

Alabama Retailer

MEMBER HIGHLIGHT
*DUSTIN AND
SHANNON BEATY*
OWNERS OF LAVISH BOUTIQUE
AND COFFEE BAR

SHOP
ALABAMA
*Holiday
Spending
to Top
\$12 Billion*

RETAIL DAY
HONOREES
Centennial
Retailers and
Retailers of
the Year

REGULATORY
UPDATE:
*eWIC,
Economic
Nexus and
Grease Traps*

BEYOND DOWNTOWN

*Courtney Thompson
and Meagan Richardson*

OWNERS OF NELLIE MAE BOUTIQUE

From the President



**Together We
Can Make the
Retail Vote Count**

On Tuesday, Nov. 6, Alabama voters have the privilege and responsibility of choosing our state's leaders for the next four years or more.



There are a lot of races on the ballot, including ones for governor, Supreme Court and the Alabama Legislature.

Part of our mission at the Alabama Retail Association is to elect "retail friendly" public officials and fair judges.

We have two political action committees – Alabama RetailPAC for state races and Alabama Retail Association PAC for federal races. In contested races, those PACs recommend candidates who are right for retailers. For the General Election, the state PAC has recommended five statewide candidates and 65 state legislative candidates. The federal PAC recommends five congressional candidates.


In recent weeks, members for whom we have an email address should have received an electronic Voter Guide. I hope you shared that guide with your employees, colleagues and friends.

Together, the 4,200 Alabama Retail Association members, their employees, friends and associates can make the voice of retail heard at the ballot box.

Please plan to vote Nov. 6 and encourage your employees to vote as well.

Make the retail vote count. Alabama's future depends on it!

Rick Brown, Publisher and President

 **To find the Voter Guide and other election information, go to: alabamaretail.org/vote/**

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SHOP ALABAMA

Holiday Spending in Alabama to Exceed \$12 Billion, 4.5% Growth from Last Year

Shoppers in Alabama are expected to spend half a billion more during the holidays this year than last year.

During the holiday shopping months of November and December, Alabamians will purchase more than \$12 billion, based on the Alabama Retail Association's prediction of taxed sales for those months. That represents a 4.5 percent increase beyond the \$11.7 billion spent in the 2017 holiday shopping period.


Through July of this year, Alabama averaged 4.8 percent growth in taxable sales each month over the same month last year. In the same period, the state of Alabama has also collected almost \$47.5 million in sales taxes from out-of-state, online-only retailers, who have remitted through the Simplified Sellers Use Tax program and the state's economic nexus rule.



Alabama Retail Association's 4.5 percent holiday growth prediction is for all holiday taxed sales, including those remitted from remote sellers.

Taxed holiday sales in 2017 in our state totaled \$11,757,340,700.05, a jump of 2.84 percent over 2016 holiday sales, according to numbers provided by the Alabama Revenue Department.

The Alabama Retail Association urges shoppers to Shop Alabama throughout the year, especially during the holiday shopping period.

 **For more information on how you can join the Shop Alabama movement, visit ShopAlabama.org**



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Electronic WIC Begins in 2019; New Vendor Apps Stop Nov. 30, 2018

In 2019, the Alabama Woman, Infants and Children (WIC) supplemental foods program will transition from a paper-based to an electronic-based delivery system known as eWIC. Food benefits automatically will be added onto a card, much like a debit card.



program for retailers, so no new applications will be accepted from prospective vendors after 5 p.m. Nov. 30. Applications received prior to that date will be processed. Existing vendors do have to complete the reauthorization process in 2019. If you are an existing vendor, Public Health should have notified you of this new system.

The phase-in of the Alabama Department of Public Health program begins in March of next year with five rollout dates set in different areas of the state each month between March and August of 2019. A map of the districts and rollout dates for each, can be found here:

alabamapublichealth.gov/wic/assets/ewic_vendor_implementation_map.pdf

From Dec. 1 of this year until Sept. 30, 2019, the department will be conducting a vendor readiness

The electronic system should ease transactions with WIC participants as cash registers and point-of-sale systems automatically will identify allowed food items through the Universal Product Code (UPC) database. A PIN number will be used to verify participants, so cashiers don't have to compare signatures. The Health Department said store accounts also will be credited within 24 to 48 hours for food benefits redeemed by participants, under this electronic system.

Alabama Enforcing Economic Nexus for Remote Sellers

The Alabama Revenue Department began enforcement Oct. 1 of its economic nexus rule, which applies to remote sellers doing more than \$250,000 in retail sales in Alabama. State law requiring collections or reporting by marketplace platforms on behalf of their third-party vendors takes effect Jan. 1, 2019.

Alabama's economic nexus rule has existed since 2016, but prior to Oct. 1, compliance with the rule had been primarily voluntary.

A June 21 decision by the U.S. Supreme Court opened the door for states to collect sales taxes from sellers without a physical presence in their state.

Alabama is one of growing number of states that have or will soon have an economic nexus standard. Legislation pending in Congress could delay implementation of such standards.



Secure Outdoor Grease Traps by Dec. 1

Food service establishments have until Dec. 1 to comply with the new minimum standard for outdoor grease trap covers. A rule related to the new standard was effective Oct. 1.

Under the law, outdoor grease trap covers must be constructed of materials that will hold up to heavy traffic AND be locked, bolted, heavy enough or otherwise secured to prevent unauthorized access. The covers must be secured at all times.

Health inspectors will check outdoor grease trap lids to make sure they are secure during routine health inspections.

[Learn more at alabamaretail.org/news/locked-grease-trap-covers/](http://alabamaretail.org/news/locked-grease-trap-covers/)

MAIN STREET ENTREPRENEURS

Couple's Business Flourishes with Downtown Jasper; Second Boutique Open in Cullman

LAVISH STARTS IN PHARMACY, NOW TWO BOUTIQUES,
ONE WITH A COFFEE BAR

Story by Nancy King Dennis. Photos by Brandon Robbins.



Dustin and Shannon Beaty relax in the lounge area of the Lavish Coffee Bar in downtown Jasper. The coffee bar is in the same space with Lavish Boutique.

Dustin Beaty had been operating Hospital Discount Pharmacy in downtown Jasper for nine years when he agreed to his wife's request to sell game-day clothes in the pharmacy.

A week after she began the venture, Shannon Beaty nonchalantly informed him, "I'm having to reorder. I ordered some non-game-day stuff." With that seemingly innocent statement, the idea of Lavish Boutique moved toward reality.

Six months after Shannon began her enterprise in July of 2012, her boutique had eclipsed the over-the-counter section of the pharmacy.

"We had boutique customers complaining that they didn't have enough space to shop. We had pharmacy customers complaining that they didn't come to the pharmacy to have to fight the boutique crowd," said Dustin. It was time for the boutique to find a place of its own.

So, the Beatys prayed. The florist next door to the pharmacy confided that she was considering selling her business.

"Two days later, I had a dream," said Shannon. "I saw boutique clothing in the (floral store's) front window. I said to Dustin, 'This is meant to be. If it works out, this is where we are going to be.'"

In June 2013, Lavish Boutique was born, opening next door to the pharmacy. The store quickly outgrew that 1,300-square-foot space. Again, the Beatys prayed.

By the fall of 2016, the store had expanded in the same 19th Street block and now included a coffee bar. The combination boutique/coffee shop has become the anchor of the east end of the downtown Jasper business district.

On Aug. 15 of this year, the Beatys opened a second location of Lavish Boutique in the warehouse district of Cullman. "We were at the right place, at the right time and met the right people," said Shannon. "It was all in God's perfect plan."

The couple also operates an online store at lavishboutiqueclothing.com

Downtown Renaissance

"From Hospital Discount Drugs to Lavish Boutique and Coffee Bar, the Beatys' businesses have lead the renaissance of Jasper's downtown," Paul W. Kennedy, president of the Walker Area Community Foundation, wrote earlier this year in support of the couple's nomination as Alabama Retailers of the Year. The Beatys are the 2018 Silver Retailers of the Year in the \$1 Million to \$5 Million Annual Sales Category, and they are the Customers' Choice Award winners, garnering 3,112 of 23,609 votes cast (see Page 10).

"When we decided to expand, Jasper had just entered the Main Street program for Alabama," said Dustin, who served as Main Street Jasper's president for the 2016-2017 term. The Beatys had also just returned from a family vacation out west, where multiple businesses tended to congregate

in one location. Those two events proved serendipitous.

In a town hall meeting, "the Beatys heard a desire from the public that they wished Jasper had a 'third space'; not a store, not a church, but maybe a coffee shop. Today, the Lavish Coffee Bar is one of the go-to places to meet and recharge" in our town, Kennedy said.

Customers flow back and forth between the boutique and the coffee bar through the open floor plan inspired by the Beatys' experience visiting the western United States. The coffee shop also has its own street entrance and a concrete pad beside it with outside tables.

While that trip and the suggestion

made at the town-hall meeting gave the Beatys the idea, "Main Street gave us the supporting numbers to tell us that the coffee shop would work," Dustin said.

Mike Putman, executive director of Main Street Jasper, verified, "The reason this coffee shop is here is because of our market analysis."

Main Street has been good for Jasper and the Beatys. "Our business has grown since Jasper became a Main Street city," Dustin said. "The other businesses that have come to downtown have also driven traffic and shopping to this area." ■



Dustin and Shannon Beaty pose in their Jasper boutique. Lavish Boutique and Coffee Bar at 207 19th St. E. in Jasper and Lavish Boutique at 105 1st Ave. N.E. in Cullman are open 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. Monday through Saturday. Shop online at lavishboutiqueclothing.com

Third-Generation Mobile Bakery Began 100 Years Ago

Story by Nancy King Dennis. Photo by Melissa Johnson Warnke

When Fredrick J. Pollman moved to Mobile in 1900, he brought the flavor of New Orleans with him. His sister's husband had opened a bakery and needed Fred's expertise.

By 1918, Fred had started his own bakery in downtown Mobile and began baking bread, cakes and pies for local grocery stores and restaurants. He made the pies and pastries for the first Morrison's Cafeteria, which opened two years after his bakery.

While only one Morrison's Cafeteria remains, the original Fred Pollman's legacy lives on at three Pollman's Bake Shops in Mobile.

"We are still making some of the things that we did 100 years ago," said Fred Pollman III, who runs the business now with his wife, Rose.

Pollman's Bake Shops' Praline Dobash Cake, a layered dessert that originated in New Orleans, is one of the 100 Dishes to Eat in Alabama Before You Die. That is not the only Crescent City favorite that Pollman's has made its own in Mobile.

Pollman's also introduced the Azalea City to the King Cake and po' boy sandwiches.

"What we have brought to Mobile, a lot of people have copied from us," said Fred III. "I look at us as the

pioneers in this industry. We are always looking for the next best thing."

Fred and Corinne Pollman, who started the bakery, lost their money and their business when their bank failed with the 1929 stock market crash. By 1937, they had opened again as a small retail bakery.



Fred III, Beverly and Rose Pollman pose in their 750 S. Broad St. retail shop. Fred and Rose also own two other Pollman's Bake Shops at 107 St. Francis St. and 4464 Old Shell Road in Mobile.

About 1950, Fred's children bought the business from their parents – sons Fred Pollman Jr. and Charles Pollman, and daughter, Mary Pollman Bender. In 1981, the second generation felt it was time to retire, so they sold the business. Pollman's without the Pollmans was short-lived. The third generation bought the business back in 1989 and continue to run it today with some help from the second generation.

Fred III's 92-year-old

mother, Beverly, continues to come in occasionally to work in the office.

"Pollman's is a tradition in Mobile, a legacy, a legend," said Danette Richards, director of Small Business Development for the Mobile Area Chamber of Commerce. "Parents use Pollman's cookies as a way to bribe their children or reward them."

The bakery has made wedding and birthday cakes for generations of the same families. "We are baking wedding cakes right now for girls who went to school with my daughter," said Rose Pollman.

"It is a good feeling to sell joy," said Fred III. ■

ANOTHER CENTENNIAL RETAILER:
March 12 Marked 100th Year for Trowbridge Creamery in Florence

👉 *Trowbridge Creamery was featured in the February 2018 Alabama Retailer.*
Read its story at alabamaretail.org/news/trowbridges-100th-anniversary/

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And the 2018 Alabama Retailers of the Year are ...

Photos by Melissa Warnke, Nancy Dennis, Bryan Carter and Brandon Robbins

1 RENFROE'S MARKET TEAM

Renfro's Market
2 Montgomery stores, 1 in Dadeville
Gold, Annual Sales More Than \$20 Million
(Pictured from left Operations Manager David Locke, Vice President Rob Renfro, Owner Robert Renfro)

2 JAY WELBORN

B&W Foods Inc., dba Piggly Wiggly
3 Tuscaloosa stores, 1 in Northport
Silver, Annual Sales More Than \$20 Million

3 JEFF ROSENTHAL

Hibbett Sports
Stores in 74 Alabama cities plus
34 other states and online
Bronze, Annual Sales More Than \$20 Million

4 ASHLEY GILL

Chick-fil-A Northport
Gold, Annual Sales \$5 Million to \$20 Million

5 CHARLENE HABER

Wolf Bay Restaurant, Bar & Boutique
Foley and Orange Beach
Silver, Annual Sales \$5 Million to \$20 Million

6 BRIAN AND JODI HARSANY

Cobalt The Restaurant, Orange Beach
Silver, Annual Sales \$5 Million to \$20 Million

7 GEORGE R. WILDER

The Locker Room
Montgomery and Auburn
Gold, Annual Sales \$1 Million to \$5 Million

8 DUSTIN AND SHANNON BEATY

Lavish Boutique and Coffee Bar, Jasper
Lavish Boutique, Cullman
Silver, Annual Sales \$1 Million to \$5 Million
(See story Pages 6-7)

ALSO
Customers' Choice Award
3,112 of 23,609 votes cast
(Pictured with Lavish Coffee Bar staff)

9 STEVEN AND JESSICA BRINDLEY

Brindley's Family Pharmacy, Albertville
Bronze, Annual Sales \$1 Million to \$5 Million

10 LISETTE NORMANN

The Fairhope Store
Gold, Annual Sales Less Than \$1 Million
(Pictured with her staff and her dog, Sailor)

11 THEO AND COSTAS KATECHIS


Chris' Famous Hot Dogs, Montgomery
Silver, Annual Sales Less Than \$1 Million

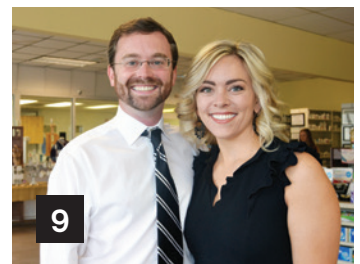
12 ANNETTE HARRIS

Rumors Deli Inc., Cullman
Bronze, Annual Sales Less Than \$1 Million

13 ZEBBIE CARNEY

Eugene's Hot Chicken, Birmingham
GEE Emerging Retailer of the Year

 *Find stories and videos about these outstanding Alabama retailers at alabamaretail.org/news/2018-retailers-year/*



More photos at [f AlabamaRetail](#)

Beyond Downtown

By Melissa Johnson Warnke

AN INTERVIEW WITH

Courtney Thompson and Meagan Richardson of Nellie Mae Boutique

Photos By Brandon Robbins

*Courtney Thompson and
Meagan Richardson*

Courtney Thompson and Meagan Richardson are living out their childhood dream. The women, both 34, are first-cousins, and as children, they always wanted their own store. In fact, they once operated a pretend store out of their grandmother's home.

Now, their store is no longer make-believe – it's reality, and the store bears the name of their great-grandmother, Nellie Mae, to honor her memory.

It all started in 2010, when Courtney and Meagan first began selling and flipping furniture in a 10-by-10 booth. Four months into their venture, their current retail space on Main Street in downtown Tuscumbia became available for rent. "We couldn't afford it," said Courtney, "but we just decided to take a leap, and we did."

In 2011, they officially opened the Nellie Mae Boutique storefront. While they still sold furniture and picture frames, they quickly realized apparel was not only their biggest seller, it would also be their pathway to growth.

Fast forward to 2018, and Nellie Mae has more than 10,000 customers a month, in store and online. The store carries the latest fashion trends in women's clothing, accessories and shoes. They also design, create and sell their own wholesale T-shirt line; the shirts are in more than 1,000 stores throughout the country, making up as much as 50 percent of their sales.

First cousins Courtney Thompson and Meagan Richardson serve 10,000 customers monthly through Nellie Mae Boutique in downtown Tuscumbia and their online store – nelliemaeboutique.com.

"Our employees are our greatest strength; and through a collective drive, we have grown at an astronomical pace."

– COURTNEY AND MEAGAN

Their downtown Tuscumbia location has become what the city's Mayor Kerry Underwood calls, "the flagship to the retail industry here in our downtown." In a 2017 recommendation letter for Courtney and Meagan's Alabama Retailer of the Year nomination and subsequent Customers' Choice Award win, Mayor Underwood described the two women and their team as "creative people who adapt easily to change. The changes they make, they make before the crowd does," he added.

It's a sentiment in which both Courtney and Meagan agree. "We aren't afraid of change," they said.

Continued on page 14

THE ESSENTIALS

Founded
2011

Number of Employees
27

Smart Move
Launching our
wholesale brand

Learning Moment
When Facebook started making changes back in 2013, and we were forced to start spending more and more on Facebook ads to drive traffic to our website. This was a real eye-opener. You can never put your eggs in one basket when it comes to advertising. We have since launched our app, which is a lot more secure and a better way to reach our customers! We still use Facebook ads, but we do not solely rely on them. We focus more on driving customers to our app and our email list.

Wisdom Shared
If something isn't working, move on quickly to something else, until you find what does work. Pay close attention to your numbers and what drives sales on a day-to-day basis. Look at the bigger picture and decide what you want your business to be in five years!

See more
of this story at
alabamaretail.org



Their unprecedented growth spurs largely from their keen eye for style and design as well as a forward-thinking savvy with social media when it comes to selling and connecting with both returning and potential customers.

They also attribute Nellie Mae's success to their staff. "Our employees are our greatest strength and through a collective drive, we have grown at an astronomical pace," they said, adding in each of the past four years, the store's sales have grown more than 100 percent.

With more than 135,000 Facebook fans and 38,000 Instagram followers, they style, photograph and ship every item themselves.

In addition, a 10,000-square-foot warehouse helps them manage their enormous volume of product which is purchased from customers all over the United States, some even internationally.

Nellie Mae succeeds at selling on social media and online, but their connection to their local customers and community is what drives them.

"We love Tuscumbia, and we love downtown," said Courtney. "The charm of the city is part of our story. When we first opened, there were not many stores downtown, except for Fiddledee D across the street, where we started out in our booth. We've seen a lot of growth over the last six or seven years, and it has been really wonderful to see and be a part of it," added Courtney.

Those local customers are what makes the holidays especially meaningful for them.

The Most Wonderful Time of the Year

Right now, Courtney and Meagan are in the midst of their eighth Christmas-selling season and their favorite time of the year. While their holiday-themed merchandise started selling before Halloween, preparations started long before that.

"We've become accustomed to buying sweaters in July," Meagan said, laughing.

Aside from new winter clothing lines, the two plan several special events, sales and giveaways to coincide with their busiest shopping days, Black Friday and the weekend before Christmas.

"On Black Friday, we'll have hundreds of people lined up outside the store before we open. One time, we saw people camped out as early as 12:50 a.m.," said Courtney.

Last year, they gave away free T-shirts to the first 100 people through the doors as well as the chance to win a flat screen TV and an Apple watch. They're planning a similar event this year, but the two agree, they have no plans to

open on Thanksgiving Day. They want to enjoy the holiday with their families and allow their employees to do the same.

"This time of year, there's something special about seeing mothers and daughters spending the day together, laughing and smiling, and just enjoying being together. What's also great about shopping in a store is that you can fill up your

arms with clothes, touch and feel the fabrics, and try things on together – it's just fun," said Meagan.

The two are expecting another record-setting season (see page 3 for Alabama Retailer's holiday shopping prediction).

"We have put together some fun ads to drive traffic to the store and to our website. Our Christmas T-shirt sales have been huge, so we expect that to continue right up until Christmas Day or the days before," said Courtney.

"We also sell a ton of gift cards," said Meagan. "We'll have lots of men coming in on Christmas Eve, and that's usually what they'll get. So, everyone is ready to come shop after Christmas too, especially since we'll have a lot of sales."

Courtney and Meagan are enjoying the now, but they already have new ideas on the horizon. Both are wives and moms to young children, so they are thankful for the chance to work with each other and their hard-working, spirited and talented team of employees.

"We launch our spring line right after Christmas, so there's no slowing down anytime soon," added Meagan. ■



Shop Nellie Mae Boutique at 110 S. Main Street in downtown Tuscumbia from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. Monday through Saturday or online at nelliemaeboutique.com.

Member News

TUSCALOOSA JEWELER EARNS TWO CIVIC AWARDS



MEMBER
SINCE
2017

Hudson-Poole Fine Jewelers' chairman and president, Gene "Poodgie" Poole, received two recent civic engagement honors. The Chamber of Commerce of West Alabama inducted him into its Civic Hall of Fame on Sept. 20. On Aug. 27, Tuscaloosa Tourism & Sports awarded him its Leroy McAbee Sr. Distinguished Service Award at the 5th Annual Alabama Veteran's Reunion. That award honors a U.S. military veteran who has enhanced both his/her community and its citizens. Poole retired from the U.S. Army with the rank of lieutenant colonel. He was the 2000 Gold Alabama Retailer of the Year Award in his store's sales category. Visit hudsonpoole.com

OPELIKA GROCER RECEIVES FRESH PRODUCE GRANT



MEMBER
SINCE
2006

Wright's Market of Opelika has received a federal grant that allows the community grocery store to offer those on food assistance half off purchases of fresh produce. The U.S. Department of Agriculture Food Insecurity Nutrition Incentive Grant covers the Double Up Food Bucks Program for at least three years. It is the only grocery in Alabama to participate in the program. Owner Jimmy Wright said a substantial portion of his market's business comes from Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) recipients. The East Alabama Medical Center matched the grant amount. Visit wrightsmarkets.com

CRAFT CLOSET OPENS 2ND LOCATION



MEMBER
SINCE
2018

Craft Closet, which opened in 2017 in Dothan, opened a Montgomery store in July. Owner Megan Harrell and her team of employees offer a one-stop shop for all things vinyl, including heat transfer and adhesive products. Craft Closet carries all colors and sizes of vinyl, which can be purchased individually or in bulk, in addition to blank bags, hats, shirts, sweatshirts, cups and other items ready to be personalized. The Montgomery location at 9174 Boyd Cooper Parkway is open Monday through Saturday from 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. Visit vinylcraftcloset.com



CULLMAN STORE HAS NEW OWNERS

Monograms Plus of Cullman is under new management. The 9,000-square-foot jewelry, gift and apparel shop that offers onsite monogramming is in the Warehouse District. In June, Lynsey and Tommy Todd assumed ownership of the business previously owned by Margaret and Mark Hamm. Lynsey Todd (pictured left), a former jewelry vendor and customer, worked as the store's manager for more than a year before taking over as owner. The Hamms had owned the business since 1999. "Mark and I handpicked (Lynsey) to continue the Monograms Plus legacy. We look forward to seeing her implement her awesome plans and ideas," said Margaret Hamm (right). Visit monogramsplusonline.com

MEMBER
SINCE
1999

Welcome

New Members



FEATURED NEW MEMBER

**CHAMPS
BARBEQUE LLC**
WETUMPKA

Founded 2006

OWNERS

**Scott and Marsha
Chambliss**
(pictured)

NUMBER OF EMPLOYEES 5

LOCATION

**10486 U.S. 231,
Wetumpka, AL
36092**

MEMBER SINCE

June 13, 2018

4F Enterprises LLC
MARION

ACT Physical Therapy
Pelham LLC
PELHAM

Amplify Salon & Spa Inc.
MONTGOMERY

Andrew's Diesel and
Automotive Repair LLC
SPANISH FORT

Angle Inc.
MOBILE

Anniston Southwest
Grill LLC
OXFORD

AU Tiger Town
Hospitality Group LLC
OPELIKA

Badcock of Clanton LLC
CLANTON

Bama Bounders LLC
TUSCALOOSA

Bayley's Restaurant Inc.
THEODORE

Benjamin D Williams
Dental Group LLC
ANNISTON

ANNISTON

Best Copy Products Inc.
AUBURN

Bobby Rai's
Sports Grille LLC
MOULTON

Bullock Preventive and
Family Medicine LLC
HOOVER

C & K Auto LLC
GREENVILLE

C D Development
Group LLC
FOLEY

Chattahoochee
Valley Auto LLC
OPELIKA

Chocolate by Julia LLC
HUNTSVILLE

Coldwater Mill
Restaurant LLC
TUSCUMBIA

Community Foundation
of Greater Huntsville
HUNTSVILLE

Confluence Lodging Inc.
DEMOPOLIS

Coppoletta Cuisine LLC
FAIRHOPE

Corporate Selections Inc.
GURLEY

Daphne Detail LLC
DAPHNE

Darryl Inc.
GUIN

Dental Care of Ozark LLC
ENTERPRISE

Derrick E & Loretta V.
Brooks, Investments LLC
MADISON

Dimwold Enterprises LLC
MOBILE

Echols & Associates, PC
TUSCALOOSA

Edge Cinema LLC
GREENVILLE

Epiphany Inc.
MADISON

ESC Central Inc.
BIRMINGHAM

Even Odds Cropwell LLC
CROPWELL

Farmhouse
Restaurant LLC
THORSBY

Flowood Fultondale LLC
FULTONDALE

Fly Away Foods Orange
Beach LLC
ORANGE BEACH

Foxy's LLC
DAUPHIN ISLAND

Frutta Group of
Birmingham Inc.
VESTAVIA

G & B Hospitality LLC
MOBILE

GFavor 1 Inc.
BIRMINGHAM

Green Golf
Management LLC
UNION GROVE

Hernco Automotive
Services LLC
VESTAVIA HILLS

Home Communities
Co. LLC
BIRMINGHAM

Horne & Horne
Enterprises LLC
DOTHAN

Hunter Royal
BRANTLEY

Integrative Family
Medicine LLC
CORDOVA

Island Rainbow LLC
DAUPHIN ISLAND

J & J Southern Roots LLC
TROY

J.D. & H. Enterprises Inc.
BIRMINGHAM

JACKIE STOVER LLC
BOAZ

Jason Michael Bailey
D.M.D P.C.
FOLEY

Jenifer Leber LLC
MOBILE

JJ's Convenience
Store Inc.
FALKVILLE

JMTX2 LLC
JASPER

JSC Capital LLC
DOTHAN

King Fundraising LLC
MOBILE

Lake Martin Trading Co.
Inc.
DADEVILLE

Last Word
Liquidators LLC
PELHAM

Live and Let Live LLC
MOBILE

LMCD Corp.
DAUPHIN ISLAND

Malouf Furniture Co. Inc.
FOLEY

Malouf on the Plaza
SANTA FE

MBSG LLC
MOUNTAIN BROOK

Metro Body Shop Inc.
ATHENS

Mobile Piano
Warehouse Inc.
SPANISH FORT

Mom's Kitchen LLC
HARTFORD

Monograms Plus
Cullman LLC
CULLMAN

Mr. Gene's Beans LLC
FAIRHOPE

Mul Inc.
DECATUR

Oversize Outfitters LLC
BIRMINGHAM

PCWW Furniture LLC
PELL CITY

Peridot Home LLC
MONTGOMERY

Phelps
Establishments LLC
BIRMINGHAM

Rama Jama
Holdings LLC
TUSCALOOSA

Ravish Hospitality LLC
EVERGREEN

RBK Management Inc.
SULLIGENT

Robertsdale
Animal Clinic LLC
ROBERTSDALE

Rolo's Cafe LLC
HUNTSVILLE

Saishivam Lodging LLC
MOBILE

Shree Narayan
Hospitality LLC
MOBILE

Shree Vikat
Hospitality LLC
GULF SHORES

Snashfin, Properties LLC
PELHAM

Southern School
Uniforms LLC
MONTGOMERY

Southside Pharmacy Inc.
TANNER

Star Spangled LLC
ENTERPRISE

Subway Development
MONTGOMERY

The Collegiate Hotel LLC
AUBURN

The Cuban Cafe LLC
MADISON

The Outdoor Loft LLC
BOAZ

The Potting Shed LLC
AUBURN

The Provident
Project LLC
BIRMINGHAM

The Retail
Companies LLC
VESTAVIA HILLS

The Village at Elizabeth
Street LLC
BOAZ

The Woolworth LLC
BIRMINGHAM

Therapy South -
Florence LLC
FLORENCE

Tin Cup LLC
VALLEY GRANDE

TLC on Temple LLC
FAYETTE

Tuscaloosa Dental
Associates PC
TUSCALOOSA

Two Friends Inc.
HUNTSVILLE

Tyler Flats
Restaurant LLC
TOXEY

Vestavia Smiles LLC
BIRMINGHAM

Webb & Son
Holdings Inc.
NORTHPORT

Wesome LLC
GUNTERSVILLE

Wethreeka LLC
WETUMPKA

Wildcat Pride Oil
and Lube LLC
WARRIOR

Y&D Enterprises LLC
TROY



**Founded
2018**

OWNERS

**Alex and
Leidi Espinosa,
Augustin Espinosa**
(pictured)

NUMBER OF EMPLOYEES **7**

LOCATION

**3271 Malcolm Dr.,
Montgomery, AL
36116**

MEMBER SINCE

Aug. 23, 2018

FEATURED NEW MEMBER

**EL TACO SHOP INC.
MONTGOMERY**

FROM BASEBALL TO BOOKSTORE

Pitcher Throws Changeup, Hits Homerun with Birmingham's Oldest Independent Bookstore

PAUL SEITZ SAYS IT'S AN EASY JOB TO SELL BOOKS TO BOOK LOVERS

Story and photos by Melissa Johnson Warnke



The 45-year-old Little Professor Book Center is now in its third Homewood location. "We offer a good inventory ..., but what makes us successful is our readers," said owner Paul Seitz.

Baseball is what first brought Paul Seitz to Alabama. In fact, he owns a special piece of Birmingham's baseball history.

A native of Ohio, he was a pitcher for Ohio State University before coming down South to play professionally. In the early 1960s, he moved to Birmingham to pitch for the Barons, and Seitz was the starting pitcher on Opening Day 1964 – the first integrated ballgame in the team's history.

The next year, he was promoted to play AAA in Vancouver with the Mounties. But in 1968, Alabama came calling again, and Seitz returned to Rickwood Field to play for the Birmingham A's. By 1969, he was ready to retire from the game. He was 28 at the time and began looking for his next changeup.

While browsing through a local newspaper, a small advertisement caught his attention – an opportunity to buy a franchise of a store called Little Professor Book Center.

Thanks to the franchise's popularity in his home state of Ohio, Seitz was familiar with the store. To him, that sounded like a good plan, and he never looked back.

In 1973, he officially opened Little Professor Book Center in downtown Homewood, in "The Curve" on 18th Street South. He spent more than 20 years at that location before moving down the street, remaining in that location until last year, when the developer sold the space.

Now, he's moved back to the heart of Homewood, directly across the street from his original location. Since the recent move, he's enjoyed seeing his longtime customers return, as well many new faces that have found their way through the doors.

"We get customers from as far 50 miles away. They are book lovers, and they are what have made us be able to survive for this long period of time," Seitz said. "We offer a

good inventory and excellent book people, but what makes us successful is our readers."

Children make up a big portion of his readership. Whether it's required reading or for enjoyment, Seitz gives those children a lot of credit towards his business' survival.

"In 1973, my first two customers were high schoolers. In the past 45 years, we have dealt with hundreds of schools and their students. Without those schools, we wouldn't be here today," he said.

Today, Little Professor Book Center in Homewood is Birmingham's oldest independent bookstore; independent now since the Little Professor franchise sold out in 1998. In fact, Seitz's store is one of only three Little Professors left in the United States that are still open and carrying on the

name. With frequent events in the store, like book signings and meet-the-author nights, its popularity is holding strong, despite the ever-present competition from online sellers and chain bookstores. From new releases to timeless classics, best sellers to would-be hits, the store's selection and employee expertise sets it apart.



Shop Little Professor Book Center at 2844 18th St. S. in Homewood seven days a week – 9 a.m. to 8 p.m. Monday through Friday, and 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. Saturdays and Sundays. Visit online at littleprofessorhomewood.com

"In our 45 years in business, I've had some of the most amazing, wonderful employees. Doctors, judges, a soprano singer, playwrights and now we have a full-fledged author on our staff. He just signed a three-book contract with McMillan," said Seitz.

While Seitz has slowed down in the past few years, he's not closing the book on working in his business anytime soon.

"What's great about having a bookstore is you never have any complaints," Seitz said with a big smile.

"When people get a car fixed, they grimace when they hand over that money. When people buy a book, they're always smiling. They say, 'Thank you very much!' So, it's been an easy, easy job." ■

PROPER FIT

Second-Generation Family Shoe Store Gives Custom Service to Growing Clientele

J-RAY SHOES IN MOBILE HAS BEEN FITTING CHILDREN IN THE PERFECT SHOE SINCE 1954

Story and photos by Melissa Johnson Warnke



Leigh Dominick Kercher, the youngest daughter among John Ray and Marian Dominick's nine children, manages the day-to-day operations of the family store.

For more than 64 years, a family owned shoe store in Mobile has been providing a ray of sunshine for shoe-shopping parents: A “J-Ray” of sunshine to be exact.

J-Ray Shoes and the family behind it are known for their friendliness, customer service and expert shoe fittings. The store carries brand-name children’s shoes, as well as backpacks, hair bows, socks, raingear, belts, purses and ladies’ shoes. They also partner with area schools to provide custom-made shoes to meet the uniform requirements and colors for each school.

“I’ve been buying shoes from J-Ray since I was a child – 46 years to be exact! Wouldn’t go anywhere else for school shoes,” said longtime customer Shirell Dortch.

Aside from its selection of high-quality shoes and accessories, J-Ray Shoes is also unique in how the owners’ family’s story is woven into the fabric of the business.

From Shoe Repair to Shoe Sales

John Ray and Marian Dominick opened J-Ray Shoes in 1954, just two years after they married. The store’s genesis was a shoe repair business, but Marian had the idea to begin selling Keds shoes in the front. It wasn’t long before the

shoe-selling business took off, and their family grew along with the shoe store. Over the years, the Dominicks had nine children, and the store needed a newer, larger location than their shop on Old Shell Road. In the early 1990s, J-Ray Shoes moved into a larger storefront on University Boulevard.

While Marian passed away in 2014, John is still involved with several of the daily operations at the store. Their youngest daughter, Leigh Dominick Kercher, is now managing the day-to-day operations of the store.

“We are very blessed to still have our father’s help at the age of 93,” said Leigh.

“My parents worked so very hard to grow the business and build a strong customer base. I am very happy that I am able to continue growing the business and carry on the legacy of J-Ray as a family owned store,” she added.

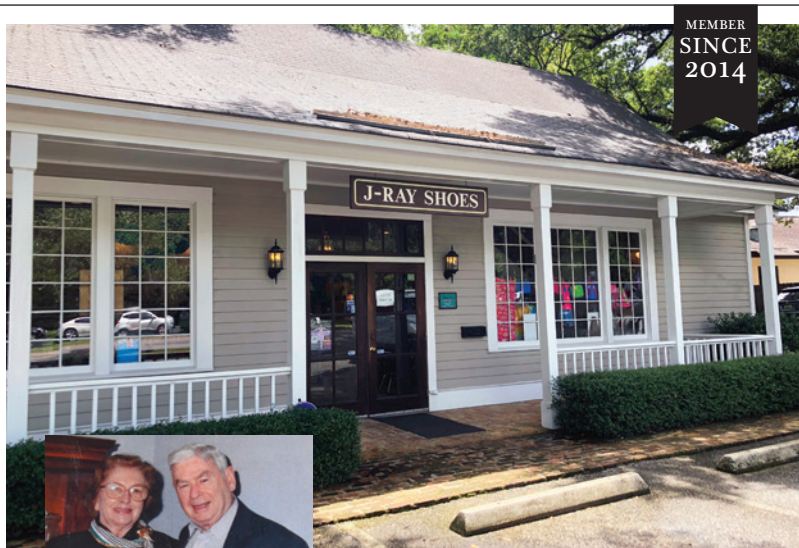
All the Dominicks children grew up in the store. Leigh recalls being there as a youngster, learning the ropes from the time she could walk. It was during college, however, that working in the family business became more than just fun, and Leigh officially jumped in to help grow the business in new ways.

Customers Like Family

Today, she’s helping fit second- and even third-generation J-Ray shoppers, who “have become like family too,” said

Leigh. “We love our customers and love watching them grow.”

With the back-to-school shopping season behind them, which is their busiest time of the year, they’re focused on another busy buying season – Christmastime. The store is often filled with parents and grandparents searching for the perfect shoes to complement a Christmas outfit. Trunk shows and special events also bring extra



Shop J-Ray Shoes at 121 S. University Boulevard in Mobile from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. Monday through Friday, and 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Saturdays. Learn more @jrayshoes on Facebook. Inset: Marian and John Ray Dominick.

foot traffic through the doors.

“As an independently owned store, we take pride in being able to offer a shopping experience that you can’t find in a chain store or online,” Leigh said.

“We go above and beyond for our customers, and very often, we’ll special order hard-to-find styles and sizes to meet their needs. When you shop with us, you know the shoes will fit properly, and you’ll get the very best in customer service.” ■



Socially Speaking

THE POSTS YOU MAY HAVE MISSED

“Every day, I get to work with my best friend – my dad.”

– COSTAS ‘GUS’ KATECHIS,
CHRIS’ FAMOUS HOT DOGS



We are visiting the 2018 Alabama Retailers of the Year (See all winners, Pages 10-11). Nominator Travis Rutherford (center) poses with Gus and Theo Katechis outside of Chris’ Famous Hot Dogs on Montgomery’s historic Dexter Avenue. #AlabamaRetailontheRoad Various dates from Aug. 7 to Sept. 19

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

/Alabama Retail

@AlabamaRetail

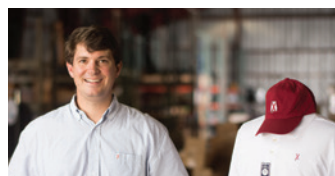
Stay informed at alabamaretail.org



It was a joy to visit with Raymond Young and his family at @MaryCarterStore in @CullmanUSA during our #AlabamaRetailontheRoad tour this week! Paint, keys, frames, skilllets, fishing poles, Mary Carter has it all. #ShopAlabama @cullmanchamber #WeLoveOurMembers Aug. 30



Thanks to the Opelika Chamber for the invitation to speak at their Business over Breakfast! Enjoyed sharing the #ShopAlabama message and telling the group more about the work we do at the Alabama Retail Association! We look forward to partnering with your wonderful retailers and city again soon! July 27 share of an @opelika.chamber post



It’s always inspiring to hear successful young entrepreneurs tell their stories! We enjoyed our visit with @statetraditions and look forward to featuring your homegrown Birmingham business turned nationwide operation in our Alabama Retailer Magazine! #ShopAlabama #WeLoveOurMembers #AlabamaRetailontheRoad Six pictures shared Aug. 28



Thanks to today’s decision, Alabama Retail President Rick Brown said, “Out-of-state, online-only businesses will no longer have an unfair advantage over our friends and neighbors who own local businesses.” [Link to alabamaretail.org](http://alabamaretail.org) post ... BREAKING: ... The U.S. Supreme Court has ruled in favor of leveling the playing field between online and local retailers. #LevelthePlayingField #alpolitics June 21

RECENTLY RE-TWEETED @ALABAMARETAIL

@RepMarthaRoby: I was honored to be recognized as a “Hero of Main Street” for supporting policies that are vital to the success of the retail industry & small businesses. I’m thankful for all of AL’s small businesses & will continue to support policies that help them prosper. Sept. 6 (Pictured U.S. Rep. Martha Roby and Alabama Retail Board Member Terry Shea)






AUTOMATIC BANK DRAFT

YOUR WORKERS' COMP PREMIUM PAYMENTS CAN BE MADE AUTOMATICALLY

At ARC, we know workers' compensation premiums probably are the last thing on a business owner's mind. To make running your business easier, ARC offers a convenient automatic bank draft program for your premium payments. Whether you are on a monthly, quarterly or annual billing plan, once enrolled in the bank draft program, your payment is drafted on the due date.

"With automatic bank draft, I have one less thing I have to worry about. My payment is made on time, and I can focus on running my business" said Avery Ainsworth, owner of Fleet Feet Sports in Montgomery. The store has been an ARC participant since it opened in 2013.

 *To find out more and sign up for automatic payments on your account, visit alabamaretail.org/bankdraft*

COLD AND FLU SEASON

Teach Your Employees "How to Be Sick"

The headline may look like a misprint, but presenteeism is a major problem in many workplaces. "Presenteeism" is when sick employees come to work anyway and often infect their co-workers as well. Train your employees on how to be sick so they can get well and get back to normal more quickly.

Virus vs. Infection

Help employees tell the difference between a common cold and the flu. The common cold is a virus that typically infects the nose and throat and can occur any time during the year. Influenza, or "the flu," is an infection of the respiratory system caused by an influenza virus and is most common during the winter into spring. Next, ensure employees know how the cold and the flu spread. Colds are spread more readily when people are indoors, where the chances increase for contact with contaminated surfaces and inhalation of airborne viral particles. The flu is most commonly spread

when viral particles are emitted into the air by coughing and sneezing, or when a contaminated surface is touched.

Stay Home When Sick or Contagious

Training your employees to stay home when they're not feeling well and during the infectious stages of illnesses will help you minimize decreased productivity by ensuring that when employees are on the job, they're working at full capacity. It also ensures that sick employees won't infect co-workers, leading to more sick days from more workers. The flu alone causes U.S. employees to miss about 17 million workdays, at an estimated \$7 billion annually in sick days and lost productivity, according to the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH).

 *For more on Colds and Flu, go to alabamaretail.org/resources/workplace-safety/employee-safety-news/*

MEMBERSHIP MATTERS

Alabama Retail: The Leading Voice and Resource for Retailers in Our State

MORE THAN 4,200 BUSINESSES ALREADY KNOW WHY
#MEMBERSHIPMATTERS WITH THE ALABAMA RETAIL ASSOCIATION

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

Be like these Retailers of the Year, past and present, and take advantage of all your association has to offer.

Issue Awareness

"What I like about being a member of the Alabama Retail Association is having people looking out for our best interests. All kinds of legislative issues are happening, like the online sales tax issue, while we go to work every day. Alabama Retail supports and helps our businesses."

- **DUSTIN BEATY, HOSPITAL DISCOUNT PHARMACY AND LAVISH BOUTIQUE AND COFFEE BAR**

Network

"It is important to belong to an organization that promotes businesses, promotes my restaurant, promotes what we are doing here. The networking possibilities are endless. It increases business. It increases relationships."

- **CHARLENE HABER, WOLF BAY RESTAURANT, BAR & BOUTIQUE**

Value

"Being an association member, we have workers' comp. Other benefits – posters, emails, newsletters – keep me abreast of what is changing in the industry. That's very valuable to me."

- **LINDA FLAHERTY, ONCE UPON A TIME**

Accessibility

"We consider Alabama Retail to be local, like we are. We can pick up the phone and call when we have a question. Our people are our business. Alabama Retail would say the same. If there is an opportunity to serve, you are right there and able to get in touch."

- **JAY WELBORN, B&W FOODS DBA PIGGLY WIGGLY**

Your Voice

"The Alabama Retail Association keeps us up to date on what is going on statewide and what is happening in any legislation that could affect us. The association allows everyone across the state to have a voice."

- **JODIE STANFIELD, LOCAL JOE'S**

👉 Visit us at alabamaretail.org