

Alabama Retailer

*SALES TAX HOLIDAY
Severe Weather
Tax Holiday is
Feb. 25-27*

*MEMBER HIGHLIGHT
MANDY HENRY
Owner of Queen City Market*

*MEMBER BENEFITS
Legislative
Summaries
and Statewide
Election Guides*

*EMPLOYMENT LAW
Your Resource Center
Offers Free Consultations
and Answers to FAQs*

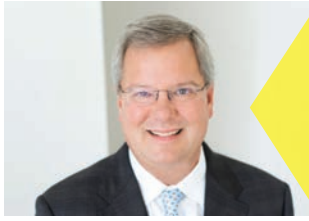
LOCAL JOE

Jodie Stanfield

ALABAMA RETAIL ASSOCIATION CHAIRMAN
OWNER OF LOCAL JOE'S



From the President



Alabama's Future is On the Ballot

On May 24, Alabama's voters begin to choose who will lead the executive and legislative branches of our state government for years to come.

The opportunity and privilege to elect the governor, constitutional officers and members of the Alabama Legislature rolls around once every four years.

The ballot this spring also will include races for one U.S. Senate seat, all seven of Alabama's seats in the U.S. House of Representatives and two places on the Alabama Supreme Court.

On your behalf, the Alabama Retail Association talks with the candidates about the issues our members face each day. We look for someone who understands the importance of the retail industry to the state's economy and who indicates they will at least listen to your point of view.

Then, your board of directors considers the staff recommendations, discusses the candidates and decides who to endorse.

Sometime this month, if not sooner, look for an emailed member communication about who your political action committees have endorsed.

Closer to the May primary, we will provide you with an electronic Voter Guide you can share with your employees and others. Find out more about how you can help get out the vote on Page 16.

Please consider casting your ballot for the candidates in the Alabama Retail Association Voter Guide and ask your employees to do the same.

Alabama's future depends on it.

Rick Brown, Publisher and President

Alabama Retailer

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Publisher
Rick Brown

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Nancy King Dennis

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Brandon Robbins

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Alabama Retailer of the Year and Centennial Retailer nominations due April 29

The Alabama Retail Association will accept nominations for the 2022 Alabama Retailer of the Year and the Alabama Centennial Retailer awards through Friday, April 29.

In its 22nd year, the Alabama Retailer of the Year awards recognize outstanding retailers who have demonstrated a blend of sound business practices and innovation with commitment to their communities, customers and employees.

Nominees must own, operate or manage a retail business with a physical presence in Alabama and that Alabama location must have been in operation for a minimum of



five years. To be considered a retail operation, a business must collect state and local sales taxes.

[👉 Nominate your favorite retailer at *alabamaretail.org/retaileroftheyearnomination/*](https://alabamaretail.org/retaileroftheyearnomination/)

Retail businesses that began in 1922 or before are eligible to be recognized as Alabama Centennial Retailers. Retailers nominated will be contacted and asked to provide a brief history and other information about their business.



[👉 Help us recognize a retailer that has been in business for 100 years or more by filling out the form at *alabamaretail.org/centennialretailernomination/*](https://alabamaretail.org/centennialretailernomination/)

SELMA BELIEVER

Real Estate Specialist Brings Retail to Broad Street

MANDY HENRY FULFILLS DREAM OF OPERATING
A RETAIL STORE WITH QUEEN CITY MARKET

Story and Photos by Nancy King Dennis



Mandy Henry takes a moment to relax in the home furnishing and décor side of Queen City Market in Selma, a business she began in 2015.

Selma native Mandy Henry is a real estate agent and developer, a licensed home builder specializing in renovations and a retail store owner.

"Mandy Henry believes in Selma, the Queen City of the Black Belt," said Sheryl Smedley, executive director of the Selma and Dallas County Chamber of Commerce and Tourism Information.

That is why Mandy named her home décor and clothing boutique, Queen City Market, and why the chamber bestowed her with its 2021 Woman of Business Award.

What would become Queen City Market started in 2015 in an 800-square-foot space in Selma's downtown historic district. "I wanted to prove that retail could make it in Selma," Mandy said. "It has always been my dream to have a retail store."

Her dream quickly outgrew that "tiny spot" and has since moved into four different buildings Mandy owns or co-owns on Broad Street, the main artery in downtown Selma – 127, 201, 121 and 125.

In 2017, the store was at 127 Broad, but "we needed more room," Mandy said, so she relocated the business to the ground floor of the historic Woolworth's building at 201 Broad in July of 2018.

By March of 2021, the store moved and expanded again, this time into two connecting historic buildings.

"I really needed to separate Queen City's clothes and the furniture, and I needed more office space for my construction and real estate businesses," she said. Mandy heads up a team for Montgomery-based RE/MAX Tri-Star in Selma and Dallas County, and she also operates Mandy Henry Design and Construction LLC. She runs all three from her office behind, but accessible to, the retail space.

The furniture and home goods portion of Queen City Market is at 121 Broad St., an Art Deco structure built in 1929 for S.H. Kress & Co. department store. The prior tenant was a jewelry store that operated in Selma for 171 years. The Queen City Market clothing boutique is next door in what was previously a bridal shop. "Originally 125 and 127 were one big building," said Mandy. Before it was split into two spaces, the larger structure housed Kayser's Liepold's department store.

Mandy said operating today's retail out of yesterday's retail spaces excites her. "I love historic buildings," she said. "I also think the historic district is the heart of any community, especially Selma."

Surviving 2020

In April of 2020, less than a month into a worldwide pandemic, U.S. Rep. Terri Sewell sought out Mandy to serve on a COVID-19 Advisory Council. The congresswoman said

she chose Mandy because Queen City Market "has not only become a beloved staple in the Selma community, but it also attracts customers from surrounding counties, which helps Selma's overall economy."

Mandy said she willingly "reached out to local retailers and others I knew within our region to see what troubles they were facing and to give them knowledge about what mandates and restrictions were coming for our brick-and-mortar businesses." The Selma

congressional representative said, "Mandy provided an invaluable perspective on how small retail businesses could reopen safely, strategically and responsibly."

After the early shutdown and adjusting to social distancing and masking, "sales are good and strong," Mandy said at the end of 2021.

Lessons of 2021 and Hopes for 2022

Selling comes easy for Mandy, who has a degree in advertising and business. Her challenge in 2021 and moving into 2022 is getting inventory for the furniture side of her business. "It is hard to get what I need at the price point my customers' are willing to pay," she said. "I'm waiting on pieces that have been back ordered for two years."

Mandy continues to invest in her hometown of Selma, which has gained new developments, apartments, lofts and restaurants in the past year. "My idea is for it to blossom," she said. "I want it to be a place where the community can enjoy it, support it and spend time on the weekends shopping."

As for Queen City Market, she plans to continue to grow the apparel side of the business instore and online in 2022, while continuing to serve home décor clients in Selma as well as those from Tuscaloosa, Montgomery and Birmingham who have discovered the store.

"Retail is constantly changing," she said. "You have to reevaluate and go with the times." ■



Queen City Market occupies two connecting buildings in downtown Selma. Home décor can be found in 121 Broad St., left, and apparel and accessories in 125 Broad St. The store is open 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Tuesday, 10 a.m.-5:30 p.m. Wednesday-Friday and 10 a.m.-3 p.m. Saturdays. Visit online at shopqueencitymarket.com

CLEANER LIVING

Jim Massey's Cleaners & Laundry Adapts, Changes with the Times

FOR 81 YEARS, THE MASSEY FAMILY HAS BEEN PROVIDING CLEANING SERVICES TO THE GREATER MONTGOMERY AREA

Story by Nancy King Dennis. Photo by Brandon Robbins.



Brothers John and Jim Massey teamed up with family friend Tripp Clements to take the cleaners' home delivery service to the next level.

Brothers Jim and John Massey are on a mission to help the River Region “live life cleaner.”

It is a mission that began in 1941, when their grandfather Jim Massey Sr. founded a dry-cleaning business in Alabama’s Capital City. Their father Jim Massey Jr. joined Jim Massey’s Cleaners & Laundry in 1964 and led the company from 1981 to 2010.

“Our father taught us that we are here to serve our customer,” said Jim Massey III, president of the third-generation Montgomery dry cleaners, who has worked at the family business since 1987. His younger brother, John, came on board in 1990 and serves as the company’s vice president.

For much of its time in business, Jim Massey’s Cleaners & Laundry focused on establishing neighborhood dry-cleaning storefronts in multiple cities in a three-state area. At one time, Jim Massey’s had 40 locations in Montgomery, Prattville, Birmingham, Auburn, Albany, Ga., and Fort Walton Beach, Fla.

To maintain the quality of its service, the brothers gradually (from 2011 to 2015) shrunk the company’s geographical footprint to just the River Region. It now operates 11 dry cleaners – eight in Montgomery, two in Prattville and one in Pike Road, which opened in 2021. Their properties also include two self-serve Montgomery laundromats.

Besides cutting-edge dry cleaning and laundry services, the 80-employee business also serves as a commercial laundry and operates CRDN of Montgomery and Central Alabama, a textile, electronic and art restoration emergency response franchise. After a property damage specialist restores structures harmed by fire or water, CRDN cleans the contents of the buildings including clothes, rugs and other textiles, electronics, paintings, photographs and even mounted deer heads.

Deep Dive into Delivery and App Business

Fifteen months ago, the brothers partnered with Tripp Clements, a family friend and former competitor with expertise in River Region pickup and delivery service. While Jim Massey’s Cleaners & Laundry always delivered to homes or offices at no extra charge, “we decided to take home delivery to the next level,” Jim said.

The revamped free pickup and delivery service, known as SAVE-A-TRIP, a play on Tripp’s former business, Save-A-TRIPP Cleaners, “has been a marriage made in heaven so far,” said Tripp, who now serves as director of business development for Jim Massey’s.

“Whether it is dry cleaning or laundry, you can drop off and pick up, you can drop off and have us deliver, or you can use our home pickup and delivery,” said John. “Our routes are growing by leaps and bounds,” Jim added.



Since November 2020, Jim Massey’s Cleaners & Laundry has offered Save-A-Trip, its revamped pickup and delivery service. The business operates 11 dry cleaners and two laundromats in the River Region. Visit online at jimmassey.com to find individual store locations and hours of operation.

A large TV screen at the company’s plant in downtown Montgomery displays each vehicle’s exact location in real time, which ties into its mobile app. If a customer with items ready for pickup pushes a button on the app, routes can be adjusted immediately, Jim said.

The contactless aspect of Save-A-Trip appeals to Jim Massey’s customers. “Everyone now is accepting of delivery of any kind,” Jim said, adding that the pandemic helped accelerate that acceptance. No surcharges excite customers even more. “We charge the same as if you took it to the store and picked it up yourself,” said Tripp.

Expanded Services

Since November 2020, Jim Massey’s Cleaners & Laundry also expanded its wash/dry/fold laundry service under the name SAVE-A-WASH, which is available at all 11 locations, and opened its first “locker zone” that gives customers 24-hour access to laundry. Both services also utilize the Jim Massey app.

“The app has been a game changer,” said Jim. “It allows a customer to alert their store that they are on the way to pick up their items. The store will pull the items and have them ready for the customer,” he said. “No more waiting.”

All of Jim Massey’s Cleaners & Laundry’s services are explained in detail on its website – jimmassey.com.

Teamwork and Adaptation

Teaming up with Tripp has “allowed everyone to focus on their primary area of responsibility” – Tripp in delivery and sales, John in operations and Jim in administration, said Jim.

John adds that the business continues to succeed because of “our willingness to adapt and change with the times, without sacrificing our core commitment of service to our customers.” ■

Severe Weather Tax Holiday Occurs Feb. 25-27

Alabama's 11th severe weather preparedness sales tax holiday begins at 12:01 a.m. Friday, Feb. 25, and ends at midnight, Sunday, Feb. 27.

The tax holiday allows Alabama shoppers to stock up tax free on common supplies costing less than \$60 that every home and business needs to prepare for a natural disaster or general emergency.



Generators costing \$1,000 or less also can be purchased free of the state's four-percent sales tax during the three-day tax holiday.

The state's first severe weather sales tax holiday occurred in July 2012. Since 2013, the tax holiday has occurred the final weekend of February every year. ■

[Learn more about Alabama's severe weather preparedness sales tax holiday at alabamaretail.org/alabamasalestaxholidays/](http://alabamaretail.org/alabamasalestaxholidays/)

PRESIDENT FROM 1970 - 2005

Association's Former Executive Remembered as Retail Advocate

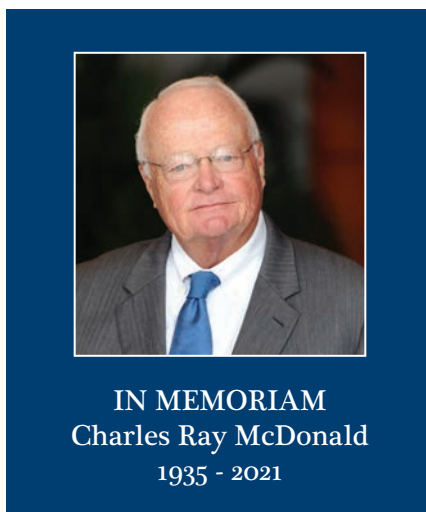
Charles Ray McDonald, who served as the Alabama Retail Association's president from 1970-2005, died Dec. 12, 2021. He was 86.

Charlie, as he was known to his friends and co-workers, retired from the Alabama Retail Association in 2005. In 2006, he received the National Retail Federation's J. Thomas Weyant Lifetime Achievement Award, which honors individuals who have committed their professional careers to state retail associations.

He was a staunch advocate for retailers and business in general. He often quoted Margaret Mead, who said, "Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed people can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has."

Charlie was the founding chairman of the Alabama Civil Justice Reform Committee, a coalition that achieved major state tort reform in 1987 and continues to work today to maintain balance on Alabama's appellate and lower courts.

Charlie also chaired a group that spearheaded a complete revision of the state's workers' compensation laws, headed a successful effort in 1999 to reform the state constitution



so the state could continue to collect franchise taxes and promoted passage of landmark legislation to permit the sale of wine in retail stores. He was a former chairman of the National Council of State Retail Associations and an honored member of the American Society of Association Executives.

When he retired, Charlie gave the board and staff the credit for the association's accomplishments during his tenure. "Everything we have accomplished has been a collaborative effort among very talented, dedicated and loyal people,"

he said, referring to his work life as a rewarding adventure, rather than a job.

He was preceded in death by wife, Elaine, and their daughter, Laura McDonald Warren. He is survived by his sons, Mark and Matt, along with eight grandchildren and four great-grandchildren.

DIRECT MEMORIAL CONTRIBUTIONS TO:

Karl Stegall Seminary Scholarship Foundation
P.O. Box 241661, Montgomery, AL 36124
or

Respite Care at the First United Methodist Church
2416 W Cloverdale Park, Montgomery, AL 36106. ■

'Good Service Goes a Long Way'

Story by Nancy King Dennis.
Photo by Amy Carson Dennis.

Jim Whaley opened his first tire store in 1986 on the Montgomery Highway in Dothan when he was still in his 20s. That first store had five employees. Thirty-six years later, he operates seven stores in five Alabama cities and employs more than 90 in Alabama's Wiregrass. Last year, he opened his first Florida location, employing 10.

MEMBER
SINCE
2002

The chief executive officer of Dothan-based Jim Whaley Tires Inc. credits his employees with growing the company. "Our employees are, without a doubt, Jim Whaley Tires' greatest asset," he said, adding, "we've had a phenomenal journey of growth."

Jim Whaley Tires added the second Dothan store in 1988 and the third Dothan location in 2001. The business also has 10,500-square-feet of warehouse space in Dothan. His third store overall came in 1992 in Ozark. Others were added in Enterprise (2007), Troy (2016) and Eufaula (2018). The Marianna, Fla., location opened on April 8, 2021.

"We're serving between 400 and 500 customers daily here in the Wiregrass area," Jim said, adding that he and his team strive for an excellent customer experience in every transaction.

"Jim Whaley and Jim Whaley Tires represents the best of Alabama small business in retail – high ethical standards, commitment to community, strong customer service and exceptional product," said Dean Mitchell, executive director of the Dothan Area Chamber of Commerce.

"We are members of the chamber of commerce in every city/county that we operate in," said Jim. "We have been a member of the Dothan Area Chamber of Commerce since 1986, since the beginning." ■



"We've had a phenomenal journey of growth."

-- JIM

Visit jimwhaleytires.com

See more of this story
at alabamaretail.org



Jodie and Karen Stanfield in the dining room of the Albertville location of Local Joe's, where each day at noon the patrons stand for the national anthem and salute the U.S. flag.



Local Joe

By Nancy King Dennis

AN INTERVIEW WITH

Jodie and Karen Stanfield Owners of Local Joe's

Photo By Brandon Robbins

Jodie Stanfield has been in the restaurant business for 37 years. He spent the first two decades of his career with casual dining chains TGI Fridays, LongHorn Steakhouse and Applebee's, mostly in the Birmingham market.

He worked his way through just about every restaurant job. He started as a bartender at TGI Fridays, then "George McKerrow (founder of Longhorn Steakhouse) showed me how to cut meat," he said. Jodie held the title of executive chef with Up the Creek Fish Camps, a division of Applebee's, a chain where he later served as a general manager. He first ventured into ownership with Furnace Masters restaurant at Tannehill Ironworks Historical State Park.

Fourteen years ago, he returned to his native Etowah County to combine his passion for food with his love for everything local.

The Attalla native and his wife, Karen, own and operate Local Joe's, a farm-to-plate and barbecue restaurant, market and bakery in Rainbow City and Albertville with a catering arm in Southside. Local Joe's In The Alley, an entertainment venue in Gadsden Mall, features street food made with Local Joe's smoked meats. There also is a licensed location of Local Joe's in Cave Spring, Ga.

The meat is local, the produce is local, so are the jams, jellies, candles, baked goods, honey, wine, syrup, cheeses and more. Local is more than part of its name. Local is Local Joe's mission.

"We sell a lot made or grown by the local Joes nearby," Jodie said. "We buy straight from local farmers. If we can, we use local sources for our ingredients."

THE ESSENTIALS

Founded
2009

Number of Employees
53

Mentors
My family. My parents, Ann and Bob McNeal, have been, and will always be, my main mentors. My mother is a salesperson, and Bob, my stepdad, always considers logistics – analyzing, charting. My wife, Karen, and my father-in-law, Floyd Powell, are salespeople as well. My brother and nephew are in sales with one of our food suppliers, Wood Fruitticher.

Smart Move

To be successful in the restaurant business, you must "own what you sit on." I "leased to purchase" the properties we have, crunched the numbers to prove profitability and then took the idea to the bank to purchase/acquire the properties based on profit and loss statements. It is easier to acquire financing from a bank when you have proof of profitability.

Learning Moment

The pandemic. We pulled our team together and pivoted. We had to streamline, repackage our products and move towards meal replacements for the family. We developed ways to

Jodie and Karen Stanfield own Local Joe's, a barbecue restaurant, market, bakery and catering business operating in Rainbow City, Albertville, Southside, Gadsden as well as Cave Spring, Ga.

"Local is our community. We buy from a lot of local Joes. We have a little incubator going on inside our stores."

-JODIE

Jodie technically qualifies as one of four chefs for the restaurants, although he said, "I don't do as much (cooking) as I used to." His role is more supervisor/teacher for his 53 employees, and "I slice a lot of meat," he said.

Karen is behind the counter or in the office, scheduling and organizing catering jobs for everyone from fishing tournaments to weddings or fund-raising events for local nonprofits.

Staying Visible

"If you don't stay visible, you go away," Jodie tells those starting out in business. Staying seen in the community is one of the reasons, Local Joe's belongs to The Chamber of Gadsden/Etowah County as well as the chambers in Albertville, Boaz, Guntersville and Calhoun County.

Continued on page 12

cater to large and small crowds with individually packaged meals that were acceptable not only for businesses, but also for weddings. That is how we survived and kept our employees.

Wisdom Shared

Business owners should be humble and kind because people do not care about what you know, until they know how much you care. I consider myself a coach, and that comes from my late father, Bobby Jack Stanfield, who died at age 52. Although he didn't live to see my success in business, he had a great impact on me by the way he coached Little League for 25 years.

See more
of this story at
alabamaretail.org



Being a member of the Alabama Retail Association gives his business a statewide perspective, Jodie says. "You get a bird's eye view, not just from a county perspective, but from a state perspective of what's going on from the Legislature to just business in general," he said, adding he has gained "knowledge from (other member businesses) all across the state of what they're going through."

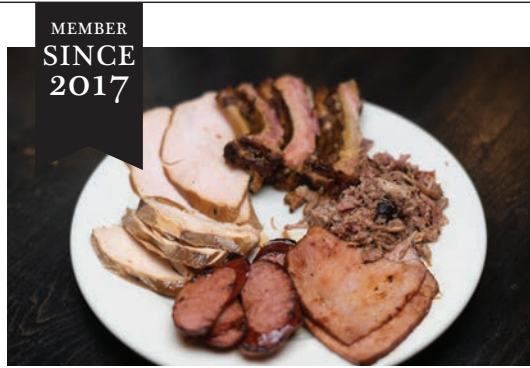
On Jan. 1, Jodie began a two-year term as chairman of the Alabama Retail Association. His goals for his term include educating young entrepreneurs about the benefits of belonging to a statewide trade association. The Stanfields also are members of the International Caterers Association.

Team Effort

While the U.S. Small Business Administration named Jodie the 2017 Alabama Small Business Person of the Year and he and Karen were Gold Alabama Retailers of the Year in the same year, Jodie places the success of his business on his staff.

"We invest in people and buy things," he said of Local Joe's, heaping praise on his culinary-trained chefs and catering set-up crews. "The people we have on staff are incredible."

J.P. Pendergrass, who has worked in New Orleans and San Francisco restaurants, is Local Joe's executive chef and catering manager. J.P. splits his time between the downtown Albertville location and the catering hub at Southside. "We consolidated our catering at Southside to maintain consistency" in events large and small, said Karen. "It is a well-oiled machine." Local Joe's caters events for as many as thousands and often caters multiple events on one day. It caters about 120 weddings annually.



Local Joe's is known for its smoked meats – turkey, ribs, pulled pork, ham, sausage and chicken. Find Local Joe's on Facebook at LocalJoesRainbowCity, LocalJoesAlbertville and LocalJoesSouthside (catering).

Ben Keener came to Local Joe's from Wildflower Café in Mentone. He serves as chef at Local Joe's original Rainbow City location. Jamie Hughes, who worked for three years at the Rainbow City location, serves as chef for the Georgia licensed location.

Serving as pitmasters are Austin Chambers at Rainbow City and Chandler Gilbreath in Albertville. "These two young guys consistently put out a great product time and again," Jodie said.

Pandemic Pivot

The communities Local Joe's serve stepped up and stayed with them when the pandemic hit. "People just started mailing us checks and said, 'Feed people,'" said Karen. Local Joe's fulfilled the orders, making thousands of sandwiches to feed their employees and families, first responders, the medical community and teachers. With funds provided by other businesses and community leaders, "we fed five different hospitals during the pandemic," Jodie said.

The coronavirus also inspired a new division – Joe Boxes for catering or pickup at Local Joe's restaurants. Each box comes with a sandwich, chips, a cookie as well as Local Joe's red and white barbecue sauces. "We also do a lot of family packs – a pound of meat, an eight-pack of buns and two sides," said Jodie. At the height of the pandemic, takeout business jumped from 30% to 65%. That ratio has evened out or gotten back to near normal, but customers who come into the restaurants now frequently order a family pack for the weekend and schedule a pickup time, said Karen.

Ken Grissom, director of the Small Business Development Center at Jacksonville State University, who nominated Jodie for the U.S. Small Business Administration award, said, "Jodie is living his dream of marrying his love of people and service to others through his business." ■

ALABAMA RETAIL ASSOCIATION'S OTHER 2022-2023 OFFICERS

👉 *Find a full list of ARA directors at alabamaretail.org/association/directors*



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Member News

HOMWOOD ANTIQUE STORE ADDS ART GALLERY



MEMBER
SINCE
2011

Tricia's Treasures has opened a second-floor gallery dedicated to more than 20 Alabama artists at its 2700 19th Place South antique store in Homewood. Alabama Treasures, The Gallery at Tricia's, which opened in December 2021, is the brainchild of Matthew Monroe and his daughter Anna Grace (pictured). Anna Grace led the renovation, while Matthew recruited artists. Matthew's mother, Tricia Thomas, founded Tricia's Treasures in 1981, opening her business next to her parents' store, Roberta's Browse and Buy. Three generations – Tricia, Matthew and Anna Grace – now work together to create a fun, family atmosphere at the family business. [Visit triciastreasures.us](http://Visittriciastreasures.us)

DEAN'S CAKE HOUSE IS 'MADE IN ALABAMA'



MEMBER
SINCE
2000

Dean's Cake House in Andalusia was among a dozen Alabama manufacturers featured in October 2021 as part of the inaugural Made in Alabama Showcase, created by the governor and the Alabama Department of Commerce. In 1994, at age 60, Dean Jacobs realized her dream of opening her own bakery. Dean's Cake House in Andalusia now produces more than 300 cakes daily, which are distributed throughout the South. The business is "home of the famous seven-layer cake," because 12 wouldn't fit in the box. Dean's Cakes can be found in grocery stores, convenience stores and produce stands. [Visit deanscakehouse.com](http://Visitdeanscakehouse.com)

BABY/CHILDRENS' STORE UNDER NEW OWNERSHIP



MEMBER
SINCE
2007

Once Upon a Time, a baby and children's clothing shop in Mountain Brook and Homewood, has new owners. Founder/designer Linda Flaherty sold the business to Christie Howell and Lane Ross in 2021, which was the 25th year for the Crestline Village store at 201 Country Club Park. The Homewood location at 2900 18th St. South opened in 2009. Christie also owns Wrapsody, a gift shop with stores in Hoover, Trussville and Auburn. Lane was the previous manager of Welle Studio in Montgomery. Both share a love for retail and children's clothing. [Visit onceuponatimebaby.com](http://Visitonceuponatimebaby.com)

TUSCALOOSA'S CHARLES SPURLIN SELLING THE SHIRT SHOP

The Shirt Shop at 525 Greensboro Ave. in Tuscaloosa will soon be under new ownership. Charles Spurlin, 66, founded The Shirt Shop in August of 1979 while he was a senior at The University of Alabama. "I've loved every minute of" the past 42 years at the shop, but "it is time for me" to focus on the many other downtown Tuscaloosa properties "I own," he said. Bethany Triplett, 27, who has worked at The Shirt Shop for eight years, also since she was in college, is buying the store in partnership with Jeff Thomas, who worked at The Shirt Shop from 2000 to 2009. The sale is expected to be final Feb. 14. Charles is pictured with his wife, Laura. [Visit theshirtshop.biz](http://Visittheshirtshop.biz)



MEMBER
SINCE
2018

NEW BOARD MEMBERS

Alabama Retail Adds Six to Its Board of Directors

THE ALABAMA RETAIL ASSOCIATION HAS ADDED SIX NEW MEMBERS TO ITS BOARD OF DIRECTORS. THEIR TERMS BEGAN JAN. 1.

Story by Nancy King Dennis. Photos by Brandon Robbins.



Michael Cohen



Melissa McAleer Cross



Jheovanny Gomez



Doug Schneider



Beth Staula



Scott Zinda

MEMBER
SINCE
1983

Michael Cohen is co-owner of Cohens Electronics and Appliances in Montgomery with his brother, David. He succeeds his father, Raymond Cohen, on the Alabama Retail Association board. Raymond founded The Record Shop in 1956 in the Normandale Arcade, selling records and stereos. In 1977, The Record Shop moved to its current location on Montgomery's East Boulevard. In 1989, The Record Shop became Cohens Electronics and Appliances, known now simply as Cohens. The business sells high-definition televisions, home theater systems, home automation and major household appliances. Its 35 employees include delivery personnel, installers and technicians for appliances. Cohens have been retail leaders in Montgomery for three generations. Eli Cohen, Raymond's father, owned Cohen Amusement Co., which sold jukeboxes and vending machines. Michael began working at The Record Shop in 1970. He left to pursue other interests in 1997 and has worked at the family business continuously since 2003. Raymond, David and Michael Cohen earned the 2008 Silver Alabama Retailer of the Year Award in the Annual Sales \$5 Million to \$20 Million category.

MEMBER
SINCE
2020

Melissa McAleer Cross is president of McAleer's Office Furniture based in Mobile, which also has a Pensacola, Fla., location. Her parents, Jim and Camilla McAleer, founded the business in 1979 to fill a need in Mobile for a store that exclusively sells office furniture. To differentiate itself from competitors, the business has nearly \$1 million of in-stock inventory, ready for same-day pickup or next-day delivery. Melissa started her work life as a lawyer in California, moved into the real estate and home building industries in Texas and then began working for a large office furniture manufacturer based in Iowa. She has been president of McAleer's since 2012. In 2015, Melissa and her father shared the Gold Alabama Retailer of the Year title in the Annual Sales \$1 Million to \$5 Million category. In 2021, she earned the Silver Retailer of the Year Award in the Annual Sales More Than \$5 Million category. Melissa serves on the Mobile Area Chamber of Commerce's board and chaired its total resource campaign in 2020 and 2021, leading a team of 40 volunteers to exceed the campaign's goal, both years.

MEMBER
SINCE
2007

Jheovanny Gomez co-owns and manages the three locations of Jalapeños Mexican Grill in Tuscaloosa, Northport and Cottdale with partners Wayne and Justin Grimball. In 2021, Jheovanny was inducted into the Tuscaloosa County Civic Hall of Fame and Jalapeños Mexican Grill was selected as the Silver Alabama Small Business of the Year by the Chamber of Commerce Association of Alabama and the Business Council of Alabama. Jheovanny serves on the Tuscaloosa County Industrial Development and Northport Redevelopment authorities as well as the Boys and Girls Club of West Alabama and the United Way of West Alabama boards. He served from 2015-2017 as a member of the Alabama Small Business Commission. Jheovanny and the

Jalapeños Mexican Restaurants earned the 2016 Gold Retailer of the Year Award in the Annual Sales \$1 Million to \$5 Million category. He studied at the English Language Institute at The University of Alabama and has an associate degree in business administration from Shelton State Community College. A native of Colombia, South America, Jheovanny became a U.S. citizen in 2018.

MEMBER
SINCE
2018

Doug Schneider is the executive vice president of operations for Bayer Properties, a Birmingham commercial real estate development and management firm specializing in mixed-use destinations. Bayer Properties has more than 400 retail, restaurant, entertainment and hospitality tenant partners. It owns and/or manages the top two lifestyle retail destinations in Alabama – The Summit in Birmingham and Bridge Street Town Center in Huntsville. Doug has been with Bayer since 2007. He previously served as senior vice president for marketing. His prior work history includes vice president of marketing for Saks Department Store Group; 13 years in various marketing positions at Fruit of the Loom; two years with Johnston & Murphy and two years as a store operations manager for Kmart Corp. He has a business management degree from Western Kentucky University.

MEMBER
SINCE
2013

Beth Staula is chief executive officer of Alabama Goods, which she and Sherry Hartley founded in 2007 as an online store selling Alabama-crafted items as corporate gifts. The business partners have since added two brick-and-mortar stores, the first in Homewood and the other in Huntsville. The certified women-owned business, which employs 32, is expected to open a third store in the late summer or early fall in Hoover. A separate operation center fulfills gift orders for their ever-growing online presence and corporate sales. Alabama Goods sells pottery, jewelry, bath and body products, towels, leather goods, glassware, T-shirts, hats, books, gourmet food and more, both individually and in gift baskets. Beth and Sherry were named Alabama's 2021 Gold Retailers of the Year in the Annual Sales \$1 Million to \$5 Million category. Beth has a degree in fitness management from Mississippi State University and a master's degree in physical education from the University of Northern Colorado.

MEMBER
SINCE
2004

Scott Zinda is district manager for Best Buy covering the entire state of Alabama and Columbus, Ga. He started at Best Buy as a seasonal associate during the holiday season. He has held various multi-unit positions over his 26 years at the company. He also served for several years as vice president of lawn and garden for Garick Corp. The Michigan native, graduated high school in Illinois and attended college in that state as well – Southern Illinois University Edwardsville and Bellville Area College. He lives in Birmingham with his wife and two children.

 [Find a full list of ARA directors at *alabamaretail.org/association/directors*](https://alabamaretail.org/association/directors)

Legislative Digests and Voter Guides Coming Your Way

While the Alabama Legislature is in session, a major benefit of your Alabama Retail Association membership is regular updates on legislative action affecting retailers. This year, the session began Jan. 11 and should end on or before April 25.

Continue to expect your Retail Report in your email inbox weekly. In this email communication and on our website, we pinpoint the issues important to your business and bottom line.

The Alabama regular session ends earlier this year because the entire Legislature and all the statewide offices are up for election in 2022. Also on the ballot will be races for one U.S. Senate seat, all seven of Alabama's seats in the U.S. House of Representatives and two places on the Alabama Supreme Court.

The primaries are May 24 and the General Election is Nov. 8.

Your Alabama Retail Association will share its endorsements and its Voter Guide with you electronically



in the weeks leading up to these important elections. Share that guide with your employees, customers and vendors.

During the 2022 election season:

- Encourage employees to register to vote
- Encourage those who can't go the polls to vote absentee
- Give your employees time off to vote
- Ask your employees, friends and family to support candidates who are right for retail

When speaking with employees be careful to explain that no adverse action will be taken against any employee based on his/her political views.



To stay informed on the latest regulatory, legal and legislative issues affecting your business, follow Alabama Retail on Twitter and Facebook and make sure Alabama Retail has your correct email address!

EMPLOYMENT LAW

Got An Employment Law Question? Use the Employment Law Resource Center

Did you know Alabama Retail Association members have access to free telephone or e-mail consultation with a team of the state's top labor law attorneys?

Your association partners with the Birmingham law firm of Lehr Middlebrooks Vreeland & Thompson, P.C., to provide the Employment Law Resource Center. You can find the center under Benefits & Services at alabamaretail.org.

Not sure whether you should terminate an employee? Want to double check whether a certain deduction from an employee's pay is legal? Through the center, you can ask such questions without charge.



If you need more comprehensive assistance than an answer to a question in a telephone or e-mail consultation, the lawyers will discuss how to proceed with you; otherwise, your calls and e-mails are handled without charge to you.

Employment Law FAQs

The center also includes employment law frequently asked questions. The FAQs are presented as video segments with members of the Lehr Middlebrooks Vreeland & Thompson staff. Topics covered include jury duty, pregnancy leave, workplace bullying and social media in the workplace.

Learn more at alabamaretail.org/employment-law/

Welcome New Members

IN MEMORIAM Stacey Hudson Hamner, owner of Reclaimed Spirit in Florence, died unexpectedly Dec. 15, 2021. She was 45 years old. She was an enthusiastic advocate for downtown Florence. "Stacey was a gift to this community and encouraged everyone around her to follow their dreams, just like she had with Reclaimed Spirit," the Shoals Chamber of Commerce said in a statement. Stacey is survived by her husband, two daughters, her parents and three siblings. A Go Fund me account has been established by her store manager to help the family with expenses: <https://gofund.me/ff7b4e09>

ABC Fire Equipment Inc., A Close Corporation
TUSCALOOSA

Alabama Sunshine
FAYETTE

Alex City Nutrition LLC
ALEXANDER CITY

Aloha Food Group of Orange Beach LLC
ORANGE BEACH

Andrew's Heavy-Duty Truck and Equipment Repair LLC
SPANISH FORT

Ayanna LLC
BAY MINETTE

B & B Drugs LLC
JASPER

Bhole Hospitality LLC
MOBILE

Bobbie's Bakery Inc.
EUTAW

Carnivore Cafe and Catering LLC
ANDALUSIA

Catch A Taste Restaurant LLC
TUSCALOOSA

Charlie's Trophies LLC
MONTGOMERY

Circle City Tire and Auto LLC
DOTHAN

Coal Bird Inc.
JASPER

Complete Healing Massage Therapy LLC
AUBURN

Creekside BBQ LLC
PELHAM

Dame LLC
TUSCALOOSA

DC Social LLC
TUSCALOOSA

Dothan Machine Shop LLC
DOTHAN

Drivin' Automotive Inc.
PRATTVILLE

Drs. Dabbs & Hyland PC
JASPER

El Patron Tex Mex Restaurant LLC
RED BAY

Fit and Fast Meals LLC
HUNTSVILLE

Foley Service Center LLC
FOLEY

Gateway Partners LLC
MONTGOMERY

Global Shawarming T-Town LLC
TUSCALOOSA

GUT Endo LLC
DOTHAN

HANGAR "33" LLC
DALEVILLE

Harrell & Harrell Corp.
JACKSON

HGFS LLC
MOBILE

HLI Foods Inc.
DECATUR

Holistic Health LLC
GARDENDALE

Holmes Group Inc.
PELHAM



HotRod's Bar & Grill LLC
ARAB

Jaco Sales LLC
MONTGOMERY

JBT Holdings LLC
TUSCALOOSA

J Trabue Inc.
DAPHNE

Kamado LLC
HUNTSVILLE

Korxico Inc.
OZARK

Legend's Bar & Grill Inc.
ALBERTVILLE

Mary Robbs Table Matters LLC
BIRMINGHAM

Mo'Bay Beignet Co. - Mobile Truck LLC
MOBILE

Mountain Brook Wellness Services LLC
MOUNTAIN BROOK

Nature's Apothecary Inc.
HUNTSVILLE

Once Upon A Time Children's LLC
MOUNTAIN BROOK

Pinebrook Coffee LLC
MOBILE

RayDen Enterprises LLC
MOBILE

Sanford and Sisters LLC
HUNTSVILLE

Sav-A-Life of Tuscaloosa Inc.
TUSCALOOSA

Siam Thai Cuisine LLC
MOBILE

Sunbridge Properties LLC
FAIRHOPE

Super Stay Inc.
GUNTERSVILLE

Tailgaters 2 Inc.
OWENS CROSS ROADS

The Coast and Cotton Co. LLC
AUBURN

The Crust Inc.
FLORENCE

The Mercado Group LLC
HUNTSVILLE

FEATURED NEW MEMBER

RECLAIMED SPIRIT LLC FLORENCE

Founded 2017

OWNER AND CEO Stacey Hamner

NUMBER OF EMPLOYEES 5

LOCATION 315 A N. Court St., Florence, AL 35630

MEMBER SINCE Sept. 22, 2021

Therapy South - Calera LLC
CALERA

Therapy South - Woodlawn LLC
BIRMINGHAM

Webb Payroll PEO LLC
GARDENDALE

Willow Mountain Distributors Inc.
BREWTON

Wiregrass Learning LLC
ENTERPRISE

Wyatt's Tire & Service Center Inc.
ALEXANDER CITY





Socially Speaking

THE POSTS YOU MAY HAVE MISSED



“This award is a demonstration of the value that small businesses have in a world that has grown increasingly corporate in nature.”





- DEWEY and ANNETTE TODD, TODD FARMS

Dewey and Annette Todd of Todd Farms in Headland, who operate a general store, restaurant and RV park, are the Bronze Alabama Retailer of the Year in the Annual Sales Less Than \$1 Million category: <https://alretail.org/3ACKSmY> Sept. 24 photo and link  






Every day, but especially on this Small Business Saturday, shop locally so that your money goes toward helping your community prosper. Metzger's Clothing #ShopSmall #ShopSmallSaturday #ShopAlabamaForTheHolidays #ShopAlabama Nov. 24 graphic    








Happy #MemberMonday to Greg and Foster Brooks and the rest of the crew at Brooks and Collier in Huntsville, which celebrated its 75th year in business this past weekend. Greg and Foster are shown with framed copies of their November 2020 Alabama Retailer cover and story. #75Years #FamilyBusiness #ShopAlabama Oct. 18 photo and link    



Fifty-seven years after opening The Locker Room in Tuscaloosa, Alex Gatewood, right, still enjoys what he does: <https://lnkd.in/daWYaeen> “Tuscaloosa has been good to us,” Alex says in the November issue of Alabama Retailer magazine. “We are lucky to be where we are,” agrees Rush Crawford, vice president and one of the co-owners. #tlr1964 #MainStreet #ShopAlabama Nov. 8 photo and link   


Get social with us! Talk to us about the photos, resources, retail updates and member news we share.

-  /Alabama Retail
-  @AlabamaRetail
-  @ShopAlabama
-  /Alabama Retail Association
-  Stay informed at alabamaretail.org



You can't turn around in Montgomery without seeing a Christmas tree beautifully decorated by Capitol's Rosemont Gardens, the next stop on our Christmas tree trail. This Alabama Centennial Retailer knows how to spruce up our state capital! #MyMGM #OChristmasTree #Holidays 📸 Hal Yeager @governorkayivey 11 photos and 1 graphic Dec. 9    

RECENTLY QUOTED TWEET @ALABAMARETAIL

@GovernorKayIvey: I've proclaimed today as Alabama Retail Day to support our retail industry. Thank you, Alabama retailers, for your commitment to providing our citizens and communities with great services and products. Oct. 19 Video
@AlabamaRetail: Thank you @GovernorKayIvey! #ThankARetailer today and #ShopAlabama 





REAL PEOPLE

CALLS ANSWERED BY PEOPLE RIGHT HERE IN ALABAMA

One of the biggest advantages of placing your workers' comp insurance with Alabama Retail Comp is our people. Should you ever need help or have questions, you will talk to real people, right here in Alabama. You are never routed to a call center or phone menu.

If you have questions about your policy or annual payroll audit, our policy support team of Sydney, August and Katherine are here to answer your questions or make any changes needed to your policy. You can reach the policy team at support@alabamaretail.org or by phone at 334.263.5757 or 800.239.5423.

This month, the policy support team is hard at work on the annual payroll audits every workers' comp fund is required by law to perform. Requests for audit information from each business that participates in the ARC fund went out in January. That information is due to ARC by Feb. 15.

After you submit the requested payroll information, Sydney, August or Katherine may reach out to you if they have questions to make sure your audit is completed accurately.

"I am very proud of the way our team supports our members," said Toni Hill, the premium administrator. "We love helping our members understand their workers' comp policy and get the information they need." Toni has been the premium administrator since 1993, overseeing policy support, billing and audit for ARC. "Getting on a first-name basis over the years with so many of our members is one of my favorite parts of this job."

If you ever have any questions about your policy or need to make some changes, please let us know! ■



Alabama Retail Comp's policy support team – Kat, Sydney and August – can be reached at support@alabamaretail.org or 800.239.5423. Premium Administrator Toni Hill, seated center, oversees policy support, billing and audits for ARC.

BETTER TOGETHER

Together We Are the Leading Voice and Resource for Retailers in Our State

Retail in Alabama is better when we join together.

Whether voicing the retail view when public policy is made, negotiating rates for benefits and services or communicating the retail story, the 4,300 members of the Alabama Retail Association are better together.

Take advantage of all your association has to offer.

“The Alabama Retail Association is a great advocate for small business. You get a bird's eye view of what's going on from the Legislature to just business in general.”

-JODIE STANFIELD, LOCAL JOE'S

Legislative Clout

Your membership gives us the power to stop laws that interfere with your business and help shape laws that let your business succeed.

Cost-Effective Workers' Compensation Coverage

The greatest benefit of ARA membership is the workers' compensation coverage available through Alabama Retail Comp. You get great rates, expert claims handling and exceptional service. Excess income comes back to you in the form of an annual retro return.

In-Depth Communication

Whether posts or issue briefs on alabamaretail.org, timely email communications, real-time social media posts or stories in our magazine Alabama Retailer, ARA keeps you informed on the latest regulatory, legal, legislative and business issues affecting your business.

Industry Recognition

Through its Alabama Retailer of the Year and Centennial Retailer awards program, telling the retail story and media interaction on consumer spending and shopping trends, ARA spotlights outstanding retailers in our state and the contributions they make to our communities and economy.

 [Visit us at alabamaretail.org](http://alabamaretail.org)