

**April 2020**

**A Special Supplement to**

**The Advertiser-Gleam**

*Best of*

**2020**

**Reader's Choice  
WINNERS**

*Your guide to top-rated  
local businesses!*



# Congratulations to the Best of 2020 winners



**Anthony Campbell**

It has been a big year for The Advertiser - Gleam's Best of the Best competition, where our readers honor local businesses for being the top in their field.

It was a record year, as more people voted than ever before in the 6 years we have been holding the competition.

It has been a tough couple months for local business due to the COVID-19 shutdown. But things will soon be coming back online and our local businesses need your support now. Please keep these winners and finalists in mind as your shopping habits get back to normal.

Small business – especially in small communities like ours – really are drivers of the economy. They create lots of jobs and our local businesses are the ones who support our local communities. They give of their money and time to local causes and needs.

According to the Small Business Administration, there are 30.2 million small businesses in the United States, accounting for more than 99



percent of all businesses. Service industry businesses make up a big part of those businesses.

If you know someone who owns a small business, you know the hard work and long hours they put in to make their business a success.

Give them a pat on the back and the support they need most by spending with them when you can.

Our Best of 2020 competition is one way the community congratulates these businesses who are doing it right. It's a prestigious title to take home a Best of 2020 award since it is voted on by these businesses' customers.

A special group of award winners are worth pointing out. They won not just one Best of 2020 Award, but they won in more than one category. Those winners were:

**Oliver Tire** – Best Auto Service & Best Oil Change

**Bubba's II** – Best Formalwear & Best Men's Clothing

**Foodland Guntersville** – Best Grocery Store & Best Meat Department

**Jonica's Bakery** – Best Bakery and Best Cupcake

**Boat Mart** – Best Boat & Jet Ski Rental & Best Water-craft Dealer

**The Soak House & Soapery** – Best Day Spa, Best Massage Therapy & Best Tanning Salon

*Anthony Campbell,  
Editor  
The Advertiser - Gleam*

*Thank you to our loyal friends & customers for voting us...*



## Best Stores

**Best Antique Store**

**1ST, KINGS ROW**  
finalists, Past Time Antiques  
& Antiques & Sweets

**Best Appliance Store**

**1ST, BONDS APPLIANCE**  
finalists, Weathers & Lowe's

**Best Consignment Store**

**1ST, RED ELEPHANT**  
finalists Pink Mag Pie &  
Blacks' Old & New

**Best Convenience Store**

**1ST, RACEWAY  
GUNTSVILLE**  
finalists Marathon Hwy 69  
& Dollar General Hwy 69

**Best Florist**

**1ST, RODNEY'S FLOWER  
SHOP**  
finalists, Gaines Florets  
& The Flower Shop

**Best Formalwear**

**1ST, BUBBA'S II**  
finalists, Bridals  
by CC & Weddings,  
Pageants, and Proms

**Best Furniture Store**

**1ST, WEATHERS OF  
GUNTSVILLE**  
finalists, Powers Furniture  
& The Furniture Shop

**Best Garden & Nursery**

**1ST, GUNTSVILLE FEED  
STORE**  
finalists Pack's Nursey & Lowe's

**Best Gift Shop**

**1ST, BAKERS ON MAIN**  
finalists, Stach & Co.  
& Red Elephant

**Best Grocery Store**

**1ST, FOODLAND  
GUNTSVILLE**  
finalists, Publix & Aldi

**Best Home Décor**

**1ST, HOBBY LOBBY**  
finalists, Stach & Co.  
& Red Elephant

**Best Jewelry**

**1ST SWORDS JEWELERS**  
finalists, Griffins  
Jewelers & Belk

**Best Mattress Store**

**1ST, MATTRESS GALLERY**  
finalists, Mattress King &  
Weathers Furniture

**Best Men's Clothing**

**1ST, BUBBA'S II**  
finalists, Belk & Old Mill Trading

**Best Pet Store**

**1ST, PET DEPOT**  
finalists, Pet Smart & Red Barn

**Best Shoe Store**

**1ST, GENERATIONS**  
finalists, The Rack  
Room & Shoe Dept

**Best Thrift Store**

**1ST, SHEPHERD'S COVE**  
finalists, Home Place  
Thrift & Goodwill



The Advertiser-Gleam  
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# BEST RIBS

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# Oliver Tire: Three generations of automotive service

Oliver Tire Pros has come a long way since it's humble beginnings in 1979 to now being one of the top auto repair and tire service dealers in Marshall County

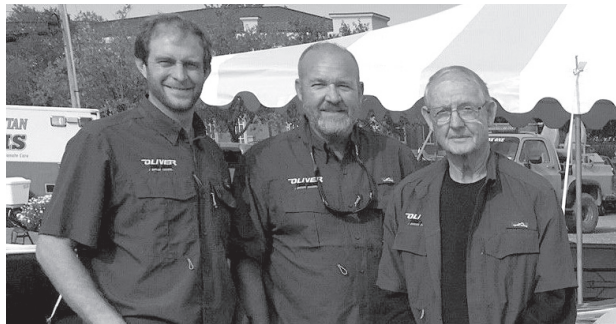
The 3rd generation family company prides itself in giving its customers the very best auto repair service, with a focus on upfront and honest quotes, timely response to issues, and quality products and parts.

Oliver Tire Pros are the 2020 Reader's Choice winners for two categories, "Best Auto Service" and "Best Oil Change."

When the company first began, it was their passion to give a better tire buying and auto repair experience, which then drove them to develop the model of Oliver Tire Pros and gave them the conviction to turn hard work into the provider they are today.

The company celebrated its 40th anniversary last fall.

Family patriarch Morris Ray Oliver founded the business when his son Mike was still in high school. Mike worked with him after school and on weekends and joined the business when he graduated.



**Michael, Mike and Morris Ray Oliver are the 3 generations who make up Oliver Tire.**

"We want people to know we are the hometown tire store," Mike said. "We don't just have our business in this city. We live here too."

Morris Ray "retired" 15 years ago, although he still farms, cuts grass and does a lot of other stuff, including overseeing some rental property.

Morris Ray said while they worked hard, they've played hard too.

"I used to tell Mike, 'Let's work hard and make some money, then we'll have a little fun

spending some of it," Morris Ray said.

Mike's son Michael is now the general manager and draws high praise from his father.

"I think he's probably more driven than any of us," Mike said of his son. "He's always working and always seeing after what needs to be done."

They pride themselves in being family owned and operated and giving each and every customer that walks in their doors, a hometown feeling.

With six service bays at hand, Oliver Tire Pros can quickly have your tire or automotive repairs taken care of while you relax in their on-site waiting room and enjoy a free cup of coffee.

The staff of Oliver Tire Pros includes: Owner, Mike Oliver; Owner, Scott Allen; Manager, Michael Oliver (3rd generation); Service Writer, Jeremiah Handrich; Tire Technician, Dewayne Franks; General Mechanic, Jim Crawford; Technician, Michael Fox; Service Writer, Chase Williams; Technician, Neal Heflin; Technician, Brian Bonds; Technician, Adolfo Cepeda; Tire Technician, David Hunt; and Tire Technician Taylor Smith.

*Thank You  
to all of  
our valued  
customers  
for your votes  
and your  
continued  
loyalty!*

The Advertiser-Gleam  
Best of  
**2020**  
Reader's Choice  
WINNER

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# Charburger: A longtime Warrenton tradition

Charburger has been around since about 1962 and is no stranger to winning several awards over the years. This year, Charburger has taken The Gleam's Reader's Choice for the Best of the Best in best fried chicken, best hamburger and best milkshake.

Christi Edwards believes Charburger dates back to 1962, but she has not had time to actually confirm that. Edwards' dad bought it in 2004 and ran it for two years, then leased it out until December 2012. Her dad took it back over January 2013, then she took over in June 2015.

There are 15 employees at Charburger and she can say this is one of the best crews ever. She is very grateful for every last one of them especially Chris and RaeAnn. They are the main cooks and can handle a busy rush. They put out quality



food in a timely manner, Christi said.

The entire staff had excellent qualities such as David who keeps

Edwards in line, picks up her slack, and cooks the meats and veggies.

Carrie, Becky, Lisa and Joan keep the front flowing smoothly and the

customers love them.

Trudy is there at 4:30 a.m. preparing breakfast without fail and she knows what her regular customers want when they walk in the door.

"Phyllis is part of the building, when she goes the building will cave in," Edwards said.

Angie and Misty are the best fried chicken cooks ever. They cooked at Bruce's before working at Charburger.

Heavenly, Gracie and Tamyra are the precious teenage help.

Charburger is known for great burgers and the Wildcat Sauce.

"We use fresh ground beef and cook to order. The Wildcat Sauce is what makes it a Wildcat Burger. You can also get a traditional burger with mustard, ketchup and

**SEE CHARBURGER, 7**

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## CHARBURGER

From Page 6

mayo,” Christi said.

Charburger’s fried chicken comes from another famous chicken recipe, at least in the Guntersville area.

“Our fried chicken is Randy Walker’s recipe from Bruce’s. We are improving daily but it’s hard to compete with 30 years of Randy’s experience. He’s been a mentor to me in the restaurant business, and a big influence on my decision to carry on his fried chicken legacy,” she said.

The best of the best milkshakes in Marshall County also comes from Charburger. Christi said they sell them even on cold days.

“The milkshakes are hand spun and a huge hit,” she said. “No matter the outside temp, we sell lots of milkshakes. You can get any flavor on the ice cream menu plus banana, cherry, grape, peanut



The Charburger hamburger is a repeat winner. It won last year too.

butter and Dr Pepper. It’s hard to beat a Blue Bell hand dipped milkshake!”

Charburger is special to Guntersville, especially the Warrenton area. Edwards said she is thankfully the previous owners made it a success, and she is just trying to carry it on.

“We greatly appreciate our customers who continue to support us” she said.

**Best Financial Services**

The Advertiser-Gleam  
*Best of*  
**2020**  
Reader's Choice  
**WINNER**

### Best Bank

**1ST, CITIZENS BANK & TRUST**  
finalists BancorpSouth,  
Wells Fargo

### Best Customer Service

**1ST, DIANE PLEDGER FARMERS INSURANCE**  
finalist Chick Fil A

### Best Insurance/Agent

**1ST, LAKE GUNTERSVILLE INSURANCE/CARSON RAY**  
finalists State Farm/

Pierce Harris, Farmers Insurance, Diane Pledger

### Best Investment Firm

**1ST, TODD CARROLL, EDWARD JONES**  
finalists Steven Knowles-Ameriprise, Team Wealth Solutions

### Best Mortgage Co.

**1ST, FIRST BANK MORTGAGE**  
finalists Mortgage Right; Citizens Bank & Trust



# Carr Funeral Home

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for placing your  
trust in us!*

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# Bubba has been a winner for years

By Sherry Mayberry

Bubba's II took home the wins for best formal wear and best men's clothing in the Best of 2020 for the Advertiser Gleam.

This is not the first time the clothing store has taken home those prizes. Owner Bubba Martin said they have won these two awards ever since the Gleam has been doing the Best of awards.

Martin said he and his store have a long history. He has been a part of the clothing industry since 1971, so he knows a lot of folks from just being around that long. It is a benefit when you have been around as long as he has.

He and his brother, Rick, opened a little clothing store in Guntersville. Prior to opening that store, he worked with Mr. and Mrs. Burger form Burgers Apparel. He started with them the summer year of his



Formalwear is a big part of Bubba's business in the spring

freshman year of high school.

He has been in the clothing business since then. He worked through college and worked at Ick Sacs Stores in Gadsden and then

moved back to Guntersville at the end of 1977.

When they moved back, the brothers bought the men's warehouse in SouthTown. They operated there for a long time, closed for a short time in the 1990s and then reopened in 2000 in the shop where Blossom's is now located.

He moved to his current location in Northtown in 2008. That was the 3rd move. He said by far this location is the best.

"We have been very fortunate to be relatively successful over the years and blessed to be able to do it," Martin.

With the COVID-19 pandemic, Martin is nervous about what will happen to the "mom and pop stores" in Guntersville. He said he is not really too afraid for himself but more concerned for the new businesses.

The pandemic could not have come at a worse time for Martin. This is his busiest season typically with proms and weddings. The hope is that the seniors are going to be able to do their proms after all, because he wants the seniors to have these memories. He has seen some efforts by senior parents attempting to put something on for their graduates this summer.

Bubba's II carries a full line of men's clothing minus shoes. He said he does sell some casual things such as flip-flops. They sell everything from casual to dressy casual to tailored clothing. The store also carries boys' casual wear.

The store sells nicer items. Bubba says their competition was Parisian. With Parisian gone, he said they are the store that people come

SEE BUBBA, 9

**El Camino Real**  
RESTAURANTE MEXICANO



Thank you for voting us Best Mexican Restaurant. We appreciate all the support throughout the years.  
- The Ortiz Family

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**Rusty Glines**

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Mon-Fri 7:30-5:00  
Sat 7:30-2:00



## BUBBA

From Page 8

to for nicer clothing.

Renting formalwear has been a very big part of the business since the very beginning. They rent prom and wedding tuxedos for formal events and special events like the Winter Ball put on by the Foundation for Marshall Medical.

The COVID-19 shutdown has been a very painful thing for all small retailers. Having to be closed and locking the doors during one of their very busiest times of years has been heartbreaking. Martin said his store has all of the inventory to pay for and at this point, most are having to pay for their inventory through borrowed money.

Martin said he is 64 and

he does not like doing that because it is like starting over. It has been changing a lot of the way people are doing business and it is a major setback. He became emotional about other small retailers possibly losing business.

His family has some funds set back for the "rainy day" and this one is a big one.

"My heart goes out to all of the young business people," Martin said. "I don't know how they are going to survive. We will see. They were just getting started and they were already operating on borrowed money and that kind of thing, so my heart goes out to them and I hope the government programs help them to survive."

There are promising signs that it is turning around and he hopes it does sooner rather than later.

Martin said he is at the

store most every day and if you want to come by, make an appointment.

The regular business hours are Monday through Friday 10 a.m. until 5:30 p.m. and Saturday from 10 a.m. until 5 p.m. and closed on Sunday.

The COVID-19 hours are 10 a.m. until 4 p.m. and closed on Sunday. He will work with anyone who wants to see his merchandise. They have curbside pickup and you can pay over the phone. If you need something for a birthday, anniversary or event for an emergency like a funeral, Martin will work with you.

"All you have to do is call me and I will make arrangements," he said.

*For more information you can reach him at 256-571-9971 or visit the Facebook page <https://www.facebook.com/BubbasII/>.*

## Best Miscellaneous

The Advertiser-Gleam  
*Best of*  
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Reader's Choice  
**WINNER**

### Best Bridal Registry

**1ST STACH & CO.**

finalists Bakers on Main, Bridals by CC

### Best Civic Club

**1ST LAKE CITY CIVITANS**

finalists Guntersville Lions,  
Guntersville Ladies Civitans

The Advertiser-Gleam  
*Best of*  
**2020**  
Reader's Choice  
**WINNER**



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The Advertiser-Gleam  
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 Reader's Choice  
**WINNER**

# Congratulations!

## READER'S CHOICE WINNERS

Thank you, Advertiser-Gleam readers. Once again you voted, and we listened. The Advertiser-Gleam is proudly presenting the 2020 Best of the Best Reader's Choice Winners, listed in this special section by categories.

This promotion gives you an opportunity to brag about your business and tell our readers why you were chosen by our readers as one of the best places in the area to do business with.

Having a great reputation is what businesses need and being able to talk about the positive things you're doing will have a big impact on your business, while allowing us to brag about the quality of businesses in our area.

Your brand is what makes you one of the 2020 Best of the Best Reader's Choice award winners and it defines you among your customer base while helping to drive business through your door throughout 2020-2021.

As an award winner you have bragging rights, you earn the right to use the



Again, congratulations and we hope you will get lots of traffic and business.

The Advertiser-Gleam Staff

Reader's Choice Winners Logo in all your advertising, marketing, social media, banners, etc. Don't forget to thank the ones who voted for you. Incorporate your appreciation into your advertising and marketing campaigns.

If you don't win, don't hesitate to run special promotions throughout the year with The Advertiser-Gleam and give our readers a reason to talk about you and vote for you next year.

We have many special business promotions to help you tell your story. Let us help you get your business noticed and build your brand.

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For more information on how advertising in The Advertiser-Gleam can help you attract more shoppers call your sales representative today at 256-582-3232.

# The Soak House: A place to unwind

The Soak House & Soapery is Guntersville's premier luxury day spa offering a relaxing space to escape and unwind.

The spa opened two years ago and it has been expanding its offerings ever since. Initial services were spray tanning and infrared sauna therapy to complement their signature service, private therapeutic mineral soaks. Before long, they added massage therapy, facials, foot soaks, and even cryotherapy.

"Our entire team is dedicated to continuously expanding their education and certifications in their respective fields of expertise in order to bring our clients the highest quality services possible," said owner Teresa Staggs.

The Soak House & Soapery just celebrated its two year anniversary on March 14 and for the second year in a row they have been awarded 3 of The Advertiser-Gleam's Best of the Best Readers' Choice Awards: Best Therapeutic Massage, Best Tanning Salon, and Best Day

Spa. Staggs attributes the wins to her amazing staff.

For winning best therapeutic massage, she credits her three gifted LMT's, Erika Phillips, Morgan Stokes, and Val Garnier. Massage therapy is a very popular method of relieving pain, stress, anxiety, and even aids in general wellness. Each massage session at The Soak House is customized based on the client's specific needs.

On winning best tanning salon, Staggs attributes this to the fact that the spray tans are private and customizable. The spray tans are performed using a VersaSpa Pro automated tanning booth which allows complete privacy while achieving an even, beautiful tan.

For best day spa, she gives all the credit to the community.

"The Soak House & Soapery was created to fill a much needed void in our community," Staggs said. "We didn't have a calm, relaxing spa to escape to



where we could relieve stress and better our overall wellness."

She and her husband Shawn built it and the people responded.

"If it weren't for the citizens of Marshall County, The Soak House wouldn't exist. We are grateful," Staggs said.



For more information about the Soak House, visit their website [www.soakhousespa.com](http://www.soakhousespa.com) or give them a call 256-960-5085. They are located in Guntersville's Historic District at 312 Gunter Ave. Open Monday - Saturday.

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• Best Day Spa • Best Tanning  
• Best Therapeutic Massage

*The Soak House & Soapery  
would like to thank the readers of  
The Advertiser-Gleam for your business  
and your continued support!*

# Best Automotive

## Best Auto Body Repair

**1ST, SHELTON'S BODY SHOP**  
finalists Holcomb Collision  
& Lake City Auto

## Best Auto Service

**1ST, OLIVER TIRE**  
finalists Team One Nissan  
& Brad Bearden

## Best Towing Service

**1ST, WHITAKER TOWING**  
finalists Ace Towing & R&D Towing

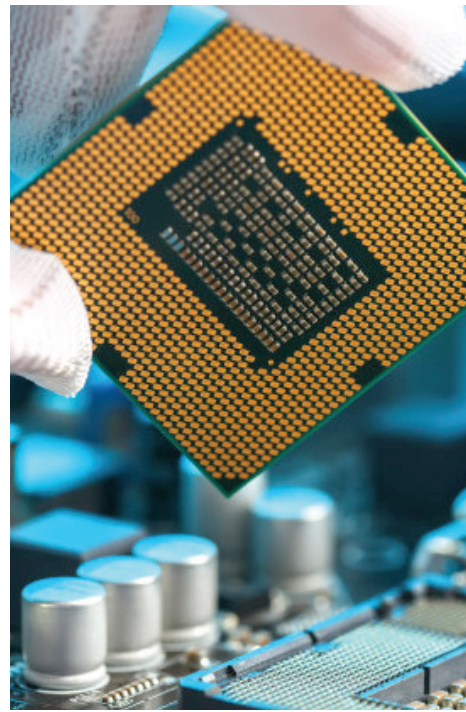
## Best Transmission Repair

**1ST, SAND MOUNTAIN TRANSMISSION**  
finalists Adams Complete  
Auto & HHE Automotive

## Best Used Cars

**1ST, SAND MOUNTAIN TOYOTA**  
finalists Gilbert & Baugh  
Ford & Browns Kar Mart

# Best Do It Yourself



## Best Equipment Rental

**1ST INDUSTRIAL RENTAL**  
finalists  
Best Hardware Store – 1st  
Discount Building; finalists  
Bragg's Ace Hardware, Lowe's

# Best Dental Services

The Advertiser-Gleam  
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**WINNER**

## Best Dentist

**1ST LAKE GUNTERSVILLE DENTISTRY**  
finalists Total Dental Care,  
Smiles by Design-Albertville

## Best Orthodontist

**1ST LAKEVIEW ORTHODONTICS**  
finalists, The Smile Team,  
Lake Gunterville

## Best Oral Surgeon

**1ST ORAL SURGERY ASSOCIATES**  
finalists, Dr. John Rutland  
& Total Dental



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*Thank you to the readers of the  
Advertiser Gleam for once again  
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**Best Food**

**Best Bakery**

**1ST, JONICA'S BAKERY**  
finalists, Albertville Home Bakery & Publix

**Best Cupcakes**

**1ST, JONICA'S BAKERY**  
finalists, Albertville Home Bakery & Publix

**Best Caterer**

**1ST, CRAWMAMA'S**  
finalists, Local Joe's & Rock House Eatery

**Best BBQ**

**1ST, SIMMONS**  
finalists Ol South Barbecue & Moe's Barbecue

**Best Catfish**

**1ST, CATFISH CABIN**  
finalists Top of the River & Papa Dubi's

**Best Chicken Wings**

**1ST, JEFFERSON'S**  
finalists, TJ's Hot Wings & The Brick  
Best Chinese Food – 1st, New

China; finalist, Ichiban Express

**Best Country Cooking**

**1ST, CRACKER BARREL**  
finalists, Garrett's Café Albertville & Neena's Courthouse Grill

**Best Fine Dining**

**1ST, THE ROCK HOUSE**  
finalists, Old Town Stock House & Beatrice at the Glover

**Best Hamburger**

**1ST, CHARBURGER**  
finalists, JJ's & Garrett's Café Albertville

**Best Milkshake**

**1ST, CHARBURGER**  
finalists, Chick Fil A & Bee Gee's

**Best Italian**

**1ST, GIOVANNI'S**  
finalists, Old Napoli Italian Cuisine & Grumpy's

**Best Mexican**

**1ST, EL CAMINO**  
finalists, Julia's Mexican Restaurant

& Los Arcos Albertville

**Best Pizza**

**1ST, MATER'S**  
finalists, Pizza Hut & Domino's

**Best Ribs**

**1ST, LOCAL JOE'S**  
finalists, Moe's Barbecue & Santa Fe

**Best Sushi**

**1ST, SAKURA**  
finalists, Ichiban Express & Thai Basil

**Best Service & Wait Staff**

**1ST, HUDDLE HOUSE**  
finalists, Rock House Eatery & Chic Fil A

**Best Health Food Store**

**1ST, LEAN KITCHEN**  
finalists, GNC & Healthy Hints

**Best Meat Dept.**

**1ST, FOODLAND GUNTERVILLE**  
finalists, Publix & Piggly Wiggly Gunterville



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# Avid Reader's Wife Wins Award



Laura Hand is the winner of the \$125 gift card from Walmart from the Gleam. She voted in the Best of 2020 and was the lucky winner.

A record number of voters took to the Internet and by paper ballot for the Advertiser-Gleam's Best of 2020 contest. This year the Gleam added a little incentive to the vote. If you voted and voted for a certain number of categories, you were entered in a drawing for a \$125 gift card to Walmart.

Laura Hand was this year's winner.

Laura said the reason she voted was not only because her husband is an "avid" Gleam reader, but because she wanted to support local businesses. She works at Medical Center Home Care and her husband works at Shelton's Body Shop, which both took home first place awards.

She continued to share and spread the word for people to vote. She said there are a lot of people who work with her and she continuously asked them to turn in their vote. She is a strong supporter of shopping local.

As for that "avid" reader, she gave the story behind that as well. When she and her husband Tyler first met, he told her that he wanted to make the front page of the Advertiser-Gleam for being married 50 years. He loves his hometown

paper and has always thought about being on the front page for that purpose. Laura decided for Valentine's Day 2 years ago to get him a subscription to the Gleam.

Laura said Tyler leaves his newspapers all around the house. She will throw them away after they start piling up and he will get them out of the garbage saying, "I will read them eventually."

The couple have two children, son Kaden, 6, and Nora Kate, 4, who are attending online classes for Guntersville. Laura said it has been a struggle to take on the role of teacher, but they are doing what they can. It has been real hard teaching her son how to use a laptop.

Laura works the weekends so she has been the main one doing school work. She is thankful that her mother-in-law bought a Chromebook for their family for Christmas. It has been a huge plus doing the school work.

She was grateful to receive the gift card and plans on using it for groceries since they are eating a lot more at home right now, especially with the kids being home.



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# Support Your Local Reader's Choice Winners & Finalists.



# Shop These Local Businesses Featured in this Section



# Jonica: 'Guntersville needed a bakery'

By Anthony Campbell

Jonica's Bakery – the creation of Jonica Thompson – will celebrate 2 years in business in June. And the business is the winner of two awards in The Advertiser-Gleam's annual Best of the Best competition.

Jonica won for Best Bakery and Best Cupcake.

Fans of the bakery could easily ask "Which cupcake?" At last count, Jonica's had 55 different cupcakes. They don't make all 55 every day, but there is a large selection most days.

Jonica previously owned bakeries in Argo and Pell City, eventually selling them both. She moved to Guntersville and for 5 years was content to be a mom and involved in the school PTO. But she would frequently say "Guntersville needs a bakery."

In time, she did something about it, opening her bakery at 1708 Gunter Avenue, across the street from Wendy's.

"When I sold the bakery in Pell City, I swore I'd never get in the bakery business again," Jonica said.

The bakery business is a lot of work, but Jonica learned the pitfalls with her two earlier ventures. She learned what NOT to do as much as what she should do.

"Our business model is different from the typical bakery," she said.

In a typical bakery, the employees arrive at 3 or 4 a.m. in the morning, bake whatever they will have for sale that day and that's that. When they're sold out, they're done.

Jonica and her employees bake throughout the day.

"The person coming in at 3 p.m. in the afternoon deserves to have a freshly baked cookie just like the person who came in first thing in the morning," Jonica said. "If you call us by noon with a cookie order, unless we have something else major going on, we can have those cookies ready for you that afternoon."

From the very beginning, Jonica has been adding and expanding the bakery. She added a dining space several months ago. Now, she is working on another dining space. The other space is two doors down. The new one will adjoin the bakery.

"It will be a more traditional bakery/café experience where you can have a seat and smell all the wonderful bakery smells while you enjoy your lunch," Jonica said.

Lunch is among those expansions the bakery



**Jonica's Bakery won Best Bakery and Best Cupcake in The Advertiser-Gleam's Best of 2020 contest. That's Jonica Thompson with some of the cupcakes. The store bakes an incredible 55 different kinds of cupcake.**

has added. At the start, she offered servings to go of chicken salad and pimento cheese. Now, she offers a soup and sandwich special every day along with a host of paninis and sides.

The soups include chicken and dumplings, broccoli and cheese and vegetable beef.

"The vegetable beef recipe was my grandmother's," Jonica said proudly.

The bakery does some wedding catering, but their much more common business is catering lunch. They only recently (during the COVID-19 shutdown) began delivering lunch.

"The EMA does a lot of business with us," Jonica said. "They can place an order for box lunches and we write the name of the person whose order it is on each box. It makes it a lot easier to pass out lunch during a training session."

Unlike a lot of small businesses, Jonica's business continued to thrive during the COVID-19 shutdown. She practiced social distancing by not allowing more than one customer or one family of customers in the store at a time.

"The first day, right after the shutdown went into effect, worried me," Jonica said. "We did about 20 percent of what we normally do. But the people of Guntersville have been so good to us. They have embraced us and they continued to build us up during the shutdown."

This is the first year for Jonica's Bakery to win in the Best of the Best competition. But it's not their first award.

"We won 'Best Debut' at Corks & Chefs," Jonica said.

There are 6 employees in the business.

"I couldn't do it without them," Jonica said. "They bring a lot of new ideas in and we try them. They're a great group."

Jonica is something of a Renaissance woman and she does a lot with her time. On top of running a bakery, she has written 2 children's books, both about Wally a great blue heron. The story was inspired by a great blue heron she and her son Shawn saw every morning as they drove from their home on Signal Point to school. Shawn was 6 at the time.

"The first book introduces kids to Wally and what he is," Jonica said. "The second book is also about Wally but is 'Come spend a day with me.'"

A third book will soon be added to the series.

"I don't just sit down and write," Jonica said. The stories build over time in her mind before she puts them to paper.

Jonica's family also expanded in the last year. Shawn is adopted. Shawn's birth family called Jonica awhile back, told her Shawn's birth mom was expecting and would she like that baby too. Jonica didn't hesitate to say she would.

"I think I actually said 'Yes' before I even discussed it with my husband Robert," she said. Of course, Robert was agreeable too.

Their daughter, Scarlett Anne, will soon be 1.

"I had actually prayed about having a daughter for 10 years," Jonica said. "It was a God thing when that prayer was answered. If Scarlett Anne had come sooner, I don't know that I would have started this bakery."

She got the phone call 6 days before the baby was born.

The offerings at Jonica's Bakery continue to grow. The new dining space will hopefully open in June, the anniversary month of the bakery. A billboard out front will soon advertise the bakery.

The newest treats available at the bakery are keto and diabetic friendly. New things, it seems, are always coming.

Robert has some fun with his wife about the bakery.

"Whenever I talk about being tired or something like that, he looks at me and says, 'Guntersville needed a bakery,'" she said.

*Jonica's Bakery is open 9 a.m. until 5 p.m. Tuesday-Friday and 9 a.m. until 3 p.m. on Saturday. The phone number is 256-486-9471. The special offerings are put on the bakery's social media sites daily.*





# Brickey and company mindful of community

By Sherry Mayberry

Sand Mountain Toyota took home best new and best used automotive dealer in the Advertiser-Gleam Best of 2020 competition. Chief executive officer Mark Brickey said he is proud of his team. This is not the first time Sand Mountain Toyota has won awards.

All of the awards matter, Brickey said, but not as much as the teammates and the community. He said the awards are nice, but there is a bigger picture to be seen.

Brickey said Sand Mountain Toyota has won the President's Award multiple years. The President's Award is from Toyota. Out of 14 years, they have won the award 11 times. The President's Award recognizes the finest dealerships by honoring dealers that excel in all facets of their operations and recognizes dealerships that continue to go above and beyond.

Another award Sand Mountain Toyota has won is the Toyota Elite Program. This award they have won since they started giving out the award. This year the company came in 8th. This competition is with 177 Toyota dealerships. Their goal is to always be in the top 10.

The Elite is Southeast Toyota's competition. In 2019, Sand Mountain Toyota finished 9th. The award is based on sales performance, sales retention and service retention. The part he is most proud of is they ranked 4th in service retention out of the 177 dealerships.

"Our service department does a phenomenal job," he said.

He may get all of the credit, but he said it is his team who deserves all the praise.

The team has been around him enough to know what he expects and what his wishes are.

Brickey and Sand Mountain Toyota take pride in giving back to the community.

The company has been recognized nationally for giving. He said he was going to buy food for the Wildcat Pantry and he heard that the schools would be closing their doors due to COVID-19. Marshal Brooks approached him and suggested the team at Sand Mountain Toyota cook hot dogs and hamburgers 3 days a week to help provide to the students who need a hot meal.

It is a drive through meal. The team wears gloves and takes all kinds of precautionary measures to keep the staff and the people safe.

The idea then grew when some local churches got together and made peanut butter and jelly sandwiches. This is known as "peanut butter and jelly and Jesus" and the bags all have inspirational messages. The goal at the beginning of the sandwich giveaway was to provide 600, but in the end the churches gave over 3,000.

The first PB&J meal they did was done on Friday, April 3. Brickey said they had over 500 people come through to get a meal. Inside the bags, there were Bible verses. There were 2 PB&J sandwiches in every bag, in case someone needed one for later.

"What was amazing about this is that these people have worked with me so long that they kind of know this is the kind of thing I like to do and they come to me with ideas," he said.

He could come up with hundreds of

times his employees have come up with ideas similar to this one. He said their goal is to help the community, support all of the schools, ministries and clubs, and many other support projects.

"I could not do any of this without the support of my team. My team takes care of the customers, sells the cars, fixes the cars, and I may get all of the credit but it is really this amazing team we have put together," Brickey said.

One story that is fond to Brickey is giving an autistic child a chance at working for Toyota.

Austin Robertson was born past term and there were some complications. His aunt reached out to Sand Mountain Toyota about getting a hat for Austin's birthday. When Brooks found out Austin wanted to work for the company, Brooks asked if it would be possible for him to work with them for a day.

He was able to work with the crew. His parents said he lifted the cars and did some other aspects of work that he could to help. It was a great experience for all of the team. In a video, his father said he loved it and smiled the whole time.

Sand Mountain Toyota's slogan changed a few months ago to "We're more than just a dealership" and Brickey said the reason for that is because he wants to be seen as more than the car dealership.

"We can sell you a car or fix your cars, and we're really good at it," he said. "Obviously, Toyota gives us awards for doing it, but we really just want to be a good community partner. We try to glorify God in all that we do. We don't always succeed, but we try."

At Sand Mountain Toyota, he does not call the people who work at the company employees. They are called teammates.

Brickey said his family had humble beginnings and he owes his work ethic to his mother and father. He was just a young boy when his dad died, but his mom never let on like the family was struggling. She worked as much as she could and provided for the family.

When Brickey moved to Guntersville in 2006, he and his brother Joe purchased Kilpatrick Toyota. He was a banker and he started banking car dealerships. He and his brother started looking at purchasing a car dealership and bought Kilpatrick.

Brickey was named Citizen of the Year this year by the Lake Guntersville Chamber of Commerce. The Chamber's annual banquet was scheduled for early April but due to COVID-19, the event will be rescheduled. The new date has not been set yet.

The sales hours at Sand Mountain Toyota are Monday through Saturday from 8:30 a.m. until 5 p.m. and closed on Sunday. Service hours are 7:30 a.m. until 4:20 p.m. and Saturday from 7 a.m. until 3 p.m. The service department is also closed on Sunday. The parts hours are Monday through Friday from 7:30 until 4:30 and Saturday from 7 a.m. until 3 p.m. The parts department is closed on Sunday.

*For more information, contact them at 256-540-5501 for their main or sales line; 256-540-5698 for service; 256-567-9892 for parts; and 256-293-5945 for the rental center.*



Cashier Angela Taylor does her part to keep the customers of Foodland safe. She said she is constantly spraying down the registers especially the touch pads. She does this all of the time not just because of the pandemic.



Rickey Pannell (left), Ted Dubs, and Larry Lain are three members of the meat department that keep the place well stocked. Lain helps in the meat department occasionally.

# Foodland picks up pair of awards

By Sherry Mayberry

In the Glean's Best of 2020, Foodland Grocery in Guntersville won in two categories: best grocery and best meat department.

Guntersville Foodland's store manager Rickey Bethune said this is not the first time they have won these awards. He is grateful for the ones who voted for Foodland being number one in these two categories.

He said the people who work at the store are the ones who deserve the credit for making Foodland the best grocery store in Marshall County. There are some good folks who work there, he said. They care about the customers and they care about the store.

"We strive to maintain a clean, fresh, friendly, well-stocked store and good prices. Customer service is number one," Bethune said.

The clean, fresh, friendly, well-stocked and good prices is the motto for Foodland. Bethune said if you can do those five things well, then you will be successful.

During the pandemic, Foodland is taking some extra measures in



The quick work from the cashiers is one reason for Foodland being the Best of the Best.

place to make sure the store is safe. They have installed plexiglass barriers in the checkout line to protect not only the customers, but the cashiers as well. The plexiglass was done by the main company and it is just a safeguard for the cashier and customer. They have markers on the floor of where people should be to maintain a 6-foot distance while they are checking out.

The staff works hard to be the most efficient with checking out their customers in a timely manner. Bethune said it takes the whole team to keep the store running.

Bethune said to keep winning the awards, the store is going to keep doing what they have been doing in giving the best customer service they can. The only reason they are there is to serve the customers.

He said keeping a clean store is a big must and the staff has done an amazing job at that.

The meat department cuts their meat fresh and the ground beef and chuck are ground fresh as well. They try to keep a variety of meat and good quality as well.

There are over 75 years of meat department experience among the 6 main meat department workers. The people in the meat department have been doing it a long time, he said.

The members of the meat department are market manager Steve Pilkington, Rickey Pannell, Ted Dubs, Ditra Freeman, Clayton Taylor and Harry Deaton.

Bethune wants to thank all of their loyal customers for voting Foodland the best grocery store and the best meat department again.

*Foodland Guntersville is opened from 7 a.m. until 10 p.m. 7 days a week. The hours are not different for COVID-19. They are located at 14214 Southgate Plaza, Guntersville and their phone number is 256-582-3470.*

# The Rock House: Best fine dining & best steak

By Sherry Mayberry

The Rock House Eatery won best steak and best fine dining in the Glean's Best of 2020.

After speaking with owner Anita Duncan, she was excited to hear the news that they had won multiple awards. She said it is because of the staff and customer. She praised the employees for the amazing service they provide in making the Rock House dining experience pleasant and you could hear the smile in her tone when she spoke about the steak. It was a recipe her late husband Joey created.

The Rock House Eatery started with Joey and their middle son Brandon. Brandon was a cook for the Coast Guard and brought the love of cooking back with him. The Rock House was owned by the Duncans and they had been playing around with what they wanted to do with it before making it the restaurant.

She said in 2003, they lost a teenage son, Cody. In some ways opening the restaurant was for him. There is a bird symbol on their logo. She said it is a dove in baby blue because Cody loved the North Carolina Tar Heels.

Joey and Brandon started working together to get the restaurant going and only a year later, Joey had a heart attack and passed away.

Beau, Joey's oldest son, had been working in hospitality for awhile in Costa Rica. Anita said it was great that he had that type of background. He kind of stepped in and was able to run the restaurant. He has been a great asset in building the business, Anita said. He is wonderful with the public and has done a lot to keep the restaurant going.

Brandon now lives in Portland, Oregon, but still sends down recipes for The Rock House Eatery.

Beau is the general manager of the restaurant and he handles all of



the customers and the day-to-day aspects of the restaurant. Anita is behind the scenes and does the paper work.

She applauded her staff. Rock House Eatery came in second place on the best service and wait staff. She said she has had several employees that have been with the restaurant since it was first opened. She claimed the employees have become more than just workers; they are family.

The Rock House Eatery is very family oriented. She said each person who works there is like a member of the family. They blend well together and they care more about not just the job, but each other.

The menu is what brings people to eat at The Rock House Eatery. The steak recipe has been a part of The Rock House Eatery for 10 years and was created by Joey Duncan. She said the steaks are hand cut and seasoned. There is no steak sauce in the restaurant which some people tend to not like, but then they taste the steak and understand why there is none there. Anita described it as Southern comfort with a touch of urban flare.

They use fresh ingredients and support local business when they buy. The restaurant tries to be environmentally friendly and uses very little Styrofoam. They



were the first in town to use paper straws and they recycle when they can.

Anita thanked the customers who have supported The Rock House Eatery during this pandemic. She said the community has been wonderful supporters of keeping their small business running. When it all started, she was afraid of what was going to happen, but they have been blessed. She said they are doing nonstop cleaning and maintaining social distancing. They have been doing curbside service for a while now and it is working well.

The community has been remarkable during these scary times and Anita is grateful to live in such a giving area. The Rock House Eatery has been giving as well. On their Facebook page, they will occasionally give away soup, cookies or other goodies that they have.

They recently added a pop-up store that includes toilet paper, eggs and some other essential items people may need. It has been good for those that need something extra. This is done with the curbside pick-up as well.

She said they had to cut some of the staff back and she knows that is hard on everyone. It has been heartwarming to see how they have pulled for each other and done so much for the community. She said

there have been times that someone will come in on their day off and do what needs to be done.

Anita is a strong supporter of shopping local. She said their customer base has been amazing. There have been people that came from Huntsville and Birmingham because they had heard how great the food is in their establishment.

She is glad to be a part of something bigger. She explained people are coming to Gunterville and surrounding cities for vacation and one thing people do during vacation is eat. The Rock House Eatery is one of those places that people want to visit and eat at because of the atmosphere and good food.

The Rock House Eatery tries hard to be involved in everything that is going on in the community and like to pay back their customers by helping any way they can.

She said winning fine dining is excellent and they will strive to keep the dining experience the best. She explained their dining is casual, fine dining. You do not have to get dressed up to come eat at the restaurant, but you could if you would like.

The offer outdoor seating as well and encourage people to bring their dogs. She said there will be a lot of times that you will see someone eating and their dog is lying down under the table. They offer little doggy treats and water to the pets.

The regular hours are Tuesday through Sunday from 10:30 a.m. until 2 p.m. for brunch/lunch and Wednesday through Saturday from 5 p.m. until 9 p.m. for dinner.

With the stay-at-home order, they ask for the last order to be called in by 1:30 p.m. and dinner is from 4 p.m. until 7:30 p.m.

*For more information you can follow them on Facebook at <https://www.facebook.com/rockhouse.eatery/> or visit their website on [www.rockhouseeatery.com](http://www.rockhouseeatery.com).*

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## Miscellaneous Winners

### Best Event Venue

#### 1ST, THE VENUE

finalists Majestic Venue & Bakers on Main

### Best Hotel

#### 1ST, HAMPTON INN

finalists, Wyndam Garden & Microtel Inn

### Best Laundromat

#### 1ST, LAUNDRY BASKET

### Best Nightlife

#### 1ST, DOWNTOWN 412

finalists, Buffalo Eddies & The Brick

### Best Radio Station

#### 1ST, WQSB

finalists, WTWX & Power 107.5

### Best Senior Living Community

#### 1ST, BRANCHWATER VILLAGE

finalists, Terrace Lake & Barfield

### Best Wedding Reception Location

#### 1ST, HARMONY HILLS

finalists, Majestic Venue & Hodges Farm LLC

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### Best Veterinarian

#### 1ST, GUNTERSVILLE ANIMAL HOSPITAL

finalists, Sand Mountain Small Animal  
Hospital and Spring Creek Veterinary

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## Best Medical Providers

### Best Family Physician

#### 1ST, DR. JOHN BOGGESS

finalists, Dr. Tray Nesmith  
& Dr. Jeff Saylor

### Best Home Healthcare

#### 1ST, MEDICAL CENTERS

##### HOME CARE

finalists, Encompass  
Health & Home Instead

### Best Medical Equipment

#### 1ST, PORCH HOME MEDICAL

finalists, Southern  
Medical Equipment &  
Latham's Pharmacy

### Best Pediatrician

#### 1ST, DR. DAVID CHUPP

finalist, Marshall  
County Pediatrics

### Best Ophthalmologist

#### Optometrist

#### 1ST, LAKEVIEW EYE CARE

finalists, Eyes on Guntersville



& Eyes on Albertville

### Best Walk In Medical

#### 1ST, LAKESIDE NORTH FAMILY PRACTICE

finalists, Care Plus 431  
& United Doctors

### Best Pharmacy

#### 1ST, BUNCH PHARMACY

finalists, Haralson Discount  
Drug & Walmart

### Best Physical Therapy

#### 1ST, THERAPY PLUS NORTH

finalists, TOC & Rehab Partners

### Best Weight Loss Clinic

#### 1ST, NEW YOU

finalists, Destination Loss  
& AL Weight Loss

**Best Personal Services**

**Best Barber Shop**

**1ST, BARNES BARBER SHOP**  
finalists, Great Clips & Michaels Salon Boutique

**Best Carwash**

**1ST, 3 BROS CAR WASH**  
finalists, Laundry Basket & Johnny's Car Wash

**Best Computer Service**

**1ST, TECHNOSHACK**  
finalist, Computer Warehouse

**Best Day Spa**

**1ST, THE SOAK HOUSE**  
Soapery; finalists, Serenity Salon & Bella Skincare

**Best Day Care**

**1ST, KIDS KORNER AT 1ST METHODIST**  
finalists, Solitude Baptist Church & New Life Christian

**Best Dry Cleaner**

**1ST, STREAMLINE**  
finalists, Duke's Cleaners & Alterations & Clean Rite Cleaners

**Best Funeral Home**

**1ST, CARR**  
finalists, Adams Brown Service Funeral Home & Guntersville Memorial

**Best Hair Salon**

**1ST, GRAY; CO.;**  
finalists, Parlour 502 & Kut N Up

**Best Heating; Air**

**1ST, DAVIS HEATING; AIR;**



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**Best Plumber**

**1ST, ROTO ROOTER**  
finalists, Dependable Plumber & Russell Rahn Plumbing

**Best Realtor**

**1ST, RUSTY GLINES**  
finalists, Nathaniel Fredrick & Tammy Maden

**Best Tattoo Parlor**

**1ST, INK MONKEY**  
finalists, Inked Up & Artistic Ink

finalists, Guntersville Air & Benefield's Cooling

**Best Landscape/Lawn care**

**1ST, SHELTON LAWN SERVICE**  
finalists, Marshall Lawn care & Robinson Waldrop

**Best Lawyer**

**1ST, BEARD & BEARD**  
finalists, Berry & Associates & Shannon Mitchell

**Best Massage Therapy**

**1ST, THE SOAK HOUSE; SOAPERY;**  
finalists, Amanda Bowers & Massage Therapy

**Best Nail Salon**

**1ST, VIP NAIL & SPA**  
finalists, Embrace Salon & Nails by Halle

**Best Pest Control**

**1ST, THE BUC DOCTOR**  
finalists, Cook's Pest Control & Sand Mountain Pest

**Best Personal Trainer**

**1ST, KRISS HOFFMAN**  
finalists, Brandy Hall & Wilmore Training

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