprised of the Montgomery trip.

**Presenting Sponsor for
Excellence, Equip and
Edge Leadership**



Decatur-Morgan County
The Community of Opportunity



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Chamber trip to Montgomery connects students, business leaders, legislators



More than 70 students, business leaders and elected officials attended the Chamber's annual trip to Montgomery.



During the Montgomery trip, attendees toured the State Capital and discussed with members of the legislature public policy issues impacting the business community.

On March 12-13, more than 70 Chamber members, community leaders, elected officials, and members of the Excellence and Edge Leadership programs traveled to our state capitol of Montgomery to visit with legislators, tour exhibits telling the story of our state history and learn more about the impact of state government on our business community and our quality of life.

The Excellence class, made up of 36, started their two-day trip with a visit to Dexter Avenue King Memorial Baptist Church in downtown Montgomery to learn about the history of the church, its role in the civil rights movement and the work it continues to do in the effort of racial reconciliation in the region. From there, the group walked three blocks to observe the Alabama Legislature in session. Following floor debates and observing from galleries of both the House and Senate, the group took part in an extensive Q&A session with members of the Morgan County Delegation: Sen. Arthur Orr, Rep. Terri Collins, Rep. Parker Moore, Rep. Poncey Robertson, Rep. Randall Shedd, and Rep. Scott Stadthagen.

After checking into the hotel and getting settled, the group gathered for a meet-and-greet at the hotel before attending dinner on their own for the evening. Wednesday morning, Katie Britt – recently named president of the Business Council of Alabama – served as the breakfast speaker when the group gathered at Farmer's Market Café, presented by **Valley Budweiser**. Britt discussed several topics impacting the business community, including infrastructure, healthcare and education. Following breakfast, the group was treated to a tour of the Hyundai Motor Manufacturing facility, where they learned about the impact of the auto industry on the state's economy and the work done at the facility. The group returned to the Capitol just before lunch and met with Clay Redden, public information officer for the Alabama House of Representatives, where he discussed the process of bills becoming law and gave the group – which at this point in the day included members of Edge Student Leadership – the opportunity to cast mock votes on current legislation. Lunch, presented by **Huntsville International Airport**, featured former

Decatur resident and area tourism leader Lee Sentell, director of the Alabama Department of Tourism, discussing the Alabama Bicentennial and how tourism helps tell Alabama's story. Once lunch was complete, the group met Gov. Kay Ivey on the steps of the Capitol Building for a quick greeting and group picture before returning to Morgan County. Excellence is presented by **Nucor Steel Decatur**.

The Edge group – made up of more than 30 tenth and eleventh graders from across Morgan County – arrived in Montgomery Wednesday morning and started their day at the Rosa Parks Museum on the Montgomery campus of Troy University to learn about the role of the icon during the civil rights movement and the historic bus boycott. The group later toured the Capitol before meeting up with the Excellence group to hear from Redden and cast floor votes. Continuing with the Excellence class, Edge attended the luncheon featuring Sentell as well as the group picture with Gov. Ivey. Following the picture, the Edge class walked down to Dexter Avenue King Memorial Baptist Church for a tour

continued on page 20

Montgomery Trip continued

and discussion about our state history in the civil rights movement. The group later toured the Museum of Alabama – part of the Alabama Department of Archives and History – to discuss the Bicentennial and our state’s rich past. After the museum, the group boarded the bus and returned to Morgan County. Edge is presented by **Nucor Steel Decatur**, along with Day Sponsor **Huntsville International Airport**.

Presenting
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Excellence and
Edge Leadership



Members of the Excellence class were treated to a tour of Dexter Avenue King Memorial Baptist Church, once the home church of the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.



Members of the Edge Student Leadership class visited the Museum of Alabama – part of the Alabama Department of Archives and History – to discuss the Bicentennial and our state’s rich past.



The group took part in a tour of the Hyundai Manufacturing Facility located just outside of Montgomery as part of their two-day trip to the area.



Edge class members toured Dexter Avenue King Memorial Baptist Church as part of their visit to discuss the role of the church in the Civil Rights Movement.

Networking events visit “The Nut House,” LPL Financial

Networking events are always a popular and fruitful part of a Chamber membership, and we are thankful for the hospitality of members willing to sponsor and host our monthly gatherings. In February, more than 40 members and community leaders enjoyed their morning with destination retail member **Tennessee Valley Pecan Company** on Bank Street in Decatur during the monthly Coffee & Cards networking event. In March, more

than 40 visited **LPL Financial** in downtown Decatur during another Coffee & Cards event to enjoy fellowship on their way to work and learn more about the services LPL provides their customers. We are thankful for both Tennessee Valley Pecan Company and the entire LPL team for the early morning events and their leadership in our business community.

February Sponsor



March Sponsor



More than 40 members enjoyed some morning hospitality at the February networking event, presented by Tennessee Valley Pecan Company.



“The Nut House” serves as a destination retailer in Decatur, attracting customers from across the southeast as well as to their large online e-commerce store.



LPL Financial in downtown Decatur welcomed more than 40 to their March networking event.



Networking opportunities are a benefit of being a Chamber member, and we are thankful for businesses willing to open their door and welcome the membership to their place of business.

Young professionals discuss “smart money”

Certified Public Accountant Matt Young of M.H. Young & Associates of Decatur served as speaker for the Chamber’s YP Leadership Luncheon Feb. 19 at Decatur Country Club. At the event – part of a series presented by **Ascend Performance Materials** of Decatur – Young discussed with the group of more than 30 a long list of “smart money” choices young professionals can make early in their career, including retirement invest-

ments, strategies on purchasing their first car, paying off student loans and how to evaluate their own personal P&L report. The end of the luncheon provided an opportunity for questions and answers about mortgages for first-time homebuyers, preparing your tax returns and the value of having a trusted financial advisor providing counsel for the future. The Chamber is thankful for Young, who started his own CPA firm in 2017, for shar-

ing his expertise with the group. The YP Leadership Luncheon series is an opportunity for networking, fellowship and personal development for the under-40 crowd in Morgan County. The next YP Leadership Luncheon event will be held Tuesday, April 30, and focus on residential recruitment.



More than 30 young professionals came out to discuss smart money choices at the February edition of the YP Leadership Luncheon.



Presenting Sponsor



CPA Matt Young of Decatur discussed with attendees how to discern smart money choices by understanding interest rates, personal budgeting and long-term financial goal setting.



The YP Leadership Luncheon series is an opportunity for members of the under-40 crowd in Morgan County to connect with their peers and develop into the next generation of area leaders.



The power to connect.



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