Alabama



From the President



Together, Make The Retail Voice Heard in 2021

A month of 2021 is behind us and so much has already happened.

The 46th president has been sworn in and the 117th Congress is two weeks into its new term.

Alabama has a new U.S. senator, Tommy Tuberville, and two new members of the U.S. House, Jerry Carl representing the 1st Congressional District and Barry Moore representing the 2nd.

Meanwhile, the Alabama Legislature begins its 2020 regular session Feb. 2.

Initially, Alabama's congressional delegation and state lawmakers will deal with issues related to the coronavirus. COVID-19 will continue to impact our collective health, business and politics until vaccinations are readily available and in widespread use. Key among pending state issues are enacting several executive actions the governor made between the end of the 2020 session and now.

(See Page 17).

While the Alabama Legislature's regular session ends by May 17, one or two special sessions could occur this year. In addition to having to conduct its regular business during a pandemic in 2021, redistricting and a federal lawsuit over prison conditions also loom.

State legislative district lines must be approved in the first legislative session following the U.S. Census. Congressional redistricting also is the job of the Alabama Legislature, although with no statutory timetable. Lawmakers could face redrawing those lines with one less House seat in Alabama.

Our weekly Retail Report emails resume the first week of February. Whatever happens in the Legislature or Congress, your association will keep you informed each Friday. Please reach out and provide feedback to Alabama Retail and your state and federal officials.

Rick Brown

Rick Brown, Publisher and President

Retailer

February 2021 Issue 1 Vol 21

Publisher

Rick Brown

Editor

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Copperwing Design

Cover PhotoBrandon Robbins

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Alabama Retailer of the Year and Centennial Retailer nominations due March 8

The Alabama Retail Association will accept nominations for the 2020/2021 Alabama Retailer of the Year and the Alabama Centennial Retailer awards through Monday, March 8. Entries will be due April 12.

After taking a hiatus in 2020, the Alabama Retailer of the Year awards program is in its 21st year. The 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/

Retail businesses that began in 1921 or before are eligible to be recognized as Alabama Centennial Retailers. Some 80 Alabama businesses have already been honored for being in business for 100 years or more. 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/

FARMING ADVOCATES

SweetCreek Farm Market In Pike Road Turns Five in March

REED AND KAREN INGRAM WORK TO OFFER
FRESH FOOD TO THEIR COMMUNITY WHILE PROVIDING OUTLET
FOR ALABAMA FARMERS AND INSPIRING NEXT GENERATION

Story and photos by Nancy King Dennis.



n 2016, Reed and Karen Ingram were empty nesters with time and energy to spare. Reed had an idea that had been percolating for some time.

"It just started off as a thought of doing a fruit stand, selling fresh produce," he said on a Sunday afternoon in a packed café attached to a bustling covered outdoor market with a live soul and blues band playing on the porch.

The Ingrams own a quality used car dealership and operate a 600-acre cattle farm, but "we don't like to sit still," said

Karen, adding that at first "I wasn't sure it was a good idea" to start another venture.

Reed's idea had begun to grow on Karen, though, when they mentioned it to a banker friend. The friend strongly advised against turning Reed's dream into reality.

"We left, and I said, 'Let's do this,' said Karen. In his retelling, Reed remembered, "She got in the car and said, "I'm in."

The couple, who have been married for 40 years

and have worked together for 38, often finish each other's thoughts or expound on them in conversation.

Five Years and Growing

In March, SweetCreek Farm Market will mark its fifth year in business, but "nothing out of the ordinary," said Reed. "Our anniversary is right when everything starts ramping up to like 100 miles per hour," said Karen, explaining that SweetCreek's busy season stretches from March through October.

What was an idea slightly more than five years ago has grown into a thriving venture in Pike Road, right off U.S. 231, a major artery for Alabamians and other travelers headed to the beaches of Alabama and Florida. SweetCreek is part barbecue café, part produce market, part ice cream parlor and part agritourism destination. And the couple has future dreams for a nearby event venue and U Pick farm operation.

"We want to target more of the younger generation, where they can learn about farms and where they can be our future farmers," said Reed, who grew up farming with his father. "We want to plug as many parents with kids into spending time with their children and learning about farming as we can."

Over the past five years, the couple has added live animals that roam the property, a pavilion, planted trees, doubled the land around them and started a farm to grow pumpkins and other seasonal crops.

SweetCreek Farm Market, named for nearby Catoma Creek and the sugary fresh baked goods and ice cream sold there, started with 11 employees. A core third of those still work there, including the cook, baker and a manager. At peak times, the business has employed as many as 78. In

> the off-season last year, that number dropped to 62. The business is open seven days a week even when it is not growing season.

> Customers "knowing when you are going to be open and when you are not going to be open is the only way you can provide a service," said Reed. "We close four days a year" - Easter, Thanksgiving, Christmas and New Year's Day.

The Ingrams chose to locate where fresh fruits and vegetables, while grown nearby, weren't readily

available to buy. "It was such a food desert," said Reed, noting that the nearest grocery store is still seven miles away. More than 100, mostly local and Alabama farmers, grow the produce, including teenagers just learning the trade. "It is neat to see these young kids come in and set a basket up on the counter with a gleam in their eyes that they will be getting money for their eggs," said Reed.



In season, SweetCreek Farm Market has local satsumas, Chilton County peaches and strawberries, Tallassee pecans, Slocomb tomatoes and other Alabama grown produce, while most of its produce is grown within a mile of the 85 Meriweather Road business in Pike Road. Visit 9 a.m.-7 p.m. Monday through Friday, 7 a.m.-6 p.m. Saturdays and 11 a.m.-6 p.m. Sundays.

Public Servant

Besides car dealer, cattleman, farmer, restauranteur and business owner, Reed also is an elected official. He's represented Alabama House District 75 since 2014 and prior to that served for 10 years as a Montgomery County commissioner. He said SweetCreek customers "talk to me about politics a lot."

"Rubbing elbows with people all day long makes him a lot more empathetic," said Karen. "When he sees some laws come down or legislation in the works, he looks at it from the eyes of all the people he sees every day." •

TOP PERFORMER

'Rare Quality' and 'Well Done Service' of New York Butcher Shoppe Appeals to Birmingham Market

JIM MOELLER OPENED HIS FIRST SPECIALTY BUTCHER SHOP FRANCHISE 10 YEARS AGO, PAID OFF HIS LOANS AND ADDED A SECOND STORE IN 2019

Story by Nancy King Dennis. Photo by Brandon Robbins.



fter 25 years in the waterworks industry, Jim Moeller began looking for a career change.

He reached out to a longtime friend from his hometown of Greenville, S.C., who is also the chief executive officer of a specialty butcher shop franchise operation.

"I noticed they were doing well, called him up and asked if I could open up a franchise in the city of Birmingham," Jim said. The corporate owners "believed in me and gave me the opportunity to market their concept."

In 2010, Jim opened his first New York Butcher Shoppe franchise in the Cahaba Heights neighborhood of Vestavia Hills. The store's fresh meats, specialty foods, assorted wines and exceptional customer service appealed so well to area consumers that the store had the highest volume in the entire New York Butcher Shoppe system in 2018 and 2019. Jim was able to pay his loans off years early and open a second location in the Greystone area of Shelby County by April 2019.

Although the two stores are only seven miles apart, Jim's franchises in

Cahaba Heights and Greystone both remain among the topperforming in the entire group of 14 corporate or franchise owned stores in South and North Carolina, Georgia, Florida and Alabama.

Giving Employees Chance to Succeed

"It sure is fun contributing to the business climate of the state of Alabama and having the opportunity to provide my employees a chance to succeed and support their own families," Jim said. "I am very blessed and thankful to be pursuing a wonderful career."

Jim's two franchise shops employ 11. "The staff are the engine that make my business run," he said.

Revenue has continued to rise even in the pandemic for the 10-year-old business. In the early months, although the stores had limited operating hours, Jim and his staff were working 80- to 90-hour workweeks trying to keep up with the demand for the meat market's premium meats, chef-prepared take-home entrees and mega-sized deli sandwiches.

In the fall of 2018, more than a year and a half before the pandemic, the shops had partnered with Shipt, the Alabama-

based grocery and essentials delivery app and shopper network. "It's almost as if we have a third store," Jim said of integrating delivery into his business model. That partnership had already paid off before the spring of 2020. Now, it is a necessity.



Visit the New York Butcher Shoppe's Birmingham franchises at 3158 Heights Village and 6801 Cahaba Valley Road, Suite 112, from 10 a.m. to 7 p.m. Monday through Saturday. Follow them at facebook.com/ nybutcher.birmingham/

Another pre-pandemic innovation that paid off for Jim's New York Butcher Shoppe franchise stores is its transparency about profits and losses with employees and an incentive bonus program.

"Not only do we constantly encourage our employees to provide excellent customer service, but also to be aware of the total business operation," said Jim. "As the performance of the store goes, so does the amount of the employees' bonus.

"It gives our employees a sense of ownership," he added. "They become more vested in the business."

Putting Customers Who Are Like Family First

Besides a stellar staff, Jim also boasts of "a great customer base. Our customers are more like friends. We get so many repeat customers, they feel like family."

That family feel filters down from the boss. One customer told Alabama Retailer, "Jim learns your name. Talks to you. He's not trying to sell you anything, he is just genuinely interested in what is going on with you."

The CEO for Butcher Shoppes International agrees, "Jim starts and ends every day with the customers' interests foremost in his mind. He develops his staff and the routines of his business with the customer central to all that is planned and executed."

In 2019, Jim's attention to customers, employees and community earned his New York Butcher Shoppe franchises the title of Silver Retailer of the Year in their sales category.

Karen Odle, president and chief executive officer of the Vestavia Hills Chamber of Commerce who nominated him for the award, refers to New York Butcher Shoppe as "a dream business in our community."

In some way, the business supports more than 50 different community groups and charities. Besides being an active Vestavia chamber member, the business also was one of the first members of the Cahaba Merchants Association.

Welcome New Members

FEATURED NEW MEMBER

CATACOMB 435 LLC

HUNTSVILLE

FOUNDED

October 2020

OWNERS

Stephanie Kennedy-Mell and Matt Mell

PICTURED

Matt Ortega, head bartender (behind the bar)

NUMBER OF EMPLOYEES

LOCATION

Basement at 100 Jefferson St. N., Huntsville, AL 35801

> MEMBER SINCE Oct. 26, 2020

Advanced Comfort Dental LLC HUNTSVILLE

Al Shish Palace Co. Inc. MADISON

Aloha Food Group LLC **DEMOPOLIS**

Andrews Paint & Body Shop Inc. **TUSCALOOSA**

Avine LLC BIRMINGHAM

Bad Az Taco Co Inc. **BIRMINGHAM**

BBMB LLC **ENTERPRISE**

Best Buffet 888 Inc. **EUFAULA**

Brooks Lock & Key Inc. **DECATUR**

Buka LLC JASPER

Burchell & Co Inc. HOOVER

Burger 101 LLC GADSDEN

Center Home Care DME LLC **ENTERPRISE**

Chandler's LLC FRISCO CITY

Dabbs Automotive Inc. HUNTSVILLE

Dakota B. Clark DMD LLC **JACKSONVILLE**

Druid City Brewing Co. LLC HUNTSVILLE

Dyestone Hospitality LLC HUNTSVILLE

Eclectic Foods LLC ECLECTIC

El Monterrey Inc. **BAY MINETTE**

Eumoirous LLC DADEVILLE

Gadsden

Orthodontics PC GADSDEN

Hage LLC **OPELIKA**

Hoover Subs Inc. HOOVER

Hot and Fresh LLC BIRMINGHAM

Iron City Machine LLC TRUSSVILLE

Isabel I I C WINFIELD

JJ Lewis Investments LLC **BIRMINGHAM**

DAPHNE

Lackey Inc. ANNISTON

Lake Guntersville Power-Sports LLC **GUNTERSVILLE**

MAE Studio LLC **BIRMINGHAM**

Mahavir Hospitality LLC MOBILE

McKee Desserts LLC TRUSSVILLE

Meadows Tire & Automotive LLC SELMA

Mediterranean Sandwich Co. LLC MOBILE

Mishali Inc. **HOMEWOOD**

Mo'Bay Beignet Co. of Auburn LLC AUBURN

Montclair Enterprises Inc. **BIRMINGHAM**

MPM Co. LLC DOTHAN

0&0 Enterprises Inc. **ENTERPRISE**

Ohatchee Pharmacy LLC

OHATCHEE

Ollies Mobile LLC MOBILE

Pat Hopkins HOUSTON

Perfect Timing Bar and Grill LLC OWENS CROSS ROADS

Pirates Bar & Grill LLC DAUPHIN ISLAND

Pet Wellness Animal Hospital LLC VESTAVIA

Rainbow City Family Dentistry LLC RAINBOW CITY

John D. Sherrod MD LLC Rivers Enterprises LLC **EUFAULA**

> Rock's Famous BBQ LLC PRATTVII I F

Saranaz I I C HUNTSVILLE

Shri Akshar I I C

MOODY

South Alabama Smiles LLC MOBILE

Southern Chill LLC FAIRHOPE

Studio 21 Salon Inc. VESTAVIA

Taco Mama Baldwin LLC DAPHNE

Taz Daphne Inc. DAPHNE

Taz Mobile Inc. MOBILE

The Corner Pour LLC HUNTSVILLE

The Hive BHAM LLC BIRMINGHAM

The Hotel Magnolia LLC **FOLEY**

The Price Butcher LLC BIRMINGHAM

Therapy South -Airport Road LLC

HUNTSVILLE

Therapy South -Montgomery LLC MONTGOMERY

Triad Property Management Inc. **TUSCALOOSA**

Uncle Gene's LLC OZARK

VISHMI 1 LLC LEXINGTON

W Chen Corp. LLC

TUSCALOOSA

Wall Street Dentistry LLC **ALBERTVILLE**



Willow + Gray Home in Fairhope Successfully Opens During A Pandemic

Story by Nancy King Dennis. Main Photo by Brandon Robbins.

Amanda Laurence had been thinking for some time about opening her own home décor business. A dinner out at a Church Street restaurant in her beloved downtown Fairhope cemented her plan.

"I looked up and there was a 'For Rent' sign in this window" at 14 S. Church St., a golden stone building known for the curve of its two bay windows, she recalls. "I immediately texted the owner and he called me within 15 or 20 minutes."

Spencer and Maryann Johnson, owners of a British import shop known as the Church Mouse and the adjoining Fairhope Fly Shop, had been thinking about retiring, or at least Maryann had, Amanda said.

"We came to terms in the first week of June" for the first-floor space previously occupied by Church Mouse, Amanda said. Spencer decided to keep the fly shop going. It took

the Johnsons a couple of months to move the British antiques out. Meanwhile, Amanda started ordering furniture, kitchen accessories and gifts. "Two close friends had always said, "If you do this, we want to come work for you," so they quit their jobs and the three cleaned and rethought the space. Willow + Gray Home opened its doors Sept. 28 and had its grand opening Oct. 6. By the holiday season, the store was up to eight employees.

"We did it all in a few months" amidst a global pandemic, Amanda said proudly, noting it was the right kind of business in the right place. "We live in Mayberry," she said. Fairhope's small town feel and proximity to one of Alabama's premier resorts, The Grand Hotel, made getting the business off the ground workable, even during the coronavirus, she said. Residents looking to improve their home environments also contributed to a successful first five months of operation.



"We are living in Mayberry."

-- AMANDA

Visit willowgrayhome.com

See more of this story at alabamaretail.org



immy Welborn traveled five days a week in his job in the wholesale grocery business, often with his young son, Jay Welborn, beside him.

When his dad decided to try his hand at running a grocery, Jay was in college and hoping to go into the grocery business. Jimmy took Jay to a run-down, old A&P building in Northport and asked, "What if we buy this store?" Jay recalls responding, "Dad, anywhere but here."

"I couldn't see what he saw - a customer base that was there looking for a place to shop," Jay said. "Through word of mouth and good value to the customer, business just grew and grew and grew."

Opening Stores Where Needed

Jimmy and his longtime friend, Ronnie Baker of Pell City, who operates supermarkets throughout East Alabama, opened their first Piggly Wiggly grocery store in 1998 in Northport under the B&W Foods Inc. banner. A second store on Tuscaloosa's Greensboro Avenue came along two years later. "My dad knew its history, so he was a big advocate of us going after that store," said Jay.

The partners built a third store on University Boulevard, opening in 2008. "Mr. Baker and my dad decided to start from scratch," said Jay. "They built a store three times the size of what was here before, so we could serve a broader range of customers." By 2009, they had a fourth store on Culver Road next to Stillman College.

Jay Welborn and Ronnie Baker are partners with B&W Foods Inc., a 23-yearold grocery company operating as Piggly Wiggly Tuscaloosa, with five stores and an online shopping app. Jay works daily to keep alive the values of his late father, the company's co-founder.

"My dad was very influential in our development. At the end of the day, he cared about people, whether it be our customers or our employees." - JAY

When the partners began the business, Jimmy Welborn was in remission from two kinds of cancer. He lost his 31-year battle with the disease in 2010, nine months after opening his fourth store. Jay then became the W in B&W Foods

On the last day of 2020, Ronnie and Jay opened B&W's fifth store in the Taylorville community of Tuscaloosa in a space previously occupied by Vowell's Fresh Market. In August, a month after Vowell's closed, B&W Foods bought it and began working toward reopening the market as a Piggly Wiggly.

The new store's prominent location off Alabama 69 South attracted the partners. "The Taylorville community is diverse and takes great pride in its schools and businesses," Jay said.

Continued on page 12

THE ESSENTIALS

Founded 1998

Number of Employees 200

Mentors Ronnie Baker and Jimmy Welborn **Smart Move** Maintaining active membership with two prominent co-op wholesale suppliers, Piggly Wiggly Alabama Distributing Co. and Associated Grocers of the South. We would not have been able to manage inventory as well as we did during the height of COVID without support from both partners.

Learning Moment

They occur every day. Never miss an opportunity to close your mouth, open your ears and listen to those around you.

Wisdom Shared Be who you say you are and do what you say you are going to do.

See more of this story at alabamaretail.org Jim Page, president and chief executive officer of The Chamber of Commerce of West Alabama, said, "The great thing about Piggly Wiggly is that they have chosen to operate in some of the most underserved areas of our community. They are really part of the fabric, part of the heartbeat of the communities in which they locate."

Local and Fresh

"My dad's philosophy was that all grocery stores have the same can of green beans, the same two-liter Pepsi," said

Jay, who remains a partner at the company his dad founded. "Where we differentiate ourselves is in the produce and meat departments."

A third of B&W's sales comes from in-house cut and packaged meat. "We are local. We are fresh," said Jay. "We choose to cut our meat fresh in the store, all the way down to our chicken program."

The distinction of having fresh produce and meat carries through to B&W's newest store, where all the

cold, fresh products are kept in refrigerators with doors as opposed to open-air coolers. "We really, really focus on our perishable departments," and coolers with doors maintain product at a more consistent temperature than open-air coolers, said Jay. No other grocery in the market has "put everything behind doors," he said, adding that being able to offer a unique shopping experience is "exciting."

Consistency Pays Off During Pandemic

Business has grown since the COVID-19 pandemic began last March, especially early on when most of the shopping being done occurred in grocery stores. "Grocery consumers are making fewer trips but buying more when they choose to shop," said Jay. More customers also utilize Piggly Wiggly Tuscaloosa's online shopping app, Grocery Pig Up Powered by Rosie. "We are very proud to offer a LOCAL online shopping option for grocery consumers not wanting the exposure of shopping in person," he added.

Finding sources for the products consumers want has been tough at times. "We are fortunate to have two prominent co-op wholesale partners," said Jay. "Our folks work diligently each day to buy quality products at the best value for our customers."

Maintaining the expected level of service while sales increased has been key. "Our employees have worked extremely hard in a difficult environment," Jay said. They "have provided consistently fresh, clean and well stocked

stores for customers to enjoy. We will maintain that consistency long after the pandemic is over."

Down Home, Down Street Corporate Citizen

The B&W Foods stores "try to be as 'down home, down the street' as we can," said Jay.

"My dad was very influential in our development," Jay explains. "At the end of the day, he cared about people, whether it be our customers or our employees."



B&W Foods operates Piggly Wiggly grocery stores on University Boulevard, Culver Road, Greensboro Avenue and Bear Creek Road in Tuscaloosa as well as a Northport store. All five are open 7 a.m. to 9 p.m. daily.

Besides the stores, Jimmy's legacy lives on with the Mr. Pig Goes to the Market fundraiser, which has raised more than \$250,000 for the American Cancer Society and the local hospital's Help and Hope Fund, which provides assistance to those receiving treatments at the DCH Cancer Center. "We also developed a food voucher program with a nutritionist from DCH to best meet the needs of patients during their treatment," said Jay. It is "our opportunity to give back to an organization and a cause we are all affected by in some capacity," said the second-generation operator of B&W Foods.

For the local chamber executive, the connection to community is clear. "Jay Welborn and the whole Piggly Wiggly family are great corporate citizens," said Jim.

Being part of the community is in B&W Foods' DNA. "You can be in a community and not participate in it," said Jay. "We want to be active participants in our community." •

Member News

ARCHIE'S BAR-B-Q & BURGERS: SAME LOCATION, NEW NAME



Archie's Bar-B-Q & Burgers is the new name of the 45-year-old restaurant at 1571 Montgomery Highway in Hoover. Owners Nick and Michael Manakides decided in late October to name the now fully independently owned business after Nick's late father, Achilles "Archie" Manakides. After retirement from the candy business, Archie was a presence at the restaurant until his death in 2004. The business opened in 1974 as the first franchise location of Golden Rule Bar-B-Q. It is "the same location, same ownership, same management and same great staff," according to the eatery's statement about the change. New signage went up in December.

Visit archiesbarbq.com

CHUCK'S FISH WINS SMALL **BUSINESS, BEST SUSHI HONORS**



Chuck's Fish added to its accolades in 2020. The Tuscaloosa locations of the fresh Gulf seafood restaurant group and its sister business FIVE earned gold status in the 51-100 Employees Category of the Alabama Small Business Awards presented in December by The Partnership - the Chambers of Commerce of Association of Alabama and the Business Council of Alabama. Earlier in the year, the readers of Alabama Magazine chose all Chuck's locations as the Sushi winner in its Best of Bama awards. The original Chuck's in Tuscaloosa opened in 2006. A Birmingham location followed in 2009 and Mobile in 2017. Visit chucksfish.com

DOTHAN'S SUSAN ANDERSON JOINS ALABAMA RETAIL BOARD



Eagle Eye Outfitters' owner and chief financial officer Susan Anderson joined the Alabama Retail Association board of directors Jan. 1 for a twoyear term. With a 1997 accounting degree from Troy University Dothan, Susan worked for eight years in the accounting field. In 1999, she and her husband, Mark, opened independent outdoor lifestyle retailer Eagle Eye Outfitters. Since 2014, the business has occupied 45,000-square-feet of retail, storage and office space on Ross Clark Circle in Dothan. Susan is a former member of the Dothan Area Chamber of Commerce and the Dothan Convention and Visitor's Bureau board of directors. Visit shopeagleeye.com





Bailey Brothers Music Co. in Montgomery and Andy's Music Inc. in Mobile were SINCE SINCE 1990 2010 among the 2020 Top 100 music dealers in the country, according to the National Association of Music Merchants. To earn that distinction, these businesses use innovative retail approaches and employ effective marketing and customer engagement strategies. Bailey Brothers has a storefront on Jefferson Street in downtown Montgomery and during the holidays operated a pop-up shop on weekends at The Shoppes at Eastchase. Bailey Brothers also has an Inverness store and online presence in Birmingham. James Andrews and his sister, Linsey Andrews Abraham, are fourth-generation merchants and owners of Andy's Music in Mobile, which their father founded in 1977. Visit baileybrothers.com and andysmusic.com

MEMBER

MEMBER

EVERYTHING STORE

'It's Rewarding to Help People and See You Are Doing Some Good'

THE ODOM FAMILY HAS OWNED ANDREWS HARDWARE IN CHATOM FOR ALMOST 60 OF ITS 83 YEARS

Story by Katie Brown. Photos by Nancy King Dennis.



ince 1938, Andrews Hardware & Seed Store Inc. has served the people of Chatom, the county seat of Alabama's Washington County. It's where everyone gets their plumbing supplies, Yeti coolers and drinkware, boots and even bridal gifts. Originally owned by the Andrews family, the town's hardware/everything store remains in the hands of locals.

"My grandfather (Lilburn Odom) came to Chatom in 1940 to run the store and later on my family bought it out from the Andrews sometime in the '60s," Jon Odom said of the family owned and operated venture. "My dad, his older brother and younger sister oversaw it along with my grandfather."

While the Odoms own the Chatom store, the Andrews family owns and operates other hardware stores under the Andrews name in deep southwest Alabama

Dwain "Cat" Odom. Jon's 72-year-old father, continues to answer the phone at the 92 Granade Ave. business and help customers find the right thingamajig they need, working right beside sons Jon and Eric. Since 2017, those three have fully owned and operated the business. Jon said he and Eric work 50-plus hours a week.

while their father clocks in about 40 hours a week. At times, you can find them three abreast at the hardware counter in the back of the expansive store that fronts an entire block.

While the business continues to grow and progress with the times, Cat said he leaves operating the "computers," aka the registers, to his sons.

Andrews Hardware converted from a True Value to an ACE store in 2017. They welcomed the change with a remodel, celebrating the new look in November 2018. While the store got a facelift, the friendly faces that customers recognize stayed the same.

"Most or our employees are long term. We have employees who stay with us until they retire," Jon said. "Arthur White in the back has been with us 22 or 23 years and Daniele Roberts, who helps in the front of the store, has been there about the same length of time too."

The store employs 13 full time and 6 part time.

"We try to provide a good service," said Jon. "No telling the number of times I have opened up the store on a Sunday to get a pump or water heater, because that stuff just happens and can't wait," he said, describing exactly what owning a onestop shop entails.

"It's rewarding to get to help people and actually see you're doing some good," Jon said explaining that the business strives to be an active member of the Chatom community. The ways Andrews Ace Hardware reaches outside of its walls includes making donations to high schools, little leagues and other organizations.

With the community's support and expanding inventory, Jon doesn't see any sign of slowing down and hopes to expand in the future.

There for The Community Before and After the Storm

Through the pandemic and the past year in general, business at Andrews Hardware boomed. The town of Chatom and its hardware store are no strangers to the severe weather Alabama experiences. Along with other storms, Hurricane

MEMBER

SINCE

1992

Zeta greatly impacted the area and even dismantled the "E" in the relatively new ACE store sign. (More on Zeta, Page 17)

"We sold just north of 100

generators" in the last five months of 2020, said Jon. "We were threatened by (Hurricane Laura) in August and sold a bunch then and when Zeta came through in October, we sold even more."

The Zeta damage wasn't repaired overnight, as many homeowners and businesses in the area continued to make improvements with the help of the store well into December and even January. "We sold shingles and metal roofing, because a lot of people got roof damage," he said, so much so that the stock received went out as soon as it arrived



Andrews Ace Hardware at 92 Granade Ave. just off Alabama 17 in Chatom is

open 6 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Friday and 6 a.m. to 2 p.m. Saturdays.

Visit on Facebook @andrewsinchatom

Alabama's 10th annual severe weather tax holiday from Feb. 26 to 28 is a time to stock up and save on the necessities at stores like Andrews Ace Hardware. State officials designed the three-day,

tax-free weekend to occur before the height of tornado and hurricane seasons.

"Flashlights, extra gas cans and generator fuel" are among the top sellers at Andrews Ace Hardware when a storm travels through, Jon 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. •

Learn about the Feb. 26-28 severe weather preparedness sales tax holiday at alabamaretail.org/ alabamasalestaxholidays/

Leave Legislation, Regulatory Changes and More Litigation Possible in 2021 & Beyond

By Whitney R. Brown, Esq.

OVID-19's arrival in March 2020 spurred Congress to enact paid leave programs on a scale previously unthinkable: Emergency Paid Sick Leave (EPSL), which provided 80 hours of paid leave, and Emergency FMLA (EFMLA), which provided 10 weeks of paid leave (and two unpaid weeks). Each applied to employers of fewer than 500 and the federal government reimbursed employers through tax credits. Though these leaves as a matter of government mandate expired Dec. 31, 2020, the virus continues to exact tolls on individual, community and economic health. Relief programs enacted at the end of 2020 give employers the option to choose to extend EPSL and/or EFMLA leaves and receive tax credits for doing so until March 31.

We anticipate this voluntary extension will not satisfy President Joe Biden's desire for paid leave specific to this crisis and the creation of an ongoing paid leave program covering most American employees. Therefore, expect his administration to push for another mandatory COVID-specific federally funded two-week paid leave program, much like the EPSL but slightly broader in scope, with all reasons for leave being fully paid up to \$1,400/week. Vaccine availability and public health projections likely will dictate the success of this measure. Rather than seek to re-enact the EFMLA, President Biden hopes Congress will pass the FAMILY Act, which would provide 12 weeks of leave at 2/3 pay (up to \$4,000/month) for employees of all employers, for reasons tracking FMLA. Democrats in Congress have proposed the FAMILY Act or similar bills for many years, and there is no reason to think that it would be passed in the current term.

On the agency side, we also expect the Biden-Harris administration to develop and publish emergency workplace safety standards regarding ventilation, face coverings, occupancy limits, cleaning, and infection notification through the Occupational Safety and Health Administration.

Change in the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission will move more slowly. While a Democratic chair will be

named, Republicans will maintain the majority position at the national commission level through July 2022. Therefore, we anticipate the commission will continue to prioritize successful mediation and conciliation over enforcement actions and update guidance on religious discrimination and expression issues for employees and employers for the next 18 months at least.

Change at the National Labor Relations Board should follow around the same timetable, but, once Democrats make up the majority of the board (likely in 2022), we expect a return to Obama-era positions.

Change at the Department of Labor may come more quickly and be more hotly pursued, assuming President Biden can get his choice for Secretary of Labor confirmed. Expect the successful appointee to roll back recent joint employer guidance and to attempt to more narrowly define which workers are independent contractors.

At the courthouse, we anticipate more employment-related lawsuits in 2021 as the EEOC works through its 2020 charge backlog; as employees perceive inequities in layoffs or recalls; and as employees bring wage-and-hour suits against employers that didn't adequately track work from home hours of nonexempt employees or wrongly deducted from exempt employees for lack of work.

- This article is a summary of a webinar presented by Alabama Retail's labor and employment law partner, Lehr Middlebrooks Vreeland & Thompson PC. For the in-depth forecast, go to lehrmiddlebrooks.com/product/2021-employment-law-and-litigation-forecast-webinar/
- More on the voluntary extension of the FFCRA leaves is available at lehrmiddlebrooks.com/wp-content/uploads/ President-Signs-Consolidated-Appropriations-Act.pdf
- Whitney Brown is a shareholder with LMVT. To learn more about LMVT and the services it offers to Alabama Retail Association members, go to alabamaretail.org/employment-law

COVID-19 UPDATE

Pandemic Prompts Federal and State Actions in 2020 and 2021

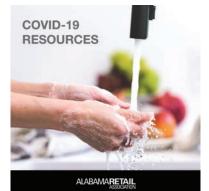
In late December 2020, Congress passed, and the president signed into law a \$900 billion coronavirus relief bill that includes:

- \$284 billion for the small business loan program (PPP).
- \$20 billion for targeted Economic Injury Disaster Loan grants
- \$600 direct stimulus payments to most Americans
- a \$300 per week supplemental jobless benefit through March 14
- Tax credits for offering paid sick leave and employee retention

For expectations on the federal front in 2021, See Page 16.



Pharmacies, both chain and independent, will play a major role in administering COVID-19 vaccines for the general public in the second phase of Alabama's vaccine rollout, possibly starting as early as the spring. Healthcare workers, nursing home patients, first responders, essential workers including grocers and food service workers, plus people 65 years or



older were among the first to get the vaccine. Phase 2 includes all age groups in the general population.

State Actions

Alabama's state of emergency related to COVID-19 lasts until March 8, 2021. The governor issued several emergency proclamations that the Alabama Legislature will consider codifying once it is in session:

• Enacting liability protection against frivolous COVID-19 lawsuits. The May 8, 2020, proclamation is retroactive to March 13.

See alabamaretail.org/news/proclamation-provides-COVID-19-civil-immunity/

- Eliminating state income taxes on CARES Act benefits, such as the Paycheck Protection Program loans and stimulus payments. The proclamation was effective Dec. 11.
- Extending the Alabama Jobs Act and Growing Alabama tax credits, also in the Dec. 11 proclamation.

Learn more at alabamaretail.org/news/coronavirus/

Apply by Feb. 8 for SBA Loan for Hurricane Zeta Physical Damage

Two major 2020 hurricanes made the damaged areas eligible for low-interest loans.

Small businesses in Clarke, Dallas, Marengo, Mobile, Perry, Washington and Wilcox counties damaged by Hurricane Zeta are eligible for physical disaster loans from the U.S. Small Business Administration. Apply by Feb. 8.

Those same entities in Autauga, Baldwin, Bibb, Butler, Chilton, Choctaw, Greene, Hale, Lowndes, Monroe and Sumter counties are eligible to apply for SBA Economic Injury Disaster Loans. That deadline is Sept. 10.

Additionally, businesses in Clarke, Conecuh, Covington, Monroe and Washington counties are eligible to apply for EID loans related to Hurricane Sally. The Hurricane Sally deadline is June 21.

Learn more at disasterloanassistance.sba.gov/s/

UC Taxes Due April 30; Delinquent after May 1

The first quarterly tax payment for unemployment insurance taxes is due April 30 and delinquent after May 1.

The Alabama Department of Labor was to notify you by Jan. 31 of your 2021 unemployment insurance rate. Unemployment compensation taxes are individual to each business based on a formula that takes into account wages paid; the amount of unemployment among current and former employees; the average duration and cost of unemployment benefits paid to claimants over a three-year period; as well as the shared costs. Shared costs, which all employers pay, were to increase this year to 1.3% because of COVID-19 job losses.

Your rate will remain the same for all of 2021.

Learn more at alabamaretail.org/news/2021unemployment-compensation-taxes/



Socially Speaking

"Brooks & Collier is a familyowned business. Everyone that is a part of this company is part of the family."

- FOSTER BROOKS, BROOKS & COLLIER



Greg and Foster Brooks, the father and son operators of Brooks & Collier, are the cover story for the November issue of Alabama Retailer. #ShopAlabama Oct. 28 photo and link 🕧 🧿



Let Alabama's retailers make your holiday shopping easy and safe. Spread the love and #KeepTheCheerHere. Thanks George Jones at Snoozy's Kids for sharing the local retailer message so well! Nov. 24 video (o)



Holly and Neal McLeod have spent five years "popping up happiness one kernel at a time" in Cullman's Warehouse District. The photos feature the couple on opening day and currently at Kernel Kullman, their solution for how to make a living and have fun. #FiveYears #HappyAnniversary 🥕 🔪 #ShopAlabama #LifelsBetterwithPopcorn Oct. 26



Today is Retail Day in Alabama! Today and throughout the holiday shopping season, shop at your favorite Alabama retailer. Whether you shop in store or online, keep Alabama businesses open by shopping local. #KeepAlabamaOpen #ShopAlabamafortheHolidays Oct. 13 video (1)

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

/Alabama Retail

@AlabamaRetail

O) @ShopAlabama

in /Alabama Retail Association

🖔 Stay informed at alabamaretail.org



Phillip Weaver Sr., owner of Buffalo Phil's, offers this time-honored advice on how to build a business in today's #WednesdayWisdom. ... "I'm trying to soak up as much of his wisdom as I can." Phillip Jr. said. #BPhils #DineAlabama Dec. 2 (1) (0)

RECENTLY TWEETED @ALABAMARETAIL

Lucky Clyde & Henrietta got a gubernatorial pardon today. ... We love when our members make the news! Thanks @ alnewscenter for sharing our Bates House of Turkey story. When you #ShopAlabama, you #KeepAlabamaOpen and #KeepTheCheerHere : Hal Yeager @governorkayivey Nov. 9 link to web post and Nov. 11 link to Member News 💟





RETRO RETURN

ALABAMA RETAIL COMP RETURNS \$8 MILLION IN 2021

Alabama Retail Comp will return \$8 million this year to participants as part of its annual retrospective return.

"We are pleased that we are returning a historic amount to participants," said Rick Brown, fund administrator and Alabama Retail Association president. "Every dollar the fund returns lowers the cost of doing business for our members."

Since its inception in 1984, ARC has returned more than \$107 MILLION – 28 percent of all premiums collected – to its participants through what is known as its Retro Return plan.

Each Retro Return is composed of excess funds ARC's trustees have set aside from previous fund years. As the need to hold money in reserves decreases in a given

year, that year's participants receive money back as a credit on their next renewal. The retrospective rating plan uses an actuarial formula that takes into account individual participants' experience versus the experience of the Fund as a whole. Lower losses return a higher retro credit at renewal, rewarding participants for providing a safe work environment.

Total

RETROSPECTIVE RETURN DISTRIBUTION FOR 2021

ARC's \$8 million retrospective return for 2021 will be distributed from fund years as follows:

2019	\$2,000,000
2018	\$1,000,000
2017	\$1,000,000
2016	\$1,000,000
2015	\$1,000,000
2014	\$500,000
2013	\$1,000,000
2012	\$100,000
2011	\$200,000
2010	\$200,000
2021 Return	\$8,000,000

Although a retrospective return is never guaranteed, Alabama Retail Comp is committed to conservative underwriting and aggressive claims management to continue returning funds to participants.



in Opelika

"Alabama Retail Comp allows us to have workers' compensation insurance at an affordable price," said

JIMMY WRIGHT, owner of WRIGHT'S MARKETS

More than 4,300 Alabama Retail members participate in the fund. ARC specializes in the retail industry, but also provides coverage to an array of business employers.

Fund Manager Mark Young said, "At

ARC, our goal is simple: To provide the most cost-effective workers' compensation coverage to Alabama businesses with unparalleled customer service."

To find out more including a full Retro Return history, visit alabamaretail.org/comp/retrospective/



Alabama Retail Comp Wishes Boland Well in Retirement

Lawrence "Butch" Boland retired Dec. 31, 2020, after almost six years as an Alabama Retail Comp marketing representative. Butch joined ARC in March 2015 with more than 45 years of insurance experience. His previous employers included Travelers, J. Smith Lanier & Co. and American Resources Insurance Co. Inc. A certified professional insurance agent, or CPIA, Butch also previously served as chairman of the Alabama Insurance Planning Commission and as a member of the Alabama Independent Insurance Agents' Associate Advisory Committee.

"Besides his exceptional level of experience and knowledge, ARC will miss the joy Butch shared with us, our agents and our participants," said Alabama Retail Comp Fund Manager Mark Young. "We wish him well in retirement."



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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.

"The Alabama Retail Association monitors legislative activity, makes members aware of pending legislation and solicits feedback from members so that their voice is heard. This would be impossible for individual retailers to do on their own." -TODD NODEN, BOOKS-A-MILLION.

Take advantage of all your association has to offer.

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 (see Page 19 to learn more).

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