

Alabama Retailer

MEMBER
HIGHLIGHT
*IYISHIA
JONES*
OWNER/DESIGNER, *ISHI*



PAYROLL
AUDIT SEASON
Premium
administrator
offers advice for
a smooth audit

MAKING HISTORY
Theo and Gus Katechis
OWNERS OF CHRIS' HOT DOGS

MEMBER BENEFITS
Make use of the
Employment Law
Resource Center

*Shop Alabama Q&A:
How you can
join the movement*

From the President



Old or New, Retail is Better Together

Within the pages of this issue of *Alabama Retailer*, we celebrate old and new.

Bromberg & Co. Inc. is less than 20 years from turning 200. Meanwhile,

its current chief executive continues to provide leadership for his community. Go to Page 13 to see the recognition he received for being a top CEO in his city.

In May, Chris' Hot Dogs turns 100 (Pages 10-12). Theo and Gus Katechis' customers don't want them to change anything about the downtown Montgomery institution or its secret sauce.

Two other retail stories told here began a mere 20 years ago. A grandmother designs nursery décor and sells children's apparel in Mountain Brook and Homewood (Page 4). This spring, customers will hop by her store for an Easter Egg hunt she founded. And Tuscaloosa is lucky to have an advocate for local retailing who also operates a contemporary ladies boutique (Page 7).

We welcome the new members on Pages 14 and 15.

Owner Michelle Reeder (Page 15) bakes the dog treats she sells at The Barkery. Her brand new business also offers doggie daycare, boarding, professional grooming and training.

One of our newest members, ISHI? started in Florida and now has three stores in Alabama (Page 8).

Before you know it, spring will arrive and with it the severe weather season. The owners of Consolidated Ace, who operate two Alabama and four Florida stores, offer some advice on how to prepare on Page 17.

Less than a year old or almost 200, retail is better together.

Rick Brown

RICK BROWN, Publisher and President

Alabama Retailer

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Alabama Retailer of the Year and Centennial Retailer nominations due May 15



The Alabama Retail Association will accept nominations for the 2017 Alabama Retailer of the Year

and the Alabama Centennial Retailer awards through Monday, May 15.

Now in its 18th year, the Alabama Retailer of the Year awards recognize outstanding retailers who have demonstrated a blend of sound business practices 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/](http://alabamaretail.org/retaileroftheyearnomination/)

Retail businesses that began in 1917 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/](http://alabamaretail.org/centennialretailernomination/)



EASTER JOY

'Thankful for the Opportunity to Give Back,' Award-Winning Retailer Says

ONCE UPON A TIME OWNER USES HER TALENTS TO SERVE CUSTOMERS, CONTRIBUTE TO COMMUNITY

Story by Nancy King Dennis. Photo by Melissa Johnson Warnke.



Linda Flaherty is the owner of Once upon a time, nursery décor and children's attire stores in Mountain Brook and Homewood.

Linda Flaherty's friends and colleagues describe her as a bridge builder and a great listener.

She regularly attends merchant meetings and interacts with other business owners. "Her involvement in the community has made a difference for other people starting out in business," said Suzan Doidge, executive director of the Mountain Brook Chamber of Commerce.

The business owner also founded and organizes the Crestline Village's annual Easter Egg Hunt, which Suzan calls "a huge community event." This spring, for the seventh consecutive year, Linda, other merchants and volunteers will stuff more than 3,000 plastic eggs with candy, scatter the eggs in a nearby green space and then watch as community children delight in filling their baskets with the multi-colored eggs.

To start the event, the Easter Bunny arrives on the Mountain Brook Fire Department ladder truck. The oversized, fluffy white rabbit lingers after the hunt to pose for pictures with the children on a picturesque bench.

"It gives me great joy to see so many of our customers and their young children participating in this event, and I am thankful for the opportunity to personally give back," says Linda, co-owner of the Once upon a time stores in Mountain Brook and Homewood.

A grandmother of seven, Linda began designing baby linens as a business venture more than a decade before she had her first grandchild.

"I discovered my passion for the retail industry when my sisters and I got together one weekend and created the nursery of my youngest sister's dreams," said Linda. "I started out as a little cottage industry doing nursery décor, making custom linens in my home. In less than two years, we had a retail space."

In November of 2016, the original Once upon a time store in the Crestline Village of Mountain Brook celebrated 20 years in business. Just the month before, Linda and Once upon a time earned the title of Alabama's Gold Retailer of the Year in the Annual Sales Less Than \$1 Million category.

Linda started the business with a partner, but after a year, the two decided to go separate ways as distinct, but complimentary Mountain Brook businesses. She opened her second location in Homewood in 2009. Today, she operates the two Birmingham area stores with her husband, Joe, who assists with the financial reports and taxes. Linda's two daughters, stay-at-home moms of young children, serve as her sounding board for new ideas for the business.

"I'm a grandmother, so I buy as a grandmother would dress her grandchildren," said Linda, "but I also listen to my associates and daughters, who offer the young mother's perspective. We try to maintain a balance. We're traditional and stay true to our belief in classic, timeless children's clothing, but also are aware of and stay current with the

trends." The store's brand focuses on the "Southern baby," she said.

Linda attributes her stores' success to paying attention to her customers. "We listen to our customers and get their feedback," she said. "The customers become our friends. We help first-time parents prepare for a life they've never experienced before."

It is a labor of love. "I love buying for the store," she said. "I love moving everything around and making it new again."

Suzan with the Mountain Brook chamber emphasizes, "This is not a hobby for Linda. She has really great ideas. She's always ready to try new things."

Some of those "new things" caught the attention of the Retailer of the Year judges. "Once upon a time shows amazing adaptation to reach their target market – mothers and grandmothers – by utilizing video on social media," the judges said. Weekly videos feature the store's associates and are posted and promoted on Facebook and Instagram. In the past year, Once upon a time also launched an online store that includes a baby registry.

"Throughout the years, I have had the privilege of creating nurseries and outfitting precious little ones," Linda said. What's next? Expanding Once upon a time's footprint in the state and the Southeast, said the award-winning retailer.

[Learn more at alabamaretail.org/news/onceuponatime/](http://alabamaretail.org/news/onceuponatime/)



Shop the Once upon a time stores at 201 Country Club Park in Mountain Brook and 2900 18th Street South in Homewood. Visit online at onceuponatimebaby.com

Q&A

with Melissa Warnke,
ARA Communications and
Engagement Manager



#ShopAlabama is a Movement

What is Shop Alabama?

We all spend money on clothes, food and leisure. The Shop Alabama campaign, launched in 2016 by the Alabama Retail Association, encourages Alabamians to keep those dollars in state by promoting local retailers and the contributions they make to their communities. The message is simple – when you Shop Alabama, you're not only supporting your friends and neighbors who own small businesses, you're also strengthening your local economy and investing in the vibrancy of your city.

Why is Shop Alabama important?

Online sales continue to grow faster than in-store brick and mortar sales. While ordering everything you need online and having it arrive at your doorstep sounds great, imagine the long-term impact that will have on Alabama and its retail community. Not only could we lose the shops, restaurants and businesses that make our cities special and unique, we also could lessen the local tax dollars collected, which support vital services and infrastructure. Alabama's retailers are the backbone of our communities; they reinvest their time and money back into other local businesses and causes. Shop Alabama builds support for this important sector of our economy.

How can I get involved in Shop Alabama?

Anyone can join our movement and help us spread the message. The easiest way is to use our hashtag #ShopAlabama. Retailers can share photos of their products using the hashtag. Customers can snap a photo while shopping and share it on social media, using the hashtag.

Use the opportunity to explain why shopping local matters to you. Maybe your child's Little League team is sponsored by the store you're in, or maybe your friend owns the store. Whatever the reason, we want Alabamians to feel proud to shop local. When their friends do, they will too!

HIGHLIGHT

When you Shop Alabama, you're not only supporting your friends and neighbors who own small businesses, you're also strengthening your local economy and investing in the vibrancy of your city.

How can my store promote Shop Alabama?

Does your store have a marquee or window where you post news or specials? Use that space to share the Shop Alabama message. Al's Flowers in Montgomery, for example, used his marquee to explain to passers-by how the newly paved road out front was funded. "The Internet Did Not Pave Carter Hill Road. Shop Local," it read. In addition, Alabama Retail has Shop Alabama signs we'd love to give you! These 12X18 inch signs are perfect to display in your window or at the register. We encourage you to use the signs for pictures. Have employees or customers pose with the signs and post to social media using the #ShopAlabama hashtag.

What's next for Shop Alabama?

The Shop Alabama campaign has just begun. It's our hope that it becomes a year-round call-to-action and point of pride. You'll see us promote it heavily during the busiest shopping times of the year, but we'll also use this platform to feature the good work Alabama retailers do in their communities. We want people to understand the long-term value of supporting their local retailers. We all benefit when you Shop Alabama.

[Join the movement at shopalabama.org](http://shopalabama.org)



Tuscaloosa is a Retail Destination, Boutique Owner Says

Story by Melissa Johnson Warnke. Photos by Amy Materson.

Nestled in the historic district of downtown Tuscaloosa, Effie's Inc. has been bringing fashion-forward looks to Tuscaloosa shoppers since 1990. The contemporary ladies boutique caters to all ages and lifestyles, carrying a wide variety of clothing, jewelry, accessories and shoes.

MEMBER
SINCE
1991

Terry Davis, who's owned the store for the past 20 years, says she loves the opportunity to do business in Tuscaloosa.

"It is such a unique city – it feels like a small town but with great diversity, thanks to the University (of Alabama). The rebuild after the (2011) tornados has been amazing, and I have really enjoyed seeing the revitalization of the downtown area. I feel like it has become a destination that people are drawn to," Terry adds.

Terry offered Effie's in Tuscaloosa as the host site for a #ShopAlabama for the Holidays news conference. The November event was part of a six-city media tour promoting the Alabama

Retail Association's campaign to encourage local holiday shopping,

Tuscaloosa Mayor Walt Maddox, Tuscaloosa chamber representatives and Alabama Secretary of Labor Fitzgerald Washington joined ARA members and staff to spread the message about the benefits of keeping shopping dollars local.

"I believe in supporting local retailers," said Terry, adding that local business owners are the ones who give back to charities, support local schools and employ those who live in the community.

Terry employs 14 at her store and is most proud of their reputation for dedicated, one-on-one customer service. "We can help you select that perfect special occasion outfit, complete a new wardrobe or enhance your old one," she said. ■

In the top photo: Tuscaloosa Mayor Walt Maddox, Terry Davis, Melissa Warnke, Alabama Labor Secretary Fitzgerald Washington and Al Spencer with The Chamber of Commerce of West Alabama.



"I believe in supporting local retailers."

Join the movement
at shopalabama.org



FLAIR FOR FASHION

Entrepreneur Turns Her Passion Into Her Career

THE ISHI? BRAND NOW HAS THREE STORES
IN ALABAMA AND ONE IN FLORIDA

Story by Melissa Johnson Warnke. Photos by Brandon Robbins.



Shop ISHI? in Homewood at 1736 Reese Street and in Montgomery at 10 Court Square. ISHI Luxe in Mountain Brook is at 2417 Montevillo Road. The Rosemary Beach location, which is closed during the off season, is at 3925 West County Highway 30A.

Even though Lyishia Jones started her career in corporate America, fashion has always fueled her.

"I was the one who pushed the envelope when it came to the corporate dress code," Lyishia remembers. "I'd never leave the house without some kind of flair."

Her love of fashion became so evident, Lyishia's husband Greg, an entrepreneur himself, encouraged her to turn that passion into a career.

"He was kind of coaching me along the way, and made me think – maybe I should be doing something different."

In 2014, she was ready to take that leap, and plans for her first boutique began taking shape. However, one piece of the puzzle was missing – its name. In the end, Lyishia said, the name had always been a part of her.

"My husband would continually ask me, 'Is she?,' and I would look at him funny and answer, 'She is!' I finally realized what he was doing. He was using the four letters in the middle of my name, ISHI!"

For Lyishia, the store's name stuck, but she says it has come to mean much more than just part of her name.

"When I say ISHI? She is! I mean she is elegant. She is casual. She is anything she wants to be, relating to fashion. That's what I wanted my business to be all about."

The couple splits their time between Birmingham and Montgomery and chose Florida's Rosemary Beach as the first location.

"It was a place our family loved visiting and vacationing, so it just felt right," Lyishia said. "Once I attended South Walton Fashion Week, that's when I made my decision, and it ended up working well."

After several months in business, Lyishia noticed an increasing number of her orders came from folks in Alabama.

"I realized it was time to bring the boutique home. So, in 2015, we opened a second store in Homewood," said Lyishia.

MEMBER
SINCE
2016

The business quickly expanded once again with the addition of ISHI? Luxe in Mountain Brook last summer. That location, which is different from the others, mainly carries her custom-designed line of apparel. Pieces sold there, she explained, can be customized or tailored in-store.

Lyishia wasn't finished growing just yet. Because her husband's job required the family to spend a good deal of time in Montgomery, she couldn't pass up the opportunity for a store there as well.

In October 2016, Lyishia opened a fourth location in downtown Montgomery. She says she is excited to be part of a budding business district, following the Capital City's revitalization efforts.

"When I was little, my mom owned a boutique in downtown Detroit, Michigan, where I grew up," she recalled. "I remember my parents and others getting dressed up and going downtown to shop. It's exciting to see that kind of thing happening here."

Lyishia's approach to service is also reminiscent of a time gone by – something she says you don't get shopping online or at a big department store. Instead of salespeople, Lyishia employs stylists.

"When you shop at ISHI?," she said, "You are immediately greeted by a stylist, who will dress you based on your eye color, body type and personality. You'd be surprised by how many times someone will say 'that won't work for me,' but when we put it all together, they say, 'Wow, I love it!'"

Additionally, Lyishia says she carries a limited number of each piece and keeps a record of each customer's special events. "So you don't have to worry about showing up to an event in the same outfit as someone else," she explained.

The one-on-one connection to her customers is what makes her excited to wake up and come to work every morning, Lyishia says.

"A longtime customer recently told me she loved shopping with me because of the service and the fashion-forwardness. When you hear something like that, you know you're doing something right," she added.

👉 *For more information, visit alabamaretail.org.*

Making History

By Melissa Johnson Warnke



AN INTERVIEW WITH

Theo and Gus Katechis, Father and Son Owners of Chris' Hot Dogs

Photos by Brandon Robbins

“People always ask us the secret to being in business for 100 years,” said Gus Katechis. “I always tell them, you just gotta be here. You’ve got to be here every day.”

It’s a motto that Gus Katechis and his father, Theo, certainly live out; there’s rarely a day you don’t see both of them behind the counter at Chris’ Hot Dogs.

The father and son are the second and third generation to run the family business. Theo’s father, Christopher Anastasios “Chris” Katechis, for whom the business is named, immigrated to the United States from a small island in Greece and opened up his hot dog business on May 1, 1917.

Nearly one hundred years later, Chris’ Hot Dogs remains in its original location – 138 Dexter Avenue in downtown Montgomery, just three blocks from Alabama’s State Capitol. The location has not only afforded the restaurant and the Katechis family a front row seat to history – they’ve also provided a seat or two to the history-makers themselves.

THE FAMILY RECIPE

Theo never planned to officially join the family business. Growing up, he was one of five children, “So, we all worked here quite a bit,” he said. In fact, he doesn’t recall his father ever closing the business, except for Christmas Day.

“The running joke was trying to find where we put the front doors,” Theo remembers. “We were open seven days a week, so there was no need to close the doors.”

Chris’ Hot Dogs turns 100 on May 1 and promises a huge and memorable celebration leading up to the milestone.

“Our customers have taken care of us for the last 100 years, and we want to give back to them.”

- GUS

We just took them off. Every Christmas, we’d sit down and try to remember where we put them last year.”

As Theo got older, he started working on his family’s farm and planned on doing that full time.

“I found out that I was starving as a farmer,” Theo said with a laugh. “So, the plan was to go work for the family business for a few years, and then I was going to get the farm going. And, here I am, still!”

But the reality was, his help was needed. Theo’s mother had passed away, and his father was in his late 70s by then.

For his son, Gus, the story is much the same. After graduating with a degree in fisheries science at Auburn University, Gus worked for a few years in Northwest Florida. It wasn’t long before he felt the call to come back home.

“It was six years ago,” Gus said. “Dad was 65, and the way everything is now, computers are a necessity. Dad had trouble turning on his flip phone,” he said. “It was

Continued on page 12

THE ESSENTIALS

Founded
May 1, 1917

Number of Employees
12

Mentor
Our fathers

Smart Move
Bringing the business into the 21st century. Credit card machines, websites and social media are a must in business today.

Learning Moment
Becoming more than a place people come to eat. Be personable. Get to know your customers. Treat everyone with respect, from the guy scraping up change to the rich guy.

Wisdom Shared
Never say, “I can’t,” and never become complacent. Learn something every day.

Find this story at alabamaretail.org



Continued from page 11

time. And I have loved every second of it. You never know who's going to walk through the doors. We serve everyone from the governor to everyday, local folks. And that's the way it's always been."

HOT DOGS AND HISTORY

When Chris' Hot Dogs first opened in 1917, the restaurant offered curb service and did so for about 25 years. At that time, Gus explains, more and more people began driving cars, and the service began disrupting the traffic flow in the area, so they had to stop.

By the 1960s, Chris' Hot Dogs found itself in the center of American history, most notably the march towards civil rights. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., who preached a couple blocks away at Dexter Avenue Baptist Church, was a frequent customer at Chris' Hot Dogs.

"Blacks weren't allowed to eat in the restaurant then. But, they were allowed to come in through the front door. That was a big deal at the time," said Gus.

"We're so thankful times are different now, but my dad remembers Martin Luther King coming in every Sunday to pick up the papers," said Gus. "My grandad was an immigrant, so they'd talk about the things they were facing those days."

Over the years, the restaurant has served many other notable guests – including Franklin D. Roosevelt, Harry Truman, Presidents George H.W. and George W. Bush, Elvis Presley, Clark Gable, Oprah Winfrey and Hank Williams, who was known to be a regular.

"There's a story that he first wrote *Hey Good Lookin'* on a napkin here at Chris'," Gus said.

KEEPING TRADITION

"I remember when all the businesses started leaving downtown in the '70s," said Theo. "People would say, the only thing still down there is Chris' Hot Dogs and the State Capitol. It got pretty bad."

Despite the great downtown exodus, as Theo calls it, the restaurant persevered, serving up the same famous hot dogs and hamburgers.

"Everybody left, and we just kept on doing things the way we always had, down to the way we shaped the burgers," remembers Theo.

Once, Theo recalls using something similar to a cookie cutter to make the patties perfectly round.

"People didn't like them even though we used the same meat and same recipe," added Gus. "The patties just didn't look like they were made by hand. So, we had to quit that."

In fact, Gus explains, they have problems making any kind of change.

"We can't even paint the place or our customers get upset. And that's who pays our bills, so we have to keep them happy. You listen to what they say. We try to make small changes and see how it goes."

Both Gus and Theo attribute that commitment

to keeping it "just like it always has been" to their ability to attract generations of Chris' Hot Dog lovers. "It's like stepping back in time," Theo added.

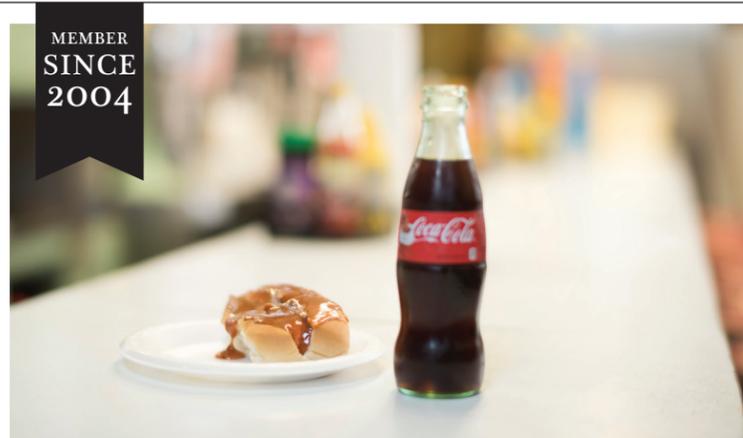
"We are really excited to see retail starting to come back downtown and more people living down here," said Gus. "We tell people we survived the great exodus, and now we're still here when everyone is coming back. We're looking forward to the future of Montgomery."

STAYING FRESH

As the restaurant's hundredth year of business approaches, Chris' Hot Dogs is preparing for a huge celebration. While plans aren't nailed down just yet, Gus says it will be a memorable experience.

"Our customers have taken care of us for the last 100 years, and we want to give back to them," Gus adds.

As they look toward the future, Gus and Theo say the plan is to keep on keeping on – and continue to serve up the now famous recipe that's nearly a century old. ■



Chris' Hot Dogs, 138 Dexter Ave., Montgomery, is open 10 a.m. to 7 p.m. Monday through Thursday and Saturdays, and 10 a.m. to 8 p.m. Friday. Visit online at chrishotdogs.com

Member News

HUNTSVILLE BREWERY FINISHES 2016 STRONG



Straight to Ale finished 2016 with an award and a new line of specialty brews in a grocery chain. The Chamber of Commerce of Huntsville/Madison County named the company Brewery of the Year for 2016. The company also entered a partnership with Whole Foods Market to bring the brewery's Rumble Seat Beer Project to the Southeast. Three beers brewed for Whole Foods – an India Pale Ale, a Citrus Witte and an Imperial Red – hit the shelves Labor Day weekend in Mississippi, Alabama, Georgia, North Carolina, South Carolina and Tennessee. Straight to Ale operates two breweries with a combined 50 barrels of brewhouse capacity in Huntsville. Visit straighttoale.com

WESTERN MARKET OPENS NEW MOUNTAIN BROOK STORE



Western Market opened a new, 28,000-plus-square-foot store in Mountain Brook late last year. The 1000 Jemison Lane store is just behind the Mountain Brook Western Market's previous Culver Road location of 57 years. The new store and what had been the Mountain Brook Shopping Center is now part of the Lane Parke Development, a multi-use property that also includes apartments and a hotel. "We're a small local chain, and this is a big deal to us," Darwin Metcalf, Western's president and chief operating officer, said of the larger store, which exceeds its previous space by 7,000 square feet. Visit westernsupermarkets.com

NEWSPAPER RECOGNIZES BROMBERG AS A TOP CEO



Bromberg & Co. Inc.'s Ricky Bromberg recently received recognition as one of Birmingham's top chief executives. In December, *Birmingham Business Journal*, a weekly newspaper and daily news website, named Ricky as one of four finalists for its annual CEO awards in the midsize companies' category. Ricky's contributions to Bromberg's, the stores' track record of performance, his role in the jewelry industry and his impact in the community earned him a finalist spot among a record field of nominees. Ricky and the other finalists were featured in the Dec. 2 issue of the newspaper and honored at a Dec. 1 event. Visit brombergs.com

IN MEMORIAM: HUGO DOYLE OWENS, 1931 - 2016



Unclaimed Baggage Center founder Doyle Owens passed away Dec. 3 at the age of 85. In 1970, Owens took out a \$300 loan, drove to Washington, D.C., and purchased his first load of unclaimed luggage. Today, the Scottsboro store is the nation's largest purchaser of unclaimed baggage and cargo and is known worldwide as a one-of-a-kind retail operation. More than 1 million visit each year. Although Bryan and Sharon Owens, his son and daughter-in-law, have owned the company since 1995, almost daily, Doyle could be found in the UBC café engaging customers. Send memorials to Samaritan's Purse, P.O. Box 3000, Boone, NC 28607. Visit unclaimedbaggage.com

For more member news, visit alabamaretail.org.

Welcome New Members



FEATURED NEW MEMBER

2GIRLS LLC
AUBURN

Founded: 2011

DBA
The Pink Room

OWNER
Debbie Smith

NUMBER OF EMPLOYEES **9**

PICTURED
**Sales Associate
Taylor Jackson**

LOCATION
**124 N College St.,
Auburn, AL 36830**

MEMBER SINCE
Sept. 2, 2016

17 Athens LLC
ATHENS

41st Street Pub & Aircraft
Sales LLC
BIRMINGHAM

Big B Bar-B-Que Inc.
ALEXANDER CITY

Big Blue's Restaurant LLC
ENTERPRISE

Big Mike's
Restaurant II LLC
THOMASVILLE

BJHQ Enterprises LLC
TUSCALOOSA

Black Sheep Kitchen LLC
MOUNTAIN BROOK

Boshancee Nursery Inc.
NEW MARKET

Burchell & Co Inc.
HOOVER

Cadella LLC
MOBILE

Chariot Investments LLC
MOBILE

Chung's Corp. Inc.
NORTHPORT

Cluck-A-Wing LLC
BIRMINGHAM

Dan Warnes
GUNTSVILLE

Danny Holmes
VERNON

Davidson, Davidson &
Umbach LLC
AUBURN

Elevations Inc.
HUEYTOWN

Empress Cafe LLC
MONTGOMERY

ESE Coatings North
America Inc.
TUSCALOOSA

Family Counseling
Service of Tuscaloosa
County, Alabama, Inc.
TUSCALOOSA

Farmers Feed LLC
MONTGOMERY

FDNA LLC
ATTALA

Fife Family Dentistry LLC
PRATTVILLE

Garnett's Lawn
Equipment Inc.
HARTSELLE

Gayatrin Inc.
IRONDALE

Heenav Inc.
GARDENDALE

Hillcrest Self Storage LLC
MOBILE

Hole Lot of Cakes Inc.
BIRMINGHAM

HSV Cigar &
Fine Spirits LLC
HUNTSVILLE

Hydro LLC
AUBURN

Ishaan LLC
AUBURN

ISHI?
BIRMINGHAM

Jai Mata Di LLC
ENTERPRISE

James Morris
WHISTLER

Jasia Enterprises LLC
MONTGOMERY

JJ Huntsville
Downtown LLC
HUNTSVILLE

JJ Huntsville LLC
DECATUR

Karen Cowan
MOULTON

Krishna K. Kakani MD
HUNTSVILLE

Lampada's LLC
TUSCALOOSA

Linden Ace
Hardware LLC
LINDEN

Loco's Cantina LLC
PIEDMONT

M & M Construction
Materials LLC
MOBILE

Maluff Enterprises LLC
MOUNTAIN BROOK

Mamma Mia Pizzeria
LLC
FOLEY

Me You and a Pizza LLC
BIRMINGHAM

Metro Anesthesia and
Pain Services PC
MOBILE

N B P & P Inc.
HOMEWOOD

New Samato Japanese
Steakhouse Inc.
CLANTON

New Vision Investments
LLC
ENTERPRISE

North River Wood
Products Inc.
TUSCALOOSA

P2Platinum Pilates
MOUNTAIN BROOK

Phillips-Dunn Animal
Hospital LLC
MONTGOMERY

Pill Sisters LLC
CULLMAN

R&R Tax and Business
Solutions LLC
NORTHPORT

Rabbit Creek
Properties LLC
JACKSON

Robert Wilson
TUSCUMBIA

Rowe's Service
Station LLC
BIRMINGHAM

S.I.D.A. LLC
OPELIKA

Safety Shoes Plus Inc.
SARALAND

Serg Enterprises Inc.
BIRMINGHAM

Sha-Mar Enterprises Inc.
BIRMINGHAM

Sha-San Enterprises Inc.
BIRMINGHAM

Shear Experience LLC
MONTGOMERY

Shelby Pizza Inc.
BIRMINGHAM

Shindigs Catering LLC
BIRMINGHAM

Shop HSV LLC
HUNTSVILLE

Sitaram Alabama LLC
ALEXANDER CITY

SL Restaurant LLC
MONTGOMERY

South Oak Title LLC
BIRMINGHAM

Southwestern Athletic
Conference
BIRMINGHAM

Stilwell Enterprises LLC
CLANTON

Summerfield Sandwich
Co. LLC
MADISON

Surat Inc.
DECATUR

Tanya Morgan
MONTGOMERY

Taqueria El Rincon
Latino LLC
NORTHPORT

Taqueria Mi Rancho LLC
DOTHAN

Towne & Country
Furniture LLC
MOBILE

United Way of Athens
and Limestone County
ATHENS

Williams Auto Parts LLC
ELBA

YP - Uptown LLC
BIRMINGHAM

Zelda Court Dental
Care LLC
MONTGOMERY



FEATURED NEW MEMBER

THE BARKERY
MONTGOMERY

Founded 2016

OWNER
Michelle Reeder
(pictured)

NUMBER OF EMPLOYEES **4**

LOCATION
**1963 Mulberry St.,
Montgomery, AL
36106**

MEMBER SINCE
Sept. 23, 2016



Founded 2013

OWNERS
**Daniel and
Krystal Mims**

NUMBER OF EMPLOYEES **6**

PICTURED
**Creative Director
Steven Lambert
and Designer
Courtne Johnson**

LOCATION
**150 Lee St.,
Montgomery, AL
36104**

MEMBER SINCE
Sept. 12, 2016

FEATURED NEW MEMBER

**COTTON & PINE
CREATIVE LLC**
MONTGOMERY

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. Access 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.

MEMBER SINCE 2005 "When you call Alabama Retail's Employment Law Hotline, you get quick and specific answers," said **REBECCA BROWN, VICE PRESIDENT OF HUMAN RESOURCES AND LEGAL FOR WALL STREET MARKETS LLC.**



"You get quick and specific answers."

**-REBECCA BROWN,
WALL STREET MARKETS, DOTHAN**

Wall Street Markets operate Piggly Wiggly grocery stores in Alabama, Georgia and Florida. Even though she is a lawyer, Rebecca has taken advantage of ARA's Employment Law Hotline. "It provides practical applications for business operations," she said.

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.

USE NEW I-9 FORM

All new hires must fill out the latest Form I-9 the first day they are on the job.

Since Jan. 22, the Form I-9 Employment Eligibility Verification dated 11/14/2016 has been in effect. It must be completed for new hires and any existing employees who require reverification for their authorization.

Even if you only employ one person, this document must be kept on file.

Find the new form and other I-9 information at <https://www.uscis.gov/i-9>

Mike Thompson, the managing shareholder for our employment law partner, Lehr Middlebrooks Vreeland & Thompson, has updated an article on ARA's website related to reviewing your I-9 forms and procedures.

To read Mike's insights into I-9 compliance, go to alabamaretail.org/I-9-compliance/

New Look Coming for Retail Report in 2017

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 begins Feb. 7 and should end by or before May 22.

During the 2017 session, you'll notice a change in the Retail Report that comes

to your email inbox. It should be cleaner and more concise. We'll pinpoint what is important to your business and bottom line.

For those who crave more detail, we'll link to issue briefs on the top retail-related topics of the session, whatever those might be. Use the issue briefs on alabamaretail.org to have

a conversation with your legislators and to understand the effects on your business.

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

For more information, visit alabamaretail.org.

Be Prepared, Consolidated Ace Owners Say

Story by Nancy King Dennis. Photo by Melissa Johnson Warnke.

"It is a lot easier to be proactive than reactive," when it comes to getting the supplies necessary for severe weather emergencies, said Art Frizzell III, co-owner of Consolidated Ace, which has stores in Dothan and Ozark. "You may not be able to get a generator or a gas can after a storm hits."

Billy Betts III, the other owner of Consolidated Ace, which also operates four Ace Hardware stores in the Florida Panhandle, adds, "It is a given in the Panhandle/south Alabama region, at some point, we are going to face storms."

Consolidated Ace, a second-generation family business, sells a vast array of goods including hardware, pet and livestock food, seed, lawn and garden items and building supplies. It is among the many stores where Alabamians can buy tax-free items the last full weekend in February to prepare for weather emergencies.

"We try to talk to our customers and get them to prepare early," said Billy. "The tax holiday helps with motivating them to make some purchases," including batteries, flashlights and tarps, he said.

State officials purposely designed Alabama's weather preparedness tax holiday to occur before the height of both tornado and hurricane seasons. The three-day, tax-free weekend, which is in its sixth year, seeks to remind consumers to stock up on needed emergency supplies before disaster strikes.

"What we see is so many people still don't know about the tax holiday," the Consolidated Ace owners said. Other Alabama retailers who sell the tax-free items report similar experiences. "When customers come in on the tax holiday weekend, and we offer to sell them a generator or some of

the bigger ticket items, they are not prepared with their spendable cash to make that purchase at that time," Billy said.

During the tax holiday, the state's four-percent sales tax is waived on common emergency supplies costing less than \$60 as well as generators costing \$1,000 or less.

Like many retailers, Consolidated Ace offers

specials on the covered items. "We will incentivize on top of the tax holiday," said Billy. "We try to promote it in-house as much as we can." Alabama Retail promotes the holiday statewide, plus provides retailers with downloadable signage to use in your store.

Consolidated Ace, founded in 1975, employs 25 at its two Alabama stores and another 70 in Florida. Art and Billy bought the Alabama portion of the business in November 2016 and the Florida portion in April 2016 from Art's father, Art Frizzell II. The elder Frizzell bought the Florida enterprise in 2004 and the Dothan store in 2006. "I was born into the business," Art III said. Billy has been a part of the company for 21 years.



Frizzell, left, and Betts encourage their customers to prepare for severe weather before the storm hits and to take advantage of the tax savings during Alabama's February tax holiday.

Learn more about Alabama's Feb. 24-26 severe weather preparedness sales tax holiday at alabamaretail.org/alabamasalestaxholidays/





Socially Speaking

THE POSTS YOU MAY HAVE MISSED

“I’d like to thank my wife for taking that leap with me to start a retail business.”

– AVERY AINSWORTH



More than 200 retailers, academics and civic leaders gathered Oct. 18, 2016, to celebrate all things retail. Inspiring stories of perseverance, innovation and commitment to community captivated those at the 35th Annual Alabama Retail Day. *Oct. 18 photo album*



Overtime rule scheduled for Dec. 1 put on hold. ARA members check your email inbox. alretail.org/2fPolTI Nov. 22 *link to Wall Street Journal story*



Alabama Retail Association shared the Dothan chamber's album.

Thank you Dothan Area Chamber of Commerce for your AMAZING support of #ShopAlabama! How fun to see our sign in so many great, local retail stores and businesses! *Nov. 22 photo album*



We're LIVE to kick off #ShopAlabama for the Holidays in Montgomery! Thanks to Mayor Todd Strange, the Montgomery Area Chamber of Commerce and member business ISHI? for helping us spread the message in a great news conference! *Nov. 17 video*

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

/Alabama Retail

@AlabamaRetail

Stay informed at alabamaretail.org

THE TOP 5 STATES FOR ADA PUBLIC ACCESS LAWSUITS ARE:



Alabama is one of the top five states for drive-by Americans with Disabilities Act lawsuits as profiled on CBS News. If your business receives a threatening demand letter, this link lists the first steps you should take: alretail.org/1RctXJy Dec. 4 *link to CBS News story and Alabama Retail web post*



PAYROLL AUDIT SEASON

RETURN INFORMATION REQUESTED BY FEB. 15

In the past few weeks, your business may have received an envelope from Alabama Retail Comp with the words “Audit Information Request” in bold red type above the address window.

This request for audit information is sent each January to ARA members who participate in the ARC workers' comp fund. While the word “audit” may evoke images of the tax man knocking at your door, ARC's payroll audit is just routine payroll verification.

ARC participants “pay premium throughout the year based on an estimate of payroll,” said Toni Hill, premium administrator for the fund. “Because it is based on an estimate, at the end of a policy period, we want to determine exactly what your payroll was, so we know whether to issue a refund or send a bill for additional premium.”

DON'T PANIC AND FOLLOW THE CHECKLIST

Every workers' comp fund, by law, must perform annual payroll audits of their participants.

In this audit, no ARC employee will come to your business to look at your books.

An ARC payroll audit simply requires a business to provide information that documents actual payroll for the past calendar year.

The first page in the Audit Information Request envelope “is a short checklist of information, we need returned to us by Feb. 15,” said Toni.

To verify payroll, ARC relies on information found in W3, W2s, and 1099s or state quarterly wage reports and federal 941s. Other information such as overtime records and workers' comp insurance certificates for subcontractors also may be required in certain circumstances.

“After doing this for 23 years, my best advice is to simply follow the checklist,” Toni said. “If a participant sends back the items in the checklist, ARC should have all we need to complete the audit.”

IMPORTANCE OF JOB TITLES AND JOB DUTIES

The second page in the Audit Information Request envelope asks for job titles and duties for all employees who received W2s and individuals who received 1099s. ARC needs the information “so we can class employees correctly,” said Toni.

“After doing this for 23 years, my best advice is to simply follow the checklist. If a participant sends back the items in the checklist, ARC should have all we need to complete the audit.”

– TONI HILL
PREMIUM ADMINISTRATOR

Your workers' comp rating is based on employee job duties. Depending on their duties, employees are assigned different class codes with different rates. Ensuring employees are classed correctly is critical to making sure a participant's premium is calculated properly. “For most of ARC's participants, filling out the second page of the audit request is easy. More than half of our audits involve only one class code,” Toni said.

HAVE A QUESTION? CALL TONI!

People question it, but Toni says, “I love auditing; it is like a puzzle.” She adds, “It is also one of the few times a year when our participants call me.”

Got a question? “Pick up the phone and call me or send me an email,” says Toni. “I love talking to our members. I love helping our members understand workers' comp.”

To contact Toni or any member of the policy team, call 800.239.5423 or send an email to policy@alabamaretail.org.

Not an Alabama Retail Comp participant? Visit alabamaretail.org/comp to find out more.

RECENTLY RE-TWEETED @ALABAMARETAIL

@tuscaloosacity is honored to support #shopalabama #shoptuscaloosa Nov. 18 by Tuscaloosa Mayor Walt Maddox



BETTER TOGETHER

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

Retailers in Alabama are better when we join together.

Whether voicing our view when public policy is made, negotiating rates for benefits and services or communicating the retail story, the 4,100 members of the Alabama Retail Association are better together.

Take advantage of all your association has to offer.

“Alabama Retail does an excellent job of assisting small business owners in navigating the complex environment involved in operating retail stores in Alabama.”

-MARGARET HAMM, MONOGRAMS PLUS

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 retrospective return.

Low-Cost Credit Card Processing

Through our partnership with Huntsville's CHECKredi®, you have access to group-negotiated, credit-card processing rates typically reserved for only the largest retailers.

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.

Visit us at alabamaretail.org